



Padma explaining the karana-s 'vartitam and talapushpaputam'

these sculptures which had been hidden under bat excreta and sand for hundreds of years. The paintings of the Chola period were also on display, a veritable feast to the eyes.

The group next visited the house where the Tanjavur Quartet had lived, a few yards away from the Bangaru Kamakshi Amman temple, behind which is situated Syama Sastry's house. This is the bicentenary year of Vadivelu. We feasted our eyes on the rare collection of photographs of the greats of Bharatanatyam. But our hearts became heavy to see the dilapidated condition of the house. We expressed our concern to the ABHAI president who decided to take up the matter of its preservation as a heritage site with INTACH.

In the evening was a performance by the members of the ABHAI group compered by this writer. A variety of dance numbers from the margam format in various Bharatanatyam bani-s were strung together – these were both traditional and contemporary in approach. The healthy blend of the old and the new

was appreciated by the large audience. The icing on the cake was when Natarajan announced that every year one evening would be allocated to the ABHAI group to perform at the Melattur festival. This was greeted with thunderous applause.

### Concluding day

On the fourth day we were taught a

daru from the dance-drama *Haribara Leela Vilasam*. Lord Vishnu turns into a mohini in the Bhasmasura episode and woos the asura to take notice of him. Our teacher was Aravind, a senior disciple of Malathi Dominic and a regular performer in the Bhagavata Mela natya natakam-s for the past several years. The daru was a fine example of sringara, especially for men when they enact female roles. The line between propriety and vulgarity is very thin and the performer has to be very careful in enacting the role with dignity. This was explicitly demonstrated by Aravind in a manner that put the female members of the group to shame. This daru was in the Anandabhairavi raga set to Adi tala.

Two different daru-s on two contrasting women characters Savitri and Mohini, two different approaches! We tried our level best to meet the challenge. Natarajan was elated to see our group performing the daru-s. Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam thanked him on behalf of the ABHAI group and we bid adieu to the historic village of Melattur, with promises to come back next year.

ROJA KANNAN

### Summer workshop participants

