

Asian Arts & Culture Program at the Fine Arts Center University of Massachusetts Amherst

For Immediate Release

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WHAT: Shantala in *Swayambhu*
WHEN: Friday, October 28 at 8:00 P.M.
WHERE: Bowker Auditorium, UMass Amherst
TICKETS: Fine Arts Center Box Office 545-2511, 1-800-999-UMAS, or
at our [online ticket outlet](#).

"...like the dancing glow of a flame which enlightens us" –*VOGUE*, Paris

Indian Kuchipudi dancer, [Shantala Shivalingappa](#), performs **Swayambhu** at the University of Massachusetts Amherst on **Friday, October 28 at 8:00 P.M. in Bowker Auditorium**. According to the Belgium alternative newspaper, *De Morgen*, *Swayambhu* is "...a performance packed with expressiveness and vivacity, where both passion and grace could be seen in a single movement of the body." Shantala's performance is accompanied by a traditional, live orchestra with four master musicians from India comprising of vocals, flute, stringed veena, mridangam (double-barrel drum) and cymbals. Professor Ranjanaa Devi from the Five College Dance Department will give a pre-concert talk entitled "Defining Classical Dance of India" at 7:30 P.M.

Presented by the **Fine Arts Center Asian Arts & Culture Program**, tickets for the concert are \$30 and \$15 for the general public, \$10 for students and individuals age seventeen and under. Please call the box office at 413-545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS, or visit us [online](#).

Kuchipudi is a classical dance form of South India. Like all Indian classical dance forms, it is based on the *Natya Shastra*, a 2000 year-old treaty on dramatics, which gives a very precise and highly developed codification of dance, music, and theater. Kuchipudi has two important aspects: pure dance and expressive dance. Pure dance is rhythmic and abstract. The footwork executes the complex

rhythmic patterns of the accompanying music, while the rest of the body, from the head to the tip of the fingers, follows, sometimes with forceful precision, and sometimes with flowing, graceful movements. Expressive dance, or abhinaya, is a narrative aspect where each part of the body is used to bring alive the text, poem, or story through a song. Kuchipudi is a harmonious combination of these two aspects, alternating moments of pure dance, rhythmic, bright, vivacious, full of beauty and grace, and narrative moments based on Hindu mythology, where the focus is on the use of gestures, facial expressions and body language.

In Sanskrit, Swayambhu (that which manifests by itself) refers to a stone or rock whose shape naturally resembles the features of deities, such as Ganesha, the elephant-headed God, or Shiva, the Lord of Dance. On a more subtle note, Swayambhu is the spontaneous and sudden experience of an altered sense of reality. In *Swayambhu*, Shantala becomes the artisan-chemist. She opens up her tool-kit, each element finely sharpened, weighed, admired, and then handled with infinite care, gentleness, and love. As Shivalingappa seeks the right combination of materials, her artistry gives rise to a performance of pure expression.

In an associated event, Shantala will offer a free workshop on Kuchipudi, the beautiful classical Indian dance style, on Thursday, October 27, 2–4 P.M. at Amherst College Dance Studio 1. Open to all and free of charge. This is a marvelous opportunity to understand the artistic elements of the dance, its tradition as well as the dancer's personal rendering of this style.

Shantala Shivalingappa is sponsored by the Pioneer Valley Hotel Group and the Five College Dance Department with support from WFCR: New England Public Radio and WGBY: Public Television for Western New England.

Please see our website at www.fineartscenter.com/asian/ for additional information. Tickets available online: www.fineartscenter.com or by calling 1-800-999-UMAS or 413-545-2511. Downloadable high resolution photos and electronic versions of press releases for performance events are available at [our online press room](#).