

A refined dance — drama

MADRAS

The loftiest of human aspirations are tersely mentioned in the Upanishadic words
Asatho-ma-Sat-gamaya
Tamaso-ma-jyotir-gamaya
Mrityor-ma-Amirtam gamaya
 (Lead me from *asat* to *sat*; from darkness to light; from death to immortality)

In the whole range of world's literature there is not one character who has realised this desire as Savithri. The episode of Satyavan-Savithri in the Mahabharata has been invested with yogic dimension by Sri Aurobindo. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan presented last week Savithri, an adaptation

It was a well coordinated picture of music, movement rhythm. SVK reviews 'Savitri.'

from Sri Aurobindo's epic, in a dance-drama form in which Lata and Githa participated with consummate artistry. As a simple narrative the story was presented with sustained interest, but while emphasising Sri Aurobindo's handling, the profound theme with a message and meaning was put across effectively to a receptive audience.

The story of Satyavan and Savithri is quite familiar but there is a pervasive spiritual excellence that lies deeply embedded in the incidents. Behind the triumphant dialogue of Savithri with Yama, the light of her soul shines and her achievement is the transcendence of conquest over death. The culmination of this stupendous task brought about by darkness or ignorance giving place to enlightenment, the *Sat* overcoming the shackles of *asat* and by the strength of her Inner Self was tellingly portrayed on the stage by Lata and Githa with refined maturity. The scene of Savithri's soul merging with the Cosmic Soul to provide her the guts to meet face to face Yama and the Viswaroopa darshan that she gives to Yama compelling



Lata and Githa in "Savitri"

him to submission to the Supreme Consciousness were danced with a deep understanding of the subtleties and delicacies of the spiritual theme. Through this transformation of Savithri Sri Aurobindo has

outlined the consummation of spirituality that flows from an occult source in the soul.

In flashback at the beginning the artistes presented Savithri's search for a suitable life partner and her final choice of Satyavan whom she met in a deep forest. Narada's revelation that Satyavan was destined to live just for an year and Savithri's unshakable resolve to wed Satyavan come what may were all well presented with dignity. The state of Savithri's mind on the fateful day torn between grief and collecting all the strength of her Inner Self was visibly brought forth with epitomised gestures by Lata and Githa. The dancers' abhinaya in this and later getting back Satyavan's life was subdued but deeply suggestive. Sri Aurobindo in making Savithri return to earth with Satyavan served to emphasise that noble soul's dedicate their achievements to humanity as a whole. Through this yogic insight Sri Aurobindo stressed the intimations of Immortality.

The way the two young dancers revealed the Savithri theme was commendable. The decision to make only the two artistes play all the roles — Savithri's mother, Narada, Yama — instead of cluttering the stage with many participants was wise inasmuch as the quality of communicating the thematic presentation was uniformly ensured. Also the attention of the audience was riveted on the two to make it easy to follow the dance sequences.

The lyrics in simple Tamil was by Dr. S. Krishnaswamy and the music wing was also effective in translating the weighty contents of the words into compelling simple tunes. The music composed by Sri Shyam Joseph stood up to the demands of the lofty theme.

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's presentation of Sri Aurobindo's classic in a dance drama was a well coordinated picture of music, movement and rhythm. The performance produced an atmosphere of sheer joy. There was silken smoothness and continuity. The presentation of each segment of the episode was quite in consonance with the poetic emotion built into the composition. Lata and Githa, in short, made it known that Sri Aurobindo's Savithri is familiar terrain to them.