

*This little book on
Sri R. Venkataraman
former President of India
and Chairman,
Kalakshetra Foundation
is offered as
a token of love and
esteem from
the Kalakshetra family*

*Penned by
Smt Shakuntala Ramani*

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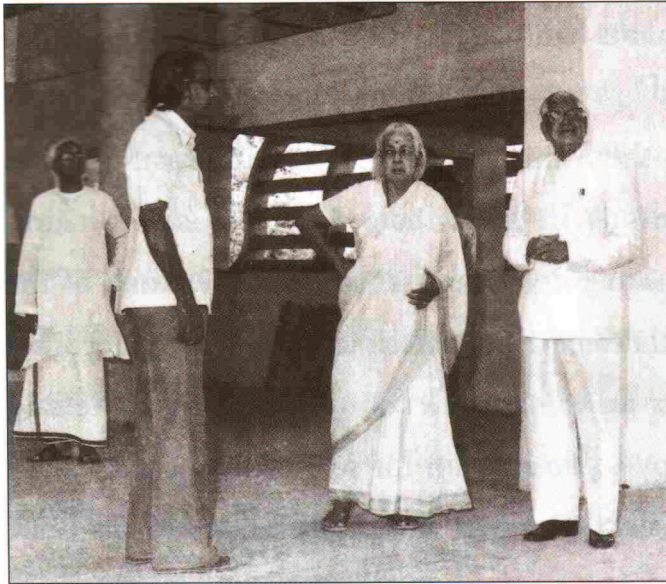
Sri R. Venkataraman, Former President of India has held many key positions in the political arena of the nation. A patriot and freedom fighter he courted imprisonment during the Quit India movement and after Independence served the country in various ways, moving closely with the architects of modern India like Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Kamaraj and others. During his tenure as President of India from 1987 to 1992, he steered the country through choppy waters - a period which saw the rise and fall of four Prime Ministers; Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, Chandrasekhar and P.V. Narasimha Rao. Speaking of this eventful period he once said in his inimitable light hearted manner -

“The office of the President is like an emergency lamp. It comes on automatically when there is a crisis and goes off automatically when the crisis passes!”

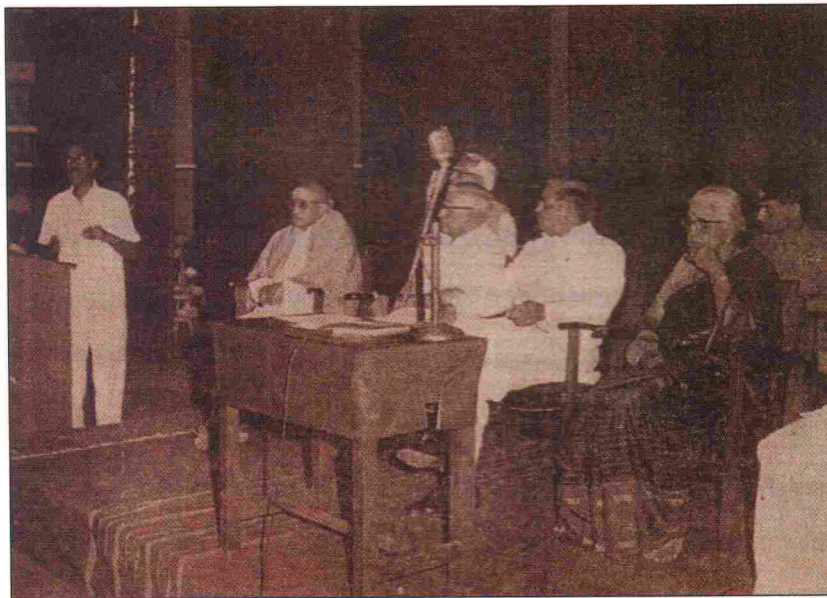
Like the emergency lamp which brings succour in moments of darkness and despair and just as indispensable, Sri Venkataraman has been a beacon light not only as “Rashtrapati” but also as patron of many institutions that were fortunate to have him at their head. Kalakshetra was one such.

In Kalakshetra, the light flickered and went out soon after the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the institution in December 1985. Rukmini Devi, Founder President of Kalakshetra, had glowed with an incandescent spirit right through the festivities inspite of failing health, but succumbed soon after the celebrations were over and died on February 24th, 1986. The darkness that enveloped Kalakshetra at her passing was total. It was as though the very life of the institution had been snuffed out.

A pioneer and brave fighter all her life, Rukmini Devi had never allowed any obstacle to come in the way of her dreams. She never allowed any obstacle to come in the way of her dreams. She always planned big and the Golden Jubilee saw the culmination of her cherished desire “to build a TEMPLE for the dance” - a traditional Koothambalam built according to the tenets of Natyasastra which would be totally Indian in design. The building of this ‘temple’ however posed immense problems, placing an enormous financial burden on the slender resources of the institution. The older theatre in the campus, built with semi permanent materials had collapsed and Kalakshetra was left without a theatre for its performances. The institution, being run on



Rukmini Devi with
Sri R. Venkataraman during
the construction of
the Theatre



Art Festival at the Music Academy Smt. Rukmini Devi, Sri. Mohanlal Sukhadia,
Governor of Madras, Sri R. Venkataraman, and Semmangudi Sreenivas Iyer.
Secretary Sri Krishnamurti welcoming the gathering

meagre government grants had to raise funds mostly through dance programmes.

In the year 1976 the Annual Art Festival for the first time was held outside the campus in the Music Academy auditorium. Speaking on the occasion Sri. Venkataraman, who was one of the Vice Presidents of Kalakshetra at that time, referred humorously to his frequent role as raiser of funds for various causes. He said that he would be happy to do it again for so worthy a cause as the Kalakshetra theatre. Kalakshetra had always been close to his heart and as Minister of Industries between 1957-1967 in the erstwhile Madras State, he was a frequent visitor to the campus. In February 1980 before leaving to take charge as Finance Minister in the Union Cabinet, replying to felicitations in Kalakshetra, he said,

“I have always regarded Kalakshetra as the symbol of Indian Culture. Whenever I go aboard, I try to interest people who are in Geneva, Paris, London and elsewhere, in the activities of Kalakshetra, and enroll subscribers for your excellent magazine. Yours is an institution, which tries to preserve the purity of our arts against onslaughts of vulgarity. It is this, which is the great service Smt. Rukmini Devi is doing through Kalakshetra. I helped

donations from well wishers and with the establishment of the School of Sculpture at Mahabalipuram. The students trained in this School, later helped to build the Vivekananda Rock Memorial near Kanyakumari. Similarly they were able to help in the renovation of several temples in the South. Let me assure Smt. Rukmini Devi that I will continue to give her work every support from the Government of India.

I have taken certain responsibilities in the Government knowing full well, things have not been going on as they ought to. All I can say with humility and understanding is that one can only try to do his best irrespective of the results. In the words of the 'Gita' - *Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phalesu kadachanah*. In the same way I can only try to do, by right action what is best for all, in the interests of the nation. I am indeed very happy to be with all of you and I enjoyed myself because I am part of this work".

It was but natural that Sri Venkataraman considered himself part of the work. His association with Rukmini Devi had been long and enduring. As compatriots in the Indian Freedom struggle they had both been inspired by Dr. Annie Besant, one of the early leaders of the Indian National Congress. Rukmini Devi's vision of

India's traditional culture was very similar to his own, coming as they both did, from the hoary, tradition-bound culture, of the Cauvery delta in the Tanjore region.

As patron and Vice President of Kalakshetra for many years Shri Venkataraman was a staunch friend of the institution always available for advise and support. Even though he had to demit such responsibilities during his tenure as President his moral support was always available.

It is not surprising therefore that in its hour of darkness the Kalakshetra family turned to its 'Pitamaha' for guidance. In a moving speech at the first Art Festival of the Institution after Rukmini Devi's demise he said,

"..... A visit to Kalakshetra is always a pleasure. And a visit to Kalakshetra during its Art Festival is a greater pleasure. And so, at the outset, may I express my sincere thanks to Shri Sankara Menon and the Kalakshetra 'family' for giving me the opportunity of participating in its Arts Festival this year and thereby continuing a cherished association. This time, however, along with the pleasure there comes also a pang of pain. Along with everyone else here I involuntarily look around for a familiar presence, alas in vain. I

miss the beaming smile of welcome and the benevolent kindness of the universal aunt, our Atthai, that used to greet me whenever I visited Kalakshetra.

This is the first time an Art Festival is being held at Kalakshetra without the presence of Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale, who founded Kalakshetra and served it till the last breath of her life. She was its soul, its spirit. Kalakshetra without Rukmini Devi is like Rishi Kanva's tapovana after Shakuntala left it . For us, visitors to the tapovana, notwithstanding the beauty that surrounds us here and notwithstanding the grace of Kalakshetra, which is imperishable, a sense of emptiness overpowers.

Kalakshetra has, over the years, come to hold all the different segments of kala together like the several colourful pieces that go to make a pattern inside a kaleidoscope. With each turn, a new pattern takes form, a new harmony and a new balance. But the pieces are essentially the same. Kalakshetra, therefore, has become a kalakshetra for a spectrum of the performing arts, for crafts, for hand-weaving and for textile printing. Be it in drawing the simple kolam or the making of palm-leaf torana, or creating this magnificent Koothambala, every manifestation of art here is complete in itself and yet lends its beauty

to the great composite personality of Kalakshetra. In this, Kalakshetra is to be compared only with Santiniketan. This kind of mutuality and interrelatedness can only be possible, if underlying all the different facets there is a central theme. Here in Kalakshetra, that central theme has been Natya, in its widest sense.

The Natya Sastra says:

Na tat jnanam na tat shilpam na sa vidya na sa kala

Na sau yogou ha tat karma natyesmin yanna drasyate.

That is not jnana; that is not sculpture; that is not vidya; that is not art; neither yoga, nor karma, where there is no element of natya. And by natya we must remember, is meant not just dance or drama in the conventional sense but poise, grace and balance. All craftsmanship of quality possesses these attributes.

I congratulate Kalakshetra, Shri Sankara Menon and the devoted team of teachers and artistes for maintaining the same high quality that Rukmini Devi used to. This is the Golden Jubilee year of the institution. I am sure Kalakshetra will continue to be an outstanding center of national creativity, upholding the ideals and standards that Rukmini Devi, its founder, has set for it. I wish the artistes, the Gurus and students of the Institution, all the best.

May the joy of their creativity, which is their best asset, abide with them always. May the spirit of Rukmini Devi continue to guide Kalakshetra as she has done during her lifetime”.

One year later the statue of Rukmini Devi was installed in front of the Bharata Kalakshetra theatre (the Koothambalam) which had been her cherished dream. Welcoming Sri R.Venkataraman to the function organized on that occasion, Sri K. Sankara Menon, President of Kalakshetra, said,

“...I am happy to welcome to Kalakshetra Sri R. Venkataraman, President of the Indian Union, who has come here to do honour to Srimati Rukmini Devi, the one and only President of Kalakshetra. Sri Venkataraman knew Rukmini Devi very well over a period of years and knows the value and magnitude of the work which she has accomplished. By that primary qualification, by reason of his high position and dignity which he occupies because of his capacity, intelligence and work and by a true goodness of the heart which is a rare quality in human beings, he undoubtedly is the fittest person to perform this office.

...Kalakshetra is, as I have stated, now without Rukmini Devi's leadership. In the past, we could have taken shelter under

her umbrella and carried out her wishes. This will no longer serve because the umbrella has been taken away from over our heads. We have, each one of us, to stand firmly to fulfil the purpose which she had in mind.

As we all know, Kalakshetra lives in difficulties of one kind or another but no one can say that the institution has suffered thereby. We can only pray that we shall be given the strength to accept whatever comes with detachment. Let there be no diminution in our purpose or our devotion to that ideal which has inspired us and to which we have given ourselves”.

Sri Venkataraman’s speech after unveiling the statue was a moving tribute and splendid oration, lasting over an hour, in which he put into beautiful words the very essence of the Kalakshetra Movement. In his concluding remarks he said,

“.....Kalakshetra is not merely an Institution; it is an Inspiration. It is not merely a College, it is a Culture; it is not merely a Theatre, it is a Theme, of which the message is simple and clear: Aesthetics have been relegated to a margin in our life today. The springs of creativity do not well up as before in our people as a whole. We can boast of more painters, musicians and dancers than before. But, as a society, we seem

to be less sensitive than earlier generations to the appeal of the aesthetic. Life has become prosaic; the daily routine is severely functional. The resultant monotony is sought to be relieved, therefore, by diversions that are garish and high-pitched, be it in colour or volume. The quiet beauty of our traditional arts and crafts, the gentle repose and tranquility they engendered, are at a discount. A non-aesthetic life can all too easily degenerate into a violent and strife torn life. That eventuality must be prevented. This was her message.

It is to the giver of that message that a statue has been raised today. I have no doubt that for years and generations to come, visitors to Kalakshetra no less than the procession of its successive students, will be inspired by it. They will be inspired by the statute not merely because it impresses itself on their eyes but because it impresses itself on their minds”.

In his book “My Presidential Years” he mentions this function in moving terms.....

“....On May 10, I unveiled a bronze statue of Rukmini Devi on the Kalakshetra campus in Madras. She was a legendary figure even during the British days. Starting her career in the Theosophical Society. She became the President of the All India



The President of India Sri R. Venkataraman unveiled the status of Smt Rukmini Devi on May 27 1988.
Dr. P.C. Alexander Governer of Tamil Nadu presided.





In consultation with Smt. Rukmini Devi and Sankara Menon at the Kalashetra office with one of the trustees Sri. S. Narayanaswami and Secretary A.Y. Sundaram.

Federation of Young Theosophists and President of the World Federation of Young Theosophists. She impressed the entire world as the living embodiment of the culture of India, which Dr. Annie Besant venerated and wished to protect against debasement. She started Kalakshetra and made it a temple of culture. Like Tagore's Shantiniketan and Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati, Rukmini Devi's Kalakshetra has emerged as one of the springs of Indian culture and traditions. Dr. P.C. Alexander, the Governor of Tamil Nadu, presided over the function.

Rukmini Devi had been a towering figure and had kept the institution from falling apart by the sheer force of her magnetic personality. After her demise the tenuous bond which held the students and workers together was rent asunder. The spirit of service and sacrifice which had kept the institution going under the most stressful conditions was giving way. Beset with internal squabbles, and lack of finance, the institution was slowly disintegrating.

It was in this hour of darkness that the "emergency lamp" in the person of Sri Venkataraman came to the rescue. In a farsighted, sagacious move, he persuaded the Union Government to take over Kalakshetra and declare it an Institution of National Importance. Recognizing the

great traditions of Kalakshetra and its importance in the cultural scenario of our country and appreciating the need for providing adequate funding for its sustained growth, the Government of India decided to declare the Institution as one of national importance and accordingly Parliament unanimously passed the “Kalakshetra Foundation Act” (Act No. 6 of 1994). The Institution became an autonomous body of the Department of Culture, Ministry of Human Resource Development, with effect from Sept 29, 1993.

Sri Venkataraman who had demitted office as President of India was the first Chairman of the newly formed Kalakshetra Foundation. The Governing Board consisted of eminent artists nominated by the Central Government. With financial support Kalakshetra was put on a firm footing and many of Rukmini Devi's dreams finally saw the light of day.

In the first half of the twenty years since Rukmini Devi's passing, Kalakshetra had been steeped in darkness until the “emergency lamp” came on and now in 2006 the institution is well on its way to glorious heights.

The benign presence of Sri Venkataraman, like a golden thread is visible in every frame mirroring the activities of the institution,

GOVERNMENT TAKE OVER



Sri Sankara Menon garlanding Sri R. Venkataraman



R.V. Ramani, Sankara Menon & R. Venkataraman



Sri Venkataramani and Sri R. Venkataraman on handing over the title deeds



R.V. Ramani pointing out boundaries of the property



After signing on the papers



Officials of the Central Government with Sri R. Venkataraman

which this book tries to convey through a collection of photographs. Excerpts from some of his speeches have also been included, even though some were not in Kalakshetra. As a tribute to a compatriot and close friend, he organized the magnificent celebrations of Rukmini Devi's Birth Centenary which lasted over a year from 2003 to 2004. The Valedictory Function was held in Delhi, where Rukmini Devi's portrait was unveiled by Sri L.K. Advani.

Sri Venkataraman is relinquishing his post of Chairman now, after having steered the affairs of the institution with wisdom and foresight for over forty years. Elders in a family do not "retire", and Venkataraman will always remain a 'Pitamaha' of the Kalakshetra family and continue as a friend, philosopher and guide to the institution.

PRESIDING OVER CHANGE OF GUARD

Sri S. Rajaram who succeeded Sri Sankara Menon as Director of Kalakshetra and Ms Leela Samson present Director with the Chairman Sri R.Venkataraman



Felicitation for outgoing Director, Sri S.Rajaram and incoming Director, Ms Leela Samson



Sri Rajiv Gandhi and
Princess Karthigai Tirunal with
Smt Rukmini Devi during the Golden
Jubilee Celebrations of Kalakshetra.
One of the last pictures taken before she
passed away on Feb.24, 1986

“I know what little I have tried to do in my life both for Art, Education, Animal Welfare and other causes has won appreciation. I am also aware of how much or how little I deserve it. In the midst of all this, I am only conscious of what I have yet to accomplish and that I have not much time to accomplish it in. My concern now is to train future workers and successors. Often people exclaim and say; “What will happen after you!” My answer is two fold; firstly, one must do the best one can while one is alive and even that is worth while. Secondly we must not stop working just because we may not find the kind of successors we expect. I feel sure that there will be some who will carry on the work and that, if our destiny is good, there will be some one or more outstanding personalities to take over, who will make their own contribution....

Rukmini Devi in President's Letter, April 1964.

RUKMINI DEVI BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

The inaugural function was organized for five days. On the 1st of March 2003 Hon'ble Sri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Vice President of India inaugurated the celebrations and paid a fitting tribute to the founder of Kalakshetra in the most moving terms. He said Rukmini Devi was a true ambassador of Indian culture and had spoken at many forums on Art, Animal Welfare and Education. Two Volumes of her speeches and writings were brought out to mark the occasion. Releasing these publications, as well as the magnificent Centenary Volume, Sri Ram Mohan Rao, Governor of Tamil Nadu, said that Rukmini Devi was a traditionalist but also an iconoclast - a rare combination which spearheaded a revolution in art and education in the middle years of the last century. Sri. R. Venkataraman, Former President of India and present Chairman of Kalakshetra welcomed the gathering and summed up the envisaged programmes for the year.

Seminar on Rukmini Devi's contribution to Vegetarianism
conducted by Kalakshetra along with Indian Vegetarian Congress
at Chennai on Sept 20th 2003.



A Seminar on Vegetarianism under the Chairmanship of Hon'ble Sri R. Venkataraman was held on the morning of 20th September 2003 in collaboration with Indian Vegetarian Congress. The President of IVC, Dr. N. Mahalingam, Smt. Radha Burnier, Vice- President of IVC and patron in Chief of IVC, Sri Surrendra Mehta and eminent speakers spoke on Vegetarianism.



Hon'ble Sri Bhairon Singh Shekawat, Vice- President of India honoured by Sri R. Venkataraman, Chairman, Kalakshetra Foundation



Hon'ble Sri Bhairon Singh Shekawat, Vice- President of India inaugurates the Rukmini Devi's Birth Centenary Celebration on March 1st 2003.

RUKMINI DEVI BIRTH CENTENARY



Sri Venkataraman identifying national leaders in photograph selected for display at the photo exhibition at Delhi.



Sri Jagmohan, Ministry of Tourism and Culture inaugurating the photo exhibition in New Delhi, accompanied by Sri R. Venkataraman, Sri L.K. Advani & Sri Singhvi

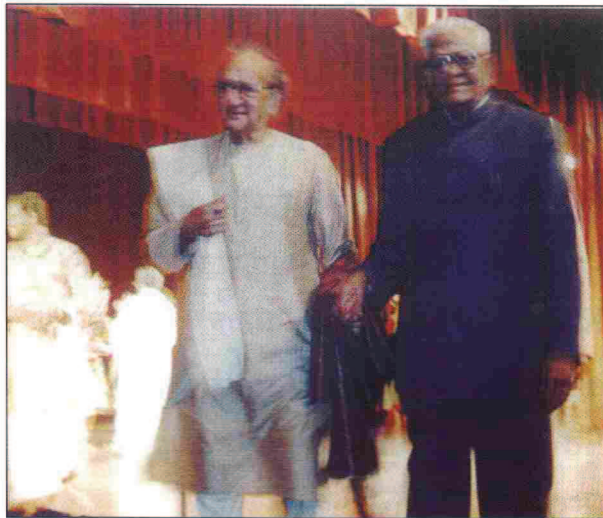
The valedictory functions of the Rukmini Devi Birth Centenary Celebrations were held at Kamani Auditorium at Delhi when the programmes were inaugurated by H.E. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, President of India on 29.2.2004, Sri Jagmohan, Minister for Tourism & Culture released the books "The Centenary Valedictory Volume and Art & Craft of Natural Dyes". On the morning of 1.3.2004 a photo Exhibition on Smt. Rukmini Devi was inaugurated by Sri Jagmohan. Sri L.K. Advani, Deputy Prime Minister was the Chief guest on 3.3.2004 and unveiled the portrait of Smt. Rukmini Devi Arundale. This was followed by "Maha Pattabhishekam" Dance-drama choreographed by Smt. Rukmini Devi and presented by our artistes.



The valedictory functions of the Rukmini Devi Birth Centenary Celebrations, inaugurated by H.E. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, President of India & Sri L.K. Advani unveiling her portrait



Presenting a
Memento to
Sri Murli Manohar Joshi



With
Pandit
Ravi Shankar

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND'S VISIT TO KALAKSHETRA

Kalakshetra had the unique privilege of extending a welcome to Her Majesty the Queen of England, Queen Elizabeth II in October 1997. Her Majesty was received on arrival by Hon'ble Sri R. Venkataraman, Chairman of the Governing Board. She witnessed a dance class being conducted under the Banyan tree and then viewed an exhibition of Kalamkari products near the Banyan tree. From there, she walked down to the theatre, greeted on both sides by the students of Besant Arundale Senior Secondary School and Besant Theosophical High School. At the Theatre, she was presented with a silver plaque embossed with Kalakshetra Emblem and a silk stole woven in our Weaving Unit. The Queen then witnessed an excerpt from the Coronation Scene of "Maha Pattabhishekam" (Ramayana). The Queen enjoyed her visit to Kalakshetra very much and in appreciation of the activities going on in Kalakshetra for the development of Art, Culture and Education, she donated a sum of pound sterling 3000 (Rs.1.89 Lakhs).



Her Majesty
Queen Elizabeth
signing the
visitors book
in Kalakshetra

“Britain has been a champion of the cause of liberty and of human rights. It has jealously defended civic liberty. India went through a long struggle for its independence and yet thanks to the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi there was no rancour or bitterness between the countries. On the contrary we learnt to admire the British character and the British virtues

- from book “R. Venkataraman on Contemporary Issues.



Sri R. Venkataraman
welcoming
Her Majesty,
the Queen



“We in India belong, strictly speaking, to what is described as the ‘East’. And yet western shores have from ancient times, received visitors and ideas from the west in profusion. A great cross-fertilization of ideas has occurred in our land, yielding some creative patterns. India owes its interiorization of the English language, its contemporary science and technology, and several vibrant political institutions from the West. Having borrowed consciously, heavily and profitably from some of the economic and political philosophies that have had their origins in the West, we have also received certain elements of the cultural ethos and value systems of the West. The Bhagavad Gita has a verse:

Aapuryamaaanam achalapratishtam

Samudramapah pravishanti yadvat

The great reservoir that is the ocean, receives the rippling waters of different rivers, but itself remains steady.

This simile is offered by the Gita to encourage a spirit of receptivity to new thoughts and ideas. Lofty as the concept is, it is most difficult of attainment by humans or by society.

- excerpt from selected speeches of Sri R.Venkataraman

ON KALAKSHETRA'S DANCE DRAMA

I have had the pleasure of being closely connected with the activities of Kalakshetra for long, and have always felt proud of the creative work and the painstaking productions that mark Kalakshetra's achievements.

The credit for this high achievement should go to Shrimathi Rukmini Devi and her team. Rukmini Devi embodies in herself the persistent pursuit of peace, joy, and beauty, which is a veritable *Tapasya*. Her dedication to search out the eternal values of literature, music, and dance and her ability to fuse them in every one of her productions has resulted in a rich crop of dance-dramas, all her own. They stand, as a class by themselves, purely original in their form, if not content. She has searched out the true spirit of art in and through the various art forms, eschewing pedantry, and dry art-orthodoxy. This has enabled her to get into the depth of art, capture its true essence and express it through newly created productions and yet adhere to the classical modes, *mudras* and choreographical techniques. The result is seen in her productions, novel but still conforming to traditional forms and modes, which speak with an original verve.

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In the twenties and thirties, she has been primarily responsible for resuscitating our classical dance, then known as *sadir* or *chinna melam*. Its rechristening as Bharatha natyam could almost be attributed to her. Hers is a life of single-minded dedication to art, ever searching for new forms of artistic expression, using and adapting the ancient modes, ever creating them anew and reviving them.



Sri R. Venkataraman with dancers of Kalakshetra after a performance

KALAKSHETRA DANCERS AT RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN



“ Thirty -five members of the Kalakshetra troupe from Madras, which was going to Moscow to participate in the Festival of India, met me in the evening. They were going to stage some Indian ballets on mythological themes. The Kalakshetra troupe is well known in the Soviet Union. As the greatest exponent of Bharatanatyam, Rukmini Arundale had given several scintillating performances there. I advised the troupe not only to maintain the high standard but also try to improve upon it.”

- from book My Presidential Years



Kalakshetra troupe at Delhi for the Birth Centenary Celebrations
with Pandit Ravi Shankar & Sri R. Venkataraman

ON MUSIC AND DANCE

Religion and Art are synonymous in India. Art is not merely entertainment; it is one of the modes of worship, a channel of *bhakti*. In the Natya Sastra of Bharata, there is an interesting story . Indra said to Brahma, "The common man has no access to the four Vedas. Pray therefore, create a fifth Veda which can be had by all." "Very Well" said Brahma, "I shall create a new Veda, the Natya veda with historical representations conducive to moral and material welfare. This will show all the activities of the world that is to be born and it will contain the teachings of all Sastras and will depict all *Arts*".

So Lord Brahma created the Natya Veda with its four limbs from our Vedas. That which should be read, the intellectual content, he took from Rig Veda; that which should be sung, the music, from the *Sama Veda*; abhinaya, the expression, from Yajur veda and the Rasas, the emotional content, from *Atharva Veda*. The classical text, Natya Sastra, has described these arts as valuable means, not only of enjoyment but also of instruction. This is recognition of the educative value of the arts, which were regard as capable of imparting all knowledge which could be useful to man.

This explains the exceptional importance and value attached to the arts and their exponents in our country. It is worthy of note that according to our cultural tradition, every art was open to all people without distinction of caste or calling, and art in its many forms permeated the life of the masses of our people. Our music is essentially a supplication, praise or prayer addressed to God. Saints like Purandaradasa and Thyagaraja ennobled music into a divine art. This is not surprising as spirituality is the hallmark of our culture, and both music and dance at best are marked by spiritual overtones and symbolism.....”

- excerpt from selected speeches of Sri R. Venkataraman



Sem Mangudi Srinivasa Iyer with Sri R. Venkataraman at a Kalakshetra Performance



With Lalgudi Jayaraman and R.V. Ramani



Honouring
Violin Maestro
Sri L. Subramanian



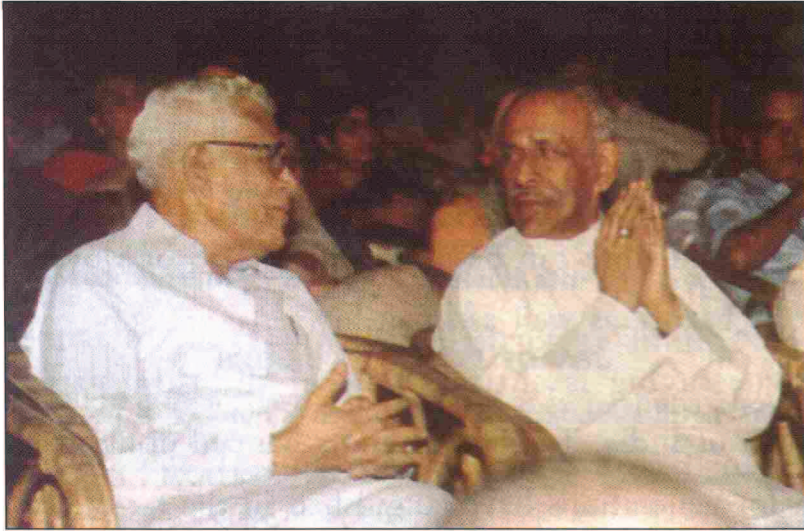
Padma Subrahmanyam well known artiste and member of the Governing Board of Kalakshetra gave a solo dance recital on 3rd March 2003 as part of the Centenary Celebrations. She is seen here with her musicians and with Sri R. Venkataraman and Pandit Jasraj.



Sri Visweswaran, talented vocalist and santoor player provided the vocal accompaniment for his wife Chitra's dance.
Mr & Mrs Visweswaran seen here with our Chairman



Smt Vyjayanthimala Bali, Sri R. Venkataraman and Sri Balamurali Krishna



The Maharaja of Travancore inaugurated the 46th Art Festival of Kalakshetra Foundation on Dec 25th 1997. The Maharaja along with Hon'ble Sri R. Venkataraman, Former President of India



Welcoming Sri Karunanidhi, Chief Minister of Tamilnadu

SRI R. VENKATRAMAN ON CRAFTS

“Inside every stone” the famous Michelangelo said , “lies a sculpture waiting to emerge. “Similarly, every sod of earth, every leaf and fibre can be moulded, shaped or woven into an object of beauty as well as of utility.

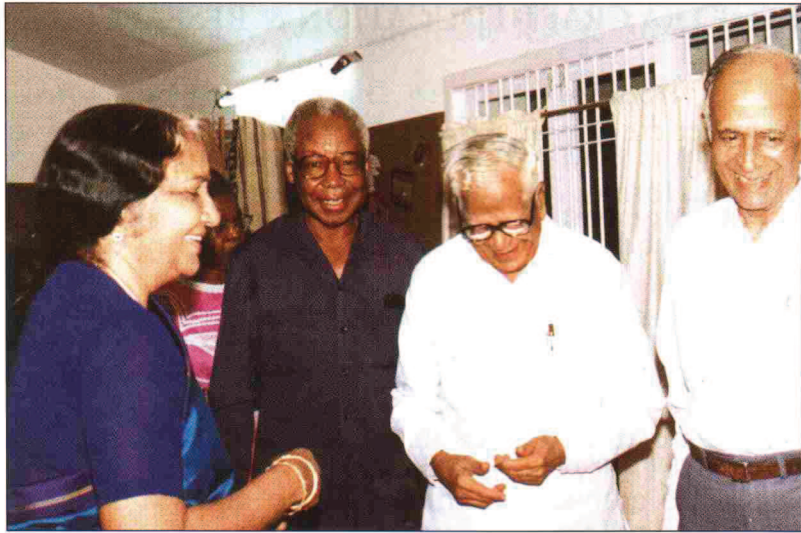
The saying is entirely true of the rural artisans and craftsmen of India. Traditional crafts handed down from father to son for generations have languished in the far-off corners of our land, unseen and unheard. Nor have many of us possessed the connoisseur’s eye to see and appreciate the beauty and charm thereof.

Kalakshetra has been as much a ‘kshetra’ for crafts as for the performing arts. The cultural presentation organized by Rukmini Devi led to a flowering of handcrafted objects ranging from the simple ‘kolam’, the hand woven and kalamkari fabrics to the magnificent ‘kootambalam’ built there for theatrical performances.

One speciality of crafts in India lies in the fact that unlike other nations, in India every province, every district and every

village has a crafts tradition. Be it urban, rural or tribal, every section of Indian society has had a tradition of crafts that is distinctive and that is of proven quality. The other specialty of crafts in India lies in the fact that we use every conceivable medium; stones, ivory, wood, metal, earth and even grass. At Patthamadai in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu for instance, plain grass is woven into what is perhaps the world's most delicate mat. In spread and in versatility therefore, the crafts of India are unique. So also in their mutuality.

At this point, it may be worth posing to ourselves the question when and why did this creative inter-relationship begin to dwindle in our country? Why is it that crafts and craftsmanship are regarded now more as a matter of curiosity or antiquity? It is, of course, not as if master craftsmen do not exist today. The two unique features I mentioned, namely, spread and versatility are still very much a reality. And we still have truly exquisite specimens of craftsmanship in our country. But nonetheless we will have to admit that, in a general sense, aesthetics have been relegated to a margin in our life today. The springs of creativity do not well-up as before in our people as a whole. We have more painters and musicians than



Dr. Julius Nyerere at the Craft Centre



Sri R.Venkataraman presenting a Kalamkari wall hanging to Dr.Frederics Mayor



Sri Veerappan former student of Kalakshetra who went on to become Director Design of Tamilnadu Handloom Dept honouring Sri R. Venkataraman



Justic Mohan and Padma Subrahmanyam with Sri R. Venkataraman at the opening of the sales room in C.E. & R.C.



Staff and workers of the C.E. & R.C. with Sri R. Venkataraman and Janaki Venkataraman



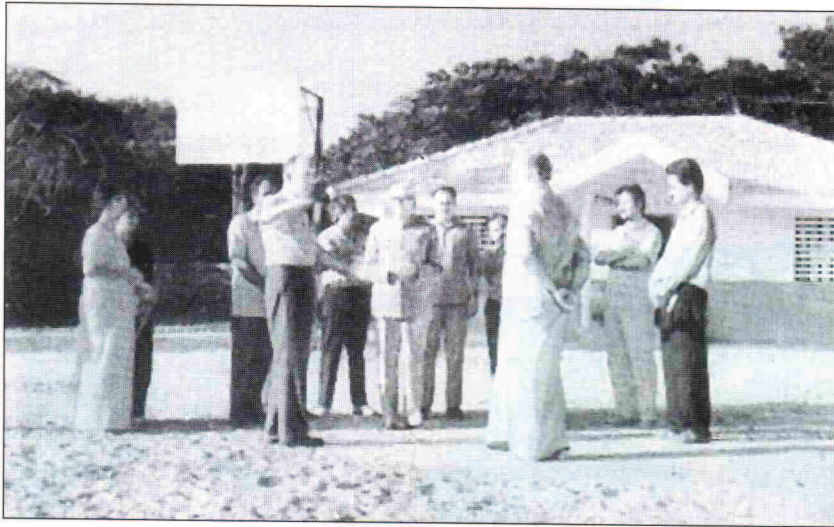
Sri R. Venkataraman presenting the book on the Kalakshetra Sari to Hon'ble Minister for Culture Sri Jagmohan

ON EDUCATION

.....” Education is an endless process and we go on learning day after day in the vast laboratory of mankind. There is a dialectical relationship between the system of education today and of tomorrow.

When I was a student in the secondary school, they had an eleven year school course, one year pre-university course and three year degree course. When my grand children are now going to school, they have a 10+ 2 secondary education and a three-year degree course. These additions and subtractions have not made the children wiser merely by the change in the years at each stage. If anything, these constant changes have just left the students very much where they were without any qualitative improvement in education. The foremost goal of any education is the inculcation of noble qualities like patriotism, devotion to duty, national integration, communal harmony and virtues like honesty, punctuality, discipline and so on. No nation however advanced in

military power or in sophisticated science and technology will survive as a nation if it has no basic qualities and virtues detailed earlier. The best time to educate one on these qualities is in the kindergarten and primary stages. Children should be taught the glory of India, its heritage and its ancient culture. When some of the most advanced countries in the world were either not discovered or living in comparative barbarity, Indian civilization had spread throughout Asia and other regions of the world. Every Indian child should know this even before it learns the alphabet and arithmetic.....”

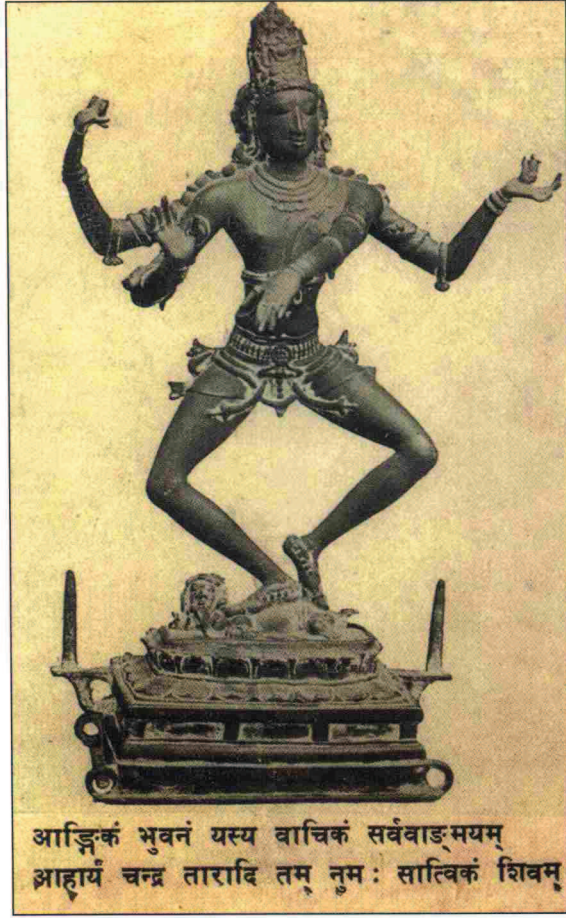


His Excellency, Sri R. Venkataraman, Former President's visit to our School





Akhila Phadnis, Std. IX student, B.A.S. School blessed by our Chairman Sri R. Venkataraman for winning best author prize 2004.



आङ्गिकं भुवनं यस्य वाचिकं सर्ववाङ्मयम्
ब्राह्मण्यं चन्द्र तारादि तम् नुमः सात्त्विकं शिवम्