

Prahlada Yaksaganam

(A Comparative Study of Kucipudi and Melattur styles)

A thesis submitted to
the University of Hyderabad
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By

Munagapati Samba Siva Raju




Sarojini Naidu School of Performing Arts,
Fine Arts & Communication
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad - 500 001

April 1997

TO
AMMA MAMMA

C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the work reported in this thesis entitled "**Prahlada Yakṣagānam**" has been carried out by Mr. Munagapati Samba Siva **Raju**, under my supervision and it is his bonafied work. The work is original and has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.



Dean
S.N. School
University of Hyderabad.



(Prof. Nataraj Ramakrishna)
Thesis Supervisor

Place: Hyderabad

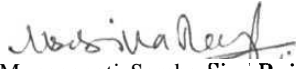
Date: 19-4-97

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work reported in this thesis entitled "**Prahlada Yakṣagānam**" has been carried out by me independently in the Sarojini **Naidu** School of Performing Arts, Fine Arts and Communication, University of Hyderabad, under the supervision of Prof. Nataraj **Ramakrishna**. I also declare **that** this work is original and has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship, associateship or similar title of any University.

Place: Hyderabad
Date:

19-4-97


(Munagapati Samba **Siva Raju**)
Research Scholar

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe the merits in my background in dance and music, if any, reflected in the present work, to firstly my parents Sr. Munagapati Appala Raju garu and Smt. Sitamma garu who allowed me to get into these career wise low priority fields.

Credits to my knowledge of dance technique, if any, go to my guru's - Shri. **Pasumarti** Sitaramayya garu, Shri. Hemadri Chidambara Dikshitulu garu, Shri. Vedantam Prahlada **Sarma** garu, Shri. **Vedantam** Radheshyam garu, Padmasree Dr. Nataraj Ramakrishna garu, Shri. C. Rama Murty garu and Smt. Chitra Chandrasekhar, who taught me various different aspects of the technique of Kucipudi and **Bharatanāṭyam** traditions.

Padmasree Dr. Nataraj Rama Krishna garu's role has been much more than a formal supervisor in bringing out this work in the present form. I am privileged to have a free access to a personality of his stature who has an indepth and first hand experience and understanding of both the dance traditions discussed in the present work.

I should specially record my indebtedness to Sri. Chintalapati Varahala Raju garu who taught me the secretes of music especially the *Tala* system has applied to classical dance with his inexplicable affection for me. I owe greatfulness to Sri. Tampella Suryanarayana garu who taught me *Karnātic* music for two years.

Mr. P. Nagaraj of the Centre for Folk Culture Studies has advised me with regard to the methodological aspects of research through his friendly company throughout the present work. In fact, I will be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge my indebtedness who transformed my vision not only with regard to the present issue but towards academics and research itself. Dr. A. Anand also of folk Culture Centre moulded my approach to research.

It may be inappropriate to pay formal thanks to Jolly (Mr. Jolly Puthussery of the Theatre Department of S.N. School) who has been as my alter ego, with me through out the present research including field work, draft planning, proof reading etc., as he is throughout my daily routine.

At this juncture it is not fair to forget another Jolly of my life Mr. Narayana Venu who landed me into the myriad world of classical dance, its academics, creativity, public relevance etc., while dance was a lonely self fulfilment for me.

But for Mr. S. Lakshmana Murty, whose drawing skills I exploited taking advantage of my closeness with him gave picture to many difficult to photograph aspects of performances. It is heartening to see members of his team Mr. Antyakula Rajeswara Rao, K. Srinivasa Chary, Mr. Sajid bin Amar and Mrs. Kusum Viswanadh who poured their friendship towards me through the lines they added to the pictures.

Another victim of my exploitation is Mr. Tirumala Rao who took out a great portion of his computertime and his personel work to computerise the draft of my dissertation. This computer work received its final touch through the hard work of Mr. K. Srinivas whom Mr. K. Chowdeswara Rao introduced me.

Coming to the reference help, firstly I should record my greatfulness to the great intellectual personality Mr. Chalasani Prasad Rao garu whose personal library fed most of the reference support to my research work. I now understand why Varma literally drove me to this shrine of abundance of books.

Thanks to the authorities of Saraswati Mahal Library, Tanjore, Andhra University Library, Visakhapatnam, Pucchalapalli Sundarayya Vijnana Kendram, Hyderabad, Sruti Publications, Madras, University of Hyderabad Libraries (Campus and G.T.) and various personal collections, which I consulted during my research work.

I do not want to formally thank my friends Kum. Jonnalagadda Anuradha, Mr. Venkat, Mrs. Sarita Dilip and Sri. Sharad B. Pitti, who supplied different reference materials during my research work.

How can I express my thankfulness to the eminent personalities who spared their valuable time for my interviews with them.

There are many individuals whose moral support and affection carried me forward in my work Sr. Philomina my former colleague at St. Ann's School and my cousin Mrs. P. Subha and her husband Dr. P.S. Raju. My brothers M.S.N. Raju, M. Vijaya Varma, M. Ravi Varma, M. Krishnam Raju and my close friends, P. Srinivasa Raju K. Srinivas, A. Venkateswara Rao, Bujji, Venkat, P.R.K. Naidu, Jaggulu, Kum. T.

Sailasree, **Vikram**, **Ramesh** and K. Gnana Reddy, whose encouragement led me in this work as in all my endeavours. The principals of St. Ann's School namely 1) Sr. Lucy 2) Sr. Marry Chinnamma 3) Sr. **Antonamma** and the management of St. Ann's School cooperated with me by allowing enough time for my research work.

I should specially thank Prof. B.P. **Sanjay**, Dean, S.N. School and former deans Prof. P.L. Visweswara Rao, Prof. V. **Ramakrishna** and Prof. **Laxma** Goud for their support during my research work. I also thank Mr. Rajendra Singh, Officer **In-charge** of S.N. School and Mr. Sudhir of the Academic section for their help in administration matters.

I am indebted to several individuals for their help in **my** research work. If their names do not find place here, I know that they allow me not to formally acknowledge their love for me.

Bujji !! shall I thank you too for being the spirit of my inspiration in all that I do?

List of Plates

Plate-I: Nattuva Hangu and Sūtradhāruḍu	51
Plate-II: Performance assistants tying the Narasimha	51.
Plate-III: The Vinayaka of Melattur with mask	53
Plate-IV: The Raksasa of Melattur Prahlada Nāṭakam	53
Plate-V: Narasimha mask of Melattur Prahlada Natakam	54
Plate-VI: The Narasimha mask of Melattur Prahlada Natakam	54
Plate-VII: Narasimha mask once used by Kucipudi	55
Plate-VIII: The Narasimha ikon worshipped in Melattur	55
Plate-IX: a) Kevala Narasimha, b) Yoga Narsimha, c) Yoga Narasimha, ..	58
Plate-X: a) Lakshmi Narasimha, b) Yogananda Lakshmi Narasimha, c) Sthanna Narasimha	59
Plate-XI: Premises of the Varadaraja Perumāḷ Temple,	91
Plate-XII: G. Swaminathan as Hiranyakasipu	91
Plate-XIII: Mr. S. Kumar of the Melattur	96
Plate-XIV: The Pandal raised for Melattur festival	96
Plate-XV: The stage raised for the Melattur festival	97
Plate-XVI: A section of the audience of M.P.N.	97
Plate-XVII: A section of the audience of M.P.N.	98
Plate-XVIII: A section of the audience of M.P.N.	98
Plate-XIX: Worship of Narasimha of M.P.N.	99
Plate-XX: Offering of the sweet Jaggery water to Narasimha	99
Plate-XXI: The performance shifts down the stage	108
Plate-XXII: Konangi,	108
Plate-XXIII: The Bhagavatars of Toḍaya maṅgaḷam	109
Plate-XXIV: Worship of Vinayaka	109
Plate-XXV: Kattikamvāḍu	117
Plate-XXVI: The last scene of Kucipudi Prahlada Natakam	117

Plate-XXVII: <i>Sahajuni Campina Vairi</i>	125
Plate-XXVIII: <i>Hiranyakṣaaaa</i>	125
Plate-XXIX: M.P.N. shifts into the audience	126
Plate-XXX: M.P.N. Shifts into the audience	126
Plate-XXXI: The climax scene from M.P.N.	127
Plate-XXXII: Narasimha of M.P.N.	127
Plate-XXXIII: Narasimha mask of M.P.N.	128
Plate-XXXIV: A scene from M.P.N.	129
Plate-XXXV: A scene from K.P.N.	129
Plate-XXXVI: A scene from M.P.N.	130
Plate-XXXVII: A scene from K.P.N.	130
Plate-XXXVIII: A scene from M.P.N.	131
Plate-XXXIX: A scene from K.P.N.	131
Plate-XL: A scene from M.P.N.	135
Plate-XLI: Melattur demon soldiers.	135
Plate-XLII: Worship of Narasimha	136
Plate-XLIII: Melattur Hiranyakasipu.	136
Plate-XLIV: Melattur Hiranyakasipu.	137
Plate-XLV: Kucipudi Narasimha.	137
Plate-XLVI: A scene from K.P.N.	138
Plate-XLVII: A scene from K.P.N.	138
Plate-XLVIII: A scene from K.P.N.	156
Plate-XLIX: The Melattur music team.	156
Plate-L: Prahlada Natak of Ganjam.	167
Plate-LI: Prahlada Natak of Ganjam.	167
Plate-LII: Hiranya Samharam: Therukkutu.	168
Plate-LIII: Narasimha mask used in Hiranya Samharam.	168

List of Figures

Figure-I: Map.....	48
Figure-II: The stage of M.P.N. and Varadaraja Perumal temple.	128
Figure-III: Bharatanatyam Tirmānam	143
Figure-IV: Bharatanatyam Tirmanam.....	144
Figure-V: Kucipudi Angikābhinayam	145
Figure-VI: Kucipudi Angikabhinayam.....	146
Figure-VII: Padardhabinayam	147-149

CONTENTS

PREFACE	i - iv
CHAPTER - ONE	
The twins with Different Broughtups.....	1 - 40
CHAPTER - TWO	
Strings of pull for Prahlāda Caritram in the twin Traditions.....	41 - 84
CHAPTER - THREE	
Scaling the two Prahlada Nātakams Together.....	85-110
CHAPTER - FOUR	
Scanning through the two Prahlāda Nātakams	111 - 161
CONCLUSION.....	162-166
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	169-177
INTERVIEWED PERSONS.....	178

PREFACE

My interest in the comparison between Kucipudi and Melattur in general and in Prahlada Caritra Natakam in particular is the culmination of my 15 years of quest about the identity of Kucipudi dance tradition into which I got initiated in the year 1980 through my Guru Sri Pasumarti Seeta Ramayya garu of Visakhapatnam. After my M. A. course in Kucipudi dance in the years 1989- 91, I got enthused to take up an academic introspection of my performance and my tradition of dance. I began to realise that developing talent in an art form is different from making a theoretical probe into the same. The picture about my quest was hazy in my mind. Incidentally, the literature available in published form on Indian Classical Dance in general and Kūcipūḍi dance in particular also does not provide a methodologically worked out background from where the discussion on the technique of classical dance could be continued, nor does this literature throw any open problems for investigation.

But there was a sudden positive turn in the story of quest with my watching the **Mēlattūr Bhāgavata** Mela Natakam Performance in the year 1994, as part of my field work in connection with my research on "Nr̥tta, Nr̥tya, and Abhinaya in Kucipudi **Yakṣagāna**". The impressive performance technique of the Melattur **Bhāgavatārs** with an approach closely resembling my own tradition of Kucipudi stimulated several exciting points of enquiry in my mind. The Kucipudi and Melattur performances seemed to be very much similar to and very much different from each other at the same time. Suddenly it seemed

that a comparison between these two traditions would certainly provide me with clues to arrive at the characteristic features of Kucipudi dance tradition which was my objective of quest.

Things began to move fast after this. To my pleasant surprise the similarity between the two traditions was already pointed out by almost all the scholars who penned on the Kucipudi tradition. But my intuition about several features of difference between the two was not touched upon by any of these writers. I felt that, here, in these points of distinction lies the clue for the identity of the Kucipudi tradition, of course, of the Melattur tradition too.

I decided to focus upon a specific item common for both the Kucipudi and the Melattur traditions. Pahlada Caritra Natakam was found to be the best choice. All the three later years that is 1994, 95, and 96 I plunged into my field work and watched Pahlada Caritra Natakam performance of Melattur consecutively for three years and recollected my experience of watching the Pahlada Caritra Natakam performance of Kucipudi and revisited the Kucipudi performances again during 1995. My close interaction with the Pahlada Caritra Natakam performers of both the teams and my performance study and analysis yielded good results. Some satisfying answers to my enquiry became available.

The present dissertation is the presentation of these results of enquiry in the form of narrating the logical quest and the results thereof.

Obviously, to focus on a specific item or aspect of a dance tradition and comparative

study of two dance traditions which are the features of the present research work are historically a new development in dance research when compared to the earlier phase of working on broad issues of an entire dance tradition.

I tried to avoid repeating stuff like definitions of art forms, histories, legends of art forms in general etc., which have been mentioned in several books in the past. I tried my best to stick to the issue of comparison between the two dance forms, right from page one to the end and avoid as many digressing issues as possible.

The comparison between Pahlada Caritra Natakams has been covered in the third and the fourth chapters which are macro and micro level comparisons of Kucipudi and Melattur Pahlada Caritra Natakams respectively. The first and second chapters lay foundation and provide background for this comparison. The first chapter is a comparative study of the repertoires of the Melattur and the Kūcipūḍi dance traditions which provides the hypothesis with which the comparison of Pahlada Caritra Natakams in the third and the fourth chapters can be taken up. The first chapter is also a comparative introduction to the tradition of Kucipudi and Melattur. Review of previous literature on the present subject is also provided in this chapter in order to make out the relevance of the present research. The second chapter provides cultural, historical and literary background against which the comparison in the second and the third chapters can be carried out. In all these four chapters a consistent and incessant stream of comparative analysis has been consciously maintained. The fifth chapter is the concluding chapter where summing up of the earlier four chapters, enlisting the results of the present research and

suggestions for taking present research into future have been covered.

Since the third and the fourth chapter according to this plan are performance study of Kucipudi and Melattur Prahlada caritra Nāṭakams, these chapters are supported by my fieldwork observation and analysis based on them rather than by references to literature which find place in the first two chapters. On account of the state and nature of dance research, heavy reliance on interviews with the tradition bearers of the different dance forms and senior scholars in the field becomes inevitable.

As is methodologically required by contemporary research in performing arts, visual documentation in the form of still and video photography has been given considerable significance in the present research. My hands on photography for the last 10 years has come to use in this context. Substantiation and illustration through photographs has been provided in this dissertation at all the appropriate places, though the photo documents included here make only a small part of whole documentation done by me. Incidentally photo documents of Melattur performance could find more place than the Kucipudi ones. Probably this is because there are so many features seemingly unusual for the audience of classical dance in Melattur rather than in Kucipudi which is familiar to dance audience.

I tried my best to avoid value judgements, value loaded comments and value based comparison throughout this presentation. I had to be specially conscious about this as I am already inside one of the tradition being discussed here.

Chapter One

THE TWINS WITH DIFFERENT BROUGHTUPS

(A comparative introduction to the Kucipudi and the Melattur dance traditions, statement of the research problem, review of previous scholarship).

Kucipudi and Mēlattūr are two distinctly apart places, one in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh and the other near the famous templetown, Tanjore, of Tamil Nadu. But these two names come together on account of two closely related classical dance traditions associated with them. The Kucipudi dance associated with the village Kucipudi is today internationally well known classical danceform. Popularity of this form among dance audience and performers has been vibrantly widespread from centuries. Relatively, the Melattur Bhagavata Mela tradition which is also centuries old, is less famous and had little spread of popularity and performance beyond the town Melattur till recently.¹

COMPARABILITY OF THE TWO FORMS

There are several interesting similarities between these two dance traditions (so highly seperated in space from each other) which warrant a comparative study between the two.

Traditionally the **Kūcipūḍi** performance teams were called "Bhagavata **Mēlams** of Kucipudi"; individually Kucipudi performers were called "**Bhāgvathulu**"; Kucipudi

¹The information about Melattur tradition is gaining more and more publicity through journalists and academicians talking about it through several platforms.

performance was also referred to as a **Bhāgavatam**. These words are used in reference to the Melattur tradition also. The performer teams of Melattur are referred to as Melattur Bhagvata **Mēlams**; individually Melattur performers are called Bhagavatars and their performances are also called as **Bhāgavatams**.

All the Melattur performers are brahmin males and the tradition is not open to non-brahmins or even to brahmin females. Though Kucipudi tradition is today open to all castes and genders the historical fact that it was also for a long time limited to brahmin males and was not open beyond that is well established.

More interestingly both Kucipudi and Melattur traditions stand apart from many Indian classical dances in being theatrical dance traditions. The genre of both Kucipudi and Melattur performances is broadly categorised under **Yakṣagāṇa/Vidhi Bhāgavatam/Vidhinatakam**² which is popular today under the name of the Yaks* agana (as a south Indian folk theatre tradition). Though we find several solo and non-drama items in the Kucipudi repertoire, though most of the items of the contemporary Kucipudi performances are non-dramatic in nature, we still find several reminiscences of the theatrical nature of the Kucipudi tradition even in the contemporary Kucipudi performances. For example, even a small episode of **Bhāmā Kalāpam** (item) performed on the stage today there is small significant prose conversation of the dramatic type included. This feature which is not found in any other solo dance form of India obviously indicates the theatri-

²Vidhi = street; some scholars feel that Yaksaganam, Vidhinatakam and Vidhibhagavatam are three different art forms for details on this discussion see Joga Rao, S.V. Andhra Yaksagana Vagnmaya Caritra, Published by Andhra University 1961. And also P.S.R. Appa Rao in Kucipudi **Nrtyam** a text book for B.A. Courses of Telugu University.

cal background of the Kucipudi tradition. The item called Vinayaka Koutwam which is performed in the contemporary Kucipudi stage concerts is in fact a mask dance which is remembered to have been a part of the traditional Kucipudi drama performances as one of the early invocation items³ There are several other such features in the contemporary performances which are obvious reminders of its theatrical background. More importantly there are still a large number of traditional performers of Kucipudi who clearly subscribe to the idea of Kucipudi tradition being basically theatrical and there are still many of them who continue to perform the traditional Bhagavatams⁴ (theatrical **Yakṣāgānam** type dances). As narrated by the traditional performers and as is witnessed even today in the traditional performances, the traditional Kucipudi **Bhāgavatam** performances were performed on the level ground in the midst of an encircled audiences "(usually situated in a semicircle in front of the performance). Help is taken of a make shift screen from behind which characters enter and into which characters exit. While the screen itself is held on either sides in the hands of two members of the Bhagavata Mēlam, there is a Sutradhara⁵ (Plate-I). Standing in front of the screen playing on symbols and singing the Pravesha Daruvu (entry lyric) and introducing characters making intervening comments etc. If there is a Nattuvangam⁶ (Plate-I), today in the place of Sutradhara, it is obvi-

³Worship of Vināyaka/Gaṇeśa in the beginning of any activity is believed to be effective in setting off of possible hurdles to that activity and as such Ganesa worship is performed even today by all the devout Hindus for this purpose.

⁴For more details, ref. Acharya C.R., "Kūcipūḍi Aradhananṛtyamulu", Eluru, 1969.

⁵The word Sutradhara means the thread holding person. Some people believe that this description refer to the Puppeteer in a puppet show who makes his puppets move by pulling strings. In a Traditional Indian Theatrical Performers, a Sutradhara is not only the director but also the **co-ordinator** of the performance.

⁶An artist sitting to a side of the stage providing vacika support. All so called **Naṭṭuvanār**, according to Prof. Nataraj **Ramakrishna**, Nattuva is the telugu word for dancer.

ously due to the influence of solo repertoire of the entertaining dancers (the traditional team directors/managers standing close to the dancer). All these features of traditional Kucipudi performance indicate its basic theatrical nature. What is interesting is that all these features like a make-shift screen, a Sutradhara, prose conversation etc., are found even in the Melattur performances. For that matter the Melattur performance is even today of Bhagavatam - type only. The solo type items found in the Kucipudi tradition are not to be found in the Melattur form at all.

Another interesting similarity between the two forms is the controversy about the two with regard to their classical-folk status. Kucipudi was till recently ruled out as a folk tradition and it had to struggle a lot to 'prove' its classical nature. The main basis on which classical status is claimed for Kucipudi dance is its conformity with Bharata's Natya Sastra and the other classical texts on dance. It is argued, on the side of the classical status of Kucipudi, that it is in fact the Kucipudi dance and the Kucipudi dance alone which has the comprehensive inclusion of dance, drama and music which are discussed as constituting Natya in Bharata's work. 'Even the components like **Pūrvaranga**, described at length by Bharata are to be found in Kucipudi,' it is argued in favour of the classical status of the Kucipudi. Parallel to the Purvarangam⁷ performance of the Kucipudi tradition the Melattur tradition has a similar performance activity called Todaimangalam.⁸ Apart from these, the dance style of Kucipudi is strictly

⁷ Actual details of the traditional Purvarangam of Kucipudi are not known. The present **Pūrvarangam** is said to have been reconstructed (by late Shri Bandakanakalingeshwara Rao and others).

⁸ "**Todayam**" or "Jaya" from the Bhajana **Sampradāya** of the South is introduced as invocation song followed by "Nandi Dwipadha" and a "**Sabdham**" - narration of the story in a **mitsell**.

according to the instruction of Bharata in terms of various elements like Hastas (Hand Gestures), Karanas (Body postures), Grivas (Neck movements and facial directions) etc. It is a worthnoting point that the Kūcipūḍi performers were given intense courses in Sanskrit literature and Sastras including Natya Sastra as part of their early childhood initiation into the tradition.⁹ All these arguments establishing the classical identity of the Kucipudi form equally hold good for the Melattur tradition also. At the same time the features of Kucipudi which lead to the impressions of its folk identity like flexibility, spontaneous response to the audience, lack of rigid script, extempore improvisations involvement of the audience, reflection of regional culture and family custom etc., also are shared equally by the Melattur tradition.

The fact that the musical style used in Kucipudi and Melattur both is Karnatic is not surprising, taking into account the fact that both are south Indian forms and the classical musical style prevalent both in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu is Karnatic. But the fact that both in the Kucipudi and Melattur forms the text used is in Telugu, is worthnoting. It is here that some of the aspects of even historical kinships of the two forms come out. Though the Melattur performers today are Tamil speakers with a weak competence in Telugu, the memory of the performers that they are the descendants of the Telugu speaking families of Melattur¹⁰ leads to some interesting historical speculations. It is on the basis of this information that several scholars hurried to conclude that the Melattur Bhagavata Mela branched out from " Kucipudi main stock "in olden times.

⁹See Acharya, C.R. "Kucipudi *Arāḍhananṛtyamulu*", page no. 63, Eluru, 1969.

¹⁰Interview with S. Natarajan, 23rd May, 1996.

But the Melattur performers themselves disagree with these theories and claim that they migrated from the Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh¹¹ and this Nellore families of dancers had nothing to do with the Kūcipūḍi Mela.¹² But all the big number of similarities between the two forms, enlisted above, may not support the second part of the Melattur performer's claim. Though "Kucipudi main stock" theory may not be valid, some kind of kinship between the Kucipudi and Melattur forms can not be ruled out completely. The kinship is not only typological but should also be genetic. Though the theory of Kucipudi as the mother of all Bhāgavatams may be set aside as only a good example of the old monogenesis theories, the possibility of Kucipudi and Melattur forms being the branches of same protoform cannot be ruled out.

THE QUESTIONS BEING ADDRESSED

The genetic kinship of the two apart, even the typological kinship gives rise to a natural question of the reasons for the differences in terms of popularity and spread between the two such closely related forms. Another issue that emerges from the above discussion is the impact of the Tamil environment on a form with Telugu Text and with an acknowledged Telugu origin. These are the two issues with which the present research work is mainly concerned.

MARKS OF DISTINCTION

The first point of distinction is the repertoire of the two art forms, repertoire

¹¹Interview with S. Natarajan, 23rd May, 1996.

¹²Interview with Arudra, 24th May, 1995. Also see page no. of second chapter.

of the Kucipudi art form is enormously larger than that of Melattur. What Kucipudi dance form today is, is characterised by a combination of the features of its variegated repertoire. Looked from this point of view Melattur art form looks to be clearly different from the Kucipudi one.

For example the **Kūcipūḍi** dance form is almost identified with one most popular item of its repertoire called **Bhama Kalapam**. For many, Kucipudi dance form comes to mind only in the form of Bhamakalapam. This is a long dance-drama performed traditionally for seven long nights. The **Brāhamin** male dancers of Kucipudi impersonate as Satya **Bhāmā**, second in rank of lord Sri Kṛṣṇa's eight principle wives (first being **Ruhmini**) the most vocal possessive, assertive and pampered of all. The text of Bhamakalapam contains a conversation between Satya Bhama and one of her attendants by name Madhavi during which several inner delicate complex feelings of Satya Bhama's possessive love for Sri Kṛṣṇa are brought out. This runs in series of lyrics called Daruvus and is divided into seven different episodes called 'Pattus'.¹³

First episode is Jadapattu. This item is a household name in Andhra Pradesh and audience both men and women enjoy equally well watching this item for their own reasons. For the artist this item is an opportunity to exhibit his skill in impersonating the female characters.¹⁴

¹³Literally 'hold' or place or Juncture.

¹⁴There are legends about the female impersonating talents of the Kucipudi artist according to one legend **Vedāntam** Satyanarayana **Sarma** was an expert in female impersonation. Once he challenged his wife to recognise him if she can when he is in a female costume. Later once during a ritual in his house, which is supposed to be attended by only women. A woman stayed back even all other women left. When his wife enquired that woman who she was, she turned out to be **none** other than her own

This significant item of **Kūcipūḍi** repertoire is conspicuously missing among the Melattur items. One way of explaining this absence, if the genetic kinship of the two art forms is accepted, is to say that the item of **Bhāmā Kalapam** entered **Kūcipūḍi** repertoire after these two genetic kins branched out from each other. (The present research is not concerned about the exact historical time at which this branching out would have taken place). However, this item clearly works as a mark of distinction between the Melattur and Kucipudi traditions. It is not that there is no impersonation of female character in the Melattur tradition, since **Mēlattūr** performers also are all males, there is bound to be impersonation of female characters even in this dance form. In fact, **Mēlattūr** dancers impersonate several female characters such as Lilavathi, **Bhūmidēvi**, (all in **Prahlada Cāritram**), **Candramati** (in **Hariscandra**), **Usha** (in **Usha Pariṇayam**) etc.

But female character impersonation in **Bhama Kalapam**, that is, impersonation of **Satya Bhama**, is a class of its own and this is what gives the caricature or mark of distinction for **Kucipudi**.¹⁵

Bhama in **Bhamakalapam** unlike the female characters in the Melattur items, is not only a major character and the heroine of the **Bhāmākalāpam**'s story, in fact the entire **Bhamakalapam** is a one character show with **Bhāmā** appearing on the stage from the beginning to the end. **Madhavi**, the only other character appearing on the stage along with **Bhāmā** plays only the minor role of an attendant - companion - confident.¹⁶ husband.

¹⁵The lyric **Bhamane Satyabhamane** is quite popular in telugu house holds and people talk of this lyric whenever they talk of **Kucipudi**.

¹⁶Quite often this character **Madhavi** does not appear on the stage. **Sutradhara** himself renders the

Shri Krsna another major character appears only for a few minutes towards the **end**. In Melattur repertoire there is no such item which can be called as a single woman character show . It should also be noted that **Bhāmā** is impressively unique even from a national perspective unlike Radha of the North-Indian classical dance Krsna items who is one of the Gopa **Sakhis** (Cowherd - girlfriends) of **Krsna** **Bhāmā** is a Sviya Nayika (his married wife). All the nuances of married life get reflected in **Bhāmā**'s romance which is in clear contrast with non-marital romance of Radha-Krsna items of the North-Indian dances. The absence of such a significant and unique item of Kucipudi tradition in the Melattur form is obviously an important line of distinction between the two traditions.

Another item with which Kucipudi dance form is usually identified (some times wrongly) is Tarangams. Now-a-days it has been a regular practice to perform Tarangams in the form of dance on brass plate, dance with lamps in the hands and vessel on the head etc. Acrobatic fetes are being recognised by the outsiders as the characteristic features of Kucipudi dance. Though this acrobatic skill demonstration is not an essential feature of neither Tarangams nor Kucipudi tradition, Tarangams themselves are **doubtlessly** the characteristic unique feature of the Kucipudi tradition. Mainly Tarangams belong to the Bhajan tradition. This item mainly consists of the repetitive singing of the descriptive names of the Lord Krsna as part of Namarupagunalilasankirtana of the Bhakti tradition. During the singing of each one of such descriptive names several episodes from the story of Krsna are enacted (mimed) by the dancer. The singing is done earlier by Sutradhara, presently by **Naṭṭuvangam** and the enactment by the dancer is not at all in correspondence words of Madhavi.

with the meaning of the line being sung. The musical composition used in Tarangams also are typically in bhajan style with a blend of the classical (dance type) Ata kac-
ceri stylisation of music. Such an important item of the Kucipudi tradition is glaringly
missing in the Melattur repertoire of dance performances. Interestingly in Melattur,
Tarangams are found in singing tradition of Bhajan.¹⁷ Since the words Bhagavatam,
Bhagavatars etc., used in reference to Kucipudi and Melattur traditions refer to the
Bhakti movement, it is quite natural to find bhakti-centered items in both Kucipudi
and Melattur. But the availability of dance tradition of Tarangams in Kūcipūḍi and
the non-availability in Melattur tradition is another clear mark of distinction between
the two dance forms. In case of the validity of the theory of genetic kinship of the two
forms, this difference in the case of Tarangams may be explained, just as in the case of
Bhāmākalāpam, by proposing the entry of Tarangams into the repertoire of Kucipudi
tradition as later to the migration of the Melattur form from Andhra Pradesh to Tamil-
nadu. As the date of Tarangams is clearly known today as 17th century (the author
of Tarangams Narayanatirtha belongs to 17th century), we can easily conclude that the
proposed branching out of the Melattur form from the Kucipudi one must have taken
place prior to 17th century.¹⁸ However, the availability of singing traditions of Tarangams
in the Melattur town could be due to the migration of Tarangams to Melattur later to
the migration of the Melattur Bhagavata Mela .

¹⁷Bhāgavata Mela, Telugu Heritage of Tamil Nadu, By Arudra, in **SRUTI**, issue no. 22, April 1986.
page no. 20.

¹⁸LaksmiNarasimha Sastry, Cintalapati gives the date of Narayana Tirta as 1580-1670. ref. Kucipudi
Bhagavatulu, own publications, Tenali, 1983. page no. 128.

Another significant item of the Kucipudi repertoire is Sabdam. Sabdam consists of long oral recitals of the syllables of the mrdangam (the rhythm accompaniment used in the South Indian (**Karnāṭic**), music and also in Kūcipūḍi dance form) mixed with a few lyrical lines consisting of usually rhetorical praises of kings or deities. For example the text of the Bhosala Sabdam is as follows.

“Dhā ki ta ki ta jham
ta dhi dhi ta ka jham
ta ka dhi ki jhanu tari
tari tari jham tari ki da ta ka t̄ā dhi ki da taka
taka dhina torn , tehi da tta thorn.
Rājasri bhosala kula candra
rati pati sundara raja Narendra
raja tulaja Maharaja tanuja
pratapa simha sutrama salām
dhi ssalam dhi dhi ssalam.

From line number 1 to 5 may be seen the syllables of Mrdangam. Line no. 6 to 10 may be translated as follows.

Oh! king, who is the moon of (the ocean of) the lineage of Bhonsle,
cupidlike handsome king of kings. Son of the Emperor Raja **Tuljā**.

Oh! Pratapasimha the great, salutations to you, salutations again, salutations again and again.

Even this item has been missing in the Melattur tradition till recently. Interestingly, Melattur Venkatarama Sāstry gāru,¹⁹ of the 18th century composed several Sabdams the best example is "Prahlada Pattabhishekha Sabdam". Interesting aspect of this Sabdam is that unlike the Kucipudi Sabdams which are mostly non narrative, this is a long narrative composition containing the brief narration of the Prahlada Caritra Story.²⁰ Ramayana Sabdam, **Prahlāda** Pattabhishekha Sabdam, Dasavatara Sabdam, Manduka Sabdam and Mandodari Sabdam are the narrative Sabdams of the Kucipudi tradition).

The musical composition of Sabdams is rhythm dominated, usually runs in fast rhythm' the central tone and tenor of the composition being that of the pompous medieval court formality of the praise recital addressed to the king, as adapted into the Yaks **agana** tradition. Usually, there is no scope for variations in either melody or rhythm in a single Sabdam. But the absence of the performance of Sabdam as a dance item in Melattur tradition, though there is a tradition of singing Sabdams is interesting. Whether, there existed a tradition of performing Sabdams during the time of Melattur Venkatarama Sastry is not clear. However, since Sabdams is the only item apart from Bhagavatam performances that is common between the Kucipudi and Melattur tradition this may be expected to provide some more clues about the kinship between Kucipudi and Melattur traditions. Did the two traditions branch out from each other only after sharing the item of the Sabdam for some time?. There is a version that the Kucipudi performers visited

¹⁹ **Andhra** Yaksagana **Vāgmaya** Carita by S.V. Joga Rao, Waltair, 1961 pp. 335-336.

²⁰ For text see **Ramanādhham** Cinta "The Kucipudi School of Yaksagana". A literary traditional and technical perspective, Ph.D., thesis submitted, Andhra University Waltair, 1979.

Melattur somewhere during the 19th century and brought Sabdams to Andhra region along with them. Especially, the availability of the Prahlada Pattabhisheka Sabdam composed by Melattur Venkatarama Sastry in the repertoire of Kucipudi tradition gives scope for such a conjecturing. Alternatively this version may be accepted only in the case of the specific Sabdam viz. Prahlada Pattabhisheka Sabdam and all other Sabdam compositions of Kucipudi tradition may be inferred to have been the originalities of the Kucipudi group. Especially, the Krsnaraya Sabdam of Kucipudi tradition indicates the existence of Sabdam compositions in Kucipudi tradition even during the sixteenth century. Then the commonness of the Sabdam between the Kucipudi and Melattur traditions can be explained only on the basis of the common Yakshagana tradition shared by both of them. This may have to do with their genetic kinship too. But a remarkable dissimilarity between the Kucipudi and Melattur Sabdams is the non-availability of the praises to the kings in the Melattur tradition and availability of the same in the Kucipudi tradition. This could be explained on the basis of the fact that Melattur tradition has always been a temple oriented tradition without reaching the court halls of the kings, Kucipudi group on the other hand has a clear cut record of having performed in the courts of several kings right from the 15th century. The oldest available record of the Kucipudi tradition the "Machupalli Kaifiat" mentions the performance by the Kucipudi group in the court of Viranarasimha Rayalu²¹ on the whole it should be said that Sabdams give the characteristic mark of identity for the Kucipudi tradition along

²¹**Vīranarasimha** Rayulu is the son of **Tuluva** Narasa Naykudu, the first Tuluva king among the Vijayanagara rulers. Viranarasimha Rayulu ruled for a short period 1506 A.D to 1509 A.D. **ref.** Ray-**alasima** Telugu "Sasanala Samskrita **Adhyanam**", by Dr. M. Adinaraya Sastry, Aditya publications, **Ananthapuram** 1995, page no. 116.

with all the remaining items of the huge repertoire of solo items of it and here Melattur tradition which is glaringly devoid of a solo repertoire stands distinct from its closely resembling possible cousin (Cognate art form). Especially, implication of this difference in terms of the approach of the two tradition towards the courts of the kings is worthnoting.

Another interesting distinct item of the Kucipudi repertoire is Adhyatma Ramayana Kirtanas. This is a solo narrative dance performance. This script used is the devotional lyrics which are highly popular in the traditional households of the Telugu people containing the story of Ramayana according to Adhyatma Ramayana which is a devotional popular version of Valmiki's Ramayana²²

This script is almost similar to the script of Krsna Lilā Tarangini which is the lyrical form composition of Bhagavatam's Dwadasaskhandha (twelfth canto) (the story of Kṛṣṇa). Each of the lyrics depicts a particular episode of Ramayana. This lyric is composed in classical karnatic in an Ata Kacceri (dnace concert) style adding suitable Jatis. A single dancer enacts different characters of the episode(unlike in a Kucipudi Bhāgavatam in which different dancers play different roles. (narrative performance traditions is historically supposed to be the earlier form of the Yaks agana drama style). Again this item is conspicuously absent in the Melattur form. This absence is interesting because Melattur form containing devotional items in its repertoire can naturally be expected to contain such a devotional form. Again this absence can be explained by conjecturing that this item might have entered Kucipudi repertoire later to the branch-

²²Munipalli Subrahmanya Kavi is the author of these lyrics. He belongs to the 17 century. ref. Telugu Sahitya **Samiksa** by G. Nagayya, Tirupathi. 1990.

ing out of the Melattur tradition from the Kūcipūḍi one and the spread of Adhyatma Ramayana Kirtana as a dance item must have been limited to the Andhra Pradesh region. There is another explanation Prof. Nataraja Rāmākrishṇa opines that Adhyatma Rāmāyaṇa Kirtanas were originally part of the Deva Dasi temple dance repertoire and the Kucipudi dancers must have borrowed it from the Deva Dasi tradition.²³

This opinion is supported by the evidence provided by Sri C. R. Acharya that the Kūcipūḍi artistes interacted with the Deva Dasis or the temple dancers during a certain stage in terms of give and take of dance-techniques. Acharya feels that temple dancers learnt several aspects of Kucipudi techniques from the Kucipudi artistes.²⁴ This interaction can be expected to have resulted in Kūcipūḍi artistes learning certain aspects like Adhyatma Ramayana Kirtana from the Deva Dasi temple dancers.

Next important item of the Kucipudi repertoire is Ashtapadis. In fact these Ashtapadis composed by Jayadeva formed part of the repertoires of almost all dance forms of India from Manipuri, Kathak and Odissi to Kucipudi Bharata Natyam and Mohiniattam. This is the one item which Kucipudi shares with not only the South Indian Bharata Natyam and Mohiniattam but even with the North Indian forms like Manipuri, Kathak and Odissi. Like in all other classical Indian dance forms even in Kucipudi Jayadeva's Ashtapadis is a solo item. Usually, this is considered to be an item giving scope for the dancer to bring out his or her Satvikabhinaya skills because these lyrics contain several psychological moods of Radha and other Gopis. In each Ashtapadi

²³Interview with Dr. Nataraj Rāmākrishṇa dated, 24th August, 1996.

²⁴Kūcipūḍi Aradhana Nrityamulu by C.R. Acharya, Eluru, 1969, pp. 185-186.

performance. sancaris²⁵ are also enacted based on certain lines of the lyrics. Since these lyrics are considered to be containing Madhura Bhakti. (devotion in the form of man woman love), this dance performance has some amount of devotional significance also. It is interesting to see that in spite of this devotional image, this item which is shared by so many Indian Dances is not to be found in the Melattur form. Here the explanation of later entry of the item into Kucipudi repertoire cannot be sufficient, because entry of this item into Kucipudi itself is not a natural phenomenon and when it was borrowed into so many different dance traditions of the country, it is logical to be curious about why it did not enter the Melattur form. Only possible answer is the absence of development of a solo repertoire of Melattur tradition theatrical form being the only form of this tradition.

Next important item, in order, of the Kūcipūḍi repertoire is the Ks. etrayya **Padams**. Kṣṭrayya Padams are, to some extent, similar to Jayadeva's As' tapadis. This is also a solo item. Like As tapadis this too contains the Parakiya Vipralambha Sringara of Kṛṣṇa's love. But Ks etrayya's Padams are different from As tapadis in several other ways. The Nayikas are neither Radha nor Gopis. These Nayikas are significantly unnamed and their community background is left undescribed as insignificant. Compared to Jayadeva's As tapadis these lyrics are more intensively erotic and less devotional (though the Nayaka in all the lyrics is mentioned as Muvva Venu Gopala, a deity in a temple at a village, Muvva of the Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh, which

²⁵Though the word Sancari taken the rasa theory in which it means a transitory emotion in the jargon of Kucipudi dance, this word is used to refer to the various episodes enacted in depiction of single word phrase on line of a lyric.

is supposed to be the native place of Ks. etrayya the author of these lyrics). In fact these lyrics are beleived to have been composed by Kshetrayya as scripts for the Royal Court **dancer-women** in the Court of Vijaya Raghava Nayaka the 17th century king of Tanjore.²⁶ Ks. etrayya is a poet-singer who both as a musician and lyricist, made path-breaking contributions to both karnatic music and Telugu poetry. **Ks. etryya** is belived for have contributed to the greatest extent towards the emergence of karnatic music in its present form. These lyrics are known for the availability of a great variety of Nayikas including the Ashtavidha **Nāyikas**. (eight stylized types of heroines)²⁷

His lyrics are admired by dancers and literary critics alike, for the ability of their author in bringing out sevaral secret delicate aspects of womanly eros in sevaral meticulous details and with a great variety compared to As tapadi and Tarangams language of both

²⁶Andhra Yaksagana **Vāgmaya** Caritra by S.V. Joga Rao, Andhra University Publications, Waltair, 1961, page no. 253.

²⁷**Vasakasajja** = The Nayika who prepares herself and surroundings and gets ready to receive her beloved.

Virahotkanthita = The Nayika who suffers because she is seperated from her beloved.

Swadhinabhartrka = The Nayika whose beloved is devoted **to**-her and who has risen to her expectation.

Kalahantarita = The Nayika who fights with her beloved **and** then regrets her behaviour being **be**-ing filled with remorse and repentance.

27 Khanditha = The Nayika who is enraged with her beloved for being unfaithful to her.

Vipralabdha = The Nayika who is deceived by he lord.

Proshitabhartrka = The Nayika who suffers pangs of seperation when her beloved is away from her. She has not fought with him.

Abhisarika = The Nayika who uncaring for and against all odds goes out to meet her beloved.

of which is Sanskrit. The major point of attraction in Ks etrayya's Padams is the day todayness of their content, colloquiality and popular idiom in their language, freshness and delicacy in their diction and native colour in the culture described in them.²⁸ This gives enormous scope for satvikabhinaya²⁹ and this is what attracts a dancer towards Ks etrayya's Padamas. How this item entered in Kūcipūḍi repertoire from the Royal court of Tanjore is not clear. Muvva the native place of Kshetrayya the author of the Padams is close to Kucipudi village. Did the Ks etrayya Padams prevail in Muvva too and reached Kucipudi from there? Did the Kucipudi performers borrow this item from the Royal court of Tanjore? Did they borrow this from DevaDasi temple dancers (in whose repertoire this is an important item along with Javalis)?³⁰

But the fact that the Kucipudi performers performed Ks' etrayya Padams from a long time (probably right from 17th century) is mentioned in the memories of the traditional Kucipudi artistes.³¹

It is described by the traditional Kucipudi performers and by those who witnessed the traditional performances of Ks etrayya Padams that these lyrics were originally performed by the Deva Dasis in the sitting posture without much movements of the

²⁸Telugu Sahitya Samiksa vol. no. 2 by G. Nagayya own publication, Tirupathi. 1990.

²⁹The word 'Sattvika' stems from the Sanskrit word 'Sattva' and it relates to the expressions coming fourth from a dancer as a result of a particular emotion he/she experiences within. It relates to the inner psychological states and mental feelings which when expressed create the relvent mood or emotion in others. Sattvika Abhinaya is that aspect of Abhinaya which contributes towards the effective creation or Rasa in the spectator.

³⁰Javali is an erotic lyric usually performed in medium or fast rhythm unlike Ksetrayya Padas which are sung in slow tempo.

³¹Interview with Dr. Ramanadham. C. 26th November, 1996.

legs or the feet. Facial expressions especially Satwikabhinaya in the face was what mattered the most. To bring out all the minute feelings depicted in the lyrics into the facial expressions was the criterion on the basis of which the Kṣṭrētrayya Padam performer's talent was measured. Another fact that most of the Kshetrayya Padams are composed (by Kṣṭrētrayya himself) in Tripuṭa Talam³² and in vilambita (slow pace) rhythm itself indicates the intention of the author to use these lyrics only for a Satwikabhinaya dominated (i.e. a sitting) performance. No other poet-singer employed Tripuṭa Tālam in such a rich and central way as Kshetrayya did. Probably, he exploited the scope for satwikabhinaya in Tripuṭa Talam compositions to the fullest extent. Probably leg movement based Kshetrayya Padam performances emerged along with the stage performance of these lyrics (i.e., during the modern times).³³ Or probably both the sitting and the leg movement based forms of Kṣṭrētrayya Padam performances existed simultaneously from the beginning. However, the fact that dominance of Satwikabhinaya of minute feminine delicate erotic feelings was the Central Character of Kṣṭrētrayya Padams cannot be denied. Absence of this item in Melattur is again a curious fact since Melattur is geographically only 18 kms. away from Tanjore and the Melattur form from all the records known, was in its boom during the time when Kshetrayya was composing these lyrics, their music and dance. One explanation which may help us in understanding this interesting immunity of Melattur tradition to the influence of Kṣṭrētrayya Padams could be that Melattur never had a court performance record and Kṣṭrētrayya Padams have

³²Tripuṭa Talam (Tisra Jati Tripuṭa Tālam), has Laghu, and 2 dustams. In Tisra Jati Laghu have three beats and each drutam have the two beats i.e., 3+2+2=7.

³³Interview with Prof. Nataraj Ramakrishna, 6th June, 1996.

always been associated with court performances. Another reason could be the disinterest of the Melattur tradition in such an overwhelmingly erotic item which, thus, does not fit into the devotional frame of the entire repertoire of that tradition.

This explanation applies to another item of distinction between Kucipudi and Melattur, namely, Javai's **Jāvalū** are erotic lyrics known for their occurrence in the repertoire of sexually entertaining dancers. Kucipudi performers performed even these lyrics. How and why these entered Kucipudi repertoire is not clear. One possible source is the interaction between the Kucipudi performers with **Dvādāsis**, who, in course of time, acquired certain features of the sexually entertaining dancers. For the same reasons as discussed above, it is natural for the **Mēlattūr** tradition whose repertoire is in a strictly devotional frame to be insulated for the entry of items like **Jāvalū**.

HYPOTHESIS.

Though, the above delineation of distinctions between Kucipudi and **Mēlattūr** traditions is carried out itemwise, the fact that Kucipudi Dance Form is not represented completely or to a greater or lesser extent by any one of the above items is an obvious bottomline for the above discussion. What Kucipudi tradition is, in other words, is characterised by a combination of all these items, combination not in the sense of their aggregate but in the sense of a process of combining all the variegated items of its repertoire. In other words the **defining** characteristic of the Kucipudi Tradition is its inner tendency, its inner ability, its inner nature to accommodate, absorb and adapt all these

items of several types, theatrical (e.g. **Bhāgavatam**), solo (e.g. **Ashtapadis**), devotional (e.g. **Tarangams**), erotic (e.g. **Kshetrappa Padams**), classical (e.g. **Bhāmākalapam**), folk (e.g. **Ardhanariswaram**, **Dadinamma**), court oriented (e.g. **Sabdams**), temple oriented (e.g. **Adhyatmaramayana Kirtana**), street oriented (e.g. **Vidhibhagavatam**), stage oriented (e.g. **Modern Kucipudi items**) and so on. There is a difference of opinion among scholars about the spirit behind this all-accommodating nature of Kucipudi Tradition. Some would like to explain it away simply as the material need of the financially poor Kucipudi Performers.³⁴ This nature is also attributed to the travelling nature of the Kucipudi **Mēlam** (team).³⁵ But a serious study may compell one to conclude that this is indicative of the openness, flexibility and adapting nature arising out of the artistic bias, artistic priority and artistic values of the Kucipudi family of dancers (in opposition to religious, devotional, tradition oriented values) this does not mean that **Kūcipūḍi** tradition has no religious or traditional or devotional orientation. But their artistic priority has helped them to be what they are.

On the same lines one may have to conclude that what characterises the Melattur tradition is not their repertoire not their form of performance but the spirit which worked behind the immunity of the tradition against the adaptations of items such as those adapted by its possible genetic cousin Kucipudi tradition. As against the artistic priority of the Kucipudi tradition Melattur tradition's priority seems to be intensely religious, tradition oriented and devotional. This does not mean that the Melattur tradition has

³⁴Interview with Prof. Nataraj **Ramakrishna**, 6th June, 1996.

³⁵Interview with Prof. Nataraj **Ramakrishna** dated 10th September 1996.

no artistic priority. When it comes to choosing between loose flexibility and traditional strictness Melattur performer chooses the later. In other words, the priority of the Melattur team is ritualistic rather than artistic.

First available record about Kucipudi dance tradition, (which has been quoted earlier while talking about **Sabdams**) Machupalli kaifiat, a local record of Machupalli³⁶ (1502) A.D. describes the performance of an episode of the atrocities committed by one Sammeta Guravaraju a local chief (Sardar) of Siddhavatam in front of Viranarashimha **Rāyalu**. How such a social theme could enter the repertoire of Kucipudi tradition during such early times is not clear. But there is a scope to include such episodes into any Yakshagana performance due to the non fixed text method of Yaks agana performance, due to the scope, for spontaneous improvisation in Yaks agana. Usually, several day-to-day issues of the place of performance, the local people, their habits and culture, problems of their concerns etc., intervene in a Yaks agana tradition to provide for lighter pauses and intervals blended in humour to dilute the impact of the emotionally pitched seriousness of the performance to suit to the receiving capacity of the audience. Sammeta Guravaraju episode might have got included, in the performance described in the Machupalli Kaifiat as one of these relaxing digressions. This establishes that the tendency of the Kucipudi tradition from the beginning has been a flexible folk oriented entertaining tendency rather than a strictly religious and devotional tendency. For example, the Melattur performance does not have any such digressions from the conventional text

³⁶ "Studies in the history of the third dynasty of Vijayanagara" by Dr. N. Venkata Ramaiah garu. Appendix-c. pages 462-463. As cited in Kucipudi Bhagavatulu by **Laxminarasimha** Sastry Citalapati own publication. Tenali, 1983, page no. 28.

being performed.

The adaptation of Pagativeshalu³⁷ (day time guises), which lead to the adaptation of items such as Ardhanariswarudu and Dadinamma into the **Kūcipūḍi** repertoire is also not possible if Kucipudi tradition were religious and not entertainment oriented, because Pagativeshalu (day time guises) is basically a humour centred entertainment performance which contains episodes of a night time performances such as Yaks **aganam** etc., sometimes parodied for humour, sometimes naively imitated. **Kūcipūḍi** performers did not hesitate to adapt such a 'low level' performance, when they found it to be entertaining.

From the point of view that dance is basically an art form and artistic is priority of entertainment is primary for an art form, the theory of artistic priority of Kucipudi tradition may look to be a statement of the obvious. But if we take the fact that the Kucipudi performers share the name of Bhagavatulu along with the Melattur performers, and the fact that this name refers to devotional performers (Which is what the Melattur performers today are), keeping even fact that the word used in reference to Kucipudi performance in the Macupalli Kaifiat is Sankirtana which, again refers to a devotional **Bhajan** performance (for which the **Tarangam** performance of the **Kūcipūḍi** tradition alone is an example), the entertainment orientedness of Kucipudi tradition should look undoubtedly strange. From this point of view we may see that the Melattur tradition, has preserved the Bhagavatam type of performance and did not deviate an

³⁷**Pagativēṣalu** are small mock theatrical performances of humorous nature, performed usually by **folk** artists on the streets during day time.

inch from the original tradition, and the Kucipudi tradition may be seen to have deviated a lot from the original tradition, expanding their repertoire far beyond the limited Bhagavatam performances (and at the same time retaining that repertoire). As on today the Melattur tradition, from this point of view helps to visualise what the Kucipudi tradition in its beginning stage was envisaged to be. What Kucipudi tradition today is serves as an illustration to understand what would have happened to the Melattur dance form if it deviated from the tradition and switched over to an entertainment oriented approach.

But the fact that the Kucipudi tradition still retains the items of its original repertoire of Bhagavatams is very interesting for a student of dance. Pahlada **Caritam** is the best example for a Bhagavatam type story which can be imagined to have brought the name of Bhagavatulu to both Kucipudi and Melattur dancers. Interestingly, this dance drama of Pahlada Caritam is performed even today by both the tradition. A student of dance should naturally be curious to see what happens to such a common central dance drama in these two traditions, which are entertainment and devotion oriented respectively.

The present research aims at studying the Pahladacaritam performances of Kucipudi, and Melattur traditions from this point of view.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

One of the earliest writings on Kūcipūḍi is to be found in the form of an article

published in 1954 by Vissa Appa Rao.³⁸ This is an example of the early writings on **Kūcipūḍi** which were aiming at introducing the dance form of Andhra Pradesh to **the** other parts of the country and to the world at large. By the time this article was **written** Kucipudi dance seems to have been acquired the status of one of the classical dance traditions of the country known beyond the region of its origin and existence. The points highlighted in this article on the Kucipudi dance technique is that Kucipudi dance technique is a dance drama technique in contrast to Bharata Nāṭyam, which is relatively of a more recent origin and is a solo dance form. The history of Kucipudi dance in this article is traced to the Nattuva Melas of **eighth,nineth,tenth** centuries which prevailed in Kashmir, Andhra, Tamilnadu and Karnataka. According to Mr. Appa Rao Kucipudi Brahmin **Mēlam** was one of those Brahmin Melams which to excluded women from the Nattaua Mela considering that women presence deteriorated those **Mēlams**. Interestingly this article makes mention of the Bhagavata Melas of Melattur also and more interestingly Mr. Appa Rao anticipates the comparative study of **Kūcipūḍi** and **Mēlattūr** forms by enlisting a few common characterstics of the two. He says,

"The dance-dramas of Kucipudi and **Mēlaṭṭūr**, have common characteristics- for instance ,the Pravesha daravu which introduces the characters on the stage; tha rakti ragas used in improvised stage in the open street in front a temple; two torch lights; the bag-pipe called the drone; the mridangam and the background music".

³⁸Appa Rao, Vissa, Kucipudi: Indian dance, New Delhi, 1954.

But from the way Vissa Appa Rao describes in the sentences earlier to the above he gives the impression that the Melattur Brahmin Mēlams are the result of the migration of the Kucipudi families to Tanjore. He narrates

" With the fall of the Vijayanagar empire these artists migrated to Tanjore and were patronised by the Nayak kings. King Achyutappa Nayak who ruled from 1561 to 1614 A.D., granted an agraharam to hundreds of Brahmin families, in order to encourage and develop the art of dance. The agraharam was known as Achyutapuram, the modern Melattur near Tanjore".

In the above narration he did not make it clear whether the 'hundreds of Brahmin families' to which the King Achyutappa Naik granted an Agraharam were actually the same as these artistes (the Kucipudi artistes) who migrated to Tanjore or not. Probably Mr. Appa Rao was trying either to raise the doubt or to hint at the branching out of the Kucipudi family itself into the Mēlattūr family by pointing at the common characteristics, quoted above.

Dr. V. Raghavan in his article on Kucipudi and Melattur forms is more positive in concluding that the Melattur Bhagavata Mela Nataka is an offshoot of the Kucipudi tradition. For example in an article in,³⁹

"Traditional dance-drama, he says, Bhagavata Mela Nataka of some of the villages near Tanjore in Tamilnadu are an offshoot or a graft from the Kucipudi

³⁹Raghavan, V., 'The Vidhi Bhāgavatam of Andhra', Vivekanda Patrika, 1981, p. 43.

Bhagavata Mela plays in Telugu Country".

In the September 1955 Prof., S.V.Joga Rao seems to have published a research article in the Telugu **mothly** literary journal "Bharathi " on the Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakams. Prof.Joga Rao refers to this article of himself in his Ph.D thesis "Andhra Yaks agana **Vangmaya** Caritra" (History of the Andhra Yaks agana literature), while talking about the Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakam and their performance.⁴⁰ In this section of his Ph.D research work Prof. Joga Rao gives a detailed description of both the Kucipudi and Melattur dance traditions.⁴¹ What is interesting in these descriptions is that Prof.Joga Rao also is frequently tempted to compare the performance details of the Melattur form with those of Kucipudi. Form for example, he identnifies the following common features between Kucipudi and Melattur dance performances.

1. The importance of Pahlada Natakam in both the dance form.⁴²
2. Use of masks.⁴³
3. The importance for the dance skill of the famale impersonaor being demonstrated through the Pravesha Daruvu (the character entry lyric).⁴⁴
4. Female impersonation.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ **Andhra Yakṣagana Vāgmaya** Caritra, by Dr. S.V. Joga Rao, Andhra University Publications, **Wal-**tair, 1961.

⁴¹ Ibid pp. 176-186, 190-195.

⁴² Ibid page no. 190.

⁴³ Ibid pp. 190-191.

⁴⁴ Ibid page no. 192.

⁴⁵ Ibid page no. 192.

5. Fasting by the Narasimha Actor.⁴⁶

Interestingly even Prof.Joga Rao is tempted to suspect the role of the possible migration of the Kucipudi dancers to Tanjore and surroundings during the reign of the Nayaka Kings based on the common features between Kucipudi and Melattur Bhagavata Mela **Nātakams**. In the bibliography of this section of his Ph.D work Prof.Joga Rao cites an article on the subject by Dr. V. Raghavan.⁴⁷ and a Thesis submitted for M.Lit of Madras University by Smt. K.Gomati on "The Music of the Nritya Natakas of South India."⁴⁸

In 1969 **C.R.Acharya** the Bharathacharya (Dance Teacher) of Kucipudi tradition at Darpana in Ahemdabad came out with a Telugu Book on "Kucipudi Aradhan **Nrityamulu**" (Kucipudi Worship Dances). Mrinalini Sarabhai who wrote the preface to this book refers to this book as a 'text book'.⁴⁹ This is an important land mark in the history of the literature on Kucipudi since in this book several pieces of information preserved in the memories of traditional Kucipudi dancers probably recieved by C.R. Acharya through his gurus, got recorded in print. In this book an interesting aspect is that the author intends to highlight the worship or traditions devotional aspect of the Kucipudi Dance Tradition. This is interesting because Kucipudi tradition can be expected to have been devotional in its origin from the name Bhagavatulu used in reference to Kucipudi performers. But as has already been shown Kucipudi tradition seems to

⁴⁶Ibid page no. 193.

⁴⁷Ibid page no. 195.

⁴⁸Ibid page no. 195.

⁴⁹First page after the inner covet, in Acharya, C.R., 'Kucipudi Aradhana **Nrityamulu**', **Eluru**, 1969.

have grown more entertainment oriented rather than devotional. The author in this book does not have a systematic thesis about the devotional nature of the Kucipudi dance tradition, but he refers to the interactions between Deva Dasis and Kucipudi performers in this work. Another interesting mention made in this book is that of the importance of the Prahlada Natakam in Kucipudi repertoire. Here he observes that Kucipudi performers were specially skillful in the performance of Prahlada Natakam.⁵⁰ But Acharya also stops only at hinting at the possibility of the Melattur performers being descendants of Kucipudi performers. In the same discussion of the Prahlada Natakam he says,

"The Brahmin Bhagavatars got Achyutāpuram (Melattur) as an agraharam by pleasing the Achyutappanaika, the ruler of Tajore for their Prahlada Natakam."⁵¹

Here, he does not make it clear who these Brahmin Bhagavatars were, whether they were the Kucipudi performers or not. Whether C.R. Acharya is right or wrong in his details about the particular drama for which Achyutappanaika donated Melattur to the Melattur performers, i.e., his mention of Prahlada Natakam and that drama only highlights the significance of Prahlada Natakam within Melattūr repertoire in the opinion of Acharya.

In 1977 Sunil Kothari submitted his Ph.D., thesis to the department of dance M.S. University of Baroda on "The Dance Drama Tradition of Kucipudi Bhagavata

⁵⁰Ibid page no. 79.

⁵¹Ibid page no. 80.

Mela Nataka and Kuravanji, with special reference to Rasa Theory as expounded in **Bharatha's** Natya Sastra". This is the first most elaborated University research work which covered either Kucipudi or Melattur separately or both of them together. This book is really elaborate in the sense that it covers several details of the history of the dance forms, the details of their repertoire, and their technical structure. In the Volume II of this work, three chapters⁵² have been devoted to the discussion on the Kucipudi Dance Tradition. The next chapter⁵³ is devoted to Bhagavata Mela Natakam.

It is interesting to see that Dr. Kothari devotes the major section of his heritage chapter⁵⁴ on Bhakthi movement and its influence on the Kucipudi Tradition. As part of this, he deals with the legends of Siddhendra Yogi and **Bhāmākalapam**. In the next chapter on the repertoire of the Kucipudi tradition, he gives a detailed description of each member of the repertoire. There is an entire section devoted to Vidhi Bhagavatam in which the different styles of Vidhi Bhagavatam like the Turpu Bani and other styles are discussed. In the Chapter on technical structure he discusses many important details of the technicalities of the performance, especially the different daruvus (he calls them darus) and observes that the basic technical element of **Kūcipūḍi** dance drama, Bhagavata Mela Natakam (and Kuravanji) are the same. Then he goes on to describe the Nritha, Nritya, the music, rasa and other aspects of the Kucipudi performance. He applies these basics to the description of **Bhāmā Kalapam**, its dance-drama form and so-

⁵²Chapters 7, 8 and 9 pp. 261 - 413, of Kothari, **Sunil**, Ph.D. Thesis submitted in the M.S. University, Baroda.

⁵³**Ibid** Chapter - 10.

⁵⁴**Ibid** Chapter - 7.

lo form, Manduka sabdam, Dasavatara sabdam, Ardhanarishwara Sabdam, Tarangams, Kshetrayya **padams** etc. With this background he goes on to deal with the Bhagavata Mela Natakam in Chapter 10. Probably, because he considered, rightly, that most of the basics covered in the chapters on Kucipudi are useful in discussing Bhagavata Mela Natakam also he thought it is sufficient to discuss Bhagavata Mela Natakam in a single Chapter. It is in this Chapter that he hints at the branching out of Melattur Bhagavata Mela **Nātakams** from Kucipudi. Some observations made by Dr. Kothari are relevant for the present comparative study. For example like Mr. Vissa Appa Rao and Prof. S.V.Joga Rao. Dr. Kothari also feels that Melattur Bhagavata Mela **Nātakam's** has got to do with the migration of the Andhra Pradesh dancers to Tamilnadu.⁵⁵ Interestingly Dr. Kothari deals, in a great detail, about Narayana Teertha and mentions that

"Narayana Teertha was one of those who augmented the Bhagavata Tradition in the Tanjore district and spread the cult of adoring the Lord with say and dance."⁵⁶

He appropriately mentions also that

"the same Bhagavata tradition was responsible also for the cultivation of a dramatic art in which devotional stories composed in the form of songs and set to dance were song and danced and interpreted in gestures by **Bhramin** Devotees and goes on to observe that."

⁵⁵Ibid page no. 420.

⁵⁶Ibid page no. 426.

"This tradition which was maintained at the Kucipudi village and which later on flowered into a dance-drama tradition incorporating the classicism of the tenets of Bharatha's Natya **Sāstra** spread to Tanjore under the benevolent rule of the Nayaka Kings."

Then he goes on to describe the different items of the repertoire of Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakams and at several places refers to the similarities between Kucipudi and Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakams. He goes to the extent of saying that

"As a matter of fact these dance-dramas are an offshoot of the Kucipudi dance-dramas with a difference of in the technique of dance, the style being that of what has come to be known as contemporary Bharatanatyam technique".⁵⁷

Interestingly he even lists several dissimilarities between the two forms

"It is different in character than the rounded, embellished with quick sliver movements and spring like quality of pure dance of Kucipudi nritta. It is more austere, has geometrical form, exquisite lineaments, arabesques, triangles, parabolae, horizontal lines, vertical ones and has three **kalas** performed in three tempos, vilambitha, madhyama, drutha."⁵⁸

⁵⁷Ibid page no. 455.

⁵⁸Ibid pp. 455-456.

The next important work, in order, which dealt the Kūcipūḍi and Mēlattūr dance form is the Ph.D.; thesis submitted in Telugu by Chintha Ramanadham on "The Kucipudi School of Yaks **agāna-Literary**, traditional and technical perceptive". Interestingly there is a section of the thesis with the title "**Kūcipūḍi Mēlattūr Bhagavata Mela Nātakamulu** oka Samgraha Paramarsa". (Kucipudi and Melattur **Bhāgavata Mēla Nātakams** - a brief overview).⁵⁹ Probably this is the first University thesis in which a comparative discussion of the Kucipudi and Melattur forms has been attempted at least in a brief form. In this 'brief overview' he joins all the authors reviewed above in suspecting that the Melattur **Bhāgavatam** families are the descendants of the Kucipudi families. But Dr. Ramanadham is more possitive in concluding in favour of the migration from Kucipudi to Melattur. He quotes a two lines from the Prahlada Pattabhishekha **śabdam** of the Kucipudi tradition in which the name of Achyutapuram is mentionend and as Achyutapuram is the other name of Melattur itself, Dr. Ramanadham argues that this is an evidence for a possible migration of the Kucipudi families to Melattur. He also mentions that the Bhagavatars to **whome** Melattur was donated⁶⁰ as an agraharam⁶¹ are said to be Kucipudi Bhagavatars themselves. As a further evidence he brings the point that some of the family names of the Melattur Bhagavatars coincide with those of the Kucipudi families. He also quotes a conversation between Cinta **Krsna** Murthy garu of Kucipudi troupe, who visited Melattur in 1969 as part of interstate cultural

⁵⁹**Ramanadam**, Cinta, Kucipudi school of Yaksagana - literary, traditional and technical perspective, Ph.D. Thesis submitted to Andhra University Waltair, 1979, pp. 443-464.

⁶⁰**Ibid** page no. 444.

⁶¹**Agrahāram**, literally means, a row of Brahmin (house)s. Usually it rerers to a village which is exclusively in habitted by vedic Brahmins, with each house constructed suitably for **vedic** rituals. A donation of land for constructing such village was also called donation on Agraharam.

exchange programme and a few elders of the Melattur families in which the Melattur elders told Cinta Krsna Murthy **garu** that the ancestors of the Melattur family were from Kucipudi families who came hundreds of years ago for royal patronage and settled down in Melattur. On the basis of this information Dr. Ramanadham emphatically concludes that Kucipudi dance tradition migrated to south (Melattur?). Here we should keep one point in mind **Dr. Rāmanādhām** belongs to the Kucipudi family of dancers and Cinta Krsna Murthy **garu** is **Dr. Rāmanādhām's** father. However, **Dr. Rāmanādhām's** observations with regard to the migration only strengthen the theory of a strongly possible genetic relation between Kucipudi and Melattur traditions.

After that Dr. Ramanadham proceeds to list several similarities between the Kucipudi and Melattur dance traditions as a further evidence for his theory of migration. Most of the similarities listed by Dr. Ramanadham have already been mentioned in the beginning of the Chapter and in the review of Mr. Vissa Appa Rao's essay and Prof. S. V. Joga Rao's thesis.

Among the points of **comparision** additionally covered by Dr. Cinta Ramanadham (not covered in the works reviewed above) there is a controversial point that both the Kucipudi and **Mēlattūr** Melams performed Bhama. kalapam in the beginning . As has already been discussed earlier in this book there is absolutely no evidence for the Melattur **Mēlam's** performance of **Bhāmā** kalapam. Within the Kucipudi tradition too there is no evidence conclusively to say that **Bhāmā** kalapam is historically the first item of the

Kūcipūḍi repertoire, as assumed by Dr. Ramanatham.⁶²

He brings comparison between the annual performances by the **Kūcipūḍi Mēlams** in the pendals raised in front of the Ramalingeswara Temple, one of the two main temples of the village Kucipudi and the annual performances by the Melattur **Mēlam** near the **Narasimha** temple of the **Mēlattūr** village.⁶³ Whether the sacral strictness and binding found in the Melattur performances of Narasimha Jayanthi is found in the same intensity and with a similar attitude in the Kucipudi performance during the Sri Ramaligeswara **Kalyaṇam** is to be carefully verified. Melattur performances are clearly done for the temple. The Kucipudi performances in front of the temple is not proved to be done for the temple.

Another important point mentioned by Dr. Ramanadham is the importance for colour semiology in the costume of Kucipudi and Melattur dance traditions.⁶⁴

Another similarity pointed out by Dr. Ramanadham is the presence of the comic supporting artistes called Hangudars or Vanthadars in both the tradition. He goes to say that the character of Konte Konangi (the mischeavous guy) was also the common feature for both the tradition, the Kucipudi people excluded this charascter from their tradition to avoid 'unsophisticatedness' (except **Bhāmākalapam**, where there is? This characters).⁶⁵ The implications of such a statement are controversial.

"Ramanadham, Cinta, Ph.D. Thesis, 1979, page no. 444.

⁶³Ibid. pp. 444 - 445.

⁶⁴Ibid, page no. 445.

⁶⁵Ibid. page no. 445.

Another point mentioned by Dr. Ramanadham is the presence of a **Sabdam** or Jatiswaram or Ashtapadi or Tarangam or Tillana (all solo items) after the Pravesha Daruvu (the entry lyric) of the female character in both Kucipudi and Melattur traditions. According to Dr. Ramanadham this item is included to demonstrate the dance talent of the female impersonator-dancer. However, items like Jatiswaram etc. mentioned by Dr. Ramanatham are not found in Melattur performances.

Another point Dr. Ramanadham mentions in his comparison is that for both Kucipudi and Melattur Natya Sastra and Abhinaya Darpana are sources of authenticity, but harteur to add that the Kucipudi tradition holds even Jayappa Senani's Nrtta Ratnavali as a source of authenticity. But Dr. Ramanadham does not attempt to prove the reasons for why Nrtta Ratnavali is authentic for Kucipudi and not for Melattur. Does this information point to the history or period of branching out between these two possible genetic cousins? This needs to be carefully further investigated.

Dr. Ramanadham mentions fasting by both the Kucipudi and Melattur performers of Nrisimha, Rukmangada etc., as another point of similarity.

He concludes his **comparison** by pointing out a major difference between the traditions namely, that the Kucipudi Melam has been a touring Melam from the beginning and **Melattūr** Melam has always been confined to Melattur. It may be remembered that this point of difference has already been pointed out in the present research work.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Also referred in the present thesis, pp.

It may be observed that Dr. Rāmanādhām who has been very keen in enlisting different similarities and the major difference like the touring and non-touring aspects of the two traditions, somehow misses to see that the more important aspect of difference between the two traditions is their repertoires. The large and variegated repertoire of Kucipudi is conspicuously different from the small monolithic repertoire of the Melattur tradition. The Yaksaganams which are the only item of the repertoire of the Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakams shared by the Kucipudi tradition. But Kucipudi repertoire contains lot more items like Bhama kalapam, Tarangams, Adhyatma Ramayana Kirthanas, Sabdams, Astapadis etc., This aspect of repertoire which makes the two traditions look glaringly different has been somehow overlooked by all the authors reviewed above. In the present research work this aspect of repertoire is being considered to be the most important point because quite often the Kūcipūḍi tradition is identified with certain items like Bhāmā Kalapam and Tarangams which are totally absent in the Melattur tradition. Moreover, the fact of repertoire of one form being enormously larger than the other cannot be ignored as insignificant. The identity of the Kucipudi form comes from a combined identity evolving out of its entire broad repertoire and the identity of the Melattur form from the specific limited items of devotional Yaksaganams. Under such circumstances this point of difference should be taken as an important point of analysis in any comparative study between the two forms. As has already been mentioned, in the present research work it is being proposed as a hypothesis on the basis of this point and a few other points already mentioned, that Kucipudi tradition has been artistic value centered and the Melattur tradition ritualistic devotional value centered. Dr.

Ramanadham like the authors reviewed above does not attempt to identify any such reason for the differences between the two comparable, possibly genetically related art forms.

In his section on the comparison between the **Kūcipūḍi** and Melattur traditions Dr. Ramanadham proceeds to review the text of the Usha Parinayam and Prahlada Caritam composed by Melattur Venkata Rama Sastry providing a brief and quick comparative analysis of the performances and texts of both these plays in the Kucipudi and Melattur traditions. It is interesting to see that the Prahlada Caritam which has been chosen for the present research work has already been subjected to a comparative study by Dr. Ramanadham, though for just two pages, in his thesis on the Kucipudi **Yakṣaḡānam**.⁶⁷ As has already been pointed out all the authors reviewed above considered Prahlada Caritam to be an important item of both Kucipudi and Melattur traditions. Dr. Ramanadham's choice of this as one of the two topics of comparative study re-affirms this widely accepted significance of Prahlada Caritam.

METHODOLOGY

The approach adapted in the present research work is basically a comparative performance study approach. Since the researcher is basically a Kucipudi performer he has the facility of having some insights into the performance and its experience. With regard to the Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakam, in spite of several similarities between

⁶⁷Ramanadham, Cinta, Kucipudi school of Yaksagana - literary, traditional and technical perspective, Ph.D. Thesis submitted to Andhra University Waltair, 1979, pp. 461-463.

the Kucipudi and Melattur forms, the researcher is more or less an outsider to the tradition. Thus the ethnographic performance observations of the Kucipudi performance by the researcher can be called a kind of participant observation, whereas the study of Melattur Bhagavata Mēla Natakam is to a great extent from an outsider's point of view.

The researcher during his research period made several visits to Kucipudi village to study the Pahlada Caritam performance as found in a traditional way in that village. In 1993 Telugu University Hyderabad, conducted 'Yaks' agānam festival, as part of which the traditional Kūcipūḍi performers performed Pahlada Caritra Yaks aganam for one night. Though the researcher had had the opportunity of watching the Pahlada caritra Yaks aganam of traditional Kucipudi performers even earlier to the present research the 1993 performance was studied by the researcher from the point of view of the present reserach work.

Later the Kucipudi performers brought their performance to the Ravindra Bharathi (Auditorium), Hyderabad, in the year 1994-95 and '96. This was also watched for study by this researches.

Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakam performance of Pahlada Caritram was studied by the researcher in the year 1995-96 during the Narasimha Jayanthi of the Melattur village.

The text of the Pahlada Caritram either of the Kūcipūḍi tradition or of the Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakam could not to be collected in a manuscript or printed

form though such a thing is very much available.⁶⁸ The texts performed in the above mentioned performances have been audio recorded by the researcher and these are texts that are being used for the present study. The printed text of Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam has also been used.

The performances both at Kucipudi and Melattur have been video documented by the researcher. The audio and video documentations have been done only to support the observations done by the researcher directly during the performances.

Several descriptive categories of the performances of the Kucipudi tradition are already known to the researcher as a student of the Kūcipūḍi dance tradition for the last 16 years. With regard to the Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakam such categories have been collected from the performance context and the performances. Detailed interviews have been conducted with the veteran performers of the Kūcipūḍi and Melattur traditions. The interviews covered not only the question of information but also several inquiries about interpretation and corroboration. The interviews have been audio recorded.

The comparative analysis covered in the next few chapters is based on such a qualitative empirical study. Finally, the comparison of Prahlada Caritam has been attempted to correlate with the observations made earlier in the present chapter based on a general survey of the Kucipudi and Melattur forms.

⁶⁸For example Dr. **Ramanadham** mentions in his book that he used a manuscript of Melattur Prahlada Natakam supplied by Prof. S.V. Joga Rao. tef 1979 pp. 458, but according to him it is presently with the family of late Prof. S.V. Joga Rao. Even a manuscript available with the **Melattūr** family could not be collected. Though people talk of a manuscript of Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam where abouts of it are not known clearly.

Chapter Two

STRINGS OF PULL FOR PRAHLADA CARITRAM IN THE TWIN TRADITIONS

(Sources of Significance of Prahlada theme and Scripts in Kucipudi and
Melattur Traditions)

Prahlada Vijayamu of the Kucipudi tradition and Prahlada Natakam of the Melattur tradition are both Yaksaganam type performances of the story of Prahlada a devotee of Lord Visnu. Lord Viṣṇu, according to Hindu mythology, is one of the three almighty gods, **Bramha** and siva being the other two. **Bramha** is the creator, Visnu the sustainer and Shiva is the dissolver of the universe. Lord Visnu, among these three keeps killing the demon chiefs tormenting the universe incarnating on earth from time to time. The story of Prahlada is also known as the story of the Lord Narasimha who is one such incarnation of the Lord Visnu in the form of a Lion-Headed Human figure, since in this story Lord Visnu appears in the form of Narasimha the Lion-Headed human figure, out of a pillar and kills Hiranyakasipu, father of Prahlada to protect Prahlada his devotee from the harassment by his father.

According to all the Indian mythology, incidents in this story took place during the mythological time called "Kritayuga". Hiranyakasipu is the brother of Hiranyaksha the demon whom Visnu killed to save the earth from that demon. In this story Visnu killed Hiranyaksha in his incarnation as "Varaha" that is wild-boar and brought earth

out of water where Hiranyaksha hid it and held it on his two trunks. Hirnyakasipu wanted to avenge this killing of his brother and became an incorrigible enemy of Visnu for this reason. But ironically he begot a son called Pahlada who is the staunch devotee of Lord Visnu. Hirnyakasipu's attempts to reform his son and to make him give up his devotion for Lord Visnu by getting him educated under the family gurus go futile. Hirnyakasipu tortures his son by throwing him into boiling oil, crushing him under the feet of elephant, throwing him down from a high mountain etc., the boy comes out uneffected through these ordeals and claims that Lord Visnu has been protecting him all through. Hirnyakasipu in desperation asks his son to show him Lord Visnu in the pillar opposite to him, if he was as all pervading as the boy was claiming. Pahlada advises his father Hirnyakasipu to call the Lord by himself and assured him that he is present even in the pillar. Hirnyakasipu shouts loudly challenging Lord Visnu to come if he were really present in the pillar. The pillar breaks open with a huge sound and Narasimha the Lion-man crashes out of it, stoops over Hirnyakasipu and kills him. After this killing Lord Visnu in the form of Narsimha gets cooled down and blesses Pahlada to rule over the earth for aeons and ultimately get liberated and reach Visnuloka (The world of Lord Visnu). This is the common structure of the Pahlada Narasimha story of all the puranas.

According to one of the versions Hirnyakasipu did penance to please Lord **Bramha** and the lord Brahma so pleased sanctioned him a boon that he shall not be killed by neither human being nor an animal , neither terrestrial creatures nor celestial beings, neither during the day nor during the night, neither in side the house nor outside the

house. Lord Visnu incarnated as half animal half human semidevine form and killed the demon during the time of sun set on the threshold of his house⁶⁹ so that this boon does not come to the help of the demon.

According to the devotional versions of this story Hirnyakasipu and Hiranyaksha, in their earlier forms before incarnating as demons, were the doorkeepers of the Lord **Visnu's** world called 'Vaikuntha'. Once they insulted four sages called Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanathsujata and disallowed them into Vaikuntha. The sages, angry with this behaviour of Jaya and Vijaya, the door keepers, cursed them to be borned down on the earth. The door keepers shocked and depressed by the sudden turn of events begged for a release from the curse. Lord Visnu who intervened at this juncture offered them a choice between two schemes of release from the curse. According to one of the schemes Jaya and Vijaya shall be borned as devotees of Lord Visnu and back to Vaikuntha after seven such births as devotees and according to the second they shall be born as demons maintaining terrible enmity with Lord Visnu and they shall come back to Vaikuntha after three such births as demons. Jaya and Vijaya chose the second as it means shorter separation from Lord Visnu and Vaikuntha than the first. As a result the two took birth as Hirnyakasipu and Hiranyaksha in Kritayuga, Ravana and Kumbhakarna in Tretayuga and as Sisupala and Dantavakra in Dwaparayuga.⁷⁰ Thus according to this version Hirnyakasipu and Hirayaksha, in their inner spirits had an urge to reach the Lord Visnu as soon as possible and hence their arch enmity with the Lord. **Srimad**

⁶⁹*Srimadāndhra Mahābhāgavatam* by Potana Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Academy Publications, Hyderabad, 1983 pp. 4-61.

⁷⁰*Ibid* pp. 4-61.

Bhagavata is the most important source for this devotional version in which Hirnyakasipu and Hiranyaksha behaved as they did out of thier 'Vaira Bhakti' (devotion in the form of enmity.) with the Lord Visnu. According to this version, both Hirnyakasipu and Prahlada are Visnu's devotees, may be of two diffrent kinds, one in the form of enemy, the other in the form of a surrendered and benevolent lover of the Lord. Both Kuchipudi and Melattur Yaksaganam performances follow this version of the story which is in fact the result of the Bhakti movement.

This story is one of the most prominent stories of the Bhagavata Puranam, which contains this story as (a) one of the stories of the incarnation of Lord Visnu, (b) one of the stories of Devasura sangramas (God-Demon battles) (c) one of the stories of the most exemplary ancient devotees of Lord Visnu.

Thus it may be seen that the Prahladacarita story's significance in the repertoire of the both these dance forms, both of which are called as Bhagavata traditions lies in its being (a) a story from the Bhagavata Purana (b) a story of the Bhagavatars (devotes) (c) a story with a Bhagavata (devotional) approach.

This Story appears in the Agnipurana, Visnu Purana, Vāmana Purana, Matsya Purana, Devi Bhāgavata and Sthala Puranas such as Nrisimha Puranas also.

Different Puranas give different versions of the Narasimha story (for details of these versions, see annexure). Infact the deffrences between these versions are not significant. There are minor differences in details such as the name of the wife of the Hirnyakasipu

for example the most prominent version of this name is **Lilavati** but in some Puranas this is mentioned as "Kayadhu". There are different versions of the names of the teachers of Prahlada also. But the main story line of the Narasimha story in Puranas is almost the same.

The Puranic literature on Narasimha cult is very rich. In this literature, there are several interpretations of the concept of the Narasimha.

But the spread of the cult of the Narasimha is not limited to the puranic classical tradition alone. This cult is spread among folk and tribal traditions also. For example, there is a vibrant tribal tradition of Narasimha worship among the 'cencus' of the southern Andhra Pradesh. This tradition is centered around a shrine of Narasimha called Ahobilam in the Kumool district of Andhra Pradesh. According to Cencu tradition of Narasimha worship, Narasimha fell in love with a cencu girl called 'Cenculakmi' and the girl and her community accepted Narsimha after he passed all the tests in the skills, of forest life. After Narasimha established his skills cenculakshmi married Narasimha and thus Narasimha became the son-in-law (brother-in-law) of the cencu family. (Community). All the cencus of Andhra Pradesh worship Narasimha with this point of view. There are long folk epic songs narrating this version of Narasimha story. This story forms part of several cencu tribal dance songs and other cencu lyrics. This story became popular even among the rural and the urban public of Andhra Pradesh. Dramas and films based on this story became popular among the Telugu public. The puranic version of the Narasimha story and this tribal version of it got intertwined without any contradic-

tion. But both the Kucipudi and Melattur texts of Narasimha story (Prahlada Caritra) consciously include only the Puranic version of this story and not this tribal version.

The Lord Narasimha is one of the most popular deities of the Hindu tradition and the temples of this deity and the cult of worship of this deity is widely prevalent throughout South India. Especially in Andhra Pradesh. In fact, the Melattur Prahlada Natakam performance is associated with the worship of Narasimha and with the Narasimha temple of the Melattur town. This association is so sacredly and strictly maintained that the Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakam team does not perform the Natakam anywhere else than in the premises of the local Narasimha temple of the Melattur town.

The cult of Narasimha is so much widespread among the Telugu people that the word Narasimha appears in personal names, family names and place names from a long time. For several families belonging to different communities ranging from Dvijas (Brahmins, Ksatriyas and Vysyas) to the Dalit communities, Narasimha is a family deity (the worship of a family deity is a strong, sacred and unviolable custom). There are several ritual requirements of the family deity worship people following this tradition, believe that the family deity must be worshipped so that he takes care of the family if worshipped and if not he troubles the family to destruction. Family deity is to be worshiped on all important ritual occasions. An annual ritual exclusively devoted to the worship of the family deity is a must. Even an annual visit to the shrine of the family deity is also a must.

It is interesting to see that among all the Avatars of **Viṣṇu** believed to have taken place during the early period of Krtayuga. Only Narasimha **Avatāra** has acquired a position of temple tradition, ikonographical tradition and tradition of magic and supernatural practices. In this respect Narasimha is closely comparable to Sakti, Hanuman and Ganesa.

There are several shrines where the principal diety is Narasimha. Interestingly most of these shrines are hill shrines. There is a huge tradition of worship built around each of these shrines. Madabhushini **Narasimhacārya**, a historian did an extensive research on 'the history of the cult of Narasimha in Andhra Pradesh, during mainly a period from the 11th century A.D. to the 17th Century A.D.' In a book with the same title he discusses the origin of the cult of Narasimha and the history of the cult and history of the different centres of the Narasimha in all the three regions (**Rayala Seema**, Costal and Telangana regions of Andhra Pradesh). Rituals and festivals of Narasimha as mentioned in the inscriptions and ikonography of the cult of the Narasimha (A map of selected centers of Narasimha worship in Andhra Pradesh provided by this historian is reproduced in this dissertation (**Figure-I**):

Thus we can see that the cult of Narasimha has had at least a history of a thousand years. And this history has been reflected through classical literature, folk songs and theatrical and dance forms from a long time. The significance of the Narasimha story in Kucipudi and Melattur traditions should be seen from the perspective of this historical significance.

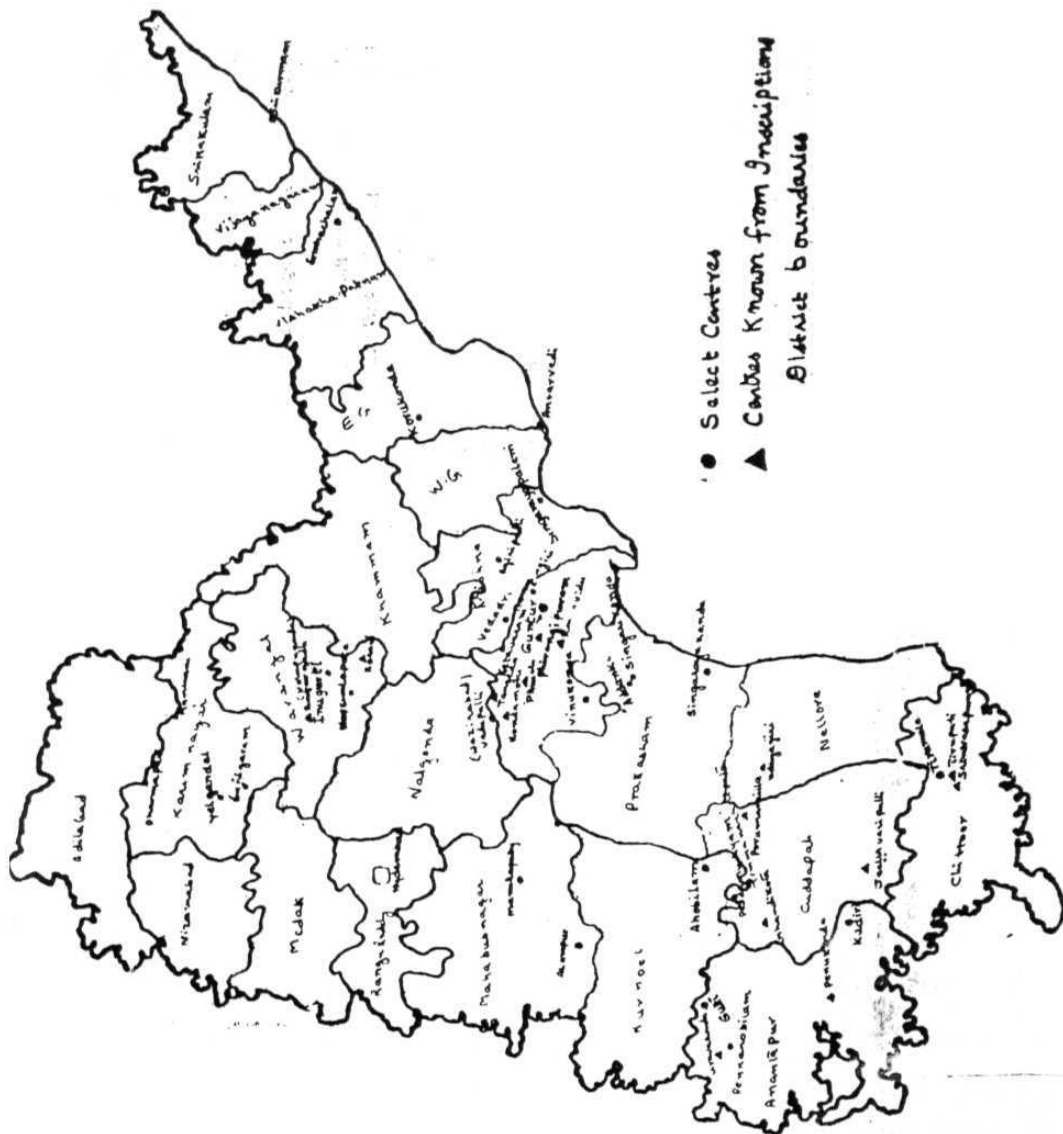


Figure-1: Map of selected centers of Narasimha reproduced from Madabhugini Narasimha Carya's Hook.

There are Yantras (symbolic drawings used for magical practices) of Narasimha, Salagramas (precious or fossilised stones) believed to be possessing the power of Narasimha. Various ikonographical figures of Narasimha are worshipped both at a house hold level and temple level. There are mantras (magical syllabic sequences or spells) of Narasimha discussed in mantra Sastra (the science of the power of spells). Narasimha upasana (devout spiritual practices centered around the concept of Narasimha) is also vibrantly prevalent among spiritual practitioners. The worship of yantras, Salagramas, ikons, mantras etc., mentioned above involves a severe life of restriction with regard to sacrality and piousness. Such practices are **belived** to be effective in giving supernatural powers to their practioners. Violation of the rules of these practices are belived to be leading to disastrous consequences. Many restrictions followed by the dancers playing Narasimha role in Prahlada Caritra **Yakṣagānams** needs to be looked at from this perceptive Narasimha, from this perceptive is in fact an enormous devine power believed to be carried, induced, invoked and possessed by and into all the objects like Yantras, Mantras, Salagramas, ikons etc., Dancer playing the role of Narasimha becomes one among such objects.

That is why, the dancers playing the Narasimha try their best to become eligible to be such objects by following severe penance in the form of fasting, sleeping on the bear floor, bathing regularly, spending time in meditating, taking soft and simple food etc., For the audience, the dancer playing the role of Narasimha is something like the sacred ikon of Narasimha temple and more often even more than that, and is Narasimha himself. Even the dancer playing the role of Narasimha shares this attitude of the audience towards himself. This leads to a great feeling of responsibility on the part of the Narasimha

role playing dancer. Quite often this leads to an extreme feeling of involvement and identification with the role in the dancer making him getting to extraordinary states of ecstasy and frivalent expressions. This is considered to be the possession of the spirit of Narasimha by the actor. Both the audience and dancer share this feeling. This feeling is said to have lead to several problems on the stage like the **Narasimha-role-playing** dancer really killing the Hirnyakasipu role player or the Narasimha role player going berserk on the stage and after a long uncontrollable freelance ferocious movements the dancer falling down unconscious on the stage etc., Even today the Melattur Mela **Nātakams** the Narasimha role player is tied with the help of a cloth and is clipped on either sides by four or five stage assistants (Plate-II). This indicates the fear on the part of the team about the possible repetition of the problem described above. Kucipudi performers of Prahlada Caritra Natakam tell that a similar practice of chaining the Narasimha role playing dancer used to exist even in Kucipudi tradition.⁷¹ They even recollected a few incidents which lead to these arrangements. According to them once two brothers were playing roles of Hirnyakasipu and Narasimha and in his state of trance, while playing the Narasimha role one of them killed the other who was playing the Hirnyakasipu character. From then on the team began to chain the Narasimha role player so that such bad repercussions do not recur again. But in course of time the team realised that the involvement of the dancers and characters is gradually decreasing and as such it does not warrant such cares.⁷² However, memories of these legends indicatae such a possibility even within the Kucipudi type of performers of Prahlada Caritra Natakam.

⁷¹**Interview** with Vedantam Rattayya Sarma, dated 3rd December, 1996.

⁷²**Interview** with Vedantam Rattayya Sarma, dated 3rd December, 1996.



Plate-I: Vedāntam Prahlāda Sarma and P.V.G. Krishna Sarma as Nattuva Hangu and Sutradharudu
(Source Sangeetha Natak Akademy Archives; New Delhi).



Plate-II: The Mēlattūr performance assistants tying the Narasimha dancer before the performance begins.
(Source: Researcher's Own Documentation (R.O.D.) 1995)

In this context another noteworthy aspect in both Kūcipūḍi and Melattur is the use of mask for the depiction of Narasimha Character. Mask is not a dominant feature in Kucipudi and Melattur performances (as it is in Kathakali and other forms). Kucipudi Bhagavatars used very few masks. One of them is the mask of Ganesh, which they use in Vinayaka Pravesham, which is a dance form Ganesa worshipped included in the beginning of all the Kucipudi dance dramas. The Ganesa mask wearing performer comes on to the stage and dances to the lyric being sung by Sūtradhāra/Naṭṭuvāṅgam in worship of Vinayaka. This is, as mentioned in the earlier chapter, one of the items common in the Kucipudi and Melattur performances (Plate III). Even for the Raksasa (demon) characters Melattur team uses masks. (Plate-IV) Though Narasimha mask is one of these few masks used by Kucipudi Melattur Performances, for the Melattur team this mask (Plate-V) is more than a mere costume. They preserve and worship the mask as a sacred ritual item, as an ikon (Plate VI). Kucipudi team contrastingly does not maintain such a strict ikonic attitude towards Narasimha mask (Plate-VII). Both Kucipudi and Melattur Narasimha mask is influenced by the temple ikons of Narasimha.

Both the audience and dancers are heavily influenced by the figures of Narasimha found in the temples (Plate-VIII). Madabhushini Narasimhacharya in his book mentioned above discusses in the different forms of Narasimha found in temple sculptures. They are:

- a. Yogananda Lakshmi Narasimha (Narasimha in yoga with Lakshmi)
- b. Varaha Lakshmi Narashima.



Plate-III: The Vinayaka dancer of Melattur Pahlada Natakam with mask
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-IV: The Raksasa dancers of Melattur Pahlada Natakam (M.P.N.) with masks.



Plate-V: Narasimha mask of Melattur Prahlada Natakam placed among other ikons of worship, ready to be taken out in a procession.
(Source R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-VI: The Narasimha mask of Melattur Prahlada Natakam is preserved here in this wooden enclosure:
(Source: **R.O.D.** 1994).



Plate-VII: Narasimha mask once used by Kūcipūḍi team taken from video recording of Prahlāda Natakam performance.

Note: The glorification and ritualisation are not seen.

(Source: J. Anuradha, University of Hyderabad).

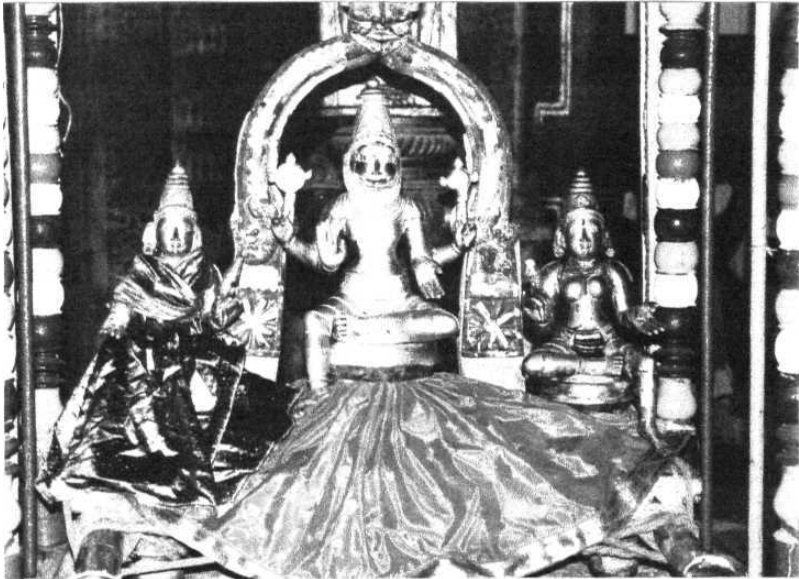


Plate-VIII: The Narasimha ikon (with his consorts) worshipped in the Varada Raja Perumal Temple, Melattur

(Source: R.O.D. 1994).

- c. Prahaladanugraha Murti (Narashima blessing Prahlada)
- d. Narashima and Cencheta and,
- e. Narasimha in Hari-Hara aspects.

A general noteworthy feature of the sculputures of Narasimha is that in early medieval representation the lion face is natural and later on it is stylized. According to the examples available, the forms of Narasimha are given below and in some instances the texts are quoted.

Types of sculpture	Total number of available sculptures
1. Kevala Narasimha (standing)	15
2. Girija Narasimha (seated)	37
3. Yoga Narasimha	40
4. Sthauna Narasimha	33
5. Yanaka Narasimha	2
6. Lakshmi Narasimha	34
7. Yogananda Lakshmi Narasimha	1
8. Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha	2
9. Prahaladanugraha Murti	3
10. Narasimha and Cencheta (Narasimha wooing chencheta)	3
11. Narasimha in Hari-Hara aspects and Tandava (Nritta)	1
12. Narasimha	2

He talks even about the concept of Nava Narasimha they are

1. Ugra (angry)
2. Vira (Fighting)
3. MahVisnu (Lakshmi Narasimha)
4. Jvalanta (emitting flames of fire)
5. Narisimham (ordinary Narasimha)
6. Bhisanam (frightful)
7. **Bhadram** (adorable) and
8. Mrityor-mrityu (the killer of death).

As one can easily imagine the costume (aharyaka) and dance postures of the dancers are influenced by these images gained from visiting the temples of Narasimha with these figures. (Plates-IX & X)



Plate-IX: a) Kevala Narasimha - Panchaviras Kondamotu, Guntur District.



b) Yoga Narsimha, Vaddemānu - Mahabubnagar District.



c) Yoga Narasimha, Lower Ahōbilam.
(Source: Madabhusini Narasimha Carya)



Plate-X: a) Lakshmi Narasimha -
(Nava Narasimhas), Upper Ahobilam.



b) Yogānanda Lakshmi Narasimha - Lower Ahobilam.



c) Sihanna Narasimha - Vidarana
(Nanva Narasimhas), Lower Ahobilam.
(Source: Madabhusini Narasimha Carya)

Madabhushini **Narasimbacharya** in his book cited above deals with the rituals and festivals centered around **Narasimha** also. According to his description the rituals and festivals are as old as the Narasimha cult itself. The most important of these rituals is Narasimha Jayanti. This falls on the fourteenth day of the bright half of the month of vaisakha. He mentions in this that an inscription dated 1287 A.D. has a mention of the celebration of Narasimha Jayanti at the **Simhachalam** Temple near Vizag (Vishakhapatnam). He mentions another inscription of 1512 A.D., which talks of Narasimha Jayanti celebration at Srinivasapuram a suburb of Tirupathi. This information is very important for the study of **Mēlattūr** performance of Prahlada Natakam, because the Mellatur family performs this dance drama only on Nrsimha Jayanti and only in the premises of the Narasimha temple of **Mēlattūr**. (Plate-XI) Performance of dance dramas in the premises of temples is also an ancient tradition. Madabhushini Narasimha charya talks of Devadasi tradition **prevailing** in Narasimha temples. The performances of Mellatur, the Prahlada Natakam has nothing to do with the **Dēvadāsi** tradition. But the performance of dance-drama of Prahlada Natakam is part of the offer of worship to the Lord Narasimha the deity in the temple Melattur . Though the **Kūcipūḍi** Prahlada Natakam is not part of Nrisimha Jayanthi festival nor is restricted to the premises of any Narasimha temple, the significance of Prahlada Natakam even within the **Kūcipūḍi** tradition is definitely related to the significance of Narasimha cult in Andhra Pradesh. There is a famous cult centre of Narasimha called Mangalagiri, in the neighbourhood of the famous town Guntur. This is very close to Kucipudi and the cult of Narasimha is also one of the significant cult prevalent in Kucipudi and the neighbouring villages.

As has already been mentioned **Narasimha** is one of the DasAvataras, the ten incarnations of the Lord Visnu. With regard to the concept of Narasimha Avatara, Madabhushini Narasimha Charya says that the concept of Narasimha is as old as the Vedas. He says the earliest reference to Narasimha is given in the Taittiriya Aranyaka and in this Aranyaka the almighty is described as "Possessing sharp claws and fangs." Then he goes on to quote Mahanarayana Upanishad and **Narisimha** Prwatapaniya Upanishad and Narasimha Uttaratapaniya Upanishad. The historical dates of these Upanishads are not clear. But **Narasimhacharya's** reference to the mention of Narasimha in Mahabharatha is important.

Traditions regarding number of Avataras vary, at some places it is 39 at some other it is 22; some books mention 19 Avataras. The most popular concept is that of ten Avataras. Vaisnava literature classifies Avataras into three kinds namely: (a) Purnavatara (complete incarnation). (b) **Amsāvatāra** (incarnation of a portion of the power of a devine being). (c) Avesa (partial incarnation of a more or less temporary character). According to puranic encyclopedia, Avataras are classified into three such as (a. Avatara That which has full power is Avatara b. Avatara that which has power only for the time being is avesha. c. **Amsvatāra**: Partial incarnation is Amsvatara). According to this classification **Narasimhavatāra** is one of the Purnavatara of the Lord Visnu.

There are several esoteric interpretations for the concept of Narasimha. Madabhushini Narasimha Charya quotes one such interpretation by Prof. Vasudeva S Agravala. The interpretation is as follows

"Narasimha is a type of **purusha-pasu**, in which the lion being an animal of the forest, is the symbol of the unharnessed energy of the divine-parameshthi, who is described as forest (Brahma-vana). That power of universal comes to the level of Matter and creates the Man-lion form. It deals with Hiranyakasyapa or region of Prakrit. Kasyapa literally means a cushion or seat of gold or Hiranya Hiranya is the principle of **Prāṇa**, which descends to the level of matter. Hiranya is Purusha and Kasipu is Prakriti. Both of them combine in the golden Egg, in which Prakriti offers herself as a sent for the divine Hiranyagarbha. The idea of the legend is that Hiranya Kasyapa how so ever powerful in the three worlds, succumbs to the might of Narasimha".

But this esoteric interpretations is not relevant for the Melattur or Kucipudi performances because neither the performers nor the audience of these performances are aware of these interpretations.

In fact Narasimha worship is specially significant for the Vaisnavaite tradition. Especially the Visishtadvaita Tradition. Interestingly neither the Kucipudi performers nor the Melattur performers are Vaisnavaites. Both these dancing families belong to the **Smārtha** Brahmin sect which is an advaitic sect. But within the advaitic sect there is no negation of the worship of almighty in the form of Visnu or one of his Avatars. Thus the prevalence of Narasimha cult among the Melattur and Kucipudi families is not against the advaitic tradition of these families. Interviews with both the Kucipudi and Melattur performers have revealed that neither of these families are seriously trained

nor do they have a serious commitment for advaitic vedantic interpretation of the stories they perform. For this reason the discussion of Advaitic vedantic interpretation of the Prahlada story also does not become necessary in the present research work.

ARTISTIC ASPECTS OF PRAHLADA CARITRA STORY

From a literary or performance art point of view also the story of Prahlada Caritra must have been possessing several attractive features. Otherwise it can not have attracted the attention of theatrical, dance and poetic artistes in so many languages and regions of India.

As a plot the story has got a gripping drama in the form of an irreconcilable conflict between a father and his son in terms of their goals of life, personalities and worldviews. The drama is rooted in the fact that the son is the only son of his father, his heir to the crown and as such the object of his concentrated affection. But the son is a staunch devotee of the arch **enemy** of his father. For Hirnyakasipu, the father, his enmity towards Lord Visnu is the goal of life. For Prahlada, the son, his devotion to Lord Visnu is the essence and meaning of his personality, life and existence. This drama has its narrative beginning in two incidents. The first is killing of Hiranyaksha, brother of Hirnyakasipu by Lord Visnu. The second is the asylum (shelter) given by sage Narada the great devotee of Lord Visnu to the wife of Hirnyakasipu (Lilavati as according to the **Kūcipūḍī** and Malattur texts) while she was carrying the babe of Prahlada in her womb, rescuing her from **Indra** (the king of Gods), who kidnapped her while Hirnyakasipu was away in his

penance to acquire deathlessness.

Sage Narada influenced Prahlada right in his prenatal days to become a staunch devotee of Lord Visnu. This act of Narada is explained as the game of nature which took care to sow the seeds of countering the plans of Hirnyakasipu who was striving to achieve deathlessness. It is again nature which makes Hirnyakasipu get an apparently unlimited but actually limited deathlessness. **Bramha** the creator sanctions Hirnyakasipu the boon of no death from human beings, animals, birds, Gods, demons, etc and no death either during the day or during the night, either inside the house or outside the house, no death from any weapon. This description of the boon of deathlessness given by Brahma to Hirnyakasipu apparently looks to have exhausted all the possibilities of death. But when Hirnyakasipu ultimately gets killed by a man-lion which/who is neither a human being nor an animal; during the dusk which is neither day nor night; on the threshold of his house; which is neither inside nor outside the house; with the nails of the man-lion which is no weapon, the deficiencies in the imagination of the possibilities of death made by Hirnyakasipu are exposed. This makes it clear how nature always has a room to impliment its law of death even when beings try to leave no such chance to it. This ending of the story gives an interesting resolution to the entire drama of the father-son conflict. Hirnyakasipu who tries to achieve deathlessness is awarded with death whereas Prahlada who never bothered to worry about his death or life span is given an enormously long life of aeons. Hirnyakasipu and Prahlada are depicted as personifications or allegories of arrogance and surrenderance respectively towards the sustainer of nature Lord Visnu.

There are several other interesting oppositions between Hirnyakasipu and Prahlada in this story. Hirnyakasipu is a violent, crude, experienced, powerholding person. Prahlada is a non-violent, polite, young and powerless person. Throughout the story the violence, power and experience of Hirnyakasipu repeatedly gets defeated in the hands of the non-violent, polite, soft, young and powerless kid Prahlada. This happens without any volition of Prahlada. The power behind the survival of Prahlada against attempts to finish him off is the grace of Lord Visnu, which is the result of the devotion of Prahlada towards Lord Visnu.

Thus more than Prahlada himself his devotion to Lord Visnu seems to be the victor in this story. Thus the entire story ends as a story of the victory of devotion. Bhakti, devotion is thus the main theme, message and central emotion of the story of Prahlada Caritra. Thus from a rasa point of view the story of Prahlada Caritra is the story of Bhakti rasa.

Though the Bhakti rasa is angī (central) rasa, there are several anga (component) rasas of the story like Bhayanaka (fear), Vatsalya (elderly affection towards a child or a younger person), Hasya (humour etc.) From a dancer's point of view it is this aspect of the story that becomes most important because ultimately all the Natya is the enactment of rasa to help its audiences to relish the same.

Especially, in a dance-drama form such as the Kūcipūḍī and Melattur dance forms, the rasa depictions have a narrative component and more than the depiction of individual

rasas enactment of the rasa combinations and movement of the narrative from one rasa to the other becomes important. Prahlada story is interesting from this point of view. The story begins with the **Roudra** rasa but the **Alambana** Vibhava (the holder of the rasa) is the villain of the story. As is wellknown the last important episode of the Prahlada **Nātakam** also is the Roudra **rasam** (the mellow of anger) episode but the holder of the emotion this time is Narasimha, the protector of the Hero of the story Prahlada. These two Roudra rasam episodes are connected in between by the other episodes of other **rasams**. For example in response to Hirnyakasipu's anger Lilavati tries to cool him down and this episode is full of Santha rasa (the mellow of dettactnant) or Karuna rasa (the mellow of patnos). The episode designed to be unusually long, probably to effect a balance between the anger and its cooling. In response to **Lilāvati's** cooling Hirnyakasipu talks about his valour and might. From a rasa point of view this is Vira Rasa (mellow of zeal or mellow of valour). Another important rasa in (especially in the Mellatur Version), is Hasya(Humour) which occurs in the episode of Rakshasas (demons) searching for Visnu on the orders of Hirnyakasipu and episode of Prahlada being trained into the Rakshasa Tradition of sastra by the gurus Canda **amarka**. Both Canda **amarka** are depicted as the woes of a foolish teacher suffering in the hands of the **adament** devotee of Lord Visnu called Prahlada. Thus different rasas keep interrupting the central rasa called Bhakti rasa and Bhakti rasa remains as the running stream in all the episodes.

LITERARY SOURCES

Madabhushini Narasimhacharya mentions the following Telugu literary sources of story of the Narasimha in his research work. Following are the Telugu literary sources directly giving information about the cult of Narasimha in Andhra Pradesh under study.

1. NARASIMHA PURANA OF ERRAPRAGADA

Errapragada, one of the famous kavitraya (Trinity) who flourished during 1324-1349 A.D. wrote Lakshmi Narasimha Purana and dedicated it to god Ahobila Narasimha Swamy, The fifth chapter of the Purana describes the importance of Ahobila Ksetra and of the god. In this Purana the poet mentions 'Simhadri' as a place of pilgrimage.

2. PADMAPURANA OF MADIKISINGANA

Madikisingana wrote PadmaPurāṇa (Uttara Khanda) in the year 1420 A.D. It is stated in his work that the noble minister, Kesana of Muppa Bhupala of Ramgiri (Karimnagar District) had given gifts for maintaining 'annasastram' (feeding house) and conducting the 'Utsavas' (celebrations) to god Narasimha of Dharma puri. In the seventh canto of the Purana, the legend of the birth of the Narasimha and the destruction of the demon, Hirṇyakasipu is given.

3. *BHAGAVATAM OF BAMMERA POTANA*

Bammera Potana, a famous Telugu Poet, flourished during 1400-1470 A.D. and hailed from the Warangal district. He had translated the Sanskrit Bhagavatam into Telugu. The birth of Narasimha and the destruction of the demon, Hirnyakasipu are described in the Saptama Skandha of the book.

4. *SIMHASANA DVATRIMSII OF KORAVI GOPA RAJU.*

Koravi Gopa Raju, who lived during 1430-1490 A.D. wrote '**Simhasanadvatimsika**', in which he mentions that Hari and **Hara** came to **Dharmapuri** as Narasimha and **Ramesvara**. Besides, the poet describes Dharmapuri in the five stanzas in the 21st picture-story.

5. *NRISIMHA PURANA OF HARIBHATTU*

Haribhattu, who flourished about 1530 A.D., wrote Nrisimha Purana (uttara **bhagam**) in **champu** **kavya** style, just as the poet Errana has written earlier the first part of Narasimha Purana.

6. *SANKIRTANAS TALLAPAKA POETS.*

The Tallapaka poets, such as Annamayya (1408-1507 A.D.,) and Peda Tirumalācāryulu (1460-1547 A.D.,) wrote a number of 'Sankirtanas' (devotional songs) in favour of **Ahobila** Narasimha of Ahobilam. It is stated that the third Tallapaka poet, Tirumalacaryulu (1485-1550 A.D.,) had made 'pratistha' (Consecration) to the image of Narasimha in

the **Hanuman** shrine at Tirupati. It is stated that Annamayya visited the Ahobilam temple and sang the glory of god Narasimha. It is attested by two copper plates of Annamacharya's kirtanas, which are found at Ahobilam. He praised the Lord of upper Ahobilam as the boon-giver.

7. VISHNU PURANA OF VENNELAKANTI SURANA

Vennelakanti Surana, who flourished in the first part of the 16th century A.D., had translated the Sanskrit Visnu Purana into Telugu, named 'Andhra Sri Visnu Puranam' describing the incarnation of God Visnu. The legend of Prahlada and the birth of the Lord Narasimha and the destruction of the demon, Hirnyakasipu are narrated in this Purana.

8. GHATIKACHALA MAHATMYAM OF TENALI RAMAKRISHNA

It is believed that Tenali Rama Kirshna lived during the last part of the 16th century A.D. He wrote Sri Ghatikachala Mahatmyamu. Wherein, he described the god Narasimha at Ghatikachala (North Arcot district of Tamil Nadu).

9. GARUDACHALA VILASAMU OF OBAYAMANTRI

Obayamantri, who flourished in the 17th century, wrote Garudachala vilasamu, a very popular yakshagana, describing the supposed marriage of god Narasimha of Ahobilam with a girl belonging to the Cenchu tribe.

10 THE DEVOTIONAL SONGS OF SIVA NARAYANA TIRTULU

Siva Narayana Tirtulu, who lived in the 17th century, wrote devotional songs on Sobhanadri sri Narasimha (Agiripalli of Krishna District) and Vedadri Narasimha (Krishna district).

11. PRAHLADA VIJAYAMU OF VIJAYA RAGHAVA NAYAKA

Vijayaraghava Nayaka, who ruled Tanjore from 1633 to 1673 A.D., wrote Prahladacaritram in Telugu.

Following are the Telugu literary sources, which give passing references about cult of Narasimha in Andhra Pradesh under study.

1. PRATAPA CHARITRA OF EKAMRANATHA

It is mentioned that Ahobilam, Mangalagiri, Simbachalam, Srikaurmam and other temples enjoyed the patronage from the treasury of Kakatiya Prataparudra II (1290-1323 A.D.,)

2. HARIVAMSAM (UTTARA BHARAM) OF ERRAPRAGADA

Errapragada, wrote Harivamsam(uttara bhagam). It is stated in the preface that **Vema Reddi** (1324-1353 A.D.,) had built the steps to the upper Ahobilam.

3. SIMHAGIRI VACHANAMULU OF KRISHNAMACHARYA

The Pratapa Charitra mentions that Krisnamacharya was appointed as an officer of fifty villages in Kanakagirisima. He wrote 'Simhagiri Vachanamulu' in prose and happened to be the first man to initiate prose writing in Telugu in the fourteenth century A.D.

4. NARAYANA SATAKAMU OF BAMMERA POTANA

Narayana Satakamu is attributed to Bammere Potana, a famous Telugu poet, in which he implored the god “**Dharmapuri** Lakshminatha Narayana”, who is no other than Narasimha, as there is no other temple of Visnu except the temple of Narasimha at that time.

5. BHOJARAJIYAM OF ANANTAMATYA

Anantamatya, who flourished in the fifteenth century A.D., dedicated his work, named 'Bhojarajiyam' to god Ahobila Nrisimha. The same god in the beginning and yogananda Ahobalanatha Nrisimha in the end, are mentioned in it.

6. KASIKHANDAM, BHIMESVARAPURANAM AND SIMHADRI TIRUNALLU OF SRINATHA

The popular Telugu romantic poet, Srinatha wrote Sri Kasikhandam and dedicated it to King Virabhadra Reddy of **Rajamahendravaram** in 1440 A.D., as was stated in the 'Pithika'. In it, the god Vedadri Narasimha and Ahobilam are mentioned.

In his other work, entitled '**Bhimesvara Purāṇam**', the poet refers to '**Simhadri Lakshmi Narasimha**', while describing the pilgrimages of Vyasa Maharshi.

This poet, also describes a festive gathering at the Ksetra (Sacred Place) of **Simhachalam** in his work, entitled 'Simhadri Tirunallu'.

7. *CHITRA BHARATAMUOF CHARIGONDA DHARMANNA*

Carigonda **Dharmanna**, who belonged to the village of Carigonda in Mahabubnagar district, is said to have written 'Chitra Bharatamu' during 1503-1512 A.D. It is mentioned clearly that the poet went to **Dharmapuri** and described the greatness of the god in his work. Besides, it is stated that **Enumulapalli** Peddana, who was a minister of Shitabhan of Warangal, was great devotee of god Narasimha of Dharmapuri.

8. *AMUKTAMALYADA OF SRIKRISHNADEVARAYA*

Krisnadevaraya (1509-1529 A.D.), the great poet-king of Vijayanagara, makes a passing reference to a fair (Tirunal) of Simhachala **Swami** (Lord **Simhachalam**) at Simhachalam in his work, entitled 'Amkutamalyada'. In it, he mentions that even 'devas'(gods) also participated in the fair.

9. *KALA PURNODAYAM OF PINGALI SURANA*

The renowned Telugu Poet, Pingali Surana, who lived about 1560 A.D., refers to Dharmapuri (Karimnagar district) on the bank of river Godavari. Simhachaladhisa and

Srimand Ahobila Swami, in his great classic 'kalapurnodayam'. While describing the pilgrimage of Manikhandhara.

10. THE YAKSAGANAMUOF KANDUKURIRUDRAYYA

Kandukuri **Rudrayya**, who lived during 1490-1570 A.D., wrote an '**yakshagana**', which is the first of its kind in Telugu language. In his work, the poet referred to god Narasimha as **Adimurti** Nrishmha.

11. VIJAYAVILASAMUOF CHEMAKURA VENKATA KAVI

The poet Chemakura Venkata Kavi wrote 'Vijaravilasamu' and dedicated it to Raghu-nathabhupala (1600-1631 A.D.,). The poet, narrating the pilgrimage made by Arjuna, a popular hero of mythology of Hindu, refers to his homage to god Narasimha of Antarvedi (East Godavari district) and his dip at the confluence there.

PRAHLADA CARITRA IN TELUGU LITERATURE
POTANA'S BHAGAVATAM-POPULAR SOURCES

Though **Prahlāda** Caritram has been dealt with even during 14th Century in books like Yerrana's Nrisimha **Purānam** the works which influenced the later writers the most is Potana's Bhagavatam composed in the 15th century. Potana's Bhagavatam is probably the only classical work which has become the household song of all the Telugu people for generations. Different episodes of his **Bhāgavatam** are recited by the traditional, Telugu people as part of their day to day activities. For example the Gajendra Moksham (the

liberation of an elephant from the clutches of a crocodile in waters) episode is sung during the early morning baths at the village tank or river or the backyard well etc., **Similiarly** the VamanAvataram, Rukminikalyanam, Pahlada Caritram and other episodes are **songs** of the daily routine in Telugu families. Many verses from the Pahlada Caritram of Potana are on the tongues of many Telugu people . It is important to note that the Telugu audience's view of Pahlada Caritram is governed by the Potana's compositions which they know. Most of the narrative art performances like Puranakalaksepam (Purana recital in temples) and Harikatha Kalaksepam (a dance-song and recital performance form) dealing with the Pahlada Caritram theme, Pahlada Caritram is narrated quite often with the help of Potana's compositions only. Telugu films on Pahlada Caritram also have used Pothana's composition extensively in their scripts. Thus even for the artist taking this theme for a dance drama, Potana's compositions become either an important source or a composition against which he can measure his own.

In Potana's composition the story begins with Hirnyakasipu's Tapassu (penance). Thus the Gods go and request the Lord Visnu for protection from Hirnyakasipu's atrocities. Then the narration goes on to the birth and childhood of Pahlada. Then Hirnyakasipu hands over Pahlada to Canda and Amarka the two sons of Sukrcarya and the remaining episodes are almost in the same order as in **Yakṣagānams**. The Kucipudi text rather than the **Mēlattūr** text seems to have run on the lines of Potana's composition.

PRAHLADA CARITRA YAKSAGANAM LITERATURE AND SCRIPTS OF THE MELATTUR AND KUCIPUDI PRAHLADA CARITRA PERFORMANCES

The Kucipudi and Melattur Prahlada Caritra **Nātakams** (Dance-dramas), in fact form part of a huge corpus of Yaksaganam literature composed with the theme of **PrahlādaCaritram**. From the beginning of the Yaksaganam literature in Telugu Prahlada **Charitram** has been one of the most recurrent themes.

Yaksaganam literature in Telugu seems to have begun with the **Soubharicharitam** of Proluganti Cinna Souri. He seems to have composed this book during the second half of the century. He called his work as Jakkulakatha which is the other name of the Yaksaganam. But this book is not available today.⁷³ ** The next available **Yakṣagānam** is Sugriva Vijayam of Kandukuri Rudrakavi, but there is an opinion that Vipranarayana Caritra of **Cakrapūri Nārāyana** is chronologically earlier to Sugrivavijayam of Kandukuri Rudrakavi.⁷⁴ Both these works belonged to the 16 th century. Next in chronological order is the Visnu Mayavilasam of Kankanti Paparaju which can be dated to around 1600 A.D. Janaki Parinayam of Tekumalla Rangasayi also belongs to the same period. The 1st woman composer of Telugu Yaksaganam is **Bala Papamba** who composed Akkamahadevi Charitra, which can be dated to the second half of the century. There are several others who composed Yaksaganam durings 16 th century.⁷⁵

⁷³**Andhra** Yasagana **Vāgmaya** Caritra by S.V. Joga Rao, Andhra University Publications, Waltair 1961, second part page no. 1.

⁷⁴**Ibid** second part pp. 9-10.

⁷⁵**Ibid** second part pp. 17-22.

With the Nayaka Kings of the South (Tanjore, Madhurai **etc.**), flourishing of the Yaksaganam literature reached its peak. During the 17th and 18th centuries, these southern Kingdoms of Tanjore, Madurai, Chenji, Pudukkotai and Mysore became main centres of Telugu literature activity. During this period Yaksaganam became the dominant form of literature.⁷⁶ The enormous number of Yaksaganams composed during this period can not be imagined to have come into existence without an equally big activity of Yaksaganam performances. Who performed these Yaksaganam, whether they belonged to a Bhagavata Melam like Kucipudi or Melattur Melam or some other such performing troupe is not clear. But interestingly Raghunatha Nayaka, son of Achyutappa Nayaka, the donor of Melattur Agraharam (Brahmin village) to the Melattur performers **seems** to be the 1st known composer of Prahlada Caritra Yaksaganam in the chronological order.⁷⁷ Prahlada Caritra is mentioned among his works, but is not available to-day. Next author of Prahlada Caritra in chronological order is Vijaya Raghava Nayaka, the King of Tanjore and the son of Raghunatha Nayaka his work is dated to 1652 A.D. This work is one of the five works of the Vijayaraghava Nayaka available today. Prof. S.V. Joga Rao in his Ph.D. thesis on the Yaksaganam literature in Telugu does a small introductory review of this work.⁷⁸ According to him Katikavadu (Batton holder) who became a conventional character in Yaksaganams of the later period is introduced for the first time in the Prahlada Caritram of Vijayaraghava Nayaka only. Interestingly, this Katikavani Valakam (the behaviour of the Batton Holder) episode is found in the

⁷⁶Telugu Sahitya **Samiksa** by G. Nagayya own publication. Tirupathi. 1990

⁷⁷Andhra Yaksagana **Vāgmaya** Caritra by S.V. Joga Rao, Andhra University Publication Waltair 1961. pp. no. 251-252.

⁷⁸Ibid pp. 261 - 262.

Malattur version of Prahlada Charitra Natakam also. The next point Prof. Joga Rao highlights about Vijayaraghava's Prahlada Caritram is the colloquial language used in the conversations of Prahlada's gurus characters Pamula jogi (the snake charmer) character etc. Prof. Joga Rao highlights even the instructions to performers incorporated within the work composed by Vijayaraghava Nayaka. On the basis of these instructions Prof. Joga Rao conclusively declares that this script was used for performances during the 17th century. Similarities between the Melattur **Prahlāda** Caritra Natakam script and the work of Vijayaraghava Nayaka may be either due to the influence of the Melattur performance of Prahlada Caritra Natakam on Vijayaraghava Nayaka or **Vice-versa**.

Next important composer of the Prahlada Caritra Natakam is Melattur Venkata Rama Sastri during late 18th Century and early 19th century. Venkata **Rāma** Sastri was a member of the Melattur Bhagavata **Mēlam** is said to have composed 12 Yaksaganams all in Telugu. The Prahlada Caritra Natakam used to-day seems to be one of these twelve. The Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakam team claims that the script used by them in these contemporary performances of Prahlada Caritra **Nātakam** is in fact this same script composed by Melattur Venkata Rama Sastri.

Tyagaraja seems to have composed a Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam during the same period. But this work does not include several important characters of the Prahlada Caritra. Prahlada seems to be the single character of the composition. This seems to be a music centered work in which devotional lyric meant to be sung by the Prahlada character, is the most dominant portion of the script.

Prahlada Natakam became recurrent more during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Tadipatri Laxmana Dasa who composed Prahlada Natakam during the second half of the 19th century mentions Prahlada Natakams of Vedacala **Tirunārāyanācāryulu** and Yadavadasu as works earlier to his.⁷⁹ Prahlada Caritra Natakams of some other authors are also mentioned in Prpf. Joga Rao's book. For example there is a book by **Bōdicārla** Subba Kavi of Kurnool district. He seems to have composed this work in later 19th century. According to Prof. Joga rao in this work name of the wife of Hirnyakasipu is mentioned as Susila instead of as Lilavati.⁸⁰ The Katikavadu (Batton holder) character talks in Hindi, Tamil and Kannada languages in this work.⁸¹ One Nischinta Yarnbarayya also seems to have composed a Prahlada **Vijayam**.⁸²

The work of Vedala Tirunarayanacharyulu mentioned here seems to be very important, since the Kucipudi Prahlada Natakam script seems to be mainly based on this work. 'Vedantam Paravatisam who is the compiler of the Kucipudi Prahlada Natakam (Yaksaganam)' available in print today, mentions two names Vedachala Tirunarayanacharyulu and Tiruvallikkeni **Rāmānujachāryulu** as the authors of the scripts on which his compilation is based. In the preface of this printed book he even mentions,⁸³

"It seems Sri Vedachala Tirunarayanacharyulu and Sri Tiruvellekkeni **Rāmānuja-**
caryulu seems to have handed over the manuscripts of the Prahlada Natakams

⁷⁹Ibid page no. 369.

⁸⁰Ibid page no. 136.

⁸¹Ibid page no. 136.

⁸²Ibid page no. 200.

⁸³**Kūcipūdi** Prahlada Natakam (Yaksaganam) compiled by Vedantam Parvatisam own publication, 1981. page no. 3.

composed by them to my ancestors 150 years ago".

He mentions two other names Sri Perumbuduruvaru and Sri **Bokkārāmabrahmam** garu as the composers of his lyrics incorporated in his compositions.⁸⁴ There is a lot of Hindi/Urdu Language and Hindustani music incorporated in this script of the **Tirunārāyanācharyulu** along with the Telugu language and Karnatic music. (Prof. Joga Rao mentions the family name of the Tirunarayanacharyulu as Vedala whereas Vedantam Parvatisam mentions as Vedachala. Prof Joga Rao mentions that the work is dedicated to Sesha **Saila** Dhamudu Lord Venkateswara, Vedantam Parvatisam mentions the makutam (dedicative addressing) of Uragasailavasa (probably Lord Venkateswara only).⁸⁵

Vedantam Rattayya Sarma gives more particulars about this handing over of the Prahlada **Caritra** scripts to the Kucipudi team by Vedachala Tirunarayanacharyulu and Triuvallekkeni Ramanujacharyulu. According to him once around 1875⁸⁶ the Kucipudi team happened to have camped in Nellur and performing several different kalapas like Bhamakalapam, **Golla** Kalapam and Dadinamma. Vedachala **Tirunārāyanāchāryulu** was among the audiences during these performances. He got immensely impressed by the talent of the Kucipudi dancers. He came to congratulate and admire the team members. During the course of the discussion he informed the team that he composed a Prahlada Caritra Natakam and asked the team if they can adapt it to perform Prahlada Caritra Natakam. The team was not a little pleased with this justure of the great scholar and

⁸⁴Ibid. page no. 3.

⁸⁵Ibid page no. 3 and Andhra **Yaksagāna** Vagmaya Caritra by S.V. Joga Rao, Andhra University Publication, 1961, page no. 140.

⁸⁶Interview with Rattayya **Sarma** dated 3rd December 1996.

readily agreed to perform Prahlada Caritram using the script provided by him. When the team hesitated a little with regard to the financiers Vedachala Tirunarayanacharylu volunteered even to help them get funding for the performance. That team was doubly happy and immediately gave a performance of the Prahlada Caritram. That was the first ever performance of Prahlada Caritram by the Kucipudi team. During this performance Tiruvellekkeni Ramanujacharyulu was among the audiences. He was immensely pleased by the performance and offered a script of Prahlada Caritra natakan composed by himself to be made use of by the Kucipudi team. The team happily adapted portions of this scripts into their next performance. It was Hari Madhavayya⁸⁷ who was mainly contributing to the music composition and choreography in adapting the scripts.

According to Vēdantam Rattayya Sarma Hari Madhavayya garu in fact handed over the responsibility of composing a fulfilled Prahlada Caritra script to his maternal nephew (sister's son) Chintāvenkatarāmayya alias Venkata Raidu popularly known as Bālintarāmayya.⁸⁸ This Venkataramayya was a wonderful musician and excellent choreographer and erudite literateur.⁸⁹ According to Rattayya Sarma today's Prahlada Caritra performance is basically a legacy of this composition edited by Chintāvenkatarāmayya. This edition of the performance was taken from place to place by different Kūcipūḍi teams who spread from Kūcipūḍi to different other places. When Rattayya Sarma's

⁸⁷The exact date of Hari Madhavayya is not clearly established. In 'who is who' of Kucipudi Dance by Kum. Jonnalagadda Anuradha, the date of Hari Madhavayya is mentioned as "late 18th and mid 19th centuries".

⁸⁸The date of Late Shri Cinta Venkataramayya is mentioned as 1860 - 1947 by Laksmi Narasimha Sastry Cintalapāṭi, Kucipudi Bhagavatulu, own publication, Tenali, 1983, page 260.

⁸⁹Interview with Rattayya Sarma, 3rd December, 1996.

team went to perform at different places, they were told that Kucipudi performance of Prahlada Caritram was already well known to them as the performance took place in that area decades ago. Some of the older generation audiences even guided them in stage settings etc., by recollecting how the Kucipudi team which performed Prahlada Caritram there, decades ago, performed it.⁹⁰ According to Rattayya Sarma the Kucipudi team made extensive use of Potana's Prahāda Caritram verses discussed earlier.⁹¹ According to him they adapted the following verses of Potana's Bhagavatam they are:-

Mandara **makaranda mādhyamuna dēlu**.....

.....marugune **sandra nihāra** mulaku.

Ambujōdara divya padaravinda

.....vinuta guna sheela **matalu veyanela**.

PadyamNo. 150

chadivinchiri nanu Guruvulu.....

.....jadiviti tandri.

PadyamNo. 166

According to Rattayya Sarma the Kucipudi team made great use of vacanams (Prose dialogues) from Sri Dharmavaram Rama Krisnamacaryulu's Prahlada Caritram a mythological (verse prose, non-dance) drama.⁹²

⁹⁰Interview with Rattayya Sarma, 3rd December, 1996.

⁹¹Interview with Rattayya Sarma, 3rd December, 1996.

⁹²Interview with Rattayya Sarma, 3rd December, 1996.

Based on the above information we may arrive at the following conclusion about the scripts of Melattur and Kucipudi Pahlada Charitra Yaksaganams.

1. Both Melattur and Kucipudi scripts of Pahlada Caritra Yaksaganam are products of a long tradition of Pahlada Caritra Yaksaganam. Which is atleast 400 years old, the earliest known composition being the one composed by the Raghunadha Nayaka towards the end of the 16th Century.
2. The Melattur script, though found to have influences of the Yaksaganams of Vijaya Raghava Nayaka (17th Century) seems to have been based on the script by Melattur **Venkatārāma** Sastry (1743- 1809 A.D).⁹³
3. The Kucipudi script is based on the scripts of Vedacala Tirunarayanacharyulu and Tiruvellekkeni Ramanaujacharyulu on the one hand and versers from Potana's **Bhāgavatam** and prose dialogues from the mythological drama by Dharmavaram Rama Krishnamacharyulu on the other.

The information that the **Kūcipūḍi** script was first procured from Nellore and the memory of the Melattur performers that they migrated from Pisuvati village,⁹⁴ in the then Nellore Mandala put together gives us scope to imagine that Nellore and surroundings probably had had a vibrant tradition of Pahlada Caritra Yaksaganams. Melattur team while migrating from the Nellore area took this tradition along with it. The tradition which remained in Nellore got revived through the Kucipudi team's interaction

"Andhra **Yaksagāna** Vagmaya Caritra by S.V. **Joga** Rao, Andhra University Publications, 1961, pp. 335-336.

⁹⁴**Interview** with S. Natarajan dated 22nd May, 1995.

with the scholars at Nellore. Probably Melattur team's attachment for Pahlada Caritra **Yakṣagānam** could be explained on the basis of the Pahlada **Caritra** tradition being an ancestral legacy and a memoir of their ancestral place.

PULLING THE STRINGS TOGETHER

Thus on the basis of the discussion in this chapter we may conclude that the roots of attraction for Pahlada Caritram in Kūcipūḍi and Mēlattūr traditions are more than one. The most superficial explanation would be that both traditions are Bhagavata traditions i.e. devotional traditions and hence it is quite natural for these two traditions to take up devotional themes like the Pahlada Caritra theme, which is in fact a story of victory of devotion. But neither the Kucipudi team members nor the Melattur Bhagavatars give such reason for the significance of the theme. According to the Kucipudi Bhagavatars they like this theme. It is good to perform and gives a great scope to exhibit their artistic excellence. Popularity according to them is another consideration. Pahlada Caritra is one of the dance-dramas which earned them the enormous popularity which they enjoy today. For the Melattur team Pahlada Caritra has more religious and ritualistic significance. For them they ought to perform Pahlada Caritra as part of their family vow and worship for Lord **Narasimha** the principal deity of the **Narasimha** temple of Melattur . That is the reason why Mēlattūr performers who no longer live on dance, who in fact are well settled and well off earning riches from their own modern professions like bussiness and Engineering come back to Melattur, some of them all the way from far off countries like U.A.E just to participate in the performance of Pahlada

Caritra on the Narasimha Jayanthi day in the premises of Varadaraja Perumal Temple of Melattur . Both Kucipudi and Melattur traditions of Pahlada Caritra performance are related to a long tradition of Narasimha Cult prevalent in Andhra Pradesh. Kucipudi tradition is also related to the literary tradition of Narasimha literature in Telugu. For the Melattur people, if the theory of migration from the Nellore area is historically valid Pahlada Caritra may have even a family significance as an ancestral memoir of their original place of living. The Kuchipudi performers, who took the original scripts of Pahlada Caritra from Nellore and from Srivaisnavite scholars detached it from both the regionality of Nellore and religiosity of Srivaisnavism and made it one of the themes of their huge repertoire giving it the identity and stamp of the **Kūcipūḍi** style of performance. The religiosity and regional strangeness found in the Melattur performance might be continuation of the original state of Pahlada Charitra performance, though even the Melattur religiosity has nothing to do with Srivaisnavite traditon.

Chapter Three
 SCALING THE TWO PRAHLADA NATAKAMS
 TOGETHER
 (A comparative analysis of the gross units of Kucipudi and Melattur
 Prahlada Nāṭakams)

Before going into a goass level comparison between the Kucipudi and Melattur performances of Prahlada Caritra Natakam, it is relevant to touch upon the cultural backgrounds and the performance attitude of both the teams. Though some of these aspects have already been covered in the earlier chapters, a restatement of them is being felt necessary for a connection here.

ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Both the Kucipudi and Melattur villages are **Agraharams** (villages where only Brahmins live and the architecture of the houses and the topography of the village is built in a way suitable to traditional **Brhmin** way of life). The earliest historical document the famous Machupalli kaifiat mentioning the Kucipudi tradition also mentions them as hailing from the **Kūcipūḍi** village.⁹⁵ There is no historical record earlier to this which establishes whether this village was a donation to the Kucipudi team as a

""Studies in the history of the thrird dynasty of Vijayanagara" By N. Venkata **Ramaiah** garu. Appendix-6C. Pages 462-463. As cited in Kucipudi Bhagavatulu, by Laxminarsimha Sastry Cintalapati, own Publications, Tenali, 1983, page no. 28.

reward to their performance. Records of latter times established the fact that lands in and around this village were donated to the different specific members of the Kucipudi team by Tanisha, one of the Golkonda Kings.⁹⁶ The Melattur village according to all the oral histories available was a donation to Melattur team given by Atchyutappa Nayaka, the Tanjore King of 1560-1600 A.D.,

The earliest historical document of the Kucipudi tradition i.e., the above mentioned Machupalli Kaifiat describes it as a team which used to travel to perform.⁹⁷ The Melattur team, in all the oral histories, is depicted as a team which never travelled out of Melattur.

The Kucipudi team in all the oral histories is depicted as the **one** which took its dance performance as a profession and as a living. Melattur team, is remembered by the both insiders and outsiders of the team, as the one which never took its performance as a living. Especially, today's Melattur team members are all well off and do not depend on their performance for their living. As such the Melattur team performers perform only with an attitude of sacrality and reverence, sentiment and vow towards the traditional artistic activity of their lineage.

Especially Melattur team never performed Prahlaḍa Caritra Natakam outside Melattur. They perform it only in the Varadaraja **Perumal** temple premises in Melattur.⁹⁸ They do not violate this principle about the place of performance of Prahlaḍa Caritra Natakam. Kucipudi team performed Prahlaḍa Caritra **Nāṭakam** at several places outside Kucipudi.

⁹⁶1672-1687 A.D. Ibid pp. 108-116.

⁹⁷Ibid page no. 28.

⁹⁸Interview with S. Kumar dated 1st December 1996.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS PRAHLADA NATAKAM

For the Kucipudi team performance of Prahlada Caritra **Nātakam** is part of their any other performing activity. According to Rattayya **Sarma**, Kucipudi team does not engage itself in any special rehearsal for the performance of **Prahlāda** Caritra Natakam. For all the team members the script of Prahlada Caritra Natakam becomes part of their memory of a huge repertoire of texts. Each member grows as a child hearing and learning the script. There are no specific jobs assigned to any specific member of the team. Each member, right from the childhood, grows executing all the different jobs of the performance including screen holding, torch holding, background singing, chorus singing, stage setting and playing any of the characters of a given dancedrama within the repertoire of the Kucipudi tradition. As part of this culture any member of the Kucipudi team can play any role within the **Prahlāda** Caritra Natakam. Rattayya **Sarma** feels that this arrangement facilitates to overcome last minute upsets due to the non availability of any particular team member." **Kūcipūḍiteam** does not require long notices for the performance. Once invited they get ready to perform even on the very day of invitation. Contrastingly the **Mēlattūr** team takes the preparations for Prahlada Caritra **Nātakam** performance more seriously. Since for any team member performance is not part of their daily routine or vocation they feel the need for a rebrushing of their preparation at least for 15 days before the performance of any of their dance-dramas. This holds good even for Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance. The Melattur team members, one in Bangalore, one in Madras, one in Kumbhakonam, one in U.A.E and a few in Mellatur all

"Interview with Rattayya Sarma dated 3rd December 1996.

gather at Melattur at least 15 days in advance to the day of Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance. They perform regular rehearsals and rebrush their memory and habit and thus gear themselves up for the great event of the year viz., Prahlada Caritra Natakam in the premises of the **Varadarāja Perumal** Temple of Melattur. Each member of the Melattur team is assigned a particular job in the performance.

Melattur team members maintain strict rules of purity and pollution during the performance days. Each performer performs with "madi" (Purity, maintained though wearing specially washed cloths and a special head bath and with restrictions of not touching any 'impure' person or material). The Narasimha role player fasts for the whole day of the performance, for the sake of purity and devotion. The Kucipudi team members recollect that even the Kucipudi performers of earlier generation used to maintain similar restrictions¹⁰⁰ especially in connection with Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance. Today's Kucipudi team members are not found to be so particular about these restrictions. Oral histories reveal that Kucipudi team members began giving up these restrictions several generations ago in the case of other performances than Prahlada Caritra Natakam. But with regard to Prahlada Caritra Natakam austerities were maintained till recently. The nonaustere approach of the Kucipudi team is now spreading to Prahlada Caritra Natakam also.

Even casting is also taken seriously by the **Mēlattūr** team. A specific member of the Melattur team is assigned a specific major character of Prahlada Caritra Natakam (for playing minor characters performers are invited from different places like Madras).

¹⁰⁰Interview with **Rattayya Śarma** dated 34th December 1996.

Each performer playing a specific character takes it very seriously and gets identified with the character. Playing any character of the dance-drama is part of devotion for and worship of Lord **Narasimha**. Natarajan the present organiser of the Melattur team told that the Lord Narasimha has been seen to be overseeing the casting from time to time.¹⁰¹ For example when a particular performer gets aged Lord Narasimha appears in the dream of the organiser and asks to hand over that particular character to a specific younger member of the team. As an example Natarajan quoted the incident of how the character of Hiranyakasipu was given to Kumar when Swaminadhan (Plate-XII) playing that character got aged. Lord Narasimha appeared in the dream of Natarajan and asked him (Swaminadhan) to stop from playing the character of Hiranyakasipu as he is too old to perform and hand it over to the younger member Kumar. Swaminadhan did not accept the decision in the beginning, as he was too attached to his performance and was not ready to give it up. But after coming to know that it was Lord Narasimha's **order** he yielded and Kumar became the Hiranyakasipu (**Plate-XIII**) from the next performance onwards. When Swaminadhan saw **kumar** in the Costume of Hiranyakasipu he shouted in admiration and went on applauding the performance with loud shouts of **excitement** throughout the performance. He felt secure about his legacy being continued properly by Kumar.¹⁰² This response by G. Swaminadhan reveals clearly that his earlier resistance to give up performance was out of attachment for the art form rather than out of egoistic consideration. His readiness to appreciate the younger talent reflects his

¹⁰¹**There** is a theory that the Kucipudi team restricted their performances only to male members on account of these purity - pollution observances only.

¹⁰²**Interview** with S. Natarajan dated 22nd May, 1996.

noble personality as an artist. According to Natraj who is presently the Lilavathi par excellence, he himself is going to give up his Lilavathi performance which is already 35 years old, as Lord Narasimha has already ordered him to hand it over to Srikanth who is presently performing some minor woman characters.

In the Kucipudi team major organisation of the responsibility is negotiate with the sponsors of the programme and distribute the money among the members of the team. According to **Rattayya Sarma** this is not an easy task. Apart from artistic satisfaction the main incentive for the performers is remuneration as they live on that. This tendency usually leads to psychological problems. The organiser needs great organisational skills in managing these problems. In the Melattur team the organiser has a great responsibility with regard to finances because the MelatturPrahlada Caritra Natakam performance must take place whether sponsorer or non sponsorer. Usually sponsorship is meagre. In **fact, according to** Kumar of Bangalore, a **Mēlattūr** team member (the present Hiranyakasipu) one of the major reasons for Mr. Natarajan going to U.A.E is to earn enough finances through his own job to sustain the tradition of the annual performance of Prahlada Caritra Natakam.¹⁰³ This indicates the extraordinary commitment and devotion of the Melattur team people for their art form. Mr. Natarajan has got a great responsibility of taking care of the financial requirements of the performance including the arrangements for stay of several guests at Melattur during the performance.

¹⁰³**Interview** with S. Kumar 1st December, 1996. He Says "In fact Melattur team includes Prahlada Caritra Natakam into a week long **dance-drama** festival in which other dance dramas of Melattur repertoire like Harishcandra, Usha **Parinayam** etc., are also performed. Mr. Natarajan hosts the entire festival and the finances earned by him are handy for the hospitality for a big number of distinguished guests".



Plate-XI: Premises of the Varadaraja Perumal Temple, the venue of Melattur Prahlāda Ca
itra Nātakam performance
(Source: Cover page of the SLNJB MNNS, Souvenir, **Details** in the picture).



Plate-XII: G. Swaminathan as Hiranyakasipu in an encounter with Lord Narasimha.
(Source: Souvenir SLNJB MNNS 1990).

ASSOCIATE SKILLS: MAKE-UP, COSTUME etc.,

Kucipudi team used to have its own make up material and team members used to take care of make up themselves. Even in this aspect the team developed professional skills. Rattayya sarma remembers that the traditional Kucipudi performers used to prepare Gadas (maces) etc., using the sticks etc., available in the village where the team was performing. Their travel kit used to include the make up material also.¹⁰⁴ This material used to be the traditional powders, wigs etc., But now-a-days the team is switching over to engaging a make up man and adapting modern make up techniques. Melattur team never treated make up as part of his its professional activity. It always depended on the help of a make up man usually the same as the one performing this job in the Traditional Tamil Folk Theatre. But the Melattur costume has its own identity and the make up man always tries to maintain this and adapt his make up technique to the traditional costume of the Melattur team.

VENUE AND STAGE SPATIAL SYMBOLISM:

Venue of performance and stage arrangements is another major aspect in which Kucipudi and Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakams differ greatly. The Kucipudi traditional Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance was just like any other traditional Yakshagānam performance, an open air street performance. Any street corner can turn into the venue for the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance. Traditionally there was no separate elevation for the stage. The audience and performers used to be on the

¹⁰⁴Interview with Vedantam Rattayya Sarma, dated 3rd December, 1996.

same level on the ground. A portion of the ground used to be cleaned, groomed and levelled for the performance. A circular white powder drawing is drawn around the stage so as to keep away the evil spirits.

The stage used to be worshipped. This is called 'Rangapuja'. Purpose of this is again to keep the evil spirits away. The makeshift screen is brought on to the stage so set and characters enter from behind the screen. After the entry the screen itself exits. Rattayya Sarma says that Prahlada Caritra Natakam requires some special stage arrangements like creating a pillar from which **Narasimha** has to crash out. He recollects that in the early days of his performance some of the audience themselves helped them in making such arrangements, recollecting from their memory of having watched Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance by the ancestors of the present Kucipudi teams.¹⁰⁵ This traditional stage setting has gradually changed into an elevated circular stage made up of the traditional tables which were part of furniture of all the traditional furnished houses. Now-a-days the performances are being arranged in the modern auditoriums. The Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance takes place invariably only in the premises of the Varadaraja **Perumal** Temple of Melattur. In the street (teru) in front of the temple (Plate-XIV) a pendal is raised (Plate-XV) in which an elevated stage is set in direction facing the main entrance of the Varadaraj Perumal Temple. This pendal falls within a clusters of houses in front of the temple. Audience squat in the space between the pendal and the temple. Some lean back on to the walls (**Plate-XVI**) of the platforms in front of the houses close to the pendal. Some bring their benches themselves

¹⁰⁵Interview with Vedantam Rattayya Sarma, dated 3rd December, 1996.

(**Plate-XVII**) and scatter in some convenient place on these benches. Some of the guests are provided a few chairs (**Plate-XVIII**) in front of the pendal. Important point is that the performers face the main entrance of the temple during the performance symbolically indicating their performance is a worship to the deity of the temple (**Figure-II**). At the end of the performance the Narasimha of the performance is worshipped in the same way as the deity in the temple is worshipped (**Plate-XIX**). At the end of the worship the sweet water drink made up of Jaggery, which is considered to be the most favourite drink of the Lord Narasimha is offered to Narasimha of the performance just as it is offered to the deity in the temple (**Plate-XX**) and the drink in five or six huge vessels so offered is distributed among the audience just as teertam (sacred water) in a temple is distributed. All these features of the Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance clearly establish the worship nature of the performance.

BOTH FOLLOW THE DEVOTIONAL VERSION

But the one important common feature of both the Kucipudi and Melattur Prahlada - charitra Natakams is that both of them follow the devotional version of the Prahlada story according to which Hiranyakasipu is, in fact, in his previous birth, the door keeper of the Lord Visnu and as such was longing eagerly for seeing Lord Visnu and getting killed in his hands. In both the Prahlada Caritra Natakams, Hiranyakasipu thanks (**Plate-XXI**) Prahlada for having helped in 'getting an opportunity to see Lord Visnu who he could not see despite great efforts'. This expression has a pun. At a superficial level this appears to be an expression of the arch enemy of the Lord Visnu who rejoices the opportunity

of facing and destroying the enemy. But suggestively this also expresses the eagerness of the door keeper of the Lord Visnu, who Hiranyakasipu in fact is , to see his Lord. In the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam when Diti laments the deaths of Hiranyaksha Hiranyakasipu consols her saying that his brother (Hiranyaksha) was lucky to have died in the hands of Lord Visnu, the liberator of all the souls. But this devotional nature of the story does not establish the devotional nature of the Kucipudi performance taking into consideration the information discussed above.

DETAILS OF THE PERFORMANCE SCRIPT

TECHNIQUE OF STORY PRESENTATION:

Based on the above comparison in the backgrounds of both the Prahlada Caritra Natakam performing teams, one may imagine that the Melattur team performs the Natakam in a greater detail than the Kucipudi team does. But interestingly in opposition to this expectation traditional Kucipudi performance of Prahlada Caritra Natakam is more detailed and elaborated than the Melatturteam's performances. The traditional Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam used to be performed for three full nights. The Melattur performance of Prahlada Caritra Natakam lasts only for five and half hours a single night.

Plate-XIII: Mr. S. Kumar of the Melattur team is the present Hiranyakasipu of M.P.N.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XIV: The Street, in front of the temple with thatched and tiled houses on either sides emanating from the main entrance of the temple,
Note: the Pandal raised for Melattur festival
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XV: The street in front of the temple with thatched and tiled houses on either sides leading towards the stage raised for the Mēlattūr festival.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XVI: A section of the audience of M.P.N.

Note: a few of the audience leaning to the wall, the old man informally squatting on the floor.



Plate-XVII: A section of the audience of M.P.N.

Note: a few settling down on their luggages etc.

(Source: R.O.D. 1995).



Plate-XVIII: A section of the audience of M.P.N.

Note: Special chairs meant for special invity guests.

(Source: R.O.D. 1995).



Plate-XIX: Worship of Narasimha dancer as part of M.P.N., the Sutradhara reciting hymns as Bhoomi Devi dancer and Prahlāda dancer watch on.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XX: Offering of the sweet Jaggery water to Narasimha dancer by Sūtradhārā as other members of the Bhgavata Mela watch on.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).

The traditional Kucipudi performance of Prahlada Caritra Natakam begins the story part with the episode of Hiranyakasipu's mother Diti. Vailing for the death of her son Hiranyaksha. Here there is a conversation between Diti and Hiranyakasipu. In the next episode Hiranyaksha's brother Hiranyakasipu proceeds to perform tapas to please Lord **Bramha**. Here there is a lyric of Lilavati trying to stop Hiranyakasipu expressing her inability to bear separation from husband. Hiranyakasipu does not **yeild** to her request. Hiranyakasipu instructs his ministers to look after his kingdom well in his absence. In the next episode there is a lyric of eulogy performed by Hiranyakasipu in praise of Lord Bramha. In the next episode Devendra afraid of Hiranyakasipu's tapas consults his minister Brhaspati. Here there is a conversation between Devendra and Brhaspati. In the next episode Devendra is seen kidnapping Lilavati. Here there is a conversation between Lilavati and **Dēvēndra**. Narada (the devine sage, the greatest devotee of Lord Narayana (Visnu) who keeps travelling through all the worlds) enters. Narada persuads **Dēvēndra** and takes Lilavati along with him. In the next episode the scene shifts to Hiranyakasipu's tapas. Bramha appears in front of Hiranyakasipu and sanctions him the boon. In the next episode Hiranyakasipu returns to his Kingdom. Here there is **a** lyric describing the glory of Hiranyakasipu's return to his Kingdom. Now Narada enters and tells Hiranyakasipu how Devendra kidnapped Lilavati and how he (Narada) protected her. Hiranyakasipu gets angry with Devendra and orders the demons to create havoc for Devas (gods) and their king (Devendra) and bring them in custody. The demons implementing the order, door keeper informs Hiranyakasipu of the entry of midwife. The midwife enters and informs Hiranyakasipu the birth of his son. Hiranyakasipu celebrates

this news and as part of the celebrations orders for the release of the imprisoned **Dēvās** (gods) Sukracarya, the guru of the demons enters and here there is a conversation between Sukracarya and Hiranyakasipu about the new born son of Hiranyakasipu and the name of the Prahlada for the baby is decided here. Now Hiranyakasipu sends his son with Canda and Amarka the traditional teachers of the demon community.

In the Melattur performance the story of all the above episodes is cutshort. The story part of the Melattur performance begins with the entry of Sukracarya and it is he who informs Hiranyakasipu about the death of Hiranyakasha. Hiranyakasipu gets angry and expresses his desire to take revenge on Visnu. Lilavati **tries** to pacify him. At this juncture Hiranyakasipu flashes back on to the episode of his tapas and boons from Lord Brahma and his deathlessness. Hiranyakasipu orders his demons to go in search of Lord Visnu and locate him. The demons returns back and informed their failure in locating Lord Visnu. Prahlada enters here and enquires from his father Hiranyakasipu about the reason for his father's enmity with Lord Visnu. It is at this juncture that Canda and Amarka enters the scene **and** Hiranyakasipu hands over his son to them and asks them to teach the boy enmity with Lord Visnu.

This episode of Canda and Amarka teaching Prahlada the demonical learning, Prahlada not receiving the same etc., is common between the Kucipudi and Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakams. But in the Melattur performance this episode is stretched longer than in the Kucipudi performance. It takes nearly seven scenes in Melattur performance whereas in the **KūcipūḍiPrahāḍa** Caritra Natakam this is finished in two scenes.

In the Melattur form Pahlada tells his mates in the Gurukula (traditional school) that he acquired devotion for Narayana (Viṣṇu). On account of sage Narada initiating him into Visnu devotion while he was in his mother's womb. Though in the printed version of the Kucipudi script of Pahlada Caritra Natakam also this version of Pahlada revealing the reason for his Visnu devotion to his school mates is found, in the actual performances of the Kucipudi team this is not found.

In both Melattur and Kucipudi Pahlada Charitra Natakams next episode is Hiranyakasipu trying to know about his son's learning. In both the versions Hiranyakasipu gets angry with his son. In both the versions Lilavati enters the scene. But in the Melattur version there is a lyric here through which Lilavati begs for pardoning the child. In Kucipudi version this is covered through a small conversation. In both Kucipudi and Melattur performances this episode is followed by the episode of a series of punishments to Pahlada like making him bitten by snakes, making him drink poison, making him get crushed under elephant feet, throwing him down from high mountains etc., This is done through several scenes. Certain incidents like crushing under elephant feet etc, **are** only narrated. In the Kucipudi performance it is said that a (Mask ?) of an elephant was really entered for this scene.¹⁰⁶ In fact there is, daruvu (Lyric) viz, 'Vedalenadigo **madagajamu**' (lo thus starts off the stout elephant) in the Kucipudi Pahlada Caritra Natakam script both in the oral and printed versions. This is not seen in the Melattur performance. But in both Kucipudi and Melattur Pahlada Caritra Natakams there are entries of sankes charmer, poisoner, wrestlers etc.,

¹⁰⁶Interview with Vedantam Rattayya Sartna, dated 3rd December, 1996.

After this episode, in the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam Prahlada is sent back to the Gurukula for another attempt to reform the kid. There are scenes of this second attempt of teaching. In the Kucipudi version the boy comes back and there is an argument between Hiranyakasipu and Prahlada at this juncture. In the Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam the episode of second attempt is not found. The performance directly proceeds from episode of punishment to the episode of **arguments** between Hiranyakasipu and Prahlada . In the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam Canda and Amarka on the orders of Hiranyakasipu create, through a witchcraft; practises an evil spirit called 'Kritti' and that spirit stoops over Prahlada to devour him. Kritti unable to reach Prahlada , who is immersed in Haribhajan (singing the praise of Lord Visnu) boomerangs over Canda and Amarka. The demon teachers take shelter of Prahlada . Prahlada utters the Narayana mantra and evil spirit gets killed. Canda and Amarka narrates this incident to Hiranyakasipu. At this juncture, gets extremely infuriated and asks **his** son to show the Lord Visnu in a pillar opposite to him. In the Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam the episode of Kritti is not found. The argument between Hiranyakasipu and Prahlada directly leads to Hiranyakasipu asking Prahlada to show Lord Visnu in the pillar opposite to him. Hereafter the episode of Narasimha breaking out of the pillar even the Kucipudi team adapts flash back technique and narrative intermissions. This indicates that the Melattur performance also could be a briefer version of a longer performance of the past. But the Melattur team members claim that their present day version of the performance is exactly the same as the oldest and the earliest performance and follows the script composed by **Mēlattūr Venkatarāma** Sastry true to T. But unless

the original script of Melattur Venkatarama Sastry becomes available this cannot be confirmed.¹⁰⁷

PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMING

In the Melattur Pahlada Caritra Natakam performance the entire story Pahlada Caritra Natakam is narrated in brief. As part of prestory part of the performance. Killing Hiranyakasipu Pahlada singing the praise of Lord Narasimha, Pahlada and others trying to pacify Lord Narasimha. The pacified Lord Narasimha blessing Pahlada are all common between Kucipudi and Melattur Pahlada Caritra Natakams.

From the above comparison it may be seen how the Kucipudi version of the Pahlada Caritra story has more details than the Melattur one. In fact the Kucipudi version is obedient to the purana version of the story. In the Melattur Pahlāda Caritra Natakam the brevity becomes possible through 1. Narration of the entire story in the beginning of the performance itself 2. Through the flash back technique adapted at different junctures.

The above described Kucipudi version of Pahlada Caritra Natakam performance is based on the printed and oral versions and the memories of Kucipudi performers. Today's Kūcipūḍi Pahlada Caritra Natakam is not as long as this. Now-a-days even the Kucipudi team is finishing the performance within a single night sometimes within one or two hours in these briefer versions.

¹⁰⁷Even after consistent effort this script could not be procured from the Melattur team.

The pre-story part of the performance of the Kucipudi and Melattur Pahlada Caritra Natakams has a few similarities. In the Kucipudi one the programme begins with **Purvarangam** (prestage) which includes 1. Nandi Vachanam, 2. Vinayaka Stuti and 3. **Amba** Stuti. The Melattur **Pahlāda** Caritra Natakam begins with Todaimangalam which is nothing but Tamil Version of Purvarangam and which includes Vinayaka Stuti and Anjaneya stuti. In the Melattur version this part is followed by a unique humorous intervension through a funnily slim and tall character called 'Konangi' (**Plate-XXII**). Konangi is a fictious idiomatic metaphor for a mischeous guy used in the coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh. Konte Konangi (mischeous Konangi) is usual expression used in reference to him. This character enters the stage and performs a laugh provoking dance and exits. According to the Melattur team there is a myth about this 'Konangi'. Once Vinayaka swallowed the disc weapon of Lord Visnu and gods tried their best to get the weapon out of Vinayaka's belly. Failing in their attempts, they created Konangi who through his mischeous humour made Vinayaka burst out into a loud laughter which made the disc weapon to come out of his belly. In the Melattur version the Konangi dance is followed by the entry of two **Bhāgavatārs** (**Plate-XXIII**) who sing the lyric of Pahlada **Pattabhisēkam Sabdam** composed by Melattur Venkatarama Sastry. (Now-a-days, the Melattur team is performing dance to this lyric). This followed by Vinayaka Pravesham singing lyric (discussed in the earlier chapter). Then Sutradhara (anchor) narrates the story from the left side (for the audieance) of the stage in brief by Yaksagana type recital of the prose. Then the Sutradhara (anchor) sings the lyric 'Ganapathi Vacche' with which the Vinayaka mask wearing dancer enters the stage and dances to the lyric

(**Plate-III**). At the end of the song Sutradhara performs the worship of Vinayaka by breaking coconut etc., in front of the Vinayaka mask wearing dancer (**Plate-XXIV**). All these pre-story elements are not found in the **Kūcipūḍi** Prahlada Caritra Natakam. It directly proceeds from the above mentioned **Amba** Stuti to the entry of 'Vetrahastudu' (the batton holder). This Vetrahastudu enters the stage, in the Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam after the above descrtibed Ganapathi Worship. Vetrahastudu is called 'Katikamvadu' in the Melattur version (**Plate-XXV**). In fact, Katikamvadu is the native Telugu word for the Sanskrit word 'Vetrahastudu'. Even today in all the Telugu villages there is a traditional job of a cone holding person and he is called 'Katkavadu, Katikayana' etc., The cane in the hands of the Katkavadu is a symbol of the power of the state. Traditionally, this cane holding person used to lead king and used to announce the arrival of the king. Copudaru is a Urdu word for Katikavakd. Interestingly in **Kūcipūḍi** script this word is found used. In the Kucipudi script of Prahlada Caritra Natakam this Copudar is found using several **differnt** languages such as Urdu, and Marati **etc.**, to announce the arrival of the King Hiranyakasipu. In the Melattur version 'Katkavadu' speaks only Telugu. Here again the Melattur version has an interesting variation in comparison to the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam. The announcement of the arrival of Hiranyakasipu is followed by the arrival of Hiranyakasipu in both Kucipudi and Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakams. But in the Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam arrival (entry of Hiranyakasipu) is followed by the entry of the several other major characters like Lilavati, Prahlada and Sukracarya. There are entry lyrics sung by Sutradhara for the entry of all these characters. In the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam the

entry of Hiranyakasipu after the announcement of Katikamvadu is followed by a royal court scene in which Hiranyakasipu is found seated in his crown in the royal court discussing affairs of the state with his ministers. This scene is followed by the entry of the secret informers of the King and then by the entry of the demons announce their victory in the destruction of temples etc., and then by the entry of Diti mother of Hiranyakasipu who grieves at the death of the Hiranyaksha as described earlier in this chapter.

The elaborate prestory **performance** in the Melattur Prahlada Caritra **Nātakam** indicate the orthodoxy of the team in following the traditional rituals. **Kūcipūḍi** team probably avoids all these details keeping the idea of sustaining their audience interest in view.

CONCLUSION OF PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMING COMPARISON

The reasons for the Kucipudi team following the detailed version of the story and Melattur team following the brief version can also be explained from a different perspective. The entire **Mēlattūr** performance is marked by a predominant **melowdrama**. Each scene is stretched through long conversations and long lyrics. Each dialogue is executed with a slow and stretching pronunciation. There is an extreme emphasis of emotions. Contrastingly in the **Kūcipūḍi** Prahlada Caritra **Nātakam** conversations and lyrics are shorter, pronounced and sung faster and the newdrama is conspicuously absent and gets dissolved into the fast action and drama running through the different humorous incidents of the story.



Plate-XXI: The Hiranyakasipu gleefully thanks Prahlada for having helped him to see lord Visnu. By this stage the performance shifts down the stage and comes amidst the audience.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XXII: Kōnaṅgi, the slim tall clown character of M.P.N., enters holding the napkin this way parodying the Dancers hand movements.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XXIII: The Bhagavatars dances in the traditional costumes of Melattur Bhagavata Mela enter after Konafigi exits as part of the Todaya mangalam.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XXIV: Worship of Vinayaka dancer in the M.P.N.

Note: Sutradhara offering coconut.

(Source: R.O.D. 1996).

INFLUENCE OF TWO DIFFERENT BROUGHTUPS ON THE TWO PRAHLADACARITRA NATAKAMS

(Another marking distinction of the Melattur performance is the marked Tamil accent found in the pronunciation of the Telugu prose and lyrics).

Even this can be seen as an evidence for the Kucipudi team's considerations of sustaining the audiences interest and a contrasting lack of such consideration in the slow and stretched performance of the Melattur team. Both the Kucipudi and Melattur teams confirm this view. The Kucipudi team members clearly proclaim that they perform for their audiences.¹⁰⁸ The Melattur team members equally clearly declare that they perform for themselves.¹⁰⁹

TECHNIQUE OF MUSIC AND DANCE

This stretching and prolonging nature of the Melattur performance is found in the musical composition also. Each syllable of the lyric is stretched through several beats of singing and even the rhythm (**talams**) adapted indicate a slow and stretched performance. Choreography and different aspects of abhinaya including Angikabhinaya also established the leisurely way of presentation in the Melattur form. Contrastingly the music and dance found in the Kūcipūḍi Prahlada Caritra Natakam is consciously faster dynamic versatile and varigated indicating the attitude of attracting the audience. These technical dance and music aspects of the performance of Kucipudi and Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakams will be analysed in a greater detail in the next chapter.

¹⁰⁸Interview with Ramanadham, Rattayya Sarma and Vedantam Parvatisam dated 3rd December, 1996.

¹⁰⁹Interview with S. Natarajan and S. Kumar dated 22nd May, 1996.

Chapter Four
 SCANNING THROUGH THE TWO PRAHLADA
 NATAKAMS
 (A comparative analysis of the microlevel units of technique of the two
 Prahlada Nāṭakams)

The identities of the Melattur and Kucipudi Prahlada Charitra Natakam performances are more intricately reflected in the details of the technique of their performances.

RASA SEQUENCE

Since all Natya is just a process of deriving rasa and since all the different aspects of Natya technique are centered around rasa, firstly the rasa composition as dealt in the Kucipudi and Melattur Prahlada Charitra Natakam performances is to be analysed. Interestingly in this aspect the two performances do not differ much. As outlined in the previous chapter the Kucipudi performance presents more details of the story than the Melattur performance. The first episode of the Kūcipūdi performance namely Hiranyaksa's death and Hiranyakasipu being reminded of it through his mother has an intense atmosphere of Karuna (pathos). Here it is Diti who is the alambana vibhava (rasa holding character) for Karuna (Pathos). There is a pathotic verse (**kandam**) sung by Diti. In response to this Hiranyakasipu sings a lyric "Yenduke nivitula....." (**Rāgam**; Ahiri,Talam; Misracapu) which has bhakti (devotional) element in it. Hiranyakasipu pro-

ceeds to perform tapas (verse and prose). At this *Lilāvati* responds through a lyric asking her husband not to leave her to suffer from separation. This is a pathetic lyric "*itula baluka tagunā....*" (Ragam; *Nilāmbari*, Talam; Triputa). Next to this there is a *Samvāda* Daruvu (conversational lyric) "*Vaṭaphalādhāri*" sung in Ragam *Anandabhairavi*, *Tālam* *Adi* by *Hiranyakasipu* and *Lilavathi* which has a mixture of *Tapovira* (zeal of penance) of *Hiranyakasipu* and *Karuna* (Pathos) of *Lilavathi*. *Hiranyakasipu* instructs his ministers to look after the kingdom well (prose). Next to this there is a lyric "*ninne nammiti....*" sung by *Hiranyakasipu* in praise of *Brahma* which has *Bhakti* (devotion) as the *rasa* (Ragam; *Punnagavarali*, Talam; *Misracapu*). then there is a *sandhi* (narrative verse) which has a powerful *bhayanaka* (terror) effect, describing *Hiranyakasipu's* tapas (penance) as terrifying for all the worlds especially to *Indra*. There is a conversation between *Indra* and *Bruhaspati* which has the continuation of the same element of fear. In the next episode *Indra* kidnapping *Lilavathi*. Here in *Lilavathi* is response and *Indra's* talk in the beginning there is an element of *raudra* (anger) but immediately it changes into the *Karuna* (pathos) of *Lilavathi* which is in a lyric "*taguna suranadha,..*" sung in *Hindustāni* *todi*, *tisra capu*. Here there is an intervention by *Narada* through a verse and lyric "*viduvunipaddhati...*" sung in Ragam *Kambhoji*, *Tisra gati*, which has the element of the *santa* (detachment) with a tone of pacification. The next episode when the scene shifts to *Hiranyakasipu's* tapas (penance) *Brahma* appears and talks to *Hiranyakasipu* through verses and admiration and blessings. *Hiranyakasipu's* responses in the form of verses has a tone of obedience and devotion. After the boons are sanctioned by *Brahma* *Hiranyakasipu's* response has got the emotion of *raudra* (anger), and *vira* (valorous—) mixed together. But for the

audience this creates a feeling of Bhayanaka (fear). Here Narada enters. Here there is a conversation between the copudar and **Nārada** which has hasya (humours). Probably this conversation is meant to provide relief between continuously running serious emotions like anger, fear and pathos. Narada hands over Lilavati to Hiranyakasipu. (dwipada verse). Coming to know of Indra's kidnapping, Hiranyakasipu gets angry (verse and prose). **Hiranyakasipu's** actions later to this have an intense element of roudra (anger) from the point of view of Hiranyakasipu and Bhayanaka (fear) from the point of view of audience. Later to this, news of Prahlada's birth reaches Hiranyakasipu and there is a great mood of celebration all around. **Sukrācārya's** entry has got a pravesa daruvu. The conversation of Sukracarya is full of humour. In the next episode Hiranyakasipu has a conversation with his son. Hiranyakasipu's lyric "rara **kumarā...**" (Ragam; Pun-nagavarali, Talam; Misracapu) is full of vatsalya (parental affection). Prahlada's dwipada in response to this has santa (dataachment). Hiranyakasipu's response to this has roudra(anger). Hiranyakasipu sends word for Canda and Amarka. The Conversation by Canda and Amarka is humourous. Hiranyakasipu's farewell to Prahlada is full of vatsalya (parental affection) "**caduvabōyi...**"(Ragam; Sahana, **Tālam**; Adi). Then the episode of Prahlada's learning under Canda and Amarka comes, this is again humourous. In this episode there are devotional lyrics "viduvajalanayya.....", "danujadhipa...." and "**vinumu** cadivi..." sung by Prahlada (Ragam; Pun-nagavarali, Talam ; Adi, Kambhoji , Adi and Bhairavi, Adi). Their is a conversation between Hiranyakasipu and Prahlada, Hiranyakasipu's lyric "yevaru bddhincinarura...." is in Nadanamakriya **Aditālam** which is full of roudra(anger) mixed with vatsalya (parental affection). There is another lyric "**it-**

ula balkeda vēmira...." by Hiranyakasipu in Kapi and Adi which is highly persuasive with a tone of parental affection. In reply to this lyric " tanuvunu bencina...." of Prahlada is more renunciational rather than devotional (Sahana rāgā-Adi tāla). Hiranyakasipu gets angry with the teachers **Canda** and **Amarka** (verse). Here **Lilāvati** enters and there is a samvada daruvu "valadurayanna..." (conversational lyric between Lilavati and Prahlada) (**Rāgam**; Mukhari, Talam; Misracapu) in which there is a mixture of Lilavati's emotion combined with fear, pathos and parental affection and **Prahlāda's** emotions which is santa (detachment) in the mode of bhakti (devotion). There is a lyric "**teliya** jalavemira...." by Hiranyakasipu here (**Rāgam**; Arabhi, Tālam: Adi) with full of terrifying anger when Hiranyakasipu orders to punish Prahlada. There is a **samvāda** daruvu "Danavendra sutuni paina ..." (conversational) between **Lilāvati** and Hiranyakasipu (Ragam; Janjula, Hamsadhwani, Talam ; Rupakam).

Then begins the trail of punishment for **Prahlāda**. The first punishment is through the wrestlers; wrestler's lyric "**endulakēgēvura....**" is terrifying vira (valorous zeal) (Ragam; Kedaragoula, Talam; **Misracāpu**). Prahlada's lyric "**jattivalla lāra**" is devotional in a preaching tone (Ragam; Sankarabharanam, Talam; Rupakam). The wrestlers collapse after the devotional lyric of **Prahlāda** and now there is an atmosphere of surprise and amazement all over. There is a repeat of **Prahlāda's** devotions, Lilavati's persuasion. The next punishment scene with poioners is almost a repeat of the earlier punishment scene. There is again a conversation between Prahlada and Hiranyakasipu , a repeat of persuasion, devotion and anger and again persuasion by Lilavati. Another punishment scene with serpent **charmers**. This serpent charmer's entry is longer involving serpen-

t charmer's long conversation, with Singi (female clown) and Sutradhara (mediator). After this there is almost a repeat of the earlier punishment scene. Prahlada returns back singing "ninna **nammina** vadara....in Ragam **Yaman**, Talam Adi. Hiranyakasipu again persuades Prahlada with parental affection. There is a conversational lyric "**yēra mera** (**Rāgam**; Desi, **Tālam**; Adi) between **Lilāvati**, Prahlada and Hiranyakasipu. After this there is again a punishment by demons. And there is another repeat of surprise persuasion and devotion etc., This time there is a punishment of throwing into fire. And now Prahlada prays to Lord Narayana in hymnical verses. This is followed by conversation between Prahlada and Hiranyakasipu after which Prahlada is again handed over to Canda and **Amarka**. Now a scene of Prahlada preaching bhakti to other students in the hermit school. This involves a bhajan type lyrical singing involving chorus. The teacher punishes the other students and not Prahlada. The teachers complain to Hiranyakasipu the king. There is another conversation veruvava dera between Prahlada and Hiranyakasipu (Ragam; Janjhuti, Talam; Adi). This time an evil spirit kritti is created by **Canda** and Amarka through witchcraft ritual. The description of kritti's emergence is terrifying (kritti anedu sakti...Ragam; Pharas, Talam; capu). The kritti boomerangs on to Canda and Amarka (dwapada verse). When Canda and Amarka report this to Hiranyakasipu, Hiranyakasipu arrogantly and angrily asks Prahlada who Hari was yevadura..... kambhoji khanda capu. There is another samvada daruvu (conversational lyric) amongst Hiranyakasipu Lilavati and **Prahlada** "namatavinavu....." Kedaragoula Misracapu. This leads to the climax scene in which the conversational lyric between Prahlada and Hiranyakasipu "yedirori.." (Ragam: Janjhuti, Talam: Misracapu) which

is followed by verses in Telugu and Sanskrit and final point of the climax is reached through the lyric "raveneedu....." (Ragam: Punnagavarali, Talam: Tisracapu) which is intervened throughout by hymnical verses (tevarams) sung in high pitch, followed by another devotional lyric "saranantini karunimpumu....." (**Rāgam:** Sourastra, **Tālam:** Adi **Samayati**). Here comes the lyric "avatarincenadigo....." describing Narasimha's emergence (Ragam: Nata, Samayati) this is mixed with harro and devotion. The conversation between **Narasimha** and Hiranyakasipu runs in verses. The killing of Hiranyakasipu by Narasimha is described in a lyric "duramonarinciri..."(Ragam? Samayati). Pacification of Narasimha by Prahlada is done through a lyric "raksamam..." (**Rāgam:** Pantuvarali, Talam: Misracapu) which concludes in a Sanskrit **ślōka** and Telugu verse. The performance ends with a mangalam (**Plate-XXVI**) in bhairavi ragam (mangalam **Nrisimha**) which brings the whole mode to a serene coolness. Since today's Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam is a shortened version of the above described traditional performance, it involves only a few of the above rasa elements and lyrics .

As mentioned in the previous chapter the Melattur performance begins with the episode of Suckracharya reminding Hiranyakasipu of the death of Hiranyakasa.

Plate-XXV: Kattikamvadu (the batton holder) of M.P.N., the raised fist is to mime the holding of the batton.
(Source: R.O.D. 1995).



Plate-XXVI: The last scene of Kucipudi Prahlada Natakam (K.P.N.), *Mangalam Nrsimha*: Sacred circling around of camphor lamp to cool down the ferocious God.

(Source: Mr. Shard B. Pitti, Chairman & M.D. Pitti Laminations, Hyderabad).

This episode begins with the prose narration by Sukracarya, "sahajuni **campina-vairi...**" (Plate-XXVII). This is neutral narration mood. To this Hiranyakasipu reacts with a frantic shout "Hiranyaksa..." etc., (Plate-XXVIII) which is in the mood of anguish, anger mixed with pathos. At this juncture Lilavati tries to cool down Hiranyakasipu through her lyric "intakopamemira..." (Ragam: Nādanāmakriya, Talam: Adi). This turns into a **samvāda** daruvu (conversational) between Lilavati and Hiranyakasipu. Hiranyakasipu's replies are arrogant and are in a mood of vira (valorous zeal) Lilavati gets disappointed and here there is a lyric "Hari nimidi vairambu..." (Rāgam: Dhanyasi, Talam: Adi). This lyric is in a mood of vexation born out of disappointment. To this Hiranyakasipu's reply through verses (usually rendered like prose by Melattur performers) "Celiyarō Nivu Yelacinta" these verses are in a mood of sringara (romance) toned in arrogance and vira (valorous zeal). At the end of this Hiranyakasipu ordered his demon soldiers to go in search of Lord Visnu and trouble all the devotees of the Lord. Here there is a lyric "Hiranyakasipu degeno..." (Ragam, Triputa Talam). This is a mood of Bhayanaka (horror). But interestingly this lyric runs in medium pace. Probably to reflect the timidity of the demon soldiers and thus give an effect of humour which dilutes the horror of the episode. The demon soldiers return to Hiranyakasipu and report through prose narration that they searched for Lord Visnu but in vain. Hiranyakasipu orders them to go back again and continue the search. The anger of Hiranyakasipu and humour enacted by the demon soldiers are found mixed here. Here Prahlada tries to persuade his father to give up his enmity with Lord Visnu through verse and prose mixed speech. This is in a mood of santa (detachment). Here is the entry of Candamarka the

son of Sukracarya¹¹⁰ who is asked to instruct demonical education to Prahlada. This entry is humorous. After this the episode of instruction to Prahlada runs in an intensely humorous mood. Significantly Candamarka is depicted as a low type comic character. After this Candamarka takes back Prahlada to Hiranyakasipu and hands the boy over to his father. Here there is a prose conversation between Prahlada and Hiranyakasipu. Hiranyakasipu expresses his Vatsalya (parental affection) in the beginning and Prahlada replies in an unstinted devotional mood. Gradually the mood of Hiranyakasipu charges into disappointment, vexation and finally anger. Hiranyakasipu changes over Prahlada ferociously. Lilavati at this juncture tries to pacify Hiranyakasipu by questioning him **for** a compassion over the small child. This is a long lyric "chinni baludu...". This lyric has several sancaris performed by Lilavathi. Though the consistent mood of the lyric is pathos mixed with parental affection the descriptions of the childhood of Prahlada are full of nostalgia. This gradually leads to another lyric "yemani taludu..." (**Rāgam:** Ahiri, Talarn: Adi). Which is in an intensely pathetic mood during which Lilavati **re-**sorts to several frantic expressions of hysteric impulse of helplessness. Prahlada consoles his mother through his santa (detachment) (miming). This is followed by a sequence of scenes of punishment for Prahlada. The sequence of moods during these scenes is almost identical to that of the scenes of Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra **Nātakam**. This is followed immediately by conversation between Prahlada and Hiranyakasipu in which **significantly** the mood of anger of Hiranyakasipu is totally toned down under the impact of helplessness and amazement. After Hiranyakasipu asks Prahlada to show Lord Visnu

¹¹⁰**Interestingly** the Melattur version treats Candamarka as a single person, though Candamarka is treated as a compound of two names Canda and **Amarka** in the Kucipudi version.

the performance suddenly breaks away from the stage passes into the audience around as the performers come down the stage and walk through the audience (**Plates-XXIX & XXX**). Here there is a long devotional lyric which is a devotional Bhajan of Pahlada while going around the stage. Significantly for this lyric Pahlada does not give any lip movement and thus the lyric is shown to be only a meditation of Pahlada. With the lyric the mood of the performance turns extremely devotional and ritualistic. At this juncture (Plate-XXXI) Hiranyakasipu breaks the pillar and Narasimha crashes out of the pillar and here there is a long prose monologue of Hiranyakasipu during which Narsimha waits holding his ferocious mood under the control of a few performance assistants who clip Narasimha on all sides stopping him from moving forward (**Plate-XXXII**). At this juncture, Hiranyakasipu thanks Pahlada for having helped him to get the long awaited view of his enemy. In fact, this expression of Hiranyakasipu has a suggestion of devotion. At this juncture Hiranyakasipu praises Pahlada as a great devotee in all lofty words and sends him off the scene. Narasimha ridicules Hiranyakasipu for having troubled a boy of his Hiranyakasipu's own community. Hiranyakasipu through out his monologue heckles at the awkward look of Narasimha's form. The mood of Narasimha is so intensely ferocious that the impression which comes out is that no one knows what Narasimha would do if he is not held back strongly by the group or performance assistants. (Probably the scene of Hiranyakasipu getting killed by Narasimha is deleted by the **Mēlattūr** team now-a-days). This is immediately followed by the scene of Narasimha being worshiped just as any idol in a temple (**Plate-VIII**). Here there are lyrics sung in chorus to pacify Narasimha's ferociousness. Narasimha cools down and a **ritualistically** devotional **atmo-**

sphere is established when panakam, the sweet water made out of jaggery, is distributed among the audience. Narasimha mask is taken in a procession **back** to its own place (**Plate-XXXIII**) in the temple and with this the performance comes to an end.

Thus we may see that the sequence of moods in the common portions of Kucipudi and Melattur is almost similar. The significant difference lies in the exaggeration of moods found in the Melattur performance (**Plates-XXXIV, XXXVI**) and a balance of moods maintained in the Kucipudi performance (**Plates-XXXV, XXXVII, XXXIX, XLVII**). This is what is responsible for the frantic anger of Hiranyakasipu, (**Plate-XXXVIII**) hysteric pathos of Lilavati (**Plate-XL**) and uncontrollable ferociousness of Narasimha. The melodramatic expressions of the Melattur performance can be exemplified through the following prose dialogues of Hiranyakasipu.

Dialogue 1

“**celiyarō**celiyaro nivela cinta nondevu ah ah ah
celiyaro nivela cinta nondeve.....
ilalona tana **balamberugavā** yancu niku **teliyalēdā**.....
tana virasura parakrama **mantayū** teliyaleda.... **ah.ah.ah**
kondalu cendadudun celiya, kondalu cendadudun.....
kondalu cendadi **pīṇḍi...pīṇḍi...** gavintunuetc.,
badabagni kanniru **pāpakīḍagunā**.....
kadimi pravahambu kadali kadaguna.....
mahinalla potulu mattebhā **mouna**.....

rahinalla pakshulu rahamsa **mouna**.....
 celiyaro.... rahinalla paksulu rahamsa **mouna**....
 yenta **mātrambu...yeh...yeh...yeh...yeh...yeh**.....
 yenta **mātrambu...yi...indira vibhudū**.....
 kantaro... nanumiri **kadalirālēdu**.....
 kantaro nanumiri kadali **ālēdu** telusuna.....
 nanumiri **kadaliraledu**.....
 pagarikaina....aparamestikaina...etc,
 kayyana viduvadu.....ayya... **yya...yya...yya...yyo**
 nivitula a...la...pada..valadu.....
 celiyaro....vinave....munupu nenu
 a Harinicusu... a haramulumani.... ahamu tolaginci etc.,
 apudu vanajasambhavudu naku varamiccinadu...eh..eh..eh
 a..yudambunanaina.....astramunanaina...
 veyicupulanaina....velpulanaina....
 pāmula pasumṛga paksulanaina.....
cimatō modalagu **jantuvulanainā**.....
pagalambunainā...rātrulanainā.....
 jagatilo nendunanu ..eh..eh..eh..eh..eh.....
 cavuledanu varamulu gaikonti....celiya.... telusuna....
 idiniku...teliya **lēdā**.....
 cavuledanu varamugaikontini....

nenu a Harini **cūda**....**celiyarō**.....
nenu a Harini cuda....kanula **kānadu** a **souri**...etc.,
ipude rasasula **nampī**.....
a panka..dasuni **madamana** gincea....

Dialogue 2.

eh..eh...eh.... Hiranyaksa...ah..ah..ah..ah.....
Hiranyaksa.....Hiranyaksa.....
Hari na vairi.... vinavayya.....
vinavayya ..guruvayya....vipula talamuna.....
tana sahodaruni....**eh..eh...eh**.....
tana sahodaruni campina sourini viduva.....
pa..ta..lamuna vadu **pā..ri..pō..yināḍu...yeh..eh..**
yetenci....yetenci kanugana yandudaginadu.....
koncana viduvanu...ah..ah..ah..ah...ah..eekolayambunan..
vancimpa.....nace..vadhiyimpabadu.....
ni....kataksamuna ...sadguro....ni..kataksamuna..
vedakinci.....Harini.....ooh...ooh...ooh.....
cikaku parcedanu....si....gra....mu....ipudu.....

Dialogue 3

āh...āh,,,āh..āh..āh....āh,,,..āh.....

āh...āh,,, āh..āh..āh....āh...āh.....

vinu vari...jakshiro.....

yiviḍu**durmadhudu**.....

manakula hani kavinca puttinadu.....

kutīla cittudū...vidu....

daityakula bandhavudu.....

ka...ta...ka...ta....ituvanti kan....tu...du...manaku....

etc.....

lālē ...ga...manaku...vi...dendu...ga.li..ge.....

etc.,

vinu varijaksiro.....etc.,

kodukāni yencanu kommaro....kodikani yencanu.....

vinini pudamilo adhamanagintunu

ve...ga....me.... āh...āh...āh....āh.....



Plate-XXVII: *Sahajuni Campina Vairi*: dialogue rendered by Sukracarya reminding the death of Hiranyaksha to Hiranyakasipu as Lilavati and Prahlada watch on in M.P.N.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996)



Plate-XXVIII: *Hiranyakṣaaaaa...*: Hiranyakasipu cries in anger as Lilavati is afraid and Prahlada is amazed in M.P.N.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XXIX: M.P.N. shifts into the audience. Hiranyakasipu challanging Prahlada to show Narasimha as both of them face the stage. A view from the stage.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XXX: M.P.N. Shifts into the audience. Hiranyakasipu satirically commenting the shape of Narasimha on the stage. A view from the stage.
(Source R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XXXI: The climax scene from M.P.N. Hiranyakasipu facing the stage from the ground about to break the pillar on the stage as Prahlada who inspired the act watches on standing beside him.

(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XXXII: Narasimha of M.P.N., rushing forward ferociously over powering the performance assistants holding him.

(Source: R.O.D. 1996).

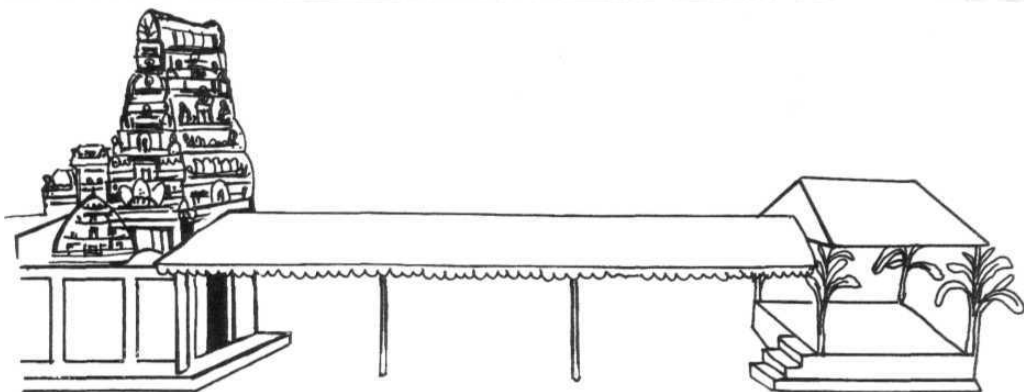


Figure-II: The stage of M.P.N. and Varadaraja Perumal temple facing each other with a street joining the two,
(Drawing by Lakshmana Murthy)



Plate-XXXIII: Narasimha mask of M.P.N. being taken in procession to Varadaraja Perumal temple towards the end of the performance.
(Source: R.O.D. 1995).



Plate-XXXIV: A scene from M.P.N.
Hiranyakasipu is irritated to see Prahlada praising lord visnu, when asked to demonstrate his learning at the school.
Note: The exaggeration in Hiranyakasipu's expression.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XXXV:
A scene from K.P.N.,
Hiranyakasipu trying to ascertain the learning of Prahlāda at School.
Note: the cool and balanced expression.
(Source: R.O.D. 1993).



Plate-XXXVI: A scene from M.P.N., Hiranyakasipu claims his invincible strength as part of the entry lyric.

Note: The emphatic expression.

(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XXXVII: A scene from K.P.N., Hiranyakasipu claims his invincible strength as part of the entry lyric.

Note: Balanced expression.

(Source: R.O.D. 1993).



Plate-XXXVIII: A scene from M.P.N., Hiranayakasipu angry with Pahlada for his *obstinacy* in devotion for lord Visnu. Pushes him off from his lap.

Note: Emphatic expression.

(Source: **R.O.D.** 1996).

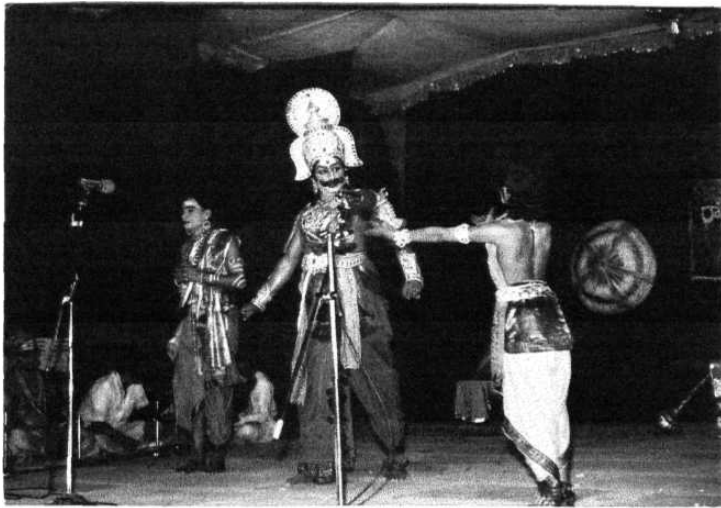


Plate-XXXIX: A scene from K.P.N., Hiranayakasipu gets angry with Pahlada for his *obstinacy* in devotion fro lord Visnu and moves off from him.

Note: Balanced expression.

(Source: **R.O.D.** 1993).

These dialogues are uttered by Hiranyakasipu in a typically Melattur style of word and pause, word and pause, way of uttering in a shouting voice in an artificially rhetorical tone typical to Melattur performance. This is marked by the strong and powerful cries, hissings, gaspings etc., for example *eh..eh..eh..* found in the above example is uttered just like an animal cry to give an effect of domonical roughness.

Another example of exaggerated presentation in Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam may be seen in Lilavati's hysteric convulsions before the punishments given to Prahlada. In this scene, Lilavati beats the breast, weeps and sobes, cries and gasps, bends down on to the floors toops and falls on the ground, runs on the stage prevalently shaking and shuddering, as if in a trance, attempts to commit suicide until she is stopped by a gentle Prahlada.

Yet another example of intensely emphatic enactment of extreme emotions which characterises Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam is found in the Narasimha character presentation. Narasimha after crashing out of the pillar swings back and forth and enacts uncontrollable ferociousness as if possessed by a cosmic destructive power out to destroy everything in the world. His gasping, shaking, shivering, swinging, forging etc., clipping by the performance assistants controlling the Narasimha performer by holding him tight on all sides and he forging ahead as if trying to escape from the people overpowering him etc., make the Narasimha presentation intensely emphatic. (Plate-XXXII).

In fact this emphasis of the features of the characters is what leads to the presentation

of the **chandamarka** Pahlada's instructor as a comic character and the intensification of the element of humour attributed to the antagonist characters like the demon soldiers in an attempt to heckle at them. Taking the side of the protagonist Pahlada leads to reducing the demon soldiers into clowns (**Plate-XLI**).

Thus we may see that the entire character presentation in Melattur Pahlada **Caritra** Natakam is marked by an over emphasis of features and emotions.

This is clearly evident in the costume and the body movements used in the Melattur Pahlada Caritra Natakam. The mask used for demons reinforce the larger than life size demonical images of these soldiers (**Plate-XLI**). Even the mask of the **Narasimha** is **unsymmetrically** bigger than a real head of either lion or a human being. In fact, it is not in proportion with the size of the remaining part of the body of Narasimha role player (**Plate-XLII**). The mask spreads into a circle of a **diameter** of approximately three feet. The design of the mask is also emphatically **ferocious, horrifying** apart from being glorified and sacralised (**Plates-V, VI**).

Even the costume of the Hiranyakasipu is larger than life glorification. This emphasis of presentation in terms of the body movements is clearly visible in the gait and the body movement of the Hiranyakasipu. Hiranyakasipu bends backwards or stretches side-wise or stretches the two hands in the highly emphatic way (**Plate-XLIII**). His stepping while walking is also emphatic the foot is pulled out from the ground strongly and after a strange movement of the foot put down powerfully. All these extra human movements of

the body are probably meant to emphasis the demonic nature of Hiranyakasipu (**Plate-XLIV**).

In all the above aspects of character presentation, Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam is marked by features **different** from the Melattur ones. For example Hiranyakasipu's costume in Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam is that of any human emperor. No body movement of Hiranyakasipu reflects any extra human quality. Demon soldiers in Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam do not have masks. The soldiers with human faces are as serious and frightening as the demon soldiers are imagined to be.

The Narasimha mask has not got as emphatic design as the Melattur one (**Plate-XLV**). Lilavati's behaviour is never emphatic beyond a limit (**Plate-XLVI, XLVII**). Her comforting Prahlada (**Plate-XLVIII**) etc., are seen to be maintained with an attempt to maintain the norms of sophistication of an empress, even **during** the most pathetic scenes. Because of this attempt to maintain balance within certain limits, the humour in the instruction of Prahlada by Canda and **Amarka** also does not go beyond a certain limit and does not remove the image of learnedness of **Canda** and Amarkas. Their humour is a Scholarly humour. Though the Narasimha character of Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra also is said to have been possessed by Lord Narasimha in the past, today's Kucipudi's **Prahlāda** Caritra Natakam has only a ferocious but not possessed Narasimha.



Plate-XL A scene from M.P.N., Lilvati's hysteric vailing as Hiranyakasipu decides to punish Prahlāda.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).

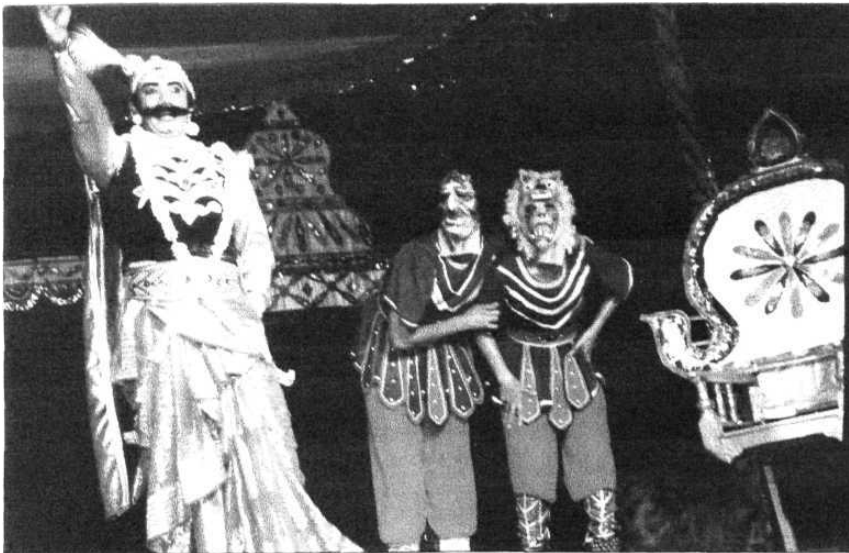


Plate-XLI Melattur demon soldiers expressing response to scolding by Hiranyakasipu for having failed in locating lord Visnu.
Note: The clown like expression.
(Source: R.O.D. 1995).

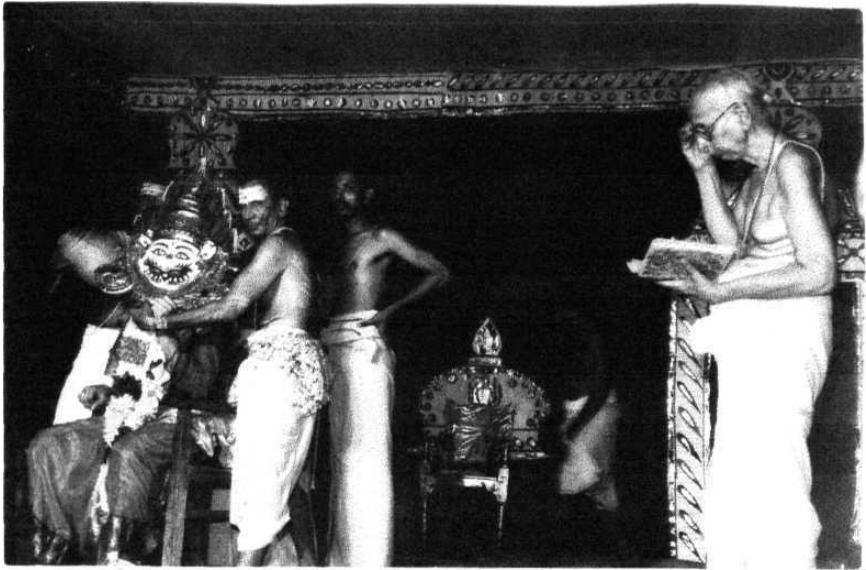


Plate- XLII Worship of Narasimha dancer in M.P.N. as Sutradhara recites hymns.
 Note: The out of proportion size of the mask.
 (Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate- XLIII Melattur Hiranyakasipu part of the dance to the lyric which he claims his invincible strength.
 Note: The emphatic expression.
 (Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate-XLIV Melattur
Hiranayakasipu's facial expression
emphasising horrifying cruelty.
(Source: R.O.D. 1996).



Plate- XLV Kucipudi Narasimha engaged in a conversation with Hiranayakasipu.
Note: The Narasimha mask has a naturalistic design.
(Source: Mr. Shard B. Pitti, Chairman and M.D. Pitti Laminations Hyderabad).



Plate- XLVI A scene from K.P.N.

Note: Lilavati coolly patting Pahlada as Hiranyakasipu claims his invincible strength.

(Source: R.O.D. 1993).



Plate- XLVII A scene from K.P.N.

Note: Lilavati expressing her balance amazement at the uninstincting devotion of her young son.

(Source: Mr. Shard B. Pitti, Chairman and M.D. Pitti Laminations Hyderabad).

As has been seen in the above description of features of rasa in Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam scenes conversations lyric and monologues are all along. Thus each emotion is to be sustained for a long time. Or, probably each emotion is built gradually during this long performance. For example, the convulsion of Lilavati which is totally absent in Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam runs for an abnormal in Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam . Similarly the Narasimha character, who in any **Prahlāda** Caritra Natakam performance including Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra **Nātakam** performance does not take much time in stooping over Hiranyakasipu and killing him, in the Melattur performance stays ferociously for an unusually long time sustaining his anger with the same intensity for all this period (in fact in Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam the stooping and killing scene is completely avoided) comparatively in Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam scenes are shorter, each emotion and sustained for a short time and the rasas are built up as a part of this process of a quick change of emotions.

ANGIKABHINAYAM

Though Kucipudi and Melattur dance traditions have been recognised to be similiar in several details, the **Angikābhīnayam** (the enactment through body language of dance tradition) in Kucipudi and Melattur Prahlada Caritra **Nātakam** is to be more meticulously compared to identify the similarities and differences between the two. If both these **Angikābhīnayams** are found to be similar it is basically because of the Andhra way of adapting the Natya Sastriya Angikabhinyam norms followed in both being the same. Another basis of similarity of these two performances is the flexibility of movement

on the basis of which the two traditions were identified to be folk rather than classical traditions.

But when more meticulously observed, Melattur **Angikābhinyam** as found in Pahlada Caritra Natakam seems to be under the influence of the Tamil tradition of Indian classical dance which is now being named as Bharatanatyam tradition. One evidence for the influence may be seen in the Tirmanams (ending method of each piece of abhinayam) (is also called Muktai Tirmānam has a feature of the same body movement being rendered thrice) of the **Āngikabhinayams** found in Melattur Pahlada Caritra Natakam performance.

For example as shown in the **Figuer-III** one of the most wellknown styles of Tirmanam found in Bharatanatyam performances is to hold the two arms with 45 degrees to each other at the elbow, the two palms in tripataka hastas facing each other to the heart level and to move the right hand forward with the hasta remaing the same palm still facing left but the stretched fingers pointing forward and this hand retracing its path and reaching the earlier posture is pulled backwards into the right back corner with the hasta remainig the same and the palm facing the backward corner. The same movement is now rendered in the left hand. During this movement, as is the norm in Bharatanatyam legs remain in the '**aramandi**' position and the foot work being according to the syllables. It goes without saying that the rule of "yetohastatodrstihi" takes the head and the eyes along with the palm. The second most well known Tirmanam of Bharatanatyam is both the hands stretched on either side to have the arms in a horizontal position palms projecting

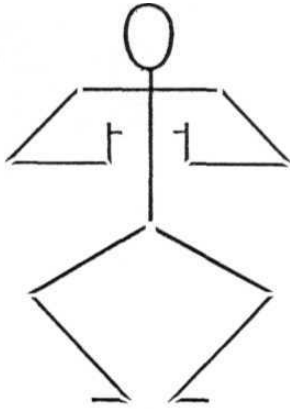
slightly into the forward direction and facing downwards with Pataka hasta and then right hand moving to turn the palm to change the Pataka hasta into Alapadma hasta with the palm facing upwards and then this hands being turned backwards by taking the palm into a downward circular movement with the Alapadma palm gradually facing downwards during its lowest position and gradually being taken into a perpendicularly backward direction and stretched horizontally backward and gradually turning the palm to bring the Alapadma palm from the down facing to the up facing position the hand gradually being lifted upward in the same stretched position while the Alapadma palm through a semi circular path travelling across the forehead, nose ,chin ,heart, navel, centre of the waist and stopping a little lower to the centre of the waist, by which time the turn of the Alapadma palm brings it to an up facing position (Figure-IV). The same process is repeated in the left hand. It goes without saying that the legs remaing in the Aramandi position the footwork imitating the syllables and the "yitohastatodrstihi" rule are as usual. The Kucipudi performers are never found to be executing these Tirmanams. Interestingly, these Tirmanams are found executed frequently in Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam.

Another feature of Bharatanatyam found in Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam is the movement of the above the waist portion of the body being less flexible as compared to the same in the Kucipudi performance. In the Kucipudi body language the legs do not remain stiff in the same **karana** (body posture) as it happens in Bharatanatyam. In Kucipudi dance the leg bends and unbends sidewise at the knee to swing the above waist portion of the body in the rhythm of the mrdangam syllables or the lyric. The

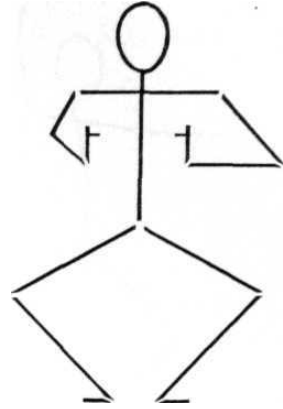
body movement in Kucipudi is so flexible that the above the waist portion of the body is swings sometimes to shift the entire weight bearing on the foot from one direction to the other so as to throw the waist to the head portion-of the body into a small angle from the vertically stiffly perpendicular line maintained in Bharatanatyam (Figures-V, VI). This sometimes results in the throw of the head portion in a circular facing back and forth in the rhythm of the syllables or the lyric (Figures-V, VI). In Melattur **Prahlāda** Caritra Natakam these typically Kucipudi body-swings are not found. On the other hand the stiff leg posture which maintains the above posture of the body without swing is to be found even in Melattur Prahlada **Caritra** Natakam performance.

CHOREOGRAPHY

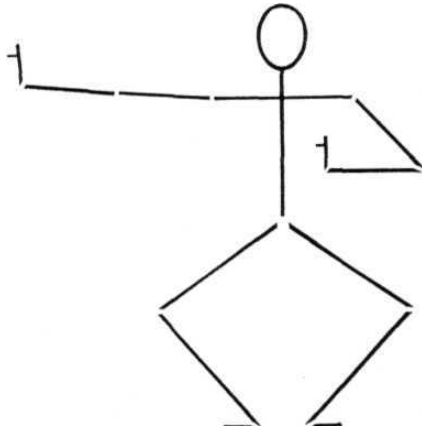
Next important similarity between Bharatanatyam and Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance is 'padardhabhinaya' found in the two dance performances. In the Kuchipudi dance performance the choreography takes into account the total import of each sentence and the meaning of each word in the sentence is not cared to be depicted. On the other hand in the Bharatanatyam tradition, meaning of the each word in the sentence is depicted through abhinaya. This feature of **Bharathanāṭyam** is found in Melattur **Prahlāda** Caritra **Nāṭakam** performance also. This has been exemplified in the figures through the Melattur type performance or the lyric "inta kōpamēmira swāmi" inta = this much; (Figure-Vila) kōpamu = anger (Figure-VIIb) yēmira= why my dear (Figure-VIIc) swamy = Lord/ husband (Figure-VIIId) swamy = Lord (Figure-VIIe).



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure-III: A **typical** Bharatanāṭyam Tirmānam.
(Drawing by Lakshmana Murthy)

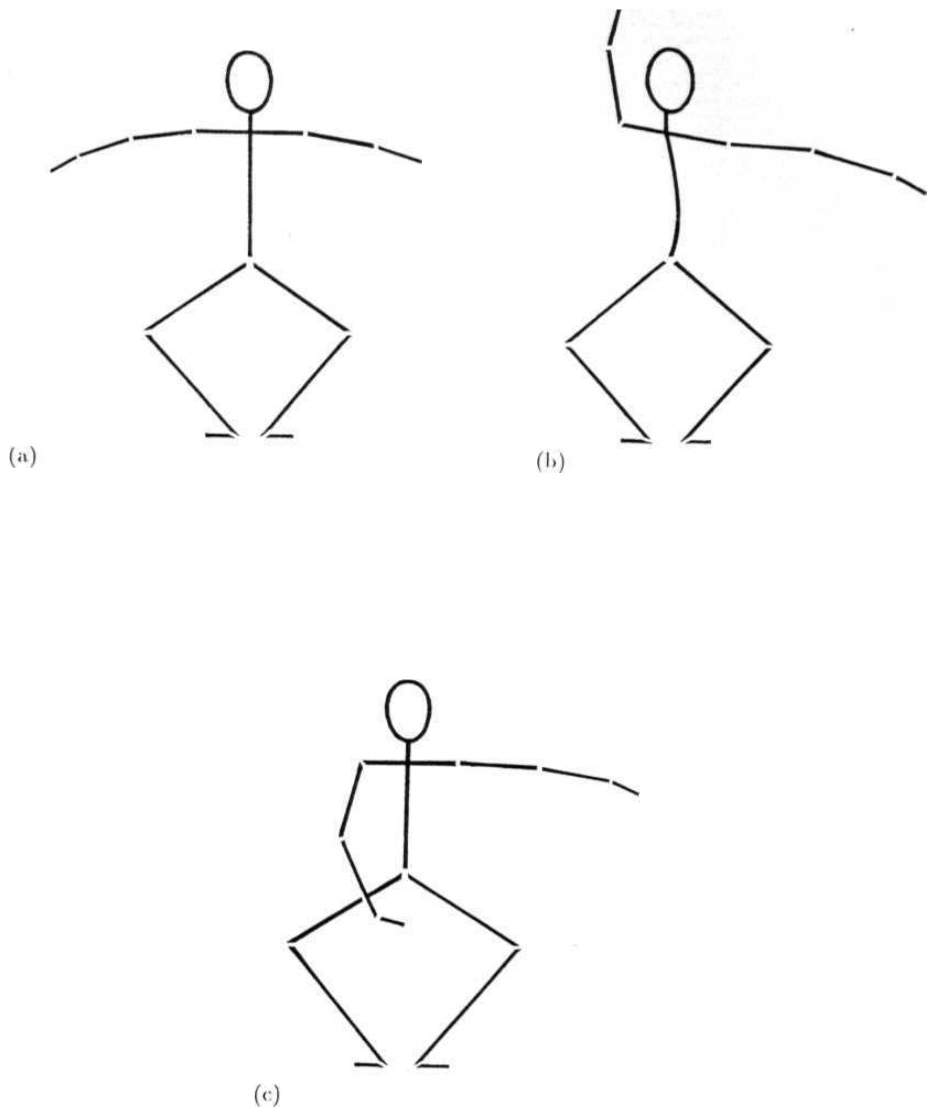


Figure-TV: Another typical Bharatanāṭyam Tirmānam.
(Drawing by Lakshmana. Murthy)



Figure-V: Typical Kucipudi Angikabhinayam

Note: The flexibility of the movement.

(Drawing by Lakshmana Murti)

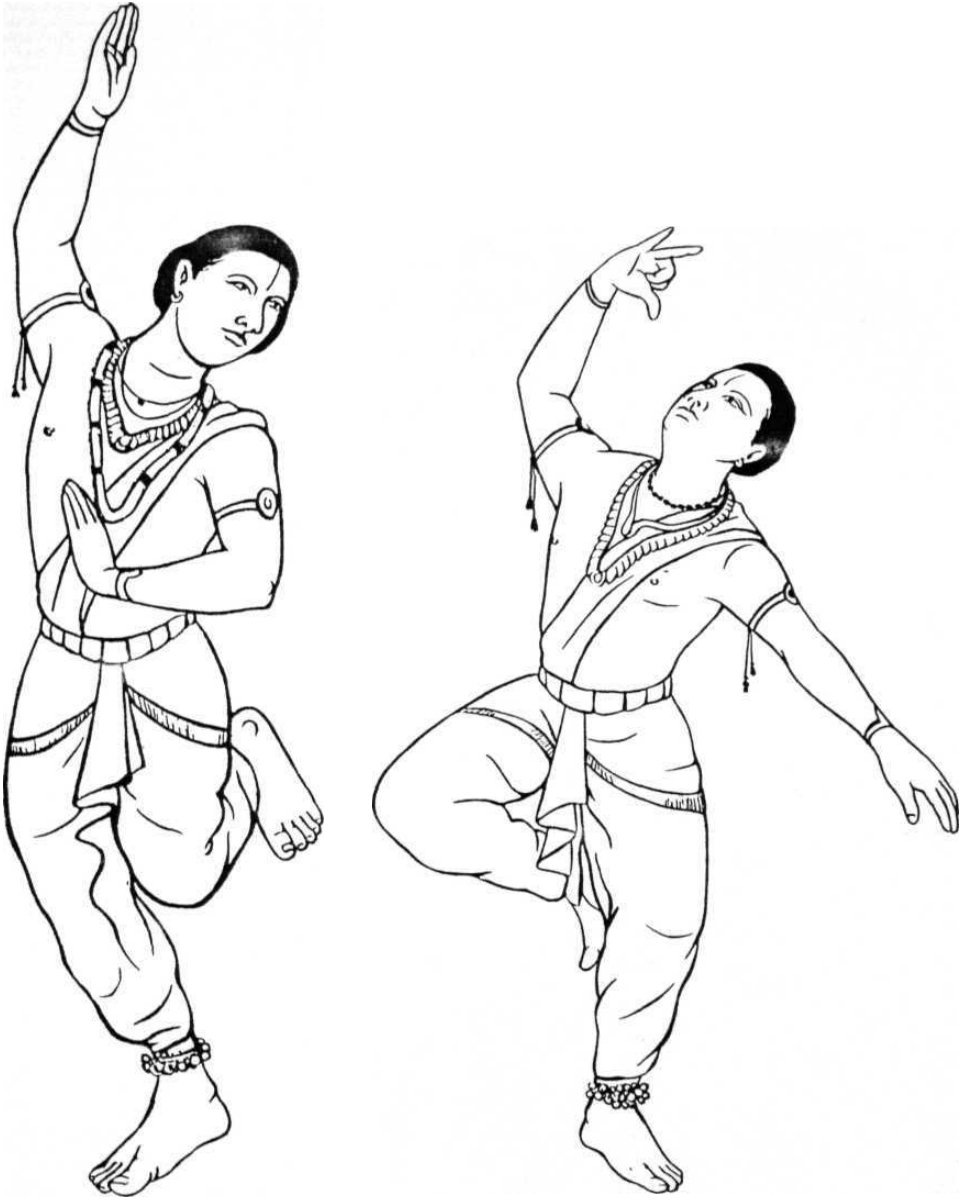


Figure-VI: Typical Kucipudi Angikabhinayam
Note: The flexibility of the movement.
(Drawing by Lakshmana Murthy)



Figure-VII: (a) *Iula* = 'This much



(b) *kopamu* — Anger



(c) *yemira* = why my dear



(d) *swami* = Lord/husband.



(c) *swami* = Lord.

Interestingly Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance has a feature of **Kūcipūdi** dance namely the abhinaya of sancharis which is found in the Tarangam and other performances of the Kucipudi tradition but not in the Kucipudi **Prahlāda** Caritra Natakam performance. Probably, this has got to do with the attempt of quickening the performance in the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance in contrast to leisurely performance found in Melattur Prahlada Caritra **Nāṭakam**. A good example for the abhinaya of numerous sancharis in Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam is found in the performance of Lilavati's lyric "cinni baludu...". For the one phrase "cinni baludu" (little lad) Lilavati enacts various rural children's games played by Prahlada in his early childhood.

MUSIC COMPONENT

Music in the Melattur **Prahlāda** Caritra Natakam performance can be clearly identified as close to the Pata Kacceri (singing concert) tradition which is marked by gradual development of Swara sancaras and intense repetitions of lines with various swara compositions with a stress on music rather than the idea in the lyric etc., Music in the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance can be identified to belonging to Atakacceri (dance concerts) tradition which is marked by quick sanchara of **swaras**, less repetitions and stress on the idea in the lyric rather than on the musical skill. The Melattur music composition for the lyrics does not involve Gatibhedas but a change of **Kāḷams** (speeds) is demonstrated on each lyric towards the end. In the Kucipudi music composition each lyric is composed incorporating the Gatibhedas in the singing of the lyric itself.

The major Ragas used by the Melattur team, (**Plate-XLIX**) as may be observed from the previous description, are **Nādanāmakriya**, Janjhuti and **Yaman** Kalyani. Interestingly, all these ragas have got a common quality which is that all these are Madhyama srti ragas, in the sense that all these ragas run between Nisada and Nisada. For this reason these ragas suit to aserene devotional mood.¹¹¹ These ragas along with Punnavarali, **Dēvagāndhāri** and Ahiri are all vakra ragas, in the sense that the patterns of Arohana (ascendence) avarohana (descendence) are not similar. If Arohana has got the normal order of notes from Sa to Ni Avarohana may have a non-normal order of notes and **vice-versa**. Because of these complicated note restrictions easy going musicians usually avoid these ragas in their concerts.¹¹² Only the orthodox musicians prefer to deal with these ragas. The occurrence of these ragas in the Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam set of musical compositions indicates the tendency of the Melattur team towards orthodoxy even in terms of music. Regarding the devotional quality of ragas like Devagandhari, an interesting fact of Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance needs a special mention here. The Pravesa Daruvu "kaduvadinadu cuda yedi" (entry lyric) for Hiranyakasipu is sung in Devagandhari **ragam**, that too in a devotional tone, though the ferociousness of Hiranyakasipu is manifest only in the enactment done by the performer **playing** the Hiranyakasipu role . It may be noted here that it is in Devagandhari, the Tyagaraja's famous **kirtana** "Ksirasagara sayana was composed by Tyagaraja.

In the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance the set of ragas used can not be classified into such a special category of ragas, though even the above mentioned

¹¹¹**Interview** with Tampella Suryanarayana 15th January 1997.

¹¹²**Interview** with **Tampella** Suryanarayana 15th January 1997.

ragas also form part of their Prahlada Caritra Natakam set of ragas. The Kucipudi teams criterion for priority seems to be **Rakti** ragas (immediately attracted ragas). As has already been mentioned the orthodoxy of the Pata kacceri style of singing the vakra ragas is not found in the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance even when the same Vakra ragas are used.

This is exemplified in the following notationwise representation of the musical renderings of three each lyrics of Kucipudi and Melattur.

Mēlattur lyrics; music notation:

Song no.1: Rāgam: Bēgaḍa. Tālam: Ādi, (chowka kālam)

Pallavi:

; ni ri sā; ni sā pa dā pā;|
 ; ga..... na; pa.....tī.....;|
 ; dā pā;| gā, ma pā mā dā; pā;||
 ; vāccē; | cū.....dā; rē;|
 8 to 10 times

Anupallvi:

; dā; pā; pā; mā; dā pā mā gā |
 ; bha kti tō;.....|
 ; gā ma pa ga ma rī gā, ma pā ma |
mi.....|
 pā; mā; dā; pā ||;||
 rī; rō ||;||

Song no.2: Rāgam; Dēvagāndhāri, Tālam; Ādi.

Pallvi:

; mā, pā, dā, pā, mā gā ri ma ga mā rī |
 ; ka, dū, va, dī nā nu jū.....dā....|
 ; rī mā pā; | mā pā ma pa da ri sa ni dā da nī,||pā||
 ; yē....dī; |.....ka.....dū...,||pā|| kaḍuvadī|

.30 times

Song no.3: Rāgam: Nādanāmakriya, Tālam: Ādi.

Pallavi:

; dā; nī;; nī; sā ni sa rī sā sā |
 ; in..tā.. kō; pā mu |

 ; nī, sā rī sā | ni sa ni da ni sa ni da ||
 ; yē .mi | rā sā mi ||

 15 times

Anupallavi:

; pā dā nī sā nī dā pā da ni da pa mā gā mā;|
 ; i..la lō nā gā lā;|

 ; gā , ma pā , mā pā ; mā dā | pā ||
 ; vai. ru ; .. la | .. ||

Kūcipūdi lyrics music notion:

Song no.1: Rāgam; Mōhana, Tālam; Ādi (Madhyama kalam)

Pallavi:

; , sā sa sa sa ri ga rī | gā, pa |rī sa sa ||
 ; , tāndava nrtyaka | rī, ga |jā na na ||

 ; , ga ga ga ga pa pa pa pa |
 ; , dhimi ki ta dhimi ki ta |

 ; ga pā da dā | pa da sa da pā ;||
 ; sou . ri mṛ | dangā ||

Song no.2: Rāgam: Athāna, Tālam: Misra gati.

Pallavi:

,pā gā ma ma || pa pā sā sā ||
 ,nindu ko lu || vaiyu nnādē ||
 ,sa sa ga ma rī | sa rī sa ni sā ||
 ,nikhi lā....kī | rtiga nnā ..dē ||

Anupallavi:

,sā gā mā rī || sā ni pa gā ||
 dandi.... ta || ri pu daityu ||
 rī; , pā || dā ni ri sa pā ||
 dē; , dā || nā vēn dru du ||

Chaturasra gati

pā; gā ma ma pa pa sā sā |
 ni; du ko lu vaiyu nnādē |
 ,sa sa gā rī | sā rī sā ni sā ||
 ,ni khilā kī | rtiga nnā dē ||

Song no.3: Rāgam: Muhāri, Tālam: Misra nadaka.

,pa da sā sā || ni dā pa ma ga ri ||
 ,va la du ra || . . . ya . . . nna ||
 ,sa ri mā ga ri || ma mā mā mā ||
 ,va la dū ra .. || ha rī bhakti ||



Plate- XLVIII A scene from **K.P.N.**

Note: Lilavati trying to persuade Prahlada through calm counselling.
(Source: Mr. Shard **B, Pitti**, Chairman and M.D. Pitti Laminations Hyderabad).



Plate- XLIX The Melattur music team sit to the right side of the stage
(left of the audience).

(Source: **R.O.D.** 1995).

It may be found in the above represented musical renderings that the Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance has the musical component very close to a **Pāṭakaccēri** (singing concert), as is found in “**gaṇapati vacce**.” the **ālāpana** between the two syllables to and mi in the line “bhaktito **mirirō**” is as long as 16 strokes of adi **tālam**. Each line is found repeated many times. The Nr̥tta enactment for this musical rendering set aside, this singing alone looks to be a perfect singing concert. Whereas in the **Kūcīpūḍi** tradition as is found in the musical rendering the lyric “**tāṇḍava** nr̥tyakari gajanana”, there are no long pauses of alāpana. Though there are a few repetitions in many other lyrics such as “nindukoluvaipunna.de” repetitions are less in number. The meaning of the words rendered becomes significant with smaller or no pauses. In other words the musical rendering orients itself towards the dance performance rather than the other way round which is the case in Melattur musical renderings. In other words in the **Kūcīpūḍi** musical rendering literature is intensely spread through the singing whereas in the Melattur musical rendering it is diluted into the purely music **ālāpana**. This pata kacceri of musical rendering is more pronounced because of the **ślōkam** type of rendering of few words before the beginning of the rhythmic rendering of a few lyrics. Even in this aspect of musical rendering Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance is close to **Bharatanāṭyam**.

Next important musical feature in which there is a contrast between **Mēlattūr** and Kucipudi performances is the presence or absence of gati shift.

In Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance just like in any other Kucipudi

performance the gati shifts are introduced into singing or a lyric without the wording getting affected. For example the above notationally represented lyric "nindu **koluvaiyunndē...**" each repetition is rendered in a different gati. For example the first rendering is in **misra** capu talam, then the first repetition is done in **tisram** and the second in **caturasram** (adi). This shift from one gati to the other is smooth and thrills the audience when found imitated in the dance execution. In the Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance the variation of rendering is effected only in terms of the kalam (time for given no. of notes).

The Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam musical rendering usually begins in chowka kalam (slower range of speed) and continues in the same pace throughout but the dancer executes the steps in all the three speeds from slower range of speed through medium range of speed to faster range of speed. It needs a special training for the audience to appreciate the thrill in the gati bheda technique adapted by the Melattur team. Interestingly, the audience of the Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance seems to have this training as part of the general culture of the Tanjore region of Tamil Nadu. The gati shift technique adapted by the Kucipudi team is catchy and amuses all kinds and levels of audience. This popular nature of gati shift technique is responsible for this technique being adapted in **Bhajan** tradition which is a popular tradition. **Tarangams** of the Kucipudi repertoire, which belong to the Bhajan tradition also have this gati shift as one of the characteristic features. Similarly, while the singer in the Melattur performance continues to sing in the same gati throughout the dancer executes all the five jatis (chat-urasra, tisra, khanda, misra and sankirna respectively) in foot work. Also the Melattur

performer executes one gati, say caturasram (4), while the singer continues in a **different** gati say **miśram** (7). This is done only for a line or two towards the end of a **lyric**. But these two gati bhedas performed by the Melattur performers are as thrilling and fast-moving as the shift followed by the Kucipudi performer along with the gati shift rendered by the singer. The Kucipudi performers, in fact perform the skill of speed variation in rhythm and gati bheda as the Melattur performers do along with their execution of gati shift in footwork in following with the same rendered by the singer in singing. But the speed variation in the Kucipudi tradition is limited to a variation of three speeds as they usually begin at madhyama (medium range) whereas the possibility of speed variation in Melattur is all the three speeds as they usually begin at chowka **kalam** (slower range of speed). This is what makes the Melattur performance enjoyable. The Kucipudi musical rendering, is different from Melattur musical rendering even in the aspect of kalam because Kucipudi musical rendering usually begins with madhyama kalam, (medium range of speed) unlike the Melattur Prahlaḍa Caritra Natakam performance which begins in chowka kalam (slower range of speed). Even in this regard Melattur Prahlaḍa Caritra Natakam performance resembles **Bharatanāṭyam** performance.

As is well known, the entries of characters in the Kucipudi begins with sollukattu jati composition. If there is a pravesa daruvu (entry lyric) for the entry in most of these lyrics, before the words of the lyric are rendered the sollukattu is sung. This is not found in the entries and exits of the Melattur Prahlaḍa Caritra Natakam characters. Firstly, pravesa daruvu is not compulsory for the next to first entries of characters in Melattur Prahlaḍa Caritra Natakam. Usually, during the next to first entry, characters walk on

to the stage. Similarly the exits of characters from the stage are also not **compulsorily** associated with lyric or sollukattu renderings in Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam the characters casually walk out of the stage to exit. Lack of lyric or rhythm at the second and later entries of the characters found in Melattur and Bharatanatyam performance may have different reasons. In Melattur performance the ritual nature which does not demand artistic attraction and in Bharatanatyam the nature of cattu performances in which a stage performance type entry is not essential may be the reasons. Even in this aspect Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam is close to Bharatanatyam.

SPEECH CHARACTERISTICS

The Tamil influence found in terms of closeness to Bharatanatyam is also found in the Tamil accent of the Telugu word renderings both in prose and song of the Melattur Prahlada Charitra Natakam. This is as natural as the Kucipudi performers using the coastal agrahara brahmin dialect in terms of accent, and intonation by the Kucipudi performers. In fact, the influence of the habit of Tamil speaking of the Melattur performers does not interfere in terms of actual Tamil words and expressions in the prose renderings of the **Melattūr** performers, probably because the performers try to strictly impliment the script which was composed without any such Tamil influence.¹¹³ But the loss of touch of Telugu speaking environment and tradition for the Melattur performers is found reflected in the prose conversations of the Melattur performers in which even several verses are also rendered like prose. For example

¹¹³**Though** the script by Melattur Venkata Rama Sastry could not be procured even from the performance text it can be seen that Telugu used in this script is chaste and learned.

"celiyaro nivela **cintanondēvu**,"
ilalona **tanabalamberugāvayancu**"

is exactly a Dwipada verse, which fulfils all the metrical requirements of the Dwipada prosody. The Kucipudi performers on the other hand render such verses in a typical yak-shagana style of rendering verses using differnt classical Karnatic ragas. This Kucipudi style of rendering verses is different from the style of rendering verses in the Pouranika Natakams of modern times.

The above observations about the Melattur performance may be summed up in the following words of Mr. R. **Parthasarathy**,¹¹⁴

"The sentiments are expressed in classical music of high class Carnatic tradition and the dance and abhinaya are in Bharata Natya technique and, occasionally with poetic speeches, dialogues and appropriate dramatic action. Abhinaya are more elaborate and incisive.

In contrast in Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam the performance is in a typical Kucipudi technique of dance and abhinaya in the Ata kacceri style of karnatic music with less elaborate less melowdramatic abhinaya with a quick moving sequence of things.

¹¹⁴**Pārthasarathy R, M.L.**, "The Unique Features of Melattur Bhagavata Mela Tradition" (A Telugu Hentage in Tamil Nadu) Bhagavata Mela Natya Natakam, a souvneir, Melattur, Sri **Laxmi Narasimha** Jayanti Bhagavata Mela Natya **Nātaka Saṅgam**, own Publication, Melattur, 1995.

Conclusion

The last two chapters of comparison at the macro and micro levels, of the **Kūcipūḍi** and Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam reveals the predominance of artistic and ritualistic natures in the Kucipudi and the Melattur **Prahlāda** Caritra Natakam performances respectively. The hypothesis drawn on the basis of the survey of the overall repertoires of the Kucipudi and Melattur dance traditions in the first chapter, that what demarcates the apparently similar dance traditions of Melattur and Kucipudi is their artistic and ritualistic orientations respectively is found proved even at the macro and micro levels of a specific dance drama performance namely Prahlada Caritra Natakam found in both the traditions. The cultural background of Prahlada Caritra Natakam performances discussed in the second chapter clearly establishes a religious and ritualistic background for both Kucipudi and Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performances. But as has been seen from the memories of the present day Kucipudi performers the ritualistic nature of the Kucipudi Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance gradually got diluted under the influence of the professional pressures which the **Kūcipūḍi** team underwent in course of time. On the other hand the ritualistic aspect of the Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance is not only preserved and continued in Melattur tradition, in fact, it is this ritualistic aspect which is preserving and sustaining the Melattur dance drama tradition in which the Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance is the vital ritualistic breath of life.

Here, it should be a noteworthy point, to remember that the enthusiasm about classical

dance traditions among the general public is only a recent phenomenon in the Modern Indian Society. Under such an atmosphere of a new born enthusiasm, the Melattur team may find many words and gestures of encouragement from the society. But it is their devotion for Lord Narasimha and their faith in his power, which sustained their **heritage**, even in an intense Tamil atmosphere. The analysis in the last two chapters **shows** that the Tamil environment under which the Melattur teams sustained their tradition did not remain without influencing the Melattur dance tradition.

The same point of a dearth of patronage for the art of classical dance and the above described new born enthusiasm had its impact on the Kucipudi team which always sustained on its dance performing profession for its living. This impact diluted the ritualistic aspect in the tradition and intensified the artistic aspects which is one of the main reasons behind the expansion of the repertoire of the Kucipudi team, discussed in this first chapter.

The comparative study in the past few pages of the two great classical dance traditions of Kucipudi and Melattur is in no way exhaustive. But this comparison, it is hoped, highlights the need for a more meticulous comparative study of the two forms, rather than the superficial observation of only the similarity between the two dance traditions. As has been seen the previous comparative study (by Dr. C. Ramanadham) of even the Prahlada Caritra Natakam in particular also has been only an extension of such superficial observation of similarities between the two traditions of Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance. But a more meticulous analysis of the two traditions both at the level of a study of the repertoires and at the level of the details of a particular item taken

up in the present study brings into light the interesting aspects of contrast between the twin traditions.

Though Prahlada Caritra Natakam has been chosen for the present study, for its significance in both the traditions the other common items between **Kūcipūḍi** and Melttur like **Uṣāpariṇayam** etc., also are good candidates for a fruitful comparative study between the two traditions. Since Ushaparinayam has no ritualistic association a comparative study of this dance drama in Kucipudi and **Mēlttūr** traditions may reveal certain new aspects of artistic orientation in Melttur tradition.

Through the fact that Melattur Bhagavata Mela Natakam type performances especially of Prahlada Caritra Natakam are formed in different village like Ootukkadu, Salaimangalam **Sūlamangalam**, and **Tēperumanallūr** the neighbouring villages of Melttur is taken note of by the researcher for the convenience of focus, these performances have been set aside in the present research work. The Melattur Prahlada Caritra Natakam performance is the most representative of all these **Prahlāda** Caritra Natakam performances.

In fact, apart from the Melattur tradition there are many other traditions cognate to Kucipudi tradition. One good example is the **Tūrpu** Bhagavatam tradition of the Eastern Andhra Pradesh. Even Kathakali of Kerala has the commonness of being a dance-drama tradition. A comparative study of **Kūcipūḍi** and these other South Indian Dance-drama traditions also may be fruitful in unearthing many hitherto unexplored aspects of these traditions.

In this connection an interesting information is the prevalence of Pahlada Caritra Natakam in the Ganjam District of South Orissa and the Terukkutu tradition of Tamil Nadu. There are many striking parallels between the Kucipudi and Melattur Pahlada Caritra Natakams on the one hand and these Pahlada Caritra Natakams on the other. An interesting aspect in this comparability of the traditions is that the Pahlada Caritra Natakam of Ganjam District of South Orissa (Plates- **L** * **LI**) is geographically close to the area of Turpu Bhagavatam tradition. Similarly, the Terukkutu tradition belongs to the same state of Tamil Nadu (Plates- **LI** II * **LI** III) as the Melattur tradition.¹¹⁵ A comparative study of all these Pahlada Caritra Natakams may be an immensely fruitful exercise.

Kucipudi tradition because of its wide repertoire shares such comparabilities with many other Indian classical dance traditions. For example, the item of Kucipudi identity called Bhamakalapam is found in Turpu Bhagavatam and Andhra Natyam traditions also. A comparative study of Bhamakalapam in all these three forms has been taken up by Mr. Prasanna Dayanand a researcher of the University of Hyderabad. The Astapadis of the **Kūcipūḍi** tradition have their parallels in Odissi and many other North Indian dance traditions. Ksetrayya **Padams** are found in Bharata Natyam and Andhra Natyam also along with the Kuchipudi tradition. Even Sabdams are common between Kucipudi and Bharata Natyam. All these commonness which the Kucipudi tradition shares with other dance traditions when probed may reveal several interesting, hitherto unobserved

¹¹⁵Patnaik, D.N. "Pahlada Natak" Sangeeth Natak journal issue no. 104, April-June 1992, New Delhi, pp. 27-29. And Venkat Swāmināthan's interview of Purisai Kannappa **Tambiran** Sangeeth Natak, a journal issue no. 105-106, July-December, 1992, New Delhi, pp. 30-43.

aspects of the Kucipudi tradition and the other dance traditions. Such a comparative study of the Kucipudi tradition with various other Indian Classical Dance traditions is a gigantic research project and beyond the scope of the present research.

Within its own scope the present research reveals the artistic priority in the Kucipudi tradition and the impact of that priority on the various different aspects of that tradition like its potential to have such an amazingly wide repertoire as it has today, the nature of music compositions, choreography, body movements, rhythm compositions etc., which are characteristic of it . Since the present researcher is a student of Kucipudi tradition these revelations about the Kucipudi tradition are of primary concern for the present research work. These revelations may help in grasping several intricate aspects of Kucipudi tradition like the scope of change, innovation, invension and transformation in Kucipudi tradition within the limitations of the identity and traditional characteristics of that tradition.

The results of the present research also warrant a **caution** in enthusiastically **projecting** spiritual mysticism, social reformation etc., as issues of priority for the Kucipudi tradition. Ofcourse, the Kucipudi tradition has spiritual mystic and soial reformative items like Gollakalapam and the incident reported in Machupalli **Kaifiat** clearly reflects their concern for social issues, these qualities cannot be taken as the central priority or the **defining** features of this tradition. Even these qualities, in fact, make part of all accommodating flexibility born out of an artistic priority for entertainment rooted in the centuries old classical dance tradition of Andhra region.



Plate- L Prahlada Natak of Ganjam in South Orissa.

Note: Punished for his intrasigence, Prahlāda **engulfed** by flames, prays to Visnu with folded hands while Hiranyakasipu and the kings executioner look on.



Plate- LI Prahlada Natak of Ganjam in South Orissa.

Note: The climactic scene where Narasimha destroys Hiranyakasipu.
(Source: *Sangeeth Natak* 104, April, 1992, p. 29).

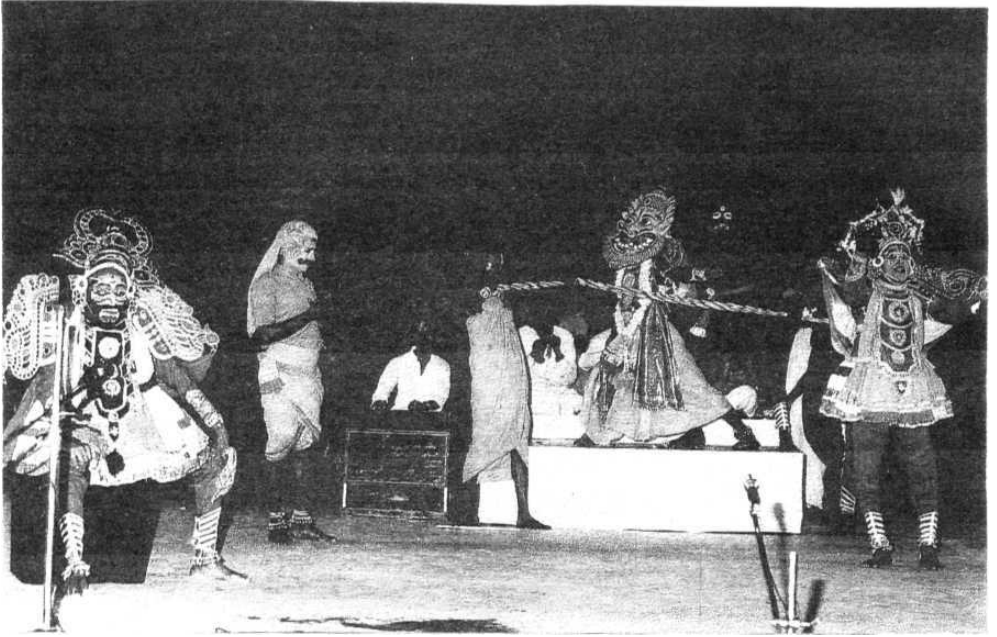


Plate- LII Hiranya Samharam: Therukkutu performance.

Note: Kannappa Thambiran of the Purisai troupe as Hiranya (extreme left).

(Source: *Sangeeth Natak* 105-106, **July** 1992, p. 48).



Plate- LIII

Narasimha mask used in Hiranya Samharam of the purisai troupe.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ENGLISH

Acharya, C.R. 'Kuchipudi and Ritual Dances of Andhra Pradesh'. *Sangeetha Natya Kala Sangraham*, Bombay, 1965.

Acharya, C.R. and Sarabhai, Mallika, *Understanding Kuchipudi*. New Delhi, 1992.

Anuradha, J., *Kuchipudi Dance - Who is Who*. Bombay, 1993.

Appa Rao, P.S.R., *A monograph on Bharata's Natya Sastra*. Hyderabad, n.d.

App Rao, Vissa., 'Dance Art in Andhra Pradesh'. *Souvenir on Kuchipudi Natya Seminar*. Hyderabad, 1959.

—————, 'Kuchipudi School of Dancing'. *Souvenir on Kuchipudi Natya Seminar*. Hyderabad, 1959.

—————, *Kuchipudi: Indian Dance*. New Delhi, 1954.

Arudra., 'Background and Evolution of Kuchipudi Dance'. *Sruti* 54 (March), 1989.

—————, 'Kuchipudi - The Abode of Dance'. *Andhra Jagati*. Madras, 1995.

—————, 'Lingering Questions: Some Fashionable Fallacies', *Sruti* 115 (April), 1994.

—————, 'The Melattur Mela: The Telugu Heritage of **Tamilnadu**'. *Sruti* 22 (April), 1986.

Ashton & Christie., *Yaksagdna: A dance-drama of India*. New Delhi, 1977.

Balakrishnan, Shyamala., 'Therukoothu: The Folk Theatre of Tamilnadu'. *Vivekananda Patrika* (August), 1981.

Banerji, Projesh., *Art of Indian Dancing*. New Delhi, 1985.

—————, *Indian Ballet Dancing*. New Delhi, 1983.

Chinna **Satyam, Vempati**., 'The Roots of Kuchipudi Art'. *Sangeeta Natya **Kaler** San-graham*, Bombay, 1985.

Ghosh, M.M. (trans)., *Nandikeswara's Abhinaya Darpana*, Calcutta, 1957 (first published in 1934).

—————, *Nāṭya Sāstra*. Calcutta, 1930.

Judith Lynne, Hanna., *To Dance is **Humna**: A theory of non-verbal communication*. Chicago, 1987.

Khokar Mohan., 'Kuchipudi: Must women Dance Solo? Degeneration, Not Development'. *The illustrated Weekly of India* (20th March), 1993.

—, 'The Renaissance of Indian Dance and its Consequences'. *Vivekanda Putrika* (August), 1981 (Source Bhavan's Journal August 5, 1962).

-, *The Splendours of Indian Dance*. New Delhi, 1985.

-, *Traditions of Indian Classical Dance*. New Delhi 1979.

Kothari Sunil, 'The Dance Drama tradition of Kuchipudi, Bhagavata Mela Nataka and Kuravanji with special reference to Rasa theory as expounded in Bharatas Natya Sastra'. *Ph.D. Thesis submitted to M.S. University Baroda*, 1977.

Kishore, B.R., *Dances of India*. New Delhi, 1988.

Krishna Murti, N.S., *Andhra Dance Sculpture*. Hyderabad, 1975.

Misra and Susheela., *Some Dancer's of India*. New Delhi, 1992.

Naidu, M.A., *Kuchipudi Classical Dance*. Hyderabad, 1975.

Narasimhacharya, Madabhushini., *History of the Cult of Narasimha in Telengana*. Hyderabad, 1989.

-, *History of the Cult of Narasimha in Telengana*. Hyderabad, 1989.

Natrajan, S., 'Bhagavata Mela Nataka Tradition and its history at Melattur'. *SLNJBMNNS Golden Jubilee Souvenir: 90*, Melattur, 1990.

—————, '**Bhagavatamela** Now and Then. *SLNJBMNNS Golden Jubilee Souvenir: 90* Melattur, 1990.

Partha Sarathi, T.S., 'Bharata Natyam and Allied Dances of South India.' *SLNJBMNNS Golden Jubilee Souvenir: 90. Mēlaṭṭūr*, 1990.

—————, 'Evolution of Dance music'. *Souvenir of Kuchipudi Mahotsav: 93*. Bombay, 1993.

Parthasarathi, R.M.L., 'The Unique Features of **Mlāttūr** Bhagavata Mela tradition'. *Bhāgavata Mela Ndiya Nātākam Souvenir*, Melattur, 1995.

Patanjali, V., 'Kuchipudi Dance'. *Vivekananda Patrika*. (August), 1981. (Source Swarajya Nov: 1979).

Pattabhi Raman, N., 'Dr. Vempati China **Satyam** - modernizer of a Tacky Dance Traditions'. *Sruti* 50/52 (December 1988 - Jan 1989), 1989.

Patnaik, D.N., 'Prahlaḍ natak'. *Sangeeth Natak* 104 (April-June), 1992.

Raghavan, V., 'The Veedhi Bhagavatam of Andhra'. *Vivekananda Patrika* (August), 1981.

Ragini Devi., *Dance Dialects of India*. Bombay, 1977.

—————, 'The Revivl of Kuchipudi Nritya'. *Marg* XIX : 2 (March), 1966.

Ramanan, K.V., 'Temples as patrons of Dance'. *Vivekananda Patrika* (August), 1981.

Rama Rao, Uma., *Kuchipudi Bharatam*. New Delhi, 1991.

Ranga Rao, V.A.K., 'On choreography and Sanchari Bhava', *Sruti* 54 (March), 1984.

———, 'The Transformation of Kuchipudi Dance - The Doctor's perceptions & performance'. *Sruti* 51/52 (Dec 1988 - Jan 1989), 1989.

Satyanarayana, Andavalli and Surya Rao, *Dr. Vempati - Amastereo with a mission.*
Vijayawada, 1994.

Seetha, S., *Tanjore as a seat of music.* Madras, 1981.

Srinivasan, P., 'The music in Kuchipudi operas'. *The Journal of music Academy: XII*,
Madras, 1982.

Subhadra Murty, K., 'Siddendhra Yogi Kalakshetra in Kuchipudi'. *Sruti* 115 (APRIL),
1994.

Sundaram, B.M., 'Bhagavata Mela staged in Three villages, differences in approach'.
Sruti 118 (July), 1994.

Sundara **Rajam**, V.S., 'Golden Jubilee of Bhagavata Mela Sangam celebrations Melattur'.
Sruti 70 (August), 1990.

Surya Prakasha Rao, Kotcheriakota., 'Kūchipūḍi Dance music - some Reminiscences'.
Sovenir of Kuchipudi Mahotsav: 93. Bombay, 1993.

Tandava Krishna, Ayyanki., 'Kuchipudi Dance'. *Andhra Pradesh Souvenir.* New Delhi,
1956.

Vaidhyanatham, Saroja., *The science of Bharatanatyam.* New Delhi, 1984.

Varadpande, M.L., *Tradition of Indian Theatra.* New Delhi, 1978.

Vasudev, S.V., 'What's Kuchipudi'. *The illustrated weekly of India.* (25th December),
1982.

Vatsyayan, Kapila., *Classical Indian Dance In Literature and Arts*. New Delhi, 1982.

—————, *Dance In Indian Paintings*. New Delhi, 1982.

—————, *Indian Classical Dance*. New Delhi, 1974.

—————, *Traditional Indian Theatre - multiple streams*. New Delhi, 1980.

—————, *Traditions of Indian Folk Dance*. New Delhi, 1985.

Venugopala Rao, Pappu., 'Kuchipudi During 1983-93 - Trend Towards solo items'. *Sruti* 115 (APRIL), 1994.

—, 'Kuchipudi'. *Sruti* 135 (December), 1995.

Vettam, Mani., *Puranic Encyclopaedia*. New Delhi, 1975.

TELUGU

Acharya, C.R., *Kuchipudi Aradhana Nrityamulu*. **Eluru**, 1969.

Andhra University Series.,

Yaksagdnamulu (Tanjavuru) No: 55. Waltair, 1955.

Yaksagdnamulu (Tanjavuru) No: 56. Waltair, 1956.

Yakṣagānamulu (Tanjavuru) No: 66. Waltair, 1959.

Yaksagdnamulu (Tanjavuru) No: 67. Waltair, 1960.

Yaksagdnamulu (Tanjavuru) No: 72. Waltair, 1964.

Appa Rao, P.S.R., *Citra Sūtram*. Hyderabad, 1994.

—————, *Ndya Sastramu*. Hyderabad, 1982.

—————, *Sātwikābhinayamu*. Hyderabad, 1993.

Appa Rao, P.S.R. (trans)., *Abhinaya Darpana*, Hyderabad, 1987.

Appa Rao, P.S.R. Rama Rao, Uma., B.A.: *Kuchipudi Nrityam*. Hyderabad, 1994.

Bhujangaraya Sarma, S.V., *Kuchipudi Nritya Rupakamulu*. Madras, 1986.

Chidambara Dikshitulu, Hemadri., *Kuchipudi Kala Sāgaramu*. Rajamundry, 1989.

Joga Rao, S.V., *Andhra Yaksagana Vangamaya Charitra*, Waltair, 1961.

—————, *The Kalpam*. Triveni (January), 1955.

—————, *Yakṣagānamulu: Samapradhyika Pdtralu*. Kinnera (January), 1955.

Kanakalingeswara Rao, Banda., *Kuchipudi Nrityam*. Souvenir on the Golden Jubilee of Dr. Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy, Hyderabad, 1963.

Krshnamurthy, Salva and Sangamesam, Mutnuri., *Bhāma Kaldpam of Kuchipudi. Souvenir of Kuchipudi Mahatsav*, 93. Bombay, 1993.

Lakshminarasimha Sastry, Cintalapati., *Kuchipudi Bhagavatulu*. Tenali, 1981.

Mallikarjuna Sarma, Akella., *Tala Prastana Sagaram*. Hyderabad, 1985.

Nagayya, G., *Telugu Sahitya Sameeksa*. Tirupati, 19 .

Narasimha Rao, Korada, *Kuchipudi Natyam* - Navarasalu. Natyakala, 1979.

Pārvatisam, Vēdantam., *Bhagavatulu Kuchipudi*. Vijayawada, 1952.

—————, *Kuchipudi Vari Bhamakalapam*. Machilipatanam, 1964.

—————, *Kuchipudi Melakartalu*. Vijayawada, 1990.

—————, *Kuchipudi Prahlāda Nātākamu*. Kuchipudi, 1981.

—————, *Kuchipudi Pagativeshamulu*. Natyakala (May), 1970.

—————, *Nritya Tarangini*. Vijayawada, 1988.

Ramachari, Natana., *Nāṭya Darpanam*. Hyderabad, n.d.

Radhakrisna Murthy, Mikkilineni., *Andhrulu Nritya Kala Vikasam*. Madras, n.d.

—————, *Teluguvari Janapada Kaldrupalu*. Hyderabad, 1992.

Ramakrishna, Natarajan., *Andhra Nāṭyam-Kūchīpūdī*. Hyderabad, 1987.

—————, *Andhra Natyakala*. Hyderabad, n.d.

—————, *Daksindhya Natyakala Caritra*. Vijayawada, 1968.

—————, *Nartana Vāri*. Hyderabad, 1970.

—————, *Nrityakala*. Hyderabad.

Ramanadham, Cinta., *Kuchipudi Kala Sāgaramu*. Kuchipudi, 1974.

-, *Kuchipudi Ndtia Bhdrati*. Kuchipudi, 1988.

-, *Kuchipudi Ntyacaryulu Caritra Putalu*. Kuchipudi, 1988.

Satyam, Vempati (Peda)., *Kuchipudi Natya Pathalu - Charitra*. Natana. n.d.

Satyanarayana Sarma, **Vedantam**., *Kuchipudi - Natyakala*. Krishnaveni, 1980.

Venkatanarayana **Sarma**, Yellapragada., *Bharatiya Nritya Bhēdamulu*. Natyakulu. 1966.

List of Eminent Scholars/Exponents/Artists Interviewed

1. Padmasri Nataraj Ramakrishna, Hyderabad.
2. P.S.R. Appa Rao, Hyderabad.
3. Padmasri Vedantam Satyanarayana Saram, Kūcipūḍi.
4. Sri. Vedantam Rattayya Sarma, Lecturer, Siddhendra Kalakshetram, Kucipudi.
5. Sri. Chinta Ramanadham, Principal, Siddhendra Kalakshetram, Kucipudi.
6. Sri, Vendantam Parvatisam, Kūcipūḍi.
7. Sri. P.V.G. Krishna Sarma, Kucipudi.
8. Sri. Vedantam Radhesyam, Lecturer Siddhendra Kalakshetram, Kucipudi.
9. Sri. Pasumarti Sitaramayya, Kucipudi exponent Andhra University, Visakhapatnam.
10. Sri. Hemadri Chidambara Dikshitulu, Kucipudi exponent Rajahmundry.
11. Sri. Chintalapati Varahala Raju, Musicologist, Chodavaram.
12. Sri. C. Rama Murthy, Bharata Natyam exponent, Vijayanagaram.
13. Sri. Tampallela Suryanarayana, Musicologist, Hyderabad.
14. Dr. Arudra, Madras.
15. Sri. Gopala Krishna Sarma, Melattur.
16. Sri. S. Natarajan, Bhagavata Mela exponent, Melattur.
17. Sri. S. Kumar, Bhagavata Mela exponent, Melattur.
18. Sri. R. Partha Sarathy, Scholar, Kumbhakonam.
19. Sri. Srikantha and Vijay, Madras.
20. Prof. Madurai Mani, New Delhi.