CHAPTER-IV
YAKŞAGĀNA AS MULTICHANNEL COMMUNICATION

4.0. MULTICHANNEL COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

Yakṣagāna is a performing art in which different channels of communication like dance, music, costume etc. are utilised. Each one of these is a different sign system and makes use of a different significatory process. In fact, some of these, like music and dance are independent artistic forms by themselves. Language, the most highly developed of all sign systems, is also used prominently in yakṣagāna. All these channels function together in the performance of a form like yakṣagāna. These different sign systems function differently, using different mediums of communication (sound, body language, colour etc.). As a result, different messages may be transmitted (one highlighting or obstructing the other), during the course of the performance. Yet the performance as a whole leads to one comprehensive message where all these disparate messages converge into one. The question that naturally confronts us is: how do all these channels work together to create one unified message and a single aesthetic experience?

Yakṣagāna is not unique in using several channels and media in its process of signification. Dance for example, is almost always associated with music and more often than not, with the linguistic message too. Even speech is accompanied by signs belonging to other systems like gestures and facial expressions. Theatre in particular, makes use of several media in its communication. Tadeusz Kowzan, in his analysis of the theatre, provides a typology of thirteen systems. He
mentions language, tone, facial mime, gesture, movement, make-up, hair style, costume, props, decor, lighting, music and sound effects.¹

This typology provides a starting point and further refinements are no doubt possible. But, as Keir Elam points out, no attempt has yet been made in analysing the syntactic rules of these individual systems with any rigour. A related question is whether each of these systems, can be syntactically analysed like language. Elam says, "These rules, [governing these systems] are not usually strong or explicit enough to bear analogy with those regulating correct sentence formation in language".²

This comment draws attention to another question-can every act of communication in any medium be equated with language? Some linguists like Andrew Martinet object to the use of the term language, unless there is 'double articulation.'³ By this Martinet refers to the two levels of operation of language - the level of phonemes which are limited in number and do not have any meaning of their own and the other level where the minimal units are combined to create meaningful utterances. No doubt, there is selection and combination of a limited number of discrete units to form meaningful wholes, in most of the media listed above. But they do not have the clearcut syntactic rules that govern the use of language. So, the analogy of these media which are non-verbal, to language, can not be taken too literally. At the same time it is also true that language, being the most thoroughly studied of all forms of human communication, provides the grid and the rules with which the other media can be studied.
Before proceeding further, let us have a cursory look at the different sign systems that function in yakṣagāna. We can list them as follows:

(1) Music
(2) Language
   (a) The written text
   (b) The improvised text (in the form of impromptu dialogues)
(3) The histrionic representation
(4) Dance (including gestural representation)
(5) Costume and make-up
(6) The lighting effects

Functioning as a background to all these, we also have,

(1) The socio-cultural context and background
(2) The ritualistic frame work and content

This ensemble of sign systems function in yakṣagāna performance and they appear either concurrently or consequetively. Each one of these, has its own code and its own system of the structuration of its components. Paul Bouissac, in his study of the circus (which also makes use of multiple channels), calls these components, subcodes. He says, "These constituents are the subcodes that form the code of circus act's message, but with respect to the contextual culture, each of these constituents is a code (i.e. clothing, music) that is part of the super code that constitutes the language we call circus".4

No, doubt the systems involved become part of the supercode (in the above case-circus) in communicating the
over all message of the performance. But Bouissac does not deal with the crucial question of how these different constituents become one cohesive unit in the act of the performance. If we concede that the performance, inspite of the multimedia involved, leads to one comprehensive all compassing message (and not a mere collage of messages), then we are confronted with questions such as the following: What aspect of the overall message is communicated by each one of those channels? Do they communicate the same message (leading to emphasis, repetition or redundancy)? When the same message is conveyed through two different media, does the meaning remain the same or does it get altered?

To take up the last question, it is one of the fundamental concepts of semiotics that when the medium changes, the message can not remain the same— it is necessarily altered. Victor Turner commenting on this says:

The same message in different media is really a set of subtly variant messages, each medium contributing its own generic message to the message conveyed through it. The result is some thing like a hall of mirrors, each interpreting as well as reflecting the messages beamed to it and flashed from one to the others. The many leveled or tiered structure of a ritual or drama, each level having many structures, makes of these genres flexible or nuanced instruments capable of carrying and communicating many message at once, even of subverting at one level what it appears to be 'saying' in another. Further more the genres are instruments whose full reality is in their "playing", in the performance, in their social setting...Their full meaning emerges from the union of the script with actors and audience at a given moment in a group's ongoing social process.5

Turner here points out how in complex genres like the theatre, there may not be 'one' message. It is more likely to be a criss-cross of messages— Turner's "hall of mirrors".
The message of one medium may be highlighted, emphasised or even subverted by other media. At the same time, it has also to be conceded that in spite of the multiplicity of messages, the performance does not lead to a confusing experience with disperate or clashing messages. So, the crucial question regarding the cohesive force that binds these individual components, still remains. The multiple channels have their own codes and structures. Yet, all of them work together towards one common purpose. What is the common factor that binds all these, so that the performance stands united as one?

This question has not been satisfactorily dealt with so far, either in the study of the theatre or in the study of other multi-channel performance genres. Some analysts have tried to find the answer in A.J. Greimas' concept of 'modality'. Eero Tarasti, for example, applies this concept to analyse the role of music in opera. Apart from the syntax of the narrative involving six actants, Greimas, in his later writings, tries to find the common thread that runs through these six actants and he finds it in the 'modality' of action. Eero Tarasti describes modality thus. "By modalities is meant all the intentions by which a person who gives voice to an utterance, may colour his 'speech': in other words they convey a certain evaluative attitude towards the content of an utterance such as will, belief, wish, emotion or psychic entity". Griemas further classifies the modes into three types - visualising, actualising and realising. Thus modality is seen as the force that binds all aspects of the discourse. When this theory of modality is applied to the multichannel genres, the emotional/ psychological factor is seen as the thread that binds the different channels.
In Indian aesthetics, the emotional/psychological factor as well as the question of the spectator response is studied in terms of the Rasa theory. This theory was first propounded by Bharata (2nd century B.C. - 2nd century A.D?) in his celebrated book on dramaturgy The Nāṭya Śāstra. This theory has been developed upon by later thinkers and commentators, so that it has become one of the basic foundations of Indian aesthetics.

This theory does not consider the performance in terms of the media involved, but analyses it in terms of the emotional states involved, which are expressed through all the media in the performance leading to the evocation of the appropriate rasa (lit. juice: = the essence of the aesthetic experience). The most famous statement of Bharata regarding rasa is, "Out of the union of the Determinants (vibhāva), the Consequents (anubhāva) and the Transitory Mental States (vyabhicārī), the birth of rasa takes place". Bhāvas are the objectified forms of emotions or mental states. Bharata recognise eight such sthāyi bhāvas (fundamental emotional states).

Bharata uses four terms with regard to bhāva. They are vibhāva (the determinant), anubhāva (the consequent), vyabhicārī (the transient emotional state) and sthāyi (the fundamental emotional state). Adya Rangacharya gives the following example to explain the meaning of these terms. "'A' challenges 'B' or quarrels with him or annoys him for some reason. In that case, 'B' will get angry. That anger will show itself through his ('B's) distended nostrils or his biting lips, or his trembling etc. And then 'B' in his anger, would raise his hand in anger to hit 'A' or shout in anger". In this example, from 'B's point of view, the
reason of his anger, the vibhāva is his altercation with 'A'. The physical manifestation of anger, through the distended nostrils, red lips etc. become the anubhāva. 'B's conscious voluntary reaction of raising his hand becomes the vya bhicāri bhāva. In all this, there is a moment when we can clearly perceive 'B' as an angry man. This is the sthāyi bhāva, which will constitute the rasa.

Bharata explains how rasa is evoked in the spectator by comparing the aesthetic pleasure to the pleasure derived from a good meal. The meal may consist of different dishes having different tastes but when the entire meal is over and when the diner expresses his appreciation and enjoyment of the meal, he is not referring to the tastes of different dishes but to a 'combined taste'. The sense of enjoyment that suffuses the diner in the moment of relaxation after the entire meal is over, may be said to be the moment when rasa is evoked in him.

In terms of this theory, let us now analyse how the different sign systems function together. The different emotional states, permanent as well as transitory, are expressed through all the media (in their different codes and structures). And the cohesive force moulding the messages emanating from different channels, would be the common purpose of the performance, which is to evoke the appropriate rasa in the spectator.

The Rasa theory also becomes relevant for the study of yakṣagāṇa because, like most other traditional theatre forms of India, yakṣagāṇa has also been greatly influenced by the classical theories of dramaturgy of which the Rasa theory forms an important part. This can be attributed to the
interaction between classical and folk forms. The performer in yakṣagāna, for example, analyses different roles and even songs and sequences in terms of the leading emotion, which they try to project in their performance. So, yakṣagāna can not be understood in its entirety without reference to the Rasa theory as well as to the other canons of the classical tradition.

This theory, concentrating the entire attention on the analysis of the emotional states and the corresponding spectator response, fails to account for the other denotative and connotative meanings that are also conveyed through the performance. For example, the intellectual appeal of ideas and ideologies that are also projected in the performance, can not be satisfactorily explained through this theory. Even in the analysis of the eight stable emotional states, subtler shades of differences within the same category of emotional state are not recognised. Both Rāma and Rāvaṇa, to take an instance, exhibit vīra, (the heroic). But their heroism is not the same and Rasa theory does not satisfactorily explain this difference. The categorisation of heroes of Sanskrit dramaturgy partly explains the difference, but even then, the rasa evoked is considered the same. These factors will also have to be kept in mind when we apply the Rasa theory for the study of yakṣagāna and the different media involved in it.

In the light of all these remarks about the problems confronted in analysing the process of signification of multi-channel communications and a brief look at different theories and their positions, let us now study how the different channels of communication with their polydiscursive processes, function in yakṣagāna. In the analysis that
follows, the most prominent of the channels are taken up and analysed individually. Aspects like the stage props or lighting effects are not studied here as they are not prominent sign systems in yakṣagāna. The socio-cultural context and the question of ritual are analysed in the next chapter. The emphasis is on the different functions performed by them and how they coalesce with others in the functioning of yakṣagāna.

4.1. MUSIC

Music plays a pivotal role in all the traditional theatre forms of South India, as has already been observed in Chapter II. The entire progression of the performance is controlled by music. This necessitates the presence of singers and the instrumentalists on the stage throughout the performance. This is true of yakṣagāna also, where the bhāgavata (the singer) is present on the stage throughout the performance. He is the person who exercises total artistic control over the proceedings on the stage. Infact, the role of the bhāgavata is given such a great importance, that he is often referred to as the modalane Vēṣa (the first role) of the troupe. (The actors and characters are referred to, in terms that mean second role, opposite role, third role etc.)

In a yakṣagāna troupe, apart from the bhāgavata, there will be another singer. The early part of the performance like the preliminaries and the oddolaga are usually conducted by him. The instruments used are tāla (small thick metallic cymbals) played by the bhāgavata himself, maddale (hollow cylindrical drum with leather coverings on both sides and played with both hands) and the śruti box (an instrument to
play the base pitch. In earlier times a gourd pipe was used for this purpose. Now a small box resembling a harmonium, where the needed pitch can be set, is used). Another instrument, that is also used is called Canḍe (a hollow cylindrical instrument which is kept vertically and struck on one side with sticks-similar to cenda used in kathakali). This instrument produces a loud sound that can be heard over a great distance. This instrument is usually used in scenes of vigorous dance and in moments like war. This instrument is usually not used during songs pertaining to female characters and when emotions like sorrow, devotion etc. are depicted. The singer as well as the instrumentalists sit on a raised platform in deep stage next to the back curtain.  

The yakṣagāṇa music is a distinct style of music that is in many ways, different from the two schools of classical music in India—Karnatik and Hindusthani. Yakṣagāṇa music bears close similarities with the musical style found in the folk and devotional songs sung in the Malenāḍ and coastal regions and also with the traditional music that was played by the sanādi (a shehnai like pipe) players of this region. Shivarama Karanth is of the opinion that this was the prevalent style of music in these regions until the growing prestige of Karnatik music pushed it to the backstage. "If we find it [yakṣagāṇa music] surviving", he says, "it is because it became a hand maid of the yakṣagāṇa drama tradition". As a result, yakṣagāṇa music ceased to be an independent musical tradition, but developed as a powerful theatrical medium capable of expressing the whole gamut of human emotions.

In yakṣagāṇa, the kind of formal training that is imparted to learners in classical music, was never imparted.
The novitiate normally learnt the music by copying the songs sung by the senior bhāgavata. As a result, the emphasis was on learning the tunes of the songs rather than on learning the parameters of the rāgas in which they were set. As a result, the singers, though they knew the way a song was sung, were never sure of the ascending or descending notes of particular rāgas. Infact some scholars like Ramachandra Ucchila argue that in yaksagāna music, there are only tunes or at best shades of rāgas and not the rāgas in their pure form.

A very important feature of yaksagāna music, is its musical timing—the rhythmic patterns called tāla. (The metallic cymbals with which the timing is kept is also called tāla). As yaksagāna is a dance-drama, the music has to suit the dance and so tāla is very important, as the dancer has to keep in rhythm with the music. So, rhythm becomes the controlling focus drawing dance and music together. Yakṣagāna makes use of seven tālas. The names of the tālas and the respective beats of each of the tālas are: ēka (4 beats), jhampe (5 beats) rūpaka (5 beats) trivuḍe (7 beats) ādi (8 beats), aṣṭa (14 beats) and kōre (7 beats).

The tālas mentioned above may be played in either of the two tempi—slow and fast. The choice of the tempo, called kāla depends on the emotional content of the song. Emotions like pathos are in a slow tempo, whereas the heroic and the furious are always in the fast tempo. There is another custom in yakṣagāna where within the same song, the singer may change the tāla shifting from one to another. This is normally associated with a shift in tempo as well and this facilitates in bringing out the variety in dance. This custom of shifting from one tāla to another seems to be unique to yakṣagāna.
The metrical patterns of the songs lend themselves very naturally to the rhythmic patterns. The songs are written in such a way that the cadence of the words contain the rhythmic pattern within them. One feature of yakṣaṅāna literature is the way the words and the rhythmic patterns coalesce with each other.

One of the unique features of yakṣaṅāna music, is its high pitch. Compared to other schools of music, the śruti (the base note of the singer) is always on a higher scale. Starting from there, the singer moves in the middle and higher octaves and almost never in the lower octave. The reason usually adduced for such high pitched singing is that, in the past, the singer had to be audible to large audiences in the open air without the aid of modern sound amplification systems. But this seems to be a simplistic explanation. The reasons for such a fundamental change from the prevailing norm of other schools of music, must be searched for in some deep, probably hidden cause. Also, explanations will have to be found for the continuance of the use of higher śruti even in the present, when the sound amplification systems are almost invariably used in all performances.

We can perhaps, try to understand this phenomenon of yakṣaṅāna music in the light of Alan Lomax' experiments. Alan Lomax, studied the different folk musical traditions of the world in his ambitious experiment 'cantometrics'. His premise was that the dominant musical pattern of any society can be directly related to the life pattern of that society in spheres like social, economic and even sexual. He studied the different folk musical traditions of the world on the basis of different parameters and related them to the life patterns of those societies. The conclusions he draws,
disabuses us of the belief that music is not directly related to the social needs or that its appeal is only aesthetic. J. Handoo has studied music in the Indian context in the light of Lomax’ theories. Seen in the light of this theory, the high-pitched singing of yakṣagāna, which is its prominent feature, becomes a sign expressing certain deep rooted social tensions. To any one not familiar with yakṣagāna, this singing often sounds like a forlorn cry. Is it an expression of helplessness born out of the rigid constraints of a traditional, stratified society? Or of the performers, who till recently did not enjoy any respect in society? Surely, more research is needed to interpret this phenomenon properly.

One result of this high pitched singing is that the singer’s voice at times becomes shrill. In addition, the words also become indistinct. Specially in the war scenes, where the songs are sung in a fast tempo, the words almost always become a jumble of sounds. At such moments, the semantic value of the words lose significance as carriers of meaning. The meaning is to be found in the sense of urgency and power that the music communicates.

A traditional yakṣagāna performance spreads from sun set to sun rise. (In case of commercial troupes, the performance begins around nine p.m.) In the early hours of the morning, after singing for several hours, the bhāgavata’s voice undergoes a subtle change. It becomes mellow and open. This is perhaps due to the effect of singing continuously for several hours. The bhāgavata may then switch to a higher pitch. This change is recognised as the early morning tone. Most of the prasangas are structured in such a way that the early morning scenes are mostly those involving
scenes of battle and so are played in a fast tempo. The early morning tone referred to above, is aptly suited for such scenes.

In the previous chapter, we observed how the metaphor of battle dominates yakṣaṇa. If it is seen as a symbolic representation of the fight between order and disorder, these scenes of battle, just before sunrise represent the ritualistic victory of order over chaos. If the night belongs to the demonic forces that have defied the order, with the approach of day light, order is restored again. These scenes can be seen as symbolic of such a victory.

Yakṣaṇa music is geared to the needs of the theatrical form. As a result, the singer normally begins the song with the words of the song and has no liberty to elaborate on the parameters of the rāga (which in classical music is done without the use of the words of the song). The singer in yakṣaṇa, has at all times to keep in mind the actor-dancer in front of him and so has no liberty to indulge in musical pyrotechniques to which the actor-dancer can not respond through his media of expression. That is why, the words of the song are given great importance in yakṣaṇa music, whereas in classical music, the words are used many a time only as a convenient vehicle of music. But in yakṣaṇa, the words and what they convey are very important for the theatrical medium. That is because, as Srinivasa Udupa explains, "In yakṣaṇa, music has no independent place. Its role is to supplement the dance and acting".²⁴

4.1.1. Delineation of a song

In developing a song, immediately after singing the first line (which is used as the refrain), the bhāgavata
plays a particular rhythmic pattern known as the muktāya (closure). After this, the song continues and at the end of the song, the muktāya beats are played again. Different tālas have different muktāya beats. In the elaboration of a song, these beats may be said to signify a shift. This shift may be of various types—from the refrain of the song to the stanza, from words to pure rhythm, from one tāla to another or from song to speech which comes at the end of the song. The muktāya beats work as the signifier for this shift—the closure of one phase and the beginning of another. These beats have definite correlated dance steps and provide the opportunity to the dancer to bring the dance to a stylised close.

In some songs, the lines are repeated several times by the singer. Specially when the song is elaborated through dance and the words are represented through gestures, the lines are repeated several times. There are no fixed rules regarding the number of times the lines are repeated. It depends on the coordination between the singer and the dancer. This trend of repeating the lines is more popular in baḍagutīṭṭu yakṣagāṇa. From the song, the singer may shift to mere rhythmic patterns played on the accompanying instruments. This shift normally takes place in the second half of the song. These rhythmic patterns, allow the dancer to perform nṛtta (pure dance—without any emotional content). The first half of the song is usually used for emotive expression of the 'content' of the song. This provides an example of how music and dance become closely interdependent. The song is rounded up with the singing of the refrain once.
Though the bhāgavata sings for all the characters, the actors sometimes sing with the bhāgavata. The actor may sometimes begin the song which will then be continued by the bhāgavata. But this intoning is done only for a few songs and only by those who play the lead roles. Even then, the actor (even if he is a good singer), can not sing the entire song himself. He has to intone with the bhāgavata.

4.1.2. Current trends

As with most other aspects of yakṣagāna, music has also been undergoing many changes in recent times. Some of these changes can be related directly to the changes brought about by modern technology—in the case of music it is the microphone and other sound amplification systems. Other forces have also worked in bringing about many changes in yakṣagāna music. It was remarked earlier that the singer's voice moves only in the middle and higher octaves and almost never in the lower octave. Now, with a microphone in front of him, the singer has the freedom of using the entire possible range of his voice without the danger of becoming inaudible to spectators. Many young bhāgavatas have been experimenting with this new range provided by modern technology. But the shift from the higher pitch to the lower or the reverse is done so suddenly that it creates a jerking effect. This new found range seems to be used mainly for the element of surprise and to show off the versatality of the singer and it has not been completely assimilated into the traditional pattern of music.

Classical music has also begun to influence yakṣagāna. Many singers of the present day, are trained in classical music too. They are using these elements freely in their
music. This has brought about a certain refinement, judged by classical canons. This trend may also be related to the 'prestige' enjoyed by classical music. But, the traditional spectators often complain that in such singing, the 'atmosphere' of yakṣaṅa is lost. Most of the singers of the present, pay close attention to the clarity of articulation, where the words of the song, are clearly heard. This was not the case in the past, where no particular attention was paid to such clear articulation. Alan Lomax, in his study referred to earlier, relates the degree of clarity of articulation in singing with the relative complexity of social and economic life. Applying Lomax' findings here, we can perhaps say that this change towards greater clarity indicates the evolution of society from a purely agrarian society (where yakṣaṅa has flourished for the past several centuries), to a relatively more complex economy and social order of urban and semi-urban centres (which are now becoming the important centres of yakṣaṅa performance). We can also relate this change to the social changes (discussed in chapter II) which are taking place in the society now.

Mention may also be made of several experiments being done in yakṣaṅa music, like using two singers, the use of instruments like saxophone and violin etc. But such experiments have had no lasting impact and have not found acceptance by the professional performers.

4.1.3. The function of music

Does music have a meaning? or to put it differently, can the meaning of music be expressed in language? This question has baffled ethnomusicologists and no universally
acceptable answer is available. Avoiding the pitfalls of controversy, this analysis confines itself to the study of how music functions in yakṣagāṇa. In this analysis, Roman Jacobson's theory of communication and the six functions of language mentioned by him have been used in assessing the functions of the different media.27

Music is a medium in which the emotive and aesthetic functions dominate. So, in yakṣagāṇa also, music is predominantly used for creating the bhāvas, the appropriate emotional states along with its aesthetic appeal. Music is perhaps least equipped to perform the referential and conative functions. We can not think of music being used to communicate facts or give orders (except in conventions like the drum messages of Africa).

This does not mean that there is a clearcut separation of these functions. As we have observed, music and dance function together and both are efficient vehicles for the aesthetic and emotive messages. But yakṣagāṇa music functions along with language (the songs of the written text). So, language will be performing other functions as well. In some situations, music is used as purely referential. The musical symbols indicating the exit and entry of characters can be taken as examples of this.

We have already observed how, music acts as the central force controlling the entire performance. All other facets of the performance are guided and shaped by it.
Dance is one of the most fundamental forms of human expression. The purposeful rhythmic movements of the body with the intent of communication is found in almost all human societies and even among animals. Judith Lynne Hanna describes the primal role of dance thus. "To dance is human and humanity almost universally expresses itself in dance. Dance interweaves with other aspects of human life, such as communication and learning, belief systems, social relations and political dynamics, loving and fighting and urbanisation and change. It may even have been significant in the biological and evolutionary development of the human species. When dance is suppressed for moral, religious or political reasons, it rises phoenix-like to assert the essence of humanity".28

Dance is part of the nonverbal communication system of human beings. Dance makes use of bodily movements in space and time as a means of signification. As such, its study belongs to the field of kinesics. Birdwhistell was the pioneer in the study of body movements as meaningful entities and the study of these, was named by him, 'kinesics'. But all body movements cannot be classified as dance. Dance is one special type of body movement and is defined by Hanna as follows. "Dance can be most carefully defined as human behaviour composed, from the dancer's perspective of (1) purposeful, (2) intentionally rhythmic and (3) culturally patterned sequences of (4a) non-verbal body movements, (4b) other than ordinary motor activities, (4c) the motion having inherent and aesthetic value".29
The above is a comprehensive definition of dance covering all varieties and all cultures. It also makes clear the distinction between ordinary motor activities and dance. In studying dance from the perspective of its signification, our basic task should be to find out the rules that operate in connecting the realm of body movements with that of meaning. Yakṣagāna, being a multimedia language, what is signified through dance cannot be treated in isolation, because dance functions concurrently with several other media. In particular, dance and music function so closely together that it is often difficult to talk of one without referring to the other. What is communicated through dance may be enhanced, highlighted or even subverted by the messages emanating through other channels. So, the analysis of any one media can be done only with reference to the polydiscursive nature of yakṣagāna.

Yakṣagāna deals with classical themes, but the dance of yakṣagāna seems to have been inspired to a large extent by the folk ritualistic practices of the coastal regions. Two such practices that have influenced yakṣagāna are Nāgamandala (lit. snake circle:= worship of snakes) and Bhūtārādhane (Spirit worship). Both these are ritual performances, where the dancer impersonates the deity and dances. Bhūtārādhane also involves elaborate make-up and costume.

Though the influence of these ritual performances on yakṣagāna is conceded by all, there are differences of opinion regarding the precise influence of these, on yakṣagāna. Shivarama Karanth, for example, believes that yakṣagāna has derived heavily from Nāgamandala but says that yakṣagāna does not owe much to Bhūtārādhane.30 Chinnappa Gowda on the other hand, disagrees with Karanth and says that
the influence of Bhūtārādhane can be clearly perceived on tenkutīṭṭu yakṣagāna. Whatever be the source, the strong influence of ritualistic performance is very clearly evident in yakṣagāna dance. (Other aspects of yakṣagāna, like costume and make-up also show such an influence.) Perhaps a more fundamental influence of these ritual systems can be found in yakṣagāna's approach to acting which will be discussed later in this chapter.

4.2.1. Types of Dance

Yakṣagāna being a dance-drama performance, dance is used as one of the chief means of expression and not as mere embellishment. From the beginning to the end, dance and body movements are used as expressive language throughout the performance, except during the moments when the actors engage in improvised dialogue. The exit and entry of characters, the elaboration of songs, the depiction of battle—all these are done through dance. The varieties of dance used in yakṣagāna, can be classified as follows:

(1) dance performed in the preliminaries
(2) oḍḍōlagā dance
(3) dance used in exit and entry
(4) choreographed items depicting hunting, bathing in water, journey, etc.
(5) dances depicting battle
(6) dance used in the elaboration of songs

These dances and their features are described below.

4.2.1.1. Preliminary dances

The preliminary dances are those of the bālagopālas (young actors who are supposed to represent Balarāma and
Kṛṣṇa) and the strīvēṣa (the female characters), that have already been described in chapter III. These dances have fixed features with little scope for improvisation. The songs used for these sequences remain the same for every performance. No great importance is given to the words in the actual singing because this song-dance sequence consists more of rhythmic patterns rather than the words of the song. In these sequences, dance has an over riding importance over that of language.

The dance of the bālagōpālas is marked by vigorous footwork and brisk movement representing the heroic, boisterous spirit of these characters. The words of the song are also represented through gestures. Badagutīṭṭu yakṣagāna of Dakshina Kannada does not make use of gestures in its process of acting and dancing (unlike the UtterciKannada variety), but gestures are used prominently in the preliminaries in both styles of yakṣagāna. These dances are performed without any emotional involvement and are classified as nṛtta in classical Sanskrit texts on dance.

The dance of the strīvēṣa, in contrast to that of the bālagōpālas, is graceful with light and easy moving steps. Yakṣagāna dance does not exhibit many examples of what is classified as lāsya (graceful) in Sanskrit dramaturgy. This quality is found mostly in the dance of the female characters and the dance of the strīvēṣa in the preliminaries is an example of the graceful in dance. The songs used in this sequence depict emotions like love and devotion.

4.2.1.2. Oddōlaga

The importance of the oddōlaga and the way it is depicted has already been described in the previous chapter.
The performance of oddolaga involves elaborate dance sequences. All the steps and movements used here, are fast and brisk, representing the vigour and valour of the characters. These dances usually involve four to five dancers. So these are choreographed items needing a great deal of coordination among the dancers. It also allows scope for expression of individual talent.

As in the preliminary dances, here also nṛtta is used prominently. The music also is dominated more by the rhythmic beats than by the words of the song. In this music-dance sequence, the referential function is minimal. What is actually communicated is the impression of the grandeur of the king’s court with the characters expressing their valour and indomitable spirit. This is done through the use of dance and music. The oddolaga dance with its fast rhythm and lively foot work acts as a starting block from which point, the prasanga to be performed, takes off.

4.2.1.3. Exit and Entry

In yaksagāna, all movements on the stage by the actors should be framed in the appropriate format of dance and should be accompanied by music. Even the exit and entry of characters have their own related steps and movements. As P.V. Hasyagara points out, no character enters or exits without the accompanying music and related dance steps.

4.2.1.4 Set sequences

There are certain set sequences like journey or jalakriđe (lit. Water game: = sequence depicting bathing in a river) which appear in several prasangas. Such scenes are enacted through elaborate dance sequences. These are also sequences that have a great appeal to the audience. A scene
of hunting or jalakrīde, may sometimes extend to fifteen or twenty minutes. Though denotatively such scenes do not have any emotional purport, at the connotative level, certain messages are definitely communicated. Scenes of jalakrīde for example, have an undercurrent of erotic and sexual appeal. The dance depicting journey, where the actors go round the stage, twice or thrice, in different steps, for different rhythmical combinations, may be said to represent a 'situation'.

4.2.1.5 Dance and battles

Most yakṣagāna prasangas, as we have seen in the earlier chapter, deal with battle or marriage. So, scenes depicting battles are found in almost all prasangas.

In the depiction of these scenes, the emphasis is not on realistic representation of battle. They are done in a symbolic manner, where the sense of confrontation rather than the actual confrontation is depicted. Different types of battles— with arrows, with maces or bare handed fight are all depicted in different ways. Mutual recriminations and exchange of sharp dialogues take place before the actual fight commences. In the depiction of the fight, the characters either move in a circle in opposite direction or diagonally. When they confront each other in the middle of the stage, they enact the confrontation and then move away to the other corner of the stage. As the depiction is symbolic, the emphasis is on creating the impression of confrontation rather than depicting the actual combat. So, actual physical combat, comes only at the end of the fight, when one of the combatants makes an exit signifying that he is either defeated or killed.
The symbolic system of representation of yakṣagāna is best exemplified in the shape of the bows and arrows used. The bow is not arch like in shape, but straight like a rod, thus breaking the very concept of how a bow is shaped (Pic. 11). This straight line synchronises with the angular lines so typical of yakṣagāna dance. In enacting the release of the arrow from the bow, the actor turns the arrow with his fingers so that the arrow strikes against the bow and makes a clapping sound. This sound, along with the release of tension from the taut body of the actor, becomes a signifier for the release of the arrow. We find here, two different sign systems working together because no such clapping sound is heard when an actual arrow is released from the bow. Yet here, the clapping sound signifies such a release and no arrow is actually released. This criss cross of sign systems may be represented as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Real</th>
<th>Signified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sound -</td>
<td>Sound +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object +</td>
<td>Object -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The battle dances are moments of high excitement when the music also rises to a crescendo. The songs are sung in a fast tempo and the words of the song usually become indistinct. As we have already noted, the power and urgency
of the singer's voice along with the 'loud' music, convey the 'meaning' of such songs rather than the words. In many of the performances now, the dances depicting the battle are shown in a curtailed form and many of the set dance movements are left out.

### 4.2.1.6. Dance and song elaboration

A major portion of the performance, comprises of dances belonging to this category. This consists of the dances performed in enacting the songs of the prasanga. There are no fixed dance movements for these songs and so they provide maximum freedom for the actor to improvise. He can use any of the dance steps from the types already described, if they are capable of expressing the 'content' of the song. He is also free to create his own steps. As Shambhu Hegde, an accomplished yakṣagāna performer says, "In consonance with the pattern of yakṣagāna dance, an artiste can create his own steps depending on the needs of acting".38

The purpose of such dances is to interpret the lines of the song through dance and bring out the dominant emotion of the song through dance. The following example from Jarāsandha as enacted by Shambhu Hegde would perhaps make the point clear. The prasanga deals with the last moments of Jarāsandha's life. The confrontation between Jarāsandha and Kṛṣṇa and Jarāsandha's death in the hands of Bhīma are the main events of the prasanga. Kṛṣṇa who had previously been defeated several times by Jarāsandha, now comes to Jarāsandha's court accompanied by Bhīma and Arjuna. They are all disguised as brahmins and so Jarāsandha does not recognise them. In the song below, we have the expression of Jarāsandha's sense of wonder when he comes to know that Kṛṣṇa who had escaped from his clutches several times, has now come to his court on his own.
"The king listening to the words of Achuta [Kṛṣṇa] was filled with wonder and drowning and floating in the sea of massive mirth, spoke thus".  

The massive mirth experienced by Jarāsandha is the essence of the song here. In order to express this, the actor pretends as though he is about to fall down from the seat on which he is seated. Clapping his hands, he moves with wide steps and enacts the falling action again in the dance, highlighting the action of drowning and floating through the motions of the body. All this is of course performed in rhythm with the music and as part of the dance. The dance is performed with such 'gay abandon' that the entire body of the actor becomes an expression of the mirth.

The above description is one example of how dance is used for elaborating upon and interpreting the lines of the song. Normally, in the representation of the song through dance, the first half of the song is used for expressing the emotional state contained in the song, and the second half is used for nṛtta - that has no emotional purport.

4.2.2. Mudrās (gestures) (Pics. 13 to 20)

Gestures form an essential part of every speech activity. In the communicative process of speech, along with language, gestures, facial and bodily expressions, also play an integral part, (except where the emitter of the message is absent, as in a radio or telephonic talk). Gestures form an integral part in communication in the theatre and other performing arts also. Depending on the particular form, the
gestures may either be realistic (having close proximity to the gestures of real life) or may be idealised (where the similarity may not be apparent).

In the classical Indian dance tradition, prominent use is made of hastamudrās (hand gestures). The Nāṭya Śāstra and Nandikeswarā's Abhinaya Darpana give a detailed list of mudrās used in dance. The origin of mudrās is said to be in rituals. The hand symbols used in Tantric Worship are also called mudrā. Forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathakali use mudrās prominently in their dance. These mudras are highly codified hand gestures which are used to represent the words in the song. Kathakali, for example, is said to have a repertoire of more than five hundred mudrās.41

When compared to these forms, the use of mudrās and gestures is not prominent in yakṣagāna. Of the three variants of yakṣagāna, only in the far northern variety of Utterā Kannada, we find the emphasis on the use of mudrās. One reason, often adduced for the absence of mudrās in yakṣagāna, is the existence of the improvised text, where language takes over the task of communication.42

Of the mudrās used in Uttar Kannada yakṣagāna, some are taken from the classical forms of dance. Mudrās for words like lotus, fish, elephant, chariot, horse etc. are cited as instances of such an adaptation by P.V. Hasyagara.43 But the number of such mudrās which have become a part of yakṣagāna tradition are only a few, and seem to depend mainly on the individual artiste's familiarity with the classical dance forms.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mudrās representing</th>
<th>Hands used</th>
<th>Static or in motion</th>
<th>Peircian classification</th>
<th>Signified meanings</th>
<th>Other meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Static</td>
<td>Icon</td>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>In motion</td>
<td>Symbol</td>
<td>Abstract quality</td>
<td>Friendship, intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatred</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>In motion</td>
<td>Symbol</td>
<td>Abstract quality</td>
<td>Enmity, clash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Static</td>
<td>Symbol</td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Power, position, prestige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Static</td>
<td>Index</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Alms, donation, giving up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rāma</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Static</td>
<td>Index</td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The largest number of mudrās used in yakṣagāna are the idealised and stylised adaptations of gestures used in real life. As examples, we can look at mudrās representing words like 'listen', or 'giving' (see the gesture of the Brahmin in pic. 27). These are clearly gestures taken from real life. But in the presentation in dance, they are highly stylised and appear as part of the rhythmical body movement. Most of the mudrās representing actions like come, go, quick, a little etc. are represented through gestures taken from real life.

In case of mudrās for love and hatred, the signification functions in a different way, where these two mudrās have to be seen in opposition to each other. Hatred/enmity is represented through the tension as visualised by the position of the two hands, whereas in the mudra for love/friendship there is a complete absence of any such tension.

The different mudrās of yakṣagāna may be classified using Peirce's typology of icon, index and symbol. The mudras that represent by virtue of verisimilitude can be classified as iconic signs. The mudra for lotus and horse belong to this category. An index on the other hand, represents by virtue of a cause and effect link between the sign vehicle and the object (referent). The mudra for Rāma may be taken as an instance of an indexical sign. The mudrā represents the posture of an archer with bow and arrow and so represents Rāma, the celebrated archer. A symbol, according to Peirce, represents only by virtue of convention where the relation between the sign vehicle and its object in purely arbitrary. The mudrās for king and forest may be said to
belong to this category. In case of such mudrās, a prior knowledge of the code is necessary for proper communication to take place.

It may also be noted that though mudrās are non-verbal sign systems, they operate within the bounds of language, because they refer back to the words which they represent. In this respect, mudrās may be compared to the gesture language of the deaf-mute, which also functions only within the semantic boundary of language.

Birdwhistell commenting on gestures (used in real life and not in performing arts), says that they are culture linked and culture bound both in shape and meaning. Explaining that there are no universal symbols, he says, "Although we have been searching for 15 years, we have found no gesture or body motion which has the same meaning in all societies". Gestures and their meanings are no doubt culture bound, but at the same time, it is interesting to find certain parallels in totally unrelated cultures. For example, the mudrās for enmity and king, bear close resemblance to gestures for 'bet' and 'emphasis' used in Columbia and United States.

4.2.3. The function of dance

The function of dance in yakṣāgāna, is primarily to convey the sthayibhāva (fundamental emotional state) and sancāri bhāvas (transient emotional states) of the song through the medium of dance. Dance in yakṣāgāna (like music) is used mainly for the emotive and aesthetic functions. The referential function of conveying information is usually done by language. So, in dance, we find a partial representation
of the overall message. What is left unrepresented through dance (and music) is completed by the medium of language in the form of the improvised text that will follow the dance. By thus assigning different functions of the communicative act to different media, yakṣagāṇa overcomes the problem of redundancy that most multichannel communications face. Redundance even in other multichannel communications, need not mean superfluity or repetitiveness. It may lead to a richness of the communicative process as Birdwhistell points out.46

So far as the representation of different bhāvas (emotional states) through dance is concerned, yakṣagāṇa dance is most highly developed in the depiction of emotions like vīra (the heroic), and raudra (the furious). Śṛṅgāra also figures prominently and its depiction is vigorous, rather than the graceful delicate delineation of śṛṅgāra, that one finds in classical Indian dance. The depiction of emotions like devotion and pathos do not figure prominently in yakṣagāṇa dance. In contrast, these emotions figure prominently in dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathak, that are performed mostly by women. But, yakṣagāṇa like other traditional theatre forms of South India, has remained a male domain totally. At a symbolic level, yakṣagāṇa can be seen as an expression of male ethos, in a society where the matrilineal family system prevailed. The emphasis on the expression of 'manly' emotions like the heroic and the furious can be viewed as an attempt at asserting the male ethos. (This aspect has been analysed in Ch.V).

So far as humour is concerned, this has largely remained confined to the dances performed by the hāsyagāra (the clown) and his assistants the kōḍangīs. The clown makes
use of the same dance steps and rhythms, utilised by other characters, but in executing the dance, he breaks the accepted canon, in his body posture or limb movement and thereby creates humour. For example, he throws his arms and legs away from the body in contrast to the dance of the other characters, though he always keeps in rhythm. He moves as though he is about to fall down, but he does not fall down. It appears as if he is fighting a losing battle against the force of gravity, even though he manages to keep his balance. These are a few examples of the way dance is used for humour.

Though the steps and movements of dance are the same for all the characters, subtle variations are used to adapt these steps to the different characters being represented. The steps and movements of a young hero would be fast and brisk whereas that of a rākṣasa (demonic character), broad, slow and measured. As P.V.Hasyagara says, "It would look ludicrous if an actor enacting Bhīma's role dances like Dharmarāya". Dance movements which emphasise on grace and delicacy are very few in yakṣagāna and can be found mostly in the dance of the female characters.

The most prominent feature of yakṣagāna dance is the play on the movement of the feet. In comparison, the movements of the hands play a secondary role and appear repetitive. There is one particular body stance that recurs again and again and which exhibits how the body lines and angles are utilised in yakṣagāna dance. Martha Ashton and Bruce Christie describe that stance thus. "The most characteristic stance in yakṣagāna Buḍagutiṭṭu Bayalāta dancer and a continuously recurring attitude seen in the dance is that in which the elbows are bent, the knees are bent pointing outward, with the feet and toes pointing
outward and heels approximate. These characteristics require the body to display angular lines while dancing rather than the graceful flowing lines often seen in Western Ballet\(^.\footnote{48}\)

In this stance and in many others, typical of yakṣaṅāna dance, the emphasis is on the projection of the sharp angular lines of the body. This synchronises with the costume structure as well. This may be seen as a defensive posture suited to dances depicting fights. But it is interesting to note that this stance is made use of in all sequences. The relation between the typical movements of yakṣaṅāna dance and the life patterns of the people of the coastal and Malenad regions (including the movements considered significant by them) are analysed next.

4.2.4. Movement and Meaning

After a study of yakṣaṅāna dance and its unique features, the question that needs to be analysed is, how and what does dance communicate? Dance being a nonverbal form of communication, uses the movements of the human body in time and space in a pattern fixed by the particular form as a signifying device. The particular form and the context of performance are culturally determined and so what is considered significant by one cultural group need not be so, for other communities. Like language, dance also chooses a limited number of entities out of the entire possible range of human body movements. These limited number of entities are then used to create an unlimited number of dance utterances.

The problem of meaning and dance was studied by Alan Lomax and his group. They studied the different dance styles
of the world and tried to relate the dance gestures to the life patterns and the economic and social activities of that particular society. The approach was given the name Choreometrics. They explain the term thus. "Choreometrics tests the proposition that dance is the most repetitious, redundant and formally organised system of body communication present in a culture... The dance is composed of those gestures, postures and movements and movement qualities most characteristic and most essential to the activity of everyday and thus crucial to cultural continuity". The activities connected with the life pattern of a particular cultural group like work, rituals, seating and moving habits may explain why certain movements out of an infinite number of possible combinations are selected by a certain group and not others. Naturally, the body movements of different societies will vary, depending on the topography, the economic activity the housing pattern etc. Choreometrics posits the argument that the dance of each society chooses those movements that are most relevant to its way of life.

The following comments by Judith Lynne Hanna about the Ubakala dancers of Nigeria makes the point clear.

For example, I observed among the Nigerian Ibo people in the rural areas, the Ubakala dancers' ease in maintaining the common angular posture (upper torso inclined forward, pelvis twisted downward), knee flexibility, elisive hip rotations, sustained movement patterns and stamina in dancing. This ease develops in such activities as travelling long distances in great heat, bending to fetch water, washing in a stream, crop cultivation, squatting to defecate and carrying heavy loads on the head... The common bending knee action gives elasticity to movement and helps to cushion the irregularities in the ground surface.
If we apply the above concept and analyse yakṣaṅāna dance, we can perhaps relate the typical stance of yakṣaṅāna with bent knees and angular lines (which has already been described) to a life system that is very similar to the Nigerian Ibo people described by Hanna. In addition, the hilly terrain of the coastal and Malenad regions also necessitates the bent knees with low centre of gravity to maintain the balance either while climbing or while descending. This can also be related to the broad steps of yakṣaṅāna dance where the movements are rarely against the force of gravity. Some particular dance movements can also be explained by using the above proposition. Mandi kūṅita (pirouetting on the knees - used in scenes of clash and battle) can be related to the common sitting posture at home where usually few items of furniture are used and also to the posture of paying obeisance to the gods, on one's knees. Another very graceful and difficult dance, often referred to, by the strange name helu kūṅita (defecating dance), can also be related to the posture that the name implies.

This theory helps explaining why each cultural group invests certain movements with meaning and not certain others. At the same time it has also to be conceded that not all aspects of a dance style, can be explained by the above proposition alone. Dance is also a highly skilled and challenging art, demanding talent and competence. Some of the aspects of dance are specially designed to show the skill of the dancer and such movements being difficult to execute, are rarely drawn from daily activity. The appeal of such movements depends on the skill displayed by the dancer and on the beauty of execution.
A few other instances of how meaning is communicated through dance may be mentioned here. Many of the dances of yakṣagāṇa are performed in a fast pace involving vigorous twists and turns of the body. The dancer has to perform them wearing a heavy costume and the ponderous headgear. These dances require great energy and stamina. Such dances are usually classified as nirbhāva nṛtya—(dance that is performed without any emotion). These dance units are immensely liked by the audience. The appeal is not merely aesthetic. The impact of such units of dance clearly indicates that some definite message is being communicated, though these are termed emotionless dance.

In order to understand how these dance units communicate, we have to look not merely at the dance unit per se, but see it in the linear progression of what has preceded it and what will follow. The signifying process at work here, can best be understood by the concept of montage used in cinematography. In cinema, apparently unconnected frames or episodes are linked in linear progression by skillful editing so that the meaning of any one particular unit is modified by conjunction or disjunction with the preceding and following units. The 'meaning' of the previous unit thus gets imprinted on what follows. As a result, what otherwise would be a disconnected frame or episode, becomes loaded with meaning.

In yakṣagāṇa also, the meaning of nṛtta has to be realised in the light of what has preceded this unit of pure dance. To take an instance from Kīcaka Vadhe, when Kīcaka sees Sairandhri coming to his house with a cup of honey, he expresses his joy through emotive dance which is followed by the 'emotionless' dance of nṛtta. But this pure dance in
the syntagmatic structure of the performance, which has the effect of montage, conveys Kīcaka's sense of joy and fulfilment after all his efforts to procure Sairandhri.

Along with all these, mention should also be made of one of the essential 'meanings' of dance - its aesthetic appeal. The human body in rhythmic motion appeals to the audience's sense of beauty and so the aesthetic appeal is one of the fundamental appeals of dance.

4.3. THE IMPROVISED TEXT

One of the unique features of yakṣagāna is that the dialogues spoken by the actors are not written down or fixed. The written text, as we have seen, contains only the songs sung by the bhāgavata. After completing the song-dance sequence, the actor creates his dialogue during the performance itself, basing it on the song just sung. This dialogue is totally an impromptu creation by the actor. It is no doubt based on the song, but the words of the song, most often, provide only the barest outline of the narrative. The actor, depending on his talent, his conception of the character he is representing, his knowledge of the epics and purāṇas, and of course the oral convention, develops his dialogue. As such, each performance becomes a new creation. This of course is true of all performing arts where the performance score will differ from one production to another. But in traditions that depend on the oral tradition, the performance score may alter radically with each performance. Specially in yakṣagāna, because of the freedom provided by the improvised text, each day's performance score, depends on the mood of the actor, the performative context, the
interaction with fellow artistes and most important, the rapport that develops (or does not develop) between the actor and the audience.

Mention may be made here of the question of 'version' or 'variant' in folklore. Folklore being oral in nature, the continuity of tradition depends on custom and memory. One mark of the living nature of folklore is that it has no fixed texts. Each performance being a re-living of the tradition, it displays differences leading to variants or versions. Explaining the reasons for the variations, Stith Thompson says, "These variations may be involuntary, where the aim is exact repetition or they represent a conscious attempt at creation within the framework of tradition". Versions may be thus said to be the life line of folklore. Each performance (the narrating of a tale, the singing of a song, the preformance of a dance etc.) becomes a creation and a re-living of the tradition. In this respect, folklore is markedly different from the modern mechanised forms of expression like cinema or even the printing of a work, (including a folktale) where the text becomes frozen. In forms like yakṣagāna, where the freedom is provided by the tradition itself, the differences between any two performance scores of the same prasanga are bound to be marked.

We can take an example to see how the actor creates his dialogue and the relation it bears to the song. The example is from the prasanga, Sudhanva Kālaga. The scene deals with the confrontation on the battle field between Sudhanva and Arjuna. After the great Kurukṣetra war, the Pāṇḍavas perform Aśwamēdha Yāga. Arjuna is sent along with the horse to defeat all the other kings and bring back the booty. After defeating many kings, Arjuna is challenged by the young hero
Sudhanva. The following is a translation of the song, during the singing of which, Arjuna dances and histrionically represents the 'theme' of the song through acting:

"you are only a boy; put an end to your talk. Release the horse and join me with your army. Pay ransom, I'll pardon and accept you".54

After dancing to the song (sung by the bhāgavata), Arjuna begins his improvised dialogue:

Arjuna: Oh! Sudhanva
Sudhanva: Arjuna

Arjuna: Sudhanva, I realise from your speech that you are expressing doubt about the bravery of this Arjuna, who is without an equal. I'll not take it amiss because you are only a boy and have no experience of this world. You do not know who this Arjuna is and what his achievements are. Oh boy,

Sudhanva: Huh!

Arjuna: My brother Dharmarāya, the sage Bādarāyana and God Kṛṣṇa have themselves selected me to go in defence of this horse. Why? Because Arjuna knows all the intricacies of war, all the rules of war. So he is the apt person. As a proof, even great warriors like Nīla Dhwaja have surrendered to me. Recognising my capacity, they have joined my forces. You also had better surrender to me. Look, release the horse that you have tied, pay the ransom and join me with your army. I'll protect you.55
The above speech shows how the improvised text develops what is contained in the song. It is not a mere prose rendering of the contents of the song. A great many details and elaborations not contained in the song are found in the improvised text. We can also see how the speech is used to develop the character that the actor portrays. The above dialogue is an example where we find a close proximity between the song and the dialogue. In some cases, there may be a great divergence between the two.

Theatre makes use of conventions like soliloquy and aside to convey the private thoughts/feelings of a character. In yakṣagāna, at such moments, the characters speak to the bhāgavata because the bhāgavata is supposed to be the omnipresent controller of the entire performance. The bhāgavata also responds and gives short replies. But this custom of the characters speaking to the bhāgavata (as well as that of the bhāgavata introducing new characters by talking to them) is decreasing now.

In case of the dialogue between two or more characters, the yakṣagāna improvised text exhibits certain unique features, because it appears more like alternating monologues rather than a dialogue. Usually, whenever a character is elaborating on the song, through speech, the other character reacts only in monosyllables like "huh", 'oho', 'is that so' etc. When it is his turn to speak (which usually follows the next song which he enacts through dance), he dominates the 'dialogue' in a similar manner. The first character (who has already spoken) now reacts in monosyllables. The example given above is of Arjuna's speech and Sudhanva replies only in monosyllables. The song dance sequence that will follow
This kind of ‘on-off’ structure derives from the structure of the *prasanga* itself. Whenever two characters confront each other, the *prasangas* are structured in such a way that the song of one character is followed by the song of the other. The speeches also follow the same sequence. As a result, the dialogue becomes a sequence of alternating monologues rather than dialogue.

This does not mean that this is the only style of dialogue in *yaksagāna*. Sometimes, sharp exchange of dialogues do take place. Scenes involving arguments or those of the *hāsyagāra* can be taken as good examples where we come across such a repartee. But a large portion of any performance, consists of the style of dialogue described above.

This kind of speech is also related to the style of acting of *yaksagāna*. Each character alternates between active and inactive phases even when he is on the stage. In the previous chapter, we have seen how the ‘active’ character is always on the right side. The other character (who is ‘inactive’ and stands to the left of the active character), usually stands nonchalantly with no expression and no involvement when the other character is dancing. During the speech that follows, he is always to the left of the active character. When it is his turn of the song-dance-speech sequence, he moves right and the other character (who now becomes the inactive character) moves to the left. This
shows how the improvised text and its operation are conditioned by other aspects like the written text, the space conventions, the approach to acting etc.

The improvised text plays a very important role in communicating the narrative to the audience. Certain functions like the referential and the conative are more effectively performed by language than by music or dance. Secondly, even those in the audience who are not familiar with the codes of music or dance will be familiar with the codes of the language (unless they do not know the language). So, these dialogues work very effectively in communicating the thread of the narrative. The spectators usually look forward to these speeches for explanation and elaboration of what they have already observed in the song-dance sequence.

The actor has to create his conception of the character that he is representing through the use of the improvised text. In order to create the character, the actor needs creative as well as critical faculties. This kind of creation of the character becomes a representation as well as an interpretation of the character. This statement is no doubt true of acting in all forms of theatre. But in yakṣaṅgaṇa, as the actor has to create his own dialogue, the interpretative facet of acting gets highlighted. It is tempting in this respect to compare yakṣaṅgaṇa acting to the German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht's concept of acting. Brecht suggests that the actor's representation of a character should be a criticism of it at the same time.57

This critical approach in the depiction of character becomes necessary because, often only the barest outline of the character, is available in the prasanga. The actor is
required not merely to 'fill out' the details but also to provide the psychological framework of the character. In this process, his representation becomes a creation as well as an interpretation.

The improvised text of the character, is no doubt created during the performance itself, but it does not mean that the actor creates it out of nowhere. Though these dialogues are not written down, the actor is guided by the oral tradition. This tradition (which is part of nađe - the unwritten convention regarding performance-referred to earlier) consists of the way the particular character (and his dialogues) have been handled by other actors in the past. The actor in each performance, adds, deletes and alters the 'received text', but it is always present as a point of reference. In case of new prasangas where no such received text is available, the actor draws from other prasangas where similar situations and characters are available.

Milman Parry and Albert Lord studied the oral epic traditions in Yugoslavia, and posited the theory of oral formulas to explain the performance of the epic singers. According to Lord, the narrators memorise "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea". These were termed oral formulas by Lord. The yakṣaṇa artistes also, master such oral formulas which become a part of their repertoire and are used in their creation of dialogues.

4.3.1. Intertextuality

For a proper handling of these dialogues, the actor needs to have a good knowledge of the epics and purāṇas. A
working knowledge of different branches of knowledge of ancient India like philosophy, religious practices, the political and social systems etc., are also necessary. Without such a knowledge, the actor would find it very difficult to elaborate on the song and its theme through his dialogue. In addition, often sharp exchanges of dialogues ensue between characters and any one who does not have a sound knowledge in these fields, will find it difficult to justify his (and the character's) stand.

In any performance, the competence and proficiency of the performer are also on test. In fact, the exhibition of communicative competence is recognised by Sebeok as one of the distinctive feature of any folk performance. He says, "In folkloristic semiosis, all functions of language may be present, but the poetic function must be present. The metalinguistic frame alerts the receiver of the message to interpret the enclosed material as a display of communicative competence in addition to applying normative decoding procedures". The competence of the yakṣagāna artiste is really put to test in the improvised text. He should be able to justify himself and his character's actions in repartees and debates with other characters. The competence exhibited by many yakṣagāna artistes in this regard is remarkable indeed. Many of them have very little formal education but the depth of knowledge that they exhibit in various fields, which find a reference in the performance, is indeed surprising. This goes to show how yakṣagāna has acted as an institution of traditional education to all the participants, over the past several centuries, in absolutely oral tradition.
The classical Indian epics and purāṇas have a vast canvas and each prasanga deals with one incident or episode of that canvas. Many of the characters that appear in a prasanga have a past and possibly a future that the prasanga does not deal with. In addition, the major characters of the epics appear in a number of prasangas. The actor who plays these roles, has to keep in mind the entire character. References are often made to past events that do not form part of the prasanga. Thus intertextuality becomes an integral part of yaksagāna. In the creation of the character, the actor has to keep in mind the character as a whole and not merely the part of the character, that is represented in the particular prasanga. Let us again take the example of Arjuna's character in Sudhanva Kālaga. The episode depicted in this prasanga forms a small part of Arjuna’s life. The actor playing the role of Arjuna in this episode, not only keeps in mind the entire character of Arjuna but also makes frequent references (in his speeches) to incidents that do not form a part of this prasanga. References are also made to literary works in Kannada and Sanskrit that deal with the same theme, though they do not form part of yaksagāna lore.

This intertextuality helps in situating the isolated episode being performed, in the larger context of the epic world. It even relates the performance to the Indian tradition as a whole.

4.3.2. Language

The language used in these speeches belongs to a special register that is archaic and florid in style but at the same time retains its communicability. This register
seems to have been developed only for yakṣagāna, though it bears some resemblance to the Kannada spoken in the northern parts of Dakṣīṇa Kannada. The archaic quality of the language creates the distance necessary for depicting the stories of a bygone age. This special register is replete with Sanskrit and old Kannada words. Care is taken not to use words that may break the aura of the distant past, that is created on the stage. At the same time, certain words and inflectional endings very typical of the Kannada spoken in the coastal districts are also used. The hāsyagāra has the freedom of using colloquial speech as well. He often utilises it to create humour. As an example, we can take the following instance from Sabhālakṣana where the clown comments on how one particular item of food is to be prepared. He pronounces huḷiśāka (a gravy like item of food) as huḷiśāṭa (hair around the genital organs).^®

The actor usually begins his dialogue in the same śrūti (pitch) as that of the singer. He also ends it in the same pitch. This leads to a kind of monotone. But this does not come in the way of acting because, by and large, yakṣagāna does not make use of intonation or tonal variation as a signifying system. (Its implications are discussed later.) This continuity of śrūti in music and dialogue helps in maintaining the ambience of music and there is no jarring shift from music to speech.

4.3.3. The mythical past and the present

The prasangas deal with a bygone age with its own value systems and world view. Though most of the values represented in the traditional prasangas, are considered relevant even for the present times, (as evidenced by their
repeated performance), certain of these values may not be in consonance with the present in which the performance takes place. This dialectical tension between the mythical past and the present, in an unseen way permeates the entire performance. It gets expressed particularly in the improvised text, because of the freedom that it affords. The actor, through his improvised dialogue, tries to make the discourse relevant to the present even while keeping within the bounds of the created past. Ananda Mastar, a yakṣāgāna artiste famous for his talent in improvised text, says, "[The speaker always faces] the danger of projecting the Varnaśrama Dharma [the hierarchical division of society into four castes- Brahmana, Ksatriya, Vaisya and Sudra], the rigid caste rules or the social structure of our mythical past in such a way that it may create anger, dislike or even hatred among spectators".61

Yakṣāgāna artistes have shown rare talent in relating the past of the discourse with the performative context of the present by the creative use of the freedom that the improvised text provides. Many social and political developments of the present, find a free expression in the dialogues of the characters. The subterfuge of the past is always maintained but they rarely forego an opportunity of commenting on the present. For example, some of the most open criticism of the emergency period in India (1975 to 1977), was heard in yakṣāgāna, even when complete censorship was in force. Some times, even concepts like democracy, free will, dictatorship etc. are freely discussed.

Some specific examples, of how the the traditional prasangas are reinterpreted may be cited here. Karṇa in most performances of the present is represented as an example of
the unequal treatment meted out to the castes lower down the hierarchy. In one performance of *Karna Parva*\(^6^2\) for example, the actor playing Karna, through the improvised text commented on how his talents were not recognised because of his low caste. Though he and Arjuna were almost equals in their talent in archery, he (Karna) was always humiliated because of his birth. So, birth should not be the yardstick, for judging one's merit. Ambe's dialogues in *Bhīṣma Vijaya* are usually used to highlight the fate of women in society.\(^6^3\) The actor playing Ambe's role explains how in the social and family system, the woman has no freedom. The father himself is the first obstacle to the freedom of his daughter. She criticises Bhīṣma for treating woman as a commodity, having no will or desire of her own. In such re-creation, the greatest challenge faced by the actors, is to maintain the proper balance so that no rupture takes place between the atmosphere of the mythical past and the search for relevance for the present. *Yaksāgāna* has remained relevant even today precisely because it has been able to maintain the balance.

This balance is achieved in the improvised text, chiefly by the use of double entendre. Most performers master the art of using dialogues that can mean two things at the same time. Thus they can make the comment relevant to the present even as they are ostensibly referring to the mythical past. To take a simple example, when Devaraja Urs was the chief-minister of Karnataka, Indra, the chief of gods was always referred to as Dēvarāja (*Dēva-God, rāja-king*). Some would even say, "Oh Dēvarāja, you are our arasa [king]."

The use of double entendre is also freely employed in making comments on sex. *Yaksāgāna* speech exhibits on open and frank approach towards sex and man-woman relations. Many
a time, such an approach is dubbed as obscene and indecent by the traditionalists. A large majority of the audience though, hugely enjoy such dialogues. The actors make free use of double entendre in such dialogues. Sexual innuendoes and undertones are freely used. Take the following example from a recent prasanga, Śūdra Tapaswini. The scene depicts the house of a prostitute to which a prince and his friend pay a visit. The actor playing the elderly prostitute asks them to sit on the cot. When they hesitate, she tells them, "Do not worry that the cot is old. So many people have sat on it and the weight of two more persons will not break it".64

4.3.4. Current trends

In the last thirty-thirty five years, important changes have taken place in the sphere of the improvised text as well. In the past, as most artistes were not highly educated, the role of speech was by and large, limited to explaining the content of the song. About thirty years ago, a number of educated persons who were wellversed in the classical texts of Sanskrit and Kannada, entered yakṣaṅa specially as performer of Tāḷamaddale.65 As a result, a sudden intellectualising of yakṣaṅa improvised text took place. Proficiency of language also improved remarkably. In the beginning, these artistes were intent on showing off their scholarship and so, very long speeches became very common. But soon, they began to concentrate on reinterpreting the characters and the myths. As a result, a different approach of searching for new meanings in the traditional prasangas came into vogue. Rather than emphasising on the religious message, a certain secular approach emerged, where attempts were made at delving into the
psychological states of characters. Instead of the opposition between good and evil, new oppositions were projected. This new trend, became quite popular and influenced other artistes as well. This process is continuing even now.

But the entrance of such scholars into yaksāgāna had its undesirable effects too. Many of these artistes were not wellversed in other aspects like dance, costume or music. So, these media were neglected and speech came to dominate all the other media. This is specially true of tenkūtiṭṭu where dance was relegated to the background and even music began to lose its prime of place. Any artiste who did not possess the proficiency of speech and the needed debating skill found it difficult to survive. Things have reached such a pass now, that traditional tenkūtiṭṭu dance faces the danger of becoming extinct.

On the whole, we can say that the quality of speech in yaksāgāna has undergone remarkable improvement, showing an incisive and analytical approach. New vistas have been opened up and the reinterpretation of traditional prasangas, has been made possible chiefly because of the new-found potentiality of the improvised text.

4.3.5. Multiple articulation - The problem of redundancy

As we have observed so far, in a yaksāgāna performance, the message contained in the song is repeated thrice, through different channels. The first is through the words of the song sung by the bhāgavata, the second is when this is represented through dance and histrionic representation by the actor; the third is the prose rendering where the message
of the song is again represented through speech. Of these, the first two are performed simultaneously whereas the third follows the first two. Thus each message is repeated thrice-in different media. The crucial question is whether this multiple articulation results in redundancy? Alternatively, can we say that the message remains the same when it is expressed through different channels?

When the media changes, the message, however subtly, is also altered. For example, let us suppose that the improvised text is just a prose rendering of the lines of the song. Even then, the message conveyed in dialogue will not be the same as the one that is communicated through the song. As the element of music will be absent in the speech, the spectator’s attention will be focussed on the semantic range of the words (apart from other changes, for example, the ‘mutilation’ of the words by the singer).

Now let us analyse how the problem of redundancy is overcome in yakṣagāna inspite of multiple articulation. This communicative act can perhaps be analysed by applying Roman Jacobson’s theory of communication and the six functions that he recognises. Different channels are naturally better suited for performing different functions. Media like music and dance, are more capable of performing the emotive and aesthetic functions rather than the referential or conative (injunctonal) functions, which are performed more capably by language.

In the yakṣagāna system of representation, a kind of compartmentalisation is visible where the emotive function is chiefly performed by the song-dance sequence. Speech on the other hand, is mostly used for its referential function.
That is why we see that in yakṣaṅa, speech is always in a monotone. Intonation and tonal variations (which can perform the emotive function and convey the mood of the speaker) are rarely used as prominent significatory devices. The monotonal voice forces the spectators to focus on the 'content' of the speech.

This does not mean that emotions are never expressed through dialogue in yakṣaṅa. In sequences depicting sorrow and pathos, the speech becomes highly emotive. (Dance, as has already been observed, can not communicate this emotion very effectively.) The same is also true when certain intense emotions are expressed. Otherwise, by and large, this compartmentalisation of acting holds true. Dance and music are used as effective vehicles of the aesthetic and emotive functions and speech of the referential and conative. Thus even though there is multiple articulation, yakṣaṅa has effectively overcome the problem of redundancy, by assigning different functions to different media. In this process, each medium conveys a different message or a different aspect of the overall message.

4.4. COSTUME AND MAKE-UP

Costume and make-up constitute an important aspect of the visual nonverbal communication in yakṣaṅa. The costumes of yakṣaṅa have been greatly praised for their beauty and the world of fantasy which they create. Undoubtedly, the aesthetic function is one of the primary functions of costume. But this 'meaning' is closely related to the other range of meanings that costume as a sign has the power of signifying, like age, social and economic status, sexual appeal, ethnic identity etc. Infact, it is doubtful
if the aesthetic function alone will operate if it is isolated from all the other range of meanings. In the studies of costume and make-up of yakṣagāna, adequate attention has not been paid to the whole range of meanings signified by costume and make-up.

Petr Bogatyrev, the Prague semiotician and folklorist was among the first to study costume from a semiotic perspective. He points out how, costume, while acting as a sign, is at the same time, a material object (which covers the body). Consider the following remarks:

Urban and rural styles of dress used as national costumes, have many functions: practical and aesthetic functions and often in association with the aesthetic function, erotic and magic functions as well. Costume also functions as an indicator of the age of the wearer and as a distinguishing marker between married and unmarried people. Such a socio-sexual function is closely related to the moral function. ... Moreover there are festive and professional functions as well as functions indicating social status, class, region, nationality, religion and so forth. In all cases, costume is both material object and sign.

The above comment draws attention to the fact that costume, inspite of the range of meanings that it signifies, is at the same time a material object. But the costumes of artistic forms like yakṣagāna function more as signs than as material objects because they are used as intentional signs (the material aspect of costume is also present, because it aferall, covers the body). These signs function as part of the entire semiosis of the performance and are related to other aspects like the narrative, the time and space represented, the type of characters etc. At the same time, the costumes themselves form a structure in which each individual item of costume becomes part of this costume structure.
The universe of signification created on the stage is a world of fantasy at once removed and different from the world of the spectators. In such forms, the primary task of costume will be to distinguish this new world created on the stage from the world of the spectators. Yakṣagāna costume achieves this by being totally different from the clothes worn by the spectators. At the same time, we also recognize distinctions within the costumes worn by various characters on the stage. This points to another level in which the costumes work as a sign - they project different categories within the new world created on the stage. So, on the one hand, the costumes demarcate the characters from the spectators and on the other, they point out distinctions from amongst the characters on the stage.

But these distinctions can not be understood or analysed in isolation. These distinctions, whether major or minor, are all part of the structuration of costume in yakṣagāna as a whole. For example, in order to understand the significance of a character wearing a crown, we have to relate it to the other types of headgears that appear in yakṣagāna (paradigmatic relations). The crown will also have to be related to the other ornaments and costume worn by the character (syntagmatic relation). Thus the overall structure of costume and the synagmatic and paradigmatic relations within the structure will have to be studied to understand how any one sign - like the crown - conveys the meaning.

In understanding the complete significance, we have to look at, not merely what is represented, but also at what is chosen not to be represented. In other words, signification works not merely by inclusion but also by exclusion. A fine
example of such a structural study of visual signs can be found in Claude Lévi-Strauss's work on the Red Indian masks. He applies the same principle to the study of these masks that he had applied for the study of the myths. According to him:

... as in the case with myths, masks too can not be interpreted in and by themselves as separate objects. Looked upon from the semantic point of view, a myth acquires sense only after it is returned to its transformation set. Similarly, one type of mask considered only from the plastic point of view, echoes other types whose lines and colours it transforms while it assumes its own individuality. For this individuality to stand out, against that of another mask, it is necessary that the same relationship exist between the message that the first mask has to transmit or connote and the message that the other mask must convey within the same culture or in a neighbouring culture.69

The above statement shows how individual masks can be studied only as part of the structure and how their meaning can not be deciphered in isolation. Similarly, the costume and make-up pattern of yakṣagāna also, can be studied only by studying the entire structure. The meaning of individual signs for example, of the different headgears (crown, mundāsa etc.), or of the colours used in make-up, becomes clear only when they are seen as part of the entire costume make-up structure.

At another level, the signs and the structure as a whole, will also have to be related to the culture where the particular form operates, because the form (and its signs) operate in a socio-cultural context, which assigns meanings to these signs.70 The marks applied on the foreheads of characters may be taken as a case in point. These marks are either vertical or horizontal (Pic. 23). The vertical marks
are the signs of devotees of Viṣṇu, whereas the horizontal marks (vibhūti- sacred ash) are of the devotees of Śiva. Most of the villainous characters in yakṣagāna wear horizontal marks on the forehead. The complete significance of these signs can be understood only in the context of the influence of Dwaita (Dualism - the followers of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa cult) philosophy on yakṣagāna.

One of the fundamental features of yakṣagāna costume is its symbolic nature of representation. The very nature of the theme that yakṣagāna deals with - the epic world populated by gods, demons and super human characters - would preclude any possibility of realistic presentation. This symbolic system of yakṣagāna costume and make-up expresses itself in its codified structure. The convention assigns definite costume categories to particular character types. There are traditionally fixed patterns for each of the major characters of the epics and the purāṇas. This does not mean that each character has a unique design unlike all others. Such a situation would lead to a plethora of individual costume styles where meaning would be lost in utter profusion. The costumes on the other hand, project different categories to which these characters belong. These categories demarcate the broad outline of the character types and the costumes project this.

When a character appears on the stage, costume acts as the first communicating factor. The first element of signification regarding the character that the spectators are confronted with, is the costume. This communicates to them even before the character begins enacting or speaking. The costume does not 'tell' them the exact identity of the
character but it conveys the category to which the character belongs, which becomes clear to any one who is familiar with the costume code of yakṣagāṇa.

4.4.1. Typology of Characters

An attempt at understanding the significatory process of costume and make-up should begin with understanding the different categories that are projected by these costumes. For this purpose, a clear typology of these categories as revealed through the costumes will have to be posited. Traditionally, yakṣagāṇa follows a categorisation in which the characters are divided into second role, third role, opposite role, female roles, introductory roles etc. Normally, every troupe will have actors specialised in these roles and the distribution of different characters to different actors is based on the above categorisation. This traditional categorisation no doubt provides a taxonomy but on closer look, we find that it does not really point to the different categories as projected by the costume and make-up. On the other hand, its main purpose seems to be to facilitate the distribution of roles to different actors.

A different kind of categorisation as revealed through the costumes can be projected. Prior to that, we also have understand the ideological basis on which this classification is based. Yakṣagāṇa deals with characters belonging to the three domains of gods, human beings and demons. But in the representation through costumes, we can discern a different categorisation where human beings are divided according to their moral qualities. So we observe the following two way division. Gods and god - like human beings and demons and demon-like human beings at the two extremes of this spectrum.
of categorisation. In between these, we have other categories which include ordinary human beings, female characters etc. In the category of gods and god like human beings, apart from gods like Indra, Visnu and Siva, we also have human beings like the Kauravas and the Pândavas, Râma, Kṛṣṇa etc. Even characters with a slightly wicked temperament like Duryódhana and Karna belong to this category. At the other end of the scale, we have demonic characters like Râvana, Bakâsura, Hiśimba, Bhasmâsura etc. This group also includes human beings with a markedly evil temperament like Kamsa, Jarâsandha etc. In tenkutittu, Bhîma is also depicted as belonging to this category.

In contrast to the grand and non-realistic costumes of the types mentioned above, we have another class, wearing simple costumes, which to some extent resemble the costumes worn by the spectators. These are mostly roles played by the hāsyagāra. There are also other character types like the female characters, Rîṣis, Kirâta (hunter) and certain special characters like Hanumantha, Narasimha (man-lion) etc. The character types as projected by the costumes can be depicted in the form of a diagram (see next page).

In this typology, six main categories are depicted. Within these categories some subcategories can also be recognised. By analysing how these distinctions are projected through costume and make-up, we can understand the codes of costume and make-up in yakṣagâna. In this analysis each category is taken up and analysed. The main features of the categories as well as the subtle distinctions within the categories are also recognised.
4.4.1.1 Heroic Characters

This is the most important category to which the largest number of characters belong. The major details of costume and make-up, like the clothes worn, the shoulder and waist ornaments, the breast plate etc. are the same for all the characters of this category. The characters belonging to this category may be kings, gods, and other royal personages. Intradistinctions within the category are projected by the different headgears though the other details of the costume remain the same. The crown, for example, is worn by gods and kings. Other royal personages who are not kings, like Karna, Arjuna, Gandharva etc. wear a special headgear unique to yakṣaṇa, called mundāsa. This is a very attractive headgear in the shape of the leaf of the pipal tree (Ficus religiosa). This is not a readymade headgear and has to be tied every time by using strands of cotton or hay. It is covered with cloth and decorated with thin strips of shining ribbon which look like rays emanating from the face. Śalya, though a king, is also presented as wearing the mundāsa. A variation of this headgear which leads to another subcategory is called kedige mandale. This is similar to the mundāsa in shape but is smaller in size. This headgear is worn by young heroic characters. Sudhanva, Arjuna’s son Abhimanyu, Lava and Kuṣa are some of the characters who belong to this subcategory. These characters wear half sleeved jacket (unlike the crown and mundāsa types who always wear full sleeved jackets). They also do not put on moustaches. Kṛṣṇa is always presented as belonging to this subcategory, suggesting his eternal youth. These characters are all young and sprightly and their costumes and make-up project this.
Two other subcategories mentioned in the diagram are not usually considered as belonging to this category. They are the brahmin warriors and the kirāta (hunter). But going by the costume signification, they can be said to belong to this category. Brahmins who are also warriors like Drōna, Aśwathāma and Paraśurāma, wear the same costume as that of the characters described above. But instead of the headgears mentioned above, they wear a śikhe (tuft of hair). The headgear indicates their brahminism and their costumes indicate their warlike qualities. The next case is that of the kirāta. The costume pattern of the kirāta is similar to the ones mentioned above, but with certain differences. He also wears a mundāsa but it is worn at an angle to the face. Instead of the breast plate, mango leaves cover his chest suggesting that he is a forest dweller. The kirātas are usually presented as brave and ambitious. His language is a strange mix of the colloquial and the archaic with strange use of inflectional endings suggesting that he is uneducated and uncultured.

A major number of characters that appear in yakṣagāna belong to this category of heroic characters. Within this broad category, we have seen how further distinctions are suggested by different headgears. Still subtler distinctions can be projected by adding or removing certain decorations of the headgear. (See Pic. 24 of Vidura in a mundāsa. Vidura is connected to the royal family but is not a royal personage himself. So, his headgear is a mundāsa but bereft of the ornamentation.)

In the configuration of the costumes of this category we have a fine example of the way the costume signification works in yakṣagāna. The dress and ornaments worn by all the
characters of this category are the same. This provides the broad classification. Further distinctions within the category are suggested by the different headgears. A subtler distinction is further posited by the use of colour and make-up. To take up just one example: both Karṇa and Śalya wear mundāsa. But Karṇa's mundāsa is always black and that of Śalya, red. (The signification of colour is discussed later.)

4.4.1.2. Female Characters

Female characters in yakṣaṇa are played by men only. The costumes of the female characters do not seem to confirm to the general pattern of yakṣaṇa costumes. It is generally conceded that the traditional costumes of these characters have been 'lost'. The costumes used now are garish and flashy and to a large extent resemble the costumes worn by rich women of the present. Mahabala Bhat says, "The female characters of present day yakṣaṇa look like modern women. Many are of the opinion that there is no coordination between them and the glorious costumes of the male characters". This makes one wonder why, yakṣaṇa, which has so zealously maintained the tradition of costumes, has been so 'careless' in preserving the costume structure of female characters.

The loss of traditional costumes is attributed either to the carelessness of the artistes or to the desire of "pandering to the gallery". But the discrepancy between the male and female costumes seems to have a much deeper cause, which can not be analysed by studying the costume structure in isolation. So far, no one seems to have analysed why the traditional costumes of the female characters have been 'lost'. Infact, even the so called
traditional costumes of female characters (said to have existed about half a century back), seem to resemble the clothes worn by the rich women of those days.

The reason for this neglect, may be found in the fact that the yakṣaṅgaṇa discourse, at a deeply connotative level, projects essentially the male perspective. (See chapter V for an analysis of how yakṣaṅgaṇa acts as an assertion of the male ethos). The gorgeous costumes of male characters as opposed to the simple costumes of female characters may be taken as a sign of such an assertion.

The reason for the female characters copying the costumes of present-day women may also be attributed to what can be termed "gender-identity crisis". These roles are played by young men and in order to establish their femininity, they try to imitate, not the women of the mythical past, but the women that they see in society. This is because of the unconscious apprehension that they may not be accepted in the changed gender that they are representing on the stage. As a result, they try to be as identical to the women that they see around them as possible. Even in their acting, most actors playing these female roles, use the stereotyped female gestures with the result that most female characters in yakṣaṅgaṇa (sometimes even the chaste characters like Śīta) appear like flirts and women of easy honour. This is clearly the result of gender-identity where in attempting to overemphasise the feminity, they end up projecting the stereotype of women, which is again a construct of male psychology. 77

The costumes of warrior queens like Mīnakṣi in Mīnakṣi Kalyana (The Marriage of Mīnakṣi) or Pramīla in Babruvāhana
Kālaga (The Battle of Babruvāhana), show certain distinct features. This costume shows certain similarity with the heroic male characters discussed earlier, projecting their courage and heroism. The number of such characters is any how, limited to a few prasangas.

At present, attempts are being made to evolve a costume for female characters, in consonance with the costume structure of yakṣāgāna as a whole. But as yet, such experiments have not become widely accepted. The one exception is the headgear worn by female characters now. This was composed by Shivarama Karanth on the same design as that of the munqāsa. This is now used by almost all female characters.

The costume pattern of female characters, thus presents certain problems for analysis, as they do not confirm to the general pattern of costumes of yakṣāgāna. As a result, they function slightly differently in the significatory process as well. Yakṣāgāna costume as a whole is symbolic, but these costumes exhibit more of realistic features.

4.4.1.3. Sages (Pic. 25, the character sitting)

To this category belong characters like Dūrvāsa, Vasiṣṭa, Viṣṇumitra etc. They wear a long silk waist cloth tucked between the legs. They do not wear the shoulder or waist ornaments worn by heroic characters. They are usually bare chested with prominent ash marks. Their headgear is sikhе, the same worn by characters like Drōṇa indicating their brahminism.

4.4.1.4. Clown Characters (Pics. 26, 27)

This category encompasses a host of characters like watchman, servant, soldier and some caste steriotypes like
brahmin, vaisya, goldsmith etc. These characters are usually played by the hāsyagāra or his assistants. These characters wear a variety of costumes which is a motley collection. Its common factor may be said to be their simplicity when compared to the costumes of other characters. These characters are rarely the protagonists of the discourse and their major task seems to be to serve the characters belonging to the higher echelons. This points to the hierarchical structure of society that is projected in yakṣāgāna.78

4.4.1.5. Man-beast Characters (Pic. 28)

In yakṣāgāna prasangas, certain unique and special characters appear that need a different treatment in visual representation. These are characters like Narasimha, (man-lion) Candi in Draupādi Pratāpa (Draupādi’s Valour), the bird Jaṭāyū, Jāmbuvanta (bear-king) etc. Characters like Hanumantha and Vāli may also be included in this category. These man-beast characters are represented with the help of elaborate make-up. The attempt is not to create the impression of verisimilitude but to convey their non-human nature through certain chosen signs. Nandi the bull, for example, is represented by painting the face red, the area around the eyes, blue and the forehead, yellow. Two horns on the head become signs for the bull. These signs may be said to function like the figure of speech, that in classical rhetoric, is termed synecdoche (the part standing for the whole). Here the horns become a visual synecdoche standing for the whole animal. The rest of the costumes are the same as that of heroic types. Masks are not used in yakṣāgāna and so in the depiction of these non-human characters, the make-up itself has a mask like appearance. These man-beast characters may be represented as mediating between the realms of nature and culture.
The costume and make-up of the character of Hanumantha has been a matter of debate. In the early decades of this century, the actors began to imitate the costume of Hanumantha that was worn in professional theatres of Karnataka (called company dramas). This was a realistic costume with fuzzy hair and complete with a tail. Such a realistic costume went against the very conceptual foundation of costume in yakṣaṇāṇa. Now efforts are being made to revive the old tradition.

4.4.1.6. Baṇṇada Vēṣa

Of all the categories of characters in yakṣaṇāṇa, the most complex in terms of design of make-up is that of the baṇṇada vēṣa. (lit. coloured costume/character:= demonic characters). The name itself is intriguing because all characters in yakṣaṇāṇa (except perhaps the hāsyagāra) apply colour and yet, only this category is called baṇṇada vēṣa (coloured role). These characters are rākṣasas (demons) known for their quick tempered cruel personality. Red is the base colour for most of these characters because anger and
rage represent their fundamental emotional state. One wonders if the name *bāṇḍada vēṣa* suggests precisely these qualities of the characters belonging to this category.  

These characters are divided into male and female demonic characters. The costume and make-up of these two types, show marked differences. The female characters wear a skirt like costume and have grotesquely projecting breasts. (In *tenkutitiṭṭu*, the costumes of male characters also have a skirt-like appearance). Their headgear is like a conical vessel from which peacock feathers project. It is interesting to note that the headgear of demonesses is the same in all the South Indian dance drama traditions mentioned in chapter II. Characters like Śūrpanakhi and Pūtani belong to this category.

The male characters are divided into two subcategories. Demon kings like Rāvaṇa and Mahirāvaṇa belong to one; to the other subcategory, belong demons like Hīḍimba and Bakāsura who are forest dwellers and live like beasts.

The costumes of *bāṇṇada vēṣa* create the impression of an enormous size. The shoulder ornaments and breast plates are bigger in size and different in design from that of the heroic types (category 1). The crown specially is huge in size with a large circular halo like structure behind the crown.

In make-up, the face is made to appear big and cruel by the application of *cutṭi* (thorn like structure) projecting from the face. These *cuttis* are created by applying rice flour and lime and can be made to project up to two or three centimeters. These *cutṭis* are applied round the face,
around the eyes and on the forehead. There are several set
designs for different characters. The face is covered with
red, white and black lines. A large ball of cotton enhances
the size of the nose. Some times the real eyes are shaded
and false eyes are written on the forehead. On the whole,
the costume and make-up give a cruel and awesome appearance
to these characters.

Semi-demonic characters like Indrajitu, Atikāya (sons
of Rāvana) Bhagadatta etc. are represented by a combination
of elements drawn from the category of heroic characters and
that of the baṇṇada veśa. Their make-up is similar to that
of the demonic characters (but without the cuṭṭī) and their
costume, including headgear is that of the heroic characters.

The depiction of demonic characters (through costume
and make-up) is more highly developed in tenkutitṭu than in
baḍagutitṭu. The geographical area of tenkutitṭu is also the
area where Bhūtarādhane is most prevalent. If masks are
used in Bhūtarādhane, the same effect is achieved in
yakṣagāṇa with the use of elaborate make-up. This makes one
wonder if at the conceptual level, these two are in any way
related.

In present day performances, the category of
baṇṇadavēṣa seems to be losing its importance. Many of the
characters, who were originally represented as belonging to
this category, are now presented as belonging to the category
of heroic characters. Only certain signs (like the
horizontal marks on the forehead) are retained (Pic. 29).
This change that is taking place in the costume make-up
configuration, can be related to the process of
secularisation taking place in yakṣagāṇa. (This aspect is
discussed in chapter VI).
4.4.2. The Conceptual basis of costume and make-up

In the above analysis, we have seen how costume and make-up project different categories of the characters. They also project the moral qualities of the characters. The projection of the internal qualities of the characters, is also achieved by these visual signs. In fact, the conceptual foundation of costume and make-up in yakṣagāna is that it should project the moral quality of the character rather than his position by birth or his present condition.

This point may be elucidated with a few examples. Kaṃsa and Jarāsandha are both kṣatriyas by birth but because both are evil by nature, they are represented as demonic characters. Rāvana and Vibhīṣana are brothers but Rāvana is presented as a demonic character whereas Vibhīṣana is presented as a heroic character. Rāma and Lakkṣmana, when they are in the forest, are supposed to be living like hermits and forest dwellers. But in prasangas that deal with their life in the forest, they continue to be dressed in royal costumes. This is an externalisation of the fact that, mentally they continue to be princes even when they live in the forest. The costumes project the basic aspect of their characters (of being princes) and not their altered situation.

The most surprising example of this concept is to be found in tenkutīṭu, where Bhīma, one of the Pāṇḍavas, is represented as a demonic character. Amruta Someshwara explains the ideological basis of such a representation. "When we realise that Bhīma is one who eats a cartload of food meant for Bakāsura, marries a demoness like Hīṃdime, drinks Duṣyāsana's blood, exhibits demonic qualities now and
then, has the strength of a thousand elephants - we should concede that Bhīma's character has been aptly represented in yakṣagāṇa". These examples show how, the inner moral qualities are also projected through costumes and make-up in yakṣagāṇa.

4.4.3. Colour and Signification

Colours belong to the domains of nature as well as culture. Colours are part of nature because they are not (necessarily) man made. But by assigning meaning and significance to colours, man has made them a part of the domain of culture. "Human societies", says umberto Eco, "do not only speak of colours but also with colours. We frequently use colours as semiotic devices: we communicate with flags, traffic lights, road signs, various kinds of emblems". Do colours have universal signification or are the meanings culture bound? Eco points out how, the colour red in national flags has different meanings in different nationalities and cultures (bravery, blood, courage, animals, faith, soil etc.).

In analysing the significance of colour in yakṣagāṇa, two different areas have to be recognised because colour functions in slightly different ways in costume and in make-up. In costume, most details of the costume structure being the same for all heroic characters, differences in colour are posited only in the colour of the jackets and of the munḍāsas. The basic colours of jackets traditionally, are red and green. (Black is also used now a days). In munḍāsa, the basic colours are red and black.
To take some examples, among the Pāṇḍavas, Dharmarāya wears a green jacket, whereas Arjuna and Bhīma wear red. This is because both Arjuna and Bhīma are bold and warlike whereas Dharmarāya is known for his peaceful equanimity. The kirāṇa (hunter) also wears a green jacket, indicating that he is a forest dweller. Hanumantha and Vāli also usually wear green jackets (indicating their arboreal nature). Black jackets are not part of tradition (for heroic characters), but are now being used for characters associated with tragedy, death etc. Kālapuṇa (God of Time), Vīrabāhuṇa (in Hariścandra) usually wear black jackets. Professional killers and ghosts also wear black clothes. Black jackets do not seem to be a part of the traditional costume code, though it is emerging with its own codified meaning now. In some recent performances, black jackets were used for characters like Kīcaka, Duṣṭabudhi etc.

In the colour of the mundāsa, black and red are the base colours. Characters like Śalya, Gaya, Pradumna etc. wear red mundāsa. Only Karna and his son Vraṣakētu, wear black mundāsas.

In make-up, red is applied around the eyes for haughty, quick tempered characters like Gaya, sage Dūrvāsa, Rudra Bhīma (when he kills Duṣyāsana) etc. (see n.79). Sharp black lines around the eyes and below the lips are used for characters with cruel temperments. Green is symbolic of the erotic and some times, small green circles are written below the eyes for characters like Indra and Arjuna, to show their erotic nature. Śrṅgāra Rāvana (the erotic Rāvana) is also depicted with green lines to show his erotic, cultured nature though he is a rākṣasa.
I. Colour signification in costume

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Quality suggested</th>
<th>Jacket</th>
<th>Munḍāsa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Heroic, war like</td>
<td>Arjuna</td>
<td>Gandharva, Śalya, Kirāta Pradyumna, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kaurava</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rāma etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Dharmarāya</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forest-dweller</td>
<td>Kirāta, Vāli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Tragic, related to death</td>
<td>Professional killers, ghosts, Kālapuruṣa (Time)</td>
<td>Karna Vraṣakētu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now a days, costumes of other colours (like blue) are also used. No definite codification of these colours seem to have emerged as yet

II. Colour signification in make-up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour</th>
<th>Quality suggested</th>
<th>Where applied</th>
<th>Characters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Haughty, short-tempered</td>
<td>Red shade around the eyes</td>
<td>Gandharva, Kirāta Paraśurāma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Erotic</td>
<td>Small green circles around the eyes</td>
<td>Arjuna, Īndra, Śrṅgāra Rāvaṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Cruel</td>
<td>Black lines around the eyes, and below the lips</td>
<td>Baṇṇada veṣa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|
In the colour codification of costume as well as make-up, we can see that only certain colours and broad categories are used. This categorisation, into the selected range of two or three colours no doubt helps easier perception. They are also related, as Eco says, "by a previous cultural coding by virtue of which, certain colours form a clearcut system of oppositional units which are in turn clearly correlated with another system concerning values or abstract ideas". In yakṣagāna we can see the oppositional pairs of red-green, or red-black. These pairs are culture specific and can be related to the values or abstract ideas of the culture as a whole.

4.4.4. Costume and make-up and the creation of characters

Costume and make-up constitute one of the most beautiful features of yakṣagāna. But as is perhaps clear from the above analysis, the aesthetic function is not the only function of costume and make-up. Infact its power as a highly codified sign system with clearly defined meanings, can not be isolated from its aesthetic function.

From the actors' perspective, costume and make-up help in creating the appropriate psychic state to represent the character (or the category) that the costume and make-up signify. The elaborate make-up and heavy costume of the baṇṇada vēṣa for example, create the appropriate mental and body states in the actor.

Another practice that is perhaps unique to yakṣagāna may also be mentioned here. The concept of a make-up man is unknown in yakṣagāna, because every actor has to do his own make-up. From the youngest to the most senior actor, each
one does his own make-up. This process of make-up, which can sometimes take hours, prepares the actor psychologically to 'enter' into the character even as his fingers are drawing the designs and patterns on his face. These, as we have already seen, indicate the category of character that the actor is going to represent. Thus, by the time the make-up is over, he will have identified himself with the character that he will represent. In this process of transformation of the actor into the character, the spectators also become involved. This is because, in yakṣagāna, the cauki (make-up room) is partly open to the spectators. Many among the spectators come and watch the proceedings in the cauki. Costume and make-up thus not merely project the categories and internal qualities of characters to the spectators, but they also aid the actor in internalising the character.

4.5. THE CREATION AND PRESENTATION OF CHARACTERS

We have so far considered how different media like music, dance etc. function in yakṣagāna in creating the new significance. Along with these, other factors like the ritualistic element, the narrative, the socio-cultural and economic contexts will also be working in shaping the discourse. Another significant factor which has not been considered seperately so far concerns acting - how the different channels of communication studied so far, are used by the actor to create another persona - the imaginary character of the narrative. Certain aspects like dance, and improvised speech which are part of the process of histrionic representation have already been dealt with. Here the conceptual foundations of acting- the creation and representation of a character - are discussed, with emphasis on how this process works in yakṣagāna.
On the stage, among the different sign systems that function simultaneously, the most fundamental sign is the actor himself. The actor is an individual with a personality of his own, but on the stage he signifies another entity—the character that he represents. In most cases and in most theatre forms, what the actor represents is another human being. So, this sign vehicle has all the qualities of what C.S. Peirce, classifies as an icon. An icon, according to Peirce, signifies by similarity between the sign vehicle and the signified. Ian Kott, who was among the first to apply semiotics to the study of the theatre, says that an actor is an example of icon par excellence. This statement however, has to be qualified because it is true mostly of western realistic theatre. In yakṣagāna for example, the actor represents a demon, an animal, a god. Men play female roles. In theatrical traditions such as these, the notion that the actor is always in iconic sign will have to be drastically altered.

Though the actor is a sign, he does not function like a word. A word is an intentional artificial sign and has no existence of its own, divorced from its signifying function. An actor, on the other hand, has an independent existence of his own. From this reality, he gets transformed on the stage into another entity—the character that he represents. This is one of the fundamental features of the theatre, points out Petr Bogatyrev, "One of the most important and fundamental features of the theatre is transformation: the actor changes his appearance, dress, voice and even the features of his personality into the appearance, costume, voice and personality of the character whom he represents in the play. Transformation is one of the basic signs distinguishing drama from lyric and epic poetry".

87
In this process of transformation, the actor becomes a sign, signifying the character that he represents on the stage. But what happens to the real self of the actor? Does it get obliterated? Or does he exist at two levels simultaneously - as an actor and as a sign? Bogatyrev continues, "Some times actors and spectators do experience a sensation of complete transformation, but this sensation must be a temporary and not a lasting one; it must come and go...However, the perception of theatre as real life through the whole performance must inevitably lead to results violating the theatre". Bogatyrev suggests that the actor oscillates during the course of the performance, between his real self and his function as a sign. But this statement gives an erroneous impression because the actor, during performance does not keep switching between the two identities. Both identities exist at the same time. Infact, in order to be accepted as a sign, the actor must have a real identity, independent of his function as a sign. The actor is not an artificial intentional sign created for the purpose of communication. So, only when the actor is accepted as a real entity, can he function as a sign. As Umberto Eco says, "In order to be accepted as a sign, he has to be accepted as a real spatio temporal event, a real human body. In theatre, there is a 'square semiosis'. With words, a phonic object stands for the other objects made with different stuff. In the mise-en-scene, an object, first recognised as a real object, is then assumed as a sign in order to refer back to another object (or to a class of objects) whose constitutive stuff is the same as that of the representing object".

These remarks point out one fundamental factor regarding all theatrical performance - the dialectical relationship that exists between the actor and the character.
Different performance traditions and theories of acting resolve this dialectic in different ways. But this dialectic can never be completely resolved as that would mean complete obliteration of one or the other entity of this dialectic.

Trance and possession dances are perhaps one example where the presence of the actor appears to be completely effaced. (Even here, the dialectic does not get completely resolved. An actor is after all needed to 'become' the medium and comes back to his real status after the trance is over. But that is beside the point here.) Kathy Foley, draws this parallel between trance dance and theatrical performance in her study of the performance traditions of Java. "I define the dancer as the performer who maintains his or her self awareness while impersonating another and the danced as those who strive for an altered trance state and allow themselves to become mediums for another presence - a phenomenon known as trance dance. Though the state of consciousness provides a demarcation line between these two types of performers, it is my hypothesis that the theatrical dancers are, in some sense, "danced", by the spirit of these seemingly archaic trance forms".\textsuperscript{91}

Some writers like Raghava Nambiar say that the approach to acting in yakṣagāna has been greatly influenced by the possession dance of the ritualistic forms like Bhūtārādhane.\textsuperscript{92} The yakṣagāna performance no doubt exhibits certain features of trance dance, like music and dance creating the mood of excitement, the actor's grunts and groans resembling that of the medium etc. But to equate it to trance dance would be to neglect many other facets of the complex phenomenon of acting.
Let us take up, for instance, the way the actor-character dialectic operates in yakṣaṇa. Instead of trying to resolve this dialectic, yakṣaṇa works by accepting this dialectic. Yakṣaṇa accepts the existence of two realities at the same time and so, the presence that we see on the stage is accepted as the actor as well as the character at the same time; to put it in a different perspective, the spectators' real interest lies in seeing the character as represented by the particular actor.

In order to understand this aspect properly, we have to realise that yakṣaṇa works with well known narratives. Neither the plot nor the characters are new to the audience. They already have a knowledge of the story as well as of the character that the actor is going to represent. Yet, they come to witness the performance again and again. What is it that draws them to the repeated performances of the same prasanga? The main interest of the spectators, (other than the ritualistic appeal) lies in observing how the particular actor enacts the particular character. They never talk about Kṛṣṇa or Arjuna or Kīcaka in abstract when they comment on the performance. They talk of Kṛṣṇa as performed by so and so, how it was better/ worse than the handling of the same role by some one else, etc. Thus the existence of the two realities is simultaneously accepted.

Another practice in yakṣaṇa also points to the acceptance of two realities simultaneously. In performances, using the freedom of the improvised text, actors often refer to the real self of the actor rather than to the character. They make use of double entendre to make such comments. The spectators also enjoy such comments and never think of these remarks as intruding into the other reality of the character.
An example will perhaps make explicit how this is achieved in the performance. In one particular performance, the role of the king was played by the actor Krishna Yāji. The clown, playing the role of the servant, began addressing him as "yāji, yāji". Upon being scolded, he said it was a slip of the tongue and what he actually wanted to say was "jīya" (lord). The audience greatly enjoy such comments, referring to the real actor and never think of them as causing a rupture between the sign-vehicle and the signified (the actor and the character), because yakṣagāna accepts the existence of both realities at the same time.

Another practice found in yakṣagāna may also be mentioned here. In some prasangas one character may be played by two (or even more) actors in the course of the same performance. This usually happens if in the prasanga, the particular character has to be present on the stage for most parts of the night. If one actor performs the role during the first half of the performance, the same is continued by another actor in the second half. In one performance of Samagra Bhīṣma (The Entire [Story of] Bhīṣma), that I had witnessed, Bhīṣma's role was performed by three different actors. Such practices are part of the tradition of yakṣagāna, and the audience has no difficulty in accepting the new actor as (the continuation of) the same character. This shows how the identification of the character with the particular actor is never total and different sign vehicles are thus used to convey the same signified. (Whether the signified remains exactly the same when the signifier changes, is also an interesting problem but that does not concern us here.)
The approach to acting in yakṣagāna is an extensive field and the above remarks deal with only certain aspects of this vast field. For example, the study of acting in yakṣagāna would have to take into consideration, not merely the trance dance of Bhūtārādhane, referred to above, but also the classical theories of acting in India which also have had a deep influence on yakṣagāna.

In this chapter, the multichannel communicative process of yakṣagāna and the different sign systems involved, have been discussed so far. All these, converge in the actor because in any theatrical performance, most of these sign systems find expression through the actor. The actor is, as Jiří Veltrusky says, "the dynamic unity of an entire set of signs".93

2. Ibid., p.51.


4. Ibid., pp.15-16.


9. The eight sthāyi bhāvas and their corresponding rasas are explained in the following summary of Bharata's exposition by Ranier Gnoli: "According to the Nāṭya Śāstra, eight fundamental feelings, instincts, emotions or mental states called bhāvas or sthāyi bhāvas can be distinguished in the human soul: Delight (rati) Laughter (hāsa), Sorrow (sōka), Anger (krōdha), Heroism (utsāha), Fear (bhaya), Disgust (jigupsa) and Wonder (vismaya). These eight states are inborn in man's heart. They permanently exist in the mind of every man in the form of latent impressions (vāsana) ... These eight bhāvas indeed do not appear in a pure form. The various modulations of our mental states are extremely complex and each of the fundamental states appears in association with other concomitant mental states, as Discouragement, Weakness, Apprehension and so on. These occassional transitory impermanent states are, according to Bharata, thirty six. These same causes, being acted on the stage, or described in poetry, not lived in real life, give the spectators, the particular pleasure to which Bharata gives the name Rasa. The fundamental mental states being eight in number, there are also eight Rasas i.e., the Erotic
(śṛṇgāra), the Comic (ḥāsyā), the Pathetic (karuṇa), the Furious (raudra), the Heroic (vīra), the Terrible (bhagyānaka), the Odious (bibhatsa) and the Marvellous (adbhuta). Ibid., pp.XV-XVII.


11. Bharata mentioned only eight rasas. Later commentators have added one more, Sānta (the Quietistic) to the list.

12. Of late, due to commercialisation, the artistic control is passing into the hands of the manager of the troupe or the contractors.

13. In tenkutīṭṭu, instead of the tāla, jāgate (a thick metallic plate) is used. It is struck with deer horn to produce the sound.

14. The Cande player sits to the extreme right of the bhūgavatā. In tenkutīṭṭu, he stands to the left of the bhūgavatā.

15. The sanādi players now usually play either classical music or tunes of film songs.


17. Rāga is one of the most fundamental concepts of Indian music. Classical music is entirely based on the concept of raga. Bimal Mukherji describes a rāga thus. "A rāga is a special combination of notes in ascending or descending order in a scale of notes or swaras. Every rāga has some dominant/ fixed phrases and notes called vadi and samvadi...These are the basic parameters of the rāga music and remaining within them, the artist has unlimited freedom and scope to present and make improvisations to create the rāga and its mood" Bimal Mukherji, "Classical Music and Creativity", Lectures on Music Appreciation Course Vol II, (Calcutta: 1989), p.1.


19. These tāḷas are referred to by other names also. Shivarama Karanth is of the opinion that these tāḷas are simple elementary forms and not as complex as the tāḷa structure of Karnatik music. Shivarama Karanth, (1975), p.79.
20. Some times four tempi are also recognised: slow, moderate, fast and very fast.


22. Jawaharlal Handoo, "Approaches to Ethnomusicology: The Indian Case", op.cit.

23. This practice is found mainly in *baṭagutiṭṭu* style.


25. Comment made by D.V.Shivaramiah, an ardent yakṣagāna fan and the organiser of *tāḷamaddale* performances.


27. The salient points of this theory have been explained in ch.III.


29. Ibid., p.19.


32. In the past, the preliminaries began with the dance of the *Kōḍangis* (lit. ape like men:= assistants to the clown). This practice has been given up in commercial troupes.

33. The use of gestures in the preliminaries may be related to the fact that these preliminaries do not have any improvised dialogues unlike the songs of the *prasanga*.

34. Dance used in dramatic performance is divided into three types by ancient Indian aestheticians: *nṛtta, nṛtya* and *nāṭya*. *Nṛtta* is pure dance with prominent use of physical body movements where rhythm is predominant. *Nṛtya* incorporates the histrionic expression along with body movements as it includes song as well. In *nāṭya*, the emphasis is on *vācikābhinaṇaya* (lit.speech acting:= using voice and language as a medium of acting). It
usually consists of the representation of a character as part of a well-knit plot. For details see R. Sathyanarayana, 

35. There are also certain related rhythmical patterns which signify the entry and exit of characters.


37. The philosopher E.H. Gombrich, sees the question of symbolic and realistic representation, from a new perspective showing how even 'realistic' or mimetic representation is also symbolic and is a 'representation'. See his _Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art_, (London: 1963), pp.1-11.


40. This analysis is based on the video recording of the performance of Jarāsandha by Idagunji Mahaganapati Yakṣagāna Mandali, Keremane; private collection.


42. Gopalakrishna Naik mentions another possible reason for the absence of mudrās in yakṣagāna. Some scholars believe that yakṣagāna has originated from the puppet play form. As the puppets do not show any movements of fingers, Naik, believes that in yakṣagāna also, the same tradition was followed. Gopalakrishna Naik "Yakṣagāna Nrtyābhinaya" [Dance- acting in yakṣagāna], _Yakṣagāna Makaranda_, op.cit., p.470.


45. Robert L. Saitz and Edward I. Cervenka, *Handbook of Gestures: Columbia and United States*, (The Hague: 1972), p.29, p.40. In the gesture for bets, the little fingers are used by the bettors, but in yakṣagāṇa the fore fingers of both hands are used by the dancer.

46. Birdwhistell, op.cit., p.86.

47. P.V. Hasyagara, "Yakṣagāṇa Kale Mattu Prayōga", op.cit., p.95.


50. Judith Lynne Hanna, op.cit., p.34.

51. Sergei Eisenstein, the Russian film director is usually regarded as the pioneer in mastering the art of the montage. He is supposed to have got the idea from his study of the Japanese hieroglyphic script. See V.V. Ivanov, "Eisenstein’s Montage of Hieroglyphic Signs", *On Signs*, ed. Marshal Blonsky, (Oxford: 1985).

52. Scene 12 of the analysis of the performance text in chapter III.


54. *Sudhanva Kāḷaga* [Sudhanva’s Battle], (17th century, 14th imp, Udupi: *1984*), pp.32-33.

55. From the performance of Sudhanva, in Sirsi, on 13-9-93.

56. The stage space conventions have been discussed in chapter III.

57. Brecht’s concept of acting and of the epic theatre bear many resemblances to traditional theatre forms of India like yakṣagāṇa. This is not surprising because he was influenced by Asian theatre, particularly by Chinese theatre. As he says, "Stylistically speaking, there is nothing all that new about epic theatre. Its expository character and its emphasis on virtuosity bring it close to the Asiatic theatre". Bertolt Brecht, "Theatre for Pleasure and Theatre for Instruction", in *Marxists on Theatre* ed., David Craig, (Harmondsworth: 1975), p.420.


62. Karna Parva, Performed in Sagar on 10-12-92.

63. Bhīṣma Vijaya, audio recording of a tālamaddale performance, private collection.

64. Sudra Tapaswini, audio cassette, produced by Anantha Padmanabha Yakṣāgāna Mandali, Perdur.

65. See note 45 of the previous chapter for detail on tālamaddale.

66. In some of the very recent performances witnessed by me, there appeared to be a growing emphasis on dance again.

67. See for example, Shivarama Karanth, (1963), p.152

68. Petr Bogatyrev, "Costume as a Sign", in Matejka and Titunik, op.cit., p.13.


70. There is a growing realisation in semiotic studies now that the study of signs and the question of meaning have to be treated as socially constructed practices. See Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, Social Semiotics, (Oxford: 1988).

71. The details of the costumes mentioned here are of baḍagutiṭṭu yakṣāgāna. These catrgories hold good to tenkutiṭṭu yakṣāgāna also, though many of the details are different.
72. As this analysis concentrates mainly on the significatory process, detailed descriptions of the costumes have not been given. For details regarding costumes, see Shivarama Karanth, (1975), pp.103-110 and Martha B. Ashton and Bruce Christie, op.cit., pp.54-55.

73. In baṭagutīṭṭu of Uttara Kannada, Arjuna also wears a crown.

74. Paraśurāma is some times presented as wearing a crown.


77. The same can be said of female stars used as sex symbols in commerical cinema. The question of gender identity does not arise here, but the image of women projected is essentially a male-construct of the steriotype of 'woman', for male consumption. For an analysis of the way women are projected in cinema, see Jaqueline Rose, Sexuality in the Field of Vision, (London: 1986), pp.216-233.

78. The importance of clowns in South Indian dance drama traditions has been commented upon in chapter II.

79. Mahabala Bhat says that rage is associated in classical texts with the colour red and the God Rudra. Baṇṇada Vēṣa, op.cit., p.38.

80. In baṭagutīṭṭu, a paper cutting with thorn like projections, round the face, is also used.


82. Umberto Eco, "How Culture Conditions the Colours We See", in On Signs, op.cit., p.173.

83. Ibid., p.174.

84. Now a days costumes of colours other than red, green and black, are also used though these do not seem to have any codified significance. The colour code for traditional characters is also not followed strictly in present day performances.


87. Ian Kott, mentioned in Kier Elam, op.cit., p.23.

88. Petr Bogatyrev, "Forms and Functions in Folk Theatre", in Matejka and Titunik, op.cit., p.51.

89. Ibid., p.52.


