G. M. Sarma (1936-2017)
A Tribute
Mandakranta Bose & Upendro Singh, Director, JNMDA

Burra Venkatesham, Secretary to Government of Telangana Youth Advancement, Tourism & Culture Department (extreme left) making a point; with him, L to R : K.K. Gopalakrishnan, Leela Venkataraman and Sunil Kothari

A scene from Keibul Lamjao by JNMDA

Madhavi Mudgal and Arushi Mudgal

Manjari Sinha: A Critic's take

Photos Courtesy: Avinash Pasricha
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The opinions expressed in the articles and the reviews are the writers’ own and do not reflect the opinions of the editorial committee. The editors and publishers of Nartanam do their best to verify the information published but do not take responsibility for the absolute accuracy of the information.

Cover Photo: Late G. M. Sarma, Founder, Nartanam

Photo Courtesy: Nartanam

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LEELA VENKATARAMAN/91
EDITORIAL

We inform our readers of the sad demise of our founder publisher, Garikapati Muralidhar Sarma (02/04/1936-18/12/2017), the brain and the prime mover of Nartanam. I do not quote the great bard when I say that G. M. Sarma garu, as he was popularly known, was a man who was "born great" and also "achieved greatness"; Sarma was such. He was born with a suave and sensitive persona, which possessed an innate love for arts. He attained greatness with a finer sensibility of a connoisseur who served as an altruistic patron of Kuchipudi and dance at large. But his was an unsung greatness.

You cannot find him on google and there is nothing written about him anywhere. He was a man not connected with dance in any way other than being an interested spectator. He retired as Joint Chief Controller of Explosives, Department of Explosives, Government of India. However, he was destined to come across guru Vempati Chinna Satyam's work and fall in love with Kuchipudi. After that, there was no stopping Sarma, who splurged money and effort, and passionately crafted some of the finest festivals and seminars of Kuchipudi (Kuchipudi Mahotsavs) and has left behind valuable archives apart from bringing Kuchipudi to limelight across India. However, he stood behind the scenes and shunned all publicity.

His love for the great art of guru Vempati Chinna Satyam was legendary and he, as the Secretary of the Andhra Associations whichever city he served in, espoused the cause of the great guru and his art form. I often said to him that he was a devotee of guru Vempati Chinna Satyam just as Lord Hanuman was of Lord Rama. Every video we watched of the Kuchipudi Mahotsavs, Sarma garu would cry at the sight of Vempati. I do not quote Bertrand Russell when I say the "vagaries of human nature" are such that guru Chinna Satyam and his family was estranged from G. M. Sarma in his later days but his devotion for Chinna Satyam was unaltering till his very end; human nature is capricious. He pined for Vempati Ravishankar, a bright star of Kuchipudi, wasted by illness, who probably never attained the heights he was destined for. The memory of a very ill G. M. Sarma standing for over thirty minutes at the steps of a stage in Hyderabad, supported
by my husband to stand steady on his feet with his bouquet of flowers, wrenches my guts to this day. The people on the stage whom Sarma garu had backed his entire life did not even have the courtesy of accepting the old man's bouquet of flowers. No matter, Sarma garu never bore a grudge. The money he showered to sponsor Kuchipudi programs was hard earned but he was rewarded with suspicion and disrespect in the end. I call this the "Kuchipudi Syndrome" which the entire community of traditional Kuchipudi families is blessed with: "Suspect friends and be manipulated by the wily and ruin their own community of boundless talent, devoid of vision, with petty squabbles and ego."

I came across G. M. Sarma years ago when he called our home out of the blue and introduced himself to my husband and announced unabashedly his intention of a dogged pursuit of drawing me to dance writing. He pursued me relentlessly till I agreed to accompany him to Kuchipudi for a festival and start writing thereafter. For some unexplained reason he placed great faith in me and egged me on to take over Nartanam's responsibilities as and when they arose and were thrust on me by the old guard. His pride in my work was worth all the hardship that Nartanam flung at my way. He was never the quintessential boss; he gave a democratic platform to air my views and would be sportive in our intense debates, arguments and disagreements at Nartanam. He would be graceful in conceding a point to a veritable greenhorn like me, much his junior. The many hours and days spent with him remind me of the pride, which would swell his heart, and fill his eyes with tears after every issue of Nartanam came out of the press.

Ambitious, as Sarma was for the propagation of Kuchipudi; he envisaged a journal devoted only to Kuchipudi, which eventually was destined to start as a journal providing a platform for academic writing on all forms of Indian dance and reviewing it. An article in this issue, written by G. M. Sarma himself, which is being reproduced from Nartanam Volume 12 no.3, gives an insight into his journey of service to Kuchipudi.

It is poignant and even cruel, as the people who have walked with him in the field of dance and who have spoken volumes about his life and service have not responded to our call to pay tribute to him in print. Lip service is easy and hence he received it in plenty. I do not quote Tennyson when I say G. M. Sarma often expressed his agony, which reflected that the field of arts is "red in tooth and claw"; it is the prevailing law in arts in India. So vexed was he with dance and the
dancers towards his last days; with dance, for its falling standards and with dancers, for their aggressive ways; he would cringe at the mention of the word "dance." The service to arts gave him profound joy but along with it came disillusionment with the baser truth of arts and artists.

Some friends who have shared his journey in the field of dance have sent in their tributes. They are printed in this issue. We have chosen to highlight in this issue the recent documentation of Kuchipudi Yakshaganas held from 23-29 February 2016 at the Kuchipudi village in collaboration with the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi and the Government of Andhra Pradesh; and the Nartanam Conclave held from 5-8 October 2017 with support from the Government of Telangana. These were the kind of projects which were close to his heart. The historic Seminars on Kuchipudi and the Kuchipudi Mahotsavs organized by him in 1986, 1987, 1989, 1993, 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2001 were all time classics. The souvenirs released at each of the Mahotsavs are valuable documents on Kuchipudi. The Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Mumbai of which Sarma was the Managing Trustee opened three Kuchipudi schools in Mumbai, Kolkata and Nagpur, which produced talented dancers under the tutelage of Vempati's disciples who taught at the schools. The famed Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Mumbai published Nartanam before it was taken over by the Sahrdaya Arts Trust, Hyderabad. We salute our late founder G. M. Sarma.

Speaking of the NARTANAM CONCLAVE the sahrdayyas gathered at the event were from amongst the scholars, the performers, the patrons and the spectators. I need to acknowledge that this Conclave would not have been possible without the support of the Government of Telangana and the Happening Hyderabad. We are happy that the government of Telangana recognizes the need for such academic conclaves. We thank B. Venkatesham (IAS), Secretary to Government of Telangana Youth Advancement, Tourism & Culture Department, Sunita M. Bhagwat (IFS), Commissioner of Tourism, Government of Telangana, and Mamidi Harikrishna, Director of the Department of Language and Culture of Telangana for their support and generosity.

We express our deep appreciation for B. V. Papa Rao (Retd IAS), Advisor to Telangana Government, a man of fine sensibilities and a deep understanding of arts, whose support and vision has been the driving force behind the Nartanam Conclave. He is also a Trustee of the Kakatiya Heritage Trust which co-sponsored the Seminar section of the Conclave.
With this Conclave we continue with what G. M. Sarma had embarked upon; generating a meaningful dialogue amongst all the stakeholders of dance – the dancers, the scholars, the spectators and the patrons. Our endeavor is also to make dance not just a high art but make it more reachable through audience education and outreach. We at Nartanam have been trying to build bridges between the scholars and the performers on one hand and on the other making the patrons sensitive to high art which is not just a vestige of a glorious past now seen only as a spectacle.

The Nartanam Conclave intends to curate festivals with a definite thematic thrust, which combines both academics and performance. In future we hope to initiate works/productions by dancers and scholars where truly the sastra and prayoga can meaningfully contribute to each other and thus enrich both. This is a new beginning for Nartanam. But we are not afraid to say that our next issue might be our last. To be completing 17 years of publication of this journal with this issue is no mean feat. We have given it our best shot with our hands tied with too many constraints. We are creating a wealth of archives on dance. For whom is the question?

We do not need money, charity or even support from governments or even the support from companies under their Corporate Social Responsibility if only the dancers, the dance institutions, and the government and other institutional libraries in India subscribed to Nartanam. We are proud that our presence is there in some of the world's leading libraries. But we direly need a national presence. I ask the readers to exercise their influence to assist this publication in any meaningful way that they can.

The four days of the conclave saw a vibrant environment of debate, discussion, paper presentations, panel discussions and lecture demonstrations which generated a valuable analysis of the treatise in focus, the Nrttaratnavali. The papers and proceedings of the conclave will constitute our forthcoming issue. We present a photo feature and a review in this issue.

The evening performances were brought to Hyderabad after much thought. The Punya group from Bengaluru, in its classical idiom of Bharatanatyam tried to extend boundaries. It brought a rare freshness to group performance in a form which essentially renders itself well to the solo format. The group danced without a care in the world, exquisite in their technique and composition with delightful accompanists and bared the souls of the spectators to sheer beauty.
As an organizer it was heartening to see the professionalism with which Parshwanath Upadhye and the group conducted themselves off the stage too. We had the *Keibul Lamjao* from Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy from Imphal, Manipur, which transcended the boundaries of Manipuri in its theme and choreography. The production presented a heart rending contemporary issue, the diminishing Sangai deer due to the cruel destruction of their habitat, choreographed by guru Chautombi Singh. The Manipuri group was a delight to deal with; simple and endearing in their nature and loving and giving all the time despite some inconveniences backstage. This is what art is supposed to do to true practitioners/seekers; shines their souls through their mortal frames.

We also brought the forms of Odissi and Kuchipudi; the maestros Madhavi Mudgal and Jaya Rama Rao are as much revered for their dance as for producing rare gems as their students. It was a delight to watch an able guru and an able shishya holding the banner of an art form aloft. What can be more exciting and inspiring than to see youth set out on the path of excellence taking their gurus' glory forward. Arushi Mudgal and T. Reddi Lakshmi lived up to the intensive training imparted by their gurus. The traditional families of Kuchipudi may watch out and shrug off their slumber; Kuchipudi shall continue to thrive without their haughty and egoistic wealth of knowledge and talent. A traditional family Surname and the talent running in their blood will no longer suffice to attain glory. They need direction, leadership and above all vision to climb out of the abyss they have already fallen into.

With a heavy heart, we send the issue to print, knowing that with all the progress *Nartanam* is making, it has lost its guiding light, its founding father, and an era has come to an end with the demise our beloved G. M. Sarma garu.

*Madhavi Puranam*

M. N. SARMA

G. M. Sarma (Garikapati Muralidhar Sarma), a rare kind of a connoisseur of Kuchipudi, whose efforts to propagate Kuchipudi by organizing huge festivals at metropolitan cities where he worked as a senior central government officer, will be remembered fondly by the entire Kuchipudi community for bringing together a galaxy of Kuchipudi luminaries and the young and promising dancers on to one platform so that lovers of dance in non-Telugu areas would not only enjoy the diverse fare offered, but also be able to see the best dancers performing. He will also be remembered for the visionary step of establishing the dance journal *Nartanam* which has completed 17 years of publishing in December 2017.

Sarma worked in the Department of Explosives, having obtained his M.Sc. degree in Geo-physics. He was known as a strict officer in a delicate government position. He retired as Joint Chief Controller of Explosives, Government of India. Prior to that he held important administrative positions at Kolkata, Nagpur and Mumbai. In all the places he worked, Sarma became an active member of the Andhra Mahasabhas.

Sarma’s tryst with Kuchipudi started in 1975 when he saw guru Vempati Chinna Satyam’s *Srinivasa Kalyanam*. He was so thrilled by its artistic and presentational
excellence that he wished that such superb performances, which gave soul-filling experiences, must be seen by larger number of audiences. From that day onwards he wanted to do something to promote Kuchipudi in general and Chinna Satyam’s performances in particular.

Sarma worked at Kolkata during 1981-86. Almost every year he organized Chinna Satyam’s newly choreographed dance dramas for the benefit of the dance lovers of Kolkata. In 1985, Sarma saw a huge Kathak Mahotsav in Kolkata and on similar lines planned the first Kuchipudi Mahotsav in the city from 22-25 February 1986.

This first Kuchipudi festival featured very important exponents of the dance form. It was inaugurated by Kapila Vatsyayan, the eminent writer and critic of Indian performing arts and aesthetics. The lec-dems for the first time tried to explain the intricacies in Kuchipudi. Lec-dem by Vempati Chinna Satyam with Pappu Venugopala Rao’s commentary was the highlight of the festival. Also included in the festival were other lec-dems by Vedantam Prahlada Sarma on the training system in Kuchipudi, C. R. Acharyulu on temple dance traditions of Andhra and Thandava Krishna on Andhra and Karnataka yakshagana traditions. Korada Narasimha Rao on the uddhata roles in Kuchipudi and Swapna Sundari on Bhama kalapam were the other well-received lec-dems. For sheer variety and masterly presentations, the lec-dems stood out. The performances were no less important. Yamini Krishnamurthy, Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma, Swapna Sundari, Sobha Naidu, Manju Bargghavee, Raja and Radha Reddy, Tarveen Mehra and Smitha Shastry gave scintillating performances. Kalakrishna’s performance in feminine impersonation in Andhra Natyam was very enthusiastically received. It looked as though the entire who’s who in Kuchipudi performed in the Mahotsav. The highlights of the Festival were Ksheera Sagara Mathanam and Sri Krishna Parijatham, two dance dramas choreographed by Vempati Chinna
Satyam. Another stunning performance was given by Vempati Chinna Satyam, for an hour. The audience was spell-bound. The Mahotsav’s success, hailed by the press and Kolkata’s cultured audiences was unprecedented. Such a rich fare of Kuchipudi was never presented even in its native state.

By the end of 1986, Sarma was transferred to Nagpur. Even here he first organized Vempati’s Srinivasa Kalyanam which was a roaring success. In 1987 and 1989 Sarma organized two Kuchipudi Mahotsav’s in Nagpur which were as innovative and comprehensive as the Kolkata one. In this festival the lec-dems by Vempati and Raja and Radha Reddy became very popular. In 1989 Vempati presented Hara Vilasam and Sri Krishna Parijatham, two dance dramas choreographed by Vempati, and as usual, received encomiums.

In 1990 Sarma was transferred to Mumbai. He immediately jumped into action. Before going in for a Mahotsav, he wanted to feel the pulse of the Mumbai audience and organized Vempati’s Hara Vilasam and Srinivasa Kalyanam in 1992. As both the dance dramas were received very favourably, the fourth Kuchipudi Mahotsav was put on board in Mumbai with all the top Kuchipudi artists participating in it. Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma, Vempati Chinna Satyam, Raja and Radha Reddy, Mallika Sarabhai, Swapna Sundari, Alekhya Punjala, Manju Bharggavvee, Korada Narasimha Rao with his team, Jayarama Rao and Vanashri Rao, Anuradha Nehru and Anuradha Jonnalagadda performed during the festival.

This festival was important in yet another way. The traditional yakshaganas vied with modern dance dramas. Siddhendra Kalakshetram presented their magnum opus, Bhakta Prahlada. Chinna Satyam’s dance dramas Srinivasa
Kalyanam, Hara Vilasam and Mohini Bhasmasura were staged. Renowned film artists and disciples of Chinna Satyam – Hema Malini and Meenakshi Seshadri – gave full-fledged solo performances. Krishna Sweta demonstrated Kuchipudi on roller skates.

Another striking feature of this Mahotsav was the music seminar, devoted exclusively to dance music of Kuchipudi. Veterans like M. Balamuralikrishna, Balanthrapu Rajanikantha Rao, P. Sangeeta Rao, V. Sarala Rao and others participated. Vempati, Nataraja Ramakrishna, Uma Rama Rao and Korada Narasimha Rao presented lec-dems. Gurus and disciples of other classical forms attended these sessions and participated in the deliberations. Kuchipudi flag flew high in Mumbai after this memorable festival. The credit for making the Mahotsav, right from its planning to successful execution, goes entirely to G. M. Sarma and his highly devoted associates.

As a consequence of the success of the festival, there was a persistent clamour from young girls and boys and their parents to have a school for imparting Kuchipudi dance in Mumbai.

In 1995 “Kuchipudi Kala Kendra”, a nodal institution to streamline all activities concerning Kuchipudi was started with G. M. Sarma as its secretary and under its aegis a Kuchipudi school was started. M. S. R. Murthy was brought as the main teacher. In course of time the Mumbai school started four different branches to impart training. In 1997, Kuchipudi Kala Kendra started a school in Kolkata with Madhuri Pal as its head. Another branch was started at Nagpur.

The next festival was in 1996 which saw a large contingent of young talent participating along with the established senior dancers. Pasumarthi Vittal, Mallika Ramprasad, Kalpana, Bharathi, Vyjayanthi Kashi performed in the festival. Solos by renowned dancers like Swapna Sundari, Raja and Radha Reddy and Manju Bharghav were the major attractions. A dance ballet, Keechaka vadha was presented by Pasumarthi Venkateswara Sarma.

Another Mahotsav from 21-23 January1999 had two important projections. One was to showcase two traditions side by side: Melattur Bhagavatha Mela and Kuchipudi yakshagana on one side and Kuchipudi Bhama kalapam and the Bhama kalapam of Andhra Natyam on the other. This gave scope for an excellent comparative analysis of two neighbourly, allied dance forms. The other major projection was to showcase duets of Kuchipudi dancers. Raja and Radha Reddy, Vempati Ravishankar and Sri Vidya, Meenakshi Seshadri and M.V. N. Murthy performed in this category and stole the show. There were also group presentations:
“Alaya Nritya” by disciples of Voleti Rangamani showed an entirely new area of Andhra dance traditions. Vempati Chinna Satyam’s *Ksheera Sagara Mathanam* was presented during this festival. V. A. K. Ranga Rao conducted a slide show on the theme “Kuchipudi dance in Telugu cinema”.

The last Mahotsav under the aegis of Kuchipudi Kala Kendra was conducted in 2001. Several newly choreographed dance dramas made their way and showcased new potential. Pasumarthi Venkateswara Sarma’s *Mahishasura Mardini* and Pasumarthi Ramalinga Sastry’s *Gajananeeyam* are in the yakshagana style, whereas Usha Gayatri’s *Gopika Krishna* represented the later-day dance drama style. Two styles in feminine impersonation by Vedantam Venkatachalapathi (Kuchipudi) and Kala Krishna (Andhra Natyam) were a delight. Jaya Rama Rao and Vanashree Rao’s *Dasavatara* was very well received.

It was during the 2001 festival the Kuchipudi Kala Kendra decided to publish a journal on Kuchipudi dance. After deliberations with experts, it was decided to publish a journal on all the classical dances of India. I was requested to be the Chief Editor. G. M. Sharma was the Publisher on behalf of the Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Mumbai.

The first issue of the journal, *Nartanam* (January-March, 2001), was to be released by Vempati Chinna Satyam, but since Vempati could not attend the festival, the journal was released by Kanak Rele, Director of the Nalanda Research Institute and a renowned Mohiniattam exponent.

Though Vempati’s and his family’s attitude towards Kuchipudi Kala Kendra and its inspiring force G. M. Sarma was growing slowly to be lukewarm, Sarma continued his efforts to widen the understanding of Kuchipudi. He spearheaded a seminar at Hyderabad in 2004 in co-ordination with the Telugu University about the problems related to teaching and learning of Kuchipudi. He also continued to publish *Nartanam* from 2001. Its special numbers on stalwarts (Vedantam Laxminarayana Sastry, Chinta Venkataramaiyah, Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma, Vempati Chinna Satyam (Kuchipudi), Nataraja Ramakrishna (Andhra Natyam), Birju Maharaj (Kathak), Kelucharan Mohapatra (Odissi),
Rukmini Devi (Bharatanatyam), Uday Shankar (Indian Modern Dance), Ram gopal (Bharatanatyam and modern dance), Balasaraswathi and many others were received with great enthusiasm and were considered to be authoritative and scholarly. Similarly, Nartanam’s special issues on each dance form are literally considered to be comprehensive text books on these dance forms.

Such was the long story of G. M. Sarma who had spared no time, energy and finances so that Kuchipudi dance gets the recognition due to it, especially in non-Telugu areas. Every artist of recognised merit was showcased in the festivals. Seminars were meaningful and educative. Souvenirs edited by K. Subadra Murthy and brought out during the festivals with well-researched articles offered the most dependable materials on Kuchipudi. Nartanam is a trail-bazer and continues to be a researcher’s delight.

What else would a man need to be remembered by Kuchipudi lovers all over the country? The whole dance community bows in gratitude to the meticulous work and selfless devotion shown by G. M. Sarma. It is such people’s love for the art that sustains any art form. Long live the tribe while we bid adieu to our beloved G. M. Sarma.

References


3. Banda Kananakalingeswara Rao’s detailed description is one of our major source materials for this eventful tour.

4. The Kuchipudi Mahotsav Souvernirs, published in 1993, 1996 and 1997 edited by Ms. K. Subadra Murthy are the earliest annual numbers in English which created a real academic interest among scholars and students on Kuchipudi dance.
It was in early eighties that I had come to know G. M. Sarma. He was heading Department of Explosives, a government institution, as the Joint Chief Controller of Explosives. It was far from his passion for classical Kuchipudi dance form. As a dance scholar, researching on different dance forms, and as a dance critic of The Times of India, he knew me. He was planning several dance festivals with a focus on Kuchipudi. His office was opposite the Church gate station in Mumbai. I recall meeting him there two or three times.

A tall and simple unassuming person, his job was different from his passion. He had known of my interest in Kuchipudi dance. I was arranging for Sur Singar Samsad’s "Kal ke Kalakar" festival lecture demonstrations by leading gurus of different dance forms. For Kuchipudi, I used to work with Vempati Chinna Satyam. Every year, from 1970 I used to arrange lecture demonstrations of Kuchipudi at C J Hall. Guruji had presented in the very first, his disciples like Sobha Naidu and Lakshmi Vishwanathan. Later on, I used to request guruji to demonstrate padarthabhinaya and vakyarthabhinaya. His patralekha had become very popular.
I think G. M. Sarma appreciated it. I got an impression that anyone who was supporting Kuchipudi dance form; G. M. Sarma lent him support. He was a soft spoken person. I never saw him angry. In his dealings with Kuchipudi dancers he was very polite. Since he used to present them, the artists’ community looked up to him as one of their well wishers and a patron.

After I left Mumbai and joined Rabindra Bharati University at Kolkata as a Professor and Head of the Dance Department, I remember when he was transferred to Kolkata, we got in touch with each other. He had planned a festival of Kuchipudi in Kolkata. He had succeeded in inviting majority of leading dancers and gurus of Kuchipudi. Vempati Chinna Satyam was there. An unfortunate event had taken place. Swapani Sundari argued with Guruji. And Vempati lost his temper and admonished Swapna Sundari. Sarma tried to intervene but on both sides there was tension and the best thing was to leave both parties and let them resolve their differences.

He was a gentleman. My friendship grew with him, working together for supporting Kuchipudi dance form. It was in 1993, in Mumbai, he had organized at The Nehru Centre a grand Kuchipudi festival and Vempati’s disciples like Anuradha Nehru from abroad were also to participate. I was working on my book on Kuchipudi. For contemporaries’ section I wanted photos of maximum numbers of dancers. I persuaded the renowned photographer Avinash Pasricha to attend the dance festival at The Nehru Centre so that we can take many photos during the festival days as dancers were coming from many places to Mumbai.

In Mumbai too an unpleasant event had taken place. Raja and Radha Reddy were to perform on a particular evening. Swapna Sundari was also scheduled to perform the same evening and they could not agree on who will perform before. Sarma called me to settle the issue. He was too soft and therefore someone had to take the decision. Luckily, when I met Raja Reddy I told him that dance as an art form need not create unpleasantness. It is like a Dharmakshetra. Why turn it into a Kurukshetra? I think my request appealed to him and the matter was solved amicably. I have seen Sarma often caught up in such situations and he used to trust in God to resolve the issues.

G. M. Sarma started a training institute for Kuchipudi in Mumbai. He put his personal money in such ventures. He always received some assistance from some quarter. I think because he had no personal gain and his work was in nature philanthropic, people assisted him. Whenever we met he would share with me his dreams of starting a quarterly journal on dance with emphasis on Kuchipudi. He invested his savings for that project. That is how the Nartanam quarterly was conceived. I did tell him that there were very few writers to contribute regularly. But he was adamant.
He had approached M. Nagabhushana Sarma, the great scholar and theatre person to take care of the journal. And it was launched. I also contributed by sending reviews of dance performances. Since Nagabhushana Sarma was based in Hyderabad, \textit{Nartanam} was brought out from Hyderabad. G. M. Sarma had no experience of collecting subscription from dancers and he started sending the journal free of cost to dancers. With the result he started losing money. The dance community known for not subscribing to the journal got used to receiving free copies of the journal. There was no way of getting dancers to pay for the journal.

Once I had gone to meet Nagabhushana Sarma and that is where I met Madhavi Puranam who was on voluntary basis assisting him in the publication of \textit{Nartanam}. I was impressed by Madhavi’s efficiency and willingness to take up any job. I remember telling Nagabhushana Sharma, in lighter vein, that if he is not willing to carry on editing \textit{Nartanam}, I would take up the job and with the help of Madhavi Puranam get it published even if I am a globe trotter and travel a lot. As with computers one can have files uploaded and sent by e mail and carry on the work!

Of course Nagabhushana Sarma understood what I was saying in good spirit. He shouldered the responsibility for many years, till Madhavi Puranam took over all responsibilities of editing and publishing \textit{Nartanam} quarterly forming a new trust. Every step, she took the advice of G. M. Sarma. I often used to go with Madhavi to meet him at Hyderabad during his stay there. He was keeping indifferent health, but never gave up the idea of closing down the journal. Madhavi would convince him and ask him not to worry. He trusted her and depended upon her to carry on which Madhavi has done doing him as a Founder of \textit{Nartanam} proud.

G. M. Sarma used to often send fees for writing articles along with the issue. Sometimes Rs 3,000 and sometimes Rs 5,000. I invariably returned the money to him. I did appreciate his gesture. But I used to get upset when he sent money. I knew that he was paying from his own pocket. He was a generous man and meant to pay for writing articles.

He was happy when \textit{Nartanam} under Madhavi’s able capacities had survived. Though Madhavi had to resolve the issues of sending copies of \textit{Nartanam} free to a large community of dancers who had got used to getting it free.

We all who are members of \textit{Nartanam} family are grateful to a visionary and a dedicated person like G. M. Sarma for his vision to have a journal for dance. We pray that his soul rests in peace.
I came to Madras in 1980. In the last 37 years, I met some of the greatest personalities from various fields, Music, Dance, Literature, Films, Politics and Swamyjis. Some of them have left an indelible impression on me. Some of have influenced my life too.

But there is one gentleman whom I met in 1987. He does not belong to any of the fields mentioned above. He has inspired me with his simplicity and thirst for service to Kuchipudi Dance.

He is G. M. SARMA, not in any way connected to Kuchipudi dance, he is not from those families, not an artiste, nor scholar, nor musician or critic. I met him in Calcutta when I went to the Kuchipudi Mahotsav. Later I met him a second time when Anuradha Jonnalagadda introduced me to him at her house. He lived a few blocks away from her house.

After these two interactions, he became a very close friend and whenever he conducted a Kuchipudi Mahotsav, I have been a part of it. The Mumbai Kuchipudi Mahotsav was the most memorable of all of them. There were many stalwarts; M. Balamuralikrishna, Rajanikanta Rao, Vempati Chinna Satyam, Sangeeta Rao, Swapna Sundari, Raja Reddy Radha Reddy, Sunil Kothari, V. A. K. Ranga Rao and many others. These festivals were almost sponsored by him but for a few donations he got from here and there.

After that whenever he visited Madras, we met every time. His only passion in life was Kuchipudi. In these Kuchipudi Mahotsavs, he invariably brought out souvenirs with very interesting articles. This passion inspired him to start Nartanam.
In all my interactions if he was found upset, it was only because he was not able to achieve something he wanted to do for Kuchipudi. Many times, he took prior appointments and went to see some people and when he met them they were indifferent to him. Except in such situations, he was never found upset or agitated. He started a Kuchipudi school in Andhra Association in Mumbai and paid thousands from his pocket to sustain it.

*Nartanam* was his brain child. Madhavi very ably carries his mantle. That is our greatest tribute to his memory.

G. M. Sharma is an unsung hero, an unheard melody and an indelible memory!

Vempati Chinna Satyam inaugurating the Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Mumbai
G. M. Sarma is seen on the extreme right.
A Friend and a Nishkama Karmayogi

K. K. GOPALAKRISHNAN

G. M. Sarma garu’s was a natural departure at the ripe age of eighty-one. At the fag end of his life he was bed-ridden for months and was under the care of his son. For a normal human being of that age, such demise is a loss to the family and friends concerned.

But Sarma garu is among the exceptions. Along with his family and friends, a stream of serious academics of performing arts traditions, especially dance, and serious readers on arts and culture and several practitioners across the world and the entire Nartanam family bereaves his demise. The quality of this elite stream is more significant than its quantity. If one goes by the subscription base of Nartanam, centres such as the New York Public Library subscribe to it but the fact is that if you google G. M. Sarma’s name nothing much about this particular soul is found. His service was in silence with the spirit of a true karmayogi. His left hand was unaware of how much finance was spent by his right hand for Nartanam that absolutely brought no returns in monetary terms; not even the interest he should have earned if such sums were kept in savings back account in a normal case. He fathered Nartanam, he was its blessed mother, uncle, guardian and what not. The editorial team was like his independent grown up children who both toddled and flew under the patronage, shade and support of this magnanimous father. He was always reluctant to go for advertisements in Nartanam.

His umpteen regards for the late Vempati master (1929-2012) were among the main reasons for starting the publication of Nartanam in 2001. And he was very shattered when the master could not make it for the launch of the journal much against his expectations. Nevertheless, Sarma garu took it in his stride and focussed on the upbringing of the journal. Content-wise Nartanam was never

K. K.GOPALAKRISHNAN is an eminent Dance Writer, Scholar and Photographer. He is an advisor to Nartanam.
ever limited within the boundaries of Kuchupudi or the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, as everybody knew. He strongly felt the need for an academic journal in literary terms and paid for the editor, contributors, the press etc. and met the postage too – all from his own resources as the hole he made in his pocket was for Nartanam. Additionally, he hardly focused on paid subscription and instead enjoyed posting free copies to our dancers. Very few, unfortunately, bothered to appreciate his spirit and responded with a paid subscription. Other few who made the remittance of a small sum (a mere Rs 350 per annum, those days) towards annual subscription, worth a coffee at a reasonable restaurant, took it to be their "life subscription". The small sum that he later started receiving from the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi as the annual publication grant was the only fiscal support from an outside source.

One can hardly imagine a person who endeavoured to publish a periodical by meeting all its expenses from his own resources and despatching it freely to dancers who in turn looked upon only the review of their performance, got agitated if superlatives were less or pictures were not carried, or both. Thus his cultural activism appeared as cultural eccentricity to many who believed that intellectualism and activism in India means working under some financial grant and functioning like a cultural mafia with the evenings for inebriation. Nartanam was Sarma garu’s sole inebriation and he was a cent per cent karmayogi. Return for the money spent was not his concern, as he deeply believed in nishkama karmam, that too, without any rhetoric or tall claims. “If you want to read; read it; if you want to refer to it, preserve for reference” was the essence of his stoic attitude.
My very first personal interaction with Sarma garu started during early 2003 through an email that I received from the id gmsarma@rediffmail.com. Briefly introducing about Nartanam he requested me to write a tribute paper on the late Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair (1914-1990) and his artistry with a few pictures. He had also mentioned that he had collected my email id from The Hindu, Chennai and my contribution would be fairly paid for, “though they cannot pay the sum The Hindu pays for its contributors”. I was a bit moved by this frank and transparent approach and agreed to do the article with supporting pictures before the deadline without any remuneration. The tribute to Krishnan Nair asan was carried as cover story of Volume III, no. 3 (2003).

Shortly after receiving the contributor’s copy of the journal, arrived a cheque from him. The sum he sent was in fact double the amount The Hindu Sunday Magazine used to pay me. It was an absolutely soothing experience that did not last long. Shortly I realised that all such payments of Nartanam went from his own savings. I rang him to return the same as my contribution by pointing out that writing for a periodical of Nartanam’s academic standard was always a privilege to me. But he was very particular that every contributor must be paid fairly and decently if not lavishly for his or her work. When I offered my subscription, he politely declined saying that he had already placed my name in the subscribers’ list! Nevertheless, I compelled him to accept my annual subscription. He agreed to it rather reluctantly when I insisted.
After a few years, during January 2007 as suggested by him, the then editor of *Nartanam*, M. N. Sarma, mailed to me to write a cover story as a tribute to Chandralekha (1928-2006). She was very close to me and ever since we met she always visited my home whenever she was around Thrissur side of Kerala. An earlier interview with her carried in *The Hindu* Sunday Magazine prompted him to give me this assignment. It was carried in the Volume IV, no. 4. The next assignment that came from *Nartanam* was in 2008 to write about 60 years of Kathakali, Kutiyattam and Mohiniattam. Due to some personal reasons and time constraints I agreed for the one on Kathakali, which appeared as the cover article of Volume VIII, no 4. During mid 2010, M. N. Sarma mailed to me for a tribute piece on Pattikkamthoti Ravunni Menon (1881-1948). In our telephonic discussion we decided to go for a 1000 word story. But that piece was shortly bounced back from Madhavi Puranam’s email id briefly introducing her and with some questions linked to sentences that she wanted me to either elaborate or clarify. The response that I provided resulted in calling for further details and as it went on and on; the paper’s word limit was almost crossing 3000. I rang up both the Sarma garu-s to put an end to it or withdraw the tribute. But both of them were equally appreciative of this to and fro exchange leading to the expansion of the article, ignoring the stress it caused to me. G. M. Sarma garu was more amused by the developments. The heated discussion and argument over emails with Madhavi Puranam went on further and finally it resulted in a worthy paper in about 5000 words on the life of Pattikkamthoti, the first and foremost Kathakali trainer of the Kerala Kalamandalam and an immaculate performer of roles with complex technique, and his contribution to the art of Kathakali with several rare photographs. Today’s prominent style of Kathakali performance spread all across is the offshoot of his painstaking refinements and contributions. This article, carried as the cover story of *Nartanam*’s Volume X, no. 3 is considered as the sole detailed study on the master ever published in English. Research students contact me even now for information from this paper.

All these, especially the Pattikkamthoti episode, made G. M. Sarma happier and drew us closer even before I formally met him during October 2010 at his residence along with Madhavi Puranam. In December of the same year we met again in Hyderabad, as I was on a visit to the city. During the few meetings we had he shared his deep concern about the future of *Nartanam*, both maintaining and further improving the content quality and the fiscal side after his period. His emotions for *Nartanam* were much more than that of a father for his dear child. He was ailing and found it difficult to manage the publishing. Plus, the increasing cost of printing, paper and all related expenses started draining his resources. He was seriously thinking on how the journal was going to continue with maintaining
its standard and at times thought of closing it down. *Either maintain the dignity of its standard or let it have its abrupt closure* was the issue that bothered and haunted him. If my information is correct, an eminent dancer or two were ready to take over the journal. But Sarma was worried whether such a transfer for its survival would help maintain the content quality or it would land the quarterly as the publicity material for the new publishers. He was sure that the latter would be the ultimate outcome. He was not prepared to "spoil" the beautiful entity of *Nartanam* that he has given life to, pampered and nourished for a decade, after his life span. The attachment was eternal for him.

Content generation is not an easy task for an academic journal even when finance is not an issue. Identifying the right persons, and getting the fool proof copies without plagiarism before the deadline is the most difficult task. (To understand these better, readers may perhaps check when was it that the last issue of *Sangeet Natak*, the quarterly journal of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi was out irrespective of their vast resources and financial backing as an autonomous body under the Union Ministry of Culture and the content quality of most of the so-called journals of the country.)

It was also a period that Sarma *garu* was undergoing tremendous pressure from dancers he knew well to carry reviews of their performances with all the superlatives in the language and due to this he was on the brim of breaking several personal friendships. Pointing out a few reviews that he had received by email during the past few months he said he was damn sure that they were written by the dancers concerned or by their kith and kin proficient in the language, especially in using flamboyant descriptions.

Considering her academic credentials and scholarship in performing arts traditions, proficiency in English language and editing, uncompromising attitude in terms of content quality and the fact that though trained well in Kuchupudi she herself is not a performer or trainer and instead taught Arts Management, Textual Traditions and other theoretical subjects at the dance department of the Hyderabad Central University, G. M. Sarma *garu* wanted Madhavi Puranam to take it over. He was already very happy the way Madhavi had planned the issues, generated content, dealt with several momentous matters and reviews received with recommendations from significant people. He possessed deep confidence in her and wanted either a smooth transmission to her or the closure of the journal in a decent way during his lifetime. His view was well focussed; I realised it during our short interactions.
The ball was in Madhavi Puranam’s court. The responsibility was very high; generating funds for the breakeven of the journal – all the while making a decent payment to the contributors and a low base of paid subscribers and very few advertisements on the other end. As G. M. Sarma had discussed the issues with me too with an open mind and shared his views on the sustenance or closure of Nartanam, Madhavi looped me in to further discussions and decisions.

Kuchupudi Kala kendra, a trust registered in Mumbai, technically owned Nartanam. All the trustees were eager to proceed as per the desire of G. M. Sarma garu. The deteriorating health and a gradually receding memory started making Sarma all the more uncomfortable and nervous with regard to the life or death of Nartanam. He knew that for his children it was impossible to take it over. The only thing he longed for was a decision while his memory was intact and of course he preferred its sustenance through Madhavi Puranam. He was very clear.

On 15 March 2011, the Sahrdaya Arts Trust was registered at Hyderabad. After all the required formalities were completed, the trustees of Kuchupudi Kala Kendra transferred the ownership of Nartanam to the Sahrdaya Arts Trust having its registered office at 508, Dwarakamai Apartments, Hyderabad 500073. G. M. Sarma garu was extremely happy about it and he was beaming amidst ill health as his desire was to be fulfilled. But then came the next hurdle; not only his but the new owner’s too. In fact he had nothing much to do except for a few signatures in the required documents and it was then the responsibility of the Sahrdaya Arts

G. M. Sarma (seated) with his family on his 75th Birthday
Nevertheless it mattered to him, adding to his worries. The transfer was to be registered at the RNI (Registrar of Newspapers for India) and tedious formalities were to be complied with because in our country rules related with publications have nothing to do with professionalism or academic quality and instead are rather stringent with long procedures. It is more bureaucratic with sheaves of documents and a string of procedures making the concerned more frustrated and discouraged from taking up the publication of non-profit ventures. There are moments that compel one to leave everything and drop the venture. Madhavi had to travel to Delhi and Mumbai many times, loop in several contacts and finally after months of delays and struggle, the transfer was successfully done much to the satisfaction of G. M. Sarma garu.

Very few, among the readers of Nartanam, know of the struggles and tribulations that he had underwent in bringing up a quality journal. Those ten years was a significant period in his life too; one must thank his entire family too in not interfering in this pocket draining passion of his. As far as I knew, they never opposed his spending and instead they valued his legitimate zeal. Indeed a rare blessing bestowed on a rarest of a rare soul.

The support rendered by M. N. Sarma garu as its first editor was highly commendable. Bringing up a periodical, leave alone a serious academic journal, with sustained or improved standard is not easy. G. M. Sarma garu rebelled in his own way with his passion; thus Nartanam was born and continues to exist. Today Nartanam in itself is the best tribute to its founder and mentor G. M. Sarma garu. What more could this passionate nishkama karmayogi’s soul need to celebrate his life on earth?
The Kuchipudi Mahotsav

G. M. SARMA

My association with guru Vempati Chinna Satyam was from the year 1975, when he had come to Mumbai to stage Srinivasa Kalayanam. I was amazed to see the ballet, so full of pristine art; I had never seen anything like that and it moved me to the core. He worked very hard to produce such ballets which inspired me to do my bit for him and the propagation of his art, Kuchipudi. Thereafter where ever I was posted, I made sure to organise his programs. I was working with the government then, and during my posting in Calcutta where I lived from 1981-1986; practically every year, I organised Guru ji’s shows. Most of my time was spent in thinking of how to promote his superlative art.

In 1985, I saw the Kathak Mahotsav in Calcutta which inspired me to plan the Kuchipudi Mahotsav. I discussed with Guru ji and he was very interested. We met frequently to plan the program, finalise the artistes and raise funds for the Kuchipudi Mahotsav 86 which was held in Calcutta. It was inaugurated by Kapila Vatsyayan and the lec dems included those by Vempati Chinna Satyam, Pappu Venugopala Rao, Prahlada Sarma, Thandava Krishna, Korada Narasimha Rao, Swapna Sundari, and C. R. Acharya. There were lectures by the likes of Sunil Kothari and P. S. R. Appa Rao; the Kuchipudi performances were by Yamini Krishnamurthy, Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma, Swapna Sundari, Sobha Naidu, Manju Barghavvee, Raja and Radha Reddy, Tarveen Mehra, Smita Sastrri, Kala Krishna, and G. Sarala Kumari. Dance dramas, Ksheerasagara Madhanam and Sri Krishna Parjatam were presented by the Kuchipudi Art Academy, Chennai. Prahlada Sarma’s group also performed in this festival which was held from 22-

LATE G. M. SARMA is the founder of Nartanam. He was a Kuchipudi connoisseur and the founder and general secretary of the Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Mumbai. He retired from government service as the Deputy Chief Controller of Explosives and was an active member of the Andhra Association in the cities where he was posted. He has conducted the, now historic, Kuchipudi Mahotsav, in close consultation with Vempati Chinna Satyam whom he revered immensely. This article is being reproduced from Nartanam Volume 12 no.3. It gives an insight into late G.M. Sarma’s journey of service to Kuchipudi and his devotion to guru Vempati Chinna Satyam – Ed.
25 February. In the Calcutta Mahotsav, guru Vempati Chinna Satyam danced for more than one hour and it was stunning. The Mahotsav was a grand success as all the major dancers/scholars/gurus of Kuchipudi had participated in the lec dems, performances, solos, ballets and also seminars. People in Bengal took a lot of interest in Kuchipudi and requested Guru Vempati to open a branch to train students there. When I was in Calcutta, I wanted Guru ji's master piece, Chandalika to be presented at Shantiniketan. I fixed up the program with Shantiniketan authorities with the consent of both Sobha Naidu and Guru ji; however, the program fizzled out due to misunderstandings between them.

By the end of 1986, I was transferred to Nagpur. There, Guruji staged Srinivasa Kalyanam which was a tremendous success; thereafter Kuchipudi gained popularity in Nagpur. In 1987 and 1989 I conducted two Kuchipudi Mahotsavs in Nagpur which were again a great success. In the 1987 Mahotsav the lec dems by Vempati and Raja and Radha Reddy became very popular. Manju Bargghavee and Raja and Radha Reddy presented solos. In 1989, guru ji presented his ballets Haravilasam and Sri Krishna Parijatam in Nagpur which received rave reviews.

Vempati Chinna Satyam found support from many people who helped promote and propagate his art. Leading film heroines were his students; Hema Malini, Vyjayanthimala, Meenkshi Sheshadri, etc.
In 1988, he produced the dance ballet, *Sri Krishna Parijatam*, in collaboration with gurus and dancers from other dance forms, Birju Maharaj, Kelubabu, Kalyanasundaram Pillai. The anchor for the presentation was Modali Nagabhushana Sarma.

In 1990, I was transferred to Bombay. In 1992, Vempati’s ballets, *Haravilasam*, *Srinivasa Kalyanam* and *Rukmini Kalyanam* were presented in Bombay and needless to say, all of them were a great success.

In 1993, another Kuchipudi Mahotsav was organised by me where all the top artistes of Kuchipudi like Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma, Vempati Chinna
Satyam, Raja and Radha Reddy, Mallika Sarabhai, Swapna Sundari and her disciples, Alekhya, Manju Bhargghavee, Korada Narasima Rao and his troupe, Jaya Rama Rao and Vanasri, Anuradha Nehru, and Anuradha Jonnalagadda performed. Scenes from Vempati’s dance ballets, *Srinivasa kalyanam, Mohini Bhasmasura* and *Haravilasam* were presented; an episode from *Bhakta Prahlada* was performed by the Siddhendra Kalakshetram. Film artists like Hema Malini and Meenakshi Sheshadri also performed. Krishna Shweta demonstrated Kuchipudi on roller skates. There was a Music Seminar which was graced by the likes of Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna, P. Sangeeta Rao, B. Rajanikanta Rao and V. Sarala Rao. Vempati Chinna Satyam, Pappu Venugopala Rao, Nataraja Ramakrishna, Uma Rama Rao and Korada Narasimha Rao presented the lec dems and thereafter there was an open session for discussion amongst gurus and artistes and certain resolutions were passed. Respected gurus of other dance forms also appreciated the festivals which gave a great fillip to the art form and also brought fame to guru Vempati Chinna Satyam.

In 1995, the Kuchipudi Kala Kendra was founded and inaugurated in Bombay. Vempati sent his senior student M. S. R. Murthy to Bombay to train the students in Kuchipudi. 1997, a branch was opened in Calcutta and Guru ji’s senior student Madhuri Pal played a significant role in organising the ballet *Ramyana* which was staged by Vempati’s troupe. Another branch of the Kuchipudi Kala Kendra was started in Nagpur. The 1996 Kuchipudi Mahotsav saw a wide array of performances including the solos of Vittal, Mallika Ramprasad, Kalpana, Bharati, Vyjayanthi Kashi and ballets and also solos of Swapna Sundari and Raja and Radha Reddy, *Bhama Kalpam* by Manju Bargghavee and ballet *Keechakavadha* by Pasumarti Venkateswara Sarma. The seminars included a lec dem on ashtanayikas by Vempati Chinna Satyam and Anuradha Jonnalagadda, a performance by Kalpalatika and Sailaja highlighting the differences between Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi and lec dems by Raja and Radha Reddy and Swapna Sundari. In the music section, a lec dem on the comparative study of music in Melattur Bhagavatamela and Kuchipudi was presented by P. Sangeeta Rao and Pappu Venugopal Rao.

In 1997, on the occasion of the opening of the Calcutta branch of the Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Guru ji’s ballets, *Rukmini Kalyanam* and *Ramayanam* were presented which was graced by the then Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University and the Governor of West Bengal, Raghunatha Reddy.

In 1998, a seminar on Kuchipudi was organised by the Kuchipudi Kala Kendra with the collaboration of the two universities- The Hyderabad Central University and the Potti Sriramulu Telugu University. It was an elaborate seminar with an
Kuchipudi Mahotsav - 1993
Kuchipudi Mahotsav - 1993
Kuchipudi Mahotsav - 1993
### PROGRAMME LAY OUT OF STAGE PERFORMANCES BY ARTISTES

**10th December '93**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>6-00 p.m.</td>
<td>Inauguration and felicitations of the gurus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-45 p.m.</td>
<td>1. Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma - Kuchipudi.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Smt. Hemalalini - Bombay</td>
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<td>4. Km. Meenakshi Seshadri</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. M/s. Raja &amp; Radha Reddy, New Delhi</td>
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**11th December '93**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>6-00 p.m.</td>
<td>Smt. Swapna Sundari &amp; Disciples, New Delhi.</td>
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<td>Smt. Mallika Sarabhai - Ahmedabad</td>
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<td>Smt. Alekhya - Hyderabad</td>
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<td>Mrs. Manju Bhargavi - Bangalore</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vempati Dance Ballet Scene (Shriniwasa Kalyanam) - Madras.</td>
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**12th December '93**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>6-00 p.m.</td>
<td>Ballet scene from &quot;Mohini Bhasmassura&quot; by Shri Korada Narsimha Rao &amp; Troupe Eluru.</td>
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<td>Andhra Pradesh.</td>
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<td>Mrs. Jaya Rama Rao &amp; Vanarsi - New Delhi.</td>
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<td>Smt. Anuradha Nehru - Washington, U. S. A.</td>
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<td>Km. Anuradha Jonnalagadda - Hyderabad</td>
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<td>Vempati's Ballet scene &quot;Haruvikasam&quot; — Madras.</td>
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<td>Ballet Scene From &quot;Bhaktakali&quot;.</td>
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<td>Siddhendra Kalashatra - Kuchipudi.</td>
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### PROGRAMME LAY OUT OF LECTURE DEMONSTRATION AND MUSIC SEMINAR

**11th December '93**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>10-30 a.m.</td>
<td>Shri. C. R. Acharya with disciples</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Km. Krishna Sweta Demonstration of Kuchipudi Dance on Roller skates.</td>
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<td>Shri Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma</td>
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<td>Smt. Swapna Sundari</td>
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<td>M/s. Raja &amp; Radha Reddy</td>
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<td>2-30 p.m.</td>
<td>Music Seminar</td>
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<td>Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna</td>
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<td>Shri Sangeeta Rao</td>
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<td>Shri B. Rajanikanta Rao</td>
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<td>Smt. V. Sarla Rao</td>
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**12th December '93**

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<tr>
<td>10-30 a.m.</td>
<td>Demonstration by Guru Vempati Chinna Satyam &amp;</td>
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<td>Lecture by Venugopal Rao</td>
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<td>Dr. Natroja Rama Krishna</td>
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<td>Smt. Uma Rama Rao</td>
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<td>Shri. Korada Narsimha Rao</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-30 p.m.</td>
<td>Open Session for Discussion amongst Gurus &amp;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>artistes - Resolutions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### PROMOTERS:
- Nehru Centre, Bombay
- Andhra Mahasabha & Gymkhana, Dadar, Bombay
- Annamacharya Cultural Centre, Bombay.
- Telugu Sahitya Samiti Bombay.
academic focus. The same year, _Ardhanareeswaram_ was premiered which was graced by the Bombay Governor, P. C. Alexander. Srividya and Vempati Ravishanker played the lead roles in the ballet which won critical acclaim.

The next Mahotsav was held in 1999 at the Nehru Centre, Bombay with elaborate program schedules from 21-23 January. It showcased the Melattur Bhagavatamela and Andhranatyam along with Kuchipudi. A comparative presentation was put up showcasing the music and dance of all these forms. V. A. K. Ranga Rao projected many slides from his collection of Kuchipudi from cinema. Lecdems were presented by most of the top artistes of Kuchipudi. Performances included duets by Raja and Radha Reddy, Vempati Ravishankar and Sri Vidya, Meenakshi Sheshadri and M. V. N. Murthy, Alaya Nrityam by disciples of Voleti Rangamani, Vempati Chinna Satyam’s _Ksheersagaram Madhanam_, and a solo by Anuradha Jonnalagadda.

Well researched souvenirs with articles by scholars were the special achievement of all the seminars.

In 2001, I organised the last Kuchipudi Mahotsav and it was then that a decision was made to publish an exclusive journal on Kuchipudi. Guru ji addressed the press conference and we decide to inaugurate the journal in the Mahotsav. The 2001 Mahotsav saw performances by Raja Reddy and family, Vyjayanthi Kashi, _Gajananeeyam_ by Pasumarthi Ramalinga Sastrī, female impersonation by Vedantam Venkatachalapati and Kalakrishna, lecdems by Uma Rama Rao and her disciple Anupama Kailash. Jayarama Rao and Vanashree performed _Dasavatara_ and the ballet _Mahishasuramardhini_ was staged by Pasumarthi Venkateswara Sarma and troupe. Usha Gaythri and her disciples presented the ballet _Yashoda Krishna_.

The journal _Nartanam_ was published, as planned, but it was unfortunate that Guru ji could not attend the Mahotsav for reasons known only to him and his family. It was said that he was advised by the doctors against travelling. Two days later, I met him at his home watering the plants. His ballet _Annamayya_ which was to be premiered at the festival was also not staged at the Mahotsav and instead was performed in Hyderabad, ten days after the Mahotsav. We had to rely on other dancers at the last minute to fill the free slots of performance which were created by Guru ji’s unexpected absence. Finally, Kanak Rele released the journal, _Nartanam_. However it was released again in Hyderabad by Vempati Chinna Satyam on my insistence. Later, Guru ji continued his extensive tours especially abroad which were all a great success. However, my association with him came to an end; his son, Vempati Venkat, informed that the Kuchipudi Kala
Kendra could not stage Guru ji’s ballets without permission from the Kuchipudi Art Academy, Chennai. An era of Kuchipudi Mahotsavs had also come to an end.

But to date, Guru ji remains fresh in my memory for his unsurpassed art. Vempati attained a greater stature than his guru Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastri in polishing the art of Kuchipudi and making it more dynamic; in both the ballet and solo genres. Vempati’s ballets attained unparalleled fame. Guru ji choreographed around 200 solos. Many solo bits were also culled out from the Kuchipudi Yakshaganas and Kalapams and his dance ballets. He was also inspired by other dance forms. His brief stint in films saw him choreograph and train dancers in films. Later, he chose to devote himself, solely, to his dance academy. He attained great fame both as a choreographer and a teacher. His dance was attractive to both the informed and the uninformed and to people in urban as well as rural setting. The successful combination of his choreography and genius with the music by P. Sangeetha Rao and scripts by Bhujangaraya Sarma made his ballets, superior productions. His close disciple Bala also contributed significantly
Performances at the Kuchipudi Mahotsav - 1999
Performances at the Kuchipudi Mahotsav - 1999

by being a dutiful assistant to him in his choreography. His second son, Vempati Ravishankar could have taken Kuchipudi to greater heights if only his health had permitted him and he were more disciplined. An era of Kuchipudi has come to an end indeed with the demise of the great maestro Vempati Chinna Satyam.
Nartanam / 58

G. M. Sarma (1936-2017)
A Tribute

Nartanam Vol : XVII  Issues : 1-4
Historic Documentation of Kuchipudi Yakshaganam

MADHAVI PURANAM

Nartanam’s Documentation of the Dance Theatre of Kuchipudi
Yakshaganam at Kuchipudi Village, Andhra Pradesh in collaboration
with Sangeet Natak Akademi and Kuchipudi Natyaramam
23-29 February 2016

Kuchipudi, the classical dance form of Andhra Pradesh has undergone great
transformation in the 20th century. This form, which originally is a traditional theatre
form (Natyamela) performing Kalapams and Yakshaganams, has in the post-
independent India, established itself as a solo form, and the dance drama form,
which are much different from Kuchipudi Yakshaganams. Though the solo and
musical dance dramas of Kuchipudi have not been able to replace the traditional
repertoire of Kalapams and Yakshaganams, they have certainly occupied the
attention of the practitioners as well as the connoisseurs of Kuchipudi and thus
have completely overshadowed the genre of Kuchipudi Yakshaganams and the
Kalapams.

The Kuchipudi Yakshaganam – one of the more dramatic and exuberant
manifestations of the Kuchipudi repertoire – has been performed prolifically till
late 20th century, but rarely in the recent times. This is a genre that has evolved
more than a century ago, around 1880, through the artistic inputs of Chinta
Venkataramayya, who is known as the Yakshagana Pitamaha in the collective
memory of the Kuchipudi practitioners. He is said to have created 8 Yakshaganas,
not all of which are available today. The remnants of the Prahlada Natakam,
Sasirekha Parinayam, Usha Parinayam, Parvathi Kalayanam, Mohini

MADHAVI PURANAM is the Chief Editor of Nartanam.

This article is being reproduced from Nartanam Vol. 16 no 2. Archiving and documentation of
Kuchipudi was a passion of late G. M. Sarma – Ed.
Rukmangada, and Ramanatakam are the only extant ones and they too are on the verge of extinction. Chinta Venkramayya’s son, Chinta Krishnamurthy, took Yakshaganam to great heights after his father. But after him, the Kuchipudi Yakshaganams saw a steady decline, not for the want of capable artistes but for the want of leadership to stage the dramas, each of which requires about 30 artistes, and to find patronage, and sponsors to stage them. It is important to note that the genre of Kuchipudi Yakshaganams has now evolved into dance dramas (Nrtyarupakas) with the song being more predominant than the dialogue and with new stories; but still based on the dramatic format of Kuchipudi Yakshaganam.

The historic seven-day documentation of Kuchipudi Yakshaganams in collaboration with the Sangeet Natak Akademi and the Kuchipudi Natyaramam, Department of Culture, Andhra Pradesh government attempted to record all the existing Kuchipudi Yakshaganams which will help preserve, propagate and revive this rich genre of the performance tradition. The documentation also brought into discussion the numerous branches of Kuchipudi Yakshaganam – its literature, its music, its dramatic element in performance and its aharya. The documentation was done from 23-29 February 2016 in the Kuchipudi village in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh, where this form has originated and where the traditional families and performers of the form still live, though many other members from these traditional families and their disciples have settled down in different parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The remnants of Kuchipudi Yakshaganam still remain with a few hereditary artistes. Of them, Vedantam Radhesyam stages the Prahlada Natakam and Parvathy Kalyanam, Vedantam Ramalinga Sastry stages the Prahlada Natakam, and also the Nrtyarupaka Nartanasala, Pasumarthy Seshubabu, son of the late maestro P.V.G. Krishna Sarma, stages the Ramanatakam and Mohini Rukmangada. Pasumarthy Ramalinga Sastry has successfully re-created the Sasirekha Parinayam. Bhagavathula Sethuram also stages Ramanatakam. While these artistes along with very few remaining stalwarts like Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma are essentially the only ones who still stage Kuchipudi Yakshaganams, there are a few others from the traditional families who stage Nrtyarupakas true to the Kuchipudi Yakshaganam style. Vempati Ravi Shankar, the son of the late maestro Vempati Chinna Satyam belonging to the traditional Vempati family, presents his father’s innovation of Kuchipudi Yakshaganams and can stage Ksheerasagara Madhanam and Srikrishna Parijatam, both, important productions marking the onset of Nrtyarupakas based on Kuchipudi Yakshaganam tradition. Sadly, due to ill health he could not participate in this documentation. The younger generation under Vedantam Venkata Nagachalapathi Rao, Vedantam
Raghava and their team have re-created *Harischandra* which is an attempt at the revival of the older Yakshaganam in the older format. There are others from the traditional families and their disciples and scholars/academicians who have contributed to this documentation by giving inputs to the varied aspects of the genre apart from acting in the productions.

Exponents such as Vedantam Venkatachalapathi, Vedantam Raghava, Chinta Ravi Balakrishna, Yeleswarapu Srinivas, D.V. Narayanamurthy, Pasumarthy Mrutyunjaya Sarma and Vedantam Satyanarasimha Sastry have excelled in portraying roles in these Kuchipudi Yakshaganams in this generation, and exhibited their experience through lec-dems and interviews. D.S.V. Sastry is a skilled Kuchipudi Yakshaganam vocalist who has received extensive training in Kuchipudi’s Yakshaganam bani of music, from P.V.G. Krishna Sarma, and represented the genre of Kuchipudi music, which is one of the key ingredients of the Kuchipudi Yakshaganam. The impact of this bani of music on that of the dance-drama genre of Kuchipudi, a later evolution, was delineated by him. Pasumarthy Rattayya Sarma is one of the oldest Yakshaganam artistes today, who had participated in the Venkatarama Natya Mandali in the golden era of Kuchipudi Yakshaganams when it was headed by Chinta Krishnamurthy. He is adept at portraying various *raju-patrulu*, or the roles of kings, and was invited to enact the same for the documentation. Pasumarthy Keshava Prasad who is an able resource person for information on Kuchipudi families and the village could not participate in the documentation. Apart from these hereditary artistes, atleast 15 experts and scholars of Kuchipudi like Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, Anuradha Jonnalagadda, Balakondala Rao from Vizag, P Surya Rao from Vijayawada, Bhagavatula Seetarama Sarma from Chennai, Chinta Seetaramanjaneyulu from Gudivada, Bhagavatula Venkatrama Sarma, and Pasumarthi Venkateswara Sarma among others were invited to participate as speakers and experts and were interviewed during the documentation.

While recording the existing major Kuchipudi Yakshaganams and its senior most maestros, the varied aspects of the form – the history, performance traditions, structure, technique, grammar, music, literature, stage, sets, costumes etc in detail was the prime focus of this documentation. It has marked the existing young generation and the talent available by creating a data base, and has also delved into the ways in which this genre has influenced other genres of Kuchipudi performance culture, especially the dance drama. It brought to light various tread and un-tread areas of the Kuchipudi Yakshaganam, and has re-kindled the interest of artistes, scholars and the *rasikas* in this genre. Above all this documentation has brought to fore the major problems of this genre of Kuchipudi dance form, the communities practicing the Kuchipudi Yakshaganams, and the support it requires.
to restore its former glory. The challenge is to make the learning and performances of this form viable/sustainable (for every Kuchipudi Yakshaganam presentation involves a huge cast of 25-30 artists) and the possible creation of a national repertory.

The combination of recording of the full fledged Kuchipudi Yakshaganams (each of 2 or more hours duration) and interviewing all the major players of the form, the lec-dems in the village of Kuchipudi in a well presented festival “Kuchipudi Yakshagana Mahotsavam” has helped the Kuchipudi Yakshaganam receive as much attention as the solo or the dance drama of Kuchipudi today.

We present here the detailed program of the morning and the evening presentations of the documentation along with some pictures. Our team is working on a special issue on Kuchipudi Yakshaganam which hope to publish in 2017.
## Lecture Demonstrations, Panels, and Interviews

at

“Kuchipudi Yakshagana Mahotsavam” 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day/Date</th>
<th>9 am – 1 pm</th>
<th>3 pm – 5 pm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Interviews to be recorded parallel to other programs on all days)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>23-02-2016</strong></td>
<td><strong>Formal inauguration</strong> of “Presentation and Documentation of Kuchipudi Yakshaganam” by the traditional Kuchipudi gurus and chief guest <strong>Bhagavatula Seetarama Sarma</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td>9.30am- 11am <strong>Keynote Speech</strong> <strong>Bhagavatula Seetarama Sarma</strong></td>
<td>2-3.30pm <strong>Talk</strong> <strong>Nṛtyarupakam: Vempati Chinna Satyam</strong> P Surya Rao</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11am- 12pm <strong>Opening Address</strong> <strong>Modali Nagabhushana Sarma,</strong> <strong>Kuchipudi Yakshaganam- A Perspective</strong></td>
<td>2- 3.30pm <strong>Interview</strong> <strong>Bhagavatula Seetarama Sarma</strong> by DSV Sastry</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Anuradha Jonnalagadda</strong></td>
<td>Book Release: Modali Nagabhushana Sarma’s book on Kuchipudi in the evening Session</td>
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<td><strong>Day 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>24-02-2016</strong></td>
<td><strong>Panels</strong></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
<td>10-11.30am <strong>1) Kuchipudi Yakshaganam- Emergence, Growth and the Golden Period</strong></td>
<td>2-3.30pm</td>
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<td><strong>Panelists:</strong> Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma, Chinta Seetaramanjaneyulu, Vedantam Radheshyam, Mahankali Suryanarayana, Modali Nagabhushana Sarma</td>
<td><strong>Pasumarthi Ramalinga Sastri</strong> by Yashoda Thakur</td>
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<td><strong>Moderators:</strong> Vedantam Ramalinga Sastri (Introductions) Yashoda Thakur (Interview)</td>
<td><strong>Chinta Seetaramanjaneyulu</strong> by Anupama Kylash</td>
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<td><strong>11.45am-1pm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vedantam Ragahava</strong> by Kathayayni Thota</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>2) Kuchipudi Yakshaganam- Sustenance- Concerns and Solutions</strong></td>
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### Madhavi Puranam

#### Day 3
**25-02-2016 Thursday**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>10-12noon</td>
<td><strong>Panel</strong>&lt;br&gt;1) Lec Dem&lt;br&gt;<em>Kuchipudi Yakshagana Music</em>&lt;br&gt;Evolution, transformation &amp; transgression, earlier/formative stages, pre &amp; post independence scenario&lt;br&gt;DSV Sastri</td>
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<td>12.15-1.15pm</td>
<td>2) Lec Dem&lt;br&gt;<em>Female Voice in Kuchipudi Yakshagana Music</em>&lt;br&gt;V Bhavani</td>
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<td>2-3pm</td>
<td><strong>Lec Dem</strong>&lt;br&gt;<em>Kuchipudi Yakshagana Chandoritulu</em>&lt;br&gt;Degala Sambasiva Rao</td>
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<td><strong>Interviews</strong>&lt;br&gt;Vedantam Radheshyam by Yashoda Thakur&lt;br&gt;Vedantam Ramalinga Sastri by Anupama Kylash&lt;br&gt;Bhagavathula Venkatrama Sarma by Anupama Kylash&lt;br&gt;Vedantam Venkatachalapathi Rao by Yashoda Thakur&lt;br&gt;Mahankali Suryanarayana by DSV Sastri</td>
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#### Day 4
**26-02-2016 Friday**

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>10-11.30am</td>
<td><strong>Lec Dem</strong>&lt;br&gt;1) <em>Yakshaganam and its Literature</em>&lt;br&gt;Vedantam Ramalinga Sastri</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.45-1.15pm</td>
<td>2) <em>Pagati Veshalu</em>&lt;br&gt;Chinta Ravi Balakrishna</td>
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<td>2-3pm</td>
<td><strong>Lec Dem</strong>&lt;br&gt;<em>Kuchipudi Yakshaganam: Pratinayakulu</em>&lt;br&gt;By Yeleswarapy Srinivasulu</td>
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<td><strong>Interview</strong>&lt;br&gt;Balakondala Rao by Madhavi Puranam</td>
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<td><strong>Pasumarthi Venkateswara Sarma and Pasumarthi Srinivasa Sarma</strong>&lt;br&gt;Tadepalli Satyanarayana Sarma</td>
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<td><strong>Bhagavathula Sethuram P Vardhini</strong></td>
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### Day 5  
**27-02-2016 Saturday**

| Panel | 10-1 am  
Kuchipudi Yakshaganam- Young Generation & Challenges  
**Moderator:** Madhavi Puranam |
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<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Hari Ramamurthy by Kathyayani Thota</td>
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### Day 6  
**28-02-2016 Sunday**

| Lec Dem | 10am-12 noon  
The lost Daruvus of Kuchipudi Yakshaganam  
Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma, Vedantam Radheshyam, Pasumarthi Seshubabu  
**Moderator:** Vedantam Ramalinga Sastri |
|---|---|
| Lec Dem | **Yakshaganam and evolution of Ntryarupakam by Vempati Chinna Satyam-**  
Balkondala Rao |
| Interview | **Pasumarthi Seshu Babu** by Vedantam Ramalinga Sastri |

### Day 7  
**29-02-2016 Monday**

| Lec-Dem | 10am-12 noon  
*Kuchipudi Yakshaganam- Dramatic structure and Nuances of Performance/ Presentation*  
Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma  
**Moderator:** Vedantam Ramalinga Sastri |
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<tr>
<td>Address by the Chairman, and Secretary of SNA, New Delhi and interaction with the gurus, artistes and scholars of Kuchipudi Yakshaganam. (Proposed)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Road leading to Sri Siddhendra Yogi Kuchipudi Kalapeetham, Kuchipudi village, Movva Mandal, Krishna Zilla, Andhra Pradesh where the Kuchipudi Yakshaganam documentation was done.

Stage for the evening performances in the grounds of Sri Siddhendra Yogi Kuchipudi Kalapeetham
Kuchipudi scholars and gurus at the inauguration of the morning seminar sessions

Garlanding the idol of Siddhendra Yogi in the premises of Sri Siddhendra Yogi Kuchipudi Kalapeetham
The senior-most Kuchipudi Guru, Chinta Seetaramanjaneyulu being honoured after his talk by Anand Kuchibhotla, Chairman, Kuchipudi Natyaramam

Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma (Left) in a practice session with Yeleswarapu Srinivas
The temple of Balatripurasundari and Ramalingeswara Swamy in Kuchipudi Village

From right:
Keynote speaker Bhagavathula S. S. Sarma, D.S.V. Sastry and Sridharachari

Kiran Seth addressing a morning session

All photos: Courtesy Nartanam
Schedule for the evening performances of "Kuchipudi Yakshaganam Documentation"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day/Date</th>
<th>6 pm onwards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23-02-2016 (Tuesday)</td>
<td>4-5 pm</td>
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<td>Inauguration of “Documentation and Presentation” of Kuchipudi Yakshaganam by the Culture Minister of Andhra Pradesh, and Secretary - SNA (proposed).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6-8 pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sastrekha Parinayam</td>
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<td>Pasumarthi Ramlinga Sastri</td>
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<td>8.15-11.00 pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gollakalapam</td>
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<td>Vedantam Radheshyam</td>
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<td><strong>Day 2</strong></td>
<td>6.00 - 8.00 pm</td>
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<td>24-02-2016 (Wednesday)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhamakalapam</td>
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<td>Vedantam Raghava and Vedantam Venkata Nagachalapati Rao</td>
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<td>8.15 - 9.45 pm</td>
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<td>Mohini Bhasmasura</td>
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<td>Chintu Ravi Balakrishna</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10.00 pm -11.30 pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sri Raghavendra Vaibhavam</td>
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<td>Chintu Ramamurthy</td>
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<td><strong>Day 3</strong></td>
<td>6-8pm</td>
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<td>25-02-2016 (Thursday)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parvathi Kalyanam</td>
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<td>Vedantam Satyanarsimha Sastri</td>
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<td>8.15-9.45 pm</td>
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<td>Mahishasura Mardhini</td>
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<td>Pasumarthi Venkateswara Sarma and Pasumarthi Srinivasa Sarma</td>
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<td>10.00 pm to 11.30 pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bhagavadgita</td>
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<td>Bhagavatula Venkatrama Sarma</td>
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<td><strong>Day 4</strong></td>
<td>6 - 7.15 pm</td>
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<td>26-02-2016 (Friday)</td>
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<td>Ramanatakam</td>
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<td>Bhagavatula Sethuram</td>
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<td>7.30-9.30 pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gujrananeeyam</td>
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<td>Pasumarthi Ramalinga Sastri</td>
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<td><strong>Day 5</strong></td>
<td>6-8 pm</td>
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<td>27-02-2016 (Saturday)</td>
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<td>Mohini Bhasmasura</td>
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<td>Hari Ramamurthy</td>
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<td>8.15 – 10.15 pm</td>
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<td>Usha Parinayam</td>
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### Day 6
**28-02-2016 (Sunday)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Performer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-8 pm</td>
<td>Nartanasala</td>
<td>Vedantam Ramalinga Sastri</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.15-10.15 pm</td>
<td>Mohini Rukmangada</td>
<td>Pasumarthi Seshubabu</td>
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### Day 7
**29-02-2016 (Monday)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Performer</th>
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<tr>
<td>4-5.30 pm</td>
<td>Valedictory Function</td>
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<td>6-8 pm</td>
<td>Bhakta Prahlada</td>
<td>Vedantam Venkata Nagachalapati Rao</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.15-10.15 pm</td>
<td><em><strong>Vinayaka Vijayam</strong></em></td>
<td>Yeleswarapu Srinivasulu</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* *Nartanam 71*

* *A still from Golla Kalapam***
Stills from *Bhama Kalapam*: Clockwise from top left: Vedantam Venkata Naga Chalapathi Rao as Satyabham; Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma as Madhavi (sutradhara) & Satyabham; Sutradhara, Vedantam Raghava as Krishna & Satyabham; Krishna & Satyabham
Stills from Sasirekha Parinayam by Pasumarthi Ramalinga Sastri
Nartanam

Mohini Bhasmasura by Chinta Ravi
Balakrishna

Raghavendra Vaibhavam
by Chinta Ramamurthy

Bhagavadgita by
Bhagavathula
Venkatrama Sarma
Mahishasura
Mardhini by
Pasumarthi
Venkateswara Sarma
and Pasumarthi
Srinivasa Sarma

Gajananeeyam by
Pasumarthi
Ramalinga Sastri

Vinayaka Vijayam by
Yeleswarapu Srinivasulu
Stills from *Usha Parinayam* by Pasumarthi Rattaiah Sarma

*Parvathi Kalyanam* by Vedantam Satyanarasimha Sastry
Mohini
Bhasmasura by
Hari Ramamurthy

Lalitha
Bhandasura
Charitam by Bala
Kondala Rao

Mohini
Rukmangada by
Pasumarthi Seshu Babu

All photos: Courtesy Nartanam
The Venues:
Seminar/Day Programs : The Plaza Hotel, Begumpet, Hyderabad.
9.30 am to 1.30 pm (everyday)
Evening Performances: Ravindra Bharati, Khairatabad, Hyderabad.
6.00 pm onwards (everyday)

Date/Time
5 Oct
9.30- 10.30 am
* Formal inauguration of Seminar Welcome address
  Madhavi Puranam, Chief Editor, Nartanam
* An Oration to Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan & Reading out of the Message from Dr Kapila Vatsyayan
* Inaugural Address – Shri B. V. Papa Rao, IAS (Retd), Advisor to Govt. of Telangana
* Release of Special Issue of Nartanam on Dr. Mandakranta Bose

10.30am-10.45 pm
Welcome Address to Seminar
Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao

12.15 pm
Paper: An overview of dance as dealt in the sastras from Natyasastra down to Nrttaratnavali
Dr. Bharat Gupt
Chair: Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao
12.15- 1.15 pm  
*Dance Treatises: The Contribution of Telugus*  
**Dr. Anuradha Jonnalagadda**  
*Chair: Dr. Mandakranta Bose*

**Day 2  9.30-10.30 am**  
*Nrttaratnavali: An Overview*  
**Dr. Yashoda Thakur**  
*Chair: Dr. Choodamani Nandagopal*

**10.30- 11.30 am**  
*The Asthetics of Jayasenapati*  
**Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao**  
*Chair: Dr. Mandakranta Bose*

**11.30- 1.30 pm**  
*Lecture Demonstration: Perini – Its History, Evolution, Reconstruction by Late Guru Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna*  
**Guru Kalakrishna**  
*Chair: Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao*

**Day 3  9.30 am - 10.30 am**  
*Paper: Someshvara's Manasollasa in comparison with Nrttaratnavali*  
**Dr. R. Ganesh**  
*Chair: Dr. Bharat Gupt*

**11.30 am - 1.30 pm**  
*Panel Discussion*  
*The Government, the Artist, the Scholar and the Corporate - Bridging the Pillars*  
**Panel:**  
*Shri B. Venkatesham* (IAS), Secretary to Government of Telangana Youth Advancement, Tourism & Culture Department;  
*Shri Mamidi Harikrishna* (Director, Dept. of Language & Culture, Govt. of Telangana);  
**Dr. K I Varaprasad Reddy** (Founder Chairman, Shanta Biotech);  
*Smt. Anuradha Prasad* (Member, Board of Governors, Dr. Reddy’s
Laboratories), **Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao** (Eminent Scholar), **Dr. Kiran Seth** (Founder, SPIC MACAY), **Prof. Anuradha Jonnalagadda** (Faculty, Dance Department, Univ. Of Hyderabad), **Dr. Sunil Kothari** (Eminent Critic), **Smt. Leela Venkataraman** (Eminent Critic), **Smt. Manjari Sinha** (Eminent Critic), **Shri K. K. Gopalakrishnan** (Eminent Critic), **Shri Kedar Mishra** (Eminent Critic), **Shri Mohammed Ali Baig** (Eminent Theatre Personality), **Dr. Katyayani Ganti** (Dancer Scholar)

**Moderator:**
**Shri Suresh K. Goel** (Former DG- ICCR)

**Day 4  9.30-10.30am**
*Nrtraratnavali: A Historical View of Jayasenapati and the aesthetics of presentation*

**Dr. Mandakranta Bose**
*Chair: Dr. Anuradha Jonnalagadda*

10.30-11.30- **Questions**

**11.30am -12.30pm**
*The sculptural representation of the desi tradition with a special focus on Nrttaratnavali*

**Dr Vidya Shimladka**
*Chair: Dr. Mandakranta Bose*

**6 pm**
*Guru-Sishya: Odissi Madhavi Mudgal and Arushi Mudgal*
ORATION:
KAPILA VATSYAYAN

Dear and Respected Kapila-ji, our Guru, Mentor and Intellectual Beacon,

*NARTANAM* is honoured to extend you our immense gratitude and affection. You have guided us magnificently and most generously and have shared your vast scholarship and experience for the benefit of readers not only in India but in far distant lands.

It would take us reams to list your many achievements in art, dance, administration, culture and academia. However, we must mention how we are specially indebted to you.

You have over the past decades endeavoured to bridge the gap between dance practitioners and dance theorists and, following your example, we at *Nartanam* are trying to do the same.

We have tried to emulate you in many ways. All the dance forms of India, be they of any genre, are examined with equal respect and consideration by *Nartanam*. There is no discrimination, bias or prejudice printed on the pages of this publication. We have no axe to grind, no hidden agenda be it cultural, social, linguistic or ethnic. We have learnt from you that man made boundaries are meaningless to devotees of dance.

Kapila-ji, we are most grateful for your contribution to nation building through your life’s work. God bless you.

Thank you.

Team *Nartanam*
October 4, 2017

MESSAGE

I AM DELIGHTED THAT NARTANAM IS ORGANIZING A CONCLAVE OF DANCE FROM OCTOBER 5 – 8, 2017. I HAVE NOTED THAT THE CONCLAVE PROVIDES A RICH FARE OF SEMINAR, TALK AND PERFORMANCES, WITH PARTICIPATION OF EMINENT SCHOLARS, ARTISTES, AND GOVERNMENT AND CORPORATE OFFICIALS.

I CONGRATULATE THE ORGANIZERS AND THE CO-SPONSORS FOR PRESENTING A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME OF EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT. I AM SORRY I WILL BE MISSING THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY AND LEARN FROM THIS WELL DESIGNED PROGRAMME.

NARTANAM HAS ALSO BEEN PUBLISHING A QUARTERLY JOURNAL CONTAINING A VARIETY OF COMMENTARIES AND WELL RESEARCHED ARTICLES, AND PHOTO FEATURES, ON A BROAD RANGE OF TOPICS CONCERNING DANCE.

MY SPECIAL FELICITATION TO SMT. MADHAVI PURANAM, THE LIVEWIRE OF NARTANAM AND HER COLLEAGUES FOR THEIR YEOMAN SERVICE IN THE CAUSE OF PROMOTION AND PRESERVATION OF THE ARTISTIC TRADITIONS.

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

Chairperson, IIC-International search Division, India International Centre; Formerly Secretary, Department of Art, Ministry of HID, Government of India

October 4, 2017
Inaugural of Nartanam Conclave-2017

Madhavi Puranam, Editor, Nartanam

B. V. Papa Rao, Advisor, Govt. of Telangana

Release of Nartanam Vol 17 No. 3 - A Special on Mandakranta Bose
L to R : Vikas Nagrare, Madhavi Puranam, Choodamani Nandagopal, B.V. Papa Rao, Leela Venkataraman, Mandakranta Bose, Suresh Goel and Kiran Seth
“Building the Bridges”: A Round Table

A paper presentation
L to R: Bharat Gupt, Pappu Venugopala Rao

Youngsters and Stalwarts
Dance sculptures of Kakatiya Temples

1. The big toe and the little toe are in level with the heel of the other foot. (Mānas 16.4.1320, LR 7-42). This sāthāna is not mentioned in NY.

Vidya Shimladka

Yashoda Thakur
Parshwanath Upadhye and Group
T. Reddi Lakshmi

T. Reddi Lakshmi performing *Bhamakalapam*

T. Reddi Lakshmi with Yelwarapu Srinivas

T. Reddi Lakshmi performing *Bhamakalapam*
A scene from Keibul Lamjao

Choreographer Guru Choutombi Singh (in the centre) with the Keibul Lamjao troupe
Madhavi Mudgal being felicitated by Mandakranta Bose

Mamidi Harikrishna, Director, Culture, Telangana Government
PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

Takeaways from Nartanam Conclave 2017

LEELA VENKATARAMAN

The Nartanam Conclave 2017 (5-8 October 2017), mounted at Hyderabad, with the Kakatiya Heritage Trust co-sponsoring the seminar section, involved dance scholars like Mandakranta Bose (M.A., M.Litt, D.Phil., FRAS, FRSC) residing in Canada, Bharat Gupt (classicist, theatre theorist, musicologist, cultural analyst and newspaper columnist), Pappu Venugopala Rao (musicologist, writer and composer with three Masters degrees, two PhDs, Doctor of letters), Jonnalagadda Anuradha, Professor of Dance at the University of Hyderabad, Choodamani Nandagopal (former Dean, Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences, Jain University), B. V. Papa Rao, Advisor to the Government of Telengana, also heading the Kakatiya Heritage Trust, B. Venkatesham (Secretary to Government of Telangana Youth Advancement, Tourism & Culture Department), Mamidi Harikrishna (Director of Department of Language and Culture, Government of Telengana), K. I. Varaprasad Reddy (Founder Chairman, Shanta Biotech), Anuradha Prasad (Member, Board of Governors, Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories), scholars, critics of dance and art columnists, youngsters involved in Dance Research, dancers and other artists – in short, representatives from all groups of stakeholders concerned one way or the other with Dance and allied arts.

While Nartanam was largely prompted by considerations of the deeply felt need to bring people together to discuss dance from the Telugu regions, after witnessing lately the very sub-standard Kuchipudi dance scenario, the challenges of bringing forward the Kakatiya heritage, were somewhat different. After over half a century of sharing the overall Telugu identity under the State of Andhra Pradesh, political cleavages had led to the recent carving of two states out of the larger Andhra Pradesh, namely Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. And now Telengana was in search of a distinctive cultural identity. Strangely, Kuchipudi,
the common inheritance from the land of the Telugu people, is also looked upon with some reservation as belonging more to the riverine areas of Seema Andhra! Mercifully, the over-riding awareness of having lived with this dance tradition as a part and parcel of the people in the Telugu region for so long seems to have won the day, and the dance has been accepted as a common legacy. But what can be touted as the specialty of Telangana? Even Mamidi Harikrishna (Director Department of Language and Culture, Telangana) announced that dance forms like Perini discussed in the *Nrittaratnavali*, were in the process of being revivied and as a part of the thrust on these dances which are special to this Telugu region, the teaching of these forms in dance institutions had been taken up with zeal. A three minute film on what was thought of as Telangana art traditions was screened. And it is in this region that the Kakatiya dynasty which flourished for 300 years from the 12th to 14th centuries with Warangal (Orugallu) as the capital, ruled as a great patron of the arts. Their activities have become the main centre of concentrated research for the Telangana State – which explains the creation of the Kakatiya Heritage Trust with a dynamic retired bureaucrat as head.

The Seminar planned as the main event round which the Nartanam Conclave was woven, had as its main thrust a discussion on the 13th century text *Nrittaratnavali* written by Jaya Senapati (the year ascribed is 1253 A.D.), the Commander-in-chief of the elephant corps of the Kakatiya army. He belonged to the Ayyana dynasty in Velanadu and his ancestors are believed to have been serving the Chola rulers, and Ganapati Deva who invaded the area ruled by Jayana’s father and took it over, took the then young son Jayana under his care and when he grew up, his patron made him the commander of his elephant forces. Since Ganapatideva put him under the tutelage of Gundamatya, Jayana had the opportunity to learn the fine arts.

In fact, it is the Kakatiya Heritage Trust that has published an English translation by Pappu Venugopala Rao and Yashoda Thakore of the *Nrittaratnavali* of Jaya Senapati. Earlier attempts at researching this text were by the great scholar V. Raghavan who had authored a critical edition published by GOML in 1965. A Telugu translation of this text by P. S. R. Appa Rao and Rallapalli Anantha Krishna Sarma had been published by the Potti Sriramulu Telugu University, and the Andhra Pradesh Sangeet Natak Academy too had published an edition of the same name. An interesting bit of information during the deliberations of the Conclave was on how the Kakatiya dynasty acquired its name. Vidyanatha’s *Prataparudriyam* mentions the Goddess *Kakati* as the presiding deity of this dynasty which explains the name *Kakatiya*. The other quaint story with no authenticated document is of a pumpkin creeper called *Kakati* which acquired importance during one of the
invasions of the Kingdom when the harem was attacked and all the women slaughtered with the young prince falling into the pumpkin creeper down below escaping and being rescued and hence the dynasty came to be known as Kakati! The Nrittaratnavali assumes special significance, for it gives information not just on dance but also on the history, the sociology and the anthropology of the times and according to the English translation, “gives glimpses of voice culture”, and Kinesiology.

Above all to bring together Sastra (which seems to be getting to be the pure concern of scholars delving into old texts) and Prayoga, which concerns the practicing performers, in a healthy exchange of views is all for the better. As early as the 14th century, the Jaina author Sudhakalasa in his Sangitopanishadarsadarhara complained that scholars who wrote on Natya seemed far removed from the performers of the arts – as much as actors and dancers seemed to have little idea of what the scholars were talking about – all of which was leading to Sastra losing its identity.

Kale sminnartaka murkha vividvamsah sadhaka nahi/
Na nartakanvinabhyasah sastrat siddhirna tam vina/

This statement could well apply to the present position where sastra and prayoga are poles apart and endeavours like the Nartanam Conclave are more needed than ever.

It was a good idea to have the Seminar in the same premises of Hotel Plaza where the delegates were also accommodated. This move saved the organisers the tedium of travel to another venue through the blinding city traffic and above all helped the proceedings of the Seminar to be faithful to the clock.

One of the best aspects of the event was in coming into contact with an unusual bureaucrat like B. V. Papa Rao who made it a point to attend the proceedings – his constant presence proving the culturally active role the newly formed State is desirous of following. In his inaugural address, he mentioned about the State government approaching the UNESCO with the proposal to nominate Ramappa temple near Warangal as a world heritage site. A special dossier on the temple was being prepared in conjunction with Choodamani Nandagopal, for UNESCO. Warmly supportive of the Nartanam efforts B. V. Papa Rao made the pertinent point to all art stake holders in general and to dancers in particular: Please stop your differences, come together and discuss your differences instead of avoiding it. Ego hassles of artists had prevented the local dance stars from attending the event. The fact of not being singled out by
name or photograph in the publicity material (which only carried photographs of artistes slated to perform in the evening programmes and of delegates who were reading papers, and of significant bureaucrats of Telengana Department of Culture, the principle sponsor for the event) would seem to have been held out as a gross
omission and insult. Whatever the reasons for lack of enthusiasm, dancers who are used to being so much in the limelight, could have been more forthcoming and magnanimous one feels, when an event of this nature was being tried out for the first time.

Pappu Venugopala Rao in his opening remarks placed *Nrittaratnavali* above Nandikeswara’s *Abhinaya Darpana*. Mentioning inscriptions which refer to details of *devadasis* and artistes connected with temples, he made the suggestion that any future Conclaves planned by the organisers, should set aside one full day for the delegates to visit the Ramappa temple, which for him was the singularly important legacy for those studying the state of art during the Kakatiya period, and he completely disagreed with V. Raghavan who maintained that there was very little connection between *Nrittaratnavali* and the Ramappa temple. He, more than once, quoted from the work to describe how Siva who was in fact formless, had to acquire a form in order to satisfy his passion for *nrtta*.

"....bhamanopi
Sada sivadyakrtibhedayoge/
yatkautukam karanamahurapta
nrttam na tat kasya bhavetsukhaya//

Thus went the author Jayapa’s eulogy for *nrtta* (*nrttaprasamsa)*.

While the word *nrtta* actually refers to non-representational dance, the detailed mention of what constitutes abhinaya and acting, reveal that what the author had in mind certainly included representational dance too.

Much was expected of the first paper by Bharat Gupt, which according to the announced schedule was *An overview of dance as dealt in the Sastras from Natyasastra to Nrittaratnavali*. Commencing his session with a rendition of the Mangalacharan from Abhinavagupta’s *Abhinava Bharati*, one had no quarrels with the speaker announcing that he was looking at the way ahead and that his attempt was to bring *Sastra* and *Prayoga* together. Then came the most unexpected announcement that while his paper had already been handed over to the organisers, *seeing the nature of the gathering in front of him (!),* he had decided to make some general observations. He said that as youngsters, one was not taught to delve into *Sastras*, and make meaning out of what it mentioned – for a performance depended on *manasa, vacha, karmana* to produce fruit. *Sastras* were not eternal and were rewritten from time to time. If Brahma’s gift to mankind of the *Natya Veda* was alive, it was due to practitioners of art and not scholars. Veda as eternal knowledge had come down to us through practice. The
next unforeseen observation was that no such thing as Sanskrit Drama existed for people spoke in Prakrit and most of the so called Sanskrit work had a lot of Prakrit in it. As a musicologist and instrumentalist who makes music on the Surbahar and Sitar, one would have expected him to be a great enthusiast of abstract music in the shape of alapana of the raga. But surprisingly, he spoke for the written word, the pada and compositional element which had been largely forgotten by the Hindustani musicians according to him, during the last 200 years, putting their art to jeopardy. Contrastingly, the speaker maintained that Carnatic music which had diligently passed on from generation to generation its vast repertoire of Kritis was in an advantageous position. His summing up that it was a puritanical attitude that killed art and that art is to be used with great seriousness for all purposes catering to the needs of the social system, was unexceptional.

From the chair, Pappu Venugopala Rao was quick to disagree with the speaker about Carnatic music, which he said in its plentiful reservoir of compositions by past masters had created a comfort zone, which allowed the musicians the liberty of forgoing Manodharma which is the essence of all creativity. Pada should be the last priority, with swara and tala coming after that. Imitation becomes easy. It is like any number of books coming out on rasa thanks to Bharata’s Natyasastra. To earn credentials by living on past legacy is easy. The main burden of what Bharat Gupt said was vehemently opposed by Mandakranta Bose who also made
a passing observation about Sanskrit in India surprisingly not receiving the kind of veneration as in the West – in Canada for instance – where she was helping organise an International Sanskrit Conference which over 500 delegates are slated to attend. And she vociferously argued that Sanskrit Drama did exist.

Bose is right. Sanskrit in the west has not had to get mixed up with politics and class warfare with the language being lambasted for its upper class associations, and its Brahmin following. There is a move to-day in the country to give classical status to Prakrit since many texts in the Jain and Buddhist theology are in Prakrit.

Anuradha Jonnalgadda took an active part in the proceedings, getting many of her research students from the University to attend and gain knowledge from the Seminar. Her own paper Dance treatises contributed by Telugus, was fairly exhaustive – mentioning a long line of works known and unknown. Mandakranta chairing the session introduced her appropriately. Basing her facts on manuscripts published and unpublished, Anuradha mentioned works prior to Nrittaratnavali, like Sangita Samayasara of Parshvadeva. From 10th to 16th centuries covering the period under the Kakatiyas, Reddys and the Vijayanagara kingdom (all of whom were great supporters of the arts) one had Sangita Chintamani by Vema Bhupala and Sangita Suryodaya of Bhandaru Lakshminarayana, son of Bangaru Vittala who wrote on the Sangita Ratnakara. Cherukuri Lakshmidhara’s commentary on Geeta Govinda was there and other works were Chatura Damodara’s Sangeeta Darpana, Abhinaya Bhushana (with Tamil meanings), Alankara Sangraha of Amitananda, Nartananirnaya by Pundarika Vitthala and of course Nrittaratnavali. The speaker mentioned how in the Vijayanagara period, works gave details of nritta, of Angikabhinaya, and explained how Pada Bhedas, Desi Karanas were all defined. Evolution of Charis, and as Mandakranta in her book Movement and Mimesis has pointed out, a Sastric text becomes an excellent repository of knowledge and while trying to understand an art form in depth, these ancient works provide invaluable data. Pappu Venugopala Rao mentioned the significant contribution of Manavalli Rama Krishna Kavi who collected manuscripts, edited the Abhinava Bharati and compiled the Bharatakosa.

While contributing a lot of other information pertaining to the Kakatiyas and Nrittaratnavali, Pappu Venugopala Rao’s own paper on Aesthetics of Nritta Ratnavali proved to be a damp squib with a lot of material spoken on various aspects barring the one in question. Rao however mentioned how the period after the Natyasastra and between the time of Bharata and Jayapa, there was an evolution in the writing of the Sastras and the total anonymity of the writer in the early works was replaced with mention of all the predecessors the writer was
grateful to, for he was building on past material. Thus Jayapa mentions Kohala, Kirtidara, Thandu, Abhinavagupta, Someswara whose Manasollasa became very important and Sarangadeva. Mentioning Bharata with great veneration, Jayapa also says in Chapter II that were he to be born again to read the Nrittaraṇṭavali, he would be thrilled at how well Jayapa had understood the Natyaśāstra, and would refer to him as Sriman Jayasenapati! Rao spoke of how working with Yashoda Thakore, translating the Nrittaraṇṭavali had been an arduous task, despite V. Raghavan’s earlier critical work that was available. This exclusively Desi dance tradition means regional and not folk, as per the distorted classical/folk divide, which we had created in the country. What we call sastriya nṛtya which is pan-Indian, is a better way of referring to some of our forms than using the word classical. The basic vocabulary of dance comes from the Natyaśāstra, and from here there was an expansion of grammar and new aspects kept coming in. As on the opening day in his remarks, Rao referred to the first chapter of Nrittaraṇṭavali, which in the very first verse describes Siva’s ruse while explaining to Parvati the various angas of nṛtta by touching the relevant parts of her body.

Maulim svedajalardrakuntalamurah purvadhikosnastanam
Sronimucchvasadamsukam pulakite parsve prakampau karau/
Sastambham caranadvayam ca mudito gauryassivah kautuka
tattannṛttakalochitangakathanavyajaih sprsan patu vah//
May Siva who was delighted on touching Gauri’s hair locks which were wet with sweat, her warm breasts, her waist seen through the elevated sari, her quivering sides, her trembling hands and inert feet, on the pretext of unravelling to her the various aspects of nrtta (abstract dance), protect us.

(May Siva who was delighted on touching Gauri’s hair locks which were wet with sweat, her warm breasts, her waist seen through the elevated sari, her quivering sides, her trembling hands and inert feet, on the pretext of unravelling to her the various aspects of nrtta (abstract dance), protect us.)

(as translated by Pappu Venugopala Rao and Yashoda Thakore).

Mandakranta Bose mentioned that Lasyangas is an aspect which changed course from Bharata to other writers. She took it upon herself to give some idea of the aesthetics of Jayasenapati which an experienced scholar like Pappu Venugopala Rao had failed to touch upon.

Yashoda Thakore also gave an overview of the Nrittaratnavali she had helped translate. A Kuchipudi and Vilasini Natyam exponent as she is, she spoke briefly on Ganapati Deva, Jayapa’s patron and on Jayapa being a diligent teacher. Actually Jayapa wrote Geetaratnavali, Vadyaratnavali and Nrittaratnavali. Unfortunately, the first two are untraceable, and only the Nritta text survives. His clear instructions are that Charis should all start in the samapada, because as a starting point this is the position which enables the body to open out to any type of movement. He scrupulously gives credit for sources of his information and never claims to be the owner of knowledge which he has not been solely responsible for. He codifies the regional forms in Desi style. He mentions 47 Lasyangas. Jayapa mentions the age of 6 or 7 as the right time for a child to start and even recommends a style of pyjama costume which leaves the leg below the knees free so as to be seen while movement is executed. But for female aspirants, he mentions the coming of age when an upper garment is a must and another is to be tied firmly round the waist and if the bosom has begun to develop, the disciple must be made to wear a bodice to keep the breast firm while dancing.

Satsaptavarsadesiyam gaurim yadva tu rohinim
Perini is mentioned in his work as a comic and vigorous form of dance, totally unlike the very manly, dizzyingly fast paced dance it is in late Nataraja Ramakrishna’s restructured version, which is performed to-day. Jayapa even mentions the nartaki/ nartaka lakshanams. Even the musicians are discussed. The 7th-8th chapters mention details of how the female dancer is to perform.

Chairing Yashoda’s session, Choodamani Nandagopal’s introduction of the paper to follow was so spun out that it became a separate session in itself! The main burden of her talk was the Karnataka/Telugu region from 7th-13th centuries, shared characteristics found in sculpture. She mentioned that restructuring Desi dance units was more difficult than the Marga oriented forms, she advocated Nrittaratnavali as a reliable guide for persons engaged in reconstruction research. Nandagopal pointed out that Perini sculpture was seen in Karnataka temples even earlier than in the Telugu regions. She pointed out the Jaina Chinnanatha temple as an example – though one wonders if she meant Chennakeshavaiyya temple in Hoysaleswara where one finds many sculptural illustrations of Perini.

The other paper throwing real light on Nrittaratnavali was by Vidya Shimladka whose Ph.D research was substantively based on this work. Emphasizing the Desi element (desya means region and this refers to regional styles as against the pan-Indian style of the Natyasastra) which is the hallmark of the Nrittaratnavali she concentrated on the codifying of regional forms which from the 12th - 18th centuries became a feature of medieval texts like Manasollasa of Someswara, Sangita Ratnakara of Sarangadeva and of Nrittaratnavali, Sangita
Samayasara of Parshvadeva, Nrityadhyaya of Asokamalla and Nartananirnaya of Pundarika Vitthala. The Desi Sthanakas, Karanas, Caris in Nruttaratnavali in minute detail show the Mula (origin and Sastra), Anvaya (application) and Prayoga (practical application). Also represented in sculpture on temple walls, the thousand pillared temple in Warangal, sculptures in Ramappa temple at Palampet, the Alaya Nritya Sampradayam in these temples yield proof of how evolved these Desi forms were. The sculpture/dance connections with examples from the Swayambhu temple and Ramappa temple bring out the close sculpture/dance cross pollination in Indian art. Jayapa not only outlined the codification of Desi but gave to dance a separate status without tagging it with drama.

One of the lectures which showed painstaking research was by Shatavadhani R. Ganesh, on Manasollasa by Somesvara (1126-1239), a Chalukyan King and the work assumes a special significance since this was the text that inspired Jayasenapati a lot and in Nruttaratnavali, he mentions his name in at least a couple of places. Somesvara had a worthy son Jagadekamalla who wrote the Sangita Choodamani. The speaker brought out the strong bond of cultural commonalities transcending political barriers, which existed in those days and how intellectuals borrowed acknowledging their act and giving full credit to those from whose thoughts they benefited. The speaker mentioned Birhatsamhita by Varahamihira, Sivatatva Ratnakaram by Basava Bhupala and Mansollasa as the three encyclopaedic works of the times. Everything from sports, arts, sciences, crafts is dealt with by Manasollasa. Dance comes under Vinoda-Vimshati and is discussed in 456 verses. Desi aspects are discussed without mention of the
word. It is clear that the Marga/Desi difference meant little to Someswara. To quote the speaker, *Marga is a path and Desi the space, Marga deals with class and Desi with mass. Marga is elitist and desi is of the oppressed. Class and mass are never opposed to each other. The demarcation is absurd and there is no divide.* This catholic approach is seen in both *Sangita Ratnakara* and *Nrittaratnavali*, two works that in quick succession followed *Manasollasa*. One other significant point mentioned by the speaker while pointing to V. Raghavan’s comparative analysis of *Manasollasa* and *Nrittaratnavali*, he said that the two did not in many places match. Both Somesvara and Jayapa were meticulous about details – they were not gender specific as much as attitude specific (*stree sthanaka* and *purusha sthanaka*).

To give an exact picture of the work being done on Perini was Andhra Natyam scholar/dancer/guru Kalakrishna. Not a Perini performer himself, he however was the primal disciple of late Nataraja Ramakrishna who was responsible, between 1960 and 1968, for reviving Perini and is completely aware of the entire process of restructuring the form. The *Nrittaratnavali* as mentioned earlier has a complete part of Chapter 7 devoted to Perini and he describes a Perini dancer as

\[
\text{Ranjako rupasampannah prakhyatah khyatavamsajah} \\
\text{Bhavako rasikatalavedi gamakakovidah}
\]

(*A Perani is one who is capable of taking the audience to the heights of aesthetic pleasure, of attractive personality, reputation and commendable pedigree, sentient connoisseur, adept at rhythm, of music, ...*) The aim of the Telangana government is to make an entire syllabus of this art form, and they have enlisted the help of dancer/teacher Kalakrishna who earlier has trained Perini dancers. Its history is uncertain though from mention in *Bharatarnava, Sangita Ratnakara* and *Nrittaratnavali*, it must have had an old history. *Perini, Peruni, Prerana* are all mentioned. Nataraja Ramakrishna made several trips to Ramappa Temple to get some idea of what the dance form should be though there are no sculptures of Perini as such in this temple. The methodology of Perini is mentioned in *Nrittaratnavali*. Post *Doopam, Suryalingam*, mnemonic patterns are played and then *Kaivaram* is sung. Perini Santosh, Kalakrishna’s student gave a magnificent demonstration of the mind numbing speed with which the dance is performed. With live music, excerpts of *Melaprapti, Pushpanjali, Damaru yati vinyasam*, all based on sounds were presented. *Laghu Nritta* and *gargara* with ankle bells tied somewhere near the knees made to quiver in quick rhythm are all important. The five elements of Nature linked with the *Pancha linga-s* (since Perini is devoted to Siva worship) each of which was depicted in the dance. While female dancers presenting Perini is not what one sees, it has fallen to the
Perini Lecture-Demonstration
L to R: K. K. Gopalakrishnan and Guru Kala Krishna
lot of Kalakrishna to structure this, which is to be part of the syllabus in dance schools. A tall task, but necessity can be the mother of invention and Kalakrishna has trained some female students through his interpretation of whatever material he has picked up. He admits to having to coach a motley lot of students, many of whom are those who have been left out of the classes for Kuchipudi, which over years has attracted the bulk of dance talents in the Telugu areas. To see that Perini does not get reduced to an also ran is a challenge posed for Kalakrishna – which he is manfully tackling. While the three female students he presented in demonstrations were of varying standards, that much work is still needed to be done before the form gets a settled feel, is obvious.

Can a dance form be born out of political needs? Not impossible, when one sees how Odissi came into existence. But there the remnants of time in whatever was available of the Mahari’s dance and the active though by no means from the top drawer, Gotipua Nritiya, were available as framework for what was being attempted. In Perini barring what Nataraja Ramakrishna left behind through his arduous reconstructions, the female dancer’s repertoire is entirely left to one person to create with help from some texts. Orissa’s attempt saw the entire, scholarly community, litterateurs, musicians and dancers getting together with political backing. Kalakrishna needs all the help. Under the circumstances, one was intrigued at Pappu Venugopala Rao who was chairing the session asking somewhat belligerently as to what was so new about what Kalakrishna was trying to promote!

It was left to Mandakranta Bose to sum up the seminar proceedings by plugging loop holes in discussion. Bharata talked of dance as created for beauty or ‘shobha’. Nritta has no ‘rasa’ then. In purely abstract non-representational dance, Saushtava and Pramana are important. If there are two types– Manavika Siddhi and Daivika Siddhi, what is the real aim of dance? While dance for Bharata was only part of total theatre, rasa and the entire theory of meaning being communicated to the audience, meant that dance too could convey meaning and not just beauty. Even Vishnu Dharmottara Purana did not mention Nritya (representational dance). Abhinavagupta spoke of Nritta Pradhana and also Raga Kavya. Gradually with expansion over years, new ideas and new terms came in and words took on added connotations. Somesvara first mentioned Desi and this was followed by other texts. Jaya Senapati went beyond all in giving to dance a pre-eminent place. Even while he extolled Nrtta in a broad sense which included idea of Nritya though he did not call his work Nrityaratnavali. Desi Lasyangas, full of grace and the importance given to Saushtava, Pramana and Rekha, are what constitute main aspects of Jaya’s aesthetics. The aspect of Rekha had been discussed by his contemporary Sarangadeva in Sangitaratnakara as the attractive body
position, with a harmonious combination of head, the eyes and the hands. Grace and harmony or Saustava and Pramana had been prescribed even by Bharata. Everything had to be just so according to Nrittaratnavali, while Jaya was leaving a lot to the sensitivities of the artist. These prescriptive theories were anibaddha and nothing was imposed. Gender in dancer was unimportant – female dancers could do lasya filled dance or even Uddhata nritta.

“Bridging the Pillars”

The session on round table “Bridging the Pillars” with an open house discussion by representatives from all sections concerned with dance matters (which as an idea roused mixed expectations) turned out to be one of the most lively, with moderator Suresh Goel, ex Director, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, having worked at his homework in framing questions to be put to each person – whether from government or from scholarly or artistic circles. As an introduction, was the brief insight provided by M. Panduranga Rao, a trustee of the Kakatiya Heritage Trust who referred to the rare technology of the Ramappa Temple erected in 1213 AD – made of bricks that float in water without sinking! A demonstration with some bricks from the site put into a jug of water proved his statement. It is because of such bricks used, that the superstructure became so light that it could withstand calamities like earthquakes.

Suresh Goel pre-empted his questioning with an introduction on how Culture had become an important soft tool in cementing diplomatic relations with other
countries. Sunil Kothari, art commentator felt that more bureaucrats sensitive to art issues were the need of the hour, because while dealing with intangible area like culture and art, persons like Kiran Seth of SPIC MACAY and business men who were art minded were important to have for decision making. Kerala scholar K. K. Gopalakrishnan pointed to sponsorship travails when the sponsor wanted a film star included in every event to get the crowds to come and see the performances! As an SNA appointee looking after the Kutiyattam Kendra, he had seen to it that more money went to the artists than in frittering away on fripperies.

K.I. Varaprasad Reddy a corporate representative gave the example of Chennai where corporates had donated without any expectations. The government representative Burra Venkatesham gave the plea that when so many claimants for government support applied, to sift the deserving from the others was difficult which is why government adopts the safe practice of supporting the well established artistes – which meant that the same people got the lion’s share of government support with even the deserving among the less known ending up with no help. Pappu Venugopala Rao gave the example of the Music Academy, Chennai which functioned all the year without any help from the government.

On asked about the merits of art interaction and society, dancer Katyayani Ganti gave a spirited reply. One cannot quantify advantages – for as she put it this is not beer guzzling but more like wine tasting. Quantifying what is nurtured and created by man’s aesthetic sensibility, is difficult. It requires very sensitive handling and few government agencies seem to realise that. She drew attention to huge spaces costing the earth and impossible to fill with people, dirty toilets, uncomfortable and often broken chairs with auditorium bookings which can be cancelled at the last minute due to some government V.I.P’s whims, lack of an
educated audience who can value the programme correctly, lack of rehearsal space in a city where people live in pocket sized apartments very often, and performance floors without wooden flooring for dancing. Serious art is not all glamour, and it takes years for one to qualify as a worthy performer. The kind of dancers who get programmes are often not the best. Most programmes are so boring. It was a long gut felt anger at lack of understanding about the needs of a dancer.

Ultimately man does not live by bread alone. If Kings believed only in fighting wars and conquests, the innumerable treasures of art monarchy has left behind would not have been there. There is the more sensitive side of a human being who responds to beauty and aesthetics without which man would be an animal. This was my contention when asked “Why art?” An ugly factor of the contemporary scene was the constant lobbying for awards and recognitions, which is the order of the day! Instead of awarding undeserving persons very often, it was better for government to remain out of this area and have informed persons with no stake in the performance scene to judge. A prime minister’s wife naming a dancer for a Padma Shri is as ridiculous as one totally strange to music and its finer aspects, judging the best raga expert. Odisha Critic Kedar Mishra ridiculed the media which has done away with almost all space for arts coverage except film, food and fashion. What is the policy for selection of heads to look after government cultural organisations? Clout and lobbying seem to decide on who is picked and institutions are being destroyed. Has the government any policy on how to educate and enlighten our masses on the arts?

Anuradha Jonnalagadda was equally critical about various selections for dance events mounted by the government. Classical dancers (barring the fortunate few who know how to push the right buttons) are a struggling lot. Now it is a question of artists having to apply for Padma awards too!
In all this critic Manjari Sinha spoke of art promoting goodness in people and she expressed the need to start inculcating art knowhow right from the school level with children! Mandakranta Bose expressed her disappointment at Bollywood dancing acquiring a larger number of supporters even abroad, than classical dance. Suresh Goel summed up that what is a dire necessity is a white paper on art policy.

The best part of the intense four day event was the promise by the sponsors that this should be an annual event. One hopes for greater participation in future. Seeing excellent programmes before very thin audiences only due to lack of communication among sections of people is a shame. Chosen with care, were the evening performances of Kuchipudi Bhamakalapam by T. Reddi Lakshmi under the tutelage of Guru Jaya Rama Rao, the exquisite Manipuri Keibul Lamjao wherein an ancient art form, without its classical grammar hampered, had projected a very thought provoking group performance on a very contemporary issue on ecology and the man/animal bond showing how the language of dance can be relevant to all times, the exquisitely thought out group Bharatanatyam by Parshwanath Upadhye from Bengaluru based entirely on Sanskrit sahitya (in keeping with the Concalve going into the Sastras), and the Odissi duet of Madhavi Mudgal and disciple/niece Arushi Mudgal under the Guru/Shishya idea.

Altogether Nartanam has to be congratulated for the arduous task undertaken and carried off with aplomb.

All Photos Courtesy: Avinash Pasricha
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T. Reddi Lakshmi with Guru Jaya Rama Rao

Sunita M. Bhagwat, Commissioner, Tourism, Telangana Government (on the mike) felicitating Guru Jaya Rama Rao (second from Left) and T. Reddi Lakshmi (Extreme Left)

Photos Courtesy: Avinash Pasricha
Parshwanath Upadhye’s Punya Group being felicitated by Advisor, Telangana Government, B.V. Papa Rao

Photos Courtesy: Avinash Pasricha