

## DANCE DAY – 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2021

### BEESU KAMSALE – A TRADITIONAL FOLK PERFORMING ART

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

'Kamsale' & 'Beesu Kamsale' are folk performing arts found in & around Mysore district of Karnataka state in South India. 'Kamsale' is folk-music art and 'Beesu Kamsale' is the folk-dance art of the 'Devara Gudda', who are the religious professional singers and by tradition worship 'Mahadeshwara' – form of Deity Shiva in the Mahadeshwara hills, near Mysore.

#### 2.0 KAMSALE

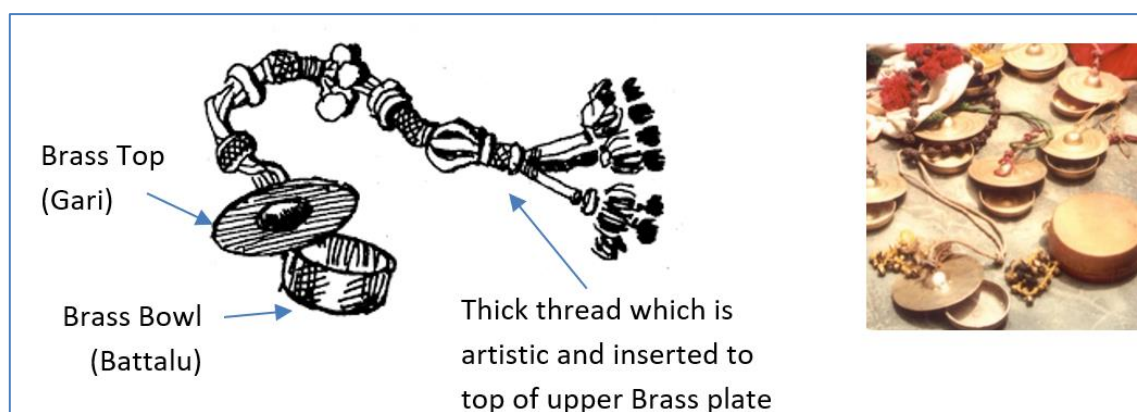
'Kamsale' was originally known as 'Kaamsyataala'. It is called as 'Birudu' by Devaragudda. It is larger in size compared to any 'Taala', a metal musical instrument, which belong to metallic percussion family of instruments – like cymbals.

Basically, 'Kamsale' rhythm instrument consists of following three special parts - refer **Figure-1**.

- (i) It has palm size circular convex shaped brass bowl (Battalu) held in left hand.
- (ii) A flat shaped brass top (Gari) held in right hand at length.
- (iii) Special thread inserted in the flat shaped brass top which helps the dancer to hold it firmly.

The musical sound is produced when the upper brass top brought down to strike the lower brass bowl at the centre. A melodious and rhythmic sound is produced. ***This can be seen in the attached video clip of Beesu Kamsale.***

**Figure-1: Kamsale - a metal percussion instrument**



Kamsale is a singing tradition, and is received, preserved, and transmitted orally from one generation to another. These professional singers go around the neighbourhood and use the instrument for the rhythmic accompaniment to singing and for collecting alms. During receiving of alms, they stretch only the brass bowl and the collected alms is put into a shoulder bag. 'Devara Gudda' are believed to be messenger of Deity and both the alms giver and receiver have a divine purpose and feel it is sacred. In the belief of Devara Gudda, 'Kamsale' is holy & sacred and not a mere instrument for singing.

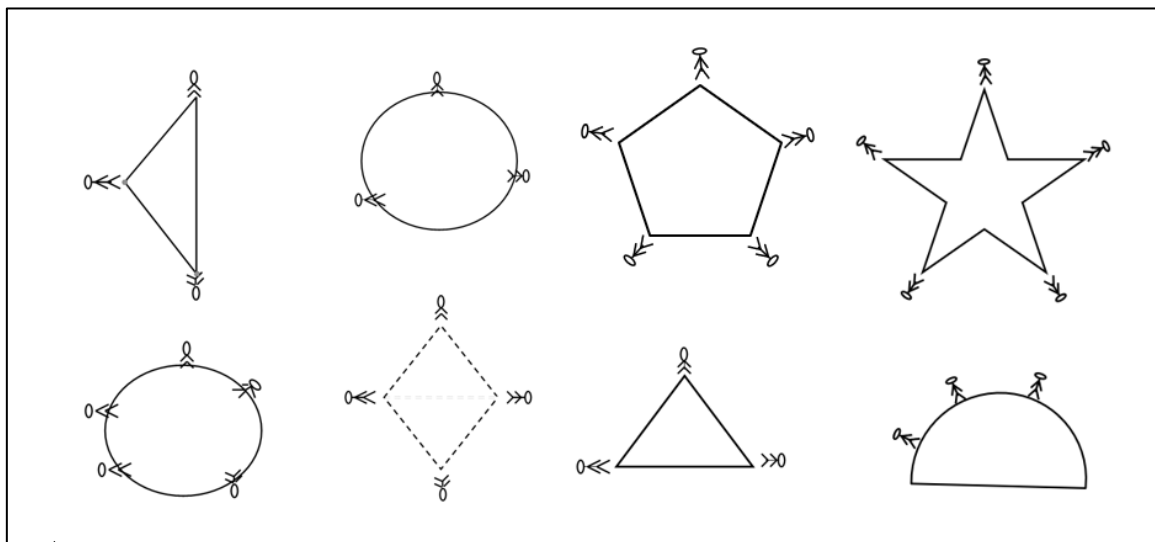
### 3.0 BEESU KAMSALE

'Beesu Kamsale' is an unique dance form of Devara Gudda. 'Beesu' literally means swinging in Kannada language. The song for the dance is mainly about mythological stories of Deity Mahadeshwara. The dancer trains himself spiritedly and develops high level of physical strength, energy, accuracy in rhythm & sense of timing, agility to make momentary designs, synchronisation, concentration and regard for dance. As it is a group dance, he also should develop respect towards co-dancers because the instrument in the hand may injure the co-dancers.

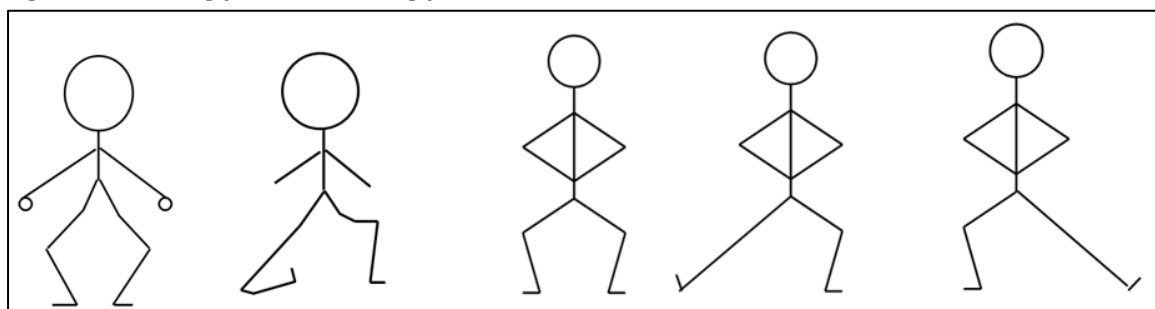
The performance of dance opens with a solo dancer. He starts by swinging 'Gari' on right hand and striking 'Battalu' on left hand according to the rhythm and song played by backstage/ orchestra. He dances for some minutes alone.

The second performer joins the first when a clue is given by the 'Leader of the Group', who is also a 'main' singer. The performance continues without any break or pause. The other performers join the group following this pattern. Finally, the group will consist of eight (8) to twelve (12) performers at the closure of the performance.

**Figure-2: Beesu Kamsale – Patterns/ shapes during performance**



**Figure-3: Dancing positions during performance**



*The above – patterns & movements - can be seen in the attached video clip of Beesu Kamsale.*

#### 4.0 LOCAL COSTUMES OF KAMSALE & BEESU KAMSALE PERFORMERS

- (a) The leading Kamsale singer wear white coloured 'dhoti', white full sleeved long shirt, 'Rudrakshi' neck chain (which was given to him at the time of ordination from his teacher. He decorates neck chain with flowers. He draws 'vibhuti' on his forehead and on throat.
- (b) The dance performer wear 'vibhuti' on his forehead with a dot of vermillion at centre and on throat. He will also wear 'Rudrakshi' neck chain. He wears orange colour full sleeve long shirt, white 'dhoti' (wore like a pant which enable him to stretch, bend, jump, sit etc). Yellow colour piece of cloth which is tied around his waist.

The artistic thread which holds the 'Gari' will be tied around his wrist which enable him swing / strike the 'Battalu'.

- (c) The percussionist who gives playback support wears the neck chain which consists of single bead of Rudrakshi, wears 'vibhuti' on forehead and white 'dhoti', orange coloured full sleeved long shirt and yellow coloured piece of cloth around his neck.

#### **Note: Explanation of some terms.**

- (i) 'Dhoti' is a long piece of cloth which is worn around the trunk/ waist – and covers lower part of body until ankles. It is a type of sarong, tied in a manner that outwardly resembles "loose trousers". It is the national or ethnic costume for men in the Indian subcontinent.
- (ii) 'Vibhuti' – is a sacred ash which is made of burnt dried wood; devotees apply vibhuti traditionally as three horizontal lines across the forehead in honour of Deity Shiva.
- (iii) 'Rudrakshi/ Rudraksha' is a seed that is used as a prayer bead. Rudrakshi chain is made of number of beads.

***The above can be observed in the attached video clip of Beesu Kamsale.***

#### 5.0 CLOSING WORDS

During my research time I travelled extensively in and around my hometown Mysore (Karnataka State). I did field work interviewing artists in person, observing & video recording performances. My observation about folk performing arts is that they are the basis for now what we call 'classical' performing arts.

My hypothesis is proving that classical performing arts are established excellence of folk performing arts. In this paper I gave an example of it through uploading short video clip/ a write-up and the figures explaining the amazing dance of Beesu Kamsale.

Beesu Kamsale dance is an example for the excellence of dance director's creativity and performers' dancing skills. It is performed mainly by men folk but now there are experiments going on successfully by teaching women to perform this art.

I thank president of CID, Prof. Dr. Alkis Raftis and his team for encouraging and supporting the dance artists globally to preserve, protect and perform dance art.

This is my humble presentation towards celebration of International Dance Day which is on 29th April 2021.

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From:

Dr. Uma Narayana Murthy [CID 11715]  
Unit 169-2, Sri Wangsaria Condominium  
Jalan Ara,  
Bangsar Baru-59100  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Sources/acknowledgement:

- Fig-1: the photo & sketch are from following websites – [www.kannadadeevige.blogspot.com](http://www.kannadadeevige.blogspot.com) and <https://kannadafolks.in/>
- Fig-2 & 3 are from research during my Ph. D.
- Video: Field work during my research (Ph. D)
- Ph. D thesis title (translated from Kannada to English): "Folk Performing Arts in & around Mysore"

