



SUJANARANJANI



Nuances of Kuchipudi



**AMERICA
KUCHIPUDI DANCE
CONVENTION**

**AP State Creativity & Culture Commission
Govt. of Andhra Pradesh**



SiliconAndhra

The spirit of Telugu Literature, Culture and Tradition



SriVani Vokkarane



'Once a mom, Always a mom... Once a dancer, Always a dancer'.

"Pranamy Sirasaa Devou Pitaamaha

Maheswarou Naatya Shastram Pravaksshyami

Brahmanaaya Dudahrutham"

"I bow reverentially to you, Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva (the creator of dance) as the shastra of classical dance outpours my lips, as it was told to me by Lord Brahma (The creator of Natya Shastra)."

Learning Phase:

I am very fortunate to be born in a traditional family where both my grand fathers were Vedic scholars; Music, Dance, Sanskrit and Vedic recitation were deep-rooted within my family. It was my parents dream to watch their daughter dance. They initiated me to this beautiful art form. I began my dance journey at the age of six by learning Bharatanatyam under Guru Sunanda. I gave debut recital when I was nine in a traditional setting of a Hindu temple. I continued to learn the complex techniques

under the able guidance of Guru Prema Kumari and secured State level scholarship and also excelled in Professional Certification from the State Board Exams. I was initiated to the art of using cymbals – known as 'Nattuvangam', the rhythmic vocalization with cymbals used in dance accompaniment. Guru Prema Kumari provided solid training to master the techniques.

Polishing and Perfecting:

The quicksilver and scintillating steps of Kuchipudi drew my attention and I started to learn Kuchipudi when I was at the age of fifteen under Guru Vyjayanthi Kashi. Under Guru Vyjayanthi, I was provided several opportunities to perform at various prestigious festivals and being on her ensemble, was a true learning and enriching experience. I had an elated experience to share the stage by dancing along with my Guru. Later on, I continued to pursue advanced training under Guru Veena Murthy Vijay. Synonymous with grace and honed with magnificent Abhinaya skills, Guru Veena Murthy bestowed upon me a wealth of Abhinaya pieces. I was very privileged to learn the traditional Devadasi art form known as 'Devalaya Aradhana Natyam', Guru Veena Murthy instilled within me that confidence and imparted the ancient ritualistic dance 'Simhanandini'. Guru Veena Murthy is a true mentor in supporting my academic skills.

Dance Moves to USA:

Moved to United States, I was fortunate to learn a few pieces from Guru Shoba Natarajan. Guru Shoba is an exemplary artist and a good motivator who supported me with my ongoing activities. Under her guidance, I received the prestigious Apprentice award from the Illinois Arts Council. She also provided me with an excellent opportunity to perform Nattuvangam for her 'Royal Ragas' production hosted in Chicago. What started as a hobby by my parents' choice, soon blossomed into a passion fruit that I wouldn't want to let go. There was never a 'looking backward' moment in my life, I continued to perform and also started teaching younger students through establishing 'Sriranga Dance Academy' in Aurora, IL with a mission to promote this traditional art form.

Having received such intense training to master the nuances of Kuchipudi, I was mesmerized by the traditional 'Devalaya Aradhana Natyam' – the art of drawing the vehicle of the residing deity through dance footwork. A unique art where the dancer sketches a lion, the Simhavahanam or the mount of the Mother Goddess Durga, while dancing on a white cloth spread over red colored powder through intricate footwork. It is said that the pioneer Guru C. R. Acharyulu watched a Devadasi perform and brought to light by passing on the legacy to some of his direct disciples including Veena Murthy. I am fortunate to learn through the lineage.

This took another dimension in my dance career. It has been a pleasure cherishing those bountiful moments that my Gurus have given me in the past and continue to support me through my dance journey until today. I have performed, organized dance festivals and workshops with visiting Gurus from India. I have been recognized by 'Sri Annamāchārya Project of North America'- SAPNA organization for my contributions towards Kuchipudi dance. I have also been recognized and honored by the local cultural groups and organizations. I have received laurels and accolades for my