

***THEATRE OF THE MARGINALISED:
POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION***

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Of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work reported in this thesis has been carried out by me individually in the Center for Folk Culture Studies, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, under the supervision of Dr. Y.A. Sudhakar Reddy.

I also declare that this work is original and is not submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or associateship of any University or Institution.



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Chapter -1

INTRODUCTION

Since the ages, theatre has been serving the purpose of an artistic expression of human kind. Theatre is the most common performing art form, which can be found in every culture. No society that did not have a theatre of its own in some or the other form has ever existed. Theatre is a showcase, a forum, a medium through which ideas, fashions, moralities and entertainments of the people in a society are displayed and at the same time its conflicts, dilemmas and struggles are negotiated. It is a dais for depicting political revolutions, social propaganda, civil debates, religious rituals, mass education and even for its own self-criticism.

After the Second World War, theatre has been appropriated for the expression of political ideology and hence shifted its emphasis from elite entertainment to common folk for upholding social issues. The theatrical

works of post world war depict the agony and grief in the society and viewed the ordinary people that were being affected by warfare. On the other hand, the Marxist philosophy has shown a wide impact on theatre personalities - the playwrights, directors, actors etc. The bodies like Communist party, trade unions, student community and many other sections of society began to communicate their views through the medium of theatre. As a result, cultural organisations like Indian Peoples Theatre-Association (IPTA), Red Theatre (China), Guerrilla Theatre of Green peace (Belgium), Berliner Ensemble (Germany) and many more emerged throughout the world. Theatre movements like Invisible theatre, modern street theatre, Guerrilla theatre, Black theatre, Community theatre and Feminist theatres were greatly influenced by Marxist ideology. All these movements tried to address the working class against all sorts of exploitation. In this process, all of them have opposed the practice of proscenium theatre and looked for an alternative space. As a result, new aesthetics were established in place of aesthetics of proscenium. Hence, a search for more alternate platforms, alternative aesthetics, and alternative performance genres were started. The hard-pressed life of the working classes and the exploiting nature of ruling classes became the themes for the modern theatrical performances. Theatre of the third world countries started opposing all the European theatrical models and started using their own artistic symbols, language, space and genres which mostly prevailed in their cultures. Hence many folk performing art forms

were adopted for the modern theatre. Theatre practitioners started identifying their own cultural roots and use them for a social change.

Now, in this thesis, an attempt is made to review the theatre of Telugu land from a subaltern point of view in order to serve the purpose of self-criticism. It tries to look at the marginalised aspects in the modern Telugu theatre and in the process to locate a new genre of theatre, which can be termed, as 'Theatre of the Marginalised'.

Significance of the Study:

This study probes into the evolution of modern Telugu theatre and analyses its different phases to discuss and question the very concept of modernity itself. A modest endeavour is made to know that how the theatre practitioners in Telugu theatre* understand the concept of modernity and also how many native theatrical expressions (art forms) of people have been marginalised in the process of representation. The History of Telugu theatre says that organisations like Praja Natya Mandali and Jana Natya Mandali have championed the cause of marginalised sections of the society by using the marginalised performing art forms of the native land. In this study an attempt is made to understand the ideologies of these theatre groups, which gave a different approach in theatre practice. A thorough review has been done to know how far these theatre groups have practiced the Theatre of Marginalised¹. The critical view of marginality has provided a base to understand that how different

theatre groups understood the same ideology in different perspectives in different times, and how their understanding led to different theatre practices among the same groups.

Literature Survey:

The literature consists of two broad categories; one category of literature pertains to the History of World theatre and the other is on the History of Telugu theatre.

The major category of books in literature survey pertains to the world theatre in general and theatre of the marginalised in particular. One of the important works on the evolution of world theatre is "History of Theatre"¹, by Oscar G. Brockett that discusses major incidents and phases in the History of world theatre ever since its origin. This book deals in detail the development of theatre at specific societies and enables the reader to understand that how theatre moulds itself according to the needs of the specific society.

The Theory of the Modern Stage ", is an introduction to modern Theatre and Drama, Edited by Eric Bentley. It is one of the foremost compilations on various ideological frame works that governed the history of theatre practice in the world. The first part of this book discusses various perspectives that shaped the modern theatre and the second part presents a historical over view of the world theatre.

*Radical Street Performance*ⁱⁱⁱ is another international anthology edited by Jan Cohen - Cruz, that deals with the experiences of various theatre practitioners across the world that try to see theatre as a means for bringing social change. This book gives an ideological framework of the working class and reviews the performative techniques of various groups in order to reach the people effectively even in the times of repression. The author sheds light on the relationship between the theatre and politics and holds that both the theatre and politics are inseparable in a capitalistic society.

Invitation to Theatre^{iv}, by George Kernodle and Portia Kernodle gives a brief discussion on the Theatre movements in various countries. The authors analyse different aspects of theatre from theoretical perspective and distinguishes theatre into theatre of Romance, Theatre of Realism, Theatre of disruption and Liberated theatre.

Robert Cohen, Professor of theatre studies, University of California, Irvine's book "Theatre"^v is one of the comprehensive works on the past and present trends in theatre. He elaborately discussed the elements of theatre with a careful demarcation. Four separate chapters are allotted to discuss the elements like The Actor, The Playwright, Designers and Technicians and the director. Various illustrations and photographs supported all the material.

The Indian Theatre^{vi} by Adya Rangacharya gives a brief introduction on the origin and development of theatre in India. This book is a historical survey on the origins of theatre, Sanskrit drama, folk theatre, the development of professional theatre companies in various parts of India, evolution of urban theatre with the impact of Western education and culture and the theatre in Independent India.

Culture, ideology, hegemony^{vii}, a book on the intellectuals and social consciousness in colonial India, written by K.N. Panikkar, gives a great insight to understand various aspects of ideology and hegemony, both inherited and imposed. A detailed note is given on the cultural and ideological struggles in colonial India, expressed through a variety of socio-cultural movements and individual initiatives. It explores the interconnections between culture, ideology and hegemony and is an effort to explain that how Indians, under colonial subjection negotiated their past and present and envisioned a future for the society in which they lived in.

The source material in Telugu on theatre is mostly the compilations and documentation of the figures, dates, personalities and performances from the last one hundred and twenty years. A few of them are reviewed below:

P.S.R. Apparao's work, *Telugu Nataka Vikasam*^{viii} is on the History of Telugu theatre from A.D 1880 to A.D 1960, till the decadence of Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat. This book is a historiographical critique on different

stages in the development of Telugu theatre and drama through the ages. He compiled meticulously the very details of the performers, performances, themes of theatre productions and list of the theatre-companies that are in vogue in the field.

The work *Telugu Van Janapada Kalarupalu*^{ix}, Folk artforms of Telugu People, by Mikkilineni Radha Krishna Murthy is a comprehensive compilation of folk performing art forms existing in Andhra Pradesh. It deals with the cultural background of each folk art form from an outsider's perspective. He cited references from traditional literature to trace the ancestry of the folk artforms that are still in practice. The main intention of the author is to provide general information to even layperson about different types of folk artforms that are extant and continuing in Telugu land.

Jayaprabha's *Nalugo Goda*^x is a work on the contemporary Telugu theatre. This work emphasizes the domination of certain forces like caste, gender, and literary and urban- rural polarities over the contemporary Telugu theatre. The writer tried to expose different dimensions of dominance. She holds that Telugu theatre imitates the contemporary film industry and is becoming a stepping-stone to enter into Cinema industry. She analysed some of the popular theatre texts from a gender's standpoint. It describes the evolution of Telugu social drama.

Nurella Telugu Natakaramam - Samalochana^{xi} edited by Modali Nagabhushana Sarma is an anthology of articles written by fourteen prominent theatre personalities of Telugu on different aspects of Telugu theatre on play writing, directing, experimentation on Telugu theatre, comparative study of different regional theatres and the evolution of performing techniques .It also provides an understanding of how the contemporary theatre personalities have viewed theatre and approached it with their own perspective. Hence it gives a clear-cut picture of different individual perspectives, which have influenced the contemporary theatre practice at large.

Twentieth Century- Telugu Drama^{xii}, edited by N.Taraka Ramarao and Sadhu Syam Prasad is another anthology of different articles on Telugu theatre. It contains nine articles on nine different aspects of theatre, in which one article on *Padya Natakam* deals with its evolution from its origin to decadence. Another article delineates the contribution of various theatre departments in different universities of Andhra to enhance the quality of Telugu theatre. It tries to focus on the importance of theatre training to bring more professionalism in theatre practices.

Folk performing arts of Andhra Pradesh^{xiii}, by M. Nagabhushana Sarma, is a brief introduction to sixty folk performing art forms of Andhra. It deals with the various forms in a categorical way as narratives, dances, and theatre on the basis of their functional and performative qualities.

The other works, which provide major information about the contribution of Praja Natya Mandali and Jana Natya Mandali, were the journals of *Praja Sahithi*^{xiv}. Particularly two special issues of this journal published during 1985 and 2002, gives the conceptual frameworks of the leftist cultural groups' in relation to the folk adaptations to the modern audiences. Apart from discussing the need for the adaptations, the journals aimed to explore the basic ideology, which influenced those organisations to do so.

All most all the works quoted above followed the evolutionary premise in their approach. Their evolutionary approach consists of three stages: the origin (*arambha*), the development (*vikasa*) and the decline (*patana*) of Telugu theatre. The authors when dealing with the first stage, the origin of Telugu theatre, simply undermined the distinction between the drama and theatre. The literary works are quoted as theatre works therefore the origins were conveniently traced back to early historical times starting from the dynastic rule of the Sathavahanas. Thus the writings on Telugu theatre by and large are descriptive and subjective. The analysis leading to concrete conclusions either on the origin, development or decline lacks critical objective evaluation of the authors. Therefore the interpretation of Telugu theatre from a scientific approach warrants an immediate attention as it is done in the Western theatre.

Aims & Objectives

From the literature survey, it is observed that no work has come out so far exclusively on the various aspects of marginality in theatre history and all the theatre criticism of the past got failed to locate the problem of Telugu Theatre. This led to study the history of Telugu Theatre from a marginalised standpoint. The aims and objectives of the study are mentioned below:

1. How the history of World Theatre evolved? Is it a study of various incidents and performances in a sequential order or does it have a base of any ideological understanding?
2. If at all, there is some ideological base for it, what are the ideologies that governed the history of World theatre?
3. How the history of Telugu theatre is being written? Does it develop through any ideological frame works or is it a History of various performances?
4. What are the marginalised aspects in the practice of Telugu Theatre? And does anyone made efforts to break the existing hegemony in the history of Telugu Theatre?
5. How various cultural organisations like Praja Natya Mandali and **Jana Natya** Mandali represented the marginality in theatre? How

they cut across the boundaries created by the main stream Telugu Theatre?

6. Why Theatre needs an ideological base to reach people at large?
How some attempts based on ideology were successful in reaching the people? How many attempts were proven to be failures?

Area of Study:

To pursue the above-mentioned aims and objectives, after conducting the preliminary surveys, the area of study is fixed keeping in view the convenience and feasibility. The area of study can be conceived at two levels. One at the physical or geographical level; the other at the mentalistic or conceptual level. At the geographical level, the entire area of Andhra Pradesh is being taken as area of study. All the theatre activities that are taken place in the nook and corner of Andhra Pradesh were taken into consideration. Though there is considerable theatre activity in both Telangana and Rayalaseema regions of Andhra Pradesh, most of the activity is based on the Coastal belt of Andhra, ranging from Vijayanagaram District to Nellore District. Though the performances of Praja Natya Mandali were on the problems of region, most of the activity took place in the border areas, fall into the boundaries of Andhra region legally due to the ban by the Government.

At the conceptual level two strands of cultural levels are taken, i.e. the traditional and mainstream. As per the 'traditional' is concerned, the

folk performances in general and those adopted for a specific cause by the elite in particular is taken for study. At the mainstream level, mainly the theatrical devices of the left political organisations are taken as the area of study. Though the Leftist cultural groups like Praia Natya Mandali and Jana Natya Mandali championed the usage of folk performing arts, the other stream of organisations who broadly fall under the category of Right wing cultural group, were also taken for analysis.

Methodology

Basically two methods are employed in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. Since the theme is on the marginality in theatre, it is imperative to understand the process of marginality and its development in the History of Telugu Theatre. For this reason observation method is employed. Various books and documents on the History of Telugu Theatre were reviewed thoroughly in order to understand the unwritten history of Theatre of the marginalised. Many performances of the contemporary theatre were witnessed in order to evaluate various elements and approaches that are employed in the theatrical productions. After having observed, another method is employed which may be called as ethnographic method to understand the performer's conceptual understanding of theatre and its purpose. To achieve this goal, unstructured interviews are conducted with the playwrights, performers, organisers and as well as the audiences with regard to the performances in general and the conceptual differences they find in the theatre practice.

This method led to the analysis of many undiscovered facets of Telugu theatre.

Sources of Study:

Major sources of study include:

Literature survey of various books on Telugu theatre, documents, records and interviews.

Various performances observed during the fieldwork and the audio and video documentation of the old performances.

Brief Chapterisation:

The thesis consists of seven chapters:

1. **Introduction:**

In this chapter, a brief introduction is given to make a point of concern for the present study. This chapter also covers literature survey, aims and objectives, area of study, methodology, sources of study and brief write up on chapterisation. The main aim of this chapter is to express overtly from which perspective this thesis is written.

2. **Theatre Through the Ages: A Philosophical premise:**

This chapter deals with the various concepts developed throughout the History of World Theatre. Starting from the Greek to the postmodern

concepts of theatre, all the movements and theatrical styles were divided into two broad categories as Idealism and Materialism. This distinction is done based on the conceptual understanding of the various inputs used in a particular theatrical expression and its relation to the society. This division is done on the ideological frameworks for a clear understanding of how ideology and theatre goes together. In other words, either consciously or unconsciously every theatre presentation represents some ideology or the other.

3. Theatre of the Marginalised: A Conceptual Frame:

This chapter provides a brief understanding of the perception of marginality. The concept of marginality is the core element in the construction of the theatre of the marginalised. So it is imperative to look into marginality in theatre. Marginality is a sociological term, used to describe the situation of groups of people who are excluded or persecuted by the dominant culture or power in a community. The concept of marginality in India can be defined from two broad viewpoints; one is 'outcaste' and the other is 'out laws'. In this thesis, the performance practices of these communities are viewed as the basis to form the theatre of the marginalized.

4. The History of Telugu Theatre - Politics of Representation:

In this chapter a thorough review of history of Telugu theatre is done from a very critical point of view. Starting from the division of the

Drama and Theatre, how the concept of 'modernity' is being understood in the history of Telugu Theatre. In the process, how the theatre practice of the native land is being marginalised. A review is being done on the specific theatre genre like '*Padyanatakam*' and its traditional base. The entire activity of Theatre is widely discussed how it has come to a stage of depending upon the '*Parishats*'. A detailed review is done on how the various efforts of the individuals and organisations became futile in making Telugu theatre more realistic and more active.

5. Political theatre: the Representation of **Marginality**:

The attempts of organisations like Praja Natya Mandali and Jana Natya Mandali in championing the voice of the downtrodden through their own cultural expressions were discussed in this chapter. The origin of these organisations, the theoretical base that made them different in theatre, the achievements, limitations and failures were discussed. Though both the organisations represent the same ideology from two different perspectives, a review is done on how their ideological differences reflected in their understanding of theatre and its' practice. This chapter gives an insight on how powerful the theatre of the marginalised in reaching the masses.

6. **Towards the Theatre of the Marginalised¹:**

In this chapter one performance of each organisation is taken for a performative analysis. The landmark plays in the History of Praja

Natyamandali's *Maa Bhoomi* and *Bhoomi Bhagotam* of Jana Natya Mandali are analysed. The different aspects like story, dialogue, characterisation, costumes, make-up, stage, properties and relation with the audiences were keenly observed. With this an understanding is drawn on how these organisations were able to pull crowds heavily, i.e. because of the nativity of the issues, and using the traditional cultural expressions of the people.*

7. Conclusion:

Broad conclusions were drawn from the study how marginality in theatre affects the theatre and how one can define the theatre of the marginalized by identifying certain salient features.

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Chapter - 2

THEATRE THROUGH THE AGES: A PHILOSOPHICAL PREMISE

Theatre has been used through the ages as an artistic form of articulating human emotions and a thriving medium of communication. Besides being an entertainment, it also contributed for bringing social change. Though the concept of theatre appears to be one and the same through out the world, it varies in its form and technique across the regions, communities and languages. The artistic expression of a particular social system obviously reveals its cultural standards and socio-economic status. The culture specific art forms invariably carry with them the myths and belief systems that are being associated traditionally with them. But, due to culture contact, some forms may become bloomy by imbibing new elements from its neighborhood societies and a few may loose their own identity or turn out to be gloomy and may finally be marginalised in their own land.

The history of world theatre starting ever since its inception, a quite good number of new concepts that were embedded on line with the dynamics of ideologies and their reflections in the form of movements. It contributed much to the growth of new vistas in the epistemology of 'theatre', thereby reflected the aesthetic practices of the society, being acquired through the ages. A brief note on various theatre concepts and movements create a base for the discussion on *Theatre of the Marginalised*. It also helps one to understand the chronological order through which the theatre got developed through the ages. The antecedents of theatre are still alive and the revival of great plays still thrills the audiences around the world. Robert Cohen, the Chairman of the drama department at the university of California says, "The theatre is a conservative art. It hangs on to its past, perennially scavenging for material, for effects, for dramatic structures, for great conflicts, great characters, and great events".¹

World Theatre: Philosophical Milieu

The theatre is an extremely complex institution that encompasses playwriting, directing, acting, costume, makeup, scenery, lighting, properties, theatre architecture, machinery, special effects, management, audiences, and criticism and also the relationship of the theatre to the society and culture in which it appears. In the context of theatre's relationship with society and culture, two broad schools of thought have emerged in the intellectual history especially from the Marxist and Leninist

thinking. One school of thought stemmed from the philosophical milieu of the ancient times, which in later on came to be known as idealism. It still functions in the intellectual spheres. The other school of thought, which influenced theatre, got evolved from materialism.²

1.Idealism: Idealism is grounded on the premise that the idea precedes the matter. It is based on the maxim that the spiritual non-material is primary and the material is secondary. Therefore it brings closer to the dogmas of religion on the finiteness of the world, in time and space, and its creation by God. This further regards regards the consciousness belongs to the realm of spirituality and therefore is the gift of the God. It is the consciousness of the human which cognate things, organise them and reproduce them to the well being of the world in general. It is because of the quality of generating ideas that humans are different from inanimate and zoomorphic strata of the world.

The Marxism -Leninism divided all varieties of idealism into two schools; one the objective idealism and the other subjective idealism. The objective idealists view the consciousness as one that emanates from super individual mind. The consciousness is of divine and there fore belongs to the super natural realm. Whether the individual consciousness cognate a phenomena or not, the phenomena remains what it is. In other words, all phenomena in the world are created by God and therefore irrespective of individual's capabilities to cognate with consciousness, remain what it is. The objective idealist doctrine first aroused in the orient,

as the *Vedanta* of Indian philosophy and Confucianism of Chinese philosophy. Dualism is the prima-facie of the objective idealism. It divides any phenomena into two parts, which are mostly seen not as contradictory but complimentary to each other. The concepts like *Atma-Paramatma* and *Prakriti-Purusha* are the classical examples of objective idealism.

The Plato's philosophy is also one of the classic examples for objective idealism. According to Plato, the sensible world, which is the product of "ideas" and "matter", occupies an intermediate position. "Ideas" are eternal: they neither arise nor perish, they are irrelative and do not depend upon time and space. Sensible objects are transient, relative and they depend upon time and space. Authentic knowledge is possible only in truly existent *forms*. The source of such knowledge is the immortal human soul's reminiscence of the World of ideas, contemplated before its incarnation in the mortal body.³

The mystic feature became even more pronounced during the middle ages, when philosophy was completely subordinated to Theology, wherein the non-material form treated as the purposeful element, which fulfills the will of omniscient God who wisely planned the world, finite in space and time.

The subjective idealists construct the world on the basis of individual consciousness. Subjective idealism holds that the sum total of the subject's sensations, experiences, feelings and actions make up the world in which the subject lives and acts as they believe that all these are

an integral and essential part of the world. The absolution of the subject's cognitive and practical activity forms the theoretical and cognitive basis of subjective idealism. In the twentieth century subjective idealism has many varieties, including various schools of positivism, Machism, Operationalism, Logical empiricism, Linguistic philosophy etc., and its outgrowth, Existentialism. Nevertheless, the difference between subjective idealism and objective idealism is not absolute. Many objective idealist systems contain elements of subjective idealism. Nevertheless the entire history of philosophy is based on the conflicting realms of idealism and materialism.⁴

2.Materialism: Materialism argues that matter precedes idea and hence considers consciousness is a property of matter. In other words it is matter that generate ideas. There are two kinds of materialism, the one, subjective materialism (spontaneous materialism) and the other one is objective materialism (philosophical materialism). Subjective materialism relies on belief of all people live on objective existence of external world. This is also known as pre Marxian, ancient and renaissance materialism. Several of these materialistic philosophical theories appeared as a result of the progress of scientific knowledge in Astronomy, Mathematics and other fields in the oriental world. The general feature of the Orient materialism lies in the recognition of the materiality of the world and its independent existence outside of man's consciousness. They tried to find the diversity of natural phenomena and common source of origin of all that

exists takes place. It is this, which made the ancient Greeks to formulate a hypothesis on autonomic structure of matter. Most of these materialists are delectations but many of them did not make a distinction between physical and metaphysical and so attributed the properties of later to nature. This further strengthens the mythological ideology, which rests on the idea of eternity of nature. The Renaissance and the post-Renaissance materialism viewed mechanistic conception of motion as 'the property of nature, which means that it is inalienable and universal.'⁵

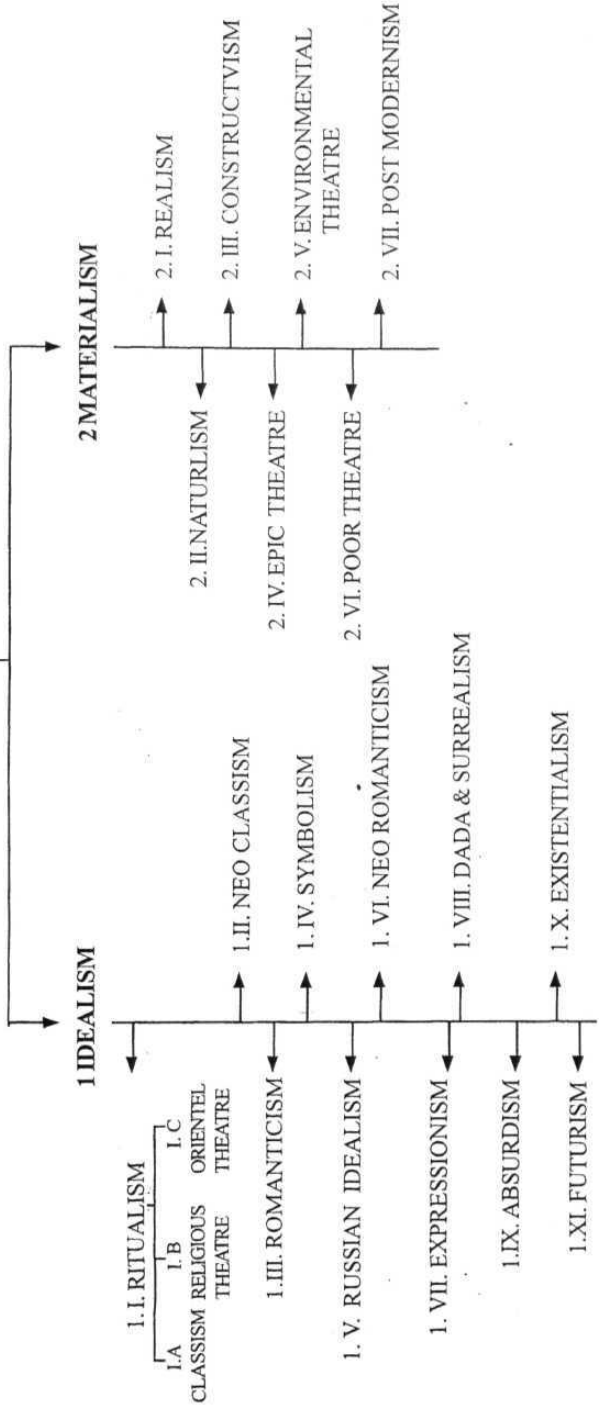
The second type of Materialism is recognised by Marxists as philosophical or Objective Materialism. It is also known as Marxist-Leninist materialism or Dialectical Historical Materialism. It is evolved by Marx and Engles and later developed by Lenin and other Marxists. Dialectical materialism proceeds from the recognition of matter as the sole basis of the world, the universal interconnections of object and phenomena, the movement and development of the world as inherent contradictions operating in the world itself. Dialectical materialism regards consciousness as a property of a highly organised form of movement of matter, as a reflection of objective reality. Therefore the dialectics become the universal method of cognition in dialectical materialism. By applying the principal propositions of dialectical materialism to an explanation of the phenomena of social life, Marx and Engles established Historical materialism (or a materialist understanding of history) Lenin made an immense contribution to the development of historical materialism, by

generating the experience of the proletariat's class struggle in the epoch of imperialism, proletarian revolution and the building of Socialism in the USSR.⁶

According to Historical Materialism, the real basis of human society is the mode of production of material wealth. The replacement of one mode of production by another leads to a transition from one socio-economic formation to another higher one. The history of society is the successive replacement of the primitive communal, slave owning, and feudal, capitalist and communist formations. The law, which determines the essence of the historical process, is the law of the correspondence of production relations to the character and level of development of the productive forces. Developing within the framework of the given production relations, at a certain stage the productive forces come into contradiction with them. This results in a social revolution, which is a law-governed form of transition from one socio-economic formation to another.⁷

Thus these two broad philosophical premises developed through the ages to cognate the material world and social reality and influenced art and life of people. Theatre being an art is no exception to these philosophical milieus. As theatre came under the influence of either idealism or materialism independently or together, it gave rise to several forms of theatre. Some times it is not as a recognisable form but as an element, which influenced theatrical practice. For example, idealism gave birth to different forms of theatre perceptions like Romanticism, Expressionism, Absurdism etc., that introduced many theatrical elements like special effects through lighting, extensive use of stage properties and costumes etc. The following diagram shows the pattern of development of History of world theatre influenced by the broad two philosophical milieus.

PHILOSOPHICAL MILIEUE



Theatre Concepts In 'Idealism'

The influence of Idealism on theatre brought a new dimension in art and aesthetics, practiced and projected in the enactment of human psyche, which pondered for Utopian ideal of human goodness. It perceived the world as problematic created in response to human greed and exploitation. Therefore to revert this situation and regain a blissful state the will of the super Natural is essential. This idea gave rise to several concepts in idealism such as Ritualism, Neo-Classism, Romanticism, Symbolism, Aesthetics, Russian Idealism, Neo-Romanticism, Expressionism, Dada and Surrealism, Futurism, Existentialism, Absurdism.

1.i. Ritualism

This is the most widely- accepted theory, championed by anthropologists in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries that envisioned theatre as emerged from myth and ritual. During the early stage of its development, society is aware of the forces that appear to influence or control its food supply and well being. Because of little understanding of the natural causes, the societies attribute both the desirable and the undesirable occurrences to supernatural or magical beings, and search the means and ways to win the favour of them. The people establish an apparent linkage between certain actions and results obtained due to performing those actions. This practice is repeated, refined and formulated into fixed ceremonies of rituals in due course. The

same ideology gets reflected in the theatre practices. Performers may wear costumes and masks and represent the mythical characters or supernatural forces in the rituals or in accompanying celebrations.⁸ As people become more sophisticated, their conceptions of supernatural forces and causal relationships may change. As a result, it may abandon or modify some rites. But the myths that have grown up around rites and rituals may continue not only as part of the group's oral tradition but also in contexts deviated from the original ritualistic concerns. In this process the first step has been taken towards the development of theatre as an autonomous activity, and later entertainment and aesthetic values may gradually replace the former mystical element in it.

This viewpoint is the extension of Darwin's theory about the evolution of biological species to cultural phenomena and consequently they assumed that human institutions including theatre evolved through a process in which there was a steady development from simple to complex. Second, they assumed that societies that had evolved such autonomous arts as theatre were superior to those in which the arts had not been separated from ritual. Therefore, their accounts of primitive cultures were written with the unconscious assumption that the European cultural model all lesser societies are evolved, although local conditions might inhibit or stall that evolution. Third, they believed that, since all societies evolve through the same stages, those still-existing primitive or less advanced

societies could serve as valid evidence for how European culture had developed during its prehistorical phase.⁹

After World War II, the superiority of society, based on technology was questioned. Primitive/less "advanced" societies, because of their cohesiveness, came to be seen by many as embodying alternative social models, different but perhaps more effective from that of the European model which had been long served as the 'standard'. Consequently, several of these societies (including their myths and rituals) were studied more to reveal their modes of thought, communication, and social structuring to define their stage of development in the premise of evolutionary model. Myth and ritual are considered as parameters that are comparable to language, through which a group discovers, and reaffirms its values, expectations, and societal relationships. A number of anthropologists argue that patterns comparable to those found in primitive societies were also still evident in advanced societies, especially in secular rituals. Thus all societies came to be seen as developing sets of conventions (or rituals) that enact relationships and serve as unconscious guidelines for behavior. As examples, wedding rituals redefine relationships with in two extended families, and within the society at large; and criminal trial rituals, through which decisions about guilt and innocence are reached, redefined the accused person's place within society. Thus, each society develops numerous conventions, which may be viewed as rituals that define societal relationships, and it seeks

validation of these conventions through religion, morality, law, or social utility.

Ultimately, anthropologists of post-world War II tended to see almost all human transactions as basically performative- as enactment of relationships with specific purposes- involving a number of elements (which are also those found in ritual and theatre). Thus, the earlier concern for the relationship between ritual and theatre was transformed. Both ritual and theatre came to be seen as merely different ways of organizing and using elements that are basic to almost all-human activity¹⁰. Therefore, theatre was not seen as necessarily origination of ritual; rather ritual and theatre were viewed as coexisting modes in which the same elements might be used for differing functions within the same society.

Idealism, being the driving force of Greco-Roman, medieval Christian, South Asian and far East theatrical practices created a space for enactment of human creativity and worldview. The human understanding of these cultures referred above project a worldview, which ascribe a goal for human existence in relation to the life that is going to exist beyond death.¹¹ These physical and metaphysical realms of human life remained by and large the concern of theatre and these concerns influenced the themes. Poets being the representatives of literate elite in all the above-mentioned cultures bore the burden of interpreting the worldview. In the process they created the texts of the theatre in a manner

of duality. This duality is represented in the form of characters either as Gods or humans on one hand and on the other actors in neutral positions as chorus or as Mediators (*Suthradhara*). The text is rendered, therefore, adhering to the strict principles of ethno poetics wherein the literary laws governing various forms of rendition is followed. This privileged the poets or playwrights as the kingpins in theatrical productions.

i.a. **Classism and Greek theatre** :

The Greek theatre can be cited as a classic example to the onset of Idealism in theatrical practice. According to George Kernodle, “ The Greeks gave us the word *theatre* and the idea of a splendid building for the whole public to watch a play of religious, historical, and national importance. They gave us the idea of a play as the high point of a religious festival, performed at a sacred shrine. They gave us the word *Drama* and the idea of a play as a work of art complete in it self, to be looked at, felt, and thought about. Along with the words *poetry* and *poem*, they gave us the idea of performing poet, competing with other poets, presenting his own personal view of the human condition, often in conflict with the orthodox view.”¹²

The three great writers of Greek tragedy had different visions of the destiny of man. Aeschylus, the earliest, caught the heroic mood of an Athens that had just defeated the invading Persians and was reshaping old institutions and loyalties for a new age of responsible public life. Sophocles reflected the ideals of the golden time of Pericles, when men of

intelligence and reason were striving for a well-balanced life in a world where blind chance and old political loyalties were constant sources of danger. And Euripides wrote at the time when the old ideals were fading, as Athens was drawn deeper and deeper into war with Sparta. In a world of torture, madness, and violence, he denounced old superstitions and offered a deep compassion for the suffering of defeated mankind.

The Greek theatre flourished during fifth and sixth centuries BC. The occasion for this new development was the context of Dionysian festival celebrating the resurrection of the living spring out of dead winter. After a wild, ecstatic procession during the festivities the Greeks bring the statue of Dionysus into his theatre. They add a very serious new form, tragedy, which combined the pain and humiliation of sacrificial death with the exaltation of resurrection. As it has found its way to all parts of the world, tragedy has gained the highest prestige of any dramatic form. They produced four of the world's greatest dramatists, new forms of tragedy and comedy that have been models forever, and a theatre to which every age returns for rediscovery of some basic principle.

The overall visual style of a Greek theatrical production was greatly influenced by costumes and masks. Several historians have argued that the standard costume for all tragic actors was a sleeved, highly decorated tunic, usually full-length, although sometimes shorter. The theatre at Athens was dedicated to one god in particular, Dionysus, the god of fertility, god of wine, agriculture, and sexuality. It was at the

annual festival of Dionysus that new dramas were first publicly performed. Another greatest contribution of Greek theatre was *Chorus*. It is easy to see that during the episodes played by the actors the chorus could provide a background of group response, enlarging and reverberating the emotions of the characters, sometimes protesting and opposing, but in general serving the ideal spectators to stir and lead the reactions from them. In performances, the feelings- and emotions that are to be communicated by the expressive behaviour of the main character on stage were conveyed to the audiences by specific modulations of the chorus.¹³

i.b.Religious Theatre:

Rome had conquered Greece in B.C 146 and thereafter it gradually absorbed the entire Hellenic world. In turn, Rome was highly influenced by Greek culture. Under the republican rule, Roman Theatre prospered by replacing regular drama of Greeks. In its place new types of entertainment were enacted. Lavishness in stage settings, elaborated visuals, using all sorts of nudity, sex, violence, and bloodshed broadened the horizons of theatre.

In other words, classic tragedy disappeared with the fall of Rome. In fact, in the hey days of the Roman empire, both comedy and tragedy had been overwhelmed by spectacular shows with –gladiators- animal combats, sea fights, vulgar performances of comic mimes, semi nude dance performances etc. All these dramas were produced in the

enormous half circle theatres. Nevertheless, the theatre in Rome, most often associated with festivals, that are obviously religious. Thus, theatrical offerings were thought to be intended for pleasing the Gods. It is difficult to estimate how many days the Romans devoted to performance annually, since the number of official festival days differed from year to year and special celebrations were frequently permitted. Further more, festivals were sometimes repeated, since whenever any irregularities in the rituals occur the entire festival including the plays had to be repeated.

The Christian drama of the Middle Ages initiated a new beginning for theatre, much later after the ancient theatres were closed due to many historical reasons.¹⁴ In ninth century, dialogue and action were added to the most sacred service of the Christian liturgy. The Easter mass combined with drama was born to boost the faith of the congregation. In the enactment of joyful anthem in praise of the Resurrection, some priests added a short dramatic dialogue of the three Mary's coming to embalm the body of Christ. The angels show them the empty tomb and tell them to announce to the world that Christ is raised. The short drama, chanted in Latin by monks or priests, was evidently effective. The adoration of the Shepherds and the three kings was also dramatised as part of the Christmas services, and the new drama spread all over Europe. A few churches even produced long plays for special occasions. For five hundred years the joyful news of the Resurrection, and the triumphs of prophets and saints were enacted as Christian performances.

Much more spectacular scenes were the medieval religious cycles, financed by the merchant guilds for the midsummer trade fairs in the fast growing cities of the High Gothic period (AD 1350 to AD1550). About twenty five to fifty separate episodes were needed to cover the whole story of the fall and redemption of man, from the creation and the fall of Adam, through the passion of Christ to the Last judgment. Each episode needed a separate scenic unit, or *mansion*. Sometimes all the mansions were spread down a long platform as *simultaneous staging*. Sometimes the mansions were placed in a large circle surrounding the audience in a medieval variant of theatre-in-the-round.¹⁵

While the church drama remained as formal, liturgical drama, sung in Latin in the church by priests highly trained in music, but the cycles of mystery plays were popular because of the usage of spectacular effects such as Devils appearing from the smoking hell-mouth amidst the beating of pot and pans.

The late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance developed two forms of entertainment that provided a transition to the Elizabethan theatre. The first was the 'Morality Play' from which playwrights developed the art of creating long plots with sustained conflict and great variety of detail. The second was the 'street show' honoring a royal visitor to a city or town. The English plays of the Middle Ages hold particular interest for the English-speaking reader and theatre-goers, not only because they are among the first literary works written in the English language, but also

because they utilised one of the most astonishing staging practices of all time, the rolling procession. At least 125 English towns produced these passion plays, which were generally called as "Cycle plays".

i.c.The Theatre of the **Orient** :

On the other side of the globe, the theatres of India, China, Japan and Southeast Asia developed the forms that have remained characteristic of their theatres and generally identified as the *theatre of the Orient*. The theatres of India, Japan, China and Southeast Asia stand as the examples for the idealistic view of theatre. As it happened in Greek and Roman theatre practices, even in the oriental societies believed that the God gifted the theatre.

The early Hindu philosophy encouraged the representation of living beings in Literature, drama, and art as manifestation of spirit. The language of Indian drama was primarily Sanskrit. Its origin may perhaps be the beginning of the stage when the theatre got developed into a community art. The seminal work in Sanskrit on dramaturgy called the *Natyashastra* was supposed to be written around 1,000 or 1,500 years ago. It was considered as the sixth *Veda*. Bharatha, the author *Natyasastra*, in his introduction to the work mentions the cause for writing the treatise. He says that the *Natyashastra* composed by Brahma was very theoretical, unwieldy, obscure and not of any practical use. Then Brahma himself requested Bharatha to compose his work in a simple, practical and useful form to the society.¹⁶ The main object of the treatise is

to prescribe what should be depicted and what not be represented in a drama, which is recognised as an essentially audio-visual production. It suggests that the dramas must be good, decent, decorous, pleasing, elevating and instructive. The performances depict the worldviews (*Loka-Charita*) and the deeds of people so that the audiences get education and guidance.

Bharatha defines drama as an imitation of men (people) and their deeds (*Loka-vritta anukarana*) represented on the stage and hence in Sanskrit it is known as *rupaka*. Bharatha prescribes governing rules for a good play production that encapsulates the playwriting, choosing the characters, designing the characterisations. It also instructs the audience to show that how a performance of a play must be perceived and enjoyed. He also writes about the housing of theatre (Auditoriums). He describes three kinds of theatre-houses based on their size: (i) *Vikrishta* (Big), (ii) *Trasya* (small) and (iii) *Chaturasra* (Medium sized). The importance of the *Natyashastra* lies in having given to Indian drama not only a form and an objective but also a definite place in the social and cultural life of the people. Bhavabhuti, wrote three plays, namely *Malati-Madhava*, *Mahaviracharita* and *Uttara-Ramacharitha*. One of the criticisms about classical Sanskrit drama is that it is written in a language, which does not belong to that of common people.¹⁷

Sanskrit plays continued up to the 17th century and they were mostly of either imitations of Kalidasa or Bhavabhuti or other famous

literary works. As a rule, plays were performed either in temple *mandapas* or within palace precincts. Even then it is more likely that the audience sat directly under the sky. In almost all the Sanskrit plays, the outdoor scene is laid only in gardens. Even the palace shows were arranged in open theatre. In this context, the purpose of curtains is being served by the characters themselves, i.e. by their entry and exits from the stage. The use of curtains to symbolise the endings/ beginnings of scenes or to distinguish one act from that of the other is totally absent in Sanskrit dramas.

There is no evidence to say that the plays of Bhasa, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti were performed in public places amidst common folk. Even if they are performed they might have taken place in the courts of Kings and places for elite audiences. By 16th century, there were no written dramas. Absence of written plays should not mean absence of the theatre itself. It is hard to believe that the theatre, which has been an influential form of entertainment for over a thousand years, would suddenly and entirely cease to exist.

Folk theatre, which has been there from times immemorial, serves the purpose of entertainment. Though *Natyasastra* acknowledges the existence of folk theatre ever since a long time, it holds that it represents only local tradition (*Gramya Dharma*), which is of not so informative and educative to the people. However the folk theatre also took its content from the same two great epics. The folk forms like Jatra, Chauv,

Yakshagana, Harikatha, Charana and many other theatrical expressions of the downtrodden groups were region-specific. Even within the same region, one finds a variety of forms. Song and dance are the primary features of all the forms. Most of the performances are ritual based and directly related to the general life of the people. In the performances, no backdrop or any other curtains are used. There is no fixed stage setting for the performance. It does not have a rigid written script. Even then the folk performances are being survived since a long time due to two main reasons i.e., (i) most of the performances are caste based and caste myth oriented and (ii) they are continued in oral traditions.

The theatre of the Orient in India thus can be seen at two levels. One for the elite and the other for the folk. In elitist theatre predominantly uses Sanskrit as its language. Therefore the theatre of the elitist in India during the pre-modern times is identified as Sanskrit drama. It is difficult to say that the Sanskrit dramas were ever played as performances. The treatise *Natyasastra* that is an exhaustive dramatology is a compiled work on theatre. It is more of a grammar of theatre rather than usage for theatre. It is more a langue (Mental abstraction of language) than parole (Everyday speech acts of language). Langue is code, which unconsciously people of a language derive at mental abstraction level. This mental faculty regulates the language usage based on laws and codes as grammar. In other words grammar is an ideal type, which governs the actual ways of speech act. But speech acts when performed reflect skills

of their own and gradually develop new laws and codes thus adding to grammar.

Natyasastra seems to be one such ideal type, which sets rules and codes for an ideal performance where in actors and audiences interact, to seek and experience *ideal rasas* (Moods and emotions) as described in the treatise. The Sanskrit dramatists expose their literary skills in writing plays which more or less" close to the norms and codes of the *Natyasastra*.'

Though one may not concretely say that the ancient playwrights followed *Natyasastra*, but one can say that they developed the Sanskrit dramas as literary genre. In fact the imagery that one gets by reading these plays is much stronger, wider and nostalgic than one performs them as plays on stage. The imagery of these plays cuts across time and space bounds, that otherwise imposed at performance level on stage. Therefore they are written for the readers more as literary genres but not as plays to be performed. If Sanskrit dramas are literary genre then the question arises whether any theatre exists in India in its performance context. To answer such question, one may safely say that among the folk performances exist with theatrical features. They are performed through the centuries in different forms and kinds. All most all-folk performances have the elements of theatre such as text, context, performers and audiences. However the setting of these elements are not one and the same for every folk form of performances. Most of the texts of these performances are drawn from oral epics, myths or legends. Therefore they

traverse between the realms of natural and metaphysical. At the context level most of them appear in ritual contexts such as purificatory rituals, territorial rites and rites of passage (life cycle ceremonies). At performers level they have hereditary rights and customary obligations. Therefore they violate the norms of *Natyasastra* prescribed for the actors to be designated for characters. In many cases in the folk performances the lead narrator takes different roles (characters) in the performance. In some of the performances the facial make-up is used as masks. This is also another characteristic feature of theatre of Idealism. A community people or people of a particular locality form the internal audiences to the folk performances and therefore the audience by violating the norms of *Natyasastra* enjoys the aesthetics of performances. Thus the Orient theatre in India exists in elite and folk versions yet form the theatre of idealism.

It was said that during 1500 B.C, when Shang Dynasty assumed power, dance, music, and ritual (relating to fertility, success in war, and the prevention of diseases or disaster) played an important role in **Chinese** life, and some early rulers considered them crucial to a harmonious state. By the eighth century B.C some temples may have had performers associated with them. Historians have sought to draw parallels between such practices **and** the Dithyrambic choruses of Greece. After **1000 B.C**, there are references to secular entertainments at court

banquets, where dwarfs, buffoons, and court jesters performed mimes, dances, and songs.¹⁸

The first great period of Chinese art and literature came under the Han Dynasty (206 B.C-221 A.D.), during which China came to equal the Roman Empire in size. All sorts of entertainments seem to have flourished, so many in fact that they came to be called the *hundred plays*. Many of these entertainments were presented at fairs and markets as well as at court. The Chinese also trace the origin of shadow play to about 121B.C when wizards to materialise departed souls or gods first used it. Not until later did it become a form of entertainment.

The Han dynasty was followed by some 400 years of conflict and unrest. But entertainments seem to have continued. After China was reunified under the Hui dynasty (589-614 A.D), the forms of entertainment were conglomerations of native traditions with elements imported from India and central Asia. The emperor Yang-ti was interested in this new version of the *hundred plays* that he set up a training school to encourage its development. Before his reign ended in 614 he is said to have staged a festival involving 18,000 to 30,000 performers in an area extending over four miles.

Ironically, it was not until the Mongols conquered China in the thirteenth century that drama began to flourish there. The Mongols, whose empire stretched across Asia into Europe, established the yuan Dynasty in China from 1279 until 1368. During this period, intellectuals began to

practice and perfect the native folk arts, including drama. Especially attracted to earlier forms of music drama, these writers created works usually considered the foundation of the classical Chinese theatre. With in less than a century, Chinese drama reached its peak. Thus, despite political and social repression, China enjoyed something of a golden age in drama.¹⁹

Yuan dramatists based their performances from narratives of history, legend, novels, epics, and contemporary events. The characters ranged through the entire spectrum of humanity, although the most important roles usually were those of emperors, scholars or students, government officials, generals, and rebels. The plays advocated the virtues of loyalty at family and friends, honesty and devotion at work and duty.

Interestingly many of the current traditional staging practices in Chinese theatre were in vogue by the fourteenth century. The stage was essentially bare, with one door on either side at the rear for entrances and exits. Between the two doors hung an embroidered, purely decorative wall piece. Properties such as fans, swords, and belts are also used. Both male and female performers were included in the companies, many of which became leading performances of the time. In Yuan period, about 700 titles of the plays are recorded in which around 170 plays have survived. About 550 dramatists are known to have written at this time.

According to Howard Roger, who wrote extensively on Chinese theatre, "Whatever native ingredients and alien elements entered into the

melting pot of Chinese civilization, its main component has been essentially Confucianism... A practicable moral philosophy that teaches the rules of personal cultivation and virtues of human relationship. This Confucianism has molded the Chinese society, the family, literature and the arts. But when the country was in disorder, Taoism and Buddhism took over, the majority of Chinese writers, however, have been conformists to the grand Confucian tradition. To them, literature has been a vehicle for the communication of the aim of Confucian doctrine: to teach and influence people to be good. The Chinese never followed the Western concept of tragedy. From the Chinese point of view triumph of the good and victorious over the bad and evil prevail ultimately".²⁰

The early history of **Japan and its theatrical forms** are shrouded in mystery because records of ancient arts were not compiled until 712 A.D. Before that time, however, there were numerous rituals, many of them related to Shintoism, which began in nature and ancestor worship. All these rituals are now usually grouped together under the general label 'Kagura', and some of them are being observed till the present day.

During the sixth century A.D., after the advent of Buddhism, Japan began to undergo profound changes during the reign of Prince Shotoku (573-621). In the following 200 years continental culture, especially from Korea, China, and India, were enthusiastically incorporated.

Around the beginning of the twelfth century, *Sarugaku-no* (a traditional art form of Japan) was adapted by Buddhists as a way to

demonstrate their teachings. Thus, it was given a role similar to that of the medieval mystery and morality plays of Europe. At first priests enacted the plays, but as performances attracted large numbers of people to the temples, professional players began to imitate the temple performances at times other festivals. As the skill of the professionals grew, some temples began to employ them to replace the actor-priests.²¹

After a time, performers had so proliferated that controls were needed. As a result, guilds were formed. Most of the guilds were attached to some powerful shrine or temple, which granted them a monopoly on performances in its area. In return, the players gave at least some free performances during ceremonies and festivals. During the fourteenth century Japanese theatre underwent a crucial change, that can best be understood within the sociopolitical context of the time. In A.D. 1192 the emperor ceded his secular powers to a military dictator, a post that became hereditary, although new families won possession of the title from time to time in civil wars. In A.D. 1338 the Ashikaga family assumed the Shogunate and held it until the late sixteenth century. It was during the Ashikaga Shogunate that Japan, after centuries of domination by imported culture, rediscovered its own heritage. The result was an era of great creative energy during which foreign and native elements were mingled in new and distinctive ways.

It was within this context that the first great Japanese theatrical form, Noh, emerged in the late fourteenth century. Zeami, who is

considered to be the greatest of all Noh dramatists, wrote more than hundred plays. He summed up Noh's aesthetic goals and described its practices in three theoretical treatises. Consequently, as a product of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Noh had a great influence of Zen Buddhism, which believes that ultimate peace is achieved only with well-being of the society, conquest of one's own desires and belief in non-permanency of world and life. Most of the typical Noh plays have protagonists of ghosts, demons, or obsessed human beings whose souls never rest in peace because they were much indulged in worldly affairs during their lifetime. Although Noh plays are extremely varied and all of them reflect Buddhist ideology.

While Noh were assuming its role as a major aristocratic art form, other entertainments were being addressed to more plebeian audiences. But major popular forms did not emerge until the era of the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867). As with Noh, the new forms can best be understood within the sociopolitical context of the time. The emphasis on native social and artistic forms encouraged the elaboration of ceremonies and entertainments of all kinds just when the increased wealth of the lesser classes permitted them to patronize the arts. During seventeenth century, two most distinctive theatrical forms the puppet theatre and kabuki were evolved.

Kabuki is said to be least 'pure' for it has always borrowed freely from Noh, the puppet theatre and other sources. Between 1675 and 1750

and most of its characteristic techniques were developed rapidly. New methods of acting were introduced and fully developed plays replaced the former improvised entertainments. Artistry replaced the personal appeal. Many purists believed that the true Kabuki ended by 1868. Kabuki drama has undergone many changes. Originally, improvised sketches were inserted into dance performances, and it was not until the second half of the seventeenth century that works of a more ambitious nature began to appear. The two-act play was given in 1664 for the first time but no important writer emerged until the 1670s, when Chikamatsu Monzaemon began to write for Kabuki troupes. Many of his puppet plays were later taken into the kabuki repertory.

Kabuki drama is not considered to be literature, however, for, like most Eastern dramatic forms, it serves merely as a basis for performance. The performances have traditionally been lengthy. From around 1650 until after 1850 they usually lasted about twelve hours. Kabuki actors do not wear masks, but some roles required boldly patterned makeup to exaggerate the muscular conformation of the face. Red and black patterns are normally painted upon a white base, although for demons and evil characters blue or brown are used. Every role has got its traditional costume.²²

Thus the ritual theatre though started as an enactment of belief manifested in the form of a ritual, it evolved in to a specialised theatrical form over a period of time. Infact, it evolved to manifest the worldview of a

community/ people. The Occident and the Orient theatres relied on the dichotomy of human nature, which absorbed and negated the world orders based on power relations. In order to bring out these dimensions the ritual theatre used masks all over the world. Mask, therefore is primarily representing ambivalent situation wherein the human emotions blend and clash. Therefore ritual theatre acquired prominence in the epistemology of theatre studies.

1.ii. The **Neoclassicism**

In drama the new concern for authority was first felt through the formulation of the neoclassical ideal. This had been given full expression in Italy by 1570, and thereafter it spread to rest of the Europe, where it was to determinate from the mid-seventeenth until the late eighteenth century.

In neoclassical doctrine, the fundamental demand was for *verisimilitude*, or the appearance of truth. A complex concept, verisimilitude may be divided into three subsidiary goals; reality, morality and universality. In relation to reality, critics urged dramatists to confine their subjects to events that could happen in real life. Consequently, in neoclassical plays, fantasy and supernatural events were usually avoided unless they form integral parts of the themes of story taken from myth, history, or the Bible.²³ Furthermore, such devices as the soliloquy and the chorus were discouraged on the grounds that it is unnatural for characters

to speak aloud while alone or to discuss private matters in the presence of a group so large as the chorus.

Drama's of this era teaches moral lessons and considerably modified faithfulness to reality. The dramatist was asked not merely to copy life but to reveal its ideal moral patterns. Since God was said to be both omnipotent, it seemed only logical that the world over which God reigns should be represented in drama to reveal His power and justice. Both reality and morality were further modified by universality a key to truth. Rather than seeking truth with surface details, the neoclassicist located it in attributes that are common to all phenomena in a particular category. Those characteristics that vary from one example to another were considered accidental and therefore not essential parts of truth. Thus, truth was defined as that which is typical and normative traits that are discoverable through the rational and systematic examination of phenomena, whether natural or man-made. Since these norms embody truth in its most essential form - one that remains unchanged regardless of historical period or geographical location- they were declared as the foundation upon which all literary creation and criticism should rest.

The concept of *verisimilitude*, defines the reality that playwrights should seek to emulate in their works. Basing on this, a number of lesser principles, for the idea that truth is to be found in universal norms were extended to almost every aspect of dramatic composition. All drama got reduced to two basic forms, comedy and tragedy, and other types were

considered inferior because they were "mixed". Comedy and tragedy were thought to have their own normative patterns. Comedy was said to draw its characters from the middle or lower classes, to base its stories on domestic and private affairs, to have happy endings, and to imitate the style of everyday speech. Tragedy was said to draw its characters from the ruling classes, to base stories on history or mythology, to have unhappy endings, and to employ a lofty and poetic style. These norms mark several departures from Greek practice, but perhaps the most significant is the substitution of social rank for moral qualities in the description of character.²⁴

It is evident that almost all plays functioned to teach and please the audience. Although the didactic ideal had often been stated in classical times, it was not given primary emphasis until the humanists of the Renaissance found it necessary to justify the study and writing of literature at a time when learning was moving away from purely theological concerns. Because they wished to depict drama as a useful tool, they tended to emphasise the instructional over the pleasurable potentiality of literature. These **ideas** about the functions of drama to dominated critical thought until the end of the eighteenth century.

Although many of the neo-classical principles now seem arbitrary and restrictive, they were accepted as reasonable and desirable in the years from about **AD1570** until after **AD1750**. As the neoclassical ideal

took shape in Italy, drama became increasingly regular. Some plays were denounced as inferior and as unworthy of serious consideration.

1.iii. Romanticism

Writers began to idealise the distant past when people allegedly had lived in a natural state, free from the shackles of despotic rulers. These changes contributed for the emergence of two forms, political theory and the literary forms. Most of these trends were formed around AD1800 under the label Romanticism. Romanticism, as a movement spread throughout Europe in the very late eighteenth century. It gained widespread acceptance in almost all arts in the first half of the nineteenth century. As a conscious movement, Romanticism began in Germany, although many of its concepts had been developing there and elsewhere for some time.

The philosophical foundations of Romanticism are complex, but the chief tenets can be summarised briefly. First, the Romantics (especially in Germany) argued that beyond earthly existence there is a higher truth than that of everyday social forms and natural phenomena, for all that exists has been created by an absolute being (variously called God, spirit, Idea, Ego). Consequently, all things are part of the whole and of each other. Truth, then, is viewed in relation to infinite variety, rather than to observable norms, as the neoclassicist had held. Second, since all creation has a common origin, a thorough and careful observation of any part may give insights into the whole (essentially a democratic idea). The

less spoiled a thing is *i.e* the less it deviates from its natural state- the more likely it is to embody some fundamental truth. Hence, the romantic writer preferred as subjects untamed nature and unspoiled natural restraints of a highly structured and bureaucratic society. Third, human existence is compounded of dualities; the body and the soul, the physical and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal, the finite and the infinite. Because of its dual nature, humanity is divided against itself, for it must live in the physical world although its spirit strives to transcend this limitation. Art which has enormous significance, is one of the few means of making human beings *whole again*, since during an aesthetic experience people are freed momentarily from the divisive forces of everyday existence. Fourth, to perceive the final unity behind the apparently endless diversity of existence one requires an exceptional imagination, found fully in the artist-genius and the philosopher. Thus, art like philosophy is a superior form of knowledge and the artist a truly superior being, capable of providing guidance for other and is willing to listen.²⁵

Romanticism that has been extant ever since the writings of Shakespeare was reactivated and rejuvenated by the theatre of the Romantics through its writings. Works inspired by the Romantic Movement include *Faust* of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Victor Hugo's *Hernani* and Alexander Dumas's dramatisation of his novel *The Three Musketeers*. With its emphasis on free form, picturesque stories, exotic locales, grotesque heroes, and sprawling dramatic structure, Romanticism

gave rise to a liberated and awesome theatricality, which survives till date primarily in the form of grand opera and Grand Guignol. It is indeed a proper appellation for Romantic theatre, for it strove hard to free dramaturgy from the strictures of neo-classic formulas like flamboyant verse, boisterous action, epic adventure, passionate feeling, and majestic style. Romantic authors explored deeply into the theatres practices for moving, dazzling, and enthralling of audiences that find subtle expression even in the drama of present times.²⁶

With respect to dramatic achievement, the aims of Romanticism proved more influential than lasting. The Romanticists succeeded in laying bare the possibilities of theatre in an age of rapid change. They also succeeded in wooing a democratic audience into the theatres. They removed academic pretension from the dram, which in the neo-classic era had threatened to destroy the theatrical experience by inhibiting its liveliness. By appealing to the emotions as well as to the mind, the works of Romanticism also stimulated a popular taste for rapture, adventure, and discovery in the theatre that had rebelliousness in both politics and art.

1.iv. Symbolism

The intellectual climate between AD1850 and AD 1900 was largely anti-idealistic, but the sweeping claims made for science at this time brought several protests. The most significant of these came from symbolists, who launched their counterattack in AD1885 on a *manifesto*. Taking its inspiration from the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Baudelaire's

poems and criticism, Dostoyevsky's novels, and Wagner's music and theory, symbolism attracted representatives from all the arts. To the symbolists, subjectivity, spirituality, and mysterious internal and external forces were the sources of truth, which is more profound than, that derived from the mere observance of outward appearance. This truth, they argued, cannot be represented directly but can only be evoked through symbols, legends, myths and moods. The essential of Symbolism was the abandonment of the appearances of life in favour of its spirit, symbolically represented, and the search for a poetic rather than a prosaic drama.²⁷ The principal dramatist of the movement was Maeterlinck.

By AD1899, Adolphe Appia (AD1862-1928) and Gordon Craig (A.D.1872-1966) laid down the theoretical foundations for modern nonrealistic theatrical practice by introducing three dimensional stage designs. Appia and Craig championed ideals and goals that practical men of the period could not provide. Together they forced their contemporaries to reconsider the nature of the theatre as an art and its function in society and its elements.

In England *Aesthetics*, a movement, which paralleled French symbolism, rejected the idea that drama should be utilitarian and the popular audience is a suitable judge of merit. Oscar Wilde (1856-1900) a member of the *Art for Art's sake*, suggested that we should seek to turn life into a work of art rather than to make art imitate life. Nevertheless, of Wilde's plays only *Salome* resembles French symbolist drama, although

his phenomenally popular comedy. *The importance of Being earnest* (1892) , *A Women of no Importance* (1893) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895) appear to be much like Pinero's social dramas, but seemingly Wilde lets the machinery of his plots show until the plays become near-parodies.²⁸

Symbolism made no marked impression in the theatre until an *independent* group, modeled on the Theatre Libre appeared. In 1890, Paul fort (1872-1962), a seventeen- year-old poet, founded the *Theatre d' Art*, where by 1892 he had presented works by forty six authors, ranging from readings of poems and adaptations of portions of the bible to new plays. When Fort left theatre in 1892, his work was carried out by the Theatre del' Oeuvre, headed by Poe (1869-1940). An actor and stage manager at the Theatre Libre for a time, Poe was converted to the idealist outlook after seeing and appearing in some of the productions at the Theatre d'arf while sharing an apartment with the symbolist painters. His repertory was made up primarily of French plays but with these he mingled some works by Ibsen and a Sanskrit drama *Mritcha katika* staged as *Clay Cart*.

Adolphe Appia started his theatrical discourse beginning with the assumption that artistic unity is the fundamental goal of theatrical production, Appia sought to analyse failures to achieve it. He concluded that stage presentation involves three conflicting visual elements: the moving three-dimensional actor; the perpendicular scenery; and the horizontal floor. He considered painted two-dimensional settings to be one of the major causes of disunity and recommended that they should be

replaced with three-dimensional units (steps, ramps, and platforms) that enhance the actor's movement and provide a transition from the horizontal floor to the upright scenery. He also emphasised the role of light in fusing all of the visual elements into a unified whole. To him, light was the visual counterpart of music that changes from moment to moment in response to shifting moods, emotions and actions.

Gordon Craig was considered to be the most controversial theatre practitioner. He began his career as an actor. His writing *The Art of Theatre* (A.D.1905) made him well known through out Europe. Craig thought of the theatre an Independent art and argued that the true theatre artist binds action, words, line, color, and rhythm into a product as pure as that of the painter, sculptor, or composer. He influenced immensely the stage designing, perhaps because he conceived of the theatre primarily in visual terms. He argued that the public goes to see rather than to hear a play. Craig's favorite project was the mobile setting. Through out his life he experimented with screens, out of which he hoped to create a setting that by invisible means one could move in ways analogous to the actor and to light.²⁹

1.v. Russian Idealism

In Russia, the antirealist impulse centered at first around *The World of Art*, a periodical begun in AD1898 by Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929). In addition to keeping Russians abreast of events in the artistic centers of Europe, the magazine sought to encourage Russian artists and

composers. The ecstatic response led Diaghilev to form his Ballets Russes, which then toured through out Europe. Every where it was praised both for its dancing and for its scenic design. The scenic style of the ballets Russes did not depend upon any new technical devices, for it relied on painted wings and drops. Nevertheless, it departed markedly from illusionism, since line, color, and decorative motifs were considerably stylised to reflect moods and themes rather than specific periods or places. Costumes also emphasised exaggerated line, color, and mass. Thus, although the artists drew on familiar forms and decorative motifs, they created a sense of exoticism and fantasy through stylisation.

During the AD1890s the symbolist ideal began to be championed in Russia and after 1900 became a major literary movement. Stanislavsky, after presenting a bill of Maeterlinck's short plays in A.D1904-1905, decided that his company needed to supplement its realistic approach, and in 1905 he established a studio to experiment with nonrealistic styles. A number of productions were planned for the new studio, but Meyerhold's subordination of the actors to his directorial concepts displeased Stanislavsky so much that he discontinued the experiment.

Nevertheless, the Moscow art theatre went on to produce other nonrealistic works, including Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird* in 1908 and *Hamlet* in 1912, the latter with scenery by Gordon Craig. It also encouraged Leonid Andreyev (A.D1871-1919), Russia's foremost symbolist dramatist. After beginning in the realistic mode, Andreyev was

converted to symbolism in 1907, *The Life of Man*, an allegory that seeks to summarize the human experience. Stanislavsky staged it against black curtains, on which windows, doors, and walls were outlined in white rope. Although the production was popular, Stanislavsky withdrew it because he felt the acting was too abstract. In 1911 the Moscow Art Theatre established the First Studio under the direction of Leopold Sullerzhitsky (A.D.1872-1916), primarily to give training in the Stanislavsky system but also to encourage nonrealistic approaches. But if Stanislavsky experimented with nonrealistic approaches, any marked departure from realism was ultimately unacceptable to him since all tended to dematerialise the actor.³⁰

Between AD1910 and AD1914 Meyerhold who was with Stanislavsky also established studios where he experimented with circus* and *Commedia Dell'arte* techniques. In one studio the entire auditorium was treated as a performance space, which intermingled actors and spectators. Actors evolved their own scripts and experimented with geometrically patterned movement, improvisation, and rhythm. Meyerhold also began to turn the scenic background into a mere apparatus for acting- a collection of steps and levels. Meyerhold clearly believed that the director is the major creative force in the theatre and that a script is simply material to be molded and reworked as the director wishes. He was the most persistent exploration of the possibilities and limitations of the theatre as a medium of expression to be found anywhere at that time.³¹

After Meyerhold, Nikolai Evreinov (A.D.1879-A.D.1953) continued to experiment with non-realistic styles in Russia. Evreinov sought to enlarge the actor's place in the theatre by emphasizing theatricality. He is probably most famous for his 'mono dramas', the basic principle of which was first set forth in his *Apology for Theatricality* in 1908. He suggested that an inborn theatrical instinct leads humans into *Role-playing* and makes them seek to transform reality into something better. Consequently, he argued, the theatre should not imitate life, but life should seek to become like theatre at its best. In his '*monodramas*' he aimed to help the audience achieve its desires by making it the alter ego of the protagonist. Through identification, the audience was led to participate in the theatrical experience through which it came to perceive an existence more satisfying than that of ordinary life.

By AD1917, Russian experimenters had introduced techniques, removed from those employed by Stanislavsky during A.D.1898. Some methods were nonrealistic. At the end of the nineteenth century, Russia witnessed some of the most significant theatrical experiments by the end of revolution.³²

1.vi. Neo-Romanticism

In Germany, a number of dramatists, most notably Hauptmann and Sudermann, eventually were to write alternately in realistic and nonrealistic styles. But others, among them Hofmannsthal and Wedekind, fall more clearly into the antirealist camp. Hugo Von

Hofmannsthal (AD1874-1929) is usually considered an exponent of neo-romanticism, a movement that in Germany roughly parallels Symbolism in France.³³ His early plays are mostly short, as in *The Fool and Death* (AD1893) and *The Adventure and the Singing Girl* (AD1899), and written in a verse that led many critics to praise him as the finest poet since Goethe. Around 1900 he underwent a crisis during which he came to believe that words are meaningless. After A.D.1900 German producers also came to be increasingly interested in nonrealistic staging. Some of the most important innovations were made at the Munich Art theatre, founded in AD1907 and headed by George Fuchs (A.D.1868-1949), a critic and theorist, with Fritz Erler (A.D.1868-1940) as designer. In two books, *The Theatre of the Future* (A.D.1905) and *Revolution in the Theatre* (A.D.1909) Fuchs expressed the need to have a theatre that fulfills aspiration of modern humanity. Under the slogan *retheatricalise the theatre*: he sought to unite all the arts in a new kind of expression.

Like Appia and Craig, Fuchs believed that rhythm fuses all the elements of production. Unlike them he placed the actor in front of the setting rather than within it and so tended to mute the three-dimensionality they so avidly sought. Fuchs's theories reinforced those of Appia and Craig and helped to establish the trend toward stylization in all theatrical elements. Ultimately, virtually all of the ideas and innovations introduced between A.D. 1875 and A.D.1900 whether realistic or nonrealistic reflected in the work of Max Reinhardt (A.D.1873-1943).³⁴ He advocated that no

single approach is appropriate to the staging of all plays. Until the twentieth century, directors in each era staged all plays in similar style. Despite widespread experimentation in the late nineteenth century, each director had adopted a distinctive approach and applied it to all plays. With Reinhardt, each new production became a problem to be solved, not through the employment of proved formulae but through clues found within the work itself. Unlike his predecessors, he welcomed antirealism without undermining realism.

1.vii. Expressionism:

Around AD1910 expressionism as a term was introduced into Germany, later as the critics popularised it as a label for the discussion that are already found in literature and arts. Since almost any departure from realism soon came to be labeled as Expressionism, a movement difficult to define. Nevertheless, its basic premises may be outlined. An anthropomorphic view of existence led expressionists to project human emotions and attitudes into inanimate objects, and to seek truth in humanity's spiritual qualities rather than in external appearances.³⁵ Expressionists opposed realism and naturalism on the grounds that those movements focused on superficial details and implied that the observable phenomena of contemporary materialistic and mechanistic society represent fundamental truth. Rather, the expressionists argued that external reality is alterable and should be changed until it is brought into

harmony with humanity's spiritual nature, the only significant source of value.

Since the expressionists' *truth* existed primarily within the subjective realm, it had to be expressed through new artistic means. Distorted line, exaggerate shape, abnormal coloring, mechanical movement, and telegraphic speech were devices commonly used to lead audiences beyond surface appearances". Most expressionist plays were structurally episodic, deriving their unity from a central idea or argument, often holding out the promise of a future *utopia*.

With the onset of first World War, expressionism began to change for its emphasis moved from personal concerns to warnings of impending universal catastrophe or pleas for the reformation of humanity and society. Between 1919* and 1924 expressionism also became a major style of production, especially as applied by Jessner and Fehling. Leopold Jessner (A.D1878-1945) had worked in Hamburg and Königsberg before becoming director of the Berlin State Theatre from AD1919 until AD1933. Here he won international fame for his imaginative use of flights of steps and platforms as the major compositional elements in his productions. The result of these various influences was a sort of theatre in which extreme and often-morbid psychological states were obsessively explored via a bold use of symbolic settings and costumes Expressionism was in many ways primarily a designer's theatre.³⁶

After AD1920s the 'subjectivist' phase of Expressionism, was dominated by the symbolic embodiment of states of mind and soul on the stage. It gave way to a more formalist, social phase to view the society in general in which human being is represented as a counter in a larger pattern.

1.viii.Dada and Surrealism:

As a consequence of the revolt against tradition, many theories and practices were emerged to break the influence of realistic theatre and to drive its attention to new forms. Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, Dada and Surrealism were emerged in this phase. During the first World War many artists and political dissents sought refuge in Switzerland, where Hugo Ball, Emmy Hemmings, Richard Hulsenceck, and others launched Dada, the most extreme of the revolts, in AD1916. The principal spokesman for dada was Tritisn Tzara (A.D1896-1963), who published seven manifestoes between AD1916 and 1920.³⁷ Dada was grounded in skepticism about a world that could produce a global war. For them insanity seemed the world's true state, the Dadaists sought in their actions to replace logic and reason with calculated madness, and in their art to substitute discord and chaos for unity, structure, and harmony. They presented a number of programs composed of recitations, *chance* or *sound* poems, dances, visual art, and short plays. Their activities came to an end with the First World War.

In France, Dada was absorbed into Surrealism, which drew much of its inspiration from the works of Alfred Jarry and Apollinaire (A.D1880-1918), friend to almost all avant-garde writers and painters after A.D1900 and the principal spokesman for Cubism. It was he who influenced surrealism largely through his play *the Breasts of Tiresias* (AD1903, revised and published in AD1917). Surrealism was defined by Andre Breton, as *pure psychic automatism, by which it is intended to express verbally, in writing or by other means, the real process of thought, in the absence of all control exercised by the reason and outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupation.*

Of all the avant-garde figures between the two World Wars, Antonin Artaud (A.D1896-1948), a surrealist was the most important. According to Artaud, the theatre in the Western world has been devoted to a very narrow range of human experience, primarily the psychological problems of individuals or the social problems of groups. Artaud holds that the more important aspects of existence are those submerge in the unconscious, those things that cause divisions within people which lead to hatred between people, violence and disaster.³⁸ He believed that if proper theatrical experiences are given, people can be freed from ferocity and express the joy and emotions that civilisation has forced them to repress. It is because the theatre can evacuate those feelings that are usually expressed in more destructive ways.

Artuad differed drastically from Appia and Craig in his conception; they tended to value art for its own sake, whereas Artuad saw in it the salvation of mankind. For Appia and Craig world is an idealised beauty, but for Artuad it is a region of cruel torment³⁹. Consequently, as the post-world War II view of humanity darkened, the influence of Appia and Craig declined as that of Artaud increased.

1.ix.Futurism:

Futurism was a movement launched in Italy in A.D1909 by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (A.D1876-1944) during inters war times. Like the Expressionists, the Futurists rejected the past and wished to transform humanity. But, whereas the Expressionists associated the past with soul-destroying materialism and industrialism, the Futurists deplored the veneration of the past as a barrier to progress. Consequently, they glorified energy and speed of the machine age and sought to embody them in artistic forms.⁴⁰ From AD1910 onward they gave performances during which they read their manifestoes, gave concerts, read poems, performed plays, and exhibited works of visual art- at times several of these simultaneously occurred. Sometimes they moved about among the spectators, using various parts of a room as stage. They sequentially and concurrently demand that libraries and museums to be destroyed as the first step toward creating a more dynamic future.

Futurists championed art forms like *picture poems* kinetic sculptures, collages, and dynamic music. As for theatre, they denounced

the past practices to be the better models for future forms. They considered the earlier drama as too lengthy, analytical and static and hence proposed synthetic *drama* in its place, which would compress the essence of a dramatic situation into a moment or two. In A.D1915-1916 they published seventy-six short plays of this type.

During First World War, Futurism lost many followers because it glorified war as the supreme example of energy. After the War it received new vitality, perhaps because many of its tenets were compatible with Mussolini's program of aggressive action. The principal exponent of Futurism in the AD1920s Enrico Prampolini (AD1894-1960) wished that the painted scene be replaced by *Stage architecture that will move*. He substituted luminous forms for human actors. He conceived stage as a multidimensional space in which spiritual forces (represented by light and abstract forms) would play out a drama of semi-religious significance.⁴¹

After AD1930, the interest in Futurism declined. Though it never became a major theatrical movement, it pioneered innovations that would be revived and extended in the succeeding years. Futurism (1) attempted to rescue theatrical art from a museum-like atmosphere, (2) directed confrontation and intermingling of performers and audiences; (3) it aimed at appropriation of modern technology to create multimedia performances; (4) it aimed at using simultaneity and multiple focus, (5) proposed for anti literary and illogical bias; and (6) wished to break down the barriers among arts.

1.x. Existentialism:

Existentialism is the philosophy that dominated the thinking of the playwrights much in AD1940s and 1950s. Thoughtful men and women, despairing of the traditional values formerly found in nature, science, politics, and history, turned inward in the hope of rediscovering a genuine identity and an authentic life of the self. The sense of disruption was more than that it was felt after the First World War. There was a drastic break with the past and the new era, the Age of Atom Bomb was launched. The holocaust at Hiroshima in A.D1945 put an end to all that had gone before. Existentialists hold that if the result of three centuries of science was to be the annihilation of every living being on the earth, there is no use in studying science. Even if destruction could be avoided, the new age of political and economic power that would follow the release of nuclear energy would be so radically different that all traditional values would seem irrelevant.

In everyday life man is not always aware of himself in a borderline situation. When he realises himself as an existence, he gains freedom for the first time. According to Existentialists, freedom means that human being should not be the one that is being shaped under the influence of natural or social necessity but one should get molded himself by one's own act and deed. Thus, a free man takes responsibility for what **he has done** and does not try to justify himself by 'circumstances'. That is why

Existentialism constantly holds that man is responsible for everything that happened in history.

In this depressing spiritual climate, Existentialism became the support of many intellectuals. Its great appeal was its rediscovery of the self as an entity with an authentic inner life, a complete being free to choose, free to create values, whether or not the universe supports them. After a century of scientific objectivity, of exact measurement, of facts and statistics, the existentialists were ready for the opposite extreme of subjectivity.

The existentialist mood appeared first in France, where it was especially pertinent during the long, traumatic experience of the German occupation. Sartre derived a strong sense of commitment from his existentialism and worked with the Communists and other groups. The existentialist movement gained momentum after the Second World War and got reflected in the plays, novels, and essays of **two** Frenchmen, Albert Camus and Jean-Paul-Sartre. Camus' novels made a much stronger impression than his plays, though *Caligula* (A.D.1945) interested many people because of its startling hero, who follows the logic of his idea of absolute freedom to the point of killing his friends. Perhaps the more than his plays the two essays published at the end of the war 'Existentialism is a Humanism' is probably the most widely read definition of existentialism. Jean Paul Sartre (A.D1905-1980), individual differences of human beings, the qualities due to heredity and environment, were unimportant. A person

or a character in a play achieved identity only as he made a decision. His first play *Les Mouches* (A.D1942), is almost an Existentialist thesis in dramatic form. The other play by him was *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* (A.D1951), that set out, rather too schematically for theatrical success, to demonstrate the uselessness of the concept of god.⁴²

1.xi. Absurdism:

During A.D 1950-1960s, those that had leanings towards Existentialism developed theatre of the Absurd in Europe. It is an Avant - garde theatre that can be shown to share certain common structures and styles and to be tied together by a common philosophical thread. The plays that constitute this theatre are obsessed with the futility of all action and the pointlessness of all direction. These themes are developed theatrically through a deliberate and self-conscious flaunting of the *absurd* in the sense of the ridiculous.

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is the masterpiece of the theatre of the absurd; of all the plays it Absurdism is the most perfect in its form, the most complete in its desolation, the most comic Absurdism in its anguish. It is a parable without message. On a small mound at the base of a tree, beside a country road, two elderly men in bowler hats wait for an *Mr. Godot* with Absurdism whom they have presumably made an appointment. These two lonely tramps are waiting for Godot, who sends every day that he will not meet them today but surely tomorrow. The place where they wait is a desolate road, empty save for a stick of a tree not

sturdy enough to hang oneself on. Discontinuity is the theme and the form, deflation the theme and comic method.

Waiting for Godot does not point to any of the known sources of values, yet it is a passionate cry for some new faith, and in that sense it is a very religious play. The problem is certainly metaphysical. No economic improvement, no psychological adjustment, no doctor's pill, but only a new definition of mankind, a new relation to the universe, will serve these forlorn creatures. In its exploration of the last possibility of emptiness, the play may be considered a turning point. Anyone with such passionate need for the spiritual plane will either renew old definitions of God or find new ones.

The Absurdist consciously breakdown the language and communication in performance and deliberately perplexed the audience. They hold that if confusion and chaos are the human conditions, the form of the play itself must make use of interruption, discontinuity, incongruity, and senseless logic and repetition.

The most important Absurdist playwrights are Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur **Adamov** and Jean Genet. All of them are in exiles. They feel that they are set apart from humanity as criminals and perverts for not being normative and hence question the society that is lawful and normal. They emphasised the sense of alienation.⁴³

Absurdism concentrated upon the irrationality of human experience without suggesting any path beyond. By employing a succession of episodes unified merely by theme or mood instead of a cause-to-effect arrangement, they arrived at a structure paralleling the chaos, which was their usual dramatic subject. The juxtaposition of incongruous events producing serious, comedy and ironic effects heightened the sense of absurdity. Because they viewed language as the major rationalistic tool, the Absurdists often demonstrated its inadequacy and subordinated it to nonverbal devices.⁴⁴ It is not much concerned with people as social and political creatures but with human condition in a metaphysical sense.

Contribution of Idealism to Theatre:

Idealism as a philosophical drive contributed to theatre in two major areas of human development. Firstly it sought the happiness of individual as the basis for the well being of humanity. Secondly it imparted morality as primary for spiritual growth of human kind. These two driving forces when applied to theatre, it becomes a vitalised instrument in shaping the human thinking. The first principle of idealism being the subject (Self) happiness led to the dogma of 'art for art sake'. Once this principle started operating the enactments became much artistic and bound to be displayed or exhibited to people at large. For this reason the theatre adapted the notion of proscenium. The concept of proscenium innately advocates **Osternin** principle, which means making an event strange. In other words enactment need to be different from the routine walks of life,

this major contribution of Idealism segregated the performer from his viewer. Hence a physical distance is created between the two; the performance and the audience during the performance. This is done so in two ways; one by raising the performance space as a platform to appear as a stage, and by distinguishing the performance space by lighting during performance. The viewers are made to sit in 90 degrees angle in front of the stage. With this the space of the performers on the raised platform is divided in two spaces. One the visible space the other is non-visible space. The visible space is actual enactment place where viewers are allowed to watch the performance. The non-visible space is converted as greenroom and for other technical purposes like lighting, musicians.

The second driving force of idealism being morality, the theatre is made to get 'influenced by the religious realm of human Rind. The metaphysical presence as pervaded in the religious preaching of the human cultures started invading in theatre as enactments. The themes from the religious texts became the popular subjects for plays. To transcend the metaphysical realm in to physical realm, theatre made use of popular images of Gods and Goddesses. For this, the use of masks is introduced in theatre. Two kinds of masks prevailed in theatre. The first kind is, facial make-up itself as mask, the second is external mask. Converting face into mask resulted in exuberant and elaborate make-up practice in theatre. Different kinds of colors and materials were used to transform normal faces into the faces of metaphysical beings. In the

practice of external masking wood, plastic, fiber and other such material was fabricated into the faces of Gods, Goddesses and satanic forces. Hence a separate skill of mask making became a specialised field in theatre.

Added to this, costumes also underwent change. Extensive costumes in different sizes and lengths are tailored to suit the characters in the play. Costumes made up of simple clothes to fine fabrics were used to make the actors appear as the characters. Stitching concurrently became a specified craft in dress making for theatre.

Concurrent to this development, the theatre also added innumerable properties in staging the plays. The divine and evil forces are represented by certain properties in every religious belief system. The properties like winks for angles, skirts for Gods, swords for evil forces etc were introduced. These hand properties also clubbed by the stage properties to make the play situational. The backdrops of the stage are painted into different settings like Abodes of Gods and evil forces. With this, artists as stage designers emerged as a specialised in this field.

The stage did undergo a change due to Idealism. The linear stages are transformed into nonlinear and vertical stages, by dividing the stage itself through raised platform, dividers, levels etc. this further contributed for the specialisation in lighting by way of spotlights, floodlights and special effects. All these are done only to make the theatre to be experienced by the audience as that of the metaphysical realm. Further song and dance

sequences are introduced in theatre as part of stylisation. With this, the performance has also undergone a change. The body language as expressed through kinesics and proxemics became a part of narration in theatre. At the outset, the contribution of Idealism to theatre is more artistic and metaphysical.

2.Theatre concepts developed in 'Materialism'

Materialism as a form of thinking sought for human intervention to correct errors in the development of civilisations. The core idea of Materialism rests on human endeavor to achieve common goodness to all humankind. Theatre did come under the influence of materialism and expressed the hope of regaining happiness of all human kind and especially those of the marginalised and exploited. This led to the realistic theatre and critiqued the negative side of development of civilisation. **Egalitarianism** formed the basis for most of the concepts developed in theatre under the influence of Materialism. The major concepts developed under materialism are Realism, Naturalism, Constructivism, Epic-Theatre, and Environmental theatre, poor theatre and post modern Theatre.

2.i. Realism

Realism owed much to the *Positivism* of Auguste Comte (AD1798-AD1857), author of *Positive philosophy*. Comte classified sciences according to their relative simplicity placing sociology at the apex. Comte argued that all the sciences must contribute to sociology by lending their scientific methodology, so that the causes for social problems and their

remedies are brought out to get desirable change.⁴⁵ Comte's arguments appealed scientists, philosophers, and also many artists, who *attempted* to think *scientific*. Out of these attempts, realism emerged.

The realist mode in art had been attempted sporadically from the time of the Greeks. In the early phases of Renaissance, pictorial illusion dominated the theatre. Melodrama and romanticism were also incorporated. All approaches before A.D1850 emphasised *Beautiful* nature, norms, picturesque locale, colour, or pleasing contrasts in theatrical practice. Even Hume, who demanded the inclusion of the grotesque in art, avoided the sordid in his own practice. Around A.D1850, some critics began to advocate a close and objective observation of life, no matter how squalid or elevated.

As a conscious movement, Realism is first discernible around A.D1853 in France. Realism aimed to create a drama without conventions or abstractions, in simple consonance with life itself. *Likeness to life* is realism's goal and in pursuit of that goal it has renounced, among other things, **idealized** or prettified settings, versifications, contrived endings, and stylized costumes and performances.

Realism is an aesthetic philosophy, since the theatre has always taken *real life* as its fundamental subject and realism seems at first glance to be an appropriate style with which to approach the reality of existence. Instead of having actors represent characters, the realists would say, let us have the actors be those characters. Instead of having dialogue stand

for conversation, let us have dialogue which is conversation, instead of scenery and atmosphere, let us have scenery that is genuinely inhabitable, and costumes that are real clothes,⁴⁶

In essence, the realistic theatre is conceived to be a laboratory in which the nature of relationships, or the ills of society, or the symptoms of a dysfunctional family are 'objectively' set down for the final judgment of an audience as impartial observers.

The realistic theatre saw its zenith in the premiers of a *Doll's House* (A.D.1879), *Ghosts*(A.D.1881), and *An Enemy of the People* (A.D.1882), the three plays by the Norwegian author Henrik Ibsen. Earlier in his career, Ibsen had been a stage director and dramatic poet, and his previous works for the theatre included the magnificent Romantic/epic poem -Play, which dealt, respectively, with the issues of Women's roles in society, hereditary, disease and mercy killing and political hypocrisy, he turned to the realistic mode.

The realistic theatre spread rapidly throughout Europe as the controversy surrounding Ibsen's plays and themes stimulated other writers to follow suit. The result was a proliferation of 'problem plays' as they were sometimes called, which focused genuine social concern through realistic dramatic portrayal. In Germany, Gerhart Hauptmann explored the plight of the middle and proletarian classes in several works, most notably in his masterpiece *The Weavers* (A.D.1892). On England, Irish-born George Bernard Shaw created a comic realism through which he addressed such

issues as slum landlords (in *Widower's Houses*, A.D1892), prostitution (in *Warren's Profession*, A.D1902) and urban poverty (in *Major Barbara*, A.D1905). In France, under the encouragement of innovative director Andre Antoine, Eugene Brieux wrote a series of realistic problem plays that included "*Damaged Goods*" (A.D1902) which deals with syphilis, and *Maternity* (A.D1903), which deals with birth control. By the turn of the century realism was virtually the standard dramatic form in Europe.⁴⁷

If the realistic theatre came to prominence with the plays of Henrik Ibsen, it attained its stylistic apogee in the major works of Anton Chekhov. Chekhov was an actor by training and a writer of fiction by vocation. Towards the end of his career, in association with realist director Konstantin Stanislaviki and the Moscow Art Theatre, he also achieved success as a playwright through a set of plays that portray the end of the Czarist era in Russia with astonishing force and subtlety. *The Sea Gull* (A.D1896), *Uncle Vanya* (A.D1899), *The Three Sisters* (A.D1901) and *The Cherry Orchard* (A.D1904). Chekhov's *Three Sisters* epitomizes the realistic theatre, in addition to being one of the finest plays of the genre, it is perhaps the most widely known of all Russian plays.

Stanislavsky and Chekhov were two towering figures of Russian realism, the first as actor-director and the second as playwright. Their collaboration in the Moscow Art Theatre productions still rank among the most magnificent achievements of the realist stage.⁴⁸

The success of realism is well established; indeed realism remains one of the dominant modes of drama to this day. At its most profound, when crafted and performed by consummately skilled artists, the realistic theatre can generate extremely powerful audience empathy by virtue of the insight and clarity it brings to real-world moments.

2.ii. Naturalism:

Naturalism, developed as a movement independently parallel to realism, is an attempt to dramatise human reality without having much dramaturgical effect. The naturalists flourished in France during the late nineteenth century grounded their aesthetics on nature particularly on man's space in the natural (Darwinian) environment. For them, human being is merely a biological phenomenon and human behavior is being determined entirely by genetic and social circumstances.

The primary spokesman for Naturalism was Emile Zola (AD1840-1902), who advocated the scientific method as a key to all truth and progress. He wants the literature to be scientific, which otherwise would die. Zola argued that drama should illustrate the inevitable laws of heredity and environment or record case studies. To portray a character as a hero, or even as a credible force for change in society was anathema to the naturalist, who similarly eschewed dramatic conclusions or climaxes. The Naturalist plays offered nothing more than a *slice of life* in which the characters in the play were the play's entire subject, and any topical issues that were brought in served merely to facilitate the interplay

of personalities and highlight their situations, frustrations, and hopes. Whereas, realist plays dealt with well-defined social issues-women's rights, inheritance laws, and worker's pensions etc.

Naturalism is not merely a matter of style; but a philosophical concept concerned with the nature of the human being. Naturalist theatre represents a purposeful attempt to explore that concept, using extreme realism as its basic dramaturgy. The naturalists tried to eliminate every vestige of dramatic convention. Zola believes that all the great successes of the stage are triumphs over convention.⁵⁰ By A.D1887, naturalistic staging and writing were united for the first time with the great contribution of Antoine at the Theatre Libre. Although Antoine had used a realistic approach from the beginning, he intensified his search for authenticity after witnessing the Meiningen players and Irving's company in A.D1888. He then sought to reproduce environment in every detail. In *The Butchers* (A.D1888), for example, he hung real carcasses of beef on the stage. The 'fourth wall' was observed consistently; in designing settings, he arranged rooms as in real life and only later decided which wall has to be removed. Often furniture was placed along the curtain line, and actors were directed to act, as though there were no audience. He discouraged conventionalised movement and declamatory speeches, instead sought natural behavior.

2. iii. Constructivism and **Biomechanics**:

Constructivism was a term adopted over from the visual arts, it was first applied about A.D1912 to the sculptures, composed by intersecting planes and masses without representational content. Between A.D1921 and 1930, Meyerhold, the popular Russian director perfected techniques with which he had experimented before the Revolution. He developed more conscious* and systematic methods designated as *Biomechanics* and *Constructivism*. Biomechanics referred primarily to Meyerhold's approach to acting, intended to create a style appropriate to the machine age. His performers were trained in gymnastics, circus movement, and ballet in order to make them as efficient as machines in carrying out 'an assignment received from the outside'. Basically what Meyerhold had in mind is a variation on the James-Lange theory:* particular patterns of muscular activity reflect particular emotions. Consequently, to arouse a desired emotional response within himself or herself or the audience need to enact an appropriate kinetic pattern.⁵¹ Thus, Meyerhold sought to replace Stanislavsky's emphasis on internal motivation with one on physical and emotional reflexes. To create a **feeling** of exuberant joy in both performer and audience, Meyerhold thought that it is more desirable for actors to plummet down a slide to swing on a trapeze, or to turn a somersault than to restrict themselves to a pattern of behavior, which is considered appropriate for traditional social standards.

2.iv. Theatre of Alienation / Epic Theatre:

Bertolt Brecht, a theorist, a dramatist and a director, brought significant changes in the post war theatre. He introduced those theatre practices, which differ from already existing ever since the times of Aristotle. He reawakened the sense of social responsibility of theatre in dealing with the public issues and events on one hand and on the other displayed the capacity /power of theatre in" approaching people's causes.

Brecht was born in Germany in A.D1898 and emerged from World War I as a dedicated Marxist and pacifist. Using poems, songs, and eventually the theatre to promote his ideals following the German defeat, Brecht vividly portrayed his country during the Weimar Republic as caught in the grips of four giant vices; the military, capitalism, industrialization and imperialism. His *Rise and fall of the city of Mahagonny* an 'epic opera' of A.D1930, proved to be an immensely popular blending of satire and propaganda, music and expressionist theatricality and social idealism and lyric poetry. It was produced all over Germany and throughout most of Europe in the early A.D1930s as a representation of a rapacious international capitalism evolving toward fascism.⁵²

He explained the use of sentiments and the notion of audience empathy for characters in performances and attempted to create a performance style, which was openly *didactic*. The actor was asked to alienate or distanciate himself from the character he plays-to *demonstrate* his character in performance rather than to embody that character in a

realistic manner. In Brecht's view the ideal actor is one who could establish a critical objectivity toward his character, which would make clear the character's social function and political commitment. To repudiate the *magic* of the theatre, he considered it as a place for workers to present a meaningful *parable* of life. Further he held that the stage personnel- actors and stagehands-were merely workers who were engaged in doing a job of work.⁵³

In every way possible, Brecht attempted to prevent the audience from becoming swept up in an emotional, sentimental bath of feelings. His goal was to keep the audience *alienated* or *distanced* from the literal events depicted by the play so they would be free to concentrate on the larger social and political issues, which generated the play. Brecht created such a new perspective on human reality to indicate the direction which political dialogue should take to foster the social betterment.

This theatre has proven more popular in A.D1960 onwards. Because of the emergence of many cultural **struggles** around the globe through discussion and practice of Brecht's philosophy had taken place. This period also witnessed the raising of some important theatre experiments, which were mainly focused on the relationship of the actors and audience.

Brecht's theory of alienation had a staggering impact on the modern theatre. He denied in his theatre the Aristotelian catharsis that depends on audience empathy with a noble character. Further, he ignored Stanislavsky's basic principles concerning the aims of acting, Brecht

provided a new dramaturgy that encouraged playwrights, directors, and designers to tackle social issues directly rather than simply by implication through contrived dramatic situations. Combining the technologies and aesthetics of other media, the cinema, the cabaret, the rehearsal- Brecht fashioned a vastly expanded arena for his ideas on theatre practice. His theatre reflects a bold theatricality, an open-handed dealing with the audience, a proletarian vigor, and a stridently entertaining, intelligently satirical and charmingly bawdy theatre.

2.v. Environmental theatre:

Many of the ideas and concepts of postmodernism were carried over to environment theatre, a term popularized by Richard Schechner, editor of *The Drama Review* (TDR). In A.D.1968 Schechner published six *axioms* designed to clarify environmental Theatre.

(1) He declared that events might be placed on a continuum with *Pure/Art* at one end and *Impure/Life* at **the** other, extending from traditional theatre at one pole through environmental theatre to 'happenings' and ending with public events and demonstrations at the other pole. Thus, he located environmental theatre somewhere between traditional theatre **and** happenings; (2) in environmental theatre *all the space is used for performance*; Spectators are both *scene-makers* and *scene-watchers*, it is because in a street scene from daily life, those who watch are part of the total picture, even when they consider themselves to be mere spectators, (3) *The event can take place either in a totally*

transformed space or in a found space. In other words, space may be converted into an *environment*, or a place may be accepted as it is and the production may be adapted to it. (4) *Focus is flexible and variable.* (5) *All production elements speak their own language* rather than being mere supports for words and (6) *a text need be neither the starting point nor the goal of a production. There may be no text at all.* Thus the site of a performance is made an integral part of the whole, encompassing both actors and spectators so that they may interact as an entity. Such an attempt demands the abandonment of traditional theatre architecture and use of natural environment and scenario from routine life as background for performance.⁵⁴

In A.D1968 Schechner formed his own performance group. It converted a 'car garage into a theatre, the towers, platforms and other properties that are located in that garage were appropriated both by the performers and audiences. There was no spatial demarcation made in the performance arena for actors and audiences. The company's first production was *Dionysus in 1969*, a working text of Euripides'. Most of them related to sexuality, freedom, or repression. Overall, the production became a plea for greater freedom and a warning against blindly throwing off restraints. Subsequently, the group presented *Commune* (A.D1970), a company created work about American ideals and failures to realise them, Sam Shepard's *The Tooth of Crime* (A.D1973), a play about rivalries in

the pop music world treated in terms of gangsterism, and in A.D1975, Brecht's *Mother Courage*.⁵⁵ In A.D1980 Schechner left the company.

The performance space was taken over by The Wooster Group, which since A.D1975 had existed as a unit within Schechner's company. Its artistic director, Elizabeth LeCompte, developed plays mostly based on the autobiographical reminiscences of Spalding Gray, one of its principal members. It won high critical praise and international recognition through their performances at festivals abroad. Its also appropriated deconstructionist techniques more effectively than any other American company.

2.vi: Poor theatre:

Internationally, Poland is known for its innovative directors rather than for its dramatists. Jerzy Grotowski (A.D1933-2000) was one who began his work in Opole in A.D1959 before his moving to Wrocław (Breslau) in A.D1965. Grotowski established his company, the *Polish laboratory theatre* and gave performances in various countries. Grotowski worked with many foreign troupes and lectured widely about his methods. His work got also publicised in the form of a book *Towards a Poor Theatre* (A.D1968).⁵⁶

Grotowski began with the premise that the theatre has borrowed too heavily from other media, especially film and television, and thus has violated its own essence, which he wanted to recover by eliminating

everything except its two essential elements: the actor and the audience. He called his approach *poor theatre*, in contrast with technologically *rich theatre*, since it avoided all machinery and minimized all spectacles not created by the actor.⁵⁷ His performances were not allowed to use makeup or change costume to indicate a change in role or within a character; all music had to be produced by the actors themselves; he used no scenery in the traditional sense, although a few functional properties may be rearranged or used in various ways as the action demanded; he abandoned the proscenium-arch stage in favor of a large room which could be rearranged for each production. Overall the actors were thrown back on their own resources.⁵⁸

During this period, actor training was the focus of Grotowski's concerns. For ideas about training he drew heavily from many sources- Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, Delsarte, Dullin and others. His system required that actors gain absolute control over themselves physically, vocally and psychically, so that during performances they should be able to transform themselves as per the demand of the production. Grotowski's actors had to be willing to give of themselves fully and expose themselves psychically when necessary. According to Grotowski, actors should arouse a sense of wonder because of their ability to exceed what the spectators can envision ever being able to do.

In this early phase, Grotowski looked upon the theatre as a secular ritual to which spectator-witnesses were admitted. He believed that the

audience is the other essential ingredient of a performance and that it must be put in a position to play its role unselfconsciously. He argued that the attempts to involve the audience directly in the action only make it self-conscious. Therefore, for each production he decided that how the audience should respond psychologically and then arranged the space to create the appropriate psychic distance.

In preparing a production, Grotowski searched for a script that forms archetypal patterns, which convey universal meaning for audiences even today. Much of the script might be abandoned and the remainder rearranged. The ultimate aim was to make the actors and the audience confront themselves in something analogous to a religious experience.⁵⁹

By A.D.1970 Grotowski believed that his group had reached the end of its search for technical mastery, and decided not to create new productions. He realised that, while his actors had been able to eliminate the barriers that stood in their way as performers, they had not broken down the blocks that stood between performer and audience. He then set out to eliminate "the ideal of theatre" in the sense of an actor playing for an audience, and to find a way of incorporating spectators into "a meaning, not a confrontation; a communication, where we can be totally ourselves." Consequently, he sought to develop means for leading participants back into the elemental connections between people and their bodies, the natural world, and each other.

The first major revelation of the new work came during the summer of A.D.1975 when approximately five hundred people from all over the world attended a 'research university' organised by Grotowski at Wroclaw under the sponsorship of the Theatres des Nations, which that year was held in Warsaw. The group included students, teachers, and journalists, as well as several famous directors- among them Peter Brook, Jean-Louis Barrault, Luca Ronconi and Joseph Chaikin. Some of the activities involved groups going into the woods for 24 hours during which they were led through ritualized myths and archetypal experiences involving fire, air, earth, water, eating, dancing, playing, planting and bathing. Through this process, participants were expected to rediscover the roots of the theatre in pure ritualized experience, as well as to discover their own true being.⁶⁰

After A.D.1975, Grotowski began to study the diverse ritual performances in Japan, India, Haiti, Mexico, Africa and elsewhere, and used these experiences to enhance the work he had done. He labeled this new phase on the Theatre of Sources.

2.vii. Post modernism in theatre:

Much that happened in the theatre after A.D.1968 reflected cluster of ideas and practices that have come to be called 'Postmodernism'- an imprecise label, but one that suggests a significant break with 'Modernism'. Under modernism a variety of styles had flourished, but within any one, the artist usually sought unity by adhering consistently to the set of conventions associated with that mode. If there were disparate

elements, they were ultimately harmonized into a unified whole. Postmodernists, on the other hand, were undisturbed by the lack of consistency or continuity. They allowed disparities to exist without seeking to mask them, and they juxtaposed style and moods that previously would have been considered incompatible or inconsistent. They collapsed categories treated as distinct under modernism; boundaries were breached between the sexes, the arts, cultures, dramatic forms and performance styles.

Postmodern art was often reflexive, calling attention to the fact it was being made and how it was being made. It might include overt references to other works. It tended to value popular and high culture equally and to intermingle them. Postmodernism was reinforced by Poststructuralism (or deconstruction). Poststructuralists argued that it is impossible to think about any subject without a language. Thus, language makes consciousness and thought possible. But a language predisposes its users to see the world in particular ways and thus seriously compromises claims of objectivity. Additionally, meaning can never be fully present because, during the process of communication, it is always being modified by what has gone before and deferred by what is yet to come. Statements and categories are also haunted by what they suppress or ignore. Therefore a supplement of meaning is always left over, and if one examines the supplement, it begins to call into question the adequacy of the original statement or the boundaries of the category and to suggest

modifications which lead to still other modifications in an endless chain of deferred and differing meanings. This analytical process came to be known as deconstruction. It demonstrates that there can be no closure of meaning because additional possible meanings are always being uncovered often ones of which the playwright may have been unaware. This led to distinction between a "work" (the physical document written by the author) and a "text" (what individual readers find when they read the work), and to the idea that the author has no more right than anyone else in the text, since no one can dictate how a work can be read. In effect, audiences became partial authors of the text they perceive. These ideas, along with the principle of no closure of meaning, provided justification, if any were needed, for directors to depart drastically from dramatists' instructions. Sometimes, it was argued, works (especially classics) have become so enshrined within accepted interpretations that we can see them afresh only upon being subjected to a radically different reading. Much theatre of the A.D1970s and 1980s intermingled elements of postmodernism and **poststructuralism** in highly innovative productions.⁶¹

Such intermingling was foreshadowed in the 'happenings', which themselves harked back to concepts and conventions introduced by the Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists. One key figure was Allan Kaprow, a painter and art historian, who in the A.D1950s became interested in *environments* (that is, the extension of the concept of art to include the entire setting in which it is exhibited or in which it occurs) and, believing

that all those who attended an exhibit become a part of the total experience, he began to give the spectators things to do. In A.D1959 he published an outline for an artistic event that he labeled a *happening* because he considered the term to be neutral. Later that year he gave the first public showing of such an event-"18 happenings in 6 Parts". For it, the gallery was divided into three compartments; different activities went on in each but simultaneously, and images were projected onto a variety of surfaces while music and sound effects provided a background. All those carried out instructions given them when they entered.⁶²

The term 'happenings' eventually came to be used to designate any event in which improvisation and chance played a large role. Though happenings were not strictly theatrical, many of their characteristics were carried over into theatre in several ways. (1) as 'institutionalised' art came under attack, there were many attempts to move it outside the confines of theatres, museums, or concert halls and to put it into more accessible and familiar surroundings. (2) emphasis was shifted from passive observation to participation- from the product to the process. Sometimes the spectators and the performers were the same and (3) emphasis shifted from the artist's intention to the participant's awareness. Each participant-spectator thus became partial creator of the piece and could derive whatever meaning he or she could from the experience. (4) simultaneity and multiple focus tended to replace orderly there was no pretense that everyone could see and hear the same things at the same time or in the

same order and (5) happenings were multi-media events, breaking down the barriers between the arts and intermingling them.⁶³

Richard Foreman, another dramatist and director in the postmodernist-poststructuralist mode, founded his own company, the Ontological-hysteric Theatre in 1968, for which he directed and designed his own pieces, including Dr. Selavy's 'Magic Theatre' and *Pandering to the Masses* and several others. Instead of telling linearly arranged stories or developing complex characters, Foreman's plays were essentially meditations on art and the efforts, effects, strategies, and inventions of whatever it is in us, and through us, that does 'thinking'. He usually sat in the front row of the theatre where he was both audience member and operator of a sound system from which his own tape-recorded or amplified voice called attention to the play's ideas and the characters' actions and thoughts- to the 'art that is made' and to the fact that 'art is being made'. Foreman used a proscenium arch stage on which he arranged very precisely organised pictures. He also used cords, painted with alternating black and white dashes and stretched diagonally or horizontally, to divide the pictures into segments as points of reference for his analytical comments. Foreman used theatre extensively to deconstruct the processes of thought and theatrical art. Foreman also did considerable work internationally, where he was highly admired. In America he directed plays for the Guthrie Theatre, Papp's Public Theatre, the American Repertory Theatre, and elsewhere.⁶⁴

The contribution of Materialism to theatre:

Materialism as a philosophical milieu pondered on the well being of human kind on the basis of sharing the resources equally. This principle brought the theatre a purpose, which aims at social well being of human kind. Idealism in theatre transposed the physical realm to the metaphysical realm where as materialism brought the physical realm to social realm. For this theatre grossly depended on "objectivity rather than subjectivity (as in the case of Idealism) as its methodological tool in theatre practice. Man's relationship with nature and man's relationship with other men is objectively treated as themes in the theatre. This brought forth the dialectics between the forces of production and the relations of production to the forefront in the themes dealt in materialistic theatre. With the result inequality in Sharing of resources and exploitation of men and environment by the '**haves**' is critically portrayed in theatre.

In order to enact the above said dialects, the context of theatre also underwent a change. The real life events and social settings of exploited class/group became the major concern of the enactment. Instead of gods and goddesses and metaphysical beings the rich the poor and the common man became the characters of the plays. In order to take up the roles of everyday life of different categories of people the materialistic theatre came up with the idea of realistic presentations. In order to achieve this, it introduced theatre labs as a major contribution to the field of theatre. The process of training became more vigorous and the actors

were made to be fit for different roles as and when required. In idealistic theatre the actors are considered as 'born actors'. Where as in materialistic theatre it is only through proper training and practice that the 'actors are made'. Theatre is not 'art for art sake' but 'art for man's sake'. Therefore it is the well being of mankind alone is concealed as pleasure in making theatre. Social relevance and political commitment became the driving force for the makers of theatre such as director, actors, and technical personal of theatre.

This setting drastically changed the theatre from not only presenting a proscenium stages but also presenting it in the streets amidst of masses. Street plays became more and more common to those believed in materialistic theatre. With this the entire theatre fabric underwent a change. Instead* of raised platforms, streets and open grounds were preferred. The distance between audiences and performers reduced. The audiences were made to sit either in a circle or semi circle and the actors in the course of performance used the space both in the demarked circular performance space and the space among the audiences. The entry and exit rules of the proscenium kind are no more treated as standard. The environmental theatre went a further step ahead and even incorporated the audience into the performance. The fourth wall of theatre started getting shattered because of the materialistic theatre.

This further changed the costumes, makeup and technical aspects too. The social roles of those humans play in everyday life being themes;

the costumes and makeup became indexical to them. Therefore the old age, youth, and childhood - all are imitated as it is through costumes and makeup. A poor man is represented in rags and a rich man in costly suits and so on and so forth. The stage properties and hand properties also found represent the real life events. The indexical sign is much used in the theatre and forms the basis for making hand and stage properties, where symbolic signs were much used in theatre of the idealism. -

The street play did not give much attention to light and other technical aspects. With the result the cost of the play production got increasingly decreased. This aspect encouraged large audiences on one-hand and amateur theatre groups to take up theatre as their part time occupation. This broadens the scope of theatre as well the frequency of play productions. Since materialistic theatre viewed any thing, which presents every day sorrows of life, born out of exploitation and inequalities. Numerous playwrights emerged in theatre and different themes on exploitation, social issues, gender issues and others were staged. This led to different stylistics in theatre. Each director interpreted the theme through visuals and scenic divisions. The actors also imitated different groups of people of different regions while enacting the roles. This brought forth the community theatre as a specialised craft in theatre. People belonging to the themes of the play are recruited as actors through training process and presented in the plays, sticking on to the maxim of 'actors are made'.

Thus the materialistic theatre put forth utilitarianism as its principle and social relevance as its immediate concern. Social change through theatre is demonstrated as a Utopian ideal. The revolutionary themes, the labor movements, topics the world war as subjects were universally taken up by the theatre practitioners and craved for the emergence of theatre as people's movement.

To conclude, the philosophical premise of the theatre through the ages, if viewed from the Marxist-Leninist approach, the theatre through the ages can broadly be divided into Idealism and Materialism. The theatre practices developed under Idealism put forth 'morality' as the basis for the development of art whereas; materialism demonstrated 'utility' as the foundation for the theatre practice. Both systems of thought contributed in their own way to the development of theatre as aesthetic system. Therefore theatre imbibed in itself not merely the place of enactment, but also the enactment itself as the tool to represent the thinking process of different schools of thought of theatre both under idealism and materialism. Nevertheless both the systems of thought did not concentrate directly on the theatre of the marginalized. The theatre of the marginalized in fact is discourse, which arouse out of critical appreciation of theatre itself. It is more relegated to the idea of politics of representation from a discourse analysis point of view. The discourse analysis is primarily of what people do, how people think and why they represent themselves. Theatre if analysed from these angles brings out the very concept of

theatre of the marginalized to the forefront of the discourse. The foregoing chapter therefore seeks an explanation of the theatre of the marginalized and its conceptual frame.

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Chapter - 3

THEATRE OF THE MARGINALISED: A CONCEPTUAL FRAME

Theatre of the marginalised is a perception within the epistemology of theatre that seeks an explanation for certain kinds of theatricalities, sprang up during the recent times. It is an ideological perceptive that not only critiques the theatre practices but also adopts such criticism as a part of experimentation in theatre practices. Therefore, it is both an ideological standpoint and an invention of practice in theatre applications. The poststructuralist and the postmodernist perspectives are looked for power relations in the practices of arts of the living traditions. It innately connects to the issues of representation such as who represents whom, how and by what means.

The concept of **marginality** being the core element in the construction of the theatre of the marginalised, it is imperative to look into what that forms marginality in theatre. The group of theatre practitioners

view marginality as far as the theatre is concerned is some thing that is practiced outside. In such case, marginality always is used as a relative term. For instance, the realistic theatre viewed the theatre practices of idealists as marginal, for they are of no social relevance. Similarly the so-called modern theatre practitioners viewed pre- modern theatres as marginal theatres. Likewise the folk theatre is also conceived as marginal theatre by the modernists. Hence, both the performers of folk theatre and their audiences are considered as 'under developed' or 'illiterate'. This understanding brings closer to the sociological concept of marginality.

Marginality is a sociological term, used to describe the situation of groups of people who are excluded or persecuted by the dominant culture or power in a community. To study marginality, a historian observes the formation of the outsider status of these groups and how they come to define themselves and become defined by the others. It is also a philosophical debate over whom and what defines a marginalised community, and from what authority does that power relations come? What is acceptable within a society and how effective is this process? These questions generate a never-ending string of methodological issues.

Literature abounds in Sociology that examines social stigma and deviance as social constructions, which support the established social order. Members of the low-status groups do not make rules that define them. Social groups create deviance by making rules whose infringement constitutes deviance and by applying these rules to a particular group

people and labeling them as outsiders. Those who have the power to define the acceptable qualities of others benefit from their ability to label.

Emile Durkheim presented a view on how marginality is constructed by society. According to him, the purpose of defining individuals or groups as deviant is by excluding some to reinforce the unity of the rest. The idea of deviance embracing both crimes as formally delineated by law and other kind of behaviour generally held to violate social norms and values. The exercise is particularly necessary in time of rapid social change and increasing differentiation. Durkheim conception is based on social groups of medieval times such as prostitution, sorcerers, witch doctors etc., who were considered as deviants and hence marginalised and persecuted. R.I.Moore¹ departs from this Durkheimian view of medieval construction of marginality because it is premised on the idea that the people who carried out the persecution embodied the collective beliefs and sentiments of society as a whole. Thus, these marginal groups and mainstream authorities clashed over the power to define the domain of order and community, with many members of marginal groups taking an active role in resisting the dominance. Marginal status was not simply a construction of the ruling classes, but a manifestation of power relations. The idea of power relations is part of Michel Foucault's work on issues of power and history². Foucault was interested in movements of transition, the changes in the way society deals with internal problems and deviance of one form or another. His

work is interdisciplinary but his main thesis is that social crisis is **resolved** by change, not only in the dominant institution that are society's most visible symbols, but also in the ways people talk and think (what he calls discourse). Foucault studies how old ways of thinking fail and the process by which people are forced to find new modes of discourse³.

The image of marginal groups as powerless or oppressed stems from an over riding concept, 'sovereignty as power'. If power is handed down from some authoritative leadership, and can only be claimed by another group through revolution or reoccupation of the same position by an opposing party, it becomes virtually impossible to understand the origins of power except as the sole possession of a ruling class. This is a monolithic approach to power relationships, which emphasises the other's role in the exercise of power and undermines the role of subject. After all, for a ruler to be successful in a power relationship, an acceptable number of subjects must follow his or her decrees. How can one study the exercise of power in medieval Europe while still recognising marginal groups as active members of a power relationship? Power is the moving substrate of force relations, which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are **always** local and unstable. Power in so far as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the overall effect that emerges from all these **motilities**, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement. Thus power is omnipresent and never-ending. But, it is always

fluid and changing. Hence, to view power as sovereignty is dangerous. It makes the power possessed by the ruling class virtually static. If power is not possessed, exchanged or taken, but rather a manifestation of relationships, minority groups must be viewed as an essential part of the system by which power functions. State authorities remain integral to the function of power relationships but they do not dominate marginal groups. Rather, they contend and interact with them in an unequal and unstable relationship. It is tempting to claim that ecclesiastical and secular rulers increased or concentrated their power in centralised bureaucracies throughout the Middle Ages in order to define their own community. To say so, though, implies that they somehow claimed it or other volunteered it to them by submitting to their decrees, which only leads back to the idea that the sovereign exercises his power upon the body politic. It also implies that those under their jurisdiction followed their decrees, which is an erroneous assumption. More accurately, one might say that church, state, and popular forces attempted to increase the domain of their power into the beliefs, behaviour, and sometimes identity of others within their geographical boundaries⁴.

Max Weber's distinction between power and domination, **according** to Rober van **Krieken**, confirms the assertion that though many marginal groups might have been disadvantaged, they were not dominated. Van Krieken⁵ writes that power refers simply to the diverse range of situations where one person or group imposes their will on the behaviour of another,

whereas domination refers to the stabilisation and routinisation of power relations. Foucault's concept of a fluid and unstable series of power relations governing human interaction renders that their 'routinisation' is very difficult. Had the majority dominated the medieval culture, the balance in the compelled relationships between the majority and minority interests would have been tipped much more thoroughly. Minority groups, however, played a much more important and dynamic role in the construction of medieval European society. While mainstream forces always sought conformity from them, each of the marginal groups saw some form of toleration from their counterparts in power relationships. As majority leaderships persecuted and criticised these groups, some sovereign powers also made efforts to preserve them within a particular intellectual and often geographical domain, thus, imposing an identity on them from the outside. Yet, one must question how this identity functioned. Did it contribute to the self-identity of these groups, or did it function more as stereotype or stigma, used for the sake of clarifying acceptable behaviour in the mainstream?

The application of poststructuralism is a positive approach to study marginality. The general aim of poststructuralism is to generate criticism of most doctrines that are unquestioningly accepted. It was a response to structuralism, which is founded based on the stability of linguistic structures and their ability to emulate the movement of the mind. Poststructuralism is a radical critique of these notions of language and of

any philosophy built upon them. The structuralists attempted to synthesise all humanistic knowledge by using the tools of linguistics. The work of Jacques Derrida used linguistics and philosophy to assert that there is no overall system or answer. This approach makes one to question the assumptions upon which the understanding of how society is constructed⁶. The difficulty of reading Derrida and Foucault is that they resist anything that would lead to setting up deconstruction as a system of thought. There is no general rule, no set of defining principles. Rather it is a complex web of ideas and observations that create more questions than answers. To generalise Derrida's method, he believes that all thought is necessarily inscribed in language, and that language itself is fraught with intractable paradoxes. This theory of language is not pointing just to literary ambiguity but claims that all human sciences rely on the idea of dominant entity, which Derrida calls 'presence'. This 'presence' demands a corresponding absence as inferior and marginal. The distinguishing qualities of the marginal entity are in fact the defining qualities of the dominant. Its marginal counterpart thus defines the dominant entity. The result is that the rigid hierarchy of the dichotomy dissolves. It is no longer clear which is dominant and which is marginal. The definitions, functions and identities of marginal groups are not static. Both majority and minority cultures changed throughout the middle ages, and their relations and views of each other and themselves changed significantly as power relations continued to define and redefine marginality.

Another way of defining the modes of marginality considers the concepts of 'identity' and 'participation' (or even loosely comprehensible notion of the norm of participation) as frames of reference, which would facilitate the general classification of the definitions and approaches to 'marginality'. In the latter case of the definition of marginality, 'identity-making' could be regarded as participation; this approach to the study of marginality is sooner 'actionist' one and corresponds to the subject matter for the study of marginality. It can be complemented by and compared to the study of marginal's functions or uses in social and cultural relationship and to the study of the form of marginality under the processes of desocialization and re-socialisation.

Considering the actionist interpretation of marginality, wherein the core operational concept is participation, one cannot but notice that marginality is usually defined as lack of participation in social institutions (in Economics, in political decision making, in symbolic **resources'** distribution etc) or deprivation and exclusion from the social structures. Such point of view provides a '**negative**' aspect of marginality definition. The deviation from the participation norm to the opposite extreme - surplus of participation - locates a marginal between the different kinds of social borders that shape and cement their social relationships and social hierarchy. This is that positive aspect of marginality definition, which has been already stressed by R. Park. It describes the position of the marginal

in between the worlds, cultures, social orders, not identifying completely with either.

Both aspects of the definition - positive and negative - entail the functional meaning. A marginal has a universal social distance enabling him to perform as an observer and providing him with criterion for observation (the norms of social/cultural/political orders 'beyond the border' may serve as such a criterion). It gives an opportunity for the instrumental interpretation of the stranger; Richard Rorty quite frankly suggests this pragmatist 'inevitable and unobjectionable **ethnocentrism**' for the Western culture.

The correlation of the concepts 'frontier', 'institutional border', and 'social conflict as a form of social border', 'spatial dimension of marginality is a special point of reference. The definition marginal and the very process of marginalisation presuppose the notion of boundary, edge, and limit. Marginals' static uncertainty acquires also dynamics when the established **institutional** borderlines and clear cuts start to shift and to transform under the social change and become 'frontiers'. Thus the marginalised become the main agents of these frontier lines. The study of process of marginality depends upon the interpretation of the very notion of 'margin' as clear-cut, division, edge, limit, frame, periphery, or frontier.

The concept of **marginality** is concerned with 'position' and its implications⁷. That is to say, it is intended to pick out phenomena that

occupy a particular position and to identify what characteristics of these phenomena etc., can properly be associated with that position, rather than being particular to the given phenomenon. One can initially characterise 'being marginal' as the situation of the edge of something, which is in some sense bigger, more coherent, and/or more influential, etc than that which is marginal. A theory of marginality picks out positions 'on the margin' of some other entity or of the field of effects created around it. The first supposition is that being 'on the margin' is some thing rather than nothing. That is to say, that being on the margin underwrites quite distinct features, realised or potential (i.e. capacities). These features, that is to say, are to be found out with those that follow from other features of the entity's nature.

In preference to other possible terms - edge, boundary, front, frontier, periphery - the term '**margin**' is used in this context to highlight the 'possibility' that which is on the margin has effects beyond the margin itself. In this way, "marginality" can be distinguished from '**peripherality**' and any other theory of that. What is 'peripheral' merely exhibits features arising from being on the edge of dependence or perhaps feelings of inferiority). In the case of the marginal, such features **can** have an impact beyond the marginal entity itself. This occurs where, for example, the margin stages and uprising to break free of its dependence or aggressively denies inferiority in the wider world beyond the given center⁸.

Being 'on the margin' is 'something', possessing some identifiable features, rather than a mere nullity. The 'marginal' features or capacities of phenomena, and / or actors may be important - though they do not have to be. 'Central' entities with marginal positions occupied by others may be affected by developments that take place in the entities, the processes and / or the actions of actors on their margins. Marginal has a degree of freedom - be it ever so small - about being within and / or attached to the central. Just the possibility that the marginal might exist outside the center's geometry is a card in the marginal's hand. It may, for example, persuade the centre to pay something to the marginal, though it may also provoke the centre to use its strength of economic muscle, mechanisms of law and order against the margin⁹.

From the above discussion one can surmise two broad categories as marginal as far as the theatre practices in India are concerned. One category points out to 'outsider status' of the groups, which are practicing the theatre to create their own cultural identities. These groups are considered as 'outcaste' during pre-independent days and are referred as '*panchama varna*' during early historic times. They are the fifth *varna* because they are considered as ritually impure and therefore assigned to perform scavenging duties that are essential to upkeep the village environments. The cleaning duties such as disposal of the dead, scavenging works etc., made them to be considered by the dominant *varnas* as polluting and hence given the lowest status. They

were made to live outside the village in separate hamlets. Having given the status of 'outcaste' the groups belonging to *panchama varna* develops their own aesthetics and art practices. Theatre is one such art, which reflected their identity. The castes known as *Mala* and *Madiga* were forced to reckon with the reality of 'outsider hood' and demonstrated their identities through the performances of the caste myths. Each caste supported several sub-castes as bards to perform the caste myths. The following table shows the sub-caste of the *Madigas* and their performing traditions.

Table:Two

Madiga Sect	Ritual Profession	Native Name
Koya Madiga	Priestly Chantings	<i>Mntralu japenchevadu</i>
Sangari Madiga	Ritual drawings (Kolams)	<i>Pat am Vesevadu</i>
Velpula Madiga	Camphor Litting	<i>Sambrani Vesevadu,</i> <i>Mangala Harathi echevadu</i>
Avuua Madiga	Ritual Possessing, Organising Groups in rituals	<i>RangamEkke Vallu,</i> <i>Utchavala Gumpunu</i> <i>Kramabadhikarinche vallu</i>
Kinnera/Byndla/Asadi/ Jamukula Madiga	Players of Kinnera (or) Zamidika (string instrument.	<i>Kinnera (or) Zamidika</i> <i>Vayedyalu Vaainche Vallu</i>

Kommu Madiga	Players of Kommu (windpipe) Instrument.	<i>Kommu vaainche Vallu</i>
Cindu Madiga	Ritual narrative tellers (through performances)	<i>Bhagavatam Adevaallu</i>
Masti Madiga	Acrobatics	<i>Dommmari Vinyasalu</i> <i>Chesevallu</i>
Gondla Madiga	Ritual Leather Bucket Makers.	<i>Krathuvula bokkenalu</i> <i>Chesevallu</i>
Landha madigaiga/ Daccali Madiga	Ritual Beggars.	<i>Adukku Thinevallu</i>

Source: *Jambapuram*

The bards as has been shown in the above table practice theatrical performances, which are quite different from that of the modern theatre. Their theatre can be considered as marginalised, for it represents a deviance from the mainstream. In this thesis, the theatre of the outcaste is taken as one of the marginalised theatre and this theatre further imitative to the yet another marginalised community that is being represented as the theatre of the marginalised, which forms the second category of the definition of marginality.

The second category points at 'outlaws' as the group. Some of the political organisations, which practiced egalitarianism as an ideology, took to violence and annihilation as a method to achieve their goals of social equality. In Andhra, some of the communist groups questioning the

dominant power as the forces of exploitation took to arms. They are considered by the State as 'outlaws'. The groups namely C.P.I (M.L) People's War, C.P.I (M.L) *Janasakthi*, are some of the examples for claiming outlaws status by themselves and resorted to geo-marginal spaces like forests, hills and hillocks. By being in this position, they also try to persuade the masses to adopt their ideology and to fight against the exploiters. In the process they evolved certain art practices that would attract the masses. Initially, they used song and dance to spread their ideology. But in due course, they came up with plays, which are akin to the theatre of the outcaste, as well as folk art forms of the marginalised caste groups. The plays like *Maa Bhoomi*, *Bhoomi Bhagotham*, *Simla Bhagotham*, and *Indravelli* are the best examples of the theatre of the outlaws.

With this conceptual premise the theatre of the marginalised is examined in this **thesis**. However to cognate one self what constitute the theatre of the marginalised, one has to probe into the history of theatre practice of this region. In the region of Telugu speaking people, several scholars enumerate the theatre practices as Sanskrit drama and modern Telugu theatre. The whole history of Telugu theatre is thus seen into two broad categories as Sanskrit and modern drama. The Sanskrit theatre is the theatre, which represents the language dominance and therefore was considered as the theatre of the literate. The modern theatre on the other hand represents the technique dominance and sprouted out from the

west, therefore was considered as the theatre of the elite. In both the cases theatre of the marginalised is undermined.

This brings forth another dimension to theatre that is the 'politics of representation'. When one considers who represents what in theatre, it invariably leads to the structure of theatre itself. In order to understand the nuances of Telugu theatre, one has to probe into its history. In the next chapter, a critical analysis is made on the history of Telugu theatre and the politics of representation.

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Chapter - 4
TELUGU THEATRE:
POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

From the times immemorial, Andhra is known for its rich and diverse traditional practices that found expression in its arts and letters. The arts may be fine arts like painting, sculpture or performing arts such as music, dance and drama; both of them pertaining to folk (oral) and elite (written) traditions of the people. However, there exists continuum between both the cultures, one getting transformed into the other depending on the contextual situation.

Theatre, the medium of expression of any performing art, be it a drama or dance or music and so on, has a long cherished past ever since the early historical period. The Satavahana king **Hala**, (c.1st century A.D.), in his *Gathasaptasati*, a compilation of seven hundred literary pieces composed by many poets and laureates of his court deals with several aspects of the contemporary times including music, drama, properties of heroes and heroines etc.¹ The best-known Sanskrit plays of the ancient times are *Abhijnana*

Sakuntalam of Kalidasa, *Kadambari* of Bana, and *Uttararama Caritam* of Bhasa. Literature abounds in regard to the passion of the rulers and the ruled for the performing arts. *Sangita Ratnakara* of Sarangadhara (12th Century) is a treatise on classical music. *Nritta Ratnavali*, *Vadya Ratnavali* and *Gita Ratnavali* which were supposed to be written by Jayapa Senani (13th Century) are discourses on *desi* (folk) and *marga* (classical) forms of dance, music of both vocal and instrumental. *Sripanditaradya Caritra* and *Basavapuranam* of Palkuriki Somanatha (13th century) written in *janu Telugu*, the colloquial Telugu language are replicates of folk music, ethno poetry and mention different forms of performing arts that prospered in those times. In addition to the frequently performed *desi* and *marga* styles of music and dances, it referred to specific performances like *gondli*, *perani*, and *prekhanam*, *dandalasakamu* enacted on special ritual occasions in the temples. The folk meters that were adopted in their compositions like *ragada*, *manjari dvipada* and the ethno-poetic expressive forms such as *vennela padamulu*, *sandhyavali padamulu*, *Gobbi padamulu*, *uyyala padamjulu*, *tummeda padamulu* still hold their influence on modern theatrical performances, especially on political ideology based art forms. The epic *Palanativira Caritra*, written by Srinatha (15th century) is still being performed as a prominent folk art form, *Burra-katha*. Singabhapala, a Recerla Velama chief (14th century) wrote a treatise on rhetoric *Rasarnavasudhakaram*, a Sanskrit drama *Ratnapancalika*, a commentary of *Sangitaratnakara* of Sarangadhara cited above, and also *Nataka Paribhasha*, on the etymology of drama.¹ Apart from patronage of the kings and royal courts, theatre has received considerable

encouragement from the masses through ages. The folk theatre has been a long-standing tradition in the rural Andhra. Folk forms such as temple dances *Bhama Kalapam*, *Golla Kalapam* and *Kuchipudi* styles, the other popular forms like *Bommatala*, *Chaya natekamulu*, *Yakshaganam*, *Koruvanji*, *Pagati Veshalu*, *Garadi* and *Vipra Vinodam* prevailed in different parts of Andhra. The sculptures on the temples of Ramappa (Warangal), Mallikarjuna (Srisailem), Narasimha (Simhacalam) etc., bear testimony to the existence of popular modes of theatrical forms in the society. Both the inscriptions and literature of the medieval times bear testimony to the encouragement given to arts through land grants and shares in the temple properties meant for their maintenance. Later with the invasion of the British, the concept of the theatre took a major shift from its traditional moulds.

Drama vs. Theatre:

The history of modern Telugu theatre commenced from A.D.1880 and that of modern drama from A.D. 1860 onwards.² It is essential to distinguish between these two theatrical forms unlike the former critiques that mixed up their identities. Theatre is a comprehensive genre, which encompasses drama as a part of it. The following table shows the fundamental differences between drama and theatre.

Table:Three

DRAMA	THEATRE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A genre of literature • Exists only in the form of literary texts. ▪ No constraints of time, space • Exists as an independent form without performance. • Seeks relationship between a reader and playwright. • An art of individual interest • A form of indirect interaction • Individual imagination as one reads or hears the drama. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A genre of performance • Exists in the form of both literary and oral texts • Time and space bound • Exists only in performance • Seeks a relation between the Performers and audience. • An art of collective efforts. • A form of direct interaction • Visual imagination created by a director with the help of light, sound & movement .

Mark Fortier³ holds that those who study theatre make a routine distinction between drama and theatre. Drama occurs often in written language in which dialogues are ascribed to the characters, whereas in the theatre they are spoken by the actors/ performers. As a written form, drama is easily appropriated by literary theory; it is understandable in the same general terms as fiction, poetry or any other form of letters. The affinity of drama and literature has produced a tendency for literary theory and literary studies to think of theatrical activity as drama rather than as theatre. Unlike drama, theatre is not words on a page. Theatre is

performance, though often the performance of a drama text entails words but space, actors, props, audience and the complex relations among these elements. Literary theory has often ignored all this. Moreover, if it does not reduce theatre to drama, literary theory is capable of making an even bolder gesture in which theatre is brought under the hegemony of language and writing in another way. Here theatre becomes a system of non-verbal signs, verbal languages, expression, yet dominated still by the hegemony of language and letters as master-patterns for the working of the **non-verbal** .

In the light of above discussion, it can be said that both the drama and theatre exist as independent forms of performances in Andhra. Very often, drama or a play is an integral part of the theatre and is the basis for its' existence'. At the same time, it should not be equated with theatre. Often it exists as an independent form with out any link with the theatre practice. For instance, most of the plays written in Telugu received wide popularity as forms of drama not as forms of theatre. Most of the plays written by **Chalam**, Tripureneni Ramaswami Chowdary Viswanadha **Satyanarayana**, Sri Sri, Kodavatiganti **Kutumbarao**⁴ and others were never been performed in theatrical form, but remained as **great** dramas in modern Telugu literature. Two reasons can be mentioned for not transforming these dramas into the versions of performance. It is because the scenic order (the sequence of events in scenes and progression of scenes in performance) and scenic division (the division of the text of the

performance into different scenes) of these dramas seem to be more imaginative and highly descriptive. Further the directors of Telugu theatre did not attempt to modify them according to the needs of the performance and hence could not reach the visual imagination of the dramatist. As a result many dramatic texts remained at the level of dramas or plays and never became theatre performances. Hence, one has to deal with it as a separate branch of literature with out mixing it up with theatre. Similarly the on Radio and Television versions of plays can never be considered as theatre, but only as forms of drama.

The beginning of the history of modern drama coincides with the establishment of the three major universities at Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras in A.D.1857⁵. Many Telugu scholars had an opportunity of reading the English literature. Playwrights like Korada Ramachandra Sastry, Kakkonda Venkataratnam and Paravastu Venkata Rangacharulu got inspired by dramas of English literature and produced dramas in Telugu by appropriating the themes and modes of characterization from them. Korada Ramachandra Sastry was the first to write a direct Telugu play *Manjari Madhukariyam* in A.D.1860. In A.D.1875 his disciple Vavilala Vasudeva Sastry translated *Julius Caesar* of Shakespeare in to Telugu in the name of *Caesaru Chritamu. The Statesman*, an English newspaper⁶ appreciated this translation that the entire literary and scientific world might believe that Vavilala Vasudeva Sastry translated *Julius Caesar* of Shakespeare into Telugu. This is the first and fair attempt at a metrical

translation of Shakespeare into this language . In otherwords, the translation was not literal, but a cultural, in the sense that the Julius Ceaser in Telugu was nativised to Andhra culture. He was the first not only in translating an English play, but also in writing a direct social play by name *Nandaka Rajyam*, published in A.D.1880. These four prominent scholars belong to the first phase of Modern Telugu drama, but their plays were never performed.

Emergence of Modern Telugu Theatre:

Between A.D.1880-81, the famous Dharwada Theatre Company by name *Altekar Hindu Dramatic Company* toured some of the coastal districts and performed their plays.⁷ This group from Maharashtra started practicing theatre professionally from A. D. 1870 onwards. Their performance in Rajamundry inspired the local amateurs to give a performance of their own. As a result, the famous literary figure and social reformist Kandukuri Veeresalingam had taken the initiative in forming a theatre group with his own students and staged a show of his own play *Vyavahara Dharmabodhini* in A.D.1880. The play talks about **the corrupt** and bribing nature of the lawyers. Even though there was no clarity in the presentation, Veeresalingam writes in his autobiography that hundreds of people witnessed the performance and appreciated it.⁸ No theatrical styles and techniques were developed by that time. Hence, theatre has not achieved a social recognition. On the other hand, Veeresalingam **had**

no time to spend on theatre, as he was busy with reformist activities. Nevertheless, he became the first playwright whose play was performed under his own direction. Recognising his contribution to theatre, his birthday, 16th April is being observed as the Telugu theatre Day. The greatness of Veeresalingam lies in his multi-faceted personality. He was the first man to attempt writing an autobiography in Telugu. He wrote around sixteen plays, edited and published a magazine called *Viveka Vardhani*. Apart from his literary and cultural contribution to Modern Andhra, he also stood first in building up a great social reformist movement against child marriages, for widow marriages and against all social evils. The performance was aimed at enlightening the people about the criticising the mischief of lawyers but in a satirical tone. A very few regional modern theatre seems to have started with such a social relevance and commitment. But the tragedy is that the path laid by Veeresalingam has not been valued or continued in the last one hundred twenty years. The first phase of Telugu theatre was marked by the tremendous influences of Sanskrit and English dramatic texts. Most of the writings were inspirations or translations.⁹

In the same period, Kondubhatla **Subramanya** Sastry wrote around thirty-one direct prose plays in Telugu. He also started a theatre group *Hindu Nataka Samajam* at Guntur and staged many performances. In A.D.1883 Vaddadi **Subbarayudu**, a poet, playwright and organiser started

another group *Hindu Naatakojjivaka Samajam*. He is also one of that are instrumental in introducing Padyams in dramas.

Gurajada Apparao (A.D.1861-1915), the famous and laureate playwright was the trendsetter of the modern Telugu theatre, which appeared to have been started with his play, *Kanyasulkam*. The play was first performed in August A.D. 1892 at Vijayanagaram and was published in A.D.1897. But his second version of *Kanyasulkam*, written in A.D.1909, received wide response. The use of local dialect, portrayal of incidents which are akin to the life situations, addressing of social problems and their possible solutions and cultural reformation are the main features of *Kanyasulkam*. But unfortunately, the Telugu theatre scenario was not ready to receive this kind of approach in theatre. It had become too modern for the then Telugu theatre. This will be clearer when one analyses the later part of the history. As a result Gurajada's attempt to bring out a modern theatre was unfulfilled until A.D.1930, when theatre personalities like Ballary Raghava, and P.Rajamannar emerged to bring about a modern tinge to theatre. It is pertinent to quote one observation of Gurajada on the contemporary Telugu Theatre. In the words of Gurajada, "Modern life which presents complex social conditions is neglected by play-wrights except for purposes of the broadest farce, and poverty of invention is manifested by the handling of threadbare romantic topics. Few writers display knowledge of technique".¹⁰ As a matter of fact, it seems no one really considered his statement seriously. Hence the history of

Telugu theatre continued in its own way. As a result Telugu theatre has missed good directions laid by Veeresalingam and Gurajada Apparao.

In A.D.1884, Nadella Purushottama Kavi from Bandar started another group by name *National Theatrical Society* and introduced songs in to plays. In A.D.1887 Dharmavaram Ramakrishnama Charyulu (A.D.1853-1912)¹¹ led a theatre movement by introducing *Champu Kavya* style in to theatre. He was considered to be the *Andhra Nataka Pitamaha*. He was an actor, director, playwright and an organiser too. He wrote around fourteen plays and became the first playwright to write a tragic play in Telugu. He gave a lot of importance to songs, *kirthanas*, and poetry in the plays. Another important personality who introduced the *Padyams* in plays was Vaddadi Subbarayudu. In A.D.1883, he started a theatre group *Hindu Natakajivaka Samajam* and performed the translations of Bhatta Naryana's *Veni Samharam*.

It is pertinent to note that in the initial phase of modern Telugu theatre, the playwrights guided most of the theatre groups. The playwright became the director, organiser and designer of the play production. Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Kondubhatla Subramanya Sastry, Nadella Purushottama Kavi, Dharmavaram Ramakrishnama Charyulu many playwrights formed their own groups , taught the artists on rendering of the dialogues, singing the *Padyam* and became the directors of the plays. Some of them took part in the performances also. Later this trend

changed. Between A.D.1910 and 1930, artists and theatre groups started approaching the playwrights to write plays according to their requirements. P.S.R.Apparao holds that Instead of selecting the best plays written by the playwrights, the theatre groups started approaching the playwrights and insisted for new plays, which suit their requirements. This unfortunate trend led to lack of best plays in Telugu theatre. The general practice of most of the groups is to approach the playwright and requesting to write a play, which can fit into their requirements. In the other words, the existence of playwrights as individuals is very minute in Telugu land. Both the group and the playwright try to be with mutual unofficial contract and produce plays for mutual benefits. There are playwrights who wrote plays without keeping any specific theatre group in the mind. Most of such plays remain at the level of dramas. The initial phase of Telugu theatre, strong foundations were laid for a mythological based theatre practice. The form of *Padyam* started playing a crucial role. Later after A.D.1930, attempts were made to make theatre a socially relevant art form.

The entire history of Telugu theatre can be divided into four broad categories. This broad division is made from two points of views. Keeping in view the thematic and conceptual boundaries of each category, a broad division is made, which also represents the chronological evolution of Telugu theatre. The other point of view is to show how each category of theatre evolved in relation to the existing category and marginalizes the other, while it develops.

1. The history of folk theatre - *Jaanapada Natakam*.
2. The history of mythological plays - *Padya Natakam*.
3. The history of social plays - *Parishat Natakam*.
4. The history of theatre education.

The History of folk theatre:

Folk theatre, as has been discussed elsewhere in this chapter, formed part and parcel of the life of the people even in countryside of Andhra Pradesh from the days of yore. It is pertinent here to distinguish between folk and modern theatre practices. The folk theatre performances are always based on the themes from oral epics, myths or legends. The medieval Bhakthi movement that led to the rise of sectarian religions like Vaishnavism and Saivasim on one hand and on the other the growth of Sakthi cult in countryside contributed for the production of devotional literature, both oral and written that formed source for many themes of folk theatre. Performances like *Dhaksha Yagnam*, *Parvathi Kalyanam*, *Kichaka Vadha*, *Mallanna katha* and many others fall under this category. The performances of these caste myths that glorify origin of their respective community became hereditary right to the performer who enact the myth. There exists reciprocity of relationships between the performer and the people of that caste or community for which they are enacting the caste myth. The former developed into dependent and the later in patron caste. The influence of the doctrine of *Bhakti* is responsible for the growth of

such a new trend in the staging of folk performances.¹³ The performers of these caste myths have hereditary rights and customary obligations over folk theatre. Hence it appears that the origin, development and practice of folk theatre are based on caste system. Caste is the controlling authority that provides an ideological base for folk theatre. The performances of folk theatre have specific contexts such as purificatory rituals, territorial rites and rites of passage (life cycle ceremonies). The theatre does not have sidewalls, curtains and lights. Some times there may not be any stage or elevated platform to segregate the audience and performer, but occupies same level on ground with a little or no spatial separation between them. Even though the performance takes place on an elevated platform, it is not a proscenium kind and the audiences are seated three sides of the performance. The musicians are seated on the stage itself with out hiding from the audiences. Song, music, dance are the integral part of the performance. Whether, the presence of any character is needed or not, the entire group of artists present on the stage to support the performance either by mixing their voices in singing or helping the other characters in prompting or reminding their dialogues. Interestingly, every performer in folk performances is aware of the roles and dialogues of the other characters. If any performer is absent, other members can also enact his role. In otherwords, a single performer may take more than one role in the performance without affecting the theme of it. The scenic order and scenic division is also dynamic, but does not distort the cultural standards of the

performance. The actors, attributes, orchestra, singers etc., are seen on stage itself thereby contribute much for the transparency of stage, i.e., hiding nothing secret from the audiences in the performances. Flexibility of text, roles and artists, performance pattern, stage properties construct every presentation as unique and lively expression, thereby make 'flexibility' integral to folk performances.

Folk theatre of Andhra has many forms like *Yakshaganam*, *Kalapam*, *Turpu Bhagavatam*, *Veedhi Natakam*, *Chindu Yakshaganam*, *Tolu Bommalata*, *Pagati Veshalu* and *Chidatala Ramayanam* (see appendix). Forms like *Yakshaganam* and *Veedhinatakam* became more popular with the rise of Bhakthi movement during 15th and 16th centuries.

The History of Mythological plays:

The mythological plays in Telugu are based on Puranic themes. Hence the text that these plays adopted was highly literary and style of rendition of the text was metrical. This genre of plays was much influenced by Telugu literary style that became a part of the construction **of the text of** the plays. The dialogues are less in number and are used as reference quotes. To keep up the literary style and Puranic tradition, the characters started wearing the costume, makeup and ornaments akin to the images of Gods and Goddesses as represented in the art and architecture of the temple tradition. These plays as such were influenced by Persian theatre

and hence adopted Proscenium stage for performances. Painted curtains are used as backdrops to contextualise the scenes. The musical instruments like Harmonium, Tabala, and Clarinet were also used with the influence of the Persian theatre. The period between A.D.1860 to 1900 can be said as the beginning phase of *Padya Natakam*.

After A.D.1900, Padya Natakam was developed in to a systematic art form and received a wide popularity. Tirupathi Venkata Kavulu, Sthanam Narisimharao, Chilakamarti Lakshmi Narisimham, Panuganti Lakshmi Narasimharao, Malladi Suryanarayana, Balijepally Lakshmikantam were important playwrights of Padya Natakams in this period. The form of Padyam introduced by their predecessors attracted all performers and playwrights and were later on being incorporated in the plays. With this, musical plays started emerging in the place of prose plays. *Gayopakhyanam* of Chilakamarti Lakshminarasimham was one of the popular examples for such kind of incorporations. There are two hundred seventeen Padyams in *Chitra Nalineeeyam* of Dharmavaram, one hundred nineteen Padyams in Chilakamarti's *Gayopakhyanam* one hundred nineteen Padyams and twenty-two songs in Balijepalli's *Harischandra* and three hundred thirty eight Padyams in Tirupathi Venkata Kavulu's *Pandava Vudhyoga Vijayalu*.¹⁴ The play *Udyoga Vijayalu* of Tirupathi Venkata Kavulu had created a new wave and inspiration for both the theatre goers and practitioners.

After observing tremendous response from people, slowly many commercial theatre companies that began to travel around entire Andhra got emerged. Theatre that has started with so many hesitations and unseen social restrictions had become a profession for some of the people. In initial stages playwrights had no other option except taking the pains of organising the group by themselves. Later the professional groups started employing the playwrights for writing the new plays every time. Poets like Chilakamarthy Lakshmi Narisimham, Nadella Purushottama Kavi were the examples. Due to this new inflow of so many commercial theatre groups, invariably competition was emerged among them. To make their group superior and distinct from the other theatre groups, organisers used on new varieties of costumes, sets, the technological inputs like wire based works and lighting for special effects. This trend increased the cost of production. In this struggle for existence, these organisers/companies that could adopt new technologies and trends, survived and stabilised and those that cannot afford for these changes got closed.

Slowly a new trend, organising competitions for Padya Natakam plays was started. In A.D.1915, at Bandar, an organisation called *Andhra Nataka Protsaha Sangham* held competitions for plays like *Chitranaalineeeyam* of Dharmavaram Ramakrishnamacharyulu. In the same way competitions for Chilakamarthy's *Prasanna yadavam* of Chilakamarthi and Sripada Krishna Murthy's *Bobbili Yuddham* were held.¹⁵ The

organisers announced prizes to the individual artists and to the best performances. At the same time writing of reviews on plays was also launched. Scholars like Puranam Suri Sastry were the popular critiques of those times.

As cited above, in this hectic competition among companies, many of them were closed and hence many artists suddenly lost their profession and started searching for their livelihood. At this juncture, new category of organisers naming themselves as contractors plunged in and organised performances by paying wages to the artists, working out their own profits. With this, money and contractors became the primary concern for theatre. Contractors began to insist different artists from different parts of Andhra and made them to perform scene after scene without any rehearsal. This phenomenon created the concept of portraying a single character by different artists in a single performance. For example, in the play *Satya Harischandra*, one artist will perform the first act of the play until Harischandra leaves to forests and for the next act from Varanasi to burial ground act, another artist used to enter for the same role. Same thing happened to all the Padya **Natakams**. As a result, the trend of *First Krishna*, *Second Krishna* entered in to theatre. It is surprising to notice that even now most of the Padya **Natakam** performances carry the same trend. Artists who are popular and worth watching were picked up from various parts of Andhra and put them together. This trend can be compared with *Jugalbandi* of Hindustani music, where eminent musicians

were asked to perform together to create a thrill in the audiences. Because of this trend, artists were forced to compete with the other artist in their performance. The audiences come to auditorium to witness the performance of the artist than the content of the play. They acquainted with story through the ages from their oral/written tradition. Thus Padya Natakam became an integral part of Andhra. The following table shows the number of plays written based on each mythology or legend.¹⁶

Table : Four

MYTHOLOGY/LEGEND	NO.PLAYS WRITTEN	PERCENTAGE
Stories from Ramayana	214	15.71
Stories from Mahabharata	308	22.61
Stories from Bhagavatam	192	14.09
Stories from History	130	9.54
Stories from folk, religion and other sources.	518	38.03
Total	1362	99.98

Critics like P.S.R. Apparao and G.S.N.Sastry divided the period of Padya Natakam into three phases. The first phase is starting from A.D.1860 to 1900, which is the beginning phase of Padya Natakam, the second phase is from A.D.1900 to 1940-, which is developing phase of Padya Natakam, and third phase is from A.D.1940 to till present-where Padya Natakam started deteriorating. They also tried to list out the total

number of Padya Natakams written during A.D.1860 to 2000. The following table shows the total number of plays written during these phases.¹⁷

Table: Five

PERIOD	TAL PLAYS	PERCENTAGE
1860-1900	95	6.33 %
1901 – 1910	172	11.47%
1911 -1920	260	17.33
1921 -1930	376	25.07%
1931 -1940	207	13.80%
1941 -1950	119	7.93%
1951 -1960	90	6%
1961-2000	100	6.67%
period unknown	81	5.40%
Total: 140 Years	1500	100%

The above table makes it clear that there were around fifteen hundred plays written in Padya Natakam style over a period of one hundred and forty years. This trend explains the popularity of Padyam in Telugu land. Over a period of time, Padya Natakam developed as an unique theatre form of Andhra Pradesh. The reason for its popularity is because of its music, song and content. These features are there in **pre-modern** Indian folk theatre, with which audiences were able to identify their roots and culture. The other factor is that Padya Natakam basically confined itself to mythological themes. There are some exceptions like *Vara Vikrayam*, *Madhu Seva* and *Chintamani*, which dealt with social issues, are not so

popular as Padya Natakams with mythological themes. And some of these mythological performances appear to carry a process of ritualisation with them. This is much more evident in folk theatre. In the performance of Padya Natakam, both the performers and the audiences consider it as ritual. The prayer of Padya Natakam makes the audience to experience it that it is not simply a performance, but a ritual act of prayer in which His greatness is praised and glorified. Apart from prayer, the breaking of coconut, offering of flowers and other sacred objects make the audiences to be much more sacred. For instance in Coastal Andhra, in the performance of The *Brahmam gari Charitra*, a popular Padya Natakam, the villagers lit a series of lamps and see to them that they should not put off till the performance is over.

The critiques of Padya Natakam proudly declare that it is the distinguished art form of Andhra. To criticise Padya Natakam, they have many things. Their main criticism is that the plays are performed with three or four artists for a single character, by killing the realistic approach and involvement of the audiences. Though it is partially true, the other important aspect is that the genre of Padya Natakam itself has that flexibility of allowing three to four artists to perform the same character. Otherwise it becomes impossible for a single artist to sing so many **Padyams** that are always applauded with 'once mores'. It led to an internal competition among the artists which arouse excitement of the audiences just like in any other popular games and sports. The following table shows the importance of *Padyam* in Padya Natakam and how the flexibility of the genre allows multiple artists to perform the same role. For analysis the play *Harischandra* is taken¹⁶ as an example. *Satya*

Hanschandra, one of the popular Padya Natakams of Telugu, written by B. Laskshmi Kanta Kavi in A.D.1912.

Table No. Six

CHARACTER	No.of PADYAMS	PERCENTAGE
Sutradhaara	1	0.5076
Vasistha	7	3.55
Viswamitra	24	12.18
Devendrudu	2	1.015
Naaradudu	2	1.015
Harischandra	94	47.71
Satyakeerthi	3	1.522
Nakshatraka	26	13.197
Maatangi	4	2.030
Chandramathi	27	13.70
Lohitaasudu	3	1.522
Pourulu	3	1.522
, Kaiakousikudu	1	0.5076
Total	197	100%

The above table shows character/role wise distribution of Padyamas recited in the play Satya Harischandra. This play has one hundred and ninty seven **Padyams** and divided into six acts. The first act takes place in heaven *Devendra Sabha*, where Rajarshi **Viswamitra** and **Brahmarshi** Vasista enter a hot dialogue in which they through a challenge in regard to the truthfulness of Harischandra. Though this scene is important for further development of the story, artists deleted this scene and start the

play with the second scene. Except Viswamitra, the remaining characters in this act like Devendra, Naarada, Vasista, Bruhaspathi, Goutamudu and others never appear in the play again. Hence for one scene artists must be called and lot of money has to be spent on their remunerations and costumes. Nothing goes wrong even if the first act is deleted and starts the performance. Hence the scene of *Devendrasabha*, a costly set is skipped in the play. Among one hundred and ninety seven Padyams, the character of Harischandra has ninety-four *Padyams*. In addition, another six Padyams written by Jashuva were incorporated in the sixth act of burial ground. Recital of all the Padyams in a single act itself is laborious for the artist to recite. Hence a single artist cannot sing one hundred *Padyams* continuously. This factor allowed multiple artists to take part in a single performance. Hence many artists take such roles that have many dialogues and verses to be performed on stage. In the same way same actor may play different small roles in plays.

The other important factor of Padyanatakam lies within the text. Just like in folk theatre where in the text is determined by the context, Padyanatakam also more or less carry the same flexibility. In folk theatre a story can be performed throughout the night or can be shortened and be completed within hours. Context and the response of the audience give a clue to the performers either to proceed with the performance or cut it down. The editing of the text even during the performance situation is an internal flexibility of the folk theatre. A text of four or five hours duration will

not lose its beginning, middle and end, even if it is cut down to one hour. Similarly in Padya Natakam many acts or Padyams can be edited according to the context. The deletion of first act in the play Harischandra did not show any effect on the story line. The performance of any Padya Natakam has no stipulated time. It varies from context to context. In the rural areas and semi-urban places the play may continue throughout the night. Whereas in cities like Hyderabad and other places, the duration of play will not cross more than three hours.

Nevertheless, Padya Natakam has been providing a massive livelihood to hundreds of artists, technicians and other related craftsmen. Apart from the artists, playwrights and many dress companies emerged in all parts of Andhra, exclusively making business on Padya Natakam. There are specialised printing presses in Coastal districts of Andhra, who have ready-made designs of posters, handbills, and all the publicity material for Padya Natakam. Popular audio companies like *Leo* and *Supreme* have produced lakhs of audiocassettes of popular plays performed by popular artists and made money. Both the streams of Padya Natakam; amateur and professional theatres have been traveling together by providing employment to many people. Padya Natakam has become a part and parcel of Telugu culture; as a result even film industry had incorporated **Padyam** into it. All most all-mythological films of Telugu have Padyams in them. Radio and television channels have special programmes like *Rangasthali*.

Surabhi **Theatre- A** co-existing phenomena:

Though Surabhi theatre falls under the category of Padya **Natakam**, it needs a special mentioning in the history of Telugu culture. It is the **only** theatre group hailing from a single family. Surabhi, a traditional family theatre repertoire started around A.D.1860 at Maharastra.¹⁹ The ancestors of Surabhi family were associated with king **Sivaji's** court. Later the families migrated to Ballery, **Rayadurgam**, and Adoni areas of Andhra. One of the cultural enthusiasts of the Surabhi family, Vanarasa Sanjivarao, started a theatre company by name *Sri Sarada Mano Vinodini Sangita Nataka Sabha* and toured different villages with their performances. In the first phase, they used to perform the puppet shows. In the later part Vanarasa Govindarao, who happened to be the adopted son of Sanjivarao, led the troupe and became a member of *Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat* In A.D. 1890, Govindarao happened to see some of the **non-Telugu** performances at Madras. He drew inspiration from these other language performances and immediately made major changes in the technical aspects of **the** performances. During their travel, they halted at Rayadurgam area of Cuddapa district of Andhra Pradesh. There they selected a village, *Sorugu* as their temporary resort, and changed its name to *Surabhi*.

The interesting aspect of Surabhi theatre practice is their use of technology in performances. They invented many techniques like characters entering the stage from the clouds, war scenes, and rain effect

on the stage to make the audiences thrilled and excited. These effects pulled the crowds to the auditoriums. The content of all the plays was drawn either from Ramayana or *Mahabharatha*. These mythological themes facilitated Surabhi to incorporate various technical wires works in every scene. They used to sell the tickets for every show and began to survive on theatre as professionals. Another important aspect of Surabhi is that the role of women. All the women in the family used to participate in the performances. Though Surabhi artists are illiterate, they mastered the art of management of play production. Like Circus companies, Surabhi stayed at one place for a month and organise regular shows everyday. The artists are highly talented. They themselves used to design the stage. They also planned for publicity and organised regular shows of their plays by selling tickets. They took optimum care that there will not be any loss to them. The important member of the group goes to the town in advance and survey whether the camp can be conducted there or not. Such meticulous care for every aspect of play production became distinctive feature of Surabhi. In due course, Surabhi toured almost all parts of Andhra Pradesh and gave thousands of performances. Now the family was divided into four groups and continuing the performances.

Surprisingly, the impact of Surabhi on the mainstream Telugu theatre was negligible. Similarly Surabhi could not learn anything from the mainstream theatre. As Surabhi theatre is technically strong, Parishat theatre is based on verbal expression such as discourses, dialogues and

modulation. Even though, the performances of Surabhi receive huge number of audiences, the mainstream theatre directors never tried to take the inspiration from it. As a matter of fact even Surabhi did not develop itself according to the changing times. It is much dependent on technical aspects than on the performance. As the mainstream **Padyanatakam** is strong in its *Raga and Padyam*, Surabhi still relied upon technical aspects. Both could not interact with each other to develop the weaker other areas that need strength. Particularly, when the generations changed, the new batch of artists who do not have any command over language, dialogue, diction and acting were exposed to the performances. The recent attempts of National School of Drama to revive Surabhi, by providing a modern training with prominent director B.V.Karant, had not produced desired results. Because the audiences expect all kinds of thrills, magic and other technically spellbound tricks from Surabhi. The modern N.S.D productions lack all these effects. As a result the two productions done under the sponsorship of N.S.D, namely *Bhishma* and *Basthi Devata Yadamma* were not performed anywhere else except in Ravindra Bharathi of Hyderabad. Soon after the workshops, Surabhi, started performing their own previous plays.²⁰

The History of Social Plays - Parishat Natakam:

Before discussing the origin and development of social plays, it is pertinent here to differentiate between Padya Natakam and Parishat Natakam. The following table shows the fundamental differences between these two.

ELEMENTS OF

PADYA NATAKAM	PARISHAT NATAKAM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mythological theme • Padyam, music, singing, are the basic features. • Costumes and makeup are the reflection of mythology. • Artists may change for each act for a single character. • More interaction with audience. (Donating money to the artists, repeating the Padyam again and again, garlanding the performer the play is on) <p>Duration is from 4 to 8 hours.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses proscenium stage, sound, lights, curtains etc., • Competition among the co artists of the same play. <p>Rehearsals at individual level not collective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two streams of practice, the professionals and the amateurs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social theme • Dialogue, melo drama, story are the basic features.. • Costumes and make up are very realistic to the present society. • Artists are same throughout the play. • Restricted interaction with audience.(Clapping,appreciating performer after the play). <p>Duration is not more than</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses proscenium stage, sound, lights, curtains and set etc., • Competition among the groups and individuals with the others. • Rehearsals are mainly collective. • Amateurs activity.

In both the Padya Natakam and the Parishat Natakam, certain features are common and certain features are specific to each of them. Nevertheless the usage of proscenium, lights, sound, curtains, set, and all other technical aspects were common to both the forms, which were the embodiment of modernity. Similarly the content of Parishat Natakam, social theme, is also a by-product of modernity. Rehearsal process, make up were scientifically developed with the emergence of modernity in to theatre. The competition among the artists and groups also reflect one of the main concepts of modernity.

During the period of contractors and competitions of Padya Natakams, many educated art lovers started their own attempts to make theatre much more lively and nearer to life. The beginning of these attempts can be traced back to the initial phase of Telugu theatre itself. Playwrights like Gurajada Apparao, Kandukuri Veeresalingam tried to draw social reality on to the stage. Though their plays were also performed. But there was no follow-up activity until A.D.1930, where Bellary Raghava entered in to the theatre scene. Tadipatri Raghavacharulu who is popularly known as Bellary Raghava (A.D.1880-1946) entered in to the scene and put his modern thinking into practice in Telugu theatre.²¹ Raghava with his knowledge in English, Kannada and Telugu tried to revive the scene in Telugu theatre from a modern

perspective. His Europe tour in A.D.1928 and his knowledge of Shakespeare dramas made him a strong visionary in theatre. He propounded that any play must represent the social conditions and reflect the realistic life of the people. With this ideology, he started a movement that stood for realistic theatre. He insisted that women themselves must perform women roles. He advocated that there should not be songs, Padyams, and music in the plays, and that the theatre must depict the day-to-day lives of the people and contemporary society. He thought that all mythological plays never represent the real life. He says that the time for performance of mythological plays has gone and that nobody is bothered about personal life of characters in performances like whether *Satyabhama* is jealous of *Rukmini* or not. It is useful and purposeful to portray the general life of the people rather than mythological stuff, which does not serve any purpose.²² Due to the statements made by Raghava, there was a great discussion among the theatre practitioners and intellectuals on the positive and negative role of Padyam, songs, and the language of theatre. His approach and ideology of Realism created a sensation in the contemporary theatre practices. Raghava made pioneering attempts to make Telugu theatre a realistic art form by taking themes from reality. Many theatre practitioners came forward to follow realistic style in their performances.

The inspiration to realistic theatre came from Henrik Ibsen (A.D.1828-1906) of Norway. His plays like *Pillars of the society*, *Dolls*

House, and *Enemy of the People* showed the way for realistic theatre. George Bernard Shaw (A.D. 1856-1950) of England was the great disciple of Ibsen, who had also written most popular realistic plays. In the same time Anton Chekhov (A.D.1860-1904) of Russia also wrote realistic plays. The entire world theatre scenario followed the trend of realistic style.²³

By the time Raghava entered into theatre as an influential phenomenon, the entire Telugu society was undergoing a major change towards modernity. Slowly industrialisation was taking a shape. The impact of English education, growth of a new section of business people, development of semi urban and urban areas, altogether led to major socio-economic changes. This change was reflected in politics, social reformist movements, literature and Cinema. As a result, a new thinking has taken place in theatre also, which led to the formation of Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat.

Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat – The Trendsetter:

With the establishment of Andhra Nataka Parishat in A.D.1929, a new phase in Telugu theatre was started. In A.D.1929 - June, the organisation was started in Tenali. Theatre and literary doyens like Achanta Sankhyayana Sarma, Kasinathuni Nageswarao Pantulu, Chatti China Purnayya Pantulu, Malladi Viswanadha Kavi Raju, Vanarasa Govindarao, Kothapally Lakshmayya assembled at Tenali and discussed about the plight of Telugu theatre.²⁴ All these personalities were highly

intellectuals and committed to the development of theatre from different regions. Among these six, Sankhyayana Sarma, Nageswarao Pantulu were basically industrialists. In the initial phases, this organisation remained as a discussion forum, meeting once in a year and debating on different aspects and trends of theatre. At this time, all the practitioners of theatre remained puppets in the hands of contractors. Hence, the efforts of the Parishats remained at the level of discussions for about fifteen years.

When the Parishat reorganised itself in the year A.D.1944, Meka Rangayya Apparao became the president. He hailed from the *Zamindar* family of Nujiveedu. In this period *Zamindars* like Ananda Gajapathiraju of Vijayanagaram, the Raja of Pithapuram, Mote *Zamindar* of Eluru, *Zamindar* of Vuoor were the main patrons for theatre. Due to the economic inflation in A.D.1930s there was a major set back for the patronage also. Hence Padya Natakam lost its sponsors and got into the hands of the contractors. Till then the Parishat remained a forum for the intellectuals and slowly started attracting the middle class educated masses in to theatre. The outcome of all the discussions, which were held at the beginning stages of Parishat, got materialised by A.D.1944. In this phase, the committee began to hold competitions for dramas by prescribing the regulations that created seriousness and realistic nature among the practitioners of theatre. These competitions created a new approach and new outlook in the minds of the performers. The set of rules

that the Parishat framed were: 1.The content of every play must be a social theme, 2.There should not be any song or Padyam in the play, 3.The female roles must be performed by women only and 4. Plays written within five years from the date of competition should be allowed.

All these rules put together led to a major change in the theatre scenario. Playwrights started writing new plays. Many new playwrights emerged. Writers like Atreya, D.V.Narasaraju, Korrapati Gangadhar Rao, Bhamidipati Radha Krishna, Kopparapu Subbarao, and Gollapudi, became popular with their attempts in the Parishat competitions only.²⁵

Another rule that Parishat insisted was that only women must play the roles of women. It forced the theatre groups to get their own women into theatre. The attempts made by Bellary Raghava in 1930s was materialised in this period. Because of these annual competitions at different places of Andhra, many amateurs started entering into theatre. Hence, the perception of considering theatre as a sin, had faded. Hundreds of play were written and performed during this period. When the middle class intellectuals and art lovers entered into theatre, the prestige of theatre had gone up. So many amateur theatre groups emerged in different parts of Andhra. Apart from Andhra, Telugu groups were started at Zamshetpur, Calcutta, Bangalore, and Bombay and participated in the competitions. Theatre became an easily accessible form of middle class. In the first phase of Parishat competitions, in A.D.1944, plays were very straight in their narration with strong themes can be found. *Edurita*,²⁶ a

play written by Kondamudi Gopalaraya Sarma won the first prize in A.D.1945 December competition held at Gudivada. Acharya Atreya directed the play and presented. The central character of the play is a sex worker.

The second play, which got a wide popularity, was *N. G. O*²⁷ by Atreya. This play won an award for best production played under the direction of the playwright himself, which was enacted at Eluru by Venkatagiri Amateurs. The play was set in such a way it can be performed with a very little efforts of properties and costumes. Many amateur groups widely performed this play throughout Andhra and attracted large number of audience. The major reason for the success of this play was its theme, which discusses the day-to-day problems of the middle-class employees. Even though the playwright had a great creativity in writing the crisp dialogue and a tight scene order, it was aimed to gain public sympathy on middle class problems that may not have any solution at realistic level.

Another play written by Atreya himself was *Eenadu*²⁸, which depicts the need for Hindu Muslim unity. This play was written soon after the riots among the Hindu, Muslim communities on A.D.1947 division. Hence it was able to capture the sensibilities of audiences at a large extent. This phase in another way gave voice to Telugu playwrights to easily comment upon the social disparities at a superficial level with out analysing the reasons or maintaining the objectivity. In the later period it has become a trend where

Telugu playwright left no problem untouched, discussing everything at a very superficial level just to satisfy the middle class audience's in the ideal of 'social consciousness'.

In A.D.1957, Andhra Pradesh Sangeeta Nataka Academy was formed. The Academy was formed as a result of state formation. The vanguards and leaders of this Academy happened to be the Zamindars or politicians. Hence the same people who were leading the Parishat became the leaders of the Academy also. M.R.Apparao who was the president of Parishat became the cultural minister for the state of Andhra Pradesh. Pasala Suryachandrarao who was the secretary of Parishat became the president of Academy. Even though the activities of Parishat and Academy were different, they became inseparable because of the same leadership. Slowly Academy started getting more prominence than the Parishat due to its financial support from the Government.

In this period, the Telugu cinema had become more popular. Film personalities like Gudavalli Ramabrahmam, B.N.Reddy, L.V.Prasad, Ch.Nagaiah²⁹ and others showed a special concern for theatre. New cinema theatres were built in all most all major business towns. Cinema industry started attracting the talented crew from the stage. With this, a process of migration started from stage to cinema. At one point of time it became a craze for the theatre practitioners to grab at least one opportunity to appear on silver screen. Hence for every drama

performance or for every theatre occasion cinema people were invited as the guests. When one looks at the old volumes of theatre magazine *Natyakala* published under the editorship of Pasala Surya Chandrarao, a bunch of photographs can be found with the faces of prominent cinema stars addressing the theatre gatherings. This trend had extended further and theatre practitioners started depending on cinema people for conducting the theatre performances. This trend continues till today. Most of the Parishats feel privileged to invite a film star for the function. S.M.Bhasha³⁰, the General Secretary of *Narasaraopet Rangastali* holds that it serves two proposes, one showing our reputation to the public and the other attracting the local sponsors. N.Sambaiah³¹, the organiser of *Pragathi Kala Parishat*, Sattenapalli opines that the local sponsors and public think that theatre activity 'is the activity of useless people. In order to show that how talented they are and how many people have gone to film industry from theatre, popular film personalities are invited every year.

By A.D.1960, when Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat became weak, there were other similar Parishats emerged in different parts of the state. By A.D.1970, this trend was much vibrant and around forty Parishats were started in different parts of Andhra. *Bellary Raghava Parishat* of Vijayanagaram and *Lalitha Kalaniketan* of Rajamudry were popular among them.³² But most of the Parishats were time bound and very few Parishats were able to continue for long. Some old Parishats were closed and some new Parishats emerged. In spite of many Parishats, no

experiments as such have taken place in Telugu land. The participating groups also did not have any financial support to make experiments. Experiments can also be done without financial support as it happened with political theatre movement through out the world. Those experiments, which do not require any financial support, need an ideological base. Parishats have no such base.

Themes, which do not require much set design and properties, were preferred. A small hut, one cot, water pot, a set of rented chairs with the name of the rental house on the back of it, telephone, door curtains, wall posters of different Gods were the general properties for all most all the plays. The design of the stage is with a sofa set in the middle of the stage, a telephone table at the left extreme and with an entrance at the middle of the stage with a door curtain. All the plays have the entrance from the right wing and the exit from the left wing from audience point of view.

In order to break this monotony, a few attempts were made within the Parishat structure. Starting the play with the climax, showing the psychological trauma of the character with a background song rather than with the character itself, starting the play with a character narrating the story to the other character, using the freeze technique where all the characters become freeze except the required character (*Maro Mahonjodaro*) were some of the techniques employed to sustain the interest of the audience. Though these kinds of attempts cannot be called as 'Experiments', many theatre critiques recorded them as experiments. In

the previous chapter all the main experiments and movements of world theatre were mentioned. The history of world theatre says experiments evolve not just for the sake of experiments; instead, they were developed through proper philosophical outlooks of theatre personalities. They broke the existing laws of performance, aesthetics and profound new laws of theatre as alternative. Ideology plays a crucial role in all the experiments and theatre movements. Even in Indian context, Badal Sircar strongly condemns the proscenium and invented the Third theatre'. Where as Telugu theatre has no history of such experiments.

In this way Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat left its legacy to the other amateur organisations. Even though there is no direct relation between Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat and the other mushrooming Parishats, one has to look at this phenomenon in relation to the Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat. Because for all these Parishats, A.N.K.P became the inspiration and guiding force. The aims and objectives for which the A.N.K.P had stood, the same ideals became the manifesto for the other Parishats also. It became voiceless in condemning or controlling the unhealthy activities of the remaining Parishats. Hence it became dead by 1970.³³

There are nearly one hundred and twenty seven Parishats functioning in Andhra Pradesh (see appendix No:3) All these Parishats were started after A.D.1960 only. The table shown in the appendix excluded the list of Telugu Parishats functioning outside Andhra Pradesh. The table shows that 14% of Parishats are taking place at cities, 41.73 %

at rural areas and 47.24% at towns. In the above-mentioned list of Parishats, some of them were closed down and some of them are still flourishing. After A.D.1990, many Parishats sprouted in the rural areas of Andhra. Right now there were around eighty Parishats through out the state conducting annual competitions for theatre groups. In these eighty, most of the Parishats are being held at rural areas and semi urban towns. Among these eighty, Guntur district stands in the first place by organising around seventeen Parishats. After Guntur, both the Godavari districts and Vizag are strong in theatre activity. Nandyala, Proddutur, Tirupathi, Ananthapuram are some of the active areas of Rayalaseema. Telengana invariably happened to be a weak region for Parishat activities. According to the available statistics, by the end of A.D.2001, sixty-five competitions were held at different parts of Andhra. Among them, seventeen Parishats were newly started.³⁴

The organisers: With the reference of above-mentioned table, the organisers of Parishats can be divided into four categories, viz .1.Employees, 2.Ametuere artists formed into committees, 3.Families & Memorial trusts and 4. Individuals. The following table shows the level of involvement of each category of organisers in Telugu theatre.

Table:Eight

Category	No.of Parishats	Percentage
1. Employees	12	10.62
2. Committees	30	26.55
3. Families & Memorial Trusts.	19	16.81
4. Individuals	52	46.02

In many Government based organisations like Department of Railways, B.H.E.L, H.C.L, H.M.T, Municipal Corporations and port authority, one can find a bunch of theatre artists, art lovers and union leaders working as employees, the first category of organisers. With the interest and initiative of these people, Parishats have emerged on these company's names. The employees convince the authorities to grant some funds towards conducting the Parishats and all the infrastructure facilities of the company are used for organising it. The venue of the Parishat is the township of the industry. So the entire workers of the industry assemble together to watch the performances. Here the employees place a crucial role in contacting the theatre groups, convincing the authorities and conducting the Parishat. The problem arises when those particular employees get transferred to some other areas. In some cases it is the initiative of the authorities in conducting the Parishat. Most of them were

withered away because of the transfers of the employees and officials. H.C.L. Natakostavalu, H.M.T. Natakostavalu, H.A.L. Natakostavalu were discontinued because of this factor.

The second category of organisers is **amateur artists formed into committees**, residing in various towns of Andhra. Most of them are bank employees, teachers, lecturers and doing a respectable job in the society. A small group of four or five such individuals join together, form into a committee and organise the Parishat with the help of all possible sources of that town. This kind of organisers is also active in performing the plays. So it becomes easy for them to get the groups and conduct the Parishats. On the other hand it becomes a status symbol to be identified as artist cum organiser of a Parishat. Even this kind of organisers have same problem of first category that once the main organiser gets a transfer, the entire Parishat will collapse. In the above-mentioned list, more than twenty Parishats were withered away because of this reason.

The third category of organisers is **families and memorial trusts**. In the above-mentioned list, one can find around 15 Parishats run in the memory of someone. The well wishers and the relatives of the demised person, feel that conducting a Parishat on his or her name will be right way of paying homage to their soul. Parishat becomes a big function to remember the dead personality, where lot of people comes and witness the show. Paruchuri Raghu Babu Smaraka Parishat, Kona Prabhakar Rao Natakostavalu, Raogopalrao Nataka Potilu are some of the examples.

The fourth category is individuals. The above table shows that the major chunk of the organisers is an individual. When most of them were interviewed, the common feeling that everybody expresses is “‘organising a Parishat is hazardous’. When it is so hazardous why people as individuals want to take up such pains? What makes them to conduct a Parishat? What is that inspires them? Among these 52 individuals most of them are from rural areas. It is the local identity that inspires them to conduct the Parishats. The political identity, the identity as a popular person in the village and surroundings, the identity of being a patron of arts,, all these things make the individuals to organise Parishats. When one takes up their financial status as criteria, it is average income of above average farmer. These people have a moderate educational background and hail from middle class agricultural families. They have a bit of political back up also. Though they have a great passion and love for theatre, they are neither artists nor directors. They are just organisers. Their intention in conducting the competition is neither to develop theatre nor making it more relevant to the society. Organising a Parishat is a communal activity for the villagers. All the arrangements like food, shelter to the artists, stage erection, and lighting are taken care by the entire village. The community feeling and the involvement of entire village can be seen in all cultural or religious activities. Similarly the village owns the Parishat. The other aspect is that it becomes a prestige issue among the neighboring villages, that the particular village is able to conduct the

Parishat every year. Even the artists, who visit the village for performance, praise the unity of the village and the reception of the local people. All these conditions made the organisers to continue the Parishat. As audiences, they enjoy the performances; appreciate the content and sentimental crisp dialogues, emotions and so on and so forth. They do not consider the technical aspects of the drama or the approach of the playwright in portraying the incidents. They only look at the emotional part of it. Hence any performance will attract their attention and make them relaxed. The agricultural scenario of that particular year also plays a crucial role in conducting the Parishats. As the crops flourish, the Parishat will be conducted with high budgets. When the crops are not favorable, the Parishat receives lot of setbacks. The recent drought in rural Andhra showed a great impact on Parishat activity. Most popular Parishats like , Kakateya Kala Parishat of Nagabhiravaripalem, Karshaka Kala Parishat of Ganesunivaripalem, and Pedanandipadu Parishat were withheld during A.D.2001-2002. The remaining rural based Parishats are able to survive, because the finance is collected from the migrated well off people of that particular villages.

Another interesting aspect of organising Parishats is the competition among the organisers itself. If one village is conducting the Parishat, the neighboring village also feels it as a prestige to organise another, much more effectively than the other. This trend is more visible in Guntur and Godavari districts.

The other important aspect of Parishats is finance. It is surprising to note that around rupees one crore on average is spent in conducting the Parishats. All this money is the patronage of the local business people and philanthropists. No money from Government side is allotted. Each Competition costs around one lakh to two lakhs rupees. Each participant group will be given remuneration around rupees three to five thousand and special prize money will be given for best three productions. Apart from collective prizes, there will be individual prizes like best actor, best actress, best script, best director and best set. A memento and token money will be given for these individual winners. Three theatre experts will be seated as panel of judges whose decision is final in deciding the winners.

The general schedule of major Parishats is between the months of February and May of every year. Among these four months, April and May months are very important and often two or three Parishats will have on the same dates. Disputes arise regarding changing of the dates. In A.D.1996, all Parishat organisers assembled at Chilakaluripet of Guntur district and formed a forum, in order to avoid clashes among them³⁵. One of the resolutions was that no two Parishats should be conducted on same dates, because it becomes a great problem for the participant groups. Most of the auditoriums where these competitions are conducted are Open-air theatres. Hence organisers prefer only summer time to conduct the Parishats. The other reason is that as many Parishats are located in

rural areas, the villagers are at free in summer time to watch the performances. As a result the entire activity of amateur theatre is limited to a period of three to four months. Recently this time schedule is stretched farther starting from January to May. This typical time schedule has provided a unique facility to amateur groups. They have six months free time to prepare for a play and the other six months to enact the play.

The nature of competition had provoked a challenging nature among the participants in such a way that some how or the other the prize must be won. Though the entire activity is for amateurs, there is hectic competition and tension prevails among the groups. It has become a regular feature to openly criticise the judges of the Parishat soon after declaring the result. Lobbying and loyalties rose to maximum extent. The judgement of the competitions is very interesting element in any Parishat. Participants start guessing who is going to win the prizes soon after knowing the names of the judges. Though the judges take care of all the possibilities and politics that take place in between the performances, they bound to receive the heavy criticism from major groups. They can't even able to answer the questions of artists, because in arts, the likings and dislikings are very personal.

This amazing trend of competitions had given a picture that as if there is no other kind of activity existing in Andhra. Even the Government of Andhra Pradesh felt that this is the only way of developing the theatre and initiated a Government competition from A.D.2000 by the name of

Nandi Natakhoshtavam. In Andhra Pradesh, the state Government has been awarding prizes for best television and cinema productions in the name of *Nandi awards*. Taking the inspiration from it, Andhra Pradesh Film Television and Theatre Development Corporation, a wing of state Government has initiated an annual competition for theatre. This event has generated a new interest among the theatre practitioners and theatre groups started taking it as a privilege to win a prize in *Nandi*. The Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu distributed the prizes for the winners for the first two years. Thus further enhanced the popularity of *Nandi Competition*. As a result lot of politics, mismanagement, recommendations and many other negative trends sprouted around *Nandi*. Starting from the announcement of the competition till the end, *Nandi* receives lot of criticism from public and media for its mismanagement and misrepresenting the creativity of the artists.

Harnadharao, a popular writer on films and theatre advocates that though the government says by announcing *Nandis* it is showing equal importance to cinema, television and theatre it always marginalises theatre from the rest of the media. It spends crores of rupees for *Nandi* functions of television and cinema. But when it comes to theatre, they would that the say that the budget is very limited. A clear cut disparity can be seen between cinema and theatre".³⁶ Now after four annual events of *Nandi*, some theatre activists started questioning the relevance of *Nandi*. Most of the participants felt that there is no structural difference between

the *Nandi* competitions and the other sixty competitions that are taking place in the entire state. *Bhumika*, a theatre organisation of Hyderabad conducted an opinion poll during the A.D.2001-May *Nandi* festival. The survey reflects the unrest in the participants over the attitude of the Government. Many artists feel that the Government should provide many other facilities than just conducting *Nandi*. But many theatre groups fear that if further demands are asked, the Government may stop conducting at least *Nandi*. It is pertinent to mention here that the chairman of Andhra Pradesh Film, Television and Theatre Development Corporation had announced in 2002-Nandi festivals that the Corporation may be privatised soon, hence *Nandi* may not be continued for long.

Modali Nagabhushana Sarma³⁷, a critique of theatre felt the need for the review plays performed in the competitions. He observes no difference between the contract plays of earlier times and the contemporary Parishat plays. He further says that during those days, contractors gave livelihood to the professional artists and killed the theatre in this process. He expects that the Parishats would function in similar manner.

Another popular theatre critique and writer Somanchi Yagnanna Sastry³⁸ said that the competitions, introduced by Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat, that renovated theatre during the times of Second World War lost its purpose in modern times. He opines that the competitions which

have gone have gone into sidetracks not only lost their purpose, but killed the very nature of theatre by spreading a pseudo psychology through it. He suggests to end the practice of holding competitions and produce plays that have novelty and creativity.

In the same ground even the Review Committee for the three A.P State Academies mentioned in its report that "Some eminent theatre men feel that these competitions have weakened the amateur Theatre Movement and that this is the main cause for the indiscipline prevalent among the amateur associations. The Review committee recommends that the Akademi should evolve a suitable scheme for holding these competitions which will check or eliminate the undesirable tendencies".³⁹

, Attili Krishnarao, a veteran practitioner of theatre and playwright clearly said in a seminar organised by Navarasa that because of these Parishats, the drama within the four walls came in to vogue. This kind of drama is meant for prizes not for the people. The artist how hard he may try to project his character will ultimately make himself away from the people. The artists are left with no option except participating in these Parishats, invariably agree for the regulations of the Parishats. A good theatre can be possible when we do it away from Parishats".⁴⁰

When one looks at the above-mentioned statements, all of them reflect various negative aspects of Parishats. They also mention about various limitations of Parishats. All these statements are made by the

educated theatre personalities. This unrest among these people led to the initiation of theatre education in Andhra.

The History of Theatre Education in Andhra Pradesh:

Though the initiation of theatre education is not a counterpart of Parishats, it has a strong relation with Parishat activity. People, who were educated and have a passion for English drama and theatre, started dreaming about such drama and theatre in Andhra. . K.Gopalaswamy, Srinivasa Chakravarthi, Manthri Srinivasarao are such people. Their vision of theatre is not limited to the theatre of competitions. It is much more broad and more of experimental. Parishats do not serve this purpose. This led to theatre education in Andhra. Later it has showed two kinds of impact on Parishat activity. There is one kind of people who stopped participating in Parishats after having theatre education. Chatla Sri Ramulu, D.S.N. Murthy, Prasada Reddy and others fall under this category. The other kind of people strengthens the Parishat activity after receiving theatre training. T.Sundaram, Udaybhanu, Deekshit, Satyanand, Misro and others fall under this category. The knowledge of English drama and theatre among a few officials led to the initiation of theatre education in Andhra. In A.D.1943, Andhra University initiated a trend of experimental productions. This trend has been continued for around twenty years and led to the establishment of Department of Theatre Arts in A.D.1961.⁴¹ The man behind this entire movement is K.V, Gopalaswamy the then registrar

of the university. Because of his English education at England, Gopalaswamy had a good exposure to the Western drama and a passion for realistic theatre. Because of his high status and profession, he tried to materialise his dreams with the students. With this idea he started a theatre group with the students and experimented with variety of plays. The aims of this theatre group were: 1. Training the students in all aspects of theatre arts, 2. Performing new plays, 3. Experimenting in all faculties of theatre arts, 4. Making the designs for different kinds of plays and auditoriums and 5. Providing entertainment.

Gopalaswamy was the final authority in all the aspects of the play production. He used to take care of all the aspects like selecting the students through interviews, selecting the plays for performances, mobilising the finance and creating the paraphernalia. The play selection was based on two things. One is its appeal to the public; another thing is its scope for experiment. The faculty members of different departments were the directors of the plays. A separate technical staff was appointed to assist the director. The group used to utilise the presence of every Department in the university to produce the plays. Department of Electronics, Department of Physics was extensively used to create special effects on the stage. A special open auditorium with 54'X30' was built with a special grant from U.G.C.

Thousands of audiences used to gather to witness the performances. Most of them were students and university staff. A bunch of educated

masses from Vijag City used to come for the plays. At times, even though the performance was not appealing, audiences used to feel satisfied with the set and the special effects. The most appreciated aspect was that some of the plays written by the students were also performed with due respect. When one looks at the list of plays performed in the university, all of them were written with a broad outlook. *Kanyasulkam* of Gurajada Apparao, *Viswambara* and *Hiranyakasipudu* of Amamcharla Venugopalrao, *Allimutha* of Kopparapu Subbarao, *Nishpalam* of P.V.Rajamannar, *Panjaram* of Avasarala Surya Rao were popular performances of the group. This experimental theatre group performed around two hundred and seventy one playlets / plays during the period of A.D.1943 to 1965.⁴² Though there were no professional theatre teachers by that time, the training was given by the popular theatre personalities like Stanam Narisimharao, D.V.Subbarao, Sanyasiraju, Rajarao and others. Throughout the year, the entire university campus used to be entertaining and exiting with the presence of the theatre group. The commitment of Gopalaswamy and his sincerity were well received by every one and resulted to the establishment of Department of Theatre Arts in A.D. 1961. Popular actor and director of modern Telugu theatre, K.Venkateswarrao was appointed as the head of the Department. An under graduate course with a duration of five years was offered to the university. Popular theatre figures like M.Ramachandra Rao, Mantri Srinivasarao, Attili Krishna Rao, Chatla Sriramulu, R.Saratbabu, Abburi

Gopalakrishna extended their services to the Department from the last forty years. A.Krishnarao for the first time introduced street theatre by adopting one of Badal Sircar's play *Mitchal* in to Telugu in the name of *Vuregimpu*. This play was first performed in Visakhapatnam under the direction of M.K. Raina as the performance of theatre workshop, organised by National School of Drama in collaboration with Andhra University in A.D. 1979

In A.D.1982, Osmania University started a diploma course in theatre arts. Though it was an evening course many translations, adaptations were done during A.D.1982 to A.D.1990. Many theatre teachers, playwrights were educated from this department. M.Nagabhushana Sarma, Raja Ramdas, Chaatla Sreeramulu served the department as faculty. At present the entire department is being operated with one permanent faculty member, G.S. Prasada Reddy. Later, In A.D.1989 University of Hyderabad started another P.G. course in theatre arts at Sarojini Naidu School of Performing Arts, Fine Arts and Communication. Bhaskar Shewalkar, D.S.N Murthy, N.J. Bhikshu, Ananth Krishnan, Jolly Puthussery are working as the faculty members. In the immediate year another graduate course was started at Telugu University. Osmania and University of Hyderabad made attempts to adopt some of the great classics of world theatre. Plays like Oedipus Rex, Exception and the Rule, Macbeth, Roots (Adaptation of Alex Haley's novel), **Roshman** (Adaptation

of Acira Curasova's movie). The other two universities have been producing direct Telugu plays.

Andhra Pradesh Natya Sangham:

In A.D.1948, the International Theatre Institute was established. As Indian charter Indian Theatre Institute was established. As a state organisation Andhra Pradesh Natya Sangham was established in A.D.1954 at Hyderabad. A.R. Krishna was the leader of the organisation. The aims and activity of the organisation were to conducting state level theatre festivals, establishing an institution to offer theatre training, extending different kinds of services to the theatre groups, initiating the construction the auditoriums in the every district head quarters, implementing the activities of Indian Theatre Institute.⁴³

In A.D.1959, the organisation started a two years course in theatre arts. Abburi Ramakrishna Rao was the in charge of the course. After two three years of its existence the organisation withered away due to some internal clashes among the leaders.

Later in A.D.1970 A.R. Krishna produced some of the productions with his group. One of his plays was *Malapalli*, a novel by V.Lakshminarayana, written in A.D.1921, was adapted to stage with twelve acting areas. The audiences were asked to sit in the middle of the surrounded set and watch the performance at different locales. A.R.Krishna says that this production was the inspiration of the concept of

environmental theatre of Richard Schechner. With around seventy artists, this play was performed hundred times at different parts of Andhra. After establishing himself as the prominent theatre personality, Krishna started a theatre repertory with the financial support of Government of Andhra Pradesh in A.D.1982. Every year a batch of twenty students was admitted into to the two years course. Devadas Kanakala, Lakshmi Devi, Krishna were the main faculty. Even this project was not run successfully for a long. In 1984, the institute was closed down as the State Government stopped funding for repertory.

Many amateur artists and directors appeared for this course as students. Their skills and competence were developed. Contemporary theatre directors like Misro, T.Sundaram, Udayabhanu, Deekshit, Satyanand received theatre training from various universities and have been receiving much applause and prizes for their productions. Some old students of these courses became the faculty members in due course.

Telugu Theatre: Politics of Representation:

From the above discourse, it can be summerised that there are two broad phases in Telugu theatre. One the folk theatre whose roots cannot be pin pointed to a particular timeframe. The second is modern Telugu theatre, which set to have started in A.D.1880s. Telugu theatre in the folk realm though has basic elements of theatre such as performer, audience, text and context is less regarded as theatre for it violated the Western

definition of theatre. The western definition innately delimits the actor from its audience, the text from the context and vice versa. The actors are trained to perform any text to any context to any audience. This overall fluidity is one major criterion for theatre to develop as modern art and hence modern theatre. **Contrary to the above is fixed and became rigid in sharing the elements of theatre.** Particular performer in a particular context enacts a **fixed** text to the fixed audience. Therefore theatre-appears as repetitive in its presentation. This also changes the other aspects of theatre like stage, makeup, costume and other technical properties. The proscenium is considered as modern, where as non- -proscenium is of folk. The non-proscenium invariably narrowed the application of light, sound, costumes, makeup etc. therefore folk theatre by and large, represented their audiences and their world view. ,The politics of representation in folk theatre are confined to caste and region. For instance the *Chindu Madigas* through their *Chindu Bhagavatham* (popular folk theatre) represent the community how it originated and why it segregated and what they expect to do in the social realm. Similarly the *Pagativeshams* of *Ganayatha Jangamas* are region oriented and cater the needs of people of the region. Through their enactments they satirically expose the fallacies of different communities and castes. In both the cases mentioned above there is certain type of rigidity in the application of theatrical elements. They are basically itinerant in nature and therefore exercise an obligation to perform to their stock audiences, the same text

drawn from orality and claimed as hereditary. Therefore the contexts in which these performances occur are calandrical and hence fixed. What is important in folk theatre is what they represent is not simply that art but they way of life of the community which they belong. This dimension makes most of the folk theatrical forms ethnocentric in nature.

Another dimension of politics of representation in folk theatre is connected with philosophical milieu of Idealism. The metaphysical realm is created in their theatre through the representation of images of gods and goddesses. The themes of the *Bhagavathams* are by and large drawn from the folk versions of the great Puranic of India such as *Ramayanam*, *Mahabharatham*, and *Bhagavatgita*. The ideal depiction of conflict and resolution leading to peaceful coexistence is rhetorically expressed through the enactments of the themes of *Puranas*. For this, metaphors and similes were vibrantly used in their enactments. Therefore politics of representation of folk theatre contributes to the depiction of ideal society, which the people should sought after.

The politics of representation of modern theatre are by and large confined to the issues of modernity. The driving principle of modernity is 'difference'. Difference as concept of critical thinking gave the modern world a new tool to analyse the cultures and their products. The modern man with the principle of difference divided the objects of the world into two sets. One is based on similarity and the other, on difference. The set of similarities is conceived as paradigms and the interplay of difference is

conceived as syntagmatics. Syntagmatics of linear and paradigms are vertical in nature. This basic division made the modern man not only to analyse the language but also the other cultural products. The human beings organised themselves into groups and hierarchised based on these principles. The social divide based on relations of productions started becoming overtly expressed in modern times. Modernity begets urban centers functioning on the mechanised productions. Therefore technology became an essential ingredient of modernity. Modern theatre did rely on two principles; one is the principles of difference and principle of technology in representation. As technology alienated the labour from its labourer, the modern theatre alienated actor from action (character of folk theatre). The performers of the folk theatre have a ritual obligation to the **audience** and therefore the audience too has a **ritual** right to view the performance. This principle in modern theatre did not work as such the actors are recruited through training processes. In other words the actor is alienated from the character. An actor who is trained need not necessarily recruited to a character, which he views as fit. This alienation principle innately contributed to the development of competition as in the case of market economy.

Capitalism, an offshoot of modernity paved the way for industrialisation and market economy. Competing in producing and selling the products in the market became an essential feature. In order to optimise costs and to deliver effective prices the business households

went in for competitive products and tried to make profits in order to sustain the industry. Modern Telugu theatre more or less followed the similar principle during its inception times in various genres of Telugu theatre for instance Padyanatakam sustained on the principal of competition. The talented actors are merged and sought after by the contractors to stage the plays. The consumer here invariably the theatre enthusiast is the prime target to reach by the contractors. Hence, they not only recruited the popular creative artistes but also relayed on advertisement in order to sell the Padyanatakam. In the process unconsciously competition grew in among the artists and with the result specialisation in performing characters grew in theatre of Padyanatakam. Like a product of industry is not manufactured in one unit but different units and then ensembled. The same way contractors recruited different actors from different regions for their plays. This in fact looks like a consortium of specialists more than a holistic performance. The phenomena of ensembling different specialised artists through appeared to be one of the causes of success of Padyanatakam, it innately started killing the very art form. The skills of the actors were confined to certain roles and therefore did not result in developing the theatre as such. The theatre requires a just combination of different elements. In the case of Padyanatakam a highly imbalanced mixture of these elements are to be seen. Only the ability to recite Padyams is given importance than the body language, sound, light and stagecraft. This lopsided development of

Padyanatakam is suffering when there is lack of new entrance whose belong to young generation that are not much for exposing literary skills.

Concomitant to this development, none of the contractors could get expertise in the modern ways of fund rising and advertising. The lack of skills in the management of event affected performances of Padyanatakam. These performances faced a threat to its existence from the modern mass media. It appears to have been failed to respond to the needs of the modern people and represented the theatre as the theatre for Telugu identity in terms of usage of language in verse form (Padyam) which is unique to Telugu culture. It sought nativity through politics of representation of language rather than the theatricality. In other words it represents the glory of Telugu as one, which has sweet language and praised as *Italian of the East*.

The Parishatnatakam which is another offshoot of modern Telugu theatre emerged as venue for social dramas. It has replaced Padyam with dialogue and treated the other theatrical elements equally. However the all above mentioned did work even with Parishatnatakam. The competition became the live nerve for the existence of Parishatnatakam. The politics of representation in Parishatnatakam shifted from actor to playwright and director. It is the directors and playwright who prevailed in Parishatnatakam. The contractors as in the case of Padyanatakam are being replaced with the organisers of **Parishats** who can be catagorised into four: (i). Institutions, (ii). families and memorial trusts, (iii). Amateur

artists formed into committees and (iv). the individuals. The politics of representation in Parishat Natakam by and large depend on the above categories of organisers. It is the organisers who fix the venue, remunerations, winners and other terms and conditions of plays to be performed.

The first category that is employees are situated in Urban centers as organisers of Parishats craved for the institutional identity. The employees partly owe their allegiance to the institution, which they are serving for two reasons. Firstly, as an employee of institution, his livelihood is taken care. Secondly as a theatre enthusiast gets funding from the employer under the category of welfare funds. This sponsoring of the employer gives the members of these Parishats a moral boost to plan for Parishats by approaching business households and philanthropists for further funds. The emblem of the institution plays a dominant role in undertaking Parishats. The politics of representation therefore surrounds on the identity of the institution. Another important factor is the welfare of the employees. Most of these Parishats are held at exclusive townships developed by companies. Therefore, the venue was invariably the auditoriums of the townships. This being the case entertaining the co - employees became the primary concern of the Parishat. Therefore the themes are selected on the basis of entertainment of value and less critical on the problems of institutions, in order to safe guard the industrial relationship. Therefore the representation of such Parishats are always

towards general social evils or satirical or humorous and themes of the general concern. The theatre in this style of Parishats represents the middle class ethos and seeks to place theatre as entertainment.

The other type of category of organisers is families and memorial trusts. Most of this category of Parishats is from non- – rich or the absentee landed gentry of the urban centers. Film personalities, industrialists, educationalists and such people run these types of trusts. The politics of representation of this theatre surrounds on identity of the patterns. The patrons identity is reflected in two ways (i) as the family identity (ii), the identity of business house holds. The Parishat becomes a springboard for this category of organisers to promote their identity. As these people are the soul sponsored for the Parishats, they deploy strategies of advertising their own identity with the help of theatre practitioners. In fact it is theatre practitioners who are close to these families act as the conductors of the event and contribute to the success of the Parishats. In due of the services from the theatre practitioners some of their needs are met as and when required. So to say the patrons almost became absentee organisers in their own Parishats but still monitor directly certain events like inaugural ceremony and valedictory ceremony and so on and so forth. Since the identity of the 'self (patron) is the prime concern of this category of Parishats, experiments on the themes, which suit to the elite concerns, are encouraged. The themes like gender issues, Patriotism, abstract portrayal of ideal social systems etc are promoted as

themes. Therefore the politics of representation are more towards urban elite and their version of nationalism, egalitarianism, gender equality etc.

The third category of Parishats run by artists formed into committees is mostly in the semi urban and towns. The members of these Parishats are mostly working in Government and non-Government sectors as gaged and non-gaged officers. It is the interest in the theatre that draws the members to come together and run Parishats. Therefore only on concerns the competitions are conducted. The members themselves being artists invite the theatre groups on the basis of personal rapport and intern develop their own opportunities to participate in other Parishats as artists. The reciprocity being the organising principle the committees run Parishats by selecting different themes and different size of troops to perform in their Parishats. The polythematic presentation of the plays gives vent to playwrights to experiment with the themes. Therefore the issues related to the contemporary socio, economic, political and cultural milieus are taken as themes. This in fact appears as if it is a journalistic theatre in the sense that as the news paper plays a role of writing the contemporary issues such as scams, *Gundaism*, crime against women, bribery etc are made into themes of the plays. Therefore, the politics of representation of this category of committee perceives as if it is anti establishment, anti normative and anti elite. It is the narrative, which is dialogue oriented, becomes the nerve of the play. Therefore the playwrights use different formulas of speech acts to catch the attention of

the audiences. The opening and closing formula of the scenes in the play acquire prominence in narrating the themes. They comprise mostly statements made in flowery language with metrical sense. The text gets unfolded based on the ability of the performers. Therefore the performance space becomes most meaningful through these Parishats. Often the politics of representation of this theatre is guided by the politics of representation of actors. The audiences were mostly the migrants from rural to urban in search of jobs and business. Hence, the metrical language is well appreciated by them because of their association with Padyanatakam and folk theatre of the rural areas. Since they are migrated, 'the non local' status become innate concern for them therefore they resort to the themes which project the loss of family relations, ethics, identity and so on and so forth. Contrary to this problems that are faced in the new settings (towns and semi urban) are also projected as cheating, bribery, crime, bureaucratic exploitation etc. So, this theatre by and large is construed on projecting differences between the ideal and the reality.

The fourth category of Parishats organisers is individuals. The individuals of this category are from rural areas and therefore these leaders for making the event of the Parishat a success encourage the community-based participation. Since the individuals are from the landed gentry and close to the *poseri loci* act in feudalistic manner in organising the Parishats. It is not simply the individuals name but the name of the entire village is the concern of this Parishats. Therefore the politics of

representation acts in two ways, one the Feudal and the other, communal. Individuals do the decision making on issues like fixing of dates, themes, prizes, funds etc., in a feudalistic fashion, whereas in actual conducting of the event it is the community participation, which is sought. The themes of these plays are mostly romanticising the rural over urban and community living.

The politics of representation of the theatre education is of different nature. Theatre education in India is done on two fronts, training in theory and in practice. Most of the members of the faculty in the institutions, which are promoting theatre education, are themselves either actors or directors, or technical personal. As part of theatre history and theory they expose the students to world theatre, developments in theatre, ideas and concepts in theatre so on and so forth. This background gives both faculty and students to go for experimental theatre. The narrative techniques in presenting the play is designed and blocking the stage movements, choreography in the scenes, illuminating the stage with different lights and visuals through symbolic structures on stage—all become the concern of this theatre. After the introduction of theatre education in Andhra, the Telugu theatre witnessed more number of plays from other languages translated in to Telugu. The European plays, the plays of the black theatre and the plays from Hindi, **Marathi**, Tamil, Kannada, Bengali of Indian languages were exposed to Telugus. In this manner it contributed significantly in expanding the horizons of Telugu theatre. Yet another

significant contribution of the theatre education is that it has influenced even the *Parishatnatakam*. The *Parishat Natakam* is narrative oriented rather than visual oriented. The students who had undergone the theatre education become critiques of the theatre, which is another significant contribution of the theatre education. Theatre journalism is also promoted. Critiquing once own plays though not accepted whole-heartedly still started the discourse in theatre. However the theatre education is not devoid of flaws. The politics of representation of this group is to project as 'elitists of theatre'. They consider themselves as the literate of theatre. This in a way distenciating themselves from mainstream theatre. Though the attitude of 'big brother' is a dangerous trend in imperialising the theatre, it appears to be a 'necessary evil' in the theatre movement of Andhra.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh also indulged in the name of promotion of theatre, a Parishat like institute to itself under the department of Andhra Pradesh Film, Television and Theatre Development Corporation. The famous *Nandi* awards started picking up in Telugu theatre circles. Pro-Government plays pro-establishment plays and pro-political ideology plays are being encouraged in *Nandi Natakostavams*. The nexus between the persons of theatre educationalists and the bureaucrats from the Government is increasing in the Telugu theatre scenario. Concomitant to this development the theatre is also facing the politics of representation from N.R.I. groups by fixing high remunerations

and attaching royal insignia attracting the theatre practitioners from all sections. In the process partly the Parishats and totally the folk are marginalised.

To sum up the history of Telugu theatre, thus far is written on the principle of chronology. In writing so the authors of history of Telugu theatre do merger of drama with theatre. A distinction between drama a literary genre and theatre as a performance genre is a must to understand the politics of representation behind the practices of Telugu theatre. Fundamentally two types of theater existed in the history of Telugus. One is folk theatre for which the politics of representation being caste and region. Caste fundamentally represents the groups innately connected to performers and audience. Region represents variations in such performances. The second the modern Telugu theatre which is constituted by the practitioners of theatre be it amateurs or professionals.

On the whole the modern theatre encouraged competition among the theatre practitioners. However, the politics of representation surrounded mostly by the compulsions of the theatre practitioners. It is what they wish to present is what the audience are supposed to receive. The gaze is from the theatre practitioners and not from the audiences. This super imposition of principle of modernity undermined the representation of **marginality**. In other words the socially, politically, culturally and economically marginalised groups were either ignored or silenced in their theatrical productions. With the result, a strong need

emerged for certain political parties to voice the concerns of the marginalised. This brought forth a desire in those political parties to seek for the art forms of the marginal communities. In the process they constructed 'theatre of the marginalised' by hybridising the 'literacy' with 'orality'. Literacy is meant for written play scripts that were produced with a conscious effort to propagate the party ideologies of the parties. The concept of 'orality' on the other is a direct reference to the folk theatre whose plays are produced and transmitted on oral compositions. Thus new theatre known as 'theatre of the marginalised' was entrepreneured by the party politics through their representation of marginality.

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Sundaram, Padmarani and Bhanumathi, Chitrangi, Sasanka, Magamma, Jayadeva, Vidakulu, Pururava are the plays written by Chalam. Rama Swami Chowdary had written plays like *Kurukshetram, Sambukavadha and Khuni. Narthana Sala, Anarkali, Venaraju and Thrisulam* are the four plays written by Viswanadha Satyanarayana. Srirangam Srinivasarao, popularly known as SriSri, had translated Chekov's *Cherry Arched* into Telugu in the name of *Sampenga Thota*, and written many short plays for radio.

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28. *Eenadu*, written by Atreya, deals about the unity of Hindu - Muslim. The theme was set in a middle class Muslim house on A.D. 1947, august 14th midnight, where two good friends Akbar and Purushottam were celebrating the Independence Day. Suddenly incidents happen and both the friends separate showing how fundamentalism can shatter even good friends.

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Chapter - 5
POLITICAL THEATRE:
REPRESENTATION OF MARGINALITY

The onset of modernism necessitated the appreciation of the relationships that subsist between people and state. The concern of State in different aspects of human life is realised. The state's control is specified by social role rather than by personal characteristics of the individual, which is always subjected to periodical constituency legitimisation. Individuals have citizenship rights that they can claim against the state, which made humans political. The rise of Marxism in the late eighteenth century led a radical change in human thinking. The relations between state and the people are redefined and both mutually perceived themselves as binary oppositions. Every branch of knowledge underwent change and theatre is one among them. Slowly a separate branch of theatre started developing through out the world in the name of 'political theatre'. The main purpose of political theatre in the initial phases was to transform the self-consciousness into group consciousness and to initiate

active political struggle for propagating their ideologies. . Many theatre groups in various countries appropriated political theatre as a weapon to fight against all sorts of social imbalances and exploitation of weak. Erwin Piscator (A.D1893 - 1966) used the word political theatre for the first time to describe his efforts to create a theatre that would champion the cause of proletariat in its battle against the bourgeoisie. Later, many theatre practitioners and writers, from Brecht to Augusto Boal have subsequently pursued similar matters and put to discourse different aspects of relations between theatre and politics. Theatre performances are considered as means by which discourses on ideology and politics are represented and popularised. After Second World War, a thorough discussion took place throughout the world on whether the theatre can be used for political purposes or not. Augusto Boal held that since all the activities of men including theatrical are political, theatre is necessarily political ¹. The political theatre cannot be used in its limited sense which otherwise used by scholars in theatre. Most of the scholars used political theatre as a synonym for Left wing theatre or the theatre of the communists. However, the term political theatre need not necessarily represent only theatre of the Left. It is because the other parties of Right wing also appropriated 'political theatre' for propagation of their respective party ideologies. The Marxist theory is based on the primary principles of social change through the initiation of ideology. Ideology for them is a conscious effort to transform the lives and environment of the people. This consciousness is

due to the relationship that develops between the forces of production and its relationship with that of production. Innately the dialectics that develop and operate between the forces of production and relations of production leads to the emergence of power structure and social hierarchy. Those who have the say over the forces of production veiled the power and formed into a political system. The power structure in given political system represents the social consciousnesses of the that are outside the power structure for their own advantage. Arts and literature of the people became the areas wherein power structure of a given political system would choose to operate and represents its innate political agenda through them. Therefore theatre became one of the *modus operandi* of the groups that access the political power. Therefore political theatre innately corresponds to theatre that represent the people at large on which they survive for political gains. In the bourgeois politics of representation theatre is immensely used to sustain in power. Hence the bourgeois theatre staged plays representing the consciousness of the proletariat and to vent their feelings of suppression attributed to the concept of 'fate'. The religious consciousness becomes the foremost themes of the plays written to support the bourgeois status. Entertainment served as the primary goal of the bourgeois to come out of the realities of misery and live in a world of fantasy for a while. Like wise to uphold the bourgeois state as the 'welfare state' theatre is immensely used for several kinds of propaganda. The bourgeois is defined here in the classical sense of 'city dweller' that does

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plays and enactments. The intelligentsia of the Left wing political group appropriates this philosophical dogma. Therefore theatre epistemology of political theatre is traditionally assigned to left wing politics.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The section one deals with an overview of party politics in theatre from a historical perspective. The second section deals with the representation of marginality through the political ideology of the parties.

Section One:

The history of political theatre in Andhra can broadly be divided into two stages: one the Right wing parties and their involvement in theatre and the other the Left wing political parties and their contribution to theatre.

Right wing parties and theatre :

The history of theatre under Right wing political parties can broadly be seen into four phases, the first two phases fall under **pre-**independence period and the remaining two under post-independence period.

In the first two phases of pre independence period, the first phase is between A.D 1880 to 1910. The main purpose of the theatre in this phase was to address social evils and inequalities, which came up in the way of rising political consciousness in a larger scale, and to fight against the imperial powers of the British. This phase (A.D.1880 - 1910) is popularly known in the Indian history *the period of Indian Renaissance* or *the phase*

of *Social Reform Movement in India*. The plays written by Kandukuri Veeresalingam, and Gurajada Apparao fall under this category, since all their writings are directly meant for social reforms.

The second phase, Right wing politics witnessed two important developments. One, the emergence of National Congress as a political party and the other, rise of Mahatma Gandhi as national leader in freedom struggle. The Minto-Marley reforms of A.D.1909 initiated the political representation in the British history of India. The National Congress entered the politics of British India and represented the people. Since then at various phases, the national Congress demanded for total representation in the name of *Swaraj*. With the entry of Mahatma Gandhi into freedom struggle, the party politics of Congress were turned to mass movement from the 'elite representation'. The emergence of Mahatma Gandhi into freedom struggle raised the expectations of the masses. Hundreds of songs were composed in praise of Gandhi and freedom struggle. Many novels and other forms of literature were produced. Chilakamaarthi Lakshmi Narasimham, one of the popular poets of Telugu, spontaneously wrote a poem explaining how Indians are exploited by Britishers. He read this poem in a public meeting when Gandhi visited Andhra and received applause from him. Later that particular poem *Bharatakhandambu* reached rural Andhra and inspired many people. Between A.D. 1910 and A.D. 1920, many plays were written with *Puranic* and Historical themes. Playwrights used to incorporate the spirit of

freedom struggle in those plays. The heroic characters in those plays speak about the need for a free nation and inspire people to be united. Plays like *Sivaji*, *Rana Pratap*, *Bobbili Yuddham*, *Rasaputra Vijayadi* fall under this category. After A.D. 1920, a few plays were written directly portraying the theme of freedom struggle. Damaraju Pundarikakshudu's plays like *Gandhi Vijayam*, *Gandhi Mahodayam* and *Panchala Parabhavam*² drew the public attention. These literary pieces were prominent not only as performances on stage, but also as lyrics that were sung and read in public meetings and informal gatherings.

The history of post independent Right wing theatre can also be divided into two phases. The first phase is from A.D.1950 to 1983. The formation of Andhra Pradesh as a linguistic state of Telugus marked the beginnings of the first phase. From A.D.1951 to A.D.1983, the Congress party as National Congress and as Congress (I) ruled the state. As congress party did not have any cultural wing of its own unlike the Leftist parties, the theatre was by and large promoted by the Government of Andhra Pradesh, formed by the Congress through the Ministry of Culture. The Academies such as Nataka Academy, Sangeeta Academy etc., by and large promoted two kinds of theatre: (i) through cultural exchange programmes, different theatre groups from various states are introduced to the Telugus and(ii) through developmental activities in theatre such as literacy campaigns, family planning etc.

The second phase of the Right wing theatre in the independence period is from A.D.1983 to the present. The emergence of Telugu Desam Party (T.D.P), a regional party, marked the beginning of the second phase. The Congress party literally faced stiff resistance from the T.D.P. With this the Telugu identity began to emerge as the keyword in politics. From this period theatre is much used for propagation of party policies and activities. A separate cultural wing was started in the T.D.P Government to conduct performances and to train performers to campaign for T.D.P activities. The form of theatre became more street play oriented than proscenium. Issues like anti-drug, *Akshara Sankranthi* (total literacy), *Janmabhoomi*, AIDS eradication, DWACRA groups etc., became the themes of the plays. The department of information and public relations is extensively used to propagate various programmes of the Government. Particularly during elections time, T.D.P. employ hundreds of artists through out the state and conduct workshops for them in order to train them for election campaign. Sivaprasadarao, the in charge of such campaign, was given the portfolio of cultural ministry in the next regime in 1999 recognising his services during elections.

The Left based political parties immensely contributed to the development of theatre towards the cause of **marginality**. The history of Left political theatre in Andhra can be divided into two phases on the basis of political formation. The first phase is period between A.D.1940 to 1964, wherein the Communist Party of India led **the** cultural movement as a

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The Left based political parties immensely contributed to the development of theatre towards the cause of **marginality**. The history of Left political theatre in Andhra can be divided into two phases on the basis of political formation. The first phase is period between A.D.1940 to 1964, wherein the Communist Party of India led the cultural movement as a

single political force. The second phase is the period between A.D 1964 to till date, wherein the Communist Party is divided into various political forces that led the cultural movement under various interpretations of Marxist ideology.

The First phase of Left political theatre:

In the first phase of political theatre movement, one organisation **that** championed the cultural expressions of the masses was Prajanatya Mandali. It emerged in association with Indian Peoples Theatre Association (I.P.T.A). Prajanatya Mandali focused on the development of theatre from two perceptions: (i) marginalised aspects of theatre and (2) people from the marginalised communities/groups. The chief pattern of Praja Natya Mandali was Communist party of India. It is important to mention the origin and development of Praja Natya Mandali, in order to understand the ideological base of it.

In India's struggle for independence, many movements and groups were formed with specific ideologies. One such wing was the Communist Party of India. The rise of a strong left-based wing is formed due to two main factors. One, the impact of Russian revolution and the other, unrest spread among some of the activists for the manner in which the freedom struggle is being led. Bipin Chandra³ observed that powerful left-wing group developed in India in the late 1920s and 1930s contributing to the radicalisation of the national movement. The goal of political

independence acquired a clearer and sharper in social and economic content. The stream of national struggle for independence and stream social - economic emancipation of the suppressed and the exploited began to converge which gradually resulted the emergence of two powerful parties of the Left, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Congress socialist Party (CSP). In the initial phase, though the left- wing associated with Congress, later it departed from Congress. This situation underwent a radical change in A.D1935 when the Communist Party was reorganised under the leadership of P.C.Joshi. Faced with the threat of Fascism the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, meeting at Moscow in August 1935, radically changed its earlier position and advocated the formation of a united front with socialists and other movements in colonial countries⁴ The communists asserted their positions due to the botheration of imperialist and Fascist powers. As a result, after A.D1935, they started uniting the masses on two issues simultaneously; one, continuation of struggle for India's freedom and the other, mobilization of masses against Fascism. This trend is much more evident in the later part of freedom movement. This political scenario of India also influenced many writers, poets and artists to form into a united force and fight for the better living of humanity.

All India Progressive Writers Association:

In A.D.1919 some of the important writers of the world made a document in entitled 'The Declaration of Independence of Thought' which

was a base for the establishment of International Progressive Writers Association. The important writers who signed on this document were Maxim Gorky, Burbusse, Russel, Rabindranath Tagore, and V.Kumara Swamy⁵.

The second meeting of the forum took place in A.D1936 June 19th to 23rd at London. Mulkaraj Anand had represented India in this meeting. The forum made a conclusion to help the people who died in course of Fascist hegemony. Later another meeting was organised at Paris in which Jawaharlal Nehru, Mulkaraj Anand, P.C.Joshi, Pramodsen Gupta participated from India⁶.

In the same year, for the first time, all the progressive writers had joined together to form a National level progressive writers organisation in Luknow. Popular Bengali writer Premchand presided over the proceedings. They named it as *All India Progressive Writers Association*. There was a major discussion on progressive writing, language, form, theme etc. Freedom of Expression, agitation against oppression and ban, support of freedom and peace were mentioned as the agenda for the organisation in the manifesto. Writers like Tagore, Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Mulkaraj Anand, Premchand, KAAbbas are the members of the committee. Abburi Ramakrishnarao, Tummala Venkaramayya, Somanchi Yagnanna Sastry were the delegates from Andhra Pradesh.⁷

The second, third and fourth meetings were held at Calcutta (1938), Delhi (1942) and Mumbai (1943) respectively. Dange presided over the proceedings. In this convention, Taapi Dharma Rao represented Andhra. A thorough discussion on the role of progressive writers in contemporary society has taken place. The manifesto was modified. Seeking the independence for India, protecting the nation from Fascism and involving all the writers in the struggle against imperialism were mentioned as the main aims of the organisation. The convention made a request to the writers to follow the footprints of the progressive writers of Russia and China. It also considered the revival of upcoming Indian cinema for progressive purpose.

First Progressive Writer's Meet in Andhra:

In A.D.1943, the first meeting of all-progressive writers was organised at Tenali, Guntur district. Taapi Dharmarao presided over the proceedings. Chadalavada Pichayya was elected as the secretary. In 1944 the second meeting was held at Vijayavada⁸. In this convention *Kanyasulkam* was performed. In 1945, the third meeting was held at Rajamundry, in which popular poet, Devulapalli Krishna Sastry presided over and Srirangam Srinivasarao, popularly known as Sri Sri, delivered the opening remarks. Fourth meeting was at Madras in the year A. D.1947. Popular playwright P.V. Rajamannar presided over the proceedings. Poets and writers like Kodavatiganti Kutumbarao, Indraganti Hanumachastri, Sri Sri, Tenneti Suri, Koganti Gopala Krishnaya, Kongara Jaggaya, Najjar,

Sunkara Satyanarayana and many others were participated in this convention. Most of the participants of these conventions had somehow or the other related to the field of theatre.

During the independence struggle, many workshops and political classes were organised in Andhra to create awareness among the activists. Another notable feature of the movement in Andhra was the organisation of summer schools on different aspects of contemporary economics and politics for peasant activists. These training camps, held at Kothapatnam and Mantenavaripalem of Krishna district. The classes were taken by many major Communist leaders of that time including P.C. Joshi, Ajoy Ghosh and R.D. Bhardwaj. Money and groceries for running these training camps were collected from the peasants of Andhras.⁹ Communist Party later continued this tradition. As a result, in A.D1946 May, the forum organised a temporary literary school. This was the first literary school in Andhra. Around fifty-seven promising writers and artists participated as students. Around nineteen popular writers taught in the school. Artists like Sunkara Satyanarayana, Vasireddy Bhaskerrao, Mikkilineni Radha Krishna Murthy, Najar, Mukkamala Nagabhushanam, Ramakoti were the students. Sri Sri, Sripada Subramanyam, Madhavapeddi Gokhale, Kutumbarao were the teachers.¹⁰ Many students of this school played a crucial role in the activities of Praja Natya Mandali.

Establishment of I.P.T.A

Having been inspired by the activities of All India Progressive Writers Association, Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) got emerged and contributed much to the field of performing arts and theatre. On A.D May 25th of 1943, the first meeting of IPTA took place in Bombay. Anil Disilwa read out the temporary manifesto of the IPTA. The manifesto emphasized the necessity to adopt the folk performing arts on to the stage and focus them for cultural progression, economic equality and freedom in order to build up a national people's art movement".¹¹

The central committee was formed in this convention in which Mukdum Mohiedden and Garikapati Rajarao represented Andhra. The second meeting was also held at Bombay in A.D1946 in whicti Rajarao and Mukkamala Nagabhushanam were elected to central committee.

The first meeting of Praja Natya Mandali (A.D. 1943):

After a week of Bombay conference of I.P.T.A, the first meeting of Praja Natya Mandali took place in A.D.1943 June 1st at Vijayawada.¹² Poets and artists like Mukkamala Nagabhushanam, Garikapati Rajarao, Kosuri Punnaiah, Koganti Gopalakrishnayya, Siviriseti Subbarao, Chadalavada Pichhaya, Kommaraju Padmavathi, Chandra Savitri, Moturi Udayam participated in this meeting. This meeting led the **artists of** Andhra Pradesh to start Praja Natya Mandali. Rajarao was elected as the secretary of the organisation. Here it is important to note that there were

also women folk who took up the initiative in forming the organisation. Manukonda Suryavathi, Moturi Udayam, Kondapalli Koteswaramma and many other women took active part in forming the organisation.

It is necessary to understand the sociological and cultural background of the land, which led to the establishment of Praja Natya Mandali. In Andhra, it was not for the first time to make combined effort by cultural and political fields, for inspiring the masses for a social cause. In the beginning phase of 20th century itself there was a thrust for freedom of India from Britishers. From A.D.1940 Communist Party started playing an active role in the state politics. Until then Congress was the leading political force in the state. It had already achieved a status and popularity in the state. So it had no need to propagate its ideology among the masses. The leaders of Congress were from middle class Brahmins or the upper class business people. So it did not realise the need for using Theatre for propagating their ideology. In the same period, Andhra *Maha Sabha* was becoming active in *Telengana* area of Andhra, through which most of the communist leaders drew the inspiration to fight against Nizam's rule.¹³

Hence for the newly started Communist Party, it became an immediate need to propagate their ideals. The ideals were based on the class struggle. Hence it has to address the lower class, farmers and agricultural laborer and all other working communities at larger extent. Majority of their target people were illiterate and resides at rural areas.

The only form of entertainment for them is folk arts. All these factors made the Communist Party to create a new genre of performance, which has to be performed in any rural area with out much preparation and a form, which can be understood even by illiterate people. The need of the hour for Communists was to cater for the needs of the uprising *Telengana* armed struggle.¹⁴

Hence the Party realised that there were many traditional performing styles in rural Andhra, which are inseparable from of rural life. With this understanding it created a new style and trend in theatre where the form is traditional and the content is Marxist based. This understanding made Praja Natya Mandali different from other organisations. Even in political propaganda, Praja Natya Mandali surpassed the other theatre activities. By the time Praja Natya Mandali was becoming active, many plays were written and performed with the content of freedom struggle. The *Mitavada Dhorani* of Congress and its opportunistic nature towards independence led to a confusing atmosphere in the national politics. This nature had showed its impact on the cultural field also. Because Congress's confusion, even the cultural expressions were also carried the same confusion and *Mitavada Dhorani*. Hence one can find no newness in the cultural expressions of freedom struggle. So they could not reach the public at large except songs like *Maakoddi Telia Dora Tanamu*. But when Praja Natya Mandali entered in to the field, there was no political confusion to the Communist Party. Hence there was a perfect mixture of

form and content. Because of this perfect blending of form and content, the cultural movement of Andhra extended its expressions to the maximum level. The varied contents of the themes of the performances/plays of political theatre reflecting the day to day problems of people, ideology of Fascists, land issues, labour problems, advent of capitalism etc necessitated new forms of expression to popularise their idiom and ideology to the public. As a result native forms like Burra Katha, Vidhi Bhagotam, Jamukula Katha were modified and attracted millions of masses.¹⁵

By the time Praja Natya Mandali took an organised shape, Communist Party achieved recognition in the state to operate political activity. It was working in Telengana region under the leadership of Andhra Maha Sabha, uniting the small peasantry and agricultural labour against the *Nizam*. The communists took an active part in building up the struggles at grass root levels. "The main targets of attack were the forced grain levy, the practice of *veth begar*, illegal exaction's and illegal seizures of land. Clashes took place initially between the landlord's *goondas* and the peasants led by the **Sangham** (as the Andhra Mahasabha was popularly known), and later between the armed forces of the state police and peasants armed with sticks and stones"¹⁶. In the same period the Second World War waged against Fascist countries like Germany, Italy, Japan. Here Communist Party had taken a stand in support of the alliance

front consist of Russia, China, Britain, America. So it became a necessity to propagate in favour of the alliance front.

In this context, Communist Party had to propagate two issues simultaneously: (i) there is class difference between the farmers and landlord, hence a class struggle has to be built up in interest of the working class under the leadership of Communist Party. And (ii) the atrocities of Fascist forces must be condemned and a massive support should be built up among Indian people. In order to address the masses on these issues, the Party had concentrated upon the traditional art forms of the people.

As mentioned earlier, in the first phase of history of political theatre in Andhra, only one organisation represented the whole political theatre. In other words, the first phase of history of political theatre in Andhra is nothing but the history of Praja Natya Mandali. For the sake of analysis the history of the first phase can be further divided into three phases: 1.Phase of blooming –1943 to 1945, 2.Phase of activism —1945 to 1948 and 3.Phase of decadence —1948 to 1952.

1.Phase of blooming (1943 - 1945):

Praja Natya Mandali concentrated on the folk performing arts of Andhra Pradesh. It picked up most of the solo based performances for adaptation. Forms like *Koya Vesham*, *Burra Katha*, *Jamukula Katha*, *Sodi*, *Kolatam* were picked up and adopted for a social change. Around forty

performing art forms were taken and adopted for a political purpose¹⁷. In this phase the themes were not based on class struggle. Thrust of all the themes was on freedom, anti fascism, Bengal drought and other related issues. Many scripts were developed in *Burra Katha* style. Writers like Vasireddi Bhaskerrao and Sunkara Satyanarayana who already had an experience in writing Burra Kathas made it easy to mould any theme into the form. In A.D.1941 22nd June", Hitler declared war on Russia. In the same year the Communist Party had taken out a movement against Fascism. This movement gave a chance to the cadre to agitate against Fascism. On the other side the drought in Bengal made Praja Natya Mandali to collect money and clothes through their performances. Popular Burrakatha artist Nazar wrote a *katha* by name *Bengal Karuvu* and performed all over Andhra. This performance in first instance *itself* gathered wide response from the audiences. Audiences for the first time started talking about drought and donated clothes and money for the needy. This was the first time where voluntary donations were collected at the venue of performance itself. Nazar mentioned in his biography that when he was performing the *Bengal Karuvu* in Bapatla, Guntur district, Ballari Raghava saw the performance and wept like a child. He immediately arranged their program in his place on the eve of his mother's ceremony. They collected money, clothes soon after the performance and sent to Bengal through the party.¹⁸

Similarly many *Burra Kathas* were produced with themes like *Tanya*, *Stalin Grade*, *Telengana* in this phase. The following table shows the themes adapted to the form of *Burra Katha* by Praja Natya Mandali during A.D1941 to A.D1950.

Table: Eight

TITILE	WRITER
Kashta Jivi	Sunkara Satyanarayana
Tanya	Kakumanu Subbarao
Bengal Karuvu	Sk.Najar
Stalin Grad	Sunkara
Andhra Mahasabha	Ch.Viswanadham
Telengana	Sunkara
Russia,German Yudham	P.Kodanda Rama Sastry
Seetaramaraju	Sunkara
Kummari Molla	Sunkara
Veeresalingam	Sunkara
Raitu Vijayam	Sunkara
Karnudu	Sunkara
Palnati Yudham	Nazar

There are quite a number of other performances that took place at different parts of Andhra but a few themes are quoted since most of them have not been recorded in history.

Table: Nine

TITILE	FORM	WRITER
Ahuthi	Harikatha	Sunkara
Hitlar Bhagotam	Yakshaganam	Unknown
Nehru Bhagotam	Yakshaganam	Unknown
Hitlar Patanam	Veedhi Bhagotam	Koganti Punnaiah
Simla Bhagotam	Veedhi Bhagotam	Koganti
Pittala Dora	Pittala Dora	Lakshmi Narasayya
Kasta Jeevi	Harikatha	Ramanjaneyulu

In this phase the organisation gave importance to solo art forms where a single artist did the entire performance. Mikkilineni Radha Krishna Murthy ¹⁹ observes that the cadre (activists) of Praja Natya Mandali was very limited in the first phase. With the available cadre we had to propagate to the maximum extent. This need made us to concentrate on the solo performing arts. Apart from the above mentioned forms, it had also used forms like *Golla Suddulu*, *Sodi*, *Jantaru Pette*, *Kolatam*, *Chenchu Vesham* extensively wherein artists were mainly depended on the spontaneity rather than the written scripts.

II. Phase of Activism: 1945 to 1948:

In this phase, the emphasis is shifted from solo performances to playlets and plays. Even though there were considerable solo performances in this phase, the efforts of the entire organisation were diverted to theatre. Plays like *Mundadugu*, *Maa Bhoomi* were written and performed in this phase.

During this period the mainstream theatre represented Parishat competitions and *Padyam* based performances. As an alternate to the existing practice of theatre, Praja Natya Mandali came up with plays and performances, which directly reflected the problems of working class. The *Telangana* armed struggle, land issues, anti Congress were the main themes of the performances. People like Garikapati Rajarao, Koganti Gopala Krishnaya, Koduri Achayya played a crucial role in training the theatre groups for performances. Apart from other writers, Sunkara Satyanarayana and Vasireddi Bhaskerrao deserve mentions for spontaneity in developing scripts according to the immediate needs of the organisation. Together they had contributed immensely to the cultural movement of Andhra Pradesh.

The plays performed by Praja Natya Mandali and their writers are given below.

Table: Ten

PLAY	WRITER
Mundadugu	Sunkara & Vasireddy
Maa Bhoomi	Sunkara & Vasireddy
Veerakunkuma	Sunkara
Veeranari	Unknown
Apaninda	Sunkara
Aasami	Sk.Najar
Potugadda	Vasireddy
Pettamdaru	Koduri Achyya
Parivarthana	Atreya
Bhoomi Kosam	Sunkara
Gurilla	Sunkara
Congresa, Angresa	Unknown
Jai Bhavani	S.Jagannath
Jaya Bheri	Pratyagatma

Even though the list of plays performed by Praja Natya **Mandali** seems to be small, the number of performances were numerous. As a matter of fact, there could be no other single organisation in the state that gave so many performances like Praja Natya Mandali. KA Abbas mentioned it as a world record that 125 groups performed *Maa Bhoomi* and within a year of 1947, they had completed thousand performances.²⁰ Mikkilineni Radha Krishna **Murthy**, mentioned that around twenty lakh people watched *Maa Bhoomi*²¹. Apart from performing within the state, the

organisation organised shows at places like Madras, Sholapur, Pune, Bombay, and Ahmadabad. In those days around ten thousand audiences bought the tickets with four *Annas* and witnessed *Maa Bhoomi* at Sholapur.

The workshops:

For the first time in the cultural history of Andhra, Praja Natya Mandali initiated a series of workshops on cultural aspects. It had organised workshops with fifteen days duration each in almost all districts of Andhra. Rajarao who happened to be a doctor by profession used to take care of the medical needs of the delegates. The basic medical kit was a must for every workshop. The delegates used to wake up by 4a.m and continue to practice the given work till the night. Within the span of fifteen days every group used to master the given art form. People like Koganti Gopla Krishnayya, Mikkilineni Radha Krishna Murthy, Rajarao, Kosuri Punnahai, Umamaheswar Rao used to supervise the process of workshops.

K.Lakshmi Narasaiah describes that both the women and men were the participants of the workshops. They used to be very friendly with one another without making any problems to their personal as well as professional lives. The participants always tried to correct their own mistakes without giving a chance to others to comment upon their work. Still everybody were given an opportunity for discussing different issues.

In this manner around fifteen workshops were conducted in the state and it paved way for the development of many groups and individual artists in Andhra.²²

III.The phase of decadence: 1948 to 1952

During this the period, Praja Natya Mandali began to deteriorate and loose its charm. Most of the leaders and important cadre started disappearing from social activism either due to the police threats or due to personal problems. Performances at major cities and towns were banned. Very few performances have taken place in rural areas. Some times performances were given in the name of the other organisations. An association, which had been showing a great legacy on the entire cultural field of Andhra for about a decade, gradually faded into darkeners for which three reasons were found.

(i) There was the ban on Praja Natya Mandali and communist party. Many artists, poets, singers were not only arrested but experienced rigorous harassment from the police. Because of this ban, the cultural movement that been taking a desirable shape in Andhra got suppressed. This was not only a set back to Praja Natya Mandali, but also to the entire cultural movement of Andhra. The Government, which tried to create an obstacle to the upcoming communist party's ideology, indirectly suppressed the then flourishing left oriented theatre of Andhra Pradesh. Vallam Narisimharao²³, an artist from Praja Natya Mandali said that

wherever there is information of Praja Natya Mandali's performance, police force used to appear there and destroy the arrangements. Sometimes they were so frightened to face the police, who do not know the local language, so it used to be a hell to convince them. The Government of Madras issued an order banning the play *Maabhoomi*. Most of the prominent leaders had gone to underground in order to avoid the police oppression. Thousands were arrested and beaten, many died, and the leaders languished in jails²⁴. Party suggested the artists of Praja Natya Mandali to withdraw the cultural activity and look after their own survival.

In 1948 Party had taken a decision to close Praja Natya Mandali at an underground meeting held at Vijayawada. With this some artists went in to film industry and some to their own previous professions like agriculture and wage laborers. This was a gloomy experience to all the associates of the organisation. Nazer, one of the leading performers of *Burra Katha* in those days felt that their association with the communist party made them to close their cultural organisation so soon²⁵. He aspired for a cultural organisation that exist with out affiliation any political underpinnings. But one must also imagine that whether it is possible to develop such a great movement with out the support of the party.

The revolutionary communist party, which was supposed to continue the political and cultural activity even in the oppression, had suggested the cadre to withdraw the activity. During the oppression, the

artists and writers who were active in the second phase of the movement had gone into the film industry. Most of them went to Madras and tried to pursue their career as artists and writers in film industry. The artists who were active in the first phase remained with the people and continued to perform for the people. They could not get a chance to enter into film industry. But the artists who had gone in to the industry never turned back to perform for a social cause. The artists who were mainly associated with folk performances and individual based forms were able to continue their commitment even in the third phase. But the artists who were educated and knew the adaptability of their creativity to the silver screen had never been able to involve themselves in the third phase of the movement.

(ii) The second reason for the weakening of the organisation was the cultural policies of Communist party itself. The differences in the leadership also had shown its impact on Praja Natya Mandali. There was no clarity to the Communist party on what kind of relationship should exist between the political field and cultural field. It had directly started propagating their ideology through art forms without preparing the masses for that. The sudden rise of people's spontaneous feelings was misunderstood as if the masses are strongly supporting the party. It was the support to the issues that the party had taken up not the ideology of it. This phenomenon can be understood with the first general elections of Andhra Pradesh in A.D 1952, where Communist Party was expected to win with great majority lost the election. The party that was supposed to

prepare the ground for a revolution had tried to create the revolution itself. Hence the same confusion has been carried out to Praja Natya Mandali also. Even though the party formed Praja Natya Mandali, it could have continued as independent body without losing its ideological commitment.

(iii) The third reason was, inability of Praja Natya Mandali to make any theoretical premise for the new styles and approaches that it made in theatre practices. Leaders like Rajarao, Koganti Gopala Krishnayya and the other leaders of the organisation, did not put any efforts to develop a theoretical understanding of theatre. It created a new way in play writing, music, sets, characters etc. It adopted folk performances to the contemporary themes but could not develop an ideological agenda to it. Because of this, the tradition created by the organisation could not be continued to the next generation either to follow it or to modify it. Even though the organisation was able to involve many women, dalits and all other marginalised groups into theatre, it could not develop an ideology to accentuate how these groups and communities are vital in building up a cultural movement in a rural based country like India. Such type of discussion could have influenced the mainstream theatre much. The lack of theory, discourses, discussions and documents in this regard made the next generations just to praise the organisation for a moment and forget it there itself. Because of this limitation there was no continuation in the work of Praja Natya Mandali.

There is also another reason for the obscurity of Praja Natya Mandali. In the history of World theatre, wherever there is a trend of people's cultural movement with a strong leftist ideology, there was an opposition to proscenium and hence, performance mostly based on the tradition were developed. From Augusto Boal to Badal Sircar, it is felt that proscenium and people's theatres are contradictory to each other. Hence they strongly built up a counter form of presentation, acting style, new method of costumes, a new way of relationship between the audiences and performers. But for Praja Natya Mandali, there were some misconceptions in the performance patterns in which it believed. People like Garikapati Raja Rao did not put any efforts to change the method of proscenium stage. Even though he tried to adopt many forms of people successfully, the main intention of all those efforts was to reach the people with their content. But he or his colleagues did not understand the contradictions that exist between the traditional art forms and proscenium form. Hence the organisation tried to use both the forms of presentation to address the people. Hence most of the cadre hailing from middle class felt that proscenium is more convenient than the traditional art forms. The cadre did not realize the ideological contradiction between these two. As a result the cadre was more attracted to proscenium and the clapping middle class audiences. Rajarao himself will stand as the best example for this phenomenon. He was fully engaged in producing the proscenium

plays after they shut down of the organisation. He also had conducted a Parishat in Rajamundry for proscenium plays²⁶.

Because of these reasons Praja Natya Mandali showed much interest on stage plays than the folk forms in the second and third phase of development. Hence plays like *Maa Bhoomi*, *Mundadugu* received the priority and popularity. Another major draw back was the appreciation of the middle class was taken in to consideration. Hence great plays like *Maa Bhoomi* was performed in *Parishats* at Vijayavada and received the best script award also²⁷.

The middle class ideology that does not accept to bring major changes in performance style led the artists of the organisation to enter into cinema industry. Some of the leaders organised regular Parishats in their towns in the name of progressive ideology. Its failure to develop proper perception about cultural aspects among public gave a wrong signals in the following years. Hence expression of progressive ideology is more important than that of the way it is expressed. Later on, the person who is expressing ideology became more important than that of the ideology that is being expressed. Because of this, the ideals of Praja Natya Mandali were accepted by every one including the people who were supposed to oppress them. The ideal of socialism became the so-called ideal for commercial cinema, Parishats organised by *Zamindars* and confused middle class intellectuals. As a result, every organiser started utilising the ideals of Praja Natya Mandali for their own benefits.

Praja Natya Mandali, which could not be active for not more than one decade had shown a great impact for around five decades. With the activity of a decade, Praja Natya Mandali had created a new epoch and perspective in the history of Telugu theatre. The analysis of its history and contribution shows that how it is distinct from mainstream Telugu theatre. It also suggests the do's and undo's to future political theatre activists in the process of synchronising both politics and theatre. Praja Natya Mandali gave due importance to the issues, that are overlooked by mainstream theatre.

1. The themes of all the performances are based on day-to-day problems and life styles of common people like wages, labour, land tenures and land levy etc. The performances were based on different motifs of Fascism, Independence movement, Russian Revolution and other national and international issues. They were addressed to the spectators in a way that they get deeply immersed and involved in events that were represented on stage. The narrative technique and story line were **synchronised** to give a lively effect in the performance.
2. The Prajanatya Mandali took native art forms, which were very powerful from both thematic and performance perspectives. Hence prime importance is given to the marginalised theatre forms of marginalised communities. Hence people from rural areas owned **the**

organisation. The organisers invited the folk performing artists to train the artists of the stage plays for the time of rehearsals.²⁸

3. Praja Natya Mandali incorporated women and dalits into performances. Women centered plays and dalit issues like untouchability, slavery, bonded labour were staged to arouse social consciousness and public awareness among audience. It followed the ideals of Ballari Raghava by involving the women in to the organisation. A culture of respecting the women artists in the group was encouraged by the organisation. The women *Burra Kata* group of Moturi Udayam, Chintala Koteswaramma, Mahankali Lakshmi gave numerous performances of the biography of Tanya, a Russian revolutionist. Kondepudi Radha, Tapi Rajamma, Viramachineni Sarojani's group from Praja Natya Mandali of Krishna District gave hundreds of performances of *Alluri Seeta Rama Raju* in *Burra Katha* form, which was attended by the political leaders of Congress Party²⁹. Later the Government banned this performance since it was potential enough to mobilise the masses against British imperialists. Praja Natya Mandali created congenial atmosphere for exposing the problems of the marginalised to a wide range of audiences from lay people to intellectuals.
4. Till the emergence of Praja Natya Mandali as a powerful theatre movement, the general trend was that one performing group prepares a play and the same group gives numerous performances

at different places. But the strategy of Praja Natya Mandali was different. It trained hundreds of groups in a single play and organised their performances at different places simultaneously. In other words, thousands of performances concurrently covered larger geographical areas within a lesser span of time. This practice set aside the question of superiority of the director over writer and vice versa.³⁰

5. Even though Praja Natya Mandali is a cultural organisation, it never confined its activity only to the performances on stage. It always tried to respond to the needs of the people in miseries. The organisation collected cash and kind from public to help the sufferers in Bengal drought. In A.D.1944, when the Government failed in its duty to remove silt in Bandar canal, around five hundred youngsters of Praja Natya Mandali worked and removed it for a length of four miles.³¹ At this juncture, the Praja Natya Mandali performers gave performances at the bank of the canal to amuse the workers on one hand and on the other to make the labour feel relaxed and inspired at work spot.
6. Praja Natya Mandali understood the interrelation and interdependence between theatre and literature. The organisation distributed many literary works to the cadre artists for their reading and made them to acquaint with literature and literary styles. Popular poets and writers were invited to address and share their

experiences with the performing artists. Soon after the completion of the performances, they are open for discussions in which local intellectuals, journalists, and writers were invited to comment upon the previous day's performance. Even at the organisational level, Praja Natya Mandali and Progressive Writers Association traveled and worked together. Later this phenomenon discontinued in Telugu land. Tummala Venkata Ramaiah³² popular activist mentioned that both Praja Natya Mandali and Progressive Writers Association were children of the same mother that received a good reception from the audience of entire Andhra. Though there is a little time gap between the two organizations in their establishment, both of them efficiently reached people and won popularity within no time because of their tremendous contribution to the society through their ideology. One became the body and the other its soul. They both contributed to each other's development.

The Second phase of Left political theatre: Party Politics

The second phase of political theatre in Andhra starts from A.D.1964 to present. In A.D. 1964, the Communist Party of India was divided into two groups with the names of Communist Party of India (C.P.I) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (C.P.I.M). Debates and discussions, over a arguments in a period of ten long years resulted for this split. M.Basavapunnaiah, the polit buro member of C.P.I. (M) holds that the clashes were developed from Telengana struggle itself. He attributes

ideological differences as causes for its split in A.D1964.³³ P. Sundarayya, Nambudripad, Basavapunnaiah, A.K.Gopalan and others represented C.P.I. (M). Ch.Rajeswarrao, Dange, Mohit Sen and others led the C.P.I. Again there was another division in C.P.I. (M) during A.D.1968, with the name of C.P.I. (Marxist, Leninist). Charumajumundar, K.Seetaramaiah and others led the group. This split rose a fundamental discussion on the way that a revolution should be led. The C.P.I. (M) says that the revolution should be through parliamentary method, through which the public consent has to be built up. Where as the C.P.I. (M.L.) felt that it is only through armed struggle that the revolution can be successful. Hence it led the Nuxualbury armed struggle in West Bengal during 1970³⁴. Later this group had undergone many further splits with many names like C.P.I. (M.L. Janasakthi), C.P.I. (M.L Prajapandha), C.P.I (M.L People's War) led by different leaders.

This division of Communist Party of India into many parties led to the rise of subsidiary cultural wings. Hence the history of political theatre in Andhra witnessed many political theatre groups after 1968. Each group tried to build a cultural wing of its own. The following parties have started various theatre groups in different names.

1. Communist Party of India – Andhra Pradesh Praja Natya Mandali.

2. Communist Party of India (Marxist) – Andhra Praja Natya Mandali
3. Communist Party of India (Marxist, Leninist) – Jana Natya Mandali.
4. Communist Party of India (M.L. Prajapandha) - Arunodaya.

Praja Natya Mandali, which championed the cause of masses during A.D.1940 to A.D.1960, was formed into two groups, one is for C.P.I., and the other is for C.P.M. Both the parties could not start their cultural wings soon after the split. It took much time for both the parties to emerge as political forces. During A.D. 1980s both the parties reorganised their own cultural wings based on their previous relations and experiences. Both the parties had new **names** for their 'cultural wings' because the Praja Natya Mandali of yester years got withered away by A.D.1960 itself. But the both parties wanted to use the same name of Praja Natya Mandali. In order to escape from the confusion, one party named it as Andhra Praja Natya Mandali and the other party as Andhrapradesh Praja Natya Mandali. But many people got confused with the nomenclature of the party's represented wings and hence the names of these cultural groups were identified as C.P.I.'s Praja Natya Mandali and C.P.M.'s Praja Natya Mandali.

In the second phase of political theatre, Jana Natya Mandali stood at the forefront and revolutionised the people's art forms.

Jana Natya Mandali:

The historical Naxalbury movement inspired the tribals of Srikakulam region to fight against the oppression. Artists and writers like Vempatapu **Satyam** and Subbarao Panigrahi started propagating their ideology and people's sufferings through their art forms and songs³⁵. Subbarao Panigrahi effectively used the local folk form *Jamukula Katha* and incorporated the ideological content into it. With the inspiration of this movement, people like B.Narisingarao and Gaddar started a cultural organisation called *Art Lovers* in Hyderabad. Slowly many poets and writers were attracted towards the Marxist-Leninist party's ideology. As a result Jana Natya Mandali was started in A.D1972³⁶.

In the initial stages of Jana Natya Mandali, the performances were in and around of Hyderabad with usage percussion instrument *dappu* and a gas lamp for lighting. Later the performances were spread to some of the Southern districts of Andhrapradesh. The main art forms of the organisation were song and street plays. It developed many songs on almost all oppressed communities. **The** very unique contribution of Jana Natya Mandali was that it brought out a performance style in singing the songs. It used acting as a supportive medium for singing. The tradition of using the song for the propagation of their creeds was started ever since the Bhakti movement. A performer using style of song, a **little** bit of rhythmic body movement and dance, dialogue and with instrumental support was the basic performance style of *Harikatha*. The same style

followed by three people with different content is *Burrakatha*. Where as the singing style of Jana Natya Mandali was quite a different one in style when compared with the above mentioned art forms. Gaddar, a legendary figure of Jana Natya Mandali was the one who popularised this style. He is a poet, performer, singer and lead narrator. His contribution to the cultural movement of Andhra was immensely great. His style became so popular that even the governmental agencies followed the same approach for publicising their political dogmas, activities and schemes. All the leftist cultural groups, non-governmental agencies and apolitical organisations appeared to have pursued the same pattern. In this context it is important to review and analyse the style of performance of Gaddar. Though it is the innovative performance of Gaddar, all other groups of Jana Natya Mandali also used to present the performance with the same style.

The performance of Gaddar & Jana Natya Mandali:

Before starting the actual performance some general songs were sung by the artists. Gaddar in the beginning of his performance attracts the audiences with his satirical dialogues and sets the minds of the audience for his show. Then he begins to explain the exploitation and miserable sufferings of the masses in the hands of power groups, be it government or landlords and so on. He requests the people to be united in order to fight against these problems. He asks the audiences to listen to the heartbeat of working class. Immediately the remaining performers start playing the Dappu instruments. He symbolically says that these sounds

are the heart beats of the exploited class³⁷ of the society. As in the traditional performances wherein a prayer is sung in the beginning, he sings a song in praise of the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the party. Because JNM believes in armed struggle many activists died in the struggle. So his martyrs' song includes all the martyrs of recent past. The song runs like this: *Oh! Students, youth, martyrs of nation Lal Salam (Red Salute) for you! You were the one who fought for land, food and for nation's freedom from the clutches of the exploiters.* Gaddar is **very** emotional and makes the audiences to experience the great sacrifice of the martyrs for the welfare of the downtrodden. At the end of this particular song audiences develop a great compassion for J.N.M's ideals.

Soon after this song, he makes satirical comments on the existing political leaders of the state and strongly criticises their policies. His criticism contains lots of humour that makes political leaders very cheap and contemptible before the public. Slowly he narrates the way how the people's army in the dense forests is getting prepared for the war against the oppressive political leaders and landlords. Again he becomes emotional and explains the sufferings of *Dalams* to build up a new society for the exploited. He further narrates how the police forces torture the innocent villagers and tribals to reveal the where about of *Dalams* (armed troupes) in their neighborhood. Some times Gaddar openly mentions **the** names of the police officers and ridicule them. He also explains his commiseration for the poor lives of the police constables.

"Neeku Naaku Teda Ledanno! Oh! Policeanna!

Manala Maname Champukuntero! Oh! Policeanna!

*Sarkarodu Kuluku Tunnado! Oh! Policeanna!"*³⁸

(Oh! my police brother! there is no difference between you and me. We are killing each other and the Government is enjoying the process!)

The song tries to establish an identity between the members of *dalam* and constabulary by asking to join with them in their fight against the state. In this song he describes how the higher officials harass the lower police to attend the work at their own houses. Whenever Gaddar's performance takes place, the police constables that attend his programme to control the law and order, they frequently request him to sing this song for them (privately).

When he criticises the politicians, his first target is the contemporary Chief Minister and Home Minister of the Government. His songs on Vengal Rao, Chenna Reddy, NT. Rama Rao and Chandra Babu Naidu are very popular. The songs narrate their biography in humourous and satirical form. This open criticism of the individuals was not found in the previous leftist cultural movement, especially with Praja Natya Mandali. Audiences enjoy this type of songs, since they knew that the lives of all leaders on whom songs are composed. And they never come across such a performer who directly pinpoints the leaders in a public

gathering. For instance one of his song on the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, NT. Rama Rao was a big hit.

"Anna Vachindo! Ramanna Vachindo!

Rama Rajyam Thestanantu Rankelestu

Anna Vachindo! Ramanna Vachindo!"³⁹

(Brother Ramanna has come before public saying that he will bring the Rama Rajya again)

This type of songs made Gaddar much more popular and nearer to the people. The important aspect in his entire performance is his *Abhinayam*. He sings every song with lots of emotion and tries to depict the visuals through his body movements. It is neither a solo performance nor a dance **balled** or a series of song **recitals**. It has all the preparations, which a modern play requires like rehearsals, acquiring the properties, instruments etc. But one cannot compare it with a modern theatre performance. It is not a play, which takes place in a proscenium. There is no specific story, but it has a specific beginning, middle and an end in the content. No entries and exits. Once the performance starts, all the members of the group will be on stage till the end. There are no curtains, sidewalls or specific lighting and set requirements. Even though all these characters are found in traditional folk **theatre**, one can't specify the form. The costumes of the performers are similar in nature. Everybody wear a general dress code of a Telengana rural peasant with a black woolen

shawl on shoulder, a *dhothi* and a stick in the hand. Even though Gaddar took up this dress code from the people, it became so popular that wherever a performer wears this kind of dress, people immediately say that it is Gaddar's dress.

In the history of Telugu Theatre, the performances of Gaddar were not considered as Theatre. Hence no one has reviewed or analysed his performances in detail. If any one looks at the performance of Gaddar in comparison with a modern proscenium play, one cannot find any characteristics of modern theatre. So most of the critiques and scholars did not mention about his work. But if an **analysis** takes place in comparison with the traditional folk theatre, one can place Gaddar in a distinguished position. The language, dialect, costumes, tunes of the songs, instruments and other performance inputs are exceedingly folk and rural based.

There is also another aspect of it. All this popularity of Gaddar is not only the greatness of the form he chooses but also lies in his personal image as a revolutionary. He went to exile for about a decade. All these happenings gave him an image as an exponent of Gaddar style in Jana Natya Mandali. When he came into the public life from the exile on 20th February, A.D1990, people of Andhra Pradesh gave a grand welcome⁴⁰. His public meetings are always crowded with lakhs of people. Even though he is not able to sing with the same pitch as that was in A.D1980s, he is well received because of his image. Almost all his performances are

lively because, his own experiences as a 'revolutionary' will get transformed into his verbal and non-verbal expressions during his renditions.

The major strength and draw back of Jana Natya Mandali in its thirty years of cultural movement is its identity with Gaddar. One cannot imagine the organisation without Gaddar. At the same time his style became the solo practice of entire movement of the organisation⁴¹. Even though Gaddar says that he is like any other member of it, he became its whole and sole. In their performances, the artists follow costumes, body movements and even modulation in voice of Gaddar while enacting different themes and singing songs and narrating different events in episodes. The adaptation of Gaddar style was so internalised that the main performer is always called as 'Gaddar'. In other words, the style and pattern of performance was identified with Gaddar. The performances were successful because of that identity. Hence J.N.M had unconsciously produced replicas of Gaddar in all their performances in the last thirty years. As a result great movement of thirty years has its own limitations also. Except for a few performances, it never tried with other forms. Vangapandu Prasadaraao a composer, singer and writer who worked in shipyard of Visakhapatnam for a long time as a worker came into contact with V.I.R.S.A.M (*Viplava Rachiyatal Sangham*), made such efforts with some folk forms. His association with J.N.M made him a great composer. Songs like *Jajanakari Janarai*, *Empillado Eldam Vastava*, *Yantrametla*

Nadustuvundante, and *Vatannadostannadu* were written and composed by him were so popular in the cultural movement of Andhra⁴². Later some of his songs appeared in movies also. His play *Bhoomi Bhagotam* was adaptation of Veedhi *Bhagavatam* of Srikakulam region and received a wide response.

The Perception of Politics made all the difference:.

Jana Natya Mandali continued the tradition of Parma Natya Mandali that made sincere efforts to address the masses with their own art forms. Even though both the organisations had the same ideological commitment, their approaches were differ. The parties heading these organisations have two different understandings on class struggle in India that found reflected in their cultural expressions. Hence, their cultural activities are different from that of the previous Praja Natya Mandali. Specifically JNM's understanding of theatre is different from Praja Natya Mandali's. the latter was interested in attracting the urban middle class audiences into cultural movement, for most its leadership of hails from the same class. Even though there were many performers in PNM, like Nazar, they remained as they are as artists but did not become the leaders of the movement. But since Jana Natya Mandali did not pay interest on middle class audiences since its leadership was not from the same class. It believed that the revolution comes with armed struggle, that to from the interior rural areas. Hence the party suggested the cadre of the party to go to the villages. As a result Jana Natya Mandali adopted

traditional art forms like *Voggu Katha and Jalari Bhagotham*. Though Praja Natya Mandali followed traditional style of folk art forms in the beginning, later it leaned towards proscenium plays. Where as Jana Natya Mandali never had any kind of interest on proscenium. As a result it developed it's own theatre form with a strong traditional base. All the performances Jana Natya Mandali were aimed at the rural audiences. The songs, tunes, instruments and the forms were designed to attract the rural masses at large. This ideological clarity of Jana Natya Mandali itself is a revolutionary cultural movement in Andhra.

Arunodaya & Jana Sahithi Samskrutika Samakya:

In the same period when Jana Natya Mandali was active another two Leftist cultural groups by names Arunodaya and Jana Sahithi Samskrutika Samakhya also formed and worked in the cultural field⁴³. These two groups represent the split in the CPI (M.L) after A.D1970s. Their activities mainly reproduce old classics of Praja Natya Mandali and develop small art forms and songs that represent contemporary political struggles. Their role in influencing the cultural movement of Andhra was negligible. Arunodaya took up *Simla Bhagavatam*, an old classic performance of Praja Natya Mandali and developed in the form of *Yakshaganam* a folk art form under the directorship of Kanuri Venkateswarrao. Another play produced by Arunodaya was *Naandi* written by G.Venkata Konda Reddy, a member of *VIRASAM (Viplava Rachiyetala Sangham)*. The theme of the play was the peasant community of Telengana fighting against the

landlords. Around hundred performances were given at Nalgonda, Kurnool and Nijamabad districts. it also dramatised the long poetic narrative of K.G.Satya Murthy's *Chelli Chandramma*. They also took up the *Bhoomi Bhagavatam* of Vangapandu and gave number of performances. Some of the major plays of Arunodaya and Jana Sahiti were given below⁴⁴.

Table: Eleven

PLAY	WRITER
Maahoomi	Sunkara,Vasireddy.
Mundadugu	Sunkara, Vasireddy
Chairman	Kodali Gopalrao.
Potugadda	Sunkara, Vasireddy
Pragathi	Kanuri Venkateswarrao
Naandi	G.Venkata Kondareddy
Janam kadilindi	Ganasekhar
Jalaga	R.V.Raju
Velugubata	R.V.Raju
Manuvu-Maanudhi	Unknwon
Athi Chowka Mamsam	Nikhileswar
Appula Bharatam	Divikumar, Lakshmayya, Ramarao

Though they adopted folk art forms and style of Jana Natya Mandali as a medium for the dissemination of their political ideology, they did not contribute much for the emergence of any specific style of its own. The

public meetings were organised with simple introductory and concluding songs that represent their party philosophy. Hence their contribution to art and theatre is not remarkable.

Street theatre:

Street theatre emerged as an outcome of anti theatrical form to the proscenium theatre. Badal Sircar, in his book *The Third Theatre* explains the fundamental differences between a street and proscenium performances⁴⁵. According to him, proscenium theatre has only two types of relationships, one is between the actors and the second is between the actors to audience. The proscenium keeps the audiences in dark and expects them to be silent/dummy through out the performance. Whereas in street theatre, a relation exists between the audiences and the actors. They can talk and react to the incidents that are taking place in the arena. As it has become a strong weapon of political propagation around the world, street theatre played a crucial role in political and cultural fields of Andhra.

Having been inspired by Badal Sircar's style, the National School of Drama organised an acting workshop in collaboration with Department of Theatre Arts, Andhra University in A.D.1973 at Visakhapatnam.⁴⁶ In this workshop, Attili Padma Vathi Krishna translated the *Julius* of Badal Sircar into Telugu by name *Uregimpu*⁴⁷. M.K. Raina, from N.S. D directed it. Later, Attili Krishnarao wrote and directed another street play by name

Jantar *Mantar Mamullu*. His play *Tomy-Tomy-Tomy* received a wide response both as street performance and stage performance. The trend of street theatre became wide popular with *Pedda Balasiksha* written by Akella Satyanarayana in A.D.1982⁴⁸. Later another play *Gograhamam* written by T.Bharani was performed all over Andhra for around sixty times by the same group.⁴⁹ Later, this play was performed by many amateur groups and widely popularised it. T.Sundaram was the director of the play.

P. Purna Chandrarao of Ethnic Art Center had also produced number of street plays for different Non-Governmental Organisations. Though his productions received wide response from them, the performances did not show any impact on either mainstream or political theatre. In A.D. 1990, Safdar Hashmi was killed while performing a street play at the outskirts of New Delhi. His death provoked many left based cultural groups to make street theatre much more nearer to masses. In Andhra, Praja Natya Mandali popularised the form of street theatre and produced number of performances on different political issues. Though the performances of street theatre started by A.D.1979, it was considered as an experiment. By A.D.1990 it became popular and most of the urban areas were covered with some performance or the other of street theatre. Praja Natya Mandali turned it into a movement. Hundreds of rural agricultural labours were trained in acting, developing script, conducted workshops for writers, artists and directors. T.J.Ramanadham is the popular director of street theatre performances of Praja Natya Mandali⁵⁰.

He designed plays like *Hallobol*, *Mana Charitra*, *Raitu*, *Telengana*, and *Alluri Seetaramaraju*. Under the banner of Praja Natya Mandali, Ramanadham stood for the ideological commitment of Marxism. According to Santharao, General Secretary to the state committee of Praja Natya Mandali mentioned that by the end of A.D.2000, Praja Natya Mandali has produced around fifty street plays on different issues. It has been organising a street theatre festival every year in the memory of Safdar Hashmi, by the name SHOT (Safdar Hashmi Open-air Theatre) in different parts of Andhra⁵¹. After noticing the **wide** response for street plays, all other political parties and non-Governmental Agencies have been using the same form for the propagation of their agendas. The Department of Information, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh employed a group of artists to give performances on several issues like AIDS, anti-arrack and primary education.

The Contemporary Scenario:

Presently, India has many Communist parties. Though only C.P.I and C.P.I. (M) have got recognition as national parties, its other parties are strong in many states. The membership in the parties has gone up. Left parties have got their own establishments in most of the states. Major left parties have their own buildings, newspapers, cadre, full time workers, funds and every thing equivalent to the mainstream political parties. Though their growth is nominal when compared to other political parties, certainly they show a considerable growth over a period of time. C.P.I

(M.L) People's War, which is active in Andhra, Orissa and bordering areas of Karnataka, has an annual budget of one hundred crore. This budget is used to buy the weaponry and for the establishment of party. But they are not able to build up a cultural movement, which they successfully did in A.D1940 despite a strong oppression in those lines. This situation is the result of the failure of the Praja Natya Mandali in developing a strong discourse related to people's art forms and their importance in building up a cultural movement in the society.

The same is the case with Jana Natya Mandali also. Because of many splits in the CPI (M L), there was no one to really concentrate on the cultural lives. Gaddar became a stereotype to himself, as a result his impact on the masses has been diminishing. The other organisations like Arunodaya, Jana Sahithi lost their organisational strengths. At present a few individuals run them. Any of them have no clarity or theoretical understanding in building up an alternative cultural movement. The mistakes, which were taken place in A.D1940s, same mistakes were repeated even in A.D2002. For instance there was a heavy discussion on the relation between party and cultural organisation in 1940s itself. Even though the Communist Party has full control over Praja Natya Mandali, most of its artists felt that there must be a visible distinction between the two. But even in 2002 Andhra Praja Natya Mandali organised a weeklong folk festival on the occasion of the CPM's national conference at Hyderabad. Even though the festival was well received, people received it

as a general strategy of the party to attract the masses. Hence the purpose of the festival was lost.

The present situation of the political theatre in Andhra is that it is meant only to entertain the cadre either before or at the end the Party's meeting. The performances produced by the party gradually became stereotyped in its expression of jargon in political ideology, music and also the way they approached the problems of society. Moreover, the party polices began to decide the nature of the plays and its message. An example may be cited here. Both C.P.I and C.P.M maintained a political alliance with Telugudesam party till A.D.1998. Until then both the Praja Natya Mandalis propagated the inherent danger of *Hindutva* forces in India and message is communicated to eliminate such fundamental forces. The theatre groups of left parties used the travel to nook and corner in the vehicles of Telugudesam Party, as it had much hold in the state. The cadre of Telugudesam used to make all the arrangements for leftist theatre groups. Later Telugudesam shifted its stand and entered into a new alliance with Bharatiya Janata Party. Then both the Communist Parties ought to withdraw their alliance with Telugudesam. Starting from the immediate election, they are forced to propagate the danger of both Telugudesam and BJP. As a result both the Praja Natya Mandalis produced songs and plays propagating the new stand of their Parties. This interdependency of parties and political theatre gave a cheap impression to the public. Hence how powerful may be the performances, people have

not responded much. Apart from producing some street plays and some emotional songs, no left organisation has a clarity or perception towards developing a cultural movement.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the political theatre used marginality as a cause to promote their power politics and gain access to the political power. For Right wing parties social evils are projected as the source for marginality by the colonial governments, especially the British which itself is an offshoot of modernism. People of India who are exposed to the modern system of education made to view certain practices and customs as the cause for marginalising the subjects in the subcontinent in the hands of British. Therefore social reform is championed as cultural renaissance and to achieve that plays were written and produced to counter the social evils.

The Left wing parties projected economic egalitarianism as fundamental tool to wipe of marginality. For them the land less and the poor are the chief indicators of marginality. To instill in them a sense of confidence, collectivism is promoted as the basis for the struggle against the laded gentry and bourgeoisie. Theatre is chiefly used by the Left wing parties to achieve their goals. Their theatre articulated the cause of marginalised and represented their marginality. By incorporating social groups that are economically back ward, socially under privileged and politically un-represented their theatre dealt with the issues related to them, which resulted the emergence of a new theatre. This is a hybridised

theatre that could adopt itself to either proscenium or street format without compromising with the textual features of the play. This feature of theatre is noteworthy for its transcendence between the realms of tradition and modernity. To represent tradition, it adopted the features of folk theatre and to represent modernity it followed the proscenium plays format of script (written plays). This combination warrants for a vivid description of the theatre of the marginalised, which is the theme of the next chapter.

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13. The Andhra Mahasabha was particularly active in this phase, and the majority of the youngsters' newly politicised cadre flocked to it. A significant development that occurred around the year 1940 was that Ravi Narayan Reddy who had emerged as a major leader of the radicals in the Andhra Mahasabha and had participated in the state Congress Satyagraha along with B. Yellareddy, was drawn towards the Communist Party. As a result, several of the younger cadres also came under Left and communist influence, and these radical elements gradually increased in strength and pushed the Andhra Mahasabha towards more radical politics.

The Mahasabha began to take an active interest in the problems of the peasants. Mrudula Mukkahjee, op.cit. Pp.369.

14. The political and sociological situation of that time saw the growth of a powerful peasant struggle in Telengana area. The communists took an active part in building up the struggles at grass root levels. "The main targets of attack were the forced grain levy, the practice of *veth begar*, illegal exaction's and illegal seizures of land. Clashes took place initially between the landlord's *goondas* and the peasants led by the Sangham (as the Andhra Mahasabha was popularly known), and later between the armed forces of the state police and peasants armed with sticks and stones, *Ibid.* pp.370 - 371

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Chapter - 6

TOWARDS THE THEATRE OF THE MARGINALISED

The historiography of Telugu theatre, discussed in the previous chapters, clearly gives an idea that how the mainstream theatre in Andhra traversed for about a century. Most of the times, it dangled on the philosophical milieu of Idealism. Though it is not cited anywhere openly, it can be understood that it has not articulated itself with the context. Here context means the changing times, the advancement of technology, the sociopolitical and economic changes in modern Andhra, and the invasion of electronic media, globalisation, and the relation of theatre to these things. Hence over a period of time, the main stream Telugu theatre has lost its relevance. The fourth chapter tells about political theatre and its ideological base. The ideological base of Andhra's political theatre is nevertheless Marxism, which falls under the broad category of

Materialism. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1987, followed by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a number of communist states, and the cold war over the last fifteen years, the nature of politics and political discourse has changed radically. The *revolution* in world politics has in part risen to the notion of a global economy. Thus the relevance of Marxist based political theatre in Andhra has become very nominal. Here Marxist based political theatre means not in the sense of ideological framework. It is just on the basis of political representation of Marxism in the context of Andhra. Political theatre in Andhra represents the manifestoes of communist parties, who have lost their political influence over a period of time. The present condition of political theatre in Andhra is such that it is used to entertain the cadre either before the Party's meeting or at the end. The jargon it uses, the tunes it make and the approach of every performance have become stereo typed. Party polices started deciding the nature of the play and its message. Therefore theatre with political ideology is needed in Andhra rather than a theatre with the affiliations of political parties. This idea further generates a question that whether there can be politics with out political parties.

Theatre of the Marginalised is a concept, which addresses the sociopolitical conditions of the masses. The voice of the deprived sections of the society is represented through their own traditional theatre forms. This merging of modern social and cultural needs with traditional theatre forms gives a new life to theatre. This experiment is proven to be

successful in the yester years. The performances of Praja Natya Mandali and Jana Natya Mandali can be quoted as the best examples. An analysis of their performances can certainly helpful to understand how effectively politics, theatre and native expressions can travel together. The play *Maa Bhoomi* of Praja Natya Mandali and *Bhoomi Bhagotham* of Jana Natya Mandali are taken for analysis.

Praja Natya Mandali - Theatrical Representation of the Marginalised:

Among all the productions of Praja Natya Mandali, the play *Maa Bhoomi* occupies high rank. Except for a few Padyanatakams like *Pandava Udyoga Vijayalu*, *Satya Harischandra*, *Chintamani* and other plays of similar kind, no social play was performed for more than thousand times like *Maa Bhoomi*. Critiques feel the after *Kanyasulkam* it was *only Maa Bhoomi*, which has created a new wave in the Telugu society. Perhaps it is the only play in Andhra that directly mobilised masses against the cause of exploitation. The opinions of great writers, political leaders and freedom fighters who witnessed the play, were published in various books and magazines. It is interesting to note that apart from people like P. Sundarayya, Kopparapu Subbarao and T.Venkatrammayya who had a left bent of mind, scholars like Viswanadha Satyanarayana, Pingali Lakshmikantam, Mallampalli Somasekhara • Sarma and many others who are generally recognised as traditionalists in the cultural history of Andhra, praised the text and performance of *Maa Bhoomi* to sky high.¹

Socio - Cultural backdrop:

It is important to mention about the socio-economic situation of the times in which *Maa Bhoomi* was written and produced. During A.D 1940, the regional cultural awakening took place in the Telengana area. A cohesion to this effort was provided by the founding of the Andhra Jana Sangham which later grew into the Andhra Mahasabha. The emphasis initially was on the promotion of Telugu language and literature by setting up library associations, schools, journals and newspapers and promoting a research society. Even these activities came under attack from the State authorities, and schools, libraries and newspapers would be regularly shut down.²

During the same period, the freedom struggle became fervent in the entire country. The *Satyagraha* started in October 1938 and the pattern adopted was that a group of five *Satyagraha* headed by a popular leader and consisting of representatives of all the regions would defy the ban by proclaiming themselves as members of the State Congress. This was repeated thrice a week for two months and all the *Satyagrahis* were sent to jail. Huge crowds would collect to witness the *Satyagraha* and express solidarity with the movement. The two centers of the *Satyagraha* were Hyderabad City and Aurangabad City. Simultaneously, there was the emergence of what to be known as the *Vande Mataram* Movement. Students of colleges in Hyderabad city organised a protest strike against

the authorities' refusal to let them sing *Vande Mataram* in their hostel prayer rooms³.

The State Congress, however, continued to be banned and the regional cultural organisations remained the main forums of activity. The Andhra Mahasabha was particularly active in this phase. Majority of the new political incumbents got fascinated to this organisation and associated with it. As a result, several of the younger cadres also came under Left and Communist influence, and these radical elements gradually increased in strength and pushed the Andhra Mahasabha towards more radical politics. The Mahasabha began to take an active role in the problems of the peasants. The Telangana armed struggle operated under the leadership of *Andhra Maha Sabha* was mentioned as one of the great struggles of Modern India. During the years 1945-46, especially the later half of 1946, a powerful peasant struggle in various pockets in Nalgonda district, and to some extent in Warangal and Khammam took place. The main issues to be attacked were the forced grain levy, the practice of *Veth begar*, illegal exaction of revenues and illegal seizures of land. Clashes took place initially between the goondas of landlords and the peasants led by the *Sangham* (as the Andhra Mahasabha was popularly known) and later between the armed forces of the state police and peasants armed with sticks and stones. The resistance grew strong as the repression grew high. Hence by the end of 1946 the severity of the repression led to the movement into quietude. Thousands were arrested

and beaten, many died, and the leaders were crushed into jails. Yet, the movement was successful in instilling into the oppressed and downtrodden peasants of Telangana a new confidence in their ability to resist.⁴

The play *Maa Bhoomi*:

. In above scenario the play *Maa Bhoomi* was written and produced. The theme of *Maa Bhoomi* was taken from an incident that took place in Nalgonda District. The playwrights Vasireddy Bhasker Rao and Sunkara Satyanarayana hold that the policemen were very oppressive against on the people's agitation. The police subjected over two hundred and forty villages to massive harassment. Around eight thousand and fifty people were arrested. Fifteen thousand and three hundred nineteen people suffered due to the torture of Nizam Government. Fifty-two active comrades lost their lives in fight. Seventy-four women were raped among them two were killed. This ruthless oppression moved the hearts of everybody and led playwrights to write plays like *Maa Bhoomi*, which represented the miserable dialogical situation between the oppressors and oppressed.⁵

Though the theme of the play is social, the content has a historical importance. All the characters and their modes of attitudes are historically significant. Because of this content the play served two purposes simultaneously. Whenever the play is performed in Telangana region, it

evoked the feelings of peasants and made them ready to fight against the forces of oppression. On the other hand with the performance of play Maa Bhoomi in Coastal and Rayalaseema region, it brought to light the sufferings of the co-peasants to the people of these regions. It resulted the growth of a strong sympathy wave and support from these regions⁶.

The story of the play:

Bandagi, a young revolutionist struggled against the exploitation made by his landlord for about twelve years and was killed finally. His demise inspires thousands of peasants to follow the path of struggle. On the day when he was killed people of that land celebrates his ceremony by gathering at burial ground. In the occasion of such celebration, people like Veerareddy, Sitamma (wife of Veerareddy), Kamala (sister of Veerareddy), Ramireddy, Subhan, and Dadasaheb gathered over Bandagi's graveyard and pay homage to him. There they decide to fight against the oppression of the local landlord.

Though there is a time gap between the periods of Bandagi and Ramireddy, there was no change in the process of exploitation by the landlord (Desamukh). Yalamanda is a shepherd by profession and happens to be an illiterate. One day Mastan, one of the followers of Deshmukh takes a sheep of Yalamanda to the house of Deshmukh. Even though Mastan happens to be the brother of Subhan (subhan is on the opposite group), he has a strong association with Deshmukh. As a result

he also represents his power with the remaining people. When Mastan meets Veerareddy and Ramireddy, he is questioned about the theft of the sheep of Yalamanda. He takes it as an insult and leaves the place with anger. Meanwhile some goondas of landlord tries to harass the sister of Verrareddy. Ramireddy comes to her rescue and make the goondas run away from that area. These two incidents are the small examples of the oppressive behaviour of the landlord. Hence Veerareddy and his colleagues like Yalamanda,Subhan decides to form a group Sangham to fight against the land lord.

Mastan who was questioned by the villagers directly goes to the rescue of the landlord. He complains that people are planning to launch a group, Sangham. He reports the matter to and explains that how the entire village violates the declaration of landlord and attend the ceremony of Bandagi. Mastan also says that Veerareddy is responsible for mobilising people. Deshmukh becomes restless and call the Patwari. Patwari Venkatrao comes to Deshmukh and he also tells the same thing that how people are uniting against the Deshmukh. Then the Deshmukh Jagannadha Reddy plans a strategy to take the help of the government and higher officials to suppress the masses. Venkat Rao gives an idea to Deshmukh to rise the problem of Levy to control the people. Immediately they call up Yalamanda and ask him about the repayment of debts. They ask Yalemanda to put his thumb impression on a paper. The paper says that he is threatened by the members of the Sangham to join with them.

Yelamanda rejects to sign on that Then the followers of Jagannadha Reddy torture him until he signs on the paper.

Veerareddy, Ramireddy and Subhan receive a message from the Deshmukh to see him immediately. By the time they come to the house of jagannadha Reddy, yelamanda leaves the place after being experienced a lot of harassment Then Jagannadha Reddy calls up Veerareddy privately and asks him to join hands with him and look after his affairs. He tries to use "Caste" as the uniting factor between them. But Veerareddy rejects the offer openly. Then Patvari Venkatrao asks them to pay the levy immediately and threatens them. Veerareddy and his gang say that there is no crop at all in this year, hence they can't pay the levy. Jagannadha Reddy becomes violent and says that he will destroy the whole village, if they do not pay the levy. Then Veerareddy asks them to pay the levy first on their own lands and then he can also ask the villagers to pay it. Patwari Venkatrao becomes silent to the argument of Veerareddy.

*Sita, the wife of Veerareddy wants to look for marriage alliance to Kamala. Veerareddy says that he is already on the job. He says that another comrade of the neighboring village is interested in Kamala and he will come and talk to all of us soon. Sita feels that time is changing that people are getting married with out any formal talks among the elders before the marriage. Ramireddy and others say that this match will be suitable to Kamala because both of them can roam around the villages on the activities of **Sangham** soon after their **marriage**. Kamala is already a*

member of the Sangham and used to sing revolutionary songs and inspire the people. Where as Sita does not have any kind of interest on Sangham. Veerareddy convinces and asks her to join the Sangham. Sita accepts it. Mean while barber Ramudu who works in the house of Deshmukh also comes and joins in Sangham. The other members of Sangham doubts Ravudu that he may be a spy to Deshmukh. Veerareddy says that it is not fair to doubt every body because Ravudu is also a sufferer. Slowly Sangham becomes strong. All the members of the organisation together started working for the betterment of their lives.

Deshmukh comes to know that Sangham is becoming popular and stronger day by day. He becomes frustrated to know that no body in the village is taking his order seriously. He also finds a unity between the village and Gudem (where dalits live). His followers say that every day some meeting or the other is organised in the village. Then Jagannadha Reddy finds no other option except depending up on the police force. He invites Ameen, the police officer and convinces him that Veerareddy is spoiling the village by violating the rules of the government. He also uses Ameen to split the masses by rising how the communal differences between Hindu and Islam. But he fails in his attempt also. Ultimately he requests Ameen to arrest Veerareddy.

Ravudu passes the message to the group that Veerareddy is arrested. He also warns the members of the Sangham that at any moment the police may ride on the village and a massacre may take place. With

the message of Ravudu, the entire group gets ready to fight back with police. In Veerareddy house Kamala and Sita are left alone. With in no time the police force, goondas and Deshmukh attacks the house of Veerareddy. Sita and Kamala try to retaliate the force with great confidence. Meanwhile the other villagers come in rescue of them. In the fight the bullets of the police kill Sita and Subhan. Deshmukh Jagannadha Reddy runs away from there. Kamala attacks the police and other followers of Deshmukh with chilly powder. With that every body disappears from the place. Sita asks Kamala to take care of her son and dies.

People gather at the graveyards of Sita and Subhan and pay homage to the demised souls. They all decide to excommunicate people like Mastan and Venkatrao from the village. Under the leadership of Veerareddy, the villagers decide to occupy their lands and start cultivating. In the climax, Veerareddy says that all this has happened because of the uniting strength of the villagers. We can also fight with either Navab or with Britishers if we are united like this under the leadership of the Sangham. With this the play ends.

The play *Maa Bhoomi* is a narrative, which explains in general the experiences of the lower peasantry and land less labour in the Telangana region in a story form. It is a narrative because it combined in itself a telling of an actual event. And this event is retold whenever the play is performed. Therefore sympathy as a device is time and again constructed

within the performance and hence acquires the status of the play. In order to produce this device effectively, the characters are presented with simple costume and make-up to appear as the normal village folk. Moreover the interaction between the characters and the events that unfold in the progression of the story is structured in a simpler manner to reach the common, illiterate and non-literate audiences, who hail mostly from the countryside. The following plot structure reveals this phenomenon.

The plot structure of Maa Bhoomi:

Though the playwrights did not divide the play into acts and sub-acts, the division of the play is understood by the locales. The total play takes place in three locales; the graveyard of Bandage, the courtyard of the landlord (popularly called as *Gadi*) and the house of Veerareddy. The first act and the sixth act takes place in the graveyard, the second and fourth acts take place in the house of Deshmukh. The third and fifth acts take place in the house of Veera Reddy. The total play consists of six acts.

All together there are thirteen characters in the play. The following table gives an overview of the names of the characters, their roles and supposed ages⁷.

Table No. Twelve

S.No	NAME	CHARACTER	AGE
1.	Veera Reddy	Protagonist - Peasant	35
2.	Sita	Wife of Veera Reddy	27
3.	Kamala	Sister of Veera Reddy	14
4.	Jagannatha Reddy	Antagonist - <i>Deshmukh</i>	45
5.	Venkatrao	Pathwari: follower of <i>Deshmukh</i>	50
6.	Ameen	Police officer	32
7.	Dada	Small peasant	55
8.	Subhan	Small peasant	24
9.	Mastan	Follower of <i>Deshmukh</i>	30
10.	Yelamanda	Shepherd	40
11.	Ramudu	Servant to <i>Deshmukh</i>	35
12.	Rami Reddy	Small peasant	26
13.	Police	Constable	

The above-mentioned thirteen characters interact in a 'dyad' fashion. A dyad in the technical term refers to the dialogue sequence that occurs between two characters or between the actors and the audiences. In any given situation in the play only two characters exchange dialogues

between them. The following table gives the plot structure of the play Maa Bhoomi, keeping in view the dyad paradigm.

Table No. Thirteen

ACT	DYED-SCENES	STORY
A C T I O N E B U R I A L G R O	1	All the villagers gather at the burial ground to pay homage to <i>Bandagi</i> , a martyr. Characters like Veera Reddy, Subhan, Dada Saheb, Sita (Wife of Veera Reddy) and Kamala (Sister of Veera Reddy) were talking about the sacrifice of Bandagi and atrocities of Deshmukh.
	2	Yelamanda (shepherd) enters with a complaint that one of his sheeps is being taken away by Ameen (police) along with the brother of Subhan. Subhan says though Mastan is his brother, one should teach him a lesson for his loyalty to Deshmukh.
	3	Mastan enters and sees Yelamanda over there and make fun of him. Subhan asks him an explanation why he has taken the sheep of Yelamanda. Mastan gives a careless answer. Rami Reddy and Subhan warns him and sends him away .
	4	Rami Reddy enters with a wound on his head. He says when the followers of Deshmukh drank and teasing

U S E	Yelamanda	Sangham. Yelamanda puts his thumb impression, as he had no other option. Deshmukh leaves the place by giving full power to Venkatrao to talk to formers.
	5	
	Venkatrao with Veera Reddy Subhan with Venkatrao Rami Reddy with Venkatrao	Veera Reddy, Rami Reddy, Subhan and Dada comes to see the Deshmukh. All of them were asked to pay their levy immediately. Veera Reddy says it is not possible because the agriculture is in bad shape. There will be an argument between Veera Reddy and Venkatrao and Veera Reddy demands that first let the Deshmukh pay the levy for his lands. Venkatrao becomes silent with this argument. All of them warns Venkatrao and goes off.
	1	
A C T T H R E E	Sita with kamala Sita with Veera Reddy	Veera Reddy, Sita and Kamala playing with their son and a talks about a marriage alliance to Kamala. Sita blames her husband for not taking care of Kamala's future. Veera Reddy says that he already saw a guy and he would come to see Kamala soon. Kamala and Sita comes to know that the bridegroom is also working for Communist Party as a whole timer.
	2	
	Dada with Veera Reddy	Dada comes to Veera Reddy place and tells him about Mastan's atrocities in the village and how people have taught him a lesson.
	3	
V E	Yelamanda with others	Yelamanda comes with lot of wounds on his body. When he addresses the small son of Veera Reddy as

E R A R E D D Y H O U S E A C T F O U	others	'Dora', Veera Reddy objects him saying that all men
	Veera Reddy with	are equal. Sita applies medicine to the wounds of
	others	Yelamanda and he feels so happy.
	4	
	Rami Reddy with	Rami Reddy and Subhan comes to Veera Reddy place.
	others	Rami Reddy is sad that one of his cows is being taken
	Veera Reddy with	away and tied in Deshmukh's place. Veera Reddy says
	others	that we will discuss it in the meeting of Sangham. The
	Veera Reddy and	conversation turns to religion when the religions of
	Kamala	Deshmukh and <i>Nizam</i> come for discussion. Veera
		Reddy explains that who ever in the power start-
		exploiting people and such people should be defeated.
		Then both Veera Reddy and Kamala sing a song
		explaining the atrocities of Deshmukh and <i>Nizam</i> .
	5	
	Ramudu with	Ramudu, the servant of Deshmukh comes to Veera
	others	Reddy place. Everybody thinks that he has come to
	Veera Reddy with	take them to Deshmukh . But he requests them that he
	others	will also join them in Sangham. He explains how he is
		suffering with day and night service of Deshmukh . After
		he leaves, Rami Reddy expresses a doubt that
		Ramudu may be a spy of <i>Deshmukh</i> . Veera Reddy
		condemns it and says Sangham should be open for
		every one . All of them start going for meeting singing a
		group song.
	1	
		Deshmukh and Venkatrao enter. Deshmukh says he

R D E S H M U K H H O U S E	Venkatrao	with	will see the end of all these people. Venkatrao says
	Deshmukh		that he already guessed it with Deshmukh's visit to city
	2		to get the help from the Nizam. Deshmukh praises
			Nizam for his brain and duality as a supporter of British
			and Congress.
	Deshmukh	with	Mastan comes in with a sad face saying that no labour
	Venkatrao		is willing to come for work in the house of Deshmukh.
	Mastan	with	They get shocked to know that both <i>Vuru</i> (main village)
	Deshmukh		and <i>Vada</i> (where <i>Dalits</i> live) became one. Mastan says
			that with your absence in the village for a few days,
			gave much freedom to Sangham that they have also
			organised a public meeting. Though they try to disturb
			the meeting by throwing the stones, ultimately Mastan
			and others were caught and beaten. Mastan says them
			that all the villagers have taken a oath that they will see
			the end of <i>Deshmukh</i> .
	3		
	Deshmukh	with	A police enters and informs that Ameen is arriving with
	Venkatrao		police force. Deshmukh calls up Ramudu and asks him
	Deshmukh	with	whether the Bungalow is cleaned. He asks Venkatrao
	Ramudu		to prepare a list of provisions to be borrowed from <i>Setti</i>
			for free of cost to feed the police force. He sends
			Ramudu along with the constable to get the provisions
			from the store. He talks to Venkatrao that let the police
			come and see the end of the leaders of Sangham.
	4		
			Ameen comes to Deshmukh and says seriously that he

	Ameen Deshmukh	with	has received a complaint from the people that their Deshmukh is exploiting and harassing them.
	Venkatrao Deshmukh	with	Deshmukh and Venkatrao gets shocked and tries to convince Ameen that what else can be done when they are not paying the levy. Venkatrao informs to Ameen that a meeting was also organised to see the end of both Nizam and Ameen. With that Ameen gets serious and to charge him more, Deshmukh offers him drinks. Though Ameen has a grudge towards Sangham, he frightens that they can also make a complaint to higher officials and go to press. Deshmukh offers him money and convinces him that it is possible only with him to see the end of Sangham. Venkatrao shows the written complaint of Yalamanda and requests him for justice. Ameen wants to see Yalamanda. He also wants to talk to the Muslim members of the Sangham in order to convince them to withdraw from Sangham.
5	Constable Ameen Ameen Deshmukh	with	The constable and Ramudu returns back from the provisions store saying that the Seth does not want to give the provisions without payment. Ameen shocks and becomes very angry. The constable says that nothing can be done because all other villagers came in support of the Seth. Ameen asks Deshmukh about the leader of Sangham. Deshmukh says about Veera Reddy that he can't be called a Reddy, as he also started having food at <i>Dalit</i> houses. Ameen wants to see Veera Reddy.
6			

	<p>Ameen with Subhan and Dada</p> <p>7</p> <p>Deshmukh and Venkatrao with Ameen</p> <p>8</p> <p>Deshmukh and Venkatrao with Veera Reddy Veera Reddy with</p>	<p>Mastan comes with Dada and Subhan. As they enter both Deshmukh and Venkatrao leaves the place in order give privacy to Ameen to convince them. Ameen asks them to sit but they refuse. He asks why they have joined in a Sangham run by Hindus. They reply saying it is not a Sangham of Hindus but poor people. Ameen says that Nizam is a Muslim so all the Muslims must support him. They reject it. Ameen says that if they want they can join in another Sangham run by Muslim leader. They disagree with him saying that nothing will change with such <i>Sanghams</i>. Ameen questions them that with this kind of Muslims only, the Hindus are able to kill Muslims in Bihar. They reply him that in Bengal Hindus are killed by Muslims, any where only poor people are killed. Argument rises among them. Subhan and Dada leaves the place. Ameen shouts at them that he is leaving them because he is also a Muslim.</p> <p>Deshmukh and Venkatrao enter with lot of anxiety to know whether they have agreed to come out of Sangham. Ameen says if not by words today they will listen with <i>Lathis</i> tomorrow. Deshmukh asks him to take rest and if Veera Reddy comes they can see him.</p> <p>Ameen gets in.</p> <p>Ramudu comes with Veera Reddy. Deshmukh asks Veera Reddy that he came to know that Veera Reddy got a job. Veera Reddy surprises and says that he</p>
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A C T I V E	<p>Venkatrao and Deshmukh</p> <p>1</p> <p>Sita with Dada and Subhan</p> <p>Kamala with Dada and Subhan</p>	<p>never tried for it. Venkatrao says that some one has seen Veera Reddy in some <i>Taaluk</i> office. Veera Reddy says that it might be because he has been to Taaluk office of Sangham recently. Deshmukh says why Veera Reddy should wonder for a job, he will give a job. Veera Reddy rejects the offer. Then Deshmukh says there are very less number of people in Reddy's caste as educated as Veera Reddy and why should he suffer with a cultivation of three or four acres. Deshmukh offers Veera Reddy to take care of his lands and village. Veera Reddy rejects it. Venkatrao becomes serious and tell Veera Reddy that they also have patriotism as he has. They are the people who gave the funds to Congress. When the leaders of Congress came to the village, they stayed in Deshmukh's place.</p> <p>Veera Reddy criticises such kind of leaders with whom Congress is getting a bad remark. Venkatrao quotes Gandhi. Gandhi said that all the <i>Jamindars</i> and <i>Deshmukhs</i> are the trustees of land and property. Veera Reddy criticises it saying that it looks like keeping wolf as the safeguard of Sheeps. With this Deshmukh gets angry and make Veera Reddy get arrested.</p> <p>Sita dusting the photographs of Gandhi, Nehru and another leader of Andhra Maha Sabha. While dusting she sings a patriotic song. Dada and Subhan comes in and ask for Veera Reddy. Sita says that he has gone to</p>
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V E E R A R E D D Y H O U S E	<p>2</p> <p>Yelamanda with others Kamala with others</p> <p>3</p> <p>Ramudu with others Subhan with others</p>	<p>see Deshmukh. Dada and Subhan says that they are coming from Deshmukh house, let Veera Reddy come back and know what is the issue.</p> <p>Yelamanda and Rami Reddy enters joyfully. Sita asks whether Yelamanda had a drink. He says that he stopped drinking soon after joining the Sangham. They say that Rami Reddy's theft cow is being got back. There Yalamanda fought with Deshmukh followers and taught them a lesson. They talk about the unity of both Vuru and Vaada. But the people at Vaada are suffering for food. Then Kamala proposes to collect food grains from entire village and give them to Vaada people. Every body agrees for it. Yalamanda opens his bag and takes out a slate. Every body gets surprised. He says that he wants to learn and asks Kamala to teach. The other people come to know that Yelamanda had learnt singing songs from Kamala. Every body asks him to sing. He sings a folk narrative of <i>Golla Suddulu</i> with a theme of contemporary political satire. After the song every body starts talking about various landlord and how police, military and landlords united to exploit the people. In order to face the military, one should know how to defend themselves. Then everyone gets ready to learn the art of self-defense.</p> <p>Ramudu comes and inform everybody that Veera Reddy is being arrested. Everybody wants to go to</p>
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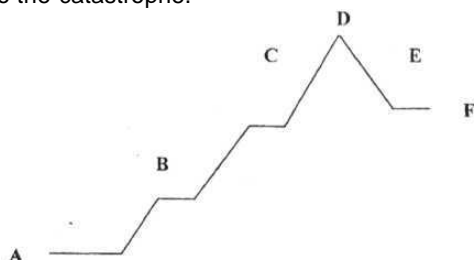
	<p>4</p> <p>Sita and Kamala with all others like police, Ameen Venkatrao and Deshmukh</p> <p>5</p> <p>Dada with others</p> <p>6</p> <p>Sita with Kamala and Veera Reddy</p>	<p>Deshmukh place but Ramudu says the police force is getting ready to ride on the village. Then all of them want to go village and make people ready to face the police. Dada says that he will stay back in Veera Reddy's house in order to protect Kamaia and Sita. But Sita and Kamaia say that they can protect themselves. Everyone recollect the oath they have taken to protect Sangham and Kamaia start singing a song in praise of Sangham.</p> <p>Ameen and Deshmukh come with police force. Sita tries to oppose them. Police enter into Veera Reddy house and start throwing everything out. Deshmukh tries to attempt Kamaia and meanwhile Sita comes and beats on Deshmukh's head. Other polices try to beat Sita, then Kamaia attack them with chilly powder.</p> <p>Meanwhile all the villagers come to rescue of Sita and Kamaia. Dada comes in and starts kicking Venkatrao. Ameen shoots Dada and Dada collapses. Sita comes to rescue Dada and Ameen shoots again. Sita also collapses. When the other people get in, Deshmukh and Ameen escape from there. Kamaia cries holding Sita.</p> <p>Veera Reddy rushes to home with the help of Ramudu and shocks at looking Dada and Sita. Veera Reddy tries to give water to Dada and he dies. Sita asks about her son. Kamaia gets in and come with Sita's son. She</p>
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A C T S I X G R A V E S D	1	holds him and kisses. She hands over the child to Kamala and says that 'from now you have to be the mother of this child'.
	Ramudu with others Subhan with others Kamala with others	Kamala, Veera Reddy, Subhan and Ramudu pay homage to Sita and Dada's graves. They sing a song in praise of Sita and Dada. They talk about the greatness and human nature of both Sita and Dada. Though both belong to two different religions, died for the cause.
	2	Rami Reddy and other farmers bring Venkatrao over there. Venkatrao straight away fall at the feet of Veera Reddy and ask for pardon. Every one over there shout at him for his deeds and support of Deshmukh. Venkatrao says he has done all those things as part of his job. He says he ready to face any punishment given by the Sangham. Rami Reddy says Venkatrao must be killed and put into grave along with Sita and Dada. Kamala says that his death body should not be buried beside the graves of great martyrs like Sita and Dada. Veera Reddy asks him to go away from the village.
	3	Yelamanda brings Mastan to burial ground. Subhan shouts at him and ask him to suicide for his deeds. He is also asked to go away from the village along with Venkatrao. Kamala says the actual culprits have escaped. Yelamanda says that both Deshmukh and
	Subhan and Yelamanda with Mastan	

	<p>Veera Reddy with Mastan</p> <p>4</p> <p>Veera Reddy with others</p>	<p>Ameen ran away to Nalgonda. Veera Reddy asks everyone to occupy their own lands and start cultivating. Yelamanda asks Veera Reddy whether the evil forces are left or eliminated. Veera Reddy says that Deshmukh may come with military or he may take the help of British. Rami Reddy says that though Deshmukh comes with military, the united village can fight back and retain their economic equality. Subhan says all this is happened because of Sangham, whoever comes, Sangham can continue the struggle.</p> <p>Veera Reddy praises everyone and says that every one must be ready to sacrifice lives in order to protect the lands. Unless it happens, it is a mischief to both Sita and Kamala. Subhan says that the Sangham is started at the grave yard of Bandagi and again at the grave yard of Sita and Dada, every on should take a oath. Everybody gives the slogans to protect the lands, and in praise of Andhra Maha Sabha. Together they all sing a song in praise of martyrs.</p> <p>Curtain falls..</p>
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The above plot structure is based on the dyed scenes reveal that it is not unilinear plot structure as it is found in by and large in European plays. Gustuv Frey tag, a German scholar, playwright and critic evolved a graphic formula to study the structure of a play/plot by symbolising the

arrangement of various incidents in a pyramidal structure. It rises from the introduction, with the entrance of the exciting forces to the climax, and falls from here to the catastrophe.



These parts of the drama (A) Introduction (B) Rise (C, D) Climax (E) Return or fall (F) Catastrophe has peculiarities in purpose and in construction. Between them stand three important scenic effects, through which the parts are separated as well as bound together of these three dramatic movements, or crisis: - one, indicates the beginning of the rising action, stands between the introduction and the rise, the second; the beginning of the counter action, between the climax and the return or fall, the third; which must rise once more before the catastrophe, between the **return** and the catastrophe. They are called the exciting moments or forces of the last suspense. The operation of the first is necessary to every play; the second and third are good but not indispensable accessories. Since it is the business of the introduction of the drama to explain the place and time of action, the nationality and life relations of the hero, it must at once briefly characterise the environment. Besides the playwright will have opportunity here to indicate the particular mood of the play, as

well as the time and the dramatic place. As a rule, soon after the opening scene, the first chords are firmly struck with as much emphasis as the character of the play will allow. The exposition at this stage should be kept free from anything distracting, its task, to prepare for the action. It best accomplishes if it so proceeds that a well-executed scene, which is connected with the following scene containing the exciting force by a quick transition, follows the first short introductory chord.

So the construction of a regular introduction is as follows; a clearly defining keynote, a finished scene, and a short moment into the first moment of the excited action. The beginning of the excited action i.e. complication, occurs at a point where in, the soul of the hero, there arises a feeling which becomes the occasion of what follows; or where the counter play resolves to use its lever to set the hero in motion. Manifestly, this impelling force will come forward more significantly in those plays in which the chief actor governs the first half by his force of will; but in any arrangement, it remains an important motive force for action.

This force of action treads the stage under very diverse forms. It may fill a complete scene; it may be comprised in a few words. It may not always happen because of the hero or his adversary; it may also be a thought, a wish, and a resolution, which may come from the soul of the hero himself. But it always forms a transition from introduction to the ascending action, either entering suddenly, or gradually developing through the speeches and the mental processes of the characters. Yet it is

to be noticed, that this force seldom admits of great elaboration. Its place is at the beginning of the play, where powerful pressure upon the audience is neither necessary nor advisable. It has the character of a motive, which gives direction and preparation. It must not be insignificant; but it must be according to the feeling of the audience. The suspense, which it causes, may modify or perhaps determine the fate of the hero. A convenient arrangement is to give the exciting **force** in a temperate scene after the introduction, and closely join to this the first following rising moment in greater elaboration. Once the action starts the chief persons reveal what they are, the interest gets awakened. Mood, passion, involution have received an impulse in a given direction. If it has not been possible to accord a place in what has gone before, to the most important persons in the counter play or to the chief groups, a place must be made for them now and an opportunity must be given for an activity full of meaning. Such persons too must eagerly desire to make themselves known to the audience. Whether the accent made by one or several stages to the climax depends on material and treatment. In any case a resting place in action and even in the structure of a scene, is to be expressed that the dramatic moments, acts, scenes, which belong to the same division of action are joined together so as to produce an unified chief scene, sub-ordinate scene and connecting scene.

The scenes of this rising moment have to produce a progressive intensity of interest. They must, therefore not only evince progress in their

import, but they must show an enlargement in form and treatment. If several steps are necessary, the next to the last, or the last, must preserve the character of a chief scene.

The climax of the drama is the place in the play where the results of the rising moment come out strong and decisively. It is almost always the crowning point of a great, amplified scene, enclosed by the smaller connecting scenes of the rising and of the falling action. The playwright needs to use all the dramatic skills of his art, in order to make it vividly conspicuous this middle point of the artistic creation. It has the highest significance only in those plays in which the hero, through his own mental process, compels the ascending action; in those dramas which rise by means of the counter play, it does not indicate an important place where this play has attained the mastery of the chief hero and misleads him in the direction of the fall. In the case where the climax is connected with the downward movement by a tragic force, the structure of the drama presents something peculiar, through juxtaposition of two important passages, which stand in sharp contrast with other. This tragic force must first receive attention. This beginning of the downward movement is best connected with climax, and separated from the following forces of the counter play to which it belongs by a division at close of an act. This brought about not immediately after the beginning of the tragic force but by a gradual modulation of its sharp note.

This close connection of the two important parts gives the drama a tragic force of magnitude and expands the middle part, which changes the pyramidal form into one with a double apex.

The most difficult part of the drama is the sequence of scenes in the downward movement or as it may well be called, the return. Especially in powerful plays the heroes are the directing forces enter up to the climax. The interest is formally fixed in the direction in which the chief characters are moving. After the deed is consummated, a pause ensues. Suspense must then be excited in what is new for these new forces; perhaps new roles must be introduced in which the audience must acquire interest. On account of this, there is already danger in distracting and in the breaking up of the scenic effects. Yet, it must be added since the hostility of the counter party towards hero cannot always be concentrated in one person nor in one situation. Sometimes it is necessary to show how frequently it affects the hero. Due to this, in the first half of the play during the course of advance it may be ruptured, in many parts. This is particularly the case with historical subjects, where it is most difficult to compose the counter party with few characters only. And yet the return demands a strong bringing out and intensifying of the scenic effects on account of the satisfaction already accorded to the hearer/audience. Therefore, the first law for the construction of this part is that the number of persons be limited as much as possible and the effects are comprised in great scenes. It is well understood that the catastrophe must not come

entirely as a surprise to the audience. The more powerful the climax, the more violent the downfall of the hero and hence the end must be felt in advance.

The catastrophe of the drama is the closing action; it is what the ancient stage called it as 'exodus'. In it the embarrassment of the chief characters is relieved through a great deed. At this juncture the drama must present in action including within itself all its parts. Though the struggle of the hero causes his entire life, it is inherent necessity of the play. Concerning the end of the heroes, perception of the reasonableness and necessity of such destruction must be vivid. It is necessary that nothing accidental, which happens at a single time, be presented.

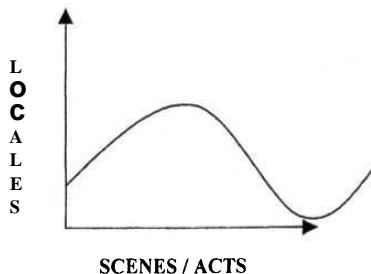
Catastrophe contains only the necessary consequences of the action and characters. For the construction of the catastrophe, every unnecessary work should be avoided, and no word should be left unspoken whereby the idea of the play can, without effort, be made clear from the nature of the characters. Further the scenes must be kept dramatically brief, simple, and free from ornament.

There are many different qualities of a poetic nature, which are called into operation in these eight parts of the drama on which its artistic structure rests. To find a good introduction and stimulating force which arouses the hero's emotions and keeps it in suspense, to bring out a

strong climax is specially the business of poetic power. To make the catastrophe effective it requires an exalted power of deliberation to make the return effective.

Contrary to the above plot structure where the climax reach after several turns in the progression of the play. Once the climax is reached the fall occurs steeply and ends in a conclusive manner This is to say that the issue that is posed in the exposition congruently gets resolved denoting catastrophe (End) of the play. The resolution of the problem posed will be the prime concern of the play in the Western dramas. Normally the story is constructed around the events of protagonist and the antagonist. At the climax both meet and the protagonist wins over the antagonist. In most of the western dramas, the protagonist is eliminated either by death or punishment. In exceptional cases the hero sacrifices himself for a noble cause. Normally such plays are considered as tragedies where protagonist is named as 'Victim hero'.

In the case of the play Maa Bhoomi, the plot structure completely differs from that of the Western dramas as explained above. When Maa Bhoomi drama's plot structure is analysed the following graph emerges.



In the above diagram, the x-axis represents acts / scenes of the play and the y-axis represent the locales. The first and sixth acts take place in the open locales, being the burial ground. The remaining four acts take place in two locales, one the Veera Reddy's house and the other Deshmukh's house in alternative manner. The inside locales distinctly juxtapose as 'Low vs. High'. The 'Low' represented by Veera Reddy's house who appears as a middle peasant. The 'High' is represented by Deshmukh's house, which is of landlords and signifies the place of authority. For instance the entry into the house of Veera Reddy is open to every one. Irrespective of the caste, religion and economic status, all the villagers have a direct access into the house of Veera Reddy. Sita and Kamala welcome everyone with equal respect and share all their feelings. At one level, the house of Veera Reddy becomes the center for the unity of all the peasantry and land less labour. Whereas the entry into the house of Deshmukh is restricted and who ever come to meet Deshmukh, should stand before him (Except Ameen). Once he offers a seat to Veera Reddy in order to pacify him and Veera Reddy rejects it. The furniture, bags of food grains and the interior represent the social and economic high ness of Deshmukh. So the plot is worked out as paradigmatic structure. Two paradigms are distinctly drawn in the play:

1, Open: Closed

2. Low : High

Therefore, Open: Low:: Close: High.

In the above formula the paradigms are drawn as Open: Low further represents the land less and small peasants. The entire events of the play take in the metaphorical norm of the 'Open'. One is the open locale, which is outside the village representing the status of the marginality, and the other is inside the house of the Veera Reddy, which is open to the marginalised. For example people like Yelamanda who hails from a lower caste also gets similar reception as other upper caste people in the house of Veera Reddy. When he is injured, Sita applies medicine to his wounds and consoles him. Contrary to this paradigm, the set of paradigm that is 'Closed ; High" represents the 'power' in the form of landlord and State. The concept of 'Closed' indexically used for power and authority, which is concentric in nature and therefore monopolised. Deshmukh with the help of few associates such as Ameen and Venkatrao veiled the state power and therefore symbolically claim high status both in social rank and economic position. The hierarchies are built up using these paradigms in the play. The play demonstrates for a reversal of the hierarchies more so to attain egalitarian social set up rather than reversing the order itself. What is interesting to note here is that the reversal is not achieved through the process of elimination of the high by the low but achieved only by way of absentia of the high. In the fifth act of the play, soon after the attack on Veera Reddy's house, Deshmukh escapes to near by town. In the sixth act again his reference is mentioned that he may come back with much police force and try to get back his power. Veera

Reddy motivates every one to be prepared for such consequence. Therefore unlike in the European drama there is no direct confrontation of the protagonist with antagonist. Therefore the climax point can't be pinpointed and the whole story depicted as a blending shown in the above graph. The beginning of the play starts with an indication of a past event and the end of the play presupposes a beginning for the emerging event. In the first act, people gather at the graveyard of **Bandagi**, a martyr, and pay homage to him. Dada and Veera Reddy talk about his greatness and deeds. In the last act, a caution is made that at any time **Deshmukh** may come back with much more strength. Hence the struggle against oppression is mentioned as a continuous process. In other words the class struggle, an ideology drawn from the Left parties here shown as continuous struggle within the feudal forces of oppression, wherein the landless fight over the landlord. Therefore the play seems to be an open ending play rather than a conclusive play.

Performance of the play:

The unit of Krishna district Praja **Natyamandali** first performed *Maa Bhoomi*. The training camp for the play was set up at a village called Lingavaram, Gudivada Taluk of Krishna district. Koduri Atchayya was the director of the camp. Artists were selected from different regions of the district and trained for a period of six months. Around twenty-five artists were selected for the training. The camp is generally residential system. The camp starts by six in the morning with physical exercises. Between

eight to nine A.M, every body finishes their breakfast and bath. From nine to one P.M, the rehearsals were done. Again by three P.M, the rehearsals were started. The session continues up to eight P.M. whenever the leaders of the Communist party come to that area, they used to attend to the camp and address the artists on different socio-political issues. Along with rehearsals, political classes were organised. Book reading is prescribed as compulsory for everyone in the camp. To asses whether a person red the book thoroughly or not, the organisers used to rise the questions from the book. Every day night there was group meeting to discuss these issues⁸.

The first phase of rehearsal is reading the text in the group. Soon after three, four readings, each artist used to read a character. With in a week all the artists were perfect with the whole text and with the lines of every character. In the second phase, the selection of artists for every character took place. The rehearsals were done according to the scene order of the play. The director did not go the second scene until the first scene is thoroughly practiced. The presence of all the artists is compulsory, even though the presence of a specific character in the scene. All the artists were asked to note down the mistakes done by the other artists. Soon after the rehearsals, they discussed the notes of each artist.

The team practiced dress rehearsals for about two to three times before starting the actual performances. All the intellectuals, literary

personalities and Party leaders were invited to the dress rehearsals. Soon after the performances, the team used to take advises from them. "This tradition of open-talk with the team is organised through out the performances. Popular writers, poets, and progressive leaders were invited to the performance in every town and used to organise a discussion soon after every performance."⁹

Though the play represents peasant movement against the landlords that took place in Telangana region, the performances took place mainly in the **non-Telangana** region. This was happened because of the ban on Praja Natya Mandali in Telangana. Orders were issued to arrest the artists wherever the performance takes place in the region. Hence the teams used to perform the play in the boarder areas of Telangana. This gave a chance to the Telangana people to witness the performances in the boarder areas of Krishna, Guntur districts. People used to come from far away places to see the play. The bordering villages like Tiruvur, **Nandigama**, **Namila**, **Turumella**, were selected for performances. Still there was threat form the police. Hence in some cases, the cadre of the party surrounded the stage with arms in order to fight back the police in emergency. Some times a rumor spreads that police force is on the way to stop the performance. Immediately there was a great chaos at the performing space. Audiences then run away from the performance with a great fear of police charge. It takes a little bit of time to control the audiences and start the performance once **again**¹⁰.

The performance style of *Maa Bhoomi* was designed for proscenium stage. The general timings of the performance was during night time around 9 to 10 p.m. In some cases, while the group returns from the village after completing the performance in the night, the neighboring villagers organised the performances during the daytime also. The organisers in advance collected a list of arrangements to be made in the village for the performance from the group in-charge. Keeping the list in mind, the organisers in village set-up a temporary proscenium stage with wooden planks, tables and bullock carts. Though the stage looks like proscenium with elevated performance space, it can be viewed from the three sides of the stage. The main feature of traditional theatre practice is having the audiences at the three sides of the stage. Same thing was practiced for the performances of *Maa Bhoomi*. Though the rehearsals and performance were planned for one side viewing of the public, the practical situations did not permit the group to do so. This is done not because of any ideological motif, but to be nearer to the thousands of audiences. In most of the villages there was no sound system, hence the audiences used to gather at the three sides of the stage. When we performed it in the towns where we found well-equipped auditoriums, we used to follow all the principles of proscenium.¹¹ Though the arrangements required for a proscenium performance are high and consume lot of time, the Praja Natya Mandali groups preferred proscenium to street performance. The organisers felt that proscenium

provides more space for more audiences to witness the performance, than a street performance. The elevated stage enables to draw the attention of the audiences seated far away from the stage. Where as in the street performance, the visibility of the performance limits itself to the audiences nearer to the stage. In fact, the method of street performance is much easier and very convenient for the performers. It is easy to escape from the police, because street performances need less preparations and properties. Hence the performers can start the play at any place with a short notice and a finish off before the police enter. But the crowd who look forward for a performance of Praja Natya Mandali was so high, only proscenium performance can enable them to witness it properly. This compulsion made us to choose proscenium to street.¹²

' Painted curtains were used to suggest the location of the play. For example, a painted curtain suggests the scene at **Bandagi's** graveyard. Properties were extensively used. The house of Deshmukh is suggested with a big chair set and with many bags of food grains on one side of the stage. Use of musical instruments like **Dolak**, Tabala and harmonium to enhance the mood and rhythm of every song. Mike is used wherever it is available, and there are quite a number of performances given with out mike. The lighting also depends upon the availability. **Vallam Narisimharao**, a renowned actor in **Maa Bhoomi** play, while talking on the stage arrangements mentioned that they performed in many villages, where there is no electricity. In such places they used gas lamps.¹³

Except for the police uniform, the costumes for the other characters were easily available and can be obtained from villagers. All the costumes were gathered before starting the series of the performances. For every group there will be an in charge to take care of the set properties, curtains and other requirements. The artists do the makeup for themselves. Face powder, creep material, ornaments and wigs were used. Garikapati Rajarao, the chief organiser of P.N.M used to get them from Bombay. The local cadre of the Party made all necessary arrangements in the villages for the performance. Food, transport, lodging were never been a problem for P.N.M performances.¹⁴

Hermeneutics of the play:

The greatness of *tylaa Bhoomi* lies in its characterisations and the content. The characters behave like any other person of Telangana area in those times. Though they have a revolutionary bent of mind, they never limit themselves to slogans and jargon of the communist party. The characters are portrayed as common folk in society. When the play proceeds they become revolutionary as the oppression increases. Another significant element is that the playwrights picturised the characters of landlords and his supporters in a very realistic mode, with out making them caricatures. The behavior, their way of talk, costume etc were the real portrayal of the landlords. Hence the playwrights were successful in creating a liking for the audiences towards the downtrodden people and

hatred towards the exploiters. This element is achieved with a sequence of incidents/events not just by dialogues and prolonged speech methods.

Though the play looks simple, its greatness lies in addressing so many issues simultaneously and making revolution a part of life. Apart from the message of uniting the masses against the oppression, the play talks about so many other messages. It addresses to the internal contradictions among the people. The playwrights try to tell people how these internal contradictions help the exploiter to make the people separated forever. The people in the play belong to two different religions. Their beliefs, customs and way of life are different from one another. Similarly they belong to different castes. The landlord always tries to show the religion as the uncommon factor among the people and wants to separate them on the same. But the protagonist in the play dismisses this factor saying, "All the poor has the same problems irrespective of their religion". The *Sangham* focuses the consciousness of class in the place of caste and religion. Similarly the need for adult education in order to understand the exploitation of the landlord and for the betterment of life as a whole is stressed in the play. The leader of the *Sangham*, Veerareddy never allows the lower caste people to address him or his family as *Dora*. The playwrights also made an attempt to question the general prevalence of untouchability. When *Yalamanda* gets injured, Sita tries to apply medicine to his wounds even though he feels embarrassed. Veerareddy wants to make a marriage alliance for his sister with another comrade,

only if the proposed couple likes each other, without involving the elders into the scene.

Even though the focussing issue in the play is land, the playwrights were successful in incorporating so many other related issues in the play, by which a great concern and impact was created among the audiences. According to K.Lakshmi Narasaiah, "All the issues addressed in the play may look like ideals of the Communist party. But the people practiced these ideals. One can see a great unity between the *Gudem* and upper caste villages in order to fight against the exploitation. So the playwrights took the inspiration from the practice of these ideals not from the ideals which remain ideals for ever".

Jana Natya Mandali: Theatrical representation of marginality

Among all the performances of Jana Natya Mandali, the play **Bhoomi Bhagotam** needs a special mentioning for two reasons. This was perhaps the only play of Jana Natya Mandali, which has got all the theatrical characteristics and a written text. The remaining performances of Jana Natya Mandali were more or less spontaneous compilation of various issues with a broad plot structure. For example most of their performances start with a sequence of paying homage to martyrs, criticising the current political system, the need for an immediate armed struggle against the oppression and how the State try to kill the comrades of the Party and finally, how the people's army will resist such oppression

and build an ideal society. This sequence of various issues may alter from performance to performance. But the broad plot structure of the performance will remain same with a beginning - progression –and fall.

All their performances have no specific text as such except for songs. Whereas *Bhoomi Bhagotam* has a specific text and all the characters in the play has a defined role to portray. The other reason for special mentioning of *Bhoomi Bhagotam* is that it is widely performed through out Andhra Pradesh. Perhaps it is the only social play in the post independence Telugu theatre, which has received hundreds of performances.

Historical Milieu:

Vangapandu Prasadarao wrote **this** play during A.D1977. The Congress (I)'s regime in the country received negative response from the people. The land reforms introduced by Indira Gandhi at national level did not produce positive results. The Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi led the public to go for alternative. As a result the Janata Party under the leadership of Morarji Desai formed the Government at center. Within a couple of years the Government received the no confidence motion in the parliament and again elections were conducted. This sequence of elections and fall and rise of the Governments gave a low opinion to the public. Most of the political leaders are considered as the power mongers. By this time various Left wing groups who believe in armed struggle,

started developing their cadre in various parts of Andhra. These groups oppose the parliamentary democracy and consider it as a weapon employed by the Feudal and Capitalists in order to continue their regime. Hence the Left groups denied working within the parliamentary system and believed-armed struggle is the only way to protect the rights of the people.

In this context Jana Natya Mandali started developing songs, skits and street plays portraying how the parliamentary parties behave at the time of elections and the way the leaders forget the public soon after the elections. All their performances propagated the idea that parliamentary democracy is a myth and people should realise it soon. No justice can be done to people and never the natural resources will be distributed. What ever such agenda brought forth by these political parties, it is a part of their political stunt for winning over the elections. **Bhoomi Bhagotham** is written in such context, to prove how the land distribution was misused and how the justice is denied to the poor sections. This play asks the people be united and fight against the oppression by the State.

The story of the play:

It is a story of Suri and Mangi who had an acre of land for their lively hood. The village officials like Karanam and Munusub (administrative officials of the village) tries to own the land in the name of distributing it to the land less people as per the Government orders. They use another

Dalit agricultural labor as an instrument to own the land. They use all their power to transfer the land from Suri to another Dalit, Mallanna. Mallanna thinks that the Karanam and Munsub are supporting his cause; hence he offers lot of money to them. When Suri and Mangi reject to disown the land, the Karanam and Munsub come with the police. Suri was arrested. Later the election comes and a political leader representing the Janata Party enters as a part of his election campaign. Mangi asks him about their problems and request him to help them by giving the land. He makes promises to Mangi and she agrees to vote for him. Later Suri comes back from the jail and the political leader wins the election and comes back to the village. When Mangi questions him about his promises, he goes away from there. Ultimately Mallanna gets the land from Suri. He happily starts working in the land. Meanwhile the Karanam and Munsub come there and ask him to vacate the land, since he has to pay so many debts to them. Karanam says that he used all his power to get the land on the name of Mallanna, in order to recover all his debts. Then Mallanna realises the mischief of the Karanam and Munsub. In the process all the land less laborers realise the mischief of the landlords and decide to fight against oppression.

The plot structure of the play:

The play **Bhoomi Bhagotam** is written in a ballad form interluding theatrical elements such as short dialogues, interrelating the scenes through background voice, commentary about the characters and their

actions on the stage, and entry and exist through the usage of curtains. This play even in the script form does not appear as a regular theatrical play. It is framed into six scenes; the first two scenes are locale based and with the help of closing and rising of curtain, the scenes are suggested to the audiences. The third scene is worked out on the entry of characters (Inspector along with Karanam and Munsub). The breakup of fourth, fifth and sixth scenes are suggested through the commentary. So it is difficult by divide the text of the play into clear-cut scenes and acts. In fact, it is a hybridised "format of song and drama and therefore strict division of the play into acts and scenes is not possible. This peculiar feature of the play Bhoomi Bhagotham can be treated as one of the basic characteristics of the theatre of the marginality.

Table: Fourteen

CHARACTER	ROLE
Suri	Poor Peasant
Mangi	Wife of Suri
Mallanna	Harijan , Poor peasant
Karanam	Village administrator
Munsub	Village head
Inspector	Police
Praja Nayakudu	Politician

From the above table it is evident that the characters with negative roles are more in number than those with positive roles. In other words the antagonist and his supporters form a larger group than the protagonist and his supporters. The antagonist and his group in general are represented

as the representatives of the Feudal State. The conflict and resolution over a tiny piece of land is depicted in tripartite form. The actions of the protagonist and antagonist and their supporters progress in syntagmatic formation. The concept of syntagmatic is based on the principle of 'difference'. The different units in any structure show a unique unilinear relationship with one another. That means to say that in a word like Dog 'D' has a unique unilinear relationship to 'O' and 'O' with 'G'. Therefore to form the linguistic sign 'Dog' the phonemes need to be a unilinear utterance producing the sound 'Dog'. Therefore the 'morph' (meaning) Dog is understood as an animal. This unilinear relationship is the feature of the syntacmatic structure. Through these syntacmatic the story in the play Bhoomi Bhagotham is constructed. The entire play is structured on the syntacmatic of the 'land less vs. landed', 'power less vs powerful', and 'status less vs status in'. All these are one after the other presented to the audience in a sequence having the land as the core problem.

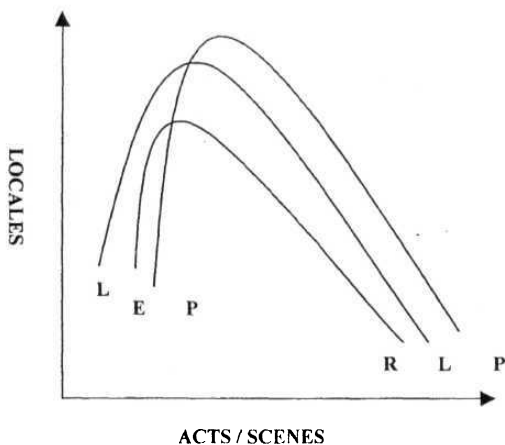
Land less——Land lord

Power less——powerful

Status less——status in

In order to arrive at the above syntactic structure, three broad plots are drawn within the story line; one story line is told from the view point of the land less laborers/ poor peasant, the second is told from the perspective of landlord, the third angle is from the politicians / State. The

following diagram represents the multiple plot structure of Bhoomi Bhagotham.



In the above diagram the P.P line represents the Poor Peasantry, the L.L represents Landlord and the E.R indicates Electoral Representatives. Three had three different purposes over land. One is for sustenance; the other is for power the third one is for status over possessing the land. As indicated in the graph, the poor peasant though subdued innately, when individualised by the landlord, he gains upper hand over the landlord when he joins collectively fight against him.

This core ideology of the party is innately structured within the story line. The message by using the tripartite plot structure is to show the poor peasants not rely on electoral representatives, but fight themselves collectively against the landlord to gain their subsistence, by possessing the means of production.

Performance of the play:

According to Vangapandu Prasadarao this play is written with inspiration from *Jalari Bhagotam* which is prevailed in and around of Parvathipuram region of Srikakulam. *Jalari Bhagotam* is purely song-based form where there is no dialogue part. Prasadarao took it and incorporated the dialogue part and made it a full musical play with dance. The first performance was given in July 30th, 1977 at Visakhapatnam¹⁶. From then around two hundred and fifty performances were given throughout Andhra Pradesh by Jana Natya Mandali alone. Later some other left based cultural organisations like Praja Natya Mandali, Arunodaya, Jana Sahiti performed it extensively. The playwright says that, "Even though I wrote the play to prepare the masses for armed struggle, some people used this play as a tool for their political propaganda, by simply changing it to the popular political needs. They tried to project the conflict between the land less people and landlords as the conflict between the political parties, portraying the landlords as the leaders of Congress. Hence projecting the defeating of the Congress in the elections as the core problem."¹⁷

The duration of the performance is around one hour. The play is performed both on the proscenium and street. The performance space is decided by the availability of it. If there is a proscenium, they used it, if not we performed it in the street. Except sound system, nothing changes for both types of performances.¹⁸ Because the group performs it for a number of times they can adjust themselves according to the performance space

with out much disturbance. Musical instruments like Dappu, Dolak were used to support the song. There will be a chorus team in the side wing to repeat the song sung by a character. The costumes were very simple and suggestive. If the performance is in the daytime the source of lighting is natural sunlight. If it is the nighttime it will be with electrical lights with out any specific lighting effects.

Hermeneutics of the play:

The characterisations were designed with less dialogue, song and dance. The play has a better clarity in respect to the form than the content. The characters in the play enter the stage with an introduction about it in the form of a song. The antagonist's characters start singing their own mischief and cunnings just like in Veedhi Bhagotam. For example the, Karanam character enters with a song that describes his nature.

"Kalam Ratha Ganni!

Ee Vuriki Karananni!

Chittalanni Rayaganura !

Pattalanni Marchaganura!"

•

("I am the karanam of the village. I have pen in my hand. I can do anything by writing legal documents. I can change the owner ship of the land just by changing the names") This technique of presentation can be seen in almost all traditional theatre forms. The traditional folk theatre

forms like Chindu Yakshaganam, Veedhi Bhagotham, Pallesuddulu carry the same kind of narrative format where in every character introduce itself to the audiences in the form a song or Padyam. Though this technique was prevailed in traditional Indian folk theatre, Bertold Berecht talks about the same kind of technique in his Epic theatre. For Brecht, this technique is a tool to create the Alienation effect. When the characters enter to the stage by introducing themselves or by commenting upon their own deeds, the audiences make a distinction between the theatre and reality. Hence they try to analyse the situation with out involving themselves emotionally.

Jana Natya Mandali has merged these two angles in order to awaken the audiences on certain political issues where the analytical capacities of the spectators are addressed than the emotional angle. This was one of the major plays of Jana Natya Mandali taking inspiration from a specific traditional art form.

The above analysis of the plays *Maabhoomi* and *Bhoomi Bhagotham* reveal that The theatre of the marginalised is constructed on a discourse pattern. 'Discourse' is not simply what people (or individual) say but what people (individual) think. What goes between thinking and saying constitute the core element of discourse. In other words an utterance is a constituent of physical realm, which represents experience as knowledge. In this sense what is being said is tantamounts to what is being experienced. Experience when gets into mnemonic system forms the part of psyche and hence becomes the basis for the thought process, Thinking

therefore represents such psyche, which comes from the experience. The thought process when becomes systematised forms ideology. Ideology when translated into play generates experiences at metaphysical realm, which constitute the very plot structure of the play. The theatre of the marginalised therefore presents metaphysical experience of the land less and to subvert such reality seeks explanations from ideology, which in turn becomes the power of the marginalised. This complexity is well depicted in the plays of *Maa Bhoomi* and *Bhoomi Bhagotham*. Therefore the theatre of the marginalised is not simply a state for contesting ideology but a place for transforming the ideologies into reality. In order to gain such transformation, the theatre of the marginalised adopted itself to the native techniques of presenting performances. The sequence of dance and song which is innate to the folk cultural idiom became characteristic feature, of the theatre of the marginalised as seen in the plays of *Bhoomi Bhagotham* and *Maa Bhoomi*.

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Chapter –7
CONCLUSION

The concept of theatre over a period of time is developed from the understanding of physical space to that of mental space. The word theatre comes from the Greek root word *Theatron* that means *seeing place*. In this sense it is viewed as a physical space meant for a specific enactments. In the initial phases, the stress was on physical space and hence arenas and **prosceniums** were constructed and viewed as theatres. This physical space is constructed based on making a distinction between performance space and non-performance space. Performance space is the space of performers and non-performance space is the space of audience. This watertight compartment of spaces metamorphoses theatre into a distinguished place for an event wherein both the performers and audiences merge and converge.

In due course, a shift had taken place in the cognition of space itself from a mere physical space to that of mental space. The idea of mental space refers to a place, which the human mind associates itself to a past experience or visualises an unknown space from a subconscious experience. The cultures started redesigning their physical spaces appropriately to present enactments from the past experiences. In other words, the mental space started affecting the physical space in such a way that the enactment becomes the experience of the entire viewer's community. Therefore the shift is towards enactments or performances that are dynamic in opposition to the static physical spaces of theatre.

This significant shift changed the very concept of theatre and contributed to its development in the history of world theatre. The mental space incorporated not only the experiences but also framed ideas and ideologies of human cultures. Conscious effort to pursue ideas brought forth ideologies. The question started emerging of not only understanding the experiences of human cultures but also interpreting those experiences of the cultures itself. This further brought forth the understanding of worldviews of human culture. The fundamental questions related to the world and its environment became the core concern of enactments. Thus, the enactments are transformed from mere experiences to that of 'plays'. The play is a conscious effort of staging an idea or a set of ideas. This shift injected a new force into theatre. It started making a distinction between the performers and the playwrights. A contested zone of

experiences between performers and playwrights emerged in theatre and to negotiate those conflicts, directors emerged between playwrights and performers. Direction as a specialized craft introduced several artistic expressions in presenting the enactments. This process led to the development of technical theatre such as stagecraft, make-up and costumes, lighting, music, sound etc.

The first conclusion of the thesis is that the conceptual frame of theatre is developed as a modernist enterprise and perceived into certain philosophical milieus. Marxist-Leninist thought is one such philosophical milieu that divided the philosophies into two broad categories. One is, Idealism; the other is Materialism. They are further divided into subjective and objective perspectives. In this thesis an attempt is made to apply this categorization to theatre in order to cognate oneself with the philosophical milieus of theatre practices around the world through the ages. It is found that theatre under Idealism is branched out into various forms namely Ritualism, Classicism, **Neoclassicism**, Romanticism, Futurism, Dada and Surrealism, Existentialism and **Absurdism**. Similarly Materialism can be seen in the forms of Realism, Naturalism, Epic theatre, Environmental theatre, Poor theatre, Post-Modernism.

Idealism is grounded on the premise that idea precedes matter. It is based on the maxim that the spiritual and non-material is primary and the material is secondary. Therefore it brings closer to the dogmas of religion on the finiteness of the world, in time and space, and its creation by god.

This further regard the consciousness belongs to the realm of spirituality and therefore is the gift of the god. It is the consciousness of the human beings which cognate things, organize them and reproduce them to the well being of the world in general. It is because of the quality of generating ideas that humans are different from inanimate and zoomorphic strata of the world.

Idealism as a philosophical drive contributed to theatre in two major areas of human development. Firstly, it sought the happiness of individual as the basis for the well being of humanity. Secondly it imparted morality as primary for spiritual growth of human kind. The first principle of idealism being the subjective (Self) happiness, led to the dogma of 'art for art sake'. Once this principle started operating, the enactments became much artistic and bound to be displayed or exhibited to people. For this reason, the theatre adapted the notion of proscenium. The concept of proscenium innately advocates *osternin* principle, which means making an event 'strange'. In other words, enactment needs to be different from the routine walks of life. This major contribution of Idealism segregated the performer from his viewer. Hence a physical distance is created between the two, the performer and the audience during the performance. This is done so in two ways; one by raising the performance space as a platform to appear as a stage, and by distinguishing that performance space by lighting during performance. The viewers are made to sit in 90 degrees angle in front of the stage. With this, the space of the performers on the raised

platform is divided in two spaces. One the visible space the other is non-visible space. The visible space is actual enactment place where viewers are allowed to watch the performance. The non-visible space is converted as greenroom and for other technical purposes to be used by musicians, lighting men etc.

The second driving force of idealism being morality, the theatre is influenced by the religious realm of human kind. The metaphysical presence as pervaded in the religious preaching of the human cultures started invading in theatre as enactments. The themes from the religious texts became the popular subjects for plays. To transcend the metaphysical realm into physical realm, theatre made use of popular images of Gods and Goddesses. For this, the use of masks is introduced in theatre. Two kinds of masks prevailed in theatre. The first kind is facial make-up itself as mask and the second is external mask. Converting face into mask resulted in exuberant and elaborate make-up practice in theatre. Different kinds of colours and materials were used to transform normal faces into the face of metaphysical beings. In the practice of external masking wood, plastic, fiber and other such material was fabricated into the faces of gods, goddesses and satanic forces. Hence a separate skill of mask making became a specialized field in theatre. Added to this, costumes also underwent a change. Extensive costumes in different sizes and lengths are tailored to suit the characters in the play. Costumes made up of simple clothes to fine fabrics were used to make the actors appear

as the characters. Stitching concurrently became a specified craft in dress making for theatre.

Concurrent to this development, the theatre also added innumerable properties in staging the plays. The divine and evil forces are represented by certain properties in every religious belief system. The properties like wings for angels, crowns for gods, swords for evil forces etc were introduced. These hand properties also clubbed by the stage properties to make the play situational. The backdrops of the stage are painted into different settings like abodes of gods and evil forces. With this, artists as stage designers emerged as a specialists in this field.

The stage did undergo a change due to Idealism. The linear stages are transformed into nonlinear stages by dividing the stage itself through raised platform, dividers, levels etc. This further contributed for the specialization in lighting by way of spotlights, floodlights and special effects. All these are done only to make the audience experience the metaphysical realm through theatre. Further, song and dance sequences are introduced in theatre as part of stylizations. With this, the performance has also undergone a change. The body language as expressed through kinesics and **proximics** became a part of narration in theatre.

Materialism as a philosophical milieu pondered on the well being of human kind on the basis of sharing the resources equally. This principle brought the theatre a purpose, which aims at social well being of human

kind. Materialism argues that matter precedes idea and hence considers consciousness is a property of matter. In other words, it is matter that generates ideas. There are two kinds of materialism, the one, subjective materialism (spontaneous materialism) and the other one is objective materialism (philosophical materialism). Subjective materialism relies on belief of all people live on objective existence of external world. This is also known as pre Marxian, ancient and renaissance materialism. Several of these materialistic philosophical theories appeared as a result of the progress of scientific knowledge in Astronomy, Mathematics and other fields in the oriental world. The general feature of the Orient materialism lies in the recognition of the materiality of the world and its independent existence outside of man's consciousness. They tried to find the diversity of natural phenomena and common source of origin of all ~~that~~ exists. It is this, which made the ancient Greeks to formulate a hypothesis on **autonomic** structure of matter. This further strengthens the mythological ideology, which rests on the idea of eternity of nature. The Renaissance and the post-Renaissance materialism viewed mechanistic conception of motion as the property of nature, which means that it is inalienable and universal.

The second type of Materialism is recognised by Marxists as Philosophical or Objective Materialism. It is also known as Marxist-Leninist materialism or Dialectical Historical Materialism. It is evolved by Marx and Angles and later developed by Lenin and other Marxists. Dialectical

materialism proceeds from the recognition of matter as the sole basis of the world, the universal interconnections of object and phenomena, the movement and development of the world as inherent contradictions operating in the world itself. Dialectical materialism regards consciousness as a property of a highly organised form of movement of matter, as a reflection of objective reality. Therefore the dialectics become the universal method of cognition in dialectical materialism. By applying the principal propositions of dialectical materialism to an explanation of the phenomena of social life, Marx and Engels established Historical materialism (or a materialist understanding of history) Lenin made an immense contribution to the development of historical materialism, by generating the experience of the proletariat's class struggle in the epoch of imperialism, proletarian revolution and the building of Socialism in the USSR.

According to Historical Materialism, the real basis of human society is the mode of production of material wealth. The replacement of one mode of production by another leads to a transition from one socio-economic formation to another higher one. The history of society is the successive replacement of the primitive communal, slave owning, and feudal, capitalist and communist formations. The law, which determines the essence of the historical process, is the law of the correspondence of production relations to the character and level of development of the productive forces. Developing within the framework of the given

production relations, at a certain stage the productive forces come into contradiction with them. This results in a social revolution, which is a law-governed form of transition from one socio-economic formation to another.

Idealism in theatre transposed the physical realm to the metaphysical realm but materialism brought the physical realm to social realm. Theatre influenced by materialism grossly depended on objectivity rather than subjectivity (which is the case of Idealism) as its methodological tool in the theatre practice. Man's relationship with nature and man's relationship with other men is objectively treated as themes in the theatre. This brought forth the dialectics between the forces of production and the relations of production to the **forefront** in the themes of the materialistic theatre. With the result inequality in sharing of resources and exploitation of men and environment by the 'haves' is critically portrayed in theatre.

In order to enact the above said dialectics, the context of theatre also underwent a change. The real life events and social settings of exploited class/group became the major concern of the enactment. Instead of gods and goddesses and metaphysical beings the rich, the poor, and the common man became the characters of the plays. In order to take up the roles of everyday life of different categories of people the materialistic theatre came up with the idea of realistic presentations. In

order to achieve this, it introduced theatre labs as a major contribution to the field of theatre. The process of training became much vigorous and the actors were made to be fit for different roles as and when required. In idealistic theatre the actors are considered as 'born actors'. Where as in materialistic theatre it is only through proper training and practice that the 'actors are made'. Theatre is not 'art for art sake' but 'art for man's sake'. Therefore it is the well being of mankind alone is concealed as pleasure in making theatre. Social relevance and political commitment became the driving force for the makers of theatre such as director, actors, and technical personal of theatre.

This further changed the costumes, makeup and technical aspects too. The social roles that humans play in everyday life being themes, the costumes and makeup became indexical to them. Therefore the old age, youth, and childhood - all are imitated as it is through costumes and makeup. A poor man is represented in rags and a rich man in costly suits and so on and so forth. The stage properties and hand properties also found represent the real life events. The indexical sign is much used in the theatre and forms the basis for making hand and stage properties, where symbolic signs were much used in theatre of the idealism.

The street play did not give much attention to light and other technical aspects. With the result the cost of the play production got increasingly decreased. This aspect encouraged large audiences on one-hand and amateur theatre groups to take up theatre as their part time

occupation. This broadened the scope of theatre as well the frequency of play productions. Since materialistic theatre viewed any thing, which presents every day sorrows of life, born out of exploitation and inequalities. Numerous playwrights emerged in theatre and different themes on exploitation, social issues, gender issues and others were staged. This led to different stylistics in theatre. Each director interpreted the theme through visuals and scenic divisions. The actors also imitated different groups of people of different regions while enacting the roles. This brought forth the community theatre as a specialised craft in theatre. People belonging to the themes of the play are recruited as actors through training process and presented in the plays, sticking on to the maxim of 'actors are made'.

Thus the materialistic theatre put forth utilitarianism as its principle and social relevance as its immediate concern. Social change through theatre is demonstrated as an Utopian ideal. The revolutionary themes, the labor movements, topics the world war as subjects were universally taken up by the theatre practitioners and craved for the emergence of theatre as people's movement.

The **second conclusion** of the thesis is that the Telugu theatre has a connotation of 'politics of representation' but seldom viewed it from that angle by those that are involved in Telugu theatre either as practitioners, scholars or as critiques. The history of Telugu theatre can be divided into two broad segments from the perspective of politics of representation;

one, the folk theatre whose roots cannot be pin pointed to a particular time frame, and the other is modern Telugu theatre that is said to have started in A.D.1880s.

Telugu theatre in the folk sphere though has basic elements of theatre such as performer, audience, text and context; it is less regarded as theatre for it violated the Western definition of theatre. The western definition innately delimits the actor from its audience, the text from the context and vice versa. The actors are trained to perform any text to any context to any audience. This overall fluidity is one major criterion for theatre to develop as modern art and hence modern theatre. Contrary to this situation, the folk theatre is fixed and rigid in sharing the elements of theatre. Particular performer in a particular context enacts a fixed text to the fixed audience. Therefore theatre appears as repetitive in its presentation. This also changes the other aspects of theatre like stage, makeup, costume and other technical properties. The proscenium is considered as modern, where as non- proscenium is of folk. The non-proscenium invariably narrowed the application of light, sound, costumes, makeup etc. therefore folk theatre by and large represented their audiences and their worldview. It is done in two ways: One through the performances of caste myths and the other through the enactments of puranic myths.

The politics of representation in folk theatre are confined to caste and region. For instance the *Chindu Madigas* through their caste myth,

Jambapuram represent the community how it originated and why it segregated and what they expect to do in the social realm. Similarly the *Pagativeshams* of *Ganayatha Jangamas* are region oriented and cater the needs of people of the region. Through their enactments they satirically expose the fallacies of different communities and castes. In both the cases mentioned, there is a certain type of rigidity in the application of theatrical elements. The performers are itinerary in nature and therefore exercise an obligation to perform to their stock audiences the text drawn from orality, which is claimed as hereditary. Therefore the contexts in which these performances occur are calandrical and hence fixed. What is important in folk theatre is what they represent is not simply that art but the way of life of the community to which they belong. This dimension makes most of the folk theatrical forms ethnocentric in nature.

Another dimension of politics of representation in folk theatre is connected with philosophical melue of Idealism, which is seen in the cases of enactments of puranic myths. The metaphysical realm is created in their theatre through the representation of images of gods and goddesses. The themes of the *Bhagavathams* are by and large drawn from the folk versions of the great *puranas* of India such as *Ramayanam*, *Mahabharatham*, and *Bhagavatam*. The ideal depiction of conflict and resolution leading to peaceful coexistence is rhetorically expressed through the enactments of the themes of *puranas*. In order to do this, metaphors and similes are vibrantly used in their enactments. Therefore,

politics of representation of folk theatre contributes to the depiction of ideal society, which the people should sought after.

In the Modern Telugu theatre, the politics of representation are by and large confined to the issues of modernity. The driving principle of modernity is 'difference'. Difference as concept of critical thinking gave the modern world a new tool to analyse the cultures and their products. The modern man with the principle of difference divided the objects of the world into two sets. One is based on '**similarity**' the other one is based on 'difference'. The set of similarities is conceived as "**paradigms**" and the interplay of difference is conceived as "syntagmas". **Syntagmatics** are linear in nature and paradigms are vertical in nature. This basic division made the modern man not only to analyse the language but also the other cultural products. The human beings organised themselves into groups and hierarchies based on these principles. The social divide based on relations of production started becoming overtly expressed in modern times. Modernity begets urban centers functioning on the mechanised productions. Therefore technology became an essential ingredient of modernity. Modern theatre did rely on two principles *i.e.*, the principle of difference and principle of technology. As technology alienated the labor from its laborer, the modern theatre alienated actor from his actions (character). The actors are recruited through training processes. In other words the actor is alienated from the character. An actor who is trained need not necessarily recruited to a character, which he views as fit. This

alienation principle innately contributed to the development of competition as in the case of market economy.

Capitalism an offshoot of modernity paved the way for industrialization and market economy. Competing in producing and selling the products in the market became an essential feature. In order to optimise costs and to deliver effective prices, the business households went in for **competitive** products and tried to make profits in order to sustain the industry. Modern Telugu theatre more or less followed the similar principle during its inception times in various genres of Telugu theatre; for instance *Padyanatakam* is sustained on the principal of competition. The contractors gathered talented actors together to stage the plays. The consumer, here invariably the theatre enthusiast, is the prime target to be reached by the contractors. Hence they not only recruited the popular creative artistes but also relayed on advertisement in order to sell the *Padyanatakam*. In the process unconsciously competition grew in among the artists and with the result specialisation in performing characters grew in theatre of *Padyanatakam*. A product of industry is not manufactured in one entity but as different components and then assembled. The same way contractors recruited different actors from different regions for their plays. This in fact looks more like a consortium of specialists than a holistic performance. The phenomena of assembling different specialised artists though appeared to be one of the causes of success of *Padyanatakam*, it innately started killing the very art form. The

skills of the actors were confined to certain roles and therefore, did not result in developing the theatre as such. The theatre requires a just combination of different elements. In the case of *Padyanatakam* a highly imbalanced mixture of these elements are to be seen. Only the ability to recite *Padyams* is given importance than the body language, sound, light and stagecraft. This lopsided development of *Padyanatakam* theatre is "contributing to its decaying process in the present days due to lack of new entrants from the young generation who are not much for exposed to literary skills and poetical (*padyam*) recitations.

The *Parishatnatakam*, which is another offshoot of modern Telugu theatre, emerged as a venue for social dramas. It has replaced *padyam* with dialogue and treated the other theatrical elements equally. The competition became the live nerve for the existence of *Parishatnatakam*. The politics of representation in *Parishatnatakam* shifted from actor to playwright and director. It is the directors and playwrights who prevailed in *Parishatnatakam*. The contractors as in the case of *Padyanatakam* are being replaced with the organisers of *Parishats* who can be categorised into four, (1) Institutions, (2) Families and memorial trusts (3) Amateur artists formed into committees and (4) Individuals. The politics of representation in *Parishat Natakam* by and large depended on the above categories of organisers. It is the organisers who fix the venue, remunerations, winners and other terms and conditions of plays to be performed.

The politics of representation of the theatre education is of different nature. Theatre education in India is done on two fronts, training in theory and in practice. Most of the members of the faculty in the institutions, which are promoting theatre education, are themselves either actors or directors, or technical personnel. As part of theatre history and theory they expose the students to world theatre, developments in theatre, ideas and concepts in theatre so on and so forth. This background gave both faculty and students to go for experimental theatre. The narrative techniques in presenting the play is designed and blocking the stage movements, choreography in the scenes, illuminating the stage with different lights and visuals through symbolic structures on stage - all become the concern of this theatre. After the introduction of theatre education in Andhra, the Telugu theatre witnessed more number of plays from the other languages translated into Telugu. The European plays, the plays of the Black theatre and the plays from Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Kannada, Bengali of Indian languages were exposed to Telugus. In this manner it contributed significantly in expanding the horizons of Telugu theatre. Yet another significant contribution of the theatre education is that it has influenced even the *Parishatnatakam*. The *Parishatnatakam* is narrative oriented rather than visual oriented. The students who had undergone the theatre education became critiques of the theatre, which is another significant contribution of the theatre education. Theatre journalism is also promoted. Critiquing once own plays though not

accepted whole-heartedly still started the discourse in theatre. However the theatre education is not devoid of flaws. The politics of representation of this group is to project themselves as 'elitists of theatre'. They consider themselves as the literate of theatre. This in a way is contributing towards distancing themselves from mainstream theatre. The 'big brother' attitude in imperialising the theatre though dangerous to the movement it has become a necessary evil in the theatre movement of Andhra.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh is also acting like a *Parishat* and indulging in the name of promotion of theatre under auspices of the department Film, Television and Theatre Development Corporation of Andhra Pradesh. The famous Nandi awards started picking up in Telugu theatre circles. Pro-Government plays, pro-establishment plays and pro-political ideology plays are being encouraged in *Nandi Natakostavams*. The nexus between the persons of theatre educationalists and the bureaucrats from the Government is increasing in the Telugu theatre scenario. Concomitant to this development the theatre is also facing the politics of representation from **N.R.I.** groups by **fixing** high remunerations and attaching royal insignia attracting the theatre practitioners from all sections. In the process, partly the *Parishats* and totally the folk are marginalised.

On the whole the modern theatre encouraged competition among the theatre practitioners. However, the politics of representation bounded mostly on the compulsions of the theatre practitioners. It is what they wish

to present is what the audience are supposed to receive. The gaze is from the theatre practitioners and not from the audiences. This super imposition of principle of modernity undermined the representation of marginality. In other words, socially, politically, culturally and economically marginalised groups were either ignored or silenced in their theatrical productions. With the result, a strong need emerged for certain political parties to voice the concerns of the marginalised. This brought forth a desire in those political parties to seek for the art forms of the marginal communities. In the process they constructed 'theatre of the marginalised' by hybridising the 'literacy' with 'orality'. Literacy, in the sense, written play scripts were produced with a conscious effort to propagate the party's ideologies. The concept of orality on the other is a direct reference to the folk theatre whose plays are produced and transmitted on oral compositions. Thus new theatre known as 'theatre of the marginalised' was entrepreneured by the party politics through their representation of marginality.

The **third conclusion** of the thesis is that the political theatre in India is started by the Right-wing parties. It developed due to the colonial rule of the British. It is the colonial state versus anti-state powers formed into national forces, primarily used theatre as a premise to express independence. Unlike the European experience, where the political theatre started by the Left-wing parties, in India the Right-wing parties geared it up. Therefore the notion of political theatre as the left-wing theatre needs to be questioned because of the Indian experience. It is a

conscious effort done by the freedom fighters of India under 'Cultural Renaissance' that paved the way for political theatre. Several plays were produced and performed with the theme of social reform in order to inculcate the spirit of unity among the subjects of the British regime. In the history of Telugu theatre the play production of pre- Independence times were seen mostly as social plays owing to their content. In fact, they are of political theatre if viewed from the context in which **the** plays were written and produced. The discipline of theatre in a way undermined the importance of contextual theories and therefore relies only on content analysis. Typologies and classifications were made only based on content rather than context. This thesis made an attempt to view the typologies from a contextual premise. This view fundamentally changed the whole understanding of political theatre from a mere Left oriented theatre and incorporated as well the Right-wing political theatre.

The Right-wing theatre during pre-Independent period represented the whole Indian people as marginal because of their subjugation to the British. During the post-independent period, their representation of **marginality** shifted to those people of India who are socially and economically poor. To bring them to the mainstream under welfare state, schemes were planned and plays were produced showing **upliftment** as the core concern of the Right wing politics. This of course laid limitation on the Right-wing political theatre. They became more or less social plays

and did not acquire much status of political theatre for lack of their own characteristic feature.

The Marxist theory is based on the primary principles of social change through the initiation of ideology. Ideology for them is a conscious effort to transform the lives and environment of the people. This consciousness is due to the relationship that develops between the forces of production and relationship of production. Innately the dialectics that develop and operate between the forces of production and relations of production leads to the emergence of power structure and social hierarchy. Those who have the say over the forces of production veiled the power and formed into a political system. The power structures in a given political system represent the social consciousness of those that are outside the power structure for their own advantage. Arts and literature of the people became the areas wherein power structure of a given political system would choose to operate and represents its innate political agenda through them. Therefore theatre became one of the *modus Operandi* of the groups, which access the political power. Therefore political theatre innately corresponds to theatre that represent people by and large on whom they survive for political gains. In the bourgeois politics of representation, theatre is immensely used to sustain in power. Hence the bourgeois theatre staged plays representing the consciousness of the proletariat and to vent their feelings of suppression it attributed them to the concept of 'fate'. The religious consciousness becomes the foremost

themes of the plays written to support the bourgeois status. Entertainment served as the primary goal of the bourgeois to come out of the realities of misery and live in a world of fantasy for a while. Like wise to uphold the bourgeois state as the 'welfare state', theatre is immensely used for several kinds of propaganda. The bourgeois is defined here in the classical sense of 'city dweller' that does not participate in the production force but instrumental in organizing them. The bourgeois state in later stage was identified as the state, which emerged in Capitalism, or the Capitalist State. The Capitalist State in general put forth the manifestoes towards achieving 'welfare state'. The Left wing party politics produced a category of intelligentsia that would articulate their ideology through literature and arts. Theatre therefore oriented towards promoting welfare activities under the bourgeois state. Most of the Right wing politics represented such theatre.

The Communists on the other used **Egalitarianism** as the chief goal of the state. The antithetical norm for egalitarianism is '**surplus value**'. The surplus value generated out of alienation principle contributed to the exploitation of the 'have-nots' by 'haves'. The chief weapon in the hands of '**haves**' to do so is by owning the means of production. This principle generated capital and produced the feudal and industrial societies. In both the cases the land less labour and industrial labour is hierarchically positioned in the Feudal/Capitalists state formations. The forms of entertainment therefore used by the communists was to question the

privileges of the 'haves' over the 'have-nots', in terms of ownership of the means of production, such as land and capital. The political theatre of the communists basically geared on the issues of landlessness, urbanisation, industrial disputes, exploitation of labour, exploitation of women and property and so on and so forth. The Marxist ideology specifically concerns with social change in terms of **de-hierarching** classes/groups and the theatre, which represents such plays and enactments, is clearly initiated by the intelligentsia of the Left wing parties.

The Communists were formed as *Andhra Maha Sabha* in the Nizam dominions during 1930s. Their ideals were based on the class struggle. Hence it has to address the lower class, farmers and agricultural laborer and all other working communities at a larger extent. Majority of their target people were illiterate and reside in rural areas. The only form of entertainment for them is folk arts. All these factors made the Communist Party to create a new genre of performance, which can be performed in any rural area with out much **preparation** and a form that can be understood even by illiterate people. The requirement of the hour for Communists in A.D.1940s was to cater to the needs of the uprising Telengana armed struggle. In this context Communist Party had to propagate two issues simultaneously. (1) There is class difference between the farmers and landlord; hence a class struggle has to be built up in the interest of the working class under the leadership of Communist Party. (2) The atrocities of Fascist forces must be condemned and a

massive support should be built up among the Indian people. In order to address the masses on these issues, the Party had concentrated upon the traditional art forms of the people.

During the pre-Independence times in the Telangana regions one of the branches of the Communists was formed as Praja Natya Mandali and concentrated on the folk performing arts of Andhra Pradesh. It picked up most of the solo based performances for adaptation. Forms like *Koya Vesham*, *Burra Katha*, *Jamukula Katha*, *Sodi*, *Kolatam* were picked up and adopted for a social change. Around forty performing art forms were taken and adopted for a political purpose. In this phase the themes were not based on class struggle. The thrust of all the themes is freedom, anti fascism, Bengal drought and other related issues. Many scripts were developed in *Burra Katha* style. Writers like Vasireddi Bhaskerrao and Sunkara Satyanarayana who already had an experience in writing *Burra Kathas* made it easy to mould any theme into the form. In A.D.1941 June

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22 , Hitler declared war on Russia. In the same year the Communist Party had taken out a movement against Fascism. This movement gave a chance to the cadre to agitate against Fascism. On the other side the drought in Bengal made Praja Natya Mandali to collect money and clothes through their performances. Popular *Burra Katha* artist Nazar wrote a *katha* by name *Bengal Karuvu* and performed all over Andhra. Later, the thrust is shifted from solo performances to playlets and plays. Even though there were considerable solo performances in this phase, the

efforts of the entire organisation were diverted to theatre. Plays like *Mundadugu*, *Maa Bhoomi* were written and performed in this phase.

After Praja Natya Mandali's sincere efforts to address the masses with their own art forms, it was Jana Natya Mandali (JNM), which continued that tradition. Even though both the organisations were with the same ideological commitment, their approaches were different from each other. The parties heading these organisations have two different understandings on class struggle in India. Their understanding and manifestoes were reflected in the cultural arena also. Hence, Jana Natya Mandali's cultural activities are different from the previous Praja Natya Mandali. Specifically JNM's understanding of theatre is different from Praja Natya Mandali's. Praja Natya Mandali (PNM) was interested in attracting the urban middle class audiences into cultural movement, for most of the leadership of PNM also hails from the middle class. Even though there were many performers in PNM, like Nazar, they remained as they are as artists but did not become leaders of the movement. The JNM does not have any kind of interest on middle class audiences. It did not have leadership from the middle class. It believed that the revolution comes with armed struggle, that too from the interior rural areas. Hence the party suggested the cadres to go to the villages. As a result JNM adopted traditional art forms like *Voggu Katha* and *Jalari Bhagotham*. Though Praja Natya Mandali followed traditional style of folk art forms in the beginning, later it showed much interest of proscenium plays. Where

as JNM never had any kind of interest on proscenium. As a result it developed its own theatre form having a strong traditional base. All the performances of JNM were aimed for the rural audiences. The songs, tunes, instruments and the forms were designed to attract the rural masses at large. This ideological clarity of JNM made it a revolutionary cultural movement in Andhra. The main art forms of the organisation were song and street plays. It developed many songs on all most all oppressed communities. The very unique contribution of JNM was that it brought out a performance style in singing the songs. It used acting as a supportive medium for singing. The tradition of using the song for the propagation of the ideals was started ever since the Bhakti movement. A performer using style of song, a little bit of rhythmic body movement and dance, dialogue and with instrumental support was the basic performance style of *Harikatha*. The same style done by three people with different content can be seen in *Burrakatha*. Whereas the singing style of Jana Natya Mandali was quite a different one in style when compared with the above mentioned art forms. Gaddar, a legendary figure of JNM was the one who popularized this style. He is a poet, performer, singer and main narrator. His contribution to the cultural movement of Andhra was immensely great. His style became so popular that even the governmental agencies adopt the same for publicising their political activities and schemes. All the leftist cultural groups, **non-governmental** agencies and apolitical organisations are following the same pattern.

The fourth conclusion of the thesis is that in the context of Telugu theatre one can trace out a category of theatre, which can be termed as "Theatre of the Marginalised" within the typology of theatre. Fixing the conceptual frame of theatre into idealism and Materialism is a modernist enterprise and therefore served for a limited purpose. This division is more useful for critiquing the intellectual backdrops of theatre practices than for constructing theatre to a social relevance. The on going debate on social relevance is to find out for whose goal that the theatre served? This innately connected to the idea of politics of representation. In finding out this issue a new dimension is brought forth into the epistemology of theatre, which is concerned towards marginalised, and their representation in theatre.

It is found from the analysis that **marginality** in India can be defined from two broad viewpoints. One is 'outcaste' and the other is 'out laws'. This social category of out caste in India resulted in keeping away certain communities from the mainstream of social behaviour. Hierarchically they are placed beneath the *Varna* system and considered as *Panachama Varna*. This relegated **them** the position of untouchables throughout the history from ancient to modern until the independence of India. This social stigma uniquely places them as polluted once and delegated the services related to purifying the habitats of the upper castes (*Chaturvarna*).

The category of 'outlaws' is based on the principle of deviance from the established social order. The social orders are always established by

the dominant powers and label others who deviate from such as out laws. Therefore it is power relationships that constitute the core element of marginality in the cases of construction of the idea of 'out castes' and 'out laws'. Marginality as such then brings forth the issue of identity. Who identifies a group or a phenomenon as marginalised? Whether the dominant ones? Or the marginalised itself? This dichotomy brings forth the politics of representation of marginality.

The theatre of the marginalised is constructed on a discourse pattern. 'Discourse' is not simply what people (or individual) say but what people (individual) think. What goes between thinking and saying constitute the core element of discourse. In other words, an utterance is a constituent of physical realm, which represents experience as knowledge. In this sense what is being said tantamount to what is being experienced. Experience when gets into mnemonic system, forms the part of psyche and become the basis for the thought process. Thinking therefore represents such psyche, which comes from the experience. The thought process when becomes **systematised** forms ideology. Ideology when translated into play generates experiences at metaphysical realm, which constitute the very plot structure of the play. The theatre of the marginalised therefore presents metaphysical experience of the land less and to subvert such reality seeks explanations from ideology, which in turn becomes the power of the marginalised. This complexity is well depicted in the plays of *Maa Bhoomi* and *Bhoomi Bhagotham*. Therefore the

theatre of the marginalised is not simply a state for contesting ideology but a place for transforming the ideologies into reality. In order to gain such transformation, the theatre of the marginalised adopted itself to the native methods of presenting performances. In order to achieve this goal some of the techniques were adopted and they form as the significant features of theatre of the marginalised.

Salient features of Theatre of the Marginalised:

In order to define a theatre into a particular type, it needs certain special features. For instance **Padyanatakam** as a genre of Telugu theatre exists because of the feature of Padyam as the form of dialogue between the dyed characters. Similarly rendition of Padyam acquires prominence than the presentation of the play in its theatrical formats. Like wise Parishat plays as a distinct genre can be identified with the context of competition. It is the competition, which decides the type of the theme, manner of presentation, size of the group and length of the play etc.

To identify a theatre as theatre of the marginalised, it should also have certain characteristics. From the analysis of the data presented in the thesis the following significant features are identified as the features of theatre of the marginalised.

1. Theatre of the marginalised is a hybridised theatre wherein the plays can be staged both as proscenium kind and non-proscenium type. The proscenium kind is basically guided by the written plays wherein the entry and exit of the characters are clearly marked during the play. They are presented in the linear fashion. In the case of non-proscenium theatre the stages are either circular or semi circular and a demarcation between the performer and audience is blurred. In this case the entry and exit of the characters is symbolic and supported by the chorus, which is also placed on the stage itself. The plays *Maa Bhoomi* and *Bhoomi Bhagotham* are suitable for both the stages as they are written plays and at the same time presented through the dance and song sequence in non-linear fashion.
2. The second feature of the theatre of the marginalised is that the entry and exit of the characters are constructed on the basis of folk theatre. In the folk theatre such as *Yakshaganam*, *Veedhi Natakam*, *Bhagavatham*, *Toorpu Bhagavatham* etc., the characters introduce themselves not only their names but also their nature and personality. In folk theatre two persons hold a curtain when the character being behind the curtain introduces to the audiences. However the theatre of the marginalised no such curtains is placed between the audiences and actors. The actors enter in a rhythmic style and introduce itself in a verse

form. The body language of the character is used as an additional feature to indicate the nature of the character. This is unique to the theatre of the marginalised.

3. The theatre of the marginalised is constructed on song and dance sequences and interlude with the dialogues. Song and dance is also a feature of folk theatre but is used more for entertaining than for the construction of the text of the play. In the theatre of marginalised song and dance sequences are basically used to construct the text of the play and as well as to create the moods and emotions during the play. This textual feature is considered as another significant feature of theatre of marginalised.
4. The plays of the modern theatre can usually be divided into acts and scenes and are strictly adhere to while presenting the play. They are constructed as units of the play to show linear progression of the play. In the case of theatre of the marginalised, the division of the play into acts and scenes are not strictly followed. The song and dance is used as continuum between the scenes and acts and therefore a strict demarcation of the units is not all that comfortable. For this reason the duration of the plays in the theatre of the marginalised become flexible. The duration of the play can be denoted based on the

convenience and context. This flexibility is not found in the modern play productions.

5. The plays of the theatre of marginalised are inconclusive and open ended, indicating the ongoing struggle with the powers of dominance represented in the form of state, landlord, police etc. these plays show unity and hope as climax of the plays winning over the dominant by the marginalised is shown as a temporary phenomena and to continue that it seeks unity as the force behind the success of the marginalised. This paradox of gain and loss is shown theatre of marginalised. .
6. Another feature of theatre of the marginalised is that the negative characters representing the dominant power are always more in number than the positive characters which represent the marginalised. Ironically the marginalised being the weak are represented fewer in number as characters. Subverting the minority into dominance being the theme of the plays, the theatre of the marginalised created more space and time duration **for** the characters representing marginality.
7. Though the characters representing negative roles are more in number the time duration they take on stage while presenting the play is less when compared to the characters representing positive roles. In fact the positive characters, which represent

the marginalised, are less in number but take more time duration on stage. This art of subversion of the weak appearing as strong on stage is a unique feature of theatre of the marginalised.

8. The composition of actors of theatre of the marginalised is from both professionals and amateurs. It is interest in the party ideology, which becomes the driving force of actors rather than theatre itself. However professionals whose interest in theatre force them to look for creative avenues to express party ideology through theatre. The amateurs, on the other, are party's activists who are trained to spread it through theatre. This professional/amateur combination of actors is unique to the theatre of the marginalised.

9. The party ideology being the driving force of the actors casting in the plays do not strictly confine to the rules of theatre. The actors whose physique is suitable for expressing villainy need not cast villainy characters. Moreover the characters do not have much make-up and costumes and therefore they are symbolically suggested through the body language and textual reference.

10. In the folk theatre the males perform mostly the women roles. Hence cross-dressing is a feature of the folk theatre. In theatre

of marginalised women's roles are played by women only and also the women party workers participate in the chorus. Whereas the modern theatre is facing scarcity of women artists. In fact in modern theatre, keeping in view the scarcity of women actors, the playwrights introduce less number of women characters. This is not the case with theatre of the marginalised. In fact both men and women characters are in equal number.

11. The modern theatre productions gave much importance to technical aspects of theatre such as lighting, set design, sound, special effects etc. The theatre of the marginalised, contrary to this, give less importance to technical aspects of theatre. In folk theatre make-up and costume is given much importance and properties are used as suggestive. The theatre of the marginalised does not give much importance to make-up and costume. In other words, make-up and costume function not as indexical or iconic but symbolic sign.

12. The context of the play production surround on party meetings, movements, agitations, strikes, demonstrations and *dharnas* etc. This unique feature of the theatre of the marginalised incorporates the audience into the play and therefore the audiences do not remain as passive onlookers as it is in the case of modern theatre but became active recipients of the ideology which is imparted to the theatre and gear them up to

actions. This incorporative element of theatre of the marginalised transforms ideology into action and audience into event makers.

Thus the theatre of the marginalised emerges as an entity in the history of Telugu theatre and warrant special attention both from the academicians and practitioners.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX -I

The growth of Telugu theatre in to an effective mode of expressing the culture of the Andhradesa is an effort of several people, ranging from non-literate custodians of performing traditions to well-educated scholars, academicians and intellectuals who made constant innovations in theatrical performance traditions to suit the changing perspectives of people in the society. In this appendix, a brief anecdote of selected personalities- artists, writers, and directors - beginning from A.D. 1880 to present day that rendered remarkable services to theatre, is given.

Kandukuri Veeresalingam (A.D. 1848 –1919)

Veeresalingam well known as the father of modern Telugu theatre is one of the popular social reformists of modern Andhra. Veeresalingam has multifaceted talents since he was a writer, playwright, critic, social reformist and a lawyer. In A.D. 1880, with the inspiration of Dharwada theatrical Company, he wrote a play *Vyavahara Dharma Bodhini* and directed its enactment on the stage. He introduced writing of farce plays

into Telugu literature. He wrote around seventy farce plays of such kind. He took themes from contemporary social life for his plays highlighted the issues like, corruption of the bureaucrats, mischief of the lawyers in legal practice and various other problems related to social life of women. He translated Sanskrit plays *Ratnavali*, *Sakuntalam*, *Prabhoda Chandrodayam* and *Malavikagni Mitram* into Telugu. He wrote social plays like *Prahladanatakam*, *Dakshina Gograhanam* and *Nitya Harischandra* with Puranic themes. He translated some of the English plays of Shakespeare- *Comedy of Errors* and *Merchant of Venice*- into Telugu. He also edited and published a magazine called *Viveka Vardhani*, a prominent journal of those times that dealt with social evils. His contribution to modern Andhra is immensely great. As a tribute his contribution, Telugu theatre celebrates his birthday on every April 16th as Telugu theatre Day.

Gurajada Apparao (A.D.1861-1915)

Born in A.D.1861, Gurajada Apparao stood at the forefront of modern Telugu literature. His writings in colloquial Telugu inspired thousands of writers and readers. His play *Kanyasulkam* (the first version was written in A.D. 1897 and the second version in 1909) is an exemplary in Telugu literature. Gurajada Apparao tried to achieve three purposes through his play; (i) social reformation, (ii) supporting the Telugu language movement of the contemporary time and (iii) to produce a well-structured play. The play addressed to the problem of 'bride price' (selling of brides

for money, *Kanyasulka*, at the time of marriage). This practice turned into an evil since even tiny girls are also given in marriage to even old men who can pay high bride price. The death of old husband led to another social problem, the early widowhood of women, which is a curse to them. Every character in the play *Kanyasulkam* is the replica of people in the society. The characters like *Girisam*, *Madhuravani*, *Buchamma* and others became symbols of modern Telugu culture. Many books and wide research have taken place on various aspects of *kanyasulkam*. Though the history of modern theatre began with Kandukuri Veeresalingam, it got consolidated with Gurajada's *Kanysulkam*.

Though Gurajada wrote two other plays entitled *Kondubhattiyam* and *Bhilhaniyam*, but were not published in final version. He was very well versed and exposed to western and Sanskrit dramaturgy. Hence his views and opinions are highly critical and analytical in those days. His letters and other articles show his acquaintance with linguistics and language and behaviour of the people in society. Critiques say that Gurajada Apparao was born a century in advance.

Kallakuri Narayanrao (AD. 1871 - 1927)

Kallakuri Narayanrao, another reformist writer tried to use theatre for the cause of society. He wrote about seven plays out of which two are with Puranic and the remaining five with social themes. *Chitrabhudayam* (1909) and *Padmavuham* (1919) are based on Puranic themes. Three of his plays with social themes are very popular in Telugu theatre. The play

Chintamani (1921) talks about the issues related to prostitution, *Varavikrayam* (1922) throws light on the problem of dowry. The third play *Madhuseva* (1926) deals with the repercussions of alcoholism on society. Narayanrao was proficient in writing **Padyams** in colloquial language. Among all his plays, *Chintamani* got a wide popularity as a performance. Hundreds of theatre groups performed this play and the name *Chintamani* became synonym to prostitute. The characterisation of *Subbisetty* in this play is very humorous and funny. Many artists tried to make this character much more witty and humorous, but in certain cases it also became vulgar.

Ballari Raghava (A.D.1880 – 1946)

Tadipatri Raghava Charyulu, popularly known as Ballari Ragava was a popular director and championed the movement of realism in Telugu theatre. His contribution as an artist, director and leader has changed the scenario of Telugu theatre. Till then, the general practice was that men played all the women roles in the **play**. Women were not supposed to enter into theatre performances. With **Raghava's sincere** attempts slowly women were invited to act in plays. Rama Tilakam, Sri Ranjani, **Kannamba**, Rajeswari were such women artists who entered theatre with the inspiration of Raghava. It was Raghava who initiated the concept of Realism in theatre. Till then the Padya **Natakam** dominated the theatre performances. In this scenario he insisted the writers like **P.V.Rajamannar** and others to write plays with social themes and initiated

performances of those plays. The impact of Raghva was so much on the contemporary society that every theatre group discussed about his innovations in the practice of theatre. He also became a controversial figure among theatre circles. His exposure to European theatre made him a strong supporter of Realism. As an artist he was the first to give much importance to *Satvikabhinayam*. Many references speak high about his acting capabilities. He criticised the artists that did not move away from mike while enacting the drama. In all his performances he avoided over use of mike and never responded to the utterances like 'oncemore' from the audience'. P.S.R. Apparao quotes an incident about the performance excellence of Raghava that when Rabindranath Tagore was asked about the Bengal actor Bahaduri, he said, "He is most certainly Bengal's great actor, but for an all Indian claim I should give my palm to your actor Raghava".

Vanarasa Govindarao (A.D.1868 -

Govindarao was the exponent of Surabhi theatre. Initially his family belongs to professional performers of *Tolubommlata* (puppetry). After Govindarao took the responsibilities of the family, he formed theatre groups and began to perform plays like *Keechaka Vadha*. He worked with some of the Marathi theatre companies and got trained in various aspects of play production. He introduced all technical effects into Surabhi theatre. During A.D.1914 – 1915, Govindarao toured extensively the places like Burma with his performance groups and enacted various plays. He was so

successful that he need not turn back again. Almost all the plays of his family were received with great zeal. He encouraged his family members to act in the performances. His wife Lakshamma was also an actress. Over a period of time, the Surabhi family became larger with hundreds of family members which later split into various theatre groups. But all groups performed the same plays with the same name. In order to avoid duplication of performances, the Surabhi groups divided the geography of Andhra Pradesh into different parts and made their own boundaries. Care was taken that no other group performs in the boundary of other group. But all groups had great respect for Govindarao. He was one of the founders of Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat. He spent all his money and influence for the development of both Surabhi theatre and Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat.

***Garikapati Raja Rao* (A.D.1915 - 1963)**

Rajarao was an artist, director and an organiser. His efforts caused the growth of political theatre in Andhra. He was a doctor by profession; he dedicated his life to Praja Natya Mandali. He participated in the first conference of Indian Peoples Theatre Association (I.P.T.A) at **Bombay** during **A.D.1943**. Later he toured all over Andhra, inspired artists and organised several branches of Praja Natya Mandali. He directed the plays like *Maa Bhoomi*, *Hitler*, *Parivarthana* and others. As an artist, he performed various roles like *Hitler*, *Rudher Ford*, *Rahim*, *Khilji* and many others. His skills as a dance composer were worth mentioning. As an

organiser, he was responsible for conducting many acting workshops, producing plays, adaptations and political lectures to artists. When Praja Natya Mandali was banned, he settled at Rajamundry for quite some time and organised a theatre group Raghava Kala Samithi. Later he shifted to Madras and did some roles in movies. He also produced and directed a movie by name *Putillu*. As a director, artist and organiser, he got great respect both within the circles of Praja Natya Mandali and mainstream theatre.

Koganti Gopala Krishnayya

Gopala Krishnayya was behind the establishment of Praja Natya Mandali's Krishna district team. Though much is not known about his contribution, one can assess his importance as an artist, director and organiser. He was jailed for some time on the pretext that he was singing against British rule. When the first conference of I.P.T.A was held at Bombay in A.D. 1943, a group of artists went with their art forms. Gopala Krishnayya performed *Koya Vesham* of Andhra, and received tremendous response in the conference. The local newspapers made a special mention of his performance. He organised a dance training camp with Vedantam Venkateswarlu for Praja Natya Mandali. He directed plays like *Maa Bhoomi*, *Mundadugu* and many other plays organised by Praja Natya Mandali. He played a crucial role in adopting many folk performances for political purposes. After Praja Natya Mandali was banned, in A.D.1953, he

was jailed for two years. After spending two years in jail, he went to Madras and worked as an associate director for movies.

K. V. Gopala Swamy (1903 - 1981)

During A.D. 1943 - 1963, there was a movement of experimental plays in Andhra University. It was initiated and supported by Gopala Swamy. His relentless services were responsible for the systematic study of theatre as an academic discipline in Andhra. Gopala Swamy came from a highly respectable family and got educated at England. Later he was appointed as the Registrar of Andhra University. The influence of English education, Western theatre practices and his theatre friends/associates in Andhra made him passionate towards theatre. His acquaintance with Western and Indian theatre practices made him to analyse the contemporary scenario from theatre **perspective**. He was unhappy with the plays of Parishats and other organisations that produced dramas. The unruliness in different performances and organisational perception of theatre made him to plan for a systematic study of theatre as an academic discipline in universities. He introduced experimental plays in theatrein which students enacted. His official position as Registrar of Andhra University made it easy for the establishment of Theatre Arts Department. As a result, for about two decades the Andhra University became a dais for many experimental plays. Performances were planned with proper planning, efficient technical staff and with high budgets. He invited all his theatre friends as guest faculty to teach the students. Around

two hundred and seventy one plays were performed in a period of twenty years. Not only as an organiser, he also directed many plays during this period. Thousands of students and citizens of Visakhapatnam attended his performances. As an individual, the contribution of Gopalaswamy is significant for he is responsible for the beginning of a new epoch in theatre and performance.

Abburi Rama Krishna Rao

Abburi Rama Krishna Rao is widely known in the field of theatre as a writer, critique and organiser. His education at Mysore, Culcutta gave him an insight on Indian theatre practices. He transformed the play *Kanyasulakam* of Gurajada into a performative text. He gave considerable performances at various places of Andhra. He started a theatre group with name *Natali* and performed *Kanyasulakm.and Pratima Sundari* (free translation of Herald Brighouse's *The Prince was a Piper*) through out Andhra. He directed an experimental play on the beach of Visakhapatnam with sixty artists. The theme of the play is the invasion of Alexander to India. Natural environment at seashore and beach were used as natural backdrop of the performance. The audiences were seated in the beach. These experiments made him a visionary in Telugu theatre. When he was in Andhra University, he supervised several experimental theatre productions. Theatre personalities like A.R. Krishna, Mantri Srinivasarao, Abburi Gopala Krishna and many others were his strong followers.

Sk. Naazer

Naazer, a renowned performer of a folk genre of *Burra Katha*. He hails from Guntur district and excelled in performing *Burra Katha*. He performed the stories of martyrs reflecting *veera and karuna rasas*. He was associated with Praja Natya Mandali and appropriated his traditional art form for political cause. Wherever his performance is announced, people gathered in thousands and he became the centre of attraction. In the same way as Gaddar is considered as synonymous to Jana Natya Mandali, Naazer was identified with the artform *Burra katha*, reflecting fervour and compassion. He was not only an artist, but also a composer of the lyrics of his performances. He wrote many poetic narratives that suit for *Burra Katha* performances and some plays meant for enactment. His play *Asaami* received first prize in the competitions conducted by Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat. The Government of India has honoured him by *Padma Sri*. He also received many prestigious awards from Sangeeta Nataka Academy, Telugu Association of Madras.

A.R.Krishna

Krishna was a student of Abburi Rama Krishna Rao. Both of their works have more similarities. As Rama Krishna Rao, Krishna had many political contacts and relations at international level. He was a writer, artist, director and organiser. He toured various countries and got a wide understanding of theatre. He also studied at British Drama League in A.D.1961. He was the founder member of A.P.Sangeeta Nataka Academy

and A.P.Natya Sangham. Through Natya Sangham, he conducted several theatre festivals through out the state. He was the managing director for Repertory funded by Sangeetha Nataka Academy. As a director, the play *Malapally* was his best contribution to Telugu theatre. He adopted the popular novel *Malapally* of Unnava Lakshmi Narayana into a play and performed it for hundred times. The performance was set up in twelve acting areas. Audiences were asked to sit in the middle. The intention of Krishna in doing so was to create an impact among the audience as if they have seated in a middle of the village, watching various locales at a time. As a teacher, director, and organiser Krishna played a very crucial role in Telugu theatre. The official/honorary positions held by Krishna in Government made him to contribute his best in policy making with regard to the theatre.

T.J.Ramanadham

There are many talented theatre directors in Andhra. Unlike the others who restricted their activities to the Parishats only, **Ramanadham** .extended his vision beyond stage and prizes and wanted to use them for social causes. He considered political theatre as the one that can serve the function of dealing the social issues. His plays in Parishat framework also made him a different personality. Later in 1980s, he got an association with Praja Natya Mandali. From that period to till his death, Ramanadham remained with Praja Natya Mandali and identified himself with street theatre movement. Starting from *Pedda Bala Siksha* to *Alluri*

Seeta Rama Raju, he directed around forty street plays on various issues. The greatness of Ramanadham lies in his broader understanding of Street theatre. Till then, people held that street plays are very simple and their theme focuses on social issues and solutions to problems and finally end with slogans. But the productions of street plays by Ramanadham changed the stereo- typed impression of people on the art form. Subjects that are meant to perform at proscenium are transformed into street plays. He did a documentary play on the modern history of India. He also made a play on the biography of *Alluri Seeta Rama Raju*. His dream was to produce a street play of Ramayana. Seven episodes are planned at seven evenings with duration of three hours a day. Unfortunately he died before realising his dream.

APPENDIX - II

One of the thrust areas in this thesis is review of various forms of folk performing arts of Andhra Pradesh in the present day scenario. Many folk forms are mentioned in this work without providing much information about them. A crisp note on some of the folkart forms of Andhra Pradesh that are being adopted by various political theatre groups for popularising their ideologies.

Burra Katha

Burra Katha is named after the percussion instrument (*Burra*) used by the performers while narrating the story. Burra Katha is a ballad-singing form of modern origin evolved from the traditional art form *Tandaana Katha*. There are more than a dozen

types of ballad singing traditions in Andhra. Some are secular and some non-secular and ritualistic. Traditionally, the *Vira Vidya Vantulu* from *mala* community sing the ballad cycles of Palanadu heroes; *Kommulavaru* sing the ballad cycle of *Katamaraju*, *Bavanilu* of *mala* community sing the ballad cycle of *Sakti*. Each Burra Katha troupe consists of three minstrels, one main storyteller and the two chorus singers (*vantalu*). The storyteller wears a long attire namely *angaraksha* as upper garment and a tight *pajama* or dhoti as lower garment. He puts on a beautiful turban with a crest feather on his head and holds a *Tambura* on his right shoulder. He wears *andelu* (brass rings with iron balls inside) to the thumb and index finger of the left hand along with a handkerchief. He plays these instruments while singing the ballad and moves one step forward and backward and also dances some times. His assistants also put on similar dress and play the percussion instruments *Burralu*. They assist the lead singer in singing the last line with *Tandana Tana*. This is one of the popular forms to express emotions like anger, ferocity, compassion and so on depending upon the story the performers narrate..

Oggu Katha:

. The story of the performance is narrated with the help of an instrument Oggu, otherwise called as jaggu that resembles to the *damaruka* (the celestial percussion instrument, drum) of Siva and hence called Oggu Katha. In Telangana region, there is a minstrel sub caste called *Oggu Gollalu* known as *Kurumas* among the shepherd community, the *Gollas*. .

The Oggu minstrels narrate the ballads of Biranna and Mallanna, the gods of Gollas for weeks together during religious occasions and before any rituals of the rites of passage, like marriage to ward off evils. They also narrate *Sakti* ballads like *Ellamma Katha*. These ballads are generally composed in Manjari Dwipada metre, interspersed with prose narrations of extempore compositions of oratorical and rhetorical nuances depending upon the capability of the chief narrator. There are at least four artistes in a troupe; one chief narrator, one assistant and two instrumentalists one playing a big drum called *dolu* and the other playing big size cymbals. Sometimes the assistant also plays another *Oggu*. Some troupes maintain two drum players, two cymbal players and one more to play *napiri*, a pipe-like wind instrument. The chief narrator puts on jingling bells to his ankles and plays oggu while narrating the ballad. He plays different roles of different characters in the story. He imitates and gesticulates their styles and moods. He

quickly changes his roles and dialogues on the stage by changing his modulation according to the characters he impersonates.. He puts on a waistband and holds a piece of stick and kerchief, which he waves, during his forward and backward movements while enacting. He also dances according to the situation. When he plays the role of a woman the cloth around his waist works as a veil or an apron of a sari. The chief narrator always has long tresses of hair and silver rings to the second finger of the right foot, like a woman. The assistant helps the chief narrator by elaborating the tune or sounds uttered by the chief narrator and create humour by witty conversations and punning. Traditional *Oggu Katha* is confined to the priestly class, the **Kurumas** only.

Chukka Sattayya of Jangaon has introduced **many** innovations into the tradition of *Oggu katha*. *Oggu katha* troupes are found in all the districts of Telangana.

Jamukula Katha:

The **ballad** narrated with the help of a queer stringed, percussion instrument is called *Jamukula Katha*. *Jamuku* is called *Jamidika* in Telangana. It is also known as *pamba*. The instrument *pamba* is always in pairs –one small and another bigger. That is why it is called *pamba jodu- pamba* pair. The smaller one serves as *sruti* and bigger one as a percussion instrument. The smaller one sounds like ektar or kinnera and the bigger one sounds like

thunder. The chief narrator plays on the bigger instrument while his assistant plays on the smaller instrument.

Among the Harijans there are two main castes called mala and madigas. Both these communities employ this instrument and narrate stories. In coastal Andhra the madigas are known as Bavinidu or Baindla and narrate the ballad cycle of **parasurama** and worship Ellamma and Renuka. The **Malas** are known as **pambalas** and sing ballads of **Ankamma** and worship her as 'Maaraasapuankamma'. Along with the pair of **jamukus** they also use a wind instrument called Titti. But in Telangana only Madigas bear the two names *pambala* and *Baindla*, perform priestly duties during the worship of **Mother** goddess and hero worship, sing the ballads of Ellamma, **Matapuranam**, **Gautupuranam** to prevent the spread of epidemics and cattle diseases in villages. In Telangana, the ballad singing by this community is still ritualistic, whereas in coastal Andhra it has become a folk performing art. Females also assist the male artistes in coastal Andhra.

Vira **Naatyam**:

Viranatyam, also known, as *Virabhadranatyam* is a continuity of the traditional ceremonial dance performed in the temples of Siva and Virabhadra during the medieval times when **Virasaivism** was in its fullest vigour and turbulent.. Veerabhadra, the destroyer of Daksha's sacrifice is said to be the originator of this

dance. Holding the **sword** in one hand and a shield in the other hand the devotee dances and dances online with the beatings of *viranam*. Till date in famous Siva temples like Srisailam, *Dakshayajna* is being performed symbolically in rituals during the *Ugadifestive* celebrations. Viranam sounds resemble to the sounds of battle drums and trumpets and **Virnatyam** resembles to Tandava **Nrityam** in its might and **vigour**. Besides *Viranam* other instruments like *dhole*, *Tashamarpa* and *Sannaayi* are also played during the **Veernatyam**. At the time of lingobhava on the sacred day of **Sivaratri**, these artistes present *Urdhva Taandavam* [dancing upward] a special type of dance.

In modern times, the artistes who perform *veeranayam* also hold **trident**s with **burning** torches. It is a vigorous and **aweful** dance with long leaps in steps and upward movements of legs and hands.

Yakshagaanam:

Yaksha gaanam is a theatrical performing folk art form wherein music, dance, speech and makeup [costume] all the four arts are harmoniously blended into one. *Yaksha gaanam* can be described **as** an operatic ballet interspersed with songs sung to varying rhythms, to effectively convey the mood of the episodic situation. The conversation is mostly lively, even when the subject is philosophic. There are characters that make speeches, sing

verses and songs. The themes are mostly from puranic lore, but with popular appeal. One or two characters are introduced without any reference to the mythological story, for the purpose of sustaining interest in the audience. These characters are always the favourites of the spectators. The structure of the play let is always simple. It opens, develops, reaches a climax and then the denouement is worked out. In some conversations, certain passages, which always have a topical bearing, are introduced extempore. Sometimes a local incident is woven into the dialogues. Varied themes in Yakhsagana performances correspond to the abundance of rhetoric in Telugu literature of *kavya/prabandha* style.

Chindu Bhagavataam:

Chindu Bhagavatam is a special folk dance - drama presented by professionals, Chindu Madigas, a sub caste among Harijans. As such this art must be as old as the caste Chindu Madiga itself. Chindu Madiga also performs a variety of dance dramas with puranic themes. They have Garudachala, Harischandra, Sarangadhara, Marravana etc., and plays in their repertoire. The costume and makeup in Chindu Bhagavatam, to some extent, resemble *Veedhinaatakam* and *Yaksha gaanam*. But the *abhinayam* i.e., gesticulation of limb movements of the chindu artistes is quite different. Another special feature of Chindu Bhagavatam is that all characters present on the stage share the

song and dance of individual character when he or she plays his or her role. The singers in orchestra players also assist the characters on the stage in their performance.

Chindu Bhagavatam troupes generally present their plays during harvest season, staying for 4 to 5 days in a village. On the final day they collect their rewards in cash or kind and move to another village. These troupes are found in all the Districts of Telangana. Chindula Ellamma (75) and Chindula Nilamma (68) of Nizamabad District are significant in this art form.

Tolu Bommalaata:

Leather puppet shadow play is one of the most ancient performing folk art forms known to Andhra people from 3rd century B.C. onwards. A troupe of shadow puppeteers consists of eight to twelve artistes; two females for singing and speaking for female roles, two males for singing and speaking for male characters, there instrumentalists for playing harmonium, *sruti* and Cymbals and one assistant who provides every help in the quick supply of puppets, maintenance of lamps etc., The artistes themselves prepare the puppets required for the plays they produce. Puppets are made out of goat and deer hides. These hides are well tanned and made translucent, cut into shapes and sizes, painted with natural colours and perforated for depicting ornaments and jewellery. The sizes of the puppet ranges from one to six feet

depending upon the age and nature of the characters like gods, demons and human beings. Like wise different kinds of animals, birds and reptiles are also prepared. Sometimes three to four puppets are prepared for one character, like Rama as a boy, while in exile, in the battlefield and during coronation. Andhra puppets are the largest of Indian puppets having joint limbs of the body like neck, shoulders elbows, waist, knees, and ankles. Each troupe possesses 100 to 150 puppets to cater to the variety of themes, which they present. The puppet box called **Ganiyam** is the most treasured and revered possession of the troupe. The artiste holds the slim stick clipped at the back of the puppet with one hand and manipulates its limbs with another stick with the other hand, and make the puppets to move in the , direction the character is supposed to move, backward and forward, up and down.

The puppeteers raise a temporary theatre with a thatched roof in an open place. It is open on three sides and closed on one side with a slanting white screen tied tightly to the poles on both sides. Powerful caster oil lamps (**petromaxes** in modern times] are placed in equal distances behind the curtain so as to throw light evenly and reflect color shadows on the screen. The puppeteers perform plays like Sundarakanda, Lakshmana **murcha**, Ravana Vadha, Lavakusa **Katha from** Ramayana, etc.,. **Comic and romantic episodes are**

introduced in between through special characters like Juttupoligaadu, Ketigaadu, and Bangaarakka etc.

Pagati **Veshalu**:

Vesham indicates imitating some characterisation with costume. *Pagati* is daytime. As the term indicates, *Pagati Veshalu* is always plural in the context of performance. Three or four performers take up different roles depicting a type each day and present their shows at the doorsteps of every house in the village. Each performance is based on a single episode, consisting of a prominent *vesham* while others play the roles connected with the main role. Same performance will be repeated at each house. The costume, make-up, speech and mannerisms denote a specific characterisation, adding humour to the content. The *Veshams* are broadly of two types, one the characterisations from mythology and the other from social life. The characterisations **Arthanareswara**, **Shakthi**, **Bhetala** etc belong to mythological type wherein the performer depict the art form with much more sincerity and devotion. The characters from social life are **Mondibanda Vallu**, **Singi-Singadu**, **Gurkha Wala** etc, wherein lots of humour and exaggeration of reality is depicted.

Chenchu Vesham:

Chenchu is a tribe, mostly inhabiting the forest areas around the **Srisailem** Mountains. They are equally respected both in Saiva

as well as Vaishnava temples. They come to the villages during harvest season singing the story of Chenchu Laxmi. A batch of three singers comes to the villages singing the ballad to the rhythm of a *Jeganta*, a flat brass disk and a stick to beat thy rhythm. The dress of these nomads attracts the attention of the on-lookers; short and tight *paijamas*, long *angarakhas*, and turbans with the feathers of a peacock stuck into them. A part of their song contains a wordy duel between *Chenchita* (Chenchu Laxmi) and **Narsimha Swamy** in the form of a *samvada daruvu* (a duet) that is quite popular in every village.

Veedhi Naatakam:

Veedhi means street and *Naatakam* is drama. It is also known as *Bayalaata*, an enactment (*ata*) performed in open yard (*bayalu*) famously known as in **Rayalaseema** region of *Andhra Pradesh*. It had its origins in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, when the Bhakthi cult especially the Krishna was dominant. When the temple performing art forms shifted to the open places, they were performed on raised platforms facing the temples to entertain the thousands of devotees that visit especially during festival occasions. Apart from *Sutradhara* and *Vidushaka*, many characters are found in *Veedhi Naatakam*. Exuberant costumes and make-up are used to denote the **characterizations**. Music and singing play a prominent role. Most of the dialogues

were framed into songs and Padyams and the characters introduce themselves. The entire story of God and goddesses are acted and the text is presented with more dramatic way, employing *taalas*, percussion instruments and harmonium. The Vidushaka can enter at any point of time on to the stage and **improvise** according to the context.

Chiratala Ramayanam:

This form contains around twenty people who sing and dance for the stories based on epic themes. The *Chiratalu*, two long wooden pieces designed in an oval shape at the ends and two round tin plates at each end to give a tinkling sound. The wooden *Chiratas* are held in the right hand and strike one against the other, produce a musical sound for which the dance is composed. Harmonium and *dolu* accompany the dance performance. The dancers, usually wearing white *dhoti* tied tightened at the ankles and with bells tied as anklets perform a circular dance. This popular dance form has several variations - *Chekka Bhajana*, *Chitikala Bhajana* etc. The actors also perform the dramatic episodes as per the requirements of the text of the performance on stage, a simple raised platform. The dramatic episodes in this form are similar to Veedhi **Naatakam** style. Song and music play a prominent role in this form also. The costumes and make-up of the characters denote their roles of their enactment. The chorus serves the purpose of narrating the story. Though the form Chiratala Ramayana is an offshoot of Chiratala Bhajana, it later developed into a full-fledged theatrical form.

APPENDIX - III
List of Parishats in A.P

Name of the Parishat	Organisers	City/Town/Village
Andhra Lalita Kala Samithi	Dep. Of Railways	Hyderabad
Agro Industries Nataka Potilu	Company	
A.G.Office Nataka Potilu	Employees	
B.H.E.L. Nataka Potilu	Employees	
Film Nagar Cultural Centre	Individuals	
H.C.L. Natakostavalu	Employees	
H.A.I. Natakostavalu	Employees	
H.M.T.Natakostavalu	Employees	
Akkineni Nataka Parishat	Individual	
Parucuri Ragubabu Nataka Parishat	Family	
Raogopalrao Nataka Parishat	Individual	

Name of the Parishat	Organisers	City/Town/Village
B.H.V.P. Nataka Potiiu	Employees	Vizag
Kanaka Mahalakshmi Natakostavalu	Committee	‘ TOWNS
Sagari	Port Employees	
Municipal Corporation Parishat	Corporation	Vijayavada
K.S.Murthy Kala Parishat	Family	“
Railway institute Parishat	Family	
S.Veerabhadra Rao Parishat	Family	
V.Ranga Smaraka Parishat	Individuals	
Anavemo Nataka Kala Parishat	Individuals	
Jesus Natakostavalu	Committee	Guntur
Guntur Kala Parishat	Committee	“
Hariprasadaraya Smaraka Sangham	Family	“
Indira Gandhi Kala Parishat	Individuals	“
Mallaya Lingam Nataka Parishat	Individuals	
Sahiti Kalaniketan	Individuals	
Alluri Sita Ramaraju Nataka Parishat	Committee	“
Mitra Samajam	“	Bhimavaram
Yuvajana Sangham		“
Cultural Arts	“	“
M.Ramanna kala Parishat	Family	Rajamundry
Navya Kalani Ketan	Committee	
Ballari Raghava Parishat		
K.Raghuramhai Parishat	Family	Bapatla

Name of the Parishat	Organisers	City/Town/Village
Kona Prabhakar Rao Parishat	Family	Bapatla
Addanki Kala Sagar	Committee	Addanki
Art Lovers	"	Chittoor
C.R.Club Nataka Kala Parishat		Chilakaluripet
Kalasadassu	"	"
K.Venkata Subbaih Parishat	Family	"
Telugu Desam Nataka Parishat	Individuals	"
D.Indira Kala Parishat	Family	Tenali
K.Venkatrao Parishat	Family	
Radha Smaraka Kala Parishat	Individuals	"
Dasari Narayana Rao Parishat	Individuals	Palakollu
Kalanjali	"	
Ksheerapuri Nataka Academy	Committee	
Mahatma Gandhi Maitri Brundam	"	"
Palakollu Sangita Nataka Academy		
Rasamayee		Piduguralla
Kalaravali	"	Dornakallu
Lalitha Kala Samithi		Ananthapuram
Nava yuvatha	Individuals	Macherla
Chennakesava Nataka Parishat	"	"
Nataraju Nataka Parishat		Ongole (Town)
N.T.R. Kala Parishat	"	
Narsapuram Nataka parishat	"	Narsapuram
Nataraja Kala Samithi	Individual	Cheerala

Name of the Parishat	Organisers	City/Town/Village
Narasaraopet Nataka Parishat	Committee	Narasaraopet
Railway Institute	Employees	Guntakallu
Raghava Natakostavalu	Committee	Vijayanagaram
Vijaya Rama Nataka Academy	Individual	Penugonda
Kalidasu Kalaraadhana Samithi	Individual	Kavali
Khammam Kala Parishat	Individual	Khammam
Soujanya Arts Academy	Individual	Kakinada
Samskruti Sammelanam	Committee	Guduru
Sri Venkateswara Parishat	Individual	Tirupathi
Social Club Association	Committee	Eluru
Ponnur Nataka Kala Parishat		Ponnur
Pragati Kala Parishat	Individual	Sattenapalli
Sahrudaya Samskrutika Samstha	Committee	Warangal
Draksharamam Nataka Parishat	Individuals	Draksharamam
Appajosula & Vishnubhotia Parishat	Trust	Various towns
VILLAGES		
VenkatarammayyaSmaraka Parishat	Family	Yeddlapalli
Azad Army Nataka Parishat		Divili (village)
Kalaravali		Buchireddypalem
Karshaka kala Parishat		Ganesunivaripalem
Kalavani		Nagulapalem
Kalanjali		Palakollu

Name of the Parishat	Organisers	City/Town/Village
Lalita Kala Samithi	Committee	Pamarru
Lalita Kala Samithi		Vetapalem
Modukuri Johnson Kala Parishat		Kabadipalem
Natika Kala Parishat		Lankala Koderu
N.Mulareddy Kala Parishat		Ramavaram
Rajiv Gandhi Kala Parishat		Murikapudi
Bhagat Singh Nataka Parishat		Divili
Diamond Hits Parishat		Anakapalli
Dickman Nataka Parishat		Phirangipuram
Jungle Club		Charla
Gurajada Kala Parishat		Dhavalesvaram
Kamalanabhudu Parishat		Murukipudi
Kalavahini		
K.Sarvarayudu, Subbarao Parishat		Veeravaram
K.Subbarao Kala Parishat		Gollaprolu
Kalasamithi		Tiruru
Kalanilayam		Chintalapudi
Ramayogi Nataka Parishat		Tatapudi
Rasabhavana		Kakumanu
Sarvodaya Natyamandali		Lankala Koduru
Kondaveedu Kala Parishat		Lingarao Palem
Satyanarayana Swamy temple Parishat		Annavaram
Swamy Fine Arts		Pattipadu

Name of the Parishat	Organisers	City/Town/Village
Sri Sri Arts Academy		Tanguturu
Sports Club Kala Parishat		Veerannapalem
Sri Rama Nataka Kala Parishat		Karlapadu
Sesha Sastry Kala Parishat		Cherukuru
T.Krishna Nataka Kala Parishat		Mittapalem
Youth Club		Konteru
Yuvajana Nata Samakhya		Satuluru
PedanandiPadu Parishat		Pedanandipadu
Kakateya Kala Parishat		Nagabhiravapalem
Ch.Pakeerrayudu Kala Parishat		Velagaleru
N.T.R. Kala Parishat		Vinganampadu
N.T.R. Kala Parishat		Pedakancharla
N.T.R. Kala Parishat	Family	Vira
Bharateya Nataka Kala Parishat		Vardhannapet
Friends Cultural Association	Family	Madala
Jyothula Kala Parishat		Irripaaka
Balayogi Smaraka Parishat		Ravulapalem
P.Padmanabham Nataka Parishat		Geddanapally
Chaitanya Samakhya		Doddipatla
Graameena Yuvajana Mandali	Family	Munagapaka
Cheemakurthi Kalabharathi		Cheemakurthi
Chetana Kalaniketan Parishat		Katrapadu
A.S.N.Raju Memorial Parishat		Boppudi
Kaladeepthi Nataka Parishat		Akiveedu

PHOTOGRAHS



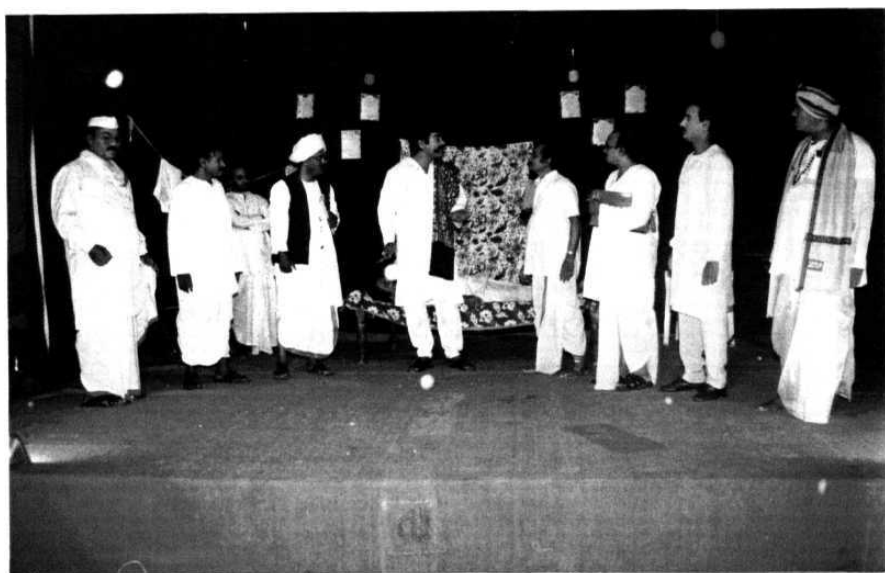
Folk Theatre : A scene from Chenchulakshmi Natakam of Chindu yakshaganam



Padyanatakam : A scene from Sriknshna Tulabharam



Padyanatakam : A scene from Satyaharichandra



Parishat Natakam : A scene from the play "Kurchi"



Parishat Natakam : A scene from "Poster"



Cover page of the broucher of Nandi theatre festival organised by Government of Andhra Pradesh during 1999.

Cover page of the broucher of Nandi theatre festival organised by Government of Andhra Pradesh during 2000.





Theatre of the Marginalised : A scene from Gaddar's performance on the stage



Theatre of the Marginalised : A scene from Gaddar's performance in the street



Theatre of the Marginalised :
A scene from the play
“Telangana”

Theatre of the Marginalised ;
A scene from the play
“Bhoomi Bhagotham”



Theatre of the Marginalised :
A scene from the play
“Maa Bhoomi”

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