**Kutiyattam**, confined to the temple premises of Kerala, came to be performed on a public platform only in the second half of the 20th century. The establishment of a department at Kerala Kalamandalam in 1965 for training Kutiyattam artistes was a landmark in the transformation of a ritual into a theater form. Institutional studies, followed in other centers also, preserved the ancient tradition and also provided a secular and modern face to the age-old Sanskrit theater.

The discovery of Bhasa plays, in the early decades of the 20th century, had attracted the attention of scholars all over the world to the Sanskrit theater. Academic studies on ancient theater became serious in the eighties. The Govt. Sanskrit College at Tripunithura notably published Dr. Kapila Vatsyayanan’s *Arts of Keralakshetram* (1988) followed by *Natankusa* (1992). The latter, a 15th century critique of Kutiyattam practices, was a historic moment which sparked off a series of discussions. The partial publication of *Vyangyavakyakhyay* which marked the deviation from the national Natyasastha stream in 11th century was another serious attempt. An institution for the promotion of Kutiyattam with stress on research and publication was started in Tripunithura in 1995 followed by a new department for ancient theater at the Sanskrit University, Kalady.

In short, UNESCO declared Kutiyattam as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity when the renaissance movement in the field was at its peak. The impact of the UNESCO declaration can be summed up as follows:

1. Financial assistance extended to the five existing institutions encouraged the activities of both training and academic streams. Teachers and trainees got better emoluments which ensured systematic functioning of training institutions. Promotional activities like appreciation courses, workshops, and lecture-demonstrations attracted new audiences to the art form. Publications came out with the help of the UNESCO funds, the most outstanding being *Kutiyattam – The Earliest Living Tradition*, from The International Centre, Tripunithura.

2. The academia turned its attention to Kutiyattam and several research programs/projects were started in Universities of Kerala. Many research scholars opted for Kutiyattam for their PhD projects.

3. International recognition enhanced the prestige of the art-form and the favorable perception of the public instilled confidence in young Kutiyattam actors. This reduced the number of dropouts in traditional training centers.

4. Kutiyattam now has been accepted as an integral part of theater activities both contemporary and traditional. It also got a respectable space in the world theater movement.

5. An air of optimism prevails among the actors, activists and scholars. This is an auspicious sign for the future. ☺

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**TEN YEARS OF UNESCO RECOGNITION**

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