Parthisubba’s Play: Panchavati Yakshagan

Playwright: Parthisubba
Director: Keremane Shivanand Hegde
Group: Sri Idagunji Mahaganapati Yakshagana Mandali, Karnataka
Language: Kannada
Duration: 1 hr 30 mins

The Play
The performance starts with the traditional invocation Poorvaranga to lord Ganesha with dance and music. Sri Rama moves to the forest, with wife Seeta and brother Laxmana. The sages of the forest complain about the demons and solicit his protection. Rama assures to help them.
Shoorpanakha, Ravana’s sister, smells the odour of human flesh and approaches Rama’s hermitage. Looking at Rama, she gets attracted by him. Using her magical powers she transforms herself as a beautiful damsel and expresses her desire to marry him. Rama, for the sake of fun, advises her to marry his brother Laxmana who is younger, more handsome and yet to be married. With lust and desire, excited Shoorpanakha runs to Laxmana. Laxmana becomes angry, scolds her for her behaviour and asks her to bring proof from Rama. Rama writes on her back, suggesting Laxmana to chop off her ears and nose. Laxmana sees Rama’s orders, and cuts off her ears and nose. Angry Shoorpanakha takes a vow that she will take revenge.

Director’s Note
This episode is selected from the Aranya Kanda of the Ramayana. Happenings in Panchavati is a crucial part of Ramayana and forms a basis for abduction of Seeta. Traditionally, this play was limited to the conversation based Taalamaddale. I have tried to explore new possibilities, besides already existing traditional theatre elements, music and rhythm, in enhancing the portrayal of the characters and

the story. Breaking the barriers of language through simple narration and direction, without losing the framework of impromptu dialogue delivery, dance and narrative motives of Yakshagana, has made this play successful in and abroad India. The depiction and dance of many rishis being choreographed into a single song, the depiction of intimacy of Seeta and Rama, entry and transformation of Shoorpanakha, the dramatic usage of the tere (traditional curtain), expressions of internal emotions, Rama and Laxmana's determinations are some of the notable parts of directions and choreography of the play.
One can see a spectrum of moods, other than the popular Veera, Raudra, Hasya in Yakshagana, i.e. Shringara, Bhayanaka, Karuna and Adbhuta as well.

The Director
Sri Keremane Shivanand Hegde is the present director of this Yakshagana Troupe. He is also Guru and director of a Yakshagana Training Center – Srimaya Yakshagana Ranga Shikshana Kendra in a remote village of coastal Karnataka. Sri Hegde is a fifth generation Yakshagana artist in Keremane family. He has studied and practiced many classical and folk-dance forms apart from Yakshagana and has toured all over the globe heading the Yakshagana Mandali. He has been conferred with many awards (Aryabhata International Award, Kuvempu Deepa Award, Ajithashri, Kusumashri, Chittani Awards etc.) and titles (Yakshagana Kalashekhara, Yaksha Sarathi and Nritya Param). Currently, he is a member of the executive board of Sangeeta Nataka Akademi, New Delhi; the chairman of Folk and Tribal Community of SNA, New Delhi; academic council member of Karnataka State Dr. Gangubhai Hangal Music and Performing Arts University, Mysore; and a member of many other renowned organisations.

The Playwright
Yakshagana poet Parthisubba, believed to have lived in about 1600 AD, is a celebrated composer of many Yakshagana Prasangas

(or poetic episodes). Subba is believed to be the originator of new regional style, the Tenkutittu, the ‘Southern School’ of Yakshagana. He is also believed to be the author (probably the compiler and editor) of Sabhalakshana, a collection of songs used for the preliminary (Purva Ranga) of Yakshagana.

The Group

Yakshagana is a rare 500 year old operative art form which belongs to our rich Indian heritage originating in Karnataka. It is a combination of dance, drama, music, dialogues and stories taken from Indian epics and mythology. Sri Idagunji Mahaganapati Yakshagana Mandali, Keremane® was established in 1934 by Sri Hegde’s grandfather. This mandali is a non-profit NGO, and the performing unit of the organization has toured extensively in India, USA, England, Spain, Bahrain, France, China etc. Many awards and recognitions have been conferred to the mandali from all over the world; the prestigious ‘Raja Mansingh Tomar Award’ conferred by MP Govt. being the most recent.

Cast & Credits

Shri Rama Keremane Shivanand Hegde
Rushi Muni Timmappa Hegde
Shoorpanakha 1 Ishwar Bhat Hamsalli
Maya Shoorpanakha 2 Sadashiv Bhat Yellapura
Laxmana Vighneshwar Havgodi
Rushi Muni Seetaram Hegde Mudare, Shridhar Hegde Keremane, Ganapati Kunabi
Poorvaranga Chandrashekar N.
Seeta Maruti Naik Bailagadde
Poorvaranga Nakula Gouda

Tere Krishna Marathi
Tere &
Green Room Helper Mahaveer Indra Jain
Bhagawata (Singer) Ananta Hegde Dantalige
Chande Player Krishna Yaji Idagunji
Maddale Player Narasimha Hegde Mururu

Playwright Parthisubba
Director Keremane Shivanand Hegde

Contacts
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