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### Creative brilliance

What the Jugalbandi dance craze purports to achieve by way of enduring contribution is difficult to say. But no one can deny that the desire to capture, on one performing canvas, a synthesis of styles is fairly widespread. Is this just an idle hunt for a change from the usual or is it prompted by a more serious urge to study the comparative merit of styles and to find out if stylised kinetic images of varying traditions can find a harmonised meeting point? So far these



### Suchitra Mitra

attempts at fusion have never gone beyond a once only experience.

In an India International Centre sponsored evening, Priyadarshini Ghosh and Suchitra Mitra worked at the latest combination of Mohiniattam and Bharatanatyam. In a brave attempt at placing the half circular swaying grace of one tradition alongside the rigid linear dimensions of another, the evening had flash points of creative brilliance. If the quality could not be sustained right through, it was in the very nature of the experiment.

Dayanand Saraswati's Siva Stuti in Revati, a great favourite with dancers today, had Priyadarshini Ghosh's Mohiniattam playing lasya to Suchitra Mitra's tandava in the Bharatanatyam aspect. Despite the accompanying music in the Carnatic mould being common to both, reconciling the slow paced aesthetics of Mohiniattam to the more energetic Bharatanatyam metre posed problems. Suchitra who tried to evoke a feel of the fiery Siva who contains the turbulence of the Ganga in his locks, through the odd 'tatta mitta' phrase only partially succeeded, the geometric tension of Kalakshetra trained Bharatanatyam not very evident in her dance. In fact in an item tailor-made for Bharatanatyam, it was Mohiniattam which showed to greater advantage.

Dramatic natya oriented items lend themselves better to this type of fusion which in Swati Tirunal's Dashavataram composition 'Kamalajasya' had its best expression. Dancing just in relation to each other is not easy in the frontally aspected styles. Where the dancers got away from this approach, they achieved a measure of success. The 'Samudra Manthan' scene, with Vasuki sporting a Bharatanatyam



### Priyadarshini Ghosh

mien contrasted with Lakshmi and Mount Mandara in the Mohiniattam form — both meeting in the final homage to Vishnu as Koorma. Parasurama's belligerence and the Ananda Bhairavi joy of Krishna and the Gopis in Brindavan, were expressive. But one wished for a singer with more staying power in the vocal chords.

The Jatiswaram in Nattakuranji where each tried to do an independent dance in simultaneity became a confused picture of movements. If the dancers had spaced themselves more imaginatively, say one at one corner of the back of the stage and the other diagonally in front of the stage, the differing dance lines could have held together better without one cutting into the other. The Tillana in Desh was similarly handicapped. Invariably in the softer unarticulated moments (dictated by the need to accommodate another style) while Mohiniattam did not get diminished, the situation made for a loss of emphasis in Bharatanatyam.

Priyadarshini's solo Mohiniattam in 'Meghadootam' based on the immortal poetry of Kalidasa built up a moving picture of the pining Yakshi as visualised by the banished Yaksha. The fond recollections of past togetherness in striking contrast to the emptiness of the present were vividly expressed through the subtleties of some exquisite abhinaya. One had a feel of the quintessential Proshitapatika nayika.

Suchitra's Mahishasura Mardini stotram was tame, the ragged singing with melody and raga thrown to the winds, adding to the dancer's woes.