



REFORM OF TELANGANA FOLK ART FORMS

POST STATE FORMATION

DR. KOTLA HANUMANTHA RAO

Asst. Professor, Dept of Theatre Arts

P.S.Telugu University, Hyderabad Telangana, (India.)

I. INTRODUCTION

Telangana state as an economic, social, cultural, historical entity has a glorious history of at least 2500 years or more. The Shatavahanas ruled this region during the period 230 BCE to 220 CE. After Shatavahanas this region was ruled by Vishnukundinas, Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas etc.

The telangana region experienced its golden age during the ruling of Kakatiya dynasty. The Kakatiya dynasty expressed itself best through art. Kakatiya kings created their own mark by giving much importance to the rich arts and dances. The sculptures of dances on the monuments and temples built by Kakatiyas standing before us showing how various Folk art forms were effective in carrying forward the various mythological and social stories from generations to generations while entertaining audience.

Before introducing the Telangana Folk Arts, I would like to give a brief description about Folk.

The knowledge of folk is known as Folk Lore. Folk Lore includes, myths, legends, folk tales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, curses, oaths, insults, retorts, taunts, teases, toasts, tongue twisters and greetings and leave taking formulas. It also includes folk costumes, folk dance, folk drama, folk arts, folk belief, folk medicine, folk instrumental music, folk songs, folk speech etc. and Folk poetry ranges from oral to autograph.

This vast folklore is divided into four parts by the American Folk Loris Richard M Dorson. They are

1. Folk literature
2. Material culture
3. Social folk custom
4. Performing Folk Arts

Folk literature is also called as Verbal Art or Expressive Literature. All traditional verbal words, sounds and songs include in this category. We can even observe a sub-division of Folk narrative and Folk poetry in this. This only has become the root cause for the Classic literature.

Material culture has direct link with the Folk literature. The study of observation and imitation are the main sources of this division. Techniques, capacity and Folk medicine etc. are the subject contents for the research.

Social folk custom includes both the Folk literature and Material custom. Group interaction plays a vital role in



this division. This applies to the different social beliefs, Religion, Rituals, Festivals, Folk meetings, Folk medicine etc.

Folk art is the unassuming creative expression of millions of village people. It is a treasure of their customs and group behavior, beliefs and concerns, pain and pleasures. Infact, their very ways of life. Folk arts study consists of the origin and development of traditional folk music, dance and drama. It forms an important integral part of folk lives, not because they want to retain professional competence in an art form, but because they actively involved in it for reasons other than mere social and cultural recreation. For them it is a soul-filling means of religious participation, a way of reaching the God.

Folk life and folk art are inseparably interlinked with each other. Every sphere of life they live is reflected in their creative expression. Births, marriages, deaths have been expressed in tuneful melodies. Every type of work is reflected in the rhythmic resonance of their song. The entire life is reflected in the folk songs. Their sorrows and pleasures, their jest for life, their sentiments find an enchanting echo in what they sing and how they express.

This oral tradition though a simple expression of faith in the beginning later on became more complex, as individual performers gained excellence.

Unfortunately after the fall of Kakatiya dynasty almost all the folk art forms of Telangana lost their existence due to many reasons. Since 1990's people of Telangana started reorganizing themselves with a high demand for separate state of Telangana. In this process people started to reform the Folk Arts which were the heart and soul of Telangana people to educate and mobilize people towards the self respect.

In this process we can observe the reform of Telangana Folk Art forms such as ChinduYakshaganam, Oggukatha, Bathukamma etc. from post State Formation.

1. CHINDU YAKSHAGANAM

This is the oldest Folk Art form of Telangana state, performed by the scheduled caste families leading nomadic life moving from one place to another to propagate their caste myth and traditions. ChinduYakshaganam is observed as the caste based performance and was performed by the Chindu's a sub-division of Madiga caste for the Madiga caste people only. Chindu's entertain Madigas by performing their caste epics and depend upon them for their livelihood. Performance used to go on for 8 to 10 hours. Earlier these performances were used to take place in Harijanwadadas only. As chindu's were dependents on madigas, after entering into certain village, they used to visit Harijanwada and take the permission of the wada members and then give their Performance over there. This was their tradition. It is believed that this tradition was introduced by Jambavantha. They used to stay in harijan's houses only. After performing puja to Landa (a pot believed that Goddess Yellamma stays in the pot) they settle the amount for the first three performances which are going to be



performed. This amount is called as Tyagam. These three performances includes two Yakshaganams and one Yellammavesham.

After the performance they perform harathi on the name of Lord Rama. The women who played the main role on that day will take the harathi among the audience. They place the amount in that harathi plate and praise the artists.

This art form was almost at the stage of extinction due to changing times. Chinduyellamma one of the performer of Chinduyakshaganam made many efforts for the survival of the art form. She introduced new attractive techniques in the performance. Since then many changes were observed in the performance. One of the major revolutionary change is Chindu broken the boundaries of performance and performed where ever got the opportunity. Apart from the caste myth, artists started performing contemporary issues to educate and entertain the audience. According to the need and situation performances restricted to even half-an-hour time. Artists able to live prestigious life comparatively, with good applause and respectable remuneration. Along with the remunerations artists even received lands from the State and Central governments as an encouragement to the art form.

Now this art form is identified as the Telanagana Folk Theatre Form.

2. OGGU KATHA

Oggukatha is being performed in only Telangana, by the Oggus and Berannas. It got its name because of the invoking instrument “oggu” used in Oggukatha performance. It is the folk name given to Lord Shiva’s Dhamaruka. The story narrated by playing Oggu is known as Oggukatha.

In Oggukatha the minstrels narrate the stories of Mallanna and Berappa. They are also adept narrating Shakti Ballads, especially that of Yellamma. Mallanna story will be narrated during the marriage rituals of Kuruma caste. After the story narration only marriage will be performed. There is a custom that Oggukatha should not be performed other than marriage time.

But Oggukatha performer named Chukka Sattaiah violated this custom and started performing Oggukatha as an art form with new techniques and dramatization. In recent days we can observe that many contemporary issues are being narrated and performed in this art form.

The instrument Oggudolu, which plays prominent role in Oggukatha has become much famous now-a-days. Artists dance while playing Oggudolu skillfully with amazing feats, attracting audience a lot.

This Oggudolu dance is being encouraged by the government of Telangana and performance receiving great applause in different places of India.



This is how Oggu Katha crossing its boundaries from a particular caste marriage ritual to stage performance countrywide.

3. BATHUKAMMA

Bathukamma is a unique performance of Telangana performed by the women for the 9 days during Dassera festival. Women decorate colorful and traditional flowers in a Triangular shape and worship as Bathukamma. In the evenings women gather together by placing Bathukamma in the middle and dance around by singing songs and clapping hands. Bathukammasongs reflects the culture of Telangana along with the lives and sacrifices of Telangana women. This is the only entertainment Folk Form of Telanganawhich is by the women, of the women and for the women.

After the fall of Kakatiya dynasty for the course of time, this dance was restricted to the bungalows of Jagirdars and Jamindars. Later this dance lost its existence. But during the Telangana agitation this dance was reformed and performed widely. Now it has become World wide popular.

Nowhere else in the World one can witness the Floral Festival other than in Telangana state of India. Usually Flowers are being used to worship God. But Bathukamma is the tradition where Flowers are worshipped as deity by singing and dancing. Bathukamma is the unique combination of many Indian stories, Nature representation, reflection of women lives and worship of the God.

Bathukamma is an icon of the cultural identity of Telangana

III. CONCLUSION

Human life without Art is incomplete and is barren. Though it is centuries old it appears new always. The folk literature with performing arts is not only very much alive, but also dynamic and vibrant. It not only gives pleasure to the people it awakes them and carries its important social function that is keeping the social identity of its patrons.

Cultural heritage have proved to be effective instruments of economic development and culture is one basic assessment of whether a society is either developing slowly or rapidly there is always need to protect our cultural heritage.

IV. REFERENCES

1. Telugu varijanapadakalarupalu by MikkilineniRadha Krishna
2. Janapadavignanaadhyayanam by Dr. G.S.Mohan
3. Telugu janapadageyasahithyam by B. Ramaraju
4. Folk arts of Andhra Pradesh by M.N.Sarma