
KERALA KALAMANDALAM

Organisation

Type of Institution: State Academy of Arts, Registered society under the Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act No. 12 of 1955.

Year of Establishment: 1930

Brief History : Founded by Poet Laureate Vallathol Narayana Menon along the banks of the river Nila at Cheruturuthy in Thrissur district bordering Palakkad district, Kalamandalam is the premier public institution in India imparting training in and conducting performance of the classical performing arts of Kerala. Most of the legends in Kathakali, Mohiniyattam, Kutiyattam and Tullal were associated with Kalamandalam till the last century. Now this institution has a host of highly talented artistes in various art faculties. From 1990 onwards, Kalamandalam offers to students, training in art disciplines and scholastic subjects too. The education here leads to Degree course in performing arts. There are altogether thirteen art subjects. Kalamandalam has major and minor performing troupes that travel in India and abroad for performances, lecture-demonstrations and workshops at the invitation of cultural organisations, Universities etc. There are special training programmes for interstate and international students in various art disciplines.

The Kutiyattam faculty of Kalamandalam was started in June 1965 with Painkulam Rama Chakyar as Guru in acting and P.K. Narayanan Nambiar as Guru in Mizhavu. It was a historic moment for Kutiyattam which had been so far confined to temples for centuries. This art was presented outside the temple for the first time in 1956 by Painkulam Rama Chakyar, braving very stiff opposition from the conservative section of the society. The maestro did this solely in the interest of salvaging this great theatre tradition from total extinction and showcasing it before the world of ardent theatre enthusiasts. It was he who headed the Kutiyattam faculty of Kerala Kalamandalam and started institutional training for the first time; taking in non-Chakyar students also for training. The path was thus opened to bring in to being a new generation of aspiring young artistes, who were free to pursue the art without the shackles of cast, creed or convention. Very soon, international attention was brought to focus on this great tradition.

In 1966, under the joint auspices of American Institute of Indian Studies, a comprehensive seminar was held - an in-depth, authoritative and thought provoking one involving great Sanskrit scholars, historians, musicologists and theatre experts from all over the world. Dr. V. Raghavan, Dr. K.N. Ezhuthachan, Dr. K. Kunjunn Raja, Dr. V. Venkita Subrahmonia Iyer, Panditarajan Achuta Pothuval, K.P. Narayana Pisharody, Poomully Krishnan

Namputirippadu, K.P.S. Menon, Suresh Avasthi (Secretary, S.N.A. New Delhi), P.K. Narayanan Nampiar, Olappamanna were some of the stalwarts participated in the discussions. More importantly theatre students from America viz. Mr. Clifford Jones and Betty Jones made their entry in to the field; later on they disseminated the art to the outside world by their outstanding contributions such as publishing the Kutiyattam masterpiece *Ascharyachudamani* under the caption *The Wonderous Crest Jewel*. The range of subjects discussed at this seminar covered mainly were: The historical evidences on Kuthu and Kutiyattam in Kerala and Tamil Nadu; Theatre criticism

relating to Kutiyattam expounded in the treatise *Natankusa*; Known Attaprakarams - their dates, contents and usage; The religious aspects of Kutiyattam; Ancient treatises on Kuthambalams; The relation between Angikabhinaya and Literature; Historical evidences on the author of Tapatisamvaranam and Subhadradhananjayam; The musical aspects of the oral renditions in Kutiyattam; The acting method and literary content in Mantrankam; and The growth of Kathakali which branched off from Kutiyattam. This seminar, way back in 1966, was a prophetic pointer to the infinite scope for research and study on theatre aspects and also to the

Performance Repertory

Play	Act	Choreography (Attaprakaram)	No. of days
Subhadradhananjayam by Kulasekharavarman	I	Traditional*	3 (11)
Ascharyachudamani by Saktibhadra	Surpanakhankam	Traditional*	1(5)
Ascharyachudamani by Saktibhadra	Jatayuvadhankam	Traditional*	2(6)
Abhisheka by Bhasa	Balivadhankam	Traditional*	1(5)
Abhisheka by Bhasa	Toranayudhankam	Traditional*	1(6)
Naganandam	II	Painkulam Rama Chakyar	1
Naganandam	III	Painkulam Rama Chakyar	1
Bhagavadajjukiyam by Bodhayana	One-act Play	Painkulam Rama Chakyar	1
Svapnavasavadatham by Bhasa	IV V	Painkulam Rama Chakyar Mani Madhava Chakyar	1 1
Abhijnanasakunalam by Kalidasa	II III	Painkulam Rama Chakyar Mani Madhava Chakyar	1 1
Kalyanasaugandhikam Vyayogam by Neelakantan	One-act play	Painkulam Rama Chakyar Ammannur Madhava Chakyar	1 1
Srikrishnacharitam Nangiari Kuthu	Stories: Kamsotpathi, Ugrasenabandhanam, Putanamoksham, Kaliyamardanam, Govardhanodharanam, Kamsavadham		

* All these plays are edited and choreographed for the stage by the late Maestro Painkulam Rama Chakyar.

ultimate to the acceptance of this art by the world theatre community - proved by the UNESCO recognition of Kutiyattam in 2001 as a world heritage tradition.

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Funding Source

Fully supported by the State Government.

Premises and Equipment

Kalamandalam owns enough Kutiyattam Kalaries (training spaces) and a Kuthampalam (traditional temple theatre) in its campus at Vallathol Nagar.

The concept of replicating a Kuthampalam in a modern setting (outside a temple) was revolutionary. This was carried out by engineer/theatre scholar D. Appukkuttan

Nair, who was an executive member of Kerala Kalamandalam. This dream project became a reality in October, 1977. Today it stands out as a unique theatre structure, a reminder of ages gone by and an unending attraction to visitors of all over the world.

Kalamandalam has a set number of costumes and percussion instruments used for the performances and rehearsals.

Training Faculty

Guru/Teachers in Kutiyattam:

Painkulam Rama Chakyar - Acting
(Chief Guru from 1965-1980)

Mani Madhava Chakyar - Acting
(Visiting Professor for a short period)

Ammannur Madhava Chakyar - Acting
(Visiting Professor for a short period)

P.K. Narayanan Nambiar - Mizhavu
(retired as Professor in 1988)

Kalamandalam Rama Chakyar - Acting
(retired as professor in 2006, continues as Visiting Professor)

Kalamandalam Sivan Nambutiri - Acting
(retired as Professor in 2005)

Kalamandalam Kuthampalam



Kalamandalam Eswaranunni - Mizhavu
(Asst. Professor)

Instructors:

Kalamandalam Girija - Acting
Kalamandalam Shylaja - Acting
Margi Sathi - Acting
Kalamandalam Kanakakumar - Acting
Kalamandalam Prasanna - Acting
Kalamandalam Sangeeth - Acting
Kalamandalam Achuthanandan - Mizhavu

Students/Trainees: At present there are about fifty students including boys and girls studying in the faculty of Kutiyattam.

A non-exhaustive list of very talented Kutiyattam artistes who graduated from Kerala Kalamandalam, but moved out of its portals to work in other institutions is given below:

Acting:

Painkulam Narayana Chakyar
(now at Painkulam Rama Chakyar Smaraka Kalapitam)
Kalamandalam Radhakrishnan
(now at Mani Gurukulam)
Kalamandalam Krishnakumar
(now at S.S. University of Sanskrit, Kalady)
Kalamandalam Ravindran (now at Margi)
Vasanthi Narayanan C.K.
(now at Mani Gurukulam)
Margi Sathi
(worked in Margi and rejoined Kalamandalam)
Margi Usha (now at Margi)
Kalamandalam Sindhu
(now at Mani Gurukulam)
Kalamandalam Krishnendu (now at Margi)

Mizhavu:

Kalamandalam Eswaranunni
(worked in Margi and rejoined Kalamandalam)
Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan Nambiar
(now at Margi)
V.K.K. Hariharan

(now at Mizhavu Kalari)
Kalamandalam Hariharan
(now at Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam)

Kalamandalam Achuthanandan
(worked in Margi and rejoined Kalamandalam)

Kalamandalam Rajeev
(now at Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam)

Kalamandalam Narayanan Nambiar
(now at Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam)

Margi Ramanunni (now at Margi)

Kalamandalam Dhanarajan
(now at Margi)

Kalamandalam Anoop (now at Nephathya)

Kalamandalam Ratheesh Bhas
(now at Nephathya)

Kalamandalam Raman Chakyar
(now at Chachu Chakyar Smaraka Gurukulam)

Almost all the Mizhavu artistes now in the profession working in various institutions are products of Kerala Kalamandalam/ disciples of P.K. Narayanan Nambiar.

Archives

Kalamandalam has a good collection of manuscripts in palm leaf connected with Kutiyattam, Sanskrit dramas of different authors:

- 1) Ascharyachudamani
- 2) Malathimadhavam
- 3) Surpanakhankam
- 4) Pancharatram
- 5) Subhadradhananjayam
- 6) Pratijnayougandharayanam
- 7) Yudhishtiravijayam

Major Publications

- Srikrishnacharitam Nangiaramma Kuthu by P.K. Narayanan Nambiar.
- Natyakalpadrumam by Mani Madhava Chakyar.

- Kalamandalam Thrimasikam series.

Other Informations

Kerala Kalamandalam has instituted fellowships and awards, which are granted annually to outstanding artistes of various disciplines like Kutiyattam, Kathakali etc. These awards are considered as very prestigious since it is given by the premier arts academy of Kerala, a pioneering citadel of theatre arts.

The first ever Kutiyattam group to perform oversease was the Kerala Kalamandalam lead by Painkulam

Rama Chakyar in May, 1981 under the sponsorship of Ms. Milena Salvini. The countries visited were France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Switzerland. In August 1982, a 12 member group of Kerala Kalamandalam visited USA and held performances, workshops in New York at the Universities of Virginia and Visconsin and Smithsonian Institute in Washington. The existance of a unique and 2000 year old theatre tradition in Kerala was a revelation to the theatre experts in United States of America. This is followed by several other oversease performances.

