

Koppaka Family Donates \$750,000 To Emory University

BY RAVIR. PONANGI

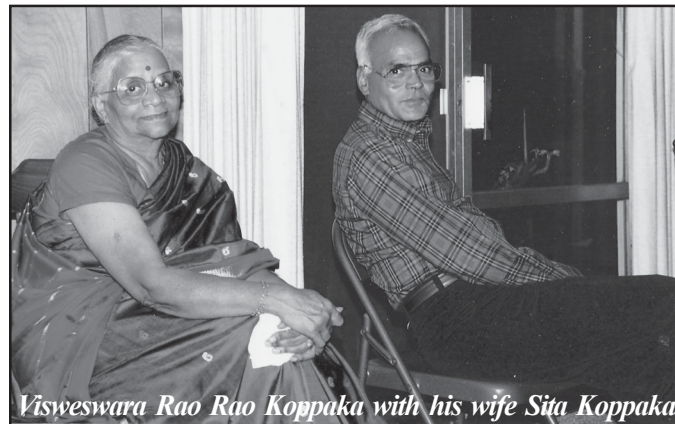
Atlanta: The need for establishing a Telugu Chair at a university in North America was first brought to the attention of the Telugu Americans at a Telugu Symposium held in Atlanta in 1998 organized by the Vanguri Foundation of America.

The idea took concrete form almost seven years later when Emory University showed interest in starting a Telugu studies program as part of its South Asian Studies. In response to this interest, the Telugu Association of Metro Atlanta (TAMA) raised about \$100,000 as seed money. This included \$25,000 raised by the Academy of Kuchipudi Dance through their fund raising event, the Kuchipudi dance drama Swapnavijayam (Nut-cracker). With this fund, Emory was able to invite Prof V. Narayana Rao as visiting professor teaching Telugu literature for two semesters. Emory has matched these funds and committed additional funds by deciding to invite Prof. Rao for five more years to the campus to teach subjects on Telugu literature and culture and history.

The goal is to establish a permanent chair for Telugu Studies at Emory University. Towards the fulfillment of this objective Emory has already received \$750,000 from the Koppaka Family Founda-

tion. An additional \$ 750,000 dollars are necessary to establish a permanent chair. The Telugu Community here and in North America has an opportunity to participate in the realization of this dream.

The Koppaka Family Foundation has gifted



Visweswara Rao Rao Koppaka with his wife Sita Koppaka.

\$750,000 to Emory University for the establishment of a professorship in Telugu language, South Indian cultures, literatures, and history in memory of their parents Visweswara Rao Koppaka and Sita Koppaka.

The family is strongly committed to the es-

tablishment of a permanent, endowed professorship in Telugu language and culture at Emory University. Dr. Ram Koppaka, son of Visweswara Rao, said the gift represented the fulfillment of his parent's dream of sharing their passion for South Indian culture and Telugu language with others.

Dr. Koppaka Visweswara Rao's success story is known to many. He was born in a village Vempadu in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, India, in 1925. He grew up in poverty. He was the first in his village to obtain a doctorate degree and go to the United States for further studies. A scientist who enjoyed the process of research, he continued to work in the lab, write grants, and supervise graduate students well after he turned 70. He

was also a pharmacy professor who had a lifelong love for learning and teaching. He was a medicinal chemist, but not a doctor. He was taught at a young age that education was his only path out of poverty. Often relying on the charity of others

for a single meal each day, a practice known in Telugu as Vaarulu and the persistence instilled by his parents, Dr. Rao excelled in high school and college and went on to receive a D.Sc. in Organic Chemistry from Andhra University at the age of 23. Although married with an infant daughter, he left India in 1948 on a government of India scholarship to pursue further studies in the US. He returned to his family five years later, having earned a second PhD and in biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin. The family ultimately immigrated to the US in 1954 and began a new life in this country. Dr. Rao joined the staff of Chas. Pfizer, Inc. and soon became manager of chemical research of the company's cancer research program. This period was highly successful, earning him an international reputation for skill in the isolation of natural products with antitumor activity. Of the 30 agents he discovered, which were subjected to human clinical trials, one compound, mithramycin, was ultimately approved by the FDA and is still in clinical use today. Dr. Rao left Pfizer in 1969 to join the faculty of the College of Pharmacy at the University of Florida. In addition to continuing his research, he developed a passion for teaching, an endeavor in which he also excelled.

Dr Rao passed away in 1998. In the last two years of his life, Dr. Rao expressed a desire to share his interest in South Indian classical music and the arts with younger generations of Indians raised in the US as well as Americans, who are interested in learning about the rich cultural and language traditions of Andhra Pradesh. Realizing that it was through the charity of others that he was able to complete his education and become a successful scientist, he very much wanted to re-

Continued on Pg 21.....

Dance Recital Raises Funds For HTA Yaaga Saala

BY JYOTHSNA HEDGE

Atlanta: Students of Bhavini Rajan presented a Bharatanatyam extravaganza, Samarpanam 2009 on Dec 19th, 2009 at the Hindu Temple of Atlanta as a Fund Raiser for the Yaaga Saala project of HTA.

The program offered a wide range of dance sequences choreographed by Bhavini Rajan. Bhavini, an accomplished dancer has graduated from Shri Satguru Sangeeta Samajam in Madurai. She has been a student Padmashree Leela Samson. Along with Bharatanatyam, she has also learned Mohiniattam and Kuchipudi.

The evening began with a Prayer followed by "Pushpanjali" in Gambheera Nattai Ragam and Adi Taalam - a dance that is generally performed first, to welcome the audience.

"Chidambaram Natesa(Shiva) Kauthuvam" in Varaaali Ragam and Adi Taalam was next. This dance was in praise of Lord Shiva. This fast paced piece had poses of Shiva dacing with drum in one hand. As part of the Kauthuvam, rhythmic syllables called chollukatts are intertwined with the lyrics of the song. Hence both nritta (footwork) and abhinaya (expressions) are components of the choreography. "Thodaya Mangalam" in Nattai Ragam and Adi Taalam, an invocatory dance generally performed at the beginning of any concert with lyrics worshipping Lord Ganesha followed. "Temple Bells" was next in line with dance set to carnatic classical Veena music by Shri Chitti Babu. A pure nritta number, "Alarippu" came dancing in where is no abhinaya involved and is performed to the rhythm of the Mridangam along with nattuvangist reciting the sollukattu. In a Bharatanatyam repertoire, this is technically the first piece to evaluate the performer's skills.

"Nursery Rhymes", a unique blend of east and west was presented by 5 year old kids who depicted nursery Rhymes such as "Jack and Jill" and "Twinkle Twinkle little star" in Bharatanatyam mudras. "Jatiswaram" in Vasantha Ragam and Rupakam Taalam", a pure dance set to musical notes with no abhinaya was next. "Sabdam" entertained the audience in RaagaMalika Ragam and



Misra Chapu Taalam. Sabdam is an introductory piece for abhinaya and is a mixture of steps and expression. The Sabdam presented was in praise of Lord Krishna. The next dance "Kavadi Attam", is a dance to worship Lord Murugan. It is performed during the festival of Thaipusam and emphasizes debt bondage. The Kavadi itself is a burden through which devotees implore for help from God Murugan. Bharatantnyam Jathis were performed for Fusion music by Vanessa Mae and A.R. Rahman. "Kummi", a folk dance popular in Tamil Nadu and Kerala was next. Kummi involves dancers imitating harvesting activities. "Thillana" in Kadana Kuthalam Ragam and Adi Taalam, a pure dance form followed.

Dr. Hyma Mikkilineni, the President of HTA thanked Bhavini for her efforts and passion in raising funds for the Yaaga Saala. She also appealed to public support for the temple projects. She also quoted from Newsweek magazine that recognized Hinduism on a national platform. She talked about Yoga and Meditation playing important roles in areas of back pain etc.

After a short break was the presentation of Ramayana. The epic was depicted through an Introduction and Sloka from Valmiki Ramayana followed by Sriramachandra in Yaman Ragam and Misra Chapu talam composed by Tulsidas. This part talked about who Rama was. Next was Janaki Ramana is Kapi Ragam and Adi Taalam composed by Vanamala Jeer. This part was about Rama who was Janaki's husband and son of Dasaratha. The sequence Sita Kalyanam describing the wedding of Rama and Sita was in Kuranji Ragam and Khanda Chapu taalam composed by Thyagaraja. Eppadimanam, in Husseni Ragam and Misra Chapu taalam composed by Arunachala Kavirayar depicted Sita asking Rama to take her to the forest with him. Kahan Ke Pathik which describes villagers talking to Sita was in Kuranji Ragam and Thiranaada taalam composed by Tulsidas. Ramachandraya Janaka in Kuranji Ragam and Adi taalam composed by Bhadrachala Ramadas, the concluding part of the presentation was a benediction song praising noble qualities and attractive personality of Lord Rama.

Packed with a house full of audience, the elaborate dance recital raised well over eight thousand dollars. A cultural experience for a divine cause was truly an effort worthy of accolades. Here's wishing much success to Bhavini, all her students and Hindu Temple of Atlanta in all their future activities.

Postage With Images Of Deities

Atlanta: Usa-postage.com, an Alpharetta based postage company has created seven spiritual designs that have special appeal for the Indian community in the US. For the first time, real U.S. postage depicting Sai Baba, Goddess Lakshmi, Lord Venkateshwara, Murugan, Vinayaka, Shiva-Parvathi and Sri Krishna are available on 20-stamp commemorative sheets. These are exclusive designs not available anywhere else, according to a press release issued by the company.

"Customized postage is fun and gets attention! Choose your favorite image from the Usa-postage.com store and use it for day-to-day mail, special occasions or give the sheets as gifts. Sheets are available in \$0.44 for first-class letters," says the release.

USA postage, tries to encourage fund raising activities in the Indian community and for temples across the USA. "If you are looking for a fund rising program for your temple or a non-profit organization, please contact us and will be happy to assist your with your program," says the release.

The commemorative sheets from Usa-postage.com are valid U.S. Postage produced by a technology call PC Postage.

Customized postage sheets are ideal for giving as gift items. The Indian community living in United states can order online at www.usa-postage.com.

