

# **GLIMPSES INTO TELUGU FOLKLORE**

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## **FOREWORD**

Telugu Folklore is as rich as that of any other Indian language; but its richness is less known to the non-Telugus because very little has been done in that direction to make it known. Folklore studies in Telugu gained momentum after 1970 in different Universities of Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring states as well. More than a hundred M. Phil and Ph.D. degrees have been awarded so far, on a variety of topics of folklore in general and folk literature in particular. And a good number of these dissertations are available in print also. Besides, scholars and enthusiasts outside the Universities have also published, critical essays, monographs and anthologies of folk songs, ballads, proverbs and riddles. In spite of this fairly good amount of work done in Telugu, only a little is published in English or Hindi for the benefit of non-Telugu readers interested in Telugu folklore. It is this reason that prompted me to bring out this anthology of essays in English hoping that it would provide a glimpse into the variety and richness of Telugu folklore to the English reading public. Out of some 15 papers that I presented in various folklore seminars between the years 1961 and 1990 and five lectures which I delivered under U.G.C. National Lectures Scheme (1980-81) in five Universities, my friends Sri N. S. Krishna Murthi M.A., B.L. Advocate Nellore and Prof. M. Nagabhushana Sarma, Osmania University, selected these 12 essays and arranged them in a cohesive order for giving the present shape. I owe my thanks to them for their suggestions and help.

I dedicate this humble work to the Veteran Freedom Fighter and Patriot Sri VANDEMATARAM RAMACHANDRA RAO who has been a great source of inspiration since 1939 not only to me but to all those who love our mother land Bharat and its Culture. His heroic suffering on 7-2-1939 due to the inhuman brutality inflicted by the then ruling powers earned for him the surname VANDEMATARAM So dear to all those who love Bharat. I had the good fortune of coming into his fold when I came over to Hyderabad from Warangal in 1946 and stayed at Sunderbhavan, the Centre of activities of VANDE MATARAM BROTHERS in those days. As a mark of deep respect and veneration I offer this work to him on his 75th Birthday (25.4.1916) and pray to the Almighty to shower his grace and bestow a healthy and long life on Sri Ramachandra Rao Garu.

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**B. RAMA RAJU**

# CONTENTS

## FORWORD

- 1) FOLKLORE STUDIES IN TELUGU : 1 - 11  
Folklore Fellows of India - Mysore, March 1980
- 2) TELUGU FOLK LITERATURE : 12 - 23  
All India Folklore Conference, Calcutta, February - 1964.
- 3) TELUGU FOLK SONGS : 24 - 34  
All India Folk Culture Conference, Ujjain, November-1961
- 4) THE FOLK VERSION OF RAMAYANA STORIES 35 - 48  
All India Symposium on Ramakatha in  
Tribal and Folk traditions, Gauhati, February 1988.
- 5) THE FOLK VERSIONS OF MAHABHARATA STORIES 49 - 56  
National Lecture 1980 - 81.
- 6) MYSTICAL FOLK SONGS IN TELUGU 57 - 69  
National Lecture 1980 - 81.
- 7) MYTHOLOGICAL SHIFT IN TELUGU FOLK RAMAYANAS 70-73  
Calicut University, January 1990.
- 8) SATI BALLADS IN TELUGU 74 - 79  
International Symposium "FOLSFUIL" New Delhi, March 1989.
- 9) TELUGU PERFORMING FOLK ART FORMS 80 - 94  
Dravidian Folk Performing Arts  
S.V. University, Tirupati, December, 1990
- 10) FOLK RELIGION AND LOCAL DEITIES IN  
ANDHRA PRADESH 95 - 102  
Written for Some Organisation at Aligarh.
- 11) TRIBAL LORE : SOME COMMON TRAITS IN  
HERITAGE 103-112  
International Seminar on Tribal Culture  
in a changing World, Cuttack - Dec.1988.
- 12) TELUGU FOLK MEDICINE : 113 - 126  
Indian Folklore Congress, Ranchi University - February, 1983.

## FOLKLORE STUDIES IN TELUGU

### I

It was C.P. Brown (1798-1884), a civilian in the East India Company, who resurrected a major part of Telugu classical literature, also collected for the first time some important Telugu Ballads like Palanati Virula Caritra, Kumararamuni Katha, Bobbili Katha, Kamamma Katha besides many stories, songs, manjari dwipadas and some Yaksaganas. He also wrote an article in the Asiatic Journal volume 34 (1841) on the richness of Telugu folk literature. Thirty years later J. A. Boyle, again an English civil servant, introduced Sarva Papani Katha, a historical ballad and five other love songs which he collected from the folks, through Indian Antiquary (vol III, 1874). Following in the foot steps of these initiators, scholars and enthusiasts like Raja Mantripregada Bhujangarao, J. Venkataramanayya and J. Ramalakshmayya published separate anthologies of Women's songs called "Strila Patalu" in 1898. Nandiraju Calapatirao published two comprehensive anthologies called "Strila Patalu" in 1900 and 1903 respectively, covering a variety of Telugu folksongs sung by women during different occasions. Mangu Venkata Ranganatha Rao's edition of "Strila Patalu" (1905) contains some additional songs. During the same period essays "Folklore of Telugos" by G. R. Subbaramayya and "Some Telugu folksongs", "Some Telugu Nursery Songs and catches" by M. V. Venkataswami appeared in the Indian Antiquary (Vols. 34 & 35 in 1905 and 1906 respectively). The anthologies "Strijananda navina Kalyana Patalu" (1904), "Strila Vedula Patalu" (1910), "Strijana vinodini Pendi Patalu" (1911) and "Strijanandakara Kalayana Patalu" (1919) containing a variety of women's songs came out in quick succession. Tekumalla Aiyta Rao's essays in the "Krishna Patrika" (1916-17) were published in a book form "Andhra Padamulu Patalu" in 1924.

These preliminary attempts caught the imagination of some leading scholars like Panacagnula Adinarayana Sastri, Veturi Prabhakara Sastri, Dr. Cilukuri Narayana Rao, Akkiraju Umakantam, Suravaram Pratapa Reddy and Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma. They published quite a few essays bringing to light the hitherto neglected branch of folklore in general and folksongs and ballads in particular. Akkiraju Umakantam edited and published (1938) "Balacandruni Yuddam", celebrating the glory of the Battle of Palanadu (12th Century). His critical introduction to this work is a powerful plea in defence of folk poetry, folk language and hero cult. The ballad cycle of palanati Viracaritra, collected and preserved by C. P. Brown was collated and edited by Pingali Lakshmikantham and Avasarala Surya Rao (1961). "Kumararamuni Katha of Kampili" singing the glory of Kumararama and his valiant fights against Mohammad Bin Tuglaq in 1327, with a critical introduction by Dr. N. Venkataramanayya (1952), "Katamaraju Katha" a part of the famous historical ballad cycle celebrating the glory of the battle (13th Century) fought by the Yadavas on one side and the Nellore Cholas on the other, edited by Veturi Prabhakara Sastri (1953), and "Bobbili Yuddha Katha" another famous

historical ballad describing the battle of Bobbili fought in 1757, critically edited by Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma (1956) were published by the Govt. Oriental Manuscripts library, Madras. Sri V.N. Bhushan, A. Gopalakrishna, Y. Sriramamurti, Cinta Dikshitulu, A. Rama Rao, T. Sivasankara Sastri, Vavilala Somayajulu, D. Ramanujarao and others published inspiring and critical essays in different magazines and journals on the various aspects of the rich folk traditions. The contributions of two scholars namely T. Kameswara Rao and Dr. S. Gopalakrishnamurti gave a definite shape, to the study of folklore in Telugu. T. Kameswara Rao's anthology "Pata Patalu" (1941) with a critical introduction defining folklore for the first time and his articles published during 1953-55 and brought out in a book form "Andhra Janapada geya Vangmaya Caritra" and Dr. S. Gopalakrishnamurti's innumerable articles in "Kinnera" and "Bharati" magazines opened new vistas and attracted the attention of the Telugu literary world. Andhra Saraswata parishat of Hyderabad published the anthologies Telugu Folksongs, "Palle Patalu" (1957), Ramayana songs sung by women "Strila Ramayanapu Patalu" (1955) and Puranic songs sung by women "Strila Pauranikapu Patalu" (1963) all the three edited by Dr. S. Gopalakrishnamurti. Cinta Dikshitulu's "Praja Vangmayamu" (1951) I. Saraswati Devi's 'Jatiratnalu' (1954) containing critical appreciation of some of the well known folksongs, Ellora's anthologies and appreciations like "Janapada geyalu" (1955) "Saragalu" and "Madhura Kavitalu" (1961) B. Narendra's "Mota Padalu" (1962) C. Narayanaswami's "Tene Sonalu" (1974) S. Pasupati Rao's "Tene Sonalu" (1977) V. Satyanarayana Sarma's "Pillala Patalu" (Childrens songs 1949) N. Gopal's "Sudha Sravanti" (1976), Dr. Gangappa's "Telugudesapu Janapada geyalu" (1976) Dr. G. Linga Reddy's "Karimnagar District Janapada geyalu" (1979) Mahendarji's "Palliyula Pasidi Patalu" (1979) Prayaga Narasimha Sastri's "Telugu Palle Patalu" (1960) G. Aswatthanarayana's "Alichippalu Animutyalu" (1972) deserve special mention. Many magazines, weeklies, Monthlies and even dailies in their Sunday or special supplements published folksongs and appreciative articles. Giduturi Suryam, Sitaram Naidu, Guduri, Kanapati, K. Sabha and many others made impressive collections of folksongs and ballads. All India Radio and the Govt. Information Bureau have a rich variety of folk songs collected from all the districts of Andhra Pradesh. Hari Adi Sheshuvu made a successful attempt to bring out a critical history of Telugu folk poetry for the first time in his book "Janapada geya Vangmaya paricayamu" (1954). All these anthologies and essays or surveys pertain to folksongs or ballads only. Other genres of folk literature and other branches of folklore remain outside the review made above.

The shining star in the field of Telugu folklore, late N. Gangadharam, a poor teacher who dedicated his life for collecting all types folklore deserves the gratitude of successive generations of scholars. He spent away his hereditary property and paltry salary for collecting the rich treasures of folklore. His publications cover a variety of folksongs, ballads, proverbs, folk idioms, riddles, rituals, games, entertainments, beliefs, magic, medicine, arts and crafts. Many research scholars have drawn rich source material from Gangadharam's

collections. It is estimated that his collections run into 10,000 pages. His published works are (1) Melukolupulu (1949) awakening songs, (2) Mangala Harataku in two volumes (1951) songs sung on different deities while offering and waving light, (3) Selayeru (1955) folk songs of different kinds (4) Vyavasaya Sametalu (1956) Proverbs associated with agriculture, (5) Pasidi Palukulu (1960) containing proverbs, sayings, beliefs etc (6) Strila Vratakathalu (1960) in three volumes, containing songs, stories and rituals connected with vows and ceremonies of women folk (7) Janapada geyavangmaya Vyasavali (1960) essays on folksongs (8) Atalu Patalu (1964) native sports and songs (9) Minneru and (10) Munnuru (1973) two sufficiently voluminous anthologies of folksongs and other oral folklore.

Oswald J. Couldrey's South Indian Hours (1924) and Prof Sambamurti's articles in Indian Arts & Letters (1973) contain rich information regarding Telugu folk music. Vinjamuri Anasuyadevi and Sitadevi the two sisters and Prayaga Narasimha Sastri have done good service in propagating folk music through radio and different platforms.

Late Dr. Cilukuri Narayana Rao is said to have collected one Lakh Telugu proverbs. Captain M.W. Carr's "Telugu Sametalu" (1949) contains Telugu proverbs with English translation. "Telugu Jatiyamula Kathalu" (1959) by M.V. Sastri contains 57 stories based on folksayings in vogue. Dr. V. Venkatappaiah's "Rayalasima palukubadulu" (1979) containing proverbs, riddles and idioms of Rayalasima area of Andhra Pradesh. "Podupu Kathalu" (1981) containing 2455 riddles, are commendable works in this field. "Tatacarya Katha" (1974) edited by B. Gopal Reddy contains C.P. Brown's collection of Tatacarya's Folk tales. Dr. K. Rajaseshagiri Rao's "Andhraki Lok Kathayen" (1962) is a Hindi version of 14 Telugu Folk tales. Likewise "Tales from Telugu" (1975) by Dr. C.R. Sarma is an English version of 18 children's folk tales. G. Venkateswara Rao's "Grihalankarana Muggulu" (1956) deals with the Rangavalli designs drawn by women to decorate the house floors and courtyards. Sri B. Subbarayan has a rich collection of folk art forms. K. Ramamurti has rich material objects pertaining to performing folk arts and material culture. K. Rajayya and Jagadish Mithal possess rich treasures of folk paintings. Nataraja Ramakrishna, an eminent dance exponent published "Nrtyanjali" (1959) "Nartana murali" (1959) and "Andhrula Natyakala" (1959) on different aspects of folk dances. M. Radhakrishnamurti's "Andhra Natakaraanga caritra" (1969) surveys folk theatrical performances also.

"The Chenchus" (1943) and "The Reddis of the Bison Hills" (1945) by Furer Haimendorf are critical studies of two Telugu tribes, i.e. the Chenchus and the Koyas. "The Yanadis" (1962) by V. Raghavayya deals with the semitribal people called Yanadis. The census of India vol. II part VII-B "Fairs and Festivals of Andhra Pradesh" surveys the fairs and festivals of the Tribal and folk people of entire Andhra Pradesh. The Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute has a good museum of musical instruments and other things pertaining to the

material culture and performing arts of the Tribals. "Andhra Pradesh Adima Jatulu" (1976) by D.R. Pratap throws light on 32 Tribal communities that inhabit Andhra Pradesh. The biannual bulletin "Tribal" also contains rich information regarding tribals. "Hinduvula Pandugalu" (1931) "Andhrula Sanghika Caritra" (1950) by Suravaram Pratapa Reddy, "Andhrula caritra Samakriti" (1954) by K. Lakshmiranjanam, "Hinduvula Pandugalu" (1960) by Tirumala Ramachandra, throw light on folk life and folk manners including festivals and rituals. Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi's publications "Telugu Sametalu" (1959) Edited by V. Satyanarayana is a collection of Telugu proverbs, "Janapada geyalu Sanghika Caritra" edited by Dr. B. Rama Raju and Dr. N. Krishna Kumari contains some ballads and the social history depicted in those ballads. "Katamaraju Kathalu" in two volumes (1976 & 1978) edited by Dr. T.V. Subbarao contains the ballad cycle of Katamaraju with a critical introduction. The Akademi published two monographs "Podupu Kathalu" Telugu riddles by Sankara Rao and Telugu festivals by T. Ramachandra in connection with the world Telugu Conference 1975. Andhra Pradesh Sangita Nataka Akademi published an anthology of folksongs called "Triveni" (1960) edited by me. Its monthly "Natyakala" (1970) February & March special number is a useful document for all types of performing art forms presented during the folk festival conducted by the Akademi (1970). Likewise Natyakala (1977) June also is dedicated to the performing art forms. It has also published two monographs "Burrakatha" by Nadira and "Janapada Sahityamu-Viragathalu" by Dr. T.V. Subba Rao, during the world Telugu Conference 1975. This Akademi has also helped the folk art troupes in a big way. During 1966-1970 it helped Yakshagana and Turpu Bhagavatam Troupes. In recent Years it is helping Totubommatala i.e. leather puppet shows. Under the supervision of Dr. M. Nagabhushana Sarma, a survey of existing leather puppet troupes is undertaken by the Akademi. Dr. Sarma made an indepth study of performing art forms in general and folk theatre in Particular. Nataraja Ramakrishna gave a boost to the folk performing art forms and artistes during his tenure as President of the Andhra Pradesh Nritya Akademi.

## II

Folklore studies in Telugu entered the University portals very late and with great hesitation. Prof. Lakshmiranjanam, the then Head of the Telugu Department and my research Supervisor had a hard job to convince the authorities when I offered "Telugu Folksongs" as a subject for my Ph.D. Degree in 1952 in Osmania University. I submitted my thesis in July 1955 and got the Ph.D. Degree in 1956. My Thesis "Telugu Janapada geya Sahityamu" (Printed in 1958, 1978, 1990) within its 16 chapters discusses different aspects relating to various types of folk songs and ballads. I succeeded in introducing the study of folk literature as an optional paper of the M.A. Telugu courses in 1970 and as a compulsory paper since 1975. Since then Osmania University has made long strides in folklore studies and as a result more than a dozen Ph.D. and M.Phil., degrees have been awarded in different subjects. I published "Pillala Paatalu" Children's songs (1960) and "Telangana Pallopaatalu"

Telangana folksongs (1968) which I collected during my field work. I have edited "Folk Tales of Andhra Pradesh" (1974) for Sterling Publishers and wrote "Folklore of Andhra Pradesh" (1978) for National Book Trust (both in English). I have had the fortune of presenting and publishing many papers on different aspects of Telugu folk literature and delivering National lectures in different Universities.

Dr. Nayani Krishna Kumari was awarded Ph.D. degree in 1970 for her thesis "Ballads in Telugu". Her approach to folk literature is that of an anthropologist. She has discussed the theory of Totemism, Mother Goddess worship, magic and sorcery in ballad tradition in her thesis. She has a number of papers to her credit. Y. Raghuma Reddi obtained his Ph.D in 1974 for his thesis "Social life in Telugu Folksongs" dealing with the psychology of the folks and their social behaviour and the traditional values which uphold the family life of the folks. N. Koteswari was awarded Ph.D. degree in 1978 for her thesis "Unregistered Lexical items in the printed Telugu folk songs" and analysed the descriptive grammar of the language in Telugu folksongs. Smt. K. Sumati got Ph.D. in 1979 for her thesis "Telugu Janapada Kathalu" i.e. Telugu folk tales. It is the first thesis on prose narratives in Telugu on the basis of types and motifs. She has a good collection of Telugu folk tales. G. Linga Reddy obtained M.Phil., degrees for his dissertation on "Labour songs in folk literature" in 1976 and Ph.D. degree on "Telangana Labour Songs" in 1980. Smt. R. Premalata (1980), Smt. P. Saraswati (1980) and Smt. G. Vasundhara (1981) obtained Ph.D. Degrees for their theses on Mythological songs, Children's songs and Tradition in women's songs respectively. The results of the thesis on Telugu Riddles by K. Venkatarreddi are awaited. So far six candidates have obtained M.Phil., degree on different topics of Telugu folk literature. At present twenty candidates are working for their Ph.D. and M.Phil., degrees on a variety of subjects pertaining to folklore in Osmania University. On behalf of the Telugu Department a Project "Survey of folklore in Telangana" has been taken up in a phased manner and the survey of Nalgonda District is completed. The Department is slowly building up a Folklore Museum also. An All India Seminar on Comparative Folklore Studies and Methodology was held in 1981.

In Andhra University Prof. S.V. Jogarao did commendable work on "Telugu Yakshagana" and obtained his Ph.D. degree in 1957. His thesis (1960) deals with the evolution of Yakshagana both as a form of literature and also as a theatrical event. He has published a number of papers on different kinds of performing art forms. Dr. S.V. Joga Rao as Head of the Dept., of Telugu has introduced the study of folk literature as a paper in M.A. Telugu. Ch. Subrahmanyastry obtained Ph.D. degree for his thesis "Telugu proverbs and idioms" in 1963. In Andhra University Smt. Lakshminarasamma is working on women's

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On behalf of the Telugu Dept the VII Session of the Indian Folklore Congress was Organised in 1983 and the first Summer School in Folklore was held in 1984



songs and Sri Jagannatha Naidu is working on the Ballad of Bobbili for Ph D

Sri Venkateswara University has also introduced folklore studies in Telugu. Dr T V Subba Rao obtained Ph.D in 1969 for his thesis "Ballad Poetry in Telugu". He has exhaustively dealt with all aspects of ballads and covered 980 ballads published and unpublished. Dr Subba Rao has edited the ballad cycle of Katamaraju Katna published by Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi in two volumes with the title "Katamaraju Kathalu" in 1976 and 1978 respectively. He has published many papers and monographs also. K Viswanatha Reddy did pioneering work and obtained Ph D for his thesis "Village names in Cuddapa district in 1976

Nagarjuna University has also initiated folklore research. Prof T Donappa, Head of the Telugu Dept, has not only collected innumerable folksongs of Rayalasima but also published many learned articles. His "Telugulo kotta velugulu" (1972) and "Janapada Kalasampada" (1975) contain critical essays on a variety of Telugu folksongs. His "Telugu Harikatha Sarvasvam" (1978) is a monumental work on Harikatha a semi-folk narrative performing art. Dr G Gangappa of the same department has also collected a good number of folksongs of Rayalasima. B Venkateswarlu obtained his Ph D degree for his thesis "Kolatham songs of Palnadu" in 1981. G Narasimlu was awarded M Phil degree for his "Ramayana songs of Srikakulam District" in 1979.

Folk literature as a paper in M A Telugu was also introduced in the Sri Krishnadevaraya University in 1978-79. Dr M K Devaki who obtained Ph D in 1979 for her thesis "Children's Songs" from S V University has joined this University. She has a good collection of children's songs and riddles.

P G Centre Bhimavaram has also introduced folk literature as a paper at M A Telugu and the students have collected 200 ballads during their field work from that region.

Kakatiya University has folk literature as an optional subject in M A Telugu. Sri P Jagannatham of the Telugu Dept, is working on "Are songs" i.e. on the songs of Are-a Maratha community settled in Andhra Pradesh for his Ph D.

It is gratifying to note that Universities outside Andhra Pradesh have also encouraged folklore studies in Telugu. Vinjamuri Sitadevi was awarded M Lit degree by the Madras University as long back as 1953 for her dissertation "Music in Telugu folk Songs". Smt Nirmalamma is working on "Telugu and Tamil folksongs" and Candravali is working on "Depiction of Sita in Telugu folklore" for Ph D Degrees.

Mysore University took lead in comparative studies and Sri R.V.S. Sundaram was awarded Ph.D. degree in 1973 for his thesis "Folksongs in Telugu and Kannada - a comparative study" (1979). Dr. Sundaram is doing commendable work in Telugu folklore. His "Janapada Sahitya Swarupam" (1976) serves as a guide to the students of folklore. He established 'Janapada Vijnana Bharati' - Centre for folkloristics in 1981 at Mysore. He has also started a quarterly journal called "Janapadam" dedicated to folklore researches. He is one of the editors of the anthology "Alichippalu Animutyalu" (1972). "Comparative study of Telugu Kannada proverbs" "A comparative study of Ramayana songs in Telugu and Kannada" is in progress in that University.

T.V. Subba Rao who took his Ph.D. from S.V. University joined Bangalore University. Mention has already been made with regard to his works on heroic ballads. G.S. Mohan obtained Ph.D. for his thesis "Women's songs of Anantapur Dist" in 1979. He has published "Kannada Telugu Gadegalu" i.e. Kannada and Telugu Proverbs (1977) "Janapada Vijnana Vyasavali" (Essays on Folklore) (1981), "Bibliography of Telugu folklore" and many research papers in various journals.

Hindi Departments in different Universities inside as well as outside Andhra Pradesh have also encouraged Telugu folklore studies. (1) Folksongs of Andhra (Ph.D.) K. Seshagiri Rao (Agra) (2) A Comparative Study of Telugu and Hindi Proverbs (M.Phil) Sekha Saka (Agra) (3) Hindi and Telugu Proverbs - A Comparative Study (Ph.D.) N.S. Dakshinamurti (Sahitya Sammelan) (4) Hindi and Telugu Proverbs (M.Phil) Y. Venkataramana Rao (Tirupati) Hindi and Telugu Sayings (M.Phil) Fazlunnisa Begum (Tirupati) (5) Hindi and Telugu Folksongs (Ph.D.) N. Pasupati Rao (Andhra) (6) Hero Cult in Hindi and Telugu Folksongs (Ph.D.) M. Saraswati (Osmania).

This is a brief survey of folklore studies in Telugu confined to a few forms like Ballads, songs, proverbs, Tales etc. But there lie still many other forms of folk literature and other branches of folklore unexplored and unexamined. The application of latest methods and principles and a research oriented study of other branches of folklore are a desideratum in Telugu.

### ADDENDUM

Since the writing of this article (1981) the following studies in Telugu Folklore have been made in different Universities.

#### Osmania University :-

- 1) Social life in Karimnagar District Folksongs (M.Phil) N. Rajesam
- 2) Depiction of Female Characters in Ramayana Folksongs (M.Phil) K. Srilakshmi
- 3) Influence of folk literature on Telugu Cinemas (M.Phil) K.H. Lakshmana Rao
- 4) Telugu Riddles (Ph.D.) K. Venkata Reddy
- 5) Telugu Tribal Songs (Ph.D.)

P. Sivarama Krishnamurthy 6) Influence of Telugu on Are folk literature (Ph.D.) P. Jagannatham 7) Village deities of Nalgonda District (M.Phil) M. Andamma 8) Figures of Speech in Telugu folk literature (Ph.D.) K. Ruknuddin 9) Music in Telugu Folksongs (Ph.D.) R. Vasanta Lakshmi 10) Description of nature in folk literature (M.Phil) T. Padma Rao 11) Indigenous medicine in Telugu folk literature (M.Phil) K. Ravindra mani 12) Life and Compositions of Bhakta Ramadasu (M.Phil) D. Balayya 13) Telugu Proverbs, a comparative study with other Dravidian languages (M.Phil) N. Bhaskar 14) Telugu Proverbs and folk culture (Ph.D.) B. Damodara Rao 15) Ramayana Folksongs Psycho Analysis (Ph.D.) K. Srilakshmi 16) Village names of Nagar Kurnool Taluq (M.Phil) K. Kishore Babu 17) Village Names of Medak District (Ph.D.) P. Manik Prabhu 18) Folktales of Mahboobnagar District (Ph.D.) B. Balaswamy 19) Runjalu (Minstrels) in Folklore (M.Phil) P. Subba Chary 20) Folk itinerant minstrels (Ph.D.) N. Yadagiri Sarma 21) Telugu Burra Kathas (Ph.D.) K.H. Lakshmana Rao 22) Mother goddess worship in folklore (Ph.D.) M. Andamma 23) Mystical folksongs in Telugu (M.Phil) N. Jyotirmayi 24) Depiction of Social life in Telugu Proverbs (M.Phil) T.V. Ramanarasayya 25) Ramayana Yakshaganas (Ph.D.) D. Balayya 26) Folk Songs of Nalgonda District (Ph.D.) M. Satrugna Reddy 27) Life and Musical Compositions of Rakamacherla Venkatadasu (Ph.D.) S. Anjaneya Sastri 28) Yaksha ganas of Telangana (Ph.D.) P. Yella Reddy 29) Kalajnanas of Potuluri Virabrahmam (Ph.D.) M. Venkata Narasimha Reddy 30) Jataras in Cuddapah and Chittur Districts (Ph.D.) M. Narasimha Reddy 31) Depiction of family life in Telugu and Malayalam Proverbs (Ph.D.) N. Bhaskar 32) Telangana Raitanga Poratam Praja Sahityam (Ph.D.) J. Tirumala Rao 33) Depiction of kinship in Karimnagar District Songs (M.Phil) Ch. Satyam Raju 34) The Story of the battle of Bobbili (M.Phil) P. Venkatarama Sastri 35) Kolatam Songs (M.Phil) V. Surendra Rao 36) Water lifting Songs of Mahboobnagar District (M.Phil) B. Kesavulu 37) Folk Songs of Bhagavata (M.Phil) Subbalakshmi 38) Stories of women's vows (M.Phil) T. Anjali 39) Ballads of Karimnagar District (Ph.D.) I. Swami Reddy 40) Budige Jangalu (Ph.D.) S. R. Venkatesam.

#### **Hyderabad University - Hyderabad**

1) Wedding Songs - Tradition and Rituals (M.Phil) K. Lakshmi narasamma  
2) Burrakathas - Social awareness (M.Phil) Y. Philip 3) Labour songs of Prakasam District (M.Phil) G. Mastan Rao

#### **Telugu Unlvesity - Hyderabad**

1) Fisher Community Songs of Konasima (Ph. D) U. Subrahmanyaswara Sarma  
2) Folk tales (M.Phil) K.V.N. Narasamba. 3) Tribal Songs of Maredumilli region (M.Phil) P. Subrahmanyasastr

This University is developing a Department of Folklore. Teaching and research in Folklore and performing art forms is the speciality of this institution.

**Kakatiya University - Warangal**

1) Bhaagawata Folksongs - Critical Study (Ph.D.) K. Rajitamala 2) Kumara Ramuni Katha - a Study (M.Phil) Lakshminarasayya 3) Social life in Warangal District Folktales (M.Phil) V. Sridevi 4) Songs of Batukamma festival (M.Phil) T. Vishnumurti 5) Oggu Katha in Warangal District - a literary study (M.Phil) K. Satish Kumar.

**Andhra University - Visakhapatnam**

1) The Art of Kuchipudi Yakshagana - Historical and Technical aspects (Ph.D.) Ch. Ramanadham 2) Imitations and adaptations of Telugu folksongs (Ph.D.) P. Apada Rao 3) Blind beliefs in folk literature (M.Phil) K. Viranjaneyulu 4) Village deities of East Godawari District (M.Phil) V. Vivekanandaswami 5) Children's Lore (Ph.D.) V. Venkatappayya 6) Folk lore and Ramayana (Ph.D) Smt. Malaya Vasini.

**Nagarjuna University - Guntur**

1) Beliefs-an analysis (M.Phil) Satyabhushana Rani 2) Depiction of women in Telugu folklore (Ph.D.) A. Vijayalakshmi 3) Village names of Anantapuram District (Ph.D.) Balagangadhara Rao 4) Village names of Mangalagiri Taluq (M.Phil) A. Papa Rao 5) Sir names of Telugus (Ph.D.) B. Satyavati 6) Games and Sports of Telugus (Ph.D.) V. Subrahmanyam.

**Sri Venkateswara University - Tirupati**

1) Surnames of the residents of Chandragiri town (M.Phil) K. Sarada 2) Children's Songs in Telugu (Ph.D.) M.K. Devaki 3) Kumararama's Story in Telugu and Kannada (M.Phil) M. Vedavati 4) Folksongs of Cuddapah District (M.Phil) M.V. Ramanayya 5) Woman in Telugu Proverbs (M.Phil) B. Chaya 6) Woman in Telugu Heroic Ballads (M.Phil) M. Vijayalakshmi 7) Telugu heroic ballads of Chittur District (M.Phil) K. Ramachandrudu 8) Folk Songs of Harijans of Bangaru Palyam Taluq Social and Cultural Life (M.Phil) K. Muniratnam 9) Place names of Nellore District Sociolinguistic study (Ph.D.) V. Chandrasekhara Reddy 10) Place names of Chittur District (Ph.D.) D. Chenga Reddy 11) Heroic ballads of Kurnool District (Ph.D.) T. Guru Rama Prasad 12) An Anthropological Study of Telugu folksongs of Chittur District (Ph.D.) K. Viswanatha Reddy 13) Village names of Anantapuram District A Sociolinguistic Study (Ph.D.) Govindaswami Naidu 14) Folk music styles in Annamacharya's Songs (Ph.D.) A. Leelavatamma 15) Philosophical folksongs - A study (Ph.D.) E. Balakrishna Reddy 16) Tenali Ramalinga's stories (M.Phil) Sivappa 17) Surnames, Gotras and Caste stories of the Reddis of Kamalapuram Taluq - Socio linguistic Study (Ph.D.) M. Vijayalakshmi 17) Erotic Folksongs (Ph.D.) K. Srinivasulu Reddy 18) Folk dance and Gorava tradition (Ph.D.) B. Ramacharya 19) Folksongs of Yadagiri Mandalam (Ph.D.)

K. Damodar Naidu 20) Labour songs of Chittur District (M.Phil) K. Krishnama Naidu 21) Place of Women in Folk literature (Ph.D.) K. Ramachandrudu 22) Ritualistic songs of Rayalasima (Ph.D.) R. Venkataramayya.

#### **Sri Krishnadevaraya University - Anantapuram**

1) The ballad of Subhdra Kaiyanam (M.Phil) P. Umadevi 2) Folk songs of Dharmavaram Taluq (M.Phil) Ch. Krishna Reddy 3) Reflection of life in Telugu Proverbs (M.Phil) Y. Krishna Reddy 4) Folk Dances of Anantapuram District (Ph.D.) Ch. Krishna Reddy 5) Folksongs of Anantapuram District (M.Phil) C. Ramulu.

#### **Madras University - Madras**

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#### **Mysore University - Mysore**

1) Ramayana folk songs in Telugu and Kannada (Ph.D.) T. Gopala Krishna Rao 2) Folktales of Anantapuram District (Ph.D.) P. Peddi Reddy 3) A comparative study of Telugu and Kannada Proverbs (Ph.D.) C.S. Gopala Krishna 4) Society as depicted in Katamaraju Kathalu (Ph.D.) V.V. Bhanumati

#### **Annamalai University - Annamalai Nagar**

1) Linguistic analysis of Telugu Folksongs (Ph.D.) K. Lakshminarayana Sarma

**Delhi University - Delhi**

- 1) Folksongs of Godavari District (Ph.D.) Smt. Satyajnaneswari

**Kamaraj University - Madurai**

- 1) Folksongs of Pulivendula Taluq (M.Phil) P. Rama Devi

**Visconsin University**

- 1) The epic of Palaradu (Ph.D.) G.H. Roghair.

## TELUGU FOLK LITERATURE

The rich tradition and variety of folk literature in Telugu with distinctive literary and cultural values, representing spontaneous artistic expression of the Telugu people, is as old as Telugu language and its culture. Nannicoda (11th Century) and Paikuriki Somanatha (13th Century), in their poetical works, referred to the different kinds of folk songs and folk art forms prevalent in those days. Folk literature can be broadly divided into three main branches: i.e., Song, Prose and Drama. The first branch may again be divided into two, (i) Simple songs and (ii) Ballads or narrative poems; long and short. The simple songs are generally known as folk songs. These folk songs can be grouped either on the basis of the emotional content in them, as love songs, humorous songs, songs of pathos etc; or on the basis of subject matter, as philosophical songs, devotional songs, ritualistic songs, songs describing nature or natural objects etc; or on the basis of persons who sing them or for whom they are meant, as labourers' songs, women's songs and children's songs.

As in classical literature, in folk literature also amorous songs are in abundance. The emotion of love is depicted according to the tastes of the folks who sing them. Though some of these love songs deal with violations of the social code and with illegitimate relationship, refined love is also very skillfully portrayed in some of them.

The moon is the lover's friend, smiles at their happiness and waits over their disappointments. The following is a typical example of Telugu songs addressed to the moon. In it, a young woman is pouring forth her tale of woe:

Oh moon, Sweet moon;  
He fell in love with me,  
And pined away for me  
Oh moon, Sweet moon

He won me by his love  
And, I fell in love with him,  
The day was about to dawn  
And I called him 'my Sweetheart'  
Oh moon, Sweet moon ..

He stared at me,  
But did not answer  
He did not speak a word;  
And it was strange  
Oh moon, Sweet moon

He was doting on me,  
He was clinging to me,

And, it was so, till Yesterday  
Oh moon, Sweet moon .....

He showered many a smile on me  
And many a rare present too.  
Waited and waited for my favour  
Till I fell in love with him.  
Oh moon, Sweet moon ...

His light pink dhoti smells of musk;  
His young moustache fans out love;  
His charming image is enthroned in my heart  
Oh moon, Sweet moon .....

He has a dagger by his side,  
With emeralds studded on its handle  
It is sharp and very sharp  
Oh moon, Sweet moon .....

I wish the dagger reaches my heart  
And then, all with rest and peace.  
Oh moon, Sweet moon....

Folk songs present a better picture of real humour in Telugu. Satire, repartee, parody, wit and caricature find their best examples in Telugu folksongs. Ganga-Gauri Samvadham, Iswara-Bhringi Samvadham, Lakshmi-Paravati Samvadham, Varasa patalu and others illustrate Narmokti, Vyajokti, Vakrokti, Chala and other types of humour. Viyyalavari patalu (songs sung by bride's and bridegroom's parties) contain delicate (and sometimes even pungent and biting) humour which the Telugu women folk enjoy during the fun and frolic of wedding ceremonies. Bidding farewell to the bride is a moment that arouses pathos in the bridal party. Telugu folks have harnessed the mythological stories and composed many extempore songs. Their familiarity with the great epic Ramayana produced several songs. The following is one such. The foster-father of Sita, King Janaka, affectionately calls Sita to his side and then he hands her over to her in-laws.

If your Lord is in a temper, never be cross with him  
Be alert always to be by his side,  
If he is uxorious towards you, never be proud,  
Always be by his side  
Understand the mind of Srirama  
Forget us all, and shed your attachment to us.

So saying, Janaka hands over the bride to them. He places the hands of his foster-daughter in the hands of Queen Kausalya, Rama's mother, saying :



O, Lady, bid her to serve you,  
 And secure her services to you all.  
 If by chance, she goes to play  
 Mildly admonish her, and with affection and tact  
                   get her to perform the duties.  
 From now on, she is your girl, no longer is she ours.  
 Bestow equal affection as on your Santa.  
 Your daughter and this Sita, now your own daughter (in-law).

Sita follows her parents-in-law. The mother is unable to bear the sight of her departure. She pines for her. She appeals to her, at least, to turn her face homewards to have a farewell look.

O, Sita, just turn your face towards us  
 Your looks will be to us like pearls and diamonds  
 Let us see the undulating chaplet decorating  
 Your bridal forehead.

O, Sita, Just turn your face towards us  
 Let the disc of azure jades bestow on us their lustre  
 O Sita, let yourself turn towards us.

Such farewell songs are many and the people have improvised them to be sung at social gatherings. The texts of the songs convey the manners and customs of the common people, and not the customs of the epic characters. In this song Sita is made a prototype of all the daughters that are sent to the in-law's house after marriage. These sentiments that emanate from the hearts of the parents were highlighted by Kalidasa in his drama, *Sakuntala*.

As misery overrides happiness in life, folksongs depicting pathos are not only more in number, but are more enervating. Either on account of separation or of death of a loved one or as a result of ill-treatment and cruelty meted out to a house wife or servant or on account of some natural calamity the grief of these simple folks is expressed in these melancholic songs. The following is an *Etamu Pata*, (Picottah Song) sung while water from wells or streams is lifted and diverted to irrigate the fields. The peasant works hard round the clock and is responsible for the harvest, but his rewards are meagre. He feeds others, but often he has to starve himself. The bosses of the town and the petty officers in the village harass him, but he cannot directly criticise them. So he sings allegorically and laments his fate.

I lift water from the stream  
 and produce thousands of bags of paddy  
 but rarely do I have a morsel.

Having washed my feet and hands

When I sat on the bank, the crow hit me on the head  
and even the little one of the crows hit me on the head.

Unequal to the fight, when I sat near the fire  
my own daughter slighted me,  
and this daughter's mother too slighted me.

Getting up before dawn,  
When I set out with a bucket on my head,  
I fell headlong on the ground  
and my bones were broken.  
Oh, what a wretched life do I lead,  
Why did I not die early ?

The illiterate rustics sing and talk of great philosophical truths in songs called Tatvalu, those that instil metaphysical truth. Even a cowherd boy sings 'Guta Cilukedira Cinnanna gudu cinaboyera' (Where has the bird gone brother? the nest looks deserted). These are mainly monistic, and are popular among rustics. Very often, we find in them ruthless criticism of superfluous ritualistic code and customs, rites and rituals of the higher castes. The songs of blessed souls and mystics like Eganti Lakshmayya, Potuluri Virabrahmam, Vemana, Dudekula Siddappa, Seshacala Swamy, Bhoja dasu, Edla Ramadasu are commonly heard all over Andhra. These songs generally preach Rajayoga, Acaia Philosophy, Devotion towards the guru, ethical precepts, social reforms, nonviolence, detachment and good conduct and denounce the caste system. The precepts laid down in the Bhagawadgita are reiterated in simple words in some of these philosophical songs. Many times these songs are sandwiched between the episodic narrations of the heroic ballads.

As devotion is the easiest way for salvation, thousands of devotional folksongs belonging to saivism, Vaishnavism and other cults are popular in the Telugu country. Some of the ancient Bee songs of the Saivites still survive. Jangams, Haridasas and other street singers also eke out their livelihood by singing these devotional songs. Songs of Bhardracala Ramadasu, Tumu Narasimhadasu, Parankusadasu, Nittala Prakasadasu, Rakamacarla Venkatadasu, Tatankam Venkatadasu are the mainstay of wandering mendicants and minstrels. Besides these Sankirtanas some of the Melukolupulu, (awakening songs) Lalipatalu (caressing songs), Jolapatalu (Lullabies), Kotata patalu (songs of stick dance) and Mangalaharati can also be included among devotional songs. The kolatam songs contain Madhurabhakti i.e., devotion mixed with erotic love.

Children's songs are of two types : (i) Songs composed by elders for children and (ii) Songs composed by children themselves. Among the songs composed by elders Lalipatalu (caressing songs) and Jolapatalu (Lullabies) are important. There are songs sung during feeding, and massaging babies limbs

at the time of giving a bath. There are songs when children are taught different movements and finally there are songs for appeasing or pacifying children. In these songs we notice an attempt to teach children first sound, then rhythm and finally gesture. Among the songs sung by children some are entirely their own compositions while others are songs originally composed by elders but altered and adapted by children. Most of the sport songs of boys and girls come under this category. Cemmacekka, Bitti, Guduguduguncam, Bujabujarekulu, Gobbillu, Kotikommacci, Cirragone, Dagilimutalu, Pillikuppalu are some of the children's games accompanied by songs. It is interesting to note that some of the children's songs contain medical prescriptions for primary amenorrhoeas, sterility, snake bite, bone fracture, impotency etc.

Poetry springs up not only to delight but also to remove strain. We see men and women folk, while grinding, ploughing, replanting, watering, harvesting, sailing, pulling and pushing road rollers, bearing palanquines, sing different kinds of songs. Songs not only remove pain in the heart and mind but also remove physical fatigue and inspire and elate people. We should note how most of these labourers' songs are best suited to the particular kind of labour involved. Either the movement of their limbs or the inhalations and exhalations of their breath acts as the rhythmic beats for these songs. Not only the music of these songs but sexual thought in them provide pleasure to the labourers. There are many vulgar songs popular among hard working labourers especially those who lift heavy weights.

Most popular are the songs of the women folk. The singing of songs is always a part of their daily work. In their working life, commencing early in the morning and ending at night, the singing of songs goes on and is integrated into their living. Some times the lady of the house, while sweeping the front yard of the house or sprinkling water and decorating the floor with rangavalli, or rocking the baby in the cradle, or performing religious ritual, or working in the fields, or watching the golden fields ready for harvest, and on many other occasions, sings either for pleasure or to lighten the burden of humdrum living. Singing is, however, spontaneous. Songs connected with the problems of motherhood or barrenness, songs sung in a playful mood while engaged in domestic chores, songs sung during the ceremonies of a girl's attaining age or wedding come under this category. Realism is more predominant than poetic imagery in these songs. As such, these songs correctly present the social history of the people.

The variety of songs mentioned above and available in print today are only a small fraction of the rich and abundant wealth of folk poetry yet to be gleaned and collected.

The Second group of songs is a special variety of story poems or narrative songs known as ballads. The size of a ballad depends upon the story content and accordingly they are called balladlings, ballads and ballad cycles.

These songs cover a variety of stories from mythology, religion, epics, Puranas, history, legends, fables, and local events.

Stories from the Vedas, tales from Ramayana and Mahabharata, from Kathasaritsagara, from the Puranas form a large core among folk songs because the villagers have a natural devotion to everything connected with mythology. However, many changes and innovations have crept into these stories according to the fancies, tastes and temperaments of the folks. The differences found in these stories are an indication of the variety arising from different attitudes towards these characters. The incidents are given a topical turn by bringing in contemporary events, and the manners and customs of the traditional society of the Telugu land are interwoven with the story. Some of the characters overlooked by classical authors are taken up by the folk composers and recreated afresh. This process of transformation demands originality and by which many of the characters of ancient works are given a native touch. For instance, in the story of the Ramayana, Lakshmana's wife Urmila was mentioned once at the time of her marriage. But the folk composer developed an elaborate story about her. The theme of her deep slumber is raised to a sublime height and an artistic finale, when she rejoins her lord after his exile. Her character is marked by chastity, and she gains the sympathies of the listeners. The heroine Sita, too, is treated as a daughter of the Telugu land. The folk singers, in depicting these characters, cater to the simple tastes of the country folk, maintaining at the same time the dignity of the epic roles.

A sense of wonder about the mysteries and inexplicable occurrences and events of nature is a significant element of the life of the common people. To aspire for the impossible is a human weakness. But in their hope to realize the impossible, the villagers seek supernatural help. Based on this human desire, many wonderful stories have come into existence. Among such, the most popular throughout Andhra is the story of Balanagamma. It is, in short, a local Ramayana, wherein the heroine Balanagamma is abducted by one Mayala Pakiru, who wields superhuman powers with the help of his magic wand etc. Next to it is Kammavari Panati Pasala Balaraju Katha, the story which draws its vigour from inter-caste marriage. The oldest and the finest story is that of Gandhari. Likewise Dhamangada Pamupata, Kambhojaraju Katha, Balaraju katha etc. infuse fear and reverence in the hearts of the people and proclaim that only truth and righteousness Dharma will ultimately win.

Like the sense of wonder, the emotion of pathos is also ingrained in the mental make-up of the people. Once again, since the subjects of these stories are drawn from everyday life, they become telling evidence of the warp and woof of the rural social ethos. For instance, women who have suffered at the hands of their mothers-in-law or those who suffered hardships at the hands of their cruel husbands, or succumbed to the plots of the malignant cowives or fellow daughters-in-law, or played into the hands of mischievous neighbours or were otherwise destined to be doomed, are subject of folk ballads which continue to

exercise a spell on the village folk. The Telugu people have added some charm to the pathetic stories that actually happened. Kanyakammavari katha, Kamamma katha, Lakshamma katha, Sanyasamma katha, Mandapeta Papamma katha, Erukala Nancari Katha, Tirupatamma Katha, Vira Rajamma Katha, Erukamma Katha, Ramulamma Katha, Sarojini Katha, Nalla Tangal Katha (a story of Tamilnad), are stories depicting the fateful lives of those either persecuted and killed or sacrificed. Among these the stories of the faithful wives who performed sati are called perantandla kathalu.

In the repertoire of the people, historical ballads have a major part. The noble lives of the local heroes of the past, their deeds of valour, their pastimes, are deftly portrayed by the folk composer. More than all these, their heroic deeds are recited with vigour and emotion. The audience is always enthralled by these recitations. They differ from other types of narrative songs with regard to content, style and methods of narration. They are also known as heroic ballads as the sentiment of heroism is predominant in them. Their purpose is to stimulate, sparkle and amplify the sentiment of heroism and patriotism. Palanati Virula Kathalu, Katamaraju kathalu termed as ballad cycles have many connected stories in them. They date back to 12th century and the hero worship connected with them is a regular annual feature in the Guntur and Nellore Districts respectively even today. The story of Kumara Rama, the prince of Kampili who fought a heroic battle with Mohammed bin Tughlak is common to both Andhra and Karnataka. Likewise the ballad of Desinguraju is common to Andhra and Tamilnadu. The ballads of Miyan Sahib, Somanadri, Rameswara Rao, Rani Sankaramma, Savai Venkata Reddi, Karnul Nawab, Sadasiva Reddi, Parwatala Malla Reddi, Sarvai Papadu, Balguri Kondalrayudu and Are Marathila katha are very popular in the Telangana region. Bobbili katha that describes the battle of Bobbili (1757) is very popular throughout Andhra. Bangaru Timmaraju katha is very popular in Rayalaseema. Peddapuram Kodipunjula katha, Padmanabha Yuddham katha are very popular in coastal Andhra. The ballad describing the heroic exploits of Alluri Srirammaraju alias Sitarama Raju who fought against the British rulers during the struggle for independence, though of recent origin, is very popular throughout Andhra.

The second branch of Folk literature i.e. Prose, can be divided into (i) Prose narratives (ii) Proverbs and (iii) Riddles. Prose narratives are again grouped under Mythological, Legendary and simple folk tales with sub-divisions known as Popular tales, Fairy tales, Marchen, and Saga.

Like Telugu folk poetry, Telugu Prose narrative also goes back to the days of yore when disappointed Gunadhya narrated his 'Katha saritsagara' (ocean of stories) to the animals in the forest during the Andhra Satavahana Period. Since then all types of prose narratives - those that have celestials as their characters, those that have animals, birds and reptiles as their characters, and those that have human beings as their characters - are told and retold by grand mothers and grand fathers during their leisure hours. There are

some stories wherein we find a conglomeration of gods, human beings and animals also. These folk tales through fantasy and make believe, satisfy the rustics' curiosity about the inexplicable phenomena of man in nature. The folk tales with fancy and wonder as their main characteristics are listened to by children with rapt attention. Folk tales narrated by males are generally witty humorous, and intelligence-testing. Many of the stories are didactic.

Stories from ancient anthologies like *Katha Saritsagara*, *Pancatantra*, *Suka Saptati*, *Hamsavimsati*, and stories of legendary kings like *Vikramaditya* and *Salivahana* (an Andhra who is responsible for *Salivahana Saka*) Stories of *Bhoja* and *Kalidasa* and the stories of great kings, ministers, and generals who ruled over this part of the country, those of Buddhist, Saivite and Vaishnavite Saints and devotees and others, of sacred places, hills, temples and rivers are the treasures bequeathed to the posterity by word of mouth. Fortunately Telugu classical literature also has story poems in abundance. Many of the story poems in Sanskrit have their different versions in Telugu classical literature. But folktales, though in abundance in oral tradition, are less in written form or printed anthologies when compared to the number of folk songs. Though some of the Prose narratives are common to other regions and languages, they retain the local character and culture-complex of the Telugu region and society. They depict the religious customs, beliefs, food habits, modes of dress, superstitions, fancy and imagination of the Andhra region.

The second division under Prose literature is that of proverbs. There is a very rich treasure of different kinds of proverbs dealing with domestic life and different kinds of professions like agriculture, trade and commerce, cottage industries and other ways of life. There are many didactic proverbs and proverbs used in common parlour. Some proverbs have seeds of stories belonging to mythology, popular epics and native and local events. Obscene and vulgar proverbs form a special category in Telugu. There are a couple of anthologies of proverbs published by Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi, private publishers and individual scholars. Half a dozen M. Phil., and Ph.D. dissertations on Telugu proverbs are also available. Telugu proverbs, like the proverbs of any other language, represent the Telugu genius more than any other form and at the same time have similarities and commonness with the proverbs of not only other Indian languages but also those of foreign languages as they contain long experience and observation of human mind and nature. Moreover they have a literary flavour with figures of speech, alliterations and crispness of language.

Following are some proverbs and sayings :

Crops in off season and children in the old age.  
One who does not remove the weeds, need not harvest also.  
The family name is musk, but the family smells filthy.  
Even if the horse were blind, it does not eat any the less.

5. The horns that come up later are sharper than the ears.
6. A beggar husband is better than a ruler son.
7. It does not matter if the birth is premature, provided the child is male.
8. Even while throwing away, you count and throw.
9. How would a barren woman know labour pains?
10. Don't care for relatives and don't disregard friends.

The third group under Prose literature is that of riddles. They provide pleasure and knowledge. They are meant for testing one's ability. They are witty and complex. They sharpen intellect and provoke thoughts. Rural folks during their leisure hours form into two groups and while one group puts forward a riddle the other group tries to answer a solution. After an interval the second group poses a riddle while the first group tries to answer it. Whoever gains more points is declared as the winner. More often it is a pastime of children who learn these riddles from elders. Riddles are known in Telugu as Podupulu. They are also called Tatiu and Sastralu. Podupu Katha (Riddle tale) is a common nomenclature because of the stories embedded in riddles. Telugu classical literature has inherited riddles in abundance from Sanskrit, wherein it is known as prahelika. While riddles in verse form part of Citra kavita in classical literature, riddles in Prose and song form part of folk literature in Telugu. Like proverbs riddles also can be divided under many groups based on the content, nature and language.

The following are some riddles in Telugu:

1. A tailless bird travelled a hundred miles (a letter)
2. My grand-father has brought two bulls; while one is constant, the other rotates (Grind stone)
3. The tank in Hanumakonda has five pillars in it you could shake them up, but not uproot them (the palm & the fingers)
4. Press at the end and lick at the mouth (a mango fruit)
5. The doors constantly slam, but do not make a sound. (eye lids).
6. A tiny fellow had dressed innumerable. (an onion)
7. The bull bellowed in the forest. (an axe)
8. A mouthless bird drinks water with the tail. (a wick)
9. You may not want any stone; but you want that stone. (Salt stone)
10. Eyes all over the body, but no Indra;  
It can not move without the aid of man;  
It has no life of its own, but kills many. (The fishing net)

The third branch of Telugu folk literature is that of Drama, which comprises of the performing art forms like Yakshagana, Pagati Veshalu, Kalapam, Kuravanji, Vithinatakam, Bommalata or Puppetry, Valakam, Burra atha, Harikatha and Bahunupa.

The name Yakshagana suggests that it was a recitation of desi music by a Yaksha or Yakshini in an earlier state and after sometime evolved into a narration of episodes with the aid of more than one character and finally developed into an opera with different kinds of songs and dialogues and numerous characters. In Andhra, the Yakshas known as Jakkulu is a caste devoted to dance and theatre. The early Yakshaganas contain, desi compositions like Jampa, Triputa, Ata tala, Eka tala, Dwipada, Eta, Sobhana, Dhavala, Mangalaharati, besides dialogues. Later Yakshaganas developed many nuances and adopted some of the features of classical Sanskrit drama. The Tanjore Naik period is the golden age of Yakshagana in composition as well as production. The earliest reference to Yakshagana in classical Telugu literature goes back to the 11th century but the extant Yakshaganas "Vipranarayana carita" and "Sugriva Vijayamu" are dated 1545 A.D. and 1568 A.D. respectively. Yakshagana can be described as an operatic ballet interspersed with songs sung to varying rhythms for effectively conveying of the moods of the episodic situation. The subjects chosen are mostly from puranic lore, but with an eye on popular appeal. The structure of the playlet is always simple. It opens, develops and reaches a climax and the denouement is worked out. Sometimes a local incident is woven into the dialogue. The earlier Yakshagana themes centred on the gods, but since the Tanjore Naik period successful attempts are being made to write plays on contemporary subjects also. More than 500 Yakshaganas are available in print and an equal number or more is yet to see the light of the day.

Some of the stock characters introduced into the Yakshaganas to portray local incidents have gained individuality and are often portrayed as part of a male or two men performances. They are called 'Pagati Veshalu' which means 'day characters' called so because these are enacted during the day time. The actors, often not more than two or three, go round from village to village, portray one role (Vesham) each day for a week and on the final day go about the village begging for alms. Some of the important characters in Pagativeshalu are Dadinamma, Somayaji-Somidevamma, Koravanji etc.

'Kalapam' another type of traditional drama, is a precursor to Yakshagana for it is simpler in its thematic development and direct in its moral appeal. It is a monoplay, mainly characterising one main person and another less important one. Each of the characters enters by self announcement. The 'Sutradhara' not only conducts the play by his running commentary on the sequence, but often plays the role of an attendant whose main duty is to respond, question and fill in the dramatic gaps. The stress is on Sattvikabhinaya (involuntary emotional expressions) and the rasa is either srinigara or Bhakti. The most important dramas of this type are 'Bhamakalapam' and 'Gollakalapam' said to have been composed by Siddhendra Yogi of the 14th century. In order to rescue dance from the professional dancers, he initiated and trained a whole clan of Brahmin families in this art form. 'Bhama Kalapam' is the story of Satyabhama who, in the unbearable absence of Lord Krishna,



anxiously awaits his coming. This has gained popularity and attained classical heights due to the elaborate nuances introduced into it by the Kuchipudi Masters. 'Gollakalapam' is a philosophical play in which a milk maid explains to a Brahmin the Philosophy behind God's persisting reappearances on this earth, whenever there is a decline in Dharma. The Kuchipudi troupes perform these dance dramas and many more, in a superb manner which earned them world wide reputation.

'Kuravanji' is a metaphysical operatic playlet, in which Jiva Sati represents Jivatma and Kriya Kanta represents the actions indulged in by creatures. Singadu represents Primeval Nature, Kuravanji the Gnostic Enlightenment and Singi the Original kinetic Energy of the Cosmos. The fundamental tenets of religion are amusingly expounded through this dramatic medium. Kuravanji also refers to the female soothsayer. Her cry 'Eruka' can be translated as 'awareness'. A traditional song is recited, as an invocation to the gods and goddesses. Next, obeisance is offered to the Master. Then commences the Soothsaying. It is spoken in riddles or cryptic epigrams. She is particularly introduced in romantic plots to prognosticate the coming events of a pining lover. Sometimes the lover himself puts on the role of Kuravanji and gains audience with his pining beloved. The meeting assures them fulfillment. Kuravanji has its counterpart Kurattippattu in Tamil and Korattiyattam in Malayalam. 'Rajamohana Kuravanji' and 'Koravanji katie' date back to 17th century

'Vithinatakam' is an open air drama performance, different from its namesake 'Vithi' one of the ten types of Sanskrit play. This type of play was introduced by the Saivites with a missionary zeal drawing the subject matter of the plays from the epics. But now it also covers mundane and contemporary subjects. This form of open air theatre produces Yakshaganas. Many artistes inherit their skill in this performing art. They arrange itineraries and stage performances in the villages. After the performance the actors in their costumes go round the houses and collect whatever is given. History records these performances from 15th century onwards. The Vijayanagara emperors patronised this art and it still continues to be the most popular theatre art in Andhra Pradesh. I have more than a couple of hundred printed and unprinted plays in my collection.

'Valakam' is a play the text of which is given out impromptu. Four seasoned actors gather on the stage and on the spur of the moment think of a topic and deliver it extempore but with dramatic gestures. The subject is mostly topical, incidents of every day life, treated with a light touch and a sense of humour. Social evils are grotesquely satirised and individual idiosyncrasies are caricatured to the merriment of the audience. The village officer, tax collectors, the dandy and the miser are frequent targets. The speeches are spicy and the ridicule is pungent. This type of folk play is in vogue only in the northern coastal districts of Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam.

'Bahurupa' is a play wherein one actor who is an adept in acting, singing and speech takes up the role of many and entertains the audience. Writers of dance texts classify Bahurupa as a folk variety. Jayapa the commander of Emperor Kakati Ganapatideva of 13th century, has described this play in his "Nrttaratnavali", a manual on dancing.

It is interesting to note that only male actors play the roles of males and females in all the above mentioned types of plays. Only in puppet shows female artistes sing the songs for female roles behind the white curtain.

Puppetry is one of the most ancient Indian folk arts and Andhra history records that this art was in vogue during the Satavahana period in B.C. Art critics opine that puppetry spread from Andhra to Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma and from there to Africa, Greece, Macedonia and the Byzantine empire. There are four kinds of Puppetry (i) Marionettes or String puppets made of wood, and manipulated by strings behind a curtain, (ii) Todugu Bommalu or Glove puppets. The fingers of the palm are thrust into the hollow of the figures and the fingers manipulate the movements. (iii) Uca Bommalu or rod puppets wherein the whole figure is mounted on a rod and strings are passed through. (iv) Tolu Bommalu or coloured leather puppets of the shadow play. This art is, as all other folk arts in general are, slowly vanishing and only the 4th type is remnant. The puppeteers travel round the country to make a living. The stories are mostly taken from epics and puranas.

Folk literary forms are so varied and so numerous that a sketchy account like this will not do justice to a proper evaluation of the richness of this literature in Telugu. However, this, I hope, will enthuse scholars to have a glimpse at the wide variety of Telugu folk forms.

### TELUGU FOLK SONGS

Andhra Pradesh is very rich in its folk traditions and culture. Like the folk songs of other languages Telugu folk songs are the spontaneous, artistic expressions of the Telugu people. They reflect the distinctive ethos of the Telugus in simple and sweet notes and melodies. The history of Telugu folk songs is as old as the history of Telugus. Early inscriptions indicate the existence of some metrical compositions akin to folk metres. Early poets like Nannicoda (11th century) and Palkuriki Somanatha (13th century) made references to the types of folk songs prevalent in those days. Tallapaka Annamacarya (15th century) composed devotional songs in desi metres that were in vogue during his age. His grandson, Peda Tirumalacarya, expounded the metres and principles of composition of 'Ela' 'Gobbi' and 'Candamama' songs. While such references indicating the existence of folk songs are found in the works of many ancient poets, the songs now extant cannot be traced earlier than 14th century. Most of them are of comparatively recent origin.

These songs can be grouped on the basis of sentiment – as love songs, humorous songs, songs of pathos etc., or on the basis of the subject matter – as philosophical songs, devotional songs, ritualistic songs, songs describing natural objects etc., or on the basis of persons who sing them or for whom they are meant – as labourers' songs, women's songs and children's songs. It is true that no translation can bring out the pristine beauty of the songs, but I will try to present their native beauty inherent in them by selecting a few specimens under each type.

**SONGS OF LOVE:-** Amorous songs are in abundance in Telugu. Some of these love songs deal with violations of social code and with illegitimate attraction. Yet refined love is also very skillfully portrayed in Telugu folk songs. Very often love is presented in a realistic manner, without softening the rough ends. Meanness as well as nobility, coarse sensual attraction as well as refined love are found jostling with each other. 'Venkayya-Candramma Pata', 'Sirisirimuvva Pata', 'Gongura pata', 'Kamuni Patalu', 'Jajara Patalu' and 'Rangam Patalu' are typical love songs, sung by the village folk.

'Venkayya-Candramma song' is very popular throughout Andhra. It consists of sixty lines and every line is a repository of love sentiment. It is a duet. Venkayya is an outcaste and Candramma belongs to the agricultural community. They loved each other. But being afraid of the society, they committed suicide drowning themselves in the river Godavari and the Godavari in its eternal flow ripples out their sad story of love.

"O Venkayya, why do you climb up the tamarind tree  
for plucking its tender leaves?  
If the branch breaks away you may fall down and get hurt.  
O Venkayya, why do you climb up the date palm

for drinking date toddy?  
 Don't drink toddy, your health gets spoiled.  
 O Venkayya, do not be away from my sight, because you  
 have a sprain on your leg.  
 Hurry up, I will bandage your leg

These lines depict Candramma's care, compassion and love for her lover

"O Candramma, when you smile laying your head on my lap,  
 all woes and worries disappear instantaneously.  
 O Candramma, the bed spread in the fullmoon light has  
 turned into a bed of Jasmynes. It has become a floral bedstead.  
 O Candramma! I by becoming one with you in a single embrace,  
 the stars above laughed and came down."

These lines depict Venkayya's intense love and poetic feelings for his beloved Candramma.

"O Candramma if you marry me, an outcaste, you will lose your prestige;  
 therefore keep quiet, and do not talk.  
 'O Candramma, if we indulge in secret amours and merriments  
 there will be no clamour and public grievance.

"O Venkayya if one has a good heart why should he be called an outcaste?  
 I did not choose the caste; I have chosen the good quality only."

"O Candramma, none will let me survive if I marry you.  
 They are coming to beat me because I am inferior by caste.  
 I can't live without you. I will die."  
 "O Candramma, my heart trembles for entering into a temple.  
 Why I was born in an inferior Caste?  
 You alone go to the temple, my dear."

"O Candramma, the God that is found there, is also present here in me.  
 I will worship god who is present here.  
 "O Candramma, if we live together unitedly,  
 All the seven worlds will be with us.  
 Therefore we need not go anywhere. Let us live here only."

These lines depict their thoughts and feelings about the society, god and the sad plight of the downtrodden outcastes.

"O Candramma, if the creeper of our love grows and  
 entwines us together, will the rules of caste impede us?  
 Why should we worry about these things?"  
 "O Venkayya in the silvery moonlight shall we wash our feet

in the shining ripples of the tank and indulge  
in amorous dialogues"

Such delicate feelings are in abundance in this song.

"O Venkayya, I cannot leave you and yet I cannot be with you.  
I cannot bear these woes and I cannot brook these insults.  
"O Venkayya, I will go to the Godavari and after praying  
Govinda, I will put an end to myself.  
Let me have a last look at you, my dear."  
"O Candramma, if you die I cannot survive, I too will follow you,  
Let me live with you.  
O Candramma, in a pleasant place in the Heaven above,  
let us spend the time in amorous talks watching the moon from near.

The love, full of sacrifices of Venkayya and Candramma, is very tender and natural. The very fact that the song is popular all over Telugu land and has survived proves beyond doubt the customary barriers of social injunctions and the lovers' heedlessness of such rules.

Another song which is full of sweet and tender feelings is "Cel Mohanaranga pata." The hero is Mohana Ranga. The heroine, whose name is not known, addresses her lover thus:

"Applying collyrium and having an earthen pot resting on my side waist  
the tears have filled the earthen pot - Cel Mohana Ranga  
the tears have filled the earthen pot.  
Having crossed the dales and the thick forests  
We are tired, Cel Mohana Ranga -  
we are tired having crossed all these.  
On the night of the New Moon Amavasya during the midnight,  
you are my divinelight - Cel Mohana Ranga -  
You are my divine light.  
In the bowl - like crescent moon, the fine rice and milk together,  
I will put them into your mouth - Cel Mohana Ranga -  
I will put them into your mouth.

If I were a bird, clasping you in my wings,  
I would take you around the world - Cel Mohana Ranga -  
I would take you around the world.

The stream of webbing tears has become a cyclone of Bandar  
Is it proper for you to keep silent - Cel Mohana Ranga -  
Is it proper for you to keep silent?  
Pining for you I have become so emaciated that  
my finger ring has turned into a waist belt. Cel Mohana Ranga -

My finger ring has turned into a waist belt.  
 Having closed my eyes in your embrace, I am immersed  
 in a deep thought whether it is a reality or a dream - Cel Mohana Ranga -  
 I am immersed in a deep doubt.  
 If our hearts (minds) become one,  
 why do we require the false marriage - Cel Mohana Ranga -  
 Why do we require that false marriage?"

**HUMOROUS SONGS:-** Wit and humour abound in Telugu Folk songs. Viyyalavari Patalu i.e. songs sung during marriage festivities by both the parties of the bridal pair making fun of each other and levelling spurious charges against each other form a special variety of songs in Telugu. Besides these, some children's songs and women's songs also contain fine humour. Examples of fine and coarse humour, witty caricatures and absurdities, parodies, poignant remarks and satire, illustrations for Vyaja stuti, Vyaja ninda, Narmukti, Mridavam, (Literary ornaments - Alamkara) Nalika, Avaspandita, Udghatyaka and Chala as propounded in the works on rhetorics are found in abundance in these folk songs which are very rare in classical literature.

Here is an imaginary duet between Lakshmi and Parvati sung by rejoicing women folk:

Lakshmi : O Gauri! what is that black spot on the throat of your husband?  
 What is that black spot?

Parvati : O Lakshmi! is not your husband Vishnu very dark?  
 is he not very dark?

Lakshmi : O Gauri! why does your shameless husband move about  
 begging the world? Why does he beg?

Parvati : O Lakshmi! Didn't your helpless husband beg of King Bali?  
 Did he not beg?

Lakshmi : O Gauri! Why does your Siva unhesitatingly keep a deer in his  
 hand? Why does he keep a deer?

Parvati : O Lakshmi! was it not for a deer that you went in to exile?  
 Was it not for a deer?

Lakshmi : O Parvati! How is it that your husband a half woman?  
 Why is he a half woman?

Parvati : O Lakshmi! Did your husband not become Mohini?  
 Did he not become Mohini? a full woman!

- Lakshmi : O Parvati! Why did your unmindful husband cut the head of Brahma? Why did he behead Brahma?
- Parvati : O Lakshmi! Did not your husband cut the heads of Ravana Brahma? Did he not behead him?
- Lakshmi : O Parvati! How it is that your husband wears venomous reptiles all over the body? Why does he put on serpent?
- Parvati : O Lakshmi! Does not your husband sleep on a serpent couch? Does he not sleep on a serpent?
- Lakshmi : O Parvati! Having nothing, why does your husband ride over a bull? Why does he ride over a bull?
- Parvati : O Lakshmi! Did not your husband purposefully herded the cows in Brindavan (Vrepalli)? Was he not a cowherd?

Here refined humour is delineated by depicting the apparent drawbacks of Vishnu, husband of Lakshmi, who points out the drawbacks of Siva, the husband of Parvati. Lakshmi does not know that her husband has greater drawbacks than Siva when she criticises and mocks at Parvati. This is a kind of Vyaja Stuti. It is a very good example of wit. To depict virtue as vice and vice as virtue is called Mridavam. Bharata has defined Mridavam as

"Doshagunikaranam va tanmridavam nama Vijneyam  
Paravacanamatmanascottarottara Samudbhavam dvayoryattu"  
(Natyasastra, XVIII-122)

There are many parodies in Telugu folk songs. By imitating either a poem or style, if one composes a poem ridiculing the original one, it is called a parody. One should know the original poem before one enjoys the imitated parody. There are songs imitating lullabies, mangalaharatis and send-off songs in Telugu. Bidding fare-well by the bride is a moment that arouses pathos in the parents. Here is a parody that arouses humour:

"What a good luck my dear daughter!  
You have neither mother-in-law nor sisters-in-law  
You have your husband, therefore  
thrash him to your heart's content and control him.  
You must frighten him and he must shiver  
the moment he hears your voice.

You should not submit (lie down) if he is angry.  
Raise your temper ten fold and give him a good beating.  
If the neighbours come and interfere

Don't weep instead, abuse and terrify them.  
The respect of a wife who controls her husband  
Is greater than that of an emperor.  
Therefore pay heed to our advice  
And be happy and enjoy, my dear darling!"

Usually a farewell song is intended to teach moral lessons and codes of discipline, including patience, devotion to the parents-in-law, husband and his brothers and sisters etc. Whereas this parody of the farewell song teaches abuse, malice, anger and all other vices and thus arouses fun in the listeners.

Unexpected deceit creates absurdity and thereby produces fun. When the pleasing words in the beginning turn into displeasing words afterwards, subtle humour is produced. This is what is called 'Chalam' by the rhetoricians. "Anyarthameva vakyam chalamabhisandhana hasyaroshakaram" (Natyaśāstra, XVIII-123)

An example of this type of humour is:

That much is enough for me  
Even the nipple of a betel leaf is sufficient for me  
I do not demand like other ladies  
Nor I do bargain (hanker) like some other ladies.

These words of contentment of a housewife are very pleasing and we think that she is a nice lady and an embodiment of all virtues. Then start slowly her unpleasant demands:

My nose is disgraced bereft of the nose ornament  
My dear! Sell away your three daughters and get me a  
nose ornament.

My hands are disgraced bereft of gold bangles  
My dear! Dispose of your sisters and get me gold bangles.  
My feet are disgraced bereft of golden anklets  
My dear! Sell away your mother and get me anklets.  
My waist is disgraced bereft of golden waist belt  
My dear! Sell away your sons and get me a golden waist belt.  
My neck is disgraced bereft of a necklace  
My dear! Dispose of your mansions and get me a necklace.  
I have become low spirited bereft of a cushioned coach  
My dear! Dispose of your suit and 'boot' and get me a  
cushioned coach.

The last lines wherein reference to suit and boot is made, might be a modern grafting on the old folk song. The words of the house wife who is content even if she is given a nipple of a betel leaf seems to be pleasant in the beginning



but the long list of her desires and demands at the cost of the children, mother and even the suit and boot of her husband becomes quite unpleasant at a later stage and produce crude humour with this unexpected turn.

**SONGS OF PATHOS:-** As misery overrides happiness in life, folk songs depicting pathos are not only more in number but are more enervating. Either on account of separation or death of a loved one or as a result of ill-treatment and cruelty meted out to a housewife or a servant or on account of some natural calamity the grief of these simple folks is expressed in these melancholic songs. The following is an "Etamu Pata" sung while water is lifted from wells or streams and diverted along channels to the fields. It is the peasant who works hard day in and day out and is responsible for the harvest, but the rewards are meagre. He feeds others, but often he has to starve himself. The bosses of the town and the petty officers in the village harass him. He cannot directly protest. He sings about them allegorically and laments about his own ill fate.

"I lift water from the stream  
and produce thousands of bags of paddy  
but rarely do I have a morsel.

Having washed my feet and hands  
When I sat on the bank, the crow hit me on the head  
and even the little one of the crows hit me on the head.

Unequal to the fight, when I sat near the fire  
my own daughter slighted me  
and this daughter's mother too slighted me.

Getting up before dawn  
When I set out with a bucket on my head  
I fell headlong on the ground  
and my bones were broken.

Oh, what a wretched life do I lead  
Why did I not die early."

The following song is sung while working at the grind stone. A woman rejected by her husband lets her tears flow in a stream of song. The first two lines are in the nature of a question addressed by the son to his mother. The next two lines are the mother's reply. The fifth and sixth comprise the question of the daughter-in-law. The seventh and eighth comprise the mother-in-law's reply. The remaining lines denote the floods of tears of the mother Earth in the shape of a daughter-in-law.

"It hasn't rained, and there has been no flood,  
How is it mother! there's so much of water near our doorstep?

Since you have gone out and slept in the neighbour's house  
Oh son! the tears of your wife have burst into a flood

Oh mother-in-law! Oh my royal mother-in-law!  
What has your son, your bright boy said, oh mother-in-law?

Oh daughter-in-law! oh my dear young daughter-in-law!  
My son says he would have nothing to do with you

If he does not love me, what is the use of my weeping  
It is all right if the elder brother-in-law praises me  
If my co-sisters call me sister  
If my parents-in-law approve of me  
If my co-brothers call me sister-in-law  
If my co-sisters' sons call me mother

**PHILOSOPHICAL AND MYSTICAL SONGS** - Not only the learned but also the illiterate rustics sing of great philosophical truths in our country. Philosophical and mystical songs are of many types. They are in the form of Awakening songs (Melukolupulu), Lullabies (Lalipatalu), Bee songs (Tummedapatalu) and Tattvalu. They are so called because they preach Advaita philosophy embedded in the Mahavakya 'Tat Twam Asi' i.e. Thou Art That. Very often we find in them ruthless criticism of superfluous ritualistic code and customs, caste and creed. Sita pata, Kalajnana tattvalu, Brahmananda Kirtanalu, Yagantivarī Vacanalu, Rajayogi patalu are best examples of mystical songs. It is very difficult to comprehend the real meaning of these mystical songs. I will quote a couple of lines from one "Ela" type of mystical song ascribed to Yaganti Līnga supposed to have lived during the 14th century.

"In the courtyard of the narrow doorstep  
There is bright full moonlight  
I heard the sounds of the Lute  
O Yaganti līnga - It became wonderful  
as I was accustomed to hear and rehear it  
The darkness was born in the womb of fire  
The fire was born in the womb of darkness,  
When the fire and darkness became one-  
O Yaganti līnga - a handsome lass was born

Here the moon light can be compared to Chitkalas, sounds of lute to the Nada, Fire to the Jiva and darkness to the Maya. But it is very difficult to know the meanings for every word in this lengthy song. Such mysticism is also found in Baul's songs of Bengal.

Thousands of devotional folk songs belonging to Saivism, Vaishnavism and other cults are popular in the Telugu country. Jangama,

Haridasas and other wandering rhapsodists eke out their livelihood by singing these devotional songs. Songs of Bhadrachala Ramadasu, Tumu Narasimhadasu, Parankusa dasu, Prakasa dasu, Venkata dasu are very popular throughout the country. Bee songs, Morning songs etc. mentioned by Palkuriki Somanatha have luckily survived. Here is one ancient folk song:

What shall I do O Linga, what shall I do O Linga.  
 I wanted to bring water from the Ganges for bathing you,  
 But the fish and frogs of the Ganges say that it is defiled by them.  
 I wanted to bring cow milk as an offering to you  
 But the calves say that it is polluted by them.  
 I wanted to bring the Tummi flowers to worship you  
 But millions of bees on the branches say that they have sucked from  
 them.  
 What shall I do, O Linga, what shall I do?

**RITUALISTIC SONGS:-** Songs connected with religious rites which are especially popular among women, are of many types. Boddemma patalu, Batukamma patalu, Moceti padmam patalu, Cilukamuggu patalu, Varalakshmi patalu, Sravana Sukravaram patalu, Pendli gummadi patalu etc., are connected with religious rituals. Here is one Boddemma pata, sung on the occasion of a religious festival observed by the virgins just before the Devi Navaratri for nine days in Telangana:

A beautiful mansion Chandamama  
 It has silver rafters Chandamama  
 It has brass door frames Chandamama  
 It has copper thresholds Chandamama  
 It has drawings of pearls Chandamama  
 It has a courtyard studded with diamonds Chandamama  
 It has coral canopies Chandamama  
 It has a drinking water well Chandamama  
 It has a jasmine creeper by the side Chandamama  
 It has grown to mountainous heights Chandamama  
 As there was none to pluck it Chandamama  
 Oh moon get it plucked Chandamama  
 Distribute it Oh Gauri Chandamama

The jasmine creeper described in this song is an unmarried girl. As she is of marriageable age and as no one has yet come forward to marry her she has grown up very big. Therefore, it is prayed that the Moon God of Love and Gauri the Mother Goddess, should come forward to bring a suitable bridegroom.

**CHILDREN'S SONGS:-** Children's songs are of two types: 1. Songs composed by elders for children, and 2. songs composed by children themselves. Among the songs composed by elders caressing songs (Lali patalu) and

Cradle songs (Jola patalu) are important. There are songs when children are taught different movements and finally there are songs for appeasing or pacifying children. In these songs we notice an attempt to teach children first sound, then rhythm and finally gesture. Among the songs sung by children some are entirely their own compositions while others are songs originally composed by elders but altered and adopted by children. Most of the play songs of boys and girls come under this category. It is interesting to note that some of the children's songs contain medical prescriptions for primary amenorrhoeas, sterility, snake bite, bone fractures, impotency etc. For example, the following song, sung by girls playing a game called 'Bitti' gives out a prescription for curing impotency.

"O girl, of heap of charms  
O girl of personified beauty  
Take superfine rice and bleached pulse  
And black gram dal  
And cook with ghee and milk.  
If it is fed to your husband  
You will enjoy life."

**LABOURER'S SONGS:-** We see men and women folk, while grinding, ploughing, transplanting, watering, harvesting, sailing, pulling and pushing road rollers, bearing palanquines, sing different kinds of songs. These songs not only relax physical and mental fatigue, but inspire and elate people. Many times these songs help the rhythm of their physical movements. We should note here that most of these labourer's songs are best suited to the particular kind of work involved. Either the movement of their limbs or the inhalations and exhalations of their breath act as the rhythmic beats of these songs. Not only the music of these songs but sexual thoughts in them provide pleasure to the labourers especially those who lift heavy weights.

Here is an Eruvaka song sung by agricultural labourers. Eruvaka is a festival that falls on the full moon day in the month of Ashadha. Agriculturists worship the yoke, the plough and the bulls with turmeric and Kumikum (vermillion). Coconuts are broken either at home or in the fields before the yokes and the bulls. They inaugurate the annual cultivation season by ploughing five or nine rounds in their fields on this day as it is supposed to be an auspicious day auguring fresh showers. They cook sweet dishes and enjoy eating them with their children and relatives. They wash the cattle, smear and decorate the hooves and horns with oil and a variety of colours and feed them with Pulagam (rice, green gram dal and sesamum cooked together). Little bells are tied to their horns and necks and they are driven out into the open space to wander and run about. This song depicts the intense love feelings of a woman who is expecting her husband from a distant place on this Eruvaka day.

The first cloud has peeped in  
The lightning in that cloud flashed away  
A shower bursted in the backyard and stopped.  
My heart has slipped away in that shower  
A sun stricken bird from some branch  
Flew away in search of a streamlet  
It is one year over by this Eruvaka day  
The awaiting heart of mine is dissipated  
The male and female birds are kissing each other  
All the cows and bulls have returned home  
The birds flew away into the air of stream  
I don't know why my hopes also leapt away  
At the time when I sing on the banks of the stream  
And my brother-in-law plucks the flowers in laughter.  
While the tender hearts blossom and flower  
My brother-in-law should come and chat with me  
Charmingly he should caress me  
Goddess Eruvaka should come to us  
And should bless us.

These songs show that the rhythm and song have gone into the very bones of the village folk; they are natural outbursts of groups on set occasions, and, as such, reveal the social ethos of the entire class which participates in the singing. Thus they are the live arteries of these villagers in which run the blood of life which flows exuberantly when occasions inspire them.

## THE FOLK VERSIONS OF RAMAYANA STORIES

Next to the Vedas and the Prasthanatraya i.e. Upanishads, Brahmasutra and Bhagawadgita, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata are the most authentic works of religious and spiritual importance to Indians. This is true as far as the educated elite and scholars are concerned. But to the illiterate masses who know nothing about the Vedas and Prasthanatraya, it is the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata that matter very much for the worldly as well as the other worldly lives. Among this trio Ramayana reigns supreme. The Telugu people reverentially worship Sita and Rama with parental regard. It is their good fortune that this divine couple spent some time on the banks of Godavari in Andhra during their exile. It is said that while the brothers, Rama and Lakshmana, fetched water from Godavari, Sita prepared the beds and watered the sapplings and creepers in the front yard of and around the Parnasala (Hermitage), their forest abode. At that time the River Godavari heard the chatting and whisperings of these three and absorbed them into the innermost recesses of its heart. From thence till today the murmurs of the heart of Godavari are dinning into the ears of the Telugu folks. Hence they are in better knowledge of the secrets of Ramayana and Rama's story.

Ramayana grew hundred fold with its innumerable branches in the mouths of the Telugu folks. The number of folk songs based on Ramayana theme is in abundance. I have come across more than 20 songs that narrate the complete story of Ramayana. There are more than 50 songs that narrate some or other episodes of this epic. And there are more than 50 songs that are purely concerned with Sita alone. For example, Sita's birth (Sita Puttuka), Sita's wedding (Sita Kalyanam), Sita's send off to her-in-law's place (Sitani At-tavarintikamputa), Sita's attaining age (Sita Samarta), Sita's chatting (Sita Subhagoshti), Sita bolting the door (Sita Gadiya), Sita playing Vamanaguntalu (Sita at Vamanaguntalu an indoor play) Sita's anger in amour (Sitammavari alaka), Sita playing spring season sports (Sita Vasantam), Sita playing the game of hide and seek (Sita Dagilimutalu), Sita being fanned (Sita Surati), Sita being awakened (Sita melukolupu), Sita's seals (Sita Mudrikalu), Sita's abduction (Sita Cera), Sita's Identification (Sita Anavalu), Sita's fire ordeal (Sita agniparvesam), Sita's morning sickness (Sita Vevillu) are some of the popular folk songs pertaining to Sita. From among these Ramayana songs some are adaptations of Valmiki Ramayana, some are adaptations of Adhyatma Ramayana, some are influenced by Ramayanas of the regional languages, some bear influences of Jaina and Buddhist traditions and some are pure creations of the folk genius. Telugu folks have identified themselves with Rama and Sita. Every moment, every breath and every throb in their daily life seems to be that of Rama and Sita. The hearts of Telugu women throb with every incident in Sita's life. Her play, her song, her exile, her abduction and her fire ordeal are experienced as their own. Such were the empathetic feelings and emotions of the country folk. Sita taken as cynosure, a plathora of tales grew around her

name.

The songs that narrate complete Ramayana story have many incidents not found in Valmiki Ramayana. The tale of Jambumali, the story of Sulocana, the incident with Kalanemi, Sukra's advice to Ravana, Ravana's sacrifice of the Netherland are some of the incidents which have been borrowed by Telugu Classical poets like Bhaskara and Ranganatha. Besides these there are many more tales current in Telugu folklore. It can be safely inferred that these classic poets have selected a few of these folk versions and included them in their works. From among the songs that describe some incidents in Ramayana story, Santa Kalyanam (Santa's wedding), Kausalya's morning sickness (Kausalya Baikalu), Rama's displeasure (Ramulavari Aluka), Koel's meditation (Kovela rayabaram), Lakshmana's laughter (Lakshmanadevara Navvu), Urmila's comatic slumber (Urmiladevi nidra), The Story of Kusalavas (Kusalayakam), Sita's victory (Sita Vijayam) are very important.

Before I dwell upon the episodic refinements of the beauties of the folk versions of the Ramayana I venture to assert that the innocent folks have a more heart-rending comprehension of Ramayana and Ramahood. They have pictured the Rama-hood as the celestial target for devotionism. They are even confident that godhood is easily comprehended by adopting the course of devotion and piety. To suit their ends they have reconstituted and reconstructed the thematic arrangement of the story. Their unsophisticated and illiterate state helped them to take these liberties.

#### SITA'S IDENTIFICATION (Sitadevi Anavalu)

When Hanuman starts on the expedition to search for Sita he asks Lord Ramachandra, how to identify Sita and to convince her that he is a messenger of Ramachandra. At that time Rama describes Sita's beauty and narrates some of the interesting incidents in their marital life. All these identifying marks put together are woven in a song "Sitadevi Anavalu" i.e. Sita's identification. The description of Sita is most sublime and superb. Not only Hanuman but ordinary human beings like us can easily identify Sita, if we carefully remember these identification marks that glorify Sita's beauty.

"O Hanuman I will tell you how to identify Sita, listen.

She has dark tresses, that are undressed; they are matted  
and very long.

She looks as if she has taken an oilbath, though she has not,

She looks as if she has smeared raw turmeric, though she has not,

She looks as if she has applied collyrium, though she has not,

She looks as if she has applied beauty spot, though she has not,

She smells as if she has applied scents, though she has not,

She looks as if she has put on ornaments, though she has not,

She looks as if she is chewing betel leaf, though she is not,  
 She looks as if she is decorated, though she is not,  
 She looks like a gem tied in a black wornout cloth  
 She looks like water in the cold winter  
 She looks like Veda studied on Padyami day, shorn of all  
 her glory and brilliance."

This is the description of Sita's physical beauty and charm, which is nonpareil. Now I will quote a couple of memorable incidents pertaining to the conjugal life of this divine couple from the folk's imaginative lore, which Rama showed as legends for identification.

The first incident pertains to the wedding day of this couple. While Sita was playing Vamanaguntalu with her friends in the wedding hall, Sri Rama once desired to have a look at her and subsequently entered the hall. Sita's friends first sighted Sri Rama and began describing his beautiful eyes longing to see Sita. They said to her "O Janaki, Rama has come to see you. His eyes are beautiful, his eyes are charming; they are shining like lights. He is like the Lord of love." Sita, then bowed her head in shyness and slipped away to her mother's chambers. She stood near her mother, with bowed head in bashfulness. Her mother (Ratnamala) asked the reason for her shyness and in the meanwhile realised that Sri Rama, was also approaching. Then she too said "O Sita look Sri Rama is coming to see you. Sri Rama is coming to talk to you." Sita still with shyness bowed her head and stood still. Sri Rama says that this is an incident which he never forgot. And therefore asks Hanuman to narrate this episode to Sita so that she may believe Hanuman to be a messenger from Sri Rama. This incident depicts Sita's innocent bashfulness of her girlhood which is very dear to the folks.

Sri Rama narrates further :

"O Hanuman! there is one more incident. Don't forget to narrate this to my Sita. One day while she was combing her long hair she saw her own image in the standing mirror in her bed-room. She said "Who is this lady with such a beautiful and charming shape and gait. She then rushed towards me and said, "O Ram! O Ayodhya Ram! you are deceiving the world. My father gave me to you thinking that you are Ekapatnivrata. Your Ekapatnivrata is now unmasked. Is it fair on your part to keep such a bewitching and enticing woman in the bed room?" Knowing that Sita is quite innocent, I laughed at her innocence. I caught her by her hand and told her, "My darling! you are very angry because you saw that lonely lady when she is without her husband. Will you be passified if I show you her husband? Then I ordered for a life size standing mirror. After cleaning it well, I placed it in front of her. She saw two people - a man and a wife in that mirror. When she asked "Tell me my lord who are these two?" I told her, "they are Sri Rama and Sita. Who can be there except they?" She in fear fell on my feet. This is one such incident for identification.



O Hanuman, remind her of this without fail". This explains Sita's innocent and charming beauty which she never recognised when she was alone without Sri Rama on her side. What a chaste and pious delineation of Indian womanhood!

Sri Rama further narrates another incident which occurred during their exile. One day when they were sojourning at Chitrakuta, Sita prepared herself for a bath. She smeared her body with raw turmeric and went to the pond to have a dip. But without taking her bath she immediately returned to Sri Rama and complained thus: "My Lord, Descendant of Solar race! There is something strange near the bathing pond. The mischievous moon is playing in the pond. And there are innumerable bees also flying over the pond. How can I have my bath there? You come with me and see those rogues." Sri Rama was also perturbed and followed her to the pond. When they approached the pond Sita pointing with her finger said to Rama "Lo, that is moon and those are the bees". Sri Rama laughed and said, "My dear Sita! It is no moon; it is your own face. They are not the bees; they are your own locks of hair". When I told her the truth about her fallacy she bowed her head in bashfulness. Therefore, Hanuman! you must narrate this incident also to Sita so that she may know you to be my confidant."

This incident also reveals Sita's innocent heart and enchanting beauty, metaphoric and hyperbolic imagination of the folks. Sri Rama narrates 13 such incidents for identifying Sita.

These incident also reveal the innocent villagers' own ideals of love and life, as they are adopted to suit the life of their idols, their ideal man and wife.

#### URMILADEVI'S COMATIC SLEEP FOR 14 YEARS (Urmiladevi nidra)

Two other poems of the folk are very popular throughout the Andhra country and they are rendered in sweet melodies by the women folk. They are:

- (1) Urmiladevi's comatic sleep for a period of 14 years and
- (2) Lakshmana's laughter

The first has come to stay as the most popular ballad. From Valmiki down to the latest classical writers of the epic have entirely forgotten the role of Urmila, the bride princess of Lakshmana. But the Telugu ladies have treasured this great princess in their live memories. This is their special and unique song treasure. It remains an inexplicable wonder as to why several scholars have shown indifference to the character of this noble and great lady Urmila. Not that they loved Urmila less, but they loved Sita more. In the thunderous roar of the splitting of Siva's Great Bow and the joyful wedding music of Sita's marriage, the wedding of Urmila has been silently by passed.

The tragic and perilous life of Sita during exile has overshadowed the forlorn life of Urmila. But the village bards gave the highest place to Sita, but they did not forget Urmila's place in the grand epic story. Urmila offered to accompany Sita into the wilderness. Lakshmana followed his brother and sister-in-law to serve them. Urmila requested Lakshmana to permit her to follow him. Her volunteering was thought to be an obstacle by Lakshmana. He quoted some sacred injunctions like :

"The younger sister-in-law shall not tread  
the same ground traversed by the eldest brother-in-law.  
She shall not be within the earshot of him.  
How shall I take you, to follow them?"

He ordained for her a stay in the palace. Urmila, the chaste wife, confined herself to the palace and obeyed her lord. Now rises a question as to the magnitude of her sacrifice. Is Sita greater who followed her lord against his will to the forests or Urmila who remained forlorn when her lord left her to herself. Let us not consider the travail of Sita during her captivity in this context. The course of the Ramayana would have been different, if Urmila followed the other three. Lakshmana, in his absolute obedience to his elder brother Rama, became impervious to the fate of his wife in her solitary state. How Urmila suffered the acute agony of enforced and imposed loneliness could only be imagined. The lady went into a state of sleep.

"From thence onwards  
She was in coma on her couch."

That was the manner in which Urmila lay for fourteen long years. She thought of her lord and lay in long sleep.

When Lakshmana returned home, what was his primary duty? He ought to have approached his betterhalf. No - during the coronation he got immersed in waving the whisker to the king, Rama. He forgot about his wife. Women alone can fathom and comprehend the psychological states of women. One day :

"Rama, after coronation, was seated majestically on the throne  
Bharata, Satrugna and Lakshmana rendered due services.  
Hanuman, sat at Rama's feet and massaged them."

At that moment Sita approached her lord Rama and said :

"O Lord of Lords! I have a request to make, please listen,  
When we were leaving for the forests  
Our dear brother-in-law volunteered to be with us.  
His bride Urmila also preferred to follow him.

Lakshmana issued a mandate to her to stay on.  
 From that moment dear Urmila is sleeping  
 on the couch in deep coma.  
 Now at least, please relieve Lakshmana  
 and allow him to meet his beloved."

She, thus, recommended and Lakshmana was permitted to meet Urmila. It was only then that Lakshmana must have learnt about his wife's state. Instantly did Lakshmana repair to the bedchamber of Urmila. Instead of soothingly waking her up and offering apologies to her, this prince began to address her thus sitting on the bed by her side.

"O dear! this moon like lover has come  
 to serve your beautiful face"

Thus he began his overtures to the sleeping princess. Lakshmana behaved roughly and petulantly. The lady, who had closed her eyes for a period of fourteen years felt the sudden presence of strangers in her private chamber. She remonstrated :

"O Sir, who are you? Why this outrage?  
 Wandering in lanes and bylanes,  
 Why did you come to commit this mistake?  
 Why did you intrude into this solitary chamber?"

If my sire King Janaka learns about this  
 he will order for your punishment  
 If my sister and her husband know about this  
 danger to your life is imminent  
 If her brother-in-law is here now,  
 he will not allow you to survive."

Thus she gently warned him. One can note her shyness, her chastity and other noble virtues in these lines. Lakshmana was bitterly chagrined. She further remonstrated over her misfortune:

"I have wrought ill fame to the great dynasty  
 What can I do now?  
 Being born of a reputed family,  
 I have drawn disgrace over it."

She thought she could give sound ethical advice to the intruder.

"Indra became a physical wreck because he desired  
 another's wife  
 Ravana met with genocide because he made overtures

to another's wife  
 Kicaka met with disaster for loving another's wife.  
 How could you deliberately indulge in such an outrage ?  
 Are you not born along with sisters?  
 Have you no mother like me?"

Thus did she run a tirade on the despicable desire of courting others' wives. The reference to Kicaka is an anachronism, but the rural folk have in their memories the several atrocities perpetrated by persons of yore. The precepts uttered by Urmila, have to be multiplied and set as ideals for women. They have to follow them scrupulously.

The revealing of the identity of Lakshmana and the recognition by the wife, and the conversation that ensued have been finely described. Urmila prostrated herself at his feet. She melted away in a rapturous state. Her stirred up emotions were on the increase.

"It was at a fitful moment that our sire  
 King Janaka gave me to you.  
 Men repose their attentions in a direction and at the  
 proper time show indifference to those that love them.  
 Reposing their attentions in another thing, men belittle  
 others - such are men"

Urmila continued her diatribe on her husband. Lakshmana could fully understand her. He told her that during the exile, he served his brother and Sita without taking food and by keeping awake round the clock. They both regretted for the separation. This must have been due to their past actions. [Especially they must have separated some spouses.

The dowager queen Kausalya and other elders of the royalty pacified them, gave them auspicious baths and feasted them.

Urmila's demeanour was shining par excellence. Her sister-in-law Santa said:

"Lustrous sheen of a gold image was hiding on her face till now,  
 Let her not be struck by an evil eye,  
 Let us propitiate auspicious rites to allay the dangers of  
 evil sight"

and indulged in jovial dialogues with the refreshed bride Urmila. Poor Urmila kept silent. But her cause was taken up by Sita. Santa had an impish proclivity. Sita rose up to the occasion and indulged in a quick repartee. She said to Santa:

"My brother Rishyasringa was tempted by you  
And that anchorite was head over ears in love with you  
at first sight and followed you."

This was a bolt into silence for Santa. Such were the soft and delicate ideas of the Andhra women which were manifest in the folk songs.

Urmila's bedchamber was beautifully decorated. Lakshmana sat by her side and began to aid her in make-up. He dressed her hair, plaited the tresses and gave them a floral decoration. While he was engaged in the adorning process her thoughts caught up the tragic fate that befell her sister Sita. She initiated a conversation of enquiry.

"When you of leonine strength were there  
how could Sita be captured?  
When you rulers of earth were present  
how could Sita be abducted?"

Lakshmana narrated to her the whole experience. The repeated story thus inflicted sorrow not only on Urmila then, but on all the listeners of the Telugu land even now. Urmila narrated the story to her sisters in the palace. They felt the sorrow while listening, but revived into happiness when they thought of her safe return home. Here is the blending of weal and woe. The sentiments of evil and good are mixed up. The trends of the folk songs exhibit the genius of the Telugus. The auspicious ending promises beauty.

"These songs of Urmila's separation when either sung or heard,  
They will be benignly transported to the Abode of Vishnu  
And they will attain the ultimate Release."

In add, they shall never suffer the pangs of separation.

#### LAKSHMANA'S OUTBURST OF LAUGHTER (Lakshmanadevara navvu)

Vying with the beauty of "Urmila's comatic slumber" is another song, "Lakshmana's outburst of laughter." In this we note the psychological understanding of the folk. To picturise in words, classical writers indulge and capitalise the generalisation as a figure of speech - i.e., literary adornment. But the folks are more concerned with the episodic setting. The meaning is of utmost importance to the classicists. The thematic emphasis is the forte of the folks. This queer trait is to be discerned in the song. The story of Urmila's coma condition for fourteen years and Lakshmana's wakeful state bereft of food and rest during that period which was spent in the service of Sri Rama have prompted the folks to weave songs with aesthetic content.

After the disaster of Ravana at Lanka, Rama returned to Ayodhya with Sita. All the gods, sages and friends attended the coronation. When all were assembled,

"Laughed, Laughed and Laughed the great Lakshmana,  
This raised doubts in the minds of those that assembled.  
He laughed uproariously.  
At the loud laughter the king felt humiliated"

This laughter has made everyone an introvert himself. A series of chain reactions have been ascribed by the folk poet to every one of that royal assembly. Siva thought that his stationing Ganga the mermaid on his head was the cause of the laughter. Vibhishana thought that the cause of the laugh was his fratricidal crime to secure the kingdom of Lanka. Sita thought that the laugh was directed at her for the uncivil and rude speech she indulged in with Lakshmana when she heard Marica's false alarm. She felt shy. Rama thought that the laugh was due to his having restituted Sita, who was a captive of Ravana for long. Likewise Sugriva, Jambavan, Hanuman, Bharata, Satrugna and every dignitary present in the coronation hall thought Lakshmana was laughing at him only. This is a fine figure of speech. One incident produced a series of reactions in individuals. Out of a single act multiple reactions are inferred. Like the phrase, "Astameti gabhastiman" (The Sun has set) very often quoted by the rhetoricians in order to convey different kinds of suggestive meanings, here the laughter has compelled everyone there, to infix their thoughts and make a search of their own past apparently out of the way actions which naturally provoke laughter or derision. They hung their heads down, humiliated, chagrined and felt bitter. Rama's anger grew into a pitch because he felt that the whole assembly was insulted. He drew his sword from the sheath to behead Lakshmana in a fit of anger. But Vasishtha and Vamadeva intercepted and stopped Rama. They said that Rama should first enquire why Lakshmana laughed. He should not punish without a proper enquiry. You know it was Ramarajya i.e. Rule of Law. Nobody could pronounce a punishment without proper enquiry. Therefore, Rama asked Lakshmana the reason for his laughter. Lakshmana bowed to the king-brother and explained thus :

"I have one submission my lord.  
In the forest when I was sentrying with bow and arrows  
One night when you were asleep inside pamasala  
Slumber overcame the whole living world, from the ant to the lion  
I was the only one awake watching you and the hermitage  
The Goddess of sleep was afraid to approach me  
She did not dare  
She made rustling sounds on the banks of Godavari  
and began to wail  
I approached her and asked her the reason  
She said "I am the Goddess of slumber

The Elephants Eight that watch the cardinal points  
 The seven Rishis of the Great Bear,  
 And the Seven seas are now under the spell of sleep.  
 I rule over Vaikuntha.  
 All the birds, animals, mountains, rivers  
 Trees and plants and human beings submit to me.  
 No human being can get victory over me  
 But my power is nullified before you  
 This is opposed to nature  
 I feel greatly mortified  
 I have lost my suzerainty before you  
 It is an insult to me and my supremacy'

Then I prostrated before the Goddess and said

"I am duty bound, must keep sentry to my brother and his wife  
 I am a watchman to my brother Raghurama and his wife Sitadewi  
 I am a watchman to this parnasala  
 I have come all the way from Ayodhya to serve them.  
 Thou shalt now hurry to the city of Ayodhya  
 There is the spouse who has been left there alone by her husband  
 She shall not be alone like that.  
 Both in day and in night envelop her with sleep  
 Leave me into my ever vigilant state.  
 After the return when my Lord gets coronated in Ayodhya  
 When he is happy surrounded by his ministers and gaurds  
 You may come and possess me.  
 Till then, kindly spare me, O Celestial SLEEP"

I thus importuned her. She agreed to this and left me. Now, during the full session of the Royal Assembly she came and began dancing on my eyelids. That is why I laughed, my lord. Excuse me for my indecency and improper behaviour."

Hearing this tale, Rama's heart melted away. The great selfless sacrifice made by his brother was brought home to him. The lofty and noble services rendered by Lakshmana at the altar of fraternal feelings, and his own hasty action mortified him. He raised arm with the drawn sword and tried to cut his own head in order to make amends. The high priests Vasishtha and Vamadeva prevented him. As a punishment the high priest suggested

"O Ruler of the earth! this is improper for you.  
 Allow Lakshmana to sleep on a royal couch  
 You shall massage his feet  
 This retribution is enough in the circumstances

Rama agreed. Lakshmana was on his couch, ready to sleep. Ramaslyy entered the chamber lest any noise would disturb his sleep. If Lakshmana was awake he would prevent Rama to do that service. Lakshmana was asleep, no doubt, but the touch of Rama's palm has awakened him. First massage kept him silent. The next pressure of the palm was thought to be the touch in a dream. The third touch made him open the eyes. He realised that it was no longer any dream but stark reality. He saw the King massaging. He rose up instantaneously and prostrated before his eldest brother.

"With the touch of your foot Ahalya was purified  
Your foot resides on the head of the philanthropist Bali  
All the Celestials pray at thy feet  
They massage your divine feet  
And O Lord! you shall not touch my feet  
You must pardon me for my sleep unawares"

Lakshmana offered his homage at the feet of Rama. Not only he, but all the folk that have created this tale and the listeners of this episode seek the sacred feet of Rama. Rama raised his brother and said

"Moonless night is always dark  
So too the Royal Assembly bereft of you"

The simple folk have created this incident. They assigned vigilance round the clock to Lakshmana and deep slumber for 14 years to his forlorn wife at the palace as a compensatory distribution of manual energies.

One cannot describe the hilarious and exuberant happy feelings of Rama. He proposed for his three younger brothers that day as the consummation night or the first night of their honey moon. In that royal household Santa had always the whiphand over things and matters. She was consulted for the performance of things. It is so even now in the households of Andhras. The daughter of the house has a domineering position. Rama grew curious to have a look at the wives of his younger brothers. But in a royal household, the young wives never appear before elders - more so before the King. He screened himself behind Santa and Sita and keeping Satrugna by his side, he stole a glance at the young brides. His paternal affection for them was unappeasable. It appeared that even with a thousand eyes, he could not satiate his parental and affectionate desire. When the last of the brides passed that way, Rama asked Satrugna, as to who she was.

"He kept silent and did say that she was his queen" A similar situation was introduced in Bhavabhuti's play 'Uttararamacarita.' In the picture-gallery scene Sita showed Urmila's portrait and asked Lakshmana as to whose resemblance it was. Here Rama showed Sita and in order to exhilarate Satrugna said



"Look here this lady with eight bends"

Then Satrugghna immediately replied,

"Brother Rama! You shall not say so  
Sita is the first Goddess of wealth,  
She is the Mother Goddess of the worlds"

That night was the honeymoon for all the bridal couples in the palace. Sita escorted Urmila into the bedchamber of Lakshmana, and Mandavi to her bridal couch to stay with Bharata. Sita gracefully walked into her own chamber to meet the Lord.

"Instantly Rama saw the goddess of wealth approaching.  
With ripples of laughter on his face he said  
On the sight of green grass in Summer, cows feel happy  
For the loyal wife, the sight of her Lord gives happiness"

During that night,

"Like Sugar immanently mixing up in milk  
Rama and Sita entwined themselves  
Like with molasses Bharata and Mandavi were together  
As jaggery is mixed with, fennel (Jilakarra)  
Lakshmana and Urmila met at amour play"

But the youngest of the brides Srutakirti did not move towards the trysted chamber of her lord Satrugghna; who waiting in vain complained to mother Kausalya. She escorted the hesitant bride immersed in bashfulness, to her son's bed chamber. The bride was still in her girlish teens more addicted to play and playful things. Kausalya said to her :

"You shall now conduct your play on your lord's couch  
The youngest bride was on the move.  
On the corridors of the palace  
Her brightness tarnished the well polished metal pillars  
The lustres of the diamond lights brightened many fold"

The Sun rose but these happy bridal couples slept on. Hanuman was behested to raise fanfare to announce the dawn. Trumpets blew. The grooms rose up in forced suddenness.

"On the face of Bharata there were marks of turmeric  
On the forehead of Lakshmana there were marks of Kumkum.  
On the cheeks of Satrugghna there were strokes of collyrium,

Their brother-in-law Rishya Sringa was there. They felt ashamed that he might ridicule them for their overindulgence. They refreshed themselves. Thus the erotic pleasures have been suggested naively and subtly. Thus the unadorned literary excellence is manifest in this folk ballad.

Another feature of folk psychology could be noted in this poem. It is consistent with simple naturalness. An illustration serves the purpose. Hanuman is a demi-god both for the scholars and the folks.

A grand royal feast was arranged the day following the honeymoon night. The folk were interested in joking with the character of Hanuman. After all he was a monkey given to impishness. The naturalness in describing the incident disarms the scholarly rhetoricians. The grand feast was conducted. The menu of the banquet is not detailed, lest the listeners may feel the descriptions hollow and not materialising. Rama was sitting with his friends, relatives and other guests. The party began to sing and narrate their experiences at Lanka. They forgot to invite and fetch Hanuman. That devotee was tentatively out of the memories of every one assembled there for the feast. Hanuman entered the hall murmuring. Rama realised his mistake of not extending the invitation to his great devotee and friend-in-need. It was too late for regrets. He decided to propitiate him and offer his apologies. His duty was to appease the neglected guest and induce him to partake in the feast, which was half over. He approached the monkey chief.

"You are one of us, we kept silent.  
You are the supreme friend, sit by my side.  
It is because of you that I could secure Sita  
It is because of you that I am able to dine with my brothers  
Dear Hanuman, pay heed to my appeal,  
Sit by my side, Oh supreme friend"

Hanuman's chagrine intensified. He was not so simple to swallow the shallow explanation offered by Rama. How he gave vent to his anger was the problem to him and all. The problem was greater to the author of the ballad. Hanuman's position as a devotee should not be lowered. He replied :

"To sit by your side am I your equal?  
I am not the 'Supreme friend'."

Thereby he began to reproach sarcastically not only Rama but all those who sat by Rama's side at the banquet. But as he was a devotee of Rama the remnants of His food was the most precious for him. He saw the well served plate of his Master

"He snatched it away  
and went up a tree and settled himself there

This joke is immensely liked by the rural folk

"He made round a ball of mouthful  
He kept it on the branch  
Then threw off the golden plate as an unwanted excess"

But his anger was not alleviated Rama went to the tree and implored Hanuman

"He extended his hand and invited  
Hanuman to alight from the tree"

The anger subsided Hanuman seemed to be appeased

"Like the pet parrot he alighted on to the arm of Rama  
Rama placed him on the ground below  
He adorned him with a pearl necklace"

This Hanuman with the decoration remains even now the favourite demigod of the rural folk But still he is a prankish monkey with them This is their psychology

There are scores of such beautiful events and incidents that illustrate the folk versions of Ramayana Stories in Telugu

## THE FOLK VERSIONS OF MAHABHARATA STORIES

Next to the Ramayana, the Bharata and the Bhagavata are the other two major works that the Telugus have taken to with love and devoted enthusiasm. The righteous conduct of the Pandavas, the vicious acts of the Kauravas, the partiality of Sri Krishna towards the just and the righteous and his rendering benediction to the virtuous are the familiar precepts to the Indians. The unconscious impact of these stories over the Indian populace from the days of yore is profound. Dhritarashtra's blindness, Bhishma's vow of celibacy, Drona's excellent skill in archery and his over-zealous affection towards his favourite disciples, the envious nature of Duryodhana and Dussasana, Karna's selfless acts of philanthropy coupled with loyalty to his royal friend, the precepts of Vidura the wise, Sakuni's knavery and machinations, Yudhishtira's just and righteous conduct, Bhima's strength and valour, Arjuna's martial strength, the fraternal loyalties of Nakula and Sahadeva, Abhimanyu's precocious bravery and agility, Ghatotkaca's strategic and magic moves, Draupadi's mortification and outrage, Kunti's desires, Prince Uttara's empty boasts, Nala and Bhima's culinary expertise, Catechism by Yaksha, help of the Gandharvas at needy times, the blind obedience of Ekalavya, Salya's dubious conduct as charioteer, Sikhandi's adamant persistence - are the favourite topics univesally liked by the Telugus. These are more palatable to them than eating cakes (Vadas), as adage says:

"F"ill the palate with cakes (vadas) edible  
or read and enjoy the Bharata story"

The rural folk have culled out from the great epic some topics here and there and composed their own lore of ballads. Just like the augmentation of Ramayana episodes, Bharata epic was also enlarged and strange ballads and tales are woven into it. Nala caritra, Devayani Caritra, Subhadra's Dream, Subhadra's Wedding, Subhadra Sara (Gifts presented to Subhadra when she was pregnant), Dharmaraja's play at dice, Declothing of Draupadi. The tale of the fruit, Clandestine murder of Kicaka, The story of Virataparva in various styles as a padam and Jangam Katha, Padmavyuham (Lotus formation of armies), Viswarupa, Bhagavadgita, Savitri's story in song, the marriage of Sasirekha in various song forms, Gayopakhyanam, the dialogue between Parasara and Matsyagandhi are engrafted in the hearts of the rural folk. Ayyagari Kurmanatha's Virata, Karna and Salya parvas and Candragiri Tatayya's Uttara Gograhanam and Dakshina Gograhanam are very long ballads sung by only professionals.

I shall now briefly comment upon some of the highlights in the Bharata folk versions.

To create new stories and invent strange episodes is a common folk tendency. The traditional stories are altogether changed, altered and recast in

a unique manner. Their own innate creative genius is blended into the previously existing story-format. New creations were made to the Ramayana epic and similarly with the Mahabharata. Such deviations from and extensions of the original stories are made not only by the rural folk but also by classical writers. This interpolatory tendency is mainly the outcome of the mental attitude of the poetically incensed people both sophisticated and unsophisticated. The original story always recedes into the background in proportion to the intensity of this mental approach. Some stray and remote incident flies as it were, from one corner and subsumes into the main story and gets integrated into it and gains a roost. Then it will be difficult to actually locate the source of its origin.

As A.A. Macdonell says "when met with a late stage of its development, a myth may be so far overgrown with secondary accretions unconnected with its original form, that its analysis may be extremely difficult or even impossible"

#### Vedic Mythology

Such a strange and surprising episode sought refuge in the Mahabharata epic. It gained an extensive literary legal tender. The episode is "Gayopakhyana" the tale of Gaya.

Gaya, a gandharva King, after propitiating Siva in Kailasa is returning in his Vimana-aircraft. One morning on his way back he spits which falls inadvertently into the hands of Krishna who is offering prayers to the Sun god in the Jamuna. Sri Krishna takes an oath to kill the offender. This news is conveyed to Gaya by Akasavani. Gaya seeks refuge at Brahma's abode, but Brahma regrets his inability to protect him from the wrath of Sri Krishna and advises him to go to Siva. Siva also expresses his inability. When the disappointed Gaya was returning with no hope of his survival, Narada meets him and advises him to seek the refuge of Arjuna. Gaya runs to Arjuna and falls on his feet seeking asylum. Arjuna first promises that he would protect him and then enquires about the peril he is confronted with. Gaya narrates his plight. Arjuna is in a fix, for he has to protect the enemy of Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna sends message to Arjuna for handing over the culprit. Arjuna refuses to oblige. As a result the Pandavas led by Arjuna fight with Sri Krishna. The duel is very severe and perilous. Both of them by turn swoon and after recovery exchange words. While they are prepared for an all out fight Siva and other gods descend and prevail upon them to end the warfare. Sri Krishna pardons Gaya and all ends well.

This fight between Sri Krishna and Arjuna like the 'Ramanjaneya Yuddham' - fight between Rama and his devotee Hanuman - not found in mythology is a beloved theme for the rural folks. They revel in enjoying the sight of such a fight and also in the enraged polymics wherein each tries to belittle the other and boasts of one self. Carigonda Dhamana who lived at the end of 15th Century in his 'Chitra Bharatamu' alludes to this in an implied manner.

'Maruttarat caritra' also contains a similar story. Nadendla Gopamantri of 16th century has rendered this tale into a poem called "Krishnarjuna Samvadam" in Dwipada metre. Later on this theme was developed by Veliceru Venkatarama Pradhani, Kasturi Rangakavi and Ramayamatya. Cilakamarti Lakshminarasimham a celebrated playwright of modern times dramatised this tale and earned unprecedented fame in the Telugu country. C.P. Brown wrote about this poem in his lexicon (1852) in the following manner

"A mere fiction. The name is given to apochryphal poems that are not grounded on any classical tradition as the (1) Mairavana Caritra, (2) Satamukha Ramayana, (3) Krishnarjuna Samvadam, (4) Ganga Gauri Samvada and (5) Jaimini Bharata."

But we know that these stories have their sources in some classical poems as well as ballads. For example Mairavana story is contained in the Bengali Ramayana of Krittivasa and in the Ramayanas of South Indian Languages. Satamukha Ramayana is contained in a Sanskrit work called Sita Vijayam.

The present Ballad Gayopakhyanam was composed by Dhenuvakonda Timmayya, a folk poet. There is also a Kannada version of this ballad rendered by Sadhupalli Candra Sekhara Sastri of the last century. There is a similar story in Marathi also.

There is an interesting point in this story. While it is surprising to note that the Pandavas arrayed themselves against Sri Krishna it is curious that the natural enemies of Pandavas, the Kauravas, jointed hands with their cousins, to rise up against the Yadavas and this remains a surprise amidst surprises. Dhritarashtra heard about the war that arose between Pandavas and Yadavas from the report of Narada, consulted the elderly statesmen like Bhishma and others, and ordered his son Duryodhana to help the Pandavas. Duryodhana got ready to help the Pandavas, but he was actuated with the sinister motive of annihilating the Yadavas in the first instance and then conquer the Pandavas who might no longer have the help of the Yadavas. Even Subhadra could not negotiate peace between her brother Krishna and her lord Arjuna. She underwent bitterest travail. It is only Lord Siva who could foresee the disaster that might result when the Cakra of Krishna and the Pasupata missile of Arjuna would clash. He prevailed upon Krishna to forbear and succeeded in bringing about peace.

In the end Krishna said to Arjuna thus : "There will be fierce fight between you and the Kauravas, I doubt your victory over them without our assistance. Therefore, without any reason, I contrived this for your benefit."

This ballad contains 'in some places' fine poetry. The sunrise is described thus :

"The Sun appeared like the Heavenly diamond  
 Nay like the Heaven's lightning lamp.  
 It looked like the red beauty mark  
 On the face of the maid of the Eastern Cardinal point"

Gaya from the ethereal region saw Arjuna and was aghast seeing the Pandava hero's personality.

"Is he Siva or Brahma the husband of the goddess of learning  
 Is he 'the great' that bore the Mandara mountain  
 Is he the Cupid himself or the handsome Nalakubara  
 Is he the Moon or Indra himself."

### DHARMARAJU JUDAMU

The episode of the Canto II - Sabhaparva, where Dharmaraja indulges in playing dice - "Dharmaraju Judamu" - is a favourite narrative that ever dwells on the tongues of women folk. The Telugu women folk have not only added but have also changed the course of the tale.

When Dharmaraja was preparing himself to start to Hastinapura for the play of dice at the invitation of Duryodhana, Sahadeva the youngest brother advises him not to play the dice game. Dharmaraja tells him that it is highly improper not to play the game, when an equal invites for a game. In the epic Duryodhana played the game by proxy - Sakuni, but in the folk ballad Duryodhana himself took part in the game. Dharmaraja wins the game in the beginning according to the folk ballad whereas in the Bharata it was otherwise. This ballad narrates that when Duryodhana was precipitously losing the stakes, he called in Sakuni to be his proxy and went inside to offer his prayers to the goddess of Destitution (Dardradevi). The goddess benedicted the prince and went to persuade her younger sister the goddess of wealth (Lakshmidēvi) to favour Duryodhana.

"The goddess of Wealth saw the elder sister visiting her,  
 She went to receive her and offered her obeisance thrice over  
 And enquired "How with you, O sister! what is the purpose of this visit"

The Goddess of Destitution acquainted her about the dice play of the princes Duryodhana and Dharmaraja and further said that in the past she was once worsted by the Pandavas. "When Dharmaraja performed the Rajasuya sacrifice I went there and took part in the grand dinner. Then Bhima spotted me as the only woman sitting in line with all men. He got the platter removed and offered grave insult. Then in bitter anger :

"I pronounced an imprecation on Bhima.  
 When you spread the paddy in a winnow





Lakshmi in the Milky ocean. He heard the cry of Draupadi and with a bang "Akshayam" threw the dice. Lakshmi asked the reason why he cried out like that. Vishnu explained the reason. Thus with the Akshaya boon of the Lord, Draupadi's wearing costumes grew into an unending number. Dussasana was tired, his assistants fatigued, and they all fell down exhausted. The whole court hall was filled with beautiful and colourful saris. All ladies from the city took away as many silk saris as they could carry in contentment. Duryodhana was also enamoured of the costly and beautiful saris. He picked up two pieces and handed them over to safe custody. But lo! the two pieces turned into birds and flew away. This innovation of the women folk is meant only to mock at the mean and cruel Duryodhana.

Draupadi cursed the cruel brothers for their outrageous behaviour. She challenged Duryodhana to play dice with her. The Kaurava prince accepted the gauntlet. She wreaked her vengeance by winning a victory over the proud prince. How they played the game is thus described :

"Duryodhana was seated on the Lion throne  
 Pancali sat on the Tortoise seat  
 As she hated to countenance the Sinner  
 She ordered for erecting a screen in between"

This is how women folk reacted. They wanted to avoid the sight of that Sinner. That is why they introduced a screen in between Draupadi and Rajaraja.

"Duryodhana threw the dice with his hands  
 Draupadi moved the dice with her toes."

That was her self respect. The folk poetess could not think of the poetic justice till she made her heroine treat the prince contemptuously. Draupadi was able to win back one by one all the wealth that Dharmaja lost in wager previously. Sakuni intervened. Had it not been for this interruption, no one could predict the fate of the prince. Sakuni said to the prince :

"Women are witches and are cunning  
 The Lord of the fire is their friend  
 They touch the boiling rice  
 They feel the burning embers  
 They kick the flaming faggots."

The whole of this episode is not found in the epic. But some Manuscripts of the Telugu version, contain this incident of Draupadi, defeating Duryodhana at the game of dice.

Dhritarashtra entered the court hall, pacified Duryodhana and granted boons to the Pandava princess the victor of the game. The King gave her

kingdoms. But she tarried and said:

"Can women rule and reign Kingdoms ?  
I shall follow the lords to wilderness"  
She asked for the enfranchisement of her lords  
Dhritarashtra instantly granted the boon."

Thus Draupadi was portrayed as a self-respecting princess. In the epic there was encore of the dice play in which Pandavas met with complete defeat. They went into exile. But in this ballad Pandavas refused to accept the gifted Kingdom. They desired to wage a righteous war and win their kingdom. So they left for the forests.

Draupadi's character portrayal is superb in this ballad.

'SASIREKHA PENDLI PATA' - The song of Sasirekha's wedding is another interesting ballad connected with Mahabharata. There are at least three versions of this song. One is a ballad composed by a folk poet Toleti Sitaramayya of the last century. Another one is a women's song sung during the Bratukamma festival in the Telangana region. Another is a comparatively short song very popular among women folk. This song consummates the wedding of Sasirekha, daughter of Balarama, with Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna. Marriage of nephews and neices through female relatives is considered to be an ideal marital relationship in the entire Telugu country. Sasirekha is the daughter of Balarama, elder brother of Krishna. Abhimanyu is his sister Subhadra's son. Arjuna is his father. They are, according to custom amongst Andhras, eligible to marry one's sister's daughter. There were obstacles to the conclusion of this marriage, but finally they were auspiciously married. The Telugus have maintained their customary practice. The parents of this bridal pair have become Telugu Elders.

When the Pandavas were living in exile, Abhimanyu was sojourning with his maternal uncles - Balarama and Krishna at Dwaraka along with his mother Subhadra. Sasirekha daughter of Revati and Balarama was the endeared and favourite child of the whole family. The close acquaintance that grew between those youths developed into close intimacy and then into love. When Sasirekha grew into maidenhood, her father Balarama put her in the Seraglio. Hereafter their trysts and rendezvous took place in the pleasure gardens.

Duryodhana, at the instance of his wife, sends Bhishma and Drona to Balarama with a proposal to marry Sasirekha to his son Lakshmana Kumara. The elderly men made the proposal to Balarama, the father of the bride and said:

"If you and Duryodhana get affiliated through this marriage  
It will be like acquiring fine scents to the gold,  
It will further be like the sugar cane bearing fruit."

Balarama was elated with this appeal and he readily accepted the proposal and fixed the auspicious moment for the wedding. Revati, wife of Balarama, pleads for the match with Abhimanyu. But ill-tempered Balarama says,

"Arjuna has gone into wilderness  
Subhadra in order to maintain herself is living with us.  
I do not want to give my daughter to the poor  
Who neither have food nor cloth nor shelter."

Subhadra felt disappointed over the obstacle created for the consummation of the marriage of Sasirekha and Abhimanyu. Sri Krishna pleaded with Subhadra his inability to interfere in this affair. She abused and cursed her brother Balarama and in a fit of anger decided to go to Pandavas along with her son Abhimanyu. On their way through the forest, Abhimanyu had to engage himself in a duel with Ghatotkaca, son of Bhima and Hidimbi. Narada revealed to them that they were brothers. Thus peace was secured. Ghatotkaca heard about the disappointment of Abhimanyu's marital relations with Sasirekha. He consoled Subhadra and Abhimanyu and promised to bring Sasirekha with his magical powers. As promised Ghatotkaca brought Sasirekha along with the cot on which she was sleeping. He himself stayed in the seraglio of Balarama in the guise of the bride Sasirekha. On the wedding day at the proper moment the Maya Sasirekha played hide and seek with the bridegroom and his party. This provides a lot of fun to the folks. To the other onlookers of the wedding, Ghatotkaca looked like Sasirekha but to the bridegroom he appeared in several fierce faces like a tigress and a serpent, wild cat and a wild boar. He was like a leopard and a devil. Lakshmana Kumara thus frightened, took to heels. The diabolical feats and the savage tricks that Ghatotkaca played on the persons at Dwaraka bristle with humour and laughter. Kauravas took to flight to Hastinapura. Krishna who knew about these events kept silent. Ghatotkaca appeared in his real form before Balarama and others. He took them to his forest abode and performed the wedding of Sasirekha and Abhimanyu. Balarama pleads guilty and requests Subhadra to pardon him. The bridal pair is brought to Dwaraka and the wedding is celebrated with eclat. The story in the song concludes with a happy note.

As in the Ramayana stories, in the Mahabharata stories also, the Telugu folk have introduced their own customs and ways of life, their own likes and dislikes in such a way that the original stories have been transformed altogether and they seem as though they are native stories with local characters. Such deviations and extensions confirm the view that the ballads and songs reveal the inner-most cravings of the village folk.

## MYSTICAL FOLK SONGS IN TELUGU

The way of the attainment of Gnosis, wisdom or divine knowledge is the superior way to secure the Release (Moksha). It is well nigh very difficult to attain. Scholars have opined that this way to attain Gnosis is superior to the way of Karma or the way of Bhakti. The Bhagwan in His Gita has declared:-

Na hi jnanena Sadrsam, Pavitra miha Vidyate  
Tat Svayam Yoga Samsiddhah, Kalenatmani Vindati

(Verily there exists here no purifier equal to Wisdom (Gnosis). He who is perfected by Yoga finds it in time himself by himself.)

Shraddhavan labhate jnanam, tatprah samyatendriyah  
Jnanam labdhva Param Santim, acirenahigacchati

(He obtains wisdom (Gnosis) who is full of faith, who is devoted to it, and who has subdued the senses. Having obtained wisdom, he ere long attains the Supreme Peace) (Santi)

(Bhagavadgita, IV - 38 & 39)

The pioneering status gained by India is entirely due to the possession of this Gnosis. In this country of Bharat umpteen number of great souls and great seers have trod this way of Gnosis and attained the supreme Release and they preached the same to the world. For all practical purposes this way of Gnosis may be also known as Vedanta. Every religion in this world has developed some philosophy. But our country has this Vedanta as its forte and this Yoga Vidya has earned for it a speciality and that is why the Western Orientalists said that India consists of Philosophers and mystics. Our mythology abounds in tales of children, during their pre-natal existence and in teens, being endowed with wisdom as it was seen in the lives of Prahlada and Dhruva.

"Mystic experience everywhere points to the realisation of the Beautiful; and the summit of Vedantic thought proclaims this by the term Ananda.

And further, the value of mysticism consists in giving to mankind the benefit of direct and immediate individual experiences of the truth of the Beautiful in Divinity as the all-encompassing feature, and the optimistic basis and the end of the universe."

"Mysticism is the attitude of mind which consists in the spiritual quest of man for union with Godhood culminating in unitive experience. It is a fulfilment of man's highest aspiration as an integral personality satisfying the eternal values of life like truth, goodness, beauty and love. (Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram)

The mystic considers it the birth right of every one to seek God as the Innerself of all Beings. Mystic consciousness is certified to be true by itself and is therefore its own proof.

Dialectics and Divinity can never co-exist. The soul is aglow with divine fire, but it is not identical with it.

The mystic is an explorer of the eternal the pilgrim to the perfect. The mystic in his ecstatic condition realises Reality and sees everything with the eyes of God, Brahma Drishti.

P.N. Srinivasachary,  
Mystics and Mysticism

Sanskrit literature is replete with theses and dissertations extensively dealing with Vedanta. When compared to this Oceanic literature in Sanskrit, regional languages of this country do not contain such vast treatises. But the folklore on this subject of the Ultimate wisdom is charged with meta-physical thought. The folks have inherited this exalted heritage and treasured the traditional wisdom in their songs, sung day in and day out. We find a spate of these Telugu folk songs flowing unhampered through the ethos of the rural population. The wisdom that percolated through classical treatises combined with the practical experiences of saints and mystics formed the main fountain of nectarian drink of the Telugu folks who in turn gave out songs, sayings and dialogues.

Though it is very difficult to say how many of the people who sing these songs had mystical experience or practise these philosophical truths, a cowherd boy as well as an old man in the Telugu country sing

"Guta Cilukedira Cinnanna - Gudu Cinaboyera"

(Where has the bird gone my dear brother! The nest looks empty)

Here the bird and nest stand for the soul and the body respectively. The soul is like a parrot in the cage being enmeshed by the complex body. When the parrot flies away, the cage becomes deserted and useless.

Such songs are called Tattvalu in Telugu i.e. Vedantic essences, rhapsodies of philosophy. They are called so because 'Tattvam' (Thou art That) i.e. Reality or Truth is propounded in them. Most of these songs are Advaitic in their content and purport. Saints like Eganti, Nanjaya, Virabrahmam, Dudekula, Siddayya, Vemana, Pudota, Lingavadhuta had sung such mystical songs and left a great heritage to the Telugus. Knowingly or unknowingly acolytes gathered round these saints and as time passed, mountebanks are flourishing by singing these songs to earn a livelihood. The composers as well

as the propogators of these mystical songs seem to be Sudras in general. The distinctions of high and low, the inequalities that are precipitated in the traditional society are not found in the Advaitic thought and Nondualism process of experience which is mostly spiritual and philosophic and beyond distinctions and classifications. A real Advaitin always rises above differences, because he becomes One in all. As such these people of the lower strata could give vent to their philosophical ideas freely in these songs. The ostentatious vanities exhibited by the topmen of the hierarchy in their rituals and insistence on the strict division of the social complex brought forth criticism and rebellious attitude in the community. Therefore, we find very often in these songs, ruthless criticism of Brahmanical order and its religious as well as ritualistic code, customs, practices and discipline. Such songs came into vogue to be preached by the eligible and for the self satisfaction by the non-eligible.

Philosophical and mystical songs are of many kinds. They are in the form of lullabies, nursery rhymes, songs of awakening sung early in the morning (Melu Koluputu), songs sung while offering lights (Harati), Bee songs (Tummeda Patalu) and lastly pure mystical songs (Tattvalu).

Here is one lullaby sung by the Telugu mothers while rocking their babies to sleep.

జో అచ్యుతానంద జోజో ముకుందా రార పరమానంద రామ గోవిందా,     | జోజో |  
 తొలుత బ్రహ్మాండంబు తొట్టె గావించి వాలుగూ వేదముల గొలుసు లమరించి  
 బలువైన ఫణిరాజా పాన్పునమరించి అద్వైతమనియేటి దూలమును వేసి     | జోజో |  
 తొమ్మిది వాకిండ్ల దొడ్డిలోపలనూ క్రూరులగు ఆర్కురూ ముగ్గురున్నారూ  
 తెలివి దెల్పడి వాడు దేవుడున్నాడూ | వాని ప్రార్థించండి వరుసతో మీరూ     | జోజో |  
 పట్టవలె నార్కుర్ని పదిలంబుగానూ | కట్టవలె ముగ్గుర్ని కదలకుండగనూ  
 ఉంచవలె ఒక్కర్ని హృత్కమలమందూ | ఉండవలె పండువెన్నెల నిండుగానూ | జోజో |  
 ఈడుగానివాని కూడుండవలెనూ | జోడుగానివాని జాడ గవవలెనరా  
 మేడమీదనున్న మేలు గవవలెనరా | కోరియా గోవింద గురుని గవవలెనూ     | జోజో |  
 వీధిలో బాటలో గీతంబు చేయా | కోటలో భేరిమృదంగములు మ్రోయా  
 కోటలో మొనగాండ్రు కోలందివేయా | దీటులేని ప్రభువు దొరతనము చేయా | జోజో |  
 ఓంకారమనియేటి నొక తొట్టెలోనూ | తత్త్వమనియేటి చలువలం బరచి  
 వేడ్కతో పాపణ్ణి యేర్పాటు చేసి | యేడు భువనములవారు ఏకమై పాడె     | జోజో |

(Sleep O Achyuta, O Mukunda, come and Sleep) on, O paramananda Govinda.  
 The Universe is the Cradle, the four Vedas are four chains  
 The great serpent Sesha serves as bed, and the Advaita is the raft to hold it  
 In the abode with nine doors, there are six and three cruel fellows  
 There is the God who enlightens, Offer your prayers to Him  
 One must catch hold of those six carefully and fasten the three tightly  
 The ONE must be kept in the Lotus of the heart, the full moon light should

shine brightly

Be in the company of the unmatched and seek for the Non-duel  
Obtain the Good lying on the Top, with a quest after the Preceptor  
Govinda

While there is Music in every Street, and trumpets blowing in the fort  
While the troupes are playing Kolatam, the Lord who has no equal rules  
In the Cradle of Omkara, THOU ARE THAT Serving as bed  
The baby is rocked joyfully, while the Seven Worlds sing unitedly)

In this song the numerals one, three and six stand for the soul, Trigunas and six senses respectively. The Unmatching is Mukti Kanta and the Non-duel is Advaita state. The God on the Top is the Light in the Sahasrara. The street is Sushumna and the music is the sound heard by the Yogis in their Samadhi. Rest of the similes and metaphors are clear. One need not wonder whether the Telugu women folk who sing such songs are aware of the mystical symbolism and highly philosophical meaning embedded in them. For, they know it or not, they have inherited this legacy not only in song but also in their day to day household life. It is astonishing to note such mystical symbolism even in the Rangavalli (Muggu) Dhuli Chitra decorative diagrams and designs drawn in front of the houses by ladies. This design indicates the meaning of the following verse :

Dwa Suparna Sayuja Sakhhaya  
Samanam Vrksham Parishaswajate  
Tayoranyah Pippalam Swadwatti  
Anasnannanyo abhicakasiti  
(Mandukya Upanishad III-I-1)

(Two birds, inseparable friends perch on the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit, (of that tree) the other looks on without eating).

But there are many songs full of mystical symbols whose meaning is very difficult to make out. Here is one example.

మొసలు మీదుగ తలలు క్రిందుగ మొలచి యున్నది పృథ్వీ  
మోద మలరగ మంటి మీదను మదగజము విహరించెరా  
చిదిమిపట్టిన బంటుకెవడి చీమ యేమగు మ్రింగెరా  
విజ్ఞువీగుచు కేకవేయుచు యీగె మంచము మ్రింగెరా.

(The Tree has grown with its roots upward and the branches downward from the Sky; an Elephant in rut was roaming with joy. Like a gallant warrior the Ant has swallowed the Elephant. Crying and puffing with Pride the Fly has swallowed the Cot.)

The Tree with roots upward and branches downward is not a new concept to us. Bhagavadgita Chapter XV opens with

"Urdhwamulamadhassakha maswattham Prahuravyayam"

(With roots above, branches below the Aswattha is said to be indestructible)

I thought this song to be the essence of Amanaska Yoga wherein the Elephant is the mind addicted to sensuous pleasures, the Ant is disinclination, the Fly is Sankalpa and the Cot is the mind in four quarters i.e. Manas, Buddhi, Citta and Ahankara. But Sri Anandanada Swamy the present pontiff of Pudota math has explained it thus :-

It means the manifestation of the creation with Trigunas, i.e. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas from the unmanifest Avyakta volition of the Brahman. The Elephant in rut is awareness, the Ant is the Fire essence of the Laya sakti, Fly is one of the five vital airs which circulates or is diffused through the body, the retension of the thought "Aham Brahmasmi" i.e. I am the Brahman, is puffing with pride, uttering "Sivoham" i.e. I am Shiva is crying; and sound, mind, intelligence and consciousness are the four legs of the couch of the Mind orb. And this is annihilated by the great psychic power Garuda, which when released effects the laya, the final Dissolution.

This is known to either Yogis or scholars well read in Yoga Sastra. Ordinary people cannot comprehend it. But pseudo-philosophers beguile the laity under the pretence of imparting great metaphysical truths which they never understood. It is not my intention at all to lessen the reputation of the great philosophers and mystics like Eganti, Potuluri, Pudota, Vemana, Siddappa, Seshacalaswami, Lingamurti and Bhojadasa who gave out these great sayings out of their spiritual experiences.

That the mystical songs are popular from ancient times is known from the quotations of the early classical Telugu poets. Palkuriki Somanatha a Saiva poet of 13th Century has referred to different kinds of folk songs prevalent in those days and the Tummeda patalu (Bee songs), Elapatalu (Ela songs) and Ananda Padamulu (Songs of Beatitude) among them are definitely philosophical and mystical in nature. Here is one Tummeda pata (Bee song) of that type.

శివ శివ యన మేలు తుమ్మెదా - శివుడంటేనే వినమేలు తుమ్మెదా  
 శ్రీకంఠుడనుపూవు తుమ్మెదా - మూడు లోకము లాయేనే తుమ్మెదా  
 సాకారమే యుండు తుమ్మెదా - వరమే కాంతమున జూడు తుమ్మెదా  
 ఆరు రేకుల పూవు తుమ్మెదా - అది మేరువే వాసనలు తుమ్మెదా  
 వేరు సేయక నీవు తుమ్మెదా - శివు జేరి భజియింపవే తుమ్మెదా  
 అష్టదశముల మీద తుమ్మెదా - నీ వంటి చరించేవే తుమ్మెదా  
 కష్టము నెరుగక తుమ్మెదా - నీవు ప్రస్థవై యుండవే తుమ్మెదా  
 తొమ్మిది వాకిండ్లు తుమ్మెదా - నీవు నమ్మి చరియించాకె తుమ్మెదా  
 ముమ్మూరి కోనా తుమ్మెదా - నీవు నెమ్మూరి నుండవే తుమ్మెదా  
 పది పదేవింటాను తుమ్మెదా - వెండి పదురెండు తావుల తుమ్మెదా



మెదలాక నిల్చివా తుమ్మెదా - నిమ్మ కదలించగలరే తుమ్మెదా  
 వేయిరేకుల పూవు తుమ్మెదా - అది వెలుగును జగమెల్ల తుమ్మెదా  
 పద్మగు నడుగానె తుమ్మెదా - పువ్వు పద్య జాపు నీకు తుమ్మెదా  
 గురునకు హరునకు తుమ్మెదా - అంతరుపు లేదేమి తుమ్మెదా  
 గురుపాదపద్మాలు తుమ్మెదా - నిమ్మ దరిశించునుంటేని తుమ్మెదా

(It is good to repeat the name of Siva O Beel!  
 And it is good even to hear the name of Siva O Beel!  
 The flower Srikantha has become the three worlds O Beel!  
 It has taken a Form and you can see it with undisturbed mental eye O Beel!  
 The flower of six petals is full of fragrance O Beel!  
 Unite yourself with it and meditate upon Siva O Beel!  
 Over the eight petals don't hover over O Beel!  
 Then you don't find any difficulty and you be the Creator O Beel!  
 There are nine doors, don't be unaware in your wanderings O Beel!  
 Rest in peace in the Centre of the triangle O Beel!  
 If you rest in Ten and Fifteen and then in Twelve places O Beel!  
 There is none who can disturb you from your place O Beel!  
 The Thousand petalled flower is luminous throughout the universe O Beel!  
 Ask the real preceptor he will immediately show the flower to you O Beel!  
 There is no difference between the Preceptor and God O Beel!  
 I say you seek the lotus feet of the preceptor O Beel!)

Here the Bee stands for the soul of the mystic who is practising Yoga. The six-petalled flower must be either Swadhishtana Cakra or the six cakras as a whole (plexus). The thousand petalled flower stands for the seventh and uppermost Sahasrara Cakra. The eight petals advised to be avoided must be eight Vishaya Vrttis. The nine doors are invariably the nine outlets of the body. The equilibrium in the triangle may be the Bindu which represents Samyavastha. The triangle may also represent either the three Nadis i.e. Ida, Pingala and Sushumna or the Pranayama consisting of three kinds of breathing exercise i.e. Recaka, Puraka and Kumbhaka. The twenty five houses must be Panca Vimsati Tattvas. The twelve places may be the turning points of the Manovina. When the inner chords are struck with the divine music the soul is said to rise to the pitch which is beyond the twelve.

"Man should deliver himself from his body, the evil principle in him, eradicate his passions and all sensuality by theoretical contemplation (asceticism). But we cannot do this unaided, uninstrumented for we are too weak, too SINFUL, we need divine help. God must illuminate us, penetrate our souls.

The Sun of Consciousness Must Set. In this state of ecstasy we immediately apprehend God, plunge ourselves into the pure source of Being, literally see God."

Frank Thilly  
 A History of Philosophy

Ela is a type of folk song described in Sangitaratnakara. Sarngadeva says that it is the most enchanting Desi song prevalent in Andhra. Most of the Elas are erotic songs but the Ela songs referred by Palkuriki Somanatha might be devotional and philosophical songs. Following is a recondite Ela song containing highly metaphysical truths.

సూర్యాసామా వహ్ని నడుమా | శౌర్యామనే చిరుకా గంట  
 సూర్యాదీప్తి కాయుచుడంగా - యాగంటిలింగా  
 చూడచూడాశ్చర్యామౌగానా | సూ |  
 ఇంటిగుండా చూచుచుండా - కంటి నుదయాగిరీ మీదను  
 సాము జోసే వంజ్ఞా తెలిసితే - యాగంటిలింగా  
 సారమే నా పుట్టా జేరుమా | సూ |  
 సాము పేరూ చెప్పా విషమూ - ఆడకాదా కక్కేగదరా  
 దీమ యెనుబోతు కడుపూనా - యాగంటిలింగా  
 దీమపమున మ్రింగి యుండేరా | సూ |  
 ఆకానా కోడి గూసే - చీకటిలో ప్రాద్దు బొడిచే  
 చింత చేయరాగ ద్యానమో - యాగంటిలింగా  
 యేకమే న వెన్నెల గాసేరా | సూ |  
 కానరానీ యడవిలోనా - వానలేనీ మడుగూ నిండే  
 వానలేనీ మడుగూ మీదటా - యాగంటిలింగా  
 మాపరానీ అగ్ని పుట్టేరా | సూ |  
 ఆకులేవి ఆడవిలోనా - తోకలేవి మృగమూ బుట్టే  
 తోకలేవి మృగమూ కడుపూనా - యాగంటిలింగా  
 ఈకలేవి పక్షి బుట్టేరా | సూ |  
 సుయ్యావాలే మేనా భూతి - వెయ్యావాలే రుద్రాక్షలూ  
 తెయ్యావాలే శివుని పూజాలూ - యాగంటిలింగా  
 కొయ్యావాలే కర్మబంధములూ | సూ |

(Betwixt the Solar and lunar blazes, sits the parrot of valour  
 It is really wonderful O Yaganti Linga to see the solar bright sheen.  
 While gleaming through the roof of the house,  
 I saw in the Eastern mountain top  
 If the symbol of the Coiled serpent is practised  
 O Yaganti Linga, the snake will enter the ant-hill.  
 When the name was uttered the serpent vomitted poison then  
 and there  
 The Ant swallowed into itself the Buffalo  
 O Yaganti Linga with all strength and Ostentation.  
 The Cock has crown in the sky, the sun has dawned in the dark  
 And by the deep meditation O Yaganti Linga  
 The all pervading moonlight shone.  
 In the invisible forest the pond got filled without rain  
 And over that pond O Yaganti Linga  
 Inequenching fire broke out.  
 In the forest without a leaf, the animal bereft of tail is born

And from the Womb of that animal O Yaganti Linga  
a bird without a feather is born.  
One must smear the sacred ashes and wear Rudrakshas  
And worship Shiva O Yaganti Linga  
in order to cut off the fetters of Karma.)

The song trots with mystical content and is embedded in poetic language. It is difficult to scan the meaning of every word. It contains sublime thoughts couched in mystical poetry. The symbolism in the latter part of the song is beyond my comprehension.

Some of the Eganti songs contain ethical homilies and general morals applicable to any society and do not strictly come under mysticism. But they are surely philosophical and ethical songs. For example :

తెరవాలు గాట్టి తెచ్చి తేగమిచ్చే కీర్తికంటే  
ఒరుల నొప్పించక యుండుటే చాలు  
పరుల బాదించి సంపదల బొందుట కంటే  
ధర దున్నుకొని బ్రదుకు దారిద్ర్యమే చాలు  
ఓపితే పుణ్యము పేయము ఓసకుంటే ఊరకుండుము  
పాపము పేయకు మితే పదివేలు జీవుడా  
ఒరులతో చాడిచెప్పి యుడుగర లందుకంటే  
గరిమతో గొచ్చెన కట్టేది మేలు  
పరులతో కల్లలాడి వాచారుడగుకంటే  
అరయంగ మూగవాడయ్యేది ఇమేలు  
పరులచే అప్పుచేసి పప్పుకూడు దినుకంటే  
దొరుకునంటలి యొక్క దోసెడే చాలు  
పరదేవముల గొలిచి పడయు సిద్ధుల కంటే  
ఓరిమ వేగంటిప నొద్దనుంటే చాలు.

(instead of earning fame by sacrifice of wealth got by highway robbery  
It is better to remain silent not hurting others.  
Instead of becoming rich by torturing others  
It is noble to plough the field and live in indigence.  
Do virtuous deeds if you can otherwise simply keep quiet;  
But don't commit sins, that is itself great.  
Instead of securing presents from others by back-biting  
It is better to remain in rags.  
Instead of becoming an orator by speaking lies  
It is better to remain dumb.  
Instead of feasting by borrowing from others  
It is better to have a handful of porridge as one's lot.  
Instead of mastering miracles by worshipping other gods  
It is better to remain with Egantisa with patience.)

The last line betrays the author's extreme saivite frenzy.

In another song there is the description of the Yogi and his virtues. Even this is couched in Mystical and highly symbolic words. The yogi leads a life of complete detachment. He is unattached to everything mundane. The same is described in the following song:

అరయ నాటక జిడ్డు నంటకుండని యల్లు - పరగ తామర నీరు పట్టనల్లు  
గరిమ బూడిద గచ్చకాయనంటని యల్లు - బురదయును కుమ్మరిపురుగంటనల్లు  
పారలి సంసారమ్ము బొరయకుండెడె యోగి - అరపి కోర్కెలయందు అంటబోడు  
అపని మీదను నీడ యంటకుండని యల్లు - తవిలి నీరను రవి తగులనల్లు  
అవలీల రూపంబు నద్దమంటని యల్లు - వివరింప మరి నీరు వెన్నంటనల్లు  
పర్వతగుహలందు పలుకులంటని యల్లు - దర్శి సాకంబురుచి దగులనల్లు  
ఉర్విని జీడి లోనిత్తు నంటని యల్లు - గర్వులను వేగంట పునుడంటనల్లు  
పారలి సంసారమ్ము బొరయకుండెడు యోగి - అరపి కోర్కెలయందు అంటబోడు.

(As the greez does not stick to the tongue  
As the water does not stick to the lotus leaf  
As the ashes does not stick to the guilandina bondu cella  
As the mud does not stick to the mole cricket  
So the desires do not stick to a yogi who renounces the worldly life.  
As the shade does not stick to the earth  
As the sun does not stick to the water  
As the image does not stick to the mirror  
As the water does not stick to the butter  
As the (word) sound does not stick to the caves  
As the taste of the dish does not stick to the spoon  
As the sap does not stick to the seed of the marking nut  
As the Yagantisa does not touch the proud and arrogant  
So the desires do not stick to a Yogi Who renounces the worldly life.)

Such are in prolific numbers and the thoughts are highly elevated.

Next to the Tattvas of Egantisa come the 'Kalajnana Tattvas' of Potuluri Virabrahmam. The word 'Kalajnanam' is generally misunderstood to connote foretelling the future or prognosticating the bad future of Kali Age. But Sri Anandanada Swamy opines that it is the Awareness of Narayana who is Kalaswarupa." Our ancient sages accomplished the Supreme Identity by their meditation and Yogic practices and expressed themselves employing Akshara Sankhaya and animate objects as metaphoric symbols in poetic language. These 'Kalajnanas' were not the original innovations of potuluri Virabrahmam. His contemporary Pudota Lingavadhuta also composed such songs. The early saivite zealots drank poison, performed miracles and sang Kalajnanas. Siddaramayya's Kalajnanas in Kannada are very famous. Several



They cry loud and exhale the last breath  
 Possessed by devils, they bawl out inchoerently  
 The firmament will turn Sanguine  
 The Six schools of Philosophy will become one.  
 The whole creation with its beings will get immersed  
 in fire and deluge of waters.  
 Earth quakes and volcanic fires consume  
 They get frightened on seeing the stars during mid-day  
 Tremendous and loud reports fill the atmosphere  
 After this terrific onslaught of the Elements  
 People get scared and will be left to themselves like lonely birds.  
 The sinners will be ruined, the virtuous and the seekers will be happy  
 In the chaos and confusion that envelops the earth  
 Those that never uttered the sacred name 'Rama Rama  
 fall out (like the dried up leaves).  
 Evil is to be deserted; if it occurs, there will be infamy  
 Then Potuluri Vira Bhoga Vasantaraya  
 will reign supreme over the seven islands and the universe under one parasol.)

Sri Anadanadaswami emphasises that the main running precept in these lines is to awaken the people and make them aware of the great ethical canons. They by doing acolyte service to the master and listening to the preachings of the master and securing divine enlightenment and by meditating on the Supreme and by practising Yoga will attain the fruits of spiritual and divine status. And if these are not adhered to they will get into suffering untold and sink into perdition. In the above symbolic expressions one has to understand the following double entendre.

Mother and Children = Prakriti and jiva (Nature and life monad) Six schools of Philosophy becoming one = The six centres, i.e., 1) Mano, 2) Buddhi, 3) Citta, 4) Ahamkara, 5) Mahat tattva and 6) Sat, becoming unveildy.

Stars = Jivamandala, Loud reports = the ecstasy of the practicing Yogi, Lonely bird = the unveiled Supreme state, potuluru = the abode of the life monads, Vira Bhoga Vasantaraya = the Purna Pursha (Full and Accomplished MAN) who with his own potential energy works out for self-dissolution and New Creation. Ruling over seven islands under one parasol = One who unveils in the seven Bhumikas and becomes All powerful.

This is apparently a recondite concept of applied philosophy and it can only be understood under the guidance and scrupulous instruction of the Guru.

The following song also enunciates Yogic practices.

కోలాటాటి కోల జగతిలో ఏ కోలా లేదు  
 కోలరాటి కోల జగతిలో ఏ కోలా లేదు

|| 5 ||

వెయ్యి బురుజులా కోట యున్నది - ఏడు ఏరులు పారుచున్నది  
 ఎగిరిపోయే గుట్టమున్నది - వెళ్లిపోయేదే బాట యున్నది | కో |  
 కొండల నడుమను కొంగ యున్నది - కొంగ ముక్కులో లోకమున్నది  
 కోటి దీపములు వెలుగుచున్నది - కోరిన వారికి పలమౌచున్నది | కో |  
 ఆరుకొమ్మల యేనుగున్నది - చదు కోతులను మేపుచున్నది  
 ఆవలీపల జూచుచున్నది - అతిశయమే నాటాడుచున్నది | కో |  
 మేఘములేనిది పర్వమున్నది - మేకలనెదు మేపుచున్నది  
 మేఘములోపల మేయచున్నది - మేలిమె న వెభోగమున్నది | కో |  
 మూలాధారమునందు నున్నది - మూలమూలాలకె తిరుగుచున్నది  
 మూలస్థానము ఒకటై యున్నది - మూలజ్యోతియై వెలుగుచున్నది | కో |  
 పదమూడామడ పట్నమున్నది - పాపరినడుమ లింగమున్నది  
 పాము శిరమునా పండు యున్నది - పరమ భక్తులకు ఎరుకైయున్నది  
 వీరబ్రహ్మము వాక్రైయున్నది - విపరము తెలిసితే బాగైయున్నది. | కో |

(That is a fort, a fort, nothing like it in this world  
 It has a thousand bastions, in it flow the seven rivers  
 It has a flying horse, there is the highway for the Exit.

Between the hillocks there is the crane  
 In its beak there is the microcosm of the Universe  
 It is shining like thousand lights  
 And bestows desired fruits on the seekers.  
 There is an elephant with six tusks  
 And it is feeding five monkeys  
 It looks that way and this way and dances in extravaganza.

There is rain without clouds and it is feeding five goats  
 It grazes in the clouds and enjoys all pomp  
 It is lodged potentially in the Muladhara  
 It is wandering in all the corners  
 At the BASE it is ONE and it glows as main light.  
 It is a city of 13 Amedas\*, the Linga is betwixt the Pupils  
 The fruit is on the hood of the serpent  
 The earnest devotees are aware of it.  
 This is the word of Virabrahmam.  
 If one understands fully there is plentitude.)

Ameda is equal to four miles.

Some of the symbols in this song can be vaguely understood thus: Fort = The human body, Seven rivers = 1) Mano, 2) Buddhi, 3) Citta, 4) Ahankara, 5) Mahat tattva, 6) Cit and 7) Sat. Flying horse = the supreme and profound thought of 'I am'. The way of exit = the way of unattachment. Hills = microcosm and macrocosm. Crane = Laya Sakti (the Dissolution Agency). The universe in the beak = the atomic world? Thousand lights = the sheen of the effulgent

being (Jvalamalakulam bhati Viswasayatanam mahat). The elephant = the consciousness supreme. Six tusks = six sheaths. Five monkeys = the five elements. The dance = the flux in the supremest state of unmanifestation. Rain without clouds = the boundless ecstasy in super state. Five goats = the five senses.

Here is another song which defines Bliss as Paranada other than Anahatanada.

ఏదారి వచ్చితినో అదారినే పోవ - ఇక జన్మమే లేదు చిలుకా  
అదారి తెలియకే గోదారిలోన బడి - అల్లాడి పోవకే చిలుకా  
నీకీష్టమగు నామ మేదియై ననుగాని - నిత్యమనుచుండనే చిలుకా  
అనగననగా నామ మనకుండీనను గూడ - అస్వయంభై యుండు చిలుకా  
కాలంబు గడువగా గడువగా అది విశ్వ - గానమై పోవునే చిలుకా  
ఆ బ్రహ్మగానంబు కారీగానంబున్న - దంతరిక్షంబందు చిలుకా  
ఆగాన మేగాన మైక్యమే పోవుటే - ఆనందమే రామచిలుకా.

(There is no more birth if you can go  
the way through which you came O Parrot.  
Not knowing that way don't tread a wrong path  
and be agitated O Parrot.  
Have any name of your liking and repeat it always O Parrot  
By constant repetition, even when you don't repeat it  
It becomes repeated O Parrot.  
As time passes on and on It becomes universal music O Parrot.  
To that music there is Source music in the space O Parrot  
The union of that music and this music is Bliss O Parrot.)

This song is the essence of

"Anahatam tu Yatsabdham  
tasya sabdasya Yatparam  
tatparam vindate Yastu  
Sa Yogi Chinna Samsayah"

as propounded in the Dhyana-bindupanishad. The parrot  
addressed, is one's own soul of the seeker.

These few examples show that great mystics and wise men of yore  
had expressed universal truths in a language that suited such thought. As  
many of these songs came from great practitioners of mysticism and Yoga, their  
followers cherished them as the philosophical canons of these masters and  
they retained their power and popularity not only because of the zealous  
devotion of the disciples but also because of the inherent wisdom and truth  
these songs contained.



## MYTHOLOGICAL SHIFT IN TELUGU FOLK RAMAYANAS

The abundance, popularity and variety of Telugu folk Ramayanas in song and prose denote the unparalleled richness of the story of Sri Rama among the Andhras. It is perhaps due to the reason that Rama, Sita and Lakshmana sojourned for sometime in the Telugu country during their exile on the left bank of the river Godavari in Parnasala, some 20 miles from Bhadrachalam, the famous pilgrim centre of Sri Rama devotees. Telugu folks have many wonderful stories, episodes, incidents, characters in their Ramayana repertoire, which do not find place either in the Valmiki Ramayana or in other classical Ramayanas. Here I confine myself to the mythological content of Ramayana lore in Telugu. The mythological beliefs and practices connected with Telugu folk Ramayanas can be broadly divided into three main categories, namely natural phenomena, flora and fauna and human beings.

### I - NATURAL PHENOMENA

1) The rainbow in the sky is described as Siva's bow broken into seven pieces by Rama when he took up king Janaka's challenge to lift and string the bow as a pre-condition to obtain the hand of Sita. In another story, the rainbow in the sky is Sri Rama's bow itself which he threw away in disgust and despair when Sita finally went into the womb of her mother Earth. The gods in the sky caught hold of Rama's bow and stationed it on the skies.

2) Parnasala where Rama, Sita and Lakshmana sojourned during the period of their exile, has many natural objects and surroundings connected to Ramayana lore.

There is a hillock called Lakshmanakonda from where a stream known as Sitavagu flows down. Lakshmana with a stroke of his arrow brought down this water for Sita's daily ablutions. There are marks of stripes in different hues on the stone slabs of this bathing ghat. Devotees attribute and believe that these marks are the signs of Sita's wet fibre clothes which she used to spread for drying up in the sun. There we find small stones of yellow and saffron colour signifying turmeric and kumkum which Sita was said to have applied. There is another hillock called Rathacharalagutta where Ravana parked his aerial chariot before he carried away Sita from Parnasala. The tracks of the chariot wheels are traced on this hillock. There is a dry tree called Surpanakha chettu signifying Surpanakha. Every pilgrim pelts a stone at it. The stones pelted at it over the years have formed into a small hillock. Far from Parnasala, we find hot water springs called 'Ushna gundalu' wherefrom Lakshmana used to bring hot water for Sita for her weekly oil baths.

At a distance of 3 miles from Bhadrachalam, there is a place called Jatapaka, the abode of Jatayu, the eagle king, who informed Rama about Sita's abduction by Ravana. Sreeramagiri is yet another place where the

friendship of Rama and Sugriva was brought about by Hanuman. Sabari Ashram is on the confluence of river Sabari with Godawari, some 30 miles from Bhadrachalam. This is the place where Sabari, a tribal woman-saint, waited for Rama's arrival into the Dandaka forest and offered him sweet fruits which she already tasted lest they should be bitter.

Jeedikallu is another Srirama Pilgrim centre, situated at a distance of 6 kilometres from Alir Railway station halfway between Warangal and Hyderabad. There is a rock called Ledi Banda, deer rock. Rama is supposed to have aimed at the golden deer from this spot. While taking a shooting position, Rama rested his right knee on the stone and shot the arrow at Maricha, who disguised himself as golden deer. The impression of Rama's knee left a dent in the stone. This stony pit has a speciality. Fresh and cool water oozes out and gets collected in a pit perennially. Pilgrims take the water as sacred tirtham.

## II - FLORA AND FAUNA

1) The mango fruit naturally has a typical shape. It is round in the beginning but at the end, it is somewhat drawn out as if pressed. It is Hanuman, who gave this shape to mango fruit. During his aerial journey in search of Sita, Hanuman felt hungry and got down in a fruit garden. He ate many kinds of fruits known to him. But for the first time he ate mango fruits. They were more tasty than other fruits. He was enamoured of them. Therefore he wanted to eat some more in his return journey. In order to easily identify, he drew out the end part of the fruit with his mouth. That is why mango has a drawn out shape at the end from that day onwards.

2) The Badari Tree called Regu in Telugu (*Zizyphus jujuba*) can grow up well in drought areas also. The reason is attributed to Rama's blessings. While searching for Sita, Rama and Lakshmana got tired and sat for a while under a Badari tree to have some respite. The tree saw Rama and Lakshmana lamenting over Sita's loss. Then it told them that it saw a Rakshasa flying with Sita and in order to stop him, it sprang up its branches tall into the skies. The enraged Rakshasa cut out its branches and fled away with Sita. The tree then showed a piece of torn cloth that was caught up in its thorny branches. Rama identified it as a piece from Sita's garment. Rama was very much pleased with the Badari tree. He praised its valour, courage and goodness. He blessed the Badari tree that it would survive and grow up even when there is water scarcity. That is the reason why Badari grows and survives in drought areas also.

3) When Rama was searching for Sita, he asked the trees, creepers, birds and animals if they saw Sita. Among the birds it was Koil (Cuckoo) that gave the news of Sita to Rama. It said that it saw a Rakshasa who having abducted a lady proceeded towards south. Rama was pleased with the bird. He blessed it saying "as you have feasted my ears with Sita's news, your voice will be very sweet hereafter." This is the reason for Koil's sweet musical notes.

4) Another bird that received the blessings of Rama is the parrot. Sita imprisoned in Ravana's pleasure garden used to always repeat the name of Rama sitting under an Asoka tree. As a result, a parrot that lived on the Asoka tree learnt to repeat the Rama Nama. Sita used to enjoy while the parrot repeated the name of Rama. When Sita was united with Rama after Ravana was killed, she told about the bird to Rama. Pleased with the devotion of the parrot, Rama asked it to choose any boon. The parrot requested Rama that its race thereafter should always sing Rama Nama. That is why the parrot is called Rama chiluka in Telugu. Saint Tyagaraja also referred to the parrot singing Rama Nama in his famous kirtan "Rama Chiluka nokati benchi Rama Rama yanuchu nerpi."

5) Rama and Lakshmana in their search for Sita, were passing by a water reservoir. There they saw a crane eating fish. Lakshmana asked the crane whether it saw Sita. The crane did not care to answer and pretended as if it was engaged in meditation. Lakshmana could not tolerate the insolent behaviour of the bird. He caught the crane by its neck and pulled as if to kill it. Rama interfered and rescued the bird. Because of Lakshmana's forceful pulling, cranes continue to have long and ugly necks.

6) Another bird that incurred the wrath of Rama and lost an eye is the crow. At the behest of Ravana, Kakasura, the crow demon pricked the breast of Sita while she was sleeping. Rama got wild, picked up a blade of grass, charmed it and threw at the crow to kill it. Kakasura approached all gods for protection. No god was able to protect him from Rama's missile. While the crow was running for life, it came across Narada. It implored Narada to save its life. Narada advised it to seek refuge from Sita. The crow fell at the feet of Sita. Sita, an embodiment of forgiveness, requested Rama to pardon the crow. Rama pardoned the crow saying that his missile will affect its one eye only. From that day onwards, crows have one blind eye.

7) 'Uduta bhakti' i.e. squirrel's devotion is an idiom in Telugu. Not only folks but also many classical poets paid glowing tributes to the tiny squirrel that rendered sincere and devoted service when the bridge across the ocean to reach Lanka was under construction. While the giant monkeys were bringing big boulders and stones for the construction, the little squirrel full of devotion rolled over in the sands of the beach and shook the sand that stuck to its body in the sea as a service in constructing the bridge. Srirama was very much pleased with the tiny creature. He took it into his hands and caressingly passed his palm over it. Srirama's fingers have left indelible impressions on the little animal. Hence the beautiful stripes on the fur of the squirrels.

8) It is a common practice among Telugu folks that if they happen to kill a Naga Sarpa i.e. cobra (spectacle snake), they do not throw it away simply. They burn it reverentially on a pyre like human beings. This is because the Naga serpent did a service to Sita, when she was abandoned in the forest. Pregnant

Sita wandered through out the forest in the hot sun and swooned. At that moment, a huge Naga sarpa spread its hoods over Sita's face shedding its shadow over her face and protected her from the scorching sun till she was awake. On the request of the serpent, Sita in gratitude granted a boon that Naga serpents should be offered reverential funeral rites.

### III - HUMAN BEINGS

1) The wandering minstrels called 'Balasanta' put on a whimsical attire. If any body puts on a gaudy and variegated dress, he is rebuked as a Balasanta beggar. A Balasanta minstrel wears a long coat like loose shirt that goes down upto ankles. This is stitched out of different small pieces of cloth in different colours. One upper cloth hangs over his shoulders. Another cloth is tied around his waist. He has a turban over his head and big hanging bag over his shoulder to receive alms. While singing a rigmarole song, he rings a bell with one hand and occasionally blows a conch holding in another hand. He goes from house to house receiving alms. Alms given to him herald fortune and well-being of children in every household.

One day "Lakshmana in Ayodhya dreamt that pregnant Sita, whom he escorted and left in the forest gave birth to twins. Next morning he wanted to go to the forest to see the new born kids in disguise. He put on many kinds of dresses and make up for disguising himself. He was not satisfied with them. Finally he chose the form described above and succeeded in his endeavour. From that day onwards Balasanta minstrels clad themselves in that attire and go about begging to bless the children.

2) Andhra Brahmins are divided into two main categories i.e. 1) Vaidiki brahmins and 2) Vyapari brahmins on the basis of their professions. This division is found since more than 1000 years historically. Vaidiki brahmins perform priestly duties whereas the Niyogi brahmins abstain from such duties and seek other administrative and independent jobs. The second category of brahmins are also known as Niyogis, Karanams and Patwaris. The folk stories trace the origin of this second category to Srirama's award. The agriculturists of Nandigram, who evaded all taxes during the rule of Bharata for 14 years, had to pay all the arrears when Rama began ruling. Because they were illiterates, they had to appoint a young brahmin to maintain their revenue records. This brahmin was very clever to maintain their records and plead before Rama on their behalf. He did justice to the farmers and the government treasury. Pleased with his cleverness, Srirama conferred the titles of Niyogi, Karanam and patwari on the brahmin and fixed the rate of remuneration on behalf of the government besides what he was getting from the farmers. This is how the second category of brahmins came into existence according to folk Ramayanas.

The mythological incidents, either all or some, cited above under three headings might be common to other languages and regions. They explain folk psychology - i. Devotion towards Rama, Sita and Lakshmana and ii. Natural justice i.e. One reaps as he sows

## SATI BALLADS IN TELUGU

Hero worship seems to be very popular in the olden days among Andhra Warriors who died in the battle field while defending their King or Lord. Heroes who sacrificed their lives for any great or pious cause were deified and worshipped. Their memories are perpetuated by erecting stone pillars or lingams or images in their names. Such stones or images are called 'Viragallulu' in Telugu. These hero stones are ubiquitously found throughout Andhra. Hero worship has become a cult in Andhra and as a result a commemorative ritual is performed with great fanfare and zeal every year even today in Guntur and Nellore Districts.

Not only men but women who died for either a great cause (like blocking a tank from inundation) or sacrificed their lives on the funeral pyres of their husbands or predeceased their husbands are also deified and worshipped in Andhra. Such women are called 'Perantaandlu' in Telugu. This term is applicable to all women who are deified and worshipped. They may be "Satis" who died on the funeral pyres of their husbands, or they may be great women who sacrificed their lives for the good of the community and finally they might have been murdered by their ignorant husbands instigated by mischievous mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. For the present I confine this paper to the 'Perantaandlu' who performed Sati and are being worshipped even today.

Sati seems to have gained an aura of religious merit in Andhra. In the beginning sati might have been a rare and freak incident of self sacrifice by a chaste and pious wife who could not bear the pangs of separation from her husband due to his untimely death. Later on it became a custom with royalty when the queens died on the funeral pyres of their husband Kings, who died on the battle fields. While it was a matter of devoted love in the first instance, it was prestige and self-esteem in the second instance. Medieval history abounds with scores of examples of Sati performed by princesses and queens.

'Palnati Virula Kathalu' and 'Katamaraju Kathalu' are the oldest historical ballad cycles in Telugu. They describe the exploits of war heroes in the battles of 'Painadu' and 'Pancalingalakonda' respectively, fought during the latter half of the 12th Century. The ballad cycle of Painadu contains two episodes of Sati. Queen Mailamadevi performed sati when her husband Anuguraju died. Ratnala Peramma performed Sati when her husband prince Alaraju died. The former was an elderly lady having many sons, but the latter was a young bride in her prime of youth. 'Kridabhiramam' also refers to another instance of sati performed by Bilasaani of the same period and same place.

The Katamaraju Ballad cycle contains twelve incidents of Sati. These are

## Name of the Queen or Princess

## Name of the King or Prince

- |     |   |                              |
|-----|---|------------------------------|
| 1)  | Vallamma Wife of King Avala Valaraju Grand Father of Katamaraju           |                              |
| 2)  | Peddamma W/o Peddiraju second son of No.1 above and father of Katamaraju. |                              |
| 3)  | Sitamma W/o Simhadriraju first son of No.1 above.                         |                              |
| 4)  | Sankaramma W/o Bhumati Sankarayya C-I-C of No.3 above.                    |                              |
| 5)  | Sita W/o Eranukaraju third son of No.1 above.                             |                              |
| 6)  | Desamma W/o Pulimaddula Raghavudu C-I-C of No.5 above.                    |                              |
| 7)  | Sita W/o Nala Nukaraju fourth son of No.1 above.                          |                              |
| 8)  | Maramma W/o Cata Marayya C-I-C of No.7 above.                             |                              |
| 9)  | Maremma W/o Kallandula Marinidu   | } Balli Kuruva battle heroes |
| 10) | Maremma W/o Kallandula Masilinidu   |                              |
| 11) | Citi Gopu W/o Bhetala elephant driver of Warangal                         |                              |
| 12) | Citi Nuka W/o Polinidu son of No.9 above and son-in-law of No.3 above.    |                              |

Sati seems to have gained so much respectability among ruling classes and warriors in olden days that even the tribals among whom widow marriage is common, have also resorted to Sati though rarely. Jampanna a Koya tribal Chieftain died fighting against Prataparudra (13th C.) the Kakatiya Monarch of Warangal. His wife Sammakka performed Sati. As a result she is worshipped as a deity by millions of tribals and nontribals biannually even today. Thus one notes that performance of Sati is a sacred act of a devoted wife.

In later centuries Sati became a practice with other communities also. Most of the satis that are worshipped today in Andhra belong to the 4th or 5th caste. No one belongs to upper classes. This is an interesting feature of Andhra Pradesh only. But people of all communities including Brahmins worship the satis. Sati worship is an annual feature in Andhra. Every year the ritual of worship, which goes on for one to three days according to the practice, begins on a particular day when the respective lady performed sati. In some places small to medium size temples are constructed which house either an image or a stone in the name of the Sati. In some places a fire pit is dug before the festival begins. Besides the routine ritual of worship and offerings of fruits, new clothes, turmeric and vermillion, fairs are conducted by the village authorities. Thousands of devotees congregate from nearby villages. Priests belong to the community of the 'Sati'. Census of India, 1961, Vol. II, Part VII-B, Fairs and Festivals Andhra Pradesh, reports district wise information and describes the Sati or 'Perentaandlu' festivals conducted in the villages. I give below the 'Sati' festivals conducted in Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam Districts of Coastal Andhra.

**SRIKAKULAM DISTRICT**

Name of the village	Name of the Sati
1) Garbham	Rajamma
2) Naruva	Appayamma
3) Tirupati Palem	Mahalakshmidēvi
4) Nadimi Valasa	Lakshmi
5) Ponduru	Akkappa
6) Burada	Lakshmi
7) Pagodu	Gundamma

**VISAKHAPATNAM DISTRICT**

1) Mindi	Mallamma
2) Tummalapala	Acchamma
3) Asakappalle	Ramayamma
4) Uppavaram	Satyavati
5) Moturupalem	Ramayamma
6) Namavaram	Lakshamma
7) Payakarao Peta	Nagamma
8) Chettupalle	Acchamma
9) Koduru	Gangatalli
10) Bailapudi	Nagamma
11) Jammivalasa	Acchamma
12) Sringavarapukota	Erukamma
13) Tanavaram	Marethalli
14) Pedamajjapalem	Ramamma
15) Chintavalasa	Maremma

These statistics indicate that Sati gained some respect in Coastal Andhra, particularly in the Northern Districts. As we go down to south the Sati episodes fade away. Rayalasima Districts have one or two episodes of sati whereas Telangana has none, though other forms of deification of women is familiar in these parts. Some sati episodes gained wider popularity in these parts. Some episodes date back to three to four centuries and some episodes belong to 18th and early 19th centuries. Some are simple and small stories of facts while others are lengthy narrations full of exaggerations attributing supernatural powers and miracles to the satis.

I have the following sati ballads in my collection: 1) Kamamma Katha, 2) Sanyasamma Katha, 3) Papamma Katha, 4) Erukamma Katha, 5) Tirupatamma Katha. All the five young ladies were below 25 years and Kamamma was a minor. Only Erukamma was a mother of two children. Rest of them hardly enjoyed any conjugal life. But the strong conviction with which they were endowed is really rare and that made them sacrifice their lives. As a result they

are defied and worshipped. Due to the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy Sati was banned in 1829. All these five ladies performed sati after it was banned. They suffered many hardships for obtaining permission. This perhaps attracted the sympathy of the folks by which an element of wonderment through supernatural powers and miracles gained a ground in the episodes. That all Satis become deities and grant boons is another element of faith which is very dear to the folks. This is a common feature in hero worship. The "Savitri Gauri Vratam" (Bommala Nomu) observed on the second day of Sankranti must be a kind of worship of 'Perantaandlu' only. All the deities with a suffix 'Perantaalu' must be satis. This Vratam is very popular in the Coastal Districts of Andhra. All the five ballads mentioned above belong to Coastal Districts only.

The last two episodes of Erukamma and Tirupatamma are simple and short stories. Their husbands Appanna and Gopanna respectively fell a prey to the tigers in the forest. These young ladies could not bear the pangs of separation and therefore died on the funeral pyres of their husbands in spite of pleading and imploring of their parents and relatives. Erukamma obtained permission of Ananda Gajapati (1895) the ruler of Vijayanagaram and performed Sati in the land granted by the King. She proved her piety by holding burning coals and convinced the king.

But the three other stories of Kamamma, Sanyasamma and Papamma are lengthy and full of miracles and supernatural incidents. I give below one episode in brief.

amamma is the daughter of Lakshmayya and Venkamma of Jamarlakota in East Godawari District. After the parents died Kamamma was brought up by Ramanna and Venkamma. She was wedded to Marayya thier nephew while she was in teens. Marayya worked as a servant boy under a British Collector at Kakinada for some time and came back home. He wanted to join service at Chennapatnam (Madras). His mother Challamma pleaded that he should not go to Madras where his father died. But Marayya left for Madras planting a Tulasi sappling which would wither away if there was any danger to his life. Reddayya, his brother accompanied him up to Kakinada. Marayya travelled by ship for three days, reached Madras and joined service as a Head Boy under Wallis a British Official. After serving for six years he took three months leave and started for home by foot with presents to his mother, wife, brother etc. He reached Kakinada after 24 days. There he developed high fever and headache and reached Samarlakota next day. He requested his mother to send for his wife so that he may die peacefully after seeing her. Reddayya was sent to Pithapuram where Kamamma was staying with her foster parents. As this was Kamamma's first visit to her parents-in-law's place she was given a ritualistic customary send off with 'Saare' consisting of sacred objects like turmeric and vermilion to be distributed. She encountered many ill omens on her way and reached Samarlakota.



Marayya was on the verge of death. She performed some sacred duties of a wife. Within two days Marayya breathed his last after taking Tulsi water from Kamamma's hands.

Kamamma wept bitterly and declared that she would perform 'Sati'. Her parents-in-law and foster parents tried in vain to prevent her from performing Sati. Reddanna said that 'Sati' is prohibited and requires permission from the Collector at Kakinada and the Governor at Madras. There upon Kamamma first approached the English Captain at Samarlakota. When the Captain refused permission, his wife developed severe headache. The Captain was forced to permit, but requested her to approach the Collector. Kamamma came back to her house, decorated the corpse of her husband, kept it on a cot, adjured that no one should touch it until her return, locked it in a room and asked her foster father, father-in-law and Reddanna to escort her to Madras to meet the Governor. On their way Reddayya narrated to her the severe trails imposed by the Kakinada Collector on Chinnamma who performed Sati long back. But Kamamma was firm in her determination. The Bhimavaram canal was in spate. She prayed to the Goddess of water. The water level came down ankle deep. She conjured a float by which others crossed over the canal. The Kakinada Collector did not heed to her request. He made Kamamma stand in the Sun for a week. Kamamma withstood the test without taking any food or water. The Collector secretly issued orders to burn the body of Marayya at Samarlakota. Kamamma fell dead at Kakinada. When her body was being taken to Samarlakota, on the way near Someshwara temple at Samarlakota, Kamamma got up and narrated how her husband was cremated. She called for the village head, cured his crippled legs and ordered that he should come to Samarlakota on the 7th day.

The funeral pyre of Marayya was still burning until her return. She went into the fire, played with it for some time, tied some burning embers in her apron. She then put a fig sappling into the fire, watered it and then planted it. The sappling sprouted and flowered immediately. She collected the burnt bones of Marayya in an earthen pot, tied it to the fig branch. She prepared a bed of grass in the western room at her house, bolted it from inside, asked Reddayya to lock the room from outside, stretched herself on the bed of grass, left her body and reached Chennapatnam (Madras) in seven ghatikas. She appeared in the dreams of Wallis, Meadows, Pennigir Oakes the Englishmen and Nainappa Mudaliar the Dubasi interpreter and narrated her vow. They tested her. The Governor was convinced of her divinity when his brother who was missing for the last six years returned home. The Governor issued orders not to obstruct Kamamma from committing Sati as contemplated by her.

Kamamma asked the Governor to launch a boat full of sandalwood without navigators. She towed the boat to Samarlakota from Madras port. The Kakinada Collector was dismissed. Her soul came back to Samarlakota and entered into the body. The door was opened. Reddanna brought the village

head Papayya of Sopparam. Kamamma purchased some land and prepared a fire pit. People from nearby villages gathered and the Englishmen from Madras also arrived. Lakshmmamma, mother of Chinnamma an other Sati, failed in administering black magic. Kamamma asked Venkamma a barren woman who came to witness the Sati, to christen her would-be offspring after her husband and herself. She told the Governor that three days after her performance of Sati, His Excellency would see the turban of Marayya, her apron, Mangalasutra and bangles along with flowers emanating from the fire pit. After receiving these objects he should cover the pit, erect a shed over it and worship with flowers.

Kamamma then took her bath, came to the fire pit accompanied by music band. She offered 25 gold coins to Madasu Venkayya and asked him to compose her biography. After putting Marayya's collected bones into the fire pit she prayed to the Gods and jumped into it. After three days all the objects came out of the fire pit as told earlier. The Englishmen and Papayya made elaborate arrangements and celebrated the festival. The Collector of Kakinada was reinstated when he begged pardon. He constructed a temple on that site. Venkamma the barren woman gave birth to a son; he was named Marayya. Subsequently she also gave birth to a daughter who was named Kamamma. Venkamma hung a golden cradle in the temple of Kamamma. In the shape of a lemon Kamamma swings in that cradle even today. Every year she is worshipped by one and all. This is how the story ends.

To me, all the supernatural powers and miracles attributed to Kamamma may be inventions introduced by Madasu Venkayya who was paid for composing her ballad. Kamamma a staunch believer might have undergone all the trials of test and obtained permission to perform Sati and died. That is all. The rest of the exploits are introduced to attract the folks which they believe with faith.

The other stories of Sati i.e. Sanyasamma ballad, Papamma ballad also contain many miracles. These miracles go on increasing day by day as the story gains popularity and passes from one generation to another generation. Some ballad singers describe lesser number of miracles. While other singers describe more number of miracles. If the minstrel is to wind up his performance within one hour he reduces some miracles. If he is to narrate the episode for three hours he adds some more miracles. Supernatural incidents and miracles of one ballad enter into another ballad, though the story content and the death of the husband of the 'Sati' are different. Though the practice of Sati is no more it has become a part of folk religion in the guise of Heroworship.

## TELUGU PERFORMING FOLK ART FORMS

The history of Telugu folk arts is as old as the history of Telugus. Archaeologists and indologists have discovered many cave drawings, paintings, artistic household utensils and instruments in the prehistoric caves, cairns and cists in different Districts throughout Andhra Pradesh. Along with traditional arts and crafts some of the performing folk arts are also coming down from one generation to another generation as ancient heritage. Due to political, social and economic changes and modern impact on the society some of these arts have vanished, some are waning and some have survived. There are abundant references and proofs to a variety of folk music, dances and performing arts in the ancient historical remains, temple architecture, Prakrit, Sanskrit, Telugu inscriptions and literatures.

Palkuriki somanatha a celebrated Telugu poet of 13th and 14th centuries has mentioned and described a number of folk songs, dances and performing arts in his "Panditaaraadhya Charitra." These folk art forms not only provided recreation, but also were a great source of inspiration and education in the propagation of moral, religious and spiritual values in the days of yore. Like the classical art forms, the traditional folk art forms also are helpful for building and moulding individual as well as social character in the nation by inculcating high ideals. They provided pleasure, happiness and finally bliss to all those who nurtured and adopted them. It is through these folk arts that great human values like satya, Dharma, Santi, Prema, Ahimsa, Seva and Bhakti could be conveyed to the rural folks in a manner attracting their attention. The episodes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata and other epics have convincingly conveyed the message that the ultimate victory is on the side of virtue in the long drawn battle of life between good and bad. Though the folk artistes have taken up more secular and social themes in modern times, they have never forgotten or neglected the under current ideal which they wanted to bring home to the masses through these folk art forms.

There are many kinds of performing folk art forms popular in rural Andhra. Most of them are not only common to Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Kerala but also to northern regions of Bharat with different names and regional variations. Some can be performed by a single individual artiste, some by two artistes and some by a troupe of artistes. Some are popular throughout Andhra and some are known in a few Districts. Some of them are purely auditory, some purely visual and many audio-visual arts.

These folk arts can be broadly grouped under four categories  
1. **MUSIC:** 1) Bavanilu 2) Birannalavaaru 3) Budiga Jangaalu 4) Golla Suddulu 5) Haridaasulu 6) Hari Hari Padaalu 7) Hari Kathalu 8) Jamukula Kathalu 9) Jangam Kathalu 10) Kaaki Padagalu 11) Kaddi Vaadyam 12) Kaasi Kaavadi 13) Kommulavaaru 14) Pambaala 15) Paandavula Vaaru 16) Piccukuntlu 17) Runjalavaaru 18) Saarada Kaandru 19) Sodi 20) Vira Vidya Vantulu.

**II. DANCE :** 1) Batukamma 2) Boddemma 3) Butta Bommalu 4) Chiratala Bhajana 5) Dappu Naatyam 6) Garagalu 7) Ghata Naatyam 8) Gobbi 9) Gora-vayyalu 10) Gurrapunaatyam 11) Jattijaamu 12) Kaavadi Chindu 13) Kolaatam 14) Pullivesham 15) Tappeta Gundlu 16) Urumulu 17) Viranaatyam.

**III. DRAMA :** 1) Bahurupulu 2) Chenchu Naatakam 3) Chindu Bhaagavatam 4) Gante Bhaagavatulu 5) Golla Bhaagavatam 6) Koravanji 7) Koyya Bommalu 8) Kuchipudi Bhaagavatam 9) Pagativeshalu 10) Raasanaatakalu (Vennela Naatakaalu) 11) Tolubommalu 12) Vaalakam 13) Vidhi Naatakam 14) Yakshagaanam 15) Yanadi Bhaagavatam.

**IV. MISCELLANEOUS :** 1) Baalasanta 2) Budubukkal 3) Dommari 4) Gud-delugula 5) Gandireddula 6) Gaaradi 7) Kaatipapala 8) Ladduru Sahebu 9) Modi 10) Pakiru Vesham 11) Saadhanasurulu 12) Saamu 13) Vipravinodulu.

This fourth category consists of folk entertainments in which the expert professionals by sleight of their hands perform miracles, jugglery, mesmerism, acrobatics, sword and staff wielding and exhibit trained animals like bulls, horses, monkeys and bears performing tricks and finally itinerant beggars forecasting and blessing.

There may be many more folk arts which I could not enlist under the above categories. For the present I would like to deal briefly about three art forms under each category.

## MUSIC

### 1. BURRA KATHA :

Burra Katha is ballad singing of modern origin named after the percussion instrument (Burra) used by the minstrels while narrating the ballad. Modern Burra Katha is evolved from the traditional Tandaana Katha. Burra is also known as Budiga and Gummata. Ballad singing is common throughout Bharat known as Villu Pattu in Tamilnadu and Kerala, Puvada in Maharashtra and Alha, Var, Raso etc., in Northern parts of Bharat. This kind of narration in musical tones is traced back as far as pre-Ramayana days. Valmiki, the epic poet, publicised his great story through two skilled rhapsodists, then known as Kusalavau. They sang the Rama Saga to their countrymen and finally before the ruling emperor. Though the text of the epic gained the status of a classic (Marga Style), its publicity was in the folk medium - Desi. Later on with the passage of time, these rhapsodic traditions continued taking regional forms and the main aim was to preach, entertain or provide diversion for rural folk. During the reigns of various dynasties of Andhra, this entertainment by minstrels had a hold on the people. During and just after the Kakatiya times Saivite missionary zeal had monopolised this pattern of recitation in song. Saiva worshippers known as "Jangams" particularly practised this musical

recitation before the masses. Tales about Siva dominated their repertoire.

There are more than a dozen types of ballad singing traditions in Andhra. Some are secular and some non-secular and ritualistic. Vira Vidya Vantulu sing the ballad cycle of Palanadu heroes, Kommulavaaru sing the ballad cycle of Katamaraju, Bavarilu sing the ballad cycle of Sakti (Mother Goddess), Birannala vaaru sing the ballads of Mallanna and Biranna and Jakkulavaaru sing the ballads of Goddess Kameswari. They are sung only on special occasions. They have their own ritual, instruments and make up, whereas there are some professional and itinerant minstrels called Saarada Kaandru, Piccu Kuntlu (Helivaras of Karnataka) Budige Jangalu etc., who sing all kinds of ballads, historical, epical, folk, quasihistorical, social etc., throughout the year to earn their bread. The modern Burra Katha is evolved out of these later forms. But there are many differences between these two in make up, prosodical compositions in the narration and method of singing. The traditional rhapsodists do not put on any particular dress and makeup. Being polygamous the minstrel's wives serve as assistants and instrumentalists. The ballads are in a single type of prosodical composition like Dwipada, or Manjari dwipada or Ragada etc., and their authorship is unknown whereas the modern Burra Katha troupes put on gaudy dresses and attractive makeup. Only males serve as assistants to a male artiste and females serve as assistants to a female artiste. The ballad is not only short to be sung in one to two hours but also in different metrical compositions at different stages depicting different moods and incidents. It was Dhenuvakonda Venkayya who introduced a variety of metres like Dwipada, Daruvu, kandaardhas and Kirtans in his "Uttara Gograhamam" ballad. Sunkara Satyanarayana revolutionised the ballad composition by a variety of songs in form and content in his political, social and historical ballads of shorter duration. It was again comrade Nazar the most famous ballad singer who introduced attractive dresses, make up and stylish and powerful narration.

Every Burra Katha troupe consists of three minstrels, one main storyteller and two 'Vantalu' (Chorusmen or Yes men), as assistants. The story teller puts on a long angarakha, beautiful turban with a crest feather, a tight pajama or dhoti, a colourful waistband and jingling bells to his ankles. He holds a Tambura or Sitar on his right shoulder and Andelu (brass rings with iron balls inside) on the thumb and index finger of the left hand along with a hand-kerchief. He plays these instruments while singing the ballad and moves forward and backward and also dances some times. His assistants also put on similar dress but not so attractive. All the three put on religious marks on their foreheads. The assistants play on the percussion instruments, burralu or budigalu. They assist the leader by singing the last line or uttering 'Tandaana taana'. In olden days these assistants used to play the role of comedians, but in modern times they also indulge in political and social satires and witty tales of euphonic expressions to regale the audience.

Burra Katha is now the most powerful and popular performing folk art form due to its usefulness in catering to the needs of different political parties, voluntary social and religious organisations and the Government for propagating their ideals, activities and plans. Burra Katha troupes are found in all Districts of Andhra Pradesh.

## 2) **OGGU KATHA :**

Oggu is an instrument resembling Siva's Damaruka. The story narrated with the help of this instrument is therefore called Oggu Katha. Oggu is also known as Juggu. In Telangana there is a minstrel subcaste called Oggu gollalu among Yadavas - shepherds. They are known as Kurumas. In Karnataka they are known as Kurubas or Goravas. Their main profession is to tend goats, sheep and weave blankets with sheep wool. The minstrels serve as priests during religious and marriage occasions among Kurumas. They worship Biranna and Mallanna also known as Khandoba or Maihar in Maharashtra area. The Oggu minstrels narrate the ballads of Biranna and Mallanna for weeks together during religious occasions and before the wedding ceremonies. They also narrate Sakti ballads like Ellamma Katha. These ballads are generally in Manjari Dvipada metre, interspersed with prose narrations of extempore compositions of oratorical and rhetorical nuances depending upon the capability of the chief narrator.

There are at least four artistes in a troupe-one chief narrator, one assistant and two instrumentalists, one playing a big drum called Dolu and another playing big size cymbals. Sometimes the assistant also plays another Oggu. Some troupes maintain two drum players, two cymbal players and one more to play Napiri, a pipe-like wind instrument. The chief narrator puts on jingling bells to his ankles and plays oggu while narrating the ballad. He plays different roles of different characters in the story. He imitates and gesticulates their styles and moods. He quickly changes his roles and dialogues. He puts on a waistband and holds a piece of stick and kerchief which he waves in his forward and backward movements. He also dances according to the situation. When he plays the role of a woman the cloth around his waist works as a veil or an apron of a Saari. The chief narrator always has long tresses of hair and silver rings to the second finger of the right foot, like a woman. The assistant helps the chief narrator by elaborating the raga or tune or sound uttered by the chief narrator and creates humour by witty conversations and punning by the words interrupting the chief narrator. Traditional Oggu Katha is confined to the priest class of Kurumas only.

In modern times the Oggu Katha has crossed over its limits of ritual and has become a folk recreation. Besides the traditional ballads the artistes are singing Baiguri Kondal Rao, Siva Kumara, Majunadhari and other ballads. They have shortened the ballads to be narrated within hours on the stage and within minutes in the radio and television. Chukka Sattayya of Jangaon has

introduced many innovations into the Oggu Katha. He is an adept artiste capable of depicting Karuna, Srīngara, Vira and Adbhuta rasas very ably. Another equally potential artiste is Middle Ramulu of Hanumanpeta, Karimnagar District. Oggu Katha, once confined to Telangana, is now known all over Andhra Pradesh and gained access to the National and International platforms. Oggu Katha troupes are found in all the Districts of Telangana.

### 3) JAMUKULA KATHA :

The ballad narrated with the help of a queer stringed but percussion instrument is called Jamukula Katha. Jamuku is called Jamudika in Telangana. It is also known as Pamba. The instrument Pamba is always in pairs - one small and another bigger. That is why it is called pamba Jodu - Pamba pair. The smaller one serves as a Sṛuti and bigger one as a percussion instrument. The smaller one sounds like Ektar or Kinnera and the bigger one sounds like thunder. The chief narrator plays on the bigger instrument while his assistant plays on the smaller instrument. In both the instruments the strings used are made of animal guts fixed into the hollow drums covered with skin on one side and kept open on the other side. In the smaller instrument the gut is permanently fixed to a wooden rod running over the outer cover of the drum forming a triangle. When the string is struck with fingers or nails it produces sweet notes of Sṛuti. In the bigger drum the gut at the loose end is tied to a small stick which the player holds with the left palm, and strikes the string inside the hollow with the right hand fingers and fist producing different terrific sounds. Among Harijans there are two main castes called Mala and Madigas. Both these communities employ this instrument and narrate stories. In coastal Andhra the Madigas are known as Bavinidu or Baindia and narrate the ballad cycle of Parasurama and worship Ellamma and Renuka. The Malas are known as pambalas and sing the ballads of Ankamma and worship her as 'Maaraasapu Ankamma'. Along with the pair of Jamukus they also use a wind instrument called Titi. But in Telangana only Madigas bear the two names Pambala and Baindia, perform priestly duties during the worship of Mother Goddess and hero worship, sing the ballads of Ellamma, Maṭapurāṇam, Gaṭupurāṇam and help in arresting epidemics and cattle diseases in the villages. In Telangana the ballad singing by this community is still ritualistic, whereas in coastal Andhra it has become a folk performing art. Females also assist the male artistes in coastal Andhra.

In olden days these artistes used to narrate only Sakti ballads. But nowadays they are not only narrating stories from puranas and epics but also episodes with social and political import. In Andhra Pradesh political parties engage Burra Katha and Jamukula Katha troupes for propagating their ideologies and manifestoes. Burra Katha is a finer means of propaganda attracting the urban population and the elite also, whereas Jamukula Katha caters to the needs of lower strata among the rural folks.

## DANCE

### 1) KOLATAM :

Kola means a stick. Ata means play. Therefore Kolatam is a play with sticks. Actually it is not a play but a dance popular throughout Bharat. This is known as Hallisaka and Dandarasaka in Sanskrit. That it is in vogue in Andhra from ancient times is proved from temple sculptures of Mahabalipuram, Daksharamam, Macherla, Ramappa, Srisailem, Hampi and Tadipatri temples wherein male and female figures are carved playing Kolatam separately. In olden days females used to play Kolatam in temple halls as a devotional offering. But the Kolatam played by males in modern times is a folk art form.

A troupe of Kolatam players consists of twenty to forty members. Smallest troupe consists of eight members. There are even number of players and a leader in every troupe. The troupe leader is called Pennuddi or Kolanna pantulu or Guruvu who controls and leads the troupe. A pair of two players is called Uddi in which one is Rama and the other is Lakshmana. All the players form a big circle in the beginning and change into two circles one in another, later on. The leader along with the mridangam, flute, harmonium and cymbal players, stands in the middle of the inner circle. Each player holds two sticks one in each hand with coloured strings or bells tied to their ends. The players tie jingling bells to their ankles, colourful waist bands and dhotis in a fashion to ride a bicycle or horse. As soon as the leader signals, pairs in the circles start moving, with a prayer to lord Ganesha. The leader then cries out the rhythm "It tayyaku" or "Kita Kita Tayyaku" and begins a song. This is called Ettugada, i.e. start off. This is in consonance with the play to be presented by the troupe. The songs are in different rhymes and beats. They may be prayers, duets, descriptions or narratives delineating Bhakti, Sringara, Karuna and Vira rasas. The variety in steps is called "Kopulu". There are as many as 50 kinds of Kopulu but the minimum number known to any troupe ranges from six to twelve. While the troupe leader sings the first line of the song the players sing the second line and strikes the sticks moving or jumping forward and backward in the circles. The leader whistles and changes the speed to a high crescendo. This is called "Usi". The players accordingly move with fast steps, maintaining the speed for some time, and stop with the cry "It Tayyaku Taddhimi" or "Kita Kita Tayyaku Taddhimi" by the troupe leader. This is called "Muktayimpu" i.e., winding up. The troupe leader then takes up another kopu and the Kolatam continues with different styles.

There is a special type of Kolatam called "Jada Kolatam" or "Veni Kolatam". This is more popular in Karnataka. The troupe consisting of 12 or 16 or 18 players holding coloured strings or ropes tied above to a pole or branch of a tree form into a circle. The circle's movements inside and outside are so well timed and executed that the ropes hanging from the top become plaited to form a Jada or Veni. Nowadays colourful ribbons are substituted for



ropes and Jada Kolatam is presented before the elite on dance platforms during ceremonial occasions. It is a feast to the eyes to witness Veni Kolatam when played by girls dressed in colourful attire.

Kolatam is the most popular performing folk art form in the entire country. It is played during leisure times in moon-lit nights or during fairs and festivals.

## 2) **VIRA NATYAM (HEROIC DANCE) :**

Viranatyam also known as Virabhadranatyam is a continuity of the traditional ceremonial dance that used to be presented in the Siva and Virabhadra temples when Virasaivism was at its zenith. Veerabhadra the destroyer of Daksha's sacrifice is said to be the originator of this dance. Holding a sword in one hand and a shield in other hand the devotee dances and plays steps according to the beatings of Viranam, a big percussion instrument which produces sharp and piercing sounds. Viranam sounds resemble the sounds of war drums and trumpets and Viranatyam resembles Tandava Nrityam in its force and vigour. Besides Viranam other instruments like Dhole, Tashamarpa and Sannaayi are also played during the Viranatyam. At the time of Lingodbhava on the sacred day of Sivaratri, these artistes present Urdhva Tandavam (dancing upward) a special type of dance.

Viranatyam is performed by Viramushti, Jangam, Balija and Devanga communities of Virasaiva cult. In Telangana Viranatyam is presented by Viramushti and Jangam communities during the festivals in Virabhadreswara temples at Koravi and Kottakonda while offering Virabhadra Palleram to the deity. A big plate with burning oil or camphor flames is held in both the hands from palms upto elbows and waved to the deity as an offering. The dancers also recite poems called Khadgaalu in praise of Virabhadra and his exploits when he spoiled the sacrifice of Daksha and killed him. The artistes wield swords while singing these panegyrics. In modern times the artistes who perform Viranatyam also wield tridents with burning torches. It is a vigorous and aweful dance with long steps and upward movements of legs and hands. In devotional frenzy and fervour the artistes also pierce their tongues, cheeks, eyelids, throats and lips with spears and spikes of different denominations called Ekanaarasam, Kantinaarasam, Kantha naarasam, Sironaarasam, Sulanaarasam etc. They bleed but dance with frenzy. Dance critics say that Viranaatyam contains some of the 108 Karanas and Charibhedas i.e., postures and movements involved in Siva Tandava. "Patayam" which is in vogue in Trivancore resembles Viranatyam of Andhra.

This ceremonial dance has now gained wide popularity as a folk art due to the nuances introduced in the dance styles and make up by Chinta Venkateswarlu and his troupe of East Godavari District.

### 3) **URUMULU (THUNDER DANCE) :**

Urumulu or Thunder dance is found only in Anantapuram District. The instrument employed in this dance is called Urumu, a percussion instrument which sounds like thunder. Hence the name urumu to the instrument as well as dance. This instrument is made out of brass or bell metal a hollow round pipe with 1 1/2 feet diameter and 2 1/2 feet length. Both sides are covered with goat skin fixed into iron rings and tightened with ropes at the top of the drum. It hangs from the left shoulder on the belly of the artiste and is tied to the right side of the waist. The left side of the instrument is rubbed with a thin stick and the right side is beaten with a thick stick.

The Urumu dancers belong to scheduled caste. They are pious and virtuous groups of people who observe religious austerity and worship goddess Akkamma. They abstain from drinking and eating meat. They present Urumu dance to please their deity. Therefore it is a ceremonial dance. They move in circles adopting different styles and foot steps and play on Urumu. They put on big turbans and strings of beads or coins like metal pieces in their necks. They smear their faces with turmeric and also put on Naamam on their foreheads. They wear long shirts covering from neck to feet and an upper garment hanging from both shoulders. While dancing they sing devotional songs on Lord Kadiri Narasimhaswami, Dasavataras and Goddess Akkamma. The Urumulu instruments are also played while awakening the village deities in Anantapuram District. It looks as though looming clouds in the sky are thundering when Urumulu are beaten while these artistes sing and dance.

This rare art of Anantapuram District is introduced to all district headquarters in Andhra Pradesh by arranging their performances under the aegis of A.P. Nritya Academi.

## **D R A M A**

### 1) **YAKSHA GANAM :**

Yaksha ganam is a theatrical performing folk art form wherein music, dance, speech and make up (costume)-all the four arts are harmoniously blended into one. This is common to Karnataka also. The earliest reference to it is found in Palkuriki Somanatha's "**Panditaradhya Charitra**" and the oldest Yakshaganas available in Telugu belong to 15th and 16th centuries. The name Yakshaganam suggests that it was recitation of desi music by a yaksha or Yakshini in its earlier state and after some time evolved into narration of episodes with the aid of more than one character and finally developed into an opera with different kinds of songs, dialogues and numerous characters. Yakshas are mentioned as celestials along with Garudas, Gandharvas and Kinnaras in our ancient lore. In Andhra Pradesh, the Yakshas known as Jakkulu are found in Anantapur, Guntur, Kurnool, Krishna and Godavari Districts. From time

immemorial it is a caste devoted to dance and theatre. "Kridabhiramam" (15th century) portrays a Jakkula lady's performance of dance and music with the aid of an instrument while narrating the ballad of "Kaamavalli". The early yakshaganas contain desi compositions like Daruvu, Ragada, Jampe, Dwipada, Ela, Sobhanam, Dhavalam, Magalarati besides Sandhi Vacanam - small link words in prose which developed into dialogues later on. Later Yakshaganas developed many nuances and adopted some of the features of classical sanskrit drama. The rule of Telugu Naiks and Maratha Bhonsles of Tanjore and Madura was the golden age in the history of Yakshaganam for its composition and presentation.

Yakshaganam can be described as an operatic ballet interspersed with songs sung to varying rhythms for effective conveying of the mood of the episodic situation. There is conversation, mostly a lively one, even when the subject matter is philosophic. There are characters who make speeches, sing verses and songs. The subjects chosen are mostly from puranic lore, but with an eye on popular appeal. One or two characters are introduced without any reference to the mythological story, for the purpose of sustaining interest in the audience. These characters are always the favourites of the spectators. The structure of the playlet is always simple. It opens, develops, reaches a climax and then the denouement is worked out. In some conversations, certain passages which always have a topical bearing are introduced extempore. Sometimes a local incident is woven into the dialogues. The simple folk audience never feels it an anachronism, but is mused and satisfied with performance.

The themes of Yakshagana plays of earlier centuries were drawn mainly from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata and other puranas. Later on contemporary historical, social and political themes were also enacted. Rangajamma's-'Mannarudasa Vilasamu' is a play written on the greatness of her royal lover Vijayaraghavanayaka who ruled over Tanjore from 1638 to 1673. Modern authors like Chervirala Bhagayya and his disciple Md. Abdullah not only took up folk and modern themes but also introduced new characters like Dommarisani, Chakali, Komati, Jalari, Donga etc., besides traditional comic characters like Singi, Singadu and Sunkara Kondadu. Bhagayya has composed more than a hundred Yakshaganas with themes drawn from Puranic, historical and folklore. His Bobblikatha deals with a historical battle and his Kambhojaraju Kath is based on a folk theme. Md. Abdullah's Hanumadramasangrama is a fictitious mixture of puranic lore with folk imagination. Patluri Virappa's "Krodhapuri Raitu Vijayam" is based upon a modern theme depicting conflict between the tiller and the land lord. The richness of Yakshagana literature in Telugu in its variety of theme and sentiment besides quantity stand only next to the Prabandha literature in Telugu.

Yakshagana theatre requires a thatched roof supported by four poles and covered on three sides. In Yakshaganas the curtain comes down from above unlike the curtain in dramas wherein it goes up from below or moves into the sides. Burning torches or mashals or caster oil lamps of olden days are yielding place to petrolmaxes and electric lights nowadays. Costumes and makeup according to the requirements of different characters, mridangam, cymbals and harmonium are the other paraphernalia essential for any Yakshagana performance.

The play commences with traditional prayers at 10 PM and goes on till the dawn. Though Sutradhara introduces the characters very often there are occasions when the characters enter the stage introducing themselves. The songs, daruvus, pallavi and anupallavi sung by an individual character are also repeated by other characters present on the stage. In olden days males alone played male and female roles. But in modern times females are playing their own roles. Kuchipudi Bhagavatam, Vidhinatakam and Yakshaganam are mutually influenced in their composition, characterisation and presentation. It is really a matter of great satisfaction that Yakshaganam is still alive providing education and recreation to the elite as well as village folks even during modern times.

Yokashagana troupes were once available in coastal Districts and Rayalaseema areas also. But in modern times the production of Yakshagana is limited to Telangana only. Yakshagana troupes are available in Karimnagar, Warangal, Rangareddy and Hyderabad Districts in Telangana. The troupes of Tigala Guttapalli and Idula Gattupalli have earned good name for their performances. Yakshagana is a favourite entertainment for the slum dwellers of Hyderabad and Secunderabad cities.

## 2) CHINDU BHAGAVATAM :

Chindu Bhagavatam is a special folk dance-drama presented by professionals called Chindu Madigas, a subcaste among Harijans. As such this art must be as old as the caste Chindu Madiga itself. The Telugu Idioms "Chindulu Veyu" indicate the antiquity of this caste and its profession. As is compulsory for every Brahmin boy born in Kuchipudi to wear the dancing bells and dance at least once in his lifetime in the local temple, so is the tradition with the Chindu Madigas that every member of the family must play Bhagavatam in praise of the Lord through dance and song. While males alone play male and female roles in the Kuchipudi dance drama, males take up male roles and females take up female role in the Chindu Bhagavatam. Chindu Madigas also present a variety of dance dramas of Puranic themes. They have Garudachala Harischandra, Sarangadhara, Mairavana etc., plays in their repertoire. The costume and make up in a Chindu Bhagavatam, to some extent, resemble Vidhinatakam and Yakshaganam. But the abhinayam i.e., gesticulation of limb movements of the Chindu artistes is quite different. Another special feature of

Chindu Bhagavatam is that all characters present on the stage share the song and dance of individual character when he or she plays his or her role. The orchestra players also assist them in singing. When the king's role or Nar-simhaswamy's role is presented on the stage some inflammable powder is put into the burning torches on both sides of the temporary theatre for creating flashes of light. The ornaments like Bhujakirtulu (Shoulder decorations) Kiritam (Crown) and Tarahaaraalu (Necklaces) of glittering tinsel and artificial beads, sparkle brilliantly causing astonishment and amusement to the folks. One more peculiarity of Chindu Bhagavatam is that the players never stand still on the stage. They go on dancing or moving their limbs.

Chindu Bhagavatam troupes generally present their plays during harvest season, staying for 4 to 5 days in a village. On the final day they collect their rewards in cash or kind and move to another village. These troupes are found in all the Districts of Telangana. Chindula Ellamma of Nizamabad District has made a mark in this art for playing different roles superbly. She is a robust lady above sixty years but plays the roles of heroes and heroines, young and old with equal facility and efficiency.

### 3) **TOLU BOMMALATA :**

Leather puppet shadow play is one of the most ancient performing folk art forms known to Andhras from 3rd century B.C. Historians and art critics opine that it spread to Java, Malasia and Indonesia from Andhra. It was popular during the reign of Satavahanas, Pallavas, Kakatiyas, Vijayanagara Kings and finally reached its zenith when Telugu Naik Kings ruled over Tanjore and Madura. Palkuriki Somanatha has mentioned this art form in his "Panditaradhy Charitra". In ancient days it was presented by indigenous Telugu folk artistes known as Ata Golialu (Cowherd players), Jangams (Saivite mendicants) and Baijas. But today majority of the puppet players belong to Bondili (Bundelkhand Rajputs) and Are (Marathi) Communities who have identified themselves with the main stream of Telugus. A few families of these artistes inhabit, Sarvasiddhi and Srinagavarapukota in Vishakapatnam District, Peddapuram, Samarlakota, Rajamahendravaram, Tellarevu and Madhavapatnam in East Godavary District, Bommalatapalli, Nimmala Kunta and Rayadurgam in Anantapuram District, Kamalapuram in Cuddapah District, D.C. Palli, in Nellore District and Rajapuram in Nalgonda District. Their number is gradually dwindling due to lack of patronage and invasion of Cinema and Television into the rural areas also. The artistes are compelled to opt other professions for earning their bread.

A troupe of shadow puppeteers consists of eight to twelve artistes; two females for singing and speaking for female roles, two males for singing and speaking for male characters, three instrumentalists for playing harmonium, Sruti and Cymbals and one assistant who provides allround help in the quick supply of puppets, maintenance of lamps etc., The artistes themselves prepare

the puppets required for the plays they produce. Puppets are made out of goat and deer hides. These hides are well tanned, made translucent, cut into shapes and sizes, painted with natural colours and perforated for depicting ornaments and jewellery. The sizes of the puppets ranges from one to six feet depending upon the age and nature of the characters like gods, demons and human beings. Likewise different kinds of animals, birds and reptiles are also prepared. Sometimes three to four puppets are prepared for one character, like Rama as a boy, Rama in exile, Rama in the battle field and Rama during coronation. Andhra puppets are the largest of Indian puppets having jointed limbs of the body like neck, shoulders, elbows, waist, knees and ankles. Each troupe possesses 100 to 150 puppets to cater to the variety of themes which they present. The puppet box called Ganiyam is the most treasured and revered possession of the troupe. The artiste holds the slim stick clipped at the back of the puppet with one hand and manipulates its limbs with another stick with the other hand, according to its movements backward and forward, up and down.

The puppeteers erect a temporary theatre with a thatched roof in an open place. It is open on three sides and closed on one side with a slanting white screen tied tightly to the poles on both sides. A black cloth measuring two feet wide pinned as border to the white screen serves to cover the activities of the puppeteers behind the curtain. Powerful castor oil lamps (petromaxes in modern times) are placed in equal distances behind the curtain so as to throw light evenly and reflect colour shadows on the screen. The puppeteers present plays like Sundarevanda, Lakshmana Murcha, Ravana Vadha and Kusalava Katha from the Ramayana, Sisupala Vadha, Draupadi Vastrapaharanam, Kichaka Vadha from the Mahabharata, Prahlada Katha, Banasura Vadha etc., from the Bhagavata. They also produce historical plays. Songs, dialogues and verses from all these plays are known by rote by all artistes. Comic and erotic episodes are introduced in between through special characters like Juttupoli-gadu, Ketigadu, Bangarakka etc. Ritualistic worship is offered to Vinayaka and Saraswati in the beginning. Plays commence with Nata raga and conclude with Surati raga. The puppeteers simulate any sound-human, animal or any other. Their speeches and songs rendered in music accord precisely with the actions, i.e. the change of postures of the figures. This continuity gives the audience the illusion of a play. The stylised delivery of prose dialogues and the melodious singing of verses and songs in classical style by the deft manipulators make inanimate figures animate on the screen and animate spectators inanimate in the open air with absorbed interest. The puppeteers travel around the country to make a living during the off season of agricultural activities and festive occasions.

#### IV MISCELLANEOUS

##### 1) **GANGIREDDULAVARU :**

A community called Gangireddulavaaru trains bulls and makes them

perform feats. In Karnataka this community is known with the names "Gangettinavaru" and "Basavanna". It is a subcaste among Yadavas - Cowherds. Gangireddulavaaru put on gaudy attire of different colours. They beg costly dresses from rich people and Zamindars for decorating their bulls, besides cash rewards after they exhibit the feats of their trained bulls. The bulls are also decorated with colourful cloths hanging from their backs, garlands in their necks and ribbons tied to their horns. If the bulls are in pairs they are named Rama and Lakshmana. One artiste plays on Dhole and another on Nadaswaram. To their tunes and beats the bull nods, dances, kneels, bows, paws, wags its tongue as if singing and puts all the four legs together in a plate contracting its body as per the directions of the master. The master sings the panegyrics of the donors and directs the bull to touch his feet by its head as a mark of respect and submission. The play of the bulls is a special feature during the month of Margali through out Andhra. Gangireddulavaaru travel from one village to another village exhibiting the feats of their bulls and earn money, grains and clothes.

It is said that this community trains the bulls while they are quite young. This training period extends from six months to one year. During this training period the poor animal passes through a severe ordeal by way of harsh beatings and starving. Some of these bulls have queer limbs - an extra small leg hanging from their humps or shoulders or an extra eye on their foreheads. A bull that simply obeys the order of the master and plays to his tunes has become a proverb in Telugu. Such person is called "Doo Doo Basavanna" or "Gangireddu" and a person who puts on a bizarre attire is also called "Gangireddula Vesham".

## 2) **BUDUBUDUKALA :**

Budubudukala is a community of itinerant beggars going from village to village and singing in a rigmarole fashion before all houses playing on the instrument called Budubuduka. Budubuduka is a small Damaru having strings with iron beads at their loose ends which strike on both the sides of the instrument by deft handling. It produces shrill but sweet sounds of mandra, madhyama and tara swaras. The Budubudukala beggar takes his rounds early in the morning between 3 to 6 A.M. He forecasts the past, present and future events and suggests ameliorative measures standing and playing his instrument before every house. Villagers with full faith in his prognostications give away alms munificently. The Budubudukala collects alms only once from each house. He roams in the village for a few days, collects his rewards in cash and kind including clothes and departs for another village. It is believed that Budubudukalas learn the art of foretelling in the cremation ground during dark nights from a bird called "Sakuna Pakshi". This is the only community that knows the language or utterances and signs of the bird.

The dress of a Budubudukala is also very queer with a turban, a black

coat and different coloured rags hanging over his shoulders. If any one is dressed queerly he is named Budubudukala. In Karnataka this community is known as "Budubudukeyavaru". Like "Nune guddalavaaru" (Oil clothed men) who beg oil for worshipping SANI devata, Budubudukala community also is supposed to come from Maharashtra. In modern times the Budubudukala character is imitated by expert artistes in the folk festivals.

### 3) **KAATIPAAPALU :**

Kaatipaapalu means "Babies of the funeral pyre". Kaatipaapalu may be a misnomer for Kaatikaaparulu meaning watchmen of the crematoriums and funeral pyres. They claim to be the descendants of Virabahu the employer of emperor Harishchandra, the embodiment of truth. They also claim to be the descendants of Harishchandra himself. As such they bear the symbols of Harishchandra dressed as a watchman at the crematorium, Chandramati the queen with the dead body of her son Lohita on her lap and god Yamadharamaraja seated on the he buffalo with the pasa-a rope in his hand and their head gears. Once upon a time their profession was only to discharge their duties at the crematoriums and earn their bread from the taxes levied on the dead. While the corpse is being taken to the crematorium they walk before the carriage blowing conch shells and pipes called Kommulu (Horns) and playing cymbals. Before the burial or cremation takes place, they implore and beseech the relatives of the deceased for big donations by entering into the burial pits or lying on the pyres.

The Kaatipaapalu later on adopted the profession of begging from all castes roaming from village to village earmarked periodically by their panchayats. Later on they resorted to exhibiting tricks and performing jugglary by conjuring different objects.

The Kaatipaapalu put on amusing dress like circus baffoons. They wear long shirts stitched out of multicoloured cloth pieces covering from neck to feet, put on rudrakshas around their necks, hang long upper cloth pieces from shoulder along with a begging bag which contains many articles they conjure. It contains wooden dolls, brass idols of goddesses, iron nails, silver coins, cowries, iron and stone balls, turmeric, frogs and scorpions. He plays a bell called Bonugu which produces hoarse sound. He puts on a vermilion mark of the size of a rupee coin on his forehead. The most peculiar part of his dress is his head gear or crown. It is made out of brass stripes measuring one foot long and two inches wide fixed into a circular brass ring attached to his turban. His face is blotted with vermilion and lampblack.

The Kaatipaapalu while begging, also perform magic tricks. They produce iron and stone balls from their empty mouths, take out cowries and turn them into silver coins, dole out those coins into the hands of the land lords or land ladies and wave the magic wand by which act the coins turn into scorpions



and frogs frightening the householders. They produce wooden dolls out of nothing by sleight of their hands, singing vulgar songs. They also enter into witty conversations employing erotic proverbs. As a finale they produce idols of goddesses to evoke fear and devotion among the onlookers and extract alms.

The Kaatipaapalu live in the suburbs of Guntur, Tenali, Mahboobnagar, Zaheerabad, Shamshabad etc. During the Folk arts festival at Guntur and A.P. Magic Festival at Warangal (1990) the Kaatipaapalu exhibited their talents and won the ovation from expert magicians and the elite. But their tribe is decreasing day by day as most of them gave up the old profession of begging in lue of other employments.

## **FOLK RELIGION AND LOCAL DEITIES IN ANDHRA PRADESH**

### **I**

Andhra, Telugu and Tenuku stand for the race, language and the region. The modern state of Andhra Pradesh is bounded by Orissa and Madhya Pradesh in the North, Tamil Nadu in the South, Bay of Bengal in the East and Maharashtra and Karnataka in the West. There are three main regions in Andhra Pradesh. They are : 1) Coastal Andhra comprising of Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore Districts. 2) Rayalasima comprising of Kurnool, Cuddapah, Chittoor and Anantapuram Districts. 3) Telangana comprising of Khammam, Nallagonda, Warangal, Karimnagar, Medak, Nizamabad, Adilabad, Mahaboobnagar, Rangareddy and Hyderabad Districts. Hyderabad is the capital city for Andhra Pradesh. The total area of Andhra Pradesh is 276759 Square Miles and the total population is nearing 6 Crores. Andhra Pradesh ranks fifth among the States of India on the basis of both population and area. The racial history of Andhras can be traced back to the Vedas, Brahmanas, Puranas, the great epics of Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Bhagavata besides the Buddhistic and Jain literature. The political history of Andhras begins with the rise of the Satavahana dynasty. Like any other region in India Andhra Pradesh has people belonging to four main Varnas i.e. Brahma, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudras which are divided into innumerable castes and subcastes besides a considerable size of nomadic tribes, hillmen, forest dwellers and tribals of 33 denominations. While all of these belong to the Native Faiths, people belonging to alien faiths i.e. Muslims, Christians and Parsis are also in good number. They may be approximately 10 percent of the total population. Except the Parsis, most of the Christians and Muslims are converts only.

The Sanatana Dharma or the eternal Vedic Dharma metamorphosised as Hindu Dharma holds its sway throughout Andhra Pradesh in cities, towns, villages, hill tracks and forest areas. The Vedic as well as Puranic Gods and Goddesses are worshipped by one and all. Yet the rural folks especially the backward classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Nomadic tribes, Hillmen and Tribals have an additional big list of deities whose worship has its own ritual and tradition. Sometimes they seem to be different and sometimes they are one and the same; sometimes they are interdependant and sometimes influencing each other. This is but natural with our country Bharat which has an unknown past to the so-called modern historians who calculate in terms of B.C. and A.D. We have our own calendars which count the ages in terms of Krita, Treta, Dvapara and Kaliyugas which fortunately correlate with the modern scientific discoveries with regard to the genesis of our planet and the evolution of life on it. If we believe that Brahman, the Supreme Being is the ultimate foundation as well as the meaning and explanation of the phenomenal world and if we believe in the omnipresence of the divine as told in the Vedas, "Eko

"ham bahu Syam" we must also be magnanimous to recognise the different ways and modes of worship according to the capacity, mental makeup and intellectual maturity of different kinds of people. The water from the ocean evaporates, becomes clouds and rains down, some on mountain tops, some on deserts, some into rivers that join the ocean after a long march and some directly into the ocean itself whence it emanated. Every drop of water longs and strives till it reaches the ocean. This is why our ancient Sages and truth seekers have laid down the paths of Karma, Bhakti, Jnana and Yoga which lead a man to the Ultimate goal of Final Realisation. In between, there are innumerable lanes and by-lanes which again join the highways mentioned above. The hunger is same, only the food is different, the devotion is same the expression and language are different. Mother Goddess worship, Ancestral worship, worship of the spirits and Totemism all lead to the same God.

As Hindu Dharma is all inclusive, it allows all kinds of Worship - Saguna, Nirguna, Sakara and Nirakara. All these depend upon one's own choice and preferences. The illiterate masses of the villages, the nomads who always go from one place to another to eke out their living and the tribals that dwell in the deep forests worship all Hindu Gods and Goddesses besides their own deities. Their Gods include natural elements like earth, air, water, sun and moon, flora and fauna, different kinds of spirits - benevolent as well as malevolent. There are special Gods and Goddesses that have different functions to look after the welfare of the villages, to guard the crops, to ward off disease and pestilence and to bestow boons of progeny, health and wealth. In almost all villages these deities have shrines built in mud or brick or in rough stone, 3 to 4 feet high unimposing and unassuming. Some times there is no permanent shrine at all. Whenever there is a festival a temporary accommodation is provided for either in a field or under a tree. In many villages the shrine is a rough stone platform under a tree with unshaped stones in the Centre. The village deities', forms are numerous. Some times they are shapeless stones, roughly carved idols, basreliefs on stone slabs, sometimes they are iron tridents and spears, sometimes conical wooden pikes or posts with roughly shaped heads, sometimes they are represented by earthen pots and small vessels and earthen lamps. Sometimes the deity is represented by a brass pot well decorated with margosa and mango leaves and colourful sarees. It is called Garaga. Some times these deities are represented by geometrical designs and diagrams with dots and lines drawn with turmeric, Kumkum and rice flour. These are all symbolic. Every religion whether antique or modern throughout the world has symbols and rituals, the meaning of which is sometimes evident, some times latent and sometimes lost in oblivion by passage of time. Ninety percent of the village deities are goddesses. The Pujaris of these deities are from backward communities, mostly Washermen, Potters, Ballijas, Kapus, Herdsmen and Asaadis (Scheduled Castes). The pujaris are males as well as females. Most of the village deities are very often propitiated and worshipped with animal sacrifices. While some deities are worshipped regularly every day some are worshipped weekly or monthly or annually or biannually over a period lasting

from one day to one month. There are some deities worshipped only occasionally whenever there is epidemic or disaster. The whole village congregates for the worship of the village deity without discrimination of high and low, caste and creed. Muslims and Christians join them whenever the deity of small pox or cholera or plague is propitiated. As the names of the village deities are in thousands it is impossible to enumerate them.

There may be approximately 4000 deities in all the districts of Andhra Pradesh. Some of the names like Adilakshmi, Durga, Kanakadurga, Minakshi, Mahishasura mardani, Kuntidevi, Draupadi, Kameswari, Kanyaka, Mari, Ganga, Gauri, Renuka, Virabhadra, Bhairava, Dharmaraja, Parasurama, Shetala, Kala Bhairava, Pandava etc., are of sanskrit origin. Akkagaarlu or Aggaarlu, the seven sisters are the Telugu forms of Saptamatrukas only. Most of the female deities are metamorphosed forms of Lakshmi, Parvati or Adisakti only. The Mother Goddess or Goddess of Fertility is Paraasakti only.

## II

The folk deities may be classified under certain groups according to their functions, traits, prominence, nature, etc.

1) Deities whose domain extends beyond their places. Some deities like Renuka-Ellamma, Gangamma, Ankamma, Kanakadurga, Draupdi, Mahankalamma, Maisamma, Maremma, Poturaju are common all over Andhra Pradesh. Not only the villagers of that particular village where the shrine of that deity is located but also from distant villages people come and worship that deity.

2) Local Deities : - Their domain is restricted to a particular place or village. They have local names and they are innumerable. Aretamma, Tippamma, Sadumalamma, Allamma in Chittoor Dist., Balusulamma, Golusulamma, Ballamma in East Godavari Dist., Elamancamma, Lingamantudu in Nallagonda Dist. may be cited as examples. They are not known beyond their respective places.

3) Tutory deities : - These are originally favourite deities of a particular caste or community. But later on other communities also began worshipping these deities. For example Mallanna is the Tutory deity of the Cowherds, Biranna of the Sheep-herds, Matangi of the Scheduled castes, Katamayya of the toddy tappers, Chowdamma and Bhavanarushi of the weavers, Ujjanaraya Swami of the Kurubas according to the folklore and mythology were worshipped by those particular communities only in the beginning, as these deities have done special favours to them. But later on these deities have gained reverence and respect among other communities also because of the cooperation between one community and another community.

4) Boundary deities : - These deities guard the villages and protect

the inhabitants from draught, disaster, epidemics and pestilence. They are stationed on the borders of the villages or in the fields outside the villages: for example Elamma, Poleramma, Maisamma, Kanaka Durga etc.

5) Hill deities : - These are awe-inspiring deities. They usually reside on hill tops or in caves. They are ferocious and demand more animal sacrifices during the propitiatory festivals. For example Chiralamma resides on the mountain near Krishna Puram, Chittur Dist. It is believed that she stopped the wild fire that was spreading into the village with her saaree. That is why she is called Ciralamma (Cira=Saaree, Sanskrit). She is in the form of a stone 3 feet high. During her annual festival 400 buffaloes, 1000 goats, 1000 rams and 2000 fowls are sacrificed. The pujari belongs to Dhobi community. In the days of yore the famous deity Kanakadurga of Bezawada used to entertain human sacrifices. Now she is a refined goddess with brahmin priests. Similarly Kondalamma the hill deity of the Bhadrachalam agency demands bloody sacrifices.

6) Deities worshipped for special diseases and distresses. Though most of the village gods and goddesses are worshipped to ward off disease and disaster, there are special deities who mitigate special diseases. They are also named after these diseases. Tattamma is worshipped for Tattu a severe kind of pox (Measles). Maramma is worshipped for mari-cholera, Mutyalamma for pearl like pox, Sitalamma for small pox, soppalamma for the disease of the cattle in their thighs and Dommamma for the disease of the cattle in their lungs. Desamma is well known for curing eye diseases. Some four hundred years back the raja of Karvetnagar built a big temple for her at Tirumala Raju Kandrika. At present it is managed by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (T.T.D.). Her idol is carved in black granite. People from far off places with different kinds of eye diseases and wounds come, take bath in the nearby tank of the temple and worship the goddess.

7) Deities representing natural elements like earth, air, water, sky, fire, sun, moon and stars are being worshipped all over the world from times immemorial. Our Vedas, Puranas and folklore contain references to the worship of these natural elements. Mother earth, Bhumamma or Bhudevi is the deity of fertility. All kinds of crops are grown on earth. Farmers before commencing their agricultural operations worship her and offer sacrifices to her. Likewise the water Goddess Gangamma is worshipped throughout A.P. Besides Ub-bagangamma by washermen and Valasagangamma by migrants are worshipped for enough water. Airgod is worshipped before winnowing the paddy. This deity is temporarily made out of clay and worshipped before winnowing the paddy or grain. The winnowing woman vows that she would give her daughter in marriage to the Airgod for the beneficial breezes. Sun and moon are regularly worshipped by one and all in many temples wherever Navagrahas are installed.

8) Agricultural deities : - These are mainly responsible for rains, protection of tankbunds and riverbunds, keeping water over the crops and

arresting pestilence. Their shrines are found on the tank or river banks or in the middle of the village. After installing a Boddurayi (Boddu = Navel, Rayi = Stone) only, a village is established and constructed. It is the navel or centre of the Vastupurusha according to our ancient tradition of engineering and sthapatya. Akkagaarlu in the shape of horses made of clay are found outside the villages under trees, near tankbunds and fields. Akkagaarlu are supposed to take rounds on these horses during nights petrolling and keeping watch over the fields and tanks. None dare see them while petrolling, lest he dies. Black goats are sacrificed to them. Kattamidi Gangamma i.e., Gangadevi on the tankbund is worshipped when crops dry away due to water scarcity. She is also worshipped when the tank is full and overflowing. Pillari (Vighneswara) made out of clay or cowdung is worshipped to protect the crops and grain from rodents. These idols are placed in the fields and grain godowns.

9) Forest Deities : - They are awesome and dreadful and roam about in the forests. Most of the forest deities have no shrines. If there are shrines they are made of natural boulders and slabs. Idols are found only in a few places. The idol of Kateri is made out of clay and worshipped in the forest. She is dreadful with protruding fangs, bulging eyes, and hanging tongue thirsty of blood. Gurappa, Bhetala, Bhairava, Muniswara are the male forest deities. All tribals have their own forest deities. Forest deities are installed in the forests, crematoriums and gardens outside the villages. Gradually these deities are changing into civilised and passified deities. Otherwise all the forest deities are blood thirsty. Once upon a time they used to have human sacrifices. Our mythology has many references to this effect.

10) Puranic deities : - Besides Siva and Vishnu with their consorts and their various incarnations, deities from our puranas and great personalities from our epics like Hanuman, Virabhadra, Parasurama, Bali, Renuka, Dharmaraja, Pandavas, Draupadi and Kunti are also worshipped by villagers and forest dwellers. During their worship folk plays depicting episodes from the Mahabharata are also enacted. A common feature during these festival is walking over red hot coals. During the days of the festival, fire wood is collected from every house. A batch of devotees is selected to perform the fire ordeal as an act of worship. They regulate their regimen with regard to diet and sex, take repeated baths and on the final day get ready to walk on the burning red hot cinders. The rectangular pit is filled with firewood which is lit. After the flames subside, the burning cinders are fanned to disclose only white hot cinders. The deity is carried in procession and placed on a platform built near this pit of fire. The worshippers go round the pit three or five times and enter it, with the leader of the group stepping in first and the others following. They do this seven or nine times. Their feet remain unhurt and unburnt by the fire. It is their faith in the deity that enables them to perform this feat.

11) Deities of Martyrs : - The chaste wife who offered sati i.e., burning herself on the funeral pyre of her husband is called perantaalu. And those who

have been killed due to the conspiracy of their mothers-in-law or sisters-in-law or brothers-in-law also become perantaallu. Great heroes who died in the battle field for a righteous cause of defending their king or country and those who sacrificed their lives for religion are called viras. These heroes are worshiped in the form of lingams and viragallus (Vira = hero, Kallu = stone, Virakallu = hero stones). Perantaalu worship is very common in Andhra. Reddamma who gave up her life in order to save her chastity from some sex hungry muslim invaders is worshipped in Chittoor Dist. Likewise Lakshamma, Kamamma, Vira Rajamma of Rayala Sima, Buccemma, Kannamma, Papamma, Viramma, Sanyamma, Tirupatamma of coastal Andhra are worshipped as perantaallu who did miracles after their death and grant boons to those who worship them. Kanyaka Parameswari, the tutelary deity of Vysyas is also a martyr. There are innumerable viragallus throughout Andhra Pradesh, some in the shape of well carved idols, some in bas-relief on stone slabs and some as lingams in historical and religious places. Annual hero worship is offered to the heroes of Palnadu Battle (12th Century) in Karempudi of Guntur Dist. Without knowing the tradition of hero worship Mr. Henry Whitehead interpreted the hero stones which he saw in Warangal as Revenge by suicide in his "Village Gods of South India" (P. 124, 1976 edition).

12. Deities who grant special boons : - There are special deities for granting special boons. Totlamma is worshipped for progeny. Women who do not have children worship Totlamma and hang cradles (Totle) to the trees near the shrine of this deity in Nadimur Village of Kuppam Taluq in Chittur District. Reddamma also grants boons for progeny. In Telangana Boddemma is worshipped by Virgins in order to get good husbands. Women folk of upper castes worship Mangala Gauri for the longevity of their husbands and Santana Gopala Swamy for progeny.

13. Totemic deities : - Different kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and trees are worshipped by villagers and forest dwellers believing in the Divine's omnipresence. The divine is Sarvabhutantaratma. The Bhagavadgita illustrates the omnipresence of the Divine in clear terms. Nagalamma or Nagadeva in the shape of serpent carved on stones in basrelief or the ant hill where the serpent resides are worshipped throughout Andhra Pradesh. Nagapanchami and Nagula Chaviti are important festivals of the village folks. Naga bas reliefs are of many kinds. Gomata, as a live cow or in bas relief, Nandi in the shape of a bull idol in front of every Siva Temple as Basaveewara, Garuda the sacred eagle vehicle of Vishnu are worshipped every where. Tribals and hill men worship tigers, turtles and fish. Totlamma in the shape of a bird is worshipped in Palagummi (E.G.) for 15 days. Likewise tree worship is also common, in Andhra Pradesh. Neem trees (Margosa) are worshipped everywhere. Nim trees are a must near the shrines of Posamma, Maremma and Mutyalamma. Nim tree is personified as Vemulamma (Vemu = Nim) and deified in Chandragiri and Renigunta of Chittoor Dist. The idol of Vemaaulamma is 5 feet high and it is worshipped daily and an annual festival is conducted on large scale. Toddy and

jaggery water is offered as Naivedyam. Goats and fowls are also sacrificed. Likewise fig tree is worshipped by the village folk and upper castes. Sterile and childless women in particular circumambulate around the fig tree daily for begetting children. Jammi (Sami in Sanskrit) is worshipped on Vijayadasami. Toddy tappers worship palm and date trees. Nim and fig trees are also married together with all pomp and ritual for securing religious merit. Mango trees, after they flower also are married with pomp.

14. Deities of Nomads, Tribals and Hillmen : - Besides the common deities worshiped by all village folks the nomadic tribes and hill men have their own deities. Sugalis or Banjaras also called Lambadas are in good number in Andhra Pradesh. Sivalabhaya is the common deity for all Sugalis. Korra subdivision of Sugalis worship Mataralu, and Buksa subdivision of Sugalis worship Tolaja deity. This might be Tulja Bhavani of Maharashtra. Mudhe Subdivision of Sugalis worship Chevudamma. Another nomadic tribe called Vaddes, the earth diggers and tank builders worship Sallapuramma. Erukulas who rear pigs and whose women prepare baskets and mats with palm and date leaves worship Kollapuramma. This must be again Kolhapur Mahalakshmi of Maharashtra. Yanadi tribals worship Kunkalamma and Battala Bhairava i.e., naked Bhairava. Chencu tribals dwelling in the Nallamala forest area worship Garelamaisamala, Chencudevudu and Shinga or Narasinga, the manlion incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Gonds of Adilabad worship Nagoba their principal deity. Kolami tribals worship Ayak also known as Bhima. Pradhans worship Akipen, Avulpen, Masoba and Satipen. The Naikpods, Koyas and Chencu Tribals of Warangal forests worship Sammakka and Sarakka whose festival is conducted bi-annually when more than a million devotees congregate. Adavi-rajulu, Singarajulu and Bodidevata represented by formless stones are worshipped by Kondakapu tribals. Injevetamma and Yegulamma are the favourite deities of the East Godawari tribals. Konda Reddis worship Kondalamma. Konda Kapus also worship Mavilamma in the shape of swords. Kondarajulu and Kondarajulu Kodukulu religious festivals of East-Godawari tribals are well known. Goravas worship Singarajulu.

15. Migratory deities : - As Andhra Pradesh is surrounded by Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhyapradesh and Orissa famous deities of those states are also worshipped in the border districts of Andhra Pradesh. Ellatamma, Om sakti and Peri Andavan of Tamil Nadu are worshipped in Chittoor District. Patalamma, Suguturu Gangamma, Virupakshamma and Saudatti Ellamma of Karnataka, Tulja Bhavani, Mahuramma of Mahur, Kollapuri Mahalakshmi of Maharashtra are very much worshipped in Andhra Pradesh.

16. Saints and Godmen of the past and present are also worshipped by the villagers. Like local deities some of these saints are known only locally and some are well known all over the state and all over India. Among the modern saints who are no more, Avadhuta Venkayya Swamy is worshipped in Nellore and Prakasham districts. Civatam Amma is worshipped in East Godawari



District. Both of them belonged to Backward Communities, but they were realised souls. As such without any distinction all classes of people worship them. Balayogi of East Godavari District born as an out caste is deified by one and all. Pakalapati Guru born as a brahmin spent his life in the forests amidst the tribals of Vizag District. He is god for the tribals. Jillellamudi Amma born as a brahmin is worshipped as Jaganmata by her devotees. Nityanada Swamy is known only in Cuddapah district. Among the saints of the past Potuluri Virabrahmam (a Gold smith) Vemana (a Reddy) and Raghavendra Swami (a Brahmin) of 17th century are worshipped all over Andhra by all kinds of people. Pudota Lingavadhuta (a Gold smith) a contemporary of Virabrahmam is worshipped in Cuddapah and Kurnool districts. Kaivaram Narayana yogi a bangle seller of the 17th century is well known in the border districts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Shirdi Sai Baba of Maharashtra is worshipped all over Andhra, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra. No body knows whether he was a Hindu or Muslim. Village folks worship the tombs of Muslim saints and actively participate in the Moharram festival. They also name their children as Mastanayya, Kadarayya, Pirayya, Sahebureddi and Jangiramma. Sri Satya Sai Baba a living godman loved as a Divine Incarnation by his devotees is worshipped by Tribals also. He has millions of devotees all over the world. Villagers and tribals being simple and innocent have their own ways of worship. Their prayers, rituals, regimen and offerings are all simple. They are always busy in eking out their living. It is only during sickness, in distress, or festivity do they worship of their beloved deity and they with their body mind and heart surrender and supplicate to the Divine in different forms and names and derive solace and satisfaction. Whatever they do, they do with strong faith and pure heart, as such they obtain psychic relief.

## TRIBAL LORE SOME COMMON TRAITS IN HERITAGE

According to the 1971 Census reports 16.57 lakhs Gijans of 33 denominations inhabit Andhra Pradesh. Their habitat spreads along the coastal and mountain strip of the Bay of Bengal from the Bhadrakiri Agency in Srikakulam district to the Bhadrachalam Agency in Khammam - Godavari districts. From there their domicile spreads north-east-ward to the Adilabad region. This tribal area is contiguous to the tribal areas of Bastar, Dandakaranya and Vidarbha. Tribals inhabit in good numbers in the districts of Srikakulam, Warangal, Adilabad, Mahabubnagar and Kumool. Nellore, Ongole and Chittoor Districts also have some small areas of tribals.

The tribals of Andhra Pradesh are 1 Aandh 2 Erukula 3 Kattunaayaka 4 Kammara 5 Kondadora 6 Konda reddi 7 Kolaami 8 Koya 9 Kondu 10 Kotiya 11 Kuliya 12 Gadaba 13 Gondu 14 Gaudu 15 Chenchu 16 Jataayu 17 Toti 18 Nayakapodu 19 Pradhani 20 Poraja 21 Bhagata 22 Bhilla 23 Mannedora 24 Maalilu 25 Mukadora 26 Yaanaadi 27 Reddidora 28 Rona 29 Vaalmiki 30 Savara 31 Sugaali etc. They are sub-divided into several groups and speak different languages belonging to different linguistic families. Kammara, Kondadora, Konda reddi, Chenchu, Bhagata, Yanadi and Reddidora speak Telugu only. Some Koyas and Nayakpodus also speak Telugu only. The rest of the tribals also know Telugu besides their mother tongues. Anthropologists feel that the physical features of these tribals are similar to the features of Proto Negroids and Austroloids. Therefore the history of the tribals must be as old as the Deccan Plateau.

Besides the Sanskrit and Telugu literary records, there are ample inscriptional, architectural and iconographical evidences that throw light on the political, religious and social roles played by the tribals in Andhra Pradesh. Kumara Sambhavam, Panditaradhya Charitra, Basavapuramamu, Kaalahasti-maahaatmyamu, Shatchakravarti Charitamu, Yayaati charitramu, Rasikajana manobhiraamamu, Parvati Parinayamu, Chitra sima, Kavi chakorachand ro-dayamu, etc provide details regarding socio-economic and religious life of the tribals in Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Mahabharatamu, Amuktamalyada, Velugotivari Vamsavali, Birudavali of different royal families and the historical introduction to the poems dedicated to the kings, ministers and Chieftains provide information regarding the political importance of the tribals in the ancient and medieval kingdoms of Andhra.

During the historical times Prabhavati, daughter of Chandragupta Vikramaditya II and a Vakataka queen ruled over Nandapura, the old capital of Jayapuram. Even today Nandapura is held in high esteem as a sacred place by all tribals. Maakali Sekdi the presiding deity of this place is the Chief Goddess for all the tribals. Nandapura is also mentioned in the Buddhist inscriptions of Amaravati. This region known as Vindhayaranya in ancient days was the home land of many tribal gods and goddesses like Chakra, Mahuri, Bhairava

etc. Chakrakota in Bastar, Mahur in Adilabad and Bhairava kona in Nellore districts were the capital cities of the tribal kingdoms founded after the names of these deities. Regions mentioned as Manyams and Kottams in inscriptions and historical records are parts of the land ruled by tribals. Srungavarapukota is the boundary of Visakha Manyam. Ananta Varna claimed himself to be the Kalingadhipati in his inscription. The Borra caves in Araku valley and the Sankaram and Kotilingalu relics date back to the 5th century. Samudra gupta is said to have conquered Mahakantara, the present Visakha Manyams. Chakrakota witnessed many crucial battles during the medieval times. The rulers of Donte dynasty of Chakrakota claim to be the descendants of Kakatiyas. Present Chodavaram in the Visakha Manyam was known as Chikura Vishaya. Konda Kancheru and Macheru (Machkhand) are the Saiva centres in it. Kumbhala of Ganga dynasty is said to have ruled over these places. The famous Konaraka and Puri temples were constructed during the rule of Gangas. The Pataleswaralinga was installed by a Yadava king in the Golukonda mountain ranges. Modern Lotugadda was the main fort among the 66 tribal forts. An inscription in the Virabhadra temple in this place speaks of its past glory as Patalaganga. There are full size Pandava idols in sitting posture in the Srikrishna temple at Lambasingi. Sapta Madem, Jhade, Jantumadu, Baraha, Donti, Erukavaram, Panduru Kaluvapalli, Oddadi, Gudem etc. are some of the places ruled over by tribal kings. That these tribal kings were subjugated by Velama and Reddi kings is known from the works like 'Velugotivari Vamsavali' and Srinatha's 'Kasikhandam' introductory verses. Tribal kings had Giridurgas (Hill forts) and Vanadurgas (Forest forts). The Birudavali of Recherla kings contains the epithets "MaccaNayakatalagonduganda", "Kodamanayankara ganda", "Gosangidurga madapahara". "Kutuva manne Kumalla gundedigula". Modern Jharkhand is the Jhade desa mentioned in the panegyrics of Velama and Reddi kings. Baraha must be either Baraha of Narsingpur district of Madhya Pradesh or Baruva of Ganjam District. The Birudavali of Vijayanagaram Pusapati Kings eulogizes them with the appellation "Baraha Manne Ganda Pendera Virajita". 'Narapati Vijayam' specifically mentions that they defeated the tribal forces near the mountain at Nandapura. Madikisingana describes king Muppa as the conqueror of Donti and Manne tribal kings. Jayapuram rajas are known as Jharkhand rajas. In the mythology of the origin of the Jayapuram kings the issueless Vena's successor possessing beastly qualities was banished to the south of Vindhayas. To him were born five sons known as Gaita, Mu, Manya, Konda and Kodu.

The tribals called Koya, Chenchu, Savara, Yerakala, Maddu, Chaapa, Kona, Konda, Bodiya, Pangu, Naagala, Bottada and Bonga are said to be the descendants of these five brothers. Two brothers used to bear the royal umbrella of the first king of the present dynasty of Jayapuram kings. As a reward they were bestowed with the Zamindaris of Golukonda and Madugula respectively. Vaddadi kings also known as Jayanta family kings, claim to be the descendants of Matsya kings who were closely related to Pandavas. They claim to have first entered into Paderu and adopted Mastiyadhvaja. Sri Krishnadevaraya also sub-

jugated the regions called Sapta Mademulu, Vaddadi etc. Sapta Mademulu is the homeland of Sapta Matrikas. As a matter of fact the whole of Vindhya region was under the sway of Sakti cult. The Ballad of "Mala Gangu" suggests the greatness of the Sapta Matrikas. Sitapati known as Sitapakhan a tribal chieftain and a friend of Gajapati of Cuttack, restored the Kakatiya empire of Warangal from the clutches of Muslims and established a Dharmaraja. One of the 36 verses from the inscription called Sitapakhan Sasanam sings his glory thus.

"Devi Sumbhanisumbhadanavakula Pronmulanojjimbhanaa  
rambhaa Kakatiraajyapithakamalaanadirjaganmatrka!  
Yenaastaapi Punasturushkakujanairuccaatitaa sthaanato  
dharmaaikasilaapure Sa hi mahaenscittaapakhaano nrpahl!"

The mighty forces of Sri Krishnadevaraya could not move an inch on their way to invade Cuttak until the brave and valiant tribal king Sitapati was killed. 'Rayavacakam' mentions that Sri Krishnadevaraya mourned the death of such a valorous enemy king. Vajragada near Narsipatnam was also under the rule of tribal kings. Britishers annexed Vaddadi and Madugula to the Jayapuram State.

The tribal areas Kuravaata and Chengara in the Godavari District are mentioned in the Kanteru inscription of Salankayana Vishnu Varma. Mummidi Nayaka's inscription and 'Kridabhiramamu' also mention Kuravatika. Konda Reddis and Koyas inhabit this area.

Chenchus who originally belonged to Nallamala hills also came over to these parts and settled down. 'Kridabhiramamu' describes Madhumavati an apsara (heavenly nymph) born as a Chenchu damsel in her next birth. Rekapalli from this tribal area was the seat of Musunuri Prolayanayaka who headed the combined forces of Hindus to drive away Muslim invaders from Warangal. Rampa, Ramagiri, Addatigala, Jangaala tota etc. have many tribal remnants. The forest regions in Prakasam, Kurnool and Mahboobnagar districts also have abundant tribal relics of glory. These forests served as the playground of hide and seek for many kings who either won or lost their battles. Krishnadevaraya is said to have provided permanent livelihood by digging a big tank for irrigation purposes for the Chenchus who used to rob the pilgrims earlier. But the Britishers in their own way breached the tank, developed Teak plantation in the cultivable land and established forest range offices. Afraid of the forest officers the Chenchus kept their cultivable lands waste. Independent India, till now, could not undo the crimes perpetrated on these innocent sons of the soil. Even today there are many Chenchu reserve areas extending from 250 to 300 acres in these forests.

Kautilya's Arthasastra highlights the importance of tribal battalions in the military expeditions of kings. Auxilliary tribal troops used to plunder

pillage and strike terror in the villages on the way thirty miles in advance for the smooth passage of the main forces of the king. Sri Krishnadevaraya also elaborates on this point in his poem *Aamuktamaalyada*. One of his inscriptions refers to the Boya Sunkam (Tribal tax), perhaps a share from the plunder money from the Boya tribals. *Aamuktamaalyada* (verses 221-225 canto IV) deals at length with the policy to be adopted towards the forest dwellers and hill tribes. While the tribal principalities in Visakhapatnam area are known as Manne Kottams the tribal areas in South and West Andhra are known as Boya kottams. Pandaranga, the Commander-in-Chief of Gunaga Vijayaditya, conquered the Boya Kottams. After subjugation, Boya Chieftains were appointed Palegars, body guards and personal attendants by the Kings. Kota Ganapatideva's inscription mentions one Adapa Keta Boya - Keta Boya who carried the Paandan. Boyas were also appointed to look after the proper utilization of Religious endowments and temple maintenance. Kulothunga Chola appointed a Boya to safeguard his donations to a temple. Jalliya Boya was himself a great donor of a village called Karpagapuri. Bodda Malle Nayaka, an attendant of Kakati Prola, gifted lands and money for the renovation of a temple near Matedu in the Saka year 1120. All tribals, especially Boyas, seem to be valorous as well as devotional. The Boya rulers of Vaaginagiri who later on migrated to Surapuram fought against Aurangzeb along with the Bijapur and Golkonda Kings. If Valmiki, a Boya of Tretayuga, could sing the glory of Rama in his *Ramayana*, Raja Bahiri Pamanayaka Bhupala, a tribal chieftain of 18th Century sang the glory of Ramanuja and his 12 predecessors - the saintly Alvars of Sri Vaishnava cult in his 'Bhargava Puranamu'. The colophon of this poem reads thus:

"Iti Srimadrajagopalakrishna karunakatakshavikshalabdha Pandityadhurya-  
navaratavanimandalakhandasamrajyadhaureya, svasamarthatakrta Patahadha-  
nadhanarava vipantapatanakriyadhilikadhisa dundubhidhvanakolahala, Ha-  
numaddhvajanka, kanakadandikrta, hirkalasikrta, Sandipitapratapakritiprabhava,  
Kosala vamsa payahparavara rakasudhakara, Pitambaranayakapautra,  
Ramanabhupalakaputra, Lakshmamamba garbhasuktimuktaphala,  
Raghavabhunayakabhridhana, saundaryajita sumasayaka, Bahari Pamanay-  
aka Pranitambana Sri Maha Bhargava Puranamu"

The epithet "Vipanta Patanakriya Dhilikadhisa" in this colophon refers to the fight with Aurangzeb. Another epithet "Kosala vamsa Payahparavara rakasudhakara" alludes the origin of this family tracing back to Guha the tribal chieftain friend of Sri Rama mentioned in *Ramayana* as explained in the introductory verses of this poem. The last prince of this dynasty fought against the Britishers in the first war of Independence in 1857. When the Britishers pronounced death sentence and despatched him to the Rayavelluru jail he committed suicide on the way. The patriot hero who loved his country died and the Nizam who served the Britishers, annexed his State. This irony of fate continues till to-day. While the tribals who love this country and its culture, remain neglected, those who raise the banner of revolt, adopting alien religion

and culture are rewarded. Politicians in our country in the past and present also exploited the innocent and ignorant tribals. The so-called welfare schemes and reservations meant for tribals are either bogus or implemented halfheartedly.

Andhra tribals revolted against the Britishers for the first time during 1845-1848 in the Golukonda Agency, second time in the same Agency during the first War of Indian Independence in 1857, during 1879-80 in the Rampa area, for the third time again in the Golukonda Agency in 1891 and finally in the whole of manyam Agency in 1922 under the leadership of Alluri Sriramraju. This is all known to the modern political historians. Not only the tribals of Andhra but the tribals of entire Bharat have a glorious history. But the pity is that we do not have the eyes to see it.

While the above mentioned facts reveal the political role of the tribals in the shape of a visible tip of an iceberg, their contribution in the fields of religion, culture and science is as enormous as the iceberg hidden under water. 'ISAAVAASYAMIDAM SARVAM' represents the theoretical Truth, and the worship of the unrevealed and revealed, animate and inanimate, elements and nonelements, flora and fauna, formless and the formed, nameless and the named - everything in the universe visible and invisible in different ways represent the practical side of the same truth. Prakriti, nature, is the mother of tribals. As such nature worship in the shape of goddess (Maya), in the shape of natural elements like sun, moon, wind, water, mountains, sky, fire, etc. is very common among all the tribals. The influence of Vedic, Upanishadic and Puranic ways of worship on tribals and the tribal influence on Saakta, Saiva and Vaishnava sects are clearly visible in the ritualistic lore throughout Bharat. Worship of Mother Goddess in different forms with different names is natural to the tribals who were all once matriarchal and still a majority continue to be so.

Adisakti Vindhyavasini took the form of Saptamatrikas. 'Saptamademulu', the homeland of tribals, is named so after Saptamatrikas. Makali, Chakradevata, Mahuri etc. have already been referred to. The ballad of "Malagangu" suggests the influence of Saptamatrika worship among the tribals. Makali (Mahakali) is the presiding deity of Nandapura the old capital of Jayapuram. Makali's husband is Bhairava and her brother is Venkatesa. Venkatesa's wife Devendraalu is the sister of Devendra ruler of Rapalle situated on the the high way of Narsipatnam to Madugula. One day the seven sons of Venkatesa go to Modammakonda (the lower boundary of Manyam) for hunting and marry Durgaandlu the seven daughters of Devendra. Devendra for this treachery punishes them for seven ghatikas and as a result all the seven brothers commit suicide out of shame. After some years the bereaved father Venkatesa starts on a pilgrimage praying for a male issue to succeed him. Devendra follows in order to test him. Venkatesa while walking on sea, staggers and gets drowned. Devendra returns mourning. Modamma the eldest of the seven sisters (Durgaandlu) gives birth to Sanjeevaraju with a falcon on his arm and he becomes a great hero hunter. One day he comes across Malagangu a

damsel of a lower caste tribal who makes him eat beef and do menial jobs for returning his falcon and love. But Modamma does not permit her son who loved a low born girl and ate forbidden food. As he is the only male issue among the seven mothers and heir apparent to the kingdom the other six sisters request Makali to interfere. Makali bewildered by the charming beauty of Mala Gangu and her lucky birth stars performs their wedding. Modamma remains in the Asiveyula country whereas the other six sisters migrate to the lowlands. Mala Gangu and Sanjeevaraju live at Minumuluru. The waterpond where Mala Gangu bathed and the places where she roamed are the most sacred places in the Paderu region for all the tribals. Modamma festival is celebrated every year with pomp and grandeur by the tribals. Makali represents the Adisakti and the seven sisters represent Saptamatikas. The high and low representation of Sanjeevaraju and Mala Gangu respectively is a replica of high and low caste system of Hindu social order. The interference of Makali is the supreme order of the Divine which ultimately prevails.

Most of the ancient and famous shrines in Andhra are found on the hill tops. The mountain range of Nallamala gave shelter to the food gathering Chenchus and their gods. Mallikarjuna, Narasimha and Venkateswara reside at Sri Sailam, Ahobilam and Tirumala hill tops respectively. Chenchus gather honey from the hills of Nallamala and offer a lump of honeycomb to the goddess Malamma. Mala means hill and Malamma is Hill Goddess. Malamma became Mallamma. As the matriarchy changed into patriarchy Mallamma became Mallanna and as a result of sophistication turned into Mallikarajuna of Srisaile. This bridegroom of Central India married the daughter of Himalaya spreading from East to West for achieving the unity of Bharat. Mallanna who has no shape and dimensions (like Jagannath of Puri) is the God of the tribals. Chenchus hunt with the help of dogs. Unlike the Eastern ghats, Nallamala regions are convenient abodes of running animals which can be hunted with the help of dogs. Chenchus claim that a golden dog is their ancestor. Mallanna or Mallikarjuna is the Adibhikshu who gathered his food with the help of Kala Bhairava. Mallanna is Pinakadharvi (Pinaka Archer) and Sarangapani - one who holds a deer. He is also the first person who made use of fire as an instrument and tool. So all the paraphernalia of a hunter got metamorphosed. Dhurjati a great saiva poet chides Siva for eating defiled meat from the hands of a tribal though he himself had a deer, an axe, and fire in his own hands. This has a reference to Siva at Srikalahasti, another great Saiva centre. Tinnadu a tribal of this place worshipped Siva in his own way. He cleaned the Sivalinga with his footwear, performed abhishaka with water brought in his mouth and offered defiled meat as navedyam. 'Sivanandalahari' sings the glory of this tribal devotee in the following verse :

"Margavarita paduka pasupate rangasya kurcayate  
gandushambunishhecana puranpordivyabhishakayate!  
Kincidbhakshita mamsaseshakabalam navyopaharayate  
bhaktih kim na karotyaho vanacaro bhaktavatamsayate II (64)

Along with Siva, Tinnadu the tribal devotee also is worshipped by all Saivites in South India.

We have an interesting episode in the Maha Bharata, i.e. Kiratarjunyam wherein Arjuna fights with Siva in the disguise of Kirata and obtains Pasupatastra. The tribals have a share in the ritualistic worship of the gods and goddesses in great centres like Simhachalam, Sri Sailam, Ahobilam etc. These deities are also offered forest produces like honey, Madhuka flowers (*Bassia Latifolia*) and Tummi flowers as naivedyam and in turn distributed to the pilgrims as prasadam.

Most of the Chenchus of Nallamala forest worship Obulesa Narasimha - the man-lion god of Ahobilam the fourth incarnation of Vishnu. They claim Lord Narasimha to be their brother-in-law as he fell in love with Chenchu Lakshmi their sister and married her. It was this Chenchu maiden who pacified the Lord while he was roaming in fury after killing Hiranyakasipu. Like Karma and Rebirth the concept of Avatara also is one of the basic tenets of Hinduism. The earliest reference to Narasimha possessing sharp claws and fangs is found in Taittiriya Aranyaka (X-1-6). Vayu, Brahmanda, Vishnu, Matsya, Narasimha, Kurma, Saura, Bhagavata, Agni, Naradiya, Linga and Padmapuranas and epics like Mahabharata, Harivamsa and Vishnudharmottara describe the story of Narasimha avatara. Historical names like Simhadatta, Simharakshita, Simha vishnu date back from 1st century onwards. There are hundreds of Lakshmi Narasimha temples throughout Andhra and 90% of these temples are on hill tops. Lord Narasimha is worshipped in nine forms in Andhra. Chenchus commemorate the event of Narasimha marrying Chenchu Lakshmi in song and drama. The Garudachala yakshagana, a tribal folk play dramatises this event. Chenchu Lakshmi before accepting the hand of Narasimha puts many questions with regard to his valour, capabilities, suitability and adjustability and Lord Narasimha answers thus :

"I can foot the woods all over  
Every kind of fruit will I bring  
And all the hill streams can I swim  
Every water fowl and beast can I hunt  
To the Lord of the Chenchus will I bow  
With the Chenchu folk in amity shall I live  
Certainly my beloved,  
Believe me, I swear here and now  
I shall ever by thy word abide."

Chenchu Lakshmi was satisfied with these answers, accepted his hand, and became a life partner of Lord Narasimha. Tribal couples always go hand in hand in all their endeavours, even while hunting also. This idea of their physical closeness is depicted in sculpturing the idols of Narasimha in embrace with Lakshmi. Lakshmi who forgets herself in the Lord's embrace blesses



the pilgrim devotees just by turning her neck and face towards them being at the same time in the embrace of Narasimha. This is a unique pose of the divine couple, not found elsewhere.

Narasimha found in the temple tank of Diguvapalem (Eragondapalem Taluq) is called Lanje Bayanna by the Chenchus. The idols of Bayanna in Daarabayalu and Peddacharuvu are armed with arrow and country guns. Matriarchal Chenchus offered their sisters, Bhramaramba and Chenchu Lakshmi to Mallanna and Bayanna respectively and lived in amity. But we the civilized people after sanskritizing the divine couples, quarrel, falling into two camps of Saivites and Vaishnavites. Chenchu sons-in-law enjoy the right of hunting in their father-in-law's places, whereas the tribals of Eastern-ghats do not have this privilege. Blessed are the Chenchus who have offered their sisters to the two important deities in Andhra and enriched its religion and culture. We do not know the time of Tinnadu (also known as Kannappa) whose devotion is sung in Kavyas and puranas. Annamacharya a great musical composer of 15th Century has sung a raga called 'Chenchu Kambhoji'. Another special feature of Nallamala hills and the forests surrounding them is the easy availability of powerful herbs and medicinal plants. These herbs neither grow taller nor die soon because of the rocky beds. Many botanical changes take place in the plants that exist for many years. The expert Chenchus say that some of the plants that grow in the crevices of rocks live for centuries. Siddhas, alchemists and physicians like Siddha Nagarjuna and other tantrics, utilised them properly. That is why Sri Sailam became famous in the fields of science and tantrism in the days of yore.

The tribals of Easternghats and coastal forests worship Pandavas and Draupadi. According to them, Pandava brothers have not yet returned from their Vanavasa - forest exile. That is why they worship Pandavas during their religious and seasonal festivals. The Koyas of Bhadrachalam forests worship Rama. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana during their exile lived for some time in the Parnasala on the banks of Godavari in the Bhadrachalam agency. Bhadrachalam is the most famous Srirama Pilgrimage centre in the whole of South India. In and around that sacred place many spots where the divine couple sat, bathed, ate, sported and conversed have gained importance and developed an aura. As a result Ramayana lore grew fourfold in the mouths of these tribals and folks. They narrate wonderful episodes of Ramayana not found in the Ramayana and other Ramayana versions of regional languages. The tribals have a better claim to the Valmiki Ramayana and the Mahabharata because they still follow and live upto the ideals of the heroes of these epics.

Widow marriage is very common among the tribals. But there are exceptional instances when a widow dies on the funeral pyre of her husband. This rare custom of 'Sati', highly praised in ancient Bharat, also found its way into the tribals. There are many Sati ballads in Telugu folklore but they date back to 17th and 18th centuries only. Historical ballads like Palanati Virulu Kathalu

and Katamaraju Kathalu belonging to the 12th century contain some episodes of Sati. 'The Sammakka' ballad narrates an episode of Sati performed by a Koya tribal lady. Jamapanna a Koya Chieftain (13th Century) of the Mulugu forests in Warangal district could not be easily subjugated by the mighty emperor Prataparudra of Warangal. When at last Jampanna was killed in a fierce battle his wife Sammakka performed Sati. Along with Sammakka her daughter or co-wife (according to another version) Sarakka also died on the same funeral pyre. As a result they are deified and worshipped not only by the tribals but also by other folks and highcaste Hindus. Nowadays more than 2 million people congregate to celebrate this bi-annual festival for one day in the thick forests of Mulugu. It is gaining popularity day by day.

Besides the religious ceremonies some of the seasonal festivals and other rituals and customs observed by the tribals are closely similar to our rituals and customs. Ugadi the new year day and Sankranti are the seasonal (harvest) festivals. The rituals and customs observed on these days are common to a great extent. Raw mango is an important item used in the 'Ugadi paccadi' a compulsory dish. It is an important fruit in the Manyam regions. Many customs and festivals have developed around the mango when it flowers and yields fruits in the tribal area. The residue or left over meat after partaking is buried in the harvested fields before Sankranti. This custom is a transformation of Rajula festival of the tribals. Kondareddi tribals who do 'podu' cultivation (hill slope cultivation) worship the hills and celebrate the festival in the hillslope fields and observe the same custom. The 'Ranakudupu' or 'Ranabali' celebrated in the battle fields by the victorious kings of ancient royal families also has its remnants among the tribals. The pregnant ladies among tribals offer puja at the river banks. This is similar to the "Kappatallinillata" a vanishing custom among the civilized people. The Sraddha ritual of the civilized people also resembles the worship of the manes by tribals in many ways.

With regard to oral literature there are many things common. Tribal Riddles, Proverbs, songs and tales differ only in language and expression. The types, motifs and content are strikingly similar. We have only one 'Panchatantra'; but the tribals have many. Dr. B. Rama Krishna Reddy has published some Kuvi and Manda folktales. Among Kuvi tales the story of "A fortunate boy" is similar to "Annadanaphalam" Telugu folktale. The Kuvi story of "Seven uncles and a Nephew" is similar to the "Pokanta Pottodu" Telugu folktale. "The story of a crocodile and a fox" is common to all Indian languages. "The story of a Jackal" from the Manda Texts is similar to the greedy fox that dies by biting the bow string in Panchatantra. "The story of a money lender" in the Manda Texts is again a story from Panchatantra. "The story of a fox and a crocodile" is also found in the Manda Texts. In the 'Konda or Kubi' edited by Prof. Bh. Krishna Murthy "The story of the Sadu King", "The story of six thieves", "The story of a mysterious gourd vessel" and "The story of a magic lute" have parallels in Telugu folktales. Most of these stories are common to other Indian languages also.

In my opinion these are a few examples of common heritage that we share with the tribals of Andhra Pradesh. It must be the same with the tribals of other regions of other states also. Unlike we, who have succumbed to the onslaught of western material culture, the tribals of India still practise the ideals of Sanatana Dharma. Truth, valour, simplicity and selflessness still govern their mundane life. If the tribals drift away from the main stream of our culture, mother India will further disintegrate. May God save this sacred land from the evil doers!

## TELUGU FOLK MEDICINE

### I

All living beings, human or animal, yearn for happiness and bliss. No one desires sorrow and suffering. For a happy and blissful life animals and birds, aboriginals and tribals, rustic folks and civilised men, all alike try to protect themselves from disease and distress and overcome calamities and hurdles. The effort towards prevention and cure from diseases is known as therapy. It is a natural instinct to protect oneself from disease and disaster. This is found even in animals like dogs and cats what they eat and how they behave when they are unwell. We know that these dumb animals also try to cure themselves from minor ailments. Therefore, it is natural that aboriginals, tribals and village folks as better species know the means and measures and remedies by which they can cure themselves from different kinds of diseases and ailments. Of course their knowledge of medicine might not be very scientific and well advanced and their means might be very crude and primitive. Even then the tribals and village folk have in their treasure some of the secrets which are still unknown to the scientific world. Scientific medicine, whether Indian or foreign, is the result of individual research by scholars and specialists. The tribal and folk medicines are the fruits of long experience of collective wisdom based on trial and error method coming down from one generation to another generation. Besides the two advanced medical systems of Indian origin i.e. Ayurveda and Siddha systems, the tribal and folk medical systems also have a long history. They are still in vogue in the forest and rural areas. These systems mostly depend upon either a single or multiple herbal cure. There is very little use of metals, minerals, synthetic products and other objects. Herbs, their barks, leaves, flowers, fruits, seeds, roots and bulbs form the main objects in preparing folk medicine. Besides these, the tribals use some of the Algae, Fungi, Lichens and the flesh or bones or oils of wild birds, animals and reptiles that are available in the forest areas. As the folk life is connected with tribals on one side and urbans on the other, there is some admixture of both systems of tribal and Siddha or Ayurveda in the folk medicine.

Andhra Pradesh has rich treasures of flora and fauna. The vast forests in Udayagiri, Tirupati, Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Godavari, Kurnool, Khammam, Warangal and Adilabad districts, the Nallamala mountain ranges throughout the long east coast, the ever-flowing Krishna and Godavari rivers and big lakes have endowed the Telugu region with abundant natural resources. The Srisailem, Tirupati and Nagarjuna Konda hills are said to possess abundant medicinal plants and rare herbs. The name of Nagarjuna is famous in the history of medicine and chemistry in India. With this background

"What folklore has proclaimed for centuries Science is now beginning to confirm" ("Everyday Foods that Fight Cholesterol" by Jean Carper in Reader's Digest, July 1989 P. 58)

if meaningful researches are carried out in the field of folk medicine with the help of botanists, chemists, geologists and pharmacologists some wonderful cures can be discovered and inexpensive drugs can be produced to alleviate the suffering humanity.

Indians believe that disease is a punishment for the bad acts of a person in the previous birth. "Purva janma Kritam paapam Vyaadhi rupena baadhate" is the adage. Therefore, one who cures such a resultant disease of one's past deeds is no less than god. "Vaidyo Naaraayano Harih" - verily the doctor is the all pervasive Hari. As such the physician as a saviour of life is very much respected and revered in our society. The profession of a Doctor is held in high esteem. In olden days it was a Samaritan occupation and the doctor treated his patients freely. Even when a Royal Court physician prepared any patent medicine for the use of royal family he used to set apart 1/6 quantity for charitable use. Till recently the village physician received his award only in kind, not in cash.

Indian therapy is of three types. 1) Raja Vaidyam - medical therapy, 2) Bhuta Vaidyam - witch therapy and 3) Rakshasa Vaidyam - Fire therapy. These three types of treatment very often overlap in tribal as well as folk medicine. The third type is more applicable to animals than human beings. The second type is connected sometimes with magic and sometimes with religion. Therefore it may be called magico-religious medicine which in modern parlance can be equated to psychotherapy. The first type is usually practised by Vejjus. The term 'Veju' is derived from prakrit. The original form in Sanskrit is 'Vaidya'. The term Veju is known to the Telugu tribals also. Besides these professional 'Vejjus' others also practise medicine in the villages. They come from the communities of Barbers, Harijans, Boyas also called Tenugus, Mutarasis and Weavers. But as a matter of fact every household has some grand old lady or grand father who prescribes readily available things that cure ordinary ailments. There is not a single village without an old man or woman who does not know at least one or two folk medicinal prescriptions. Elderly members of the Boya community are well versed in the knowledge of different herbs, roots and plants and their properties i.e. materia medica of the folk medicine. Some of them maintain small herb farms also. Even the scientific doctors depend upon them for the identification and supply of medical plants and herbs for preparing patent medicines and mother tinctures. They are the knowledgeable persons regarding the flora and fauna of the region. Whenever epidemics like smallpox, cholera and plague breakout, the Bhuta Vaidya who employs sorcery, magic formulae, talismans and amulets for the outward application, also uses folk medicines secretly for arresting these epidemics. The talismans and amulets also contain some powerful herbs or minerals. This practice is in vogue for human beings as well as live stock which is more important and dear to the villagers. These dumb animals which play an important role in agriculture and Dairy farming have their own veterinary doctors.

Having come from a rural background and that too from an agricultural family I have some personal experience and knowledge about the three kinds of therapies mentioned already. In my childhood, I suffered for a longtime from 'Purre Mandi' - Scalp Sepsis tumour. When the scientific doctors failed to cure it a Harijan lady from a neighbouring village (Mahalingampalli) saved me. She learnt this treatment from her mother, a native of Chintagattu village. This grand old lady's fame for curing Carbuncles, Chronic Ulcers and wounds spread far and wide. In those days this untouchable woman was taken to different villages on bullock carts and palanquins. It was a single herb cure. The leaves of that medicinal plants were crushed into paste and bandaged on the wound. What that plant is and how the medicine is prepared remains a secret known only to one person in a generation in that house. Late Nedunuri Gangadharam, a great folklorist of Andhra Pradesh, knew some patent folk medicine. From 1934 to 1951, I suffered from Epilepsy. I used to get severe fits, some times once in a year and sometimes with a gap of 5 to 6 years. Sri Gangadharam prepared some medicine with the ashes of live cockle shells burnt, Zafran and one more ingredient which he kept as a secret. I used to take it in the betel leaf daily twice in the morning and evening. Dr. Bhumanna a famous homeopath of Hyderabad also gave some medicine in 1951. I do not know which of the two drugs cured my disease but I do not get these fits from 1951 onwards.

I myself know the Mantras, i.e. mystical formulae for curing Scorpion bite, Snake bite, Naamu wherein the cattle do not chew cud and die on account of eating tender castor oil and yellow jewari plants and 'Chedavaapu' wherein the cattle get swelling in the throat causing instantaneous death. My father's auntee i.e. my grand father's sister who lived for 95 years taught me these formulae which I used to recite for long hours during lunar and solar eclipses. In my childhood I cured human beings and cattle successfully. When I came over to the city and acquired University degree in my vanity I tried to scan these formulae and find out the meaning of the "nonsensical" words employed in them. From that time onwards these mystical formulas have failed me because of my betrayal and non-belief. But even today I have a guarantee cure for jaundice. This prescription also is coming down from generations in my family. Wet smooth lime (Chuna) filtered in a thin cloth, equal to the size of a berry nut mixed in an ounce of fresh juice of old tamarind must be given to the jaundice patient early in the morning before dawn three days on alternate days. The patient has to observe strict diet. He should eat only simple cooked rice or chapati without any vegetable and oil for three days. After three days the patient can take some dal along with rice for three days. But he should avoid all kinds of oil in his food. He should not apply oil to his hair and body even. Within a fortnight jaundice will disappear. The patient can eat anything after he is free from Jaundice.

There is a village called Nandanam in Warangal District. In that village there is a family of village doctors who give antirabies medicine. People from far

off places go over to this village for the treatment of dog bites. Similarly for snake bites people rush to Lingampalli, another village in Warangal District. Some folk medical practitioners cure asthma by giving special herbs to eat. Sometimes the patient is advised to inhale the smoke from a herb or swallow a small live fish whose mouth is just shut with some patent medicine. The Kshatriya families of Puttur village in Chittur District of Andhra Pradesh are expert bonesetters. People from far off places go to Puttur for major orthopaedic treatment. I had personal experience of their treatment when I had a dislocation of the right shoulder. Likewise a 'Vejju' belonging to Koya tribe from Devarapalli village of the East Godavari District is an expert in curing Tuberculosis, blood pressure and asthma with a single herb. Annika Balayya belonging to Konda Kammara tribe of Kottur village in Godavari District has a patent drug for curing hysteria. He administers the medicine only for three days. Besides such special medicines and prescriptions known only to a few, other prescriptions for ordinary ailments like cough, cold, spleen, bilis, headache, stomach ache, sprains, sore eyes, ear pain, tooth ache, whitlow etc., are known to many elderly villagers. Every house in the village has some grand old lady who knows some prescription or the other. These old ladies are very well-informed about the ailments of small children and the curative measures to be applied.

## II

Now I would like to mention some folk medicines which I came to know from my mother and my wife.

Small children below the age of one year are given gruel mixed with sweet oil everyday for good health. After they are bathed they are rocked to sleep in the cradles. Beneath the cradle, Pittakaalu a small herb resembling bird's foot, the peel of garlic, omum (Henbane seeds) and sweet oil are put in live coals so as to raise smoke which wards off all the diseases of children. For all kinds of stomach disorders of the babies Mosaambaram mixed in mother's milk is given. For children's whooping cough the Bhasmam (clax) of Muluka roots (Indian Night shade) mixed in honey is fed in small doses. The juice of Sadaapaaku (Garden Rue leaves) also cures whooping cough. Hingu (Assafoetida) wrapped in cotton and burnt and mixed with mother's milk is fed for all kinds of stomach aches and disorders of the small babies. Hingu cures diabetes also. For ear pain Omum crushed in water is dropped inside the ear. A pinch of edible Soda is put into the ear and lime juice is poured over it which at once foams out and arrests ear pains. Ass milk is very good for arresting children's cough and asthma. Banyan tree milk is fed to the babies as an antidote for ring worms in stomach. Banyan tree milk is pasted over the swollen glands under the cheeks- (mumps). For mumps gold neck ornament is worn. Gold contact is the cure. If the babies have constipation, small quantity of castor oil mixed with hot milk is fed. Sometimes the fibre from tamarind is inserted into the anus for easing the bowels if the baby is not in a position to take anything by mouth.

Rasakarpuram (Calomel) mixed with mother's milk is fed for easing

bowels of babies. For arresting loose motions small quantity of opium mixed with milk or Gasagasaalu (opium seeds or Poppyseeds) grinded and cooked in ghee mixed with sugar is fed to the babies and children. For arresting vomitings grinded cucumber seeds (after removing the peel) mixed with milk is fed. Hingu (Assafoetida) wrapped in cotton and boiled, mixed with milk is also fed for arresting vomitings of the babies. It is believed that Porcupine eats all kinds of medicinal plants. Therefore when a Porcupine is hunted its abdomen is opened and the contents therein are dried and preserved. It is called Edu Potta. It is also useful for stomach disorders of babies.

Here are some of the folk medicines for grown ups. Dried ginger or the horn of a spotted deer also called axis (Duppi Kommu) is rubbed over a stone with water and the paste that accrues as a result, is applied over the forehead and temples and then fomented with live coals, for arresting all kinds of headaches. Dried ginger, Garlic and Marking-nut are called "Daridra Chintaamani" i.e. poorman's wish fulfilling jewels. They are readily available in every house as they are very cheap and useful for many ailments. Garlic is an antidote for different kinds of colds. It is a saviour of women in child birth confinement. Garlic bunch covered with thick red soil and a piece of cloth is to be cooked in smouldering ashes. With the peel removed and mixed with honey it is no less than a nectarine prescription for different kinds of Vaatarogas i.e. Gout, Rheumatism etc. Four marking nuts are to be boiled in milk everyday and if that milk is drunk for 40 days all kinds of venereal diseases disappear. Turmeric powder with hot milk or turmeric hot-water-vapours cure all kinds of cold. Ginger juice with honey or wood apple shell's paste with honey are good antidotes for bile and acidity. Omum with the juice of Tulasi (sacred basil) leaves cures cough. Bandage of Lime (Chunam) mixed with butter cures whitlow. Paste made of Chilukapari (Hingtsha Repens) leaves mixed with salt also cure whitlow. If one washes one's hands with the juice of Budddagaase (Solanum Nigrum) leaves, he gets rid of jaundice. Tender Bel (Bilva) leaves with pepper seeds and salt crystals, chewed while sleeping for a week, also cure jaundice. The juice of Vaavinta i.e. Ajagandha (Cleome Pentaphylla) leaves cures deafness. A normal man's ears burn if that juice is dropped into his ears. But a deaf man does not react to it. These eardrops must be administered daily until he gets the burning sensation. That kind of a reaction is a good sign of recovery from deafness. Castor oil, or decoction of Sonamukhi leaf (Cassia Obovata = Country Senna) or powder of Katla (Andropogon Aciculatus) seeds or the curry of Pulla Baccali (Country Sorrel) leaves is a good antidote for constipation. Menti ginjalu (Fenugreek seeds) well soaked in curds if eaten with empty stomach or tender pomegranate, Jaajikaaya (Nut meg), opium, date fruit, calcined and smouldered and then made pills or pellets with honey or Bel fruit mixed with Sugar cure all kinds of diarrhoea. Raw onion juice, or Sandalwood paste, or Sandalwood oil drops in cold water, or lime juice with cold water, work as antidotes for sunstroke and excessive heat. Jaggery water also gives cooling effect while jaggery causes heat. The soft internal part of Kalabanda Ghritha Kumari (Indian Aloes) mixed with candy or sugar cures



burning sensation in the urinary track on account of excessive heat. A wet cloth put on the navel also arrests that kind of complaint. The juice of Julpati leaves is dropped on the opposite side of the shadow of a person suffering from partial head ache during the rising sun in the morning. The Julapati leaves mixed with Jaggery are made into pills. Three pills at a time, morning, evening and next morning, cure fever occurring on alternate days. Chronic fevers are cured by applying the milk of Jilledu i.e. Arka (Gigantic Gigantea) on the backbone of the patient and covering it with the soil underneath that plant at the hour of dawn. The boils in the armpits disappear if a cat eats curd rice applied over those boils. They can be cured by burning them with the fire at the end of the Nulaka thread used for lacing cots. Guggilam (Gum belledium) sulphur and sweet oil must be rubbed with water until white foam is formed. If that foam is applied it cures Scabies. One's own urine pissed over the skin effected by Scabies or ulcers is also a definite cure.

Like, Garlic and Marking-nut, the three fruits (Triphalas) namely Karaka Kaaya i.e. Haritaki (Chebula Myrobalan) Taanikaaya i.e. Vibhitaki (Belleric Myrobalan) and Usirikaaya i.e. Aamalaka (Emblic Myrobalan) are also very useful folk medicines. Karaka cures sore eyes and mouth sores. It is also useful for cough. The burnt coconut shell mixed with coconut oil cures skin cracks. The leaves of Adavi caamanti (Wild chamomile) crushed and bandaged cure all kinds of wounds sustained by sword, axe etc. It is antiseptic like turmeric. Ass milk and crab curry if taken for forty days, cures chronic asthma. Old leather burnt and mixed with oil cures footwear bitings. For all kinds of sprains, muscular or nervous pains the juice of marking-nut is applied and wet lime (Chunam) is smeared over the affected part of the body. If a nail or thorn pierces into the body hot juice of marking nut is a guaranteed antiseptic cure. The leaves of Tangedgu (Cassia Auriculata) are crushed and bandaged for all kinds of joint pains. If sweet oil boiled with marking nuts and Kaccuraalu (Curcuma Zedores) is applied to the head, hair does not fall and does not become gray. If the paste of the seeds of Sitaphal i.e. white custard apple are applied to the hair, lice or louse in the hair disappear. But one should be very careful while applying the paste. If it goes into the eyes the eye sight will be lost. The juice of Puppi (Acalypha) leaves and the juice of the roots of Tella Usirika (White Myrobalan) are antidotes for scorpion and snake bites respectively.

The Telugu folks know the medical properties of the flora, herbs and vegetables that grow in the villages and therefore make best use of them.

Vegetarian as well as non-vegetarian dishes of different kinds of birds and reptiles are prescribed as tonics and curatives. For example, Pigeon curry is prescribed for paralysis, Camaru Kaaki (a kind of crow) curry for epilepsy, house sparrow curry for impotency and Iguana curry for Lumbago. Tribals as well as village folks enjoy peacock curry not only as a royal delicacy but also for curative purposes of many diseases like Asthma and Hiccups. The ashes of peacock feathers control vomitings, the oil extracted from peacock fat cures

rheumatic pains; its liver curry or liver extract regulates blood circulation and removes all kinds of poisons from the blood. By inhaling the smoke got out of burning peacock feathers one gets cured of snake bite, as peacock happens to be the natural enemy of snakes. Peacock feathers are kept in books and book shelves to avoid moths and book worms.

The curry made out of Plantain tree flowers is supposed to kill worms in the stomach. Bodakaakara i.e. Jangli Karela (*Memordica Roxb*) is a tasty vegetable. There are two types of this wild creeper - male and female. Only female creepers yield vegetables. Both have bulbs under ground. Conception can be avoided if the juice of the male creeper's bulb mixed with pepper is fed for three days during menstruation. The fresh and pure juice of Amalaka (*Embica Myrobalan*) wood mixed with turmeric if taken for 40 days morning and evening cures women's menorrhoea and men's gonorrhoea. Kaakara i.e. Karela (Bitter gourd) is a useful vegetable abundantly grown in villages. Diabetic patients should eat as often as possible the curries prepared out of its vegetables and leaves. The juice of the vegetable and leaves in equal quantity mixed with another equal quantity of lime juice taken with empty stomach cures jaundice, anaemia, diabetes, and worms in the stomach. Alloneredu also known as Jamun (*Rose Apple*) fruits, decoction of its wood and powder of the seeds are very useful in curing diabetes and stones in the urine bladder. The powder of Cucumber seeds cures ulcers in the intestines. The milky juice from Boppayi (*Papaya*) is an antidote for all kinds of poisons like scorpion and snake bites. By applying Papaya milky juice warts and corns that grow on the face and neck drop out. Pregnant women avoid it for fear of abortion. The bandage of dry chillies mixed with tamarind leaves cures joint pains. Mulaga (*Horse Radish*) is again a popular and tasty vegetable. The decoction of its wood cures paralysis. Villagers prepare country liquor with the flowers of Ippa i.e. Madhuka (*Bassia Longi folia*). Fomented flowers are bandaged to cure swelling of the testicles. Gorinta i.e. Mehendi (*Hena*) which is applied to the palms and nails by women for decoration has good medical properties. It cures excessive heat and gives cooling effect. It cures whitlow. Pregnant women eat it as a preventive measure for antiseptic. Mouth sores disappear by gargling with its decoction. Flowers and leaves pounded and boiled in sweet oil serve as a good hair tonic and cure chundu i.e. dandruff (scurf). Chandrakaanta (*Mirabilis Jalapa*) of white yellow and red variety has a wild growth in villages. The pure juice from the bulb of the respective plant cures the respective colour discharges of women. The curry of Tamarind flowers is not only tasty but also cures jaundice. Tulsi plant which is worshipped in every Hindu house is supposed to be a Sthaavara Vaidya-immobile physician. The decoction of Tulsi leaves and flowers works as a stimulant, cures ordinary fevers, cough, cold, phelm and helps digestive system. Mixed with dry ginger it cures stomach ache and mixed with honey it cures throat sores. Likewise Neem (*Margosa*) also is a boon to the poor folk. It works wonders on contagious diseases. Water in which Neem flowers are soaked purifies blood and cures small-pox. The Neem flower decoction kills all kinds of worms in

intestines. Neem oil and gum cure skin diseases. The root of the parasite grown on a neem tree cures cancer. The root of the Attapatti (sensitive plant) is tied around the neck of children for curing cough. The crush of its leaves cures all kinds of wounds and ulcers. Villagers use Uttareni (Pricidy chaff) or Neem (Margosa) or Marri Uda (hanging root of Banyan) for brushing teeth. Uttareni called Apamarga in Sanskrit cures constipation, piles, phelgm, and skin diseases. Karivepa (Curry leaf) cures blood pressure. Buddagaase i.e. Kamanci (Solinum Nigrum) is good for piles, anaemia and heart diseases. Galijeru (Spreading Hogweed) a green vegetable is good for digestion. It works as an appetiser. Tummikura i.e. Drona pushpi in Sanskrit (Dron) is again a green vegetable the decoction of which kills ring worms. It cures jaundice and sore eyes. Baccali Kura (Indian Spinach = Night Shade) cures excessive heat and gives cooling effect. It is an antidote for scorpion and snake bites. The juice of its leaves is smeared over burn wounds. Like Tulsi, Bilva is also sacred for Hindus. Siva is worshipped with its leaves. It cures all kinds of posions and contagious diseases. Mullangi (Radish) leaves cure indigestion, tuberculosis and dissolve stones in the urine bladder. Vavinta (Cleome Pentaphylla) as well as Vavili (Five leaved chaste) are available in plenty in all villages. They cure rheumatism and arthritis. Water boiled with the Five leaved chaste is used for bathing during post-maternity period.

Fruit is not a delicacy to the tribals and folks. It is a natural food bestowed by god in bounty and plenty. Fruits like Tumiki (Tinduka in Sanskrit - diospyrus glutinosa) Paala (White berry) Morri, Regu (Badari in Sanskrit = Zizyphus jujuba), Taati (Palm), Ita (date), Panasa (jack), Sitaphala (White custard apple), Neredu (Jambu = rose apple) and Citamota fruits are available in abundance in the forests and villages. In olden days these fruits were available freely. Nowadays they are also to be purchased like Maamidi (Mango), Jaama (guava) and Arati (Plantain). All these fruits available seasonally have nutrition and medical values. Fully ripe mango juice mixed with 1/8 part of honey twice a day is a good liver cure. Two ounces of mango juice mixed with one ounce of cold water thrice a day is a very good general tonic. If one chews mango jelly and takes a cup of water before going to bed at night it works as a laxative early in the morning. The paste prepared out of solid mango wood (ceva) if applied all over the body cures blood pressure. It is good for heart diseases also. Ripe mango juice mixed with milk taken while going to bed helps semen growth. The juice of an unripe mango boiled or smouldered is an antidote for sun stroke and excessive heat. The decoction prepared out of mango bark one to three o in its juice a day cures diarrhoea. Mango gum mixed with sugar is a guarantee cure for excessive diarrhoea and bloody stools. Fully ripe guava cures gastric ulcers. Pomegranates augment blood supply and alconolise acidity. Munjalu (Kernel of the unripe palm fruit) keeps up the water baiance in the body. Palm and date fruits and Gegulu or Tegalu (Sprouts of young palm) are highly potential and add to libido. Fully ripe plantains and white custard apples are laxative. Panassa (Jack fruit) has high caloric values. Water milon has cooling qualities and helps blood supply.

Maredu (aegle marmelos) reduces excessive heat of the body.

These are a few examples of folk medicines cited casually by my mother and my wife. If one makes a concerted effort to glean such material from the elderly folk living in the villages one gets much information regarding this.

Like Ayurveda, folk medicine also gives equal importance to preventive measures as well as curative measures. But in folk medicine these prescriptions are covered in the name of rituals and rites. Many taboos ordaining what not to do and what to do, what not to eat and what to eat during certain periods and occasions pertain to medical advice only. For example, fasting on the religious occasions like Sivaraatri and Ekaadasi, partaking of gingily and jaggery preparations during Sankranti festival, use of Aamalaka i.e. Emblic myrobalan during Kaartika purnima, smearing turmeric during bathing by ladies are some of the preventive measures hidden under rituals. The taboo on biting finger nails lest one should become a destitute is a hygienic precaution. One should not bite paddy with front tooth because the shining polish of the tooth will be corroded by the rough surface of the husk. If one brushes his teeth while walking he has to dig a big tank so as to cover the whole area wherein he walked. This only indicates that one spoils such a large extent of area by spitting if he brushes his teeth while walking. One becomes a destitute if he washes his feet leaving some spots unwashed. This warning means not to leave any part unwashed which may contain some germs. By kissing a baby soon after it sucks the milk, the strength of the baby drains out. This is only to avoid any kind of contamination of the little baby's mouth wet with mother's milk.

Now I would like to narrate some Telugu sayings, proverbs and songs that contain folk medicines, preventive as well as curative.

1. Lankhanam Paramaushadham = Fasting is the best curative medicine - in ordinary fevers etc.,
2. Sonthi Sodhistundi = Dry ginger cleanses i.e. drives away general ill health. (Purgative :)
3. Peru leni rogaaniki Penneru = The disease that can not be diagnosed can be cured by Physalis Rattan.
4. Sirisha pancakam Vishaharanam = The five parts i.e. wood, root, flower, fruit, and leaf of Sirisha tree are antidotes for poison.
5. Panca vepalu Pedda roganni Pataapancalu Cestaayi = The five types of Margosa trees i.e. Vepa, Turaka Vepa, Karivepa, Pedda Vepa and Nela

Vamu drive away Leprosy.

6. Ulli Padi tallula Pettu = Onion is equal to ten mothers.
7. Ulli cesina melu talli ceyaledu = The good done by garlic cannot be done by a mother.
8. Kudu Veraite gunamu Veraunu = If the food habits change the character also changes.
9. Gutilo deepam kukshilo annam = Lit the lamp in the niche and fill the belly i.e. one should take his evening meal very early. (Jains do it).
10. Mantrasaani mundu marmamu daacinatlu = Like hiding the secret (organ) before a midwife.
11. Maatale mantraalu maakule mandulu = Only words are mantras (mystic formulas) and plants are medicines.
12. Maaninde mandu = That which cures is the best medicine.
13. Mitamu tappite amritamaina Vishame = Even the nectar becomes poison sans temperance.
14. Mukku Undevaraku Padisamu untundi = As long as there is nasal track there is cold also.
15. Rogiki rosham ekkuva = A sick person has more anger i.e. a sick person easily gets irritated.
16. Raagamu raanivaadu, rogamu lenivaadu ledu = There is none who does not know music and who does not fall sick.
17. Rogaaniki mandu gaani ayurdaayaniki manda? = There is medicine for disease but not for longevity of life.
18. Vindu mandu mudu putale = Doses are only for three (1 + 1 + 1) times a day.
19. Vaidyuni Peru cheppina rogamu Povuna? = Does the disease get cured by merely hearing the name of the doctor?
20. Rasa debba tagalanide ranku pundu maanadu = Without a dose of mercurine medicine syphilis would not be cured.
21. Mardanam gunavardhanam = By intense grinding the quality of the medicine improves.

22. Tinnadaanikante ariginde balam = The digested food provides more strength than all the food that is swallowed.
23. Leta gummadikaaya Vishatulyam = Unripe pumpkin is equal to poison.
24. Tini Caccinaava tinaka caccinaava ani adiginaadata Yamudu = It is said that Yama the Lord of Death asked - Did you die by eating or by not eating. It means over eating as well as starvation cause death.
25. Perati Cettu manduku raadu = The herb from ones own backyard is not useful for medicine; which means - the advice of ones own kith and kin is not very much cared for. Familiar herb is not valued.

Now I quote some Telugu folk songs which contain useful medical prescriptions for different kinds of diseases. It was late Sri Tirumala Ramanuja Swami a great Ayurvedic doctor of Andhra Pradesh who published a couple of articles revealing the medical prescriptions contained in some children's songs during 1940. At the instance of Late Survaram Pratapa Reddi, Editor of Golkonda Patrika, I met Sri Ramanuja Swami who explained to me the meanings of these songs in 1954. Most of these songs are childrens' especially girls', play songs.

The following songs are sung by girls while playing 'Bitti' a Pattern of game wherein two girls holding each others hands fast and planting their feet on the ground firmly, whirl fast round and round clockwise leaning back 60 degrees slanting.

Oppulakuppa - Vayyaari bhaama  
 Minapa pappu - menti pindi  
 Taati bellam - taguvagu neyyi  
 Guppedu tinte - Kulukulaade  
 Nadumu gatti - naa maatabatti

(O girl of infinite charms  
 O girl of personified beauty  
 Blackgram dal and Menthi Powder (Powder of Fenugreek seeds)  
 Jaggery of palm tree - cooked in ghee properly  
 If eaten a handful daily  
 The waist which is shaky  
 Becomes strong - this is my word.

This is a tonic for sexual potency for women. Another version of the same song gives out a prescription for curing impotency of males.

Oppula Kuppa - Vayyaari bhaama  
 Sanna biyyam - Caaya pappu

Minapa pappu - merika biyyam  
 Paalu neyyidi - Paasam vandu  
 Ni mogadu tinte - aananda mante

(O girl of infinite charms  
 O girl of Personified beauty  
 Take superfine rice, bleached pulses  
 And blackgram dal  
 Cook them with ghee and milk  
 If it is fed to your husband  
 You will enjoy life.)

The following song is sung by girls while playing 'Chemma Chekka', a kind of game wherein two or more than two girls standing face to face jump at each other and strike each other's palms and jump back and go on repeating. It is a good hopping exercise for girls.

Cemma Cekka - Caaredesi bukka  
 Atlu poyyanga - aaragincanga  
 Ratnaala cemmacekka - ranguleyyanga  
 Mutyala cemmacekka - Mugguleyyanga  
 Pagadaala cemmacekka - Pandireyyanga  
 Panditla Baaludu - Parugu lettanga  
 Paaliya Vaccena - Padati Padmaakshi

This contains three prescriptions - one for primary amenorrhoeas, two for sterility and three for abundance of breast milk.

1) If a handful of peel of Red cemma (Long Beans) is eaten along with a dosa every day morning primary amenorrhoea is cured.

2) If the peel of the white variety is taken in the same manner sterility is cured in women.

3) If lotus seeds powdered and cooked in ghee are eaten women in child bed get abundance of breast milk to feed their babies.

Another play song of girls gives out a prescription for Eczema.

Kaalla gajji - Kankaalamma  
 Vegu Cukka - Velaga mogga  
 Mogga Kaadu - Modugu niru  
 Niru Kaadu - Nimmala vaaya  
 Vaaya Kaadu - Vaayanta Kura  
 Kura Kaadu - Gummadi pandu  
 Pandu Kaadu - Paapada misam

Misam Kaadu - Miriyaala potu  
 Potu Kaadu - Bommala setti  
 Setti Kaadu - Saamala mannu  
 Mannu Kaadu - Manoi gandham cekka  
 Lingu lituku - Pandemaala patuku  
 Kaalu pandinatlu - Kadaku tisi pettu.

There are four versions of this song. Some versions give a few ingredients and some give a long list of ingredients used in preparing this medicine for curing Eczema. Whatever the list of ingredients may be the primary ingredients in all the songs are only three. They are common to all songs. The rest are substitutes only. The Primary and most important ingredients are

1) Kacuraalu = Curcuma Zedores; 2) Baavancaalu = Psoralea Corylitolia and 3) Velaga Mogga = Mercury. If mercury is not available the juice of Palaasa tree (Bastard teak) or lime juice or juice of Cleome Pentaphylla or Chalmogara seed oil, or seeds of Bastard Teak, or Pepper Seeds, or tender Baniyan leaves or Iron clax or Sandal wood oil will serve as substitutes. They are to be well grinded and bandaged over the effected parts of the legs. This is a guaranty cure for Eczema.

Eczema can also be cured by bandaging with yellow plantain peels or by applying rice gruel on affected parts of the body, during nights.

Prescription for snake bite is suggested in the following philosophical song.

Caavadura I paamu - Cappidi debbalaku  
 Bhaavinci Vairaagyamane badite debba padite gaani  
 Maacikaaya raasmu Bisari Veru tecci  
 Kaaci posina gaani - Kaavaramanagadu

(This snake does not die by insipid beatings until it is beaten by a heavy cudgel of dispassion. Juice of Oak galls (*Quercus Infectoria*) and Beesari (*Asparagus Racemosus*) roots are to be boiled. If that decoction is given then only its arrogance will be curbed.)

The following play song, while tossing with Gaccakaayalu (*Guilandina Bonducella*) gives out a prescription for bone fractures.

Kondamida Vendi ginne  
 Kokkiraaju Kaalu Virige  
 Daanikem mandu  
 Vepaaku pasupu, Vellulli gadda  
 Nunemma bottu nutokka dhaara.

This is a dialogue between two girl players. One informs that



Kokkireju's leg is broken and the other asks for a remedy. Then the first girl informs that Margosa leaves, turmeric and garlic with hundred and one drops of oil are to be bandaged over the broken leg for its cure.

This is only an outline of the vast information that is available with the folk regarding the use of medicine. If interested folklorists and pharmacologists collect all the necessary information and feed the Medical Researchers in the Central Drug Research Institute and Central Indian Medical Plants Organisation they can find out really good medicines which will be within the reach of common man in an indigent country like ours. Moreover these medicines prepared with herbs and indigenous plants will not have dangerous side-effects like other medicines of foreign system.

## **Some Other Works of the Author.**

- 1 Telugu Virudu
- 2 Vira Gaathalu
- 3 Telugu Jaanapada Geya Saahityamu
- 4 Marugu Padina Manikyaalu
- 5 Charitrakekkani Charitaarthulu
- 6 Urdu-Telugu Dictionary
- 7 Sri Satya Sai Vinnapamulu
- 8 Folklore of Andhra Pradesh(English)
- 9 Folk tales of Andhra Pradesh (English)
- 10 South Indian Folksongs (English)
- 11 Telugu Folk Songs (Unpublished) (English)