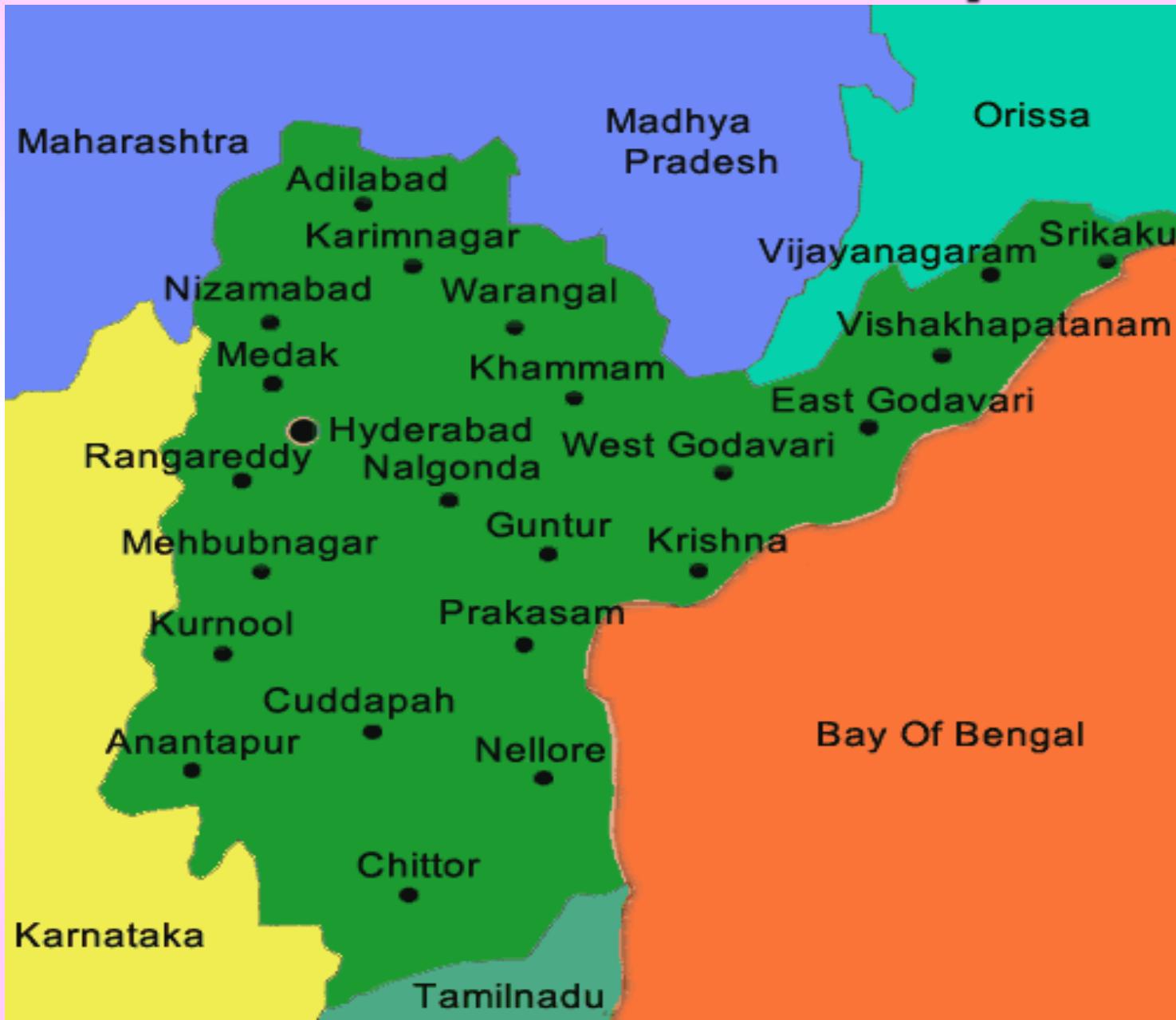


# **History of Telugu Literature**

**Prof. C. Mrunalini**

# Andhra Pradesh Map



# **Telugu language**

*Telugu language has a history of 1500 years*

- In the first phase, it was in inscriptions that the language took literary shape
- Telugu language has been accorded Classical Status along with Sanskrit, Tamil and Kannada by the Government of India

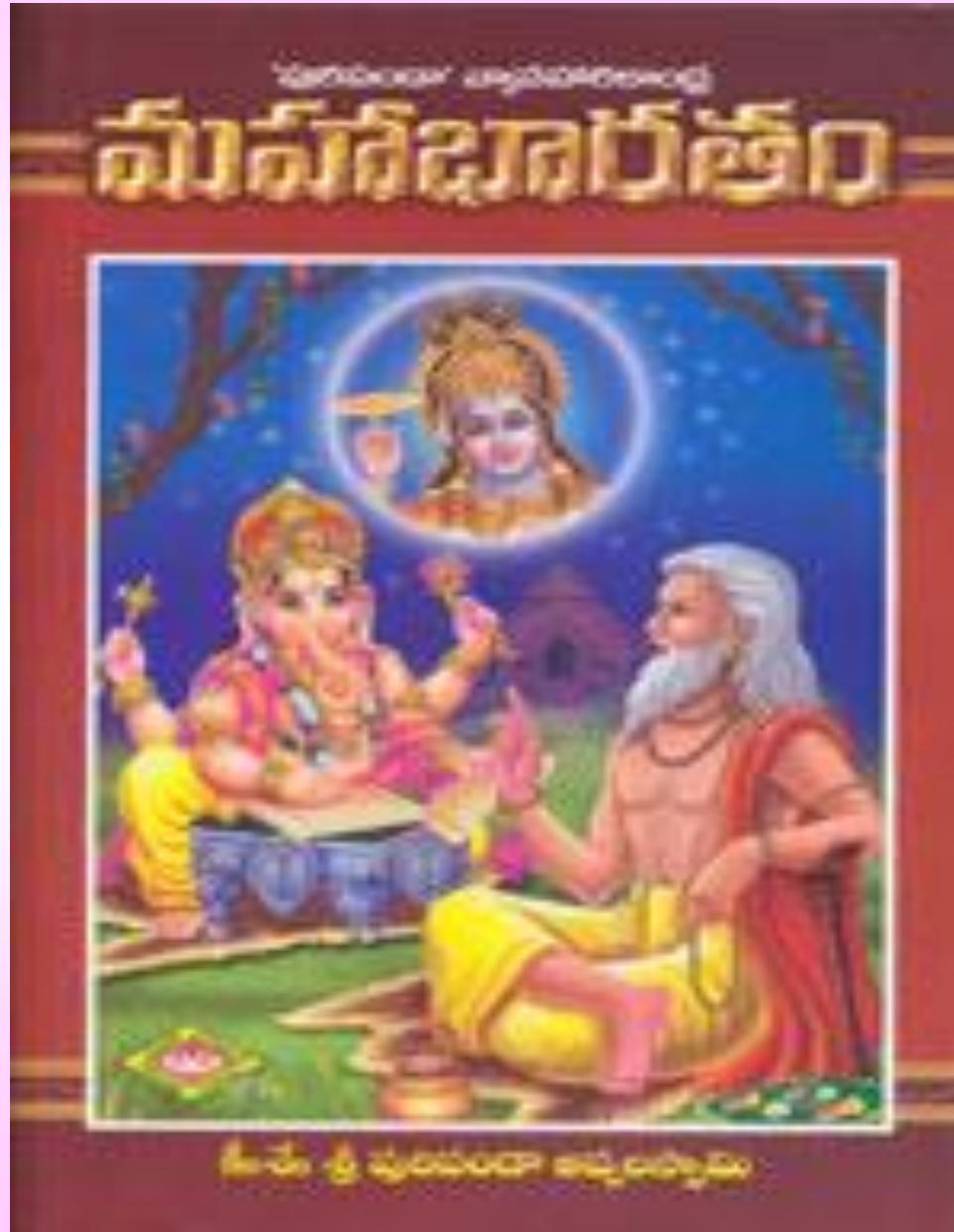
# **Telugu, Italian of the East**

- Telugu is a vowel-ending language
- It is one of the 4 Dravidian Languages
- Telugu has been hailed as “Italian of the East’ because of its melodious quality
- Telugu is the second highest spoken language of India, after Hindi

# **The Mahabharata**

- Three poets-
  - Nannaya
  - Tikkana
  - Errana
- Translated Vyasa's Mahabharata into Telugu
- Translation of Mahabharata was started by Nannaya in the 11<sup>th</sup> century on the request of the East Chalukya king Rajaraja Narendra.

# Mahabharatam



# **The Mahabharata**

- Nannaya wrote two and a half parvas and Tikkana wrote from 4<sup>th</sup> parva till the end. Errana completed the part left out by Nannaya in the third, Aranya parva. These three are known as Kavitraya (The poet Trinity)
- Mahabharata is the first comprehensive literary text written in telugu (1053 A.D)

# **Major Genres of Classical Age**

- The main genres from 11<sup>th</sup> century to 18<sup>th</sup> century were 3 fold. Important are;
  - Itihasam, Puranam, Kavyam
- Itihasam was the story of kings and gods with some historical basis. The main message would be Truth and dharma
- Purana was the story of the Gods and their Avatars mainly intending to inspire devotion and spiritual thinking

# **Major Genres of Classical Age (contd..)**

- Kavya is a combination of myth and fiction. Meant to please with its style and language.
- Apart from these, there were other literary forms like
  - Sataka
- literary performing arts like
  - Yakshagana, Padakavita

# **Major classical poets**

- The Trinity who wrote the Mahabharata lived from 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century. They were the idols for the following poets.
- Other great poets include the 12<sup>th</sup> century Palkuriki Somanatha, Nannechoda, 14<sup>th</sup> century Nachana Somana, 15<sup>th</sup> century Srinatha, Pothana etc.

# Bammera Pothana



# **Major classical poets (contd..)**

- Some renowned women poets are,
  - Tallapaka
  - Timmakka
  - Molla
  - Rangajamma
  - Muddu Palani
  - Ramabhadramba
  - Tharigonda Vengamamba

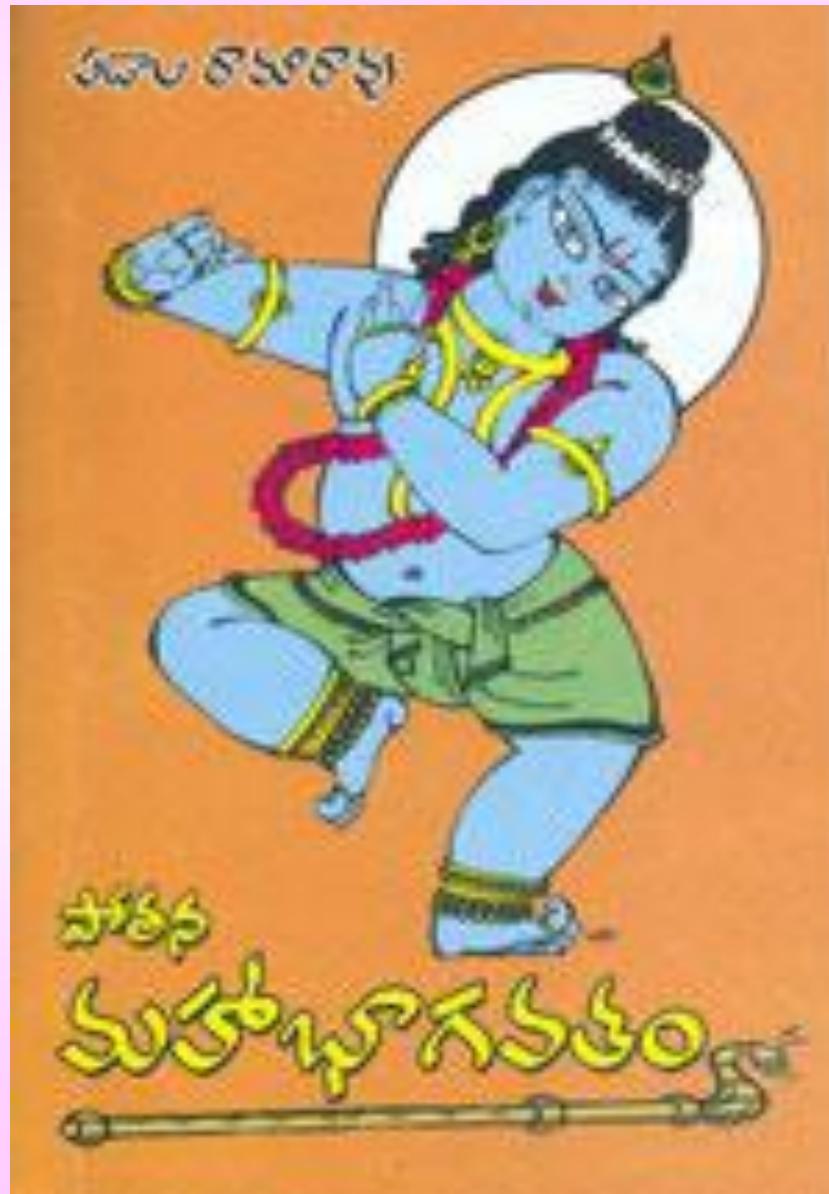
# **Bhakti movement**

- **Vaishnavism and Shaivism were the major movements in Telugu literature from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century**
- **Veerashaiva religion, inspired by a similar movement from neighbouring Kannada language was popularised by the works of Palkuriki Somanatha.**

# **Bhakti movement (contd..)**

- Tikkana, one of the great Poet Trinity, responded to the rivalry between these two sects, by declaring his religion as Hariharadwaita (a combination of Shiva and Vishnu).
- Vaishnavism was at its zenith in two poets of the 15<sup>th</sup> century; Potana, the classical poet who translated Mahabhagavata and Annamayya, the harbinger of musical literature, i.e. padakavita in Telugu.

# Mahabhagavatam



పత్రా

మహాభగవాతం

# **Golden Age of Telugu Literature**

- The 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the Vijayanagara Rule is known as the Golden Age of Telugu literature
- Sri Krishnadevaraya, the renowned king of Telugu and Kannada speaking areas, is hailed as the greatest patron of literature and arts
- The Ashtadiggajas-(Eight great poets)- created poetry in Telugu which exemplifies the variety, creativity and diversity of the language

## **Golden Age of Telugu Literature (contd..)**

- Sri Krishnadevaraya was himself a great scholar of Sanskrit and Telugu.
- This age saw many genres lighting up the language;
  - Kavya
  - Prabandha
  - Purana
  - Yakshagana
  - Prose genres

# Yakshaganam



# **Ashtadiggajas - 8 poets**

- There is a controversy regarding the exact names of the 8 great poets in the court of Sri Krishnadevaraya.
- The major poets include Allasani Peddana (his magnum opus is Manucharitram)
- Ramaraja Bhooshana's work Vasucharitram is known as the best Sleshakavya.

# Sri Krishnadevaraya



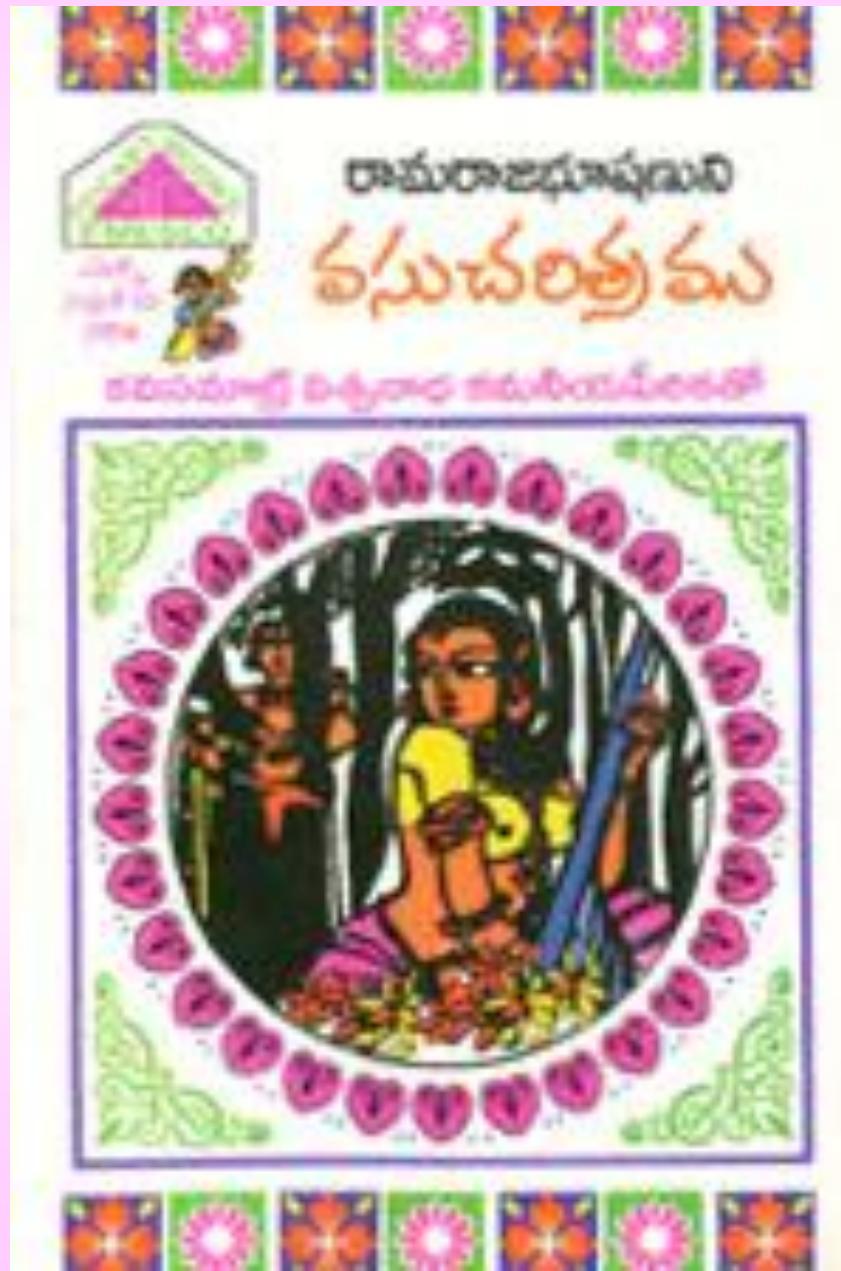
# Ashtadiggajas (8 poets)



# Allasani Peddana



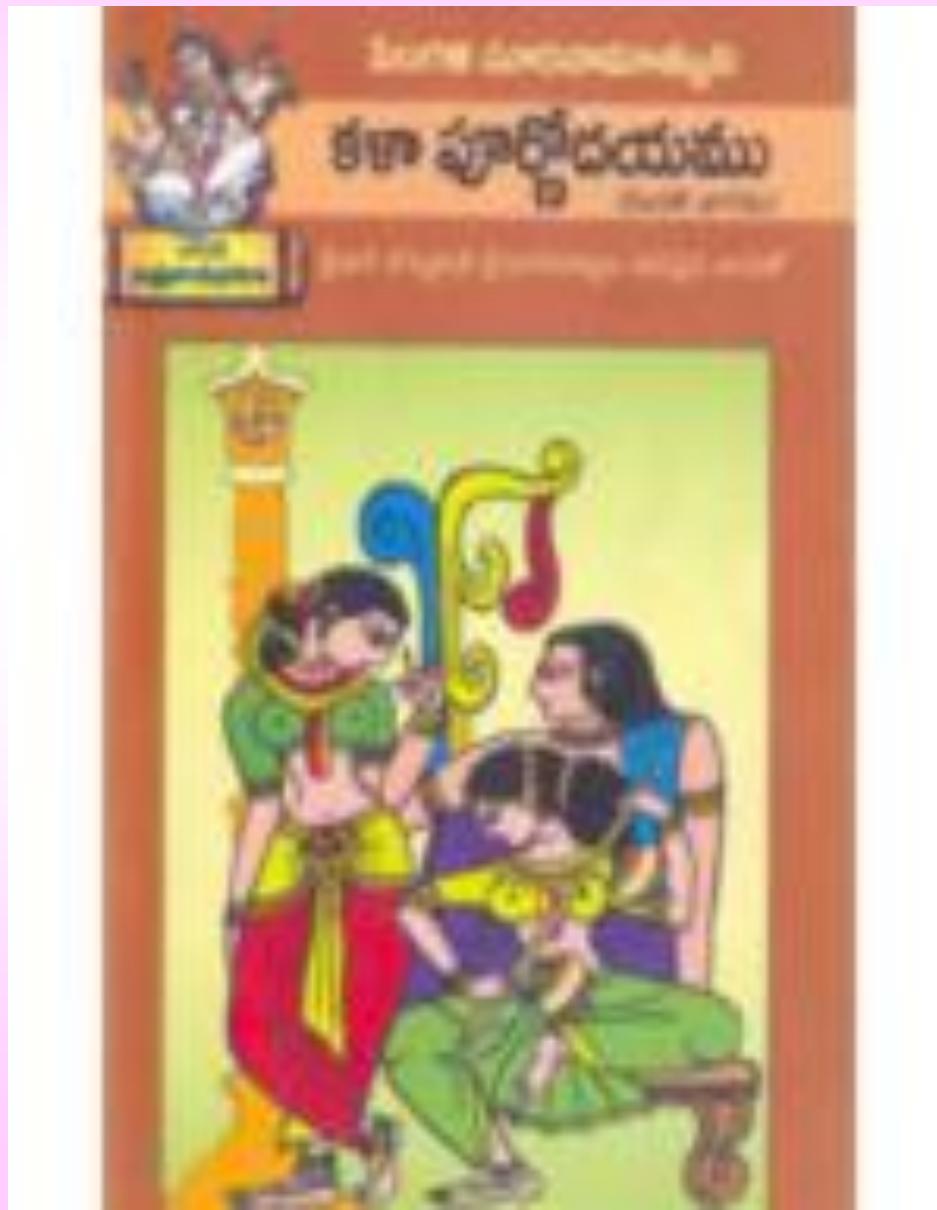
# Ramarajabhusana's Vasucharitra



# **Ashtadiggajas - 8 poets (contd..)**

- Nandi Timmana's Parijathapaharanam, Tenali Ramakrishna kavi's Panduranga Mahatyam and Pingali Surana's Kalapoornodayam are other exquisite kavyas that brought glory to Krishnaraya's court

# Kalapoornodayam



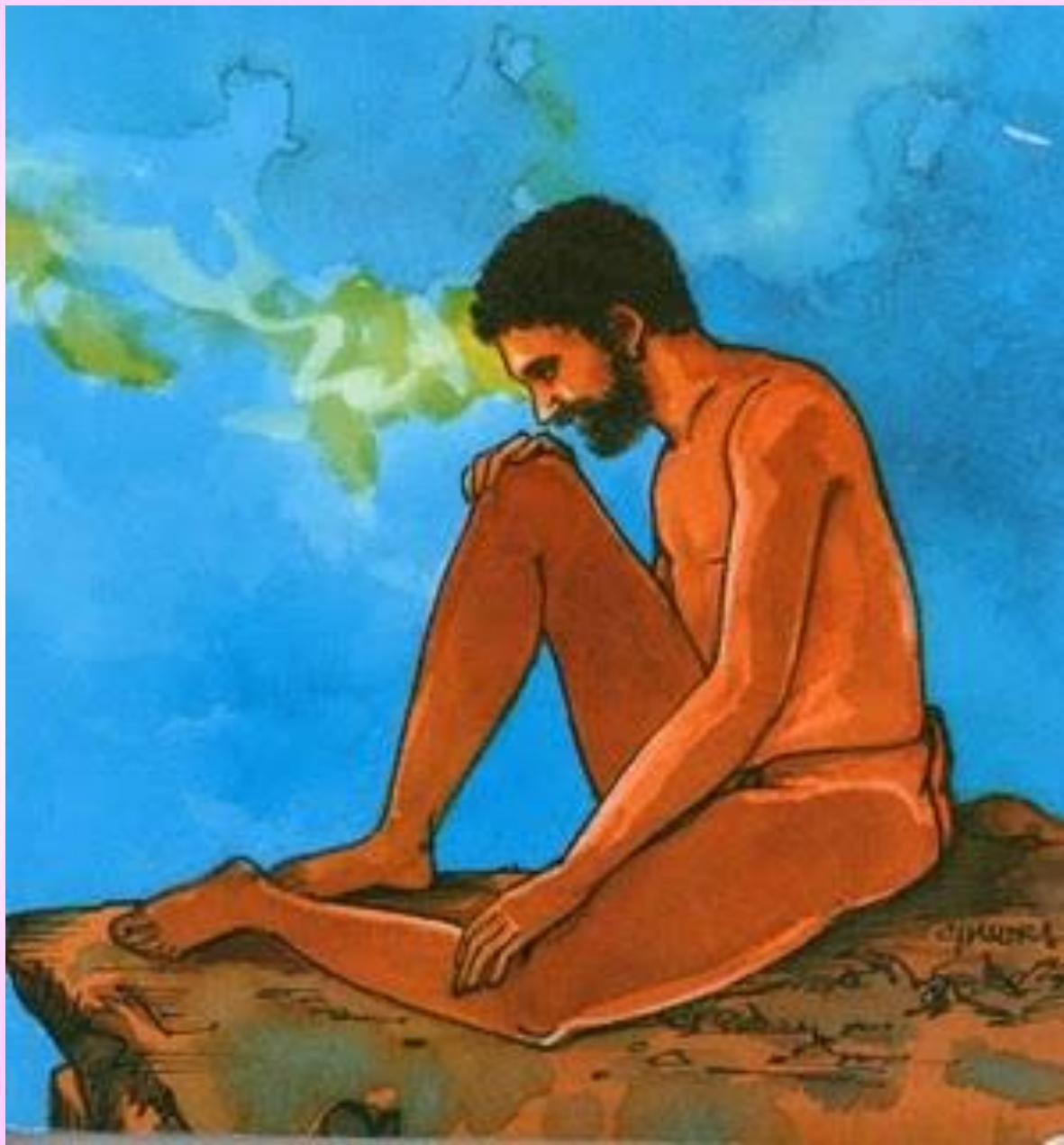
# **Some good; some bad**

- The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century are referred as Degeneration Age in Telugu literature, mainly because most kavyas were imitative of old ones.
- The few sparks in this age consisted of King of Tanjore, Raghunatha Nayaka's patronage to performing arts, women poets and his own scholarly writings.

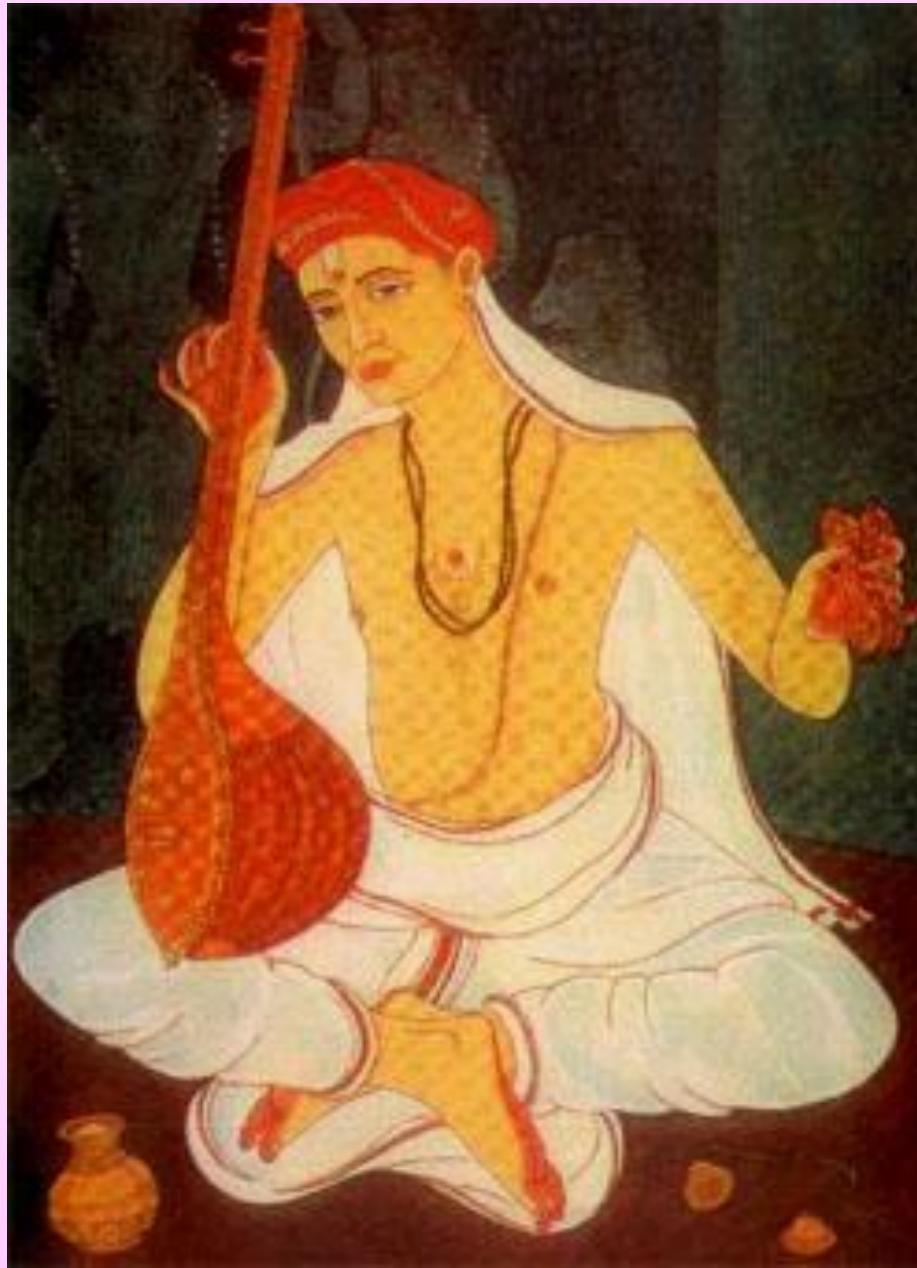
## **Some good; some bad (contd..)**

- The birth of the great poet of the masses, Vemana in the 18<sup>th</sup> century ushered in a new form, the satire in Telugu literature.
- The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the birth of Saint Thyagaraja, the Father of Carnatic music.

# Vemana



# Saint Thyagaraja



# Carnatic music-Balamurali



# Carnatic music-Priya sisters



# **Modern period**

- Modern literature can be said to have started in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Reformation movement of Bengal, advent of printing press, English education, influence of English literature were some of the reasons for modernity in literature
- Kandukuri Veeresalingam Panthulu is accepted as the first modern thinker and writer in Telugu. He introduced many genres ;
  - social novel, one-act play, essay, column, prose satire, biography and auto-biography.

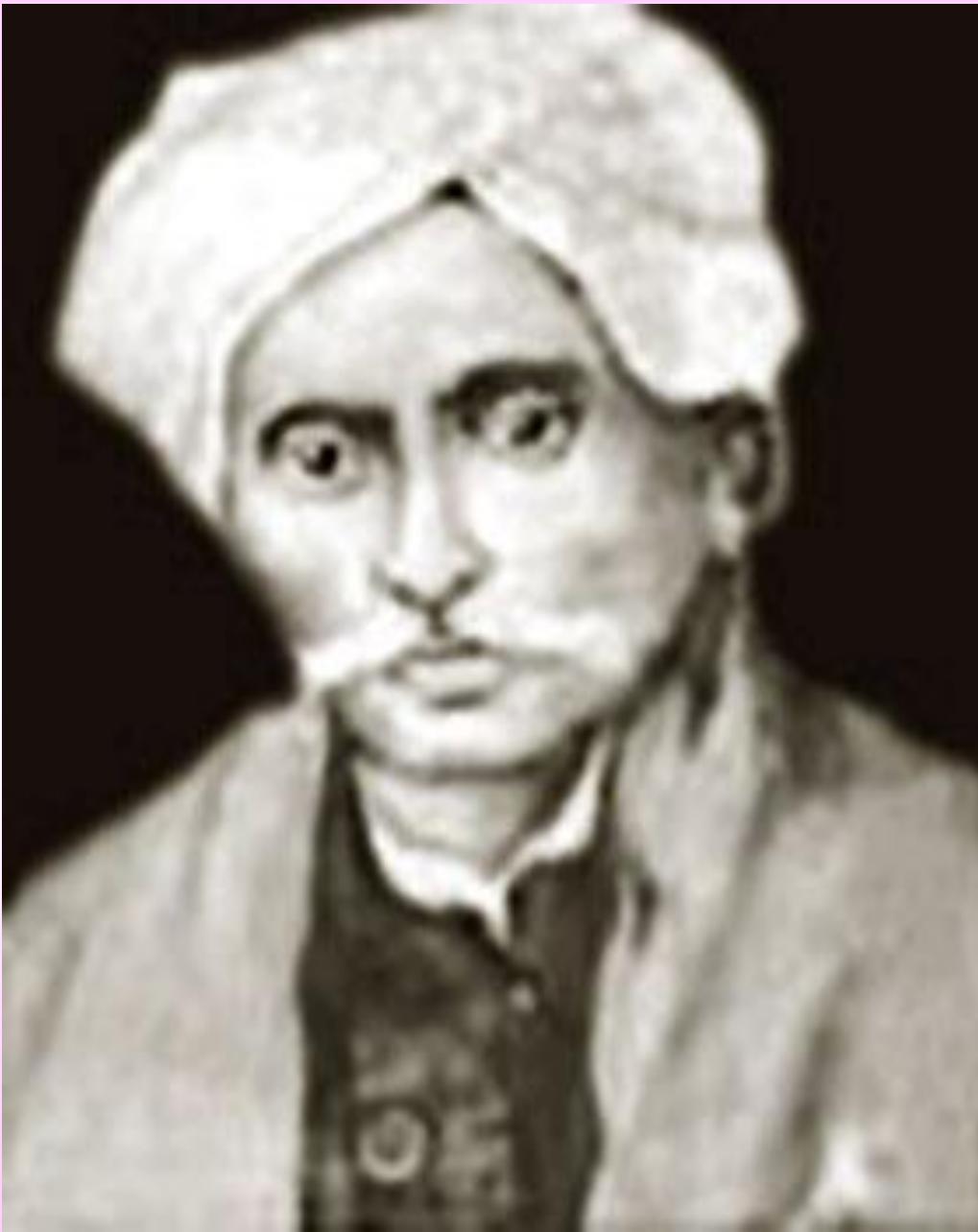
# Kandukuri Veeresalingam



## **Modern period (contd..)**

- The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of common man as protagonist in literature for the first time; it also saw new genres like novel, prose drama, journalistic writing and the very first modern play Kanyasulkam by Gurazada Apparao.
- The literature of this period was greatly influenced by English literature, in both content and form

# Gurazada Apparao



# Kanyasulkam



# **Major movements : Reformation**

- **Reformation movement – 1905-1920**
- **This movement was dedicated to women education, eradication of child marriage and encouragement to widow remarriage.**
- **Major writers during this movement were Kandukuri Veeresalingam panthulu, Chilakamarthi Lakshminarasimham Panthulu, Gurazada Apparao**

## **Major movements : Reformation (contd..)**

- This legacy was carried over by later writers like Sripada Subrahmanya Sastry, Chalam.
- Gurazada Apparao added other dimensions to the reformist movement. He criticized the pseudo reformists, he sympathized with the fallen woman and believed that “Modern woman will rewrite history”.

# **Gudipati Venkata chalam**



# **Romantic Movement- 1920–1935**

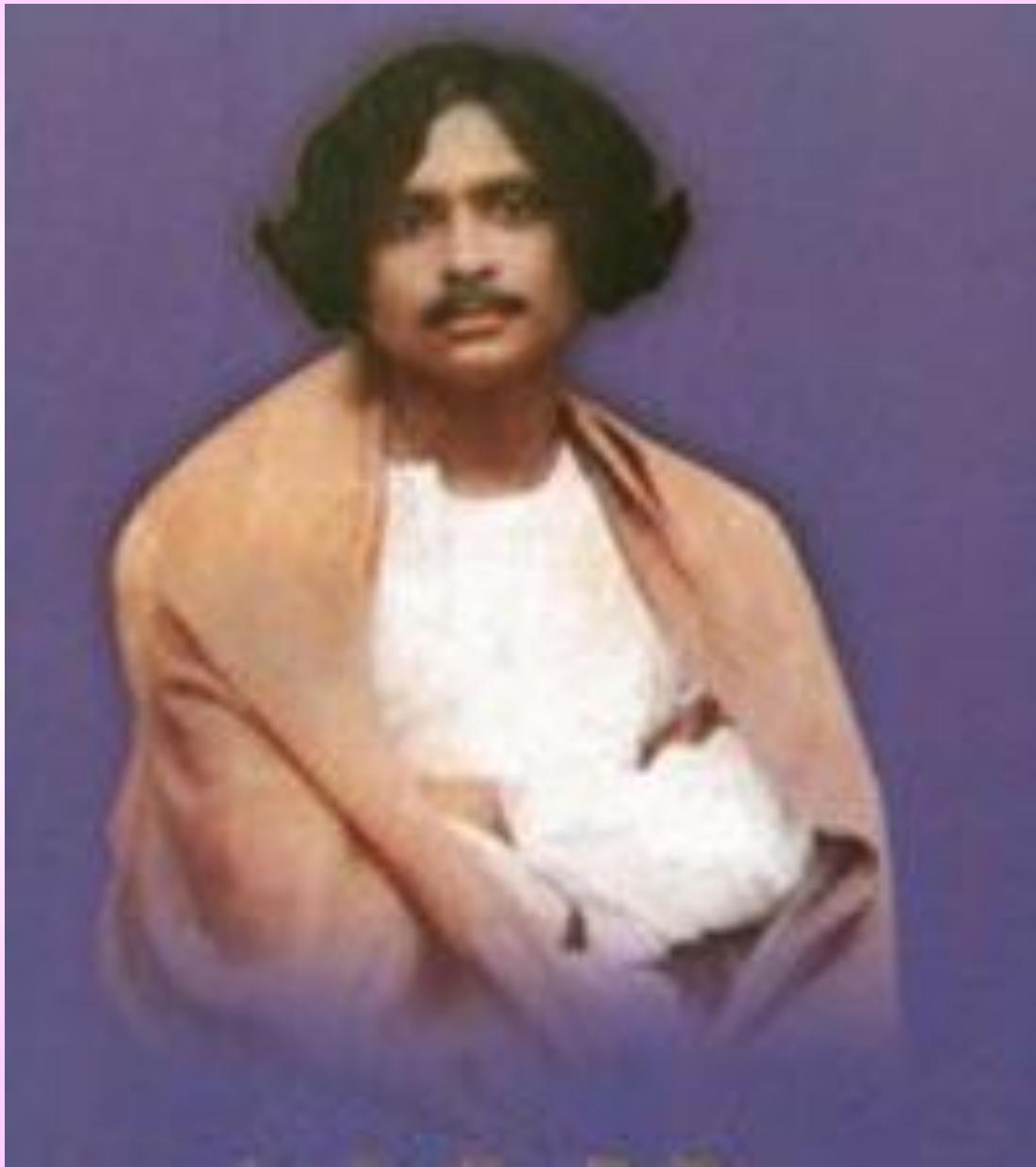
- This was the result of inspiration from William Wordsworth, G.B. Shelley, John Keats major poets of England.
- The main focus in this poetry was on Nature, pure love, dignity of woman, spirituality, sentiment and on the whole, it was totally subjective.
- Lyricism is the main feature of this poetry. Simple language, great imagery, novel expressions make this poetry enchanting to all generations.

## **Romantic Movement- 1920–1935 (contd..)**

- Major poets of this genre were,
  - Rayaprolu subbarao
  - Devulapally Krishnasastry
  - Nayani Subbarao
  - Nanduri Subbarao
  - Gurram Joshua

Major text in this movement is  
***Krishnasastry's 'Krishna paksham'***

# Devulapally Krishnasastry



# Gurram Joshua



# **Nationalist Movement – 1905-1945**

- This poetry was inspired by Bengal nationalist leaders and later by Gandhiji
- This poetry brought in new genres: Poetic biography, Elegy, Long kavyas apart from Khandakavya, song and Satakam.
- Main poets and writers are, Chilakamarti, Rayaprolu Subbarao, Thummala Seetaramamurthy, Gurram Joshua, Adavi Bapiraju, Maheedhara Ramamohanarao, Dasarathi Rangacharya.

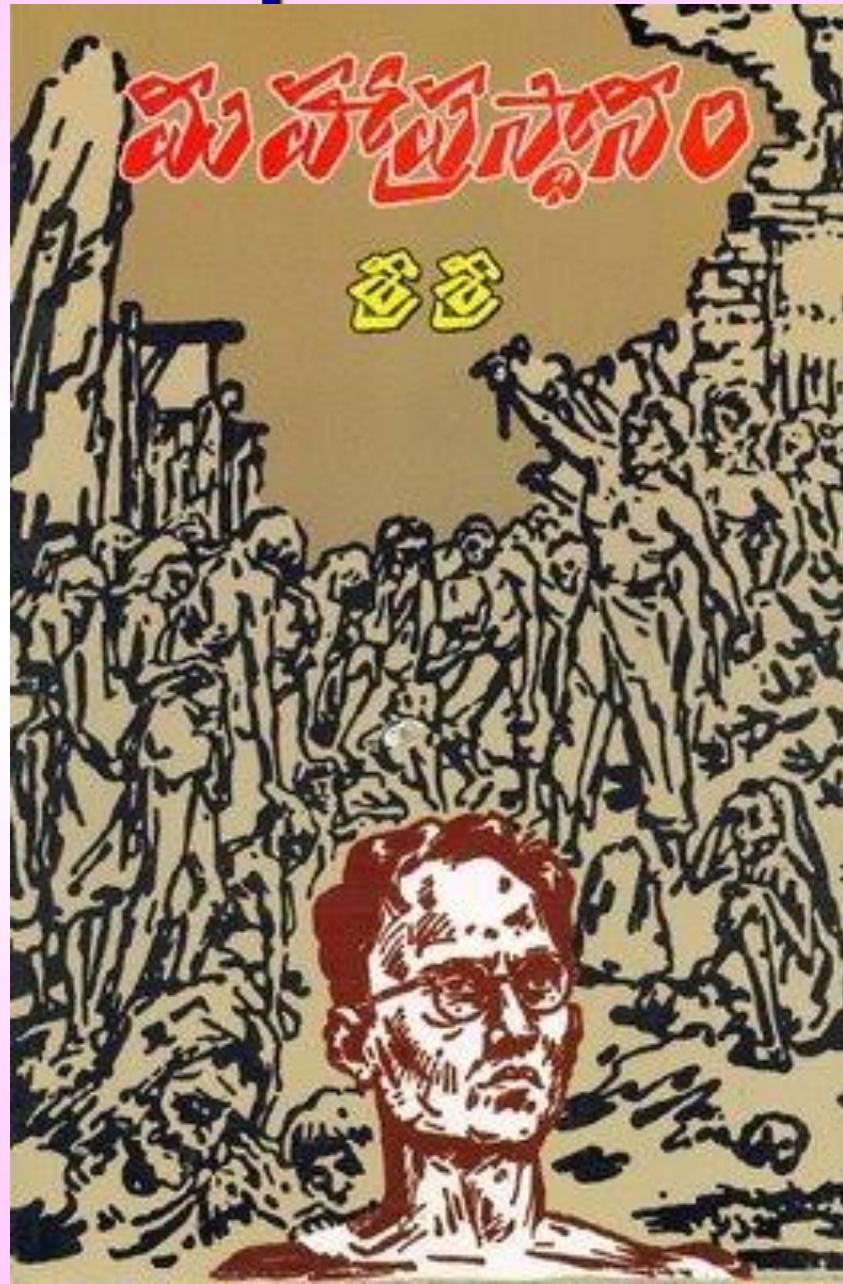
# **Progressive Movement-1935-55**

- It was the anti-thesis of the Romantic movement. Romantics spoke about themselves - Progressives spoke for others.
- Marxism was the ideology behind progressive poetry. It called for egalitarian society.
- The major poets were Sri Sri, Narayana Babu, Pattabhi, Dasarathi, Kundurthi, Arudra, C. Narayana Reddy.
- This poetry influenced a few generations of poets from all ranks of society.
- Major text of this poetry is Sri Sri's Mahaprasthanam.

# **Mahakavi Sri Sri**



# Mahaprasthanam



# **Revolutionary Movement -1970-80**

- The Naxalbari movement of West Bengal and the following Naxalite movement in Northern Andhra Pradesh laid down the foundation for this literature.
- Commitment to and Involvement in Armed Struggle was the main slogan of this poetry
- Major genres in this were free verse, song and burrakatha.
- Major poets were Vara Vara Rao, K. Sivareddy, Siva sagar, Gaddar, Vangapandu Prasada Rao, Cherabanda Raju.

# **Feminist Movement -1980-2000**

- Feminism became a movement with the realisation by women writers of the role played by patriarchal values in degrading women in the name of tradition.
- Main subjects are: discrimination in the name of gender, domestic violence, sexual harassment, abuse of woman's body, double standards in societal morals etc.

## **Feminist Movement -1980-2000 (contd..)**

- Major writers are Abburi Chayadevi, Jayaprabha, Volga, Konddepudi Nirmala, P.Rajani, K. Satyavathi, Ghantasala Nirmala, Kuppili padma, Ch. Swaroopa Rani, Joopaka Subhadra etc.
- Feminism is in three layers: Feminist writing from the point of women irrespective of social status, Dalit feminist writing and Muslim women writing. Major text, i.e. compilation of feminist poetry is Neeli meghalu.

# **Abburi chayadevi**



# Jayaprabha



# Volga



# **Dalit movement – 1980-2000**

- Dalit writing called for self-respect to in fighting domination of upper caste in all fields of life.
- The main concepts were to establish their identity, fight for their rights denied in the past hundreds of years; rewrite mythology and history from Dalit point of view. The ideology and message of Dr. B.R Ambedkar was the inspiration behind this movement.

# Babasaheb Ambedkar



# **Dalit movement – 1980-2000**

- Major writers of this movement are from the yesteryears Gurram Joshua, Boyi Bheemanna, Satish Chandar, Tereshbabu, Sikhamani, Yendluri Sudhakar, Chilukuri Devaputra, Swamy.
- This movement also developed layers; the sub-sect in Dalits writing their own poetry, the Madiga texts and the Mala texts having their own identity. A major novel in this area of writing is Kalyana Rao's Antaraani Vasantham.

# **Exclusive Genres of Telugu**

- Telugu has genres which are exclusive to it. They have been crowd pulling literary art forms for the past hundred years.
- Satakam –a poem with a minimum of 100 stanzas with the last line mentioning the poet's name. Ex. Vemana satakam, Dasarathi satakam and Sumati satakam. They are taught in childhood for their simple words and character-building message.
- Padya natakam: this is a mythological play in which characters sing metrical poems and occasionally utter dialogues.

# **Exclusive genre: oral Literary feat**

- In olden days, poets were singing oral poems to vent out their feelings which did not find place in the texts written under the patronage of kings. These were called Chaatuvulu.
- In modern days, an oral literary feat was discovered (which was mentioned in old kavyas), i.e. **Avadhanam**: This is a literary feat where one scholar is tested by a minimum of 8 scholars. He sings spontaneous poems on the subjects and metre suggested by the scholars. Most of the questions are very tricky and the Avadhani (the performer) has to understand every nuance of the question and satisfy the scholar. At the end of the show, he has to repeat all the poems he has spontaneously rendered in the same order.
- Some of the major Avadhanis are Medasani Mohan, Garikipati Narasimha Rao, Madugula Nagaphanisarma etc.

# **Musical Literature: Annamayya**

- **Padakavita is the first musical literature.** The father of this genre is Tallapaka Annamacharya
- He is said to have written, composed and sung more than 13,000 songs, of which only a few hundreds are available.
- All his songs are in praise of Lord Venkateswara of the Tirumala Hills, some of them on Narasimha avatara of Lord vishnu, some on Hanuman.
- His poetry is a combination of scholarship and experience. He earned the praise of great pundits and was sung by the commoner. He took bhakti movement to its zenith, with his egalitarian approach.

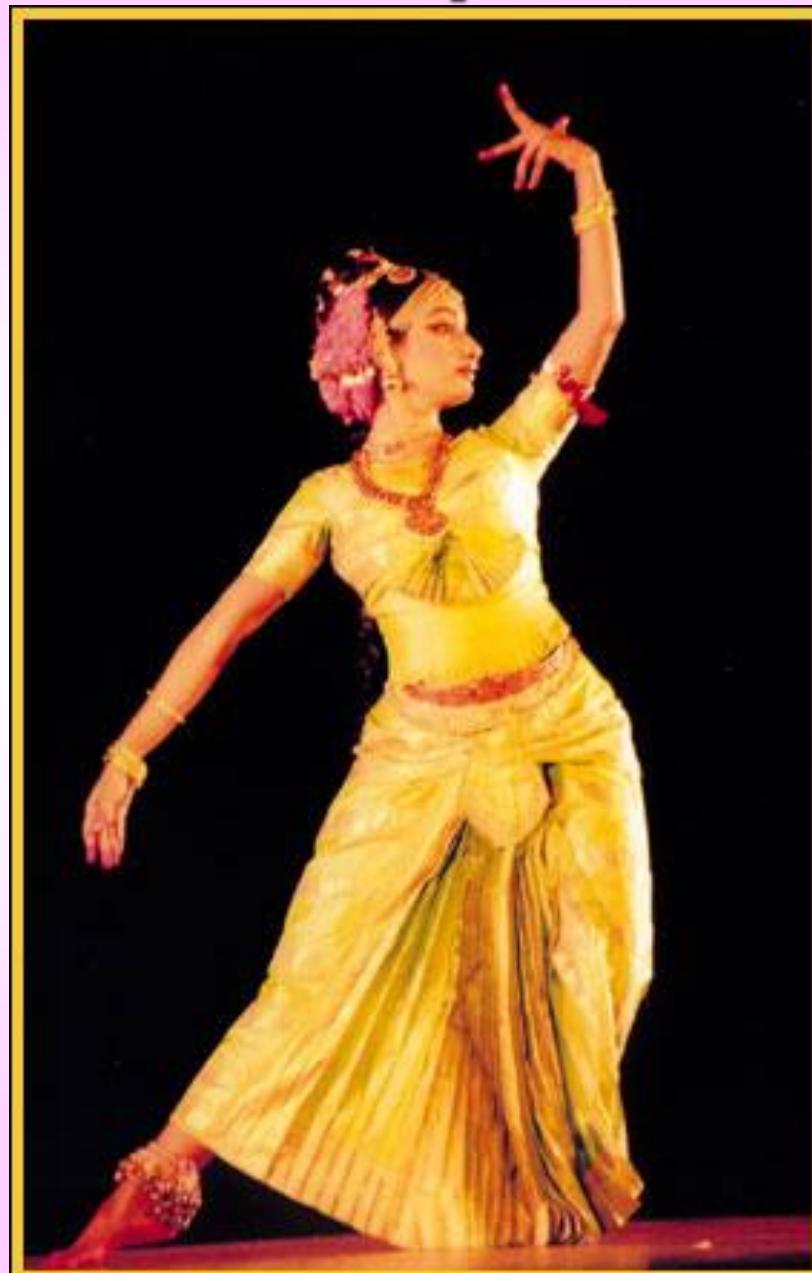
# Tirumala Temple



# **Saint Thyagaraja**

- The composer, writer and singer who is referred to as the father of Carnatic music was Thyagaraja.
- His kritis are set in all Raagas of carnatic music and they are in praise of Lord Rama.
- He was divinity personified. His kritis are sung by musicians all over the world, by singers belonging to all regions and languages.

# Kuchipudi



# Kuchipudi dance



# Kuchipudi dance



# **Sree Ramadas**

- A devotee of Rama of the 17<sup>th</sup> century who ushered in group singing through his compositions.
- His original name was Kancharla Gopanna but because of his unflinching devotion to Lord Rama, he was named Bhakta Ramadas.
- His songs are hailed as direct dialogues with Lord Rama.
- His works include songs and the very popular Dasarathi Satakam.

# Sri Ramadasu



# **Surabhi Theatre**

- In modern age, Surabhi Theatre was the main performing theatre of the Telugus
- Its exclusive feature was that it is run only by family members. All the artistes and technicians are from within the family
- Since its inception in 1899 to this day, it has been a favourite with the audience
- The technology on stage created by Surabhi theatre is unique.

# Surabhi Theatre



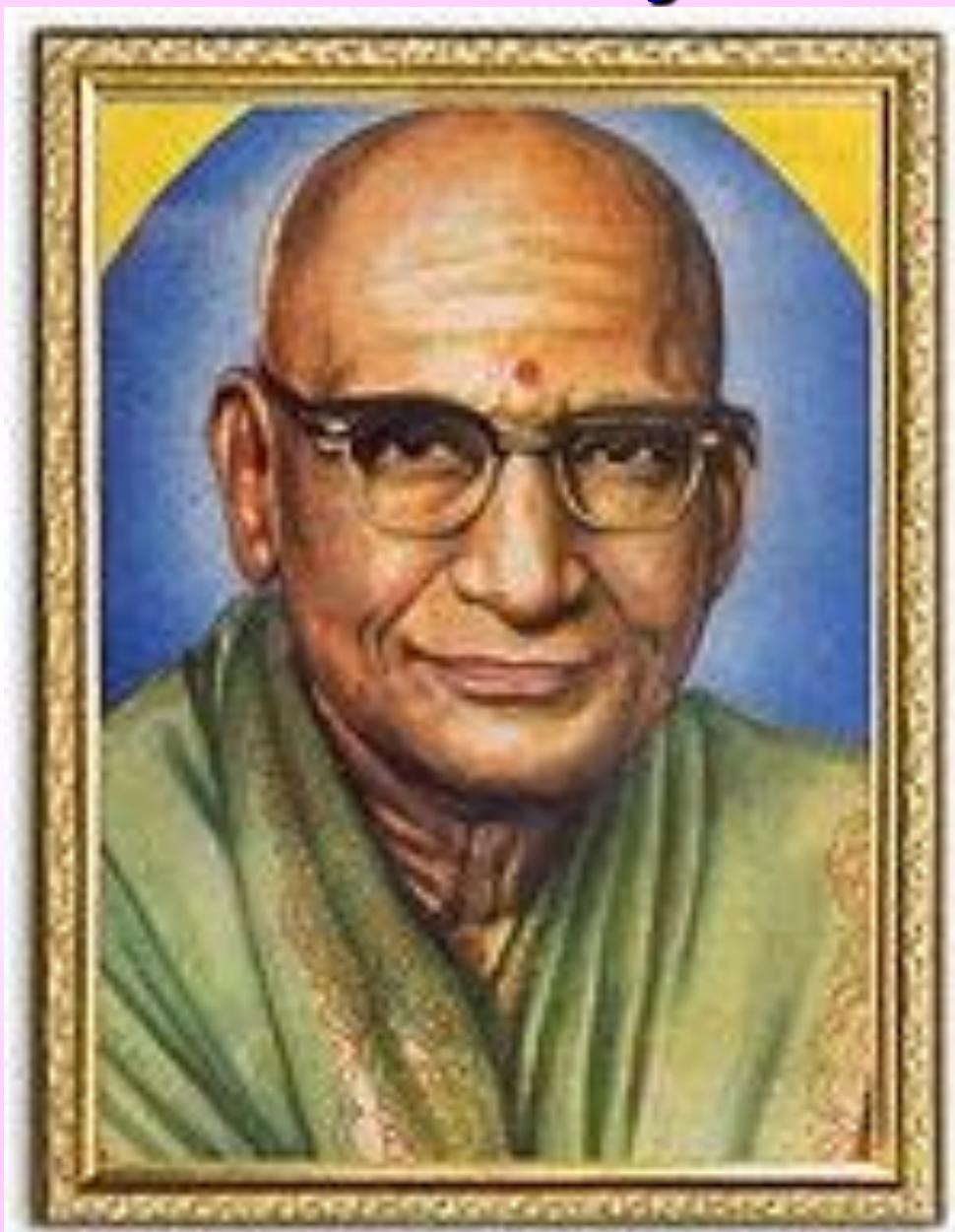
# Surabhi theatre



# **Jnanpeeth Awards**

- Telugu literature has produced two Jnanpeeth awardees.
  - Viswanatha Satyanarayana won it for his traditional kavya, Ramayana Kalpavriksham in 1970.
  - Dr. C. Narayana Reddy won it for his long poem in Free verse “Viswambhara” in 1988.

# Viswanatha Satyanarayana



# **Dr.C. Narayana Reddy**



*Thank you*