

MARGI

Thirty second Annual Report – Year ending 31.3.2003

THE MARGI KALIYOGAM (Performing Group)

Margi, started in 1970, is currently functioning as a Kaliyogam (training cum performing group) from 1994-95. The important features of the Kaliyogam system are:

1. Maintaining a group of excellent artistes graded under different categories like Upadeshtavu (Guru), Adyasthanam (Top level), Onnamkida, Idatharam, Kuttitharam (other levels) as against the old system of teachers and stipendiaries; who had to leave the institution on completion of the time bound course like 4 years, 6 years etc.

(The main pitfall in the time bound course, as experienced in premier institutions like Kerala Kalamandalam etc. is that, on completion of the course, the artistes have to fend for themselves to remain in the profession. Junior artistes are seldom offered stage venues. In the result most of them had to earn their livelihood in other lay professions. Actually, Margi has absorbed number of artistes from Kerala Kalamandalam etc. and provided them financial support and performance opportunities. Many of them have turned out to be outstanding artistes).

2. Continuous training and performances side by side throughout the lifetime of the artistes and staying together as a well knit cohesive unit, which leads to high level production values.

3. This system is the one most suited to restore the arts to their former glory by enabling revivals, creative elaboration through poetic treatment etc.
4. There is a constant challenge to the creative talents of the artistes in every production and performance.

For a Kaliyogam (training cum performance organization) to function effectively, the main need is to have a long term programme of training/performance schedules. This was spelt out by the late Sri.D.Appukkuttan Nair (Margi founder and a great theatre personality of our times) It consists of new productions on a continuous basis; not really new, but revivals of a multitude of themes and theatre practices which had lost their way down the years of dwindling appeal for classical art forms. More precisely, for Kathakali, the continuous training is on enacting all popular plays in their entirety and bringing onstage, revivals of extinct plays. In Koodiyattom, the waning phase was more pronounced and whole plays/acts had disappeared from stage and much more ground had to be covered to build up a sizable repertoire, which alone can sustain an art for long. Hence, these processes were set in motion quite early in Margi by Sri. Nair as follows.

- (1) He wrote enlarged performance manuals for plays like Nalacharitha parts I, II, III; Banayudhom; which plays had infinite scope for elaboration and deep poetic treatment.
- (2) He wrote, perhaps for the first time, detailed performance manuals for extinct plays belonging to the series known as "Ramanattom" authored by the former ruler of the region known as Kottarakkara Thampuran (these plays are very significant as

they mark, the very beginning of the art of Kathakali itself) The plays thus revived were Vischinnabhishekom and Kharavadhom and Sethubhanandanam (compiled by Scholar Sri. S.Ganesa Iyer)

- (3) For Koodiyattom, the revivals were Acts I, III and VII of Sakthibhadra's Ascharyachoodamani and Act II of Kulasekhara Varman's Subhadra Dhananjayam. The performance manuals were prepared for Margi by Veteran Guru Padmashree Ammannur Madhava Chakiar. More ground was covered later by adding Bhasa's Mantrankom and Mahendra Vikraman's Mathavilasom (taught to Margi artistes by the veteran Guru Sri. P.K.N.Nambiar)

Every year Margi's working programme consists of training on the themes selected from the foregoing extensive material and performing them onstage. In this format each session is a new presentation, a challenge in creativity for actor, singer and percussionist alike to continuously hone their respective innovative talents. This greatly helps to revitalize the arts.

ACHIEVEMENTS 2002-2003

KATHAKALI

Following the long-term guidelines spelt out already, the enactment of the Kathakali classic Kirmeeravadhom was rehearsed and performed in full after several rehearsals. It took six evenings to completely enact the play. Between September and December the Margi Kathakali Group was on a 3 month long tour of Europe where 28 Kathakali shows and six lecture demonstrations were presented in Spain, Germany, Poland, the Canary Islands etc; the longest foreign tour so far by Margi.

KOODIYATTOM & NANGIARKOOTHU
With support from Kendra Sangeet Natak Akademi

The weekly Koodiyattom shows, as per ongoing programme of support by the Kendra Sangeet Nataka Academy, continued during the year. This is the 12th year of the SNA supported scheme and 39 programmes were staged during the year, covering a wide range; drawing from the vast repertoire built up in Margi during the previous years as well as from revivals after study of texts as per current scheme. (Please see list of programmes)

There was significant progress in taking this art to a wider audience. Programmes staged in temples, the city colleges and other University centres as well as out reach programmes staged outside the State in centers like Chennai, New Delhi etc. were very successful in spreading the art among the younger generation of lovers of classical theatre.

Another important development during the year was the staging of Koodiyattom in the "Koothambalam" (traditional type of theatre structure) recently constructed by the Department of Culture, Government of Kerala as part of its extensive Culture Complex named after a great Malayalam poet viz - The Vailopally Samskrithi Bhavan. The Director of this centre has made available this facility to Margi on several occasions during the year. Naturally Koodiyattom, the oldest Sanskrit theatre of our land, when staged in a Koothambalam acquires added appeal among theatre enthusiasts.

UNESCO Proclamation of Koodiyattom; the fallout

Mention had been made in the last annual report about Margi's initiative in preparing candidature file and submitting it to the UNESCO with a three hour video documentation on Koodiyattom filmed in the Kidangoor and

Haripad Koothambalams, by Adoor Gopalakrishnan/.On 18th May 2001, for the first time, UNESCO proclaimed 19 of the world's most remarkable examples of the oral and intangible heritage. Selected by an international 18 member jury, the only entry from India – Koodiyattom, was unanimously selected and proclaimed as one of the *“Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”*. This was officially announced in New Delhi by the Director General of UNESCO at a meeting of the Koodiyattom Gurus. To mark the occasion, there was also a Koodiyattom programme at the Ashoka Hotel in which Margi artistes took part along with senior Gurus and artistes from all the Koodiyattom centers in Kerala.

The fallout of the UNESCO proclamation in financial terms has since been spelt out by the UNESCO. As a first step a three year action plan has been charted by the UNESCO with initial funding also. The Government of India, Ministry of Culture will also be providing funds and action is under way.

Margi is named as the National implementing agency for this UNESCO programme.

SNA ASSISTANCE FOR REVIVALS – NEW SCHEME

From 1.7.2000, the Kendra Sangeet Nataka Akademy modified its pattern of assistance of support to Koodiyattom through Margi. Monthly payment was sanctioned to all artistes for the object of studying and enacting new dramatic texts (revivals of old and discontinued Acts/Episodes etc.) The performance subsidy was however reduced from aiding four programmes a month to two. The total assistance (benefit to the artistes) however showed an overall increase. (The assistance for costumes, percussion, instruments, programme expenses etc was reduced from RS.1 lakh to Rs.50,000/- This sum is proving

to be very insufficient taking into account the cost escalation for these services).

Under the SNA assistance programme consisting of (i) Study of texts for revivals and (2) their presentation on the Stage after rehearsals (the performances also include outreach programmes); during the year, the following texts were studied

- (i) Act VI of Sakthibhadra's Ascharya Choodamani viz. Anguleeyankom. This Act, which used to be performed in brief as a ritual has been expanded to 32 days of performances in Margi, based on the performance manual by Koodiyattom Scholar Shri. K.P.Narayana Pisharadi
- (ii) Mahendra Vikrama Pallavan's Mathavilasom under the guidance of Guru P.K.Narayanan Nambiar. The portion, entry of Kapali was also performed after study and rehearsals. This section is very difficult to handle involving elaborate rituals and performance modes; being performed now only by a few veterans of the older generation.
- (iii) Nangiarkoothu, Sree Ramacharitham. This performance manual, authored by Margi Sathi, is being studied, rehearsed and performed in the monthly programmes episodally.
- (iv) Nangiarkoothu · Subhadra's Nirvahanam, occurring in Act V of Kulasekhara Varman's Subhadra Dhananjayam. This new performance text, after study and supplementary choreographic details, was performed in the monthly programmes. This revival was also at the instance of Dr. Diane Daugherty as a continuation of her project Subhadra Dhananjayam Act II, completed last year.

- (v) Subhadra Dhananjayam Act II which was completed last year after study of texts & rehearsals, was also performed in continuation during this year.

Out reach programmes

Though only six programmes were envisaged as per ongoing scheme, there were several demands from various sources for staging Koodiyattom and Nangiarkoothui. *This is an indication of the outstanding success of the SNA sponsored Koodiyattom Scheme. Hence fourteen programmes were staged during the year.*

The outreach programmes targeted the art loving youth of our State through lecture demonstrations and programmes staged at colleges, University centres etc. A few arts associations also requested and made local arrangements for Koodiyattom and nangiarkoothu programmes.

More importantly programmes staged outside the state were very successful and well appreciated as revealed by press reviews: brief details below.

76th Annual Conference and Music Festival of the Music Academy, Chennai – Dec. 2002

Lecture Demonstration and Nangiarkoothu – Sree Ramacharitham by Margi Sathi. The lecture was part of the series “The Dr.V.Raghavan Shastiabhipurthi Endowment” lectures. The topic “Attaprakarams and Kramadeepikas – Choreography for the Sanskrit theatre art of-Koodiyattom”. The demonstration was the episode “Sita Swayamvara”

All India Natyakala conference at Chennai (Krishna Gana Sabha – December 2002)

Leading Dancers and theatre specialists from all over the Country participated. Margi Sathi presented an episode from Sree Krishna Charitham to illustrate the subdued role of the written text in Koodiyattom and the scope it affords for extended enactment. The theme of the Conference was “Dance – Context, Content and Core”

Koodiyattom at the Nimrana Palace in Rajasthan – November 2002

A large gathering including several foreigners witnessed “Surpanakankom” (Act II of Ascharyachoodamani) presented by Margi.

Nangiarkoothu at the Kamaniya theatre, New Delhi – December 2002

A large gathering witnessed Nangiarkoothu by Margi Sathi; arranged by Dr. Leela Omcheri

Visit of the Chairman, Secretary and members of the SNA to Margi, Trivandrum.

The Chairman, Secretary and Members of the SNA visited Margi and witnessed Koodiyattom and Nangiarkoothu presented by the Margi artistes.

Kerala SNA Award for Margi artiste

Margi Sathi was the recipient of the award of the Kerala Sangeet Natak Akademi for Koodiyattom for the year 2002-2003.

Training foreign scholars under ICCR Scheme

Three foreign scholars received training in Kathakali and one foreign scholar in Koodiyattom with support by the ICCR. Margi has been empanelled as an institution for imparting training to foreign students. Our sincere thanks to the ICCR are hereby placed on record.

European tour of the Margi Kathakali group under the auspices of ICCR (September –December 2002)

In an extended tour of Europe, a 14 member Kathakali group of senior and accomplished artistes of Margi presented 28 Kathakali shows and 6 lecture demonstrations in Spain, Germany, Poland, the Canary islands etc. The programmes attracted full houses in all centers. There were special shows for children. On the whole it was a very successful tour, proving the popularity of our theatre arts like Kathakali among art lovers all over the world. We are extremely grateful to the ICCR for sponsoring this foreign tour.

Children's film on Kathakali by a French team

A short film based on Kathakali, aimed at creating awareness and appreciation of this great art was produced in Margi with Margi artistes, by a reputed team from France.

Feature including selections from Kathakali by the National Geographic TV Channel

The National Geographic TV Channel filmed scenes on Kathakali body training (Uzhichil), exercises and a live Kathakali show in Margi, for telecast.

Documentation of Kathakali & Koodiyattom (CD and DVD)

The Invis Multimedia documented extended sessions of Kathakali, Koodiyattom and nangiarkoothu with Margi artistes. The selections are:- Kathakali – Kalyanasougandhikom, Kalakeyavadhom; Koodiyattom – Balivadhom and Nangiarkoothu by Margi Sathi (Kamsavadhom)

PROGRAMMES STAGED DURING THE YEAR

Kathakali 7 programmes were staged during year at Margi, Trivandrum and 61 programmes in various temples, mostly in South Kerala.

Koodiyattom 39 programmes were staged under the support scheme of the Kendra Sangeet Natak Akademi, in Trivandrum at Margi Natyagriha, the Vailopally Samskrithi Bhavan (the traditional Koothambalam type theatre of the Department of Culture, Government of Kerala), Other venues were University Centres, Colleges in the State, various temples in South Kerala (Vide list of programmes appended) Out reach programmes were staged in connection with festivals etc. in centers outside the State also such as New Delhi, Rajasthan, Chennai etc)

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, (MINISTRY OF CULTURE) GRANT

The Ministry of Culture, Government of India was kind enough to continue the salary grant assistance to 20 artistes in Margi. But, since there are 40 artistes, there is a wide disparity in the earnings of the artistes. We have requested the Ministry of Culture to consider this aspect and sanction salary grant assistance to all the Margi artistes.

For the current year, assistance for Guru was also sanctioned separately.

The assistance of the Ministry of Culture is an invaluable support and encouragement to the artistes of Margi, who are among the lowest paid and our heartfelt thanks to the Government of India are hereby placed on record.

HOSTING OF WEB SITE www.margitheatre.org

We have hosted our website – www.margitheatre.org. It features sections – History, Philosophy, Art centers, Information about Kathakali & Koodiyattom, UNESCO proclamation of Koodiyattom, Video documentation, publications, Foreign assignments etc. etc. With the aid of this InfoTech we expect much greater response to and appreciation of our traditional arts.

REDUCTION IN THE RECURRING GRANT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

Mention had been made in the last annual report about the inadequacy of the present grant of Rs.10 lakh, fixed in 1997-98. Within this grant, the 40 artistes of Margi could be paid only very low salaries. These artistes are all very accomplished and senior members of the profession and had given off

their best for the development of Kathakali and Koodiyattom, maintaining the highest standards & traditional values of these essential Kerala theatre arts, which are increasingly being appreciated by more and more art lovers. Margi is the only institution for Kathakali and Koodiyattom functioning in the Capital city of our State. We were hoping that Government would sanction a rational salary structure for the very low paid artistes, comparable to that in the Kerala Kalamandalam.

But, sadly, due to the overall financial stringency faced by Government presumably, the grant was reduced from Rs.10 lakh to Rs.6 lakh during 2001-2002 and the artiste's low salaries had to be slashed by 40% at a time when the artistes were justifiably hoping for an upward revision. During the current year also the grant was reduced and only Rs.7 lakh was released resulting in a 30% cut.

We hope Government will take due note of this serious situation and sanction a rational salary structure for the artistes, in the absence of which it would be impossible to continue running Margi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The committee would like to acknowledge its deep debt of gratitude to the Government of Kerala, Department of Culture and the Director of Vailopally Samskrithi Bhavan; Government of India (Ministry of Culture); the Kendra Sangeet Nataka Akademi; the Indian Council for Cultural Relations; the Kerala Sangeet Natak Academy and the Travancore Devasom Board.

Our sincere thanks are due to the Press in General and in particular the leading dailies like Malayala Manorama, Mathrubhumi, Kerala Kaumudi, The Hindu, The Indian Express etc. for their regular coverage of the programmes of Margi. We are extremely grateful to the visual media and the Invis Multimedia for featuring our programmes.

**Dr. A.D.Damodaran
SECRETARY**

**Thiruvananthapuram
18th June 2003**

LIST OF PROGRAMMES 2002-2003

Kathakali

- 22-06-2002 Kirmeeravadhom Part I
23-06-2002 Kirmeeravadhom Part II
15-06-2002 Observance of 'Guru Dinam' – (Homage to past Masters)
Nalacharitham
26-12-2002 Kirameeravadhom Part III
28-12-2002 Kirameeravadhom Part IV
26-01-2003 Kirameeravadhom Part V
27-01-2003 Kirameeravadhom Part VI

(Total seven programmes)

Koodiyattom

(Under the auspices of the Kendra Sangeet Natak Akademi)

- 1.4.2002 'Thoranayudhom' at Kerala University
2.4.2002 'Subhadra Dhananjayam' Act I, Sree Krishna Temple, Kottarakkara
3.4.2002 Nangiarkoothu 'Sree Ramacharitham' by Margi Sathi
for Driyasavedi at Theerthapadamantapam
4.5.2002 'Subhadra Dhananjayam' Act I – Temple at Kottayam
20.5.2002 'Ascharyachoodamani' Surpanakankom at temple at Kottarakkara
21.5.2002 Nangiarkoothu by Margi Sathi at temple at Kottarakkara
26.5.2002 Nangiarkoothu by Margi Usha at temple at Kottarakkara
27.5.2002 'Ascharyachoodamani' Act VI, Anguleeyankom
9.6.2002 Nangiarkoothu 'Sree Ramacharitham' by Margi Sathi at
Vailopally Samskrithi Bhavan
12.6.2002 'Ascharyachoodamani' Act VI Anguleeyankom
16.6.2002 'Subhadra Dhananjayam' Act II
14.7.2002 'Subhadra Dhananjayam' Act I, Vailopally Samskrithi bhavanban
18.7.2002 Mahendra Vikaraman's Mathavilasom
21.7.2002 Ascharyachoodamani Act III Mayaseethankom at Vailopally
Samskrithi Bhavan
11-8-2002 Ascharyachoodamani Act IV Jatayuvadhom at Vailopally Samskrithi
Bhavan
17.8.2002 Mahendra Vikarama Pallavan's Mathavilasom
18.8.2002 Nangiarkoothu "Sree Rama Charitham" by Margi Sathi at the
Vailopally
Samskrithi Bhavan
8.9.2002 Ascharyachoodamani Act II "Surpanakankom" at the Vailopally
Samskrithi Bhavan
15.9.2002 Kulasekhara Varman's Tapati Samvaranam at Vailopally
Samskrithi Bhavan
21.9.2002 Nangiarkoothu by Margi Sathi at Powdiconam temple
18.10.2002 Nangiarkoothu by Margi Sathi and Koodiyattom by Group
20.10.2002 Ascharyachoodamani Act II Surpanakankom at Vailopally Samskrithi
Bhavan

- 23.10.2002 Subhadra Dhananjayam Act II
 27.10.2002 Subhadra Dhananjayam Act II at the Vailopally Samskrithi Bhavan
 16.11.2002 Subhadra Dhananjayam Act I at Jyothis Akademi, Kazhakuttom
 17.11.2002 Nangiarkoothu by Margi Usha at Vailopalli Samskrithi Bhavan
 24.11.2002 Subhadra Dhananjayam Act II at Vailopalli Samskrithi Bhavan
 22.12.2002 Ascharyachoodamani Act III Mayaseetankom at Vailopalli Samskrhti Bhavan
 25.12.2002 Subhadra Dhananjayam at Temple, Sasthamangalam
 27.12.2002 Subhadra Dhananjayam Act V, Subhadra's Nirvahanam by Margi Sathi
 29.12.2002 Bhasa's Mantrankom at Vailopalli Samskriti Bhavan
 18.1.2003 Nangiarkoothu by Margi Usha and Koodiyattom by Group at Baselius College, Kottayam
 19.1.2003 Subhadra Dhananjayam at Vailopalli Samskrhti Bhavan
 25.1.2003 Nangiarkoothu Sree Rama Charitham by Margi Usha at Vailopalli Samskrhti Bhavan
 8.2.2003 Patakam by Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan Nambiar and Nangiarkoothu by Margi Usha at Vailopalli Samskrithi Bhavan
 10.2.2003 Nangiarkoothu by Margi Sathi at Temple, Powdikonam
 15.2.2003 Bavadajjukeeyam, Udyanavarnama by Margi Sathi and Usha at Vailopalli Samskrhti Bhavan
 22.3.2003 Mahendra Vikraman's Mathavilasom - Entry of Kapali by Sajeev Narayana Chakiar - at Vailopalli Samskrithi Bhavan
 25.3.2003 Bhasa's Mantrankom by Sajeev Narayana Chakiar

(Total thirty nine programmes)

Artistes

Actors	Margi Sajeev Narayana Chakiar Margi Sathi Margi Raman Chakiar Pothiyil Narayana Chakiar Margi Usha Kalamandalam Raveendran
Percussionists	Kalamandalam Unnikrishnan Nambiar - Mizhavu Margi Ramn Unni - Mizhavu P.K.Unnikrishnan Nambiar - Mizhavu Harish Nambiar - Mizhavu Margi Subramonian Potti - Edakka Margi Mohanan - Thimila
Stage & Make up	Margi Somadas Margi Raveendran Margi Sree Kumar