CHAPTER III

THE FOLK THEATRE

The Folk People: Folk, the ethnic term suggests a group of kindred people forming a tribe or a nation; now generally used with reference to a primitive stage of social organisation, especially to those emerging from the tribal state (Webster). This description suggests that the 'folk people' would collectively be the masses of people of 'lower' culture in a homogeneous social group, a people bound together by ties of race, language and religion; and a group, the great proportion of which tends to preserve its indigenous and characteristic forms of civilization, custom, arts, crafts and tradition unchanged from generation to generation.

Likewise, the 'folk people' of Karnataka seem to have remained a continually constant group in spite of the inevitable change of the individual. The characteristics of the group are not much changed, nor even the complexity of its civilization with its inherent and indigenous culture, conserved in its pristine glory. The folk of Karnataka is a symbolic monument of the cultural activities of the people, thus providing a living document of their past. It is in this sense the term 'folk' with its inseparable connotation is considered in estimating its theatre.

Theatre of the Folk: The folk theatre is the theatre of the masses and is also called 'The Village Theatre', 'The Rural Theatre' and "The Peoples' Theatre". The folk theatre usually reflects eloquently on the past of a country's theatre
and forms the basic structure for the professional and the amateur stages of the urban area. It is a live spring which continually supplies the 'elan vital' to its counterparts. It preserves, rejuvenates and inspires the cultural achievement of the people. It forms the source and supplies resources for the progress of theatrical art.

'Real Indir lives in her villages,' because the village houses the folk with all its 'soft green of the soul' of culture, art and tradition. It is the village that has protected the folk arts—the dance, music and drama in their original simplicity and sublime glory. Dance, especially, is the most original, spontaneous and universal method of expression of the joys of life and that has remained as the treasure of the village. The mainstay of the folk theatre is its dance—be it ritual, religious or secular.

Origin in Rituals: "The origin of the theatre is to be found in the religious and ceremonial cult through which primitive peoples of all times have sought to promote the welfare of the tribe by incurring the favour of deities and placating the spirit of evil."¹ To know the full implication of this remark of Julius Bab and also the "raison d'être" of the folk theatre, it is essential to look into the working of the mind of the primitive man.

The primitive man was guided, possibly more by impulses and instincts than reasoning. Ignorance of the causation of the natural phenomena on the one hand, and the lack of capacity for cogent reasoning on the other, made the primitive man FEAR everything; he did not properly understand.

¹ Julius Bab—Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences. Vol.15. p.998.
Fear was the dominant instinct that persuaded his activity; fear, especially of hunger, sleep, sex and evils. Rituals when analysed show the effort of the primitive man to invoke the aid of the phenomenal powers to get their assistance in keeping the four-fold fears away from his doors, or to offer thanks when his wishes were acceded to. There is, perhaps, no ritual which is not either an invocation or a thanksgiving.

Of the four, the fear of the evil (Bhaya) dominated and gave rise to a number of rituals. The ritual was to please the ghost (Devva) which was understood to have been causing the evil, or to please its superior power (Jeva) which was capable of controlling the ghost. It was natural that the ghost, the master of evils was much feared and respected. The ghost, "the eye of the folk, would express itself by hurling an earthquake or a famine or casting a devouring plague. Both the individual and the community indulged in different rituals and worships to propitiate them in order to ward off war, famine or disease and when relieved, joyous and grateful festivals of deliverance were celebrated.

One of the most popular methods of humouring the ghost or to thank him was to sing his prayers and dance for his glory,—often to one of their own who was made to represent the ghost. It is in this 'representation' of the ghost and in the dance and music of the community, we see the seed of the drama. Even to-day, when mostly the original fear has

1 भय, अभय अभिप्रय.
made way to traditional faith, the old modes and original forms of worship can be traced in the villages of Karnataka. Through their worships, the folk people have preserved their arts and expression; it is here some of the old archaic modes of the existing folk theatre are seen.

The home of rituals: The coastal region of Karnataka, with its thunderous skies, pouring rains, thick forests and dangerous valleys of the ghats, intensely feels the presence of the phenomenal powers, and so, has been the home of ghost-worship, might be a totemistic relic. Ghost is the presiding deity over the destinies of man in the coastal village and on several fixed occasions in the year, festive ceremonies called 'Kola', 'Kera', 'Agol Tambali Bandi' and 'Nana' are celebrated with great eclat. On all these occasions, the particular ghost (Bhoota) invoked 'possesses' a dancer who is gorgeously dressed for the occasion, and decrees through him the destiny of the individual and the community. This institution of the ghost worship is one of the oldest in the coastal region, probably as old as ten thousand years according to Sri Ranganatha Punja who suggests with probable evidences that the ghost-worship travelled into the east to those pre-historic civilization of Sumer, Ur and Egypt. It is in this ancient institution of ghost worship we see the original grain of the theatre, in its costume, dance, talking and the very idea of impersonation.

Drama in Rituals: The coastal village has its sacred 'ghost abode' (Bhoota sthana), a small building measuring about

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twelve square yards. The only small door faces either to the east or west. There is a swing cot inside the abode and on it is placed a figurine made of brass or bronze in the shape of human being, tiger, boar or the bison. The priest (Pujari) worships the figurine every day, sprinkling water and dedicating red flowers; but the real pomp and splendour is witnessed only on the days of festivals like 'Kola'. It is on that occasion the impersonator - called 'Mani' is carefully dressed up in the gorgeous costumes mostly made of indigenous vegetations. He is also painted and decorated in strict traditional manner. The colossal costume differs in details in the cases of different ghosts though the general pattern is roughly the same. When the impersonator comes to the arena to give 'faith and assurances', he is beheld to be directly under the influence of the particular ghost. The dancing party of men - all made up in the traditional massive costumes with 'gaggara' tied up to the ankle and sword in hands - called 'Wakre' dance around 'the ghost' to the vigorous beating of 'Tapani' the traditional drum. Songs of prayer - 'pad-thane' (prarthane) are sung in high pitched chorus - all in praise of the particular ghost.

1 That very similar figures are discovered in the sites of Mohenjodaro is significant.

2 There are many ghosts (Bhootas). The prominent male ones are Annappa, Jarantyc, Posa Mahoraya, Magrandape and Kalkudu while the female ones are Ultaldi, Jumaci, Kallurtti, Rakteswari and Panjurli. The most ancient, powerful and feared ones are Jumadi and Panjurli.
The atmosphere will grow intense with the faster tempo of the drum-beat and the dance of 'Mani' and the 'Nalke'. It is then that 'Mani' will be possessed and he speaks under the spell of the ghost. The whole thing is the new creation of an unearthly art, full of grotesque grandeur and tension. The verdict of 'Mani' is respectfully obeyed and the 'Bhootasthana' has remained a highly respected and strictly obeyed institution in the coastal village.

The point for consideration in the context is the very basic idea of impersonation with costume, dance and the act of rousing a sentiment; a sentiment of heroism worked out by the ferocious dance of 'Mani' whose whole body is employed as a harmonious means of expression. Though devotional initially, the dance vigorously works into a climax of valour and it suggests that one stage or the other, the folk dances, including 'Yakshagana', the peak of the folk theatre have taken their basic patterns from the 'Bhoota' dance.

Sri Muliya Timmapayya considers in addition, that the make up and costumes of the ghost impersonator has imprinted its influence on 'Yakshagana'.

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1 [Footnote]

2 Muliya Timmapayya: 'Pancha Kajjaya' (1927); p. 46.
The crown called 'Bataalu Kireeta' worn by demons and the 'proti-nayaka' in Yakshagana which seen to have evolved from the head-dress of 'Mani' supports his inference. The indigenous colours called 'Karadala' and 'Ingaleeka' used for centuries for the make-up of 'Mani' of 'Bhoota sthana' are also used by the Yakshagana artist for his make-up, and thirdly, the procession of the 'Bhoota' and the 'Bhetala' surrounded by the singing 'Nalkes' would give a highly similar picture to that of the court scene in Yakshagana. These hints suggest that the oldest available ritual dance of the coastal tract of Karnataka has provided some of its aspects which have become fundamentals of later folk entertainments.

NAGANRITYA: The extant form of 'Naga Nritya' (Cobra Dance) of the southern coastal tract of Karnataka reminds me of the totem worship of ancient days. A class of people who are serpent worshippers have great faith in the cobra, which like the 'ghosts' animates the devotees. 'Nagana Patri' is the specialist dancer who impersonates the cobra. The way the dancer moves his limbs, the way he twists and turns his body into wavy like movements of the serpent, makes one doubt his having any rigid and brittle bones. Warangal of Kota is said to be one of the pastmasters in the art of the cobra dance and when performing "he looks a perfect King Cobra (Kalinga) with his fast rhythmic movements and supple twists."  

1. Naganritya has a rare combination of power and beauty, and this folk-mode is reproduced by dancers like Ramagopal.
It is said that while 'Naganritya' is performed with essential animation, real reptiles would come from somewhere and present before the dancer awaiting his dictates.  

'Nagamandali' is the festive occasion when the Naga dance forms a part of the worship. The arena is traditionally decorated with 'rangavalli' and is made up for the performance. The dancer paints himself and comes out in the well matching costume to create a perfect make-belief. Other worshippers start singing and dancing around the 'Patri' to the wild accompaniment of drums, and then he joins moving about the decorated ground slowly, and then when the beating drum, the singing voice and the dancing steps work him up to a tension, he is animated to show the miracle of his performance, all too stupefying the spectator who lifts up his hands in devotion to God Cobra. 'Nagarriitya' like the 'Bhoota Sthana' is a ritual dance-drama that is carried down from the dim distant past. The emphasis is not on entertainment in either case as the spectator is invariably the performer also. It is very likely that the 'Naganritya' also has given to the other folk arts, including Yakshagana, the motif of its dance, notion and also its indigenous musical instruments.

1 Kumara Venkanna- 'Bhavatada Janapada Nrityagalu'; p.31

2 The original dance 'in which every motion was a word' as a form of expression has "so completely perished that it is difficult to recall it even to the imagination; modern dancing has nothing in common with it but motion". H.W.Mable- Short Studies in Literature. p.160.
"Even the costumes of some of the 'Naga nelas' resemble the ones used in Yakshagana." Both 'Bhoota Sthan' and 'Naganritya' have retained from times immemorial as the basic institutions of the folk theatre—with their impersonations, dances, make-up and costumes. With the full play of the rhythm and its fruitful results, they initiate their devotees-cum-spectators into a wild and curious experience, make them forget themselves, relieve them of their toil and move them over to a happier world—thus fulfilling one of the fundamental purposes of the theatre.

Drama in Dances. Karnataka has a rich legacy of folk dances, most of them ritual and many of them dramatic. The 'dramatic dances' are particularly colourful and impressive because of the costumes and make-up of the participants. Beating drum is the inevitable accompaniment with fast and changing rhythms. The real 'dramatic' is noticed in the dance when the group divides into two camps, one replying to the other either in music or in dance patterns. They cannot assume the full role of drama. They miss a chiselled plot (though some of them like 'Malakudiya Kunita' and 'Paravantara Kunita' have their broad themes), rehearsed dialogues and also a non-participating audience. They still fulfil a fundamental purpose of the theatre as a successful media of self expression. They have also contributed patterns in music and dance, instruments, costumes and methods of make-up to the folk drama.

Coastal tract: Prominent dramatic dances of the coastal region of Karnataka are 'Holonyara Kunita' and 'Marira - Shikariyar Kunita', both community dances with charging rhythms and meaningful but monotonous movement and gesticulation, 'Raneyara Kolata' - the emotional dance of the community in two camps, and Kudiyara Kunita - the war-dance of the tribe called 'Malekudiyas'. The last is a typical dramatic dance with its intense movement, music and fully developed sentiment of heroism. The beauty of all these dances is in the self-abandon of the participants.¹

North Karnataka: Some of the dramatic dances of North Karnataka have pronounced themes or even clear cut plots. 'Paravantara Kunita' (dance of the Pramathas) is one such. On the occasion of the marriage of a son in the family aligned to God Veerabhadra (particularly Godachi Veerabhadra), five persons carrying earthen pots with live coal will go on in procession and the 'Paravantas' perform dances before them. The 'Paravantas', are dressed up like 'Shankhadayya' with 'Trishula'² in the hand and dance vigorously to the accompaniment of the double drum called 'Sambala'. They speak out riddles on the life of Veerabhadra and answer them recitatively to the joy of the spectators.


² Their holding the 'Trishula' and following the faith of Veerabhadra is said to indicate that their's is a faith much preceding Veerashaiva cult, and belonging to 'Pashupatha Pantha' which is closely related to Shaiva Pantha of Kashmir.
Another important dramatic element in this dance is the presence of the jester who throws funny riddles for the amusement of the people gathered. Thus, in this dance there is a theme based on Veerabhadrā, a sentiment of heroism, humour of the jester and also a crowd of non-participating spectators.

Veeramukha, a festive community dance of the Kshatriya tradition has also a theme of "winning a bride after the battle". This is a war dance in which the men of all the 'Kshatriya' families of the village participate. 'Veeramukha' is a impressive celebration on the occasion of a marriage, full of symbolic action. The dance rouses the sentiments of 'veera' and 'kringara' with varying patterns, vigorous and colourful.

The art of acting and articulation has been better achieved by the performers of Ellamma Kunita by the followers of Goddess Ellamma of Saudatti in Belgaum district. The dancer usually has on her head a big bronze pot full of water with a face-mould of the Goddess tied around. The artist dances to the accompaniment of the indigenous musical instruments called 'Tuntuni' and 'Chaudiki' singing in praise of the Goddess. Datti Afa, also called 'Beere Deware Kunda'.

1 Shepherds who perform the 'Datti Afa' are dressed in tight trousers, long coats and head-dresses with 'Torso', all in different colours and they hold pieces of coloured cloth to wave in accordance with the intensity of the dance.
and Oggara Kunita (Vyaghrayana Kunita) are two other prominent community dances full of dramatic elements in them with colourful costumes, make-up and music.

In Mysore: Among the dramatic dances of Mysore, 'Rangada' Kunita, 'Handikol Kunita', 'Veera Makkala Kunita', 'Veerabhadran Kunita', 'Garudi Bombe', 'Kolata' and 'Mari Kunita' are prominent. Among them the 'Kolata' is the only community dance that has a group of chorus singers which resembles the chorus party of 'Bhayalata'. The colourful make-up and imposing costume is the speciality of 'Veerabhadran Kunita', wherein the impersonator of Veerabhadra with his red plait of hair, crown and bead necklaces receives devotion from his followers and dances vigorously shouting songs and stories in praise of God Veerabhadra. The beating drum accompanies him as in all the other dramatic dances. The only folk mode where masks are worn is 'Veera Makkala Kunita' wherein three or four performers put on masks that bear glaring expression of pride, joy or valour and dance like the warrior-soldiers. 'Garudi Bombe' is a huge bamboo structure in human form usually twelve feet in height, painted and dressed up as a man and woman. Such huge human figures which are light in weight are borne by individuals who dance to the beating drum. Others are mostly community dances and remain dramatic.

Performers of Oggara Kunita of Devaragudda wear long coats, tight nickers, waist belts (Kanchi) and dark woollen blanket. A rope with bells tied at either ends is left hanging from the shoulder. 'Trishala' and 'Bamaruga' are held in hands. They are also said to belong to the 'Pashupath Pantha'.

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because of the special costumes, chorus music and rousing a sentiment with dance in varying rhythms. In every dance it is "the sheer excitement of rhythm (that) caught their (performers') simple imagination and they were given the joy of their own strength and movement, the joy of creation."

These ritual dances are essentially dramatic. The actor experiences a state of self-abandon and gets the treble thrill of creating something in himself, which was other than himself, communicating it to the audience and to the Gods. In spite of the absence of the spoken word, these dramatic dances have the fundamentals of the folk theatre in their dance, music and gesticulation; but yet, they cannot assume the role of a drama for they do not mean entering entertainment, but only aim at fulfilling a purpose or a commitment to the supernatural powers. In fact, the spectator himself is a performer in the majority of them. Yet, the dramatic dances, even without regular theme, prose dialogues and organised method of presentation do fulfill some purpose of the theatre by rousing a sentiment and creating a dream land.

The spoken word: Dance first and then music seem to have laid the foundation of drama; but the superstructure was built by the spoken word. In its evolution, the theatre has shifted the emphasis from the original fundamentals of dance and music to the spoken word. The real drama and the new drama as we understand to-day was obviously born at the

1 Hulk Raj Anand: The Indian Theatre- p. 18.
times when gestures were accompanied by words. The folk
theatre of Karnataka has preserved some of the earlier
fashions of prose drama; earlier fashions wherein the
monologue and the dialogue formed their basis.

If for the entertainment and enlightenment of the
urban society, there is the 'Purana', 'Keertanakara',
'Pravachanakara', 'Jangama', 'Panasavata', 'Kalajnani' and
'Samaki' to interpret and illustrate the epics and often
to impersonate their heroes, there is, for the entertain­
ment of the folk, the Goraya (professional bard), Gondaliga
(professional bard, singer in praise of Goddess Tulja),
Jogi (devotional dancer), Kalhegara (story teller), Hasya-
gara (Jester), Nattuva (actor), Nakal (humourist) and
Bahu-rupi (Imitator). These performers belong to specified
castes, specialised in particular professions which have
given them their name. They usually, but inadvertently
speak only the 'dramatic language' while impersonating
others. Many of them like 'Nattuva', 'Bahuroopi', 'Nakali',
and 'Hasyagara' usually wear special dresses also, while
some others like Gondaliga, Jogi and Nakali often speak an
imaginary dialogue between two persons. 'Maramma', commonly
seen in the eastern taluk-land and Mysore can be cited as an
example in this regard for speaking an imaginary conversation.

1 The 'Bahuroopi' is said to have been popular in Maharashtra
also. "It is said that a Bahuroopi once went to the Court
of Aurangzeb. He was ordered to imitate a tiger. This man
who wanted to revenge a relative of the King, killed him
while acting as a tiger. The King is then said to have
asked him to imitate a 'Sati' and burned him alive". H.N.
which is highly dramatic. The seeds of the fundamentals of the drama can be seen again during the 'Mahamavami' festival when boys divide themselves into two groups - challenging each other in the entertaining 'Ganga-lauri Samvada'. A step in advance, there is 'Kole Basava' whose performance is built on a planned plot. The trained bull (Kole Basava) and his cow carry on signal conversations as between Rama and Sita, and their gesture-language is interpreted to the spectator by the master-trainer. Often the animals themselves synchronise their 'acting' with the songs and speech of the trainer. Usually the story starts with the happy Rama and Sita in the forest - Rama goes to fetch the golden deer and then comes Ravana who takes away Sita and ultimately in the fight, Rama wins over Ravana. The performance is usually done by two bulls, a cow and a calf. The calf plays the role of Lakshman and also - 'Vidushaka' providing a good deal of humour by his funny actions and behaviour.

1 The man who impersonates 'Maramma' carries a mettot on his head with a decorated image of the Goddess of plagues. His woman accompanies him beating the drum. When in the roads-meet, he places the mettot down and whips himself he will be 'possessed'. The wife of the man then questions the Goddess and gets replies:

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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Reply</th>
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<tr>
<td>సుమారు కనిష్ఠ ప్రధానం పరిించండి?</td>
<td>కార్యం మేలు కొబ్బడిలేదు.</td>
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<tr>
<td>మందివంతమైన ప్రధానం పరిఃంచండి?</td>
<td>కార్యం మేలు కొబ్బడిలేదు.</td>
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The 'Hlagaluvosh-da Ata' even now occasionally witnessed in the Mysore Village brings a group of persons in full make-up and costumes of mythological and historical personalities. They go from door to door staging dramatic scenes asking for alms. The Jogi (and Kinnara Jogi) and the Gondaliga, both dedicated devotees of Goddesses Ellemma and Tulaja Bhavani are seen commonly in the villages of North Karnataka, singing songs, telling stories and performing "one man shows" before homes. The accompanyist to the Gondaliga acts as a 'Vidushaka' with humorous remarks appropriately interspersed in the 'dramatic' talking of the main performer. The Gondaliga performance has also a good dramatic frame work for, he opens with a prayer (Mandi) in praise of the particular Goddess and then, sings in praise of the regional deities. The main story follows and is represented in song, prose and considerable art of gesticulation. The main performer often has jingles tied around his feet and dances appropriately to rouse the sentiment of 'Veeru' or 'Sringara'. At the end of the story, there is the prayer song again, the 'Mangala' to thank the deity for making the performance a success.

These relics of the mediaeval modes of the Karnataka theatre still linger on in the villages to be eloquent of the early usage of dance, music and the spoken word to make

1 The song in praise of Kikeri Bhistamaa, a goddess of Malnad runs as:

\begin{verbatim}
    కికరి బ్హిస్తమా సమ్మలం మలంద సమ్మలం
    సాధనం బ్హిస్తమా సమ్మలం అనేకం
    కికరి బ్హిస్తమా సమ్మలం అనేకం
    కికరి బ్హిస్తమా సమ్మలం అనేకం
\end{verbatim}
the performance dramatic. The emphasis was gradually shifted from the dance to the spoken word. The performance still remained largely ritual, and though gained a hazy framework of the drama, it did not follow any rule of decorum, organic construction nor consistent characterization. Often it was a curious inter-mixture of crude farcical device and coarse jokes; still the significant was hit by the spoken word, which marked the birth of drama in these 'one man shows'.

Crude Presentations: 'Dasarata'- Among the village entertainers, the class or caste of 'Nattuva' is significant because it refers to the community of actors. The 'Cheravu Belgal' inscription of 1514 A.D. mentions the grant of land to the daughter of Nattuva Timmayya and to Nattuva Nagayya evidently on the occasion of their marriage. 'Nattuva', the Kannada word is commonly used in the village to this day, to indicate an actor. Nattuvas were also called Dasas. They used to earn their living by staging plays on festive occasions and jatras. 'Dasara ata' is not found in Mysore nor in South Canara.

An important feature of 'Dasarata' is its chorus consisting of both men and women singers, unlike in any other mode of the folk theatre including Yakshagana and Doddata. The performance is one in which both the Hennu Dasas'(women) and 'Gandu dasas' (men) take part. The leading lady of the chorus later plays the heroine on the stage. The hero of the play is called 'Goddi Bheemanna' and the jester- 'Javari'. There is no particular theme
In 'Basarata'. After an invocation and introductory talking by Goddi Bheemaanna the show opens with a song and dance by a subordinate female character. After her exit, the leading lady of the chorus who is the heroine enters the traditional costumes and receives a great welcome from the chorus. After a song and dance, she speaks to Goddi Bhimanna, the leading male member of the chorus. The conversation moves around the theme of love and the hero expresses his love quite crudely and the heroine promptly rejects him; but the rejection is not precipitous as it only inaugurates the real drama of the keen argument between the hero and the heroine each in support of his and her stand. Reels of songs and sayings including Javadi, Dasara pada, Javani and Vachana will figure in this long argument. The jester is always there providing a funny twist, a crooked turn or even a vulgar touch to the argument of the hero and the heroine. The performance ends after a usual run for four or five hours without either the hero or the heroine yielding to the other. 'Dasara station' fulfills another fundamental demand of the theatre for it has a collected audience to witness and enjoy. Still, it lacks a regular theme and frame work and hence the prevailing proverb that Basara Ata is not a real 'ata'.

In spite of the proverb, the performance thrived evidently for hundreds of years and became so popular with its wealth of entertainment, information and humour, that when

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1 Betgeri Krishnasarma.

teams of Basara ata performers visited Maharastra, it seems to have been readily accepted and adapted by the Marathi Stage. As a result, similar performances with the same characters and characteristics called 'Tamasha' came up in Maharastra. When in full swing, Tamasha became such a popular and powerful theatrical mode, that it assumed the role of the most successful medium of political and cultural propaganda in Maharastra. It thrilled and enthused thousands into vigorous action against the alien ruling powers. Tamasha could provide scope for such a pro-agenda for it did not have a theme nor a rigid frame work.

In Tamasha, the Marathi version of the Kannada Dasara Ata, the hero of the original Goddi Rameshna came to be called 'Galfioji' and the heroine—Radha. The jestor, Javari came to be called 'Sakharam Tatya'. Maharastra gave its magic touch to the Kannada Dasara ata and made it more refined with fashioned music and hilarious humour. Years later, when Tamasha became the most charming of entertainments both of the villages and cities, several of the Marathi teams visited north Karnatak. Karnatak eagerly accepted it back, adapted it into Kannada and named it Radhana ata after the name Radha, the heroine of the Marathi performance.

Radhana Ata: Radhana ata, which in course of time, assumed another name—Rajuna ata, retained the method, manner and music of the Maharastrian 'Tamasha'. Its song-styles came

from 'Chhakkada', 'Kauwali' and 'Lavani'. Violin and Tabla, the musical instruments that accompanied the original Dasara ata came to be replaced with 'Sarangi' and 'Dhappa'. The only factor that remained unchanged was the dominant sentiment of LOVE. Whether it be 'Haradeshi' (or Tārai) that ended with the superiority of women or 'Nageshi' (or Kaligi) that accepted the superiority of man, Radhāna ata thrived gloriously on account of the love-theme. It is found in the villages of north Karnataka to this day. With its chorus, improvised talking, recitative poetry and the humour of the all pervading jester, this mode of the folk theatre did satisfy to a considerable extent, the claims of a full-fledged drama. The performance was so popular that every village in north Karnataka had one or two troupes of Radhāna ata twenty years ago.

Defined frame work and social themes: The romantic form of Radhāna ata inspired romantic themes and hit another mark by bringing down the performance to the social plane. The departure from the mythological theme is particularly significant, as the change was first done on the platform of the folk theatre—much earlier than even on the platform of the professional theatre.

Prominent among the social themes are 'Rupasingara ata', 'Mukkunda-Govinda' and 'Sangya Balya.' As is typical of the folk-lore, the authors of these plays are unknown to-day, though the performances themselves are just as old as about eighty years. All the three plays are believed to have been
based on cold facts of life and each one of them was typically romantic.

'Rupasingana ata' deals with a married soldier Rama Singa, falling a victim to the charms of a married girl Kamalakshi when away in a different city and neglecting his own wife Gunavanti and son Rupa Singa. When the latter went to him and entreated, Rama Singa yielded and decided to get back to his home town. This decision infuriated Kamalakshi and she murdered him one night. Learning of the tragedy, wife Gunavanti and son Rupa Singa appeared on the scene again and sang prayers to God. Their prayers were rewarded, for God came in the garb of a sanyasi and brought Rama Singa back to life.

'Mukunda-Govinda' deals with a love-theme again. It is about two devoted friends, one of whom fell in fast love with the wife of the other. The resulting complications ended when the friend made an offer of his wife for the sake of friendship.

'Sangya Balya' is also around an illicit love-affair between Sangya, an aristocrat of the village and Gangu, the young wife of a cultivator; a love-affair which resulted in the murder of the former by Rappa, the husband of Gangu.

The performances sustained well with their amorous songs and exciting dialogues. There was not much of make-up and costumes in these plays as they were on socio-cultural themes. A chorus consisting of about eight singers remained an essentiality. The speciality of the performance was the
theme itself which marked an advancement in the folk-
theatre. The deviation from the mythological was sudden
and 'revolutionary'- particularly on the folk-stage, but
soon the social themes became very popular and several
troupes including the proficient troupe that came from
Guledgudd staged them extensively in north Karnataka.

These plays painted love with its dangerous aspect
magnified. Anything excessive had to meet a punishment in
the conservative folk eye and so, murder and death became
inevitable in them. The ritual tendency still persisted
when Gods were brought down to revive the dead into life.
Indeed the plays have a moral undertone. To the folk-
audience they appealed for their informal presentation,
the very voluptuous theme and the comparatively crude and
sometimes vulgar acting. The plays have good poetry set
into charming native tune but more than the music and moral
tone, it is perhaps the presence of a lady on the stage
as the central figure of an amorous theme that sustained
the play and made it popular. Still the performance proved
to be a link between the ancient and modern phases of the
folk theatre.

The Puppet: It is human tendency both to imitate and to be
pleased to get imitated; the result of the latter is the
entertaining performances of the 'Kole Basava', the trained
bull, the monkey charmer, the bear player and the like, which
are still seen in the villages all over Karnataka. Being not
satisfied with the standard of the animal's imitation of man,
the artist with a keen sense of drama, created the puppet which
held the stage from times immemorial. In the words of Jan Bussel— "Puppets have been known from early times. No country or date can be given for their birth. They appeared in ancient Chinese religious ceremonies, in Indian magical rites and have been discovered in early Egyptian tombs." ¹

The origin of the puppet show in the coastal tract of Karnataka is seen in a number of puppets placed in the temple-car and also in the age old 'Shootasthanada Bandi' that are drawn in procession on festive occasions. "These puppets exhibit their compassion to their devotees by devised gestures." ² The puppet is called 'Sootradada Bombe' and 'Gombeyata' in Karnataka and bears literary references from early times. Kanakadasa ³ and his contemporary— Purandaradasa ⁴ of early 16th century have drawn analogies to the puppet in their compositions. Ratnakara Siddha mentions of the puppeteers among the artists that visited the capital of his hero— Bharatesha Chakravarthi.

Several inscriptions, one of 1470 A.D and the other of 1521 A.D. clearly indicate the popularity of puppet shows in the

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¹ Jan Bussel: The Puppet Theatre— p.13
² Muliya Timmapayyat Poncha Kajjeya (1927) p.46.
³ "हूंकरानि पुजामात्र जौँ जो ज्ञातानां सिद्धांतः"
⁴ "संगोल्लकां ललित्मित्रां भारतूर्मान्:"
times of Vijayanagar.¹ These evidences indicate the existence of the puppet shows in ancient Karnataka. Some scholars consider the puppet to be the most ancient theatrical mode in South India, which must have supplied the name 'Sootradhara' to Sanskrit drama.

The puppeteer is virtually a Sootradhara, for he controls the movements and actions of the puppets with the threads tied to their movable limbs. He also supplies words and songs to his miniature which is a decorated doll made of wood and dressed in colourful costumes to represent mythological characters. The hands, feet, head, fingers and even the lips of the doll are manipulated by means of strings or dark threads (sootra) to movement and expression of a sentiment, synchronising with the spoken word. The puppets are made to perform some folk dances with flawless rhythm. All this calls for meticulous training and practice on the part of the puppeteer, who, with the threads held in both the hands, bound to the wrists and sometimes held between the teeth, engineers his miniatures into perfect human movement and expressions. He will have to possess a grand sense of the dramatic and be an intelligent ventriloquist to supply words in different voices to the different puppets. Once the balance and perfection is achieved between the spoken word and action, the puppet becomes a living being capable of realistic and delicate movements, full of intense action and emotion. Sri Sudavidu Krishnarao recalls

¹ B.A. Salatore: Social and Political life in Vijayanagar Empire. Vol. II- p.15
the effect and grandeur of one such performance—'Vrishna Parijata', dealing with the love and jealousy of Satyabhama, Queen of Vishnu, and praises the abundant artistic skill of the well-known puppeteer—'Gombe Anantappa of Begepur'.

"The puppet that was the love-stricken Satyabhama dislodged all the ornaments and screwed off even the delicate nose ring with its own hands. The pathetic and powerful curses of Satyabhama on the Lord Creator and her expression of the bitter pain of separation was so touching that she used to make the audience shed tears." When such efficiency is achieved, the audience forget themselves for hours under the spell of the puppet when "the male and female, child and adult, high brow and low brow, rich and poor all fall for its charms." 

As obtained in recent times, the puppet show in Karnataka— with its dance, music, chorus, themes, method of talking and the manner of procedure closely resembles Yakshagana and Doddata. Themes are usually drawn from the epics and the composition is in poetry— which will be interpreted in prose during the performance. Some of the most popular shows that held the stage were 'Vataala Harana', 'Sri Krishna Sandhana', 'Krishnarjun Yuddha', Subhadrakalyan' and 'Ravana Samhara'. There would often be as many as ten puppets (manipulated by four or five persons) at the same time on the stage and the show would normally run for three to four hours.

1 Mudavidu Krishnarao: Jayaskarnatak-XII, 11,p.27
2 Jan Russell: The Puppet Theatre, p.16.
In order to bring about the effect of illusion, the stage of the puppet is so devised that the manipulator is concealed behind a drop-curtain. It is in the foreground the puppets which are usually about two feet in height will perform the histrionic miracles, which will be shown up by the rather dim light.\(^1\) It is behind the curtain or at the end of the platform the Bhagavata will be seated with his musical accompaniments—'pungi' or 'Mukha Veena', Mridanga and the Dhol. The puppeteer does all the talking and sings also along with the Bhagavata, synchronising the song with the dance and movement of the puppet.

The puppet held the stage for years as one of the most popular modes of the folk theatre of Karnataka. No festival or 'jatra' would be colourful without it. For scores of years, the art of the puppet was the expert monopoly of the learned Brahmins of North Karnataka and usually, their families took their names after the puppet as the 'Gombe' family. Bapu Ramachar Pandurangi of Ranebennur, now in old age was one of the reputed puppet players of Karnataka—like Gombe—Amantachar of Belgaum. Some of the villages of Chitaldoorg and Bellary districts in Mysore and towns like Karjagi, Ranebennur, Alur, Kurvatti and Hangal in the north Karnataka are the centres of the great art of the puppet. Once a most popular and influential art of Karnataka, the puppet is fast receding into the far background today. If not

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\(^1\) The petromax has displaced the kerosine lamp and has taken away most of the mystic grandeur of the performance.
revived, with it Karnataka loses one of its most colourful and ancient modes of folk drama full of skill and full of entertainment.  

**The Coloured Image:** Though not as perfected and popular as the puppet, the performance of the coloured image called 'Togalu Bombe' was a much liked mode of the folk theatre all over Karnataka and particularly in the eastern tableland. Unlike the puppet which is a four dimensioned solid figure with chiselled features, costumes and decorations, the Togalu Bombe is an unimpressive piece of decorated leather to the plain eye, but the miracle is performed by its shadow on the screen. The leather puppet is made of tanned leather, beaten thin as to be highly transparent and cut into figures. Highly artistic colouring and decoration is made on the leather figures with meticulous care, to bring out the costumes in several colours. Thus, usually "the image of Hanuman with his red face will wear a green loin cloth and a head-crown in yellow and red."  

Togalu Bombe is the specialised art of a particular 'low class' nomads called "Kille Ketas". The entire family goes to make the show. Behind a thin white screen a fairly

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1 'The Tanjore Brothers thrilled their audience in various centres of the South and also in Delhi with their puppets. They are creating a flare for the puppet and have shown that the skillful art will char even the modern times.' The Tanjore Puppet Show - The Hindu Weekly Review. 3.5.54.  
powerful light is kept, and the manipulator fixes the leather figure on the screen (and sometimes holds it by long and thin sticks) and with the help of strings or thin sticks he moves the figures and its limbs so cleverly that on the screen, the coloured image walks, dances, fights and even acts appropriately in symphony with the words of the manipulating master. Song and dialogue of the male figure is provided by the leader while those of the female figure is done by his woman. Chorus songs, war cries, loud exclamations and the background accompaniments provide a perfect background for the play of the coloured image and when done well, it should resemble a fast running technicolour film, so much so "when an old man from Dharwar witnessed for the first time the cinema show, he at once declared—'this is our Kille Keta play.'"  

'Togalubombe' is a colourful art in the hands of an expert who can make his images live and perform miracles for the audience who sit in front of the screen. A full-fledged performance based on a mythological theme would show on the screen human and animal figures in fantastic attire, moving, dancing and performing acrobatics all in close synchrony with the background music and words provided by the chorus and the manipulators. Battle scenes with moving armies are highly impressive. This art provides a great scope to show on the screen the fantastic, the

symbolic and the grotesque. The figures are especially made with meticulous care to give wild appearances and movements. It can give a real experience also, an experience that cannot be had on even the modern stage with all its amenities. "In the play 'Lanka Darpan' of Togalubombe, Hanuman's leaping across to Lanka was a perfect experience to the spectator."¹

The art of Togalubombe enjoyed great religious and entertaining significance for centuries in the Kannada land, particularly in North Karnataka and also in Kolar and Chitaldoorg districts of Mysore. It was a time honoured tradition to put up a Togalubombe performance in the temple to invoke the village deity to shower early rains. Even to-day, there is a Kille Ketha troupe attached to the Hanuman temple at the village 'Gosbala' in the Belgaum district, enjoying the grant of land. Every year on the occasion of 'Kartikotsava' (Daapavali) the Togalubombe is made to perform the story of Pandavas 'so that rains would be regular.'²

Themes of Togalubombe are drawn from the epics and particularly Maha Raghata which provides full scope for action and impression, and the performance goes on at

² Siam, Indo-China, Java and Bali have very similar shadow puppets and their themes are drawn mostly from the Indian epics though the puppeteers themselves are mostly Aghamans. It is possible that this art has travelled from Karnataka to the far-east at the time of the great Gangai Konda Chola (1022-1042) whose vast empire included the lands cited above.
length for three to four hours. The method of presentation in north Karnatak has a pronounced influence of Yakshagana for it has a chorus and its leader (Brągavita) who is also the main manipulator in this case. "without this personage nothing can be done; for he not only puts the puppet in motion, but repeats their parts, interspersing them with detached verses."

These words of Sir William Ridgeway with reference to 'Dalang', the Javanese manipulator of the shadow puppet holds entirely good here also.

Musical instruments used in the Togalubombe are indigenous and interesting. The drone is an improvised peculiarity with a broad-mouthed vessel, containing a little water and a jowar stalk fixed as its diameter. The player, with wet palms moves his fingers on the stalk and it produces a single continuous note quite a pleasant drone to listen to. Other instruments are 'Pungi' or 'Ektari', flute, 'Dhol' and a mouth-organ made out of a hollow jowar stalk having one of its ends sealed with the spider's web. A hole is made in the centre of the stalk and then, the artist fills his voice into the hole to get it fully magnified as to be the background for wars and other tense situations.

To-day the Togalubombe is a rare sight in the north Karnatak village. Like the marionette, the coloured image also is fast going out of existence as a result of the

1 William Ridgeway- 'Dramas and Dramatic Dances'-1915. p.220.
invasion of the so called civilization with its moving cinema into the heart of the folk.

These different modes of the folk-theatre mentioned above give a glimpse of the evolution of the drama from the rituals blossoming into full-fledged entertainments. In this process the theatre seems to have shed off some of its old limbs like the vigorous dance and monotonous music and accepted the alterations suggested by the changing times, particularly a theme, a defined framework, and an intelligent use of the spoken word. Some of the relics have still remained scattered all over Karnataka. The ritualistic 'Naga Nritya', the one man show of Gondaliga and the formless performance of 'Dasaara Ata' are some of the landmarks in the progress of the theatre. All these folk modes are interrelated and have naturally influenced each other and in every one of them there is some stunted growth or underdeveloped limb, though they have been successful in holding the stage, and in giving the people a rich entertainment and continued thrills.

The most ancient and perhaps the most perfected indigenous art of which Karnataka can well be proud of is Yakshagana, and to an extent, its variants, the Mudalapaya or 'the eastern method of Yakshagana'. Yakshagana which comes from the coastal tract of Karnataka is hailed as the depositary of the best traditions.
Yakshagana: Any art and culture is born out of the interaction of the place and the people. Human being is a child of the environment and the different aspects of his art and culture will unmistakably reveal the influence of the place he lives in. Similarity of conditions has always produced similar results, the exception being when two similar things are independently evolved on account of the sameness of human mind. There is seldom a dramatic form elsewhere which closely compares with Yakshagana in its entirety. It is the product of the southern coastal tract of Deccan with a clear print of its influence. The coastal strip of Karnataka, especially the southern part of it, with its sounding sea, the thunderous and colourful skies, whistling wind, lofty mountains, fast running rivers, deep valleys, close forests and thick vast green has remained a land of wild beauty and is an inspiring field for the creative artist, who feels the presence of the superman in all his surroundings. This wild beauty of the robust nature is richly reflected in Yakshagana and has made it one of the richest and most colourful of world's folk arts.

It is a folk art and a typical one, for the reason that the art richly reflects nature and tries to create the figures of superman on the stage with gorgeous make up and vigorous indigenous dance, and for the second, it has been the soul and body of an entertainment essentially for the masses as differentiated from the classes.
It is a typical 'Deshya' or 'Desi' art in contrast with the 'Marga' for its basis is tradition (Sampradāya) and not written code of strict rules (Shastra) of the Marga type. In its march through the passage of time from the deep dim past, Yakshagana has gained a shape and a designed framework; but this is far from the strict rigidity of the Marga. These considerations give Yakshagana the status of a typical folk art; and so, one would differ from Shri G.R. Pandeshwar when he says that it is not one in the strict sense of the term folk art. His arguments are that the art is not spontaneous as a folk dance and that the Yakshagana artists are not illiterates and uncultured as would be a typical folk-artist and thirdly, that its themes are drawn from the 'Marga' sahitya, the epics. It is true that Yakshagana needs care and preparation before presentation, but the fundamental aspect of it, the prose interpretation is unrehearsed and spontaneous. Secondly, it may not be a characteristic of qualification for the folk-artist to be illiterate and the folk art itself, a sentimental and illogical mode. With regard to its epical themes it may be said that they might have been later incorporated to the original form of Yakshagana, which as discussed was perhaps a characteristic musical style coupled with dancing. In the course of its evolution 'YAKSHALAGANA' probably accepted themes from the epics because of their lofty moral tone and rich scope for dramatic portrayal. Thus though the themes are 'marga', the method of presentation has remained essentially 'desi' the fundamentals of which are music and dance, the rece-

mode of the Dravidian art. The original medium of expression of sentiments was music and dance and not prose in Yakshagana. That is perhaps the reason why even to-day, its prose is only an improvisation on the spot. The 'marga' themes might have brought prose interpretation also along with them to Yakshagana, to make it a full-fledged drama. The performance to-day is more a 'nataka' than 'gana' and deserves to be called 'Yakshanataka' as suggested by Sri Hasanagi.

**Yakshagana and Kathakkali**: It is the prose, the spoken word that makes all the difference between Yakshagana and its counter-part in Kerala- Kathakkali. A comparison between the two will reveal the close relation between them and possibly hint at their common origin.

'Kathaka-Kali', or as Dr. Raghavan puts it 'Kathaka Kali' is the extant Kathakkali which portrays a theme with the medium of dance (Nritical), music (Gana) and gesture (Mudra), without employing prose, the mainstay of Yakshagana. But both Yakshagana and Kathakkali draw their themes from the epics; both of them emphasize on rousing the sentiments of 'Raudra' and 'Veera'; their costumes, ornaments, musical instruments and even the make-up and method of presentation are similar. Their settings with a single back curtain, the Bhagavata and his accompaniments, the stage and oil-torch are close to each other.

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1 Ramachandra Bhatta Hasanagi: 'Yaksha Natakagali' (1950).
2 V. Raghavan: 'Yakshagana': Jayakarnataka XII-11.
other, both are performed on significant occasions and festivals and both of them beat 'Chande', the high pitched percussion instrument to invite the neighbouring villages to the evening performance.\(^1\) It would, therefore, sound strange when Sri Das Gupta observes that "nothing quite like it (Kathakkali) exists outside Malabar."\(^2\)

Kathakkali conveys in gesture every conceivable earthly and unearthly thing including even parts of speech, and therefore, it is said that Kathakkali covers more ground than Yakshagana which is less symbolic and more rigid in its import.\(^3\) The art of gesture is a specialised science with Kathakkali, its dance is more vigorous with varying rhythms, its make up is more imposing though it is said to be less pure.\(^4\) All these differences, excepting the medium of expression, the spoken word, are differences only in degree rather than in kind. Methods of make up and costumes in the Yakshagana of Tenku Tittu (of the coast)

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1 It is called 'Kelike' in Kannada and 'Kelikai' in Malayalam.
4 It is said that the costumes of Yakshagana are purer than those of Kathakkali for the latter have a pronounced Muslim influence on them; R. Vasudeva Poduval- The Art of Kathakali. p. 15
is very close to Kathakkali and strikes as almost its replica. Such close similarity even in the details of Yakshagana and Kathakkali indicates the possibility of their being two branches of the same basic art. Kathakkali's emphasis on dance and music suggests also that its original pattern might have been the purer and earlier form of Yakshagana—before it accepted the spoken word as its main medium of expression.

Kathakkali is given quite a recent origin. "Historically, the origin of Kathakkali is associated with Malabar and more particularly with Travancore which remains to this day the repository of the art. The Raja of Kottarkara (1575-1650) is credited to be the first composer and originator of Kathakkali in its PRESENT form."\(^1\) It is true that the PRESENT form of Kathakkali was originated in the early 17th century by Kottarkara Tempuran who composed 'Ramanattam' in rivalry with Mahadevan Zamorin of Calicut, the celebrated author of 'Krishnannattam,' a composition on the lines of 'Geta Govinda' of Jayadeva. Both the compositions are in eight pieces and deal with the heroes of the epics, but the fundamental difference is in their language. While 'Krishnanattam' was in Sanskrit, the language of Gods, Ramanattam was composed in Malayalam. Thus the PRESENT form of Kathakkali was evidently based on an old form, an already existing mode of folk performance, older than even

\(^{1}\) Premakumar: The Language of Kathakkali. p.15
Krishnanattam— with a loose framework and possibly on indigenous themes. It was full of costumes, dance and gesture but certainly was not refined. The reference is supported by Sri Madhavan Nair when he observed that —

"Kathakkali as it functioned in Kottakara Tanur’s Court might reveal certain defects and crudity."¹ A refinement was brought to this ancient and crude theatrical mode by the munificent royal patronage extended by kings and princes like Kottayathu Tanur, Kartika Tirunal and Uthram Tirunal who were themselves great composers of Kathakkali. But the unrefined, crude mode of Kathakkali of antiquity was perhaps very near the Yekkalgana which was possibly full of music and dance, some relics of which could evidently be seen in the Bhootasthana and Naganritya of Karnataka. It is of significance that it is only the PRESENT form of Kathakkali that had its origin in the royal Courts of Travancore. Its ancient form may have had something intimate to do with Karnataka, the home of Yakshagana.

YAKSHAGANA: The oldest and the most impressive of the folk mode of the theatre of Karnataka comes from its coastal region. It is also known by the name Bhagavatara ate possibly because of the 'Bhagavata' the singing leader who is the pivot of the performance or because its themes are mostly drawn from 'Srimad Bhagavatam', an epic that deals with the fascinating life of Sri Krishna, or because the players

were mostly devotees of 'Bhagavanta' (Sri Vishnu) and followers of Bhagavata Sampradaya, and some times, the followers of Sri Ramanujacharya. The influence of 'Bhagavata Sampradaya' or 'Vishnu-bhakti Pantha' could be evidenced in the themes of Yakshagana. Yakshagana is also called 'Dasavatara-atha' for it chose for its themes the ten Incarnations (Avatar) of Vishnu which could preach morals through rich entertainment. It is known as 'Meladavatara-atha' for obviously the harmonious result of the performance was the outcome of cooperative effort, as in the Tamil - 'Kudiyattam'- a play by a party.

Presentation: In its final form Yakshagana is an open-air drama. On the evening of the performance 'Chande' is beaten to convey the information and invite the neighbouring villages. The sound of the Chande, sharp and penetrating, easily reaches a distant village of even six or eight miles if the wind is favourable. On the evening of the show, at about 10 p.m. people assemble near and about the platform raised in the open, generally before the village temple.

The platform is roughly about 16 feet square with fixed bamboo poles at the four corners. The top is covered with

2 "Harivansha Purana makes a reference to 'Bhagavazara - mela', indicates that the performers were devotees of Bhagavan and so they might have got the name Bhagavatam. Kerodi Subba Rao. 'Yakshagana Hatta'- Rangabhoomi. Nov, 1925. p.90.
3 This sound invitation is called 'Kalike', 'Kelke' and 'Kelibadi'.

inter-twined palm leaves and the entire arena is decorated with flowers and mango leaves and with plaintain-trunks tied to the poles on either side in the traditional way. On the three sides of the platform sit the audience—spreading their own sets on the earth, while on the rear of the platform the Bhagavata (in plain clothes) with cymbals or gong in hand takes his place with his accompanists; the players of 'Maddale' or 'Mridanga', 'Chande' and 'Fungi' or 'Mukha Veena'—the drone. With this, the stage is set for the show.

The Yakshagana performance of the coastal tract opens with the prayer ('Nandi') and invocation to Ganapati and 'Subrahmanya'. The prayers are sung by the Bhagavata.1 The jester (Kodangi) then enters the stage in queer costumes with an odd dance and a song. Two players in female attire—what is called 'Mitya Vesha' appear on the stage to sing and dance.2 This long series of several songs, dances and humorous talk provided by the MINOR roles called 'Tundu-vesha', caters to the audience alerts their attention to the main show. Bhagavata sings again to signal the entrance of the epical characters of the performance. From behind the curtain held at the ends by two persons gradually emerge the dressed up participants one by one until at

1 The tradition is slightly different in the Chitaldoorg School (Mysore) where two boys called 'Madanagopala' sing the prayers.

2 "About a hundred years ago, there were still two other characters by name 'Chapparamaneha' and 'Areppav'." M. Govinda Pai, Jayakarnataka—April, 1953.
last the most important character called 'Bundu Vesha' or 'Bannada Vesha' appears. Then in a row, they stand together to take a bow to the audience. It is a sight of real splendour which could send thrills up the spine of the spectator. This completes the 'Poorvaranga' or the preparation and the characters recede again out of the sight leaving the Bhagavata and his accompanists on the platform.

Bhagavata then sings the 'Prastavane' or the prologue of the play chosen for the evening. As the tempo of his song rises accompanied by the fast beat of the cymbals, mridanga and chande, the relevant characters enter to open the play proper. Every character dances into the stage, the pattern of dancing itself usually differing from one to the other in accordance with the spirit and sentiment of the character. After the end of the short dancing to the accompaniment of cymbals, mridanga and sometimes chande, the character is interrogated by Bhagavata who introduces him to the audience. In recent times however, the tradition is changed and the character himself—be it the king, Nishi, Danava or Deva, at his first entrance makes a self-introduction in dry prose and then in a nutshell acquaints the audience with the dramatic situation that has prompted him to appearance and action. It is then the character assumes...

1 The term 'Poorvaranga' is used with its dramatic connotation from the times of Adi Pampa...
the role fully by interpreting in prose, dance and gesture, the various verses recited by the Bhagavata. When the verse refers to a particular character on the stage, that particular character keeps on dancing lightly or with great vigour in consonance with the mood and sentiment of the verse. The climax is reached when the inevitable battle issues between the hero and his foe. Accompanied by the severe beating of the Chande and Mridanga at varying rhythms, the characters perform the var-dance with all the rustic vigour and grandeur until at last the foe is overpowered. Thus goes on the performance before the spell-bound audience throughout the night and no one is aware of the flying-paassing of the time. It was the custom—now extinct—to see the Sun in the East and end the play after invoking his blessings.

Costumes and Make-up: The Yakshagana artist is himself an expert adept in the methods of make-up and costume-wearing as to bring out the innate character of the role he is portraying. The leading role of the performance is called 'Bannada Vesha' to mean literally, the 'Role in colours' and the name is a worthy compliment to the imposing make-up and gorgeous costumes of the role. The artist playing the Bannada Vesha spends in the normal course, four to five busy hours in making up and getting into his imposing garb. Make-up is a specialised art with Yakshagana and Kattakkali and is the mainstay in recreating atmosphere in which the Super man revelled. It is the grand make-up and costume that re-creates the Super man on the stage and drives the audience to a dream land.
The diffused dim light of the oil lamp called "Panju" or 'Deevatige' and the great distance between the last spectator and the artist were considerations that conditioned in the art of make-up in Yakshagana/olden days; further, the costumes were to be convenient for the vigorous dancing performed almost at every verse.

Over the 'Kavacha'- the tight upper human and Challana, the tight trousers, every performer wears full-sleeved upper garment usually in green or red, and /'veeragaacme'- (hero's way of wearing the loin). If the role is of 'Yama'- the God of Death, Narasimha- the great human/with the lion's head, and the demon, the girth of the character will be increased three folds with the help of thick sheets of cloth or sarees that would be tied around the body. The finesse is given by wearing the loose garment in appropriate colour to reveal the innate quality of the character. - dark for the demon and reddish for kings, Gods and chiefs - (Maha Nayakas). Even above that is worn the waist coat, embroidered with embossed pieces of glass. Other ornaments are : bead necklaces and garlands, 'patti', 'Keralshara' and 'sage' around the neck, 'Bhujakeerti' for the elbow, 'Tola payada' for the wrist, gold plates for the arms, crown for the head with Karnapatra (wings attached to the crown), Kannappo for the ear, 'Devale', the flowing piece of embroidered cloth in front and singles around the ankles. There are significant head-dresses and crowns with pronounced differences in the shape and size. The most
prominent of the crowns is 'Battalu Kireeta' with the great halo, worn by royal characters like Dasharatha and Dharmaraja, 'Pombe Kireeta' for characters like Rama and Arjuna, 'Rakkasi KireetA with peacock feathers for demons like Shurpanakhi, 'Hanumantha Kireeta' for Hanuman are the other varieties. A circular halo of the head dress made of white and black cloth with decorations in silver lace tape and peacock feathers is called 'Sirimudi' and is worn by characters like Krishna and Abhimanyu. 'Sirimudi' is in the shape of human heart but is made in varying sizes and colours specifically for different characters. The size of the Sirimudi is symbolic of the stature of the character wearing it.

After making up and wearing the prescribed ornaments and head dress, the Yakshagana artist gives a final touch by holding the relevant weapons—the mace, sword or the bow and arrow.

Symbolic colours: Yakshagana does not present two similarly made up and dressed characters unless warranted by a situation producing two with identical innate qualities. Colours that are used for painting the face will be chosen with care. 'Gods' are usually painted in reddish soft white, roles like Yama, 'Dali' and even Harischandra in dark, Krishna in pleasant blue and the leading opposite role—the Bannada Vesha—in dark or pink. Originally all the basic painting with all their different shades was made with the help of different indigenous colours called—Aradala, Ingalseka, Kadge and Balopa. It is over this foundation painting that careful working of the features of the characters is made.
in red and white. The most imposing achievement of the Yakshagana artist could be seen in the make up of roles like 'Narasimha', 'Ravana', 'Chandi' and 'Yama'. These characters will be able to create an illusion that they are having masks on their faces. It is because the nose is uplifted with a lump of cotton, eyes are made to look three times their natural size with bordering white dots, a decorated frame work (called 'Chutti') is provided around the face and artificial canine teeth are fixed up. The Yakshagana artist can make marvels on the human face just with the help of white, red and black colours and cotton. He steals a march over the Greek and Javanese masks, which though grotesque, bear but a single static expression. What the mask denies, the make-up of Yakshagana provides in abundance—a scope to work the eye and the mouth. Some of the typical make-up patterns will be provided by the great demon-characters like 'Chandi' and 'Kali'. These demon characters in 'Draupadi Parinaya' had ferocious make-up with the lion's canines, hanging red tongues, huge breasts and dishevelled red hair all around the faces. The huntsmen in 'Rukmangada' and 'Bhishma Vijaya' had tied branches of trees around their hips to indicate their living in jungles. The artist who played the animal in the hunting scene wore a mask (?) and moved like a quadruped. Bheema in 'Virata Parva', in order to look big, had tied around bones of the whole.

1 A keen observer like Dr. Raghavan narrates that he was convinced that the impersonator of Ravana wore a gorgeous-grotesque mask, a compliment to the great make-up of the face. V. Raghavan: 'Yakshagana'. Jayakarmata. XII-11. P.9

Roles of the lady, the rishi and the jester look simple and neglected in make-up in comparison with the dominant characters like the King and the demon. The Lady is in the most unimpressive daily worn saree, the rishi in a long flowing gown and the jester, painted black, wears an odd long robe called 'Kose Kattuva Niluvangi' and the head-dress - 'Mundasa'. These 'odd' roles which stand on the stage in glaring contrast often shatter the illusion of a wonderland created by the magnificent make-up of the main characters. This neglect can be explained, for the main sentiments of Yakshagana - 'Veera' and 'Adbhuta' could be roused only by the dominant mythological heroes and not by secondary roles like the jester and the rishi. Still, for the sake of theatrical harmony, it would he necessary to pay some attention to the minor roles, their make-up and costumes.

The Oil Lamp: The glory and grandeur of the artful and imposing make-up and fabulous costumes could be fully appreciated in the dim reddish light of the oil torch - 'Deevatige' or 'Panju', the only source of light in the village. In olden days, two torches were held by persons who moved forward and backward in the steps of the dancing performer, thereby creating a fantastic beauty, throwing diffused reddish light on him. These torches formed a part of the performance and created before the spectator an exquisite

1 Recently it has been the fashion with the jester of Doddata and even sometimes in Yakshagana to wear an unclean sun-hat.
world of pomp and splendour. Later, the torches were fixed up on either side of the platform and to-day, they have almost gone out of existence replaced by the petromax, which throws a flood of penetrating sharp light, all too bright for creating a mystic atmosphere and often, all too revealing something odd or artificial in the make-up or costumes of the character.

Dance, music and instruments: Dance, the 'race-mode' of the people of Karnataka is an inevitable aspect of Yakshagana, and is the most effective medium for rousing the sentiments of 'Raudra' and 'Abhuta'. Every character including even the aged man that appears in 'Bhishma Parva', performs dances to the accompaniments of the cymbals and Mridanga. Dances are performed by the character in three sequences, once when entering the stage, then while the Bhagavata sings a verse concerning the particular role and thirdly, during a 'battle' with all intensity.

Dance is associated with gestures in the former cases, but during the third the tempo is too fast for any gesture. 'During the battle' the wild dancing is in 'Tanda var Prakara' in different patterns and at varying rhythms, full or intensity, done to the accompaniment of 'Chande', an ideal war-instrument. The hero and the demon with wild shouts of exclamations sometimes jump up in the air or turn like a top sitting down the stage keeping the rhythm all the same. The performance is called 'Chakraguppi'.

Dr. Raghavan's observation that in parts the dances of Yakshagana very closely resemble the dance patterns - 'Arbhati Vritti' and 'Nyaya' mentioned by Bharata, author of Natyashastra is full of significance regarding the relation between the 'desi' and 'marga' patterns and the influence of the former on the latter.

Music and Instruments: Music is essentially vocal in Yakshagana. 'Shatpadis', 'Kanda' and 'Vratta', of the composition 'Prabandha' are sung by the Bhagavata who provides the life force of the performance. He sings them at varying rhythms and tremendous power with his musical rendering of them. The ragas employed are usually drawn from the classical Karnatak music. They are Mohana, Kambhoji, Nata, Shankarabharana, Kalyani, Regupti and Saurastra, the most popular and commonly employed ones being Mohana and Kambhoji, for they successfully support rousing the sentiments of 'Raudra' and 'Adbhuta'. Unlike in the classical 'marga' music, here singing is only a means for full development of a sentiment. Though the ragas themselves are a few when compared with the several shades of emotions and sentiments to be roused, Bhagavata achieves the desired effect by employing the ragas in different rhythm patterns. The most commonly used raga- Mohana alone is often employed with success in rousing different emotional shades like appeal, promise, grief, romance and fury. The emphasis in Yakshagana is on the musical form of raga and the style of singing. 'The musical pieces are astonishingly well-attuned to the emotional atmosphere which pervades the precise incident portrayed.'
Musical instruments employed in Yakshagana are only a few, but they are almost inevitable for the performance. Apart from the Cymbals (Tala) or the gong (Jagata-Kelu) used by the Bhagavata, there are the wind instruments 'pungi' and 'Mukhavezena' to supply the background drone. Much of the native tune is missed since the pungi and Mukhavezena are replaced by the harmonium. Yakshagana lays a particular emphasis on its percussion instruments like Maddales Mridanga and Chande. Mridanga accompanies the Bhagavata in all his singing while Maddale and Chande are usually employed only in dramatic moments of tension. Chande, the most vital instrument of Yakshagana is a high-pitched drum beaten with two thin sticks. It is chande that greatly helps the development and maintaining of the main sentiments of Raudra and Abbhuta. Rise and fall in the tempo of Chande, accompanied by Tala and Chekratala (bigger pair of cymbals) brings about the rise and fall in the emotional intensity of the performer and the battle becomes tense and thrilling. It is possible that the cymbal is replaced by the gong, pungi by the harmonium but there is not any near about instrument to replace Chande. Chande remains the life-sound of Yakshagana.

1 The objection that 'Chande' would not be able, as at the portrayal of delicate sentiments like 'Srungara', is but an objection to the artist rather than to the instrument. In the hands of an expert like Kemminche Narmadappa of Mangalore, Chande can be a charming instrument capable of accompanying any delicate sentiment. K.S.Karanth: Yaksha-ganada Punarnavijavana'- Karnaveera Special issue 1939 p.2.

It is said that in olden days, Chande was so specialised that when it was beaten for 'Kelike', the neighbouring village would discover as to what particular theme of the epics would be taken up for the performance - from the very pattern of sound. T.Gopalkrishna Bhatta: 'Yakshagana'-Mitramanadiya Kanike: Madras 1945. p.30.
Thematic: The audience of Yakshagana mainly being the village folk, themes dealing with the mythological Superhuman personalities, Gods, demons and dream lands are usually portrayed. Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavata have provided suitable themes in abundance for Yakshagana. Moreover, these epics maintained the continuity of the Vedic influence as they simplified into didactic stories, the lofty tenets and philosophical teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads. Instruction through entertainment made a lasting impression on the rural audiences and the morals of the classics went home. It is in this sense "the Yakshagana remained the Night School for the masses preaching the everlasting spirit and salient qualities of our classical Sanskrit literature."1

Tendency of the folk is to appreciate the heroic and the grand. This native instinct is satisfied by portraying a theme that has something gorgeous about it, something unearthly and even abnormal. In selecting the theme, therefore, for his 'Yakshagana Prabandha' the composer paid a particular attention to the time honoured folk tradition of rousing the sentiments of 'Veeri' and 'Raudra'. He also provided full scope for exploiting dancing, the mainstay of the performance. Dancing to the accompaniment of 'Chande' and 'Mridanga' is at its intense climax only in 'Kalaga's' or battles. Thus we find all the important battles mentioned in our epics are brought on the Yakshagana stage and the prominent among them are 'Krishna Arjuna Kalaga', 'Babruvahana Kalaga', 'Hamsadhvaja Kalaga', 'Karnaarjuna Kalaga'.

and others. Even if the *Yakshogana Prabandha* is about a marriage (*Parinaya*) or diplomatic dealing (*Sanrhana*), there is perhaps no *prasanga* without a battle (*Kula*) in it. The title of *Girija Kalyana* suggests a romantic theme but it opens with the destruction of *Daksha Yajna* by Shiva and ends with the battle between the demor Taraka and Subrahmanya, War God and son of Shiva. Thus with a due emphasis placed on the fierce battles, Yakshagana like *Kathakkali* is a *Tandava Prakara*, a like of the vigorous war-dance of Shiva. *Lasya*, the delicate dance also finds its place but only too occasionally as in *Bhishma Parva* when three princesses softly dance with gestures to portray their bathing in the river Ganges or as in *Ravana Kozvijaya* when Ravana by his symbolic dance washes his feet, hands and face before worshipping the *Shivalinga*. But the very grain of Yakshagana is valour and power, its dominant sentiment—Veera and Raudra which go ideally with *Tandava Prakara*.

Only recently valorous themes are drawn from Indian History and even here, due consideration is given to providing sufficient scope for the battle dances. One of the representative prabandhas is Rana Rajasimha, composed by Sri K.P. Venkappa Shetti. Social themes have not made advent on the Yakshagana stage for the obvious reason that anything dealing with the ordinary human being would lack sustenance with the folk audience. To the folk, lofty morals can come from the super human being and, after a convincing conflict.
The Composition: 'Sabna Lokshana' or 'Sabha Vandana' is the only treatise on the prosody of 'Yakshagana Prabancha' believed to have been written by Parti Subba one of the foremost composer-exponents of 'Prabandhas' of 17th century. This treatise is said to be in close affinity with Natye Shastra of Bharata. Subba's own compositions of Prabandhas contain a variety of different verse-patterns like 'Yardha' and 'Bhamini' Shat-padi, Kanda, Vritta, Dwipadi and Vachana, and are fixed up in the seven different rhythm patterns (Sapta-talas) appropriately. Parti Subba has been accepted by later composers as the model to copy.

The Yakshagana composition rightly places its emphasis on the intelligibility of poetry on the one hand, and the movement of the story on the other, both in the interest of the audience, to whom it caters. Simplicity is the secret of its glory, for it was not written for the sake of the learned, but for the common man who had a pronounced flare for the art of drama and poetry rather than the science of it. It was meant for the common ground of popular entertainment and not for the Court; nor was it meant for silent

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1 The work is assigned to one Benakayya Bhagavata of Mudavur by Sri M.Timmeppayya- Parti Subba,p.14.

2 Ten of his Prabandhas are discussed in detail in the book 'Parti Subba'.

3 'Appakavyan', the Telugu treatise on the prosody of Yakshagana mentions that the compositions are to be in 'Ragada' form which would be the 'Ragale' form in Kannada. But many a lyric in the Tamil Tanukattam and the Telugu Teethi Nataka are 'dwipadis' and 'daru's (stage songs) In any case songs of Yakshagana richly reflect the methods and structure of the folk songs prevailing.' Dr.Raghavan: Yakshagana, Op.cit.
reading. Lyrics of the Yakshagana prabandha richly reflected intense emotions and sentiments of epical characters and were meant for singing on the stage in order to thwart the emotions of the spectator and reflect the same sentiments in his heart. Yet the compositions do pay all due considerations to the rules of poetics. When viewed from this background, Yakshagana remains a Kavya, for it serves the purpose of a true Kavya by successfully invoking the different sentiments. The common structure of the lyrics of the prabandha is its being 'ganás' and groups of five and seven matras. The structure is common because it is highly helpful in effective rousing of the sentiments 'veera' and 'raudra', the fundamental 'rasas' of Yakshagana. Occasional expression of 'karuna' and 'sringara' is witnessed when the word-structure of the composition provides scope for elongation and repetition. A typical example of 'karuna' is in 'Karna Parva Prasanga' (composed by Gerusoppe Shantappa, the second earliest composer of Yakshagana according to the available evidences) wherein, Karna on seeing the

1 M.Timnappayya concludes that Yakshagana must have been the 'Bajangabba' mentioned in Kaviraja Marga; Bajangabba that followed the rules of Kannada prosody. M.Timnappayya-Parti Subba; pp.34-42.

2 E.P.Rice: History of Kannada Literature. p.100
wheels of his chariot stuck in the damp earth, implored his foe to wait for a while. 'Sringara' and 'Hasya' are fully evoked in the compositions like 'Billababha', 'Bala Leele', 'Gograhama' and 'Chandravatilas'. 'Hasya' is at its full play in 'Krishna Sandhama', a treat and a lesson in Divine diplomacy.

Composers: B.P. Rice observed that Udipi Madhava Dasa (early 18th century) was still considered to be the first composer of Yakshagana. The second was Shantayya, a brahmin of Gerusoppa who became a principal Sadar Amin at Bangalore and who wrote a large number of works in this style. Most of the later composers came from the coastal tract of Karnataka. Yakshagana being a folk art of the Padugabba variety (recitative poetry), the prose part of it was never written. The most prominent and prolific of the later composers is 'Parti Subba' of the village 'Kumbala' in Kasargod Kaluka of South Karnataka who flourished possibly between 1760 and 1820 A.D. Parti Subba is called 'Yakshagana Valmiki' for his compositions are based on the themes of Ramayana. He set a standard, a framework and a fashion as the model to be copied by the later writers.

1 song quoted by K.P.Venkappashetty: Paanchakajjaya (1927) p.12E.
2 E.P.Rice: History of Kannarese Literature: (Heritage of India Series). p.100.
He has remained a tremendous influence on the vast folk-populace from the 18th century to the present day. His compositions are simple, direct and effective. With no purposeful play on words nor struggle for alliteration and other literary embellishments, his compositions read lucidly with direct appeal and are 'relished as much as ripe grapes.' A number of lyrics cited in the pages of 'Parti Subba,' with their intensity of emotion, poetical appeal and literary beauty can live independent of their contexts, and when set into music appropriately, they can enliven good taste for times to come.

Nandalike Lakshminarasamma, popularly known as Muddana has composed two prabandhas of Yakshagana—'Kumara Vijaya' and 'Ratnovati Kalyana,' both very impressive because of their rich poetical beauty and literary merit. But some of the lyrics bear the heavy weight of Sanskrit words, deliberate play on words and compound constructions, thus

1. "...
2. Ten of his compositions are discussed by M.Timmappaya: 'Parti Subba'—pp. 52-112.
3. "...
4. "..."
defeating the fundamental characteristics of Yakshagana-Prabandha being straight and simple. Sri Venkappa Setti himself, who is in superlative praise of Muddana accepts that the latter's compositions were not performed at all due to their unintelligibility, excessive literary weight and non-pauranic themes.

Other composers of repute are Matti Vasudeva Prabhu who was also well-known as an exponent, Bavyuru Sankayya Bhagavata, Haritangadi Ramabhatta of Basur, Mulka Venkamma and Parameshwara Bhatta of Harpur. After the advent of the coastal groups of performers to the important cities of the eastern table-land and Mysore, Yakshagana gained considerable prominence and popularity all over. Poets were enthused to compose 'Prabandhas'. The prominent among the most successful composers of Mysore was Aliya Lingaraja Urs (1822-1874) of the royal family of Mysore, who is said to have written about sixty compositions and some of them- 'Girija Kalyana', 'Seetka Kalyana', 'Jalandharana Katha', 'Vrishabhendra Vilasa', 'Vara Nandi Kalyana', 'Karna Farva' and others have been staged by different 'melas' or troupes, at different parts of Mysore for nearly a hundred years. His merited compositions mark him as a poet with a considerable sense of drama. At a time when

2 Parameshwara Bhatta is known to have composed only three Prabandhas- 'Prabhavati Swayamvara' (from Bhagavata), 'Kalasam Kalaga' (from Ramayana) and 'Abhimanyu Kalaga' (from Bharata). Sri Kerodi Subbarao speaks very highly of his poetical, literary and dramatic merits. Rangothwani: Oct., 1926- pp.37-40.
It was the fashion to translate into Kannada plays from Sanskrit, he made a prolific contribution to the Yakshagana literature. The variety of his themes, their adaptability to music, a grand conception of story and characterisation earned him the title - 'Abhinava Rhoja' from the rulers of Mysore. 

Other composers of the eastern table-land whose names may be mentioned for the quality and quantity of compositions are Balasubrama Rao of Shimoga, Talukina Subbanna of Bellary, Gyananda Kavi and K. Venkataramayya, both of Mysore.

Bhagavata: All the well-known composers have invariably been successful exponents also in the role of 'Bhagavata' who is the very vital soul of Yakshagana. It is 'Bhagavata' that performs the entire work of the Greek Chorus. He promotes the movement of the story, prompts the different characters to dance and provides a befitting frame-work to the entire performance and motivates the rousing of a sentiment. In addition, he introduces the characters to the audience by asking them questions and also, he links up situations with his own prose commentary. He should have a close understanding of the epics and be equipped with a good voice and a clear sense of the 'Ragas' of classical music.

The coastal tract of Karnataka has had a number of great exponents - the Bhagavatas. The line starts with -

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1 Kannada Stage Centenary Volume: 1948- pp. 127-123.
'Parti Subba', the well-known composer who was also a Bhagavata. Some of the others who have made lasting impressions at their times are Benakayya Bhagavata, Nerampadi Harayana Bhagavata, Sankayya Bhagavata and Mulike Manjunatha Bhagavata. In recent times Subraya Shanbhag of Kasargod and Maliya Harayana Bhagavata are known in the entire coastal tract for their great abilities and talents as exponents. The Bhagavata would usually know by memory entire texts of forty to fifty 'Prabandhas' and would go on with the performance without referring to manuscripts. Kavi Bhooshana K.P. Venkappa Setti is a prolific composer with a commendable literary and poetical merit and is also well known for his performances.

The Actor: The actor of the Yakshagana performance has to satisfy many more requirements than the modern stage actor, who shines with just some delicate touches both in 'acting and acting, assisted in addition by the make up expert, the property man and even the prompter. The Yakshagana artist is at once a make-up expert, a dancer, and one with convincing talking powers, which bring home to the audience at every step, his close understanding of every line of the 'Prabandha' he is portraying and also of the epics, arts and literature of our land. He, at the outset, should be strong and patient as to be in the inconvenient make up, as to bear the heavy costumes and still perform the exhausting vigorous dances, mostly all the time he is on the stage. Above all, his presence of mind and cool common-sense is his asset.

1 Maliya Timmappayya: 'Parti Subba' - p.15
As in the case of the modern actor, the spoken word is not fixed for the Yakshagana artist. The Paagavote with his verse will only prescribe an orbit for the artist to go on with his own words and acting. The spoken word is all original, spontaneous and extempore. The prompter does not exist in the world of Yakshagana. It is this freedom of the artist and the absence of any fixed form for the spoken word that enlivens Yakshagana and makes the same performance new and sustaining every time it is staged. The prose interpretation of the actor depends on his presence of mind in spite of his playing the same role in the same 'prabandha' any number of times before. During a performance he lives in a state of real dramatic suspense as he would have no chance of knowing what his 'opponent' would speak next. This handicap is also the merit of Yakshagan; for, it changes the surface complexion of the dialogue and provides scope for alteration and improvement in characterization. An artist could achieve the art of acting in Yakshagana only after meticulous training for years.¹

Successful artists of Yakshagana enjoyed a great status and honour in the coastal villages, and whenever

¹ All the well-known artists of the past studied the secrets of the art for at least ten or twelve years. In the strict traditional manner they would receive tuition and training at the feet of a master regarding the technique of make-up, modes of dancing (Hejje gati), different gestures ('Anganyasa') and manner of talking; G. L. Pande- shwar- Yakshanatakada Bhavitavya: 'Kannada Vrata,' Special Number-1953, p. 4.
visited cities, they made a lasting impression on them. \(^1\) Many of the reputed artists of Yakshagana had a rare understanding of the dynamics of acting and "would compare well with any Indian or western artist of the professional stage or screen." \(^2\) Dr. V. Raghavan while considering the artistic qualities of 'Ganapati Prabhu', the celebrated actor belonging to 'Paradur Dasavatara Sangha' paid him a compliment saying that he, with his rare command on the art of dance, gestures, talking and roving a sentiment can be an equal to many Udayashankars'. \(^3\)

Some of the past masters in the art who are intimately remembered even today are 'Kamble Hamsappa' for humour, Kokkarane Ganapati for female roles, Kambale Malinga for the leading grand roles like Ravana and Balarama, and

\(^1\) Yakshagana troupes of the coastal area frequently toured in South India and in Maharashtra. The prominent among them were Paradur Dasavatara Sangha and Dakshina Kannada Yakshagana Sangha.

\(^2\) V. Raghavan: 'Yakshagana- Jayakamataka Vol. XII.11. p.15'.
Upparahalli Sesha for sublime characters like Kama. This glorious legacy of the art is ably borne even to-day by imposing experts and all-round artists like Keremana Sivarame Hegde, Karki Paramayya, Murur Devara Hegde, Brahmavara Veerabhadra and others in North Canara (Badagu Tittu) and K. Vittal Sastri, Narayana Bhatta, Dejasetti, Haladi Rama and others in South Canara. When a performance of K. Shivarama Hegde or K. Vittal Sastri is witnessed, one feels that Yakshagana, in spite of ravages of time and various influences has yet retained the rich native art of Karnataka in abundance and if the art is supported by such expert hands, Yakshagana will undoubtedly have brighter days in future.

Different schools of Yakshagana: The western coastal region extending from Goa to the border of Malabar in the South has been divided into two parts, considering the differences in the techniques of the portrayal of Yakshagana. The northern region which has a different style of presentation is called

1 M. Timmappayya: 'Parti Subba'- P. 44.

2 K. Shivarama Hegde is known all over for his portrayal of the role of 'Duryodhana'. He performed it with commendable skill and understanding in the Kannada Sahitya Sammelan that met at Kumta in 1954. He is a thin man with a fragile body but when on the stage in full make-up and costumes, he occupies it fully, literally and figuratively. Karki Paramayya or Parama Hasyagara as he is known, is about 65 years of age now, but his portraying the role of 'Shambasura' on the same occasion, with his scary dance and talking, gave thrills to the audience. K. Vittal Sastri, the leader of the Manjunatha Mela of Dharmsathala recently paid a visit to Hubli with his troupe. The ease and informality of his portrayal competes with the grandeur of impression. Shri. Mahalinga of the same troupe playing the main opposite role (Pratigata) and Ramachandra Rao who plays lady roles are also artists of rare ability.
the 'Badagu tittu' while the southern region is known as 'Tenku tittu' with Udupi as the demarcating taluka. Main differences between them are... firstly, the Bhagavata of 'Badagu tittu' uses one pair of cymbals (tala) while its counterpart in 'Tenku tittu' uses the Gong (Jagata Kolu); 'Mridanga' of the North is longer and narrower at the ends giving sharp notes at high pitch, while in the South the Mridanga has a wider diameter giving base notes (Kula and Mandara) with sounds of 'Jhankar' and 'Dhinkar'; 'Genda' in the South is used with better proficiency and profit as an accompaniment for evoking even a delicate sentiment like 'Sringara' and subtle dances as 'Laasya' and "the reason for this superior exploitation of this powerful percussion instrument in the South is perhaps due to the better efficiency of the southerners in making this instrument."

Secondly, while the performance in the North pays greater attention to acting (abhinaya); the Southern style has specialised in the art and technique of dancing. Thirdly, the Bhagavata of Tenku tittu is a lone singer, while in the North, the Bhagavata is invariably accompanied by the performing artist also. Fourthly, while the northern Bhagavata stops singing along with the beating of the cymbal, in the South, the Gong (Jagata Kolu) continues in three rounds even after the recitation of the Bhagavata stops in order to give a nice finesse to the dance of the character. Finally, the make up and costumes of the southern style is better, more imposing with a pronounced similarity.

1 K.P. Venkappa Setti. Presidential Speech at Kumta Sammelan.
with the methods of Kathakali. These differences in the performances of Badagu tittu and Tenku tittu are obviously due to the local and regional influences as well as the contacts; but the source and purpose remain the same and they produce almost the same total impression.

**Prasanga:** Yakshagana is essentially an open air performance and will be interrupted by pouring coastal rains for full four months in the year. In the absence of a full scale performance of Yakshagana in the open air, the coastal region has evolved an alternative in what is called 'Prasanga' or 'Tale Maddale', an indoor entertainment, closely following the lines laid down by Yakshagana. 'Prasanga' is a virtual Yakshagana performance without the latter's costumes and dances.

In the presence of an audience assembled in a spacious hall, the Bhagavata sits in the centre with his accompaniments, and the artists (Arthadhari as they are called in contrast with 'Veshadhari' of Yakshagana) sit in front of him in two rows opposite to each other. Bhagavata selects a particular 'Prasanga', sings the invocation and recites verses as in Yakshagana. The verses will be interpreted by the artists sitting in plain clothes still assuming different roles. The illusion is created all the same for the participants talk with all the vigour, bearing and understanding of the roles they portray. Individual entry of the participant recedes to the background and the mythological heroes dance before the mental eye and the audience enjoy.
the performance immensely, for after all, the physical eye beholds much less than the mental.

The 'Prasanga' emphasises on the literary and emotional exposition. Compositions like 'Krishna Saadhana' and 'Angada Saadhana', which provide greater scope for literary exposition and imaginative interpretations are usually selected for the performance. 'Prasanga' is an evidence to show that tense dramatic situations and atmosphere could be created without dance and even costumes. That the Pauranik, the Keertanakara and the Pathaka did single handed, is done more ably by a team of learned artists here. 'Prasanga' has more dramatic colour in it than the single handed performance of the Pauranika or Keertanakara; but still, it cannot be a 'drama' in the correct sense of the word because of the absence of settings, dance, make up and costumes. It is, however, not improbable that it is the middle step between the 'prayachanakara' on the one hand and the full-fledged Yakshanatak on the other in the evolution of the theatre of Karnatak, as suggested by Prof. Krishnasastri.

1 Sri R. Ananthakrishnasarma recalls his witnessing a 'play in plain clothes' enacted in the Sanskrit Patashala of Mysore. It was the Sanskrit 'Veni Samhara Nataka'. Four boys came in their daily clothing and sat on chairs. One of them said to his neighbour 'Priye' and was responded by the other who said 'Aryaputra'. The audience laughed, realising that one was Bhima and the other Draupali; but within a few minutes, the audience sat up with full attention and enjoyed a real drama- R. Ananthakrishnasarma: Natakopanyasa: Prakuddha Karnataka. 79. 1939. p.12

Mudalanayai. While Yakshagana is essentially an indigenous theatrical mode of the coastal tract of Karnataka, the eastern table-land—North Karnataka and Mysore—have evolved a mode of open-air performance called Mudalanayai or 'the Method of the East'. The performance is also recognised by the names—'Attadatu' which means 'a performance on the platform', Bayalata, to mean 'a performance in the open-air', Boddata to convey that the performance is an imposing play' and Donab Dasara Kunite used mistakenly to suggest that it is 'the performance of the Dasas'. The procedure of the performance is roughly on the lines of Yakshagana itself but the obvious differences between them in the details of production make the two easily distinguishable. In some of the villages of North Karnataka both Yakshagana and Mudalanayai thrive side by side, frequently performed by specialised parties.

Mudalanayai has all the essential compliments of a typical mode of Folk Theatre with its Bhagavata supported by a band of chorus singers called 'Himmela' vigorous dances and music, colourful costumes and make-up and finally, an epical theme and/or organic development. The platform in the decorated arena is more spacious than for Yakshagana, for it has to accommodate a bigger number of participants who perform awe-inspiring wild dances. The performance opens with a prayer to Ganapati, the God of Learning, who appears on the stage and blesses it to success. Unlike in the Yakshagana where the different characters are introduced to the audience
by the Bhagavata, Mudalapaya has a special role called «Sarathi» to do the necessary introduction of the characters and also to provide substantial humour for the audience. Every character addresses the Sarathi while speaking and an ingenious «Sarathi» is a link between the audience and the roles on the stage interpreting one to the other. He fills in the gap between the exit of one role and the entrance of another. Witty as he is, he often indulges into humorous conversation with the audience. Sarathi is an essential limb of Mudalapaya and is usually assisted by Kodangi, the jester.

The grandeur of the performance is in the costumes, dance, acting and talking of the main character - Ramesa - Vesha. The main artist is usually painted and dressed up at his own residence fully attended to by the village experts. He will wear fabulous costumes in fast colours with golden embroidery (peetamba). 'Veeragasha' (heroic way of wearing the loin cloth), Tolapavada (Silken pads for wrists), Kanchidama (broad waist belt), Kavacha (upper garment), Karetha (crown for the head), numerous necklaces, wads and a flowing robe at the back are his usual wearings. Heavy jungles will be tied around the ankles over the socks. He will be laden with scores of artificial ornaments above the waist, made to look most imposing and is brought in a procession with oil torches on either side, led by the village band party (Blaga'). Whenever the procession halts on the road, the artist performs a wild round of dance with intermittent war cries. After he is seated in the lone chair on the platform, villagers make gifts to him 'the homage'. He is then
prompted by the chorus into action; a cracker will be exploded and he springs to his feet, spitting fire from his eyes on the foe who will have stood to his opposite on the platform and thus opens the grand drama. Heroic roles like Bheema, Duryodhana, Ravana and Hiranyakashipu are presented in the most imposing make-up and costumes. These characters, and sometimes even minor roles like Hanuman and Surpanakhi rush and jump up to the platform after taking a few hops through the audience shouting loud shrieks. The polish and finesse of the Yakshagana make-up is missing in Mudalapaya, but the emotional intensity is carried to its climax by the wildness of dancing and acting and the audience thrilled.

The performers of Mudalapaya are mostly illiterates and unimaginative when compared with the Yakshagana artists, and so, their performance may look to be more physical than intellectual. Unlike ac in Yakshagana again, invariably the prose is memorised; the prose is heavily burdened with Sanskrit words and strings of deliberate alliteration.

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1. "Bhuta svarupa sithira vachana sakti sankara—

Sita sakshi chhadi,

Prahlada, Bheema, Duryodhana, Ravana and Hiranyakashipu

Nakala samagru nilam manasa sahaatar

Aparajit dhrishti kha yatra,

Hiranyakashipu.

Ojja, bhagya drishti, gopala jeevan,

Maha Bheema, Duryodhana, Ravana, and Hiranyakashipu

Ekopa devarshini sarasa sastham.

Vedas, Upanishad, Vedanta, and Bhagavad Gita

Katha, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Bhagavata Purana.

Kathavahana, Kathakal, and Kathakirtana

Mudalapaya, Yakshagana, and Sattras.

Kathasangama, Kathavanta, and Kathavasanu

Kathavaha, Kathavanta, and Kathavasanu.

Kathavaha, Kathavanta, and Kathavasanu.
The prose structure is tight, involved and elongated consisting of words that can provide scope for the over stressing of the letters 'I' and 'O'. Compositions of Mudalapaya are thus necessarily in prose unlike the composition of Yakshagana which is poetical.

Mudalapaya provides humour in a large measure but it may sound to be crude and often physical than verbal unlike the literary and chaste humour of Yakshagana. The dance of Mudalapaya looks wilder, more raucous and overtone of the supporting chorus and the costumes, often too gaudy. Its themes though drawn from the epic, seem to lack the Bhakti element which is found in abundance in Yakshagana. Yet, when it is performed by an experienced troupe, the Mudalapaya of North Karnataka can create a fantastic atmosphere of the wild grotesque and toss the audience from climax to climax with thrills between. With its war-cries, dances, fantastic settings, it looks that the Mudalapaya is sometimes for more wild and thrilling than Yakshagana that often becomes a 'tame affair' in comparison.

Recently, within these fifty years, Mudalapaya seems to have been much influenced by the methods of the professional stage. Unlike as before, the platform will be

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1 Sometimes there would be an overweight of crude humour (of Sarathi) crushing the dignity of the leading character at repartees like -

\[\text{Sometimes there would be an overweight of crude humour (of Sarathi) crushing the dignity of the leading character at repartees like -} \]
covered on three sides and will have oddly painted curtains, two of them usually. Even the costumes and make-up reveal a pronounced alien influence. The age-old 'Panju' is replaced by the petromax, the village band ('Olaga') by the harmonium and finally, the fundamental vigour expressed in dance and war-shrieks seems to have faded out considerably. Yet even to-day, on a festive occasion, if the Doddata of 'Ramayana' (Ramayana) is announced, the entire village including even the old and the sick will assemble and enjoy every bit of the long performance that bridges the dusk with the dawn. After all, 'audience is half the play'.

It is because of the comparatively rustic crudeness witnessed in the performance, Mudalapaya is considered to be more ancient than Yakshagana. It is compared with the open-air performance of Ancient Greece because of some of the identical characteristics - like the absence of settings and scenery on the stage, composition and function of the chorus, heroic themes and non-commercial nature of both. Mudalapaya is considered by some scholars as the most typical of 'Prakrit' performances that influenced the early Sanskrit Drama supplying with some of its theatrical modes and basic roles which later came to be called 'Sootradhara' and 'Sarpiparaswaka' who later assumed names like 'Vidushaka', 'Vita' and 'Shakara'.

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2 M.G. Venkateshayya: Ibid. Rangabhoomi: Vol. IV. 9 pp. 146-147
3 Rangabhoomi- March 1929. pp. 110-115
The suggestion is significant, but excepting for the comparative crudity of performance, there is no other tangible evidence in support of placing Mudalapaya far in earlier than Yakshagana, the antiquity, nor is there any material evidence to prompt the conclusion that Yakshagana is the outcome of Mudalapaya or the other way about. Each seems to have lived independently for a long time and similarities in their features may at best indicate mutual impact on each other. Development of one and the crudity of the other may essentially be owing to environmental influences. Secondly, several factors provide a contrast rather than a compromise between the ancient Greek plays and Mudalapaya, the important ones being the wearing of the mask in the one and the absence of it in the other, the tragic end of the theme in the former and the happy end of it in the latter and finally, the three unities that are considered to be fundamental conditions for the ancient Greek drama being totally absent in Mudalapaya. The disparity between the two would indicate the absence of any influence of the one on the other, though there was a close contact (mostly commercial) between Ancient Greece and South India. The theatrical modes of the two countries were obviously evolved independently, and so, any similarity between the two in the theatrical pattern or procedure would be owing to the sameness of human mind.

The opinion that Mudalapaya more than Yakshagana has contributed concepts to the creation and development of Sanskrit drama deserves some consideration, for
highly probable, as suggested in the previous chapter that the Sanskrit drama owes some of its grains at least to the then prevailing Prakrit mode of performances of South India and possibly of Karnataka. But the absence of any substantial evidence prevents Mudalapaya claiming an earlier antiquity than Yakshagana and so, it cannot be said that it was Mudalapaya and not Yakshagana that influenced Sanskrit drama. Except in a few details already discussed both these modes resemble each other in their methods of presentation, purpose and fulfilment. They seem to be two faces of the same Prakrit performance and branches of the same theatre developing differently under different environments. As there is no clear print of the distinguishable characteristics of the one more than the other on Sanskrit drama, it cannot be said as to which of them influenced the Sanskrit drama and which, less. Even in the modern times each is as popular as the other and as effective also on the different audiences.

**KRISHNA PARIJATA:** A theatrical mode that has still held the village stage in North Karnataka even in the age of cinema is Krishna Parijata, a much refined pattern of Doddata. Refinement in the performance and the resultant popularity is essentially due to the magic touch given by a folk poet and artist by name Kulgod Timnenna, of Gokak Taluk.

The original composition of Krishna Parijata is said to have been written by an earlier folk-poet by name Aparala Timnenna of Raichur in Hyderabad Karnataka, who lived in the early years of the 13th century. The original composition
which is full of verses bears a pronounced influence of the methods of Yakshagana. Years later, Kulgod Timmanna, who was deeply influenced by the Yakshagana performances of the visiting troupes from the coastal tract took up the old composition of Aparala Tamanna in order to evolve an equally successful indigenous theatrical mode of North Karnataka. He trimmed up the original, added his own lyrics appropriately, collected his friends and staged it as a \textit{drama}. The experiment was a great success and was very new to the village audiences. Krishna Parijata got a great welcome all over and the troupe of Kulgod Tamanna received invitations from every village of North Karnataka.\footnote{Beggeri Krishna Surma: op cit. p.355}

The success and attraction was due to the keen theatrical insight of Timmanna who retained the love-theme of Krishna Parijata but made a series of changes in the methods of its presentation. Modern touches of popular Marathi light music were given to the songs; the characters themselves were made to sing their respective songs, yet with the support of the traditional chorus. Modern instruments like Tabla, Sarangi and Harmonium were introduced; better attention was paid to the frame work of the play, the stage, make-up and costumes and finally, women were initiated into taking part in the performance.\footnote{Kanjilal Gangasam was one of the reputed lady-artists of Krishnaparijata. She built her own troupe later and toured the cities and villages of Karnataka in 1830s.} These important alterations marked the performance as a novel experiment, which catered to the changing tastes of the people.
who were slowly acquainting with the urban professional
plays. Krishna Parijata marked on to stage a middle stone
in the progress of the theatre from the folk to the pro-
fessional.

SANNATA: A more recent mode of the folk theatre than
Krishna Parijata is Sannata, so called evidently to distin-
guish it from the well-known Doddata. Sannata is virtually a
drama set essentially in the traditional folk method of
theatrical procedure but bearing the influences of the
performances of professional companies, particularly with
regard to stage, setting, make-up and the spoken prose in
dialogue. Sannata is about 50 years old and is popular in the
villages of North Karnataka because of the impressive per-
formances of the teams that came from Belgaum and Hire-
districts, particularly from the villages like Narandre and
Kelgeri.

Sannata combines itself the salient features of
both the traditional folk theatre and the modern professional
productions. It is based essentially on a moral and philo-
sophical theme, but not usually drawn from mythologies. It
does not lay predominant emphasis on gorgeous costumes, make
up or dances at varying rhythms as Doddata does, though the
procedure of production is on the methods of Doddata and
in fact when performed, it looks a much simplified Doddata
on account of the sameness of procedure. The platform set for
Sannata is a regular stage covered on three sides and equi-
poped with self-rising curtains. Like Doddata, it is a whole
night performance and opens with songs by the chorus and
its leader in praise of Ganpati, \(^1\) Ishwara\(^2\) and Saraswati.\(^3\) The chorus joins the leader only in singing 'Arakali', the opening lines of the verse at the end of each stanza; the actor also sings along with the Bhagavata. The jester is present but with a different name 'Lalu', introducing to the audience different characters of the play as each enters the stage. The actor performs an occasional dance but not with the vigour or intensity of the artist of Yakshagana or Doddata. The actor performs three rounds of short dances called 'Chalti' at the specific timing allotted while the Bhagavata sings at different tals like Trital, Ektaal and Jhampetal. Cymbals, Tabla, harmonium and the recently acquired Violin are the accompanying instruments. A peculiarity of the performance is the playing of the instruments at different rhythms at the same time, all joining together in unison at the final climax synchronising with the short dance of the actor. The music contains a fair mixture of ragas like Bhairavi and Multani of Hindusthani music in addition to a few popular tunes taken from the Marathi stage plays.

A fundamental difference between Samanta and the other folk plays is in its being a written out play essentially in prose with interpersing verses, and also in the artist's emphasis on 'acting', an over stressed employment of the art of gesticulation in synchrony with the spoken word. The —

\(^1\) गणपति
\(^2\) इश्वर
\(^3\) सारस्वती
performance provides no scope for the actor to react or speak extempore for it is a regularly rehearsed drama with the actor fully memorising his long prose passages running sometimes to three pages without an interruption. As is typical of the folk theatre the playwright is not usually known though the plays themselves are recent and popular. Script of the play is usually sold from one party to another on the payment of an amount ranging from Rs.15/- to Rs.30/- depending on the popularity of the play. Some of the very popular Sannata plays are 'Allama Prabhu', 'Satyasheela', 'Kabirdas' and 'Jodabai' and they stress on the moral and philosophical aspects of living. The performance provides on the stage opposite camps of the moral and immoral and drives home the triumph of the former. During a musical duet both the artists impersonating opposite roles dance differently yet synchronising with the tunes and rhythm patterns provided by the leader and the chorus. Sannata thus has some of the traditional elements of the folk stage.

1 The usual stress is on the chastity of woman and on the triumph of internal powers and the performance preaches in simple words the practical morality. A musical dialogue between Satyasheela, an enlightened monk and Tara, the young wife of an aged man runs as-

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\text{ते सत्यशील} \, जोगनाथ कोटे \, (सत्य शील) \\
\text{अंतराल की पतली मार बोले अपने सितारे को धारा} \\
\text{बच्चे के हृदय, निन्दा निकल पर दिखे निंदा} \\
\text{सोहील बुझी उठे एकदम दिखाई} \\
\text{ते सत्यशील} \, जोगनाथ कोटे \, (सत्य शील) \\
\text{अंतराल की पतली मार बोले अपने सितारे को धारा} \\
\text{बच्चे के हृदय, निन्दा निकल पर दिखे निंदा} \\
\text{सोहील बुझी उठे एकदम दिखाई} \\
\text{ते सत्यशील} \, जोगनाथ कोटे \, (सत्य शील) \\
\text{अंतराल की पतली मार बोले अपने सितारे को धारा} \\
\text{बच्चे के हृदय, निन्दा निकल पर दिखे निंदा} \\
\text{सोहील बुझी उठे एकदम दिखाई} \\
\text{सत्यशील जोगनाथ कोटे (सत्य शील) अंतराल की} \\
\text{पतली मार बोले अपने सितारे को धारा बच्चे के हृदय,} \\
\text{निन्दा निकल पर दिखे निंदा सोहील बुझी उठे एकदम} \\
\text{दिखाई} \\
\text{ते सत्यशील} \, जोगनाथ कोटे \, (सत्य शील) \\
\text{अंतराल की पतली मार बोले अपने सितारे को धारा} \\
\text{बच्चे के हृदय, निन्दा निकल पर दिखे निंदा} \\
\text{सोहील बुझी उठे एकदम दिखाई} \\
\text{ते सत्यशील} \, जोगनाथ कोटे \, (सत्य शील) \\
\text{अंतराल की पतली मार बोले अपने सितारे को धारा} \\
\text{बच्चे के हृदय, निन्दा निकल पर दिखे निंदा} \\
\text{सोहील बुझी उठे एकदम दिखाई} \]

such parallel pictures of moral and immoral are provided in almost all the Sannata plays like 'Allama Prabhu' (Allama Prabhu's advice to Maye) and 'Kabirdas' (advice of Beitbi, wife of Kabir to the impetuous Madana).
like 'Poorva Ranga', the Bhagavata with his chorus and some dance, music and stock characters like 'Lalu'.

Its departure from folk traditions is seen in the method of talking the prose with exaggerated gestures and in the make-up and settings which closely resemble the ways of professional productions. The artist is given no liberty with his words in order to prevent any distortion of the lofty moral themes. Sannata, thus shifts the emphasis from the actor to the playwright as if a precursor of the amateur stage. The method of make-up also marks a transition from the folk theatre to the modern theatre. The actor just paints himself like the professional actor without attending to the elaborate working of the features as in Doddata. He does not wear 'Kireeta', the crown, 'Shuja-Keerti' - the shoulder Bladë, and other imposing ornaments. The leading role will wear a gown and socks. The jester has his loose loin cloth, a jubba and a mundasa, the head-dress in contrasting colours. The lady of the play receives better attention than in Yakshagana or Doddata. She wears a wig, an imposing saree with heavy necklaces. Thus with the comparatively modern make-up and an emphasis on the script, Sannata looks a virtual stage drama bridging the village 'Doddata' and the urban professional performances. With its engaging theme and lofty moral tone as the sustai ning aspect of the show, Sannata is still popular in the villages of North Karnataka.
Folk Theatre of Mysore: It is strange indeed, that Mysore which made a grand contribution to the professional theatre did not evolve any original mode for the folk-theatre, possibly because its needs were catered to by the 'Doddata' played in the same pattern as in north Karnataka and by the visiting Yakshagana troupes from the coastal tract, particularly from the 'Tenka Tittu'. Royal patronage was extended to Yakshagana from the times of King Kantirava Narasimha as made clear by Govinda Vaidya. Later, the Mysore Palace received a Yakshagana troupe from Dharanasthala in the year 1812 and maintained it. Again in 1867, King Mummadi Krishnaraja Wadýar wrote to Manjaya Hegde of Dharanasthala asking for some expert artists to replenish the palace troupe. 

Aliya Lingaraj Urs (1622-1674) of the Royal family wrote as many as about sixty compositions of Yakshagana, rehearsed and got 'many of them' staged by the 'Dashavatara mela' in the palace both at the palace in the Royal presence at 'Budara Totti' and at his own residence. Indeed the Court performances of Yakshagana provided no access to the common man but it did lead the way and inspired many a 'Dashavatara Mela' into existence both in the cities and villages of Mysore State - particularly in Sagar, Chitaldoorg and Kolar. Since then a number of poets wrote 'Yakshagana Prabandhas' the prominent of them - after Lingaraja (Aliya Lingaraj Urs) being Tippanayya ('Sundara Kanda', 'Hanumadvilasa' and other prabandhas), K. Anantharamaiah ('Bala Leele' Bana-sura Kote' and others), V. Pattanna ('Dhruva Charite', Mala

1 C. Re Amardarao: 'The Palace Company'. (Manuscript).
Charlie' and others), Subbaraya ('Kariya Bhantana Kathe', 'Karnarjunana Kalaga' and others) and Rama Shastri 'Jalandhara Kalaga', 'Chora Kathe' and others). The Mysore performances closely resembled the methods of the Yakshagana of Tenkutittu, though they lacked in the colourful costumes and vigorous dancing of the coastal performers. Prasanga or Tala Maddale was also popularly performed on festive occasions particularly in the temples in cities, while the villages depended on the age-old Doddata for their entertainment. Mysore, though did not originate an independent mode for the folk theatre, it found abundant entertainment in Yakshagana, Doddata and their variants. Yakshagana in particular was accepted as both royal and popular entertainment and thus, Mysore paid a homage to an unrivaled folk art of colour and character.

The future of the folk mode: These various theatrical modes of the folk theatre have preserved themselves in spite of the damage done to them by the changing tastes through the times. Yakshagana and Doddata in particular provide a golden link between the past and the present of theatrical art of Karnataka. What Professor Nicoll observed of English plays of the mediaeval age, fits ideally in their case also. "There is freshness of fancy here, a free treatment of material, a rich fund of humour and at times a true sense of the profound and the tragic."[1] They appealed profoundly to the masses indeed, but they charmed the classes too. They pervaded the entire folk world and -

remained the unchallenged modes of the folk art and theatre of Karnataka.

Yet, when a performance of Yakshagana is watched to-day, it brings conflicts in the spectator as to its future, for it has lost some of its vitals like the oil torch that created a convincing dream-land, its indigenous instruments like Pungi and Mukhaveena which gave a rich native tone, the vast learning and meticulous training of both the Bhagavata and the actors— which gave a sublime touch to the performance and it has also lost to a considerable extent, its original pattern of presentation¹, its cancée in varied rhythms and even its elaborate make-up and imposing costumes. While the Southern Style (Tenku Titto) it clearly influenced by the methods and make up of Kathakkali—and has become impure², its counterpart in the 'Bacagutitvu' seems to have taken traits of the professional stage drama. The worst among its acquisitions seem to be the harmonium³, a loose talking often indulged in by some roles and the very misfitting themes.⁴ With these, the future of Yakshagana looked rather dim and dismal a few years ago.

¹ Some of the old characters like 'Ardhanari', 'Cheppara Mancha', 'Stree Vesha' and even 'Poorna Ranga' is shed off.
² 'Nagarika'- Daily of Kunta: 31-3-1954. p.2.
³ 'For every discordant musical note heard in India to-day, the harmonium should be blamed'. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya: 'Kala' Sept. 1931. p.107.
⁴ "পুরাণের বর্ণনা ভ্রমে, সেখান হইতে, নয়ন ভুলে যেখানে কল্যানের কল্যান পড়িয়া যায়। যিনি তাহি করিলেন কী জন্য, এই ভালোবাসাসূত্রে বিজ্ঞান করিয়া যায়। কিছুই - অনেক অঙ্গ করিয়া যায়; এই কথায় ভালোবাসার পরিপাক ৷
"

Many an art critic and well-wisher of the theatre of Karnataka expressed anxiety of the future of this colourful mode and blamed for its decay, the sense of realism that was setting into the soul of Yakshagana and warned it against merely hanging as a handmaid to 'Shastra', 'Panditya' or even to 'Navinya'. Critics wrote deploring the lack of taste and patronage on the part of the public and a careful study and strenuous training on the part of the artist. They called on the living masters to give full training with a free mind and everyone demanded the eradication of sophistication and esoterism. Attention on the part of the artist and consideration and patronage on the part of the Government and the public was called for - "without which this glorious art would soon find its grave and pass into history." It was indeed a warning given in a much exaggerated tone - but a warning all the same which deserved serious consideration.

As a result or as a coincidence it is heartening however, that there is a new awareness coming all over to witness, understand and estimate the folk theatre and particularly its Yakshagana. The awakening is a happy augury for it sets the active minds to thinking of Yakshagana, its problems and its future. Yakshagana has attracted the attention of the

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1 Shivarama Karmath: 'Yakshasanada Punarujjevana' - Kannaveera Annual-1949, p.29.
3 Hasanagi: 'Yakshanaatakaegalu', p.93.
administrators, artists, learned and the layman and seems to have convinced them of its worth as a theatrical art which should be preserved at all costs.

Considerations that deserve attention are regarding the compromise of Yakshagana with the changing tastes. Along, it has lived mostly on the patronage of temples and has remained 'religious'. The original significance attached to the temple and even its financial strength is weakening thin in modern times and so, Yakshagana cannot depend entirely on the temples any longer. It has to be maintained by the society which should make it a medium of common man's education in culture and art.

It would be unfair to dictate that Yakshagana should be preserved in its very original pattern, for it is impracticable; but it has to preserve, as far as possible, its original grain by recreating its lost characters, by preserving the tradition of its make-up and costumes, by

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1. For the first time a 'Yakshagana Kosti' was organized under the auspices of the 36th Kannada Conference convened at Kumta in Dec. 1953. For the first time again, a Yakshagana troupe (The Haryagaara Mela of Karagi) went to Delhi and staged shows at the Kannada Cultural Conference early in 1954. The Delhi public, the President and the Prime Minister of India, witnessed the shows and received them very well.

2. Even to-day the good form of some of the troupes is owing to the financial back up, provided by temples to which they are attached— as at Dharmasthala, Serafur, Mandari, Marakeatte, Kiriyadka, Haladi, Bapponadu, Mulki, Idaganji and other places.
maintaining its dance and music and in fact, by keeping all its original paraphernalia. It has to make efforts to become the beloved entertainment of the city-audiences also by cutting short its duration and trimming up the performance. It can take advantage of the modern amenities without in any way suffering in the soul, for the benefit of the performance and betterment of the impression.

Whether Yakshagana should become commercial is another consideration discussed and supported by some critics for the obvious economic advantages. But then, the art may have to cater to the taste of its patronizers on an obligation and at the cost of its own soul. It would be a certain danger to get into an obligation with any audience (unless fully prepared for self-adjustment) to cater to its taste which is neither constant nor dependable. No art can remain pure and yet become commercial success for all times and it is particularly so regarding the folk art and its theatre of which, if ceases to remain pure, ceases also to be a typical folk art that lives for its own sake to speak of the soft green soul of a region. The question then, of its prosperous future should be met by social patronage and the art’s own appeal.

1 G. A. Pandeshwar: 'Yaksanatakada Bhavitayya': Kannada Vritta-25th Dec., 1953, p. 4

2 The Manjunatha Yaksanatakaka Mandali of Dharashtala led by Sri K. Vittala Sastri did stage impressive performance at Hubli on tickets. The show would start at 9.30 p.m. and would go on till 1.00 a.m. when suddenly, realising the late hour for the city, the show would be concluded with the final battle scene quite unceremoniously in regular contrast with the 'Poorvaranga'. Still the shows were well responded.
The opening of a 'Kala Kendra' or a Teaching Faculty is imminent, a Kala Kendra that can bring together the expert, the student and the critic in order to preserve and foster the art. It may be run on the lines of 'Kalamandalam' of Kathakali at Cheruthuruthy in Travancore-Cochin under the guidance of the Poet Laureate Vallathol. It may work in other directions also of collecting manuscripts, costumes, ornaments and weapons of Yakshagana from olden times and thus become a Research centre of the folk theatre. An annual festival of Yakshagana and Doddata performances staged by troupes drawn from all over the Kannada land will flip the art into better action. Efficient troupes must also be made to go in turns around the entire country of ours, staging shows and creating a consciousness for the folk theatre of Karnataka.

It is in these rural performances of Yakshagana and Doddata, the seeds of the professional theatre and modern drama lay. If there is some art that is indigenous and typical of Karnataka as indigenous and typical as its music and temple, it is Yakshagana and its counterpart Doddata. Yakshagana can safely remain the pride of Karnataka comparing favourably with any other mode of Indian folk theatre; the 'Yatra of Bengal,' the 'Rasadhari' of Madhura and the 'Rama Leela' of upper India. With its spoken word, it has an advantage even over its counterpart in Malabar, the acclaimed Kathakali. If not for its great past as the unrivalled University of the common man, imparting light and delight, for its own future as a lofty institution of the indigenous folk theatre of Karnataka, it has to be preserved in its purity and rustic glory for though it has already borne remarkable fruit, it is indeed yet capable of bearing more and richer.