

## *Venḱata Narayana Vempati (1871 - 1935):*

Son of Smt. Punnamma and Sri Kodandaraamayya, Vempati Venkatanarayana was trained by his father in the Kuchipudi art form; a popular female impersonator and guru, Venkatanarayana excelled in the roles of SATHYABHAMA, DAADINAMMA and BAALINTHAVESHAS, which he portrayed till the age of sixty. An unusual feature for a performing artist; special mention should be made of DAADINAMMA, which he used to perform for three hours tied to a cot with only the upper part of the body left free. Impressed by Venkatanarayana's prowess, on one occasion HARIKATHA PITHAAMAHA Aadibhatla Naarayanadasa himself played the role of SUTHRADHAARA in which Venkatanarayana played the role of SATHYABHAAMA.

Specially known for his meticulous THAALAPRASTHAARA and facial expressions, he was called ABHINAVA SATHYABHAAM. He also performed BHAAMAKALAAPAM for a record number of more than a thousand times all over Andhra region.

