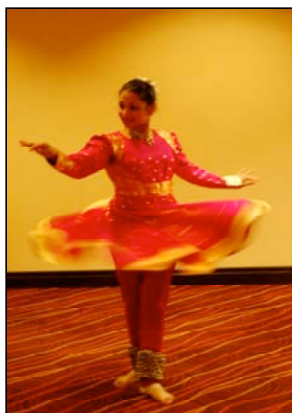




Chhandika abuzz with events and plans

By Anjali Mitter Duva, Executive Director



Shelley Chhabra after performing at the American India Foundation Gala, November 7th. Photo by Anjali Mitter Duva

Namaskar. In October I attended an inspiring kathak conference hosted by the Anila Sinha Foundation in Chicago. What a treat: three days of kathak of the highest caliber, with discussions, workshops, and phenomenal performances by some of the world's kathak greats, including our very own Pandit Chitresh Das.

Artistic Director Gretchen Hayden, senior disciple of Pandit Chitresh Das, opened the "Teaching Kathak in the Diaspora" panel discussion, sharing insights into what it was like to study (for her) and to teach (for Pandit Das) kathak in California in the 1970s. It was a particular time and place: openness to other cultures offered great opportunities, but the newness of this art in the U.S. also created some serious challenges. Many participants came up to thank Gretchenji for sharing

this unique piece of kathak's history in the West.

Both Gretchenji and a Chhandika student, Himani, share some of their thoughts below. Please also take a look at the performances and workshops Chhandika has offered recently, and at the exciting events planned for 2010.

We also hope to work on new choreographies, to develop further our teacher training program, and to offer more workshops and performances for the public. As you consider which organizations to support this season, please bear in mind the beauty and richness of kathak, and consider donating to Chhandika. We now accept donations online at www.chhandika.org.

With warm wishes for the winter season.
~Anjali

Looking forward to a creative 2010

By Gretchen Hayden, Artistic Director

The October conference in Chicago was a wonderful opportunity to reunite with Guruji, Chhandam and our kathak "family" from California, Toronto, and India. We're looking forward working together as a united sangha (community).

2010 will bring three major events, with one in the Boston area. First: A celebration of the Chhandam Chitresh Das Dance Company's 30th Anniversary Year in March in San Francisco. Second: In conjunction with the spring Boston performances of India Jazz Suites, some master classes and lecture-demonstrations by Guruji as well as members of the CDDC in April. Third: Traditions Engaged: International Festival and Symposium to be held by Chhandam in October in San Francisco. (See p. 4)

And we are planning a new artistic project: I'll be creating a choreography

based on the solo St. Lucy gat bhav item, first performed in 1992 (originally presented in California, then in Europe, India, US, Toronto, Cambridge.) George Ruckert will compose an original music score. The Chhandika Dance Ensemble will perform the item in late 2010 or early 2011. We are seeking funding support for a choreography and rehearsal retreat to work on this.

Instead of an Annual Show in 2010, Chhandika have smaller class-recital events in each of the branch locations (Cambridge, Andover, Burlington, Acton) in June. Performances by all the bright young budding kathak dancers! Followed by our summer kathak camp-retreat.

The future holds much promise for Chhandika, as we move forward with renewed commitment, harmony and joy.



Pandit Chitresh Das receives National Heritage Award

On September 22, 2009, Pandit Chitresh Das was awarded the 2009 National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The ceremony took place in Washington DC at the US Capitol Visitor Center. A banquet followed the ceremony at the Library of Congress, where Pandit Das and the awardees each gave a speech and signed the book signed by heads of state and Nobel laureates. In 1982 the National Endowment for the Arts established the NEA National Heritage Awards as a way of honoring American folk artists for their contributions to our national cultural mosaic. It is a testament to Pandit Das' unwavering and lifelong commitment to kathak, and to the emergence of kathak as a recognized art

form in the United States, that he was one of the eleven recipients of this prestigious award. Our sincere congratulations, admiration and gratitude to him for his teachings and this accomplishment!

At the ceremony on Capitol Hill, NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman, appointed by President Barack Obama, said, "An acknowledged master of kathak dance since childhood, Chitresh Das is a performer who combines rhythmic power, sensual expression, and improvisational ingenuity to spin out stories in motion. He is a teacher who dedicates his time and talents to working with youth in underserved communities of both the United States and India."

**News and information
about the Chhandam
Chitresh Das Dance
Company at
www.kathak.org**

**Save the date!
Pandit Chitresh Das
performing in
Boston
April 30-May 2, 2010**

INDIA JAZZ SUITES, featuring Pandit Chitresh Das and Jason Samuels Smith, is an explosive collaboration between one of India's foremost Kathak masters and one of the world's fastest, Emmy-award winning tap dancers. The result is high entertainment which crosses all boundaries of age, race and culture — a blast of incredible speed and power, grace and beauty, epic storytelling and the pure joy of dance.

INDIA JAZZ SUITES has received extensive critical acclaim and has toured around the U.S. and India. It was chosen as the #1 Dance Performance of 2005 by the San Francisco Chronicle and won the prestigious Isadora Duncan Dance Award (Izzie) for Best Ensemble Performance of the year.



2009 NEA National Heritage Fellow Chitresh Das and NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman at the NEA National Heritage Fellowship Awards Ceremony on September 22, 2009. Photo by Tom Pich.

Continuing series: Kathak Enhancement Workshops

As part of a new series, guest artist Professor George Ruckert, senior lecturer in music at MIT and longtime disciple of Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, led a three hour session on listening to and appreciating Indian classical music. In this workshop, open to the public, Prof. Ruckert guided participants through a listening session of a variety of Indian music samplings,

providing insights into what to listen for, how to listen critically, and the nuances to note. The session was especially valuable for Chhandika students as an understanding of Indian classical music is an essential component of a kathak dancer's development. Look for more such workshops coming up in 2010.

The Second International Kathak Festival—My Experience

By Himani Navare, Chhandika student

The 2nd International Festival that took place in Chicago, Oct 23-25, gave me a fantastic opportunity to experience the beautiful world of kathak in many ways. It brought together some of the greatest kathak dancers in the world for workshops, performances and discussions.

All three evenings offered a wide variety of performances. Seeing the mix of intricate footwork patterns and fast spins being performed with such high energy along with grace was exhilarating. The abhinaya (expressions and emotions) of some performers was a visual treat.

Personally, I felt the Kathak Yoga performed by the Chhandam Dance Company was one of the most unique performances and certainly Chitresh Das ji's performance was one of the major highlights of the entire event. Overall, I was really happy to see so many different techniques and styles. As a student of kathak, I felt it was truly enriching to watch these great performers on stage.

Each day began with a panel discussion. For example, one topic was, 'Teaching kathak in the diaspora'. Kumudini Lakhia shared her thoughts on teaching and introducing certain abstract elements to the dance. Gretchenji gave an interesting account of her introduction to kathak by Chitresh Das at Ustad Ali Akbar Khan's school. Rosella Fannelli, a leading kathak dancer from Italy, spoke about some of the ups and downs she faced while pursuing her study of kathak in India. During another one of the panel discussions, Mekhala Natwar showed a wonderful documentary on temple kathak dancers performing mythological tales from epics which really demonstrated the 'Katha' or story telling aspect of kathak.

Pandit Birju Maharaj and Saswati Sen ran an intense, four-hour long workshop with footwork practice and other pieces of dance. Saswati Sen helped students of all levels one on one with footwork techniques and gave demonstrations on different dance pieces such as different styles of salami, gat etc. requested by the

workshop participants. During this workshop, I also got to see what a great tabla player and Hindustani vocalist Maharaj ji is!

Returning from this conference, I am definitely more motivated and determined to continue learning and practicing kathak. It was amazing to see so many people, from diverse cultural backgrounds, being drawn towards this Indian dance form and making it so much a part of their lives. There is certainly something captivating and in the beauty of kathak.



Charlotte Moraga, principal dancer with the Chitresh Das Dance Company, performing at the Festival. Photo by Himani Navare.

Last Summer's Events

Workshop: Gretchenji, Rucha Khisti and two youth students, Mayrose and Anisha, led families through kathak footwork and movements at the Springstep Center for Dance as part of their Summer Saturdays series.

Classes: Gretchenji contributed to the Boston Ballet's "Taking Healthy Steps" education and outreach program.

Performance: Shefali Jain, currently a first year student at Yale, performed at the New Art Center in Newton, for the India-themed week of the Children's Summer Art Program.



Saswati Sen, disciple of Pandit Birju Maharaj, performing at the 2nd International Kathak Festival in Chicago, October 2009. Photo by Himani Navare.

November events: Workshops and Performances

Saturday the 7th was a busy day, with a full-day program for Chhandika students, including intense dance practice, videos and discussions.

In the evening, five Chhandika students (Rucha Khisti, Meenakshi Agrawal, Shefali Jain, Justine Watt and Shelley Chhabra) performed for an enthusiastic audience at the American India Foundation's annual gala at the Hyatt in Cambridge.

Upcoming Events

Sunday, Jan. 10:	Start of Winter/Spring session
Sat/Sun, Feb 13-14:	Weekend Kathak Intensive: a full weekend of dance, music, practice and theory for Chhandika adult students.
Saturday, March 13:	Kathak Day for Young Dancers (Chhandika students ages 7-15)
Saturday, March 20:	Chhandam Chitresh Das Dance Company's 30th Anniversary Gala (in San Francisco)
Week of April 25 (tent):	Pandit Chitresh Das in residency
Fri-Sun, Apr 30-May 2:	India Jazz Suites at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston: an explosive collaboration between Pandit Chitresh Das and Jason Samuels Smith, Emmy Award-winning tap dancer.
Sunday, May 23:	End of Winter/Spring session
Sunday, June 13:	Summer session begins
Late June (tent):	Weekend Retreat with Pandit Chitresh Das (Chhandika students)

Social Networking for Gurus: Tradition meets the Modern

By Meenakshi Agrawal, Chhandika student and instructor

In March 2009, Pandit Chitresh Das began sharing his thoughts on the popular social networking site Twitter. Those who have spent any significant time with him know that he provokes a lot of thought and discussion with his sayings. What I love about then is that they not only relate to dance, but also to life. One example, "without laya, you are nothing". Laya, or the speed/tempo at which we dance, is so important for a dancer. In life, pace and tempo of how we create our careers, pursue education and establish ourselves is equally relevant. Since Panditji is located in California, we miss out on hearing these on a regular basis, so Twitter makes connecting with him easier. Catch up on his tweets at: <http://twitter.com/daskathaka>.

How to support Chhandika

- ❖ Join a class in Burlington, Andover or Cambridge
- ❖ Volunteer
- ❖ Help find a home and office for our music and dance center
- ❖ Donate equipment or services
- ❖ Send a tax-deductible donation made out to Chhandika at 194 Norfolk Street, #2, Cambridge, MA 02139

To discuss any ideas, please call Anjali at 617-797-4612

About Chhandika

The Chhandam Institute of Kathak Dance (Chhandika) is an organization of artists, musicians and scholars dedicated to maintaining and contributing to the rich tradition of kathak dance. From its origins in ancient India to its dramatic emergence on today's international stage, the storytelling art of kathak blends classical theater with dynamic rhythms and exquisite dance movement.

Chhandika offers classes for men, women and children; enriches the community through performances and demonstrations; and fosters personal growth and cultural exploration through its outreach activities. Chhandika is affiliated with the Chhandam Chitresh Das Dance Company (based in the San Francisco Bay Area) and the Nritya Bharati Institute (Kolkata, India).

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