

Bhoota Kōla

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In news- Controversy over the practice of 'bhoota kola' in the Kannada movie 'Kantara' erupted recently.

What is 'bhoota kola'?

- Bhoota Kola is **an annual folk ritual performance where local spirits or deities (animistic ritual dance) are worshipped.**
- **There are several 'Bhootas' who are worshipped in the Tulu-speaking** belt of Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada and Udupi districts.
- It is usually performed in small local communities and rural areas.
- **As per Tulu Adivasi tradition, Bhoota Kola or Daiva Kola is a "non-vedic" ritual where Bhootas or Daivas** (guardians and ancestors) are worshipped.
- **Idols representing 'bhoothas' are taken out in a procession** to the beating of drums and bursting of firecrackers.
- It has influenced Yakshagana folk theatre. Bhoota kōlā is closely related to Theyyam of neighbouring Malayalam-speaking populations.
- It is believed that a **person performing the ritual has temporarily become a god himself.**
- This performer is both feared and respected in the community and is **believed to give answers to people's problems, on behalf of the god.**
- The *bhoota* cult is prevalent among the non-Brahmin Tuluvas of Tulu Nadu region.

Types of Kōla-

The Bhūta worship of South Canara is of four kinds, kōla, bandi, nēma, and agelu-tambila:

- **Kōla:** Demi god dancing, is offered to the Bhūtas in the sthana of the village believed to be where they are supposed to reside.
- **Bandi:** Bandi is the same as kōla, with the addition of dragging about a chariot, on which the one who is representing the Bhūta is seated; most often, he is from the nalke, pambada or ajala communities.
- **Nēma:** Nēma is a private ceremony in honour of the Bhūtas, held in the house of anyone who is so inclined. It is performed once in every year, two, ten, fifteen, or twenty years by well-to-do families.
- **Agelu-tambila:** is a kind of worship offered only to the family people, wherein rice, dishes, meat, alcohol are served on plantain leaves and offered to spirits, deities, departed forefathers annually or once wishes are completed.
- In *kōlas* and *nēmas* family and village disputes are referred to the **spirit for mediation and adjudication.**