



## AP Culture

### INTRODUCTION

Folk art, the unassuming creative expression of millions of village people is a treasure house of their customs and group behavior, beliefs and concerns, pains and pleasures, in fact their very ways of life. Andhra Pradesh, like any other state in the country, is rich in its traditional folk art forms. Folk life and folk art are intertwined with each other. These art forms may broadly be divided into three groups. (1) The musical forms, Dance forms and the Drama forms.

The musical forms are again divided into 2 major sub divisions: (i) Songs- both individual and group. And (ii) the ballads. Besides, there are several skills which showed the manipulative techniques of some groups and individuals. In course of time individual performers remained though the customs no more exist.

There are 7 diff kinds of performances on the basis of nature of performance.

- (1) Songs      (2) Folk narratives (ballads)    (3) Dances      (4) Theatre      (5) Skills
- (6) Individual Performances that were originally part of a ritual
- (7) Other rural entertainments.

To know about them is also to know the entire spectrum of Telugu village life and their cultural gamut from time immemorial.

**(1) SONGS:** The natural outburst of pain and note or an utterance. In other words, they forget the troubles of their toil in song. These songs can be classified on basis of sentiment they devote love songs, humorous songs, pathos songs etc. Songs are interwoven with everyday life of human beings. They may listed as

**(i) Songs for children:** Lullabies and cojoling songs are most popular in every household of Andhra. Lullabies (Uyyala patalu) are often universalized in the feminine imagination.

Eg:      "Jo Achyutananda Jo Jo mukunda".....  
            "Rama lali – Megha syama lali".....  
            "Chandamama rave, jabilli rave".....

**(ii) Play songs by children:**

When child comes of age when it can play games songs are sung by them. They are endowed with 2 imp. Qualities. One rhythmic beat and alliteration. There is always an incremental ending, with same word repeating at the end of the line.

Eg:      Kalla gajja – Kankanamma.....  
            Oppula kuppa – Vayyari bhama....  
            Chemma Chekka – Charadesi mogga

The gobbi and Boddamma songs sung by girls are popular in coastal Andhra and Telangana areas respectively. Among the humorous songs well known song. Popular sister in laws taunting the brother in law who comes for festival to inlaw's house.

            "Bava – bava – Panneeru  
            Bavanu Pattuku tanneru".....

### (iii) Marriage and love songs.

Marriages and marital rituals are the occasions when songs find a befitting opportunity for expression in all hues and colours. Every moment every ritual in Telugu marriages has corresponding song. “Mangala harati” – Signify the sober moments of wedding for the new couple.

The hilarious songs “Viyyalavari Patalu” sung by groom’s side and bride’s side ladies are full of joviality” The pathos song ‘poyiragadamma janaki’ is sung when bride is being sent to her inlaw’s house after wedding.

The love songs sung by women mostly are full of very delicate sentiments of lord and unusual imaginary. The duets are little obscene and sung even now by villagers while regturning from fields.

Eg: “Chal Mohanaranga”.....

“”guttivankaya kura”.....

**(iv) Work songs:** The village folk engage themselves in song while working especially in fields. Imaging gives them a ‘laya’ to the work they are doing. People who lift water sing songs called mota patalu’ Their songs are directly related to work rhythm.

Eg: ‘aa-hum’

‘tummeda’

‘chandamama’

### (v) Ritual songs and devotional songs:

Ritual songs are sung during social and religious rituals at home and religious devotional songs are sung by devotees in temple and gatherings. Songs are sung by women befitting the occasion and reflect symbolic significance of the festivals like Deepawali, Vinayaka Chaturdi etc, Atlataddi, Gobbemma, Batakamma etc.

Devotional songs: These are divided into 2 kinds (i) those which praise the lord called as ‘Kirtanalu’ and those bring philosophical myth of human life called ‘Tattvalu’. Andhra is rich in both varieties kirtanas of Bhadrachala Ramdas, Tumu Narasimha Das and others are famous and also used for Kolatam and ‘Chekka Bhajana’ dance famous.

Among tattavalu- Songs of Eganti Laxman, Potuluri Veerabrahmam, Dudekula Siddappa and several others are famous. They are monistic on nature and reflect Raja Yoga and Achala Yoga Philosophies of life. Many denounce caste system.

Though songs do not show the people in action they cannot be categorized as a performing art. The real performing arts are those folk artists play for others. They include Naratives, dances, dramas, skills and other entertainments.

### FOLK DANCES:

According to cultural anthropologists, the earliest man’s creative endeavour, could expressing joy and celebrating victory. This must be the earliest stage of traditional dances as they developed in the agricultural milieu. Then follows the village ritual in which many of them are procession dances moving forward with the pujari carrying the ghatan. The role playing dances of animals became a part of Jataras and in due course given a special place of honour.

As a natural adjunct, dance narratives have soon become important to propagate the beliefs of a society based on religious ideologies and have been vehicles of self expression and fulfilled the needs of the spiritual minded rural folk of Andhra.

### DAPPU DANCE:

‘Dappu’ is the most common instrument used in Andhra for making people aware of or publicizing an event. It is an accompanying instrument for many folk performing arts, especially the dances.

The 'dhup' must have got its name from the sound it gives, As a dance from it has developed its own style. In almost all the castes of working classes, dappu dance along with Karra Samu is a constant feature. The dancers usually move in a circular way while at a standing position and in a linear way of two rows while in procession. Each dance performance starts with 'Prasthanam' dappu.

Two important innovations: In the dappu dance are the 'Kolata' dappu and dappu accompanied by songs. In spite of the existence of several other types of drums, none can beat the thrill that a dapper can create in the minds and hearts of the countless villagers of Andhra even today.

#### **BUTTA BOMMALU:**

Butta bommalu (Basket puppets) got their name from the material with which they are made-thin bamboo strips woven into the form of a long circular basket figure and played in open. The figure is a huge one of about 8 ft high with 3 ft radius. The bottom part is hollow and light. So the performer gets into it and carry the figure easily.

These figures dancing to the rhythm of the dappu is a very pleasant sight and will be a highlight in any religious procession. The figures are of different mythical heroes Rama and Hanuman, Krishna and Satya Bhama etc

The form is particularly popular in West and East Godavari districts and is slowly replacing the traditional prabhas in the other northern districts.

#### **PULI VESHAM:**

Puli Vesham ( a tiger-play) is perhaps both with Hindus and Muslims in Andhra. This is usually performed during Dassera festival and "peerla" festival. It is an open air performance extending the whole village or larger part of town.

It is believed to be the remnant of the joyful celebration of the prehistoric man's mimetic expression of his act of killing a ferocious tiger to his associates. The dance denotes the ferocious animal's prowling and its attack. Usually contains 2 performers the tiger and archer. The costuming takes for about 8 hrs with tiger's mask. As this is a ferocious dance the performer needs to do udhruta nritya. The well built dancers show not only their prowess but also muscles indulging acrobatics.

As a sheer dance which irritates one of the most ferocious of the animals, the tiger-dance is heart throbbing. The popularity indicates that tigers are more prominent in forests. There is no variation in dance styles of either Hindu or Muslim except seasons.

**TAPPETA GULLU:** It is a virile folk dance confined to the three north coastal districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam. Performed by Cowherds and Shepherds to propitiate Rain Goddess, Gangamma during the village festivals. Celebrated Bhishma Ekadasi to the end of the month of Vaisakha. There are two distinct parts in Tappeta Gullu dance. The first one is the ritualistic dance performed during the worship of Gangamma – propitiation ceremonies and the second part is the performance during the night of the jatara (festival of village Goddess) with many descriptive and narrative songs on her greatness. Tappeta Gullu performers sing the dasavatara stories during the festive dance of dasavataralu with great favour and devotion. The dance group fervor and devotion. The dance group numbering 12 to 30 is a constant sight either in village festival or a family ritual with peculiar costumes. Most of the well-trained dance groups know 35 variations of the tatas and they will be able to dance to all these but Adi, Ata, Rupaka, Misra are mostly used talas. The dancers also show their expertise in several acrobatics and skills like forming a human tree standing on one another, dancing on a new pot full of water, carrying 3 pots on their heads while dancing etc.

The performers of Yadava community are strict followers of tradition-they enjoy participating in the night long dance performances during village festivals, emphasizing the combined role of entertainment and devotional involvement.

#### **GARAGALU:**

Garaga means a pot, usually made of brass and decorated with turmeric and vermillion and coloured cloth held on the head of the artist who dances to the accompanying music beat of two dappu. The garaga has a five headed serpent with lingam and umbrella covering lingam.

In older days, it was also known as ghatam. This was borne by pujari (ox) the ghanachari of local goddess and goes round the village and households worship it treating as goddess and make their offerings to pujari. After the festival garaga is kept in local temple until next festival. The pujari usually belong to washerman's potters or Asadi community.

The use of garaga (A.P, Karagarru in T.N and Karige in Karnataka) on various occasions show how the household rituals moves on into religious rituals finally becomes an art form practiced by several communities. It is a vigorous dance performed by 12-16 dancers using many jatis while dancing and synchronizing gestures. Sometimes artists carry bottles instead of garagas and dance. This is called sis moti,

This energetic dance form is more prevalent today in the East and West Godavari districts and can be seen performed in the festivals of all village goddesses. When in height of the festival, these dancers even bite a cock or hen to death, clutching it with their teeth, though this practice is almost extinct now.

#### **BONALU:**

It is a ritual in honour of mother Goddess it is the shortened form of 'Bhojanalu' or food offering made to the goddess by all women of the community. It is celebrated with great pomp in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The several Goddesses like Katta maisamma, Pchamma, Ujjaini Mahankali etc worshipped the offerings are of two kinds such as annual thanks and fulfillment of vows taken which involves intense participation in festival. Bonalu becomes a procession dance.

The pujari with the image of goddess goes to each door step and receive offerings made by women folk. He is accompanied by potharaju. Who enthralls the people's involvement by dancing to the rhythms of the dappus. It becomes a community dance only by male members while females carry bonalu. It is a seven day long festival celebrated by young and old: Dance is only ancillary and its purpose is to invoke people to participate in community celebrations, besides, the devotees expressing their faith through rhythmic.

#### **FOLK NARRATIVES:**

A ballad is a narrative song intended for singing usually focused on a single incident, especially on the resolution. It is highly emotive forms. The ballad singing tradition in Andhra is an off shoot of attempt of the Veera Saiva cult to propagate Saivism. It had its origins in 'jangam Katha' a story told by jangams (a veera Saiva wandering sect) and thus is often used as its synonym.

#### **1) JANGAM KATHA**

Jangams belong to Veera Saiva community who propagated Saivism in Andhra through their ballads called Jangam Kathalu. The reciters are also called budige jangalu, budige or dhakki or 'gummeta' being major percussion instrument for rhythm to the narration. They were perhaps the originators of ballad singing tradition in Andhra.

Though the jangams originally restricted their recitation to Saiva stories later included none Saivite also. By 19th century they've mastered art of ballad singing. They are itinerant singers moving from place to place giving performances in villages and took to singing ballads which spoke of men and women of high

esteem by rural audiences along with religious & heroic ballads. All jangam Kathas like Bobbili Katha, Desinga Raju Katha, Balanagamma Katha and Kamboja Raju Katha were written in jangam 'ragada' metre. The jangam katha has three participants. The main narrator (Kathakudu) and other two following him (varthalu). Providing the rhythm and singing refrain like 'bhali-bhali', 'tandana-tana' and 'ayyo, deva and tandana tandana & tandana-deva nandana etc. The percussion instruments are called budge, dhakki, gummeta etc in diff parts of state.

The main narrator wears ankles with bells vibhuti, dhatti on his waist and has tambura on shoulder. He also wears 'andela' around left thumb and left pointing finger. The accompanying drimmers follow the narrator moving forward and backward and making cyclic moves synchronizing with mood of narrative has tremendous impact on audiences.

However jangam Katha which is now sung by other community people. Such as Setti Balijas besides jangam is still popular in Guntur and Prakasam districts.

## **(ii) SARADA KATHA**

'Sarada' is the name of the string instrument used by minstrels of Telangana area while narrating a story. It is like tambura but smaller in size with image of Goddess Saraswathi fixed at tail end. Reciters are called Sarada Vallu or Sarada gandru. They recite native stories like Sarvai papadu katha along with Bobbili katha, Desinga Raju katha etc.

The Sarada Singers wear an ordinary dhoti and a shirt along with black coat. The partners usually wives play gummetas or dhakkis to provide rhythm. Their narration is crisp without raga alapana of jangams. They are both Saivites and Vaishnavites who do not narrate ballads from either of religious myths specifically. Many of them are Budige jangalu. They are itinerant and mainly recite ballads for muttarasi and Munnuru Kapu castes, their deities are yellamma, Maisamma and Machamma.

**3) PICHUKUNTALU:** They are itinerant minstrels telling caste histories & family signs (Gotras) of Reddy, Kapu, Kamma, Balija and Yadava communities. They are saivites and caste diety is Mallikarjuna Swamy of Srisailem. Their origin is in vogue as many legends exist. Jangams are their gurus. They once told family histories and caste stories with assistance of 'titti' and a 'ganta's now use tambura and two dhakkis made of brass and goat skin.

The pichukuntalu adapted themselves to artistic environment. The Rayalaseema pichukuntalu sing Ela Nagi Reddy story in eight nights. In Guntur and Prakasam they narrate Palnati Yuddham, Kamboja Raju Katha, Are Maratheela Katha. Some even hold a sword in their hand and narrate the stories with Pamba jodu giving rhythm, thereby combining several practices followed by other story.

## **4) OGGU KATHA:**

Oggus are the traditional priests of the Yadavas and those who utterly submit to God Mallanna. They are also the priests performing marriage of Mallanna with Bhramaramba. Oggu katha got its name because of invoking instrument, the oggu used at beginning of each story and also at the marriage festivals of Mallanna. The folk name of Siva's damaruka also known as jaggu. The story narrated with the help of oggu is oggu katha. The oggu minstrels narrate the stories of Mallanna and Becrappa, they are also adept in narrating Shakti ballads, especially Yellamma. These ballads are in 'Manjari dwipada' (a desi metre).

The term consists of four to six members. More than the costumes, the ornaments they have to wear are traditional considered more important. The main narrator wears a chain made of seven shells called 'gavvala darshanam'.

The dramatization of the narrative is what gives the oggu Katha its predominant place in the ballad tradition of Andhra, especially in Telangana where alone it is prevalent. In the able hands of an able

narrator like chukka Sattayya, it has become very inspiring because of innumerable improvisations he introduced along with traditional way of rendering the story.

#### **5) JAMUKULA KATHA:**

The professional Harijan performers reciting the parasurama and yellamma stories with janukus are called jamukula vullu. In coastal Andhra the madiga sect performing Jamukula Katha are known as Bavanili or Baindhu and mala Sect as Pombala. But in Telangana Madigas are known as Pambala and Bandla. They serve as priests of mother Goddess and sing ballad of yallama to arrest epidemics and cattle diseases in the villages. They are known for reciting Matapuranam and Ganta puranam.

Jamuku is an interesting instrument serving dual purpose of shruti and rhythm. In Telangana, the jamuku is called jamidika and also as pamba. In Andhra, jamidika katha form a part of 10th day ritual of a dead person; especially among Reddi, Kapu and Yadava communities.

The pamba performers are three in number. They initially recited only shaktistories later included stories from legend and fantasy. The jamukula katha is very popular in politically afflicted areas of Andhra Pradesh this is used for political propaganda by the leftist groups.

**6) KOMMU GOLLALU:** They are minstrels belonging to the madiga community of Harijans and narrate the ballad of Katamaraju katha to Gollas or yadavas. They worship Ganga an incarnation of Shakti. The Kommula vans are the hereditary custodians of the tradition to maintain the family records of Yadava heroes. These minstrels are patronized in southern parts of coastal Andhra.

As the talled singing consists of a team of four people with a hollow horns Kommu, they are called Kommulavaru. The narration is mostly recitative – prose being read as son without much singing ragas, the ‘chindu’ is neither mood creating nor rhythmic but war narrations are highly emotive.

They can be seen in Guntur, Prakasam and in parts of Nellore districts. In Rayalaseema they are called Bhattu vullu and in Guntur and prakasam called as gudarulu as they erect tent and perform

#### **BURRA KATHA:**

No other creative medium is used so extensively as Burra Katha has been in Andhra. It served as a political whip up employed by all political parties. Govt organization to propagate developmental activities in all rural areas, Developed in 1942 as a remodeled medium for expressing a contemporary consciousness it stayed on to be just that the story of development of Burra Katha as an art form is exhilarating.

Many of its performative qualities have been borrowed from existing narrative forms of folk artists. The major difference between the old narratives and Burra Katha lies in charnelising traditional medium to serve a dire contemporary need to make the message contemporaneous by using several methods like direct comment, forceful appeal, irony etc. and this is its finest achievement.

There is total change in costume and that also provide rhythm with percussion instruments called burras or dhakkis. One Vantha acts as ‘hasya gadu’ to create humour out of situations but connects the past of the story the present. The perspective given to hasya gadu is new Burrakatha but a great improvement on all the earlier models whether narratives or the theatre. He infact open up the contents of story to a thorough questioning and this has especially become necessary when stories of political bias are being narrated the other vantha is a straight character providing rajakuyam a political thrust to the performance he emphasizes the point of view of the performance. He also connect events by narrating the factual events in prose not merely to entertain people but to educate them in the quickly changing political scenario.

The narrator gives punch to the story through his medium by changing pace of narration according to the requirements of the atmosphere, mood and occasion of the story.

The performers like G. Raja rao, Koduri Achaiah, Nazar and other has brought significant artistic excellence and greater flexibility of narration. Nazar, a rare genius is successful in braking Burrakatha performance a tense dramatic quality and bringing instantaneous transformation of moods. Today there are more than 150 troupes of Burrakatha narrators in Andhra.

Though Burra Katha has been insensitively and mechanically used by the Govt organizations for propagating their developmental programmes it still retain its intrinsic freshness and flexibility as well as its vigour and richness.

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