

“KALARATNA”

SYLVESTER THOTA



The word ‘MIMIC’ means to imitate or copy something specially for the entertainment, enlightenment, awareness and welfare of the society. This art is known as ‘MIMICRY’. Man is born a mimic. Imitation or mimicry is an inborn talent. Knowingly or unknowingly, every person tries to imitate or mimic others.

Imitating or copying or reproducing the sounds is Mimicry, meaning Dhwanyanukarana. Mimicry is one among the sixty four art forms as per Indian tradition. It is called as “Swaravanchana” in Telugu. Here, swaravanchana does not mean to cheat or to deceit, but it means to bend or change ones voice to sound like something else. As such, the art of Mimicry is not to cheat or deceit people, but to provide enjoyment and entertainment on one hand and also to bring about awareness and enlightenment in the public leading to the welfare of the society. It has neither a Guru nor a syllabus. It is a one man show or art. It requires intense observation. One has to bend and master one’s own voice and reproduce the correct sound effects through regular and sincere practice.

Mr Sylvester Thota, popularly known as Silver Star, is a living epitome of the art of Mimicry. Over a period of four and a half decades, he thrilled and enthralled the audience with his exciting shows of mimicry and ventriloquism (Talking Doll). He is a dictionary and an authority in mimicry.

Sylvester was born in a poor Balija family to illiterate parents Thota Jacob and Thomasamma on August 15, 1949 in Mutluru village of Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh in India. He had experienced the extremities of poverty and faced many hardships. For three years, he worked as a vegetable vendor and helped his parents. Not a single day had passed without tears. He had spent many sleepless nights.

Sylvester took to mimicry as his profession. He believed in hard work and self help. His determination, dedication and relentless efforts enabled him to attain a unique place among mimicry artists. He has developed a style of his own in mimicry.

Silvester is very realistic and truthful. His confidence, consistency and sincerity saw him through many testing times. He is a person with a good heart and moral values. Above all, he is very humble.

Starting from Bishop Grassi High School, an orphanage, he continued to secure a B.Com degree from Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada. During this period, he realized the role and responsibility of an artist towards the welfare of the society.

In his long career, Sylvester associated with many government agencies and voluntary organizations, developed and presented mimicry shows on subjects of educational value and social welfare such as Family Planning, Adult Education, Savings, AIDS, Eradication of Illiteracy and Against Untouchability and Superstitions. He has given many useful programmes through AIR and Doordarshan. He has given many useful programmes through AIR and Doordarshan. He was fortunate to have the support and guidance of noted personalities such as Padmasri Turlapati Kutumba Rao, Dr. Samaram, Dr. MC Dass, Ambati Anjaneyulu, Kalabandhu KK Raja & others.

From the stage of sweating for his daily meal, Sylvester had grown to the stage of providing food for others. He had given free performances for the benefit of service organizations, poor and old artists and for creating and motivating public awareness on issues of social importance. Continuing his service to the society, he became a member of Rotary Club of Vijayawada and contributes to its social service programmes.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS :

Sylvester is having more than 9,000 mimicry shows to his credit and has toured very extensively. He is the first mimicry artist after Padmasri Dr. Nerella Venu Madhav to go abroad for mimicry shows. His first overseas performance was during the TANA Regional Conference at New Orleans, Atlanta and Chicago. He had been to USA and UAE twice between 1991-95. He was invited by ETA in 1995 for a single programme in Birmingham, England. He had flown along with Sr NT Rama Rao for this programme. He had performed in almost all towns and cities wherever there are Telugu people.

Sylvester had performed to the delight and appreciation of dignitaries including former President Sri Abdul Kalam, all Governors and Chief Ministers of AP and many stalwarts and distinguished persons in the fields of politics, films, IAS and IPS officers and philanthropists.

Three most important events worthy of special mention are 1) The publication of a souvenir "Sylvester Vijayotsavam" in 1987 by Chaitanya Art Theatres, Yuva Kala Vahini, Hyderabad, 2) "Silver Jubilee Celebrations" of his mimicry career at Hyderabad and 3) Four Nandi Awards for the play "Prema Samrajyam" in 2000, which he directed and acted.

TITLES AND AWARDS :

- ✓ HAMSA "Kalaratna" Award felicitated by Govt. Of Andhra Pradesh in 2016.
- ✓ Acharya Nagarjuna University felicitate with "PRATIBHA PURASKAR" award in 2009.
- ✓ "2013-UGADI PURASKARAM" received from the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri N Kiran Kumar Reddy.
- ✓ At Guntur on December 23rd, felicitated and awarded by our beloved CM Sri N Chandrababu Naidu, A.P. Govt and AP Christian Minorities Welfare Organization. Our hon'ble Ministers Raavela Kishore Babu, Pallem Raghunath garu and Rt. Rev. Bishop Gali Bali and others.
- ✓ Balco Township of Madhya Pradesh felicitated with "MIMICRY KING" award.
- ✓ Sumadhura Kalaniketan of Vijayawada felicitated with "GOLDEN STAR" through Padmasri Sri Turlapati Kutumba Rao.
- ✓ A great felicitation at Hindu College of Machilipatnam by the then AP Governor Sri KC Abraham.
- ✓ Chaitanya Art Theatres & Yuva Kalavahini of Hyderabad felicitated with "DHWANYANUKARANA RATNA" through Governor Sri Kona Prabhakara Rao and GOLD MEDAL by Darsaka Ratna Sri Dasari Narayana Rao, M.P.
- ✓ A great felicitation at Raj Bhavan by then Governor Kumud Ben Joshi.
- ✓ Raypur Andhra Association (Orissa State) felicitated with "VISWA DHWANYANUKARANA CHAKRAVARTHI".
- ✓ Dr Ambedkar National Youth and Cultural Association felicitated with "SAPTA SWARA DHWANYAVALOKI" award.
- ✓ Gowtami Cultural Association of Rajahmundry felicitated with "DHWANYANUKARANA SARWABHOUMA" award.
- ✓ Telugu Kala Samithi of Hubli (Karnataka) felicitated with "SARVA SWARA BRAHMA" award.
- ✓ Andhra Telugu Kala Sravanthi of Mardas felicitated with "SWARANUKARAN CHAKRAVARTHY" through Kalavachaspathi Sri Kongara Jaggaiah.
- ✓ Alluri Seetha Rama Raju Smaraka Kala Vedika of Kakinada felicitated with "SOVERIGN OF MIMICRY" through Cine Artist Sri U Krishnam Raju, M.P.
- ✓ Gowtami Cultural Association of Rajahmundry recognized as "MAN OF THE YEAR" in 1987 and awarded "DHWANYANUKARANA SAMRAT" title.
- ✓ Kala Sagar of Chittor honoured with "EVER GREEN ACHIEVEMENT" and felicitated by Sri Nara Rama Murthy Naidu, M.L.A.

- ✓ Great honour of receiving “V.R. NARLA VISISHTHA KALA AWARD” formed after famous literary giant and great editor Sri Narla Venkateswara Rao in 2004.
- ✓ Dr. Sardar Gowthu Lachchanna Kala Peetham of Vijayawada felicitated with “NAVAR RATNA PURASKAR” through Sri Palagani Prabhakar in 2008.
- ✓ Sneha Samakhya of Guntur felicitated with “RAMBO OF MIMICRY” in 2008.
- ✓ Sri Sri Sri Vibhavashi Mangamamba Educational Welfare Trust of Razole, W.G. Dist., felicitated with “SWARA KALA PRAPOORNA”.
- ✓ A.P. Governor Sri Narasimhan honoured and felicitated on 6th March 2013.
- ✓ Swara Madhuri of A.G. Office of Hyderabad honoured and felicitated on 14th March 2013.
- ✓ Vijayawada Cultural Academy of Vijayawada felicitated with “KALA BANDHU NUSETTI RAMA MOHANA RAO PURASKARAM”.
- ✓ Maheswari Prasad Memorial Kala Parishat and Andhra Arts Academy of Vijayawada honoured and felicitated in November 2014.
- ✓ All the Best Academy of Hyderabad felicitated with “VISISHTHA UGADI PRATIBHA PURASKARAM” on the even of 2015-Ugadi.
- ✓ “JOURNALIST” magazine felicitated with “PEOPLE’S CHOICE AWARD – 2015” through Andhra University Vice Chancellor Sri GSN Raju at Visakhapatnam.
- ✓ Great felicitation by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Sri N Chandra Babu Naidu on 15th July, 2015 on the eve of Godavari Pushkaraalu at Rajahmundry.
- ✓ Great felicitation by M.P. And Y.S.R.C.P. President Sri YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and All India Working Journalists Union familiar personalities Sri Srinivasa Reddy, Devulapalli Amar and Ambati Anjaneyulu on 25th August, 2015 on the even of A.P. Working Journalists Union’s 34th Anniversary at K.L. University.
- ✓ A.P. Speaker Dr. Kodela Siva Prasad felicitated the Star on 13th September, 2015 at the 5th Anniversary of “Journalist Magazine”.

And many US, UAE and EU Telugu Cultural Associations felicitated Mr Sylvester many times.

FAMILY :

Sylvester, who had been married to Smt. Boppana Dhana Lakshmi, made sure to see that their two sons and daughter are well-settled in life. Through his family, he has shown the importance need and of national integration.

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