

An epic performance

By Ayesha Singh | Published: 31st December 2016 11:41 PM |

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Minutes before being airborne, Bharatanatyam exponent and scholar, Bala Devi Chandrashekar tells us she'll be back soon. Nothing can keep her away from the city for too long. As soon as the New Year dawns, she'll return to embrace it with her new recital, Karna: Destiny's Child at the Habitat Centre.

She seems completely besotted with Karna. "His qualities of bravery, friendship and generosity need to be spoken about more often," says Chandrashekar, the Artistic Director of SPNAPA

Academy of Performing Arts, Princeton, New Jersey,

"The story of Karna was introduced to me in detail by my husband. After that, I went on to watch him in several movies. I also read over 10 books in several languages to learn more about him, besides listening to commentaries," she says. His destiny and the way fate tied his hand repeatedly, his strong loyalty to Duryodhana, and his might and valour are other attributes that inspired her to stage Karna's story.

The production explores various hues of Karna, trapped in moral dilemmas, and the angst and the conflict with which he grew up. She's taken the production to Chennai. Up next are Delhi, Bengaluru and Banaras.

For the last 25 years, Chandrashekar has been performing Bharatanatyam, not as a teacher, but as a student. The dance form has helped her keep in touch with her roots. To never let complacency set in is a resolve she made to herself years ago. "The more I learn, the more I realise how little I know," she says. "What you are in real life is what you'll reflect on the stage, so it's important to be true to yourself before you're true to your art," she says with a smile.