

THE BIOGRAPHY OF PASUMARTHI VENU GOPALA KRISHNA SARMA

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Abstract

Pasumarthi Venu Gopala Krishna Sarma is a highly acclaimed artist in the realms of dance and music, with a fascinating biography that highlights his talent and commitment. Starting from his early training in classical dance and music to his achievements as a performer and educator, Sarma's journey is a testament to his passion and artistic prowess. Through his performances and teachings, he has been a source of inspiration for many, making a profound impact on the world of Indian classical arts. Creating a kuchipudi dance drama is a multifaceted endeavour that demands a deep comprehension of music, dance, drama, and literature, as well as an understanding of human psychology and societal norms. The traditional structure of kuchipudi dance drama involves exposition, complication, climax, denouement, and resolution. A successful dramatist must excel in poetry, dance, and music to craft a captivating performance. Contemporary playwrights are encouraged to infuse Indian traditions with modern elements for a contemporary twist. Notable luminaries in kuchipudi dance drama include PVG Sarma Krishna Sarma, Vempati Chinna Satyam, Radhe Shyam, and Vedantham Satyanarayana Sarma. This article delves into PVG Sarma's significant contributions to literature, music, and dance drama, aiming to present a realistic portrayal of nature, humanity, and society in their artistic endeavors.

Keywords: PVG Sharma, Kuchipudi dance, Sutradharudu, Music, Yakshaganam, Bhamakalapam.

1. PVG Krishna Sarma about (1929-2012):

Pasumarthi Venu Gopala Krishna Sarma, also known as PVG Sarma, is a versatile artist who excels as a vocalist, Kuchipudi Yakshagana performer, composer, and Carnatic musician. Hailing from Kuchipudi Village in Andhra Pradesh, PVG Sarma is a revered figure in the realm of music and dance. He is known for his exceptional skills in singing, acting, dancing, and storytelling, captivating the hearts of enthusiasts. Born on August 27, 1929, PVG. Sarma comes from the prestigious Pasumarthi family, renowned for their expertise in Kuchipudi dance. He began his artistic journey at a young age, learning Yakshagana and Kuchipudi dance techniques from the revered Sri Chinta Venkata Ramaiah and music from Sri Yeleswarapu Seetharamanjaneyulu.

His dedication and talent led him to master various roles in Yakshagana performances and excel as a sutradhara [1]. Despite the legacy of his family, PVG Sarma carved his own unique identity in the world of Kuchipudi, becoming a revered teacher and mentor to numerous students. He holds a Diploma in Dance and Carnatic Music (Kuchipudi) and has received training in teaching. His ability to convey the essence of a song through music and dance has earned him widespread recognition and admiration. PVG Sarma's contribution to the fusion of art forms and his commitment to preserving the cultural heritage of Andhra Pradesh have made him a beloved figure in the artistic community. His passion for both music and dance has enriched the lives of many, making him a true legend in the field.

1.1. PVG Sarma: A Renowned Artist:

Throughout history, from the time of Yogi Siddendra to the present day, numerous masters have excelled in their roles in the art of Kuchipudi [2]. Notable figures like Chinta Venkatrammaya, Vedantam Raghavaiah, ChintaKrishnamurthy, Vedantam Parveteesam, Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma, Vempati Chinna Satyam, and Pasumarthi Venu Gopala Krishna Sarma have left a lasting impact on the art world with their talent and dedication. Among them, the well-known Carnatic musician and Yakshagana Sutradhara, PVG Sharma, stands out. He has had a remarkable career as a musician, Yakshagana exponent, Sutradhara, and the founder of the Siddendra Kalakshetra of Kuchipudi for 35 years. He also made significant contributions to the Telugu film industry as a dance master.

PVG Sharma introduced the Kuchipudi Yakshagana pattern and performed it over 2,500 times, showcasing the traditional essence of the art form. His effortless portrayal of various roles earned him widespread acclaim, solidifying his place in artistic history. The art form has produced many national and international award winners, including recipients of Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri, Sangeetha Nataka Academy awards, fellowships, and state government honours. Despite their achievements, these artists often remain unrecognized by the general public, much to the disappointment of true art enthusiasts. PVG Sharma's journey in the world of Kuchipudi began auspiciously, guided by the blessings of one of the trinities of Kuchipudi, ensuring his success in the field.

PVG Sarma has collaborated with artists of various generations in India and abroad, ranging from Padma Bhushan awardees to emerging talents with a strong background in Yakshagana. He is renowned for his expertise in portraying both male and female characters. Throughout the 20th century, he was a prominent figure in the world of Kuchipudi, excelling in a wide range of roles. His journey as a performer began at the age of five with the portrayal of Bhakta *Prahalada* in Kuchipudi *Yakshagana*. His reinterpretation of *Prahalada Yakshaganam*, known as '*Prahalada Rahasyam*,' seamlessly blends elements from Kuchipudi and *Melattur* traditions. Some of his notable roles include *Lava Kusha* in *Ramanataka Yakshaganam*, *Sasirekha* in *Sasirekharparinaya Yakshaganam*, and *Satyabhama* in *Bhamakalapam Yakshaganam*. His portrayal of characters like *Seetha* in *Ramayana* and *Usha* in *Ushaparinayam* continues to be revered. PVG Sarma's versatility shines through in performances such as *Gayopakhyanam* as *Arjun* and *Rangi Rangadu*. PVG Sarma has performed in various ballets such as *Bhamakalapam*, *Mohini Rukmangada*, *Usha Parinayam* (as shown in Fig. 1a) and others. He particularly enjoys playing the role of *Sutradhara*, finding it challenging and rewarding (refer to the details in Fig. 1c). His portrayal of this character allows him to showcase different aspects of his talent and contribute significantly to the ballet. Throughout his career, he has been dedicated to learning and sharing his knowledge with students and audiences through his choreographies, incorporating elements like *Yakshagana* music and *Gathibehdalu*. In the evolution of Yakshagana characters, PVG Sarma has played roles like **Gopika, Radha, and Rangi**, showcasing tenderness and skill. His achievements include national dance programs in New Delhi, contributions to documentaries, and collaborations with renowned artists like **Yamini Krishnamurthy** (refer to the details in Fig. 1d).



a



b

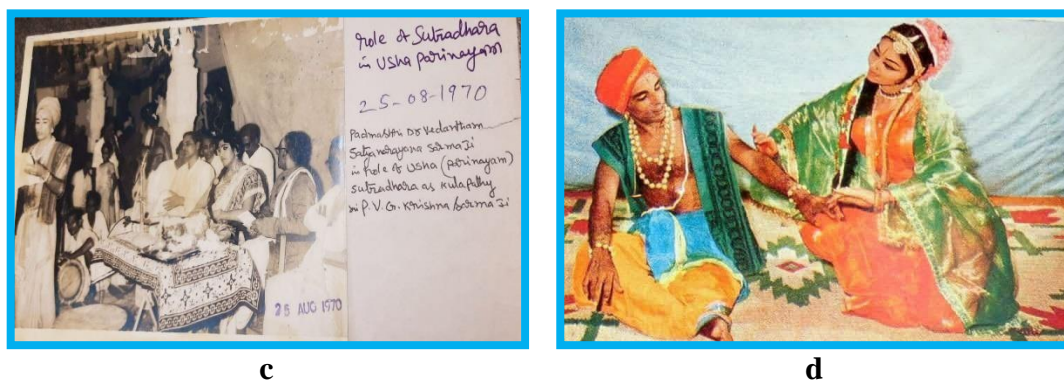


Fig. 1: showcases PVG Sarma in different stages: (a) PVG in Usha Parinayam workshop (b) PVG in Siddendrakalakesthra, (c) PVG as Sutradhara, (d) PVG and Yamini KrishnaMurthy

2. Characteristics of PVG Sarma:

Known for his positive attitude and willingness to learn, PVG Sarma values his family's traditions and dedication to Kuchipudi. He is dedicated to serving the Lord's activities at Siddendrakalakesthra (shown in Figure 1b), putting aside self-interest.

- Despite other schools having full classrooms, students at this school show humility by gathering under the banyan tree for music classes.
- The disciples of PVG Sarma consider his time as principal the Golden Era, as he would personally teach and engage with students.
- PVG Sarma prioritized practice and dedication, informing students of new ragas well in advance and ensuring they practised diligently.
- PVG Sarma exemplified humility by dressing simply and focusing on education and humanity over personal desires.
- PVG Sarma's devotion to music and worship inspired disciples like Shri Vedantam Radhyasham Garu and Shri Rattaiah Sharma Garu to innovate in dance forms and Yakshaganams.
- During PVG Sarma's time, the Siddendrakalakesthra attracted notable guests like Ministers and officials, who praised the students' artistic performances, leading to celebrations and features in magazines.
- To develop Kuchipudi village, PVG Sarma's family donated Pasumarthi Pound (reservoirs) for public use, contributing to the community by providing a bus stand for the Government transport corporation.
- During the 19th-century war with China, he raised funds for national defense. Lord Vani Mata, the embodiment of Saraswathi, bestowed immense knowledge of music and dance upon those who sought it.
- PVG Sarma is dedicated to his work at Siddendra Kalakshetra, teaching, practicing, and dancing daily. His sons have become accomplished dancers (e.g., Pasumarthi Vittal, Pasumarthi Sheshubabu) under his guidance. Despite ageing, PVG Sarma's commitment to his art remains unwavering, serving as an inspiration. While physical abilities may diminish with time, maturity and a deep understanding of the art form are acquired through a lifelong journey. The essence of his artistry lies in subtle movements rather than flashy displays.
- Today's dancers must strive for grace, expression, and precision like their gurus. PVG Sarma comes from a lineage of musicians, embodying the essence of "Sangeeta" - song, instruments, and dance. Some Kuchipudi and Bharatnatyam musicians excel even beyond Carnatic concert performers, showcasing the expressive beauty of dance. True enthusiasts can appreciate the music of dance performances with an open mind, free from biases.

2.1. PVG as a Music composer:

PVG Sharma, hailing from a family of musicians, boasts a successful three-decade career as a professional musician, singer, and dance maestro (figure 2a). He has performed worldwide and collaborated with top musicians at renowned festivals. Sharma's dedication to mastering various aspects of classical music and dance has elevated his performances and brought honour to his art. Under the guidance of Yelishwarapu Sri "Sitaramajaneyulu Garu," he honed his musical techniques, enhancing the lyrical and traditional elements of his dance sequences. Sharma emphasizes the nuances between dance and concert music, stressing the significance

of expression in dance music and intricate *Gamakas* in concert music (Fig. 2c &d).



Fig. 2. PVG Sarma as a musician at various stages

His unique fusion of bhava and *Gamakas* in his performances reflects his profound understanding of the art forms. He also elucidates the differences between Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, highlighting their shared cultural roots in south India while delineating their technical distinctions. Through his teachings and performances, Sharma embodies the dedication and discipline essential for excelling in classical arts, inspiring future generations to uphold these values. He also shares insights into his musical journey and the establishment of the *Sindhendra Kalashatram* to support artists and promote classical arts.

2.2. PVG as an artist:

PVG Sarma, a dedicated Natya guru, played a significant role in popularizing Kuchipudi dance both locally and internationally (as shown in Fig. 3a). His expertise as an artist and choreographer is evident in his performances in various classical dance dramas such as Bhakta Prahalada, Rama Natakam, Krishnaleel Tarantini, Parvathi parinayam, and sutradhara (picture shown in figure 3b). He portrayed diverse roles, including male and female characters like Matanga Kanya, Satya Kirti, Lavakusha, and Prahalad, showcasing his versatility and skill. Under the guidance of Sri Chinta Krishnamurthy, he honed his craft in Yakshagana drama and activities. From 1943 to 1948, PVG Sarma was associated with Parvathisam Garu and excelled in roles like Go Pika, Radha, and Rangī. His expertise as a Sutradhara in the Yakshagana tradition was recognized with the title "RASAGARATA." In the 1950s, he taught music and dance in various settings, including high schools and fine arts institutes, leaving a lasting impact on his students. Despite opportunities in Madras, he remained committed to preserving traditional art forms and returned to Kuchipudi village, where he continued to nurture talent at Lalitha Kalakshetra. PVG Sarma's contributions to the art world are commendable and reflect his dedication to preserving and promoting classical dance forms.

2.3. Yakshaganam and Bhagavatavulu:

Music in Yakshaganam plays a significant role, with ragas like *Mukhari*, *Dhanyasi*, *Bhairavi*, *Todi*, *Kannada*, *Kamboji*, *Saurashtra*, *Bhoopalam*, *Saveri*, *Regupti*, *Bilahari*, *Nata*, *Arabhi*, *Madhyamavathi*, *Panhuravali*, and *Janhoti* being commonly used. The unique melodic modes and beat patterns in *Yakshaganams* set them apart in terms of music and percussion. While the dialogues are in Telugu and Kannada, the presentation relies heavily on *vachika*, which can be challenging for the audience to follow precisely. However, the familiar illustrative and storyline elements help bridge the language barrier for the audience to enjoy the performance. In the realm of *Bhagavata Mela*, *Kuchipudi Bhagavatavulu* travelled from place to place, adapting their performances to suit local customs and audiences. Notable works like *Bhamakalapam* by Siddendra Yogi and *Gollakalapam*, by **Sri Pada Ramayya** of the Suvana family showcase the rich tradition of *Bhagavata Mela*. The fusion of dance and drama in *Kuchipudi Yakshaganams*, pioneered by **Sri**

Chinta Venkata Ramaiah, has elevated the art form to new heights. Some well-known Kuchipudi Yakshaganams include *Prahalada*, *Charitam*, *Usha Parinayam*, *Rukmini kalyanam*, *Seta kalayam*, *Rama Natakam*, and *Mohini Rukmangada*.

The legacy of PVG Sarma in Siddendra Kalakshetra is profound (figure 1b), with his contributions to music and dance education leaving a lasting impact. His dedication to teaching and nurturing talent has produced renowned artists like **Radha Reddy**, **Yamini Krishna Murthy**, **Sri Vedantham Radheshyam**, and many others. PVG Sarma's guidance has led to the establishment of dance and music schools worldwide, showcasing the global reach of Kuchipudi art. PVG Sarma's humility and commitment to the art form earned him accolades, including the Central Sangeet Nataka academic award in 1987, recognizing his outstanding contributions to Kuchipudi dance. His influence transcended borders, with luminaries like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and various heads of state acknowledging his artistry.



Fig. 3. Showcases PVG Sarma in different roles: (a) as an artist and (b) as a sutradhara in USHA Parvathi Parinayam

2.4. Awards: -

- 1987: Kendra Sangeetha Nataka Academy Award
- 1958: Acharya Vinobabhave Award by Brezlmoy
- 1968: Chief Minister Jalagam Vengala Rao Award
- 1969: Padma Sri Chittom Nagayya Cash Award
- 1973: World Telugu Congresses Convened
- 1975: Golden Bracelet Retention by Income Tax Officers
- 1985: Kuchipudi Nrutyabbara1hi REGNO 2852 staphana
- 1987: President R. Venkatraman Award, Academy of Musical Drama.
- 1988: Respected by Andhra Pradesh Cultural Director Sri K.V. Ramana Chary
- 1989: "Kulapathi" title by Telugu University Vice Chancellor
- 1997: "UGADI" Award by Sri Nara Chandra Babu Naidu
- 2001: Sahasravadhani Dr. courtesy of Madugula Nagaphani Sharma
- 2003: Nritya Pratibha Award by Pottsreeramulu Telugu University
- 2003: Recommended for Padma Bhushan Award by Mandala Budhaprasad, MP
- 2004: Jyothi Cultural Association, Hyderabad
- 2005: Andhra Music Academy Award Lifeline Achievement Award
- 2005: Natya Guru Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S Rajasekhar Reddy
- 2006: Honored by Sri Madhuyashki Gowda (MP)
- 2006: Felicitation by Dr. C.S Gopinath Reddy, Ministry of Culture
- 2007: Honored by artist Gandapenderum
- 2008: "Natya Kalaprapurna' "" Award by Dr. Mangalam Pali Bala Murali Krishna garu
- 2009: Sindhendra Acharya Award by Potti Sree Ramulu Telugu University and Central Sangeetha Academy-
- 2010: Yakshagana Vibhushan title by the Golden Star Organization
- 2010: Global World Records.
- 2010 : Honored by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Sri K Rosaiah
- 2012: Ugadi Award by Kiran Kumar Reddy, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister
- Received Tagore Award, NGO awards, a gold bracelet, and the "LIMKA" book of PVGSarma Awards in 2010.



Fig. 4. Prestige Awards of PVG Sarma

Kuchipudi, known for its *Yakshagana* pattern and presentation, incorporates the life and message of *Siddendra Yogi* into various ballet themes. PVG Sarma Sharma, a skilled teacher and role model in the art, played a key role in shaping the careers of renowned dancers like Yamini Krishna Murthy. Krishna Sharma focused on his students' success, following the motto "**Shishya dichchet Parinayam**" aiming for their achievements over his own. Notable disciples include *Yamini Krishna Murthy, Raja and Radha Reddy, Mikkilineni Swarnalatha, Lanka Annapurna, Kilambi Raja Kumari, Narsimhrayulu & Vasantha Laxmi, Padmasri Vedantam Satyanarayana Sharma, and Mysore Nandhini.*

Key disciples of PVG Sarma in Dance include Padma Bhushan awardees Yamini Krishna Murthy and Radha Reddy, Raja Reddy. Other notable students are

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Vyjayanthi Kashi | Dr. Vedantham Radheysayam, | Pasumarthi Venkateshwara Sharma |
| Vasanth Laxmi Narasimha Chari | Dr. Vedantham Parthasarathy, | Lanka Annapurna |
| Dr. Chinta Ramanathan | Dr. Vedantham Macheswara Rao | Dr. Naively Anuradha |
| Dr. Chinta Adi Narayana Sharma | Sri Mahankali Suryanarayana Sharma | Varanasi Jayapradha |
| Dr. Nageswara Sharma, | Sri Mahankali Mohan | Dr. R Prasanna Rani |
| Muvva Jayalakshmi | Dandibotla Venkata Srinivasa Shastri | Dandibotla Narayana Murthy |
| Chinta Shaei Baby | Mahankali Krishna Kumari | □ |

PVG Sarma's sons, Dr. Seshu Babu, Srinivas, and another son, are prominent figures in Kuchipudi dance based in New Delhi. They have received accolades and awards for their contributions to the art form. The sons were trained by their father and Guru Pasumarthi Venugopala Krishna Sharma and have developed their unique style of compositions and choreographies in Kuchipudi dance and music.

PVG Sarma's granddaughters also carry on his legacy in the field of dance

- Pasumarthi Chandra Bala
- Pasumarthi Sai Deepika
- Pasumarthi Phani Bala
- Pasumarthi Vijayalakshmi
- Pasumarthi Pavani

3. CONCLUSIONS:

PVG Sarma, a prominent figure in the world of Kuchipudi dance and music, has left a lasting impact on the art form. His compositions have been performed by dedicated disciples such as Seshu Babu and Dandibotla Narayana Murthy. The legacy of PVG Sarma continues through his granddaughters Pavani and Pavithra, who are carrying on the tradition of Yakshagana. Despite his significant contributions, PVG Sarma's achievements have not always received the recognition they deserve. His dedication to Kuchipudi sets him apart in the realm of Indian dance. PVG Sarma's influence as a musician, vocalist, choreographer, and performer is evident, resonating with art lovers globally. The establishment of Siddendra Kalakshetra in Kuchipudi village further solidified PVG Sarma's reputation as a leading figure in Yakshagana. His life story reflects his passion, knowledge, and artistic sensitivity. The guru-shishya parampara in Kuchipudi has nurtured exceptional talents like PVG Sarma, Vempati Vedantam, and the Pasumarthi families, each contributing unique elements to the art form. Today, Kuchipudi is taught with a structured approach, encompassing body preparation, voice modulation, and a broader understanding of world dance.

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