Navratri at Isha

Isha Yoga Centre holds cultural events to celebrate Navratri. Sri Ranjani Santhanagopalan will sing at a music concert on October 11 and Shreyo Devnath will play the violin on October 12. Kalaikal Kalaimanam Kesavanay in and group, will present a puppetry show on October 13. The event concludes with a vocal music concert by Ranjani Ramachandran on October 14. The centre will also hold Dandiyaaros, every night.

Choose from a range of traditional handicrafts at Hands of Grace, a craft exposition featuring 60 groups from all over India till October 15, from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Venue: Isha Yoga Centre

Date: October 11, 12, 13 and 14 (cultural events)

Crafts, music and faith

EVENT Visitors to Isha Yoga Centre had a glimpse of the vast wealth of Indian craft and spirituality

People stream into the hall near Suryakund, the holy water tank at Isha Yoga Centre. They have gathered here for the Navratri celebrations, which begin with a viluppatu performed by Bharathi Thirumagan and troupe. Meanwhile, Hands of Grace, a crafts exposition, is held at the open grounds nearby. Stalls, designed like huts and made of palm leaves, have been put up by the artisans from different parts of India.

Patachitra from Odisha, stone vessels from Manipur, block-printed fabric from Gujarat...the expo displays at least 40 stalls. Sujith, the artist at the Bhavan Muralis, welcomes you with a warm smile. He stocks printed coasters, wall hangings and pendants featuring Kerala mural motifs in bright hues.

The colourful foilees and myths of Rajasthan come alive at Dwarka Prasad Jagd, which displays Kavad that are miniature temples made of wood with as many as 12 doors. Each door features a panel of stories, legends and even contemporary social issues.

Elephants, plum headed parakeets, yellow-footed tree pigeon and frogs...Dastakar Ranthambore, an NGO, has brought the entire Ranthambore forest, with them. Handcrafted by the village artisans of Ranthambore, the stuffed toys, jholas, quilts and kurtis, feature motifs of the flora and fauna in the forest. “We conducted a drawing competition in one of the villages where many local children and women participated. We have used some of the best ones on our fabrics,” says Ujjwala Jodha, a member of the organisation. The lovers of grand bodiacs can always count on the Banarasi weavers’ stall from Uttar Pradesh. They have exquisite saris and dupattas with grand borders and shining zari.

Dilawar Hussain, from Kashmir, shows off his collection of kasumari paper mache jewellery boxes with enamel work. Another Kashmiri stall sells soft pashminas and silk dupattas. Cushion covers, bed sheets, kathal with applique work sit pretty at the home textiles stall from Gujarat.

At Dwarka Plus there are mobile pouches and purses with Kalamsari work on them. They are priced at Rs. 100.

Want to see dancing toys? Visit the stall set up by artisans from Andhra Pradesh. They also have wooden ladles, vessels and even jigsaw puzzles. Lamps made from recycled paper light up Aurobindo Lamps, from Pondicherry. Made of handmade paper and newspaper, these come with detailed motifs.

The voice of Bharathi Thirumagan and her team rings through the breezy night air. By now, the crowd has grown. Many meditate as T. Kalaimagan, the main singer of the troupe renders “Bho Shambho”. Bharathi, the story teller explains the origin of viluppatu. “A king stopped hunting one day and decided to do something for the world. He wanted to stop killing animals and become a musician instead” “Ooho saa,” the accompanists shout. “So what did he do? He attached a pot to his bow and turned it into a musical instrument!”

The theme of the performance is centred on Madurai Meenakshi. “Maayawada Pandya and his wife Kanthamanai prayed to Lord Shiva for a beautiful daughter. And that was Madurai Meenakshi,” says Bharathi.

“She was a scholar. She mastered all the seven arts!” At this point, T. Kalaimagan, the main singer belts out the bhajan “Om Kali”. The tabla, ndasukai and the organs support him as Bharathi strikes the bow strings.

As the evening’s performance comes to a close, the devotees form a procession to Dhyanalinga. Here they do a holy parikrama. A maha arati is performed in front of the Dhyanalinga and prasadham is offered to all devotees.

PARSHATHY J. NATH
Photos: S. Siva Saravanan