

MUSICIANS AND DANCING FRIEZES IN THE VIJAYANAGARA TEMPLES OF RAYALASEEMA

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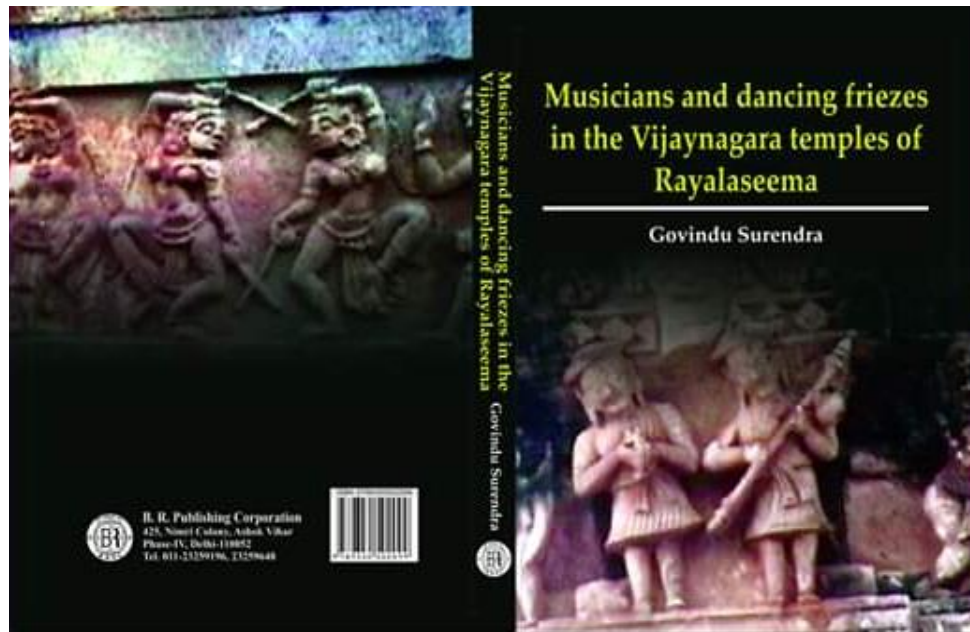
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The author of this book, Dr. Surendra Govindu working as an Assistant Professor of History, VR. College, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh is a renowned *Sthapathy* (Temple architect) and art Historian too. His book is a comparative study of the dancers and musicians in the Vijayanagara court as well as how the same has been reflected in the Vijayanagara art of *Rayalaseema*. In fact, this book is an illustrated history of music and dance about the Vijayanagara art of Rayalaseema and of course the title of the Book itself raises the eyebrows of the readers as it throws a flood of light on the magnificent Vijayanagara art of Rayalaseema in detail.

In Sanskrit there is an old saying that *music is the tree of nature's symphonies and the dance is the blossom of all music*. As the art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy aptly described, Indian music is essentially impersonal. It reflects an emotion or wisdom of any single individual. Its' sorrow is without tears, its joy is without exaltation and it is passionate without any loss of serenity. In the deepest sense it is of the words all-human. Following this, the author of this book interestingly intertwined history with music and dance in the Vijayanagara art of Rayalaseema by beautifully narrating the architectural beauty. Since book has highlighted various important types of dances, musicians and musical instruments, it will be very useful for the students of history, art history music and dance students as well as to the travelers who

wishes to learn and see the Viyanagara art along with the beauty of the temple.

This study encompasses a wide range of factual evidences and spectacular images. So far, only meager information is available on the dancing and



musician figures represented in the Vijayanagara art. With this book some extent the problem addressed.

Author Surendra Govindu gave a complete picture of the music and dance forms of India and Vijayanagara art in the opening sentence of the introductory chapter itself. He also explained the symbolism of the dance and music and how it evolved and developed among various cultures as vibrant Vijayanagara art in the country. Major portions of the book compared the two art forms i.e., music and dance during the Vijayanagara times with the same arts that are reflected in the temple art of Rayalaseema as the various patterns of the dress of the musicians and dancers, which are delineated in the plastic art. The costumes of the dancers shows the foreign influence, as stated by the travellers.

This book elaborately describes about the music and dance in the Vijayanagara period through the information gathered from the accounts of foreign travelers, literature and inscriptions. The study brings to limelight about the types of musicians i.e., court musicians, haridasakuta, poet-musicians and commoners. It corroborates about the existence of various dances such as Kuchipudi, Devanartaki – temple dance, Dance of *Vasantotsava* (Holi dance), Stick Dance (*Kolata*), Dappu Dance, *Tolubommallata*, Garbha Dance, open-air circus dance, and the *Ballet* (or) Group dance.

Dance figures in the Vijayanagara art are classified into gods and goddesses in dance postures, dancing celestials, i.e., dancing *ganas*, *apsaras*, *Kinnaras* and *Kinneris* and performing dancers and next as secular dance figures as represented in the Vijayanagara sculptures and paintings. It also speaks about the dancers of two groups' i.e., Traditional classical dance, and Traditional folk dance.

Quite conspicuously this study deals with the musical instruments as reflected in Vijayanagara Art representing the musical instruments like, *Damaru*, *Vina*, Cymbal, *Tamboora*, *Sehnai*, *Mridanga*, Flute, Conch, Horn, *Nagasvaram*, *Tappeta*, *Kolatam sticks*, etc. It significantly classified the musicians and dancers based on their *Costumes*, *Ornaments*, *Coiffure*, and *Head Gear*. This study further classified the sculptures into 1) Gods and Goddesses as musicians and dancers, 2) Male and Female musicians and dancers and 3) Dwarfs and Jesters as musicians and dancers.

As such, this book delivers an entertaining account and perspective on the structural beauty of the Vijayanagara art. It allows the reader to easily follow the beauty and life style as well as the advancement of the Vijayanagara art in a readable and entertaining style. It is an excellent resource to students especially for enthusiasts and researchers in art history. In toto, this study takes the readers on a delightful journey through the Majestic Vijayanagara art.