

YAKSHAGANA

ANCIENT ART

When God decided to create this world, He gave a shape to it. It is the Sculpture of Him. He painted it and it became Fine Arts. Art is the expression of beauty and it is the true uplifter of humanity. So is Yakshagana. It has been developed over centuries. There is a mention of this style in Kannada literature of 10th and 12th centuries.

Yakshagana is song-dance-drama of coastal Karnataka, which evolved centuries back as theatre art of India. It flourished in the coastal districts nurtured by patrons.

Yakshagana art is blended with true panorama of Indian Culture and is eminently adapted to perform plays based on classical legends, enchanting epic stories and mighty mythological themes. Every movement of YAKSHAGANA is human and divine and glamorous and graceful too. From a solo- type, this dance-drama art gradually developed into a regular dramatic form containing a number of characters with distinct roles.

EVOLUTION

Yakshagana is eminently adapted to perform plays based on classical legends, enchanting epic stories and mighty mythological themes. Being a fully matured theatre form, it contains music, improvised dialogue, costume, and dance. Thus the techniques include dancing, singing and also acting and declamation. Every movement of Yakshagana is human and divine and hence glamorous and graceful too.

This theatre, entertaining the villagers throughout the nights during their off-seasons and hence, it is called 'Bayalatta'. It has grown to perfection permitting the fragrance of culture in the paddy fields of Karnataka over the last hundreds of years.

Yakshagana is prevalent in different regions of Karnataka. The troupe is called Mela or Mandali, a traditional repertory. It travels from village to village everyday. Yakshagana depicts the true panorama of Indian Culture. This theatre has grown to perfection pervading the fragrance of culture of Karnataka over the last hundreds of years.

It assumes many titles and forms and in Karnataka it is called 'Bhagavatha Aata' 'Bayala Aata' and so on. Originally this form of theatre used to deal with the tales of Bhagawan Krishna and hence the name 'Bhagavatha Aata'. Later on, it began to depict the tales of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu, it became to be known as 'Dashavathara Aata'.

Yakshagana evolved into theatre form imbibing the salient features of song, dance and drama. It is patronized by the art lovers in general and elite in particular. Yakshagana began to flourish fast in coastal districts of Karnataka.

Among the various styles of Yakshagana prevalent in different regions of Karnataka, the 'Abhinaya' (dance, gestures & action) oriented Yakshagana has the credit of making an impact upon the Marati stage.

The folk art Yakshagana, being traditional, envelops the entire life of the people and has been a great source of true Indian culture. It is essentially blended with the combination of dance, drama and music and it forms into a TOTAL THEATRE.



Traditionally enacted in the open fields in torchlight under star-lit sky with the roar of thuds of nearby sea-waves providing a musical background, Yakshagana is played for six months in a year to regale, instruct and edify the rural masses.

The elements of music, dance, literature, mime, customs and dialogue are blended in such an appropriate manner that it certainly forms a total theatre.

THE TROUPE – 'IDAGUNJI MELA'

Sri Idagunji Mahaganapati Yakshagana Mandali Keremane(R), popularly known as *Idagunji Mela* was founded in the year 1934 at Keremane in North Kenera, Karnataka, India with a view to preserve and foster the Badagu style of Yakshagana by the renowned performer, Late Shri Keremane Shivarama Hegde who was later awarded by the Central and State Academies.

The trust also established a Yakshagana Kalakendra in the year 1986 to train the younger generation. The achievements of the Mandali and its contribution to the Yakshagana Art formed a subject of Doctoral thesis, which was awarded gold medal by the Karnataka University, Dharwad in 1986.

Since its establishment, the troupe has given more than 6,000 stage performances all over India and in countries like England, China, Spain, France, Nepal and Bahrain.

The Keremane Hegdes have made a great name as exponents of BADAGU form of Yakshagana known also as Keremane Mela (Troupe). The troupe commands all respect from the art lovers and enjoy their patronage because of strict adherence to the tradition and experiment in the art and purity in style.

The troupe 'Idagunji Mela' has three weighty ambitions in its activities. Formation of repertory for the tour will strive to provide Education (Shikshana), safeguard (Rakshana) the art from deterioration and adopt meaningful media (Prasarana) i.e., popularising and upholding the true traditional Yakshagana Bayalata.

A new semi-circular stage in the shape of half moon as described by the traditional Yakshagana shlokas has been introduced which provides greater freedom of movements to performer on the stage and the entire audience is able to have a better view of all the artists and their actions in the stage. This change from the conventional rectangular shape of stage received high appreciation from all the concerned. Its impact is great and the credit for its success goes to Sri Keremane Shambhu Hegde, S/o Late Keremane Shivarama Hegde.

PRESENT

The divisions have emerged in various style and form of Yakshagana. Cheap and garrulous productions are made with commercial motto. It has become a mockery in the name of Yakshagana and is blocking the traditional art from growing. The innocent publics are easily lured away by the commercial clowns who do not hesitate to blend pure style with that of any unscientific modes. Melodramatic themes, filmy tunes and non-rhythmic movements of dance forms, although unpardonable, are being deployed to exploit masses.

The pure traditional art suffers and the respect for tradition is slowly disappearing among public who is forced to view the vulgar art more often. Flashy costumes as used in dramas and cinemas, modern-make does of style, cinema tunes, the imitation of classical style of singing; obscene dialogue, stereo-type stories, and bringing of live animals, like elephants and bears in to stage are the negative changes which would destroy the very tradition of Art. Besides, romantic themes, also have been introduced, the gain is an unhealthy trend. The village audiences, who for centuries appreciated and patronised the traditional Yakshagana, have been made to believe that it is stale by exposing them too often to the cheap and vulgar presentation of the art.

To arrest the traditional elements from being fading away the aesthetic perception of the masses has to be kindled by exposing them to the traditionally rich Badagu form of Yakshagana that has maintained its chaste and traditional elegance due to the sustained efforts of the Keremane Hegdes.



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