CHAPTER 4

THE USE OF MASKS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN DANCE AND RITUALS

The origin of masks and their use in every popular culture is very ancient and is most often a significant part of a traditional costume associated with a ceremony or ritual that has been an important tradition to the community as a whole or to a particular group within the tribe or community of people. These traditions and the associated activities have been ardently passed on to the later generations, preserved in their purest forms and followed by these generations till the present day. Man has been using masks ever since mankind came into existence. Masks form an important aspect of many of the folk dances, folk theatre; traditional pageants, ceremonies, rituals, festivals and fairs. Masks are a very common and indispensable feature of most of the traditional and folk ceremonies; rituals, festivities and processions and have been in practise from times as ancient as mankind himself. Masks form the source to conceal one’s identity, to transform oneself into a different individual, to transcend himself from the ordinary individual that he is in the society, to gain importance in a community during special occasions and the like. Foremost of all these is the use of masks in theatre and for the purpose of rituals. Masks are of the totally detachable variety and also those that could be a design made by the use colours to paint the face to suit the corresponding purpose. The person who adorns the mask also assumes a dual personality: one being his own self and the other being the one that the mask lends to him. It is therefore seen that an individual who adorns any
mask behaves and is rather possessed by the characteristics of the personality of the mask rather than being his own self in such a situation. A detachable or external mask restricts the expression of the person who adores it. A fixed expression continues to remain throughout the presentation of any dance or drama or the like. It acts as a means to hide one’s own expression also. It could also serve the purpose of bewilderment or enchantment to the onlooker. Thus the mask maintains both a power and mystery to the person wearing it and to the onlooker. This leads to the fact that the mask could be either magical or religious. A mask could be a means to entertainment as in the case of those that are adorned by the joker or the jugglers.

When the outward form assumes great importance, and when it is in a situation where in the form draws into itself the appropriate spirit; masks must have come into existence. “After covering the body and its colour by means of paints and cosmetics an actor should assume the nature of the person whose character he is to represent.”¹ It, the mask causes a visible transformation. “To put on another face is to admit another spirit. We call this other face with all its costume and decoration a Mask.”² The beginnings of the mask may be traced back to the early period of dance decoration. For the purpose of looking attractive on festive occasions these dancers must have decorated themselves with colourful paints, beautiful clothes and gleaming ornaments. It is interesting to note that wherever this mask was of use, it always carried along with it a religious


² Curt Sachs, World History Of The Dance, Norton Library New York, 1963; P.132
significance. The mask thus is of great significance in assisting the dancer in elevating the dancer out of his every day, in freeing him from himself, and bringing him into a state of exhilaration.

“There are tribes where the masks that represent the evil or the malignant spirits, these are worshipped for keeping evil at bay.”³

**Masks are hence used for the following purposes:**

To change the identity of the person so much so that the performer becomes a medium, when it is used as major part of any ritual,

For purposes of utility, as in situations where it is used as a camouflage to ambush the enemies or during situations where one needs to befool the other person in consideration,

For purposes of recreation as in circumstances wherein the wearer is an actor: the inner self remains the same, while the outer appearance is changed.

Consequently, these lead to the adaptation of the masks in the following ways;

Masks serve as an instrument for reenactment of some supernatural powers when the wearer identifies himself as an inseparable part of his own self as seen in a ritual, wherein the person is possessed or is carried away by the magical power of the same. Without change in identity of the person who adorns or wears the mask, the ritual offerings, the vows fulfilled to the

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³ Shovana Narayan, Folk traditions of India, Shubhi publications, Harayana, 2004, p.64.
spirit, are considered to be ineffective and meaningless. They do not yield the required or desired effect to the tribe or community.

Mask serves just as an accessory in a situation wherein the person adorning the same is aware that the outward appearance alone has been changed and hence it is essential to enact accordingly leading to those that are used in the dramatic productions and the like. The mask used in this context catalyses to stylize the character to be played.

Masks are protective in nature as in their use by cosmonauts, surgeons, welders where in there is no artistic usage and is purely for purposes of utility.

The mask is an important part of a costume used for adorning the face and generally signifies any important traditional or religious activity of the whole group or a certain group of people in the community. Masks also reflect the lifestyle and religious beliefs of the people. “Different types of masks are used by different groups of ethnic people during folk dance dramas. In all mask dance dramas, the masked dancer wears colourful traditional dresses and ornaments, and holds various attributes according to the prescription of the drama. In addition Deity masks are used during religious festivals.”

They generally form the medium to understand the legend that they are being used for.

As part of a ritual, dances and religious dramas were conducted within the enclosures; masks were employed as a necessary part of these presentations to convey the plot. In tracing the development of the Dramas

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4 Thapa Shanker, Man and Masks: history, Phenomenology and the art of Expression; Rolamba, Lalitpur, Nepal, Vol XV, P 1-2
of the Greeks, Japanese, Indians and the Europeans, it can be noticed that the masks formed an essential part of the Dramas and their origins have grown out of the religious practices of the primitive tribal cultures. A distinctive feature of the worship of the Greeks, especially amongst the Dionysian, incorporating a procession of dancers, intoxicated by wine, wearing animal masks. Masks were generally used as a means to conceal the original identity of the performer, who wears it, and also to be possessed or to become one with the figure of the mask, that is the animal or God that it represented. The Masks as such were primarily designed to create a sense of either admiration or terror in the minds of the tribes that would be participating in the ceremonies. In few cultures, the mask is used as a mark of retaining and wielding power. Of these, those tribes that closely associated with the Buddhist religion have interesting ritual masked dances.

It can be concluded that as long as the performer wore the mask, he transformed his physical self into the animal or God, “It meant that his physical frame was ‘taken over’ by the animal or God for the time being,” which was rightly termed by the Greeks as ‘Inspiration.’ An actor of the Greeks in such a situation was called ‘the Hypocrite’ since he was double faced and also answered queries as the word literally meant. The masks that are in vogue till the present day to represent Theater universally have been derived from the ancient Greeks. It was the Greeks who originated and necessitated the masks as part of the tragedies and the comedies. The various characters in a play invariably used the masks

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6 Ibid p.
and performed in the Greek theatre, which was the foremost of all the
dramatic presentations that mankind ever designed, or performed in an
organized and conventional way. They were hardly used for the purpose of
personifying the supernatural or the spirits. They were meant to serve the
purpose of representing various characters purely meant for entertainment.
The Japanese, Chinese, Romans and the Europeans also used masks as part
of their ancient culture, for various purposes inclusive of their use in theatre,
and pageants and carnivals.

Shamans of the primitive tribes of Africa, Australia and Pacific Islands wear masks.

**Human skulls are also employed in the making of masks.** In order
to strike astonishment, terror and to venerate amongst the participant tribes,
the religious dances of Tibet, Sri Lanka, British Columbia, Western and
Central Africa and the Red Indians are dominated by the use of Masks. It
was customary for the royalties of the Egyptians and the Greeks to bury their
dead with masks of Gold on their faces. **Masks in India form a primary
requisite in the performing of ritualistic dances with religious
affiliations and in the presentations of mythological Dance-dramas.**
**Masks form the soul of the performances of the Chau, the martial art
form of Seraikella.** A majority of these Masks are those that represent
animals. “These masks are made after many imaginative figures of monsters,

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7 Prof. S.K.Ramachandra Rao, The Folk Origins of Indian Temples, Early shrines and
Masks, IBH Prakashana, Bangalore, 1980 p.
dragons, beats, devils, evil spirits and skeletons.” The human form of the body is generally combined with the animal masked faces of the performers.

The pig,[panjurli], tiger,[pili bhuta], horse,[jarandaye], bull,[nandi gona] and the buffalo,[mahishan daye] are those that are in vogue and proficiently used in the religious rites and rituals by the people of Tulunadu. In the regions of north Malabar in Kerala the Naga kanye representing the serpent, Puli Teyyam to represent the tiger and Bali Teyyam to represent the monkey are in vogue. They are then provided with special attributes to create an extraordinary being that creates the necessary feeling of reverence in the minds of the tribe. Besides their representation by means of masks there are also instances where in they are represented as complete animals and their effigies are made quite often and installed in temples. These are worshipped since the belief is that the spirit is unavailable for worship, the animal that is used as its vehicle is thought of as the deity, but it is only the mask or the effigy of such an animal that is worshipped and not the real or the actual animal itself. For the spectator, the mask gives a sense of continuity as it serves as a link between the past and the present. It is thus held with great importance for the integration of any tribal culture, since tradition has been orally transmitted through the centuries by means of such practises. The mask therefore induces a sense of respect and reverence in the minds if the spectator. Hence these masks are associated with rituals, and such rituals are usually performed within a closed enclosure. There is an extensive use of these during religious rites and rituals as a regular feature. Masks of wood are worn by some of the tribes while hunting,

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8 Shovana Narayan, Folk traditions of India, Shubhi publications, Harayana, 2004, p.64
dancing, while conducting magical procedures such as expelling of spirits and spirit propitiation.

**Masks can be classified broadly into the following categories:**

1) The one which gives a false covering to the face, extended over the head completely, 2) one that is a partial cover to the face, 3) that which covers the entire body, concealing the whole body of the one who wears it and 4) the one that covers a part of the latter half of the body as in the case of the one that is seen in the Horse dance which shall be described further.

The headgear is closely related to the mask; also came to be accepted as a social symbol. The functional quality of the head gear is seen as that it protects the head. For the successful portrayal of any character it is essential that the mask, make-up and the headgear are suitably used. These therefore can viewed to be of the following types: 1)Mukut / Keerat: the usual full crown, 2) Turban: that which can be realistic or stylized to suit the theme in consideration and 3) the stylized representation of the hair, made in such away so as to suit the character to be represented.

The fact that the masks began to grow smaller in size in the later cultural ages, is seen in the mask that is left with the narrow covering of just the eye and the nose, especially while tracing the history of the masks of the Japanese cultures. The well developed stage of the mask has perhaps led to the transition that can be termed as “masklessness” in the Eastern Asian cultures where the face itself is painted into the rigidity of the mask. The dancer therefore slips into a world of fantasy, a world that is unrealistic and

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often this is reflected in the movements that are executed by him. The unmasked face is free to reflect all intricacies of the Human soul.10 “The themes and contents of the dance have scarcely changed at all. The big events in the life of man and the important incidents in the existence of the tribe form the occassions just as before.”11

Being one of the richest, culturally, the state of Karnataka is a host to a great number of folk dances of which the masked dances form an important aspect. These dances are most often associated with rituals that have been observed by a particular community, traditionally for generations. “Masks are extensively used in traditional theatre and as well as in tribal rituals.”12 These dances could part of the annual festivals and fairs celebrated by the entire community or as a part of the celebration of a good harvest, prosperous year, and sometimes merely an entertainment to the village community, or part of any procession that is held during the various festivities.

The Gaarudi Gombe :

The regions of south Karnataka, Mandya, Mysore, Tumkur, Bangalore, Hassan, Shimoga, Chikkamagalur and Kolar observe fairs and festivities with the Gaarudigombe aata. The Keelukudure and peacock dances form part of these. They are also identified as Tattiraya in the coastal regions of Karnataka. The Thattirayakunitha of the male and female are also

10 Jiwan Pani, World Of Other Faces Indian Masks, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, August 1986, P.3.
seen. This is performed by the Harijans, Vokkaligas, and the Nayaka class of people as part of a procession during the various festivals and fairs. It is an important part of the Mysore Dasara Procession that is held on a mammoth scale every year. The performers adorn the ankle bells meant for dance, and entertain by means of dancing, to the accompaniment of the Tamate, Dolu, the Volaga, ankle bells and the Mridanga. There are generally a female and a male: Gombe’. The masks are made in huge dimensions measuring about 10 to 15 feet in height resembling the human face and the form of a Doll and are also called “Magical Dolls”. These ‘DOLLS’ are made to fit a bamboo frame which is made to the dimensions mentioned to give the final look like a human puppet or Doll in form. Over this frame either light wood or wax or clay are used to fill in the required shape of the human form. The hands of the Male are sometimes designed to look as if they are holding a pungi, or a musical pipe, while the female is designed a few inches lesser in height with the hands sometimes placed on the waist. These are dressed beautifully, with the male wearing a turban and a dhoti, and the female adorning a blouse on top, with fabric fashioned in such a way as to look like a sari from the waist and upwards and a huge skirt fitting up to the length of the feet from the waist and downwards. These ‘DOLLS’ or ‘Gombe’ are then worn or rather carried from within the stylized dress by the performers and danced. They have a varied posture. The man who dances gets into the masked doll through the dhoti wrapped around the lower portion of the doll and yet another male performer gets into the female doll through the lower portion of the doll within the skirt of the doll and performs the dance to rhythm of the musical accompaniments. The antiquity of the dance is understood by: “It is said that, this dance was performed even in the Mahabharatha when
Lord Krishna’s wife, Satyabhama was angry with him. He soothed her anger by wearing a Garudi Gombe mask and performed for her.”

Somana kunitha:

This dance is also danced in the districts of Mandya, Tumkur, Hassan, Chitradurga, Mysore and Bangalore. This is danced on the occasion of the festival held in honour of the village Goddess and also during the annual fair of the village. This dance is bound by certain rules and regulations which correspond to the ritualistic aspect of this dance and is hence danced only after observing these requirements. Basically it is a dance to propitiate the presiding Goddess of the village. Soma is understood to be the body guard of the Goddess of rakshasa origin and hence the dance is performed during the festival or fair of the village to appease the Goddess. A Goddess generally has two Somas assigned on her duty. One of them is “HALADI SOMA” and “KEMPU SOMA” are also known as “KENCHARAYA” and “KEMPARAYA”, “KEMPAMMA” and “EARANNA”, “EARANNA” and “PAPANNA” respectively in different regions. Earanna is believed to be Satvika and Papanna as Raudra and accordingly Papanna as known for his valour and is also identified as Dootharaya in certain regions. Another version signifies them as Kempusoma, who is satvika and Kari soma who is tamasika.

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13 Sharanya Selvakumar, Quoted in a seminar on Masked dances;

The Lingayats, Vokkaligas, Nayakas, Kurubas and the Bestas or the fishermen folk perform this dance. This dance is identified as Chomana Kunitha in yet a few other places too.

Foremost amongst the masked dances, the mask of this dance is the most important feature of attraction in this dance. This mask is sculpted out of the Rakthaboothale wood and is done by a particular person in a traditional family after an austere fast. It is believed that the tree from which the wood is procured is very energetic and hence great caution is observed while sculpting the masks. The mask is polished after sculpting a broad forehead, huge nose, broad ears and eyes and teeth which are huge and carnivorous in
nature. These are then coloured such that they look divine and respectful with red, yellow and black colours which complete the mask.

These masks measure about four to five times the size of a normal head. The back of the mask is fitted with a framework of bamboo such that it can be fixed with coloured cloth to look like a halo behind the mask. Varied coloured sarees of the village deity are hung down from the halo backwards. About ten to twelve varied coloured sarees are hung down from the sides of the shoulders up to the feet of the person carrying the “SOMA”. The man carrying this mask inserts his head into the mask and matches his view through the nostrils of the mask and then dances.

The dancers are invariably from families that have been traditionally dancing with these masks. These families initiate the children of their families through sacred ceremonies. Generally the members of the families of the priest of the village Goddess carried and danced these masks.

The dancer undergoes an austere life adhering to orthodox principles during the time of performing the dance and adorns himself with either a coloured dhoti or a saree of the village Goddess, (signifying that he is one with the Goddess) without the pallu of the saree over the shoulders. He adorns himself with anklets on the feet, silver armlets on the arms. Besides these, he adorns the Thali with the Gods embossed on it after which he wears the Soma Mask. The areca florescence, the hibiscus and the red kanagle’ flowers are adorned on the mask. The sight of these is incredible. The dancer then holds long silvern canes in his hands and is now ready to dance. Soma is made to dance to a huge crowd of people as a prelude to the Ganga pooja or before the sacrifice is offered to the Goddess. The two
Somas dance alike to the rhythm of the dance and the song with gait, grace, swaying and turning around. The text of the song varies in places where the Dootharaya is considered as a romantic one.

The dance is performed by three Somas in a particularly special presentation in the Jaggur village of the Tiptur taluk. Here these are identified as Bhootaraya, Kencharaya and Sayuva Soma. The colour of the mask is also indicative of the nature of the deity. A benevolent deity is represented by a red mask while a yellow or black mask suggests the opposite. There are many types of somas or masks which differ from region to region. The mask of Bhootaraya is red in colour, with a huge curved moustache, carnivorous teeth, with small and intricate designs on the cheeks. Kencharaya’s mask is designed in yellow colour, and is made out of the white Bhootale’ wood. The mask of the Sayuva Soma is carved out of the Rakta Bhootale’ wood. This Soma is not of the jubilant looking type of masks. The moustache is made of golden colour and the mask is, like the other two, designed with the Naama on the forehead and the carnivorous teeth but is generally painted black in colour.

The performance in this region is held for three consecutive days. On the concluding day, Sayuva Soma returns to the temple premises and faints on one the three “Mandalas” that is previously drawn by the members of the Lingayat community symbolizing the death of the Soma. The Soma is then revived to life by the people of the Fisherman community, who are believed to be the sons of the Ganges, and are gifted with the purificatory prasada.

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H. C. Boralingaiah, Karnataka Janapada Kalegala Kosha; Director of Prasaranga; Kannada University, Hampi, 1996; p.
The song and accompanying music form a prominent part of Somana kunita. The Are’, Donu, Tamate, are the group of instruments that are played for the village Goddess, form part of the musical instruments that provide accompaniment to the dance. Also there is a Padagara who conducts the dance of the Soma.

At times when the Goddess does not accept the blood ridden sacrifice, it is offered to Soma and this is accepted by him. He dances to a state of ecstasy, as if possessed by the spirit of the Goddess. **Mask rituals, often accompanied by powerful percussive music and solemn singing, lead to states of collective hysteria.**16 Soma then joins the Goddess into the cella.

Though this dance is prevalent in three to four districts it is still performed, confining to the strict religious rites and rituals that were once followed. In the event of an invite from other places where processions require the Somanakunita, they seek permission from the Goddess and leave only after procuring the same. To sum it up, **Somanakunita holds a prominent place amongst the folk forms of dance which are culturally, traditionally ritualistic in approach.**

**Chowdammana kunitha :**

This is a ritual based dance performed in honour of the Goddess. It is performed as part of the Annual village fair or once every two years. It is observed in the regions of North Karnataka, chiefly in the district of Gulbarga. It is danced by the men belonging to the communities of the Lingayat, Kurubas, the Potters the Weavers and the Paanchalas. The fair is

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generally scheduled to be held a fortnight or a week preceding the celebration of the Shivaratri festival. However, it is also celebrated anytime between the months of March and May. The dance is presented with association of the people of the lower sections of the society in the village. The mask of the Devi is made ready and is adorned by the man belonging to the traditional family which dances at the fair every year districts of Karnataka. The Goddess is believed to visit the streets with great fervour and grandeur. The Mask is huge in its dimensions, due to which the performer is stuffed with a turban to accommodate the same properly. The mask is then fastened with the nails that are present on the back of the mask. A long silk cloth is hung on the rear of the Mask to conceal the back. An indigenously made skirt is worn by the performer which is extremely easy to change. The ritual begins with the obeissance to the deity at the specific points in the village that are marked for conducting these ceremonies. There are two factions amongst the devotees who follow the tradition of a fight between them. They represent the Dodda and Chikka devi. This is followed by the dance of the masked bearers of the Devi which are by now at two separate ends of the same street where it is performed. By sunset the procession and the performance come to an end after which there is the prophecy being spelled by one of the possessed devotees. This marks the end of both ritual and the dance associated with it.

**Pooja kunitha :**

This dance is popular in Mandya, Kolar, Tumkur and Mysore of the village at the time of the village carnival in the form of ‘pooja.’ The performer carries the mask of the Goddess, Shakti, that is fitted into the centre of a bamboo frame. The frame measures about five feet in height and
four feet in width. It has a number of silk sarees hung down the frame which have been gifted as votaries to the Goddess by the devotees. On the topmost part of this frame are placed either seven or nine pitchers as part of the décor. The Goddess is decked with the respective ornaments and a great number of flower garlands, such that the frame housing the mask of the Goddess looks very fascinating. This is balanced on the head by the performer by means of a special pitcher, the ‘Gindi’, which serves as a transition between the frame and the head of the performer. The dance is performed on the occasion of the village fair or as and when there is a vow to be fulfilled, in front of the temple of the village deity. It is danced to the accompaniment of the percussion instruments, tamate, nagri, dolu, with the execution of three, four, five, six, eight or fourteen steps as the traditional dancing has been designed. The performer exhibits various acrobatic feats as part of his performance all along balancing the goddess placed in the frame overhead. There are instances when these performers are invited to neighbouring villages to dance with a few more similar counterparts making it a wonderful and awe inspiring sight to the onlookers.

**Keelukudure :**

The Keelukudure is performed in the various districts of Karnataka and is referred as Poi kudure in Kodagu district. It is assumed that the prince used this horse to kidnap the princess or to meet her in secrecy or to meet the princess captive in the seventh storey of the palace. It is made of pieces of bamboo to fit the stomach and back of the performer to look like a horse. The head and neck of the horse is made by the painters or the village artisans. Paper machie is used in making the head of the horse. This is uniformly joined to the body of the horse and the tongue is made in such a
way that it moves up and down when the dancers dance to and fro. Wooden slits are made such that they are suitable to be worn by the performer measuring increasing the height of the performer by two feet. These and the body of the horse are then covered by a colourful gown. The performers are usually both men and women who adore themselves with various ornaments similar to those of the royalty. In some places, peacock feathers are added to these horses. This is performed during joyous occasions, weddings, processions, festivals and the like to the accompaniment of the nadaswara, dolu, tamate and the karadimajjalu.

Andhra Pradesh has a rich tradition of folk entertainers, street singers, dancers and acrobats. The Keelu guralu is similar to the dummy-horse show Keelu Kudure. It is prolific in the district of Guntur. The dummy horse ‘Mask’ in this case is made out of cattle-dung hay and husk. The masks are life sized. It is popularly performed as part of the processions of a wedding and during village fairs.

Poikkal Kuthirai attam or the Puravi Attam:

The Poikkal Kuthirai attam or the Puravi Attam is its counterpart in the state of Tamil Nadu being the most popular amongst them. Horse riding was considered as an essential and exclusive sport and qualification of the privileged in India, till about the twelfth century. The horses were of great importance since they were the means for drawing chariots, hunting, waging wars and for pleasure rides. In the mythological concept one finds that they were sacrificed during the Ashwamedha Yagas. There is also a mention that
they were given away as gifts of thanksgiving to the sapta matrukas ans the Kannigais for protecting the people from evil spirits. Horses in clay also formed part of votive offerings to the guardian deities of the villages in fulfillment of their vows. This guardian deity was regarded as an exceptional deity who rode the village at nights for which he was offered these horses in clay. Also it was thought of that the God was a bridge between the eternal and the empirical worlds. **The Dummy horse shows might have been an offshoot of this.**
“There is a reference to this dance in the ancient text Shilappadikaram as Poykaal attam or Marakkal Attam.”  

The dancers are a man and woman generally playing the parts of a king and a queen, a husband and a wife or a knight and his beloved, according to the theme.  

**Kacchi Ghori:**

This is a spectacular dance of Rajasthan that is similar to the dummy horse dance prevalent in the states of the South as mentioned above. The performers dance in four or five pairs enacting stories using very interesting verbal dialogues or singing the valourous glories of the kings and heroes simultaneously as they dance, at wedding ceremonies and ceremonial festivals.

The fisherfolk of Orissa, also perform this dance and it is identified in this region as the Chaiti Ghori. It is an interesting fact to note that although these regions are spaced a great number of kilometers apart geographically, the costumes and the basic concept and occasion for presenting the dance are very similar. Mock battles also form part of their presentation some times.

**Mayilaattam:**

This dance is performed along with the dummy horse dance during simple festivals and other important occasions. It is a male dominated dance. The dancers wear costumes made of cardboard, paper, bamboo and sticks, which is decorated with colourful glass beads and artificial jewellery. The dance is a personification of Lord Muruga, which is symbolized by the

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17 Lakshman Chettiar, Folklore of Tamil Nadu, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 2002, p.23.
holding of a lance, the weapon of the Lord. The dancer executes movements similar to that of a peacock, the vehicle of the Lord, to the accompaniment of the folk musical refrain and rhythm with ankles bells tied on to his feet.

**The peacock dance:**

In the state of Andhra Pradesh the peacock dance is performed by the Khond tribe. It is danced to the accompanying music that is played on the pirodi a kind of flute. The performers adorn the ankle bells to keep the rhythm of the dance. The dance is performed as part of wedding ritual. It also marks the celebration of the festivities that are observed in the month of April. The dancers move to and fro and execute circles by stamping and squatting. The dancers wear white dhothi, turbans, anklets and fasten peacock feathers in bunches, with rags of cloth on their backs to look like peacock tails. Peacock feathers called Melka Muthanga are tied on the rear side over the hips. They look like dozens of peacocks dancing in a circle. The dancers wave their hands with kerchiefs in their right hands, thus imitating the gestures of the bridegroom while going to the bride’s house. The dance is commenced only after paying obeissance to the Sun god and Mother Earth. The dance begins in a circle with the forward bending of the fore part of the body. The dancers imitate the cries of the peacock by tapping on their mouth with their right hands.

**Pagadi Vesham:**

This is also a male dominated dance form. The dancers personify animals such as the bulls, tigers, bears and monkeys and dance to the

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19 Kapila Vatsyayana, Traditions of Indian Folk Dance, India Book Company, 1976; p.228.
accompaniment of popular folk tunes. Amongst these, the most popular is the Puli Vesham. The dancer paints his whole body with stripes to resemble a tiger, besides fixing carnivorous teeth in the mouth and long tail on his back. The dancer executes wild jumps, pounces, crawls, moves in strides, thus imitating the moves of a tiger to personify the animal and create fear in the minds of the people as a real tiger would do. The dancer also wears a tiger mask.

In the state of Karnataka, it is identified as **Huli Vesha** and forms an important part of the procession of the village Goddess in certain districts even to this day.

In the state of Andhra Pradesh it is performed as Puli Vesham and is equally popular. It is performed a single male artist as part of the Dasara and Moharram festivities. The dance is similar to that as described in Tamil Nadu, but has the lifting of the heavy artificial tail tied to his back by yet another person. Besides this, the dancer also depicts the devouring nature and the strength of a tiger by means of lifting a brass pot full of water with his teeth. It is danced to the rhythm of the mridangam or a dappu, a percussion instrument that keeps the rhythm.

Traditional theatre has evolved a great variety in its representation of the various Puranic characters and the characters chosen from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana to give the themes a non realistic approach and stylization of these to a very great extent. One of the most significant of these is the treatment of the face with elaborate make-up in different colours and designs besides the use of the elaborate masks. As mentioned earlier in most of these traditional theatres the headgear forms an integral part of the
mask, and has been designed variedly, in its form, using different colours and material. The materials used vary from materials such as clay, wood, bark, cork, pith, hide, tapestry, bamboo, to papier machie. They also vary in sizes. They are small sized as seen in the Seraikella Chhau and very huge as seen in the traditional theatres of the Yakshagana of Karnataka, Krishnattam of Kerala, the Sahi Jatra of Orissa. Most of them are a single piece while e few others are made up of the different pieces joined together. The shapes are well defined for particular characters, as much as their colour. In fact, the interpretation and the colour scheme followed is so systematic in some of the traditional theatres that one can identify the nature of the character that is being portrayed on stage just by the glimpse of the headgear. Also prevalent is the practise of using colours to paint the face in a particular shade with an evident symbolism which, at the very offset, reveals if the character portrayed is one of the God, demon, human being, animal or otherwise. This symbolism of colour is practised even to this day in the presentation of the traditional dance-dramas of Kathakali in Kerala. There is the execution of figures on the floor as part of ritualistic dances as discussed in the chapter describing the dances of Kerala wherein a particular colour is essentially used to appease the deity since every deity has his favourite colour. This is also termed as Kolam. Kolam literally means a figure or a decoration. In the Tirayattam, the actor represents the deity and the face of the deity is painted with a coloured, mask like make-up or is adorned with a beautiful mask itself which is made of light wood to facilitate the actor’s movements. The face is hence altered to look fearful, by either accentuating or distorting

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20 Jiwan Pani, World Of Other Faces Indian Masks, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, August 1986, P.17.
the features of the face of the performer. This enables the performer to highlight the qualities of the character that is being portrayed. “The most striking feature is the elaborate and varied make-up; the huge, tastefully designed crowns (these are in some cases 20 feet tall), the brightly painted faces and the unusual costumes make the performances quite spectacular.”

Similar is the treatment of the performers in the Bhoota Kola that is performed in the south canara districts of Karnataka.

Bengal has a unique tradition of dances that are very colourful and festive. The dances have evolved into the devotional kind although they belonged to the agricultural background initially.

The Gambhira, an obeissance to Lord Shiva is a typical example of the dances associated with the ritualistic types. It can be considered as a traditional folk theatre due to the presence of the comical dialogues, elements of music and dance in its presentation. The celebration of the Gambhira, is identified as the Gajan or the Charak and is held during the end of the Chaitra month; between the months of March and April. The most significant aspect of the dance is the masks, which are employed in the execution of this satire, which is of a traditional origin. The masks are donned by either a single male performer or sometimes by a group of men, who, as in the usual practise world over, gets possessed by the mask and dances to a state of ecstasy and answers queries of the gathered devotees, besides the prohapesies he makes. The play is generally chosen from the Puranas, while contemporary and social issues also form a part of the

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21 An article, Therayattam: A Kerala Festival, published by the weekly magazine in the 1960’s.
presentation on a few occasions. The characters of the various deities in the story are represented with the respective masks. Devi is depicted in her varied incarnations, in addition to this, is the role of Lord Shiva, Hanuman, Rama, Lakshmana, Narasingha/Narasimha, Karthika and the various demons that use masks in their depiction. The dance is performed to the rhythm of the Dhak, a percussion instrument and the kansi, the gong. On the 2nd and the 3rd day of the Gambhira festival, the Mukha nautch or the masked dance is preformed. On the fourth day the dance is dedicated to Kali who is the fierce Goddess of the Cemetery, consequently, the mask is fierce and gruesome in its features. The dimensions are exceptionally huge. The chief performer, dancing the Kali, is accompanied by Tantriks, since the Goddess is thought of as a Tantric Goddess. In the initial stages the performers adorned themselves with masks of wood. These were heavy and carved out of Neem or the Bel wood. The features of the face, on the mask are generally painted with vivid colours and exaggerated, to facilitate a clear view of the face, to the onlookers and also with the purpose of creating an expression of fear and reverence, as noticed in the majority of such performances that are preformed in the various regions of India. Holes are provided in place of the eyes of the mask, to help the performer’s to view better. In the event of personifying the Kali, the tongue is carved and added as a separate one. The headgear is most often, of an elaborate kind and is decorated very intricately so much so that it stands out as one of the most fascinating features of the Mask. Masks of other materials are also available but are lacking in their beauty and elegance as compared to the traditional wooden masks.
Ritualistic mask dances are performed by the Lamas in the monasteries in the regions of Ladakh, Kinnaur and Dharamsala. These are very similar to those that are performed in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The themes are the same since their stories are invariably chosen from the life of the Buddha and the moral conveyed is the victory of the good over the evil. There is an elaborate use of the masks in this context where in the masks are carved out of wood and two holes to match the vision of the performer are sometimes made to benefit the performer. These masks are generally painted in bright colours and are worn by the Lamas themselves or by young boys or men.

It is interesting to note that the mythical characters as perceived in the Puranic literature and the epics are interpreted visually in a variety of forms in a variety of theatrical forms. The characters of Narasimha, Hanuman, Ravana and Lord Ganesha are seen to be executed as masks in distinctive styles differing in the different theatre traditions.

The foremost of all the traditional theatres in Karnataka, the Yakshagana, the features of which have been mentioned in the preceding chapters also follows a great, systematic approach to the facial, mask like make-up. Some of the observations have been briefed hereunder:

The themes chosen in a presentation of the traditional performance of **Yakshagana**, are generally categorised as Kalaga, wherein there is a conflict represented between two major characters, Kalyana, in which the hero and the heroine are united in a wedlock to mark the end of the presentation and Parinaya, that in which there is the emphasis on the courtship of the protagonists. But more often the plays are executed invariably with fight
scenes which heighten the play to a climax thus accentuating the Veera and the Raudra sentiments.

The play is generally staged in the open fields with no backdrop or screen as available in the proscenium theatres of today. The performing area is the non illusory type, since the audience is seated on all the three sides of the performing area. The only illumination is provided by two dimly lit oil lamps emitting yellow lights. The characters of the play hence have certain important features that are essential for an effective execution of the play, with the above mentioned facilities utilised for the presentation. They can therefore be categorised as:

1) Chivalrous or the gallant characters like those of the Pandavas and the Kauravas, the other Kings and heroes.

2) Romantic characters such as the Gandharvas, Kiratas who are better known for their foolhardiness and vanity.

3) The roles of the demons and demoness like Ravana, Shurpanaka.

4) The terrifying characters amongst the divine as seen in the forms of Lord Narasimha or Chandi

5) Commoners, those that are portrayed as the Rishis, Brahmins, clowns and the like.

6) The roles that represent the Women from Mythology.

The costumes have been defined with a great deal of understanding and thought since the artists had to create an illusion only through their costume and Make-up in the absence of an illusionary performing area.
where the artist and the performer would be spaced and the effect of lighting and stage décor would contribute to the concept of illusion or fantasy that would be required to make the presentation a spectacular one. “Their original designer was a true genius.”

The characters of the demons and the types have rich costumes and ornaments, crowns different from those of the royal personages, and an entirely different type of facial make-up.

“Similarly different masks (pratishira) are to be used for gods and men, according to their habitation, birth and age.” However the costumes for all gallant characters, romantic, demonic male characters would be the same checkered cloth of black, red and orange for their dhothis, matched

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22 K.S. Karanth, Natya Theate Arts Journal, Bhartiya Natya Sangh, Publications Division of the Indian Cooperative Union, New Delhi, Costume and Make-up in Yakshagana, Dance-drama; p. 5,6,49.
with either a green or red coloured cotton angharakha. Over this is worn the chest plate or the armour like glittering gold ornament, the Bhuja-kirthis or the ornaments for the shoulders, bangles or the armlets and the dangling girdles. The plain costumes set off the golden ornaments the make-up for these is of a simple, straight one while that of the raudra characters is designed to match the sentiment but is definitely different from those of the satwika, rajasika and the tamasika characters. It is an interesting aspect to note that the rear of the performer is concealed by the hair that is let loose or by the elaborate use of the veil for the performing area gives a scope to the viewer to observe the performer from both the front and the back from a very close distance.

The characters of the fourth category as mentioned above are clad in ordinary costumes but the facial make-up and crowns with a special touch to them helps to make over or transform them into the awe striking characters that they are to portray. The commoners are clad in loose cotton garments with no decorations on them. The female roles have no special costumes since they follow the contemporary attire if women. The costume and Make-up thus substantiate to the illusionary presentation of the play inspite of the non illusionary performing area that has been traditionally utilised for the purpose.

Demons and dwarfs wear masks and the horns of rams, buffalo and deer; and Nagas and Naginis (serpent gods and goddesses) have cobra hoods swaying on their heads.24 “The Naga women are to wear like the goddesses

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the ornaments abounding in pearls and jewels, but they are also to have a hood [in addition to these].”

Krishnattam is a ritualistic dance-drama performed in the Krishna temple at Guruvayur, Kerala. It has a great affinity to Kathakali of which it is believed

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The mask of Murasura as used in Krishnattam.

25 Manmohan Ghosh, Natya Shastra, Chowkhamba Sanskrit series office ch 23, Costumes and Make up, P.420.
The mask of Jambhuvan as seen in the use of Krishnattam presentation.
to be the precurser. Krishnattam, is a votive offering to Lord Krishna, based on the life of the Lord executed as eight plays. The accompanying songs are in Sanskrit and the text of the play has a great semblance to the Geeta Govinda of poet Jayadeva. The lines that are sung are delineated through dancing movements and gestures of the hands. The Make up of the female characters is much lighter to that of the male ones. Masks are adorned by the characters like Ghantakarna, Dharmaraja, Putana, and so on. These masks are generally inclusive of the headgears, carved out of a single block of wood and are generally painted in the bright bold lines and curves. The colours of these are red, green, black or white.

Koodiattam is a traditional temple theatre of Kerala, which has a tradition that is older than ten centuries. Traditionally the presentation is the prerogative of two communities, the Chakiars and the Nambiars. The treatment of the highly stylized characters of Koodiattam, is colourful and heavy.

The art of Kathakali, the traditional theatre of Kerala owes its origins of the facial mask like make-up to the ritual dance form Teyyam. It has amalgamated the use of make-up materials, mixing of colours, costume designing, headgear and the ornaments from this ritual dance. It is fascinating to note the fact that the use of the varying colours in the Make-up, the silvern and leather jewellery and foremost of all the most vigorous terrifying energetic movements have all been incorporated into this

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26 Jiwan Pani, World Of Other Faces Indian Masks, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, August 1986, P.
traditional theatre from the Teyyam. The need to represent the characters that are portrayed by the Kathakali artist in a form that is bigger than life

Mask like make up as used in the traditional theatre of Koodiattam.
size has given scope to the art to be colourful and symbolic. The style is highly evolved in both its gestural representations and in its costume and make-up thus being abstract and away from the mundane everyday life which again lends the art form an illusionary effect. The traditional presentations were performed in open fields or in the vicinity of temples as in the case of the Yakshagana. The Aharya is so well designed that it accentuates the moves of the performer be it the movements of the limbs or those of the hands or the face. “From a character’s first entrance the audience knows the general character type and what sort of behaviour they can expect from the character.”27 The colours used are associated with the moods and the sentiments that are to be represented. The colour scheme used is described here; green represents shringara or love, Raudra by red, the wonderful or the astonishing one by yellow, thus transforming a whole actor into a demon or god.

**Paccha:**

Paccha or green make-up is used for noble and pious characters. The mask like make up of the characters representing Nala, Indra, Rukumangada and the Pandavas has generally a yellow mark on the forehead, elongated eyes and eyebrows with black colour, an extended white border on the face which covers either side of the cheek ending up in the chin, the lips are in red while the rest of the whole face is coloured green predominantly. The headgear for all these characters is the kireedam, which is halo like and round in shape.

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The Mudi or the conical shaped headgear with peacock feathers and the paccha make-up are adorned by the characters that represent either Lord Rama or Krishna. Their sons are also represented in the above manner. However, the costume is in golden yellow for the skirt while it is a dark blue jacket that is used for these characters. There is the use of the more elaborate low, conical crown with a small disc to represent the heroes that have been mentioned so far. Balarama, Lord Shiva, Lord Ayyappa and the Sun God are represented by using lighter shade of pink and yellow in place of the green colour while the rest of the costume and facial details remain the same. This type of Make – up is termed as the Pazhupu or pinkish yellow make-up.

**Kathi :**

The knife or the Kathi type of make up is suitably used for the valourous, aggressive and romantic, and the evil characters. The make up is identified by the use of the knife like red patches on either cheeks bordered with white. White knobs are fixed on the tip of the nose and the middle of the forehead. The characters of Ravana, Keechaka, Duryodhana have a curved and rather stylish Kathi and hence are categorised as the Kurum Kathi, while the roles of Ghatottkacha, Kumbhakarana, are adorned with a long and straight Kathi, the Nedum Kathi.

**Tadi :**

The beard is also symbolic and major part of the character to be depicted for the red beard or the Chuvanna tadi, is used on the evil and crude characters with their faces painted with both red and black coloured streaks. The forehead, eyes and the eyebrows are painted black, there is the use of white paper that has contoured ends fixed on either side of the nose,
on the cheeks, besides, the application of the black and red coloured stripes of 4 to 5 inches length in about two lines. The lips are also coloured black. These characters wear the headgears similar to those of the noble characters in their shape but vary in their dimensions. They are larger in proportion since they represent the evil character roles. However the demons and the villains sport specially designed huge headgears which when worn along with the red fur coats reveal a rather fierce looking actor. Instances of this type can be seen in the roles portrayed as the demon Baka, Dushasana and Kalakeya. The monkey kings Vali and Sugreeva are also embellished in the above makeup with slight variations. There is the provision of the use of protruding canines to make the character more ferocious in appearance.

When the entire face is painted in black with a few red streaks on the cheeks and the forehead the makeup is categorised as the Karutha Tadi or the black beard make up. The chutty or the white raised outlines demarcate the red streaks and accentuate the colour. The lips are coloured red and outlined by yellow and green lines, and the tip of the nose is fixed with a white flower like blob. There is the use of the black beard which adds to the widening of the face. A cylindrical headgear is used which is curved inwards and is decorated with the feathers of the peacock and silvern colour. The hunters, primitive tribes and the forest inhabitants are assigned these features in addition to the black costume.

The face is painted red with streaks of black, highlighted by the white lines of the chhuti, besides attaching a white beard, a white fur coat, with a broad, domed hat - like headgear bestowing a look of serenity, thus defining the
**Vella Tadi**

This is the group of characters primarily meant to indicate the characters like Hanuman and Nandikeshwara. The characters wear the canine teeth protruding out of the mouth to add to their fearful appearance. These canines are movable, into and out of the mouth as in the Chuvanna tadi roles.

**Kari :**

The face is painted in black as suggested by the name given to this category. The forehead is painted with alternating horizontal lines of yellow and red, the cheeks are coloured red with a white border and the nose and chin are accentuated with red. The grotesque look of the characters like Shoorpanaka, Nakratundi and Simhika are further blown by the addition of the large protruding breasts huge ear rings and the headgear and costume of the Karutha characters. These also sport the protruding canines that can be moved easily in and out to make the appearance of the character more ferocious.

**Minukku :**

The realized souls and the mundane class of people in society besides the female characters other than the demonesses generally belong to this category. Therefore the characters that are portrayed in this category include the rishis, saints, Brahmins, messengers, wrestlers, charioteers, servants and the kike. The colour of the make up used is a very light tone of pinkish-yellow, with the highlighting of the eyes and the eyebrows in black and the lips in red. Minukku means polished, which is very evident in the make up
of these characters. The costumes vary and are chosen to suit the characters aptly. They decorate themselves with the ornaments as required by the role assigned. However the headgear of the rishis is such that it resembles matted hair. They also adorn themselves with a long beard. The wrestlers, charioteers and messengers wear a turban and a moustache.

**Theppu:**

These characters are painted in various colours since the make up is meant for the representation of animals, birds and a few special characters. The birds are provided with artificial beaks and wings. The colour and type of costume is customized to suit the character to be portrayed. Examples of this variety is seen in the portrayal of Jatayu, in a peacock coloured costume, Garuda in the lighter shade of pink, that of the swan in golden yellow. The ferocious character of Lord Narasimha is specially designed to resemble a lion. The make up of the clown also belongs to this category.

**Masks:**

Besides the use of make up as categorised and described above, there is the use of masks in certain contexts where the transformation is a very quick one. In instances where the character has to undergo a partial transformation as seen in the making of a goat out of a king, in the course of the story, a mask is used to do the needful in the presence of the spectators and in the process of the acting in the play. There is a symbolic change in the transformation in such a situation.
The ritualistic dances of this North-Eastern region have a certain affinity with those of South-India, where some dancing has a magical significance and a connection with ancient Tantric cults.28

The tribes in these regions use a great number of properties as they dance and are basically a civilization that is heroic by nature. One of the outstanding examples of the masked dances of the north eastern regions of India is the Topo Tsen Dance, in which the dancers wear loose clothes and skulls form part of their ornaments on the head. The masks are designed to represent the spirits of the other world in rather a grotesque fashion, carved out of wood, with a mysterious smile on the face of the mask. The dancers twirl and hop to the accompaniment of very slow and low toned music that is blown by the use of long slim horns and percussion instruments. Thoko Gari Cham is one of the cham dances of Arunachal Pradesh which is associated with the skeleton as its important property. The war dances of this region performed by the tribes like the Miris, Tagnis, and the Daflas can be categorised as part of the masked dances for there is the elaborate use of the huge and fascinating headgears while dancing the motifs of war brandishing the swords and spears as part of the combat.

Ritualistic mask dances are performed by the Lamas in the monasteries in the regions of Ladakh, Kinnaur and Dharamsala. These are very similar to those that are performed in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The themes are the same since their stories are invariably chosen from the life of the Buddha and the moral conveyed is the victory of the good over the evil. There is an elaborate use of the masks in this context where in the

masks are carved out of wood and two holes to match the vision of the performer are sometimes made to benefit the performer. These masks are generally painted in bright colours and are worn by the Lamas themselves or by young boys or men. The tribes that are closely associated with the religion of Buddhism have fascinating masked dances.\textsuperscript{29}

**Thutotdam**:

The Torgyap festival in the states of Arunachal Pradesh and the neighbouring regions is celebrated by the use of masks representing skulls and costumes designed as skeletons. The dance is believed to ward off the evil spirits, to ensure prosperity, a good harvest and a favourable climate throughout the year.

Cham is one of the important ritualistic dances of the people of Sikkim, which involves the prolific use of huge masks and the dancing of those who embellish themselves with these to ward off the evil spirits on the occasions of the New Year of the Tibetians, Sikkim folk and yet a few other joyous festivals.\textsuperscript{30}

The dance of the Monpas is called the Arpos dance. This is danced by a group of about twenty-five men who wear helmets, carry swords and shields and demonstrate the incident describing the conquering of the enemies by their ancestors. This dance culminates with the performance of

\textsuperscript{29} Jiwan Pani, *World Of Other Faces Indian Masks*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, August 1986, P.11.

the Gallong Chham wherein the performers sport spectacular headdresses and gorgeous costumes.

**Cham dance from Sikkim.**

The foremost of the masked dances is the Yak dance that is performed by the Sherdukpen. Two men form the dummy animal, covered by the black cloth to make the body. The head of this dummy animal is made of wood to resemble that of the animal in truth. On the back of the animal is seated the idol of the goddess. Besides this, there are three masked men of legendary importance dancing around the Yak.
In the neighbouring states of Orissa, Bihar and West Bengal, an interesting dance theatre is prevalent and is known as the Chhau. The Chhau is part of the ritual and religious celebrations of the people of the state of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.\(^{31}\) The dance developed under different rulers. Hence the variations are identified as the Seraikella Chhau, from Bihar, the Mayurbhanj Chhau from Orissa and the Purulia Chhau from West Bengal. Chaitra Sankranthi is the day on which the Chaitra Parva is held. The rituals are conducted thirteen days in advance to the final day. “The dance begins with Rangabaja, essentially a musical invocation.”\(^{32}\) All the three forms are distinctive in their forms. Shiva and Shakti are the presiding deities for the religious rituals that are conducted during the Chaitra Parva that corresponds to the month of April. The dance is performed to the accompaniment of dance syllables and the refrain that is played along with the rhythm that is maintained by both the drummer and the dancer. The Seraikella and the Purulia forms use masks while the Mayurbhanj uses none. The dance form is believed to have originated in the military camps and hence is martial in its movements of the feet, in the execution of the various uflies and topkas, wherein one can notice the use of the various charies as mentioned by Bharata in the Natya Shastra.

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32 Durgadas Mukhopadhyay; Lesser Known Forms Of Performing Arts In India; Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd; New Delhi; 1978, ch.20. A.Chowdhury; P.109.
Seraikella Chhau:

The masks used in the Seraikella Chhau can be broadly classified as those that are used to represent the mythological characters, those that represent the animals, birds, nature: that are personified and those that represent either well known historical figures like Rani Jhansi Laxmi Bai or a hunter or a boatman etc. The dancers adorn a serene looking coloured mask in the respective hues to suit the characters that are being portrayed. The basic facial colour of the masks varies from white as used to represent Lord Shiva, light pink used for Parvathi, brown to represent tribal men, such as Ekalavya, blue to signify Lord Krishna black to symbolize the Night. The Seraikella Chhau also has movements chosen and stylized from the gait of the animals, birds, everyday chores and the like. The presentation of Chhau performance incorporates the themes like the Night and the Moon; wherein the moon is personified as a Hero and the night is personified as the Heroine in the sentiment of Shringara. There is an elaborate use of the angika or the various parts of the body to convey all the emotions required. In the ancient presentations the performers used either masks of wood or those of clay and earthenware. However the present day masks are made of papier machie and hence help the performer to wear them and perform with ease. There are instances wherein the masks are adorned with the hair styles that are invariably a part of the character that is portrayed and also when the masks have elaborate and ornate headgears with beautiful ornamentation, in the sentiment of Shringara. There is an elaborate use of the Angika or the various parts of the body to convey all the required emotions. Initially the performers used either masks of wood or those made of clay and earthenware.
However the present day masks are made of papier machie and hence help the performer to wear them and perform with ease. There are instances wherein the masks are adorned with the hair styles that are invariably a part of the character that is portrayed and also when the masks have elaborate and ornate headgears with beautiful ornamentation.
Purulia Chhau:

The masks of the Purulia Chhau are stylized representations of the characters to be enacted. The most prominent feature of this form is that all the actors adorn masks. All the masks are made of papier machie and are painted in vivid colours. These again are symbolic of the characters as seen in the use of colours in the case of the Yakshagana and Kathakali forms of traditional theatre. The masks that are adorned by the heroes or the heroines are generally in white colour with blue and green colours painted along the jaw lines and on the forehead. The characters of Lord Rama and that of Arjuna are pastel green in colour while that of Lord Krishna is blue.
Elaborate headgears accompany these masks of the heroic characters and these are richly decorated with indigenous materials. The use of these materials in the headdresses helps to emphasise the movements of the actor.

Masks of the various deities are made to represent the Gods in their basic typical form. This can be observed in the mask of Lord Shiva, where in the mask is surmounted with the crown of a serpent enclosing the figure representing the face of Ganga. The mask of Lord Ganesha is seen to represent the face of the Elephant. Goddess Durga is painted typically to represent the Mother Goddess of Bengal while Goddess Kali has a fierce looking appearance and is painted in black with features like bloodshot protruding eyes, open mouth with blood droplets dripping from the mouth, disheveled hair and the like. However the lions which are the vehicle of Durga, are realistically represented. The masks of the demon characters are the most meticulously made. They are painted either in green or red. The facial features are distorted and fierce looking, with wide and dilated nostrils, wrinkled skin on the forehead, open mouthed, carnivorous teeth jetting out of the upper jaw, thick black moustaches and beards, with disheveled hair protruding from the base of the mask too.

**Sahi Jatra:**

The celebrations of the Ramanavami, in Puri, Orissa is held in the form of a procession that is generally named as the Sahi Jatra. “Sahi Yatra, a unique form of folk theatre from Orissa incorporates singing, dancing gesturing to the accompaniment of dramatic drumming and the enactment of sequences that are very much part of their own lives.”

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33 Durgadas Mukhopadhyay; Lesser Known Forms Of Performing Arts In India; Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd; New Delhi; 1978, ch. 21, P.113.
huge masks with head decorations and gorgeous costumes go in a procession on the street to the accompaniment of loud drumming.”  With a few exceptions the masks used in this procession are those that are of the various characters from the Ramayana. Ravana is depicted to have a single head instead of the actual ten heads as the myth goes. The masks are made so as to resemble the icons seen on the decorative and ornamented walls, of the regional temples. In the formative years the masks were carved out of a single block of wood and painted which could have caused a great inconvenience to the wearer owing to its weight, which was overcome over the years by the use of lighter materials like papier machie. The headgears are ornate, and are made of the materials like sponge, wood and other local materials. The actors donning these masks mime the gait and movement of the characters as they walk.

In the Northern parts of the country, especially in the celebrations that are observed in the cities of Varanasi, Mathura, Ayodhya and Chitrakoota are seen the presentations of the Ramacharita Manas as part of the Ramanavami celebrations either in the form of the Pageants or as a spectacular tableaux. There is absolutely no enacting of the characters, but a presentation of the situation from the Ramayana with the aid of the Masks and the other stage properties that are essential to recreate the same. “Ramaleela has great richness and variety in costume, headgear and jewellery.”

**Mask of Sahi Jatra**

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34 Jiwan Pani, World Of Other Faces Indian Masks, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, August 1986, P.22.
35 Jiwan Pani, World Of Other Faces Indian Masks, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, August 1986, P.28
Therukoothu:
The most ancient theatre of Tamil Nadu, has a highly stylized make up and is perhaps one of the most vigourous theatrical forms too. The actors adorn huge shoulder ornaments, the bhuja keerthis, which are very ornate and give a beautiful, majestic appearance to the actor besides the richly decorated headgears and colourful make up that emphasise the illusionary effect of the actor personifying the various characters.
The operatic form, a common source to the dance forms prevalent in the regions of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh is observed as a form of worship as mentioned in the earlier chapters. Some of the special characters execute their roles by adorning masks. “The characters do not wear heavy make up, but a few such as Narasimha, Brahma, some demon characters and Ganesha who is worshipped in the beginning of the play, wear masks.”

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Teyyam:

The word Teyyam is believed to be the tarnished version of the word ‘Daivam’, meaning God. Hence the Teyyam is the dance of the god. These are at least 300 forms in their initiation. However the present day extant ones are about a hundred fifty in number of which those that are performed in honour of the noble, legendary men and women irrespective of the community they belonged to, (for examples of people representing the Muslim faith are also seen to be represented in this category), form one of the major categories and the one that represent the Hindu gods and goddesses is yet another category. The Teyyam enacts the songs of the Tottam, and gets possessed. There are the supporting actors as required by the legend who take part in enacting the presentation. “Of all the characters appearing in a Teyyattam, the make-up and costume of the Teyyam are most striking and fantastic”.

The characters that support, adorn themselves with the make up that is akin to the nature of their being. The Teyyam is adorned with the varying head dress and costume with no two similar ones to be found till date. They are identified as the Muti and the Kereetam. The muti is generally made out of a frame that is covered with coloured cloth which is

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37 Ibid;47.
built using split lengths of bamboo and wooden planks. This is further decorated with flowers and leaves of the coconut palm. Some include the feathers of the peacock in their decoration. The height of these is sometimes towering to the extent that they measure fifty to sixty feet vertically above the performer making it necessary for him to take the assistance of others in adorning the same as it creates an imbalance when placed on the head. These incorporate the use of the arecanut tree along with that of the bamboo
Colours as used in the Make up of Teyyam

splints. These huge Mutis are characteristic of the Kshetrapalan and the Bhagavathi Teyyams. Yet, a few other Bhagavathi Teyyams sport a crown of the serpent’s head decorated with flowers in red. The Kereetams are circular in shape and are very similar in their appearance to those that are used by the actors of Kathakali. These are generally seen on the Teyyams that represent Othenan or Bali. The costume of the Teyyam is traditional and thus has the colourful skirt on the waist, which is again made out of the splints of bamboo and covered by either the leaves of the coconut palm or a red coloured cloth. The torso is bare and is hence painted typical to the tradition and the spirit, the animal or the hero it represents unique identification as noticed in the examples of Purunthuval (eagle’s tail), Anchupulli (five dots) and the like. The facial make up is also unique to every Teyyam and is consequently identified by terms such as Prakkezhuthu,
Sankezhuthu, Vattezhuthu, and so on. The female Teyyams are embellished with wooden breasts while those that are male or otherwise are bare-chested.

**Mudiyettu**

The Mudiyettu, yet another presentation that is ritualistic in nature, is abound in special make-up and costume. They are unique in their splendid headgears and have certain traits similar to those of the Teyyam. The details of the rituals and the making of the Mudiyettu have been discussed in the chapter dealing with the folk forms of Kerala.
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Thus the make up and the costume, which is the Aharya helps to recreate the required atmosphere of surprise, fantasy with reality and awe which is the primary requisite of the presentation.

It can therefore be inferred that masks help to create the required illusion in the non illusionist performing area. Masks thus help to bridge between the earthy everyday and the imaginative supernatural forces.

The codification and the conventional approaches of the Aharya, have further contributed to the successful presentation of the characters and the involvement of the audience in the presentation that is being staged serving the purpose of uniting the Jeevatma with the Paramatma, which is the very essence of Indian art in all its manifestations.

Masks as used in the various traditional theatres. Their functions and their ritualistic aspects have been discussed with reference to most of the Indian traditional theatres and are found to serve the same purpose wherever and whenever used.