

The Courtesan - An Enigma

Dance relived... stories retold...

(Conceived & Conceptualized by Manjari Chaturvedi)

*Wednesday, 31st, August 2016
India Habitat Centre, New Delhi*

Project Report

Prepared by



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THE COURTESAN - AN ENIGMA

dance re-lived...stories re-told
as never done before offering the audience
a unique glimpse into the enigma that was
the courtesan.

Featuring

MANJARI CHATURVEDI
Performing Darbari Kathak - the
dance of the Courtesan, known for
its delicate movements and
expressions

&

NEESHA SINGH
Narrating episodes and stories from
the lives of well-known courtesans
Inspired by the book "The Nautch
Girls of India" By Sri Pran Nevile

Wednesday, 31st August 2016, 7:30 pm onwards
at Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road New Delhi

CONCEIVED AND CONCEPTUALIZED BY MANJARI CHATURVEDI

Supported by
K.L. Saigal Memorial Circle

An initiative by
 SUFI KATHAK
FOUNDATION

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Adult two. Seating is on first come first serve basis, except the
first two rows. Children below 5 will not be allowed. Audio /
video recording and flash photography is strictly prohibited.
Please ensure your mobile phones are switched off.

Photo: Sahil Sharma

The Courtesan- An Enigma

Wednesday, August 31st, 2016

Chief Guest

Honab'le Minister of Art Culture and Language Mr. Kapil Mishra

Guest of Honour

Honab'le Member of Parliament & Former Minister for Law and Justice Dr. Ashwani Kumar

Introductory Note

Shri Pran Nevile, Author and founder of K.L. Saigal Memorial Circle

Performers

Ms. Manjari Chaturvedi, Kathak Danseuse

Ms. Neesha Singh, Actor

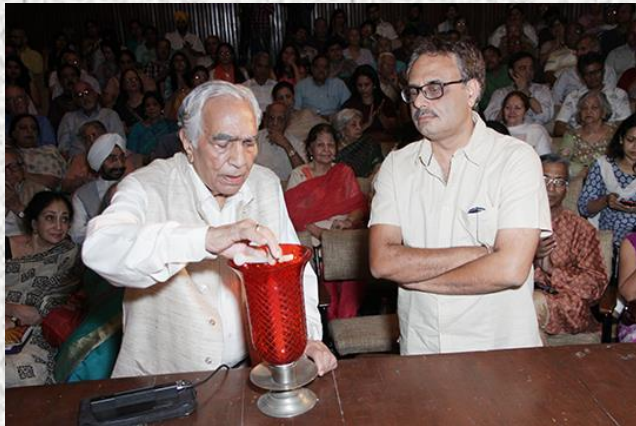
Venue

India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Attendance

Over 400 guests

The one day concert held on 31st August 2016 at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, in association with KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, began with the introductory note by Shri Pran Nevile, Author and Founder of K.L. Saigal Memorial Trust. This was followed by the lighting of the Shama by Chief Guest, **Shri Kapil Mishra, Honab'le Minister of Art Culture, Language and Tourism**. The compere for evening introduced Sufi Kathak Foundation. She welcomed all guests for their presence and our Venue Partner K.L. Saigal Memorial Trust and India Habitat Centre for their kind support.



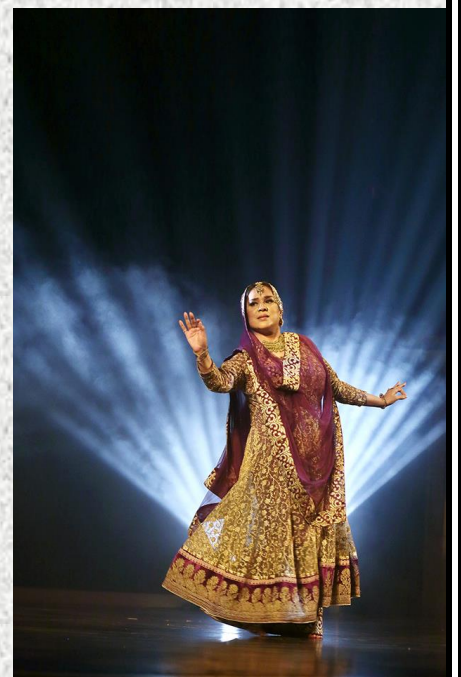
About the Concert: "The Courtesan-An Enigma, dance relived ... and stories retold..."

This concert is a unique initiative by Sufi Kathak Foundation for recreating history and an era of the courtesan wherein the dance was relived by kathak danseuse Maestro Manjari Chaturvedi and the stories of the the courtesan were told by Actor Ms. Neesha Singh.

Through this concert Sufi Kathak Foundation has revived the magic of the Courtesan...the muse for poets, painters, sculptors, artists, musicians, writers, filmmakers and the creative thought at large... The concert is part of the research project on the "The Lost Songs of Courtesans" - Under this is the archival and documentation project and our efforts to remove the social stigmas associated with the courtesan and respect them for their art and as artists par excellence.

Concert featured **Manjari Chaturvedi**, who lit up the evening with an incandescent and faultless performance. It more than a dance relived; it is a story that retold. Manjari through her dance nuances recreated the Awadhi darbar. The poetic words of love explored through darbari kathak dance.

The evening started with Darbari Kathak by Manjari on the Ghazal "*Awal shab wo bazm ki raunak, shamma bhi thi parwana bhi tha*" which left the audience awestruck, as she relived the sheer beauty of remembrances of love of a courtesan. The performance was further enhanced when Manjari Chaturvedi performed on *Firdaus -e-husn o ishq hai daaman e lucknow, Aakhon mein bas rahi hai ghazal khwar e lucknow*. Darbari Kathak relies heavily and vividly on the hands and the face for expression, her body language such as those courtesans would have used to entice commoner and royal. Manjari took one's breath away. She not only commanded the stage with a fluidity of motion, she owned it with a confidence of method.



This was followed by Actor Neesha Singh, who narrated anecdotes and stories from the lives of the courtesans. She mesmerized the audience with her stunning voice and her elegant style. Neesha Singh shed light upon pre-conceived notions about courtesans, often misconstrued, such as their sensibilities, disposition and ethos including the life and times of Gauhar Jaan who was born of Armenian parents, Chanda Bibi, Rasoolan Bai and Zarina Begum.



Amidst the bursts of classical choreography, actress Neesha Singh provided commentary on the courtesan, lives that burned comet-bright, and occasionally rumbled with storms but were never dull.

The stories by Ms. Neesha Singh was followed by Darbari Kathak on *Sajan lagi tori lagan*, and *tarana in raag lalit*, and this led to uninterrupted applause from the audience in each and every sequence performed afterwards. In the last sequence of *deewana banana hai to deewana bana de*, the audience was humming along with the dance sequence and the audience rose for a standing ovation for the performance.

At the end of the concert, President of Sufi Kathak Foundation Ms. Manjari Chaturvedi thanked our sponsors KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and venue partner Shri Pran Nevile for their valuable support. She also mention special thanks to our Chief Guest Shri Kapil Mishra and Guest of Honor Dr. Ashwani Kumar for their kind presence at the concert.



About Artists:

Manjari Chaturvedi:

Manjari Chaturvedi the founder President of Sufi Kathak Foundation is a leading exponent of the Indian classical dance and is acclaimed for being the creator and only performing artist of Sufi Kathak. She has combined the mysticism of Sufi traditions with classical Indian dance to create a stunning new school of performance called Sufi Kathak. Manjari has performed in more than 200 concerts

all over the world including Europe (France, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, U.K. & Ireland), the Middle East (Dubai, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Kuwait), South East Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka) and Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan) along with Australia and America. An outstanding exponent of Kathak, Manjari's expertise is in Darbari Kathak also known as Kathak of Lucknow Gharana, and is characterized by lovely costumes, and is famous for its delicate nuances of expressiveness, alluring grace in movements, eloquent *gat bhav* and its unique *abhinaya* to the accompaniment of lilting *thumri's*, *ghazals* and *holis*, which was patronized in the opulent *darbars* of Nawabs of Awadh.



Neesha Singh:

Neesha Singh is an actress, who started her career as a successful model. She did a few acclaimed Hindi films, notably M.S Sathyu's 'Kahan Kahan Se Guzar Gaye', Sagar Sarhadi's 'Bazaar' & N. Chandra's 'Ankush', before making a decision to move to television, where she had a long, successful acting career. On television she has worked with well-known names like Shyam Benegal, Balwant Gargi, Amit Khanna and Vinay Dhumale, among others. She has had starring roles in popular television serials like 'Bharat Ek Khoj', 'Choli Daman', 'Upanyaas', 'Kathasagar', 'Kashmakash', 'Bua Fatima', & in the 1st Indian made English television serial on Star Plus in India, 'A Mouthful of Sky'. She has also hosted long running, successful shows like 'Mansi' & Rangoli. Neesha Singh had the leading role of Rani Jindan Kaur, widow of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in Gursharan Das's play 'Larins Sahib'. Directed by Rahul D'cunha, it was the 1st Indian play in English that was invited to be showcased at the Edinburgh Fringe festival. Neesha has a long, keen interest in yoga, & holistic health & beauty. She has a published book on teaching yoga to children through storytelling & drama, 'Good Morning Sun'. She now acts in select projects, the most recent being a part in noted danseuse Manjari Chaturvedi's concert 'The Courtesan - an Enigma'

Sufi Kathak Foundation:

The Sufi Kathak Foundation is a non-profit registered society (Regd. 61883, exempt from tax under section 80g and 12A), founded by Manjari Chaturvedi, to create awareness about India's intangible heritage in music and dance and preserve the gradually fading 700 year Sufi Traditions in Music. SKF has organized more than 12 concerts in last 5 years and is been associated with 219 artists from all over India. SKF aims to create a world of cultural unity, by spreading the secular message of the Sufis and also help in initiating children and orienting the youth to become self-employed through arts - dance and music. It provides assistance and support to needy artists and students by giving scholarships, pensions and medical support, in order to enable them to pursue classical music and dance. In last 5 years SKF has supported around 14 musicians and keen learners under the various Schemes offered by it. SKF seeks to evolve a humanist outlook and create centers, organize training classes, workshops and musical concerts to promote Sufi music, *Qawwali*, Sufi Kathak, and folk & classical dance across the world.

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Audience Response

अभी सूफी कत्थक का बेहतरीन मंचन देखा, IHC के Stein Auditorium में प्रसिद्ध सूफी नृत्यांगना मंजरी चतुर्वेदी ने दर्शकों को अभिभूत कर दिया। कत्थक में नूतन प्रयोग हैं मंजरी की विधा, वेशभूषा राजसी दरबारों की और बेहद कीमती किन्तु सामायिक है। मंच पर धुंधलके और प्रकाश का नूतन प्रयोग "निशब्द" करता है। अलंकृत गीत, गज़ल मधुर हैं। मंजरी की भाव प्रधान भंगिमाएं बारीक और नज़ाकत से भरपूर हैं। शमा और परवाने की अदायगी पानी पर तैरती प्रतीत होती है। मंजरी का लय को पैरों पर ठीक पकड़ना कत्थक की जान है, लाइट्स इफ़ेक्ट्स पूरे शो की आत्मा हैं, जिसमें मंजरी अद्वितिय हैं। आपको नृत्य में नूतन परीक्षणों की लम्बी यात्रा तय करने की शुभकामनाएँ। Raj Kamal

*As always you are an enigma
Manjari You captured in soul n
beauty the quintessence of a
courtesan with your expressions
n fluid movements
Preeti Kaur*

*What a spectacular show...
Everything great... Dancing
music singing and delightful
recitation by Nisha! Wishing
you all the success always !
Indu Shrikent*

*...I was at the concert and
I would say what a
performance, you gave
insight into lives of these
very talented ladies of
bygone era and revived
their art, the sets created
were mesmerising and more
than that was your
performance, left everyone
spellbound*

*Watching you was a visual
treat. You are an epitome of
grace and a performer par
excellence. Looking forward
to your next show.*

Vandana Thapar Bhalla

ॐ
Wonderful
performance...just
mesmerized
Ankita
ॐ



*I was truly mesmerized by your dance. Who says
ANGELS don't live on earth . God bless – Swadesh
Mishra*

*Loved every moment of the mesmerising show! Jayant
Krishna*

*What grace. And elegance ! A sublime bliss . Suraiya
Hussain*

It was an excellent programme. Superb. R.K. Jain

The Sponsors

The concert has been made possible with the kind contribution and support of our sponsors and partners. Our contributors and sponsors are the backbone of any event organized by the Sufi Kathak Foundation. By contributing to Sufi Kathak Foundation, their support is directed towards the preservation of centuries old traditional arts and culture that we at Sufi Kathak Foundation, strive to preserve in their original form and ensure its continuity for the future generations of this country and the world.

Our sponsors for this concert include:

Supported by



KLM Royal Dutch Airlines

Venue Support by

K.L. Saigal Memorial Trust

India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Event organized & managed by:



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