

## Karna: Destiny's Child - Geetha Chandra

June 14, 2016

On May 21, 2016 the New Jersey - Srivari temple's fundraising event presented 'Karna: Destiny's Child' by Bala Devi Chandrashekar, a senior disciple of Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam.

It begins with the birth of Karna, and the first scent of a newborn, for a young girl named Kunti. The baby in the young virgin's hands causes panic and turmoil within her. With paralyzing fear, tears and hesitation, she parts from her child by placing him in a basket and sets him afloat on a river. This first scene was depicted with apt choreography and riveting facial expressions and set the tone for things to come.

Can a solo dancer depict so many different stride variations, all set to a multitude of different gati and thala variations, including the youthful gait of Kunti? It was a lovely contrast seeing the Soorya Deva and Kanya Kunti nritta lasya, the valiance of Karna, brought out in a clear thrikala jathi, the arrogance of Duryodhana, and the list goes on. The scene of Karna being drilled by a bee was depicted by the effective usage of different swara passages. The portrayal of a crushed Karna, as he was cursed by his beloved guru, was really heart rending.

The story further unfolds with the beautiful visage of cunning Indra. Bala Devi's abhinaya and her expressive eyes portrayed Draupadi's wrath and loathsome Duryodhana, which was striking. In the climax it was a touching scene when Karna falls like a felled banana tree, and Kunti laments and cries on Karna's death.

For almost two hours, the audience was immersed in the story of Karna, which was embellished with more than 52 ragas and variety of complex rhythmic structures interspaced with intricately woven musical sequences. Can just one dancer bring out all the characters in Karna's life in such an impressive way? Bala Devi Chandrashekar's performance was compelling and the music composition and voice over was brilliant. Two years of relentless toil and incredible amount of research have gone into the making of this solo performance.



**Geetha Chandra is a corporate financial professional, a prolific writer on Tamil literature, literary critic and a connoisseur of classical performing arts.**