

**THEATRE PERFORMANCE  
THEORY:  
ITS RELAVANCE WITH THE  
BHAGAVATHAMS OF ANDHRA PRADESH**

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By  
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I love Him...

**Dedicated to the Lord**

## ARRANGEMENT OF THESIS

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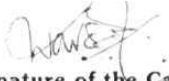
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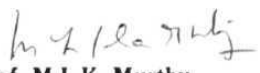
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# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

If theory is a matter of general principle, what is performance? The performance exists only when audience and actor are together. The performance - audience relationship is a two - way transaction like a dialogue. Without performance-audience relationship, the aesthetic nature of theatre does not exist. Though efforts have been made in the past to separate the audience from performance by way of erecting proscenium arch and other physical hindrances, the postmodern era considered it necessary to dissolve all the hurdles - physical, mental, cultural and social- to evolve a harmonious relationship between the performer and spectator. It has a global village perspective. This thesis is a critical study of theatre performance theories. The term 'Performance Theory'<sup>1</sup> was postulated during the postmodern era by Western scholarship, and it played a vital role in the avant - garde movement of theatre history. The essence of the performance theory in theatre is a phenomenon of live performances under the shades of actor - audience relationship in the theatre realm. In the postmodern and post - structuralist age, it gained maturity and was treated as intercultural and pluridisciplinary discourse. During the 1980s, it emerged as an independent discipline called 'Performance Studies'. It is a paradigm of pluridisciplinary explication of the spectacular text of the genres of performances in different cultures by utilizing various paths and criteria. But the present discourse is a slight diversion in an attempt to emphasize the theatre performance theory that had emerged as a theoretical approach in the theatre realm in the past few decades in Euro-American theatre culture.

The study goes with an analytical and empirical approach, taking into consideration the *bhagavathams* of Andhra Pradesh. This has been conceptualized into three major parts. One is looking at the performance theory in the postmodern and post - structural age. Second, the study extends its findings and observations of performance theory from pre-dramatic ritual to Avant - garde theatre performances that gave rise to the performance theory in the postmodern age. Finally, it examines the relevance in *bhagavathams* both theoretically and experimentally, taking into consideration the theatrologist and experimentalist works,

i.e., Richard Scheduler's and others who adopted the environmental theatre approach and its attitude to the postmodern age in the West.

Environmental theatre is a theatrical style in which the whole audience is included in the enactment together with the performers, and wherein both acting space and audience space is treated as a totality. It implies that performers and spectators are treated equally, akin to pre - dramatic rituals. Structurally, all the *bhāgavathams* of Andhra Pradesh are more similar to several aspects of environmental theatre concept, as will be observed in the course of this thesis. The theories are similar although cultural - geographical variations dominate the theatre. An extensive study of theatre performance and its interconnections with scholarly works provided many insights in order to bring out specific individual theories in the theatre realm. The attempt inevitably led to examining different theories and their phenomena, from ritual to the avant - garde movement.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The present investigation is an attempt to understand the dimensions of several theories, which include both old and new. The following are the specific objectives of the study:

1. To understand the background of performance theory and its importance as an inter-cultural and pluridisciplinary attempt during the postmodern and post - structural era.
2. To trace out causes, going back to the essence of theatre i.e., actor - audience participation during the postmodern era and its applications in avant - garde theatrical experiments.
3. To know the origins of different theatre performance theories since the last few decades, and the necessity to study the classical theatre to avant - garde theatres to understand the creation of performance theory in postmodern age.
4. To focus the *bhagavatha* performance structures (folk, traditional, classical) under the

light of Western experimental theatres, and to focus its attention towards performance space, performance text, and actor - audience participation.

## AREA OF STUDY

Since the area of study is mainly focused on avant - garde theatrical experimentation and its ideology, it became necessary to focus on Richard Schechner's work with his performance group, taking into consideration performance space, text, and actor - audience transactions in the theatre. Structurally and conceptually attention has been devoted to the above linkages and parallels in the *bhāgavathams* of Andhra Pradesh for the specific study.

## METHODOLOGY

In view of the above objectives set for the present study, the data has been collected through primary and secondary sources. Since the studies in performance is a new area, I preferred the Western performance analysis method rather than an independent one. The data collected for the study is as follows:

1. Literature survey on theatre history and theories related to analytical and empirical methods, and personal interviews conducted by Western and Indian scholars.
2. Consultation of the books, published articles and research papers of regional scholars written in Telugu for *bhagavatham* performances. Besides, the narrative interview technique has been adopted for better analysis of the performance structures of *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham*, *Melattur bhāgavata mela*, *Toorpu bhagavatham* and *Chindu bhdgavataham*.
3. Use of interview guide technique, and personal observation of the live performances in different places and at different contexts. Extensive field work and personal interviews with renowned scholars and artists, connoisseurs, technical persons and spectators of the performances who participated in live performances in the environmental space.

Data was collected by personal observations of performances at different locales on different occasions by interaction with performers and spectators. The secondary sources are profusely used, if found authentic, to supplement primary data. Therefore the arguments are enlarged on the basis of available data. During this exercise, maximum care has been **taken** to verify their authenticity for analysis. On the whole, the current data collected from different sources is used in this appraisal.

## **THE PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION**

The primary data for the present study was collected from August 1992 to June 1994. During this period, extensive travel was carried out at different places both in Andhra Pradesh and other states in India. The tour covered both collecting literature i.e., books, research articles, documentations of different Western theatrical performances gathered by different research libraries throughout the country, and also personal observations of live performances at different places in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu (Melattur) many times. Field work had been done on different levels at different intervals in the villages. Pilot investigation helped to standardize the mode of conducting interviews. First, it was thought to use a tape - recorder to record information from the performing troupes, but with minor exceptions all the respondents refused the use of taping, hence it was dropped in the final investigation. A period of ten to fifteen days was spent in each village to interact with different performing troupes and spectators. This helped to finalize and standardize the interviews schedule in a logical order and pose the questions in the dialect of the respondents. The final investigation has been developed according to the primary sources of the performers (recent) to collate with the literature.

## **OUTLINES OF THE DOCUMENTATION**

The present study is a traditional and intercultural discourse, local usages are properly used to develop arguments, and these are also underlined. Special attention is given to photo and video documentation for getting reliable and accurate visual information. Only

few performances were documented by the researcher due to financial constraints. Though the documentation of the live performances of the traditional artists are recently done, the analysis encompasses all traditional performances. Photographs were taken in all specified *bhāgavathams* according to subject specifications to prove my hypothesis.

## OUTLINES OF THE PRESENTATION

The present thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter deals with the background of performance theory and its development with other schools. Various postmodern ideologies and arguments are briefly discussed. Various performance studies of Western scholars and their work and connections to treat performance as a multidisciplinary matrix and Schechner's theatre performance theory and his environmental theatre ideas are presented. Indian traditional theatrical performances are discussed in this context. Spheres of performances genres, i.e. , folk, traditional and classical theatre is brought out.

The second chapter deals purely with the investigation of theatrical performance changes that occurred in theatre realm from ritual performances to avant - garde theatre in order to understand the theories that have arisen during the postmodern age. Thus the chapter explicates the ritual theatre, Greek theatre, Roman theatre, Renaissance theatre, modern theatre and avant-garde theatres. Emphasis has been given to the changes that occurred sociologically and culturally thorough the ages. It also throws light on performance space, text and actor-audience participation metamorphosis. At the end, the chapter concentrates on the necessity of actor - audience transaction in the avant - garde theatre of Schechner and his experimentation in Western society. The entire chapter tries to make a preliminary investigation of the similarities and parallelisms between theory and practice in the Western theatre (specifically avant - garde experimental theatre).

The third chapter contains a brief profile of the *bhāgavathams* study area and its origin, performance structure, compositions, and other aspects of traditional importance. This chapter also discusses the background of the *bhāgavatha* cult, inscriptional evidences, and

other aspects of traditional importance.

The fourth chapter explicates the topoanalysis and text of the environmental experimental theatre and examines the shades of *bhagavathams* of Andhra Pradesh. This chapter covers the limitations of drama as a literary piece and dramatic text, replacement of performance text for dramatic text in the postmodern age, confronting the text of environmental theatre concept and spatial importance to look into the —it *bhagavathams*. This chapter also covers topography and its ideology, anti - illusionistic space, and *bharata's* spatial concept in *Natya Sastra*, proxemics and spatial concept in *bhagavathams*.

The fifth chapter explicates the different theories of actor - audience participation, relationships and transactions of actor and spectator in experimental theatre of the West. This chapter enumerates postmodern theatrological ideology on actor - audience participation; and actor - audience participation in *bhāgavathams*, audience qualification, spectatorship, theory of *rasa*, communication vehicle in *bhagavathams*, participation through physical structure of theatre and *hasya rasa* and *Sringara rasa*, theatrical relationship, Schechner's exploration of audience participation, and Western theories of actor - audience participation.

In the concluding chapter a summary of findings of all the chapters is given. This thesis maintains a perspective of theatre in the postmodern era, conceptually and structurally, with focus on the *bhagavathams* of Andhra Pradesh.

# CHAPTER - I

# CHAPTER-I

## EXPLORATION OF PERFORMANCE THEORY : A DISCOURSE

Performance is about people, not only actor but also spectator (Meduri 1992:19). **Goffman's** definition of performance in Frame Analysis is: "A performance [...] is that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offense and looked to for engaging behavior, by persons in an 'audience role' " (quoted in Lampe 1988:183). Goffman employed the theatrical concept of performance as a model for the social realm both for onstage and off. He distinguished between a person as an individual complex identity and the specialized function of a person in a social role. Performance can have layers of appearances and intentions which possibly contradict each other (Ibid.:183). Performance is an inclusive term (Schechner 1966, 1988, 1993). "Theatre is only one mode of a continuum that reaches from the ritualization of animals (including humans) through performances in everyday life - greeting, displays of emotion, family scenes, professional roles, and so on - through to play, sports, theatre, dance, ceremonies rites and performance of great magnitude" (Schechner 1988: 1-2). Performance is an approach which has enlarged into various disciplines since the 1980s in the postmodern era.

### 1.1. POSTMODERNISM AND ITS APPROACH TO PERFORMANCE

**In** an introductory note to Critical Theory and Performance editors Reinett and Roach (1992:1) note that:

Post Modernism offers a good starting point... represents neither a category nor a method but, rather, as **Jean-Francois** Lyotard has observed, a "condition". The condition it represents reflected the collapse of categories themselves, an implosion that has been attributed to the media - saturated powers of capitalistic production and consumption. Post modernity has been described as a culture of "hyper representation" in which objects lose



their authenticity and become indefinitely reproducible and representable as commodities.

Postmodernism favors eclecticism and embraces simulations; it distrusts claim to authenticity, originality, or coherence. "Postmodernism appropriates the popular debris or retrospective styles; it vacates modernist belief in progress and the perpetual avant-garde. Postmodernism inspires pluralism; it deflates master narratives and totalizing theories" (Ibid.:1).

Thus, postmodernism inspires new ways of performance events and creates a new climate for the beginning of a new thought process even in the theatre performance realm.

#### *1.1(a). Postmodern Perception of Theatre Performances*

The postmodernist view of theatre performance is an approach and an analogy. It is construed "as a multi-disciplinary matrix where a confluence of ideas from folklore, anthropology, linguistics, theatre, semiotics and psychoanalysis are collaged in the central metaphor called 'drama' 'behavior' model or 'performance' "(Muthukumaraswamy 1992:2).

There was a great turbulence in performance realm and scholarship, which has proved productive and frustrating by turns, with divisions created by the diverse disciplines. Those disciplines are theatre, performance studies, communication, literature, media studies, and anthropology. This logic produce, theory versus practice, history versus theory, dramatic text versus stage performance, performance versus theatre, **and theatre** versus stage performance.

Therefore, with the emergence of performance approach and analogy for social life and its shows, it is possible to explore as to how the ideas from diverse sources intermingle to create a cohesion on the whole. Therefore basic ideas have given rise to theories in theatre performance history in the postmodern era.

Post avant - garde and post structuralist theatrological research has two fundamental approaches. Helbo (1987:vii) opines, "first the perspective that still relies on the communication model and tries (proxemics and kinesics), on the other hand the tendency that studies theatre in terms of flows of energy/libidinal exchanges". Besides the above approach, performance studies combine both the perspectives and considered theatre as a social or ritual event. Sub - disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, literature and folklore, fine arts and ethnology are the direct constituents of performance studies.

### **1.1(b). Performance Studies Paradigm**

Performance study has recently developed ethnographic and intercultural perspectives on a variety of public events and practices. It has developed as an individual discipline since 1980 at New York University. "Performance studies builds on the emergence of a post-colonial world where cultures are colliding, interfering with, and fertilizing each other"(Schechner 1993:21). As per Schechner (1989a:7), some of the important works on performance studies during the last three decades are Bateson's *A Theory of Play and Fantasy* (1955); Austin's Howard lectures on the '*Performative*'(*How to Do Things with the Words*)' (1955); Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959); Lohd's *The Singer Tales* (1961); Caillois *Man, Play and Game* (1961) and *My Approach to Theory/Criticism* (1966); Dell Hymes' *Model of the Interaction of Language and Social Setting* (1967); Turner's *Ritual Process* (1969) and *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* (1974); Singer's *When a Great Tradition Modernizes* (1972); Ben Amos and Goldstein's *Folklore, Performance and Communications* (1974); Myerhoff's *The Peyote Hunt, Secular Ritual* (edited by Myerhoff and Sally Moore) (1977); Bauman's *Verbal Arts as Performance* (1977).

In addition, to mention some important publications for this study are Blackburn's *Performance as Paradigm in the Tamil bow song tradition* (1980); Frasca's *The Terukkut-tu Ritual Theatre of Tamil Nadu* (1984); Zarrilli's *The Kathakali Complex Actor, Performance Structure* (1984); articles of Bauman's on *Performance in the International Encyclopedia of Communication* (1989,vol.3). Also valid are quite a few articles in **the**

journals *The Drama Review* (TDR); *Journal of Arts & Ideas*; *Sangeet Natak* ; *Theatre Quarter*; Theatre International etc.

One way or the other, the above works have given an impetus to interdisciplinary ferment characteristic of the approach of performance studies and theories. Thus the emergency of performance approach and analogy for social life shows various transformations that have occurred in backing up a comprehensive theory on performance realm.

*1.1(c). Performance as a Metaphor: A Survey*

From the 1960s, onwards some Western scholars turned towards the Indian performances and made suitable studies within the performative context. Blackburn (1980) consciously prioritizes behaviors vis-a-vis a cognitive system in his study of Tamil bow-song performances, and goes on to prove how performance stands as a behavioral paradigm which organizes and describes culture at the same time. Within the history of folklore scholarships the shift in the focus from text to context inevitably gave rise to performance approach, and the story of the shift in focus and its allied concerns are well narrated by Blackburn in his introductory survey of scholarship on oral tradition (Muthukumaraswamy 1992:3-4). In Villu - pattu performances, palm leaf texts have a controlling force. Blackburn (quoted in Muthukumaraswamy 1992:4-5) elaborates as Villu-pattu:

The central argument of this study has been that performance in an oral tradition operate as a cultural paradigm. As a demonstration this thesis, I have analyzed performances in Tamil Villu-Pattu tradition. In this tradition, the performance paradigm is built upon a set of correlations between narrative content, performance context and stylistic texture. Performance sequence is co-ordinated with ritual sequence, and narrated event is tied to delivery mode. In sum, narrative content is organized into select positions in the festival sequence in which it is performed by particular verbal style. Embedded within this multi-leveled order, in its very centre lies disorder. The most extreme ritual depth, the deepest dances coincident with death and sexual conflict are surrounded by this tightly woven frame... The movement of possession dance, the *attam* is essential, but it must also be controlled. Regardless of

its specific properties, this performance paradigm demonstrates our central thesis that people organize their lives not only by cognitive model but by behavioral ones, as well.

Richard Frasca's doctoral work on The Terukkuttu: *Ritual Theatre of Tamil Nadu* (1984) (quoted in Muthukumara Swamy Ibid.:5-6). Presents a detailed ethnography of Terukkuttu performers along with discussions on the central structuring strategy of the form, and the tripartite ritual structure of Bharatakuttu. Frasca's central argument is that, "pattam incorporates the two major rubrics of rituals of transition, rites of ritual of reversal, the constituent pieces of the Mahabarata cycle of enactments, the kutu episodes, are irreversible rituals of evaluation". Further, his investigations and findings of three phases common to all sacred transitions in the modality of Terukkuttu performance. In these performances, there are three movements through which the actor's self is constituted as an object in itself as well as for others. He writes, "In the first movement Terukkuttu actors stand behind the hand held curtain and invoke the blessing of gods and goddesses" (Ibid.:5). He interprets this as a process of separation in which the performer removes himself from reality as a prelude to entering epic reality. In the second movement, "the actor puts on the crown, wears his anklets and sings the third person narration of his own character accompanied by instrumental and vocal music" (Ibid.:5). He calls this a phase of liminality in which the actor has left his real self and the character is still in the third person. According to Frasca, the period of liminality extends even into the entrance after the curtain has been pulled away and actually constitutes the entrance itself (Ibid.:6). In the third movement when "the performer interacts with the kattiayankaran, the latter through his paradoxical humor at critical juncture resegregates the performer into epic reality" (Ibid.:6). Frasca demonstrates the display mode of performance functioning as technique of self.

Zarilli (1984) made an excellent attempt in presenting a detailed study of Kathakali complex in an intricate set of relationships between technique, training, patronage, aesthetic principle, socio-economic environment, closed and open texts does also contain speculations on performance as a mediational process of cognitive systems. His per-

formance studies and theorizing the function of aesthetic elaboration and realization is noteworthy. To him, "The Indian notion of cyclical time is reflected in the content and structure of Kathakali performances"(Ibid.:2).

## 1.2. PERFORMANCE THEORY 'A' CREATION

Theory is a method used to understand anything that is or happens(including structuralistic performances); and theory as the basic or matrix for making performances (Schechner 1976:121). Where do theories come from? Schechner, was an American theatreologist, scholar, thinker and post-modernist also a well known contemporary director in America, who explored the network of ideas and actions that are the basic for the emergent field of performance studies. He examined the complex interrelationship between theatre and dance, anthropology, ethnology, ritual and performance in everyday life, performance training, rites of passages, play, psychotheatraphy, and shamanism. In his book on *Performance Theory* (1988), he admits, "My speciality is performance theory - which for me is rooted in practice and is fundamentally interdisciplinary and intercultural".

### 1.2.(a) *Performance Theory Paradigm*

As reviewed by Schechner (1988; preface), the developments in the study of various facets of performance theory can be traced back to 1977. He draws special attention to some of the following works.

There are several contributions which appeared in the journals the *The Drama Review*, such as as *Approaches to Theory/Criticism* (Schechner 1966:20-53), *Drama, Theory, Script, and Performance* (idum.: 1973b:5-60); *Actuals: A Look Performance Theory* (Cheuse and Koffer 1970-1976); *From Ritual to Theatre* (Schechner 1974); *Towards a Poetic of Performance* (idum.:1974); *Performance and Social Science* (idum.: 1973b:3-4); *Ritual Play and Performance: Reading in Social Science/Theatre* (idum.:1976); *Ethnography and Theatre* (idum.:1976); *Anthropological Analysis* (idum.: 1978:23-32); *Magnitudes of Performance* (idum.: 1982); *Between and Anthropology* (idum.:1985); *The Future of Ritual* (idum.:1993).

Schechner (1973:vii) emphasizes that according to him, anthropology, social psychology, psychoanalysis, and gestalt therapy are the bases of his belief that performance theory is social science, and not a branch of aesthetics; herejects aesthetics. According to him, there are two main realms of performance theory. The first is looking at individual and social human behavior as a genre of performance; and the other is looking at performance as a kind of personal or social interaction. He say, "These two realms, or spheres, can be metaphorically figured as interfacing at a double two-way mirror. From one face of the mirror persons interested in aesthetic genres peep through at 'life'. From the other side, persons interested in the 'social sciences' peep through at 'art' " (1985:296). Therefore, performance theory can be a theoretical study of any performance - human or animal. Schechner (1973:3) pinpoints seven key areas where performnace theory and social science coincide:

1. Performance in everyday life, including gatherings of every kind.
2. The structure of sports, ritual, play and public political behaviors.
3. Analysis of various modes of communication (other than the written word); semi-otics.
4. Connection between human and animal behavior patterns with an emphasis on plays and ritualized behavior.
5. Aspects of psychotherapy that emphasize person to person interaction, acting out ,and body awareness.
6. Ethnography and prehistory - both of exotic and familiar cultures.
7. Construction of unified theories of performance, which are, in fact, theories of behavior.

Schechner opines that performance theory deals exclusively and and coherently with the above said areas and also it should take into account the scientific method of social sciences and traditionally intuitive method of the arts. This is because we are currently

witnessing a convergence marked by increasingly analytic methods in the arts and increasingly intuitive methods in the social sciences. He (Ibid.:4) also believes that “the convergence of the social sciences and the performing arts, and the creation of performing theory, is an antecedent to an avant-garde movement just taking shape”. This movement will be more iconographic than iconoclastic; more conservative than prodigal. Schechner pinpoints his viewpoint diagrammatically in the following manner (fig 1.1):



Fig 1.1. The Seven Key Areas of Performance Theory. (after Schechner 1988:1)

In addition to the aspects incorporating the scientific methods of art, there is yet another dimension, i.e., the environmental theatre which is an important domain in the realm of performance theory. In this context, Schechner (1973a:vii-viii) pinpoints in his book *Environmental Theatre*:

Environmental theatre is a way of working that has grown more precise over the past fifteen years or so. It is a particular style of theatre in Europe and America. I consider much of the works of Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, Ludovico Ronconi, the Theatre de Soleil, the Living theatre, the Bread & Puppet theatre, the Open theatre, and Manhattan Project to be environmental theatre. Across much of Asia, Oceania and Africa all theatre is environmental .... When I identify a style such as 'environmental theatre' I

am not (I hope) writing a manifesto but describing a phenomenon called into existence by social circumstances.

This whole book on environmental theatre is devoted to exposition of Schechner convictions by Schechner has both aesthetic as well as didactic properties. All traditional performances have fixed boundaries with set conventions and cultural codes to sustain their aesthetic appeal. The basic idea of environmental theatre is to break down traditionally set conventions and come away from the limited structure to control wealth in the society. Its off shoot is the rigid structure of proscenium theatre, and its suffocative fictitious situations created by fictitious characters in a fictitious world is a post-modern thought.

Schechner's concepts on environmental theatre have been published in various journals from 1968 onwards (1966, 1971b, 1973, 1982b, 1983). He presents his environmental theatre concept as a web, which clearly shows the position of contemporary environmental theatre among various performances (fig 1.2).

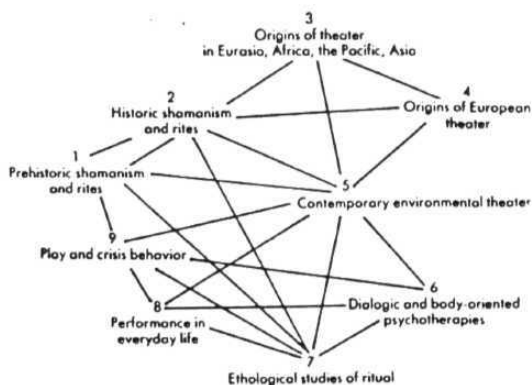


Fig 1.2. Diagram showing various interlocked components of environmental theatre (after Schechner 1988:1)

**While elaborating about the web he says:** “The web is the same system seen more dynamically. Instead of being spread out along a continuum, each node interact **with**



the others. It is no accident that I put my own practice theatre work - environmental theatre - in the center: this position is arbitrary" (Schechner 1988:np).

### 1.3. APPROACH TO PERFORMANCE THEORY

Anthropological research in the post - war era gave an impetus to the studies of performance, with the Western scholars in due course developing interest in the study of Oriental societies and performances. "The most important development in the Western responses to the oriental theatre, during the late 1950s and early 1960s is the dominance of anthropological research as a whole. Many of these anthropology, ethnological and folklore researches on the oriental society involved subjects like ritual, community activity and cultural behavior which in turn, often included theatre in their scope. This influenced theatre researchers in general, and they began to use cultural anthropology as a necessary discipline, borrowing specially, its methodology. As a result, often the world theatre was replaced by the world performance, which included everything from religious ritual to sports and popular gatherings" (Akshara 1984:47).

Studies on primitive societies, their community life, cultural behavior and ritual perspectives gave insights into the study of performance.

#### *1.3(a). Performance Theory and Sociology*

Theatre is a part and parcel of society as a whole. The writings of Lukas (1965); Eco (1977); Goffman (1959, 1961, 1963, 1974); Burns (1972); Duvignand (1963); Burns and Burns (1973); Hymes (1974); Goodlad (1971); Nagamalla (1994) etc, explicate the sociological functions of theatre directly. Sociological discourse investigates the social structure and its undercurrents revealed in the performances. Therefore sociologists consider theatre as social milieu which comprises dramatists, directors, performers, spectators, technical persons etc. For them it is social institution in itself. Hence, principles of Social sciences may be successfully applied to the theatre in its institutional form. The vocabulary of these studies in the social sciences has been adopted from the vocabulary of theatre: role playing, scenes, settings, acting and actions. Thus theatre has adopted key terms from the social science: interaction, ritual, ceremony, confrontations, etc.

Therefore, sociology of theatre is developed as a sub-discipline in the performance studies. In Schechner's view, the East has an ideal performance culture, where every body enjoys the same space, everybody actively involves himself/herself in the enactment. The performance is freed from the domain of written text; it is rather an improvisatory realm. Performances are not artificial events, but extension of social life. It follows the rules and norms also conventions and behaviors of the social system. In modern theatre it is concerned with fictional characters in fictional environments in a **fictional** world. The actors and audience do not interact with each other in fictional theatre, but keep a socio - physical distance. To offshoot this attitude, Schechner (1973, 1983, 1988) rejected the conventional aesthetics the fictional theatre and created a new convention based on various types of sociological concepts. He categorized different performance genres considering Event - Time - Space under the sociological aspects related to ritual performances to social dramas (fig 1.3) different performance genre listed in the chart considering the Event - Time - space under the sociological aspects relates to Ritual performances to social dramas. This chart helped him in organizing and categorizing performances genre thought to the world.

### *1.3 (b). Performance Theory and Folklore*

Performance and folklore (Gernald 1991, Thomas 1977) have closest relations with the geographical, social and cultural pattern of a country. In India, where diversity is the keynote in all these realms, it is quite natural to find a rich variety of folk songs, performing arts, stories, customs etc. At one level whether, whether in time or space, these forms embody man's innate universal desire to express human joys and sorrows. Another way they are all different, clearly tracing out an account of their particular content and the distinctive form and style through which content is manifested.

In spite of these great variations and multiplicity of trends, folk performances continue to be in a distinct classes. The most common of their characteristics is the quality of spontaneity. Folk performance of each region varies according to the topographical setting of the land, the sociological traits of different communities, and their different occupational patterns. In India, Hinduism with all its multiple religious sects, institutions

	AMPHITHEATRE	SACRED RITUAL	SECULAR RITUAL	SPORTS	SOCIAL DRAMA	MINUTES OR LESS	HOURS	DAYS	MONTHS OR MORE	SINGLE ONCE ONLY	REPEATED MULTIPLE	CALEND. CYCLE	EVENT GENRE	SYMBOLIC TIME
PRIVATE & RESTRICTED	Theatre on Chalkbox Street	Initiation rite	Executions in USA	Sports played at home	Election of Pope	Execution	Theatre on Chalkbox Street	Election of Pope	Some initiation	Exercise	Theatre on Chalkbox Street	Some	Election of Pope	Theatre on Chalkbox Street
PRIVATE BUT OPEN	Happenings & Bar Mitzvah	Performance Art	Pho Orala	Sandlot baseball	Murder trial	Puja at Hindu temple	Happenings; bar mitzvah, etc.	Happenings; Some	San Hach 'Yearling performance'	Bar Mitzvah	Theatre on Chalkbox Street	Puja at Hindu temple	Some happenings	Some happenings
LOCAL	Ordinary theatre & dance	Teyyan	Mary's Thanksgiving's Festival	Big League baseball	Turkish social drama	Stuart Sherman's street spectacle	Ordinary theatre & dance	Ramilla; Yaqut; Easter	Orakolo 'crystal'	Some happenings	Ordinary theatre & dance	Ramilla; Yaqut; Easter	Big League ball	Ordinary theatre & dance
GENERAL	National TV drama	Pilgrimage	President's inauguration	Olympics	Hostage crisis; war	TV commercial	Feature film	Olympics	TV Soap	Boxing match	Feature film	Olympics	World Series	Feature film
SACRED SPACE	R & P; St. John the Divine	Rites	Religious events	Aborigine church	Church where Pope is elected	Puja; celebrant	Ordinary service	Election of Aborigine ceremonies	Pilgrimage	Bar Mitzvah	Feature film	Yaqut; Easter; Ramilla	Ramilla; Yaqut; Easter	Ramilla; Yaqut; Easter
SECULAR SPACE	Ordinary theatre & dance	Jewish circumcision; wedding	Macy's Parade	Playing fields	Town square; negative ball	Stuart Sherman; circus; circus	Ordinary theatre & dance	Wilson's 'Ka Mita'	Hostage Crisis	Wilson's 'Ka Mita'; 'Ka Mita'; 'Ka Mita'	Ordinary theatre & dance	World Series; Olympics	World Series; Olympics	Ordinary theatre & dance
FOUND SPACE	Roadside, beach, arena, gallery	Social events, rock, rivers	Parade routes	Sandlot ball	White US Embassy during Hostage crisis	Some happenings	Parade; Wilson's 'Ka Mita'	Wilson's 'Ka Mita'	Book's 'Ka Mita'	Many happenings & 'Ka Mita'	Parade; Wilson's 'Ka Mita'	Aborigine ceremonies	Sandlot ball	Switzerland's 'Ka Mita'
UNFORMED SPACE	Stage set; (theatrical)	Churches; (theatrical)	Courthouse; (theatrical)	Sandlot ball	Courthouse; (theatrical)	Execution	Ordinary theatre & dance	Murder trial	Orakolo	Some happenings	Ordinary theatre & dance	Ramilla; Yaqut; Easter	World Series	Ordinary theatre & dance
DOOR SPACE	Churches, temples	Churches, temples	Courthouse; (theatrical)	Field; (theatrical)	Courthouse; (theatrical)	Some happenings; execution	Ordinary theatre & dance	Murder trial	Murder trial	Some happenings	Ordinary theatre & dance	Church services; (theatrical)	Indoor sports	Ordinary theatre & dance
DOOR SPACE	Greek or Elizabethan theatre	Aborigine initiation grounds	Parade route; US inauguration	Stadium	Two 'duels'	Stuart Sherman	Greek or Elizabethan theatre	Wilson's 'Ka Mita'	Orakolo	Some happenings	Elizabethan theatre	Ramilla; Yaqut; Easter	Elizabethan theatre	Elizabethan theatre
DOOR SPACE	Ordinary theatre & dance	Church service	Courthouse	Stadium, (theatrical)	Courthouse; (theatrical)	Execution	Ordinary theatre & dance	Murder trial	Boxing title match	Ordinary theatre & dance	Ordinary theatre & dance	Folk	Indoor sports	Ordinary theatre & dance
MULTISPACE	Many happenings; environmental theatre	Pilgrimage	Parade	Marchion moving Olympia	Hostage crisis	Some happenings; some guerrilla th.	Some happenings; some guerrilla th.	Olympics; Yaqut; Easter	Orakolo	Hostage Crisis	Ramilla; Yaqut; Easter	Ramilla; Yaqut; Easter	World Series	Ramilla; Yaqut; Easter

Fig. 1.2.1. Events Time Space: Sociological Chart

and rituals has generated a large number of folk and ritualistic performances.

The difference of these folk and ritualistic performances have not yet been enumerated structurally. Many folk traits and characteristic patterns of certain forms are still preserved in religious rituals. The absence of selfconscious, artistic expression, sophisticated stylization in content gives the folk performances a capacity for ever renewing itself and maintaining a continuity with traditions. This tradition is mainly evident through religious beliefs, customs and ritualistic happenings.

### *1.3 (c). Performance Theory: Ritual Behavior*

Ritual performances include the type of complexities found in adhering specially to ritual procedures, gestures, specific texts, and choreographic dramatic technique associated with the propitiation of a particular deity. Panikker (1985:18) writes, "A ritual is born when the archetype shaman comes into contact with his favorite deity. This contact at the preliminary stage of the ritual has an element of 'otherness' and 'beyondness'; in other words, the shaman in the beginning looks upon the deity as something different and distant from himself. Ultimately, in the process of ritual, shaman and deity merge into a whole. There is no ritual without devotees, but the shaman and devotee are on the same wavelength and willingly drawn into the atmosphere of devotion. In theatre also this willingness is essential - for the actor who is in the place of the shaman in ritual, and the audience which is the place of the devotee"

Panikker described the importance of ritual performance in the theatre performance realm. Theatre has its roots in religious rituals. Since ritual is a part of life, it evokes spirituality in human beings. During ritual enactment, everybody gets involved in the ceremony by playing some roles such as clapping, singing, responding and sometimes through dance, ultimately attaining spirituality. Most of bhakti performances come under this school. In these performances, both priest and devotee involve in the enactment. As far as semi - classical performances concerned, the terminology of actor-spectator relationship is irrelevant because all the spectators are participants. The performance is a ritual to adore the village deity or a supernatural being. The performer possesses superhuman power and transcends it to the participants in the form of give and take

during the performance. By this exchange, the performer makes spiritual and psychological transaction with the participation. In this context, it would be pertinent to note Schechner's explication of the development of theatre from rituals as follows (fig 1.4).

EFFICACY	ENTERTAINMENT
(Ritual)	(Theatre)
results	fun
link to an absent other	only for those here
abolishes time, symbolic time	emphasizes now
brings Other here	audience is the Other
performer possessed, in trance	performer knows what he's doing
audience participates	audience watches
audience believes	audience appreciates
criticism is forbidden	criticism is encouraged
collective creativity	individual creativity

Fig 1.4. Ritual to Theatre. (after Scheduler 1983: 137-38)

Thus, theatre has its roots in the religious, in and ceremonial rituals. Turner (1982), in his study of ritual to theatre, concentrated much on ethnography into playscript, playscript into performance, and performance into meta-ethnography among the same/other culture. He writes: "The 'playing' of ethnography is genuinely an inter disciplinary enterprise, for if we are to satisfy ourselves of the reliability of our script and our performance of it, we need advice from various non anthropological sources. Professionals in the field of drama in our own culture- script , writers, directors, actors, even stagehands- draw on centuries of professional experience in performing plays. Ideally , we need to consult , better still, bring in as part of the cast, members of the culture being enacted. We may, sometimes, be lucky enough to enlist the aid of theatrical or folk professionals from the society we are studying. But , in any case , those who know the business from the inside can help enormously" (Turner 1982:90).

The development of theatre in the East or in the West) is more often than not traditionally inherited. Dramtic dances still form a part of tribal cultures all over the world, giving a clue to the development of thetre form its most rudimentary form.

#### 1.4. PERFORMANCE THEROY AND POSTMODERNISM

Being a postmodernist, Schechner viewed post modernist performance "as a **liminal** bridge, conscious of itself, its past, and its multiple potentials as future" (1983:308). He clearly elaborated his ideas and concepts on postmodern performances (1979) with an illustration (fig 1.5).

Schechner's extensive research on world performances and his work with experimental theatre proves that postmodern theories support interculturalism. In his view, there are four kinds of performances today (1982b): oral, traditional, modern, and post modern (Schechner 1979:20). The comparison of above four modes (fig 1.5) illustrates how oral and traditional forms are related to post-modern performance genres. He suggests, "...The oral, traditional, and historical are becoming the post modern; the modern remains separate. The modern proposes the analytic, the critical, the narrative, the skeptical, the contentious - what used to be called rational, intellectual, and humanist; the post modern is religious, the synthetic, the holistic, the ritualized, the uniform" (Ibid.:22).

In extension to this, he writes, "The post modern is influenced more by oral and traditional ways of making theatre than any modern ways" (1982b:106). Schechner is very much in favor of intercultural studies and performance analysis of different cultures. He openly proclaims "Intercultural themes are present in my directing my writings and my hopes for the future world" (1989b:151). His performance theories and environmental theatre are a product of postmodern interculturalism and it can be analyzed only by using pluridisiciplinary modes. His passion in creating a performance theory is purely on Intercultural and pluridisiplinary modes. He admits that, "Performance theory is no longer just bout the performance genres of one culture. It is about the relatedness among the genres and cultures and analogies between performance and other modes of human behavior" (Schechner 1986:5). Minch Brewer a French linguist, writing in an article on "**performing** theory" appeared in Theatre Journal (1985) agrees that:

**MODERN**

Role and performer separate; function of rehearsal to join them.

Originality prized.

Narrative.

Rehearsals used to make details of the performance, but not the text.

Younger performers train outside of rehearsals learning a "grammar" of techniques applicable to any performance.

Artists are individuals who get together for one play at a time; each has his/her career.

Works often critical of the social-political-economic order.

**POSTMODERN**

Role and performer separate; kept that way in performance.

Originality prized.

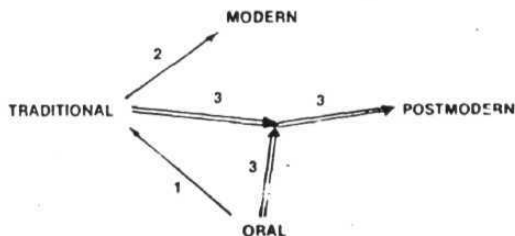
Information bits.

No set pattern. Sometimes text is composed during rehearsals.

Training habits vary widely from none to continuous training.

Often organized collectively in groups.

Works mostly non-political, non-ideological.

**TRADITIONAL**

Role and performer separate; separation maintained. Often masks or mask-like makeup used.

Maintenance of score prized. Rules for improvisation.

Little or no rehearsal.

Training in specific roles. Training through imitation or direct manipulation of the body.

Roles are hereditary or in the family.

Artists are part of groups: castes, families, etc.

Works often support religious ideological order.

**ORAL**

Role and performer separate; often complete identity secured through trance.

No set pattern. Sometimes a strict score, sometimes very loose.

Little or no rehearsal.

Training in specific roles. Or no training at all, merely observation.

Roles are hereditary or in the family.

Artists are part of groups: castes, families, etc.

Works often support religious ideological order.

Fig. 1.5 FOUR KINDS OF PERFORMANCES TODAY

(after Schechner 1979)

Metaphors of the theatre such as *mise-en-scene*, staging, performance, production, play, and act pervade the major discourses of contemporary theory. Despite their differences, the discourses of psychoanalysis, **semiology** of the arts, sociology, philosophy, reception aesthetics, speech act theory, and deconstruction have all had recourse to a valorization of theatrical notions in elaborating their theories (Brewer 1985:13).

Both the above scholars' attitude towards performance theory seems to encourage intercultural and pluridisciplinary discourse in the postmodern era.

### 1.5. SCHECHNER'S INTERCULTURALISM: REACTIONS

A noted Indian theatrologist, and director, Rustom Bharucha (1990:2-3) reacted to Schechner as follows:

"I begin my confrontation of interculturalism by providing a critical scenario of its development in the Euro-American theatre of this century. As far as possible, I have concentrated on those artists who have been actively involved in experiencing, adapting, transporting, and manufacturing performance tradition from the East. To narrow the focus of my investigation, I am concerned specifically with Euro-American uses and constructions of the Indian theatre .... I believe it is imperative to resist any attempt to subsume performance traditions of the East with amorphous categories like the "oriental theatre"(envisioned by Antonin Artaud in the early 1930s) or the strictures of performance theory provided by Interculturalists theories like Richard Schechner.

Richard Schechner's interculturalism of performance tradition **stimulated much of the** oppositional energy. One can hope that Schechner seems to be more eager to synthesize underlying patterns of structure/process in different performance traditions rather **than** confront their individual histories. While commenting on Schechner's performance **theory**, **Barucha** observes, "....religious festivals like **Ramaila** can not be subsumed **within** the post-modern categories of thought adopted by Schechner in his performance **theory**... this theory upholds a methodology and a vision of the world that must be **termed**



egocentric. My critique of western mis(uses) of the Indian theatre is not based solely on aesthetic criteria,[...] representation underlying any cross cultural exchange, and the social relationship that constitute it (Ibid.:3-4). He further feels that Schechner has been largely responsible for the propagation of interculturalism both as a concept and practice. This phenomenon that was most explosive in the American theatre of the late sixties which continued to experiment in interaction with other cultures. vskip0.35cm Schechner clearly substantiated in one of his books *The End of Humanism* (1982:11) his idea of Interculturalism further. According to him, “A theatre that was genuinely intercultural drawing its techniques and examples from within the Euro-American culture area, and from without - from Africa, Asia, Native America, Micronesi,' every where... People didn't question me too much whether or not this interculturalism - this affection for Kathakali exercise, the precision of Noh drama the simultaneity and intensity of African dance- was continuations of colonialism, a further exploitation of other cultures. There was something simply elaborating about discovering how diverse the world was, how many performance genres there were, and how we could enrich our own experience by borrowing, stealing or exchanging (Schechner 1982:19).

Dalmia-Luderitz supports Schechner's performance theory and Interculturalism when she writes:

The mode of selection and the authoritative use of aspects of other cultures, as exemplified for instance by Schechner's concepts of the choice of cultures, of being able to choose from a vast palette of possibilities, the Indian, the Japanese, the Asian and so on, in the construction of pan - human even supra - human communication networks' is a privilege which only a few can practice, and these few stem largely from the western hemisphere. As a notion it is especially bizarre when regarded in its absolute impracticability foremost mankind (Dilmia-Luderitz 1992:24-25).

However, the idea of Interculturalism, which was framed or practiced by Euro - American theatrologist, was not new but old. Interculturalism was first suggested by Antonin Artaud, who was inspired by the mythologies of the Oriental theatre. So his influence on

the interculturalism trend of Euro-American theatre can not be ignored. Whether **Artaud travelled** to the East or not was entirely altruistic or based on understanding of its innate principles, even if it proves that he created his own "East", an imaginary Oreint, from which he derived is source of rejuvenation. His experience with Balieness theatre may not be a totally systematized description of Performance theory. But its connection with the Oriental theatre is a magic storehouse of ancient rhythms and gestures, **cosmic** traces and metaphysics, mental alchemy and exorcism which gave rise to the theories in **the** postmodern era.

## 1.6. CLASSICAL, FOLK, RITUAL, DEVOTIONAL AND MODERN PERFORMANCE PARADIGM

The Indian Theatre performance tradition are categorized into five spheres interlocked with each other by some scholars such Richard, Swann and Zarrilli (1990). While commenting on this, they wrote, "No performance genre is governed exclusively by a single spear of influence" (Ibid.: 11). The sphere sketches of the five genres and their interlocking modes are (fig 1.6).

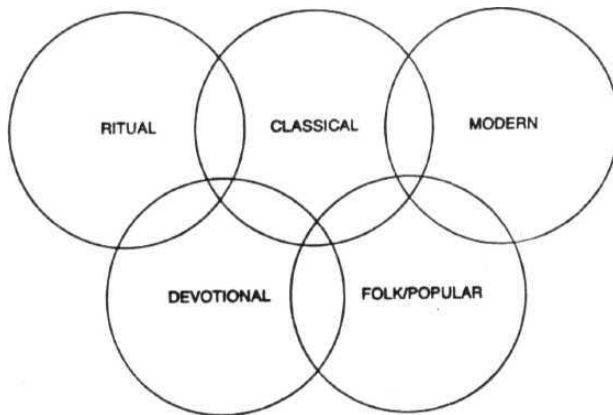


Fig 1.6. Spheres of Performance Genres. (after Richard, Swann and Zarrilli 1990:4)

Andhra Pradesh theatre performances can be fitted into the above spheres interlocking modes - ritual, folk, traditonal, devotional and classical. These performances embody

their own complex modes of performances. The complexities of traditional and folk performances are most likely to be found in dramatic text, dance, narration, songs etc. It is very important in folk performances both actors and audience are detached from the outer world, and become participants in the performance. *Toorpu bhagavatham* (traditional) and *Chindu bhagavatham* (folk) fall under this category. Most folk performances provide social wisdom and community based. They deal with social themes, popular history and tradition. Classical performances are not necessarily more complex than traditional and folk performances. In classical performances, there is most often a complexity of nuances of gesture and refined, codified, technique, especially in manipulating of hand, eyes, body and face, etc. *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* and *Melatturbhagavatha mela* (classical) performances come under this realm (Fig 1.7).

Bharata's *Natyasastra* or the Indian performance theory is (Appa Rao 1967) considered the foremost book in India. It deals with dramaturgy and theatre. It is believed that this book was composed between 2 B.C - 2 A.D. The book has 36 chapters covering 5,600 verses dealing with all aspects of theatre: three modes of theatre architecture - *Vikrishta* (rectangular), *Caturasara* (square) and *Tryasa* (triangular); there are four modes of *Abhinaya* ( histrionic expression) - *Satvika* (responsive emotion), *Angika* (gestures), *Vachika* (vocal), *Aharaya* (costumes); *Rasas* and *Bhavas*; ten types of *Rupakas* and *Panchasandhis*; finally, advice to the spectator on how to appreciate a play.

There are 67 varieties of hand gestures described in *Natyasastra* for dance and theatre performances. Of these 67 varieties, 37 are expressive and the remaining 36 are ornate. The ornate *mudras* are now used for dance (Kuchipudi, Bharata Natyam) The expressive 37 *mudras* are classified into two : 24 *mudras* are called *Asamyutha* or single handed gestures and the remaining 13 are called *Samyutha mudras* or couple handed gestures. The 24 basic single-handed *mudras* being used in the classical theatre. In the Kuchipudi school i.e., *Isya* tradition (female solo performance) follows *Abhinaya Darpanam* written by Nandikeshwara which has 28 hand gestures. *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* and *Melatturbhagavatha mela* is a by product of *Natyasastra*. These performances are considered as classical theatre because of its *Abhinaya* enrichment. Structurally and conceptually, *Natyasastra* favours both *Marga* (Natyadharmi) and *Desi* (Lokadharim) tradition in the



Patāka



Tripatāka



Ardhapatāka



Kartarīmukha



Hamsāsya



Hamsapaksa



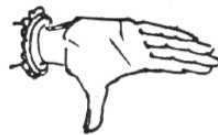
Sandamsa



Mukula



Mayūra



Ardhacandira



Arala



Sukatunda



Tamracuda



Trisūla



Vyāghra



Ardhāsūci



Musti



Sikhara



Kapitha



Katakāmukha



Kataka



Pālī



Anjālī



Kapota



various like performances in Anikva pradesh



Kartirivastika



Sakata



Samkha



Nāgabandha



Khaṭvā



Kangula (fron



Cakra



Samputa



Pāsa



Simhamukha (front)



Catura (front)



Svastika



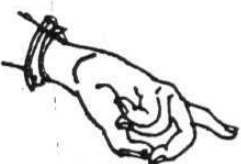
Kūṁba



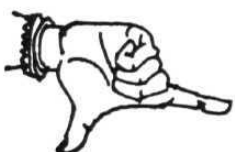
Matsya



Kilaka



Suci



Candrakala



Padmakosa



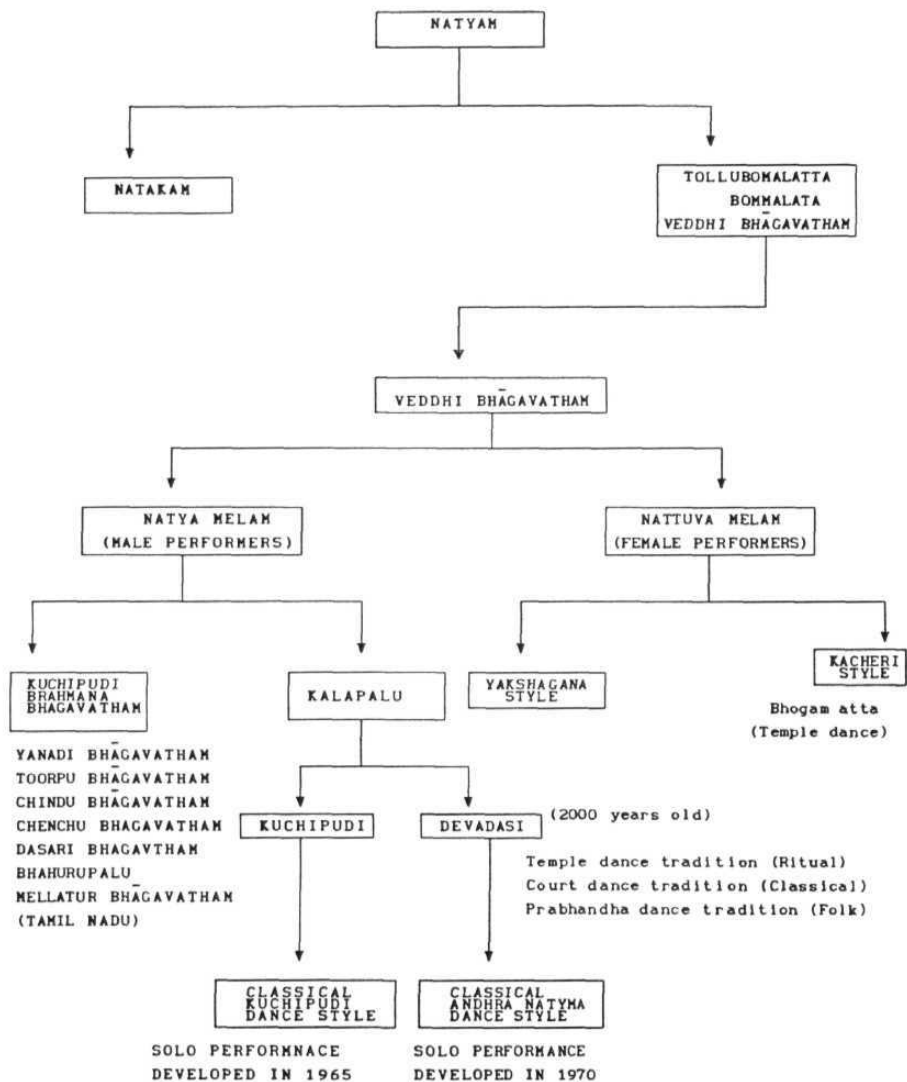


Fig. 1.8 The development of theatrical performance genres in Andhra Pradesh

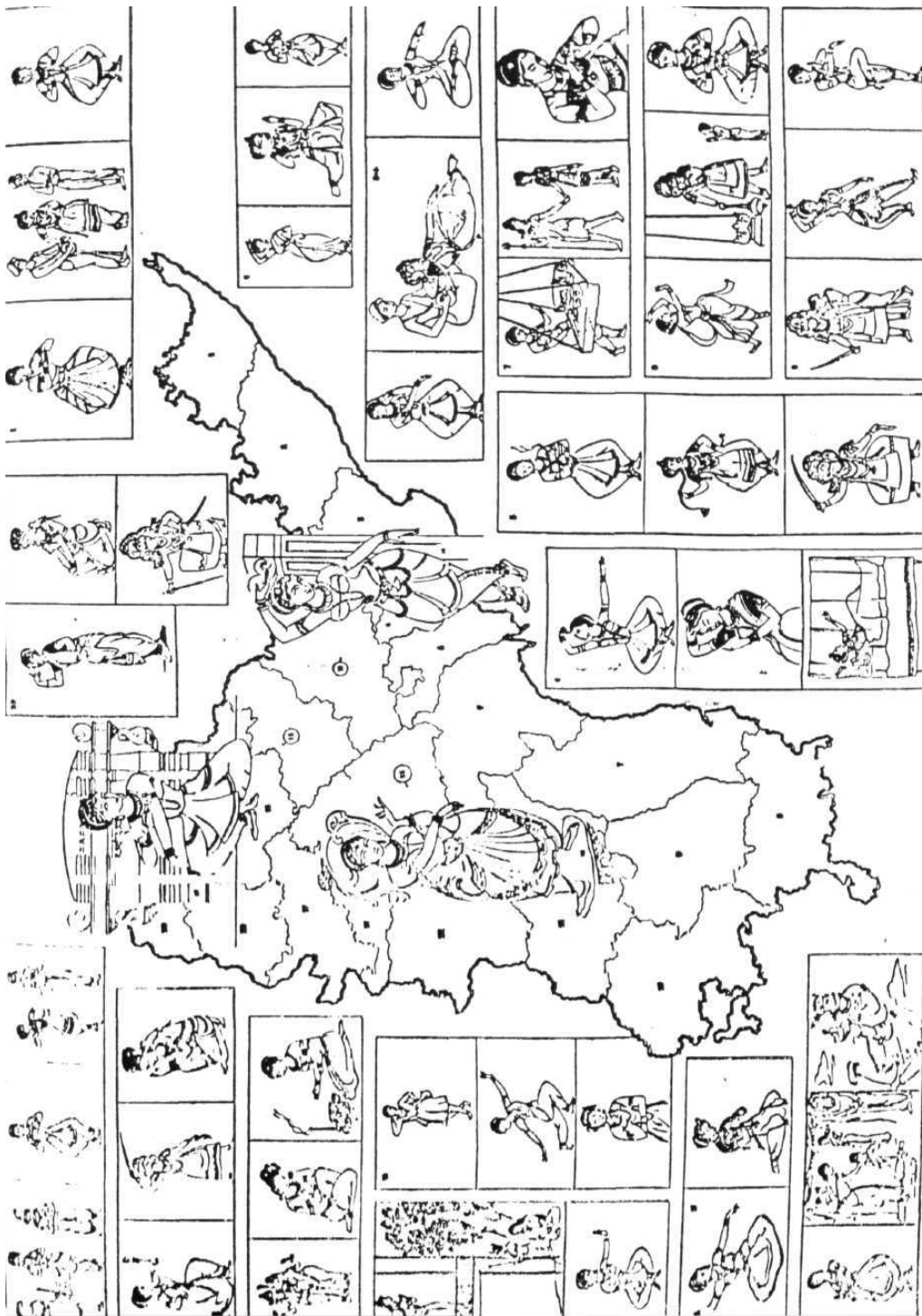
performance realm. The classical performance propounds the theory of rasa. The taste of good play is its capacity to evoke rasa in the audience.

There is no evidence of the Sanskrit theatre as mentioned in *Natyasastra* in theatrical performance of Andhra Pradesh. Though the writings of Nannaya, a poet who lived in 11 A.D, it was known that there were many folk art forms in existence during his time. However, there were a variety of ritual performances which were confined to the temples during fairs and festivals. To entertain the bourgeois society, there were temple as well as courtyard performances for the priests, kings and intellectuals in the ancient period. Later, other performances were privatized to entertain common people in that society. Those were largely folk or desi performances. Fig 1.8 demonstrates the development of different theatrical performances in Andhra Pradesh. In addition to this, there are few other performance genres, both folk (Fig 1.9) and ritual (1.10), available in Andhra Pradesh.

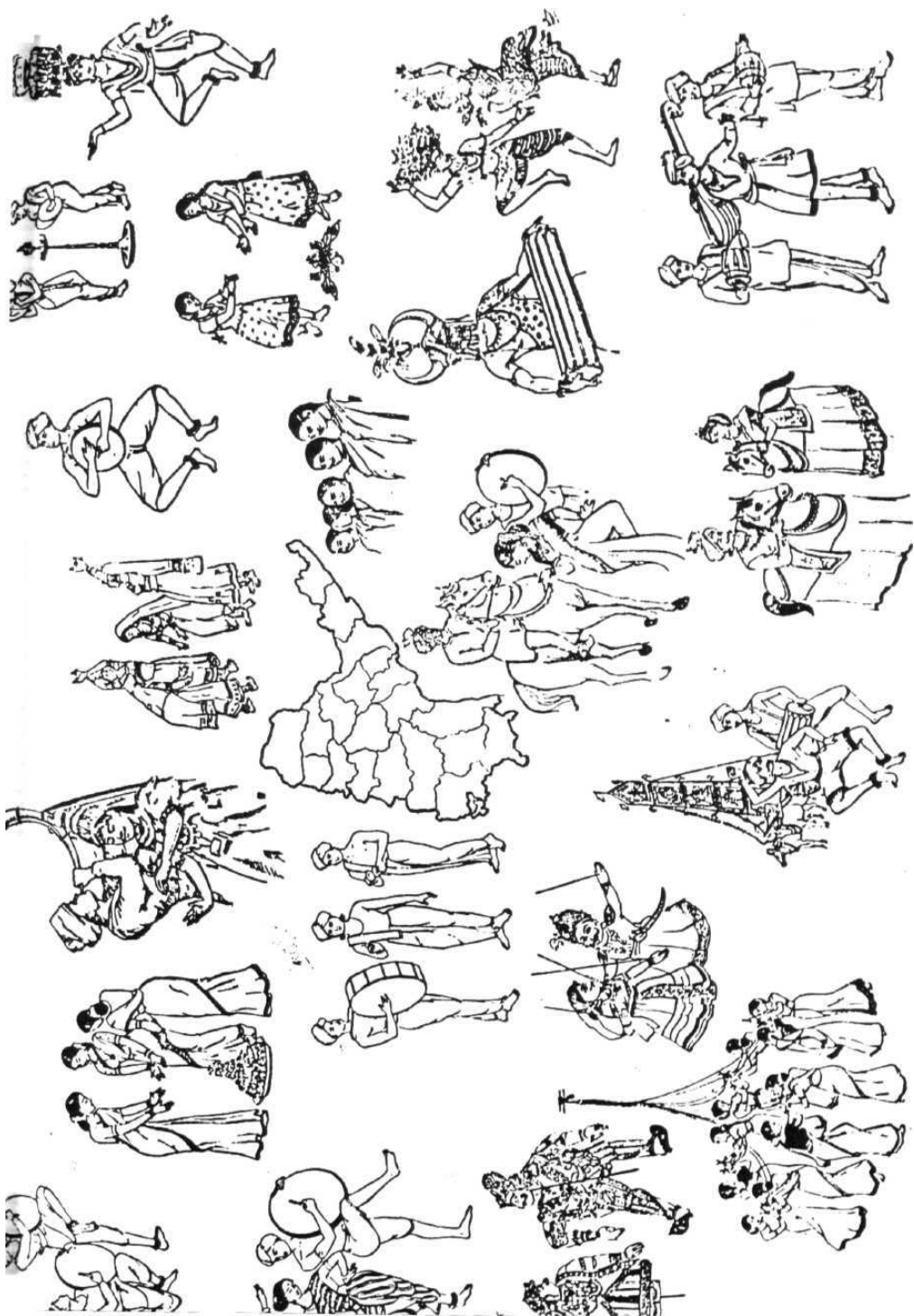
In the context of different analytical tools in vogue in performance theories and studies, this work centres on the appraisal of the *bhāgavathams* in Andhra Pradesh such as *Kuchipudi bhdgavtham*, *Melatturbhāgavatha mela* (Tamil Nadu), *Toorpu bhāgavtham* and *Chindu bhāgavatham*. As shall be shown in due course. All *bhdgavathams* cut across this compartmentalization and in fact encapsulate both the folk and classical. These aspects Bharata identified as *marga* and *desi*. In the light of the prevailing debate on performance theory, this thesis attempts an explication of the major characteristic features such as text, space and actor - audience participation of these four *bhdgavathams* and situates them in a broader theatrical framework.

It would be apt to note that the inspiration for this study is largely drawn from Schechener's contribution on performance theory and studies and also of other Western scholars.

Performance theory and performance studies paradigm are the amalgam of many disciplines which explicate the different cultures using various perspectives in the performance realm. Performance theory as pluridisciplinary is proved by the scholars under performance discourse. And it is paradigm that had come into being as an offshoot







of folklore, cultural anthropology, sociology, history, literature, semiotics and fine arts and thereby attained maturity in the postmodern era as independent branch called performance studies.

Avant - garde experimentalists in Euro - Americans found that there was need for intercultural exploration in postmodern era and offered theories. One of the tendencies of postmodern performances analysis is looking at performance interculturally. Because of communication channels hegemony among nations, it is possible that people can exchange views, share their ideas thereby interact with each other, so that the net result was all culture are intermingled. Obviously no art form can be remained pure in the intermingling.

Schechner exploration on performance theory and Social science and Environmental theatre is the out product of his wide understanding on performance genre and intercultural discourse His influence on Indian theatre made him make radical changes in his experimental theatre in American society. His understanding on world wide performance genres helped him to write performance theories. I his words “ I am passionate about theory because I see it as a way applying the "Performative way of thinking" to a very wide range of subject” (1986:5). Akshara writes Schechner's works "Schechner shares the basic ideas of post - Stanislavsky experiments - the rejection of the proscenium stage, emphasis on audience participation and an ideal of creating at least a temporary community through the ritual performance" (Akshara 1984:48).

It is true, Schechner's attack on the rejection of proscenium stage and emphasis audience participation is very much genuine in the postmodern era. Next chapters explicates the investigations that made the theories in postmodern era from predramtic ritual to modern theatre performances under the Western scholarship. Special attention will be given to Schechner's studies in theatre history and developments from predramtic rituals to modern theatre and his cultural anthropology studies on different performance genres as a methodology to crate performance theories and environmental theatre concept during the Avant - garde movement.

## CHAPTER - II

## **CHAPTER II**

### **PERFORMANCE THEORIES OF THEATRE FROM PRE-DRAMATIC RITUAL TO AVANT-GARDE**

The present chapter explicates the performance histories and theories from pre - dramatic rituals to the avant - garde in theatre realm.

The emergence of the performance approach and performance analogy in human life shows the divergent trends in the study of theatrical performances, methods and theories in which anthropological studies contributes in tracing the origin and development of a theatre. However, some theatrologists, practitioners and directors have done an extensive study of the theatre and their findings on performances threw some light on performance theories. Among them, Grotowski,(1968), Eugenio Barba (1982), Peter Brook (1980) and Richard Schechner (1988) are prominent. Directly or indirectly, some scholars have been influenced by Asian theatrical tradition and rituals. Thus rituals have become the main turning point to go back again to the roots of theatre.

All over the world, rituals existed in different cultures and played a dominant role in establishing a dynamic relationship between humans and their environment (physical and social). These rituals of society began as mimesis, and in a later period extended to performances - theatre, games and events etc.

#### **2.1. BACK GROUND OF PERFORMANCES**

Performance is to 'act'. Any action requires two persons or groups of persons to exchange their feelings through actions. In theatrical parlance, it requires actors and spectators. These two bodies share the event, participate and get involved in occasions to derive entertainment. This phenomenon is called 'Performance'.

Performance is a communal art involving a group of performers and audiences belonging to the same community. Communal performances are related in their remote origins to primitive fertility rites and other religious observances. Writing on the origin of theatre, Sir James Frazer, an anthropologist, said: "All cultures go through the same evolutionary stages; consequently, those primitive societies still in existence supply reliable evidence about the origin of the theatre thousands of years ago" (quoted in Brockett 1977:3). He further explained the nature of rituals, their origins, existence, etc. According to Frazer (Ibid.:3):

In the beginning, people gradually became aware of forces that appeared to control their food supply and the other determinants of existence. Having no clear understanding of natural causes, they attributed them to supernatural or magical forces. Next, they began to search for means to win the favor of these powers. Over a period of time, they perceived an apparent connection between certain of the devices they have used and the outcome they have sought to bring about. These devices are then repeated, refined and formalized until they became rituals. Thus, the entire group usually performed the rites, while the audience is the supernatural forces

The above description throws light on the origin of rituals.

## 2.2. MEANS IN RITUAL

Though rituals that existed in primitive societies are no longer considered as entirely reliable evidence of the theatre's origin in antiquity, they continue to be helpful in other ways. A ritual in primitive society had certain features (Brockett 1977:4) (a) ritual is a form of Knowledge - to understand the universe, (b) ritual may be didactic - though it does not have language it serves as a means of passing on tradition and Knowledge, (c) ritual is intended to control events, (d) ritual is often used to glorify a supernatural power, a hero and (e) ritual may entertain and give pleasure - ceremonies which provide

pleasure through spectacle, the repetition of a formal pattern, or the skill of performers. The above conditions are strictly adhered to in the survival of rituals of the past.

Hence performances originated from primitive people's rites- stories and myths. A myth contains elements based on real or imaginary events or persons. The performers impersonate the mythical characters or even supernatural forces in rituals. This impersonation is one major sign for the development of theatrical performances.

Ritual performances of primitives included all devices that were used in the theatre performances - music, dance, speech, masks, costumes, acting space, performers and audience. Though ritual performances are pantomimic dances, accompanied by rhythmical, musical sound speeches and dialogues are less. Vocal sounds are common while masks and costumes are means of attracting the spirits to enter into rapport with them. Make - up is in the form of paint, ashes and juice. Actors are highly skilled and disciplined. There is no confined stage for ritual performances; where ever space is found they will perform. Acting space is circular and surrounded by spectators. Hence this kind of performance explores more the actor-audience participation in the event. While relating the ritual performances to theatre, Panikker (1983:7) pointed out certain characteristic features of such an alliance: (a) the elements of cruelty and violence, are often kept out of classical theatre, (b) the idea of theatre as therapy, whereby a patient devotee may be cured of illness or demoniac possession through theatrical exorcism, or a performance is arranged as an offering to the deity to propitiate him, or as a form of ancestor worship; and (c) the use of surrealistic devices so as to produce dreams or nightmares.

### **2.3. TRANSFORMATION OF RITUAL TO THEATRE PERFORMANCE**

The transformation of pre - dramatic ritual to theatre is a prominent turning point in theatrical performance history. Therefore transformation is the heart of theatre, and there appear to be only two fundamental kinds of theatrical transformations. One is the displacement of anti - social, injurious disruptive behavior by ritualized gesture and

display and the other is the invention of characters who act out either fictional events or real events fictionalized by virtue of them being acted out. The above transformation causes the ritual act to modify theatre performance. All ritual enactment has become the model for the birth of theatre in the history. Therefore theatre is now acquainted with all the devices that were already present in the ritual performances. However, due to socio-cultural changes that occurred in society, the theatre performance forcibly went through changes into many stages. But the essence of the performance is still absorbed from the ritual performance. From this point, the real history of theatre starts.

## **2.4. EMERGENCE OF THEATRE**

*What is theatre ?*

Theatre seems "like" something else. To English critic Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)- the theatre was like an "echo of the public's voice"; to the French playwright Jean Giraudoux (1882-1944) it was like a "trail"; to Swedish playwright August Strindberg (1849-1912) it was like "a lay preacher"; for English actor- playwright William Shakespeare (1564-1616) the stage was like a "mirror" held up to nature. German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) liked this metaphor so much that he exclaimed that "not going to the theatre is like making one's toilet without a mirror".

Today artists and scholars have gone so far as to discard the "like" altogether. A supper, a trail, a public echo, a morning shave, and a lay sermon may all be considered forms of theatre. American composer John Cage (1912-) insists that "theatre takes place all the time wherever one is; an art simply facilitates persuading one this is the case". An American critic Bernard Beckerman defines theatre as occurring whenever "one or more human beings, isolated in time and or/ space, present themselves to another or other .... Theater is a potpourri. It can contain anything that man offers to others in his person". (Kurtz 1988 :1)

The above metaphorical answer about the theatre was given by George Farquhar (1678-1707), an English playwright. The history of such theatre would include most human activity, right from the beginning of time in theatrical history. Besides rituals, games, matches of all kinds, lectures and talks, personal appearances, nightclub acts, the circus dance, concerts, sporting events, every presentation of oneself to another isolated in time and or /space will be termed as theatrical performance. So rituals and myths are the bases for the originating of theatre in performing arts. This made historians look back at theatre to investigate and to distinguish theatre from rituals and myths.

## 2.5. MYTH AND THEATRE

Rituals, myths and legends form the basis for the organization of theatre. While writing on myth, Marcia Eliade opines (quoted in Kurtz 1988:3)

Myth narrates sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the "beginnings". In other words, myth tells how, through deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence... Myth, then, is always an account of a "creation"; it tells how something was produced, began to be... In short, myth describes the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred (or the "supernatural") into the World.

According to Malinowski (Ibid.:3) an Anthropologist:

Myth is not simply a piece of attractive fiction which is kept alive by the literary interest in the story. It is a statement of primeval reality which lives in the institutions and pursuits of a community. It justifies by precedent the existing order and it supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values of sociological, discrimination and burdens, and magic of belief. Therefore the origins of theatre performances are embedded in the myths and ritual enactments of a given society.

Theatre is one of the performance genres (Ibid.:4). It has a vitality to draw human life and experience through religious and social life. Though theatre may ~~change~~ under



social pressures and be inspired by individual interests which hide emotions within the community, it uses human emotions as the raw material of human experience, shaping it and rearranging it to secure for human beings happier relationship with life.

In a word, theatre has become a form of self - realization in the broad social sense, one form of participation in life in its social and cultural dimensions. Therefore it has become a shared activity to a greater extent than other forms like story, novel, etc. The nature of theatre is to make the spectators forget the author and implicate themselves in the situations conceived by him. Therefore, theatre gives more importance to spectators than other art forms, since it is a communal art involving both the group of performers and the spectators. However its relationship to myths, legends and folk observances of a particular culture in the world is the major source of its power. The remarkable period in world theatrical history is the classical period. Classicism in the theatre began from the Greek theatre performance tradition.

## **2.6. GREEK PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND THEORY**

History of theatre and its theory begins with the fifth century B.C. Even though the Egyptian theatre was older than Athenian drama, it was the theatre of the Greek that came to light first.

The first record of Greek theatre and drama dates from 500-400 B.C., when the first actor - playwright, the Thespis (468 B.C), appeared on the scene. He introduced the one actor tradition in theatre performance history. The performance was presented in huge amphitheatres, which could accommodate as many as fifteen thousand spectators; the audience sat on tiers about sixty or seventy feet across around the stage. It is noticeable that the stage conventions of Greek theatre are very much nearer to the environmental spatial concept of Avant-garde teatrologists. Performance development started from the Aescylus period. Before that, it was rich with rituals. Chorus was predominant and music, rhythmic movement and huge costumes are the other elements known to this

period. The performance space was dominantly circular in shape. Soon this Dionysus lost religious association. Thereby, theatre performances lost their ritualistic quality. And playwrights have emerged. The dancing chorus dominated, and two or three actors are placed in the performance. Music and dance are the heart of the performance. Action was exaggerated and actors wore conventionalized garments based on everyday life. Costumes usually reflected characters in the play, masks covered the faces and the entire head of all actors except the flute player, while the chorus has identical masks. The stage was circular and had no stage barrier as in proscenium theatre of the modern times. Therefore the Greek theatre performance explored the actor - audience participation during the performance (Kurtz 1958:23).

Audience involvement in Greek theatre was high. Approximately 15,000 audience were accommodated in the theatre of Dionysus to witness the play. While writing on audience participation, Kurtz writes (Ibid.:34-5):

Their vocal responses - stamping feet, cheering, applauding, throwing nuts and raisins, hissing, drinking and relieving themselves, demanding encores, talking to the actors and to the characters, hooting - undoubtedly affected the judges' voting. During comedies actors sometimes threw raisins and nuts back into the audience...Most importantly, Dionysus himself was thought to be spiritually present in the festive audience.

Actor-audience interaction is a major event in Greek theatre performance because of its religious connection and ritualistic approach and nature of the performance space.

## 2.7. ROMAN PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND THEORIES

Roman history introduced prominent characters in the realm of the Western theatre. The Romans' achievements provided the basis of the theatre that dominated Western culture.

### 2.7(a). *Audience Participation*

Roman audiences were truly democratic and all sections of people used to attend theatre performances including the forbidden slaves. They wanted fun and entertainment. They shouted at one another, laughed, sometimes quarreled, gossiped, and also fought for better seats. Crying babies and womenfolk also took part in the event. Horace, the great Roman poet and literary critic, described how the audience reaction and participation during the performances took place (Ibid.:55):

The audience demanded spectacle and novelty; they would be satisfied. Nobles - men and women - occasionally appeared on stage and in the arena. Many emperors tried to excel in acting, dancing, music, chariot driving, and gladiatorship to delight the crowd. Nero even repealed laws forbidding knights and senators from appearing in events. The advent of mime and pantomime brought even wilder audience responses. Lucian of Samosata described a pantomime audience as "that throng of women and lunatics; [who] clap and yell in unseemly rapture over the vile contortions an abandoned buffoon".

With the arrival of Lombards, a Germanic tribe considered "barbarian" by the Roman theatre, the latter started to decline during 568 A.D. A series of sporadic incursions by these tribes, which began in the century B.C. ;eventually the theatre undermined the stability not only theatre but also of the unity of the entire empire. Meanwhile, the local emperor Diocletian seduced by Eastern mythology and religion. With this, new Gods emerged. With the change in religious attitude and mythologies, there was a great revelation that influenced the entire development of Western theatre and civilization. Emergence of Christian mythology - the life of Jesus dominated other great mythologies of the world. Western culture and theatre grew from the Christian epic. In the East, Buddhist religion had emerged during the same period. Therefore the evolution of Christian mythology provided the only Western model for the transformation of the historical person to mythological divinity, who finally became the dramatic hero <sup>1n</sup> the

theatre (Ibid 55-57). As a result, the Christian dramatic theatre spread throughout the medieval period.

## **2.8. MEDIEVAL THEATRE PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND THEORY**

There is some dispute among scholars on spontaneous development in the theatre of the medieval period in Europe. Nevertheless, there was spontaneous development within the Church besides professional entertainment.

Christianity in medieval times provided a new dramatic tradition in the West. In this struggle, liturgical plays came first in the medieval theatre. These plays were performed by the members of the Church community. They were mostly performed inside the Church with a participatory attitude. This is because the inside does not have a stage except for the altar (holy place meant for the priest). Since there was no proscenium arch as a barrier between performers and audience, the audience got involved in the play in a ritual manner. Priests started writing the dialogues and composed special music for the liturgical dramas. By the thirteenth century, these plays were completely developed and appeared in the vernacular or native language. These liturgical plays connected with the Church service enacted only stories from the Bible (holy text). The Resurrection of Jesus was celebrated by performance before the altar at **Easter**time. Participants or devotees would chant and sing the songs there and thus be involved in the religious function. Later this new tradition was taken outside the Church with Christian laymen's sponsorship. Hence, liturgical plays immensely changed and developed into miracle or mystery plays during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. During this period, a lot of development took place in theatre. Sets become elaborate, and performance moved from the Church steps to the marketplaces. Art historians have discovered numerous elements of theatre such as costumes, make - up, properties, effective texts and stage directions in medieval theatre. Medieval dramas also made use of the speaking and singing voices **and** of instrumental music; and these two elements becoming **a** part of the medieval stage **shows that** medieval staging was symbolic rather than realistic. There are different types

of staging plays in different places in the Medieval theatre. Those plays were staged in church's and outside the church. Playhouse with round. The rectangular open theatre, semi-circular theatre, processional theatre, the booth theatre and the indoor theatre. The presentation of dramas are different for entertainment in the medieval period. Majority medieval period theatre was open theatre performances. Actor-audience participation is open and secular during this age. "Whether lewd or not in theme, the indoor staging of the interlude, in barn, in chapel, great hall, or monastic refectory, seems usually to have been a simple affair of a small acting area (not necessarily a raised platform) at one end of the room and an audience (perhaps seated at table) at the other end. The combination of small cast and small audience, in close proximity to each other and undistracted by elaborate staging, encouraged the writing of intimate dialogue in which the audience could fully participate" (Cawley 1983: 34).

The above scholarly idea directly shows the environmental theatre concept and its religious and ritualistic approach to a participatory nature in the theatre performances in medieval theatre. Arnott (1971:22) clearly pointed out the relationship between religion and drama that caused the new dramatic tradition in the entire medieval period:

...association of drama with religion is one of the reasons for the long series of prohibitions laid upon drama; the forbidding, in Deuteronomy, of the exchange of clothes between the sexes, originally directed against some pagan dramatic ritual and invoked by zeal-of-land buy in Bartholomew Fair... and seventeenth-century France, where Moliere was at first refused Christian burial; the banning of Catholic miracle plays by the reformed church in the sixteenth century; the Catholic and Protestant suppression of folk plays and rituals; the long Puritan and Nonconformist attacks on the stage; Marxist censorship. In all these instances, the drama is involved in the struggle between one system of belief and another.

Revival of religiosity that had ceased in the Roman theatre brought remarkable changes in the theatre performance, and in performance theories and structure during

the medieval period.

## **2.9. REVIVAL PAST THEATRE PERFORMANCES: A GOD-CENTRIC APPROACH**

Massive changes in society caused the streamlining of the Greek, Roman and Medieval theatres. Sam Smiley (1987) aptly pointed out the god - centric approach in his book *Theatre: The Human Art*: "Greek, Roman and medieval dramas were mostly religious in philosophy or celebratory in emotion. A majority of the plays didactically prevented a closed, God-centered vision of the universe and of human existence..."(Ibid.:183). The history of the Medieval Age and theatre surveys show the dominance of the Christian monarchy and its attempt to enforce uniformity of belief in theatre performances. The decline of the feudal system in the medieval period showed new a path to the Renaissance Movement. This movement continued from 15 A.D to 17 A.D. It started in Italy and spread to the rest of Europe.

## **2.10. RENNAISSANCE THEATRE PERFORMANCES AND THEORIES**

The changes that occurred in man's thinking were a great influence even on theatre performances during the seventeenth century. The simple religious faith which formed the basis of theatre or drama in the Greek to the medieval theatre had lost its roots. By the mid 18th century, religious flavor began to diminish and reason and logic began to prevail, and these developments found expression in the theatre. Attention was paid to the social conditions in the performances. Goodmann (1978:316) writes:

Under the influence of the Deists, men started to put their minds to work on social and economic problems and to take a special interest in the down-trodden, the exploited, and the poverty-stricken. This ushered in a procession of sentimental comedies and middle-class tragedies; these plays were highly moral, superficial, and didactic. Almost as an antidote to them there suddenly appeared, early in the eighteenth century, a great number of revivals and of

adaptations, parodies, and burlesques- all filled with music, song and dance; theatregoers, apparently, were now more interested in lively and spectacular entertainment than in uplifting dramas.

Renaissance was the first age to think of itself as an historical entity. But the Renaissance was the first age is a still religious period, even though religion was secondary in popular consciousness and in the initially dramatic theatre. ...**“Renaissance** art and theatre evolved through many schools; the Renaissance theatre grew out of the tumult of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries....the renaissance began an information explosion. In fact, the breakdown of traditional Asian, African and American institutions and attitudes that began in the Renaissance continued into the Modern age. Not until the nineteenth century would scholars and scientists again be as respected. Those seeking to expand industry and trade through science and technology explained the world as an empirical reality capable of being ordered and understood by a systematic recording of sensory experiences. The theatre became a place to hear new explanations... Human power seemed beyond limit. The theatre showed people testing their limitations. The emergence of science depended on the economic needs of new, strong state governments. The printing press, a visual, sequential, uniform, and lineal presentation of thought, experience, and perception, seemed appropriate to Renaissance national ambitions and scientific methods" (Kurtz 1988:154). The changes during this period occurred throughout the European countries like Italy, England, France, and Spain.

In addition, there was a revival of sex and the occult. As a result, Renaissance found a twist in the relationship between love and sex. The revived interest in the Greeks and Plato caused humanists to support new attitudes on sexuality that were represented on the Renaissance stage. This attitude immediately affected theatrical performances too, which shared the new interest in sexuality. Classical subjects had provided the themes related to rapes and incest and births in the plays. Despite a great desire to curb sexual excesses, the Christian Church was rendered virtually impotent by its own internal dis-

orders. Religious disputes relaxed the Churches grip on drama, but disrupted the peace of the audience. This classical antiquity renewed the theatrical performances. Classical dramatic works were seen to have a different method of obtaining unity. Medieval simultaneity seemed incompatible with the Renaissance desire to create the illusion of a different reality. Theatre people could no longer justify the existence of actors silently waiting on stage when not part of scene. Nor could the simultaneous on-stage presence of unused setting satisfy the age's desire for truth. Therefore humanist scholars rejected the artistic conventions of medieval illusions, and new principles of unity in dramatic art developed (**Ibid.**: 159) Further, Kurtz narrates:

Theatrical space was unified according to standards of proportion. Dramatic themes were restricted to suit the new concentration of dramatic form; plays were either serious or comic in tone. Plot actions needed rational motivation. Logic was applied to theatrical beauty. The relationship between play's parts and its whole design became an issue of mathematical proportion. Art and theatre entered a rational, logical phase.

Logic and reason (especially the logic and reason of the ruling elite) dictated a life ruled by formal codes designed to protect society from anarchy and emotional excess. Dramatic art, like society, came to be based on order and discipline. Greek and Roman theatrical art was admired for self-control and the suppression of passion. Renaissance artists, copying the ancient masters, subordinated spontaneity, inspiration and ecstasy. The emotionalism of the Gothic era disappeared; Christ was portrayed without pain, Mary suppressed her feelings towards the Christ child, and kings on stage contained their passions in regular metered verse. Theatre praised the normal behavior of moderated persons; it condemned and punished the individual behavior of immoderate persons: Both tragic and comic heroes were flawed by immoderation. Economy also characterized artistic technique: A small number of **figures** inhabited both painting and the stage (**Ibid.**:159).



Kurtz's lengthy description on Renaissance theatre, its socio-cultural changes in society, and its influence on theatre was true and accountable for the theatre performance developments and theories.

Due to changes in society, theatre has also undergone many changes. The net result was theatre architectural changes and its demarcation into two divisions, unlike in the Greek, Roman and Medieval theatres. Henceforth, the Greek, Roman and Medieval theatre performance stage was replaced by a proscenium arch, and a separate building came into existence. The interior theatre was shaped roughly like a horseshoe and was divided into two main parts, auditorium and stage the auditorium accommodated the audience according to social status. The seats in the orchestra called the pit were less expensive and were occupied by the middle class of society (bourgeois society) and the working class (proletarian society), including servants who were given the cheapest place to sit on the benches. The stage modified with proscenium arch, wings and drops was close to the walls of the house. Later on, the backstage area was enlarged and built with revolving and rolling platforms as well as mechanical and lighting equipment. Even special theatrical effects, rehearsal rooms and green rooms were predominantly found. Then the first permanent proscenium theatre came into being in 1618 at Parana in Italy (Goodmann 1978).

Another remarkable change in theatre performance during this period was the appearance of women on the stage. Love episodes involving both sexes began to be enacted. These episodes were more physical, sensual and realistic. The director made his appearance during this period only, though previously this task was not that important; the task of coordinating the various elements of a production was left to the playwright or the actor-manager. Thus Renaissance theatre became diversified. The earlier religious plays were no more enacted except in Spain. Church performances were replaced by newly created court performances. And learned humanistic dramas began to be popularized inside the court.

According to Smiley (1987), the end of 17 A.D saw a new social freedom, and with 18 A.D came the enlightenment. People of the lower and middle classes came to dominant the aristocracy. During England's Restoration period at the end of 17 B.C, producers presented the English version of neo classical plays. But the Enlightenment brought changes to the theatre. David Garrick introduced a more realistic acting style to England. Italian designers contributed elaborate baroque theatrical setting. Germany's Golden Age produced a strong national theatre and two outstanding playwrights Goethe and Schiller. The nineteenth century spirit stressed individuality and adventure. The intellectual leaders of 19 A.D emphasized the importance of the common person and the perfectibility of every human being. The late 18th century political revolutions in France and U.S.A took deep roots, and the desire for equality spread throughout these countries and affected many others. Common men and women were for the first time in history considered important, and novels and plays of the period reflected this sentiment. The theatre of the century, in all its phases, stressed the value of the individual in life's marvelous achievements. Due to the above changes in society, theatre became more vital than drama during this period. These changes continued for many centuries. Later, these tendencies and innovations occurred during the 20th century, which caused the creation of the Modern theatre. Commenting on Modern drama (1870-1920), Godmann (1978:354-55) says:

Towards the end of this century men were making gigantic strides in industry and economics, social reforms and scientific discoveries; and the ideas of Darwin, Marx and Freud were beginning to make themselves felt. Darwin taught that man is related to the animals; Marx, that "thinking" animals can arrange society to suit their needs; and Freud, that the nervous mechanisms of these animals can be repaired if they break down during the process of living. Realism reflected this thinking in the theatre; the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen tried to create the effect of the reality in the visual aspects of his productions and the dramatists of the period were striving for the same effect in their plays. The works of Ibsen, Chekov, and Shaw mirror modern thinking; social,

scientific, philosophical, and even religious questions provided the themes of their dramas.

## **2.11. REALISTIC THEATRE: MODERN THEATRE PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND THEORY**

Within a short period, the Modern drama or realistic theatre spread over the entire Europe and other places of the world. With the introduction of realism, theatre demanded a great intimacy with the audience in terms of physical attachment, but this did not happen because the box set was introduced to reform the picture frame stage. The auditorium had the invariable disadvantage of providing a considerable number of seats at the gallery ends that had a poor view of the stage. From a societal point of view, this demarcation of the modern stage created a lot of discrimination among the audience.

But realism lost its supremacy during the last quarter of the twentieth century, when a new age began in the realm of theatre performance. The new dramatic art moved towards episodic and unstructured form and content. As a result, the demarcation between the various genres began to fade and ballets intermixed with drama, drama with mime, and graphics and films were introduced into society. Modern drama did not hesitate to flaunt its unashamed eclecticism for a long time but it travelled a new path, searching for its own roots of pre - dramatic theatre forms for ever participatory events.

## **2.12. DEPARTURE FROM REALISM AND ARRIVAL OF AVANT - GARDE**

After the two world wars, materialistic, nihilistic and cynical attitudes began to play a major role in society. The world was full of tension, violence and nausea, and the **same** prevailed in the individual. At this point, the theatre produced playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and **Friedrich Durerrenmatt**. These writers' brought about remarkable changes in theatre performance history and theories. The drastic changes in social norms and people's agony and despair

in an atomic age is depicted in its most revolting aspect in the plays written by them.

Rama Rao in his *Makers of Modern Theatre* (1975), has given a clear understanding of avant - garde experimental theatrologist theories. Most prominent and most creative among the avant-garde directors was Vsevolod Meyerhold. He was the first director who objected to the orthodox theatre. He became an experimentalist innovator and continued his experiments with non-realistic forms in the theatre. The first experimentation he did was with Komissarzhevskaja's production of "Ghost". In this production he removed the front curtain. He was more influenced by Gordon Craig and his writings on *The Art of the Theatre*. He hated the tyranny of the spoken word. He was against the conversational theatre of the playwright - actor type. He thus substituted the director for playwright and made it a director-actor theatre. Not only this, he also evolved a new method to create scenic background in the production. This he called *Constructivism* on stage. This made him popular and many of his followers followed and copied his ideas and methods. After abolishing the front curtain, he moved further forward and shifted the action outside the proscenium arch by converting the orchestra pit and using it as a part of the stage. He asked his actors to move into the auditorium and mix with the audience. Meyerhold's intention in extending the stage space and improving actor-audience participation clearly shows the anti - traditional theatre approach. His enthusiasm to create a common space and to create better actor-audience participation and experiments with didactic theatre were later taken up by eminent theatrologists and directors like Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht. He is the foremost and most eminent director who stood firmly against the advancement of Naturalism and Realistic theatre, and further directed the entire European theatre into its avant-garde paths to create suitable performance theories.

### **2.12(a). Vakhtangov: Theatre of Realism**

After Meyerhold (1969), the task of theatrical experimentation was taken over by Vakhtangov (Rama Rao 1975:135:36). He was a student of Stanislavsky. "**Vakhtangov**

agreed with Stanislavsky that the supreme task of the theatre was to project the reality of man's spiritual life. He wanted to present it in a suitable theatrical form. So he combined the inner realism of Stanislavsky with the outer theatrical form of Meyerhold (whom he called "Master"), and evolved a new style called *Theatrical Realism*." He differed from Stanislavsky in one important aspect, for he held the view that the actor should not try to "become the Character". If the actor's performance was in any way to resemble the character's behavior under the pressure of events in the play, it was not necessary to insist that the actor also transform himself into the character.

*S.I.S(b). Bertolt Brecht: Epic Theatre*

Bertolt Brecht was a poet, dramatist and director. He constituted a theory called 'Epic Theatre'. His passion to create actor-audience participation forced him to think and invent a new theory for theatre. Therefore, he evolved a theory called 'Alienation' or 'Verfremdung'. He strongly opposed the playwright's intervention in the production. He crystalized his thoughts and made theories. Verfremdung means dis-familiarization. His invention was to dis - familiarize the characters to the audience through actors. The audience watching a play should remember the character's actions, not the actor. According to him, a play is for intellectual appeal rather than for emotional appeal; during a performance, the spectators should think about the characters and action of the play and judge it accordingly. Hence a good performance should stimulate intellect and simultaneously propagate the individual's relationship to the social, historical and political circumstances under which they live. His theory calls for "the audience not to forsake the faculty of thinking in the theatre. The action on the stage should stimulate their minds, not their feelings. They should not identify themselves with the characters on the stage. They should remain outside all the characters of the play in order to be able to judge them well. Then only would they be able to opine, evaluate and sit in judgment over the actions of their parallels whom the actors impersonated on the stage. This would enable them not to repeat mistakes committed in the past. The spectators

should not only differentiate good and bad, but should also think out what is bad and why. The spectator can achieve this only as a alien to the play or the production" (Rama Rao 1975:144).

Brecht's productions were **non-realistic**. He used only real properties. The place of the action was named by hanging strips. Lighting was never realistic, the parabolic reflectors were kept at the back of the audience. To create the continuity of action and to make the play unemotional, he used songs (this technique was adopted from the Asian theatre), placards, projected titles, and characters commenting on their actions between scenes. Ideologically, his theatre performance bore some similarity to the environmental theatre concept.

Brecht's epic theatre was an attack on the middle class illusionistic dramatic and theatre concepts. Kurtz (1988:382) writes on Brecht's works:

He worked to create a theatrical experience that placed the audience in a skeptical point of view towards what happened on the stage. Because Brecht believed a bit more skepticism would have prevented the horrors of the modern age, his theatre tried to develop the habit of skepticism in the modern audience. Brecht wanted neither actor nor audience to lose themselves, to escape, or to forget that the events on stage were not real. He wanted actors and audience to confront, consciously and rationally, both themselves and the stage, so that they might learn what needed to be done in society... The stage's illusion of reality was just as changeable and unrealistic as people's illusions of everyday reality. Emotional sympathy or empathy with characters and situations interfered with the actors' and audience's ability to remain skeptical.

**Melchinger's** opinion on Brecht theatre is:

The illusionistic 'dramatization', according to Brecht, took place both on the stage and in the audience: on the stage by having the actors identify

themselves **completely** with the roles so that they became immersed in them, thus playing a trance by which the action could be completely resolved in an ostensible truth. In the audience this dramatization was achieved by means of sympathy, suggestion, enchantment, intoxication - in other words, by means of a trance. The epic theatre, on the other hand, put ahead of everything the assertion that theatre is theatre and nothing else. The actor is not Lear, Hargapon, Schweik.- he depicts these people ! (This is the alienation effect).

From the standpoint of theatrical history, this is all part of the return to the pre - illusionistic theatre, in which the theatrical element had not yet been made suspect by the exion of naturalness. Epic theatre, as Brecht defined it, was the Chinese; the Indian, and partly also the Elizabethan theatre. From the stand point of human society, the epic theatre is the most conscious attempt to bring the public into communication with the stage (quoted in George 1992:14-15).

### **2.12(c). Antonin Artaud: *Theatre of Cruelty***

Antonin Artaud, an actor - director, was called the father of avant - garde. Influence of Balinese dances created a tremendous effect on him. His various writings on the theatre were collected and published under the title *The Theatre and Its Double* (1958), which is considered the text book for avant - garde directors. He proposed that "language should be subordinated to live action". But he did not propose the complete banishment of speech from the theatre. He also proclaimed that the playwright's words should be used only for their sound and not their meaning. The spoken word appeals to the intellect, being a symbol of thought. It is only the physical act, the deed, that can cause the direct involvement of the **sense**. **Therefore** he detested the tyranny of the spoken word for the correct interpretation. "The audience should be involved by their sense not their mind. And contact with the senses of the audience should be achieved through **assault**" (Rama Rao 1975:155).

Therefore, Artaud called his theatre *The Theatre of Cruelty*, the word cruel meaning "sense of intensity of life", not in the sense of a blood - shedding event. He proclaimed that "there should be no barrier like proscenium arch, curtain or footlights between the performer and the spectator if the spectators are to participate in a dramatic experience which allows communion between the stage and auditorium" (Ibid.:156).

He attacked the Western theatre for having a psychological and intellectual bias, and preferred the Eastern religious and metaphysical theatre. He urged the Western theatre to return to the ceremonial roots of magic, myth, ritual and dance. He attacked the audience central nervous system and went directly to the subconscious to liberate forces. To create better communion, he used the variety technique like metaphysical in action, incantational language, puppets, dance, improvisation, music, magic etc. He also encouraged the audience to feel and to involve itself like in a religious ritual, and to create this effect he evolved certain elements like audience participation, incantations, rhythmic movement, symbolic gestures, exorcism, sensory hieroglyphics, masks, distorted objects etc.

In all his writings, Artaud directly or indirectly supported the pre - dramatic rituals concepts from which he might have taken inspiration for his new theories. His theories attracted several other avant - garde directors, and have been introduced in the second half of the 20th century in Euro-American theatre circles. Directors who explored the actor-audience participation are Okholopkov, Jerzy Grotowski (Poor theatre), Julian and Judith Beck (Living theatre), Allan Kaprow (Happenings), Chaikin (Open theatre), and Peter Brook (Empty theatre). They have obtained successful results. Okholopkov brought action into the very midst of the spectators in such a way that the spectator also reacted along with the actors. In 1935, his presentation made remarkable changes in the theatre realm. "That year Okholopkov was breaking down the proscenium and presenting theatre in round and the rectangle and the hexagonal, as it had never been dreamed of before" (Evans 1989:78). Okholopkov wanted that theatre be "a meeting place where



the actor and spectator must clasp hands in Fraternity" (Rama Rao 1975:159). All the above theatrologists broke down the barrier between the actor and audience and created a shared common experience.

### **2.12(d). Jerzy Grotowski : Poor Theatre**

Polish avant - garde experimentalist and director Jerzy Grotowski, who influenced American and Continental actors, proposed a theory called 'Poor theatre'. In his view, a theatre can exist without make - up, without costume and scenography, without light and sound effects, but it cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship. In the world of high technology, theatre has a different function other than those of television and film. Grotowski worked with his group and experimented in the theatre. In his book he says, "No matter how much theatre expands and exploits its mechanical resources, it will remain technologically inferior to film and television" (1968:19). Because of this inferiority, he turned his theatre movement to other worlds where even television or films cannot enter. The only basic and fundamental notion of Grotowski's work is breaking the conventional traditional physical theatre and its sets, and imitating the intimate theatre with the actor in the centre using his trained body and voice as his tools in the performance. While defining his poor theatre concept, Grotowski summarizes:

The theatre must recognize its own limitations. If it cannot be richer than the cinema, then let it be poor. If it cannot be as lavish as television, let it be ascetic. If it cannot be a technical attraction, let it renounce all outward technique. Thus we are left with a 'holy' actor in a poor theatre (Grotowski 1968: 41).

Grotowski's ideology is more akin to the traditional Asian theatre in terms of physical movement and actors' use of body, mind and voice.

## 2.13. AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE THEATRE

In the world theatre performance realm, the most advanced experimentation was done by American directors, and even some theories were made by them under the light of actor - audience participation between 1960 and 1970. In his book *Macmillan Modern Theatre: American Alternative Theatre* (1982), Theodore Shank explained the histories and performance experimentation and theories of American theatre directors:

The social upheaval in the United States during the 1960s and early 1970s not only gave rise to a new cultural movement outside the dominant culture; it also spawned an alternative theatre. Initially, the new theatre was expressive of those who aligned themselves with the various social movements of the time - civil rights, free speech, hippie, anti - nuclear, anti - Vietnam War, ecology, feminists and gays. It was an alternative to the theatre of the dominant complacent middle-class society which tended to perpetuate the *status - quo* in its aesthetics, politics, working methods, and techniques. The alternative theatre companies directed themselves to the new audiences, often a specific constituency such as intellectuals, artists, political radicals, workers, blacks, chicanos, women or gays. They explored the new working methods, new techniques, and new aesthetic principles that would be in harmony with their convictions and would be used to express their new theatrical conceptions (Shank 1982:1).

Alternative theatre in American society and lifestyle made spectators conscious of the real world rather than focusing their attention on fictional illusion, and it tried to continue the experiments in the theatre realm. Alternative theatre performances are intended to perceive real time and place. The most important condition of this theatre is that performers and spectators are physically present in the same time and place. **“This** is abrogated, however, when the spectators are permitted only to see the illusion of character and not the performer, when they are focused exclusively on fictional time

and place. If a compelling all-absorbing realistic illusion were to continue as the aesthetic means of live theatre, then live theatre would be doomed to compete unsuccessfully with motion picture" (Ibid 1982:5).

The most radical and advanced concepts taken by the other generation in American theatre are by Allan Kaprow's 'Happenings', and Julian Beck and Judith Malina's 'Living Theatre' and Schechner's 'Environmental Theatre'. Others are, Intermedia Performances, Guerilla Theatre, Workers Theater Movement and Agit-prop Movement. All the above directors and practitioners main ambition was to create or rediscover numerous new techniques and theories. They named it as "alternative theatre" in America. The alternative theatre explores the relationship of the artistic to the works and the performance to the spectator. They attempt to discover the unique possibilities of live theatre, and seek ways of extending the use of theatre beyond its entertainment (Ibid.:1982:6-8).

Alternative theatre need not keep the audience in the focused fictional illusion and create suspense. This can be observed in the traditional proscenium theatre where spectators focused and involved themselves in fictional characters. Therefore, the artists of alternative theatre explored the actor-audience relationship. They attempted to discover the unique possibilities of live theatre and seek paths of expanding the use of theatre beyond its entertainment value. "The tremendous energy of the alternative theatre of the period, in fact, is best appreciated by recognizing the diversity of experiments, in acting styles (especially those begun by Jerzy Grotowski at his Polish Laboratory Theater, and continued and modified in the United States by Blau, Richard Schechner, and Joseph Chaikin), production environments (found space, lofts, art galleries, created "environments" and "assemblages"), dramatic functions (as agit - prop theatre, ritual theatre, live poetry, dance theatre, theatre therapy, and theatre anthropology, to name only a handful), and dramatic style" (Heuvel 1992:29).

### 2.13(a). Allan Kaprow's "Happenings"

In the 1950s and 1960s, "Happenings" became popular in American culture. First the happenings were initiated by Allan Kaprow, whose 18 Happenings in 6 parts were staged at the Reuben Gallery, New York in Oct 1959. In this production, spectators and performers equally participated in the flow of actions and unexpected events which were either real or fictitious. In these performances, both actors and spectators were given a choice to perform and to involve themselves in the environment where all are equally treated. Commenting on 'Happenings,' Kirby 1965:11) says, "Happenings are a new form of theatre, just as collage is a new form of visual art, and they can be created in various styles just as collages (and plays) are". After some years they slowly diminished in spite of their potential and artistic qualities that could be developed. Later, the movement was led into other directions by Julian Beck, Chaikin and Richard Schechner.

### 2.13(b). Julian Beck and Judith Molina's "Living Theatre"

Julian Beck and Judith Malina both formed the living theatre in 1951. Their radicalism was aesthetic. They have explored a variety of theatrical techniques, some of them adopted from Happenings and Allegory music. Beck's and Malina's works were intended to jolt the audience into a new awareness to produce unique works. This group explored the techniques of actor-audience relationship to create wealthy environment in theatre realm. Their main productions are Jack Gelber's *The Connections* (1964), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1965), Sophocle's *Antigone* (1967) and *Paradise Now* (1968). In these productions, they experimented with actor-audience participation with successful results. For Living Theatre, group life is theatre, and they gave more importance to reality rather than to fiction. Therefore, they started doing mysterious productions for exploring actor-audience participation. Commenting on Living Theatre's productions and actor-audience participation, Shank opines:

It contained most of the innovation for which the Living theatre became

known during their years in the Europe-audience confrontation, spectator participation, breaking down the separation between stage and auditorium, collective creation, performance improvisation, performance without text, set or costumes, nudity, focus on real time and place rather than a fictional illusion, and actors devoid of the usual stage mannerisms, voice, and bearing. These innovations were intended to unite the actors and spectators into one community in the here and now; their objective was to effect social change (Shank 1982: 15).

The living theatre group and its productions became a popular model for other American teatrologists and experimental group in the country. Later, Schechner's use of living theatre's actor-audience participation and his use of the spatial concept and performance text have made him construct his own theory and experimentation under the banner of *Environmental Theatre*.

#### *2.13(c). Richard Schechner's "Environmental Theatre"*

Reference has been made earlier (see page ) to Schechner's contribution to environmental theatre. In this context, Schechner (196Sb:41-63) formulated the following six axioms:

1. The theatrical event is a set of related transactions.
2. All the space is used for the performance; all the space used for audience.
3. The theatrical event can take place either in a totally transformed space or 'found space'.
4. Focus is flexible and variable.
5. All production elements speak in their own language.
6. The text need be neither the starting point nor the goal of a production. There may be no text at all.

Under his direction, the performance group adopted techniques and concepts drawn from several sources. The living theatre's use of the techniques and the formulation of their concepts pre-dated the performance group; they were not simply borrowed by Schechner but thoroughly explored through practice. The key of his goal is environmental thinking. The basic principle of environmental theatre is to begin with an empty space, without a preconception of actor and audience and their relationship. Environmental theatre prefers to perform at any available space but not arranged to link other conventional theatres. Sometimes, the performance occurs in a large open room, similar to a black box, and audience arena and performance arena are unpredictably intermixed. The audience - environment and the performance-environment interpenetrate so that a single atmosphere pervades all present. Thus, environmental theatre deals with the whole, not merely fragments placed in spaces pre-determined by conventions. Schechner aptly writes about environmental theatre spaces: "Literally spheres of spaces, spaces within spaces, spaces which contain, or envelop, or relate, or touch all the areas where the audience is and/or performers to perform. If some spaces are used just for performing, this is not due to a predetermination of convention or architecture but because the particular production being worked on needs of space organized that way. And the theatre itself is part of a larger environment outside the theatre. These larger out-of-the theatre space are the life of the city; and also temporal-historical spaces - Modalities of time/space" (quoted in Evans 1989:79). The aesthetic of alternative theatre underlie the environmental theatre concept. According to scholars like Rober Cohen and John Haroop, the environmental theatre explored the use of space, because space was regarded as totality embracing both actors and audience in one common place. The action takes place around, above, behind, below and among the audience. The purpose of this technique is to create a totally shared experience, where bodily contact was more between the actors and audience members (see chapter V).

The major productions of Environmental Theatre of the Performance group are *Dionysus in 69* (1968-69); *Makbeth* (1969-70); *Commune* (1975-72); *The Tooth of Crime*

(1972-74); *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1975-77); *The Marilyn Project* (1975-76); *Oedipus Seneca* (1977); *Cops* (1978-79); and *The Balcony* (1979-80). Richard Scheduler and his group extensively explored the training and working methods to utilize the space and scenography, to deal with the problem of audience participation, etc.

## **2.14. PROFILE ON PERFORMANCE THEORY**

**All** the above movements and experimentations in theatre history, one way or another, ideologically explicate the Avant-garde theories. Exploration of avant - garde theatrologists and their theories rightly looks back to the roots of the theatre and its ritualistic behaviors. Modern and postmodern theories and their experimentations are profiled by Evans (1989:1):

...For Stanislavsky it meant the importance of the actor, whereas for Craig the actor was practically dispensable, the emphasis being upon the scenic possibilities of theatre. Meyerhold and Reinhardt stressed the importance of the director; Appia the use of light. Brecht, like his master, Piscator, was concerned to explore the didactic nature of the theatre. Artaud, like Stanislavsky, came to believe that theatre should reflect not the everyday reality of naturalism, but rather those intimations that are beyond the reach of words. Much that was foreseen by the early pioneers has come to be realized in the American modern dance, while the theatre of Alwin Nikolais represents in many ways a synthesis of Artaud's concept of a non-verbal theatre and Craig's idea of moving abstract masses. Finally, like Copeau, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba have gone back to the essence of theatre, to the live relationship of actor and audience.

## 2.15. SCHECHNER'S RESEARCH OUTPUT ON PERFORMANCE THEORIES

Richard Schechner's thorough research from rituals to modern theatre and his investigations are clearly depicted in his book, *Performance Circumstances: From the Avant-garde to Ramalila* (1983). One of its chapters "From Ritual to Theatre and Back", give the outgrowth of performance theories and changes from beginning of theatre history to the present. His understanding of theatre history made him create performance theory. He correctly pointed out: "It is my belief that theatre history can be given an overall shape as a development along a core which is a braid structure constantly interrelating efficacy and entertainment" (Ibid.:139). His efficacy/entertainment braid model, which is the ideological heart of all aspects of new theatres is given below in (fig 2.1).

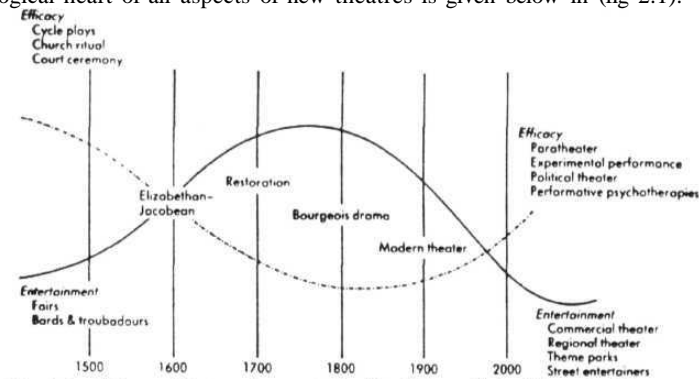


Fig 2.1. Efficacy/Entertainment Braid: Fifteenth to Twenty-Five

(after Scheduler 1983:140)

The above diagram relates the efficacy and entertainment braid, taking into consideration theatrical history and its development. While commenting on the braid graph, he says: "For Western theatre, at least, I think it can be shown that when the braid is tight - that is, when efficacy and entertainment are both present in nearly equal degrees - theatre flourishes. During these brief historical moments the theatre answers needs that are both ritualistic and pleasure-giving" (Ibid.:139).



**The** model offered by him clearly shows the simplification and helps in conceptualizing the progression of theatre history. He explains the model as follows:

Fifth century Athenian theatre, Elizabethan theatre, and possibly the theatre of the late nineteenth century and/or of our own times show the kind of convergences I'm talking about. When efficacy dominates, performances are universalistic, allegorical, ritualized, tied to a stable established order; this kind of theatre persists for a relatively long time. When entertainment dominates, performances are class-oriented, individualized, show business, constantly adjusted to suit the tastes of a fickle audience. The two most recent convergences - the rise of entertainment before the Elizabethan period and the rise of efficacy during the modern period - are necessarily opposites of each other. The model that I offer is of course a simplification. I present it as a help in conceptualizing my view of the progression of theatre history, which I think has its own logic and internal force. The late medieval period was dominated by efficacious performances: church services, court ceremonies, moralities, pageants. In the early Renaissance these began to decline and popular entertainments, always present, gained, finally becoming dominant in the form of the public theatres of the Elizabethan period. The private and court theatres developed alongside the public theatres. The private theatres were for the upper classes. Although some professionals worked in both public and private theatre, and some spectators attended both, these entertainments were fundamentally opposed to each other. The conflict between the public and private theatre never worked themselves out because all the theatres were closed in 1642. When theatres reopened at the Restoration the Elizabethan public theatre was gone and all the theatres resembled the private theatres and masques, the property of the upper classes. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this aristocratic theatre developed into the bourgeois theatre, as that class rose to displace the aristocracy. **The** dominant efficacious

mode of the medieval centuries went underground to re-emerge in the guise of social and political drama during the last third of the nineteenth century. This new naturalistic theatre opposed the commercialism and pomposity of the boulevards and allied itself to scientific theatrical styles and techniques. The avant garde identified itself both with Bohemianism - the outcasts of bourgeois society and science, the source of power. Avant garde artists used terms like 'experimental' and 'research' to characterize their work, which took place in 'laboratories'," (Ibid.:139-40).

The above lengthy investigation into historical development from Greek theatre to Avant-garde performances and their efficacy and entertainment led to create performance theories during the postmodern age. But evidence of transformational steps by which theatre emerges from ritual - by which an efficacious event in which the participants depend on the performance is transformed into an entertainment in which the entertainer depend on an audience - is not locked in ancient or medieval documents (Ibid.: 142). The move from ritual to theatre happens when a participating audience fragments into a collection of people and moves from theatre to ritual. The tendencies can be found in all performances. Even Brecht and Meyerhold worked it and kept the tension between these extremes working throughout each performance by moving an audience back and forth moment to moment. "So wherever we look, and no matter how far back, theatre is a mixture, a braid of entertainment and ritual. At one moment ritual seems to be the source, at another it is entertainment that claims primacy" (Ibid.:158).

## 2.16. CONCLUDING NOTES

Most of the post - war avant - garde theatrologists attempted to overcome fragmentation by approaching performances as a part of community. This community - related avant - garde is not only a phenomenon of the industrialized West, but also countries that are industrializing or undergoing great changes in social organization. Being a radical thinker, Schechner has gone beyond the theatre and propounded his performance

theories and environmental theatre concept to overcome participatory community in this society. To him, "...the orthodox dramaturgy - the theatre of plays done in fixed setting for a settled audience relating stories as if they were happening to others - is finished. At least this kind of theatre doesn't meet the needs of many people - needs as old as theatre itself, combining ritual and entertainment" (Ibid.:158).

Theatre is a middle world where real interaction and participation can happen. It is not only through physical audience participation but also psychological and subtler means of audience inclusion and environmental staging. Therefore, theatre combines artistic composed behavior along with everyday spontaneous behavior. The coming chapters explicate the Ethnography of Bhagavatha performance and important axioms of performance theory.

## **CHAPTER - III**

## CHAPTER III

### ETHNOGRAPHY OF BHAGAVATHA PERFORMANCES

This chapter explicate the history and origin of *bhagavatha* performances of Andhra Pradesh. It also explore the underlying performance theories in the light of Indian theatrical tradition.

#### 3.1. INDIAN TRADITIONAL PERFORMANCES: A PROFILE

Indian traditional theatrical performances (Awasthi 1960,1974; Jain 1992) are basically non-illusionistic. It is rich, ritualistic, devotional and aesthetic in nature. It consists of various elements like dance, mime, poetry, music, graphic and plastic arts, religious and civil pageantry, and various decorative arts and crafts. It reflects the peoples beliefs, myths and lifestyle, and subsumes a multi-dimensional relationship between religion and theatre.

All over the world, primitive religions are ritual- oriented. The word 'ritual' has a great meaning and can be defined as a system of esoteric and sacrosanct rites with prescribed procedures that are observed in fairs and festivals. A ritual is to be performed to appease (Varadapande, 1981,1982,1983) the spirits to avert calamities and thus set benevolent forces into action. During this process a thin layer of theatricality can be observed in their performances. Ritual takes a form of rudimentary drama. Anthropologists believe that, "whole hunting scene is enacted as a magico-religious ritual by the primitive community to ensure favourable results in future expeditions" (Varadapande 1983:1).

A ritual is enacted at two levels. At one level, the whole community participates and at another it is entrusted to persons specially chosen for the purpose. Here, the leader is the priest. Their priests perform different roles in the ritual acts. The innermost shadow of an actor can be seen in the priest when he is in a trance. In a community, a group of persons or even individuals were bifurcated to perform the ritual and thereby the performer-audience division came into existence. A separate arena was marked out for performing the ritual that led to the origin of "Ranga Bhumi"(stage). Varadapande (Ibid.:2) writes:

that led to the origin of "Ranga Bhumi"(stage). Varadapande (Ibid.:2) writes:

The explanatory myths generated by the rituals provided the theme for stage enactment. In the frenzied movement of the ritual performer the art of dancing originated. The gesture language adopted by priests helped the formulation of a code of acting for the stage. The priest who acted as a medium of communication with the spirit probably created the form of verbal exchange called dialogue.

Other accessories like masks, make-up and singing are common to rituals and the theatre. Primitive religion and its system of rituals gave the dramatic art many necessary ingredients to evolve itself into a separate entity.

Ritual performances include the type of complexities found in adhering specially to ritual procedures, gestures, specific texts, and choreographic dramatic technique associated with the proportion of a particular deity.

While writing on traditional Indian performances, Zarrilli opines:

All types of traditional Indian performances are suffused with religious significance and punctuated by ritual practice..., the classical theatre of India may not be discussed without taking into careful consideration its ritual and religious context and significance. In the eastern and southern region of India, "ritual performance" has played a central role in the development of some forms of scripted theatrical genres. Some genres of ritual performance and many theatrical genres enact their own versions of dramatic episodes based upon epic and mythological sources. Not surprisingly, as scripted theatrical genres emerged historically, some appropriated from ritual performances extant modes of staging and performed important scenes depicting battles between the forces of good and evil. Before turning attention to this special class of performances which we call "ritual performances", it will be helpful to describe these closely related but distinct relationships between ritual and performance in traditional Indian

**performance:**(1) rituals as performative, (2) rituals within a performance genre, and (3) ritual performances (1990:121).

Since times beyond the vedic period, historically, one can see how the ritual enactments were performed. The ritual of fire-sacrifice of the vedic Aryans was highly theatrical, one can even call it a rudimentary playlet. The Aryans incorporated in their execution of the ritual song, music, dialogue, symbolic language, dance, myth etc. All the above elements are present in rituals since the vedic Aryans. The significant evidence of the above lines can be seen in cave paintings.

In its true sense, theatre has its roots in religious rituals. Since ritual is a part of life, it evokes spirituality in human beings. During ritual enactment, everybody involves himself in the ceremony by playing some role such as clapping, singing, and sometimes through dance. Most devotional performances come under this school. In these performances, both the priest and the devotee involve themselves in the enactment. For instance, in traditional and folk performances, the terminology of actor-spectator relationship is irrelevant because all the spectators are participants. The performance is a ritual to adore the village deity or to appease a supernatural being. The performer possesses superhuman power and transcends it to the participants in the form of give and take policy during the performance. By this action, the performer makes spiritual and psychological transactions with the participants.

The above genres may share with each other certain marked similarities of techniques, styles, practices and even dramatic content. *Bhāgavathas* of Andhra Pradesh are the outgrowth of this convergence. It evolved from folk; from folk to traditional and traditional to classical theatres.

### **3.2. BACKGROUND OF BHAGAVATHA CULT**

*Bhagavatism* centered round the worship of Lord Vishnu or *bhagavat* and originated from this cult in post Maurya times. Vishnu was a minor god in Vedic times. But by the 2nd century B.C, he got merged with the god called Narayana, and came to be known as Narayana

- Vishnu. Originally, Narayana was a Non-vedic tribal god. He was called *bhāgavat*.

One of the greatest influences of *bhāgavata* theatre is *Natyasastra*. According to *Natyasastra*, Bharata enumerated ten kinds of dramas. In the 22nd chapter, he says that *vritti* emanated from Vishnu and Krishna stories. Therefore the basic source of *bhāgavatha* cult is *vritti*'s. *Vritti*'s are based on Krishna themes. Hence Hari-Krishna stories are the sources of dramatic arts/theatre performances. Adya Ranga Charaya, a scholar noted that "Vritti's as singing, dancing, prose, poetry and other entertaining activities" (Varadapande 1983:79). Bharata's consideration of Krishna -Vishnu is the fundamental source for the origin of the-  
atrical performances. Dhananjaya in his treatise *Dasharupaka*, elucidated an interesting analogy between Vishnu-Krishna and Bharata, According to him:

*Dasharupanukdrena yasya madyanti bhāvakāḥ Namah sarvavidc tasmai vishnavc  
Bharataydcha (79)*

The relationship between Vishnu's incarnations i.e Dasavataras and the kind of plays mentioned by Bharata as *Dasarupakas* are the same i.e., ten. This implied that there is a close association of the *bhāgavata* cult and its theatrical performance. Even the well known Sanskrit playwright Kalidasa referred to this mode of theatrical presentation in his play *Malavikagnimitram*. One can observe an entire episodic description of Krishna's life and his grand picnic arranged by the Yadavas at *Pindarak Tirtha* on the sea shore near Dwaraka. This entire episode is depicted in dance-dramas and mimetic of Krishna's life. Hence the *bhāgavata* cult gave a definite place to theatrical performances and their ritualistic practices.

#### *S.2(a). Inscriptional Evidences of bhāgavatha Cult*

A stone inscription (Varadapande 1983:85) of king Saranagadeva dated saka 1348 is worth mentioning. This inscription which was found at Anavada or Anahilapataka, a few miles from Patna, opens with a stanza from the Dashavatar Asthapadi of Jayadeva's well known Krishna opera *Geeta Govinda*. At that time, Maharajudhiraj Shri Saranagadeva of the Vaghela dynasty was the ruler of Anahilapataka. It seems that there was a temple of



Krishna at the place long before the reign of King Saranagadeva. Another one is the Bayana inscription of Chitralkha. In this inscription, the passages from *Bhāna Ubhayabhisarika* indicate the practice of staging plays at the Vishnu-Krishna temples. Inscription of Gajapati ruler Prataprudradeva (1499) was a later evidence for the *bhagavata* cult. Many similar stone inscriptions, copper plates and literary references have been found even in recent time. All the evidence indicates the long and continuous tradition of *bhagavata* theatrical performances all over the country. Therefore, *bhagavata* cult gave a great impetus to Indian traditional theatrical performance realm.

According to *bhagavat* purana, "creation, preservation and destruction" (*Srishti-Sthithi-Pralaya*) constitute an eternal cycle of existence. Hari, that is Vishnu, represents the principle of preservation and continuity of life. He is the supreme being, a sublime source of eternal bliss, the entire universe is just a manifestation of his power.

### 3.3. THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE: INTERCHANGEABILITY

In the realm of world performance studies, the word theatre performance has become a question mark. Hence world theatres have become world performances (Richmond, Swann and Zarilli 1990:3) clearly mentioned that the words theatre and performance are used interchangeably, one for the other, because Indian theatre is not confined to neat, narrow categories. Indeed in this book we pay considerable attention to examples of performance that would not generally be regarded as 'theatre' in the West. We note too that this effort to redefine the meaning of theatre and performance is part of a larger rewriting of the history of theatre/performance that is currently underway.

Indian performances, except those of the modern theatre, are known by "genre-specific names in their local languages - *yaksagana*, *rasa lila*, *terukkuttu*, *cavittu natakam-an* endless stream of names, each with its own history and reasons for having been given that name" (Ibid.:3-4). This dual understanding on Indian theatre/performance is true even in the case of *bhāgavatham-Kuchipudi bhāgavatham*, *Melattur bhagavata mela* (Tamil Nadu), *Toorpu*

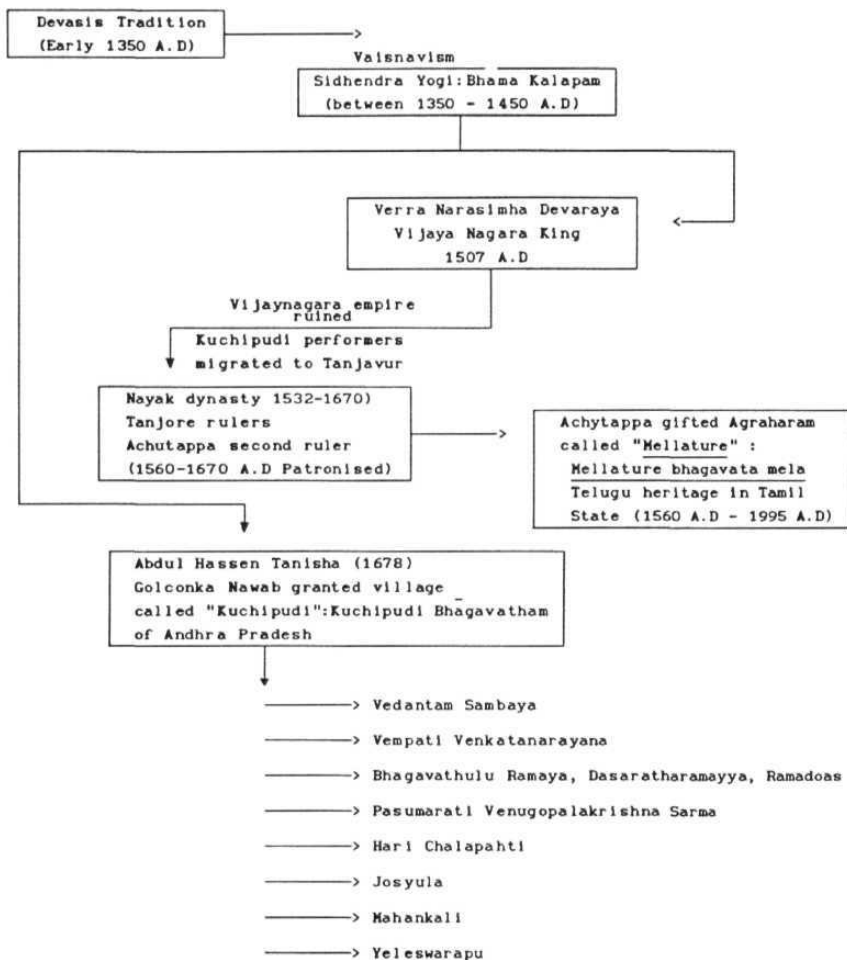


Fig. 3.2 The evolution of kuchipudi bhagavatham

*bhagavatham* and *Chindu bhāgavatham* of Andhra Pradesh. In the realm of traditional genres, invocations to initiate the main influence and the main performance are performed by persons of different communities. According to **Ramakrishna**, in Andhra Pradesh, **Kurmapulu**, **Jakkulu** (Yakshas), *Bhogam* and *devaganicas* did such invocations. **Yakshanganams** were popular even during the Buddha period. Besides, there are many other forms such as *Perani*, *Prekkhana*, **Rasaka**, *Carcari*, *Natyarasaki*, *Sivapriya*, *Chindu*, **Kuanaduaka**, *B-handika*, **Chatisari**, *Carana*, **Bahurupa** and **Kolata** etc (personal communication). The performances of these theatre forms are not based on any written performance theory. These performances followed the oral tradition. They were more stylized than the folk tradition. They did not follow any modern theatre norms. So these theatre forms came under the shadow of traditional theatre without objecting to their original ritual and folk values. Therefore the evolution of folk, traditional and classical theatre performances of Andhra Pradesh is a product and synthesis of the ritual, folk and brahmanical forms (fig 3.1).

Indian performances evoke devotional experiences. Devotional experience arises at whichever traditional performance is seen by the audience. Most Indian performances belong to traditions of performance or performance - tradition. In other words, a performance tradition is a body of knowledge, including techniques of performance, texts, and aesthetic principles or rules or assumptions, which constitute and define a particular genre and simultaneously the process of passing on that knowledge from one generation to another. So *bhagavathams* of Andhra Pradesh can be included under this performance tradition.

### 3.4. CULTURAL EVOLUTION OF ANDHRA PRADESH

Because of its geographical position, Andhra Pradesh became the meeting point of different cultures (Rajagopala Rao 1983), being on the highway between North and South India. The influence of Sanskrit literature on Telugu literature is quite considerable.

Andhra Pradesh is a major Buddhist centre. **Amaravati** and **Nagarjuna Konda** especially **are rich** with art and architecture and have become world famous. Geographically, Andhra

Pradesh is located in hilly areas, ruled by local dynasties from their hill forts. The Kannada-speaking Chlaukyias and Tamil speaking Cholas ruled over it for several centuries. This was a remarkable period for the mingling of the Andhra culture with the Tamil and the Kanada culture. Nannaya, the first great Telugu poet, was helped by Narayana Bhattu, a Kannadiga, in his literary pursuits. Under the Cholas many Tamil scholars well versed in vedic learning settled in different parts of Andhra Pradesh. They are known as Dravida Brahmins and they played a great role in the growth of Sanskrit scholarship and Telugu literature. During the Vijayanagara regime, many Telugu scholars, poets and dancers migrated to domains in Tamil Nadu founded by the Nayakas of Tanjore and Madurai, where Telugu art and culture flourished gloriously. These scholars worked to propagate the religiosity and its necessity for everyday life. Therefore, mythology has become the basis for the movement which is found in most traditional forms of Indian theatre and it is a reflection of the symbolic relationship between Indian mythology and its performance traditions. The same thing happened even in Andhra Pradesh theatre performance tradition.

The decline of Sanskrit theatre and remarkable changes in society lead to the evolution of Vaishnavism (16 A.D). In the post-vedic period, the Aryan gods were displaced, subsumed into relative obscurity by formerly lesser gods. This period began in the 8th and 9th centuries of the Christian era and saw the emergence of a *trimurthiaavatara* of gods who constitute, a triadic Hindu godhead even today. These *thrimurtiaavatarare* Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer), and Siva (the destroyer). *Bhāgavatgita* accommodated all the three and gave the highest place to devotion. To Indians, *bhdgavatgita* is a living devotional tradition, and it is directly related to the liberation or salvation. It is to worship Vishnu and Siva, and their various incarnations are directed by the majority of modern - day Hindus. Brahma was named particularly for worship. Thus Hinduism got divided into two traditions, one is **Vaishnavism** and the other is Saivism. Vaishnavism teaches people to worship and adore particular deities- Narasimha, Rama and Krishna- to make deep religious expression as well as entertainment through theatre genres. Thus *bhdgavatha* theatre developed out of Vaisnava **devotionalism**.

Largely, Vaisnava bhakti spread in South India and reached North India. Some of the Muslim rulers who established themselves in North India were jealous and even repressive of Hindu society. Due to this reason, the spirituality and bhakti movement resulted in a great following of religion, poetry, music and art throughout the Indian sub-continent. The net result was the emergence of traditional theatre performances in 15th and 16th centuries which set their roots in Andhra Pradesh. From the south- *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* (Andhra Pradesh), *Melattur bhagavata mela* (Tamil Nadu), *Toorpu bhagavatham* (north coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh), and *Chindu bhāgavatham* (Northern and Telengana parts of Andhra Pradesh) came to light.

Along with this development, a peculiar role was thrust on the Telugu people by their geographical position, trade, religion and their art, which drew people from other parts of India to the Telugu land. Therefore, the close contacts naturally brought out an assimilation, which has become a characteristic feature of Telugu culture since a long time. The North and South met here and Telugu people grasped this opportunity, taking the best from both cultures. This is reflected in their language, literature, habits, and even in the performing arts.

### **3.5. PERFORMANCE HISTORIES OF BHAGAVATHA PERFORMANCES KUCHIPUDI BHAGAVATHAM AND MELATTUR BHAGAVATHA MELA**

The *bhagavatham* is a term loosely attributed to any theatrical presentation in Andhra. This term was used both for *bhagavatha purana* and for performances based on the stories from it. Truly speaking, *bhagavatham* is a form of theatrical presentation based on the legends of Krishna. From a historical point of view, these performances came into light during late 16th A.D and early 17th A.D.

### 3.5(a). *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham*

The word Kuchipudi bhagavatam means *bhāgavata performance group from Kuchipudi*, a village in the Krishna district (Naidu 1975; Raghavan 1981; Rajinikanta Rao 1964; Sharma 1995). The vicinity of Kuchipudi is of great historical importance in performance history. According to Rajanikanta Rao:

Divi Taluk in the Krishna District in Andhra Pradesh is well known for its hoary tradition of dance, music and drama, fostered for the last seven centuries in the villages of Kuchipudi and Movva. It is 'Divi seema', as the Taluk was called. In the 13th century (1254), the Kakatiya emperor, Ganapati Deva, discovered an orphan Brahmin boy, called Jayappa, a prodigy in dance and music and a future commander of his elephant regiment. Continuing the traditions of Bharata Muni and Matanga Muni, Jayappa Senani expounded the principles of dance and music in his three great Sanskrit treatises, *Nritta Ratnavali*, *Gita Ratnavali* and *Vadya Ratnavali*.

Divi Narasimhacharaya of Avanigadda claims that in A.D. 1350, one Gopalkrishna Saraswati of Srikakulam, a scholar in dance and music and composer of yakshaganas in Sanskrit and Telugu wrote a commentary on the *Natyasastra* of Bharata muni...About the same time or half a century later (A.D.1400), Suddendrayogi of seems to have organised the village theatre of Kuchipudi and ordained that every Brahmin boy of the village should dedicate himself to the arts of dance, drama and music, according to the principles of Bharata, and undergo training to enact the role of Satyabhama in his *Yakshangana* entitled *Bhama Kalapam*. The *Kaifiyath* of Machupalle mentions Salva Narasimharaya, the emperor of Vijanagara in the year A.D 1502, being entertained by the Bagavata Mela of Kuchipudi which performed a 'Kelika'(1969:14).

But according to Machupalle Kyfai, we can deduce that they were not the Kuchipudi **artists** of the Krishna district who visited the court of Narashimha Devaraya and presented

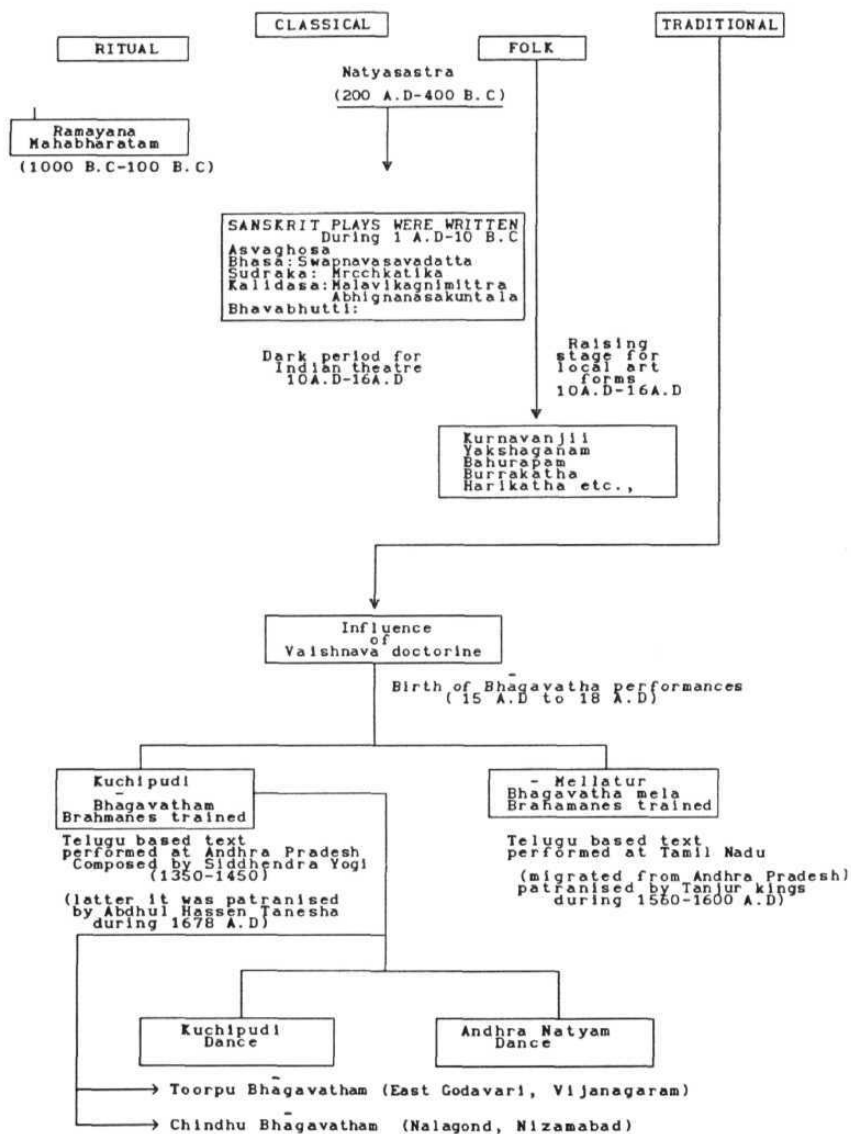


Fig. 3.1 Development of various performance genres from ritual to traditional theatres

the episode of *Sambatikuravaraja*. The troupe that visited him was from the Guntur district. It was Abdul Hassan of Golkonda who granted them an innam land in the Krishna district, impressed by their performances. This group of performers built a village and named it as Kuchipudi, the original name of their village in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. Thus, this **mela** came to be known as *Kuchipudi bhāgavatha mela*, corresponding to their place of living and dance-dramas. The origin and birth of Siddendhra Yogi, the pioneer of Kuchipudi tradition, and his compositions also became very controversial. According to Gidugu Ramamurthy (personal communication), opines, "based on the language used in the *Bhāmā Kalāpam* text, it can be presumed that the Siddendhra Yogi belongs to post 16th A.D. only" i.e after the grant of land by Abul Hassan to the Kuchipudi performers".

The Kuchipudi village was not only a historical place of dance-dramas but also the place for music, as is Movva, a village situated just two miles from Kuchipudi, which gave birth to Kshetrappa (1600 A.D), in whose *Padams* a perfect blending of dance and musical composition offered a unique vehicle of expression for Kuchipudi dance. Saint Narayana Tirtha (1550 A.D.) enriched Kuchipudi dance - dramas through his opera called Krishna **Leela** Tarangini. Thus Kuchipudi, nurtured with dance, music and drama, flourished since the 17th century. The evolution of Kuchipudi dance - drama is illustrated in the (fig 3.2).

Siddendhra's pioneering work and his dedication to this art is the result of the *Bhāmā Kalāpam*. *Bhāmā Kalāpam* is a story based on passionate love of Krishna and **Satyambahama**. **Bhāmā's** ambition was to keep Krishna in her embrace. Her passionate love is a form of devotion. Siddendhra is supposed to be the father of the Bhama cult. He composed song after song and the whole composition was known as *Bhāmā Kalāpam*. He sang and danced his own compositions. It is said then, even the devanarthakis of that village requested him to teach *Bhāmā Kalāpam*, because the songs of the *Bhāmā Kalāpam* were sensuous love acts, but due to certain social morales, he could not give much preference to women, thinking that they demoralize the society further. Hence forth, he selected good looking **Bahrmin** boys of the village and gave the training. Thereafter, this performance tradition was confined



only to male genre rather than female genre. Hence he was called the founder of Kuchipudi School.

*S.5(b). Melattur Bhagavata Mela*

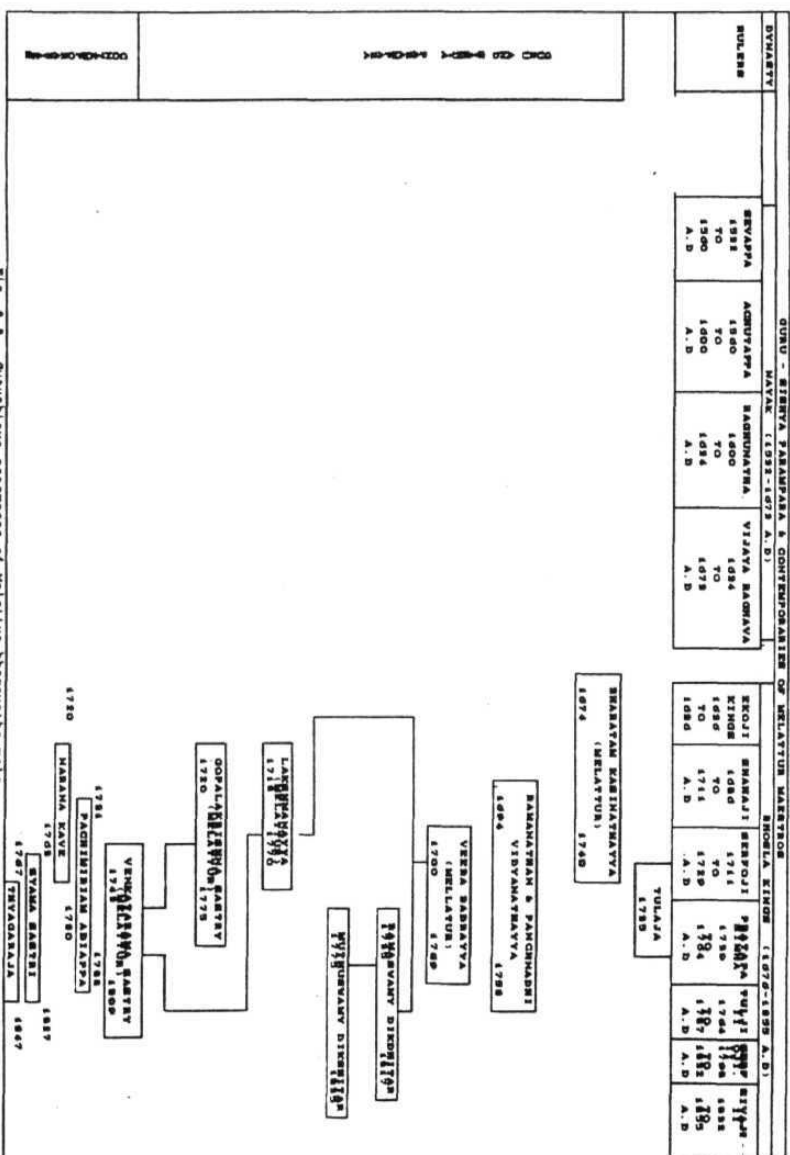
The *Melattur bhagavata mela* means “*Bhāgavata* performance group from Melattur”. Melattur is a medium-sized village situated in the interior of Tamil Nadu about ten miles from Tanjore (Iyer 1958, 1969, 1975; Natarajan 1993, 1995; Kothari 1979; Joga Rao, 1964). The village was gifted by “**Achutappa**” Naika, former king of Tanjore of Nayaka dynasty. **According** to Natrajan, pioneer of *bhagavata mela*:

The cholas, one of the dynasties that ruled over the South and parts of rest of India, played a very significant role in the Tamil country for four and a quarter centuries in promoting Tamil culture, especially Tamil literature, Saivite religion and temple architecture.

It is evidenced from the stone inscriptions that during the reign of “Vikrama Chola” (1125-1150 A.D) a shiva temple was built at a high-rise site where a Linga was unearthed and the Chola named the site as “Unnathapuri” and the deity in Linga form as “Unnathapureswarar”. It is thus the village Unnathapuram came into existence since the early part of the 12th century and it is this village where the Bhagavata Mela natakas are held in connection with the Narasimha Jaynati.

By the end of the 14th century, the Vijanagar empire annexed Chola mandala to its kingdom and founded the Nayakas dynasty in Thanjavur.

**When** the Vijayanagara empire was defeated at the hands of Muslims in 1565 A.D. in the battle at Talikotta, several families of composers, poets, vedic scholars and performing artistes from the empire migrated to Tanjavur. The second Nayak king, Achutappa (1560-1600 A.D) offered refuge to these families and settled them down at Tanjavur and nearby place (Natarajan 1993:1).



Natrajan's description gives the entire pragmatic understanding of the development of *Melattur bhdgavata mela* performances. The chronological development of *Melattur bhdgavata mela* and its Guru-Sishya parampara & contemporaries of Melattur maestros are demonstrated in fig 3.3.

According to Krishna Iyer (1975:84), "The Bhagavata Mela Dance-Drama tradition seems to have been in vogue in this country from the 11th century A.D. if not earlier. It is known to have come into prominence in South India from the time of Thirthanarayana Yogi, the author of *Krishna Leela Tharangini* who migrated from Andhra Desa, lived and died at Varahur in the Tanjore District about 300 years ago. According to him and his followers, devotion to God through the fine arts became perfect only when it was expressed through the combination of music, dance and abhinaya in drama, expounding the philosophic truths of the *bhāgavatalore*. Among his followers of later generations, Venkatrama Sastriar was a great composer, who lived at Melattur about 150 years ago, as a senior contemporary of Saint Thyagaraja and he wrote about 12 dance-dramas of high artistry". Therefore Gopalakrishna Sastry's son **Venkatarama** Sastry is the playwright of the great *Melattur bhdgavata mela natakas*. His excellence in *Vedas*, *Sastras*, *Upanishads*, *Puranas* and expertise in *Kavya*, *Natakas* and *Alankaras*, and scholarship in Telugu, Sanskrit, music, dance and drama brought a new era to *bhdgavata mela* dance-dramas of Melattur.

#### *S.5(c) Toorpu bhāgavatham*

When *Kuchipudi bhdgavatham* attained maturity and gained as a classical theatre, the *Toorpu bhdgavatham* (Ramakrishna 1975; Sharma 1995) had taken root as a traditional theatrical form in northern parts of Andhrapradesh- Vishakapatnam, Vijayanagaram and **Srikakulam**. *Toorpu bhdgavatham* means *Bhdgavatham of eastern style*. Strictly speaking, the origin and birth of this theatre is unknown. Nevertheless, it got influence from classical theatre - *Kuchipudi bhdgavatham*. Nataraja Ramakrishna, who popularized this form, opines: "It is vaisnavism that influenced the semi - urban people during the 17th A.D. along with other traditional theatre forms. Therefore it stands as traditional theatre form of Andhra

Pradesh" (personal communication). *Toorpu bhagavatham* performers belong to all sections of castes unlike in *Kuchipudi bhagavatham*.

#### *S.5(d) Chindu bhagavatham*

*Chindu bhagavatham* is popular in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. Chindu means 'dance-step'. But later *Chindu* became part of the performers' social life and their *bhdgavathams* came to be known as *Chindu bhāgavathams*. This *bhagavata* group socially belongs to the downtrodden in society. All the performers are harijans (schedule caste). The origin and birth of these performances are also unknown, but one can predict that this tradition followed the same path as *Toorpu bhagavatham*. Natraja Ramakrishna highly promoted this art form and took it into urban society. *Chindu bhdgavathams* are still popular in the rural parts of Telangana of Andhra Pradesh.

### **3.6. COMPOSITION OF BHAGVATAMS**

#### *S.6(a). Kuchipudi bhagavatham*

It is believed that primarily the composition of *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* text was done by Siddendhra Yogi. It was *Bhāmā Kaldpam*, and later other compositions such as *Parijatham* and *Golla Kalāpam* were added to their repertoire.

Siddendhra Yogi's pioneer work and his dedication to this art was the result of the *Bhdmd Kaldpam*. He is called the father of the *Bhdmd* cult. It is a story based on Krishna's and Satyabhama's passionate love. Satyabhama's ambition was to keep Krishna in her embrace. Her passionate love is a form of devotion. This whole composition is known as *Bhdmd Kaldpam*. It is in the form of dance and drama. *Golla Kaldpam* is a metaphysical dance - drama. It describes the genesis of the world and humankind thorough dance and songs. The story starts with the birth of the universe and the process of the birth of a child. And it elaborately described the difference between a brahmin and a *gollabhdmd* (milk maid). *Golla Kaldpam* is a philosophic song discourse. The discourse is between a brahmin and a

milk-maid. The milk-maid declares that all human beings are equal and devotion is the only way to attain salvation.

During later stages, many other texts were included in the Kuchipudi repertoire. They are *Prahalada Charitra*, *Rukminikalyanam*, *Harischandra*, *Usha Parinayam*, *Geya Natakam* and *Rama Natakam*, taking themes from Hindu scriptures - *Bhāgavatham*, *puranas*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharatam* etc.

Subsequently, the other exponents of *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* added Nritya to the performance tradition. These are known as *Sabdams*. *Sabdams* are compositions of a rhythmic character around the lyrics of the performance. These serve to praise the patrons and also narrate incidents from the puranas. One such *sabdam* is *Dasavatara Sabdam*. It depicts the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu, composed by Siddhabattula *Ragadas* and other poets. Another one is *Manduka Sabdam*, a composition by Melattur Kasinathayya. The *Prahalada Sabdam*, composed by Melattur Venkarama Sastry, relates to the story of Prahalada taken from *Mahabhdgavatam*. Likewise, many other *sabdams* came to light. They are *Tulaja Sabdam*, *Sivaji Sabdam*, *Thadhi Sabdam*, etc, found in the Kuchipudi school (Kanakalingeshwara Rao 1968). In addition to the dance-dramas and *Sabdams* they have expertise in *Tarangam*-s Narayana *Tirtha*'s, *Tarangam*, (*Krishnalila Tarangam*) and to the *Padams* (Kshetraya) (Ibid.:27).

#### *S.6(b). Melattur Bhagavata Mela*

*Bhagavata mela* natakas of Melattur consist of those composed by Melattur Venkatarama Sastry. He composed many nrtyanatakas and there are at least twelve natakas to his credit. Out of them, eleven natakas are authentically confirmed. The themes of *Melattru bhdgavata mela* are chosen from the popular puranic tales found in *Srimad bhdgavatham*. The Natakas are *Prhalada Charitamu*, *Markandeya Natakamu*, *Harischandra Natakam*, *Usha Parinayamu*, *Rukmaangadha*, *Hari Hara Leela Vilasamu*, *Kamsa Charita Natakam*, *Seeta Parinayam*, *Rukmani Kalyanam*, *Dhruva Charitamu* and *Sati Savitri Natakamu*. All the

above compositions are highly influenced by bhakti. Therefore, bhakti is the driving force in all his compositions. Sastry's compositions connote the beautiful and are dedicated to Lord Varadaraja, the presiding deity of Melattur village. His compositions also include *Churnikas*, *Champakamalas*, *Daruvus*, *Dwipadas*, *Kandams*, *Kandharthas*, *Padas*, *Pada - varnas*, *Padyams*, *Sandhi vachanas*, *Vachanas*, *Sis a ms* and *thillans* (Natrajan 1993:1). All these compositions are in Telugu language only. In his composition of daruvus, he has employed all the kinds of daruvus like *Pravesa daruvu*, *Samvada daru*, *Uttara-Pratyuttra daruvu* as found in Bharata's stage. "A beautiful 'Chindu' also finds a place in the pravesa daru for the character, 'Matangakanni' in the play **Harischandra**" (Ibid.:1).

#### S.6(c). *Toorpu Bhāgavatham*

Truly speaking, the original composition in the repertoire is *Bhāmā Kalapam* like in *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham*. But today, the text followed by them is a different text prepared for their own troupe's consumption. Fortunately *Bhama Kalapam* gained popularity both in performer and audience, because the main story centered around the love/quarrel/reunion sequences of Krishna and his consort Satyabhama. The villagers' major interest of the text is *Savutula Kayyam*, the wordy-duel between the two co-wives of Krishna, Satyabhama and Rukmini. In an earlier version the quarrel was between Satyabhama and Rukmini, but very soon Radha replaced Rukmini because the Telugu psyche finds it unpalatable to have the good-natured Rukmini getting into a quarrel with Satyabharna (Sharma 1995:96).

The entire story goes on between Rukmini and Satybhama and Krishna and the play concludes with a happy end. Music predominates these performances. Ragas used in it are desi. the performance begins with *Nata-raga* and closes with *Surathi*. Writing on ragas, Sharma (1995:96) observes, ragas such as Hayiri *Mukhari* and *Yadukulakhamboji* are also rendered in desi style. The *raga-prasthara* and the *gamakas*, while enunciating the raga, followed the folk conventions. Starting the song in the madhyamakala, the raga reaches the high pitch with the chorus. This of course does not look innocuous, since the entire tradition is built up on this high note. Essentially an open air performance, it usually caters to a

crowd of 5 to 10 thousand at a time. The only way to project the sound was the use of the human vocal chords. Several desi metres form a part of the musical text: *Kandaradham*, a half poem or a half song, *ragada*, *padyam* (the metrical stanza) *dwipada* etc., have all been used appropriately.

The mridangam plays an important role during the performance. It functions as in Tandava style with complete enunciation of broad rhythm to compensate the dance movements of actors and to draw perfect attention of the audience. Usually the mridangam player has one of the important key roles in the troupe. For instance, Ramavaram of Vijanagaram *Toorpu bhāgavatha mela* always booked Dupama Suryalingam (fig.3.4). His excellence in playing and fame demanded to be hired for all their performances during season times (personal communication).

### 3.6(d). *Chindu bhagavatham*

The most important composition in *Chindu bhāgavatham* composition is *Jamba Purana*. It is a cast-myth performed as dance-drama. It is about their ancestor jambhavan who was a king, and his wife, Neelarukanya. Jambavan goes through many intrigues of his enemies and ultimately rules over the country forever with the blessings of Yellamma. This performance is called *Kula puranam*. It is evident from their cast-myth that Vaishnavism has greatly influenced their performance tradition. All plays start with the dance of child Krishna and are followed by Radha. After this, the main episode starts with the appearance of the King and the queen and other characters. In this performance tradition, it is observed that the entrance-song is only for the king and the queen but not for other characters.

Besides Jamba puranam, their repertoire consists of other plays such as *Satya Harischandra*, *Chenchu Lakshmi*, *Veerabhimanya*, *Ganga-Gauri samvadam*, *Sati Savitri*, *Bhakata Prahalada*. All these themes are drawn from Mahabharatam, Ramayanam and *bhagavatham*.

### 3.7. THE PERFORMANCE STRUCTURE

#### S.7(a). *Kuchipudi bhagavatham*

The *Bhdm Kalāpam* of *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* performance is noteworthy. The performance begins with a recital of extracts from the four vedas from where the *rig veda* (text), *yajur veda* (histrionic expression), *sama veda* (vocal music) *atharvana veda* (sentiment or rasa), are borrowed. These four vedas symbolize the composition of the *Naty veda*. Group dancers appear on the stage and consecrate the stage by sprinkling holy water. This ritual act is known as *Punyavachana*. It is followed by *Rangalankarana* i.e., the decoration of the stage with colored powders (traditional performances). A bunch of 58 lights are offered to the *Ranga Adhidhvata*, the stage god. It precedes the offering of flowers to the audience by way of invoking their blessings. Afterwards, the flag staff of India is set upon the stage. After this, Lord Ganesa appears and blesses the artistes. It is believed that by doing this **ritual**, the performance cannot be disturbed. Then the main character Sutradhra (stage manager) appears on the stage and sings *Amba Prarthana* and *Guru Parthana* along with his three or four of his colleagues. Then *Nandi Sthotra* follows.

The Sutradhar stands up with his curved stick (fig 3.5). It is believed that this curved stick was presented to Bharata by Lord Brahma, according to the *Natya Sastra*. It is named *Kutilika*. Sutradhara offers prayer to his guru and welcomes the audience and narrates the story line. Sutradhara himself portrays *Vidushaka's* (buffoon's) role. The *Vidushaka* provides humor by gestures and dialogues and gives relief to the audience. Wherever there is a song for introducing a new character, he starts off with a parody of the song by mentioning ridiculous things to create comic for relief to the audience. Then follows the major episodes. The performance begins with a curtain held by two stage-persons and the main character, Satya **Bhāmā**, stands behind the curtain (figs 3.6 and 3.6a). Her dance to *Pravēshika daruvu* is sung by the *Vidushaka*. The songs are entirely in Karnatic music and *mridangam* supplies the rhythm for her dance. Even *jatis* are also orally recited and they inspire the performer in **his** rhythmic patterns of dance and footwork. Through *abhinaya*, the performer interprets the



songs. For more entertainment and for putting across the ideas more effectively, Vidushaka interviews the main performer. It is in a form of dialogue or an argument among themselves.

For instance in *Golla Kalapam*. it is a dialogue which the chief character, as represented by a milk maid (gollabhama), carries on with the Brahman, and so it is called Kalapam. "The golla always scores, she cross-examines the Brahman as to his real brahmanhood and expatiates on what a real brahman is according to the sastras and in the torrent of her questions and several Sanskrit quotations on several matters, the poor brahman become breathless" (Rahgavan 1981:246).

Besides *Bhāmā Kalapam*, *Kuchipudi bhdgavatha mela* also enacts *Prahalada Charitam* - dance-drama. The proceedings of this dance-drama are the same as the *Bhdmd Kalapam*. A distinguishable element in the dance-drama is the involvement of a large number of performers. Outward structure of *Prahalada Charitam* of Kuchipudi is the same as *Prahalada Charithamoi Melattur bhdgavatha mela*, except for its variation in the pattern of hand movements, gestures, foot work, costumes and make - up. Otherwise, it is similar to the *Melattur bhdgavata mela*.

According to Vedantham Satyanaryan Sharma, "there are two temples in Kuchipudi village. One is Ramalingeshawara temple (fig 3.7), the other is Lord Krishna where Siddendhra Yogi worshipped. There is a rectangular stage on the outside of the temple. In olden days there were regular performances at the temple premises" (personal communication). "Since about middle of fifties, the stage has been demolished" (Khokar 1988:74-81). Kuchipudi performances were patronized by the temples, local rulers and zamindars etc.

#### *S.7(b). Melattur Bhāgavata Mela*

For instance, *Prahalada Charitiam* of *Melattur bhdvatha mela* performance structure is as follows. The performance begins with the appearance of the first character Konangi (buffon) (fig 3.8). He appear on the stage and dances for about fifteen minutes in a humorous manner. He then requests the audience to watch the play in silence and quits the stage. Then there is

a group of musicians who sing the invoking song called *Thodaymangalam*. It contains many sweet tunes including *Sabdhas* and *Sollukkattus*, interesting to the audience. *Thodaya* or **Jaya** which is from the *Bhajana Sampradaya* of the *South* is introduced as a invocatory song, followed by *Naandi Dwipadha* and a *Sabdam* - narration of theme in a nutshell. The *sabdam*, called *Prahalada Pattabhisheka Sabdam*, unfolds into excellent *sollukkattus* in different *gatis* followed by a *Kavutuvu*s and a *Jaggini daruvu* in praise of Lord Vigneswara. This concept of *Katha Sangraha* is absent in Sanskrit drama (Natrajan 1993:2). It follows the *Poorva ranga*, Lord Vigneswara character (fig 3.9) enters the stage with *pravesa daruvu* with graceful dance. He comes to the stage and blesses the audience and then exits. After this, the main play begins with the introduction of the chief characters by themselves, one by one, through *pravesa daruvu*, and the introduction is called *Patra Pravesam* After the introduction of the chief characters, the main story follows scene by scene.

As the performance proceeds, a variety of *daruvus*, soliloquies in classical music of Carnatic tradition and dialogues in poetic diction blend at every stage with dance and *abhinaya* according to *Natya Sastra* and other treatises. With the significant hand gestures and facial expressions, the interpretation of speech and songs gives meaning to the story. There is a remarkable synchronization of music, speech, dance and *abhinaya* rendering high aesthetic appeal which leads to *rasa*.

### 3.8. PRELIMINARIES OF BHAGVATAMS

In *bhḡgavata melas* (Kuchipudi and Melattur), ritual preliminaries have much importance. These performances begin with the worship of Lord Ganesha and an invocatory song is sung by the musicians in chorus. In both performances, the ritual starts in the greenroom itself after the completion of make-up, with certain religious rites and prayers. For instance, in *Melattur bhāḡavata mela*, performances take place only in the festival season. Therefore it is necessary to go through the ritual acts. The *bhḡgavata mela* is held in front of the local Sri Varadaraja Perumal temple at Melattur on the occasion of Narahimaha Jayanti. The Jayanti continues for 12 days in the village. All the *bhḡgavata mela* performers start their

ritual practices in front of the Temple in the morning before enacting the plays. In this ritual, all performers go to the temple to worship Lord Narashima and offer yagnas etc. "Venkatarama Sastry recruited his players from each Brahmin family and enacted the plays in the Varadaraja Perumal Sannidhi (Propylaeum) before the decorative Utsav Vighras or Processional deities (Natarajan 1993:3). The same night they perform *Prahalada Charitam*. The major ritual within the play starts with the *Apurva raga* adopted by Venkatarama Sastry. Immediately after the *Apurva raga*, Lord Vigneswara enters the stage dancing beautifully with a *pravesa daruvu* and blesses the audience, musicians on the stage, and then exits (figs 3.9 and 3.9a). This entire ritual act is performed with devotion. Natarajan (1995:11) proclaims that:

At the end of this performance, the actors and personating the gods and demigods, the protagonists climb down the stage, walk through the passage to the temple with the *Bhāgavata* chanting Hari Bhajans to offer worship and *Deeparathana* to the deities inside. Later, the ensemble continues the procession towards another temple maintained by the patron. As it walks through the streets of the villages, the villager, offer *arathi* to the actors and the actors offer prayers followed by recitation of benedictory verses, only then the *natakam* of the day is said to be complete. This is one of the fascinating spectacle of our living theatre

Natarajan's description clarifies the ritual importance in the performance.(figs 3.10 and 3.10a). Even today this ritual can be seen in Melattur. This kind of intensive ritual enactment is not visible in *Prahalada Charitam* of *Kuchipudi bhdgavatham*. But according to the Vedanta Satyanaryan Sarma, "it existed during olden days. As days passed on this ritual enactment slowly vanished" (personal communication). But *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* is enriched with stage rituals (fig 3.9). As Padma Subramanyam pointed out in one of her lecture - demonstrations: "The Bharata tradition is clearly seen in the preliminaries of Terukkuttu in which they have a fairly elaborate puja. Lord Ganesha is worshipped in the form of a lump of turmeric pulp - there is kottu (beating of drums) for a long time in the form of announcement. After that, invocatory songs in praise of Lord Ganesha, Saraswathy, Ellama

and their Guru are sung and then the Kattiyankaran enters.... These are all part of the **Natyadaharmi** mode of expressions which is typical of all these traditional theatre" (Venu-gopal 1992:10). She also pointed out "that here are other dramatic forms which are close to Bharata's *Natya sastra* in their conception if not in their technique. The Terukuutu and Bhagavata mela of Tamil Nadu, and Kudiattam and Cakkiyarkuttu of Kerala, the Bhagavata atta of Kuchipudi and of other similar villages of Andhra, and the yakshagana of Karnataka are some of the theatrical forms which show an interlying unity in their format in spite of their linguistic diversity. All these forms are descendants of Bharata's *Natyasastra* and hence all the four *Abhinayas* play an equal role in them" (Ibid.: 10). Common characteristic features of *bhāgavthams* are illustrated in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2.

### 3.9. CONCLUDING NOTE

Traditional Indian theatre is identified under three categories: one, classical Sanskrit theatre drawing its attention from works such as *Natya Sastra*, *Abhinaya Darpana*, *Sangita Ratnakara*, etc.; two, ritual theatre covers a wide range of castes and communities; and last one i.e., semi-classical and folk theatre, which is equally diversified and often secular in spirit.

Indian traditional theatre is the amlagam of *Natyadharmi* (stylistic acting) and *Lokadharmi* (realistic acting). The use of *touryatrikam* (singing, dancing, and instrumental music) increases the *natyadharmi* mode. The text of the plays are so composed as to provide enough scope to explore the music and dancing resources of the performers. The four types of *abhinaya* (angika, vacika, aharya and *satvika*) help to suggest that there is no attempt to represent external reality through the performance of the play. The *Ekaharya* or *Pakarnnattam* style of rendering, where the same actor impersonates different characters without change of make-up or costumes, also destroys the impressions of realism aimed at in illusionistic drama. The tendency is to improvise for hours together without any textual support during the performance (see chapter iv). Skill of a gifted actor his *manodharma* or free play of imagination, is another factor that emphasizes the absence of illusionism in Indian theatre.

Most of the above characteristic features can be found in all *bhāgavathams*, thus they are more common in the *Kuchipudi bhdgavatham* and *Melattur bhagavata mela*, whereas *Toorpu bhdgavatham* and *Chindu bhdgavatham* are dilute in their structure and concept, since they are considered as traditional and folk theatre of Andhra prades. To sum up, the three main types of traditional Indian theatre share common features with the diverse experiments that have tried to take European theatre away from its post-Renaissance theatre experiments and **their** parallel in three forms of traditional Indian theatre classial, semi-classical/folk , and **ritual** theatre. The bhagavathams are the best examples to identify the features common to experimental theatre in the West and traditional Indian theatre. It also explicates the performance theory of Westerners, specifically Schechner's Performance theory and Environmental theatre theory. The next chapter explicates text and space and its linkages between the Westernen as well as *bhdgavatham* performances.

Table 3.1: Characterstic features of *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* and Melattur bhagavatha mela

Charecters	<i>Kuchipudi bhagavatham</i>	<i>Melattur bhagavata mela</i>
Word Meanning	<i>Bhagavata</i> performance of brahmin artists from Kuchipudi village	<i>Bhagavata</i> Performers (from Mellatur)
Evolution	From Yakshaganam later Veedhi bhagavatham	From Yakshaganama later Veddhi bhagavatham
Place of Enactment	Outside temple near chariots	Outside temple near chariots
Time	Night	Night
Nature and Function	Aesthetic	Aesthetic and devotional based
Theme or Subject	Enactment of Telug Plays on Vaishnavism <i>Bhāmā Kalapam</i> and <i>Prahaladacharitam</i> etc.	Enactment of Telugu Plays on Vaishnavism <i>Prahaladacharitam</i> etc.
Make-up	Special Make-up for major Charectars Colorful Mask Head-gear Rude Make-up (olden days) made with Haridalam Termaric and Charcolate	Special Make-up for major Charectars Colorful Mask Head-gear Rude Make-up (olden days) made with Haridalam Termaric and Charcolate

Action	<p>Non-stylized attempt will be made for executing four modes of Abhinayas</p> <p>Stress on Vachikabhinaya <i>Lokadharmi</i></p>	<p>Non-stylized attempt will be made for executing four modes of Abhinays but natural way of expression is more</p> <p>More stress on Vachikabhinaya <i>Lokadharmi</i></p>
Lighting	Petromax lights for traditional enactment sometimes electrical lights Sun light	Petromax lights for traditional enactment sometimes electrical light Sun light
Text rendering	<p>All characters speak their local language play backsingers also take part in the <b>performace</b></p> <p>Singers follow folk-tunes sometimes classical ragas</p>	<p>All characters <b>speak</b> their local language play backsingers also take part in the performance</p> <p>Singers follow only folktones</p>
Music	Mridangam, Symbols and Hormoniam	Mridangam, Symbols and Hormoniam
Performer training	No special training	No special training
Performance score	<p>Not controlled by Natyasastra</p> <p>Individual actor can create his own score</p>	<p>Not controlled by Natyasastra</p> <p>Individual actor can create his own score</p>
Transmission of performative Knowledge	By oral tradition and written records	By oral tradition and written records
Cast of the Performers	<p>Any caste in the village</p> <p>No female performer</p>	<p>Low-caste (Madigas)</p> <p>female performers</p>
Occasion of performance	Some festival times	Any time

**Table.3.2:** Characteristic features of Toorpu bhagavatham and Chindu bhagavatham

Characters	<i>Toorpu bhagavatham</i>	<i>Chindu bhagavatham</i>
Word Meaning	Eastern <i>bhāgavata</i> performers from Andhra Pradesh (Vizag, Vijayanagaram and Srikakulam)	grigorious <i>bhāgavatam</i> performance from Andhra Pradesh (Nizamabad, Armoor)
<b>Evolution</b>	<b>Yakshaganam</b> and Veedhibhagavatham	Yakshaganam and Veedhibhagavatham
Place of enactment	Outside temple <b>four</b> corners of the road	Outside temple four corners of the road
Time	Night	Day
Nature and Function	Ritual and aesthetic	more ritual and aesthetic
Theme and subject	Plays from Hindu Mythologies	Plays from Hindu Mythologies other historical plays
Make-up	No stylized make-up Head-gear No mask	No stylized make-up Head-gear some times mask
Costume	Colorful dress Traditional ornaments (self-made)	Colorful dress Traditional ornaments (self-made)



Costume	Colrful silk cloth	Colorful silk cloth
Action	Four modes of Abhinaya as <i>Aharya</i> , <i>Vacchika</i> , <i>Satvikka</i> and <b><i>Angika</i></b> with histrionic expression (Natyadharmi)	Four modes of Abhinaya as <i>Aharya</i> , <i>Vacchika</i> , <i>Satvikka</i> and <i>Angika</i> with histrionic expression (Natyadharmi)
Mudras	Hand Mudras and gestures	Hand Mudras and gestures
Lighting	Electrical Lights Petromax light, coke and wood (lattuka) (olden days)	Electrical Lights Petromax light, coke and wood (lattuka)(olden days)
Text Rentering	All characters speak background singers (Vocalist) All characters sing for themselves (olden days) All characters deliver their dialogue	All characters speak and background singers (Vocalist) All characters sing themselves (olden days) All character deliver their dialogue
Orchestra	Mukha veena,Symbols, Sruthi, Violin, Harmonium, Flute(later added)	Mukha veena, Symbols, Sruti Violin, Harmonium, Flute (later added)

Performer Training	Systematic Training Childhood onwards with body exercise and rythematic movements	Systematic Training Childhood onwards with body exercise and rythematic movement
Performance Score	Individual actor can create their own score controlled by <i>Natyadharmi</i>	Individual actor can create their own score controlled by <i>Natyadharmi</i>
Transmission of Performative Knowledge	Generation to generation by oral transmission written text Systematic approach	Generation to generation by oral transmission written text Systematic approach
Cast of the Performers	Only brahmins All cast people take part (current) No female Performer for Traditional enactment Now female performers emerged (current)	Only brahmins  Strictly male performers for traditional enactment
Occasion of performance	Nomadic performers Performance all seasons except rain season Even festival occasions (For livelihood)	Festival occasions (For tradition) Lakshmi Narasimha jayanthi

## CHAPTER - IV

## CHAPTER IV

### DRAMATIC TEXT / PERFORMANCE TEXT TOPOANALYSIS OF BHĀGAVATHAS

This chapter explicates the dramatic text, performance text and spatial concepts in the light of performance theories propounded by Western scholarship and its application on *bhāgavathams* of Andhra Pradesh.

#### 4.1. DRAMA AS A LITERARY CANNON: DRAMATIC TEXT

Whether drama is a literary cannon or a theatrical piece (Alter 1990; Eco 1977, 1979); Hall 1959; Pavis 1979; Deak 1976) is an old controversy. Czech structuralist Veltruski, in his essay "Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre" agrees that "Drama is a work of literature in its own right; it does not need anything but simple reading to enter the consciousness of the public. At the same time, it is a text that can, and mostly is intended to be used as a verbal component of theatrical performance" (quoted in George 1992:77). It is true, that the nature of theatre favors certain types of dramas, a lyric or narrative. Thus theatre enters the realm of literature as a whole and is not confined to the dramatic genre. Therefore, the term performance can be applied variously to a range of cultural and literary phenomena, and we can use it to designate verbal performance viewed as a cultural event. Scholars like Rober-d-Abraham and Richard Bauman have reconceptualized the distinction between the textual representation, and what Robert George calls "Complex communicative events". As such, scholars often associated the term *vernacular* with the modern concept of folklore as an intricate interaction between the performer and audience that relies on linguistic, paralinguistic, kinesic, and thoroughly contextual codes and conventions. This implies **end** of textuality and of the eventual return to a radically modified text that the assumption of performance has become a model for how to discuss oral literary text. It caused the end of textuality and the eventual return to a radically modified text had come into the existence.

Semiotists designated dramatic text as a written sign more suited for reading than for a theatrical performance. The production text or stage direction comprises the scenic annotations destined particularly for actualization through staging. The written signs undergo transformation which Ronald Barthers (1974) describes as an operation of a "simple implication" (Helbo 1987:40).

Even in Shakespeare's dramas, we know that writing and acting were intimately linked and interaction between the script and the performance appears to have been intently reciprocal. Since his use of the art of language must have been powerfully stimulated by his theatrical experience and vice versa, so we can assume, as many critics still do, the priority of the written script over the performed play, especially when the performance is described as a realization of the script. The audience response in Elizabethan theatre involved an intimate knowledge of the art of writing, and awareness of the script. It was also rooted in culture not entirely literate. Thus transition from declining orality to emerging literacy, rather than benefitting institutionalized locations of writing, such as learned humanism and jurisprudence, must have immensely stimulated the cultural functions of an inscribed performance in the popular renaissance theater (Weimann 1992:506).

If the performance is based on visual aspects, the importance of the dramatic text declines and the verbal language is compensated by other means of expression that occur during the performance. Even contradiction takes place between dramatic voice and theatre expression during the performance on. Theatrical text covers all the signs, those meant for reading and those meant for the performance. Modern directorial thinking of Criag, Meyerhold, Artuad, Brecht, Grotowski, Peter Brook, and Schechner- is that "text has to be interpreted, or reinterpreted, and not simply placed literally, faithfully on the stage" (Rabkin 1983:45). Gilman viewed that according to the change of times and perception, the interpretation of the text should necessarily change. He declares "the ascendancy of the director to superstar status, the dominance in a production of his presence, his interpretation, his mystique at the expense of the text" (Ibid.:45). Whereas the deconstructionist and semiotists consider

dramatic text like any other literary text that follows literary convention in poetry and fiction.

Performance has its own history, its own intertextuality. As the critic interprets dramatic text, the audience interprets dramatic texts. Like a literary critic, a strong director can proceed with the text with different hermeneutical strategies and models. Artaud's view **is that all** words, once spoken, are dead and function only at the moment when they are uttered. Then interpretation survives.

Since the times of dramatic history, the playwright used to write plays in isolation and other artists used to stage them as independent entities. The autonomous method involves **a** single process wherein the artistes develop the work from initial conception to finished performance, whereas structuralists, semiotists and deconstructionists give due importance to both playwright and director. In their view, no one is superior to the other in the theatre.

## **4.2. TRANSFORMATION OF TEXT**

When a dramatic text is converted into the performance text, the score should usually be retained in the mise-en-scene. The transmission of the text is governed by tradition inherited from the past as in Asian theatre and Western music. In a performance, the audience first react to the visual performance of the text as score instead of reacting to the dramatic text and score. Schechner's view on transmission of the text is clearly understood in *Drama, Script, Theater and Performance* (1973b), in which he says: Text is the written document of a performance. Script is something that pre - exists at any given enactment. Script is the pattern of doing, not the mode of thinking. Drama arose as a specialized form of scripting. ' The potential manifestation that had previously been encoded in a pattern of doing was now encoded in a pattern of written words'. Aristotle points out that the dramas of the Greeks are the codes for the transmission of action in the lives of men. When Greek dramas were transferred to West, the sense of doing the script was replaced by drama in a new way. He writes, **“thus, the scripts no longer** functioned as **a code for** transmitting action through time;

instead, the doings of each production became the code for re-presenting the words-of-the drama" (Schechner 1973b:5-36). Slowly, words attained more importance than the actions of individual choice. Therefore, drama attained its separate identity from the scripts. The avant - garde movement and other traditional theatre refocused attention on doing aspects of script, and beyond script to theatre and performances (Ibid.:5-36). Schechner admits that words like Script, Drama, Theatre and Performance are loaded with connotative meaning and none have neutral synonyms.

Hence drama is the realm of the author, composer, shaman and scenarist; the script is the realm of the performer; and the performance is the realm of audience. It is clear that theatrical meaning will generate and communicate in all possible ways, because the entire gamut of social and cultural persuasion is also potentially evolved in the performance realm. Therefore, different cultures mark the boundaries differently. Wherever the boundaries are set, it is within the broad region of performance the theatre place, and at the center of the theatre is the script, and sometimes the drama. And just as drama may be thought of as a specialized kind of script, so also the theatre can be considered as a specialized kind of performance.

The drama is usually considered as a 'given' offer to the spectator through the mediation of the performance. The spectator is welcomed not only to employ a specific dramatic ability but also to work hard and gather together into the composite structure the partial and fragmented bits of dramatic information that he receives from different sources. The construction of dramatic world/event is the result of the spectator's competence to place order upon a dramatic context. To substantiate this Elam writes, "It should not be thought that a reader of dramatic texts constructs the dramatic world in the same way as a spectator: not only does the latter have to deal with more varied and specific kinds of information (through the stage vehicles), but the perceptual and temporal conditions in which he operates are quite different. The reader is able to imagine the dramatic context in a leisurely and pseudo - narrative fashion, while the spectator is bound to process simultaneous and

successive acoustic and visual signals within strictly defined time limits. Nevertheless, the basic action-structure and logical cohesion of the drama is accessible through analysis of the **written** text, which is of unquestionable value as long as it is not confused with performance analysis" (1980:99).

The transformation of dramatic text into performance text has been the primary concern of Indian dramatic theory and practice. When a dramatic text is converted into a performance text, the score should be usually retained in the *mise-en-scene*. "The emphasis in making a performance text is on systems of relationships: confrontations or otherwise, among words, gestures, performers, space, spectators, music, light- whatever happens on stage" (Schechner 1982b:32-33). Some of the factors which have a direct bearing on the dramatic text in its transformation process into performance text are: the actor and his art including speech-delivery, movement, make - up, masks and costume, theatrical space and its setting, scenic means and devices, actor - audience relationship, practices and conventions of framing a performance, the nature and degree of stylization, and the whole set of conventions for treating space, time and progression of the narrative.

#### 4.3. PERFORMANCE TEXT

There are two potential focuses of semiotic study that throw light on the theatrical/performance text and the written/dramatic text respectively. "Unlike the literary semiotician or the analyst of myth or the plastic arts, the researcher in theatre and drama is faced with two quite dissimilar-although intimately correlated-types of textual material: that produced *in* the theatre and that composed *for* the theatre" (Elam 1980:3). This is how the semiotic laborer take the text into the analytic corpus. Bettentine (1977) and de Marinis (1978) and Ruffine (1978) consider the virtual rule out of the dramatic text altogether as a legitimate concern of theatrical semiotic proper.

Performance text is the new incarnation (avatar) of the dramatic text. It has its own laws and its own semantic world. In the terminology of Schechner (1983:214-15) performance texts



mean not only the words but also the whole *mise-en-scene*. It passes from one generation to another, and particular performance are made ready for the public and there is no way to separate these tasks, for the texts are both written and oral i.e., the libraries where these texts are kept are the bodies of the performers. The whole *mise-en-scene* involves realization of the performance text and the highly evolved and codified art of the actor, theatrical space and its conventions. The whole scheme of stylization and a set of conventions for theatre is the text. But an offshoot of alternative theatre culture in America (1960s and 1970s) laid the way for the creation of autonomous texts. Until the movement began, the playwright used to write plays in isolation and other artists used to stage it as independent entities. The independent method involves a single process where in the same artistes develop the work from initial to finished performance. The created text is called performance text.

From the renaissance to the time of the Industrial Revolution theatre was considered an offshoot of drama. This caused the ascendance of the director in the theatre from the latter half of the 19th century. In the Renaissance/Industrial Revolution period, the authority of the playwright had not been questioned and the dramatic text was considered sanctimonious. Plays had the status of poetry or other genres of literature. In the same period, doing theatre mean staging plays as intended by the playwright. When experimentation started with the association of Avant-garde movement and also the introduction of technology to the realm of the theatre, it needed or necessitated a director. With the ascendance of the director, he deplored the text, i.e., something should be added or deleted during the process of physicalization. Gerald Rabkin writes, "the director emerges at an historical moment of selfreflective theatrical anxiety. When theatre represented unreflective communal values and conventions, the director as a distinct craftsman was unnecessary" (1983:56).

Apart from giving entertainment, the performer renders a social function by conveying a message to the the audience. This social function/experience is very much linked to cultural identity of spectatorship. Hence it is not to say that text in the theatre was radically affected by the social and cultural function, and also it is dangerous to assume, as many critics

still do, the priority of the written text over the performance, especially when the performance is described as a realization of the text. Even though the dramatic text preceded the performance text and in several important ways constrains the production through the prefiguration of action, character and setting, the written text by itself is radically incomplete. "the dramatic text is radically conditioned by its performability. The written text in other words, is determined by its very need for stage contextualization," (Elam 1980:209). Thus it is clear that theatrical meaning will be generated and communicated in all possible ways, and the entire gamut of social and cultural persuasions are also potentially involved in the performance score.

#### **4.4. SPECTACULAR TEXT**

The spectacular text was coined by Marco de Marinis and generalized by Pavis (1979). Semiotic modeling, says the spectacular text is a text (discursive matter such as speech, rhetoric dialogue, pragmatic constraints etc,) specially created for the stage (convergence is divergence of various semiotic systems; gesture, mimicry, music, etc.).

According to Kowzan, a spectacle is an art whose products are communicated through space and time, which means that they require space and time to be communicated. The notion of space - time dimension permits a distinction between spectacle and temporal arts (poetry, music) or spatial arts (architecture) (Helbo:1987:140-41). To Greimas, the definition of spectacle includes, from the central point of view, properties such as the presence of closed three - dimensional space and proximal distribution. From the external point of view, it implies the presence of an observing actant (Ibid.:142). This paradigm is against the rejection of the linguistic paradigm of semantic analysis.

The modern trend of these critics is the interdisciplinary analysis of the spectacle on the *mise-en-scene*. And it demands a global expansive vision. This spectacular paradigm deals with Eastern and Western theatre simultaneously. Since its methodology is derived from interdisciplinary discourse and pluralistic cultural analysis, spectacular analysis goes

beyond the limits of the theories of drama and theatre to all genres of arts such as music, opera, circus, ballet, dances, films, sports, races, street shows and painting. The scenic spectacle is investigated in many perspectives by using different criteria. Spectacular text has a multiplicity of components beyond a verbal and non-verbal network.

The pattern of spectacular text analysis on environmental production is yet to come out. Bhagavathams aim at a spectacular text in the mise-en-scene and also at enacting texts and subtext.

#### 4.5. CONFRONTATION WITH THE TEXT

"Arthur" finds in Balinese theatre an inspiration for a "hieroglyphic" synthesis of movement, light, and space unmediated by the inflections of scripted language; Brook scours the continents seeking the Ur-script in a hybrid of "alien" dialects and voices; Schechner's transfigures from *The Bacchae* into *Dionysus's play*, dismembering the text in order to reassemble it as the transgressive body electric of rebellious Vietnam War-era culture" (Benston 1992:442). Schechner adopted the method of confrontation from Grotowski and he successfully practised it in many of his productions like *Dionysis 69*, *Tooth of Crime* and *Dr Faustus*. He experimented with the text; the text was not at all changed from the original text of Marlow (author), but he arranged it into a montage. Unnecessary scenes were omitted, some scenes were modified, and some scenes were created without changing its score from dramatic score. However, he rejects the idea of the playwright as the first creator of the text. His intention is to provide the production guidelines. In his view, "No play are produced for the sake of production. The producer wants to make money; and a group of actors want a vehicle to perform; and the production is suited to the size and convenience of the auditorium and a cultural, national or social occasion demands performance" (Schechner 1968b:61). He clearly explained this premise in his six axioms of environmental theatre that, "the text need be neither the starting point nor the goal of production. There may be no text at all" (1968b:41-64). The other axiom says, "The fundamental logic of the theatre is not logic of the story but the logic of story telling" (1973a:83). His idea is quite common and different

in the presentation and relevance of the production in American situation. For this new explication, he necessarily changed the text. The presentation and relevance of production to the contemporary situation are more important than performing a drama as it is. When the director's logic confronts the playwright's logic, the play is likely to be changed to satisfy the production intention in the given circumstances. Because the stylization of the production was a subsidiary motive behind the text, it may give brilliant insight to the play when it is performed. In environmental production, Schechner treatment of the text of *Shepherds The Tooth of Crime*, he deplored that the text required some changes at the structural level. According to Schechner's production, it is believed that, "The language of the play is highly musical in its score and rhythm. It is very difficult to verbo - physicalization of the language" (Ibid.:234). The Performance Group recited the play at various levels, sang it in various tones, and read it in various styles, but the language was out of control of the limits of the theatre. At last, "the performers used a verbo - physical approach: taking sentences and distorting their usual intonation according to the physical impulses in and among the performers. Once we went through the play speaking the lines as fast as possible. New ways of saying the words were found" (Ibid.:234). According to him, dramatic text is mere pretexts and out of it performance is made. Therefore text can be distorted, dismembered and reassembled. He thinks a performance is not the enactment of a play that is written in an isolated place; it is a teamwork in which all the participants including the spectators' ideas and suggestions are necessarily welcome (Schechner 1973a). Since his environmental theatre is designed environmentally and his text and commentaries can be viewed as environmental of interlocked structure, passages and spaces, frequently do not connect or cohere. He proved his theory and its practice application in environmental theatre.

#### 4.6. TEXT IN BHAGAVATA PERFORMANCE

In the strict sense, *bhāgavata* theatre does not follow any text during the performance though the text is available. the script provides the pattern of doing, not the mode of thinking *bhāgavata* performances are ritualistic and devotional in their basic nature and have been

following from generation to generation an oral tradition as folk forms. Thus they have their own performance scripts, which are in poetic language, and performance is controlled by music score. In these *bhagavathams*, some factors have a direct bearing on the dramatic text in its transformational process into performance text. They are the actors, dialogues, mask, body movement, music, make - up, scenic means and other devices, degree of stylization, set of conventions for treating space, time and actor - audience relationship.

In *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* and *Melattur bhdgavata mela* the script is not merely words but also contains codified hand gestures, body postures, movements and facial expressions added to the words by performing tradition. These performances decode the signs and codes, and open up the communication channel to the receiver (audience). In this process of decoding the signs and codes there is a perfect execution of technique of the creative power of performance. For instance, in *Bhāmā Kalāpam*, Satyabhama character describes her lover Lord Krishna to Madhavi (servant-maid) with several gesture patterns elaborating and embellishing the key concept of the verse (Fig 4.1). She not only explores the dhvani patha (sub-text) but also creates prathi patah (counter part) by portraying the imagined reactions and responses. Thus the *bhagavathams* provide for out-of-frame activities to loosen the frame and give scope for the incorporation of new ideas for the actors to improvise the text. Lifting half curtain in *Kuchipudi bhdgavatham*, *Melattur bhdgavata mela* and *Toorpu bhdgavatham* (Figs 3.3, 4.2, 4.3) is to manipulate and dramatize the actor's entrance and exit. And the vidushaka (comedian), who is all the time present on the stage, recites prathishoka (anti-versus) parodying the utterances and actions of the main characters. This role is created to loosen a highly structured performance, and to entertain the audience with comic actions. In olden times, all *bhdgavata* performances used torchbearers with a burning torch in his hand moving with the characters to illuminate their faces (fig 4.3a). In *Melattur Bhagavata mela* the stage manager holds the script in their hands, and keeps prompting the performers and giving cues to the musicians and performers wherever it is necessary (fig 4.4).

*Pravesika daruvu* (entrance of the character) is the oral performance text of *bhdgavatham*s with music notations. It is a stylized classical song in *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* and *Melattur bhagavata mela* and stylized folk tunes in *Toorpu bhagavatham* and *Chindu bhagavatham* sung before the performance by a performer to the accompaniment of the rhythm on **m-ridangam** to introduce each character of bhagavata performances to the audience in front of the acting area. Then the play proper begins. For instance, in *Melatur bhdvata mela*, the *Thodaymangalam* (song consisting of many tunes including *sabdas* and *sollukattus*) etc., is a stylized song sung before the character of Ganesha as a prayer to bless the play so that it may get through without a hitch (fig 3.9 and 4.5). Generally, a young lad below 12 years of age wears the mask of elephant head (*Ganesh*) and dances. The words of the song are composed both in Sanskrit and the regional dialect. It is believed that the transformation of the performances to their respective characters takes place during the process of the *praaveshika daruvu* (entrance song)- Structurally, it is a part of enactment through which the performance gains the inspiration to start the rhythmic physical movements. The physical movements are conceptually governed by the nature of *bhagavata* and the purpose of its incarnation.

Bhagavatars, brahman scholars, well versed in Sanskrit and *Natya Sastra*, have been given a large scope to expand by adding themes from *Srimad bhagavatham*. Thus the *bhagavata* performances supported by thematic songs and verses presented devotional doctrine with its illustrated stories of *Prahalada charitam*, *Bhamakalapam* etc.

The text in *bhdgavatha* performances has two distinct divisions - one is a musical script sung by the vocalist (see in video tape) the other aperformance script, which is spontaneous conversation which takes place during the performance. The verbal music and the associated dance movements structurally make the form resemble *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* and *bhdgavatha mela* performances. For instance, the physical movement of the *Bhāmā Kaldpam* is controlled by verbal music. The spontaneous conversation does not follow any text or pattern, and changes from performance to performance or from performer to performer. But the

definite text will be maintained in both *bhāgavathams* written by their respective authors.

In all traditional and folk theatre the script of the performance is a loose verbal narrative, and functions as a tradition guide for the enactment, because it is a part of their life and **the** performers are neither slaves of the script nor in their imagination as it is controlled by **them**. Each *bhagavata* performer gets ample chance to set his/her individual score through physical action except in certain cases.

*Kuchipudi bhagavatam* and *Bhagavata mela* performances follow the cannons of *Abhinaya Darpanam* and *Natya Sastra*. *Natya Sastra* insists on the presentation of a drama by using four modes of *Abhinaya*. They are *Aaharya* (make-up, costumes, and scenic spectacle); *Angika* (gesture); *Sattvika* (revealed action of mind); and *Vachika* (oral rendering). Unlike in other classical forms, here the characters speak in a highly stylized manner. The presentation is so elaborate that there are lengthy excursions into various fields. For instance, the *Bhāmā Kalāpam* of Siddendra Yogi takes 3 days to perform. It is possible to read this text within one and a half hours. The text of its *bhagavata* plays are enlarged upto 8 hours during the performance. It starts at 10 p.m. and ends in the early hours at 6 a.m. But in reality, requires 3 nights to tell the story with *Abhinaya* and dance movements alone. The beginning of the play starts with the narration of Vidushaka. It is an oral exposition (other characters use hand gestures). The entire script is enacted in such a way that the inner meaning of the text and subtext and their connotation are brought out to the audience. Therefore, here actor is the confronter and interpreter of the text.

Both the texts of *Melatur bhagavata mela* and *Kuchipudi bhagavatam* are written in Telugu. Some actors do not speak. Instead, they interpret the slokas which are sung by the vocalists and actor, expressing it by hand gestures, facial expression, and dance movement (figs 4.6 to 4.11). But in the case of Hiranyakaspu and Prahalda, dramatic discourse is very much present. For instance, in *Prahalada Charitam* the vocalist who sits on the left side of **the** acting space sing in classical ragas to guide the performers (figs 3.8 and 3.10b). Since *Vacchikabhinaya* is also present, the actors concentrate on other modes of acting beside

*Angika*. Here the actor performs what is sung by the vocalist with *mudras* (hand gestures), facial expressions and body movements. The vocalist continues singing with the actor until he finishes his act, without breaking dramatic speech. The actor gets maximum freedom to pursue his ideas without breaking the continuation of the score. This style of acting is called spontaneous acting or *Manodharmabhinaya*. This style of acting is found in all *bhāgavatha* performance of Andhra Pradesh. About *Manodharmabhinaya*, observing about Kathakali performance, Bharata Iyer says:

Another feature welcomed in an actor and considered a distinction, nay even a (sic) necessary quality, in manodharma (imaginative faculty and its appropriate application). The actor who does not possess manodharma, which is a reflection or measure of his intellectual refinement, has not attained maturity. On the Kathakali stage the actor is given ample opportunities to display his skill and imaginative faculties. By subtle and pleasing variations, the accomplished actor makes the presentation of the same thing ever fresh. The actor with manodharma adds to the common stock which is transmitted to his students in pillary succession. He is expected to enrich his presentation by supplementing the *text*...., some times the text may indicate the line to be pursued, as when, *it contains* an allusion. Similarly, when the text refers to a situation or a scene such as festival, assembly of devas, royal wedding, forest, the celestial city of Indira, a lake, an ocean, the Himalayas etc., the actor would describe these according to his own imaginative capacity, or by an appropriate use of descriptions by gifted poets, which is again, a measure of his refinement or cultural tastes. Such occasions are also utilized to employ the actor's sense of humor and wit to the utmost effect, provided the context permits (quoted in George 1992:97-98).

Iyer's observation rightly reflects even in the case of *bhāgavathams*. To show their mastery, some actor, in *bhāgavathams* interpolate ideas from great masters/masterpieces of literature into the performance text. In the words of Vedantam Satyanaryana Sarna, "*Manodharma* is necessary to change literary text into the performance text effectively. It is an



imaginative house full of the described culture"(personal communication). Even in modern performances *manodharma* is very competitive; thus the performance reaches the highest watermark. Hence the actor uses the text as a starting point of performance in the *bhagavatas* of Andhra Pradesh. In this context, the transformation of dramatic text into the performance text is the primary concern of the bhagavata performance theory and practice. The *bhagavata* performances are more concerned with the fashioning of the performance text, "The factors and elements involved in realizing the performance text are the highly evolved and codified art of actor, theatrical space and its conventions, the whole scheme of stylization, and a set of conventions for treating the text" (Awasthi 1985:90). Strictly speaking, the Indian theatrical performances have great tendency to cultivate techniques and devices to develop rules and procedures for the transformation of the text into performance. While elaborating on the transformation of verbal text into stage actions, Awasthi writes:

The rich poetic text of the traditional plays dealing with the epic and mythic material itself involves not only linguistic, but also literary and cultural codes, and presents a network of verbal signs. In performance another network of verbal signs is added to the words. These involve recitation and singing of the text, codified movements and hand gestures, stylized costumes, symbolic make-up, head-dress and masks, ritualistic opening and concluding procedures; each of these with its own system of codes. In most of the highly developed performance forms, the staging signs are multiplied and their impact maximised. In achieving this the full potential of the verbal signs is exploited. In this transformational operation, the verbal sign of the text when enriched with the staging signs undergo together a double shift in function; from sign to referent, and from referent to new signs (Awasthi 1987: N.page).

#### 4.7. TOPOGRAPHY

Topology is the study of space. Space is one of the fundamental aspects in semiotic studies. It explores the proxemics and kinesics for an elaborate performance under the

cultural unit; if theatre is an alliance of the symbols, semiotics is its communicative and non - communication channels. It is true that Western theatre (modern theatre) has legitimately recommended linguistic and symbolic media of presentation during the modern age. Whereas Eastern theatre extremely supports the semiotic medium in addition to verbal language and symbolic expressions. This is a unique feature of Eastern theatre, which has played a vital role in the performance realm. An actor's body flexibility, bending nature and sign system convey a more effective meaning than as in the Western theatre. Directly or indirectly, semiotic proximity has become popular to analyse the spatial concept both in the West and in the East.

#### **4.7(a). *Topography as Ideology***

If space is coined as ideology, topoanalysis will become the mode of analysis of physical space. It is a term used in mathematics and physics. It has been employed even in cultural studies, philosophy, sociology and psychology. Survin viewed space as a "qualitative ensemble whose attributes signify different ideological ways of envisaging conceivable societal relations" (Suvin 1984:5).

Space is neutral. It is heterogeneous. It has limits. Survin distinguishes three types of space. The first is the topological or logical space. It is the space of logical relationship, semantically or mathematically stated. There are three kinds of spaces, topological space or logical space; abstract space; and empirical space (Suvin 1984). These three different spaces have different levels of meaning- imaginary space and social space. These spaces were explored by many directors in their respective theatre for empirical purpose in the West.

#### **4.7(b). *Anti - Illusionistic Space***

Schechner's environmental theatre explored the spatial concept with performance group. In his Performance theory and environmental theatre and in the second, third and fourth axioms of the environmental theatre he says, "All the space is used for audience", "the theatrical event can take place either in a totally transformed space or in a found space; and

focus is flexible and variable" (Schechner 1968b:41-64). While elaborating these theories in the light of spatial concepts, he opposed proscenium architecture and says:

Have you ever thought how *stupid* the proscenium theatre is architecturally? Starts with the auditorium, the 'house'. A silly name for row after row of regularly arranged seats- little properties that spectators rent for a few hours. Nothing here of the freedom of arrangement in a house where people live-and can push the furniture around. And most of the places in the 'house' are disadvantageous for seeing or hearing. The first few rows are so close that the actors - in their efforts to project to the back and up to the balconies - spit all over you; the seats to the side give a fun-house mirror view of stage, all pulled out of proportion; the seats at all back of the orchestra under the balcony are claustrophobic and acoustically murder; the view from the second balcony makes the stage look like a flea circus. Only a few seats in the orchestra, mezzanine, and the first balcony offer anything like a pleasing view of the stage. But this is no surprise. The proscenium theatre was organically designed to emphasize differences in class and wealth. It was meant to have very good seats, medium seats, poor seats and very bad seats.

When people come late or leave early, they all but step on you, push their asses in your face, and disturb whole rows of spectators. There is no chance to readjust your body, take a seventh-inning stretch, or extend your arms. During intermission everyone runs to the lobby to gobble food, drink, smoke, talk. Intermission is just about the only human thing on. Also, of course, to see who's here- which undeniably is one of theatre's chiefest and oldest joys. Not just to look at or for famous people- but to look over the crowd, see who's out with you this evening. This looking is impossible in the darkened house that cruelly makes you focus straight ahead, as in church or at school, at a performance that, finally, may not interest you at all. The worst thing about the 'house' is that imprisons you away from the stage where there are many interesting things to see if you were only

allowed. What's visible of the stage from the house is only a fraction of its total area and volume. For me the wonderful direction is up. To gaze up into the flies through rods and curtains and lights and ropes and catwalks and galleries into the immense space....

So the proscenium stage is a focused space surrounded on every side by other spaces attending on the stage like on old queen. How mean that audience should be exiled from this royal realm of magic. Such exclusion is pitiable, cheap, unfair and unnecessary (Schechner 1983:80-1).

According to him, proscenium theatre is a prison. It keeps the audience away from many interesting things, which audiences need. The proscenium space presents illusion as reality among the audiences. In this aesthetics, everything is pre-determined structurally. It declares a static culture. It shows difference in class and wealth. Those who are rich enough to afford money can get very good seats in the front rows and the poor get back seats. However, there are scholars who support proscenium theatre. Murry (1984) argued in its favor and opposed Schechner's spatial concept. According to him, ...“the proscenium's purpose was not to keep the spectator at a distance from the performance. Rather it reinscribed performance in the space of spectatorship. The proscenium arch presented for the spectator a field of scenic perspective limited to the sight of the prince seated in the position of perfect perspective vision. The spectators surrounding the prince could only imagine the perfect scenic vision as the prince must have been seeing it. Consequently, the function of the proscenium performance in its historically most political moment was not a distance of **frontalism** but the displacement of the vision from stage to hall. There in the space of the audience, spectators performed the symbolic representation of perspective as they imagine how it looked from the (phantasmic) eyes of the prince... In this respect, frontalism- whether the image of the stage framed by the proscenium or the visage of the prince- provided a vivid representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their conditions of **existence**” (Ibid.:96)

Most of the theatres constructed in the 20th century are proscenium in their structure. And these theatre space concepts reflect the feudal/bourgeois society. One of the intention of avant-garde movement was to reject the spatial notions of the proscenium structure. And the net result was the formation of theatre in the arena structure or taking theatre away from closed theatre, which is closer to pre-dramatic ritual performance spatial concepts of ancient society.

Artaud envisaged of the stage and auditorium and replaced them by a single vision, without partition or barrier of any kind. A direct communication is established between the spectator and the spectacle between the actors and spectators, from the fact that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it. He did not give any philosophical or ideological interpretation to the use of space. Grotowski resigned from the stage-and-auditorium plant. For each of his productions, a new space is designed for the actors and spectators in order to make infinite variations in the performer-audience relationship.

Happening is the foremost movement that imitated the rejection of the aesthetics and set notions propagating the proscenium theatre. Instead of conventional spaces, Cage and Kaprow selected public places, streets and side walls for the enactment of Happenings, before an unpolished audience. Street theatre and Gurilla theatre followed the tradition of Happenings.

The offshoot of proscenium theatre in Schechner theatre and the creation of one common space to performer and audience is did not understand by the above scholar. His intention to make a shared experience as in the pre-dramatic rituals of ancient society (elaborated in chapter v) is not properly understood by Murry. Schechner's attempt is to get back the past days, but it is difficult because the present society does not have a shared and religious/social belief on rituals. It is impossible to make a shared experience. Nevertheless, his approach was considerable and reasonable according to the Western situation during that period.

#### 4.8. BHARATA'S SPATIAL CONCEPT IN NATYA SASTRA

Bharata in his book *Natya Sastra*, gave a lengthy description of three types of theatre, designed by the celestial architect Visvakarma as directed by him. They are *Vikrishta* (rectangular), *Chaturastra* (square), and *Tryastra* (triangular). These three main types have been sub-divided into three categories as *Jyeeetha* (large), *Madhyama* (medium) and *Avara* (small). The measurements are given below (Rao 1964:116):

Rectangula	large	162' x 81
	medium	96' x 48'
	small	48' x 24'
Square	large	162' side
	medium	96' side
	small	48' side
Triangular	large	162' side
	medium	96' side
	small	48' side

( after Rao, 1967: 116)

These nine types of theatre should have exact measurements as specified above. The large sized theatre is intended for the gods, the medium sized for the kings and the small sized for the others. The medium theatre is the ideal one where speech and music have good audibility, and facial expressions and eye movements have good visibility.

##### 4.8(a) Medium-Sized Rectangular Theatre

The structure of a medium sized rectangular theatre is as follows. The rectangle thus marked out should have a length of 96' and width of 48'. This rectangle is divided equally into two squares, each 48'x 48'. The western part is horizontally divided into two equal parts each measuring 24' x 48'. The rear part of this rectangle forms the *neepathya griha* or

the green room and the front part is a passage from the stage. The stage is again equally divided horizontally to form two rectangles of 12' x 48'. A raised platform measuring 12' x 12' is centered in the rear half and is called the *ranga Siirsha*. The front half of the stage is called the *ranga pitha* or the acting area, with a proscenium opening 24' wide 12' deep with the two —it *mattavaaraniis* or vestibules measuring 12' x 12' on either side of the floor. These also serve as the wing -space. On either side of the *rang sirsha* there are entrances from the green rooms, through which the actors and actresses enter, after completing their make-up and costumes and wait for their entry onto the stage. On either side of the *ranga piitha* or the acting area, *mattavaaraniis* or vestibula are constructed. They should be at a height of 1 1/2 *hastas* or 27' from the level of the auditorium and level with the acting area. The *rang Sirisha* is intended for the vocalists and instrumentalists and should be filled with black cotton soil and be perfectly level. *Shadaaruka* or six-pillar wooden design should be constructed behind the *rang siirsha* and a provision has to be made for a *yavanikaa* or backdrop coinciding with the back line of the *matta vaaranis*. The wood work used in the construction of theatre should have decorative designs.

The seating gallery stands 12' away from the stage. The first step of the 24' wide gallery is 18' high from the floor of the *ranga mandapa* or the auditorium. The rises thereafter are 9' high and the treads are 18" broad. Thus there will be 24 rows seats 18 with in each row. Hence the total accommodation will be 432 seats.

The topmost seats in the gallery will be 18'-19" high. The top-line of the proscenium may be surmised to be 14'-3" high from the ground level considering the height of the proscenium opening to be 8 *hastas* or 12' ensuring perfect visibility of whatever is happening in any part of the acting area (Rao 117-19). All Indian classical theatres strictly adhere to the above principles of *Natyasastra*. Truly speaking, Andhra Pradesh did not construct a theatre as mentioned in *Natya Sastra*. Nevertheless, *Kuchipudi bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavata Mela* structurally imitate the Sanskrit architecture superficially. Spatial concept of the above theatre is not important because performance can be done on any available space in the village like

*Toorpu bhdgavatham* or even *chindu bhāgavatham*. Because of open air performances, space is not marked it is flexible and variable.

#### 4.9. PROXEMICS

**Proxemics** is the science which deals with the study of use of space. According to Hall, "man's use of space in his architectural, domestic, urban, work place and aesthetic activities is neither causal nor merely functional but represents a semiotically loaded choice subject to powerful rules which generate a range of (connotative) cultural units" ( quoted in Elam 1980:62). Further, he explored three proxemic syntactic systems to liberate boundaries between units. He termed them as fixed-feature space, semi - fixed feature, and the informal respectively. "Fixed feature space involves, broadly, static architectural configurations. In the theatre it will relate chiefly to the playhouse itself and, informal theatres (opera houses, proscenium arch theatres etc.), to the shapes and dimensions of stage and auditorium. Semi - fixed feature space concerns such movable but non - dynamic objects as furniture, and so in theatrical terms involves the set, auxiliary factors like lighting; and in informal theatrical spaces, stage and auditorium arrangements. The third proxemics mode, informal space, has its units the ever - shifting relations of proximity and distance between individuals, thus applying, in the theatre, to actor - actor, actor - spectator and spectator - spectator interplay" (Ibid.:62-63). These three proxemic modalities are usually operative in theatre performance history, and marked by shifts in dominance by one or other of the classes. The nineteenth century ideal of spatial organization in the playhouse is a maximum of grandiosity and fixity which results in the maximum formality in the theatre. Elam admits that "The center of theatrical transaction has become, during this century and particularly in recent decades, less and absolute, stage-auditorium divide than a flexible and occasionally, unpredictable manipulation of body-to-body space (for example in theatres of Beck and Schechner). This movement towards the opening up and loosening of proxemic relations in performance, in order to escape from the tyranny of architectonic grandeur and its aesthetic and ideological implications, looks back to earlier and non-institutional forms of performance, where fixed



feature space was either nonexistent, as in the medieval mystery cycles, or secondary to semi-fixed and informal space, as in the medieval theatre-in-the-round, where actors descended into the platea to form an acting area cleared for the nonce, of spectators" (Ibid.:63-64).

Another American psychiatrist Humphry Osmond has provided an exemplary instance of informal theatre. He called it sociopetal space and sociofugal space. Sociopetality comes under informal theatre where actor and audience are not segregated. Medieval and Renaissance theatre, folk theatre and 'poor' theatre has explored the cohesion of actor-audience for the better spectacle. Whereas most of the formal theatres tend towards sociofugality where actor-actor cohesion is negligible in the architectural unit of the auditorium. Therefore created, "the spectators has his own a well-marked private space, individual seats, and relative immunity from physical contact with his fellows (and even from seeing them). The result is to emphasize personal rather than social perception and response, to introduce a form of 'privacy' within an experience which is collective in origin" (Ibid.:64-65). Out of the above three proxemic modalities, informal proxemics has given prior importance to theatrical semiotics, that is dynamic spatial relations of the performance and also accessible analysis meaning interpersonal distance and determining the semantic units of performance. These kinds of proxemic exercises had been tried in Euro-American experimental theatre since 1960 onwards. "Proxemics research has directly influenced the work of such American directors as Richard Schechner and Scott Burton, who, instead of relying on their directorial instinct for spatial meanings, have applied certain scientific data to their representations" (Ibid.:66-67).

Traditional *bhāgavata* theatre purely follows a set norms of proxemics modalities. In *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* and *Melattur bhdgavata mela*, performance space itself allowed definite portions to vocalists, musicians, even stage manager (see video tape). Every character relation to one another is clearly seen with a definite spatial distance according to relationship with the characters. For instance, *Prahalada charitam* of *Melattur bhagavata mela* is closely associated with proximity. In the case of *Bhāmā Kaldpam* psychological proximity is very much found during the performance. Without the awareness of proxemics, the *norm-*

s and modalities are traditionally inspired through the cultural code of the society and is transmitted from one generation to another generation without breaking the score.

#### **4.10. SPATIAL CONCEPT OF BHAGAVATHAMS**

Social space and life space that existed in society may not create the spatial concepts of *bhagavathas* of Andhra Pradesh. The *bhagavata* performances are primarily temple-based ritual performances. The space of the performance was assigned to a community. Each section of the audience of a particular *bhagavata* was conceptually assigned to a certain community based on the social hierarchy. It is considered only as physical space. But mental space is quite unique in all *bhagavata* performances. In traditional *bhagavata* performances, no scenery is used during the performance on the stage. They utilize all the available space and also depend on some simple stage devices. In these performances, scenery is imaginary. Without any artificial scenery they can create scenes on the stage. This concept has been extended in all *bhagavatha* performances (figs 4.6 to 4.12).

In traditional theatre, using of informal, ordinary space is common rather than fixed and special space (figs 4.13 and 4.14). This is one of the most dynamic aspects of theatrical discourse. The use of space always has relationship with the movement of the actor's body on the stage and to the spectator.

The properties that are used in *bhagavata* performance are illusory. For instance, the chair used in *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* and *bhagavata mela* is a normal wooden/steel chair, but it symbolizes the king's palace in the episode (figs 4.15 and 4.16). According to situation they used the chair and at other times it is removed from the acting space. Transformation of physical space into imaginary space is quite common in *Kuchipudi bhagavatam* and *bhagavata mela* performances. In contrast, *Toorpu bhdgavatham* and *Chindu bhāgavatham* use none of the stage device at all during the performance. Thus without using any scenography, fictitious space can be created in a traditional *bhagavatha* performance.

*Bhagavatha* performances are based on the ritual act, thus they have a ritual attitude to the entire performance score. Most of these performances are traditionally staged during the time of fairs and festivals of the village. It has a traditional bondage and belief to perform rituals at the performance space at the commencement of a festival. This ritual is observed in all *bhāgavata* performances. After the commencement of the festival the actors visit the performance space and perform the rituals. Thus the space is sanctified. After the pooja is over, then they erect the stage with the usual decoration with fruit bearing plantain trees and tender coconut leaves. The audience are used to sitting on the bare floor or on the chairs (figs 4.17 and 4.18). No permanent seats are seen in any of these *bhāgavath* was performances.

Till recently, *bhḡgavathams* (Kuchipudi bhagavatham, Toorpu bhagavatham and *Chindu bhḡgavatham* )were performed outside the temple or in the temple premises, but now they are performed at any space because of the availability of sponsors.

Classical theatre performances, cover all aspects of theatre - dramatic speech, movement, gestures, costumes, make-up and music. *Kuchipudi bhḡgavatam* and *Bhḡgavata mela* vividly express the conventionality of make-up, gesture, costumes and the whole set of convention- s operating within the overall aesthetic scheme of stylization. In these performances, the action is delimited to any defined physical space. If the situation requires, the stage expands to the auditorium and beyond. For instance, in *bhḡgavata* mela performance, Hiranya Kashyupa leaves the stage and comes into the midst of audience, when Lord **Narashimha** comes out of the pillar and appear on the stage in *Prahalada Natakam* (fig 5.8). In the words of Natarajan, "The Hiranya kasyupu entrance from the audience is to explore the participation with *Sahurudaya prekshaka* and avoid societal space and to neglect the physical distance of stage" (personal communication). Whereas in *Kuchipudi bh/-agavatham*, the expansion of acting space is not found in *Prahalda Natakam*. The spatial experience can be noticed through psychological space of audience. According to Vedantam Satyanaryana Sharma, "The traditional *Kuchipudi bhḡgavatam* performances during the yester years have

the participation of the actors with the audience and expansion of the acting space into the audience space" (personal communication).

In *Toorpu bhagavatam* and *Chindu bhdgavatham* (traditional and folk theatre) the expansion of space is quite common (fig 5.5). Since the performance obtains during the festival season, both audience and actors participate in the procession of the village deity. The nature of performance being at ground level with the audience sitting on all sides of the performance space, actors are disengaged from the action and sit, gossip and share with the audience. During the performance, actors take entrance and exit only through the midst of the audience; there is no barrier between the actor and audience. Thus they develop the audience participation more. In traditional and folk theatre the actor is a member of the community with his own vocation, performance is being a seasonal and a part - time activity or maybe a full time activity. These performances are often inherited, and family based. They may be carpenters, farmers, or landlords etc. All these performances are part and parcel of the society either directly or indirectly. Spectators of all traditional performances know their actors well. Transformation of the actor is minimal.

Most of the traditional theatre performances are open-air events, organized on the level ground, a platform stage, or as a mobile processional spectacle. They are presented in the fields after the harvest, streets, open spaces outside town (often permanently designed for performances), fairs, markets, and - especially for the Ramayana and the Krishna legend shows - temple gardens, river banks, market squares, and courtyards...(Awasthi 1974:36)

Each idea of this lengthy illustration is true to the *bhagavathams* of Andhra Pradesh. As far as the *bhdgavathas* (folk, traditional and classical theatre) are concerned, focus of attention is not a matter of serious concern. The focus of attention falls where the text of the performance and the action take place. Thus the text and space are flexible and variable in accordance with the action of the performers.

#### 4.11. CHANGES IN PERFORMANCE SCORE

The performance score of *bhāgavathams* has undergone many changes from century to century. The existing score of these forms are different from those of olden times. When there were no edits, the text was completely enacted without deleting and altering its environment. Due to external circumstances and social changes, the present generation is forced to change the score either by editing the text or reducing the time. Obviously, when the lengthy text is cut short, the score of the text and performance score change. Moreover, musicians omit certain parts of the text or the actors do not elaborate certain points which are to be elaborated for maintaining the score. The performance score is a significant trait of Oriental theatre which fascinated European directors. The score has been transmitted from generation to generation, with the necessary modifications according to the change of the performance culture and social circumstances.

#### 4.12. CONCLUDING NOTES

The explication of the performance text, spectacular text and space in particular and *bhāgavathas* in general is the fundamental notion of environmental theatre. To Schechner, the fundamental logic of environmental theatre is not the logic of the storytelling (1973a:83). This concept is a modified version of the practice of the text of classical theatre. All folk, traditional and classical theatres do not aim at presenting a story with a plot, theme, and structure, but emphasis on the mode of presentation of the story. In case of Western experimental theatre, it is the director who confronts the script for making better performance score, whereas in *bhāgavathams* actors confront with the text within the given innate qualitative of the text. Performance score of the traditional text is conceptually set for being enacted in a given space. When the definite space changes, the text also changes. Each society has its own spatial concept. In a static and secular space the space is delimited by cultural codes in every unit of human behavior as in *bhāgavathams*. In *bhāgavathams*, the intention behind the one space common to performer and audience is to make a shared experience as in the pre-dramatic ritual society. Because the present society in the West does not have a shared

religious and social belief based on rituals, it is impossible to make a shared experience. This concept is totally explored by the *bhagavatha* performances of Andhra Pradesh. The next chapter deals with aspects of actor - audience participation in *bhagavathams* particularly and superficially western environmental theatre.

## CHAPTER - V

# CHAPTER V

## ACTOR - AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

This chapter explicates the actor-audience participation from the viewpoint of different theories of the west, Environmental theatre concept and its relevance in the *bhḍgavatha* performances of Andhra Pradesh. The basic aim of audience participation is to create a shared experience between participants and performers as in the ritual performances of aboriginal culture. The task has become a serious matter during the postmodern age in theatre performance realm.

Theatre is an experience not only for those who act in it but also for those who see it. It is like other experiences in daily life- like men falling in love with beautiful women, attending a cricket match, reading a favorite writer a novel or a books and even attending festival ritual etc., . All the above instances require personal presence and each event changes **from** moment to moment as we pass by or encounter series of shifting impressions. Jones, an American critic and scenic designer, presented it in a moderate manner, “All that has ever been is in this moment; all that will be is in this moment. Both are meeting in one live flame, in this unique instant of time. This is Drama; this is theatre- to be aware of the new” (quoted in Wilson 1976:2-3).

In the west, teatrologists from Arataud to Schechner explored actor - audience relationship and have come out with successful theories which have rejuvenated the Euro - American theatre. Actor - audience relationship (Kirby 1969; Hanna 1983; Sechechner 1971b) was a novel concept in 1968 onward for avant - garde theatrical movement, but now it occupies common place.

### 5.1. ACTOR - AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP: A DISCOURSE

**Styan**, in his book *The Elements of Drama* (1985:231-255) gives an analysis of audience participation in the dramatic text and performance. According to him, every suggestion



on the stage/text makes a different impression among the audience/reader from time to time. "The dramatist will always be asking himself how imaginatively, emotionally or intellectually he can take him, and to what depth he dare explore. Audience participation is a problem envisaged in the play's inception"(Ibid.:236). Where as Bertolt Brecht's idea is that impressions created by suggestions may help the audience to identify themselves with the actor on the stage, resulting in *Katharsis*. The function of epic theatre is to detach such identification and alienate the audience from the action. He uses audience participation as a device to communicate and demystify the theatre and thus to achieve the alienation effect (Ibid.:236). The above work shows that audience participation has become a serious matter in Euro-America. It is used simultaneously as an inclusive and exclusive element in a performance. Awasthi (1960) stated, "Some other minor conventions are the enactment of the scenes in the midst of the audience for achieving a closer contact with the people or for producing a greater effect; improvization by the actors, both in the spoken word and in dramatic action, repetition of speeches in several styles and patterns and addressing them directly to the audience. Carrying to the acting area some essential properties by the actors themselves in full view of the audience is also common" (Ibid.:21).

## 5.2. WESTERN THEORIES ON ACTOR - AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION AND RELATIONSHIP

### 5.2(a). *Spectatorship*

Popovici in his article *Is the Stage - Audience Relationship : A Form of Dialogue* (1984), writes, "From the spectator's point of view, the performance is everything offered to the eye" (Ibid.:115). Whatever is offered to the eye has not only an objective and non - mediated character but also a semiotic character, inner structure, and also pragmatic significance. This means that everything in the performance is a presence in itself and the representation of something else. Therefore, the spectator sees and hears only a part of what he has to understand. Marinis (1976,1983, 1987) suggested that, "we can speak of this dramaturgy of the spectator in two ways, both of which are already grammatically present in the double

meaning (objective and subjective) of the possessive 'of'.(1) We can speak of a dramaturgy of the spectator in a passive or, more precisely, objective, sense in which we conceive of the audience as a dramaturgical object, a mark or target for the actions/operations of the director, the performers, and, if there is one, the writer (2). We can also speak of dramaturgy of the spectator in an active or subjective sense, referring to the various receptive operations/actions that an audience carries out: perception, interpretation, aesthetic appreciation, memorization, emotive and intellectual response,etc [...]. These operations/actions of the audience's members are to be considered truly dramaturgical (not just metaphorically) since it is only through these actions that the performance text achieves its fullness, becoming realized in all its semantic and communicative potential" (1987:100-1).

#### 5.2(b). *Theatrical Relationship*

The theatrical relationship is the relationship between performance and spectator. It manipulates the actors and audience in definite semiotic strategies. Thus the performance gives rise in each spectator a range of definite transformations both intellectual and emotional. Marinis's opinion about the performer and the spectator is "...the two fundamental and inseparable dimensions (like two sides of a coin) which together constitute the performance event and the 'theatrical relationship' " (Marinis 1987:101). Theatrical relationship is the relation of performance and spectator. It is a manipulation of the audience by the performance. Further he elaborated, "I do not mean manipulation in the ideological sense which the term traditionally implied before its use in semiotics. That is to say, I do not mean to refer exclusively to cases where the deliberate and explicit aim of the producers of a performance is to persuade or seduce. I wish instead to bring to light an essential and intrinsic aspect of the performance/spectator relationship as such" (Ibid.:101-2).

The theatrical relationship demands active cooperation of the spectator. The spectator is a relatively autonomous emotive effect and can only be truly actualized by the audience. According to Bharata's *Natyasastra*, the good *Prekshakas* are "Persons who are undisturbed, clean, imaginative, sympathetic and unbiased" (Appa Rao 1967:130). They do not have any

part to play in the performance except enjoying the emotions evoked by the character on the stage, ultimately participating in the performance.

### 5.2(c). George Mounin Theatre Communication Relationship:

George Mounin, a French linguist in 1969, challenged the classification of performance - spectator bond as a communication relationship. His challenges are based on genuine communication of linguistic exchange. He argues "....in the theatre, where the information - giving process is unidirectional and the participants' roles fixed: 'There is nothing of all this in the theatre, in which the sender - actors remain always such, as do the receiver - spectators' " (Elam 1980:33). He represented his idea with the following equation.



Fig 5.1 Performer-spectator bond equation

(after Elam 1980:33)

Mounin's conception of theatrical performance is a stimulus response model in which one way signals initiate number of more or less autonomous reflexes. Which do not communicate in the same axes. There are several objections made in this model. According to Elam "Mounin's view of the actor-audience transaction appears to be based on the weakest forms of bourgeois spectacle where a passive audience may indeed obediently provide predetermined and automatic responses to a predicable set of signals (many a West End or Broadway comedy has operated successfully on this principle). Not only are the audience's signals, in any vital form of theatre, an essential contribution to the formation and reception of the performance text - and indeed various post - war performers and directors such as Becks and Richard Schechner have extended the bounds of the performance to include the audience explicitly - but the spectator, by virtue of his very patronage of the performance, can be said to *initiate* the communicative circuit"(1980:34).

Franco Ruffni's reply to Mounin's challenge was quoted by Elam (1980) "If the sender and receiver know each other's code, it is not at all necessary, in order for communication to take place, that the two codes coincide, nor that they translate each other's message exactly, nor that the two-way communication occur along the same channel" (Ibid.:34). The challenge thrown by Mounin "should be taken up with care: he furnishes a sober warning regarding the difficulty of defining the actor-audience transaction and, still more, regarding the danger of viewing the performance as a 'language' directly analogous to speech and thus a suitable object for analytic models taken straight from linguistics" (Ibid.:35).

Theatrical communication is based on the performance that brings about the multiplication of communication factors i.e, code and decode, of the consequences of the multiplication of components and systems. It is not possible to talk of a single theatrical message. The spectator will interpret these messages into different components such as theatrical, dramatic and cultural codes at his disposal. These features and inter communication between spectators is one of the major distinguishing feature of live theatre. Barthes cybernetic machine theory is the best example in this regard. His cybernetic theory says "What is theatre? A sort of cybernetic machine. When not working, this machine is hidden behind a curtain; but as soon as it is revealed it begins to transmit a certain number of messages in your direction. These messages are distinctive in that they are simultaneous and yet have different rhythms. At every point in a performance you are receiving (at the same second) six or seven items of information (from the scenery,the costuming, the lighting, the position of the actors, their gestures, their modes of playing,their language), but some of these items remain fixed (this is true to scenery) while others change (speech and gestures)" (Barthes 1974:29).

Above cybernetic theory of Barthes is purely about the system of proscenium theatre communication which preserves the concept of **mystified** theatre. But Schechner's demystified environmental theatre is a cybernetic machine not hidden in any curtain - which transmits a certain number of messages simultaneously from beginning to end. The cybernetic theory is an example of linguistic/semiotic learning that only deals with the scientific study of the

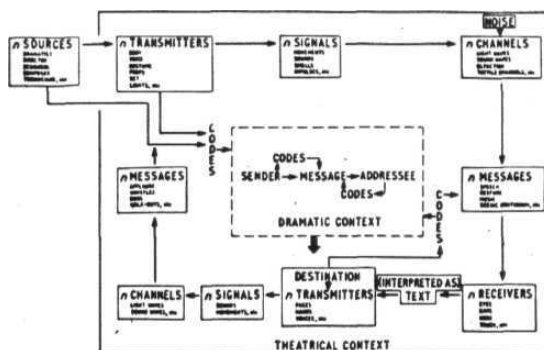


Fig 5.2 A Simplified Theatrical Communication Model  
(after Elam 1980:38)

communicative efficacy of an enactment. He tried to prove in his 'six axioms' of Environmental theatre, **"All production speak their own language"**. This theory shows total rejection of Proscenium theatre and its communication process and theatrical language. He created his **own** theatrical language adopted from Indian theatre under the four heads: Suprasegmental, Paralinguistics, Proxemics, Kinesics.

The actor - spectator transaction within the theatrical context is mediated by a dramatic context **in** which a fictional speaker addresses a fictional listener. It is this dramatic **communicational** situation which is extended to the spectator and this peculiar obliqueness of the actor-audience relationship must be accounted for in any model (Elam 1980:38). For by the director in any model, a simplified representation of this situation can be seen in his diagram (fig 5.2). This model, "while undoubtedly reductive and mechanistic, serves at least as an emblem of the multi-levelled character of the theatrical **communicational** exchange" (Ibid.:38).

#### 5.2(d). *Taxonomy Of Theatrical Communication*

The concept of communication is fundamental in theatre semiotics. Daniela (1984) writes, **"....the Semiotic of communication has to establish the various parameters which occur in receiving theatrical messages, such as the proxemic ones (audience's front or lateral position that influences the sign selection and combination capacity), Kinesic ones (the variations**

imposed by placing the stage in the middle of the hall or by the actors' coming in and out from the audience) as well as the cultural, ideological and rhetorical ones" (Daniela:72). The **semiotic** modeling of theatrical communication has to provide more than a linguistic description, that means: it has to investigate all the semiotic codes, the merging of visual and auditive iconicity with text symbolism, the specific combinatorics of different sign systems. By its informational polyphony and high sign density, theatre represents a privileged field of semiotic investigation (Ibid.:75). While describing theatrical communication from the viewpoint of Jacobson's communication theory and Peiree's triadic model, he defined semiotically the main non-linguistic sign systems, which are working together in creation of theatrical significances as follows (table 5.1).

Table 5.1  
NON-LINGUISTIC SIGN MODEL

Sign-referent link	Semiotic code	Semiotic level	Semiotic dominant	Communicative function
Iconcity				
Image	set gesture mimicry	SEMANTIC	visual	referential expressive expressive
Diagram	set costume	SEMANTIC	visual	referential referential
Metaphor	mask  music		auditive  metanlinguistic	expressive or Phatic
Indexicality	gestuality kinesics proxemics lighting	PRAGAMATIC	visual	expressive expressive expressive conative
Symbolism	music lighting	SEMANTIC	auditive visual	poetical poetical

(after Daniela 1984:76)

Theatrical communication characterizes plurality of code and sign in semiotic (linguistic: narrative and discursive, and non - linguistic: gesture and musical semiotics, kinesics, proxemics etc.) (Ibid.:72). This system is akin to all classical and semi classical theatres of India.

### **5.2(e). Closed Performances and Open Performances**

Closed performances are genre - based theatres like the political theatre, children's theatre, women's theatre, gay theatre, street theatre, musical dance theatre, mime, and so on. "Closed performance (Marinis 1987:103) anticipate a very precise receiver and demand well - defined types of 'competence' (encyclopedia, ideological etc.)for their 'correct reception'. In these theatres, the performance comes off to the extent that the real audience corresponds to the performance in the derived way.

The other end of the continuum is the open performance. Open performance make a point of addressing itself to a receiver who is neither too precise, nor too clearly defined in terms of their encyclopedia, intertextual or ideological competence (Ibid.: 103). In this kind of theatre, the performance will leave the spectator more or less free, though still deciding the extent to which the freedom ought to be controlled "where it needs to be encouraged, where directed, and where it needs to be transformed into free interpretive speculation" (Eco 1979:58).

Most of the experimented theatres form of historical avant - garde and are based on open performance. Many non - Western theatre traditions have more interpretive freedom to the audience. Classical Indian theatre, Kathakali, Balinese dance - theatre, Kabuki and even the noh play demand varied levels of understanding and enjoyment. Schechner's environmental theatre explored audience - spectator relation on this ground, though environmental performance are intended to make shared experience between the performer and participants as in the **pre-dramatic** rituals.

### 5.3. SCHECHNER'S EXPLORATION OF AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Theatre experimentation period in Euro - America began in the fifties and ended by the mid -seventies. Schechner, in his essay *The Rise and fall of the (American) Avant - Garde*, (1980 ) discussed the history and the reasons for the decline given in detail. Experimental environmental theatre's major attention is to explore actor - audience participation. "Experiments in environmental theatre and in audience participation (even to the dissolution of the audience altogether by Grotowski), have been the major avenues of meta - aesthetic in Euro - American theatre... They are individualistic and modest, but clearly connections can be seen between them and Ramalila and Yogi Bhaer" (Schechner 1983:303).

#### 5.3(a). Audience Participation

Many people think that participation is a new phenomena and it is new to them, even if it is not new to the theatre. The same people consciously or unconsciously participate in saluting, standing for the national anthem at sporting matches, cheering, and agreeing to umpire for a few innings of cricket matches, at market yards etc. "In fact participation in theatrical event is a very old, widespread practice. It has been limited in our culture for several hundred years for a variety of reasons" (Schechner 1971:73). Many in theatre dislike greatly anticipating or accepting a rough or lengthy performance. Thus people rejected participation in theatre, they were even uncomfortable about inclusion of the audience in space because their presence is visible to each other and their deployment an important part of performance.

According to Schechner's "participation means taking part in the play: Dancing, playing a scene with the performers, engaging fellow spectators in conversation as part of the play, removing or exchanging clothing, or any of the many other kinds of physical involvement possible" (Ibid.:73). Theatre is a peak experience, with a speciality to differ from other kinds of life. It comes from it and blends back to it. Thus one should admit that without audience participation no performance is possible.



Participation is a way of trying to humanize relationships between performers and spectators. This process far transcends what goes on in a theatre. But there is no better laboratory for trying out ways of responsibility than in the intense, microcosmic space of a theatre.

The performance - audience relationship is a dialogue. It is true that the performance and spectators are seen from the perspective of inter subjectivity. Without performance - spectator relationship there is no aesthetic nature. Here two partners are involved in the performance i.e performer-spectator. In this enterprise, only one of them takes an active part (actor), the other partner (spectator) is silent. Here actor - spectator relationship comes down to one-way relationship. To separate the audience from the performance is not only an artificial operation but also an error. The performance exists only together with an audience and actors. The audience exists only because he participates in a performance. Thus the performer and audience are both elements in the performance entity.

The theatre event is a set of related transactions. The theatrical event includes audience, performers, text, sensory stimuli, and house personnel. The theatrical event ranges from non - matrix performance to highly formalized traditional theatre. In traditional theatre, all characters are fictional in fictional situations in a fictional world. The spectators and actors do not transact/interact with each other in fictional theatre, instead they keep the social distance.

Schechner's intention is to reject the conventional aesthetic of the fictional theatre and to make a new convention based on various types of sociological transactions. He emphasizes (1968) the primary transactions in a theatrical event that are among performers, among members of the audience, and between performers and audience. To elaborate this...

### *5.3(b). Transactions among Performers*

Transactions among the performers begin during the rehearsals and continue throughout all performances. Schechner rejected the Stanislavsky oriental training system which gives emphasis to smooth transaction among performers. This theory covers the principles and

artistic success of a play which is directly related to the transactions among performers. That is, if transaction among the performers is perfected, the production of the play will be artistically successful.

### 5.3(c). *Transaction among the Audience*

After happenings came to light serious attention was paid the experimental theatre movement. Until then, transaction among the audience was not seriously concerned in the theatre performance. In Happenings and environmental theatre, the audience are invited to participate in the enactment. In the modern realistic proscenium theatre, the audience got special attention. They are treated with royal hospitality in the theatre. In these, theatre has a definite ethics and code of conduct. Audience were allowed to enter and go out at a particular time and are allowed to sit anywhere in their allotted seats. In that situation, there are hardly any chances for interaction during the performance. Scheduler's environmental theatre does not belong to this category and also does not have any such restrictions. Sometimes, it is even impossible to distinguish spectators from performers in his experimental environmental theatre. He says that (1971:74) theatre is a peak of experience and significantly different from other kinds of life. But it is not separate from other kinds of life: It comes from them and blends back into them. To work from this perspective means to accept the audience as a potentially, and to admit that without audience collaboration, no performance is possible . The performers have special training for transactions whereas the spectators attend theatre without any preparations. Such audience are "difficult to mobilize and, once mobilized, even more difficult to control" (Schechner 1968:44).

### 5.3(d). *Transactions Between Performers and Audience*

It is a traditional transaction. Any action on the stage evokes direct reaction among the audience. According to Schechner, "the 'best'<sup>1</sup> audience is one in which harmonic evocations are presented up to, but not beyond, the point where the performers become distracted. The traditional theatre barely explores a part of the full range of audience-performer reactions" (Ibid.: 45).

## 5.4. APPRECIATION OF INDIAN RASA THEORY: SCHECHNER VIEW

In his book *Performance Circumstances from Ramalila to Avant-garde* (1983), Schechner admits that:

...according to the *Natyasastra*-and many Indian performances of today- the enjoyment of the performance is shared between the performers and the spectators, or as I shall say from their point, between the preparers and partakers. *Rasa* happens where the experience of the preparers and partakers meet. Each, using their skills that have to be learned and that are not easy, move towards the other. The experience of the performance is like that of a banquet where the cooks and servers must know how to prepare and serve, but the diner must know how to eat. And, as in Asian banquets in general, there is more food than that can possibly be consumed: a great part of the skill is in knowing how and what to select for any given occasion...A successful performance is one where both the levels of skill (preparers') and understanding (partakers') are high and equal. If the partaker expects more than the preparer can deliver, the performance is inadequate; if the preparer does more than the partaker can savor, the performance is wasted. Low skill matched by low understanding is preferable to an imbalance. Perfect *rasa* is a meeting point at a very high level of preparer and partaker (1983:110-111).

Rasa is the mutuality, sharing, co-creation of preparers and partakers. He further said that both performers and partakers are transported and no one is transformed. With aid of

the diagram (fig 5.3) he depicted his idea:

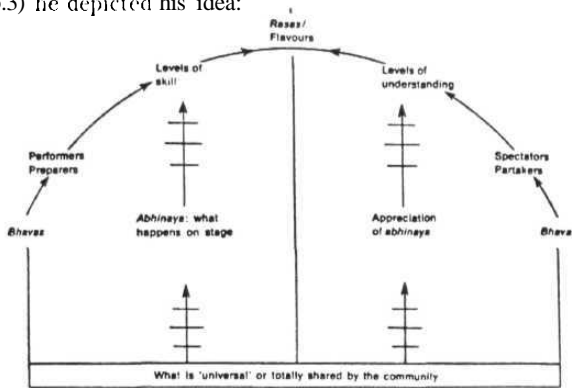


Fig 5.3 Preparer and Partakers relationship according to Naya Sastra  
(after Scheduler 1983:111)

It is this communication between actor and spectators is essential for evoking *rasa*. Even sometimes this communication is broken ,but it does not effect *rasa* much. Strictly speaking all *bhāgavata* performance comes under this category. Structurally, Scheduler borrowed this audience participation concept from Oriental theatre and applied it to occidental experimental theatre and made theories. Elaborate studies and exercises of his experiments were published in his book on Environmental theatre.

## 5.5. INDIAN PERFORMANCE THEORY: ACTOR-AUDIENCE PERCEPTION ACCORDING TO NATYA SASTRA

### 5.5(a). Theory of Rasa

*Rasa* theory is the backbone of Indian aesthetics. The aesthetic pleasure evoked by the audience through the actor's histrionic expressions and sentiments is called *Rasa*. In *Natyasastra*, Bharata dedicated IV & V chapters to *rasa* and *bhava*. He narrated beautiful episodes to trace the origin of *natya veda* in chapter II.

At the beginning of *treetaayuga*, people were leading mixed lives full of misery and happiness subjecting themselves to the elemental passions of lust, greed, rancor and misery. This

caused much uneasiness to Indra. So, India and the other gods approached the creator of the universe, and requested him to create the fifth *veda*. Through his meditation, Brahma created the fifth *veda* called *natya veda*. He taught *natya veda* to Bharata as desired by Indra. With his disciples, Bharata produced his first production *asura paraajaya*. This production was disturbed by the demons during the performance and they who disappeared from the audience under the leadership of Viruupaaksha. Indra got angry for the disturbance and appraised Brahma. Then Brahma ordered Visavakarma, a celestial architect, to construct *natya griha* or theatre and he constructed theatre. Later, Brahma enquired the cause of disturbance and Viruupaaksha, accused him of creating *natya veda* for the enjoyment of gods and for insulting demons. Brahma explained to him the purpose of creation of *natya veda*- "I have created *natya veda* to represent the actions, ideologies and genealogies of both the gods and demons" (Appa Rao 1967:10). It does not stop with narrating the story of either the demons or gods. It presents the activities of gods, demons, kings, saints and commonmen and therefore it is to be called *trailokyaanukarana*- imitation of the happenings in the three worlds. And also presents the nature of the world in all its aspects with its pleasures and pains through the medium of *abhinaya*- histrionic expressions. It promotes strength and peace of mind and gives enjoyment to all, besides giving them information.

The various actions performed will be instructive to one and all, creating *rasa* through the media of *bhava* and emotions. It gives relief to those who are in grief, enlivens others and finally provides reputation to those who enact the play. The ultimate aim of this performance is to evoke *rasa* among actors and audience.

*Rasa* theory has a strong performance orientation. It takes into account the performer - spectator interactions and their mutual reciprocal relationship. It supports both actor - audience to explicate pleasure. In chapter V Bharata clearly mentioned that *rasas* are produced in the minds of sympathetic audience as a result of the configurations of **determinants**, **consequents** and **transitory emotions** of actors.

### 5.5(b). *Qualifications for Audience*

According to *rasa* theory - *rasa* is not experienced by all, only few people can have it. It also stated that the spectator's qualities viz. a clear mind, unadulterated, by unbiased thoughts should sympathetically direct towards witnessing the performance. These spectators are called *Sahridayas*- the refined or *sympathetic*. The *Sahridayas* are those who are mentally prepared to receive emotions expressed by the actors. When a *Sahridaya* experiences the intensity of the emotions, he ultimately forgets himself. In this explicit experience, he overcomes his own personality and completely identifies himself with the actual state of the determinants. This state is called *Saadhaaraniikarana* or universalization. It is only possible with the *sahridaya* - spectator, who is quick in perception and responsive to emotions created by the actors. In a true sense, this is the climax in the audience mind, filled with happiness. This state of *rasa* experience is transcendental and audiences attain eternal or supreme bliss. The same cause affects the actor too when the spectator appreciates through his response. Thus participation occurs both in actors and in audience according to Indian aesthetics.

*Natyasastra* enumerated eight *rasas*. Those are *Sringara* (amorous); *Haasya* (humorous); *Karuna* (pathetic); *Raudra* (furious); *Vira* (valorous); *Bhayaanaka* (horrific); *Bibhatsa* (repugnant) and *Adbhuta* (wondrous). The ninth *rasa santa* was added later (fig 5.4). The *rasas* are evoked by the actors to communicate the messages in the text to the audience. Thus, these *rasas* are primarily concerned in the Indian situation. It is a **culminative** state produced by various movements, gestures and emotions embedded in the actions of the play. It depends on the audience attitude and receptive power and the depth of their emotional experience. In the strict sense, the evocation and enjoyment of *rasa* is directly related to the receptive capacity of the spectator.

### 5.5(c). *Rasa Theory and Classical Theatre Performances*

*Rasa* theory is the monopoly of Indian classical performances and the attempt to transplant it into any other tradition in the conceptual or structural level, has not succeeded so far. It requires a long period of training for actors to produce *rasas*, and to appreciate them, also it requires a long period of training. The audience is specially trained to enjoy classical arts from childhood onwards. Since *Natya* is a composite art, the power of reception varies from individual to individual. Mastery of all fine arts is essential for full enjoyment of a performance in its *mise-en-scene*. Strictly speaking, classical theatre follows Bharata's instructions mentioned in *Natyasastra*. Therefore it is meant for highly educated people in the society, who know the *sanskrit* language and semiotics of *Natyasastra*. Such audience only can anticipate and participate in the classical theatre performance.

### 5.6. ACTOR - AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: REQUIREMENT IN BHAGAVATHAMS

Actor-audience participation in *bhāgavathams* is not common like in other theatre forms of India. It purely depends on the nature and environment of the performances. *Bhāgavata* performances are a part and parcel of society. The performance acts as a shaman and is treated as a therapy in a clinical sense. For instance, in *Prahalada charitham* of *Melattur bhāgavata mela*, When Lord Laxminarshimha appears on stage, all the spectators/devotees stand up and worship with devotion (fig 5.5). In a theological sense, the characters are considered the incarnation of the transcendal god. It is pure belief of the spectator/devotees who feel that He will save them from all the worldly problems. There was many an occasion when people of the audience approached god and touched his feet physically. In another instance, *Yellama vesham* in *Chindu bhagavatham* is a local deity. Before the performance and during the performance all actors and spectator worship her with devotion. Nataraja Ramakrishna was present during one of the performances, worshipping *Yellamma* deity (fig 5.6). *Bhāmā Kalāpam* of *Toorpu bhagavatham* is intended to satisfy the village deity Paidy thalli and is performed during festivals during major disasters in the village such as contagious dis-

eases, droughts or floods; the *bhagavatham* is enacted to please such powers and thus escape **from** disasters. Like this there are many incidents that can be observed in *bhagavathams*. Therefore it is deep-rooted faith in the central motif that functions therapeutically. This spiritual communication channel between performer and participants is almost equal to the communication between god and devotees. It is very much liked to religious canons. **It is true that when** people do not believe in a super human power, spiritual communication and participation is not possible.

In each region of Andhra, *bhagavata* performances vary according to geographical, social and cultural modes. The performance tradition also differs from one place to another. By and large, all *bhagavata* performances of Andhra are treated as divine bliss. On every occasion of major festivals, ceremonies and marriages these performances are enacted in villages. It underlies the customs and beliefs of the people. Thus *bhagavata* performances not only serve ritual, and religious causes, but also aesthetically they are very dominant.

## **5.7. IN SEARCH OF ACTOR-AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:**

### *5.7(a). Kuchipudi bhagavatham and Melattur bhagavatha mela*

In the true sense, there is no pure classical theatre (play house) like *Kudiyattam* of Kerala that followed pure *Natyasastra* treatise in Andhra Pradesh. Nevertheless, one can trace some major characteristic features from *Natyasastra*. For instance, *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* and *Melattur bhagavata mela* strictly follow the *Natyasastra* in terms of *abhinaya* part. Therefore, *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* and *Melattur bhagavatham mela* require long periods of training for both actor and audience to experience *rasa* or emotion. Because both the above *bhagavathams* are rich in **mudras**, gestures, body language and facial expressions, the actor requires intensive training for about 5 to 6 years to fulfill the above requirements. If the same audience repeatedly watches the performance, they can understand the **emotions(rasa)** and **abhinaya** of **the** actor.



### 5.7(b). *Toorpu bhāgavatham* and *Chindu bhāgavatham*

*Toorpu bhagavatham*, *Chindu bhagavatham* are dominant in drama sequences. Actor - audience participation in both forms varies from one to the other. The performance style of *Toorpu bhagavatham* stands in between classical and folk; it can be treated as traditional theatre. The audience participation is not so as in *Chindu bhagavatham*. In the literary sense, participation is evoked both ritually and aesthetically. Since these performances are performed by the villagers for the villagers they are shaped in such a way that everybody can enjoy and participate in these performances. More participation is made possible only with the presence of *Vidushaka* (buffoon) (fig 4.11). The *Vidushaka* often tells jokes and interacts with the audience physically. As the entire performance is based on Krishna-satyabham lovelore which is known to them, the audience watch the performance with interest without any disturbance. *Toorpu bhagavatham* is full of musical interludes. In *Bhdmd Kalāpam*, the main mridanga player Dupam Suryalingam while playing the mridangam in between the presented Jatis on the mridangam.(fig 3.4) After that one of the audience got up and offered him Rs. 116/- for his excellence. Sometimes the mridangist can share text with performers. In another incident, in between the scene, *Vidushaka* came from the acting place and asked for a beddi from a spectator and enquire of the impact of the performance. He sat with them for sometime and chit chated and again he resumed his role in the stage. Therefore the entire performance continues very casually with dance, music, jokes and dialogue to elicit participation. In the case of *Chindu bhāgavatham*, the participation is not only elicited through dance, music, jokes and dialogues before utals after the performances and bears some ritual significance.

### 5.8. COMMUNICATION VEHICLE IN BHAGAVATHAMS

Dialogue is one of the most important vehicles in actor - audience communication. In a performance communication, efficacy is directly related to its audience reception. In chemical terminology, it is a reversible reaction, (fig 5.7) other actors communicate to the audience, they respond and send their reactions back in the form of physical and vocal applause.

Actor  $\rightleftarrows$  Audience

Fig 5.7 Actor-Audience Communication Vehicle

Sometimes in traditional and folk theatre (*Toorpu bhdgavatham* and *Chindu bhdgavatham*) they request actors to repeat the dialogues, songs etc., by saying 'once more'.

The above communication channel is common in all *bhdgavathams* of Andhra. Here, the actor's tools are his body, voice and emotions. An intelligent actor uses his body language to produce emotions and expressions. These emotions and expressions directly pass into the audience mind and evoke rasa. For instance, in *Kuchipudi bhdgavatham* and *Melattur bhdgavatha Mela*, actors communicate *abhinaya* through psycho-physical exercise. These psycho-physical actions are called body language. The performer needs to bend his body, eyes and facial expression impressively in order to communicate the text to the audience. This needs perfection and intensive training of both actors and audience in communication vehicle.

Avant-garde teatrologists highly explored body language in their pioneer works. Brecht's epic theatre propagates the concept of new non-verbal theatre language. Walter Benjamin's opinion on this work is, "the gesture is the material and epic theatre its practical utilization"(quoted in Elam 1984:69). Antonin Artaud dreamed of "pure theatrical language" freed from the tyranny of verbal language. A language of sign, gesture and attitudes having an ideographic value as they exist in certain unperturbed pantomimes" (Ibid.:39). All the above directly or indirectly influenced classical Oriental theatre, whereas Schechner's experimental environmental theatre and its open rehearsals, were directly influenced by traditional theatres of India, particularly as one can see, in the *bhdgavathams* of Andhra Pradesh.

## 5.9. TRANSACTION OF BHAGAVATHAMS

In *Natyasastra* there is no direction that exclusively deals with audience participation as it is relevant today, but in Chapter XXXVII there is a reference to the quality of the audience.

In *bhāgavathams*, audience participation can be divided into three components (1). aesthetic participation; (2). ritual participation; (3). Devotional participation. *Bhagavata* performances deal with stories taken from the life history of Sri Krishna, who is considered a personification of God. The stories lay emphasis on his romantic episodes, enacting the relationship between Sri Krishna and his spouse Satyabhama.

Among the *bhāgavatams*, *Kuchipudi bhdgavatham* and *Melattur bhagavata mela* have little variation as far as audience participation is concerned. All *bhdgavathams* are concerned with ritual elements even though the performer and audience belong to two different realms. Some of the scenes in the performance occur in the midst of the audience, enabling participation to take place. For instance, In *Prahalada charitham* of *bhagavata mela* in the last act, Lord Narshimha appears on the stage breaking through the pillar. Hiranyakashipu immediately jumps into the audience (fig 5.8). All the spectators get up and start worshipping Lord Narshimha (fig. 5.5). In *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham*, audience participation is psychological. For instance, in *Bhdmnd Kaldpam* in the first scene, Radha awaits Krishna's arrival (fig 5.9). During the performance Radha will look towards the audience expecting Krishna while the spectators think that Radha is looking at them. In this way, the audience participates in this episode. Besides this, audience also appreciate the actor who portray female character in the performance and act as female (fig 5.10). In *Toorpu bhdgavatam* and *Chindu bhdgavatam* audience participation is very much seen in each episode. Most of the time the spectators get inspired by the performer's actions, dialogues and dances and on many occasion with music. In *Toorpu bhdgavatam* and *Chindu bhdgavatam* the concept of mystification is unknown. The performers, before and after their roles in the play, spend time sitting with the audience to witness the remaining scenes, even sometimes to share jokes with the audience

to make them laugh during the performance (figs 5.10 and 5.12). The symbolic interaction between the performers and participants in these performances happens in the form of a give and take process. Participants even sometimes donate money - usually rupees - to the performers during performance. For instance, in a *Toorpu bhāgavatam* audience impressed by the Satyabhama's action and also **Mridangam players**, offered 116 Rs/- to both the actor and the mridangam artist. In *Toorpu bhdgavatam* and *Chindu bhāgavatam*, Vidushaka uses vulgar colloquial language to elicit more participation. Audience never thinks of it as a disturbance. Rather they participate in the scene.

#### 5.10. PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE

The physical structure of the *bhdgavata* theatre shows that the audience can have direct access to the stage. As there were no permanent fixed seats, the audience and the characters entered the stage through the audience in all *bhāgavathams* during olden days. But now this practice is not in vogue because of the availability of space and socio - cultural barriers. Thus a special entrance path for the actors through the audience is cleared and the characters enter the performance space. This kind of special entrance and the structure of the traditional performing space prove the transaction between performers and audience, and it was common to most of the *bhdgavata* performances.

The more environmental a performance is, the more intense the participation and also transactions in *bhdgavathams*. Schechner observed on Indian Performance, "If some theatres need an audience to hear it, and some need spectators to see it, Indian theatre needs partakers to savour it" (Schechner 1983:110). Though *Kuchipudi bhdgavatam* and *Melattur bhdgavata mela* are considered as classical theatre, and *Toorpu bhdgavatam* and *Chindu bhdgavatam* are considered as traditional and folk theatre, the participation is the same through physical and psychological involvement unlike in the avant - garde theatre experiments. In *Toorpu bhdgavatam* and *Chindu bhdgavatam*, the participation is dominantly through physical and less psychological Unlike in the classical theatre.

## 5.11 PARTICIPATION THROUGH DUPLICITY OF ACTORS

Audience watching a performance of *Bhāmā Kalapam* of *Kuchipudi bhdgavatham* or *Prahaladacharitham* of *Melattur bhgavatha Mela* with their favorite actors is an all time performance in a state of dual perception. For instance, Vedanta Satyanarayana Sharma in Satyabhama role and Natarajan in Lilavathi's (fig 5.9, 5.11) role present a dual perception in the audience's mind. The audience are watching Satyabhama and Lilavathi as characters in the story and also the performances of their favorite actors. Elderly people even post-mortem the interesting episodes and appreciate the roles played by the actors. According to Vedanta Satyanarayana Sharma, "After the *Bhmd Kalapam* performance is over some people (*sahridayas*) came into the green room and hugged me and appreciated my performance, though I was in female costumes and could not remove them until they left me" (personal communication). This duplicity acquires great theatrical effect in the *Ibhagavathams*. Aesthetics of Indian theatre has dealt with this problem of dual perception and actor-role relationship in explaining theatrical communication and perception of theatrical events.

## 5.12. PARTICIPATION THROUGH HUMOROUS SITUATIONS

In *Kuchipudi bhdgavatham*, Madhavi and Madahvudu play humorous roles besides vidushaka (fig 5.13). In *Melattur bhdgavata mela* Katikaran or buffoon provides humor through his external decorations. He creates humor with a large nose, protruding belly and curved stick. His physical appearance creates the humor. When sutradhara provides the lead, the vidushaka disturbs the play with his humorous comments on situations. This kind of role appears in all *bhagavathams* of Andhra, with regional variations in their costumes and external decorations. These characters enter the stage from corners of the performance space any time during the performance. When they feel that the audience needs entertainment, they contradict sutradhara and provide interruption with loose talk, fun, jokes and willful ironic thrusts. All feel that it is part of performance; the audience never gets angry. Rather, they participate in the event. Vidushaka has total liberty to have a direct conversation with the audience and with other actors in the play. He can make fun of anybody including the

main character i.e God, King, Minister, Hero, Heroine etc., he even makes fun of himself. He is to remain alert all through the performance. He should be aware of text to prompt the actors when they miss the episodes or incidents. All through, he keeps the performance lively, eliciting audience participation.

### 5.13. CONCLUDING NOTES

Audience participation in postmodern age is “creation of new kind of space for theatre, a widespread intent” (Schechner 1983:119). In the West, only in the 1960s it has become a novel concept and dominant virtuality of the performance. And its specialty is radically questioned. “The democratizing 'environmental' experiments of that period attempt to replace the illusionistic character of the stage as a 'special place' with a purely informal 'found space', consisting of an impromptu performance area, presented as such rather than as an 'intangible image' ”(Elam 1980: 68-69). Experiments in environmental theatre, and in audience participation have major avenues of meta - aesthetics in Euro - American theatre (Schechner 1983:303).

In the Indian context, audience participation is common from time immemorial time. In the classical theatre, *rasa* is evoked from actor and audience. It strictly adheres to *Natyasastra* tradition. Whereas in traditional and folk theatre it is different according to the form and space. The *bhagavathams* of Andhra Pradesh are the amalgam of classical, traditional and folk theatres. In addition to this, *bhagavathams* favor the devotional and ritual participation as a commune in the society besides its aesthetic participation. Every spectator and performer participates in it as feast. The sole aim of participation in the *bhagavathams* is to create aesthetic as well as meta - physical life.

# CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

Performance studies (Reinelt and Roach 1992:) have recently developed ethnographic and intercultural perspectives on a variety of public events and practices. In the postmodern age, they gained maturity and inspired pluralism. Postmodernism inspired new ways of performance events and created new environments and new thought processes in the theatre performance realm in Euro-America.

Richard Schechner is a pioneer of postmodern studies. He first explored the network of ideas and actions of emerging field of performance studies. His conceptualization of performance studies and performance theory formed the basis for the postmodern approach. To him (Schechner 1988), performance theory is interdisciplinary and intercultural. Postmodernist approach towards theatre demands global vision, taking into consideration text, space and actor-audience participation in the performance realm. It inspired new ways of performance events and created a new climate for the beginning of new thought process in theatre realm ( 1.1). Postmodernist view on theatre performance is thus both an analogy and an approach. It is constructed as a multi disciplinary matrix blending ideas from folklore, anthropology, linguistic, semiotics and psychoanalysis etc.(1.1a).

Performance theory is the pluridisciplinary study of the genre of performances from all over the world (George 1993:163). The post-avant-garde and post-structuralist theatrological research has two fundamental approaches (Helbo 1987). One looks at communication model (Proxemics and Kinesics), the other looks at studies on theatre in terms of flows of energy/libidinal exchange (1.1a). It caused the emergence of performance studies discipline in 1980 at New York University (1.1b). Western scholarship such as Blackburn (1989), **Bauman** (1977.1989), Frasca (1984, 1990), Zarilli (1984) and Schechner (1988) conducted studies on Indian theatre performances such villu pattu, Terukuttu and Kathakali within the performative context (1.1c).



The present thesis explicated the different theories that have come during postmodern age as well as the background for the development of such theories. It also examined the **findings of performance theories from pre-dramatic ritual to avant-garde theatre**. At the end, this thesis examines the relevance of different performance theories in the light of text, space and actor-audience relationship that have become serious debatable issues during the postmodern age, to the *bhdgavathams* of Andhra Pradesh.

In theatre realm, there are two major strains, one is Oriental and other is Occidental. Oriental theatre evolved from folk performances. Occidental theatre is the result of experimental theatre both in the West and East. In the West, experimental theatre started during the avant-garde period . Avant-garde means looking forward (Schechner 1993). Avant-garde artists used terms like experiment and did research to characterize their work in their laboratories.

After the two world wars, materialistic, nihilistic and cynical attitudes emerged in Western society. This impact was visible even on the theatre performances. At this point, theatre produced playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Fredrich Durerrentmatt. These playwrights caused remarkable changes in the theatre performance history and theories (2.12).

Most prominent and creative among the avant-garde directors was Meyerhold (2.12a). Later on many other joined this movement and started experiments in the theatre such as Theatre of Realism (2.12a), Epic Theatre (2.12b), Theatre of Cruelty (2.12c), Poor Theatre (2.12d) in Europe. In America, experiments started in 1960 onwards under the title of Alternative Theatre (Shank 1982). These include Happenings (2.13a), Living Theatre (2.13b) and Intermedia performances, Gurella Theatre, Workers Theatre movements and Agit-prop Theatre. The basic intention of all these movements is to create or rediscover numerous techniques and theories.

Richard Schechner, experimentalist and director, radically influenced the above movements and theories and made new directions in the performance context. His intense research and practice of theatre resulted Environmental Theatre (2.13c). His performance theories on social science (1.2a) and environmental theatre are the result of his study and research of both European theatre and Eastern theatre in many facets.

To understand the origin of performance theories the study traced the development from pre-dramatic ritual to avant-garde theatre. The background of the performances ( 2.1), means in ritual (2.2), transformation of ritual to theatre performances (2.3), Greek theatre performances (2.6), Roman theatre performances (2.7), Medieval theatre performances (2.8), Renaissance theater performances (2.10), modern theatre performances (2.11) and avant-garde theatre performances (2.12) are explicated for the origin of theories in the postmodern age. One of the fundamental notions of avant-garde movement is to consider theatre origin and its study to create new paths and theories in theatre realm. Most advanced work done by Schechner was to develop new concepts from old theories. Thus his attempt regarding actor-audience participation is to create pre-dramatic ritual participation. Being a postmodernist, his intention to create a participatory system is acknowledgeable.

The theatrologist of the early sixties in the United States of America found themselves in an expanding, increasingly sophisticated, bureaucratized and increasingly **primitivized** global village. One postmodern thought is to create an alternative community based on shared aesthetic, social, political rather than the more traditional, ethnic and religious. This caused American avant-gardists to produce a double imperative to create things new. This double imperative rejected the earlier tradition. This was the first generation of postmodern artists. Schechner was the first post-modern experimentalist in this regard. The present thesis is an attempt to not only place one artistic work in any kind of aesthetic or ideological proximity to another, but to analyze their interpretation and experimentation during the avant-garde period and its relevance in the *bhdgavathams*.

Postmodernists ideology is to explicate theatre as a social occasion. To create, new environment, they adopted certain issues. One rejects the theatre architecture (proscenium theatre) and takes performances into multiple spaces. Postmodern theatre comes out of the rigid spatial notion of the proscenium structure to an open world that encompasses everybody without any class or racial discrimination. At the other end, postmodernist performances are not only the physicalization of the imagination of the playwright depicted in the text, but also the re-creation of the imagination of the playwright by a creative craftsman in a particular cultural context for special audience. Therefore to influence post-modern psyche, the text is interpreted or misread in the light of intertextuality. Another major attempt of postmodernist is increasingly associated with actor-audience participation. They treat this phenomenon as a holy service in which all actors and audience are included in the performance. They never treated is as two separate entities.

According to Schechner, "postmodern means something too, something close to what post-war means... post modern performance abandons narrative as its foundation" (1979:10-11). He framed it as post-modern issue and made four foundations as (1) indeterminacy, (2) things-space-time or material chronology, (3) narcissism, (4) collectivism. These four foundations replace modern era concept of narrativism. These four foundations are the means of ritualizing performance.

The result of the five avant-gardes (Schechner 1993:1-22) - historical avant-garde; current avant-garde (always changing); forward-looking avant-garde; traditional-seeking avant-garde; and intercultural avant-gardes directly or indirectly influenced Eastern performance tradition and have given many insights in their experiments. The intention of these five-avant gardes is to attack naturalistic theatre. Re-examining and redefining tradition is a characteristic of the avant-garde in India. This phenomenon is called -theatre of roots (Awasthi 1989). According to him, "some qualities of the 'theatre of roots'-rejection of proscenium stage, closer contact between spectator and performers, integration of music, **mime**, gesture, and literary text" (quoted in Schechner 1993:15). These characters are identical to the ex-

**perimental** theatre program practiced by environmental theatre workers in the West. The present thesis explored how far the Western theories (environmental theatre) performances are relevant in the *bhdgavathams* of Andhra Pradesh.

Environmental theatre has an aesthetic as well as a didactic nature. Orthodox theatre (proscenium theatre) is fixed the boundries with set of conventions and its cultural code to sustain their aesthetic appeal. Encounter of environmental theatre is breakdown and come away from the limited structure. The tenet of environmental theatre is a total exploration of space to its maximum extent (4.7b). While attacing proscenium theatre structure. Structurally the proscenium theatre manifests a static culture, where everything is predetermined. It also depicts illusion as reality to the audience. This is one major offshoot of post-modernism. Modern theatre practice delimited proscenium theatre which had a well-knit structure and seating arrangement, individual stage, and lobby. Half of the structure belongs to the performers, half to the spectators. Postmodern performances take place in multispaces such as galleries, lofts, clubs, courtyards, beaches and streets. To Schechner, “the environmental possibilities of performance have expand to include dozens of new territories. Not only space, but time too. I mean time as a when and time as an experience oF(Schechner 1983:320).

Environmental theatre is performed either in a transformed space or a found space. Schechner favors transformed space (4.7b). Therefore he created a special environment for each of his productions, where actors and audience negotiate freely and openly within the given theatrical space. He demonstrated this spatial structure in making shared experiences between actor and audience.

In the context of Indian classical theatre, spatial demarcation very much existed ( ). In traditional and folk theatre, spatial concept is delimited. In *Kuchipudi bhdgavathams* and *Melattur bhdgavata mla* spatial norms of the classical theatre are not distinctly visible, but one can see the demarcation of stage (4.10). These performances are more or less environmental in nature. In *Toorpu bhāgavatham* and *Chindu bhdgavatham*, the spatial

demarcation is negligible (4.10). All the space is utilized for the performances. It even neglects the performance score for their survival. Their attempt is to have more contact with audience through physical space (4.10). Being rich in ritualistic nature, they make a shared experience among all sorts of participants and performers. In all *bhagavatham* the space is traditional, open and conventional. On certain occasions, *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* and Melattur bhagavata **mela** break the spatial concept and use total performance space during the performance ( ). Exploration of space is maximum in all *bhagavathams* of Andhra Pradesh. With the change of place, the spatial focus also changes in the performances. In accordance with the change of performing space, the confrontation of text should be changed.

Drama is a literary canon (4.1). It has its own dramatic conventions. Modern drama is totally dependent on literary text written by the playwright. Semiotists considered dramatic text as a written sign more suited for reading than for a theatrical performance. If the performance is based on visual aspect, the importance of the dramatic text declines and the verbal language is compensated by other means of expression that occur during the performance. Masters such as Craig, Meyerhold, Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski, Peter Brook and Schechner interpreted or reinterpreted the text but not simply or faithfully presented on stage. But postmodernists viewed text as the imagination realm of the playwright. This attitude is not much favored by them. To them, text is confronted and edited also misread in the light of sub-text.

When a dramatic text is converted into the performance text, performance score should retain the same in mise-en-scene (4.2). Transformation of dramatic text into performance text is primary concern in Indian performance theory and practice. Performance text is the new incarnation or avatar of the dramatic text (4.3). Schechner viewed transformation of text in four modes- Drama, Script, Theatre and Performance (1971c). According to him, text is a written document and background for a performance whereas script is the pattern of depiction. It is related to performance. Drama is a specialized form of scripting. It is related to theatre. He rejected the conventional text given by the author or playwright.

Spectacular text is an art whose products are communicated through space and time. This means it requires space and time to communicate. The spectacular text coined by Marinis and generalized by Pavis (4.4). Spectacular text analysis on environmental theatre is yet to come out. *Bhāgavathams* aimed at spectacular text in their mise-en-scene and also enacting texts and sub-text.

*Bhāgavatha* performances do not follow any text during the performance. Script provides the pattern of doing the performance in its mise-en-scene. They have their own script, which is in poetic language, and performance is controlled by the music score. In *bhāgavathams*, some factors have a direct bearing on the dramatic text in its transformational process into performance text (4.6). In *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* and *Melattur bhāgavata mela*, the script provides gestures, body movements, postures, and facial expressions. These signs will be decoded, creating an open communication channel to the audience. In *Toorpu bhāgavatham* and *Chindu bhāgavatham* the script is loose verbal narrative and functions as a tradition guide for the enactment.

It is true the when the space and text change, actor-audience communication or participation ought to be modified. The orthodox theatre concentrated on linguistic and verbal analysis. This is called cybernetic machine (5.2c). Proscenium theatre transmits numerable messages from scenery, costuming, lighting, position of actor, their gestures, their mode of playing, their language and so on from beginning to end (5.2d). The attack of post-modernist performance discourse extends its realm to kinesics and proxemics, supra segmental, paralinguistic and semiotics (5.2d).

In the Western scenario, there are new devices for theatre discourse in which a scenic spectacle is created. In the audience context, the mise-en-scene is created through the actor's body movement and gestures. Indian classical theatre, *Natyasastra*, has been following rasa evocation for the past 2000 years. Classical theatre favors the semiotics medium in addition to linguistic and symbolic media. *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* and *Melattur bhdgavata mela* (5.7a) highly explored this paradigm. It explores using the blending of body to sign, any

cosmic scenes or images can be created on the stage without any scenography (5.8). The actor's communication tools are body, voice, gestures and emotions.

Grotowski's, (an experimental director) (Schechner 1992:12) poor theatre, emphasizing the actors **psycho-physical** abilities, refusing theatrical sets, redefining audience-performer interactions according to the needs of each production, constructing a textual montage from many [...] was based on vigorous training founded at least initially on yoga and other principle devices from Asian theatre and philosophy. Artaud's Cruel Theatre aims at liberating theatre from the verbal language and creating a pure language for theatre. Classical theatre has become a guideline for them to create new theatrical language. Like others, Schechner also attracted and adopted from yoga and Kathakali.

*Rasa* theory is the backbone of Indian theatre (5.5a). Aesthetic pleasure is evoked by the audience through the actors histrionic expression. *Rasa* cannot be experienced by all; only a few could have this experience. The audience qualification is to have a clear mind and receptivity (5.5b). These spectators are called *Sharidayas*. *Rasa* theory is the monopoly of Indian classical performances and an attempts to transplant it into any other tradition in the conceptual or structural level (5.5c) was made possible.

Actor-audience participation in *bhāgavathams* is purely dependent on the nature and environment of the performances. *Bhagavatha* performances are part and parcel of society. *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* and *Melattur bhagavatha mela* require long periods of training for both actor and audience to experience *rasa* (5.6). Participation is both aesthetic as well as psychological and physical. *Toorpu bhagavatham* and *Chindu bhagavatham* are both aesthetic and ritual (5.6). In *bhāgavathams* audience participation can be seen in the form of aesthetic, ritual and devotional. In addition to this, the participation is more, because it is part of their social and religious life. Dialogue is one of the most important vehicle in the actor-audience communication (5.8). In *bhāgavathams*, communication vehicle is reversible (5.8). As far as *bhāgavathams* are concerned, the actor-audience participation is not an issue at all, because all the spectators actively participate in the event either physically or psychologically. In

addition to these, *bhāgavathams* explore participation through the physical structure (5.10); through the duplicity of actors (5.11) and participation through humorous situation (5.12).

Other postmodern exploration is use of multiple channels of communication. This is beyond the human psyche. “..in performance it is no longer necessary to put forward the linguistic channel as the dominant one. There is **multicentricity** of communication as well as of experience and cosmic construction” (Schechner 1983:321). Though the actor-audience participation was experimented in the West, it has not been much fruitful. In the words of Schechner, “The post modern transmutation is not of gold but of experience, not to predict heavy metals but to offer new ways of being, which are ways of doing, ways of performing” (Ibid.:321). To some extent,, Schechner carried out this practice to propagate a culture against popular American culture based on materialistic prospects. He tried to create new culture that led to universal brotherhood with shared wealth and health. To achieve this, he redefined the concepts on text, space, actor-audience transactions in his experimental theatre. But he met with partial success, because shared experience is only possible by both performers and audience participation. This is a modernist discourse on post modernism. “The post modern is possibly a liminal bridge in history, a period conscious of itself, its past, and its multiple potentials as future” (Schechner 1983:308) Although the east does not know the post modern thought, it has been following performance/theatrical culture since time immemorial.

In the Indian context, actor-audience participation is very much prevalent in society, because theatre is considered a part and parcel of socio-cultural life of the people. In the performances, everybody enjoys the same space and involve themselves in the enactment actively. Performances are free from the domain of the written text. Theatre performances are no longer artificial events but are seen as an extension of **meta-physical** life.

The thesis summarises its findings with regard to the evolution of performance theories with *bhagavathams* in Table no. 6.1 and the association of performance theories from pre-**dramatic** ritual to avant-garde theatre (Open space to Opne space) in Table no.6.2.



Table 6.1: Performance theories of *Bhagavatham*s

Text	Sacroscant and Non-sacroscant
Dramatic Text	More/reintrepeted edit
Performance Text	eloborated created by individual actor
Importance of Text	Story telling is more important
Space	Permanent space, avialable/found space Traditional <i>bhāgavatham</i> s use Environmental space Performance space is used for actor and audience Actors can be sit in the audience and performance depicts midest of the audience share experience (space in not defined)
Actor-audience participation	
Audience inclusion	More or less during the action
Transaction	Trasaction between actor-audience is more Phsical and psychological transaction is more
Interaction	More interaction during the performance
Communication	Spritual communication
Performance score	Traditional score is not controled
Rasa Theory	Individual score is important known

TABLE 6.2: FROM OPEN SPACE TO OPEN SPACE

Seven Ages	Period	places	performing space performing text Actor-Audience participation	Others
Costumed player	prmitive	All over world	common space Open space No text Actor-Audience Paticipation is Maximum	No technical devices primitive theatre Ritual perform aces Environmetal theatre
I Phase				
II Phase	Classical	'Kathakali' (India)	Open space	raised stage audience placement performance script religious dominancy little proffesionalism
Great Religious plays	Greek Classical	Theatre	Closed space Text Actor-Audience participation is maximum	Actor-Audience separation Special audience
Rise of professional plays	early medieval	Rome	Closed space Text Actor-Audience is slowly minimized	Actor-Audience separation Theatre architecture
Organised playse	Medieval Theatre	Elizebathean	Closed space Text Actor-Audience participation is declined	Stage invented Theatre architecture dominated attention towards secnic background special effects create regular performances

Roofed playhouse with scenery	Late Medieval Restoration	Sanskrit (India)	Closed space Text Actor-Audience Participation through charcters	Four types stages green room Participation is more Body language spectacular text common sharing zone
		London	Closes space Text Actor-Audience participation slowly decreased	Scenary dominancy Technology Special effects Frequent performance Procenium stage Stong barrier between Actor and Audience
		Europe	Closed space Text Actor-Audience participation diminished Realistic appraoch	Stage Illusion Highly techonlogy Lighting Sophisticated theatres Air conditioned orthodox theatre actor to actor contact is more Directors evolved
Illusion	Modern			
Anti-Illusion	Avant-garde	America	Open space Performance Text Actor-Audience Participation is maximized Ritualized behaviors	Good bye to 'Procenium' theatre Resuming the'Open space Sharing the experience Participatory theatre Environmental theatre Ritualistic performnce

Resuming the Pre-Dramatic ritual elements such as Open space perforamiices free text and Actor-Audience Participatory mode.

Postmodern Era: Intercultural and Pluridisiciplinary discoure.

Importance has give to Performance Studies and Performance theories.

(after Burton 1962)

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# PHOTO ALBUM

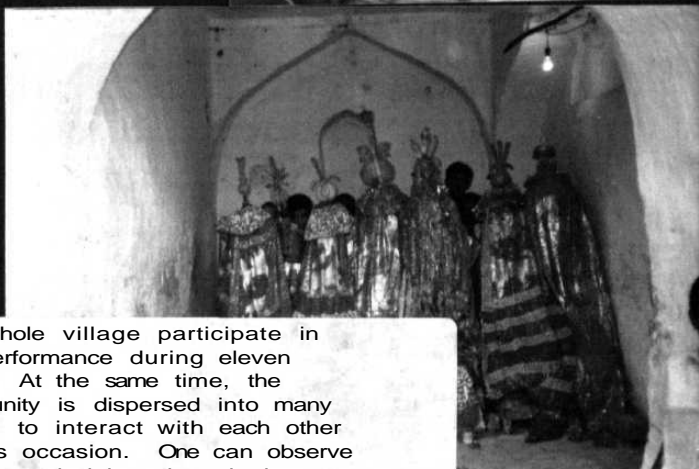
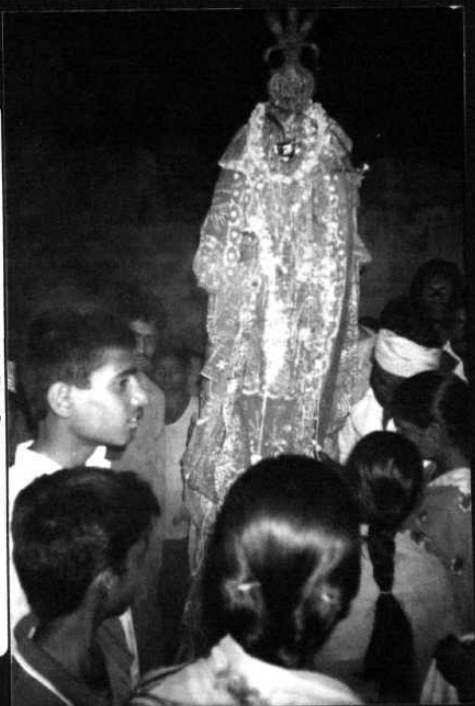
1.10 Various Ritual performanres in  
Andhra Pradesh.



Bonalu : Ritual performance  
Top : Potaraju is a distinct  
character who entertains the  
devotees during the procession.  
Bottom : A devotee possessing  
Maisamma goddesses during the  
festival in the Temple premises.



**Moharram : Ritual Performance**  
 It is a Muslim festival celebrated in towns and villages to commemorate the death of Hassan and Hussain. The ritual re-enactment of the death scene and the procession to Karbala reflect a disunited Muslim community. The ritual enactment reflect the sentiments of particular community.



The whole village participate in the performance during eleven days. At the same time, the community is dispersed into many groups to interact with each other on this occasion. One can observe a thin underlying theatrical flavour in this performance genre. Fig 1 & 2 shows the enactment of the Pirs taking into the village procession.



Paidithalamma jatra : A ritual Performance in Vijayanagaram procession alongwith pagati vesham artist going to instal goddess in the village.



3.4. Dupam Suryalingam as  
Mridangam accompanist



3.5. Sutradhara in Prahalada  
Charitam of Kuchipudi Bhagavatham

5.16 Female role (as Satyabhama)  
played by male in Toorpu  
bhagavatham





3.5a  
Bhagamakalapam  
Bhagavatham  
Sutradhara  
of  
Kuchipudi



3.6a Vedantam Satyanarayana  
Sharma as as Satyabhama  
(Traditional).





3.7 Ramalingeshwara Temple as Kuchipudi Village



3.9 Actor with Lord Ganesha mask in Melattur Bhagavatha Mela



3.8 First character "Konangi" in Melattur Bhagavatha Mela





3.10 Actor Posses by the mask of  
man lion taking into the procession





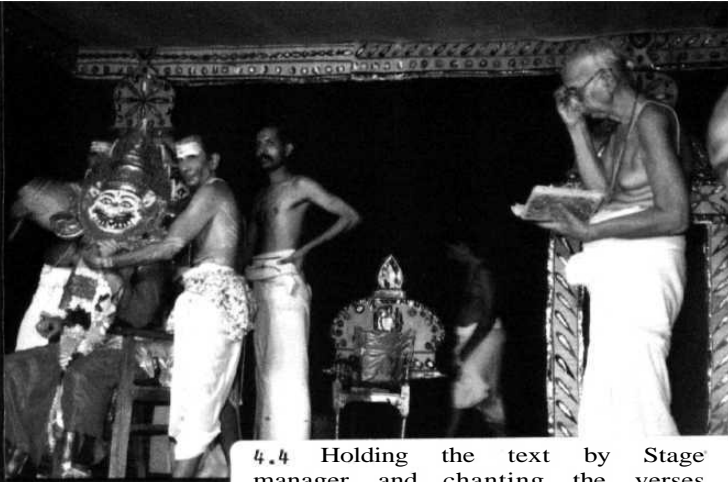
3.10a Stage Ritual in Melattur  
Bhagavatha Mela





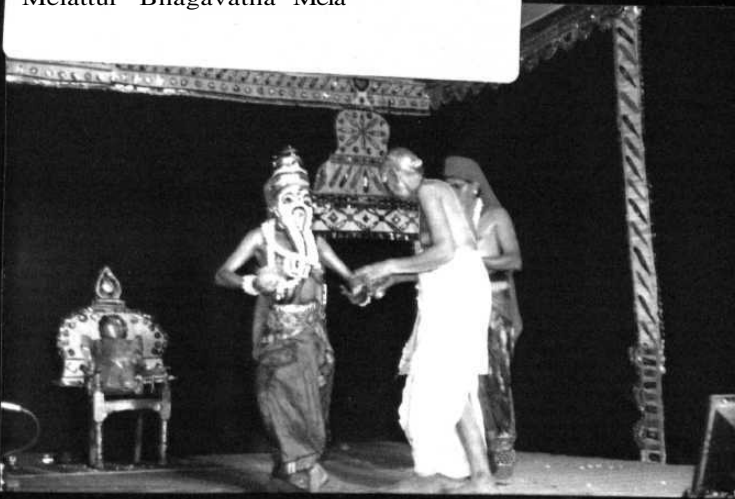
4.2 & 4.3 Lifting off curtain to  
manipulating and dramatizing the  
actors entrances and exits





4.4 Holding the text by Stage manager and chanting the verses in the text he also provide cue to the performers and musicians in Melattur Bhagavatha Mela

4.5 Thodayamangalam a stylized song sung before the character of Ganesha: Young lad below 12 years wear the mask of elephant head in Melattur Bhagavatha Mela





4.6 to 4.12 Creating Mise-en-scene with actors body movements, gestures and facial expressions.





5.12 Female role (as Lilavati)  
played by male: S. Natarajan in  
Pralhada Charitam of Melattur  
Bhagavatha Mela (Traditional)



3.6 Manju Bhargavi as  
4.9 Satyabhama.  
(nontraditional)

4-10



4.13 Using formal space, ordinary space during the performances in Melattur Bhagavatha Mela

4.3a In olden days, using burning torch is to illuminate the characters in (Toorpu Bhagavatham)





4.15 Only wooden/steel chair used as stage property in Melattur Bhagavatha Mela





4.17 Audiences are sitting on  
Chairs or bare floor in Melattur  
Bhagavatha Mela

4.18 Audiences are sitting only on  
bare floor and participating in the  
performance in Toorpu Bhagavatham



5.4 Navarasas.



Sringaara



Haasya



Karuna



Raudra



Viira



Bhayaanaka



Biibhatsa



Adbhuta



Saanta

Courtesy :  
Kala Krishna (performer)  
Ch. Janardhan Rao (Cameraman)



5.5. Spectator/devotees worshipping Lord Narasimha when he appears on stage.



5.14 Kattiakaran in Melattur Bhagavata mela : he introduces main characters of the performance.

Possessing Lord Narasimha character by performer (kinesics expression)

5.14 Kattiyakaran creates humour in Prahalada Charitam of Bhagavtha Mela



4.8 Hiranyakasupu and his family taking blessings from Guru



4.8 A scene in Chindu Bhaga-  
vatam



5.5 Worshipping Yellamma  
(Godesses)  
as a ritual act by Dr.  
Nataraja Ramkrishna  
before the performance  
begin.



Andhra Nattyam  
(Classical dance of Andhra  
Pradesh)



4.10 Creating Mise-en-Scene  
Without any stage device

view of Chindu performer  
full make up, ornament,  
costumes.



5.8 Hiranyakasu amidst in the audience. (Proxemic relationship) a kind of physical participation with the audience

5.11 Performer sharing and chanting with the audience in Toorpu bhagavatham (concept of mystification)





5.10 Female role (as Sathyabhama) played by male: Vedantam Satyanarayana Sharma in Kuchipudi Bhagavatham (Traditional)



4.1 Satyabhama describes to Madhavi about her lover (Krishna) in Bhagamakalapam (sutradhara acts as a Madhavi role)

5.9 Radha awaits Krishna's arrival: (Kinesics relationship) a kind of psychological participation in the audience mind



5.13 Sutradhara acts as Madhavi and Madhavudu role to produce humour in Bhamakalapam of Kuchipudi bhagavatham

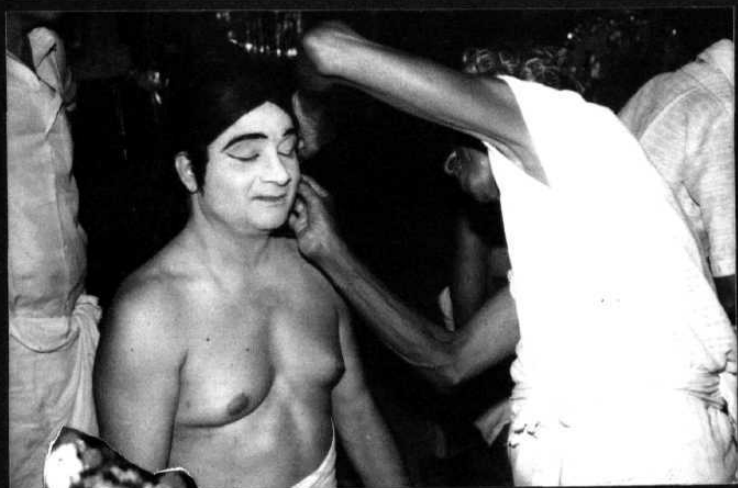
A procession of the Chinese performer going to the performance space.

Female character portrayed by male : Kala Krishna

Preparing for the performance:  
Make up







PERFORMERS IN THE GREENROOM

