

“Her - Story through His(s)tory: Evolution of Solo Repertoire in Kuchipudi”

A Dissertation submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfillment of the award
of a Ph.D. degree in the Dept. of Dance

By

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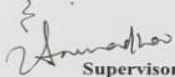
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To,

Acha & Jaanu

One taught me to fly

And

Other gave me space to fly

Acknowledgments

Still, I dance!!

Through the paradox of uncertainty

When my mind flutter in paleness

Intertwined to float in its duality

Even when I plunge into darkness

My body and soul could dance to the rhythm of my heartbeat.

Still, I dance!!

(Devi Girish, Blackhole)

Yes, I find solace in dancing; when I feel sad, depressed, happy, contented, jealous, proud, to be precise, all my emotions have transfigured to one or the other movement pattern. Writing and practicing dance is always part of 'the self' – the perception and conception of emotions through movements become its crux, and it varies from individual to individual. This same 'self' plays a significant role while writing dance, and you tend to go through all the emotions while writing dance too. Through this research work, I have experienced the emotions of Kanchanamala, Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry, and other referral points who became part of this journey. I believe I brought out the same emotions through my thoughts that is put forth through my analysis and writing. Above all, to make some corrections in the history and heighten the perceptions of the unheard.

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My Mine's

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Preface

The arts and literature, as the cultural products of a society, convey, communicate, and discuss various issues related to the society. They also try to depict the socio-political and cultural problems of the society. Similarly, performing arts and traditional theatre groups highlight and deal with the serious social issues of the society. The theatrical forms that grew out of the Bhakti Movement in Andhra Pradesh are Bhāgavata Mela Nāṭakam, Vīdhi Nāṭakam, Yakṣagānam, and Kalāpam. The cult after the Bhakti Movement was named Bhagavati cult, which originated after the Mauryan period. It is said that one of the greatest influences on Bhāgavata theatre is Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra. In the twenty-second chapter of the Nāṭyaśāstra, Bharata says that *vṛtti* (different modes of expression) was formulated by the inspiration drawn from the stories of Lord Vishnu and Lord Krishna. The stone inscription of the King Sarangadeva projected the year of Bhāgavata cult as 1348. One can conclude from this that the Bhakti cult paved the way for subsequent performance genres that mirrored the functions of the society.

The professional artists who comprised the Bhāgavata group were dancers, musicians, and actors; they moved from region to region and propagated their art form. The occasions for these performances were not necessarily ritual or social festivals, but any given opportunity to exhibit their art and vocation. In India, every region boasts of indigenous dance and theatre traditions that date back to time immemorial. These traditional theatres represent the mythological themes that are part and parcel of such performances to explain human life's travails.

Nevertheless, the names of these forms changed from place to place and region to region. Such forms include Yakṣagānam (Karnataka), Kathakali (Keralam), Kūḍiyāttam (Keralam), Bhāgavata Mela Nāṭakam, Kuchipudi (Andhra Pradesh),

Chau (Bengal), Khamba Thoibi (Manipur), Lai Haroba (Manipur), Augri Hangel (Manipur), Bhaona (Assam), Oraons and Santhals (Bihar) (Banerjee 1984, 238), Jātra (Bengal), Teru Kūthu (Tamil Nadu) and Tamāśa (Maharashtra). Mythology has remained the inspiration and basis of all traditional expressions in their theme and content though the stylization, technique, and presentation differ from region to region.

These traditional forms may be taken as versatile texts. They adapt native ideas, content, and theme of a particular region. In such cases, the local dialect of the presentation was given much importance. The performers were prepared accordingly to strike an instant rapport and communicate with the audience. Such sensitivity in the use of language and dialect of the region ensured the success of the traditional performance and the forms' survival. The history and development of the above-mentioned forms cannot be exactly described. However, their origin can be easily traced to the Vedic and post-Vedic times of the Puranas, through classical Sanskrit literature (4th – 5th centuries AD) and the development of the literature regional language (10th –17th centuries) up to the contemporary period. Literary evidence supports the assumption that the evolution of the traditional theatre forms can be traced back to the tenth to fourteenth centuries AD.

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Translation and Transliteration

This study has widely used the vernacular language Telugu in order to bring out the same essence in the meaning. The translation of some of the lyrics, quotes and statements are carried out by the researcher in English. The researcher implied the diacritical marks for transliterating the vernacular words and idioms.

The Phonetic Chart

అ	अ	A, a	ఆ	आ	Ā, ā
ఇ	इ	I, i	ఈ	ई	Ī, ī
ఉ	उ	U, u	ఊ	ऊ	Ū, ū
ఋ	ऋ	R, r	ౠ		Ṛ, ṛ
ఎ	ए	Ē, ē	ఏ		E, e
ఐ	ऐ	Ai, ai	ఒ		Ö, ö
ఓ	ओ	O, o	ఔ	औ	Au, au
అం,	अं	am, m	అః	अः	aḥ, ḥ
క	क	Ka, ka	ఖ	ख	Kha, kha
గ	ग	Ga, ga	ఘ	घ	Gha, gha
ఙ	ङ	Ṇa, ṇa	చ	च	Ca, ca
ఛ	छ	Cha, cha	జ	ज	Ja, ja
ఝ	झ	Jha, jha	ఞ	ञ	Ña, ña
ట	ट	Ṭa, ṭa	థ	ठ	Ṭha, ṭha
డ	ड	Ḍa, ḍa	ధ	ढ	Ḍha, ḍha
ణ	ण	Ṇa, ṇa	త	त	Ta, ta
థ	थ	Tha, tha	ద	द	Da, da
ధ	ध	Dha, dha	న	न	Na, na
ప	प	Pa, pa	ఫ	फ	Pha, pha
బ	ब	Ba, ba	భ	भ	Bha, bha
మ	म	Ma, ma	య	य	Ya, ya
ర	र	Ra, ra	ల	ल	La, la
ళ	-	Ḍa, ḍa	వ	व	Va, va
శ	श	Śa, śa	ష	ष	Śa, ṣa
స	स	Sa, sa	హ	ह	Ha, ha
ఱ	-	Ṛa, ṛa			

Chapter 1

Blooming Kuchipudi

Everything in this Universe has rhythm. Everything dances

(Maya Angelou)

A Look Back

Dance has fascinated me at an early age of three. It could be its adornments or its larger than life image that attracted me towards dance at that point of time. As years passed, when I started understanding dance in a much deeper sense, its complexity and intricacy fascinated me. I realized that there are different styles/ techniques/ frameworks, in which dance as an ‘umbrella term’ is separated into different forms. These forms have fascinated me as they differed from each other merging within it a unique regional flavour. However, at a later phase I have realized that these frameworks form different idioms and expositions which in itself make each technique a subject of study in its profundity. At a matured state, I realized that my learning-unlearning process should be focussed on one technique. For me that is Kuchipudi and the process is continuing, as the zest to learn is a never-ending process.

As we were standing beside the side wings, I was really tensed to see the crowded Rabindra Sadan of Kolkata; among the audience there were eminent men of letters and established artists. For us, my on-off stage partner P. Girish Chandra and I, this was our first duo performance. It was the prestigious platform of Uday Shankar Dance Festival. We initiated our recital/mārgam with Ganēśa Vandanam (an invocatory piece on Lord Ganēśa). As the pace increased and we moved on to

other items, we could hear the spontaneous response of the audience. It was either for the intricate jati or a piece of intense abhinaya. Once we concluded our recital/ mārgam with Tillāna, I felt that to be the greatest achievement ever for all the positive reviews that poured in. Among them, Kalamandalam Venkitt, one of the eminent Kathakali exponents commented that you performed well, in spite of the fact that the art form was a male performing art and also while having an astute male partner performing beside you."

(Field notes, Kolkata, 9th December, 2009)

This was the first stage of our performing career¹ as duo which opened a new arena of perception for me. It created a different insight on the art form that I was practicing, and it was instrumental in the choice of my broader area of research. The statement '*in spite of the fact that the art form being a male oriented one*' triggered the thought for this research work. It prompted me to examine further why is that Kuchipudi is always considered, understood, analysed and juxtaposed as a male oriented art form. Through my research journey, I could closely apprehend the situations that encouraged the path for a separate solo repertoire in Kuchipudi. This research work brought in many twists and turns that were interesting and revealing at the same time. The extensive work of mapping the transformation of a performing tradition from a conservative custodian of a hereditary family – inculcated by male performing group to its evolution,

¹The review of this performance by Tapati Chowdary is published in the *Nartanam* Vol. IX.No: 4:2009. p-153-154.

structuring and patterning to a non – hereditary – female– solo repertoire opened up a new vista of knowledge.

The body in movement is its Philosophy

(Nelly Mazloun)

To begin with the story, India's cultural and performing landscape was complex in its structure and form. The Indian society's cultural milieu is always portrayed to be in a highly confused state during the late 19th century and early 20th century. Various articles written by different scholars² portrayed the performing traditions of that period in the Southern part of India as the glory of a bygone era. Kuchipudi that stemmed from a larger than life image - a group art form like *Bhāgavata Meḷa Nāṭakam*- speaks a different story. Exactly, when entire India concentrated on the *Revival of Art* movement, Kuchipudi spoke the story of tiring hard work, passion for art, enthusiasm, and above all, dwindling patronage³. The artistic necessity to survive the dawn of newly emerging cultural modes was the crucial point for an artists' destiny too. Many creative manifestations could be termed as the outcome of the intrinsic and extrinsic exigencies of human nature. This work focuses on the evolution of the solo tradition as a separate format, mapping the incidents that led to this progression which are codified through the years from 1930 to 1970.

The nationalist movement against the British rule from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century perceived an urge for the reaffirmation of traditional values.

² See articles written by Jonas (1998), Sarma (2007), Arundale (1981), Soneji (2012) that elaborate deeply on the cultural and social milieu of India in the late 19th and early 20th century.

³ Refer to Sarma (2007), *op.cit.*, p. 8.

This was in turn an attempt to achieve total awareness and awakening of the cultural values among the people. It is believed to have brought in a consciousness of identifying oneself with one's own cultural references. An imaginary 'Cultural India' was formulated as an after-effect of these cultural, political and social reforms.

India, in the early 20th century was ambitious to construct an identity that would accomplish a significant position for the country. It was the same in the case of different States that were part of this pan-Indian movement. Recognition was a common yearning for all the States and it seemed possible only when the emotion is felt collectively. In order to develop the same consciousness and to spread the trigger of recognition many scholarly articles were published. To heighten certain cultural identities on the cultural map of India many performing traditions re-scribed and re-constructed histories.

In India, the phase of re-constructed history recaptures the referral point of colonialism. The literary narratives⁴ stated that in South India the social moorings were not disturbed until the colonial rule swept over India. This transformation in the social, cultural and political scenario directly perturbed *space* of performing traditions, especially dance because of its close association with, patronage, religion and rituals. In India, the beginning of the 20th century saw the import of alien rule and felt its contempt⁵. During the last quarter of 19th century, North India was invaded by the foreign rulers and this in turn was instrumental in prohibiting dance from the temples of North India and to juxtapose it at the Moghul Courts. Parallely, South India remained *virtually untouched*⁶. However, the new pragmatism and the

⁴Ibid.

⁵Refer to Sarma (2007), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁶Ibid

reformist zeal with its concept of *Victorian morality*⁷, was inefficacious to understand and analyse the term *dēvadāsi* as dancers who performed in temples or as *temple dancers*. Davesh in *Unfinished Gestures: Dēvadāsis, Memory and Modernity in South India*⁸ suggests that the concept of temple dancer is a constructed belief. A constructed belief requires specific details to maintain a collective and efficient function from the originator. Thus, the stigma related to *dēvadāsis* was a constructed belief stimulated by the colonial populaces. At the same time, cultural studies refer to identity as not *immanent* and is defined as a constructed one which is an outcome of some *specific historical circumstances and discourses*⁹. These discourses refer to the relations of power and reflect on the incidents that has occurred. When the *dēvadāsi* system is analysed as a constructed belief, it contemplates the constructed identity that has been attached to it.

Since the constructed belief and identity were desisted to be analysed, understand and bifurcated by the *morality*, the performing tradition attached to *dēvadāsi* or temple dancers were repudiated from performance. This could be termed as one of the atrocious criterions that were formulated by the Colonial rule on performing traditions. It was under the leadership of Miss Tenant¹⁰ that there was

⁷Refer to Trennet.(1967), p. 113.

The article suggests that at the beginning of the 20th century, the federal government frequently interfered in the personal lives of the Indian women. Bureau of Indian Affairs employees with a strong sense of paternalism attempted to ‘civilise’ the Indian youngsters participating in federal apprenticeship programs. Although strict disciplinary codes were applied to both the sexes, women were more closely supervised. The Victorian morality and the ideal “true womanhood” concepts were applied to Indians, emphasising the strength and inflexibility of government attitudes even in the phase of national beliefs. These values perhaps more mythical than real required an unattainable standard of perfection for the Indian as well as the white women. In the minds of many Victorians, Indian women by nature were prone to filth, ‘animal gratification’, lewd, licentious and promiscuous behaviour in general and drinking and laziness in particular.

⁸For more information, see Soneji. (2012).

⁹See Nayyar (2007), p. 118

¹⁰Refer to Sarma. (2007), p. 6.

crusade in Madras Presidency against the *dēvadāsis* or temple dancers. She came particularly from England to become a part of the crusade and even gathered written pledges from *upper class* Indians stating that they have nothing to do with this kind of *anti – social evil*¹¹.

This incident led the remaining practitioners of dance into penury. The rich *Naṭṭuva Meḷa* tradition of the *dēvadāsis* were in obsolescence. The chronicles¹² narrated that they were not even allowed to practice in the premises of their homes. Eventually, this prejudice was countered by the educated group who defied the forcefully constructed identity and belief. They had the foresight that this massive attack on performing traditions would be a severe crisis which in turn would lead to a cultural and social milieu of ambiguity and absurdity. Accordingly, the *Pro-Art Movement*¹³ was emanated to revive and re-establish the performing traditions into practice¹⁴. Parallely, this movement offered certain strata of people certain power that allowed them to appropriate certain performing traditions. Again, this privileged strata's constructed belief regarding the re-acceptance of performing traditions in the society led to a re-formulation of the structure and framework of the performing traditions' technique. They envisioned for a regained status of the performing traditions and insisted that the girls from the *educated* and *elite* family commence dance classes¹⁵. In contrast, these incidents are mapped as an array of incidents which

¹¹Ibid. op. cit., p. 7.

¹²For more information see Khokar (1981), p. 13-15.

¹³ For more information see articles written by Arundale (1981), p. 9-10. and Sarma (2007), p. 6. that explicate more on the *Pro Art Movement*.

¹⁴ Refer to Khokar (1981), p. 13-15.

¹⁵For more information, refer to the articles written by Arundale (1981), p. 9-10. Sarma. (2007). p. 6. Khokar (1981), p. 13-15. These articles explain how the socio-cultural milieu prevalent during that period encouraged the entry of girls from educated and high class to pursue dance.

are discursive in nature. Discourse is understood as a system of statements within which and by which the world and its realities could be known. It provides a system of representation, which in the Foucauldian sense encompasses a wider area of social knowledge. By discourse Foucault means:

A group of statements which provide a language for talking about – about a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historic moment. Discourse is about the production of knowledge than language

(Taylor and Simeon 2001: 72)

This constructive concept defines that the appropriation of the art forms from the *real owners/custodians* could be termed as an act of ostracizing the *real owners/custodians*. This in turn makes the *real owners* in oblivion in the *distorted* history. Another perspective of the same concept defined the life and sacrifices made by the unsung heroines of the history. The researcher means no disrespect to the ideology or doubt the vision of the master minds; it was through their great effort at the apt time that the art forms were revived. This was an attempt to heighten *another perspective*, which elaborated the condition of the *dēvadāsis*, who were once the custodians of the many performing traditions, to stoop down to a situation of no performances, no practices and no invitations.

The intervention of Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Shivaram Karanth, Kali Charan Patnaik, E Krishna Iyer, Vallathol Narayana Menon, Ayyanki Tandava Krishna, Dr. Maheshwar Neog, along with the creative genius of Kunju Kurup, Ramunni Menon, Meenakshi Sundaram, Rukmini Devi Arundale, Pankaj

Charan Das and Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry,¹⁶ the then visionaries brought in an *Artistic Renaissance*. Their visionary idea to set up institutions dedicated to performing traditions were another milestone in the history. On the contrary, whether this *Artistic Renaissance* could revive the *original performing traditions* or showcased an *invented tradition* that could address the concerns of emergent nation-state deconstructed the notion of *Artistic Renaissance*.

The journey of Kuchipudi was not the same as other performing traditions. It was a hereditary – male – group – performing form, which urged for patronage and economic support. The early to mid-1900 was a real cultural turmoil in Andhra Pradesh, and the performing artists were searching for new avenues of exploration that would satisfy both their artistic and materialistic needs. The erudition in Kuchipudi¹⁷, proffered that based on its repertoire and the phases of transformation, it could be categorised into four:

1. The phase of *Kalāpam*
2. The introduction of *Yakṣagānam* (1880s- 1920s)
3. The emergence of separate solo performing tradition (1920s – 1956)
4. The dawn of dance drama tradition (after 1956) and the structured construct of solo tradition

In these four categories, the emergence of solo as a separate format of performing tradition forms the thrust of this research work. This study maps the incidents during the years 1930s to 1970s that witnessed the progression of the artistic urge to transform as an identity marker.

¹⁶ Refer to Sarma (2007), p. s8.

¹⁷Ibid. For more information see the articles of Rao (2010), p. 25. and Anuradha (1996), p. 16

The Preamble of the Study

This research work focused on the journey of Kuchipudi from the 1930s to 1970s which was a phenomenal phase for not only Kuchipudi, but also for all the performing traditions of India. For Kuchipudi, these years witnessed the structuring, patterning and formulation of solo as a separate format. The year 1930 saw the initiation of the solo becoming a separate format and by the year 1970, solo has evolved as a separate format with an established repertoire of its own.

The beginning of the 1920s witnessed a series of incidents that changed the socio – political and cultural scenario drastically¹⁸. Alongside, this phase saw the urge to establish linguistically separate provinces. In order to support the national leaders for the same, new separate Congress Committees for Kerala region, Andhra region, and Tamil region were formed. Though this was executed for the political interest, the Indian National Congress was in need to build a support system from every section of the society to achieve the goal of getting complete Swaraj for the country¹⁹. The Andhra Mahasabha intervened at this point and cultivated a sense of identity among the Telugu speaking people²⁰. This in turn triggered the impetus to have one's own cultural identity through the performing traditions.

It was in the year 1956, that the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh was formed as a linguistic province and as any other newly formed state, there was an innate urge to have a cultural identity of its own. Parallely, agencies and organizations like Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) were formed (Central – wise and State – wise) to identify the

¹⁸Refer to the newspaper article written by Guha (March 3,2003), p. 3.

¹⁹ For more information, see newspaper article entitled *The Story of Separation of Andhra* (April 5th, 2001), p. 30.

²⁰Ibid

regional performing traditions and to promote and propagate them. As part of this, many Dance Festivals and Seminars were conducted to categorize the performing traditions as major, minor, classical and folk-art forms.

This study analyzes, theorizes and comprehends Kuchipudi's accomplishment of being classical after the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh was formed in the year 1956. Kuchipudi gained its classical status as an outcome of the impetus to have a cultural identity of its own by the Telugu speaking people. The urge to have a status of classical for Kuchipudi was a thoughtful, serious and much awaited accomplishment for the Telugus. The resolution of Kuchipudi being classical was passed during the Kuchipudi Dance Seminar of 1959 conducted by the Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy at Hyderabad. However, a series of incidents that occurred during the All India Dance Seminar of 1958 which were not appealing for Kuchipudi, sparked the need for another Seminar in the year 1959. These incidents occurred when Kuchipudi was represented as part of the classical dance festivals at the National level (1955) and during the All India Dance Seminar conducted by the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi in the year 1958. They hold a significant place in the history of the dance form but are rarely recounted in the literary narratives of Kuchipudi.

Interestingly, these incidents are interpreted differently by various scholars. The dichotomy in the (mis)interpretation by various chronicles fail to elaborate the actual incidents that occurred during the lecture – demonstration of the All India Dance Seminar of 1958 that led to a deep anguish to re-assert Kuchipudi as classical. The period of post-1958 Seminar witnessed the publication of a series of articles and discussions on why Kuchipudi was mentioned as a *folk* form and why was it not recognized as *classical*. Another major concern was Kuchipudi's non-inclusion in the

Classical Dance Festivals along with the other classical traditions. A sudden titling of Kuchipudi as a folk form in the post - 1958 Seminar, era is said to be a result of an articulation between the representative of Kuchipudi (in this case, Kanchanamala) selected and sent by the Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy and the organizers of the Seminar, at New Delhi. Since Central Sangeet Natak Akademi was understood as an ace Akademi that recognizes and supports the performing traditions, this was a serious remark for the Telugu people as well for the Kuchipudi gurus, practitioners, and academicians.

This study focused on mapping these incidents through primary source materials and especially through the memoirs of Kanchanamala, who represented Kuchipudi as a performer in the 1958 Seminar. Some scholars opined that Kanchanamala misrepresented Kuchipudi and henceforth it was recognized as a folk form. Other scholars mentioned that Kanchanamala deliberately argued with the organizers, which perturbed and provoked the committee to remark Kuchipudi as a folk form and stated it as a part of Bharatanatyam. This research work analyzed and theorized these incidents of the All India Dance Seminar through the primary sources, memoirs and different perceptions of scholars. Alongside, the theories of *Orientalism*, *Narrative Inquiry*, *Memoir Analysis*, *Historiographic Metafiction* and *Discourse* are implied.

Statement of the problem

The study is entitled *Her-Story through His(s)tory: Evolution of Solo Repertoire in Kuchipudi*

Her-Story defines the contribution of women practitioners in Kuchipudi, especially the role of Kanchanamala as she was one of the prime students of Vedantam

Lakshmi Narayana Sastry (herein after referred to as Sastry). Kanchanamala's accretion, being the prime – female – non-hereditary student of Sastry in forming, structuring, and shaping the art form is mapped. Parallely, the study focuses on the emergence of Kuchipudi as a classical dance form and the process that was involved in it. The process of change in the traditional art forms is considered as a part of the Nationalist movement. The literary narratives and scholars defined this as a product of the change in the socio-economic and political milieu. To understand Kuchipudi's journey of becoming *classical*, this study, critically looked at various incidents that led to its progression. The present work goes into detail and concentrates upon Kanchanamala's role in attaining classical status to Kuchipudi. Her perception of incidents and her personal experiences in this process are also comprehended. Besides, this work brings out the historiographic metafiction of the pattern of incidents through Kanchanamala's story, adding different perceptions, thus widening the scope of analysis of this significant historical event. This section of the research work has been theorized with *gender politics/perspectives*, theory of *Discourse* and with the *mind/body dichotomy*.

His-Story /History refers to the history of Kuchipudi that has been transformed to a non-hereditary – female – solo format from a hereditary – male – group performing tradition. The contribution of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry in evolving the solo repertoire as a separate format in Kuchipudi is analyzed through historiography and the historiographic metafiction. Sastry formulated pedagogy and methodology to have a proper understanding of the form. Alongside, he codified a syllabus that is culled out for teaching Kuchipudi. This study compares Sastry's teaching tool to the 'Somatic pedagogy of dance' (around the 1990s). The somatic pedagogy is referred to as including *bodywork*, *hands-on work*, *body-mind*

*integration, body-mind disciplines, movement awareness, or movement education*²¹.

Sastry's erudition in the dance scholarship, his approach towards methodology, and pedagogy is coined as a highly systematic and structured one. He was also fond of experimenting constantly in his teaching; his adroitness in teaching always followed this methodology.

Relevance of the Study

This study elaborates the role played by the hereditary and non-hereditary female performers in the history of evolution of solo as a separate repertoire in Kuchipudi. The research scholar refers to the State, the women performers and the form Kuchipudi as 'her' in the title.

Re – construction, re – situation and re – storation are the three vital concepts that revolved around the cultural milieu of India from post 1920's. The history of the performing traditions witnessed the re-construction of many items in the repertoire, that were altered and replaced in order to fit into the emergent cultural identity. Re-situation was part of the history as the performing spaces were shifted, altered and constructed to accentuate the 'intellectual' as well as the 'theoretical' thought process of the emergent state. Re – storation is implied when certain pieces of the performative behaviour are transformed into a new format to create a new practice and event in the history.

Interestingly, this point of the history (post-1920's) saw the initiation of many female performers into learning the performing traditions. The concept of female body performing on stage would also parallelly raise the question of how that has

²¹ For more information, see Eddy (1991), p. 20 – 28. in which she elaborates on the tools and techniques incorporated to develop and structure somatic pedagogy.

been perceived on stage. The term ‘body’ carries different images for different people. For a lay man, the body could only be referred to a clothed body, but for a performer, the body could be identified as a means through which his/her art is carried out. The discussion of the perception of female body directly throws light on the concept of ‘gaze’. Gaze is a term brought into the popular usage to describe the anxious state that comes with the awareness that one can be viewed²². The informants who were approached for the interviews and interactive sessions found the question of gaze little uncomfortable for them to answer and most of them were unaware of such concepts. In Kuchipudi, the early female performers like Kanchanamala and Yamini Krishnamoorthy refrain from accepting that they encountered any such problems. However, the first anniversary edition of the *Sruti* magazine (1984 November), project a different story. It includes a section named *Images of Dance - Sruti critique*, wherein the then correspondent of the magazine had given a different opinion of the whole scenario:

Yamini Krishnamurthi at her best, she can knock you out with her angika abhinaya or dance expression through the limbs of the body. She brings to it a perfected technique, an effortless grace and a natural sexuality – as for example when she dances “Sami ra ra” – though it is not unlikely you may feel that her sensuousness takes her dancing into the realm of cabaret from the confines of classicism and masks a deficit in other aspects of abhinaya.

(Issue_012 pp 41)

²² For more information, see Fróis (2010), p. 1–14.

The correspondent here took full freedom to stoop down the image of a famous item in Kuchipudi repertoire. He was confident enough to take the liberty to interpret it as a cabaret form of dance and he/she was never questioned for making such a statement. This could be substantiated with the cross reference of the remark that carried out on the next edition (Issue_013 pp 3). The issue_013, page number 03, had a correction mentioned about the photography credits of the same article of Yamini's as Avinash Pasricha. The ironical part was that there was no mention or apology about a blunt statement on an art and artist that was elucidated. The issue_012 also mentions 'folksy Kuchipudi' and 'gimmickery'. These connotations pointing towards a classical art form is also a matter of gaze. As the person who has perceived the performance could only see a performing body and not the technique that has been executed through the body. This viewpoint could be accentuated with the mention of 'sensuousness' and how he/she mentioned that the other aspects of abhinaya were masked with sensuousness. At this point, he/she directly questions the abhinaya skills of the artiste, whereas Yamini is majorly popular for her abhinaya. So, it could also be a conscious effort to deconstruct the image of an artiste through the power structure of gaze. In the power structure of gaze, the gazer is always superior to the object that has been gazed at. The ironical part is that the identity of the correspondent is not mentioned anywhere. It is just entitled as 'correspondent'.

This article also furthers to describe how her technique has been transformed from 'energetic' to 'arrogant'. Here, the gaze does not perceive a 'body' in a particular manner, but it has the tendency to create a constructed identity for a particular body. The above-mentioned article tends to deconstruct the image that has been created by the artiste over a time span. The impact of such readings after generations might

denature and conclude the energy, time and perseverance of an artiste spend in an art to an 'arrogant dance'.

Review of Literature

The present study comprehends the following major areas of research – tracing the evolution of solo repertoire as a separate form, representation, discourse, practice of Kuchipudi, cultural politics, identity and gender studies.

There are very few literary narratives available that focus on the evolution of solo repertoire as a separate form, however, no existing literature appertains to the analysis and theorisation of structuring, formatting and patterning of Kuchipudi repertoire as a solo format. Furthermore, no literary sources are available on the role and extensive contribution of Kanchanamala in formulating a solo repertoire in Kuchipudi. This study serves as one of the prominent works that will throw light on the important role played by Kanchanamala in developing the framework of Kuchipudi as a solo format.

‘Literature’, an umbrella term that connotes the different demarcations for a researcher is reflected in this study too. Among the available literary narratives of different scholars, a substantial secondary source on Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry and the evolution of solo repertoire, is the quarterly edition of *Nartanam*²³(April-June 2002). One of the major supporting works for this study is the thesis of Prof. Jonnalagadda Anuradha. On a larger scale, the published and unpublished works on Kuchipudi, both in Telugu and in English has been analysed and evaluated in the thesis of Jonnalagadda Anuradha- *Traditions and Innovations in*

²³*Nartanam* is published by Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Mumbai and edited by M N Sarma.

*Kuchipudi Dance*²⁴. This work could be claimed as the prime body of knowledge in the field of Kuchipudi. In her thesis, she clearly states that the works procured during research *are not based on proper sources and made liberal generalizations, lacking academic rigor*²⁵. This state of unavailability of resources on Kuchipudi remains to continue. Despite all the perimeters, the thesis outran the edges to come up as a major body of knowledge and created a prime niche for generations to rely upon. The thesis deals with the subject at two levels: the first part discusses the tradition of the form and the second part describes the innovation it underwent. It is the second part of the thesis that provided much insight to this research

The work of Rumya Putcha, *Revisiting the Classical: A Critical History of Kuchipudi Dance*²⁶ has also been perused closely for the purposes of this study. The thesis provides a detailed analysis of representation, discourse and practice of Kuchipudi. The work focused on the ways in which the dance practice has represented the Telugu identity within the larger concept of a globalizing Indian modernity.

From the hereditary family lineage, the works of Vedantam Ramalinga Sastry entitled *Telugilo Kuchipudi Nataka Vikasam*²⁷, traces the evolution of *Kuchipudi*. He attempts to substantiate this with the theories. Since this study also throws light on the topic of the female performing body, the perimeter does not stick to *Kuchipudi* alone. The thesis of Daves Soneji, titled *Performing Sathyabhama*:

²⁴ The thesis has been submitted to Sarojini Naidu School of Performing arts, Fine Arts and Communication, University of Hyderabad in 1996.

²⁵ Refer to Anuradha. (1996), p. 16

²⁶ The thesis has been submitted to the University of Chicago in the year 2011.

²⁷ The thesis has been submitted to Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University in the year 2006.

Text, Context, Memory and Mimesis in Telugu speaking South India has also been influential for this thesis. His ethnographic work on Kuchipudi gives a new perception to the performing world. He also throws light on the political attitude towards the sanctification of the devadasi. This has been projected while describing Indian performing art history in Telugu speaking South India²⁸.

Harshitha Mruthinti Kamath's work on female impersonation is also an extensive work on *Kuchipudi*²⁹. Her work is titled *Aesthetics, Performativity, & Performative Maya: Imagining Gender in the Textual and Performance Traditions of Telugu South India*. Rajyalakshmi Seth's research work entitled *The Changing Contours of Kuchipudi Dance: A Sociological Study*³⁰ explicated on the ambiguity that revolved around the classical status and formal recognition of the form. She opined through her thesis that there was no unanimity among scholars, teachers and performers on this point. She intricately suggests that problem of ambiguous identity lies not in the structure and content of the form, rather the representation is not accurate.

The doctoral thesis of Neena Prasad, Mohiniyattam exponent, is entitled *The Concepts of Lasya and Tandava in the Classical Dances of South India: A Detailed Study*³¹. This study focuses on the in-depth examination of the various manifestations of *lāsya* and *tāṇḍava*. The basic concepts of feminine and masculine are analysed and evaluated through the south Indian performing art forms like Bharathanatyam, Kuchipudi, Mohiniyattam and Kathakali. Both Tandava and Lasya are analysed as the

²⁸ Soneji has submitted his thesis to the Mc Gill University in the year 2011.

²⁹ Kamath has submitted her thesis to Emory University in the year 2012.

³⁰ The thesis has been submitted to the University of Mumbai, in the year 2005

³¹ The thesis has been submitted to the Rabindra Bharathi University, Kolkata in the year 2000

two fundamental and philosophical modes of expression which is common to all classical dance forms in India. The study explored how these twin concepts are aesthetically differentiated and synthesized. The work also dwells deeply in connecting that with the nine rasas or sentiments. The concepts are treated through the classical canons of Indian aesthetics beginning from Bharatha and other leading exponents. This study compares how the execution part of the tandava and lasya concept is differed in all the art forms. The work justifies in giving a clear definition and description of feminine movements and masculine movements and how they are put forth in different art forms.

Other published works on theoretical aspects of dance in general includes, *Dance Matters*, edited by Pallabi Chakravorthy and Niranjana Gupta, inculcate the work of different scholars in a myriad. The book has given many insights that were valuable for the theoretical part of the subject. The essays of Vikram Iyengar, Urmimala Sarkar Munsî, Kalpana Ram, Shreeparna Ghosal, Mandakranta Bose, Payal Ahuja, Ann.R.David are the ones which are cited and quoted in the chapters.

Urmimala Sarkar Munsî edited *Dance Transcending Borders*, features essays of Rustom Bharucha, Mandakranta Bose, Pallabi Chakravorthy and Avanthi Meduri are referred in the theoretical part of this work. Daves Soneji and Indira Vishwanath Peterson edited *Performing Pasts; Reinventing the Arts in South India*, is also a collection of essays by the scholars like, Lakshmi Subramanian, Hari Krishnan, Avanthi Meduri and Janet'O'Shea. *The Routledge Dance Studies* by Alexandra Carter throws light on the theoretical as well as methodological part of dance. Norbert Servos's article on Pina Bausch completely deals with the kind of experimental works that she dealt with. It also explains the audience-performer interaction that she always maintained in her work. The study of her choreographical works in the article states

that she used to finish her choreographical work in such a high note that it would make the audience to think for a longer period.

Janet Adshead Lansdale and June Layson edited *Dance History: An Introduction* discusses the works of different scholars on the methodology through which choreography of dance could be analyzed and put forth. June Layson's work on *Dance History Source Material*, Jane.C. Desmond's *Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies*, Janet Adshead Lansdale's *An Introduction to Dance Analysis*, Susan Leigh Foster's *Choreographing History*, Kim Grover Haskin's *Dance and Gender* are some of the major articles that sustained as substantial body of knowledge in creating a methodology for this work.

Kapila Vatsyayan's work titled *Traditional Indian Theatre-Multiple Streams* (1983), broadly discusses the various streams of performing arts in India, in which Kuchipudi is also discussed as one among the Indian Classical dance forms. Another work of Kapila Vatsyayan, discusses about the historical constructs of 19th to 20th centuries. Projesh Banerjee's work *Indian Ballet Dancing* deals with the Oriental view of the form, with the lack of evidence and theory to substantiate his work, he flawed in his effort to bring in the essence of Kuchipudi.

Jonnalagadda Anuradha's *Kuchipudi Who is Who?* gave a biographical sketch of almost all the eminent gurus and scholars in the field of Kuchipudi, both belonging to the traditional and non-traditional lineage. *A Passion for Dance- My Autobiography* by Yamini Krishnamoorthy talks about her journey with dance and the learning process that she underwent for the three different art forms – Bharatanatyam, Odissi and Kuchipudi. Her connection with her Gurus and her learning pattern under Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry from whom she learnt

Kuchipudi are accentuated. The book has served this research to continuously re-check and clarify as a secondary source.

The noted contributions of the stalwarts who worked high on propagating the form Kuchipudi are Vissa Appa Rao³², Arudra³³, Banda Kanakalingeswara Rao³⁴ and V. Patanjali³⁵, hold a special place in the history of Kuchipudi. The articles and books published by the performing scholars include that of Uma Rama Rao (1991), Mrinalini Sarabhai and CR Acharaya who compiled a book on Kuchipudi named *Understanding Kuchipudi* (1992), *The Splendours of Indian Dance* (1985) by Mohan Khokar, in which he describes Kuchipudi as one of his subjects. The rarest combination of scholar-critic and an incisive lens man compiled the work *Kuchipudi-Indian Classical Dance Art* (2001). The book contains the research works of Sunil Kothari on Kuchipudi and beautiful motion stills by Avinash Pasricha. Through the quarterly dance journal *Nartanam* and *Souvenirs of Kuchipudi Mahotsavams*, M.N Sarma adds on to this rich body of knowledge. Among the published vernacular literature on Kuchipudi, one could find a series of articles by the traditional Gurus and performers who traces back the lineage of Kuchipudi to Siddendra Yogi. Among them, supposedly the first ever book published is written by Vedantam Parvatism³⁶. The book has an autobiographical

³²Souvenir on Kuchipudi Natya seminar published in the year 1959, includes of articles of Vissa Appa Rao, namely *Dance Art in Andhra Pradesh* and *Kuchipudi School of Dancing*. Apart from these there are innumerable works of him discussing Kuchipudi as the main subject and its trajectories.

³³The important articles of Arudra that discusses Kuchipudi as its prime focal are *Kuchipudi-The Abode of Dance*, *Andhrajagati*, a souvenir published by the World Telugu Federation in the year 1995 in Madras and *Background and Evolution of Kuchipudi Dance*, published in Sruti Magazine in the year 1989.

³⁴See bibliography for the detailed work of the author

³⁵See bibliography for the detailed work of the author

³⁶Refer to Anuradha (1996), op. cit., p. 16. The book of Vedantam Parvatisam is written in the form of poetry.

element in nature and traces back the origin of Kuchipudi. The other two books³⁷ of Parvatism named *Nrityatarangini* and *Kuchipudi Melakarthalu* are of much significance. The books written by Chintalapathi Lakshmi Narayana Sastry³⁸, Hemadri Chidambara Dikshithalu³⁹ and C.R.Acharyulu⁴⁰ are of much importance to the Kuchipudi Scholarship.

Methodology:

As Desmond clearly suggests,

In studying the transmission of a form, it is not only the pathway of that transmission, but also the form's re-inscription in a new community/social context and resultant change in its signification, that is important to analyse.

(Desmond, 1993, p.34)

³⁷ Refer to Anuradha, (1996), op. cit., p. 16. The books of Vedantam Parvatism entitled *Nrityatarangini* (Tel), published at Vijayawada in the year 1988 and *Kuchipudi Melakarthalu* (Tel), published at Vijayawada in the year 1990, throws light on the *patākśaras*, *tālas* and the music that were employed in Kuchipudi, for both training and performance. Besides, his own compositions the author also propounds new theory on *melakartas* to dance. A detailed note on this is also incorporated in the book. The book also discusses the similarities between the footwork explained in Lepakshi Venkata Narayana Kavi's *Natyapradimpamu*.

³⁸ Refer to Anuradha (1996), op. cit., p. 17. The book of Chintalapathi Lakshminarayana Sastry, is entitled *Kuchipudi Bhagavathalu* (Tel), published at Machilipatnam in the year 1983. It is explicated that this work is indicated to provide information on the history and genealogy of Kuchipudi.

³⁹ For more information refer to Anuradha (1996) op. cit., p. 17. The work of Hemadri Chidambara Dikshithulu is entitled *Kuchipudi Kalasagaramu* (Tel), published at Rajahmundry in the year 1989. This work is said to have stated the life graph of the famous Gurus Bhagavathula Vissayya, Vempati Venkatanarayana and Vedantam Rattayya.

⁴⁰ Refer to Anuradha (1996), op. cit., p. 17. The work of C.R.Acharya is entitled *Kuchipudi Aradhana Nrityamulu* (Tel), published at Eluru, in the year 1986. It elaborates more the repertoire and technique that has been incorporated by C R Acharya.

In the same manner, this study also depends on empirical, historical and ethnographic way of analysis along with the collection of published and unpublished English and vernacular literature.

Ethnographic Research

The value of ethnography as a social research method is founded upon the existence of such variations in cultural patterns across and within societies and their significance for understanding social process.

(Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 9)

This phrase of Martyn and Paul clearly suggests that the informants of the same society may come up with different cultural patterns and perception of an incident. The kind of response from every single person was different from that of the other when the topic of evolution of solo repertoire was taken into consideration. Kanchanamala explained the pattern of rigorous training that she underwent during her course of learning under Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry. As explained, she was not comfortable to answer the questions related to ‘perception’. However, she remembered that the audience were in awe after seeing her performance. She stated that

I have never come across any such problems during my performing career in Kuchipudi as I was not performing inside the Kuchipudi village; only once or twice I gave a performance in Kuchipudi Village. However, the incidents that occurred during the Seminar were disturbing.

Kanchanamala, M. (personal communication, August 10, 2011)

During interview, the researcher has procured the first ever designed and stitched costume of Kuchipudi. This was designed together by Sastry and Kanchanamala for one of her solo recitals in Bandar. The same design was followed for all her further performances. This could be described as the replica of the contemporary saree costume that is used in Kuchipudi.

Vedantam Shanthi is the first female performer from the hereditary family. She is the granddaughter of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry. Though she was part of the hereditary family, she had no clue of the incidents or developments occurred inside the village, Kuchipudi. She explained that they moved to Hyderabad along with her father-Guru, Vedantam Jagannadha Sarma much earlier. Henceforth, it could be analysed that the performers were not able to understand and identify whether there were any discussions/criticisms occurred about them while performing.

The experiences of Yamini Krishnamoorthy was incomparable with anyone else, as she was an established Bharatanatyam artiste before taking up Kuchipudi⁴¹. Though she was a celebrated performer, the exclusive and inclusive nature of the social strategy prevalent in Kuchipudi had different opinions. It was difficult for the then performers – gurus from the hereditary lineage to accept the non-hereditary female performers, even though, the non-hereditary female performers have relentlessly worked in popularising the art form. One such instance could be found in one of the audio records of Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma where he talks about a Vaishnavite girl who performed Kuchipudi in some of the sabhas and

⁴¹Performance Reviews of Yamini Krishnamoorthi from 1960-1980 collected from “The Hindu” office, Chennai and the library of Sangeet Natak Akademi, Delhi.

was never accepted by them⁴². The researcher has listened to this audio, which was recorded by Harshitha Mruthinti Kamath for her work and is greatly indebted to her. The usage of the word Vaishnavite girl rather than taking her name describe the caste-class distinction that was prevalent. The hesitation to accept an ‘outsider’ performer (initially) in popularising the art form is evident in this record. The power ploy, gender distinction and class-clan variation are portrayed through such statements. The absence of ‘inclusiveness’ among the performers had created a creative lacuna in the collective representation.

The interview with Pasumarti Seshubabu shifted the focus to another perspective. He was the son of the renowned Yakṣagānam exponent PVG Krishna Sarma. Both concentrated and pursued the Yakṣagānam style of performance. The informant explained about the repertoire of Yakṣagānam and his journey of dance with his father. However, the question of solo repertoire perturbed him, and he opined that:

we were never bothered with the kind of activities that were happening under the guidance of Sastry, as my father was more interested in depicting the form with its essence-that is drama.

Pasumarthy Seshubabu (personal communication, July 18, 2014)

This statement clearly throws light that among the three performing traditions viz., *Kalāpam*, *Yakṣagānam*, and solo, there existed discrepancies. It could be the ideological differences that led to certain conclusions which deprived the

⁴² This audio was taken by Kamath (2012), as part of her research work, and later during a discussion with her about this research work, she played it for the researcher and the researcher is indebted to her. In this conversation ‘them’, here signifies the men in the Kuchipudi Traditional family.

acceptance of one form. It could also be the fear to get out of one's own forte that made them disown the new development of the form. Another important fact could be that they could not foresee the future developments and status that the solo format could gain. This might be the reason for them to invalidate the experiments. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm, energy and the urge to move forward with their art was constantly similar and the driving force for the three groups.

Chapters- three, four and five are analysed through the Ethnographic memoir and Narrative inquiry

An ethnographic memoir is a nonfiction text that recounts past individual experience as representative of a particular sociocultural group. These narrative constructions convey history through a personal lens⁴³.

(Mills, 2010, p. 344)

While ethnographic memoir allows to understand the past individual experience as representation of the socio – cultural group, narrative inquiry another qualitative research methodology which has been developed in the 20th century of the Sociological Studies had enhanced the proper understanding of research with field notes and memoirs as its tools.

Both the Self and Other are presented together within a single narrative ethnography, focused on the character and process of the ethnographic dialogue

(Tedlock, 1991, p.i)

These chapters perused the memoirs of Kanchanamala to understand the

⁴³ Refer to Albert Mills's *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, elaborately described the scope of this methodology that has been used widely by the authors who follow the post – ethnographic methodology.

series of incidents that led to the evolution of solo repertoire in Kuchipudi as well as the progression in attaining classical status of the form. Narrative inquiry as a tool has helped to draw different viewpoints of the same incident and made the analysis and understanding of the narratives much easier.

It is common for the scholars and writers to trace back the budding stage of any art form from its tradition. When the concept of tradition in itself is highly political, there are chances that an art form could be misinterpreted. The Oxford English Dictionary suggests etymology of the term ‘tradition’ as the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or something that has been passed on to from generations. But when tradition is analyzed as corpus, the past is always evaluated as how one perceives it in the present. Then, the past itself becomes a constructed one, when analyzed according to the present. At this point it is also important to understand that when a situation or incident is evaluated, the historical and cultural constructs in which that has been progressed plays an important role. This enlarges the scope of identifying the same with the concept of post – structuralism. Thus, it proposes dance scholarship with an inter- disciplinary attitude. Post – structuralism allows to analyze and form relationships between dance and culture which could be exhibited as mode of representation.

A post-structuralist approach argues that to understand an object (a text, for example), one must study both the object itself and the systems of knowledge that produced the object⁴⁴.

(Raulet, 1983, p.200)

⁴⁴ For more information, refer to Raulet (1983), where he described and analysed the two concepts structuralism and post – structuralism and their pros and cons.

In order to understand and analyze the much attainment of classical status of Kuchipudi, it is also important to understand different viewpoints of the same incident. The analysis through post – structuralism would open this new vista of knowledge for this research work.

Empirical Research

...A conception of 'empirical research's dealing primarily with 'facts', that is so-called positive analysis and of 'political theory' as dealing primarily with 'normative issues'(values).

(Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2015, p. 310)

Rightly coined by Dvora Yanow and Shea describe the theoretical as well as the conceptual level of fact. While the transformation of Kuchipudi is graphed, it is also essential to substantiate on the kind of insights put forward by the female impersonators. To analyse this kind of work, twenty videos of different female impersonators have been collected, both the famous-established and the upcoming ones. Similarly, videos of female soloists are collected. The age of the performers, the year of the performance and their way of executing abhinaya are co-related. This covers a span of period from later 20th century to the early 21st century.

Historical Method

This study implicated historical method to analyse, communicate, transfer and transmit the origin and growth of the solo repertoire. Henceforth, the history of the evolution of the solo repertoire through the initiation of the female artistes is traced through:

- a) Evaluating the history of India in general and Andhra Pradesh in particular between 1930s and 1970s.
- b) The political and economic turmoil that transformed the art form before the evolution of the solo repertoire.
- c) The transformation of the art form from a hereditary-male-group performing tradition to a non-hereditary-solo-female performing form.

Objectives

A section of this research work focuses on the politics of semantic drift of the words *Andhra* and *Telugu*. It was significant to elaborate on this point as the language plays a vital role in defining a performing art form. The evolution of a language is as important as the evolution of the State. So, the politics in renaming the language and the State is interlinked and contested as an outcome of the invented tradition of reconstruction. Since Kuchipudi is performed on the *sāhitya* (lyrics) of Telugu language, the semantic progression of the language is parallelly linked to the evolution of the form too. When the language is perceived as Colonial discourse, the name does not remain as a mere noun.

The study further elucidates the identity and cultural politics prevalent in Kuchipudi. Creating an identity and an urge of recognition was considered as a common expression that pan India faced during the early 20th century. To develop the same consciousness and to spread the trigger of recognition, many scholarly articles were published. The idea behind recognizing certain performing art traditions and to re-scribe/re-construct it was to uplift one's own cultural identity. This research work focuses on the development and transformation of the group – hereditary – male performing art form *Bhāgavata Meḷa Nāṭakam* to a non –

hereditary– female – performing solo performing tradition Kuchipudi.

A part of this study also concentrated on the *Orientalist* view on Indian dances in general and Kuchipudi in particular. It traces the power politics behind substantiating the name *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam* through the theory of *Discourse* and how *Bharatanatyam* became politically a pan Indian image. This research elaborates on the contribution of oriental women performers in propagating the art form Kuchipudi, both to the West and East.

As mentioned above, the research work mainly focuses on the transformation of a hereditary-male-group performing-form to a non-hereditary-women-solo performing form. This clearly indicates that the form must have gone through tremendous social, political and economic turmoil to transform into a solo form, being performed by the non-traditional members that too female in gender. There are many questions of equal importance that sprout up at this juncture. To evaluate them, and to analyse those notions that are a part and parcel of the form is crucial. It is also critical in nature, and that would invite many controversial connotations. Despite all these, the richness of the form, in terms of intricacies in *nṛtta*, transformation in the choreographical pattern, evolution of new form and also execution of different levels of abhinaya: for instance, from female impersonators to male impersonators etc are looked at in detail. This study aims to look at the evolution of Kuchipudi in four different levels:

1. The socio-political and economic scenario prevalent in Andhra Pradesh from 1930s –1950s, especially the politics of naming a State as well as its dominant language.
2. Contribution of Kanchanamala as the only student of Sastry who continued Kuchipudi training under him for fourteen years. The research furthers to explain

how she became instrumental in being a source person to represent Kuchipudi in the All India Dance Seminar, 1958.

3. Contribution and role of Lakshmi Narayana Sastry in introducing a separate solo form and repertoire to the cultural milieu of Andhra Pradesh. Alongside, it also saw the initiation of non-hereditary female performers, non-hereditary male performers and Oriental female performers into the form.
4. How a female dancing body is perceived throughout the performance and who remains the custodian of the form.

Hypothesis and Significance of Study:

- This research study analysed the voyage of eponymous dance form Kuchipudi in attaining classical status through the language, culture and socio-political status of the land/place called Kuchipudi. It emphasized on how the art form Kuchipudi has evolved into its present form while interconnecting these aspects.
- The semantic progression of the words Andhra and Telugu are discussed to understand the power politics of converging names in order to create new-identity marker.
- Argued that the politics behind the usage of the term *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam* for Kuchipudi allowed to sustain a pan Indian image for the other classical tradition.
- Mapped the incidents that led to the classical Kuchipudi by juxtaposing the experiences of Kanchanamala with that of the available literary narratives to bring forth more clarity.
- The contribution and role of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry in formulating, structuring and patterning a separate solo repertoire in Kuchipudi is analysed and

theorized. Alongside elaborated the role of Kanchanamala as a prime – female – non – hereditary performer in structuring and performing a separate solo repertoire in Kuchipudi.

- This study critically analyses and theorizes the gender politics and power politics that have played a major role within the framework of Kuchipudi. Interestingly, it deconstructs the whole notion of gender politics and power politics as a hereditary-male-group performing tradition is transformed to a non-hereditary-female-solo tradition.

Patterning of Chapters:

This research emerged as an answer to a question that was raised during the discussion on the topic: *Why Kanchanamala disappeared from the Kuchipudi performance scenario after the 1959 Kuchipudi Dance Seminar organised by APSNA?* She remained a trigger point for this study. As explained, this study focused on mapping the incidents that occurred to Kanchanamala during the 1958 All India Dance Seminar organized by SNA. Some scholars opined that Kanchanamala misrepresented Kuchipudi and henceforth it was recognized as folk form. Other scholars mentioned that Kanchanamala deliberately argued with the organizers, which perturbed and provoked the committee to remark Kuchipudi as a folk form and stated it as a part of Bharatanatyam. This research work analyzed, theorized and coalesced these incidents of the All India Dance Seminar through the primary sources, memoirs and different perceptions of scholars and other literary resources that misinterpreted Kanchanamala, where she continued to traverse with a scapegoat image

The second chapter is divided into two parts, where part one is entitled

Semantic drift in the terms Andhra and Telugu. This section of the chapter focusses on the politics of naming a State and its language by analysing the semantic drift of the words *Andhra* and *Telugu*. The importance of naming a State and its language plays a vital role while analysing a performing tradition as text, literature and lyrics are the prominent points of performing traditions.

The part II of the second chapter is entitled *Identity and Culture Politics in Kuchipudi: The Contribution of Oriental Women Performers in Propagating the Art form from 1920's – 1970's*. This part of the chapter elaborated on the contribution of oriental women performers in propagating the art form *Kuchipudi* both to the West and East. It also argues the power politics behind substantiating the name *Kuchipudi-Bharatanāṭyam* through the theory of *Discourse* and how *Bharatanāṭyam* became politically an Indian-classical-performing image. The section elucidated oriental performers as a group of artistes who propagated the Indian performing traditions, globally. The literary narratives written by them are substantial works to understand the early Indian performing art traditions and the socio – political scenario of that period. This study focussed on the contribution of orientalist women performers (both from West and East) in popularizing and propagating *Kuchipudi*. Ragini Devi and Indrani Rehman are selected as the case study for the same. Interestingly, this work juxtaposed the position of native performers too. It analysed how oriental performers became popular with their referral points and native performers remained unpopular.

The third chapter emerged as a significant point of this research work, it is entitled *Mapping the Classical Kuchipudi on the Cultural map*. This chapter focuses on the emergence of *Kuchipudi* as a classical dance form and the process involved in it. To understand *Kuchipudi's* journey and its accomplishment of being *classical*, it

is also necessary to analyze and comprehend a series of incidents that led to this event. This chapter combined various trajectories of Kuchipudi's journey in attaining classical status through various contributors who played a vital role in that. Further, this chapter critically looks at the various incidents that resulted in mapping the art form in the cultural history.

Chapter four, entitled *The Untrodden Meadow of Wisdom: From Guru to Śiṣya* focusses on the evolution of solo repertoire as a separate stream in Kuchipudi. It elucidated the role and contribution of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry in structuring and formatting a separate solo repertoire in Kuchipudi. In addition, this chapter elaborate the role of Kanchanamala as a prime – female – non – hereditary performer in forming, structuring, and shaping the art form. Through Kanchanamala's experience, the chapter focussed to bring out the teaching method, methodology and pedagogy of Sastry.

Chapter five, entitled *Scripting Repertoire and Performance Pattern*, discusses the repertoire formulated and imparted by Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry to his disciples. Kanchanamala remain to be the prominent case study of this chapter. Alongside the repertoire of Sastry has been comprehended and analyzed through his other disciples from hereditary and non – hereditary background. The chapter elaborated on Sastry's ingenuity in methodology and pedagogy, also focused on the syllabus that he formulated for his disciples. The chapter furthers to explicate the philosophy of Sastry's choreography and juxtaposed the same with the ideology of Western thinkers.

Chapter six of the research work is divided into two sections. Part I is entitled *The look contains the history of a man*, it focused on the significant change that was brought in the performing scenario in general. However, the research work defined

that the dislocation of patronage and the political turmoil damaged the whole performing scenario as it is difficult for any performing form to survive without economical support. The section further elaborates the concept of Gaze, the study questions the idea of gaze and how female artists are objectified and perceived when they are performed. The performance reviews of female practitioners debated the mind/body dichotomy and acted as body-shaming agents. The misogynistic is theorized with the distinguished binaries of male activity/female passivity to solidify gender characteristics and categorization. It also further analyzes and comprehends the position of female hereditary performers and how they are subjectified as home-makers.

The part II of chapter six entitled *The Metamorphosis*, includes inference of all the chapters, along with the *Conclusion*. This chapter also incorporated a post-script that explicated the history of Kuchipudi and its various trajectories.

Chapter 2

Part I

Semantic drift in the terms Andhra and Telugu

This chapter has been divided into two parts for a convenient understanding of the evolution in the art form, Kuchipudi. Part I discusses the semantic drift in the name of the language and the politics of naming the State and Part II discusses the identity and culture politics in Kuchipudi. The reasons to elaborate on the politics of semantic drift of the words Andhra and Telugu are

- The language plays a vital role in defining a performing art form.
- The evolution of language is as important as the evolution of State
- The politics in renaming the language and the State are interlinked and contested as an outcome of an invented reconstruction tradition.
- Since Kuchipudi is performed on the *sāhitya* (lyrics) of the Telugu language, the language's semantic progression is parallelly linked to the evolution of the form.

The second part of the chapter discusses the Orientalist view on Indian dances in general and Kuchipudi in particular. The chapter furthers to delineate the politics behind the name *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam*. It also describes the Madras Presidency's socio-political scenario, where the standard of education and other essentials of the Telugu speaking community were contested daily.

The chapter explains oriental women performers' contribution to propagating Kuchipudi's art from the West and East. The period has been chosen from 1930 to 1970 because the early 20th century was when the cultural scenario of pan India was

active. For Kuchipudi, the early 1930s was a period of milestones⁴⁵. One of those was the visit of Ragini Devi to Vijayawada to watch Kuchipudi performance for the first time. She showed her enthusiasm to learn it and wrote extensively on the art form. It is significant that this was the first writing on Kuchipudi in English⁴⁶. This was one way to make the art form global. From the 1970s, it can be concluded that the urbanization of Kuchipudi was initiated.

Identifying Mother Tongue

Mother tongue is always referred to identifying oneself with the language spoken or the language learnt from your mother (biological or not). However, when the linguistic boundary designates the geographical boundary of a State, the question of the real self-identity is a matter to be probed. Another definition for mother tongue⁴⁷ identifies it as not only the language one learns from one's mother, but also the speaker's dominant and home language⁴⁸. It means not only the first language according to the time of acquisition, but the first regarding its importance and the speaker's ability to master its linguistic and communicative aspects. Mother tongue is closely associated with culture. Hence, it is the language of the community, the language spoken in a region, which enables the process of enculturation. The growing of an individual into a particular system of linguistic perception of the world is

⁴⁵ For more information refer to chapters 3 and 4.

⁴⁶ The brief bio of Ragini written by Sukanya Rahman describes Ragini's writing as the first of its kind as a published work in English. Also, see the newspaper article by Rahman (June 7th, 2002) published in *The Indian Express*.

⁴⁷ For more information, see Davies (2003), p. 17. In this book, he explains, it is not necessary that the language that one's mother speaks to be defined as Mother tongue, it could also be the first language that the child is acquainted with. Thus, the first language of a child would also be called as Mother tongue of the child.

⁴⁸ Refer to Davies. (2003), op.cit., p. 18. He describes home language as a language of the home there would be people of different language and dialects stay.

simultaneously a participation in the centuries old history of linguistic perception⁴⁹. As far as the mother tongue is concerned, myth is another important element which is vital to explain one's first language. The notion of 'mother tongue' is thus a mixture of myth and ideology⁵⁰. The family is not necessarily the place where languages are transmitted. Sometimes, there would be a break in transmission; this is often translated by a change of language. Then this change of language would become the first language of children and it would dominate the milieu. This phenomenon is generally a concern raised in all multilingual practices and situations of migration⁵¹. Thus, it could be concluded that one's Mother tongue could be defined as a first language, dominant language, home language, native tongue or native language.

These definitions and connotations on the mother tongue or the native or dominant language has been described to understand and analyze the state of mind of Telugu speaking people in the Madras region where the intolerance towards the Telugu speaking people in the socio-political arena of Madras region was a highly discussed issue.

Language as Colonial Discourse

A name is not just a noun; therefore, it could be stated that there is a political tint involved in naming as well as choosing the name from the various options. To understand the voyage of Kuchipudi attaining a classical status, it is important to

⁴⁹ For more information, refer to Shanmugam (2018), p.208. He quotes that the definition of mother tongue and linguistic perception by W.Tulasiewiex and A Adams. He explains that how an individual become a part of linguistic perception and unknowingly carry forward the old history of linguistics.

⁵⁰ Refer to Davies (2003), p. 19 – 20. He describes how is myth and ideology are intertwined in mother tongue. He argues that family cannot be concluded as a place where mother tongue is originated.

⁵¹ See Calvet (1999), p. 158 – 159. His work describes how a multilingual situation is created in a child because of travel, neighborhood and migration.

analyze the language, culture and socio-political status of the land/place called Kuchipudi. Also, this discussion would enhance a deeper understanding of how the art form Kuchipudi has evolved into its present form while interconnecting these aspects. The first part of this chapter further discusses the politics of changing an ethnic group name to a land name and the land name to a language name. To explain further, this study focusses on the evolution and power politics involved in converging an ethnic group name Andhra to the name of a State where the subjects largely relied upon the language Telugu. Especially considering that the early references suggest that 'Telugu country'⁵² was the name given to the land /place where 'Andhra' was the name of an ethnic group that existed.

Andhra as an ethnic group

In order to identify a language and its culture, it is very important to understand the nature and culture of the inhabitants who spoke the language. So, for deeper understanding of the different implications of the words Andhra⁵³ and Telugu⁵⁴, it was necessary to understand the ethnic group that spoke this language. In all the versions of the ancient texts, the indication towards an ethnic group name as Andhra and land name as Telugu country is apparent. Edward Rapson⁵⁵ had mentioned that:

The earliest mention of the Andhras seems to occur in a passage of the Aitreya Brahmana in which they are

⁵² See Rapson (1908), p. xvi. where he mentioned the connotation of Telugu as a name of place

⁵³ According to Merriam Webster, the etymology of the word Andhra defines it as a Dravidian language of Andhra region.

⁵⁴ According to Merriam Webster, the etymology of the word Telugu is also defined as a Dravidian language.

⁵⁵ See Rapson (1908), p. xvii. where he mentioned the connotation of Andhra as a name of place.

enumerated among the tribes of Southern India, living on the fringe of Aryan civilization. Their home then, as in later times was no doubt the Telugu country on the eastern side of India between the rivers Kistna and Godavari.

(Rapson, 1908, p. xv – xvi)

The same has also been emphasized in the article written by G N Reddi⁵⁶ where he explains that the earliest reference available in *Aitareya Brahmana* is incorporated as part of Rig Veda. The text explains the curse given by Viswamitra to his fifty sons to live in the Aryan settlement. In this, one of the places that they live was mentioned with the inhabitants of the ethnic group, Andhra. Instances of many such references to this ethnic group appears in epics and puranas also (Reddi, 1995). Another reference that emphasizes this is the book written by B Krishnamurti (2003), where he specifies to say that the place name Telugu occurs in Prakrit inscriptions from the 2nd century AD onwards.

Dr. RK Pruthi⁵⁷ in his book *The Classical Age* (2004) refers to Andhrās as people who are mentioned as early as the fifty century BC. He further explains that the inscription of the Ashokan empire refers to Andhrās as border people (Pruthi, 2004). At the same time, the Roman author and natural philosopher Pliny⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Refer to the article written by Reddi (1995), p. 3 – 4.

⁵⁷ For more information see the article written by Pruthi (2004), p.56. where he refers *Andhrās* as early inhabitants of the Indian sub – continent.

⁵⁸ Pliny the Elder (23 – 74): A Roman author and a natural philosopher is the author of the base model of encyclopedias with his work *Naturalis Historia* (1493). Pruthi (2004), in his book states that Pliny has referred to Andhrās in his encyclopedia. Also furthers to explain that: - Pliny referred to Andhrās as a powerful race that could supply the King with an army of 1,00,000 infantry, 2000 cavalry and 1000 elephants. The same has been cited by Keiko (2010), along with substantiating the relationship of Andhrās to an ethnic group. She elaborated that Pliny in his encyclopedia had quoted the work of Megasthenes, which described that “*Andhrās were independent and military powerful people*” and legendary ones.

represented the word Andhra to an ethnic group in his work. Further, Pruthi corroborates with Pliny's reference and concludes that:

Pliny's mention of the Andhra territory in Eastern Deccan together with the late traditions about Srikakulam on the lower course of the Krishna being the capital led to the assumption that the original seat of their kingdom was in the Godavari – Krishna delta region from where it expanded rapidly to the west right across the Deccan.

(Pruthi, 2004, p. 56)

The references in puranas regard *Andhrās* as the successors of Kañvās (Pruthi, 2004). The epigraphical record states that the Kings represented in the puranas are referred to as *Andhrās*, *Āndhrajātiyah* and *Āndhrabrityah*⁵⁹. The puranic name *Āndhrabrityah* could be interpreted either as servants of Andhra or servants who are named as Andhrās⁶⁰. To emphasize the notion of Andhrās as an ethnic group, there is another point that leads us to the conclusion. The *Satavāhanas/Sātakarnis* were mentioned in inscriptions, coins and in the Puranas as *Andhrās*, *Āndhrajātiyah* and *Āndhrabrityah* (Pruthi, 2004). These references support the argument that the word Andhra initially referred to an ethnic group and not a place/ region. On the other hand, it also throws light on the fact that nowhere has Telugu been mentioned as the

⁵⁹ Refer to Krishna (2020), p. A250. In his work, he mentions that the kings of puranas were mentioned as Andhrās.

⁶⁰ For more information, see Pruthi (2004), p. 57. where *Āndhrabrityah* has been connoted differently and has been described as the successors of Kañvās.

spoken language of the ethnic group, Andhra.

Andhra as language

The next phase in the research was to understand and analyze the evolution of language where the ethnic group Andhra inhabited. The language that is spoken in the contemporary scenario of Andhra Pradesh is *Telugu*. To have a deeper understanding on the current name *Telugu*, it was necessary to trace its history and development for the study. As aptly coined by Ania Loomba (1998, p. 43) in *Colonialism/Post Colonialism, language has the capacity to construct the subject and therefore it does not remain objective and neutral*. It has been stated by B. Krishnamurti (2003) that the Indian script Ashokan Brahmi of the 3rd century BC is the mother of all the major Indian scripts, both Indo-Aryan and Dravidian⁶¹.

The major rock edicts of Ashoka have described the language used by the *Andhra* an ethnic group. It could be stated that the language inscribed could be a regional variation of the Ashokan Prakrit. The Ashoka edict of the Yerragudi village⁶²

⁶¹ According to the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary, only four of the Proto - Dravidian languages have recorded history and literature starting from pre – CE to the 11th century. In which, most of the cognates fall under the now structured and formulated four literary languages of which Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada belong to South Dravidian I and Telugu belong to South Dravidian II. For more information, see Krishnamurti (2003), p. 6 – 7.

⁶² The detailed description of the Ashoka Edict of the Yerragudi village could be found in the article *ASI to develop Ashoka rock site as tourist spot* in *The Hindu* written by D. Sreenivasulu published on May 31, 2013 in Andhra Pradesh edition. The article states that the archeological survey of India (ASI) has traced the exact period of the inscription to be (269 – 231 BCE). This has also accentuated that the inscriptions are one of the important treasures of the Mauryan King Ashoka. These inscriptions fall under major and minor rock inscriptions. From the archaeological point of view, Yerragudi site is the most important location in the entire South India. The Yerragudi inscriptions comprised of 28 parts inscribed in nine rocks. The inscriptions advocated “one to be obedient to ones parents, one should likewise be obedient to one’s elders, one should be kind to living beings, one should speak truth, one should propagate the attributes of dharma, no – living being be slaughtered”. The edict furthers to say “on the roads, trees have been caused to be planted and wells dug for the enjoyment of animals and men. These records related to dharma have been caused to be written by me (Ashoka) for the purpose that it may last and that my sons and grandsons may exert themselves for the welfare of all men”. The same article also quotes Dr. Abdul Khader, Historian and Principal of SJ College stating the rock edict could be the first law enacted for the welfare of wildlife in the entire world.

could be considered as the first written evidence of the same⁶³. (Krishnamurti, 2003)

The regional language variations and characteristics of Ashokan Prakrit could be assumed to have been reflected on the Yerragudi Prakrit too. This could be further accentuated with the reference of the newspaper article written by D. Sreenivasulu (2013)⁶⁴, where he states that the Archaeological Survey of India elaborated that the inscriptions in Brahmi script and Prakrit language are etched during the tours of King Ashoka after his Kalinga Campaign. In the same article Dr. Abdul Khader, a famous historian quotes that this rock edict could be referred to as the first law enacted for the welfare of wildlife in the entire world. Henceforth, the existence of Ashokan Brahmi script has been substantiated by the inscriptions carved on the Ashokan rock edict at Jonnagiri of Kurnool district.

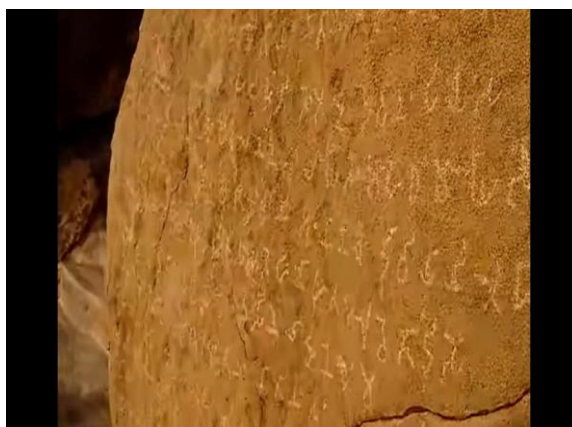


Photo 1: The inscription on the Ashoka rock edict site of Jonnagiri, Kurnool
Photo Courtesy: P Girish Chandra

In addition to this, R Caldwell (1974) suggests that the oldest reference of distinct local language traced is the *Brihatkatha*⁶⁵. This local language is supposed to

⁶³ For more information, see Krishnamurti (2003), p. 111.

⁶⁴ For more information, see Sreenivasulu (May 31, 2013).

⁶⁵ For more information refer to the book of Maurice (1991), where he has defined *byhatkathā* as great narrative. He further explains that it is an ancient Indian epic. He also states that it has been written by Gunaadhya. The language that has been referred to in the text is described as a poorly understood language known as Paishachi. Paishachi is a language that is said to be an unattested

carry a system of oral language tradition that was found between 3rd and 7th century BC. It should also be noted that the original version of the same has been lost and what could be found in the history now is its sankritised version.

The emergence of 7th century brought a new connotation for the word Āndhra. Caldwell (1974) points out that Kumarila Bhatta of the 7th century was the first person, who referred to Andhra as a local Dravidian language in his *Andhra- Drāvida Bhāṣa*. According to the first ever Telugu classic - Nannaya's *Andhra Mahābhāratam* of the 11th century, the word Andhra was referred to as a language too (Krishnamurti, 2003). Thus, this period saw the transition of the usage of the word Andhra that identified an ethnic group being adapted to signify an indigenous language. Though the language that has been used in the text was archaic, it was documented in the written format. The written language in the literature is supposed to be a divergent version of the upper class spoken language (Rao 1995). This clearly states that Andhra was a language that was used by the brahmins. This hierarchy in the usage made Andhra language prominent enough to find a place in the Sanskrit sources as a form of inscription or literature. Also, politically this was the period when the region of the ethnic group of Andhra saw the dawn of Eastern *Cālukyas*, after the fall of *Satavāhanas*. This phase is generally considered as politically chaotic in the face of economic decline and emergence of caste hierarchy with the dominance of the brahmin caste. This could be considered as one of the reasons for the evolution of a literary tradition of the upper class. C P Brown (1991) and K Veeresalingam (1990) also agreed with the assumption that the word Andhra found place in the literature

literary language that mentioned Prakrit and Sanskrit grammars of antiquity. Also, R Vijayalakshmy (1981) refers to the testimonials to *Brhatkathā* by later Sanskrit poets such as Dandin, Subandhu, and Baana make it evident that it prevailed in 6th century AD. She further explains that the earliest reference to the *Brhatkathā* seems to be that of Subandhu (600-700 AD) in *Vasavadatta*.

and inscriptions only because it was a popularly used Sanskrit name in the vocabulary of the orthodox brahmins. So, it can be concluded that Andhra was a Sanskrit word which represented an ethnic group initially and then denoted a local language from the 11th century.

Another significant trajectory while analyzing Andhra as language is P V Parabrahma Sastry's article *Language, Literature and Script of Early Historical Andhra* (2008). This article referred to the term *Āndhri* as one of the southern desi dialects. He also opined that the reference of the same found in Vatsyayan's⁶⁶ *Kāmasutra* and in Buddhaghosha's mention of the *Andha Rattakatha* treatise indicate that the language named *Āndhri* existed in the early period. Surprisingly, this language is explained as a mixture of three languages – Telugu, Prakrit and Dravidian. Furthermore, it also indicates the existence of a language named *Telugu*. (Sastry, 2008)

Andhra as a region

In the third phase, the word Andhra is presaged to a region. Different literary sources referred to the contemporary Telugu speaking community as the lineage of Dravidians⁶⁷. They were a group of people who migrated from the north-west India and are the precedents of Austro-Asian inhabitants. They were supposed to have reached the Deccan region around 11th century BC (Krishnamurti, 2003). Hanumantha Rao (1995) opined that *Āndhras* have given their original tribal name

⁶⁶ The author is said to have lived between 400 BCE- 200 CE.

⁶⁷ For more information, see Krishnamurti (2003), p. 6 – 7. He states that according to the Dravidian Etymological Dictionary, only four of the Proto - Dravidian languages have recorded history and literature starting from pre – CE to the 11th century. In which, most of the cognates fall under the now structured and formulated four literary languages of which Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada belong to South Dravidian I and Telugu belong to South Dravidian II.

to the land where they settled. He also mentioned that Andhra was the tribal name that transformed to be the name of its region. G N Reddi (1995) too ratified that Andhra was a tribal name that was adapted to the name of a region. Hsuan-tsang's article⁶⁸ labelled the country ruled by the eastern Cālukyas as Andhra country. This clearly throws light on the assumption that Andhra was designated as a region/dynasty from the early 7th century. The etymology of the word *deśa* refers to land or region. This is another reference that clearly stated the transformation of the word *Āndhra*'s identity to a region.

Another significant reference of Andhra as a region could be found in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* in which the 14th chapter of the book refers to the zones and local usages and is termed as *pravṛtti*. This section elaborates the four *pravṛttis*⁶⁹ according to the different local usages. *Āndhra*, as a region is mentioned under the *Dakṣiṇāṭya pravṛtti*. Henceforth, the third phase in the transformation of the word Andhra defined how the name of an ethnic group was converted to the name of a region where the same group inhabited. Nevertheless, even at this point there is no evidence of any relationship between the words Andhra and Telugu.

Semantic progression of Telugu

Compared to the word Andhra, the word Telugu made an appearance much later. The 11th century also saw the existence of the name *tenungu* and *tenugu* as native terminology in the first Telugu classic, Nannaya's *Āndhra Mahabharatam* (Krishnamurti, 2003). He has also referred to this as *Andhra Bhasha* in the

⁶⁸ The article written by Keiko (2010) incorporates the reference of Hsuan – tsang, where his statements are translated into English by Keiko. For more information, see Keiko (2010), p. 59.

⁶⁹ The local usages or *pravṛtti* is categorized into four according to *Nāṭyaśāstra*. They are *Avantī*, *Dakṣiṇāṭya*, *Oḍra Māgadhi* and *Pāñchāla Madhyama*.

inscriptions. Though the historical references emphasize Nannaya's words *Tenungu* and *Tenugu*, it was Tikkana who mentioned word Telugu for the first time in the 13th century⁷⁰ (Talbot, 2001). He is considered as the second author of *Āndhra Mahabharatam*. Tikkana incorporated three nouns *Tenungu*, *Telungu* and *Telugu* (Talbot, 2001). It could also be analyzed that, if one considers the argument regarding the archaic language Andhra used by Nannaya to be accurate, the words referred to by Tikkana could be believed as a colloquial form of the language that existed much prior to the archaic form of the language. All these four varieties, *Tenungu*, *Tenugu*, *Telungu* and *Telugu* could be mentioned as a colloquial usage by common people. It may also be because these words had not undergone any semantic changes like the word Andhra.

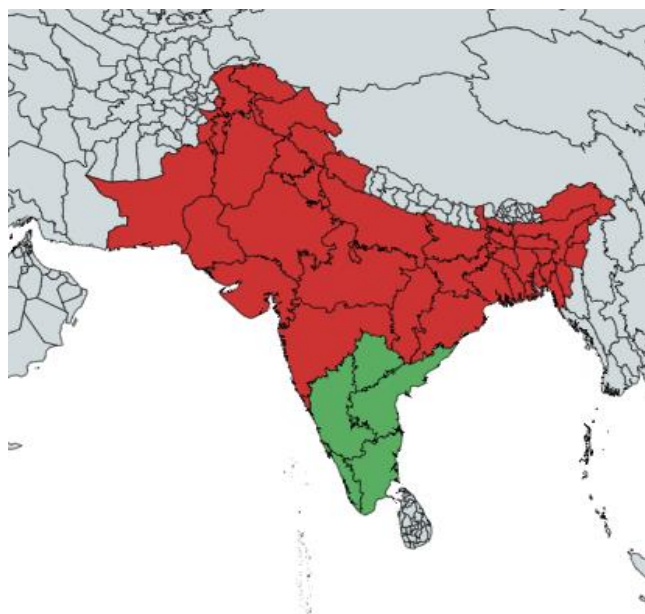


Photo 2: The image of India map divided according to the linguistic variations. The Green colored are the states that used Dravidian languages as their means of communication

Photo Courtesy: www.aternatehistory.com

⁷⁰ For more information, see Talbot (2001), p. 26 – 40.

Another perspective of the whole incident could be the existence of two groups of people who spoke two different dialects of the same language by 11th century. One could be, Andhra- the Sanskrit version of the colloquial language spoken by the upper-caste and other, the non-Sanskrit version - *Tenungu*, *Tenugu*, *Telungu* and *Telugu*.

As explained, the word Telugu might not have undergone semantic changes as the word Andhra, but it underwent spelling reform. According to various literary sources, the word Telugu denoted by the scholars varied over time. It underwent a tremendous spelling reform to attain its present status of Telugu. Other than Nannaya and Tikkana, the scholars who contributed to the language name and its variations are:

- Campbell – *Telinga*, *Teloogoo* and *Trilinga*
- Caldwell – *Telinga*, *Tailinga*, *Telugu*, *Tenugu* and *Telugu*
- Brown – *Tailinga* and *Telinga*
- An old French missionary⁷¹ (18th century) – *Telougou* and *Talenga*

C P Brown (1991) furthered that these were the variations used by Muslims and those of unknown origin. Caldwell (1974) also clarified that the name was corrupted further by the invasion of Muslims and foreigners. Eventually, Brown, Caldwell and other scholars incorporated the same spelling that is seen today as Telugu.

The second phase which identified the word Andhra as a language concurrently put forth the history of existence and evolution of another language which was named Telugu. This phase heightened the transformation of an ethnic

⁷¹*Grammaire Pour Paarendre La Langue Talenga* by French Jesuit Missionary, referred to Telugu as *Telougou* and *Talenga* approximately between the years, 1720 –30. For more information, see Campbell (1820), p. vii.

group name Andhra to a language name alongside which the region name Telugu was also being transformed into a language name. This clearly states the existence of two varieties of language in a region. The reason for the development of two spoken languages would define the class/caste hierarchy prevalent in the society at that period. These hierarchical power politics led to the progression of one language (Andhra) being referred to in the written history as an archaic one. Whereas the other language (Telugu) remained as colloquial in nature and was referred to be used by the common class of people. This also throws light on the manifestation of class/caste hierarchy prevalent in the region from the earlier century itself.

Politics of Naming

For the evolution and formation of a State, the name holds an important place. A series of events might have occurred that led to the selection of 'name'. The name Andhra has also undergone such semantic changes to form today's Andhra Pradesh. This section of the chapter traces the influences and journey of the word Andhra that made it politically correct to be a State name.

As discussed earlier, different literary sources⁷² point out that the Orientalists believed that the word Andhra was the Sanskrit name of the Telugu language. This is reiterated in the article written by C P Brown (1991: 3), he states that *Āndhram* is the Sanskrit word of Telugu. Campbell (1820)⁷³ wrote that the ancient Telugu was divided into two- the northern Kalinga and the Southern *Āndhra*. Caldwell (1974) suggested that Andhra was a part of the Telugu region and he further explained the

⁷² The articles written by Keiko (2010) and Talbot (2001) accentuate this point in their study that the Orientalists had another perspective. They believed that word Andhra was the Sanskrit name of Telugu and Andhra were not a name of the region.

⁷³ For more information, see Campbell (1820), p. i – x.

transition of a regional name to the name of the language. He accentuated that the people in Andhra were much more progressed than their counterparts in Kalinga. Therefore, the Sanskrit writers named the language commonly spoken in both the areas as Andhra. Hemingway (2000)⁷⁴ suggests that the Brahmins of the Godavari region were named *Āndhras* to distinguish them from other castes. The first collected works of Telugu literature written by K Veeresalingam was the *History of Andhra Poets/ Andhrakavulacaritramu* (1959), in that work Andhra was referred to as the only language that was spoken.

This section throws light on the journey of the word Andhra that underwent semantic changes many a time. The modern revival of the word Andhra could be considered as the aftermath of the rediscovery of ancient history by the educated inhabitants. These narratives on Andhra as a place, an ethnic group and language were part of many a vernacular literature. By the time this history became a discussion among the educated, the word Andhra validated the historical domain with much gravity. Henceforth it was considered more than just a synonym of the Sanskrit version of Telugu language. The appearance of Andhra in earlier literary references and discussions indicate that the word Andhra was elevated to an elitist status. The importance of Andhra in the literary narratives and genre could bring forth more respect to the newfound history by the educated Telugu speaking community.

The educated citizens through the literary resources of the Orient⁷⁵, analyzed, understood and propagated that the Telugu speaking community is not merely the Telugu speakers but were the descendants of a glorious an ethnic group named

⁷⁴ For more information, see Hemingway (2015), p. 50 - 60.

⁷⁵ For more information, refer to the articles on Andhra written by Veeresalingam (1959, 2019), Campbell (1820), Caldwell (1974), Keiko (2010) and other scholars also accentuate the same.

Andhra. This new-found history was a revelation for them to comprehend and evaluate their position in society. The same factor had also created an urge for an identity and representation of their own. If that was the prime cause, the next could be the place of their existence. The Telugu speaking community is mapped as an ethnic group that originally inhabited the coastal region and then spread wider. These discussions filled the pages in the early 20th century literary genres⁷⁶. There were descriptions in the literary narratives that appreciated the ethnic group, Andhra and its descendants in both vernacular and oriental narratives. These were well received and adopted by the then educated Telugu speaking community. These narratives were cited with much appreciation in their own works and historiographies⁷⁷. Keiko (2010) substantiated this with the works of K V Lakshmana Rao (1907), C Virabhadra Rao (1910). Their works are the most notable examples for this, Kommaraju Venkata Lakshmana Rao's work entitled *Hindu Desa Katha Samgraha* (The Brief History of India) is the first historiography of India written in Telugu. Another major work is Chilukuri Virabhadra Rao's *Andhrula Charitram* (The History of the *Andhras*) and it is considered as the first monumental historiography of the Telugu region in Telugu language written by a Telugu historian. K V Lakshmana Rao is known as the father of modern education in Telugu, since he propagated the need for modern science and history education in Telugu. The reference in the *Andhrula Charitram* opined that the people of Andhra were not just Telugu speakers, but the ones with a glorious past.

There is a general consensus that in writing popular regional history there was a conscious effort made by the Telugu intellectuals at the beginning of the 20th

⁷⁶ See Keiko (2010), op.cit., p. 59.

⁷⁷ The different articles on Andhra written by scholars like Campbell (1820), Caldwell (1974) and Keiko (2010) substantiate the same.

century to get the attention of the common man. Origin of the inhabitants and their glorious past were the point of focus in all the literary narratives of vernacular language. For instance, the writings of Veeresalingam are believed to have widened the perception of modern identity and awakening among the Telugu speaking people. In the analysis of his writings, one could find an urge to have Telugu people's unification according to the language they spoke. Though he never wrote for or against the concept of common land for people who speak the same language, his writings highlighted the basic principle of having a convenient medium or tool to understand and analyze certain ideas and ideologies among people. He greatly spoke about *deśa bhāṣa* to reform practices such as widow re-marriage and many such ideologies.

It was evident from the above reading of the history that the Telugu speaking community was able to analyze their original history as the descendants of ancient *Andhras*, who spread from their homeland Godavari - Krishna basin. They built a glorious past to transform the present Telugus. Modern scholarship in the Telugu language was constructed on colonial learning. Thus, it could be traced from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century that to give a name was a significant political approach. The identification of *Andhras* as *Telugu* and Telugu country as Andhra Pradesh could not be considered a simple matter of naming. This could be treated as an example of a particular historical interpretation that was intertwined and rooted in colonialization and modernization.

Impact of Orientalism

Orientalism can also express the strength of the West and the Orient's weakness as seen by the West. Such strength and such

weaknesses are as intrinsic to Orientalism as they are to any view that divides the world into large general divisions, entities that coexist in a state of tension produced by what is believed to be radical difference.

(Said, 1978, p. 53)

The theory of Orientalism by Said throws light on how a system of knowledge, history, cultural and socio-political scenario would be projected in a way that is perceived by the Western culture. Said suggests through his theory that these kinds of perceptions make the world fall into two divisions of perceptions – one is that of West Orient and East Occident. The Orient would define a set of representations of *Western learning, Western consciousness and Western empire*. At this point, the East becomes the stage where the Occident would perceive the representations from the Orient viewpoint. Here the Orient would take the liberty to decide which role should be highlighted. This leads to a tendency to substantiate and highlight a distorted history.

However, when language was taken into consideration, the Sanskrit name- Andhra was neglected by Oriental linguists. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the studies proved that Telugu was the name of the language spoken by the common man and that was colloquial in nature. Whereas Andhra was archaic in nature and was considered as the Sanskrit version of Telugu. Later, there is a conscious effort in the writings of Orientalists to identify Telugu as the common language used by the inhabitants of both the region. If that was a conscious move, then the question that prevails is why Telugu was chosen and Andhra was discarded as the name of the language. One main reason could be that Telugu was the colloquial language used for

communication. On the other side, the written language was archaic and that was Andhra. This means that the written tradition would treasure the Sanskrit version of language. The primal point here is that the arguments are based on Orientalist writings. The orientalist narratives after a certain period preferred to address the language spoken as Telugu. Gradually, the reference of Andhra as a language disappeared from the literary narratives. As Said says when a system is represented it could create two consequences.

1. When a system is represented by an external body to make it an inclusive act it would strengthen the system to serve as voice of the muted.
2. On the other hand, if the system is represented in an authoritatively repressive manner, it would cease the whole process. This situation does not give a chance to the ones who are represented to intervene. The represented ones would remain as mere viewers who could watch the game silently; here the voice of the muted remains the same.

The initial point that has been comprehended and analyzed in this discussion is regarding 'representation'. This could be concluded to argue that the system has used an authoritatively repressive representation while naming the language as the inhabitants were never given a chance to pick the name of the language that they wished to have for their State.

This chapter argues that the Orientalists made a conscious move to identify Telugu as a language. The analysis of the socio-political scenario prevalent during that period concludes that it could be a deliberate effort taken by the Orientalist narratives to project their perception of Telugu history and bring to light the interconnectedness of it with *Drāviḍa*.

Though the contemporary theories state Dravidian as an ethno-linguistic

group, and not as a race, the earlier versions and studies always connoted Dravidian to a race and colour. This could be considered as a cognizant effort to identify people of certain language with a certain race and impose the orientalist view and ideology to overpower them. This way, they were to create a hegemonic power system in society. If an ancient/Sanskrit name of the language would become an official one, it might arouse a deeper sense of fear of the loss of the hegemonic power system that they had deployed. The selection of *Telugu* as the name of the language could be a reason to imprint the Orientalist ideology of Occident's race, color, origin and culture. The various stages in the usage of the word Telugu up to its present identity could be termed as a critical move of authoritative repression.

Scripting Lives

According to the status and survey from the literary resources, the Telugus were ranked third after Hindi and Bengali speakers and were considered larger than Marathi/Tamil speakers⁷⁸. This was a fact that was not revealed or known to the public until the beginning of the 20th century. For the Telugu speaking community, being ranked as third among the linguistic population was a milestone. That was the time when the whole Telugu speaking community was under a very humiliating and distressing phase. They were considered as a minority among the Tamil speaking community of Madras Presidency. The Tamil speaking community benefitted more in the fields of education, transportation, job opportunities and economic development. There was a deep sense of insecurity and lacuna among the Telugu speaking community that was triggered by some of the articles that were published

⁷⁸ Refer to Veeresalingam (2019), op. cit., p. 125.

in leading dailies. In 1910, *Andhra Patrika*⁷⁹ published an article that portrayed Telugus as not so advanced community when compared to Bengalis, Maharashtrians, Gujaratis and Tamilians. The article directly criticized the retrograde attitude for this predicament despite the advantage in terms of population. The next trigger was the series of discussions included in *The Hindu* in 1911. The article by Narayana titled *Are Telugus (a) Backward Race?*⁸⁰, lamented the number of Telugu civil officers that were appointed by the Government of Madras Presidency. It further explains the disparity in the quality of education extended to the Telugu speaking community as compared to that of the Tamil. These inequalities signify a disproportionate disadvantage when one considers the strength and the size of population of Telugus.

*A sense of identity can be a source not merely of pride and joy,
but also of strength and confidence. And yet identity can also
kill – and kill with abandon. A strong – and exclusive – sense
of belonging to one group can in many cases carry with it the
perception of distance and divergence from other groups.
Within – group solidarity can help to feed between – group
discord*

(Sen, 2006, p. 1 – 2)

Through the articulation and expression of ideas, people make sense of their collective experience, existence and co-existence. It is always the feeling of not

⁷⁹ For more information, see Ugadi Sanchika (1910), p. 37 – 41. Ugadi Sanchika is the annual edition of *Andhra Pathrika*, a weekly from Mumbai, published by Nageswara Rao. This article on Telugu speaking community entitled *Andhrulu* was published in Ugadi Sanchika. The same has been referred to in many other scholarly articles too. *The Indian Media Economy* (2018), edited by Adrian, Vibodh and Srinivas also mentions the same.

⁸⁰ See the newspaper article written by Narayana (15th April, 1911), published in *The Hindu*.

‘being’ themselves in a given space which drives them towards such expressions. When this feeling of (not) ‘being’ is a collective expression, there lies the whole issue of how the socio-political scenario could be revised to get back to the state of ‘being’. Exactly at this point the communitarian identities and cultural politics play an important role. The ‘identity’ crisis that has been created by the socio-political scenario double up when it is triggered by the theories substantiated in the literary narratives and print media. The impulse to create and have an identity of one’s own in a collective way paves way for the urge to create communitarian identity. *The cultural politics is a term that refers to the process through which relations of power are asserted, accepted, contested or subverted by means of ideas, values, symbols, and daily practices*⁸¹. (Schiller, 1997) This theory clearly explains the scenario that the Telugu speaking community underwent. There was a feeling of continuous self-contestation and a necessity to assert one’s own identity in every field. This in itself was a humongous task for the Telugus. There are few or no literary sources which state/prove that the Madras Presidency maintained equality among both the linguistic communities of Tamil and Telugu.

The narratives by the Telugu intellectuals brought awareness of their glorious past. They were made cognizant of the unfair treatment meted out to them in the name of language by the ruling Government of Madras Presidency⁸². They realized that the colonial rule had strategically transformed the historiography of Telugus to suit their agenda. Telugus could finally sense the imposition of ‘distorted history’ on them.

⁸¹ For more information, see Schiller (1997), p. 1-7.

⁸² For more information, refer to articles written by Campbell (1820), Caldwell (1974), Veeresalingam (1959, 2019) and Keiko (2010).

Monetary bifurcation of the regions

As far as the name of the regions is considered, colonial rulers never focused on the language as a part of the regional classification. For them, it was the revenue units that they focused on. The boundaries were based on the date of annexation (Keiko, 2010). The Madras Presidency did not bifurcate the State on geographical grounds. It can also be substantiated that the bifurcation was mapped according to the zamindari and ryotwari classification of places.

As explained, the Colonialist invasion was never interested in a linguistic bifurcation. From the end of the 19th century, the division within the geographic terrain of south and north India was based on the socio-economic grounds. The goods, transportation and other essentials were distributed in such a way that the Circar⁸³ became affluent. But the life of the people in Ceded⁸⁴ districts were not taken care of. The transportation and the carriage of goods were connected to the

⁸³ The Circar, generally spelt as Sarkar was a division of British India's Madras Presidency. This could also be understood as the districts under the administration of British Govt.

⁸⁴ These are also districts under the British administration, but the only difference is that here the earlier rulers would give the power of the territory to the British Govt. according to some treatise or rule.

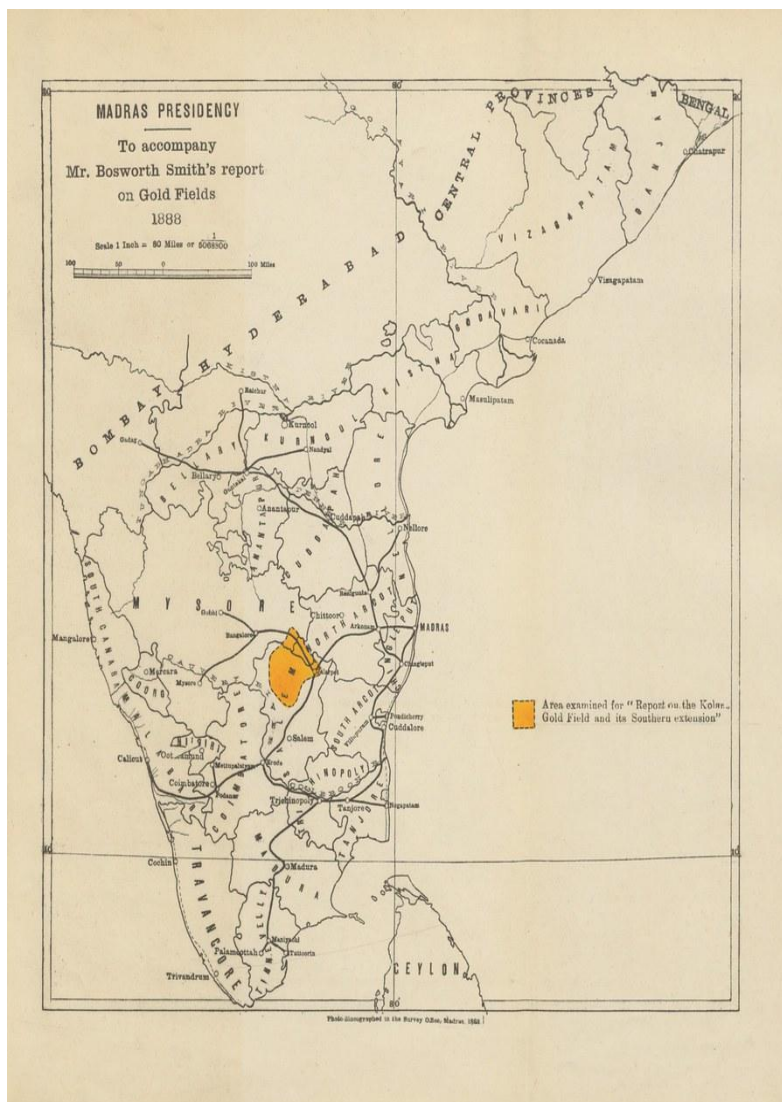


Photo 3: Image of Madras Presidency
Photo Courtesy: British Council Library Archives

Circular ones. For instance, the Ceded districts include the contemporary Ananthapuram and Kurnool. It was very difficult for the people of these regions to trade or transport goods without the consent of the Madras Presidency and the Tamilians. Since this created tension among the people of both the linguistic community, it was difficult to imagine any category of bifurcation other than language.

One State. One Language.

A name can never be defined as noun, it could be something more powerful than that, it could appropriate the past, present and the future to an extent. The significance of having a common language as an identity to form an ethnic group or a nation was well defined and was continuously under critical observation in India. This aided an added regional flavour of identifying oneself with the language spoken and unification into one nation/group while opposing discrimination. The formulation of Andhra Mahajan Sabha in 1913, propelled the effort towards the goal to achieve a separate province for the Telugu speaking community. Almost all political parties supported the cause, and it also extended to support the economic backwardness that was affected in some of the Telugu speaking districts. In 1934, the proposal for linguistic states were accepted by the Calcutta Congress Committee. In 1935, Madras assembly passed the bill for the proposal of separate state for the Telugu speaking community. Even though the proposals were passed, an immediate action for bifurcation was never witnessed.

After an independent India was formed the urge for a separate state intensified and this time, the agitation witnessed the participation of a larger mass of Telugu speaking people in the Madras State. This was marked as *mass expression of regional patriotism of all Telugus*⁸⁵. However, this could not convince the central Ministry. The (then) Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru appointed a commission under the Chairmanship of S K Das to analyze the situation, and the commissioner was not convinced with the idea of a linguistic bifurcation of the state. In 1949, there was an unofficial committee appointed to mitigate the rumpled mental state of the Telugus. The committee was named as JVP committee which included Jawaharlal Nehru,

⁸⁵ For more information, see Gundimeda (2017), p. 188. He quotes Selig. S.Harrison's phrase from his book "The American Political Science Review". In this book he analyses the caste hierarchies prevalent in Andhra, post - state formation phase.

Vallabhai Patel and Pattabhi Seetaramayya. This committee too overruled the formulation of a State, based on language. The committee offered a deal where an independent State of Andhra may be formed without Madras. The plea of T. Prakasam of formulating a Telugu speaking state with its capital as Madras was rejected by C. Rajagopalachari, the (then)Chief Minister of Madras Presidency along with the orders from the central committee. This triggered the emotions of the Telugu speaking community. On 19thOctober 1952, the poet - activist Potti Sriramulu from Nellore took up a fast unto death in Madras.

The congress leadership from the center did not pay much attention to the situation of Potti or the Telugu districts. The agitation faced utter negligence from the Ministry and it took a violent turn when Potti passed on 15th December 1952 (on the 58th day of his fasting). The Nehru Government was taken aback, this precipitated Jawaharlal Nehru to adopt the linguistic principle in the federal system as they could not control the violent agitation this time. They had to give the consent for a separate state for the Telugu speaking community and was sanctioned and announced on 19th December 1952. The State of Andhra Pradesh was formed in the year 1956, after the state reorganization commission submitted its report. Andhra Pradesh is described as the first linguistic state formed after Independence. In effect, the ethnic group named Andhra, who spoke the language Andhra, was part of Telugu Country was renamed as Telugu speaking community of the State - Andhra Pradesh.

Part II

Identity and Culture Politics in Kuchipudi: The Contribution of Oriental Women

Performers in Propagating the Art form from 1920's – 1970's.

Recognition and identity

In India, the nationalist movement against the British rule from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century witnessed a tremendous urge for the reassertion of traditional values as well as an attempt to bring in a complete awareness and awakening among the Indians of their rich cultural heritage. This could involuntarily bring in a consciousness of identifying oneself with one's own cultural points. *Dwindling sense of identity*, has been resurrected with the renewed focus on culture that was aided by the revival and reconstruction of several art forms. These cultural reforms, along with the political and socio-cultural reforms, have played a pivotal role in conceiving an imaginary idea of *Cultural India*.

Creating an identity and an urge for recognition was considered as a common expression that the Pan-India faced during the early 20th century. To develop the said consciousness and to spread the trigger of recognition, many scholarly articles were published. The recognition of certain performing art traditions, re-scribing and re-constructing the histories of certain traditions were to uplift one's own cultural identity. This research work focusses on the development and transformation of the group – hereditary – male performing art form *Yakṣagānam* to a non – hereditary – female – performing solo art form Kuchipudi.

The semantics of Kuchipudi identifies the name of a place and name of an art form. As explained in Part I of this chapter, the words Andhra and Telugu underwent many transformations to reach its identity of being a State and a language. The word

Kuchipudi did not undergo any transformation to get its new identification as a form. Kuchipudi is a physical place, a village located in Krishna District, along Krishna river. The earlier name of the village Kuchipudi was referred to as Kuchelapuram. The literary narratives⁸⁶ on Kuchipudi have mentioned this fact that Kuchipudi is the current name of the then Kuchelapuram. However, the reasons for the transformation in the name has not been traced in the literary sources. The interviews with eminent artistes of Kuchipudi also referred to that *over a period of time the name has been transformed*⁸⁷. Nevertheless, the reasons and the year in which it has been transformed are unclear. The literal meaning of *Kūci* is small and *pūḍi* is village. So, it could be an identification of a small village from that part of the Krishna district because geographically there is another physical place named *Peddapūḍi* which literally translates to ‘a big village’.

As referred to in Part I of this chapter, *Āndhra deśa* or the country of the *Āndhras* is a Sanskrit name for the Telugu country lying between the rivers Krishna and Godavari⁸⁸. There were many references given to state that the *Āndhras* were highly intellectual and learned people and that their spoken language itself was a Sanskrit version of the modern Telugu. The ethnic group, Andhra were mentioned as brahmins with a glorious past and as progressed inhabitants compared to those of the northern part of the region. There are many literary evidences that refer to the existence of the term *Kuchipudi-Bharatantyam* till 1960’s⁸⁹. *Kuchipudi-*

⁸⁶ For more information, see articles written by Putcha (2011), Kamath (2018), Massey (2004) and Seth (2005). In addition to this, there are many online reading sites like ‘good read’ where the evolution of the place name Kuchipudi was defined as “Kuchipudi itself is a shortened form of Kuchelapuram or Kuchilapuri, which in turn is believed to have originated from Kuseelavapuri – the abode of the Kuseelavas. Kuseelavas were bands of actors wandering from place to place”.

⁸⁷ The memoirs of Vedantam Shanthi and Pasumarthi Seshubabu elaborate the same.

⁸⁸ For more information, refer to Rapson (1908), p. lxxi

⁸⁹ For more information, see Putcha (2011), p. 92.

Bharatanatyam may not have meant an attempt to define the technique of Bharatanatyam. It must be noted that any kind of dance that was performed in and around Kuchipudi village could also be described so. It is possible that it was a generic name for a form of dance which followed a particular framework or structure.

Even before the linguistic bifurcation of the states, Bharatanatyam maintained a pan Indian outlook. In 1932, the Madras Music Conference of the Music Academy passed a resolution of renaming *Sādir* to Bharatanatyam⁹⁰. This is how the name Bharatanatyam evolved. It could be assumed that renaming *Sādir* to Bharatanatyam was a deliberate effort to appropriate the dance to *Nāṭyaśāstra*⁹¹ and its author Bharata. The art form also claimed to incorporate the principles of *bhāva*, *rāga* and *tāla* of Indian musical form to establish its lineage to an ancient spiritual and aesthetic heritage⁹². Another major point that is repeatedly quoted by the then Bharatanatyam artistes and also in the literary sources is that *Bhārat* is the Sanskrit name of India, thus, linking the dance to nationalism. No stone was left unturned to give Bharatanatyam a historically validated outlook that could represent a unified India (Coorlawala, 2004). The invented tradition of Bharatanatyam was popular enough to appropriate other performing art forms too, in its umbrella term. This was a conscious effort that was put forth by the educated class of people in Tamil Nadu to project their own identity across India. Rukmini Devi's statement substantiates this. As Uttara Asha Coorlawala documents, Rukmini Devi said in an article published before 1957,

*Bharatanatyam was the quintessential dance described in the
Nāṭyaśāstra and that Kathakali and Manipuri were its*

⁹⁰ For detailed study see, Jeevanandam (2016), p. 736.

⁹¹ *Nāṭyaśāstra* is a Sanskrit text written by Bharata on performing arts. The text is considered to be the dictionary for all the performing art traditions dating back to approximately 200 BCE and CE.

⁹² For more information, refer to Coorlawala (2004), p. 53.

variants while Bhāgavata Mela and Kuchipudi came “under the category of Bharatanatyam..

Coorlawala, 2004, p. 53)

This is how the whole scenario was politicized to project Bharatanatyam as an art form of the then unified India. Substantial popularity and importance were given to the art form in both, the performing scenario and the literary narratives. Thus, this invented tradition of Tamil Nadu was spread globally.

The most significant mention of *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam* could be seen in the SNA Annual Report of 1955-58. In this report, there is a mention of the dance performed by Kanchanamala during the festival. In the report, the dance performed was referred to as *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam learnt under the well-known late Vidwan Vedantam Laxmi Narayana Sastry*⁹³. There is good reason to conclude that a conscious effort was made to subsume Kuchipudi under the umbrella term Bharatanatyam by taking the support of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Annual Report. After all, this report serves as a referral point for further studies facilitating the distortion of history.

Consequently, it could be argued that the usage of the term *Kuchipudi - Bharatanatyam* referred to the performing art tradition prevalent in the Kuchipudi village. Since Bharatanatyam was very popular and amply appropriated from the hereditary women dancers to get a status – it may have been a strategic move to name this performing art tradition of *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam*. Since the state was not bifurcated based on language till 1956, this may have been an effective means to popularize Kuchipudi. Since Bharatanatyam already occupied a popular status in Madras Presidency, the inclusion of another performing tradition in the same

⁹³ For more information, refer to *Program of Festival* (1955), p. 57. in SNA Annual Report.

geographic boundary was not accepted. This conscious political effort not to bring in any other dance form as part of the Madras Presidency was successful. A similar parochial attitude was continuously substantiated by Rukmini Devi, when she said that Kuchipudi was, but a variant of Bharatanatyam. Though the sources or the person who coined the term *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam* remain unknown, the term has been used by many research scholars and artists in different contexts. There are also references of Bharatanatyam dancers who had included Kuchipudi as part of their repertoire to *enhance audience appeal*. This too created an image of Kuchipudi being an offshoot of Bharatanatyam, sometimes *secondary too*⁹⁴. (Khokar, 2014) There could also be another analysis that draws our attention to the issue of patronage. Since the content of Bharatanatyam was developed during the reign of the Telugu Nayak kings of Tanjore, there are many Telugu compositions as part of the repertoire originating from that time. This could also be a reason for confusion between the two art forms.

The *linguistic principle* followed by the State Reorganization Act of 1956 urged the Telugu speaking community to have a cultural identity of their own. The major agenda was the significance to have a common language, alongside the urge to build a cultural identity and socio-economic prosperity. The cultural identity was essential as it could mark and validate the newly formed state on the map of India. It was a continuous need to develop the performing art tradition of Telugu community for recognition. The establishment and propagation of Kuchipudi, by all means, was very much the need of the day, what with the State being benefitted by the same.

The Orient perception of Kuchipudi

⁹⁴ See, Khokar (2013-2014), p. 7.

The literary narratives on the Orient and Occidental view of the ‘puritan’ concept of the Victorian Era suggest that it was impossible for the Orient to accept certain practicing traditions of India. They could never understand the ideology attached and associated with the Indian performing and practicing traditions. They weaned India of its rich culture, heritage and arts. The colonial rule could not *digest* the practice of devadasi system in India, and they denounced the system in 1911. Parallel to this, there was another form of dancing that sprouted, and that was ‘Orient form of dancing’. This term referred to the dance pieces that were choreographed by the artistes in the West, taking their inspiration from the East. Artists like, Ruth St Dennis, Anna Pavlova, La Meri and Ragini Devi were few of the artistes who derived art from the East and used it in their performances. La Meri and Ragini Devi came to India and learned the Indian forms from the *authentic Gurus* (Mohan Khokar, 1981). The Orient form of dancing has become very popular in the West with the help of visionaries like Uday Shankar; they teamed up to explore the rustic nature of India.

In contrast to that, the occident was preparing itself to bring back its lost glory with the revival and reconstruction of its own forms of dance. There was a process involving nationalism, state patronage and sponsorship that was instigated with the appropriation of certain regional art forms as ‘national’ and therefore they fall under the category of the ‘classical’. The paradox in the scenario was that the one who appropriated Indian dance forms was celebrated as the epitome of Indian culture while the hereditary performer was relegated to the position of the carrier of past tradition.

Apart from these, there was another group of artistes who dedicated their lives to the Indian performing traditions. They did not appropriate the form, but they went ahead to find the routes and learn, understand and analyze the form. They facilitated

the global acceptance of Indian performing traditions. Most importantly they propagated the forms widely not only in the West but also in the East. Their literary narratives are substantial works on the early Indian performing art traditions and the socio-political scenario prevalent at that time. The Part II of the chapter focusses on the contribution of the orientalist women performers (both from West and East) in popularizing and propagating Kuchipudi.

The Cultural Revivalist

‘**The Cultural Revivalist**’ was the title given to Ragini Devi by *The New York City*⁹⁵, on 29th January 1982 while announcing her death. She was widely known as an American who introduced “cultural revivalism” in the classical dance tradition in the United States as well as in India. Born as Esther Sherman, she was deeply interested in dance. She has many books to her credit. She was born in Michigan in the United States in 1896. She had a fascination for the Indian dancing at an early age of eight. It is said that as a teenager, she attempted to study the texts *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Abhinaya Darpaṇa* with the help of a Sanskrit pundit. She had performed in the social functions her own versions of Indian dances. For these performances she had taken help of the Indian students who lived in New York and the music accompanied were of Indian musical instruments. This passion of hers was further ignited when she saw a presentation (as a slide show) of Kathakali by the scholar Dr James Cousins. Esther was drawn to India and her zest made her believe that she was an Indian in her previous birth. She met Indian physicist Ramlal Bajpai, whom she

⁹⁵ For more information, refer the newspaper article *Cultural Revivalist, Ragini Devi, Dies.* (January 29, 1982), p. 4.

married, and changed her name to Ragini Devi⁹⁶.

In 1928, she published *Nritanjali: An Introduction to Indian Dancing*; this was her first published book on Indian dancing written in English. It was in 1932 that she had her first contact with the dance form Kuchipudi. In her words

In Kuchipudi Nritya, Indian classical dancing has found a fluent medium of dramatic expression in dance form having an extensive vocabulary of gestures for conveying narrative and dramatic themes, moods and states in the Natya Sastra tradition.

(Marg, 1966, p. 37)

⁹⁶ The brief bio of Ragini is from the article written by Sukanya Rahman published by the Indian Express on (7th June, 2002).

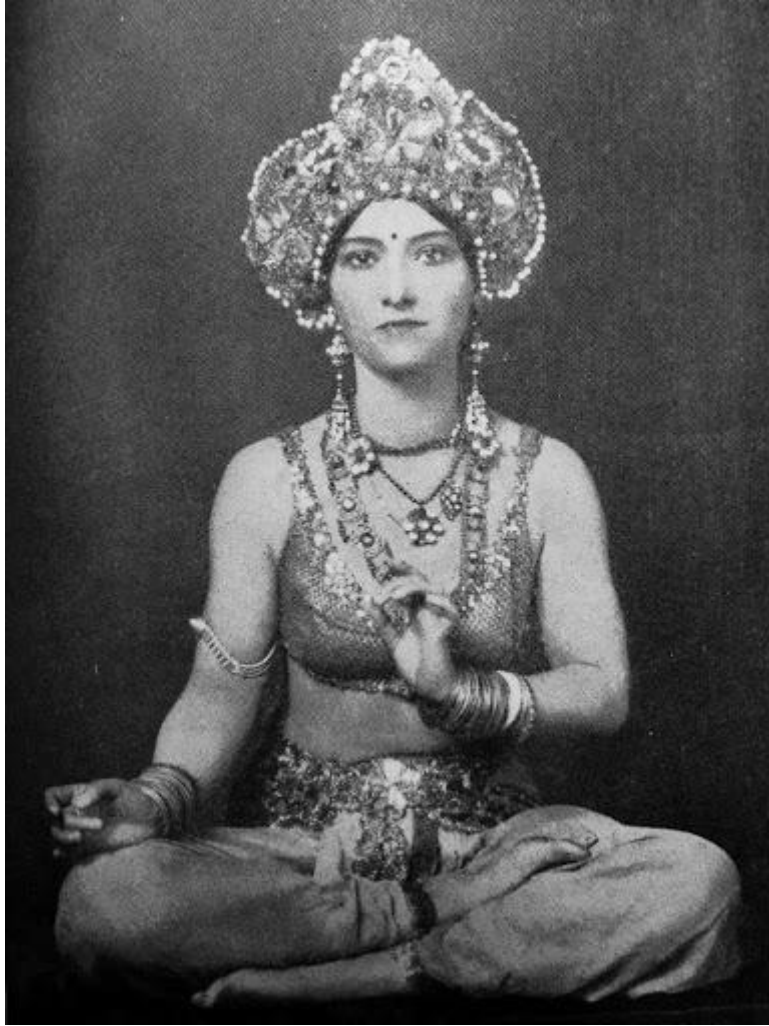


Photo 4: Ragini Devi in the costume of *Hindu Dance*, choreographed by her
Photo Courtesy: White Studio, from the Archive of Racial Fantasy by Historian Rachel Mattson.

Ragini went to Beszwada (current Vijayawada) from Madras to attend performances of Kuchipudi artistes. She was very much impressed by the *clarity of abhinaya and the vitality of the mimetic dance*. This urged her to request Vedantam Chinta Venkataramaiah, the guru, to teach her. She had chosen *Dasāvatara Śābdam* as an item to be learnt from the repertoire. The guru asked Vedantam Raghaviah to instruct her demonstration. Venkataramaiah himself wrote the Telugu text for her. She described the gestures that she had written at that time during her stay at Kuchipudi. Though in the article *The Revival of Kuchipudi Nritya* she widely spoke about the repertoire, presentation and history of Kuchipudi, nowhere did she mention

about her own performance. However, Ragini had clearly mentioned that she taught *Daśāvatāra Śabdām* to Indrani, her daughter.

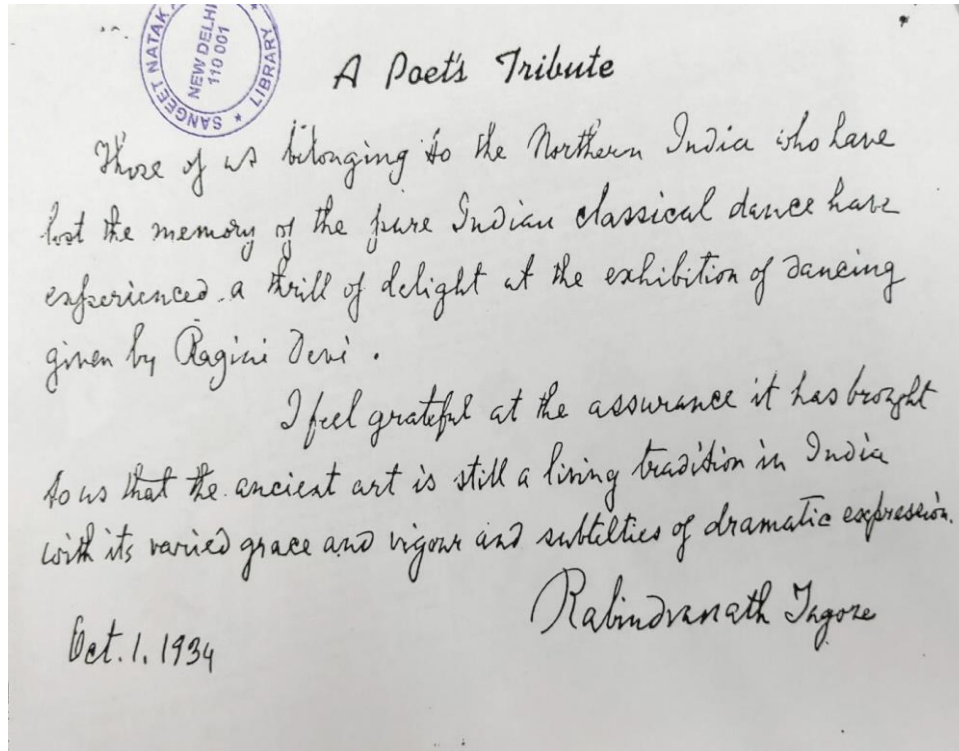


Photo 5: The hand-written appreciation by Rabindranath Tagore after her performance in Calcutta (current Kolkatta) in the year 1934

Photo Courtesy: Sangeet Natak Akademi Library, New Delhi

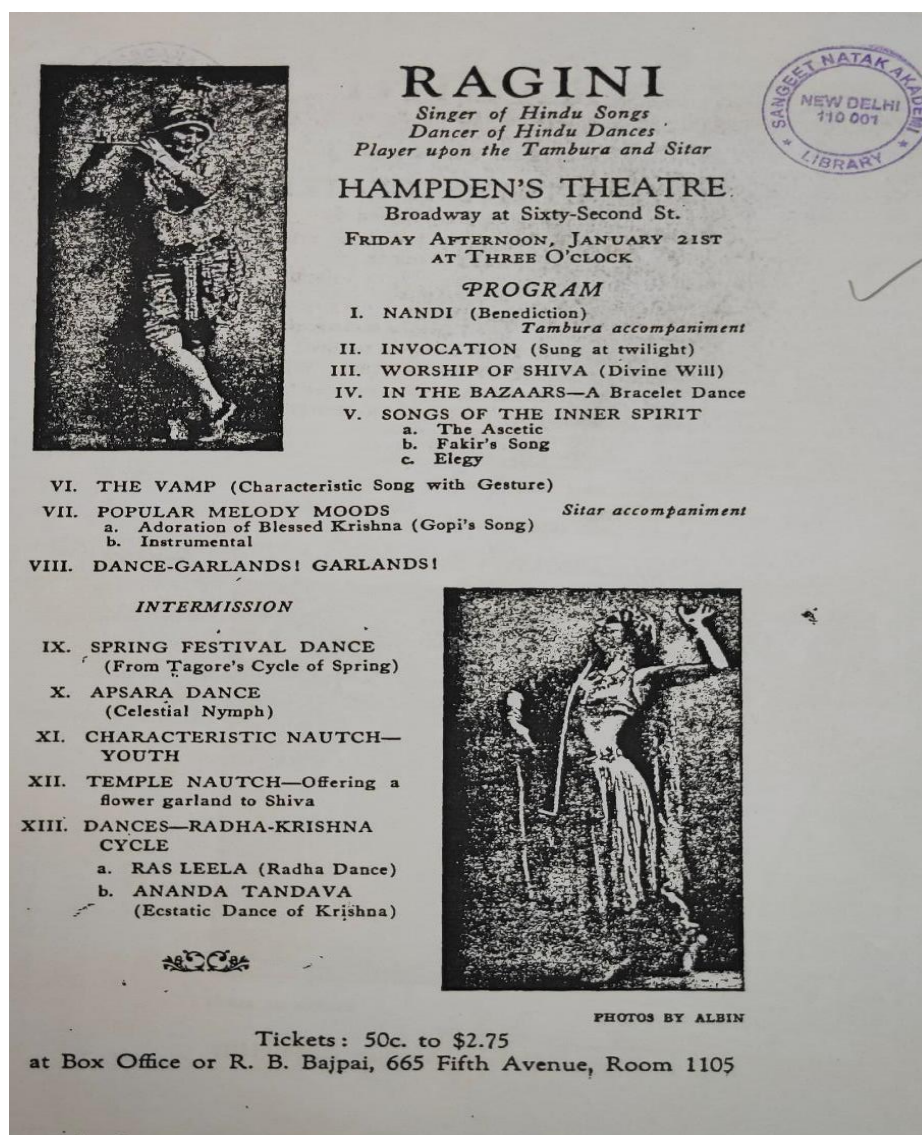
The program posters, reviews and literary sources describe that the presentation of Ragini included some Indian dances and Kathakali. Kuchipudi was not mentioned anywhere. But her extensive literary work about Kuchipudi in the *Dance Dialects of India* and the articles published in various magazines have opened up a new outlook for Kuchipudi in a wider reading circle. She never forgot to explain her love and passion towards Kuchipudi. Her writing reflects her concern for the future of Kuchipudi. Though Ragini was widely accepted in the Indian performing scenario, she had to work hard to make a mark in the West. She believed that in order to recreate the spirituality and essence of Indian performing forms, one had to feel

the ‘*Indianness*’. *The American Weekly* in 1926, published an interview of Ragini, in which she described herself as a

girl of Kashmir, a high-caste brahmin. Who (sic) had spent much of her childhood in the secret sanctuaries of India and Tibet, studying the invisible dances and inaudible music of Tibet – dancing that cannot be seen by the untrained eye and music that cannot be heard by the untrained ear.

(Thobani, 2017, p. 35)

This throws light on the fact that she had to act and make-believe herself as an Indian in order to perform the Indian art form. Changing her name from Esther to Ragini Devi was her attempt to come to terms with her conflict within herself regarding authenticity. The *insider – outsider*, the oriental – occidental ideas had created a lot of dispute within her. But her art and work were greatly approved in India. Esther Sherman is an out product of the ‘imagined community’. As Benedict Anderson aptly coined the term *Imagined Community*, which depicts nation as a socially constructed entity that consists of people who perceive themselves as part of that group. The moment she changed her name to Ragini Devi, she has become part of the imagined community where she perceived herself as an Indian, passionate about dance.



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RAGINI

*Singer of Hindu Songs
Dancer of Hindu Dances
Player upon the Tambura and Sitar*

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Broadway at Sixty-Second St.
FRIDAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 21ST
AT THREE O'CLOCK

PROGRAM

- I. NANDI (Benediction)
Tambura accompaniment
- II. INVOCATION (Sung at twilight)
- III. WORSHIP OF SHIVA (Divine Will)
- IV. IN THE BAZAARS—A Bracelet Dance
- V. SONGS OF THE INNER SPIRIT
 - a. The Ascetic
 - b. Fakir's Song
 - c. Elegy
- VI. THE VAMP (Characteristic Song with Gesture)
- VII. POPULAR MELODY MOODS
Sitar accompaniment
 - a. Adoration of Blessed Krishna (Gopi's Song)
 - b. Instrumental
- VIII. DANCE-GARLANDS! GARLANDS!

INTERMISSION

- IX. SPRING FESTIVAL DANCE
(From Tagore's Cycle of Spring)
- X. APSARA DANCE
(Celestial Nymph)
- XI. CHARACTERISTIC NAUTCH—YOUTH
- XII. TEMPLE NAUTCH—Offering a flower garland to Shiva
- XIII. DANCES—RADHA-KRISHNA CYCLE
 - a. RAS LEELA (Radha Dance)
 - b. ANANDA TANDAVA
(Ecstatic Dance of Krishna)

PHOTOS BY ALBIN

Tickets: 50c. to \$2.75
at Box Office or R. B. Bajpai, 665 Fifth Avenue, Room 1105

Photo 6: The program brochure of Ragini that suggests the repertoire of her Indian Dance
Photo Courtesy: Sangeet Natak Akademi Library, New Delhi

The title of the brochure *Ragini Singer of Hindu Songs, Dancer of Hindu Dance, Player upon the Tampura and Sitar* is a highly political move to be part of the imagined community. The repeated usage of 'Hindu' where she connotes the word to both the religion and language that gives an authenticity of being Indian in an Orientalist view. Even her interview on American Weekly, where she posits herself as a high class brahmin, denotes the aftermath of the invented tradition that she perceived and imbibed while she was in Madras. She has seen the reconstruction of

the history of the performing tradition, where the 'brahmin, high-class' was accepted. She might have anticipated that in order to become a part of the performing tradition she would have to project herself as high class brahmin. Even when she performed in India, it was written that nobody could deny that she hailed from a high class Indian brahmin society. She was politically and secretly secure in her imagined community leaving no room for doubt either in West or East.

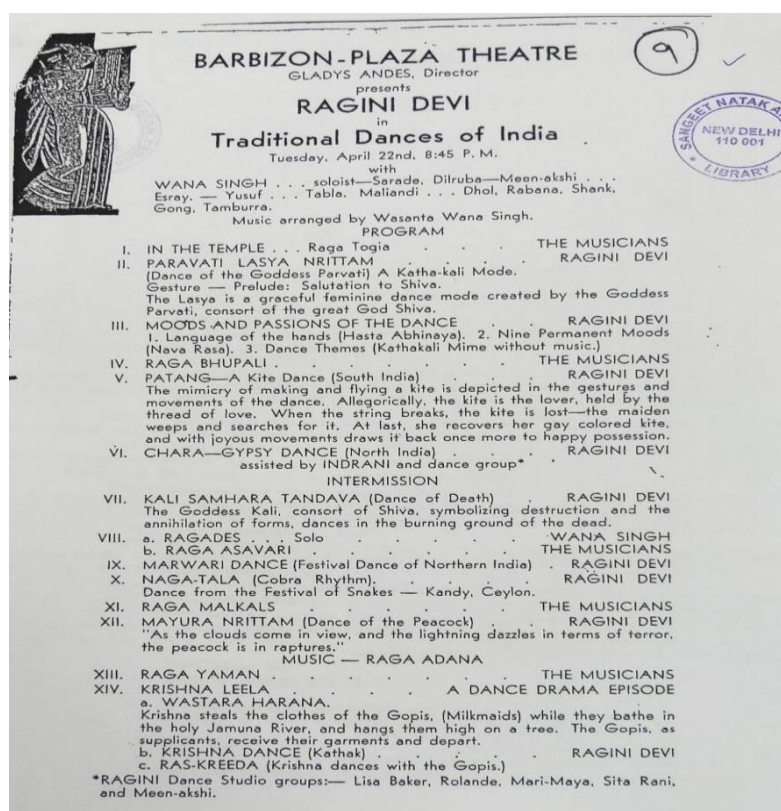


Photo 7: The program brochure of Ragini that suggests the repertoire of her Indian Dance
Photo Courtesy: Sangeet Natak Akademi Library, New Delhi

Goddess of Oriental Art⁹⁷

Indrani Rahman, daughter of Ragini Devi (Esther Sherman) and Ramalal

⁹⁷ For more information, see newspaper article *In her Mother's Footsteps: Indrani completes*

Triumphant US tour. (7th September, 1960). This article states that Indrani was referred to as

Goddess of Oriental Art this by the dance critics of New York.

Bajpai, was born on 19th September 1930 at Madras Presidency (current Chennai). Indrani was born into the elite, multicultural social milieu. She has learnt from her mother to be fiercely independent and liberal minded. She was initiated into dance by her mother and at the age of nine, she accompanied her mother for performances. The mother-daughter duo gave scintillating performances in the West and East alike. Little Indrani underwent training in *Bharatanatyam* under the tutelage of Chokkalingam Pillai and later she moved to Bezwada (current Vijayawada) where she recieved training in Kuchipudi from Korada Narsimha Rao. She furthered her training in Odissi and Mohiniyattam too.

Indrani's Indian debut was at the New Empire Theatre in Calcutta in 1950. Since then, following her mother's footsteps, she had given performances in all parts of India⁹⁸. In the beginning of the mid 1950s, the Ragini-Indrani mother-daughter duo undertook extensive overseas tours. They performed in various cities across the globe and enthralled hordes of classical dance lovers. Indrani Rahman became the first dancer who performed through the National tour by the Asia Society in 1961. She gave performances for the erstwhile US President John F. Kennedy and Jawaharlal Nehru during the latter's official visit to Washington, D.C. Thus, she became the *Prima Donna* at the official cultural functions. Especially for the ones that were organized when Nehru had foreign dignitaries visiting India. The honours list included Haile Selassie, monarch of Ethiopia, Queen Elizabeth II, Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, former Russian premier Nikita Khrushchev, and the Cuban Socialist dictator Fidel Castro. It is said that when the Ethiopian ruler Selassie saw her performance, he was so astounded that he bestowed her with

⁹⁸ Ibid.

gold coins. He also asked his daughter to gift the gold belt that she was wearing to Indrani⁹⁹.

She received ample accolades including the *Femina Miss India* Award in 1952, Padma Shri in 1969 and the *Sangeet Natak Akademi Award* in 1981, for her contributions in the field of dance. She was also a faculty member of the dance division of *Juilliard School* in New York's prestigious *Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts* in 1976. Indrani Rahman died on 5th February 1999 in New York, Aged 68.



Photo 8: Indrani with her crown, when selected as Miss. India, along with the movie actors Raj Kapoor, Nargis and Bombay Mayor S K Patil (1952).

Photo Courtesy: India Times published the photo from the personal collection of Sukanya Rahman

⁹⁹ The brief bio of Indrani is from the article written by Sukanya Rahman published by the Indian Express on (7th June, 2002).



Photo 9: Indrani with then Chinese premier Chou Enlai at the Delhi Gymkhana Club, 1955.

Photo Courtesy: From the personal collection of Sukanya Rahman published on Rediff.com/news



Photo 10: Indrani after her performance with Indira Gandhi, Shobha 'Fori' Nehru whose husband B K Nehru was then India's ambassador to the US, then US President John F Kennedy, his wife Jacqueline Kennedy, then Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru in Washington DC, 1961

Photo Courtesy: From the personal collection of Sukanya Rahman published on Rediff.com/news

Though some of the performance reviews accentuate the presentation of Indrani as a Bharatanatyam dancer, the major part of the literary resources suggests

that she performed Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Mohiniyattam and Odissi¹⁰⁰. In which, her Kuchipudi performances were always emphasized. To substantiate, Indrani's performance reviews highlight her partnership with Korada Narasimha Rao in performing Kuchipudi. Both were able to create an identity for the art form. One of her reviews¹⁰¹, describe her performance at Sapru House under the auspicious Indian National Theatre as *refreshing* and *revealing*. The analysis of performance reviews of Indrani procured from Sangeet Natak Akademi archives emphasize the effort that she has taken to popularize Kuchipudi along with her Guru – on stage partner Korada Narasimha Rao. Some of the rave reviews of their performances are enumerated to understand the popularity of Kuchipudi in the Western countries in the later 1950s and early 1960s.

Kuchipudi the latest craze in Delhi dominated the show. Three sequences in this well-known dance drama style of Andhra were presented by Indrani and her troupe. Narasimha Rao, the noisy devilish dancer, stole the show. He was compelling and irresistible. His gestures were eloquent and impressive. Indrani, appearing with aplomb, danced with great abandon. Her movements were faster and facile. She teamed well with Narasimha Rao in a beautiful sequence from the Ramayana. It must be conceded that Indrani's 'novel experiment' is a

¹⁰⁰ For more information, refer to the newspaper article *Press Hails Indrani's New York Debut* (26th August, 1960). The article carries her performance and presentation pattern. The article described the accolades that she won in her US tour which was sponsored by the Indian Government. It quotes her reviews published on "The New York Times" and "New York Herald Tribune".

¹⁰¹ For more information, see the newspaper article *Choreography Excellent* (24th November, 1960).

*success*¹⁰².

(*Choreography Excellent*, 24th November, 1960)

Regarding the same performance, it was also stated that the week-long engagement at Ted Shawn's Annual Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival drew highly enthusiastic capacity audiences. The prominent factor of the whole performance was the introduction given to Indrani by Ted Shawn himself as "*fine, technically perfect exponent of the dance form of her native land. It is a privilege for me to have her and her fine troupe appear on stage*"¹⁰³. The *Choreography Excellent* quoted "New York Times" and described Korada as "*a character dancer who was outstanding*". In New York, her presentation *Temple Rhythms of India* at the Barbizon Plaza Theatre received an enthusiastic response from New York audiences. Dance critics hailed her as "*an exceptionally beautiful woman and a highly exciting dancer and a goddess of Oriental Art*"¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰² This program was the first even in a series planned by the New Theatre of the East. Before performing in New Theatre, they had finished their performance series at Chicago World Trade Fair, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

¹⁰³ For more information, see *In her Mother's Footsteps: Indrani completes Triumphant US tour* (7th September, 1960).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.



Photo 11: Indrani Rehman and Ted Shawn in 1960

Photo Courtesy: Personal collection of Sukanya Rehman, published in Narthaki.com on July 23, 2010



Photo 12: Indrani Rehman, Martha Graham and Ted Shawn in 1960

Photo Courtesy: Personal collection of Sukanya Rehman, published in Narthaki.com on July 23, 2010

In Paris, when Indrani performed with her group at the Sarah Bernhardt

Theatre, Korada was awarded first prize for the best male dancer in the entire festival series. The combination of Korada and Indrani “*brought the audience to their feet with virile extracts from Kuchipudi, the dance drama of the South*”¹⁰⁵. She has been widely acclaimed by all the critics for her *perfect blending of pure classical technique with a liquid grace*. Mr. Arnold Haskell¹⁰⁶ mentioned that she has a *natural grace* that has the capacity to turn even the wildest elements of *Bharatanatyam* and Kuchipudi to a thing of beauty. Her rendition is always suggested as effortless, as she danced with a relish that transmitted the infectious joy in the beauty of movement to the audience.

However, added to the show was her recent development in Kuchipudi. This Andhra system is, one might say – the dramatic form of Bharatanatyam and Indrani has used this classical system of dancing by the incorporation of Kuchipudi dance dramas. Among the many new numbers was a love scene between Radha and Krishna (Indrani and Narasimha Rao), excellently rendered by both dancers; and a kind of gypsy item “Singhi, Singhadu and Konangi” in Kuchipudi style were of great charm.

(Memorable Dances by Indrani’s Troupe, 24th November, 1960)

¹⁰⁵ The newspaper article *Memorable Dances by Indrani’s Troupe* (24th November, 1960), gives a detailed analysis of the whole tour.

¹⁰⁶ Arnold Haskell was the founder of Camargo Society (1930) and was a British dance critic. He is considered to be influential in the development of Royal Ballet School and later he became the Headmaster of the School.

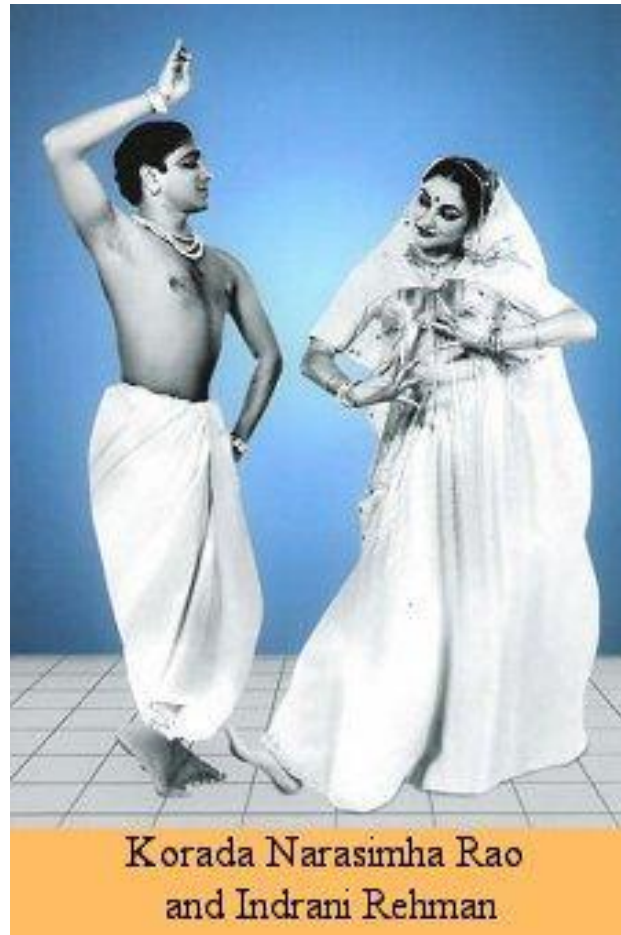


Photo 13: Indrani and Korada Narasimha Rao

Photo Courtesy: From the personal collection of Sukanya Rahman published on Narthaki.com

Indrani's performances were entitled *Indian Classical Dance*, in which she would incorporate items from different performing art genres. Her presentation was an amalgamation of items from Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi and Mohiniyattam. However, the reviews of the performances have highlighted Kuchipudi as the focal point of her presentation. It could be stated that the Orient audiences had recognized the vitality, vigour and vivaciousness of Kuchipudi. Thus, the art form was well accepted and recognized in the West. According to the literary narratives, the major part of this acceptance in the performance could be concluded as the contribution of Korada Narasimha Rao. Indrani's part could be gauged as that of a facilitator more, and performer less, who encouraged and guided the exuberant

Korada to excel in West. This in turn has allowed both to make a distinct identity for the art form.



Photo 14: Indrani and group with dignitaries after her performance at Paris, right to her is Korada Narasimha Rao.

Photo Courtesy: United Nations, UN Audio Visual Library

The piece de resistance of the evening was a short scene from PrahladaCharitram, presented by Indrani's Koochipudi guru Korada Narasimha Rao. The demonic laughter of Hiranyakasipu, his pride, vanity and wickedness, his defiance of Lord Narasimha himself and his ultimate destruction were all enacted with extraordinary histrionic skill

(Prasad, 5th April, 1957)

The article of Arshiya Sethi refers to Indrani's elaborate execution of 'exhaustive repertoire' and 'theoretical expositions'. The article pronounced the lecture demonstration of Indrani at the Art Gallery of the College of Art, Delhi. It is

also stated that, it was the third lecture – demonstration series that she was delivering in three months.

The performance in the Yakṣhgana style, to illustrate the Natya aspect of dance, by Indrani's Guru, Korada Narasimha Rao was exhilarating. His brilliant abhinaya and controlled sahitya as Hiranyakshyipu enthralled the audience.

(Sethi, March 12th, 1987)

Some of her performances were funded by the Government of India. Her American tour in 1960 is one such. She is the first Indian dancer to receive a Government of India travel Grant for an American visit¹⁰⁷. In all her international performances she was accompanied by Korada, her Guru and her dancing partner. Almost all her Kuchipudi performances were either conducted by him as a *Naṭṭuvanār* or he performed along with her as her dancing partner (Pioneer Lucknow: 1960). Some of the performances in which they have excelled are enumerated;

The Government of India have given her a travel grant under the cultural activities program, visiting US. Indrani will break journey in Paris where she will participate in the 'Theatre Des Nations Festival on June 21. She will also perform at the Musse Guimet as also for the Indian Embassy in Paris. From Paris, Indrani will proceed to US where she will appear at the Chicago International Fair from June 28 to July 4. There after

¹⁰⁷ For more information, see *In her Mother's Footsteps: Indrani completes Triumphant US tour*. (7th September, 1960).

she will stage performances at the famous Jacobs Pillow Festival of dance for 12 days. Indrani will go to Canada later, where she is scheduled to participate in the Festival Des Montreal on August 5 and 6. She is also likely to go to Cuba.

(Indrani Rahman Leaves for US, 21st June, 1960)

One of her reviews articulates her performance at Pakistan; she could be stated as the prime Indian classical dancer who performed at various stages of Pakistan after the bifurcation of both the countries. She had performed at Karachi and then in Pakistan for the opening of the New Chancery Building on the Republic Day. The team comprised of Indrani Rahman, Sarod player Ishtiaq Ahmed and vocalist Gajanan Rao Joshi. They gave three performances while the Indian High Commission at Karachi had a hard time as they were running short of tickets. There was a high demand from the audience. In the same article, Indrani is quoted saying that she was invited for a performance named *Pak Raks*. This is the name given to the performance that has been formulated by some of the Pakistani dancers. She described the performance as a kind of *Salam* in traditional Muslim style, “*but what followed was unmistakably of Bharatanatyam*”¹⁰⁸.

The Kerala Kalamandalam had also sent an appreciation letter to Indrani Rahman for the extensive work that she did for Mohiniyattam and Ragini Devi for Kathakali. The active participation of Ragini Devi and Indrani Rahman in the Indian cultural and literary field had attained many critical accolades for various Indian Classical art forms..

¹⁰⁸ For more information, see the newspaper article *Indian Visitors at Lahore* (7th February, 1960).

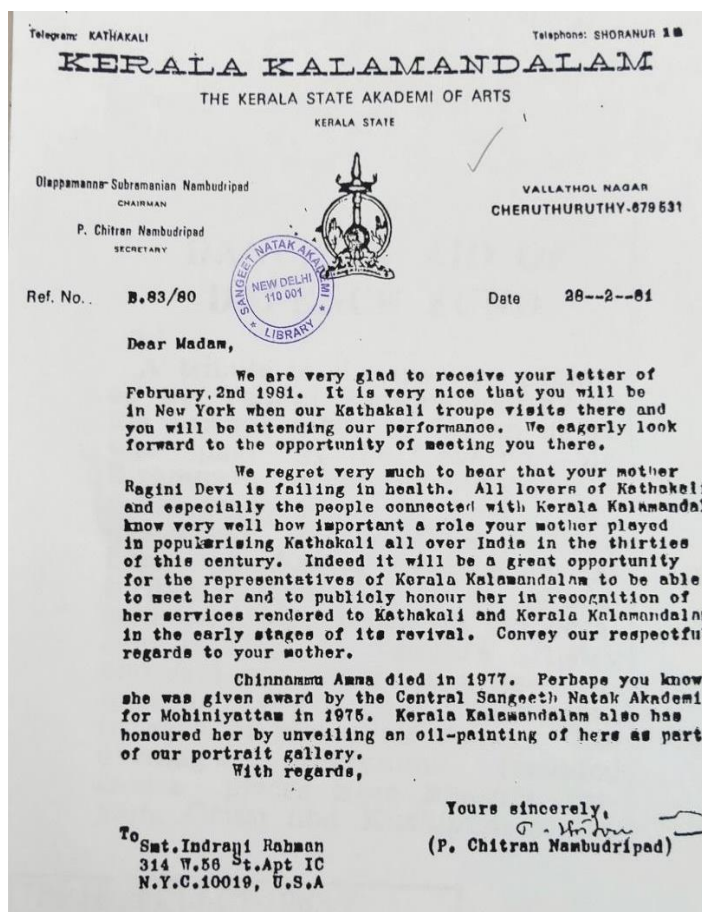


Photo 15: Appreciation letter sent from Kerala Kalamandalam
Photo Courtesy: Sangeet NatakAkademi Archives

The performance reviews traced through the research work reflect the kind of exposure and wide acceptance that Indrani received. Her choreographic works had been acclaimed with rave reviews as an Oriental performer who functioned for the upliftment and popularization of different classical genres of performing tradition. She, along with Korada was able to create an identity for the art form Kuchipudi, even before it was popular among the East. Ragini and Indrani could be considered as facilitators who brought acceptance for Kuchipudi among the Orientalists. If Ragini was able to articulate the art form through her literary works, Indrani was able to popularize it through her performances. These literary works and the performances highlight the admiration and acceptance of the global audience.

On the other hand, the chapter argues that Indrani and Ragini enjoyed a

privilege that allowed them to take an authoritative approach to reach the orientalist audiences as cultural ambassadors of India. The literary resources highlight the social contacts that Indrani maintained after shifting from Calcutta to Delhi. Through her prestigious contacts, it was easy for her to get into the cultural milieu of performing arts which also made her eligible for funds to travel and perform. The article *Canvas of Custom* by Nitya describes the view of Sukanya (Indran's daughter) regarding the importance of the contact points that facilitated her to get into the mainstream performance.

When Gandhiji died, Pandit Nehru asked my father to design the Gandhi Ghat and he also designed one of the tallest buildings in India, the New Secretariat in Calcutta. So it caught the eye of Panditji and he was brought to Delhi as a senior architect and then chief architect. In 1952 we moved to Delhi. Soon my mother and our family got involved in a sort of the renaissance of the arts. Every evening we had artists, musicians, dancers and painters in our house and it was then a very creative time for India. Nehru was sending my mother abroad on numerous cultural delegations¹⁰⁹.

(Vidyarthi, 3rd January, 2013)

These aspects make it clear that it was not only the love for the art form, but also that the circumstances and opportunities accessible to them because of their privilege were supportive for them. In this context, one aspect that merits attention is the normal mental conditioning of press, media, cultural activists and the artists

¹⁰⁹ For more information, see the newspaper article written by Vidyarthi (3rd January, 2013). The article describes the life style and the political and social scenario that led to the dancing tradition in the family of Indrani. It speaks about their family's association with Nehru and other politicians, historians and cultural carriers.

during the 1950s to 1960s. Their notion of highlighting an occidental performance and popularizing an art work should also be contested. A review of a cultural performance should be evaluated based on the ethos of the form and its regional flavour. In this matter, the review of *Indrani* by Abinash published in *Hindustan Standard* stands apart.

Indrani presented two Kuchipudi numbers – ChamundeshwariSabdam and MandookaSabdam. These items clearly unfolded the manliness of the art and proved beyond doubt its origins from tantric Saivite cult. Its form was folkish: its narrative quality was Kathak. Its gestures were unrefined. The Treta Kul (three worlds) was, for instance, indicated by three fingers brought at the forehead – a position basically incomprehensible. In a similar way, the symbolization of the Brahma weapon lacked subtlety¹¹⁰.

(Abinash, 5th February, 1960)

This performance review was published in 1960, by then, according to the historical record, Kuchipudi has been declared as a classical art form. This review signifies a projection of a distorted history of Kuchipudi. Kuchipudi has been traced as an offspring of the Bhakti cult, and nowhere is there any reference of *tantric* corollaries. He classifies the form as *folkish* and the narrative quality as that of *Kathak*. The contradiction is that by 1959 Kuchipudi had been declared as a classical art form, and nowhere did it trace any resemblance with that of *Kathak*. Regarding

¹¹⁰ For more information, refer to the newspaper article written by Abinash (5th February, 1960). The article furthers to question the authoritativeness of 'classical'. This question arose because she performed Bharatanatyam, Odissi, Kuchipudi and Mohiniyattam in the umbrella term Indian Classical Dance.

the mudra of three worlds, none of the videos of 1950s – 60s infers a mudra of the same kind. So, the performative quality of the art form is contested at this juncture. Whether the cultural carriers represented the art form with appropriate technique, nuances and flavour of the form is questionable.

Another review of the same performance has referred to her presentation as a ‘cocktail of classical dances’.

In Kuchipudi, for instance, her footwork strongly smacked of Odissi. She rendered two Kuchipudi numbers – Chamundeswari Sabdam and Mandooka Sabdam. While the former suffered from lack of vigor, the latter was better. But the costume for the second number was incongruous. Korada Narasimha Rao, who recited the syllables for the first number has no musical voice and his utterances failed to match the virtuosity of this dance form¹¹¹

(A Cocktail of Dances, 5th February, 1960)

This review not only contests the performance quality of Indrani, but also the *nattuvangam* skills of Korada. This leads to the conclusion that the Orient viewed a palette of exotic extravaganza of East, which was exactly what they would have preferred to perceive. In the representation of the exotic extravaganza there was little space given to identify the quality of items. This could be substantiated with the theory of *Orientalism* by Said, he emphasizes the perception and understanding of representation of Orientalist. The representation of *East as exotic, feminine, weak*

¹¹¹ See, newspaper article *A Cocktail of Dances* (5th February, 1960)5/02/1960. This review has deconstructed the notion of performing pieces of different performing art traditions as Indian Classical dance.

and vulnerable.

On the other hand, when cultural carriers were selected to propagate an art form, native performers were long forgotten. Indrani had Korada as a native performer of Kuchipudi along with the group. The accolades that he achieved as a performer could be contested with the expanse of articles and interviews that voiced his excellence as compared to that of Indrani. There are few literary narratives that could be found regarding his contribution, while he was selected as the best male dancer in the Jacob's Pillow Festival. The major factor that the native artists lacked could be the communication skill. As the native performers were not well versed in English, they might not have struck a chord. This resulted in their performance arena being limited to their native area. As far as Kuchipudi is concerned, the art form was popular in the villages of Krishna District, where the traditional artistes were striving to find a place in the cultural map. The regional history of Kuchipudi in 1950s – 60s comprised of female artistes like Kanchanamala who performed and conversed in English, but their contact points could never lead them to Nehru. At the same time, there were convent educated women like Indrani who could take the art overseas and perform for a global audience.

In this whole process, if the concept of the identity of a performing art tradition needs to be valued and labelled, how would that be possible? According to the literary narratives, the different genres of performing traditions like Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, Odissi and Mohiniyattam were merged in Indrani's presentation. She entitled the whole presentation as *Indian Classical Dances*. As an entire presentation, it might have been appealing, but the representation and authenticity of each genre within it is questionable. This same point was mentioned in the review of Indrani's performance at the Fine Arts Theatre that raised the

eyebrows of critics¹¹². They questioned her representation and the juggling between the dance forms. The analysis of these reviews also throws light on the aspects of lack of authenticity and clumsiness that prevailed when the presentation is an amalgam of many genres of performances on the same stage. There is no doubt that these performances make the audience aware of the existence of certain performing art traditions. However, one should be sceptical of the standards and the authenticity of the performances, particularly so, because they were presented with the claim to authenticity regarding each dance form.

When the oriental dancers were celebrated as the cultural carriers, the native performers were left unidentified, both on native and global platforms. The selection of performers like Indrani to represent India in a global platform could be a conscious effort to have a picture-perfect stamp on the global cultural map. The orientalist view of Indian classical dance could be easily conveyed through Indrani as she maintained the elitist aura in her physicality, language and communication. The native performers like Kanchanamala could not bring in the orientalist perception of aura and communication which denied them the limelight of global platform. For a nation that was re-defining and re-discovering a new realm globally, it was essential to have a signifier who would project Indianness and independence in its nationalist and feministic denotations.

Dancers of the 50's – 80's blatantly used gender in negotiating performances, audiences and income. If dancers were not endowed with mango breasts, wasp waists and

¹¹² Ibid.

elephant hips, padding was built strategically into pre-sewn costumes. If dancers were dark skinned, a base make – up was applied to lighten the skin tone. The use of authentic silk and gold costumes and real bridal jewellery still denote a full and loving offering/ sacrifice to the deity of the dance

(Coorlawala, 2004, p. 56)

This clearly emphasizes the concept of a female dancer that was present in the Indian psyche at that period. Accordingly, Indrani perfectly fit into the category. The fair skinned-English speaking dancer was considered as an asset to highlight the Indian community globally. These ideological connotations were welcomed by the press and media alike. They celebrated the achievements of Indrani, and this is clearly perceived when she is identified as the *Oriental Goddess*¹¹³. To imprint nation's name in the global cultural map, Nehru identified a dancer who could gratify the Orientalist ideology. Thus, a political authoritative indulgence could be perceived in projecting the artistes who satisfied the Oriental ideology.

¹¹³ Refer to the newspaper article *In her Mother's Footsteps: Indrani completes Triumphant US tour* (7th September, 1960). This article states that Indrani was referred as the Oriental Goddess by the dance critics of New York

Chapter 3

Mapping the *Classical Kuchipudi* on the Cultural map

This chapter focuses on the emergence of Kuchipudi as a classical dance form and the process involved in it. The chapter also further elaborates the role of Kanchanamala as a prime – female – non – hereditary performer in forming, structuring, and shaping the art form. The significant portion of the chapter has been analyzed through the method of Ethnographic memoir and Narrative inquiry.

The process of change in traditional art forms could be considered as a part of the nationalist movement. The literary narratives and scholars defined this as a product of the change in the socio-economic and political milieu. This change could be described as an ongoing process even today. To understand Kuchipudi's journey and its accomplishment of being *classical*, it is also necessary to analyze and comprehend a series of incidents that led to this event. This chapter attempts to analyze Kuchipudi's journey through its various contributors who played a vital role in attaining this status.

Further, this chapter critically looks at the various incidents that led to an array of progression in mapping the art form in cultural history. Among the few available scholarly works that view this development process, is the work of Rumya Putcha (2011). However, based on the availability and collected source material, the present work goes further from the aforesaid work at varied points in its analysis and conclusions. Putcha's work limits itself only to a cursory mention of the role of Kanchanamala in attaining classical status to Kuchipudi, whereas the present work goes into the details; and concentrates upon Kanchanamala's perception of incidents and her personal experiences in this process. Besides, this work brings out the

historiographic metafiction of the pattern of incidents through Kanchanamala's story, adding different perceptions, thus widening the scope of analysis of this significant historical event. The historiography and the historiographic metafiction of the form have been discussed copiously in this context.

The memoirs of Kanchanamala hold a prominent place for this study as she was the first National Scholarship holder for Kuchipudi and was the prime woman performer, from a Telugu middle-class elite family, who proceeded with the art form seriously. In addition, Kanchanamala represented Kuchipudi for the All India Dance Seminar conducted by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in the year 1958 at New Delhi. A series of incidents occurred during that seminar which was not appealing for the art form and led to the 1959 Seminar. Thus, Kanchanamala was instrumental in sparking the imagination and aspiration of the Telugu speaking people to establish the *classical* status for Kuchipudi that served as an identity marker for the State.

Kanchanamala and her Scholarship days

The Annual Report on Dance Seminar of 1958, published by Sangeet Natak Akademi, suggested that *Kanchanamala received the Government of India cultural scholarship in Bharatanatyam in 1954*¹¹⁴. The judging panel of Kanchanamala's scholarship interview included V. Raghavan (1908 – 1979), Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904 – 1986), and Pandanallur Chokkalingam Pillai (1893 – 1968). She performed a *padavarṇam* - *ēranāpai* written by Patnam Subrahmanyam Iyer (*Tōdirāgam*)¹¹⁵. After her interview, the panel pointed out that her *aṅgaśudhi*¹¹⁶ need to be corrected

¹¹⁴ For more information, refer to *Dance Seminar 1958*, (1958), p. 57. in SNA Annual Report.

¹¹⁵ *ēranāpai* is a *padavarṇam* that Kanchanamala learned from Sastry was set in *Tōdirāgam*.

¹¹⁶ The basic stance and posture in dance with perfect and clear lines of hand.

and she had to undergo training in Bharatanatyam. However, it was also decided that during the first course of her scholarship she would learn *abhinaya* under the tutelage of Sastry. Since Kanchanamala had to undergo training in Bharatanatyam, she had to select her guru from the judging panel. She never wanted to learn under V Raghavan. However, Rukmini Devi took her along to visit Kalakshetra and briefed her about the training over there. The Kalakshetra style did not appeal her and she decided to select Chokkalingam Pillai as her Guru. As explained, her scholarship was divided into two trajectories of learning; she had learned *abhinaya* under Sastry for the first half and was trained in Bharatanatyam under Chokkalingam Pillai for the second half.

During her scholarship days, Kanchanamala presented a Kuchipudi performance at the Fine Arts Hall, in the (then) Madras. Many art connoisseurs, critics and enthusiasts were regular spectators of the dance recitals that was part of the Fine Arts Hall. Though Kanchanamala never expected to be featured in the headlines, to her surprise, an article was published in the first page of *Hindu* written by the famous art critic, E Krishna Iyer¹¹⁷. In the review, he appreciated her performance and provided an elaborate description of the items, as well as the technique she performed. He elucidated that Kuchipudi dance did not incorporate *nṛtta* to an extent, and *Tanjōre* dance had minimum *abhinaya* usage. When these were combined, you could perceive a correct version of Bharatanatyam. However, personally, Kanchanamala did not find that article to be pleasing, though it was all in awe of her.

¹¹⁷ For more information, see Anuradha (2013-2014), p. 42. This edition of the book *Attendance* was dedicated for 'Telugu Traditions', in the Overview, she mentioned about the performance review of Kanchanamala written by E Krishna Iyer.



Photo 16: One of the published photographs of Kanchanamala during her 3rd year of scholarship days.

Photo Courtesy: Personal Collections of Kanchanamala

The Classical Kuchipudi: One Incident – Three Discernments

The concept of Classical Kuchipudi was a thoughtful, serious and much awaited incident for the Telugu speaking community. It was the only hope for the newly formed Andhra State as well as for the Telugu people to be part of the cultural map of India. The recognition of an art form from each State was considered as the cultural identity of that State. For Andhra Pradesh and Telugu community, it was a chance to get recognized in the pan Indian cultural scenario. However, the incidents that followed regarding the *classical status* was not appealing for the art form Kuchipudi. The prime incident of recognition of the art form Kuchipudi was not pleasing for the whole Telugu community and they considered this as an awful insult.

There were many literary narratives that elaborated on the incident and explained about it. However, in this thesis, I trace the three perceptions of the same incident that led to an array of incidents resulting in the process of attainment of ‘classical’ status in Kuchipudi. This particular incident played a major role in the history of Kuchipudi, as this is the turning point as far as the history of solo form in Kuchipudi is considered. To elaborate, this section of the thesis deals with three perceptions of the same incident during the All India Dance Seminar in the year 1958, conducted by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, Delhi.

Sangeet Natak Akademi was set up in 1952 by the Educational Ministry which became functional in 1953¹¹⁸. This is a general body/ cultural agency that was formed in order to oversee the activities, to recognize, to categorize and to preserve different performing art traditions of each State. The performing traditions and regional art forms were categorized as classical and folk. The art forms were bifurcated according to its coalition with the structure, format, development and interspersed with treatises and texts. For the public, this was an agenda to preserve the performing traditions of the country. On the other hand, the strategy to employ the classical status to different forms remained an issue that is contested even in the present phase of the century¹¹⁹. This situation could also be politically analyzed as a

¹¹⁸ For more information, refer to the introduction part of the site of Sangeet Natak Akademi. It is stated that

there was “a resolution created by the (then) Ministry of Education, Government of India, dated

31st May 1952 notified in the Gazette of India June 1952. The Akademi became functional in the

following year, with the appointment of its first Chairman Dr. P V Rajamannar and the formation of its all – India council of representatives, the General Council. The first President

of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, inaugurated it on 28th January 1953 in a special function held in

the Parliament House”.

<https://sangeetnatak.gov.in/sna/introduction.php>

¹¹⁹ It could be considered from the different popular narratives on the bifurcation of the ‘classical’

separation of the performing traditions based on an invented tradition. The traditions were mapped so that they could portray a captivating essence of India, globally. The analysis also draws the attention of the conscious effort in mapping the classical. As part of the efforts that were put forth for the propagation and preservation of art forms, the first All India Dance Seminar was conducted from March 30th to April 7th, 1958, at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi by the SNA. The Seminar was inaugurated by Dr. P V Rajamannar (1901 – 1979), the (then) Chairman of the Akademi. Over 350 artistes represented the various schools and styles of Indian dancing, and 40 scholars and critics participated in the Seminar. In addition, some observers also attended the Seminar from Ceylon, China, and Nepal¹²⁰. The Seminar lasted for nine days and was hailed as a unique event in the annals of Indian dancing.

Dr. Rajamannar, in his opening address, pointed out that existing spirit of rivalry, intolerance and misunderstanding between the different schools of music and dance and pleaded for more sympathy, understanding and appreciation of the various styles that existed in this vast land.

The Seminar's comprehensive and broad-based planning made it possible for the scholars and exponents to exchange their ideas and pool their knowledge in various schools and

and 'folk' attempted by SNA that the forms were divided into two groups as 'margi' and 'desi' traditions of performance. The term 'margi' signified an evolved state or newly structured format of performing tradition, which could also be termed a standardized one. Whereas 'desi' refers to the aspects of art that are not intentionally created, but rather termed as a parallel form of human evolution.

Also refer to the article written by Ganesh (11th December, 2014) in NARTHAKI.com. This article elaborates different perceptions of Margi and Desi performing traditions.

¹²⁰ For more information, refer to *Dance Seminar 1958*, (1958), p. 57. in SNA Annual Report.

styles of Indian dancing – classical and semi- classical with their all possible regional and formalistic variations, highly developed, well-structured folk dances and modern dance – drama.

(SNA Annual Report, 1958, p. 39)

Though this was the Seminar's agenda as per the Chairman, how far all the regional art forms were represented in the Seminar remain as a subject of debate. Furthermore, it could be analyzed from the Impressions of the Dance Seminar written by Mohan Khokar suggested that

One also felt that it would perhaps have been more useful if more time had been allotted to demonstrations of dance forms other than Bharatanāṭyam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri, for dance enthusiasts could now be presumed to be fairly well acquainted with these arts, and besides there was nothing new or uncommon which any of the demonstrators of these dances tried to present.

(SNA Annual Report 1958, p. 52)

The first and foremost analysis is based on the published research work of Putcha (2011) as some part of her research dealt the same area. The second discernment is the analysis of the published works and transcription of the audio records procured from the Sangeet Natak Akademi library and the audio–visual archives. The third perception is analyzed according to the insights and first-hand information that has been procured from Kanchanamala. She was the one who represented the art form Kuchipudi for the All India Dance Seminar. She recollected these incidents after fifty

years from its actual year of materialization. Her memoirs, her experience, her silence, and her approach are analyzed. Especially her reason to quit Kuchipudi after she participated in the Seminar.

Putcha's Observation

Putcha's thesis elaborates on the problems and issues that the art form faced with the incident in her second chapter '*Kuchipudi and the Classicism Controversy*'. She elaborately described the performance of Kanchanamala. As explained in her work, Kanchanamala was prepared to initiate her performance with *Vinayaka tāḷam*. In this performance, the performer will dance across a canvas and paint the figure of Lord Vinayaka. At the end of the performance, the canvas would be lifted for the public to see Vinayaka's painted face. Since the performance was altered to lecture-demonstration, she refused to perform *Vinayaka tāḷam*, but gave its description. She concluded her first item with the two *ślōkams* of the piece, which was very vigorous in nature. Putcha explained the next item that was performed by Kanchanamala as *jatiswaram* or *swarajati*¹²¹. Her thesis pointed out that when Kanchanamala was about to begin her performance, Raghavan interrupted her. It was particularly mentioned that when Raghavan interfered, not even her accompanists were ready to commence the performance and their conversation was exchanged as:

V Raghavan: *See, this is taking too much time. How much more is there because there*

¹²¹A *jatiswaram* is a set of jathis, bols, sollukattus or the vocalized mnemonic syllables on percussion to a tune. *Swarajathi* is the letters of the sargam notation (Indian solfège) to a tune.

is one more demonstration to be done. This is the only other item? Are there more items such as these? You see it is enough if you do Kuchipudi items. It is not necessary for.

Kanchanamala: *I am doing only Kuchipudi items.*

V. Raghavan: *These three verses, which you did, do not belong to Kuchipudi.*

Kanchanamala: *They are doing this in Kuchipudi.*

V. Raghavan: *Oh, I don't suppose the lifting of all these legs, the Nataraja pose and all . . . that does not belong to Kuchipudi. This is all improvised by you. The difficulty is all these people will mistake that this is taught by Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana and others.*

Kanchanamala: *It is only he that taught. Nataraja is done in Bharatanatyam or...*

V. Raghavan: *I have not seen this taught in Bharatanatyam. It is only now that they are doing.*

Kanchanamala: *But Nataraja is done in dance, right?*

V. Raghavan: *Nataraja is worshipped everywhere for centuries. That is not your point.*

(Putcha, 2011, p. 42)

This discussion between Kanchanamala and Raghavan, which is part of Putcha's thesis, throws light on the repeated efforts to prove that what she performed cannot be termed Kuchipudi and was a replica of Bharatanatyam.

Audio – Visual archive and Library of Sangeet Natak Akademi

As explained earlier, the all India Dance Seminar of 1958 from March 30th to April 7th was conducted at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, and was organized by Sangeet Natak Akademi.

The papers read and presented at the Seminar were accompanied by demonstrations by eminent artistes which punctuated and stimulated the discussions. The Akademi had arranged public performances of the dances every evening at the capital's open-air theatre at Talkotara Gardens. These performances, in their range and quality, were impressive and unfolded many facets of problems connected with the art of dancing. They also indicated future trends and suggested likely measures for organizing the art in a more effective manner.

Organizing Committee:

- 1. Dr. V Raghavan*
- 2. Smt. Rukmini Devi*
- 3. Shri Hari Uppal*
- 4. Shri. Uday Shankar*

(SNA Annual Dance Report, 1958, p. 40)¹²²

The aim and objectives of the Seminar could be seen as elaborated in the Annual Report. The report also suggested that there were two paper presentations on the

¹²² Furthermore, it elaborated that

The Seminar sessions and public performances attracted many critics, pressmen, observers and thousands of interested visitors from all over the country. Prof. Humayun Kabir, Union Minister for Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, also attended the Seminar sessions, and in an illuminating speech dwelt at length on the State patronage to arts. The Prime Minister, Shri. Nehru gave a reception to the participants at the Prime Minister's residence. The Seminar made some valuable recommendations for the future growth and development of Indian dancing.

Kuchipudi Dance, one by Vissa Appa Rao (1884–1966) and another one by Nataraj Ramakrishna (1923 – 2011). But in the proceedings of Seminar Nataraj Ramakrishna name is not included. Dr. Rajamannar, in his opening address, stated that

The existing spirit of rivalry, intolerance and misunderstanding between the different schools or systems of music and dance all over the country and pleaded for more sympathy, understanding and appreciation of the various styles that existed in this vast land. His earnest appeal to all true lovers of Indian culture was to develop a sense of respect and regard for authentic traditions, irrespective of linguistic and regional differences or attachments.

(The Dance Seminar: A Brief day to day account, 1958, p. 25)

The opening address clearly stated that the decisions should be made irrespective of the linguistic and regional differences. Nevertheless, the subsequent incidents turned out to be just opposite to what the Seminar's aim was supposed to be.

Another significant factor is the list of authors for the paper presentation, which included Nataraj Ramakrishna's name, but the Seminar's brief incorporated only Vissa Appa Rao and Kanchanamala's name. In the memoir of Kanchanamala also she never mentioned that Nataraj Ramakrishna was part of the Seminar. Thus, it could be assumed that Ramakrishna's paper was selected for presentation, but he might not have attended the same. Regarding Kanchanamala, the bulletin published by SNA stated that she presented a *short lecture-demonstration of the Kuchipudi style of dancing*¹²³.

¹²³ See *The Dance Seminar: A Brief day to day account* (1958), p. 29.

According to the audio recordings¹²⁴ procured from the SNA archives, the tape number ACD – 468 comprised of lecture-demonstration of Kanchanamala, where she extensively talked about the tala system and movement patterns of *Alankāradīpaṃ*, *Sarpadīpaṃ*, *Riśabhadīpaṃ*, *Puśpadīpaṃ*, and *Gurṛamdīpaṃ*. Alongside, she also demonstrated the different movement patterns structured in different mnemonic syllables of different pace or speed representing the different presentation formats. For instance, the *Gurṛamdīpaṃ* represented a tempo and mnemonic syllables that reminded the horse's movement.

Another audio record that has been accessed was ACD – 470, in which the initial 10 minutes of Kanchanamala's presentation incorporated *Aṭāṇa Jathiswaram*¹²⁵ and discussion of *cāris*¹²⁶ in Kuchipudi. There was a short excerpt of *Aṣṭapadi* interspersed with performance and demonstration. While she was demonstrating, one could clearly hear a voice that speak about *dhīrasamīréyamuna thīré*, of Jayadeva's *Aṣṭapadi*. It was written on the tape that mic access was given to only the presenter and few of the committee members. The paper pasted on the tape had three names written on it as Kanchanamala, Rukmini Devi Arundale and Dr. V Raghavan. Since the voice heard was a male voice, it could be presumed that Raghavan might have asked the question. In the voice record, one could clearly hear distant murmuring while the performance was going on.

¹²⁴The number of audiotapes that Putcha had procured from the archives was referred to as ACD – 470(II).

Simultaneously, I was not given ACD – 470 (II); instead, the tape numbers ACD – 465, ACD – 466, ACD – 468, ACD – 470 were made available to listen.

¹²⁵A *Jathiswaram* in *rāgam* Athana.

¹²⁶The movement of a *cāri* refers to the movements of hands, feet, calves, thighs and the hip are moved in mutual concordance. Another significant factor is that the movement is done with the single foot.

The memoirs of Kanchanamala

If you want to see me perform, you must allow me to finish my sentence at least.

Kanchanamala explained that she was the first recipient of a scholarship by the Ministry of Culture in 1954 and she was chosen by the Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy (APSNA) to represent Kuchipudi in the All India Dance Seminar of 1958. Along with her, Vissa Appa Rao also went to Delhi to present a paper for the seminar¹²⁷.

She explained that the invitation she received clearly pointed out a full-length Kuchipudi performance. On her arrival at the Vigyan Bhavan, she was informed that she will have to cut short her performance into a lecture-demonstration. She decided to have clarity on the same matter and met the (then) Secretary of Sangeet Natak Akademi, Ms. Nirmala Joshi. Kanchanamala made it clear to Ms. Joshi that she received an invitation that referred to her presentation as a performance and not a lecture demonstration. To this, Joshi responded that, by performance she meant demonstration only. To this, the furious Kanchanamala retaliated that *in which dictionary you will find the meaning of performance as demonstration?*

Kanchanamala felt disturbed by their attitude and the whole scenario that was staged there. She firmly believed this was reflective of their attitude towards the Kuchipudi dance form. Since she was not prepared for the lecture-demonstration, once she was on stage, she announced the same and proceeded to demonstrate the salient features of Kuchipudi, which exceeded the given half an hour time limit. The

¹²⁷ For more information, refer to *Dance Seminar 1958*, (1958), p. 40. in SNA Annual Report.

announcement made by Kanchanamala prior to her lecture-demonstration perturbed some of the members of the organizing committee. So, the moment she crossed the time limit, Raghavan interrupted her and embarked on a discussion with her.

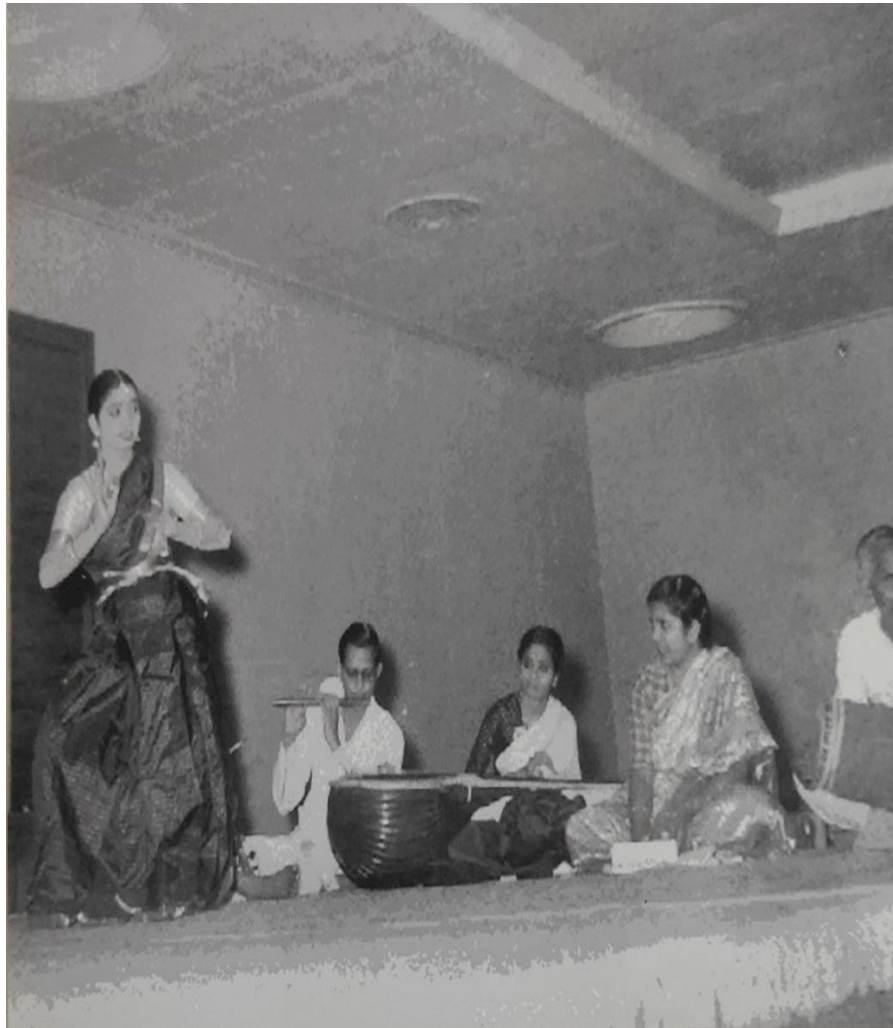


Photo 17: Kanchanamala during her demonstration at the 1958 Seminar
Photo Courtesy: Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives

Raghavan emphasized that Kanchanamala was given half an hour and she should conclude her presentation in the given time constraint. Kanchanamala explicated that it was difficult for her to either demonstrate/ perform or give a lecture on any of the aspects of Kuchipudi within the allotted time. She repeatedly requested

to extend her time limit to clarify her explanation and performance; however, it was ignored and denied. This action disconcerted Kanchanamala. Kanchanamala retaliated by saying that *you are neither willing to listen to me nor allowing me to showcase a complete Kuchipudi performance. If this is how you treat an artist, then I am disinterested in performing!*

Kanchanamala stopped her lecture-demonstration and came off the stage. She referred to this as the most challenging time in her career. However, this incident had changed her mindset, attitude, and passion for Kuchipudi. There was a massive setback after this incident that ended up in the blame game.

Juxtapose of the Jigsaw – puzzle

The analysis of this incidents and different perceptions of the same incident is overseen in this section of the research work. As mentioned earlier, the memoirs of Kanchanamala suggested that her performance schedule was changed to lecture-demonstration, without any prior information. Though the adjustment appeared to be a minor one, but it resulted in a radical transformation in the history of Kuchipudi. She had stated that it was very difficult for her to go through a situation of that sort, as she was invited and had prepared for a solo performance. Sudden information of change in her program was a blow to her as she did not get enough time to prepare. She felt that the cancellation of the performance in the event was an insult to her and Kuchipudi. Many literary narratives and radio broadcasts stated that Kanchanamala felt insulted and was humiliated by the organizers during the All India Dance Seminar of 1958 at New Delhi.

Kanchanamala, in her memoir, mentioned about an article entitled as Kuchipudi *Sāstrīyanṛtamkāda?* which was published soon after she returned from

Delhi. Though she did not remember the reporter's name and the newspaper's name, she emphasized that it provoked the common intelligentsia. She recollected that there were many articles in the same manner that was published during that period. These articles focused on blaming her and portraying her as the main reason for the denial of the classical status for Kuchipudi. Though she retaliated to these paper headlines with her version of the story, unfortunately, it was too late, and the common crowd understood and analyzed a different story altogether. She mentioned that among the writers who wrote about her include Banda Kanakalingeswara Rao (1907 – 1968), which was a shocking for her.

As explained earlier, it was difficult for the hereditary family members to accept Sastry (then). The incident at Delhi fueled the whole scenario, and they accentuated that his choreographies were not appropriately patterned, and that his methodologies were discarded. She recollected that Sastry had no connection with anyone in a higher position of any organization to influence and get things done. Sastry felt low when his ideas were never approved in the precincts of Kuchipudi by the hereditary family members. Sastry lamented that no one listened to him when he talked about the innovations and strategies that could make the art form popular. On the other hand, she commiserated that there was a broader propagation among the Kuchipudi fraternity (then) that whatever Sastry taught cannot be named as Kuchipudi.

The same has been elaborated in Putcha's work too (2011:25). She explained in her thesis that the whole Telugu community felt insulted by the series of incidents in Delhi. As for the community, through Kuchipudi, it was their chance to be part of the cultural history of India. They felt that *Telugus and Telugu culture were also*

*insulted at the Seminar*¹²⁸. She has also thrown insight into the same aspect that has been elaborated by Kanchanamala that many literary narratives stirred up the situation. There were articles published that even pointed out that the Telugu land's classical art form was folk.

As explained, Kanchanamala was a recipient of a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India. The judges of the interview included Raghavan and Rukmini Devi. In the memoir, Kanchanamala explained that Rukmini had taken her to visit Kalakshetra, and she blatantly expressed that she was not a great fan of that style, so she did not join there and then she joined under Chokkalingam Pillai. If the whole scenario is analyzed, Kanchanamala's decision to avoid Rukmini and Raghavan must have triggered them. When they found the same person was in the Dance Seminar representing Kuchipudi, they must have doubted her technique, too, as she was also introduced to Bharatanatyam by then. The brief bio of Kanchanamala in the SNA report suggests her to be a recipient of a scholarship in Bharatanatyam. While considering the scholarship incidents along with that of the Seminar incidents, it could be understood that the attitude of the organizing committee members was a part of the pre-conceived notions that they had on Kanchanamala. Kanchanamala once being the student of Chokkalingam Pillai alongside her triggering conversation with Ms. Joshi might have fueled up the whole scene.

The memoirs of Kanchanamala and other literary narratives elucidated that review of Kanchanamala's performance written by E Krishna Iyer, which was published in the first page of *The Hindu* could be another reason to accentuate her connection with Bharatanatyam. This could be another reason to doubt her mudras and stances in the presentation. The performance review by Iyer might have created

¹²⁸ For more information, refer to Chapter 2 of Putcha (2011), p. 25

a vast disgruntlement among the Tamil speaking connoisseurs. Being a Telugu speaking girl, who performed Bharatanatyam and achieved rave reviews from Iyer might have been a setback for the Tamil art fraternity. It is expressed in Kanchanamala's memoir that though she did not like it, the whole Telugu fraternity took it proudly. So, this review might have struck the eyes of Raghavan and Rukmini too. Since they already knew her caliber, it could be a matter of acceptance. As she expressed, it could also be considered as a 'staged' situation. In Putcha's analysis of the conversation, there is a part in the audio record where Raghavan mentioned a movement of Kanchanamala as her own improvised one. His existing knowledge of Kanchanamala's training in Bharatanatyam might have prompted him to say that. Another major part would be the analysis of the incidents from Putcha's work. The *Vinayaka tāḷam* is a performance piece that has been developed by Kanchanamala and she had elaborated the same during the Seminar. Sastry was against her performing this piece as the performer has to draw the face of Vināyaka with her feet. But Putcha's observation also cites that she did not perform the whole of *Vinayaka tāḷam* and only a part of it because of the time constraint.

The record ACD – 470 did not mention about *Vinayaka tāḷam*, the other *tāḷams* incorporated are elaborated earlier. In this record, it was clear that she performed *Aṭāna Jatiswaram*, but in a fast tempo than the contemporary ones that are practiced and performed. Putcha's observation on the same had mentioned it as *swarajati* or *jatiswaram* (2011: 42).

Next item for demonstration of her performance was Jayadeva's *Aṣṭapadi* as per audio ACD – 470. The *Aṣṭapadi* incorporated the traditional *jatīs* of Kuchipudi. In between 20:00 to 21:24 minutes time duration of the audio referred a conversation between Kanchanamala and Raghavan. Raghavan was bit irritated in his tone and

asked Kanchanamala what category of *nayika*/ heroine she was portraying. Kanchanamala replied it as *mugdha*. At this particular juncture, it could be heard that an enraged Raghavan cross-questioned Kanchanamala. He questioned on the categorization of *nāyika* as *mugdha* in *raṭi sukha sāre gatamabhisāre*. Furthermore, he detailed her *abhinaya*/ expression and probed the credibility of her answer. Kanchanamala's answer *mugdha* refers to a category of heroine who has no experience in love, whereas, the meaning of the *Aṣṭapadi* portrays the deep longing of Krishna to meet Radha in the banks of Yamuna, while he still remembers their last union. The verse *raṭi sukha sāre gatamabhisāre* refers to the pining of Krishna to have a union with Radha. So, Raghavan found it paradoxical to understand her selection of the song and her explanation of the enactment as *mugdha nayika*. Her voice suggested that she was very much tensed to handle the situation as she was not prepared enough.

The discussion between Kanchanamala and Raghavan which was part of Putcha's thesis throws light on the repeated efforts to prove that what she performed cannot be termed as Kuchipudi and was a replica of Bharatanatyam. As explained in Kanchanamala's memoir of the incident, she had emphasized that she had a word with Ms. Joshi regarding the shift of the full-length performance to lecture-demonstration. This kind of attitude by Raghavan could be his reaction to Kanchanamala's response to Ms. Joshi which did not end in a positive note. Since she questioned her, in offence with her attitude, he reacted indifferently. Also, in Putcha's version, Raghavan elaborated on the *Natarāja*¹²⁹ posture of Kanchanamala and contested that what she had performed is not Kuchipudi and that the posture is

¹²⁹ The iconic posture of Lord Shiva

part of Bharatanatyam. Though, in the conversation it could be perceived that she defends her part, but Raghavan cut down the conversation by stating that *it's not!*



Photo 18: Kanchanamala in Nataraj pose during one of her performances prior 1957.

Photo Courtesy: Personal Collections of Kanchanamala

If the *Natarāja* posture was an issue, this photo of Kanchanamala was taken during her performances at Bandar. In her memoir, Kanchanamala elaborated that Sastry did *naṭṭuvāṅgam* for the performance. In that case, how could Raghavan argue on the *Natarāja* pose and claim that the posture is part of Bharatanatyam performing tradition and interdict it for Kuchipudi. The mere purpose of Raghavan to doubt Kanchanamala's performance and blatantly argue against it as not Kuchipudi is uncertain. At this juncture, the analysis doubts the organizers' intention. As Kanchanamala explicated in her memoir that it was a *staged* array of incidents.

The events' analysis suggests the existence of a pre-conceived notion on Kanchanamala as a performer and her presentation of Kuchipudi as an art form. In the paper presentation of Appa Rao also, he questioned why Kuchipudi as an art form

was ignored. Rukmini reassured that it is always considered a classical art form that is a part of Bharatanatyam. The SNA bulletin also stated Kuchipudi as a *special form of Bharatanatyam*.

In the afternoon, Shri. V. Appa Rao read a long and interesting paper on “Kuchipudi School of Dance”, tracing the origin and history of this special form of Bharatanatyam as practiced in Andhra Desa. He pointed out the similarities between this particular type of dancing and that of the Melathur type as practiced in Tamil district of Tanjore. He felt that for some unaccountable reason, this art was being ignored and not encouraged in South India and was not even considered a classical type of art. Smt. Rukmini Devi corrected him by saying that Kuchipudi dance had always been considered as a classical dance art and another form of Bharatanatyam.

(Dance Seminar 1958, 1958, p. 29)

The general attitude not to bifurcate Kuchipudi as another art form was continuously persistent in the Seminar.

The memoir of Kanchanamala suggested that she was upset with the kind of response that was put forth by the organizing committee members, Rukmini and Raghavan. Though she had personally known them during her scholarship days, their indifference in behavior during the Seminar worried her. Kanchanamala stated that she felt disheartened as her evening performance was shifted to morning lecture demonstration. She elaborated on the discomforting and intimidating atmosphere that

was around her at the performative space during the morning session. Putcha's analysis elaborated on the disappointment and disrespect that Kanchanamala underwent when she was asked to stop in the middle of her lecture-demonstration. She was shattered at the thought that her art form could not stand for itself.

The discernments that are discussed earlier also throws light on the attitude of Rukmini. She behaved differently throughout the Seminar. She was convinced in her belief of Kuchipudi as part of Bharatanatyam and accentuated that throughout the Seminar. She seemed to be in a refusal note to identify Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam as two different art forms representing different cultural- regional flavours. Since both the states were undergoing a political – geographical turmoil, it was important for Andhra Pradesh to attain that recognition for Kuchipudi. In the second chapter of this thesis, the connotation of the same has been discussed extensively with the popular term *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam* that was widely used. The political movement to bring in wide acclaim to Bharatanatyam was also discussed there.

The same could be perceived in the 1955 National Dance Festival, the third sponsored program by the Sangeet Natak Akademi. The (then) President Dr. Rajendra Prasad inaugurated the festival and expressed great satisfaction in the way Akademi was progressing.

The program of the Festival covered a wide cross-section of Indian classical and traditional dancing, ranging from Bharatanatyam to the comparatively little-known styles of Chau and Kuchipudi as also the modern innovation as ballet.

(Dance Seminar 1958, 1958, p. 43)

This clearly suggests the pan Indian image that Bharatanatyam carried throughout. The participants list projected Andhra as Kuchipudi Dance, and no name was

mentioned. So, who had performed for the 1955 Dance Festival representing Kuchipudi remains a question. At the same time, a photograph of Nataraj Ramakrishna performing on the lawn has been procured from the SNA archives.



Photo 19: Nataraj Ramakrishna performing on the lawn
Photo Courtesy: Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives

The photograph suggested that it was taken in 1955, but whether it was taken during the dance festival is not mentioned. The participants list also did not convey the name of the performer. Another significant point that needs to be noted in the 1955 Dance Festival is that the festival carried the name *Kuchipudi Dance*. Hence, it was not like Kuchipudi as a name of an art form was not prevalent or was not in usage, as Rukmini mentioned during the 1958 Seminar.

Though in the addressing note, Rajamannar had discussed maintaining a fair overlook on the art forms irrespective of the geographical – linguistic boundaries, it is evident that this was carried forward in actuality. In the paper presentation part,

Rukmini Devi discussed Kuchipudi as a part/binary of Bharatanatyam, but she never gave the art form an individual identity.

During this extensive work, two questions that occurred throughout were

- Selection of Kanchanamala as a representative of Kuchipudi
- Kuchipudi being considered as a non-classical art form

In the memoirs and the SNA report, Kanchanamala was referred to as the recipient of a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. This scholarship is mentioned in the report of SNA as *one of its kind*. The literary narratives and memoir suggested that Kanchanamala worked with Sastry during the first half of her scholarship time period and then with Chokkalingam Pillai during the second half. Since she is one of the recipients of the scholarship who worked with Sastry and was recognized by the Ministry itself, it could be the reason for her to be part of the Seminar. One more factor for the selection could be that she was well-versed in English; she could articulate and express through a language with which the hereditary performers of Kuchipudi were not comfortable then. Kanchanamala and her acquaintance with the English language are mentioned in Putcha (2011) and Bapati, (1989) too. Furthermore, Sastry might have wanted to put forth an 'educated intelligentsia' to represent Kuchipudi and participate in the presentation.

Many literary narratives have mentioned that Kuchipudi was categorized as a non-classical art form during the Seminar. Who categorized and what was the purpose of this categorization were the questions that remains answered. However, the uproar of not including the form into the classical category left Andhra Pradesh ignored. Being a newly formed State, the whole expectation was on the Seminar as it was believed that this would pave the way for the State to achieve a new cultural

identity of its own. However, when the art form itself was not recognized, then the State's representation was in oblivion. In order to avoid this situation, nationalists, as well as art connoisseurs, were in continuous demand for (re) scrutiny the issue.

As explained earlier, the work of Putcha and the memoir of Kanchanamala give an insight into the incidents that followed. The article published entitled as *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam Sastriyame!* (Putcha, 2011) in *Jagruti*, could be translated as *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam is classical!* Again, it is mentioned as *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam*, as referred to by Rukmini. In the memoirs of Kanchanamala, she had mentioned that she had given interviews and written articles where she had stated that no one had categorized Kuchipudi as non-classical or folk-art form. She expressed that efforts were taken by Appa Rao too to put forward the same insight to the public. Putcha's (2011) work also includes the statement of CR Acharya, who was present for the Seminar, who had expressed the same opinion to the press. By the time these interviews came out, the uproar reached its peak, and none cared much about these interviews. Kanchanamala also expressed that when Telugu identity was a matter of life and death, people in Andhra Pradesh engaged in fast-until-death campaigns to establish an independent state for Telugus, the recognition of a Telugu dance was important, and it meant a great deal for them at that time.

As an immediate reaction of this uproar, the Kuchipudi Dance Seminar was held from 28th February 1959 at Hyderabad under the auspices of Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy. The participants of the All India Dance Seminar appealed to the SNA to revisit the issue of not granting classical status to Kuchipudi and take appropriate action.

*Veteran dancers, eminent scholars and persons interested in
this art assembled to discuss various aspects of the Kuchipudi*

dance style. The Seminar was also attended by the secretary of the Central Akademi. As a sequel to the above Seminar, the Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy submitted a scheme to the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, for the establishment of a School at the village of Kuchipudi itself and also an institution at a central place in Andhra Pradesh for imparting advance courses in Kuchipudi dance. The scheme prepared and submitted by the State Akademi is under consideration of the Central Akademi.

(SNA Annual Report 1958 – 59, 1959, p. 39)

In the later phase, the Central Akademi considered the request and the construction of *Siddendra Yogi Kalakshetra* at Kuchipudi was initiated.

The ‘Classical’: Analysis of series of events of the 1959 Seminar by APSNA

Amid all the anxiety and urge to identify Andhra Pradesh as a State, the scholars, critics, historians, and the artists demanded another Seminar. The Seminar was under the guidance of Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy. This, for them, was a chance to prove themselves as a *well-equipped* State which has a cultural legacy of its own. The art enthusiasts, performers and scholars decided to perform in front of the delegates with proper referral points and model from the SNA Seminar, so that Kuchipudi could be re-evaluated. The *Seminar on Kuchipudi Dance* under the auspicious of APSNA was a two-day Seminar. It started on 28th February and proceeded till 1st March 1959 at the Tilak Memorial Hall, Hyderabad.

The Seminar was attended by veteran dancers, eminent scholars, and persons interested in this art to discuss the various aspects of the Kuchipudi dance style. The

attendees included Nirmala Joshi, the (then) Secretary, Sangeet Natak Akademi, Delhi¹³⁰. The delegates sent by the central Sangeet Natak Akademi included Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the (then) Prime Minister of India, Justice Dr. P V Rajamannar, the (then) Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, Shri Bhimsen Sachar (1894 – 1978), the (then) Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Dr. B Ramakrishna Rao (1899 – 1967), the then Governor of Kerala and Dr. V Raghavan.

It was during the evening of 28th February at 3 pm, that the proceedings of the Seminar commenced. The situation was very much tense as the linguistically formed new State, Andhra Pradesh, was eager to have its recognition in the field of culture. The proceedings commenced with prayer by Smt. R Janaki Devi. The delegates were welcomed by the (then) convener Nataraj Ramakrishna and L N Gupta, the (then) Secretary, Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy, looked through the messages received. The Seminar was inaugurated by Sri. S B P Pattabhi Ramarao (1911 – 1980), the (then) Education Minister, Andhra Pradesh. He mentioned that discussion should be carried forward in developing the art form Kuchipudi¹³¹.

At evening 5 pm, all the members again gathered, and under the presidentship of R B Ramakrishna Raju the proceedings began. With scholar Vissa Appa Rao's paper presentation, the second session was initiated. He discussed the historical development of Kuchipudi dancing and its distinctive features, almost the same points that he had covered in his 1958 paper. After the paper presentation, Chinta Krishna Murthy and his group performed. They performed pieces from

¹³⁰ The observers were Vice Chairman and Administrator of Bharatiya Kala Kendra, College of Dancing in Delhi

¹³¹ The purpose of the Seminar was explained by R B Ramakrishna Raju, President of the Andhra Akademi. The first session was concluded with the vote of thanks by L N Gupta.

Bhamākalāpam, *Bhakta Prahlāda* and *Gollakalāpam*. Their demonstration explored and explained the rigorous exercises for various *aṅgās* and *upāṅgās* of the body that brought grace and expressiveness to the performance. This was followed by Putcha Venkata Subrahmanya Sastry's explanation of four kinds of *abhinaya* described in *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and he also explored its significance in the performative part of the Kuchipudi style of dancing.

Session 1: 1st March 1959, Morning 9am.

The next morning included paper presentation of Dr. M Rama Rao¹³², Ayyanki TandavaKrishna¹³³, C. V. V. R Prasad, A. Venkata Ramaiah, Banda Kanakalingeswara Rao¹³⁴, Lanka Surya Narayana Sastry¹³⁵, Nataraj Ramakrishna¹³⁶, Bhagavathula Ramkotaiah and Kanchanamala¹³⁷. The report also elaborated the performance of *Gollakalāpam* by *devadāsīs* - *Vaidehi* and *Induvadana* of *Manampally* as the *cynosure* of the whole event¹³⁸.

¹³² In his paper, he described the greatness of book *Nritta Ratnavali* written by Jayapa Senapati and he also related it to the Kuchipudi dance tradition.

¹³³ He described the journey of Kuchipudi and how it travelled beyond the boundaries of Andhra Pradesh and influenced the dances of other places.

¹³⁴ Three of them suggested various ways and means to preserve and develop Kuchipudi dance style.

¹³⁵ He focused on the female impersonation prevailing in the Kuchipudi dance tradition and he mentioned how successfully this has been carried forward. However, he also added that in the contemporary context women should also be trained to enact the role themselves.

¹³⁶ He described the Aradhana and Kelika dances which are in vogue in the temples and emphasized the necessity for preserving this art which was preserved by the devadāsīs.

¹³⁷ Kanchanamala gave a comparative demonstration of Kuchipudi and the Tanjore Natyam sampradayas.

¹³⁸ They sang and rendered the *Pindotpathi krama* in Sanskrit, along with giving performance. The performance was initiated with a benedictory verse *Amba Prarthana*, the main singer - Gollabhama

Session 2: 1st March 1959, Evening 3pm

During the evening, all the scholars, artists and other delegates gathered to have a discussion on the art form Kuchipudi and during this discussion it was unanimously passed that the art form would be given a ‘classical’ status. They also listed some resolutions that would discuss the steps to be taken for the development of Kuchipudi dance tradition. After the discussions, *Uśa Parināyam* was presented by Chinta Krishna Murthy and his group¹³⁹. The seminar concluded with vote of thanks by Ramakrishna Raji.

Resolutions

1. *The seminar is of the opinion that it has been authoritatively proved that Kuchipudi Natya Kala follows Bharata’s Natya Sastra and the commentaries are there on and this dance style of Andhra is ancient and classical.*
2. *A subcommittee is hereby appointed to prepare a report on this ancient and classical dance with a view to its*

offered Pushpanjali and then performed Ganapati Vandana. This was followed by the enactment of the story of creation. They recited a *vedic mantra* and elaborated its meaning in Sanskrit and then an explanation in Telugu. They explained through their performance the whole cycle of life - from birth to death and several duties prescribed for men in the text Karma Kanda were detailed. This description was interspersed with songs and dances

¹³⁹ The duration of the performance prolonged till the early hours of next day. Brahmanand Reddi gifted Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma a gold bracelet on behalf of the Academy as he enacted

Usha so admirably and congratulated the artists who took part in this.

publication. Its history, nature and distinctiveness should be delineated, supported by documentary and other evidences. This committee is requested to prepare the report with all possible expedition and send it to the akademi the names of the members are as follows:

<i>M Rama Rao -</i>	<i>Hyderabad</i>
<i>A Tandava Krishna -</i>	<i>Vijayawada</i>
<i>P V Subrahmanya Sastry -</i>	<i>Hyderabad</i>
<i>Nataraj Ramakarishna -</i>	<i>Hyderabad</i>
<i>P S R Appa Rao</i>	<i>Secunderabad</i>

3. It is resolved that in order to develop this art, a college should be established. This is to enable the preparation of a comprehensive scheme after collecting all the relevant data necessary to prepare a syllabus. The committee is requested to prepare the report and send it to the akademi with all possible expedition. The names of the members are as follows:

<i>Chinta Krishna Murthy</i>	<i>Kuchipudi</i>
<i>Vempati Satyanarayana</i>	<i>Madras</i>
<i>Nataraj Ramakrishna</i>	<i>Hyderabad</i>
<i>C V V R Prasad</i>	<i>Hyderabad</i>
<i>P S R Appa Rao</i>	<i>Secunderabad</i>
<i>Banda Kanakalingeswara Rao</i>	<i>Vijayawada</i>

4. It resolved that the railway authorities should be requested to give concession rates to the Kuchipudi artists when they undertake journeys to give performances.

5. At present the temple dance traditions are gradually languishing. The religious endowment department is therefore, requested to restore and encourage this dance and to invite Kuchipudi dance troupes during the festivals and arrange for their dance dramas on religious themes and help them financially.

6. Though there is not much encouragement for Kuchipudi dance tradition, Chinta Krishna murthy and others have been holding on their tradition and preserving it. In the same way, Chittajalu Vaidehi, Induvadana and others have been holding on to the devadasi tradition and preserving it. The seminar therefore, congratulates these artists though according to the Kuchipudi dance tradition men alone should play the part of women, the Kuchipudi artists have been coming forward to train women also to play the roles of women. The seminar takes note of this innovation and welcomes the steps taken in this direction.

7. *It is hereby resolved to request the Akademi to hold seminars on music and drama also as done in the case of Kuchipudi dance.*

8. *This seminar congratulates the Sangeet Natak Akademi authorities for having arranged this Kuchipudi dance seminar and conducting it successfully.*

(SNA Bulletin No:11-12, 1959, p. 11 – 12)

The 1959 seminar's resolution elaborates the conscious effort taken by the State to claim its place in the cultural map of India. The 1958 Seminar had served as a model to understand, analyze, and attain the right path to showcase Kuchipudi's history. This seminar had deeply impacted the implication of various textual traditions to the practical aspects of the performing traditions. This was a clue for the Kuchipudi fraternity to connect the art form with the textual traditions, which they thought would be an easier way to attain classical status. For instance, the lecture demonstrations on Bharatanatyam and the discussions ended up in directing its association with the treatise *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Even though the art form Kuchipudi was deeply rooted and coalesced with the textual traditions, there was an extra effort from the side of the Telugu speaking scholars, artists, connoisseurs, and critics to reinforce the same to the panel. They accentuated the relation and implementation of the text on the technique. Assuming the 1958 Seminar as a model, the scholars believed that legacy/ antiquity/ background/ history/ hereditary were mandatory to be associated with the country's textual tradition to be part of the umbrella term, 'classical.' During the Seminar, the papers presented by different scholars had tried to draw the connection with *Nāṭyaśāstra* through various examples. Thus, in the Seminar,

through the paper presentations, there was a conscious effort put forth to throw light on the various ways in which Kuchipudi had implemented *Nāṭyaśāstra* and other textual traditions to its form.

One of the much sought out concepts discussed in the 1958 seminar was institutionalization. There were speeches dedicated to understanding and analyze the benefits of getting institutionalized. It was also explained that institutionalization would, in turn, support the propagation of the art form. The pioneer institutions like, Kalakshetra, Kalamandalam, Darpana, etc. were taken as examples to have made their own mark in the cultural history during the 1958 seminar. The papers presented by Raghavan, Rukmini Devi, and Krishna Rao spoke widely about the art form, Bharatanatyam and Kalakshetra too. It also explored the areas where Kalakshetra acted as the greatest pillar principle for exploration, experimentation, and the reconstruction of Bharatanatyam. The Telugu scholars understood and analyzed these series of incidents in the 1958 Seminar and mapped something similar to that for the 1959 Seminar. So, a model was designed which was close to the structure of Kalakshetra at Adyar. Then, the same was proposed for Kuchipudi in Andhra Pradesh. As explained, the suggestion was sent to Central Sangeet Natak Akademi and the construction of *Siddendra Yogi Kalakshetra* was initiated in Kuchipudi. One more reason for the urge to have an institution of its own for Kuchipudi could be an impulse to get bifurcated from Bharatanatyam. Through which, Kuchipudi could attain an individual identity of its own other than the *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam* tag. Furthermore, to have a separate identity in the cultural map, it was necessary to have a different functional point after the State formation.

During the *Yakṣagānam* performance sessions of the Seminar, the female roles were majorly enacted by men. The practice of female impersonation is a part of

the Kuchipudi dance tradition. The artistes like Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma, created a niche of his own by the mid-twentieth century for his talent at representing female characters. The performance schedule of the 1959 Seminar featured *Yakṣagānam* that highlighted *śṛīvēśam*. The literary narratives stated that the popularity of female impersonation in Andhra had given no space for the female performers in the theatrical traditions practiced at the Kuchipudi village (Hansen, 1999). Lanka Suryanarayana Sastry, during his paper presentation in the Seminar discussed that Kuchipudi lack in (re) presenting female performers (*Dance Seminar*, 1959). It coincided with Sarma's presentation that included statements giving reasons for the less intake of female performers in Kuchipudi.



Photo 20: Vedantam Satya Narayana Sarma as Bhama for the 1959 Seminar
Photo Courtesy: Sangeet NatakAkademi Archives

Regarding the performances of 1959 Seminar, it was mentioned that;

The highlight of the Seminar, however, was an illuminating demonstration of Gollakalapam as performed by the devadasis. Smt. Vaidehi and Smt. Induvadana of Marampally, able exponents of this style, rendered the Pindotpathi Krama in delightful Sanskrit. Starting with a benedictory verse Amba Prarthana, the main singer—Gollabhama offered Pushpanjali and Ganapathi Vandana (invocations) and then came to the story of creation. Reciting a Vedic mantra (chant), she elaborated its meaning in Sanskrit and then an explanation in Telugu. The whole cycle of life—from birth to death, several duties prescribed for men in the texts—Karma Kanda were detailed. This description was interspersed with songs and dances.

(SNA Bulletin, 1959, p. 43)

The performance of Induvadana and Vaidehi in the morning session of 1st March 1959 was written as the highlight of all the performances and paper presentations (SNA Bulletin, 1959). The list of other performances included *Uśa Pariṇāyam*, excerpts of *Bhamākalāpam* and *Gollakalāpam* by Chintha Krishna Murthy and group. Paradoxically, the prime hours were neither dedicated to the solo performances nor to the *Yakṣagānam* performances of the hereditary performers. The 1959 Seminar did not highlight Kuchipudi's male-oriented hereditary family lineage with female impersonators donning the female role. This directly throws light on the inclusive insight that the art practitioners and scholars put forth. The incorporation

of the performance of Induvadana and Vaidehi was to substantiate the existence of female performing traditions from the courtesan families in Andhra.

This could also be considered as a targeted move to make the delegates of SNA understand and analyze that Kuchipudi is inclusive of female dancing traditions. This could be a model that has been formulated following the pattern of *Bharatanatyam* from the 1958 Seminar. The analysis of the same might have made the scholars frame and structure the performance list in this manner. As Bharatanatyam showcased its female performing tradition, the scholars might have thought it safe to showcase Kuchipudi's female performing tradition. Along with the emphasis on textual tradition and institutionalization, this was another attempt to convince the authority to get into the *classical* strata. This part of the history has deconstructed the theory of power politics. The power politics of Kuchipudi that was controlled by the male-dominant hereditary families was socially inclusive enough to accommodate the female performers from the courtesan performing tradition too. However, Putcha (2011) elaborates in one of her interviews with M N Sharma a different dimension of the whole scenario of bringing in the female performing tradition

The performance scenario featured Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma on one side and the *Gollakalāpam* of Induvadana and Vaidehi on the other side. By showcasing a vibrant performance schedule, the organizers (might have) believed that they could bring into fore Andhra's performative culture. Thus, the 1959 Seminar demonstrated a rich performing culture of Andhra tradition, and it could also be considered an outstanding achievement.

Kanchanamala was the only woman speaker who presented a paper during the 1959 Seminar. This showcase two aspects of the socio-political scenario prevalent during that period.

- Women scholars were reckoned then and Kuchipudi was inclusive enough to appreciate them.
- The women performers or artistes who had taken up Kuchipudi as part of their full-length performance were also very few in number.

Though the graph of women performers incorporates the contributions of Indrani Rahman and Yamini Krishnamoorthy, but Kuchipudi remained as only a part of their main repertoire.

Another facet that needs to be elaborated is the power politics within the gender. To elaborate further, the literary narratives gave rave reviews of the performances of Vaidehi and Induvadana. However, the memoir of Kanchanamala merely suggested the performance of *Gollakalāpam*. To emphasize this point further, majority of the informants' attitude towards the performance of *Gollakalāpam* was inconsequential. This juncture intensified the *elite – middle class* power politics. In her memoir, Kanchanamala recollected that two female performers came for the Seminar. She added that these women were not from the Kuchipudi lineage nor were they disciples of any other Kuchipudi hereditary Guru. They were the *devadāsis* invited by Nataraj Ramakrishna on his *particular interest* for the Seminar. She emphasized that contradictory to their non-lineage reference of Kuchipudi, they were the most photographed and featured performers at the Seminar. This point directly indicates the power politics within gender; Kanchanamala, being a female performer, could not accept the reviews and appreciation that was bestowed upon Induvadana and Vaidehi for their performance.

Thus, the 1959 Seminar brought in many referral points and junctures in the history of Kuchipudi. It gave a clear picture and complete analysis of the implication of performing traditions and textual traditions of Andhra. However, it was understood that *officially* Kuchipudi attained classical strata with the Seminar. Though officially, it was declared as a classical art form, the turmoil within the frame continued further. This had led APSNA to organize another Seminar after five years.

Re-instating the ‘Classical’: All India Dance Festival Organized by APSNA (1964)

All India dance Festival organized by the Andhra Pradesh Sangeetha Nataka Academy at Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad during 14th – 17th March 1964¹⁴⁰ re-instated Kuchipudi’s need to be categorized under the *classical dance* strata. The presidential address of the same was delivered by Vedantam Raghavaiyya. In the presidential address, he spoke about different performing traditions of India and how artistes move forward with an inclusive nature of respecting all performing traditions. He further elaborated that no art form could be looked up or looked down upon as superior or inferior since each one carries its own distinct adroitness. He pointed out that there was a general tendency which prevailed (then) among the artists to categorize the performing traditions and build a hierarchy placing each one at different levels. Through his presidential address, he requested everyone to have an equal perception of all the performing traditions of India, as each one has a distinct story of evolution and formulation which need to be respected.

The resolution was signed by E Krishna Iyer and he emphasized that

¹⁴⁰ For more information, refer to Anuradha (2019), p. 117 – 123.

I was agonized to hear that Kuchipudi dance is not considered to be a classical art form. It is sad that the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi did not accept Kuchipudi as a classical art form. This is an utter insult to Indian dance itself. It is a mistake to think that Kuchipudi is a folk-art form. It originated from the classical texts and was shaped by Siddendra Yogi.

(Anuradha, 2019, p. 121)

E Krishna Iyer elaborated that the music employed for Kuchipudi has dignified emotions, varied steps and distinct abhinaya and insisted that everyone should agree that Kuchipudi is a classical art form.

Resolution

It has been resolved to recommend to the central Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, to recognize Kuchipudi dance form as a classical art form and include it in the category of Indian Classical Dance forms. This has been decided and recommended by the dancers and dance critics who participated in the All India Dance festival conducted at Hyderabad.

Signed by

E Krishna Iyer

Damayanthi Joshi

Nayana Jhaveri

(Anuradha, 2019, p. 121)

Thus, after the 1959 Seminar too, there were efforts taken by the art enthusiasts, performers, and scholars to re-instate the status of Kuchipudi. It was a series of political, social and cultural turmoil and incidents that resulted in having successfully placed the name Andhra Pradesh through 'Kuchipudi' on India's cultural map.

Chapter 4

The Untrodden Meadow of Wisdom: From *Guru* to *Śiṣya*

This chapter focuses on the evolution of solo repertoire as a separate stream in Kuchipudi and is termed as the need of the time. The role and contribution of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry (1880 – 1957), and his prime disciple Kanchanamala (1936 – 2019) in structuring and formatting a separate solo repertoire in Kuchipudi is analyzed and comprehended. The repertoire was ever-evolving and Sastry had much enthusiasm to innovate something novel and unique in Kuchipudi. Thus, the establishment of the solo repertoire in Kuchipudi could be termed as his innovation. In addition, this chapter elaborates the role of Kanchanamala as a prime – female – non – hereditary performer in forming, structuring, and shaping the art form. The significant portion of the chapter has been analyzed through the method of Ethnographic memoir and Narrative inquiry.

Sastry was eager to make the solo format the main part of Kuchipudi's repertoire and history. His enthusiasm prompted him to leave the Kuchipudi village, and his passion allowed him to think from a larger construct of art. This, in turn, urged him to teach Kuchipudi out of its cultural precincts and make it available to the non-hereditary learners. Sastry mentioned his passion and zest for propagating art to his disciples during his class. Though he was not financially stable, his dedication towards the art form made him concentrate more on teaching and propagating the form rather than performing and claiming fame. Sastry desired to innovate something different from others that would mark a signature of his own. His piquancy of life was to learn and collate more about the art and art-related topics that led to the formulation of a solo form in Kuchipudi. He missioned this vision as a path-breaking

one but grieved that he was initially never appreciated by his own people from Kuchipudi's hereditary performing family.

On the other hand, Kanchanamala belonged to a middle-class, educated family of the 20th century. The social-political and cultural milieu of that period aroused a sense of responsibility among the educated – middle-class to revive the performing traditions and normalize its presentation in the social and cultural contexts. This attitude towards arts in her family could be considered as a result of their exposure to a broad perception of culture that existed before the anti-nautch movement. This probably created an urge for a reformed classical culture as the anti-nautch movement contested *gender, class, traditional practices, and sexuality*¹⁴¹. The idea and impulse to have a renewed status for arts paved the way for the middle-class intelligentsia to embody themselves as the cultural protectors. They reaffirmed the cultural confines of the country in what they believed to be a respectable framework. Thus, in the revival era, cultural consciousness allowed them to initiate, structure, and identify the traditional praxis. Since Kanchanamala hailed from an educated, middle-class background, she was imbibed, inspired, and surrounded by these values, which allowed her to chase her dreams.

¹⁴¹ For more information, refer to O' Shea (2007) p. 105 – 115.



Photo 21: Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry, during his class at Bandar.

Photo Courtesy: Kanchanmala's personal collection

Kanchanamala, in her memoir, undoubtedly mentioned that it was not the economic factor that made Sastry teach Kuchipudi outside its hereditary precincts. She relentlessly talked about the passion-driven journey of Sastry. Some literary narratives also suggested that Sastry was ignored by the troupes of *Yakṣagānam*. He was devoid of roles in the group presentations and performances. This created a longing in him to widen the horizons of Kuchipudi. Thus, the solo repertoire could be termed as an offshoot of his relentless work on Kuchipudi. As explained in the previous chapter, as Sastry was acquainted with the intricacies of *mejuvani*¹⁴² or

¹⁴² For more information, refer to Peterson & Soneji (2008), p. 286 – 291. This article states that *Mejuvani*, in the early 19th century was referred to the performance and it derived from a Urdu word *mezban* which meant host of a feast or landlord. It also stated that *Mejuvani* is often referred as performance of dance and music as an entertainment for the guests and performing *mejuvani* is also referred as concert repertoire for entertainment.

Also refer to Thirumali (2005), p. 39. He states that local Nautch parties were called *mejuvani* derived from the Persian term, *mejubani*, which primarily meant 'feast'.

*kelika*¹⁴³, the possibilities and ease of exhibiting a solo repertoire was very clear before the adept and inquisitive Sastry. Though the socio-economic and political condition of Andhra was undergoing a serious turmoil in the first half of the 20th century, Sastry was persistent to form a new genre of performance in Kuchipudi.

Sastry, in his inquisitive days, noted that the *abhinaya* done by the expert devadasis were always focused on the *netrābhinaya*¹⁴⁴ and *sāttvikābhinaya*¹⁴⁵ (Sarma: 2002, 15). They were also very good at performing *ślōkams*; all these aspects stroked an eternal note in his mind. Since he noticed these elements, while choreographing and structuring separate solo items for Kuchipudi, he inculcated those elements. The evaluation of *mejuvani* and Kuchipudi, for Sastry, intersected at a common point of textual traditions. The texts or treatises referred by both the forms were *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Abhinaya Darpanam*. However, the major bifurcation was that the former was open to the general public, and the latter restricted itself to a selected few. Over time the solo repertoire widened itself into a bigger arena to accommodate more inputs of *nṛtta*, *abhinaya*, *sancāris*¹⁴⁶, and *sāttvika abhinaya*. This far-sighted approach of Sastry towards the methodology incorporated in *pada abhinaya* during the initial stage of evolution of the form¹⁴⁷ exhibits the genius in him.

All the primary and secondary sources regarding Sastry pointed out that he

¹⁴³ For more information, see Soneji (2012), p. 202. He has referred *Kelika* as a play.

Also refer to Sundareshan (1998), p. 17. He referred *kelika* as dance performance that is performed before the selected audience in the mandapa. It is believed to lead to the moral degeneration. It is also stated that Nataraja Ramakrishna collected the data from devadasis and resurrected the form.

¹⁴⁴ Expression through eyes.

¹⁴⁵ *Sāttvikaabhinaya* could be defined as a mental message or emotions communicated to the audience through the dancer's inner emotions.

¹⁴⁶ Transitory emotions based on the psychological states of mind.

¹⁴⁷ The memoirs of Kanchanamala referred the same.

was exposed to the exposition of Bharatanatyam (Sarma, 2002). Though he was interested in pursuing it, he could not follow, as he could not find a guru. He was attracted by the proper repertoire, fixed system, and the orderly presentations of the compositions in the Bharatanatyam repertoire¹⁴⁸. Moreover, Bharatanatyam was a female-oriented performing tradition. He soon analyzed and studied that the repertoire of *Karnātakam*¹⁴⁹ was not fixed earlier, nevertheless as Bharatanatyam, it developed a format of its own. He also noted that the *jati* exposition in the latter is more critical than in the former. His first visit to the south Tanjore in 1921 – 25 could be confirmed as his inclination to learn new art form/ Bharatanatyam¹⁵⁰.

Sastry's intricate patterns

The changes and transformations that Sastry inculcated in the art form were not welcomed by the (then) hereditary performers. The creative insight in him could not understand the reasons for this denial. However, it strengthened his passion to establish solo as a separate format. This contradiction of ideas became one of the significant factors to make him a pioneer in the career graph.

As discussed, Sastry travelled all over South India before the 1940s.

Kanchanamala shared an anecdote, in which Sastry's tour to Kumbhakonam¹⁵¹ is

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. For information, see Sarma (2002) p. 16, 29, 34. Sarma elaborates on Sastry's passion for Kuchipudi in his article. Also, the interview excerpts of Vempati Chinna Satyam quote the same. The same has been quoted by Nataraja Ramakrishna, he also explains about Sastry's inquisitiveness to learn Bharatanatyam.

¹⁴⁹ Refer to Sarma (2002), op. cit., p. 16. He explicates that the form *Karnātakam* had limited *jati* inclusions.

It is explained that this difference might have allowed Sastry to work more on developing a repertoire that contains the elements of both Bharatanatyam and *Karnātakam* and the inclusion of *abhinaya* and *tāla* in South Indian dance traditions.

¹⁵⁰ See Sarma (2002), p. 109. The Chronology of Events of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry is illustrated.

¹⁵¹ Kumbhakonam is a physical place, a town that comes under the Municipality of Tanjore District in the Indian State of Tamil Nadu

described. It is stated that Kumbhakonam was a place where devadasis were treated with due respect, and there were different *satrams*¹⁵² on the way to Kumbhakonam. These *satrams* provided food for brahmins and were given the(then) one rupee as a token of respect. Apparently, Sastry went to a *satram* where he was offered food. As he saw this pattern in the *satram*, he patiently waited for his turn. Whenever it was his turn, the one rupee was given to another person who sat next to him. Thus, they finished the line, and only Sastry was left. The residents of the *Satram* told him that he looked like a person of knowledge. They enquired whether he was adept in the art of dancing. Surprised, Sastry informed that he was a Guru as well as a performer, and he specified that Kuchipudi is his forte. The devadasis of the *satram* requested him to teach them and were incited to learn various *padams* and its textual aspects from Sastry. It is understood from the memoirs on Sastry that the pursuit for the devadasis to learn more on the art form attracted them towards the methodology of teaching. His teaching included a more holistic approach, where he incorporated the textual aspects, mode and intonation of expressional exposition. He observed that it was a period where people were sharp-eyed enough to understand others' ingenuity in one glance.

Sastry's interest in understanding Bharatanatyam was fulfilled through his association with the celebrated danseuse Balasaraswathi (hereinafter referred to as Balamma) through whom he attained a deeper understanding of Bharatanatyam. Balamma's prowess in *abhinaya* was universally popular, and her association with Sastry was a major turning point in his professional career. Putcha (2011) explained how Sastry had juxtaposed some elements of Kuchipudi and culled out other essentials to carve a reformulation in Kuchipudi. It is also variously suggested that it

¹⁵² *Satram* could be translated as a caravan serai, where people in ancient times took rest while travel

could be an inspiration that he gained from his association with Balamma and her style of exposition. He was also inspired by other dancing genres like *sādir*, *mejuvani* performances, and especially thematic compositions, and Oriental dances popularized by Uday Shankar¹⁵³.

The year 1921 – 25 is marked as his initial journey to the Southside, where he was exposed to the Tanjore style of dance. He is stated to have toured for the second time in the year 1939 to South. During this tour, he had performed in Tanjore and Melattur. In the year 1940, he toured to Guntur, and in the following years (1941 – 42), he went for an all India tour with Ayyanki Tandava Krishna (1915 – 1991), his disciple, and Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma (1923 – 1982), his son. They even performed at Warangal, Hyderabad, Pune, (then) Bombay, and Bhopal. In the year 1943, he toured Andhra Pradesh, especially the Rayalaseema districts¹⁵⁴.

With the amalgamation of his understanding and analysis of different categories of solo performances in different genres, Sastry had formed his teaching career. The solo form's initial performances included solo pieces from *Yakṣagānam*, *Bhāgavata Meḷa Nāṭaka*, *Gollakalāpam*, and *Bhāmakalāpam*. It is graphed that these tours to different samasthanams¹⁵⁵ opened his perception towards aesthetic expansion. This, in turn, facilitated him to polish his pedagogy¹⁵⁶, skills in

¹⁵³ For more information, see Sarma (2002), p. 94 – 97. This section incorporated the program notes of Sastry.

¹⁵⁴ In the memoir, Kanchanamala elaborated on the tours of Sastry.
For more information, refer to Sarma (2002), p. 109 – 111.

¹⁵⁵ For more information, see Hyles & Bhasin (2001), p. 162. In this book Samasthanam is referred as a zamindari, and it cannot be understood as a State.
Also refer to Sarma (2002), p. 16, has defined Samasthanam as small native States under British Government.

¹⁵⁶ See Steinberg & Kincheloe (2018), p. 53. In this work, pedagogy is elaborated as a definition of culture
and a means to transmit that culture to the next generation.

choreography and technique. The female dancing tradition/solo performance culture and the repertoire that he formulated over the years are the results of his exposure and willingness to include/exclude some of the elements of the then Kuchipudi and form a shape/structure.

Sastry and his non-hereditary disciples

As explained earlier, Sastry's ideas and methodologies were not welcomed by the (then) Gurus of the hereditary family. However, his impulse to innovate created an urge to move out of the village precincts. He shifted himself to Bandar, where he expanded and formulated his teaching methodologies and pedagogies. Sastry enriched his repertoire with *padams*, *jāvalis*, *ślōkams*¹⁵⁷. He taught *abhinaya* to the *aṣṭapadi* from *Gīta Gōvinda*, the *ślōkams* from *Amarakōśam*¹⁵⁸, *Puṣpabāṇa Vilāsam*¹⁵⁹, and *Srī Krishna Karnāṁṛtam*. Later, he enlarged the repertoire with his own compositions. In this process, he noticed that to structure the repertoire, it was essential to work on the form's rudiments. He understood that to popularize the form,

¹⁵⁷ For more information, refer to Kothari & Pasricha (2001), p. 158. This work states that the *padams*, *jāvalis*, and *ślōkam*, when executed in the native traditions, were used for *abhinaya* by the temple and court dancers.

Also refer to *Proceedings Society of Dance History Scholars: twenty-first annual conference* (1998), p. 90.

See *Indian Horizons* (1985), p. 09 – 10. This work elaborates the reference of the form and its repertoire.

Refer to Singh (2000), p. 48. She has given a detailed analysis of *pada abhinaya* choreographed by Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry.

See *Andhra Pradesh Year Book 1984*, (1984), p. 59. This work describes the general repertoire of Kuchipudi.

Refer to Sarma (2002), p. 16. A detailed analysis of the repertoire of Sastry, along with the explanation on *Yakṣagānam*, the solos were performed are, *Daśāvatāram* and *Dammera Timmendra śabdam*, and those were part of plays. They also included *tillana*, in which the one in *Prahlada Pattābbhiṣekam* is of utmost importance.

¹⁵⁸ *Amarakōśam* is the popular name of *Namalinganushasanam*. The book was written by the ancient Indian scholar Amarasimha. It is said that *Amarakōśam* consists of more than 40 commentaries.

¹⁵⁹ *Puṣpabāṇa Vilāsam* is set in the Sanskrit language, and the author is Kalidasa.

it was indispensable to work more on the form. In order to make a separate format for solo repertoire, the prominent factor was to compose more solo choreographies. This would in turn develop a strong and rich repertoire for solo. This would be a twofold advantage for the form as it would also increase the number of choreographies. For this far-sighted approach of Sastry, he was soon followed by Vempati Peda Satyam (1922 – 1982), Ayyanki Tandava Krishna, and Vedantam Raghavaiah (1919 – 1971)¹⁶⁰.

The literary narratives explained that it was C R Acharya (1919 – 1998)¹⁶¹ who visited Sastry in the latter half of the 1930s to become his disciple, from a non – hereditary background. He was from Nuzvidu and had an urge to learn dance and music. He tried to find out different ways to reconnoiter his passion, but he was devoid of enough support. But he gained a thorough understanding of the performing traditions of Andhra. It was then that the Mirzapur *zamindar* Rangaiah Appa Rao, who valued and supported arts/artists happened to see Acharya's group performance depicting mythological stories. He was recognized by the zamindar through this performance. With the zamindar's support he started learning Kuchipudi from the Kuchipudi village. Though the distance between Nuzvidu and Kuchipudi is long, he preferred to walk as he could not afford the bus charge. After reaching Kuchipudi, he waited for his turn to learn from Guru¹⁶². This was the juncture where Acharya met

¹⁶⁰ Refer to Sarma (2002), p. 17. He describes that the partnership of Tandava Krishna and Pedda Satyam made Sastry build a rich repertoire of not less than 100 compositions. This achievement of Sastry is considered to be one of its kinds that depict his scholarship on the subject and the wide cultural and classical bias.

¹⁶¹ For more information, refer to Sundaresan (2007), p. 47. He states that C R Acharya joined Sastry as a disciple during the latter half of the 1930s.

Also, see *Proceedings Society of Dance History Scholars: twenty-first annual conference* (1998), p. 97. It states that C R Acharya joined *Darpana* academy in the 1950s, established by Mrinalini Sarabhai to propagate the form and find new recognition outside the State.

¹⁶² Refer to Rangamani (unpublished manuscript), p. 5 – 6.

However, there is another version, which explicates that Acharya belonged to the temple tradition

Sastry and that transformed his life and turned out to be the highest point in their career graph. This period witnessed the transformation of Kuchipudi. Alongside, there was the initiation of severe thought-provoking gestures in building up a new repertoire for Kuchipudi. Acharya conducted his initial experiments in weaving Kuchipudi and temple dance together at Natraj Nritya Samithi, established by him in Eluru in 1951¹⁶³. He, along with his association with Sastry brought many changes and innovation to Kuchipudi. Acharya introduced, “*Prenkhani Natyam, for which he choreographed unique items like Simhanandini, Mayura Kautvam, Mahalakshmi Vaibhavam and Ganesha Kautvam*” (Acharya, 1998). Acharya was invited by Mrinalini Sarabhai, the Bharatanatyam exponent to be part of her institution (post the 1960s) and in the year 1968 he wrote his book *Kuchipudi Aradhana Nrityamulu* which was published by Sangeet Natak Akademi¹⁶⁴

This was the period which saw the urge to plough the untrodden meadow and gather enough materials to substantiate the solo repertoire. Sastry became the first student of Vempati Venkatanarayana. There was only a nine-year difference between the teacher and the student; they were very close to each other. Sastry learnt *Kalāpams* and accompanied his Guru in both performing solo items and rendering mnemonic syllables while doing nattuvangam. He travelled widely in Andhra along with his Guru. This has created in him a wider perception of performing traditions of Andhra (Sarma, 2002). *Thanks to his guru and his own inquisitiveness Laxminarayana Sastry acquired a mastery of Telugu classics, Pada literature, the*

of performing artistes, the nattuvanar family, and the temple dancers' gurus in Krishna district. Also see, Acharyulu (1998), p. 17.

¹⁶³ Refer Acharyulu (1998), p. 17.

¹⁶⁴ See Rangamani (Unpublished manuscript) op. cit., p. 12.

keertanams of Tyagaraja, the Sakuntalam slokas, and the Adhyatma Ramayana songs (Sarma, 2002, p. 16).

The dawn of the era saw the initiation of students, especially male-students, from non-hereditary families taking up the form; C R Acharya and Tandava Krishna¹⁶⁵. Sastry's inclusive nature meant that he never brought in class-clan distinctions while teaching the form. He was focused in bringing in a framework and structure to the form¹⁶⁶. Meanwhile, Jagannatha Sarma was initiated into dance and learned the intricacies of the form from his father. Jagannatha Sarma and Tandava Krishna made a good pair in presenting Kuchipudi duo performances¹⁶⁷. Kothari, in one of his articles, mentioned about a program book that he got from Tandava Krishna. It reads:

Oriental Dance by Tandava Krishna and Party (Kuchipudi Dancers). Under the distinguished patronage and in the immediate presence of Nawab Zahiruddin Khan Bahadur, Amir – e – Paigah, H E H the Nizam's Dominions (sic). At the dinner given by him to the delegates of the All India Oriental Conference, Indian History Congress etc. at his Basheer Bagh Palace, Hyderabad – Dn. On Sunday the 21st December 1941.

(Kothari, 21st September, 1990)

¹⁶⁵ For more information, see Kothari & Pasricha (2001), p. 158. The work gives a detailed description of the initiation of Kuchipudi repertoire by non-hereditary male dancers.

¹⁶⁶ For more information, see Satyanarayana & Rao (1994), p. 8. In this work, Vempati remembers Sastry's idea of perfection and how he was eager to take Kuchipudi to a position where the art form would gain respect and accolades.

¹⁶⁷ Refer to Pasricha & Kothari (2001), op. cit., p. 158. The book has given a detailed description of the duo performances by Tandava Krishna and Vedantam Jagannadha in Kuchipudi.

The program booklet also carried a portrait of the Nawab, details of the program notes, names of the dancers and musicians, and an article on Kuchipudi. It is one of the earliest published brochures on Kuchipudi.

Jagannatha Sarma and Tandava Krishna continued to perform widely both in the South and North India; in fact, the all India tour of Sastry was accompanied by their performance tour. Sastry restructured the form and incorporated elements of *Bhāmakalāpam* into his duet choreographies. ‘Radha – Krishna’ and ‘Siva – Parvati’¹⁶⁸ became widely popular in the Northern region of India. “*Due to the long and successful tours of Vedantam Laxmi Narayana Sastry, Thandava Krishna and Jagannatha Sarma on one side and Peda Satyam and Vedantam Raghavaiah on the other, young people in Kuchipudi found abhinaya attractive*” (Sarma, 2002, p. 18). Inspired by them, the (then) upcoming artistes and the (then) stalwarts who learned under the hereditary gurus shifted their classes to learn solo items under the tutelage of Sastry¹⁶⁹. By 1940s, his work became popular and was known in the nooks and corners of Andhra. Another turning point in the history of Kuchipudi occurred in the year 1943 with the entrée of Kanchanamala. She was one of the prime students of Sastry and learnt under his tutelage for fourteen years. This incident became a significant part as the students who joined Sastry till then were men both from inside and outside Andhra.

As explained, Kanchanamala was Sastry's first non – hereditary female disciple. He taught widely in the Bandar area during 1940 – 1950. The latter students

¹⁶⁸ The duets were a great hit in the northern part of India. Sastry had worked hard on the structural part of it. They started with a *padam* or a song and incorporated a *ślōkam* in Sanskrit, a *dandakam* or a *chulika* and then came back to the *pallavi* in Telugu. This ‘composite’ structure with different varieties of compositions initiated then and was later made popular. Also, see Sarma (2002), p. 17.

¹⁶⁹ Many of the established artistes in Kuchipudi who learnt from the established gurus like Chinta Venkataramaiah, Bhagavathula Vissayya, Tadepalli Peraiah Sastry and Yeleswaruppu Seetharamanjaneyulu were eager to learn from Sastry. Also see Sarma (2002), p. 18.

who learnt under Sastry included, Josyula Seetarama Sastry (1923), Sakunthala from Gudivada, the Andhra sisters and SRY Rajyalxmi at Machilipatnam and Manorama and others from Rajahmundry and Akhileswari (Gudivada)¹⁷⁰.



Photo 22: Sastry teaching Kanchanamala
Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of Kanchanamala

Some other female students of Sastry that Kanchanamala recalled include Rajeswari¹⁷¹, Lalitha and Sundari¹⁷², Bhakthapriya and Rajyalakshmi¹⁷³ and other students from Bandar were Kalpana, Komala Kumari, Suri Padmavathi, Sumathy Kaushal¹⁷⁴, girls from the Vemuri family and granddaughter of Gurunatha Rao.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 18 – 19.

¹⁷¹ Granddaughter of Pattabhi Seetharamayya from Bandar

¹⁷² Daughters of Vadyagannatti Seetarama Rao from Bandar, in which Lalitha is a doctor, Kanchanamala remembered that they gave selected performance.

¹⁷³ They belonged to the Zamindari family of Bandar. It was also mentioned by Kanchanamala that though Rajyalakshmi wanted to pursue dance as her career, she could not continue because of her social circumstances

¹⁷⁴ Sumathy Kaushal's name was mentioned by Kanchanamala and also included in Sarma (2002), p. 108.

During his stay at Bandar, many of the stalwarts came to his place and learned under him. Vempati Chinna Satyam (1929 – 2012), Vedantam Satya Narayana Sarma, Pasumarthi Venugopala Krishna Sarma, Bhagavatula Yagna Narayana Sarma, Kaalipatnam Ram Narayana, Yeleswarappu Naga Yagna Sarma, Tandava Krishna, Nataraj Ramakrishna¹⁷⁵, Yamini Krishnamurthy. At Bandar even, C R Acharya and Narasimhachari learned for a while, and they stayed at Sastry's place for months.

From Eluru, Kanchanamala remembered Vasundhara¹⁷⁶ and Korada Narasimha Rao learning from Sastry during his Eluru visits. From Krishna District, Haranath and his sons Anand and Narasimhachari, learned from Sastry. In Krishna district, he mentioned having taken classes at Azad Balika Paatshala during the years 1946 – 47. Later, he had appointed Jagannatha Sarma to teach dance in the school. Jagannatha Sarma gave many performances along with the girls who learned from him at school¹⁷⁷. The students from Rajahmundry included Bhaanu and Bhaskara¹⁷⁸, Manorama, Nallam Susheela, and Nallam Vanaja¹⁷⁹. Apart from these names, *Nartanam* (2002) also referred to other names as Pandiri Venkataratnam (1905 – 1971), Duggirala Jagadamba (1911 – 1979), Bhagavathula Ramatarakam (1923 – 1992), Vedantam Prahlada Sarma (1929 – 1991), Hemadri Chidambara Deekshitulu

¹⁷⁵ When Kanchanamala was in fourth / 5th grade, she reminisced that Nataraj Ramakrishna and his student Shyama Koundinya came to Bandar. Shyama was the daughter of the (then) Deputy Collector. She also learned from Sastry and performed many times at Bandar.

¹⁷⁶ Vasundhara belonged to a Zamindari family

¹⁷⁷ Kanchanamala recollected that, daughter of Mruthyunjaya Sarma from Nuzividu learned under Sastry at Paatshala and gave performances.

¹⁷⁸ Kanchanamala reminisced that they performed *Sri Gananadham Bhajamyaham* at Bandar during a concert.

¹⁷⁹ Vanaja was an excellent musician who sang for movies. She was also a lead singer in Sastry's concerts; she had sung for Kanchanamala at Bandar during a concert. Susheela and Vanaja were her cousins from the maternal side.

(1931 – 2002)¹⁸⁰.

From Kuchipudi to Madras

In 1948, Sastry visited the (then) Madras Presidency with a firm aim to propagate the form and frame it into a widely accepted performing tradition. He searched for the (then) *abhinaya* expert and famous artist in Bharatanatyam, Balasaraswathi, with whom he thought he could expand and popularize his form. In turn, he thought it will also be a chance for him to analyze and understand Bharatanatyam's subtle nuances. He always considered Balamma's interaction as a learning – unlearning process between the two forms Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam¹⁸¹. Other than Balamma, he also took classes for Mylapore Gauri Ammal, who was keen to study under him¹⁸².

Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry complained that noone seemed to be interested in his art. He later said that he has heard of Bala's fame as an abhinaya artist, and he wanted her to be a repository of his art, which he knew would otherwise be lost.

(Knight, 2010, p. 138)

Sastry's proficiency over *pada abhinaya* and his knowledge of executing the same

¹⁸⁰ See, Sarma (2002), p. 105 – 108.

¹⁸¹ For more information, see Knight (2010), p. 138 – 141. In this, he discusses Balamma's association with Sastry and how reluctant she was initially, to take up his class. Later, she realized how beneficial it turned out. The work also throws light on the fact that Sastry was a keen observer of the form Bharatanatyam.

¹⁸² Ibid

mudra for different connotations enthralled Balamma in such a way that she started including those nuances in her performances. Balamma said-

In my thirties, Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry opened a great new vista for me, especially in varnam improvisation. He shared his immense knowledge and, in a very real sense, gave me the confidence to attempt to those things I do today.... I would pierce him, and he poured forth.

(Knight, 2010, p. 139)

Balamma's admiration and respect for Sastry were profound; like Sastry, she cried while enacting some sad or heart-touching moments on stage. This aspect was a significant characteristic of Sastry. Balamma took a series of photographs of pieces that Sastry taught her and not to forget the esoteric lexicon of gestures. Sastry had very much inspired her that she never left a chance to exhibit her indebtedness to him. *"I was groping in darkness and his art opened my eyes to new vistas of amazing beauty and excellence. I have a fountain spring in the oasis of neglected dance"* (Naidu, 11th July, 2014).

Another significant factor in substantiating this is her keynote address during her performance at the Congress on Research on Dance in Hawaii in August 1979¹⁸³. This keynote address is mentioned as one of its kind and explicated, it was first time that Balamma experimented something of this manner. In which she gave due credit to Sastry and described *mudras* or hand gestures being the suggestive language for Bharatanatyam. To give much more clarity to the audience, she demonstrated this with an example of different usages of the mudra *hamsapakṣa* (according to

¹⁸³ Knight (2010), p. 140. A detailed description of her keynote address along with the memoir of the performance along with the detailed description is given in the Chapter 5 of the book.

Nāṭyaśāstra) *hamsāsya* (according to *Abhinaya Darpanam*). She further explains that the same mudra addressed as *Chin Mudra* in Tantra Sastra, and it is accepted in the spiritual sense in dance and its further connotations as the valor of a bowman (when the palm is held stiffly upright) beautifying the lover (when the same mudra placed on the midpoint of her eyebrow). Thus, the same mudra has three different concepts: *spiritual wisdom, valour, and preparation for beautifying the lover* (Knight, 2010, p. 140).

Balamma had mentioned about Sastry's approach towards choreography in an elaborate manner in many literary narratives. As explained, she expounded that Sastry was an expert in the interpretation of padams. He spoke his own idiom. When he went to teach Balamma, he would ask her “*Can you do this varṇam? How would you cast its horoscope?*” (Raman & Ramachandran, 1984, p. 45). Balamma was very appreciative of his methodology and pedagogy of choreography. She described *how Sastry commanded her to cast the horoscope of a tōdivarṇam*. She remembered that one day she performed it without repetitions. “*He responded by asking me to leave it up and stick to padams! They are your family's heritage, and with someone like your mother singing padams, you can have the whole world in your hands*”. (Raman & Ramachandran, 1984, p. 45).

Along with the different memoirs, the literary narratives suggested that Sastry had developed a performance method that was incredibly dedicated to the genre *padam*. One of his concise work on the performance method of *padam* has been illustrated in Vissa Appa Rao's book *Kshetrayya Padamulu*¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸⁴ Refer to Sarma (2002), p. 111.

Also mentioned in the memoirs of Kanchanamala and Vedantam Shanthi



Photo 23: Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry and Balasaraswati
Photo Courtesy: *The Hindu Archives.*

Sastry developed a habit of writing commentaries on the *abhinaya* of *padams* and elaborating on their performance method. These commentaries were later sent to Vissa Appa Rao, through which his earnest desire was to propagate Kuchipudi's solo repertoire in Andhra. These commentaries were referred to as *Jātakam*¹⁸⁵ by him.

Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry maintained performance manuals and a performance method (abhinaya paddhathi) for all the items that he taught. He called it the Jatakam or the horoscope of the item which consisted of the raga and tala of the song, the major nayika and the avasthas, the predominant rasa and the ensuing bhavas to be enacted, the meaning for every word of the song along with its satvika and sanchari bhavas and detailed hasta bhinaya. At times, as many as twenty different hastas are mentioned for one single word. This method of Lakshmi Narayana Sastry's writing of Jatakam

¹⁸⁵ The literal translation of *jātakam* to English is horoscope. This is also referred to as a performance manual. For more information on the performance manuals, refer to Rao (1950), p. 65 – 70.

brings to mind the delineation of songs by Devulapalli

Veeraraghava Sastry in his Abhinaya Swayambodhini

(Anuradha, 2018, p. 76)

This elaborate description on Sastry's *Jātakam* describes his mastermind in choreography. Especially, when it is defined that to portray a single word he had included twenty *hastās*. This not just exhibited his creative genius, but his vast and in-depth knowledge on the subject. In parallel to Kuchipudi's performative aspect, Sastry consolidated the collected materials and made a course work out of that. This course work was part of his pedagogy, which he continued to teach throughout his life. He made sure that it was equally important for the students to understand the both theoretical part¹⁸⁶ and the performative aspects.

Sastry's Accolades

Sastry had won many accolades and prizes in recognition of his love and appreciation for the art form. Kanchanamala reminisced that in 1946 /47, he was felicitated by Balasaraswati in (then) Madras. The list of famous personalities who felicitated him during this voyage includes Rajamannar too. The literary narrative Sarma (2002) has also referred to the felicitation by Rajamannar. In the memoir, during his tour to Tanjore, he gave Kuchipudi performance and the success of his presentation brought in appreciation and recognition as a great artist. He went to Mysore Maharaja, where he was asked to sing. There he sang and performed the

¹⁸⁶ The memoir of Kanchanamala described how Sastry wrote notes by himself and would demand her to read it out or by heart. She confesses that at that tender age she could not realize its value. But later, when she joined as lecturer in Tirupathi College, she was able to understand its value. Also see, Sarma (2002), p. 34, 44, & 62. The book inculcated the interview excerpts of Akhileswari Yeshwanth, Joysula Seetha, Rama Sastry and Nataraj Ramakrishna where they mention his teaching style.

Ślōkam from *Puśpabāṇa Vilāsam- sāyamkāle*. The King was highly impressed by Sastry's performance and he was felicitated there too for his work.

The literary narratives elaborate that Sastry's tour towards Guntur in the year 1940 won him many accolades, and he was honored at Guntur by Tellakula Jalaiah¹⁸⁷. He was also honored at Pune in March 1942, after his performance. He was even appreciated by Uday Shankar, whose choreography inspired him. He performed Bhāmakalāpam at the age of 62 and was appreciated by Uday Shankar at Hyderabad. Uday Shankar exclaimed that. “*I can't believe he is 62! He moved and danced as though he was 25! And what alacrity!! His hand gestures, so meaningful and swift, took me to a new world of enjoyment*” (Naidu, 11th July, 2014). During his 1943 tour to Andhra Pradesh, he was honored at Anantapur and Karvetinagaram. In the year 1945, he was also honored by Andhra Nataka Kala Parishad at Gudivada.

One of his unforgettable moments referred to in the memoir of Kanchanamala, also substantiated in the literary narratives, was his performance in Kshetraiyya Festival at Muvva in the year 1951. He was stated to have demonstrated a *padam* on 25th April 1951. There, he was honored by great pundits and also the Rajas of Muktyala and Challapalli. *Nartanam* (2002) elaborated the accolades with the description of the date as 1948, where the Madras Government honored him with the title *Kuchipudi Natya Kalanidhi* and a *Simhatalatam*¹⁸⁸. The same feature has been accentuated by Prof. Mohan Khokar (1924 – 1999) in his article *Natya*. He opined that

In his own time, Shastri earned much fame for his role as

¹⁸⁷Tellakula Jalaiah became a member of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly from 1955 – 1962 from Guntur.

¹⁸⁸ For more information, see Khokar (1957), p. 32.

Bhama in Bhama Kalapam. He stayed at Madras for some years, and while there in 1948, the Telugu patrons of that place, in a spurt of enthusiasm, organized a function and honored him by presenting with a simhatalatam – an engraved bracelet of gold in recognition of his services to the Kuchipudi art. But, that is all they did, for since then nobody has bothered about him or his art.

(Khokar, 1957. p. 32)

Sastry and his later life

Sastry was an innovator par excellence in his career, but his personal life seemed to be a not so celebrated one. He went through a phase in his life where all his silver and golden felicitations were sold to survive. It was stated in the memoirs of Kanchanamala and Shanthi that Sastry was always sad and vocal about the lack of acceptance by his own family members and the hereditary gurus at Kuchipudi. This phase of non -acceptance in Sastry's life could be coalesced with the version of the same story by the hereditary gurus about Sastry, that has been quoted in the research work of Katyayani Thota (2016). She explicated that Pasumarthy Venkateswarulu¹⁸⁹, PVG Krishna Sarma¹⁹⁰ ,; Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma¹⁹¹ , and, Chinta Seetaramanjaneyulu¹⁹², whom she interviewed as part of her research opined another version of the whole story of acceptance.

¹⁸⁹ He was the elder brother of Pasumarthy Krishnamurthy, who accompanied his brother's performances with the fiddle and harmonium.

¹⁹⁰ His forte was the *Yakṣagānam* and its *bāni* of music

¹⁹¹ He succeeded Vempati Venkatanarayana as the Satyabhama of Kuchipudi;

¹⁹² He was a part of the Venkatarama Natya Mandali in the time of Venkataramayya

The views they expressed of Lakshminarayana Sastry were on these lines: he followed his guru Venkatanarayana and performed with him for many years and was never known to have been adept at the yakshagāna. The financial needs of his family were met, as and when there was a requirement, by selling away in parts the agricultural land he had. Of course, but naturally, after a point there was none left, and so he was compelled to travel from one place to another, teaching whoever was interested; and, thus made a living. Whenever an artiste from the hereditary families wanted to learn a padam or another solo, they would approach him for just that.

(Thota, 2016, p. 27)

This clearly depicts hereditary guru's take on Sastry. Kanchanamala unabashedly elaborated her disagreement with the (then) hereditary performing families of Kuchipudi in this regard. The hereditary performers/ Kuchipudi *vālu* (group) never accepted the non-hereditary performers (then). She commented that the inclusiveness among the artists, whether hereditary or non-hereditary, was almost absent in Kuchipudi. The introduction of non-hereditary and women performers into the form almost bifurcated the whole scenario. This, in turn, created tension among Sastry and other hereditary gurus. This could be the sole reason for non – acceptance of Sastry among his own people that he urged for a long time. In contrast, throughout his life journey he was never spotted to be felicitated or recognized by his disciples who created their own niche in the performing arena.

Memoirs of a *nayika*

M. Kanchanamala was born to Dr. Mariganti Seshacharyulu and Seethamma. She was one of the prime female students of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry, who hailed from a non-hereditary family and chose the art form, Kuchipudi. In fact, it was an era dominated by the performers from the hereditary performing families, and it was believed that they were supposedly the ones who could practice and perform Kuchipudi.

Kanchanamala was born into a middle class educated family. Her father was a doctor who was socially committed and worked for the Harijan¹⁹³ dispensary. The harijan dispensaries are the health centers that were opened for the welfare of Harijans. This was an initiation from the Harijan Sewak Sangh formed to ameliorate the conditions of Harijans by Gandhiji on 2nd September 1932¹⁹⁴. This throws light on the social commitment that her father carried forward as a doctor. The literary narratives opined that from the 1930s, the middle-class intelligentsia was, directly and indirectly, part of the Nationalist movements.

A R Desai, in his *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* referred to the middle-class as

They were the pioneers, organizers and leaders of all political national movement. They brought ideas of nationalism and freedom to wider and wider sections of Indian people, through educational propaganda work which included great sacrifice and sufferings.

¹⁹³ The literal meaning of the term Harijan is peoples of God. It was first coined by the medieval poet saint Narsingh Mehta. It was Gandhiji who adopted the word Harijan to represent the depressed classes of the society. For more information, refer to the newspaper article of Guha (10th June, 2017).

¹⁹⁴ Refer to *Harijans Today* (1956), p. 9. The book elaborates the contributions of different leaders in uplifting the backward class Harijans.

(Desai, 2005, p. 183)

The same could be traced in the upbringing and perception of Kanchanamala's family. Her maternal uncles belonged to the Nallan Chakravarthula¹⁹⁵ family, one of the famous Telugu families with musical ancestry. Her father and mother stood as strong pillars of support for five of their daughters. Along with Kanchanamala, all her four older sisters were academically and artistically affluent. She and her sisters were adept in music and musical instruments too. Furthermore, as explained, there was a conscious effort from the middle class to circumvent the taboo that was attached to the performing traditions. Even before learning dance, Kanchanamala started learning mridangam¹⁹⁶, along with her sisters. Her sisters learned other musical instruments like the violin¹⁹⁷ too.

¹⁹⁵ Refer to <http://www.nallanchakravarthy.org/nc-lineage/>. The story of the lineage of the famous NC family is elaborated in the site. It is believed that Lord Tiruvengadamudaiyan gave the "Sudarsana-Panchajanya" to one Tondaiman Chakravarthy, for worship. This Tondaiman Chakravarthy was, in his previous birth, born as Rangadasa. He was doing Pushpa Kaikaryam to Lord of Seven Hills by supplying flowers to Vikanas Maharshi who was doing Pūja to Lord Tiruvengadamudaiyan. God was so pleased with Rangadasa that he blessed him to be born as a King in his next birth. The Lord gave him the Sudarsana-Panchajanya for worshipping him and hailed him "CHAKRAVARTHY." Over time, many families have migrated to different states say Andra Pradesh (calling themselves Nallanichakravartula, Nallan Chakravarthy etc.) Karnataka, Maharastra etc.

¹⁹⁶ Mridangam is a rhythmic accompaniment or percussion instrument of ancient origin.

¹⁹⁷ Violin is a wooden string instrument. It has the smallest and high-pitched voice.



Photo 24: Kanchanamala along with her sisters playing musical instruments
Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of Kanchanamala

Kanchanamala's memory of dancing is traced back to the latter half of the 1930s and early 1940s, when one of her family's close acquaintances from Eluru, whom she fondly called *tātaiya* (grandfather), Poovula Rangacharulu, was inspired by the *bhōgam meḷam* presentations and enacted the same whenever he visited her home. The literary narratives refer to *bhōgam meḷam* as the salon-based performance tradition usually performed in the Telugu speaking parts of the Madras Presidency. The performances were usually presented during different occasions like weddings at the homes of the opulent brahmin and non-brahmin elites¹⁹⁸. He was always in awe of their presentation, and playfully enacted the same. She also remembered her grandfather describing their presentations.

¹⁹⁸ Refer to Soneji (2012), p. 102. He extensively elaborated the performance pattern of *bhōgam meḷam* while explaining more about *javalis*.



Photo 25: Kanchanamala with her sisters
Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of Kanchanamala

According to Kanchanamala's recollections, it could be assumed that the *meḷam* dancers did not perform prolonged *nr̥tta* pieces, instead had concentrated on their forte, *abhinaya*. They used to improvise and perform the *abhinaya* pieces while standing¹⁹⁹. Kanchanamala presumed that these performances would have been highly captivating that the elite of the time were very impressed. Kanchana's little twinkle eyes could never forget the demonstration that her *tātaiya* gave for the piece *Anyāyamugāne apavādupālayithi* (I have been slandered without reason). She remembered how she was excited and would ask him to enact that piece again repeatedly. Mentioning this, she concluded that the then artistes were brilliant performers who could make the lay audience like her grandfather understand and reproduce the presentation with much finesse.

Kanchanamala reminisced that during the 1930s and 1940s, *bhōgam meḷam* dancers were the only group which danced in the (then) Andhra society. They were a

¹⁹⁹ This is in contrast to the regular mejuvani performances, where the artist sat and performed *abhinaya*. For more information, see Soneji (2012), p. 102.

group of performers who presented dance for the marriage functions and other functions in the courtyard of opulent families of zamindars, brahmins, and others²⁰⁰. In contrast, girls/women especially from middle-class strata, were never allowed to dance. The reason for the same was the emergence of anti-nautch movement around the latter half of the 1800s. The campaign was associated with a Victorian feminism that was inculcated along with the 19th century European sentimentality that intertwined women's roles to their inherent *virtue*²⁰¹. As a sequel to this, devadasis were oppressed as they were systematically not part of the domesticity suited for their feminine *attributes*. This had created a public opinion that dance was not a suitable vocation for the girls with *traditional upbringing*.



Photo 26: Kanchanamala in her early twenties
Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of Kanchanamala

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ For more information, see O Shea (2007), p. 105 – 115. She elaborated on the consequences and formulations of the Anti-Nautch movements.

There are literary narratives which mentioned that the *bhōgam meḷam* performances were also referred to as *bhōgamāṭṭa*²⁰². Kanchanamala opined that the *bhōgam* performers were not part of the temple performing tradition. Their presentations were never termed as dance performances but referred to as *meḷam*. However, their brilliance lies in how they incorporated the (then) contemporary issues into their presentation. This occasional addition contributed to the audience's enjoyment and made them aware of certain prevalent situations. According to Kanchanamala, these dancers never performed for critical acclaim alone: there was no need to make a conscious effort at *nṛtta* or *abhinaya* to impress and enthrall the audience. It was a natural outcome. The ideas were incorporated to make the lay public understand the performance and enjoy it. Kanchanamala finds a larger difference in the execution of *abhinaya* during those days and the present scenario. In the present scenario, according to her, the artists are not challenging the audience through subtlety. Such presentations deplete the audience's ability to understand and analyze a particular performance. She questioned that when a particular performance is appreciated by the audience in the present scenario, how many could inculcate a deeper understanding and analysis of the piece that was performed. She added that *the (then) dancers believed that the art is above the artist*, where art is considered much bigger than the individual artiste.

To emphasize the (then) general scenario among the art enthusiasts, she quotes an anecdote recollected by her grandfather. The story starts with the entry of the *rājanarthaki*²⁰³ into the palace. While she was walking in the garden, she saw the

²⁰² Refer to Logan (2000), p. 230. One section of this book elaborates the usage of *bhōgam āṭṭa* and *bhōgam meḷam*.

²⁰³ In those days, *rājanarthaki* is referred to a court dancer who has high respect and value.

King strolling on the other side of the garden. She suddenly noticed him bend forward. She took a curious peek to see that the King took a black plum that fell on the ground and quickly gobbled it, assuming no one saw him. The next day during the palace's performance, she started her performance with *aḷḷapaṭṭi māta* (there was a situation that occurred long back). The King wondered if she saw him eat the plum and fretted that she would bring that into her enactment. This thought made him restless, and he ordered the Minister to give her money so that she could take leave. As soon as the Minister gave her money, the *rājanarthaki* assumed that the King much appreciated her performance and continued to perform. She enacted her second line as *alanāti māta eesabhalōnē chepakamānanu* (I would indeed speak about that situation in this court). Enraged, the King blurted, *Yes! I have eaten a black plum that fell on the ground. So?* This was one of the hilarious memories that Kanchanamala had fresh in her mind. This indicated that dance performances of those days easily incorporated the regular incidents that occurred in the day to day life. She believed that it always added to the performance. She accentuated that the selection of the hilarious themes, including its lyrics, was designed in desi style ²⁰⁴ for the lay audience to understand.

Journeying with Kuchipudi

Kanchanamala started learning Kuchipudi under Sastry in 1943 when she was six or seven years old. She recollected that in those days, the girls who learnt the form were mostly interested in learning than performing. From 1940-1950, Sastry taught widely in the Bandar area, and she mentioned that it was a privilege to learn under

²⁰⁴ The folk or rural category in the performing tradition is referred as desi. The one that is not structured and formulated with a theory of movement.

him. Unfortunately, that was the period when dance faced an onslaught from society. During that period, there was a general notion among the common public that dance was not virtuous as it was associated with only *bhōgam meḷam*. Common man unabashedly expressed aversion for the art form, and girls from respectable families were never allowed to learn dance.

However, the Azad Balika Patshala at Bandar played a significant role in educating girls with different vocations related to arts. It was the first school that was dedicated only to girl's education. Kanchanamala recollected that Bandar's zamindar family was contributory in initiating such an endeavour and had donated land for its construction. Kanchanamala reminisced that *Ms. Tripura Sundaramma was instrumental in organizing a platform that was dedicated to girls*. Sastry was invited to be part of the school to teach Kuchipudi. Along with Kuchipudi, other musical instruments were also taught there. For Kanchanamala, this period witnessed and created a positive atmosphere to learn and understand different performing traditions. Her family too perceived arts differently and had high regard for them. She believed that she grew up with a different perception of arts and considered herself blessed to be a part of a family which gave her the freedom to choose what she wanted to do.



Photo 27: Kanchanamala's parents: M. Seshacharyulu and Seethamma

Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of Kanchanamala.

Kanchanamala reminisced that, during her initial stage of learning dance (in the first half of the 1940s), the main purpose of erudition was to create an awareness of dance among the common man²⁰⁵. Another important factor could be to normalize the dance performances and dance study as any other vocation. Further, the era in which Kanchanamala stepped into dance saw a social turmoil in values and virtues.

Practice and Training under Sastry

Kanchanamala was under the tutelage of Sastry for fourteen long years, where she considered herself to be fortunate enough to learn from such a knowledgeable and humble Guru. When her learning career began, she remembered that Sastry must have taught her a hundred *adugulu*/steps. This, in itself, throws light on the pedagogy that he followed throughout his teaching career. He made sure that through his training, his disciples should understand thorough understanding of the form.

²⁰⁵ For more information, refer to Soneji (2010), p. 31 – 35.

Another peculiar feature of his methodology, referred to by Kanchanamala, was his adaptation of different methods to teach the non-hereditary students. He formulated a three-level course and syllabus for his students to understand the intricate patterns of Kuchipudi. Kanchanamala elaborated her own experience of learning *Bhāmakalāpam* following this syllabus under Sastry. She learnt *Bhāmakalāpam* after ten years of her learning period under Sastry. According to her, he believed that students with an evolved thought process only could understand the psyche of characters in *Bhāmakalāpam* and firmly opined that they needed to reach a certain age and maturity to enact such characters.

Journeying with Sastry

The evolution of the solo repertoire is an ever-changing process. As explained, Sastry had the opportunity to analyze the intricacies of *mejuvani* and *kelika* from the very beginning of his career. Since the performances held solo characteristics, the possibilities and ease of exhibiting a solo repertoire were obvious to the adept and inquisitive Sastry. During the first half of the 20th century, when Andhra's socio-economic and political conditions were demanding a reclaiming of art, the stage was set for the proficient Sastry. He worked with new-found self-confidence and determination to form a new genre of performance in Kuchipudi.

Sastry's enthusiasm incited him to bring about innovations in Kuchipudi. The structuring of solo as a separate repertoire in Kuchipudi was a remarkable contribution by Sastry. However, Kanchanamala mentioned that this progression of the form into structuring a separate solo repertoire was not welcomed by the (then) Kuchipudi community. Thus, the agonized Sastry left Kuchipudi and went for a spiritual tour and traveled all over South India before the 1940s. There are many

references for the tour that reflected Sastry's experiences before he focused on Kuchipudi's solo repertoire. Some of the readings say that he was part of his Guru's troupe and visited *Tanjōre* between 1921 and 1925²⁰⁶. Kanchanamala recollected that he traveled widely and performed in all the *samasthanams*. It is graphed that these visits to different *samasthanams* changed his aesthetic outlook, the prospect of pedagogy, skills in choreography, and technique. It is stated that during these tours, he was requested to teach *devadāsis*. Later, he referred to these classes as the learning-unlearning process that facilitated him to carve out Kuchipudi's technique with certain additions and abstains²⁰⁷.

Kanchanamala mentions another anecdote that elucidated her experience of visiting Balamma after she appeared for the scholarship (Ministry of Culture) interview at the (then) Madras. After her interview, Sastry took her to Balamma's home. Kanchanamala, along with her sisters, mother and Sastry, went to visit Balamma, where Sastry introduced her introduced as his disciple. She was asked to perform in front of Balamma, for which she chose to perform a *jāvali*²⁰⁸ with full enthusiasm. Balamma appreciated the efforts of Kanchanamala. On the other hand, Balamma performed a padam in *rāgamsahāna*, which Kanchanamala recalled as a beautiful piece that she has ever seen in any performance. Through this experience she explicated the enthusiasm of Sastry in showcasing his students with pride.

Kanchanamala affectionately remembered an anecdote that elaborated on the love and affection of her guru. During her scholarship days in Madras under

²⁰⁶ See, Sarma (2002), p. 16.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ The term *jāvali* is derived from a Kannada term *Jhāvali*, which means a song or poetry. Generally, revolves around theme of love.

Choikkalingam Pillai, Sastry visited her once. He inquired about her scholarship's progress and the current item that she was learning then. She replied very innocently that it was *padavarṇam*. The same *padavarṇam* was taught by Sastry, and in a lighter note, she added that she learned it with proper *aramaṇḍi* (half – sit position). She regretted that gesture of hers, as she realized that Sastry was deeply hurt with her answer.

The significant difference that Kanchanamala identified between Kuchipudi and *Tanjōre* dance²⁰⁹ was the rounded hand posture as the *nātyārambha*²¹⁰ position. She also specified that in *Tanjōre* dance, the legs were appropriately stamped, and the students were expected to produce a certain kind of sound while stamping the foot. However, in Kuchipudi, she never experienced the same, and she had never seen anyone doing it in that way (then). Another anecdote that she refers to an incident where Vempati Chinna Satyam probed her. As Kanchanamala was practicing for her Kuchipudi performance in the Fine Arts Hall, Madras (then), Vempati Chinna Satyam visited her to see her during the rehearsal. He commented that *amāyi nuvu iymārcakapōte rālupadatāyi* (if you are not changing your technique, the audience out there will throw stones at you.). This statement made her furious. She replied that *rāḷésina, ravaḷésina, pogidésina, māmastergāru nerpichinate nénu cheystānu* (whether they would throw stones, mud or even if they praise me, it does not matter. I would perform whatever I had learned from my Guru). She was that adamant not to dilute the art form and represent precisely in the same format as she had learned from Sastry.

²⁰⁹ The whole chapter it could be perceived that Kanchanamala refers an art form as *Tanjōre* Dance. In the last part of the interview when dwelling deeply regarding the *Tanjōre* Dance, she referred that it is the contemporary *Bharatanatyam* of the present scenario.

²¹⁰ *Natyarambha* refers to the initial stance of the dancer before beginning the performance where he /she stretch their hand to the shoulder level and chest is in a raised position.

Kanchanamala undoubtedly mentioned that it was not because of economic reasons that Sastry initiated his teaching outside Kuchipudi precincts. She relentlessly talked about the passion-driven journey of Sastry. He felt that he was excluded from the group presentations of *Bhāgavata-meḷa* and *Yakṣagānam*, and this could be another reason for him to concentrate on the solo performing tradition. This, in turn, created an urge in him to create a new genre. It could also be foreseen that it was Sastry's enthusiasm that acquiesced him to move out of Kuchipudi village, and his passion acceded him to visualize a larger construct of art. This, in turn, urged him to take Kuchipudi beyond the limits of the village and its ethos. He extended it to the female, non-hereditary learners. Even at the lowest points of his career and personal life, he never discussed his economic issues, but perpetually worked to propagate art²¹¹.

Memoirs of the performances

The mid-1900s saw a conscious effort by the middle-class intelligentsia that desired to bring general awareness of arts among the common man. The reasons to learn the performing traditions might have differed for each person or each family. Some learned to comprehend the importance of performing traditions in cultural India. The form might have fascinated others, and for some families, it was a gesture to coalesce with the Nationalist movements through the enrolment in dance. The nationalists believed that this would bring in a more considerable change in the society.

Kanchanamala's first performance was during the first Indian Independence Day celebrations at the Harijan dispensary center, Bandar. She performed in a dance

²¹¹ Personal Interview Kanchanamala.

drama named *Swatantra Yudham* on 15th August 1948. It was a ‘benefit show,’ in which one of her sisters also performed along with her. It was based on a book written by Seshacharyulu, her father, in the year 1947 with the title *Swatantram Yudham*.

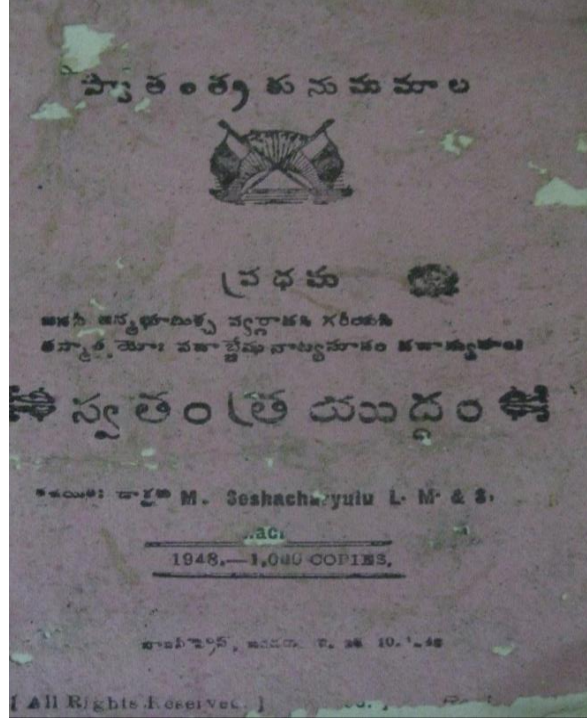


Photo 28: The front cover of the book *Swatantra Yudham*
Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of Kanchanamala



Photo 29: Kanchanamala, when she dressed up to perform for Independence Day celebrations of August 15th, 1948, Bandar

Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of Kanchanamala

In the year 1949-1950, Kanchanamala presented her second performance. This was a dance drama, named as *Asōka Sita* and was written by Vemuri Parthasarathy. Apparently, the dance drama was also choreographed by Vemuri as he was a disciple of Sastry. The dance drama could be defined as Sita's soliloquy. The Sita's character in the dance drama was designed in enactment mode, where she sat in one place and enacted the whole piece.



Photo 30: The whole team of the dance drama *Asoka Sita*
Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of Kanchanamala

The next performance of Kanchanamala was at Muvva, where she performed along with Turaga Janaki²¹². Their performance was under the guidance of Sastry, and they performed *alarimpu*, *jatiswaram*, and *tillāna*. However, she could not trace the date of this performance. In 1955, Kanchanamala gave another performance in the Kuchipudi village, in front of the temple. For the first time, she performed *Bhamākalāpam* under the guidance of Sastry, simultaneously, that became the first stage where Sastry performed along with her. Kanchanamala was accompanied by her older sister M Soubhagyavalli for the performances. Apparently Soubhagyavalli was the singer in Kanchanamala's accompanists' team.

Kanchanamala reminisced about her lecture-demonstration as she was adept in English language. She was invited to give lecture-demonstration, where she

²¹² Turaga Janaki Rani (1936 – 2014) was from Machilipatnam, Krishna District. She was a student of Sastry for some years. During this course of time, she along with Kanchanamala gave performances.

elaborated on *Padavarṇam*²¹³ and *Vināyaka tāḷam*²¹⁴ at the Indian Institute of Fine Arts, New Delhi in the year 1955-56. *Vināyaka tāḷam* was choreographed and designed by Kanchanamala during her scholarship period under Sastry. Alongside she choreographed *Simhānandini tāḷam* too. She choreographed and performed these items for *tāḷaṅgās*²¹⁵. Kanchanamala also included her choreographies in the demonstration. In this context, she mentioned that Sastry did not approve the *Vināyaka tāḷam* presentation as he was against the concept of illustrating the face of Ganéśa with feet. Though he never accepted her choreography, he had an interminable appreciation for the piece's frame, structure, and intrinsic tala.

The specific pattern of solo presentation evolved through Kanchanamala's performance career is elaborated below. Throughout her performing career, she followed this pattern.

1. *Pūja Nr̥tyam*
2. *Tillāna*
3. *Swara Jati*
4. *Śabdam*
5. *Viṇṭaḷu Viṇṭiva*
6. *Bhāva Palakaranam*
7. *Taraṅgam*
8. *Padam*

²¹³ The *Padavarṇam* in *Tōdirāgam* is the one which Sastry choreographed for her. This has been explained in the earlier part of the same chapter.

²¹⁴ *Vinayaka Tāḷam* is a chant on Lord Ganéśa, which she choreographed with intrinsic foot work and patterns. She designed it in such a way that at the end of the performance she would draw the image of Vinayaka on a screen while performing *jati*. The screen would be erected to have the view of the image for the audience.

²¹⁵ The literal meaning of *Aṅga* is limb. But in tala, *aṅga* defines the physical action or act of counting using different gestures.

9. *Jāvali*
10. *Aṣṭapadi*
11. Light music songs
12. And other non-classical items were presented at last



Photo 31: Performance photograph of Kanchanamala
Photo Courtesy: Personal Collections of Kanchanamala

The Performance Scenario

In the initial years of the 1940s, Kanchanamala opined that even if Sastry planned to stage a full-length Kuchipudi performance, it would have been impossible. Since the format of the repertoire was not structured by then, a complete recital was

impractical. The initial period of the transformation constituted mainly of solo items from the group presentations- *Yakṣagānam* and *Kalāpam*.



Photo 32: Performance photograph of Kanchanamala
Photo Courtesy: Personal Collections of Kanchanamala

An anecdote that Kanchanamala recollected was of a dance performance that she watched. The dance recital of Lalitha and Padmini, the ace movie actresses and adept Bharatanatyam performers, was arranged in Bandar. The recital was a ticketed show, for which the excited audience of all strata of the society brought the ticket for Rs. 10/-. However, the popular actors concluded their performance after a few presentations. The enraged audience even broke the chairs of the auditorium. There was an uproar among the audience, and they refused to calm down. At this point,

Kanchanamala pointed out that there was a general statement among the audience' that *Mā āchāryagāri piḷalu indakaṇḍe bāgacheystāru* (the daughters of Acharya would have performed with more brilliance and finesse than them). She also accentuated that the audience (then) appreciated a well-presented performance irrespective of the artist who performed or whose student they were, or to which clan they belong.



Photo 33: Performance photograph of Kanchanamala
Photo Courtesy: Personal Collections of Kanchanamala

Kuchipudi is widely popular for its inclusion of *sātvikabhinayā*²¹⁶ in the performing pieces. Kanchanamala elaborated on another anecdote of her experience watching the performance of Balasaraswati. During the scholarship days of Kanchanamala, in Madras, she got a chance to watch the performance of Balamma.

²¹⁶ Nāṭyaśāstra explains *Satvikabhinaya* as one of the four categories of abhinaya namely, *Angikam*, *Satvikam*, *Aharyam* and *Vachikam*. Bharat in *Natyasastra* explains that *Satvikabhinaya* expresses the understanding and interpretation of various state of mind, in accordance with different sentiments.

On that particular evening, Balamma performed a *varṇam*²¹⁷ in *khamas rāgam*. Kanchanamala noted that the elaboration of the *abhinaya* was precisely the replica of Sastry's *abhinaya*. Her association with Sastry was so deep that she could identify the signature *abhinaya* and movements of Sastry in Balamma's *varṇam*. The focal point was that Balamma incorporated not just the signature expressions of Sastry, but his actions were mimicked. Sastry had a habit of keeping his pen behind the ears and would take it and use it whenever needed. Balamma incorporated the same in her performance as a mind-blowing adaptation of Sastry's characteristic. In various literary narratives and interviews, Balamma acknowledged that Sastry had opened a new vista of knowledge in *abhinaya* for her. During his exposition of *abhinaya*, he internalized the character intensely that tears rolled down when he enacted emotional moments of his choreography. Kanchanamala remembered that when Sastry enacted sad situations, both the audience' and the performer were in tears and Sastry referred to this as *sātvikam*.

It was Sastry's quest for new horizons that developed into a new trajectory of separate solo format in Kuchipudi. The solo performing tradition in Kuchipudi was an outcome of his zest for uniqueness and inquisitiveness. This attitude of his, made solo repertoire the main constituent of Kuchipudi. Kanchanamala expressed that she was one of the prime students who witnessed and participated in Sastry's structuring of the technical aspects of Kuchipudi to elevate the aesthetics of the form. Their intrinsic attitude to dwell deeper into the form's minute aspects resulted in the form's transformation into a solo format.

²¹⁷ The literal meaning of *varṇam* is letters. The particular music compositions that has high prevalence on swaras are termed as *varṇam* in music. When such kind of music is taken for a dance choreography, it becomes *varṇam* in dance repertoire.

Chapter 5

Scripting Repertoire and Performance Pattern

This chapter discusses the repertoire formulated and imparted by Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry to his disciples. Kanchanamala remains to be the prominent case study of this chapter, as she was the prime – female – non – hereditary student of Sastry. Alongside the repertoire of Sastry has been comprehended and analyzed through his disciples from hereditary and non – hereditary background. The significant portion of this chapter is analyzed through the method of Ethnographic memoir and Narrative inquiry as well.

Sastry, in his choreography, used an elaborate diction of *samāsam*²¹⁸ and *alankāras*²¹⁹. He considered dance as a *kāvya*²²⁰. He visualized his choreography from a poet's point of view. He would explore the socio-cultural and political context of the period in which the *sāhityam* was written. Thus, he patterned his choreography according to the behaviour and modes of representation of that period. For instance, Sastry's choreography of *tarāṅgam* by Narayana Tirtha would inculcate the philosophy and thrust of Narayana's preaching. This pattern was followed in the choreography of items written by all the *vaggēyakāra*/lyricists. His idea to coalesce the poets' philosophies in the choreography was to amalgamate an in-depth understanding and analysis of the subject to create the same rasa/sentiment among the audience.

²¹⁸ *Samasam* is referred as combination of two words that without any conjunction or preposition.

²¹⁹ These are the embellishments of phonology and semantics that are used in Telugu language to add aesthetics to the poetry.

²²⁰ Poetry is referred as *kavyam* in Telugu literature.

Kanchanamala opined that in the initial stage, *Kuchipudi* did not incorporate good music. Her take on *Kuchipudi*'s musicality in the early stage was referred to as 'horrible.' Since she had a thorough training and also flair towards music, she could not accept *Kuchipudi*'s musical aspects that were being followed. Kanchanamala recollected that in *Kuchipudi*, *tarāṅgams* were sung in Hindustani²²¹ mode. The juxtaposition of *swaras*²²² of different *rāgams*²²³ to the *tarāṅgams* of different *rāgams* was not acceptable to her. As an anecdote, she referred to the story of *Sāmba Śivāyēnarē*,²²⁴ this item is a *swarajati* that has *swarās* intertwined in it. Instead of using the same *swarās* of the piece, Sastry juxtaposed the piece with different *swarās* from another item, *swarapallavi*²²⁴. This *swarapallavi* was composed by Sastry- *Rāveememagua*- set in Ananda Bhairavi *rāgam*. However, *Sāmba Śivāyēnarē* was set in Khamas *rāgam*, and the *swarās* incorporated in the item were contrasted with Ananda Bhairavi *rāgam*. Kanchanamala never approved this attempt by Sastry, and she criticized him for the same. On a lighter note, she elaborated that she never allowed Sastry to sing for her; it was either her mother or sister who used to sing for her performance. Kanchanamala opined that only Carnatic music was apt for the form and urged Sastry to adopt it²²⁵. Kanchanamala points out that the music was not refined and well-structured during the initial days of *Kuchipudi*'s solo performance and probably this was only with some Gurus as the *Yakṣagānam* and *Kalāpams* of *Kuchipudi* and Gurus of Chinta and Pasumarthy were exceptional musicians.

²²¹ Hindustani music is a classical genre of music prevalent in the northern part of India.

²²² *Swara* is a Sanskrit word that connotate a particular note of an octave.

²²³ The Sanskrit meaning of the word *rāgam* is color or passion. It is a melodic framework for improvisation and composition.

²²⁴ *Swarapallavi* is a piece of composition that has *swarās* with less sahitya or lyrics.

²²⁵ Carnatic music could be defined as a system of classical music that could be seen in the southern part of India.

In contrast, Sastry was vibrant and exceptional with the rendering of mnemonic syllables. He improvised and rendered the *konagolu*²²⁶ brilliantly. In the initial days of her performing career, it was difficult for Kanchanamala to follow Sastry as he improved his rendition of *konagolu* intricately. Since she was not adept at improvisation in her earlier days, it was difficult for her to adapt to his style. Nevertheless, her intense practice transformed her to be an expert on the same. Later, a stage was reached where Sastry was noted for his rendering and Kanchanamala for her improvisation. She reminisced that he was a fast *naṭṭuvanār*²²⁷ and his expertise in improvisation was evident in the rendition of *īndira maṇḍira*²²⁸.

²²⁶ Konakol is the art of rendering the mnemonic syllables in a particular rhythm, that would be in perfect sync with the *rāgam* of the composition.

²²⁷ *Naṭṭuvanār* identifies a person who has the capacity to do many roles like that of a dance master, music conductor, vocal percussionist. In general, *Naṭṭuvanār* visually maps a person with hand cymbals, and that beat is in consonance with the rhythmic framework of dancer.

²²⁸ This is the *anupallavi*/second stanza of *Bala Gopala Taraṅgam*



Photo 34: A working still of Sastry while teaching *Dasāvātara Śabdam*
Photo Courtesy: Personal Collections of Kanchanamala

Patterning Kuchipudi in a new format

Sastry formulated and structured *Amba parāku*²²⁹. In the present day too, a Kuchipudi recital would commence after offering prayer to the Goddess of Kuchipudi through *Amba parāku*. Kanchanamala reminisced vividly that *Śabdam*²³⁰ *Kānthakuniraṇṭaramvasaṇṭhakālamu* (When I am with you, Oh my beloved!! I am always happy) was choreographed in such a way that it employed *jati*²³¹ in the same *rāgam* of the piece. *Daśarathavara kumārudavaithivi* (You are the

²²⁹ This song is dedicated to the village deity of Kuchipudi Bala Tripura Sundari.

²³⁰ *Śabdam* relates to a dance piece which is more expression oriented and the story is taken forward according to the lyrics of the piece.

²³¹ *Jati* is constructed in pure *nṛtta* format that follows intrinsic rhythmic patterns.

priced son of *Daśaratha*), the *Ramāyana śabdham* incorporated the story of Rama and also praised the Lord for his virtues. *Daśāvatāra śabdham* incorporated the stories of ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. She elucidated that it was her older sister, M. Soubhagyavalli, who suggested that she portrays the story of each incarnation in different ragas. However, Sastry was not satisfied with such innovation, and he never encouraged it. He wanted the piece to follow one *rāgam* throughout, so all the *śabdams* were patterned likewise. She explained that it was later that Vempati Chinna Satyam introduced *jati* in a structured format and he abstained from the use of *rāgam* during *jati* rendition. Apart from this *Maṇḍūka śabdham* and *Kṛṣṇa śabdham* were also a part of the repertoire. The history of *Kṛṣṇa śabdham* was traced as a transformed form of *damēṇdra timēṇdra kumāra śabdham* which was composed as part of the *Yakṣagānam*, *Uṣā Parinayam*.

Kanchanamala described the second item in her repertoire as *tillāna*²³². She further explains that no dictum refrained *tillāna* from being performed as a second item. She believed that those are constructed images which were never followed (then). The performers and the choreographers had the freedom to choose and sequence their recital; no strict patterns were followed back then.

Kanchanamala also explicated about *taraṅgam*²³³, *ślōkam*²³⁴ and other musical compositions. The musical compositions' lyrics were: *Yajñyapatñyasyamēśānām*, *līlagōpālavigraham* (*Kṛṣṇa līla taraṅgiṇi*). The focal point of Sastry's compositions were abhinaya/the facial expression, diverse

²³² *Tillāna* is referred to as a rhythmic piece in Carnatic music that was generally performed at the end of the concert, which is widely used in Classical dance concerts too.

²³³ *Taraṅgam* is a popular style of performing piece used in Kuchipudi repertoire. The uniqueness of this piece is that the performer would dance on the brim of the brass plate.

²³⁴ *Ślōkam* is referred as a couplet of Sanskrit verse that contains sixteen syllables.

adugulu/steps, *gatibhēdas*/different level of tempo in execution. She also reminisced about Sastry's excellent choreography of *Padavarṇam*²³⁵ - *ēranāpai* written by Patnam Subrahmanyam Iyer (*Tōdi rāgam*) and *Swarajathi*²³⁶ - *tārijēmtagan* (*Vasānta rāgam*).

Though it was pointed out that Kuchipudi in those times did not follow a structured pattern in its presentation, however, theme-based performances were included in the repertoire. Generally, the theme-based songs included different *swarās* in *rāgamālīka*²³⁷. The inspirational incidents from the Nationalist movements were part of the repertoire. Regarding the pattern and sequence of performance, Kanchanamala catechized its clarity. Apparently, she inquired to Sastry about excluding items like *alarimpu*²³⁸ at the beginning of the repertoire. This, in turn, enthused Sastry to compose *Tā to todhimi* for her, which was analyzed as another version of *alarimpu*.

Kanchanamala opined that the total performance duration was more than two hours. In this, the first one or one and a half hours of performance was totally dedicated to Kuchipudi. This was usually followed by the performance of folk songs. These songs were referred as *yeṅki pāṭa* (folk songs) and light songs. As an anecdote, she referred a song: *mā vaḷḷa kādamā devi yaśōda* (Gōpika Gītam that could be translated as 'we may not be able to do this, Devi Yashoda').

Sastry's brilliance in choreography could be perceived in such incidents. He

²³⁵*Padavarṇam* is generally referred to a piece in the repertoire of dance and it consist of lyrical part or *sāhityam* along with *swarās* and *jathis*. This particular *padavarṇam* that Kanchanamala referred to is set in *rāgam tōdi*.

²³⁶*Swarajathi* is a form of Carnatic music that consists of a pleasing melody with *swarās* and *jathis*.

²³⁷*Rāgamālīka* is the term used for the ragas of different combinations.

²³⁸*Alarimpu* is traditionally the first dance piece that the Bharatanatyam dancers learn and perform.

had a peculiar way of adapting even the lighter songs to the repertoire. His choreographies were coalesced with the flavor and texture of the technique and music. Sastry was acclaimed for his usage of *Lalita gītams*. His unique way of designing and choreographing the lighter songs made him more popular. Thus, the song *madhurā nagarilō*, became popular in Kuchipudi.

As a case study of Sastry's brilliance in choreography *madhurānagarilō* is elaborated. For this, Kanchanamala narrated the sequence of the song and the process of its formulation. The item began with a *ślōkam* from *Govinda Damōdara Stotram* of Sage Bilwamangala Swami;

Vikrētu kāmākhila Gōpa Kañya,

The lovelorn Gopa maiden having offered

Murāri pādārpita chittavruti

Her mind at the feet of Lord Murari,

Dadōdhakam mōha vasadavōchad,

While selling curds in the street, due to her passion filled mind,

Gōvinda, Damōdara, Mādhavēti

Cried, "Oh Govinda, Oh Damodara and Oh Madhava

The verses intended to elaborate that Gopika went to *Madhurānagari* (in the city of Madhura) out of *paramabhakti*²³⁹. When she was selling curd there, she anxiously cried out for Krishna. The choreographic pattern of this was designed so that after these verses Krishna would enter the scene. Few lines were also incorporated into this by her father, Seshadri. The lines are composed in the framework of question and answer from Krishna to gopika, which transcends a high

²³⁹ *Paramabhakti* is termed as ultimate bliss of divine worship.

philosophical note.

Kṛṣṇa:

Madhurānagarilō callaṇamma nēla

(Why do you have to sell milk and curd in the city of Madhura)

Illucūdarāvē gōpī

(come home and see my place)

āṭalādarāvē gōpī

(so that we can play)

Abjapatranētri

(Oh!! lotus eyed girl)

Arayumā ē guṭṭu

(Do you know this secret?)

Arthamēlamanaḱu, vyarthamatiyu

(Why do we need money, that could only be useful to buy materialistic things and it is utter waste)

Lōkamella līla rūdikateliyuma

(You should be very careful and understand the worldly affairs cautiously)

Kaṇuvippi sriṣṭi kāṇcubāla

(Oh! my dear girl!! open your eyes and look at the complexity and beauty of Universe)

Misamisa merisēti déhamatula

(Just like a mirror image on the water that sparkle beautifully)

Alayavanamāla kāṇcudéhamula nene

(Oh!! Beautiful!! in that image didn't you see me in you)

Nityamayi nirmalambayina nīvé

(You are just a body)

Ātma nénu

(And I am the soul engraved in you)

Gōpika:

ātmalanduṇḍu paramātmā nīvuga

(You are the soul in all human beings)

In choreography, these lines are preceded by the *jāvali* taken from Chittor Subrahmanya Pillai – *Madhurānagarilō dārividuvu Kṛṣṇa* (Give me way in Madhura Nagari oh Krishna!) set in Ananda Bhairavi *rāgam* and *Adi tālam*. The verses by Chittor Subrahmanya Pillai are elaborated below:

Pallavi:

Gōpika:

Mathurānagarilo callaṇaṁapōdu

dārividumu Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa

(mathurā)

When the Gopi is walking through the town of Mathura, please give her way, Oh Krishna!

Anupallavi

Gōpika:

māpaṭivélaku tappaka vacéda

paṭakurā koṅgu gaṭṭigānu Kṛṣṇa

(mathurā)

Surely, I would come to see you when the sun sets. Now you please take your hands

from my saree, Oh Krishna!

Caranam 1

Aṭacūsina nannu āgadicéyunu

āgadamēlara aṇdagāda Kṛṣṇa

(mathurā)

If my mother-in-law finds me, she might not allow me to come to you. So, you please slow down your excitement, Oh! Handsome one.

Caranam 2

Kosarikosari nāto sarasamulādaku

Rājamārgamidē Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa

vrajanitalu nannu céravaṭurika

vidu vidu nācéyi Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa

(mathurā)

We are standing in the center of the pathway, please do not act your coquettish pranks on me. The women around the *vṛja* would notice me and come closer. So please leave my hand. Oh Krishna!

Thus, they concluded the performance. During the presentation, Kanchanamala played the role of Krishna, and her sister M. Rangamani portrayed the role of gopika. This was designed as a *samvādam*. The items like *Śrī Gananādhama Bhajare* were also musically composed by her father. She explains that qawwali²⁴⁰ was another music genre which used to be a part of their repertoire. Most of the items that they chose to perform were part of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa Karṇāmṛtam*²⁴¹, in

²⁴⁰ Qawwali is a style of Muslim devotional music that is largely associated with Sufis.

²⁴¹ Gīta Govindam is a Sanskrit work written by Saint Jayadeva of 12th century. It beautifully describes the relation of Krishna and the *sakhis* or friends.

which *Rādhika Kṛṣṇa tavavirahē kēsava*²⁴² was a common item that has been performed as Sastry's composition.



Photo 35: Kanchanamala as Krishna and Rangamani as Radha
Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of Kanchanamala.

Pedagogy²⁴³ and Methodology²⁴⁴ of Sastry

Sastry was adamant that through his pedagogy, his disciples should receive a thorough understanding of the form. His teaching tool could be compared to the dance scholarship (around the 1990s) seen much later- the Somatic pedagogy of dance. The somatic pedagogy is referred to as *bodywork*, *hands-on work*, *body-mind*

²⁴² This is the 9th Ashtapadi of the Jayadeva's Gīta Goviṇḍam and it describes that *Hey Kēsava! In your separation, Radha has become very weak at heart, even the fine necklace that she wears feels burdensome.*

²⁴³ For more information, refer to Steinberg & Kincheole (2018), p. 53. In their work, pedagogy is defined as a definition of culture and a means to transmit that culture to the next generation.

²⁴⁴ The methodology is referred to as a system of methods used in a particular area of study, analysis, or understanding.

*integration, body-mind disciplines, movement awareness, or movement education*²⁴⁵.

Sastry's tools of teaching allowed the students to develop their methods and approaches to teaching. Thus, his erudition in the dance scholarship, his approach towards methodology, and pedagogy could be coined as a highly systematic and structured one. The more in-depth understanding and analysis of the form had facilitated him to create and formulate a foundation that enabled his students to be proficient in every learning phase. Sastry was also fond of experimenting constantly in his teaching; his adroitness in teaching *padābhinaya* (the lyrical expression) always followed this method.

As explained earlier, Sastry's ingenuity in methodology and pedagogy could be evidenced through the syllabus's reference that he culled out for teaching Kuchipudi. He divided the syllabus into three courses based on the experience and practice of the students and level of understanding too.

- In the first stage, if the student is enrolled as a child, he/she would undergo five to eight years of dance training and complete the course by the 10th Grade.
- In the second stage, the student would finish ten to twelve years of learning. If the student enrolled under him as a child, then he/she must be at their graduation level, approximately 20-year-old.
- The third stage could be referred to as the learning period of thirteen years and above. If the child enrolled from childhood, then he/she must be in their post-graduation level, approximately 22-year-old.

Philosophy of Choreography

Sastry's philosophy of choreography could be juxtaposed with the recent

²⁴⁵ See, Eddy (2009), p. 20 – 28. In this work, she elaborates on the tools and techniques incorporated to develop and structure somatic pedagogy.

addition in the interdisciplinarity of dance scholarship. The dance philosophy of ‘thinking in bodies’ (2004) proposed by Jean-Luc Nancy²⁴⁶ (1940) in which he elaborated that the philosophy of dance not just focuses on the genesis of meaning in the sensuousness. It ruminates on the theory of the subject elaborated through dance, and the meaning that is cogitated. Nancy opined;

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the relationship of dance and philosophy has been transformed into a dynamic one. Dance movements and thought movements no longer seem to thwart, but rather to accelerate one another.

(Uhlener, 2012, para. 11)

This was the ideology that Sastry wanted to integrate through his choreography. His vision and understanding of the subject are beyond comprehension. He was an intelligent choreographer who patterned the philosophies of the subject through his choreographies. The paradox lies where West discovered this concept in the first half of the 21st century, whereas Sastry executed the same through his choreography from the first half of the 20th century. Sastry’s concoction in dance scholarship, as well as his forethought, is evidenced through this.

The Journey of the patterned Repertoire

The journey of solo repertoire could be analyzed through its transformation from the early constructed to the contemporary. This process underwent many levels

²⁴⁶ Jean – Luc Nancy is a French philosopher. He has written on both contemporary and classical philosophers and is known for his writings on the question of community, the nature of the political, psychoanalysis, literature, technology, and hermeneutics. He has earned respect as an influential philosopher of art and culture, especially on contemporary art.

of structuring, patterning and re-structuring of the form. The execution of the repertoire of Sastry is studied and analyzed through his various posterities. The first scions who underwent direct training under Sastry include; PVG Krishna Sarma²⁴⁷, Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma, Vempati Chinna Satyam and Kanchanamala. The scions of the second generation are selected either as the prime student or the popular student of Sastry's successors. PVG Krishna Sarma taught the items he learnt from Sastry at Siddendra Kalakshetram Kuchipudi and his scion for this study is Jayarama Rao. Vedantam Jagannatha Sarma's scion is his daughter and disciple Vedantam Shanthi. Seetha Nagajyothy²⁴⁸ is selected as the descendant of Vempati Chinna Satyam, as she is one of the prime students who learned from the Kuchipudi Art academy established by Vempati Chinna Satyam. The repertoire of Kanchanamala is also analyzed. The items taught to Vedantam Prahlada Sarma has been analyzed through the repertoire of Raja and Radha Reddy. This repertoire analysis also showcased the immense structuring and re-structuring patterns which were evolved to frame Kuchipudi into its contemporary repertoire. The detailed analysis of Kuchipudi's repertoire from the 1940s to the 1970s is elaborated with materials procured from the field notes, memoirs, interviews, and literary evidence. The literary narratives not necessarily refer to the repertoire of Sastry; however, it elaborates the ones that are popular in Kuchipudi. This is a concise analysis of Sastry's technique and pattern that had evolved through his disciples over a while. Some are still performed, and some went into oblivion.

²⁴⁷ PVG Krishna Sarma learnt from Sastry when he was stationed at Kuchipudi, vaguely around (1943 – 44). Also see, Sarma (2002), p. 38.

²⁴⁸. She has explicated on the items learned by her and Chandrakala. Chandrakala is the first student of Kuchipudi Art Academy who completed the course – Natya Visarada from the Academy, after its establishment in the year 1963. Chandrakala and Seetha are contemporaries.

Pūja Nr̥tyam

The repertoire designed by Sastry for Vedantam Jagannadha Sarma²⁴⁹ (the performing period starts from 1938) included *Pūja Nr̥tyam*, with the paḷḷavi as *nā hṛdaya pīṭa pai*²⁵⁰; the same was carried forward in the repertoire of Kanchanamala and Haranath²⁵¹. Haranath taught his sons Anand and Narasimhachari (the performing period starts from 1947)²⁵². An article published by *The Hindu* as an appreciation to Kuchipudi's items revived by Lasya Mavilappali, daughter of Narasimhachari, also accentuates the beauty of the piece *nā hṛdaya pīṭa pai*. This article also substantiates Kanchanamala's knowledge of music and involvement in the structuring of the item's intricacies.

The piece – de – resistance of the evening was 'naahridayapeethapainatyamaday Deva!' (Maand, Khanda chapu), a devotional song on Lord Nataraj, which had been choreographed by the 'father of solo Kuchipudi', Vedantam Lakshminaryana Sastry and taught to Narasimhachari's father, musician – dancer – theatre artist M S Haranath, who

²⁴⁹ The memoirs of Shanthi gave a detailed description of the repertoire which Vedantam Jagannadha Sarma and Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry followed. Sastry widely taught *Pūja Nr̥tyam* to almost all his students. The reference of the performance period is also mentioned by Vedantam Shanti. Sastry had taught this to C R Acharya and he in turn taught it to Mallika Sarabhai. The performance of Mallika Sarabhai has been documented and analyzed as part of this research work.

²⁵⁰ Set in Bilahari *rāgam* and Jhampe *tālam*.

²⁵¹ M S Haranath is the famous musician, dance-theatre artist. He is also the father of the famous Kuchipudi artiste Narasimhachari.

²⁵² Memoirs of Kanchanamala mentioned her first performance period as the Independence Day celebration of 1948.

in turn taught to his sons, Anand and Narasimhachari. It was written in 1942 by Bhavaraju Narasimharao and originally tuned in Maand by Marangati Kanchanamala, the first female non – devadasi disciple of Lakshminarayana Shastry and Narasimhachari’s teacher. Haranath had learnt it from Lakshminarayana Shastry and had taught his sons. The piece then disappeared from the Kuchipudi repertoire and Vasanthalakshmi remembers the song as snatches hummed by her husband and his brother Anand.

(Srikanth, 9th August, 2018)

For Vempati Chinna Satyam too, Sastry initiated his classes with *Pūja Nr̥ṭyam*²⁵³ (the performing period starts from 1945²⁵⁴) and for PVG Krishna Sarma, he started with *Vināyaka Kauṭam*²⁵⁵ (even though he started learning from 1944²⁵⁶, his performing period is not mentioned with much clarity). He also refers to the song on *Natarāja-nā hr̥daya pīṭapai*²⁵⁷, which they performed. The second descendant of the same tradition Vedantam Shanti has *Pūja Nr̥ṭyam* in her repertoire. Chandrakala also carried forward the repertoire of *Pūja Nr̥ṭyam*. Jayarama Rao²⁵⁸, did not incorporate *Pūja Nr̥ṭyam* in his repertoire. The books written by C R Acharya

²⁵³ For more information, see Sarma (2002), p. 27. The interview excerpts of Vempati Chinna Satyam in the book throws light on the kind of repertoire that was carried forward by Sastry for him. It mentioned course work that Sastry formulated.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 27.

²⁵⁵ Set in Nāṭa rāgam and Ādi tāḷam

²⁵⁶ Sarma, op. cit., p. 40. The interview excerpt of PVG Krishna Sarma gives a detailed description of the training that he underwent, also mentioned about the repertoire.

²⁵⁷ Ibid

²⁵⁸ The memoirs of Jayarama Rao gave insights on the training that he underwent and also explicated on the repertoire that he learned.

(Acharya & Sarabhai, 1992), Projesh Banerjee (Banerjee, 1985), and Sunil Kothari (Kothari & Pasricha, 2001) describes the item, technique, and repertoire more extensively, but they do not explain the inclusion of it as *Pūja Nr̥tyam*. However, the one written by Mohan Khokar (Khokar, 1985) explains the incorporation of *Pūja Nr̥tyam*.

*Vin̄ṭalu Vin̄ṭiva Yaśōḍam̃ma*²⁵⁹, an item that was part of *Kṛ̥ṣṇa Līlalu* followed *Pūja Nr̥tyam*. However, this item could be perceived as part of Kanchanamala's repertoire.

Jatiswaram

For Vedantam Jagannadha Sarma, Vempati Chinna Satyam, and PVG Krishna Sarma, Sastry taught *Aṭāna* and *Tripuṭa Jatiswaram*²⁶⁰. The same has been followed in the repertoire of Vedantam Shanti, Chandrakala, and Jayarama Rao, respectively. The repertoire of Raja Radha Reddy also included *Jatiswaram*²⁶¹. Though Mohan Khokar's work describes the inclusion of *Jatiswaram*²⁶², the *rāgam* is not explained.

Taraṅgam

Kanchanamala and PVG Krishna Sarma's repertoire incorporated *bālagopāla taraṅgam*, whereas Jagannadha Sarma and Vempati Chinna Satyam's repertoire included – *nīla meghaśarīra taraṅgam*. In the successors' list, Vedantam Shanthi, scions of Vempati Chinna Satyam learned *nīla meghaśarīra taraṅgam*. Jaya Rama

²⁵⁹ Set in Kamboji *rāgam* and Ādi *tālam*.

²⁶⁰ For more information, see Sarma (2002), p. 27 & 40. Also, the memoirs of Vedantam Shanthi gave a detailed description on training and the repertoire that carried forward.

²⁶¹ Refer to Vardhini (2019), p. 145.

²⁶² Refer to Khokar (1985), p. 87.

Rao's repertoire does not include *taraṅgam*. It could be seen that Mohan Khokar mentioned about *nīla meghaśarīra taraṅgam* and *bālagopāla taraṅgam* in his work ²⁶³. However, Sunil Kothari's work mentions only *nīla meghaśarīra taraṅgam*²⁶⁴.



Photo 36: Kanchanamala during one of her performances.
Photo Courtesy: Personal Collection of Kanchanamala.

²⁶³ Refer to Khokar (1985), p. 87.

²⁶⁴ Refer to Kothari & Pasricha (2001), p. 113.



Photo 37: The *arangetram* photos of Seetha Nagajyothy
Photo Courtesy: Personal Collections of Seetha Nagajyothy.

Śabdam

In the *śabdam*²⁶⁵ category, Sastry taught *Kṛṣṇa śabdam* and *Rāmāyana śabdam* to Vedantam Jagannadha Sarma. Both these *śabdams* were part of the *Yakṣagānam* performing tradition of Andhra, though they were part of the group presentation, Sastry re-structured it to a framework that suited for the solo performance²⁶⁶. *Daśāvatāra Śabdam*, which was composed by Sastry was taught to Vempati Chinna Satyam²⁶⁷. *Daśāvatāra Śabdam*, along with other *śabdams*, were part of Kuchipudi Art Academy's repertoire²⁶⁸. Vedantam Shanti learned both *Rāmāyana* and *Kṛṣṇa śabdam*. At the same time, Jayarama Rao had *Rāmāyana*, *Maṇḍūka*, and *Tulaja Rājendra Śabdam* to his repertoire. Both *Daśāvatāra Śabdam*

²⁶⁵ Devi (2002), p. 73. Ragini Devi gave a detailed description of the *Śabdam* category of Kuchipudi. She elaborated that *Śabdam* is composed in a musical style called *pāthya*, which incorporates the intoned recitation of descriptive or narrative verses as *sloka*, rhythm syllables (*śabdās and darus*) and song

²⁶⁶ Memoirs of Kanchanamala and Vedantam Shanthi described the same.

²⁶⁷ Refer to Sarma (2002), p. 27 – 28.

²⁶⁸ Seetha Nagajyothy specifically referred *Kṛṣṇa śabdam* and *Rāmāyana śabdam*

and *Maṇḍūkā Śābdam* are inculcated in the repertoire of Raja Radha Reddy²⁶⁹. C R Acharya (1992) described a series of *śabdams*; *Kṛṣṇa*, *Mallikāṛjuna*, *Mandōdari*, and *Ardhanārīśwara śābdam*. Other than *Kṛṣṇa śābdam*, all other *śabdams* are referred as Acharya's choreography.

Projesh Banerjee (1985) mentioned *Daśāvatāra śābdam*, whereas Mohan Khokar (1985) described *Kṛṣṇa*, *Maṇḍūkā*, and *Daśāvatāra Śābdam*. Sunil Kothari (2001) explained *Kṛṣṇa*, *Maṇḍūkā*, *Jakkula Purandari*, *Chāmundeswari*, *Daśāvatāra* and *Ardhanārīśwara śābdam*. At the same time, Indrani's repertoire included *Jakkula Purandari Śābdam*, *Chāmundeswari Maṇḍūkā*, *Ardhanārīśwara śābdam*²⁷⁰.

Tillāna

Kanchanamala's repertoire had *Tillāna*. Both Vedantam Jagannada Sarma and Vempati Chinna Satyam's repertoire from Sastry did not incorporate *tillāna*. PVG Krishna Sarma has *Tillāna* in his repertoire²⁷¹. Among the scions of the second generation, Vedantam Shanti, Jaya Rama Rao and Chandrakala did not inculcate *tillāna* in their repertoire. Though Chinna Satyam did not learn *tillāna* from Sastry, the *araṅgétram* repertoire of Seetha Nagajyothy includes the same. However, Seetha Nagajyothy has *tillāna* in her *araṅgétram* repertoire. In the repertoire of Raja Radha Reddy, *Tillāna* is included²⁷². Among the literary sources, only the work of Mohan Khokar (1985) mentioned about the item *Tillāna*.

²⁶⁹ See Vardhini (2019), p. 145.

²⁷⁰ For more information refer to Anuradha (2013 – 2014), p. 45.
Also, Devi (2002), p. 74.

²⁷¹ Refer to Sarma (2002), p. 40. The interview excerpts of PVG Krishna Sarma gave description of repertoire.

²⁷² Refer to Vardhini (2019), p. 145.

Ślōkam, Kīrṭaṇam, Padam, Padavarṇam, Swarapaḷḷavi and Jāvali

Items like *Ādhyāṭma Rāmāyana Kīrṭaṇam, Jāvali, Padavarṇam, and Swarapaḷḷavi* are common in Vempati Chinna Satyam and PVG Krishna Sarma's repertoire²⁷³. In the literary sources, Mohan Khokar (1985) and Sunil Kothari (2001) have mentioned some. Among the successors, Chandrakala's repertoire incorporates *Varṇam*²⁷⁴, other than that no other *ślōkams* or *padams* or *Kīrṭaṇam* are mentioned. Subsequently, Sunil Kothari (2001) also mentioned *Varṇam* in his book. Vempati Chinna Satyam has *padams* like *Indēṇdu...*, *Innalla vale kādamṇa Céllanayēna Manasu* in his repertoire and PVG Krishna Sarma had *Aṣṭapadi, Kriti, padams, Tyāgaraja Kīrṭaṇam* and *Ślōkam* in his repertoire²⁷⁵. Mohan Khokar (1985) has mentioned about *Ślōkam* in his book.

Technique and Choreography Pattern

One significant aspect that was pointed out in the memoir of Kanchanamala was the exposition of *nṛtta* standing on the rim of a brass plate. As Sastry's inquisitiveness is very popular, introduction of a unique way of performing *nṛtta* could be an outcome of the same. The urge of self-identity could be a reason for Sastry to introduce a brass plate to execute footwork on mnemonic syllables. Later, this has become the salient feature of Kuchipudi. It could also be his farsightedness to make distinct the art form of Kuchipudi from other performing traditions. The

²⁷³ Refer to Sarma (2002), p. 27 & 40.

²⁷⁴ The memoirs of Seetha Nagajyothy gave the reference Chandrakala's performance. Seetha mentioned that Chandrakala performed both the *varṇams* as part of her Guru's repertoire on her *araṅgétram*.

²⁷⁵ Refer to Sarma, op. cit., p 27 – 28 & 40 – 41.

same has been accentuated in one of the interviews of Vempati Chinna Satyam:

Why are these taraṅgams done on the vessel? I'd ask Tātaiyya (Sastry) and he did reply that it is by the sanction of sastra quoting the sloka Punkhanupunkha. He did say that there is a special skill involved in dancing on a plate and vessel filled with water and the water without spilling over. Though he had done this and made others do it too, he wasn't too happy with it. He would say "You must do something special if your talent is to be recognized. It isn't enough if you have a vessel below and a pot above. You must illustrate the jati-s and jaati-s (variation of rhythmic patterns) with foot work. This was his credo and he would see to it that it was done.

(Rao, 1989, p. 55)

Here, Sastry elaborated the high philosophical content of the verse *Punkhānupunkha* from the *Mukunda Māla Stotra*²⁷⁶

Punkhanupunkhaviśaya-anupasevyamanaha

Dheeronna-muncha-ti-mukunda-pada-rvindam

Sangeeta Vadyalaya tala vasangatapi

Moulista kumbha parirakshanadheernativa!

The philosophical content of the verse and Sastry's idea of incorporating vessel and

²⁷⁶ Mukunda Mala Stotram was written by A C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896 – 1977). He was an Indian spiritual teacher and the founder preceptor of ISKCON. This particular part of the verse is from the third *Mukunda Mala Stotra*.

pot as part of *Taraṅgam* was aptly described by Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888 – 1975)²⁷⁷ in one of his speeches before Yamini Krishnamurthy's performance. He opined that,

Taraṅgam remains one of the most popular items from the Kuchipudi repertoire, with its exacting dexterity and acrobatic mastery. Little do people understand the philosophical significance of the apparent acrobatic feats. There is a philosophical significance to the water pot and plate. It is an analogy for life itself. Like the dancer who concentrates on the water pot while dancing to the music, accompanied by melodic instruments and rhythmic patterns, the Brave One contemplates the divine feet of God, although saddled with worldly worries.” This can be further interpreted as: “We are all bound to this earth (the brass plate under the feet) and we carry heavy responsibilities on our head (signified by the water pot, from which not a drop is supposed to spill). But just as the dancer moves joyously in rhythm, her mind in glorious contemplation of God, so too should life be lived, with grace, energy and good purpose.

(The president who loved Kuchipudi, 24th August, 2010, para. 5)²⁷⁸

This clearly throws light on the factor that Sastry was very conscious of his

²⁷⁷ Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan is the second President of the Indian Republic, a Bharat Ratna awardee too. He was a great scholar with vast erudition. He knew performing traditions, in particular, Kuchipudi

²⁷⁸ Refer to the article published in <https://Kuchipudivaibhavam.wordpress.com/2010/08/04/the-president-who-loved-Kuchipudi/>

selection and execution criterion. He did not map a single factor of the form without having proper thought processes and definitions. In the field notes, there are numerous reasons quoted for adding vessel and pot to *Taraṅgam*, but no one has defined it objectively. However, the literary narratives on Sastry brought in the philosophical and textual mode of implementation.

Interestingly, another version of *taraṅgam*'s introduction refers to the performance of *taraṅgam* by Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy²⁷⁹ in the 1930's. Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy included *taraṅgam* and *jāvali* as part of his solo performing format. This was alluded in Anuradha's (1996) research work. She mentioned this statement as part of her interview excerpt of Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy. This point illuminates that *taraṅgam* was part of the solo repertoire of Kuchipudi even before Sastry popularized it. However, the major literary sources ascribe it as Sastry's creation.



Photo 38: Image of *Taraṅgam* being performed with vessel and pot
Artiste: Vedantam Satya Narayana Sarma

²⁷⁹ Anuradha (1996), p. 133. This statement is referred to as an anecdote of her interview with Pasumarthi Krishnamurthy

Photo Courtesy: Sangeet Natak Akademi Archives

Another take on the technique could be analyzed through the interview of Chinna Satyam. He distinctly described the kind of training that was carried forward under the tutelage of Sastry. The question was how they practiced without spilling the water all over, the execution of *jati*-s on a plate and water pot on the head? He elaborated Sastry's teaching methodology and technique:

By moving without jumps or jerks, but with the sound of the ankle bells correct and clear. In a similar fashion Tataiyya would have us do the Dasavatara Śabdam standing on a small, low stool. This is not done on a vessel, like Taraṅgam is. It was his idea that we should be able to sound out all the foot work within this restricted space. When we asked him why, he would explain: "Something new has to be shown to attract the public. Without that, there will neither be patronage for us nor a profession. I have done this and earned the praise of the people.

(Rao, 1989, p. 55)

This clearly substantiates the methods through which Sastry patterned the repertoire which included certain eye-catchers that made the form distinct. This, in turn, had served the purpose of creating a niche for itself for Kuchipudi.

While annotating on the technique of Sastry, Kanchanamala opined that she could not find Sastry's technique in Vempati Chinna Satyam's style of execution. The style of Chinna Satyam is referred to as a restructured and codified form of exposition. To substantiate this, an anecdote of her visit to Kuchipudi Kalakshetram

the years 1970 – 1980 was elucidated. PVG Krishna Sarma²⁸⁰, was the Principal of *Siddendra Yogi Kalakshetram*, Kuchipudi. The workshop was conducted by Chinna Satyam for the students of *Kalāksētra* during the same period. Curious Kanchanamala visited Chinna Satyam's session and she noticed that he focused on *aramandi* continuously. Chapter 4 of this study analyzed that when Kanchanamala was under the tutelage of Chokkalingam Pillai, he too concentrated on *aramandi*. When the aspect of *aramandi* is correlated, it could be interpreted as a culled-out replica of technique in Tanjore dance²⁸¹. This indicates the alliteration of the statements on Vempati Pedda Satyam and Chinna Satyam being juxtaposed with the acquaintance of Tanjore dances cohering that to Kuchipudi to make it richer²⁸². She fondly remembered that Chinna Satyam gave many performances, and they maintained a certain standard.

In Kuchipudi's choreographical pattern of the solo repertoire, the technique had undergone an evolving process, which resulted in its gradual transformation. The period 1930 – 70 was for Kuchipudi a multidimensional one, in both presentation and style/context. This period was a crucial one that saw the emergence of solo format in Kuchipudi as a separate arena of transformation. The performative graph saw the inclusion of the female performers from non-hereditary background. Cohering to the same, there was an explicit transmogrification in the choreography of each solo piece. Tropologically, the choreography centered on giving a distinct identity to the form as a classical dance. The choreography sharpened certain ends of the technique; certain

²⁸⁰ The period in which PVG Krishna Sarma served as the Principal of Kuchipudi Kalakshetram was 1971- 1991.

²⁸¹ According to Kanchanamala, she referred the style of Bharatanāṭyam dance as Tanjore dance. The meaning is confined to only style and not the items or repertoire.

²⁸² Refer to Rao (1989), p. 55 – 62)

movements are expurgated to fit correctly into the absolute framework of *classical*.

For instance, right from the basic posture has been transformed.

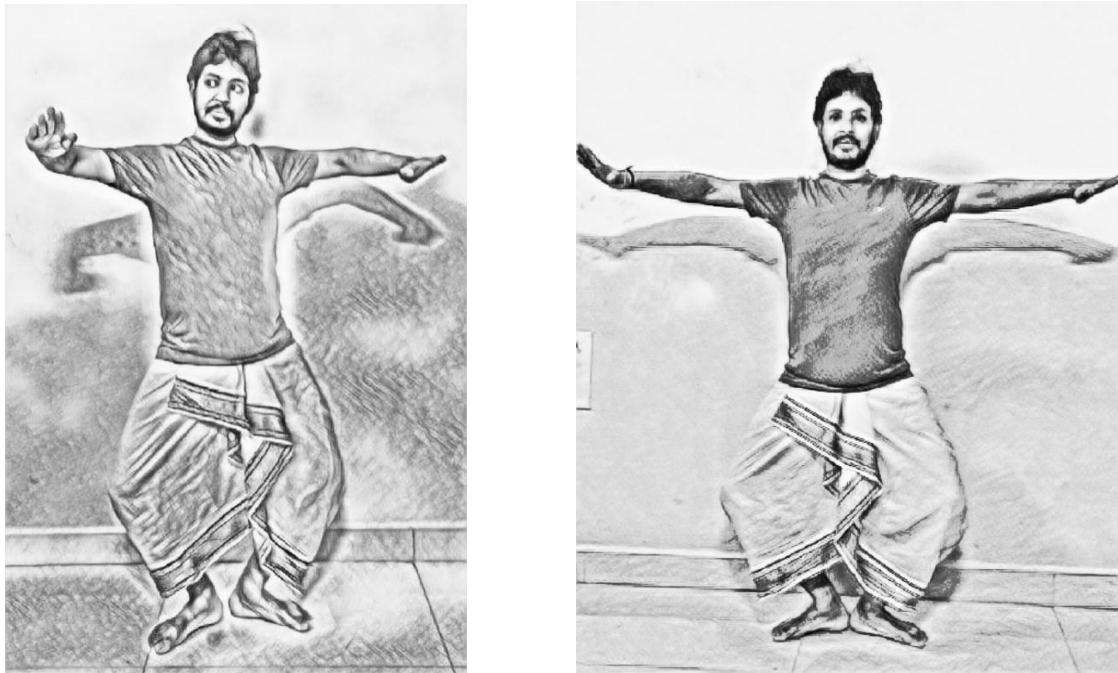


Photo 39: The basic posture in old style (left) and its reversion (right)

Photo Courtesy: P Girish Chandra

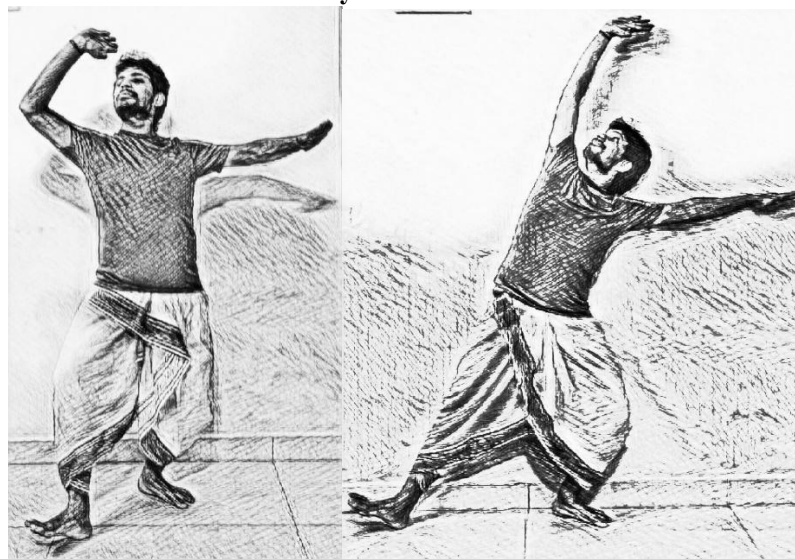


Photo 40: The *adavu* or movement in the old style (left) and re-structured version of its execution (right).

Photo Courtesy: P Girish Chandra

To analyze some inclusions and exclusions that were part of the evolution and restructuring the form, the choreographical pattern of a form needs to be analyzed over a period of time.

In such a case, *Śabdam*, a very popular part of the repertoire, could be taken as an example. The choreography of *śabdam* by Sastry had *jati* construction, set to the same *rāgam* of the item, whereas when Vempati Chinna Satyam restructured the pattern, the *rāga* composition of *jati* was excluded²⁸³. The mnemonic syllables of a *jati* from then were rendered in a regular format without any *rāgam*. Generally, it is analyzed that in most of the *śabdam*, the raga is set to *Mōhanam*²⁸⁴. This particular *rāgam* has one unique quality that it could be sung any time, whether it is day or night. This quality of the *rāgam* might have attracted the composers and made it their favorite one.

The *śabdam* set in *Mōhanarāgam* are *Dammēra Timméndra Kumāra (Kṛṣṇa) śabdam*, *Rāmāyana śabdam*, *Daśāvatāra śabdam*, and *Maṇḍūka śabdam*²⁸⁵. The two different trajectories of composition of *śabdam* has been analyzed: the structured-patterned, re-choreography of *Maṇḍūka śabdam* by Vempati Chinna Satyam²⁸⁶ and the choreography of *Maṇḍōdari śabdam* by CR Acharya²⁸⁷. Acharya followed the performance text of Jayappa Senapathi²⁸⁸. The story mentions the episode of a frog being transformed into a beautiful maiden by Lord Brahma. Furthermore, she was assigned to divert the attention of King Ravana from his attempt to seize Goddess Parvati²⁸⁹.

²⁸³ The memoirs of Kanchanamala explicated on this.

²⁸⁴ Also see, Kothari & Pasricha (2001), p. 151.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Refer to Anuradha (1996), p. 94. She mentioned that the *Maṇḍūka Śabdam*, written by Kasinadha Kavi was re-choreographed by Vempati Chinna Satyam.

²⁸⁷ Also, see Kothari & Pasricha (2001), p. 109. Sunil Kothari mentioned that *Maṇḍūka Śabdam* of Jayappa Senapati was re-choreographed by C R Acharya.

²⁸⁸ Jayappa Senapathi is the author of *Nrittaratnavali*. Sunil Kothari (2001), p. 109. mentioned that the item was composed of the celebrated court dancer Lakuma Devi.

²⁸⁹ Ibid

The *Maṇḍūka śabdam* by Chinna Satyam followed the text composed by Melattur Bharatha Kasinatha Kavi and the composition inculcates the episode of *Gajendra Mōkśam*. It depicts the story of an elephant named Gajendra. While he was drinking water from the pond, he was attacked and caught by a crocodile. Gajendra pleaded to Lord Vishnu for help. Finally, Lord Vishnu enters and kills the crocodile with his *sudarśanacakra*²⁹⁰.

There is a general belief that *Maṇḍūka śabdam*, choreographed by Sastry, was made popular by Indrani and Korada. However, in the memoir of Kanchanamala, she clarified that though Indrani and Korada learned it from Sastry, it was Vazhvoor Ramaiah Pillai²⁹¹ (1910 – 1991) who popularized it. He had learned *Maṇḍūka śabdam* from Sastry and rewarded him with (then) Rs.100. Though he was a Bharatanāṭyam guru, he made *Maṇḍūka śabdam* part of his repertoire. To substantiate this, Kanchanamala quotes an instance from 1954, where she presented herself for the scholarship. At the same time period, she met L Vijayalakshmi²⁹²(1943), who had also attended the scholarship interview. Vijayalakshmi performed after Kanchanamala, which made it possible for Kanchanamala to watch her performance. For the interview, Vijayalakshmi performed *Maṇḍūka Śabdam*. The surprised Kanchanamala enquired about the item's authenticity, Vijayalakshmi replied that the item was part of Bharatanāṭyam repertoire. She also clarified that they had performed the item widely.

²⁹⁰ For more information, see Kothari & Pasricha (2001), p. 94. The story of Gajendra Mokśam in the Śabdam is mentioned. Also, refer to Anuradha (1996), p. 94. The episode of Gajendra Mokśam is mentioned in her work too.

²⁹¹ Vazhvoor Ramaiah Pillai was a Bharatanatyam teacher, performer, and *naṭṭuvanār*. He popularized the Vazhvoor style of exposition of Bharatanatyam around the globe.

²⁹² L Vijayalakshmi was a classical dancer and film actress. She had learned Bharatanatyam from Vazhvoor Ramaiah Pillai and later she advanced her training under T Swaminathan Pillai.



Photo 41: Vazhavoor Ramaiah Pillai and L Vijayalakshmi
Photo Courtesy: Malayalam all Classic Visual Arts, Media, Scriptures of Bharatham

To analyze the evolved, structured and patterned movement comprehension, the chorography of *Maṇḍūka Śābdam* that is re-choreographed by Vempati Chinna Satyam has been taken as a case study. Alongside, the analysis of *Maṇḍōdari śābdam* by C R Acharya is amalgamated to understand the difference in structuring and patterning of choreographical aspects of both the students of Sastry. It could be understood that Acharya followed the performing text of Jayappa, as the documented performance of Indrani recorded in the year 1968 is evident to follow the same text. The analysis of Acharya's choreography is consummated through the recorded documentation of Indrani. The composition of Chinna Satyam's is analyzed through the research notes and field notes of this study, where the researcher learnt the item from Chavali Balatripura Sundari (daughter of Vempati Chinna Satyam).

The pattern of Acharya's composition seems to be simple in its structure, and

it deeply follows the underlying meaning of what is spoken and explicit its expression. The *Maṇḍūkā śābdam* set by Sastry follows the literal meaning of what is explained in the *kāvya*. His choreography²⁹³ starts with the danseuse's entry, holding *Maṇḍūkā mudra*²⁹⁴ and portraying the frog with typical jumping movements. When she (Indrani) danced as *Maṇḍūkā*, the lyric/*sāhitya* of the movement is *Maṇḍūkā bharatakamalam*. The water description follows this in the pond, the darting of the fish, the lotus, the turtles, the crabs, and the lyric of this is *kina kina kina ādinajalacaramulu*. While the frog is still in the pond, she finds the bees hovering the lotus, and then the frog dives into the pond and transforms into a beautiful frog maiden Maṇḍōdari. This episode is followed by a *ślōkam* about the description of the beauty of Maṇḍōdari; she rises from the pond with the grace of a swan. It is furthered to portray that Maṇḍōdari is as delicate as lotus, and her eyes resemble that of a deer. Then, the piece's mood is transformed to depict Rāvana; he is described as a demon king who is very much powerful and arrogant. The gait of both Rāvana and Maṇḍōdari shows an artiste's brisk in transforming from one character to another. Through the *pada abhinaya*, the cupid's pierced arrows make the demon king fall in love with Maṇḍōdari. He took her along with him to make her the queen of his kingdom. The item ends with *Salam, dhi Salam, dhidhi Salam, bhajoparah: Salam*²⁹⁵.

²⁹³ The choreography is analyzed according to the documented version of the performance by Indrani Rehman in the year 1969. Also see, Devi (2002), p. 74. In this work Ragini Devi describes the choreography of *Maṇḍūkā Śābdam*.

²⁹⁴ Holding *sikharam* in both hands, placed in front of the chest.

²⁹⁵ The usage of Salam is depicted in the *Sahitya* of the item, and the performer also displays the *mudra Salam* at the end of the performance along with her exit. The choreography is analyzed according to the documented version of the performance by Indrani Rehman in the year 1969.



Photo 42: Indrani Rahman as Mandōdari

Photo Courtesy: <https://narthakionline.blogspot.com/2014/05/mothers-by-daughters-remembering.html>

This is the choreographical pattern of *Maṇḍōdari śabdam* could be described as a masterpiece of Sastry's mimetic dance. There are minimum repetitions of the *sahitya*, and the total duration of the item is 5 minutes and 17 seconds. The item is composed at a high pace, the analysis of this item in the present scenario would create the effect of a fast-forwarded version of the original one and the artiste is literally running. Despite the speed in choreography, the execution of movements and the depiction of mudras are carried forward with much clarity. This point itself counts the kind of training and hard work that Indrani must have undergone. The item ends with the *salām* note attributed to Krishna Deva Raya of the 17th century²⁹⁶. This *salām* is retained in the memory of the royal patron. The *sollukaṭṭūs*, or the mnemonic

²⁹⁶ Refer to Ragini (2002). p. 74.

syllables incorporated in the item are

Buda buda buda Maṇḍūkamu

Kiṇa kiṇa kiṇa

Jala jala jala

Plāṅgu plāṅgu

Thaki ta ki ta and *plāṅgu plāṅgu* are the syllables that are still in diction in the contemporary scenario of Kuchipudi²⁹⁷.

The choreography of Vempati Chinna Satyam is completely different, and it follows descriptive quality in nature. The choreography²⁹⁸ continues to follow a systematic pattern; after the artiste's entry, the item opens with the execution of *jati*. After the *jati* pattern, with *padaabhinaya's* aid, he utilized the whole context to describe the environment; it does not stop with one repetition. The *sāhityam*/lyrics of

Poṇamaḷḷelu pogadapūvulu saṇajājulu sampanangi

The *pallavi* of the *sāhityam* itself is repeated around 8 times, where his choreography is patterned around describing the different kinds of flowers, creepers, fully blossomed ones, and half blossomed ones. The elaborate description of each variety of flowers found in the garden leaves an image in the spectator's mind, and the purpose is established. Along with the execution of abhinaya, he has followed an intrinsic rhythmic pattern into it. For instance, the use of *miśra jāti*²⁹⁹ adavūs while

²⁹⁷ The *jati* construction of the Kuchipudi continues the usage of these syllables. For instance, *plāṅgu* could be found in the final *jati* of the item *Ananda Tandavam* composed by Vempati Chinna Satyam. According to Vedantam Raghava, one of the contemporary Kuchipudi artistes from the hereditary family, the mridangam's sound inspires the *bol* plāṅgu. The right side of mridangam has *karani* (the black colored round shaped one). A hit on *karani* could create sound *plāṅgu*.

²⁹⁸ The choreography is analyzed according to the pattern that has been taught by Chavali Balatripura Sundari (daughter of Vempati Chinna Satyam) in her class. She strictly follows her father's choreography.

²⁹⁹ *Miśra Jāti adavūs* contains the mnemonic syllables *ta ki ta ta ka dhi mi*. Altogether 7 mnemonic syllables.

depicting the creepers in the garden, and so on. The *pallavi* ends with a *jati* to give the audience a clear-cut picture of it. This *jati* is created by Vempati Chinna Satyam himself, as this was not part of the text.

Pūlavāsana cālakaligina vanamulōpaladanarucundēdi

The *anupallavi* commences with the abhinaya of the exotic smell spread over by the fully blossomed flowers. As the repetitions increase, the choreography gets added with the rhythmic patterns. The piece depicts flowers, creepers, a bunch of the flowers being plucked, bees hovering on these flowers, birds, peacocks, and deers that roam around the garden, which increases its beauty. The intrinsic rhythmic syllables of *miśra jāti* and *khaṇḍa jāti*³⁰⁰ are deployed in this episode. This is lengthier than *paḷḷavi*, as it has more than 12 repetitions.

The choreography furthers to include a *jati* composed by the choreographer and the enactment of the episode of *Gajēndra Mōkśam*: -*Ugrasāpamuto gajēndrudu baḍḍuḍaibalmakaricētanu*. The repetitions of the same are employed to enact the whole episode of the King being cursed by the sage and getting transformed into an elephant. The elephant caught by the crocodile pleads to Lord Vishnu for help as both the elephant and crocodile fight. Finally, Lord Vishnu enters along with *sudarśanacakra* and kills the crocodile. Then, the rescued elephant pays his respect to Lord Vishnu.

After enacting the episode, it furthers to a minor *jati*; the choreographer also creates this *jati* as the text did not include any *jati* at this juncture. This *Maṇḍūka Śabdham* also end with *salām*,

Śriraghurāma, Jayarāghavarāma,

³⁰⁰ *Khanda Jāti adavūs* contains the mnemonic syllables *ta ka ta ki ta*. Altogether 5 mnemonic syllables.

Kotañdarāma salām

Dhisalām, dhidhisalām.

The mnemonic syllables or *soḷḷukaṭṭūs* employed in this version of *Maṇḍūka śabdam* are

De gu de kuku de gu dim kuku

Ja gaga ja ga ja ga ja gam

Da gaga da ga da gam.

The item is analyzed to have incorporated many channels of furtherance. These variations and differences in mood are conveyed through three different *rāgams*; *Śanmukhapriya*, *Bilahari*, and *Madhyamāvatī*³⁰¹. *Maṇḍūka śabdam* is just an example of numerous compositions that have been reworked.

³⁰¹ See, Anuradha (1996), p. 95. The description of *rāgam* is elaborated.



Photo 43: The jump in the picture is referred as *Maṇḍūka* jump in Vempati Chinna Satyam's choreography of *Maṇḍūka Śābdam*.

Artist: P Girish Chandra

Photo Courtesy: Ms. Rahana Habeeb

Initially for *Dammera timmendra kumāra*, *śābdam* Uśa was selected as the protagonist. Sastry reworked on it, and with the same lyrics or *sāhityam*, and later, the same was named as *Kṛṣṇa śābdam*. Originally the *śābdam* was referred to as *Dammera timmendra kumara śābdam*³⁰². The original song started with the lyrics *Rāra dammera timmendra kumāra*³⁰³. This particular *śābdam* was initially a part of the *Yakṣagānam* repertoire, *Uśa Pariṇayam*³⁰⁴. The memoir of Kanchanamala opined

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Dammera timmendra Kumara was referring to the son of Timma (1745 – 1795), King of Kalahasti. His son's name was Damarla Pedda Venkatadri. For more information, see Anuradha (1996), p. 95. The memoirs of Vedantam Shanthi substantiate the same.

³⁰⁴ Pasumarthi Seshubabu too opined the same.

that Sastry changed the word from *dammera timmendra kumara* to *yadu vamsasuddhambud icandra*, which directly indicated Krishna and comparing him as the moon for the Yādava community. However, the literary narratives suggested that it was Banda Kanakaligeswara Rao who changed the word from *dammera timmendra kumara* to *yadu vamsasuddhambudi candra*. Since there are two trajectories of the same concept of transformation of words, the conclusion is that *Kṛṣṇa śabdām* was structured through *Dammera timmendra kumara śabdām*. Similarly, the *salāms* that were part of the *śabdams* were slowly excluded from the framework and are replaced with *parāku*³⁰⁵.

The Performance

The performance scenario of the later 1940s, after the evolution of the solo repertoire, was entirely different from the kind of scenario prevalent now. The performers took the audience to their level, and spectatorship was viewed at a much higher level.

The (then) performance scenario provided a space for the performers where enactment was not for mere appreciation from the audience³⁰⁶. Neither the performers nor the choreographers designed the items and patterned it to be appealing for the audience or to enthrall them. The enactment of a particular item's theme is portrayed to reach the common man directly; it was never an imposition of ideas or an intellectual display. On the analysis of the performance, the difference in the

³⁰⁵ Refer to Anuradha. op.cit., p. 95.

Pasumarthi Seshubabu, in his memoirs, elaborated on the transformation of the name of the *śabdām* and the subtraction of *Salam* from *śabdām*. For Seshubabu, *śabdām*'s served to be an integral part of the repertoire. He heightened that instead of *Salam*, *paraku* was put forth.

³⁰⁶ The memoirs of Kanchanamala describe the performance scenario that was prevalent in the Andhra Pradesh during the mid-1940s–1960s. With her own personal experience as a student and as a performer, she analyzed the performance scenario.

choreographic pattern, usage of themes, the selection of *sahitya*, and abhinaya's execution was very much different. According to Kanchanamala

In the present scenario, the artistes are not leaving anything for the audience to think about. The audience are appreciating a performance, but they are not getting into the minute aspects of either a performance or an item. The judgement is done superficially when compared with her performance period. She emphasizes that the importance was given to 'kavihridaya' and represented the same to the audience.

The two anecdotes that Kanchanamala shared explicated the performance scenario and the existence of dance festivals then. The Nallān Chakravarthula³⁰⁷ family organized annual dance festivals in 1950s. Sastry without failure made sure that his students get a chance to participate in the dance festival. Another anecdote elucidated about the performance given by Vempati Pedda Satya, Soudamini, and Vempati Chinna Satyam for the Silver Jubilee celebrations of Andhra Bank at Bandar. In 1946, they were invited from Madras (then) by Pattabhi Seetharamaiyaa for the performance. During this concert, Chinna Satyam performed Kalyani Jatiswaram, followed by Nemali dance (peacock). Their concert incorporated both classical and non- classical/semi-classical items. Kanchanamala accentuated that in this particular item, he incorporated Tanjore steps. The audiences highly appreciated these performances.

The *sāhityam* or lyrical meaning of the music was given much importance. A piece is composed or choreographed accentuating the song's lyrical meaning,

³⁰⁷ Refer to footnote no. 55 of Chapter 4, p. 168.

facilitating the common man to understand the underlying meaning of a particular poetic verse. The choreography was designed in such a way that it incorporated incidents from one's own life experience. The perception of audience appreciation was very different when compared to the contemporary scenario. The artistes were never appreciated with a sudden loud reaction in the manner of applause or say *sabhāsh!* among the audience. However, today, if the performances are marked with sudden reactions from the audience, they are considered successful. For instance, in the memoir, Kanchanamala quoted an incident of Veena Dhanammal's³⁰⁸ (1867 – 1937) reaction:

Once during the Veena recital of Veena Dhanammal (Mother of Balasaraswathi) someone among the spectators in exhilaration said 'sabhash!!!', she got distracted with that and stopped the performance at that point and reacted to it. Later, Veena Dhanammal made it mandatory to explain that any hindrance during the performance will not be entertained.

So, it was once considered a disrespectful gesture for both the performance and the performer. On a paradoxical note, the present scenario performers yearn to boost their confidence during the performance with applause from the audience. This analysis draws a wide difference in both the performer and spectator of then and now.

Later Progression

On the other hand, the female dancers' introduction to the form has given a

³⁰⁸ Veena Dhanammal was a highly appreciated Carnatic musician. She was a vocalist and a performer of Saraswati Veena.

new dimension of perception to the male body and introduces the duo into the form³⁰⁹. As explained earlier in this chapter, Sastry himself was the pioneer for this; Vempati Peda Satyam and Tandava Krishna gave duo performances. During the 1940s, Vempati Peda Satyam was highly inspired by Uday Shankar and Ram Gopal and popularized the male duo performances³¹⁰. More men shifted to be part of the *Yakṣagānam* tradition³¹¹, and the Kuchipudi scenario welcomed more female performers. The (then) hereditary and non-hereditary male performers have become part of the duo performances and female artists. Korada Narasimha Rao³¹² is one such example of this kind of a trend.

The contemporary scenario has become a new era which emphasize the existence of new ideologies and made dance a medium of expression (as it was being served) to exhibit their thought. Kuchipudi enlarged itself with different choreographies that addressed subjects of relevance in the present socio-political society.

³⁰⁹ Refer to Bapat (2012), p. 120. He explicated how Kuchipudi was inspired by other performing traditions and formulated its own trajectories.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Refer to Sarma (2002), p. 11.

³¹² Refer to Chapter 2, part II, Korada and Indrani duo performances.

Chapter 6

Part I

A look contains the history of a man.....

(W H Auden)

Today in 2020, if one needs to analyze and evaluate the past hundred years' performance scenario, one could perceive an enormous change regarding the structure of the performance. Who performs? Who perceives? How are they perceived, as physical performers or mere bodies performing? Moreover, to whom are they performed for? These are some of the questions attached to the performing traditions. To analyze the questions discussed, it is inevitable to understand the traditional antiquity of the performing traditions. As discussed in the earlier chapters, nationalist movements, custodians, re-scribed traditions, and power politics played a major role in shaping the form. This part of the thesis accentuates the discursive theory's implementation to analyze how the form has been appropriated. In parallel to this, the theory of appropriation also opens up another arena. The concept of *invented tradition*, a term coined by Eric Hobsbaum and Terence Ranger. Invented tradition is defined as

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values or norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historical past

(Bapat, 2012, p. 1)

The above quote clearly suggests that invention could indicate either the emergence of a new form or the invention of a new lineage of an existing art form.

The society is an evolving system, and it was continuously evolving from time immemorial. The first two decades of the 20th century saw tremendous change in the system called society. The colonial system brought rapid changes, and the feudal law's denunciation led to the lack of patronage for many of the art forms. As Partha Chatterjee clearly points out,

The Eastern type of Nationalism, consequently, has been accompanied by an effort to 're-equip' the nation culturally, to transform it. However, it could not go so simply by imitating the alien culture, for then the nation would lose its distinctive identity. Therefore, the search was for a regeneration of the national culture, adapted to the requirements of progress, but retaining at the same time its distinctiveness.

(Blackton & Chatterjee, 1990, p. 2)

As explained in the earlier chapters, the revival of India movement constructed and projected a new-found dance history. The national elites and the revivalists have instigated a significant part of this. There was an array of incidents that set-in motion the anti-nautch movement of 1890, and the main reason for that was the implementation of the Victorian morality of the East (Soneji, 2012). The social ethics, reforms, and values transformed that era into a *purity movement for the national regeneration*³¹³. As explained, the 'revivalists and the nationalists' were on a mission to write a 'new,' 'appealing' and 'respectable' history for India. They analyzed and accentuated an invented history that pulled out the traditional patrons for the performing art forms, which ostracized the performers. Furthermore, in no time, an emerging perception of the Nation was accomplished that highlighted

³¹³ Refer to Chakravorthy (2010), p. 113.

the *past's spiritual roots*. They argued that the spiritual roots *resided in the Vedic Times' traditions of arts, aesthetics, and culture*³¹⁴. This process's paradox effect made the custodians of the art 'immoral,' and their art was named as the 'spiritual and divine antiquity' of the Nation.

The revival of art movement 'codified, textualized and canonized' the art forms. This period was the one in which the Nation was in urge to represent *National Culture* and create *National Identity*. The invented tradition and constructed culture were weaved politically during the time of Revivalism. On the other hand, the forms that were revived, faced the basic problem of losing its texture and flavor. The educated elite class and the literary narratives were the acting pillars in constructing a *new cultural lineage*. Parallely, this period saw the emergence of institutionalization and the constructed re-scribed literary narrations of the revived forms became its history. Politically, this led to the creation of a safe history that made everything fell in place and could be highlighted throughout. To project a glorious lineage and for the prospect of a glorious future the invented history became tenacious with *safe* social moorings.

To prove the antiquity of classical dance forms, a seamless history, scholars, dancers and educators continue to refer to the sacred text of Nāṭyaśāstra, which originated in the Vedic times and thereby to inscribe the classical dance genre with an unshakable Brahmanical world view.

(Chakravorthy, 2010, p. 113)

This clearly depict the implication of a constructed history that submissively intended class-clan distinctions.

³¹⁴ Ibid

This chapter emphasis on the contribution of women performers in *Kuchipudi*. Alongside, it traces the perception of women performers on stage and how their ideology of performing was contested with that of the spectators (both qualified and lay). With posing certain questions on this area, this research work joins the dance scholarship that particularly researched the *reinvention of performing art forms in modern South Asia*. In the wake of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (2016) and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (1986), *Re – Scribing Tradition* (2010) Guru Rao Bapati. At the same time there is another trajectory of scholarship that could be intertwined with this research work too. They are the ones that dwelled deeply on the process of modernity through the prism of nationalism and nation-building (e.g., Chakrabarty 2000; Chatterjee 1993a, 1993b). Indeed, from dance studies (e.g., Banerji 2010; Chakravorty 2008; Meduri 1996; O'Shea 2007; Sikand 2010; Walker 2004) to South Asian studies (e.g., Bakhle 2005; Blackburn 1998; de Bruin 1998; Frasca 1990; Kersenboom-Story 1995; Peterson and Soneji 2008; Soneji 2012; Srinivasan 1985; Zarilli 2000) to ethnomusicology (e.g., Allen 1997; Qureshi 1990, 2001; Schultz 2002, 2008; Subramanian 2011; Wade 1979; Weidman 2006) and Rumya Putcha (2010).

The main setback of revivalism is assumed to be the dichotomy to prioritize certain performing traditions and to relegate others. The prioritized ones by the elite, urban – middle class achieved classical status in a shorter period, whereas others were categorized as folk or indigenous forms. Initially, they were never made a part of the newly found *national culture*.

As explained in the previous chapters the formation of a separate State for Andhra according to the linguistic identity brought tremendous change in the cultural

life of the people. The Krishna delta which is named as the cultural hub of Andhra, this place was part of Madras Presidency. This could be analyzed as a reason to draft the name *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam* and the form remained to be recognized as this until 1960³¹⁵ for general public. Even though the State Andhra was separated from Madras Presidency in the year 1953, it took another seven years to bifurcate the State from its cultural strings³¹⁶ that is attached to the presidency. However, the introduction of a solo format in Kuchipudi was pioneered from 1930's Sastry. Nevertheless, today, the term Kuchipudi refers to the performing tradition from the Kuchipudi village, which is largely understood as a solo performing tradition.

The main idea of identifying an art form to its State was to classify its linguistic boundary and to mark the State in the National panorama. There are many art forms that has been formulated in that manner Bharatanatyam – Tamil (Chennai), Odissi – Oriya (Orissa), Kathakali – Malayalam (Kerala), Kathak – Hindi, Urdu (UP) are to name a few.

However, in the case of Kuchipudi, when the solo format developed in itself as a separate genre, it was embraced by the performers who were already established in other styles like Bharatanatyam. For instance, the mainstream prime-woman performer of Kuchipudi, who contributed much to its propagation (then) was Yamini Krishnamoorthy. Even before starting her career in Kuchipudi, she was an established Bharatanatyam performer, who had created a niche of her own in the field. The then stalwarts hailed from an *elite-upper-middle-class* stratum. The women performers were educated enough to articulate their ideas through speech and demonstrations. This has opened a new horizon for them and they were welcomed in both the Oriental

³¹⁵ Refer to the research works of Seth (2005) and Putcha (2011).

³¹⁶ Refer to Caldwell (1974).

and Occidental arena of performances. The contribution of the Oriental women performers is discussed in chapter two.

Dance Personified

Yamini Krishnamurthy was born in Bangalore and her parents were from Andhra. She grew in the citadel of Tamil culture, in the (then) Madras. She believed that it was her stay at the (then) Madras that crystallized her career³¹⁷. She considered herself to be fortunate enough to have learned under Ellappa Pillai, Kittappa Pillai, Chokkalingam Pillai, Dandayudhapani Pillai and also the gurus at Kalakshetra. She started her career in *Kuchipudi* under the tutelage of Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry and continued further under PVG Krishna Sarma and Chinta Krishnamurthy. She is accoladed with many awards including the Padma Shree (1968), Padma Bhushan (2001) and Padma Vibhushan (2016). These are among the highest civilian awards of the country.

³¹⁷ Refer to Khokar, (1997), p. 77 – 79.



Photo 44: Yamini Krishnamoorthy

Photo Courtesy: www.narthaki.com, <https://narthaki.com/info/intervw/intrv121.html>

Several literary narratives on Yamini accentuated that Kuchipudi happened to her as an accident. She explained that

Contributing in no small measure to Yamini's stature as a dancer has been her accomplishments in Kuchipudi, a dance style which also she went out to conquer with her father serving as her charioteer. After he saw Vedantam Raghavaiah doing a rustic and yet fantastically compelling Dasavtaram in a film, Professor Krishnamurthi made his daughter learn Kuchipudi also. After initial training under Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry, Yamini spent a great deal of time learning the style under teachers like Venugopala Krishna Sarma and

Chinta Krishnamurthy. It was a style which according to her, was then direly in need of redemption, for the high priests of culture believed it was folk art and lacked patronage

(Sruti, 1989, p. 23-26)

Though the literary narratives like *Nartanam* (2011) substantiated that Yamini met Sastry around 1960³¹⁸, logically it does not fall on the place as Sastry passed away in the year 1957. It could be assumed that Sastry met Yamini during the year 1955/1956, as this has also been substantiated by Kanchanamala in her memoir. Kanchanamala referred incidents where Sastry talked about the young energetic dancer Yamini. Yamini explicated that

He was very old and fragile then. It was as if he had to come to my life to initiate me into this form. That seemed to be his purpose. Once I was initiated into Kuchipudi, I continued. He taught me for two or three months. At that time, I used to travel a lot to perform. It was then that I learnt of his demise which saddened me immensely.

(Puranam, 2011, p. 39)

This clearly stated that Yamini's learning period under Sastry lasted only for some months. Her father went to Kuchipudi and approached Krishna Sarma to teach her³¹⁹.

My father, then, went to Kuchipudi and approached Venugopala Sarma to teach me. My father did not heed to his

³¹⁸ For more information, see Puranam (2011), p 39.

³¹⁹ See, Puranam op. cit., p. 39.

Also, refer to Khokar (1997), p. 77 – 79.

*pleas that he cannot leave farming and shift to Chennai and insisted that he had to teach me*³²⁰.

(Puranam, 2011, p. 39)

Regarding the technique of the form, Yamini substantiated that it carried a folk element and since she was a welcomed and reputed performer by then, that the form too was accepted. This directly indicate a situation (then) persisted for Kuchipudi. The literary narratives and the performance reviews elaborate on the performance scenario of post 1960. Furthermore, this period is an aftermath of the (then) newly gained classical status of Kuchipudi. The evaluation of the performance reviews and its year of publication contrast with her perception of the audiences' like towards Yamini in turn made the audience accept Kuchipudi as a solo format.

*We had to fight for the style as it was held to be folk. Our generation established its classical credentials*³²¹
Her dancing in that state reveals her mastery of technique and degree of spontaneity that lifts even 'folksy' Kuchipudi items in which she dances on a brass platter or with a water pot on her head above the level of gimmicky.

(Sruti Critique, 1984, p. 41)

This array of incidents describes the attitude of lay audience towards Kuchipudi. Since the form was not popular (then) and was constantly contesting for classical status, the strenuous efforts made by the (then) scholars and performers of Kuchipudi remain oblivion. Their endeavor to give prominence to attain classical status for Kuchipudi remain paradoxical with the statement that Yamini gave during

³²⁰ Refer to Venkataraman (1989), p. 23 – 26.

³²¹ Refer to Khokar op. cit., p. 77 – 79.

her interview. *“It (Kuchipudi) was more for fun as a form, but it stuck. I like it: the audience liked me, so it stayed”* (Shani, 1996, p. 47).

She elucidated that the performing tradition – Kuchipudi was accepted by the audience just because they liked her. This statement remains unclear when it is juxtaposed with that of Kanchanamala’s statement. Kanchanamala explicated that *art is above the artist*. Though both Yamini and Kanchanamala are contemporaries there is an ample difference in their opinions, thought process and attitude towards the art form. The former affirms through her work and interviews that *art is beyond artiste* while latter proclaim that since the audience like the artist, the art was also accepted. There is one more unknown connection between Kanchanamala and Yamini, that both of them represented their own forte/style during the 1958 All India Dance Seminar conducted by the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi.

It was in April 1958 at the Vigyan Bhavan in Delhi during the morning session at the All India Dance Seminar that Yamini Krishnamurti was demonstrating the jatis. One of her mentors Elappa was wielding the cymbals and it was an electrifying experience.

(Sukumar: 1989, p. 3)

Regarding the repertoire of the performances of Yamini, it could be analyzed that she abstained from giving a full length Kuchipudi performance. Even though the performance period of Yamini (post 1960’s) consisted of an evolved full-length structured repertoire of Kuchipudi, her performance invitations and reviews suggested that Kuchipudi remained as a mere part of her repertoire. To elaborate, she presented few items from the Kuchipudi repertoire and she focused on Bharatanatyam.

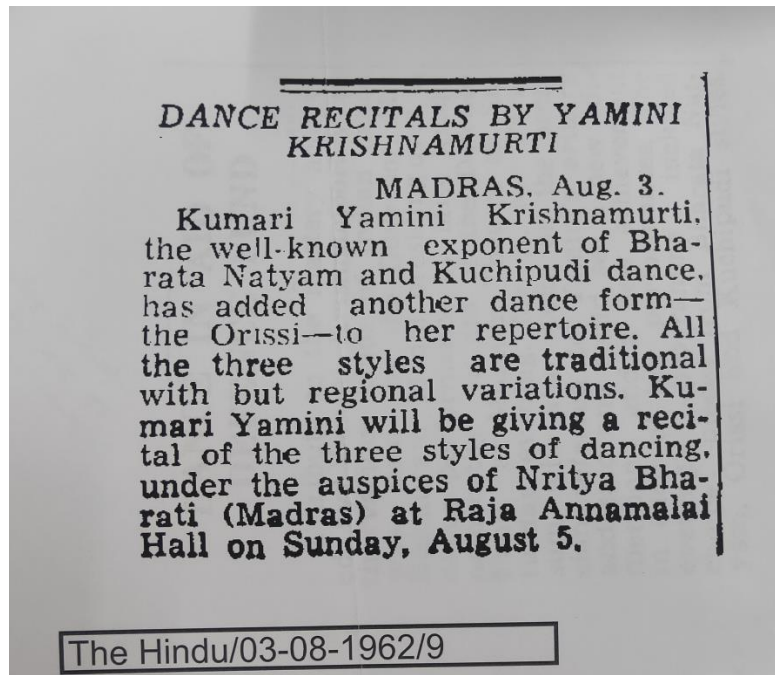


Photo 45: Invitation of Yamini Krishnamurthi Dance recital
Photo Courtesy: The archives of Sangeet Nataka Akademi, New Delhi.

This particular invitation also suggested that apart from Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, she incorporated *Odissi* in her repertoire. This also elucidated that the Kuchipudi items that she learnt remained her *mixed repertoire* during the dance recitals. The *mixed repertoire* could be juxtaposed with the performance brochures of Indrani Rehman, as explained in Chapter two. Even though Yamini is an iconic figure among the Kuchipudi-woman-performers, whether the repertoire and technique of Kuchipudi was represented in its acceptable format remain a question. Precisely, as the literary resources suggests, her performances included only certain solo pieces of the (then) evolved repertoire of Kuchipudi. So, it cannot be substantiated that Yamini was the only reason to propagate the art form or the audience just loved her performance and thus Kuchipudi was accepted.

Evidently, the analysis of the statements suggests the existence of performers like Kanchanamala who already learnt under Sastry for fourteen years. Furthermore,

her repertoire of one and half hour performance consisted only of Kuchipudi pieces. Paradoxically, the name of Kanchanamala is hardly referred in the literary narratives related to the solo format of Kuchipudi. The years 1960s – 70s saw the name of Kanchanamala being sidelined and performers like Yamini taking up the charge. During this process, the major trajectory that need to be analyzed is that of the position of the solo repertoire formulated by Sastry and the representation of the form Kuchipudi. Since the repertoire of Yamini did not solely concentrate on Kuchipudi and was part of *mixed repertoire*, her consistency of representation remains a question. In the performance reviews of Yamini there is a frequent mention of words like *folksy* and *gimmickry* to connote Kuchipudi. Further study of the reviews points towards the implication of these words as synonyms to describe items choreographed as *taraṅgam*. Chapter 4 of this research clearly elucidate the high philosophical aspect inculcated in the choreography of *taraṅgam*. This evaluates the degree to which a performing tradition could be misrepresented, alongside these reviews refrain to bring out the richness in knowledge of the performing tradition.

The institutionalization of the form was another movement that initiated parallel to this. This facilitated the performing tradition Kuchipudi to formulate a syllabus of its own to be part of the educational institutions. This was initiated by Vedantam Parvatisam, alongside establishment of training institutions also initiated. The establishment of Kuchipudi Art Academy, a Government funded institution headed by Vempati Chinna Satyam is one such example. This institution of Chinna Satyam was opened for many girls from ‘elite background’. He choreographed many solo pieces and dance dramas under the banner Kuchipudi Art Academy. According to Vempati Ravi Shankar {(1969 – 2018) the son and disciple of Chinna Satyam}, the inclusion of more female performers and students in the compositions of Chinna

Satyam could be a deliberate move by his father. Ravi Shankar opined that since Chinna Satyam was associated with many scholars, connoisseurs and artistes it could be a conscious effort from his side. Ravi Shankar explained that

He knew the current trend and status of other art forms. He used to keenly observe and read the progression of other performing art traditions too. That might have inspired him to work hard for the propagation of Kuchipudi.

Vempati Ravi Shankar (personal communication, February 5, 2017)

It could be traced that the separate solo format formulated by Sastry was again patterned and structured by Chinna Satyam that evolved as a style that is widely accepted now. Through many literary narratives he has mentioned that there were many driving forces for him to re-structure the solo format into the present framework.

Once Rukmini Devi of Kalakshetra and her niece Radha (now Burnier) had come to Pedda Satyam's house to see what Kuchipudi was like. By that time, he had learnt a little Bharatanatyam too in Madras. A little bit of that and a little bit of Kuchipudi was shown to them. They left saying that it wasn't quite right. I did the fundamentals of Kuchipudi. The others did various items. We were dismissed of having no standard. They ranked and reinforced my decision.

(Rao, 1989, p. 56)

His creative endeavor in formulating dance-drama could be termed as an inspirational out pouring of his association with art connoisseurs.

Perception of the Female body

The term 'body' carries different images for different people. For a lay man, the body could only be referred to a clothed body, but for a performer, especially a dancer, the body can be identified as a means through which his/her emotions and expressions are portrayed. *The discourse on dancing recognized from the beginning that it was an art of the body, a dynamic system of capturing the beauty of notion and of representing ideas and experience* (Bose, 2010). Concept of perception of a female body and gaze are considered as parallel terms by the academia world. So, it is necessary to bring forth idea of gaze when perception of female body is discussed.

Gaze is a term brought into popular usage to describe the anxious state that comes with the awareness that one can be viewed. The psychological effect, Lacan argues, is that the subject loses some sense of autonomy upon realizing that he or she is a visible object. This concept is bound with his theory of the mirror stage, in which a child encountering a mirror realizes that he or she has an external image. Lacan suggests that this gaze effect can similarly be produced by any conceivable object such as a chair or a television screen. This is not to say that the object behaves optically as a mirror; instead it means that the awareness of any object can induce an awareness of also being an object.

In cinema theory, identifies the male gaze, in sympathy with the Lacanian statement that "Woman is a symptom of man." This means that femininity is a social construct, and that the feminine object is the object of desire, is what constitutes the male lack, and thus his positive identity

The gaze is characterized by who is the gazer (viewer):

- The spectator's gaze: that of the spectator viewing the performance or

spectator(s) viewing the performance.

- The Intra-diegetic gaze: in a text, a character gazes upon an object or another character in the text. In performance, it could be of a performer viewing another performer on stage.
- The Extra-diegetic gaze: a textual character consciously addresses (looks at) the viewer, e.g. in dramaturgy, an aside to the audience; in cinema, acknowledgement of the, the viewer. The performer's gaze on the viewer.
- The gaze of the performer himself/herself.

Spectators Gaze

The memoirs of female performing artists are analyzed and they have confidently stated that they never confronted problems with spectator's gaze, when performed on stage. In fact, they believed that they were received with much acceptance and were never criticized. As in the case of Kaanchanamala, when asked about her performance in Kuchipudi, she confidently put forth that she never faced any acceptance problem throughout her Kuchipudi dance career. This could be an anaphora of the anecdote mentioned in Chapter one regarding the interview of Vedantam Satya Narayana Sarma. The interview describes about a Vaishnavite girl, who used to perform Kuchipudi in some of the *sabhās* and was never accepted by them³²². This statement was indicating Kanchanamala, as she was a Vaishnavite who gave performances in Kuchipudi. The attitude towards the women performers by the (then) hereditary Gurus were not welcoming. However, Kanchanamala was unaware

³²² This audio was taken by Harshita Mruthinti Kamath for her work, and later during a discussion with her about this research work, she played it for the researcher and the researcher is indebted to her. For more information refer to Kamath (2012). 'Them', here clearly signifies the men in the Kuchipudi Traditional family.

of this comment on her. This analysis also opens up an argument of identity that has been questioned and the gender politics within the gender. The identity of a female performer, who is performing on stage, for the performer it is an appreciative work, on the other hand the spectator views it in a different manner.

To substantiate the same, the reviews of the ace danseuse Yamini, clearly suggests that the sensuous items that she presented on stage were highly appreciated, and the audience were always on awe about her *abhinaya*.

Apart from Bharatanatyam Yamini has also mastered the Kuchipudi tradition and contributed to popularizing it. Her Krishna Sabdam has justly become famous. Dwelling upon Gopi's yearnings for Krishna she depicted shringara in all its varied hues without any inhibition, to the point that her detractors denounced it as vulgar. Yamini would sit on the stage in a seductive manner and using every weapon in her armoury, make eyes at her beloved. Which was with in tradition except that her abhinaya was bold enough to invite the wrath of the conservatives. At times when she exaggerated, it did not result in aesthetic delight and bordered on what critics called vulgarity. Otherwise when rendered with restraint it was a big success with her audiences.

(Sukumar, 1989, p. 3)

This particular review of Yamini explicate that her *abhinaya* was not always considered as an aesthetic way of exposition. This article was published in the year 1960 and that was the period when *Kuchipudi* attained its mention as classical. This kind of a review directly throws light on the politics of *representation* and

authenticity.

Another review of Yamini's stated that

The first item in which the young girl offers her love to Krishna and the final one the taraṅgam were replete with graceful movements, coquettish charm and lilt in the dance style which is so essential for good Kuchipudi.

(Dutt, 1989 p, 3)

This review stated that *coquettish charm* is a quint essential part of Kuchipudi, again the question of representation of the form is raised.

Her style and sensuous expressiveness seem just made for the exotic and exotic rasas with which the art bounds. With her on view grace and beauty used to be conferred on the proceedings right from the very start and the audience were invariably left in a mood determined to be impressed.

(Yamini excels in Kuchipudi, 1971, p. 11)

There are many reviews that throws light on how Yamini was objectified to perceive as a woman performer. If analyze, the performance reviews³²³ of Yamini from the

³²³ The other performance reviews are entitled, "*Vibrant recital by Yamini*. Times of India. Delhi. 17/04/1987. *Classical Grace*. Hindustan Standard. Delhi. 11/12/1960, *Yamini at her best*. Times of India. New Delhi. 10/01/1961, *A convincing exposition: Kuchipudi by Yamini*. Times of India. Delhi. 29/01/1959, *Dance*. Statesman 17/02/1959, *Kuchipudi recital*. Indian Express. New Delhi. 25/04/1959, *Dance by Yamini*. Indian Express. 2/08/1959, *Dance Recital at AIFACS*. Indian Express. 6/08/1959, *Another fine performance*. Statesman. Delhi. 11/01/1961, *Memorable recital by Yamini*. Indian Express. 14/08/1983, *The fine recital by Yamini*. Indian Express. New Delhi. 12/02/1960, *Dance*. Hindustan Express. Delhi. 12/02/1960, *Yamini's dance Recital*. Indian Express. New Delhi. 21/03/1959, *Dance*. Statesman. 21/03/1959, *Yamini Excels in Kuchipoodi*. Times of India. Delhi. 21/03/1959, *Yamini's dance recital*. Hindustan Times. 18/02/1959, *Fine Recital by Yamini*. Indian Express. Delhi. 12/02/1960, *Dance*. Hindustan Times. New Delhi. 12/02/1960, *Memorable Recital by Yamini*. Indian Express. 14/08/1983, *Goddess of Dance: The Pioneer*. 18/10/2000. p 11, *Yamini's Bharatanāṭyam*. Amrita Bazar Pathrika. Calcutta. 28/01/1985, *Yamini mixes old with new*. Statesman. Calcutta. 4/02/1989, *Danseuse from Andhra*. The Hindu. 24/02/1963. p 18, *Lively Dancing*. By Ramaswami. The Hindu. 13/11/1960. p 16, *Dance In Aid of Defence Fund*. The Hindu. 13/01/1963. p 7, *The great tradition of Bharatanatyam*. Hindustan Times. New delhi. 28/06/1959.

year 1960, they had heightened her sensual expressions, which directly body shamed her. These reviews throw light on the dichotomy of perceiving a female body as an object of pleasure. The forte of Yamini is always considered to be *abhinaya* and the inferences note an overdose of sensuous *abhinaya*, which is a conscious usage. This signifies Bordo's mind/body dualism³²⁴. Where, the feminine gender is always related to the vulnerable, sensual being or body. In her *Unbearable Weight*, she contrasted that the men are historically associated with intellect and mind/spirit and women are associated with body, the subordinated and negatively imbued term of mind/body dichotomy. Since majority of Yamini's reviews objectifies her body and she is a female performer there was a tendency to reify her as a mere body. However, the identity as well as the forte of a performer is contested in this context.

The Intra- diegetic gaze

The Intra – gaze refers to the one that is perceived by a performer for his/her co – performer. Though this particular gaze is not applicable for this research work, but in on a personal note it defines the experiences of the researcher being a duo performer.

The Extra-diegetic gaze

This gaze explains, how a performing body perceives the spectators. A performer might have gone through several situations, where she/he would feel that the piece that was selected for the presentation was not apt for that evening/ that particular audience. In such cases, he/she would present a perturbed performance as this thought would worry them. There are different emotions that a performer undergoes in the

³²⁴ Susan Bordo specialized in contemporary culture and its association with body. Her work focusses on racism and the body and issues of masculinity.

inner space other than the execution of the performance in the *outer space*.

- With love and support
- Draining energy into a consuming black hole
- Some bore witness to an inner energy adding their intensity and experience into the mix of the performer's body memories.
- Others withdrew in resistance

The *Inside* Stories

This section of the chapter focusses on the attitude and life style of the hereditary women born in the Kuchipudi village and their affiliation towards dance. This brings in a paradox realm, the art form performed by a non – hereditary female performer is appreciated, and it is contrasted with restricted involvement of hereditary – female performer. Relevant to this discussion is the Foucault's idea of gender politics within the gender, which is mentioned as part of the discourse theory (Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison, 2020). Through this, he tries to bring in the concept that how a structure has allowed a certain set of people to enjoy certain luxuries and certain set of people of the same gender are devoid of the same.

Though there are many hereditary women from the village who are interested to perform and dance, this study majorly focusses on Vedantam Shanthi and Chavali Balatripura Sundari. This study selected Vedantam Shanthi because she is the granddaughter of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry, who structured a separate solo in Kuchipudi. Chavali Balatripura Sundari was chosen as she is the daughter of Vempati Chinna Satyam who re-structured the form. The work and practices of hereditary women of the Kuchipudi village is discussed in the thesis written by Harshita (2019). She elaborated that

...female counterparts living in the village, was born in Kuchipudi and married into a Kuchipudi brahmin family, a practice idiosyncratic to marital customs in northern India where village exogamy is dominant. In southern India, more broadly kinship systems usually follow a model of cross-cousin marriage: a man can marry a woman who is his father's sister's daughter, his mother's brother's daughter or in rarer cases, his own sister's daughter. Kuchipudi's agrahāram or brahmin enclave, has maintained an endogamous kinship system in which cross-cousin marriage is preferred; marriage to women outside is relatively uncommon, although this practice is changing in recent years. This closed system of marriage results in women having multiple connections to dance.

(Kamath, 2019 p. 137)

This countenanced the connection of hereditary women in Kuchipudi village towards the art form Kuchipudi. In the memoirs of Shanthi, she explicated that there was an attitude among the hereditary performers in the village that the girls in the Kuchipudi hereditary family are not proficient enough to dance. They prevented the women in their home from entering the proscenium. Shanthi recollected the amount of criticism faced when she performed in the Kuchipudi village along with her father Jagannatha Sarma. The disapproval was not only for her performance, but it also attacked Jagannatha Sarma.

I was totally taken aback by the kind of response that the village inmates and other hereditary Gurus showed. I was

treated as if I made a grave mistake in life by dancing. Despite all the post-performance incidents, they blamed Nānagāru for allowing me to dance.

Vedantam Shanthi (personal communication, August 23, 2013)

The memories are so bitter that Shanthi refrained from thinking about it. She opined that it was the role played by the hereditary performers' male ego, that prevented the female artistes within the family to take it further. However, she emphasized that Jagannatha Sarma had a different opinion.

Nevertheless, Shanthi elucidated that there were people who talked bad about girls from the hereditary family performing on stage. However, she considers her shift to Hyderabad with her family was a boon in disguise and never encountered any such issues later. Though she hinted that there were many in the list who were not appreciative when she collaborated with her father in performance. They heightened that she was the *female* member of the hereditary family and not a *male* member to perform. This paradox in the opinion was crucial for this research, as Kuchipudi embraced the initiation of non – hereditary female artists in the performing arena. On contradiction to this, the women inside the hereditary family were allowed to perform. The mentioned the performing scenario of late 1960, and that was the period when Yamini reached her zenith in performance.



Photo 46: Vedantam Shanthi

Photo Courtesy: www.narthaki.com, <https://narthaki.com/info/rev16/rev1888.html>

Another inside story is of Chavali Balatripura Sundari, daughter of Vempati Chinna Satyam. She is widely known as Baliakka, it was through the association with her that the expressive narratives of the hereditary women of Kuchipudi village women struck the chord of this work. Baliakka is an ardent enthusiast of Kuchipudi, though she did not get chance to learn it from her father, she learnt it through sneak peeking her father's classes. The discussions with her are not the formal ones, these are the informal narratives of her experiences which she shared while taking Kuchipudi classes.

My interest towards dancing was never encouraged by Nānagāru and Amma. I always felt bad for the same and complained Amma the same. Amma would reply that the girls in the Kuchipudi agrahāram or enclave do not dance. I used to sit and cry for hours, but there was no difference in my situation. During the class hours, I sneak-peek and learnt dancing, which Nānagāru never found out. Later, when I was married and shifted to Bahrain, I started my own institution there. Nānagāru gave mixed reaction to it, I did not

understand it though. Nānagāru, once visited Bahrain and apparently during the same time, I performed as Rama for a function at Bahrain. I enquired, how was my performance, he smiled and told that I looked exactly like my Annaiya (Vempati Venakat) and nothing more. Maybe he did not like me performing on stage! I never understood what it was!

(Field notes, Hyderabad, August 3, 2015)

Baliakka elaborated that she never understood what was the real cause that abstained her father in allowing her to pursue dance as her profession. This could be coalesced with the structure of historical societies where the division of labor of women is confined to domestic work and child raising *thereby creating a woman's world that of the household*³²⁵. This phenomenon or belief is against essentialism and create a *universal* that is constructed upon social conditions. This social condition does not accept an alternative to the constructed social conditions. Parallely, a doubtful metaphysical state is created that the female nature is responsible for creating tradition. This state would surpass all exigencies of *race, class and culture*. This could be a biological essence, that point towards the denial of essentialism, that means, *any biological features which are relevant, are relevant only insofar as they are mediated by social structures*³²⁶.

³²⁵ Refer to Barwell (1990), p. 64.

³²⁶ Ibid



Photo 47: Chavali Balatripura Sundari
Photo Courtesy: <http://abhinayavani.org/>

Feminization

Sociology refers feminization as a word that imply two meanings. One refers to it as *shift in gender roles in a society, group or organization that focus upon feminine*³²⁷ and other indicates it to *incorporate women into a group or profession that was once dominated by men*³²⁸. Feminization in performing traditions, when analyzed as a conscious effort, indicate the semantic progression and evolving processes that it underwent to structure and pattern the form. These processes could be analyzed by examining the gender graph of classical dancers from the early 1900's till today. *Historically, across most classical dance styles (with the exception of possibly Mohiniyāttam) most dance maestros were men* (Iyengar, 2010). As explained in the other chapters, a woman dancing in the society was never a socially sanctioned activity. However, that does not conclude to say that there were no female dancers. It was the society that automatically grouped them with certain category of women doing a certain category of dance for a certain category of audience.

³²⁷ Refer to Doughlas (1977), p. 7.

³²⁸ Ibid

This stigma sanctioned men to dance without any social disturbances and devoid the same for women.

But dance when practiced by men was considered a 'sadhana', a calling, a path to spiritual salvation. When a woman performed the same dance, she was immediately accused of using it as a device to attract the helpless male of the species-accused even by the person who taught both her and her male counterpart the same dance!

(Iyengar, 2010, p. 227)

Another aspect of feminization that is associated with dance is the feminization of a male dancer himself. There are clichéd notions that is associated with male performers. Vikram Iyengar says that:

What is that makes a male dancer problematic; it is certainly not the dancer himself but the audience attitude towards him. And certainly, it is men who are most uncomfortable watching or dealing with dancing male bodies on stage, not women.

(Iyengar 2010, p. 233)

However, Kuchipudi is contested at this point, as it is a male performing art. The problems elaborated by Vikram neither be coalesced with *Kuchipudi* nor mentioned by any of the male performers of Kuchipudi. In contrast, when the repertoire of *Kuchipudi* is analyzed through a female body, it is significant to refer the performance graph of the female impersonators. The position of the female impersonators became ambiguous with the advent of the female non-hereditary artists in the performance scenario.

The readings generalize that female impersonation was a tradition that was prevalent, it could be juxtaposed with other performing traditions: - *Kathakali*, *Yakṣagānam* or *Terukūtu*³²⁹. Kuchipudi was initially designed on a male performing body, this was endured for ages on the same body. The male performing bodies created a *space* of their own enacting the opposite gender. It was not a mere switch of gender which is an outward transformation, it was a whole conversion of innate emotions, psyche and understanding the gestural exposition of opposite gender. When the exposition is on a imagined boundary, it might have altered the idiom of presentation and body kinesthetics in Kuchipudi. To elaborate, the male performing body entered an *outer* and *inner space* of an abstract/ illusionary limit and executed what they felt would be the opposite gender's reaction. The male performing bodies enacted their imaginary perception of how a female body/mind would react to certain situation or retort to certain emotions. With the evolution of solo repertoire as a separate format, this imaginary perception has been transformed to a real realm. On parallel, the body posture, gait and the execution of steps were also contrasted with that of the female impersonators. Gradually, this advent reduced the number of female impersonators in Kuchipudi.

³²⁹ Refer to Bapati (2010), p. 126. He pointed out that the female impersonation in dance – drama is a normal notion so that it falls under tradition. The dance – dramas that are focused as part of these traditions are *Kathakali*, *Yakṣagānam* and *Terukūtu*.

Part II The Metamorphosis

Dance is always considered as a production of knowledge/ a means of communication. Performances could be termed as a living social activity that refers to the past and looks forward to the future while existing only in present. India, in the last century, is believed to have witnessed a chain of process of change in the development of performing arts, especially dance. This, in turn, paved the way to the sprouting of new art forms as well as the grooming and shaping of the existing art forms into a new dawn. The performing arts, especially dance, for a long time was associated with what was performed by the *devadasis* and the *nautch* girls. The overdose of the *puritan concept* imposed on Indian society failed to understand the usage of the term *devadasis*. The *alien* rulers were not able to understand the concept of devoting a life for ‘God’ or towards an art form. As a result of this social stigma, dancing in India came to be looked down as a vain and vulgar pursuit. It is stated in some of the articles of Daves Soneji, that there was no ‘classical music’ in South India³³⁰. The music that was performed was at the homes of wealthy patrons, by performers from hereditary communities and by professional court musicians. Likewise, there was no ‘classical’ dance. Female *devadasi* dancers performed in ritual and non-ritual contexts, again in temple, court and home settings and there were some male Brahmin performers as well. By the middle of the 20th century, mainly at the initiative of middle-class Brahmin nationalists, music and dance was shifted out of traditional venues and placed in modern concert halls and thus a new classical repertoire had been constructed.

³³⁰ Refer to Soneji & Peterson (2008), p. 10 – 60.

As stated above, the *puritan* concept attached and associated to the Indians by the *alien* rulers separated India from its otherwise associated culture, heritage and arts, which in turn forced Indians to perceive this in a depraved manner. The institutionalization of dance forms and ‘reclaiming’ the authenticity of the forms was a major mark of the preceding years of 1930s. In this process, the question we pose is who were the gainers?

- a. The form in its totality
- b. The individual/masterminds
- c. Both the form and the individual complimenting each other

The history of all the major performing traditions³³¹ uncovers the existence of an *undiluted* form that has been apprehended from its *real owners* and appropriated by *selected owners*. In this transition, the forms have undergone a major change over which chiselled it from its *original essence* and adapted to the modified name and fame. In this context, if the history of the forms is analyzed as discourse, the process of appropriation and power politics played by a *selected* group in the society has altered the form. On the contrary, the significant change that was brought in the performing scenario is that the art still remains and continues to remain.

However, Kuchipudi is different in this context from the above-mentioned art forms which were popularized by women performers, globally. The transitions and

³³¹The literary narratives describe that the art form *Mōhiniyāṭṭam* was re-designed by the Tanjore Quartet and was structured during the reign of Maharaja Swathi Tirunal. What happened to the ‘original’ form that was prevalent in the name of *Dāsīāṭṭam* has always remained a question. The composition and the *mārgam* of the form had been appropriated and structured by the Tanjore Quartet, who were otherwise popular as the architects of Bharatanāṭyam. The construction of the *mārgam* of *Mōhiniyāṭṭam* is preceded with utmost astute guidance that at every stage of its formation they maintained a record. So, whenever the history is traced back, the formulated *mārgam* has a firm place in history and the phase prior to that is blurred out.

Also, refer to Ashokan (1984), p. 2.

transformations in most of these art forms were the aftermaths of the influence of the *alien intelligentsia* or *educated intelligentsia*. However, the exclusive male performing traditions like *Bhāgavata Meḷa Nāṭakam*, *Yakṣagānam* and *Kathakali* are some of them which were affected by dislocation of patronage and indifference to them and the ignorance towards their own heritage by many early modern Indians. The political turmoil and the shift of patronage have caused damage to form like *Bhāgavata Meḷa Nāṭakam*, as it is difficult for any performing form to survive without economical support. Parallely, economic scarcity for transportation of the artistes from one place to another was also a reason for some forms to remain stagnant. For instance, *Kathakali* faced the same problem as it was mainly practised in the interior parts of Kerala; it took some time for the art world to recognize the form and to popularize it.

Another reason that made the art forms to remain inactive could be its regional fervour. The over importance of regional tones attributed to some art forms made it to be restricted to that particular region³³². Those art forms saw vastness, elaboration and its own validity in the outer world much later, when it was propagated by the English-speaking intelligentsia. The same could be perceived in the literature related to these art forms, as most of the published works would be in vernacular literature, it was difficult for the artist, patrons and enthusiasts from other regions to understand and analyze art forms from these distinctly different regions. When the authentic accounts of such performing traditions were not found in English, its propagation became a major problem. The case of Kuchipudi is also not very different, the lack of recorded and reliable evidence refrained the art critics and

³³² See for detailed description Patanjali (1981), p. 30.

writers to fill newspaper columns highlighting the authentic audacity of the form³³³.

Inference

The research work mainly focused on the journey of Kuchipudi from the 1930s to the 1970s. This was a phase of transformation in general for all the performing traditions of India, particularly Kuchipudi.

The politics in naming a State and its art form is discussed in an in-depth manner in the first part of Chapter 2. The voyage of Kuchipudi in attaining classical status is analysed through the language, culture and socio-political status of the land/place called Kuchipudi. This chapter enhanced a deeper understanding of how the art form Kuchipudi has evolved into its present form while interconnecting these aspects. This part of the thesis discussed the politics of changing an ethnic group name to a land name and a land name to a language name. The politics of selecting name to represent the State and language is deeply analysed, comprehended and contested.

Chapter 2, part II, elaborate on the politics of the naming Kuchipudi as *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam*. The literary narratives substantiate that till 1960, Kuchipudi was referred to as *Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam*. This research work analysed that, it could be the restraint nature of Madras Presidency that did not allow them to incorporate another performing tradition in the same geographic boundary. Since the linguistic bifurcation happened in the year 1956 and by then Bharatanatyam became popular, it could be a conscious political effort by the (then) Madras Presidency to not to include any other dance form as part of the State. In contrast,

³³³ Ibid

this created an image of Kuchipudi being an off shoot of Bharatanatyam and sometimes referred to as its *secondary*. In addition, this section of the thesis elaborated on the contribution, position and role of Orientalist performers in propagating Kuchipudi. On parallel, this study reviewed the position of native performers when contested with that of the Orientalist performers.

Chapter 3, critically analyzed various incidents that led to mapping of Kuchipudi in the cultural history. Based on the availability of the collected source materials, the research furthered to concentrate upon her perception of incidents and personal experiences in this process. This study also brought out the historiographic metafiction of the pattern of incidents through Kanchanamala's story, added different perceptions and widened the scope of analysis of this historical event. The historiography and the historiographic metafiction of the form are discussed and contested at different points in this chapter.

Chapter 4 evolved as a significant part of the thesis. This section could bring out some original referral points and perceptions to the renown. The chapter primarily elaborated the role the life and aim of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry to find the new realms in which he sustained his art form. At the same time, it elucidated the prominence of Kanchanamala as a prime – female – non – hereditary dancer in the forming, structuring, and shaping of the art form. The initiation of non – hereditary, male and female performers are explained. The chapter furthered to throw light on the performance scenario prevalent during the 1930s, chiselling and structuring the form and above all, it explicated the story of hardships. This chapter analysed and comprehended, how the aforesaid aspects complimented each other in forming a framework for solo as a separate performing tradition in Kuchipudi.

Chapter 5 focused on the formulation and structuring of a separate solo

repertoire in Kuchipudi. The repertoire was ever-evolving and Sastry had much enthusiasm to innovate something novel and unique in Kuchipudi. His pedagogy, methodology and philosophy in formulating a syllabus, curriculum and choreography is juxtaposed with that of the Western thinkers and philosophers. Sastry was an innovator par excellence as he could formulate these much ahead of the times of Western thinkers and philosophers.

The Part I of Chapter 6 critically analyzed and theorized the gender politics and power politics that have played a major role within the framework of Kuchipudi. The gaze of spectators, the inside-outside gaze of performer and the gaze of the performer himself/herself is analyzed with the memoir analysis and performance review analysis of Kanchanamala and Yamini. The performance reviews of female practitioners debated the mind/body dichotomy and acted as body-shaming agents. The misogynistic approach towards the performing female body has been theorized with the distinguishing binaries of male activity/female passivity to solidify gender characteristics and categorization.

It furthers to explain the gender politics within the gender in Kuchipudi. The self-contradiction in Kuchipudi is comprehended in this chapter. One part of Kuchipudi heightened the inclusion of the non-hereditary female performers and the other part restricted the hereditary-female performers from entering the proscenium. The chapter also elaborated the position of female impersonators once the female performer bequeathed the main stage.

The part II of this chapter attempted to analyze, comprehend, theorize and argue different ideas and ideologies that was part of the journey of Kuchipudi in attaining its *classical* status. This study was majorly theorized through Cultural Studies, Mind/Body Dichotomy, Gender Politics, Discourse Theory, Orientalism,

Theory of Gaze, Somatic Pedagogy of Dance Study, Imagined Community and Identity Politics.

The Significant Findings: Conclusion

This research work engendered the perception, experience, contribution, and erudition of Kanchanamala's involvement to structure and formulate a separate solo format in Kuchipudi as a disciple of Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry. She probably was the only female disciple, who spent 14 long years. Alongside this, her ingenuity helped to collate and understand the performative aspects of the form, which in turn resulted in creating a concrete framework and solo repertoire by the duo. Though the socio-political and cultural milieu prevalent in the early 1940s through mid-1950s was not as encouraging for performing arts, the case of Kanchanamala, befittingly shows how the educated – middle-class's support enabled establishment of Kuchipudi as a solo form. It also facilitated understanding the dynamics of how a passionate involvement of several such educated families of Andhra resulted in Kuchipudi spreading out of its traditional hereditary precincts.

Yet she decided to quit Kuchipudi!. This was the trigger point that makes this work probe into incidents and happenings that lead to it and highlights many interlinked pre and post developments of Kanchanamala taking this decision. Primarily, this research work brought out the involvement of Kanchanamala in formulating a separate technique for the repertoire of Kuchipudi as a separate solo format.

This study also brought out the pedagogy, methodology, and curriculum that has been formulated by Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry. Kanchanamala was instrumental in this process as he choreographed most of his experimental items in

solo format with her. Kanchanamala became a body of knowledge in this process, where items for separate solo format were composed, choreographed, and formulated with her. In turn, Kanchanamala's knowledge of music, education and brilliance became an unseen factor for Sastry to chisel the performative aspects of Kuchipudi. Alongside, she also saw the transition phase of a male-performing form to a female-performing form in its model, pattern, and structure. Thus, this research work demonstrated the prominence of the (then) evolving repertoire of Kanchanamala, being transformed as a significant referral point to structure a complete solo repertoire of Kuchipudi and substantiates that it was through her performances and learning skills that Sastry composed many of his choreographies.

This research work also probes into the position of native performers like Kanchanamala in contrast to the Oriental performers like Indrani Rehman. This study demonstrated, how color, place of residence, and referral points become significant to create an identity for a dancer. The position of Kanchanamala and Indrani are contested in this study, representing these aspects.

Alongside, this study could bring forth the actual incidents that happened during the All India Dance Seminar of 1958 organized by Sangeet Natak Akademi, where Kanchanamala was (mis)interpreted in every available literary narrative as a wrong representation of Kuchipudi. This research work deconstructed the interpretative analysis of Kanchanamala's role and put forth her experience and perception in the forefront to comprehend the unpleasant incidents that occurred regarding Kuchipudi in the All India Dance Seminar of 1958. This study signifies that these unpleasant memories and incidents made her stay away from the places and people who reminded her of Kuchipudi. Being a dedicated student and learner, she was traumatized to understand the (mis)interpretation, and (mis)representation of

her committed self. So, she decided to quit Kuchipudi!

Interestingly, this study deconstructed the notion of gender politics, by transforming and accepting the transformation of a hereditary – male – group performing tradition to a non-hereditary – female – performing tradition. This study further demonstrated and comprehended the role and contribution of other hereditary and non – hereditary teachers during the same time period in propagating solo as a separate performing format. This is substantiated through the works of PVG Krishna Sarma, Vedantam Prahlada Sarma and simultaneously C R Acharya, Korada Narasimha Rao and their contribution in formulating and enriching the repertoire of Kuchipudi.

Postscript

The general history and evolution of Kuchipudi

To begin with, the initial mark, *Bhāgavata Meḷa Nāṭakam* is supposed to be the basis of the traditional form of Kuchipudi. The earliest reference to Kuchipudi *Bhāgavatars* is found in the sixteenth century (1502 AD) (Banerjee 1983, 41). According to the Machupalli Kaifiat records, the *brahmana bhāgavatars* came to the Vijayanagara Empire during the reign of Veera Narasimha Raya. Earlier, the King had heard about their fame and invited them to give a performance in the court. The *bhāgavatars* performed a *kēlika* as part of their presentation, which depicted the misrule and maladministration of a local chieftain, Sammeta Gurava Raju, who was a tyrant. The violence of the chieftain extended from twisting the breasts of women with tongs to other atrocities against girls and women. These acts of violence were committed because of their inability to pay the illegal exactions imposed by him. The performance was done with one character as Guravaraju, two as attendants and one in the attire of a woman. The Emperor was moved by the performance and he could not believe that these violent incidents were taking place in his own kingdom. He ordered the execution of Guravaraju. Thus, the *bhāgavatars* through their meaningful enactments addressed significant social issues.

It was during the reign of Madanna's Ministership, around 1678 A.D. that Abdul Hassan Qutub Shahi attended a performance. In that performance, a group of brahmins performed dance drama at Kuchipudi, the village which is located in the Krishna district, he was so very much impressed by the performance that he soon granted the village as an *agrahāram* or *inām* to the brahmin families, who dedicated their lives to the art form, Kuchipudi. This could be defined as the second historical

antecedent that clearly marks the proficiency of the performers of Kuchipudi dance drama³³⁴.

The other belief surrounded with these *Bhāgavtulas* is that, they must have been performing *Śiva līla taraṅgiṇi* during the Kakatiya period and with the advent of Vaiṣṇavism, the scene must have been shifted to the popular *Bhāgavata Purāna*, gaining them their name as *Bhāgavtulas*³³⁵. According to one oral tradition, items like the *Ardhanārīśwara* performed by the *Kuchipudi Bhāgavatulu* as *PagatiVēśam* are reminiscent of the ancient *Śiva līla* tradition³³⁶.

The existence of another group of performers widely known as *NaṭṭuvaMeḷas* are found in 8th, 9th and 10th centuries' inscriptions of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka (Banerjee, 104). Because of the continuous stigma associated with the women artistes being *morally low* and the deteriorating social status of women performer in the society made *Naṭṭuvameḷa* a *not-so-acceptable* one in the society. As time passed, *Naṭṭuva meḷa* faded away. Since the *purity* of dance has to be preserved and the *quality* of dance has to be carried forward, the emergence of *Brahmana Meḷa*, which excluded women performers were encouraged.

By the 12th and 13th century the *devadasi* tradition got completely degenerated and the folk theatre lost its lustre³³⁷. It is believed that at this point of time Siddendra Yogi, considered as the torch bearer of the *Kuchipudi* tradition initiated into the form with his artistic zeal and Vaiṣṇavite ideal. He was well versed in *Nāṭyaśāstra* and composed a dance drama *Pārijāta Apaharaṇa* and had taught it to a group of brahmin

³³⁴ See Raghava (1945), p. 35.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Refer to Patanjali (1981), p. 62.

³³⁷ Ibid

boys of Kuchelapuram, the present *Kuchipudi* village. He had taken a vow from the brahmin boys to preserve the tradition with their sons and descendants³³⁸.

Kuchipudi dance is not only these, but it has something more to explain; Kuchipudi could also be referred as the *kēlika* of the classical texts. The historical development of these performative forms finds corroboration in the literary genres of the time. These literary documents furnish historic evidences and provide insight into the thematic content and the presentation styles of the form. In Andhra Pradesh, some major literary texts trace the development of performative forms such as *Yakṣagānam* and *Kalāpams* (Anuradha, 2008). The extensive study of the evolution of solo repertoire urges to understand the different trajectories of performing traditions that was part of Andhra.

Yakṣagānam

Yakṣagānam is believed to be one of the earliest forms of the performing arts tradition of Andhra Pradesh. The earliest written *Yakṣagānam* in Telugu can be traced back to 1564 AD. This leads us to assume that the *Yakṣagānam* plays and *prasangas* or speeches originated prior to 1500 AD. The etymology of the word suggests that it represented a singing sect called *Yakśas*, while another connotation refers to *yakśas* as demigods associated with *Kubēra* (God of wealth) and *Gāna* signifies song, so *Yakṣagānam* signifies the song of demigods. *Yakṣagānam* is very popular among the rural audience.

Around a hundred *Yakṣagānam* are available in the Telangana region, produced by nearly sixty-five writers. During the Bhakti movement, *Yakṣagānam* became a significant medium for spreading the *līlās* of gods. Modern *Yakṣagānam*

³³⁸ Refer to Kothari & Pasricha (2001), p. 105.

started to concentrate on political issues but followed the traditional format of music and dance. The modern writers have used the traditional technique of the form to elaborate contemporary political issues.

Yakṣagānam has progressed in different directions in its long history of five hundred years. In its earlier stages as a narrative form, it influenced art forms such as *Jangam Katha* and *Hari Katha*. Furthermore, it developed into *Kalāpam* and with its elaborate *sāṭvika abhinaya* (involuntary reaction deeply rooted in the mind) strengthened itself as a classical form. A segment of the actor-narration in *Kalāpam* gave birth to forms like *Kuravanji*. But the basic *Yakṣagānam* form branches out to develop *Yakṣagāna Nāṭakam*, *Yakṣagānaprabandham*, and *YakṣagānaMahānāṭakam*. Parallel to this, another tradition which sprouted was *Bhāgavata Meḷa Nāṭakam*, which was developed as a counterpoint to the court performances and to entertain the rural folk. In fact, the *Bhāgavata Meḷa Nāṭakam*, presented today at Melattur and other places around Tanjore, connects with the *Kalāpam* tradition and the *Vīdhi Bhāgavatam* or *Vīdhi Nāṭakam* tradition of the latter-day performances.

Kalāpam

Kalāpam emphasizes character portrayal which is another important literary dramatic composition of the Kuchipudi repertoire. The word *Kalāpam* suggests a group or collection. Accordingly, the form *Kalāpam* appears to be a collection of songs in various meters strung together by the artiste. It could be defined as a lyrical drama which does not give much importance to the dramatic sequence or action, but brings out the subjective exposition of the characters, according to the performative situations. Another definition of *Kalāpam* suggests the display of the multi-coloured

tail of a peacock (Anuradha, 2008).

To generalize, *Kalāpam* portrays character through song, dance and acting, usually through a single incident that brings out the psychological and social nuances of a character. It is related to both *Yakṣagānam* and *Vīdhi Nāṭakam* but is sometimes mistaken to be *Vīdhi Nāṭakam* because of its dramatic elements. The single narrative nature in *Kalāpam* made it seem like *Yakṣagānam* in its initial state. But *Gollakalāpam* written in *Yakṣagāna Prabandham* contains no elaborate stories and more or less follows the argument structure of a traditional Kuchipudi dance drama (Kothari, 2001).

At a later stage, *Kalāpam* enlarged the scope of the single narration by adjoining different *alankāras* or the ornamented verses to enrich the literary genre. Another important aspect that is much discussed is the dual nature of *sūtradhāra* in a *Kalāpam* – he acts both as *vidūśaka* and *sūtradhāra*. Thus, the *sūtradhāra* adopting the role of *vidūśaka* enjoys the freedom to highlight the socio-cultural and political issues that may not necessarily be a part of the main performance. Even while assuming comic attire, the *vidūśaka/sūtradhāra* points out social atrocities and stirs the audience to sensitize them about issues pertaining to that region.

The antiquity of *Kalāpam* is not very clear and remains a much-debated matter among scholars. One aspect which could be considered as a hint for declaring its antiquity is the history of the development of Kuchipudi. Siddendhra Yogi, regarded as the founder of the Kuchipudi school, is said to have lived before the end of the fifteenth century; the reason behind this assumption is that the Kuchipudi performance had spread from Cuttack to Hampi by 1600 AD (Sarma, 1996).

The most significant aspect in a *Kalāpam* is its introduction of the characters, *Pātra Pravēśa daruvu*, a term referring to the entrance songs, which are

choreographed and improvised in *Kalāpams*. The introduction of each character is done through the portrayal of his/her major characteristics. The music in a *Kalāpam* is usually the couplet sequences of various meters called *kēlika*, *dwipada* and many more. There could also be stanzas comprising four lines like *taruvūja* and *utsāha*. All these comprise *daruvu*. There was also the notion that a cluster of four such songs could be called a *Kalāpam* (Sarma, 2000). In a *Kalāpam* the demand for the movement of limbs is essential, since it conveys the accurate ideas of the expression. Even though the *Kalāpam* is considered to have dramatic elements like *Yakṣagānam*, its music is especially composed for dance. Though the *Kalāpam* is not mentioned as an *Uparūpaka* in any of the works of Sanskrit dramaturgy, it exhibits the essential features of an *Uparūpaka* (Rao, 1996).

Kalāpams and Uparūpaka

Attempts have been made to identify the prevailing traditional theatre forms with *Uparūpaka*. In Andhra, *Kalāpams* of *Kuchipudi* were identified to *Srigadita*, one of the *Uparūpakas*. Bhoja in his *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* describes *Srigadita* as a piece that depicts *vipralambharasa* or love in separation. The protagonist should be a lady, a *kulngana* pining in separation, and there is a second character, a friend to whom she describes the qualities of her lover. If her lover had deceived her, she is *vipralambha*, who finds fault with him and longs for reunion. The theme is expressed through songs³³⁹. The above description does make it evident that *Bhāmakaḷāpam* can be identified with *Srigadita*³⁴⁰. Also, attempts were made to identify

³³⁹ Refer to Sarma (1973), p. 615-616.

³⁴⁰ Refer to Murthy (1961), p. 24 – 28.
Also refer to Murthy and Sangamesam (1960), p. 2-7.

Bhāmakalāpam with *Pārijātakam* and *Dandasaka*, which were later disproved³⁴¹.

There were attempts to identify *Gollakalāpam* and *Chodigāni Kalāpam* with *Bhanika* and *Dombi* respectively.

Two distinct styles of *Kalāpam* emerged in Andhra: one considered ‘classical’, was adopted and performed by Kuchipudi performers, and the other maintained its *original folk form*, which could be perceived in forms like *Tūrpu Bhāgavatam*. In the *classical* category, the two popular *Kalāpams* are *Bhāmakalāpam* and *Gollakalāpam*. The predominance of music and dance in *Kalāpam* made labels like *Kēlika* and *Kīrtana* to get associated with it (Sarma 91). Among these classical *Kalāpams*, *Bhāmakalāpam* has undergone regional variations. For instance, a temple dance of *Bhāmakalāpam* performed in East Godavari, especially at the *Kunti Madhava Swamy* temple in Pithapuram, is known as *Navajanārdhanam*. This dance is also called *Pārijātam*, a general name given to *Kalāpams* in the northern part of Andhra. *Bhāmavésam*, *Radha vésam*, *Gollavésam* are called *Pārijātam*. *Chodigāni Kalāpam* is another *Kalāpam* which gained popularity with its appearance of rustic characters and the incorporation of native humour. This is usually performed by the actors who perform *Tūrpu Bhāgavatam*.

Apart from the above, *Vīdhi Bhāgavatam* also has two *Kalāpams* in its repertoire – *Bhāmakalāpam* and *Gollakalāpam*. These *Kalāpams* feature a single female dancer. In some cases, as in *Gollakalāpam*, a brahmin joins the dancer to generate an argument. The role of the brahmin introduces humour and also acts as a vehicle of wisdom. He remains a versatile and multipurpose character and supports the lady character as a constant companion (Gollabhāma) as her chorist.

Since the age of *Bhāgavata Purana*, the Krishna–Radha episodes have been

³⁴¹ Refer to Murthy and Sangamesam, (1961), p. 79-80.

the central concepts of the poets, performing artistes and musicians. The conventional idea of the Krishna and Radha duet is replaced by that of the Sathyabhama and Krishna episode in Andhra Pradesh and is typical to this region. The major emphasis of *Bhāmakalāpam* is on Sathyabhama whose ego belittled Krishna and prompted him to leave her. This separation brings realization to Sathyabhama and is depicted through several vivacious episodes as she yearns for him.

Gollakalāpam

As a contrast to *Bhāmakalāpam*, the composition of *Gollakalāpam* is considered a variation of Kuchipudi *Bhāgavata Meḷa Nāṭakam* (Banerjee, 1983). The *Kalāpam* is described as “a rural mind’s master stroke” (Sarma, 1996). But some of the facts suggest that the performers practiced and presented *Bhāmakalāpam* in order to please an elite audience, especially pundits and courtiers. *Gollakalāpam* was performed to entertain the rural people. Both of them now fit under the ‘classical’ genre. *Gollakalāpam* is also known as ‘*gopikaviprasambhāsanam*’ or ‘*gopikāvīprasamvāda*’ (Kothari, 2001). The word *golla* refers to milkmaid and *Kalāpam* is interpreted as argument. In short, the dance drama *Gollakalāpam* deals with an argument between a milkmaid and a brahmin, which is of high philosophical value. The text as such has many versions and many authors have attempted to re-write *Gollakalāpam* or *Gollavésakatha*.

Three trajectories

Even though the rich repertoire of Andhra Pradesh had all the cultural and traditional attributes within it, the first decades of the 20th century or the *trying* days

showcased the artistic necessity to survive in the newly emerging cultural milieu, resulting in the formation of the new expressional modes. At this point of time, the external and internal conflict of the artiste would have been the conflict between the artistic freedom and satisfaction to live with the matured gains and advantages. This manifested itself when the artiste is in the socio-cultural turmoil, groping for new avenues for survival, both artistic and materialistic. Thus, the creative endeavour at the dawn of the New Era has to be understood from these performative conditions, demanding the best from the artiste either individually or as a team.

In the changing conditions of deteriorating audience support, the terminology of the first artistic mode or the step taken could be referred to the episode of five *Kuchipudi Melams* which came together under the guidance of Chinta Venkataramaiah, who established Venkatarama Natya Mandali. This was carried forward with a great vision that it could gratify the artistic and the financial needs. The group work easily melted in the hands of Chinta with his able leadership. The second artistic mode was *Bhāmakalāpam*, it almost narrowed down to a one-man presentation, where the connoisseurs were also open in depth character study. While *Bhāmakalāpam* is considered as the zenith of the artistic excellence in Kuchipudi art, only very few artistes survived, the most important among them was Vempati Venkatanarayana, who was always referred as ‘Kaliyuga Sathyabhama’³⁴².

There was no artistic mode in Kuchipudi; the ones who cannot fit into the demands of the *Yakṣagānam* and *Bhāmakalāpam* found *Pagati Vésālu*, an alternative. Structurally *Pagati Vésālu* resembled *Yakṣagānam* than, *Bhāmakalāpam*. But there was a long-drawn tradition in Kuchipudi that the fittest among them would choose

³⁴² Refer to Sarma (2002), p. 60.

Bhāmakalāpam as their major vocation, assisted by *Gollakalāpam*, *Dadinamma*, *Balinta* and if need be the *Radha Vésam*³⁴³ as well. The case of those who were not trained well in *Yakṣagānam* and concentrated on the *Kalāpams* had to make a major decision in seeking their fortunes. The one way left to the best of them was to find something new to garner their talents towards creating a new area of artistic expression. Vedantam Lakshmi Narayana Sastry stood at the threshold of this quandary when he accompanied his Guru, Vempati Venkatanarayan, to perform in all parts of the state³⁴⁴. By that time, two of his seniors became the leaders in the existing areas of performance in *Kuchipudi*, *Yakṣagānam* and *Bhāmakalāpam*. Then, it was his turn to create a niche for himself and in this process, he became the creator of the new tradition. This step which he has taken, later proved in itself as responsible for the quick rejuvenation of the Kuchipudi art itself. This in turn had led the way for many of his disciples to engage themselves in the artistic pursuits and to make materialistic gains out of it. He is always considered as the genius with a vision, who would trudge on to find new paths³⁴⁵.

³⁴³ Ibid

³⁴⁴ Refer to Sarma (2002), p. 62.

³⁴⁵ The memoirs of Kanchanamala explicate the same.

Epilogue

*“The sheer tenacity of human heart
 Never fail to amaze me
 All scratched from misspelled trust,
 A bit seceded from the chaotic world,
 Caged between the human ribs;
 Sequestered from harm outside
 But always hurt because of
 Human’s knack to choose troubles.*

It goes on...

*Lub – dub lub – dub
 Always dancing to the rhythm of goodness
 Within
 Always ready to embrace the goodness around.
 Lub dub lub dub”*

(Chandralekha)

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Appendices

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SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI

Dance Seminar

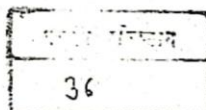
1958

KUCHIPUDI SCHOOL OF DANCE

By

Shri V. Apparao

NEW DELHI



2-9-93

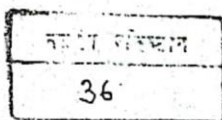
KUCHIPUDI SCHOOL OF DANCE

by

V. Apparao.

Dance had been, from ancient times, the most effective form of expression of the joy of life. In India this art had developed and acquired a refined technique as early as 500 B.C. The earliest known treatise in the art is the Natya Sastra of Bharata - a comprehensive codification of the general principles and technique as practised all over India. As time went on, the art had further developed its forms.

Indian dance was mainly of two types - religious and secular. The temple was the centre of the religious dance, which was performed by deva-dasis as a form of worship. The order of the deva-dasis was highly religious and each one of them was leading an austere and dedicated life. Secular dance was practised by professional women artistes, outside the temple. In course of time, the deva-dasi order deteriorated. The religious atmosphere of the temple and the standard and quality of the Bharata Natya declined. A reference to this decadence of the art was made by Damodara Gupta in his book 'Kuttanimata', more than one thousand years back.



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Consequently, a movement to preserve the purity and quality of the art was started and organised by scholars and pundits well-versed in the arts of dance and music. Kuchipudi was the seat of one such organisation.

Kuchipudi village is situated in the heart of the Krishna delta in the Divi-taluq nearly fifteen miles from Masulipatam. Srikakulam, the capital of the Satavahana Kings and Ghantasala, the famous sea-port of the Andhra Empire, are within a few miles of Kuchipudi. This tract of land was the seat of Andhra culture from the 3rd century B.C. right up to the 16th century A.D. The classical arts of dance and music flourished under royal patronage. The exquisite sculptures of Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Bhairavani Kona in the Nellore district, the Undavilly Caves near Vijaiwada and Ramappa temples near Warangal, furnish us a vivid picture of the highly developed arts of dance and music.

Treatises on these arts like Abhilashitartha Chintamani of Someswara II, Nritharatnavali of Jayapa Nayaka, Vasantarajeeyamu of Kumaragiri Reddi, and Sangita Chintamani of Pedakomati Vema were written in this

period. Particular mention may be made of Jayapa Nayaka who belonged to Divi-taluq in which Kuchipudi was situated. He was a great adept in the art of dance and was the disciple of the Brahmin Natyacharya, Gundamatya. Another famous teacher of the art, Vennalakanti Suramatya was known as the modern Bharatacharya. This clearly indicates that learned Brahmins studied and taught classical dance, particularly to the members of the royal family and to persons of high rank. Further, a critical examination of the elaborate description of the various types of dance given by Palkuriki Somanatha in 'Panditaradhya Charitra' shows that an indigenous system of the art was prevalent in the Andhra country during the Kakatiya period - the 12th and 13th centuries. One important feature of the temples of this period was the provision of a big polished stone slab called the 'Balipitha' fixed on the ground just behind the Nandi - the Bull - facing the presiding deity of the temple. Aradhana Nrityas or ritual dances were performed on this 'Balipitha' on important occasions by deva-dasis. These ritual dances were described in "Nrittaratnavali".

It can, therefore, be safely assumed that a tradition of classical dance flourished at Kuchipudi during this period. No wonder, therefore, that one of the -

organisations for the preservation of the purity of Bharata Natya was established at Kuchipudi and Brahmana Melas, in which no woman was allowed to take part, were formed in contrast to the traditional Nattuva Melas. The most note-worthy feature of the Brahmana Melas was that all the members led a pure religious life.

It is not possible to state exactly when this movement was started at Kuchipudi. The earliest historical reference about the "Brahmana Bhagavatulu of Kuchipudi" dates back to 1502 A.D, in the reign of the Vijayanagara king, Vira Narasimha Raya. We find it mentioned in the Machupalli Kaifiat of the local records as follows: "A dramatic troupe of the Brahmana Bhagavatulu of Kuchipudi, lying in the direction of Vinukonda and Bellamkonda, arrived at Vijayanagar during the reign of Vira Narasimha Raya. On request, they were asked to stage a play (Kelika). As the Kuchipudi Mela was famous for its proficiency, Vira Narasimha Raya wanted to witness the play along with the queen and the members of the royal family, and ordered the performance to be given inside the palace. The troupe improvised a feature play portraying and exposing the misrule and maladministration of Sammeta Guravaraju of Siddhavatam. The king was very much pleased and took immediate steps to set right the matter."

The Kuchipudi Brahmana Mela was an itinerant troupe and entertained the people by enacting popular puranic stories and were keeping up the religious and devotional atmosphere in the country. Further, as patriotic and loyal citizens, they were shrewd observers of the affairs of the land and were intelligent and bold enough to bring them to the notice of authorities in an artistic form.

It can be reasonably assumed that these itinerant artistes enacted stories from the Siva Puranas, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. After the spread of Vaishnavism, popular stories from the Bhagavata Purana must have been staged and in consequence these artistes were called "Bhagavatulu". Their missionary zeal was very helpful in spreading the classical art of dance. The earlier form of dance-drama, called "Bahu Nataka" by Somanatha, portraying the ten varieties of Siva Leelas, gradually took shape as Yakshagana - a type of play common to many parts of India - 'Lalita' of Maharashtra, 'Bhavai' of Gujarat, 'Yatra' of Bengal, 'Gandharva Gana' of Nepal, and 'Yakshagana' of Andhra, Karnataka and Tamilnad.

After the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire, Natyacharyas, along with other scholars and pundits of Andhra, found patronage with the Nayak kings of Tanjore.

Achyutappa Naik (A.D. 1561 - 1614) provided nearly 500 Brahmin families each with a house, a well and a few acres of cultivable land. The Agraharam which was thus formed was named Achyutapuram, after the benefactor. It is the modern Melatur, nearly ten miles from Tanjore. The ancestors of Tyagaraja, Virabhadrayya - the famous musician and composer, Veena Vidwan Sonti Venkatasubbiah - father of Venkataramanayya, who was Tyagaraja's guru, and several learned men had migrated from different parts of the Telugu country, about this time, into the Naik kingdom for patronage.

Kuchipudi Brahmana Bhagavatulu established themselves at Melatur and were enacting Yakshaganas in Telugu. Besides these Brahman artistes, a number of Raja Nartakis who had also migrated to the south, were ~~patronised by the~~ Tanjore Durbar and were performing a variety of dances like 'Durupada', 'Chaupada', 'Padakelika', 'Madana bala dyutam' etc. The famous Kavis and Kavayitris of the Tanjore Naik durbars were Telugus and composed ~~Prabhandas~~ and Yakshaganas.

During this time Kuchipudi continued to be the great cultural and art centre and produced great composers and masters in the arts of music and dance - Kshetragna,

Tirthanarayana Yati, and Siddhendra Yogi.

Kshetragna belonged to Muvva, ^avillage nearly two miles from Kuchipudi. Kshetragna, the greatest pada composer, travelled south and went to Tanjore. His unique rendering of Muvva Gopala Padams in Satwika Abhinaya, in Vijayaraghava Naik's durbar electrified the atmosphere and revolutionised the classical dance of the south. The Rasabhinaya of Kshetragna was so effective that the Brahmana Bhagavatulu and Raja Nartakis took to it.

Tirthanarayana Yati who had also migrated to the Tanjore district composed, in Sanskrit, 'Krishna Leela Tharangini' - a classical type of Yakshagana.

The intricate patterns of rhythm - the laya vinayasams - of tarangas were well suited for Nritya, and the artistes of the Bhagavata Melas mastered the technique and the taranga nritya continues to be a speciality in Kuchipudi dance. Narayana Thirtha composed a short musical play called 'Parijatha Harana Nataka' in Telugu and dedicated it to Varadaraja Swami of Achyutapuram - the modern Melatur. The manuscript discloses the fact that Narayana Thirtha stayed in Melatur for some time, about the close of the seventeenth century, among

the Bhagavata Mela families.

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At about this time Siddhendra Yogi of Kuchipudi composed the 'Parijatha Harana' story into a unique type of dance-drama and taught the play to Kuchipudi artistes and it ever remained as the best item in the repertoire of the Kuchipudi school.

It is worthwhile considering why Yatis and Yogis associated themselves with the art of dance and composed dance-dramas. The revival of Hinduism through the spread of Vaishnavism may be said to have started from the singing of the Gita Govinda by Jaidev. In the centuries that followed, a number of singer - saints like Meera, Chaitanya, Tukaram, Kabir, Tulsidas and Bhadrachala Ramadas, continued to spread the cult of Bhakti among the masses of India. A few of these 'Ministrels of God' introduced the dance element along with music, for a more effective religious propaganda. The theme selected for the dance-drama had been always 'Parijatapaharana' - the story of the intense love of Satyabhama to Lord Krishna. The story is pregnant with rasa and bhava, because 'Satyabhama, being a 'Swadhinapatika' nayika, could command Lord Krishna and take liberties with him. In the esoteric sense it is

a fit subject for the exposition of Madhura Bhakti - the yearning of Jivatma to merge with Paramatma. The Vipra-lambha Sringara portrays the troubles and tribulations to be gone through in the attempt, by the 'Jivatma'.

As early as 1320 A.D. Umapathi of Barhut wrote this play in Sanskrit. Saint Sankara Deva of Assam, composed the story into a dance-drama. He travelled south and was proclaiming in his itinerary, that unless a saint could compose a dance-drama comprising of Krishna Leelas and enact it himself, he would not attain salvation and would not be a leader of a religious order. Tirtha Narayana Yati and Siddhendra Yogi significantly, composed Parijatha story into a dance-drama.

Siddhendra Yogi persuaded the ~~Brahmin~~ families of Kuchipudi to take a vow by which every male member of the families pledged himself to practise the art and play the part of Satyabhama at least once in his life time. Further, he was responsible for the issue of a copper plate grant of the village of Kuchipudi by Abdul Hasan Qutub Shah, Nawab of Golconda (A.D. 1672 - 1687) as an Agraharam to the families which consecrated their lives to this classical art and through the art, to religious propaganda. The oath was honoured and the art was handed over from

generation to generation.

One of these families headed by Challa Bhagavatam Vasambhotlu, migrated from Kuchipudi to the village of Kotakonda in the Pattikonda taluq of the Kurnool district, nearly two hundred years back, having been invited by the Nawab. Sri Challa, Bharatasastram, Lakshmayya of Kotakonda, who is now sixty years old, can enact the part of Satyabhama. He can also render the Taranga Nritya and Astapadi and Kshetragna padas, in abhinaya. Sri Lakshmayya writes that there are some differences in the technique and interpretation of Bharata Sastra between him and the present exponents of the art at Kuchipudi.

The dance dramas enacted today by Kuchipudi artistes and by the Melatur artistes are given below:

Kuchipudi

1. Bhamakalapam
2. Golla Kalapam
3. Prahlada Charitram
4. Usha Parinayam
5. Sashirekha parinayam
6. Mohini Rukmangada
7. Harischandra
8. Gayopakhyanam
9. Rama Natakam
10. Rukmini Kalyanam

Melatur

1. Prahlada Charitram
2. Usha Parinayam
3. Rukmangada
4. Harischandra
5. Markandeya
6. Sita Kalyanam
7. Rukmini Kalyanam
8. Dhruva Charitram
9. Kamsa Vadha
10. Bhasmasura Vadha
11. Sivarathri Vaibhavam
12. Golla Bhama

Details about the authorship etc., of the Kuchipudi dramas are given in the appendix.

All these are in Telugu. Among those of Melatur only the first few are played every year during the Vaisakha month. They were all written by Venkatarama Sastry of

Melatur, a senior contemporary of Tyagaraja. The texts of the dance-drama, enacted before the time of Venkatarama Sastry are not extant and the history of the dance-drama during that period (1700 - 1800 A.D.) is yet to be ascertained.

Variations

As already stated, temples were the centres of cultural activities, and deva-dasis were performing the ritual dances before the God. Besides these dances, stories relating to the presiding deity of the temple were enacted as dance-dramas — Yakshaganas — at the 'Kalyana Mantapa' for the edification of the devotees. Raja Nartakis of the durbars also enacted Yakshaganas in addition to the solo items of secular dance. Though Raja Nartakis were not allowed to enter the temple precincts, the deva-dasis could, if they liked, dance in durbars. This resulted in the inter-change of dance technique of the Yakshagana. Meanwhile, the touring Kuchipudi Brahmana Melas came into contact with deva-dasis and Raja Nartakis at the various temples and Samsthanams. The deva-dasis of the Vaishnava temples began to learn Parijathapaharana Nataka from the

Kuchipudi artistes and enact it at temple festivals. But, the technique adopted by the deva-dasis in the dancing of the daruvu, in the interpretation of the bhava of the song, in the angikabhinaya of the descriptive verses, and the nritta of the various sabdas and tirmanams slightly varied from that of Kuchipudi artistes.

By constant observation of the different technique of the deva-dasis Kuchipudi artistes had adopted, in turn, many forms from them but interpreted them in their own tradition. This intermingling of art forms resulted in the re-shaping of Parijatanataka into 'Bhamakalapam'. This transformation chiefly consisted in the elaboration of the character of Satyabhama, giving scope for the complete interpretation of the various Nayakis described in 'Alankara Sastra'. These variations can be noticed by a critical observer, by comparing the performances of the Kuchipudi masters and the veteran deva-dasis like Pendala Satyabhama of Pithapur and Chittajallu Venkataratnam of Marempalli. These exponents of the art are already very old. Only recently, one of the great masters of Kuchipudi art, Brahmasri Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry, had passed away, and with him, a great tradition had also been lost.

The Sangeet Natak Akadami has, therefore, to take immediate steps to preserve the art of the living veteran old lady artistes by filming and tape-recording.

Bhamakalapam was so popular in the Telugu country that Bharatacharyas of other districts had not only learnt the art at Kuchipudi but had also written their own versions of Bhamakalapam. This is why the Kalapam, performed in the Vizag and Bobbili areas is different from that of Kuchipudi.

Evolution of the Dance-Drama — Yakshagana

Yakshagana was originally an old form of desi-drama. It was written in desi-metre — 'Dwipada', 'Kandam' and 'Sisam', and contained different desi-types of songs like Yela, Dhavala, and Arthachandrika. The composition was mainly descriptive in style. Only one artiste danced the whole story and interpreted the various characters. In the next stage, two primary characters — one male and one female — were introduced. Then came the clown and fortune-teller — 'Yerukala sani'. The Yakshagana of the solo-type thus developed into a regular dramatic form containing a number of characters with distinct parts of their own. Kuchipudi artistes embellished the drama further by introducing classical dance forms —

Sabdas and Daruvus - into it in order to give full scope to the four types of abhinaya.

Equipment and training of Kuchipudi artistes

The members of the Kuchipudi Brahmana Mela were given a broad cultural education in Sanskrit and Telugu. They were taught Bharata's Natya Sastra, Nandikeshvara's Abhinaya Darpana, and Bhanudatta Misra's Rasamanjari. They underwent a thorough, disciplined and rigorous training in nritta, nritya and abhinaya. Further they were given a good basic training in musical theory and practice, with particular reference to daruvus and padams.

A special feature was the rendering of the prose passages in angikabhinaya. The sabdas or 'sollukattu' were executed melodiously in tune with the sruti in the raga of the song. The 'vachikabhinaya' in general, brought out the meaning and bhava of the sahitya.

The orchestra consisted of a mridanga and flute. A wind-bag (thithi) with a mouth piece and a reed was used as a drone or sruti. This equipment and training, I believe, has a general resemblance to that of the Melatur artistes. In this connection, I may mention that I had the good fortune of meeting Shri Bharatam

Nallur Narayanaswami Iyer, a disciple of the great natyacharya Melatur Natesa Iyer. He knew Telugu very well. He was good enough to render a few padams of Kshetragna in abhinaya. The points he was mentioning about the dance-drama art, about the peculiarities of Kshetragna padams, the quotations given from 'Abhinaya Darpana' and 'Kasamanjari' were exactly the same as those which the veteran Natyacharya Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry of Kuchipudi had been telling me. This striking similarity was very suggestive and I concluded that the two traditions were basically one.

I give some more interesting features of the Kuchipudi dance-drama art which appear to me to be in general agreement with the practice at Melatur.

Kuchipudi artistes have a good repertory of dance-dramas. The themes are similar to and identical with those of Melatur. All the dramas are in Telugu though the authors are different. The dramas contain mainly daruvus, and verses written in good style and diction.

The Kuchipudi Brahmana Melas are touring troupes, and their stage is a simple one, improvised for the occasion under a flat thatched pandal, in front of the temple

of the village. The spectators sit on the ground under the open sky and witness the play throughout the night (10 p.m. to 4 a.m.). An aesthetically designed, coloured curtain is held across the stage by two young men. Two washermen of the village stand on either side of the stage and hold torches fed by castor oil. This provides the lighting for the stage. An inflammable resin powder -- 'guggilam' - is thrown on the torches to provide a sudden flash of light to enhance the 'dramatic effect at particular moments during the play, for example, on the entry of an important character from behind the curtain. The dropping of the curtain and the throwing of the powder are simultaneous and synchronise with the sudden burst of the orchestra singing out the pravesha daru - the song proclaiming the entry of the character on to the stage. It may be interesting to note that the character introduces himself or herself. Behind the actors, just close to them, stand the members that play the orchestra which consists of a mridangam, a flute, sruti and two back-ground singers. The leader of the troupe keeps time with cymbals in hand and conducts the play. He possesses an outstanding personality and according to tradition, is well versed in 'mantra sastra'. He is ever alert to ward off the evil eye cast on the performing artistes.

It is interesting to note that the composition of the orchestra described above is nearly the same as that of the Nattuva Melas described by Palkuriki Somanatha of the 13th century, and by Srinatha of the 15th century. Palkuriki Somanatha also mentions the simple stage and the single curtain held by two persons. Srinatha mentions that the Natyacharya who conducted the Natya-mela held a cane in his hand ('Vetra Hasta'). This tradition is followed at Kuchipudi. The leader of the party holds a cane with a prominent bend and acts the role of Madhavi, the friend of Satyabhama.

Special features of Kuchipudi

Bhamakalapam heads the list. It is a Sringara Kavya - a practical exposition of Natya, Sangita and Tala Sastras, all in one - so declares Siddhendra Yogi, the author. It contains nearly eighty darus, each ending in an intricate nritta called 'Tirmanam' with beautiful foot work and tala play.

After introducing herself, Satyabhama describes the philosophic significance of the 'Jada', an artificially knotted hair, glittering in variegated colours, and throws it over the curtain from behind. It is a challenge and an invitation to any veteran present in

the audience who wants to dispute her proficiency in the technique of the art. If vanquished, the 'Jada' will be cut, to her utter humiliation, and carried away as a trophy. The main theme is the Vipralambha Sringara of Satyabhama in all its logical sequence as elaborated in Sastra. The leader of the party, Madhavi, plays the humorous role and keeps up popular interest. He personifies 'Atma Viveka' - the wisdom of the inner self.

Gollakalapam is another speciality. It is a philosophical dialogue between a Milk-maid and a Brahmin. A good proficiency in Sanskrit is required to render the passages correctly and with effect. It is not a regular story but a discourse on various cultural topics like the futility of the elaborate ritual yagna, the superiority of 'Manasika Yagna', ideal family life and 'Pindothpatti - Krama' - the development of the embryo. It is a social satire and is more of an education than an entertainment. The milk-maid argues that she is not inferior to the Brahmin in culture, knowledge, erudition, and dignity, and that a man is born as a 'Sudra' and acquires brahminhood after initiation.

Very interesting dances in Vinayaka Tala of 72 matras and in Simhananda Tala of 108 matras were practised

by the old masters of Kuchipudi. At the end of these dances the figures of Vinayaka and a lion respectively, are left on the ground.

Another peculiar feature of the Kuchipudi school is the ability to put on 'Pagati Veshamulu' - fancy dresses during the day time and display, with considerable humour, all the phases of social life. The portrayal of the administration of the country by Pantulu and Pathan, on the last day, is the crowning feature of the series of daily shows extending over a fortnight.

'Garadi Vesham' - the magician - is another interesting item of the 'Pagati Veshamulu'.

Make-up

The make-up of the Kuchipudi artistes is not elaborate. A single coloured paint and powder, appropriate to the character, is used. Before the advent of the modern make-up material, the required paints, colours and powders were prepared from the mineral and vegetable sources available.

The king wears a beautifully designed crown and ornamented shoulder covers - 'Bhuja Keertulu'. The decoration of Satyabhama is elaborate. Her ornaments

are many. She wears different sets of ornaments on different days of the week. These are the replicas of the ornaments worn by the queens of society. They are made of light wood and bedecked with brilliant coloured paper.

Music

The musical tradition of Kuchipudi is classical. Kshetrappa of Muvva, near Kuchipudi, was the composer of padams of high musical value. He was the first 'Vaggeyakara' who gave a definite and beautiful shape to the rakti ragas of Karnatic music. Tirtha Narayana Yati was another classical composer in Karnatic music.

Eleswarapu Subbiah and Hari Ramayya were the famous musicians that lived about seventy or eighty years back. Veena Sambanna of Mysore was very much pleased with the veena performance of Hari Ramayya and took him to Mysore. The performance of Ramayya in the Mysore Darbar was much appreciated and the Maharajah suitably honoured him.

Eminent exponents of Kuchipudi School.

The genealogies of the natyacharyas and 'Vidya Gurus' of Kuchipudi are not known completely. Some information about them for the last 120 years is available.

Pasumarti Sitayya was a great scholar, sutradhar, and vidya-guru. Chinta Venkataratnam and Venkataramayya were his pupils. The elder brother, Venkataratnam was a great scholar of Veda and Vedanta and was famous in portraying 'Narada Maharshi'. The younger brother, Venkataramayya who was enacting the part of Satyabhama, latterly specialised in dance-drama technique. He brought into prominence the 'Veedhi Natakams' - dance-dramas - played by the artistes of the previous generations. He revived and reformed them, gave a new shape to the rendering of the sabdas and darus and made the dance-drama very attractive and popular. Some of the 'Sabdas' introduced by him were those composed in praise of Pratapa Simha and Damara Simhendra Bhupala.

Chinta Krishnamurty, the son of Venkataramayya, is the only active organiser of the Kuchipudi school who is now trying to keep it active.

Among those that portrayed Satyabhama, Chinta Narayanamurty was the best and held the palm. He was most famous exponent of Kshetragna padams. Vempati Venkatanarayana and Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry also won fame as very good actors of the character of Satyabhama.

Peddibhottla Dasaradharamayya (1850 A.D) was the pioneer in the art of 'Pagati Veshamulu'.

Among the present generation, Vempati Satyam, who earned a name in the role of Satyabhama went over to the Cinema. Vedantam Raghavayya and Pasumarti Krishna-murthy are also working as dance-directors in the cinema field. Thandava Krishna, M.A., who underwent training under Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry and studied the history of Kuchipudi art, is now employed as a teacher. Miss M. Kanchanamala, B.A., of Masulipatam, learnt Bhama-kalapam under Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry, obtained a Government of India scholarship, and learnt Bharata Natyam under Natyacharya Chokkalinga Pillai, in Madras.

Nataraj Ramakrishna, B.A., had some training under the late Lakshminarayana Sastry.

The Lalita Kala Samiti of Kuchipudi is a registered body. It is celebrating annually, for the last eight years, Siddhendra Yogi Festival, for five days, and enacting dance-drama in front of Ramalingeswara Swami, the presiding deity of Kuchipudi.

Before I conclude, I would like to state that the dance-drama is the best form for demonstrating the

essential principles of Natya Sastra. Bharata Muni demonstrated Natya for the first time in the form of dance-drama, in Indra Sabha. Dance-drama is a source of education as well as recreation. It has a high cultural value, giving scope for the display of various emotions that touch the heart. This original and ancient form of Natya was widely practised for a long time as the form of national art. It is classical in style. In spite of all this, it is strange that it is considered only as a tradition whereas, the secular solo-dances — Bharata Natya and Kathak — are mentioned as important classical styles. I do not know why the dance-dramas played by the ~~Brahmana~~ Melas of Kuchipudi and Melatur are not recognised as classical. I am glad that at least Kathakali, the dance-drama of Kerala, is mentioned as a classical type.

During the last one hundred years or more, the religious back-ground of Natya had been ignored by the potentates of the country, who patronised Raja Nartakis. As a consequence, the classical dance-drama was neglected by the elite of the society also and nearly forgotten. Scholarship and learning declined and the quality of the art deteriorated. The economic condition of the few artistes that are still hanging on to this art at -

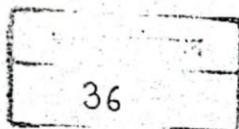
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Kuchipudi, is distressing. They have to be encouraged and helped to improve their art. A liberal subsidy may be granted. Steps have to be taken to spend the amount according to plan, under the auspices of the Andhra Pradesh Sangeeta Natak Akadami.

Talented young men and women with the required qualifications have to be trained at Kuchipudi in the dance-drama technique. Correct texts of the dance-dramas have to be prepared by collating all the available copies. As suggested already, the technique and art of the surviving old veterans has to be preserved by filming and tape-recording.

I fervently hope that immediate and active steps will be initiated for the revival and development of the dance-drama at Kuchipudi by the Sangeet Natak Akadami.



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APPENDIX

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Dance - Dramas.

1. Bhama Kalapam

By Siddhendra Yogi.

The original text has been very much altered. Various versions in manuscript are available.

2. Golla Kalapam

By Bhagavatulu Ramayya.

This was composed eighty years back. Ramayya was a profound Sanskrit scholar. The text is available in manuscript.

There was an old version called 'Oora Golla Vesham' in which the humorous character Sunkara Kondayi appears.

3. Prahlada Charitram

By Tirunarayanacharyulu

who lived one hundred years back. This is printed about sixty years back.

4. Sashirekha Parinayam

By Vallabhaneni Chowdari

of Golivepalli, Gudivada Taluq. This was written about forty years ago, and printed.

5. Mohini Rukmangada

By Beta Bhagavanta Rao

of Nuzvid. A recent composition; contains songs. This is printed.

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6. Usha Parinayam By Chidambara Kavi
of Palnadu. This is also
printed.
7. Harischandra Natakam It was an old composition.
8. Gayopakhyanam By Vallabhaneni Ramakrishnayya
of Golivepalli. Printed.
9. Rama Natakam -
Uttara Rama Charitram It was an old composition.
10. Rukmini Kalyanam It was an old composition.

OTHER COMPOSITIONS

11. Kuruvanji Singi and Singadu are the two
characters - wife and husband.
An old form of dance-drama.
12. Dadinamma Story of Chola Princess.
13. Balinta Vesham The story of the first confine-
ment of a young woman.

Her - Story through His(s)tory: Evolution of Solo Repertoire in Kuchipudi

by Devi G

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