The Development of Kutiyattam at Kerala Kalamandalam after the UNESCO-declaration

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It is a moment of pride and joy to think that it has been ten years since UNESCO accepted Kutiyattam as one among the world heritage arts. A very apparent development can be seen in Kutiyattam after this recognition. Besides Kerala Kalamandalam, Painkulam Ramachakiar Kalapeedam, Ammannur Gurukulam, Margi and Mani Madhava Gurukulam, many other institutions have arisen for the propagation and promulgation of Kutiyattam.

When I joined Kalamandalam in 1971, there were only 2 or 3 students to learn Kutiyattam and I was the only female student for about 4 years. Since 1971 until the present, I have been closely watching the changes that have come about in this field. I am happy to say that today we have many talented artists in this art. Kutiyattam has now become more popular among the public than ever before. People are showing more interest, especially for Nangiarkoothu, and a lot of new experiments are being done both in Kutiyattam and Nangiarkoothu. In my own case, I have scripted and staged Bhattanarayana's 'Venisamharam' (Act I & VI) & Bhasa's 'Balacaritam' (Act II Bhagavatipravesam) for Kutiyattam, as well as choreographed several Nangiarkoothus such as Gandharivilapam, Karnolpatti, and Madhavi.

Yet when I look upon the matter from a more personal point of view, I am disappointed that it has been of no advantage to the artists of Kerala Kalamandalam. It must however be acknowledged that the prestige Kutiyattam now enjoys is ultimately the fruit of the selfless and unprejudiced efforts of late Sri Painkulam Ramachakiar. ❄