

Thailand Tour

Ramayana Excerpts for Chonburi performance on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014

## Introduction

We welcome you to \_\_\_\_\_ -

This afternoon, we the members of Kalakshetra will be presenting before you a few excerpts from Ramayana.

In all Rukmini Devi's major productions such as Kumara sambhavam, Sita Swayamvaram, Paduka Pattabhisekam, Sabari Moksham, Choodamani Pradhaanam, Maha Pattabhisekam, Shyama, Koorma Avataram, Meenakshi Vijayam, Rukmini Devi employed Kathakali technique in a greater or smaller measure having regard for the demands of the situation – where vigorous male action was required and also where elaborate miming was in order, as in the case of Soorpanaka, Ravana, Monkey Characters and Asuras.

Her introduction of Kathakali modes of action and expression in her compositions, which are predominantly in the Bharatanatyam style is again a tribute to her artistic ability. This combination, she managed with consummate skill, without sacrificing the purity of each style. The coming together of these two styles has enhanced the dramatic power of her productions

Rukmini Devi exhibited true dramatic imagination in her characterization of non-human beings such as Hanuman, Vali, Sugreeva, Jatayu and action such as Sethubandhanam, Sagaravarnana, Lankadahanam, etc. with the help of Kathakali technique.

Now we shall move on to group choreography and Patrapravesham. The entry of the character is known as Patrapravesham and has been a practice to introduce the principal characters in the natakas like Kuchipudi, Bhagavata Mela, Yaksha gana and Kathakali. In Kathakali we call it 'Teera Nokku.'

## Order

Dharu

Jatayu

Hunters Dance

Hanuman

Vali

Sagaravarnana

Sethubandhanam

Thillana

## Dharu

Four girls in the court of Dashratha perform Dharu, which is predominantly the expression of Nritya and concludes with the verse describing the merits of the great king, as he is about to discuss the marriage of his elder son, Rama. From Sita Swayamvaram, the first part of the Ramayana series, this piece was choreographed by Rukmini Devi in 1955.

## Patrapravesham of Jatayu

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana come across the mighty eagle Jatayu on their way to Panchavadi. The eagle's costume is extremely simple, suggestive and picturesque. His movements are very realistic. Now let us see how Rukmini Devi saw Jatayu in her imagination – A superb choreography. This is taken from the dance drama Sabari Moksham composed in 1965

## Demonstration of Hunter Girls

We will move on to Guha's hunter girls performing a joyous folk type of dance with wooden sticks. Rukmini Devi choreographs the dance while Rajaram composes the music. You will see the grace, authenticity of their land and how classical adavus can be adapted to a lighter form. We find symmetrical patterns in nature – a leaf, a flower, even a blade of grass. A human body is perfectly symmetrical too. The universe has symmetrical patterns. The orbit of the stars and planets are reflected in the movement of the dancers. In Bharatanatyam, symmetry is revealed in the repetition of movements. In this dance, observe how Rukmini Devi brings out a symmetrical pattern.

## Demonstration of Hanuman Patrapravesham

Now we see the Patrapravesham of Hanuman to a classical song. His dance is most suited to indicate his monkey character, valor and power of flight. Rukmini Devi has given him an innovative facial make up and suggestive tail, which make the character impressive. This is taken from Choodamani Pradhaanam dance drama composed in 1968.

## Demonstration of Vali

An example of masruna nritta is performed by Tara, the wife of Vali, in the ballet Choodamani Pradhaanam brought to life in the year 1968. Rukmini Devi has taken much pain to illustrate the character of Tara. As she enters after having the premonition of her husband's death, she is troubled and tried to persuade Vali not to accept the challenge to fight Sugreeva, as Vali is sure of meeting his death. Before she begins to interpret the song through gestures, she performs Nritta in which adavus are adapted to the mood of the character. This is followed by the entry of Vali, who has animal characteristics. Even as he enters, we can see the vigor and arrogance. Tara cautions as Sugreeva has befriended Rama. Vali refuses to acknowledge the fact that Tara has revealed and believes he will always remain victorious, as he has not violated the Lord's rules. The dance itself brings out Tara's anguish, fear and sorrow against Vali's boastfulness and arrogance. Tara leaves Vali and Vali sees her off.

## Sagaravarnana

We will now present before you a short scene from Choodamani Pradhaanam, the Sagaravarnana from the 5<sup>th</sup> part of Ramayana. It is one of the most beautiful and colorful scenes. Girls dressed in light blue and shades of green dance and

describe the crashing waves, the fish, the tortoise, the conches and the other sea creatures. They do this with simple yet elegant and expressive movements. Hanuman is seen in their description crossing the ocean from rock to rock. He leaves the stage when the dancers describe how the sea serpents were frightened mistaking him to be an eagle. Two songs cover the whole scene.

#### Demonstration of Sethubandhanam

A special mention of the production Maha Pattabhisekam in which the apsaras describe the battle between Indrajith and Lakshmana, Kumbhakarna and Rama – a scene not presented on stage. The marvel of this presentation is the four girls as apsaras create the battle scene solely through their formations and intricate movements. This scene is done completely in the Bharatanatyam style and is fully an evidence of her choreography skills.

A noteworthy feature of her presentations is the scrupulous attention Rukmini Devi gave to every detail pertaining to the stage, costume and the set. She had an eye for the most suitable color schemes and worried until everything was right and fit in well together. She showed an amazing sense of geometry in designing the formation of actors on stage and in utilization of stage space. Grouping of characters, their entries and exits were never the same in any of her 26 major productions. Her management of such details showed her keen sense of dramatic propriety. This scene has been taken from Maha Pattabhisekam choreographed in 1970 to which has been composed by Rajaram.

#### Demonstration of Apsaras

We conclude this evening's program with an auspicious and grand finale from Thillana from Maha Pattabhisekam. This takes place in Rama's court, after his coronation. It begins with a sloka describing Rama seated alongside Sita on the gem-studded throne. The apsaras dance to the Thillana, which serves as an obeisance to Rama. Rukmini Devi's Maha Pattabhisekam has always been received with eagerness and adulation from the audience ever since the premiere. This grand production is not only spectacular but evokes a deep-rooted Bhakthi in the audience.