CHAPTER - 2

FOLK DANCES THEIR ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

Origin of Folk Dance forms: Folklore is defined as “pulse of the people” and “wealth of society.” \(^1\) Folk dances are the dances of the people which are performed spontaneously. All that is expressed by them is natural and original, effortlessly with great ease and grace. These are performed by the whole village community, by the young and the old alike. \textbf{It marks the celebration of a wedding, a festival, a harvest, an initiation of a maiden or sometimes a funeral rite too.} Besides these, the folk dances are performed after a hunt, to celebrate a victory after a war, sometimes to herald the advent of the spring season, \(\text{or in order to pacify or to ward off the impending natural calamities or any evil, which can befall the whole village.} \) These are performed by the ordinary people who are not trained or professional dancers. They are not performed for want of appreciation or reward of any kind. They are danced since dance as such, forms an integral part of their everyday life, their religious beliefs, customs and rituals. It is an offering to the habitat around them, to continue their peaceful existence. They are primarily performed to express joy and not with any other purpose. “They believe that their dance is a kind of prayer to Nature and its puissant gods, a prayer that invokes and propitiates, as well as gives thanks.” \(^2\) \textbf{There is an inherent spirituality about the rural folk in India and symbolism, not necessarily the prerogative of the urban bred.}

\(^1\) Ramakrishna Reddy.B. Dravidian folk and tribal lore, Dravidian University, Kuppam, 2001,ch. 27; Ritual and folk performing tradition in Kerala, A.K.Nambiar, P; 288.

is an integral part of the attitudes and beliefs of the rural people.\textsuperscript{3} The performers are full of energy and are vibrant. The movements are very simple with minimum variety in the steps. Quite often they derive their movements from their everyday activity which their primary source of inspiration. They are usually led by a leader who extends his imagination and skill to make the dance colourful, vigorous and vibrant. They also follow a broad set of limitations which vary with the occasion and the type of dance. During most of these presentations the performers themselves sing the songs, accompanied by wind blown instruments and the drummers.

Hunting and food gathering were primarily the occupations of the primitive man, until he developed agriculture completely, which, necessitated a great lot of hard work, his absolute time and attention, from the time of sowing. Until the activity of reaping, and after the reaping activity, the available period of time of leisure and rest must have however been the time meant for recreation, in the form of community dancing. The satisfactory harvest gave birth to their feeling of exhilaration and happy and lighter moments found expression in the form of the expanded movements of the body with the rhythm and the form taking prominence thus leading to what we see and understand as folk dance or the dance of the whole community or the village. These social gatherings of the families and celebrations in turn lead to the birth of the song and music which is and was the reflection of the live of these folks in all its variety and completeness.

\textsuperscript{3} Rama Raju.B. Glimpses into Telugu Folklore, Janapada Vijnana Prachuranala, Hyderabad,1991, P.35.
These reflect the aesthetic sense of the people and have been preserved by Oral tradition. 

The Village makes its people aware of the flowering of the dance by the theme songs being sung to simple beats of the drum out of depth of the night. The dancers move to the performing area keeping the time or rhythm with the clapping of their hands or their feet. The ensemble includes almost the whole community. The life of the village people thus manifests itself in expressing itself in popular dances with natural grace and beauty. The Gods were invoked and appeased by man through his dancing. Man offers his gratefulness to the Almighty through that which is nearest to prayer---------- dance, when God gives him in plenty. The peasants are the creators of the dances that are ritualistic, agricultural and seasonal in nature besides these, special groups being part of the village community, serving the village become, responsible for the continued dialogue or serve as vital links between the village and urban societies such as the Craftsman, entertainers, musicians and dancers. The Harvest festivals are thus created with spontaneity in music and movement. Man unconsciously copies the movements of birds, beasts and flowers in his rhythmic movements. The legs and arms sway like the swaying of the branches, the body waves like the waving grasses. He imitates the animals for his movements also.


\[4\] Ibid; p.36.

\[5\] Mohan Kokkar, Folk Dances Of India, Marg Publications, 1959; P.4.
“Folk dances have an inexhaustible variety of forms and rhythms. They differ according to regions occupations and castes. Tribal people, farmers, gypsies, hill people, and labourers have their special dances.” 6 With the onset of the monsoons, the Farmer’s inner life bubbles with energy and hence deeper rhythms move his feet to dance. Hence a definite relationship between the inner rhythms and outside movements are established and are obviously seen in the folk dances of India. “If an Andamanese is asked why he dances, his reply is that it gives him pleasure. He dances after a successful hunt - never when the day has brought disappointments. One calls to the mind the Egyptians, whose dance word ‘hbj’ means also “to be joyful”, the Greeks - word for dance ‘choros’, derieved from ‘chara’ meaning “joy”.’’7

Movements have also been extracted from the everyday life of people like the fetching of water, milking the cows, churning butter, pounding rice, scattering of seeds, reaping the harvest, ploughing of the land and the like.

Thus passion for movement lifts man from his ordinary life that is from the EVERYDAY to the ECTASY of the highest kind. This is the situation from which our folk dances have originated. “The secret of all art is self-forgetfulness.”8 This justifies the thought that man danced to forget himself and elevate beyond the everyday life which must have eventually


lead to dancing for every occasion or event that he came across in the stream of life, the instances of which we notice in the following paragraphs.

“The study of folklore leads us to an assessment of the culture complex of the race and at the same time enthuses us about the human aspect of things.”

The type of landscapes that cause change in the climate, eventually leading to the transformation of the dress, traditions and culture of the clan also forms one of the decisive components that contribute to the vast variety of movements, rhythms and musical compositions besides the costumes and dance styles. This further contributes to the regional variations found in folk dances. Peasants and the village communities welcome every change in the season by a dance. They are performed all throughout the year. These dances are not staged on any formal platform by them. They are artistic expressions of a social group of a certain period of time that have mythological beliefs of their native land and culture rooted in them, carried forward and nurtured by successive generations through repetitions.

These dances are performed by men, women, young, old and children for joy and as an offering to Nature. However these dancers have no formal background to dancing whatsoever. **These folks are hard working, dancing at birth, death, marriage and festivals.** Thus it is a song of life and living in a simple way but a happy one.

The songs are framed out of the work or the occupation of the villagers or describe the rains, or the nature and the like, that forms the

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9 Rama Raju.B., Glimpses into Telugu Folklore, Janapada Vijnana Prachuranala, Hyderabad, 1991, P. 34.
highlight of the occasion of the dance. The movements of the dances would be a very good imitation of the life around them leading to motifs that are similar to the acts of sowing, harvesting, hunting thus educating the young ones in the tribe to face encounters with wild beasts by actually making them capable of fighting the beast confronted during a actual hunt or the movements of the animals around them. The cultivators and the hunters were fascinated by the circle undoubtedly, for the circle was an invariably an important motif in executing the dance thus leading to the belief that the Sun and the Moon also influenced the dancers’ movements. An example of this type is seen amongst the GADABA tribes of the Vishakapatanam District in Andhra Pradesh which has been described in the later paragraphs. The dances incorporated simple rhythmic, repetitive movements that suited the whole community of young, old and children who participated in the dance. Men and women danced together in some cases, while in certain other cases they formed separate groups and danced as individual groups. Couple dancing was also prevalent with certain cultures during certain occasions. Sometimes the children formed the innermost circle surrounded by the women and followed by the men in the outermost circle. An object or an image, signifying the purpose of the dance would be placed in the centre, sometimes relating to the theme directly, or sometimes being abstract or symbolic, around which the whole village danced. For instance it could be a pitcher to represent fertility or a lamp to signify the prosperity of the community. Also included were dances that had no object in the centre, but yet were danced for the well being of the village. No special platforms or performing areas with special lighting effects were erected for the purpose of such dancing and festivities. A huge open field would be chosen for the purpose where the whole village gathered and
danced. These dances have generally been passed on to the next generation by means of an oral tradition and they strongly exhibit the traditional beliefs of the village community and are extant features of the culture of the folk that performs. Hence folk dances may be defined as the dance that reflects the traditional life of the people of a certain country, class or clan, developed by a few people that are part of the group. The rules followed by these groups in their dances are broadly set and these vary from one dance to another and one region to another.

In a few instances, we learn that the dances were Shamanistic in nature, wherein a traditionally trained member of a particular community danced to a point of exaltation and became possessed by a spirit. Here the possessed shaman, gave solutions to the problems of the people, answered their queries’ relating to all the disasters and the misdoings or all that was mysterious to the human mind and needed a solution to further a peaceful living, of the community of people. The possessed shaman would predict the advent of rains, for the forthcoming year, the plights that are expected to befall them in the days to come, the precautions or solutions that are to be observed to ward off such predicaments. It was therefore an occasion for the whole village to find solutions to all their ailments, disputes if any, and yet to celebrate socially as a single community without any disparities of economic status or social orders.

Dances to commemorate the dead were also performed by these folk. These basically were performed to appease the spirit of the deceased. The songs would be sung in praise of the dead person eulogizing the deeds of his valour and generosity, so that the spirit reached the heavens after the body was exhumed or cremated. While performing such dances the
dancers used masks in certain cultures. The masks helped the performer to transcend and transform one’s own self to represent the mysterious and to be one with the character that was to be portrayed. It helped elevate the dancer beyond the everyday, thus making it essential for the performer to undergo a great change in his own self for a temporary period. It can be observed that the performer would elevate one’s own self from being just an ordinary human to that of a being of the supernatural order.

These dances were also danced in huge open spaces, to facilitate the gathering of the whole village. The dancers carried stage properties that related to their occupation, and those that suited the theme of the dance that was being performed. A javelin, a bow, a sickle, a spear, colourful feathers of birds, a bunch of leaves, formed their major properties. In the dances that were meant to celebrate a hunt, sometimes the hunted animal formed the central point of the dance. The dance of the Khonds in parts of Vishakapatanam and Ganjam is an apt instance to this fact. The dancers also balanced a pitcher of water decorated very beautifully from the outside with a mask of a goddess placed in front of it, as seen in the case of the Karaga, who is also accompanied by Veerakumaras carrying swords and dancing all along with the pot bearer guarding the main dancer against dropping off the sacred pitcher all night long, through the streets of the city, in the guise of the female character from the Mahabharata, Draupadi.

The Jogiti nritya is yet another dance wherein the dancers balance a pot filled with water on their heads and dance with great fervour and ecstasy to the song in praise of goddess Chowdamma. The dancers appear as women but are actually men in the guise of women, who are traditionally groomed for the purpose. This dance has been described in the following paragraphs.
Folk dances and their movements are greatly influenced by the topography, the climate, the occupation, the standards of living, the culture and the social conditions of the region they represent as mentioned in the earlier paragraphs. Some of these dances are ritualistic in nature in addition to being Seasonal. It is a desire of the village community to celebrate that is seen as these dances in most of the cases.

A primitive origin of these folk dances in India, leads to the conclusion that the aboriginals must have danced these dances. Those cultures of people that inhabit the forests and the wild jungles and live under occupations like farming and hunting in communities are termed as tribes. Their lifestyle and culture are more often different from the rural and urban communities. Through the ages these tribes have been isolated from the rural and folk communities which have helped in preserving the tribal culture unaffected and unchanged. The unity and adherence of these groups have also helped to maintain their culture unadulterated through the ages. Severe punishments and banishment of those who strayed into the rural and urban cultures, in the neighbourhoods, from the community is a prevalent practice amongst them even to this day, which has probably contributed to the preservation of the tribal culture and rituals. However, new groups have been formed by a great number of groups that have branched off from the parent ones.

Ritual can be defined as a special procedure that helps to invoke a supernatural being as and when required on various occasions.¹⁰ The supernatural presence of the being is invoked in a holy site--- a shrine, which

¹⁰ Prof. S.K.Ramachandra Rao; The Folk Origins Of Folk Temples; IBH Prakashana, Bangalore, P. 65.
forms the material basis. This shrine comes into being, as and whenever required by the occasion that is conducted by the community of the village and remains valid depending upon the efficiency with which the ritual is conducted. Hence to conduct these procedures or rituals an enclosure is set up which becomes the core of all ceremonial activities, congregations and is maintained with supreme sanctity. **ANIMISM [animated to life] is done i.e. even an inanimate object is animated to life, wherein a chosen few objects are selected for this purpose and assigned with, by means of rituals.**

Man being an animal, with a sense of insecurity, in the world, often responds to magic and animism. Since both magic and animism are complementary in their function, it can be said that the two form the two faces of the same coin. The folk shrine thus becomes a site for magical proceedings. At the outset, these shrines of the various folk cults that are existing in India, were places where the Masks, the weapons, the Ornaments, and Musical Instruments which were employed by the dancers during the occasions of spirit invocation were preserved. On the other hand, the icons are a concept of the present day grown out of the medieval times. Consequently, we find, even to this day, in the West coast of Karnataka, empty enclosures that are dedicated to the shrines or those with a swing in them. The dark interior is often lit with a small oil lamp. The treasure of the spirit whom the dancer personifies, i.e. the Aharya used by the dancer like the Masks made of either wood, gold or silver, a sword, a bell, an elaborately made head dress, jewels, hand fans and the like are sometimes placed in the shrine. Huge pandals, decorated profusely, were made for the purpose of accommodating large numbers of people and to create enough
moving space for the rituals in the form of Dance. Otherwise these shrines sometimes remained as thatched huts made for the mere purpose of storage.

The enclosure belonged to the entire group or community or the tribe and was kept reserved for the purpose, out of the bounds and limits of the people, who were outside the tribe or who were unclean. It was an occasion for all the members of the tribe to assemble and participate in the procedures. **A tree would sometimes be chosen under which the ritual would take place. Consequently, the tree would assume great importance.** Instances of the tree being worshipped can be seen in the low reliefs, carved on the porch of a chaitya in Bhaja where in, an enthroned king is shown beside a group of people worshiping a sacred tree covered with garlands. The enclosure that would be erected on occasional ceremonies and during these celebrations would be the centre of everybody’s attention and came to be known as Mandapa. This contributed to the very essence of the continuation and survival of the tribe. Within the enclosure, it could be noticed that the following activities and festivities would take place; **the decoration of the shrine, dance of the priest: who would be possessed by the spirit, the answering of the various queries put forth by the people and the solutions to the same by the possessed priest, the fire walking, animal sacrifices, community feasting and all the entertainment that followed by the gathering of the community.** The mandap would be made and discarded as and when required while the tree would continue to be there at all times. The spirit would reside in the tree, at all times and would be invoked from therein, to be possessed by the priest, [the patri] on these special occasions. Thus the tree came to represent the
spirit, which consequently, instilled a feeling of reverence, fear and astonishment in the tree by the innocent tribal community.

Thus the movement of the tree came to be identified as the movement of the spirit. The spirit thus became the central concept of the life of the tribes, which they believed, to be protecting them from dangers, calamities, death and thus helped to organize a harmonious society amongst the tribes. Further only those trees, that were associated with the shrine, came to be worshipped and not all of them, although they belonged to the same species or genera were revered. These therefore were termed as STHALA VRIKSHAS.

Sometimes around this sanctified enclosure, there would be no tree available, in such a circumstance, a rock, in the vicinity, or an unusual boulder, or an odd looking huge stone would be chosen for the purpose. These then became the dwelling of the spirit. It can be observed here that, similar to the above situation, the rock that was associated with the enclosure alone would be worshipped and not any other available ones. However, as time passed by, the tribal enclosure lost its importance and the rocks came to be worshipped as the home or the dwelling of the spirit.

Therefore in our country, India, many temples contain stones or rocks that are natural of indistinguishable shapes and sizes. These are untouched by the sculptor and are regarded as representing the Divinity rather as icons. Instances of these can be seen in the temples of the shrine of Mukambika in Kolur, Ganapathi in Kumbhasi,[Anegudda] and Mangala-devi, in Mangalore in the districts of South Kanara in Karnataka. This has perhaps contributed to the concept of the Linga worship in our country.
Besides this, there are upright stones or wooden blocks at several shrines all over the country. The rituals associated with these suggest that these were originally blocks on which animals were sacrificed during tribal rituals and ceremonies and would be objects of great sanctity during the other days. These were gradually enclosed in a shrine, and additional wooden or stone blocks were installed for the purposes of sacrifice, in front of these shrines which were later referred to as BALI PITHAS. In the due course of time, these wooden or stone blocks over which shrines were later constructed, were being carved with animal figures that were both symbolic and suggestive in nature. The temple structures therefore, became a homogeneous blend of a combination of a sophisticated exterior structure and a crude, tribal shrine as its interior. As a consequence of this the use of Masks to cover the block or icon in the central, shrine whatever was the original shape or form, came into existence. This gave the devotee a stylized familiar image of the Divine. It can be observed here that the origins of the mask can be traced to the tribal cultures as also the foremost use of these masks.

The use of this is extant in India and is still worn during religious dances and in Dance-dramas with mythological themes. Most of the religious masks are those that represent animals with human attributes. References of the representation of the animal faced human bodied God Varaha can be seen in the rock-cut cave architecture at Udaygiri dating back to the Gupta Dynasty, belonging to A.D. 401-402. While performing the religious dances along the West coast in regions of Karnataka and along the coast of Kerala it is customary to employ masks. Many of these masks are animal faced. These are the Gods and their Masks for the worshippers in
Tulu nadu in the South Canara districts of Karnataka. The religious Teyyam of the cults of North Malabar in Kerala are also associated with the animal masks as seen in the worship of the Serpent represented by the Naga-Kanye, the Tiger represented by the Puli-Teyyam and the Monkey by the Bali-Teyyam. These animals are elevated to the highest level as Divinities and are worshipped in the shrines where the effigies of these Animal-Gods are made, invoked and worshipped. The effigies are the animals themselves in their form, completely. This idea supports the belief of the tribes that these particular animals are the vehicles of the spirit, the spirit being formless and invisible. It is thought of the spirit as to be riding these animals which are constantly found wandering around them and hence are believed to be protecting the tribal area, guarding the devotees by warding off the misfortunes and calamities that could befall the community, warning them of the mishaps that could befall thus helping them well on time to protect themselves. These animals are thought of to be chosen by the spirits and employed as their vehicles in accordance with the individual characteristic features of the spirits themselves. To the innocent tribal it is the animal that is the vehicle of the spirit that is available and visible, since these spirits in whom their beliefs lie are neither visible nor easily accessible. Hence, the spirits are thus perceived in these animal masks, their presence is also sensed through them, and further, they are led to believe that the animals themselves are the spirits as a natural process of the extension of an idea.
Folk dances can be categorized broadly as

1) Cultural or semi-religious folk dances:

These are performed to appease the local village Deities or the evil spirits or ghosts for the betterment of the village society. These group dances incorporate sanctity and are primarily sacred in nature.

2) Social folk dances:

These are performed as part of the celebration of the ceremonies like the weddings, naming and cradling of children or sometimes the ceremonies for the dead. On hearing the news, that is good the villagers get into the act of joyous celebration through the art of dancing.

3) Warrior dances:

These are performed just before the tribe is to leave on a big hunt, after a hunt, to mark the sacrificial ceremony with the sacrificial animal in the centre, or when the war with the other tribe has to be accomplished.

4) Seasonal dances:

These are performed to exhibit the joy of the tribe after a good harvest, danced generally during the Spring or the Rainy seasons. It could also be an offering to the rain Gods to shower blessings on the community for a quiet and prosperous living.11

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The ritualistic aspect, as seen in some of the folk dances of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have been described hereunder. It is interesting to note that the corresponding folk dances of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu also follow similar ritualistic traditions, dance motifs and have a common motive in their presentation as observed in the dances like the Karaga of Karnataka, the Karagam of Tamil Nadu and the Garaga Nrithyam of Andhra Pradesh, and as also in the presentation of the Keelu kudure, the Poi kudure and the Keelu Guralu to mention a couple of them.

The tribal and village population in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka constitutes many groups and sub groups which includes nomads, hunters, fisherman, tradesman and cultivators. These have many similarities with each other. Some of these tribes have lived in isolation and hence have practices which can be traced back to prehistoric times. Some tribes have been affected by modernization and have abandoned their earlier style of living while a few others have migrated to different parts of our country. Snake worship, fertility rites and a variety of propitiation rituals of spirits connected with boothas are widely prevalent. Some of these rituals have transformed into social occasions, agricultural seasonal festivities and religious festivals. But dance is popular amongst all groups at all levels and phases of everyday life in India, be it rural or the urban part of the country.

The history of the state of Tamil Nadu can be traced to the Pre-historic and perhaps the proto – histories times which predate the Vedic period too. This region saw the rule of many dynasties such as the Cheras, the Pallavas, the Cholas, the Pandyas and finally the Marathas in the 17th century. There are nearly twenty five groups of tribes which inhabit different
parts of Tamil Nadu. Funeral rites and dances are characteristic of the Todas and the Badagas; the earliest tribesmen of Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{12} It can be observed that the various tribes have dances akin to their culture and occupation as perceived about the culture of the tribes inhabiting the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

**Devar attam :**

There are references to this dance form in Sangam Literature as Munther kuravai.\textsuperscript{13} It was the privilege of the chivalrous men to perform in front of the chariot of the king. The dancers identify themselves as the descendants of the cowherds who were under the protection of Lord Krishna. They dance this to the accompaniment of the musical instrument Urumi, which is used exclusively for this purpose. The legendary belief is that this dance of the Devas originated to appease the Rudra Tandavam of Lord Shiva. Hence it is rightly termed as Devara Attam. Nandi is supposed to have provided the accompaniment to this dance.

**Kavadi Attam :**

There are many other forms of ritual dances and songs in Tamil Nadu. The **Kavadi** is the most important form of divine worship associated with dance. It is an important form of ritual procession dedicated to the worship of Lord Muruga or Subramanya, the son of Lord Shiva.\textsuperscript{14} “The term Kaavadi

\textsuperscript{12} Kapila Vatsyayana, Traditions of Indian Folk Dance, India Book Company, 1976; p.234
\textsuperscript{13} Lakshman Chettiar; Folklore of Tamil Nadu; National Book Trust, New Delhi; 2002,P.25.
\textsuperscript{14} Kapila Vatsyayana, Traditions of Indian Folk Dance, India Book Company, 1976; p. 237.
appears to be a combination of the two words **Kaavi** and **Padi**, which denotes the vow made to walk a distance to a particular place of pilgrimage on foot.”¹⁵ It is performed during the festive occasions of Skanda sashti, Thaipoosam, Kaarthigai, Vaikaasi Vishaakam, of the Tamil calendar.

The story relates to a giant called Idumban who slung two hillocks on the two ends of a pole and placed them on his shoulders. Since he became the chief assistant of Lord Muruga, shrines are dedicated to Idumban half way up the Palani hill in Madurai district. The worship of Idumban becomes an essential requisite to the worship of Lord Subramanya. The pilgrims hence carry a wooden shaft on their shoulders with two bamboo frames decorated with flowers which are hung on either side. This whole structure is called the Kavadi and symbolizes the above said hillocks carried by Idumba. The devotee carries on his back the Kavadi, which is a semi-circular frame made out of wood. This is decorated with the feathers of the peacock. The motifs of the dance incorporate, those of a peacock, for it is the vehicle of the Lord. The movements are quick and vigorous and are performed to the accompaniment of the Tavil and the Nadaswara, collectively identified as the Naayyaandi Mela. The devotees proceed to the shrine in groups performing these movements.

There are several types of these kavadis where in pots of milk, rose water or whatever offering is to be made to Muruga is carried. The pilgrims observe many austerities and ceremonies before performing this ritual. They are dressed in a yellow costume and wear garlands on bare bodies. The

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¹⁵ Lakshman Chettiar; Folklore of Tamil Nadu; National Book Trust, New Delhi; 2002, p.16.
dancers dance to a frenzy to the tune of various musical tunes. The symbolic significance being that the devotee undergoes various kinds of torture to cure himself, to get rid off vices, ego, lust, anger and the like.

This dance is performed in the various districts of Bangalore, Tumkur and Kolar in Karnataka. The kavadi, of the devotees here is also decorated with peacock feathers on top. It is performed on the occasions of Shivarathri, the processions of Gods, and during the month of aashada to the accompaniment of the tamate, dolu and nagari.

It is interesting to note the Kavadi is danced as an entertainment in the present scenario, besides being performed as a ritual by the traditionally bound pilgrims. Here the performer subjects himself to a great number of acrobatic skills in addition to dancing and spinning with great fervour. The dance as an entertainment is however performed to the accompaniment of the same musical instruments.

**Karagam:**

The Karagam is performed as a part of a ritual, and is the most common form of folk dance of Tamil Nadu. The dance is known to be of two different types. 1) Shakti Karagam which is of the religious type. As the name suggests the dance is performed in honour of the Goddess. It can be termed as a dance of fertility since it is dedicated to the Goddess of health and rain. Fire walking is a part of the ritual where people carry baskets of flower walking over a long distance to the accompaniment of music in large groups. Men balance pots filled with uncooked rice, on which is placed a
tall, conical bamboo frame covered with flowers. The dance begins at an auspicious place and ends in the temple. The procession follows the dancers. The pot is carried by the traditionally privileged priest or his representative. The pot is filled with the sacred waters and the procession begins at twilight for, it is thought of to be the most auspicious time, when the Gods and the angels are at their most benevolent nature with regard to their devotees. The performer is supposed to be austere and perform the dance with great
reverence since the belief is that his dance instigates the rain God to shower rains for the prosperity of the village. The Karaga bearer frequently taps the pot overhead with a stick simultaneously as he dances. The musical accompaniment includes a long pipe and a drum. Yet another form of Karagam known as the AttakKaragam, performed by professional musicians and dancers is also seen. Intricate patterns are executed in the feet besides balancing the pot and the frame. Here acrobatic skill, music and dance form the major aspects. A large number of instruments are used as accompaniments, which include pampadi, muni, tavil, nadaswaram and thamukku. “Glitteringly dressed men and women balance the pots on their heads unaided by hands and dance to the rhythm of the musical instruments.”16 There are instances when the tempo of the dance increases leading the dancer to a state of ecstasy and frenziful dancing. It is indeed incredible to note that inspite of the ecstatic dance the pot remains intact over the head till the very end of the ritualistic procedures that are carried out, or as part of the performance and ceremonies as the case may be. Sculptural reliefs of this kind are found in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.17

Podikazhi Attam:

It is danced with a pair of small sticks by the fishermen folk of Tamil Nadu. Eight to sixteen men in traditional costumes dance this in honour of Lord Muruga. Various floor patterns are executed by these dancers as the dancers strike their pair of sticks with each other and dance to the rhythm of

16 Lakshman Chettiar; Folklore of Tamil Nadu; National Book Trust, New Delhi; 2002, p. 11.

the folk song sung by the women glorifying the Lord. The musical accompaniment is provided by the cymbals, dolak, maddalam, shruti and the talam.

**Kummi**:

The term gets its name from the word ‘kummai’ which means to dance while clapping hands to a rhythm, accompanied by songs in popular tunes. It is danced for ten consecutive days, during the Maariaman and the Kannu Pongal festivals. It also marks the celebration of the initiation of young maidens, a custom that is observed even to this day in the traditional households. There a variety of the kummi dances owing to the variety in clapping. Viral thattu is the striking of fingers, Ullangai thattu or the striking with palms, Anjali tattu wherein the dancers strike with joined hands and the Muzhanai thattu, that which incorporates the striking with elbows.

**Palighai Kummi**:

The dance around eighteen varieties of grains, as part of the wedding ceremony celebrations, danced by women of all age groups is termed as Palighai Kummi. The leader sings the refrain of the song which is repeated by the chorus with the clapping of the hands is the prominent feature of this dance.

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18 Lakshman Chettiar; Folklore of Tamil Nadu; National Book Trust, New Delhi; 2002, p.11.
**Kola Attam:**

It is the name given to yet another dance that involves the striking of small sticks by the performers with each other. This dance is associated with a festival having cultural and religious significance. Traditionally it is said that the dance was danced by young maidens to engage the ferocious demon Basava and to take control of him. Danced as a part of the celebration of the festival of Deepavali, a clay image of Basava or the Nandi, is installed in the centre by the dancers to mark the incident. The celebration is called the Kolattai Jathirai and has been in practise from a very long period of time.

**Pinnal Kolattam:**

A braid is weaved along with the dancing of the Kolata. Here the sticks are tied to coloured ropes which are woven by the precise interchanging movements of the dancers. Braids of differing types are weaved in the frame of music that accompanies the dance. “In the Pinnal, rods are fastened to ribbons or ropes suspended from a tall central pole or o higher point and the dancers weave patterns as they move.”

Tamil Nadu also has the tradition of leather puppetry or the Bommalattam Pavaikkuthu. This is closely associated to the folklore of Tamil Nadu since it draws all the required movements for the puppetry from these as its major source. The fact that dance and puppetry are also associated arts is an interesting field of study by itself.

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Karnataka is also home to a great number of tribes and their culture and is also influenced by the traditions of the neighbouring regions, as much as the other states are influenced by the culture of Karnataka. The trade across the seas has brought in an understanding of a great number of foreign cultures too. The fact that the rule of many of the dynasties over this region was associated with the regions of the present Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and parts of Kerala as one country drives home the truth that there is a great similarity in the cultural and traditional rites and rituals of all these regions.

There are dances exclusively for men, women dances and the mixed dances too. “The word ‘Kunitha’ occurs often here – it means ‘Dance’ in Kannada, the regional language of Karnataka.”

**Suggi Kunitha or Harvest Dance:**

The dance is performed on moon lit nights by the villagers to celebrate a good harvest. The performing area is initially sanctified by cow – dung and the place of performance is generally the area in front of either a Hanuman temple or any other temple in the village. The sounding of the Tamate, a percussion instrument, marks the assembling of the men – young and old of

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the village to dance. The leader begins the dance with the word ‘Suyyo Sai’ which is repeated by the rest of the dancers besides the song sung by the accompanying musicians. The dancers and the percussionist keep to the changing rhythms and come to a halt after exhibiting a great number of rhythmic patterns. There is the exchange of the intellectual question and answer session following which the merry making of the villagers with comical dances.

**Bellaggunitha:** This dance marks the end of the harvest celebration that begins with the Suggi Kunitha. The dance is named because it begins in the
night and ends with daybreak. The people of the neighbouring village are invited to participate in the celebration eventually leading to a healthy competition between the two dancing groups adding to the joyous atmosphere. The Gowda or the headman heralds the start of that day’s celebrations by offering Ranga – pooja or his salutations to the area of performance. The celebration ends with the pooja to the stage offered at day break by young maidens of the village and the competition that chooses the ‘Hero’ of the village.

**Pata Kunitha :**
The harvest dances include the Pata Kunitha wherein the dancers, dance with bamboo poles of 20 feet in length with multi coloured cloth fastened along the length of the pole which is called the ‘pata.’ It is danced to the accompanying music provided by the ‘Tamate’ and ‘Nagari.’ It is performed during ‘car festivals.’\textsuperscript{21} The dance also marks the celebration of the Vijaya Dashami festival.\textsuperscript{22}

**Unmathata:**

The Unmathata is yet another dance to celebrate the harvest\textsuperscript{23} and is a dance of the women of Coorg in praise of Goddess Kaveri. The dancers clap and sway exhibiting very graceful movements as they dance and sing in honour of the river Goddess.

**Balakat:**

The men perform the Balakat to exhibit their bravery. This dance has the agricultural rites observed significantly. The men wear black, long overcoats and a white turban and dance to the drumming of the Damaru, a percussion instrument played by a group of about eight people. They carry the daggers firmly fitted into their girdles and wield them in their hands besides the fly whisks in the other hands to symbolize that the dance is a war dance or a weapon dance.


\textsuperscript{22} Kapila Vatsyayana, Traditions of Indian Folk Dance, India Book Company, 1976; p.245.

\textsuperscript{23} Kapila Vatsyayana, Traditions of Indian Folk Dance, India Book Company, 1976; p.245.
Karagada Kunitha:

In Karnataka, the Karaga procession is carried along the streets of Bangalore all night on the Chaitra Poornima day which generally falls in the month of April and this is an austere ritualistic presentation or offering to Draupadi. This is an annual festival associated with a fair and festivities. “Karaga is a solo ritual dance.” There are various types of ‘Karaga’s such as ‘Hasi Karaga’, ‘Onake Karaga’, ‘Chembina Karaga’ and ‘Chitra gopura Karaga’. The prominent amongst these is however the ‘Chembina Karaga’ or the Karaga with the ‘pot’. Formerly it is used to be the prerogative of a particular community and a family to perform these rites and rituals and carry the Karaga and dance along the streets of the city all night long till daybreak through a particular route that has been marked for the purpose since a very long time. Presently it is the decision of the Government body that decides the performer of the same. The performer represents Draupadi, of the Mahabharata, which is adorned by the Priest of the Dharmaraya temple. Two assistants carrying swords dance on either side of the priest.

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These are the guards against the dropping of the sacred pot by the priest or the bearer of the pot overhead. They are permitted to slay the bearer in the event of this mishap which has never occurred in so many centuries owing to the austerities and the belief in the rituals that are executed in the process of the annual festival. In this context the pot is filled with water which is sanctified and the performers undergo a lot of austerities before the auspicious day of performance to be held every year. Over this pot is placed a decoration of flowers so much so that the pot is not visible to the onlooker.

“Karaga is a unique religious festival of Karnataka and is very popular with the masses.”26 Since the dance is generally performed by a single artist there is ample scope for originality and improvisation. The most awesome amongst the usual forms of Karaga is the Jade Karaga.27 There is a heavy cluster of flowers that are carried by the performer over his head than in rest of the forms of this dance. As the dancer dances the flowers and the garlands worn by the dancers twine and wave around very beautifully making it a very pretty sight for the onlookers. The dance floor is strewn with these flowers making the place very aromatic. It is most often performed by a pair of dancers.


Also seen is the entertaining aspect of the Karaga as seen in Tamilnadu where acrobats form a primary aspect rather than the ritualistic ceremonies. Karagam is akin to Kavadi but in place of bamboo structures, the dancers use metal pots or Karagams. The performer carries a water pitcher decorated with flowers on the exterior, on the head and balances the same, besides entertaining the audience with interesting acrobatic tricks and rhythmic foot work to the accompaniment of the drum as played by the drummer and to the tune of the Nagaswara. In the state of Karnataka, the above form of the Karaga is also performed as a part of an entertainment during fairs, festivals and Folk carnivals.

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Nandi Kolu Kunita :

This dance forms a vital part of the processions held in honour of the village deities. An icon of Nandi, the bull is surmounted on the top of a metal Kalasha, which is placed on top of the 20 feet long bamboo pole which is the chief accessory for performing the dance. The dancers carry these poles placing the same in a pocket specially attached on to the dress of the performer. They exhibit varying patterns such as uniting the other ends of the pole towards a common centre, when in a circle, matching the ends of these in a straight line and the like; dancing all along trying different positions with regard to all the other performers in the group. The poles are decorated to their full length with the rudraksha or sacred beads.

Karadimajjalu :

The Karadimajjalu is yet another form of folk dance rampant in North Karnataka and known as the Karadimela in the southern counter parts. It is a professional art commonly performed during the festivals related to the Gods. The dance is a night long performance. It is danced by playing the shell shaped percussion instrument tied on to the waist of the performers who sing, play the instrument and also dance simultaneously. It is performed during the fairs, while conducting pooja to the Gods, the namakaranas or naming ceremonies, weddings, while adorning flowers as a ritual to women during various occasions; during the entry of the religious Gurus into the town etc.\(^{29}\) The Nandi dwaja is incomplete without the Karadimajjalu. The

performers stand in a semicircular pattern and play the instruments like the karadi, sanadi, shruthi, tala, dimmu, and the chougada moving to and fro. There are instances when the performers sit while playing and hit the ground by their knees. The performers begin with a very slow tempo, moving on to the very fast, in various stages and returning to the very slow tempo to finish the performance. The phases in dancing are termed as Ondu hejje kunita, Eradu hejje kunita, mooru hejje kunita and mandala kunita. The dance shows a great number of similarities in its execution to the traditional ‘Yakshagana’ theatre of Karnataka and is believed to exhibit the influence of the ‘lavanis’ from Maharashtra owing to its proximity to the neighbouring state.

Dollu Kunitha:

It is the boisterous drum dance of Karnataka, which is highly popular. The dancers are generally men. However in the recent years the women teams have also started performing this dance. Acrobatic feats combined with the simultaneous drumming of these Dollus or the drum is the most important aspect of this dance. It is one of the most popular forms of folk dance in Karnataka. The dancers exhibit jumps, leaps, strides and the type of movements that are very energetic in nature, with the dollu hung on to their neck and the simultaneous playing of these, as they execute the somersaults and the pyramids.

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Veerabhadra Kunitha:

This dance has the heroic sentiment as the prominent one. It is therefore a dance of the men. The protagonist is dressed as Veerabhadra with a brown haired wig, a crown, anklets a dothi worn upto the knee length, an
armour called the ‘Veerpatti’ with a garland of the rudrakshi beads. He dances to the rhythm of the ‘Nagari’ which culminates in a frenzy due to the increase in the tempo of the rhythm that is played on the drum. There are occasions wherein two or three members dance this dance in union.

**Karapala mela :**

The Karapala mela is believed to have travelled from regions of North Karnataka to the Southern parts of Karnataka. Dance, music and literature form an important aspect of this folk form. Three members perform this dance. One of them is identified as the Guru/Nayaka or Nirupaka while the other two or his assistants. A, special attire is assigned to the nayaka where in a beautiful head gear resembling a crown is adorned by him. This has tassels of pearls and rudrakshi dangling. His neck and hands are also adorned with rudrakshi. He dons the saffron coloured robes with a red sash on his waist, vibhuti, or the sacred ash on his forehead and a kasepanche, the dhoti tied in a traditional way. This is performed on a high area in the absence of a formal stage. The verbal expertise of the nayaka adds colour to the performance and captivates the audience. The nayaka holds cymbals in his hands and the assistants on either side hold the damadi and tamboori in their hands. The nayaka begins a refrain which is sung along by the assistants; some times the assistants catalyse the performance by asking relevant questions to the nayaka and at times by asserting their acceptance to the facts spoken by the nayaka. This is an all night performance which includes the current affairs of the country, the navarasas, descriptions of the city and the ruling dynasty’s grandeur and splendour. The performers are generally Shaivaites by origin and are invited by the villagers to perform on
occasions of fairs and festivals held in the village. Interesting anecdotes are also quoted by the nayaka to make the performance more colourful.

**BeesuKamsale :**

The **BeesuKamsale** is yet another ritualistic folk dance form of Karnataka with an equal importance to both music and dance. Kamsale or cup shaped cymbals are carried by the dancers and the musicians. This was originally performed as a part of the annual pilgrimage of the devotees of the holy Mahadeshwara hills situated in southern parts of Karnataka. The people who dance are initiated into the cult through rites and consecration ceremonies akin to the religion. The devotees sing the glory of the Lord making rich sounds of the heavy cymbals with intricate footwork and difficult postures. Agility and dexterity form the most important aspect of this dance. While clapping the cymbals continuously, they keep the theme step on and exhibit complicated acrobatic skills in their presentations.

**Veeragase :**

This a special form of celebration that is observed by the people belonging to the Veerashaiva belief. It is performed during joyous occasions, during the village carnivals, festivals, as part of processions, weddings, house warming ceremonies and the like. The families that are traditionally associated with the worship of Veerabadra, organize the dance at least during the wedding of the first and last sons. The number of performers range anywhere between eight and ten. They are clad in saffron dhotis [kaase’] and saffron angarakhas. A wig of silk threads to look like hair flowing over the shoulder is adorned by the main dancer. On either side of the waist are hung two Chauris, and on the neck is worn a linga in silver.
The performer holds a sword in his right hand and carries the performance by narrating the glory of Lord Shiva which is responded to, by the rest of the group. The musical accompanists include a ‘Samala’ bearer, one person with brass cymbals, one with the Mukha veena and the ‘Karade’. The narrations are termed as ‘Odabu’, the recitation of which provide a break to the dancers. Raudra rasa is a predominant sentiment of the presentation. A benediction is sung as a prelude to the presentation.

Gondaligaramela:

The class of people belonging to the Gondaligas, are ardent followers of the Goddesses Yelamma and Bhavani. They dwell in the regions of Karnataka, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. All these dance the Gondaligaramela. In Karnataka, it is prevalent in the districts of Belgaum, Bellary, Bijapur, Dharwad, Raichur, Gulburga, Mysore, Mandya, Shimoga and the districts of South Canara. The dance is also known as Gondalee, gondala, goondolu, gondage and gondana. “The historians are of the opinion that this dance was danced during the 6th and 7th centuries during the rule of the Kadambas, in the Tulajapur, Bhavani temple. The Nritya Ratnavali belonging to the 1240 A.D. mentions this dance as ‘Gondali’ which the historians are of the opinion must have transformed into ‘Chakra Gondali’. There are ample references to the existence of this dance in the Yadava- sahitya of the poets Jnaneshwar, Namdeva, Dattopanta, (in his Abhangs) and Ekanatha. It is termed as ‘Baroda’ a spiritual dance by Ekanatha.”

The clan therefore has a history as ancient as about a thousand years. In accordance with the textual references the dance is categorized as

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31 H. C. Boralingaiah, Karnataka Janapada Kalegala Kosha; Director of Prasaranga; Kannada University, Hampi, 1996; p.82.
superior, middling and low. The superior group has a group of 32 performers while the middling has 16 of them while the lower one has 8 of them to perform this dance. The dance is purely a ritual in form. It is danced to appease the Goddess Amba Bhavani. The performers are invited to perform for a particular household. The ritualistic dance begins only after the night falls. The dance is performed as part of the celebrations of Navaratri, Deepavali, weddings, initiation ceremony of the young boys and as part of all the joyous occassions. On the prescribed evening the performers begin with the propitiation of the Goddess in a water filled pitcher, singing songs in praise of the Goddess to the accompaniment of musical instruments. A minimum of two performers are required to conduct this performance. One of them is an all rounder in the sense that he enacts, narrates, dances, and is the compere and the main protagonist. While the rest of the performers can vary, since the number of accompanying instrumentalists are of equal importance subject to their availability. The chaudike player lends the maximum support to the performer. However in the earlier days the accompanying musical instruments included the veena, mridanga, chande, trvali and the muruja. The stories of sheelavathi, baskumara, aranyakumara, vignavathi, sati shivalochana, lakshmapathi raja, somashekara-chitra shekara, the stories of Yellamma and Renuka form the important themes for their presentations. This presentation has a great number of similarities to the traditional theatres of Yakshagana in the execution of the play since both these observe the poorvaranga rites have a background and foreground in the execution of the story and glorify the good and punish the evil. Hence the play is rightly called Gondaligara mela. The fact that the actors are many in the Yakshagana and only one actor
characterizes all the characters in the play is one of the major differences between the two theatrical presentations.

**Gombeyatta:**

Traditionally imbibed dance forms are in surplus in Karnataka. They are most commonly performed for fairs and festivities by the families assigned to do the same. The village community participates in patronizing these forms and bringing out the specialties of these art forms. The traditional theatre also forms part of the ancient, ritualistic, traditional presentations as seen in the puppet shows which date back to centuries before Christ and have flourished in the civilizations of the Greeks as entertainment as early as the fifth century B.C. Puppets are as old as man himself. In India tantric rituals were conducted using puppets. By the 10th century puppetry reached its height. By the 17th century wooden puppets came into existence. The English, Dutch, Germans and Italians encouraged puppetry raising it to its zenith from the 15th century onwards.

Traditional Theatre is believed to be influenced by sutra Gombeyata (Puppetry). Evidences of the practise of puppetry can be seen in the Mahabharatha dating back to the 3rd and 4th century B.C. Inscriptions and ancient literary works form the source of information about the puppetry during the Vijayanagar Kingdom, wherein a mention of rewards for puppet shows to artists have been mentioned. Also evidences of puppet shows can be had from literary works of poets like Kumaravyasa and Vachana and Dasa sahitya.
Puppetry was conducted by people belonging to the Vishwakarma cult as a profession but is presently a secondary profession owing to its fading popularity and income. It was conducted during the national festivals, fairs and festivities, at nights. In the temples of the coastal regions the troupe begins to tour after the pooja of chowti. The episodes chosen for the presentation are from the Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Puranas. The aharya of the puppets is influenced by the regional traditional theatre.

**Togalu Gombeyatta:**

Leather puppetry is yet another form of puppetry in India. A mention of this presentation in the Chinese courts during the 3rd century B.C. is seen. An evidence to the fact that leather puppetry prevailed can be had from the various sources available in history belonging to the dynastic rule of the Pallavas, Chalukyas, Shatavahanas, Kakatiyas, Vijayanagar and Tanjore. From these references it appears that about 2000 years ago shadow theatre along with other forms of puppetry flourished in India as a very intimate part of our group life particularly in the villages. It reached its best during the Vijayanagar and Tanjore periods and was spread to the countries of Greece, Turkey, Persia, Italy and France by 17th century. The Bhagavadgeetha mentions leather puppetry being presented, dating back to as far as the 3000 B.C. The themes adapted are chosen from the Ramayana, Mahabharatha and Purana. Leather puppetry is also known as shadow puppetry. It is performed to ward off the diseases of cattle and hence is performed in a fair, during weddings for entertainment and to please the rain Gods when it does not

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32 Durgadas Mukhopadhyay, Lesser Known Forms Of Performing Arts In India, Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1978, Ch 23 Shadow theatre of India; Jiwan Pani; p. 125.
rain. Leather puppetry is conducted by Gomberamaru, Chitramarataru, Kille’kyatharu who are identified by the names Bundekyatha, Astrikyatha, Kalikyatha, Kolukyatha, Shillekyatha and Kalagajyatha. The people in the profession are believed to be the cursed by Lord Rama. Also the art form is thought off to be an offshoot of the Yakshagana since there are many strikingly similar features in the style of presentation of the play in both these art forms.

Leather puppetry in the regions of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka throw coloured shadows on the screen while those of Orissa and the regions of Kerala project silhouettes in black. The leather puppetry of Andhra Pradesh has a rich and strong tradition with large size leather puppets. The Tholu Bommalatta is very closely associated with the sophisticated art of Bhamakalapam. “It is an important folk art of Andhra Pradesh in which the puppets are made of leather. It is also known as Chayanatyam.”

These highly decorative figures (leather puppets) of Karnataka togalu Gombeyatta are manipulated by men and were once the extremely popular entertainment on village greens and street corners, fairs and festivals, in rustic barns and temple precincts.

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34 Durgadas Mukhopadhyay, Lesser Known Forms Of Performing Arts In India, Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi,1978, Ch 23 Shadow theatre of India; Jiwan Pani; p. 127.
Yakshagana:

The Yakshagana is yet another traditional theatre of importance which has variations in presentation identified as Uttarakannada Thittu, Badaguthittu and Tenkuthittu. Geographically uttarakannada thittu varies with badaguthittu and hence is absolutely different from badaguthittu. The badaguthittu belongs to the regions of Udupi and Kundapur while the tenkuthittu is commonly seen in Kasaragodu and spread over the districts upto Chandragiri. Initially the presentations were the same but later they have become varied. Historical themes are adapted by the badaguthittu artists, besides themes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavatha. The musical background of the badagutittu is the southern variation while it is the northern variation of music for the tenkutittu. But incidentally the rendering of music is the same in both styles. The Bhagavatha is the Thaladhari in the badagutittu while he is a jagatedhari in tenkutittu. Of late the mridangam is also used as an accompaniment in the tenkuthittu presentations wherein a big sized maddale is used and the chakrathala is played as a complementary to Veera rasa which is of great importance to Yakshagana.

At the time of the start of the touring of the troupe or the mela, known as the gejje kattuvudu and at the time of the culmination of the tour of the mela or troupe known as the gejje bicchuvudu, a presentation is held in the premises of the temple of the patron diety, on both the occasions separately and the gejje is adorned on the ankles of the performer by the leader of the troupe or the patron of the troupe. The punduvesha (Kattuvesha) and the strivesha are of very great importance during this ceremony.
The Gramadevatha habba, Nagaradhane, Bhootharadhane are the occasions when the presentation of the Yakshagana finds a place.

**Chowdammana Kunita:**

Appeasing the Goddess in various forms is yet another ritualistic folk dance form prevalent commonly in Karnataka. The chowdammana kunita is performed by the Kumbara, Weavers and Panchala clan in regions of Gulburga wherein the head of the village, the upper class people and the dalits join in. The performance is held during a fair in honour of the Goddess once in two years or sometimes annually on the Friday that preceeds the Shivarathri amavasya. This is performed anywhere between the month of March and May where the chosen man wears the masks of the Devi and dances. It is believed that Goddess Chowdamma is the sibling of Veerabhadra who are born out of the forehead of Lord Shiva to vanquish Daksha. Goddess Chowdamma lashes her long tongue to drink the droplets of blood falling out of the slain Rakshasas failing which innumerable ones will be born, thus helping Veerabhadra to fight his opponent Daksha and slaying him. Rituals are performed as a prelude to this performance, an offering of an animal is made and the dance of the Goddess is performed. The Devi is then brought to the temple and replaced.

**Chaudike:**

The dance is performed in honour of the Goddess Yellamma. She is also known by the names Huligeamma, Renuka and Yellamma in the regions of Northern Karnataka. It is predominant in the taluks of Saudatti, Hospet and Belgaum in Karnataka. The people of Chandragutti identify her as Renuka and there are a great number of folk stories with varying versions
which are thought of to be the reason behind the celebration and the rituals associated with the dance. The dance is categorized as a dance of fertility since the dancer carries a pitcher on the head while presenting the ritual dance and dances in the circular motif more often. The pitcher here is symbolic of the world. It is interesting to note the fact that only the head of the Goddess is worshipped since the myth goes to say that the head of Renuka, the mother of Parashurama was chopped off by him, in order to carry out the orders of the sage and husband of the Goddess, Jamadagni. This had given rise to innumerable heads which is perhaps the cause of such a strange tradition.

**Hejje Mela :**

A dance that is danced by the believers of both the Hindu and Islamic religions, the dance forms a major part of the procession of the Muharram festival. The dancers wear the dhotis in a traditional way that is; it is tied to the length of the knees down the waist such that the dhoti is taken between the legs to enable the dancers to dance freely. Its counter part is the ritualistic celebration of the **Muharram** in the state of Tamil Nadu by the Shia cult, muslims. The ritual is observed for about ten days and marks the martyrdom of Hassan and Hussain, the grandsons of Prophet Mohammed.\(^{35}\) The participants in the procession subject themselves to piercing their bodies, tongues as well, with small arrows, and undergo self conditioning in the public as they dance to a state of frenzy.

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Jogiti Nritya:

As mentioned earlier this is a dance offered to the Goddess Yellamma. Men in the garb of women dance this, singing the praises of the Goddess. These men voluntarily choose to be initiated into the religion and undergo the necessary austerities before performing and singing the glory of the Goddess. The connotation of the word Jogiti is the one who carries the ‘Jaga’ or the world on her head and dances. Here the dancer carries either a pot filled with water or with a basket housing the idol of the Goddess. The folk story that relates to the dance is that, on refusal to chop off the head of Renuka by her four sons, Jamadagni the father cursed the sons into Eunuchs who started singing the glories of their mother and dancing till their death.

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36 H. C. Boralingaiah, Karnataka Janapada Kalegala Kosha; Director of Prasaranga; Kannada University, Hampi, 1996; P.
which has been continued as a tradition. Yet another folk lore narrates that the King of Warrangal fell in love with Renuka and was passionate for her. The Goddess cursed him for this foolish behaviour of his owing to which he was transformed into a eunuch. He is believed to have spent the rest of life singing praises of the Goddess leading to this traditional dance. The dance is a ritual offering to the Goddess and is not an entertaining dance in character. This dance also incorporates circular motifs in its execution.

It is also believed to be a celebration held in the abode of goddess Yellamma, on every full moon day in Saundatti taluk of Belgaum District. The abode of the goddess is situated atop a hill. The tradition incorporates the professional singing of the Jondalingas and the Jogis, a prevalent tradition dating back to a few centuries. Men dedicate themselves as mentioned earlier to the service of the goddess and sing and dance her glory. But in the present day the Jogiti is of both the sexes. Further the belief goes to say that they are the two sisters of the goddess mediating between the goddess and the devotees. The Jogitis are associated with a lot of special rites and rituals in their life after their death.

**Panjina Kunitha:**

The dance that incorporates the burning torch is termed thus for, Punja means a burning torch. It is staged in the vicinity of the deity in the temple premises. The dancers carry torches in their hands as a major accessory to dance. The torch sometimes is three tonged as in the trident of Lord Shiva.

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37 Ibid; P.

38 Prof. S.K. Ramachandra Rao, The temple ritual and social elements, ch folk and tribal rituals I.B.H. Prakashana, Bangalore, 1980, P.76,
The burning torches provide a beautiful sight to the eye when the dance is executed with innumerable movements of these. The counter part of this dance is seen in the state of Andhra Pradesh where the dancers carry the holder of five tonged fire torches and exhibit wonderful patterns in their dance. Generally the dance is performed by men and in the precincts of the temples.

The state of Andhra Pradesh has a flourishing tradition of folk entertainers, street singers, dancers and acrobats. As recorded in the History of the state, there are references to the Gathas or the four lined verses that were composed during the rule of Hala, the Shatavahana king between the 6th and 7th century A. D. which forms important sources to the folklore of Andhra Pradesh.39 The state has a large population of tribes. They incorporate the food-gatherers, hunters, agriculturists, snake charmers, the professional acrobats, wrestlers and gymnasts besides the dancers and singers. Each of these groups is known for a life style full of ceremonies and festivities where dance plays an important part.

**Dappu Vadyam**

This dance is so called because of the use of the Dappu, or tappeta, a percussion instrument. Men dance this, wearing simple everyday costumes. The dancers strike the drum with two sticks and dance along with playing the drum. It is one of the most primitive and significant dances of the tribes of Andhra Pradesh and is traditionally danced by the Harijan men. In the villages it is used a means of communication with the public. This is also

being used on fairs and festive occasions and during marriage or death ceremonies.\(^{40}\)

**Kondh:**

The kondh or the konds are a tribe that inhabits the regions of Vishakapatnam and Ganjam. They have a sacrificial dance which is performed after making the offering of a buffalo.\(^{41}\) On hearing the blowing of the buffalo horn and the sounding of the drums, the group of dancers comes down rushing. The dancers then strike against the animal and join the rest of the assembled villagers in dancing around the animal leading to an exhilarated performance. There is the brandishing of the knife by some of the performers while a few more wave a green bough of some tree and yet a few more carry the Tangi. The dancers sport feathers on their head and are dressed to make merry.

**Garaga nrityam:**

This is danced with a pot on the head. A popular dance in the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu also, it is danced to propitiate the village goddesses. According to the ancient practice the priest of the temple carried an earthen pot which was richly decorated over his head and danced in front of the goddess or as part of a procession held in honour of the Goddess. The dance of the present day, has the pot made of brass which is covered with a

\(^{40}\) Ramakrishna Reddy.B. Dravidian folk and tribal lore, Dravidian University, Kuppam, Folk performances in Andhra Pradesh: An over view by C. Krishna Reddy, P. 317.

\(^{41}\) Mohan Kokkar, Folk Dances Of India, Marg Publications, 1959; P.8.
five - hooded serpent, made of brass or bronze. A bunch of Margosa leaves are held by the performers to symbolize Shakthi worship. The performers dance to the accompaniment of the drums and the anklets balancing the pot on their heads while exhibiting a number of variations in their feet movements. Of late acrobatic movements also find an important place in the execution of these dances as seen in the execution of the same in the above mentioned states.

The mango dance:

The Konda Reddis dance this as a prelude to the plucking of the mangoes in their plantations. It is an obeissance to the Goddess Muthyalamma and the Konda Devata. The whole community dances this dance. The dance has no special costume but follows a systematic pattern in the dance motifs. Men and women dance separately, forming circles and unwinding them making it a magnificent sight to the onlookers. The groups move towards the centre with waving hands and move away from the centre creating aesthetically incredible patterns. They dance to the accompaniment of the drums, with the drummers initially in the centre. The dance begins at dusk and the dancers break for food after which the dancers dance at a greater frenzy creating their own groups, until daybreak by which time the dancers are thoroughly exhausted. Songs invoking the goddesses also form an important aspect of the dance.

Guravayyalu:

This is a religious dance of the Guravayyalu folk of Kurnool district. The dance is an offering to the Lord Mailarlinga. The dancers play the Damarukamu and flute and dance. The men don the caps made of the bear’s
hair and are dressed in black coloured clothes. the group consists of ten members and they dance to invoke the god Mailarlinga.  

**The Urumulu Dance :**

This is the dance of the Urumu dancers belonging to a particular tribe of the Ananthapuram district of Andhra Pradesh. The tribe abstains from eating meat and drinking alcohol to observe religious austerity, to present this dance to please their goddess Akkamma and thus worship her. The dancers adore themselves with huge turbans, strings of beads and coins, besides wearing long shirts which hang up to their feet. The dancers hang the Urumu, a percussion instrument by their neck, play it with little sticks, and dance to the rhythm of this drum, to the accompaniment of the song that has the themes like the Dasavatara and the glories of the Goddess Akkamma.

**Viranatyam :**

The dance is a privilege of the Shaivaite cults like the Viramushti, Jangam, Balija and the Devangas. It is performed in the Veerabhadreshwara temples of the Telangana districts. Tradition attributes its origin to the dance of Virabhadra who was created by Shiva from his hair on the eve of Daksayajna to kill Daksa and destroy his yagna. The dancers wield swords, sing the praises and exploits of Virabhadra, and dance vigorously, in devotional frenzy. The chief performer holds a sword in the right hand and a shield in the left and dances to the accompaniment of the Dholu, Viranamu,

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43 Ibid; P.317.
the drums which sound war. The Urdhwa Tandava is performed on the occasion of Shivaratri. The presentation also includes feats like the piercing of their tongue, cheeks, eyelids, throat, lips and the like with spears or spikes. The dancers bleed but continue to dance to frenzy.

**Dhimsa:**

This is the most popular tribe and perhaps the most famous too in Andhra Pradesh for its tribal dance in which both men and women, young and old participate alike. It is danced by the Valmiki, Bagata, Khond, and the Rotia tribes that inhabit the picturesque Araku Valley of the Vishakapatnam district. The dance is performed for every social, ritualistic and festive occasion. The dance serves more as an entertainment and is danced to the accompaniment of drums and the refrain of the song includes themes relating to nature. Dhimsa is further categorized to be of eight different varieties and each of these has a special theme incorporated in it. “Like the Batha Kamma, the Dhimsa of the Poroja caste is also an exclusive women’s dance. It is performed by a woman on special occasions and is dedicated to the welfare of domestic life.”

**Vidhinatakam:**

This is a street play prolific in Kuppam of the Chittor district. The themes chosen are from mythology and the stories often chosen are Narakasuravadha, Virataparvam, etc. The performance begins with an invocation to Lord Ganesha following which the Sutradhari introduces the

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characters of the play to the people. The accompanying instruments include the tabla, drum, cymbals and the harmonium.

Yakshaganam :

A reference to the practise of the art can be had from the Lakshanasarasamgraha of Chitrakavi belonging to the 1550 century A.D.\textsuperscript{45} The presentation is a night long one and involves a sutradhari, who conducts the invocation to Lord Ganesha. The cymbals, harmonium and the dolu form the chief accompanying instruments for the presentation. Jakkulu, a form of the alapana of the ragas is a distinctive feature of the play. The Cindubhagavatam is a variation of this play. The feature that is exclusive of this form is the vigourous footwork of the artists as they narrate the epics. The themes popularly chosen are the Sasirekhaparinayam, Pandavavijayam, Satya Harischandra etc. The chindu madigas exclusively enact the Virabahu.

Turpubhavatam :

A traditional performance that is presented in the districts of Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam and Vijayanagaram on major festive occassions such as Amravati temple festival, jataras at Bobbili, Vijayanagaram and Parvatipuram of the northeastern coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh. The performance has a great number of the traits of Bharata Muni’s Natya Shastra in its execution. It is perhaps the closest in the presentation of the Bhamakalapam as seen in the Kuchipudi school of dance.

\textsuperscript{45} Ramakrishna Reddy.B. Dravidian folk and tribal folk, Dravidian University, Kuppm, 2001,ch on Folk performances in Andhra Pradesh: An over view by C. Krishna Reddy, P.318.
Mathuri :

This is danced by the men and women of the tribes from Adilabad. The men and women form two groups, on either side. While the men dance striking their sticks with each other and keeping the rhythm, the women dance by clapping their hands matching their rhythm with that of the men and the accompanying drums and cymbals. The every day activity of the peasants form the simple motifs executed in the dance. The dance is of a votive nature since the dancers perform this to praise their war heroes and the Tribal Gods. It is also danced as part of the festive occasions and the weddings.

Gosadi :

This is one of the foremost dances of the Gond tribe and it owes its origins to Mythology. The general belief is that the gods of this tribe performed this dance to attract damsels whom they wanted to marry. This is also danced as a votive offering. “This is ritualistic in character.” It is a male dominated dance. Their adorations include the products of the wild, like the berries, nuts, dried seeds of wild grass, multiple strings of shells and tiny bells hanging around their neck. Their headgears are huge and are complete turbans made of peacock feathers. As the dancers lift their arms and jerk their bodies, the bells on their body produce a jingling sound. The dancers paint their bodies black and white and their eyes are encircled with white paint. It can also be noticed that these men sport bushy beards and long moustaches.

46 Kapila Vatsyayana, Traditions of Indian Folk Dance, India Book Company, 1976; p. 228.
47 M.S. Randhawa, Folk dance forms of India; P.Xvii.
**Batha-kamma:**

Bathakamma is a women’s ritual festival performed by the women and for the women for ten days during the Dasara festival in Telangana region. Bathakamma is prepared out of variety of flowers on the last day when an elaborate ritual is conducted. Following this the women perform dances by singing different songs. This is also generally performed to mark the celebrations of a wedding by the women folk of the Telangana region. The dance involves the narration and the enactment of the pathetic story of Saijan Bai, the only child of a Rajput King and the consequences of the oppression she suffered in the association of her in laws. The women dance around auspicious objects of the house hold and pray for the peaceful married life of the newly wedded bride on that particular day. This is therefore regarded as a dance of fertility.

**Jakkin:**

The sankranthi or the Pongal and the new year or the Ugadi festivals are celebrated with the dance of the Rayalaseema women dancing this dance. The performers are 12 in number. The performers form circles and dance using the various directions by clapping all along. The songs are the same as those that are sung while performing the Gobbi dance to which the dancers, sometimes strike little sticks against each others as in the Kolattam. The rhythm is played on the drums and the anklets of the women also sound the rhythm besides their clap.

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Bonalulu:

The women of the Rayalaseema perform this during the festivities, which are associated with the village goddess. The men dance lashing the whip, and donning themselves with neem leaves on their waists, and holding bunches of the same in their hands, also leading the procession of the women dancers carrying decorated pots filled with either water or pongal. The procession is led to the temple of the village goddess.

Gadaba:

It is a dance of the agriculturists and the hunter tribes of Vishakapatnam. It is a festive dance which marks the celebration of the festivals like Holi and Dasara. Both men and women dance this until they are exhausted. The circle is the major motif of the dance.

Kummi:

A dance common to the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, it is danced by young girls or women folk. The dancers follow the circular pattern as their, perhaps, only motif. The movements include the clapping of hands and dancing gracefully towards and away from the centre of the circle.

Lambadi:

It is the name of the gypsy tribe perhaps found in the regions of Andhra planting and sowing. The occasions for their dance is a celebration of a wedding and all the other joyous celebrations of the tribe. Generally the women deck themselves with colourful costumes and a great
variety of beads and ornaments. On the occasion of the festival of Holi, the men and women of the tribe dance, after worshipping the clay images of the Love-god, Kama and his consort, Rati are worshipped. The celebration lasts the whole night around a fire, which is lit on this occasion. “The belief in the sacredness of fire continues.”

The festival where Kali is propitiated throughout northern parts of Kerala and southern parts of South Kanara and Coorg is also called Teyyam or Kaliattam it is performed both by communities and by individuals. Hence the festival could be a large public festival, a private individual fest called a fulfillment of vow to the Goddess or a performance of the festival.

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commissioned by an entire village for the benefit of the village. Teyyam could be a Shamanistic dance associated with male or female Gods, one or a number of spirits, historical figures, ancestors or the Hindu Gods like Shiva, Vishnu or Parvathi or in honour of a Nayar warrior who has served the Country. The deity is summoned during the festival, into a place / wooden platform / sword, specially meant for the ritual.

When members of the family die unexpectedly or an epidemic or calamity befalls the entire village or a family, the causes of the disturbance are appeased by conducting the Teyyam. Corresponding deities are propitiated and installed.

Thus it can be inferred that ritual and religion form a way of life in a vast and culturally advanced country like India making it essential to have the essence of both the religion and ritual in the folk forms, for these folk forms are those that have emerged out of the everyday life of man. These are observed to be the same over the entire country. In order to emphasise and understand the ritualistic aspect in depth, the study of the choosen subject has been restricted to forms of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.