

Jangam Kathalu as Popular Culture in Medieval Andhra: A Historical Study

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Abstract— This paper examines the nature of popular culture in medieval Andhra with special reference to Jangama Kathalu between the 12th and 14th centuries. It situates the evolution of popular cultural forms within the broader socio-political transformations marked by the decline of traditional Kshatriya dominance and the rise of non-elite groups such as the Nayakas, Reddies, and Velamas. The study highlights how cultural expressions were shaped by changing power structures, religious movements like Shaivism and Vaishnavism, and the spread of Virasaivism. It distinguishes between elite and popular culture, emphasizing the oral, non-literary traditions of marginalized communities. Jangama Kathalu emerged as a significant medium of religious propagation and social communication, later evolving into Burrakatha. These performances reflect collective experiences, beliefs, and resistance of common people. The paper argues that popular culture not only provided entertainment but also functioned as a tool of social cohesion, ideological transmission, and subtle resistance in medieval Andhra society.

Index Terms— Medieval Andhra -Popular Culture - Jangama Kathalu -Burrakatha -Folk Traditions - Virasaivism -Social Change Oral tradition

I. INTRODUCTION

History tells us that the Andhra region was ruled by a number of dynasties – Mauryas, Satavahanas, Ikshvakas, Vishnukundins, Chalukyas of Badami, Kalyani and Vengi, Rastrakutas, Pallavas, Cholas, Kakatiyas, Gajapathis, Vijayanagar kings, and Asaf Jahis – since the post-Mahavira and Gautama Buddha period in the history of India. All this tells us that the history of Andhra dates back to the pre-Christian era. For better understanding, it is better to go deep into the specific area of region in a particular period of history. This requires division of history into ancient, mediaeval and modern. Then a question may arise,

what is the criteria to periodise history. At the broad level, there is a general concern among the historians about the periodization of history while dividing history into Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern. The historians have taken into consideration the changes that took place in the particular period of human lives of the region. The developments in a particular period can be distinguished from the others on the basis of some scientific principles, and these principles are helpful for periodization of history.¹ If accept this argument as criteria for periodization in history, then a question may arise: when does mediaeval Andhra begin?

II. CRITERIA OF MEDIEVAL ANDHRA:

There is no uniform time for periodisation in history. It differs from region to region. The periodisation that was followed in case of Indian history is not applicable to the history of Andhra. The periodisation of mediaeval Andhra is generally considered a difficult task. Periodisation in history is done by taking into considering the changes that occurred in the particular period of human lives in a region. The mediaeval Andhra is characterized by the socio-economic changes coupled with the dominance of men belonging to the so-called lower castes in political affairs. The idea of the Kshatriya as the sole protector of the soil receded back. The shifting of power from higher castes to the lower castes, from solar and lunar dynasties to the Sudras like the Musunuri Nayakas, the Reddies, Velamas, Korukonda Reddies, Koppula Nayakas, etc., was a revolutionary phenomenon. There was widespread patriotism in a limited sense, uniting the native rulers to oppose Muslim invaders and their faith. This happened especially in the later part of the mediaeval period. Though there was the

¹. V. Kameswara Rao, Presidential Address, (Mediaeval Section) APHC Proceedings, 13th session, Srisaillam, 1989, p. 61.

sway of the various minor dynasties during the early mediaeval period, the unification of greater parts of Telugu-speaking people under the Chalukyas, Cholas, and Kakatiya rulers and the growth of Telugu literature, art, and architecture, etc., under these rulers demonstrate a change from the past. Apart from it, the most important feature of mediaeval Andhra is the development of indigenous feudalism of a fiscal and military nature, not of the European type, which varies in many respects from the so-called feudalism of Andhra.² From these changes in Andhra, it is clearly seen and marks the beginning of the mediaeval period in Andhra.

III. BRIEF SURVEY OF POLITICAL HISTORY

When examining the geographical distribution of mediaeval Andhra, it is observed that it is quite different from modern Andhra Pradesh, which was formed on the linguistic basis in 1952. It becomes very important to study the geographical regions existing in the period of study. Historians denote the regions, which are immutable and may cease to be meaningful in another period.³ For example, Vengi, once a very prominent region comprising part of coastal Andhra, it is not well-known.

This paper is confined to Jangam Kathalu from 12th century to 14th century in medieval Andhra. The Kakatiyas are one of the major dynasties that ruled over the mediaeval Andhra. They were feudatories of the Eastern Chalukyas but later shifted their allegiance to the Western Chalukyas of Kalyani. Prataparudra I was the first independent ruler. The entire period of the Kakatiyas may be divided into two periods. The first period extended from 1000 to 1157 C.E. During this period, Kakatiyas established and consolidated their position in the Eastern Telangana region. The second period, which extended from 1158 to 1323 C.E, saw their rise and fall. The territory under the Kakatiyas comprised almost all of Andhra. Its frontiers reached Kanchi in the south. On the west, its boundaries touched Raichur and Gulbarga. It inclined towards Kalyani in the northeast, and in the east, it touched the

Bay of Bengal, near the Ganjam district of the present Orissa state.⁴ The Kakatiyas were out-and-out an indigenous power sprung from the fourth caste.

The fall of the Kakatiya empire resulted in anarchy. The tyranny of the Muslim rule under Muhammad-bin-Tuglaq led to the various Hindu Nayakas of Kakatiyas closing their ranks to throw off the Muslim yoke. All these chiefs took the leading role in organizing a war of independence against Muslim rule and elected Prolaya Nayaka as their leader, a Kamma chief of Musunuri in Nuzvidu taluka of Krishna district.⁵ All the other 76 Nayakas rendered assistance to Prolaya Nayaka. Prolaya Nayaka expelled the Muslims from Rajahmundry and occupied the region between the rivers Godavari and Krishna. The rule of Masunuri Nayaka extended from 1325 to 1368.

After the death of Kapaya Nayaka, Eastern Telangana came under the control of Recharla Padma Nayaka, who hailed from the Velama Community. The Recharla chiefs ruled from 1325 to 1474. During this period the Velama kingdom split into two. The northern portion was retained by Anapotha Nayaka, who ruled from Rachakonda as his capital. The southern portion was given to his brother Madhava Nayaka, who ruled this region from Devarakonda as the capital. The rule of the Velama chiefs came to an end in the late 15th century.

Among the families that ruled Andhra during the early mediaeval period was the Reddies of Kondavidu. Prolaya Vema Reddy was the founder of the Reddy kingdom. He ruled the present districts of Guntur, Prakasam, Nellore and parts of Kurnool. Prolaya Vema Reddy made Addanki, near Ongole, as his capital. During the reign of Anapotha Reddy, the capital was shifted from Addanki to Kondavidu, near Narasaraopet in Guntur district. The Kondavidu Reddies ruled from 1325 to 1424. The Reddy kingdom extended from the hills of Srisailem in the west to the Bay of Bengal in the east and from the river Krishna

² . *ibid.*, P.62.

³ . M. Battacharya, "The Problems and Prospects of Regional History: Some Questions of Methodology" Paper presented at the University of Hyderabad, p. 3.

⁴ P.V. Parahrahaa Shastri, *Kakatiya Charitra*, (ed. Ramesan N), Hyderabad, 1977, p. 141.

⁵ . P. Raghunatha Rao, *Ancient and Mediaeval History of Andhra Pradesh*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, p. 89

in the north to Nellore in the south.⁶ Another branch of Reddies of Kondavidu, named Reddies of Rajahmundry, came into existence in 1403.

One of the major dynasties that ruled Andhra after the Reddies was Vijayanagara, which was the last Hindu empire in South India. The Vijayanagara empire was ruled by the Sangama, Saluva, Tuluva and Aravidu dynasties consecutively. They ruled the southern part of the country from 1336 to 1678. The Sangama dynasty was established by Harihara and Bukkarayalu in 1336. The Sangama dynasty ruled southern India from 1336 to 1485. The outlying areas of the empire were divided into six provinces. Out of six provinces, the first two, Udayagiri Rajya and Penukonda Rajya, were part of mediaeval Andhra, which was ruled by the Sangama Dynasty.⁷

The religion during 12th century to 14th century was predominantly Hinduism. There were two important religious sects prevalent in medieval Andhra. They were shaivism and vaishnavism prevalent in Andhra. Even though they patronized Hinduism, the ruling class followed religious tolerance towards Jainism and Buddhism. Virasaiva movement was popular in Karnataka, also left its ripples upon Andhra. In Virasaivism, Shiva is being supreme, who is omnipotent of lord of universe. It opposed the brahmanical rituals and brahmins as priestly class. Brahmins were replaced by Jangamas as priests. Virasaivism spread South India during 11th to 13th century. Mallikarjuna Panditharadya of Andhra was chief exponent of Virasaivism. Shiva was worshiped in the form of Bhairava, Mailara during the Kakatiya period. Srisailam, Tripurantakam, Umamaheswaram, Sangameswaram, Yelleswaram, Somashila, and Draksharamam were important Saiva centres during 12th century to 14th century. Srikurmam, Ahobhilam, Simhachalam, Tirupathi, Sarpavaram and Bapatla were important vaishnava kshetras during Kakatiyas and Reddies.

Brahmins and a section of vaisyas were monopolized educational knowledge and enjoyed social status, economic and political power throughout history. Brahmanical cultural practices were elite culture. The

temples and mathas(monasteries) were used to spread elite culture. The elite culture consists of rites, rituals, yagnas, penance, and classical dance called Marga. This culture was patronized by the ruling class. In contrast to literary groups, groups such as Sudras, Untouchables, Boyas, Pulinda's and Chenchus where majority belongs to non-literary groups denied access to theoretical education and marginalized in history. The non-literary groups depend much on the oral tradition to transmit their cultural forms. Their beliefs, customs, rites, rituals, songs, dance forms (Desi) such as Jangam Kathalu, Dandalasakam (Kolatham), Pagativeshalu, Puppetry and Yakshaganam were popular. Therefore, the cultural forms of non-literary groups can be referred as popular culture.

IV. POPULAR CULTURE:

The idea of 'popular culture' as opposed to 'learned culture' is a late 19th-century phenomenon, first formulated by the German writer J.G. Herder. Of course, there were some writings that were describing popular customs in the late 17th century, but what was new in Herder and Grimms is the emphasis on people and their beliefs, which were reflected in proverbs, etc., were part of a whole, expressing the spirit of particular people.⁸

Popular culture may be perceived as the cultural practices of the people outside the sphere of the dominant culture. This has been a constant feature of literary, political, and cultural debate since the eighteenth century. The concept of popular culture did not develop completely until the nineteenth century, but we may recognize the emergence of a distinct way of talking about it as early as the 1730s. Since then, the concept of popular culture has remained a powerful element in the cultural analysis. Popular culture has become an object of study in various disciplines such as literature, history, and anthropology.

The phrase "popular culture" consists of two terms, "popular" and "culture." The problem of popular culture is one of definitions. It is better to precisely have the meaning of "popular" and "culture," then the

⁶. Balendu Shekaram Banskruithi & K. Laxmiranjanam, Andhrula Charitra Samskruthi, Madras, 1990, p.302

⁷. Ibid., P.107.

⁸. Peter Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, Willwood House, England, 1988, P. 8;

problem would hopefully disappear. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED), does offer an account of different meanings of particular words, supported by citation and a certain degree of analysis. The term "popular" was first used in the OED as a legal term. It denotes action open to all people living under a particular government.⁹ The legal definition of the concept of "popular" in the OED defines it as pertaining to common people. At another time, 'popular' refers quite clearly to one part of the social formation: those of low birth, belonging to the commonality or populace, or plebeian.¹⁰ There is another set of meanings of the word, which refers to text, language, and forms of knowledge; 'popular' refers to a cultural form that is 'intended for ordinary people.' In the analysis of popular culture, it should not bring philosophical debate, because it was always in the hands of the elite class and can't be understood by the people but is also contradictory to the popular culture. Hence, Gabriel Harvey protested against the dilution of philosophical debate into the popular and plausible themes.¹¹

By the nineteenth century, the term was increasingly applied to cultural forms that applied to people generally. The people were generally identified with folk. Folk as an old-fashioned segment living on the margins of civilization, and that matter was equated to the concept of peasant. The folk were understood to be 'the illiterate in a literate society.' More recently the term was changed to non-literate.¹² Therefore, folk or popular culture may be characterized as (illiterate or) non-literary, rural, and lower stratum as against elite culture, which is characterized as literate, urban, and upper stratum within a given society. The popular culture is more often non-elitist and local in its outlook. Oral literature comprised a wide spectrum of

social classes and religious institutions, but it often was controlled by the lowest castes.¹³ The question may arise, why do we accept folk as people? It is because of one version of people's history; in the Marxist perception, the people are constituted by relations of exploitation, in another (folklorist), by cultural antinomies, and also by political rule.¹⁴ The study of the popular consciousness as affected by the infusion of new, external ideas must be an important aspect of any people's history. This means that a people's history cannot be a mere narrative of conditions of the common people. It must go beyond and study interconnections of classes. And also, revolutionary Marxists perceived folk, who were real people, had the sense that they were participating in the modes of production. Therefore, identify the 'folk' as the people of the non-literary, rural, and lower stratum of a given society as 'popular.' Another question may arise: what is culture? Which is the suffix of the phrase popular culture? The primary meaning of culture is the cultivating of natural growth, and by extension, in recent times; it became the cultivating of the human mind. Culture, in the simplest sense, is the entire way of life followed by a people.¹⁵

What has been termed the classical definition of culture was provided by the 19th-century English anthropologist Edward Burnett Taylor in his *Primitive Culture* (1871). "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."¹⁶ The emphasis of anthropologists on culture as a unique to human social activity also found Karl Marx's social theory, where he argues that "Man (SIC) can be distinguished from animals by consciousness and also by the fact that they produce their means of subsistence."¹⁷

⁹. Morag Shiach, *Discourse on Popular Culture: Class, Gender and HISTORY IN Cultural Analysis*, 1930 to present, Polity Press, UK, 1989. P.22

¹⁰. Ibid., p. 26.

¹¹. Ibid., p. 28.

¹². Alan Dundas, *Study of Folklore*, Folklore Institute, Meerut, 1978, p. 2.

¹³. Gene H. Roghair, *The Epic of Palanadu*: Oxford University Press, New York, 1982, p. 1.

¹⁴. Raphael Samuelson, (ed.) *People's History and Socialist Theory*, op. cit., pp. XXI

¹⁵. Charles A. Valentine, *Culture and Poverty: Critique and Counter-Proposals*, University of Chicago Press, London, 1968, p. 3.

¹⁶. K.N. Panikkar, *Culture and Consciousness in Modern India*, People's publishing House, Delhi, 1992, P.22.

¹⁷. Rosamund Billington & Sheelagh Strawbridge, "Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Study of Culture," in *Culture and Sociology: A Sociology of Culture* (ed.) Rosamund Billington (et al.), London, 1992, p. 22.

The New Encyclopedia Britannica, defines "Culture may be defined as 'behavior specific to Homo sapiens, together with material objects used as an integral part. Part of this behavior, especially culture, consists of language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies, and so on.¹⁸ A modern definition of culture refers to "organization of experience" shared by members of a community, including "their standards for perceiving, predicting, judging and acting."¹⁹ This means culture includes all the standardized ways of seeing and thinking about the world; of understanding relations among people, things, and events; of establishing preferences and purposes; and of carrying out actions and pursuing goals.

Therefore, it came to an understanding that popular culture is seen as a description of a particular way of life followed by the illiterates in a literate society. Hence, it is perceived that popular culture prevailed in the non-literary, rural, lower stratum of society and was non-hegemonized in the sense of being politically, economically, and socially outside the sphere of power, and it had an oral living tradition, in contrast to literary works. Therefore, the study of folklore should be studied as a "view of the world," as a reflex of the life that they were living and would continue to live, as Gramsci noted:

"It would be necessary to study (folklore). as 'a view of the world and life,' to a great extent implicit, of determinate strata of the society, counter-posed to the' official 'views of the world. A view of the world which is not only systematic and elaborate because the people. by definition cannot have systematic, elaborate, and politically organized and centralized conceptions even in contradictory development, but, indeed, multiple not only in the sense of diverse and

juxtaposed but also in the sense of stratified from the least to the most vulgar if, indeed, it is not a matter of having to speak of an undigested heaping up of fragment of all the views of the world and of life which have followed one another throughout history, the larger part of which has left surviving mutilated and contaminated traces only in folklore."²⁰

Dai Smith defined popular culture as the analysis of popular tastes, customs, folk beliefs, manners, and entertainments within a given social order. In short, it is the culture of the people as opposed to the culture of organized thought transmitted by various elites.²¹ By 1930, social anthropologist Robert Redfield offered a residual definition of popular culture as the tradition of the non-learned, the unlettered, and the non-elite.²² His perception was narrow because it excludes the upper classes, who participate in popular culture and to whom popular culture was secondary culture. According to Peter Burke, popular culture would study the history of the excluded, the dominated, and the subordinate groups and classes. It not only studies their standard of living but also their culture as well. It is not exclusive like high culture. It is open to all. In Burke's opinion, strategy should not concentrate on people or any group but on the interaction between learned and popular cultural traditions.²³

Douglas Haynes and Gyana Prakash, in their book *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday South Asia*, mentioned that popular culture, referring to those activities that texture the people's daily lives, provides an especially important arena for studying the 'everydayness' of resistance.²⁴ English Marxist historians have rightly insisted that popular is the expression of a 'whole way of conflict' rather than a kind of 'whole way of life.'²⁵ Gerald M. Sidder

¹⁸. New Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropædia, Vol. 8, 15th edition, printed in U.S.A., 1981, p. 1151.

¹⁹. Charles A. Valentine, op. cit., p.3.

²⁰. David Forgaes (ed.), *A Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, Lowrence and Wishart, London, First edition, 1988, p. 361

²¹ .Asa, Briggs, Dai Smith, & others, "What is the history of popular culture," HT, no. 35, December 1985, p. 42

²² . Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Op. Cit., P.24.

²³. Asa Briggs and others, Op. Cit., P.41; also, Juliet Gardiner (ed.), Op. Cit., P.121.

²⁴. Douglas Hayns & Gyana Prakash (ed.), *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday South Asia*, Delhi, 1991, p. 16.

²⁵. Hans Medick, "Plebian Culture in the Transition to Capitalism," in *Culture, Ideology and Politics: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm*, ed. Raphael Samuelson & Gareth

demonstrated that there is a relationship between production relations and the growth of hegemonic and also counter-hegemonic forces. For him, the ruling class appropriates as much material production as possible from the people for their survival and luxurious life. They adopt a particular culture, unifying the people by catching the minds of the people by adopting particular cultural forms. And also divert the attention of people from the production. M. Sidder felt that the people's resistance to hegemony can be seen as resistance to elite values rather than to the values themselves.²⁶

Therefore, it may tentatively reach an understanding that the study of popular culture can be seen at two levels. At first level, the study of popular culture as culture connects social and economic aspects in any given society. It reveals the importance of cultural form in historical contexts and also constructs the history of those hitherto excluded, the dominated, and subordinate groups and classes in history. It constructs the cultural history of the people hitherto excluded 'outside the walls,' beyond political society and the triangle of power. In fact, they were never outside the large field of social forces and cultural relations. They were linked with a multitude of traditions and practices.²⁷ At the second level, popular culture can be seen as a tool of dissent and protest. As long as their traditional life and beliefs were not touched by anybody, they followed their own way of life, belief, and practices. If their cultural life was disturbed or intervened or destroyed by the ruling class for their selfish ends, then the people use their cultural forms as a 'weapon of the weak,' as an arm of resistance as well as one of domination.²⁸

Stedman Joes Routledge, London, First Publication 1982, P.84.

²⁶. Eve Rosehaft, "History, Anthropology, and the Study of Everyday Life," CSSH, No. 29, 1987, p. 104 (a review article).

²⁷. Stuart Hall, "Note on deconstructing the popular," in People's History and Socialist Theory (ed.) Raphael Samuelson, op. cit., p. 228.

V. NATURE OF ELITE AND POPULAR CULTURE

Irrespective of time and space, there have been two streams of cultural strands in any given society. The elite and popular strands are two streams of culture of any society that exist simultaneously as parallel forms with different levels of mutually influencing interactions.²⁹ The elite and folk arts are associated with classical and popular theatres, respectively. The classical theatre is characterized as rigid, complex and unsophisticated. It fulfills the needs and aspirations of elite groups in society. The classical theatre was confined only to a minority people of the society. The classical theatre was very much influenced by Sanskrit. It was also patronized by kings and elite groups in society. The classical theatre fulfilled aspirations of few, i.e., the elite who were withdrawn from the process of primary production and living in the court and were also very much associated with literature. The sections associated with the classical theatre are Pan-Indian. Contrary to classical theatre, there is the popular theatre developed out of the leisure time of the people. This theatre is associated with rural or countryside people, who were non-literary people. Hopes and aspirations, joys and sorrows, travails and tribulations of the lower classes of society are embodied in vernacular folk literature. The folk theatre can make the whole community take part in it, breaking the barriers of religion and country. The popular theatre has mass appeal and caters to the lowest common denominator, i.e., the ordinary man, in contrast to classical theatre. Therefore, popular theatre has universality.³⁰

The relationship between the classical and popular theatre is complex. They are not antitheses of each other. Irrespective of time and space, there has been an

²⁸ . Caroline Ford, "Religion and Popular Culture in Modern Europe," JMS, no. 65, March 1993, p. 153 (a review article).

²⁹ . V. Ramakrishna. "Literary and Theatre Movements in Colonial Andhra: Struggle for Left Ideological Legitimacy, SS, Vo-21. No 1-2, January February 1993. p 69.

³⁰ . Balwant Gargi Folk Theatre of India, Rupa and Calcutta, 1991.p.3

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active link between classical theatre and popular theatre. The use of popular idioms and similes drawn from everyday life which marked their singing are typical of rural folk tradition, and this genre of literature is simple in its expression without any literary embellishments, which are commonly seen in the classical literature. Similarly, performing art forms as a part of folk culture are also seen as offshoots of life and its struggle.³¹

VI. CLASSIFICATION OF FOLK ARTS

There are many kinds of performing folk art forms popular in mediaeval Andhra. Dr B. Ramaraju classified folk performing arts under four categories. The criteria that he has taken to classify folk arts are not watertight compartments. There are some overlapping and under lapping in the criteria that were taken to group the folk-art forms. The criterion included music, dance, drama and all three combined together. On the basis of music as an important role in folk-performing arts, performed by Bavaneelu, Gollasuddulu, Jangama Kathalu (Modern Burrakatha), and Sharadakandlu come under the first category. The second category of group was classified with dance as the main criteria for classification. The folk arts like Batukamma, Chirutala bhajan, Gobbillu, Kolatam, Puliveshalu, and Veeranatyam come under it. All those folk arts, which required both music and dance, were classified as folk drama. This is the third category. Under this category, folk art forms like Bahurupulu, Chenchu Natakam, Chindu Bagavatam, Pagativeshalu, Veedhi Natakam, Yakshaganam, Tolubommatalu, etc. were grouped. All those folk arts which were not under any of the above three groups were put in the miscellaneous category.

VII. JANGAMA KATHALU

The history of folk performing arts is as old as the history of Telugu. The period between the 12th and 14th centuries was the age of popular literature, as contrasted with the highly ornate and pedantic poetry

of the elite. Popular literature gained ground during this period. Palkuriki Somanadha, a celebrated Telugu poet of the 12th century, has mentioned and described a number of folk songs, dances and performing arts in his classical Telugu epic Panditaradya Charitra.

Burrakatha is ballad-singing named after the percussion instrument, i.e., 'Burra', used by the minstrels while narrating the ballad. The chief characteristic of a ballad is a refrain. "This refrain often appears to be nonsense, but it probably had some sense originally perhaps it was meant to represent the sound of musical instruments or some action on the part of the dancer."³² Modern Burra Katha is evolved from traditional Thandana kathalu. Ballad singing is common throughout India, variously known as 'Lavani' in Karnataka, 'Villupattu' in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, 'Puvada' in Maharashtra and 'Alha', 'Vas', 'Raso', etc., in northern parts of India. This kind of narration in musical tones is traced back as far as the pre-Ramayana days of Valmiki. The two skilled rhapsodists, known as Lavakushulu, sang the Rama saga to their countrymen and finally before the ruling emperor. Though the text of the epic gained the status of a classic (marga style), its publicity was in the folk medium-desi. During the reign of various dynasties of Andhra, Burrakatha had a hold on the people. During and just after the Kakatiya period, the ballad-singing tradition in Andhra was an offshoot of an attempt of the Veerashivites to propagate Saivism and had naturally had its origin in Jangam kathalu, a story told by Jangamas. Originally, the Jangamas were a wandering sect going in praise of Lord Shiva.³³ Shiva worshippers known as Jangamas practiced this musical reaction before the masses. The story told by Jangamas came to be known as Jangama Kathalu.

Palkuriki Somanadha, the poet of the 12th-century work Panditaradya Charitra, gives the description of the refrain Changubhala sung by the audience along with two accompanying singers, who follow the main

³¹ .V.Ramakrishna, Op. cit., p. 69.

³² .T.Kodanda Ramaiah, "Basavapuranamlo Janapada Kaladharmalu," Bharathi. Vol. 53, No.10, Oct. 1976, P.45.

³³ .Nagabhushana Sharma, "Folk Art forms Andhra Pradesh," Teluguvani, vol. 8. No.1, January, 1983, p.18.

narrator by repeating the lines enthusiastically.³⁴ From this account, it came to know that the refrain words 'Changu bhala', 'Thandana thane thandana', 'Bhala Bhali', etc. existed from mediaeval times.

Tikkanna, a legendary 13th-century Telugu poet, gave a description of Jangama dress and their performance of Jangama stories in his work *Virata Parvam* of *Andhra Mahabharatam*. He describes that the Jangama katha is presented by a three-member team, the kathakas. The chief narrator (Pradana kathakudu) stands in the centre, and the two accompanying singers (Saha kathakulu) follow the main narrator by repeating the lines while the chief narrator tunes a Tambura for sruthi. The two accompanying singers play on the dakki, a percussion instrument for lay; the percussion beat changes as the pace and the narrative mode change. The beating with sounds of dakki was to entertain the members of the court.³⁵ From the description of jangam kathalu, it is assumed that Jangam stories became Burrakath in course of time.

Jangam Kathalu was propagated by Siriki Jangalu, Budiga Jangalu, Settibaliya, Ethamukku Jangalu, etc. At the time of Saivism and Vaishnavism struggling hard for their existence, they created new castes for propagation. Saivites created the Lingayat, Baliya, Thambalu, Jangama, etc., castes to propagate Saivism. The Vaisnavas were not sitting calmly. They were also counteracted by creating castes like Sathaulu, Nambalu, Dasarulu, etc., in order to counteract Saivism and propagate Vaisnavism by wandering every village through praising Vishnunama kirtanalu.³⁶

Vinukonda Vallabharaya, a Telugu poet of the 14th century, in his work *Kridabhiramam*, gave a description of the sounds 'Thaka-Dhum Dhum' being produced out of Thalalu (a musical instrument used to play while praising the God) by young women singing the dwipada songs of Palnativeerula katha.³⁷ In the mediaeval age everything is for blessing and purifying their life. *Kridabhiramam* was also mentioned at

another place the sounds which were also produced while praising the goddess, which were similar to the sounds produced by the dakki, a modern Burrakatha instrument. Young dancers were praying to the goddesses Ekaveera and Mahuramma enthusiastically for sacred life by playing Thalaalu and Jamidikalu, which were producing sounds like 'thakadhum'.³⁸

It is interesting to note that Jangam stories took different forms during the Reddi kingdom. It is noted that the Picchakuntla, Kommula Golla (Yadavas), Bhavaneelu, Jakkula, etc., castes used to sing stories of Palnati Yuddam, Katamaraju Kathalu, Ellamma Kathalu, and Kameswari Kathalu, respectively.

Hence, a cultural form in history has always been used as a means of communication to spread ideas. Whenever there is a need to spread ideas, a cultural form either brings back an old one into the forefront or creates a new cultural form to spread religions. The folk performing cultural forms like Burrakatha were used to propagate Saivism during its infancy stage. These Jangama kathalu were evolved, refined and culminated into Burra Kathalu in a later period. Jangama kathalu are known as Burrakathalu in Coastal Andhra, Telangana areas, while they were popular as Thandanam kathalu in the Rayalaseema area.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The popular culture not only provided recreation but also were a great source of inspiration and velour in the days of yore. Like the classical art forms, the traditional folk-art forms also are helpful for building and molding individual as well as social character in the nation by inculcating high ideals. The participants in the Jangama Kathalu were basically non-literary people, who were main forces in modes of production and were primarily denied the social status, economic and political power in the early mediaeval Andhra. It is great concern that Burrakathalu lost its importance in present days

³⁴ . Malayavasini, "Burakatha," (ed) Dhakshanatya Drushya Janapada Kalarupalu. G. Nagaigh, Navya Prachuranalu, Tirupathi, 1992 p. 244.

³⁵ . 50 Malayavasini, "Burakatha," (Ed) Dhakshanatya Drushya Janapada Kalarupalu G. Nagaigh op. cit., p. 243.

³⁶ M. Radhakrishna Murthy. "Jagamkathalu," *Natyakala*, vol.7, no. 1. January, 1972, p. 20

³⁷ .Vallabharaya, *Kridabhiramam*, (ed.) Veturi. Prabhakara Sastry, Hyderabad, 1988. p.32

³⁸ Ibid, P.132.