



How Shri Ghantasala Helped the Formation of Detroit Telugu Association

[Katta Murty](#)

Editors Note: This article is in Unicode; If you cannot see the Telugu script, please scroll down to read the RTS Transcription, or see the [pdf version here](#)

In September, October 1970, a visit of Ghantasala with an accompanying troupe of musical assistants and the mimicry artist Venumadhav to a select set of American cities was sponsored by Palanki Ramarao (PR) garu of New Jersey. PR knows Katta Murty (KM) of Ann Arbor. So, PR called KM and asked whether it would be possible to arrange a visit of the group to Detroit.

At that time there was no Telugu association in Michigan. So KM talked with Tummala Madhavarao (TM) and Cerukuri Ramarao (CR) and some others about the possibility of the visit. They thought that it was a great opportunity that should not be passed up, and started organizing for the visit.

When the group arrived, Ghantasala was already suffering from a severe cold and exhaustion from continuous travel. Each member of the visiting group was provided accommodation for their stay with a Telugu family living around Detroit. Ghantasala stayed in CR's house. Lunches and dinners to honor the visiting troupe were organized by many Telugu families, but Ghantasala did not attend any of them because of his cold, and also because he was afraid of losing his voice by eating too much.

The group stayed in Michigan for only a couple of days. During the daytimes, we took the group sightseeing, visiting Detroit city, and landmarks like the Green field village and the Ford Assembly plant. Ghantasala joined some of these trips and seemed to enjoy them immensely.

The main event was of course the concert held one evening. In spite of his poor health Ghantasala insisted on fulfilling his commitment to his fans, and the concert started around 7 PM, with his rendering of జగమే మాయా బ్రతుకే మాయా. He started the concert saying నా పాటల్లో అన్నిటికన్నా నాకు నచ్చింది ఇదే.

సోదరుడు నాగేశ్వరరావు దేవదాసులో ఈ పాటకు అద్భుతమైన నటన ప్రదర్శించాడు. For many in the audience it was a great thrill to hear Ghantasala sing this song in person, and there was wild applause for a long time.

The concert was attended by an unbelievably large crowd consisting of not only Telugu people, but also many people from all states in South India, and many North Indians as well, and it lasted many hours. We wanted to reimburse the visiting group for at least their travel expenses, so we had to charge \$10/person, which was considered a large amount at that time by many people.

Even around midnight the audience were bringing slips of paper with names of songs that they wanted Ghantasala to sing. At that time Ghantasala made an announcement to the following effect మిత్రులకు నమస్కారం. అర్ధరాత్రి కావస్తోంది, అయినా ఇంకా చాలా పాటలు పాడమని కోరుతున్నారు. నాచేత పాడించుకోవాలానే మీ అభిలాషకు ధన్యవాదాలు, కానీ ఆలస్యం అవడంమూలాన ఇవాళ్టికి ఆపనివ్వమని నా కోరిక. మీకు ఇంకా నా పాటలు వినాలనిఉంటే నన్ను మళ్ళీ ఇంకొకసారి మీ ఊరుకి పిలిపించుకోమని నా ప్రార్థన. ఇప్పుడు మంగళం పాడి ఇవ్వాలి ముగిస్తాము ఏమీ అనుకోకండి

This way the program was a success beyond our expectations. This concert was the starting point for Telugu programs in Michigan. Shortly after that program the Detroit Telugu Association (DTA) took shape. Ghantasala's trip and his concert provided the impetus for the birth of this association.