Chapter 1

Introduction

Pre-Modern Song Cultures In India

1.0 Pre-Modern Song Cultures in India

It has long been known in India that one learns not by instruction so much as by imitation. The learning process is one in which the vehicle is emulation of those whom one respects and admires the most. The veneration felt for one's parents, guru, and other saints is bound up in a system which requires that those on the highest social levels be the most responsible and demonstrate by their examples the highest ideals of Indian thought and behavior. The song itself is a masterpiece of emotive adoration. The beauty and bounteousness of India we evoke through the same language of worship. We find the singing of an oral poem where the people of generation follow the early saint-poets. Song is a foremost art form such as music and performance of a culture of a region or of a jati. The composition, connotation and importance of a song differ from time to time, place to place and region to region. The main aim of a song is to provide cultural understanding of the mankind and to educate the uneducated about social changes. Song

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not only is an important part in Indian states and languages, but also most states of the world give important space to songs. For instance Sufi community people sing songs at their daily activities; in Brazil, and in Africa farmers sing songs when they work in the fields accordingly, almost in every country, the song plays a vital role as it does in India.

The common elements in a song are text, theme, imagery and music (rhythm and melody). As we know that song plays a crucial role in Indian ethnicity, at various societal activities or occasions such as labouring, births, wedding, deaths and other ceremonies. In addition to that song also maintains a co-relation with the society, since there are many songs which associated with the individual devotions, social and political movements where people sing songs as per the context.

India, being a multicultural, multi-caste society, it celebrates a number of social and cultural occasions. People sing songs on every human occasion from birth to death in every part of the country. Apart from singing songs at individual or public occasions the singers of a community perform the songs with their body movements. A mother sings lullabies for a small child. As India is a multi-religious country, people sing bhajans in every temple and in religious activities. Thus song becomes a vital part of culture of every region. Therefore, most of the cultures in the world are song cultures including

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India. Farmers, labourers, women workers, and devotees sing appropriate songs according to the toil that they do in their daily lives. Thus the songs or oral-poetry is the earliest form of literature in every society. In India people live in a *jati* based society. Every Jati has its own everlasting and tremendous haunting melodies in it. Moreover, an interesting fact is that the song cultures still exist, sung and performed in the present day, though we could see and experience a lot technical developments like print culture and other developments like computer and other accessories. The song cultures in India are not affected much by any so called technological developments, because they are safeguarded by the Jatis. Every Jati in the country keeps different kinds of songs and the forms of singings. And the song cultures of every Jati feel it is second to none other song cultures of other community or Jati. The song cultures of various Jatis are called Jati-Puranas in pre-historic times. It is true that the Jati Puranas are marginalised in 19th century, but they still have their roots in the song cultures of the pre-modern times. Every Jati has its own *Purana* and pattern of singing as it has its lifestyle that often includes occupation, ritual status in the social system. The Jati puranas portray the formation and the development of jatis.

1.1 Jatis And Puranas

India is a place where we find people of different languages, cultures and sub-cultures, castes and sub-castes. Every Jati has its’ own unique cultural art forms. Though the art forms differ, singing and performing are the most common features of every caste.
In India, every state has enriched cultural forms as it has its language. Though there are many languages in the country, all the languages and cultures are brought together by song cultures and make them similar. From immemorial times songs, singing and performance are the most commonly found cultural forms across all the regions and languages. The cultures and traditions of Indian Jatis are several thousand years old; from such remote past to present day the song plays an interesting role - even in today's computer era. There is an appealing interrelation between the song and the cultures of the people that the people make the songs come alive in the public domain, and the songs keep the past memory of the people and their cultures alive with them as the mile stones. To see the positive side of the Jati system in India, it would be found that the contribution of Jatis to a human culture is immense. Every Jati has its Jati Purana, and the Purana of a Jati illustrates the formation of the Jati.

If there are no Jatis, there would have been a problem of finding one's roots. The Jatis have certain duties such as keeping a record of the historical events or heroic deeds pertaining to the chiefs of their community and to serve as a cultural link between the generations by entertaining their community and passing the formational story of the community in the song cultures. In all the artisan communities, which have been the major production force in India, a sub-caste has come into being with a purpose to record the historical events of the Jatis through its singing and its song cultures. The song cultures are now being recorded as valuable sources of history in the absence of an authentic written record. These narratives are of immense value particularly in
connection with the chronological writing on the culture and life of the uneducated mass of several Jatis. It is an imaginary conjecture that the written and the archeological sources mostly reflect the life of governing class in the society. The colonial historiography with its two paradoxical shades of opinions administrative and xenophobic has mostly depended on the conventional sources of the past. The oral traditions of preserving the past in Indian song cultures dates back to the times immemorial. These narratives were ignored hitherto as legendary myths and undermined as an unwanted literature. Most of the earliest literature which has been handed down from the generation to generation through oral traditions is judged as less important by the modern scholars in the present times. Besides Sanskrit literature like Vedas and other puranas, we come across numerous narratives through oral art forms which are still currently practiced by and among various communities and castes in India. These sources if tapped, analyzed and interpreted with academic interest the art forms will provide rich information on the history and culture of bygone days. The study of such narratives also reveals the historic sense of the unlettered jatis to portray their cultures and maintain their identities braving the vagaries of time.

India is a pluralistic society with different religions and Jatis. Caste system is peculiar to India through other peoples are also socially stratified. Each caste tried to preserve its uniqueness by maintaining its own enjoyable folks who sing the glory of their past which can be analyzed and studied to understand the subaltern cultures in India. These narrations are unconventional sources and they may also facilitate the reconstruction of narration and culture of jatis. Though it is found that there is a long lasting and significant relation between the Jati, song cultures India, no recognizable work is done with this
perspective to find out how the Jati and song cultures are related and how memory is important in the song cultures. The chart presented below reveals an interesting correlation between the singer-community and the various Jatis.

### 1.2 Singer-performers of Jati-Puranas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S No</th>
<th>Jati</th>
<th>Singers of the Jati Puranas</th>
<th>Jati-Puranas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brahman</td>
<td>Vipravinodis</td>
<td>Magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vaishyas</td>
<td>Viramusti</td>
<td>Kanyaka Kadha</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Visva Brahmana Panasolu</td>
<td>Runjalavallu</td>
<td>Runja Kula Puranam</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Mutrasi</td>
<td>Kaki Padagala Pandaullavaru</td>
<td>Patam Katha</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gauda</td>
<td>Gouda Jetti Ekoti</td>
<td>Gauda Puranam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Padmasali</td>
<td>Sadhana Surlu Kuna Puli</td>
<td>Magic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mangali</td>
<td>Addanki Siggadu</td>
<td>Mangali Puranam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chakali</td>
<td>Ganjikooti Masayya</td>
<td>Madelu Puranam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kummari</td>
<td>Pekkari</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Golla</td>
<td>Mandecchu Oggu Pujarlu</td>
<td>Butta Bommalu Yadava Kathalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Redid</td>
<td>Pichukuntlollu</td>
<td>Reddi Puranam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Madiga</td>
<td>Chindu Dakkali Bandla Maasti Nuluka Chendayya</td>
<td>Jambapuram/ Yaksha Gaanan Patam Katha Renuka Yellamma Katha Adipuranam Pujari, Kolupulu / Kathalu Ritua/ Recitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mala</td>
<td>Gurrapollu</td>
<td>Patam Katha/ Kula</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The people belong to the most of the jatis in India mainly deal with the stories related to their patron community in India. The tales or the puranas that they sing tell us about the family history and pedigree of their host community. These puranas or caste related stories are transmitted from one generation to the other in oral form. Each of these groups or the castes keeps a copy of *patam* [scroll painting] of the manuscript of the stories, irrespective of the fact, whether they are literates or not.

The people who sing the caste puranas also exhibit *patam* when they sing or recite the stories to their patron community in which the entire story of Purana is printed in the form of pictures. The people of the community or *Jati* treat the puranas as sacred. The caste-singers recite or singers sing stories in which they trace the origin of their patron caste and their sub-castes. They narrate life stories of the historical personalities of their host community.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Jati</th>
<th>Sub-Jati</th>
<th>Puranam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lambada</td>
<td>Bhat/Bhatt</td>
<td>Banjara Kathalu/songs/ballads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Nayakapodu</td>
<td>Korrajulu/Pujarlu</td>
<td>Patam katha</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Gondu</td>
<td>Pruthan/Pardhanlu</td>
<td>Vamsakatha</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Koya</td>
<td>Doli</td>
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1.2.1 Vipravinodis

This class of singer-performers takes donations or ‘Katnam’ from the Brahmins only. They are lingayats known as vipravinodis because they perform acrobatic feats to entertain the Brahmins, the word vipra means a Brahmin and vinodi means an entertainer with their magic tricks. In a note on the Vipravinodis, C. Hayavadana rao writes that they are said to be the descendants of a Brahmin and Lingayat Woman⁵. One of their favorite accomplishments of performance is throwing up three stone or wooden balls into the air and catching them or rolling them over various parts of their body. When they perform this play before a mixed audience, they call themselves Naravidyavaru, which is said to be an abbreviated from of narulu Vidyalu Chese varu or those who perform praise worthy feats.

Historically this magic was very popular between 15th and 17th centuries. These Vipravinodis adorned the Vijayanagara court. According to the inscription of Sadasivarayulu, the Vipravinodis were in large number in Vijayanagar kingdom and they also held Agraharas⁶. Their magic is called Vipravinodi Vidyā. They are a sub-sect in the same Brahmin Jati. Moreover, they have various Gotras and Sutras. They all give donations for divine purposes. They pray God and perform magic with charms.


Vipravinodis were performing in the courts and places of the kings and also in the households of Brahmins.

1.2.2 Pandavulavaru Or Pandavulollu

Pandavulavaru or Pandavulollu take donations from Mutrasi Jati people. This Mutrasi also called Mudiraj or Tenugu in Andhra Pradesh. Pandavulavaru recite the story of Pandavas, the heroes of the Mahabharata. That is why they are called Pandavulavaru. While reciting the stories for Mudiraj community they play a musical instrument called Kinnera melodiously, and express all their gestures. They recite not less than 40 stories related to Mahabharata. Among them Yayaticharitra and Pandava Vanavasam are very important. The Yayaticharitra narrates the origin of Pandavulavaru. In the entire Telangana region the troupes of Pandavulavaru invariably recite these two stories. The entire Mahabharata story can be heard from them.

There is legend regarding the origin of Pandavulavaru caste. The legend is mentioned in pandava vanavasam story. According to it Pampanna and Dugganna were guarding their cucumber garden in the outskirts of a village. They belonged to Mutrasi community. They thought that they would one day host the Pandavas. Wandering in the forest, one day the Pandavas came to them. The Mutrasins hosted a feast to Panadavas who later constructed a hut at a short distance from the cucumber garden and lived there for some time. One day the Pandavas went for hunting in the forest and did not turn up till late in
the night. Then Droupadi went to the forest in search of Pandavas and reached Mutrasis
cucumber garden. Droupadi asked Dugganna, who was warming up himself by fire about
Pandavas. Dugganna, with an intention to test Droupadi, told that the Pandavas were
killed by a Shakti Goddess in the forest and he was performing funeral rites pretending
his succession to them. There was a little bit of doubt in the mind of Dugganna regarding
Droupadi. He thought that she might be a devil. That’s why Dugganna told the lie. But
Droupadi believed it and put an end to her life. After Pandavas came to Dugganna, he
told them about her. Then Dharmaraju became angry and killed Dugganna on the spot.
After some time Jampanna came there and explained the truth that there no mistake of his
brother Dugganna. Then Dharmaraju meditated on Srikrishna and Dugganna came back
to live. After that Jamanna caused Draupadi to come to life

1.2.3 Gouda Puranam

In the story of Gouda Puranam, the singer tells the story by singing the Gauda Puranam
and traces the origin of Gouda Jati and their sub castes Goudajettis and Emutilvaru to an
ancient sage Koundinya, who was born to Lord Brahma. The sage Koundinya begets five
sons and one daughter with the blessings of Brahma. They were Adi Gouda, Amara
Gouda, Pungama and Challama Devi. They were called pancha Goudas. Challamadevi
was married to Katamayya. They were all collectively working for their livelihood. Adi
Gouda was producing toddy from palm tree. Amara Gouda was producing toddy from
date palm trees. The other brothers, sister and her husband were selling toddy at
Manduava (a place where toddy is sold).
According the song of the singer of the Jati, the Goudas were vegetarians, and they were strictly following caste regulation. As long as they were following their dharma, there was no need for them to use implements for toddy tapping. It is even said that, in those days, they were not climbing the palm trees for toddy tapping. The trees were bowing down before them to facilitate them. But in course of time, because of their negligence in following their regulations, the palm trees stood upright. Then they prayed to lord Siva who responded to their prayer and said that the palm tree would not behave as they did previously but the Goudas should climb the trees to get toddy from the trees. Whenever the Gouda community was in trouble lord Siva was responding to their prayers favorably. The Gouda community was also rescued from the evils of giant called Rakthathishudu. Thus the singer goes on singing about the story or Purana of the Gouda called Gouda Purana.

1.3 Chindus and Their Jambava Purana

The Chindu Jati people are the singers of the jambava Purana. The chindus and Dakkalis are the dependent caste of Madiga community, and they sing the puranas and explain the various aspects of the pre-creation, creation and evolution of this Universe. This Purana has many characteristic features of the Mahapurana and it is very close to the Devi Bhagavatham which speaks of the Adishakti or the mother of the trinity-Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. It is said that Brahma and Vishnu had refused to marry her when she proposed and so they were burnt by her with her third eye. Later Lord Siva consented to marry her on the condition that she should give him her third eye which could burn anything in the world. Having agreed to this the Adishakti parted with her third eye and gave it to Lord
Siva. Lord Siva immediately burnt her and gave life to the other two gods Brahma and Vishnu. The singer in the story also tells that Adishakti was reborn in three inferior forms of Parvathi, Lakshmi, and Saraswati who were married by Siva, Vishnu and Brahma respectively. With this the creation of Universe has begun.

Indian culture has been shaped by its long history and diverse geography. The ancient heritage of the Indus valley civilization has been reserved even while absorbing customs, traditions and rituals from both the immigrants and invaders. India’s different regions followed by vast populace have contributed to making its culture as diverse as it is unique. The folk epics such as Ramayana and the Mahabharata which serve as folk epics have been greatly influenced the Indian cultures in different regions. The fabric of Indian song cultures has been spun with yarns from different cultures and it is this cultural diversity that makes the song cultures in India more interesting and colourful.

Song cultures in India are also so varied that it would difficult to generalize them. However, as with all the song cultures and folklore it has been handed down by oral tradition, and has a strong sense of one community. In a county whose regions are boasting of ballroom dancing art forms and it is refreshing to see the performance and singing continue to hold their ground. They remain an integral part of Indian’s culture.

Perhaps it is the Indian fascination for songs that give Indian culture its distinctive flavor. Whether it is India’s cultural performances or its songs they all tell the stories with singing. Each region carries particular forms of songs, singing and performance in India. Though they are specific to particular locale and even if they are performed at another place they will still carry the strong features of the place of their creation. The oral art
forms of India vary and each state has several forms of performance. The common and important forms of the performance are accompanied by song. If not exaggeration, in India it is not possible to see a performative art without a song as the main component. If Indian performance has sprung from the religious urges of her people her music has also been influence by her cultural beliefs. Song cultures in India are rustic reflection of the large Indian Jatis. It draws largely from Janajati’s music or songs but it is different from it. Indian song cultures which are performative based are mostly sung from the memory of the singing-performer. Song cultures of the people in Indian villages are sung and performed with the common and reliable instruments like Dappu. The forms of singing and performing of India are in internationally acclaimed position today and they depict Indian culture effectively. It is also seen that the song cultures had some strong relation between the jatis and the forms of singing and performing which are the two interrelated art form India from ages ago.

The relation between the Jati and song culture is very important in all the cities, despite the reliance of some cultures on written records and accounts. The Jati based cultural relation accounts from the ways things are and often the way they should be, and assist the people in educating the young and teaching important lessons about the past and about the life. Because the song cultures are highly prearranged and are told realistically without modification, they can be as consistent as other non-oral ways of recording and passing experiences. While song cultures can vary from place to place the variations are also open to contradiction in the same ways that written accounts are. In this way the
force of song cultures can continue through generation although small details in the singing and performance may change. Because of this, song cultures which relate the past events and have been passed down through time cannot be dismissed simply as the caste puranas as I shown above. The Kulapuranas and the relation between the Jati and song cultures are entirely valid within their cultural context and should be respected as such.

In India there is a great variety of oral poetry. There are hymns, prayers, praise songs, procession songs, and oral poetry, all with their varying conventions, content, and function in different regions and different cultures. I make an attempt to examine briefly, the foundation, career and concern of the devotional poetry from the 6th century in Tamilanadu, 12th century in Karnataka, fourteenth century in Maharashtra, from 16th century to today in Andhra Pradesh and its spread thereafter to the entire north, west and east and south of India. By the sixteenth century the oral poetry of devotion had reached almost every comer of India. The poetry of devotion ranges from the simple one or four line songs in Tamil, Kannada, Hindi and Telugu song cultures. In this chapter I analyze the devotional poetry under four different categories: Thematical and theological than mythical and literary. The chapter makes a survey of the devotional song cultures and their sustenance in the contemporary times. From the day English has been introduced to Indian society to present most of the writers have been running after English literature and writing in English. It also challenges to study the evolution of the devotional movement and the role it played, as it steered its course through the historic catastrophe, ideological pressures and invasions of the other cultures (the Christian or the Western, Jain, and Buddhism and Persian invasions on Indian regional language poetry). The devotional poetry was the phenomenal attempt of the lower segment of society. Therefore
the regional languages and literature and the lower castes and classes are brought into the limelight by the poetic-languages used in devotional poetry. The saint-poets who led devotional poetic-movement, named as “Bhakti movement” in 19th century were from different castes and classes of the Indian society. The devotional poetry was guided by a very humanizing cosmopolitanism, and an emotional commitment and a thirst of the divine essence and experiences.

1.4 The Characteristics of Song Cultures in Pre-Modern Times

The written poetry or the literary canon that the Indian writers created in other literary areas including English is deficient in showing the experience of Indian nature and its identity. It spelt complete departure from the long-lasting form and traditions of Indian poetry writing. In recent times, the scholars and academicians agreed that there is little continuity in verse written in English in the nineteenth and twentieth century in India. They also agrees that by losing traditions we lose hold on the present; this new reality of the last two centuries contrasts brusquely with the Indian tradition of poetry writing which was started from the Upanishads onwards, has tended to be highly mystical and emotional. C.D. Narsimhaiah says that, our writers have perhaps done well by contemporary English standards but not created their own identity. Is it because they have not discovered their cultural identity? Referring to the legacy of Indian mystic and devotional poetry, he says, one is not so naïve as to want them to revive that kind of

poetry, but they can’t afford to forget that both folk and formal poetry in this country has been functional, a humanizing and spiritualizing force, never a mere instrument of pleasure that it now threatens to be. “Many of the younger poets can hardly be said to belong to the tradition, let alone continue it in a significant way”\(^8\). Bhakti in E.B. Havell’s words, comprehends all the three cardinal virtues-faith, hope and charity\(^9\). In recent times another well known writer Romila Thapar claims that the Bhakti sects arise at various times over a span of thousand years in various parts of the subcontinent. They were specific in time, place and teachings but were limited by the language which they used, they did not evolve out of some original teaching or spread through conversion; rather, they arose as and when historical conditions were conducive to their growth often intermeshed with the need for particular castes to articulate their aspirations. Hence, there is a clear variation in belief, practice and lack of consciousness of an identity of religion across a sub-continental plain. Similarities were present in some cases but even these did not lead to recognition of participation in a single religious movement\(^10\). There are three main reasons for which poetry can be regarded as being religious or devotional. Firstly, the content may be religious, as in verse about mythical actions of gods or direct religious instruction or invocation. Secondly, the poetry may be recited by those who are regarded as religious specialists. Thirdly, it may be performed on occasions which are generally


agreed to be religious ones. These three criteria always coincide. Hymns for example, may have definite religious content and be sung on religious occasions, but they may or may not be performed by religious experts. The song cultures record the cultural achievements by means of the great personalities who deeply influenced and molded the lives of the people and kept their spirit alive. The main means of the poet-singers of pre-modern days was the well being of man. The result of their teaching their song-poems of devotion has become the universal intellectual tradition for all people of the country, irrespective of caste, community and religion. Most of the poet singers in olden days have taught many precious lessons in self education through their devotional and philosophical song-poetry. The lives of the saint-poets have been set as the examples of living up to the principal of the unity of the man which they preached through the unity of god as a common basis of human living.

There are two words involved in this; poet and saint. When we study the lives of the saints we find that almost all of them were poets, though all poets may not be saints. But the saints were all poets. And this is not confined to any particular region, language or sect. We find saints from all parts of India, starting from Kerala to Kashmir, and Assam to Gujarat, wherever we go we come across poet-saints. They are a great force, a great integrating force amongst us. When other forces have been trying to disintegrate the country in the name of religion, caste and many other factors, these poets travelled from one end of the country to other spreading the gospel of harmony, universal brotherhood and love. This has been their greatest contribution. In the devotional song cultures, the

devotion can be attained either through singing or through the repetition of the divine name. It is no wonder, then that all these great saints were inevitably poets too.

All of the above mentioned were poets and melodious singers too. They were poets not in the ordinary sense, stealing words form here and there. Their poetry sprang from the bottom of their hearts. It was the outpouring of their inner feelings. That is why their authenticity and power remain undiminished after centuries. Their songs continue to have a great impact and show spiritual benefits on us\textsuperscript{12}. Poetry and religion are two indispensible components of the materialistic world we live in. To the skeptic these terms might appear redundant. Poetry and religion belong to those realms of the human consciousness which are beyond the critical and logical assumptions of mere scientific enquiry. In today's highly industrialized economies, the relevance of poetry and religion towards the spiritual developments of the human psyche is as important as it was in the past. Countless civilizations bear testimony to the fact that human beings do not live by bread alone. Poetry and religion enables the individual to free himself or herself from the tyranny of continues anxiety caused by avidya, kama, and karma, that is desire and strife arising out of ignorance of the ultimate truth. A person has to transcend this egocentric predicament if he is to achieve happiness. Poetry and religion, in different ways, pave the path towards spiritual liberations. Religion is a social phenomenon that has existed since time immemorial. Neither can it be defined that the poetic utterance was the first mode of human communication. To the rational, religion might be a useful illusion and poetry a delightful fiction – both seducing a person from what he/she would call the facts of

reality. The great mystic poets attained a level of understanding the lay of beyond the
dogmas of science or orthodox religion. Those who did experience a vision of logos use
the language of myth and symbol to record the profundity of their spiritual illumination.
Since language is an imperfect medium of communication, the intensity of such as
experience is communicated through the poetic use of the language where form and
content, harmony and rhythm blend to recreate a symbolic vision of the poet’s
realization. Religious poetry is expressed in different moods—often opposed and
conflicting, for example, praise which rests on intense eruption of faith, self-abnegation,
self-remorse, a questioning of God’s ways, a highly mellowed reconciliation and a
petition to God. All these trends could be seen as the dynamics of religious change-part
of an ongoing culture. The modern religious poetry derives its subjects from the stress
and strain of socio-economic pressures. Hence, emotion is kept under the tight control
and severe objectivity seemed to be a part of the poetry. Bhakti is necessary to
emphasize, is one of the fundamental emotions in human soul. It has been recognized as
an important factor in the spiritual history of man.

After a close analysis of the devotional song cultures in India, it is found that the poetry
of devotion was not called the Bhakti poetry. It was during period or the later period of
the later Chola kings, the whole body of the devotional poetry was termed Bhakti poetry.

13 Sumita Roy and M. Siva Rama Krishna, Poet Saints of India, (New Delhi: Sterling
14 Sunaina Singh, Poet Saints of India: Religious Note in Indian English Poetry, (New
15 Sisir Kuamr Das, A History Of Indian Literature 500-1399: From The Courtly To The
Bhakti poetry or literature means something caused by or dealing with human emotion called Bhakti; it does not simply designate any eulogy or praise of god as one\textsuperscript{16}. Thus the devotional poetry has been changed as the poetry of Bhakti movement. Furthermore, Manavalan lays down the characteristic of the devotional poetry are:

1. The devotional poetry is, at least most part of it, occasional in composition, the occasions being more or less similar.

2. The poetry has a distinct and uniform structure, though the anthologists have classified them differently in terms of their religious principals or priorities.

3. It is choric in character and hence most of the body of devotional poetry is sung attuned to the patterns of popular music.

4. It is historical in that the period and the places of composition have imposed temporal and spatial dimensions on these poems. That is to say it is a movement of literature.

5. In view of this successive ideologies that governed the movements, the earlier compositions are protestant in tone and hence socio-political in aim where as the later compositions are more spiritual and persuasive towards psychic participation in the blissful experience\textsuperscript{17}. Accordingly the devotional poetry


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 75.
had become an inspiration to the following song cultures in India from the past to present and to the future.

The song cultures around the world, even in the past and present, were and are experienced through performance and singing. This is true in song cultures of Tamil, Kannada and Telugu traditions. The singing and performance involves engagement, audience, emotion; and the song cultures could not be understood without considering singing as their main feature. This remains the case even in past and present forms of the song cultures or any other oral performative cultures. In the modern times we are now used to experiencing the forms of literature primarily from reading silently, and despite theatre and poetry reading. But it is not the case of the forms or genres of oral song cultures of any period or place. Song cultures meant primarily to be heard, experienced and analyzed. Similarly, song cultures concentrate attention upon audience reception, the social and cultural significance of the event of singing itself.

In a manner of speaking, song cultures are everything in a particular society, and one can easily speak of music and other art forms of the music. In a broad sense, the distinction of song cultures is not a matter of music, dance, art and other things; it talks about the death rites, patterns of pilgrimage to holy cities modes of raising children, treatment of elders, and innumerable other aspects of everyday life that are stitched into the meaning of culture. But in other sense the song cultures and music have always played an important and central place in the imagination of Indians. The range of the phenomenon of the song cultures in India and indeed in the rest of South Asia extends from simple melodies,
commonly encountered among hill tribes, and to what is one of the well-developed systems of classical music in the world.

Indian music can be described as having been inaugurated with the chanting of Vedic hymns; though it is more than probable that the Indus valley civilization was not without song cultures, of which almost nothing is known. The predominant themes in the devotional song cultures are often set to sing about love of man for god which represented in the form of woman’s love for man and most particularly as the love of the god.

The thesis deals with important questions in song cultures such as what relevance, if any, do the elaborately dense and rich oral traditions of Indian societies have in the representation of the past? Do the Indian song cultures in several regions and languages, from the past still have the capacity to be used as voices in today’s public space, and in understanding of the past and production of the future? In answering the questions we have to remember that oral art never exists in isolation but coexists with the community lives of the people, as acted out in different ceremonies and occasions. Without memories, no individual and no society would be able to develop a sense of identity. How we recall the past is among other things influenced by the different media we use to extend the limited range of our individual memory.

The long lived tradition of song cultures or oral poetry provide evidence of an engagement of this form of oral art in various issues, ranging from the devotion, caste
encounters, gender problems, social sufferings and public commentary and self-identity, globalization encounter, colonial education, impact of social movements. By taking into account, some of the famous song composers such as Alwars, Basavanna, Kabir, Gaddar and Venkanna who belong to different time periods and languages, I shall discuss on why and how the songs played its important role in the society and how the songs are immortal among the people’s cultures in the present day. The thesis also deals with jati and its important role in making the song cultures continue from past to the present in the Indian context. It gives interpretation of major poets in different periods in Indian song cultures like Nayanmars, Alwars in Tamil oral literature, Vachanakaras in Kannada literature, Kabir and Surdas in Hindi song cultures, and Gaddar and Venkanna in the contemporary song cultures, against the social dogmas like class and caste; and it also attempts to see in their poetic-work, continues with their past and future of Indian song cultures. This is one of the prime concerns of the chapters

The thesis indicates that the great poetry is always rooted in a corresponding sense of history, spirituality and struggling lives of the working class. This fact becomes factor in the chapters like devotional song cultures.

By surveying the song cultures at large, the thesis also attempts to understand the features that characterized the songs from devotional poetic times to contemporary song cultures. The different genres in each song cultures are the primary concern of each chapter in the thesis. The thesis provides an interesting backdrop to the concerns of each chapter and I hope some thought provoking questions like why the song cultures are important.
And lastly the thesis strives to analyze the impacts and the effects of devotional song cultures, and on Gaddar's and Venkanna's poetic-writing in the contemporary times in Telangana cultures. By undergoing this hard and huge exercise the thesis attempts to arrive at an honest understanding of different song cultures in different times in India.

1.5 Description of the Chapters

The chapter 1 entitled 'Pre-Modern song Cultures in India' gives a brief description of the significance of song cultures in India and introduces the whole theme of thesis about song cultures. As we know that in India there are different jatis in every region of India. Each and every caste or jati has its own culture of singing song in its own style. The people of Indian live in a multi-linguistic and multi cultural society. The lives of the people in India are associated with different kinds of songs in different time periods. The chapter also gives a space for the list of jatis and their puranas. The chapter claims that the caste or jati helps a man to know his roots of culture, region and language. The chapter tells us about the relation between the singer-performers of various jatis and the purana of each jati like Golla, Mala, Madiga, and Gouda and so on. It also consisted of the details such as the characteristics of the song cultures in general and also give brief information how an oral poem is composed in Indian song cultures from the past to the present day.
The chapter 2 titled as ‘The Song Cultures In Tamil, Kannada And Hindi’ deals with the song cultures in three languages like Tamil, Kannada and Hindi. The chapter gives an historic out like of the famous poets like Alwars and Nayanmars in Tamil, Basavanna, Allama Prabhu and other famous poets in Kannada and Kabir, Surdas in Hindi song culutres. It describes how the song cultures have travelled from place to place and how the song forms have survived in the languages in early centuries. The chapter also tells us how the songs and singing had been understood and treated by the famous academicians such as A. K. Ramanujan and others. The chapter claims that the song-poems composed by famous poets like Nammalwar, Basavanna in early centuries are transformed as the poetry to be read where as songs are mean to be sung.

The chapter 3 entitles ‘The Song Cultures In Telugu’ deals with the song cultures in Telugu language and the famous oral poets and poem-songs composed by Annamayya, Vemana and others. It also describes the distinction between the oral-poem or poem-songs and a written poem. The chapter gives a description about the poetic revolutions in Telugu language such as Purana, Prabandha and incomplete revolutions. The chapter claims that the song cultures of Telugu language are as old as the language of the Telugu land. The people of the Telugu land are associated with a different forms song cultures. In every art form of Telugu culture the song plays a vital role. So the chapter shows how it is necessary to study the earlier forms of songs and singing to comprehend and analyze the songs in the contemporary times.
The chapter 4 titled as ‘Gaddar: The Singer Of The Masses’ wholly deals with the songs composed by the famous song poet named Gaddar in the contemporary song culture of Telangana in telugu language. The chapter consisted of a concise introduction of Gaddar’s personal and educational life. It also tells us the important role of Peoples dance group well known in the land of Telangana as Jana Natya Mandali in bringing the songs to the people composed by song composers like Gaddar in contemporary times. It consisted of most important themes in Gaddar’s song compositions such as mourning songs, songs on women, songs against globalization and so on. I have taken good number songs to study and analyze the song composition of Gaddar. Each song I have taken into the study dissimilar from the other and give a unique idea about the diction of Gaddar, who is a composer, singer and performer in the contemporary times in Telangana.

The chapter 5 entitled ‘Gorati Venkanna: The Gaurdian Angel Of Song Cultures’ entirely deals with the songs composed by another famous song composer in the contemporary song cultures of Telangana. The chapter also gives a brief description of Venkanna’s personal and educational life. It describes the characteristics of Venkanna’s song compositions. It is consisted of a good number of famous songs composed by Venkanna on various themes such as pastoral elegies, songs on women, songs on globalization, songs on social chaos, and so on.
Chapter 6 entitled 'Translation Zone' consisted of a complete translation of a book on history of song cultures named, "Never-Ending Treasure: The History Of Peoples’ Songs" written by Gaddar in recent years. This is one of unique resources in the song cultures of the present times. The chapter helps the readers or the researcher of even a non-telugu language to understand the matchlessness of the song cultures in Telangana. The chapter describes many thought provoking issues such as how the song helps as tool of communication among the people, and the distinction between the peoples’ song and a revolutionary song. The translated material in the chapter will be helpful to the academicians who are interested to do research in the field of song cultures in future.

Chapter 7 entitled Conclusion, concludes the whole thesis emphesising the significance of the well known song poems composed by well known song composers in tamil, Kannada, Hindi and Telugu towards the end of the dissertation. The chapter, while pointing out what the dissertation det out to do, and also records its limitations and indicates the possibilities of future research on the these haunting melodies composed by the song composers and performers of the song cultures.