

Kuchipudi Bhagavatam: The Dance-Drama of Andhra Pradesh

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Temple is the cradle of Hindu civilization and religion, the backbone of the Indian nation. Hence every detail of Hindu culture, whether it is science or art, is intimately connected with religion. So is the case with the fine arts—music, dance, painting and sculpture. The sculptor brought realism in an inanimate model by the masterly touch of his hand, exhibited all his skills in the temples of eternal beauty. The painter decorated the temple walls with his immortal paintings drawn from the Hindu scriptures. Poets composed verses in praise of the presiding deity of the temple. The musicians sang them, while the devadasis interpreted the devotional songs through dance and gestures during the temple rituals, where devotees assembled to offer prayers to the Universal Lord. The fine arts were invariably practised and utilized in ancient times in commemoration of God. Needless to mention that the same tradition had been developed and followed in Andhra Pradesh also.

In olden times when the sculptor built temples in Andhra to immortalise gods and goddesses, people began to worship the God with music and dance. So the art of dance and music became a part and parcel of worship and temple ritual. In the early times, the dance in Andhra Pradesh was of two types—the ritual dances performed by the devadasis in the temples and the dance-dramas enacted outside the temple by professional artists to entertain the pilgrims. The dances performed by the devadasis belong to the *margi* style, following *natyadharini*, strictly based on the classical traditions, while the dance-dramas or *nritya-natakams* enacted by professionals were of the *desi* type based mainly on the *lokadharini*.

The devadasis were of two types—the Shivadasi and the Vishnudasi. The art practised by one differed from that of the other. The dance of the Vishnudasi was in *lasya* style abounding in *rasa* and *bhava* with graceful movements of the body, importance being given to *abhinaya*. The art of the Shivadasi was of the majestic *thandava* style and excelled in the dynamic forms of *nritya* and *nritya*.

Similarly, the dance-drama enacted by the professionals also differed. In places like Srisailem, Draksharama, Bheemarama, Kotappa Konda, Peetikapura where Siva is worshipped, drama connected with the life of Siva are enacted. In Tirumla, Simhachala, Srikurma, Srikakulam, stories from *Vishnupurana* was the theme of their plays. These dramas were called Kuravanjis or Yakshaganas, for artists belonging to the Kurava, Chenchu and Yaksha communities used to perform these plays. As their art was of the *desi* type, it changed from time to time according to the tastes of the enlightened public that gathered at the holy places from various parts of the country during festive times. It took a classical and

perfect shape in the Veedhi Bhagavatam in the hands of the Brahmin pandits of Kuchipudi who practised and popularised this art. But the dances developed in the temple being a standardized art never changed, as the original idea of the ancient acharyas was to preserve the classical traditions of the art forever. So in later times when all arts changed greatly according to the tastes of the patrons, ritual dances like Subhalila, Bhujanga, Bhujangatrasa and Suddha retained their original forms. This is the greatest contribution of the temple art to our classical dance in as much as all the ritual dances are composed of the various classical *karanas* and *angaharas* described in the *Natyashastra*. They were executed in such a perfect manner that the divine form of Hindu gods and goddesses were visible in these temple dances.

As time went on, the devadasis, who were mainly dancing before the deity, came out of the temple sanctum sanctorum to entertain the pilgrims in the temple *prangana*. At the *Kalyanamandapam*, they used to perform dance-dramas from *Sivapurana* and *Vishnupurana*. As time passed on, this art lost its religious sanctity and purpose, and became mere entertainment for the pilgrims. It was at this stage that the life of luxury which the *rajnartaki* enjoyed at the court attracted the devadasis. The institution of devadasi was purely a religious one and her life was one of great personal sacrifice and dedication. Hence, they were generally very poor, living on the charity of the temples to which they were dedicated. The *ganika* or courtesan was the favourite of the court and enjoyed all the luxuries that patronage and riches could afford. The devadasi was naturally tempted by the pleasant and glorious life of the *rajnartaki* and gradually began to remodel her own life to suit the tastes of the court. Thus the sacred institution of devadasi fell into decay and degeneration.

In Andhra, the devadasis were believed to be the direct descendants of Urvasi, and the descendants of that particular sect were taking part in temple rituals. Even amongst them not all the lady artists of the community had a place in the temple. Only those who had been given rigorous training in the various duties of the temple were dedicated to the gods with due ceremony and branded with the religious marks of the temple deity. They performed the ritual dances before the deity and the Bhagavatams at the *mandapam*. Women artists belonging to dancing communities were attached to the courts and danced in public functions. But the devadasi had an option. If she wished she could take part in the court dances. It was this option that brought about the degeneration in the temple art.

The religious faith of the people were always threatened in these times by uncertain political conditions in the country. In this sad state of affairs in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, the Brahmin melas took upon themselves the task of retaining the pristine purity of the classical dance. These melas served the dual purpose of spreading religion and art. The renaissance in art was a feature all over India and the Brahmin acharyas with their profound knowledge of the Vedas, the Puranas and the *Natyashastra* played their part in Andhra, as their contemporaries did elsewhere, with a missionary spirit. They formed parties and began training artists in dance-drama. It became an itinerant party touring from place to place giving performance. Their missionary spirit saved the classical art from

complete annihilation. The fair sex was tabooed from the dramas, female roles were enacted by men only. From that time, the art of the dasis was called Nattuvamela, while the Brahmin melas were known by the name of Natyamelas or Bhagavatams. The Kathakali of Malabar, Ramlila of Uttar Pradesh, Bhagavatamelas of Solamangalam, Oothukadu, Melatur and the Brahmin Bhagavatulu of Kuchipudi come under this group. In all these dance systems, no lady was assigned any part.

The Kuchipudi Bhagavatulu

Kuchipudi is an *agraharam* in the Krishna District of Andhra. The male members of the Brahmin families of that place dedicated their lives to the revival, development and preservation of Yakshagana. The Bhagavata art of Andhra was named after the village of Kuchipudi. The Kuchipudi Bhagavatulu was famous even before the reign of the Vijayanagar Kings. The earliest reference to the Bhagavatulu is made in the *Machipalli Kaifiat* of A.D. 1502 wherefrom we gather that a party of Bhagavatulu visited Vijayanagar during the period of Veera Narasimha Raya and exhibited their art at his court. The King, who had already heard about the fame of these artists, attended the performance with the members of the royal family. The Bhagavatulu enacted a drama depicting the evil deeds and oppression of his subjects by one of his vassals, Sammeta Guruvaraju of Siddhavataseema. History tells us that Veera Narasimha Raya after seeing the performance took immediate steps to relieve the people of their sufferings and punished Guruvaraju. This incident makes it clear that the Kuchipudi artists were famous even by the time of Vijayanagar Kings as touring missionaries of art and religion. During the regime of Kakateeya Emperors when Veera-Shaiva cult was predominant, these artists used to enact stories from *Sivapurana*. In *Panditharadhya Charita*, there is an elaborate description of the various dance styles, both *margi* and *desi* practised in those days. *Dasavidha Sivalila* was a very popular theme enacted by the Natyamelas. The temples of Siva built during the Kakateeya rule had a special *nrityavedika*, just behind Nandi facing the deity in the temple, for performing ritual dances, the like of which are not found in any other Hindu temples. Special *mandapams* were built for enacting dance-dramas. The Veera Shaiva acharyas found a very good medium in the art of dance and music to propagate their militant religious faith. The Natyamelas were given every encouragement by the Kakateeya kings. Jayasena, the brother-in-law of Pratap Rudra Deva, a great Kakateeya ruler, was not only a promoter of the art of dance and music, but also the author of *Nritya Ratnavali*, a treatise on Indian dance.

Later on, when Vaishnavism replaced Shaivism, the Natyamela artists enacted stories from Bhagavata Purana. Since then, these Natyamela artists were called Bhagavatulu and their dramas, Bhagavatams.

After the fall of Vijayanagar Empire, these artists were patronized by Nayak Kings of Tanjore. King Achutapa Nayaka, who ruled Tanjore during 1561-1614, gave a grant of *agraharam* to hundreds of Brahmin Natyamela families and retained them in his territory. That *agraharam* was known as Achutapuram, the present Melatur. Melatur in Telugu means *Melam Vuru*, the village inhabited by Melams. These artists were performing a

number of Telugu Yakshaganas written by the scholarly kings of Tanjore, and the great poets of the court.

Yogi Siddendra, a Vaishnava saint and a great composer was the author of the famous dance-drama *Parijatapaharanam*. He trained the Kuchipudi artists and persuaded them to take a vow that every male member born in their families would play the role of Satyabhama at least once in his life as a religious obligation. The Yogi got the copper plate grant of the village of Kuchipudi from Abdul Hasan Qutb Shah, Nawab of Golconda (1672-87), as *agraharam* to these Bhagavata families. These sacred vow was honoured and handed over from generation to generation along with the art. This great heritage has been preserved even to this day.

The *Parijatapaharanam* is now performed as *Bhamakalapam*. This Kalapam gained such fame and popularity that artists from other parts of the country came and learnt it from the Kuchipudi artists. Poets of other places began to write Kalapams on the model of Siddendra Yogi's composition. Consequently, we have at least six different versions of *Bhamakalapam* in addition to the original text of Yogi Siddendra.

The Kuchipudi artists were never satisfied with their old Bhagavata traditional art alone. Whenever they visited the various zamindaries in the country to give performances, they taught the courtesans their traditional art and in turn, learnt from them, their special dances and enriched their art.

Origin and Development of Kuruvanji, Yakshagana and Bhagavatam

Kuravanji: I have stated previously that Kuravanjis were dance-dramas, enacted by the tribal people called Kuravas and Chenchus, to entertain the pilgrims and earn their livelihood thereby. *Kurava-anji* means the *adavu* of the Kurava, i.e., the dance of the Kuravas. The Kuravanjis were unsophisticated dramas rich in pure nritta and simple at the outset. We can safely classify them more as *geyanatakas* i.e. musical plays than as dance-dramas. They adopted stories from Hindu mythology for their dance dramas. Nritya performed by these artists in narrating the story was not the expressive type of gestures used to convey the meaning of the verse that was sung. There was neither rasa nor bhava in it. It was nritta (pure dance) performed at times in between the long narrative songs to avoid monotony. In these plays, laya (rhythm) was the more predominant feature than tala (time measure). The songs were also of the narrative type, full of descriptions of the various incidents in the story. In the beginning, a single artist performed the entire drama. She used to sing and narrate the song and dance at intervals in order to relieve the monotony of a long narration. The next stage in the development was the introduction of two characters in the play, the male and the female characters, Singa and Singi, resembling the Sutradhara and *nati* of the Sanskrit drama, who interpreted the various characters of the play and danced the entire drama. Later came in Konangi (*chodigadu*) the clown who was a running commentator of the play. Next we find the introduction of the Erukala Sani, a female fortune-teller. Though two or three characters were introduced in Kuravanji, it was not according to delineation of characters of a drama. The famous *Garudachala Nataka* or *Chenchu Lakshmi Katha* en-

acted by Dasari Bhagavatulu and Bahurupulu even to this day in the remote villages of the Telugu country belongs to this dance tradition.

Yakshagana: In course of time, the Kuravanji art became very popular amongst the cultured communities of the society. The people of the town and city encouraged and adopted this dance tradition. The Yaksha (Jakkula) artists were the first who took to this art. Since then Yakshagana became famous. The Jakkula artists learnt the Kuravanji, refined it, brought about many changes and performed them in an artistic manner. The ruling princes patronised this art and wrote many Yakshaganas. *Thayikonda Nataka* was a very popular drama enacted in the court of Krishna Deva Raya and Nagaih was a famous *nata* of those times. *Mureechi Parinaya*, another Yakshagana, was written by the daughter of Shri Krishna Deva Raya. *Sugriva Vijaya* composed by Kandukuri Rudra Kavi of the fifteenth century was one of the oldest Yakshaganas in which many poetic desi styles like Triputa, Tribhanga, Jumpe, Dhavala, Adha Chandik, Yela Dvipada and Kandam were introduced. *Angika-abhinaya* (i.e. gestures with *hasta* and *mudras*) was greatly developed by the Yakshagana artists in addition to *nritta*. The artists while interpreting the various songs in gestures and *mudras*, performed *nritya*. But *rasa-abhinaya*, the climax of the Indian dance, was still wanting in their art.

The reign of the Nayak kings of Tanjore was the golden era for the Yakshaganas of the Telugu country. Numerous Yakshaganas were written during that time; *Raghunatha Abhyudayam* by Vijaya Raghava Nayaka and *Mannardesa Vilasam* by Rangajamma were the most famous Yakshaganas of those times. Till the time of the Tanjore kings, the dance-dramas were purely of the religious type. For the first time, Vijaya Raghava Nayaka introduced a social theme in his play, *Raghunatha Abhyudayam*. It describes a day spent by his father Raghunatha Nayaka at his court. It is not only very interesting as a Yakshagana but is of great historical importance in as much as it gives a vivid description of the customs of the durbar and the rule of the Nayak kings of the time. The most famous Yakshagana written in Telugu is *Mannardesa Vilasam* by Rangajamma during the reign of Vijaya Raghava Nayaka. Rangajamma was a scholar and poet of high order, adept in fine arts and a linguist to boot. While Vijaya Raghava made his father the hero of this play, *Raghunatha Abhyudayam*, Rangajamma depicted Vijaya Raghava himself as her hero. In *Mannardesa Vilasam*, we find a detailed description of Vijaya Raghava's court and his rule. Music gained importance in her plays. Full scope was given for *angika-abhinaya*. The descriptions were so elaborate and artistic and the style so different from other Yakshaganas that unless an artist was well versed in the *Natyashastra* and *angika-abhinaya*, he would not be able to do justice to the play. For the Bhagavata artist, it is a test of his knowledge in the art of dance. The introduction of *bahupatras* and *bahubhasha patras* into the Yakshaganas redound to the credit of the creative genius of Rangajamma. She introduced characters speaking five different languages in her play. Till the time of the Nayak kings, only *nritta* and *nritya* were exhibited by the Yakshagana and Bhagavata artists in their plays, as the Yakshaganas were composed with little scope for *abhinaya*. For the first time during the

rule of the Nayak kings, *rasa-abhinaya* was introduced by the *Bhaghavata* artists. Special compositions called Padam and Padakelika were written giving scope for *abhinaya*. Kshetrappa who belonged to Muvva near Kuchipudi, a great composer of Padamas, was mainly responsible for the development of *rasa-abhinaya* or *satvika-abhinaya*. He was a great poet and a *Bharatacharya* and wrote as many as four thousand Padamas rich in expression of *satvika-bhava*. Kshetrappa revolutionized the dance art of the Durbars by introducing *pada-abhinaya*. He visited Tanjore during the rule of Vijaya Raghava and under his influence, *abhinaya* was greatly developed. It is seen in the composition of Vijaya Raghava Nayaka who introduced for the first time Padamas in his Yakshagana. Though it was a new experiment, it was successful as an artistic improvement in the realm of *abhinaya*. From that time onwards, Yakshagana composers introduced Padama and Padakelikas in their dramas.

Daruvu, a song composition describing the character also gained important. The Daruvu helps the artist in knowing the proper dress and *aharya* he should wear, the gait and manner in which he or she should enter the stage and play his or her part. Thus the Kauavanji art of the tribal people became a classical art by the end of 16th century under royal patronage. Some of the famous Yakshaganas enacted in Andhra Pradesh by the Jakkula artists are: *Jalakreeda*, *Markandeyam*, *Dharmagada*, *Kusalayokam*, *Kaleeyamardhana*, *Mrutyunjaya Vilasam*, *Siva Parijatam* and *Ganga Gouri Vilasam*.

Bhagavatam: In Bhagavatam, the Yakshagana was completely dramatized on the model of the Sanskrit drama by developing various characters in the nataka. The Brahmin Bhagavatulu of Kuchipudi introduced many classical traditions into the Yakshagana and made it a classical dance-drama. The *purva-ranga* of the *Natyashastra* was included in the play. *Nritta*, *nritya* and *chaturvidya-abhinaya* (*angika*, *vachika*, *aharya* and *satvika*) were perfected and exhibited in a systematized manner. The *chari*, *karana*, *angahara* and *mandala* were performed according to the principles laid down by Bharata in the *Natyashastra*. *Chitrabhinayam* was introduced by these artists in the Bhagavatams. *Angika-abhinaya* was so elaborately developed that even prose was rendered with musical intonations and expressed in gestures. Daruva singing was greatly improved. Every character of the play entered the stage singing the Daruvu himself and danced accordingly.

This gave much scope for the artist to exhibit his skill in music, *vachika-abhinaya*, and *nritya*. The Daruvu was composed in appropriate ragas and talas selected carefully to suit the mood of the characters in the play and special *adavus* (foot work) were composed for every character of the drama. Finishing every Daruvu with the dance of Sabdams was a new system popularized by these artists. Sabdams are descriptive verses in praise of a King or God composed in different talas intermingled with Mridanga sound or bols. While dancing the Sabdam, *nritta* was performed to the Mridanga sound, and *nritya* to the song proper.

The study of *alankarashashtas* and *rasasjashtras*, namely, *Prataparudriyam*, *Rasa Prakarana*, *Rasagangadharam*, *Narasabhupaliyam*, *Rasmanjari*, *kavyas* and *prabhandams*, besides *Natyashastra* helped these artists in improving *nayika-abhinaya* and in the ex-

pression of various *sanchari* and *vyabhichari-bhavas* in *satvik-abhinaya*. In *Bhamakalapam*, the role of Satyabhama is developed giving full scope of *abhinaya* for the *astavidha nayika*—*swadheenapatika*, *kalahantaritha*, *virahotkantitha*, *vipralabdha*, *abhisarika*, *khanditha*, *vasakasajjika* and *proshita*. *Abhinaya*, the soul of Indian art and dance, was fully developed by the Bhagavata artists.

Besides the desi poetic compositions already used in Yakshaganas, these artists introduced Keertana, Vritta, Sabdam, Churnika, Seesardham and Kandartham. *Parijatapaharana*, *Prahlada*, *Usha Parinaya*, *Harischandra*, *Rukhmangada* and *Ramanataka* were some of the famous dramas performed by these Bhagavata artists.

By the end of 19th century, a new style of drama with prose and verse became popular in the country. As they were not dance-dramas, it was enough if the artist was a good musician. Lighting and stage arrangements and attractive make-up were introduced for the first time in these new dramas. People were attracted by the stage dramas and gradually lost interest in the Bhagavatams. The final blow came from the cinema to the great Bhagavata tradition and many Bhagavatulu due to lack of encouragement abandoned this art and embraced other professions. Artists, who joined the cinema, were compelled to remodel dances to cater to popular tastes. Some artists are still struggling hard to preserve the old traditional art. If this art is refined without harming its original grace and adjusted to the modern stage, it can not only be saved from extinction but also revived to its former glory. Andhra Pradesh looks to the Sangeet Natak Akademi for the revival and propagation of this ancient and glorious classical art.

Some of the important musical forms in the Bhagavatam:

1. Churnika: is an invocation verse composition in Sanskrit sung by the artist in the drama while offering prayer to the God.

2. Kausthubam: is also an invocation song intermingled with Mridanga sabdams to which nritta is played. The Bhagavata opens with prayers to several Gods—Ganapathy, Saraswati, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara. While singing the prayer relating to a particular deity, Kausthubam in Sabdams composed to please that God is danced.

3. Kaivaram: is mainly sung in the court of the king in his honour as he enters the durbar. The same tradition is followed in Bhagavatams also and the Kaivaram denotes the entrance of the hero in the drama.

4. Devalam: is a chorus song, sung in praise of a character in the play. The last line in each stanza alone is sung in chorus, while one person sings the song in full throughout.

5. Yela: when the God or King goes for *noukaviharan* (boat-ride), this type of song is sung to entertain him. This starts as a poem and assumes the form of a song with tala.

6. Daruvu: is an important composition of Bhagavatam. It is so called because this type of songs are composed with Daruvus in repetition of the same idea in several forms. Daruvus are of two types: Pravesa Daruvu and Abhinaya Daruvu. Pravesa Daruvu is sung as the artist enters the stage, and Abhinaya Daruvu is played in an important situation where rasa and bhava have to be expressed.

7. Sabdam: is a descriptive mixed musical-dance composition containing *nritta* and *nritya* in praise of Gods with Mridanga sabdams.
8. Salaam Jati: is an interesting salutation song with Mridanga sabdams composed in praise of the kings. These are sung during dance performances in royal courts, ending with a salute to the king. Both Sabdams and Salaam Jatis are sung and danced in continuation of the Daruvu.
9. Tribhanga: contains three stanzas only, describing an important sequence in the drama with full expression.
10. Ardhachandrika: is a narrative composed in simple metre to link up the several sequences in the play.
11. Hechcherika: is sung when the hero goes in procession.
12. Padama, Padakelika: *satvika-abhinaya* is a special feature of these compositions. Padama moves slowly while expressing *rasa-abhinaya*, Padakelika is a composition with a quicker tempo.
13. Suvvali, Sobhanam: Suvvali is sung during marriage ceremonies mainly by ladies while pounding turmeric. In Bhagavata, it is sung to signify a marriage. Sobhanams are sung at the first meeting of the hero and the heroine after marriage.
14. Jola (Lullaby): songs to denote that the hero is sleeping or a child is born. Suvvali, Sobhanam and Jola are symbolic songs sung in drama to indicate marriage and birth.
15. Dwipada: is a poem in pure desi style. It is very popular with Yakshagana and Bhagavata artists because of its simple style. As it is very easy to sing, this style is adopted for long narratives in the play.
16. Kandardham, Seesardham: these two are also important desi poetic forms of Andhra Pradesh. Kandam is the shortest poetical form and Seesam the longest. The first half is recited as a poem and the second half sung as a Daruvu. Hence they are called *Kandardha* and *Seesa-ardha*.
17. Vritam: Champaka Mala, Utpala, Mala, Mattha-Kokila, Sardula, Mattebha, Pancha-Chamara, etc. These poetic compositions are used whenever a particular mood and *rasa* had to be expressed in the dramatic sequence. Pancha-chamara is generally used in *Manmodopalambana* describing Cupid's entrance with flower arrows (*pushpabana vilasa*). The gait in this vritta is such that when it is set to music and sung, it sounds like marching songs of the army. Every vritta is finished with the singing of the Daruvu.
18. Sollukattu: singing of Mridanga Sabdams in raga and tala is called Sollukattu.
19. Nela Katlu: this belongs to the pure *nritta* style. In dancing a Pallavi, the artist dances various *adavu* compositions keeping to the time of the drum.
20. Ayitham, Konugolu, Chitta: All these three are same. While dancing a Daruvu, the artist dances pure *nritta* to a line in the Daruvu, making it as Pallavi. The *nata*, who keeps the tala, sings Mridanga Sabdams of his choice adjusting to the *laya* and tala of the dance. The artist reproduces the same with her feet using appropriate *hasta-vinyasa*. This type of dancing is called Ayitham, Avrutham, Konugulu or Chitta.

DISCUSSION

Nataraj Ramakrishna: I will not take much of your time as I have very little to add to what I have written in my paper. I am afraid very few of you have been able to visualize a Kuchipudi form of dance by reading my paper alone. It is not possible for anybody to do so. Neither, I believe, many of you have earlier witnessed a genuine Kuchipudi dance. I seek your permission to give you some demonstrations of some of the styles to convince you of the superb art-quality it possesses. You will find how in these dances poetry has been given expression by rhythmic variations of the body. [Demonstrations of the art]. Well, I have given you only an idea of Kuchipudi; you must have noted that when we perform a song-drama, we sing the same song but change our actions frequently to make them suitable to express different shades of emotions. But when we translate the very same song-drama into a dance-drama, we change the music with our gestures. In south India, the devadasis do generally perform these dramas. They master both the music and the dance. But all of us, who are supposed to be preserving the tradition, do not acquire proficiency both in music and dance, saving one or two here and there. It is, therefore, essential that to preserve these interesting dramas, the devadasis and true exponents of these arts must not be allowed to drift away for the necessity of earning their livelihood. As everywhere else, so in our part also, exponents of these folk arts are quitting their arts. There are causes for their doing so. One is, of course, that these arts do not pay now a days. Another cause is the feeling that these are crude arts and their votaries are looked down upon as unworthy of any respect. Just like the Bhavai artists, the Kuchipudi artists are also being neglected, castigated as worthless vagabonds propagating vulgar songs and dances. When I myself approached my guru to accept me as a disciple he was amazed. He said, 'No, no, these are not for a university graduate to pursue. You will be only buying bad name'. It took me a long time to persuade him to agree to teach me. Even the gurus are disappearing. The few that we may justly be proud of are now aged between sixty and seventy years. With their passing away, these arts will also pass away.

A Delegate: Why? You are there.

Nataraj Ramakrishna: Yes, I am there. But I have learnt only a fraction of these great arts. I have yet to learn many things. There is a lady who is a great exponent of this art as she is great in Sanskrit learning. She is also about seventy years old now. Even the gurus, when they grow old, fail to give practical lessons because of their physical inability. Unless any rapid measure is taken, Kuchipudi and most of the folk-arts have no chance of survival. I came all the way from distant Vishakhapatnam to tell you just this. Discussions on the theory and practice of Kuchipudi is good indeed. But they are by themselves no good to keep the art surviving.

Nirmala Joshi: The same sad story we hear in regard to every form of folk art in every region of this sub-continent. The Sangeet Natak Akademi is frantically trying to preserve as much of these disappearing arts as is possible by filming and recording them. But it does very strongly feel that preservation is a very poor consolation. Ways and means must be found to save them from inglorious extinction. Although we are seriously thinking of them,

we have not been able to discover how best can we make any headway. The financial implications are found to be an insurmountable obstacle.

Balwant Gargi: We are shocked to hear this. Because we find that every year tons of money are being spent on the Republic Day to give the public taste of folk arts which happen to be no art at all. If money may be had for those tamashas, why could it not be found to save forms like Kuchipudi and Bhavai. I remember to have seen a sort of hopelessly muddled style of Kuchipudi at one of the Republic Day celebrations. We have just now had an idea of the exquisite beauties of it from the demonstrations given by our friend, Shri Nataraj Ramakrishna. While I was looking at them, I was thinking why that rotten stuff was displayed at the Republic Day celebrations. Who was responsible for the importation of the spurious stuff which was crude, vulgar and which gave out a martial note?

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay: The Military is entrusted to organize the folk art festivals held on the Republic Day.

A Delegate: Why so?

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay: Again I will tell you that I really do not know. I have no say in the matter. Neither the Akademi has.

Nataraj Ramakrishna: The most unfortunate part of it is that none of us in Kuchipudi knew that a troupe was being organized to participate in the Republic Day celebrations. The official who was entrusted to organize could not contact the right persons but he wanted to prove his efficiency. He gathered together persons who did not know their art and thought that modern costumes would give them dignity in the Capital of India. There was nobody to tell them that they would look clownish in modern costumes.

Dina Pathak: We need not waste our time over the follies of officials and artists. It is a tragedy that this world cannot be got rid of fools. We want to see how this Kuchipudi form may be preserved. If we can keep the forms pure, we will be able to find persons who will be willing to learn them and take them as their profession. Now the question is how to preserve the form? Well, I come again to the necessity of a school and a band of devoted pupils. I don't think that pupils will be found wanting. We need a school for Kuchipudi at once.

A Delegate: Who will give you a school?

Dina Pathak: How can I tell you that? Some agency must be found. At this Seminar, we have only the Akademi to be told that we want schools for the preservation of the Bhavai form and the Kuchipudi form of dances and may be schools for every folk form. A chain of schools all over the country plus a chain of theatres where we can demonstrate our art.

B. Kanakalingeswara Rao: Kuchipudi drama is no mere folk drama. It is both folk and classical. The classical ones were given a form by a saint named Sidhananda who came from Maharashtra. The saint took some elements from the folk forms and rendered them into a new form adopting the principles of the *Natyashastra*. He taught this classical art to Brahmins alone. About twenty to thirty families used to perform this new form. They were so

anxious to keep the tradition alive for posterity that they used to tie bells around the ankles of their children to impress upon them that when they come of age, they will have to learn this particular art and devote their lives to it. There is another peculiar form, Collakala, which is a recital of the feelings of a woman who is going to be a mother, starting from the early consummation stage and ending in the birth of her child. Only milkmaids do perform this. The object is obvious. It is to prepare mentally a women for motherhood. No milkmaid nowadays is aware of its technique. There is only one man in Andhra who has the knowledge of it. He is sixty now. There is a lady aged seventy who is the custodian of varieties of folk forms. The Andhra Government has not yet paid any attention to them and to the dying arts which are the prides of Andhra. So far as the Kuchipudi is concerned, there are only three men living who have an all round knowledge of the art. We have started an institution which we have named Kala Kshetram.

There, we want to give demonstrations of the pure forms and teach them to young aspirants. But you can imagine that our financial position is hopeless. We cannot give any material shape to our ideas. Yet I promise that very soon I will bring to Delhi a genuine Kuchipudi show which will not only give you entertainment but also light. What you can do for us is:

- i. Filming of Kuchipudi,
- ii. Holding of Kuchipudi festivals,
- iii. Awarding scholarships to young talents enabling them to learn and practise Kuchipudi.