Preface

*Nrityam* *Darsyayami*. This chant rendered in daily worship of a house holder and also in temples. The shodashopacharas, chatushashti upacharas performed in the worship of an idol in the temple have music and dance as compulsory offerings. Music and dance were prescribed as a part of ritual performance in the Agama Sastras. In the vaikhanasa Agama, there is a mention of Nine fold worship of God (Navavidharchanam - see Appendix-I) In this Maricha Maharshi mentioned that Uttamottama, Uttama Madhyama, Uttama Adhama, Madhyama Uttama, Madhyama Madhyama, Madhyama Adhama, Adhama Uttama, Adhama Madhyama and Adhama Adhama are nine fold worship with several offerings including dance and music. Worship without dance and music was believed to be a sin. Above chant “*Nrityam darsayami*” made me to ponder about the importance of dance in the rituals.

Recollection of my childhood dance performances in the Kalyanotsavam of Manyamkonda Venkateswara swamy and other festivals under the guidance of Smt. Saride Manikyamma given me the scope to understand the status of dance in the temple rituals.

Fortunately I came to learn dance from Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna, the only person who can teach temple ritual dance and who is striving hard to retain the lasya dance tradition of Andhras. He explained me the development of dance in general and temple dances, court dances and other dances of India with reference to Andhra in my M.A. course.

After completing my M.A. in dance when I had to choose a subject for the research study, I approached Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna with the hypothesis of temple dance in Andhra Pradesh. He immediately accepted my request and explained the area of research study. During the course of discussion I came to know that it is a vast area and I could not complete it within five years. After understanding my problem Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna suggested me to take one temple for ritual dance tradition. So I took Ballipadu Madana Gopala Swamy temple in West Godawari district where my first Guru Smt. Saride Manikyamma was in the service as the temple dancer.
Dance developed in two main streams Lasyam and Tandavam. They are again developed as Nritta, Nritya and Natya. In Andhra Pradesh classical dance art developed in temple, court and in open arena. Temple dance and court dance mainly practiced by the female artists. These dances are described in the Telugu literature from 11th century to 17th century. As an offering in the temple the dance was patronised in a great grandeur by the kings and the society. Gudisanis in Andhra country (Devadasis in general) attained a great admiration and social status.

In course of my research work I came to know that the Lasya dancers in Andhra Pradesh are named as Venkatarathnam, Venkatanarayana, Nukaraju etc., which sounds like male names. I asked Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna about this, and he explained that the gradual degradators of dancer's status in the society. Temple dancers were not known as "Devadasis" in Andhra, they were called as Gudisanis, Devanartakis, Devaganikas. Dasis were the slaves who used to be with queens in the harems. Most of the dasis were sent with the queen as a matrimonial gift from her mother's home as “Aranam”. Their names were generally Mandaramala, Kamanethri, Sarisiruham, Vasanthalathika etc., Some of the scholars who didn’t know the fact were confused and believed that names like Venkataratnam, Ramabhadram etc., were the names of Kuchipudi dance masters. But most of the dancers of 20th Century A.D were known with male gender names. Reason is the degradatory status of dancers and the people who wanted to use them in other way but not as artistes and used to call them as Manikyam, Muthyam. Instead of calling Manikyam they call as Manikyam. They wantedly avoided the “Amma”. Once temple dancers were believed as Nityasumangalis and were used to invited to attend the marriage ceremonies of higher families. They used to sing the Mangalaharatis and used to give some black beads from their chain to the newly married lady. That was believed to be very auspicious and the bride will be blessed by God as a “Sumangali”.

In the beginning of 20th Century the dance practise was
a taboo in India. So almost all the female dancers have stopped dance performance in Andhra Pradesh. This thesis on Andhra Natyam as a temple art deals with the following aspects in seven (7) chapters.

CHAPTER-1

A General Introduction to Dance

Lasya as defined in some treatises. It also contains the different types of dances and classical dance styles of India in brief and introduction of Andhra Natyam.

CHAPTER-II:

Temple - Worship and Dance in Temple:

Dealing with origin, development of temples and some of the important temples of Andhra Pradesh where dance was a part of rituals.

CHAPTER-III:

Worship - Music and Dance Worship in Temple:

This chapter contains the method, and types of worship in Andhra Desa. Devanartaki in temple her initial training, dedication with special reference to Ballipadu Madanagopala Swamy temple in West Godawari district where Smt. Saride Manikyamma was dedicated as a Temple dancer. The terminology of Gudisani, her social status in olden days.
CHAPTER-IV

History of Andhranatyam:

Rulers of Andhra Desa- Literary evidence of Andhranatyam and ancient dancers etc., are covered in this chapter.

CHAPTER-V:

Resurrection of Andhranatyam:

The details of seminars, conferences held at Rajamundry in 1970 - "Abhinaya Sadassu" and at Vijayawada and Hyderabad in 1994.

CHAPTER-VI:

Technique of Andhranatyam:

Details of technique, repertoire and Navajanardhana Parijatham. A brief biography of Dr. Nataraja Ramakrishna.

CHAPTER-VII:

Andhranaytam-The Lasya Dance Tradition of Andhras.-Conclusion:

Gradual development of dance art. Its decadence and renaissance in Andhra Pradesh. The place of Andhranatyam as a Lasya Dance Tradition and scope for the further study in the cultural history of Andhra country.