

*Saptakam:*

*A Septet of Indian Dance*

*Saptakam*, a choreography which unites seven different forms of Indian dance, has grown out of a hymn in the *Atharva Veda*, one of the four ancient Indic texts encompassing the life of man on earth, enunciating the philosophy of collective living. This philosophy is based on an appreciation of the complementarity of all living beings and the need for mutual understanding and regard in the conduct of our lives. The philosophy finds a reflection in the conceptualization of dance in India's ancient treatise on the dramatic arts, the *Natyashastra*, ascribed to the sage Bharata.

As it brings together dances evolved in various parts of the Indian subcontinent, *Saptakam* also plays upon the relation between forms and the formless dealt with in Indian aesthetics. Through a subtle and dynamic interplay of forms which dissolve into one another, it brings before the viewer the Bharatanatyam of southern India, a dance nurtured in temples and royal courts; the Manipuri dance of north-eastern India, grown out of ritual worship of Krishna; the Odissi dance of eastern India recapturing forms of medieval statuary; the Kathakali of southernmost India evoking primordial passion through its enactment of myth; the sparkling Kathak dance of northern India captivating with its footwork and pirouettes; the serene Sattriya dance of the Vaishnava monasteries of the North-east; and the Kuchipudi dance of South India blending folk tradition of drama with its classical grammar. Each of these dance forms comes alive in *Saptakam* making space for the other as the choreography unfolds through its successive movements.