

# KUTIYATTAM: 10 YEARS AFTER THE UNESCO DECLARATION

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To properly understand the circumstances in which UNESCO declared Kutiyattam an intangible world heritage, it is necessary to go back and revisit late Painkulam Ramachakyar, for it was he who opened Kutiyattam to a larger circle of audience and performers. In 1949 he took Chakyar Koothu for the first time beyond the walls of the temple, and Kutiyattam in 1957. He gladly accepted the invitation from Kerala Kalamandalam to open a Kutiyattam department, which started functioning in 1965 with Chakyar as its head. Again for the first time breaking the tradition-bound custom, he admitted students for training at Kalamandalam who belonged to communities other than Chakyars

and Nangiars. This new epoch in the history of Kutiyattam began in 1949 and it continues even today. This epoch can and should justifiably be called the Ramachakyar epoch. The UNESCO declaration is an important link in the chain of events that resulted from the bold, historic action taken by Ramachakyar.

The UNESCO declaration raised the status of Kutiyattam and Nangiyarkuttu, as well as that of their practitioners, to new heights. It also gave a new dimension to the recognition of the art as a form of international theater. Providing funds for the art and artists, it created new opportunities for



*The first Kutiyattam-tour abroad: the group of Painkulam Rāma Cākyaṛ (with walking cane, behind him: K. Vasudevan Namboodiripad) in Paris, 1980.*

