Drama und Theater in Südasien

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Yakṣagāna Raṅgabhūmi
The World
of the Yakṣagāna Stage

The picture on the cover shows a thermacol-based kēdage mundale, made by Krishnamurthy Urala in 2012.
Property of the author. Photographed by Julian Hughes.

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To my teacher Sanjeeva Suvarna
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Nanna gurugaḷu Sañjīva Suvarṇa
mattu nanna akka Vēdāvati
avarige

Preface

Since this study of *yakṣagāna* was submitted as a doctoral thesis, the world of the *yakṣagāna* stage has continued to be flexible and dynamic.

Some of the most important developments in the professional scene include the decision of the Kaṭīlu *mēḷa* management to pay their artists all year rather than only during the touring season. Furthermore, both Kaṭīlu and Mandārti temples each have launched a fifth troupe with the 2010/2011 season, while performances continue to be booked for the next two decades. The commercial sector has seen as steep decline. The last southern style »tent« troupe, Maṅgaḷadēvi *mēḷa*, was disbanded in October 2011. It is not lack of popularity that is forcing the owner to take this step, but shortage of singers, which is affecting both *harake* and commercial troupes in *teṅku tiṭṭu yakṣagāna*. The last *bhāgavata* of Maṅgaḷadēvi *mēḷa* was reported to have joined Mandārti *mēḷa*, a northern style *harake* troupe. The remaining artists were absorbed into the other two troupes owned by Maṅgaḷadēvi's owner. Interestingly, these are northern style troupes, too. In *baḍagu tiṭṭu*, two commercial troupes, Sāligrāma and Perdūru, remain after the unsuccesful launch of a new commercial troupe, Śrī Mahīṣamardhinī yakṣagāna maṇḍaḷi Nīḷāvara, by Perdūru *mēḷa's* owner for the 2010/2011 season.

The Udupi Yakṣagāna Kēndra has moved into its new building, complete with a raised stage and a wing with flats for the gurus. With the beginning of the 2011 intake, they have also altered the structure of the course so as to allow boys to continue their formal education while training in *yakṣagāna*. Lessons now take place in the early morning and after school in the evening. The new course structure appears to be working to the advantage of all sides. The boys are doing very well academically. The added benefit of schooling is expected to make it more attractive for them remain in training at the Kēndra for several years rather than going into the troupes after only one year.

The doctoral thesis presented here as a book was shortlisted for the International Convention of Asia Scholars Best Dissertation in the Humanities in 2011.

Visual material illustrating costume items and ornaments, as well as the steps in putting on a basic male hero costume with *kēdage mundale* are accessible online at:

<http://indologie.uni-wuerzburg.de/yakshagana_rangabhumi/welcome/>.

Note on transliteration and use of words from Indian languages, Indian personal and place names

As a general rule, words from Indian languages have been transliterated according to academic standards using diacritical marks. Indian personal names have been used in the way found in the source cited or referred to. This results in some persons appearing in several different forms, e.g. M. Prabhakara Joshy, Prabhakara Joshi and Em. Prabhākara Jōṣi are all used in the text. Place names follow commonly used anglicised spellings (e.g. Mangalore). An exception are place names when they are part of troupe names. So it is Mandarti in reference to the place, but Mandārti *mēḷa*. Transliterated words are italicised. Proper names have been capitalised and not set in italics (e.g. Rāma, Kṛṣṇa). Common English forms of Indian terms have been used where appropriate (e.g. brahmin instead of *brāhmaṇa*). Names of Indian languages have not been transliterated (e.g. Kannada, Tulu).

The orthography and (or) transliteration found in works cited has been maintained in quotes. This also applies to American spelling of English words where it differs from the British English maintained in this work.

Long »e« and »o« in words from Kannada have been distinguished from their short counterparts by diacritical marks even if the word in which they appear is a loan word from Sanskrit or other languages which do not need this distinction. Additionally, I have mostly retained »Kannadised« forms of Sanskrit words and names, most frequently and obviously in the instances of those ending in -ā in Sanskrit, which is changed to -e in Kannada (e.g. *pūjā*, *sēvā* become *pūje*, *sēve*). Occasionally, the -ā ending is also used. Plural forms of Indian terms have been generated by adding -s without hyphen. Translations from Kannada are mine if not otherwise indicated.