

CHAPTER - IV

CHAPTER IV

DRAMATIC TEXT / PERFORMANCE TEXT TOPOANALYSIS OF BHĀGAVATHAS

This chapter explicates the dramatic text, performance text and spatial concepts in the light of performance theories propounded by Western scholarship and its application on *bhāgavathas* of Andhra Pradesh.

4.1. DRAMA AS A LITERARY CANNON: DRAMATIC TEXT

Whether drama is a literary cannon or a theatrical piece (Alter 1990; Eco 1977, 1979); Hall 1959; Pavis 1979; Deak 1976) is an old controversy. Czech structuralist Veltruski, in his essay "Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre" agrees that "Drama is a work of literature in its own right; it does not need anything but simple reading to enter the consciousness of the public. At the same time, it is a text that can, and mostly is intended to be used as a verbal component of theatrical performance" (quoted in George 1992:77). It is true, that the nature of theatre favors certain types of dramas, a lyric or narrative. Thus theatre enters the realm of literature as a whole and is not confined to the dramatic genre. Therefore, the term performance can be applied variously to a range of cultural and literary phenomena, and we can use it to designate verbal performance viewed as a cultural event. Scholars like Rober-d-Abraham and Richard Bauman have reconceptualized the distinction between the textual representation, and what Robert George calls "Complex communicative events". As such, scholars often associated the term *vernacular* with the modern concept of folklore as an intricate interaction between the performer and audience that relies on linguistic, paralinguistic, kinesic, and thoroughly contextual codes and conventions. This implies **end** of textuality and of the eventual return to a radically modified text that the assumption of performance has become a model for how to discuss oral literary text. It caused the end of textuality and the eventual return to a radically modified text had come into the existence.

Semiotists designated dramatic text as a written sign more suited for reading than for a theatrical performance. The production text or stage direction comprises the scenic annotations destined particularly for actualization through staging. The written signs undergo transformation which Ronald Barthers (1974) describes as an operation of a "simple implication" (Helbo 1987:40).

Even in Shakespeare's dramas, we know that writing and acting were intimately linked and interaction between the script and the performance appears to have been intently reciprocal. Since his use of the art of language must have been powerfully stimulated by his theatrical experience and vice versa, so we can assume, as many critics still do, the priority of the written script over the performed play, especially when the performance is described as a realization of the script. The audience response in Elizabethan theatre involved an intimate knowledge of the art of writing, and awareness of the script. It was also rooted in culture not entirely literate. Thus transition from declining orality to emerging literacy, rather than benefitting institutionalized locations of writing, such as learned humanism and jurisprudence, must have immensely stimulated the cultural functions of an inscribed performance in the popular renaissance theater (Weimann 1992:506).

If the performance is based on visual aspects, the importance of the dramatic text declines and the verbal language is compensated by other means of expression that occur during the performance. Even contradiction takes place between dramatic voice and theatre expression during the performance on. Theatrical text covers all the signs, those meant for reading and those meant for the performance. Modern directorial thinking of Criag, Meyerhold, Artuad, Brecht, Grotowski, Peter Brook, and Schechner- is that "text has to be interpreted, or reinterpreted, and not simply placed literally, faithfully on the stage" (Rabkin 1983:45). **Gilman** viewed that according to the change of times and perception, the interpretation of the text should necessarily change. He declares "the ascendancy of the director to superstar status, the dominance in a production of his presence, his interpretation, his mystique at the expense of the text" (Ibid.:45). Whereas the deconstructionist and semiotists consider

dramatic text like any other literary text that follows literary convention in poetry and fiction.

Performance has its own history, its own intertextuality. As the critic interprets dramatic text, the audience interprets dramatic texts. Like a literary critic, a strong director can proceed with the text with different hermeneutical strategies and models. Artaud's view **is that all** words, once spoken, are dead and function only at the moment when they are uttered. Then interpretation survives.

Since the times of dramatic history, the playwright used to write plays in isolation and other artists used to stage them as independent entities. The autonomous method involves a single process wherein the artistes develop the work from initial conception to finished performance, whereas structuralists, semiotists and deconstructionists give due importance to both playwright and director. In their view, no one is superior to the other in the theatre.

4.2. TRANSFORMATION OF TEXT

When a dramatic text is converted into the performance text, the score should usually be retained in the mise-en-scene. The transmission of the text is governed by tradition inherited from the past as in Asian theatre and Western music. In a performance, the audience first react to the visual performance of the text as score instead of reacting to the dramatic text and score. Schechner's view on transmission of the text is clearly understood in *Drama, Script, Theater and Performance* (1973b), in which he says: Text is the written document of a performance. Script is something that pre - exists at any given enactment. Script is the pattern of doing, not the mode of thinking. Drama arose as a specialized form of scripting. ' The potential manifestation that had previously been encoded in a pattern of doing was now encoded in a pattern of written words'. Aristotle points out that the dramas of the Greeks are the codes for the transmission of action in the lives of men. When Greek dramas were transferred to West, the sense of doing the script was replaced by drama in a new way. He writes, **“thus, the scripts no longer functioned as a code for** transmitting action through time;

instead, the doings of each production became the code for re-presenting the words-of-the drama" (Schechner 1973b:5-36). Slowly, words attained more importance than the actions of individual choice. Therefore, drama attained its separate identity from the scripts. The avant - garde movement and other traditional theatre refocused attention on doing aspects of script, and beyond script to theatre and performances (Ibid.:5-36). Schechner admits that words like Script, Drama, Theatre and Performance are loaded with connotative meaning and none have neutral synonyms.

Hence drama is the realm of the author, composer, shaman and scenarist; the script is the realm of the performer; and the performance is the realm of audience. It is clear that theatrical meaning will generate and communicate in all possible ways, because the entire gamut of social and cultural persuasion is also potentially evolved in the performance realm. Therefore, different cultures mark the boundaries differently. Wherever the boundaries are set, it is within the broad region of performance the theatre place, and at the center of the theatre is the script, and sometimes the drama. And just as drama may be thought of as a specialized kind of script, so also the theatre can be considered as a specialized kind of performance.

The drama is usually considered as a 'given' offer to the spectator through the mediation of the performance. The spectator is welcomed not only to employ a specific dramatic ability but also to work hard and gather together into the composite structure the partial and fragmented bits of dramatic information that he receives from different sources. The construction of dramatic world/event is the result of the spectator's competence to place order upon a dramatic context. To substantiate this Elam writes, "It should not be thought that a reader of dramatic texts constructs the dramatic world in the same way as a spectator: not only does the latter have to deal with more varied and specific kinds of information (through the stage vehicles), but the perceptual and temporal conditions in which he operates are quite different. The reader is able to imagine the dramatic context in a leisurely and pseudo - narrative fashion, while the spectator is bound to process simultaneous and

successive acoustic and visual signals within strictly defined time limits. Nevertheless, the basic action-structure and logical cohesion of the drama is accessible through analysis of the **written** text, which is of unquestionable value as long as it is not confused with performance analysis" (1980:99).

The transformation of dramatic text into performance text has been the primary concern of Indian dramatic theory and practice. When a dramatic text is converted into a performance text, the score should be usually retained in the *mise-en-scene*. "The emphasis in making a performance text is on systems of relationships: confrontations or otherwise, among words, gestures, performers, space, spectators, music, light- whatever happens on stage" (Schechner 1982b:32-33). Some of the factors which have a direct bearing on the dramatic text in its transformation process into performance text are: the actor and his art including speech-delivery, movement, make - up, masks and costume, theatrical space and its setting, scenic means and devices, actor - audience relationship, practices and conventions of framing a performance, the nature and degree of stylization, and the whole set of conventions for treating space, time and progression of the narrative.

4.3. PERFORMANCE TEXT

There are two potential focuses of semiotic study that throw light on the theatrical/performance text and the written/dramatic text respectively. "Unlike the literary semiotician or the analyst of myth or the plastic arts, the researcher in theatre and drama is faced with two quite **dissimilar-although intimately correlated-types** of textual material: that produced *in* the theatre and that composed *for* the theatre" (Elam 1980:3). This is how the semiotic laborer take the text into the analytic corpus. Bettentine (1977) and de Marinis (1978) and Ruffine (1978) consider the virtual rule out of the dramatic text altogether as a legitimate concern of theatrical semiotic proper.

Performance text is the new incarnation (avatar) of the dramatic text. It has its own laws and its own semantic world. In the terminology of Schechner (1983:214-15) performance texts

mean not only the words but also the whole *mise-en-scene*. It passes from one generation to another, and particular performance are made ready for the public and there is no way to separate these tasks, for the texts are both written and oral i.e, the libraries where these texts are kept are the bodies of the performers. The whole *mise-en-scene* involves realization of the performance text and the highly evolved and codified art of the actor, theatrical space and its conventions. The whole scheme of stylization and a set of conventions for theatre is the text. But an offshoot of alternative theatre culture in America (1960s and 1970s) laid the way for the creation of autonomous texts. Until the movement began, the playwright used to write plays in isolation and other artists used to stage it as independent entities. The independent method involves a single process where in the same artistes develop the work from initial to finished performance. The created text is called performance text.

From the renaissance to the time of the Industrial Revolution theatre was considered an offshoot of drama. This caused the ascendance of the director in the theatre from the latter half of the 19th century. In the Renaissance/Industrial Revolution period, the authority of the playwright had not been questioned and the dramatic text was considered sanctimonious. Plays had the status of poetry or other genres of literature. In the same period, doing theatre mean staging plays as intended by the playwright. When experimentation started with the association of Avant-garde movement and also the introduction of technology to the realm of the theatre, it needed or necessitated a director. With the ascendance of the director, he deplored the text, i.e, something should be added or deleted during the process of physicalization. Gerald Rabkin writes, "the director emerges at an historical moment of selfreflective theatrical anxiety. When theatre represented unreflective communal values and conventions, the director as a distinct craftsman was unnecessary" (1983:56).

Apart from giving entertainment, the performer renders a social function by conveying a message to the the audience. This social function/experience is very much linked to cultural identity of spectatorship. Hence it is not to say that text in the theatre was radically affected by the social and cultural function, and also it is dangerous to assume, as many critics

still do, the priority of the written text over the performance, especially when the performance is described as a realization of the text. Even though the dramatic text preceded the performance text and in several important ways constrains the production through the prefiguration of action, character and setting, the written text by itself is radically *incomplete*. "the dramatic text is radically conditioned by its performability. The written text in other words, is determined by its very need for stage contextualization," (Elam 1980:209). Thus it is clear that theatrical meaning will be generated and communicated in all possible ways, and the entire gamut of social and cultural persuasions are also potentially involved in the performance score.

4.4. SPECTACULAR TEXT

The spectacular text was coined by Marco de Marinis and generalized by Pavis (1979). Semiotic modeling, says the spectacular text is a text (discursive matter such as speech, rhetoric dialogue, pragmatic constrains etc,) specially created for the stage (convergence is divergence of various semiotic systems; gesture, mimicry, music, etc.).

According to Kowzan, a spectacle is an art whose products are communicated through space and time, which means that they require space and time to be communicated. The notion of space - time dimension permits a distinction between spectacle and temporal arts (poetry, music) or spatial arts (architecture) (Helbo:1987:140-41). To Greimas, the definition of spectacle includes, from the central point of view, properties such as the presence of closed three - dimensional space and proximic distribution. From the external point of view, it implies the presence of an observing actant (Ibid.:142). This paradigm is against the rejection of the linguistic paradigm of semantic analysis.

The modern trend of these critics is the interdisciplinary analysis of the spectacle on the *mise-en-scene*. And it demands a global expansive vision. This spectacular paradigm deals with Eastern and Western theatre simultaneously. Since its methodology is derived from interdisciplinary discourse and pluralistic cultural analysis, spectacular analysis goes

beyond the limits of the theories of drama and theatre to all genres of arts such as music, opera, circus, ballet, dances, films, sports, races, street shows and painting. The scenic spectacle is investigated in many perspectives by using different criteria. Spectacular text has a multiplicity of components beyond a verbal and non-verbal network.

The pattern of spectacular text analysis on environmental production is yet to come out. Bhagavathams aim at a spectacular text in the mise-en-scene and also at enacting texts and subtext.

4.5. CONFRONTATION WITH THE TEXT

“Arthur” finds in Balinese theatre an inspiration for a “hieroglyphic” synthesis of movement, light, and space unmediated by the inflections of scripted language; Brook scours the continents seeking the Ur-script in a hybrid of “alien” dialects and voices; Schechner’s transfigures from *The Bacchae* into *Dionysus’s play*, dismembering the text in order to reassemble it as the transgressive body electric of rebellious Vietnam War-era culture” (Benston 1992:442). Schechner adopted the method of confrontation from Grotowski and he successfully practised it in many of his productions like *Dionysis 69*, *Tooth of Crime* and *Dr Faustus*. He experimented with the text; the text was not at all changed from the original text of Marlow (author), but he arranged it into a montage. Unnecessary scenes were omitted, some scenes were modified, and some scenes were created without changing its score from dramatic score. However, he rejects the idea of the playwright as the first creator of the text. His intention is to provide the production guidelines. In his view, “No play are produced for the sake of production. The producer wants to make money; and a group of actors want a vehicle to perform; and the production is suited to the size and convenience of the auditorium and a cultural, national or social occasion demands performance” (Schechner 1968b:61). He clearly explained this premise in his six axioms of environmental theatre that, “the text need be neither the starting point nor the goal of production. There may be no text at all” (1968b:41-64). The other axiom says, “The fundamental logic of the theatre is not logic of the story but the logic of story telling” (1973a:83). His idea is quite common and different

in the presentation and relevance of the production in American situation. For this new explication, he necessarily changed the text. The presentation and relevance of production to the contemporary situation are more important than performing a drama as it is. When the director's logic confronts the playwright's logic, the play is likely to be changed to satisfy the production intention in the given circumstances. Because the stylization of the production was a subsidiary motive behind the text, it may give brilliant insight to the play when it is performed. In environmental production, Schechner treatment of the text of *Shepherds The Tooth of Crime*, he deplored that the text required some changes at the structural level. According to Schechner's production, it is believed that, "The language of the play is highly musical in its score and rhythm. It is very difficult to verbo - physicalization of the language" (Ibid.:234). The Performance Group recited the play at various levels, sang it in various tones, and read it in various styles, but the language was out of control of the limits of the theatre. At last, "the performers used a verbo - physical approach: taking sentences and distorting their usual intonation according to the physical impulses in and among the performers. Once we went through the play speaking the lines as fast as possible. New ways of saying the words were found" (Ibid.:234). According to him, dramatic text is mere pretexts and out of it performance is made. Therefore text can be distorted, dismembered and reassembled. He thinks a performance is not the enactment of a play that is written in an isolated place; it is a teamwork in which all the participants including the spectators' ideas and suggestions are necessarily welcome (Schechner 1973a). Since his environmental theatre is designed environmentally and his text and commentaries can be viewed as environmental of interlocked structure, passages and spaces, frequently do not connect or cohere. He proved his theory and its practice application in environmental theatre.

4.6. TEXT IN BHAGAVATA PERFORMANCE

In the strict sense, *bhāgavata* theatre does not follow any text during the performance though the text is available. the script provides the pattern of doing, not the mode of thinking *bhāgavata* performances are ritualistic and devotional in their basic nature and have been

following from generation to generation an oral tradition as folk forms. Thus they have their own performance scripts, which are in poetic language, and performance is controlled by music score. In these *bhagavathams*, some factors have a direct bearing on the dramatic text in its transformational process into performance text. They are the actors, dialogues, mask, body movement, music, make - up, scenic means and other devices, degree of stylization, set of conventions for treating space, time and actor - audience relationship.

In *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* and *Melatur bhdgavata mela* the script is not merely words but also contains codified hand gestures, body postures, movements and facial expressions added to the words by performing tradition. These performances decode the signs and codes, and open up the communication channel to the receiver (audience). In this process of decoding the signs and codes there is a perfect execution of technique of the creative power of performance. For instance, in *Bhāmā Kalāpam*, Satyabhama character describes her lover Lord Krishna to Madhavi (servant-maid) with several gesture patterns elaborating and embellishing the key concept of the verse (Fig 4.1). She not only explores the dhvani patha (sub-text) but also creates prathi patah (counter part) by portraying the imagined reactions and responses. Thus the *bhagavathams* provide for out-of-frame activities to loosen the frame and give scope for the incorporation of new ideas for the actors to improvise the text. Lifting half curtain in *Kuchipudi bhdgavatham*, *Melattur bhdgavata mela* and *Toorpu bhdgavatham* (Figs 3.3, 4.2, 4.3) is to manipulate and dramatize the actor's entrance and exit. And the vidushaka (comedian), who is all the time present on the stage, recites prathishoka (anti-versus) parodying the utterances and actions of the main characters. This role is created to loosen a highly structured performance, and to entertain the audience with comic actions. In olden times, all *bhdgavata* performances used torchbearers with a burning torch in his hand moving with the characters to illuminate their faces (fig 4.3a). In *Melatur Bhagavata mela* the stage manager holds the script in their hands, and keeps prompting the performers and giving cues to the musicians and performers wherever it is necessary (fig 4.4).

Pravesika daruvu (entrance of the character) is the oral performance text of *bhdgavathams* with music notations. It is a stylized classical song in *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* and *Melattur bhagavata mela* and stylized folk tunes in *Toorpu bhagavatham* and *Chindu bhagavatham* sung before the performance by a performer to the accompaniment of the rhythm on **m-ridangam** to introduce each character of bhagavata performances to the audience in front of the acting area. Then the play proper begins. For instance, in *Melatur bhdvata mela*, the *Thodaymangalam* (song consisting of many tunes including *sabdas* and *sollukattus*) etc., is a stylized song sung before the character of Ganesha as a prayer to bless the play so that it may get through without a hitch (fig 3.9 and 4.5). Generally, a young lad below 12 years of age wears the mask of elephant head (Ganesha) and dances. The words of the song are composed both in Sanskrit and the regional dialect. It is believed that the transformation of the performances to their respective characters takes place during the process of the *praaveshika daruvu* (entrance song)- Structurally, it is a part of enactment through which the performance gains the inspiration to start the rhythmic physical movements. The physical movements are conceptually governed by the nature of *bhagavata* and the purpose of its incarnation.

Bhagavatars, brahman scholars, well versed in Sanskrit and *Natya Sastra*, have been given a large scope to expand by adding themes from *Srimad bhagavatham*. Thus the *bhagavata* performances supported by thematic songs and verses presented devotional doctrine with its illustrated stories of *Prahalada charitam*, *Bhamakalapam* etc.

The text in *bhdgavatha* performances has two distinct divisions - one is a musical script sung by the vocalist (see in video tape) the other a performance script, which is spontaneous conversation which takes place during the performance. The verbal music and the associated dance movements structurally make the form resemble *Kuchipudi bhagavatham* and *bhdgavatha mela* performances. For instance, the physical movement of the *Bhāmā Kaldpata* is controlled by verbal music. The spontaneous conversation does not follow any text or pattern, and changes from performance to performance or from performer to performer. But the

definite text will be maintained in both *bhāgavathams* written by their respective authors.

In all traditional and folk theatre the script of the performance is a loose verbal narrative, and functions as a tradition guide for the enactment, because it is a part of their life and **the** performers are neither slaves of the script nor in their imagination as it is controlled by **them**. Each *bhagavata* performer gets ample chance to set his/her individual score through physical action except in certain cases.

Kuchipudi bhagavatam and *Bhagavata mela* performances follow the cannons of *Abhinaya Darpanam* and *Natya Sastra*. *Natya Sastra* insists on the presentation of a drama by using four modes of *Abhinaya*. They are *Aaharya* (make-up, costumes, and scenic spectacle); *Angika* (gesture); *Sattvika* (revealed action of mind); and *Vachika* (oral rendering). Unlike in other classical forms, here the characters speak in a highly stylized manner. The presentation is so elaborate that there are lengthy excursions into various fields. For instance, the *Bhāmā Kalāpam* of Siddendra Yogi takes 3 days to perform. It is possible to read this text within one and a half hours. The text of its *bhagavata* plays are enlarged upto 8 hours during the performance. It starts at 10 p.m. and ends in the early hours at 6 a.m. But in reality, requires 3 nights to tell the story with *Abhinaya* and dance movements alone. The beginning of the play starts with the narration of Vidushaka. It is an oral exposition (other characters use hand gestures). The entire script is enacted in such a way that the inner meaning of the text and subtext and their connotation are brought out to the audience. Therefore, here actor is the confronter and interpreter of the text.

Both the texts of *Melatur bhagavata mela* and *Kuchipudi bhagavatam* are written in Telugu. Some actors do not speak. Instead, they interpret the slokas which are sung by the vocalists and actor, expressing it by hand gestures, facial expression, and dance movement (figs 4.6 to 4.11). But in the case of Hiranyakaspu and Prahalda, dramatic discourse is very much present. For instance, in *Prahalada Charitam* the vocalist who sits on the left side of **the** acting space sing in classical ragas to guide the performers (figs 3.8 and 3.10b). Since *Vacchikabhinaya* is also present, the actors concentrate on other modes of acting beside

Angika. Here the actor performs what is sung by the vocalist with *mudras* (hand gestures), facial expressions and body movements. The vocalist continues singing with the actor until he finishes his act, without breaking dramatic speech. The actor gets maximum freedom to pursue his ideas without breaking the continuation of the score. This style of acting is called spontaneous acting or *Manodharmabhinaya*. This style of acting is found in all *bhāgavatha* performance of Andhra Pradesh. About *Manodharmabhinaya*, observing about Kathakali performance, Bharata Iyer says:

Another feature welcomed in an actor and considered a distinction, nay even a (sic) necessary quality, in manodharma (imaginative faculty and its appropriate application). The actor who does not possess manodharma, which is a reflection or measure of his intellectual refinement, has not attained maturity. On the Kathakali stage the actor is given ample opportunities to display his skill and imaginative faculties. By subtle and pleasing variations, the accomplished actor makes the presentation of the same thing ever fresh. The actor with manodharma adds to the common stock which is transmitted to his students in pillary succession. He is expected to enrich his presentation by supplementing the **text**...., some times the text may indicate the line to be pursued, as when, *it contains* an allusion. Similarly, when the text refers to a situation or a scene such as festival, assembly of devas, royal wedding, forest, the celestial city of Indira, a lake, an ocean, the Himalayas etc., the actor would describe these according to his own imaginative capacity, or by an appropriate use of descriptions by gifted poets, which is again, a measure of his refinement or cultural tastes. Such occasions are also utilized to employ the actor's sense of humor and wit to the utmost effect, provided the context permits (quoted in George 1992:97-98).

Iyer's observation rightly reflects even in the case of *bhāgavathams*. To show their mastery, some actor, in *bhāgavathams* interpolate ideas from great masters/masterpieces of literature into the performance text. In the words of Vedantam Satyanaryana Sarma, "*Manodharma* is necessary to change literary text into the performance text effectively. It is an

imaginative house full of the described culture"(personal communication). Even in modern performances *manodharma* is very competitive; thus the performance reaches the highest watermark. Hence the actor uses the text as a starting point of performance in the *bhdgavathas* of Andhra Pradesh. In this context, the transformation of dramatic text into the performance text is the primary concern of the bhagavata performance theory and practice. The *bhagavata* performances are more concerned with the fashioning of the performance text, "The factors and elements involved in realizing the performance text are the highly evolved and codified art of actor, theatrical space and its conventions, the whole scheme of stylization, and a set of conventions for treating the text" (Awasthi 1985:90). Strictly speaking, the Indian theatrical performances have great tendency to cultivate techniques and devices to develop rules and procedures for the transformation of the text into performance. While elaborating on the transformation of verbal text into stage actions, Awasthi writes:

The rich poetic text of the traditional plays dealing with the epic and mythic material itself involves not only linguistic, but also literary and cultural codes, and presents a network of verbal signs. In performance another network of verbal signs is added to the words. These involve recitation and singing of the text, codified movements and hand gestures, stylized costumes, symbolic make-up, head-dress and masks, ritualistic opening and concluding procedures; each of these with its own system of codes. In most of the highly developed performance forms, the staging signs are multiplied and their impact maximised. In achieving this the full potential of the verbal signs is exploited. In this transformational operation, the verbal sign of the text when enriched with the staging signs undergo together a double shift in function; from sign to referent, and from referent to new signs (Awasthi 1987: N.page).

4.7. TOPOGRAPHY

Topology is the study of space. Space is one of the fundamental aspects in semiotic studies. It explores the proxemics and kinesics for an elaborate performance under the

cultural unit; if theatre is an alliance of the symbols, semiotics is its communicative and non - communication channels. It is true that Western theatre (modern theatre) has legitimately recommended linguistic and symbolic media of presentation during the modern age. Whereas Eastern theatre extremely supports the semiotic medium in addition to verbal language and symbolic expressions. This is a unique feature of Eastern theatre, which has played a vital role in the performance realm. An actor's body flexibility, bending nature and sign system convey a more effective meaning than as in the Western theatre. Directly or indirectly, semiotic proximity has become popular to analyse the spatial concept both in the West and in the East.

4.7(a). *Topography as Ideology*

If space is coined as ideology, topoanalysis will become the mode of analysis of physical space. It is a term used in mathematics and physics. It has been employed even in cultural studies, philosophy, sociology and psychology. Survin viewed space as a "qualitative ensemble whose attributes signify different ideological ways of envisaging conceivable societal relations" (Suvin 1984:5).

Space is neutral. It is heterogeneous. It has limits. Survin distinguishes three types of space. The first is the topological or logical space. It is the space of logical relationship, semantically or mathematically stated. There are three kinds of spaces, topological space or logical space; abstract space; and empirical space (Suvin 1984). These three different spaces have different levels of meaning- imaginary space and social space. These spaces were explored by many directors in their respective theatre for empirical purpose in the West.

4.7(b). *Anti - Illusionistic Space*

Schechner's environmental theatre explored the spatial concept with performance group. In his Performance theory and environmental theatre and in the second, third and fourth axioms of the environmental theatre he says, "All the space is used for audience", "the theatrical event can take place either in a totally transformed space or in a found space; and

focus is flexible and variable" (Schechner 1968b:41-64). While elaborating these theories in the light of spatial concepts, he opposed proscenium architecture and says:

Have you ever thought how *stupid* the proscenium theatre is architecturally? Starts with the auditorium, the 'house'. A silly name for row after row of regularly arranged seats- little properties that spectators rent for a few hours. Nothing here of the freedom of arrangement in a house where people live-and can push the furniture around. And most of the places in the 'house' are disadvantageous for seeing or hearing. The first few rows are so close that the actors - in their efforts to project to the back and up to the balconies - spit all over you; the seats to the side give a fun-house mirror view of stage, all pulled out of proportion; the seats at all back of the orchestra under the balcony are claustrophobic and acoustically murder; the view from the second balcony makes the stage look like a flea circus. Only a few seats in the orchestra, mezzanine, and the first balcony offer anything like a pleasing view of the stage. But this is no surprise. The proscenium theatre was organically designed to emphasize differences in class and wealth. It was meant to have very good seats, medium seats, poor seats and very bad seats.

When people come late or leave early, they all but step on you, push their asses in your face, and disturb whole rows of spectators. There is no chance to readjust your body, take a seventh-inning stretch, or extend your arms. During intermission everyone runs to the lobby to gobble food, drink, smoke, talk. Intermission is just about the only human thing on. Also, of course, to see who's here- which undeniably is one of theatre's chiefest and oldest joys. Not just to look at or for famous people- but to look over the crowd, see who's out with you this evening. This looking is impossible in the darkened house that cruelly makes you focus straight ahead, as in church or at school, at a performance that, finally, may not interest you at all. The worst thing about the 'house' is that imprisons you away from the stage where there are many interesting things to see if you were only

allowed. What's visible of the stage from the house is only a fraction of its total area and volume. For me the wonderful direction is up. To gaze up into the flies through rods and curtains and lights and ropes and catwalks and galleries into the immense space....

So the proscenium stage is a focused space surrounded on every side by other spaces attending on the stage like on old queen. How mean that audience should be exiled from this royal realm of magic. Such exclusion is pitiable, cheap, unfair and unnecessary (Schechner 1983:80-1).

According to him, proscenium theatre is a prison. It keeps the audience away from many interesting things, which audiences need. The proscenium space presents illusion as reality among the audiences. In this aesthetics, everything is pre-determined structurally. It declares a static culture. It shows difference in class and wealth. Those who are rich enough to afford money can get very good seats in the front rows and the poor get back seats. However, there are scholars who support proscenium theatre. Murry (1984) argued in its favor and opposed Schechner's spatial concept. According to him, ...“the proscenium's purpose was not to keep the spectator at a distance from the performance. Rather it reinscribed performance in the space of spectatorship. The proscenium arch presented for the spectator a field of scenic perspective limited to the sight of the prince seated in the position of perfect perspective vision. The spectators surrounding the prince could only imagine the perfect scenic vision as the prince must have been seeing it. Consequently, the function of the proscenium performance in its historically most political moment was not a distance of **frontalism** but the displacement of the vision from stage to hall. There in the space of the audience, spectators performed the symbolic representation of perspective as they imagine how it looked from the (phantasmic) eyes of the prince... In this respect, frontalism- whether the image of the stage framed by the proscenium or the visage of the prince- provided a vivid representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their conditions of **existence**” (Ibid.:96)

Most of the theatres constructed in the 20th century are proscenium in their structure. And these theatre space concepts reflect the feudal/bourgeois society. One of the intention of avant-garde movement was to reject the spatial notions of the proscenium structure. And the net result was the formation of theatre in the arena structure or taking theatre away from closed theatre, which is closer to pre-dramatic ritual performance spatial concepts of ancient society.

Artaud anvisaged of the stage and auditorium and replaced them by a single vision, without partition or barrier of any kind. A direct communication is established between the spectator and the spectacle between the actors and spectators, from the fact that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it. He did not give any philosophical or ideological interpretation to the use of space. Grotowski resigned from the stage-and-auditorium plant. For each of his productions, a new space is designed for the actors and spectators in order to make infinite variations in the performer-audience relationship.

Happening is the foremost movement that imitated the rejection of the aesthetics and set notions propagating the proscenium theatre. Instead of conventional spaces, Cage and Kaprow selected public places, streets and side walls for the enactment of Happenings, before an unpolished audience. Street theatre and Gurilla theatre followed the tradition of Happenings.

The offshoot of proscenium theatre in Schechner theatre and the creation of one common space to performer and audience is did not understand by the above scholar. His intention to make a shared experience as in the pre-dramatic rituals of ancient society (elaborated in chapter v) is not properly understood by Murry. Schechner's attempt is to get back the past days, but it is difficult because the present society does not have a shared and religious/social belief on rituals. It is impossible to make a shared experience. Nevertheless, his approach was considerable and reasonable according to the Western situation during that period.

4.8. BHARATA'S SPATIAL CONCEPT IN NATYA SASTRA

Bharata in his book *Natya Sastra*, gave a lengthy description of three types of theatre, designed by the celestial architect Visvakarma as directed by him. They are *Vikrishta* (rectangular), *Chaturastra* (square), and *Tryastra* (triangular). These three main types have been sub-divided into three categories as *Jyeestha* (large), *Madhyama* (medium) and *Avara* (small). The measurements are given below (Rao 1964:116):

Rectangula	large	162' x 81
	medium	96' x 48'
	small	48' x 24'
Square	large	162' side
	medium	96' side
	small	48' side
Triangular	large	162' side
	medium	96' side
	small	48' side

(after Rao, 1967: 116)

These nine types of theatre should have exact measurements as specified above. The large sized theatre is intended for the gods, the medium sized for the kings and the small sized for the others. The medium theatre is the ideal one where speech and music have good audibility, and facial expressions and eye movements have good visibility.

4.8(a) Medium-Sized Rectangular Theatre

The structure of a medium sized rectangular theatre is as follows. The rectangle thus marked out should have a length of 96' and width of 48'. This rectangle is divided equally into two squares, each 48'x 48'. The western part is horizontally divided into two equal parts each measuring 24' x 48'. The rear part of this rectangle forms the *neepathya griha* or

the green room and the front part is a passage from the stage. The stage is again equally divided horizontally to form two rectangles of 12' x 48'. A raised platform measuring 12' x 12' is centered in the rear half and is called the *ranga Sīrsha*. The front half of the stage is called the *ranga pitha* or the acting area, with a proscenium opening 24' wide 12' deep with the two —it *mattavaaraniis* or vestibules measuring 12' x 12' on either side of the floor. These also serve as the wing -space. On either side of the *rang sirsha* there are entrances from the green rooms, through which the actors and actresses enter, after completing their make-up and costumes and wait for their entry onto the stage. On either side of the *ranga pīṭha* or the acting area, *mattavaaraniis* or vestibula are constructed. They should be at a height of 1 1/2 *hastas* or 27" from the level of the auditorium and level with the acting area. The *rang Sirisha* is intended for the vocalists and instrumentalists and should be filled with black cotton soil and be perfectly level. *Shadaaruka* or six-pillar wooden design should be constructed behind the *rang sirsha* and a provision has to be made for a *yavanikaa* or backdrop coinciding with the back line of the *matta vaaranis*. The wood work used in the construction of theatre should have decorative designs.

The seating gallery stands 12' away from the stage. The first step of the 24' wide gallery is 18' high from the floor of the *ranga mandapa* or the auditorium. The rises thereafter are 9' high and the treads are 18" broad. Thus there will be 24 rows seats 18 with in each row. Hence the total accommodation will be 432 seats.

The topmost seats in the gallery will be 18'-19" high. The top-line of the proscenium may be surmised to be 14'-3" high from the ground level considering the height of the proscenium opening to be 8 *hastas* or 12' ensuring perfect visibility of whatever is happening in any part of the acting area (Rao 117-19). All Indian classical theatres strictly adhere to the above principles of *Natyasastra*. Truly speaking, Andhra Pradesh did not construct a theatre as mentioned in *Natya Sastra*. Nevertheless, *Kuchipudi bhāgavatam* and *Bhagavata Mela* structurally imitate the Sanskrit architecture superficially. Spatial concept of the above theatre is not important because performance can be done on any available space in the village like

Toorpu bhdgavatham or even *chindu bhāgavatham*. Because of open air performances, space is not marked it is flexible and variable.

4.9. PROXEMICS

Proxemics is the science which deals with the study of use of space. According to Hall, "man's use of space in his architectural, domestic, urban, work place and aesthetic activities is neither causal nor merely functional but represents a semiotically loaded choice subject to powerful rules which generate a range of (connotative) cultural units" (quoted in Elam 1980:62). Further, he explored three proxemic syntactic systems to liberate boundaries between units. He termed them as fixed-feature space, semi - fixed feature, and the informal respectively. "Fixed feature space involves, broadly, static architectural configurations. In the theatre it will relate chiefly to the playhouse itself and, informal theatres (opera houses, proscenium arch theatres etc.), to the shapes and dimensions of stage and auditorium. Semi - fixed feature space concerns such movable but non - dynamic objects as furniture, and so in theatrical terms involves the set, auxiliary factors like lighting; and in informal theatrical spaces, stage and auditorium arrangements. The third proxemics mode, informal space, has its units the ever - shifting relations of proximity and distance between individuals, thus applying, in the theatre, to actor - actor, actor - spectator and spectator - spectator interplay" (Ibid.:62-63). These three proxemic modalities are usually operative in theatre performance history, and marked by shifts in dominance by one or other of the classes. The nineteenth century ideal of spatial organization in the playhouse is a maximum of grandiosity and fixity which results in the maximum formality in the theatre. Elam admits that "The center of theatrical transaction has become, during this century and particularly in recent decades, less and absolute, stage-auditorium divide than a flexible and occasionally, unpredictable manipulation of body-to-body space (for example in theatres of Beck and Schechner). This movement towards the opening up and loosening of proxemic relations in performance, in order to escape from the tyranny of architectonic grandeur and its aesthetic and ideological implications, looks back to earlier and non-institutional forms of performance, where fixed

feature space was either nonexistent, as in the medieval mystery cycles, or secondary to semi-fixed and informal space, as in the medieval theatre-in-the-round, where actors descended into the platea to form an acting area cleared for the nonce, of spectators" (Ibid.:63-64).

Another American psychiatrist Humphry Osmond has provided an exemplary instance of informal theatre. He called it sociopetal space and sociofugal space. Sociopetality comes under informal theatre where actor and audience are not segregated. Medieval and Renaissance theatre, folk theatre and 'poor' theatre has explored the cohesion of actor-audience for the better spectacle. Whereas most of the formal theatres tend towards sociofugality where actor-actor cohesion is negligible in the architectural unit of the auditorium. Therefore created, "the spectators has his own a well-marked private space, individual seats, and relative immunity from physical contact with his fellows (and even from seeing them). The result is to emphasize personal rather than social perception and response, to introduce a form of 'privacy' within an experience which is collective in origin" (Ibid.:64-65). Out of the above three proxemic modalities, informal proxemics has given prior importance to theatrical semiotics, that is dynamic spatial relations of the performance and also accessible analysis meaning interpersonal distance and determining the semantic units of performance. These kinds of proxemic exercises had been tried in Euro-American experimental theatre since 1960 onwards. "Proxemics research has directly influenced the work of such American directors as Richard Schechner and Scott Burton, who, instead of relying on their directorial instinct for spatial meanings, have applied certain scientific data to their representations" (Ibid.:66-67).

Traditional *bhāgavata* theatre purely follows aset norms of proxemics modalities. In *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* and *Melattur bhdgavata mela*, performance space itself allowed definite portions to vocalists, musicians, even stage manager (see video tape). Every character relation to one another is clearly seen with a definite spatial distance according to relationship with the characters. For instance, *Prahalada charitam* of *Melattur bhagavata mela* is closely associated with proximity. In the case of *Bhāmā Kaldpam* psychological proximity is very much found during the performance. Without the awareness of proxemics, the *norm-*

s and modalities are traditionally inspired through the cultural code of the society and is transmitted from one generation to another generation without breaking the score.

4.10. SPATIAL CONCEPT OF BHAGAVATHAMS

Social space and life space that existed in society may not create the spatial concepts of *bhdgavathas* of Andhra Pradesh. The *bhagavata* performances are primarily temple-based ritual performances. The space of the performance was assigned to a community. Each section of the audience of a particular *bhagavata* was conceptually assigned to a certain community based on the social hierarchy. It is considered only as physical space. But mental space is quite unique in all *bhagavata* performances. In traditional *bhagavata* performances, no scenery is used during the performance on the stage. They utilize all the available space and also depend on some simple stage devices. In these performances, scenery is imaginary. Without any artificial scenery they can create scenes on the stage. This concept has been extended in all *bhagavatha* performances (figs 4.6 to 4.12).

In traditional theatre, using of informal, ordinary space is common rather than fixed and special space (figs 4.13 and 4.14). This is one of the most dynamic aspects of theatrical discourse. The use of space always has relationship with the movement of the actor's body on the stage and to the spectator.

The properties that are used in *bhagavata* performance are illusionary. For instance, the chair used in *Kuchipudi bhāgavatham* and *bhagavata mela* is a normal wooden/steel chair, but it symbolizes the king's palace in the episode (figs 4.15 and 4.16). According to situation they used the chair and at other times it is removed from the acting space. Transformation of physical space into imaginary space is quite common in *Kuchipudi bhagavatam* and *bhagavata mela* performances. In contrast, *Toorpu bhdgavatham* and *Chindu bhāgavatham* use none of the stage device at all during the performance. Thus without using any scenography, fictitious space can be created in a traditional *bhagavatha* performance.

Bhagavatha performances are based on the ritual act, thus they have a ritual attitude to the entire performance score. Most of these performances are traditionally staged during the time of fairs and festivals of the village. It has a traditional bondage and belief to perform rituals at the performance space at the commencement of a festival. This ritual is observed in all *bhāgavata* performances. After the commencement of the festival the actors visit the performance space and perform the rituals. Thus the space is sanctified. After the pooja is over, then they erect the stage with the usual decoration with fruit bearing plantain trees and tender coconut leaves. The audience are used to sitting on the bare floor or on the chairs (figs 4.17 and 4.18). No permanent seats are seen in any of these *bhāgavath* was performances.

Till recently, *bhdgavathams* (Kuchipudi bhagavatham, Toorpu bhagavatham and *Chindu bhdgavatham*)were performed outside the temple or in the temple premises, but now they are performed at any space because of the availability of sponsors.

Classical theatre performances, cover all aspects of theatre - dramatic speech, movement, gestures, costumes, make-up and music. *Kuchipudi bhdgavatam* and *Bhdgavata mela* vividly express the conventionality of make-up, gesture, costumes and the whole set of conventions operating within the overall aesthetic scheme of stylization. In these performances, the action is delimited to any defined physical space. If the situation requires, the stage expands to the auditorium and beyond. For instance, in *bhdgavata mela* performance, Hiranya Kashyupa leaves the stage and comes into the midst of audience, when Lord **Narashimha** comes out of the pillar and appear on the stage in *Prahalada Natakam* (fig 5.8). In the words of Natarajan, "The Hiranya kasyupu entrance from the audience is to explore the participation with *Sahurudaya prekshaka* and avoid societal space and to neglect the physical distance of stage" (personal communication). Whereas in *Kuchipudi bh/agavatham*, the expansion of acting space is not found in *Prahalda Natakam*. The spatial experience can be noticed through psychological space of audience. According to Vedantam Satyanaryana Sharma, "The traditional *Kuchipudi bhdgavatam* performances during the yester years have

the participation of the actors with the audience and expansion of the acting space into the audience space" (personal communication).

In *Toorpu bhagavatam* and *Chindu bhdgavatham* (traditional and folk theatre) the expansion of space is quite common (fig 5.5). Since the performance obtains during the festival season, both audience and actors participate in the procession of the village deity. The nature of performance being at ground level with the audience sitting on all sides of the performance space, actors are disengaged from the action and sit, gossip and share with the audience. During the performance, actors take entrance and exit only through the midst of the audience; there is no barrier between the actor and audience. Thus they develop the audience participation more. In traditional and folk theatre the actor is a member of the community with his own vocation, performance is being a seasonal and a part - time activity or maybe a full time activity. These performances are often inherited, and family based. They may be carpenters, farmers, or landlords etc. All these performances are part and parcel of the society either directly or indirectly. Spectators of all traditional performances know their actors well. Transformation of the actor is minimal.

Most of the traditional theatre performances are open-air events, organized on the level ground, a platform stage, or as a mobile processional spectacle. They are presented in the fields after the harvest, streets, open spaces outside town (often permanently designed for performances), fairs, markets, and - especially for the Ramayana and the Krishna legend shows - temple gardens, river banks, market squares, and courtyards...(Awasthi 1974:36)

Each idea of this lengthy illustration is true to the *bhagavathams* of Andhra Pradesh. As far as the *bhdgavathas* (folk, traditional and classical theatre) are concerned, focus of attention is not a matter of serious concern. The focus of attention falls where the text of the performance and the action take place. Thus the text and space are flexible and variable in accordance with the action of the performers.

4.11. CHANGES IN PERFORMANCE SCORE

The performance score of *bhāgavathams* has undergone many changes from century to **century**. The existing score of these forms are different from those of olden times. When there were no edits, the text was completely enacted without deleting and altering its environment. Due to external circumstances and social changes, the present generation is forced to change the score either by editing the text or reducing the time. Obviously, when the lengthy text is cut short, the score of the text and performance score change. Moreover, musicians omit certain parts of the text or the actors do not elaborate certain points which are to be elaborated for maintaining the score. The performance score is a significant trait of Oriental theatre which fascinated European directors. The score has been transmitted from generation to generation, with the necessary modifications according to the change of the performance culture and social circumstances.

4.12. CONCLUDING NOTES

The explication of the performance text, spectacular text and space in particular and *bhāgavathas* in general is the fundamental notion of environmental theatre. To Schechner, the fundamental logic of environmental theatre is not the logic of the storytelling (1973a:83). This concept is a modified version of the practice of the text of classical theatre. All folk, traditional and classical theatres do not aim at presenting a story with a plot, theme, and structure, but emphasis on the mode of presentation of the story. In case of Western experimental theatre, it is the director who confronts the script for making better performance score, whereas in *bhāgavathams* actor confronts with the text within the given innate qualitative of himself. Performance score of the traditional text is conceptually set for being enacted in a given space. When the definite space changes, the text also changes. Each society has its own spatial concept. In a static and secular space the space is delimited by cultural codes in **every** unit of human behavior as in *bhāgavathams*. In *bhāgavathams*, the intention behind the one space common to performer and audience is to make a shared experience as in the pre-dramatic ritual society. Because the present society in the West does not have a shared

religious and social belief based on rituals, it is impossible to make a shared experience. This concept is totally explored by the *bhdgavatha* performances of Andhra Pradesh. The next chapter deals with aspects of actor - audience participation in *bhagavathams* particularly and superficially western environmental theatre.