

**TEXT AND CONTEXT IN CHINDU BHAGAVATHAM  
--A PERFORMANCE STUDY**

A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad

For the award of the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Folk Culture Studies**

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## DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work reported in this thesis has been carried out by me *individually* in the Sarojini Naidu School, University of Hyderabad, under the supervision of Dr. Y. A. Sudhakar Reddy. I also declare that this work is original and is not submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or associateship of any University or Institution.

**Place :** Hyderabad

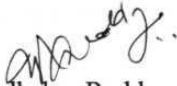
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## CERTIFICATE

Certified that the work contained in the thesis entitled **TEXT AND CONTEXT IN CHINDU BHAGAVTHAM –A PERFORMANCE STUDY** has been carried out by Mr. D. Sreemannarayana Murthy under my supervision and the same has not been submitted elsewhere for any degree.



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**D.SREEMANNARAYANA MURTHY**

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## **CHAPTER – I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

For theatre all over India there are several common features, emphasising there by that they owe their origin and development to similar circumstances in predictable modes. It is also to be stressed that in spite of many pan-Indian characteristics, each one of them flourishes with local aroma, strong regional variations, upholding their individuality.

The urge to express, communicate, and share something beautiful are responsible for the emergence of performing arts. Tradition plays an important role in the creative artistic process, particularly in the field of folk performing arts. Folk art is functional and spontaneous. Every activity in the village has its relevant music, dance, or theatre. The folk performing art is changing its structure continuously over centuries, modifying it to the needs of the changing situations, making it functionally relevant to the society. The traditional performing art is an

relevant music, dance, or theatre. The folk performing art is changing its structure continuously over centuries, modifying it to the needs of the changing situations, making it functionally relevant to the society. The traditional performing art is an aesthetic component of the constant concept of belongingness and affinity in a cultural context. In traditional societies art is an integral part of the general life of the people.

The folk performer knows a set of rules, a system of communication, a grammar in which the relationship between the attributes of verbal messages, and the sociocultural reality which are in constant inter-play in transforming symbol and metaphors, styles and structures, themes and forms in response to social variables of a situation. From the perspective of the contextual approach to folklore, in which its communicative attributes are primary, not only does it make good sense to base the meaning of a text upon both the intent of the speaker and the attitude of a listener but also to consider the meaning of messages as interdependent upon their actual communicative events. Folk arts being functional, interpersonal and having a contextual base would be able to carry the message of change.

The term folk includes all those persons, living within a given area, who are conscious of a common heritage and have some constant traits<sup>1</sup>, occupation, language and religion etc. The behavioral knowledge is based on the oral tradition and not on written scriptures. The group should have a sense of identity and belongingness regardless of its numerical strength. The way of life of the group of people is much traditional and natural; systematic and specialised.

### ***Chindu Bhāgavatam* - its scope and significance:**

It is the oldest folk theatrical form in Telugu, prevailing in the Telangana districts of Karimnagar, Nizambabad, Nalgonda, Warangal and parts of Adilabad of Andhra Pradesh <sup>2</sup>. It is rural, ritualistic, story and performance based form, which is still in oral tradition. It retains the rich folk traditions and maintain elaborate make-up and costumes. Socially, it is unique because it is performed by harijan professionals for harijan audience. They perform more than thirty five texts <sup>3</sup> which contain the stories drawn from, the epics like, Ramayana, Mahabharatha; Bhagavatam episodes, local legends, fairy tales etc.,

### **Significance of the study:**

The symbolic and expressive forms, which one can call folklore have their primary existence in the action of the people, and are rooted in the social and cultural life of those people. This study will be significant because, the emphasis will be on the aspects of context, which invariably based on field work, with primary focus on "oral tradition". The significance of the contextual variation of the performances can be grouped notably into three types ; functional, situational and cultural. They are denotative of the inter-relationship that exists between the *chindu* performers and their intra and their intra and inter cultural groups.

Depending on the context, the texts concomitantly vary in tune with the situations. The analysis of the texts manifest three types of texts which exist in the narrative tradition of *chindus*. They are - oral text, performance text, and written text. The segmentation of these texts into three do not categorically deny the inter-play between them and infact some times appear correlative and in some

other times, remain parallel. The community's existence from the time immemorial shows the dynamics of texts and context inter-play, which potentially communicate poly-meaningful performance tradition.

**The problem:**

Text and context of any performance thus so far studied posed serious problems in analysing contextually the text. Folk theatre altogether a new branch of study is usually combined with the subject matter of folklore. The modern theatre practitioners or analysts especially in the Indian context did not take into account folk theatre as a matter of interest and very few works are found in this regard. However, the problem lies in situating text and context as an integral part of performance. In theatre, text determines the level and interpretation of performance. Where as, in folk theatre performance itself becomes a text. In other words, a written text (drama) is exclusively written to be enacted as a performance by the theatre practitioners when it is written the 'target performers' and the 'target audience' are kept in view by the playwright. In the folk performing tradition the playwrights are anonymous and texts are always transmitted from the past. It is the performance, which alone makes the presence of the text. Therefore, text and context pose altogether a new challenge to the analysts of a given folk performance.

The study of folk texts and contexts of performances has a long history of development. Initially folk text is the interest of the philologists who hail basically from the linguistics and literature background. They viewed folk text as the text that exists in orality but transcribable in a field situation. Whatever the

texts which are recorded for them produced linguistic value and nothing else. Since the texts are transcribed from a field situation, they are called as the ethnolinguistic model of the text. This model presented the text in a conversation manner as it is found in the interaction between researcher and informant. John Wesley Powell <sup>4</sup>, Franz Boas <sup>5</sup> etc., are some of the well known ethnolinguists whose aim in recording the text is to understand to which cultural level that the text relate to.

The next school of thought which is interested in recording the texts is functionalists. The functionalists are basically anthropologists whose aim is to understand the function of a text. This invariably lead to record the context in order to assess the functional value of the text. Malinowski <sup>6</sup> is the foremost in stressing the need of context to assess the functional value of the text. This is truly a departure from the earlier studies which has lead in due course to the performance approach from the study of text.

In the performance approach of folk texts two branches emerged. The Prague school <sup>7</sup> laid emphasis on the llinguistics and tried to find out the ways of a normal verbal expression in a conversation context and a stylistic expression in a performance context. In the process they brought semeotics as a feature of verbal arts in making text and context relationship in a performance. The concepts of Saussure <sup>8</sup>, Chomsky <sup>9</sup> are widely utilised in analysing the folk texts by Prague school. However this linguistic model deduced performance to a structural phenomena rather than appreciating it as an artistic endeavour. Followed by the Prague school the socio-linguists headed by Dell Hymes approached the text from



'ethnography of speaking' point of view <sup>10</sup>. This actually reinterpreted the relationship of text and context from a mere linguistic view to performance oriented phenomena. Alan Lomax<sup>11</sup>, Roger D. Abrahams<sup>12</sup>, Dan Ben-Amos<sup>13</sup> and Alan Dundes<sup>14</sup> took the lead from Dell Hymes studies and started interpreting folk text from performance context and emphasised that this approach alone would truly bring to light the unique characteristics of folk texts. According to them the characters like 'variation', 'version', 'multiple existence'<sup>15</sup> are unique to folklore and therefore the performances of folk are found commonly in other cultures too. The studies later on carried out by Richard Bauman<sup>16</sup>, Joel Sherzer<sup>17</sup>, Clifford Geertz<sup>18</sup> etc., advanced the studies on folk performances. The text and context thus became a new field of interest of research and literally heightened its domains from mere structuralism to performative notion where the interaction among different units of performance is aesthetically projected to analyse their relative utility to the ethnic community which uses it.

From this background the present study on *chindu bhāgavatam* aims at studying text and context from performance approach wherein the theatrical elements are conceived as units of performance.

#### **Literature survey:**

The literature survey consists of two components. The first component is on theatrical premise in general on theatre (folk theatre) and on the component comprises of the works on *chindu bhāgavatam*.

The scholars on theatre or folk theatre such as, Gustav Freytag<sup>19</sup>, Richard Schechner<sup>20</sup>, Kapila Vastayana<sup>21</sup>, Balawant Gargi<sup>22</sup>, Jackson G. Bary<sup>23</sup> who contributed for the development of discipline most, are referred and some of their ideas are tested in this study. For instance to analyse the textual structures of the *chindu yakshagānams* Bary's, Freytag's analysis and graphs are critically examined. Similarly Balawant Gargi's ideas on the interface of classical and folk theatre is evaluated keeping in view the salient features of art form under study. Jacques Derrida<sup>24</sup>, Clifford Geertz<sup>25</sup> Paul Ricoeur<sup>26</sup>, the post modern critics on texts are also referred for theatrical positions on textual analysis of *chindu bhāgavatam* plays.

The folk performance theorists such as Dan Ben-Amos, Richard Bauman, Roger D. Abrahams and Dell Hymes are also consulted while analysing the data on the intricacies of the contextuality of *chindu bhāgavatam* performances.

The second set of works in literature survey are those which have direct bearing on *chindu bhāgavatam* tradition. The foremost works on *chindu mādigas*, though in nutshell, are of the colonial ethnographers, Edgar Thurston<sup>27</sup> and Stephen Fuchs<sup>28</sup>. They only referred *chindu mādigas* as traditional performing groups within the *mādiga* cast. These works are silent on their performance traditions.

S.V.Joga Rao<sup>29</sup> who made a maiden attempt on studying *yakshagāna* tradition of the folk art form of Andhra referred the *chindu bhāgavatam* as one type of *yakshagānams* which emerged out of an archaic *yakshagāna* singing tradition. He propounded both the monogenesis and diffusion points of view for

*chindu bhāgavatham* tradition. Mikkilineni Radhakrishna Murthy<sup>30</sup> who compiled the folk art forms of Andhra scantily referred *chindu bhāgavatham* also. However his work is mainly based on the secondary sources. Natraja Ramakrishna<sup>31</sup> has given a very brief note on the history of *chindu bhāgavatham* but elaborately discussed the dancing styles from a classist view point. Poddaturi Yella Reddy in his doctoral thesis on Telangana *yakshagānam*<sup>32</sup> has dealt very elaborately on the texts and their dramatic versions along with an exhaustive list of plays written, both published and unpublished. Being a student of literature, he has also analysed the linguistic patterns of the texts. However Hindu *dharmic* ideology has been strongly imposed on the *chindu bhāgavatham* texts which actually undermine the aesthetics of the folk tradition. M.Nagabhushana Sarma's<sup>33</sup> work on folk performing arts of Andhra Pradesh also refer to *Jāmbapurānam* as cast myth of *chindu mādigas* and *Yellamma vēsham* as the key to the performing tradition of *chindus*. His work infact presented, in a condensed manner, the varied aspects of *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition. A documented version of *Jāmbapurānam* published by Janapada Kala Parisodhna Vedika is an interesting first ever documented record which gives in detail the performance text<sup>34</sup>. However, from a performance approach this text lacks the critical analysis of the performance. An unpublished thesis submitted by Y.Yadagiri Sarma to Osmania University is a well researched work on several performing traditions of Andhra Pradesh<sup>35</sup>; he calls these as the profession of being communities. However, his work gives more data on ethnography of the communities rather than the art form from a performace perspective.

From folk literature point of view B.Ramaraju<sup>36</sup>, R.V.S. Sundaram<sup>37</sup> and P.Kishan Rao<sup>38</sup> referred to *chindu yakshagānas* but did not deal in detail with the performance tradition.

However, the above mentioned works though deals with the *chindu bhāgavatham*, they did not probe in depth, the performing tradition of the art form vis\_à-vis the textual changes that occur due to contextual elements. Therefore, an attempt is made in this thesis to study *chindu bhāgavatham* from a theoretical perspective and the dimensions of text and context in relation to the performer as well as the audience.

#### **Area of study:**

*Chindu bhāgavatham* being predominant in the dry zone region of Telengana, in this thesis two districts i.e. Nalgonda and Nizamabad are taken for study. Since the study is based on performance approach, it is inevitable to study the variations in styles within the given region. For ethnographic purposes, the *chindu māḍiga's* of Telengana as a whole are taken as a unit of study since their life styles do not show much variation. As far as the performance tradition is concerned, it is the group repertoire which acts as a catalyst in their tradition. The repertoire differences between the two groups of *chindu māḍigas* are taken as such they - show variation and therefore text and context is taken as parameter to bring out such differences.

### Nalgonda and Niamabad Districts.



### **Aims and objectives of the study:**

The aims and objectives are as follows:

..... To find out intrinsic relationship, if any, that exists between the community and textual representations.

..... To locate the preference frequency of a genre of plays with in the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition.

..... To apprehend the textual structures and their relationships with the community's ethos and idios.

..... To understand the hermeneutics that sustain the contexts of *chindu bhāgavatam* tradition and find out, if any, the differences that exists between each set of performance.

..... To make a detailed performance study from a theatrical approach in order to understand better their art form and its aesthetic value to assess the emotional status of the performer and audience.

..... To look at the change and continuity of the tradition gearing to the contemporary needs of their social system.

### **Methodology:**

Three levels of methods are employed in this study in order to intelligibly arrange the data and interpret it. At the first level, the data is examined from the secondary sources such as published and unpublished materials on this study. At the second level, ethnographic method is deployed to understand the continuities between the texts and their creators i.e. the *chindu māḍigas*. In the ethnographic approach, the dialogical method is adapted which necessities for unstructured and

uninterrupted interview mode which forms the basis of data collection. At the third level, performance approach is followed which essentially warrant observation method in collecting and processing the data. Since the study aims at analyzing the text and context inter-play, the performance centered approach becomes integral part of enquiry. Thus, the theatrical study becomes fulfilled, if only multi-layered methods are followed in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. This thesis demonstrates such multi-layered deployment of methods in the study

#### **Sources of study:**

Major sources of study include:

- Various types of performances and the community's behavioural patterns observed directly from the field.
- Oral traditions which are found in various genres such as cast myths, legends, beliefs, rituals etc.
- Published and unpublished *chindu yakshgāna* texts.
- Already available writings either on *chindu mādigas* or on their performances.

#### **Brief chapterization:**

This thesis comprises the following chapters.

1. **Introduction:** In this chapter a brief introduction on the art form in general and the *chindu bhāgavatham* in particular is given along with the aims and objectives, sources and methodology. A review of the existing literature on this art form is also discussed.

## **2. The Nature and Science of Art and Culture : Their forms and studies:**

This chapter deals with the basic concepts which are essential in this study. The concepts like art and culture, folk art and folk culture, theatre and folk theatre are dealt in detail to assess their mutual dependency, and yet, form distinctive frontiers for themselves. These concepts are dealt section wise in this chapter.

- 3. *Chindu mādigas* and their *bhāgavatham* at a glance:** This chapter is divided into five sections. Section one deals with the ethnographical details of *chindu mādigas*; section two covers *Jāmbapurānam*, the cast myth which narrates how the community has come into existence; the third section is on the performance of *Yellama vēsham* which is their cast goddess; the fourth section elaborates the evolution of the *bhāgavatham* tradition; and the fifth section is on the format of the presentation of the performance along with the technical details of theatre such as stage, make up and costumes, ornaments, music and dance along with pre performance and post performance rituals. It also contains the introduction of the play and also the order of the entry of characters which is a typical feature of *yakshagāna* tradition.

- 4. Textual Analysis:** This chapter deals with the texts of *chindu bhāgavatham* which are hermeneutically analyzed in order to find out their origin and sources; transmission channels; typology of texts; and structure of the texts. It is noted that the *chindu bhāgavatham* text can be classified into three types as the oral, written and performance texts. Their salient features are elaborately dealt by taking few texts as case studies.



- 5. Contextulization of the Performance:** In this chapter the concept of context in relation to the *chindu bhāgavatham* performance tradition is discussed. In the first section the typology of contexts is derived based on the first time knowledge of the field. It is found from the analysis that there are three types of contexts which manipulates both the texts and inter-relationships between the performers and audience. In the second section the performance approach which demands for a detailed elaboration of the record of the events in a given performance is also taken up and based on that three case studies are made as representational to different contexts.
- 6. Chindu bhāgavatham - with the changing times:** The influences of communication media and their impact on traditional art forms like *chindu bhāgavatham* is taken as study material in this chapter. Tradition and continuity being the crux of the problem for any traditional art form in the wake of modernity, is critically evaluated to study the potentiality of the art form for adaptability it has is also discussed.
- 7. Conclusion:** This being the final chapter, major conclusions are drawn from the study which are elaborately enumerated. For instance *chindu bhāgavatham* is performed as traditional folk art form and hence 'rigid' in its communication mode is questioned in this thesis. It is found, interestingly, that *chindu bhāgavatham* is also capable of adapting to the changing times, generate polyvocal and polyphonic representations of culture of that community which creates and perpetuates it. Plural meanings in a multi layered narrative structure becomes meaningful only in its performative

context and hence it becomes the strength of this art form. Divergent contextual frames are strategically manipulated by the performers in order to reach their audience, and hence keeps that art form functionally alive.

## NOTES

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## **CHAPTER-II**

**The Nature and Science of Art and Culture:  
Their forms and studies**

Cultural manifestations are represented in the form of verbal and non-verbal expressive behavior of human kind. In the process of representation expressive behavior get systematized and institutionalized, the levels of interaction on one hand with the nature, and on the other, with other fellow beings. In this chapter both the levels of culture as well as artistic behavior of a given culture is taken for study. The chapter hence is divided into three sections: the first section deals with art and culture as it is represented in a literate strand of cultural level; the second section deals with folk art and folk culture, which is altogether a representative of another strand of cultural level whose basis rests on tradition and orality; the third section deals with theatre and folk theatre which is the main concern in this study. Theatre being a distinct form of art how this gets represented in a folk performance is taken as the study matter in this chapter to build up a case for text and context of folk performances.

## SECTION-I

### ART and CULTURE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAME:

Whatever life may be it is an experience; whatever experience may be it is a flow through time, duration, a many coloured episode in eternity. Experience may be simple as it is among babies and simple people, it may be complex as it is in the case of a scientist or poet or man of affairs. It may range from the aimless movement of a baby's hands and the undisciplined distraction of its eyes to the controlled vision, and deliberate movements of the champion 'marksman'<sup>1</sup>. It may move from beholding and manipulation of physical things to the invention and organization of ideas tenuous and abstract. But between birth and death this much may be averted of life, it is the stimulation and response of a living body, of 'five little senses' starting with delight, of muscle twitching to answer with action, of hands eager and restless, of a tongue moved to utterance and a mind provoked to thought. Portions or aspects of that experience may be remembered and recorded. Totally considered, it may be aimless or purposeful. It may be merely the veil or revelation of something behind or beyond experience itself. It may be merely a systematic transient delusion. It may be nightmare or dream. Philosophers and poets have exposed at one time or another all these hypotheses.

But whatever experience may portend or signify, veil or reveal, it is irretrievably there. It may be intensified and heightened, or dulled and observed. It may remain brutal, dim and chaotic, it may become meaningful and clear and alive for a movement in one aspect, for a lifetime in many, experience may achieve lucidity and vividness, intensity and depth. To effect such an intensification and clarification of experience is the province of 'Art'.



So far from having to do merely with the statues, pictures and performances, art is the name for that whole process of intelligence by which life, understanding its own conditions, turns them to the most interesting or exquisite account.

But exactly what is art? Probably no term has been discussed so frequently or defined so ambiguously. Until the eighteenth century, art was used almost always to designate the systematic application of knowledge or skill to achieve some pre-determined result. The work is still used in this sense when one speaks of art or craft of medicine, politics or persuasion. In the neo classical era (from the renaissance to the mid eighteenth century most persons accepted the idea that the principles governing tragedy and comedy could be clearly specified, and that the application of these precepts constituted the art of play writing.

During the eighteenth century, it became customary to divide the arts into two groups 'useful' and 'fine'. Into the later category literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, music and dance are placed. Though not specifically listed, theatre was considered to be one of the fine arts, because it drew on the others. At the same time the idea arose that, while the useful arts may easily be taught and mastered, the fine arts as products of genius, cannot be reduced to rules or principles that can be learned. As a result, since about 1800 AD art has often been depicted as too lofty to be fully comprehended or explained and as too elusive to yield its secrets to any rational analysis. It has also frequently been implied that only those with truly superior sensitivity can fully appreciate art and that the average person mistakes some inferior products for authentic artistic expression. But if no definition of art has achieved universal acceptance, some of its distinguished characters can be enumerated by

comparing it with other approaches to experience. First and most broadly, "Art is one way whereby man seeks to understand his world"<sup>2</sup>. In this respect it may be compared to history, philosophy or science all of which seek to discover and record patterns in human experience. Art may deal with the same subject matter as these other approaches and may even use some of the same methods. For example, the historian seeks to record the facts of man's past, but since he cannot report every detail of human existence, he necessarily must select those events that seem to him significant and to compose a pattern of causes and effects. Thus, the historian like the artist selects, arranges and gives emphasis to his materials. Similarly the philosopher seeks to find the truths and the principles underlying all beings to relate them to human existence; obviously a dramatist may also suggest answers to this quest. Such branches of social science as psychology and sociology seek to determine the causes and probabilities of certain kinds of behavior, which a play, too has some of these concerns.

These and other approaches recognize that human experience is composed of innumerable happenings which are occurred to an infinite number of people through countless generations, and that each persons life is made up of a series of momentary occurrences, many seemingly coming about wholly by chance. The question they seek answer is; what significant pattern can be perceived behind apparent randomness? The search for meaning may take a different contour in each field, but it is always directed towards discovering those relationships that bring order to otherwise chance events. Art, then as one approach, shapes perceptions about human experience into forms or patterned relationships that help to order our views about man and his world.

There are, however, significant differences in the methods used in various approaches to human experience. The historian, philosopher and scientist attempt to set their conclusions drawn in logical expository prose, a point of view is expressed and the proof is marshaled to support that view and to gain its acceptances. They direct their appeals principally to this intellect.

The artist on the other hand works primarily through direct involvement of audience's emotions, imaginations and intellect, thereby evokes responses more directly. A theatrical presentation consequently shows events as though they are occurring before the eyes. Audience absorbs them in the way they absorb life itself through their direct operation upon the senses. Art differs from life, by skipping away irrelevant details and organizing events, so that they compose a significant, connected pattern. Thus, a play illuminates and comments on human experience at the same time it appears to create it.

Another distinguishing characteristic of art is its manipulation of imagination. Although it may draw upon actual experience, art clearly differs from life. People are distanced from the artistic event in part by their knowledge that they are witnessing an artistic event as opposed to actual occurrence, but also by the manner in which the event is handled within the artistic form. The result is some time referred to as an aesthetic or psychic distance, and may vary from a sense of almost total detachment to barely distinguishable from the response to real life events. Aesthetic events however, are usually thought of as a state in which we are sufficiently detached to view an artistic event semi objectively.

At the same time however, the distance must not be so great as to induce indifference. Therefore, while a degree of detachment is necessary, involvement is of equal importance. This feeling of kinship is sometimes

called empathy. Thus, audience watches a play with a double sense of concern and detachment, of entering into experience but without any need for action of their part. It is both a removed and an intensified reaction of a kind seldom possible outside an aesthetic experience.

Art, then, is one way of ordering, clarifying, understanding and enjoying experience. Each art form uses its own special techniques, but each offers both significance and pleasure simultaneously. Of all the arts, the theatre is probably the one most closely related to the patterns of normal experience. It is also the art form that most nearly to all of the other arts.

“An Art properly important, would be, as Aristotle pointed out, Politics. Its theme would be whole of experience; its materials and its theatre the whole of life”<sup>3</sup>.

The comprehensiveness of art is depended upon the conditions of life, especially of life together, are as complex as they are precarious. To the extent that life has form it is an art, and to the extent that the established disorder of civilization of some coherence, it is a work of art. All that goes by the name of custom or technique or institution, is the working of intelligence or perhaps, its dilapidated heritage. The realm of art is identical with the realm of man's deliberate control of that world of materials and movements among which he must make his home, of that inner world of random impulses and automatic processes which constitute his being. The breaking of a stick, the building of a hut, sky-scraper or a temple, the use of language of communication, the sowing or the harvesting of a crop, the nurture and education of children, the framing of a code of law or morals for social living, the weaving of a garment or the digging of a mine – all these are alike examples

of art no less than the composition of music or the exhibition of artistic skills in a performance.

So, art is a complex object of scientific inquiry, and its multidimensional activities and problems require an inter disciplinary approach. This includes a wide range of other sciences among which sociology, culturology, social-psychology, general psychology, anthropology, dramatology etc., as well as certain areas of exact and natural sciences figure prominently. These areas of scientific knowledge are primarily concerned with art as a sociological, psychological, semiotic etc., objects rather than with the specific essence of art. It should be taken into account that the sociology of art, the psychology of artistic creativity, the semiotics of art etc., are not independent sciences but sub-disciplines of various sciences in their relation to aesthetics. Thus, the task of the sociology of art is the study of art with the aim of clarifying certain parameters of social life, of creating, if one may put it so, a social portrait of the times. In this respect it functions as a sub-discipline of sociology which integrates the diverse fields of knowledge in human social activity. The sociology of art at the same time is the sub-discipline of art criticism or to be more precise, of aesthetics viewed as a general theory of art. To fully know the nature of art, its social functions, communicative possibilities etc., it is desirable to study the semiotics and psychology of art along with the sociology of art.

The science of art deals both with the unlimited and the limited, with the general meaning of the spiritual phenomenon and its actual polysemy on the one hand, and on the other a scientific position determined by a concrete historical context, a theoretical single valuedness. The openness of art in the history of artistic meaning, so different from the closedness of the principles of

the scientific investigation within a definite historical period, manifests itself as specific interpretation of the law of the unity of opposites of the limited and unlimited in cognition. The meaning of a work of art, open to know historical periods, is actualized through its interpretation and appears as a stage in revealing the unlimitedness of its own content. The concrete historical contextuality of an art study is an element of the broad historical, textual perspective of the work of art itself. In other words, it constitutes an aspect of its comprehension accessible to cognition.

The study of art in the historical context gives us the much required classification as ancient arts, medieval arts, modern arts and post-modern arts. The study of the semiotics of arts can tell us the nature and meaning of visual art, performing art and utility art. These can be further divided as traditional arts, popular arts, and contemporary arts. The age long idealistic and metaphysical opposition of 'pure' and 'impure' arts, 'noble' and 'lower' arts, could only be repudiated on the basis of a new approach. To all kinds of art regarded as a system in which each kind performs a definite social function, solves specific artistic tasks and realizes a definite social, ethical, aesthetic and human meaning. In opposition to idealist aesthetics one can affirm, the inner wealth and diversity of content of a work of art that forms an integral, organic, complete artistic world, a reflection and expression of an objective real world. This changes the traditional relations between a work of art and value; it is not value that is the basis of the complex and fundamental genesis of a work of art, but a work of art that is the fountainhead and genesis of aesthetic values. Aesthetic values too, acquire a truly social and moral content, taking up a position next to the sensual, technological, formal, intellectual, and social values that constitutes a most functional complex gamut of artistic works.

It is therefore, not difficult to realize the nature and sense of demarcation of arts and artistic genesis. They point to the lines of development of the artistisity through the totality of contents, forms, functions, values, themes and technical devises which when taken as a whole, form art. This normative approach, traditionally defining and charactersting various kinds of art and separate genres, outlines the need for a corresponding idealization. But it is thee elements of content, form, technique and value that, through genres, give a characteristic and specific significance to the structure of art itself, in accordance with the partial social and cultural function; they pose before art new problems and open up new paths of development.

The generic segmentation of various kinds of art is merely a tool to study different dimensions of culture. However genres are quiet often misunderstood as isolatable and independent entities which strictly confine to their own spheres. In fact culture did not compartmentalize genres but views them as integral parts of expressive behavior of human kind.

'Culture', like several terms in history, has a history. The meaning of culture for the medieval and ancient societies was no more than 'a process of cultivating a given nature' and for the people of the later period it denoted 'one of creating a new second nature'<sup>4</sup>. The ancient societies did not perceive opposition between 'nature' and 'culture'. For the post renaissance societies culture is different from nature and it is part of human's unlimited self assertion. The cultural theorists argue that the modern culture takes its birth with the rebellious efforts of post-renaissance human's decision to surpass one's allotted nature. The division between division of labor and cultural diversity brought autonomous character of culture into fore. The idea of culture underwent further mutation in the eighteenth century and the meaning

of culture changed from an individual creation into the objective expression of the spirit of a whole nation. It is here, the problematic of division between the 'high culture' and 'popular culture' is noted.

Historians of the popular culture have become increasingly dissatisfied with the two-tier model, which constructs 'popular' and 'elite' culture as analytically distinct categories for the purpose of investigation. The term popular is increasingly seen as problematic, while it is argued that the very notion of popular culture postulates the existence of something for which proof remains to be given. even more complex are the residues of 'oral culture' – poetry, ballads, folk songs, myths, legends or proverbs etc., "Culture, broadly speaking, is considered to be an expression of all aspects – intellectual, religious and ethical – the metaphysical in man"<sup>5</sup>.

If this is the definition of culture given by historians, anthropologists gave more definitions and meanings for the term 'culture', of course with more elaboration, because 'culture' is the central concept in anthropology, and so it has resisted rigorous definitions. Even the anthropologists have had the difficulty in defining culture in precise terms as it enjoys wider application and usage in various contexts.

The anthropologists do not use the term culture in the sense of 'cultivation', 'refinement', 'sophistication' etc., like "he is a cultured man" and "he knows agriculture" etc.. In their sense "all people are cultured, in that they are borne, or raised and live in social groups"<sup>6</sup>.

Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, gave one hundred and seventy five separate definitions in their book 'Culture'<sup>7</sup>. Most definitions, despite minor differences fall into one or the other general categories i.e., totalist view and mentalist view.



The totalist view of culture is referred to the totality of a peoples' "way of life", but mentalists viewed it as "conceptualization of appropriate behavior". According to the totalist view, "culture is that complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society"<sup>8</sup>. Cohen, another renowned totalist viewed culture as the artifacts, institutions, ideologies and the total range of customary behavior with which a society is equipped, for the exploitation of energy potentials of its particular habitat<sup>9</sup>. Levine viewed culture as a composition of (i) the energy systems of a population and its methods of exploiting them (ii) of the organization of social, political and economic relations (iii) of language, customs, beliefs, rules and laws (iv) of everything that is learned from other people or their works<sup>10</sup> -So culture is every thing to man in society and it is an adaptive mechanism. It is that totality of tools, acts, thoughts and institutions and through which a population survives, secures and maintains itself. According to the mentalist view - "it is a system of rules or pattern for behaviour rather than an observed pattern of behaviour"<sup>11</sup>.

This view appears less comprehensive. It does not include tools, acts or institutions but only thoughts. Combining the core ideas of both views, Levin defined culture as "An organized body of rules, concerning the ways, in which individuals in a population, should communicate with one another, think about themselves and their environment, and behavior towards one another and towards objects in their environment"<sup>12</sup>.

So it is best understood as an intensive effort to assert the inner being in an independent form. The study of culture helps an understanding of the strivings and ideals of any one group of people. Culture as such is not

confined to intellectuals alone, it encompasses the common people and their activities ranging from their social organization to economic pursuits to religious ideas, moral principles, creative artistic pursuits and even political set up. This study of people in any country or territory is not limited by time and space, nor is it confined to a matured and advanced phase of life in that region. It deals with the evolution of human activity from the earliest times onwards. In this process one can also trace the impact of one culture on a neighboring one, some times leading to a confrontation and at other times, bringing about concord and understanding between the two.

Art is a segment of culture, and culture is the totality and outcome of art. For example, in the Indian society, religion constitute an important element of culture and art served the needs of religion. Art also manifested into several forms as media for individuals and collective awareness and consciousness of society. So, the two term's art and culture are 'siamese twins'.

As stated above art and culture are like two sides of a coin and hence inseparable. Nevertheless art and culture have within themselves contextually segmentable units. These units for analytical and cognate purposes are usually hierarchically structured. The terms of hierarchy exist due to the operation of power and dominance and its location. Within a culture, a group dominates over the other than that group is often defined as cultured, civilized, elite, literate etc., and the subdued one as barbaric, uncivilized, folk and pre-literate / non-literate etc. Therefore the segmentation is always done in terms of power representation. It does not mean that the subdued group does not possess art or culture of their own. In most cases their cultural expressions are twined in

orality, therefore, they are popularly known as folk cultures and their material manifestations as folk arts.

## **SECTION-II**

### **FOLK ART AND FOLK CULTURE**

Folk art is the creative expression of millions of village people, which provides popular entertainment for the common folk, along with imparting traditional education. In the absence of classical forms of dance and drama for a considerably long period in history, the folk arts have filled in an important lacuna in the otherwise struggling lives of the people. Folk arts are treasure houses of customs of the village people, group behaviour, beliefs and concerns, pains and pleasures, in fact their very ways of life. They form an important integral part of their lives, not because they want to attain professional competence in an art form, but because they are actively involved in them for reasons other than mere social and cultural recreation. For the village folk, they are soul lifting means of religious participation, which in a way of reaching god. The Indian sages have prescribed *kirthanam* as a way to realize god.

Folk life and folk art are inseparably intertwined with each other. Every sphere of their life they live is reflected in their creative expression. Births, marriages and deaths have been expressed in tuneful melodies. Every type of work is reflected in the rhythmic resonance of their song. All village rituals find a synchronizing reflection in the folk art forms. Religious festivals attract a wider participation of people, not only in paying their grateful obeisance to

the gods and goddesses, but also expressing their gratitude through song, dance and drama.

The entire village life is reflected in the songs the village folk sing. The finer nuances of life they live, their sorrows and pleasures, their jest for life, their sentiments, find an enchanting echo in what they sing and how they express. Their belief and their entire value system can be known from their folklore.

Every village has a village god and goddess. The rituals around them are plentiful, so are the songs and dances. Even within the rituals, every occasion is celebrated either through a song, a ballad or a dance. The temple worshipper himself is usually the main performer. He or she may be assisted by others and thus it becomes a common sharing of religious expression.

The oral tradition, though a simple expression of faith in the beginning, later on became more complex, as individual performers gained excellence. When the professions became castes, each caste has its own deity besides the common village deities. It is interesting to note that in course of time, they grew in to separate performing subgroups in each caste or profession. They are the torch bearers of that group, singing in praise of their god, sharing the family histories and performing the great deeds of their groups' ancestors and gods. Thus a whole network of performances developed inseparable from the life of the villagers. During all the seasonal festivals the villages organize and present some performances in praise of the common gods to benefit the occasion. Some villagers have even developed professional groups to tour the neighboring villages to give performances.

The folk performing art forms may broadly be divided three groups: the musical form, the dance forms and the drama forms. Again the musical forms

are divided into two major sub-divisions; individual and group. Besides there are several skills, which showed the manipulative techniques of some groups and individuals. In course of time some of the individual performers that formed a part of the life cycle of the villagers reflecting their beliefs and customs, remained as performers, though the customs no more exist.

M. Nagabhushana Sarma<sup>13</sup> has classified the folk performing arts in the following order distinguishing them on the basis of the nature of performance:

- 1 songs( though not strictly performance oriented some of them have qualities of performance; the singer, the listener and the situation)
- 2 folk narratives(ballads)
- 3 dances
- 4 theatre
- 5 skills
- 6 individual performances that were originally part of ritual;
- 7 other rural entertainments.

To know about them and their methods of performance is to know not only of the various vibrant forms of self expression of these so called untrained, un-ostentatious village folk, but also to know the entire spectrum of a village life and their cultural gamut from time immemorial

Folklore is that verbal art form comprising various types of stories, proverbs, sayings, songs, incantations<sup>14</sup> and other formula, which employs spoken language as its medium. It can also be said as the accumulated knowledge of a homogeneous people.

Folklore or popular knowledge is the accumulated store of what man kind experienced, learned and practiced across the ages as popular and

traditional knowledge, as distinguished from so called scientific knowledge. Folklore is traditional belief, literature, exaggeration, knowledge and skills orally conceived or transmitted from one generation to the next or disseminated among the members of the same generation. It is preserved in the memories of the people and its indispensability is unwritten tradition.

The existence of folklore began about as early as mankind. Through the word 'Folklore' was not coined until 1846 by the English Man William John Thomas, as a convenient substitute for the awkward term 'popular antiquities'<sup>15</sup>. All art and culture are based on folklore and tradition, as it exists, best in only oral society.

The materials of folklorists are generally recognized to be traditional ideas, actions or consequences. The domain of traditional ideas ,behaviors and their consequences are observed in two ways by folklorists<sup>16</sup>. The first group of folk culture analysts do not consider all traditional things, but only those held to be expressive i.e., artistic and non-instrumental verbal modes. This group consists of the 'traditional arts folklorists' within which there may be further narrowing to include only the art, that depend heavily on verbal component. By and large this group define 'traditional' in terms of some process of artistic expression. In other words the transmission channels in the form of oral transmission and face to face communication are alone become the criterion of this group of culture critics. This gives them leverage to encompass all cultural levels and groups in the process of exploring the art tradition. The second group of folk cultural analysts, who are generally known as 'folk life scholars' delimit the domain of traditional ideas, behavior and consequences in terms of culture level and not in terms of whether these traditional ideas are necessarily expressive in nature. This group study folk culture purely in terms

of cultural levels, which have the following traits; rural, pre-industrial, non-main stream, non-elite, past oriented, old time, regional or ethnic. However, the studies on folk culture, either in terms of cultural level or expressive forms, became more complex and did not confine to a discipline.

The organization of the conceptualization originates with the realization that the critical interest and perspectives transcend the boundaries of area, genre and academic discipline. Disciplinary divisions of theory, which are currently popular, are inadequate because the same theoretical concerns are started by many disciplines. For example, literary, linguistics and communication approaches to folk culture pursue the matters of structure and style, while anthropology, sociology, psychology all investigate the issue of function. Thus the disciplinary boundaries become redundant and arbitrary, in pursuing a cultural trait especially, a performance oriented cultural trait. The discipline of theatre is also contributing much in understanding the performative behavioural codes of a community or region. Thus, the performance studies, cutting across the disciplinary boundaries are trying to analyze and assess the phenomenon of text, texture and context. These segmentations of performance are analytically derived in order to assess their value to the performance per se in relation to community.

The cultural manifestation of any oral tradition based society, for the sake of intelligibility are segmented into analytical categories by the folklorists. The analytical categories are superimposed over the ethnic genres, which are the actual real expressions of the folk and their world view. By segmentation into genres, the culture critics try to bring out the salient features of a given mode of expression. The demarcation, though not watertight compartment, still exists in a spatial continuum of a given folk behavioral mode. For

instance, the artistic behavior clubbed with verbal expression is conceived as performance. When the spatial, contextual and textual patterns are seemingly stereotypic and rhetorical, then that form of expression can be termed s a theatrical form.

## **SECTION-III**

### **THEATRE and FOLK THEATRE**

Any work of art is an address (in some form) by an individual to a number of people. This way of putting it brings at once within sight of the act of theatre. It is that there can be two ways of addressing a public. The one is by making something and the other is by doing something. If something is made an object, a picture, a story, a musical composition, the maker can embody in it whatever it is he has to say to the public. There he can leave this 'thing' to its fate, to be read as may be by the separate individuals that compose the public according to their opportunity. If any body does something or perform something – speak, move, play an instrument, he can embody in that action whatever he has to say. But it is important to emphasize at this point that the secret of the theatre does not lie in the 'thing' done but rather in some thing that arises from the manner of doing. 'Drama' may be the thing done, but theatre is doing. 'Theatre is an act'.

An address through doing, however it is prepared depends on a concentrated effort on one particular occasion, more over the audience is limited to the group present on that occasion. A creation then, can be perfected in solitude before the people see it but an action is done before them once, and



is finished, the only chance of perfecting it, if it has failed, lies in an opportunity of trying it all over again on another occasion.

So a separate line can be drawn between the 'arts of making' which can be called as creative arts and the 'arts of doing' which can be called as performing arts or executive arts. In creative arts there is no direct contact between the artiste and the people but in executive or performing art it is absolutely essential that the artist or performer comes in to direct personal contact with his public. This coming into direct personal contact as part of the players art and, with the relentless element on the 'one occasion', must be appreciated for any true understanding of the essence of the theatre.

An act of theatre is capable being a work of art, obviously it is not inevitably so, any more than a painting is inevitably a work of art. But it seems not unlikely that deepness of communication which marks an accepted work of art is the same sort of deepness of communication that can mark an act of theatre. An act of theatre, then, may be a work of art, the medium through which the art is conveyed to the public is the manner of individuals addressing that public. It is this which is the essence of theatre. So, the essence of theatre does not lie in what is performed. It does not lie even in the way it is performed. The essence of theatre lies in the impression made on the audience by the manner in which the actor performs. It is essentially a reactive art. In the theatrical art, all the elements count for nothing whatsoever (elements such as playwriting, rehearsing, production, characterization, scene design) costumes design – without the culminating and fusing experience of performance before a public. Without this, theatre whether good or bad has not come into being.

So, the ground, which is best suited to germinate the seeds of theatre, is the public assembly or originally the tribal gathering. Here can accumulate that reservoir of what is comprehended under the term 'group psychology' which provides the power upon which the player can draw; the carrier-wave as it were on which he can impose his communication.

Theatre in human society has been a part of community existence since long recorded history. From the dawn of time to the present movement dramatic presentations have been conceived with (1) inspiration (2) education and (3) entertainment, with worships and propitiations of gods. Since its primitive beginnings, theatre has assumed many shapes and forms. The tribal gathering is that, it is quite capable of some sort of elementary theatre all by itself. Provided it meets on a particular occasion, the elements of theatre are there, or can be called into being. The essence of the theatre lies in communicating something to the people. So that if the gathering meets on a particular occasion, the subject of this occasion may be what is communicated to the people. It can almost communicate itself with the help of people. In the tribal gathering pre-historic man's showing his skills to his fellow tribesmen how he made the hunt, caught or killed the animal which all of them were enjoying by eating it. Here the particular occasion is community eating and the basic element of theatre is 'imitation' of his own actions. Man imitates nature and in this process started imitating others' actions and thus planted the art of theatre in human society.

It has been said that the theatre dies each night, since it only truly exists during the movement when actors are performing for audience. But if the theatre in this figurative sense, dies each day, it is also reborn in performances given on the next day. Still as an art the theatre is so ephemeral that the

essence of a performance cannot be fully re-captured, since, unlike a novel, painting or a statue, each of which remains relatively unchanged, a theatrical production when ended, lives only in the play script, program, pictures, reviews, and memories of those who were present.

Although the theatre along with music is the most ephemeral of the art, it is one of the most powerful for, while audience watch, human beings perform, they experience as though it is happening at that very instant. In this way, the theatre approximates life as it is lived and felt moment by moment. As in life, each episode is experienced and then immediately becomes part of the past. The theatre is also the most objective of the arts, since characteristically it presents both outer and inner experiences through speech and action. As in life, it is through listening and watching the individuals are known both externally and internally. What is learnt about their minds, personalities and motivations come from what they say and do and from what others tell about them. Unlike the novelist, who may deal at length with the unspoken thoughts and unexpressed feelings of his characters, the dramatist can indicate these inner strings only through external signs. This limitation, however, serves to give the theatre a life likeness, which other arts cannot match.

The theatre is also the most complex of the art, since in a single production it utilizes many creators, the playwright, the actor, the director, the scene designer, the musician, the choreographer; etc., The complexity has led many to call the theatre a mixed art since it usually combines a literary word of the literary artist, the visual background of the architect and painter, the speech and movement of the actor, the music of the composer and the dance pattern of the choreographer. Others have called it as 'impure art', because it is not the

product of the single creator. These labels imply that several artists cannot achieve a unified result and that the theatre is, therefore, imperfect and inferior. Certainly the theatre can rarely achieve the purity of form possible in a novel, a poem or a painting, but it has its own kind of unity. In its very complexity lies much of the theatre's strength, for its varied appeals, actions, speech, music, dance, painting combined in one art product, the appeals of all other arts, although in a new and distinctive form. This can be supplemented with a derivation that in theatre the playwright is the only creative artist, the others are interpretative artists, for that creation. That is the play-script. The history of the theatre is often treated as though it is synonymous with the history of drama. Although it may distort the truth, such an approach is partially justified, for it is through the written drama that one gains clearest impressions of the theatre of the past. It is the play-script which comes down most nearly unchanged, where the other theatre arts only through such second hand accounts as the description of the acting or pictures of single scene. The history of the theatre is usually constructed around drama for still another important reason, the play script forms a bridge between the present values and those of the pasts. The theatre arts of the past, when viewed in isolation from drama, may seem totally disconnected from the present, but the great plays of other times create points of contact with the feelings, the thought, the life of these periods. This common bond can then serve as a bridge to understanding of the other theatre arts.

In recent years, however, there have been attempts to debunk the importance of the language and the written scripts and to locate the true theatrical traditions in various kinds of popular entertainment such as circus, magic, improvisation, pantomime, acrobats etc., which are admired for their

emphasis of visual and non-verbal aural techniques. These attempts remind that theatrical performances need not utilize a written script or dialogue in order to be effective. Similarly written script may be developed from theatrical performance and be considered a form of literature, giving an identity to performance text. Thus it is possible to view that theatre and drama as two separate arts, often but not always working in conjunction. So, drama be treated as one of the arts of theatre, that concern with creating a scenario, overall plan or complete script, as a basis for performance, which may or may not achieve, literary excellence. In this sense, drama is basic to the theatre, since virtually every performance follows a preconceived plan of some sort, however vague it may be in some cases.

If a comparison is made between the theatre and folk theatre, both are presented to audience, but the folk theatre usually takes place on a particular occasion or event or context. The folk theatre remained in the same situation, where theatre started in the human history. The present theatre is said to have its beginnings only in the ritual based folk theatre in rural areas. If man's beliefs have given birth to myths and religions they in turn gave birth to rituals and theatres. The ever changing theatre is de-linked with folk theater, with its shift from rural to urban areas and acquired various names and undergone multiple classifications as the time moved on. If today's theatre is postmodern theatre, yesterday's was modern. If day before yesterday's theatre was classical the previous one we can conclude as folk theatre.

So the immediate one that has emerged from folk theatre is classical theatre, which is rigid, complex and sophisticated, whereas the folk drama is unself conscious, spontaneous, poisterously naive. Some conventionalists, intellectuals and champions of culture term the folk theatre as impolite, rude

and vulgar. The rural based folk theatre is *unheun*, the others are chiseled, demand mathematical exactness and regal.

The folk theatre can make a whole community take part which has a mass appeal and caters to the lowest common denomination, the ordinary man, where as the classical and modern for the elite and demands previous knowledge from the spectator. The folk art crosses the borders of class, religion and region and has a universality. In spite of diversity, the Indian people are bound by a common impulse embedded in their philosophy, music, arts and tradition. The folk theatre mirrors both this variety and this unity. According to Balwant Gargi, "after the tenth century, the classical Sanskrit language splintered into vernaculars and took root in the form of regional languages, the Sanskrit drama, petrified for many centuries was replaced by the growing folk theatre. Old legends, puranic tales, mythological lore, philosophy and stories of Sanskrit plays were popularised by the present folk theatre. In this way the tradition followed not from the folk to the classical, but from the classical to folk"<sup>17</sup>.

So folk theatre has acquired the classical conventions, which were not existing earlier since its beginnings in human society. The *sūthradhara* of Sanskrit drama appeared in vernacular folk forms in the country. The clown, the counterpart of the classical *vidūshaka* has become darling of the folk theatre. He appears under different names in various regional forms. He speaks in rustic prose or dialect. He has the freedom to comment on the past with the present and relate the drama to the contemporary scene. He also acts as a liason between the audience and the players. The *poorvaranga* (stage preliminaries) is an essential feature of both Sanskrit and folk theatre. The musicians take their positions on the stage, tune their instruments and play a

melody, the dancers perform a few dance numbers, the cast sings *mangalācharana* ( a vernacular form of the classical invocation). Some of the folk theatres also use a benediction at the end of the play. They employ music , dance, stylization, verse dialogue, exaggerated makeup and masks with the same lavishness as the classical drama. Scenes melt into one another. The action continues in spite of changes of locale and scene, along with asides, soliloquies and monologues are found.

Folk theatre represents the people their natural habitat with all their contradictions and multifarious activities. It contains a rich store of mythological hero's medieval romances, chivalric tales, social customs, beliefs and legends. The folk theatre does not give a slice of life as in modern realistic theatre; it offers a panorama of existence. Though it moves slowly it can not afford to be dull. The spectators are participants in the performance. They cheer, laugh and weep and suddenly become silent as the moment demands. They constantly throw sparks of live interest to the actors who charged with this electrifying contact, throw the spark back.

Balwant Gargi opines that "the idea of a closed theatre is almost foreign to the Indian masses. In the nineteenth century, when British introduced their educational system, they also brought in the concept of the picture frame stage. In big cities where amature movement developed a few theatre halls were built, in mid-victorian style with plush curtains, glided chairs and chandeliers. But in 700 thousand villages of India the traditional dance drama, pageants, operatic ballads and folk plays continue to entertain the audience in the open air"<sup>18</sup>.

The folk plays performed in a variety of arena stages, round, parabolical, horizontal, square and multiple set stages with different types of gangways according to the custom and convenience. In the religious ritual

based folk theatre the places of action are usually temples, the agricultural fields, or the burial grounds. Some of them are performed on streets either in static or mobile format. The spectacle by telescoping of time and space speeds the action of drama. The *sūtradhara* builds up a montage of varied dramatic episodes. The same spot is transformed in to a different place by a word or an action. The folk actor uses a very few props. He creates palaces, rivers, forests, battle scenes, and the royal courts by the sorcery of his art and makes the audience to believe and accept. The folk theatre is a rich art touching the human hearts.

The performance of a folk theatre is a folkloric act, in which the process whereby a folk artistic message is realized by audience in a performance context, is a matter of concern. The performance structuralists assume that all behaviour is rule ordered and that what performer and audience learn are the rules for generating different types of artistic communications that are appropriate in different types of social situations. That is to say, that a folk performer is held to draw upon his knowledge of how to behave in order to generate behaviour that constitutes appropriate participation in shaping of the artistic result. The structure of a systematic knowledge of a performance is assumed to be similar to the structure of a systematic knowledge upon which the understanding and aesthetic judgement of a performance rest.

The performance structure theory has resolved to conceive various domains to study the structure of a folk performance and three domains are identified as important, because of the significance of the variables in these areas for determining appropriate performance behaviour. They are the text, vehicle, and context. Each of these domains is held to be structured, and any



folkloric performance is regarded as a function of the systematic knowledge in dealing with structure in all three domains.

Text structure here referred to the domain within which the context of the folk performance is determined. Study of textual structure involved the identification of the units of content, the dependencies of these units at different levels of inclusiveness in a generative hierarchy and the rules for combining these units of content to create, complete, acceptable generic texts. Vehicular structure refers to the process by which content is manifested. In other words, it includes all codes passing in all channels of communication which ultimately results in the texture of the content. Vehicles include language, music, graphic representation, all forms of body movements and properties, if any, used. In fact vehicle is nothing but sign which is codified in various ways to express meanings. Contextual structure refers to the social rules of artistic behaviour. In other words the occurrence of a folkloric act depends on a social situation and relates to manifestation of the text owing to the limitations imposed by the social situations. In any given folklore performance these three components are vital and inform the meaning to the actions. The performers ability to react to these three levels of structures ensures the continuity of the performance in timeless continuum.

The performance tradition of *chindu mādigas* can be seen as a theatrical form since it has all the elements discussed above; a specified space for performance, makeup and costumes, ornaments, orchestra etc. What is important in the theatrical form of this kind is the interaction level between the performer and audience is socially systematized in such a way that their life styles invariably get institutionalized and made mentally dependent. Therefore, to study a performance of this kind should necessarily be correlated

with the ethnographic accounts of the community in order to understand the underlying current that flows in the text and context, which makes the performance feasible and gracious.

## NOTES

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### **CHAPTER-III**

## **CHINDU MADIGAS AND THEIR BHAGAVATHAM AT A GLANCE**

The contextual theories, which pervaded the folklore studies during sixties and seventies emphasized the need of the 'lore' in the context of folk which actually creates, sustains and perpetuate it. 'Lore' without folk becomes mere a textual exercise without the functional value attended to it, therefore becomes simply an intellectual exercise rather than an exercise bearing on social utility. Keeping in view this phenomena, in this chapter an attempt has been made to study the various facets of the lore, *chindu bhāgavatham* in relation to the folk which nativised this form. It in fact thus, becomes a cultural product of that folk.

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section one deals with the ethnographical details of *chindu mādigas*; section two covers *Jāmabapurānam*, the cast myth, which narrates how the community has come into existence; the third section is on the performance of *Yellammavēsham* which is their cast goddess; the fourth section elaborates the evolution of the *bhāgavatham* tradition and the fifth section is on the format of the presentation of the performance along with the technical details of theatre such as stage, make-up and costumes, ornaments, music and dance along with the pre performance and post performance rituals. It also contains the introduction of the play and also the order of the entry of characters which is a typical feature of *yakshagāna* tradition.

## SECTION-I

### **CHINDUS: ORIGIN AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE:**

*Chindu bhāgavatham* or *chindu yakshagānam* is a unique folk theatre form prevalent in the northern Telengana districts of Andhra Pradesh. It started as a ritual form, presenting the cast myth of the *harijans* and in course of time included stories from Ramanaya, Mahabharatha and Bhagavatha. Since last hundred years popular legends are also being performed in this format. There is no historical accuracy or recorded evidence about the beginnings of this form. It is supposed to be the oldest art form.. Edgar Thurston in his volumes "Tribes and Casts of South India" mentions the *chindu mādigas* as "*veshagāllu*", a performing sub-group of *mādigas*<sup>1</sup>. However, Thurstan's survey appears to have been limited to Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh, that too mostly pertaining to Karnataka borders.

*Chindu* performers belong to the lower strata of the society known as *mādigas*, which is a cast of *harijans*. Among the *mādigas*, the families

performing this kind of *bhagavātham* are known as *chindu-mādigas* and thus becoming a sub-group or sub-sect of *mādiga* community. The *mādigas* are self employed in their cast related profession which is tanning of leather and making leather goods. But *chindu mādigas* have taken dancing and performing of cast-myth and other *yakshagānas* as their chief profession and hence are considered as the 'acquired children'<sup>2</sup> of *mādigas*. The *chindu mādigas* perform mostly for the *mādiga* audience and collect money after the performance. The *chindu mādigas* is the term used in Telangana region and in coastal Andhra region they are called *mādigabhogas*. As mentioned earlier in Rayalaseema region they are called as '*chindu veshagāllu*'. When compared with Telangana region the *chindu* families are much less in number in coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions.

There are two views about the word '*chindu*' tagged to these people. One view is that the people from *mādiga* community who have taken dancing as their profession are called as *chindu mādigas* because '*chindu*' means a dance step. The other view is that the word '*chindu*' has been obtained from the word '*sindu*<sup>3</sup>' which means ocean, as these dancers dance like the waves of ocean which are very dynamic and artistic in nature.

The myth<sup>4</sup> pertaining to the origin of the *chindu* family says that, in the past when a fierce battle was going on between lord Siva and *tripurāsūrās* (the demons), seven crore people of Jambava origin (the *mādigas*) supported lord Siva. When the demons were killed, from each droplet of the blood one thousand demons were reborn. To stop this multiplication *adisakti* or Yellamma was invoked who drank the blood pouring out the bodies of these demons. She became unconscious and fell asleep. To regain her consciousness, thirty three crore gods and goddesses tried their best to awake

her, but without success. Then one crore of *harijan*s took the '*kanaka dappu*' (a percussion instrument very effective to draw the attention) and banged, for which Jambava's daughter danced and served Yellamma. Her dance was just like the waves of the ocean. Yellamma woke up and pleased with her dance, blessed the dancers. Thus, the *chindu* dance began, and *Yellamma* became the goddess of *mādigas*.

The *chindu mādigas* as the other people of the *mādiga* community live in clusters in the out-skirts of a village. Their customs and traditions are same as that of *mādigas*, but there is no marriage alliance between these two sub-sects because *mādigas* treat *chindu mādigas* as their cousin brothers.

The head of the family is male and as art form is their profession the elders in the family train the youngsters in singing, dancing, ornaments making, costumes stitching, applying self makeup and playing of musical instruments. During the off season, the elder male and female members of the family work as agriculture laborers.

Child marriage is not prevalent in this community. The marriages are performed when the girl attains the age of puberty i.e. fourteen or fifteen years of age. Dowry system is totally absent and the practice of the *oli*<sup>5</sup> (bride price) is still in existence. Gifts in kind are offered to the bridegroom depending upon the capacity of the individuals. When untouchability is rampant in the society, no brahmin entered either the huts or the places of the marriages to perform the marriage rituals of *chindus*. An elderly person of the same community used to act as *purohit* to perform the marriage, and other related rituals. But now in the changed scenario brahmins are performing the marriages, if they are called<sup>6</sup>.



An important and interesting custom of *chindu-mādigas* is performing *upnayanam* (thread marriage), before the marriage of a male member. The system of *upnayanam* and wearing sacred thread around the neck from left to right is a vedic tradition, prevailing in the higher castes. The wearing of sacred thread known as “*yagnopaveetham*” (Sanskrit term) and “*jandhyam*” (Telugu term) suggests the high cast of the person wearing it. According to *chindus* they wear the sacred thread, after performing all the rituals of the thread marriage, which was basically a brahminical tradition, only to maintain sanctity and purity in the performance. They also practice and chant the sacred “*Gayathri mantram*”.

The marriages are arranged by elders. The marriage with own brother's and sister's daughter is prohibited due to close blood relationship. There are divorces, re-marriages and widow marriages. A widow after the marriage gets full woman's status in the society<sup>7</sup>. The marriages are performed as community festivals and they perform usually ‘Seetha kalyanam’ as *yakshagānam* during those occasions.

This community has their own *panchayat* (village court). *Kulaguru* (the cast head) and *sarpanch* will conduct the cast *panchayat*, which is judicial tribunal to decide the cases like theft, adultery, family disputes etc., and accord punishments. Every member of the community abides by the rules and regulations of its tribunal. Thus, *kula panchayat*, *kula guru* and *sarpanch* serve as a close knit organization.

Their women are confined to the houses in the earlier days. They are not allowed to take part in the performances except performing the cast goddess Yellamma's role. But in the changed circumstances, women play the roles of both female and male characters. The *chindus* are illiterates.

They practice the texts of *yakshagāna* by listening from the elders. The oral tradition also prevented them from attending to schools for education. Some of them have the primary education and they know to write their names and put signatures. Their poverty, ignorance and semi nomadic life style might be the chief factors for not concentrating on their children's education.

They observe and celebrate all the Hindu festivals and other holy days. The lord Narasimha, the lion faced incarnation of Vishnu believed to be one of the *dasāvatharās*, is their primary god<sup>8</sup>, even though Yellamma is their cast goddess. They are non-vegetarians and consume toddy and liquor. They perform animal sacrifices during the religious and social rituals and also during the performance of Yellamma character to appease the goddess. During the times of a birth of a child or puberty they observe pollution. On the occasions of death the close relatives observe ten days of pollution which is also a brahminical tradition. The disposal of the dead body is by way of burial. After cleaning the body, they offer new cloths and perform *pooja* to the dead, before taking out in a procession with drum beats for burial.

All the villages in the district are equally shared by various *chindu* performing groups. These groups are known as '*melams*', and each *melam* is known with the head of the melam's name like Neelamma *melam*, Yellamma *melam* etc. Each group tour villages for which they have rights to perform. They give continuous performances for a couple of days and claim the remuneration from the *mādigā* community only. As mentioned earlier they are deemed as the acquired children of *mādigas* and according to Y. Yadagiri Sarma "they possess a rights document called '*Kanchi farmāna*', which details the amount of money and other materials like rice, gold, cloths etc. to

be given as 'teygam' by each *māḍiga* family *tochinduperformers*'<sup>9</sup>. This system is still prevailing in the Telangana region.

Though the *māḍigas* are once considered as untouchables, their services are essential to the village in order to sustain balance in ecological system. There is an immense need to purify the villages from the pollution caused out of deceased animals and human beings. The disposal of the dead is not only essential but imminent need of any human organization. The *māḍigas* used to perform the services of disposal of the dead. Therefore they are considered as polluted cast and kept aside. However, the segmentation of this case in a watertight compartment is also considered as a threat to the existing social order. Their behavioural modes need to be controlled and regulated in order to check any threat arising from them. For this reason the Hindu social order of the village found means and ways to appease these communities by incorporating them into Hindu fold through Sanskritising their mythical ancestors and goddesses. This process of Sanskritisation<sup>10</sup> is done at two levels. One at the level of 'deitification' of their ancestors and goddess<sup>11</sup> and at the other, in their performance tradition where the texts are Sanskritised. The Jambava *muni* and Yellamma are Sanskritised by linking them with the *adipurāṇam* wherein Jambava *muni* becomes the originator of the communities and Yellamma becomes the *adisakthi*. At the performative level the epic episodes, drawn heavily from Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and other Purāṇas, textured in such a way that the images of the royal personages imparted on the *yakṣhagāṇa* characters, not only in content, but also through costume and makeup. In the process the *chindu māḍigas* are drawn into the Hindu fold and made to accept Naraśimha, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Naraśimha, a lion headed god is semeotically represented as the god of forest

tribes and autochthonous communities of whom the *mādigas* form a part. Through the imposition of the Hindu pantheon along the lines of Sanskritisation, the *mādigas* performing tradition also got Sanskritised. That is the reason why the elements of Sanskritic theatrical tradition even till date are overtly found in their native performance tradition. Even in the social organization, the concept of mutual dependency by way of exchange of goods and services<sup>12</sup>, as it is found in the '*varna system*', is also noticeable in the *chindu mādiga* tradition. These communities strategically adopt the rights and obligations of each community to a sub community and vice-versa in order to avoid social tensions and class conflicts. The *chindu mādigas* of the present day claim *Kanchi farmāna* as their tradition's document, which gave them, rights over certain villages to perform and collect their specified remuneration in the form of *teygam*.

In fact *Kanchi farmāna*, according to *chindu* performers of Nizamabad and Nalgonda districts, is originally given to them by the pontifical seat of Vishnu Kanchi. According to tradition Kanchi is the seat of Vaishnavite and Saivite sectarian leaders who established at Kanchi their *peethas* and *mathas*. Kanchi rose to prominence as a religious center from the times of Adi Sankaracharya. When the sectarian religions began to flourish in Andhra region around 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. The sectarian ideologies parallel to the brahmanical ideologies tried to woo the under-privileged communities to come into their fold. Several remote places of worship at hilltops were made as the main centers of temples, through the tradition of pilgrimage<sup>13</sup>. Most of the tribes and the native communities during this phase of history are brought into village fold. Myths pertaining to their origin from the *puranic* themes began to get circulation to pacify these communities and at the same time to

fix them in a social frame without distorting their identity. *Kanchi farmāna* is one such ordinance that the *chindu* performers relish as an authentic document to regulate their service distribution. The itinerary movement of the communities and the frontiers of performance of their caste myth *Jāmbapurānam* and cultural performance, *Yellammavēsham* are defined through such *farmanas*.

Some stories of origin of *chindu mādigas* are available also in *Jāmbapurānam*, *Sakthipurānam*, *Arundhati Kalyānam*, *Moola Stambham*<sup>14</sup>. Since *Jāmbapurānam* is an obligatory performance and hence widely performed, it is discussed in detail in the following section of this chapter.

## SECTION-II

### JAMBAPURANAM : THE CASTE MYTH

Indian Culture is very ancient, composite and variegated. It is a known fact that the society which contributed to its richness has been caste oriented. For want of a systematic recording much of a cultural heritage has passed into oblivion. Even though a few individuals are engaged in good service in their limited way to retrieve the lost treasure, with some dedication, their efforts are meager and incomplete in form.

From the ancient past, several castes contributed to the cultural excellence but as the masses were mostly illiterate, the various art forms of the illiterate castes have been handed down from generation to generation by oral tradition. The art forms of *mādiga* caste which draw their inspiration from the myth, popularly known as *Jāmbapurānam*, disseminated in five art forms viz., *chindu*, *Asadi*, *Baindla*, *Masti* and *mādiga jangam*<sup>15</sup>. They form as the sub-castes of *mādiga* community. From the point of view of stage performance, *Jāmbapurānam*, which is being performed by the *chindu* sub-

caste is the most powerful in its expression and reach to the masses which is an obligatory performance during their festivals and marriages. The performance of *Jāmbapurānam* ends with the performance of 'Yellammavēsham' their cast goddess.

In the *Jāmbapurānam* of the *chindus* the myth is unfolded in a logical sequence by means of an interaction between the two main characters<sup>16</sup> – the brahmin, symbolic of the prevailing dominant culture on one side, and the Jambavamuni, known as Gosangi<sup>17</sup>, in this myth who is the ancestor of the down trodden, on the other.

The entire legend is unfolded to the audience by arguments between the two characters. The brahmin who is the first appearing on the stage is depicted as a person self-conscious and overbearing, who looks down upon the illiterate for their bad pronunciation<sup>18</sup>.

Jambavamuni, the hero whose name is given to the epic arrives a little later and he is accosted by the brahmin. The brahmin asks him to reveal his origin, his land and his philosophy. The way he questions the Jambavamuni he assumes a stance of superiority.

Jambavamuni claims that he is the grandfather of the 'thri-murthis' (trio) viz., the creator, the preserver and the destroyer<sup>19</sup>. According to him, there were eighteen *yugas*<sup>20</sup> (units of time) commencing from *Nandaneerana* to *Kali yuga* – unlike the four *yugas* enunciated by the vedic traditions<sup>21</sup>.



The character of Gosangi (Jambavamuni) in the cast myth  
Jāmparurānam performance



The characters of Brahmin and Gosangi in Jambapuranm

In the first and the earliest *yuga*, *Adidevudu* took a form of multiple heads, eyes, hands, and feet and created from his five *vedas*. In the third *yuga* (*Adbhutha yuga*), Jambavamuni is born, with profusely hairy body in a bear form. Thus, he narrates the history of creation and says that, he is elder to *Adisakthi* borne in the fifth *yuga* (*Thamanda Yuga*). *Adisakthi* performed penance and took the form of a peahen and she delivered three eggs from which '*thri-murthies*' assumed their forms. But when they had a problem with the *Adisakthi*, Jambavamuni advised and saved them from the embarrassment of copulating with their mother. Later the *thri-murthies* created the universe of many parts<sup>22</sup>.

The Jambavamuni claims that he is six months older than the earth. In one *yuga* known as '*Bhinnaja yuga*', when Jambavamuni was meditating, a son was borne from his right abdomen. But he has to be killed for a noble cause. For this killing Jambavamuni received a curse, according to which he was condemned to be an untouchable for five thousand years. His own dying some who cursed him also said that, after five thousand years he would get rid off the social seclusion and be absorbed in the society with all the honour due to him<sup>23</sup>.

In the course of his narration of the legend, Brahmin would be intervening with several questions and arguments, which Jambavamuni answers with wit, tenacity and at times sarcasm<sup>24</sup>. He upholds the dignity of labour and the status of his descendants. The legend closes with the exit of brahmin in the direction of Kashi, a holy place and pilgrim centre. On the way he has to cross a river in which he gets drowned keeping the footwear above his head even without any comment, in his efforts to save himself<sup>25</sup>.



The text ends with this. The *Jāmbapurānam* warns about the future of castism in this country by discussing the contemporary issues.

*Jāmbapurānam* as seen from the above narration is not simply a performance text but a cultural text, which marks the identity of the caste, the *mādigas*. It, in fact through repeated performances rejuvenate the ideology that the caste cling to and through which its functional roles in the given social reality are defined and hence fixes the normative behaviour of the caste. To speak esoterically the caste repeatedly projects the anti-structural overtones to their own community not in order to create social unrest but to mitigate the sense of feeling of one. Ritually the caste solidarity is also expressed through another performance known as *Yellammavèsham* to uphold their social roles as sanctified ones and hence predetermined to be performed by them. The following section gives a picture of *Yellammavèsham*, a performance equally important to contextualize the communities' social being in a stratified social system.

### SECTION-III

#### YELLAMMA VESHAM : THE CASTE GODDESS

The *chindu* performing troupes, which are called '*melams*', every year start their performances after observing a ritual of worshipping their make-up, costumes and ornaments kit on *Vijayadasami* day (the Dasara festival day). This ritualistic worship is known as '*pette pooja*<sup>26</sup>'. They tour the villages allotted to them, and in each village they stay for our to five days and give the performances to the *mādiga* community from their repertoire. Customary performance of *Jāmbapurānam* is done on the first day of their camp in the village, and *Yellammavèsham* is performed on the last day of their series of performances. However, depending upon the local circumstances both these

performances are presented on the last day itself. In any case the performance of *Yellammavèsham* should be the last one in their programme<sup>27</sup>.

The *mādigas* believe that Yellamma, their caste goddess is the combination of goddesses Lakshmi, Saraswathi, Parvathi, Shyamala and other superhuman powers<sup>28</sup>. She is the *adisakthi* for them.

The performance of *Yellammavèsham* is the most important in the cultural context of the community, which is also very vibrant in form in the *chindu* performances. On the day of the performance, the woman performing the character of Yellamma observes austerity<sup>29</sup>. It is just waiting at the wings till her turn comes, because this would be the last item on that particular day also in the tour itinerary.

The *mādiga* community considers the presence of Yellamma is very auspicious to that village. The woman performer who performs the *Yellammavèsham* is offered new cloths, flowers, fruits, sacred *kumkum* (safron) and turmeric powders. They worship the *yellammavèsham* and they pay money to the performer, which at times may go to thousands of rupees. The very entrance of this *yellammavèsham* into the village is a mark of prosperity to them. The community feels that the performer is a personification of goddess herself. If she enters the houses of *mādigas*, they consider it as a blessing. The other performers of the group along with Yellamma dance with a vibrant footwork, to the heavy beats of drums. They spill turmeric powder, *kumkum*, flowers and neem leaves and the smoke of frincine sense. They prey goddess Yellamma to give wealth, health and prosperity to the people of that hamlet<sup>30</sup>.



Finishing Touches to Yellammavesham



The costumes, ornaments and the performer of Yellamma Vesham,  
the caste goddess



Goddess Yellamma and her ferocious looks



Chindu Jihmamahamuni and Yellamma in the performance of  
Yellammavesham

The woman performing *Yellammavèsham* will observe piousness from the morning on the day of performance. She observes fasting till the performance is over. She takes the bath in the morning and she gets into trance till the start of the performance and maintains silence throughout. This is a kind of psychological preparation to perform the role of goddess and finally she lives in that role in a different emotional status during the performance<sup>31</sup>.

A loose black blouse tucked into tight red saree forms the basic costume. Turmeric paste is applied as a thick layer to the face, hands and feet. A big round and red 'tatto' (sacred dot) applied to the forehead with *kumkum* or red colour. A series of dark red, white and black dots are applied with colours around the eyes, going down to the chin through cheeks in rows are painted. The face becomes glittering and appears ferocious<sup>32</sup>.

The ornaments constitutes large gold coloured ring to nose (called *bulaki* in Telugu), small chains of sea shells tied above and below the arms, and also to the ankles of legs as anklets. The shells stitched to a leather sheet of four to five feet in length and two feet in width will be tied to the entire body from neck to legs as a cover to the entire front view of the body. She holds a big sword in the right hand and plaque with Yellamma figure in the left hand, in absence of this she holds leaves of neem tree.

According to *Jāmbapurānam*, the caste myth<sup>33</sup> of *mādigas*, Renuka Devi with a fear of getting killed by her son Parasurama, approaches Jambavantha for his help. She prays him and says that she will be hiding from her son in the leather container of Jambavantha. She also warns him the if he tells this secret to her son he will kill her and the moment she is killed

she emerges as *mahasakthi* (great power) from the leather container and swallows all the people along with Jambavantha.

Parasurama comes to know about this and he kills his mother. As warned she emerges as a *mahasakthi* who is called Yellamma. She is ferocious and starts terrorising the people. Jambavantha asks his second wife's son *chindu* Jihmamahamuni, to save the people from the terror of Yellamma by pacifying her with prayers and other offerings.

*Chindu* Jihmamahamuni prayed Yellamma for nine days along with others and finally pacified the ferocious Yellamma by offering animal sacrifice, toddy and other eatables. This situation is reenacted whenever *Yellammavèsham* is performed by *chindu mādigas*.

This ritualistic performance starts at the local Yellamma temple in a hamlet. The drum beating, dancing and worshipping of *Yellammavèsham* continues at the temple for an hour and then Yellamma moves out of the temple. The chief priest (Potharaju) of the entire ritual, the *Chindollu* beating the *dappus* and others follow her. She enters the area where *mādiga* community lives and she visits all the houses and finally settles at a place. People sacrifice a goat to Yellamma and the blood is sprinkled on her, so that the angry and ferocious Yellamma cools down. People offer money, rice, new cloths, fruits and flowers to her. Once ecstasy is over, she drinks toddy and she would be taken to the nearby river or canal for a bath. After returning back to the *mādiga* hamlet she wears the new cloths offered to her.

The earlier tradition was to select a good looking *chindu* girl, keeping her unmarried to perform *Yellammavèsham*. It is a kind of offering to god as prevalent in *devadasi* system. She is affectionately called as '*ada papa*' or '*ada pilla*', means unmarried young lady<sup>34</sup>. The native term for the girls

dedicated to goddess is '*jogita*' and the girl invariably suffixes her name as an honor with '*chindu jogita*<sup>35</sup>'. This denotes that she is not only dedicated to goddess but also well versed in the art of dancing.

She performs this character from the age of sixteen years to fifty years of age. She is respected as the daughter of the goddess and the lady of purity.

There are no restrictions for this lady to have sexual enjoyment with males. She agrees for sexual pleasure with the person who gives more money to her after the performance of *Yellammavèsham* in that village. If she becomes pregnant by any chance and delivers a child, her parents accept that child, and she is not ridiculed in the society<sup>36</sup>. In a patriarchal society, this has paved a way to exploit her sexually. She has the license to a free sex and the villagers are paying high money to enjoy her, which they believe it as a privilege to have sex with that performer. This has given scope for the bad effect not only on the community but in *chindu* performance tradition also.

With the passage of time, the *chindus* have stopped this practice. They could realize the social injustice done to scores of young ladies over the generations. At present *Yellammavèsham* is being performed by the wives of the male artistes in a group. All most all good looking women in a *chindu* group will perform *Yellammavèsham* and the earlier tradition of free sex is ruled out.

As discussed above, the performance of *Yellammavèsham* intrinsically knitted the identity of the folk to project it as a community. Both the performances of *Jāmbapurānam* and *Yellammavèsham* act as identity markers and establish the community of *chindus* as professional performers to the community of *madigas*. The *chindus* as professional theatrical performers uphold the folk theatre known as *yakshagānam*. It is the performance of

*yakshagānams*, which esoterically define their existence as minstrels as well as professional entertainers to the folk in general. The ensuing section traces the origin and historicity of *yakshagānam* in general and *chindu yakshagānam* in particular.

## SECTION-IV

### BHAGAVATHAM AND YAKSHAGANAM

*Bhāgavatham* is a Sanskrit derivative, which means pertaining to god<sup>37</sup>, and most of the mythological stories the *chindus* perform are taken from Ramayana, Bhagavatha and Mahabharatha and this form is known as *chindu bhāgavatham*. The word *bhāgavatham* has metamorphosed as '*bhāgotham*' in the colloquial usage of rural folk. Another meaning of this term is 'what is narrated'. *bhāgavatam* according to Indian tradition affirms that it is one of the eighteen *mahapuranas* which are meant for narration and so *chindu* performers narrate the '*leelas*' of god by dancing and singing and with less acting.

The word *bhāgavatham* (the term used for both *bhāgavatha purāna* and for performances based on the stories from it) is a blanket term loosely attributed to any theatrical presentation in Andhra, particularly in Telangana region. Ordinarily no distinction is made between *bhāgavatham*; *yakshagānam* and *veedhi nātakam* and they are used synonymously<sup>38</sup>. However, all the three forms differ both in their textual content and in performative orientation. Technically speaking, *bhāgavatham* is a form of theatrical presentation, which has a strong bearing on the Krishna legends. The extension of the term to other kinds of performances may simply indicate that these Vaishanava performances gained momentum much before the



others. Nagabhushana Sarma opines that the influence of Jayadeva's Geetha Govindam (13<sup>th</sup> A.D) on the performing arts also indicates that the probable origin of the Bhagavatha performance in Andhra could be dated to a period after the 13<sup>th</sup> century<sup>39</sup>.

During the *bhakti* movement *yakshagānam* became a very significant medium for the spreading of leelas of the god. The main performance place was temple. Since the story was about the god, these performances were uniformly called *bhāgavathams*. In course of time, however, even the *bhāgavathams* parted ways in their performative quality and attained an individuality of their own. The *toorpu bhāgavatham* and *chindu bhāgavatham* are the examples of this. While the former is strictly a *kalāpam* and the later a *yakshagānam*, both of them are tagged together and are called *bhāgavathams*. *Veedi nathakam* also though erroneously called *bhāgavatham* in some parts of Andhra (only to denote the story therein) it is a different vibrant form of more dramatic and less narrative, descriptive qualities. M. Nagabhushana Sarma made the following differentiation between *yakshagānam*, *kalāpam* and *veedinātakam* depending on the textual content and performance qualities.

YAKSHAGĀNAM	KALĀPAM	VEEDHINĀTAKAM
1.Importance to narration - Description	Importance to expressions of inner emotions	Importance to dramatization of human conflicts and so Narrative- dramatic.
2. In its initial stages, one person played several roles without changing his costume : narration. In later stages narration/dialogues through a few characters.	One major character and one minor the latter being the suthradhara	As many actors as there are characters and in addition a sutradhara and a vidushaka
3. Music is dominant; dance is subsidiary	Music is synchronized with dance, both of them having equal importance.	Music and dance ancillary to or part of dramatic dialogues. The dialogues may take the form of song.
4. Characters do not introduce themselves.	Characters introduce themselves.	Characters introduce themselves.
5. The suthradhara's role is minimal : he introduces the subject, presents the exposition, and supplies, the interludes bringing the	Suthradhara is important. He is often the Vidushaka also.	Suthradhara assumes a major role. Vidushaka is separated.

spatial and temporal aspects of narration.		
6. Earlier Yakshaganas are written in the style of prabandhas – with invocatory songs, shasthyantas, etc.	Invocation to the gods only to pray for the success of the performances.	Invocation is limited to Ganesh and Saraswathi.
7. Earlier desi meters are used (ragāca, reṅu, ela etc).	Made use of daruvus, chumikas, padams.	Made use of daruvus, dialogue-songs and poems. Action-songs prominent.
8. Poetic elements dominate.	Poetic elements with dance-oriented songs.	Dramatic elements dominate.
9. Prose is minimal. It is used only for interlinking passages – prose is recitative.	Poetic prose is used for the characters and colloquial prose for the Suthradhara – prose is recitative. the former is contained in the text.	Dramatic prose is introduced
10. Dance is occasional; it is not connected with the emotional content of the play.	Dance is dominant.	Dance and music serve the dramatic needs. While music accompanies the dramatic text, dance fills the time when the lines are sung by the chorus.
11. Projection of the	There is not much of a	Story is acted out, only

story through musical narration	story. The few incidents are shown through dance and emotive expression.	incidents being presented
12. There is no act-division: Sandhi Vacanas (interlinking prose passages) supply the division.	There is no act division: the suthradhara supplies the spatial and temporal changes and the story that runs in between.	Act – division suggested by the entry-songs of the major characters.
13. Emphasis on the text. Vachika is elaborate.	Emphasis on the interpretation of the text through sattvika. Sattvika is elaborate.	Emphasis on vachika and angika, with broad outlining of sattvika. Vachika and angika are elaborate.
14. Humour is minimal.	Humour supplied by the suthradhara; text – oriented.	Humour is a major part; supplied by the vidushaka. Usually improvised; non-textual.
15. Narration of the story is linear.	Interpretation of the story: circular.	Dramatization of story linear.

It is believed that *chindu bhāgavatham* has developed as an individual tradition by parting ways with *yakshagāṇam* in its performative qualities. The deviations can be noted in comparison to *yakshagāṇam* in respect of the following items of the above classification.

Item- 3. Music and Dance both are dominant in *chindu bhaghāvatam*.

Item- 4. In *chindu bhaghāvatam* characters introduce themselves

Item- 5. *Sūtradhara* is *pradhani* in *chindu bhaghāvatam* and his role is very Important in this tradition.

Item- 10. Dance is continuous as the tradition's name goes with *chindu*— a dance step.

Except these deviations, *chindu bhāgavatham* retains all the other qualities of *yakshagānam*.

So, *chindu bhāgavatham* popularly known for the performance of *chindus* has its roots in *yakshagānam*. Even the texts recorded or written (and published) are titled as *yakshagānams* along with the title of that particular theme or story like *Sati Savithri yakshgānam*, *sarangadhara yakshagānam*.

*Yakshagānam* seems to be one of earliest forms of the performing tradition of Andhra, though the existing text can only date back to fifteenth<sup>h</sup> and sixteenth centuries. Both the etymological meaning of the word and the popular tradition indicate that originally it is referred to a singing style of a sect called *yakshas*<sup>40</sup>. What was the relationship between the *yakshas* and the singing tradition, and between the *yakshas* and Telugu people remain at best a conjecture.

The earliest reference to *yaksha* singing is available in Palkuriki Somanadha's (1280-1340 A.D.) *Panditaradhya Charitra*. He describes in the '*parvatha prakaranam*', the performance of the then existing art forms during the *Sivarathri* festival at Srisailam. In the words of Palkuriki Somanadha, "there are the singers and performers and vidyadharas performing with great devotion and enthusiasm<sup>41</sup>". Srinadha is the first poet (AD.1430) to refer to *yakshagānam* as a compound word, while extolling the

Draksharama pilgrim center in his Bhimeswara Puranam. While translating this piece, Srinadha added that the *gandharvas* sang in the *yakshagāna* style, whereas the original contained only the description of *gandhrvas* singing, showing their expertise in the *gandhrva vidya* (music)<sup>42</sup>.

Kridabhiramam mentioned *yaksha* men and women signing and dancing on festive occasions<sup>43</sup>. The poets of *prabhanda yuga* also mentioned the term *yaksha* in their works<sup>44</sup>. These texts affirm that some people disguised as *yakshas* gave musical performances and it latter developed into a separate style of singing. Women joined in due course with men in singing and they are also experts in dancing<sup>45</sup>.

In the state of Karnataka, *yakshagāna* or *yakkagita* is a singing tradition attributed to a community of singers. Similarly in Andhra, *jakkulavāru*, belong to a community of singers and dancers and several villages are built commemorating them. Edgar Thurston described the *Jakkus* as “a dancing and theatrical caste”<sup>46</sup>. Some of the *jakkus* must have held high positions in the administration during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as is evidenced by an inscription at Tirupathi dated July 9, 1481 by one Jakkula Kannayi<sup>47</sup>. Separate texts are written for them as *Jakkula kathas*. References are also made to *jakkula* dancers and their performances in Purushothama Deekshitar’s Tanjapura Annadana Mahanatakam of 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>48</sup>. These references made to believe that there existed in Andhra a music oriented community called the *jakku*, which took to dancing and then to theatrical performances in course of time. The song sung by *jakku* is *jakkula pata* and its Sanskritised form is said to be *yakshagānam*.

On the basis of these evidences, one can safely conclude, that *yakshagānam* began as a singing tradition and developed into a full-fledged

theatre tradition. This development has taken place in three stages (1) the *sankeerthana* stage (2) the narrative stage and (3) the theatrical stage.

The first stage of *yakshagānam* must have been closely related to the religious festivals. The two very first references to it are in connection with temple festivals at the Srisailam temple and at the Draksharama temple. During this stage *yakshagānam* is a musical rendering, in different rhythms, sung in praise of god or goddesses (as the occasion demands). They are disguised as *yakshas* and rendered their songs in the street before the temple during a festival (*thirunalla* or *jatara*), sitting at a place when audience surrounded them and listen to their songs<sup>50</sup>.

The second stage of development is the addition of a story to the stray devotional verses. At this stage, as all the available descriptions indicate, only female singers in the guise of *yakshinis* sang narratives. The first available text of such narrative is Obayamantri's *Garudachala Mahatyam*, which contains songs and poems of a wide variety set in *jampa*, *triputa*, *ata* and *eka talas*. It also has *desi vruttas* (meters) like *dwipada*, *padyam*, *ela*, *sobhanam*, *dhavala* and *mangala harathi*<sup>51</sup>.

At least three prosodic texts confirm these literary qualities of *yakshagānam*. An anonymous text *Lakshana Deepika* attributed to sixteenth century, mentioned that *yakshagānam* contains *pada*, *daruvu*, *ela*, *dhavala*, *jakkula reku pada*, *chandamama suddi*, *ashtaka* all belonging to the *desi* tradition<sup>52</sup>.

In *yakshagānam* however, songs are predominant for they are to be sung and also set to dance. The text contain an elaborate prelude with extollatory verses on gods and goddesses, verses of praise to earlier poets,

verses about the present work and its author etc., Connecting prose descriptions are incorporated. No instructions are given for performance. These prose descriptions are known as '*katha sandhi*'<sup>63</sup>. The major emotions depicted are erotic, heroic and sorrowful.

The third and most important stage of development of *yakshagānam* has taken place in the seventeenth century from 1663 AD to the end of nineteenth century. *Yakshagānam* during this period had a hey-day since both the common people and royal families patronised the form. It has also seen substantial changes in the format of the *yakshagānam*. It moved from being a narrative form in which one performer acted out the roles of several characters, and also provided the necessary suggestions regarding the characters, the locale and the time of various actor taking different roles. Occasionally stage directions were provided. Even now the tradition is in force with less emphasis on movement and action and with greater reliance on song and dance. Prose dialogues are limited. A number of *desi* meters are used.

During the reign of Tangore Nayaka kings, *yakshagānam* received unprecedented royal patronage. The reign of Vijaya Raghava Nayaka (1663-73) was a golden age in the history of *yakshagānam*. The king himself was a great writer. Out of the twenty-three *yakshagānams* that he has said to have written, six are available. He called *yakshagānams* as *natakamulu* (dramas)<sup>64</sup>.

The same type of patronage is given by the Maharashtrian kings who later ruled Tangore. Shahaji (1684-1712 AD) was the author of **twenty** *yakshagānams*<sup>65</sup>. Important administrators and poets outside the Telugu land



also wrote *yakshagānam*. Peda Kemparaya, the founder of the city of Mysore (AD1658-78) was the author of *Ganga-Gowri Vilasam*<sup>56</sup>.

In the Telangana region *yakshagānams* were popular from the eighteenth century onwards. Seshachala Kavi's *Dharmapuri Ramayanam* (AD 1780) and Rapaka Srirama Kavi's *Adhyatma Ramanayanam* (AD 1780) are important contributions to the genre<sup>57</sup>. Even in recent years Chervirala Bhagayya recorded and wrote nearly hundred *yakshagānams*, which are performed even today in the remote villages of Telangana region. His disciple Mohd. Abdullah wrote *yakshagānam* using folk themes and introducing several rural characters. His *Hanumadrama Sagramam* is a fictitious mixture of puranic lore and folk imagination<sup>58</sup>.

#### **YAKSHAGANA TEXTS WRITTEN BY CHERVIRALA BHAGAYYA**

1. Are Marateela charitra
2. Kanakathara (1982)
3. Kanthamathi charitramu (1982)
4. Kambhojaraja charitra (1980)
5. Kiratharjuna charitramu (1982)
6. Kusalava natakamu (1986)
7. Gayopakhyanam (1984)
8. Gulebakavali anu pushpa leelavathi charitramu
9. Jayantha Jayapalamu (1980)
10. Tharakasura vadha (1982)
11. Nalamaharaju charitra (1982)
12. Nagarjuna charitramu (1982)
13. Pundareeka charitramu (1982)

14. Peda Bobbili charitramu (1979)
15. Pothuluri Veera Brahmam gari charithra (1979)
16. Pothuluri veerabrahmam gari charitra (1980)
17. Bhabruvahana charitramu
18. Balanagamma charaithramu (1961)
19. Balanagamma charitramu (1983)
20. Madalasa parinayamu (1978)
21. Madhava charitramu (1948)
22. Maya subhadra vilasamu (1986)
23. Ramba rampala (1973)
24. Srikrishna tulabharamu (1977)
25. Sri krishna rayabaramu (1977)
26. Srikrishna parijatham (1947)
27. Sri markandeya vilasamu (1982)
28. Seetha swayamvaramu (1950)
29. Sugreeva vijayam (1986)
30. Satya harischandra (1982)
31. Sati Tulsi
32. Sarangadhara natakamu (1976)
33. Sarangadhara charitramu (1983)

In its long history of four hundred years, *yakshagānam* had progressed in different directions and as time passed, was influenced by various local demands and emerged as a popular performance tradition. *Chindu bhāgavatham* / *yakshagānam* retained its age-old traditions in tact with minor adaptations till recent past.

The forgone graphic depiction of the historicity of *yakshagāna* tradition with special reference to *chindu yakshagānam* speaks about the deep rooted tradition of the art form which eventually nativised other cultural traditions in the performance presentation. The *chindu bhāgavatham* is as much folk as 'elite' in its performance. The fact that the text is highly designed on the Sanskrit formats in terms of poems, songs and narratives. It has imbibed the language of elite with the flavor of native dialect as endnotes in the dyad interaction of the characters in the performance. This can be seen in the succeeding section which deals with the format of *chindu bhāgavatham* performance.

## SECTION-V

### THE FORMAT OF CHINDU BHAGAVATHAM PERFORMANCE

#### The beginning of a season:

As discussed earlier all *chinda* groups in a district share the total villages, draw their tour itinerary to perform in various villages and collect the money, which is their right as per the rights document. Every year each group covers a certain number of villages allotted to them and after visiting a set of villages in a year, they tour another set of villages in the next year, and so on. In this pattern they usually cover all the villages in cycles in four or five years, depending upon the number of villages they get as their share. They repeat the same cycle and they re-start touring the first set of villages, which they have covered four or five years ago.

In rainy season is an off season for them. So roughly from June to September they start touring and giving performances, but to meet the livelihood most of them work in fields as agricultural labourers. However,

on demand they may give some performances in their native village during important festivals like *Ganesh chaturdhi* or *Krishna janmashtami* etc.,

Usually on the day of *Vijaya dasami* (Dasara festival) all the members of a *melam* (group) assembled at the group leaders place with all their personal kits of make up material, costumes and ornaments and other material required for giving a performance. They perform a grand *pooja* to their primary gods and also to the kits and boxes containing the materials. This is called '*pette pooja*' (worshipping of boxes containing make-up and other materials) and this entire ritual is celebrated by all of them as a community festival. After the ritual they open the boxes, take out the costumes and ornaments and wear them for some time. They tune the instruments, sing prayers in chorus and start dancing for a while as a curtain riser to make the beginning of the season for the ensuing year. They drink and dine and enjoy the whole day in the manner they like. If for any reason they could not celebrate this ritual on *Vijaya dasami* day, they choose another auspicious day for this purpose and conduct the *pette pooja* on that day<sup>59</sup>.

After *Vijaya dasami*, usually the rains recede and the troops move out of that village to cover their allotted villages for giving performances. The *māḍiga* community acts as host to the *chindus* in all the villages.

### **The Performance space:( the stage)**

The performances are usually given during daytime, preferably afternoon onwards. This seems to be an ancient practice since villagers will be free during that time and availability of sunshine is ensured. However, occasionally they perform during night time also depending upon the unforeseen circumstances



Pette pooja by the chindu performers



Worshiping of ornaments and other properties before applying make-up

and for this they use fire sticks to provide lighting. The performance runs usually for five to six hours and by sunset it comes to a close. As per their traditional belief they should not perform on Sundays and on *amavāsyā* (no-moon day). They follow this belief even to day<sup>60</sup>.

The stage for them is an open-air place, either in front of a temple, in the middle of the village, or any other convenient place where the audience could assemble, comfortably sit and watch the performance. During the rule of Nizam, the performers have to obtain a formal permission from the local village officials for staging their performance. Even though it is a formality, it is a must even today.

The requirement for the staging the performance is basically a plain and unelevated area, some bamboo sticks to post them as pillars on the four corners of the main acting area, some curtains to cover the sides, back and roof of the acting area. Here curtains refer to pieces of cloths like old sarees, *dhotis*, bed-sheets and off late the *shāmiyanas*. These are required to protect the performers from sun, unexpected showers of rain and chiefly to control the spillover of the voices of the performers and to conceive the characters that enter and exit during the course of performance. Now a days during the night performances they are using gas lights and if available electric bulbs to illuminate the acting area and faces of the actors.

Usually the donors/sponsors in a village would help the troupe by supplying the required stage materials. In absence of that, the performers themselves manage to get them and if worst comes they improvise every thing according to the context, circumstances, situation and occasion.



An improvised stage in the middle of the village for the performance of  
Sathi Savithri (Saigudam Village, Nalgonda District)



The stage is the premises of Kali Temple for the performance of Gaja Gouri  
Vratham (Amdapur village, Nizamabad District)

If, by chance nothing is possible they start the performance in an open area, at times audience around them, but projecting their main actions to one side only. But, when the performance happens to be in an arena stage like this, where the performers are surrounded by the audience on all the sides even though they project the main action in one direction, audience sitting in the other directions could clearly see their faces during their dance sequences, because all the performers will take circular movements covering the entire stage while dancing<sup>62</sup>.

In any case as discussed above, once the acting area is finalized they fix the boundaries of the acting area by drawing horizontal and vertical lines with *muggu* (line powder mixed with sand), after cleaning the area and watering it thoroughly. Watering is done to cool down the area and also to avoid rise of dust during their vibrant steps of dancing which irritates the audience sitting nearby. If possible and available they decorate the stage with green mango leaves which are considered auspicious among Hindu community. In earlier days it seems that they used to draw various designs and formulations on and around acting area with powders of turmeric, *muggu* and *kumkum*, to appease gods, to flay away the evil forces, that are expected to disturb the performance<sup>63</sup>. This kind of belief is common not only in the rural folk but also very strongly exist even in the urban sector, which is a part of pan-Indian culture. Even though this belief is not acceptable for some, it definitely gets a decoration to the stage and acting area. It adds beauty and emphasizes the performance space as well as the performance.



### **Pre-performance rituals:**

After making the arrangements at the stage or the place of action, they move along with their kits and other baggage's to a place, which will be convenient for them to sit and apply make-up. Usually they prefer a place very close to the stage for the sake of convenience and proximity. If available a closed room in a nearby house or if it is a temple premises on the backside of the temple or in any other open area close to the stage will become their make-up place. They settle down at that place and keep the boxes in a row and sit opposite to them. On getting clearance from the head of the group, they perform *pooja* to the make-up kits and other bags with flowers, incense sticks, turmeric and *kumkum* powders and finally they break a coconut and offer it to the god. They offer individual prayers to gods. After the *pooja* they open the small boxes or bottles containing different colours and pastes and first they apply *bottu* to the forehead and then touch the feet of the head of the group, or the other elders in the group seeking their blessings for a good performance for that particular show<sup>65</sup>.

### **Make-up, Costumes and Ornaments:**

After this ritual they sit before their individual kits and start applying makeup to their faces. These performers use mostly yellow colour to the faces unless there is a specific reason to apply a different colour like blue to Krishna character, black to Yamadharmaraja character, red to demons (*rākshsa*) characters and violet to Narada character. The base of these colours is homogeneously applied over the face up to neck region and the base paint is prepared by a folk material called as *ardalam*, abstracted in the form of liquid from a wild tree, which will be dried, powdered and properly stored. The *ardalam* is mixed with castor oil to make a paste, which forms the base

paint. However, in the changed circumstances, the present performers are not using *aradalm*, which was the earlier practice. They purchase cheap powders from the shops, which specially sell the makeup colour in the rural areas. For some of the colours they mix with vaseline or grease and some in water. They also use a red liquid called '*jāju*' to highlight the cheeks and lips<sup>66</sup>.

Their makeup is very elaborate, yet makes the faces very bright. The other finer points of facial makeup like *bottu*, shaping of eyebrows, painting of mustaches would be in tune with the characters and they can be easily distinguishable from one character to the other. However, this kind of distinguishing of characters is not possible when they complete wearing of costumes and other ornaments, because they all look alike. This is a significant feature of *chindu bhāgavatham*, where they maintain uniformity and homogeneity in appearance hence the form itself is very spectacular and colourful.

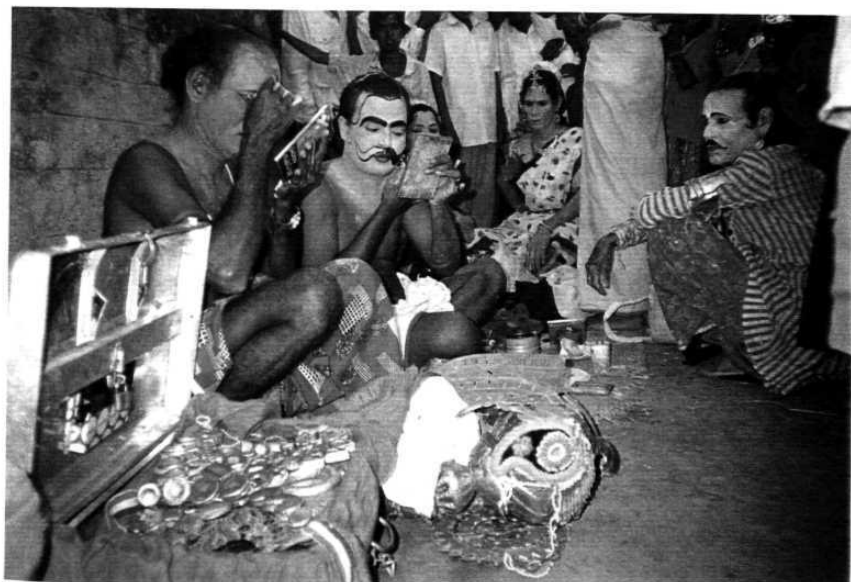
For the royal personage and celestial characters, they paint h black colour for mustaches. In some cases, however, for some characters like lord Siva, Viswamitra and Vasista, they use softened jute fibers to arrange bears and mustaches.

Their costume consists of coloured *dhoties*, sarees, jackets, and shirts and coats specially designed and stitched keeping in view of the various characters they have to perform from the texts of their repertoire.

The costume of these artists is simple but elegant. Both male and female characters, besides an appropriate costume use an '*angavastra*', which is placed on shoulders and falls on both sides up to their knees. On this they wear a *patka*



Chindula Yellamma and her meylam during the make-up session



Self make-up by chindu performers

or *dhatti* (waist belt) which keeps the upper cloth tight. This gives a very interesting look to the characters and facilitates the actors to dance freely.

### **The Ornaments:**

Heavy ornamentation of different colours and sizes make the characters glittering. In fact this kind of using heavy and gorgeous ornaments is a specialty of the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition. With this kind of colourful and peculiarly designed costumes and ornaments make the rural illiterate audience to believe, that they are watching superhuman and celestial figures, because this kind of conceptualization of costumes and ornaments are not seen in the realistic society they live. The dazzling appearance of these mythological characters would mesmerize the audience as if heavenly gods are before them.

The *chindu mādigas* are not only artistes of repute, but also great artisans with an aesthetic taste and good craftsmanship. They stitch the costumes of their own for the characters and also they are the masters in making the ornaments. They know woodcutting, carving, painting, engraving and every skill required to make these kind of beautiful ornaments. They use the wood of *poniki* (wild tree) and *būruḡa* (a species of cotton plant) to prepare crowns, hedgers, heavily designed shoulder gaurds, because the wood of these plants are very light when it becomes dry. They need these kind materials of less weight because they have to wear and dance during the course of the performance. They should be able to bear the weight of these ornaments for about 5 to 6 hours to complete the performance. They draw the designs on the wood and carefully cut it according to the curves and finer points. At times they apply paints of different colours as per the design on these cut wood pieces, if not they paste colour papers according to the colour

scheme they decide depending upon the character and the play. Some of the conventional ornaments made with various metals are purchased by them. The following is the list of ornaments they wear according to the requirement of the character.

(1) crown (2) other head-gears (3) ear rings (4) nose rings for female characters (5) gold coloured chains and necklaces (6) chains of pearls or stones (7) garlands (8) waist belt (9) bangles (10) armlets (11) anklets with small bells (*gājjelu*) (12) shoulder wears (13) rings (14) bracelets and other miscellaneous items. The peculiar feature of the crown is decorating it with a small toy of green parrot or peacock at the top it to give the crown a peculiar and majestic look<sup>67</sup>.

An interesting point here is the costume and ornaments of Pradhani character (the *sitradhara* who introduces the characters mostly and conducts the proceedings on the stage during the performance) which varies from district to district. In the Nizamabad tradition the actor who performed as Pradhani appeared with all the ornaments of a heavenly characters but his costumes are ordinary pant and shirt, which he wears in normal life<sup>68</sup>. In the tradition of Nalgonda district this character appeared as a 'joker', with ordinary pant and shirt with a cricket cap on his head and with mustaches and beard drawn with black pencil/colour<sup>69</sup>.

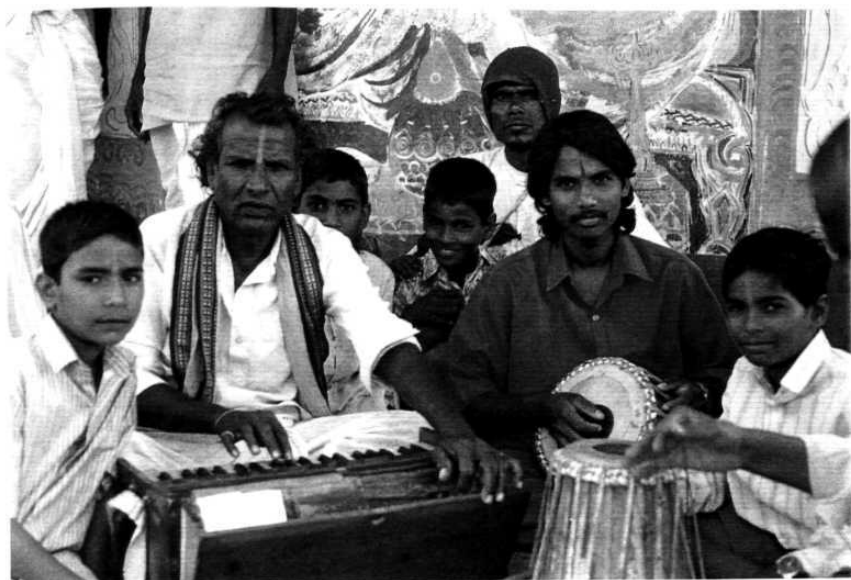
So they go in an order to physically prepare an actor to get transformed into a character, by applying make up first, wearing the costumes next and later the ornaments. They tie tightly the costumes and ornaments, so that they will not slip and cause embarrassment to performers and inconvenience to the performance. After this they collect the individual hand

properties, if any, as per their plan of production and get ready to move on to the stage.

### **The Music:**

The *chindu bhāgavatham*, performance tradition goes with beautiful singing to the set tunes and beats, as solos and chorus. Each performer will sing all the songs and verses as a chorus of all the characters, once the individual character finishes his song or verse. The repetition of the same is made as a chorus by all the characters, irrespective of the relationship between the characters. For example Gajagouri vratam<sup>70</sup>, Gandhari the mother of *kauravas* abuses Kunthi, the mother of *pandavas*, in a scene. Here, the entire conversation and arguments takes place through a song. When Gandhari completes a line a song, abusing Kunthi, all the others including Gandhari and Kunthi repeats the same line as chorus. When Kunthi replies through the next line of the song, all repeat the same, including Gandhari and Kunthi. This is the peculiarity of *chindu* singing tradition.

The orchestra includes harmonium, a percussion instrument like tabla or mridangam, a pair of symbols. Though less in number, they are sufficient to follow the tunes of the songs, and to accompany the chorus in a fast rhythm in accordance with steps they make while dancing. Although all the members of a group are capable of playing these instruments the persons who get expertise are assigned with the job of playing the instruments. In case of emergency and necessity the performing actors also will play these instruments on shifts, when they are free from the main action<sup>71</sup>.



The Harmonist and tablist in the Nizamabad tradition



The harmonist and mridangist in the Nalgonda tradition

The tabla/mridangam always supports the characters in giving a meter to have a good rhythm while the actors render songs. A pair of symbols will be handled and played by the lead chorus singer, usually a female. Woman who becomes old or unfit to play the characters will become the leader of the chorus. In some cases some women are trained only in singing from their childhood, and they remain as singers alone in the tradition. The main singer is supported by other women folk, children and other instrument players and also the off stage actors to complete the chorus group.

The harmonium is an air filled instrument used to maintain the pitch of the singers and to give lead of the tunes, which the actors have to sing in course of the performance. The tunes are also followed by the harmonium player where his fingers mechanically move on the reeds of the harmonium. The player of the harmonium must be a master of all tunes that are practiced by the performers. He is also a teacher who imparts training in singing to the children of the *chindus*, who will become future professionals when they attain adulthood. So the harmonist in a *chindu* performing tradition plays an important role as a teacher, music director, and a leader of the total orchestra set up.

Both the mridangist and harmonist are conversant with the instruments and their technology very well. They know how to tune them or make suitable adjustments with the reeds and pitch tightening systems and keep them ready for the performance. In no time they would repair the minor faults of the instruments, and they are capable of repairing even the major faults. They are also quick, in improvising in case of emergencies, when the instruments trouble them during the course of performance.



The members of the orchestra, along with the lead and supporting singers, take their places at the backside of the acting area, so that they can closely watch the actors, their dancing patterns, and singing, to lead, follow, support and to adjust in tune with the performers, during the course of performance. They will be alert through out the performance, to cover up, any flaws in any component of the performance with their apt and spontaneous improvisations. So without the orchestra and singing group, there is no *chindu bhāgavatham* performance.

The songs sung by actors are the called 'daruvus'. Each *daruvu* ends with a small finishing called '*thirmānam*'. Five kinds of *daruvus* are employed in *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition<sup>72</sup>.

- 1) *Pravēsa daruvu*: - the songs sung while characters make their entry on to the stage.
- 2) *Samvāda daruvu*:- conversational songs between two or more characters
- 3) *Swāgata daruvu*: - solo songs sung by individual characters to express their inner feelings.
- 4) *Varnana daruvu*: - songs of descriptive in nature.
- 5) *Uttara pratyuttara daruvu*: - songs employed in a question and answer situation.

Depending upon the number of lines (a character should sing in a particular situation) the songs are composed as *ekapada* (one line) *dwipada* (two lines) *chatushpada* (four lines) and *ashtapada* (eight lines)<sup>73</sup>.

The verses are composed in various genres and kinds of poetry (like *kandam*, *sisam*, *utpalamāla*, *champakamāla*) depending upon the needs of the situation and the character<sup>74</sup>. In each kind of a poem, the grammar and

structuring of words change, according to the limitations and granatological needs of that particular kind of poem.

These verses along with songs are used throughout a play to tell the story to the audience. The performers converse in songs and verses, and they are also used for prayers, descriptions, and to express inner feelings, thoughts and emotions. Like songs the verses are also sung to a set tune and in a set pattern. Usually the verses are sung continuously by the characters, but occasionally, they stop after rendering two lines or at a convenient place, add some prose and speak the lines, and again continue to sing the remaining part of the poem<sup>75</sup>.

The songs and verses of *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition are usually set in the *rāgas* (tunes), of 'Carnatic' classical style. They are known as (1) *kāmbhoji rāga*, (2) *mōhana rāga*, (3) *āsaveri rāga*, (4) *sobhavarali rāga*<sup>76</sup>. Each of these *ragas* has its own melody. The *rāgas* for a particular song/poem are selected depending upon the mood that is to be expressed through the words of that song/poem. Each *rāga* communities different moods. The lyrical words in a song/poem should be communicable the required mood or the meaning in that particular song/poem.

The meters known as '*tālas*' to be followed in *ragas* of *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition are (1) *ādi tāla* (2) *rupaka tāla* (3) *triputa tāla* (4) *julva tāla* (5) *eka tāla* and (6) *āta tāla*. The *tālas* are the guiding factors for the dancing steps. In *chindu* dancing tradition *julva tāla* is unique<sup>77</sup>.



The dancing of chindus in the Nizamabad trdition



The dancing of chindus in the Nalgonda trdition

When the actors are ready for the performance the orchestra along with the lead and supporting singers occupy their positions at the back of the stage and they start playing the instruments for sometime. This kind of playing some times on harmonium accompanied by tabla/mridangam will not only help them to become more familiar with the instruments, but also it is a kind of warning to the actors to get ready for the performance. It also signals to the public as a final bell before the start of a show.

### **The Performance:**

The actual performance starts with singing prayers to the gods and goddesses by the singers as a chorus, accompanied by the orchestra. Singing these invocatory songs is an age old custom in the Indian tradition. This is to appease gods to bless them for a good performance on that day.

Immediately after the prayer, a character called 'Balakrishna' (child Krishna) enters the stage. He sings and dances to the tunes of orchestra for four to five minutes and makes the exit. Introduction of this character is a unique feature in *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition. A boy of six to ten years of age who is under the process of learning the tradition will appear as Balakrishna. He comes with a simple makeup, with a peacock feather tied to his head and a flute in his hand. He exhibits his dancing and singing skills to the amusement of the audience. This is a part of the training to the young boys to gain confidence to face public and to shun stage fear. But *chindus* believe that the entry of Balakrishna on to the stage, before other characters enter, will make the stage auspicious. This Krishna consciousness affirms a strong bearing on the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition that it is an off spring of the *bhakti* moment of Vishnu cult. Here the point of interest is that Balakrishna character is introduced in the performance irrespective of the

themes they perform. He is seen in all the texts whether it is a mythological, historical, fairy tale or a local legend.

After the exit of Balakrishna Ganapathi, the god of obstacles enter from one side and Pradhani enters from another side. Worshipping of Ganapathi before starting any work is the Hindu tradition, so that he removes all the obstacles, for uninterrupted and successful completion of that particular one. The Ganapathi introduces himself and Pradhani prays him to bless the performers for a successful production on that day. The Ganapathi obliges, bless the artists and exits.

The artist performing the role of Ganapathi wears a mask of an elephant symbolizing Ganapathi. If mask is not available with any particular troupe, they select a fat bellied person, to reflect some of the physical appearances attributed to Ganapathi. The appearance of Ganapathi is considered very auspicious not only to the performers, but also to the rural audience, and they look at him with folded hands.

After the exit of Ganapati, goddess Saraswathi enters the stage and she introduce herself to the audience through the conversation that takes place between her and Pradhani. The typical feature of *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition is the character of Pradhani. He is *sūtradhara* of the play and he is the bridge between the characters on the stage and the audience. He deviates himself from the main story and talks to audience with improvised humor and alienates them from involvement in the action. He is *dwarapalaka* (gatekeeper) to royal characters, and he becomes maid assistant to the female celestial and royal characters. Here Saraswathi addresses Pradhani as maidservant for which Pradhani obliges and replies. This peculiarity is not seen in the other theatre

traditions, where a male character is addressed as a female character and he responds positively and speaks. Through the conversation between Pradhani and Saraswathi, audience will come to know about the title, theme of the *yakshagāna*, and its' authorship<sup>78</sup>. The Pradhani prays Saraswathi to bless clean and good speech to the actors throughout the play, because Saraswathi is considered as the goddess of speech and education. Saraswathi obliges and makes her exit.

After the exit of Saraswathi the characters of Rambha and Urvasi enter. They are the dancers in the court of Indra, the king of heaven. The Rambha and Urvasi are well known for their beauty and also for their dancing expertise. Here also Pradhani acts as a lady and converse with them. They introduce themselves and dance for sometime and make the exit.

The significance of Rambha and Urvasi characters, even though they are not connected to the main theme to be presented, is not clear, in *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition. However it is believed that by watching a *yakshagānam* performance, the audience will get *mukthi* (Salvation) and *rakthi* (aesthetic pleasure) and these two are symbolized before the start of actual *yakshagānam* by introducing the characters of Balakrishna, Ganapathi, Saraswathi, for providing *mukthi* and Rambha, Urvasi characters for providing *rakthi*.



A scene from Gaja Gowri Vratam performed by chindu Yellamma troupe



A scene from Sathi Savithri performed by Pillutla Sanjeeva troupe

After this introduction, the main story starts with the entrance of the chief characters of the play. First the characters will appear from behind the back curtain, or from behind a curtain piece brought out on to the stage held by two people. At this point the character which enters is not seen in full view, only the head is seen. Each character will introduce itself at first, but Pradhani requests that character to come out of the curtain and introduce himself/herself. That character agrees for this and comes out of the curtain to give a full view to the audience. The people who were holding the curtain will exit with the curtain or if it appears from behind the back curtain, the character/takes a movement and enters the stage. After coming into the full view of the audience, the introduction of that character and the purpose of coming there are communicated to the audience, through the conversation between the characters and Pradhani.

In this fashion all the characters come and go as per the story line and development of the plot the total theme is presented by various performers till the end. After completing the performance all the artistes assemble on the stage and sing the benediction (*mangalam*) song in chorus. In this song they pray god to bless the audience/donors/sponsorers with health, wealth and prosperity. They collect the money offered by the audience or donors and windup the show for that day.

After winding up the show, they carefully remove the ornaments and clothes and put them back in their respective boxes. They remove the make up and wash the faces, if possible at the place of the performance, if not they wash it after getting back to their places. The total presentation of a story is glorified with melodious music, enchanting dancing steps and spectacular makeup, costumes and ornaments and the curtain is return for that evening.



To sum up, the *chindu bhāgavatham* of *chindu* is a cultural product emerged over a period of time and hence established a tradition of its own. It is the *chindu* by this tradition became the performers and the *mādigas* remain in as their customary audience and the rural folk as the general audience. As performers the *chindu* in order to virtually get satisfied their role, develop a value system of their own which is highly rigid in regulating the normative behavior of their familial and societal levels. They almost set the standards of priestly community in the brahmanical tradition to their own community in order to acclaim priestly status to the customary audience community of *madigas* of whom they are a part.

The manifestations of ritual sanction are done through the performances of *Jāmbapurānam* and *Yellammavēsham* through which they ritually purify the community in a calenderical cycle. By this function their ritual status of priests is not only rhetorically established but also functionally viable to sustain in that position perpetually. In the process, a tradition is established. That tradition, which has 'performance' as centrifocal, is the live nerve of the *chindus*. This makes them to move further to expand their tentacles as professional theatre practitioners from the customary audience, which are any way limited, to a broader audience encompassing all castes and communities in the rural scenario. This shift from ecocentric to ethnocentric in the performance tradition itself is a matter of interest. Therefore the tradition of *yakshagānam* and its historicity becomes the prime factor of investigation to a researcher working in the field of folk theatre.

The tradition of *yakshagānam* over a period of time is well established to such an extent that it has carved a domain of its own with all the elements of theatre. The pre performance (rituals referred to *poorvaraga* by sage

Bharatha in his Natya Sastra) and the order of presentation, the tradition of *sūtadhara*, the invocation and the benediction pattern all are present in the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition which reminded the cultural metabolism of the art form which has the capacity to nativise the Sankritic dramatic tradition. After all the Indian culture has its roots in orality and hence strongly imbibes the singing tradition in the narrative presentations and *chindu bhāgavatham* is the best example for this phenomena. By virtue of becoming a theatrical form it added flavour by the spectacle presentation of the characters through elaborate, but glittering makeup, costume and ornaments. This spectacle has not simply remain as static visual but vibrant with movement and dancing steps and therefore it has come to be known as *chindu bhāgavatham*, i.e., the narration with song and dance patterns.

However, the narration being one of the primary characterstis of *chindu bhāgavatham*, the texts which contain the narration also become important for the study and hence the following chapter discusses the process of textualization and its varied manifestations.

## NOTES

1. Edger Thurston and K. Rangachary, The Casters and Tribes of Southern India, New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1909, rpt. 1987. P.301.
2. Y. Yadagiri Sarma, Janapada Bhikshuka Gayakulu, (tel), Hyderabad, unpublished Ph.D thesis submitted to Osmania University, Telugu Department, 1986. P 558.
3. Kotra Syamala Kama Sastry, Sree Andhra Vachaspathyamu – Vol-IV (tel), Kakinada, K.S.K. Sastry and Son, 1940. P.2650.
4. B. Venkateswarulu, et.all., eds., Jambapuram (tel), Hyderabad, Janapada kala parishodana Vedika, 1997.
5. Bride price an opposite of dowry.
6. Oral evidence from an interview with Chindula Yellama, aged 82 years, Amdapur, Bhodan Mandal, Nizamabad District dated 29-11-1997.
7. This is contrary to the Brahminical order in which a remarried widow is not considered as *muthaiduva*.
8. The chindus seem to have drawn into Hinduism by projecting Narasimha as their chief male deity, though they still worship Yellamma as their mother goddess. Field observations made at Nizamabad and Nalgonda districts confirm this fact. Even Edgar hurston in his ethnographic accounts attested the same.  
  
Edger Thurston, Op.Cit., P.310.
9. Y.Yadagiri Sarma, Op.Cit., P.558.
10. The concept of Sanskritization is found by M.N. Sreenivas, the father of Indian sociology. Neelakantha Sastry, a famous historian used the term 'Aryanization' to denote the descendency of Aryans to Dravidian soils crossing through Vindhya. Thus, the dravidian social hierarchy came into contact with the Aryan cultures. The super imposition of Aryan culture over Dravidian culture especially in the spheres of religion, ritual and social structure is referred by M.N. Sreenivas as 'Sanskritization'. Lower ranks of the social hierarchy when tries to imitate high ranks by adapting higher strata's behavioural mode, the phenomena is termed as Sanskritization.
11. The concept of deitification of tribal animistic belief into image bound worship leading to structural changes of the sacred complex is well demonstrated by Hermen Kulki and others on Jagannath temple of Orissa.

- A. Eshemann, Hermen Kulki and G.C. Tripathi, eds. The cult of Jagannath and the regional tradition of Orissa, New Delhi, 1978.
12. W.H. Wiser, The Hindu Jajmani System, Lucknow, 1936;  
M.N. Srinivas and A.M. Shah, "The myth of the Self sufficiency of the Indian village", Economic Weekly, No. 12, 1960. pp.1373-78.
  13. M.L.K.Murthy, "Environment, Royal Policy and Social Formation in the Eastern ghats, South India, A.D 1000-1500", Presidential address, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 53<sup>rd</sup> session, Warangal 1993.
  14. Y.Yadagiri Sarma, Op.Cit., p.556.
  15. In the foreward to *Jāmbapurānam* it is mentioned that the caste myth is dissiminated in five art forms viz., *Chindu, Asadi, Baindla, Masti and Mādiga Jangam* which form as the sub castes of *mādiga* community. But in the *Jāmbapurānam* text, the character of Jambavamuni explains that there are twelve sub groups of *mādiga* community: *Koya mādiga, Gonda mādiga, Sangari mādiga, Runja mādiga, Dappu mādiga, Landha mādiga, Avva mādiga, Yelpu mādiga, Kinnera mādiga, Kommu mādiga, Dakkani mādiga, Chindu mādiga*.  
*Jāmbapurānam*, p. 24.
  15. *Ibid.*
  17. Gosangi is one of the many alternative terms to denote the term *madiga* Kotra Syamala Kama Sastry, Op.Cit., Vol-III, pp. 20-26.
  18. Brahmin enters singing a song and Budden Khan, a minor character imitates him by repeating the last line of the song in his accent. Brahmin says "you the son of a dog, pronounce the letters correctly".  
*Jāmpapurānam*, p. 1.
  19. *Ibid.*, p.4.
  20. *Nandaneerana, Anatha, Achyutha, Adbhutha, Thamanda, Tharaka, Andaja, Bhimaja, Anyona, Alankrutha, Viswabhava, Parabhava, Sakadhama, Sakalaswaroopa, Kruthayuga, Threythaguda, Swapara Yuga, Kali Yuga.*  
*Jāmbapurānam*, p.4.
  21. The four *yugas* as per vedic tradition are *Krutha Yuga, Threytha Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga*. Y. Yadagiri Sarma rejects the order of creation as told in *Jambapurānam*. He opines that the puranas like Bhagavatham and others also give different versions about the order of creation. He agrees with the vedic version of creation as mentioned in *Rig Veda and Yajur veda*. Y. Yadagiri Sarma, Op.Cit., p.560.

Pundit Gopadev also rejects the order of creation as mentioned in Purans and caste myths. He opines that the puranas and caste myths are giving different versions opposing vedas, which are far from truth and created. Pundit Gopadev, Veda Tathva Prakashamu (tel), (translated from Sanskrit original by Dayananda Saraswathi's Rigveda Bhashya Bhoomika), 1985.

22. *Jāmbapurānam*, p.9.

23. *Jāmbapurānam*, p.11.

24. (a) Brahmin : How your caste and my caste will be same ? We are Brahmins. We are gods to the earth. What is your caste?

Jambavamuni: What should I tell when people ask me about my caste?

All the people on earth have borne from the womb of the women. No body has fallen from the sky. All are borne to a man and women when they meet sexually.

(b) Brahmin: What are your other duties?

Jambavamuni: We perform your marriage. We collect the firewood for

your cooking. We grind the food grains, we play dappu

for the marriage procession..... we also play the dappu

for your funeral procession.

*Jāmbapurānam*, pp.8,9,16 and Passim.

25. *Jambapurānam*, p.36.

26. For detailed description see section V of this chapter.

27. Observation made from the field.

Oral interview with Chindula Yellamma at Amdapur village, Bhodan Mandal, Nizamabad District, dated 28-11-1997.

28. Interview with Chindula Yellamma dated 28-11-1997 and Chindu Neelamma at Armoor, Nizamabad District at her residence on 04-12-1997.

29. Austerity is observed by means of keeping aloof herself from the rest of the community by way of meditation and fasting. She does not indulge in any mundane pleasures.

30. Field observation. Saigudam village, Aleir Mandal, Nalgonda District, dated 08-12-1997.

31. Field observation at Saigudam village dated 08-12-1997.
32. Field observation at Saigudam village dated 08-12-1997.
33. *Jāṁabapurāṇam*, pp.17-18.
34. Oral interview with Chindula Yellamma at her residence, Amdapur, Nizamabad District dated 29-11-1997.
35. Even today Chindu Jogithas like Neelamma or Yellamma who excel in the performance tradition by dedication and commitment to the art form are highly acclaimed by their community. The fact that their performing troupes are named after them reveal their status in the art form. The Andhra Pradesh Nritya Academy has honoured Chindula Yellamma with the best Folk performer award during 1982.
36. Oral evidence: Interview with Chindu Venkati, a performer of Yellamma troupe, Amdapur, Nizamabad dated 10-11-1997. The informant revealed this fact and Y. Yadagiri Sarma also confirmed it. Y. Yadagiri Sarma, Op.Cit., p. 562.
37. Bhagavatham is one of the eight great puranas (*Ashtadasa Mahapuranas*) originally written by sage Vyasa in Sanskrit. It is also considered as one of the poetic dramas (*kavya natakamulu*). Kotra Syamala Kama Sastry, Op.Cit., pp.839,1760.
38. M.N. Sarma Folk performing Arts of Andhra Pradesh (tel), Hyderabad, Telugu University, 1995. P 95.
39. *Ibid.*, P.95.
- 39.a *Ibid.* Pp.101-103.
40. S.V. Joga Rao, Andhra Yakshagana Vangmaya Charithra (tel), Waltair, Andhra University series No. 68, 1961. P 3.
41. Palkuruki Somanadhudu, Panditharadhya Charithra (tel), Madras, Vavilla Ramaswamy and sons, 1955. Pp 436-465.
42. Sreenadhudu, Bhimeshwara Puranam, (tel), Eluru, Venkatarama and co. 1958. P 65.
43. Vinukonda Vallabharayudu, Kreedabhiramam (tel), Madras, Vavilla Ramaswamy and Sons, 1953. P 135.
44. Allasani Peddanna, Manucharithra (tel), Madras, Vavilla Ramaswamy and Sons, 1948; Mukku Thimmana, Parijathapaharanamu (tel), Eluru, Venkatarama and Co, 1959; Ayyalaraju Ramabhadhrudu, Ramabhyudayamu (tel), Eluru, Venkatarama and Co., 1954.
45. S.V. Joga Rao, Op.Cit., p.95.

46. Edgar Thurston, Op.Cit., (Vol-II) p.438.
47. S. V. Joga Rao, Op.Cit., p.18.
48. *Ibid.*, P.89.
49. *Ibid.*, P.97.
50. *Ibid.*, P.94.
51. *Ibid.*, P.63.
52. *Ibid.*, Pp.106-109.
53. M.N. Sarma, Op.Cit., p.88.
54. S. V. Joga Rao, Op.Cit., P.148.
55. *Ibid.*, P.156.
56. *Ibid.*, P.164.
57. *Ibid.*, P.170.
58. *Ibid.*, P.175.
59. Oral evidences collected from the *chindu* performer Chindula Shyam, Armour, Nizamabad district on 04-12-1997. It is also confirmed by Poddaturi Yella Reddy. Poddaturi Yella Reddy, Telanganalo Yakshaganam rachana prayogam (tel), Palamur, Jatheeya Sahithya Parishad, 1994. P.147.
60. Chindu Yellamma troupe of Amdapur village has confirmed a performance on 30-11-1997. This researcher has gone there on 29-11-1997 to document the performance on video along with equipment and technicians. But surprisingly Yellamma informed that they are not performing on 30-11-1997 as the date falls on Sunday along with *Amavāsyā* (No moon day).
61. This custom is prevailing even now in Telangana villages. During the course of field work it is noticed Chindu Yellamma asking the village surpanch at Amdapur village for his permission to stage the performance at 1'o clock in the afternoon in front of Kali temple which is located on a small hillock at the entrance of the village.
62. Kreedabhiramam which is written in the '*veedhi*' genre of dramatic literature during the fourteenth century was considered as the first available *yakshagānam* in telugu. Historians also opined that Kreedabhiramam was responsible for the evolution of *veedhi bhāgavatham* / *yakshagānam* in Telangana region as that text refers to the Kakatiya's capital Orugallu (now known as Warangal), the socio economic conditions of that period, the existence of different castes,

their customs and professions. Even though no account of the performing technique was available pertaining to that period or the following periods, it can be assumed that all such *yakshagānams* would have been performed in an open area where the performers were surrounded by the audience. Even in the modern street theatre (*audhinika veeḍhi nātakam*) the performance takes place in an arena stage, where the audience surround the performers, and the action is made circular to facilitate all the audience to see and listen. So I would like to assume that the earlier form of presentation of a *chindu bhāgavatham* performance would have been taken place in an arena stage / concept, and so the chindu performers might have developed this kind of circular movements while dancing to facilitate all the audience around them to see.

63. This information is collected during the field work through oral interviews conducted at Armoor with chindula Neelamma on 03-2-1997. This is also referred by Poddaturi Yella Reddy. Poddaturi Yella Reddy, Op.Cit., p.146.

64. *Ibid.*

In a theatrical presentation 'emphasis' occupies an important place. Emphasis is used to draw the attention either towards a character or towards an object. It is an important factor in composition of a play. In a proscenium stage, proscenium arch, usually decorated with different colours and designs to draw the attention of the audience towards the stage.

65. Field observations made both at Nizamabad and Nalgonda districts while studying the chindu bhagavatham performances.
66. Interview with Chindula Gangaram, an experienced performer in Yellamma troupe of Amdapur village on 30-11-1997. He has revealed these indigenous names of the make-up materials. Also mentioned by P. Yella Reddy. Poddaturi Yella Reddy, Op.Cit., p.144.
66. During the field work at Nizamabad and Nalgonda districts, all the senior performers are questioned about the importance of peacock/parrot at the top of the crown. But no satisfactory reply was given. Most of them said that it is only to add beauty. Some of them simply said that it is their tradition.



67. After watching the performance of Gaja Gowri Vratham performed by Chindula Yellamma troupe at Amdapur village of Nizamabad district on 01-12-1997, the actor Chindula Tirupathi who performed as Pradhani is questioned about his particular get-up. He emphatically said, that Pradhani is the only character in the *Chindu Bhāgavatham* tradition who speaks with the celestial characters and also the earthly characters, apart from the audience. To show this peculiar nature and duties of this character, symbolically he wears the ornaments of the heavenly characters and the costumes of the earthly characters.
  
68. The same question is put to Raja who portrayed Pradhani character in Sathi Savithri on 06-12-1997 at Saigudam village of Aleru Mandal, Nalgonda District. Without hesitation he replied that Pradhani is the only comedy character and accordingly he was asked to appear in this getup by his leader. He also confirmed that he appears in the same getup in all the other texts also as Pradhani is a joker.
  
69. Vithal Rayadas, Gaja Gouri Vratham (tel), Hyderabad, Sri Mallikarjuna Publications, 1976. Pp.19-20.  
  
The performance of this *Yakshagānam* by Yellamma troupe is documented on video during the field work at Amdapur on 01-12-1997.
  
70. This observation is made during the course of field work at Sadula village of Medak district on 10-12-1997. During the course of Sarangadhara performance by Chindu Neelamma's troupe, the actor who played the character of Raja Raja Narendra played Harmonium when he was out of the scene. He relieved the regular harmonist who was going out very frequently to attend some other work.
  
71. S.V. Joga Rao, Op.Cit., pp.242-246.
  
72. Poddaturi Yella Reddy, Op.Cit., p.261.
  
73. The texts written by Cherivirala Bhagayya and others patterned the metric Styles on these lines.  
  
See for example: Cherivirala Bhagayya, Sugreeva Vijayam (tel), Hyderabad, Siddheswara publications, 1984.
  
75. It is observed during the course of field work at Nalgonda and Nizamabad districts. Experienced *chindu* performers like Yellamma, Venkati, Shyam, Neelamma, Sanjeeva, Anjaiah followed this method during their performances. Usually this is a practice in telugu *padyanātakamu* (verse drama). The senior professional actors have introduced this style to attract the audience. Even in telugu mythological films this can be observed.
  
76. Nataraja Ramakrishna, Chindu Jogula Nritya Reethulu (tel), Hyderabad, AP Nritya Academy, 1982, p.8.

77. Poddaturi Yella Reddy, Op.Cit., p.171.

It is observed and recorded during the field work, that the performers used to hint themselves to which *rāgā* and *tālā* they should sing in a given scene. Therefore these *rāgās* and *tālās* though widely used in the classical tradition, they are not unknown to *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition.

78. Cherivirala Bhagayya, Nagarjuna Charithramu (tel), Sri Mallikarjuna Publications, Hyderabad, 1976. P.5.
79. This convention of introducing Ganapathi and Saraswathi characters in *Yakshagānam* exists only in the Kuchipudi tradition. This convention along with the convention of *Sūthradhāra* becoming a female servant to female celestial /royal characters of Kuchipudi tradition, might have inspired *chindu* tradition to adapt them. Even though geographically Kuchipudi of Krishna district is far away to Nizambad district, politically both the places are under the Qutub Shashi rule. When this point is discussed with P.S.R. Appa Rao, the renowned scholar and author of Telugu Nataka Vikasam Development of Telugu Theatre) he ruled out any influence of Kuchipudi over *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition. He opines that the tradition of introducing Ganapathi and Saraswathi characters on stage was prevalent in Dharwar and Maharastrian theatrical tradition, which toured entire Telangana and Andhra regions. Because Maharashtra is very close to Nizamabad district *chindus* might have got inspiration from them and adapted it.

## **CHAPTER – IV**

### **TEXTUAL ANALYSIS**

Before going into the textual analysis of *chindu yakshagāna* it is necessary to define the concept of 'text'. The term, 'text' usually defined in a broader sense as "marked words" which exist either in written / oral or visual forms. Western scholarship associated the word 'text' with written words. However, this only suggests a form of a text. Walter Ong, a pioneer in linguistics who contributed to the concept of literacy and orality and their transformational qualities, treated text as one, which has the root meaning 'to weave'. In other terms 'marked words' are woven to create meanings according to the context. From this point of view, text and texture are used to denote any marked words, be it in orality or in literacy.

However, in folklore when the term text is used, it is used to signify essentially a version or a single genre (verbal or non-verbal) such as tale, proverb, folksong, folk drama etc. Therefore, text encompasses, in folklore, both written and / recorded or oral/aural forms. Any behavioural mode when

expressed in a performative context with marked words / gestures is treated as folk text. From this point of view it can be said that the boundaries between the oral and written genres gets blurred and in fact trespass. The generic distinctions do not remain as segmented parts but appear in a continuum in any folklore text. Generic distinctions are only analytical categories made by the scholars in order to understand textual and textural features of a genre. *Chindu yakshagānam*, if studied as a text, only facilitate to understand the format of text in a sequence. But if it studied as a performative narrative, then it becomes an embodiment of several genres such as myth, epic, song, proverb, joke etc, Therefore the *chindu yakshagānam* text should be analyzed from both perspectives. In this chapter an attempt is made to unfold the issues related to texts of *chindu yakshagānas*.

For the sake of analysis this chapter is divided into three sections. Section one deals with origin and development of texts and includes the types of textual transmission that occur in the *chindu yakshagānam*. Section two deals with the nature of texts, which virtually define new boundaries of the text irrespective of the form in which they are present. This section elaborates on different kinds of *chindu yakshagānam* texts. The third section deals with the structure of the texts, having examples from *chindu yakshagānams* and their graphical plotting.

## SECTION-I

### ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF TEXTS:

*Chindu yakshagāna* texts are strikingly oral compositions developed over a period of time and reflect the creativity of the folk which own it. Most of the texts seem to have a culture specific context and indirectly refers to the communities' desire to elevate their status from the existing reality. The *chindu mādigas*, though belong to a lowest strata of the cast oriented social structure, their texts have all the qualities of classical texts in terms of narrative techniques, metaphorical usages and semiotic devices. This does not mean that the texts have come from the elite in other words no evidence suggests that the text has derived from above i.e., from the brahmanical to folk. However, the controversies still lies in finding out the origins of this phenomenon.

One school of thought suggests that based on thematic presentations of the texts, the text would have originated at a place and transmitted severally at different points of time to different people and region. This school of thought which clings to the idea of monogenesis <sup>1</sup> suggests the place of origin would have probably been Kuchipudi, a village in coastal Andhra in Krishna District. Even today the Kuchipudi *bhāgavatham*, a style of *yakshagāna*, is attributed to be the origin place for several *bhāgavatham* traditions <sup>2</sup>.

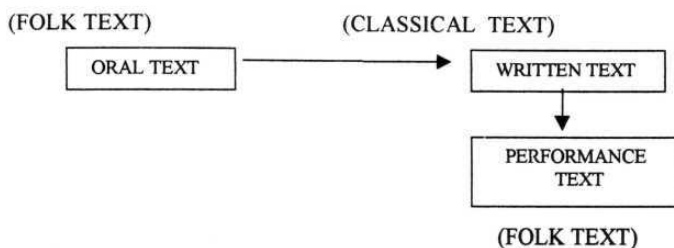
The other school of thought which propounds polygenesis <sup>3</sup> as the system of thinking, attribute tempered diffusion as the source of finding the origins advocated that *chindu bhāgavatham* developed as a parallel tradition to that of classical Kuchipudi *bhāgavatham* tradition. These *bhāgavatha* traditions thus are not from a particular tradition, but independently

originated, yet culturally reciprocal. In other words, there is a system of exchange of give and take being present in texts, textures and partly contexts of this large whole *bhāgavatha* tradition. This school of thought proposes the historical forces as an evidence for cultural exchange. During the fourteenth-sixteenth centuries, the Bahamani Sultans and Golconda Nawabs ruled these provinces, were astonished at the performances of the Kuchipudi *bhāgavathams*, not only donated the lands generously, but also encouraged them to travel and perform in Telangana regions <sup>4</sup>. Similarly the local legends and folklore (where the *chindu bhāgavatham* is most popular) also suggest, that the pilgrimage center at Basara, (whose chief deity is goddess Saraswathi, the guardian deity of knowledge), was visited frequently by the Kuchipudi *bhāgavathars*, who used to perform the customary obligations to the deity by staying for a considerable period at the center<sup>5</sup>. This culture contact also would have helped the local *chindu bhāgavata* tradition in borrowing certain performing techniques and texts for them. This only suggests that these art forms did not originate at a place, but transmitted culturally over a period of time where there were already parallel traditions existing. However these two schools of thought do not concretely resolve the origin of the tradition of the *chindu bhāgavatham*.

It is not only the origin of *chindu bhāgavatham* is an issue of contention, but also the transmission of text itself is a question to be probed. From the available literary text of the *chindu yakshagānam* which are found in print media from the first decade of this century <sup>6</sup>, only indicate that they are written, based on the oral composition already available. On the whole three forms of texts are found in this tradition; oral, written and performance texts <sup>7</sup>. Three levels of transmission are observable in the transmission cycle.

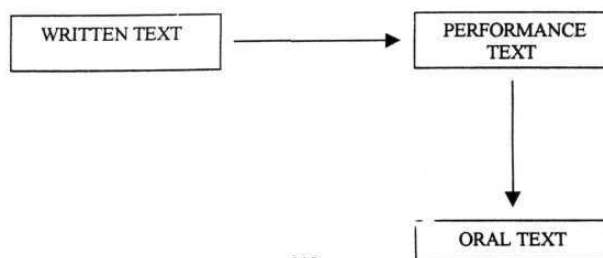
### Textual Transmission:

In the first case where oral composition primordial to performance and written text, the following pattern of transmission emerges.



The above pattern denotes the transmission of *chindu bhāgavatham* text such as Sati Savitri transmitted from oral text to that of performance text, via written text. In other words oral composition is documented (written) while it is not being performed, and yet available in a performance context as a performance text. In this situation the written text for being literary incorporates the qualities of classical text, yet this written text remains only as a reference or as a version to the literate audience / readers. This in any case does not influence the performance and hence the oral text takes the shape of a performance text. Therefore the written texts almost remain as parallel texts to the oral and performance texts.

In the second pattern of transmission where the written texts precede the performance and oral texts, the text, which occurred at the prime instance, would lead the other texts.

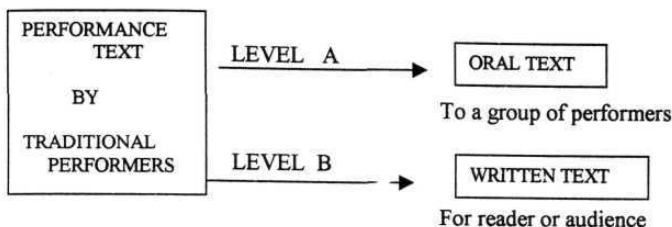




As stated in the above schema the written texts are literally composed in the *chindu bhāgavatham* genre and allowed to be performed by a troupe of *chindu* performers. In which case the written text is totally direct the performance, in which textual textures are invariably in accordance with the literary texts. Usually a non-*chindu* literate composes a literary text and makes the performers by heart that text for the performance sake. In the process of performance *chindu* performers being non-literate tend to incorporate their idioms and syntax in the process of the performance. Thus, the performance text emerges out of written text. By repeated performances the performers not only create versions of performance texts, due to changes in place, time and context, but also generate in the process an oral text. Most of the present day *chindu bhāgavatham* texts, which are found in print media, refer to Chervirala Bhagayya as the author of these texts <sup>8</sup>.

In this pattern of transmission, written texts do not remain silent, but voiced through the performances, their texture, style and content. In this case they become didactic and communicative and standardized as ethical maxims.

The third type of transmission pattern shows simultaneous origin of oral and written text from the performance text. In this type, performance text orally gets transmitted to the group of performers in due course and admits changes in the process of making the oral text. Simultaneously the same performance text when watched and recorded, either by memory or by the present day technology of video and audio documentation begets the written text, which is invariably the same version of the performance text. The following illustration explains this phenomenon.

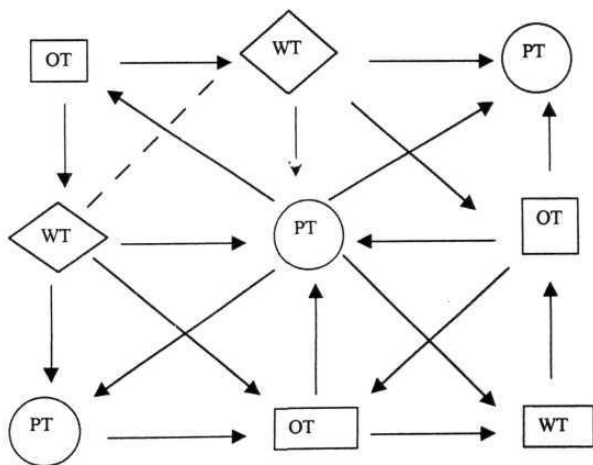


As stated in the illustration, one can observe two levels of transmission simultaneously taking place by a performance text while in presentation. In the Level A it is the group of performers, who in due course make an oral text with the help of the performance text for future performances. At this juncture the transmission of text is taking place between the performers. These performers could be either traditional or non-traditional. In Level -B the transmission of text will be between performers and reader / audience. Those who have audience to record / document the performance text, create that version of performance text as written text. Once the performance text changes its form into written text it acquires certain qualities of written text, owing to the limitations that has with in the written words. In other words, the semantics with all its limitations of phonetics and grammar operate in the expression of that written text. According to the 'principle of limited possibilities' which is a well-known theory in linguistics, the number of sounds that can be articulated is practically unlimited; but in a language, only a definite and relatively small number of sounds are used. Obviously, this is not an incidental but a necessary condition of language, for, if the sounds articulated by the members of the group tend to vary all the time, no associations between clusters of sound and definite meanings could be formed; and there would be no language. Language as a means of

communication of thought requires an automatic coordination between 'ideas' and 'words', which cannot exist, unless the sounds used are fixed and limited in number<sup>9</sup>.

The same applies to written text when the written text is transformed into performance text that version of performance text which has become written text will not remain as the same version of the performance text, but generates plural performance texts. Therefore, the whole transmission of texts from oral to written to performance would lead to the emergence of plural texts and transmit in cycles of different dimensions and size in different conditions.

If juxtapose the three types of transmission, the following illustration emerges.



OT: oral text, WT: written text, PT: performance text.

I. OUTER LAYER:

OT → WT  
 WT → PT  
 PT → OT  
 OT → WT  
 WT → OT  
 OT → PT  
 OT → WT  
 WT → PT

II. SECONDARY LAYER

WT → WT  
 WT → OT  
 WT → OT  
 OT → OT

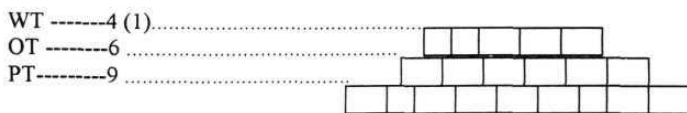
III. INNER TO OUTER

PT → OT  
 PT → PT  
 PT → WT  
 PT → PT

IV. OUTER TO INNER

WT → PT  
 WT → PT  
 OT → PT  
 OT → PT

OUT OF 20 KINDS OF TRANSMISSIONS



A sequence of sound images, which are capable of communicating meaning, can be defined broadly as 'text'. If this is verbalized it becomes oral text, if it is written, becomes written text and if presented in visual mode it becomes a visual text. In the above illustration oral texts and performance texts are shown as separate texts for it is not just the verbalized sound images

that are presented in a sequence but along with it, gestures, actions, and body language in a dramatized fashion presented by the artist when communicating the oral text to the audience. Therefore the performance text is not simply an oral text, but goes beyond the frontiers of oral text. The field data of this research reveals three types of texts as shown in the illustration. The three texts, quite often than not, emerge as paradigms of folk texts.

In the case of *chindu bhāgavatham*, which is basically an oral and performance text, and therefore a folk text, do not subscribe to any author. In other words, these texts are anonymous. But in course of time the literate strata of society taking interest in either documenting or recording oral / performance texts, produced written texts. They in due course may become source for future oral and /or performance texts.

An interesting future of *chindu bhāgavatham* texts is that the performance texts are numerically more in number than the oral and written texts. Performance being the only mode with which the community as well as the text survives, and hence performance texts become centri-focal. Without performance, emphatically one can say, the text demises. This being the case as shown in the above diagram the performance text is more than the other two forms of texts. The following equation reveals this fact.

Performance texts-----	9
Oral texts	----- 6
Written texts	----- 4 (1)

The occurrence of the performance text, from both oral and written texts is nine times when compared to six of oral texts and five of written texts.

As stated earlier written text occurs only in due course and remain mostly as a parallel text, for the simple reason that is composed for altogether

for a different strata of social structure. It has all the qualities of narrative technique of oral text and performance text, because it is nothing but a documentation of a version of oral text/performance text. The authors of the texts being literate, imitated the texture of classical text and made this folk text appear semi-classical. One interesting feature is that in all the written texts the author followed the classical epic composition tradition by inscribing his name in the beginning of the text, as a part of invocation.

Another notable feature is that all the written texts are dedicated to a local deity. Thus the process of textualization of the written texts, though developed as a parallel tradition, remain as an integral part to study the *chindu bhāgavatham* textualization process. Hence if taken to written text as reference to performance text the intricacies involved in the performance text and its relevance to community of performers as well as the audience can better be understood. This suggests that the characteristic feature of *chindu bhāgavatham* text is that the textual composition lies in oral tradition rather than in written tradition.

The above illustration substantiates these phenomena. In the case of written text is producing another written text not well found in the *chindu bhāgavatham* textual compositions. This is the reason why in the above illustration broken line is used to show written text leading to the written text composition and the frequency of the occurrences of such phenomena is also not widely evident so far as the collection of the written texts are concerned. Out of the three hundred and twenty five written texts<sup>10</sup> of *chindu bhāgavatham*, so far available in written format, both at print and manual script level, only forty nine are found to be of same title and content. In other words, they produced second set of written texts of same kind.

**TABLE SHOWING DIFFERENT AUTHORS ON THE SAME**

**TITLE / TEXT**

Title	Author1	Author2	Author3	Author4
1. Ajamilopakhyanam 2. Anasuya charitramu	K. pentiah J.veeranna (1908)	P.papaiah V. lakshmana charyulu (anasuya devi charitra)		
3. Allirani charitra	M. sherifuddin	M. mallesam	V Narasimhadas (allirani)	
4. Usha parinayamu	k.krishnam acharyulu	V. lakshmana Charyulu		
5. Kanakataru	C. Bagayya (1982)	V. Narasimha dasu		
6. Kanthamathi charithramu	C. Bagayya (1982)	V.Narasimha dasu (1971) Kanthamathi natakamu		
7. Kambhojaraja charitra	C.Bagayya (1980)	Subaiah devara		
8. Kausalya parinayam	T.P. Annanacharyulu	T.P. sree ranga Nadha charyulu (1943)	Vithalaraya kavi	G. ramadasa (kausalya vivaham)
9. Gayopakhyanamu	C.Bhagayya (1984)	K.Krishnamacha ryulu		
10. Gule bakavali anu Pushpa leelavathi katha	C. Bagayya	S. vasudevudu (gulebakavali)		
11. Thara Sasanka vijayam	S.Bhowmachary ulu (1978)	A. Ramadasu (Thara Sasanka natakamu) 1905	Ananthaseanarao (Tharasasankam)	
12. Dharmangada charitra	Yadavadas (1982)	A.M.C. krishnamachayr ulu (Dharamangada natakamu)	D.Ramakrishna kavulu	
13. Devayani charatramu	Yadavadas (1982)	V.Narasayya (Devayani Katha)		
14. Draupadi vastrapaharanamu	V.Narasimhadas	G.Ramadasu	D.Ramalakshman a kavulu	
15. Padmavathi kalyanam	E.Ramakrishna raju and lakshmanabha deva	S. Annanacharyu lu	V.Narasimhadasu (Padmavathi Parinayamu)	

16.Parijathapaharanamu	T.P.Annanacharyulu (1966)	P.Narayanadhvari	V.Lakshmanacharyulu	V.Nrsimha Sastry
17.Pundareeka charitramu	C.Bagayya (1982)	S.Vasudevakavi		
18.Pothuluri Veerabrahmam gari charitra	N.Sattiah(1984)	C.Bagayya (1985)	C.Padmayacharyulu(brahmamgari charitra)	Md.Sherifuddin (brahmamgari charitra)
19.Prabhavathi vilasamu	--- ---- (1970)	--- ---- (1970)		
20.Prahlada charitramu	Yadavakhyudu (1982)	Lakshmayabha Deva		
21.Bhabruvahana charitramu	C.Bagayya	P.Rangakhyu (1982)	Vithalarayakavi	
22.Banasura charitramu	B.Ramadasu (1982)	T.P.Annanacharyulu (banasura)		
23.Balanagamma charitramu	A.Veerappa	C.Bagayya (1983)	Y.Buchidasu (1983)	C.Bagayya (1961)
24.Bheemarjuna garvapaharanamu	G.Venkatadasu (1982)	V.Lakshmanacharyulu (Bheemarjuna Garva bhanagamu)		
25.Mayuradhwja natakam	T.Krishnaiah (1977)	V.lakshmanacharyulu(mayuradwaja maharaja charitramu)		
26.Madalasa parinayamu	C.Bagayya (1978)	G.ramadasu (madalasa)		
27.Markandeya vilasamu	V.Kalidasu (1905)	K.Papayya	C.Bagayya(sri markandeya vilasamu)1982	
28.Mohini rukmangada charitra	R.Ranganadhacharyulu	K.Pentaiah(mohini rukmangada)		
29. Radha Madhava charitra	P.Venkataramaya	G.Ramadasu		
30.Rukmini kalyanam	P.R.Gundanna	T.P.Annanacharyulu	T.P.Sriranganadhacharyulu	
31.Rukmangada natakam	Venkatakavi	B.Balaramulu (Rukmangada charitra)		



32. Ruthudhwjopakhya namu	Annanacharyulu (1940)	G.K. Krishnamac haryulu (1940)	G. Ramadasu (Ruthu dhwaja vilasamu)	
33. Lakshmana parinayamu	----- (1974)	Sudarshan (1970)		
34. Vamana charitramu	Vithalaraya kavi	S. Vasudevakavi (vamanavathara mu)		
35. Srikrishna tulabharamu	C. Bagayya (1977)	K. Pentaiah	Ananthasenarao and G. Singappa (krishna tulabharam)	V. Papakavi (thulabharamu)
36. Srikrishna parijathamu	C. Bagayya (1974)	D. Ramalakshma nakavulu (krishn a parijathamu)		
37. Srikrishna garadi	K. Pentaiah	K. Pentaiah (unpublished)		
38. Vipranarayana charitramu	S. Vasudeva kavi	S. Vasudevudu (unpublished)		
39. Sreerama vijayamu	E. Vithal (1985)	Vithalarayakavi		
40. Veerabhadra vijayamu	R. kaveendrudu (1976)	V. Lakshmayya (sree veera bhadra vijayamu)		
41. Sri Satyanarayana vratha katha	S. Annanacharyu lu	A. Malliyya (1949 ) (sree satya narayana vrathamu)	G. Ramadasu (satya narayana vrathamu)	T. C. Annanach aryulu (satya narayana vrathopakhyan amu)
42. Sugreeva vijayamu	C. Bagayya (1980)	V. Narasimhad as		
43. Sumati swayamvaramu	Vithalaraya kavi	V. Lakshmanach aryulu (sumati parinayamu)		
44. Sati Thulasi	C. Bagayya	Dr. Raghupathi 1978		
45. Savithri parinayam	----- (1982)	Siddakavi (1988)	C. Bagayya (sarangadhara charitramu) 1983	
46. Sarangadhara natakamu	C. Bagayya (1976)			Ramaswamy (Sarangadhara charutramu) 1982
47. Hanumadvijayamu	C. G. Venkatacha ryulu	G. Bhoomayya (1978)	Varamkusakavi	
48. Samudramathanam u	T. ramalingayya kavi	V. Narasayya	G. Ramadasu	

49. Kusalava natakamu	C. Bagayya (1986) (1986)	Mohd. Abdullah (kusa lava charitra) 1982	T.P. annanacharay ulu (lavakusa)	
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Only the authors are different for these sets of texts. The available three hundred and twenty five written texts only suggest the volume of repertoire of *chindu bhāgavatham* texts in the region of Telangana. However, in the present days many of these are not performed by the *chindu* performing troupes, owing to several reasons, which are dealt in the forthcoming discussions.

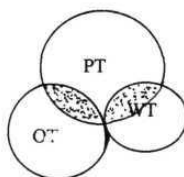
The striking phenomenon that can be derived from the above discussion on the three types of texts are that the process of transmission itself becomes the limiting factor in the occurrence of the above three types of texts. Very few written to written texts are found in the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition, because this tradition is not only the life style of *chindu* community but also the source of their living in a cultural context. The *chindu mādigas* being an ethnic community forming as a sub-sect to the *mādigas* whose occupation is chiefly tanning and leather related works. The community as a whole occupies the lowest ebb in the cast oriented social hierarchy. This being the case the *chindus* are left at subsistence level of living. Therefore, the socio-economic forces compel them to transmit their performance tradition vertically through generations. In other words, the community inherits the performance tradition as property. This vertical transmission survives only because of performance text and oral text. Even from their childhood the *chindu mādigas* are initiated into the performance tradition. Watching of repetitive performances right from childhood days make them automatically by-heart the texts and produce them in a performance context. This technique of training which is imbibed in the tradition, negate the written

texts and their influences in the performance contexts. Thus, the nature of transmission itself safeguards and perpetuates the *chindu bhāgavatham* oral and performance texts.

## SECTION-II

### THE NATURE OF TEXTS:

The *chindu yakshagāna* texts are found, as stated above, in three forms. Of the three, the predominant place is occupied by the performance text. If the boundaries of the three texts are drawn in a diagrammatic form the following picture emerges.



Performance text, which is a resultant of the oral text and causes the production of written text is shown in the above diagram. Therefore the boundaries of the performing texts are vital to the *chindu bhāgavatham* performing tradition and encompasses both the oral as well as the written texts. However oral text and written text remain as parallel texts but linked only by performing texts. *Chindu bhāgavatham* therefore, becomes the central nerve of the performing community whose expressions are found in the performance text. One interesting feature in this is that the community establishes its identity and its intra and inter culture linkages only through the performance text. The nature of performance text, hence becomes the nature of the community's expression of identities. For this very reason the texts of

*chindu bhāgavatham* from the times immemorial found in large numerical strength and added to the repertoire of the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition.

The Written texts of both the print and manuscript level, according to one-survey accounts to three hundred and twenty five. Out of which the present research concentrate only on performing texts numbering thirty seven which are currently in circulation with various performing troupes<sup>11</sup>. They are taken for the analytical purposes. The following table shows the thematic classification of the performing texts of *chindu bhāgavatham*.

**TABLE – I**  
**THEMATIC CLASSIFICATION OF THE TEXTS**

Mythological / Puranic	Historical / Legendary	Fairy Tales	Saint Plays
1. Nala Dayamayanthi	1. Allirani	1. Balanagamma	1. Vipranarayana
2. Chenchu Lakshmi	2. Kanthamathi	2. Bhatti	2. Bhaktha Kuchela
3. Mairavana	charitam	vikramarka	3. Bhaktha Pahlada
4. Sugreeva Vijayam	3. Sarangadhara	3. Kambhojaraja	4. Sathi Savithri
5. Prabhavathi Vilasam	4. Kanakathara	katha	5. Bhaktha Markandeya
6. Lava Kusa	5. Aare marathila		
7. Satya Harischandra	charithra		
8. Mandhatha Charitram	6. Dharmangada		
9. Veerabhimanyu	charthram		
10. Subhadra Parinayam			
11. Sundarakanda			
12. Keechaka Vadha			
13. Gaja Gowri Vratham			

14. Sasirekha parinayam			
15. Bheemarjuna			
16. Rukmini Kalyanam			
17. Ganga Gowri samvadham			
18. Kalinga mardana			
19. Krishnarjuna yuddham			
20. Banasura			
21. Krishna leelalu			
22. Bhabruvahana			
23. Seetha swayamvaram			

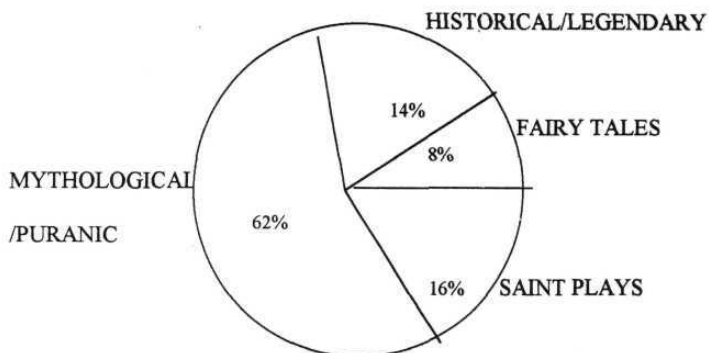
**NOTE:**

1. The *yakshgānams* now being performed by Nalgonda and Nizambad district troupes are considered in all the tables of this chapter.
2. *Jāmbapurānam* is not included here, as it is not performed in the *yakshagānam* style, but it is the enactment of a caste myth.

The themes of the performing texts vary from cast myth to mythological puranic. The performance of cast myth being an obligatory right of *chindu mādigas* to the *mādiga* community, as a whole becomes central to their performance tradition. It is the customary duty on the part of the *Madiga* to arrange for the performance annually for which the *chindu mādigas* has an obligatory right to fulfil the demand of the cast. This is not only a social obligation, but also an economic necessity for both the communities to reciprocate and share the resources. Therefore, a ritual is

made an integral part as a vow to their ancestors and culminates with the proficiation of their tutelary deity. The *Jāmbapurānam* therefore becomes their only inevitable performance to the itinerary of *chindu bhāgavatham* troupes and remains consistently a sacred performing text of the tradition.

#### THE PERCENTAGE OF THE TEXTUAL THEMES



The other performing texts mentioned in the above illustration, mythological/puranic themes dominate the total repertoire of the *chindu bhāgavatham* performing tradition. On the whole twenty three themes related to the mythological/puranic are found with the troupes of Telangana region. Only five plays related to saintlores; and the historical/local legends to six; and fairy tales to three. The divergent themes that the repertoire contains show their wide knowledge on different topics of interest. The mythological and puranic occupying more than sixty two percent of the repertoire reveals the fact than an average Indian would like to watch such performances which have an epic background. This popular demand is getting satisfied by the *chindu* performers to their own community which otherwise is deprived of the

same for the very reason that their hamlets are away from the main villages. Prior to the Independence of the country the segment between the main village and the hamlet was much worse and highly stratified. This could be one of the reasons for the *chindu mādigas* translating the epic tradition into a performing text and presenting it to their own community to satisfy their needs which would have become essentially an obligatory service. Through this service *chindu mādigas* established an identity to the *mādiga* community with puranic/celestial personages. Therefore, they are considered as a kind of priestly community to the *mādigas* and to demonstrate the same they wear the sacred thread similar to those in the brahmanical tradition.

The second notable point in their preference to the mythological themes is that they being economically the weakest community, they would tend to elevate their status to the royal personages or celestial bodies mentioned in the *puranas*. This art of subversion of their reality into a fantasy negating the fact of their economic status on one hand, and on the other, associating themselves with the mythopoeic personalities, demonstrates their art of negotiation through performance tradition.

It can be noted from the above table that their repertoire is devoid of any social theme. Contemporary or other social themes are totally absent in their performance texts. This further substantiates the above fact that the *chindu mādigas* are ordained to perform a sacred service of translating the epic tradition into a performance tradition to their own deprived community. The reciprocity norms between the *chindu mādigas* and the *mādigas* are intently preserved and perpetuated through the principle of subsistence

ethics<sup>12</sup>. This fact can be proved by the very nomenclature that the *mādigas* use to refer the *chindu mādigas* as '*arjitha biddalu*' (acquired children).

The theme-based division of performance texts can further be classified into sectarian religion related topics. The following table shows this classification.

TABLE-II

SECTARIAN RELIGIOUS BASED CLASSIFICATION OF TEXTS

Vaishnavite cult	Saivite cult	Others
1. Sugreeva vijayam	1. Gaja Gowri vratham	1. Allirani
2. Sundara kanda	2. Bhaktha markandeya	2. Kanthamathi
3. Mairavana	3. Banasura	charitham
4. Lava Kusa	4. Ganga Gowri samvadam	3. Sarangadhara
5. Satya Harischandra		4. Kanakathara
6. Chencu Lakshmi		5. Aare
7. Prabhavathi vilasam,		Maratheela
8. Veerabhimanyu		charithra
9. Keechaka vadha		6. Balanagamma
10. Sasirekha parinayam		7. Bhatti
11. Bheemarjuna		Vikramarka
12. Bhaktha Prahlada		8. Kambhoja raja
13. Krishnarjuna yuddham		katha
14. Bhabruvahana		9. Dharmangada
15. Seetha swayamvaram		charitramu
16. Vipranarayana		
17. Bhaktha kuchela		



18. Kalinga mardana		
19. Krishna leelalu		
20. Mandhatha charitram		
21. Subhadra parinayam		
22. Rukmini kalyanam		
23. Sathi Savithri		
24. Chenchu Lakshmi		

Of the thirty seven texts collected from the field the themes related to Vaishnavite tradition exceed the Shaivite tradition. From the above table it can be noted that performing texts related to Vaishnavite religious ideology numbering twenty four are found in their repertoire, where as only four texts are connected to Shaivite religious ideology exist in their present performance traditions. The other remaining nine texts are related to historical/legendary etc.

The fact that more number of Vaishnavite religious related performance texts found in the repertoire than the others, suggests the potentiality of the themes that are found in the Vaishnavite cult which could be translated into performance texts, as they are much suitable for good number of performers to play the roles. Moreover, the *chindu mādigas* worships Narasimha as their tutelary god. Narsimha happens to be incarnation of Viṣṇu as one of the *Dasavatharas*. However, the hegemonic construction of Hinduism into Vaishnavite and Shaivite sects has any bearing to this community whatever the popular demand is the *chindu mādigas* performed irrespective of the Vaishnavite and Shaivite sectarian texts. In fact, *chindu mādigas* are a folk

group with all the essential characteristics of oral tradition in their living mode.

Yellamma is their chief cast deity who is invoked and proficiated invariably in their performance. Yellamma is a folk deity of the rural telugu speaking masses and considered as one of the seven sisters of the village. Hence, one may not argue that they belong to Hindu Vaishavite sect.

Interestingly enough their performance texts show more affinity to Mahabharatha and Bhagavatha episodes than to the Ramayana tales. The following table demonstrates this fact.

**TABLE-III**

**CLASSIFICATION OF TEXTS AS PER THE EPIC BASE**

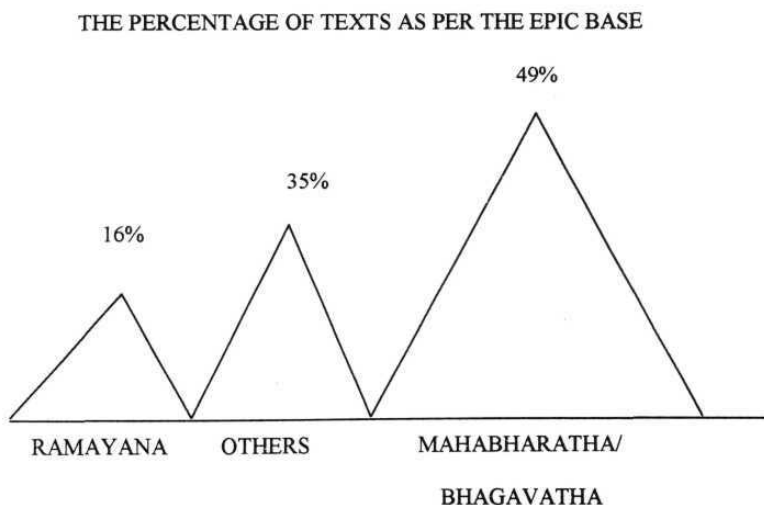
Ramayana	Mahabharatha	Bhagavatham	Others
1. Sundarakanda	1.Nala	1.Bhaktha Kuchela	1.GangaGowri
2. Sugreeva vijayam	Dayamayanthi	2.Kalinga mardana	samvadani
3. Mairavana	2.Prabhavathi	3.Sreekrishna	2. Vipranarayana
4. Seetha	vilasamu	leelalu	3. Banasura
swayamvaram	3.Mandhatha	4.Bhaktha	4. Bhaktha
5. Lava Kusa	charitra	Prahlada	Markandeya
6. Satya	4.Veerabhimanyu	5.Chenchulakshmi	5. Balanagamma
Harischandra	5.Subhadra	6.Rukmini	6. Bhatti
	parinayamu	kalyanamu	Vikramarka
	6.Keechaka vadha		7. Khambojaraja

	7. GajaGowri vratham		charitra
	8. Sasirekha parinayamu		8. Allirani
	9. Bheemarjuna		9. Kanthamathi Charitra
	10. Krishnarjuna Yuddham		10. Sarangadhara
	11. Bhabruvahana		11. Kanakatarata
	12. Sati Savithri		12. Are Marateela charitra
			13. Dharmangada charitram

Out of thirty seven performing texts classified, eighteen are related to Mahabharatha/ Bhagavatha tradition whereas only six are representative of Ramayana tradition. The remaining thirteen are related to historical/legendary/fairy tale tradition. This phenomenon is not only true with the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition, but also present in the whole South Indian-performing communities<sup>13</sup>. Contrary to this Ramayana episodes are more popular in the North Indian performing traditions<sup>14</sup>. This observation is vital and requires special attention for further probe in future as to know why this dichotomy persists in the performing tradition.

As far as *chindu mādiga* performing tradition is concerned, their preference to play Mahabharatha epic episodes more than any other because of the facility that these episodes provide, both in terms of size of the performers employed and also the popularity they enjoy. As per the ethnographic accounts of the *chindu mādigas* they possess an obligatory right over certain villages to perform as service and to collect a fee both in cash and

kind from the *mādigas*. In due course when a family of performers grew in size, they divide their villages among themselves for their living<sup>15</sup>. Under these conditions the Mahabharatha episodes gave a considerable leverage for continuing the performance tradition. Moreover, the exuberant make-up and costumes which the *chindu* performers employ are suitable to the characters of Mahabharatha. Even the texts based on Mahabharatha/Bhagavatha tradition which the *chindu mādigas* play, the primary characters dominate, and invariably in most of these texts Krishna is depicted as protagonist<sup>16</sup>. Whereas in Ramayana based text, the character of Rama appears only for a brief span, in the duration of a performance<sup>17</sup>. This again suggests that the *chindu mādigas* are fond of playing the role of Krishna and the character associated with Krishna.



While analysing the performances it is noted that they prefer Mahabharatha/Bhāgavatham episode due to the swift movements and steps

associated with fast tunes (ragas) are more suitable to their performing technique, than the Ramayana based texts, which have pathetic, slow and melancholic mood imbibed in the story line. Moreover, according to their ethnographic accounts collected through interviews, it is learnt that their audience being placed in an economically weaker position do not appreciate the tragic and sober nature of the characters and incidents of the play. This being the case, to give a soothing effect to the economically deprived community, at least in their entertainment the *chindu mādigas*, elevate their audience (*mādigas*) to a higher plane of fantasy, where they can be placed in jolly and happy emotional status. This further confirms by their usage of spectacular costumes and ornaments, giving royal attire to the characters with which emotionally the audience get attached to and remain in that plane of fantasy at least during the duration of the performance<sup>18</sup>.

Another interesting feature of their textual preference to Mahabharatha/Bhagavatha episodes is that they reflect their mind, which are set to drive them to the fairy tale contents. Most of the folk in their narratives have fairy tales, which are basically surrounded around the 'donor'<sup>19</sup>, who come to the rescue for fulfilling the desire. Even in the epic tradition of India such fairy tale features are overtly knitted. Either Krishna or Rama appear as donor to relieve the prime characters from their distress in *chindu bhāgavatham* plays. It is almost like a community, which is chained by the economic and social miseries, aspires a helping hand to bring them out from their hard reality. The *chindu bhāgavatham* performers by performing such donor-centered tales create a solace and hope for their audience. This being the reason, as stated already, they perform a sacred duty and therefore acquire the priestly status to their own community.

The number of characters that can be introduced in the texts due to adaptation of the episodes of the epics make the troupes to accommodate themselves well into the mode of presentation owing to the size of the troupe which basically survives on the performance tradition. Thanks to the feasibility of the epics given to the performers to artistically communicate their narratives through *chindu bhāgavatham* texts. For this reason, one may find, on an average, sixteen characters in the *chindu bhāgavatham* performances. The following table shows the number of characters of *chindu yakshagānams* that appear in the written texts.

**TABLE-IV**  
**CLASSIFICATION OF TEXTS AS PER THE NUMBER OF**  
**CHARACTERS**

Title of the yakshaganam	Total number of characters		Primary characters		Donor characters		Common characters	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Mairavana	9	4	1	1	8	3	1	2
2. Sugreeva vijayam	11	3	2	1	9	2	1	1
3. Sundarakanda	10	4	2	1	8	3	1	2
4. Seetha swayamvaram	12	2	2	1	10	1	2	-
5. Lava kusa	9	2	2	1	7	1	1	1
6. Satya Harischandra	18	3	3	1	15	2	2	2
7. Chenchu Lakshmi	14	3	2	1	12	2	2	2
8. Prabhavathi viilasam	12	2	2	1	10	1	1	-
9. Mandhatha charitram	14	4	2	1	12	3	2	2
10. Dharmangada charitra	11	5	1	2	10	3	1	2
11. Veerabhimanyu	20	4	3	1	17	3	1	-
12. Keechaka vadha	12	3	2	1	10	2	1	1
13. Sasirekha parinayam	14	5	1	1	13	4	2	1
14. Bheemarjuna	13	2	2	2	11	-	2	1
15. Krishnarjuna yuddham	15	2	3	1	12	1	2	-
16. Bhabruvahana	14	1	2	1	12	-	2	1
17. Subhadra parinayam	6	4	2	2	4	2	1	1
18. Vipranarayana	9	3	1	2	8	1	1	1
19. Sati Savitri	7	3	2	1	5	2	1	1

20. Bhaktha Kuchela	13	3	2	1	11	2	2	1
21. Kalingamardana	18	6	3	2	15	4	2	2
22. Sreekrishna leelalu	16	4	2	2	14	2	2	2
23. Rukmini kalyanam	18	2	2	1	16	1	1	1
24. Gaja Gowri vratham	9	5	2	2	7	3	1	2
25. Naladamayanthi	12	2	1	1	11	1	1	-
26. Bhaktha Markandeya	10	4	2	1	8	2	1	-
27. Banasura	16	3	2	1	14	2	1	1
28. Ganga Gowri samvadam	9	6	1	2	8	4	2	2
29. Allirani	14	4	2	2	12	2	1	1
30. Kanthamathi charitram	9	3	1	2	8	2	1	-
31. Sarangadhara	11	3	2	1	9	2	1	-
32. Kanakataru	15	2	2	2	13	-	1	-
33. Balanagamma	17	3	2	2	15	1	1	1
34. Bhatti Vikramarka	12	4	2	1	10	3	2	1
35. Aare Maratheela charitra	16	4	1	2	15	2	2	1
36. Kambhojaraja katha	16	11	1	1	15	4	1	1
37. Bhaktha Prahlada	12	3	2	1	10	1	2	2

It is evident from the above table that both male and female characters in different roles, in a dialogical format operate in a play. From the total number of characters, based on the function, one can divide them into primary characters, donor characters and common characters. Without the mixture of these three the *chindu bhāgavatham* text cannot exist. The primary characters



are those which have protagonistic and antagonistic functions<sup>20</sup>. The whole play is knitted around these characters. However they are always supported by another set of characters which can be named as donor characters. Though the donor characters appear in supportive roles within the text, their function is vital to the development of plot into interesting sequences, which actually grip the audience/reader and give flesh and blood to the performance/text. The donor characters are those characters, which inform the actions of protagonist to antagonist and vice-versa and direct the plot to resolve for a happy ending. The common characters are those characters, which play a crucial role in the performance. However, these can be divided into two types. One type of common characters, which are essential for running of the play, are Pradhani, *hasyagādu* and *chelikatte*. Pradhani takes up various roles in the development of the play depending on the text which is being played. Sometimes *Pradhani* may become *hasyagadu* in one context and *chelikatte* in another context while talking to celestial or royal personages<sup>21</sup>. Pradhani is a crucial linkage on one hand, between the scenes of the play and on the other hand, between the audience and the performers. As a mediator between the scenes, he takes up the role of either *dwārapālaka* (gate-keeper), *chelikatte* (maid attendant to the female royal personages), *mantri* (minister) etc., As an intermediary linkage between the audience and performers Pradhani takes up the role of *sūtradhāra* (master of ceremonies found in Sanskrit plays). This being a crucial role, a creative performer alone is given this role. He in the guise of the *sūtradhāra* improvises the text wherever necessary, and if called for, some of the scenes into brief narrations keeping in view the contextual temporal needs<sup>22</sup>. On one hand, he understands the potential of the performers and enhances their skill to perform and on the other hand, the

mood of the audience and situate the play accordingly. If a person who plays the protagonist role is absent from the troupe and replaced by a novice<sup>23</sup>, the Pradhani gears the whole play to conceal the deficiency of the performer there by boost the image of the performance.

Even at times when the duration of the play need to be restricted owing to contextual constraints, he wisely and logically sums up the scenes without it being overtly recognized by the audience, makes the play interesting. This requires potential creativity for this character which alone adds dynamism to suit *chindu bhāgavatham* to changing times and tradition. In other words, the key to change the tradition to modernity lies in this character and because of this the *chindu bhāgavatham* even to day survives. For instance during the rule of Nizam in the province of Telangana<sup>24</sup> a ban was imposed on cultural performances which mitigate Hindu consciousness, for a fear of revolt against the rule of Nizam. During the period of this crisis, the Pradhani played a vital role in perpetuating the performance tradition despite the policing which is created to check such performances. Pradhani in the guise of a *musalmān* develops a dialogue with another improvised character known as *hāsyagādu* (equivalent to court jester), in the urdu language which is considered as the official language. Through patterning a dialogue in a highly creative manner not only informs the nature of the play that is being performed to the officials/police, but also subverts the anger of them through cautious creation of humour<sup>25</sup>. Important plays like Satya Harichandra, Srikrishna, Rayabaram, Sasirekha parinayam etc., could not but document this tradition in their written texts. However, in the performance texts the intervention of the urdu dialogues are not uncommon.

This improvisation is crucial to the survival of the art form as well as the community, which are the direct subjects of the Nizam. Had such improvisations were not created by the Pradhani character, the community along with their art form either would have perished or migrated. Thanks to the role of Pradhani in keeping the art form alive.

Quite often than not Pradhani also takes up the role of '*hāsyagādu*'. As *hāsyagādu* he acts as a linkage between the audience and the performers. The presence of mind involved in creating humor, as *hāsyagādu* is crucial to this tradition. But for *hāsyagādu*, these plays would have confined largely to the adults or at the most to the youth. *chindu bhāgavatham* is also an entertainment to the children of the village. It is *hāsyagādu* who surpasses the age barriers of his audience and communicates effectively the narrative. He also acts at times as *chelikatte* to celestial characters.

Apart from these important common characters, the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition also evolved other common characters which are not throughout essential for the main story line, and are placed as parallel characters for the survival of the tradition. The characters like Balakrishna, Ganapathi, Saraswathi, Rambha, Urvashi etc., can be taken as examples for this. Most of these characters are celestial personages and considered as auspicious. Owing to time and monetary constraints these characters may not appear in a given play. However for tradition sake they remain in their repertoire. Because they are not directly involved in the story line development, it is easy to side track these characters, and yet continue the play. However, they are introduced at the expository stage, to bless performers as well as audience<sup>26</sup>.

The analysis of the number of characters in *chindu bhāgavatham* texts leads to further classification of the texts to male and female centered. The following gender classification of the *chindu bhāgavatham* texts reveal further insights into the performing tradition.

**TABLE V**  
**CLASIFICATION OF THE TEXTS AS PER GENDRES**

Male	Female	Male and Female	Others
1. Sugreeva vijayam	1. Chenchulakshmi	1. Kanakatara	1. Sundara
2. Mairavana	2. Prabhavathi	2. Nala	kanda
3. Satya Harischandra	vilasam	Damayanthi	2. Kalinga
4. Dharmangada charitram	3. Rukmini		mardana
5. Veerabhimanyu	kalyanam		3. Aare
6. Keechaka vadha	4. Sasirekha		Martheela
7. Bheemarjuna	parinayam		charitra
8. Bhaktha prahlada	5. GajaGowri		
9. Krishnarjuna yuddham	vratham		
10. Bhabruvahana	6. Seetha		
11. Bhaktha Kuchela	swayamvaram		
12. Krishnaleelalu	7. GangaGowri		
13. Bhaktha Markandeya	samvadam		
14. Banasura	8. Allirani		
15. Sarangadhara	9. Kanthamathi		
16. Bhatti Vikramarka	charitram		
17. Vipranarayana	10. Balanagamma		
18. Kambhojaraja katha	11. Sati Savithri		

19. Lava Kusa	12. Mandhata charitra 13. Subhadra parinayam		
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The above table based on gender is classified by taking only the primary characters. In fact the titles themselves suggest this classification. Of thirty seven *chindu bhāgavatham* texts analyzed, nineteen represent male centered and thirteen pertain to female centered themes. In a way this community being basically rural, do not show preference to one gender. The Indian village has mother goddess as one of the prominent deities along with male gods. The worship for both male and female gods is quite common to this community. They worship Narsimha, a male god and yellamma, a goddess. Their performance tradition also gave importance for both the themes, unlike the stage plays, which deal with mythological themes, owing to the restriction, that the elite (literate) tradition imposed. The *chindu mādigas* as a tradition derived female impersonation in their performing tradition<sup>27</sup>. Even in the male centered plays of nineteen mentioned above male impersonate females in various plays. This tradition of impersonation gave the feasibility of expanding the repertoire of performances irrespective of male and female centered themes.

Their performance tradition itself demands for the incorporation of female roles. The chorus singing and dancing patterns in the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition gave a platform for more number of female roles. The mythological themes, which operate on a feudal social pattern, require the

roles of the attendants etc., to be accompanied by each prime character, therefore in their repertoire male and female centered themes are visible.

Thus the nature of *chindu yakshagānam* texts basically represent the epic tradition and its associated themes. The characters therefore are depicted as members belonging to puranic lineages. The narrative tradition also reflects the ethos of the community living on oral tradition. However, when the texts are dramatized and made into performances, they represent not only the epic tradition but also the cultural tradition of the folk group, the *chindus*. The structure of the narratives also reflects this dual nature. As far as the texts are concerned, the plot or the story line reflects a structure but when it is performed that structure becomes invisible. The following section deals with such complexity and attempts to bring to light the dichotomy that exists in the structures of *chindu bhāgavatham* texts.

### **SECTION- III**

#### **THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT**

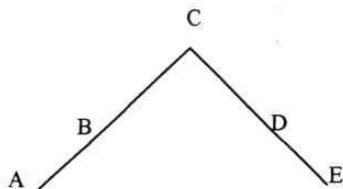
The *chindu bhāgavatham* texts, as discussed earlier, are much relevant to performances. To study the structure of a performance text is difficult theoretically, but a recorded /received written text can be analyzed to find the structural values and the compositional patterns, which are essential for a dramatic text.

The dramatic structure is not a visual shape or line, but graphic representation of non-visual phenomena, such as the graph of a rising and falling action in a play. The visual analogy is a convenient one, but it is an analogy of dramatic structure.

Any play is developed over a theme, around the characters, with a series of incidents, thus creating the required dramatic action and by using a communicable language. A dramatic text should have invariably a well developed plot. Plot is the proper arrangement of various dramatic incidents in an order. If the plot is weak the drama in a play collapses, as Aristotle puts it "plot is the soul of tragedy"<sup>28</sup>. The dramatic incidents in a plot are the events of dramatic action, which evolves out of a clash between forces, usually between the antagonist and protagonist or their supporters and such play is termed as the play of romanticism. The clash may arise between the protagonist and the society, making it a social play and if it is within the protagonist himself, it leads to psychological play.

So the dramatic structure in a play depends upon the plot and its development, and an attempt to study the structure of any dramatic text will be useful to know how plot is constructed in that particular play.

Gustav Freytag<sup>29</sup>, the German scholar playwright and critic, evolved a graphic formula, to study the structure of a play / plot, by symbolizing the arrangement of various incidents in a pyramidal structure. It rises from the introduction, with the entrance of the exciting forces to the climax, and falls from here to the catastrophe. Between these three parts lie, the parts of the rise and fall<sup>30</sup>.



These parts of the drama (A) introduction (B) rise (C) climax (D) return or fall (E) catastrophe have peculiarities in purpose and in construction. Between them stand three important scenic effects, through which the parts are separated as well as bound together of these three dramatic movements, or crisis; - one, indicates the beginning of the rising action, stands between the introduction and the rise; the second, the beginning of the counter action, between the climax and the return or fall; the third, which must rise once more before the catastrophe, between the return and the catastrophe. They are called the exciting moments or forces, the tragic movements or forces, and the moments or the forces of the last suspense. The operation of the first is necessary to every play; the second and third are good but not indispensable accessories. Since it is the business of the introduction of the drama to explain the place and time of action, the nationality and life relations of the hero, it must at once briefly characterize the environment. Besides, the playwright will have opportunity here to indicate the particular mood of the play, as well as the time, and the dramatic place. As a rule, soon after the opening scene, the first chords are firmly struck with as much emphasis as the character of the play will allow. The exposition at this stage, should be kept free from anything distracting, its task, to prepare for the action. It best accomplishes if it so proceeds that the first short introductory chord is followed by a well executed scene, which by a quick transition is connected with the following scene containing the exciting force.

So the construction of a regular introduction is as follows: a clearly defining keynote, a finished scene, and a short moment into the first moment of the excited action.



The beginning of the excited action i.e. complication, occurs at a point where in, the soul of the hero, there arises a feeling which becomes the occasion of what follows; or where the counter play<sup>31</sup> resolves to use its lever to set the hero in motion. Manifestly, this impelling force will come forward more significantly in those plays in which the chief actor governs the first half by his force of will; but in any arrangement, it remains an important motive force for action.

This force of action treads the stage under very diverse forms. It may fill a complete scene; it may be comprised in a few words. It may not always be of the hero or his adversary; it may also be a thought, a wish, a resolution, which may come from the soul of the hero himself. But it always forms a transition from introduction to the ascending action, either entering suddenly, or gradually developing through the speeches and the mental processes of the characters. Yet it is to be noticed, that this force seldom admits of great elaboration. Its place is at the beginning of the play, where powerful pressure upon the audience is neither necessary nor advisable. It has the character of a motive, which gives direction and preparation. It must not be insignificant; but it must be according to the feeling of the audience. The suspense, which it causes, may modify or perhaps determine the fate of the hero. A convenient arrangement is to give the exciting force in a temperate scene after the introduction, and closely join to this the first following rising moment in greater elaboration. Once the action starts, the chief persons reveal what they are, the interest gets awakened. Mood, passion, involution have received an impulse in a given direction<sup>32</sup>.

If it has not been possible to accord a place in what has gone before, to the most important persons in the counter play or to the chief groups, a place must be made for them now and an opportunity must be given for an activity full of meaning. Such persons too must eagerly desire to make themselves known to the audience. Whether the accent made by one or several stages to the climax is depends on material and treatment. In any case a resting place in action and even in the structure of a scene, is to be so expressed that the dramatic moments, acts, scenes, which belong to the same division of action are joined together so as to produce a unified chief scene, sub-ordinate scene and connecting scene.

The scenes of this rising moment have to produce a progressive intensity of interest. They must, therefore not only evince progress in their import, but they must show an enlargement in form and treatment. If several steps are necessary, the next to the last, or the last, must preserve the character of a chief scene.

The climax of the drama is the place in the play where the results of the rising moment come out strong and decisively. It is almost always the crowning point of a great, amplified scene, enclosed by the smaller connecting scenes of the rising and of the falling action. The playwright needs to use all the dramatic skills of his art, in order to make it vividly conspicuous this middle point of the artistic creation. It has the highest significance only in those plays in which the hero, through his own mental process, impels the ascending action; in those dramas which rise by means of the counter play, it does not indicate an important place where this play has attained the mastery of the chief hero and misleads him in the direction of the fall.

In the case where the climax is connected with the downward movement by a tragic force, the structure of the drama presents something peculiar, through juxtaposition of two important passages, which stand in sharp contrast with other. This tragic force must first receive attention. This beginning of the downward movement is best connected with climax, and separated from the following forces of the counter play to which it belongs by a division at close of an act. This is brought about not immediately after the beginning of the tragic force but by a gradual modulation of its sharp note.

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

The most difficult part of the drama is the sequence of scenes in the downward movement or as it may well be called, the return<sup>33</sup>. Especially in powerful plays the heroes are the directing forces enter up to the climax. The interest is formally fixed in the direction in which the chief characters are moving. After the deed is consummated, a pause ensues. Suspense must then be excited in what is new for these new forces, perhaps new roles must be introduced in which the audience must acquire interest. On account of this, there is already danger in distraction and in the breaking up of the scenic effects. Yet, it must be added since the hostility of the counter party towards hero cannot always be concentrated in one person nor in one situation. Sometimes it is necessary to show how frequently it effects the hero. Due to this, in the first half of the play during the course of advance it may be ruptured, in many parts. This is particularly the case with historical subjects, where it is most difficult to compose the counter party with few characters only.

And yet the return demands a strong bringing out and intensifying of the scenic effects on account of the satisfaction already accorded to the hearer/audience. Therefore, the first law for the construction of this part is that the number of persons be limited as much as possible and the effects are comprised in great scenes. It is well understood that the catastrophe must not come entirely as a surprise to the audience. The more powerful the climax, the more violent the downfall of the hero, so the end must be felt in advance.

The catastrophe of the drama is the closing action; it is what the ancient stage called it as 'exodus'<sup>34</sup>. In it the embarrassment of the chief characters is relieved through a great deed. At this juncture the drama must present in action including within itself all its parts. Though the struggle of the hero causes his entire life it is inherent necessity to the play.

Concerning the end of the heroes, perception of the reasonableness and necessity of such destruction must be vivid. It is necessary that nothing accidental, which happens at a single time, be presented.

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

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

requires an exalted power of deliberation to make the return effective<sup>35</sup>. Here neither experience, poetic resource nor clear vision of the poetic spirit can guarantee success.

With this introduction of dramatic structure, the question is whether the structure of *chindu yakshagānam* texts can be graphically studied, by applying the above-discussed formulae or not. For an exercise, Satya Harichandra<sup>36</sup>, written in a typical *yakshagānam* format, which is having a single plot, is considered here. The story goes as follows.

One day in the court of Indra at heaven, a discussion comes about the existence of a person who always speaks truth but never a lie. Sage Vasistha says that Harichandra, the king of Ayodhya on earth is one such person who always speaks only truth. But sage Viswamithra disagrees with Vasistha by saying that any person at one point or other has to lie to overcome certain situations. Vasistha reiterates that under no circumstances Harichandra could lie. They both enter in to a bet and Viswamitra challenges that he would make Harichandra to speak a lie.

Vishwamithra comes to Harichandra and asks for money to perform a *yagna*. Harichandra agrees to pay the money to him but Viswamithra says that he would take the money at appropriate time.

After some days, a group of villagers come to Harichandra and complain to him against the attack of wild beasts on their fields. To redress the grievances of his people goes to jungle to hunt the wild beasts. When he was resting, after hunting for sometime, two *mātanga kanyas* (celestial dancers) created by Vishwamitra come to provide entertainment to him. Harichandra pleased with their dancing offers gifts, but they deny them and

express their desire to have sexual pleasure with him. Harischandra refuses to yield to them and sends them away.

The *mātanga kanyas* complain to Vishwamitra about Harischandra. Vishwamitra gets angry and approaches Harischandra with a demand that he should satisfy them. Harischandra is stubborn in rejecting the demand of Vishwamitra, and instead he offers his kingdom to Vishwamitra. Vishwamitra accepts the offer and asks Harischandra to leave the kingdom along with his wife Chndramathi and son Rohit. When Harischanra prepares to leave, Vishwamitra asked for the money, which Harischandra promised to give to perform *yagna*. Harishchandra who lost his kingdom is unable to pay the money but to keep up his word given to Vishwamitra, asks for some more time, so that he can sell his wife and pay the money. Vishwamitra agrees for this and he sends his disciple, Nakshatraka along with Harischandra to collect the money.

Harishchandra along with his wife, son and Nakshatraka leave for Kasi. Vishwamitra creates so many problems to Harischandra during his journey. Nakshatraka advises Harischandra to speak a simple lie that he never said that he would pay the money to Vishwamitra, so that he gets back his kingdom and he can live happily. But Harischandra refuses to speak lie.

After reaching Kasi, Harischandra sold out his wife to a brahmin called Kausika, but the money he gets is not sufficient to pay to Vishwamitra. He asks Nakshatraka to sell him and collect the money. Nakshatraka sells Harischandra to Veerabahudu, who works as a caretaker of the burial ground.

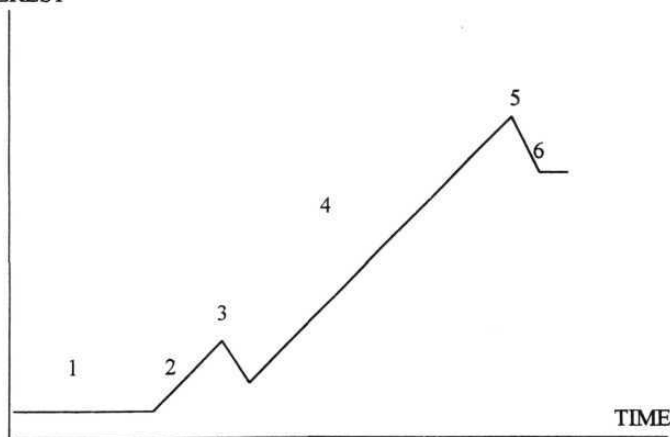
But his ordeals are not over. To make him to speak a lie, Vishwamitra with his mystic power creates further problems to him. His son, Rohitha dies of a snake bite and Chandramathi gets the dead body for burial to the burial

ground where her husband works. But she does not have money to pay the caretaker towards the fees for cremating at the burial ground. Harischandra advises her to sell her *mangalsûtra* and pay the fees. Her *mangalsûtra* cannot be seen by others, except by her husband. They both recognize each other. Harishchandra asks her to go and get the money by selling her *mangalsûtra*.

While she is going on the streets, the solders of the king arrest her and she is charged of killing the king's son and stealing his ornaments. The king orders death sentence to her. She is brought to Harischandra and he is asked to kill her. Harischandra knows the truth but to obey the orders of the king takes out the sword and puts it on her neck. The sword becomes a garland of flowers. Viswamitha, Indra, Lord Shiva and other celestial gods appear. Viswamithra confesses to Harischandra that he is responsible for creating all these troubles to make him to speak a lie and accepts his defeat. Harischandra gets back his son, kingdom and everything to lead a happy life.

This play is being a tragi-comedy the plot is built up with strong dramatic incidents and with a proper arrangement, to keep the interest in rise. The total structure of this single plot can be demonstrated graphically.

INTEREST



In the above graph, 'X' axis represents 'time' scale and 'Y' axis, the 'interest' span. Number one is expository stage in which introduction to Harischandra, the protagonist is made at Indrasabha and also the nature of Vishwamitra, the antagonist is explained. In the second incident the action rises with the challenge of Vishwamitra to Vasishta that he will make Harischandra to speak a lie. In the third the action falls in the scene where Vishwamitra meets Harischandra for money and Harischandra's refusal to *māṭhanga kanyas* desire, and leads to the fourth stage which rises to reach the climax starting from Vishwamitra's anger towards Harischandra (for refusing *māṭhanga kanyas* desire), to the point where Chandramathi meets her husband in the burial ground.

Then the climax at point five arrives where Harischandra tries to kill his wife. The falling action in the sixth stage is the appearance of Vishwamitra and other celestial gods. Thus the conclusion arrives with Harischandra getting his son back to life along with the lost kingdom. The play ends with a prayer to lord Shiva and others by all the characters.

This structure with minimum introduction, maximum rising action and less falling action and conclusion is typical, as far as this play is concerned, which is having a single plot. But can a play with a double plot would have a different structure? This question seeks an answer in Jayantha Jayapalamu<sup>37</sup> another *yakshagānam* text.

Jayantha Jayapalamu is a play centered around two good friends, Jayantha and Jayapala. The story is as follows.

Radhanga is the king of Chola kingdom. Vimalangi is his wife and Jayapaludu is his son. Jayanthudu, the son of the *mantri* (minister) and



Jaypaludu are best friends. But the king does not like the friendship of his son with the son of the *mantri*, with a view that his son is getting spoiled because of the friendship with Jayapaludu who is a bad character. He asks the *mantri* to discourage their friendship.

One day, when Jayanthudu and Jayapaludu are at the royal garden, Bhuvanasundari, a prostitute, who is specially employed to break their friendship, arrives. Jayanthudu discourages Jayapaludu's talking to her. But he does not care the words of his friend and he presents the chain of pearls to her in praise of her singing and dancing. While leaving that place, the prostitute calls Jayanthudu and whispers in his ears as "rice grain in the grains of paddy" (*vadla ginjalo biyyapu ginja*), a popular proverb.

After her departure Jayapaludu asks his friend what she has whispered to him. Jayanthudu tells what she has actually whispered to him. Yet Jayapaludu is not convinced and abuses his friend that is he concealing the truth and telling a lie. Jayanthudu pleads that he is telling the actual words she has whispered, but Jayapaludu could not believe it. He breaks his friendship with Jayanthudu and leaves that kingdom. He goes to the kingdom of Magadha, where his wife, Prabhavathi stays with her brother, Chandrasekharudu, who is the king of Magadha. Jayanthudu has not seen the face of his wife since their marriage, and during this long gap, she develops illegal contact with another man called Medari Venkanna. She wanted to get rid off her husband and one night when Jayapaludu is asleep, she plots with her paramour and kills her husband. Jayanthudu in search of his friend Jayapaludu reaches Magadha in the disguise of a *bairāgi* (mendicant). Unfortunately he arrives to the spot where his friend is killed and he becomes

an eyewitness for that murder. But Prabhavathi and Venkanna throw the crime on the *bairāgi*, who is taken to custody and sent to prison.

The king Chandrasekhara meets *bairāgi* at the prison. *Bairāgi* reveals the truth of the murder to him. He agrees to find out the truth from the culprits. Prabhavathi and Venkanna are caught. They confess and are sentenced by the king.

*Bairāgi* reveals to the king about himself. He urges the king to give the ashes and bones of his friend for immersing them in holy rivers. The king agrees for this and Jayanthudu leaves that place with the ashes and bones of his friend tied in a piece of cloth.

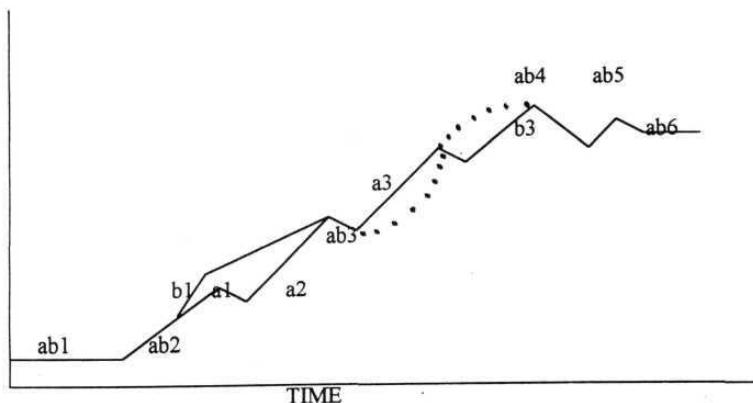
Jayanthudu goes to the kingdom of Kuntha, where his wife Bhanumathi, the daughter of the king lives. Jayanthudu too, has not seen his wife since their marriage. Bhanumathi is a noble lady and ardent devotee of goddess Kali. On the night of their union, when Jayanthudu is asleep, Bhanumathi leaves the palace and goes to Kali temple. Jayanthudu wakes up and he also follows her. At the temple Bhanumathi worships Kali and prepares herself to cut her little finger to pay her vow on the day her husband arrives. But goddess Kali appears before her and prevents her from cutting the finger. She is pleased for Bhanumathi's devotion and sincerity and grants supernatural powers to her with which anything she touches would become gold and lifeless bodies would get life. Jayanthudu after watching this returns to his palace and lies down pretending that he is sleeping.

Bhanumathi returns to the palace and finds the sack, which contains the ashes and bones of Jayanthudu. She thinks that it is a gift brought by her husband and she opens it. Due to the supernatural powers she is bestowed with by Kali, the bones and ashes get to life with her touch and Jayanthudu

comes out with life. On seeing Bhanumathi he tries to embrace her, but she escapes from him and hides herself in a corner. Jayapaludu finds Jayanthudu on the bed and with an anger he cuts the throat of Jayanthudu and he dies. Bhanumathi weeps for the death of her husband. She abuses Jayapaludu and with her magical powers she touches the dead body of Jayanthudu. He comes back to life. Jayapaludu confesses for the mistakes he has done and requests his friend to pardon him. The play ends on a happy note.

As the play has two plots, which are interwoven, one is of Jayanthudu and the other is of Jayapaludu, the structure can be drawn in the following manner.

#### INTEREST



In the above diagram the dramatic structure of double plotted play, showing the lines with ab marks indicate the situations in which both Jayanthudu and Jayapaludu are involved. The lines noted as a is the plot pertaining to Jayanthudu and b is the plot pertaining Jayapaludu.

Ab-1 is the exposition of the play wherein the friendship of Jayanthudu and Jayapaludu, and the aversion for the same by the king is

established. Ab-2 is the rising action, where the friends get separated. From here the lines take different directions. B1 is the rising action in the plot of Jayapaludu where it reaches climax at ab-3. a-1 is the rising action of Jayanthudu, and at A-2 it falls and rises to reach climax at ab-3. Ab-3 is the common plot and the climax of the two sub plots wherein Jayapaludu is killed by his wife along with her paramour and Jayanthudu is arrested on implication of false case against him of killing Jayapaludu. B-2 is the fall of Jayapaludu wherein his dead body is made into ashes. A-3 is the progression of Jayapaludu in which he reaches his wife. B-3 is again the rise of Jayapaludu getting the life and plot reaches the second climax at ab-4 of the play with the killing of Jayanthudu by Jayapaludu. ab-5 is Jayanthudu getting back to life. ab-6 is the conclusion where Jayapaludu confesses and continue the friendship.

The above diagrams are showing the structures of a single plotted play and a double plotted play as theorized and advocated by Freytag. These graphs are developed on the summaries of the plots of the two plays. But the idea that the summary of a plot of a play which would be traditionally considered as 'content' represents the 'structure' or 'form' of the play<sup>38</sup>. Even plot summary lacks the visual suggestion of a form and the architectural suggestion of structure, yet it seems likely that the locus of relating and ordering principle of drama would be found in the pattern of the major developments of a series of events – a pattern which recurs in that order often enough to impress itself in the memories of the reader of a play. So the pattern is the overall structure and can only be accurately described in terms of a series of events, which can be called as 'basic pattern of events'<sup>39</sup>.

Certain group of events seem to recur in more or less the same order, for example, the events of journey; leaving home, series of adventures enroute, arrival of home coming are well established in the plays analyzed earlier like Satya Harischandra and Jayantha Jayapalamu<sup>40</sup>. Other familiar patterns are: rise to great power and prominence, decision to risk life for greater power, fall, new arrangement of forces and persons, mistaken identities or revelation of identities etc. Descriptions of structure in terms of tragedy and comedy are not neat and precise. They lack the obvious formality of geometric description, but they are more accurate descriptions of general dramatic structures than circular and straight lines<sup>41</sup>.

The satisfactory basic pattern of events must be emotionally meaningful to its audience. They must know the results, not while in conclusion because the pattern may be enjoyed when the conclusion is known, but in the sense that the pattern as a whole must stir the feelings of audience. Such is the nature of basic pattern of events, which form the gross structure of drama.

One source of confusion may be cleared up by noting the difference which can be assumed that exists between the basic pattern of events and the plot, because of no conceptual difference separates them, surely the more familiar term would be preferable. The kind of pattern referred to by 'basic pattern of events' is of a general nature, a pattern usually recognized because of frequent repetitions and/or the importance attached to it as a root pattern of experience. In this way it acquires the strong sense of pattern necessary to give it authority as artistic structure. Plot, on the otherhand, refers to the actual mechanisms by which the basic pattern of events is made to take place

in a particular play<sup>42</sup>. A basic pattern of events may serve for several different dramas, but plots are drama specific.

The description of a basic pattern of events as a kind of root pattern of events as a kind of root patterns of experience is sufficiently similar to the two related concepts of myth and archetype that the distinctions which forced the coining of this new term should be set forth. The basic pattern of events is not a story or a myth; it precedes a possible manifestations of strong or myth. Aristotle<sup>43</sup> considered that a story or a myth is a structural cause of drama. This of course is true in the sense that the Greek myths existed before the dramas did, and the Greek playwrights used the myths as a basis for making their dramas. On the other hand, the myth itself is an art form with its own 'structure' from the example of Aristotle, many of the events in the myth of Iphigenia as he quotes it, do not find a place in the drama of Euripides<sup>44</sup>. This suggests the need of a principle of dramatic structure, which dictates, which events in the myth are used and which are left out. In modern drama, where there is usually no story source, this principle will not work, yet the sense of a pattern of events, which underlies myths, proverbs, stories and the most sophisticated dramas, can serve to organize the traditional or the modern play.

In some respects the basic pattern of events resemble what are called archetypal patterns. The meaning of 'archetype' varies with the user<sup>45</sup>. Northrop Frye uses it in a very wide sense. "I mean by an 'archetype' a symbol which connects one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary experience. A symbol like the sea or the heath cannot remain within Connad or Hardy: it is bound to expand over many works into an archetypal symbol of literature as a whole<sup>46</sup>".

In Frye, then, the sea can be an archetype, a character can be an archetype, and a plot, in the loose sense, may be an archetype. It is in the later sense, where Frye's archetype covers a root arrangement of actions or events. It coincides with the basic pattern of events. Frye explains this aspect of concept as "the archetypal analysis of the plot of a novel or play would deal with it in terms of the generic, recurring or conventional actions which show analogies to rituals: the weddings, funerals, intellectual and social initiations, executions or mock executions, the chasing away of the scapegoat villain, and so on"<sup>47</sup>.

Frye is not interested in how the archetypes are derived. He notes that they exist. So the basic pattern of events does share with the archetypal pattern of events, the sense of existing prior to any specific instance of itself. That is people sense a pattern of events in their experiences before it is set down in any drama and as distinct from those dramas which manifest it<sup>48</sup>. These sensed patterns could be verbalized in such general statements as 'that which goes up must come down', which is surely general enough to qualify as an archetype, yet the fact that, people do make these generalizations hardly involve a mystery deep enough to entail the usual archetypal theories.

This gross structural principle on the basic pattern of events can be described as the 'shape' of a play<sup>49</sup>. There is, however, a large step between the basic pattern of events and the individual actions, which body it forth. It will be suggested that this area is organized both by set patterns, such as the ordinary progression of a day and what will be called an improvisational structure, which is moving always into the future one step i.e., one action, at a time<sup>50</sup>.

The improvisational structure leading from action to action does not form one unbroken line from the beginning to the end of the drama, or even from the beginning to the end of an act. The human being is not so precise. Instead, drama, and the life it reflects, seems to move towards its purposes in changing directions and at various speeds. When the purpose is changed, a beat is said to have closed. The analytic unit of drama called a 'beat' is thus like a paragraph in prose, and can be divided as arbitrarily in some cases.

The separation of a drama into beats is the basis for the rhythm of drama-in addition to and working through such metrical rhythms as may be present in verse drama. The rhythm in the beats is a pulse rhythm which, although irregular, can yet be easily felt, and which manifests in building tension and a release at the end of the beat. There is usually a variety to the length of beats in any section of a play.

The concept of the rhythm of the play looked at more precisely shows itself to be based primarily on the sounds of the play, with the spoken word the most frequent and evident of sounds. However, every sound and movement contributes to and must be made part of the rhythm. The soul of foot steps, the visual rhythm, of a cross or a gesture, a quietly or slowly descending curtain, a sudden "black-out" at the end or slow fade, all are part of the rhythm of a performance. A rhythm of this kind must come from sensitivity to the improvisational quality of the script. When the actor is really caught up in a give and take with his partner, the changing situations and purposes of the improvisational structure stimulate in him a speeding-up and a slowing-down, a growing urgency and involvement with the partner, or a slacking of interest searching for new purposes. There even appears to be something about the rhythm of a given performance which is fundamental to a



judgement of the acting as believable or not, that is, as a performance in which the actor is truly involved or a mechanical performance.

A rhythmic tightening and slacking of interest also satisfies the psychological and physiological needs of the audience, which requires a pause to sit back and catch its breath between moments of tension. An interesting question of emotional effect of pure rhythm arises in connection with music drama, opera, melodrama, dramatic dance and all attempts to abstract drama in whole or in part from the spoken word.

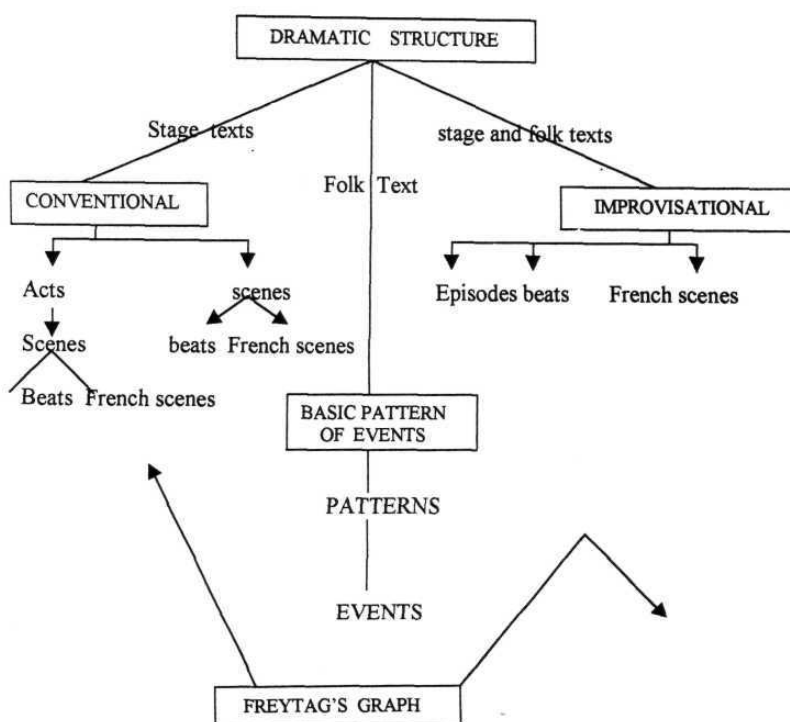
One more aspect of play structure is the Act division which has an ambivalent nature in dramatic structure, because it may be either purely conventional or organic and, in either case, its dictated divisions may or may not be physically marked for an audience at that playhouse<sup>51</sup>. In part, act division is certainly conventional, the product of historical precedent terms authority from the Roman and Elizabethan plays and in part, a matter of practical convenience such as change of set, makeup or costume, and refresh the spirit of the audience<sup>52</sup>. Act division conceived as a convention presents a mechanical slicing up of the play, however, even the mechanical division of a play has its ambiguity because the division into acts may be physically marked production or may be made only in the printed text so that only a reader would be aware of the division. On the otherhand, there are logical divisions of dramatic material into the two to five segments, which have traditionally marked the act division of a play. These are analytic divisions corresponding roughly to Aristotle's' triad<sup>53</sup>: beginning middle and end, which are pyramidically illustrated by Freytag as introduction, climax and fall or conclusion.

Where these logical divisions really exists, something may be gained by marking them off into units, but this three stage pattern cannot be imposed upon all dramatic material. The episodic plays of Bertolt Brecht suggest no such act division<sup>54</sup>. Often the time of a dramatic progress is not continuous, lending further logic to the act break. Thus the nature of *chindu yakshagānam* texts basically represents the epic tradition and it's associated themes. The characters therefore are depicted as members belonging to puranic languages. The narrative tradition also reflects the ethos of the community living an oral tradition. However, when the texts are dramatized and made into performances, they represent not only the epic tradition but also the cultural tradition of the folk group, the *chindus*. The structure of the narratives also reflects this dual nature. As far as the texts are concerned, the plot or the story line reflects a structure but when it is performed that structure becomes invisible. The following section deals with such complexity and attempts to bring to light the dichotomy that exists in the structure of *chindu bhāgavatham* texts.

The progress of a play may also be broken into smaller units, which are known as scenes. The scenes may be continuously present in a play upto end, or they may present in an act. So scenes are independent at times, but mostly they are the subdivisions of the acts. The beginning and end of a scene is very simply determined: one scene constitutes, by definition, the continuous action in one place. French practice further refines this unit by adding that the action must also involve the same persons, that is, when one or more persons enter upon or leave the stage a new French scene emerges<sup>55</sup>.

Leaving aside the French scene division, the nature and number of scenes in a play depend on the author's assumptions about the essential nature

of the dramatic progression and its requirement for a break. In short, division into scenes is really a method of analytically marking of units fundamentally determined by the nature of the dramatic material itself. No widespread formulas for 'a prior' division of this material into scenes exist, as they do for act division. Scene division can, then, be most profitably view and as a formalization of the result of the structural forces already described. Thus, various dramatic structures that are discussed above can be summed as follows.



The stage texts are built up with Act/scene divisions, basically for practical convenience. Usually a break is given either in the form of an act, scene or scenes within an act, when there is a change in the place of action. To practically execute the change of location by changing the sets and other

stage material, the performers or the concerned technicians require some minimum time either in total blackout or by closing the curtain. So this point is a convenient one for the playwright by closing one act / scene and to start a new act/scene. Freytag's graph is useful to study the structure of an act or the total play, to find-out the sustenance of interest of the audience. The scenes can also be sub-divided either into beats or French scenes, which are basically useful for practical convenience during the rehearsal period. The director for his analytical purposes also can divide the act either into beats or French scenes. But Freytag's graph can only be applied either to the whole play or to study the structure of an act / scene, as they are divided by the playwright and which appear in the text. Beats and French scenes are the divisions made by the director for his convenience and hence Freytag is no more applicable in these divisions<sup>56</sup>.

The improvisational structures are basically seen in the episodic plays. Plays of Erwin Piscator<sup>57</sup> Bertolt Brecht are written exclusively in the episodic genre. The episodes in a play cannot be divided into beats or French scenes because, usually they are short in length and they themselves become the beats or French scenes of the total play. Eventhough there is a change in the place of action when an episode changes; the presentation style of these plays is not realistic, which needs change of setting and other visual elements. In non-realistic style of presentation of a play the change of place of action can be suggested to the audience either by showing a placard, or by an announcement, or by a projection of a slide showing a picture, which symbolically suggests the location. Even in the concept of modern street theatre, the play is episodic, where number of locations are suggested through dialogues or songs or visuals. In this non-realistic style of presentation no

stage properties are used but the men become the material. The episodic plays are usually meant for stage and the modern street plays can be performed any where without more theatrical elements. Some of the folk texts which have the improvisational structures can be divided into beats and French scenes, in spite of episodes, and hence Freytags' graph become helpless to study these structures. An attempt can be made to study the structure of an episode –through the graph but it becomes a useless exercise, because usually the episodes close abruptly and start without a proper introduction or beginning to that episode. The graphical study of a dramatic structure requires a beginning, middle and an end, either in a scene or in an act or in the total play.

The folk text will have the basic patterns and each pattern is studded with events. The patterns may be either small, in terms of duration or long and the events may be either minimum in number, or maximum. A folk text usually will contain a large number of locations<sup>58</sup>. The change of a location is communicated by an announcement or through the conversation of the characters, particularly through the character of Pradhani in *chindu yakshagānam* texts.

In *chindu yakshagānam*, Pradhani who is *sūtradhāra* of the total *yakshagānam* presentation, announces the change of location and arrival of characters and also the off stage actions. In spite of the change in the location usually all the characters stay there only, eventhough some of them are not required in the ensuing action, to support the chorus singing and stepping when the dance is on. The *chindu bhāgavatham* texts are usually narrated to the audience, through dialogues, songs, verses and occasional improvisations, than acting. The structures of these texts cannot be studied by applying the

Freytag's graph, which is basically meant to study the rise of interest in the total play. Even though there is a point of interest and involvement by the audience in a *chindu bhāgavatham* text, the involvement is broken with the dancing and singing of the characters, which are supposed to involve in the situation meant for them in the performance. The presentation of *chindu yakshagānams* can be compared with that of Brecht's epic theatre plays. The epic plays are presented in a proscenium stage with all the modern techniques and devices, where both the actors and audience are 'alienated' from emotional involvement in-to the situation, which is the basic concept propounded by Piscator and Brecht.

The theory, which can be applied for a narrative also, cannot be employed here to study the structure of *chindu yakshagānam* text, because *chindu yakshagānams* are not narratives. Moreover, as discussed in this chapter, the *chindu yakshagānam* texts are not written texts but performance texts. A performance text continuously gets changed as per the context and hence the structure gets changed.

Therefore, the structures in *chindu yakshagānam* are performance specific but not drama specific. Though by summing up the plot of the play, one may infer a structure which only refers to the story content. The same structure becomes invisible in the performance context owing to the fluid nature of the text itself, which is more context, oriented than the play oriented.

To sum up, the *chindu yakshagānam* texts are tradition based and always transmitted from oral to performance channels. While written texts are more or less remain as parallel texts. Even if there are instances of written texts leading to performance texts, they too do not completely follow written

texts. The tradition has given such a base to the performance that every performance itself becomes a text in its own right. Thus performance becomes the live nerve of the community and tradition and hence it is inalienable from the community, which creates and perpetuates it. Of the thirty-seven texts analyzed in this chapter it is found that the *chindu yakshagānams* are epic oriented, more so, Mahabharatha based. As far as the structure of the text is concerned it reflects a dialogism wherein the structures appear at one level and disappear at another level. At the plot summary level structures do appear to inform the progression of the story line. But when they are performed, structures disappear due to the thin connection of the characters in the plot. In-fact the narrative style in the performance goes in a segmented sequence by the continuous interruption of characters, such as Pradhani and other common characters. This is strategically implanted in the performance text as a texture in order to facilitate face to face communication with the audience. The principle of alienation being the main feature of the *yakshagānam* tradition the performers and audience develops reciprocal relationship with each other which otherwise socially constructed in their sustenance pattern. Change of roles, therefore, prohibited between the *mādigas* and *chindu mādigas*, which become apparent need for the continuation of the tradition. This basic need naturally looked for avenues in differential contexts to develop performer and audience relation relationships. Hence, the performance texts themselves have given a way for differential contexts.

The forth-coming chapter deals with the differential contexts and the meanings that the performances would generate for these communities.

## NOTES

1. Monogenesis theory is propounded by the anthropologists of nineteenth century to find out the traces of cultural arti-facts.  
L.H. Morgan, Ancient Society, New York, 1977;  
George Peter Murdock, Culture and Society, Pittsburg, University of Pittsburg Press, 1965.
2. The Kuchipudi dance dramas are composed with the stories drawn from the epics Mahabharatha, Ramayana and Bhagavatham. They perform these stories with dancing and melodies classical singing. The performing troupe is known as '*natyamèlam*'. The stories which depict the *leelas* of god are known as Bhagavathams and the performers are called as Bhagavathars. The troupes of these Bhagavathars are known as Bhagavatha *mèlams*. In the earlier days they used to perform at the streets, preferably at the junctions of the cross roads and hence are called as *Veedhi Bhāgavathams*. The performers used heavy make up and costumes and each melam as consists more number of dancers and actors. In earlier kuchipudi tradition, women are not allowed to participate and males used to act as females. This tradition is confirmed to Brahmins only (tr.).  
P.S.R. Appa Rao, Telugu Nataka Vikasam (tel), Hyderabad, Natyamala Publications, 1967. P.140.
3. Polygenesis is a theory with regard to origin of cultures basically rests on concept of 'psychic unity' of human kind developed paralallay but antithetical to monogenesis theory.  
Max Mayer, The Fundamental laws of Human Behaviour, Boston, 1911.
4. S.V. Joga Rao, Andhra Yakshagana Vangmaya Charithra, Waltair, Andhra Univeristy series No. 68, 1961. P.124.
5. Kodumagulla Parankusacharyulu, Sri Vasara Jnana Saraswathi Mahatyamu, (tel), Basara, Department of Endowments, 1979. pp. 35-36.
6. The first available text in print medium dated back to 1905 AD.  
Amarachintha Ramadas, Tara Sashanka Natakamu, Secunderabad, Bachu Veeranna, Chiluka Bal Reddy and Company, 1905.
7. The trasmission of texts from oral to written and vice versa is initially discussed by A.K. Ramanujam and Stuart Blackburn.  
Stuart H. Blackburn and A.K. Ramanujam, Another Harmony: New Essays and the Folklore of India, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986.
8. Cherivirala Bhagayya seems to be the author of thirty three yakshaganams.  
See section-IV of Chapter-III in this thesis for details.



9. A.A. Goldenweiser, "The Principles of limited possibilities in the development of Culture", Journal of American Folklore, Vol-XXVI No. XCIX, Jan. 1913. P.270.
10. Poddaturi Yella Reddy, Telanganolo Yakshaganam Rachana Prayogam (tel), Palamoor, Jathiya Sahitya Parishad, 1994.
11. These thirty seven texts are in vogue in the performances of the Chindu Troups of Nizamabad and Nalgonda districts. Various interviews conducted during field surveys to find out their repertoire reveal this fact.
12. James C. Scot, The Moral economy of the peasant, London, 1977.
13. Alf. Hildebeitel, The Cult of Draupadi, Vol.I. Mythologies: From Gingee to Kurukshethra, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991.
14. For examples see: Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger and Laurie J. Sears, Boundaries of the Text: Epic performances South and Southern Asia, Michigan, The University of Michigan, 1991. pp.9-12.
15. Chindu Yellamma informed during an interview conducted on 29-11-1997 at Amdapur village of Nizamabad District, that during her childhood her father had three hundred villages as his share to give performances. As the family grew in size the villages are divided among family members who established separate families. Now fifty villages remained as her share in the Nizamabad district.
16. For instance the yakshagana texts such as Sri Krishna Leelalu, Sri Krishna Tulabharam, Krishanarjuna Yudham, Rukmini Kalyanam, Bhaktha Kuchela etc., depict Krishna as the protagonist character.
17. For example, texts like Lavakusha, Sugreeva Vijayamu, Bhaktha Ramadasu etc., Rama appears for a brief period.
18. Jack Zipes, Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The classical Genre for Children and the process of civilization, New York, Wildman Press, 1983.
19. The concept of donor is well discussed in the structural analysis of fairy tales by Vladimir Propp. According to his syntagmatic structural analysis the donor performs vital functions which in fact becomes nerve center of the tale. Without donor the tale would not move further. In the thirty one functions which he enumerated XII, XIII, XIV and Desisgnation D, E, F are connected with the functions of the donor.  
Vladimir Propp, Morphology of Folk tale, Bloomington, Indiana University Research Centre in Anthropology, Folklore and linguistic publication.10, 1950.
20. Propp calls these characters as 'dramatis personae'.  
Vladimir Propp, Op.Cit.

21. Instances of Pradhani becoming *hāsyagādu* may be seen from the texts like Satya Harischandra, Mairavana, Sri Krishna Rayabaram etc., Even as Pradhani also he replies in a comic way to the questions of main characters when these characters speak from behind the curtain, before entering the stage. The capacity to improvise the dialogue as per the situation is a must for the actor who portrays the Pradhani character. Examples of Pradhani acting as *chelikatte* to royal or celestial characters can be seen from the plays like Rukmini Kalyanam, Sri Krishna Parijatham, Kamamma Charithra etc., These celestial / royal characters address Pradhani as *chelikatte* and in turn Pradhani obliges to be *chelikatte* to them. Poddaturi Yella Reddy confirms that in any yakshaganam, where ever there is an entry of a female character in the beginning of the play as per the story, compulsorily Pradhani becomes *chelikatte*. Poddaturi Yella Reddy, Op.Cit., pp. 162-167.
22. It is a field observation at Sadula village of Medak district. On 08-12-97 for a video recording of Doordarshan, Chindula Neelamm's troupe of Armoor village performed Sarangadhara Yakshagānam. In fact, if performed in the chindu tradition, the text requires four to five hours for the total performance. But the organizers have given only one and half an hour for the troupe to complete the performance. Here Pradhani has taken an active part by beautifully editing the total text, with his improvisations and narrations through uncalled for interventions. The total text is performed within one and half an hours.
23. Field observations at Sadula village, Medak district. In Sarangadhara performance the actor who acted as Raja Raja Narendra, the king, appeared to be new to the character. On many occasions either he forgot the lines or spoke blurred lines. Twice he could not speak any thing and looked helplessly. But in all these instances Pradhani saved him and the performance with his improvisations and presence of mind.
24. The following conversation takes place between the *hāsyagādu* and the *mantri* (Pradhani) in Bhabhruvahana Charitram.
- Mantri: *Are Bhai ! E- thamam roshini ujala kya hai ! Rath din chamcham, tum-tum, dum dum, kya batwa macha raha hai?*
- Hasyagadu: *Ayya ichata bhagavatham ada bovu chunnamu.*  
(in Telugu)
- Matri: *Are ! Bhagavatham geegavatham mereku maloom nahi*  
(in Urdu) *Acha bol !*

Hasyagadu: *Anaga, idi oka Yakshaganamu*  
(in Telugu)

Mantri: *Yakshaganamu, bhikshaganamu kya laga hai !*  
*seedha bhol*  
(in Urdu) *nahee tho thanda bhajavoonga!*

See Cherivirala Bhagayya, Bhabhruvahana Charithramu (tel),  
Secunderabad, Dacheppally Kistaiah and Sons, 1989. pp. 5,6.

25. In yakshagana text Jagadeakaveeruni katha, Pradhani speaks in urdu language with another character, the village servant(sevaka).

Pradhani: *Ore sevaka! Ye udayagiri shehar me sub log acha hai*  
(in Urdu)

Sevaka: *Ayya, kshemamugane unnavaralamu.*  
(in Telugu)

Pradhani: *Acha dekho ye gaon me roshini bahut hai. Kya baat hai ?*  
(in Urdu)

Sevaka: *Ayya ichata bhagavathula yakshaganam duchunnaru.*  
(in Telugu)

Pradhani: *Acha! Acha! Ye dekho, abu udayagiri pattanamu*  
(in Urdu) *palinchu udayasena maharaju ane vala hai. Acha intijam hona hai. Sub tayyar hai kya?*

Sevaka: *Ayya! Chittamu. Alage chappandi.*  
(in Telugu)

Pradhani: *Acha! dekho, sub collector, deputy collector,*  
(in Urdu) *tahasildar, amin, mohtemai, sadar amin, kotwal, deshmuks, patel, patwari, sarpanch, upasarpach, begari, talari, sheku sindhi, vaddera, ayyavaru, vagaira, sub hajar hai ?*

26. For example see the following texts  
Timmapura vithal rayudu, Gaja Gowri Vratam(tel), Hyderabad, Sri Mallikharjuna publications, 1976 pp.1,2;  
Cherivirala Bhagayya, Satya Harischandra (tel), Hyderabad, Siddeswara publications, 1994. pp. 1,2;  
Chervirala Bhagayya, Savithri Parinayam(tel), Hyderabad, Sri Mallikharjuna publications, 1991.pp.1,4;  
Ippalapalli Ramakrishnayya, Nagarjuna Charitramu (tel), Hyderabad, Sri Mallikharjuna publicationas, 1982. pp. 3,5.

27. In all the *chindu yakshaganam* performances observed during the field survey, males impersonated females. In the performance of Gaja Gowri Vratam observed at Amdapur, the female characters of

Gandhari and maid servants are portrayed by male actors. In Sarangadhara observed at Sadula village male acted as Chitrangi. In Chenchulakshmi observed at Hyderabad and presented by Armour troupe male acted as Mahalakshmi and in Sathi Savithri observed at Saigudam village male acted as Savithri. The interesting observation is in all these performances male acted the lead female roles.

28. Aristotle, Poetics: Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, tr. S.H. Butcher, Chicago, Dover Publications, 1951. P 37.
29. Gustav Freytag, Technique of Drama – An exposition of Dramatic composition and Art, tr. Elias J. Macewam, New York, Benjamin Bloom Inc. Bronx, 1863.
30. *Ibid*, p.115.
31. Jan Austell, The play as theatre, New York, Jovnovieh, 1971.
32. Gustav Freytag, Op.Cit., p.121.
33. *Ibid*, P.133.
34. *Ibid*, P.137.
35. *Ibid*, P.139.
36. Cherivarala Bhagayya, Op.Cit..
37. Cherivirala Bhagayya, Jayantha Jayapalamu (tel), Hyderabad, Sri Mallikarjuna Publications, 1991.
38. Based on the sequence of events in a plot which constitute the structure denote the forms like tragedy, comedy etc.
39. Jackson G. Barry, Dramatic Structure- the shaping of experience, Los Angles, University of California Press, 1970. P.28.
40. For example basic pattern like 'journey' is well knitted in the narratives of Satya Harischandra and Jayantha Jayapalamu, which actually causes a further advancement in both the place. Therefore these basic patterns are not simply having narrative value but possess plot value also, particularly in folk texts.
41. Jackson G. Barry, Op.Cit., p.35.
42. In the Yakshaganam texts cited, the differentiation between plot and basic events can be seen. As far as 'journey', a basic pattern in both the plays refers to the movement of protagonists from a 'home' space to wilderness/ alien place denoting unstability as the prime feature for the character's position in the play. As far as the plot is concerned the journey's undertaken by the protagonists of the two plays resolved to the differential ending in the story, changing the very basic format of

the play. The catastrophe in play-one i.e., Satya Harischandra ended in producing single plot mode, whereas in play-two Jayantha Jayapalamu catastrophe resulted in producing double plot.

43. Aristotle, Op.Cit., pp.37-38.

This is also true with the Indian dramas based on Indian mythologies. In the case of Satya Harischandra the myth on the puranic royal personage named Harischandra, who is supposed to belong to the lineage of Ikshwakus from whom the epic character is said to have taken descent is made into a theatrical drama in the Yakshagānam tradition. The narrative structure of the drama is concomitant to the progress of the story line.

44. *Ibid.*, P.15.

45. Archetype in folklore is used more or less as synonym to the 'original' or 'first' or 'premordial'. The historic geographic method of the Finish school tried to find out the archetypes of folk tales by applying cantographic method in order to trace the transmission channels.

Stith Thomson, "Star Husband Tale", the Study of Folklore, ed. Allan Dundes, New Jersey, Prentic Hall, 1965. Pp.414-459.

46. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957. P.81.

47. *Ibid.*, P.72.

48. For example the archetypes in Satya Harischandra, as in Frye's opinion would be, hunting scene, journeys, encounters with extra terrestrial elements, benedictions etc., Similarly in Jayantha Jayapalamu, journeys, deaths and rebirths, encounter with deity's, prison events etc. Every archetype in its narrative form reaches to climax and ends up with a catastrophe thus making sub structures in the main structure of a plot.

49. Shape of a play denotes the external elements of a play which constitute as markers to analyze the structural feature of the segments of the play. If a segment in the form of an incident in a play is presented in a dragging manner and felt by the audience then it denotes the dragging nature of the plot which forms the shape. Therefore shape is always felt as a extra textual and hence external in the performance.

50. In the plays cited as examples this feature is very much striking. For instance in Satya Harischandra the chindu performers though present

at a time on the performance space, it is only the character at a time presents its action then followed by the others. The whole narration takes place in this manner.

51. The unique feature of *chindu yakshagāna* text is that they are fully devoid of any kind of act division. Both in written texts and as well as performance texts, act division does not take place. Though the progression of the play suggest different scenes at different places and with different dyad combinations for convention sake, the play runs continuously without any division of acts and scenes.
52. The act division is more relevant to proscenium kind of theatre rather than a folk theatre where the performance space remains only a marked space rather than a sign space, where the back drop of the stage denotes the location. Therefore the Elizabethan plays always demanded a time gap between the acts and hence the play is conveniently divided into acts. Whereas the folk theatre do not use stage properties and only the narratives suggest the audience about the scenes and hence act division becomes unnecessary. Ironically the play Satya Harischandra exclusively written for stage performance, not in the *yakshagānam* style, is provided with act division in order to make the necessary changes in the stage and the characters make up and costume.  
B. Lakshmikantha Kavi, Satya Harischandra (tel), Rajamundry, Kondapally Veera Venkanna and Sons, 1948.
53. Aristotle, Op.Cit., p.76.
54. Raymond Williams, Drama from Ibsen to Brecht, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1964. pp.322-325.
55. Milton Smith, Play Production, D. Appleton' Century Company Inc. USA, 1948. pp.77-78.
56. The concept of a Director do not apparently exists in chindu bhagavatham tradition. Only the leader of the group takes the role of the conductor apart being an actor himself. Hence the convention is the prime guiding factor for the framing of the performance and hence individual creativity shown by the directors is not applicable in this case.
57. Erwin Piscator is the founder of epic theatre in Germany who inspired his disciple Bertolt Brecht. Brecht has popularised the epic theatre concept both in his writings as playwright and in his productions as director.
58. The locations in Satya Harischandra can be listed as the court of Indra at Heaven and on earth, the palace of Harischandra, his royal court, the forest, the capital of Harischandra, road to Kashi, main roads of Kashi, house of Kala Kausika, royal court of Kashi king and burial ground.  
See Cherivirala Bhagayya, Op.Cit.

The locations in Jayatha Jayapalamu are royal palace of Chola king, royal court, royal garden, royal palace at Magadha, forest, road before royal palace, prison, Venkanna's house, royal palace at Kunthala kingdom, bed room at royal palace and Kali temple.

See Cherivirala Bhagayya, Op.Cit.

59. In Satya Harischandra Pradhani announces the following locations. Indrasabha at heaven, ashramas of sages, Ayodhya city, royal palace of Harischandra, forest, Kasi city, Kaushika's house, roads of Kashi, burial ground and forest.

See Cherivirala Bhagayya, Op.Cit., pp. 7, 10, 15, 19, 32, 37, 39, 40-41.

In Jayantha Jayapalamu Pradhani announces the following locations. Royal palace of Chola king, Royal garden, road to Maghada, royal palace at Maghada, Maghada city, Venkanna's house and Kali temple.

See Cherivirala Bhagayya, Op.Cit., pp. 11, 14, 23, 27, 30, 39, 44.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE PERFORMANCE**



Any performance situates it self in a context because without which it cannot survive. Without context if a text is 'performed', it becomes only a narrative in the 'form of a report' which tells about the events in the narration. But in a context, if text is narrated, it imbibes not merely the narrative events, but the way that those events are narrated, both in verbal and action<sup>1</sup>. Then only it becomes a performance. Performance therefore invariably denotes a context. Contextualization of performance encapsules verbal narration along with the usage of gestures, symbols, song and dance sequences. Whole of this put together encodes the performance genre and its variant manifestations in varied context.

There are two issues to be probed to understand better the term 'context'. Firstly, context is often used in the performance tradition as "something denotative of temporality". This means to say that context invariably is confined to "time and space"<sup>2</sup>. The knowledge of time and space makes appropriate the usage of context. For instance, the context of death invariably demands for certain socially acceptable verbal modes of presentations, which are generally called as genres. In an event of death, cracking jokes is not socially appropriate, but mourning songs are well appreciated and accepted<sup>3</sup>. This logic suggests that a narration of performance is contextually guided and therefore, context as an underlying force structure the performance.

Secondly, the term context suggests interactive relationship that emerges between the two groups of people i.e., performers and audience. Therefore, context is also used in the form of 'social context'. Quiet often them not "narratives are performed in specific social contexts. These contexts are constituted by a specific group of people, by a specific set of principles governing their interrelationship, by a specific set of behaviours and conservations in which the narrative is embedded, and by a specific physical and symbolic environment present at the time of narration. The understanding of performance is governed to some extent by an understanding of the specific situation or situations in which it is played"<sup>4</sup>. This suggests that context is not merely temporal, which gives the impression of inanimity and lifelessness, but aliving situation where the groups interplay enacting specific social functions. Therefore, context also means creating social events in which the textual events may appropriately be shared through a live performance<sup>5</sup>.

Taking the case of *chindu bhāgavatham* it is interesting to study how the epic narrations get contextualized in a performance mode. *chindu bhāgavatham* being a traditional performance of the *mādiga* community, they stratazise by creating contexts to make possible the performances and not only live on them but build an identity to justify their social functions as minieal labour<sup>6</sup>. From this point of view, contextualization of performance text by the community, essentially to survive with given socio-economic constraints in their day-to-day life, is to regulate their tradition of performance.

The contextualization of their performance tradition is basically done at two levels. At the primary level *chindu mādigas* as a performing group create a context to validate their position as performers in a ritual context<sup>7</sup>. This ritual context operate in the frame of a cast myth<sup>8</sup>, where in their legality and authority is established by upholding the *dhārmic* tradition<sup>9</sup> which was the asal factor for their status. In the process of upholding this *dhārmic* tradition they create a cast myth, which gives claim for a hierarchically superior lineage from the mythical figure Jambawantha<sup>10</sup>. In fact the caste structure of the Indian social system is negated by claiming that their occupation lies in purifying the other castes through their minieal jobs. This act of purifying the pollutants of the village (though being a caste living outside the main village within a distinct hamlet) made them to enter in to a village during the festivals and jatras to comply sacred duties only during those days as privilege<sup>11</sup>. This social reality of heirarchy made the *chindu mādigas* strategically adapt to a context for their performance through which their identities are explicitly expressed, not only to their own community but also to others. This context may be called as ritual context, because through

ritual they claim their existence to mother goddess, Yellamma and through the narration of the caste myth, they claim their descent from Jambavantha.

These ritually contextualized performances are must for any *chindu mādiga* troupe in their itinerary performing tradition, without which their performance cycle in a village will not be completed<sup>12</sup>

The secondary level of context is related to those situations where they perform their repertoire, which is basically filled with mythological and legendary themes. In a given cycle of their performance tradition, in a village *chindu mādigas* invariably perform the texts of caste myth and the caste goddess as well as the *yakshagānams*. The secondary level context is also crucial for its survival not so much so for identity but for their solidarity and continuity as a performing tradition. The repeated performances sanction legitimacy and authenticity to their performing tradition<sup>13</sup>. This creates a distinct identity to them as '*chindolu*'<sup>14</sup>. Therefore it is the context which is structuring the performance and also social relationships within the *chindu mādigas* and the *mādiga* community.

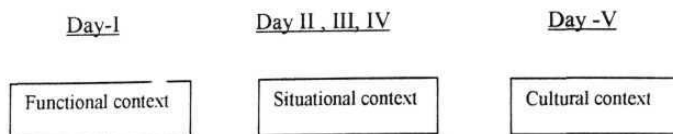
Context in folklore refers to specific social situation<sup>15</sup> where the interaction between the performer and the audience takes place. Context being the guiding factor determines the level of performance and the scale of textual enactment. The *chindu bhāgavatham* texts, as mentioned in the previous chapter are performed in different contexts, yet articulate the unique style of *chindus* to the audience. Whatever may be the context, song and dance sequence distinctly structured and communicated through a pattern of rhythm and set pitch and tune, become the centrifugal performance markers in this art form<sup>16</sup>. This intelligibly is a must, prior to going in for the analysis or the context.

Of all the varied contexts that this performance occur one may substantatively sum up these contexts into three types based on focal elements that the given context imbibes.

There are three types of contexts that one may observe in their performance tradition.

1. Functional context
2. Situational context
3. Cultural context

The above three contexts are essential and crucial for perpetuation of the performance tradition of *chindu mādigas*. Hence, in every itiernary performance cycle they inevitably create contexts of the above three types and perform their repertoire. For instance , the *chindu Yellamma melam* of amdapur village<sup>17</sup>, a performance troupe , has acquired right over roughly fifty villages as hereditary. This troupe has exclusive right to perform in these villages for which they got remuneration called 'tegam', from the villagers, especially the *mādigas*. When this troupe performs in a village for five days they create three contexts mentioned above. The following illustration shows the patterning of the contexts by the group in a village for different performances in a cycle.



For these three contexts they choose different texts from their repertoire. However, the themes of the performance texts of the first and the third contexts remain constant in their performance cycle. This being the case they become fixed variables in the contextual analysis of *chindu bhāgavatham*. Because these contexts rhetorically and symbolically express their identity and in turn become their legal inheritance of the performance tradition.

The second context do not confine to mono specific situation, but has a larger hemisphere, wherein the performance texts can be chosen according to the need of the audience and feasibility of the group of performers. This being the case, within the three types of contextual scenarios the situational context has the potential of becoming intra and inter cultural platform for the *chindu bhāgavatham* performance. At the intra-cultural situational contexts, the contexts may vary from a congregational occasion (like public entertainment exclusively made for the communities or villagers sake during the span of the five day performance programme in a village during their tour) to a specific familiar occasion like an event in the rights of passage, birth, marriage etc. They also perform during the important festivals like, *Ugadi*, *Ramnavami*, *Ganesh Chaturthi*, *KrishnaJanmasthanami*, *Dasara*, *Diwali*, *Sankranthi* and *Mahashivarathri* at the invitation of any village within their frontiers of obligatory right<sup>18</sup>.

As stated already, the texts they select for performance is largely contextualized hence in the first context i.e., functional context, their caste myth *Jāmbapurānam* becomes customary in their performance. Similarly, the third i.e., the cultural context, performance of *yellammavēsham*, their caste goddess, as a tradition being performed at the end of the sequence of

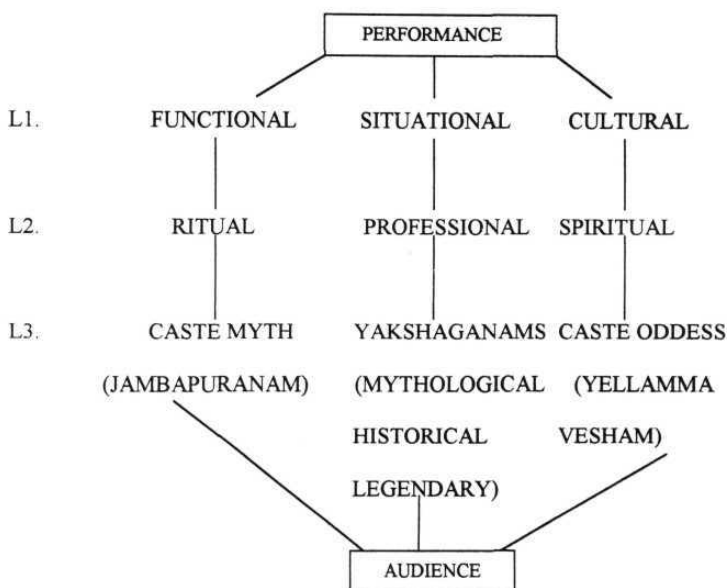
performances, to express the community's union with their goddess. For the situational context, they inevitably select *yakshagānams*. Depending on the village they may even select a local legend or historical text for the performance along with the well-known mythological texts. The idea of selection of the texts largely depends on the familiarity of the themes to the audience. Yet another factor for the selection of the themes is spacing and timing of text in a particular village.

Once a text is performed in a situational context, in their next visit to the same village the same text may not be repeated and may select a different text. But if the villagers regard a particular text as a well performed one they may demand for the same text in that visit also to that village. In any case, these texts are invariably from *yakshagānams* alone.

At the inter cultural level the *chindu bhāgavatham* troupe chooses only the *yakshagānams* as texts for performance. The intra cultural level being a communication situation itself to a different level and background of audience, they select only *yakshagānam* texts, which have primarily epic narration, and are popularly known, since this epic tradition is pan-Indian phenomena<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, the situational context gives the performers' a scope to reach wider audience; both traditional and non-traditional owing to the flexibility imbedded with the structure of the situational context.

Keeping in view the three broad types of contexts and their inbuilt strengths the *chindus* could follow this art form for several generations, even withstanding the challenges of modernity to their tradition. To be more

picturesque an illustration is drawn to demonstrate the salient features of each context. The following scheme explains sequencing of the contexts along with the nature of occasion (performance) with their choice of texts to be performed from their repertoire.



In the above scheme 1,2,3 represent 'layers'. These layers and interconnected are manifest in three divergent manners. The layer one is contextual layer, wherein distinct contextualizations appear as functional, situational and cultural as already discussed in the preceeding paragraphs. This layer of contexts not only structures the performance layer but also directs the textual layer. In a nutshell this layer structures the performance and the texts on one hand and on the other, regulates the interrelationship between the performers and the audience.



The L2, represents performance layer and for three different contexts three types of performances are followed; they are ritual, professional and spiritual. The functional context evolve a ritual performance, in order to define the function of the community in a caste hierarchical social system. The whole ritual is given the meaning of the caste to its cultural milieu. The prime function of this ritual is to demonstrate their legal and sanctioned occupation which they are ritually purified to perform. Therefore, the identity becomes distinct episode of this ritual performance.

In this performance layer, another kind of performance that takes place incongruence with situational context is professional performance. This is most prominent and has wide variety of texts for performances. Here professional is designated to mean that their chief occupation is folk performance. As a performing group their identity is communicated due to the professional/performance layer. Both in the village as well as in their community *chindu mādigas* acclaim the status of bards for, they being professional entertainers through their performance tradition.

In the layer two yet another performance layer can be seen in relation to the cultural context which can broadly be defined as 'spiritual' performance. The spiritual performance invariably is a religious performance in which the caste goddess is worshipped and regarded as auspicious for the well being of the community and the village. The chief feature of this spiritual performance layer is ritual possession. In the enactment of the role of goddess *Yellamma* both the performers and the audience ascend to the plane of spirituality through a trance and change the roles from performer -audience to goddess-devotees.

The layer three denotes 'textual' layer. The three distinct contexts and performances of the layers one and two paved the way for three types of textual enactments.

The functional context leads to the ritual performance where the caste myth becomes their chief textual presentation. The *Jāmbapurānam* being the caste myth of the *mādigas* the *chindu mādigas* perform the caste myth as a ritual to communicate didactically the functional aspect of the caste for which it is born. In a given caste hierarchical social system the performances of caste myths are crucial, and deployed as a means to bring in order in the social hierarchies. The roles which are considered to be given by the celestial powers to each community need to be taken per se and should remain unquestionable. This being the paradigm of the caste myths their performances rhetorically and repeatedly orient the community to remain in that social status and perform services designated to them. In this sense the textualization of caste myth *Jāmbapurānam* performs a functional value and to do so a ritual performance is essential. *chindu mādigas* as minstrels take this role chiefly as their occupation and indirectly save the social system from leading to social conflicts. This functional role is achieved strategically manipulating the written text by superimposing the performance text.

One interesting feature of textualization of the caste myth is expression of anti-structural overtones in a dialogue manner between the two characters Gosangi and Brahmin<sup>20</sup>. Representationally these two characters voice arguments the reasoning of higher and lower castes. Brahmin by virtue of being born in high caste questions the wisdom of Jambavamuni the ancestor of *mādigas*. Jambvamuni patiently replies to all the queries of the brahmin and upholds his occupation and the caste role in the society as an

advocacy of *dhārmic* tradition. In the process of dialogue both characters bring in issues related economic changes viz. a social relations. In defense of tradition, modernity is questioned and even in modernity their caste role is perceived to be crucial for the survival of the social order. *Mādigas* traditionally the leather workers are degraded for being so by the character of brahmin in the performance. However, through the voice of Jambavamuni the *mādiga* emphatically expresses the need of his role even in the changing context. When the leather buckets are replaced by pump sets, Jambavamuni still finds the role of *mādiga* and his works with leather which are used in pumpsets as vouchers and other such material, without which pumpsets utility becomes absolute<sup>21</sup>.

In this manner, the performance text, the caste myth *Jāmbapurānam* encapsulates the issues of modernity relevant to the survival of the community. Another interesting feature of *Jāmbapurānam* performance text is that it gives an outlet to the oppressed community by negating the reality of the caste hierarchy. The events in the narration are knitted in such a way that the Brahmin is forced to keep on his head his own leather footwear, in order to cross a river. Symbolically the act of keeping the leather footwear on the head of the brahmin tantamounts to accepting the reversals of social order in which *mādigas* are placed superior for being indulged in the occupation of leather works. These claims are made in the caste myth repertoire<sup>22</sup>.

The second set of texts in the textual layer three belongs to *yakshagānam* tradition. As stated already the *yakshagānam* texts are performed in different situational contexts as professional enactment's. In fact these texts are perceived as profession by the *chindu mādigas*. A salient feature of *yakshagānam* texts is impersonating the downtrodden and poverty

stickmen *chindollu* the roles of royal personages and heavenly bodies as characters in the performance. Interestingly enough the characters in their *yakshagānams* speak/sing Sanskritized prosody, with all their vernacular and highly localised dialect. This shows a contradiction that persists between the actual reality of their being and the characters, which they play in the performance. For instance in the invocative song of Ganesha, the troupes of Telangana region pronounce the prosody '*vāma hastamun*' as '*yāma vastamun*'.<sup>23</sup> This is almost identical to 'tongtwister' a genre in folklore. Such misphonetations and speech distortions are commonly found in their performance texts.

One more interesting feature of this textual layer is, as professional performers they improvise the texts, while performing, depending on occasion, time, space, audience, etc.

In the textual layer three *yellammavēsham* appears as concomitant to spiritual performance in the cultural context. Though any verbalised text is absent in this performance, semiotics operate as 'silent texts'. The characteristic feature of this textual layer is found in metaphysical presence of the goddess and the actions that denote reverence to appease the goddess. The concept of metaphysical presence underlies in the sense of what is being present is not present, but the notion of goddess manifested in the *vēsham* is present<sup>24</sup>. The text, therefore becomes silent, yet present through the actions, chants in praise of goddess and ritual possessions. The idea of goddess and the perception of *yellamma* of the community is an age old phenomena and rhetorically brought to life cyclically in their performances, which gives an appearance of 'cultural performance'<sup>25</sup>.

It can be summarised from the above discussion that the textual layer denotes a position of dichotomy between the reality and the fantasy. The reality of their social being is dialectically negated by subverting it to fantasy, where they perform the roles of royal personages and celestial bodies. This is very much apparent in the *chindu mādigas* performance tradition. As Jambavamuni, as *purāṇic* characters and as Yellamma, they acclaim the status of descends of creator, sustainer of creation, and protectors of creation in their performance tradition. These claims are sequentially structured in their narrative events and in the performance tradition. In the performance frame anti-structural overtones in their traditional narratives especially the *Jāmbapurāṇam* and *yellammavēṣham* seek a ventage as an outlet.

Only during the performance and only to their traditional audience such performances are made and as an outlet they vent their feelings of perceived suppression in a given caste i.e., hierarchical social system. Symbolically they choose brahmin as a target of attack in their *Jāmbapurāṇam* which is the soul of their caste existence. In fact as agricultural labour when they were drawn into the village fold, the landlords exploited them for up keeping their agricultural lands. Though this being the reality the *mādigas* in any of their performances never show signs of protest against the landed community, who mostly hail from '*sūdra varṇa*' of the *chaturvarṇāsrama* tradition. Ironically it is the brahmin who is made as a scope goat for the simple reason that it is a symbolically expressed anguish over the caste hierarchical society which according to the general notion created by brahmins. This type of ethnocentric conceptions are quiet common in all the caste myths.

The relationship between performers and audience in the performance tradition itself is contextualised by structuring of contexts as already mentioned in the illustration. What is interesting in this structure is the levels of interaction that they develop by following a maxim which can be stated as 'emotional status'. By placing functional context in the beginning of the performance series, the performers break the barriers between them and the audience by incorporating ritual in their performance and communicate them through the text of *Jāmbapurānam*. With this act of interaction, performers take the audience of their community to their level and set kinship relationship that is enumerated within the caste myth. According to the caste myth *mādigas* are the progeny of Jambavamuni's first wife, namely Jagadveeramatha. The second wife Jagatvinuthamatha gave birth to *ChinduJihmamuni* who is considered as the ancestor of *chindus*<sup>26</sup>. By knitting this lineage *chindus* become stepbrothers to *mādigas*. Therefore to demonstrate this even now there are no inter marriages between the two. Thus, by transforming the audience into kin groups (brotherhood), the performers set the ball of emotional status keep rolling. Thus logically structuring the audience in the performance as brothers achieves two-dimensional effect to the performance. Firstly as elder brothers they are forced to the position of patrons, and secondly as audience they share the emotional feelings of the *chindus* in expressing the anguish over the established social order in which they remain at the lowest ebb.

Followed by this ritual performance the professional performers of *chindus* are well grounded in the performance pattern sequence. When *yakshagānams* are played, emotional status of the audience is carried through the journey into an illusionary world of mythopoeic age<sup>27</sup>. The presentation

of the performers as *purāṇic* characters gives a visual effect, supported by costumes, makeup and ornaments to the audience. In all *yakshagāṇams* this fact remains as vital force to elevate the audience to fantasy plane.

At the end of the performance cycle the performers make the audience to transform as devotees and participate in the worship of Yellamma. As devotees, audience share their resources with the community of *mādigas* as votives to the goddess Yellamma. Thus, the performers establish a relationship with the audience by making them pass through in their transformational process by mitigating their emotional status. In the first place a made-belief situation is created wherein the audience are made to conceive themselves as brothers. Being in that state they are again made as friendly audience to watch their professional performances in the second stage. At the end they were again transformed to devotees by the cultural performance. Again made-belief system is created to make the audience as perceptual stock to ensure the continuity of the performance. Interestingly *yellammavēṣham* is considered as auspicious and must for the well being of the community. This belief is injected by the performers to their traditional audience so that they stage their performances cyclically. This linkage between performer and audience is strategically and conveniently manipulated within the structure of performance contexts, without which the professional folk theatre like *chindu bhāgavatham* would not have survived.

TABLE SHOWING THE ROLE OF PERFORMERS AND STATUS OF AUDIENCE IN  
DIFFERENT CONTEXTS OF PERFORMANCES

Context	Text	Performance role	Audience status
1. Functional	<i>Jāmbapurāṇam</i>	Occupational	Cousins
2. Situational	<i>Yakshagāṇam</i>	Professional	Customary
3. Cultural	<i>Yellammavēṣham</i>	Ritual role	Devotees

However there are exceptions in the performance pattern owing to certain factors like time, weather, availability of the number of performers, auspiciousness attributed to the days etc. Nevertheless the traditional *chindu bhāgavatham* performance tradition follows the pattern enumerated above.

## CASE STUDIES

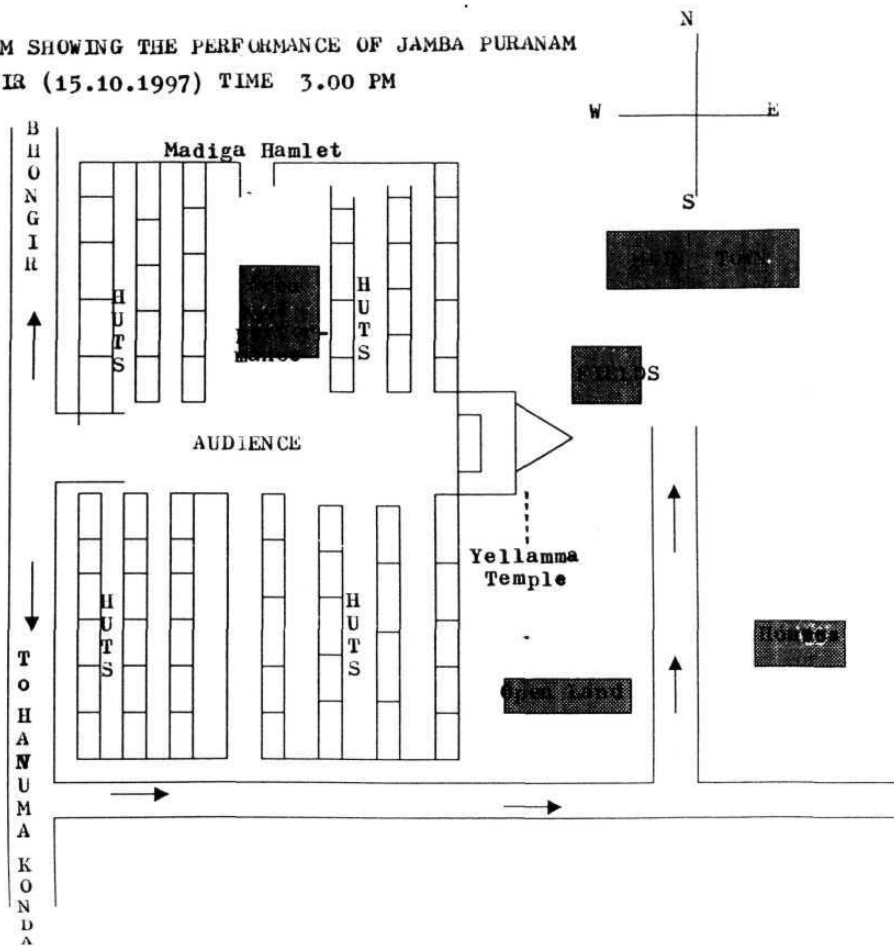
The field studies conducted in the districts of Telangana region, some observations are made with regard to their performances. To demonstrate the importance of the three layers of contextual performances in their performance tradition certain case studies are made.

### Case I :

The performance of *Jāmbapurānam*, observed in Aleir, Nalgonda district of Andhra Pradesh, performed by P.Sanjeeva's troupe can be taken as a case study since it is performed exclusively for their community, *mādigas*. In this performance context esoterically the views are expressed in the textual narration about their own community and what they think about themselves. In the process of performance they express their world view in relation to their origin and existence. On the whole the *mādigas* become central to the theme in which they even question the social structure and aspire to reverse the ladder by taking an anti structural ideology.



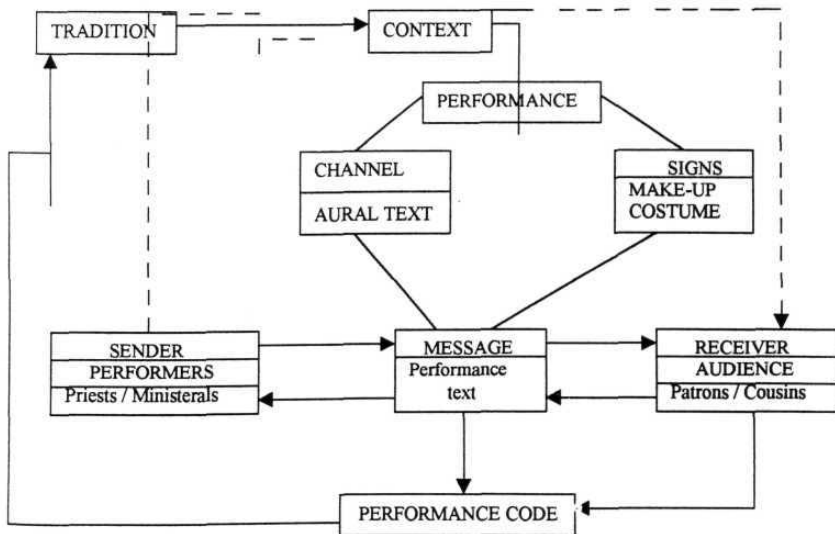
DIAGRAM SHOWING THE PERFORMANCE OF JAMBA PURANAM  
AT ALEIR (15.10.1997) TIME 3.00 PM



In the case-I, where *Jāmbapurānam* becomes the performance text, it determines the channel of communication. The centrality of the communicative message is the expression of caste solidarity. Hence the performers create a made belief situation in which the audience are incorporated as kin group. In the process the encoded messages through text, make up and costume, body movements and gestures, dance, music etc., are made explicitly clear to the audience to decode. This is essential because without which the performance will not continue as an occupational endeavour. The following diagram shows the symbiotic relationship that exists in the performance in order to make the performances a traditional oriented one.

#### CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION IN FOLK THEATRE

##### CASE1: JAMBAPURANAM



In any given folk theatre deciphering channels of communication is essential in order to understand its intrinsic value. Since folk theatrical art forms are tradition based, the communication channels are knitted within the tradition. Tradition in fact begets a context for a performance. In the case of *Jāmbapurānam* it is the tradition which has given the *chindus* the right to perform it as a caste myth of *mādigas*. Therefore, *chindus* as performers, and *mādigas* as audience create a context for the occurrence of the performance. Within the tradition it is inbuilt on the part of the *chindus* to perform it as customary right, and on the part of the *mādigas* to conduct the performance as an obligatory duty. To negate the tradition tantamounts to denial of the performance, which both the parties do not wish to deviate from it, because it is this tradition which make them important members of the social system. In otherwords, *Jāmbapurānam* performance becomes the life of the community and hence it has to be definitely performed annually and cyclically in every sequence of *yakshagānam* performance.

As shown in the above diagram the performance is communicated through 'channel' and 'signs'. The main channel in the performance is the aural text, which is transmitted traditionally from generation to generation of *chindu mādigas*. The aural text here is nothing but *Jāmbapurānam* which tells about how the caste of *mādigas* has come into existence and how the *chindu mādigas* become the ministerels of *mādigas*. The aural text in this performance is communicated totally in a different form than the *yakshagānam* form. It is different because the total number of characters in *Jāmbapurānam* do not exceed four or five of which two remain dominant throughout the performance. In fact the whole narration takes place in a discourse form where the character of a brahmin mitigates Jambavamuni,

another chief character to react to his queries. Thus the whole narration expresses the word view of the *mādigas* from an argumentative stand and even goes to the extent of rebuking the existing elite cultural norms. Therefore, the aural text as a channel becomes the primary carrier of encoded messages. On the other side of performance the encoded messages are also contained in 'signs', such as make-up, costumes, mime, dance, gestures etc.,. They in fact become the markers of the performance. Unlike in the *yakshagānam*, the performance of *Jāmbapurānam*, donot have an elaborate make-up and costumes. The Brahmin character as an identity symbol invariably presents the attire of a brahmin with symbols like sacred thread and pig tail.

Jambavamuni's costume and makeup donot represent any of the usual epic characters which are otherwise found in their *yakshagānams*, but create distinctive image which generate the cultural symbol of their caste originator. In fact, he also wears the sacred symbols made-up of garland of neem leaves, flowerised headgear giving the image of a crown and a sacred thread, but not distinctively visible owing to a piece of decorated upper garment. The facial makeup includes a big moustache with a cleanly shaven chin, elongated eyebrows with distinct earrings. The other minor characters who appear in the play for a brief period will have the villagers attire without any make-up.

Unlike *yakshagānam* tradition the performance of *Jāmbapurānam* of not contain much music and dance sequences and this becomes the distinctive feature of *Jāmbapurānam* performance. More weightage is given to the encoded message delivered to discursive process that takes between the two main characters.

The performance text virtually becomes the encoded message which acts as an inter-play between the performers and audience. Performers as senders of the message perform the role of minstrels as well as priests. The transformation of ministerial into priests in the process of the performance is worth noting, as it becomes the key to the channel of communication. This transformation makes the performer to exercise authority to transpound the traditional audience (*mādigas*) to socially higher ranks in the made belief system.

The audience on the otherside in the process of the reception of the performance text are also transformed from 'patron' status to the 'cousin' status. Thus, *Jāmbapurānam* contextually defines the role of performers and audience through the channels of communication enumerated in the above diagram. The end result of the interaction of the performers and audience through the translation of the performance text is to create conscious identity of their self in a given social reality to perpetuate the caste solidarity. This self created identity rhetorically and repeatedly communicated back to the tradition thus grounding the tradition on a solid footing.

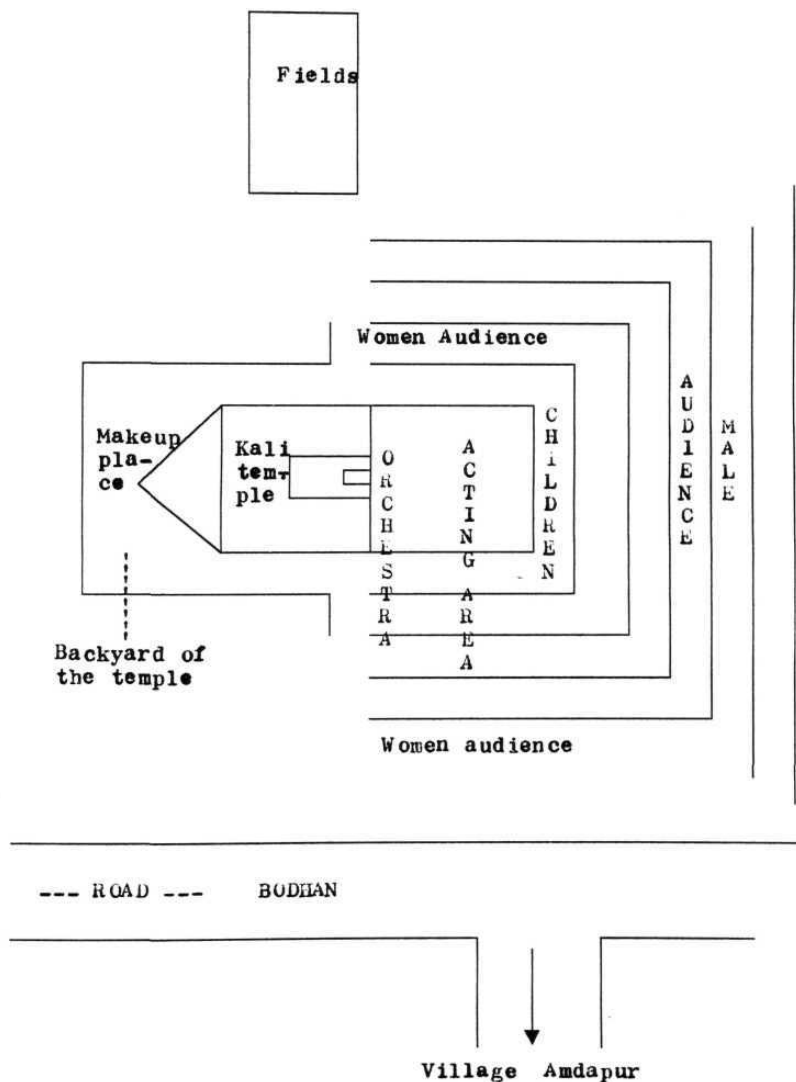


**Gosangi(Jambavamuni) in Jambapuram**

## Case-II:

The main thrust of the case study two is to analyze the channels of communication through which the performers attain the status of professionals and the audience become customary audience. The whole interplay between the audience and performers in the communication mode is done from an exoteric angle. Exoteric refers to the view point of community. In other words aspirations, belief and their reality in relation to the other community, in otherwords, exoteric refers to the way what community thinks about themselves is the same as what the others think about them. From this angle if one studies *yakshagānam*, one can find sub-identities are interwoven and overtly expressed within the larger community of *mādigas*. The following case study documented at Amdapur, which is eight kms. away from Bodhan in the Nizamabad district, reveals the sub-identities that exist in the process of communication.

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE PERFORMANCE OF CHINDU YAKSHAGANAM  
TO THE RURAL AUDIENCE AT AMDAPUR VILLAGE, BODHAN MANDAL,  
NIZAMABAD DISTRICT ON 30.11.1997, TIME 2.00 PM





A renowned *yakshagānam* performing troupe lead by *chindula* Yellamma presented Gaja Gouri Vratham in front of the Kali temple, which is situated at the entrance of the village on a small hillock. The performance ran for four hours for which the troop prepared nearly for the same amount of hours to get ready with the make-up and costumes, and to complete other pre-performance rituals.

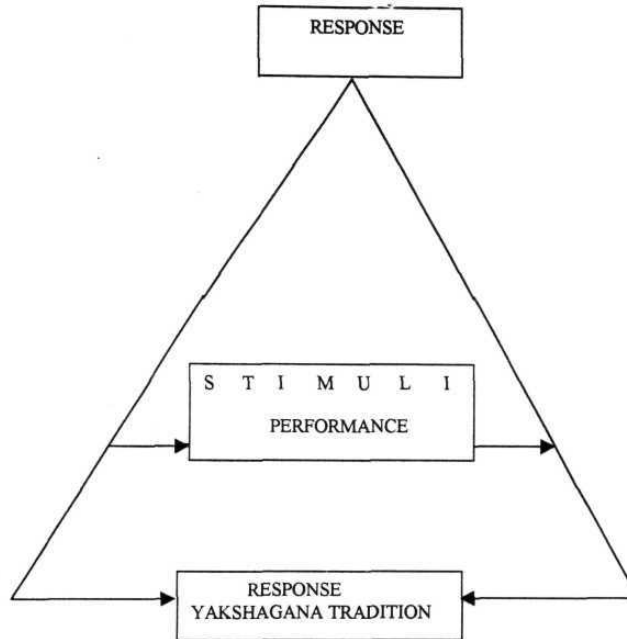
*Yakshagānam* text being the theme of this performance, the performers encoded signals through their make-up and costumes in the open air behind the temple premises. This observation is crucial because the audience started getting attracted to the performance since the troop signaled professional touch to their forthcoming performance. The minds of audience are mitigated for certain expectations from the performers. Thus a situational context is communicated to the receivers. The following diagram shows the channels of communication in the *yakshagānam* tradition.



A scene from yakshaganam performance

## CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION IN FOLK THEATRE

### CASE2: YAKSHAGANAM PERFORMANCE



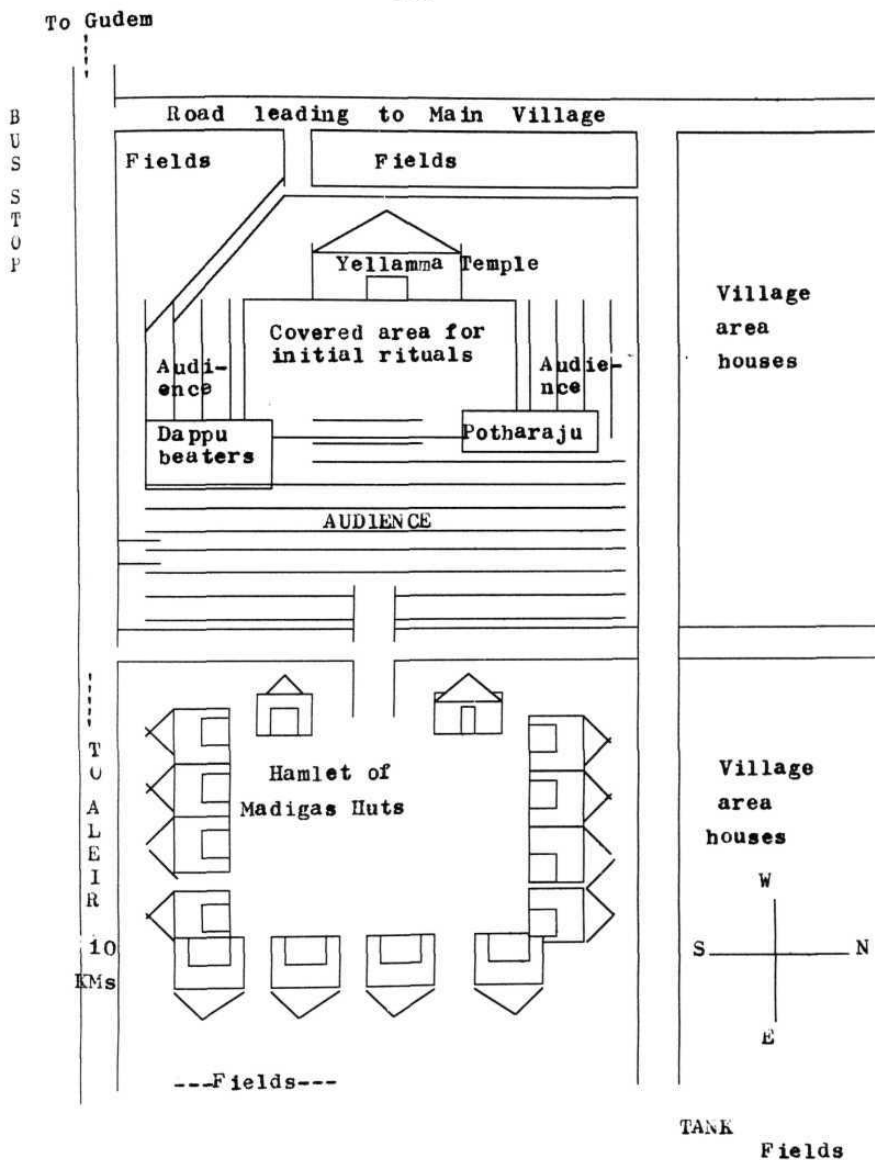
From the above diagram it can be noted that performers being placed as senders, pass messages to the receivers who invariably are the audience. The message is sent through two levels, which culminate ultimately into the performance channel. Stimuli here refers to theatrical elements such as make-up and costumes, ornaments, dance and music. They basically become the performance markers due to the potentiality of acting as stimulus to draw the attention and interest of the audience. 'code' in the diagram refers to the 'text', which narrates not only the events but also expressed in sub-codes such as the verses, songs, jokes, emotional expressions which are communicated through body movements intrinsically narrated by the text. Both 'stimuli' and 'code' forms the performance. This performance itself gives exclusive domains to

the performers and audience. Owing to the inbuilt stylistics in the expression of the text which require intensive training makes the performers to create a space for themselves as professional performers. On the other side, when the performance is communicated through 'stimuli' and 'code' which has the basic message can be decoded only by a group of audience which have familiarity with the art form. The familiarity as a prerequisite creates space for the audience to make them as customary audience. If familiarity of the art form is not with the audience they still remain as onlookers or spectators instead of becoming customary audience. In the interaction of the professional performers with their customary audience, the response would result in making the performance as *yakshagāna* tradition, wherein both the professional performers and customary audience express their sub-identity, yet perpetuate the tradition of *yakshagānam*. These sub identities as professional performers and customary audience is almost universal phenomena for the folk art forms. The case study two is important because through different channels of communication both the performers and the audience not only create but also communicate distinct identities, which are essential for the continuation of the tradition.

### Case III:

Performance of *yellammavèsham* is taken as case study three, in order to demonstrate how this performance creates a hierarchically special difference between the performer and the audience. The channels of communication are quiet significant for it is they which communicate through non-verbal expressions, the relationship that exists between the two groups. The performance of *yellammavèsham* is documented in Saigudem village, fifteen kilometers away from Aleir in Nalgonda district. The performers long to Pillutla Sanjeeva group of the same village. The character of Yellamma, the caste goddess of *mādigā* is performed by Renuka, aged thirty years. The elaborate make-up and costume of *yellammavèsham* is already discussed in chapter III of this theses. The significant feature of this performance is the ability of transforming performer to goddess and the audience to devotees, thus establishing a hierarchical relationship between the goddess and devotee.

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE AREAS OF YELLAMMAVESHAM PERFORMANCE IN  
SAIGUDEM VILLAGE, ALEIR MANDAL, NALGONDA DISTRICT ON 6.1.1998, AT 4  
P.M

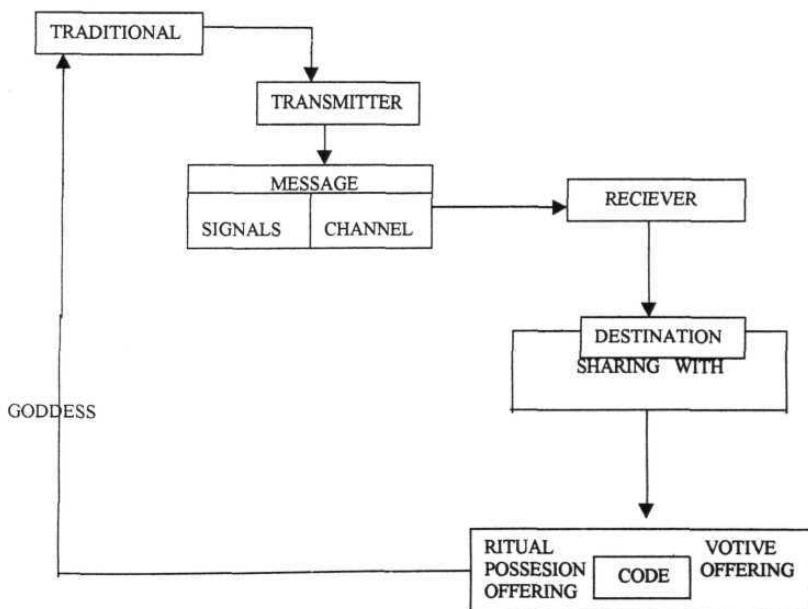


The communication channels themselves become transponders to establish such hierarchical relationships. The following diagram illustrates the channels of transmission in *yellammavèsham*.

Since Yellamma is considered as the caste deity of the community, the tradition itself gives a scope for the enactment of the role of goddess to sustain the community in its religious belief.

#### CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION IN FOLK THEATRE

##### CASE III PERFORMANCE OF YELLMMAVESHAM



The transmitter invariably is the performer, who by tradition is designated and ordained to perform the role of Yellamma. The performer

after attaining puberty is dedicated to the goddess Yellamma and pronounced as Yellamma while she performs the role.

The message is carried at two modes in the performance. Signals as modes of message represent mak-eup and costume of Yellamma and her associate Jihmamahamuni. Channel as another mode of message is represented by vibrant body movements, dancing steps, drum beating, and ritual possession. The notable feature in this performance is that, it is devoid of any verbal text, be it written, oral or performance text. Yet the messages are clearly encoded by the transmitters i.e., the performers of the tradition. A ritual scenario is well established by the usage of frankincense, turmeric, saffron powder and neem leaves, which are essential to the worship of village deities like Yellamma.

At the receivers end the audience aspire to share emotionally with the goddess. That being the destination point, the receivers follow the ritual procession of Yellamma through their hamlet. When Yellamma visit their houses, the audience transforms into devotees and pay homage by rendering votive offerings. Some of the devotees get ritually possessed during the performance. The code thus being represented by ritual possessions and votive offerings, make them share the planes of experiencing the goddess. This again rhetorically communicated back to the tradition in order to perpetuate the spiritual experience time and again.

It can be summarised from the above discussion that the three case studies represent three contexts, which exist due to the fact of interrelationship between the performers and audience. In case study one, the functional context, where *Jāmbapurānam* is performed, the space between the audience and performers are cautiously blurred to express caste solidarity.

Once the solidarity is achieved, in case number two, where situational context is created to perform *yakshagānam*, distinct domains are again created between the performers and audience. The *yakshagānams* being the part of the professional repertoire, it is essential for them to distinguish themselves from the audience by deliberately transforming them to customary audience. However these spaces between the performers and the audience are created on the same plane juxtaposing with one another. In the case number three in which cultural context is created the space between the performers and audience is further changed to hierarchical positions. The performers place themselves above, as goddess and her priests to the audience, who transform in reciprocation to the call of the deity as devotees. Interesting feature here is that, the audience being in the status of patterns are made to relegate their position to become devotees and remain at the back and call of the performers in the roles of goddess and priest etc. Thus, it is the context which made possible the reversal of roles between the *chindu mādigas* and *mādigas* for mutual survival.

To sum up, the contextual situations of the text exposition by the *chindu* communities and their traditional audience is knitted around performance tradition. The functional and cultural contexts ensure the status of *chindu mādigas* in a caste oriented cultural milieu and strengthen their professional theatre performances at situational context. Contextualization of the texts is crucial because it resolves a dichotomy between the reality and the fantasy. This dichotomy is negotiated through dialogism between what the *chindu mādigas* are in reality and what they claim as ritual superiority over their community. In reality, they as bards perform the obligatory right, to *mādigas* and claim remuneration. This in fact denotes their economically



weaker position within the *mādigas*. In ritual status they claim almost priestly position and through the performances of *Jāmbapurānam* and *yellammavēṣham* they ensure their traditional audience to continue to be their supporters as audience. The purification roles performed during these two performances make the *chindus* as cousins and as goddess herself to the community. This background makes the *chindus* to rise to the level of professional performers through the *yakshagānam* tradition. Thus the dichotomy between poverty and ritual splendidity is mediated through the professional theatre known as *chindu yakshgānam*. For this reason the *chindu mādigas* are known more so as professional performers than as priestly community. This being the case, they become conscious of the art form, the *chindu yakshagānam* and situate it to contemporary needs of the audience. The foregoing chapter deals with the position of *yakshagānam* in the changing scenario of tradition and modernity.



**Yellamma vesham**

## NOTES

1. Richard Bauman, Verbal Art as performance, Rawleyman, Newbury House, 1977
2. Allan Dundes, "Texture, Text and Context", in Interpreting folklore, Bloomington, Indiana University press, 1980. PP. 20-32.
3. Context resulting in genres as analytical categories is well brought out by Sherzer in his work on Cuna tribe of Africa.  
Joel Sherzer, "Nammakke, Sunmakke, Konmakke : Three types of Cuna speech event", Ethnography of speaking, eds. Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer, New York, Columbia University Press, 1974.
4. Elliot Oring, Folk groups and Folklore Genres – An Introduction, ed. Elliot Oring, Logan Utah State University Press, 1986. P. 136.
5. Ruth Finnegan, Oral Poetry : its nature, significant and social context, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977.
6. Edgar Thurston and K. Rangacharyulu, The castes and tribes of Southern India, New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1909 rpt. 1987.
7. The tradition of specialist group emerging as bards or minstrels is common to many cultures living on orality. Von Sydow calls this community as "active bearers of tradition".  
C.W. Von Sydow, "Folklore stories and philosophy: some points of view", the Study of Folklore, ed. Allan Dundes, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1965. PP. 219-242.
8. Caste myth is a genre which deals with how a caste has come into existence. The caste clings to the myth as sacred narrative because it explains the origin of the caste usually the mythic personages or celestial bodies.  
See Allen Dundes, Sacred Narratives: Readings in the Theory of Myth, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988.
9. *Dhārmic* tradition refers to the code of conduct of individuals, castes and land and believed to be sacred, hence unquestionable. In India the *dhārmic* tradition lies in the conventions and encoded in the sacred scriptures like *vedās*, *dharmā sūthāas* and *shasthrās*. See Max Muller, Sacred books of the East, London, Royal Asiatic Society Publication, 1856.  
P.V. Kane, History of Dharmashastras, Vol-I, V, Poona, Bhandarkar Publications, 1930.
10. In *Jambapuranam* the caste myth of *madigas*, Jambavamuni claims that he is the grand father of the '*thri murthis*' (trio) viz., the creator, the preserver and the destroyer. According to him there were

eighteen *yugas* (units of time) commencing from Nandaneerana to the Kali *yuga*, unlike the four *yugas* enunciated by the *vedic* tradition. In the earliest *yuga* Adidevudu took a form of multiple heads, eyes, hands, feet and created five vedas. In the third *yuga* i.e., Adbhutha *yuga*, Jambavamuni is born. He claims that he is elder to Adishakthi who is borne in fifth *yuga* (Thamanda *yuga*). Adishakthi performed penance and took the form of a peahen and she delivered three eggs from which '*thrimurthis*' assumed their forms. See section –II of Chapter-III in this thesis.

B.Venkateshwarulu, et.all., eds., Jambapuram (tel), Hyderabad, Janapada Kalaparishodhana vedika, 1997.

11. This is a Pan-Indian phenomena. During the festive occasions especially those celebrated to the village deities these communities are given specific roles such as drum beating, conducting procession of the sacrificial animal etc.,
12. Oral interview with Chindula Yellamma at Amdapur village, Bhodan mandal, Nizamabad district on 28-11-1997.
13. Dell Hymes, In vain I tried to tell you, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.
14. *Chindollu* is colloquially used by the villagers to identify the performers. Even the *madigas* identify them in this way.
15. Roger D. Abrahams, "The past in the presence: An overview of folkloristic in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century", Folklore processed, ed., Raymond Reimund Kvideland Helsinki, NIF Publications No. 2, 1992. PP. 39-45.
16. Alan Loamax, Folk Song style and Culture, New Jersey, Transanction Inc, 1968. PP. 117-150, 222-240.
17. Oral interview with Chindu Yellamma and others at Amdapur on 2911-97.
18. Oral interview with Chindu Neelamma and others at Armoor on 04-12-97.
19. See for example: Stuart H. Blackburn, Clause J. Peter, Fluckizer B. Joyce, Susan S. Wadley, eds. Oral Epics in India, Berkeley, Los Angles, University of California Press, 1989. Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger and Laurie J. Sears "Boundaries of the Text:" Epic performances South and Southern Asia, Michigan, The university of Michigan, 1991.
20. Jambapuram, Op.Cit.

21. *Ibid.*
22. Almost all the caste myths reveal such anti structural overtones.  
See Y. Yadagiri Sarma, Janapada Bhikshuka Gyakulu (tel), Hyderabad, unpublished Ph.D thesis submitted to Osmania University, Telugu Department, 1986.
23. Performance observation of Sarangadhara at Sadhula village, Medak district, presented by Chindula Neelamma troupe.
24. Jacques Derrida, "The time of a thesis: Punctuation", Philosophy in France To-day, ed. A Montefiore, Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1983.
25. The concept of Cultural performances is used by Milton Singer.  
Milton Singer, When a Great Tradition Modernizes, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972. PP. 70-76.
26. Jambapuranm, Op.Cit..
27. Max Muller in his Solar Mythology theory propounded that the early Aryans lived in a mythopoeic age where they moved freely with gods. After the catastrophe they were thrown away and lost the experience of mythopoeic age. Only in fragmented memory it remained and from those memories, which Max Muller calls as 'decease of language' the present day names of gods have come into existence.  
  
Richard M. Dorson, "The eclipse of Solar Mythology", Journal of American folklore. Vol-68, 1955, PP. 393-416;  
The founder of analytical psychology, Carl Jung also believed that mythopoeic age exists in the human mind and hence it creates myths to survive the world of fantasy.  
Anthony Storr, Jung, Glasgow, Fantama Paper Back, 1973. PP. 39-61.

## **CHAPTER – VI**

### **CHINDU BHAGAVATHAM WITH THE CHANGING TIMES**

*Chindu bhāgavatham* a folk theatrical form of Andhra like any other folk art form is being survived despite changing times owing to the in-built strengths of the art form as a utility product to the community which it serves. With inventions and innovations the folk theatre forms cater to the needs of the changing times and sustain its popularity due to the strong roots of tradition. The preceeding chapters show the art forms existence in its traditional locale. This chapter on the other gives an idea that the art form despite its strong traditional base did respond to the contemporary times of technological advancement and modernity. A strange competition of antithetical forces that sustain the art form and promise its continuity is worth noting. Hence, an attempt is made in this chapter to see the art form from the dichotomy of tradition and modernity.

## **Tradition and Modernity:**

The concepts of tradition and modernity are viewed as dichotomic and oppositions by the nineteenth century cultural evolutionists. The tradition according to the nineteenth century notion is defined as those cultural systems which are primarily pre-literate / non-literate, unchanging, immemorial behaviours of the communities, their value systems, beliefs and in general the life style<sup>1</sup>.

Any changes that effect the static and stereotypic cultural notion is considered as modern. Modernization in this sense is an agglomeration of forces which act as catalysts to transform the existing static cultural traits of pre-literate / non-literate communities. Quiet often than not, modernity is juxtaposed to Westernization or advanced technological developments, which are hierarchically placed as higher cultures and their influence over the lesser cultures, is considered as modernization<sup>2</sup>. The writings of Max Webber, Durkheim, Louis Dumont etc., considered the notions of tradition and modernity as dialectical and tried to implicate a sense of dichotomy between rural and urban<sup>3</sup>, as representatives of tradition and modern respectively. However, this notion started changing in the twentieth century, especially with the writings of Eric Wolf<sup>4</sup>, Milton Singer<sup>5</sup>, Micheal Bhaktin<sup>6</sup> and Edward Said<sup>7</sup>.

The scholars mentioned above did not view tradition and modernity as oppositional but in coexistence. To quote Milton Singer, “the traditionalism of Indian civilization lies elsewhere – in its capacity to incorporate innovations into an expanding and changing structure of culture and society.



This capacity is reflected in a series of adaptive mechanisms and processes for dealing with the novel, the foreign, the strange”<sup>8</sup>.

From this point of view, cultures are conceived as a living organisms with a capacity to adapt to the surrounding cultural eco systems. Tradition therefore no longer remains ‘pure’, ‘original’ or ‘static’<sup>9</sup> but ever changeable with underlying continuities, which alone makes a tradition recognizable as an entity in a larger cultural spectrum.

Any tradition should necessarily require a cultural continuum in order to get designated as tradition. Any cultural item which has in principle patrimonial, but not prebendial<sup>10</sup>, remain as a trait inherited from the past. Therefore it is not of the present, though remains with the present. In this sense, that cultural item is not the artifact of the present, but of the past<sup>11</sup>, yet, in vogue due to its existence in the present. The present-past dichotomy, therefore become interesting because the factors that influence the time span of the past and present would naturally act upon the artifact, sometimes culminating it as a hybridized form or a product of synthesis. *Chindu Bhāgavatham* if seen from this point of view, though had long living tradition, could not but escape from the reality of modernity. What is interesting in the traditional art form is that it has an imbibed formula of convention and invention<sup>12</sup>. Convention is the area where the artiste (performer) acts in a specified frame of roles, which are easily recognized by his audience. And this convention which is understood both by the performer and audience, even without being spelt out makes that art form a traditional one. Therefore, tradition partly becomes inherited, inalienable and inseparable<sup>13</sup>. However this does not limit the tradition to adapt to the changing times by way of modernizing it or inventing it. In either case, the invention sphere is limited

to only certain extent where it does not effect the convention. If convention is totally negated and replaced by invention then the end product would be not a traditional one but a modern one, altogether a new product<sup>14</sup>. Perhaps modern theatre if seen juxtaposing folk theatre may represent the two sides of the coin, tradition and modernity. In this sense invention is restricted to the creativity and talent of an individual artist in a given tradition, wherein he is allowed to express his histrionics by way of improvisations.

Improvisations, quite often than not, may appear in a traditional art form as a bye-product of modernity. Whatever the technological advancements that the modernity has provided and showed influence on the traditional forms, the response of the traditional forms are seen as improvisations from a positive perspective<sup>15</sup>. Though the traditional school of thought which cling to the idea of 'Pure' and 'Original' may remain only as an utopian ideal and do not actually reflect the reality of art form because it survives in a given space and time, not in isolation but in relation to certain socio-economic forces. Modernity, therefore, has its own implications on the art forms. What is interesting here is that, the influences of modernity over the art forms are not perceived as per se the literate and other non-folk groups. In fact, modernity lies in their ways of representation, which influence the community that represents. Edward Said, a notable cultural critic of the post modern scenario, while writing on Orientalism refers to the idea of Orient that exist not in the reality of the East, but only in the writings of the West<sup>16</sup>. Similarly it is the literate elite groups, in the modern context, which basically derive their strength on the written word, rather than the spoken word, almost legitimised the cultural representations of the oral tradition based communities. In the process of legitimisation, the sympathetic writers

romanticised the oral tradition forms and those writers who are harsh, characterised them as uncivilised and barbaric<sup>17</sup>. In either case of representation the reality is not brought to light. One of the concerns of this study, as seen in the preceeding pages, to bring to light the reality of the art form from all its theatrical perspectives and fallacies with which the art form carries as a strategy in order to sustain as a tradition. For instance, the anti structural feelings shown in the presentation of cultural text of *Jāmbapurānam* is one such strategy, which deliberately undermine the existing reality of the social order. Ironically, the text argues by taking the help of advanced technology of the modernity to return back to the tradition, which is the source of their strength.

Thus, the dichotomy between tradition and modernity is resolved by the community itself, which is placed between the two spheres.

Community vs. Culture contact:

As discussed above the tradition and modernity do not live in the realm of metaphysics, but exist in a given social reality. Therefore they are incongruous with the social reality of the physical world<sup>18</sup>. This logically suggests that the time space referred to here is not empty ones but filled with human activity. When tradition and modernity is referred, it is referred to culture specific component which invariably here is a community. The community's existence in a given time and space always relate their existence to the given cultural socio-economic milieu. The *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition of *chindu mādiḡas* if seen from this angle, shows that the community does not remain silent to the socio economic factors, which influence them. In fact, inwardly they are affected by their own cultural system and outwardly

they in turn, effect the other cultural systems. The process of affect – effect represents two levels of *modus operandi*, one dealing with their own selves the other dealing with the surrounding cultures. This social frame clearly indicates that they are as a community express their own identity and at the same time relate their identity with other communities<sup>19</sup>. Precisely for this reason *chindu mādigas*, though caught in between the nexus of tradition and modernity, yet continued till date as a distinct but corelatable community in the social frame of the rural Andhra.

The traditional occupation of *chindu mādigas* is performance from time immemorial. As stated earlier, they virtually hold the right of performing cast myth and create spiritual unison with their cast goddess, Yellamma to the community of *mādigas* for their sustenance. For doing this job of performance, the *mādigas* in turn customarily obliged to gift grain, gold, cash etc., as a share known as '*teygam*'.<sup>20</sup> This reciprocity of services resulting in the exchange of resources is not uncommon in the villages of Telangana. In fact, it is variously designated as *mirāsdar*, *watandār* and *jajmāni* systems in the Indian social context.

*Chindu mādigas* being the group of performers required to perform to the *mādiga* community the cast myth and traditional performances such as *Yellammavēsham* and *yakshagānams*. However, as the community of *mādigas* of a particular hamlet could not solely take the responsibility of adapting the community of *mādigas* through '*teygam*', the *chindu mādigas* is forced to find other hamlets in a given region for sustenance. Thus, that region where a joint family of *chindu mādigas* held sway over the hamlets as exclusive right to perform became virtually their domain. As the family grew in number the hamlets are divided among the members of the family for

performance as well as for '*teygam*'. This tradition based on subsistence ethics and reciprocity norms is the soul of the tradition when the tradition came into existence during the ancient times of the region. However, this tradition underwent several changes owing to the socio-economic factors which resulted in changing the life style of the community. It is evident from the field observations that the modernity has shown its own impact on their life styles.

The *chindu mādigas* as minstrels of *mādigas* used to get their sustenance only through '*teygam*' in the past. However due to the political consciousness and ideologies developed on the socialistic pattern adapted by the mixed economy of the independent India did give them a scope to acquire surplus lands distributed to the land-less poor as part of the governmental policies<sup>22</sup>. The *mādigas* as well as the *chindu mādigas*, once confined purely to land-less agrarian proletariat, now could possess small quantities of land with proper legal rights of ownerships. This, as a major development has given the community to get additional and stable resource base with which they could think of expanding the boundaries of performance. Concomitant to this development the governmental and non-governmental agencies also started pouring in resource in the name of developmental activities in order to appease the marginalized social groups. Even in the political system, championing the cause of poorest of the poor became a catchy word and turned into a vote bank. For this reason the elite and literate communities in the name of reformation made inroads into the life styles of the poor and made them cautious of their own strength as a socio political force. This new consciousness lead to the *dalit* movement, which further enhanced the economic base of the community. The reservation policy also did help the

marginalized communities to gain access to respectable positions in the social order. With all this changing scenario, the *chindu mādigas* did get some benefit and their art form which was hitherto confined only to the *mādiga* community now expanded to the other communities of the villages as well as the urban centers. Interestingly enough, the elite also got attracted towards these art forms for reasons of their own such as to incorporate their art forms in the mass media to achieve various targeted purposes. For instance, to spread the messages of family planning, literacy, untouchability, poverty eradication programmes etc, the folk forms like *oggukatha*, *burrakatha*, *jamkula katha* etc., are used, through Radio, Television and print media<sup>23</sup>. This new approach to folk art forms by the elite made them to turn as sponsors and audience<sup>24</sup>. The performers like *chindu mādigas* did respond to this occasion by making changes in the art form both in text and other theatrical elements. For example, the *chindu* Yellamma troupe, in one of the field experiences narrated that they are given an opportunity by an ex-minister of Andhra Pradesh to be the guests of the god-man, Satya Sai Baba at Puttaparthi<sup>25</sup>. They also acknowledged that for the brief performances at Puttaparthi, they were honoured by the god-man, with sumptuous food, rich gifts and handsome cash awards<sup>26</sup>. In fact, after coming back to their village they could not forget the honour and hospitality shown by the god-man. The impact of their visit to Puttaparthi was so much in their minds that they even included the photograph of Satya Sai Baba in their makeup boxes along with their tutelary gods<sup>27</sup>.

Thus, new contexts started emerging in their performance tradition due to the presence of urban / elite groups as audience and sponsors. The *dalit* movement also gave impetus for the folk art forms in the national / state

cultural events. This is evident from the presentation of folk art forms in the Republic Day / Independence Day and State Formation Day celebrations. The government is also organizing cultural festivals at State, National and International levels by engaging folk performing troupes in the cultural display of state / country<sup>28</sup>. Ironically, the representation given to the folk art forms as replica of the Nation's culture to the outsiders has gone to such an extent that some of the folk art forms gained the elevation to the pan-Indian cultural level<sup>29</sup>. Though in reality they are, still confined to the local level. Nevertheless, this emerging scenario benefited the performers at the same time effected their art form tradition, sometimes negatively and sometimes positively. Negatively in the sense that the pseudo performers started gaining entry into the art forms and being situated in advantageous positions quench the opportunities because of having the contacts with the bigwigs of governmental and non-governmental agencies<sup>30</sup>.

On the positive side, the community makes a culture contact and benefit by that contact in enhancing their own skills and resources. By making a culture contact with elite, literate and urban, the folk performers in order to communicate their art form device certain strategies and techniques by incorporating the modern theatrical elements such as microphones, lighting systems, highly decorative and proscenium stages.

Thus, the community's advancement due to modernity results at one level, a culture contact and on the other, patterning of their own art form to suit to the demands of modernity.

### **Cultural Metabolism:**

The performances of *chindu mādigs* having exposed to the new challenges that are thrown by the changing cultural system need to respond and hence forced to adapt to the new mechanisms. The concept of ‘cultural metabolism’ is used by Milton Singer in studying the great tradition of modern India<sup>31</sup>. The concept of metabolism is taken from biological sciences which denote the combination of anabolism and catabolism, the former the constructive force, and the later, the destructive force. When Singer applied this concept to the cultural arena he defined it as a force that “ingests foreign cultural bodies, segregates them, breaks them down into usable forms, and eventually builds them into indigenous cultural protoplasm”<sup>32</sup>. From this view any culture do not simply replicate the superimposed cultural traits as it is but modify and adapt them to nativize that cultural item. In due course it becomes almost impossible to identify a cultural item of a given culture as borrowed from another culture. It assimilates so much into the culture, that the culture feels that is of its own.

In the fieldwork done during the period of study of *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition, several observations are made with regard to the phenomena of cultural metabolism. In the theatrical element of make-up and costumes glaring adaptation to the modern mechanized materials are in uage with the troupe hailing from Nalgonda district. The Pillutla Sanjeeva troupe instead of using conventional indigenous make-up material shifted to the usage of company make-up materials available in the market such as lipsticks, pancakes, base paints available in tubes in various shades, creep hair and spirit gum etc. Similarly, the hairstyles also changed with the usage of company made wigs and moustaches instead of growing original long hairs.



All this is done to adapt themselves to the modern comforts, which are available in the market within reach. The point here is not simply to see their adaptation to the modern available material, but how they could alienate themselves from the tradition yet could continue in the changing tradition. For instance, growing long hair by the performers, act as an identity in his own intra-cultural scenario. However, in the inter-cultural level when he comes into contact with other cultures, he discards the practice of growing long hair but retains a substitute with a wig at the time of performance in order to communicate the identity of a performer. This make-up due to modernity segregates and incorporates identities of the performer at the contextual levels.

Another important theatrical element, which has come under the influence of modernity, is costumes and ornaments. In fact these are the distinguished features of *chindu bhāgavatham*, *Yakshagānam* tradition. Often the *chindu bhāgavatham* is identified with the spectacular costumes and ornaments. Nevertheless, this theatrical element also underwent the process of modernity. The Nalgonda district troupe mentioned above, instead of using the costumes and ornaments inherited from their predecessors, now resorted for hiring the available costumes and ornaments from the market which are used for stage plays. The hired costumes and ornaments resemble not the characters of *chindu yakshagānam* but those of other stage and film mythological characters. For being in this attire, unconsciously, they do imitate the popular filmy personalities.

What is interesting to note here is that the character of Pradhani, which is crucial to *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition, is also came under the impact of modernity violating the traditional norms of the form.

As Pradhani he communicates with the puranic characters on one hand, and on the other the audience. As an intermediary he takes up the role of mediation between the two realms i.e., the *devaloka* and the *naraloka*<sup>33</sup>. In order to project this role, the costume and ornaments are so designed that he appears with a headgear and shoulderguards representing the image of the *devaloka* character, at the same time as the representative of *naraloka* he wears ordinary shirt and trouser. But the Pradhani of the said troupe appeared as a character of comedian from a contemporary social play. However, this is not the case with all the other troupes. Some like the Nizamabad troupes are still following the traditional makeup, costumes and ornaments for their *yekshagānam* performances.



Narada in Gaja Gowri vratham improvising the gada of

Bheema as his tambura

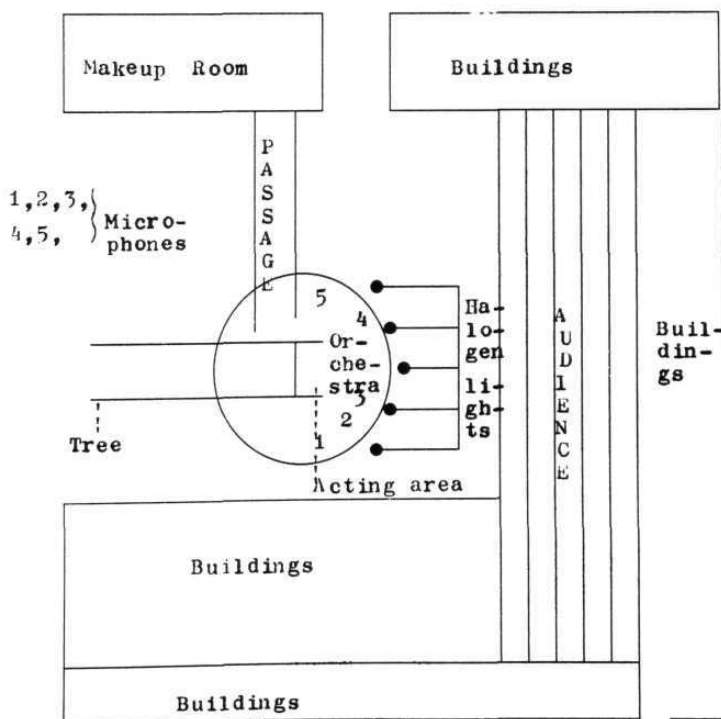


Yamadhararaja in Sati Savithri imitating the filmi style of acting

Traditionally *chindu bhāgavatham* though have a specified space for staging the performance of *yakshagānam*, the audience squat around in a semi-circle manner because the curtains are not erected on the sides of the performance space. When *yakshagāna* tradition has formalized with the dramatic entry of characters from behind a curtain, the boundaries of the space is automatically defined for performance as well as the audience seating. However, in the traditional system there is no compulsion for an elevated space, which can be used as stage. This tantamounts to say that the hierarchical spaces do not exist between the performers and audience<sup>34</sup>. When the performers are exposed to the urban elite their performance space also changes according to the preference of the urban audience. Usually in any given urban setting, theatre requires a proscenium kind of stage where the levels of positioning, acts as a bifurcation between the performers and audience.

The *chindu* performers at their cognitive level, when exposed to the urban setting need to rise to the occasion in order to make the urban audience as new sponsors for their performance. In this regard the performers did react to the new situations and place their art form to the requirements of modernity. A performance conducted in the University of Hyderabad campus, during the Indian History Congress sessions, under the auspices of Department of History of the University, it is observed that the *chindu bhāgavatham* troupe of *chindula* Neelamma of Armoor in Nizamabad District, could very judiciously and aptly adapted the elevated stage for the performance of Chenchulakshmi, a popular *purāṇic* story. Interestingly enough, the stage is designed like a circular platform of four feet height having a big tamarind tree in the middle. The stage is lit up with halogen

lights and microphones are placed in such a way that the voices of the performers could reach the audience, which is a usual practice in an urban theatre. The orchestra comprising a harmoni, tabla and group of vocalists playing symbols are placed in front of the trunk of the tree forming a backdrop to the performers. The entry and exit of the characters are strategically done by manipulating the space covered by the tree. This reflects the aesthetic sense of the performers who could cognitively used the space in the new environments. The audience are placed facing the elevated platform, having a distance of twelve feet between the first row and the stage. The composition of audience includes faculty, non-teaching staff, students and the delegates of the History Congress. The following illustration is a description of the stage for the performance at the campus.



The performance started at 7.30 in the evening continued for 40 minutes. What is interesting to note here is that a new context is given to the performers to display their skills which otherwise in the traditional locale is guided by the responses of the audience. Usually in the villages when they perform, the audience reacts immediately and basing on the responses the performers also improvise their actions as well as the text. In the said context the audience being the representatives of the urban literate community watched the performance as if they are watching a spectacle. The silent watching of the performance is itself is a new experience for the performers, especially to the Pradhani whose role is to set the mood of the audience without disturbing the narrative events of the performance. Despite the silent watchers, the performers could rise to the occasion and exposed their talents and skills through dancing and signing keeping in view the time duration given to them.

Usually Chenchulakshmi text in *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition is performed for more than four hours<sup>35</sup>. Owing to the time limitation imposed on them, the performers edited the presentation of the text for forty minutes. The editing is done spontaneously on the stage without disturbing the story line of the play. To achieve this goal the performers resorted to three kinds of strategies. Primarily *chindu bhāgavatham* is dance intensive tradition therefore the performers conveniently reduced the dancing patterns and circular movements, which automatically reduces the repetitions in the text. Secondly, by reducing the satirical, comical conversations, which are intrinsic to the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition, the performers achieved the goal of containing the time duration. Another important area where they have worked for the redress of time duration is at the entry level of the characters.

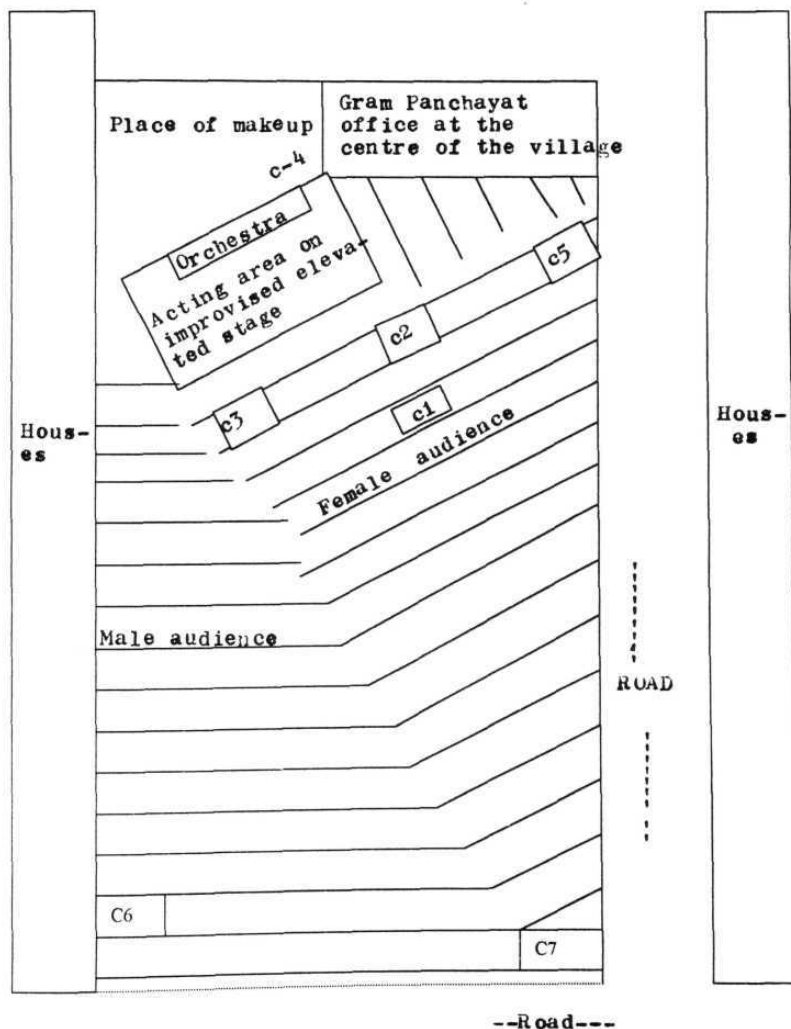
Usually, in the tradition, elaborate introduction of the characters is made by themselves by being behind the curtains and later the same is repeated on the stage<sup>36</sup>. In this performance, Pradhani made a brief announcement with regard to the characters entry. Thus, the long time duration is shortened.

As stated already the audience being urban elite could not respond spontaneously while the performance was on due to the lack of familiarity with the dialect on one hand, and on the other, by custom they view such responses as disturbance to the progress of the play. Despite this given a situation, the performers could still communicate with the audience not just by the verbal expressions but also through the non verbalised language mode of their spectacular costumes, ornaments and vibrant, fast, swift body movements. One more interesting phenomena in this performance is lighting, which has given added beauty to the ornaments and costumes. Thus, this is the best known example to demonstrate how the traditional art form could gear up to the changing situations caused by modernity and yet nativise the performance as if the situation is not afresh. Nativisation of modernity therefore enhances the traditional behavioural modes of the performing groups and withstands the tests of the time.

Similarly, in a traditional locale where the art form is performed, when modern devices such as video cameras along with spot lights and reflectors are placed around the performers to document, the performers also responded to the needs of the camera medium and nativised even that performance. The performance observed at Saigudem near Aleir in Nalgonda district, the *chindu bhāgavatham* troupe of Pillutla Sanjeeva performed *Sati Savithri yakshagānam*. The performance in fact was done at the request of a private producer who got a commissioned programme on folk art forms of Andhra

Pradesh in Doordarshan, National network. However in the village scenario itself the performance is documented, for which more than thousand audiences from the village attended. The following diagram shows the stage, audience and the camera positions.

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE PERFORMANCE OF CHINDU YAKSHAGANAM FOR THE AUDIENCE AND ALSO FOR VIDEO RECORDING AT SAIGUDEM, NALGONDA DISTRICT ON 6.1.1998, 12.30 P.M





C1- Represents the state position of the cameras to capture main performance  
C2,C3 AND C4 - Represent Camera Positions To Capture The Movement Of  
The Characters From Different Angles  
C5, C6 AND C7 – Show the camera positions to capture the audience from  
different angles.

The performers having given the idea that is meant for telecasting, they became conscious of the camera and started performing exactly for camera. Usually when a performance is recorded for telecast purposes either in studios or elsewhere, the performers have a target audience who actually do not watch the performance while it is being recorded. In other words, in the anticipation of reaching certain group of audience the performers play before the camera. But in this situation even while thousands of audience are watching, signaling their presence with shouts and response, the performers virtually ignored their presence and played only facing camera. Even the traditional body movements filled with circular dances are minimised and controlled to get captured by camera field. Even in communicating with other characters they did not face each other, but only talked to the camera. Since they are camera conscious they got transposed themselves to a plane where they started feeling as if they are acting for a motion picture. The cinematic effect is so much expressed that they even started singing duets, which are not in the text, and all the dramatic actions reflected in the filmy style of the popular heroes. Even the dancing patterns lost the traditional style of *chindus* and reflected only the contemporary commercial filmy styles.

The entry and exit of the characters are modernised by the usage of the English way of greetings like 'hello', 'ta-ta', 'byb-bye'. Several Urdu / Hindi words such as '*jaldi*', '*phikar*' etc., are unmindfully used so as to create comedy rather than the seriousness of the narrated events. In fact, the

language of *chindus* is totally metamorphosed to reach the 'unknown' audience owing to their camera consciousness.

Thus, the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition did respond to the contexts thrown open by the modernity. It is the performance and the community which nativised by adapting to the new situations, the text, texture, context and other theatrical elements. Especially, with the increase of the communication system, the agencies of different kinds showed interest in the native forms and therefore, the native forms in order to gain from the given demands accepted changes in their own traditions. *Chindu bhāgavatham* is no exception to this reality. With the result it acquired new audience, new sponsors, new techniques, new forms of remuneration, new theatrical elements, new textural practices, new deities and new levels of interaction. All new things are added to the oldest tradition and in the process nativised the new ones to such an extent that they no longer remain new but appear as friendly to the tradition. The culture contact at the intra and inter cultural level also got effected by the changing scenario of modernity and resulted in hybridising the *chindu* tradition itself. The capacity to absorb the elements of modernity is so much felt by the community itself that they no longer remained 'inward oriented' but became 'outward oriented',<sup>38</sup> by pleading for new programmes, not only in the urban centers of India but outside India.

## NOTES

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25. In an oral interview with Chindula Yellamma on 28-11-1997 at Amdapur, she said that ex-minister Dr. J. Geetha Reddy has arranged their performance at Puttaparthi in connection with the birth day celebrations of god-man Satya Sai Baba.

26. Chindula Yellamma informed that for a single performance at Puttaparthi her troupe is paid Rs. 30,000/- in cash, and she is personally awarded a gold chain worth Rs. 15,000/- by the god-man Satya Sai Baba. This is apart from an excellent lodging and boarding for five days and to and fro fares for the entire troupe of eighteen members, from Amdapur of Nizamabad district to Puttaparthi of Anathapur district.
27. Field observation and documented at Amdapur on 30-11-1997.
28. As a member of the selection committee for the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Andhra Pradesh and also as a former executive committee member of A.P Nataka Academy, it is a personal experience while selecting various troupes to represent the state at different cultural festivals.
29. For instance late Shivaram Karant's experiments on Kannada Yakshaganam elevated it to a national folk art form and thus presented to the foreign audience at various cultural festivals abroad. Similarly leather puppets of Andhra also gained international recognition.
30. Personal experience as a member of selection committee.
31. Milton Singer, Op.Cit.
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33. Oral interview with the actor who acted as Pradhani at Amdapur. See Chapter-III of this thesis.
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## **CHAPTER-VII**

### **CONCLUSION**

The theatre is a form of systematic expression that the human cultures resort to negotiate their feelings, innate urges and aspirations both in verbal and non-verbal expressions. This inevitably results in stylization, textualization and externalization of the expressions depending upon the contexts. Each community/groups develop their own forms of expression based on the environment and other socio cultural milieus. In the process the community/group gave way in for 'specialists' to emerge as performers who later came to be known as minstrels or bards. With this division the performers developed their specialized skills in narration and action. Thus the art forms started becoming exclusive domains of the performers and each community made their art form look different from the others in order to achieve the innate need for identity. The art forms therefore, became cultural markers both in the elite and folk traditions, and the identity consciousness underlying these art forms was so immense that even they lead to form the basis of nationalism. For instance *Kalaivahala*, the oral epic of Finish people

became a symbol of national identity during their struggle against the colonial rules, the Russians. So the art forms whether theatrical or semi theatrical played a dominant role in projecting the identities of either a national or a group of people.

In order to study the identities as reflected in the art forms; require a multidisciplinary approach since they are made up of several complexities. In this thesis, therefore, multi-disciplinary approach is suggested to analyze a community's art form. The need is so much felt that the disciplinary segmentation would only lead to fragmentation of the community's expressive behavioural traditions. For this reason this thesis has taken up a study on *chindu bhāgavatham*, the performing art form of *chindu māḍigas*. Since the study focuses on not only the art form, but also the culture which is the basis for the expression. Therefore the concepts dealing with art and culture are exclusively taken up as study material in the analysis of the *chindu chāgavatham* tradition. What is interesting to note here is that art and culture are not homogeneous in nature and encompasses different strands of communities/groups with variant manifestations of culture. For instance, the groups living at pre-literate / non-literate strand of culture would immensely depend upon orality as their basis in cultural continuum. Their art forms therefore are expressed in oral tradition and indicate their level of culture. *chindu bhāgavatham* is one such art form, which represents the community living on oral tradition. In this thesis to unfold the multi-layered dimensions of the structure of the art form, the foremost elements like text and context of the art forms are taken for the study.

The methodology used in the study therefore cut across the boundaries of the discipline. For instance ethnographic accounts as part of



methodological tool is taken in the study to assess the art form's structure to the life style of the community, which creates and sustains it. Similarly to analyse the texts of the art form syntagmatic structural features are noted and the plot of the plays (*yakshagānas*) is analyzed from the structural point of view. The methodology employed in dealing with the structures is taken from the discipline of theatre. As far as the analysis of the context is concerned performance approach is immensely used to analyse the deeper nexus between the performer and the audience. Thus the study made use of different methodologies to study the field data as well as the performers, the *chindus* and their art form.

In the ethnographic accounts of the *chindu mādigas*, it is found that the community lives by the text, for the text and of the text. Therefore, the text *yakshagānam* is made them as 'textual community'. This finding is essential because it is with the text that the community gets identified and perpetuates its identities. In order to achieve this goal the community demonstrates virtually in a rhetorical fashion the enactment of caste myth as a necessary routine in their performance tradition. This being the case their life style also situated to fulfill this goal by making them as semi-nomadic and itinerary performing groups. Travel being an integral part of their practice of the art form, they formalized a rigid frame in their social relationships. Matrimonial is strictly followed keeping in view the norms of the group, which fear 'contamination' from outside. Their family system too became rigid in order to facilitate the perpetuation of the performance tradition. All these rigid rules and regulations, which are self imposed made them elevated to the position of 'sacral' and hence became priests to the community of *mādigas*. It is a well known fact that seclusion creates sanctity to any animate

or inanimate object. This principle is well followed even by the *chindu mādigas*. They communicate physically the notion of seclusion by wearing sacred thread and by following all those normative behaviors, which are on par with the '*dwijās*', which is laid as the *dharma* of the land. This finding is quite significant when it is looked from the performance tradition point of view. By virtue of attaining a made belief '*dwija*' status to their own community people, they could perform two major roles in their performance tradition. One as the performers of *Jāmbapurānam*, they could create a brotherhood feeling to their madiga audience, and secondly as performers of *yellammavēsham*, they could reverse the status of their audience to a subordinate position. This is very crucial because, it is with these performances that the *chindu mādigas* who are basically at the receiving end as mendicants could not only reverse their profession from a mere entertainment to that of an obligatory right. In fact, as seen from the preceeding chapters, the *chindu mādigas* who are at the marginalised levels of subsistence with no proprietary rights over any means of production, could survive by their talent of performance and making their repertoire as the means of sustenance. The *theygam*, an obligatory reward customarily inherited by the *chindu mādigas* is worked out on the principle of reciprocity norms to ensure their continuation of position as performers. Therefore in this thesis the *chindus* are seen as a 'textual community' and their text and context are taken for analysis for the same purposes.

At the preformative level, the *chindus* interact with their audience by distinguishing themselves as a group of performers known by their peculiar style of presentation of the art form. The vibrant body movement shown in terms of dancing steps made them *chindus*. It is this patterning of song and

dance sequence through which the textual expository is narrated, made them a distinct group of performers. It is also through their traditional attire, which they present themselves in the performance space, made them different from other performing artists. Glaring and glittering make-up, costumes and ornaments added their own flavor to the art form and also a style to the performance. All these ultimately became markers of performance and distinguished it from the other forms of *bhagāvatha* tradition. The tradition of *bhāgavatham* itself in a way determined the format of presentation even in *chindu bhāgavatham*. The entry and exit of the characters, a distinct feature of *bhāgavatha* tradition is also incorporated in this form and came to be known as the *bhāgavatham* of *chindus* or the *chindu bhāgavatham*. What is interesting in the format of presentation is certain characters like the one representing the godly or celestial characters such as Balakrishna, Ganapathi, Saraswathi, Rambha and Urvashi appear on the stage even though they do not have vital connections with the narration of the play. This peculiar feature speaks about the tradition of *chindu bhāgavatham*, which facilitates the movement of celestial characters with the earthly characters within the performance. The dismantling of the hierarchies within the characters in respect of spaces or realms is also achieved in terms of the characters making a communication with the audience. To demarcate this performance space is not elevated, as otherwise, is the case with the proscenium stage, and hence the interaction between the performer and audience easily achieve on the same plane. This is another crucial feature of the performance, which violate the existing elite theatrical tradition, which controls from a panoptic regime its audience. This can be exemplified from the fact that the character of Pradhani itself cut across the frontiers of hierarchies and communicate with

ease, both with celestial and other characters on one hand and on the other hand with the common audience.

In the textual analysis it is found that there is a dichotomy that persists with regard to the structure. The dichotomy lies in the visibility and invisibility of a systematic structure in terms of progression, climax and catastrophe. This is so because the texts which are taken for performances are not compiled on the stereotypic dramatic texts fashion but developed in the process of tradition as an interaction between the performers and audience. This can be demonstrated by analyzing the texts in terms of themes, number of characters etc. Thematically, the *chindu bhāgavatham* texts fall under *purāṇic* / mythological more than the others, such as historical, legendary etc. The fact that the *purāṇic* themes are preferred for the performances, it reveals that *chindu mādigas* innate urge to entertain their audience, (who too are in an economically weak position) by taking them to a fantasy plane where they can communicate in a transpounded stage with the celestial / *purāṇic* characters.

With the puranic themes, the *chindu mādigas* perform the episodes of Mahabharatha more than Ramayana. Contrary to this in the North Indian performance tradition the Ramayana episodes are more performed than the Mahabharatha episodes. This is another interesting finding, which is interpreted as functional to the practice of the art form. As the Mahabharatha episodes have the quality of ingesting more number of characters, it comes handy to the *chindu mādigas* group, which takes up the performance as their mode of life. As the families of *chindu mādigas* grew it is inevitable for them to absorb the members of the family into the tradition of performance. For this reason the themes with more number of characters are preferred and the epic Mahabharatha suits for their requirement. Moreover by tradition they

worship Vishnu in the form of Narasimha and also claim allegiance to Vishnu Kanchi, which bestowed them with legal proprietary right over certain number of villages as performance zone for the *chindu mādigas*. By this their occupation as professional performers was legitimised by the state power during the times of Nizam. This only speaks about the process of legal sanction to their performance tradition, which hitherto remained only to the practice and known to their own audience. This is quite interesting because, the tradition which was all along transmitted from orality to performative, after legitimisation in a written document form attained an authority which acted as an additional claim for the performers, not only with their own group of audience but also to the other audience residing in their obligatory right performance domains. This process speaks about the way the art form sustained in the course of history despite facing the adverse regimes of the Muslims and others, which are not alien to this land and the community. Of course, there are instances of checks during the times of Razakars movement, yet the art form strategically by adopting in the performance certain characters representative of the Nizam's bureaucracy, sustained the onslaught and remained as a traditional art form till date.

The interesting feature of the art form lies in the process of transmission, which eventually resulted in safeguarding the art form, from the challenges thrown by the historical events. In this thesis, it is found that the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition transmitted in these forms, i.e., oral, written and performance. The strong roots of the tradition lies in oral and performance forms more than the written form. Since it is the enterprise of the community, the art form survived in oral and performance more, which has become ultimately the characteristic feature of the art form. In the

analysis it is found that the performance texts appear more in number than in either oral or written texts. Oral texts are mostly found during their transmission at the level of imparting training to the members of the group as a traditional inheritance. Therefore performance texts are the end products of oral texts and every performance text becomes a 'version' of the oral text. The written texts at much later date, though documented/written/recorded by the literate strata, remained as parallel texts and showed no influence on the art form per se in any manner. The *chindu mādigas* being a non-literate community and apparently survived as textual community, the written texts though recorded as early as 1905 AD did not make any impact on the performance tradition of the community. The art form in any case is much older than the recorded evidence. Hence the written texts stand as the only evidence to the existence of the art form and its performance texts. Though the literate community tried to improve in style and content certain portions of the texts, they remained as merely literary exercises and at the most referential to the dramatic texts of the *chindu yakshagānams*. Therefore the written texts appear in the process of transmission in a minimal way and do not in any case influence the oral text or the performance text.

Since the tradition survives on performances, they become crucial to the community and therefore they take utmost care in presenting them. The community is sensitive to the context of the performance and hence grossly violates the dramatic structures that are present in the plot of the texts of the performances. Usually the theatrical critics give much importance to the dramatic plot structures, as they become the soul cause of sustenance of interest to the audience. Much theory is evolved around the plot structures in the western scholarships. The plot is conceived as a linear upward movement

from exposition to catastrophe via different stages of progression and climax. The whole plot is systematically designed so as to give a feature to the drama itself like comedy, tragedy and tragi-comedy etc. However interesting these studies are, they remain marginal to the folk performance texts, owing to the constant fluidity that occur during a performance, violating the stages as enumerated by the theatrical critics. Since the performance is context oriented and western models of plot structures do not fit in to the indigenous texts which grossly depend on oral and performance texts. This finding is significant because it forms the major factor for performance continuance in the region by the community. Despite the *chindu yakshagānams* are repeatedly performed through the ages, they still sustain the audience and in fact created exclusive domains for their performance tradition. The interesting feature lies in converting 'context' to a strategic manipulation of the text and hence every performance becomes a unique, interesting and a 'version' of the oral text. This nexus between the orality and performance which is translated into actions of the community in a given context makes the art form special to the region and the community. This inheriting strength of the community to improvise constantly the properties and all other theatrical elements made the art form an entertainer and also a cultural product.

For this reason the performance texts of the *chindu māḍigas* are designed to suit to the contexts which are culturally defined and produced. In the thesis an interesting observation is made on the contexts. The contexts are not singular and uniform in nature but varies according to the cultural necessities that make the community of performers and their audience to come together. The contexts that are found prevalent in the tradition are three folds. They are functional, situational and cultural. These three forms of

contexts in turn develop three different levels of relationships with the audience with the help of three divergent texts.

In the functional context, the *chindus* develop a kinship relationship with the traditional audience (*madigās*) through the performance text of *Jāmbapurānam*, the caste myth. This is inevitable for the *chindus* to overtly express their functional roles and legitimate them by defining in terms of roles to be performed in the hierarchical social system based on caste. The anti-structural overtones are innately knitted in the text and logistically presented in a discourse manner to the best satisfaction of their own community audience. Precisely this becomes an insider's context and therefore establishes in clear tones a self articulation which is pertinent for their survival in the dominant social hierarchy which they always resent, yet inevitable to be with this system. *Jāmbapurānam* therefore becomes an obligatory performance on the part of the *chindus* and a customary obligation on the part of the *mādigas*. To convene such performance in order to sustain in the social reality of performing menial jobs as polluted services, but essential to the eco system of the social order is inevitable.

The functional context being an expression of the esoteric view point, it is essential to communicate only to the members of the groups of *mādigas*, the *chindus* contextualize it by internalising the text itself in terms of a performance metaphor. Therefore the performance invariably carries anti-structural features which negate the community, at least for a temporary period as a relief, from the hard social reality of what they being. This function of the *chindu mādigas* as performers to cherish the idea of superiority in their fantasy, make the *chindus* on par with the priestly community of the brahminical order. Therefore functional context enhances



their position not only from the textual point of view which is performed, but also from the functional role of priests as deliverers from the realistic world of pain and sorrow.

In the situational context the *chindus* ascertain the status of professional performers. For being in this status, they choose texts of complex nature for performance. The texts are *yakshagānas* where the characters appear as the representatives of celestial and mundane domains. The performances are based on oral traditions and hence demand a continuity in the style of presentation. This makes the audience a distinct group from the performers and thereby create a space in between them, not in terms of hierarchy but in terms of equity. This is essential because the *chindus* in order to survive as a community of performers need to cast a wider net to catch extra audience to their performances. This in fact turn the art form from an esoteric plane to exoteric plane. The community therefore is identified as the community of performers not only by its own customary audience (*mādigas*) but also by the other audience generally known in theatrical parlance as 'external audience'. This transformation of roles from priestly to professional by the *chindus* as strategically done by them by manipulating the contexts from functional to situational. At the functional context level the traditional audience are related through texts as well as performance to *chindus* as kinship. At the situational context the *chindus* by mitigating the emotional status of brotherhood convert the audience to friendly audience. This situational context being the representation of the professional space to the community, they resort to explicit identities in the manner of elaborate make-up and costumes and all other elements of theatre. This domain actually make the *chindus* identifiable as the specialists in the tradition. For this reason the

texts embedded with puranic themes are chosen to display their artistic talents and get recognised by that art form among the communities of the region. Therefore, situational context as an exclusive domain of *chindu mādigas* helps to express their identity not only as bards but also as professionals in theatre. What is special about this context is that, the presentation of the texts and the characters are stylised in the theatrical grammar, and hence conceived not only by the community but also by others. As the group of folk theatre specialists, surviving on oral tradition and transmitted through performance cycles from generation to generation, the *chindus* make use of this context to uphold the continuity of their tradition.

In the cultural context, the *chindus* resort to the enactment of the valour and fury of their caste goddess Yellamma, through the performance of *Yellammavèsham*. The transformational quality of the performance itself denotes the role of *chindu mādigas* as the community of intermediaries between the goddess, the creator and the devotees (*madigas*). An interesting feature in the performance is that the *chindus* neither perform a text explicitly with verbal expressions, nor use definite space as stage (performance space) during the performance of *Yellammavèsham*. For this reason the context of *Yellammavèsham* is conceptualised in this thesis as cultural context. The cultural context here refers to the context where both the performers and audience meet through performance with the understanding of the cultural text of the goddess and her importance to the community. The pacification of the goddess being the main motto of the performance, the *mādigas* transform themselves into devotees and seek blessings of the goddess by offering her animals and materials. It is cultural also because the belief that they have on the goddess as benevolent and malevolent figure is expressed in terms of

enactment of the context where the goddess has become the goddess of the community during the times of creation as enumerated in their creation myth, *Jāmbapurānam*. Therefore, the performance is basically a belief oriented, which is translated into context by changing roles of the performers to goddess and the mythical ancestor *Chindu Jihmamahamuni* on one hand, and on the other, audience as devotees. The lifeline of the performance lies in transpounding the 'silent text' to a vibrant enactment through ritual possession in the process of performance as procession. This violates the space constraints that is usually imposed otherwise to any theatrical performance. In this sense performance is continuous and do not demand for any special attention of the audience as onlookers. Audience as devotees show their reverence to the goddess and seek blessings by participating in the ritual to appease the goddess. The make-up and costume is required only for two characters i.e., Yellamma and *Chindu Jihmamahamuni*. The absence of verbalised text gets expressed in the body kinesics of the characters as well as the devotees. The music chiefly produced by the percussion instrument (*dappu*) and the semeotics that reflect in the materials and their application are used in the ritual. Therefore the cultural context leads to cultural performance and perpetuates the performance tradition of *chindus*.

Thus the three identified contexts in the thesis reveal at the deeper structural level the reasons for the continuation of the art form from time immemorial. The audience in the three contexts mentioned above change the roles from kin group to devotees via friendly audience. The performers by mitigating emotional status all along the contexts establish their position as professional performers in the tradition.

However the tradition is not silent to the changing times. The above description of the texts and contexts may give the impression that the art form *chindu bhāgavatham* is static and rigid. In fact this is not the case, since the art form responded during the course of survival with the changing times. It is demonstrated in the thesis that even during the adverse times of the Muslim regimes the art form did react functionally as well as strategically and incorporated several cultural idioms of Muslims, then the dominant power group. Similarly in the wake of technological advancement to reach the other strands of culture such as urban, literate, elite etc., the *chindu bhāgavatham* tradition adapted to new techniques of presentation including those of the film semiotics. The *chindu mādigas* for this reason are able to survive in the tradition as professional folk performers. Therefore in the thesis the concept, 'cultural metabolism' of Milton Singer is used to reason out the cause for performance continuum. But what is interesting to note in the findings of the study is that the art form has become an identity mark for the community. It is not simply that performance continuum is a source of sustenance for them, but it has become an expression of identity without which the community ceases to be performers and would remain as menial labour for being at the lowest ebb of social hierarchy.

## **APPENDICES**

## GLOSSARY

- Angavastra:** A long coloured cloth which will be placed on the Shoulders and falls on both sides up to knees of the *chindu* performers. This is one of the costumes the *chindu* performers wear while performing the characters in *yakshagānas*.
- Aradalam:** A folk material used as base paint while applying make-up to the faces of actors. Its usage has become redundant in modern times.
- Bhāgavatham:** The term used both for the *bhāgavatha purānas* and the performances based on the stories from them. Technically speaking *bhāgavatham* is a form of Theatrical presentation which has a strong bearing on the krishna legends.
- Bhāgotham:** Refers to the term *bhāgavatham* in rural dialect of Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh.
- Bottu:** Tatto. A sacred symbol on the forehead with red/saffron powder.
- Chindu:** A dance step. This term is tagged to the people of *mādiga* sub-cast who have taken dancing as their profession and they are called *chindu mādigas*.
- Chindu Bhāgavatham** Theatrical performance of *chindu mādigas*
- Daruvus:** The songs sung when the characters enter the scene in *yakshagānas*
- Dèsi** The regional (tradidtion). Used to denote metres in Singing of songs in *yakshagānas*.
- Devadāsi:** Women dedicated to god to serve through *angaranga bhogas*.
- Dharma:** It is regulating force for normative behaviours, expressing the ethical codes to be followed by the land, people and the organisations.
- Farmāna:** Is a title deed refers to the rights of possession issued by a royal authority. The term has come into vogue in the revenue records from the regime of Muslim rule in the country.

<b>Gada:</b>	Club, a weapon used by Bhima in epic Mahabharat.
<b>Gāyathri mantra:</b>	A sacred Sanskrit line taught to Hindu males during <i>upanayanam</i> or thread marriage. The line known as 'mantra' is composed with six words of eight letters each and is believed to be the protector of those who recites it regularly with sanctity.
<b>Harijan:</b>	Usually refers to fifth <i>varna</i> who were once upon a time considered untouchables. In Telugu speaking region <i>mālas</i> and <i>mādigas</i> constitute the main castes of <i>harijan</i> community. Gandhiji termed these communities as <i>Harijans</i> , so as to mean, as they are not untouchables but children of god. In independent India constitutionally they are given scheduled caste status.
<b>Jāju:</b>	A reddish brown coloured powder, which is soluble in water, and used to paint the mud walls of the hut particularly in rural areas.
<b>Jāmbapurānam:</b>	The caste myth of <i>chindu mādigas</i> performed by them.
<b>Jathara:</b>	Annual ritual celebrated to appease the gods and goddesses.
<b>Jōgita</b>	A women dedicated to goddess Yellamma and considered as specialist in dancing in <i>chindu</i> performing tradition.
<b>Kalāpam:</b>	The general name given for dramatic compositions of the song dance type, with a major concern for character portrayal. It is a form which portrays character through song, dance and acting.
<b>Kanaka Dappu:</b>	A percussion instrument.
<b>Kanchi Farmāna:</b>	A document mentioning the rights of <i>chindu</i> performers over a set of villages.
<b>Keerthanam:</b>	Usually the term refers to elite practices of singing tradition in Praise of a deity.
<b>Leelas:</b>	Refers to the acts of Krishna as described in <i>Bhāgavatham</i>
<b>Lord Narasimha:</b>	One of the ten incarnations of Vishnu.
<b>Mādiga Bhōgās:</b>	Refers to <i>chindu mādigas</i> of coastal Andhra districts.

<b>Mangalācharana:</b>	A vernacular form of the classical invocation.
<b>Mèlam:</b>	Refers to a group of performers inclusive of actors, singers and instrumentalists.
<b>Panchāyat:</b>	The association of village elders which look into the moral and ethical codes of the community.
<b>Patka/Dhatti:</b>	Waist belt.
<b>Pette Pooja:</b>	Workshop of pette.
<b>Pette:</b>	A box either of wood or iron containing the costumes, ornaments and make-up materials.
<b>Poniki/Buruga:</b>	Local names for the wild trees whose dry wood will be very light with which the head-gears and shoulder-guards of the <i>yakshagāna</i> characters are made.
<b>Poorvaranga:</b>	Sage Bharatha in his <i>Nāṭyasāstra</i> used this term which means pre-performance rituals.
<b>Pradhani:</b>	Can be compared with <i>sūtradhāra</i> of Sanskrit dramatic tradition. In <i>chindu bhāgavatham</i> tradition he bridges the gap between the audience and the characters.
<b>Sankeerthanam:</b>	Singing in praise of God.
<b>Sarpanch:</b>	Head of the panchayat, presently refers to the elected representatives.
<b>Sūtradhāra:</b>	An important character in Sanskrit Dramas. He along with <i>Nati</i> , the lady character, would conduct the dramatic performance. These two are the bridge characters between the performers and the audience. They both appear in the beginning of the play, sing the invocation song, introduce the play, playwright, performers and the donors / organizers of the performance to the audience. At the end they again appear, sing the benediction song and close the performance. During the course of the performance they also act some minor characters depending upon the need.
<b>Tambūra:</b>	A string musical instrument used by Narada of <i>Bhāgavatha</i> texts.
<b>Teygam:</b>	An obligatory custom for <i>mādigas</i> to pay as remuneration to <i>chindu mādigas</i> .



<b><i>Tirunāllu/Jātara:</i></b>	The annual ritualistic celebrations performed in temples / sacred shrines.
<b><i>Upanayanam:</i></b>	Thread marriage. As per vedic rites it is customary for brahmins to wear a sacred thread and to recite <i>Gāyathri mantra</i> twice a day, after the performance of <i>upanayana</i> .
<b><i>Varna System:</i></b>	Refers to <i>Chāturvana</i> system which is prevalent from the ancient times in India. The <i>varna</i> denotes the ritual rank in which different <i>jāthis</i> (castes) are grouped at different levels.
<b><i>Vēshagāllu:</i></b>	Performers, Actors.
<b><i>Vidūshaka:</i></b>	Clown in the royal court and usually close aide of the king. This character is also an important one in the Sanskrit dramatic tradition.
<b><i>Yagna:</i></b>	A religious ritual to appease gods and ancestrals.
<b><i>Yagnōpaveetham/ Jandhyam</i></b>	Sacred thread.
<b><i>Yakshagānam:</i></b>	The etomological meaning of the word is referred to a singing style of a sect called <i>yakshas</i> . The singing style in course of time metamorphosed into theatrical form and now <i>yakshagānam</i> is a folk theatre form prevalent in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamilnadu.
<b><i>Yellamma:</i></b>	Caste goddess of <i>mādigas</i> .
<b><i>Yuga:</i></b>	Unit of time. According to Hindu belief, <i>Kritha</i> , <i>Thrēythā</i> , <i>Dwāpara</i> and <i>Kālī</i> are the four <i>yugas</i> which run for forty three lakh twenty thousand years.

**YAKSHAGANAM TEXTS ANALYSIED AND USED IN THE THESIS**

1. Satya Harishchandra
2. Jayantha Jayapalamu
3. Sathi Savithri
4. Sarangadhara
5. Gaja Gowri Vatham
6. Chenchulakshmi
7. Jagadekaveeruni Katha
8. Nagarjuna Charithram
9. Sugreeva Vijayam
10. Sri Krishna Parijatham
11. Lava Kusha
12. Bhaktha Ramadas
13. Rukmini Kalyanam
14. Bhakatha Kuchela
15. Sri Krishnarjuna Yudham
16. Bhakatha Prahalada
17. Kamamma Charithramu
18. Sri Krishna Rayabaram
19. Mairavana
20. Bhabhruvahana Charitharamu
21. Sri Krishna Leelalu

**APPENDIX-III****LIST OF PERFORMANCES OBSERVED**

<u>YAKSHAGANAM</u>	<u>TROUP</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>DATE</u>
1. Kanthamathi Charithramu	Ganga Ram Troup	Nizamabad	16-02-95
2. Lava Kusha	Neelama Troup	Hyderabad	24-04-95
3. Rukmini Kalyanam	Anjaya Troup	Janagam	14-09-96
4. Gaja Gowri Vartham	Yellamma Troup	Amdapur	01-12-97
5. Sathi Savithri	Sanjiva Troup	Saiguydam	06-12-97
6. Sarangadhara	Neelama Troup	Sadula	09-01-98
7. Chenchu Lakshmi	Neelama Troup	Hyderabad	10-01-98

Caste Myth

Jambapuranam	Anjaya Troup	Aleir	23-10-97
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Castegodess

Yellamavesham	Sanjeeva troupe	Saigudam	06-12-97
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# APPENDIX-IV

## CHINDU PERFORMERS INTRVIEWED

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>DATE</u>
1. Chindula Yellamamma	Amdapur, Nizamabad Dt.	8,29,30-11-97
2. " Venkati	"	"
3. " Gangaram	"	"
4. " Dharamana	"	"
5. " Sailu	"	"
6. " Ramana	"	"
7. " Thrupathi	"	"
8. " China Gangaram	"	"
9. " Gopamma	"	"
10. P Sanjeeva	Saigudam, Nalgonda Dt.	5,6,7-12-97
11. P Shashu	"	"
12. C Govinda	"	"
13. Lakshmamma	"	"
14. C Renuka	"	"
15. Radha Bai	"	"
16. Anjayya	Aleir, Nalgonda	8-12-97
17. Buchayya	"	"

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>DATE</u>
18. Chindula Neelamma	Armoor, Nizamabad Dt.	9,10,11-01-98
19. Narayana	“	“
20. C Shyam	“	“
21. Shivaram	“	“
22. C Suseela	“	“
23. Rangadu	“	“

## APPENDIX-IV

### LIST OF SCHOLARS / CRITICS INTEVIEWED

1.	Dr. Natraja Ramakrishna	Hyderabad
2.	Prof. M.N.Sharma	“
3.	Dr. P.S.R.Appa Rao	“
4.	Prof. Rama Krishna	“
5.	Prof. M.L.K Murthy	“
6.	Prof. B.Ramaraju	“
7.	Dr. Mrs. B.Lalitha	“
8.	Dr. B.Venkateshwarulu	“
9.	Dr. P.Yella Reddy	“
10.	Dr. P.Kishan Rao	“
11.	Dr.Y.Yadagiri Sharma	Shamshabad
12.	Dr. Y.A.Sudhakar Reddy	Hyderabad
13.	Dr. Mrs. P.S.Kanaka Durga	“
14.	Dr. S.Subba Chary	“
15.	Dr A.Anand	“
16.	Dr. Anuradha Jonnalagadda	“
17.	Dr. N.J.Jayakar	“
18.	P.Naga Raju	“

## PUBLISHED YAKSHAGANAS

S.No.	Name of the Play	Author
01.	Ambareeshopakyanamu	Gundayya Dasu
02.	Allirani Charitramu	Mora Mallesham
03.	Ajamilopakhyanam	Kaiarakonda Pentayya
04.	Anasuya Charitramu	Jalakanti Veeranna
05.	Allirani Charitra	Md. Shareevuddeen
06.	Are Marateela Charitra	Chervirala Bhagayya
07.	Uttara Gograhanamu	Zilla Venkata Dasu
08.	Usha Parinayamu	Kassa Krishnama Charyulu
09.	Kanakatara	Chervirala Bhagayya
10.	Karna Dusshasana Vadha	Toramamidi Mallayya
11.	Kaliyuga Ponna Katha	Kotte Krishnayya
12.	Kalapurna Vilasam	Maya Brahma Lakshma Nacharya
13.	Kantamati Charitra	Chervirala Bagayya
14.	Kantamaati Natakamu	Vanamamala Narsimha Dasu
15.	Kabhoga Raju	Chevirla Bhagayya
16.	Kambhoja Raju Charitra	Subbayya Devara
17.	Kalinga Mardana	Vetsari Narasimhadasu
18.	Kiratarjuna Charitramu	Chervirala Bhagayya
19.	Keechakavadha (Virata Parvamu)	Zilla Venkata Dasu
20.	Kushalava Natakam	Chevirla Bhagayya

22.	Kuntioeevena Anu	Goshika Bhumayya
23.	Kushalava Charitramu	Mahammad Abdulla
24.	Koocha Konda Ramayanamu	Gujjari Yella Dasu
25.	Kondala Rayacharitramu	Sri Shashatananda Adevu Gorava Dasu
26.	Kousalya Parinayamu	Tarkika Chakravarthi: Tenna Rangam Ponnadi Annana Charyulu
27.	Kosalya Parinayamu	Tarkika Chakravarthi: Tenna Rangam Ponnadi Sri Ranga Charyulu
28.	Kousalya Parinayamu	Vitala Raya Kavi
29.	Gaja Gouri Vratamu	Vitala Raya Dasu
30.	Gayopakhyanam	Chervirala Bhagayya
31.	Garudachala Mahatyamu	Obaya Mantri
32.	Gunasundari Yakshaganamu	Sri Bala Yogi Avadhuta Nirmalananda Swami
33.	Gule Bakavali Anu Pushpa Leelavati Charitramu	Chervirala Bhagayya
34.	Gule Bakavali	Sabban Vasudevudu
35.	Goud Jeevita Charitramu	Bhumigari Narayana Goud And Pedda Malla Reddy
36.	Chandra Hasa	-----
37.	Chandra Kala Vilasam	Gadhi Hanumat Kavi
38.	Chandraketoopakhyanam	Lakshmayabhadeya
39.	Chirutenda Natakamu	Zilla Venkata Dasu
40.	Chitra Kettopakhyanam	Sai Krishna Kavi
41.	Chootapuree Vilasamu	Yelluri Narasimha Dasu
42.	Jayanta Jayapalamu	Chervirala Bhagayya



43.	Jatadhara Parabhavamu	Vanamala Narasimhadas
44.	Jagadekaveeruni Katha	Tirunagari Krishnayya
45.	Janamejaya Charitramu	Avanchavatlo Shankar Reddy
46.	Dangeyo Pakhyanam	Burugu Palli Venkata Narasayya
47.	Tapatee Swayamvaramu	Vanamala Narasimhadas
48.	Tarakasura Vadha	Chervirala Bhagayya
49.	Tara Shashanka Vijayamu	Sadguru Bhumacharyulu
50.	Tara Shashanka Natakamu	Amara Chinta Ramadasu
51.	Tarakasura Vadha	Chervirala Bhagayya
52.	Timmajipeta Harischandra Natakamu	Pattenu Papa Kavi
53.	Damayantee Swayamaramu	Avadhuta Nirmalananda Swamy
54.	Dharmangada Charitra	Yadava Dasu
55.	Dharmangada Natakamu	Asurimaranganti Chenna Krishnama Charyulu
56.	Dakshayanee Kalyanam	Kaira Konda Pentayya
57.	Dhanyanmalinee Natakamu	Booruguvalli Venkata Narasimha Rayudu
58.	Dhuryodhana Kapata Natakamu	Hanumantu
59.	Devayani Charitramu	Yadava Dasu
60.	Daivadheenam	Srimukundacharyulu
61.	Droupadee Vasthrapa-Haranam	Nanamamala Narasimha Dasu
62.	Droupadee Swayamvaramu	Nachupalli Shattu Lakshmana Dasu
63.	Nalineedeevee Prabhavamu	-----

64.	Nalamaharaju Charitra	Chervirala Bhagayya
65.	Nagarjuna Charitramu	Chervirala Bhagayya
66.	Nandeevu Kalyanamu	Subban Vasudeva Kavi
67.	Padmavatee Kalyanamu	Velijala Ippaturu Rama Krishna Raju & Lakshmayashadeva
68.	Padmavatee Parinayamu	Annana Charyulu
69.	Parushu Rama Vijayamu	Venkataswamy Ayya
70.	Padmavyuhamu	Vallu Ramulu
71.	Parvatee Kalyanamu	Burugupalli Venkata Narasimha Khyulu
72.	Palasa Chola Maharaju Charitra	Gopaya Chari
73.	Parijatapaharanamu	Tarkika Chakravarti Tenna Rangam Ponnadi Annana Charyulu
74.	Puroorava Chakravarti Natakamu	B Vitala Dasu
75.	Pondareeka Charitramu	Chervirala Bhagayya
76.	Putrakameshti Yagamu	Boorugupalli Venkatakyudu
77.	Pundareeka Charitramu	Subban Vasudeva Kavi
78.	Peda Bobbili Charitramu	Chervirala Bhagayya
79.	Potuluri Veera Brahmangari Charitra	Chervirala Bhagayya
80.	Potuluri Veera Brahmangari Charitra	Chervirala Bhagayya
81.	Prabhavatee Vilasamu	-----
82.	Prabhavatee Vilasamu	-----
83.	Prahallada Charitramu	Yadavakhyudu
84.	Prahallada Charitramu	Lakshmana Yabhideya

85.	Prasoonavati Vilasamu	Kairakonda Pentayya
86.	Baka Hidimbasura Vadha	Sudarshanam Anantayya
87.	Babrivahana Charitramu	Chervirala Bhagayya
88.	Babrivahana Charitramu	Paravastu Rangakhyudu
89.	Babrivahana Charitramu	Vitala Rayakavi
90.	Banasura Charitramu	-----
91.	Balanagamma Charitramu	Ambeedaveerappa
92.	Balanagamma Charitramu	Chervirala Bhagayya
93.	Balanagamma Charitramu	Yerram Bucchi Dasu
94.	Balanagamma Charitramu	Chervirala Bhagayya
95.	Bheemanjaneya Yuddham	Vanamamla Narasimha Dasu
96.	Bheemarjuna Garvapa Haranam	Zilla Venkata Dasu
97.	Banasura Bahu Garvapaharanam	Sreemanmeel Matt Lakshmana Yabhideeya
98.	Bheemaseena Vilasamu	-----
99.	Bhookailas	Annana Charyulu
100.	Madana Mahinee Vilasamu	Nrisimha Dasu
101.	Mayoora Dhvaja Natakamu	Tirunagarikrishnayya
102.	Mallanna Charitra	Rajaveerappa
103.	Manmadha Samharamu	P. Veerappa
104.	Madana Vijayamu	Eerabattini Narsimulu
105.	Madalasa Parinayamu	Chervirala Bhagayya
106.	Mannemkonda Vijayavilasam	Mannemugiri Hanumaddasu
107.	Madana Sayaka Parinayamu	Vitala Rayakavi
108.	Madhava Charitramu	Chervirala Bhagayya

109.	Mayaprakriti Purusha Leela	Nagannagari Bheda Dasu
110.	Mayasubhadra Vilasamu	Chervirala Bhagayya
111.	Markandeeya Vilasamu	V. Kali Dasu
112.	Mudavatee Parinayamu	Pichika Papayakhyudu
113.	Mairavana Charitra	-----
114.	Mairavana Charitramu	Koturu Purushottama Dasu
115.	Mohinee Rukmangada Charitramu	Rangam Ranganadha Charyulu
116.	Rambha Rampala	Chervirala Bhagayya
117.	Ramadasu Charitramu	Yadava Dasu
118.	Radhamadhava Vilasamu	Palla Venkata Ramayya
119.	Rajasekhara Vilasamu	Lakshmana Yabhadeeya
120.	Rajasuya Yagamu	Vitala Rayakavi
121.	Rukminee Kalyanamu	Pregada Raju Gundanna
122.	Rukmanagada Natakamu	Chandanarayana Shreshti
123.	Rukmabhi Charitramu	Yadavagiri
124.	Rutudhvajo Pakhyanamu	Annanacharyulu
125.	Raitu Vijayamu	P. Veerappa
126.	Lakshmana Parinayamu	-----
127.	Lakshmana Parinayamu	Sudarshan
128.	Valmeeki Charitramu	Anavattula Pullayya
129.	Vamana Charitramu	Vitala Rayakavi
130.	Vamanavataramu	Subbanvasudeeva Kavi
131.	Vishnu Mayavilasamu	Vavila Ramaswami Sastrulu
132.	Vijaya Simha Vilasamu	Gangam Yella Reddy

133.	Vishnu Mohinee Vilasam	Boorugupalli Venkatakyudu
134.	Vipranarayana Charitramu	Subban Vasudeva Kavi
135.	Veerabhadra Vijayamu	Ramaradvarkaveendrudu
136.	Shambarasura Vadha	Gadige Krishna Dasu
137.	Satakam Ramayanamu	Kasheepati Acharyulu
138.	Shashirekha Parinayamu	Amudala Ramaswami
139.	Shakuntala Parinayam	Narasimha Dasu
140.	Sreekrishna Tulabharamu	Chervirala Bhagayya
141.	Sreekrishna Rayabharamu	Chervirala Bhagayya
142.	Sreekrishna Parijatamu	Chervirala Bhagayya
143.	Sreekrishna Vijayamu	Kairukonda Pentayya
144.	Sreekrishna Tulabharamu	Kairukonda Pentayya
145.	Sree Kamamma Yakshaganam	Gurava Dasakavi
146.	Sree Krishna Garadi	Kairukonda Pentayya
147.	Sree Krishna Charitra	Maranganti Venkata Charyulu
148.	Sree Chenchulaxmi Parinayamu	Goshika Bhoomayya
149.	Sree Nala Damayanti Charitra	Subban Vasudeva Kavi
150.	Sree Pativrata Shiromani	Satyanarayana
151.	Sree Banasuro Pakhyanam	Annana Charyulu
152.	Sree Markandeeya Vilasamu	Chervirala Bhagayya
153.	Sree Ramalinga Pratishta	Zilla Venkata Dasu
154.	Sree Ramjaneeya Sangramamu	Sreemanmeelali Laksh Mana Yabhadeyulu Vitala Raya Kavi
155.	Sree Rama Vijayamu	Vitala Raya Kavi

156.	Sree Rama Vijayamu	Yeerela Vital
157.	Sree Varahavatara Charitra	-----
158.	Sree Vinayaka Vijayamu	Kairamkonda Pentayya
159.	Sree Veerabrahmgari Charitra	Nara Sattayya
160.	Sree Veera Bhadra Vijayamu	Vaishya Laxmayya
161.	Sree Shamantak Mani	Kairamkonda Pentayya
162.	Sree Nivasa Padmavathi Parinayamu	Tennarangam Ponnadi Ranganadha Charyulu
163.	Sree Satyanarayana Vrata Katha	Annana Charyulu
164.	Sree Satyabhama Vijayamu	Sashi Shetti Mallayya
165.	Sree Satyanarayana Vratamu	Avadhuta Mallayya
166.	Sree Suguna Chandrika Parinayamu	Subban Vasudeva Kavi
167.	Seeta Swayamvaramu	Chervirala Bhagayya
168.	Subhadra Parinayamu	Zilla Venkata Dasu
169.	Sugreeva Vijayam	Chervirala Bhagayya
170.	Sulochana Parinayamu	Gajjala Narsayya Gupta
171.	Sugunavati Natakamu	Goorugupalli Venkata Nrisimhakhyudu
172.	Suvyama Parinayamu	Laxmanayabhadeyulu
173.	Sugreeva Vijayamu	Vanamamala Narasimha Dasu
174.	Sumalee Swayamvaramu	Vitala Raya Kavi
175.	Somavaram Vratamu	Avadhuta Nirmachananda Swamy
176.	Somashekara Vilasamu	Ancient Poets
177.	Satya Harischandra	Chervirala Bhagayya
178.	Satee Tulasi	Chervirala Bhagayya

179.	Satyabhama Parinayamu	Vanamamla Narasimha Dasu
180.	Satee Tulasi	Dr. Raghupathi
181.	Samudra Madhanam	Krishnapattana Sheshachal Kavi
182.	Savitree Parinayamu	-----
183.	Sarangadhara Natakamu	Chervirala Bhagayya
184.	Sarangadhara Natakamu	Siddha Kavi
185.	Savitree Parinayamu	Chervirala Bhagayya
186.	Sarangadhara Cheritramu	Chervirala Bhagayya
187.	Sarangadhara Charitramu	Ramaswamy
188.	Swadeeshi Prahlada Natakamu	Venkata Narasayya Panthulu
189.	Hanumadvijayamu	Chenna Ganapura Venkata Charyulu
190.	Hanumadvijayamu	Goshika Bhoomayya
191.	Hanumadvijayamu	Parankusha Kavi
192.	Helavatee Parabhavamu	Vanamamala Narasimha Dasu
193.	Hamangee Vilasamu	Vitala Raya Kavi

## UNPUBLISHED YAKSHAGANAS

S.No	Name Of The Play	Author
1.	Agnidatta Maharaju Charitra	Tennarangam Ponnadi Annanacharyulu
2.	Amba, Ambika, Ambalika	Tennarangam Ponnadi Annanacharyulu
3.	Angabhupathi Charitra	Tennarangam Ponnadi Annanacharyulu
4.	Aniruddha Vilasamu	Maranganti Veenkata Nrisimhacharyulu
5.	Ajamilopakhyanamu	Pechika Papayya
6.	Anasoooyadevi Charitra	Nongooru Laxmanacharyulu
7.	Atma Yoruka Koravanji	Picchana
8.	Ahalya Sankrandanamamu	Pandira Ramanujarao
9.	Allirani	Vanamamla Narasimhadasu
10.	Goda Parijathamu	Marnaganti Veenkata Nrishimhacharyulu
11.	Ikshwaku Maharaja Charitra	Tennarangam Ponnadi Annanacharyullu
12.	Indra Sabha	Gaddam Ramadasu
13.	Usha Parinayamu	Vongooru Laxamanacharyulu
14.	Kapota Vakyam	Vongooru Laxamanacharyulu
15.	Kapila Deva Huti Samvadam	Vattem Chenna Krishnamamba



16.	Krishna Parijatamu	Doddavaram Rama Laxmana Kavulu
17.	Kanaka Tara	Vanamamala Narsimha Dasu
18.	Kiratarjuneeyam	Doddavaram Rama Laxmana Kavulu
19.	Krishna Leela Tarngini	Rakonda Laxmanacharyulu
20.	Krishna Leela Vilasamu	Gaddam Ramadasu
21.	Krishna Tulabharam	Ananta Senarao And Iillela Simhappa
22.	Krishna Garadi	Karaikonda Pentayya
23.	Kousalya Vivaham	Gaddam Ramadasu
24.	Kalindi Parinayamu	Venkata Narsimha Sastry
25.	Gayopkhyanam	Kassa Krishnamacharyulu
26.	Gangeeya Charithramu	Pandari Aramanuja Rao
27.	Gajendra Moksham	Tennarangam Ponnadi Annanacharyulu
28.	Champaka Sumajee Parinayamu	Tennarangam Ponnadi Annanacharyulu
29.	Chitraketoopakhyanam	Tennarangam Ponnaadi Annana Charyulu
30.	Chikkadakkeeyamu	Gopalapeta Ramachandra Charyulu
31.	Jayasimha	Chennoju Padmayacharyulu
32.	Jambavatee Parinayam	Tennarangam Ponnadi Annana Charyulu
33.	Jambavatee Satyabhama	Vongoori Parinayamu Laxmanacharyulu
34.	Jalakreedalu	Gaddam Ramadasu
35.	Jayadeva Charitramu	Gaddam Ramadasu
36.	Jalakreedalu	Telakavalli Ramalinga Kavi

37.	Jeevanamukti	Mahammad Sharvuddeen
38.	Jeemutavahana Charitra	Chenna Krishnamacharyulu
39.	Tarashashankam	Anantasena Rao
40.	Talanka Nandjee Parinayamu	Maranganti Venkata Nrisimha Charyulu
41.	Tirumangalvar Charitra	Ranga Kavi
42.	Tirumangalvar Charitra	Govartanam Venkata Nrisimha Charyulu
43.	Tulabharamu	Pattemu Papakavi
44.	Dharmangada Charitramu	Doddavaram Rama Krishna Kavulu
45.	Dhuryodhana Garvapaharanam	Gaddam Ramadasu
46.	Durga Vijayamu	Tennarangam Ponnadi Annana Charyulu
47.	Dushyanta Maharaju	Tenna Rangam Ponnadi Annana Charyulu
48.	Devayani Kathi	Veldanda Narsayya
49.	Parakala Vijayamu	Rakonda Laxmana Charyulu
50.	Panchalee Parinayamu	Manmelati Lxmayya
51.	Parijatapaharanamu	Palla Narayanadhvari
52.	Pradyumnopakhyanamu	Rekonda Laxmana Charyulu
53.	Pradyumna Vijayamu	Maranganti Venkata Nrisimha Charyulu
54.	Pradyumnopakhyanamu	Vongooru Laxmanacharyulu
55.	Parijatapaharanamu	Vongooru Laxmanacharyulu
56.	Ballana Charitramu	Vanamamala Narasimha Dasu
57.	Bala Kreedalu	Veldanda Narsayya

58.	Banasura	Tennarangam Ponnadi Annana Charyulu
59.	Bilhaneeyamu	Rakonda Laxmanacharyulu
60.	Droupadee Vastrapaharanam	Gaddam Ramadasu
61.	Droupadee Vastrapaharanam	Dodḡavarapu Ramakrishna Kavulu
62.	Narakasura Vadha	Gokavaram Ramachandra Kavi
63.	Neeladhvaja Maharaju Charitra	Gokavaram Ramachandra Kavi
64.	Nrisimhavilasamu	Venkata Nrisimha Shastry
65.	Poundraka Vasudeva Charitra	Sree Ranganadha Charyulu
66.	Padmavathe Parinayamu	Vanamamala Narasimha Dasu
67.	Parushurama Vijayamu	Annana Charyulu
68.	Parvatee Parinayamu	Vongooru Laxmanacharyulu
69.	Parijatapaharanamu	Venkata Nrisimha Shastry
70.	Pashupatastram	Maranganti Ranga Krishnamacharyulu
71.	Bilhaneeyamu	Gaddam Ramadasu
72.	Bramham Gari Jeevitha Charitra	Chennoju Paadmayacharyulu
73.	Bramham Gari Jeevitha Charitra	Mahammad Shareefudden
74.	Bramhagaruap Haranam	Gaddam Ramadasu
75.	Bheemarjuna Garva Bhangam	Vongooru Laxmanacharyulu
76.	Bali Chakravarthi	Vanamamala Narasimha Dasu
77.	Bhanumatee Parinayam	Ramavarapu Krishnayya
78.	Mandodaree Vivahamu	Maranganti Narasimhudu
79.	Mayuradhvaja Maharaju Charitramu	Vongooru Laxmanacharyulu

80.	Madana Vijayamu	Naranganti Ranga Krishna Macharyulu
81.	Mallikarjuna Yakshaganamu	Vallabhapuram Janardhan
82.	Madalasa	Gaddam Ramadasu
83.	Markandeey Vilasamu	Kondapalli Papayya
84.	Mayamairavana Natakamu	Velugonda Gyanadeva Kavi
85.	Mudunnara Vajramu	Poddavarapu Rama Krishna Kavulu
86.	Yadalopakhyanam	Sree Rananadha Charyulu
87.	Mohinee Rukmangada	Kairukonda Pentayya
88.	Mairavana Charitramu	Doddavarapu Ramakrishna Kavulu
89.	Mohinee Rukmangada	Sree Ranganadha Charyulu
90.	Mounadhari Natakamu	Pechika Papayya
91.	Mandhaja Charitramu	Gaddam Ramadasu
92.	Yayathi Charitra	Ara Linga Dasu
93.	Yayathi Charitra	Gorite Krishnama Dasu
94.	Rajahamsa Maharaju Charitra	Pechika Papayya
95.	Radhamadhava Vilasamu	Gaddam Ramadasu
96.	Raja Hamsa	Anantasena Rao & Jillelatla Narasimhappa
97.	Rutudhvaja Vilasam	Gaddam Ramadasu
98.	Rukmini Kalyanam	Annana Charyulu
99.	Rukmini Kalyanam	Sree Ranganadha Charyulu
100.	Rukmangada Charitra	Bagam Balaramulu
101.	Rutudhuatopakhyanam	Gorite Chenna Krishnama Charyulu
102.	Renuka Vilasamu	Mahammad Shareefudeen

103.	Laxmana Parinayamu	Gaddam Narasimha Dasu
104.	Lava Kusha	Annana Charyulu
105.	Lalitopakhyanam	Sree Ranganadha Charyulu
106.	Lavana Sura	Doddam Ramakrishna Kavulu
107.	Vijaya Vilasamu	Pattemu Papa Kavi
108.	Vipranarayana Charitramu	Bubban Vasudevudu
109.	Vritrasura Vadha	Gaddam Ramadasu
110.	Venkateshwara Mahatyamu	Annana Charyulu
111.	Shabari Moksham	Mahammad Sherfuddeen
112.	Shashanka Vijayamu	Venkata Narasimha Shastry
113.	Shikhandee Parinayamu	Sree Ranganadha Charyulu
114.	Sree Ranga Mahatyamu	Annana Charyulu
115.	Samudra Madmanamu	Telakapalle Ramalingayya
116.	Samudra Madhanamu	Veldanda Narsayya
117.	Satyavarma Charitramu	Gaddam Ramadasu
118.	Sampoorna Ramayanam	Mahammad Shareefudden
119.	Samudra Madhanamu	Gaddam Ramadasu
120.	Satyanarayana Vratamu	Gaddam Ramadasu
121.	Satyanarayana Vratopakhyanam	Annana Charyulu
122.	Sanandopakhyanam	Gorite Chennakrishnama Raju
123.	Satrajittu Parinayamu	Venkata Narasimha Sastry
124.	Savitri Parinayamu	Doddauarapu Rama Krishna Kavulu
125.	Sanandopakhyanam	Annana Charyulu
126.	Saindhava Garvapa Haranamu	Gokavaaram Ramachandra

127.	Sumaji Parinayamu	Vangooru Laxmanacharyulu
128.	Saindhava Garvapaharanamu	Ramachandra Kavi
129.	Stambagiri Parijatapaharanamu	Timmaraju
130.	Sougandhikapaharanamu	Maringanti Ranga Krishnamcharyulu
131.	Sugreeva Vijayamu	Vanamamala Narasimhadasu
132.	Hanumadavatharamu	Pandari Ramanuja Rao

The published and un-published yakshaganam texts are taken from Poddaturi Yellareddy's Telanganalo Yakshaganam Rachana Prayogam.

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