

The Salangai Poojai Guide

Introduction

The Salangai Poojai can be attributed as a primary graduation ceremony every Barathanatyam student participates in. It is the first time the student wears the Salangai, or dancing bells and officially ascends the stage as a Barathanatyam student. This ceremony has been conducted since ancient times and prepares the student for further training in this art form. In the Salangai Poojai, the student offers his or talent to their parents, Guru and to God. It also serves as a form of motivation for the student and an opportunity to showcase the art form that they have learnt. The syllabus taught to Barathanatyam students in preparation for the Salangai Poojai differs according to levels and styles they are learning in. After commencing their sishyarambam, the student reaches this level before moving on to the training required for his or her Arangetram. The following is a guide to all students and gurus for the Salangai Poojai.

Dhyana Slokas

Beginners are usually taught a set of Dhyana slokas depending on their Gurus. This can include

Ganesha Slokam – Mooshiga Vahana

Guru Slokam – Guru Brahma

Saraswathi Slokam – Saraswathi Namasthubyam

Natya Shastra Slokam (Angikam Buvanam)

Thamizh Slokam / Other Slokam

Adavus

The training of adavus differs according to the styles in which the Gurus are trained in. The basic adavus can be taught to students preparing for their Salangai Poojai. The adavus should be learnt in 3 kalams or speeds (Chowka or Vilambita Kaalam, Madhyama Kaalam, and Dhuritha Kaalam)

A list of Adavus are given below.

Thattadavu

Nattadavu

Paraval Adavu

Theermana Adavu

Thatti Mettu Adavu (Pancha Jathi)

Kuthithu Mettu Adavu

Mandi Adavu

Kuthadavu

Sutradavu

Paithal Adavu

Sarukkal Adavu

Etc

Hastas

In the process of learning the adavus, students are also taught the hastas or hand gestures which can be taught with their corresponding slokas.

Asamyutha Hasta

Samyutha Hasta

Nrittha Hasta

Repertoire (Dance Items)

After this, students move on to learning the dance items.

Pushpanjali

Alarippu

Jathiswaram

Sabdham

Padham

Keerthanam

Thillana

Mangalam

Students are also taught any of these kauthuvams

Ganesha Kauthuvam

Subramaniam Kauthuvam

Natesha Kauthuvam

Krishna Kauthuvam

Others

Theoretical Knowledge

While preparing for the Salangai Poojai, students must also be taught the theory aspect of Barathanatyam which can cover the following topics.

The importance of a Guru

The symbolism of Nataraja and other Gods

Thalam (Rhythm) and Kaalam (Speed)

The importance of the Salangai (Dancing Bells)

Mythological Stories and Itihasas (Ramayana and Mahabaratha)

Musical Instruments used in a concert

Other important aspects

Repertoire

Upon completion of the training in the above aspects is when the student is considered ready for his or her Salangai Poojai, as decided by the Guru. Preparing the student for the Salangai Poojai is a combination of various factors such as age, commitment and the capacity of the disciple. This may take a period of 2 to 7 years. The event is usually performed at a temple or a hall and should feature the repertoire in order. It is essential that the students wear proper costumes and adorn the necessary jewellery and accessories required for a Barathanatyam performance. It is also important that the student dances accompanied by live Carnatic Music and to the sound of the Nattuvangam as the live orchestra is an essential part of every Barathanatyam recital.

Guru Dakshinai

Guru Dakshinai is an offering by the student to his or her teacher as a form of gratitude for having prepared them to complete the Salangai Poojai. The Guru Dakshinai is usually presented in the form of money placed in a tray along with other offerings such as fruits, flowers, sweets and gifts. The amount prescribed as Guru Dakshinai depends on the teacher and student in question. Should any student have doubts regarding the Guru Dakshinai, they should discuss with their teacher and come up with an agreeable amount. There is no amount of money that can equate to a Guru's sacrifice hence the Guru Dakshinai is a token of sincere appreciation for the Guru's immense efforts.

Conclusion

The guide presented above can be followed by all Barathanatyam gurus to ensure the standards of Barathanatyam are met and upheld. Barathanatyam is a divine art form which requires dedication and sacrifice from both the Guru and Sishya. Learning the art form is not limited to the Salangai Poojai and continues throughout one's life. The Salangai Poojai is a stepping stone for the students to journey into the endless ocean of Barathanatyam.

Prepared by the Malaysia Barathanatya Dance Association