PADMA SHRI
Dr. NARTHAKI NATARAJ

narthakisakthi@gmail.com

Narthaki Nataraj

Narthaki Nataraj Bharatanatyam

narthakinataraj



ARTISTIC SYNOPSIS

Padma Shri Dr. Narthaki Nataraj is one of India's foremost Bharatanatyam exponents, an internationally acclaimed performing artist, scholar, choreographer, pedagogue, cultural ambassador, and social reformer. Revered for her uncompromising commitment to the classical traditions of Bharatanatyam, she is widely recognised as the foremost torchbearer of the authentic Thanjavur Quartet legacy and the rare, nuanced tradition of Nāyaki Bhāva.

Born in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, Dr. Narthaki underwent over fifteen years of rigorous Gurukula training under the legendary Guru Kalaimamani K. P. Kittappa Pillai, the last direct hereditary descendant of the illustrious Thanjavur Quartet. Her artistry reflects impeccable technique, profound scholarship, expressive subtlety, and an unwavering dedication to preserving the aesthetic and spiritual integrity of India's classical dance heritage.

For more than four decades, Dr. Narthaki has enthralled audiences across India and around the world through critically acclaimed performances, original choreographic productions, lecture demonstrations, academic presentations, and intercultural collaborations. Her extensive repertoire embraces classical margam, rare compositions, Tamil literary masterpieces, devotional traditions, temple heritage, and innovative thematic productions rooted in Indian philosophy and aesthetics.

As the Founder and Artistic Director of Velliambalam Trust – School of Dance, she has mentored numerous disciples from India and overseas, nurturing a new generation of artists through rigorous training, research, and artistic excellence. Her institution has become a respected centre for the preservation, documentation, and dissemination of Bharatanatyam in its purest traditional form while engaging meaningfully with contemporary cultural discourse.

A distinguished scholar and researcher, Dr. Narthaki's work explores the rich intersections of dance, literature, music, spirituality, gender, history, and cultural identity. She is a sought-after keynote speaker, motivational orator, and resource person at international festivals, universities, cultural institutions, conferences, and government forums, where she speaks on Indian classical arts, heritage conservation, artistic pedagogy, inclusivity, and social transformation.

A pioneering transgender artist, Dr. Narthaki Nataraj has transformed adversity into artistic excellence and social leadership. She became the first transgender Bharatanatyam artiste to receive the Padma Shri, India's fourth-highest civilian honour, setting a historic milestone in the nation's cultural landscape. Her inspiring life journey has been incorporated into the Tamil Nadu State Board Class XI Tamil curriculum, serving as a source of inspiration for future generations.

Her distinguished public service includes her tenure as a Member of the Tamil Nadu State Development Policy Council (State Planning Commission), where she contributed to policy initiatives relating to culture, social equity, and inclusive development.

PROMINENT ACCOLADES

- 2007 Kalaimamani Award / State Government of Tamil Nadu
- 2011 Sangeet Natak Akademi Award /Ministry of Culture, Government of India
- 2016 Honorary Doctorate - Periyar Maniammai University, Thanjavur
- 2017 Empanelled Outstanding Dance Artist / Indian Council for Cultural Relations
- 2019 Padma Shri Award - India's 4th highest civilian award / Government of India
- 2021 Member of the Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission
- 2022 Nrithya Kalanidhi Award / The Madras Music Academy
- Vishwa Kala Bharathi- Bharat Kalachar Chennai.
- Life time achievement award from Bharatiya Vidya bhawan Chennai Kendra.
- Dharmapuram Aadheena Aashtha vidwan for the performing arts tilting Bharatanatya Kalanidhi award with gold model





