

# The Artist as Visionary : Guru Vempati Chinna Satyam's Contribution to Kuchipudi

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Guru Vempati Chinna Satyam, who completes 75 this 15th October (he was born on October 15, 1929), is Kuchipudi's gift to the world of Indian Dance. Like the other pioneers of this era and the earlier - Rukmini Devi, Kelucharan Mohapatra

and Birju Maharaj, to name a few - he too worked within the parameters of his chosen art form, and like them, enlarged the creative fecundity by elevating the art form to nobler heights, by giving it a pan-Indian expanse. Vempati brought to Kuchipudi a classical insignia and a global ambience,<sup>1</sup> while retaining his art's roots down to the traditional soil of Kuchipudi.

It is interesting to note that Vempati, the insider, has worked hard for the last fifty years to refurbish the form and format of Kuchipudi. It looks all the more astonishing because some of the other pioneers of the Renaissance- Era of Indian dance do not come from families whose hereditary profession was dance. Rukmini Devi's socio-cultural milieu and Kelu Babu's multi-levelled theatrical exposures guided them into the field of dance since it signified for them what was best in the tradition. But to be in the tradition for 150 years, to look at his own family profession objectively, sit on judgement of the artistic excellence of one's own elders and bring about a revolution - is a stupendous task! Vempati Chinna Satyam (and to some extent, Birju Maharaj) had just done this - regenerating an art form from within!

The trajectory of Vempati's artistic journey was long and fortuitous. With phenomenal zeal, unswerving determination and artistic integrity, he embarked on a difficult journey, overcoming early debacles to reach the pinnacle of artistic excellence. Behind this unique achievement lies a man, humble yet steadfast; knowledgeable and yet ever-learning; rooted in his own soil, but always on flights of new creative imagination. The journey of Vempati and his Kuchipudi art seem to be typically identical: both started like a stream in a tiny spot, strided past hills and valleys and remained ever-expanding, always bubbling with a brimming joy of freshness and vigour.

Born into a modest, yet artistic, family of performers in Kuchipudi village, Vempati has dance in his veins and genes, so to say. A ninth generation practitioner, he had learnt his alphabets in music and dance from Tadepalli Perayya Sastry and Pasumarthi Kondalarayudu. He then came under the tutelage of Vedantam Laxminarayana Sastry, that legendary Guru and illustrious progenitor of present-day Kuchipudi, whose refreshingly original and daringly creative experiments resulted in building a large repertoire for Kuchipudi, teaching boys and girls from non-traditional families and, above all, initiating a solo-system in Kuchipudi dance.<sup>2</sup> No other disciple of Laxminarayana Sastry imbibed his originality of approach and experimental bent of mind as Chinna Satyam did.

However, the confines of a small village bothered Vempati both financially and artistically. He ventured to move out. With a cousin (Vempati Peda Satyam) in the movies at Madras, he thought he could easily eke out his livelihood and an opening for his creative urge. With a short stint in commercial cinema,<sup>3</sup> where established mediocrity

was patronized by the Government. Vempati came out and started giving private tuitions. Then came a hopeful opening with Shanta Rao backing him to start a school.<sup>4</sup> The charming danseuse gave all help but proved to be excessively possessive. Vempati, becoming wiser with experience, ventured into starting his own school at this crucial juncture. The Kuchipudi Art Academy,<sup>5</sup> started in 1963, has since become a Mecca for all aspirants who wanted to learn Kuchipudi. As A. S. Raman, well-respected editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, said as early as in 1973:<sup>6</sup>

Today, 'Kuchipudi' is the word that best sums up the work of just two dedicated men. It is almost synonymous with them. Both bear the same name: Satyam. One is a performer, Vedantam Satyam.<sup>7</sup> The other is a preceptor, Vempati Satyam. Nine out of ten celebrated danseuses must have learnt the Kuchipudi style at his feet at one time or another and the tenth is bound to go to him sooner or later, because no other Guru can supply what is missing in her dance: that elusive 'elan', that flamboyant fluidity which enables her style to come to life.

Other teachers may be more knowledgeable, more competent and more imaginative than he. But he has in abundance something indefinable and they seem to lack it, something which is a blend of learning, sensibility, creativity and expressiveness.

He succeeds professionally where others fail because of his charisma as a teacher.

Groomed as he was on the traditions of Kalapam and Yakshaganam, he soon learnt to distinguish between what was strong in, and so can be borrowed from, the tradition and what more was needed to make Kuchipudi a viable, living form. Capturing the innovative methods of his Guru, Laxminarayana Sastry, the attractive and graceful, though cinematic, choreographies of his cousin, Peda Satyam and the fluency of expression of such eminent dancers as Kamala (Laxman), Vempati's intuitive genius ventured into making Kuchipudi a shastraic form of classical elegance, yet retaining the romantic fervour and theatrical sensibility of his native form, thereby infusing a new grace and vigour, a delicacy of expression and the expanse of body language.

Vempati made new strides in realizing his vision with the growing popularity of his Academy. He taught about a thousand students in the last forty years, many of them, settled either in India or abroad, became, in their own right, knowledgeable teachers and proud propagators of Kuchipudi.<sup>8</sup> He moved on from success to yet another success, with that easy transcendence of a born genius. But, in this his long and strenuous journey he had to encounter several hurdles, both personal and artistic. He never cared, of course, for personal gains and losses, when once the artistic endeavours bore fruit. During these long years of consolidation, Vempati has choreographed at least two hundred new solo items and more than a dozen scintillating dance dramas, which bear ample testimony to his quantitative as well as qualitative creative output.

Vempati's innovations in solo items as well as in dance dramas are too many to mention in passing; but one can venture to find, by tracing some of these, the working of a master choreographer, craftsman and regisseur.<sup>9</sup> According to Vempati, the solos occupy an important place in a dance form's repertoire: "... for the spread of (the) tradition, a strong solo repertoire is a prerequisite."<sup>10</sup> Solos are individual items, taught and learnt separately. They are taught to a single dancer (it may be more) at the convenience of

both the teacher and the taught. As in a group item the choreographer need not concentrate on composition, balance and symmetry. However, as the solo items are important instruments of the profession, and are crucial in a dancer's artistic endeavour, utmost care is to be taken in presentation. Further, if a programme contains six dance numbers, each one must show variety in rhythm, in sahitya, in pace and must be a perfect amalgam of content and technique. For this, the choreographer must search for 'new' treasures or re-do old numbers with a stamp of his own.

The solo numbers Vempati choreographed belonged to both these types: a large number of new pieces find a pride of place in Vempati's repertoire. Ashtapadis, tarangams, padams and keertans by eminent vageyakaras hitherto untouched were newly choreographed by Vempati for the first time. The other type of solo numbers consists of those that are re-choreographed by Vempati, taken from the traditional repertoire. These include items done traditionally as a part of a play, but stand on their own due to their generalized content.

Vempati showed exemplary craftsmanship and imagination in both the newly choreographed and re-choreographed numbers. They contain characteristics that would serve as text book theories. The foremost among them is that Vempati looked at each piece as a "drisyakhanda-kavya" n - a short dramatic piece intended for visual presentation. In such a sense each song is treated as a separate entity by itself and is treated as an independent dramatic piece which has a beginning, a middle and an end. The introductory part is expository, introducing the subject, the characters involved and the mood. It takes off somewhere at the beginning of the second stanza of the song and picks up its pace and moves on to a climactic point and finishes with a summing up of the entire episode's major thrust in the final repetition of the pallavi, winding up the song.

Vempati has said that he had consciously created a structure for each of the categories of solo numbers. He particularly mentioned about his "tarangam structure".<sup>12</sup> The same performance structure was followed by his disciples. Some of the traditional gurus also copied it, though they did not acknowledge. In this connection, one would remember such an attempt by his Guru, Vedantam Laxminarayana Sastry, for padams. He not only created a structure but also wrote it down in black and white. Sastry garu called it a "performance manual", Jaatakam." It is, in a way, a teacher's manual for a padam performance and had showed the way for Vempati to provide authentic structural formulations for all the categories normally used in a Kuchipudi recital.

Vempati said that he structured these pieces for a "solo stage". The word has a new spatial meaning with an altogether new perspective. It is not merely a stage set for a solo dancer; along with it came the lighting design which would place the dancer in perspective. It also includes the area to be covered by the dancer during the number. A lot of dramatic activity is to be created for the dancer to interpret the lines in the prescribed emotional spectrum. In order to achieve this, Vempati had invented some performative techniques and the result was exceedingly pleasing.

The first important thing that is discernible, both in the solo pieces as well as dance dramas, is the way he worked out the entrances and exits.<sup>14</sup> Each entry and exit are carefully organized to give a dramatic start and an equally dramatic finish. Within these parameters, each solo item is choreographed with a growing tempo in mind. The jatis are so carefully jettisoned that they stand as both emotional pieces (to carry on the

Nritya technique of Kuchipudi."<sup>17</sup> He also followed his great guru's quick - silver hand gestures and use as many sancharis as possible to highlight the interpretations possible in great texts.

A word about the re-choreographed solo numbers. In fact these are the ones that are popular in traditional Yakshaganas and Kalapams. Some of them were earlier choreographed by his own Guru, Vedantam Laxminarayana Sastry. They serve, in fact, as a link between the tradition and modernity. Since in the traditional practice these were performed as parts of a major Yakshagana, they needed a separate performative treatment when shown as solo pieces. He was also conscious that these pieces serve as *raison d'être* of his choreographic abilities, and would have to stand the scrutiny of the traditional gurus. Vempati stood unhampered. The "letter sequence" in Bhamakalapam holds good as a perfect example of Vempati's attitude to "dancic visualization". Earlier, the 'lekha' was rendered by the performer, sitting at one place and simulating writing a letter with a few 'mudras' used occasionally. Vempati was against "static" position of Satyabhama for almost 12 minutes. He made his Bhama stand up, move about, use charis and mudras to comment upon the action. Some of the predominant changes in *angika* rendering in the dance dramas throw light on Vempati's attitude to *abhinaya* more elaborately.<sup>18</sup> Vempati will be remembered for his illuminating versions of choreographed numbers. He is solely responsible for consolidating the solo system in Kuchipudi. ;

Vempati has to date choreographed fifteen dance dramas, starting with Srikrishna Parijatham . It was followed, in regular intervals, by Chandalika, Ksheerasagara Madhanam, Kalyana Sakuntalam, Vipranarayana Charitra, Menaka Viswamitram, Padmavathi Srinivasa Kalyanam, Bhamakalapam, Kalyana Rukmini, Haravilasam, Siva Dhanurbhagam, Arthanareeswaram, Sri Pada Parijatham, Kiratarjuneeyam and his recent Gopika Krishna. These dance dramas occupy a coveted place in Vempati Chinna Satyam's entire creative output.

A majority of these dance dramas is the combined work of three luminaries. Vempati is the leader of this group as the choreographer, S.V. Bhujangaraya Sarma, Head of the Dept. of Telugu at Jawahar Bharati and P. Sangeeta Rao, a veena expert who was associating Ghantasala Venkateswara Rao, a noted singer in movies and music director. The coming together of these three ushered in a golden age in Kuchipudi dance history. Sarma was the author of the majority of Vempati's dance dramas and Sangeeta Rao set the musical score to most of the plays except the earliest ones. Vempati himself was very ardently touchy about their relationship. Writing about the preliminary preparations I for rehearsing Padmavati Srinivasa Kalyanam, Vempati says: <sup>19</sup>

Right from the moment we conceived the theme, myself, Bhujangaraya Sarma (the script writer) and Sangeeta Rao (music director, even though initially Bhavanaryana Rao was associated for music compositions) were constantly discussing and each time modifying and composing either the script or music, to suit to the needs of the performance. Perhaps it could be said that they gave shape to my imagination in terms of using a word at some point or making a note at the other. Such perfect rapport we had with each other that this team work is the major cause, that make my productions what they are.

In fact, Vempati has been fed on the intricacies of Natya, the dramatic mode, since he was four. The 'Natya Mela' tradition and the 'dramatic' mode in the Kuchipudi tradition had always been its high watermark of achievement. Vempati has a natural instinct for the 'dramatic' and even in the solo items he choreographed, he gave special attention to 'angika' and 'sattvika'. The predominance of physical action (through charis and mudras, through gati bhedas in stage walk) could be seen even in shorter pieces. The same practice proved more successful in dance-dramas for, as Vempati visualized, characters can be distinguished through 'angika'. This is more important in the absence of 'vachika' for the characters, though it comes from the vocalists.

The second important deviation Vempati brought about in his dance dramas is complete elimination of the characters speaking the dialogue directly. The dialogue and the narration, instead, are given to the vocalists. The traditional Yakshagana, from which sprang the present day dance drama, was full of vachika. In fact, several classical dance forms are text-specific. Within the parameters prescribed by the text, the choreographer and the dancer might instill variety and bring about some variations. But in dance dramas character dialogue, either in prose or song, is relegated to the singers. This change is emphasized by Sangeeta Rao, the music director. "His works of dance drama project the characteristics of Western Opera and ballet... He has relied heavily on Natya Dharmi than on Lok Dharmi and has avoided such rustic indulgences as dialogues..."<sup>2</sup> At the outset, this appears to be a great handicap. In fact, earlier critics found this unacceptable, for the strength of Kuchipudi lay in the rendering of the dialogue by the character himself. But Vempati felt it more a hindrance than an advantage. As he is working in a cosmopolitan milieu, many of his dancers are non-Telugu ones. And more often than not, they are all women taking up the roles of men. Their speaking out the dialogues of a male character which they are donning would look as inappropriate as the males doing the female roles and speaking their dialogues.

The solution found by Vempati was perfectly in tune with the needs of the hour. This is also a practice in several other dance dramas found elsewhere in India.

The third prominent deviation found in Vempati's dance dramas is that they are dominated by female performers. Sometimes they are all-female presentations. From an all-male tradition to an all-female practice seems, at first, a dichotomy, brought into the transition of the tradition. But Vempati proved right again for, instead of relying upon unwilling and undependable male actors, to have most dependable and more than willing female participants would vouchsafe the success of the project. No less a dance observer and critic than Subbudu lauded this particular changed phenomenon of Vempati's choreographic perception:<sup>21</sup>

I know how difficult it is for creative artists to effect improvements in art forms, without, of course, destroying the basic tenets. It is but proper that Kuchipudi must also undergo a sea-change. It is, therefore, to the credit of Vempati that he has heralded a new era by choreographing a Kuchipudi dance drama with women participants. Its innate charm can be appreciated only as a ballet.

Another significant change that Vempati incorporated is with regard to the musical score of the dance dramas. It is true that Vempati gave the top most importance to 'Sahitya'. And then came choreography and music direction. Music used in traditional pieces is limited to a few raga-scales. It is also not always certain that the ragas are so

selected that they reflect the mood of the situation. Vempati implemented a sea-change in dance-drama music. First of all, he sat with his librettist Bhujangaraya Sarma and his music director Sangeeta Rao to decide on the musical demands of the text. The criteria were simple. Music should reflect the mood of the scene and define the character. Vempati's penchant for classical music is certainly one of the main reasons for upholding the classical image of Kuchipudi. However, he always allowed his music director, to experiment. Sangeeta Rao tells us how the "trimuverte" decided on having Hindusthani ragas where desired. And at appropriate places, he also chose folk tunes. For example, for the lilting music of the milk maid and the buoyancy of the bangle-seller in Chandalika, proper folk tunes were used.<sup>22</sup> Similarly in Kalyana Rukmini, the use of Hindusthani scales for emotional scenes and Carnatic scales for samvadas and for voicing morals went extremely well with the audience. Another major experiment in the use of music could be found in Padmavathi Srinivasam: all the popular features of Carnatic style - kriti, padam, javali and even ragam-tanam-pallavi - find their place in it to the connoisseur's delight.

"Sandhi Vachanam" (a connective interlude in prose) is a prominent narrative part of a Yakshagana. When Vempati restructured Srikrishna Parijatham, the Sandhi Vachanam disappeared and in their place a whole scene of Narada giving the parijatha flower to Srikrishna is introduced. True, a song in the place of a prose narration would extend the time of the dance drama, but it fits into Vempati's choreographic system. (It, in fact, adds to the dramatic effect of the play since both Srikrishna and Narada play their pranks and the scene works wonders from the point of view of the audience). Thus, in several places narrative episodes give place to dramatic ones. In Bhamakalapam, it is not only the minimized dialogue that is noteworthy, but using padyams in stead of dialogue sequences which added to the dramatic effect:<sup>23</sup>

Further, to make it more appealing to the wider range of audiences, mainly cosmopolitan in nature, I chose to minimize the dialogues and in their place, introduce verses that give scope to abhinaya through gestures and facial expression, which can appeal to any kind of audience. Each and every daruvu right from the Jadavrittantam (the story of the popular plait of Satyabhama) was rewritten and choreographed. However, out of these daruvus, I wish to mention the daruvu, Siggayenoyamma. It was traditionally performed with Satyabhama covering her face with a veil suggesting her bashfulness. However, I felt that this should be done through abhinaya and, in the process, developed a dialogue between Satyabhama and Madhavi, her close confidante.

One example of how the appropriate raga is chosen to invoke the mood can be seen in the music maestro, Sangeeta Rao's own words:<sup>24</sup>

The use of Bilakshani Todi to bring out the feeling of separation in Lord Siva after the flames consume Sati; his consort, is apt as no other scale in any other style would have given the desired result. Similarly the Desi nature of the ragas for the marriage preparations and raag Punnagavarali while Parvati is made-up as a bride, reinforce the mood of the scene : and invoke a feeling of rare experience in the viewers.

The scope for experiment is successfully tested in this ballet as the composition "Aamani vachchi vaali" set in a literary meter known as Khanda Gathi, in raagamalika, is presented in misra jaathi Jhampa Taala using an

unusual pace (tempo) of Madhyama kaala. The general practice is to use this taala in dhruta kaala. In effect the literary meter of Khanda Gathi is converted into musical meter of Chaturasra Gathi to make it amenable to the expression of Natya.

Though these manifestations of music, text preparation and lighting are also essential in making the dance drama aesthetically pleasing, choreography is at the centre of it. Vempati's choreographic feats are too many to mention here. Two important examples may be cited: one was with regard to Chandalika, a unique play of Rabindranath Tagore. This is the only play choreographed by Vempati which has social milieu. It has a modern, social theme. To choreograph a dance drama based on mythology, there are precedents from tradition, at least a model. But Vempati has to rely entirely on his own imaginative capabilities. How he worked on it may be summed up in his own words:<sup>25</sup>

Responding to the requirement of the theme, I adopted my dance technique and created a folk milieu in the dances of flower vendors, milkmaids and bangle sellers. In the process, the dances were choreographed giving a lilt to the dance movements of the milkmaids and a buoyancy to those of the bangle seller adopting gatis like chaturasra and tisra. However, the significant part of my experimentation in Chandalika is, the dance I composed for Maya, mother of Prakriti (the main character in Chandalika). Conceding to the request of her daughter to bring back the Buddha Bhikshu, Maya invokes the evil spirits. In this scene, there is no song, I took the help of instrumental music and rhythm intermingled with jatis that contain such sounds which create an atmosphere of something unusual like, Dhim, tadhim, etc. In choreography, along with Maya, a group of six girls representing the spirits were introduced. Their costumes were suitably made with flowing garments and hair let loose. The movements were large, reaching out into the air, creating circles in the space. Starting with a new tempo, the dance of Maya, encircled by six spirits who dance at her command, reaches its climax in fast tempo within a span of ten minutes. Though some expressed their doubts about its appeal during the practice sessions, my persistence to retain it proved to be right, since it is one of the scenes that really moved the audiences.

Choreography also includes using space, composition and decor. Traditional Yakshaganas had no concept of composition and using the entire stage space judiciously and aesthetically. Vempati's imaginative work in this area equals the work of Rukmini Devi Arundale in her dance dramas, and, in fact, goes nearer to some of the experiments in modern dance in recent years.

The use of symbolic decor, by and large, is a common feature in dance dramas all over the country. Vempati used this technique again and again. For example, in Padmavati Srinivasa Kalyunam, suggestive properties like a swan and a lotus, painted on a curtain and hung at the back as a drop to suggest Brahmhaloka and the crescent moon and a trident (trishula) to suggest Kailasa.<sup>26</sup>

One of the most fascinating elements of Vempati's choreography lies in his imaginative creation of "human decor" on the stage. Unlike the general setting in the background, which is sometimes elaborate and sometimes suggestive, the "human decor" may be defined as a choreographer's "visual imagery" of using human artists for creating non-human effects, be it as animals or mountains, or simply to extract a striking visual image.

In Padmavati Srinivasa Kalyanam he brought a cow and a calf on to the stage with four artists. One artist bent over the other at a distance and both covered by a white cloth made the cow. A tail and a cow mask completed the figure. So was the

case with the calf. The movements of the cows were carefully choreographed to synchronize with the dance movements of the gollabhama. Ploughing the field with bullocks on either side of the plough is again a similar "trick" which mesmerized the audiences of the same play.<sup>27</sup>

The "human decor" is nowhere better shown than in the "Sati Dahana" episode in Haravilasam. It is an effective scene in which Daksha's daughter burns herself after she was insulted. This could either be simply narrated through a song as a narrative commentary by the singer or can be visually presented through lighting effects. Vempati was not satisfied. He wanted something to be "shown on the stage", to have a strong visual effect. He created a wonderful stage picture through "human decor", which highlighted the entire scene and made it a memorable visual. This is what Vempati has to say about choreographing this scene.<sup>28</sup>

During its choreography, especially in the scene of Satidahana, where Sati burns herself after being humiliated by Daksha. The question was how to show it. A ready-made suggestion was that it should be portrayed with the help of lighting technique. I was not convinced. After prolonged thought, I felt I should create the needed effect through movement and aharya. A group of girls dressed in red were used for the same. As soon as Sati tries to immolate herself, these girls rush on to the stage in a single file with swift movement, throwing up their arms while quickly fluttering them to suggest the flames and enriches Sati, indicating the flames engulfing her. This was one experiment which was applauded by no less a person than Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan,

If I am asked to mention one single major contribution of Vempati to Kuchipudi I would say "his visual aesthetics". He knew the nature of the theatrical practices and had a thorough grounding in rhythm and pace. He has gained a fine sense of colour and shade, a mastery over stage compositions and stage pictures. Adept in Natya Sastra practices, he easily correlated them with the traditional practices in which he was trained early in life. But, above all, he has the audience and their enjoyment and approval at the top of his work's ideal. Perhaps, to say that would be, at best, a half-truth. It might seem that his sense of "visual aesthetics" is aimed at pleasing his audience. But, I think, the fruition of all artistic endeavour emanates from an artist's desire for creating and realizing a soul-filling experience, first of all for himself and then for all those who share the experience. For the best among artists, audience enjoyment and self-fulfilment are two sides of the same coin. And Vempati Chinna Satyam is easily one of such best that recreated a dance idiom to suit his contemporary social, cultural and aesthetic milieu.

About how many dancers and dance teachers in contemporary India can you say that ?

Kudos, Master! May Nataraja give you many more healthy and creative years...

## REFERENCES:

1. In this age of Diaspora, tours are the major media of communication. Great masters, with their single-minded devotion to the art, have always helped students to establish schools both in India and abroad. Vempati toured several countries either on the invitation of the students, an ICCR exchange programme or a Festival of India programme.  
In fact, he is right now on a long tour to U.S.A. It will be during this tour that his 75th Birthday Celebrations will be held in Washington D.C. on 15th and 16th of October, 2004.
2. Vedantam Laxminarayana Sastry was one of the three leaders of Kuchipudi renaissance, the other two being Chinta Venkataramaiah and Vempati Venkatanarayana.  
A great scholar, performer and teacher, Vedantam is a Guru's Guru, for all great teachers of the next generation were his disciples.  
For details of his life and work, see Nartanam, Vol. II, No. 2, (April-June, 2002), Special Issue on Vedantam Laxminarayan Sastry.
3. Satyam's work in films was two-fold. He assisted his cousin, Vempati Peda Satyam and Vedantam Raghavaiah with credits being given to them. He must have worked over 50 films like this. Though he independently choreographed dance items in "Peda Raitu" (1952), he was given credit as a Dance Director only in Parvati Kalyanam (1956). During the next few years, he was in and out of films.
4. For Shanta Rao's involvement with the school, see Andavilli Satyanarayana & Pemmaraju Surya Rao: Dr. Vempati - Maestro with a Mission, Vijayawada, 1994, p.8.
5. Kuchipudi Art Academy, started in 1963, is a centre to train the young aspirants in the Kuchipudi style. Its objectives were eight-fold, the most important one being training and dissemination of Kuchipudi.  
For the eight objectives, please see Kuchipudi Mahotsav Souvenir, Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Bombay, 1996.
6. A.S. Raman, Times Weekly April 8, 1973.
7. Padmashri Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma is a well-known Kuchipudi performer, donning female roles. His major roles are Satyabhama in Bhamakalapam, and Usha in Usha Parinayam.
8. Some of the more well-known disciples are: Vyjayantimala, Hema Majjini, Sobha Naidu, Prabha, Bala, Kamala Reddy, Sasikala, Kamadev, Manju Bhargavi, Vedantam Rattaiah Sarma, Madhavapeddy Murthy, Vedantam Ramu, Kalpalathika, Anuradha Nehru, Anuradha J, Padma Menon, Kshemavathi and, of course, Ravi Shankar and Sri Vidya, his own son and daughter-in-law.
9. Regisseur: an artistic director of any play. A French word used in English.
10. K. Subadra Murthy (ed.) Kuchipudi Mahotsav Souvenir, Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Bombay, 1996, p. 97.
11. Drama is usually considered a "drisyā kavya", "an epic poem for seeing". A solo

- number is like a short dramatic poem (Khanda-Kavya) which is set for presentation and spectators' viewing.
12. Kuchipudi Mahotsav Souvenir, Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Bombay, 1996, p. 97.
  13. For a detailed description of "Jaatakam", please see M. Nagabhushana Sarma, "Vedantama Laxminarayana Sastry: His Life, Times and Achievement," Nartanam, Vol. II, No. 2 (April-June, 2002).
  14. Vempati himself said that he took care to "stylize the entry and exit of each number". See Vempati Chinna Satyam, "My Experiments with Kuchipudi", Kuchipudi Mahotsav Souvenir, Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Bombay, 1996, p. 97.
  15. Ibid.
  16. Examples of how and what kind of technical aspects of angikabhinaya Vempati had made use of are narrated shortly in the Kuchipudi Mahotsav Souvenir, Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Bombay, 1996, p. 97.
  17. Ibid.
  18. Ibid.
  19. Ibid, p. 95
  20. Sangeeta Rao P, "Kuchipudi Sangeeta Nruthya Rupakam", Kuchipudi Mahotsav Souvenir, Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Bombay, 1996, p. 154.
  21. Subbudu as quoted in Andavilli Satyanarayana and Pemmaraju Surya Rao, Dr. Vempati: Maestro with a Mission, 1994, p. 104.
  22. Sangeeta Rao P, "Kuchipudi Sangeeta Nruthya Rupakam", Kuchipudi Mahotsav Souvenir, Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Bombay, 1996, p. 154.
  23. Chinna Satyam, "My Experiments with Kuchipudi", Kuchipudi Mahotsav Souvenir, Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Bombay, 1996, p. 96.
  24. Sangeeta Rao P. "Kuchipudi Sangeeta Nrutya Rupakam", Kuchipudi Mahotsav Souvenir, Kuchipudi Kala Kendra, Bombay, 1996, p. 155.
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