Chapter - 10

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
Folk Paintings between
Andhra Pradesh & Karnataka

Plate No. 211
Folk art is the source of all arts. The varied folk forms of India have won world-wide recognition. The art of Leather-Puppetry for nearly 15 centuries. It has extended its influence to many Far-Eastern countries, even today representing our glorious culture in those parts. The art of Leather Puppetry has two distinct variations like visual aspect and its performing counterpart, together complementing each other and contributing to enriching its purposiveness.

The Puppeteers of Karnataka for ages have kept this art form alive, all the time helping the people in understanding and appreciating its rich historical and mythological ramifications, many of the artistes have become part of the ethos. Their names have become immortal.
In Karnataka there are two major varieties in the leather puppet shows, depending on the size of the puppets.

(1) Chikka Togalu Gombeyaata (small leather puppet play).

(2) Dodda Togalu Gombeyaata (life size or larger leather puppet play)

Each variety shows several regional variations in the style of music, craftsmanship, stage technique and manipulation.

Leather puppeteers are scattered all over the interior of Karnataka and other Dravidian states. They have vivid name for shadow theater or leather puppet play. In North Karnataka the leather puppeteers are called “Killikyaata’s”.

In Karnataka, the string, and leather puppet form exists in the villages. The string puppet form is called Gombe atta, (means – dance of dolls). In some districts, it follows yakshagana, the traditional live theatre (folk) form of the state. The puppets have rounded figures with legs, and joints at shoulders, elbows, hips and knees. Five or more strings attached to a puppet figure are tied to a rod- like wooden prop. The Gombe atta presents stories based on episodes drawn from epics and puranas. The highly dramatic music is a blend of folk and classical style. Sometimes the strings of the heavier puppets are replaced with rods for better mainpulion and control. This from is prevalent in the district of Bellary, Bijapur, Chiradurga,
Dharwad, Mandya, Mysore North Canara, Shimoga, South Canara and Tumkur.

The leather or shadow puppets locally called togalu (leather) gombe-atta (puppet dance) of Karnataka is similar to the leather puppets of Andhra Pradesh. There are two sizes of leather puppets in use – one with large puppet form almost like that of Andhra Pradesh. The other one uses smaller puppet figures. The themes for the puppet plays are drawn from epics and puranic literature and a number of characters like clowns, dancers, etc, which are presented in almost all plays. The puppeteers hail from the districts of Bellary, Bijapu, Chitradurga, Dharwad, Gulbarga, HASSAN, Kolar Mandya, Raichur, and Tumkur.

The Machilipatnam Kalamkari craft made at Pedana near by Machilipatnam in Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh, evolved with patronage of the Mughals and the Golconda sultanate.

There are two distinctive styles of kalamkari art in India - one, the Srikalahasti style and the other, the Machilipatnam style of art. The Srikalahasti style of Kalamkari, wherein the “kalam” or pen is used for free hand drawing of the subject and filling in the colours, is entirely hand worked. This style flowered around temples and their patronage and so had an almost religious identity - scrolls, temple hangings, chariot banners and the like, depicted deities and scenes taken
from the great Hindu epics *Ramayana*, *Mahabarata*, *Puranas* and
the mythological classics.

This style owes its present status to Smt. Kamaladevi
Chattopadhayay who popularized the art as the first Chairperson
of the All India Handicrafts Board. Only natural dyes are used
in Kalamkari and it involves seventeen painstaking steps.

Chittara folk art of Karnataka is a Cultural
phenomenon of Dewaru community, agrarian community of
nature worshipers residing in and around Sagar Karnataka,
engaged primarily by the women Folk as a socio cultural practice.

Andhra Pradesh is a home of abundant folk tradition,
rich with classical and folk arts ranging from ballad singing
“Burra Katha” to the refined classified form of Kuchipudi dance.

Being the neighbouring states Karnataka and Andhra
share commonality in many aspects – cultural linguistic and
traditional.

In the folk tradition we have Kalamkari and Leather
puppetry, the two of such found in their traditions, but with
certain variations. The lines in Karnataka kalamkari so refined
well balanced composition, sensitive with bright contours and
compact. In case of Andhra kalamkari Kalahasti kalamkari
paintings are more detailed and elaborate picturising the whole
story in to one single piece. The Machilipatnam works are only
in block prints.
The visuals will clarify on the differences of kalamkari paintings and Leather puppetry.

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