

DECCAN HERALD

'USHA PARINAYA'

A dynamic display on stage

The second-year dance students of the postgraduate department of performing arts, at Jain University, are currently sitting through a round of examinations — and although they don't have to cram from textbooks or course papers, the process is anything but easy. The students have to conceptualise and execute a recital based on their specialisation, and present it before a panel of examiners. As part of this, a group of six bharatanatyam students recently staged *Usha Parinaya* — a touching tale of a young girl's search for love — before their examiners. And the experience, says Vidya — one of the members — was exhilarating.

"This is one of the major examinations we have in the semester — we're the third batch to go through it. Everything, from the stage craft, lighting, story selection, costumes and general execution, had to be handled by the students. We formed a group and started preparing for this around three or four months ago," she explains.

The group selected the sto-



POISED The performance in progress.

ry of *Usha Parinaya* because it had a lot of scope for the dance element. The story is quite a dramatic one, describes Vidya, saying, "In this story, Usha is blessed by Parvati and told that she will dream of her future husband, who is Aniruddha — the grandson of Krishna, who lives in Dwarka. Her friend Chitrlekha uses her magical powers to bring Aniruddha to Usha and locks both of them in a room in her palace."

However, this is far from

the happy ending the couple were expecting. "Usha's father, Banasura, is very powerful — he worshipped Shiva and was blessed with a thousand hands, making him undefeatable. When he finds out about what is going on under his roof, he calls Aniruddha and puts him in custody, claiming that Krishna can come and save his grandson if he wants. Krishna does come eventually, and there is a huge fight — finally, he defeats Banasura and cuts

off all his hands — save for two, because Shiva requests him to. Finally, Banasura agrees to the marriage," adds Vidya.

The students had quite a tough time with this story, since they were given only an hour for the entire recital. "It was tough to fit it in the time given, but we managed. I played Sutradhara — and in the last scene, I appeared as Kanakadasa. Since there were only six of us, we also took the help of four of our juniors, who were supporting characters," Vidya explains.

On top of this, the students also had to sit for a viva, in which the panel of examiners questioned them on their recital. The result, though, was worth all the effort. "It went very well. We never expected the exam to be such a success. Our teachers and lecturers came to watch us and all in all, the feedback was good — *Usha Parinaya* was well appreciated," beams Vidya, adding that she is expecting the results of the exam towards the end of the semester.

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