

***SEKAPURUSHA  
BHARATA KALA PRAPURNA  
SRI VEDANTAM RAGHAVIAH  
A KUCHIPUDI LAGEND***



**VEDANTAM RAGHAVAIAH**

**Reams of papers have been written about a fascinating, colossal and legendary personality - Vedantam Raghavaiah, who ruled the world of Kuchipudi dance & South Indian film field as an uncrowned King for over four & half decades (47years) in 20th century. One can never get tired of retelling his story since the greater heights reached by him in both the classical dance form and the glamour cinema world are firmly etched as one of the golden periods of Kuchipudi. He was destined to be great, since he hailed from a traditional vedantam family' Kuchipudi, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh . Vedantam familie migrated (11 generations) from Kunchavaram Agraharam near Tenali. This Agraharam was gifted by Raja Venkatadrinaidu to YAJURVEDIC Brahmins (Ghanapaties ) of VEDANTAM families, Storch bearers for centuries of the popular classical art form of Andhra Pradesh.**

**Raghavaiah was born on 8th June 1919 in kuchipudi village**

to Vedantam Ramayya and Annapurnamma. Who had 8 children in total .

1. Vedantam Raghavaia Sriramalakshmi.

2. Pasumarthi Arudhathi Adinarayana.

3. Somayajula Haimavathi Satyyannarayana.

4. Bhagavatula Ramalakshmi Ramakotaiah.

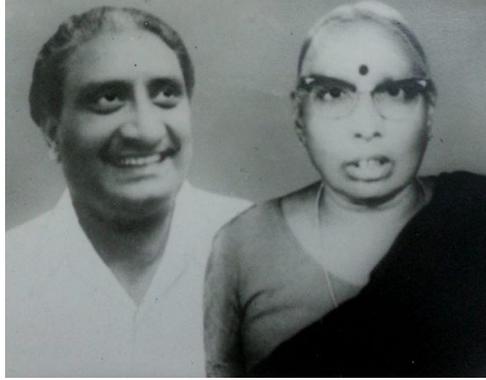
5. Josyula Venkatalakshmi Srihariprasadarao.

6. Vedantam Venkatachalapatisarma Subbalakshmi.

7. yeleswarapu Sriparvati Rmalingeswarasarma.

8. Vedantam venkataranasarma Rajyalakshmi.

- **Raghavaiah, married, his, own, maternal uncle, Hari, Punnaiah's 5 year old daughter**



**Sriramalakshmi at the age of 9 in the year of 1928 According to the then existing customary system of performing five day marriage function in Kuchipudi village. He was blessed with four children, three daughter's and one son.**

**1. BOKKALALITHADEVISITARAMAIAH.**



**2. MANTRALA RAJYALAKSHMI UMAMAHESWARARAO**



**3. B.MADUSUDHANASANKAR.**



**4. RAMACHANDRAVARAPRASAD(RAMU)**





VEDANTAM RAGHAIAAH



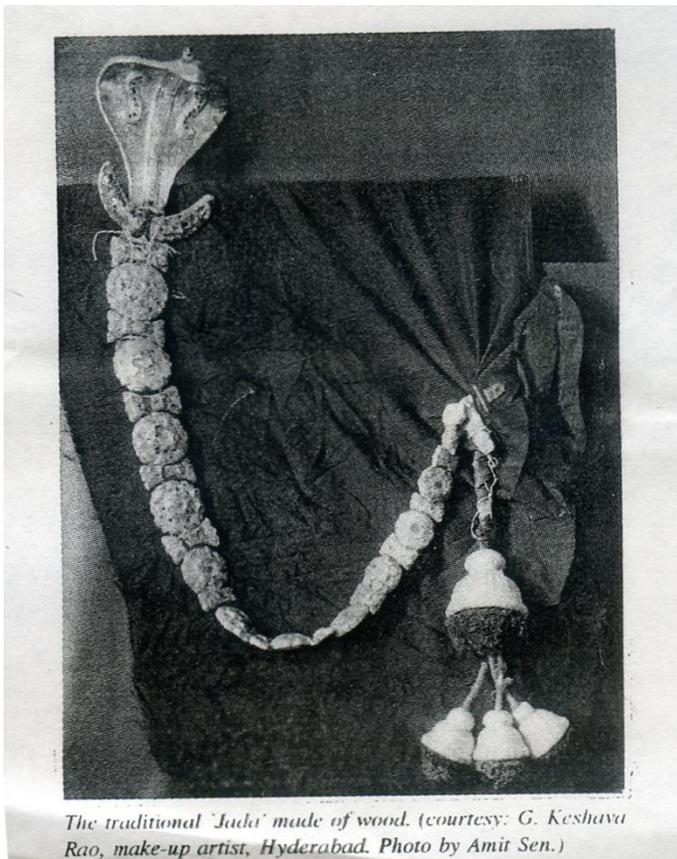
VEDANTAM RAGHAIAAH

**He started his formal training in Dance (yakshagana) and Music (yakshagana Sampradaya Sangeetam) from his father at a very tender age of five and later he continued under the tutelage of Yakshagana Pitamaha Sri Chinta Venkataramayya and Natyakalanidhi, Shadbharathkalanidhi, Abhinaya Brahma Sri Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry. He had also mastered the languages of Sanskrit & Telugu from one of his cousin's Bhagavatula Sitaramaswami a scholar within a very short span of time because by birth he was an 'Ekasanthagrahi. He very quickly became one of the star students of Kuchipudi Yakshagana tradition. He became a poet (Asukavi) also. He used to dance and sing impromptu while entering the stage for this talent**

he was called assukavi or vaggeyakara. He plunged head long with his heart and soul with an unknown level of devotion & passion and quickly imbibed the various techniques of dance, music and tala and above all stage presentation, simultaneously absorbing all the nuances of laya undera, genius 'LayaBrahma' (Kaliyuga Satyabhama) Vempati Venkatanarayana. When most kids of his age were busy with their play toys, Raghavaiah, toyed with (dance) plays, made his debut performance at the age of seven, as Prahlada, which was awarded so many Gold medals by the British Government and others. According to many artistes of his time, this signaled the 'Golden Era of Kuchipudi', since this is acclaimed to be the first such recorded accolade given to the art form by the then rulers of the land. From then there was no looking back and he excelled in the roles of Lohitasya, prahallada, Lava Kusa and others. However, his speciality or penchant if one can say so was that of female impersonator. He became one of the outstanding of his time by mastering the Kaisiki vritti. Raghavaiah was equally adept in music world & Kuchipudi traditional music (Kuchipudi Sampradaya Sangitam), sang while performing like Kuchipudi Yakshagana artists playing on the 'Mukhya Sancharas' or the key-notes of every raga of any daruvu and this made his performance very

memorable and soul stirring. His effortless performances in the characters of

Usha in Ushaparinaya yakshaganam, Sita in Ramanataka yakshaganam, Leelavathi, in Prahallada yakshaganam, Chandramathi, in Harischandra nataka yakshaganam, Sasirekha, in Sasirekshaparinaya yakshaganam, Mohini in Mohini Rukmangada yakshaganam, Rukmini in Rukminikalyanayakshaganam and Satyabhama in Bhamakalapa yakshaganam are still revered.



PRAHLADA YAKSHAGANAM ( 1890 )



HIRANYAKASIPU  
(Hari Chalapathi)

LEELAVATHY  
(Vempati Paradesi)

NARADA  
(Chinta Venkatramayya)

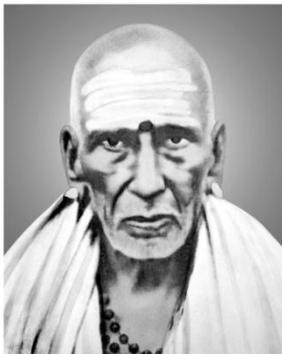
**once**

**prahallada yakshaganam was performed in a village.thousands of audianticies were jampacked. Raghavaiah set an artificial pillar with the barks of bananatree,where from inside that pillar narasimha avatar would come out bouncing.he aranged men holding lamps(kagadas) on which salgumpowder sprinkled either side of the pillar in the show when nrusimha bounce out of the pillar with effects of light, with nrusimha karalam people were astonished. This is one of the raghavaiah's unique creations.**

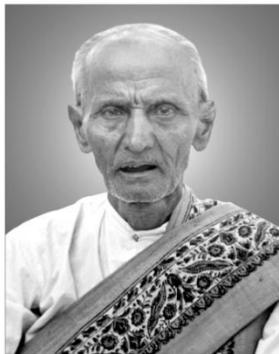
**Once in Chennai The International Kathak Mastro Gopikrishna happened to see Raghavaiah's performance and got spellbound . He appreciated Raghavaiah saying that he was really a Great Dancer. The very next day it so happened that Raghavaiah**

**was able to see the great performance of Gopikrishna at the same venue . Then Raghavaiah got doubly spellbound and embraced him and said that Gopikrishna was still a Great dancer, then onwards both became close friends in the Star world.**

## **HIS GURU'S**



CHINTA VENKATARAMAYYA



VEDANTAM LAKSHMINARAYANA SASTRY

**Folklore says that people used to travel miles to see him in his famous female impersonator Rupaanurupam roles. His ‘Ushaparinayam’ was considered to be enough for liberation and thus people used to come in droves from afar as if it was a pilgrimage to watch his performance.**

**In the days where there were no action replays, freeze frames, giant screens, dolby sound systems, etc., it is learnt that the plays of Vedantam Raghavaiah not only attracted audience from far and wide but also they were unruly and difficult to control since all of them wanted to view from close quarters from a vantage position. This necessitated, perhaps for the**

**first time, police protection / intervention in such performances of the time just when he was being branded as an excellent female impersonator, he took it upon himself and created waves by performing the key male roles like Harischandra, Hiranyakashyapa, Gaya, Rama and Krishna. Any role played by him became a rave among the audience and he carried with aplomb, not even suggesting an iota, the difficulty of playing such versatile roles. He performed unique items like Bala Gopala Tarangam with dancing on brass plate balancing a water vessel on his head. He has the unique distinction of being one of the first to perform Narayana Theertha's "Krinshna Leela Tarangini" Taragam called Balagopala by including the brass plate and water vessel (a small pot) depicting the Yoga Sastra slokha**

**PUNKHANU PUNKHAVISHAYEKSHANATATPAROPI  
BRAMHAVALOKA NADHIYAM NAJAHATIYOGI  
SANGEETA TALA VADYA VASAM GATAPI  
MOULISTA KUMBHA PARIRAKSHANA DHIRNATIVA'**

**The meaning of the sloka is that a Yogi who sits on meditation reaches the Parabrahma state unmindful of having to go through lot of distractions on the way is called as a Siddhayogi. Likewise the dancer stands on the brass plate and balances the water vessel on the head and successfully completes**

**the dance is called as Natyasidhi. He performed this dance in the film Mohini Rukmangada also.**



**His solo items included ‘Saa Virahē Thavadeēnaa Radha’ from Jayadeva’s Ashtapadi, the Dasavathara Shabdam written by Sidhabattula Rangadasu of Pedapulivarru, Andhara Pradesh (also performed in the film ‘Raitu Bidda’) and ‘Kanto Yaasyathi Dura Desa Mithi’ slokam from Pushpa Bana Vilasam, javalis, shabdas among others. It is felt that his abhinayas as a Kuchipudi artist is par excellence and nobody could equal him up to this day.**