



NATARAJA RAMAKRISHNA
Fellowship of Sangeet Natak Akademi

Born in the Bali islands of Indonesia in 1923, Shri Nataraja Ramakrishna was a moving spirit behind the renewal of the traditional dance in Andhra Pradesh. Scion of an aristocratic family of West Godavari District, he was attracted to dance early in life by performances witnessed in temples on the family estates. Later, he was to acquire training in temple dance at Srikalahasti under the famous dancer Nayudupeta Rajamma, and was initiated into the Navajanardhana Parijata tradition by Pendyela Satyabhama. He learnt Kuchipudi dance under Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastry. Meenakshisundaram Pillai, his first teacher and mentor, initiated him into Bharatanatyam. From gurus Kartik Ram and Kalyandas of Raigarh, he learnt Kathak dance. Together with this, he studied the classical texts on dance and aesthetics, equipping himself both in the theory and practice of dance.

In the years to come, Shri Nataraja Ramakrishna came to be known as a leading teacher and scholar of dance. He travelled widely in the Andhra region giving lectures and demonstrations, interacted with traditional gurus and scholars, and carried forward his research in dance which led to the revival of traditions such as Perini Siva Tandava and Navajanardhana Parijata. He authored more than forty books in English and Telugu, wrote over five hundred articles, and also trained a number of dancers. Shri Ramakrishna will be particularly remembered for his research into and revival of the art of the Andhra temple dancer, which he brought into public domain under the name of Andhranatyam.

Shri Nataraja Ramakrishna received many honours which include the Bharata Kalaprapoorna title of the Andhra Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi (1968), appointment as Asthana Natyacharya by the Srisailam Devasthanam of Andhra Pradesh (1980), the honorary doctorate Kalaprapoorna conferred by Andhra University (1981), the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1983), and the Padma Shri (1992). More recently, the Central University of Hyderabad conferred on him an honorary D. Litt. and appointed him Professor Emeritus. He had been conferred the title Nataraja by the ruler of a princely state and carried the name ever after.

To our deep regret, Shri Nataraja Ramakrishna passed away on 7 June 2011 at Hyderabad after the General Council of the Akademi had elected him its Fellow. He worked for the cause of dance and guided students and scholars till the end. The Fellowship of Sangeet Natak Akademi is conferred on Guru Nataraja Ramakrishna for his contribution to Indian dance.