



KOLANKA VENKATARAJU

I present to you, Sir, Kolanka Shri Venkataraju

□ Born in 1910 in a family of Mridanga Vidwans, Shri Venkataraju had his initial training in Mridangam under his uncle Shri China Ramaswami Guru. Later he underwent training with his Guru, Shri Muramala Gopalaswami of Kakinada. Early in his life he came under the influence of Shri Sangameshwara Shastri and Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu for both of whom he became a regular accompanist. He has been performing from the age of 8. He has accompanied many eminent musicians, such as, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Ayyangar, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar, Somangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Paladam Sanjeeva Rao, Emani Shri Shankara Shastri.

Shri Venkataraju has taught Mridangam at the Music College of Vizianagaram and the Government

College, Hyderabad. He has been honoured by many public institutions in India. The Andhra Bharati Thirtha of Vizianagaram honoured him in the year 1930, the Sangeeta Vidwat Sabha of Kakinada in 1942, Shri Vijaya Durga Sangeet Vidwat Sabha of Vijayawada in 1971. The people of Tuni, his native village, conferred on him the title "Mridanga Aditya" in 1957.

He accompanied Shri Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu – for many years. He has served as a member of the Andhra Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi since its inception.

For his eminence in Mridangam playing and his contribution to its enrichment, Kolanka Shri Venkataraju receives the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Karnatak Instrumental Music for 1979.