

YAKSHAGANA: DANCE OF THE DEMI-GODS

Analytical report submitted to Discover India Program committee, FLAME for partial fulfilment of Discover India Program six credit course.

LIST OF STUDENTS

Sr. No	NAMES OF THE STUDENTS IN THE GROUP	DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
1	Aaron D'souza	Content Writer	
2	Akshay Nayar	Creativity and Design	
3	Anchal Sood	Content Writer	
4	Devisha Poddar	Presentation	
5	Rohil Jethmalani	Admin	
6	Sameer Nawab	A/V Editing	
7	Sanjana Ajith	Content Writer	
8	Shradha Gulrajani	Group Leader	
9	Shreya Mundhra	Photography	
10	Siddharth Turakhia	Finance	
11	Srishti Saigal	Public Relations	

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this report entitled “**Yakshagana: Dance of the Demi-Gods**” submitted by the undersigned research team was carried out under my supervision. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

Name of student

Signature

Aaron D'souza

Akshay Nayar

Anchal Sood

Devisha Poddar

Rohil Jethmalani

Sameer Nawab

Sanjana Ajith

Shradha Gulrajani

Shreya Mundhra

Siddharth Turakhia

Srishti Saigal

Name of the Mentor: Dr. Ashutosh Potdar

Signature:

Date:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would not have been possible to carry out this research project without the support of a number of people, who extended their valuable assistance in the preparation and completion of this study. First and foremost, we would like to extend our greatest gratitude to Dr. Indira Parikh, president of Foundation for Liberal and Management Education (FLAME), our Academic Dean, Dr. Christina Furtado and Prof. Suniti Vadalkar, Chairperson of the Discover India Project committee, for providing us with the opportunity to carry out such an extensive research at an undergraduate level.

Our faculty mentor, Dr. Ashutosh Potdar accompanied us on our ten day journey in Karnataka. Keeping our research work in check and providing us with valuable information as to how to carry out our on-field investigation, his contribution helped us reach greater heights with our study.

Our preliminary research as well as our post-field research and findings were guided by Dr. Viraj Shah, our report mentor, who provided us with her valuable insights and constructive criticism, all the while channeling our study, giving it direction and structure.

We would also wish to convey our greatest thanks to the people of Udupi and Honnavar that we interacted with, during our field work. Mr. Krishna Bhatt and Mr. Sanjiva Suvarna of Yakshagana Kendra went a long way in aiding us with how we were to carry out our research in Udupi, while Mr. Shivananda Hegde had a similar role in channeling our research in Keremane Yakshagana Institute, Honnavar. Scholars such as Mr. G.L. Hegde of Kumta, Mrs. Sri Devi, Mrs. Kiran Pai of Shimoga and Mr. M.L. Saamaga of Udupi contributed greatly to our research study, without whose help, our on field research would have been incomplete. We would also wish to extend our sincerest thanks to the common people of Udupi, Honnavar, Gundabala, Shimoga and Kumta. Our interviews with them in the market places yielded useful results.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
Index of Pictures	v
Index of Journal Entries	v
Chapter 1- Introduction.....	1
Research Methodology	3
Limitations	5
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	7
Chapter 3 – Yakshagana: An Overview.....	13
Etymology	13
The Performance.....	15
The Folk Vs. Classical Debate.....	21
A Comparison with Kathakali and Ramlila	26
Evolution and Commercialisation.....	28
Changes in costumes:.....	29
Changes in Themes:.....	31
“Commercial Troupes”:	32
Women Performers	33
Women Performers – Perceptions:	34
Current Role of Women:.....	36
Chapter 4 – Yakshagana in its Cultural Context.....	39
Yakshagana and Gender	42
Symbolic Significance of Yakshagana	45
Preserving Tradition.....	46
Chapter 5 - Conclusion	49
Glossary	52
Bibliography	54

Index of Pictures

Figure 1. .Map of our journey through Udupi, Honnavar, Kumta and Shimoga	4
Figure 2. Interview with Shivananda Hegde at Keremane Yakshagana, Gunavante.....	4
Figure 3. A performer enacting the role of Krishna at Yakshagana Kendra, Udupi.....	10
Figure 4. Worship of the mukuta of Lord Ganesha, worn by the central character	16
Figure 5. The Bhagavata(extreme right) and the chande and maddale players on stage	18
Figure 6. Ingredients used for the makeup of performers.....	18
Figure 7. The intricate make-up of an actor playing the role of Surpanakha, Ravana's sister	19
Figure 8. Photograph depicting various mudras at the Yakshagana Kendra	22
Figure 9. Yakshagana performers during a performance at the Yakshagana Kendra, Udupi.....	22
Figure 10. Kathakali performer (Courtesy: http://www.wandering-threads.com).....	26
Figure 11. A Yakshagana performer playing the role of Rama (left), and a male actor playing the role of Sita (right)	30
Figure 12. Detailed make-up and costumes of actors; headgear made of thermocol (right)	30
Figure 13. Mrs. Kiran Pai rehearsing in Shimoga.....	36
Figure 14. A male performer dressed up as Sita	44

Index of Journal Entries

JE 1. Gundbala.....	1
JE 2. Koteshwara.....	15
JE 3. Udupi-1.....	21
JE 4. Honnavar	28
JE 5. Shimoga.....	33
JE 6. Udupi-2.....	39

Abstract

Yakshagana Badagatittu is a dance-drama tradition based on the stories from Mahabharata, Ramayana and *Bhagavata Purana* that originated in northern coastal Karnataka. Initially hosted in temple grounds, through a rich combination of drama, dance and music, Yakshagana creates a captivating performance, attracting audiences young and old. As the narrator sings verses from the epics in Sanskrit, to the accompaniment of the *chande* and *maddale*, the actors interpret these through dance and dialogue. In Kannada society, Yakshagana is a means by which the masses learn about the stories from the great epics. Given the actors' freedom to present their interpretations of these stories, Yakshagana has become a platform in which the audience is encouraged to debate and question their understanding of the values and teachings of the epics.

In recent years, Yakshagana has evolved to reflect the changes industrialisation, globalisation and socioeconomic transformation has brought to Karnataka. Use of lighter material in costuming and the incorporation of contemporary social issues in performances show how Yakshagana is adapting to modern society. Up until recently, only men performed Yakshagana, playing both male and female characters. The late emergence of women actors is a reflection of progressive gender roles in Indian society today as women emerge from the 'home' into the public sphere.

Modernisation has also had its negative impacts on the art form according to many artists, scholars and Yakshagana enthusiasts. After the introduction of television and cinema, Yakshagana has taken a back seat as the primary entertainment of the Kannada family. The famed *Bayalata* shows, outdoor performances that lasted overnight, have become rare and sparsely attended events. The abridged versions that have replaced the *Bayalata* shows have lost their appeal in the eyes of the elderly audience who are dismayed by the inclusion of what they perceive as crass humour and vulgar references in an attempt to attract crowds. The broadcasting of such 'commercial' performances on television further annoys the section of Yakshagana enthusiasts who consider these commercial shows to be aberrations in a pure tradition.

Apart from eschewing the thematic changes introduced by the so-called commercial troupes, some puritan groups go to extents of rejecting even the use of thermocol headgear and ornaments

or the weaving of contemporary social themes into the fabric of Puranic stories. Preserving the tradition of their ancestors is of utmost importance and school children are encouraged to learn Yakshagana as part of their curriculum. However, one can't help but wonder if an art form so rooted in antiquity will succeed in maintaining its relevance in such a rapidly evolving society.

Through our research, we hope simply to inform the reader about the evolution of the tradition of Yakshagana. This research project does not attempt to propose a solution for an art form coping with rapid change in its social context. Whether Yakshagana will retain its niche in Kannada culture we leave up to the reader to decide.

Chapter 1- Introduction

Gundabala

Jan 28th, 2013

As we overcome the last bend and turn toward Shri Mukhyaprana Lakshmi Venkatarama temple, the distinct sound of the chande accompanied by the shrill song of the Bhagavata becomes a tangible presence in the night's air. The amplifiers make the Bhagavata's notes discernible over the blaring radio of our Tata Grande. Dylan is silenced. As we approach the temple grounds, we can't help but think of the footsteps of countless generations of Gundabala families being trampled over by our 70R16 tyres while our city-minds awaited the stories they had grown to love through countless retelling. Yet as the stage is finally visible to us, the sparse attendance at the performance is a sight to develop sore eyes. "The people are more interested in their televisions today but the actors do not stop. It is their duty."

The connection between a popular art form and the social and cultural context in which it is set seems relatively inextricable. A symbiotic relationship of sorts seems to develop in which both entities influence the progress (or lack of it) that the other witnesses. The social context it is set in (environmental, cultural, political and economic) tells us a great deal about an art form, especially one that is derived from a folk tradition. Understanding the relationship between an art form and its social context would help us understand the subtle functionalities of a society and sensitize ourselves to what we often perceive as being the less influential elements in a culture.

Yakshagana is a form of dance-theatre that originated in Karnataka and is thematically centred largely on the great Indian epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata) and Puranic mythology. (Ashton, 1977: P 19) With its combination of dialogue and dance, along with elaborate costuming and make up, Yakshagana could remind one of what can be considered as India's most famous

theatre-dance form Kathakali (Kerala) or the lesser known Terukuttu (Tamil Nadu). Yakshagana is peculiar in that it is a dance form that can be seen as both folk and classical. Though the movements and *mudras* of Yakshagana are derived from the *Natyashastra* tradition of Bharata, it is an art form patronised largely by the common man. (Karanth, 1997: P 24)

Traditionally performed only by men, overnight in an outdoor setup, Yakshagana performances today are generally two or three hour distillations of the great *Bayalata* (outdoor) shows of old. It is also now common to find Yakshagana performers lending their credibility to political parties by performing at election rallies, weaving contemporary political themes into their acts. (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 27 Jan. 2013) However, this platform is hardly the political support Yakshagana possibly enjoyed under the patronage of the Keladi, Vijayanagar and Nayak kings of South India. (Ashton, 1969: P 155) How far has globalisation affected the present day form of Yakshagana? How important is Yakshagana Badagatittu in modern coastal Karnataka during the influx of the Information Technology sector? Will Yakshagana continue to maintain its popularity in a society that is increasingly moving toward western influences?

To understand how Yakshagana has evolved, this research project asks:

How has Yakshagana evolved as a folk theatre tradition in response to cultural changes in northern coastal Karnataka?

Our research attempts to answer the following two questions:

A. How has Yakshagana evolved after the country's Independence and in the wake of globalisation?

B. How do the proliferators of this ancient tradition attempt to safeguard its relevance in today's dynamic society?

It does seem quite evident that social factors would be the primary driving force behind the development of an art form. Any society and culture is not stagnant, as contact with external factors as well as internal changes are bound to impact how a society looks at itself. Our country, as with any developing former colony, is one preoccupied with the goal of development and ever since the Economic Liberalisation of 1991 this may be considered synonymous with globalisation. (Kumar *et al*, 2009: P 21) As our economy opened its arms to foreign investment, our society accepted the cultural changes it would bring with it.

Yakshagana is likely to have been affected by the socio-political-economic changes since the country's Independence and Economic Liberalisation in much the same way as our nation and its people have. However, it remains to be seen whether Yakshagana, an art form that derives its setting from the antiquity of our culture, can continue to maintain its relevance in Kannada society and keep up with the cultural metamorphosis that seems to far outpace any development in the past.

For this project, we have specifically selected Yakshagana Badagatittu, the school practiced and performed in the northern coastal regions of Karnataka. Yakshagana Badagatittu is distinguishable from Yakshagana Tenkutittu, which is practiced south of Mulki district and stretches from Mangalore along the coast to where Karnataka meets Kerala. (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 1 Feb. 2013).

We have highlighted the following objectives to help us understand how Yakshagana has evolved and how social issues have impacted its evolution:

- Exploring the various aspects of the performance; namely the themes, costumes, make-up and setting.
- Studying the role of Yakshagana in the lives of the people of Udupi and Honnavar.
- Examining the transitions in various facets of the art form as well as analysing the reasons for these changes.

Research Methodology

Our field research was conducted in Udupi, Honnavar and Shimoga where we visited two Yakshagana academies (Keremane Mela¹ in Honnavar and Yakshagana Kendra¹ in Udupi) and various prominent artists and scholars. Udupi is an industrial city whereas Keremane Mela is located in a village Gunavante, just outside the lazy tourist beach town that is Honnavar. The two different economic settings were deliberately selected to determine whether this would have an effect on the popularity or perception of Yakshagana.

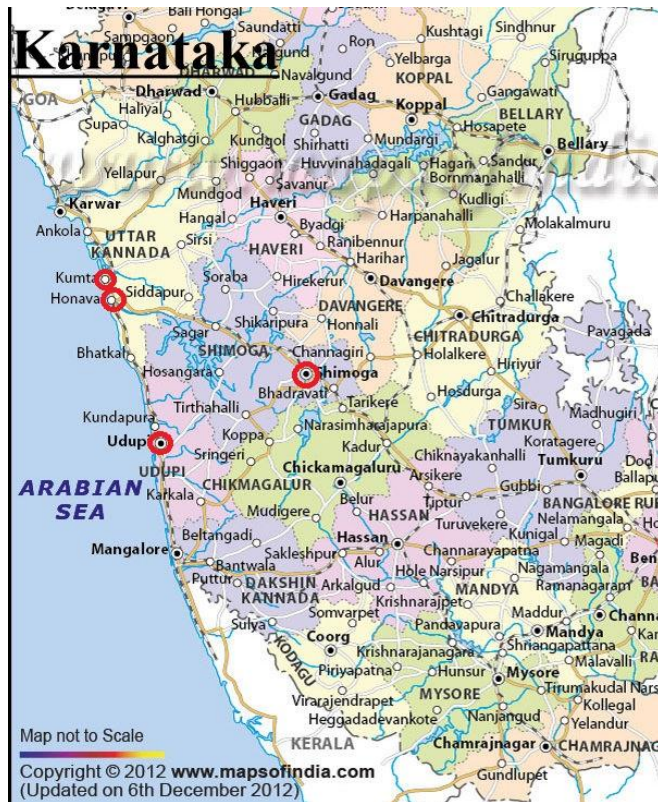


Figure 1. .Map of our journey through Udupi, Honnavar, Kumta and Shimoga

While we were on field, we were fortunate enough to meet two of the biggest names in Yakshagana today: Mr. Shivananda Hegde from Keremane Mela and Mr. Sanjiva Suvarna from Yakshagana Kendra. Mr. Hegde comes from a family that has been proactive in Yakshagana for three generations and both his father and grandfather before him were reputed actors. Shambhu Hegde, Mr. Shivananda Hegde's father, won a Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 1993 for his contribution to Yakshagana and breathed his last while performing Yakshagana. It is Mr.

Shivananda's pedigree in the art form that motivated us to speak to him. In addition to directing and acting for his troupe, Mr.

Hegde also maintains intellectual interest in Yakshagana and has devoted his life to the advancement of this tradition.

Yakshagana Kendra is the brain child of Shivarama Karanth and is one of the largest institutes of the art form in the country. In addition to training students in the various aspects of Yakshagana, Yakshagana Kendra has its own troupe that conducts performances across the globe. They are also affiliated to the Regional Resource Center for Folk Performing Arts in Udupi which catalogues information and publications



Figure 2. Interview with Shivananda Hegde at Keremane Yakshagana, Gunavante

on various folk arts including Yakshagana. We were fortunate enough to travel to Udupi during a seminar hosted by the Yakshagana Kendra on Kuchipudi and Yakshagana, where we had the opportunity to speak to various reputed artist and scholars of Yakshagana.

In our quest for answers, we primarily interviewed scholars, teachers, and students from Yakshagana Kendra and Keremane Yakshagana Institute, as well as the audiences and actors we encountered at performances we watched. These interviews were largely unstructured ones during which we attempted to engage our interviewees in a discussion. While there was a decent amount of questioning, we allowed the interviewee to stamp his or her relative authority on the session by steering the discussion in directions he or she deemed most relevant. This was especially effective since our prior knowledge of Yakshagana, owing to the sparse availability of secondary sources in Pune, was far too limited for us to come up with pertinent contextual questions. Instead, we were able to latch on to interesting points while keeping our overall research question in mind.

Limitations

We found that perhaps our unstructured interview method was not as successful while conducting interviews on the general public in the market places as it was when interviewing scholars and actors. A structured format would have been more effective in quantifying the different perspectives based on audience demographics allowing us to include statistical data in our research. However, the informal nature of our interviews allowed us to get closer to the interviewees and hence obtain what seemed like more honest answers and opinions.

Another drawback that we faced during our research was the problem of linguistic constraints; no member of our group knew Kannada, the language predominantly spoken in Karnataka. Seeing as most of the people we interviewed knew broken Hindi or English, our information from interviews was not hampered. However, we were unable to properly understand and interpret the performances we viewed, as they were entirely in Kannada. For this reason, our understanding of the performances was based on our discussions with other audience members and translators. A more accurate understanding of the performances would have allowed for deeper analysis and interpretation of the messages and themes in Yakshagana.

On our return from Karnataka, we realised that an additional visit to an urban setting such as Bangalore, the IT hub of Karnataka, might have proven to be an interesting area based research on Yakshagana. The metropolitan, well known for its high-end shopping malls and rock concerts would have been an interesting area to study in relation to the more ‘traditional’ areas of Udupi and Honnavar.

Owing to time constraints and largely negative perceptions on the part of the artists and scholars we associated with on-field, we were also unable to locate any of the so-called “commercial troupes.” These troupes are said to adapt Yakshagana performances by incorporating modern dance and entertainment techniques. For the most part, we sensed that these commercial troupes are considered “vulgar” and “aberrations” and are not popular neither among the leading artists and scholars, nor the people of Udupi and Honnavar. However, what caught our attention were the attempts made by such troupes to include cinematic sequences and ‘item numbers’ in their performances to attract crowds to their shows. Unfortunately, there were no shows being conducted by such troupes while we were in Udupi.

It would be appropriate to mention here that our research findings are based on a limited sample size, taking into account only a small portion of people of Udupi and Honnavar, primarily those associated with the two academies we focused on for our study. Nowhere in our study have we made any claims of generalisations about perceptions that we encountered in Karnataka, our findings being qualitative in nature.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

A vibrant and enchanting folk art form from Karnataka, Yakshagana is well known for its themes, costume and style of performance. Research has long been carried out by scholars, regarding the history behind the art form, the various intricacies that go into the routine of the performers as well as the future of Yakshagana as a folk art form. Being a South Indian folk art form, the accessible English literature on Yakshagana was rather limited during our preliminary research. But in Karnataka, we were able to find a few books dedicated completely to the art form - *Yakshagana* by Martha Bush Ashton and Bruce Christie, *Yaksagana* by K. Shivarama Karanth, *The Semiotics of Yakshagana* by Dr.Gururao Bapat, *Yaksagana and its Sanskrit Sources* by Dr. G.S Hegde, *Oddolaga (An Introduction to Yakshagana)* by K.S Haridasa Bhat and N. Thirumaleshwara Bhat. Other books such as *The Karnatak Theatre* by H.K Ranganathan and *Krishna Theatre in India* by Manohar L. Varadpande as well as articles by Martha Bush Ashton and V. Raghavan published in journals are few other reliable sources which we found could also throw light on our research.

The term “Yakshagana” can be split in to two; *yaksha* and *gana*. There are slight variations in etymology in all the secondary sources, but in none of them is it clear why the word *yaksha* is used, or the exact meaning of it. All the authors give various ideas as to its origin, yet none can provide evidence to back it up.

In saying that Yakshagana is a folk art-form, we are making an assumption based on colloquialisms. Although this is the term used, Karanth specifically mentions in his book that Yakshagana is folk only in the sense that it is very “local” in nature, meaning it is patronised, performed and watched by the common people. Yet in its intricacies, it takes a lot from the *Natyashastra*, and the music, dance and costume are highly sophisticated and can be mastered only through years of training. (Karanth, 1997: P 24)

The history of the art form itself, gathered from its first few mentions in historical texts and previous mentions of similar art forms that might have evolved to become Yakshagana or influenced it in some way, is outlined by Martha Bush Ashton in her book. She uses and compiles several sources like K.S Karanth as well as do several of our other sources. But relying

on a single author for evidence of history, which is already hard to gather results in information being less reliable. Yet all of our literary sources give us somewhat conflicting or varying records of early Yakshagana, which makes creating a historiography a challenging task. Therefore here, we shall give a single record of history, relying mostly on Ashton's account, so as to at least give a general idea of its possible origins.

Ashton begins with the primary language of literary expression in the Kanara area, Kannada, the first book written in which mentions *cattana*, a form of composition perhaps for singing or recitation. M.M. Bhat, as recorded in *Yakshagana-Stage in Karnataka* believes this to be a forerunner of Kannada Yakshagana. Although several descriptions in ninth and twelfth century writings could possibly refer to early forms of Yakshagana, there is no way to substantiate this claim, since there are no works of literature that trace the development of the form from then to now. (Ashton, 1977: P 19) The importance of language in Yakshagana and it being central to the nature of the art form has been both expressed and implied by other authors like Dr. Gururao Bapat and K.S Karanth. Bapat also alludes to what he calls a "linguistic hegemony" being important in the development of Yakshagana in South Kanara along with the Bhakti movement. (Bapat, 1998: P 203) In this project, we explore this aspect and compare it with information from our primary sources.

In the South Kanara area, the term "Yakshagana" refers to both a style of music and a dance-drama form. Yakshagana style of music is one that is very established, and the attempt to trace the history of the art form begins with relating Yakshagana-style music to early styles of music that can be associated with it. K.S Karanth in *Yakshagana: A Musical Dance Drama* suggests that the music might have been the first element of the dance-drama to develop. (Karanth, 1997: P 150) This is also reaffirmed by H.K Raganathan. (Ranganathan, 1982: P 25) Karanth believes that it began as *Gandharagrama*, which was prevalent before the *Natyashastra*, subsequently evolved into *Ekkalagana* (mentioned in the *Mallinatha Purana*, a Kannada classic written by Nagachandra in 1105 CE), and eventually took the form of Yakshagana. (Ashton, 1977: P 20) Karanth is also of the opinion that it is this music form that eventually developed into the theatre-dance form and Yakshagana as a mere music form was lost over the years. (Bapat, 1998: P 30) This tracing of the evolution of Yakshagana-style music is based on the fact that these forms share certain striking similarities, suggesting that they must be related in some way. However,

this relationship can easily be debated due to lack of substantial evidence, making this history of Yakshagana music a mixture of conjectures and probabilities.

There is more substantial evidence that is useful in reconstructing the historical development of Yakshagana Badagatittu Bayalata. According to the late Sri Kerodi Subba Rao, the earliest mention of a folk performance is in the *Harivamsha Purana* of the *Bhagavata* in around 200-400 CE, wherein there is a reference to a *Bhagavata mela*. He believes this to have been a close variant of Yakshagana. (Ranganathan, 1982: P 22) An inscription found on a Lakshminarayana temple in Kurugod, Bellary District describes a land endowment for the financial support of the performers of *talamaddale*. In today's context, *talamaddale* means stories sung in Yakshagana-style music. (Ashton, 1977: P 21) Another piece of evidence is a palm-leaf manuscript of a story written to be performed in the style of Yakshagana, which is one that is still being performed today – *Virata Parva* written by Vishnu of Ajapura in 1564 CE. (Ashton, 1977: P 21-22)

These two pieces of evidence, according to Martha Bush Ashton, suggest that by the mid-sixteenth century, stories were being written and sung in the style of Yakshagana, and also accompanied by the *tala* (small cymbals) and *maddale* (drum), which are instruments used in the dance-drama today. Another palm-leaf manuscript of *Sabhalakshana* from 1621 CE describes rituals to be performed before the presentation of the story. Some of these rituals are part of present day preparations for Yakshagana performances. (Ashton, 1977: P 22)

From 1621 CE to the 1940s, there is a gap in records of Yakshagana or similar composite forms of music, dance and drama, but the previously mentioned evidence could suggest that its origin might have been around the early sixteenth century. K.S Karanth also gives several reasons as to why Yakshagana Badagatittu Bayalata is believed to have originated somewhere around the Malnad area between Udupi and Shimoga districts. To begin with, most of the early extant authors and plays came from this area. Another clue is the stronghold of the Krishna cult in the area, which is attributed to Sri Madhavacharya's (born in 1238 CE) installation of the image of Lord Krishna in the temple at Udupi. (Ashton, 1977: P 22) Dr. Gururao Bapat too, speaks of Madhavacharya in *The Semiotics of Yakshagana* as significant in influencing the theme and very origin of Yakshagana as a religious folk art form.

Stories of Krishna are a prominent theme in Yakshagana Badagatittu Bayalata, and most of the stories centre around Vishnu and Krishna. The inclusion of Balarama in the rituals of this Yakshagana, and the fact that there is a Balarama temple near Udupi also support the theory of its origin in the Udupi area. (Ashton, 1977: P 23)



Figure 3. A performer enacting the role of Krishna at Yakshagana Kendra, Udupi

H.K. Ranganathan, in his book *The Karnatak Theatre*, believes Yakshagana to have flourished in the 18th and 19th centuries. Several authors in literary texts around this time suggest that Yakshagana was well-established on the folk-stage front. It was also put forward that the art form was essentially musical in form. The life and the style of the literary compositions of the famed composer and exponent of Yakshagana – Parti Subba, who lived from around 1760 to 1820, suggest that the art form had been perfected by the 19th century. (Ranganathan, 1982: P 19)

There are several debates amongst scholars over the history of Yakshagana. Some believe that the art form that preceded it was called *Kuravanji*, and was performed by the tribes of Kurava, Chechu and the Yaksha communities. A single female artist is believed to have narrated and danced the story in those times. Gradually, more performers were added such as a male narrator and clowns for comic relief etc. (Ashton, 1969: P 153)

During the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, due to political unrest in the region, Brahmins felt that their religious faith was being threatened. At this time, Yakshagana began to be used by them to promote religion, and from then on, women are believed to have stopped performing the dance-drama. (Ashton, 1969: P 153)

According to Martha Bush Ashton's article, there is a gap in information between the aforementioned royally patronised Yakshagana and the locally performed one. In an agricultural

society, Yakshagana began to be performed by the farmers at the time of harvest. Almost the entire village contributed in some way or the other to this performance, with the landlord providing costumes, the carpenters building the stage and the common village folk performing. (Ashton, 1969: P 153)

We found that Yakshagana has been compared to several art forms of the southern region by several authors like K.S Karanth and H.K Ranganathan. We attempt to do the same, but by comparing not just the nature of these forms, but the role they play in their own cultural contexts. This may allow us to make generalisations about the role of art forms in influencing culture and vice-versa.

The book *Yaksagana* by K.S Karanth gives a complete overview of the art form, including nearly every aspect of it. But he tends to jump to conclusions without providing evidence, and his analysis is at times judgmental in nature. *The Semiotics of Yakshagana* on the other hand, is an interesting book that attempts to study Yakshagana almost anthropologically, using terms and theories of culture studies. This book uses a lot of Karanth's sources, and the attempt at a cultural anthropological analysis, although being an interesting read, occasionally tends to fall flat when he speculates without sufficient evidence or examples to support his claims. Another limitation of one of our major sources, Martha Bush Ashton's *Yakshagana*, is that we could only manage to procure the earliest edition, which dates back to 1977. Ashton published nineteen editions after this, but they were inaccessible. The information in this book is therefore not very recent, and she is said to have also added to and changed several parts of her book in the further editions.

Further, focusing on Martha Bush Ashton's work, there is a slight incongruity between the article written by her for *The Drama Review*, and her book *Yakshagana*. In the former, she says that Yakshagana was patronised by Keladi kings, who were feudatories of the Vijayanagara empire (1336-1565 CE), yet in her book, she states that Yakshagana was never royally patronised. No other source mentions that Yakshagana was ever patronised by anyone other than the local people of the village.

On careful reading of all of the literary sources, we have come to find a few discrepancies. Firstly, there is a high degree of variance in the historical chronology presented by various sources. It is also unclear why women stopped featuring in Yakshagana performances. Even though Martha Bush Ashton in her article mentions the political and religious backgrounds of the country, the direct linkage between this event and its background is ambiguous. None of our

other secondary sources give any explanation as to why women do not perform, they seem to take it at face value and present it as merely a fact. Therefore, for this, we rely on only our primary sources.

Rather than simply speculating reasons for the occurrence of certain historical events from the sources made available to us, we believe that actually examining the historical accounts of the families who have witnessed the evolution of Yakshagana could prove to be beneficial to our research. In order to fill in the gaps in the existing scholarly work, we will also attempt to clear the other discrepancies that have been mentioned, related to particular historical facts.

Our aim is also to compare our primary and secondary sources, and since the focus of our research is different, our results will also be different from those of these authors. These works focus mainly on describing the art form, whereas we aim to study it against the backdrop of cultural changes in its region. Our objectives also include observing and analysing how Yakshagana implicates society, and how and why it evolved the way it did. This, in our opinion, would give us a holistic view of the art form in its cultural context.

Chapter 3 – Yakshagana: An Overview

The vibrancy and captivating nature of Yakshagana performances seems to stimulate the audience at many levels. When we asked people what aspect of Yakshagana allured them the most, no one aspect of the performance seemed most popular. While some said they were attracted by the visual aesthetics of a performance, others felt they could relate to the stories depicted in Yakshagana while some were enthralled by the unique musical style. The actors' liberty to interpret the texts and the *Bhagavata's* narrations ensures no two performances could ever seem repetitive.

This chapter explores various aspects of Yakshagana Badagatittu as a performing art tradition. We begin with documenting the performance, focusing on style, themes, characters, music and costumes and attempt to trace changes in these over time. We have attempted to do this by presenting an amalgamation and comparison of our preliminary research along with a greater emphasis on our findings on field. This chapter also explores the rise of women performers and troupes, a relatively recent development in Yakshagana whose mention was absent in all of our secondary sources.

Etymology

The term “Yakshagana” can be split in to two parts; “*yaksha*” and “*gana*” to understand the true meaning of the word. There are slight variations in etymology in all the secondary sources that we referred to, but in none of them is it clear why the word ‘*yaksha*’ is used for an art form that is centred on the prominent gods and characters from the great Indian epics. All these scholarly works give various ideas as to its origin, yet none of them have provided concrete evidence to substantiate their claims. According to Martha Bush Ashton, the word *yaksha* means demi-gods and the word *gana* means song, thereby translating it directly to “songs of the demi-gods” (Ashton, 1977: P 17). But since demi-gods hold little or almost no importance in Yakshagana, this name seems rather inapt. In Hindu mythology, *yakshas* are tree spirits, headed by Lord

Kubera, who is the Hindu god of wealth. (Ions, 1967: P 56) These too are hardly central figures in Yakshagana performances, appearing only rarely when the story requires them to.

On the other hand, several of our other secondary sources lay claim to the fact that the term “Yakshagana” was actually originally used to describe the style in which the songs were sung. This Yakshagana style of music is very different from Carnatic and Hindustani styles which was accompanied with a dance and drama and was thusly propagated. Soon, this music style ceased to exist as an art form by itself and was solely used as accompaniment with the dance drama tradition that was gaining popularity. (Bapat, 1998: P 30) Bapat backs his claims by citing similar statements made by various scholars such as Shivarama Karanth and K. Krishna Bhat. Karanth speaks of Yakshagana in relation to the style of music called *Jakka*, thought to be the corrupt form of the Sanskrit word *Yaksha*. (Karanth, 1997: P 83)

Yakshas are also believed to have been inhabitants of the south, before Kubera fled to the North after being defeated by Ravana, the king of Lanka. Ranganathan believes this could be symbolic of the movement of the Dravidians to the north of the country before the advent of the Aryans, although this connection seems rather far-fetched. But since there are records of music forms such as “Yakkalagana” which were similar to Yakshagana only in the south, Yakshagana is said to have been a “Dakshina Gana”, or a southern musical form. (Ranganathan, 1982: P 24)

Our research on field showed that the interpretations of the name we heard roughly overlapped with what we read in our secondary sources. The origin of the word did not seem to raise much doubt in the minds of the scholars who simply repeated what we had already heard. The song of the *Yakshas*, or the song of the demi-gods was the popular translation. From the interviews, we could gather that most people took the name for granted, probably because they had heard it being used for so long; they did not think to question the use of ‘*yaksha*’ in the name of an art form that does not seem to concern *Yakshas* in any direct way.

However, we were presented with a very different perspective by one renowned scholar, G.L Hegde. According to him, the word “Yakshagana” itself stands for Ganapati worship. Mentioning the fact that Lord Ganesha is worshipped before every performance as evidence for this idea, he breaks the word into “*yaksha*” and “*gana*” again. But instead of “song”, he interprets “*gana*” as the *Ganas* or demi-gods who serve Shiva under the leadership of Lord Ganesha. The word Ganapati means “the king of *Ganas*”, which is why he believes “Yakshagana” itself means Ganapati worship, although this theory seemed to stem more from

personal speculation than historical evidence. (Hegde, G.L. Personal Interview. 29th Jan 2013)

But the importance of Lord Ganesha in Yakshagana cannot be denied. The head of Yakshagana Kendra in Udupi, Sanjiva Suvarna reaffirms this by pointing out that the crown of the central character, or the *Kireeta Mukuta* is the crown of Lord Ganesha himself, and clearly represents him.

The Performance

Koteshwara

Feb 2st, 2013

Bumping along in a cramped little taxi, we chatted with our driver about everything from his wife and kids to his views on politics, all the while squabbling over access to the music to be played in the vehicle. As we finally reached the temple at Koteshwara, the babble died halfway through psychedelic versus indie rock. We were slightly taken aback by simplicity of the set-up, a white cloth extending from the temple into something resembling a shed. The sheer number of people awaiting the performance took us by surprise; we had yet to register the popularity of Yakshagana among locals.

While we were wading through the crowd trying to find spots to squeeze into, the puja had already begun. Lord Ganesha was evoked, and the temple priest handed out ghee and jaggery to the perennially hungry children sitting towards the front of the stage. We were getting slightly impatient now, our enthusiasm beginning to wane slightly under expectations of what seemed like a promising performance that had yet to begin.

The Bhagavata sat still on stage next to his musicians. A pregnant silence later, it began. The chande player beat its rhythm into the air, and every single person in the audience fell silent. Then the Bhagavata started to sing, a baritone that reverberated through the arena, expertly maneuvering notes in tandem with the chande and maddale.

This set the stage for the entry of the central character. The minute Shivananda Hegde made an entrance, celebrating colour and shiny gold from head to toe with massive headgear in the shape of a peepal leaf to top it off, it became clear that he was one of the crème-de-la-crème of Yakshagana artists. A flamboyant, yet nubile Krishna, he danced in a sort of organised frenzy. The other characters made their entrance one by one, and the story began to gather headway.

Krishna flirted with the gopis. He spoke clear and fluent Kannada, making jokes that elicited regular titters from the audience. He persuaded the audience to believe he was a cow-herder, a prince, a king and a hero. Although we faced a rather frustrating language barrier, the brightness of the entire stage and the constant movement made sure our eyes were glued to it.

Admiration glazed the eyes of the little children seated in the front. Krishna battled Kamsa, his evil uncle who looked little different from the devil incarnate with his terrifying makeup and ferociously spoken words. They spoke and danced their way through an entire gamut of emotions, and when the story reached its climax, the audience clung to every word. Suspense hung in the air, as though everyone seated there did not know exactly what was going to happen next. When Krishna finally slew his uncle and took the throne, the audience cheered like he was their champion, their saviour. The performance ended, and the Bhagavata and the actors left the stage one by one.

It was around 3 am. The audience made headway for the snacks counter, and piling little vadas onto their paper plates and filling their thermocol cups with the now cold chai, they hurried home. The temple courtyard was now almost completely empty, and silent. It was almost as if the performance had never happened, the heroic acts of Krishna forgotten, as everyone, including us, looked forward to the warmth of our beds.

Yakshagana performances are rather enchanting with their vivid colours and extravagant costumes, especially to someone newly introduced to the art. Although the overnight Bayalata performances are rare in today's day, every performance we visited was set up in either an

open or semi-open air location. Earlier performances were always staged in the courtyard of a



Figure 4. Worship of the mukuta of Lord Ganesha, worn by the central character

temple but this is not always the case today. Although Ranganathan described the setup by mentioning that the audience sat on all three sides of the stage (Ranganathan, 1982: P 51), we only saw audiences seated directly in front of the stage. While it is best to be seated as close to the stage as is possible, the actors' elaborate make-up allows the audience to discern changes in expression even from further away with relative ease.

Before any performance, the troupe offers prayers to Ganapati (Ganesha), the most important deity of Yakshagana. Although it is not certain why Ganapati is the primary deity of Yakshagana, some believe it is owing to the fact that he is the son of Nataraja (Shiva) or the lord of dance. It is also customary, through most of India, to worship Ganesha before commencing any new project as he is the remover of obstacles. (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 31 Jan. 2013) There is a *puja* in the make-up room before the performance followed by one on stage, in the presence of the audience. This latter rite is conducted by an actor, in accompaniment with the *Bhagavata* and the other musicians. While we saw Ganapati idols installed in all the green rooms we visited, the *mukuta* worn by the leading actor can also be worshipped as a physical representation of Ganesha and is often chosen for worship on stage. (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 31 Jan. 2013)

Yakshagana actors also treat their costume and ornaments as manifestations of the divine and pay respects to the cases in which these are stored. (Hegde, G. L. Personal Interview. 29 Jan. 2013) We also observed a tradition of paying respects to senior actors, something common throughout India, and for junior actors to seek their blessings before going on-stage.

A Yakshagana performance has four main musical components. The *Bhagavata*, or singer-narrator, is the main storyteller of the performance. His shrill, high-pitched voice has a distinct piercing quality, discernible even from a distance. He introduces the performance by singing the prologue and throughout the performance the *Bhagavata* sings verses from the epics in *raga* form while the actors interpret these through their movements and dialogue. When an actor is alone on stage, the *Bhagavata* serves as his companion and confidante (Karanth, 1982: P. 2). We noticed that this appeared to happen when the lone actor was in a state of emotional upheaval, generally by the character that most recently left stage. The *Bhagavata* also uses a pair of cymbals to accompany his singing and a drone, one of the four key elements of Yakshagana music is used to help him stick to the chosen key.

The *chande* and the *maddale* are the two percussion instruments that give rhythm to Yakshagana music. While all the musicians are seated on a long table covered by cloth at the rear end of the stage, the *chande* player is usually seated on a chair next to this as his *chande* must be placed on the ground. The *chande* is about knee height, positioned vertically between the player's legs and is played using sticks. The *maddale* is placed horizontally on the table on which the *Bhagavata* is seated, while both ends of the instrument are played using hands.



Figure 5. The Bhagavata(extreme right) and the chande and maddale players on stage

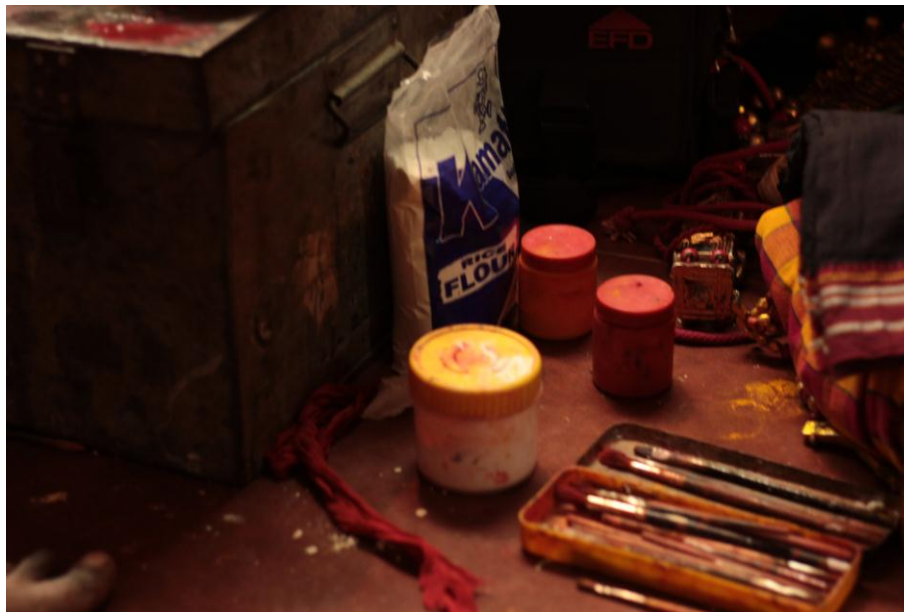


Figure 6. Ingredients used for the makeup of performers

The make-up in Yakshagana, made from a base of rice paste, (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 31 Jan. 2013) is an indication of the nature of the character. The actor playing fierce characters, *rakshasas* or demons, are decorated with rigid black make-up that accentuate his eyes.

Tiny spikes made of rice paste outline the periphery of his facial make-up. The gentle characters wear lighter make up that allow us to view the subtle movements of the actor's facial muscles. The application of make-up is a very elaborate process that can take up to a few hours.



Figure 7. The intricate make-up of an actor playing the role of Surpanakha, Ravana's sister

Costuming makes the characters even more distinguishable than make-up and specific characters are always seen in specific types of costume. The gentle characters wear large oval, fluted or pointed crowns and orange and black checked dhotis. The *Gandharvas* can easily be distinguished by their huge pyriform headgear. The *rakshasa* is usually dressed in colours of red, green and black to accompany their fierce, multi-coloured make-up. Commoners such as Brahmins, sages and clowns wear loose garments without any decoration, and women characters are made to wear saris. (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Yakshagana-Kuchipudi Seminar. 26 Jan. 2013)

During a performance, the main characters are introduced to the audience by the means of an encapsulating curtain routine. The character is shielded from the audience's glare with the help of a piece of coloured cloth held by two simply-dressed attendants. Only the tip of the actor's headgear and the soles of his feet are visible to the audience as the *Bhagavata* extols the virtues of or demeans the vices of the character. The actor slowly reveals parts of his elaborate get up before the curtain is suddenly drawn and he becomes visible in all his glory. This sequence is especially enthralling in the case of *rakshasas* when the demon violently shakes the barrier between him and the audience while letting out bloodcurdling screams.

The Yakshagana performance itself is a melange of dialogue and dance as the actors interpret the stories through their words and movements. The actors are largely free to interpret their character

as they wish and performances can often turn into debates on the nature of the characters or the stories. (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 28 Jan. 2013) In some interesting cases, an actor's questioning of the epics and debating skills might so outshine his counterpart's that his companion will be forced to concede defeat but request the interlocutor to continue with story as it was written. (Saamaga, M.L. Personal Interview. 31 Jan. 2013)

The stage is usually occupied by two actors, although one of the actors may leave stage allowing the lone performer to soliloquise or open a dialogue with the *Bhagavata*. The prose is interspersed with dance as the actors use body movements to emote. A play builds up to a climax that usually involves a battle sequence well-choreographed through the use of vigorous footwork and hand gestures. The two actors improvise with a varied size of painted sticks to depict the use of bows and arrows or swords. As is the case in most epics, good overcomes evil.

Those who are familiar with Bharatanatyam may feel that it is a more structured and refined dance form than Yakshagana, however, the somewhat rough edges of the latter lend an indescribable charm to the show.

Yakshagana performances are in season from the end of December through to the beginning of the monsoons in May. (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 31 Jan. 2013) During season, troupes such as those hired by Shri Mukhyaprana temple in Gundabala go through strict routines. They perform every night for the entirety of the season often to no audience at all. When the play ends at dawn, a final prayer is said to Ganesh after which everyone involved retires till the evening when they must resume preparations for the next performance. All in all, the glory and honour many of the famous actors from Udupi associate with Yakshagana seems absent in the case of the Gundabala troupe.

The Folk Vs. Classical Debate

Udupi

Feb 1st, 2013

"Excuse me! Yahaan pe Yakshagana ke books hain?" I asked. The slight man looks up, re-adjusts his spectacle frames on the bridge of his nose and replies in an accented English "Yes, Just wait for a minute." We were at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial college library in Udupi, the cool, airy chambers were a welcome respite from the sweltering heat outside. It was an old-fashioned library with a high ceiling and light blue walls. The old wooden furniture and multiple rows of shelves stacked with dusty books reminded me of the library at school. It was fairly empty barring a few college students, who sat sifting through the day's paper.

Subramaniam, the librarian with a typical double stripe tika returned with a fairly large pile of books. We settled down at one of the huge antique tables and each one picked a book. There were books about the vibrant dance- drama in English, Kannada and even Hindi, but thankfully most of them were in English.

The books had an old musty smell. As we sat and pored through them under the whirring fan, we got lost in the colourful world of Yakshagana. The books proved to be very useful and we acquired substantial secondary information. When we looked out of the window, it was already evening. The sun was about to set and we could hear a koel calling out to his mate. On the whole, it was an afternoon well spent.

The classification of Yakshagana as a folk art form is debatable. While conducting our preliminary research, we encountered only references to Yakshagana as a folk theatre tradition from Karnataka, however, on field we were met with varying opinions. Before introducing the debate around this topic, it would be appropriate to distinguish the terms folk and classical.

When we speak of classical dance in the Indian context, it is generally a reference to the guidelines set by the sage Bharata in the *Natyashastra*. According to the *Natyashastra*, the performer simultaneously takes on the role of the actor, the dancer, and the singer. It is the actor's duty to convey the essence of the performance through the movements and gestures of his or her body. The dance must consist of *Natya* (the dramatic element), *Nritya* (expressions to convey emotion), and *Nritta* (pure dance that does not have any symbolic meaning).



Figure 8. Photograph depicting various mudras at the Yakshagana Kendra

Hence, a classical form of dance, such as Bharatanatyam for instance, would implement the *mudras* and footwork along with their symbolic interpretation, as propounded by Bharata, to help convey the *Navrasas* (nine emotions). (Ministry of Culture, Government of India)

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines folk dance as “A dance that

originates as ritual among and is characteristic of the common people

of a country and that is transmitted from generation to generation with increasing secularization.”

In India, folk dances do not follow the guidelines of the *Natyashastra*, and its movements and styles reflect the regional traditions and customs of a relatively smaller social context. Folk dances are performed at events such as harvests and births, to celebrate a religious festival or to accompany the rituals of a particular region. (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2000)



Figure 9. Yakshagana performers during a performance at the Yakshagana Kendra, Udupi

The Yakshagana dance is hence more classical than folk in its presentation. With the use of *mudras* and animated facial expressions, actors effectively convey their emotions while dancing. The intricate nature of makeup itself draws the viewer to the actor’s facial movements and

goes a long way toward amplifying the actor's expressions. The *rakshasa* makeup is relatively rigid but it draws attention to the actor's eyes. The actor, in turn, accentuates negative emotions such as anger and fury through the distinct movement of his or her eyes.

Although Karanth believes that Yakshagana dance eschews *nritya* for the spoken word and he bemoans the lack of a more complex system of symbolic hand gestures such as is found in Kathakali, (Karanth, 1997: P 83) dancers' attempts to depict mood through gesture and facial expressions are especially successful in the eyes of an audience who are not familiar with Kannada. Perhaps this can be looked at as a manifestation of the folk element of Yakshagana, since it would be more complex for the vast majority of the rural population to familiarise themselves with the symbolic bearings of classical hand gestures.

The music in a Yakshagana performance is truly distinct in the sense that it has the ability to etch itself into the memories of the audience. Yakshagana employs *ragas* from both the renowned classical traditions of Indian music: *Hindustani* and *Carnatic*; and formulates some ragas of its own. Like *Hindustani* and *Carnatic*, Yakshagana style of music distinguishes itself through its modulation of the various ragas that it shares with the classical forms of Indian music. (Karanth, 1997: p. 86) The shrill tone and high pitch of the *Bhagavata's* singing, on the other hand, is markedly different from both Hindustani and Carnatic music (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 27 Jan. 2013) but is somewhat reminiscent of Rajasthani folk singing.

Karanth in fact argues that the musical and performance aspects of Yakshagana are largely classical and deserve to be mentioned in the same breath as *Carnatic* music or Bharatanatyam. It is the patronage of the common man as opposed to royalty which makes Yakshagana a folk tradition. (Karanth, 1997: p. 24) While we were in Karnataka, we got the sense that Yakshagana is indeed a popular art form in many ways. At the Keremane Yashagana institute and Gundabala, the students and performers are largely from rural backgrounds and testing economic contexts. Shivananda Hegde in fact perceives a lack of interest in the art form, from those who have the will and financial power to pursue higher educations. He claims that it is still an art form practised by the common man. (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 28 Jan. 2013)

Mapping Yakshagana's historical path proves quite a task owing to the fact that there exists no database or written historical records that tracked changes and influences along the way. For this reason, it is difficult to ascertain the historical patronage of Yakshagana. We received varying

accounts from scholars and published works seeing as historical theory has emerged more from personal interpretation and analysis than solid fact.

To further probe into this debate, we decided to explore the caste hierarchy in the patronage and performance of Yakshagana. Many of our secondary sources mentioned that it had been performed largely by people of the lower castes such as the farmers. Ashton supports this theory of village roots as she refers to Yakshagana season being timed after harvest season. (Ashton, 1969: P 148) However, she also made a mention of Brahmins travelling to different places to perform plays from the *Bhagavata Puranas*. An interview with a scholar, G.L. Hegde, gave us a similar story. He claimed that this dance was performed mainly by a Brahmin sub-caste called the *Havyakas*, and was not performed by the lower castes. However, while Martha Bush Ashton claims that the art form was royally patronised by the Vijayanagara kings, G.L. Hegde was convinced that this was never the case.

Although several of our primary and secondary sources mention that performances were generally sponsored by wealthy landlords, the consensus seems to lie with Yakshagana emerging from a grassroots level. Sanjiva Suvarna believed that Yakshagana was definitely initially performed by peoples of lower castes, possibly even from among the untouchables. (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 1 Feb. 2013) Shivananda Hegde echoes this sentiment, as the art form has always been associated with farmers and the farming class, who certainly did not make up the higher strata of society. According to him, Brahmins have only recently taken an interest in the art form they considered impure out of association with lower castes. (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 27 Jan. 2013) During our interviews, we felt that, for these personalities, it was never in doubt that Yakshagana was associated to the lower castes of society. It seemed a piece of information that was more common sense than anything. Although G. L. Hegde did attempt to associate Yakshagana to the *Havyaka* Brahmins, his theory seemed far-fetched in our humble opinions. For him, the fact that Yakshagana was performed in temple yards meant that these performances must necessarily have been Brahmin dominated.

However, we got the sense that today Yakshagana does appear to be emerging from its populist roots. In Udipi, there are performances hosted at relatively posh venues such as banquet halls and larger auditoriums. Although the performers at these shows are generally from the larger professional troupes, it is not uncommon for highly ranked individuals such as academics and industrialists who maintain a passion for the art form to perform at these events as well as

patronise them. (Saamaga, M. L. Personal Interview. 1 Feb. 2013) While we were in Udupi, we were fortunate enough to attend a seminar on Yakshagana and Kuchipudi, organised by the Yakshagana Kendra. We noticed the large number of renowned artists, scholars and Kannada personalities it attracted. The interest drawn by scholars and the political class can be seen as drawing Yakshagana from the grass roots level to an intellectual and global one. Indeed, troupes such as the Yakshagana Kendra have performed in the U.S.A., Europe and Australia.

Apart from being a form of entertainment and artistic expression, Yakshagana is also now becoming a component of the high school curriculum in various areas of Karnataka. MLA Raghupathi Bhat has introduced Yakshagana as a compulsory subject in schools in his constituency and 1500 students, 60% of whom are girls, are now studying it. (Bhat, Raghupathi. Personal Interview. 1 Feb. 2013) We met students of Journalism and Literature from the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial college of Udupi who pursue Yakshagana in their spare time and perform at small events and competitions. Although Udupi still has a long way to go before it can be seen as a metropolitan, it seemed to us that even the urban youth of the city maintain an interest in Yakshagana. Again, here we regret our inability to visit Bangalore, where school and college children are exposed to international curricula of education and could be considered more 'global' than the adolescents of Udupi.

Yakshagana has found itself a new audience that is not of the original village class, thus maybe denying it the status of a folk art based on the audience it caters to. However, with the increasing tendency of Yakshagana troupes touring outside of Karnataka, the language-barrier could limit its spreading popularity. Touring troupes attempt to change this by performing in other languages or providing translations of dialogues in print when they travel outside of Karnataka. However, from the point of view of a non-Kannada speaker, the folk perception of Yakshagana will endure.

A Comparison with Kathakali and Ramlila

A number of sources, both primary and secondary, kept drawing commonalities and making inferences on similar trends and aspects between Yakshagana and the popular South Indian dance form, Kathakali. Firstly, we shall approach aspects of both art forms that share similarities and then we shall move on to how they differ in certain facets of performance.



Figure 10. Kathakali performer (Courtesy: <http://www.wandering-threads.com>)

Kathakali originated in Kerala and like Yakshagana, is an enactment of stories that carry various religious themes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata as well as the Puranas. (Barba and Sanzenbach, 1967: P 37) Both art forms convey their religious themes, primarily through dance, song and prose. Moving on from the themes of these art forms, another noticeably interesting feature that is seen in both the art forms is the role that women play. From early documentation of Yakshagana, one observes the presence of women performers at its onset and then a sudden disappearance of the same. The reasons for this are varied; some of our secondary sources such as Mr. SanjIva Suvarna said that this was predominantly

due to household and child rearing duties that women faced and also their ‘monthly problem.’

However of late, women have begun to come to the forefront as professional Yakshagana performers. A similar trend is applicable to Kathakali as well, whereby male performers used to take on female roles, though in the recent past women have begun to participate as well (Daugherty and Pitkow, 1991: P 139).

There are a few distinguishing features in the performance styles of both the art forms that set them apart. Yakshagana is distinct with its unique *nritya* facet of performance (Karanth, 1997: P 103). Rhythmic synchronisation of footwork, hand gestures complete with song and music

supplied by the Bhagavata sets Yakshagana apart. Moving on to gauge hand gestures and movements, the information provided by our primary sources is rather contradictory; K.S. Karanth states that the hand gestures employed by Yakshagana actors are ones that are habitual and not formal *mudras* while G. Bapat stated quite the inverse (Bapat, 1998: P 71). Another major difference that one can observe is that Kathakali, unlike Yakshagana allows absolutely no spoken words between the actors. It lays greater importance and focus on the music and the *mudras*. Also, the dance in a Yakshagana performance is greatly supported by the music of the *chande* and *maddale* and the verses sung by the *Bhagavata* while in Kathakali, the metre of the the *Bhamini Shatpadi* proves to be the basis of the performance (Bhat and Bhat, 1982: P 4).

In our opinion another theatre art form that shares a few similarities with Yakshagana is the Ramlila that takes place in Ramnagar, located on the banks of the river Ganga. Like Yakshagana, the Ramlila too incorporates a number of religious themes. Yakshagana derives its themes from the Puranas, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana while the Ramlila solely derives its themes from the Ramayana. The Ramlila that takes place in Ramnagar is based on a 16th century Banarsi version of the Ramayana, focusing on the life and stories of Ram (Bonnemaison and Macy, 1990: P 3). Early Yakshagana was also a token of appreciation to the wealthy landlord that had sponsored the particular performance. (Ashton, 1977: P 8) Similarly, the Ramlila used to be carried out under the auspices of the Maharaja of Banaras, whose presence was necessary for the performance to commence (Bonnemaison and Macy, 1990: P 4). Thus, both these art forms could be looked upon as synchronous to each other in the sense that they were means through which their respective overlords asserted their status and power within the societies they resided in.

Evolution and Commercialisation

Honnavar

Jan 28th, 2013

As we walked through the narrow lanes of the Honnavar marketplace the various sights and smells intrigued me. Many small shops thronged the sides of these lanes. Shopkeepers and hawkers haggled frantically with their customers, school children walked by hand in hand chattering excitedly and cycles and bikes manoeuvred their way through the bustling people. The marketplace was a short lane with a couple of by-lanes which led to the houses of some of the shopkeepers.

We had split into pairs to interview the people of this small town to get a feel of their lifestyle and opinions on Yakshagana. Our attempts to merge into the crowd of people were futile. We began our little expedition- notebooks, pens and cameras in hand and were met with looks of wonder and sometimes suspicion. Whichever shop we entered we would be surrounded by eager bystanders curious to hear what we had to ask or say. They would all try to get a word in edgeways. We asked some shopkeepers if they had seen the Yakshagana dance form and what they thought of it. A few of them had not heard of it and those who had did mention having watched it a long time ago. Some of the younger people we spoke to seemed rather disinterested, and some, when questioned, looked at us like the very idea of them watching Yakshagana was preposterous. We got a sense that everyone was familiar with Yakshagana, but it was not as integral to their lives as it had been earlier, and that its popularity compared to that during the days of no television had waned considerably.

Over the past few decades, India has undergone a sweeping development, one that has influenced every aspect of culture and society in its wake. We are now in what cultural theorists would call a “post-colonial era” (Yang, Zhang and Wang, 2006: P 279) and the country has been rising in stature as it imposes itself on international markets. Globalisation has impacted all types of

cultural representations, including art forms such as Yakshagana. Certain aspects have changed, while others have remained intact for various reasons.

Changes in costumes:

Whatever the standing of Yakshagana might be among other folk or classical art forms of south India, there is no denying that it is one of the most visually appealing. Watching the performances, we were dazzled by the sheer volume of colour and movement on stage. The costuming is probably one of Yakshagana's most striking and attractive features and it had the ability to captivate us completely and help us transcend the language barrier to some extent. In earlier times, the costumes, especially the headgear, were made of heavy materials like wood and rope. The costumes also have several layers and are accompanied by heavy jewellery, especially in the case of males. This made wearing the costume for an overnight performance and yet retaining the energy to perform rather difficult.

During the seminar at MGM College near Yakshagana Kendra in Udupi, we spotted such headgear, masses of heavy rope and cloth, lying unattended in the green room. We also watched one of the artists wear headgear of this "ancient style." It looked like an extremely long-drawn, convoluted process that required years of expertise.

To make things easier for the performers, costumes and headgear have begun to be made of lighter materials such as thermocol. The headgear especially has become several times lighter and simpler to wear, since the actor now does not need to tie the various ropes around his head, and instead simply places it on himself. This also makes it easier during *Bayalata* performances, because with a lighter costume, the actor can perform with greater vigour and energy for longer periods of time. (Hegde, G.L. Personal Interview. 29th Jan 2013)



Figure 12. Detailed make-up and costumes of actors; headgear made of thermocol (right)

There are a few schools of puritans, however, who refuse to shift to the new thermocol headgear. At Gundabala, we were told that many old artists insist on using the old, rope-set headgear. Sanjiva Suvarna goes as

far as to make the use of traditional headgear compulsory in his school. According to him, this way is how it is “supposed to be” and he considered it important to keep this tradition from dying out. (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 1 Feb. 2013)

Aside from changes in the materials of



Figure 11. A Yakshagana performer playing the role of Rama (left), and a male actor playing the role of Sita (right)

costumes, we were told by most

scholars we interviewed that there has been almost no change in the appearance of costumes of

the male characters. But the costumes of women characters have constantly transformed along with the times. Women characters wear costumes that resemble the attire generally found in contemporary society at the time. (Karanth, 1997: P 130) Sanjiva Suvarna was also in agreement of this.

One might wonder why Yakshagana, which has so carefully preserved the tradition of male costumes, has not considered it of equal importance to hold on to female costumes of antiquity. Bapat has attempted to explain this as a “gender-identity crisis”. This refers to the gender discrepancy felt by the male actor while performing a female role, in which he tries hard to be accepted by the audience as a member of the opposite gender, ending up conforming to the present accepted appearance of the female gender. He also mentions that the grandeur of the male costumes when contrasted with the simplicity of those of the females’ can be taken as a sign of assertion of the “male ethos”. Men dominate this art form, and this reflects at a deeply connotative level its various aspects, including preservation of traditional costumes. (Bapat, 1998: P 165).

The costumes of this art form are one of its most important aspects. Several people we interviewed in and around the marketplace mentioned that this is the primary reason they are attracted to the performances. Therefore, there are only minor changes in the costumes, while the true nature of Yakshagana costumes, at least that of the males who chiefly dominate the art form, their flamboyance and colour is preserved.

Changes in Themes:

Like several other folk and classical art forms of the country, Yakshagana centres itself around stories from the great Indian epics and the Bhagavata Purana. But although the basic narrative remains the same, the stories have always been interpreted based on the social context at the time when they are read. To familiarise the audience and make them more comfortable with the characters and ideas in these epics, it is possible that certain contemporary social issues were always woven into the story in some way or the other.

Several of our interviews confirmed this, and we were told by everyone, including the common people, that references are generally made during the performance to certain issues that might strike a chord with the audience. These allusions are subtle; they are never overtly expressed by the actors. The audience are able to catch these references, however, as they are relevant both to the Yakshgana story and their society. These allusions can often serve as comic relief.

Several issues addressed include AIDS awareness, family planning and environmental awareness. Shivananda Hegde, in one of his performances, brought to mind the matter of family planning by reminding the audience that though Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas from the Mahabharata, had only three sons who all survived while Gandhari's hundred perished. The message was that the number of children you have is not of any value if none of them survive. A smaller family is a healthy family. During the Emergency years in India, Indira Gandhi was often subtly compared to the Goddess Kali. (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 27 Jan. 2013) But these subtle allusions are rejected by absolute puritans like Sanjiva Suvarna who believe that they in some way corrupt the "original" form of Yakshagana (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 1 Feb. 2013).

Although these references and insinuations are common, the basic storyline still falls under the broad overarching theme of the epics and Puranic stories. This has for the most part, been left untouched, since it speaks of the very origin of the dance-drama as a religious art form. Several people that we interviewed in the marketplace and at performances seemed to think that the very purpose of Yakshagana was to propagate these age-old stories, and remind people of what a lot of them called the tenets of "Indian culture."

"Commercial Troupes":

On the other end of the scale lie certain other groups that are known as the commercial troupes of Yakshagana. These are scorned by most scholars and proponents of a "purer" version of the art who believe them to be only focused on profit-making. Gathering a large audience would, in this case, be the sole aim of these performers – at least such is the belief of several scholars like G.L Hegde and M.L Samaga. Therefore, they would change their style of performance to suit the audience, and these are the groups that have actually changed the core nature of Yakshagana on the way to commercialising it.

M.L Samaga is of the opinion that commercial troupes treat Yakshagana as a product. Although the 'tent troupes,' who charged audiences in much the same way as a circus does, have mostly died out, the commercial troupes are still associated with profit-making. Samaga believes the popularity of these groups can be credited to the changing ideologies of people. "They want novelty", he says, speaking of the people of today's generation.

These commercial troupes have been accused of polluting the art form in several ways by scholars and artists that we interviewed. They include film-style narratives and also "item-

numbers”— songs with supposedly vulgar and sexually explicit content in both lyrics and dance. It is not uncommon for these troupes to advertise products and banking schemes for an advertising fee. (Hegde, G.L. Personal Interview. 29th Jan 2013).

Unfortunately, we were unable to personally meet with or interview any members of any such commercial troupe. Our perceptions of commercial troupes come from scholars and other renowned artistes which calls into question the impartiality of our content. A concept of “purity” of an art form is something that seems to pervade the ideologies of most of the scholars and artists we interviewed. Yet none of them can quite make it clear what this purity is, or what its exact reference point is. The general idea that we could form from our interviews is that these scholars seem to project an idealised version of Yakshagana onto the past, and commercialisation, which would be using the form to earn money and also changing it to suit people likes, would be a form of adulteration.

Women Performers

Shimoga

Jan 30th, 2013

Packed like sardines in a can for four hours, our twelve-member group emerged from the menacing Toofan that we were travelling in, squinting at each other in the merciless afternoon sunlight. Irritable, hungry and sore from the indescribable positions we sat in, all our first thoughts primarily revolve around three words; washroom, shelter, food. Having satisfied these primal urges and having gotten some semblance of smiles on our faces, our enthusiasm was building at the prospect of finally meeting what we initially thought was one of the few women’s Yakshagana troupes.

Cut to the residence of Kiran Pai, the woman who headed this all women’s troupe that we had heard so much about. The homely, quaint set up was the site of one of the most action-packed interviews of our field visit. Comprising an informal dance performance and an impromptu dress up session for which one of our group members was made the model; our three-hour stint at Shimoga was definitely worth the eight hour-long commute it mandated.

The history behind the inclusion of women in the performances is vague and our secondary source information for the same is limited. The mere mention of women performers in the initial stages of the developing art form is difficult to find in all the scholarly works that we have collected. Martha Bush Ashton is one of the few authors who believe that women once played a part in some capacity in Yakshagana performances. Ashton claims that before the name *Yakshagana Badagatittu Bayalata* was adopted, the primitive form of the dance-drama was called by various names as *Bhagavatara Ata* - referring to depictions of plays based on stories from the *Bhagavata Purana* (Ashton, 1977: P 23) and simply *Bayalata* (meaning an open-air performance). At this time, the performance consisted of solo performers, usually women, wearing the costume of a *Yaksha* and enacting the story through song and dance. (Ashton, 1969: P 148) However, it is unclear whether this was in fact a form of the same art form, or of another art form, *Kuravanji* which in some diluted sense might have donated some of its attributes to Yakshagana (Ashton, 1969: P 153). In another part of her article, Ashton attempts to throw some light upon how the exclusion of women from the performance came about. Following the *puja* and the introductions of the *Bhagavata*, musician, and clowns, the performance earlier consisted of the song and dance by women performers, through which they depicted the basic theme of the play to follow. (Ashton, 1969: P 150) During the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries, Brahmins dominated the art form, for the purpose of spreading their religious faith and preserving the dance-drama form. From this time on, only men have performed Yakshagana. She also says that the aforementioned introductory dances by women were now omitted in efforts to cut the duration of the performances. (Ashton, 1969: P 153) Given this sparse information, the connections she draws between the exclusion of women performers and the Brahmin control of the art form are still uncertain and are not substantiated with logical reasoning. Having found no certainty in our secondary sources information, we begun conducting our primary research under the impression that women played little to no part in Yakshagana whatsoever.

Women Performers – Perceptions:

On our numerous interviews with scholars, actors and audiences, the discussions we had surrounding the history of women performers were once again built on shaky grounds. While some were convinced that women performers were never a feature of the art form, others attributed their uncertainty on the topic to the poor quality of documentation of the art form in its original stages. However, everyone zealously affirmed the presence of women performers and troupes today and considered this a matter of prestige.

In our interview with Shivanada Hegde, the director of the Keremane Mela in Honnavar, we were made aware of his perspective about the origins of the woman performer. Earlier, in rural areas, the division of labour within a village meant that women were relegated to the household sphere, while males took up the duty of providing for their families, usually through farming. Yakshagana came up as a male dominated art form for these farming communities with women being held back from entering such a field while the women themselves were hardly interested. The village ethos itself was such that just the idea of women performing Yakshagana was considered absurd and unheard of. The practical problems that the performers faced – of strenuous dance steps with the heavy costumes and headdresses, the life of a troubadour travelling from village to village for performances – all together made it impossible for women to perform, he said. Today however, women are entering all fields and making themselves felt outside the household. Performing Yakshagana is just a natural occurrence owing to the progress women have made outside of the home in recent years. (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 27 Jan. 2013)

Mr. Hegde made it clear that he did not perceive women's role in Yakshagana as a matter of social debate. For him the longevity of the art form was of utmost importance and it mattered more that a show was carried out successfully more than who performed it. It is simply the practical problem of women not being able to put up a performance as well as a man would which decides that the choice of a performer is male. On further prodding, he did concede that perhaps it was owing to the very recent interest in the area that women performers were not as accomplished as their male counterparts. He said that in time, women's troupes would no longer be exceptions. (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 27 Jan. 2013)

Dr. Sridevi, a performer of Kuchipudi Yakshagana, a form of dance prevalent in Andhra, provided another perspective on women performers. According to her, women did not perform the dance style because of the difficulties that their menstrual cycles may pose in travelling from village to village to perform (Dr. Sridevi. Personal Interview. 25 Jan. 2013). Sanjiva Suvarna also suggested that women's 'monthly problems' restricted them from performing Yakshagana during the times when all performances took place in the temple yards as women are not allowed to enter temples during their menstrual cycle. "Today, these rules are not practiced. This is one of the good changes in Yakshagana." (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 1 Feb. 2013)



Figure 13. Mrs. Kiran Pai rehearsing in Shimoga

Overall, we understood from our interviews that the Yakshagana community welcomed women performers warmly in today's day. We interviewed a women's troupe from Shimoga headed by Mrs. Kiran Pai that was set up under the guidance of an experienced male Yakshagana artist. This troupe consisted of homemakers from Shimoga who performed Yakshagana at an amateur level and had put up successful performances across the country. According to them, they had never faced any discouragement or discrimination and were always well supported and encouraged. Female members of the audience, in turn, applauded their performances with added zest.

It is possible that in their quest to glorify the art form and present it in a positive and politically correct light, the interviewees held back on their true

opinions. For instance, when a female student in the Keremane Institute started talking about the problems that a woman might face when entering the art form, Shivananda Hegde immediately intervened in the conversation "If the families are unwilling, what can we do? The art form by itself is open to all." However, it is important to consider this is a potential error in data collection that cannot be corrected. We were not on field long enough to understand the relationship and interaction between male and female performers for ourselves and hence have to present to you the opinions of those who associate themselves to the propagation of their proud tradition.

Current Role of Women:

We were met with two very contrasting images of the involvement of women in Yakshagana while conducting preliminary research and when on field. With little to no mention of women

performers in our secondary sources, our group went into the field with the idea that the mere mention of women in Yakshagana would be met with apprehension and discouragement. Our findings on field however suggested quite a different story altogether. With most scholars, actors and even audiences open to the idea of watching a female performance; our presupposed beliefs about the taboo that women faced in Yakshagana were slowly deconstructed and instead revealing a sense of social openness to performances by women. Through our interview with Mrs. Pai's troupe and audiences, we learned that there exist a decent number of women troupes in Karnataka, some with considerable repute. Apart from all women troupes, there are also women who perform with men. There exist, however, no professional women troupes though some women do perform professionally in male-dominated troupes. (Pai, Kiran. Personal Interview. 30 Jan. 2013)

Yakshagana Kendra in Udupi conduct evening training sessions for homemakers that are passionate about Yakshagana, however, all the full time students of the Kendra were male. Both Sanjiva Suvarna and Shivananda Hegde (who also houses only male students), however, also conscripted this, as an issue of practicality. According to them, they would need additional room to put up female students as well as specialised staff. Even if the funds were acquired, they are not certain that families would be willing to allow their daughters to pursue such an education away from home. Instead, Yakshagana Kendra also offers evening classes for girl students and Sanjiva Suvarna showed off his best female student with considerable pride.

Shivananda Hegde, in his interview, also commented on the quality of performances of women's troupes. In his opinion, women cannot do justice to the emotions and behaviours of male characters, whereas men can do a good job of taking up a female character. "People go to watch women performances because they're women – an uncommon sight in Yakshagana – not because of the quality of performances." (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 27 Jan. 2013). He also said that if a woman portrays a woman's character, the depiction becomes realistic rather than exaggerated. In this way, the dramatic appeal of the performance is lost.

Sanjiva Suvarna had a different outlook on women performers today. According to him, like in any other field, women actually perform better than men do. The truth in their emotions, the grace in their steps, and their accuracy in rhythmic timing – all impress him to a great degree (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 1 Feb. 2013).

While Yakshagana and the society it is prevalent in are becoming more accommodating of women's participation in the art form, it is still far from a completely egalitarian setup. Though on the face of it, women are encouraged and revered for performing, there are a few subtle indicators that show a gender disparity. An example of this is the supreme grandeur of male costumes when compared to the simple costumes of women characters. Another power play at work within Yakshagana until recently is the patronage it offered to wealthy landlords who sponsored the performances. Also, in the past it was mainly performed by lower or peasant classes, whereby one could draw an inference that it was mainly for the entertainment of the upper classes, though there is no evidence to substantiate this claim. We have observed that the power plays and politics within and surrounding the art form have changed quite drastically from before. However, this change has not produced any visible changes within the performance and other facets of Yakshagana.

Chapter 4 – Yakshagana in its Cultural Context

Udupi

Feb 2nd, 2013

As the blisters began to form on our feet and the tar collected in our lungs, we decided it was necessary to park ourselves under the shade of the auto rickshaw stand. A rickshaw is by no means ideal protection from the sun but such was the relentless heat of Udupi that black awning seemed comforting to our tiring bodies. Our Goldflake smoke tickled the driver's nose and he stirred from his restless nap.

"Bhaiyya, aapne kabhi Yakshagana dekha?"

"Haan dekha hain."

"Aapko Yakshagana mein sabse accha kya lagta hain?"

"I don't like Yakshagana!"

Wow, this looked like the end of our rest under this man's rickshaw. Clearly he wasn't up for conversation.

"People think it's because I'm Muslim that I don't like to watch Yakshagana. But I don't watch movies or even cricket. Nahi boss, yeh entertainment business mere ko entertain nahi karta."

"But do Muslim people generally watch Yakshagana at all?"

"Muslim people even perform Yakshagana beta. In Udupi there is no difference between Hindu and Muslim or Brahmin and Shudra. I've travelled outside of Udupi and come across politicians spreading hatred among communities to help their interests. But here, my Hindu brothers would be the first to defend my honour in front of these thieving swines."

Ah well, he didn't know too much about Yakshagana but the conversation was refreshing. As we got up to initiate parting pleasantries he sprang up. "Aapke naam kya hain?"

"Akshay, Sameer aur Aaron."

Not until we had put a sizeable distance between us and our temporary refuge did we understand the crazy coincidence that had just occurred. And then we understood the beaming smile that wished us goodbye and we silently sent our smiles back his way.

Yakshagana is deeply ingrained and also much appreciated in quite a few areas in northern Karnataka; we observed this first-hand in Udupi and Honnavar by interacting with the general public there. We soon got a sense that asking people if they watch Yakshagana was in fact similar to asking an urban elite population if they used computers. In this section we shall focus our attention on Yakshagana's impact on social as well as cultural facets surrounding societies that it is performed in. Firstly, we shall enquire into the economic viability of the art form as a full-time occupation as well as reasons for performing that might be distinct from material ones. We shall then probe into the styles of performance, mainly the *Bayalata* (overnight performances) and the abridged shows in commercial settings and the switch in popularity between the two due to changes in interest patterns. Another topic that we shall discuss is the role women play in Yakshagana and also how men successfully embrace feminine roles. We shall then move on to discuss the symbolic significance of the art form and then conclude by asserting that it is due to the failure of the leading perpetrators of the art form to acknowledge change that one can observe a gradual waning in the popularity of Yakshagana.

On reaching Udupi, we were quite surprised to learn that Yakshagana was everywhere - posters decorated city walls and performers graced TV screens. Contrary to our opinion based on the sparse availability of secondary sources, the art was not one enshrouded in oblivion. "It is the great tradition that tells the story of our Indian culture," said an amateur Yakshagana artist at the Gundabala temple. This Indian culture, according to him, is at risk of being forgotten as the young generation in the big cities drift toward "western style and western civilisation." Yakshagana can be the link between an ancient, glorified cultural heritage and a modern, globalised youth. (S, Balakrishna. Personal Interview. 28 Jan. 2013)

Yakshagana today can be considered to be a sustainable profession if an artist manages to make it to a reputed troupe. Some of the better and more reputed performers in a troupe earn about fifteen hundred rupees or more per show (Suvarna, Sanjiva. Personal Interview. 1 Jan. 2013), however, the performers from the smaller troupes are not as lucky. The troupe that performs at Gundabala temple is paid 9,600 rupees for a night's performance and this fee has to be shared amongst a troupe of twenty five. (Bhatt, Shripal. Personal Interview. 28 Jan. 2013). In this distribution there exists a hierarchy: the *Bhagavata* is paid the most followed by the leading actor of the troupe. (Hegde, G. L. Personal Interview. 29 Jan. 2013) This led us to question the

popularity of Yakshagana as a profession, especially one that could support and sustain an entire family.

While conducting our research, we encountered three types of Yakshagana performers: the professionals, the amateurs and those who performed as *seva*. At Gundabala itself, these three types of performers were present. Professional and amateur performers are the two fixed groups where as those who performed as a form of *seva* could fall under either category. *Seva* would mean performing with a troupe for a single performance with no lucrative intentions but rather as a sign of devotion to the gods. At Gundabala we encountered Mr. Balakrishna who was an amateur performer who travelled to Gundabala from Gunavante only to perform out of a sense of duty and worship. There was also a performer from Shivananda Hegde's own troupe (hence a Yakshagana artist by profession) who performed from time to time at Gundabala as part of his *seva*.

The performances at Gundabala themselves are signs of devotion to the presiding deity of Shri Mukhyaprana Lakshmi Venkatarama temple. After asking for a boon from the deity of the temple, the devotee pledges to sponsor one Yakshagana performance at the temple ground. The devotee has the liberty to pick which episode from the epics he would like the troupe to perform. The Shri Mukhyaprana temple is a popular one and devotees have to wait approximately four years for their sponsored performance to take place. (Temple Priest. Personal Interview. 28 Jan. 2013)

The fourth category of Yakshagana artists – the “commercial” artists or troupes, performs with the help of sponsors who want their performances to attract large numbers. These troupes are the descendants of the “tent” troupes who charged an entry fee at their shows. This phenomenon quickly died out, however, and there are only two such troupes remaining in Udupi Karnataka. (Bhatt, Krishna. Personal Interview. 31 Jan. 2013). The commercial troupes, like the tent troupes before them, were perceived as aberrations by those associated with the pure tradition. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these troupes experimented with cinematic stories and popular song and dance routines from Kannada and mainstream Hindi cinema. Theirs is an attempt to modernise the dance form with the hope of attracting larger numbers to their shows. Such troupes are also used by banks and other corporations to advertise new schemes or products. (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 27 Jan.2013)

Attendance at Yakshagana performances can vary from the type of performance. The *Bayalata* shows are long and arduous affairs that are not as popular as they used to be. The increasing popularity of television provides direct competition to *Bayalata* shows and they are no more the exciting family affairs as romanticised by Shivaram Karanth. At Gundabala, the troupe often performs to an empty temple ground since they are not permitted to stop the performance having received payment for it. (Temple Priest. Personal Interview. 28 Jan. 2013)

The “abridged” shows that take place in the cities and bigger towns are more popular and attendances are generally higher. Many are drawn by a sense of tradition as they have grown up watching performances. While some stand by the educational value of Yakshagana for children, others enjoy it simply for the dance and elaborate costuming. “The use of comedy in performances today makes them more interesting and I enjoy watching them more today.” (Laxmi. Personal Interview. 26 Jan. 2013). This can be contrasted with the account of our taxi driver who saw the increasing use of comedy as a blemish on the pure tradition that Yakshagana represents.

Yakshagana and Gender

In a folk art form such as Yakshagana, where the stories presented are adopted and to a very small extent adapted from ancient Indian texts of the Puranic period, gender roles of characters are distinctly defined. But considering the fact that female characters in Yakshagana are largely played by men, we thought it would be interesting to look into how a male performer implements the role of a woman, and what, in effect, constitutes “the woman” in our culture, as can be deduced from Yakshagana.

A patriarchal society by its very nature implies a dividing line between males and females. Starting from defined roles in the domestic space, it translates into specific characteristics being set down as rules for both genders that each must abide by. Taking a broad example of this, is the idea that men are supposed to be strong and dominant, while women are supposed to be fragile, submissive and dependent on men; it is obvious that both genders are expected to behave in specific ways. Judith Butler is a cultural theorist who has published extensively on this nature of gender, a phenomenon she terms “gender performativity”. Butler says: “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender.” She also says that “Identity is performatively

constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results.” (Butler, 2006: P 25) To paraphrase, gender is not as much *who you are*, as *what you do* at a particular time.

The two contrasting theories of gender; essentialism and social constructionism attempt to explain the basis of gender. While essentialism supposes that gender is based on certain predispositions to particular types of behaviour, and that masculinity and femininity in society actually have a biological basis; social constructionism rejects this idea completely, talking of how bodies are shaped, constructed, constrained and even invented by society. Mary Holmes writes about how gender is nothing but conforming to social expectations. (Dutt and Munsri, 2010: P 191)

Jane C. Desmond discusses the regulations on a woman’s body in dance in her essay ‘Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies’. She speaks of conventions of bodily activity, in dance, representing highly codified and mediated representations of social distinctions. (Desmond, 1997: 32) Janet Wolff, in her essay ‘Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics’ writes: ‘Women learn as girls to monitor their appearance, and to what is presented in their culture as some ideal of femininity.’ (Dutt and Munsri, 2010: P 193) All of these theorists speak of the same concept – that of gender being in essence a construct, and merely a repeated performance of what is expected of a person based on their sex.

The idea of communicating through movement, of bodily gestures transcending into meaning-making forms of such communication is what the theory of *Rasa* is about. This is also stressed in the *Natyashastra*, which lays down rules for female characters, presupposing a certain “feminine way” a female character is supposed to move and emote. (Dutt and Munsri, 2010: P 200)

Theories and ideas such as these can be superimposed onto a gendered understanding of a Yakshagana performance. An ideal of femininity amongst women is very clearly present in Indian society, and this is the ideal that the male performers try to align to when they play a female character. The things that a woman is expected to do by society are dutifully copied into the dance by a man playing a female character.

In the performance, we observed that male characters are erect and firm in their stature, as a result becoming more physically imposing. Their postures and movements are a lot more sharp and forceful compared to the female characters. The female characters on the other hand are

played by smaller, slighter male actors. We observed that they left their bodies loose, and there was a lot more grace in their movements as they attempted to appear delicate.

This effort put into appearing feminine by male performers, and appearing masculine by female performers when they play a male character was implied as very important in several interviews we conducted.

Adhering to this societal code of how gender is represented through movement and behaviour is essential to be convincing in the role the actor plays, and this is a given, accepted unquestioningly by the performers. They are also judged based on this, and Shivananda Hegde also mentioned in his interview that women performers were somehow not as convincing in their male roles as male actors could be in female roles for several reasons including their voice and their stance, which might not be appropriate for the male characters that they portray (Hegde, Shivananda. Personal Interview. 27 Jan 2013).

As far back as confirmed recorded history goes,



Figure 14. A male performer dressed up as Sita

Yakshagana has always been performed by men, and until very recently, it was only men who played female characters. The code they follow to appear “feminine” is as implicit as are the expectations from a woman concerning her outward appearance and behaviour in society. The fact that this is also mentioned in the *Natyashastra* and that the epics too, have a clear idea of what a beautiful, ideal woman is evidence for the fact that the idea of gendered gestures and movement has prevailed since these were written. Yakshagana especially reflects these expectations of both men and women in society that are taken for granted, since this unspoken code is followed by both men and women when they play characters of the opposite gender.

Symbolic Significance of Yakshagana

Contemporary societal structure is very important in order to understand the symbolic significance of Yakshagana. We have a greater number of secondary sources on this topic as compared to primary sources, because it is the scholars who study Yakshagana who are actually more interested in the symbolism underlying it than the actors who perform it or the people who merely watch it as a form of entertainment.

The sponsorship of a Yakshagana performance is seen to be of great significance. The sponsor is generally a landlord who is treated as a patron, and is allowed the luxury of choosing the story that has to be presented. He is usually thanked before, during or after the performance which symbolises his power, influence and authority in the society. (Bapat, 1998: P 195) Societal structure and hierarchy is somehow reaffirmed in the performances. The *Kshatriya* and *Brahmin* castes form the upper tiers and portray the main characters; whereas the other castes are hardly even referred to. However, if they were acting, they would generally play the servants or secondary roles to the upper caste characters. This, whether done intentionally or unintentionally, highlighted and glorified the social hierarchy. Even this unequal social system had some sort of stability, which was termed by Clifford Geertz as “the sanctification of social inequality”. (Bapat, 1998: P 195)

On field, we were surprised to learn that aside from its entertainment value, Yakshagana is also deeply ingrained in the minds of the people as a symbol of their culture. As an amateur performer at the Gundabala temple noted, “Yakshagana is essential to preserve and propagate Indian culture and civilisation in the minds of the younger generation.” (S, Balakrishna. Personal Interview. 28 Jan. 2013) For the older generation, Yakshagana represents the culture they were surrounded by, and the stories they grew up hearing. Greatly pained by the fact that the youth of today does not seem to care much for “Indian culture and civilisation”, it is almost as if Yakshagana is a beacon of hope for those wishing to hold on to what is now slowly becoming obsolete, or replaced by a more Western culture and frame of mind.

Many people echoed this sentiment regarding the educational value of Yakshagana performances. For the ones that believe the ancient Indian texts and epics are a doctrine, a moral guide, they make sure that they take their children to watch these performances because according to them it is imperative to their education. According to Balakrishna S., these texts

“teach you how to live”. (S, Balakrishna. Personal Interview. 28 Jan. 2013) It struck us how similar it was to our parents encouraging us to read the *Amarchitra Katha* as children to learn about the many myths and legends of the great epics.

Several families take their children to watch these performances to ensure that they learn about their own art, music, and literature. “Everything the children of this generation know about the epics is because of Yakshagana” is what a renowned scholar, Professor G.L. Hegde told us during an interview with him. He also thinks that a child from Karnataka would know more about Hindu culture and religion as compared to children of other states solely because of the presence of this art form. According to him, the essence of Yakshagana is its educational value. (Hegde, G.L. Personal Interview. 29 Jan 2013)

We gathered that Yakshagana is perceived as standing for knowledge in several ways, apparently leading to the holistic growth of an individual by improving his or her knowledge of several issues, whether ethical or political, drastically. From our interviews, we got a general sense of it being repeatedly glorified and sanctified as a symbol for Hindu traditions and a culture that is slipping away with time.

Preserving Tradition

It is human nature to express and communicate as a group through the invention of certain symbols and also through common codes of conduct. These coupled with various rituals and forms of expression, expressed through art is what makes up culture. Culture is in large parts an agglomeration of ideologies and beliefs that have found the greatest reception in the people belonging to a particular community (Althusser, 1970: P 204). These mainstream ideologies and beliefs are subject to change, though this change is gradual, and significant change is only seen with an extreme change in one’s surroundings. Culture being something that is constantly re-created to best suit a community’s surrounding is a plethora of ideals and views that forms a base from which one can make meaning of life and one’s surroundings. With the drastic change that has occurred around the world in the past century or so, we find many societies around the world that are trying to “preserve” their culture or keep old customs and beliefs alive and maintain their status in mainstream ideologies. Yakshagana has a similar story in societies where it is performed. The various people that control its workings; the top performers, scholars, etc. all

make a seemingly recurrent claim, where they talk about how Yakshagana helps in preserving Indian or more precisely Kannada culture.

Widespread capitalism and globalisation along with tremendous technological advancement has led to a great number of changes in people's surroundings worldwide. To cope as a society with this massive change requires that we come up with new beliefs and models that are best suited to understanding and optimizing our existence at this present moment rather than at some point in the past. At the same time it would be rather close-minded and regressive of a community to completely put aside that knowledge that is a result of hundreds of generations of thought and debate. Yakshagana when viewed as an aspect or reflection of Karnataka culture faces a similar dilemma.

Karnataka has moved towards a capitalist form of subsistence and have incorporated global ideals into their way of life, more so in richer urban areas than in lesser developed or rural areas. Thus, in a quickly changing Karnataka society, Yakshagana is a medium through which its people hang on to the last vestiges of culture that they have been handed down through the generations. This is hard to accomplish as the art form strives to maintain its "purity" or older traditions when confronted with newer and different ideologies that disrupt old norms of what is interesting or even relevant for that matter. Many performing troupes of Yakshagana have altered their styles so as to be fit for a different and more impatient market of people, or have changed the original form of the performance for a more commercialized one. Additionally, in very recent times there is definitely a greater audience for Yakshagana in rural settings than in urban ones. This again shows how an increased change in a community's surroundings results in cultural change and transformation that many a times requires old belief systems to be discarded.

Yakshagana as a whole plays a large role in educating youth on Indian mythology and culture as well as imparting a set of pre-dominating societal ethical codes. In pre-industrial society, where contemporary forms of information dispersal or education were unavailable; especially so to the common man, Yakshagana was an easily accessible imparter of knowledge and education. One could infer that the art form is slowly losing popularity, partly due to the diminishing significance or utility that religious and mythological knowledge has within society today. The predominant ideology within society today is geared towards achieving the objective of economic development, whereby traditional or mythological knowledge are not directly applicable so as to achieve these set objectives. Yakshagana, until today plays a large role in

people's lives in parts of Karnataka, though one can quite easily observe the variegated levels of interest that are existent amongst different generations. The introduction of a large spread of options with which one can entertain oneself has forced Yakshagana to compete with other contemporary forms of entertainment. This competitiveness has forced Yakshagana to evolve in certain ways (commercialisation for instance), that is not viewed favourably by those involved for a long time, who are still clinging on to their notions of purity and originality that have a clearly historical basis. Thus, by being steadfast about preserving the tradition exactly as it was earlier is certainly not viable, due to the fact that it must remain relevant to be considered important. All art forms and cultural artefacts are a result of the prevalent ideology of a particular time period, and it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain popularity unless it juxtaposes itself to the dominant ideology.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

While selecting our area of research, we became interested in the ‘inextricable relationship’ between an art form and a culture we spoke so much about at the offset of this report. We were lucky to have found a research mentor who had already studied Yakshagana and our journey began. While we began our research with the hope of understanding how an art form is impacted by, and in turn impacts, the socio-cultural context it is set in, we became increasingly captivated by various cultural phenomena in Yakshagana. As it turns out, our research brought us to question **how Yakshagana has evolved as a folk theatre tradition in response to cultural changes in northern coastal Karnataka.**

Yakshagana, as a dance-drama tradition, is one of Karnataka’s cultural jewels. Interpreting the ancient Hindu epics through song, dance and drama, Yakshagana makes the knowledge of the gods accessible to the common man. Accompanied by a *Bhagavata* or narrator, who sings in a style quite different from *Hindustani* or *Carnatic* classical music; the actors play out the stories of characters such as Krishna, Rama and Ravana. After the prose conveyed by the actors translates the *Bhagavata*’s Sanskrit lines into Kannada for the audience, the *chande* and *maddale* add percussive intensity to the whole affair as the actors turn to dance in an attempt to express their deepest emotions and desires. Through his dance, the Yakshagana artist draw his audience to his state of mind, either twisting his body in grief or stomping across stage in a flight of fury.

Yakshagana performances are traditionally held in temple grounds or fields and stretch from dusk to dawn of the next day. This practice, however, is becoming increasingly rare especially in urban setups as people find less time to spend watching Yakshagana. Many who are yet associated with the *Bayalata* (outdoor and overnight) performances blame the introduction of television for the waning popularity of Yakshagana Bayalata. Yet most Kannada people believe that it is impossible for them to attend these all night performances owing to their jobs and other commitments. They prefer instead to attend the abridged performances that are popular in urban areas or, even better yet, watch the studio Yakshagana performances that are shown on T.V. While speaking to people on the streets of Udupi and Honnavar about Yakshagana, we noticed

that it was largely the young and the old who were interested in attending Yakshagana (especially *Bayalata*) shows. The working population seemed to have generally lost interest in the art, perhaps as a result of work pressures and constraints.

Women have now become an important part of a tradition that was not merely male-dominated but rather an art form exclusive for males. While we were initially surprised at the presence of female performers and even all-women troupes; to the people of Karnataka this seemed a natural step in the evolution of society. As women became increasingly active in all spheres of life outside of the home, it was only a matter of time before they expressed themselves in male-dominated art forms.

Technological advances have also affected Yakshagana in positive ways. Industrialisation brought with it light material such as thermocol which Yakshagana artists have used to make their jobs easier. Television and even radio (broadcasting *tala maddale*) make Yakshagana accessible to the people in their homes. Electronic amplification carries the sound of the *chande* even further than the instrument did on its own, announcing an imminent performance to all who can hear. Some troupes even experiment with coloured lighting to denote mood. (Saamaga, M.L. Personal Interview. 31 Jan. 2013) Here exists conflict, however, as some do not see these technological modifications as blessings but rather as negative deviations from the traditions of their ancestors.

This is where we come across one of the most interesting aspects of our research. In all honesty, this phenomenon was discovered by accident as some of us were engaged in casual conversation with our mentor on the long commute between Shimoga and Udupi. As the banter steered toward the interviews we had conducted that day, we were all captivated by the passion with which all the actors and scholars clung onto their sense of tradition. Many of them had devoted their lives to maintaining the ‘purity’ of the art form of their ancestors and ensuring its survival. We became interested in this act of ‘preserving tradition’ and began to wonder whether these efforts were truly helpful as far as ensuring the longevity of Yakshagana was concerned.

To us, it seems quite evident that a culture will never remain stagnant but rather evolve to suit the needs of the hour. In this way, as Karnataka embraces industrialised modes of subsistence and opens its doors to foreign investment, Kannada society evolves in its tastes and worldviews. As this natural progression occurs, we wonder whether an art form so caught up in antiquity would ever survive the test of time.

The efforts of leading Yakshagana performers and scholars to “preserve” their art form in a modern context can be looked at as stagnation. As children in the cities are increasingly exposed to modern ideals and forms of entertainment through the various electronic media, will they be able to relate to Yakshagana the same way as their parents and grandparents did before them?

According to Yakshagana scholar and amateur performer Professor G.L. Hegde, the waning importance of religion and spirituality will not affect Yakshagana popularity. For him, Yakshagana above all else is a symbol of Kannada culture and as long as the Kannada language and its culture survived, Yakshagana would endure.

“I’ve never been to a Yakshagana show in my life and I’m from a pure Kannada family. Honestly, kids our age in Bangalore could not care less about the art. To us, it’s something our grandparents used to watch when televisions weren’t too popular.” The words of our colleague from Bangalore resonate the problem Yakshagana is bound to come across in time. As Karnataka changes to keep up with the trend of globalisation, it becomes imperative that the art form embraces change so as to ensure its survival. Temporal and thematic relevance to the shifting times needs to be maintained if Yakshagana is to keep its niche in society.

Glossary

Badagatittu: A northern style of Yakshagana

Bayalata: An open air performance in a field or plain.

Bhagavata: The lead singer who sings Sanskrit verses from the *Bhagavata Purana* and other Puranas.

Bhagavatara Ata: Refers to stories depicted from the *Bhagavata Purana*. It was also a name used for Yakshagana previously.

Bhagavata mela: A traditional theatre dance form of Tamil Nadu.

Bhagavata Purana: Mythological stories from the Mahabharata

Chande: A double headed cylindrical drum played with sticks.

Chechu: An agrarian community in Northern District of *Karnataka*.

Dakshina Gana: Southern style of music

Ekkalagana: A style of music as described in the *Mallinatha Purana* and *Candaprabha Purana*.

Gana: Sanskrit word for song, or music.

Ganas: Demi-gods who serve Shiva under the leadership of Lord Ganesha

Gandharagrama: One of the three parent scales or *gramas* in that existed before the time of the *Natyashastra*.

Gandharvas: Godly beings or guards of the pleasure gardens of the Vedic god Indra.

Havyakas: A Brahmin sub-caste, literally translated as “the one who performs”.

Jakka: A word of Dravidian origin, in K.S. Karanth’s opinion, a corrupt form of the word *yaksha*.

Keladi: A temple town in Shimoga district in Karnataka

Kireeta Mukuta: A high and pointed headgear or crown.

Kuravanji: A Tamil dance drama performed generally by women.

Kurava: An ethnic Tamil community of Southern India

Lord Kubera: Hindu god of wealth

Maddale: A barrel shaped, double headed drum played on both sides with hands respectively.

Mukuta: Headgear, or crown

Madhavacharya: Founder of a thirteenth century Vaishnava movement advocating *Dvaita* or dualism philosophy.

Mudras: Hand gestures with specific meaning.

Nagachandra: A prominent poet of Kannada literature.

Natya: Focus on speech with voice and language as a means of drama

Nritta: Pure dance using physical body movement with an emphasis on rhythm, without emotional or spoken content.

Nritya: Theatrical expression with body movement and song.

Natyashastra: Bharatmuni's work on a Sanskrit technique of drama composition

Navrasas: Nine emotions or feelings –love, mirth, pity, anger, courage, fear, surprise, peace and disgust.

Raga: One of the most fundamental concepts of classical Indian music. It is a unique mixture rising or falling order of *swaras* or notes.

Purana: History and legends of Hindu mythology

Sabhalakshana: Name of the opening part of a Yakshagana performance. It consists of pre-performance puja which was behind the curtains earlier, but nowadays it is displayed on stage. Also known as *purvaranga*.

Seva: Service

Shri Mukhyaprana Lakshmi Venkatarama: A Hanuman temple in Gundabala

Talamaddale: A type of Yakshagana comprising of only music and improvised text.

Terukuttu: A traditional drama form of Tamil Nadu

Tenkutittu: Southern style of Yakshagana from the southern region of Karnataka

Virata Parva: A book on King Virata from the Mahabharata

Vighnaharta: Another name for Lord Ganesha, literally translated as 'remover of obstacles'.

Yakshas: Divine helpers of Kubera, the god of wealth

Yakkalagana: A theatrical art form referred to in Kannada poems

Procured from:

- Ashton, Martha Bush. "Yakshagana. A South Indian Folk Theatre." *The Drama Review: TDR* , Vol. 13, No. 3, Pp. 148-155. The MIT Press, Spring 1969. Web. 14 Jan. 2013.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1144470>
- Hegde, G. S. *Yaksagana and its Sanskrit Sources*. Delhi: Parimal Publications, 1997. Print.

Bibliography

- Ashton, Martha Bush. "Yakshagana. A South Indian Folk Theatre." *The Drama Review: TDR* , Vol. 13, No. 3, Pp. 148-155. The MIT Press, Spring 1969. Web. 14 Jan. 2013.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1144470>
- Ashton-Sikora, Martha Bush., and Bruce Christie. *Yakṣhagāna, a Dance-Drama of India*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1977. Print.
- Bapat, Gururao. *Semiotics of Yakshagana*. Udupi: Regional Resources Centre for Folk Performing Arts, 1998. Print.
- Barba, Eugenio and Sanzenbach, Simonne. "The Kathakali Theatre" *The Tuane Drama Review* Vol. 11, No. 4. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1967. Web. 21 March 2013.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1125137>
- Bonnemaïson, Sarah and Macy, Christine. "The Ramlila of Ramnagar". *Design Quarterly*, No. 147, Celebrations: Urban Spaces Transformed, 1990. Web. 21 March 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4091217>
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. Routledge, May 12, 2006. Print.
- Daugherty, Diane and Marlene Pitkow. "Who Wears the Skirts in Kathakali". *TDR* (1988), Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 138-156, Summer, 1991. Web. 20 March 2013.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146093>
- Desmond, Jane C. "Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies." *Cultural Critique*, No. 26, pp. 33-63. University of Minnesota Press. Winter, 1993-1994. 14 March, 2013. Web. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1354455>
- Dutt, Bishnupriya. Munsî, Urmimāla S. *Engendering Performance: Indian Women Performers in Search of an Identity*. Sage Publications India, 2010. Print.
- "Folk Dance". *Encyclopædia Britannica*. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2013. Web. 24 Mar. 2013
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/212114/folk-dance>
- "Folk Dance". *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster Inc. Web. 21 Mar. 2013
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/folk%20dance>

- Hegde, G. S. *Yaksagana and its Sanskrit Sources*. Delhi: Parimal Publications, 1997. Print.
- *Indian Classical Dances*. Centre for Cultural Resources and Training. Under the aegis of Ministry of Culture, Government of India. Web. 21 March 2013.
<http://ccrtindia.gov.in/classicaldances.htm>
- Ions, Veronica. *Indian Mythology*. London: Hamlyn, 1967. Print.
- K. S. Haridasa Bhat & N. Thirumaleshwara Bhat. *Oddologa: An Introduction to Yakshagana*. Udupi: National Festival of Yakshagana, 1982. Print.
- Karanth, K. Shivarama. *Yaksagana*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publication, 1997. Print.
- Kumar, Nirmalya et al. *India's Global Powerhouses: How They Are Taking on the World*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business, 2009. Print.
- Raṅganāthan, H. K. *The Karnatak Theatre*. Dharwad: Karnatak University, 1982. Print.
- Szeman, Imre. Kaposy, Timothy. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus (Notes towards an Investigation)”. *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. Print.
- Varadpande, Manohar Laxman. *Krishna Theatre in India*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1982. Print.
- Yang, Geng. Zhang, Qixue. Wang, Qi. “The Essence, Characteristics and Limitation of Post-Colonialism: From Karl Marx's Point of View.” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Jun., 2006), pp. 279-294. 14 March, 2013. Web
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30209970>