

Classical Essence in Yakshagana

Harshita Upadhya

Student, Department of English Christ University, Bangalore

Abstract—Yakshagana is one of the popular art forms in India. It is a unique art which has been known as folk art and research showcases the classical essence in Yakshagana. The usage of Hindu Mythology, classical dance, musical impact, Natyashatra and Sanskrit basement likewise many other elements of Yakshagana unfolds the Classical essence. Ample of Shlokas and Prosody is dwelled in the literary works of Yakshagana and which cannot be seen in Folk art. To support these ideas Lava Kusha Kalaga Prasanga is taken as my primary text. This Prasanga showcases many incidents which glorifies classical essence of Yakshagana. The cultural methodology is applied to design my research. The research helps to know more about classical notion of Yakshagana and even reflects on classical genres.

Keywords: Prasanga, Yakshagana, Natya, Classical, Bhagawata

“Geetam Vadyamcha Nruthyamchatraya
Sangeetamuchchate” (Hasyagar 59).

This is Yakshagana which is the combination of three soul elements like Song, Dance and Instruments or Vadhya. Yakshagana is very popular in India as well as in many countries as it has been known for its song, dance and theatre experiments. It is a popular art that compiles dance, music, dialogue, costume, make-up, stage techniques, himmela, mummela with a unique style and form. Therefore, it is the art of arts.

Yakshagana has been known as Folk theatre which is blended with classical elements in it. Hence it popularly called as Folk Art of Karnataka. So, my research paper showcases classical elements of Yakshagana with certain inherent nature. Research problem: Yakshagana showcases it as a unique art performance and it has been considered as Folk art that of classical. But all the attributes of Yakshagana orient the classical essence in it. The problem here is whether Yakshagana attributes Classical essence in it or it is more folk.

Objective: To evaluating the classical essence of Yakshagana and my aim is to showcase the classical attributes in yakshagana with reference of "Lava – Kusa prasanga" as my primary text.

Research questions: Why does Yakshagana considered as Folk form? Is there not classical essence in it? Without

classical essence does it exist? What do Prasanga's show about Yakshagana. Janapada does not have literary script, What about Yakshagana? Is there Janapada stories used in Yakshagana? Or something else? In Music, Dance, Costumes is this showcases Classical or Folk form?

Thesis statement: Yakshagana orients classical essence which employs Indian mythology, Classical Music and classical dance components, Sanskrit impact and basement of Natyashtra in it.

My Primary Text is Lava-Kusha Kalaga Yakshagana video which is performed by Mahila Yakshagana Balaga Gund (Women Yakshagana Team Gund) at Nandigadde Rangamandira on 06-09-2016. This Lava-Kusha Kalaga Prasanga is written by M.A Hegde Siddapur. The video filmed by Ajith Hegde. The artists performed Badagutittu genre of Yakshagana. Yakshagana consists of Himmela and Mummela. For Lava Kusha Kalaga performance Himmela and Mummela consists of following artists.

Himmela: (Background Music)

Bhagawataru: Sri Ananda Ankola

Mrudanga 1: Sri Ganapati KanniJaddi

Mrudanga 2: Sri Venkata Ramana Desai

Chande: Narayana Komar

Direction: Sri Narasimha Bhat Kunkimane

Assistance: Sri R.N Hegde Pragati

Mummela: (Actors)

Kusha: Harshita Upadhya

Lava: Sumangala Desai

Rama: Mangala Hegde

Seeta: Shaila Upadhya

Shatrugna: Surekha Bandekar

Chandrakeetu: Mangala Upadhya

Valmiki Maharshi: Uma Bhagwat

Dhoota: Archana Hegde

The method used for the paper is reading and observation. Methodology is based on Cultural Studies. Mark Franko and Annette Richards performance study theory is applied as theoretical framework to the paper.



Kusha is expressing wrath and ready for war.

1) Great stories from Indian Epics and Puranas

Most of Yakshagana Prasanga's showcase stories from Indian Epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. My primary text, Lava Kusha Kalaga is extracted from Ramayana. The King has to follow four Ashrama's (stage) in his life, this is said in Shashtra. The first ashrama Brahmacharya (practice of celibacy) can be seen in the role of Kusha and Lava where they are studying in Ashrama of Valmiki Maharshi. This stage is the stage of learning which is explained in Veda and exemplified as Gurukhula system. Another stage Vanaprasta (retire stage) can be seen in the role of Rama. For instance, he wanted to do Ashwamedha Yaaga, hence he went on conquest other places where he tied the horse to a tree, the King have to do war otherwise they have to pay kappa (Money). Here is my point that Rama tied his horse to a tree, the younger brother Lava has seen the horse and came to know that it is the horse of Ashwamedha, then went to rescue his place instead of giving kappa. In consequence, he defeated in the war by Shatrugna (brother of Rama). The news reached to Kusha (elder brother) and he went to rescue his brother where he defeated Shatrugna then faced Rama. In between conversation took place between Rama and these children. In this time, the prose work of Valmiki is expressed in the form of Poem where Lava Kusha sings the entire Ramayana in the form of Song. The song is "Purvam Rama Tapovanadhigamanam". So 'Guru - Shishya Parampare' is reflected here. After in the time of war with Rama, Valmiki enters and explains Rama that Lava-Kusha are the children of Rama. Hence, the story of Ashrama's basically explained in Shashtra of Hinduism, so this classical essence can be performed in Yakshagana and one can't see this in Folk stories. The whole prasanga is based on Ashwamedha matter, which is rooted in Dharma sutra of Hinduism.

Yakshagana showcases that people have to follow Dharma (religion) and whoever committed mistakes have to be sentenced. The people even suspected Sita who is one of the five pativrates in Hindu Mythology. As the result of this, Rama led Sita to "Agnipariksha" to check her purity. This scene glorified in the last part of Lavakhusa Prasanga, the scene is full of melancholy. The people is about to cry in this scene. These glorification is having classical essence in it.

2) CLASSICAL MUSIC

The music used in Yakshagana is not any folk songs but it is classical music. The Indian Hindustani and Karnataka Musical essence is glorified. The Ragas are based on Karnataka classical music and the Dhati is as like as Hindustani Music which is sung by Bhagwata (The Singer in Yakshagana). There is one shloka which reveals the great feature of the Bhagwata- "BhakaroBhagawadbhaktahGakaroGarvavarjithahVakaroVakyapatee chtakarasatwanirnayah" (Hasyagar 52). Here Bhagwata is considered as devotee of God. Because he is singing the songs of God. In Lava - Kushaprasanga, the use of these Ragas can be exposed like Raga Saveri, Brundavai Saranga, Mohan, Rag Thodi, Rag Arabhi. These ragas are seen in Carnatic and Hindustani Music but with the help of this Bhagwata uses Gamaka which is a particular music style used in Yakshagana. They use Harmonium, Tala, Shruti, Maddale, Chande (instead of Tabala) which is also used in Indian Classical music. These are instruments of Classical music.

In this Prasanga, Saveeri raga is basement for the song "Dhareyolu Malagirdha Taralaru" where Rama comes and sees the dead children (Chandrakeetu) and his siblings (Bharata and Shatrugna). These people are defeated by Lava Kusha in the war. Raga Saveeri based song is enriches to show the pathetic situation in this Prasanga. After this Rama goes to battlefield to claim war against Lava Kusha. When he saw these children, his heart started to love the children instead of go for war. He felt that these are his own children. The song is "Cheluvanunodidarenalivudennaya mana" which says my heart is in happy mood by seeing these beautiful children. Mohan raga is used to glorify the happy mood of Rama. Further, Rama observes the activities of Lava and Kusha. They perform a dance in this time which is for "Lavanebabanoodubarutihaavanipalaka Ramachandranu" song. This means- Lava see there, the great Rama is coming here. This song is based on Brundavani Saranga of Hindustani Music which is having all Shudda (pure) swara (note) in ascending and Ni komalswara during descending. The song follows the nature of Brundavani Saranga. In react to this song Lava performs another dance which is in Mohan Raga. The song is- "Anna keliivanannukanalukannapapavukaleduhoyitu" which means by seeing this Man all Paapa (mistakes) went away. Mohan Raga is often use in the time of Serious and sorrowful mood. Finally, when Valmiki enters in that time Arabhi raga is taken in "Dharaniparaguvarane Song".

3) Impact of Sanskrit and Natyashashtra.

It has huge impact of Sanskrit and Natyashashtra. In Sanskrit 'Yaksh' means Worship. So, this is the song for worship. In India art is not only used for entertainment but

also to worship God. Here one can remember Kalidasa's Malavikagni Mitram in which he says "Devanamidamamanantimunayahshantamkratum Chakshusham". This means the sages believed that Natya is loved by Deities. Yakshagana is Natya itself which has the ample scale of impact of Sanskrit and Natyashastra. Before entering to the stage without any music and dance, there will be only huge sound of Chande and Maddale (Instruments) which is known as 'Abbarabidtige'. This is mentioned in Bharatashastra and this shastra said it as 'Ashravanavidhihi'. In Lava Kusa Yakshagana first performer Shatrugna not comes directly upon the stage, after completion of Abbarabidtige he enters the stage.



Himmela: Sri Anand Ankola as Bhagawataru and Sri Ganapati Kannijaddi as Mrudanga Player.

Mummela: Harshita Upadhyas as Kusha

On the stage or ranga Himmela people (singers and instrument players) must have to sit behind the Actors who are known as Mummrela. That is like Mradanga player has to sit left side, Bhagwata has to sit right side and next to him there must be Shruti (Tanpura). These rules of Himmela people are mentioned in Natyashashtra. In Lava Kusa Yakshagana performance Himmela followed the same rules not only for this Prasanga but other performance also follow the same rules. In between the Yakshagana Prasanga's are based on Sanskrit Puranas. Shivatandava Dance can be seen in Yakshagana which is mentioned in Natyashashtra. The rasa's like Shringaram, Hasyam, Karunyam, Bibhatsam, Raudram, Bhayanakam, Veeram, Adhbutm are expressed very beautifully in Yakshagana which is mentioned in Natyashashtra. Expressing these rasa's is known as Rasabhinaya. The Natyashastra uses Bhava to create each Rasa. In relation to my primary text Veera and Karuna rasa are expressed primarily.

4) DANCE AND TALA (RHYTHM).

Dhruvo Matyo Rupakashcha Triputamevacha Ashtatalaikatalou cha Saptatalah Prakeritah". (Hasyagar 59).

The talas used in Yakshagana are seven talas, those are Dhruva, Matte, Rupaka, Jampe, Trivude, Ashtatala, Adhitala and main talas used in Lava Kusa Yakshagana are Trivude, Rupaka and Jampe. In this performance Kusa performs a dance in Trivude Tala that is for this song "Lavanebabanodubarutihaavanipalak Ramachandranu". Here Kusa performs to this song which is in particular Tala and he doesn't go beyond the rhythm whatever the expression, steps he can perform that will be within the outline of Tala. Even for Lava "Anna Keeli" song is performed in Trivude Tala. In cheluvanunodidare song Rama performs particular steps and expression in Jampe Tala. The very famous song "Banagu Nrapalarannu Geddihenembanenagobbinindaneenu" where Kusha mocks Shatrugna here Kusha uses different expression and different styles of steps which helps to mock Shatrugna will be within the outline of Tala. Thus it is classically designed and should go with this flow.

Each dance in Yakshagana has its own Laya. The artist has to follow Laya with stepping to rhythm of Chande, Mrudanga and his Mudra's Hand moments, eyes, steps will be expressed in a one particular time. For right leg moment, right eye, right part of face and right hand should be move forward and vise-versa. This particular moments, rules determines the classical essence. Dances showcases Yogasana Mudra's like Padmasana for Sage, chinmudre. In Lava Kusa Yakshagana Kusha performs Chakrasana in one dance he even used Shavasana in this dance. The point is he showcases these within the rules of Yakshagana Dance. Mandi Kunita, Chakra Kunita are famous kunitha's(dance) which also comes under particular Tala system.



Chakrasana is made by Kusha in Kore Tala

5) Costumes in Yakshagana.

The costumes are having the classical essence. Kanchidama, Bhujakeerti, Kireeta are Sanskrit terms and Kaikattu, Tolabandi, Mundale are Old Kannada terms. Rama has to wear Kireeta and Lava Kusha must wear Pagade. Rama must have serious and calm face and Lava Kusha must reveal the childlike innocent face with mature thinking, these are all performed in Lava kusa Yakshagana. These boys should have

bow and arrow; Maharshi Valmiki must apply Vibhuti, must wear Rudrakshi and he must wear cloths of a sage. As a sage he has to conduct Yagna - Yaaga's. One man has to do his particular functions in a particular way, he has to look in a particular manner-these are mentioned in Shashtra and Puranas. One can see these elements while performing Yakshagana. The typical rules and regulations followed by them even in terms of costume.

6)Source of Written Literary Works.

When we consider a song as folk song? Yes, the song will be folk, when it comes from people's mouth to mouth. Folk song or 'Janapada Geete' doesn't have any written document or script, it will always in the mind of people because of its simple form, usage of ordinary language and the song is their part of life. Hence, they don't need any written source of these songs as each and every person knows these songs very well.

In Yakshagana, it orients its own literary documents which is in the form of written works. Yakshagana has its own great poets and their works. Most of great Prasanga's were written by Devidas, Nagappayya, Subba. Subba of Ajapura has written famous works like Pattabhisheka, Panchavati, Seetubandhana, Kusha lavara Kalaga, these are from Ramayana and Iravata, Parijata, Rukmini Swayamvara from Mahabharata. Many words are borrowed from Kannada Shastra. In 9th century the word 'paragana' was used in the work Kavirajamarga. In Keeshiraja's Shabdamani Darpana the word 'Nalpagarana' was mentioned. Rathnakara Varni's Bharateesha Vaibhava reveals some qualities of Natya. The term used in these songs are like Ekkadigaru, Maddale, Tala, Meela, Shruti have been seen in Yakshagana. These are the words which mentioned in the Old Kannada works to show the significance of Yakshagana.

Somehow, Old Yakshagana Prasanga's are constructed on the bases of Kumara Vyasa's Bharata, Kumara Valmeki's Thorave Ramayana, Laxshmisha's Jaimini Bharata, Kanaka Das's Mohana Tarangini and Nala Charitre. Somewhere in Yakshagana original songs which are used in these Old Kannada works are Performed. Yakshagana has particular determined rules,for this reference Krishna Bhandari's Yakshagana Kaipidi book is available.Hence, these written documents are available to enrich the literature of Yakshagana

To sum up, Yakshagana is having classical essence. To the Scope classy elements are glorified more to enrich the Yakshagana. But this is continued as Folk art because in olden era, the performers are rural people. The art is echoing in the heart of people is because of its classical essence.

REFERENCE

- [1] Awasthi, Suresh. "In defence of the Theatre of Roots". Sangeeta Nataka , 1985, pp. 77-78.

- [2] Bapat, Dr. Guru Rao. Semiotics of Yakshagana. Regional Resources Centre for Folk Performing Arts, 1998, pp. 304.
- [3] Bharucha, Rustom. "Ninasam: A Cultural Alternative". Economic and Political Weekly, vol. 25, no 26, 1990, pp. 1404-1411.
- [4] Gill, Harjeet Singh. " The Human Condition in Puran Bhagat". The Word and the World, Sage Publication, 1986.
- [5] Hasyagar, P. V. "Art and Practice". Yakshagana, IBH Publication, pp. 49-102.
- [6] Inamdar, Srimati Nirmala. "Poets, works of Yakshagana". Yakshagana, IBH Publication,pp. 3- 48.
- [7] Karanth, Shivram. "YakshaganaBayalata". SahityaAkademi, vol. 3, no 1, Oct. 59- Mar. 60, pp. 127-130. Ashton, Martha. " Yakshagana: A South Indian Folk Theatre". The MIT Press, vol. 13, no 3, 1969, pp. 148-155.