

BHOOMI PRANAM 2025 - REPORT

On Saturday, the 9th August Association for Learning Performing Arts and Normative Action (A.L.P.A.N.A.), a Delhi based NGO organised BHOOMI PRANAM 2025 – an event of Odissi Dance recital at CD Deshmukh Auditorium, India International Centre (IIC), New Delhi where Miss Shreysha Singh and Miss Lavisha Gulati, senior disciples of Guru Smt. Alpana Nayak made their debut as solo Odissi dancers through Manch Pravesch. This was 16th BHOOMI PRANAM by A.L.P.A.N.A. A.L.P.A.N.A. is a registered organisation under the Societies Registration Act 1860 since 2003. The Society aims at promotion of performing arts and working towards equitable human development and growth. The emphasis is on inclusive growth and composite cultural heritage of India.

Dr. Mallika Nadda, President, Special Olympics Bharat, Chairperson SOAP Advisory Council was the Chief Guest and Shri Sushil K Lohani, IAS, Additional Secretary, Government of India and Shri Anuj Gogia, IRS, Pr Chief Commissioner of Customs, Government of India were the Distinguished Guests.

Shreysha Singh is a gifted Odissi dancer and her tryst with the classical arts began at the age of six, and ever since, she has immersed herself in the discipline and devotion the form demands. Under the careful guidance of Guru Nayak, Shreysha has grown into a poised and expressive performer, carrying forward the rich legacy of Odissi with sincerity and grace. Over the years, her talent has resonated across celebrated stages, both in India and abroad. She has performed at the International Buddhist Confederation at The Ashok Hotel, Special Olympics Bharat, Noida Sanskriti Mahotsav, the prestigious Odissi International Dance Festival in Bhubaneswar, International Kullu Dussehra Festival, Ramotsav in Ayodhya, the International Dance Festival in Vietnam, and other cultural events hosted by the Indian Embassy in Vietnam.

Nationally, she has been a part of cultural initiatives like Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat and Azaadi ka Kaal: Shilpkaron Ka Mela, both curated by CCRT. She had participated in a workshop with the legendary Odissi Guru Padmashree Dr Kumkum Mohanty and also featured on India's national broadcaster, Doordarshan along with her Guru. In 2018, Shreysha was awarded with the National Scholarship by the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), acknowledging her as a young artist of exceptional promise. Most recently, she completed her Visharad Poorna degree in Odissi with first division from Akhil Bhartiya Gandharva Mahavidyalay Mandal, Maharashtra, a milestone that reflects both her academic rigour and artistic commitment.

Lavisha Gulati's journey in Odissi began in 2012, when she was just eight years old, under the devoted guidance of Guru Smt. Alpana Nayak. Over the years, what started as a childhood curiosity has blossomed into a deep and disciplined pursuit of the classical form. Her dedication culminated in earning the Visharad Poorna degree with First Division from Akhil Bhartiya Gandharva Mahavidyalay Mandal, Maharashtra in 2024. Lavisha took to the stage early, performing since the age of twelve, and quickly gained recognition for her expressive grace and stage presence. In school, she was honoured with the title of Best Odissi Dancer, and her college years saw her actively competing and winning accolades, including the first prize in her college's annual talent show and third prize in an inter-college competition hosted by Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College, Delhi University.

Her performances have spanned several prestigious platforms, such as the International Odissi Festival in Bhubaneswar, International Kullu Dussehra Festival in Himachal Pradesh, Ram Mahotsav in Ayodhya, and Utkal Samaj Divas in Ludhiana. She has also performed at events like the International Trade Fair at Bharat Mandapam, the International Buddhist Confederation at The Ashok Hotel, Special Olympics Bharat, and the annual day of Uttkalini. A memorable milestone in her journey includes sharing the screen with her Guru in an Odissi presentation aired on Doordarshan, and participating in a dance workshop with the legendary Guru Padmashree Kumkum Mohanty.

After the welcome of the honourable guests with *uttariya* and plants the auspicious ceremonial lamp was lighted by them to mark the beginning of the event. Then both dancers did *Guru Pujan* on stage.

Traditionally an *Odissi* dance recital starts with *Mangalacharana*, which is an invocation to mother Earth, Gods and Goddesses, *Guru* and the audience. In *Mangalacharana* *Shreysha* and *Lavisha* began with a prayer to Goddess *Saraswati* - *Manikya Veena Mupala Layanti*..... written by *Mahakavi Kalidasa* in which the Goddess was depicted as “*Jagat Janani*”, “*Vak Vilasini*”, “*Sangeet Rasike*” and “*Kalyani*”.

Next item presented by *Lavisha* was *Batu Nrutya* which was a pure dance. It depicted different sculptural postures of ancient temples of *Orissa*. In this item equal importance is given to dance as well as music and rhythm.

After *Batu* *Shreysha* presented *Shankarabharana Pallavi*. The word “*Pallavi*” has been derived from the *Sanskrit* word *pallava*, which means the bud of a leaf, or the shoots of a tree which are very tender. As a small seed grows gradually into a large tree, in *Pallavi*, a tune is sung in a particular *raga* and it develops gradually into different varieties. *Shreysha*’s movements in this item were extremely graceful and lyrical.

After *Pallavi* *Lavisha* mesmerized the audience with her *abhinaya* on *Ashtapadi* “*Dhira Samire Yamuna Tire Basati Vane Vanamaali*.....” which is an excerpt from *Geeta Govindam* written by the legendary *Odia* poet *Jayadeva*. In this *Ashtapadi* a *Sakhi* tells *Radha*: “Oh my dear! On the bank of river *Yamuna* in the forest of *Vrindavan* where the cool wind blows gently *Lord Krishna*, the God of Love and the God of your heart awaits for you. Oh beautiful lady with lovely hips make haste. Your lover waits while playing his flute very softly. It calls only your name. Today he welcomes even an infinitesimal grain of dust upon his hands as that grain has touched you and returned to him. When a bird alights upon a branch there is a rustle, a noise and a sound which makes him feel as if you are coming. He is making a place for you to rest and to make love with you. Oh my *Sakhi*, hurry to the dark silence of love’s bower where the God of your heart - *Lord Krishna* awaits for you.”

Next *abhinaya* presentation by *Shreysha* was based on an *Oriya* Song “*Bhangi Chahan*”, which is “*Bha*” letter *Champu* written by *Kabi Surya Baladeva Ratha*. *Shreysha*’s expressions in this presentation were exceptionally good where she used *Hasta mudras* or hand gestures, *Drishti bhedas* or eye movements, *Griva bhedas* or neck movements and *Shiro bheda* or head movements extensively to depict the meaning of the song. This presentation was choreographed by *Guru Smt Alpana Nayak*.

Lavisha Gulati & *Shreysha Singh* concluded their performances with “*Shiva Tandava*” based on the ‘*Shiva Tandava Stotram*’ written by *Ravana*, King of *Lanka*, in which the “*Udhata* or *Raudra*” manifestation of *Lord Shiva* is depicted followed by *Moksha* which means salvation or spiritual liberation. This Dance was Choreographed by *Guru Smt. Alpana Nayak*.

The accompanying musicians were *Guru Shri Prashant Behera* as *Vocalist*, *Guru Shri Prafulla Mangaraj* on *mardala*, *Ustad Raees Ahmed Khan* on *Sitar* and *Shri Nikhil Behera* on *flute*.

Dr. Mallika Nadda, the Chief Guest of the evening praised both *Lavisha* and *Shreysha* for their stamina, elegant postures, beautiful *abhinaya* and wished them luck for their bright future as accomplished *Odissi* dancers. She also congratulated *Guru Smt. Alpana Nayak* for training today’s youth in our age old classical dance form and *Indian heritage*. She hailed the role of the brilliant musicians to make the performances so beautiful.
