



Scheme for “Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India”

Form for National Inventory Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage of India

A. Name of the State

Andhra Pradesh

B. Name of the Element/Cultural Tradition (in English)

Documentation and cultural mapping of Veeragadha: A traditional folk performance

B.1. Name of the element in the language and script of the community Concerned, if applicable

Telugu

C. Name of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned (Identify clearly either of these concerned with the practice of the said element/cultural tradition)

1. Nagaraju
2. Shiva Yoga Shastri
3. J.M. Veerabhadhra swamy

D. Geographical location and range of the element/cultural tradition (Please write about the other states in which the said element/tradition is present)

Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Karnataka

E. Identification and definition of the element/cultural tradition of the India

(Write “Yes” in one or more boxes to identify the domain(s) of intangible cultural heritage manifested by the element. If you tick ‘others’, specify the domain(s) in brackets.)

- i. () oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage
- ii. () performing arts
- iii. (YES) social practices, rituals and festive events
- iv. () knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- v. () traditional craftsmanship
- vi. other(s) ()

F. Provide a brief summary description of the element that can introduce it to readers who have never seen or experienced it

Veeragadha is well known as Dance of Bravery. It is an ancient form of ritual folk performance from the state of Andhra Pradesh, associated with religious significance. The term Veera literally means brave. Thus as the name of the dance form suggests, it is the dance of the brave. It is a very old form of dance in the state of Andhra Pradesh particularly in Anantapur district that has lot of religious importance. This fascinating kind of dance form is also known as Veeranatyam (Telugu: Veera = brave and Natyam = Dance), Veerangam and Veerabhadra Nrityam. Veeragadha started as a ritual that was performed in Shaivite temples in honour of Lord Shiva. The followers of Veerabhadra are best known for performing this style of dance, in particular the Jangama and Lingayath communities of Andhra Pradesh state. Veeragadha is a dance of Veerabhadra who is the great warrior of Lord Shiva. This was performed on the occasion of remembrance of Veerabhadra. The devotees of Lord Shiva, wears Veerabhadra dress and move as a parade during rituals in the village/area. Veeragadha is performed by men in East and West Godavari, Kurnool, Anantapur, Warangal and Khammam districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. It is a story narrating performance about the Dakshya Yagna related to Lord shiva. Peculiarity of this performance is that the story teller himself dressed as Veerabhadra, the main Warrior in Dakshya Yagna.

From my research on Veeragadha it was noticed that during Sravanamasa and Maagamasa (important periods of Shaivates), during festivals of Lord Shiva and during marriages of Lingayaths and Jangamas this performance was performed. In the first stage of ceremony, Veeragadha starts with Ganesh Prayer (Fig 1) and Rudhra yaga, Jayathi yaga for the success of Veeragadha performance (Fig 2-4).

Veeragadha performance is a two days ritual performance which starts with lakshya deeposthavam. Then next day early morning Ganga puja was performed (Fig 5, 6). During Deeposthavam, the devotees of Lord Shiva light the deepas as in deepavali in the temple premises (Fig 7, 8). Performance starts with a huge plate known as "Veerabhadra Pallem" is carried from the palms to the elbows and also camphor fire, the dance goes on vigorously according to the tempo of several percussion instruments. Part of this ceremony consists of the 'Khadgalu' recital, where a Pujari brandishes a long sword representing that of Veerabhadra.

The second stage lies in holding a long consecrated pole known as Dhwaja Stamba which is marked with Vibhuti (sacred ash) and bells tied to the top.

In the third stage dancers perform "Narasam" which is a movement in which spears and tridents are pierced into their ankles, hands and tongue. The dancers are dressed with colourfull dhotis secured by waist-sashes and smeared with vibhuti all over the body. The main percussion instrument is the War-drum. There is a story about Veeragadha in the Hindu Mythology. Once Lord Shiva's wife, Sati Devi was humiliated at a function conducted by her father Daksha. This made lord Shiva angry. Out of his extreme anger lord shiva performed a vigorous dance and picked out a relic from his hair which created Veerabadhra. This is a dance of destruction. Veerabhadra destroyed 'Dakshayagna Vatika' the place where the function was held. Veeragadha initially started as a ritual that was performed in all the shaivite temples in honour of Lord Shiva. At present, the followers of Veerabhadra mostly perform this folk art.

Dressed in colorful 'Dhotis' and 'Dattis' the dancers perform Veeragadha. Musical and rhythmic instruments like Dolu, Thasha, Wardrum, Thambura and Soolam are used while the dance is being performed. To the rhythm of drumbeats, the dancers perform the dance of destruction. Long steps and dexterous hand movements are required for performing Veeragadha.

G. Who are the bearers and practitioners of the element/Cultural Traditions? Are there any specific roles or categories of persons with special

responsibilities for the practice and transmission of it? If yes, who are they and what are their responsibilities?

Veeragadha performers belong to Jangamas and Lingayaths community (Fig 9). These are devotees of Shiva. In my research it was noticed that temple priest decides the members who are going to perform Veeragadha. Presently only few members are available who are performing Veeragadha. Due to financial problems many performers are leaving this performance as it was done only once or twice in a year. The performers are not transferring to their generations also. The performer should possess a good looking appearance who has to represent Veerabhadra. These performers should be aware of Khadgas which should be chartered at the time of performance. Also special training should be taken for dance of Veeragadha. The performers learn the dance and Khadgas from their gurus. Also first they act as supporters and after getting experience one can get a chance for Veeragadha performer. Also the magical shows should be known to performers in order to attract people. The dancers put on a white traditional headgear and a bright red coloured dress. They also adorn themselves with a necklace made of Rudraksha beads, a hip-belt called rudra muke, an ornament resembling a snake and worn around the neck called Nagabharana and anklets (Fig 10-12). The dancers smear vibhooti on their foreheads, ears and eyebrows. They carry a wooden plaque of Lord Veerabhadra in their left hand and a sword in their right hand.

Performance

From my studies at Anantapur district, the veeragadha dance troupe usually consists of two, four or six members. The story of Daksha yajna is narrated by a lead singer in the troupe as the dance is being performed. First the performer do Khadga puja and Anklet puja before going to the performance as these main ornaments to the performer (Fig 13-16). One of the dancers hold a huge decorative pole called Nandikolu which has an orange flag at the top. Traditional percussion instruments and ornaments like sambal and dimmu lend music to the dance (Fig 17-25). Cymbals and shehnai and other instruments like karadi and chamala are also used (Fig 26-34). The dance also involves a ritualistic piercing of a needle across the mouth.

I also watched the performance recently from the Sneha Mahila Veeragadha Tanda group was in full form at Dakshinachitra. The troupe from Yelahanka, Bangalore, presented their traditional, vigorous dance form as part of the Dasara celebrations to a select audience, students of the Semester at Sea, the floating university that had docked in Chennai. The unique aspect about the Sneha group is that it is an all- women group performing a theatre form, which normally males perform. The Yelahanka branch of Sneha Women's Association invited professional artists from Birur to teach them the art and performed it. The group has been performing all over India and even performed in the U.S. recently.

Veeragadha, a traditional folk dance of Karnataka, encompasses human emotions. It is an expression of people's zest for life. The art form, like most, is based on a legend. It is all about the fury of Veerabhadra when he vanquished Daksha.

Legend has it that Daksha, the father of Dakshayani, bore great enmity toward his son-in-law, Shiva. He performed a Yagna, for which invitations were sent out to all the Gods and celestial beings except Shiva. Much against her husband's wishes, Dakshayani went to her father's house uninvited. Daksha insulted her and unable to bear it, Dakshayani jumped into the sacrificial fire.

The news reached Shiva, whose anger knew no bounds. And that saw the beginning of the Shiva tandava, which is believed to have created a turmoil in the world.

When a drop of Shiva's sweat fell on the earth, Veerabhadra, the terrible one was born. He marched with his ganas and attacked Daksha and destroyed him. Daksha was restored after his wife pleaded mercy. That was when Daksha realised the greatness of Shiva.

The story is retold on street by the Veerashaivas during the procession of Veerabhadra (Fig 35-39).

H. How are the knowledge and skills related to the element transmitted today?

In my observation, due to modernization and development of media, Veeragadha is losing its existence. To say frankly Veeragadha is at the end of existence due to the carelessness of the people. A serious attempt has to be done to take care of Veeragadha folk art. Otherwise we have to pay for our mistake. Also

how veeragadha was performed during rituals of Rayalaseema was mentioned. Veeragadha is the folk art of the lingaith and jangama communities. These communities only perform. So government has to take special care in helping the communities by politically.

In the observation it was noticed that there is a difference in performing veeragadha, in Rayalaseema region is similar to veeragase of karnataka also the lingaith and jangamas performing veeragadha speak kannada as it is their mother tongue.

Veeragadha in Rayalaseema consists of Khadga instead of camphe fire. The dress of priste performing veeragadha is similar to other regions. Veeragadha folk performance was performed by Jangama community. In Andhrapradesh particularly in Rayalaseema it was a famous performance during the rituals of lord Shiva. Bukkarayasamudram is a village very near to Anantapur headquarters. Here during Sravanamasam this performance was conducted every year. Bukkarayasamudram is well conserved region for veeragadha performance.

I. What social functions and cultural meanings do the element/cultural tradition have today for its community?

The Veeragadha is a ritual performance which was performed by Jangama community during the festivals in honor to Veerabadhra, the follower of lord Shiva. Veeragadha starts with the invitation of pujari. The person who performs veeragadha is well dressed with different ornaments and looks like veerabhadra, the follower of shiva pujari, along with kalasham and jyothi moves as a group to the place where the veeragadha performer was stayed then the performer along with pujari and group move to the place where water rises from the earth to perform Gangapuja (honour to water). In this prayer three to five women were decorated with flowers. In the group two persons carry the statues of veerabhadra. Here the persons in veerabadra dress pierces "shula" into the tongues, mouth of followers. It is believed that, they will be free from the worries by doing so, from Ganga puja the troupe moves to the temple of veerabadhra in between this, the movements were shown by the performer which includes different hand & leg movements were given by him to the beats of war drum (Fig 40, 41). Also pujari says some words in order to praise the great ness of veerabadhra (Fig 42-44). These are known as 'Khadgam'. Four to five members were in the group to carry dwajasthamba (Fig 45, 46). These also show movements

according to the beats of the wardrum (Fig 47). In between the ceremony, the performer of veeragadha perform some magical shows like taking fire into the mouth, lifting the pot with no support etc., these are performed to show the greatness of veerabadhra while moving long cloths were scattered in front of the performer and he allowed to walk (Fig 48). In this ceremony the jangamas and their follwers of other communities like lingayath baliya, etc. were also participated this ceremony time depends on the village where it is performing.

After coming to the temple, the performer gives Harathi to the Veerabadhra and blesses the people who participated. Here comes the end of the ceremony. This performance is ritualistic and based mainly on the performer it depends on the performance of the performer of veerabadha, because it made people to show enthusiason.

SIMILARITIES WITH OTHER FORMS

This folk performance is exclusive to Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. In Karnataka this art has assumed a different style from that of Andhra Pradesh came to be called Veeragaase is the parallel form of Veeranatyam of Kostha area of Andhra Pradesh, which is a centre of Veerashaiva Community.

The earliest Khadgalu were written in Kannada and they were translated into Telugu. The Khadgalu are Vachanas consists of verses and songs. Veeragase is ritual form performed at Karnataka state which is similar to Veeragadha of Rayalaseema. It is similar in concept as both are based on the victory of Veerabadhara. The difference is in the costumes weared by the performer. Also in Karnataka women performs Veeragadha which is very rare and is not seen elsewhere. The stories and sentiments are expressed in the performance with the sufficient certainty. Another form is Veeranatyam in which the performer carries fire instead of Khadga. This ritual folk form is seen at Northern part of Andhra Pradesh. Similar forms observed with in Andhra Pradesh are Veerabadhranrutyam, Khadganrutyam etc. All these forms are similar but Veeragadha is specific to Rayalaseema and shows similarities with Veeragaase of Karnataka and other Veeranatyam forms of Andhra Pradesh. This Veera gadha is different as the performer carries Khadga as Veeragaase and says Khadgalu which similar to Veeranatyam. But the costumes are different to Veeragaase and carries Khadga which is different to Veeranatyam. Even when in Rayalaseema Veeragadha of Kurnool district is different to Veeragadha performance of Anantapur in dressing. In

Anantapur little Kannada culture is mixed where as in Kurnool Veeragadha is based on purely Telugu culture. Veeragadha is the similar form of Veeranrutyam and Khadganrutyam.

J. Is there any part of the element that is not compatible with existing international human rights instruments or with the requirement of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, or with sustainable development? I.e. describe any aspect of the element/cultural tradition that may be unacceptable to Law of the country or may be in opposition to practicing community's harmony with others.

No such element which was not acceptable to law of country was seen in Veeragadha, as it was performed by the community who are purely vegetarians like lingayath and jangamas.

K. Your Project's contribution to ensuring visibility, awareness and encouraging dialogue related to the element/cultural tradition

From the field work knowledge and interviews of people performing Veeragadha, data will be collected about the topic. Here I used historical analytical and explanatory methodology in this study. In this region the work included research, surveillance, data collection, interviews with important and eminent personalities performing Veeragadha, popularizing the ritual performance veeragadha among the groups and conducting rituals to improve the performance Veeragadha. Also after completion of the project the entire performance style will be saved in the form of books, videos, cds, internet domains which can be accessible to everyone easily.

L. Information about the safeguarding measures that may protect or promote the element/cultural tradition

a. (Write “Yes” in one or more boxes to identify the safeguarding measures that have been and are currently being taken by the communities, groups or individuals concerned)

- i. () transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education
- ii. (YES) identification, documentation, research
- iii. () preservation, protection
- iv. () promotion, enhancement
- v. () revitalization

b. Write about the measures taken at local, state and national level by the Authorities to safeguard the element/cultural tradition?

During my research, it was found that initially Veeragadha was only a traditional folk form delivered on rituals. Gradually it changed into an art form imbibing Dance, Music and Theatre aspects and started performing in the streets. There will be no growth or development of any art form if entertainment part lacks in it. The entertainment factors influenced Veeragadha to pave its growth and development by crossing the boundary limits of the caste traditions. No proper support was given from the state or national authorities till now for Veeragadha performers. This is also one of the main reasons that Veeragadha performance is at its edge of existence.

M. Write about the threats, if any, to the element/cultural tradition related to its practice, visibility and future longevity. Give facts and relevant reasons based on the current scenario.

In Anantapur district, Veeragadha is generally performed within the limits of the caste. Each narrator of the caste should perform only in certain villages hailed to them and should not enter the other's hailed villages to perform. With time Veeragadha performers, not only crossed the limits of caste but also the boundaries of the villages. This showed the effect on the Veeragadha and diversified it by placing it in traditional performance within limits and the non traditional performance

crossing the boundaries with nomadic and wandering. In my research it was identified that Jangamas and Lingayath community didnot teach this performance to other castes. The performers available in these communities are very less due to modernisation.

N. Safeguarding measures proposed

According to my view major step has to be taken in order to survive Veeragadha is to give support in all directions particularly in Anantapur district. It is the duty of the government to make sure of performing Veeragadha of rituals. Seminars and workshop has to be conducted every year on Veeragadha so that this folk act will keep in touch with the modern times. Societies have to be formed to perform veeragadha cultural organizations should provide opportunities to participate in national and international events.

The government has to encourage both financially as well as by providing chance to perform at various occasions has to encourage the persons who are performing Veeragadha by financial deed.

Community Participation

O. Concerned community organization(s) or representative(s)

- i. **Name of the entity** performer
- ii. **Name and title of the contact person** shiva yoga shastri
- iii. **Address:** D.no: 9/2/218, Veerashaiva colony, Uravakonda (P), Anantapur (D), Andhra Pradesh 515812.
- iv. **Telephone number** 91-9395367623
- v. **E-mail**
- vi. **Other relevant information**

P. Give information of any Inventory, database or data creation centre

None

Q. Principal published references or documentation available on the element/cultural tradition

None

Signature: M.Chandra Mohan

Name & Designation: Traditional Folk Artist