



Obituary

Veteran make-up artiste, **K Sethumadhavan**, 90, passed away on January 13. He worked closely with dance and theatre artistes and some of them were India's top names.



With an experience of 66 years, he worked with many classical dancers across generations. He started his makeup journey in the time of legendary Y. G. Parathasarathy and Yamini Krishnamurthi.

His family said Sethumadhavan had seen it all in the makeup field – from turmeric and castor oil to pancakes consisting of zincwhite and glycerine.

He had worked with artistes like Srinidhi Chidambaram, Sudharani Regupathy, Srikala Bharath, Chitra Visweswaran and many others

“My father made all the products with his own hands. It was never once store-bought. This included cosmetic powders like pancakes to accessories like the flower chendu. He usually stayed with the dancers until the end of the programme. He never confined himself to makeup, he also took great effort in ensuring the costumes and accessories were all in place,” said Guruskanthan, his first son.

Sethumadhavan always used makeup shades based on the lighting and never fixed a shade based on the skin tone. He believed light settings made all the difference to the makeup. He also played a small role in the Tamil movie Meenda Sorgam.

Once, at Peravurani near Thanjavur, the drama ‘Sivakamiyin Sabadham’ was to be staged and Sethumadhavan was there to assist the troupe. The make-up artiste did not turn up. The artistes were in a fix and asked for his help. He had only the foundation and nothing else. So, he went to a local shop to buy zinc white. There, he saw jute threads and suddenly an idea struck him. He bought the jute threads and converted them into a beard and moustache. They looked like original ones and he was appreciated for this. He managed to do the make-up for the entire troupe successfully.

The appreciation by maestro dancer Kelucharan Mohapatra was very dear to his heart, his family said.

He had to do make-up of Naganandhi, a male character in ‘Sivakamiyin Sabadham’, to a female. So, he had to cover the lady's long hair. Also, the female role of Sivakami was done by a male. He had to make adjustments for that.

He also won appreciation for his work in Chandrakantha's troupe.

Sethumadhavan was given the title of ‘Oppanai Ratnam’ by Pakkirisamy Pillai and dance guru Sudharani Reghupathy honoured him with a certificate of appreciation. He always got mementos at the end of performances.

Sethumadhavan was saddened that neither the central nor the state government recognised the make-up professionals. He used to say, “ICCR does not recognise us as artistes; we get treated as technicians. So, we do not receive concessions for travel abroad. I wish the government would recognize our field.”

Born in Watrap near Srivilliputhur, Sethumadhavan used to dine only once a day and he never ate at night. This habit of his started when Lal Bahadur Shastri introduced the ‘Miss a Meal’ concept.

“Shastri's Miss a Meal” was a campaign launched by India's late prime minister Shastri during the 1965 India-Pakistan war, where he urged citizens to voluntarily skip one meal a week to show solidarity and support for the nation during a food shortage crisis

Sethumadhavan is survived by his wife Bhanu, two sons – S Guruskanthan and S Ragothaman, one daughter – S Sukanya. The family resides at 27, San Thome High Road. Contact - 9840237057.

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