

Home > Cities > Kochi

## A tale unlike any other

*Bharatnatyam dancer Rajashree Warriar's enactment of Panchatantra and Jataka tales is available online on the NatyaSutra portal through a series of 20 videos titled 'Great Indian Tales'*



Published: 21st April 2020 06:54 AM | Last Updated: 21st April 2020 06:54 AM

| **A+** **A** **A-**



By Deena Theresa

Express News Service

KOCHI: As Shobha Tharoor Srinivasan's voiceover resounds in the background about a ferocious lion in the forest, Rajashree Warriar enacts the same with her expressive eyes, elaborate hand gestures and graceful body movement. Shobha's retelling of the Panchatantra and Jataka tales infused with bharatnatyam brings the characters to life and transports the viewer to another realm. Perfect during the lockdown period. Titled 'Great Indian Tales', a collection of 20 such videos targeting children are available on NatyaSutra, an Indian classical dance and music e-learning platform based in Thiruvananthapuram.

"Production house Invis Multimedia and Shobha intended to retell the Panchatantra tales initially. There were so many such as Tenali Raman, Birbal and Jataka that could be reintroduced in a similar manner. But we considered sticking to just Panchatantra and Jataka and see how it fares. I'm still working on a few more stories that Shobha has narrated," says Rajashree.

While the videos were shot in 2018, they were only available for a limited time on YouTube. Come lockdown and Rajashree was flooded with requests by parents for the videos. "Upon seeing the enquiries I informed them that the tales were available on NatyaSutra—it was well-received," she says. The initiative, while reintroducing Indian classics to children, also aims to incite an appreciation for classical dance among them. "Classical dances are usually considered alien, something that can't be easily comprehended. Teaching the nuances of the same can be easily grasped by younger children. The process is then taught via stories and characters they can easily relate to," says the bharatnatyam exponent.

The videos range from four to eight minutes. This is in keeping with the short attention span that children have. However, prepping for the videos was by no means an easy task. "It is not a complex bharatnatyam presentation, as we've focused on children. It is simple in every way—a description of mudras is given initially to make the child accustomed. Simultaneously, a word cannot be communicated solely with a mudra. The combination of facial expression and body movement translates the word. Bharatnatyam is also taught as a language via the video," Rajashree explains.

As a result, Rajashree says she had to push her limits. Fortunately, the dancer loves a challenge. "Simplification is rather laborious. When I read through a story, I figure out where I can be descriptive, what I can emphasis on and the number of various characters. When I render the story through dance, care is taken to portray every character with a mind of its own. It is a double responsibility," she adds. The videos are available on [natyasutraonline.com](http://natyasutraonline.com).