

The Sacred and the Secular in India's Performing Arts--

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy Centenary Essays

Edited by Prof. V. Subramaniam

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CHAPTER XI

KOOTIYATTAM (A General Survey)

—K. Kunjunni Raja

The Kootiyattam¹ of Kerala is perhaps the only form of the ancient Sanskrit drama that survives in performance to-day. It has been kept alive in the temple theatres of Kerala (which are known as Koothampalams) by members of the Chakyar and Nambyar communities. The Kootiyattam has a continuous tradition extending for more than a thousand years. A close comparative study of the stage practice of this theatre, with the prescriptions given in detail in Bharata's *Natyashastra* and the references to the actual staging of Sanskrit play found in later works like the *Kuttanimita*, reveals that the Kerala tradition of staging Sanskrit plays follows, on the whole, the procedure adopted in other parts of India in ancient times. At the same time, it points to various special features mostly developed in Kerala to suit the taste of the audiences there. A detailed analysis of the descriptive and historical aspects of the Kootiyattam, is, therefore, essential for an understanding of the ancient Sanskrit stage in India.

The history of the Sanskrit stage in Kerala goes back to

at least the tenth century A.D. This is when King Kulasekhara Varman of Mahodayapura, the author of the two dramas *Subhadradhananjaya* and *Tapatisamvarana*, is said to have reformed the Sanskrit stage with the help of a Brahmin scholar, who was popularly known as Tolan, and may probably be identified as the author of the *Vyangya* commentaries on them. King Kulasekhara Varman's innovations included the introduction of the Malayalam language by the Vidushaka to explain the Sanskrit and Prakrit passages on the texts. The Vidushaka often used a macaronic Sanskrit-Malayalam, a mixed language called *Manipravala*. In the case of the Prakrit passages recited by him or by others in his presence, he used to give the Sanskrit *Chaya* (rendering) and then explain its meaning in Malayalam. He also added his own parodies or *Pratishlokas* of some of the verses recited by the hero in his presence. He often inserted *Chaya-shlokas* or parallel passages, referring to his own condition.

Another innovation was the humorous element which consisted of such extraneous matter as the parody on the *Purusharthas*. This formed part of the narration of the early life (*Nirvahana*) of the Vidushaka. The four *Purusharthas*, sanctified by tradition, are replaced by the four aims of existence of a corrupt society. These are described as *Asana* (food), *Vinoda* (enjoyment of sexual pleasures), *Vanchana* (deception) and *Rajaseva* (serving a king). The Vidushaka is the most prominent and the most popular figure in Kootiyattam and Koothu. In course of time he came to overshadow all the other characters in a play.

Didactic and cultural elements were gradually introduced; stories from the epics and Puranas were added—and sometimes even when they were quite irrelevant—so that the stage was used in an interesting manner as a vehicle for adult education and for the moral uplift of the people.

Thus in the *Mantraka* scene of the *Pratijnayaugandharayana* of Bhasa the Vidushaka is made to approach the

mother of King Udayana and to console her by narrating the story of Rama. The Vidushaka expounded Puranic episodes, lacing the didactic element with humour, and making veiled references to contemporary problems. His role in a play developed as an independent temple art called Koothu; it included the exposition of Puranic stories without connecting them in any rigorous manner with a drama. The Koothu came to be performed in the temple theatres by the Chakyar dressed as the Vidushaka. This type of story-telling when it was performed outside the temple precincts by others came to be called *Pathaka*. Several Sanskrit texts were written by scholars like Melpputtur Narayana Bhatta for such expositions of Puranic stories.

The Kootiyattam is a form of art restricted to the temple; it is performed only in the Koothampalams or theatres within the precincts of temples and enacted by members of the Chakyar and Nambyar communities. The role of the hero or other male characters can be played only by a Chakyar. The women of the Chakyar community, who are called *Illottamma*, have nothing to do with the stage. The role of the heroine and other female characters is to be taken by the Nangyar, the women of the Nambyar community. The vocal music is also supplied by Nangyars, who keep the *tala* with the *Kuzhitala* cymbals. The Nambyar plays on the *Mizhavu* drum. He also acts as the *sutradhara* for the introductory *purappad* and narrates in brief (in Malayalam) the story which is to be enacted.

At a time only a single act from a drama is staged. The actual staging of a whole act lasts three to five nights; the introduction of characters (*Nirvahana*) and the preliminaries alone often take up twenty to thirty days. Of the popular scenes, *Mantraka* (Act Three of Bhasa's *Pratijnayaugandharayana*) is the most important and is depicted very elaborately. Shaktibhadra's *Ascharyachudamani*; *Subhadradhananjaya* and *Tapatisamvarana*, the two plays of Kulashekhara Varman; *Mattavilasa prahasana* by the Pallava King

Mahendravikrama and some more plays ascribed to Bhasa like *Abhisheka*, *Pratima* and *Svapnavasavadatta* and Harsha's *Nagananda* are also in the Chakyar's repertoire. Stage manuals for *Bhagavadajjukiya* are available. There is a tradition that *Shakuntala* used to be staged in former times.

Probably the all-India tradition of staging Sanskrit plays was revived by the Pallava kings of South India in the sixth and seventh centuries, and it spread to Kerala from there. The Kerala tradition says that King Kulashekhara Varman revived and reformed the Sanskrit Stage. This means that it must have been in existence even earlier. The terms *Koothu* (dance) and *Chakaiyan* (dancer) are found in the ancient Tamil classic *Cilappatikaram*; but it is not certain whether these had anything to do with the staging Sanskrit plays.

Koothampalam is the Malayalam name used for the theatre structures in the precincts of temples in Kerala where single acts of select Sanskrit plays are staged. It corresponds to the *natyamandapa* of Sanskrit texts. More than a dozen such theatres are still preserved in various temples; the present structures of the Koothampalams are not much older than three hundred years, but the tradition of staging goes back to much earlier times. The theatre at the Vatakunnatha temple at Trichur is the largest. Most of the Koothampalams are rectangular; the interior stage structure within the auditorium is square in shape. Chengannoor had an oval-shaped theatre, but now only its base is extant. These theatres do not conform strictly to the directions found in the *Natyashastra*, but follow the main rules of construction laid down in the Sanskrit texts of Kerala like the *Tantrasamucchaya* (fifteenth century) of Narayana and the *Shilparatna* of Shrikumara (sixteenth century). Koothampalams still stand at the Vatakkunnatha temple at Trichur, the Koodalmanikya temple at Irinjalakkuda, the Shiva temple at Perumanam (in ruins), the temples at Guruvayur, Kottappadi, Tiruvegappura, Tirumoozhikkulam, Trippunit-

tura, Ettumanoor, Kitangur, Arpukkara, Harippad, Neeleswaram, Talipparamba and Panniyur (in ruins). Inscriptional evidence is available for the existence in former times of theatres at Avittathoor and Tiruvanchikkulam. Where the temples did not have a Koothampalam, the Kootiyattam was allowed to be performed in *agrashala* halls. At the Triprayar Rama temple where there is no Koothampalam, the *Anguliyanka* scene from Shaktibhadra's *Ascharyachudamani* is staged in the *mukhamandapa* right in front of the main shrine.

The Koothampalam is located in front of the shrine on its right side. It belongs to the class of *Prasada* structure. Though the sizes differ, all the structures follow a similar pattern. The roof is an enormous, four-sided structure, rectangular in shape, and slopes downwards in a steep manner; it is supported on beams resting on rows of pillars. The outer roof is either copper-plated or tiled with decorative flat tiles. At the top there are three finials or *tazhikakkudams*.

Inside the large auditorium is the raised stage; it is usually square shaped. It has a roof of its own, supported by round pillars. The outer edge of the stage which faces the God of the temple is built in alignment with the middle finial; thus the stage projects into the auditorium. In front of the stage is the special portion reserved for the Brahmins. The roof covering the stage is an independent structure, not part of the roof of the auditorium, and helps in the effective projection of the sound from the stage. At the back of the stage is the green-room, connected to it by two doors. Between these two doors are placed two *mizhavus* or big drums, with raised seats for the drummers.

The stage is very simple. There are one or two stools meant as seats and used for other stage business. A curtain is brought in by two persons at the time of the first entry of the main characters. During a performance the stage is decorated with palm and plantain leaves, red cloth and a cylindrical vessel (*para*) filled with rice. A huge lamp, about four

feet high, made of bell metal is placed in front of the stage; it is lighted with oil and wicks, two wicks facing the actor and one facing the audience.

Stage manuals

In addition to the continuous tradition of the method of staging handed down from generation to generation, there are actual stage manuals giving choreographic details and elaborate instructions regarding the staging of plays. These stage manuals are the *Kramadipika* and *Attaprakaram*. The former is written in Sanskrit or Malayalam and explains the procedure to be adopted for the staging of plays. It deals with the songs, dance-steps, ragas and various stage directions. The latter indicates acting methods, the meaning of passages in the text and is in the form of a continuous, moving story, enabling the actor to expound the text accurately. Besides, there is the text in Malayalam which is to be spoken by the Vidushaka; it explains the meanings of the Sanskrit passages spoken by the hero, and contains the matter which is added to produce humour. Some of the commentaries on Sanskrit dramas also contain much useful material for the actors. The story of the scenes which are to be enacted, is summarised in archaic, Malayalam sentences; this part is recited by the Nambyar at the beginning of the performance and is called *Nambyarute Tamil*; it is available for some of the select scenes, usually staged. There is a Sanskrit text called *Hastalakshana dipika*, giving the rules of hand poses; it is mainly based on Bharata's *Natyashastra*. It was prepared for the use of the Chakyars, and is used even today in the training of Kathakali actors. Another interesting work shedding light on the Kerala Sanskrit stage is a Sanskrit work called *Natankusa*. This work severely criticises the Kootiyattam for taking liberties with the text and for adding unnecessary and extraneous matter.

Actors

It is said that formerly there were eighteen Chakyar

families; but now there are only about half a dozen families which preserve the tradition : (1) The Ammannoor Chakyar family at Irinjalakkuda, (2) The Koypa Chakyar family at Painkulam and also at Tirumoozhikkulam, (3) The Maniyoor Chakyar at Killikkurissimangalam in Lakkiddi, originally part of Talipparamba in North Kerala, (4) Kuttancheri Chakyar at Nalluvay, (5) Potiyil Chakyar and (6) Kitangoor Chakyar. The late Cacchu Chakyar belonged to the Irinjalakkuda family; Padmashri Natyacharya Mani Madhava Chakyar belongs to the Maniyur family and Painkulam Rama Chakyar, now teaching at the Kerala Kala Mandalam, belongs to the Koypa family. Many of the Nambyar families are related to the Chakyar families through hypergamous matrimonial relationships.

Instrumental Music

The instruments used for the Kootiyattam include : (1) The *mizhavu*. The two drums called *mizhavu* are of slightly varying sizes; they are two to three feet high, and are made of copper. The mouth is tightly covered with calf skin. Members of the Nambiyar community sit facing the audience on seats arranged near the top of the drum stand. They play on them with their hands : one of them keeps the *tala*, while the other plays the *vinyasas*, using both the palms and the fingers. For Koothu just one *mizhavu* is sufficient. (2) The *Kuzhithalam* or a pair of bronze cymbals is used for keeping the *tala*; it is used by the Nangyar who also chants the verses for the introductory *Nirvahana*, the *dhruva* songs recited at the time of the entrance and exit of characters. (3) The *Kuzhal* or *Kurumkuzhal*, a double reed pipe, is employed to suggest the rhythm or play the *jatis*, and indicate the proper tunes or produce a melodious refrain in the background. (4) The *Idakka* or 'a tunable, double faced, pressure drum' is held by means of a piece of cloth hanging from the left shoulder of the standing drummer; the tension strings are manipulated by the left hand and the drumming is continued with a thin stick held in the right hand. This delicate and

sensitive drum is also played in temples, and for the *Panchavadya* type of instrumental orchestra. (5) The auspicious *Shankha* or conch shell is blown when important personalities appear for the first time on the stage.

Abhinaya

The *abhinaya* for Kootiyattam is highly conventionalised and to a great extent follows the precepts of the *Natyashastra*. The *Purappadu* and the preliminary rites such as the dance sequences shed considerable light on the way the Prologue was performed in ancient Sanskrit dramas. The songs which invoke the deities, Ganapati, Saraswati and Shiva are known as *akkitta*. Then the Nambyar fetches sacred water from the green-room and sprinkles it on the stage, reciting the *mangalashloka*. These preliminary rites last for one day. The introduction of the earlier life of the hero (prior to the incidents to be actually staged) is called *Nirvahana*; it is very elaborate in its scope and continues for a few days. These earlier portions are expanded or reduced to suit the actual circumstances. The actual Kootiyattam or combined action takes place on the last three nights.

There are four types of *abhinaya* :

(i) *Angika* is the technique of using hand poses and gestures and stage movement to represent ideas. It is mainly based on the teachings of the *Natyashastra*. For example, in the first act of *Subhadradhananjaya*, Arjuna saves the heroine without knowing who she is. Her beauty casts its spell on him. He says :

नवकुवलयधाम्नोरञ्जनस्निग्धमक्ष्णोः
भयचलधृति युग्मं केयमालोलयन्ती ।
मुखपरिमललोभाद् भृङ्गदत्तानुयात्रा
शिथिलयति सुभद्रामुद्रितं मानसं मे ॥

The actor who plays Arjuna needs four hours to explain this verse through gestures. He gazes at Subhadra, describes her,

beginning with the hair. He stops when he comes to the eyes, and recites this verse very slowly in the *raga* called *Arttan* indicating the meaning of each word through hand gesture. Then the gestures are repeated, but the verse is not recited. Not only the number and gender of words, but even the nature of the compounds is suggested through hand gestures. Then the verse is taken up the third time. This time it is the syntax, the *anvaya* which matters. He says the words, *iyarn ka*, "What sort of a girl is she? What is her name? Who is her father?" His gestures indicate these queries. Then he stops. "Why should this bother me?" Then he goes on to the words *me manasam shithilayati* and again expounds it in detail till he comes to *Subhadramudiram*, when he assumes the posture of Subhadra and suggests how she enters his heart. Her eyes are beautified by collyrium, *anjanasnigdham*. To explain the idea, he enacts a story. The heroine calls her attendants to adorn her body. The entire procedure is described, from the combing of her hair to the tying of the anklets round her feet. But something has been forgotten—applying the collyrium to the eyes. The Chakyar becomes the heroine, her attendants and even Arjuna himself.

The *Angikabhinaya* consists not only in explaining the meanings of the text, but also in indicating the nature of the character whose role is played by the actor. Thus in *Abhishekanataka* as soon as Sugriva enters, he holds the tree-branches, shakes them, scratches his head, smells the tip of his tail to show that he is a monkey. After he has done this he assumes the posture of Sugriva, king of the monkeys. In Kootiyattam the actor has to confine himself to the space between his shoulders during the hand gestures. This is unlike what happens in Kathakali where the actor can stretch his arms to any length.

(ii) *Vachika* or verbal recitation. Here the actor himself slowly recites his text, and then uses the language of gesture in detail.

There is no regular music in Kootiyattam but there are different modes of reciting the verses or even the prose passages; the modes depend on various factors, such as the type of the character who is reciting them, the nature of the situation described and the sentiments conveyed. These modes of recitation have different technical names such as *Indala*, *Tarkan*, *Veladhooli*. These are called *ragas*, even if these *ragas* have very little to do with the *ragas* of Indian music. Some of these like *Srikamaram*, *Poranir* and *Tarkan* are found in the *Panns* of ancient Tamil music; some like *Indalam*, *Srikanthi* are again preserved in modern Kathakali songs. It is very difficult to identify and distinguish these Kootiyattam *ragas*; the modes of recitation have been handed down from teacher to student, without any precise theoretical definitions. However, there are detailed instructions as to the usage of these recitation *ragas*; *Antari* is used for narration; *Veladhooli* is for shouting and indicates fear and perplexity; *Srikamara* suggests unexpected joy; *Tarkan* indicates anger; the use of *Veera Tarkan* denotes enthusiasm; *Kaisika* is for *hasya* and *bibhatsa*; *Poranir* is used in describing the rainy season, *Korakurinji* is used for the words of monkeys. *Indala* is the normal *raga* for the Vidushaka. Some correlations between *ragas* and *talas* are formulated in the stage manuals. In *Vachikabhinaya* the Vidushaka sometimes explains the significance of even the pure sounds of words uttered. In *Subhadradhananjaya*, the Vidushaka hears the word *Sakhe Kaudinya*. First he hears the sound *eee*; he says it is like the waves in the pond. Then *khe* which he thinks is like the croaking of frogs in a pond. He is reminded of his boyhood prank of wounding frogs and finally it strikes him that it is his friend Arjuna calling out to him. The hero gives prominence to those scenes where there is scope for *Angikabhinaya*; the Vidushaka to those where there is scope for *Vachikabhinaya*. He speaks his own lines and also those of the hero and explains them.

(iii) *Aharya* denotes costume and make-up. This is similar to that of Kathakali, but simpler. The *Chutti* (the lining

made with rice flour paste) which is applied round the cheek and the chin is narrower, and the headgear is also smaller. Different types of make-up like *Pacca*, *Pazhukkua*, *Kari* and *Katti* are used. The magnanimous have the *Pazhukkua* make-up, with the face painted in a reddish colour. The haughty types like *Ravana* have the *Katti* make-up, with a round ball painted at the tip of the nose.

Formerly certain spectacular stage effects were achieved. In the Fourth Act of the *Nagananda*, thousands of strings were tied to the artificial wings of the actor playing Garuda and he used to slide down from above the stage space. The strings were manipulated by the *Nambyar*. In *Tapatisamvarna*, the river were depicted by thousands of strings kept tightly in a horizontal way and the idea of *ozhukal* (flowing) was suggested. The suicide scene in *Nagananda* with *Malayavati* trying to hang herself, or the sequence in *Ascharyachudamani* where *Lakshman* deforms *Surpanakha* were staged with an eye for realistic detail.

(iv) *Sattvika* is the representation of moods and the emotions. With the help of delicate movements of the eyes, brows, lips and cheeks, but without any gestures of the hand, the actor is able to produce facial expressions which correspond to a particular mood. In this *Sattvikabhinaya* the *Chakayar* is supreme and has not been surpassed or even equalled by the *Kathakali* actors.

Since music and recitation are integral to the *Kootiyattam*, *talas* or rhythmic patterns play a very important part in the performance. The female musician, *Nangyar*, keeps the *tala* with the help of the *Kuzhitalam* cymbals. The drummers, seated at the back of the stage, behind the actor, and facing the *mizhavu* keep the *tala*; one of them merely keeps the *tala* and the other plays the appropriate *jatis* or *vinyasas* for the various *talas* to give proper effect to the acting. Six different *talas* are generally used, depending on the *raga* (mode of recitation) employed. There are

detailed rules prescribing particular *talas* for particular *ragas* and specific occasions.

1. *Ektala* of four beats (*matras*) is used for the *ragas* *Srikanthi*, *Thondu*, *Poranir*, *Kaisika*, *Indala*, *Bhinna*, *Panchama* and *Dukkha Gandhara*. It is used also for *hasya* and *bibhasta rasas* and for the *adbhuta rasa* of *dhirodattha* characters.

2. *Dhruvatala* of fourteen beats is used for the *ragas* *Muddan*, *Tarkan* and *Korakurinji*, and in *adbhuta*, *bhayanaka*, *sambhoga shringara* (of *rakshasas*) and *vipralambha shringara* of *dhirodattha* characters.

3. *Triputatala* of seven beats, used when *Veladhooli* is the *raga* and for *bhayanaka rasa*. *Triputa* of slow tempo is used in *Ghattantari raga*; it is in a fast tempo in the case of *Srikamara* and *Paurali ragas*.

4. *Champatatala* of eight beats is used for the instrumental orchestra before the start of the play.

5. *Thampatala* of ten beats is the same as *Jhampa* of Karnatic music.

6. *Atanta* of fourteen beats is used while repeating what another has said. For different types of dance pieces or modes of gait different *talas* have been prescribed.

Till very recently the Kootiyattam, being a religious art, was strictly confined to the precincts of the temples of Kerala. It was only in 1960 that the first public performance of the Kootiyattam outside the temple precincts was staged at Calicut before a select audience invited by All India Radio. A portion from Act One of the *Subhadradhananjaya* was staged by Painkulam Rama Chakyar and his party. I made a preliminary survey of Kootiyattam in 1960; this survey was published in the *Sanskrita Ranga Annual*, II. Other public performances of the Kootiyattam followed—at the

Kalamandalam in 1962 arranged by Dr. Clifford Jones of the University of Pennsylvania; a show was arranged in Madras under the auspices of the Samskrita Ranga in 1963, and in New Delhi under the auspices of the Sangeet Nataka Akademi and the Pederewski Foundation. It was Natyacharya Mani Madhava Chakyar and his party who gave the performances at Madras and at New Delhi. Enthusiastic encouragement was given to this activity by scholars like Dr. V. Raghavan. My paper on Kootiyattam was republished as a booklet by the Sangeet Nataka Akademi. The Madras University produced a M. Litt thesis on Kootiyattam and another doctoral thesis was written in Poona. In 1966 a seminar on Kootiyattam was arranged at Cheruthurutti; it was sponsored jointly by the Kerala Kalamandalam and the American Institute of Indian Studies, on the enthusiastic initiative of Dr. Clifford Jones, the well-known Western scholar of art and theatre history. Mani Madhava Chakyar has prepared a scholarly work in Malayalam on the theory and practice of the Kootiyattam, and it is to be published by the Kerala Kalamandalam, where a department of Kootiyattam was started in 1967, with Painkulam Rama Chakyar as professor. Dr. Clifford Jones is now in India preparing a documentary film and a descriptive monograph on the technique and practice of this one surviving form of the classical Sanskrit-based dramatic tradition. The Kerala Kalamandalam and other scholars in the field are co-operating with him in this effort and it is to be hoped that more light will be shed on our ancient drama as a result of this awakening of interest in the subject.

Footnote to Chapter XI.

1. *Kootiyattam is also spelt as Kutiyattam or Kudiyattam.*



Painkuiam Rama Chakyar as Ravana performing the lifting of the Kailasa Mountain in Abhishekanatakam



Sthapana Sutradhara performing the Nityakriya. Two Mizhavu drums and the players



*Mani Madhva Chakyar in Asokavanikanka in
Ascharachudamani*



The Yakshagana of Karnataka



Kamālabhūpa and his daughter Rati

CHAPTER XII

THE YAKSHAGANA OF KARNATAKA

—K. Shivram Karanth

The Kannada-speaking area of India, usually called Karnataka, has a rich theatre form known as 'Yakshagana.' In earlier times it used to be called 'Bhagavatara ata,' 'Dashavatara ata,' or simply 'Bayalata.' In Kannada 'ata' means a play. Originally this form of theatre used to deal with the tales of Bhagavan Krishna and hence the name 'Bhagavatara ata.' Later on, it began to depict tales of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu; hence the name 'Dashavatara ata.' Being an open-air theatre, it came to be called 'Bayalata.' The nomenclature 'Yakshagana' came from a special style of music which accompanies these plays. It is a very ancient style, for there is mention of this style in Kannada literature of the tenth and twelfth centuries. The *Chandraprabha Purana* (1189) makes mention of the form. Nagachandra's *Mallinatha Purana* (1105) refers to Yakshagana as "pleasing to Laksmi who stands in the lotus." In the sixteenth century Kavi Ratnakar Varni speaks of *Yakkalagana* in his *Bharateshavaibhava*. Since he belongs to the region of South Kanara, it may be surmised that the Yakshagana form was widespread by that time.

Yakshagana embraced in earlier times a form of music played before royal personages. Later on, owing to the

advent of more evolved styles of music like Hindustani and Karnatic music, Yakshagana receded very much into the background. We would have totally lost this form, but for the fact that opera-like plays began to be written in this style and their stage success contributed to its survival right to this day. In the Kannada country we have over three hundred Yakshagana plays, written by a number of writers, from at least the period of the sixteenth century. The tradition of staging such plays has continued over the past few centuries, evolving its own peculiar stage techniques.

An essential feature of these plays is that the play is conceived as a fantasy dealing with heroes, gods and demons; the material chosen for depiction comes from our myths and legends. Such stories are moralistic in outlook and often portray the victory of good over evil. Most of our traditional drama leans heavily on such legendary lore. The special distinction of Yakshagana consists in its presentation of the story through the medium of music, dance and literature.

The very backbone of Yakshagana is its operatic nature; songs and verses are employed for the narration of its themes. This is done sometimes in the third person, and often in the first and second persons. The songs consist of many musical patterns, composed to express every type of emotion contained in the puranic stories. The language is simple and direct, and can easily be understood by lay audiences. The *Bhagavathar*, or conductor of the play, has to sing all those songs (in addition to many narrative verses) to the accompaniment of cymbals and drums.

The *purva ranga* of the performance is known as *Sabha-lakshana*. It begins with a prayer to Ganesha, Skanda and other deities. The *Bhagavathar* is, of course, the leader. Next to him in importance is the character who plays heroic or serious roles. Those who perform the parts of demons are known as *bannada vesha*. (Colour is *banna* (*varna*) in Kannada). The *stree-vesha* is lower down in the scale. The

Bhagavathar is at the apex. The two accompanying instruments, the *chande* and the *maddale*, are an aid, but it is he who controls the rhythm and the pace. The *Bhagavathar* introduces each character; when a character is alone on the stage and seeks to express his feelings, it is the *Bhagavathar* who listens to his problems. The *shruti* determines the note of the *Bhagavathar* and the *shruti* box is by his side throughout the performance. Even when the music is silent, the dialogue continues to be based on this particular note and has its own mode of presentation. The din of the *chande* becomes more pronounced during a war sequence or in moments of elation or vigorous movement.

Another feature of the earlier part of the performance is the Balagopala (Krishna-Balarama) dance. Then there is always a comic interlude. Hanumanayaka comes with his band of urchins. These young monkeys are the *kodangi* and their *nayaka* (leader) is Hanuman. Even as the *Bhagavathar* sings the praises of Ganesha, Hanumanayaka and his followers forge ahead with their own brand of humour. They repeat the pattern during the moments when Skanda and Shiva-Parvati are praised. Then the *stree-vesha* enter; they dance and sing, concentrating on the *shringara rasa*.

The *Sabha-lakshana* terminates and the *Prasanga* proper begins. It is introduced by the *vaddolaga*. The character, who is about to enter, stands behind a curtain and he is presented to the spectators. If a Mahabharata story is to be enacted, the Pandavas are presented through the *vaddolaga*. For example, Hanumanayaka speaks the *birudavali* of Dharmaraja. He hails him thus: *Shrikrishnasuprita, Duritavamshavidhata, Trailokyavikhyata, Sakalavaninatha, Sharanasankuladhata, Kamakrodhavidhata, Ajatashatruavadata, Sarvasastradhita Saddharma Pariputa, Shrimadrajakulalimandita, Padpadmaradantha, Dharmaraja Maharaja*. There are traditional songs associated with a *vaddolaga*. For instance, Krishna's *vaddolaga* begins with a Sanskrit *shloka* and is followed by a song in *raga* Sankarabharana, *tala* Adi.

The *vaddolaga* of the demons is a more spectacular affair; the dance is more slow and is punctuated by roars and cries. Popular *prasangas* like the Karna-Arjuna Yuddha are eagerly awaited by the audience.

Kannada works based on Sanskrit compositions form the source of these *prasangas*. These include Kumar Vyasa's *Bharata*, Torwe Narhari's *Ramayana* and Battaleshwara's *Kaushik Ramayana* and *Bhagvata Katha*. It is through them that village audiences make their earliest acquaintance with our epic forms. The heroic *prasangas* which feature battles have the word *kalga* incorporated into their titles. They include *Babhruvahana Kalga*, *Sudhanvana Kalga*, *Marimukha Kalga* and other *kalgas*. Those that end in marital bliss have the word *Kalyana* or *Parinaya* inserted in the title. For example, *Subhadra Parinaya* or *Kanakangi Parinaya*. Of course, the humorous element of a performance is wholly monopolised by Hanumanayaka. The *Sabha-lakhana* introduces us to the choreography of the Balagopala and *stree-vesha* sequences. The *vaddolaga* includes excellent group formations in its dance.

Various metres fulfil a particular function. For instance, the Kannada metre *Kanda*, based on the Sanskrit *Arya*, helps to speed up the pace of a narrative. *Vritta* is used when deities are praised. *Dvipadi* and *Bhamini Shatpadi* are employed for telling a story. Yakshagana is never too ornate and some of the songs like those in the *Shrikrishna Balalila* borrow heavily from folk songs. The famous *prasanga* of Chandravali composed by Kavi Nagappaya of Dhvajapura has elements of love and pathos, and a touching simplicity of mood. The *Bhagavathar* resorts to prose particularly when something exciting is expected to happen.

Yakshagana music at one time employed as many as one hundred and fifty *ragas* and about seven *talas* in its musical patterns (*Dhatis*). Today's *Bhagavathars* has forgotten most of these *ragas*; even so the musical patterns that have survived are numerous enough to depict forcefully the

many different moods of these plays. If all the earlier *ragas* could be revived now, we would experience again the operatic excellence of this form. There is a richness and potency in the *ragas* and *talas* used; they are able to convey various shades of thought and feeling. In classical music, both Hindustani and Karnatic, we have numerous *ragas*, but their thought content is generally devotional or sad in its nature. It embraces the wail of a devotee, self-castigation or praise of one's personal deity. Even in the aspect of love, it is the *viraha* element (the pangs of separation and the yearning for the presence of the lover who has vanished from sight) that predominates. A drama cannot restrict itself to these emotions alone. It has to deal with other human feelings like anger, jealousy, rage or joy. It cannot limit its emotional core to pathos, devotion or praise. The Yakshagana composer, therefore, found greater opportunities for composing expressive patterns which could also lend themselves to rhythmical dance expression.

In Yakshagana some of the *ragas* have Karnatic names (Gaula, for instance). Others have a wholly Kannada flavour—Koravi, Mechali or Gopanite. The Koravi is close to the Kurunji of Karnatic music. Dvijavanti is like the Hindustani Jaijaiwanti; Pahadi is like Pahadi. Assembling some of our traditional *Bhagavathars* and with the help of classical scholars (in both the Karnatic and Hindustani styles), I was able to discover more than sixty *ragas*, whose patterns our *Bhagavathars* can recollect still, but whose names they have forgotten. Not being sure of their scales, they often migrate from *raga* to *raga*; at times they tend to be monotonous. We realized that whenever an old composition (set in a particular *raga*) was wittingly or unwittingly changed, its expressive power seemed to wane. It is quite clear that in former times composers were experts in their musical style; whereas most of our present day *Bhagavathars* appear to have lost their moorings.

The importing of *gamaka* (style of modulation) from the

Hindustani and Karnatic schools has also had an adverse effect on Yakshagana. This factor differentiated it from the other two schools. The tendency of the *Bhagavathar* to imitate Marathi stage music and the devotional songs of saints like Purandaradasa has also modified the original style and impaired its purity.

There is one element in Yakshagana which has suffered a good deal at the hands of the present-day *Bhagavathar* and his accompanists. The *Bhagavathar* tends to ignore the language-content of his song, and to concentrate for the main part on its style and *tala*. The accompanists are mainly absorbed in playing the *maddale* and *chande*. The sound of these drums drowns all the words of the song. The musicians pay little attention to thought content. The pitch of the voice and the accompanying cymbal and drum beats are shrill and piercing. The dancer necessarily follows them. Subtler feelings, the lines of demarcation between one emotion and another are wiped out in the process. Earnest attention to these aspects of music can help us to exploit the richness of Yakshagana. For a dancer it offers wonderful opportunities for expression; many of the songs portray a wide range of emotions, calling for quick changes in mood and utmost subtlety in projection.

The characters speak out their words in dignified prose after each song; this art has to be cultivated over long years of experience. The prose passages cannot be learnt by rote. A speech is delivered extempore and often improvised on the spur of the moment after the *Bhagavathar* has sung one stanza after the other during the course of the play. Two opposing characters, or a courting couple, can thus develop a fascinating dialogue between themselves; this is often handled with dexterity by veterans of the Yakshagana stage.

Kathakali, with its strong accent on music and the language of gesture, allows for no dialogue spoken by actors. In Yakshagana the dance element is not predominant. The story unfolds itself through the words spoken by the actors.

The dance is supported by the rhythm of the *chande* and *maddale* and the pace of the *Bhagavathar*. The simple metre of the *Bhamini Shatpadi* provides the dancer with the right tempo. The *stree-vesha* concentrate on the *lasya* element of the dance. The male characters display valour and fury. Hanumanayaka's movements embrace humour and joy. The dances do not depict so much of delicate emotions as the predominant mood of a sequence. They offer the rhythmic background to its delineation. Thus dance (except for the few occasions when travel, battle and valour are depicted) serves as no more than an embellishment to an otherwise prose drama. The spoken word is the main ingredient and the audiences remain passive observers of the drama enacted in front of them.

The important problem in Yakshagana is that of liberating dance from the medium of prose. Dance with music can by itself suggest quite significantly many aspects of a drama. The thought-content is in the realm of language; but emotions can also find an intense and subtle expression through music and dance. To discover these possibilities, I eschewed spoken prose altogether in my ballets. The songs did have words; they set a sequence in motion. But the dancers were taught to express their emotions in terms of footwork, body flexions, gesture, facial expressions, and choreography. This did not mean substitution of gestures for every spoken word. The minimum of commonly understood gestures was used. The entire body was turned into a vehicle of expression. Footwork was subdued or tuned up depending on the nature and pitch of the emotion. Steps were not deemed to be exercises in technical skill. *Tala* rhythms had to be a part of the dancer's body-movements and poses. The rhythms of songs had to evoke corresponding reflections in a dancer's movements. Years of study and exercise led me to the conclusion that our Indian dance has a lot to gain by accepting the fact that one medium hardly enriches itself by imitating another. Skill alone is

neither art nor *shastra*; acrobatics in *raga* and *tala* cannot serve the needs of dance or musical expression.

The potential in this form can be exploited to the full and its canvas enlarged. For example, tradition has given Hanumanayaka full liberty of speech and action. He assumes light roles like those of servant, courier or messenger. He provides the element of humour in the dance. Dance developed to suit such a mood can enrich the possibilities latent in his role. Yakshagana has a few basic dance patterns but they are restricted to the performances of the main characters during the battle and travel sequences. They can be employed to embrace other situations, too.

Yakshagana surpasses many Indian theatre forms in one particular field, that is in the matter of costumes and make-up. These plays were originally conceived as fantasies and practioners of the form evolved a rich variety of costumes. Their design was not inspired by ancient paintings or sculpture; it is based on the essential nature of the characters. To the first category belong heroes like Karna and Arjuna or *Avatara purusha* like Rama or Krishna. The second type consists of characters of heroic mould who are a trifle too proud of their prowess and consequently slightly immature. To this class belongs Indra or Gaya (Gandharva). The third group includes those like Kirata who are fearless, yet somewhat uncultured and even stupid. Then there are demons like Ravana and Kumbhakarna who are brave in their own right but, on the whole, quite destructive in their ways. Another group includes those who are born among demons but have a code of right and wrong. Among these are Ravana's brother Vibhishana or Ravana's son Atikaya. A special kind of costume is designed for them. Then there are those deities like Veerabhadra and Narasimha who are entrusted with the difficult task of annihilating demons. Apart from the characters of this *deva-danava-manava* group, there are others like Hanuman, Bali and Jambava. Then there are straight characters, like rishis or

gurus. The *stree-vesha* includes queens; princesses and attendants.

The Yakshagana performances used to take place at night. Torches were used to light the arena. The dim, yellowish flames flickered and the dazzling costumes imparted to the atmosphere a suggestion of fantasy. In the olden days *aradala* (yellow orpiment) was mixed with coconut oil and smeared over uncovered parts of the body. With the introduction of petromax lamps—a whiter shade, with a slight crimson colouring, was substituted. The area of the temples near the eyes is covered with white and outlined with streaks of red. A white *tilak* is painted on the forehead and a black line is drawn in the middle. The *stree-vesha* has a red *tilak* on the forehead. Balagopala, Lava-Kusha, Krishna have no moustaches.

The main colour for the *rakshasa* characters is red, green and black. The face is multi-coloured. Rice paste is used to outline the contours and after many such layers, the face begins to have a solid, three-dimensional effect. The face looks even larger when it is framed by a strip of paper, cut into sharp, teeth-like shapes and tied behind the ears.

Those playing the roles of rishis or purohits are usually simply clad. The clothing for all the characters is effective; the ornaments are elaborate and dazzling. Special types of headgear correspond to the nature of the characters portrayed in the play. Every foreign student of the theatre who has witnessed Yakshagana plays, has gone into raptures over its costume and make-up. It can stand comparison with the best in their Balinese, Javanese or Cambodian counter-parts. Unfortunately decadence slowly set in in the matter of costumes, particularly in the style of clothing worn by female characters. The desire to cater to popular taste resulted in their being presented like fashionable ladies of the times. Female figures looked like women on the

street straying on to the stage from among the crowd. Re-designing appropriate costumes and ornaments for them has now become an urgent task and I have sought to introduce suitable patterns and colours for the sari and other apparel used by female characters. I have also tried to design a few ornaments to blend with those of the male characters. A number of early plays have stopped being performed and the costumes and make-up of characters like Vali, Hanuman Jambava, Nandi and Garuda have been totally or partially forgotten. I am now making an attempt, with the help of veteran artists, to fill in this gap and introduce improvements in this sphere.

There is an enthusiasm for the 'new' and the 'latest' and many troupes have made it a point to stage novel and fanciful plays. But the writers seem to lack talent and shabby musical structures are produced as a result. They do not realize that new types of characters need intricate and well-designed costumes and make-up. Imitating the professional stage of the cinema will not help matters.

To get a clear picture of what Yakshagana is, all one has to do is to experience its artistic wealth. This rich variety cannot be expected of every troupe. Every play cannot fulfil a rigorous standard. Today the aesthetic elements of this theatre have been renounced by those votaries of the bizarre who have no sense of colour or harmony. Even so, there are a few temple troupes which still retain much of what is best in the old tradition.

The village audiences, who for centuries appreciated and patronised the traditional Yakshagana, now find it stale; their patronage has shifted to those cheap and garrulous productions that profess to be Yakshagana. Lack of aesthetic perception has contributed to this state of affairs. In earlier days, traditions were considered sacred and nobody dared to tamper with a given form. A more sensible government or the existence of discerning patrons could have

helped in the task of preserving Yakshagana as a national asset. State troupes could have come into existence and this heritage (which is now in the hands of commercially-minded individuals and novelty-chasing audiences, who regard it as a form of escape) would have thus been conserved in its authentic state,

CHAPTER VI

SECULARISM IN YAKSHAGANA

—Martha B. Ashton

The Yakshagana dance-drama of the Kanara Coast is considered a religious art form because it relives the creation and life stories of the Hindu deities as well as episodes revealing their intervention into and effect on the lives of mortals. The dance-drama through Mahabharata, Ramayana and Puranic legends reinforces the theme that Hinduism is all encompassing, that is; that everything in life is in some way related to religion. Therefore, if we want to discuss "secularism" in a Hindu dance-drama we must first be cognizant of the fact that "secularism" is a relatively recent concept in Indian thought. "Secular" is an Anglo-Saxon English word with its root in Latin; and there appear to be no equivalents in any of the Indian languages. Moreover, it seems that the nearest similar term is a combination of Sanskrit words "dharmaniraphekshata" which means "no favoritism towards any particular religion." The problem is then that we are attempting to discuss an aspect of the Hindu culture in terms of an English word, the concept of which is not indigenous to the Hindu culture. Accordingly we must be aware then, that whatever is considered "secular"

from the point of view of one culture is not necessarily considered so from the points of view of other cultures.

With all this in mind let us consider "secularism" in Yakshagana beginning with a subject that is sure to be controversial, that of the romances of Lord Krishna. These are described in a collection of 14 songs four or five of which are alternatively sung and danced to as part of the preliminary rituals of each traditional Yakshagana performance. The dance is sensual, yet tastefully performed by two male youths dressed in female attire. The songs suggest that these two can be either wives of Lord Vishnu, or Gopis.

To an outsider the words of this first song appear only as those of a jealous female. It is only if one knows the stories of Krishna that all the clues are recognized and the song gains religious significance. Even so we do not know if this song is an expression of a jealous wife or a jealous mistress.

Raga Kalyani Adi Tala

I can't bear this mischief.

He is a great adulterer, mother.

He is a butter thief and

he is strong in magic.

But at the same time

he is very charming.

When the ladies are going to fetch water,

he blocks their way and calls them to him.

With such small hands he will lift the

big mountains and secretly enjoy the eight ladies.¹

The beginning part of this next song suggests that it is only one wife making known her jealousy of another wife. In the latter lines, however, references to the avatars appear. Yet, only those who are knowledgeable in these legends are able to distinguish that the subject is the God Vishnu, not an ordinary man being scolded.

Raga Kalyani Rupaka Tala

Oh ! My dear female companion. What am I to do ?

My dear lord has gone to another wife,

to a place where they will enjoy each other.

I am feeling so lonely here.

These are the fruits I reap for marrying him.

What am I to do ?

Shall I make a house in the water and keep him there ?

Shall I put my burden on him.

Or by some native root shall I cure him of his cruel ways ?

Whom can I tell ?

Whom can I ask ?

Can I call him a beggar (of love) by nature ?

Can I give up this jealousy and once again join him ?

Shall I ever talk to him again or shall I leave him forever ?

Tell me if he has any affection,

he (Parashurama) who has killed his mother;

he (Rama) who has monkeys for companions.

What is the use of giving him advice.

How am I to beat this ?

He is so much taken up with (Satya) Bhama.

He has permanently settled there.

This great fellow has no shame.

What am I to do ?

Shall I get him (Kalki) a horse to ride in the end.²

The third song tells of a husband longing for his beloved wife. Only in one line is the husband's name mentioned and we know that this is a religious song.

Raga Natai Adi Tala

Beautiful lady, rich in her virtues,

come and let us enjoy one another.

I am suffering from passion. Come.

I'll embrace you affectionately.
Come ! Come ! Come ! Come !

Beautiful lady, I am forever thinking
of you in my dreams.
Don't break my heart.
It's not proper. It's not proper.
Llla, lla, lla, wife.

Beautiful lady, Guru Venkateshwara is
the only protection.
How can you forget him.³
Ta, ta, ta, wife.

The next song is usually the last song of these particular rituals. It appears to be a song that many a wife probably did and still does sing. But it does not give us any indication as to whose wife should get the credit here.

Raga Kalyani Rupaka Tala

Mother, I am bidding you goodbye.
I am leaving for my home.
I don't know my destiny.
I came here in the hope of staying for ten days
as I was suffering from my mother-in-law's nagging.
But can we erase what Brahma has written or
what actions we have done in the previous life ?
How can I disobey my husband, shamelessly listening
to others ?
He is always punishing me by abuses.⁴

To those who are both knowledgeable and who are devotees these songs are considered religious. To those who are neither perhaps these songs could be considered secular ?

Let us now turn to the possibilities of secularism in Yakshagana humour. The Yakshagana texts rarely contain humour. This is brought about through the folk songs and

through the impromptu dialogue which follows the performance of songs, poems or explanatory passages of the texts. Although conversation between or among the non-comic characters might be clever and witty the comic mood of the performance mainly depends on the abilities of the clowns.

The clown actors play the roles of sages like Narada and Valmiki, guards, messengers, and servants. One of the most enjoyable roles of the clown is that of being the guard for the Pandavas' Ashwamedha horse in "The Battle of Babhruwahana." The horse roams into the kingdom of Queen Pramila. Pramila's female guards find the clown sleeping instead of watching the horse. Clapping their hands and shouting, the guards try to awake him. But he rolls over and yawns. When he is finally awoken, he notices with delight that he is surrounded by lovely young maidens. He dances to and sometimes sings along with the Bhagavata a comic folk-song entitled "Oh, you girl."

Lavani Eka Tala

Oh, you girl !

Who are you ?

Who came with you ?

Tell me quickly.

Oh, you girl !

Clever one, who is your father ?

Here, show me your face ?

Married or unmarried ?

Tell me quickly.

Oh, you girl !

Mara's (God of Love's) flowered arrow is shot.

My mind is filled.

Lady, I promise you I am telling the truth.

I am in a state of emotional frenzy.

Furthermore, you forget everything else.

I will make you happy.

I won't leave you.

It's getting dark and I'm getting hungry.

Don't delay, come quickly.

Don't you want to come ?⁵

With comic facial movement he flirts with, chases the girls, and tells how infatuated he is with them.

If the clown is playing the part of the gate-keeper and must protect his master's kingdom or possessions, he is usually the loser. The clown's weapon is a long stick. The victor pulls the clown's arms back and bends them at the elbows. Through the opening caused by the bent elbows the victor puts the clown's stick and leaves him defeated. The clown bemoans his situation to the Bhagavata and asks the Bhagavata to remove the stick.

In one scene from *The Battle of Abhimanyu*, a king's messenger comes to challenge Arjuna to battle. The clown playing the role of the messenger created an aura of nonsense as he entered miming a deformed person and talking as though he were hare-lipped. Arjuna asked how he had come to this State. The clown replied that when his wife was pregnant she craved a liquid sweet (payasam) made from a sour fruit pod (tamarind). He had climbed the tree to get the fruit and had fallen. Arjuna cured him with a magic arrow.⁶

In another scene from *The Battle of Abhimanyu* Kaurava's servant comes to announce the arrival of Kaurava's friend, the demon Samasaptaka, from Patala. The servant says to Kaurava : "He has come from Patala." Kaurava says : "Who has come from Patala ?" Then the clown runs to ask Samasaptaka what to tell Kaurava. Samasaptaka beats the clown and says, "I have come from Patala." The clown then runs to Kaurava and says : "I have come from Patala."

the sky. Her play is spoiled when the other brother shoots down the swing.

The regional flavor of South Kanara is often reflected in the dialogue. One example occurs in the talk of the singer, a character named Chikka and another called Kichaka. Prior to Kichaka's entrance, a poor man, Chikka, played by the clown, discusses his life story with the singer and talks about buying bufaloes, preparing them for and entering them into a particular local race. As far as I know buffalo-racing is unique to South Kanara. After further chat about buying and selling dried coconuts and all sorts of local varieties of plantains, Chikka exits. He re-enters with Kichaka.

Kichaka says that he has not been to visit his sister for some time. He wants to go now and wants Chikka to accompany him. Chikka asks if Kichaka's sister will prepare him some good food. If so, he will come. Kichaka suggests that she will certainly do so and inquires into Chikka's desires. Chikka wants among other things chicken rotti which in South Kanara refers to a very hot chicken curry served over paper-thin crisp-edged rice pancakes—a specialty of the Bant community of this coastal area. He also wants boiled rice and payasa, a favorite liquid sweet of South India. In time they come near the house of Kichaka's sister. Kichaka instructs Chikka to go and announce their arrival. Chikka who has come in the hope of getting good food is overcome when he sees Kichaka's sister cooking and forgets his purpose. With his mouth watering he speaks.

Chikka : Amma, (mother) what are you doing ?

Sudeshna : I am frying rotti, Chikka.

Chikka : Why have the edges become black, amma ?

Sudeshna : The fire has become too hot.

Chikka : Is it so, amma ? Then give it to me. I'll eat it.

He takes it and returns to Kichaka and tells him what has happened. Then Kichaka asks Chikka if he told her that her younger brother Kichaka had come. He sheepishly admitted that he had not, returned to announce Kichaka's arrival and then both entered Sudeshna's house.¹⁰

The dialogue between the singer and Babruwahana's political minister in *The Battle of Babruwahana* is proof on how it must have been in the past when wandering troupes of Yakshagana artists, referred in the dialogue as Dashavatara players, or players of the stories of ten avatars of Vishnu, tried to get people to sponsor their performances. An excerpt follows :

Minister : How many of you are there ?

Singer : We are forty.

Minister : Whose house did you start out to deplete ? If this many of you go to one house, how can it survive.

Singer : For our purposes we need this many people.

Minister : From which direction did you come ?
Didn't you cross a river on the way ?

Singer : Yes, we crossed a river. And the boatman there has no sense. He caused one of our group to drown, so we are really less than usual in number.

Minister : All right. Let that be. We will agree to sponsor your performance by giving you four seers of rice.

Singer : That is not enough rice for this many people.

Minister : We'll give you other things as well. And we'll give you an abundance of salt.

Singer : Why so much salt ?

Minister : If you eat a lot of salt, you will drink a lot and that way your stomachs will become full.¹¹

Except when the hunter is the God Shiva, perhaps this role also could be considered secular. The hunter's entrance along with his little hunters is always a spectacle. His very colorful costume and unusual headdress, along with a bonfire and the acrobatics of the little hunters is topped off with some rather appropriate hunters' talk. The dialogue runs along these lines :

Hunter : In which direction shall we go to-day ? In which forest shall we hunt ? We're so hungry. What animals and birds do we want to hunt to-day. We'll take the net and several dogs, knives, spears and bows. Who will go to drive the animals in our direction ? (Looking at one boy) Where will you go ?

Boy : I will sit on the river bank. When the animals come to drink I'll shoot them.

Another Boy : I will sit in the cashew tree (common in South Kanara). When the animals come to eat the fruit I will shoot them.

Third Boy : There are two hills and a salty stream running. There I will sit and catch the animals.¹²

Through the above examples I have suggested that even though the concept of secularism was not realized as being a part of Hindu culture, that is, they did not have a term to express it, nevertheless these examples of dialogue imply that secular situations exist in this Hindu religious dance drama. Perhaps the mystery lies in a word lost or removed from the vocabularies thousands of years ago.

Footnotes to Chapter VI

1. *Yakshagana Sabhalakshana and Prasangapithige* (Udipi, South Kanara, Mysore, India : Pavanje Gururao and Sons, 1968-69, p. 38 (in Kannada). All songs from this work quoted in this paper were translated by Srimati B. Leela Bhat, Reader and Head of the Department of Kannada, Mahatma Gandhi Memorial College, Udupi.
2. *Sabhalakshana*, p. 39.
3. *Sabhalakshana*, pp. 40-41.
4. *Sabhalakshana*, pp. 39-40.
5. A Kannada folk-song which is traditionally performed in *The Battle of Babhruwahana*. Translated by Srimati B. Leela Bhat.
6. Recorded at a performance of *The Battle of Abhimanyu* by Kamalashile Troupe, Brahmavara, South Kanara, December 7, 1970. Translated by L. Bhat.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Recorded at a performance of *The Wedding of Kanakangi* by Perduru Troupe, near Hiriadka, South Kanara, January 8, 1970. Translated by L. Bhat.
9. Recorded at a performance of *Lava and Kusa's Battle* by Kadiyali Temple Troupe, Udupi, February 20, 1971. Translated by L. Bhat.
10. Collected by Sri Hiriadka Gopala Rao, November 1976 and translated by the author. Although this dialogue is known to several performers it has rarely been performed in the last fifty years.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Collected by Sri Hiriadka Gopala Rao and translated by Rao and the author. The last two sentences are risqué. The two hills symbolize a woman's breasts and the salty stream represents her urine.