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India Arts Foundation Launch Ceremony

# Krishna Leela

Oct 28th 2023 - 6PM

Belding Theatre at The Bushnell

Choreography

Rachna Ramya Agrawal  
and Aishwarya Chakravarthy

"Rasa Dance Project"

Music Direction

Kalaimamani Madurai R Muralidharan







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**Oct 28th 2023 - 6PM**  
**Belding Theatre at The Bushnell**

**Choreography**

**Rachna Ramya Agrawal**  
**and Aishwarya Chakravarthy**

**Music Direction**

**Kalaimamani Madurai R Muralidharan**

**Visuals**

**Pradeep Nair, Rachna Ramya Agrawal**  
**& Ketaki Pawar**

**Playbill Design**

**Yakkai Studio, Chennai India**

**Photography**

**Fotomatix (Pradeep Nair)**



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## *About India Arts Foundation*

The mission of India Arts Foundation (IAF) is to foster and honor the timeless traditions of India in the US, by collectively bringing together student scholars, practitioners and regional organizations to increase the accessibility of these arts to a wider demographic.

The vision of India Arts Foundation (IAF) is to promote and nurture the timeless collection of Indian arts and culture in Connecticut. By introducing and celebrating the plethora of Indian arts from music, dance, festivals, history, literature, languages and cuisine, IAF aims to encourage the growth and vibrant spirit of Indian culture among a global audience.

The use of video and audio equipment is strictly prohibited.

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[www.indiaartsfoundation.org](http://www.indiaartsfoundation.org)

IAF is a 501(c) not-for-profit organization



## **Program**

### **Manglacharan**

Songs for the auspicious beginning  
Lavanya Tadinada and Leena Dongre Damle

### **Launch presentation**

India Arts Foundation's launch presentation  
by its founding member, Madhu Reddy

### **Presentation of Krishna Leela**

#### **Act 1: Sri Krishna's life in Vrindavan**

Nrityashala: The Dance Class

The Birth of Krishna

Yashoda and Friends

Putna Vadh: The Slaying of Putna

Makhan Chor: The Butter Thief

Kaliya Mardana: The Defeat of Kaliya

Radha's longing for Krishna

Krishna's Divine Romance

#### **10 - Minutes Intermission**

#### **Act 2: Sri Krishna's life as the King and Vishwaroopa**

Kansa Vadh: The Killing of the demon king, Kansa

The Game of Dice

The Great Battle of Mahabharata War and

Sri Krishna's Vishwaroopa & Finale





## *About Krishna Leela*

Krishna Leela refers to the divine and playful acts of Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu in Hinduism. Krishna's life is believed to be a series of Leelas or divine actions that showcase his powers, wisdom, and love for his devotees.

Krishna was born to Vasudeva and Devaki in Mathura. Kansa was the evil king of Mathura, and Devaki was his sister. Kansa had imprisoned Devaki and Vasudeva due to a prophecy that had predicted that her eighth child would be the one to kill him. As Devaki delivered baby Krishna, the guards mysteriously fell into a deep slumber, which allowed Vasudeva to safely carry Krishna across the river Yamuna to the village of Gokul, where Yashoda and Nanda, a cowherd couple, raised Krishna.

Krishna was known in his childhood for his mischievous behavior and love for butter. He would often steal butter from his neighbors. His butter-thieving acts became famous, and he was lovingly called "Makhan Chor" (butter thief). Krishna's defeat of Putana is another significant story from his childhood. Putana was an evil demoness sent by Kamsa to kill Krishna. She disguised herself as a beautiful woman and came to baby Krishna with poisoned milk meant to kill him. However, baby Krishna sucked the milk and also sucked the life out of Putana, destroying her evil plans.





As a teenager, Krishna defeated the vicious snake Kaliya. Kaliya, a venomous snake, polluted the waters of the Yamuna River, making it dangerous for the villagers. Krishna, now a teenage boy playing with the ball with his friends, dropped the ball in the river. While trying to retrieve the ball from the river, Krishna and Kaliya get into a fierce battle. The young Krishna subdued the serpent and danced on the hood of the kaliya.

Young Krishna's Raas dance is the celebration of love between the divine and the devotee. During His Raas dance, Krishna assumed multiple forms to dance with his beloved Radha and each gopi.

As an adult, Krishna eventually returned to Mathura to confront Kansa and fulfill his divine mission. During a grand wrestling match arranged by Kansa, Krishna defeated Kansa in a spectacular display of his divine powers, ultimately slaying the demon king.



Later, Krishna helped Pandavas to establish dharma in the world. During a game of dice in the court of Hastinapura, Yudhishtira, the eldest Pandava, staked everything he had, including his kingdom, his brothers, his freedom, and his wife, Draupadi. Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, ordered Draupadi to be brought into the court. Duryodhana, Dushasana (his brother), and other Kaurava courtiers humiliated Draupadi and attempted to disrobe her in front of the entire assembly. However, Krishna, Draupadi's divine protector, intervened and saved her by providing her with an endless saree to cover herself. The incident and a few more incidents sparked a war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

Just before the Kurukshetra War, Arjuna's heart was filled with doubt and moral dilemmas about fighting against his kin in the war. In response, Lord Krishna revealed His universal form, or Vishwarupa, to Arjuna and imparted profound spiritual wisdom and guidance, which has come to be known as the "Song of God" or the Bhagwad Gita.





## **Synopsis**

### **Scene 1: Nrityashala: The Dance Class**

The dance teacher narrates the story of Sri Krishna to her students in her Nrityashala.

### **Scene 2: The Birth of Krishna**

As Devaki delivers baby Krishna in prison, the guards mysteriously fall into a deep slumber, which allows her husband, Vasudeva, to safely carry Krishna across the river in Gokul to his friend Nanda and his wife, Yashoda.

### **Scene 3: Mother Yashodha and Friends**

The village of Gokul comes alive with the aura of divinity. Excitement fills the air as mother Yashoda proudly shares her precious Krishna with her cherished companions, who lovingly adore the baby.

### **Scene 4: Putna Vadh: The Slaying of Putna**

Disguised as a beautiful woman, the demoness Putana tries to poison Infant Krishna. Baby Krishna, with his divine powers, slay her.

### **Scene 5: Makhan Chor: The Butter Thief**

Growing up to be a mischievous, naughty little boy, Krishna earns the name "Makhan Chor," or the butter thief, by stealing butter from the homes of the gopis, the cowherd women.





**Scene 6: Kaliya Mardana: The Defeat of Kaliyas**

Krishna, now a teenage boy playing the ball with his friends, drops the ball in the river. While trying to retrieve the ball from the river, Krishna and the vicious, evil serpent Kaliya get into a fierce battle. The young Krishna subdues the serpent and dances on the snake's hood

**Scene 7: Radha's longing for Krishna**

The peacocks in the beautiful alleys of Brij dance to welcome Basant, the season of love, and Radha, Krishna's consort, longs for Krishna.

**Scene 8: Raas: Krishna's Divine Romance**

Mesmerized by Krishna's magical music, Radha, with Brij's maidens, arrives in the middle of the lush forest, where charming Krishna waits for them to dance Raas with Him. Krishna divides himself into many by using his divine powers.

***Intermission***



## *Act 2*

### **Scene 9: Kansa Vadh: The Killing of the demon king, Kansa**

Krishna returns to Mathura to confront Kansa, who had imprisoned Krishna's birth parents, Devaki and Vasudeva. During a grand wrestling match arranged by Kansa, Krishna defeats Kansa.

### **Scene 10: The Game of Dice**

During a game of dice in the court of Hastinapura, Yudhishtira, the eldest Pandava, stakes everything he has, including his kingdom, his brothers, his freedom, and his wife Draupadi, to their estranged cousins, Kauravas who numbered a hundred. Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, orders Draupadi to be brought into the court. Duryodhana, Dushasana (his brother), and other Kaurava courtiers try to humiliate Draupadi by attempting to disrobe her in front of the entire assembly. Draupadi, in her moment of dire distress, prays to Lord Krishna for help, and miraculously, her sari keeps extending

### **Scene 11: The Great Battle of Mahabharata War and Geeta -Upadesh**

Just before the Kurukshetra War, Arjuna is filled with doubt and moral dilemmas about fighting against his cousins in the war. In response, Lord Krishna imparts profound spiritual wisdom and guidance to Arjuna, providing insights into various aspects of life.





## *About Rasa Dance Project*



Rasa Dance Project aims to preserve and promote the 2000-year-old dance forms from India through performances, educational programs, and community engagement while collaborating with artists from different cultures and genres to connect around more inclusive shared identities.

Rasa Dance Project was established in 2021 under the artistic direction of Kathak dancer Rachna Ramya Agrawal and the Bharatanatyam dancer Aishwarya Chakravarthy. Rasa Dance Project's dance performances celebrate India's cultural brilliance and weave contemporary issues that matter into the tradition. Rasa Dance's productions and programs build an awareness of all arts of vast Indian heritage through collaborative work.

The artistic directors, Aishwarya Chakravarthy and Rachna Ramya, train over 200 dance students each semester in their dance schools "Natyakshetram" and "Sumbhaav School of Kathak Dance," and provide thorough and authentic training to students in Bharatnatyam and Kathak dance forms, respectively.

[www.rasadanceproject.com](http://www.rasadanceproject.com)



### *The choreographers' note*

It rarely happens that two artists meet and share the same artistic dreams, intentions, aspirations, and imaginations. We initiated the Rasa Dance Project because we both wanted to integrate the ancient and contemporary to present traditional and crucial issue-based dance programs while maintaining the integrity of our dance forms. We also dreamed of involving and engaging the community through performances and other art-based endeavors. The first thing we discovered about each other was that we were both very fascinated by the miraculous stories associated with Lord Krishna and wanted to stage Krishna Leela as a dance drama involving the entire community, not just our students.

We are incredibly thankful to India Arts Foundation for giving us an opportunity to bring the entire community together to present the compelling life of Sri Krishna. We are also very grateful that Muralidaran sir, an eminent music director from India, agreed to create original music scores for this production. And we can't thank enough all the dancers and actors in this production who have made our dream come alive on stage.

We have used the movements of classical dances of India -Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, and Mohiniyattam to show how the story of Sri Krishna has captured the imaginations of artists of India from every dance style. For the fight scenes, we have used some of the kalarippayattu, an Indian martial art, movements that we learned from Sir Madhusudhanan for this production. We received guidance for Kathakali and Mohiniattam from Kala Acharya Smt. Vasantha Aranvindan who is a veteran in this field. We also have avoided dialogues to keep the integrity of the genre "dance-drama." Finally, we are grateful to be part of the Indian community of Connecticut, which is vibrant and very interested in preserving the arts and culture of India.

- Rachna Ramya Agrawal and Aishwarya Chakravarthy



## ***Music Director: Kalaimamani Madurai Sri R Muralidharan***

Kalaimamani Shri Guru Madurai R. Muralidharan is an acclaimed dance Guru (teacher), composer, dancer, choreographer, lyricist, playwright and director best known for his large body of modern compositions for Bharatanatyam dancers and his many elaborate dance musical productions. His works explore the complexities of Bharathanatyam theory and rhythms while remaining accessible and appealing to a modern lay audience.

The Times of India's special publication Madhura Geetham, about the artistic heritage of Madurai, recognized Shri Muralidharan as one of the stalwarts of Indian classical dance and music. Shri Muralidharan began his training at age 7 under Guru Kalaimamani Chamundeeswari. He founded Nrithyakshethra Dance Academy in Chennai, India in 1978 and has since trained over 750 dancers as a Dance Guru. Shri Muralidharan taught nattuvangam and dance to around 4500 students in India and around the world during the pandemic time. He serves on the advisory board of Alagappa University's online degree course program. In November 2022, the National Institute of Education, Government of Sri Lanka, honored him for his services to Bharatanatyam and have included his composition (Varnam in praise of Tamil Annai) in all their schools nationally.

Shri Muralidharan has received numerous accolades, most notably the Kalaimamani award from the Tamil Nadu state government for 2019. In addition,





**Kalaimamani  
Madurai Sri R Muralidharan**

Bharath Kalachar has conferred the title of Kala Seva Bharathi upon Shri Muralidharan for his contributions to the field of Indian performing arts, KartikFine Awards presented him with the Kartik Award of Excellence in 2021 and Pothy's Parambara Classic Awards named him as Parambara Noothana for his contributions to music composition and dance theatre. Shri Muralidharan has also achieved a number of records certified by Guinness, Asia and India Book of Records, including teaching 359 students an alarippu in Sankeerna Jaathi Dhruva Thalam in 2019, composing 25 varnams in 25 days in 2020 and leading 125 dancers worldwide to present 50 unique jathis on a virtual

platform in 2021. He composed, choreographed and taught 698 people a varnam on Tamil Annai (Mother Tamil), setting his third record in the Guinness Book of World Records, an effort which also raised Rs.10 lakh for the Tamil Nadu Covid Relief Fund. Muralidharanji also was given the lifetime achievement award 2022 by Abhai Association of Bharatanatayam Artistes of India. On January 22, 2023, Shri Muralidharan was conferred lifetime achievement award by Niruthia Nithyalaya of Chennai and Natyanjali Academy Association of Malaysia. On February 16, 2023 Muralidharan Sir was given the award Natya Achaarya Choodamani for his contribution to the arts from Puducherry Natyanjali Trust at their 17th year Maha Shivarathiri Festival.



***Krishna Leela Cast***  
**Characters (in order of appearance)**

**Dance guru:** Rachna Ramya Agrawal    **Devaki:** Namrata Mazumdar

**Vasudeva:** Soumya Kallath    **Guards:** Pradeep Nair, Divyendu Adhikary

**Adishes:** Rethi Rajan    **Nand:** Sushma Yadala    **Yashodha:** Vani Sundar

**Putna 1:** Aparna Bijoy    **Putna 2:** Priya Nayar    **Little Krishna:** Avantika Namboodiri

**Kaliya:** Amisha Paul    **Teenage Krishna:** Divija Adhikary    **Radha:** Sneha Cherukat

**Adult Krishna:** Sweta Patel    **Kansa:** Aishwarya Chakravarthy    **Draupadi:** Ketaki Pawar

**Balram:** Sowparnika Sabarathinam    **Shakuni:** Priya Makarla    **Dushasan:** Hetvi Desai

**Dhuryodhan:** Monomita Chakraborty    **Bheeshma:** Namrata Mazumdar

**Dridhrashtra:** Debrupa Chattopadhyay    **Yudishtir:** Soumya Kallath    **Arjun:** Deepa Rajesh

**Bheem:** Suzan Muthirakalayil    **Nakul:** Sushma Yadala    **Sahadev:** Rethi Rajan



## Dancers:

Aarushi Dedaniya Aditi Tadinada

Anica Singhal Anika Bhatnagar Anjana Priya Anamthoji

Anjani Anamthoji Anushka Praveenkumar Aruna Thakar

Ashwini Nikam Debdtuti Chatterjee Devanshi Jain

Durga Kuvelkar Gopika Seth Heshini Paramasivam

Indrani Chakraborty Kalyani Pandit

Leena Gokhale Maansi Kedlaya Manasvi Hegde

Manju Pradeep Medha Kelkar Nivrritii Mahesh

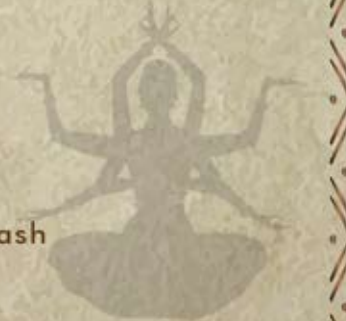
Prahalya Senthil Pranshie Shah Rinku Patel

Samanvi Hegde Sandhya Desai Shriya Kelkar

Shweta Tiwari Tanisha Chaturvedi Tanvi Paranjape

Vaidehi Paranjape Venbha Balachander Yaashi Jayaprakash

Vishali Santhosh





## ***Krishna Leela Production Team***

**IAF Founder:** Madhu Reddy

**Choreography:** Rasa Dance Project (Rachna Ramya Agrawal and Aishwarya Chakravarthy)

**Music Director:** Kalaimamani Madurai Sri R Muralidharan

**Script:** Rachna Ramya Agrawal and Aishwarya Chakravarthy

**Tech Manager:** Swapneel Batra Gaur

**Visuals:** Pradeep Nair, Ketaki Pawar & Rachna Ramya Agrawal

**Narration:** Rachna Ramya & Eshani Surya

**Narrators Voice:** Ketaki Pawar

**Stage Manager:** Greeshma Narayanan

**Electrics and Projections supervisor:** Senthil PM

**Outreach Administrator:** Deepali Pawar

**Graphic Designer:** Vijay Yakkai Studio, India

**Cast Coordinators:** Aishwarya Chakravarthy, Deepali Pawar & Rachna Ramya

**Cast Auditions:** Kala Acharya Smt. Vasantha Aravindan and Uma Vashist

**Back Stage Coordinators:** Avani Shah, Jisha Srikant

**Photography and Videography:** PM Senthil Photography

**Make up:** Rajvinder Randhawa & Saptami Adhikary

**Set & Costume Coordinator:** Greeshma Narayanan

**Costumes Courtesy:** Urvi Pathak. Lasya Dance Company, Abhinatya (Boston),

Athma Academy - Natiya Prayukthi (Chennai)

Natyakshetram and Sumbhaav





*thank  
you*

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