

Making the everyday political: The case of jānapada geyalu [folk songs] as protest-songs in
Telangana State formation movement in India

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In this chapter, I examine protest song-performances in the context of a protest movement for the formation of Telangana state in the southern part of the Indian Republic. These are ‘folk song’ performances in a style that is indigenous to the region of Telangana and are routine for a range of social and political situations such as news announcements, festival occasions, and political mobilizations (Thirumali 2013). Here, I show how these performances incorporate and transform everyday actions and activities into protest actions. I do so through an analysis of *in situ* performances during marches, sit-ins, and other protest-related political events. Since these protest performances are also, following Feld (1984), “texted-performed” – in having a life as texts and also being occasioned in specific instances – the chapter will examine how these particular song-performances construct and constitute the protest.

Traditional music of this part of South India can be broadly classified into classical and, what can be called, ‘folk’ music. Roghair (2000 p.891) argues that the term ‘folk’ music is not ‘endogenous’ to this region and that it is common to refer to these musical practices as ‘jānapada geyalu/geetalu’, which derives from the terms ‘jāna’ – people, ‘pada’ – ways/practices, and ‘geyalu/geetalu’ – music/songs: ‘songs in the ways of people’ (also see: Sadanandam 2008). In other words, these musical practices are intertwined with peoples’ ‘everyday’ practices and actions. Throughout this chapter I will use the term ‘folk’ music or musical practices to refer to song-performances that are my focus.

The distinctions between ‘classical’ and ‘folk’ musical practices are circumferentially involved in the protest events being examined here. First, folk music practices are in the oral tradition and involve sounds of daily life such as those of agricultural and field work tools or livestock, and, deal with work and religious rituals (Roghair 2000). Second, classical music is routinely intertwined with the linguistic practices of Sanskrit, which was a language of the elites (Anand 2009), and associated with ‘classical’ epics or standardized religious practices ordained by those in socially powerful castes¹ (Sadanandam 2008). Folk musical practices however are divorced from the language of Sanskrit, and, are in languages or language forms spoken by those who are not elites and are rarely from socially powerful castes. Their religious practices are also different in involving different gods, religious affiliations, and rituals (Säävälä, 2001). Third, while the oral narration of mythologies, historical events, and

heroic tales is common to both classical and folk musical practices, in the folk musical tradition the narrations are different either in content or form to those in the classical music tradition (Beck 2000). Folk music practices then are closer to people's lives. Indeed, these music practices are functional in constituting religious, festive, and other practices (Roghair 2000, Sadanandam 2008). Perhaps for these reasons folk music practices are routinely involved in protest movements.

Examining earlier peasant movements against the then feudal practices between 1946 and 1951 in Telangana region, Dhanaraju (2012) shows the central involvement of various forms of folk art in these movements. He argues that folk music and popular songs², such as religious and devotional songs, romantic songs, and lullabies were imbued with or transformed into political messages in these movements. Dhanaraju claims that one reason for this is that these forms of folk music involve routine aspects of people's lives and so were available for mobilization in the times of political instability. Dhanaraju (2014) ascribes this to features of the social context, such as those of pervasive illiteracy and poorer conditions for many due to the then ongoing feudal practices. He argues that the everyday-embeddedness of these musical practices, such as their involvement in work rituals, religious and social activities, and even personal or familial activities, was one reason why folk art including musical practices was a vehicle for expressing and addressing people's concerns.

While music and musical practices can be examined for their relations with political actions, the forms and properties of these relations have received diverse treatment from researchers. Some researchers examine how song structure reflects aspects of social structure (Lomax 1962) or that, songs and musical practices maintain social structure and organisation (Feld 1984). Other researchers treat music and musical practices themselves as specific instances of social action (Small 1998). On the latter approach, musical practices are examined for their *in situ* uses that are not necessarily linked to forms of social structure or organisation. Small (1998) argues for treating music as doing actions just as words may be used to perform actions (Austin 1962). This "musicking" is defined as "[T]o music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance" (Small 1998: 12). A central claim in this argument is the shift from focusing on music as representing or expressing some content to considering it as doing things and accomplishing social action in its own right. Rather than ascribing unique properties such as those of bringing people together (McNeill 1995), this approach foregrounds how the production and consumption of music work to construct, promote, and maintain particular forms of social organisation such as class (Small 1998) or race/ethnicity (Roy 2004).

What this means for protest songs and musical practices is that, protest is accomplished in and through these practices. For instance, researchers show how musicking embeds either mundane activities, such as running and exercising, or, political events such as protests (DeNora 2002). Hagen (2011) shows how in the late 1970s and 80s Czechoslovakia, mundane musicking activities such as listening to Compact Discs or Limited Play records allowed for doing resistance against the ongoing hegemonic culture. Likewise Paretskaya (2015) illustrates how a particular protest group for democratic citizens' rights in Wisconsin, United States of America employ music in their protest. She particularly draws attention to how their protest music embeds activities of seeking rights' redressals. Protest music can then be thought of as a performance that accomplishes various protest-related actions.

For current purposes this means that protest song-performances are both embedded in particular socio-political context and also that, as these afford the accomplishment of particular social actions, they constitute and construct contexts. The broader socio-political context here is the social movement for the formation of Telangana State in India.

State formation: A historical and socio-political contextualisation

Telangana State was officially founded on June 2, 2014 with Hyderabad as its capital. State formation in independent India involved amalgamation and division of erstwhile governed geo-political entities into states based on aspects of regionalism or regional identity (Forrester 1970), access to resources such as water (Celio, Scott, and Giordano 2010), and linguistic identities (Suri 2002). Telangana region was part of Hyderabad Princely State under the rule of Nizams³ until 1948, when it was annexed into the Union of India via political and military means, usually referred to as 'police action' (Seshadri 1970). From 1956 until 2014, this region was part of Andhra Pradesh (AP).

Andhra Pradesh was formed on November 1, 1956, which included areas under Madras Presidency and Telangana regions of the Hyderabad Princely State⁴ to include peoples who primarily spoke Telugu. A prominent feature of this amalgamation was ensuring that the people of Telangana were accorded appropriate political representation, administrative control, and access to guarantees in education and public sector employment (Ram Reddy and Sharma 1979)⁵. However, several of these assurances were voided in subsequent years leading to certain highly visible problems for the people of Telangana (Acharya 1979). While demands for rights and access, against feudal oppression, were ongoing since before the formation of the Indian Republic, the demands for a distinct state only started in 1969 (Ram 2007). In opposition to diverse issues, that are discussed alongside

protest song-performances below, agitation and protests for the formation of Telangana State intensified under the political banner of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) from 2009 (Hindu 2014). After several months of protests, the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Bill was approved by the President of India making Telangana the 29th state in the Indian Republic in March 2014 and it was officially founded on June 2, 2014. Here I examine song-performances in settings where folk musical practices attended to demands for the formation of Telangana State.

Sampling Methods and Analysis Procedures

I examine video recordings of protest song-performances during the protests for the formation of Telangana State. The performances were accessed from the video-hosting site YouTube^{®6} using the following search terms: “Telangana”, “udhyamam” [protest], “songs”, “paata” [song] and with any of these terms “Gaddar”, “Goreti”, and “Vimalakka”, for the period between January 2009 and January 2014, as the protests intensified during this period. The latter set of terms is names of well-known poets and singers associated with the protest movement⁷. While the search yielded several ‘hits’, selection criteria such as ensuring, where possible, that these were indeed live performance recordings in protest situations such as gatherings, sit-ins, and, marches, were applied to first 200 videos. This procedure yielded a final sample of eighty-six videos of varying lengths. A random sampling procedure was operationalised to select one-third (24) of these recordings. From those selected the video-recordings were further assessed for their clarity, content, and contextual fit. Particular sections of the videos were then transcribed using the Jeffersonian Lite (Jefferson 2004) system of transcription. The video-transcripts in Telugu were translated into English and a sample of these was ratified by a professional English-Telugu translator for accuracy and in order to retain the sense of descriptions. Select parts, which attended to the doing of protest and the concerns of those involved in protest, were chosen for a detailed analysis using the procedure outlined below⁸.

I analysed song-performances as texts and performances, in that, my focus was on the sorts of social actions accomplished. I employed techniques of discourse analysis (McKinlay and McVittie 2008), which allow for an explication of social action through treating discourse, in the form of talk or text, as a topic of study in its own right. Discourse analysts examine how people use discourse to construct various versions of actions, events, and people, in accomplishing social action. Therefore social actions are examined from the perspectives of people themselves than from that of the researcher⁹.

My analysis of the video-transcripts examined these as accomplishing ‘protest-related actions’ through the perspectives of what the singer-performers and audience members or chorus were accomplishing. I examined how these song-performances construct particular events as related to the claims and demands of the protest, how actions and activities were constructed and legitimized, and, how the outcomes of the protest were managed. In this way, I treated the song-performances as “live” actions that attend to the concerns of the song-performers, fellow protest-participants, and other audiences (Roy 2010, Small 1998). However I treated the video-recordings as stable reproductions of the song-performance and, at this stage, did not interrogate the production of the song-performance as a particular kind of song-performance, through video editing and other procedures.

Song-performances in the protest movement for Telangana state formation

I now examine four song-performances for the ways in which they accomplished protest. These four examples were chosen to show how prominent features of the demands for statehood and the protest movement were incorporated in routine song-performances.

In the first of these, protest-singer Gaddar, treats people of Telangana as in distress and therefore in need of help. This appeal is made to Mother Telangana. In this way, the performance is situated in practice of deification of Telangana. Pingle (2011) documents issues in agriculture and water allocation in Telangana. He shows that while the two main rivers in the region, Godavari and Krishna, flow through Telangana and other regions of AP, and 68% of the catchment area is in Telangana, it only gets 10-11% of the water because of how dams and canals were constructed (Celio et al 2010). This problem is compounded by the fact that irrigation through other means is very expensive. Nag (2011) correlates this factor with increasing numbers of farmer suicides in Telangana. Between 1985 and 2005 for example, 68% of those who had committed suicides in the united AP were from Telangana.

In this and other song-performances discussed here the video-transcripts are shown first in Telugu, then in their English translation (in *italics*). This particular song was performed at a sit-in in 2009 at what appears to be an educational institution.

Song-performance 1

- 1 Gaddar talli neeku andanaalu talli vandanaale ma yamma Telangana
greetings Mother greetings to you Mother Telangana
- 2 Chorus ((with rhythmic claps)) talli neeku andanaalu talli vandanaale ma yamma

Protest through jānapada geyalu in Telangana

- 3 Telangana
- 4 Gaddar godaavari talli kollu [mani] [edsi]naadi
- 5 Unseen [hai] [hai hai]
- Mother Godavari sobs*
- 6 Chorus godavaari talli kollu mani edsinaadi
- 7 Gaaddar krishnama talli chuudu kanniillu ralchinaadi
- Mother Krishna is in tears*
- 8 Chorus krishnama talli chuudu kanniillu ralchinaadi
- 9 Gaddar singaareni talli sinaapoyiii naadi
- Mother Singareni is shrivelled*
- 10 Chorus singaareni talli sinaapoyiinaadi
- 11 Gaddar six ten GO chuudu zero ayiinaadi
- 610 GO has become null*
- 12 Chorus six ten GO chuudu zero ayiinaadi
- 13 Gaddar kaniillu tappa maakem migilinaaye ma yamma Telangana
- Mother Telangana we have nothing left but tears*
- 14 Chorus kaniillu tappa maakem migilinaaye ma yamma Telangana

This song-performance involves the lead singer-protestor Gaddar and others who variously join-in, denoted here as “chorus”. The chorus engages in rhythmic clapping, shouts at certain moments, and verbatim repetitions of the lines sung by Gaddar. Song-performances in the folk tradition routinely have a ‘lead’ singer and a few follow-up singers who repeat specific parts of the song (Thirumali 2013) [other structural aspects of collective song-performance are being developed elsewhere]. The present song-performance is framed as celebrating Telangana as a deity (lines 1-2) and treats this as the focus of concern. This constructs the song-performance as situated in routine settings where regions and regional deities are celebrated (Blackburn 1986).

Gaddar also invokes other deities, such as the Godavari and Krishna rivers and the coal mining region Singareni, all of which are geographically situated in Telangana. In presenting these latter as in distress, through descriptors such as sobbing, being in tears, or being shrivelled, Gaddar constructs Telangana region distressed. This offers the inference that for people of Telangana their routine occupations of farming or mining coal are under threat. Alongside this, Gaddar offers similar implications for those pursuing other forms of occupation, such as those in public sector. This is done through the last item that refers to

contemporary policy issues: ‘six ten GO chuudu zero ayiinaadi’. Government Order 610 was passed in 1985 with an aim of ensuring that those treated as “locals” in Telangana will be given priority in job allocation over those who were from other parts of united AP (Hindu 2004). In portraying this as being voided, Gaddar offers the inference that people of Telangana are in severe distress because livelihoods grounded either in routine farming and mining occupations, or in public sector employment are under threat. His appeal to Mother Telangana at line 13 then is a plea for help. In appealing to Mother Telangana, Gaddar treats these issues as possible resolvable through addressing issues for Telangana, such as its statehood.

Demands for statehood also involved claims of economic dispossession for the people of Telangana. India’s economic reforms during the early 1990s allowed for increasing private investment in its economy. This, known as economic liberalisation, had a tangible effect on the rural and urban poor, especially in areas with limited educational resources such as Telangana (Maringanti 2010)¹⁰. Traditional occupations in India are routinely taken-up along lines of hereditary membership into particular castes. The economic policy changes at national and global level have had a notable impact on the continuance of caste-based occupations (Carswell and Neve 2014). Below we see that the impact of these reforms is constructed as severely problematic. The following song-performance took place in the same setting as above with Gaddar as the lead singer.

Song-Performance 2

- 1 Gaddar pindakuudu kunda ledu
- 2 Chorus kummaroni intla putti pindakuudu kunda ledu ((with rhythmic claps))
born into a Kummara (potters) family but you don’t even own a funeral pot
- 3 Gaddar *yaaduntadi plastic bucket kunda get out*
why would you have it plastic buckets are in and earthen pots are out
- 4 Chorus hahaha
- 5 Gaddar saalonni intla putti saavubatta sutaleedu
born into a Saala (weavers) family but you don’t even own a funeral shroud
- 6 chorus saalonni intla putti saavubatta sutaleedu ((with rhythmic claps))
- 7 Gaddar *yaaduuntadi Reliance [company aa (shirt)
- 8 Chorus hahahaha]
why would you have it you have shirts being made by Reliance Company

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- *points to his own shirt in an appreciative way**
- 9 Gaddar yem manchigundi battaa aa chandana pandana bondana [brothersssu (.)
ayipoindi
- 10 Chorus hahah]
*this cloth is very good we now have Chandana pandana and Bondana
Brothers (retail manufacturing company names used ironically)*
- 11 Gaddar iga veedu battalnu eeskuntu kuukunna Sircilla saalodu aakharku uresukoni
12 chachipoyaadu*
the guy in Sircilla who used to weave has now hanged himself to death
- 13 Gaddar mangalooni intla putti burushu ledi sabbu ledi
born into a Mangala family (barbers) but you neither have a brush nor a
- 14 Chorus *shaving soap*
- 15 Gaddar mangalooni intla putti burushu ledi sabbu ledi ((with rhythmic claps))
16 *yaaduntadi mangalooda Reliance oodu mangali shop pettindu aadiki
17 poovalsina avasaram ledi computer la manam feed cheyaale this is Mr
18 Gaddar na gaddam inta poduvundi
- 19 Chorus hahaha
*why would you have it Reliance has set-up a barber shop where you don't
even need to go to the shop you just tell the computer that this is Mr Gaddar
and my beard is ye long*
- 20 Gaddar what is to be done vaadu akkada(h)nunde (h) compu(h)ter anta ii gaddam
21 kinda uudi padipothadanata*
- 22 Chorus hahaha claps
*what is to be done the company man can ((with laughter)) program the
computer and my beard just falls off*
- 23 Gaddar ha ahhh
- 24 Gaddar goundloni intla putti lotti ledi chettu ledi
- 25 Chorus goundloni intla putti lotti ledi chettu ledi ((with rhythmic claps))
*born into a Gound's (palm-wine makers) family but you neither have an wine
pot nor a palm tree*
- 26 Gaddar *aree Devendar Goudi yaadunnav ra nuvvu*
O Devender Goud where are you mister
- 27 Chorus hahaha

Gaddar's performance constructs the displacement of people(s) working in traditional occupations as related to modernization, represented here by particular private manufacturers. The sense of displacement is performed through treating mundane items related to these occupations, such as earthen ware, clothing items, and, brushes and soap, as out of reach for workers in these occupations. Since these lines of occupation are fixed along castes, Gaddar's performance employs these caste-names.

In the first, at lines 1-2, Gaddar introduces concerns for someone born into a *Kummara* family, who are traditional potters. The concern is that those born into these families cannot access pots used in funeral ceremonies. Gaddar attributes this to the replacement of earthen pots with plastic pots. The second, at lines 5-12, is where Gaddar sing-performs similar concerns for those born into a *Saala* family, who are traditional weavers. Here, he shows concern for lack of access to funeral shrouds. In both these instances, Gaddar's references to funeral related items, pots and shrouds, raise issues of poverty. While other items such as pots for storing speciality foods or cloth for other ceremonies such as marriages may be normatively expected to be out of reach for a 'poor' person, his specific reference to funeral-related items treats the lack of access to these items as particularly problematic.

At lines 6-12, Gaddar introduces reasons for this, which point to the role of a particular agency, namely Reliance Industries Limited¹¹. The introduction of this is done in a comic fashion as seen in the laughter of those present. He points to his own shirt in a seemingly favourable manner to show that using products from Reliance has become routine. Alongside this particular agency, he lists other retailers such as Chandana Brothers and Bommana Brothers. Both these companies are known for their mass produced clothing outlets and are routine go-to places for many people in cities and towns in AP and Telangana. Gaddar treats these companies and multinational organisations as creating extremely problematic issues for those weavers from small towns like Sircilla (lines 11-12), such as their death. In interpolating musical performance with comic acts and storytelling, Gaddar offers a narrative that supplies explanations and understandings of the states of affairs that are sung-performed.

In the third instance at lines 13-22, Gaddar sings about the *Mangala* community, who routinely take-up the barber profession. He argues that those born into a Mangala community do not have access to mundane objects related to their work such as brush or shaving soap. His explanation for this is given a magical formulation. Gaddar describes a comic scenario where instead of a customer going to a barber shop they can avail of the online services of the

Reliance barber service. This involves informing the service provider of the length of “Mr Gaddar’s” beard and then the beard automatically falls off through some form of automated barbering service. The comic aspect of this is readily recognized by Gaddar and fellow protest-participants, which rhetorically serves to align the audience with the ongoing claims and attributions of blame (cf. t’Hart and Bos 2008).

In the last instance, at lines 23-26, Gaddar sings about the case of *Goud* peoples who are routinely associated with producing palm wine. Here he presents their concerns as directly related to their profession: not having access to wine-pots or palm trees. While no explanatory account is given for this, Gaddar appeals to a political leader for the Goud community: Devender Goud¹². This works to undermine the importance of identity-politics (Pandian, 2002), which are routinely treated as routes to emancipation for those in the oppressed castes.

This systematic formulation of music performance followed by a comic or magical narration that explains the problems for various occupational communities constructs aspects of modernization as similarly affecting people of various castes and occupational communities. Here, making relevant mundane activities and items that are associated with these occupations allows for alternative explanations for displacement, such as modernization than those along caste-based lines (cf. Vaid 2014). In this way, the everyday is made problematic (cf. Dhanaraju 2012) to offer a critique of ongoing modernization and the associated neglect of those in regions such as Telangana.

The liberalization of Indian economy and the subsequent ‘modernization’ led to the ‘information technology boom’ in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Kapur, 2002). This had a unique impact on Hyderabad, the capital of Telangana State. The already wealthier population of people from AP (Ram 2007) made significant gains during this period as they could readily access resources that further enabled employment that required skills in information technology (Maringanti 2010). Telangana state formation then involved addressing issues of their power and futures in Hyderabad.

The following song-performance happened in 2010 at an arts gathering to commemorate the birth of Komaram Bheem, a Tribal leader who fought against the Nizam rule for land and tribal rights¹³.

Song-Performance 3

1 Venkanna iddaram vidipothe bhoomi bhaddalaithunda

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- 2 *Will the earth shatter if we separate*
Chorus iddaram vidipothe bhoomi bhaddalaithunda
- 3 Venkanna indiya paakisthanole inapa kanja paduthunda
- 4 *Will there be an iron fence as between India and Pakistan*
chorus indiya paakisthanole inapa kanja paduthunda
- 5 Venkanna raavochu poovachu royyalammu kovachuu
6 *you can still freely move and sell your prawns*
chorus raavochu poovachu royyalammu kovachuu
- 7 Venkanna *nee edlabandi nee idli bandi adda jaaga neeve nilupukovachu
8 *Park our bullock cart your idli (food) cart as you like*
Venkanna aa kukatupally housing boardula haayiga nuvvu kunukochu
9 *rest comfortably in Kukatapally Housing Board Colony*
Shout [yaaaauu]
- 10 Venkanna neeku poobudhi kaakapothe
 okay if you don't feel like leaving
- 11 Venkanna yiidane vuntaanukunte
 if you wish to stay on
- 12 Venkanna yeedanunchi antaa duuram
 from here to there
- 13 Venkanna vanasthali puram annta vanya danupukovachu
 until Vanasthalipuram you can do as you please
- 14 Venkanna ma vaarasiguuda kaada
 at our Vaarasiguda
- 15 Venkanna ma moorila kampu kaada
 at our stinking gutters
- 16 Venkanna ma adda gudda basthilalla
 at our raggedy slums
- 17 Venkanna ma pashu gutta ma pashu gutta paatha basthi kaada
 at our Pashu Gutta our Pashu Gutta and old city
- 18 Venkanna ma roodla kaada neelu levu
 we don't have water at our roads
- 19 Venkanna poni vunta nani vachiinaavu
 but you came here to stay

Protest through jānapada geyalu in Telangana

- 20 Venkanna nuvvu vunte vundu kaani idda
 stay if you want but
- 21 Venkanna nee idli bandi adda jaaga neeve nilupu koovachu
 park your idli (food) cart wherever you want
- 22 Venkanna kukatipally la neevu hayi ga nuvvu kunukochu
 rest comfortably in Kukatapally
- 23 Venkanna KAani
 but
- 24 Venkanna ma ^secretaariyatu la [haayaa] ((shout and jumps))
 at our Secretariat ((shout and jumps))
- 25 Venkanna ma secretariyatu la nuvvu chakram tippina saagam
 we won't stand for your shenanigans in our Secretariat
- 26 Others pomante poovera porabok Andhra dora
 why don't you go when we say so Mr Andhra Master

Here, the singer-performer Venkanna treats the outcomes of formation of Telangana as matters of concern, through making relevant that this is a 'separation' from AP and therefore might have implications for people from AP in Hyderabad. In particular, the implications being addressed are that those from AP are expected to leave Hyderabad. At lines 1 and 3, Venkanna suggests that the separation of Telangana from AP is unproblematic by comparisons with the partition of India and Pakistan¹⁴. The use of such hyperbolic comparison readily treats this as less significant and particularly suggests that those from AP can easily move out of Telangana (line 6). In a similar fashion Venkanna describes other routine activities that those from AP can take-up, at lines 7 and 8. While this treats state formation as broadly unproblematic for those from AP, he goes onto problematize particular activities.

Venkanna treats it as implied that Telangana State formation includes the expectation that people from AP would leave. At lines 10-11, he concedes that despite this expectation, they might wish to stay and that this is unproblematic. Alongside this he offers a series of concessions (lines 8-14) to those from AP that would allow them to continue with their routine activities, such as selling food on food carts and staying in particular areas in the city. This problematic status of those from AP who wish to continue living in Hyderabad is furthered at lines 15-19 through juxtaposing disparaging descriptions of specific areas of Hyderabad, such as being unsanitary, crowded, and dispossessed, with their purported desire

to stay on in Hyderabad. Venkanna marks this stretch of the song-performance, lines 8-22, as different to earlier claims on Statehood, through changes in its performance: this is performed in his non-singing voice, is softer, and without the support of chorus. From lines 23 through 26, Venkanna indicates alternative activities that would not be conceded to those from AP, which refer to legislative or political activities taken-up in the Secretariat¹⁵. In this way, Venkanna sing-performs routine activities as notably different to legislative or political activities, with the particular implication that the latter are out of bounds for those from AP.

While the above instances of protest song-performances make the current problematic situation relevant for the people of Telangana, in the following song-performance, the singer-performer and chorus together attend to issues of what it means for protest-participants to participate in the protests. It deals with the outcomes for themselves and their kin. Various estimates put the numbers of protestors who had committed suicides between 19 to 200 (Polgreen and Kumar 2010). The song-performance analysed next comes from a meeting to commemorate protestors who had lost their lives in the Telangana agitations on February 26, 2010 at an educational institute in Karimnagar, Telangana. The main singer-performer Padmavathi is joined by her band on the stage as chorus¹⁶.

Song-performance 4

- 1 Padmavathi mee tyaagala telangana jhandaa ethukunnavo vidyaarathi veerulaara
you raise the Telangana banner of your sacrifice O brave students
- 2 Padmavathi jagadamaaduthunnavo vidhyaarathi shuurulaara
you're taking on a big battle O warrior students
- 3 Chorus mee tyaagala telangana jhandaa ethukunnavo vidyaarathi veerulaara
- 4 Chorus jagadamaaduthunnavo vidhyaarathi shuurulaara
- 5 Padmavathi aluku salli mugguuu pedithe sukkalai suusi nattu
as at dawn when the clean porches are looked upon by morning stars
- 6 Padmavathi musurukunna mabbu karigi sinukulai raali nattu
as at dawn mist forms and falls-off as drops
- 7 Padmavathi panta cheenu kaapu kaasi inti kundaludikiinattu
as when after overseeing a full yield crop cooking pot overflows
- 8 Padmavathi sadhi tini potaraa vidyaarathi veerullaara
will you leave with just yesterday's food O brave students
- 9 Padmavathi sadhuvu cheppi potaraa vidyaarathi amarullara

Protest through jānapada geyalu in Telangana

- will you leave after having given education O martyred students*
- 10 Chorus sadhi tini potaraa vidyaarathi veerullaara
- 11 Chorus sadhuvu cheppi potaraa vidyaarathi amarullara
- 12 Padmavathi mee iruvu kanna kana talli kanti shapam petta patte
the Mother for you all is about to cast curses
- 13 Padmavathi nadakeragaka kanna tandri tovaakeduru chuuda patte
your father who has forgotten how to walk awaits you on the road
- 14 Padmavathi malle pulla navvu kosam akka chella adugapatte
your sisters await jasmine flowers from you
- 15 Padmavathi mandaalichi potarra vidhyaarathi veerullara
will you console us and leave O brave students
- 16 Padmavathi mataaladi pothara vidhyaarathi amarullara
will you just talk and leave O martyred students
- 17 Chorus mandaalichi potarra vidhyaarathi veerullara
- 18 Chorus mataaladi pothara vidhyaarathi amarullara

In this song-performance Padmavathi and the chorus sing-perform the actions, and the outcomes of these for related others, of student-protestors. These are embedded in mundane events and goings-on of village life.

This song-performance is an orchestrated stage-event and is therefore well-rehearsed and well-structured. It starts with valorising student-protestors that involves the chorus, then two sets of descriptions on protest participation, at lines 5-9 and lines 12-16, without the chorus. These are interspersed with valorising descriptions of student-protestors that involve the chorus, lines 10-11 and 16-18.

At lines 1-4, the song-performance starts with characterizing the student-protestors as ‘brave’, ‘warriors’, and ‘martyred’, valorises their actions through descriptors such as them having taken up a ‘big battle’ and having ‘sacrificed’ their lives. Subsequently, at lines 5-9, Padmavathi treats protestors as precious through descriptions of certain events in the village life. These include references to how the stars at dawn look down at clean porches, how the mist melts into drops as the day dawns, and how after a harvest the cooking pots are full. These construct the protestors as precious and valued. Their departure to join protests is then lamented upon by references to other aspects of village life at lines 8 and 9. These involve treating their lives as involving hardships of living on meagre conditions (‘yesterday’s food’)

or having to engage in education. In sum, Padmavathi constructs protest-participation as a sacrifice where precious lives have to endure hardships.

Subsequently, at lines 12-18, Padmavathi turns to the implications of protest-participation for the family members of protestors. This is done through ascribing particular activities to various family members: mothers are about to cast curses, old and invalid fathers are awaiting the return of their children, and sisters are awaiting gifts such as flowers that brothers might bring. In this way, Padmavathi treats protest-participation as being hard on family members too. In the context of performing this to an audience, who are likely to have known some of these protestors, this performance is an acknowledgement of grief and hardship. At lines 15 and 16, Padmavathi voices what the family members might have wished for or what the student protestors themselves might have wanted to say: consoling or talking to their families before they leave.

In this way the performance does the action of commemorating those who lost their lives through constructing protest-participation in heroic ways. Notably this involved mundane aspects of village life and familial life.

Conclusions

In this chapter I examined folk musical practices as protest-songs, performed in the movement for the formation of Telangana State in the Indian Republic between 2009 and 2014. The findings show that for these song-performances the everyday aspects of people are central concerns. The ‘folk-ness’ of protest songs, in these song-performances, is attended to and constructed through an engagement with those who are stakeholders in Telangana, its formation (people of AP who currently live in Telangana), and protest-participants. Song-performances treat everyday practices as relevant for the protest movement not only through including descriptions of these, but also through treating these as implicated in political goings-on, such as those of the formation (or not) of Telangana State. For instance, Gaddar treats those in traditional caste occupations as in distress, such as not being able to access everyday objects related to their occupations. Venkanna differentiates mundane activities, such as selling food, from political activities of those from AP in legitimating demands for Telangana State. In this way, features of everyday life are made relevant in political ways. In doing so singer-performers offer ready means for those immediately present or other distal audiences to recognize the reasons for or legitimacy of the protest.

Folk music practices as protest actions are well document (Ingram 2008), and particularly how it is that protest-songs constitute the protest movement and allow for articulation of human rights (Paretskaya 2015), civil rights (Roy 2010), and, cultural resistance (Hagen 2011). Here, I show that protest-songs *do* protest through incorporating particular features of everyday lives as related to relevant political contingencies. One part of this is derived through relations with the context of these song-performances. On the one hand, these song-performances are situated accomplishments that took place in particular settings and involve particular actors and agents. On the other hand, these are also situated in broader social, economic, and political contexts. The features of these broader contexts, such as voiding promises made to Telangana people or liberalisation of the Indian economy, are constructed and treated to have particular bearing on the people's lives and activities. The other part is derived from relating political concerns to everyday life.

In this way, these song-performances accomplish protesting (cf. DeNora 2002), which in this case was demanding statehood for Telangana. This involved warranting the formation of Telangana State because of ongoing issues for its region and people, distress among those in traditional occupations, legitimating participating in protest movements, and managing potentially problematic outcomes of state formation. Protest song-performances then not only mobilize issues of identity, belonging, and power-relations, but also in their situated accomplishment constitute and construct these as relevant (or not), and therefore as protest-worthy. In the present case, the historical availability of musical practices that are known to be protest-related affords these opportunities. In other cases, people have recourse to alternative ways of *doing* protest through musical practices, as is readily seen in other chapters in this collection.

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Notes:

¹ Caste System: Caste is understood as an endogenous group with hereditary membership (Ovichegan, 2014). The system broadly classifies Hindus into four occupational castes or *varnas* – Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras – with varying levels of access to resources and opportunities. These *varnas* are treated as hierarchical with Brahmins at the ‘top’ and Shudras at the ‘bottom’. However, the system also classes others as those who do not have a caste, widely referred to as ‘Dalits’, which means broken or oppressed.

² Dhanaraju (2012, 2014) argues that the term ‘popular’ music or art fits with the art phenomenon in his examination. He claims that various forms of art including poetry, music and dance were not only indigenous and steeped in people’s ways, but were also pervasive and therefore were ‘popular’. However, I use the more resonant term ‘folk’ music here.

³ Title given to native sovereigns of Hyderabad State.

⁴ A “State of Andhra Pradesh” was officially founded on 1 October, 1953 on the basis that its people speak the common language Telugu (Suri 2002). This was forged out of areas under the Madras Presidency with Kurnool as its capital. From 1953 to 1956 various negotiations, political activities, and protests saw the fusion of Telangana regions of the Hyderabad Princely State into this State to form Andhra Pradesh (AP) on November 1, 1956. (Forrester 1970).

⁵ Here, the representatives of both regions and the Indian Republic signed a “Gentleman’s Agreement” (Seshadri 1970) to that effect.

⁶ In some ways, this method of sourcing data is similar to what has been called ‘netnography’ (Kozinets, 2015). This refers to online ethnography to access unique cultures and social practices that are active online. While netnography involves sustained engagement with online communities and practices, the current data collection procedures involved a focused approach to collecting song-performances. A more sustained netnography would have involved engaging with the sharing, commenting, and production aspects of the current data. However, since the focus of interest is on protest song-performances, the data collection procedures were focused on how these can be accessed.

⁷ Gaddar – The pen name of Gummadi Vittal Rao [1949-] is an Indian poet and political activist in Telangana. He has been active in movements for addressing grievances of the oppressed castes, workers, and farmers. Goreti Venkanna [1963-] is an Indian poet and folk singer and has published several works of poetry. Vimalakka – The pen name of Arunodaya Vimala [1964-] is a folk activist and leads a folk group called Arunodaya Samskritika Samakhya. She was an active member in the movement for the formation of a separate state.

⁸ Several efforts were made to determine the copyright of these song-performances and the YouTube® hosts for licensing information. These however did not yield in any response. Under the creative commons licence agreement here I only use extremely limited parts of the videos and subject them to commentary and critique rather than promoting these for mere consumption (YouTube, 2017).

⁹ Some researchers (Boden and Zimmerman 1991) seriously take-up the ethnomethodological concerns for examining social actions as methodical practices that are methodically sensible for those participating in them. Researchers argue that people of a shared culture or community methodically orient to actions as particular types of actions. This means that people use particular methods in figuring out what is happening at any given moment (Garfinkel, 1967). An analytical approach that aims to explicate these ethno-methods examines peoples’ actions from their own perspective rather than imbuing peoples’ actions with researcher or established social scientific meanings.

¹⁰ These reforms introduced in 1991 aimed at ‘opening’ Indian markets to private investors and reduce Government’s control over India’s production and manufacturing (Business 2016). An outcome of this has been a shift in employment-sectors. Traditional occupations and work roles were gradually being replaced by alternative occupations, such as those in information technology.

¹¹ Reliance Industries Limited is a conglomerate holding company and is the second most profitable company in India. It engages in production, manufacturing, and, distribution of a range of items and services such as clothes, groceries, petrochemicals, and, telecommunications.

¹² Tulla Devender Goud [1953-] is a Telangana based politician from the Telugu Desam Party (Elections.in 2016).

¹³ Komaram Bheem [1901-1940], was a tribal leader born into the Gonda Tribal community in Adilabad district, Telangana. He organized and led resistance against the then feudal Nizam rule over Telangana.

¹⁴ The partition of British occupied India into the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1947 resulted in the deaths of at least 1 million people and displacement of 50 million people (Dalrymple 2015). Notably, it continues to be a problem involving frequent wars, exchange of hostilities, and claims and counter-claims of state sponsored terrorism.

¹⁵ Secretariat was the administrative office of the employees of the Government of AP. It housed the legislative assembly, which debated and passed laws for AP.

¹⁶ Singer Padmavathi, also known as 'Karimnagar Padmavathi' is currently a well-known folk singer who has participated in several protest events. Little personal information is known about her, although several of her performances can be accessed on the World Wide Web.