

Chapter - 4
TELUGU THEATRE:
POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

From the times immemorial, Andhra is known for its rich and diverse traditional practices that found expression in its arts and letters. The arts may be fine arts like painting, sculpture or performing arts such as music, dance and drama; both of them pertaining to folk (oral) and elite (written) traditions of the people. However, there exists continuum between both the cultures, one getting transformed into the other depending on the contextual situation.

Theatre, the medium of expression of any performing art, be it a drama or dance or music and so on, has a long cherished past ever since the early historical period. The Satavahana king **Hala**, (c.1st century A.D.), in his *Gathasaptasati*, a compilation of seven hundred literary pieces composed by many poets and laureates of his court deals with several aspects of the contemporary times including music, drama, properties of heroes and heroines etc.¹ The best-known Sanskrit plays of the ancient times are *Abhjnana*

Sakuntalam of Kalidasa, *Kadambari* of Bana, and *Uttararama Caritam* of Bhasa. Literature abounds in regard to the passion of the rulers and the ruled for the performing arts. *Sangita Ratnakara* of Sarangadhara (12th Century) is a treatise on classical music. *Nritta Ratnavali*, *Vadya Ratnavali* and *Gita Ratnavali* which were supposed to be written by Jayapa Senani (13th Century) are discourses on *desi* (folk) and *marga* (classical) forms of dance, music of both vocal and instrumental. *Sripanditaradya Caritra* and *Basavapuranam* of Palkuriki Somanatha (13th century) written in *janu Telugu*, the colloquial Telugu language are replicates of folk music, ethno poetry and mention different forms of performing arts that prospered in those times. In addition to the frequently performed *desi* and *marga* styles of music and dances, it referred to specific performances like *gondli*, *perani*, and *prekhanam*, *dandalasakamu* enacted on special ritual occasions in the temples. The folk meters that were adopted in their compositions like *ragada*, *manjari dvipada* and the ethno-poetic expressive forms such as *vennela padamulu*, *sandhyavali padamulu*, *Gobbi padamulu*, *uyyala padamjulu*, *tummeda padamulu* still hold their influence on modern theatrical performances, especially on political ideology based art forms. The epic *Palanativira Caritra*, written by Srinatha (15th century) is still being performed as a prominent folk art form, *Burra-katha*. Singabhupala, a Recerla Velama chief (14th century) wrote a treatise on rhetoric *Rasarnavasudhakaram*, a Sanskrit drama *Ratnapancalika*, a commentary of *Sangitaratnakara* of Sarangadhara cited above, and also *Nataka Paribhasha*, on the etymology of drama.¹ Apart from patronage of the kings and royal courts, theatre has received considerable

encouragement from the masses through ages. The folk theatre has been a long-standing tradition in the rural Andhra. Folk forms such as temple dances *Bhama Kalapam*, *Golla Kalapam* and *Kuchipudi* styles, the other popular forms like *Bommalata*, *Chaya natakamulu*, *Yakshaganam*, *Koruvanji*, *Pagati Veshalu*, *Garadi* and *Vipra Vinodam* prevailed in different parts of Andhra. The sculptures on the temples of Ramappa (Warangal), Mallikarjuna (Srisailam), Narasimha (Simhacalam) etc., bear testimony to the existence of popular modes of theatrical forms in the society. Both the inscriptions and literature of the medieval times bear testimony to the encouragement given to arts through land grants and shares in the temple properties meant for their maintenance. Later with the invasion of the British, the concept of the theatre took a major shift from its' traditional moulds.

Drama vs. Theatre:

The history of modern Telugu theatre commenced from A.D.1880 and that of modern drama from A.D. 1860 onwards.² It is essential to distinguish between these two theatrical forms unlike the former critiques that mixed up their identities. Theatre is a comprehensive genre, which encompasses drama as a part of it. The following table shows the fundamental differences between drama and theatre.

Table:Three

DRAMA	THEATRE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A genre of literature • Exists only in the form of literary texts. • No constrains of time, space • Exists as an independent form with out performance. • Seeks relationship between a reader and playwright. • An art of individual interest • A form of indirect interaction • Individual imagination as one reads or hears the drama. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A genre of performance • Exists in the form of both literary and oral texts • Time and space bound • Exists only in performance • Seeks a relation between the Performers and audience. • An art of collective efforts. • A form of direct interaction • Visual imagination created by a director with the help of light, sound & movement .

Mark Fortier³ holds that those who study theatre make a routine distinction between drama and theatre. Drama occurs often in written language in which dialogues are ascribed to the characters, where as in the theatre they are spoken by the actors/ performers. As a written form, drama is easily appropriated by literary theory; it is understandable in the same general terms as fiction, poetry or any other form of letters. The affinity of drama and literature has produced a tendency for literary theory and literary studies to think of theatrical activity as drama rather than as theatre. Unlike drama, theatre is not words on a page. Theatre is

performance, though often the performance of a drama text entails words but space, actors, props, audience and the complex relations among these elements. Literary theory has often ignored all this. Moreover, if it does not reduce theatre to drama, literary theory is capable of making an even bolder gesture in which theatre is brought under the hegemony of language and writing in another way. Here theatre becomes a system of non-verbal signs, verbal languages, expression, yet dominated still by the hegemony of language and letters as master-patterns for the working of the **non-verbal** .

In the light of above discussion, it can be said that both the drama and theatre exist as independent forms of performances in Andhra. Very often, drama or a play is an integral part of the theatre and is the basis for its' existence'. At the same time, it should not be equated with theatre. Often it exists as an independent form with out any link with the theatre practice. For instance, most of the plays written in Telugu received wide popularity as forms of drama not as forms of theatre. Most of the plays written by **Chalam**, Tripureneni Ramaswami Chowdary Viswanadha **Satyanarayana**, Sri Sri, Kodavatiganti **Kutumbarao**⁴ and others were never been performed in theatrical form, but remained as **great** dramas in modern Telugu literature. Two reasons can be mentioned for not transforming these dramas into the versions of performance. It is because the scenic order (the sequence of events in scenes and progression of scenes in performance) and scenic division (the division of the text of the

performance into different scenes) of these dramas seem to be more imaginative and highly descriptive. Further the directors of Telugu theatre did not attempt to modify them according to the needs of the performance and hence could not reach the visual imagination of the dramatist. As a result many dramatic texts remained at the level of dramas or plays and never became theatre performances. Hence, one has to deal with it as a separate branch of literature with out mixing it up with theatre. Similarly the on Radio and Television versions of plays can never be considered as theatre, but only as forms of drama.

The beginning of the history of modern drama coincides with the establishment of the three major universities at Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras in A.D.1857⁵. Many Telugu scholars had an opportunity of reading the English literature. Playwrights like Korada Ramachandra Sastry, Kokkonda Venkataratnam and Paravastu Venkata Rangacharulu got inspired by dramas of English literature and produced dramas in Telugu by appropriating the themes and modes of characterization from them. Korada Ramachandra Sastry was the first to write a direct Telugu play *Manjari Madhukariyam* in A.D.1860. In A.D.1875 his disciple Vavilala Vasudeva Sastry translated *Julius Caesar* of Shakespeare in to Telugu in the name of *Caesaru Chritamu. The Statesman*, an English newspaper⁶ appreciated this translation that the entire literary and scientific world might believe that Vavilala Vasudeva Sastry translated *Julius Caesar* of Shakespeare into Telugu. This is the first and fair attempt at a metrical

translation of Shakespeare into this language . In otherwords, the translation was not literal, but a cultural, in the sense that the Julius Ceaser in Telugu was nativised to Andhra culture. He was the first not only in translating an English play, but also in writing a direct social play by name *Nandaka Rajyam*, published in A.D.1880. These four prominent scholars belong to the first phase of Modern Telugu drama, but their plays were never performed.

Emergence of Modern Telugu Theatre:

Between A.D.1880-81, the famous Dharwada Theatre Company by name *Altekar Hindu Dramatic Company* toured some of the coastal districts and performed their plays.⁷ This group from Maharashtra started practicing theatre professionally from A. D. 1870 onwards. Their performance in Rajamundry inspired the local amateurs to give a performance of their own. As a result, the famous literary figure and social reformist Kandukuri Veeresalingam had taken the initiative in forming a theatre group with his own students and staged a show of his own play *Vyavahara Dharmabodhini* in A.D.1880. The play talks about **the corrupt** and bribing nature of the lawyers. Even though there was no clarity in the presentation, Veeresalingam writes in his autobiography that hundreds of people witnessed the performance and appreciated it.⁸ No theatrical styles and techniques were developed by that time. Hence, theatre has not achieved a social recognition. On the other hand, Veeresalingam **had**

no time to spend on theatre, as he was busy with reformist activities. Nevertheless, he became the first playwright whose play was performed under his own direction. Recognising his contribution to theatre, his birthday, 16th April is being observed as the Telugu theatre Day. The greatness of Veeresalingam lies in his multi-faceted personality. He was the first man to attempt writing an autobiography in Telugu. He wrote around sixteen plays, edited and published a magazine called *Viveka Vardhani*. Apart from his literary and cultural contribution to Modern Andhra, he also stood first in building up a great social reformist movement against child marriages, for widow marriages and against all social evils. The performance was aimed at enlightening the people about the criticising the mischief of lawyers but in a satirical tone. A very few regional modern theatre seems to have started, with such a social relevance and commitment. But the tragedy is that the path laid by Veeresalingam has not been valued or continued in the last one hundred twenty years. The first phase of Telugu theatre was marked by the tremendous influences of Sanskrit and English dramatic texts. Most of the writings were inspirations or translations.⁹

In the same period, Kondubhatla **Subramanya** Sastry wrote around thirty-one direct prose plays in Telugu. He also started a theatre group Hindu *Nataka Samajam* at Guntur and staged many performances. In A.D.1883 Vaddadi **Subbarayudu**, a poet, playwright and organiser started

another group *Hindu Naatakojivaka Samajam*. He is also one of that are instrumental in introducing Padyams in dramas.

Gurajada Apparao (A.D.1861-1915), the famous and laureate playwright was the trendsetter of the modern Telugu theatre, which appeared to have been started with his play, *Kanyasulkam*. The play was first performed in August A.D. 1892 at Vijayanagaram and was published in A.D.1897. But his second version of *Kanyasulkam*, written in A.D.1909, received wide response. The use of local dialect, portrayal of incidents which are akin to the life situations, addressing of social problems and their possible solutions and cultural reformation are the main features of *Kanyasulkam*. But unfortunately, the Telugu theatre scenario was not ready to receive this kind of approach in theatre. It had become too modern for the then Telugu theatre. This will be clearer when one analyses the later part of the history. As a result Gurajada's attempt to bring out a modern theatre was unfulfilled until A.D.1930, when theatre personalities like Ballery Raghava, and P.Rajamannar emerged to bring about a modern tinge to theatre. It is pertinent to quote one observation of Gurajada on the contemporary Telugu Theatre. In the words of Gurajada, "Modern life which presents complex social conditions is neglected by play-wrights except for purposes of the broadest farce, and poverty of invention is manifested by the handling of threadbare romantic topics. Few writers display knowledge of technique".¹⁰ As a matter of fact, it seems no one really considered his statement seriously. Hence the history of

Telugu theatre continued in its own way. As a result Telugu theatre has missed good directions laid by Veeresalingam and Gurajada Apparao.

In A.D.1884, Nadella Purushottama Kavi from Bandar started another group by name *National Theatrical Society* and introduced songs in to plays. In A.D.1887 Dharmavaram Ramakrishnama Charyulu (A.D.1853-1912)¹¹ led a theatre movement by introducing *Champu Kavya* style in to theatre. He was considered to be the *Andhra Nataka Pitamaha*. He was an actor, director, playwright and an organiser too. He wrote around fourteen plays and became the first playwright to write a tragic play in Telugu. He gave a lot of importance to songs, *kirthanas*, and poetry in the plays. Another important personality who introduced the **Padyams** in plays was Vaddadi Subbarayudu. In A.D.1883, he started a theatre group *Hindu Natakajivaka Samajam* and performed the translations of Bhatta Naryana's *Veni Samharam*.

It is pertinent to note that in the initial phase of modern Telugu theatre, the playwrights guided most of the theatre groups. The playwright became the director, organiser and designer of the play production. Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Kondubhatla **Subramanya Sastry**, Nadella Purushottama Kavi, Dharmavaram Ramakrishnama Charyulu many playwrights formed their own groups , taught the artists on rendering of the dialogues, singing the **Padyam** and became the directors of the plays. Some of them took part in the performances also. Later this trend

changed. Between A.D.1910 and 1930, artists and theatre groups started approaching the playwrights to write plays according to their requirements. P.S.R.Apparao holds that Instead of selecting the best plays written by the playwrights, the theatre groups started approaching the playwrights and insisted for new plays, which suit their requirements. This unfortunate trend led to lack of best plays in Telugu theatre. The general practice of most of the groups is to approach the playwright and requesting to write a play, which can fit into their requirements. In the other words, the existence of playwrights as individuals is very minute in Telugu land. Both the group and the playwright try to be with mutual unofficial contract and produce plays for mutual benefits. There are playwrights who wrote plays without keeping any specific theatre group in the mind. Most of such plays remain at the level of dramas. The initial phase of Telugu theatre, strong foundations were laid for a mythological based theatre practice. The form of *Padyam* started playing a crucial role. Later after A.D.1930, attempts were made to make theatre a socially relevant art form.

The entire history of Telugu theatre can be divided into four broad categories. This broad division is made from two points of views. Keeping in view the thematic and conceptual boundaries of each category, a broad division is made, which also represents the chronological evolution of Telugu theatre. The other point of view is to show how each category of theatre evolved in relation to the existing category and marginalizes the other, while it develops.

1. The history of folk theatre - *Jaanapada Natakam*.
2. The history of mythological plays - *Padya Natakam*.
3. The history of social plays - *Parishat Natakam*.
4. The history of theatre education.

The History of folk theatre:

Folk theatre, as has been discussed elsewhere in this chapter, formed part and parcel of the life of the people even in countryside of Andhra Pradesh from the days of yore. It is pertinent here to distinguish between folk and modern theatre practices. The folk theatre performances are always based on the themes from oral epics, myths or legends. The medieval Bhakthi movement that led to the rise of sectarian religions like Vaishnavism and Saivasim on one hand and on the other the growth of Sakthi cult in countryside contributed for the production of devotional literature, both oral and written that formed source for many themes of folk theatre. Performances like *Dhaksha Yagnam*, *Parvathi Kalyanam*, *Kichaka Vadha*, *Mallanna katha* and many others fall under this category. The performances of these caste myths that glorify origin of their respective community became hereditary right to the performer who enact the myth. There exists reciprocity of relationships between the performer and the people of that caste or community for which they are enacting the caste myth. The former developed into dependent and the later in patron caste. The influence of the doctrine of *Bhakti* is responsible for the growth of

such a new trend in the staging of folk performances.¹³ The performers of these caste myths have hereditary rights and customary obligations over folk theatre. Hence it appears that the origin, development and practice of folk theatre are based on caste system. Caste is the controlling authority that provides an ideological base for folk theatre. The performances of folk theatre have specific contexts such as purificatory rituals, territorial rites and rites of passage (life cycle ceremonies). The theatre does not have sidewalls, curtains and lights. Some times there may not be any stage or elevated platform to segregate the audience and performer, but occupies same level on ground with a little or no spatial separation between them. Even though the performance takes place on an elevated platform, it is not a proscenium kind and the audiences are seated three sides of the performance. The musicians are seated on the stage itself with out hiding from the audiences. Song, music, dance are the integral part of the performance. Whether, the presence of any character is needed or not, the entire group of artists present on the stage to support the performance either by mixing their voices in singing or helping the other characters in prompting or reminding their dialogues. Interestingly, every performer in folk performances is aware of the roles and dialogues of the other characters. If any performer is absent, other members can also enact his role. In otherwords, a single performer may take more than one role in the performance without affecting the theme of it. The scenic order and scenic division is also dynamic, but does not distort the cultural standards of the

performance. The actors, attributes, orchestra, singers etc., are seen on stage itself thereby contribute much for the transparency of stage, i.e., hiding nothing secret from the audiences in the performances. Flexibility of text, roles and artists, performance pattern, stage properties construct every presentation as unique and lively expression, thereby make 'flexibility' integral to folk performances.

Folk theatre of Andhra has many forms like *Yakshaganam*, *Kalapam*, *Turpu Bhagavatam*, *Veedhi Natakam*, *Chindu Yakshaganam*, *Tolu Bommalata*, *Pagati Veshalu* and *Chidatala Ramayanam* (see appendix). Forms like *Yakshaganam* and *Veedhinatakam* became more popular with the rise of Bhakthi movement during 15th and 16th centuries.

The History of Mythological plays:

The mythological plays in Telugu are based on Puranic themes. Hence the text that these plays adopted was highly literary and style of rendition of the text was metrical. This genre of plays was much influenced by Telugu literary style that became a part of the construction **of the text of** the plays. The dialogues are less in number and are used as reference quotes. To keep up the literary style and Puranic tradition, the characters started wearing the costume, makeup and ornaments akin to the images of Gods and Goddesses as represented in the art and architecture of the temple tradition. These plays as such were influenced by Persian theatre

and hence adopted Proscenium stage for performances. Painted curtains are used as backdrops to contextualise the scenes. The musical instruments like Harmonium, Tabala, and Clarinet were also used with the influence of the Persian theatre. The period between A.D.1860 to 1900 can be said as the beginning phase of *Padya Natakam*.

After A.D.1900, Padya Natakam was developed in to a systematic art form and received a wide popularity. Tirupathi Venkatakavulu, Sthanam Narisimharao, Chilakamarti Lakshmi Narisimham, Panuganti Lakshmi Narasimharao, Malladi Suryanarayana, Balijepally Lakshmikantam were important playwrights of Padya Natakams in this period. The form of Padyam introduced by their predecessors attracted all performers and playwrights and were later on being incorporated in the plays. With this, musical plays started emerging in the place of prose plays. *Gayopakhyanam* of Chilakamarthi Lakshminarasimham was one of the popular examples for such kind of incorporations. There are two hundred seventeen Padyams in *Chitra Nalineeyam* of Dharmavaram, one hundred nineteen Padyams in Chilakamarthi's *Gayopakhyanam* one hundred nineteen Padyams and twenty-two songs in Balijepalli's *Harischandra* and three hundred thirty eight Padyams in Tirupathi Venkatakavulu's *Pandava Vudyoga Vijayalu*.¹⁴ The play *Udyoga Vijayalu* of Tirupathi Venkata Kavulu had created a new wave and inspiration for both the theatre goers and practitioners.

After observing tremendous response from people, slowly many commercial theatre companies that began to travel around entire Andhra got emerged. Theatre that has started with so many hesitations and unseen social restrictions had become a profession for some of the people. In initial stages playwrights had no other option except taking the pains of organising the group by themselves. Later the professional groups started employing the playwrights for writing the new plays every time. Poets like Chilakamarthy Lakshmi Narisimham, Nadella Purushottama Kavi were the examples. Due to this new inflow of so many commercial theatre groups, invariably competition was emerged among them. To make their group superior and distinct from the other theatre groups, organisers used on new varieties of costumes, sets, the technological inputs like wire based works and lighting for special effects. This trend increased the cost of production. In this struggle for existence, these organisers/companies that could adopt new technologies and trends, survived and stabilised and those that cannot afford for these changes got closed.

Slowly a new trend, organising competitions for Padya Natakam plays was started. In A.D.1915, at Bandar, an organisation called *Andhra Nataka Protsaha Sangham* held competitions for plays like *Chitranaalineeeyam* of Dharmavaram Ramakrishnamacharyulu. In the same way competitions for Chilakamarthy's *Prasanna yadavam* of Chilakamarthy and Sripada Krishna Murthy's *Bobbili Yuddham* were held.¹⁵ The

organisers announced prizes to the individual artists and to the best performances. At the same time writing of reviews on plays was also launched. Scholars like Puranam Suri Sastry were the popular critiques of those times.

As cited above, in this hectic competition among companies, many of them were closed and hence many artists suddenly lost their profession and started searching for their livelihood. At this juncture, new category of organisers naming themselves as contractors plunged in and organised performances by paying wages to the artists, working out their own profits. With this, money and contractors became the primary concern for theatre. Contractors began to insist different artists from different parts of Andhra and made them to perform scene after scene without any rehearsal. This phenomenon created the concept of portraying a single character by different artists in a single performance. For example, in the play *Satya Harischandra*, one artist will perform the first act of the play until Harischandra leaves to forests and for the next act from Varanasi to burial ground act, another artist used to enter for the same role. Same thing happened to all the Padya **Natakams**. As a result, the trend of *First Krishna*, *Second Krishna* entered in to theatre. It is surprising to notice that even now most of the Padya **Natakam** performances carry the same trend. Artists who are popular and worth watching were picked up from various parts of Andhra and put them together. This trend can be compared with *Jugalbandi* of Hindustani music, where eminent musicians

were asked to perform together to create a thrill in the audiences. Because of this trend, artists were forced to compete with the other artist in their performance. The audiences come to auditorium to witness the performance of the artist than the content of the play. They acquainted with story through the ages from their oral/written tradition. Thus Padya Natakam became an integral part of Andhra. The following table shows the number of plays written based on each mythology or legend.¹⁶

Table : Four

MYTHOLOGY/LEGEND	NO.PLAYS WRITTEN	PERCENTAGE
Stories from Ramayana	214	15.71
Stories from Mahabharata	308	22.61
Stories from Bhagavatam	192	14.09
Stories from History	130	9.54
Stories from folk, religion and other sources.	518	38.03
Total	1362	99.98

Critics like P.S.R. Apparao and G.S.N.Sastry divided the period of Padya Natakam into three phases. The first phase is starting from A.D.1860 to 1900, which is the beginning phase of Padya Natakam, the second phase is from A.D.1900 to 1940-, which is developing phase of Padya Natakam, and third phase is from A.D.1940 to till present-where Padya Natakam started deteriorating. They also tried to list out the total

number of Padya Natakams written during A.D.1860 to 2000. The following table shows the total number of plays written during these phases.¹⁷

Table: Five

PERIOD	TAL PLAYS	PERCENTAGE
1860-1900	95	6.33 %
1901 – 1910	172	11.47%
1911 -1920	260	17.33
1921 -1930	376	25.07%
1931 -1940	207	13.80%
1941 -1950	119	7.93%
1951 -1960	90	6%
1961-2000	100	6.67%
period unknown	81	5.40%
Total: 140 Years	1500	100%

The above table makes it clear that there were around fifteen hundred plays written in Padya Natakam style over a period of one hundred and forty years. This trend explains the popularity of Padyam in Telugu land. Over a period of time, Padya Natakam developed as an unique theatre form of Andhra Pradesh. The reason for its popularity is because of its music, song and content. These features are there in **pre-modern** Indian folk theatre, with which audiences were able to identify their roots and culture. The other factor is that Padya Natakam basically confined itself to mythological themes. There are some exceptions like *Vara Vikrayam*, *Madhu Seva* and *Chintamani*, which dealt with social issues, are not so

popular as Padya Natakams with mythological themes. And some of these mythological performances appear to carry a process of ritualisation with them. This is much more evident in folk theatre. In the performance of Padya Natakam, both the performers and the audiences consider it as ritual. The prayer of Padya Natakam makes the audience to experience it that it is not simply a performance, but a ritual act of prayer in which His greatness is praised and glorified. Apart from prayer, the breaking of coconut, offering of flowers and other sacred objects make the audiences to be much more sacred. For instance in Coastal Andhra, in the performance of The *Brahmam gari Charitra*, a popular Padya Natakam, the villagers lit a series of lamps and see to them that they should not put off till the performance is over.

The critiques of Padya Natakam proudly declare that it is the distinguished art form of Andhra. To criticise Padya Natakam, they have many things. Their main criticism is that the plays are performed with three or four artists for a single character, by killing the realistic approach and involvement of the audiences. Though it is partially true, the other important aspect is that the genre of Padya Natakam itself has that flexibility of allowing three to four artists to perform the same character. Otherwise it becomes impossible for a single artist to sing so many **Padyams** that are always applauded with 'once mores'. It led to an internal competition among the artists which arouse excitement of the audiences just like in any other popular games and sports. The following table shows the importance of *Padyam* in Padya Natakam and how the flexibility of the genre allows multiple artists to perform the same role. For analysis the play *Harischandra* is taken¹⁶ as an example. *Satya*

Hanschandra, one of the popular Padya Natakams of Telugu, written by B. Laskshmi Kanta Kavi in A.D.1912.

Table No. Six

CHARACTER	No.of PADYAMS	PERCENTAGE
Sutradhaara	1	0.5076
Vasistha	7	3.55
Viswamitra	24	12.18
Devendrudu	2	1.015
Naaradudu	2	1.015
Harischandra	94	47.71
Satyakeerthi	3	1.522
Nakshatraka	26	13.197
Maatangi	4	2.030
Chandramathi	27	13.70
Lohitaasudu	3	1.522
Pourulu	3	1.522
Kaiakousikudu	1	0.5076
Total	197	100%

The above table shows character/role wise distribution of Padyamas recited in the play Satya Harischandra. This play has one hundred and ninty seven **Padyams** and divided into six acts. The first act takes place in heaven *Devendra Sabha*, where Rajarshi **Viswamitra** and **Brahmarshi** Vasista enter a hot dialogue in which they through a challenge in regard to the truthfulness of Harischandra. Though this scene is important for further development of the story, artists deleted this scene and start the

play with the second scene. Except Viswamitra, the remaining characters in this act like Devendra, Naarada, Vasista, Bruhaspathi, Goutamudu and others never appear in the play again. Hence for one scene artists must be called and lot of money has to be spent on their remunerations and costumes. Nothing goes wrong even if the first act is deleted and starts the performance. Hence the scene of *Devendrasabha*, a costly set is skipped in the play. Among one hundred and ninety seven Padyams, the character of Harischandra has ninety-four *Padyams*. In addition, another six Padyams written by Jashuva were incorporated in the sixth act of burial ground. Recital of all the Padyams in a single act itself is laborious for the artist to recite. Hence a single artist cannot sing one hundred *Padyams* continuously. This factor allowed multiple artists to take part in a single performance. Hence many artists take such roles that have many dialogues and verses to be performed on stage. In the same way same actor may play different small roles in plays.

The other important factor of Padyanatakam lies within the text. Just like in folk theatre where in the text is determined by the context, Padyanatakam also more or less carry the same flexibility. In folk theatre a story can be performed throughout the night or can be shortened and be completed within hours. Context and the response of the audience give a clue to the performers either to proceed with the performance or cut it down. The editing of the text even during the performance situation is an internal flexibility of the folk theatre. A text of four or five hours duration will

not lose its beginning, middle and end, even if it is cut down to one hour. Similarly in Padya Natakam many acts or Padyams can be edited according to the context. The deletion of first act in the play Harischandra did not show any effect on the story line. The performance of any Padya Natakam has no stipulated time. It varies from context to context. In the rural areas and semi-urban places the play may continue throughout the night. Whereas in cities like Hyderabad and other places, the duration of play will not cross more than three hours.

Nevertheless, Padya Natakam has been providing a massive lively hood to hundreds of artists, technicians and other related craftsmen. Apart from the artists, playwrights and many dress companies emerged in all parts of Andhra, exclusively making business on Padya Natakam. There are specialised printing presses in Coastal districts of Andhra, who have ready-made designs of posters, handbills, and all the publicity material for Padya Natakam. Popular audio companies like *Leo* and *Supreme* has produced lakhs of audiocassettes of popular plays performed by popular artists and made money. Both the streams of Padya Natakam; amateur and professional theatres have been traveling together by providing employment to many people. Padya Natakam has become a part and parcel of Telugu culture; as a result even film industry had incorporated **Padyam** into it. All most all-mythological films of Telugu have Padyams in them. Radio and television channels have special programmes like *Rangasthali*.

Surabhi **Theatre- A** co-existing phenomena:

Though Surabhi theatre falls under the category of Padya **Natakam**, it needs a special mentioning in the history of Telugu culture. It is the **only** theatre group hailing from a single family. Surabhi, a traditional family theatre repertoire started around A.D.1860 at Maharashtra.¹⁹ The ancestors of Surabhi family were associated with king **Sivaji's** court. Later the families migrated to Ballery, **Rayadurgam**, and Adoni areas of Andhra. One of the cultural enthusiasts of the Surabhi family, Vanarasa Sanjivarao, started a theatre company by name *Sri Sarada Mano Vinodini Sangita Nataka Sabha* and toured different villages with their performances. In the first phase, they used to perform the puppet shows. In the later part Vanarasa Govindarao, who happened to be the adopted son of Sanjivarao, led the troupe and became a member of *Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat* In A.D. 1890, Govindarao happened to see some of the **non-Telugu** performances at Madras. He drew inspiration from these other language performances and immediately made major changes in the technical aspects of **the** performances. During their travel, they halted at Rayadurgam area of Cuddapa district of Andhra Pradesh. There they selected a village, *Sorugu* as their temporary resort, and changed its name to *Surabhi*.

The interesting aspect of Surabhi theatre practice is their use of technology in performances. They invented many techniques like characters entering the stage from the clouds, war scenes, and rain effect

on the stage to make the audiences thrilled and excited. These effects pulled the crowds to the auditoriums. The content of all the plays was drawn either from Ramayana or *Mahabharatha*. These mythological themes facilitated Surabhi to incorporate various technical wires works in every scene. They used to sell the tickets for every show and began to survive on theatre as professionals. Another important aspect of Surabhi is that the role of women. All the women in the family used to participate in the performances. Though Surabhi artists are illiterate, they mastered the art of management of play production. Like Circus companies, Surabhi stayed at one place for a month and organise regular shows everyday. The artists are highly talented. They themselves used to design the stage. They also planned for publicity and organised regular shows of their plays by selling tickets. They took optimum care that there will not be any loss to them. The important member of the group goes to the town in advance and survey whether the camp can be conducted there or not. Such meticulous care for every aspect of play production became distinctive feature of Surabhi. In due course, Surabhi toured almost all parts of Andhra Pradesh and gave thousands of performances. Now the family was divided into four groups and continuing the performances.

Surprisingly, the impact of Surabhi on the mainstream Telugu theatre was negligible. Similarly Surabhi could not learn anything from the mainstream theatre. As Surabhi theatre is technically strong, Parishat theatre is based on verbal expression such as discourses, dialogues and

modulation. Even though, the performances of Surabhi receive huge number of audiences, the mainstream theatre directors never tried to take the inspiration from it. As a matter of fact even Surabhi did not develop itself according to the changing times. It is much dependent on technical aspects than on the performance. As the mainstream Padyanatakam is strong in its *Raga and Padyam*, Surabhi still relied upon technical aspects. Both could not interact with each other to develop the weaker other areas that need strength. Particularly, when the generations changed, the new batch of artists who do not have any command over language, dialogue, diction and acting were exposed to the performances. The recent attempts of National School of Drama to revive Surabhi, by providing a modern training with prominent director B.V.Karant, had not produced desired results. Because the audiences expect all kinds of thrills, magic and other technically spellbound tricks from Surabhi. The modern N.S.D productions lack all these effects. As a result the two productions done under the sponsorship of N.S.D, namely *Bhishma* and *Basthi Devata Yadamma* were not performed anywhere else except in Ravindra Bharathi of Hyderabad. Soon after the workshops, Surabhi, started performing their own previous plays.²⁰

The History of Social Plays - Parishat Natakam:

Before discussing the origin and development of social plays, it is pertinent here to differentiate between Padya Natakam and Parishat Natakam. The following table shows the fundamental differences between these two.

Table:Seven

ELEMENTS OF

PADYA NATAKAM

- Mythological theme
- Padyam, music, singing, are the basic features.
- Costumes and makeup are the reflection of mythology.
- Artists may change for each act for a single character.
- More interaction with audience. (Donating money to the artists, repeating the Padyam again and again, garlanding the performer the play is on)

Duration is from 4 to 8 hours.

- Uses proscenium stage, sound, lights, curtains etc.,
- Competition among the co artists of the same play.
Rehearsals at individual level not collective.
- Two streams of practice, the professionals and the amateurs.

PARISHAT NATAKAM

- Social theme
- Dialogue, melo drama, story are the basic features..
- Costumes and make up are very realistic to the present society.
- Artists are same throughout the play.
- Restricted interaction with audience.(Clapping,appreciating performer after the play).
- Duration is not more than
- Uses proscenium stage, sound, lights, curtains and set etc.,
- Competition among the groups and individuals with the others.
- Rehearsals are mainly collective.
- Amateurs activity.

In both the Padya Natakam and the Parishat Natakam, certain features are common and certain features are specific to each of them. Nevertheless the usage of proscenium, lights, sound, curtains, set, and all other technical aspects were common to both the forms, which were the embodiment of modernity. Similarly the content of Parishat Natakam, social theme, is also a by-product of modernity. Rehearsal process, make up were scientifically developed with the emergence of modernity in to theatre. The competition among the artists and groups also reflect one of the main concepts of modernity.

During the period of contractors and competitions of Padya Natakams, many educated art lovers started their own attempts to make theatre much more lively and nearer to life. The beginning of these attempts can be traced back to the initial phase of Telugu theatre itself. Playwrights like Gurajada Apparao, Kandukuri Veeresalingam tried to draw social reality on to the stage. Though their plays were also performed. But there was no follow-up activity until A.D.1930, where Bellary Raghava entered in to the theatre scene. Tadipatri Raghavacharulu who is popularly known as Bellary Raghava (A.D.1880-1946) entered in to the scene and put his modern thinking into practice in Telugu theatre.²¹ Raghava with his knowledge in English, Kannada and Telugu tried to revive the scene in Telugu theatre from a modern

perspective. His Europe tour in A.D.1928 and his knowledge of Shakespeare dramas made him a strong visionary in theatre. He propounded that any play must represent the social conditions and reflect the realistic life of the people. With this ideology, he started a movement that stood for realistic theatre. He insisted that women themselves must perform women roles. He advocated that there should not be songs, Padyams, and music in the plays, and that the theatre must depict the day-to-day lives of the people and contemporary society. He thought that all mythological plays never represent the real life. He says that the time for performance of mythological plays has gone and that nobody is bothered about personal life of characters in performances like whether *Satyabhama* is jealous of *Rukmini* or not. It is useful and purposeful to portray the general life of the people rather than mythological stuff, which does not serve any purpose.²² Due to the statements made by Raghava, there was a great discussion among the theatre practitioners and intellectuals on the positive and negative role of Padyam, songs, and the language of theatre. His approach and ideology of Realism created a sensation in the contemporary theatre practices. Raghava made pioneering attempts to make Telugu theatre a realistic art form by taking themes from reality. Many theatre practitioners came forward to follow realistic style in their performances.

The inspiration to realistic theatre came from Henrik Ibsen (A.D.1828-1906) of Norway. His plays like *Pillars of the society*, *Dolls*

House, and *Enemy of the People* showed the way for realistic theatre. George Bernard Shaw (A.D. 1856-1950) of England was the great disciple of Ibsen, who had also written most popular realistic plays. In the same time Anton Chekhov (A.D.1860-1904) of Russia also wrote realistic plays. The entire world theatre scenario followed the trend of realistic style.²³

By the time Raghava entered into theatre as an influential phenomenon, the entire Telugu society was undergoing a major change towards modernity. Slowly industrialisation was taking a shape. The impact of English education, growth of a new section of business people, development of semi urban and urban areas, altogether led to major socio-economic changes. This change was reflected in politics, social reformist movements, literature and Cinema. As a result, a new thinking has taken place in theatre also, which led to the formation of Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat.

Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat – The Trendsetter:

With the establishment of Andhra Nataka Parishat in A.D.1929, a new phase in Telugu theatre was started. In A.D.1929 - June, the organisation was started in Tenali. Theatre and literary doyens like Achanta Sankhyayana Sarma, Kasinathuni Nageswarao Pantulu, Chatti China Purnayya Pantulu, Malladi Viswanadha Kavi Raju, Vanarasa Govindarao, Kothapally Lakshmayya assembled at Tenali and discussed about the plight of Telugu theatre.²⁴ All these personalities were highly

intellectuals and committed to the development of theatre from different regions. Among these six, Sankhyayana Sarma, Nageswarao Pantulu were basically industrialists. In the initial phases, this organisation remained as a discussion forum, meeting once in a year and debating on different aspects and trends of theatre. At this time, all the practitioners of theatre remained puppets in the hands of contractors. Hence, the efforts of the Parishats remained at the level of discussions for about fifteen years.

When the Parishat reorganised itself in the year A.D.1944, Meka Rangayya Apparao became the president. He hailed from the *Zamindar* family of Nujiveedu. In this period *Zamindars* like Ananda Gajapathiraju of Vijayanagaram, the Raja of Pithapuram, Mote *Zamindar* of Eluru, *Zamindar* of Vuoor were the main patrons for theatre. Due to the economic inflation in A.D.1930s there was a major set back for the patronage also. Hence Padya Natakam lost its sponsors and got into the hands of the contractors. Till then the Parishat remained a forum for the intellectuals and slowly started attracting the middle class educated masses in to theatre. The outcome of all the discussions, which were held at the beginning stages of Parishat, got materialised by A.D.1944. In this phase, the committee began to hold competitions for dramas by prescribing the regulations that created seriousness and realistic nature among the practitioners of theatre. These competitions created a new approach and new outlook in the minds of the performers. The set of rules

that the Parishat framed were: 1.The content of every play must be a social theme, 2.There should not be any song or Padyam in the play, 3.The female roles must be performed by women only and 4. Plays written within five years from the date of competition should be allowed.

All these rules put together led to a major change in the theatre scenario. Playwrights started writing new plays. Many new playwrights emerged. Writers like Atreya, D.V.Narasaraju, Korrapati Gangadhar Rao, Bhamidipati Radha Krishna, Kopparapu Subbarao, and Gollapudi, became popular with their attempts in the Parishat competitions only.²⁵

Another rule that Parishat insisted was that only women must play the roles of women. It forced the theatre groups to get their own women into theatre. The attempts made by Bellary Raghava in 1930s was materialised in this period. Because of these annual competitions at different places of Andhra, many amateurs started entering into theatre. Hence, the perception of considering theatre as a sin, had faded. Hundreds of play were written and performed during this period. When the middle class intellectuals and art lovers entered into theatre, the prestige of theatre had gone up. So many amateur theatre groups emerged in different parts of Andhra. Apart from Andhra, Telugu groups were started at Zamshetpur, Calcutta, Bangalore, and Bombay and participated in the competitions. Theatre became an easily accessible form of middle class. In the first phase of Parishat competitions, in A.D.1944, plays were very straight in their narration with strong themes can be found. *Edurita*,²⁶ a

play written by Kondamudi Gopalaraya Sarma won the first prize in A.D.1945 December competition held at Gudivada. Acharya Atreya directed the play and presented. The central character of the play is a sex worker.

The second play, which got a wide popularity, was *N. G.O*²⁷ by Atreya. This play won an award for best production played under the direction of the playwright himself, which was enacted at Eluru by Venkatagiri Amateurs. The play was set in such a way it can be performed with a very little efforts of properties and costumes. Many amateur groups widely performed this play throughout Andhra and attracted large number of audience. The major reason for the success of this play was its theme, which discusses the day-to-day problems of the middle-class employees. Even though the playwright had a great creativity in writing the crisp dialogue and a tight scene order, it was aimed to gain public sympathy on middle class problems that may not have any solution at realistic level.

Another play written by Atreya himself was *Eenadu*²⁸, which depicts the need for Hindu Muslim unity. This play was written soon after the riots among the Hindu, Muslim communities on A.D.1947 division. Hence it was able to capture the sensibilities of audiences at a large extent. This phase in another way gave voice to Telugu playwrights to easily comment upon the social disparities at a superficial level with out analysing the reasons or maintaining the objectivity. In the later period it has become a trend where

Telugu playwright left no problem untouched, discussing everything at a very superficial level just to satisfy the middle class audience's in the ideal of 'social consciousness'.

In A.D.1957, Andhra Pradesh Sangeeta Nataka Academy was formed. The Academy was formed as a result of state formation. The vanguards and leaders of this Academy happened to be the Zamindars or politicians. Hence the same people who were leading the Parishat became the leaders of the Academy also. M.R.Apparao who was the president of Parishat became the cultural minister for the state of Andhra Pradesh. Pasala Suryachandrarao who was the secretary of Parishat became the president of Academy. Even though the activities of Parishat and Academy were different, they became inseparable because of the same leadership. Slowly Academy started getting more prominence than the Parishat due to its financial support from the Government.

In this period, the Telugu cinema had become more popular. Film personalities like Gudavalli Ramabrahmam, B.N.Reddy, L.V.Prasad, Ch.Nagaiah²⁹ and others showed a special concern for theatre. New cinema theatres were built in all most all major business towns. Cinema industry started attracting the talented crew from the stage. With this, a process of migration started from stage to cinema. At one point of time it became a craze for the theatre practitioners to grab at least one opportunity to appear on silver screen. Hence for every drama

performance or for every theatre occasion cinema people were invited as the guests. When one looks at the old volumes of theatre magazine *Natyakala* published under the editorship of Pasala Surya Chandrarao, a bunch of photographs can be found with the faces of prominent cinema stars addressing the theatre gatherings. This trend had extended further and theatre practitioners started depending on cinema people for conducting the theatre performances. This trend continues till today. Most of the Parishats feel privileged to invite a film star for the function. S.M.Bhasha³⁰, the General Secretary of *Narasaraopet Rangastali* holds that it serves two purposes, one showing our reputation to the public and the other attracting the local sponsors. N.Sambaiah³¹, the organiser of *Pragathi Kala Parishat*, Sattenapalli opines that the local sponsors and public think that theatre activity 'is the activity of useless people. In order to show that how talented they are and how many people have gone to film industry from theatre, popular film personalities are invited every year.

By A.D.1960, when Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat became weak, there were other similar Parishats emerged in different parts of the state. By A.D.1970, this trend was much vibrant and around forty Parishats were started in different parts of Andhra. *Bellary Raghava Parishat* of Vijayanagaram and *Lalitha Kalaniketan* of Rajamudry were popular among them.³² But most of the Parishats were time bound and very few Parishats were able to continue for long. Some old Parishats were closed and some new Parishats emerged. In spite of many Parishats, no

experiments as such have taken place in Telugu land. The participating groups also did not have any financial support to make experiments. Experiments can also be done without financial support as it happened with political theatre movement through out the world. Those experiments, which do not require any financial support, need an ideological base. Parishats have no such base.

Themes, which do not require much set design and properties, were preferred. A small hut, one cot, water pot, a set of rented chairs with the name of the rental house on the back of it, telephone, door curtains, wall posters of different Gods were the general properties for all most all the plays. The design of the stage is with a sofa set in the middle of the stage, a telephone table at the left extreme and with an entrance at the middle of the stage with a door curtain. All the plays have the entrance from the right wing and the exit from the left wing from audience point of view.

In order to break this monotony, a few attempts were made within the Parishat structure. Starting the play with the climax, showing the psychological trauma of the character with a background song rather than with the character itself, starting the play with a character narrating **the** story to the other character, using the freeze technique where all **the** characters become freeze except the required character (*Maro Mahonjodaro*) were some of the techniques employed to sustain the interest of the audience. Though these kinds of attempts cannot be called as 'Experiments', many theatre critiques recorded them as experiments. In

the previous chapter all the main experiments and movements of world theatre were mentioned. The history of world theatre says experiments evolve not just for the sake of experiments; instead, they were developed through proper philosophical outlooks of theatre personalities. They broke the existing laws of performance, aesthetics and profound new laws of theatre as alternative. Ideology plays a crucial role in all the experiments and theatre movements. Even in Indian context, Badal Sircar strongly condemns the proscenium and invented the Third theatre'. Where as Telugu theatre has no history of such experiments.

In this way Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat left its legacy to the other amateur organisations. Even though there is no direct relation between Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat and the other mushrooming Parishats, one has to look at this phenomenon in relation to the Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat. Because for all these Parishats, A.N.K.P became the inspiration and guiding force. The aims and objectives for which the A.N.K.P had stood, the same ideals became the manifesto for the other Parishats also. It became voiceless in condemning or controlling the unhealthy activities of the remaining Parishats. Hence it became dead by 1970.³³

There are nearly one hundred and twenty seven Parishats functioning in Andhra Pradesh (see appendix No:3) All these Parishats were started after A.D.1960 only. The table shown in the appendix excluded the list of Telugu Parishats functioning outside Andhra Pradesh. The table shows that 14% of Parishats are taking place at cities, 41.73 %

at rural areas and 47.24% at towns. In the above-mentioned list of Parishats, some of them were closed down and some of them are still flourishing. After A.D.1990, many Parishats sprouted in the rural areas of Andhra. Right now there were around eighty Parishats through out the state conducting annual competitions for theatre groups. In these eighty, most of the Parishats are being held at rural areas and semi urban towns. Among these eighty, Guntur district stands in the first place by organising around seventeen Parishats. After Guntur, both the Godavari districts and Vizag are strong in theatre activity. Nandyala, Proddutur, Tirupathi, Ananthapuram are some of the active areas of Rayalaseema. Telengana invariably happened to be a weak region for Parishat activities. According to the available statistics, by the end of A.D.2001, sixty-five competitions were held at different parts of Andhra. Among them, seventeen Parishats were newly started.³⁴

The organisers: With the reference of above-mentioned table, the organisers of Parishats can be divided into four categories, viz .1.Employees, 2.Ametuere artists formed into committees, 3.Families & Memorial trusts and 4. Individuals. The following table shows the level of involvement of each category of organisers in Telugu theatre.

Table:Eight

Category	No.of Parishats	Percentage
1. Employees	12	10.62
2. Committees	30	26.55
3. Families & Memorial Trusts.	19	16.81
4. Individuals	52	46.02

In many Government based organisations like Department of Railways, B.H.E.L, H.C.L, H.M.T, Municipal Corporations and port authority, one can find a bunch of theatre artists, art lovers and union leaders working as employees, the first category of organisers. With the interest and initiative of these people, Parishats have emerged on these company's names. The employees convince the authorities to grant some funds towards conducting the Parishats and all the infrastructure facilities of the company are used for organising it. The venue of the Parishat is the township of the industry. So the entire workers of the industry assemble together to watch the performances. Here the employees place a crucial role in contacting the theatre groups, convincing the authorities and conducting the Parishat. The problem arises when those particular employees get transferred to some other areas. In some cases it is the initiative of the authorities in conducting the Parishat. Most of them were

withered away because of the transfers of the employees and officials. H.C.L. Natakostavalu, H.M.T. Natakostavalu, H A L Natakostavalu were discontinued because of this factor.

The second category of organisers is **amateur artists formed into committees**, residing in various towns of Andhra. Most of them are bank employees, teachers, lecturers and doing a respectable job in the society. A small group of four or five such individuals join together, form into a committee and organise the Parishat with the help of all possible sources of that town. This kind of organisers is also active in performing the plays. So it becomes easy for them to get the groups and conduct the Parishats. On the other hand it becomes a status symbol to be identified as artist cum organiser of a Parishat. Even this kind of organisers have same problem of first category that once the main organiser gets a transfer, the entire Parishat will collapse. In the above-mentioned list, more than twenty Parishats were withered away because of this reason.

The third category of organisers is **families and memorial trusts**. In the above-mentioned list, one can find around 15 Parishats run in the memory of someone. The well wishers and the relatives of the demised person, feel that conducting a Parishat on his or her name will be right way of paying homage to their soul. Parishat becomes a big function to remember the dead personality, where lot of people comes and witness the show. Paruchuri Raghu Babu Smaraka Parishat, Kona Prabhakar Rao Natakostavalu, Raogopalrao Nataka Potilu are some of the examples.

The fourth category is individuals. The above table shows that the major chunk of the organisers is an individual. When most of them were interviewed, the common feeling that everybody expresses is “organising a Parishat is hazardous’. When it is so hazardous why people as individuals want to take up such pains? What makes them to conduct a Parishat? What is that inspires them? Among these 52 individuals most of them are from rural areas. It is the local identity that inspires them to conduct the Parishats. The political identity, the identity as a popular person in the village and surroundings, the identity of being a patron of arts,, all these things make the individuals to organise Parishats. When one takes up their financial status as criteria, it is average income of above average farmer. These people have a moderate educational background and hail from middle class agricultural families. They have a lit bit of political back up also. Though they have a great passion and love for theatre, they are neither artists nor directors. They are just organisers. Their intention in conducting the competition is neither to develop theatre nor making it more relevant to the society. Organising a Parishat is a communal activity for the villagers. All the arrangements like food, shelter to the artists, stage erection, and lighting are taken care by the entire village. The community feeling and the involvement of entire village can be seen in all cultural or religious activities. Similarly the village owns the Parishat. The other aspect is that it becomes a prestige issue among the neighboring villages, that the particular village is able to conduct the

Parishat every year. Even the artists, who visit the village for performance, praise the unity of the village and the reception of the local people. All these conditions made the organisers to continue the Parishat. As audiences, they enjoy the performances; appreciate the content and sentimental crisp dialogues, emotions and so on and so forth. They do not consider the technical aspects of the drama or the approach of the playwright in portraying the incidents. They only look at the emotional part of it. Hence any performance will attract their attention and make them relaxed. The agricultural scenario of that particular year also plays a crucial role in conducting the Parishats. As the crops flourish, the Parishat will be conducted with high budgets. When the crops are not favorable, the Parishat receives lot of setbacks. The recent drought in rural Andhra showed a great impact on Parishat activity. Most popular Parishats like , Kakateya Kala Parishat of Nagabhiravaripalem, Karshaka Kala Parishat of Ganesunivaripalem, and Pedanandipadu Parishat were withheld during A.D.2001-2002. The remaining rural based Parishats are able to survive, because the finance is collected from the migrated well off people of that particular villages.

Another interesting aspect of organising Parishats is the competition among the organisers itself. If one village is conducting the Parishat, the neighboring village also feels it as a prestige to organise another, much more effectively than the other. This trend is more visible in Guntur and Godavari districts.

The other important aspect of Parishats is finance. It is surprising to note that around rupees one crore on average is spent in conducting the Parishats. All this money is the patronage of the local business people and philanthropists. No money from Government side is allotted. Each Competition costs around one lakh to two lakhs rupees. Each participant group will be given remuneration around rupees three to five thousand and special prize money will be given for best three productions. Apart from collective prizes, there will be individual prizes like best actor, best actress, best script, best director and best set. A memento and token money will be given for these individual winners. Three theatre experts will be seated as panel of judges whose decision is final in deciding the winners.

The general schedule of major Parishats is between the months of February and May of every year. Among these four months, April and May months are very important and often two or three Parishats will have on the same dates. Disputes arise regarding changing of the dates. In A.D.1996, all Parishat organisers assembled at Chilakaluripet of Guntur district and formed a forum, in order to avoid clashes among them³⁵. One of the resolutions was that no two Parishats should be conducted on same dates, because it becomes a great problem for the participant groups. Most of the auditoriums where these competitions are conducted are Open-air theatres. Hence organisers prefer only summer time to conduct the Parishats. The other reason is that as many Parishats are located in

rural areas, the villagers are at free in summer time to watch the performances. As a result the entire activity of amateur theatre is limited to a period of three to four months. Recently this time schedule is stretched farther starting from January to May. This typical time schedule has provided a unique facility to amateur groups. They have six months free time to prepare for a play and the other six months to enact the play.

The nature of competition had provoked a challenging nature among the participants in such a way that some how or the other the prize must be won. Though the entire activity is for amateurs, there is hectic competition and tension prevails among the groups. It has become a regular feature to openly criticise the judges of the Parishat soon after declaring the result. Lobbying and loyalties rose to maximum extent. The judgement of the competitions is very interesting element in any Parishat. Participants start guessing who is going to win the prizes soon after knowing the names of the judges. Though the judges take care of all the possibilities and politics that take place in between the performances, they bound to receive the heavy criticism from major groups. They can't even able to answer the questions of artists, because in arts, the likings and dislikings are very personal.

This amazing trend of competitions had given a picture that as if there is no other kind of activity existing in Andhra. Even the Government of Andhra Pradesh felt that this is the only way of developing the theatre and initiated a Government competition from A.D.2000 by the name of

Nandi Natakhoshtavam. In Andhra Pradesh, the state Government has been awarding prizes for best television and cinema productions in the name of *Nandi awards*. Taking the inspiration from it, Andhra Pradesh Film Television and Theatre Development Corporation, a wing of state Government has initiated an annual competition for theatre. This event has generated a new interest among the theatre practitioners and theatre groups started taking it as a privilege to win a prize in *Nandi*. The Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu distributed the prizes for the winners for the first two years. Thus further enhanced the popularity of *Nandi Competition*. As a result lot of politics, mismanagement, recommendations and many other negative trends sprouted around *Nandi*. Starting from the announcement of the competition till the end, *Nandi* receives lot of criticism from public and media for its mismanagement and misrepresenting the creativity of the artists.

Harnadharao, a popular writer on films and theatre advocates that though the government says by announcing *Nandis* it is showing equal importance to cinema, television and theatre it always marginalises theatre from the rest of the media. It spends crores of rupees for *Nandi* functions of television and cinema. But when it comes to theatre, they would that they say that the budget is very limited. A clear cut disparity can be seen between cinema and theatre".³⁶ Now after four annual events of *Nandi*, some theatre activists started questioning the relevance of *Nandi*. Most of the participants felt that there is no structural difference between

the *Nandi* competitions and the other sixty competitions that are taking place in the entire state. *Bhumika*, a theatre organisation of Hyderabad conducted an opinion poll during the A.D.2001-May *Nandi* festival. The survey reflects the unrest in the participants over the attitude of the Government. Many artists feel that the Government should provide many other facilities than just conducting *Nandi*. But many theatre groups fear that if further demands are asked, the Government may stop conducting at least *Nandi*. It is pertinent to mention here that the chairman of Andhra Pradesh Film, Television and Theatre Development Corporation had announced in 2002-Nandi festivals that the Corporation may be privatised soon, hence *Nandi* may not be continued for long.

Modali Nagabhushana Sarma³⁷, a critique of theatre felt the need for the review plays performed in the competitions. He observes no difference between the contract plays of earlier times and the contemporary Parishat plays. He further says that during those days, contractors gave livelihood to the professional artists and killed the theatre in this process. He expects that the Parishats would function in similar manner.

Another popular theatre critique and writer Somanchi Yagnanna Sastry³⁸ said that the competitions, introduced by Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat, that renovated theatre during the times of Second World War lost its purpose in modern times. He opines that the competitions which

have gone have gone into sidetracks not only lost their purpose, but killed the very nature of theatre by spreading a pseudo psychology through it. He suggests to end the practice of holding competitions and produce plays that have novelty and creativity.

In the same ground even the Review Committee for the three A.P State Academies mentioned in its report that "Some eminent theatre men feel that these competitions have weakened the amateur Theatre Movement and that this is the main cause for the indiscipline prevalent among the amateur associations. The Review committee recommends that the Akademi should evolve a suitable scheme for holding these competitions which will check or eliminate the undesirable tendencies".³⁹

, Attili Krishnarao, a veteran practitioner of theatre and playwright clearly said in a seminar organised by *Navarasa* that because of these Parishats, the drama within the four walls came in to vogue. This kind of drama is meant for prizes not for the people. The artist how hard he may try to project his character will ultimately make himself away from the people. The artists are left with no option except participating in these Parishats, invariably agree for the regulations of the Parishats. A good theatre can be possible when we do it away from Parishats".⁴⁰

When one looks at the above-mentioned statements, all of them reflect various negative aspects of Parishats. They also mention about various limitations of Parishats. All these statements are made by the

educated theatre personalities. This unrest among these people led to the initiation of theatre education in Andhra.

The History of Theatre Education in Andhra Pradesh:

Though the initiation of theatre education is not a counterpart of Parishats, it has a strong relation with Parishat activity. People, who were educated and have a passion for English drama and theatre, started dreaming about such drama and theatre in Andhra. . K.Gopaldaswamy, Srinivasa Chakravarthi, Manthri Srinivasarao are such people. Their vision of theatre is not limited to the theatre of competitions. It is much more broad and more of experimental. Parishats do not serve this purpose. This led to theatre education in Andhra. Later it has showed two kinds of impact on Parishat activity. There is one kind of people who stopped participating in Parishats after having theatre education. Chatla Sri Ramulu, D.S.N. Murthy, Prasada Reddy and others fall under this category. The other kind of people strengthens the Parishat activity after receiving theatre training. T.Sundaram, Udaybhanu, Deekshit, Satyanand, Misro and others fall under this category. The knowledge of English drama and theatre among a few officials led to the initiation of theatre education in Andhra. In A.D.1943, Andhra University initiated a trend of experimental productions. This trend has been continued for around twenty years and led to the establishment of Department of Theatre Arts in A.D.1961.⁴¹ The man behind this entire movement is K.V, Gopaldaswamy the then registrar

of the university. Because of his English education at England, Gopaldaswamy had a good exposure to the Western drama and a passion for realistic theatre. Because of his high status and profession, he tried to materialise his dreams with the students. With this idea he started a theatre group with the students and experimented with variety of plays. The aims of this theatre group were: 1. Training the students in all aspects of theatre arts, 2. Performing new plays, 3. Experimenting in all faculties of theatre arts, 4. Making the designs for different kinds of plays and auditoriums and 5. Providing entertainment.

Gopaldaswamy was the final authority in all the aspects of the play production. He used to take care of all the aspects like selecting the students through interviews, selecting the plays for performances, mobilising the finance and creating the paraphernalia. The play selection was based on two things. One is its appeal to the public; another thing is its scope for experiment. The faculty members of different departments were the directors of the plays. A separate technical staff was appointed to assist the director. The group used to utilise the presence of every Department in the university to produce the plays. Department of Electronics, Department of Physics was extensively used to create special effects on the stage. A special open auditorium with 54'X30' was built with a special grant from U.G.C.

Thousands of audiences used to gather to witness the performances. Most of them were students and university staff. A bunch of educated

masses from Vijay City used to come for the plays. At times, even though the performance was not appealing, audiences used to feel satisfied with the set and the special effects. The most appreciated aspect was that some of the plays written by the students were also performed with due respect. When one looks at the list of plays performed in the university, all of them were written with a broad outlook. *Kanyasulkam* of Gurajada Apparao, *Viswambara* and *Hiranyakasipudu* of Amamcharla Venugopalrao, *Allimutha* of Kopparapu Subbarao, *Nishpalam* of P.V.Rajamannar, *Panjaram* of Avasaraala Surya Rao were popular performances of the group. This experimental theatre group performed around two hundred and seventy one playlets / plays during the period of A.D.1943 to 1965.⁴² Though there were no professional theatre teachers by that time, the training was given by the popular theatre personalities like Stanam Narisimharao, D.V.Subbarao, Sanyasiraju, Rajarao and others. Throughout the year, the entire university campus used to be entertaining and exiting with the presence of the theatre group. The commitment of Gopaldaswamy and his sincerity were well received by every one and resulted to the establishment of Department of Theatre Arts in A.D. 1961. Popular actor and director of modern Telugu theatre, K.Venkateswarrao was appointed as the head of the Department. An under graduate course with a duration of five years was offered to the university. Popular theatre figures like M.Ramachandra Rao, Mantri Srinivasarao, Attili Krishna Rao, Chatla Sriramulu, R.Saratbabu, Abburi

Gopalakrishna extended their services to the Department from the last forty years. A.Krishnarao for the first time introduced street theatre by adopting one of Badal Sircar's play *Mitchal* in to Telugu in the name of *Vuregimpu*. This play was first performed in Visakhapatnam under the direction of M.K. Raina as the performance of theatre workshop, organised by National School of Drama in collaboration with Andhra University in A.D. 1979

In A.D.1982, Osmania University started a diploma course in theatre arts. Though it was an evening course many translations, adaptations were done during A.D.1982 to A.D.1990. Many theatre teachers, playwrights were educated from this department. M.Nagabhushana Sarma, Raja Ramdas, Chaatla Sreeramulu served the department as faculty. At present the entire department is being operated with one permanent faculty member, G.S. Prasada Reddy. Later, In A.D.1989 University of Hyderabad started another P.G. course in theatre arts at Sarojini Naidu School of Performing Arts, Fine Arts and Communication. Bhaskar Shewalkar, D.S.N Murthy, N.J. Bhikshu, Ananth Krishnan, Jolly Puthussery are working as the faculty members. In the immediate year another graduate course was started at Telugu University. Osmania and University of Hyderabad made attempts to adopt some of the great classics of world theatre. Plays like Oedipus Rex, Exception and the Rule, Macbeth, Roots (Adaptation of Alex Haley's novel), **Roshman** (Adaptation

of Acira Curasova's movie). The other two universities have been producing direct Telugu plays.

Andhra Pradesh Natya Sangham:

In A.D.1948, the International Theatre Institute was established. As Indian charter Indian Theatre Institute was established. As a state organisation Andhra Pradesh Natya Sangham was established in A.D.1954 at Hyderabad. A.R. Krishna was the leader of the organisation. The aims and activity of the organisation were to conducting state level theatre festivals, establishing an institution to offer theatre training, extending different kinds of services to the theatre groups, initiating the construction the auditoriums in the every district head quarters, implementing the activities of Indian Theatre Institute.⁴³

In A.D.1959, the organisation started a two years course in theatre arts. Abburi Ramakrishna Rao was the in charge of the course. After two three years of its existence the organisation withered away due to some internal clashes among the leaders.

Later in A.D.1970 A.R. Krishna produced some of the productions with his group. One of his plays was *Malapalli*, a novel by V.Lakshminarayana, written in A.D.1921, was adapted to stage with twelve acting areas. The audiences were asked to sit in the middle of the surrounded set and watch the performance at different locales. A.R.Krishna says that this production was the inspiration of the concept of

environmental theatre of Richard Schechner. With around seventy artists, this play was performed hundred times at different parts of Andhra. After establishing himself as the prominent theatre personality, Krishna started a theatre repertory with the financial support of Government of Andhra Pradesh in A.D.1982. Every year a batch of twenty students was admitted into to the two years course. Devadas Kanakala, Lakshmi Devi, Krishna were the main faculty. Even this project was not run successfully for a long. In 1984, the institute was closed down as the State Government stopped funding for repertory.

Many amateur artists and directors appeared for this course as students. Their skills and competence were developed. Contemporary theatre directors like Misro, T.Sundaram, Udayabhanu, Deekshit, Satyanand received theatre training from various universities and have been receiving much applause and prizes for their productions. Some old students of these courses became the faculty members in due course.

Telugu Theatre: Politics of Representation:

From the above discourse, it can be **summerised** that there are two broad phases in Telugu theatre. One the folk theatre whose roots cannot be pin pointed to a particular **timeframe**. The second is modern Telugu theatre, which set to have started in **A.D.1880s**. Telugu theatre in the folk realm though has basic elements of theatre such as performer, audience, text and context is less regarded as theatre for it violated the Western

definition of theatre. The western definition innately delimits the actor from its audience, the text from the context and vice versa. The actors are trained to perform any text to any context to any audience. This overall fluidity is one major criterion for theatre to develop as modern art and hence modern theatre. **Contrary to the above is fixed and became rigid in sharing the elements of theatre.** Particular performer in a particular context enacts a fixed text to the fixed audience. Therefore theatre-appears as repetitive in its presentation. This also changes the other aspects of theatre like stage, makeup, costume and other technical properties. The proscenium is considered as modern, where as non- -proscenium is of folk. The non-proscenium invariably narrowed the application of light, sound, costumes, makeup etc. therefore folk theatre by and large, represented their audiences and their world view. ,The politics of representation in folk theatre are confined to caste and region. For instance the *Chindu Madigas* through their *Chindu Bhagavatham* (popular folk theatre) represent the community how it originated and why it segregated and what they expect to do in the social realm. Similarly the *Pagativeshams* of *Ganayatha Jangamas* are region oriented and cater the needs of people of the region. Through their enactments they satirically expose the fallacies of different communities and castes. In both the cases mentioned above there is certain type of rigidity in the application of theatrical elements. They are basically itinerary in nature and therefore exercise an obligation to perform to their stock audiences, the same text

drawn from orality and claimed as hereditary. Therefore the contexts in which these performances occur are calandrical and hence fixed. What is important in folk theatre is what they represent is not simply that art but they way of life of the community which they belong. This dimension makes most of the folk theatrical forms ethnocentric in nature.

Another dimension of politics of representation in folk theatre is connected with philosophical milieu of Idealism. The metaphysical realm is created in their theatre through the representation of images of gods and goddesses. The themes of the *Bhagavathams* are by and large drawn from the folk versions of the great Puranic of India such as *Ramayanam*, *Mahabharatham*, and *Bhagavatgita*. The ideal depiction of conflict and resolution leading to peaceful coexistence is rhetorically expressed through the enactments of the themes of *Puranas*. For this, metaphors and similes were vibrantly used in their enactments. Therefore politics of representation of folk theatre contributes to the depiction of ideal society, which the people should sought after.

The politics of representation of modern theatre are by and large confined to the issues of modernity. The driving principle of modernity is 'difference'. Difference as concept of critical thinking gave the modern world a new tool to analyse the cultures and their products. The modern man with the principle of difference divided the objects of the world into two sets. One is based on similarity and the other, on difference. The set of similarities is conceived as paradigms and the interplay of difference is

conceived as syntagmatics. Syntagmatics of linear and paradigms are vertical in nature. This basic division made the modern man not only to analyse the language but also the other cultural products. The human beings organised themselves into groups and hierarchised based on these principles. The social divide based on relations of productions started becoming overtly expressed in modern times. Modernity begets urban centers functioning on the mechanised productions. Therefore technology became an essential ingredient of modernity. Modern theatre did rely on two principles; one is the principles of difference and principle of technology in representation. As technology alienated the labour from its labourer, the modern theatre alienated actor from action (character of folk theatre). The performers of the folk theatre have a ritual obligation to the **audience** and therefore the audience too has a **ritual** right to view the performance. This principle in modern theatre did not work as such the actors are recruited through training processes. In other words the actor is alienated from the character. An actor who is trained need not necessarily recruited to a character, which he views as fit. This alienation principle innately contributed to the development of competition as in the case of market economy.

Capitalism, an offshoot of modernity paved the way for industrialisation and market economy. Competing in producing and selling the products in the market became an essential feature. In order to optimise costs and to deliver effective prices the business households

went in for competitive products and tried to make profits in order to sustain the industry. Modern Telugu theatre more or less followed the similar principle during its inception times in various genres of Telugu theatre for instance Padyanatakam sustained on the principal of competition. The talented actors are merged and sought after by the contractors to stage the plays. The consumer here invariably the theatre enthusiast is the prime target to reach by the contractors. Hence, they not only recruited the popular creative artistes but also relayed on advertisement in order to sell the Padyanatakam. In the process unconsciously competition grew in among the artists and with the result specialisation in performing characters grew in theatre of Padyanatakam. Like a product of industry is not manufactured in one unit but different units and then ensembled. The same way contractors recruited different actors from different regions for their plays. This in fact looks like a consortium of specialists more than a holistic performance. The phenomena of ensembling different specialised artists through appeared to be one of the causes of success of Padyanatakam, it innately started killing the very art form. The skills of the actors were confined to certain roles and therefore did not result in developing the theatre as such. The theatre requires a just combination of different elements. In the case of Padyanatakam a highly imbalanced mixture of these elements are to be seen. Only the ability to recite Padyams is given importance than the body language, sound, light and stagecraft. This lopsided development of

Padyanatakam is suffering when there is lack of new entrance whose belong to young generation that are not much for exposing literary skills.

Concomitant to this development, none of the contractors could get expertise in the modern ways of fund rising and advertising. The lack of skills in the management of event affected performances of Padyanatakam. These performances faced a threat to its existence from the modern mass media. It appears to have been failed to respond to the needs of the modern people and represented the theatre as the theatre for Telugu identity in terms of usage of language in verse form (Padyam) which is unique to Telugu culture. It sought nativity through politics of representation of language rather than the theatricality. In other words it represents the glory of Telugu as one, which has sweet language and praised as *Italian of the East*.

The Parishatnatakam which is another offshoot of modern Telugu theatre emerged as venue for social dramas. It has replaced Padyam with dialogue and treated the other theatrical elements equally. However the all above mentioned did work even with Parishatnatakam. The competition became the live nerve for the existence of Parishatnatakam. The politics of representation in Parishatnatakam shifted from actor to playwright and director. It is the directors and playwright who prevailed in Parishatnatakam. The contractors as in the case of Padyanatakam are being replaced with the organisers of **Parishats** who can be catagorised into four: (i). Institutions, (ii). families and memorial trusts, (iii). Amateur

artists formed into committees and (iv). the individuals. The politics of representation in Parishat Natakam by and large depend on the above categories of organisers. It is the organisers who fix the venue, remunerations, winners and other terms and conditions of plays to be performed.

The first category that is employees are situated in Urban centers as organisers of Parishats craved for the institutional identity. The employees partly owe their allegiance to the institution, which they are serving for two reasons. Firstly, as an employee of institution, his livelihood is taken care. Secondly as a theatre enthusiast gets funding from the employer under the category of welfare funds. This sponsoring of the employer gives the members of these Parishats a moral boost to plan for Parishats by approaching business households and philanthropists for further funds. The emblem of the institution plays a dominant role in undertaking Parishats. The politics of representation therefore surrounds on the identity of the institution. Another important factor is the welfare of the employees. Most of these Parishats are held at exclusive townships developed by companies. Therefore, the venue was invariably the auditoriums of the townships. This being the case entertaining the co - employees became the primary concern of the Parishat. Therefore the themes are selected on the basis of entertainment of value and less critical on the problems of institutions, in order to safe guard the industrial relationship. Therefore the representation of such Parishats are always

towards general social evils or satirical or humorous and themes of the general concern. The theatre in this style of Parishats represents the middle class ethos and seeks to place theatre as entertainment.

The other type of category of organisers is families and memorial trusts. Most of this category of Parishats is from non- – rich or the absentee landed gentry of the urban centers. Film personalities, industrialists, educationalists and such people run these types of trusts. The politics of representation of this theatre surrounds on identity of the patterns. The patrons identity is reflected in two ways (i) as the family identity (ii), the identity of business house holds. The Parishat becomes a springboard for this category of organisers to promote their identity. As these people are the soul sponsored for the Parishats, they deploy strategies of advertising their own identity with the help of theatre practitioners. In fact it is theatre practitioners who are close to these families act as the conductors of the event and contribute to the success of the Parishats. In due of the services from the theatre practitioners some of their needs are met as and when required. So to say the patrons almost became absentee organisers in their own Parishats but still monitor directly certain events like inaugural ceremony and valedictory ceremony and so on and so forth. Since the identity of the 'self (patron) is the prime concern of this category of Parishats, experiments on the themes, which suit to the elite concerns, are encouraged. The themes like gender issues, Patriotism, abstract portrayal of ideal social systems etc are promoted as

themes. Therefore the politics of representation are more towards urban elite and their version of nationalism, egalitarianism, gender equality etc.

The third category of Parishats run by artists formed into committees is mostly in the semi urban and towns. The members of these Parishats are mostly working in Government and non-Government sectors as gaged and non-gaged officers. It is the interest in the theatre that draws the members to come together and run Parishats. Therefore only on concerns the competitions are conducted. The members themselves being artists invite the theatre groups on the basis of personal rapport and intern develop their own opportunities to participate in other Parishats as artists. The reciprocity being the organising principle the committees run Parishats by selecting different themes and different size of troops to perform in their Parishats. The polythematic presentation of the plays gives vent to playwrights to experiment with the themes. Therefore the issues related to the contemporary socio, economic, political and cultural milieus are taken as themes. This in fact appears as if it is a journalistic theatre in the sense that as the news paper plays a role of writing the contemporary issues such as scams, *Gundaism*, crime against women, bribery etc are made into themes of the plays. Therefore, the politics of representation of this category of committee perceives as if it is anti establishment, anti normative and anti elite. It is the narrative, which is dialogue oriented, becomes the nerve of the play. Therefore the playwrights use different formulas of speech acts to catch the attention of

the audiences. The opening and closing formula of the scenes in the play acquire prominence in narrating the themes. They comprise mostly statements made in flowery language with metrical sense. The text gets unfolded based on the ability of the performers. Therefore the performance space becomes most meaningful through these Parishats. Often the politics of representation of this theatre is guided by the politics of representation of actors. The audiences were mostly the migrants from rural to urban in search of jobs and business. Hence, the metrical language is well appreciated by them because of their association with Padyanatakam and folk theatre of the rural areas. Since they are migrated, 'the non local' status become innate concern for them therefore they resort to the themes which project the loss of family relations, ethics, identity and so on and so forth. Contrary to this problems that are faced in the new settings (towns and semi urban) are also projected as cheating, bribery, crime, bureaucratic exploitation etc. So, this theatre by and large is construed on projecting differences between the ideal and the reality.

The fourth category of Parishats organisers is individuals. The individuals of this category are from rural areas and therefore these leaders for making the event of the Parishat a success encourage the community-based participation. Since the individuals are from the landed gentry and close to the *poseri loci* act in feudalistic manner in organising the Parishats. It is not simply the individuals name but the name of the entire village is the concern of this Parishats. Therefore the politics of

representation acts in two ways, one the Feudal and the other, communal. Individuals do the decision making on issues like fixing of dates, themes, prizes, funds etc., in a feudalistic fashion, whereas in actual conducting of the event it is the community participation, which is sought. The themes of these plays are mostly romanticising the rural over urban and community living.

The politics of representation of the theatre education is of different nature. Theatre education in India is done on two fronts, training in theory and in practice. Most of the members of the faculty in the institutions, which are promoting theatre education, are themselves either actors or directors, or technical personal. As part of theatre history and theory they expose the students to world theatre, developments in theatre, ideas and concepts in theatre so on and so forth. This background gives both faculty and students to go for experimental theatre. The narrative techniques in presenting the play is designed and blocking the stage movements, choreography in the scenes, illuminating the stage with different lights and visuals through symbolic structures on stage—all become the concern of this theatre. After the introduction of theatre education in Andhra, the Telugu theatre witnessed more number of plays from other languages translated in to Telugu. The European plays, the plays of the black theatre and the plays from Hindi, **Marathi**, Tamil, Kannada, Bengali of Indian languages were exposed to Telugus. In this manner it contributed significantly in expanding the horizons of Telugu theatre. Yet another

significant contribution of the theatre education is that it has influenced even the *Parishatnatakam*. The *Parishat Natakam* is narrative oriented rather than visual oriented. The students who had undergone the theatre education become critiques of the theatre, which is another significant contribution of the theatre education. Theatre journalism is also promoted. Critiquing once own plays though not accepted whole-heartedly still started the discourse in theatre. However the theatre education is not devoid of flaws. The politics of representation of this group is to project as 'elitists of theatre'. They consider themselves as the literate of theatre. This in a way distancing themselves from mainstream theatre. Though the attitude of 'big brother' is a dangerous trend in imperialising the theatre, it appears to be a 'necessary evil' in the theatre movement of Andhra.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh also indulged in the name of promotion of theatre, a Parishat like institute to itself under the department of Andhra Pradesh Film, Television and Theatre Development Corporation. The famous *Nandi* awards started picking up in Telugu theatre circles. Pro-Government plays pro-establishment plays and pro-political ideology plays are being encouraged in *Nandi Natakostavams*. The nexus between the persons of theatre educationalists and the bureaucrats from the Government is increasing in the Telugu theatre scenario. Concomitant to this development the theatre is also facing the politics of representation from N.R.I. groups by fixing high remunerations

and attaching royal insignia attracting the theatre practitioners from all sections. In the process partly the Parishats and totally the folk are marginalised.

To sum up the history of Telugu theatre, thus far is written on the principle of chronology. In writing so the authors of history of Telugu theatre do merger of drama with theatre. A distinction between drama a literary genre and theatre as a performance genre is a must to understand the politics of representation behind the practices of Telugu theatre. Fundamentally two types of theater existed in the history of Telugus. One is folk theatre for which the politics of representation being caste and region. Caste fundamentally represents the groups innately connected to performers and audience. Region represents variations in such performances. The second the modern Telugu theatre which is constituted by the practitioners of theatre be it amateurs or professionals.

On the whole the modern theatre encouraged competition among the theatre practitioners. However, the politics of representation surrounded mostly by the compulsions of the theatre practitioners. It is what they wish to present is what the audience are supposed to receive. The gaze is from the theatre practitioners and not from the audiences. This super imposition of principle of modernity undermined the representation of **marginality**. In other words the socially, politically, culturally and economically marginalised groups were either ignored or silenced in their theatrical productions. With the result, a strong need

emerged for certain political parties to voice the concerns of the marginalised. This brought forth a desire in those political parties to seek for the art forms of the marginal communities. In the process they constructed 'theatre of the marginalised' by hybridising the 'literacy' with 'orality'. Literacy is meant for written play scripts that were produced with a conscious effort to propagate the party ideologies of the parties. The concept of 'orality' on the other is a direct reference to the folk theatre whose plays are produced and transmitted on oral compositions. Thus new theatre known as 'theatre of the marginalised' was entrepreneurship by the party politics through their representation of marginality.

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4.Chalam, Tripuraneni Ramaswami Chowdary, Viswanadha Satyanarayana, Sri Sri, Kodavatiganti Kutumbarao are popular writers of Telugu literature. Apart from their contribution for poetry, short story and novel writing, they had shown a great passion for theatre. *Satyam, Sivam*,

Sundaram, Padmarani and Bhanumathi, Chitrangi, Sasanka, Magamma, Jayadeva, Vidakulu, Pururava are the plays written by Chalam. Rama Swami Chowdary had written plays like *Kurukshestram, Sambukavadha and Khuni. Narthana Sala, Anarkali, Venaraju and Thrisulam* are the four plays written by Viswanadha Satyanarayana. Srirangam Srinivasarao, popularly known as SriSri, had translated Chekov's *Cherry Arched* into Telugu in the name of *Sampenga Thota*, and written many short plays for radio.

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25. Atreya, D.V. Narasa Raju, Korrapati Gangadhar Rao, **Bhamidipati Kameswarao**, Kopparapu Subba Rao, Gollapudi Maruti Rao are the popular playwrights of Telugu. All of them entered into the field of theatre with the initiation of the competitions hold by Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat during **1950s**. Most of them became writers for film industry in the later stage.

26. Kondamudi Gopalaraya Sarma *Edureeta*, a full-length play written by, focusing on various issues of a sex worker. Many plays can be found with similar kind of issues. Right from *Kanyasulkam* of Gurajada to Kallakuri Narayanrao's *Chintamani*, plays revolve around sex workers.

27. N.G.O., written by Atreya during 1948 won the award for best production in the competition organized by Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat. The play is a description of self-pity of a middle class Government employ.

28. *Eenadu*, written by Atreya, deals about the unity of Hindu - Muslim. The theme was set in a middle class Muslim house on A.D. 1947, august 14th midnight, where two good friends Akbar and Purushottam were celebrating the Independence Day. Suddenly incidents happen and both the friends separate showing how fundamentalism can shatter even good friends.

29. Gudavalli, B.N.Reddy, L.V.Prasad, Ch.Nagaih are the pioneers of Telugu film industry. Their contribution in establishing the Telugu Cinema during 1940s was well appreciated.

30. Personal interview with S.M.Bhasha, organizer of *Narasaraopet Rangastali* at Guntur on 14-1-2002.

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