

Memory and the Recovery of Identity'

Living Histories and the Kalavantulu
of Coastal Andhra Pradesh

DAVESH SONEJI



Peddapuram is a town located in the east Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, about 20 km from the city of Kakinada. It is famous for its celebration of the annual festival (jatra) of the local goddess Maridamma² in the month of Jyaishta, and infamous for its rows of brothels. Today, the town of Peddapuram is known for the exceptionally high numbers of prostitutes who inhabit its streets. Many of them are *kalavantulu*. These women work in the brothels of towns like Peddapuram as the result of a complex social, political, aesthetic and cultural restructuring that began in the nineteenth century.

One of the senior-most kalavantulu living in Peddapuram is Jakkula Radha. Today Radha sells bidis (tendu-leaf cigarettes), candy, and other confectionary at a small stall outside her home. For about an hour after I met her, Radha refused to discuss her kalavantulu identity. Instead, she talked about the fact that she has converted to Christianity, because the local mission pays her Rs 60 (about \$2) per month for maintaining a Christian lifestyle.³ When she finally began to speak openly about her past, she insisted on continuing our conversation elsewhere. We helped her into our Ambassador car and started to back out of the lane on which her house

was located. Sure enough, four young men rushed out from nearby houses, and started yelling '*mundalu mundalu*' (Whores! Whores!) at us, while throwing small stones at our car.

Women like Jakkula Radha are kalavantulu, women whose identities are sometimes glossed by the generic term 'Vedasis'. The use of the Sanskrit word 'clevadasis' as an umbrella term referring to women with temple associations throughout various parts of south India, Maharashtra and Orissa, is rooted in colonial attempts to classify data on such communities (Orr, 2000; Vijaisri, 2003). But kalavantulu ('receptacles of the arts' or *kalavati* in the singular) is a self-conscious title adopted by many of these women during the vociferous anti-natuch movement in the early part of the twentieth century. They are also known throughout the Telugu-speaking parts of south India as bhogam or bhogamvallu ('embodiments of enjoyment'),⁴ a reference to their non-normative sexuality. These women see themselves primarily as artists. Though small numbers of them underwent ritual marriages to temple deities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the majority of these women were dancers and singers who performed in the public sphere. Thus, as with Tamil-speaking 'clevadasis', the kalavantulu were in many ways defined by their public performances, which were an essential sign of elite culture in nineteenth and early twentieth-century south India. Though I have chosen to retain the terms kalavantulu and bhogamvallu in this essay, the women I have worked with are often referred to as 'Andhra devadasis' or 'Telugu devadasis'.

In public, the kalavantulu oscillate in and out of sets of historical and moral discourses in which they embody a highly contested subject position. However, in their homes, they embrace fragments of the past by remembering (and in some cases re-enacting) precisely those aspects of their identity which they can no longer express or display in public. Their music and dance repertoire, extra-domestic sexuality, lack of menstrual taboo in the community, and experiences during the anti-natuch movement in the early part of the twentieth century figure prominently in these private journeys of recollection. During my fieldwork with kalavantulu communities in coastal Andhra, I have been able to observe and document some of these private journeys of recollection that take place spontaneously, often at late hours of the night amidst nostalgic longings. These plunges into the nourishing reservoirs of memory are clearly not merely 'fleeting' nor are they simply retrospective narrations.

The latter part of this essay charts these journeys, noting their status as embodied memories. They are an invaluable source for the ethnographer,

and provide us with insights that cannot be found elsewhere. I focus specifically on some of the most characteristic performance genres of the Andhra kalavantulu repertoire to examine the ways in which these acts of recollection nurture identity. These journeys of memory highlight the disjunctures between past and present. They resist attempts to erase or deny the past. In this essay, I would like to argue that identity can be produced through acts of memory, and that kalavantulu in coastal Andhra wistfully and nostalgically elaborate upon identity to affirm their subjectivity in the present.

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century coastal Andhra, the public presence of these women was visible in the form of bhogamelams ('bands' or 'troupes' of bhogam women). These troupes were, in a sense, professional guilds made of several kalavantulu women, most of whom were trained in music and dance by one community elder, who would usually be the troupe leader. These 'troupe leaders', called *nayakuralu*, led the troupe in the sense of procuring and negotiating performance contracts, and also by playing the *talam* or cymbals during the performance. These melams performed during temple processions, known as *uregimpu*, and at private soirees hosted by landowning communities. The term melam, in fact, is also used in a verbal sense. Kalavantulu dance was also called 'melam' and 'doing melam' is the common way in which many kalavantulu refer to the practice of their art. By the early twentieth century, there was no distinction in the repertoire performed in both of these sites. The concert repertoire was performed both during temple processions and in private salon settings. Unlike in many parts of Tamil Nadu, after the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act of 1947 was passed, salon performances of bhogamelams continued in coastal Andhra, as these did not seem to interfere with the prohibition on 'temple dancing' as described by the Act. However, on 14 August 1956, the Andhra government carried out a final amendment to the Act, which outlawed dancing at marriages and other private social events as well.

What then happened to the bhogamelam? Did it simply disappear after 1956, and is kalavantulu performance culture in south India really dead? Today, bhogamelams still take place, but behind closed doors. They have gone 'underground'—that is to say that they have only found a safe haven inside the homes of the women themselves. Today there is no audience, but this is not a criterion for performance. The functions of melam performances are no longer aesthetic, they are mnemonic. The melams have become part of the interior world—they have moved from the realm of public spectacle into the realm of nostalgia and memory.

CONTEXTS FOR KALAVANTULA
PERFORMANCE IN TELUGU-SPEAKING
SOUTH INDIA

In late nineteenth and early twentieth-century south India, kalavantulu in coastal Andhra performed in three contexts: the temple, the court, and the private home of a patron. The temple performances could be further subdivided according to the sites where performance took place: the temple sanctum, the temple pavilion (*mandapa*) and the temple procession.

Table 9.1 represents the nature of kalavantula performance culture in eastern Andhra Pradesh. Performances took place at three sites: (1) the temple, where performance was referred to as *gudi seva* (temple service); (2) the royal court, where the performance was called 'concert' (*kacheri*) and (3) the homes of feudal landlords or other wealthy patrons, where the performance was called *mejuvani* or *mezuvani*, from the Urdu word *mezban*, meaning 'host of a feast' or 'landlord'. As we shall see, the actual repertoire performed at these sites however, was fluid; in the late nineteenth century, the courtly repertoire was performed in all three contexts.

Table 9.1: Contexts for Kalavantula Performance
in Nineteenth-century Andhra

troupe (bhagamelam)		
temple a) sanctum ritual (<i>gudi seva</i>)	court <i>kacheri</i>	zamindaris/private homes <i>mejuvani</i>
b) procession ritual/entertainment (<i>uregimpu</i>)		
c) <i>mandapa/pandal</i> entertainment (<i>kalapam</i>)		

THE TEMPLE CONTEXT (*Gum Seva*)

In the temple context, ritual dance that complemented or mirrored the ritual sequence of events inside the temple sanctum (*garbha-griha*) was

perhaps the least widespread of all the traditions. By early twentieth century, kalavantula participation in daily temple ritual had been severely curtailed on account of colonial critiques and the reform movement. However, the *uregimpu melam*, or dancing with the deity as it was taken on procession, was common, even among women in the community who had not been dedicated to deities. The processional performances consisted of a random selection of songs and dances taken from the *kacheri* or concert repertoire that would be performed for the enjoyment of both the deity and devotees, when the deity would periodically stop for 'breaks' enroute.

The *bhagavatam* or *kalapam* consisted of the rendering of night-long performances about the archetypal female characters Satyabhama, a wife of the god Krishna (called *Bhamakalapam*) and Gollabhama, an intellectual milkmaid (called *Gollakalapam*). These types of performances borrowed technique and other conventions from the temple and court repertoire, and were performed on temporary, makeshift open-air structures called *pandals*, usually set up inside the *mandapas* (pavilions) of temple complexes. The *bhagavatam* was essentially thought of as a dramatic idiom (*natakamu*).⁵ These types of open, public performances helped generate income for the temple. *Bhagavatam*, which could be classified as 'popular entertainment', attracted pilgrims from around the Godavari Delta region, who would come to temples such as the Madanagopalasvami temple in Ballipadu and the Satyanarayanavami temple in Annavaram specifically to watch them. The *kalapam* as both a literary and performance genre was also very closely connected to the culture of the literati. *Kalapam* texts were composed by oicommisioned from upper-caste (usually *smarta Brahmin*) poets by the kalavantulu.⁶ In many cases, these men would analyse the meaning of the poetry with the woman and make suggestions as to how it should be interpreted through *abhinaya*. Most kalavantula *bhagavatam* texts are divided into smaller sections or episodes called *pattu* ('acts'). Often, a full evening would be dedicated to the performance of only one or two *pattus* of the full text, which would be performed over a span of many nights.

THE COURT CONTEXT (*KACHERI*)

The most common feature of kalavantula performance culture was the concert repertoire called *kacheri*. The courtly repertoire as we encounter it in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century builds largely upon the Thanjavur repertoire as it developed under Maratha patronage in nineteenth-century Tamil Nadu. By the late nineteenth century, the Andhra

kalavantulu were performing some of the genres that had been systematized by the Thanjavur Quartet (four dance-masters whose ancestors had been serving in the court since the seventeenth century)⁷ in Tamil Nadu, such as the *shabdham*, *varnam*, *padam*, *javali*, and *tillana*. In addition, they performed genres such as the *pallavi*⁸ that were specific to their communities. The padams or erotic poems of the seventeenth-century composer Kshetraya⁹ were also an integral part of kalavantula public performances, especially in the court and home contexts.

In the Maratha-period Thanjavur court, the practice of dance—particularly the court traditions, known variously as *melam* ('band'), *sadir* or *chaduru* ('performed in public')—had been fostered and transformed with great care. For our purposes, it is important to know that the cultural transformations ushered in by the Thanjavur court reverberated throughout much of south India, including the coastal Andhra region. In fieldwork with kalavantulu in coastal Andhra in 2002, I observed that many of the compositions, particularly those in the genres known as *varnam* and *salam-daru*, had been taken directly from the Thanjavur court. For example, the Telugu *varnams* "composed by the Thanjavur Quartet in praise of the Maratha rulers, as well as 'salutation' songs" on the kings Pratapasimha (r. 1740-63) and Serfoji II (r. 1798-1832),¹² seem to have been regularly performed by the women and their ancestors, even in the nineteenth century. The Thanjavur court dance of nineteenth century south India has a long and complex socio-artistic history that dates back to the seventeenth century. It was also a hybrid dance culture that brought together aspects of indigenous Tamil culture, the new Maratha culture from the northern Deccan, Telugu literary practice, and eventually colonial modernity.

HOME PERFORMANCES (MEJUVANI)

In the early twentieth century, kalavantulu in Telugu-speaking south India performed largely in the salons of zamindars and other influential individuals. The woman and her troupe (*melam*) would receive an obligatory fee or 'gifts' (*osalgulu*) for their performances in this context. Here, the singing and dancing of compositions called padams, javalis, and other popular compositions (Fig. 9.1) constructed the public persona of the bhogam woman. Bhogamelams could be called upon to perform inside the homes of patrons on two occasions: (1) as part of a lifecycle (*samskara*) celebration such as a birth or wedding; and (2) as part an evening of entertainment for guests (*mejuvani*) in a .salon setting. Salon performances in the homes of wealthy zamindars are significant—the salon is the last context



Fig. 9.1: Subbulakshmi performs a popular song during *mejuvani*, Muramanda village. Courtesy Davesh Soneji

in which the kalavantula women claim to have had a public identity. With the collapse of the zamindari patronage in south India in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this type of salon performance shifted to the homes of other wealthy persons.

Until recently, the presence of bhogamelams at weddings was extremely important and a clear visual marker of high-society weddings in the Godavari Delta. Most of the women in the Godavari Delta referred to this as *kamta*, after the *kamta* (or *kamcha*), 'metal platters' given to them by the hosts at this time. The kalavantulu would not only dance padams, javalis, and other erotic compositions at weddings but would also be involved in providing blessings to the bride in a process of symbolically transferring her powers of auspiciousness. By tying the black beads (*nallapusam*) of the

bride's *mangalasutra* or wedding necklace, the bhogam woman would ensure the longevity of the woman's husband. This was a transaction that was at once economic, social, and religious. The following, in Kotipalli Rajahamsa's words, is a brief description of a typical kamta ritual:

After the wedding ritual, large amounts of *kumkum*, fruits, sweets and a silk shawl (*pattu shalva*) would be placed on large platters (kamta). People carry the *kamtas*, and we follow them, doing melam [ie. singing and dancing] in procession to the bride's new home. When we finally reach the house, the bride and groom are seated on a cot. The hosts will ask the *nayakuralu* [troupe leader] to take one of the kamtas, and will also give her a large sum of money and several sets of new clothes. Then the mejuvani [performance of dance and music as entertainment for the guests] begins.

Only we can tie the *nallapusam* [black beads on the marriage necklace] because we are *nityapunistris* (ever auspicious women). We never [experience] widowhood. So, we tie the beads for whoever calls upon us, and bestow blessings so that they will also remain *punistris* like us.

Although many of the songs and dances performed here are taken from the court repertoire, there are certain types of compositions that are unique to such performances. A parallel tradition was present in the Tamil Nadu-Andhra border regions. Saskia Kersenboom's primary informant P. Ranganayaki from Tiruttani (Telugu, Cirutanni) mentions distinct compositions that Kersenboom calls *samskara sambandham* (related to rites-of-passage). These include compositions such as swing-songs (*unjai-pattu*), lullabies (*lali-pattu*) and marriage songs (Kersenboom, 1991, pp. 145-6). On such occasions, devadasis would also perform the ritual of waving the pot-lamp (*kumbha-harati*) to protect the family of the patron from any ill-fortune or potential negativity (*drishti-dosha*). All of these activities were also common among kalavantulu in the Godavari Delta. However, these women often use the word mejuvani (entertainment of guests) in the context of salon performances, implying that after these types of 'ritual' activities were over, a formal concert of dance would follow. Many women, for example, remember performing elaborate court compositions such as varnams and padams at these private soirees.

IMPOVERISHMENT, DISENFRANCHISEMENT, AND SEX WORK

Manikyam, Anusuya, Varahalu, Seshachalam, Maithili, and their families were formally expelled from temple service in the late 1940s. Manikyam,

the eldest of the Ballipadu women, owned over twenty acres of land and several residential properties as well as over one hundred *kasulu* of gold (one *kasu* roughly equals eight to ten grams). After 1948, this family was no longer entitled to *patram* (land ownership) from the temple. The women attempted to win back their rights through litigation but were unsuccessful. With no money, they moved to the nearby village of Duvva (about 6 km away), and formed a small melam (dance troupe). They continued to tour rural Andhra, performing mejuvani (concert repertoire as entertainment) at births, marriages, and other festive occasions. They would occasionally perform court repertoire at the Ballipadu temple in the context of the uregimpu (temple processions) but only after the temple had obtained permission from the district authorities.

The social reform movement in general and the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act of 1947 in particular, not only dislodged kalavantulu women from public culture by outlawing their art but also drove them into dire poverty. Saride Anusuya, who passed away in 2006, remembers:

We became beggars (*mushtivallu*). The *dharmakartalu* (temple trustees) took all our land. We were born for the temple, for God. We danced for God. But they took our land and made us beggars. Whatever was there is gone. Even Krishna has forsaken us! I don't want to go back into that temple.

Saride Manikyam, Anusuya's cousin, also remembers:

I remember, about 50 years ago. Suddenly the temple staff was dismantled. I had nowhere to go. I was miserable. We appealed, but fought a losing battle in the courts. The case eventually reached the high court, but with no results. Finally, I moved to Duvva, another nearby village after selling my 136 acres of property. Then, eventually I moved from there to Kapileswarapuram.

Saride Varahalu, seventy-six years old and another cousin of Manikyam, who took to performing devotional storytelling (*harikatha* or *kathakalakshepa*) outside temples after the ban, puts it this way: 'We are the sisters of [the goddess] Lakshmi, but we have been treated worse than animals!'. Saride Seshachalam, who passed away in 2006, and who was on the brink of beginning her performing career at the time of the reforms, remembers: All we did was sign a bond promising to stop even our private (home) performances after the closure of the temple services. I have nothing but one room in this small house to my name.'

What then did the social reform movement mean for kalavantulu and other female performers in rural south India? If they managed to escape

being forcibly institutionalized in 'reform homes' called Sharanalayams ('centres of refuge'),¹³ the dismantling of the economic support of the temple and the feudal kingdoms left the women in a liminal, vulnerable position. Many younger women began to dance to popular songs at public events, and, as in Tamil Nadu, many entered the film industry (Srinivasan, 1984, p. 16). Nayudu Chilakamma from Mandapeta village remembers:

The land my elder sisters owned was given by the *devasthanam* [both her sisters were dedicated to temple deities]. During [the lunar observance of] *tolikadashi*, they performed bhagavatam [BhamaKalapam] at the Gudivada temple. They also did melam. When the older people used to do melam, it was good. But then younger ones started to dance for money, and did 'record' dance (dancing to film music). The older women such as my sisters wouldn't allow these women to dance in the melam with them, so they didn't. They went into 'business' (*vritti*, sex work) instead.

Kola Somasundaram from Muramanda village (east Godavari district) who used to have her own melam (she was a *nayakuralu* [troupe leader]), remembers the threat of prosecution, and how she would pray for the success and protection of her melam in light of efforts by the police to monitor and raid melam performances:

When the Act came, I secretly took bookings for melam. If I was caught, I was arrested by the police. This happened a few times. I didn't know what to do—should I leave behind melam or not?

I remember, in those days, Vinayaka Chaturthi [Festival dedicated to the god Ganesha] was very important. Thega-ja (ankle bells), *talac* (hand cymbals), *maddala* (*mridangam*, double headed barrel drum), harmonium and *pitha-karra* (wooden board and stick used to keep rhythm) were all placed in front of Lord Ganapati. All the *sanis* (kalavantulu) from one neighbourhood (*basti*) would gather at one woman's home. We broke coconuts, performed puja and danced for Ganapati, to ensure that we had success in the future, and more importantly, to ensure that there would be no breaks or halts in our performances [because of the reform movement].

Kotipalli Haimavati, also from Muramanda, described the ways in which the *manyam* (rent and tax collection from the lands she owned) were slow to come, or sometimes never came at all because of the reform movement. Eventually her mother sold all her manyam land, and today Haimavati and her sister, Sitaramalakshmi, live in a small home in Muramanda, with no property of their own:

My mother is Kotipalli Manikyam. She told me that sometimes the manyam money would come in once a year. Until that time, they would live by borrowing money throughout the year, and clear the debt when they received the manyam. With the money they received on loan, they would sometimes have jewelry made for the performances. They danced when and where the nayakuralu told them. The nayakuralu would fetch an advance for the performance. She would divide the money as follows:

Fifteen rupees for the orchestra, ten rupees (one share or *vata*) for the melam artists, five rupees (half a share) for child-artists, and thirty rupees for the nayakuralu, who was a 'class artist' [English term used].

My mother sold the temple manyam she received so that we could eat. It was a very difficult time for us. We simply could not perform in public. My mother also had many students [Haimavati looks around the room, at Rajahamsa, Somasundaram, and Krishnaveni, all of whom were students of her mother, Kotipalli Manikyam]

Haimavati also remembers that often men would come to the melam performances led by her sister after having seen the performances of *jogins* (Dalit sex workers dedicated to the Goddess Yellamma) at funerals and expect the same from them. In her younger days, she performed snake-dances, summersaults, and other forms of entertainment for money. She explains how the requests for songs that subtly equated the identities of the kalavantulu with prostitutes became frequent. To illustrate, she sang the following song:

You've done so much, you've ruined my house, you whore
I'm shocked by all this, here and there, there and here, you whore"

The context for the song is actually a quarrel between two women who are fighting for the love of the same man. However, the invocation of the language of stigma (the words *lamja*, *damga*, and *munda*—all synonyms for 'whore') serves a reflexive function when the kalavantulu are made to perform the composition. The song continues,

You've caught [the Brahmin] by his tuft of hair and you're swinging on it, playing on it, swinging on it, playing on it. . .

The sexual overtones of the song are clear. As Haimavati explained, 'They enjoyed seeing us talk about each other in that way.' Most of these men were businessmen from the city, tax collectors, and ministers. Undoubtedly, there was an almost indisputable publicization of the kalavantulu woman's public identity as 'whore' in the post-social reform period.

Unlike in Tamil Nadu, in Andhra, opportunities for kalavantulu to teach their art to women outside the community for money were rare. In the 1930s, there was a movement to create a 'regional' dance form for Andhra, much like the newly created Tharatanatyam', which became a national symbol intimately connected with regional (Tamil) cultural identity (O'Shea, 2001). Nationalists and elite philanthropists accorded this status to a re-worked version of the smarta Brahmin male dance tradition from Kuchipudi village,^{1c} and not to the indigenous female (bhogamelam) dance of Andhra. From 1940 onward, girls came in large numbers to study from the traditional gurus from Kuchipudi village, but the bhogamelam art of Andhra remained marginalized and was not re-fashioned or re-constituted by the upper classes as the sadir dance of the Tamil Nadu devadasis was in Madras.¹⁷ According to Maddula Venkataratnam from Tatipaka village (West Godavari district) the few women who tried to start dance schools in their villages had to obtain a certificate from the police and hang the certificate in a visible spot outside their homes. The certificate legitimated the fact that they were bona fide dance teachers and were not bringing young girls into their homes for other purposes.

In a self-fulfilling prophecy, when traditional systems of patronage such as manyam were dismantled in the early twentieth century, many women indeed turned to prostitution in local brothels. As a result, kalavantulu generally were seen as prostitutes and their art, once a central aspect of cultural experience in south India, was seen as unfit for consumption by respectable people. This was also a time when the kalavantulu community in particular was targeted by various North American Christian missionary groups who sought to 'rescue' the 'fallen devadasis' of coastal Andhra. By the middle of the twentieth century, a large number of women in the kalavantulu community had converted to Christianity, because this promised them a stable monthly income as members of the new rehabilitation programmes of the missions.

DANCING DISJUNCTURES: CONTEMPORARY KALAVANTULA MELAMS AND MEMORY

In February 2002, Saride Maithili introduced me to the performance culture of the kalavantulu by singing javalis.¹⁸ It was around 11:30 pm, the height of an evening of remembering—a melam inside her own house. Spontaneously, her nephew picked up a drum (*mridangam*) and a violin

player from a few houses down was called in. Maithili began to sing a song of salutation (*salam-daru*) dedicated to the King Serfoji II of Thanjavur, and performed an interpretation of the text through gesture (*abhinaya*).

In this section, I posit that such performances are living artefacts of kalavantula performance culture. Devadasi performances in south India are indeed still alive, in spite of the fact that they are not acknowledged by society at large. I present some observations made during the melam performances at the homes of Kotipalli Haimavati and her family (in Muramanda village, in January 2002) and the Saride family (Duvva village in February 2002). For these women, performance, memory, and identity are inextricably linked. It is in the context of these spontaneous melam performances inside kalavantula homes that the most revealing socio-historical and artistic data about the women can be gathered, and where one can hear them most clearly articulate ideas about their identity.

SANIS AND SAMSARIS: BHOGAM WOMEN ARTICULATE IDEAS ABOUT WOMANHOOD

This section examines the ways that contemporary kalavantulu in coastal Andhra represent the ambivalent nature of the kalavantula lifestyle. In other words, how is it that kalavantulu articulate their identities *as women*? Two features of kalavantula womanhood described to me during my fieldwork will be addressed: (1) the relationships that kalavantulu had with (usually) upper-caste men; and (2) the lack of menstrual pollution in their community. In both cases, the kalavantulu spoke about these issues to mark themselves as being *distinct* from other women. Even if these facts are insufficient to reverse or overthrow popular constructions of themselves as 'prostitutes', such features are nevertheless effective as positive expressions of identity for individual women.

A couple of generations ago, it was not at all uncommon for upper-caste married men in south India to have relationships with female performers. Maintaining a bhogam woman as a lover, or having a second family with her, was not considered anything out of the ordinary. Women who had relationships with married men were often called the *abhimana stri* ('affectionate or desirable woman') of the upper-caste man. In various parts of south India, they were commonly known as *veshyas*. Maddula Venkataratnam explained the term *veshya* in the following manner:

Yes, we are veshyas (*memu veshyalamu*). But we are not *vyabhicharinis*. A man comes to a *veshya*, because she has culture (*sanskriti*), but a *vyabhicharini* must sell herself to a man.

The devadasi's sexuality was the nodal issue throughout the social reform movement led by Muthulakshmi Reddi in the early part of the twentieth century. As Srividya Natarajan notes, Reddi's use of the rhetoric of victimization of devadasis was dependent upon her imaging of the devadasi's sexuality as fundamentally oppressive:

Both the medical discourse of the time and the ideology of the Victorian middle class held that sexual agency was incompatible with femininity. The fact that the devadasis as a community customarily invited sexual relationships (rather than acquiesced in them, as the far more abject upper-class girl-bride was bound to do) had to be interpreted as sexual exploitation by men of the devadasis; once this was established, the *devadasis* could be saved by right-thinking people. Throughout the anti-nautch campaign, and especially in the speeches of Muthulakshmi Reddi, we have the recurrent motif of 'rescue': upper-caste, enlightened people saving the *devadasis* from priests, from patrons, from older women in their community, from disease, from sin, from themselves (Natarajan, 1997, pp. 116-17).

Contemporary kalavantulu very clearly distinguish their lifestyles from those of householders. Throughout coastal Andhra, they use the term *samsari* (from the word *samsara*, 'worldly existence') to refer to householders (*grihasthins*, that is ordinary married couples and their extended families) and the term *sani* (from the word *svamini*, female leader, wife of the Lord) to refer to themselves. The clear distinction between householder and *sani* is maintained in nearly all kalavantula households. Kalavantulu do not use the word *PELLI* (marriage), and householders do not use the word *kannerikam* (lit. 'initiation of a virgin', that is, dedication). The two spheres are consciously kept apart.

Kalavantula dedication ceremonies, usually performed at home, were often accompanied by the simultaneous commencement of training in music and dance. Maddula Ramatulasi from Tatipaka describes this process:

First the elders of the village were called. Permission had to be obtained from them. The girl goes to the temple with her guru [usually an elder woman from the community]. The puja materials are kept in front of the deity; puja is performed, and the girl begins to learn dance. Then dakshina is given to the guru.

In our community, *mokku* [votive offering of a daughter to God] was common. Sometimes, if one has asked a *mokku* from God, then one girl in the family is dedicated. That girl stays in the temple for three days and nights. Her first husband is God (*modati bharta devude*). She can be dedicated to Krishna or Yenkanna-babu [Venkateshvara], but we tie the *mangala-sutra* at home. Some people think that we give all the children. This is not true. Only one daughter can become a devadasi from one family.

Unlike the devadasis of Puri, for example, kalavantulu in coastal Andhra were less restricted in their sexual relations. Frederique Marglin mentions, for instance, the officer called *dosandhi pariccha*, whose responsibility it was to ensure that the devadasis of Puri did not have relations with males from non-water-giving castes (Marglin, 1985, p. 91).¹⁹ Because of the lack of influence of the king/zamindar in the social organization of bhogam households in Andhra, this type of highly structured, hierarchical system was absent. Restrictions on sexual relations were rare, and if at all present, were dictated by the parents of the girl. Though usually men directly asked to have sexual relationships with the women, sometimes the girl's mother and her male partner (usually the biological father of the girl) would choose the first man the girl would have relations with, in a process much like an arranged wedding. This was commonly the case in coastal Andhra by the early 1920s, when the imaging of kalavantulu as brothel-prostitutes had already crystallized, and social reform movements had made a significant impact in the region. Saride Varahalu, for example, mentioned that her father had chosen appropriate partners for her and her sisters, and that each of these men came from different class backgrounds:

Let me give you the example of my own family. We all had relations with men, but all of our men were from different communities [although we should note that these are all from elite class backgrounds]. My man was a *shaukar*, a *komati* (a *vaishya*, businessman). Anusuya had a Brahmin, Seshachalam had a *kamma* (also known as *chaudhari*, influential agricultural community) man, and Maithili had a *velama doralu* (a very wealthy landlord).

Most of the women discussed in this essay have had only one partner in their lives. In most cases, the male partners die long before the women themselves. The partner will usually leave some percentage of his wealth and/or lands for the bhogam woman and her children. If this is not the case, the bhogam woman will move back into the home of her *akka* (elder

sister). Many kalavantulu did not want children, especially those who were actively involved in performing dance and music in public. They employed indigenous forms of contraception. The standard way of expressing this was *pillalni puttativva ledu* (CI did not let children be born') and usually involved the insertion of homemade pessaries into the vagina near the cervix.

In post-social reform Andhra, *kannerikam* ceremonies (in which kalavantulu would formally take on the identity as public performer) became conflated with the *pedda-manusi samskara*, or the rite-of-passage celebrating the onset of menarche. The obvious reasons for the domestication of this public ritual relate to the legal sanctions imposed on the dedication of girls on temple premises and the subsequent ban on public performances by the kalavantulu. But in addition to this, many communities of kalavantula women simply never practiced temple dedication, and these girls would have the wedding cord tied at home by another woman from the community and lived in this 'dedicated' state, that is, a lifestyle that is defined by a non-conjugal sexuality. The majority of my informants below the age of seventy were thus not married to temple deities, but instead, had *pedda-manusi* ceremonies that functioned as the *kannerikam*.

During a conversation with Kotipalli Haimavati from Muramanda village after her mother's funeral in March 2002, I noticed that Haimavati and her half-sister Sitaramalakshmi were riot observing any kind of mourning rituals or post-mortem pollution. I asked Haimavati about *maila* ('pollution') in general. She said that her family does not observe *maila* of any sort, like many of the untouchable communities in Andhra. I later decided to ask other members of the kalavantula community in Andhra about pollution, beginning with one of the senior-most women, Maddula Venkataratnam. When asked about menstruation in the midst of a *melam* performance, she said:

We have no restrictions to go into the temple during our periods (*nzaku addu ledu*). If we have a five night-long performance and we get our period in between, we bathe and continue with our performance. We always are in possession of turmeric and *kumkum*. We do not remove it when our man dies.

Saride Anusuya, the eldest of the Saride women living in their Duvva home, confirmed Venkataratnam's answers:

We can dance during our monthly periods (*nela nela*). There is nothing wrong for us [to do this] (*maku yemi tappu ledu*).

When my research assistant asked Kotipalli Rajahamsa (aged 64, dedicated at the Someshvarasvami temple, Muramanda) the same questions, a similar response was given:

Rangamani: Do you dance when you are having your monthly periods (*nela nela*)?

Rajahamsa: There is nothing wrong for us to do this (*tappu ledu*).

Rangamani: How about when someone dies, there is pollution (*maila*) from that, do you observe that?

Rajahamsa: We have no such *maila*.

It quickly became apparent that kalavantulu in Andhra did not observe menstrual pollution. In the early twentieth century, when the social reform movement was reaching its apex, kalavantulu in coastal Andhra popularized a javali composed by Neti Subbaraya Shastri that dealt with the issue of menstrual pollution. In February of 2002, Saride Maithili sang this composition:

It's that time of the month, what can I do?

I can't even come close to you!

You useless God! You create obstacles to intercourse

For three straight days!

It's that time of month

Even on our first night, we did not make love,
though I was revelling in thoughts of union.

It's that time of month

Lord of Naupuri with a gentle-heart,

Don't have these worries in your heart,

In another two days I'll be able to give you satisfaction!

It's that time of month²

cheragu maseyemi setura

raga: kalyani, tala: rupakam

In this javali, Krishna has come to a woman asking her to make love to him. The woman is menstruating and exposes the hypocrisy of the situation—the very god who has made the rules of purity and pollution now wishes to break them at will. The woman resists and teasingly tells him that he will

have to wait until after her period of impurity is over. This javali bears a striking semblance to a Kshetravya padam, likely composed nearly three centuries earlier. In Kshetravya's padam, however, it is the heroine who has come to Krishna for sex. Krishna is apprehensive about touching her in her polluted state, and she implores him to let go of the 'false taboos' (*tappu*) that society places on menstruation:

It's true, I have my period,
but don't let that stop you.
No rules apply
to another man's wife.

I beg you to come close,
but you always have second thoughts.
All those codes were written
by men who don't know how to love.
When I come at you, wanting you,
why do you back off?
You don't have to touch my whole body.
just bend over and kiss.
No rules apply.

What if I take off my sari
and crush your chest with my breasts?
I'll be careful, except with my lips.
Here is some betel, take it
With your teeth. No one's here.
I'm watching.
No rules apply.

You don't seem to know yourself.
Why follow these false taboos?
Haven't you heard that women like it now?
It's not like every day.
You'll never forget today's joy.
*No rules apply.*²¹

(trans. Narayana Rao and Shulman, 2002, pp. 336-7)

cheragu masiyunnanu
raga: *begada, tala: chapu*

After she sang the javali *cheragu mare'* by Subbaraya Sastri, Maithili was quick to add, however, that the morality encoded in this song only applies

to samsaris (householders) and not women such as herself. 'But who among the samsaris will talk about such things?' she said. Although it is not possible to go into an elaborate analysis of the performance conventions deployed in the representation of this javali, one salient point should be noted. In the depiction of the pallavi or refrain of the song (*cheragu maseyemi setura'*), Maithili holds the *pallu* or end of her sari, as if to confront the fact of menstruation, represented by the soiled clothing. This is not some kind of a stylized, abstract, or displaced representation. It is a way of *marking difference*—the bhogam woman *can* and *will* confront this fact and elaborate upon it in public, whereas according to Maithili, the samsari will not. *They* can't talk about it, but *we* can' she noted.

The most forceful accusations made by colonial administrations and social reformers against kalavantulu in Andhra in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were that their songs and dances were 'lewd' and were somehow indices of a morally degraded lifestyle. Aspects of the dance believed to reflect this lifestyle were consciously erased from the reworked, modern form practiced under the name Tharatanatyam. In the Godavari Delta, however, several of these aspects survive. Among these was the usage of *rati-mudras*, hand-gestures that depict the various positions of sexual union (*rati-bandhas*), mirroring those described in medieval works on erotics (*Kamashastra*) such as *Ananga Ranga* and *Ratirahasyam* (Fig. 9.2).

Most women invoked the taxonomies of Kamashastra when performing padams and sometimes javalis. Terms such as *samarati* (man on top), *uparati* (woman on top, also *viparitarat 1*), and *nagabandhamu* (bodies coiled in the serpent position) were common parlance. One of the most elaborate of such performances was given by the late Maddula Venkataratnam in January of 2002. In the midst of the rich repertoire that Venkataratnam possessed was a Kshetravya padam, in the raga Mohana. In this unique padam, the heroine mocks her lover Krishna for not being able to satisfy her sexually. It is a rare example of the explicit expression of a woman's own sexual desire. The refrain (pallavi) of the padam reads:

okkasariki yilagainanoho yideti ratira
makkuva dirchara ma muvvagopala

If only one round of love-making makes you so tired,
what [kind of love] is this?
Come, fulfill my desires,
my Krishna-Muvvagopala!

In her performance, Venkataratnam sang the words *makkuva dirchara* ('come fulfill my desires') over fifty times, and provided a new hand gesture



Fig. 9.2: Maddula Janakamma performs rati-mudras to a padam, Manepalli village. Courtesy Davesh Soneji

to depict sexual union each time. 'Only we can sing and dance like this. I'm still alive so you've come to see me and hear these songs. If I die, who will come? What will happen to these songs?' Venkataratnam said after performing this padam. For Venkataratnam, her identity clearly hinges on the fact that she alone possesses the hereditary knowledge of 'these songs' which she sees as clear markers of being a bhogam woman.

A javali performed by Kotipalli Haimavati at a melam in Muramanda village makes a similar point. Composed in the early twentieth century by

an unknown author, it became one of the staple compositions performed in the salon performances hosted by landowners (zamindars). The woman would request the host to be seated, then would proceed to anoint his arms with sandalwood paste, while interpreting the text of the song. The song makes an interesting reference to the 'motorcar', an element of colonial modernity that attracted a significant amount of attention in nineteenth and twentieth century south India.

O Great Lover! I'm applying fragrant sandalpaste to your body!
Leave your doubts behind, my beloved, and come!

Don't you have any love for me? Come to look after my needs, come!
Leave your doubts behind

We can live like a pair of love-birds in our love nest, come!
Leave your doubts behind

Let's go for a spin in your Motor Car!
Leave your doubts behind

We can make a boat of jasmine flowers, and sleep in it!
Leave your doubts behind

mandara gandham idi
raga: senchurutti, tala: tishragati adi

After performing the javali, Haimavati turned to me and said 'This is how we used to dance! This is the bhogamelam! I try my best to preserve it. What do I have other than this?'

What do such private journeys of performative recollection tell us about kalavantula identity in contemporary south India? Such acts of memory may not be socially effective, but are certainly effective at the level of individual identity. They keep the matrifocal home of these women intact, they ensure that the kalavantulu remember who they are and where they have come from. Such recollections also serve the dual functions of conferring positive self-worth and allowing bhogam women to retain and express some sense of their fractured identities. In this essay, I have not sought to establish or critique 'truth claims' expressed by the women in these communities. Rather, at stake are the processes and concerns that constitute kalavantula identity and self-representation in the post-reform world of hereditary female performers. In a recent essay, Margaret Meibohm (2002, p. 61) suggests that the core questions of identity formation, 'Who am I?' and 'What do I do?' can be partially addressed through the additional

queries of 'Where have I come from?' and 'Who have I been?' For kalavantulu in Andhra today, the answers to *these* questions can only come from behinds closed doors, from what we might call 'deep memory'—a process that 'remakes the self', and reconstructs identity from scattered fragments of remembrance, knowledge and experience.

NOTES

1. Ethnographic research for this essay was carried out in 2002-3 in the east and west Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh with the support of grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute. Thanks are due to my research assistant, Voleti Rangamani for her invaluable assistance. I am indebted to Leslie Orr, Velcheru Narayana Rao, Indira Viswanathan Peterson, Lakshmi Subramanian, and B.M. Sundaram for their comments on previous versions of this essay. Hari Krishnan and Simon Reader also provided close readings and many suggestions.
2. Maridamma is generally thought to be a goddess of the lowest castes, and is worshipped primarily in the Visakhapatnam region. Her festival (*jatra*) at Peddapuram attracts thousands of worshippers, including members of the upper castes. For details on Maridamma, see Padma, 2001, pp. 135-6. One of the primary ritual activities at the Peddapuram Maridamma *jatra* is the performance of the *garagalu* dance (Tamil *karagam*, *karagattam*), wherein male and female performers dance while balancing a full pot (*garaga*, pl. *garagalu*), a symbol of the goddess, on their heads. The *garaga* is the only representation of the goddess worshipped at this time. *Garaga* dance often induces trance, and after the performance, water from the *garaga* is sprinkled on the threshold of each house in the village using *margosa* leaves, as an act of protection and purification. A similar tradition exists in the Mariyamman *jattirai* of the Cheyyur taluk (Tiruvannamalai district) in northern Tamil Nadu, where the dance is called *karagattam* and is performed by professional artists from the *kuttu* community. For details see de Bruin (1999, pp. 64-71, 96-7). Sarah Diamond's doctoral dissertation on *karagattam* links it with devadasi culture in Tamil Nadu, specifically suggesting that many disenfranchised devadasis might have opted to join *karagattam* performances after the anti-nautch movement in the early twentieth century (1999, pp. 37-40). To the best of my knowledge, kalavantulu do not take part in such performances in Andhra. However, at my request, on 11 March 2002, my research assistant Haimavati brought a Dalit female *garaga* performer to Duvva, where we were

about to videotape the Saride family's melam. This woman was an ardent devotee of Maridamma, and performed *garaga* dance to popular film songs. For details on the *garagalu* of Andhra, see Nagabhushana Sarma (1995, pp. 60-2).

3. Christian missions are still extremely active in coastal Andhra and have historically had a strong base in this region. (For details see Oddie, 1977). Kalavantula women have been the focus of many of their activities. The mission that appears to be the most prominent in the region is called 'World Missions Far Corners Inc.', an organization headquartered in Long Beach, California. Their special ministry directed toward 'clevdasi' women called 'Operation Rescue', is headed by evangelical leader S. John David, the All-Asian Field Director of the organization. When I interviewed John David in Kakinada in January 2002, I observed that he referred to the women as *mundalu* ('Whores'), and he eventually told me that the kind of sympathy that I am showing these women will 'trap them into the same evil'. But he was glad that I would 'show the world who they really are'. Upon arriving back in North America, I discovered their website, which has the following to say about 'Operation Rescue':

This 'sight seeing' tour was God's appointment—the beginning of a powerful, exciting ministry we call OPERATION RESCUE. The rescue of these women and girls was hectic and dangerous with monumental problems. Organized syndicated prostitution on this scale had muscle and power to withstand intruders as we soon learned. Operation Rescue, the first of its kind, sprang forward. A ministry of compassion with its center in Christ and the Gospel. Its design is simple—rescue fallen women and their children. By God's leading we discovered thousands more called Devadasis trapped in religious rituals such as temple prostitution, a system passed down for generations. These women are taught from birth that they are born to serve the gods for the pleasure of the temple priests and the wealthy; to serve the gods of lust for personal pleasure. These facts make harsh judgement of these women difficult. God gave answers to thorny problems. We found it amazingly simple to lead these girls to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Programs of rehabilitation and training were set up. Many New Life Centers are now in operation today, practical work shops where the needs of the whole man are met body, soul and spirit and venereal disease stamped out with full emphasis on the spiritual. Thousands of Devadasi women have accepted Jesus Christ, fled slavery of prostitution and are now in one of the many New Life Centers having their dreams fulfilled. More than five hundred have married and moved to other villages with their children, new creatures in Christ, trained and equipped to take their place in society. No longer are they outcasts of

society. They have regained their dignity and respect! (<http://www.worldmissionsfarcomers.com/or.htm>) Accessed 2 July 2007.

The ministry works with both jogins (from the Telangana region) and kalavantulu and does not recognize differences between the two groups. In terms of maintaining a Christian lifestyle, most kalavantulu who have joined the 'Operation Rescue' programme clearly have done so for the economic stability it offers them by providing Rs 60 per month. Most households, for example, keep an image of Christ in their domestic *puja* (worship) spaces, next to images of Venkateshvara, Shiva, and Durga. As Kotipalli Haimavati told me using the English word 'duty', worshipping the image of Christ is 'our *duty*'. The use of the English word here is indicative of Haimavati's perception of 'acting Christian'. Only in the home of Kola Subrahmanyam in Bommaru, a suburb of Rajahmundry, did I observe Subrahmanyam, a senior kalavanti, dressed in white, with only images of Christ on her household altar. Interestingly, her own daughters have not adopted a Christian lifestyle, even though their home is one of the principle 'headquarters' for the distribution of the Rs 60 monthly allowances for kalavantulu in the east Godavari district. Her daughters regularly perform 'record' dance, a kind of titillating dance to the accompaniment of Telugu and Hindi film songs.

4. Telugu literary scholar Arudra insisted that this word comes from the Sanskrit *bhagini*, meaning 'lady of enjoyment' (Arudra, 1990; 1995). The Sanskrit word *bhagini* is also found in classical Telugu literary contexts. For example, to the poet Bammera Potana (1450-1510) who wrote the Telugu Purana called *Mahabagavatamu*, is also attributed the composition of a poem called *Bhagini Dandakam*, which he is to have composed in praise of the lover of a local king named Sarvajna Singama Nayudu.
5. Devadasi involvement in 'dramas' was fairly common in Tamil Nadu in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, many disenfranchised devadasis in Tamil Nadu founded or joined drama companies who performed either Kattaikkuttu or 'Special Natakam'. DeBruin cites rural devadasi troupes who performed dramas such as Pavalakkodi, Valli Tirumanam, Alli Arjunan, Shurpanakai Bhangam, Sita Kalyanam, Nalayani Charittiram, Nala Damayanti, Satyavan Savitri, Padukai Pattabhisekam and Vellalarajan Charittiram in the Kattaikkuttu idiom (deBruin, 1999, p. 101).
6. For example, the famous poet of the Godavari Delta, Gaddam Subbarayudu Shastri (d. 1940) composed individual *Bhamakalapam* librettos for fourteen kalavantulu in the east Godavari region, including the famed Maddula Lakshminarayana and Maddula Venkataratnam. Atkuri Subbaravu, a contemporary of Shastri, composed similar librettos for the kalavantulu of the famous Annabhatula family of Mummidivaram.

7. The Thanjavur Brothers (Tamil, *tanjai* nalvar)—Chinnaiya (1802-56), Ponnaiya (1804-64), Sivanandam (1808-63) and Vadivel (1810-47)—descended from a clan of musicians who were patronized by the Nayaka and Maratha courts. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Thanjavur Quartet systematized the court dance traditions of Thanjavur, including both repertoire and the abstract dance technique represented by units of movement called *adavus*. Building on the already existing genres such as the padams of Kshetrappa, the Thanjavur Brothers created a systematized format for the hitherto diffused and somewhat random presentation of court (or 'concert') dance. Their re-visioning of the court repertoire consisted of seven primary genres: alarippu, jatisvaram, shabdham, varnam, padam, javali, and tillana. The ethos of this repertoire, like that of the padams of Kshetrappa, situated itself very much within the ethos of bhoga (pleasure, enjoyment), with the primary agent in the narratives being the dancing woman herself. The brothers were initially patronized by King Serfoji II, and later moved on to serve in the courts of Travancore and Mysore. For details, see Krishnan (this volume).
8. The pallavi (lit. 'sprout') is a *nritta* or abstract dance composition that usually does not contain text (*sahitya*). In the pallavi one line of music is repeated over and over again, and the dancer performs specific sets of 'choreographed' movement. There are three types of pallavi found in the living performance traditions: (1) *svara*-pallavi; (2) *shabda* pallavi; and (3) *sahitya*pallavi. The first of these is the most common, and consists of a line of *svaras* (solfa syllables or notes). In the *shabda* pallavi, the *svaras* are replaced by a line of *cholkattu* or *shabdalu* (rhythmic syllables), and in the rare *sahitya* pallavi, there is one line of text (*sahitya*). I have also heard from some informants that pallavis used to be performed doing the *balabhoga* or morning meal offering to the deity in the temple context in the early part of the twentieth century.
9. One of the finest English translations of selections of Kshetrappa's poetry is found in Ramanujan, Narayana Rao, and Shulman, 1994.
10. The *varnam* or *padavarnam* is a music genre that figures prominently in the devadasi dance repertoire in present-day Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Kerala. The Thanjavur Brothers composed several *padavarnams* for dance, usually addressed to localized deities such as Shiva-Brihadishvara of Thanjavur or Krishna-Rajagopala of Mannargudi, or to kings and landowners (*zamindars*). The kalavantulu usually recognize a set of five major *varnams* (*pedda-varnalu*) which include compositions by the Quartet. Among these is *varnam* in the Raga *Bhairavi*, which is well-known in its Tamil version, beginning with the words *mohamana enmidil* (filled with the intoxication [of love] . .). This composition, dedicated to the god Shiva in his local form of Tyagaraja in the city of Tiruvarur, forms the subject

of Saskia Kersenboom's study, *Word, Sound, Image: The Life of a Tamil Text* (1995). However, in coastal Andhra, I found that the Telugu version of this song (beginning with the words *ni sati dora*), dedicated to the King Serfoji II, is still very much a part of the remembered performance culture of the kalavantulu.

11. These are the *salam-darus*, also called *tala-cholkattu* or *shabdham*. Usually addressed to a king of a local deity, they involve the recitation of rhythmic utterances (*cholkattu*) and epithets of the hero. They usually end with Urdu words like *salam* or *shabash* ('well done!' or 'bravo!'). For details, see N. Visvanathan's Tamil work (1985), *Sabdham alias Tala Solkattu of Bharatam Kasinathakavi, King Sahaji and Bharatam Narana Kavi*.
12. King Serfoji II is said to have been the author (but more likely the patron) of a cluster of Marathi texts for dance called *nirupana* in the Marathi language that presented a series of new dance genres such as *sherva*, *tarana*, and *triputa* along with existing genres such as *varnam*, *abhinaya pada*, and *shabda*, couched in the context of a linear narrative presentation similar to the Telugu *yakshagana* court-dramas of the Nayaka and early Maratha periods. These were written down in the form of Marathi texts referred to by their Tamil name, *korvai* ('links' or 'chain'). Details on the evolution of these genres are found in Krishnan (this volume).
13. These 'rehabilitation centres' existed for over a decade in cities such as Madras, Guntur, and Narsapur. For example, in 1922, the earliest such institution, the Hindu Yuvati Saranalam, was built. As a 'rehabilitation centre' set up for devadasis, the Hindu Yuvati Saranalam saw to the 'moral, vocational and literary instruction of the inmates to wean them away from their traditional lives ... the vocational part of the instruction consisted of spinning, weaving, basket-making and gardening.' Although these institutions have not received much attention from scholars, it is the memories of these institutions that are still recounted by many contemporary devadasis, particularly those from the coastal Andhra region. For details see Soneji, 2004a, 120f1
14. The first two lines of the song run as follows:
*emto jesinave elamadi kompamapitivi, o lamjamunda
amtaku vintaye viramari emtaku emtauno, o damgamunda*
15. *vadi pilaka pattukoni uyalalo, marl jhampalalo, marl uyalalo . . .*
16. For details on the history, content and technique of the dance traditions at Kuchipudi village, see Arudra, 1994; Jonnalagadda, 1996; and Soneji, 2004a, pp. 167-70.
17. In 1972, Nataraja Ramakrishna, a dance-teacher in Hyderabad held an *abhinaya sadas* (gathering of abhinaya artists) and brought many kalavantulu together in Hyderabad for the first time after the Anti-Devadasi Act had

- been passed. He urged the women to come forth to teach his own students. He aided many of them financially, including Saride Manikyam. Together with many kalavantulu, he coined a syllabus for teaching the art of the coastal Andhra bhogamelam tradition, which he christened 'Andhra Natyam', modeled after the name given to the re-worked form of the devadasi art from further south, Bharatanatyam. From 1993-4, Swapnasundari, an upper-caste woman who was one of the nation's most famous dancers, embarked on a project that contested Nataraja Ramakrishna's codification of the bhogamelam art. She studied dance and music repertoire under several kalavantulu, including the Saride women of Ballipadu, and named her version of the Andhra kalavantula art 'Vilasini Natyam'.
18. The javali is a Telugu literary and performance genre created in the early nineteenth century. Though many scholars claim that the genre is of Kannada origin, by the late nineteenth century, it had become an almost completely Telugu-language genre. The earliest surviving javali is in Telugu, and is attributed to Vadivel of the Thanjavur Quartet (1810-47) or sometimes his patron, Svati Tirunal (1813-46). The structure of the javali is likely modeled after that of the older Telugu music genre known as *padam*, with the three sections *pallavi*, *anupallavi* and *charanam*. As a musical genre specifically created for use in dance, the javali came to represent devadasi dance culture as a whole, particularly in the early twentieth century. In coastal Andhra, *javalikartas* (composers) such as Vidyala Narayanasvami Nayudu of Tirupati (1875-1942) and Neti Subbaraya Shastri (c. 1880-1940?) composed javalis that became tremendously popular in this region (Arudra, 1986b). These javalis are completely unabashed in terms of their uses of and commentaries on sexuality, which raises the issue of whether or not scholars composed these songs in consultation with women from the traditional communities of performers. According to popular biographies, poets such as Narayanasvami Nayudu are said to have had intimate relationships with the devadasi women of their times.
In 1915, out of fear that this tradition was slowly disappearing because of the social reform movement, Devulapalli Viraraghava Shastri, a Brahmin poet from the Kakinada region, attempted to preserve this tradition in the form of a book, which he called *Abhinaya Svayambodhini* (Teach Yourself Abhinaya). In his preface, he notes that the kalavantula technique of textual interpretation (*abhinaya*) is fast disappearing, and that his primary aim in collecting and publishing these compositions is to document them for the benefit of future generations. The *Abhinaya Svayambodhini* provides the song-texts; underneath each word is a list of possible ways to interpret it through mimesis. An analysis of selections of the *Abhinaya Svayambodhini* is found in Krishnan (this volume).

In the somewhat disparate kalavantula performances that continued in the twentieth century, usually in salon settings, repertoire was becoming more and more limited. Javalis acquired a special status in this period, because they were more accessible to lay audiences in comparison to other longer, more technical compositions in the court repertoire such as the varnam. Indeed, by the 1930s, the javali had become the mainstay of devadasi performances throughout Andhra.

19. In Oriya, this term is *panisprusya* (water-touching) and refers to all the castes that can give water to Brahmins. It refers to the fact that the devadasis of Puri must come from families of these castes only. Untouchables and other non-water giving castes cannot become devadasis (Marglin, 1985, p. 68).
20. To my knowledge, this composition, like most of the javalis of coastal Andhra, has never been published. Therefore, the full text (*sahitya*) is fragmented and has been pieced together by Saride Maithili. Her memory of the composition is vague but nonetheless conveys much of the spirit of the text.

REFERENCES

- Arudra. 1986a. 'Javalis: Jewels of the Dance Repertoire'. *Sruti*. vols 23-23S, pp. 43-6.
- . 1986b. 'Javalis: Jewels of the Dance Repertoire II: Salvaging After the Decline and Fall'. *Sruti*. vol. 25, pp. 33-6.
- . 1994. 'Kuchipudi: The Abode of Dance'. In *1994 World Telugu Conference Souvenir*. Chennai: World Telugu Federation, pp. 236-4.
- DeBruin, Hanne M. 1999. *Kattaikkuttu: The Flexibility of a South Indian Theatre Tradition*. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.
- Diamond, Sarah. 1999. 'Karagattam: Performance and the Politics of Desire in Tamil Nadu'. PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.
- Jonnalagadda, Anuradha. 1996. 'Traditions and Innovations in Kuchipudi Dance'. PhD Dissertation, Sarojini Naidu School of Performing Arts, Fine Arts and Communication, University of Hyderabad.
- Kersenboom, Saskia. 1987. *Nityasumangali: Devadasi Tradition in South India*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- . 1991. 'The Traditional Repertoire of the Tiruttani Temple Dancers'. In Julia Leslie, ed. *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- . 1995. *Word, Sound, Image: The Life of the Tamil Text*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Marglin, Frederique-Apfel. 1985. *Wives of the God-King: The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Meibohm, Margaret. 2002. 'Past Selves and Present Others: The Ritual Construction of Identity at a Catholic Festival in India'. In Selva J. Raj and Corinne Dempsey, eds. *Popular Christianity in India: Riting Between the Lines*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Narayana Rao, Velcheru and David Shulman. 2002. *Classical Telugu Poetry: An Anthology*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Natarajan, Srividya. 1997. 'Another Stage in the Life of the Nation: Sadir, Bharatanatyam, Feminist Theory'. PhD Dissertation, Department of English, University of Hyderabad.
- Oddie, G.A. 1977. 'Christian Conversion among Non-Brahmans in Andhra Pradesh, with Special Reference to Anglican Missions and the Dornakal Diocese, c. 1900-1936'. In G.A. Oddie, ed. *Religion in South Asia: Religious Conversion and Revival Movements in South Asia in Medieval and Modern Times*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Orr, Leslie C. 2000. *Donors, Devotees, and Daughters of God: Temple Women in Medieval Tamil Nadu*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- O'Shea, Janet. 2001. 'At Home in the World: Bharata Naryam's Transnational Traditions'. PhD Dissertation, Dance History and Theory, University of California Riverside.
- Padma, Sree. 2001. 'From Village to City: Transforming Goddesses in Urban Andhra Pradesh'. In Tracy Pintchman, ed. *Seeking Mahadevi: Constructing the Identities of the Hindu Great Goddess*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Ramanujan, A.K., Velchuru Narayana Rao, and David Shulman. 1994. *When God is a Customer: Telugu Courtesan Songs by Kitetraya and Others*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sarma, Nagabhushana M. 1995. *Folk Performing Arts of Andhra Pradesh*. Hyderabad: Telugu University.
- Shastri, Devulapalli Viraraghava. 1915. *Abhinaya Svayambodhini*. Kakinada: Sarasvati Mudrakshara Shala.
- Soneji, Davesh. 2004a. 'Performing Satyabhama: Text, Context, Memory and Mimesis in Telugu-Speaking South India'. PhD Dissertation, Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University.
- . 2004b. 'Living History, Performing Memory: Devadasi Women in Telugu-Speaking South India'. *Dance Research Journal*. 36 (2), Winter.
- Srinivasan, Amrit. 1984. 'Temple "Prostitution" and Community Reform: An Examination of the Ethnographic, Historical and Textual Context of the Devadasi of Tamil Nadu, South India'. PhD Dissertation, Cambridge University.
- Vijaisri, Priyadarshini. 2003. 'Transcending the Devadasi: Reform and Patterns of Sacred Prostitution in Colonial Andhra'. In Manas Ray, ed. *Space, Sexuality and Postcolonial Cultures*. Calcutta: Centre for Studies in Social Sciences.