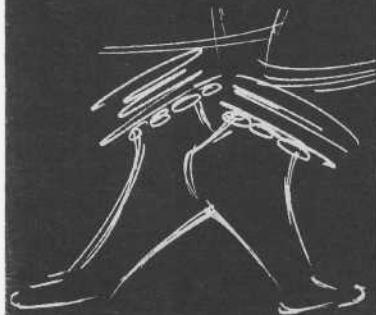


# War & Peace

A  
Dance  
Ballet



**Asmita**  
Resource Centre for Women

Idea&Concept  
Kalpana Kannabiran

Lyrics  
Volga

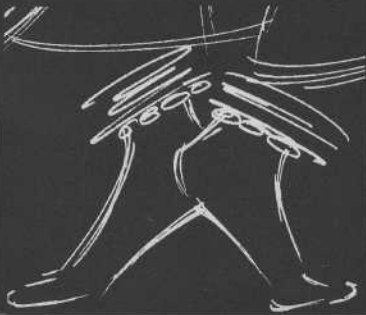
Music  
K. Kanna Babu

Choreography  
K. Uma Rama Rao

A  
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Ballet

Production

Akkineni Kutumba Rao  
Vasanth Kannabiran

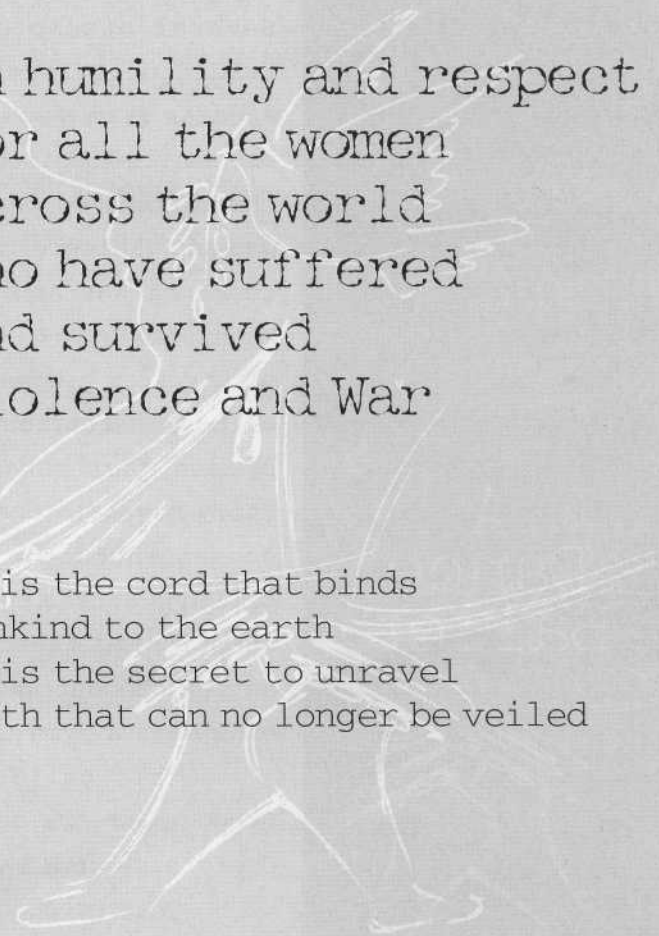
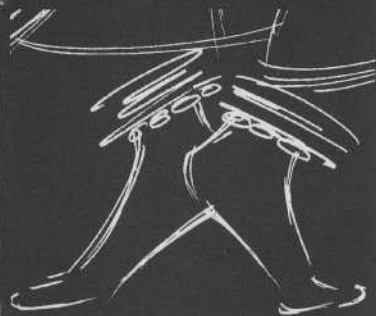


If woman is mother earth and  
Earth is motherland and  
motherland is but race

in humility and respect  
for all the women  
across the world  
who have suffered  
and survived  
Violence and War

A  
Dance  
Ballet

What is the cord that binds  
Womankind to the earth  
That is the secret to unravel  
A truth that can no longer be veiled



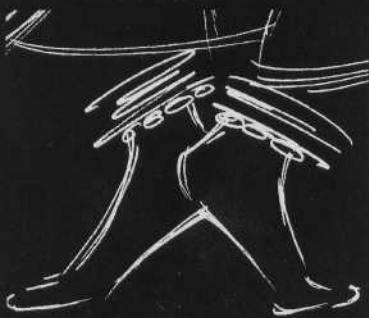
# Introduction

As women we are all aware of the significance of culture in gendering society. The role of religious myths in reinforcing and legitimising patriarchal norms is critical and has been difficult to contend with. The interpretation of these myths through traditional art forms especially music and dance carries a powerful effect that works at subliminal levels. It is as if classical music and dance are trapped in a patriarchal idiom from which they cannot be liberated. Several attempts have been made to use traditional forms to subvert patriarchal agendas from a women's perspective. This is one small experiment in that direction. Given the current concern about the escalation of war and violence in our contexts we chose the theme of war and peace. Using traditional Kuchipudi style we have traced the violence of war from a women's perspective. Starting with the narration of their experience of war by Sita, Surpanaka, Draupadi and Madhavi, the story moves to the Partition and its tragic consequences for women; to the riots and killings across the subcontinent and beyond, questioning the connection between earth, nation, honour and woman's body. The ballet ends with a hymn to peace.

This ballet has been conceived and produced on the occasion of the IX National Conference on Women's Studies in Hyderabad.

This production has been made possible by financial support from HIVOS.

A  
Dance  
Ballet



# Behold!

The spouse of the warrior without peer!  
Ever victorious! unmatched in strength and valour!  
Sole annihilator of the dravida clans  
Ramachandra maharaja patni!

I am Sita daughter of the Earth  
Dweller of the forest!  
Lover of peace!  
Nay, not for me the weight of that crown!  
Not for me the burden of that identity!

Sita bereft of peace by Rama's lust for power  
Sita of sorrow appropriated by Ravana  
Sita the pure consummating my virtue in the flames  
To prove my worth to a husband  
Swollen with the pride of victory.

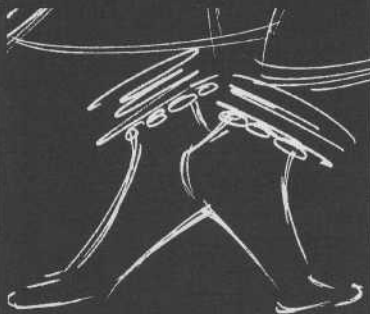
I am Sita daughter of the earth  
accused by my subjects  
banished by my lord  
to solitude in the desert  
suspected humiliated  
deserted outcaste  
I am none other than Janaki  
Daughter of the Earth.

Behold the glorious emperor bearing ten heads  
The heroic warrior spreading terror in the battlefields  
Famed victor in countless wars  
Ruler of Lanka, his beloved sister,  
Behold Surpanaka.

I am Surpanaka fountain of love  
the incarnation of friendship  
I Surpanaka the dravida maid  
Celebrating beauty, worshipping nature  
The meaning of my life, the core of my existence.

Woman of the universe I pour forth love  
Transcending barriers of caste and creed  
I Surpanaka fountain of love  
Despised, reviled for desiring love  
Punished, mutilated for craving love

A  
Dance  
Ballet



# I am

Surpanaka a flaming torch  
Living testimony to untold violation and shame.

I am Draupadi  
My throat holds the poison of humiliation  
I am Draupadi, the sorrowful  
grieving the death of my sons

I Draupadi, stake for a husband's dice  
My princely husbands' royal gifts  
Beginning with a public disrobing  
Moving through shame abduction and humiliation  
In a world filled with Kichakas Dusasanas and Saindavvas.

What were the gains of this war  
Save the destruction of brothers, sons, friends?  
The bleeding hearts of  
Gandhari, Bhanumathi, Kunti and Subhadra?  
The unending grief of bereaved mothers.

Gifts of land, Gifts of cattle, Gifts of women  
Madhavi! Madhavi! Madhavi!  
The story of loaning wombs and cleansing them  
A tool for redeeming and saving  
Emperors, seers and sages!  
Madhavi! Madhavi! Madhavi!

The battle that raged between Rama and Ravana  
Was it but the lust to expand the Aryan empire  
Women mere pawns in that bitter clash  
between Arya and Dravida

From the beginning of time  
Woman's body the battlefield  
bearing the clash of patriarchies  
war after war in history  
Played out on these bodies, of ours.

The abduction of women  
The disrobing of queens  
The test of wives' chastity  
The loan of maiden's wombs  
gifts of mankind's greed for war  
Tragic trappings celebrations of victory.

A  
Dance  
Ballet



# Dividing

nations! Dividing races! Dividing women  
Limb by limb torn and tossed into the sacrifice  
Collective rituals of destruction  
Peaking to a crescendo of violence  
Religion in arrogant dance of death  
Streets soaked in blood  
Littered with numberless dead  
Women's bodies gashed open  
Killed by kinsmen

To save the chastity of women  
Sons cutting off a mother's head  
Brothers ending a sister's life  
Husbands wiping out a wife  
Sharply echoing sounds of grief  
Cries of thirst cries of hunger  
Cries for clothing to cover the self  
The suffering earth spinning in mad despair

Who are these people? Who are these people?  
Where do they come from?  
Who do they come from?  
Flowers scattered on either side of the border  
Ashes from the raging fires of religious hate  
Who are these people? Who are these people?  
Where do they come from?  
Who do they come from?

A drop of water a grain of kindness  
has brought back to life these dry sprigs  
call it honour call it dishonour  
a handful of rice for that hunger  
slowly ravaged lives reached comfort  
the branches flowered and bore fruit  
found comfort found peace again  
grew calm and peaceful at last

The Ruler sets forth today  
governed by his patriarchs  
Flanking him on the right his police force  
on the left his armed forces  
Military might before and behind him  
Encircled and protected  
Singing the song of democracy  
Flashing the mirage of socialism  
Promising the safety of secularism  
Swearing to protect the nation's honour

A  
Dance  
Ballet



# Behold!

those women! Our women!  
Those bodies ours! Ours!  
Symbols of the purity of race  
Signals of a nation's honour  
Living proof of Bharat's manhood  
Shining proof of Pakistan's virility  
Ours! Ours! Ours! those bodies!

Begone ! Begone!  
You women from an alien land!  
Come home! Come home!  
Our country's pride!  
Come and restore the motherland's honour!  
Come back and revive our men's self respect  
Begone! Begone ! Come home! Come home!

Where were you all these days?  
What were you doing all along?  
In that dire hour when

Trembling distraught  
In need of food  
In need of clothing  
In need of succour

Where were you all these days?  
What were you doing all along?

Our grief unheard  
Our suffering unnoticed  
No murmur of sympathy  
Blind deaf and mute you

Where were you all these days?  
What were you doing all along?

At last our hearts quieten  
Slowly we live again  
Do you come to destroy that calm  
Tossing us into tumult again?  
Where were you all these days?  
What were you doing all along?

A  
Dance  
Ballet





# Begone

Begone!

You women from an alien land!  
Come home! Come home!  
Our country's pride!  
Your faith your nation your race  
Your place your safety lies here  
In this tolerant country  
This just and free land  
Come back! Come back

Where is this just and free country?  
Who are they who rule here?  
Whither justice? whither freedom

In Calcutta, Meerut, Muzaffarabad  
Lahore Karachi Amritsar Dacca  
As women's heads tumbled into the dust  
Their lives burnt to cinders  
Hearth and home scattered in the dust

Where is this just and free country?  
Who are they who rule here?  
Whither justice? whither freedom

At the moment of abduction were we hindu?  
Did the moment of conversion turn us muslim?  
At the moment of abduction were we muslim?  
Did the moment of conversion turn us hindu?  
Are we hindu? Are we muslim?  
Are we muslim? Are we hindu?  
Are we hindu muslim or muslim hindu?

Trapped in this deadlock of race and faith  
What of the children we bear?  
Whose faith do they carry?  
What future do they hold?  
Citizens governed defined by law?  
Illegal creatures invisible to history?  
What brittle justice will decide this?

Where is this just and free country?  
Who are they who rule here?  
Whither justice? whither freedom

A  
Dance  
Ballet



# We refuse

to seek eternal refuge  
We refuse to be images of epic tragedy  
We refuse to be the discordant notes  
In the song this partition sings

We are the protectors, we  
Protect women protect families  
Purity of race we safeguard, the  
Integrity of nation we uphold

The doors are closed! Our minds are closed!  
To those who have lost honour  
To those who have lost respect  
To those who sully caste and race  
To the defiled, to the immoral  
Our doors are closed! Our minds are closed  
For you there is no longer space  
For you there is no more shelter  
dishonoured despised degraded

Silence great impregnable eternal silence  
A silence no word can enter  
A silence no heart can pierce  
A bare silence of lives laid waste

If woman is mother earth and  
Earth is motherland and motherland is but race  
the integrity of nation and purity of race  
inscribed on woman's body  
and the burden of protecting the purity of race  
vests in woman's womb.

What is the cord that binds  
Womankind to the earth?  
That is the secret to unravel  
A truth that can no longer be veiled

The blood flowing through river Padma  
The blood frozen in the valleys of the Himalayas  
People in the subcontinent crushed destroyed  
under the chariot wheel of nuclear weapons

the enmity of sons of the soil and tamil tigers  
the unending sorrow of mothers bereaved  
impossible the task of counting the dead  
the endless chain of killing burning burying  
turning beautiful Lanka into a burial ground

A  
Dance  
Ballet



# Whatever

you call the cause, whatever you call the provocation  
the purity of race, a belief that is flawed  
Look upon the Serbs in Bosnia  
Behold the ritual of rape  
Incarcerating women in pregnancy through force.

Dense deep darkness life obscured by a veil  
Is it not living death  
To be confined to four walls?  
Look upon the mad rage of the Taliban  
Circumscribing the life of women in Afghanistan

Enough ! Let us halt these rites of war  
Let us open up space for loving and caring  
Usher in harmony, peace and friendship  
Heralding a spring after a bitter winter

The earth shall shine a brilliant green  
The blue sky free to soar in hope  
Rivers sparkling pure and clean  
Forests swaying to a gentle breeze

A world where poverty and cruelty are gone  
A world where freedom and equality grow  
A world thrilling to the song of peace  
A world lighting to the rays of hope.

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