
Lankan dancers mesmerize city

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NEW DELHI: The third day of the Delhi International Arts Festival (DIAF) 2009 belonged to the expression of Sinhala dance and Sri Lanka's modern dance form pioneered by Chitrasena. Besides showcasing the hardship of fisherfolk, it brought out issues of caste, religion, gender, love and identity along with a beautiful contrast of hope and despair. The 10-day festival organised in association with The Times of India is a curtain raiser to the upcoming Commonwealth Games 2010 in Delhi. The fest is showcasing some of the unique art forms from various Commonwealth nations. And one could not have asked for more from the island nation. The performance by the renowned Chitrasena Dance Company which has presented a dozen scintillating acts that have enthralled audiences across the world for the past five decades was simply spellbinding. Monday's performances offered Delhiites a glimpse into the best of Amaratunga Arachige Maurice Dias alias Chitrasena, who infused a new dynamism into and revived Sri Lanka's traditional dance. The artistes presented some of the famous dance drama such as Nala Damayanthi and Ravana. The highlight of the day was the incredible 'Theiya' a Kandyan dance technique in which dancers display their virtuoso movements in interpreting a particular segment by switching roles as the lead dancer, presenting sheer joy, energy and movement.

The colourful performances showcased all aspects of the urban and rural life in Sri Lanka and were picked up from different parts of the country and its heritage. The uniqueness of the performance lay in its exotic mask dances, the rhythmic throb of drums and fiery ritual dances that brought alive the centuries-old dance tradition. Although dance has been a part of the country's culture and tradition for thousands of years, it was only in the 1930s with the vision of Chitrasena an expert in the traditional dance forms of Sri Lanka and the first professional dancer in his country that this ancient art was given a new life as it was adapted on the modern stage. Courtesy: timesofindia