

Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma



Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma was a renowned artist of Kerala's traditional artform, Mohiniyattam. She is revered as the Mother of Mohiniyattam within the dance community. She gave the artform a great foundation, added layers and ornamentation to it, added the "bhakti" aspect to the dance form and kept reviving the artform by constantly adding elements, techniques into it. Her entire family was associated with the dance form in 1 way or another.





Life and Work

Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma was born into a simple traditional family of Thirrunavaya of Kerala in 1915. A person with many interests, she was interested in literature, sports, yoga and more. Her conservative family though never allowed her to take up dance forms. But with Vallathol Narayana Menon's indulgence led her to take up Mohiniyattam, she learned the dance form from Krishna Panicker Asan and did her first performance in 1939.

Later into her dance career, she not only mastered the art form but gave it a new lease and adapted it to meet the growing demands of the younger generation, added techniques and elements which the younger generation still follow.

She researched the history of Mohiniyattam vastly with her daughter Sreedevi, she visited sites, went to temples and interviewed descendents of devadasis to know more about the dance form.

With her firm grasp on the subject matter, she wrote 2 Malayalam books and 4 full length ballets.

She acted in a dozen plays, acted in multiple movies such as 'Rarichen Enna Powran', 'Asuravithu', 'Gandharva Kshetram' and 'Randu Mukhangal'.



Awards and Accolades

Kalyanikutty Amma received several titles and awards for her outstanding work in Mohiniyattam. She received the Kavayithri' title given by Vallathol (1940), Sangeet Natak Akademi fellowship (1974), Kerala Sangeet Natak Akademi fellowship (1974) 'Nrittapraveena' title by Kerala Fine Arts Society (1984), Kerala Sahitya Academy award (1985).

The mother of a great dance form passed away in 1994 at the age of 84.

Activities

- Find out the dance performances choreographed by Kalyanikutty Amma and write a short summary about it.

- Trace the roots of Mohiniyattam and make a timeline of the same.
- Find out about the Devadasi culture and write a short summary on the same.

- Watch a Mohiniyattam performance and write your thoughts about it.

References:

Mywordsthoughts.com
Thehindu.com
Narthaki.com

