

# *Sampravaahi* The Confluent Streams

MANGANJAR MUSIC & KATHAK DANCE

*Mr. Samandar Manganiar & Ms. Anurag Verma and Group*



*Sampravaahi*, the music and dance presentation is a confluence or coming together of two disparate artistic streams - **Manganiar Music and Singing Styles and Jaipur Gharaana Kathak Dance traditions from Rajasthan**. The presentation intends to explore the hidden common or compatible features and meeting ground shared by the two as they blend, interact and, at times, flow parallel to each other

but retain their distinct identities. The multifaceted classicality of the *Jaipur gharaana* of Kathak dance and the depth of romanticism, grandeur and gravity of the folklore and music of Rajasthan weave their magic together.

**The Idea behind the presentation of *Sampravaahi*** is, to bring to the fore, music that is authentic and not often heard, musical gems that are in danger of being lost amidst the more popular and, sometimes, very garish versions sold in commercial packages in the name of Rajasthani folk music. The group's repertoire includes some rare and complex compositions in 14, 10, and 6 beats time cycles, and traditional folk and Sufi songs and melodies from the Manganiar tradition.

**The Concept behind *Sampravaahi*** is not that of any kind of attempted fusion but rather that of a very bold and close interaction between the two streams, so that what meets the eye is pure Kathak dance, and what is heard is, by far and large, Folk music and song. This kind of interaction is evidenced variously, as in a 14 or 7 or 10 beats *lehra* kept by a folk artist on the *Kamaayacha* and *Saarangi* (string instruments), and not, as is usually done, by a classical Kathak accompanist to accompany Kathak *todaas* in the middle of a song; a spontaneous *jugalbandi* with all the folk percussion instruments such as the *Khartaal* (wooden castanets) and *Dholak* (drum) and the dancer's *ghungharoos* (ankle bells); an understanding and usage of Rajasthani rhythms by the Kathak dancer and the usage of style of movement of Rajasthani folk dancing. The **Dance Choreography in *Sampravaahi*** attempts to blend in the classical grammar of Kathak dance in a subtle rather than an obvious and forced manner, so that the mood of the song and music and its Rajasthani base and spirit reaches out to the audience intact.

## *A note on the featuring Music and Dance / Choreography* **Manganiar Music Tradition**

Rajasthan comprises a big landmass, abutting on several important cultural zones: Sindh and Punjab (the former, and part of the latter, now in Pakistan) to the west and northwest, Gujarat to the southwest, Malwa to the southeast, Braj Pradesh, that is, mid-western Uttar Pradesh, to the east and Haryana to the northeast. Interaction with these cultural zones has invested Rajasthan's folk music with diversity and a great variety of forms and musical instruments. More particularly, the melody of the Middle East comes winging to the western borders of Rajasthan via Sindh.



In our presentation, we are primarily focusing on the music of southwestern Rajasthan, namely the districts of Barmer and Jaisalmer, which in the main is the music of the hereditary **Manganiar musicians**. **Some noteworthy features of their music are these :** **they represent the meeting point of the folk and the classical**, mentioning *raag* names (like *Jog*, *Shaam Kalyaan*, *Dhaani*, *Bilaawal*, *Sorath*, *Khamaaichi*, *Saarang*, *Maand*, *Sindhi Bhairavi* and *Kaafi*) and employing *aalaap*, *murkies*, *tihais* and *taan-like sallies*, displaying advanced consciousness of rhythm and melody, that is, *laya* and *sur*, although the classical overtones are mostly incipient and rudimentary, rooted in inherited and acquired dexterity rather than in grammar; **their rich repertoire includes Jaangada, a distinctive song – type** that, *inter alia*, employs Dingal poetry and is an exacting form to be rendered in a vigorous style that calls for musical skills of a high order, **devotional songs by saint - poets** like Meera Bai, Kabir and Soordas and **compositions by Sufi saint - poets of Sindh, songs about legendary figures and ballads concerning them**, for example, *Moomal - Mahendra*, *Dhola - Maaru*, and *Lakhaphulani*. **Musical instruments such as the Dholak, Kamaayacha, Saarangi, Khartaal, Harmonium, Sataara (twin flutes), Morchang and the Dhol are some of their main musical instruments.**

## Jaipur Gharaana Kathak Tradition



In our presentation, we will be employing the **Jaipur style** of Kathak. It was nurtured in Rajasthan, received patronage in courts of kings of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner and other prominent erstwhile native states. It was greatly influenced by the Bhakti cult and temple art and culture since temples in Rajasthan employed pakhawaj players, singers and dancers in the service of god, and shows a marked leaning towards the devotional and the subtle in content and style of *abhinaya* rather than the worldly and erotic. There is greater incorporation of compositions or *parans* from the pakhawaj, and *kavitts*, compositions with poetry and dance syllables combined together. This style also traditionally places importance on the more technical aspects of Kathak dance such as complex and powerful footwork, multiple spins and complicated compositions in different *taals*.

Kathak is the major classical dance form of Northern India. The word *katha* means a story and hence Kathak is **the art of the story teller**. Kathak is **a partially narrative dance form characterized by fast footwork (*tatkaar*), spins (*chakkars*), and innovative use of enacting techniques (*abhinaya*) to give expression to a story, sung text or emotions**. It has today a form that has been influenced at various times in the past by mythological narratives by ancient bards or *kathakas*, temple dances, Rajput and Rajasthani cultural milieu due to patronage in courts of kings, the Bhakti Movement, both Vaishnav and Shaivite, and Persian influence of the Mughal courts. Kathak performances consist of two parts - *nritta* and *nritya*. The former, the so-called technical part, is abstract dance with a tremendous sense of rhythm and joy of movement. The second part, the *nritya*, uses *abhinaya* techniques - the story is told through facial expressions, hand gestures and symbolic body postures set to rhythm (*laya*) and music. The Kathak style is not rigid. It allows the artist to use a variety of free movements, thus leaving **scope for interpretation of the story through the dancer's power of imagination and improvised creativity or *upaj***.

**Folk Music Composition: Mr. Samandar Khan Manganiar**

**Dance Choreography: Ms. Anurag Verma**



**Mr. Samandar Manganiar** belongs to a family of hereditary professional Manganiar musicians from the desert region of western Rajasthan. He learnt the traditional art of singing and playing the Khartaal (castanets) from his father, Late Ustad Siddique Manganiar. He has mastered a large repertoire of the traditional songs of the Manganiar community as well as Sufi songs which he renders with great verve and sensitivity. He has come to be known as the most outstanding folk singer and Khartaal player of this region. He is also a recognized creative music composer. Samandar has participated in prestigious festivals in over 40 countries. He has received several honours such as Youth Culture Award 1994, Hanumant Singh Award 2000 and Music World Series Award 2003.

**Ms. Anurag Verma** was trained in the intricacies of *Jaipur Gharaana* of Kathak dance at Kathak Kendra, The National Institute of Kathak Dance in New Delhi. A number of performances in India and abroad have established her quaint beauty of style as well as emotive intensity. Through the Choreography of *Sampravaahi*, her brainchild, Anurag has endeavoured to present the treasure of typical Manganiar music, laden rich and decorated with the classicality of Kathak, blending subtle and evocative dancing with the poetry and varied themes like valour, festivals, devotion, the beautiful, etc. of Manganiar songs. One of the senior most disciples of Pt. Rajendra Gangani, Anurag has been teaching her dance form since 1998. She has taught at Sangeet Bharti and at Shri Ram Bhartiya Kala Kendra in New Delhi, and is, at present, teaching in Jaipur Kathak Kendra, Jaipur. She has also worked briefly in the Dance Section of Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi. She was honoured by the Rajasthan Sangeet Natak Akademi with its first Yuva Puraskar in July 2001.



**Samandar Manganiar**  
Director

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## Sampravaahi Photo Gallery



Desert Symphony

Sufi Poetry



Ballad of Haadi Rani



Saawan Aayo Najeek



Padhaaro Mhaare Des



Jugalbandi: Kathak with Manganiar Music



*Sampravaahi* at Indonesia and Malaysia Festival of India 2010



Khartaal Solo

