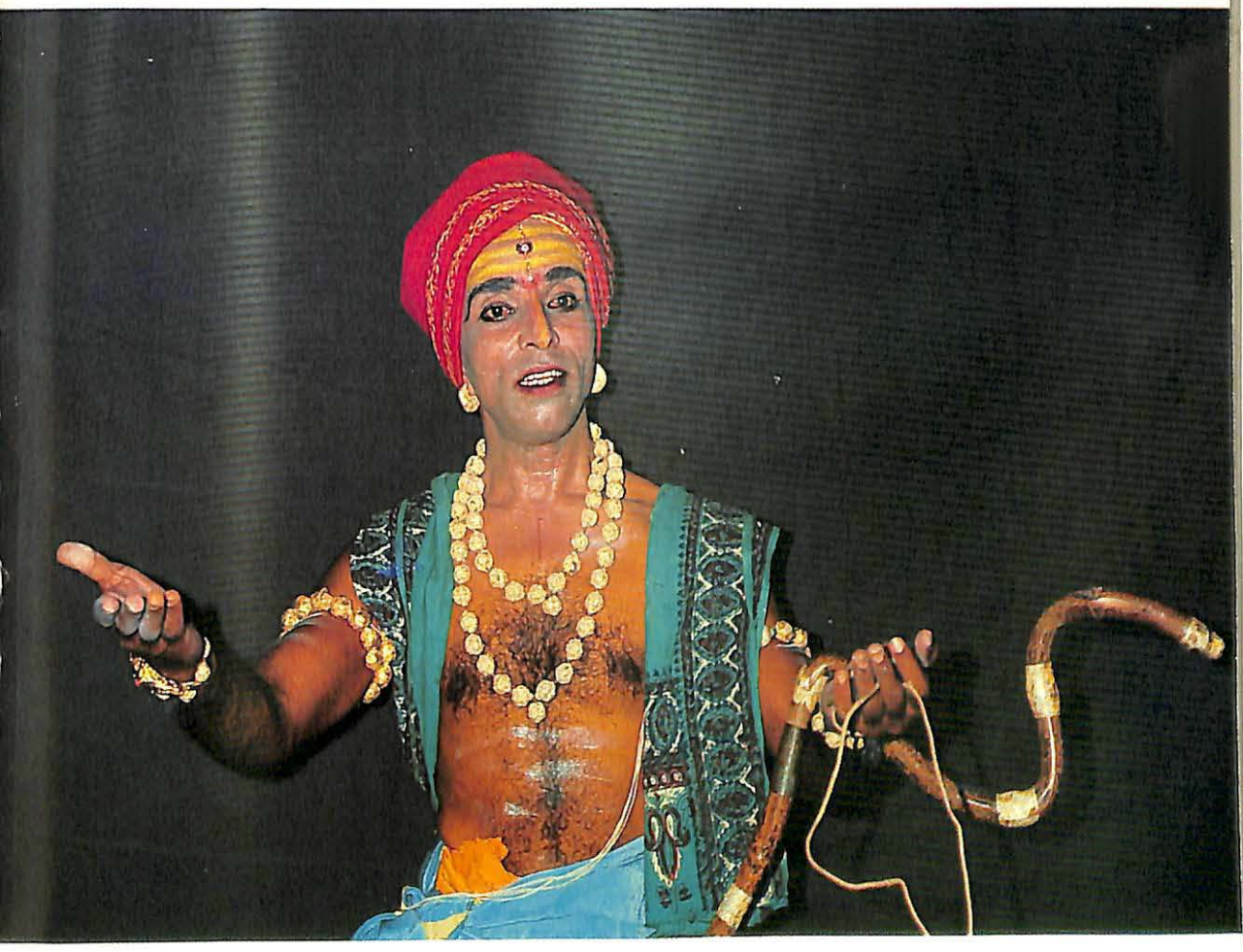


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The contributors to this number include:

Sunil Kothari, dance scholar and critic, Head, Department of Dance, Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta.

George Ruckert, sarodist, teacher of western classical music and formerly Director of the Ali Akbar College of Music, California.

Rustom Bharucha, Artistic Director of the University Theatre and Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Nissim Ezekiel, poet, art critic, until recently Professor of English, Department of English, Bombay University.

Ashok Ranade, musicologist, presently Assistant Director (Research & Ethnomusicology), National Centre for the Performing Arts.

Georg Lechner, Director, Max Mueller Bhavan, Bombay.

Mulk Raj Anand, noted authority on Indian art.

Vamanrao Deshpande, musicologist, author of *Maharashtra's Contribution to Music* and *Indian Musical Traditions.*

Guru Krishnan Kutty, well-known exponent and teacher of Kathakali.

Mohan Nadkarni, music critic, author of *Madhyavarti (Madhya Pradesh ke Pandraha Sangeetkara)* and *Bhimsen Joshi: The Man and his Music.*

Padma Rangachari, research scholar in Carnatic Music, presently with the National Centre for the Performing Arts.

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The Tradition of Kuchipudi Dance-dramas[1]

Sunil Kothari

The Historical Background

Of the many branches of learning which flourished in Andhra from very early times not the least noteworthy is the tradition of the *Natyashastra,* embracing the twin arts of music and dance. The *Natyashastra* mentions the Andhra region in connection with a particular style of dance in the context of the *Vritti*-s. Bharata refers to *Kaishiki Vritti,* a delicate and graceful movement in the dance of this region.[2] A particular *raga* by the name of Andhri was the contribution of this region to the music of India. The dance traditions in Andhra can be traced to various sources. The ancient temples, the Buddhist ruins excavated at Nagarjunakonda, Amaravati, Ghantasala, Jagayyapet and Bhattiprole indicate a flourishing dance tradition in Andhra. Of these the Amaravati *stupa* relics are the most ancient, dating back to the second century B.C.[3] They reveal the great choreographic possibilities of group and composite dances called *pindibandha*-s, mentioned by Bharata and on which Abhinavagupta gives a detailed commentary in *Abhinava Bharati.*[4]

The history of dance, divided into two periods for the sake of convenience on account of the continuity of the Sanskrit and the later development of the vernacular regional languages, admits of two broad limits: from the second century B.C. to the ninth century A.D. and from the tenth century A.D. to the eighteenth century A.D. The latter period coincides with the growth of various regional styles and with the development of the tradition of Kuchipudi dance-dramas.

Treatises on the composite arts of dance and music were written from the eleventh century onwards by a number of Andhra kings and scholars. Important among them are *Saraswati Hridayalankara* by Nanyadeva, *Abhilashitartha Chintamani* or *Mansollasa* by Someshwara and *Sangita Chudamani* by Pratapa Chakravarti. The most important text on dance is, of course, *Nrittaratnavali*[5] by Jaya Senapati, the commander of the elephant force under Kakatiya Ganapati Deva. Other works include Kumar Giri Reddi's *Vasanta Rajiyam* (1440 A.D.), *Sangita Chintamani* by Peda Komati Vema Reddi (1450 A.D.) and *Sangita Parijata* by Ahobala (1600 A.D.). The famous commentators from Andhra are Bhatta Lollata who wrote a commentary on the *Natyashastra.* Abhinavagupta refers to his work and so does Kallinath who wrote the commentary on Sharangadeva's *Sangita Ratnakara.* Singha Bhupala wrote *Rasarnava Sudhakara,* yet another commentary on the *Sangita Ratnakara.*

In Telugu literature, as it developed from the days of Nannaya in the eleventh century A.D., are found elaborate descriptions of dancing. As described in literary works,[6] the thirteenth century A.D. is often regarded as the golden age of dance. Palkurki Somanath, Jayappa, Tikkana and Shrinath dealt with the subject of dance in their works. In *Basava Purana* and *Panditaradhya Charitra,* Palkurki Somanath cites innumerable references to music, dance and drama. *Parvata Prakarana*[7] contains a resume of the technical terms of dance and also a description of the dances as a part of the Mahashivaratri festival at the Shrisailam

shrine. Somanath mentions the *Purvaranga* within the curtain and assemblages of manifold types of dancers and enactments of different stories. He also refers to *Pagativesha* or *Pahala,* a tradition which is still prevalent in Kuchipudi and other villages of Andhra.

Tikkanna mentions, in his Telugu *Mahabharata,* many dances which are not found in the original Sanskrit work. In Shrinath's works there are references to *Sabhavandana* and *Vetrapani* (the guru or *Sutradhara),* who carries a crooked staff in his hand, a practice observed in Kuchipudi dance-dramas. Jaya Senapati's *Nrittaratnavali* includes a detailed account of various dance forms. It refers to both the *Margi* and *Deshi* styles. The *Deshi* or indigenous style is detailed in four chapters and in its description Jaya follows Matɛnga's *Brihaddeshi.* Great importance was attached to the art of dancing as is evident from the elaborate descriptions of various forms.

In the second period, when the regional styles developed, the dance-drama form called *Yakshagana* flourished in Andhra along with the Sanskrit tradition of the *Natyashastra,* the development of the *Uparupaka*-s,[8] and the codification of various minor forms which had predominant elements of music and dance. Though Kohala is mentioned in the *Natyashastra,* no work of his has come down to us, but he is credited with codifying the *Uparupaka*-s. By the time of *Karpuramanjari* by Rajshekhara, musical plays had taken firm root. Various *Natyashastra* treatises refer to and list the *Uparupaka*-s. Among them Bhoja's *Shringaraprakasha,* Sharadatanaya's *Bhavaprakasha,* Sagaranandin's *Natakalakshanaratnakosha* and other works deal with the topic of the *Uparupaka*-s. *Gita Govinda* (twelfth century A.D.) also exercised considerable influence on the development of the Kuchipudi dance-dramas. The tradition of the dance-dramas in Kuchipudi was part of a general trend toward regional vernacular theatre and the Bhakti movement also contributed in a large measure to its development. Inscriptions of the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries reveal that in Andhra, Tamilnadu and Karnataka a variety of theatrical diversions composed of music, dance and drama known as *Brahman Mela* existed. Though no conclusive proofs are available, it is, nevertheless, certain that prototypes of the *Bhagavata Mela Nataka* must have survived prior to the eleventh century. Even earlier, there existed another form of entertainment known as *Shivalilanatyam.* This seems to have been later on replaced by the introduction of Vaishnavite themes and eventually an altogether different identity emerged. *Shivalilanatyam,* describing the various activities of Lord Shiva in poetic form, was performed at Shiva temples and *Vishnulilanatyam,* depicting the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu, was presented at Vishnu temples.

Of the many theatrical diversions prevalent during this period, the *Bhagavata Mela* dance-dramas originated from earlier forms of the *Uparupaka*-s and the *Yakshagana*-s. A traditional composite art form of Telugu folk *Yakshagana* is the musical play, sharing the characteristics of opera and ballet combined in one presentation.[9] It originated in Andhra, was later adopted and patronised in Karnataka and Tamilnadu and enjoys an eventful history of more than six centuries. More than 800 works were produced by 465 authors. Of these 542 works are available, some in print and others mostly in manuscript.[10]

Although no specimen of the sixteenth century vernacular drama has survived, the names of the few plays such as *Tayikondanataka* and *Gangavatara* are preserved in inscriptions and literature. They seem to be the earliest represen-

tatives of the modern *Yakshagana.* The plays were enacted by the artistes of the courtesan community who banded into itinerant companies, staging plays usually connected with some Puranic story. A group of players constituted itself into a *mela.*[11] The plays were generally staged on important occasions such as festivals like Brahmotsava. Some interesting details of the stage are cited by a few writers of the time. The curtain was frequently used and the characters were said to emerge from behind it.

The Brahmin exponents of the art of *Nattuva Mela* or *Brahman Mela* shaped the *Yakshagana* into a more stylized form, conforming to the tenets of Bharata's *Natyashastra.* They gave a new life to *Yakshagana* performances of the succeeding generations and were responsible for evolving a new type of *Yakshagana* called *Kalapam.* It became a lyrical dance-drama presentation and had an abiding impact on *Yakshagana* texts and performances. The dance-drama form which flourished during this period, a century before the golden era of the Vijayanagar empire, appears to be the tradition of Kuchipudi dance-drama. Known as *Yakshagana* and *Nattuva Mela* or *Brahman Mela,* this form achieved its own individual character, imbibing the elements of classical and folk. In a climate conducive to the growth of the performing arts there must have been some commerce between the classical solo exposition, the temple dances and its exponents. Thus the two streams of solo exposition and the dance-drama forms developed, reaching a high watermark during the heyday of the Vijayanagar empire.[12]

The earliest reference to a performance of this category seems to be one found in *Machupalli Kaifiyat* of 1502 A.D. The local records were collected at the instance of Surveyor-General Mackenzie.[13] According to the local records, a troupe of dancers-actors seems to have obtained audience with Immadi Narasa Nayaka, the ruler of Vijayanagar, and entertained him and his court with a dance-drama that artistically hinted at the sufferings of the people at the hands of Sammeta Gurava Raju of Siddhavatam, the local chieftain. The artists succeeded in impressing the king and enlisting his support in liberating them from the malpractices of the local chieftain. Sammeta Gurava Raju was defeated by the army and the artists were protected.

This historical record enables us to determine the period of the Kuchipudi dance-drama tradition as flourishing in Andhra at least a hundred years before this event, that is from the fifteenth century. The dance-drama tradition was shaped and nurtured by the *Bhagavatulu*-s and *Acharya*-s. It was also a period when the Bhakti cult spread to many parts of India. And the art of dance-drama became a vehicle for its expression.

Siddhendra Yogi, who according to a legend, is considered to be the founder of the Kuchipudi dance-drama tradition was a devotee of Krishna. An orphan, he was looked after by kind neighbours who had him married in his childhood. But when he came in close contact with the followers of Narahari Tirtha he was sent to Udipi for intense Vedic studies. After his training, he returned to Shrikakulam and was known as Siddhendra. When his identify was established by the elders of the village, he was asked to join his wife. Siddhendra set out to visit his wife's home. On the way he had to cross a river in full spate. Midstream he found it difficult to swim and prayed to the Lord that if he reached the other bank alive he would devote his life to the propagation of *Bhakti.* He then became

a *Sanyasi* and renounced all earthly attachments. Well-versed in the *Natyashastra,* he composed a dance-drama *Parijatapaharana* and came to Kuchelapuram, the presentday Kuchipudi village. He gathered Brahman boys round him and asked them to perform the work as a dance-drama and as a form of offering to Lord Krishna. He took a promise from them that they would perform the play once every year. They, in turn, assured him that their sons and descendants would preserve the tradition.

The descendants of the Brahman families, it is believed, continue this tradition of the Kuchipudi dance-dramas. The performers are all male and some of them impersonate female characters. *Nrittaratnavali* refers to *Brahman Mela* and *Nattuva Mela,* the latter being the dances of the female temple servants (*devadasi*-s). Jaya, the author of *Nrittaratnavali,* was a student of a Brahman dance-master Gundamatya. The Brahman artistes came to be known as *Bhagavatulu*-s in Andhra and as *Bhagavatara*-s in Tamilnadu. Although the tradition is known as *Kuchipudi* dance-drama, it can also be called the *Bhagavata Mela Nataka*-s as the plays are performed by the *Bhagavatara*-s and *Bhagavatulu*-s. But in order to distinguish these dance-dramas from the *Bhagavatar Mela Nataka*-s of Tamilnadu, they are referred to as Kuchipudi dance-dramas after the village of Kuchipudi.

There is one more historical record[14] which indicates that the tradition was supported by the rulers. In 1678, a Kuchipudi performance was arranged for Abdul Hasan Tahnishah, the Nawab of Golkonda, during his visit to Masulipattanam. He was pleased with the performance and announced on a copper plate the grant of the lands of Kuchipudi village to the Brahmans who took part in the dance-drama. Later on, a dispute arose among these members and the families regarding their share of the land. A partition deed[15] was drafted by two agents of the Nizam of Hyderabad, Mosalkanti Kanoji Pantulu and Kandargulu Jogi Pantulu. According to that deed, the families who are entitled to a share of the land are Vedantam, Vempatti, Hari, Bhagavatulu, Pasumarti, Jyosula, Mahankali and Yelesvarapu. These families still live in Kuchipudi, perform dance-dramas and keep the tradition alive. Every artist in Kuchipudi dreams of playing once in his lifetime the role of Satyabhama in the play *Parijatapaharana,* which later came to be known as *Bhamakalapam.* The art of dance-drama is also practised in other villages like Shrisailam, Kappatrala, Alampura, Banganpalli, Marampalli and Mandapeta.

Bhamakalapam

The story of *Parijatapaharana* revolves round the Parijata tree in Indra's garden. Krishna offers a flower of the Parijata to his consort Rukmini, and Narada, the mischievous sage, reports the incident to Satyabhama, who insists on having the flower for herself. Krishna brings the Parijata tree from Indra's garden and plants it in Satyabhama's grove. The story is found in *Harivamsha* and there are other versions in *Vishnupurana* and *Bhagavatapurana.*[16] *Parijatapaharana nataka,* if staged as a complete dance-drama, would require seven nights. In its present form (*Bhamakalapam*), it is a one-night performance. It has the quarrel between Krishna and Satyabhama for its theme. Krishna is visiting Satyabhama. He gazes in the mirror and asks her who is more beautiful — he or she? Satyabhama, in her vanity, declares that there is none as beautiful as she. Krishna returns to his palace and Satyabhama realises that she has forgotten her decorum and offended Krishna. She repents and begs her friend Madhavi — the role is tradi-

tionally played by the *Sutradhara* in the *natyadharmi* mode — to go to Krishna and bring him back to her palace. She writes a letter (*patralekha*) begging Krishna's forgiveness and sends it with Madhavi to him. Krishna relents and returns to Satyabhama's palace. After an interesting interlude of repartee, the two are united again.

In the brief and popular version (*Bhamakalapam*) of *Parijatapaharana,* there are only five characters: Krishna, Satyabhama, Narada, Rukmini and Madhavi. The character of Satyabhama overshadows all the other characters. The principles laid down in the *Natyashastra* regarding the expression of *vipralambha shringara* and *sambhoga shringara* are beautifully portrayed in the play: Satyabhama is separated from Krishna and in the end is united with him. In particular, the *vipralambha shringara* offers scope to the artiste to display his histrionic talent and suggest the pangs of separation. The *Natyashastra* enumerates a variety of ways of depicting love-sickness[17]: anxiety, weariness of the body, gazing vacantly at the sky, lassitude, sighs, speaking with a touch of pathos, fingering various items of jewellery, clinging to some support, etc. In order to help her bear the separation, the *sakhi* (confidante) attempts to fan the *nayika,* to apply sandal paste on her limbs, to play music, and engage her in other diversions. But nothing makes the *nayika* happy. She then sends the message with the *sakhi* to the *nayaka.* The artiste impersonating Satyabhama's role portrays all these emotions, following the *Natyashastra* tradition, to heighten the effect of *virahavastha.*

The Performance

The Kuchipudi dance-dramas are all-night performances held in the open. A make-shift stage is arranged and the audience sits on the ground. Formerly it was customary to perform in a narrow street in front of the Ramalingeshwara Temple. But nowadays performances are staged in more spacious grounds. A number of ceremonies and rituals are observed before the dance-drama proper begins. A prayer in praise of the goddess Amba is recited. Then enters a young boy who circles round the stage, holding a flagstaff, the Jarjara *dhwaja* of Indra referred to in the *Natyashastra.* Then follows the lamp and *dhupa* (incense) and the dancer offers *pushpanjali.* Soon a dancer enters carrying a pitcher filled with consecrated water. He sprinkles it on the stage. Then the *Sutradhara* with his *kuttilaka* (crooked stick) enters and conducts the performance. He announces the title of the dance-drama to be enacted. He keeps *tala* with the cymbals and takes his seat to the left of the stage with the other musicians.

Before the actual dance-drama begins, two stage-hands holding a curtain enter and, behind the curtain, a dancer with the mask of Ganapati shuffles his feet. The curtain is then removed and the dancer dances to the music of *Tandava Nritya Kare Gajanana.* The stage-hands hold torches in their hands and from time to time they sprinkle *guggilam* on the flames which flare up illumining the mask of Ganapati.

Before Satyabhama enters, the stage-hands bring the curtain on the stage and from behind is thrown a decorated braid (*jada*) as part of the convention. It is said that if any one challenges the artist playing the role of Satyabhama and succeeds in outshining him the braid is cut off and given to him as a trophy. Once in the past, when such an occasion arose, the challenge was averted when









it was discovered that both the artistes belonged to the same family. Nowadays it is only observed as a ritual.

With the rendering of the song *Bhamane Satyabhamane,* Satyabhama enters but stays behind the curtain. Once it is removed, the dancer who plays Satyabhama's role has an opportunity to display the full gamut of his talents. This item is called *patrapravesha daru. Daru* is derived from the Sanskrit word *Dhruva* which is explained by Abhinavagupta in his commentary on the *Dhruvadhyaya.*[18] Dhruva means 'to establish'. Through this theatrical convention a character enters on the stage and establishes himself or herself. He describes himself either in the third person or the first person. This convention is also found in other dance-dramas and traditions like *Bhagavata Mela Nataka* of Tamilnadu, *Yakshagana* of Karnataka and *Ankiyanata* of Assam.

Satyabhama executes the footwork and *nritta,* besides enacting *abhinaya* to the song. Formerly the dancer used to sing. Nowadays the vocal support is provided by the vocalist in the orchestra. The *Sutradhara* then gets up and impersonates the role of Madhavi, the confidante. When Satyabhama asks her to go and bring Krishna, Madhavi feigns ignorance and asks who it is Satyabhama wishes to see. Then follows *uttarapratyuttara daru,* dialogue replete with humour, where Madhavi ridicules Satyabhama whenever she tries to suggest that it is Lord Krishna whom she wishes to call. Satyabhama explains her plight. The dance and music are in the nature of a rebuke to the moon and to Kamadeva (*Chandra-dushanam* and *Manmathadushanam* songs). Satyabhama blames both the moon and Kamadeva for harassing her when her beloved is away.

The *nritta* employed has a lilting quality. The undulating movements are typical of Kuchipudi and different from the technique of Bharata Natyam. The movements are more rounded and the tempo is quite racy, the effect quick and mercurial. Basic units, *adavu*-s, as in case of the Bharata Natyam, are also to be found in the Kuchipudi technique. But their execution is different.

The unfolding of the dance-drama proceeds with regular dialogues in Telugu sprinkled with humour, songs and dance. The literary devices employed are *vachanam*-s, *sisardham*-s, *kandam*-s and *kandardham*-s. The dance, *abhinaya,* dialogue and songs follow in quick succession carrying the action further. In the end, after Satyabhama and Krishna are united, Satyabhama brings *arati* and offers flowers and, with the *mangala shloka*-s, the dance-drama comes to an end.

The other dance-dramas favoured by the dance-drama troupes and popular with the audiences are *Prahlada Charitram, Usha Parinayam, Shashirekha Parinayam, Rukmini Kalyanam, Mohini Rukmangada* and *Harishchandra Nataka.* In recent times *Kshirasagaramathanam* and *Vipranarayana* have earned popular favour. The traditional dance-drama *Gollakalapam,* in which the milk-maid enters into an argument with a learned Brahman and defeats him on his own ground, is also performed frequently.

An interesting feature of these dance-dramas is the inclusion of the *tarangam*-s from the *Krishnalilatarangini.* During the *tarangam*-s the dancer balances on the rim of a brass plate and executes complex *tala*-s. Sometimes he also places a pitcher full of water on the head as he continues to dance. These *tarangam*-s appear at different junctures in a dance-drama as interludes and diversions.

The mode of *abhinaya* is both *natyadharmi* and *lokadharmi,* that is, stylised and realistic. The link with the *Natyashastra* tradition is clearly seen in the employment of various *daru*-s, the depiction of *vipralambha* and *sambhoga shringara* and the *samanyabhinaya.* During the dialogues, for instance between Satyabhama and Madhavi, the *abhinaya* is *lokadharmi,* with the emphasis on the comic element (*hasya rasa*). The music used is classical Carnatic and the most common *raga* in Kuchipudi dance-dramas is Mohana, whose combination of notes is appropriate for the expression of various shades of *shringara.* On the whole, the salient features of Carnatic music are present in abundance. The *tala*-s and *jati*-s employed in *nritta* are noteworthy for the handling of rhythm and embellishments. The singers employ various combinations of *jati*-s in different speeds while directing intricate and lively dance patterns. The musical instruments used as accompaniment include the mridangam, violin, flute, tutti, cymbals and the harmonium.

A special kind of light wood is used to fashion ornaments which are given gold-colour coating. Crowns, chest and shoulder-ornaments (*bhujakiritam*-s) are used for royal characters. The costumes are regal: a long coat, scarves, *dhoti* and other paraphernalia. The women wear Conjeevaram sarees and ornaments for the head, hands, nose, waist and ankle-bells. The *Sutradhara* wears a *pugree,* and necklaces of *rudraksha* beads. Since most of the stories are drawn from mythology, the characters are both human and divine and care is taken to devise appropriate costumes for both the categories.

The Present Situation

Among the contemporary artistes from the Kuchipudi village, Vedantam Satyanarayana Sharma is decidedly the most gifted. His portrayals of Satyabhama and Usha follow the *Natyashastra* tradition. The principles laid down for the *nayika*-s come alive in his performances. So vast is his range and so great his talent that he overshadows all the rest. The Venkatrama Natya Mandali (which he manages) travels throughout Andhra and other major cities of India. He was trained by Chinta Krishnamurti and by his own brother Prahlad Sharma. His two nephews Sitaramayya and Manikyal Rao, sons of Prahlad Sharma, are now following in his footsteps and specialize in female roles. Kuchipudi village in the Krishna District is nearly 35 kilometers away from Vijayawada and Siddhendra Kalakshetram houses an institution where training is imparted on the lines of the *gurukula* system, with facilities for residential accommodation. Nowadays girls have been permitted to perform Kuchipudi. But the dance-drama troupes have no female dancers in their troupes.

The emerging form, in terms of solo exposition on the lines of Bharata Natyam, has also become very popular. Vempatti Chinna Satyam's contribution in shaping the contemporary repertoire and lending the form dignity and sophistication is very significant. He heads the Kuchipudi Art Academy in Madras and has trained several female dancers in Kuchipudi. He has also choreographed dance-dramas like *Kshirasagaramanthanam* and *Padmavati Srinivasa Kalyanam.*

During the festival of *Janmashtami,* a series of dance-dramas is organised in Kuchipudi. Hundreds of spectators squat on the floor and watch an all-night performance in the open air. At times there is also audience participation. It is



Kurchela Brahmananda Bhagavatar in *Bhama Kalapam.*

customary to garland the artiste during the performance—after he has rendered *abhinaya* to a song or *ashtapadi.* A young girl or a boy from the audience walks up to the stage and garlands the artiste. The stories are all familiar to the audiences who watch the performance with rapt attention. Though the dance-dramas are also presented in the metropolitan centres, the impact is best seen in the various villages of Andhra, where the form derives its sustenance from appreciative audiences.

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1. This article is based on ten years of research and several field trips to Kuchipudi and its environs. The findings were submitted in 1977 in the form of a thesis ('The dance-drama tradition of Kuchipudi, Bhagvata Mela Nataka and Kuravanji with special reference to the *Rasa* Theory as expounded in Bharata's *Natyashastra*') for Ph.D. to the M. S. University, Baroda.
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6. Krishnamurti, A. Vaidehi: *Social and Economic Conditions in East Deccan* (1000-1250 A.D.), p. 179.

7. *Andhragranthamala,* 30. See also Sarma, M. S: *History of Reddi Kingdoms,* p. 425 ff. and the section on Telugu Culture in Volume III of the Telugu Encyclopedia, Madras University.

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10. *Ibid.*

11. Venkata Ramanayya, N: *Studies in the History of the Third Dynasty of Vijayanagar,* p. 411.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.* p. XV, Sources; Appendix C, pp. 462-63. Telugu Text: *Viranarasimha and the Kuchipudi Mela.* Local records 56. The Kaifiyat of Machupalli, pp. 66 ff.

14. *Ibid.* This is another instance of a record of Kuchipudi performance.

15. The partition deed and other legal documents are in the possession of Mahankali Lakshminarasimha Shastri of Kuchipudi village and I was shown these documents while preparing the geneological tables of the various families who have inherited a share in the land.

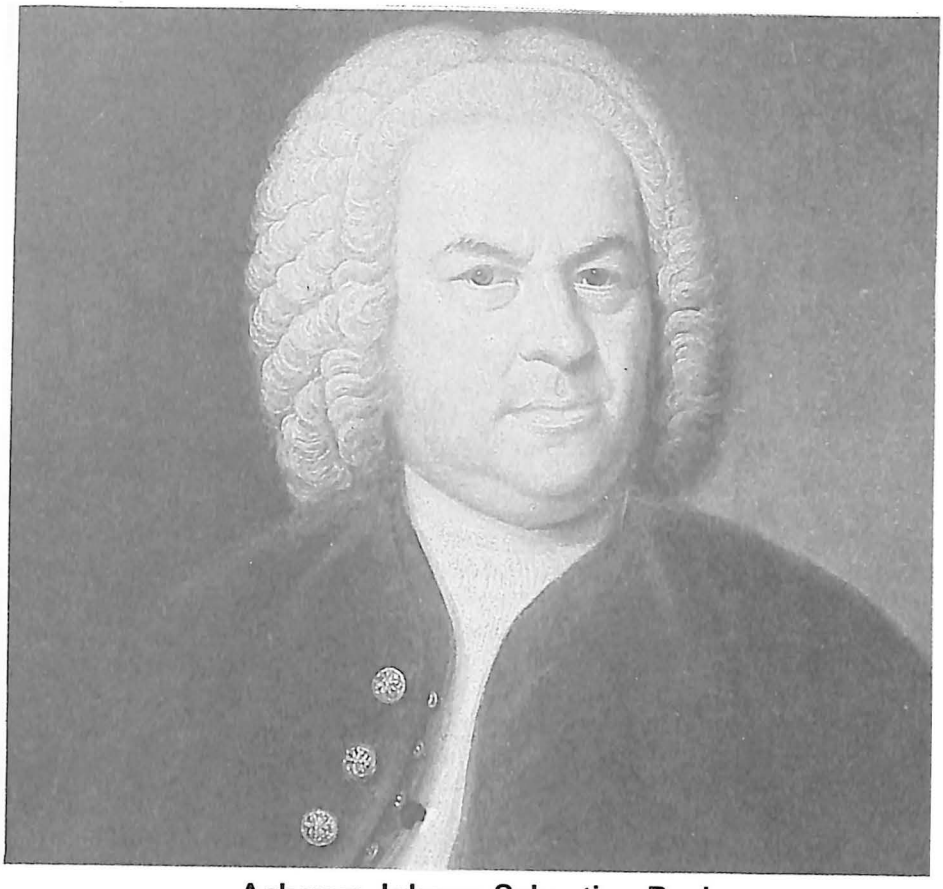
16. Vettam, Mani: *Puranic Encyclopedia:* A comprehensive dictionary with special reference to the epic and Puranic literature. 4th edition. Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1974, pp. 704-705.

17. *Natyashastra,* Part III. Chapter on *Samanyabhinaya.* It deals with the *Nayika bheda*-s and refers to *abhinaya* in *vipralambha shringara* and *sambhoga shringara.* GOS. Oriental Institute, Baroda.

18. *Natyashastra,* Part IV. See Chapter XXXII on *Dhruvadhyaya.* GOS. Oriental Institute, Baroda.

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Acharya Johann Sebastian Bach

George Ruckert

Was Johann Sebastian Bach western classical music's "last Asian composer"? The question was raised in Bombay in March (5 and 6) at a Seminar celebrating the 300th anniversary of the birth of the great German composer. Sponsored by the Max Mueller Bhavan in cooperation with the National Centre for the Performing Arts, the Seminar focussed on one of Bach's final works, the famous *Art of the Fugue*. This is a collection of inter-related pieces which demonstrate the composer's incomparable ability to compose various styles of counterpoint, especially that of the fugue itself. He was one of the last musicians of the great polyphonic style, a style in which melodies are blended together and yet retain their own characters as individual lines. In Bach's music, the result was a gloriously intricate harmonic texture as well.

The Seminar was centered around the lecture of Dr. Werner Breig, a Bach specialist from the University of Wuppertal in West Germany. The *Art of the Fugue* was presented in an absorbing and fascinating manner complete with recorded musical examples, as well as Dr. Breig's sensitive and beautiful piano playing. And through his incisive analyses, he revealed the many aspects of Bach's creative genius, so that we in the audience came to realize that many of

the facets, or parameters of this eighteenth century composer's music were remarkably similar to the techniques and substance of the Hindustani and Karnatic traditions. Dr. Georg Lechner of the Max Mueller Bhavan (Bombay), who chaired the Seminar, volunteered that indeed Bach may have been the "last Asian composer" in the west. When Bach died in 1750, the glories of his style faded almost immediately, and stylistically the music that followed seems somewhat more remote from Indian music. Let us examine a few of the points which came up in the Seminar and see how Bach's might be compared with the Indian classical traditions.

When Bach was born on March 21, 1685, Germany was not yet a nation in the modern sense. It was a collection of assorted states, ruled by princes (electors, barons, margraves, and the like), with a wide variety of sizes and characteristics not unlike the feudal states of India. For periods they would be united under a strong king or emperor, but the most unifying factor was the powerful Christian Church; in fact, confederations of states had known somewhat of a unity under the name of the Holy Roman Empire. A musician's employment was at one of the princely courts or in the church, and the resulting system of patronage is directly comparable to the tradition which prevailed in India until the twentieth century. For Johann Sebastian Bach, both the church and the court offered support and occasion for his skills as a performer and composer. For most of his active musical life, though, it was the Lutheran Church which provided for him and his large family while demanding his richly abundant musical energy. His credo was that music was "for the greater glory of God", and he even appended this motto in Latin to his musical manuscripts. It was an attitude not so far removed from the idea of *Nada-Brahma* which has attuned *shastriya* musicians for thousands of years.

The name Bach means "brook" in German, and Beethoven was to pun with respectful awe a half century later, "not 'brook' but 'ocean' should have been his name". It is a name of vast musical reputation as well. For over 250 years, beginning around 1600, members of the Bach family provided every type of prevailing music: for that of small town functions, liturgical church works, and later cosmopolitan concertos and symphonies. Perhaps it is not a *gharana,* for so many styles are represented in the long family history that one would be hard-pressed at times to identify the similarities between fathers and sons; yet the family was professionally musical in the same sense as the *khandan*-s of the Hindustani traditions.

In his youth, Bach learned his trade in the family household from his older relatives. Through both rote learning and later by copying manuscripts, he mastered the vocal and instrumental styles of his era. He was proficient on the violin and keyboard instruments, and in a somewhat Indian fashion, became adept at adapting music for whatever instrument might be at hand. By the time he was a young man, he had acquired the kind of practical and thorough training which is similar to that of many of the old pandits and ustads. Not the *guru-shisya-parampara,* perhaps, but family-oriented, practical, and applied.

If Indian classical music was lifted, inspired, recentered, and given a new direction by the Bhakti Movement, then certainly a similar statement can be made about the music of Bach. For likewise, the Protestant Reformation was both a reaction and a redirection of the spiritual consciousness of the west, with a

different set of social encounters than its Indian counterpart, but similar results: an emphasis on the individual's devotional relationship with God and the expression of it in the common tongue. As Tulsidas, Mirabai, Kabir and others turned from Sanskrit to forge their expression in the vernaculars which became modern Hindi, so Martin Luther and later Bach found in the German language the immediacy and communication of the spiritual message which the old church Latin had lost. Thus both language and music issued from and spoke to the heart of the people, creating anew a kind of *Deshi sangeet* in the *shastriya* framework. So powerful was Bach's declamation that he is sometimes called "the fifth evangelist", a statement strongly reminiscent of Bharata's *Natyashastra* being termed "the fifth Veda" in an earlier era.

From the practical to the theological to the scientific points of view, Bach's vision was immense. Anyone familiar with *tala, tihai* and *layakari* has realized the connection between music and mathematics. The extension of this association into the related aspects of geometry and morphology is seen in much of the world's art and music. Stating a theme forwards, backwards and upside down, as well as expanding and compressing it, and stating it on different pitch levels is part of the fodder of composition, east and west. One contemporary of Bach, Leibnitz, writing in 1716, made this beautiful statement: "Music is the hidden exercise of a mathematical mind unconscious that it is calculating". The *Art of the Fugue* is replete with the processes which would inspire any *dhrupadiya.* Dr. Breig's exposition revealed that Bach was working with a conscious use of numerology in this and many other of his works as well. For example, the use of musical materials derived from the number fourteen, which is numerologically related to the name *Bach,* is found in several of his works. So it is no coincidence that there are fourteen fugues in the *Art of the Fugue.* In the eighteenth century, mathematics was seen as a divine science of proportion which should be mirrored in art.

Bach wrote down his music note for note. He was criticised in his day for doing this, because it was an era in which improvisation was considered essential to music. Furthermore, grace, or ornamentation, was seen as life-giving just as it is in Indian music. Contemporary accounts reveal that Bach was capable of improvising with a level of virtuosity and fecundity of imagination which was astounding. It is little wonder, though, that he wished to preserve what he created by casting it in written form, including ornaments. Of course, when his music was intended for many voices or players, it was necessary to write it down so all could follow it. But Bach's writing was more specific than had heretofore been seen. Still, it is an important feature of Bach's music that it was generated by a mind which could create the lines spontaneously in an improvised setting as well. We know from his own words that the complexities of his composition required methodical working out and review, but the overall flow and ease which typifies his music can only have come about by years spent in improvisation. It has the overwhelming power and drive of an Ustad Ali Akbar Khan with the effervescent lyric outpouring of a Ghulam Ali Khansahib.

Another aesthetic concept of Bach is very much alive in classical *sangeet:* the idea of *rasa* (or affection, as it would have been labeled in eighteenth century Europe). A composition was cast in a particular feeling (affection) which was projected in a number of ways, mainly through the choice of scale and the intervals emphasised in the themes. Thus music was considered to have the power of

expression of emotion and even philosophical ideas. For example, when Bach wished to show sadness (*Karuna rasa*), he might use a minor sixth, such as the *S d* in Bhairavi or *Ṛ g* in Kafi; or thirds and fourths could indicate joy, as in *Ṛ S R G* or *S G P,* etc. While many of these emotionally-laden figures grew out of the dictates of harmony, others are more linear, and have a feeling similar to *raga* phrases. Dr. Breig further showed how Bach could illustrate a concept such as separation through tone painting. Perhaps the most outstanding example is the composer's use of a serpentine melodic figure to represent original sin (symbolized by a snake in the Bible), which is, allegorically, the separation of God and man. In the *Art of the Fugue,* such a phrase comes towards the end where the composer has used a theme derived from the letters of his own name B A C H (*sargam, ṇ Ḍ S Ṇ*). In its final statement, this theme is transposed to come to rest on the tonic (*Ṇ ṇ r S*), which can be interpreted as symbolic of divine reconciliation. Significantly, the *Art of the Fugue,* left incomplete at the master's death, breaks off at this point.

A further technique of Bach's day was to use specific instruments to suggest one color or mood in a composition. These instruments are featured throughout a movement of a work in a solo capacity so that one timbre dominates. Trumpets would cry out in triumph and joy (*vira rasa*), and shenai-like double reeds might impart a rustic sadness. Later western orchestras tended to blend instrumental color so that one given *rasa* did not predominate in the same sense. Indian music does not really raise the issue, except for the dominance of one timbre and color in instrumental music.

Tempo would be another part of the unifying aesthetic. The mood was not distorted by changes in *laya;* once the beat commenced, it was maintained steadily throughout the piece, not unlike Karnatic and much Hindustani music. However, fast compositions could be grafted together in sections to slower ones, a practice not usually found in *sangeet,* where the movement is commonly from slow to fast.

Bach's pieces in faster tempos have a running pattern of notes which carries the music along in perpetual motion, hence the Latin name for this style, *perpetuum mobile.* This atmosphere of nonstop movement is further enhanced by the overlapping of melodies. Where one stops, another begins, so that the forward motion is continual. This is rather unlike the music of both *khayal* and *dhrupad,* where the arrival at the *sam* of the *tala* or the reintroduction of the *mukra* of the composition will bring a variation to a summation or climax. It is more like the effect of *tappa,* perhaps, or the headlong rush of the *jhala*-s of *tarana* or instrumental music, which creates a similar effect, the elation of motion. Moreover, the *perpetuum mobile* style is very definitely a part of solo tabla playing, where *kaida* and *raila* variations succeed each other in a continuous stream; and in the footwork of Kathak dance, where a succession of variations is presented without interruption.

In some of the music of Bach, especially in the pieces for solo instruments and concertos, the compositions incorporate *tan*-s: *chhut, sapat* and *alankar.* Often highlighted for their virtuostic displays, *tan*-s will also be used for their character as musical fabric and texture, especially the *alankar*-s. A phrase will be repeated in sequence in ascending or descending patterns. Bach, I am sure, would have taken great delight in the *alankar tan*-s of, say, Kesarbai Kerkar.

Bach was a contemporary of Niyamat Khan (Sadarang), the great *dhrupadiya* of the court of Mohammad Shah Rangile. Sadarang is said to have performed in the *dhrupad* style, but taught many disciples in the *khayal* style, and after his passing, the *khayal* was looked upon as the ascendant form, and the *dhrupad* declined. The latter, with its symphonic emphasis on *raga, tala,* text and composition, all in a devotional context, can be compared with the style of Bach. His is also devotional, vocal (although Bach was a master of instrumental music as well), mathematical and soberly polyphonic. Perhaps one could say that it is a more "serious" style than the music which followed it, just as it is said that the *khayal* is less serious than the *dhrupad.* In the light of the titans of the *khayal* and later giants of western music which followed, perhaps this judgement is a bit superficial. Nevertheless, musicians of both traditions still look back in reverence at the music of this era. The styles of Bach and Sadarang reached a culmination in the eighteenth century and then declined, and yet both are very much alive in the training of modern classical musicians.

With this profusion of similarities between the music of Johann Sebastian Bach and classical Indian styles, it would seem that musicians of one perspective would have little difficulty appreciating the style of the other. In an overview, I am certain that this is in fact the case, but in the Seminar it was pointed out, by the *sangeetkar*-s in attendance, that there were difficulties in hearing and understanding the complexity of Bach's music. It is my opinion, too, that many of the same difficulties are usually voiced by people in the west who are not familiar with Bach, and even by the composer's own sons, so the difference may not be just one of "east and west".

Bach had basically a linear concept of music. That is, he conceived of melodies extending over time in a similar way as has been developed in India for thousands of years. The western practice of writing melodies together was already six hundred years old when Bach came along. This style is called polyphony (many voices), and the art of combining these melodies is called counterpoint. These words can be used to describe Indian music as well, of course, in that a *raga* is rendered with drone accompaniment, sometimes shadowed by vina-sarangi-harmonium-violin, with the spontaneous counterpoint of the percussion instruments. But, in the western sense of the word, polyphony means that the melodies for two or more voices are precomposed and intended to be played or sung simultaneously. Can these melodies still be heard as individual lines in the complexity of the resulting crowded texture? It is a complicated question, one that has both positive and negative answers. If one line is emphasised, and the others are stated in a background role, then the theme can be easily recognized, and this is indeed the most frequent of Bach's compositional techniques. Since many voices (often four or more) are composed together, one voice will have the theme for a short time, then it is taken up by another, then a third, and so on. This is called "imitative polyphony", and the fugue is the most important form of it. When not actually stating the theme itself, the other voices form a harmonic background upon which the leading voice is heard. In the rich and varied fullness of this blending of voices, Bach's creations are still held to be models of harmony.

Of course, harmony is also found in Indian classical music, and there are many *raga*-s that invoke the features of what is called tonal harmony. The concept of *samvad,* the consonance of the fifth (and fourth), comes to mind at once, for

tonal harmony is thoroughly involved with the relationships of fifths. Furthermore, *raga*-s frequently have notes in sequence which outline the harmonic chords of western music. The most common are the triads: *S G P, G P N, m D Ṡ,* and so on, which are found in varying forms in hundreds of *raga*-s. There are also more complex ones, such as *S G P N* (Shankara), *m D n ṙ* (Ahir Bhairo), or *Ḍ Ṇ r G M D* (Marwa). Harmonic sequences are also common, for example the *S Ġ, R m, G* of Gaur Sarang, or the *S R g, m P d, n P* of Darbari Kanra.

Sometimes the harmonic quality of these combinations is given a more obvious emphasis when a singer is accompanied by a sarangi or harmonium. It becomes even more evident when the instrument is a swarmandal and the *raga*'s notes hover continuously in the air. The sarod, sitar and other instruments have resonating (*tarif*) strings which also heighten the combinatorial presence of the notes of the *raga,* and this involves yet another harmonic effect: the overtones of a tuned string evoke their own *samvad*-s. Thus, when the Ga string is sounded, the Ni string rings out sympathetically, and so on with the other fifths, octaves, and thirds. Lastly, or perhaps most importantly, the tanpura itself is a galaxy of harmonic sonority.

So while Indian music can be said to have both harmony and counterpoint, western music has developed it differently, and this can be overwhelming to the ear not used to it. As has been stated, this complexity is confusing to the untrained western ear as well, and cannot be just passed off as east/west divergence.

By the time of Bach, western music had developed a system of changing tonics which grew out of the *murchhana*-s formed on each step of the scale. In Bach's lifetime, it expanded to include each step of the chromatic scale as well. Music came to be written in all twelve keys and modulations within a composition became common. In fact, Bach himself wrote a grand series of compositions in each of the twelve major and minor scales (Bilawal and Misra Asawari *thaat*-s) which he entitled *The Well-Tempered Clavier,* the clavier being a forerunner of the piano.

This evolution marks a significant departure of Bach from *raga* music. In order to transfer the tonic (*Sa*) to any other of the twelve degrees of the scale, it is necessary that the intervals between the notes be uniform. The distance between Sa and Re, Re and Ga, Pa and Dha, etc., must be identical. They are not so in the Indian systems where the microtonal shadings of pitch (*shruti*-s) in the *raga*-s play such an important role. This even, or tempered, tuning is the source of endless discussion among Indian classical musicians who accept or reject the tempered harmonium as a result. It is also true, though, that just as a soloist in a *raga* can intone the pure notes while the harmonium creates a quiet textured background of tempered ones, so a soloist in Bach's music can also add expressive tonal shadings against a tempered orchestra, provided that his instrument can accommodate such subtleties.

Nevertheless, tempered tuning and changing tonics: these create a different ambience in western music which is disconcerting to an ear used to the drone of a tanpura and hungering for the emotional expression of *shruti.* When Bach took his striking theme from the *Art of the Fugue* (Ṣ Ṗ g S Ṇ S̲Ṛ g m̲g̲R̲S), and turned it upside down, or compressed and augmented it, or changed its rhythm, everyone at the Seminar understood the composer. When he introduced it from a

new tonic, and thus changed the notes of the *raga* in order to keep the pitch relationships of the theme intact, he departed from the traditional Indian pattern of composition. And when he buried the theme in four other voices all playing different notes at the same time, he created a fabric in which it was no longer easy to discern the leading voice.

The *Art of the Fugue* itself is a complex piece, and not one of the composer's most accessible works. It requires much listening in order to be appreciated, and even then it would probably still appeal largely to musicians. In the same way we do not hear Anjani Todi or Shivmat Bhimpalashri at the music conferences, for their exposition is usually reserved for musicians and connoisseurs. But if we are led through the maze of the composition by an expert such as Dr. Breig, we can come to appreciate the words of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the great Bach scholar of the last century, who made this comment about the work: "We do not know which to wonder at most — that all these combinations could be devised by one mind, or that, in spite of the ingenuity of it all, the parts always flow along as naturally and freely as if the way were not prescribed for them by this or that purely musical necessity."

With Bach's death there passed a glorious era in music. Even his own sons composed in a new style, which was simpler, less polyphonic, and not so ornate. It was not until the next century that he was rediscovered and his genius recognized. True, certain composers, among them Mozart, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn, were familiar with Bach's work and studied and used his techniques. But Bach's own style, like the *dhrupad,* became part of the past. He is considered to be the culmination and the most sublime of the polyphonic composers. The main features of his work, including the cosmology and social background, the devotional attitude, the linear style, the moods and the compositional procedures, have direct parallels in Indian classical music. Perhaps Bach was the last western composer to have shared such an abundance of common principles with the Indian heritage.

But, "the last Asian composer"? Many western composers since Bach have used oriental themes and techniques in their music, and there are a number of characteristics common to eastern and western music which Bach did not use. Today, we see a number of western musicians rendering *raga* and *tala* on traditional Indian instruments as well as voice, and others adopting eastern forms into their western styles. An Indian maestro leads a prestigious western orchestra, a leading sitarist is writing concertos, and there are a number of teachers of classical *sangeet* in the west. One cannot tie up music in national, ethnic, and cultural straitjackets, and the fundamentals of music, which are simply pitch and rhythm (*Nada-Brahma*), are not the exclusive property of any location or era. In the words of Ustad Allauddin Khansahib, "Let me emphasise that there is no particular community in music. Music has one personality and one religion, and all devotees of *Nada* are in a class by themselves".

Johann Sebastian Bach was certainly a devotee of *Nada,* a true *sangeetkar,* and definitely in a class by himself.

A Collision of Cultures

Some Western Interpretations of the Indian Theatre*

Rustom Bharucha

Willst du den Himmel, die Erde, mit Einem
Namen begreifen;
Nenn'ich, Sakuntala, Dich, und so ist
Alles gesagt.

—Goethe

We claim, rightly or wrongly, to represent a superior civilization, and because of the right given us by virtue of this superiority, which we regularly affirm with such assurance as makes it seem incontestable to the natives, we have called in question all their native traditions. . . . We must offer ourselves to these (Oriental) civilizations as we do our other products, that is, on the local exchange market.

—Sylvain Lévi, *Memorial Sylvain Lévi,* ed. Jacques Bacot

This article examines the phenomenon of interculturalism in the theatre by focusing on some Western interpretations of the Indian theatre. More specifically, it analyzes exemplary attitudes to the Indian theatre demonstrated by artist/scholars as varied as Gordon Craig, Jerzy Grotowski, and Richard Schechner. These attitudes embody differing conceptions of the Indian theatre which correspond to differing interpretations of Indian culture and life. Implicit in these interpretations is an attitude to the East shaped by certain constructs and images of the Orient that prevail in the West.

I should emphasize that I have not attempted to provide a comprehensive history of Western perspectives on the Indian theatre. Nor do I offer any synoptic view of how the Indian theatre has been interpreted (and misinterpreted), used (and misused), mythologized (and demystified) in the West. I do not believe that there is an overriding Western view of the Indian theatre that can be summarily categorized. Certainly, I do not discern any pervasive "orientalism" (as defined by Edward Said) in the attitudes of Western theatre practitioners and theorists toward the Indian theatre, no systematized cultural imperialism that undermines the philosophical premises of Indian culture and life.

At the same time, it would be disingenuous on my part to deny that *instances* of cultural imperialism do not exist. As I will clarify towards the end of this article, the increased accessibility and use of the Indian theatre in the West have occasionally resulted in a subtle exploitation of its traditions and conventions. I substantiate this view by examining the hypocrisies of "cultural tourism" and the ambivalent ethics of cross-cultural borrowings with particular reference to Richard Schechner's writings on interculturalism and the use of ritual in theatre.

Though Schechner is by no means the only Westerner who, to my mind, is irresponsible in his attitude to Eastern theatrical traditions, he is among the most

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prominent and influential of performance theorists in the Western world today. I should stress, however, that my criticism of his views on theatre is not intended as an indictment of all Western theorists of the Indian theatre. I am aware of the considerable differences between Schechner's theories and the writings of scholars like Scott, Ernst, Pronko, and Richmond. If I choose to focus on Schechner rather than on these more academic, less controversial, scholars, it is because I sense tensions and contradictions in his writings which illuminate (more sharply than any body of critical writing of which I am aware) the innate intricacies of interculturalism in the theatre.

In contrast to the approach advocated by Schechner, I examine two diametrically opposed attitudes to the Indian theatre represented by Craig and Grotowski. Craig was the first European (to the best of my knowledge) who theorized about interculturalism *in the theatre* in a systematic way. His predilection to mythologize the Indian theatre (more rapturously than Theophile Gautier, Lugné-Poe, and Tairov) contrasts sharply with Grotowski's pragmatic use of the Indian theatrical tradition.

It is useful to contrast his pragmatism with the more utilitarian use of Eastern techniques, conventions, and concepts of Schechner. I will demonstrate in the course of this article that Grotowski eventually realized that incorporating Indian techniques within his own performance tradition was futile, whereas Schechner continues to believe in the efficacy of cross-cultural borrowings and transferences.

While I believe in the possibilities of interculturalism in the theatre, I am also aware of its misinterpretations and distortions. If the focus here is on these limitations, it is not to undermine the validity of cross-cultural exchanges or to dismiss the work of serious scholars of the Indian theatre in the West. Rather, it is by concentrating on these limitations that attention is drawn to the complexities of interculturalism in the theatre as a philosophy and practice.

Before examining Craig's mythologies of the Indian theatre, it is necessary to recall one of the most inspired mythologizers of the "oriental theatre"—Antonin Artaud. Though Artaud did not write about the Indian theatre per se, his writings on the Balinese and Cambodian dancers are among the most alluring fictions of the "oriental theatre" that have ever been written. Fictions, because Artaud's essays are neither historical accounts nor systematic descriptions of what he saw—it is unlikely that he knew the differences between *kebyar, djanger, legong,* and *baris*—they are his envisionings of an "impossible" theatre.

It is essential to keep in mind when discussing Artaud's attitude to the "oriental theatre" that "The stimulus (of the Balinese and Cambodian dances) could just as well have come from observing the theatre of a Dahomey tribe or the shamanistic ceremonies of the Patagonian Indians,"—one could add the traditional dance-theatres of India like *kathakali* and *chhau*—"what matters is that the other culture be genuinely other: that is non-Western and non-contemporary." (Artaud 1976, xxxix) What concerned Artaud was not the Balinese theatre as such but the "oriental theatre"—a term he created to evoke a magical storehouse of ancient rhythms and gestures shared by diverse theatres from the East.

Perhaps, the most unfortunate remnant of Artaud's legacy is the very term "oriental theatre." Like so many Western categories that ultimately simplify

activities and modes of thought in the East, it evens out all the distinctive characteristics of varied and complex arts such as *kabuki, no, wayang kulit, baris, kathakali,* and *chhau.* Divested of their individuality, these performance traditions of the East become mere presences in an amorphous system.

Not only is Artaud's use of the term "oriental theatre" unconsciously reductive, it is also mystifying. Though he often used "oriental theatre" synonymously with Balinese theatre, he more frequently used the term to express what the Western theatre *is not.* The "otherness" he inextricably associated with "oriental theatre" was enhanced by his misreading of "cosmic", "metaphysical", and "supernatural" elements in Balinese and Cambodian dances.

What attracted Artaud to these dances was not the minutiae of their techniques but their concrete embodiment of the unknown, their evocation of "the specters of the Beyond." (Artaud 1976, 215-227) Artaud could only view "mechanically rolling eyes," "pouts," and "recurrent muscular contractions" as elements in "a kind of spiritual architecture." Similarly, he envisioned in the taut movements of the dancers "a rigidity of body in trance stiffened by the surge of the cosmic forces invading it." One needs only a rudimentary knowledge of the Balinese theatre to realize that Artaud superimposed a cosmic signification on its signs and *mudra*-s.[1]

Though this etherealization of "oriental theatre" is yet another unfortunate aspect of Artaud's legacy, one should not dismiss all of Artaud's speculations on acting as "mystical" or "cosmic." When he wrote in *An Emotional Athleticism,* for instance, of how an actor's breathing is related "inversely" to the emphasis of the external movement, or when he speculated on the points of localization in an actor's body that can be used to project particular emotions, he could have been speaking of some of the essential principles underlying the training of a performer in the classical Indian theatre. (Artaud 1976, 259-267)

The problem stems from Artaud's attempts to classify his instincts by speaking of "male and female beats," the "six principal combinations of breaths," and "the highest Guna, the state of Sattva, that joins the manifest to the non-manifest." (Artaud 1976, 263) Such classifications are visionary speculations and should be perceived as such. It is ludicrous to expect a system of acting from Artaud, a series of *exercises plastiques* outlining the development of an actor in the Theatre of Cruelty. It cannot be stressed enough that Artaud's writings on the theatre cannot be applied. Nor were they intended to be used as manifestos of acting.

The "oriental theatre" was a construct for Artaud, not a practice. He never attempted to situate his hallucinatory experience of the Balinese theatre within a historical context. Gordon Craig, on the other hand, could not avoid a confrontation of the Indian theatre on a historical level. Though he initially located the first home of the *Ubermarionette* on "the banks of the Ganges" — a magical landscape with gardens, flowers, and fountains — this rhapsodic vision of India was shattered when Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy published a very informative article entitled "Notes on Indian Dramatic Technique" in *The Mask.* (1913) The Indian scholar challenged Craig's assumption that the human body, undisciplined and susceptible to unpredictable emotions, was not suitable material for the theatre.

> Had Mr. Craig studied the Indian actors, and not merely those of modern theatre, he might not have thought it so necessary to reject the bodies of men and women as the material of dramatic art. . . . The movements of the Indian actor are not accidentally swayed by his personal emotion; he is too perfectly trained for that. His body is, if you will, an automaton; while he is acting, there is nothing natural . . . that is to say accidental or inartistic. The movement of a single finger, the elevation of an eyebrow, the direction of a glance . . . all these are determined in the books of technical instruction. . . . Many of these gestures called *mudra*-s have hieratic significance . . . they express the intentions of the soul in conventional language. (Coomaraswamy 1913, 123)

Craig's initial response to the codification of gestures in the Indian theatre was sceptical: he felt that "it was wrong for human beings to submit to such severe discipline." (Coomaraswamy 1913, 127) The Indian art of acting was more rigorous than anything he had imagined. It embodied all the ideals that he had articulated in his theory of the *Ubermarionette*—an avoidance of personal emotions, a craving for perfection and absolute control, an attention to detail—but there was one crucial difference. The Indian theatre accepted the body of the actor as the means of theatrical expression but he rejected it. However, Coomaraswamy's belief that an actor could function with as much precision and rigor as a marionette stimulated Craig to reexamine his theory of acting. The irony is that this reexamination did not in any way compel him to study the Indian theatre seriously. On the contrary, it inspired him to mythologize the Indian theatre with greater vehemence than before he had known anything about it.

In 1915, he wrote to Coomaraswamy: "I crave the instruction of the instructors of the East. . . . You know how I reverence and love with all my best the miracles of your land, but I dread for *my* men lest they go blind suddenly attempting to see God's face." (Nandi 1936, Introduction) Craig used a religious vocabulary ("reverence," "miracles," "God's face") to evoke the art of the Indian theatre. In his imagination, it became a sacrosanct territory, at once "holy" and "dangerous."

Craig returns constantly to the idea of danger in the Indian theatre. If you go close to it, he warned his colleagues, you may never return. At times, he intimidated them in a more formidable manner. "And do you dare to dream you can be in a moment all that India is and not be burnt to a cinder in the tick of a clock . . . ." (Craig 1918, 31) Craig's rhetoric is so florid that it conceals his very subtle and contradictory attitudes to the Indian theatre. A particularly eloquent article—"Asia, America, Europe" (Craig 1918)—reveals some of Craig's ambivalent responses to the "Holy East."

To "feel" the East, Craig claimed, "we must be of it." At the same time, he could not restrict an appreciation of the East to "native" scholars like Coomaraswamy. Craig did not want to be excluded. So he strongly asserted:

> I know no separation such as "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet," for on the day that I choose to wander far afield, be it to the moon or into the beds of Ocean, I may do so . . . and so also, I may go to the East and become of it any day I wish. (Craig 1918, 31)

The grandiloquence of this style barely conceals Craig's peremptory attitude to the East. Nothing could stop him from immersing himself in the East if *he* wished to do so. *But*—this is where Craig recognized the dangers of rhapsodizing—"even as there is no returning for a true lover, be the pains the pains of Hell itself, so is there no returning from India." (Craig 1918, 31) Craig designated himself as a true lover of the East, someone who was in a position to understand its secrets. And yet, it was this very affinity to the East that made him distrust it.

Envisioning the hypnotic effect of India on the Western consciousness, Craig extemporized on the "exquisite fluting of the great and lovely Krishna." He warned his followers that it was positively indulgent to listen to this "fluting" because "we *dare* not turn an ear or an eye away from our task." (Craig 1918, 31) The Indian theatre, Craig hypothesized, could be a dreadful distraction. It could lure his colleagues to abandon their work in search of strange and esoteric mysteries.

Underlying this fear, however, there was an enormous humility, even a suggestion of cultural subservience on Craig's part when he said:

> There is nothing for us to listen to nothing for us yet. We Europeans and Americans are in the utmost need for we know very little . . . we are like fools beside wise men, we Europeans and Americans standing by Asiatics . . . and we of the theatre hammering away like slaves, we are the most ignorant of all. (Craig 1918, 31)

It appears from this statement, an apotheosis of self-depreciation, that the Western world is not in a position to listen to Krishna's music. Even if it were, Craig added emphatically, and this is the twist in his argument, it would not be worth listening to. An imaginative sojourn in the East could be a waste of time. Worse still, it could lead to a disruption of progress in the Western tradition.

For all his flamboyance, Craig was at heart a traditionalist. He chided his disciples, "Will you waste the few good centuries in which your forefathers built up for you a beginning?" Using an apocalyptic vocabulary, Craig prophesied:

> A beginning is something; we are at that promising point. Must you prefer Nothing to it? Do you prefer Annihilation to the chance that is before you? If so, then annihilate yourself and the toil of your forefathers in your gratified desire to see the marvel for an instant and die. (Craig 1918, 32)

The Indian theatre was a once at "marvel" and "Annihilation" itself: there could not be more romantic juxtaposition. *Shakuntala* was Craig's La Belle Dame Sans Merci.

What makes his position in this article so fascinating is its ambivalence. While desperately attempting to suppress his innate romanticism, he luxuriated in romantic postures. He resisted the sweet music of Krishna's flute as much as he would have liked to have been seduced by its sound. Craig seems to have been aware of these tensions in his attitude toward the East. Resolving them with the grace of a master tactician, he concluded:

> Whenever you see an Indian work of art, tighten up the strings of your helmet. Admire it . . . venerate it . . . but for your own sake don't absorb it. . . . They over there are wonderful, and we can know it, admit it, admire it, and goodnight. (Craig 1918, 32)

This point of view on the Indian theatre does not indicate Craig's indifference to the East. Rather, it reflects his acute awareness of the fundamental differences that exist between Eastern and Western cultures. Unlike some of our contemporary theatre scholars and anthropologists (who search too eagerly for universal structures in disparate cultural experiences), Craig respected the differences that exist between cultures. In this context, it is interesting to note that even though he was obsessed with an image of himself — modesty was not one of Craig's virtues — he could acknowledge the "superiority" of artists from other cultures. While advising his followers to "be themselves," he urged them to "love all things of the East . . . but to really love them . . . remembering Goethe's wise saying. 'Against the superiority of another there is no defence but love.'" (Craig 1918, 32).

It may be argued that Craig's assumption that the East was "superior" to the West often led him to speculate too bleakly on the state of Western culture. All the Oriental artist in the West will find, he once mourned, is "the spirit of Commercialism, Industrialism, Debacle, Imperialism." (Craig 1913, 90)[2] In overstating such views, Craig tended to mystify the arts of the East and to exaggerate that there was nothing to be learned in the West. He invariably viewed artists from the East as the "Holy Ones," the "conquerors."

Despite this adulation of the East, however, Craig was not entirely cynical about his own heritage. On the contrary, he was aware of what Western theatre was capable of doing. And he was convinced that it was not by borrowing rituals and theatrical conventions from the East (a phenomenon we are so familiar with today) that Western theatre could grow. Rather, it was by exploring its own tradition that it could develop its potential and unearth its own sources of poetry and magic.

To juxtapose the attitudes of Craig and Grotowski to Indian theatre inevitably raises the question of their differing experiences of Indian theatre. For Craig, the reality of the Indian theatre was shaped entirely by texts and commentaries. To the best of my knowledge, he never saw performances of *kathakali* or *bharata natyam.* India remained geographically (and culturally) distant from him. Grotowski, on the other hand, visited India as early as 1956. Subsequently, he studied *kathakali* at the Kalamandalam in Kerala and, like Eugenio Barba, he used some of the techniques of this South Indian dance-theatre tradition in his training program for actors during the sixties. This direct exposure to the practice of *kathakali* enabled him to demystify the sacrosanct associations of Indian theatre mythologized by Craig.

It is not entirely coincidental that Grotowski's production of *Shakuntala* (performed at the Theatre of 13 Rows on December 13, 1960) was blatantly nonreverential in its attitude toward Indian theatre. Though Grotowski retained elements of Sanskrit classical drama in his production, such as the *nandi* (the traditional recitation of a prayer) and a variety of *mudra*-s, he was not interested in reconstructing Kalidasa's classic. On the contrary, he edited the text ruthlessly to two acts and added vignettes and references from *The Book of Manu* and the *Kamasutra.* These additions did not "Indianize" Grotowski's *Shakuntala* in an obtrusive way. On the contrary, what was exemplary about the production was its avoidance of stereotypes celebrating the exotic Orient.[3]

Certainly, there was nothing "Indian" about Grotowski's visualization of the play. Jerzy Gurawski's geometrical stage constructions, a massive hemisphere with clearly marked seams attached to the base of a tall post slightly narrowing at the top, were startling in their austerity. Their Freudian implications (mentioned by Flaszen in a program note) clashed violently with the symbolism of the costumes which were designed by children. The vivid colors of the costumes and their rich diversity of shapes and textures were strategic choices for Grotowski's conception of the play. What the children provided were naive and playful images of the Orient. There was nothing sacrosanct about their vision of India.

This lack of reverence appealed to Grotowski. At one point in his production, Lord Shiva was worshipped by an actress and a manager who uttered the sacred words standing on their heads. This playfulness was interpreted by the critic Jan Ciechowicz as "a parody of the traditional models of Ancient Indian theatre . . . a parody of the (generally) prevailing image of India." (Ciechowicz 1976, 30) While parodies of foreign conventions often reveal cultural prejudices and a fundamental lack of respect for other cultures, it is likely that Grotowski intended to highlight the paradoxical nature of Hindu deities, who are divine and intensely human at the same time. Not that Grotowski was interested in commenting on the intricate blending of the sacred and the secular in the Indian performance tradition. His *Shakuntala* was committed neither to Indian philosophy nor to the tenets of the *Natyashastra* but to new forms and gestures, sounds and rhythms inspired by Indian theatre.[4]

Shakuntala was the beginning of a period of research for the Theatre Laboratory. Indian *mudra*-s, eye-movements, and breathing exercises were rehearsed with rigor and precision. For a number of years, *kathakali* and *yoga* provided the foundations of Grotowski's psycho-physical exercises. But the more the actors of the Laboratory learned about *hatha yoga* and the facial exercises of *kathakali*, the more Grotowski realized that it was futile to imitate the techniques of Indian theatre. While he had once acknowledged the integration of Indian techniques within his system of acting, he became increasingly sceptical about borrowing conventions from the East. The deeper he investigated his psycho-physical mode of acting, which required an actor to "sacrifice" himself to a role, the more he realized that his actors had to provide their own techniques. The most rigorous demands on their musculature had to emerge from an acute awareness of themselves as performers.

This perception led Grotowski to adopt a more sceptical attitude to any convention or technique that appeared to be fixed—*mudra*-s, for instance. Five years after his production of *Shakuntala*, he realized that the inflexible nature of the hieroglyphic signs in Indian theatre prevented Western actors from understanding them. If signs were to be used at all in the Western theatre, Grotowski realized that they could never be codified like *mudra*-s. They had to articulate the "*particular* psycho-physiology" of the actor. (Grotowski 1968, 24). In addition, they had to emerge *during* an actor's confrontation with his role. They could not be preconceived.

Whereas a *mudra* is timeless, universally understood, and accepted by Indian performers from performance to performance, a sign (as defined by Grotowski) relates very specifically to a moment in a particular performance which the actor had "scored". In addition, while this "score" is made up of

"gesticulatory ideograms," they are not fixed like the signs of the Indian theatre: they are "immediate and spontaneous," coalescing to produce "a living form possessing its own logic." (Schechner 1977, 161)

Another indication of Grotowski's pragmatic approach to Indian theatre was his attitude toward *yoga.* He stopped using it when he realized that it produced an "introverted concentration" that was harmful for his actors. The most advanced stage of *yoga,* it is well known, results in an equipoise of the mind and being when all expressions and feelings are obliterated. There is nothing theatrical about this state of tranquillity, which Grotowski accurately perceived as "an internal sleep, an inexpressive equilibrium: a great rest which ends all actions." (Grotowski 1968, 252) If "thought, breathing, ejaculation" cease as an actor masters this state of concentration, how can he act? Why would he want to act? Quite logically, Grotowski concluded that *yoga* was "not for actors".

Such an attitude prevented Grotowski from using the Indian theatre in an eclectic manner. There was nothing reverential about his understanding of its principles. If he felt that a particular convention had no resonance for his actors, he did not use it. At every point, he resisted the temptation to select the most decorative aspects of Indian theatre. Nor did he indulge in sensational techniques for their own sake. Grotowski believed that a concentration on the "purely physical" aspects of an Indian technique resulted in a kind of "emotive hypocrisy". (Grotowski 1968, 253) He felt that a knowledge of *kathakali* required more than the ability to demonstrate eye movements and postures and hand gestures: it required *faith* in a particular way of life and perception of the universe.

Part of the problem with some Western perceptions of Indian performing arts is an obsession with techniques. Even if it is understood that a tradition like *kathakali* takes years of dedicated training and concentration before even the fundamentals can be grasped in an authentic way, mere virtuosity of technique should not be mistaken for an innate understanding and control of it. .

There was nothing virtuosic about Grotowski's theatre. It is said that when his actors achieved technical excellence doing certain exercises, they stopped doing them for a period of time. Once their bodies developed new resistances to the old movements, they continued with the exercises. Grotowski was not interested in perfection and finished products—the ideals of bourgeois, as well as classical Indian, theatre. His theatre was a laboratory, not a conservatory. Consequently, when Indian techniques and conventions were borrowed, they were never simply performed as showpieces. On the contrary, they were used as *material* by his actors. Or, as Richard Schechner has observed, "The fixed structure of *kathakali* became the fluid process of Grotowski training." (Schechner 1978, 94)

In a seminar on *Ritual in the Theatre* at the New Theatre Festival in Baltimore in 1978, Schechner described Grotowski's use of *kathakali* as "a transformation . . . a genuine use of ritual cross-culturally." (Schechner 1978, 94) More provocatively than any writer on the theatre today, he has argued, theorized, and speculated about cross-cultural exchanges between theatrical traditions in the East and the West. In recent years, he has spent much time in India where he has observed and recorded performances of *chhau, kathakali,* and the *ramlila.* Unlike most American scholars of theatres in the East who tend to focus on

particular theatrical traditions, Schechner's reflections on Indian theatre cannot be studied in isolation from his comments on Balinese theatre or Japanese theatre. Often, they are enclosed within his own views of performance, ethology, kinesics, the rehearsal process, "selective inattention," and the use of ritual in theatre. Schechner's eclectic interests and modes of perception are as prodigious as they are occasionally bewildering. Not inappropriately, he once remarked: "I want to reveal myself as a set of disconnected thoughts, which is the way I am. I want to celebrate my fragmentation." (Schechner 1978, 92)

Schechner's writings conspicuously reveal his state of fragmentation. His texts and productions can be viewed as networks of interlocking structures, passages, and spaces which frequently do not connect or cohere. This seeming randomness conceals a very alert and fundamentally sceptical mode of inquiry. In fact, if there is one quality that characterizes Schechner's writings on theatre, it is scepticism. More succinctly than any writer, he has demystified the Indian theatre, divesting it of its sacred and metaphysical associations.

While Schechner is surely correct in emphasizing that the religious festivals of India like the *ramlila* and the *kumbh mela* are also vibrant entertainments and function as economic and educational centers, he tends to emphasize the social and theatrical aspects of these festivals at the expense of the spiritual. The *ramlila* is less of a *mela* than he makes it out to be. Thousands of Indians, including villagers and vagrants, deprived of the basic necessities of life, turn to the rituals in the *ramlila* not merely for their theatrical vitality (which should not be ignored) but for a spiritual guidance that invigorates them to face their lot in life with some resilience and courage.

Secular activities in religious festivals like the *ramlila* are notoriously deceptive. They are frequently so alluring that Western viewers unfamiliar with Indian rituals tend to concentrate on the fun and forget about the worship of the gods. A more rational response, which is Schechner's more often than not, is to view the secular and the sacred in some kind of analogous relationship. But the *ramlila* ultimately transcends any analysis that isolates equivalents between its structures of ceremony and play. Its ritual complexity lies not in the coexistence of the secular and the sacred but in the interpenetration, as it were, of these two seemingly irreconcilable states of being.

Schechner's most perceptive comments on the interpenetration of disparate activities relate to the thirty-first day of the *ramlila* when three distinct activities exist within one another like the layers of a seed. He sees the Maharaja's worshipping of the *swarup*-s (the boys who perform the gods) as an act of cosmic significance, which is contained within a mythic event — the Maharaja welcoming visiting royalty — which in turn is contained within the social order of Ramnagar when the entertainers are finally paid for their services during the festival.[5] This interpenetration of the secular and the sacred applies as much to the activities surrounding the *ramlila* as to the performances themselves. The *swarup*-s do not merely represent deities; they are incarnations of the gods themselves.

When Schechner asked the actor Rama what he felt when the people touched his feet, the boy replied: "Feeling of god is in me." Similarly, the veteran actor who has played the sage Narad-muni for over three decades *is* Narad-muni in everyday life. His spectators are his devotees. For Schechner, quite under-

standably, the actor is not a saint. Revealing his fundamentally sceptical mode of thinking, Schechner says, "This man is not Narad-muni, but also he is not not Narad-muni: he performs in the field between a negative and double negative, a field of limitless potential, free as it is from both the person (not) and the person impersonated (not not)," (Schechner 1981, 88)

In articulating this mode of acting, Schechner is characteristically rash in associating it with the actor playing Narad-muni and with Laurence Olivier playing Hamlet. It is not that this mode of acting does not apply to the two actors, but the point is that it applies in totally different ways. Schechner fails to acknowledge that Narad-muni's degree of absorption in his role is of a very different order from Olivier's in *Hamlet.* Besides, his continuation of the role in everyday life (when is he ever not Narad-muni?) has no parallel, to my mind, in the Western theatre. Then also the social context of Narad-muni and Hamlet as roles is radically different. With very few exceptions (notably Oberammergau), there is no tradition in the contemporary Western theatre of actors representing gods and divine figures as there is in religious dramas performed in India today. The core of spiritual belief embedded in the role of Narad-muni transfigures the performance in a way that one cannot expect from any performance of *Hamlet.*

Underlying Schechner's method in applying theoretical models to differing performance traditions is his faith in "universals". In *Drama, Script, Theatre, and Performance,* he emphatically states: "It is my belief that performance and theatre are universal, but that drama is not". (Schechner 1977, 600)[6] Performances, I believe, differ as much from culture to culture as dramas do, even though recurrences of structure and patterns of movement may be found in the creation of their spectacles. Schechner's approach is to isolate a ritual structure or process from its particular social context and then apply it to another disparate context. His approach is shared by other social scientists and anthropologists who have recently turned to the theatre to explain activities and rituals in terms of games and texts. Victor Turner's all-encompassing concept of "social drama," for example, has been applied to rites and picaresque narratives, to Icelandic sagas and Caribbean carnivals. "Turner's Western pattern of breach, crisis, redressive action and reintegration," Schechner believes, "is actually universal . . . the theatre of every culture I know about also conforms [to this dramatic paradigm]." (Schechner 1977, 121)

Though this statement needs illustration, which Schechner does not provide, it is unlikely that paradigms (such as Turner's) can be applied to theatrical traditions in the East and West without blurring their considerable differences. Even if the structure of a particular performance by the Living Theatre corresponded to a segment from the *ramlila* (and this is purely a hypothesis on my part), they would still mean two different things to their respective audiences. And what they mean ultimately constitutes what they are. Clifford Geertz has argued perceptively against "universal" structures in interdisciplinary studies of the social sciences:

> Formally similar processes have different content. They say, as we might put it, rather different things, and thus have rather different implications for social life. And though ritual theorists are hardly incognizant of that fact, they are, precisely because they are so concerned with the general movement of things, ill-equipped to deal with it. (1980, 173)

Schechner frequently neutralizes the content of a particular ritual (or "meaning" as he prefers to call it) by concentrating on its "physical action." When a ritual is taken from its original setting and integrated into one of his productions, the objective is to find an equivalent meaning for the ritual in an American context. For instance, in the Performance Group's production of *Mother Courage* directed by Schechner, food was served during intermission, just as people in the highlands of New Guinea distribute pig meat during some of their festivals. The problem with such an action is that there may not be an equivalent for pig meat in American culture. Soup and bread (with or without Swiss cheese) may not embody American social structure for Americans the way pig meat embodies the social structure of New Guinea for its residents.

On other occasions, Schechner acknowledges that the meaning of a particular ritual is altered when that ritual is transplanted from its own culture into another. What is ignored in this process is the interpretation of the ritual's meaning. Schechner's approach is to play "the physical action" of the ritual and to accept whatever meaning emerges from it. Frequently, this meaning is a travesty of what the ritual once signified. For instance, the "birth ritual" in *Dionysus in '69* was "taken" from the Asmat in West Irian. "It meant something different to us," Schechner explains, "but I didn't play the meaning, I played the physical action. You go to another country to see your own more clearly." (Schechner 1978, 97)

But what about the "other" culture? Are its rituals there simply to be used in an arbitrary, personal way? Is it fair to take a ceremony from it that is part of its heritage, divest it of its original meaning, and then replay it for its "physical action"? These questions, which may seem naive and redundant to most social thinkers, concern *the ethics of representation.* It is with this issue in mind that I question Schechner's view that "Any ritual can be lifted from its original setting and performed as theatre." (Schechner 1977, 86) I believe that this is a gross overstatement. Schechner needs to acknowledge that there are rituals rooted in spiritual contexts to which they are inextricably linked. Not all rituals are "acts of instrumentation," to use Alexander Alland's term. If rituals, particularly those associated with sacred ceremonies, have to be used or reproduced in the theatre, a confrontation of their "meaning" is as important as an examination of their "physical action." For instance, if elements of the Mass had to be reproduced in the Indian theatre, it would be necessary not merely to perform the ritual gestures associated with the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, it would be imperative to know something about Christ's death in relation to those gestures and believe in it.

Schechner's pragmatic belief that meaning is in doing applies, I believe, to performances within his own tradition where the "entire performance score," to use his words, is shaped from "ordinary life." (Schechner 1978, 93) The words and actions that constitute the score have familiar associations: they represent a consistent behavior, a grammar of action. But when a ritual is used from a non-Western culture, its words and actions are unfamiliar. The responsibility of any director, then, is first to learn what the ritual means within its own culture, and then to reflect on what it could mean in his own. Merely "doing" a ritual from another culture without knowing or caring about what it means risks a simplification and distortion of its content.

Underlying Schechner's advocacy of the use of rituals in theatre is a specific attitude toward differences between cultures. "The difference between 'them' and 'us' isn't so great," he informed the participants in a seminar on *Ritual in the Theatre* held in Baltimore in 1978. While this attitude seemed at first open and generous, it became clear that Schechner was not really interested in understanding the perspective of other cultures on their own rituals. Ultimately, he used the supposed lack of differences between cultures as a rationale for interpreting rituals in a personal way. According to him *kathakali* is no different from *Hamlet* insofar as every performance of Shakespeare's play is an "editing of the text," just as every performance of *kathakali* by a great dancer like Gopinath is a recreation of the rules. (Schechner 1978, 94)

Apart from freely associating "ritual" with *kathakali* (which can be more accurately viewed as a theatre-dance tradition incorporating *ritual elements* within its performance structure and rehearsal process), this statement reveals the limitations of analogical thinking in cross-cultural contexts. Contrary to what Schechner has stated, the degree to which a *kathakali* dancer can deviate from the rules is considerably less than for an actor playing Hamlet. What are the rules for playing Hamlet anyway? There is a performance tradition, but nothing so codified as the system of acting *kathakali* prescribed in acting manuals, where the minutiae of *mudra*-s, eye movements, and emotional states to be portrayed are intricately documented. What Schechner has not acknowledged is that there are rules in *kathakali* that remain more or less fixed. If a great dancer like Gopinath (who is really an exception among classical Indian dancers) "puts his own stamp" on a tradition, in Schechner's words, his deviation from the rules ironically calls attention to them. Certainly, every great dancer will shape a *mudra* individually just as every actor will speak "To be, or not to be" differently, but the dancer will invariably keep in mind the *mudra* as he learned it from his *guru,* whereas the actor is relatively free to interpret Hamlet's soliloquy in a manner that seems appropriate to his inner life.

Schechner is surely aware of the *guru-shishya* (teacher-disciple) relationship that is integrally related to performance traditions in India. An Indian dancer performs, in a certain sense, on behalf of his *guru* who has instilled the moves of the dance within him. As Schechner has observed, "A Balinese or Indian dance *guru* passes on the moves of the dance, often standing behind the student, manipulating her as if she were a puppet until, as the Balinese say, the dance 'goes into the body.'" (Schechner 1978, 93) But the performance itself, Schechner believes, unlike the rehearsal process, is "truly contingent, an ever-changing *lila.*" (Schechner 1981, 106) I believe that Schechner exaggerates the quality of contingency in classical Indian dance-theatre, where even the most improvized sections of choreography (and they are relatively few compared to a *raga,* which is based on the principle of improvization) function within strict limits.

I should also point out how deceptive it is to compare performance traditions in the East and the West using fixed criteria. It is not that Indian theatre is more "contingent" than Western theatre during performance, as Schechner says; the point is that they are "contingent" in totally different ways. There is an equivocal nature to the terms Schechner often uses, such as "score" and "flow" (which are predominantly Western conceptions), that conceals the fact that there are more differences than similarities in a cross-cultural examination of theatre.

With the development of international transport, the growth of the tourist industry, and the widespread use of cameras and film, the world has shrunk as it were, and rituals, which were once strange sights and sounds for artists like Gordon Craig, have now become increasingly available. Perhaps it is this accessibility of rituals that has tempted theatre practitioners like Schechner to overly familiarize them.

The most blatant manifestation of this accessibility is the emergence of "cultural tourism." Schechner's enthusiastic support for this phenomenon is problematic since it concentrates more on what tourism has opened up for Westerners (in terms of rituals, rites, and ceremonies that were once inaccessible), and less on the effect of tourism on the rituals themselves. Here again, I believe Schechner's pragmatism, so innately American (if I may insert a cultural bias on my part), leads him to view the distortion or disappearance of a particular ritual with a certain "moral neutrality," to use a term created by Kenneth Tynan (1977, 20) to describe Peter Brook's attitude to the Ik.[7]

Schechner has no contempt for the changes in genuine performances that have resulted from commercialism and audience pressures. He asks (quite unaccountably to my mind), "At what moment does a tourist show become itself an authentic theatrical art?" (Schechner 1977, 82) This question, which seems to view culture as a product that can be recycled, could emerge only from a mind shaped by the needs of a technological society. In India, the recycling of garbage has yet to be widely accepted as a practice; as for the recycling of culture, the conversion of the spurious into the "authentic," it is a totally alien concept. Significantly, when Schechner was once asked how one can distinguish between "a genuine ritual" and "a fabricated one," he responded with a question: "Does it make any difference?" (Schechner 1978, 99) My answer to that question is an affirmative one.

Fabricated rituals are not at all difficult to find in the contemporary theatre. Schechner himself has acknowledged that, "most of the ritual of theatre in our culture comes during rehearsals. The ritual we see in performance is false." (Schechner 1978, 95) A fabricated ritual is frequently distinguished by the lack of skill and accuracy with which it is executed. Even more conspicuous is the lack of belief in the ritual itself. The most virtuosic display of the gestures and movements in a ritual can be ultimately false if they are emptied of content.

One of the unfortunate developments of cultural tourism has been the influx of fabricated rituals within the cultures of these rituals. It is bad enough if a ritual from India, for example, is travestied in the West, but it is worse when this ritual loses its significance in India itself. The practitioners of many traditional dances and rituals in India no longer perform for the gods; they perform for tourists who come to the villages armed with their cameras, dressed in *kurtas* and beads. In payment for their performances, the actors no longer receive *prasad* (sacred food) — they get dollars, or marks, or yen, or (when the tourists are Indian) rupees.

It should be emphasized that there is a difference between exchanging a ritual for a song or a performance (as Brook "traded culture" with the Africans) and exchanging a ritual for money. In many situations where money is used, the "cultural exchange" becomes a pretext for an economic exchange, a business

transaction. And money, which constitutively signifies power, is very powerful in an impoverished country like India. The outsiders who give it are the ones who control the "cultural exchange," and however cosmopolitan or altruistic they may be, they are still figures of authority. They dominate by their very presence in the villages and rural areas of India where most of the traditional dances and dramas are performed.

Sometimes the mere presence of tourists at performances in Indian cities is jarring enough. At a rare performance of the ancient *chhau* dances in Calcutta, I confronted some of the ironies of cultural tourism. The dancers of *chhau* are villagers from the districts of Seraikella, Mayurbhanj, and Purulia in Eastern India. Most of them work as labourers, farmhands, and rickshaw pullers during the day. It is amazing how, with all their difficulties, they are able to preserve and perfect the intricacies of this highly complex dance tradition. From where I was sitting I could see the dancers waiting in the wings for their entrances. Before they entered, I saw them touch the ground with their hands to invoke the blessing of the gods. This gesture was ignored by the horde of American and European photographers in front of the stage who clicked cameras with callous indifference throughout the performance. At particularly dynamic moments in the dance, they yelled out instructions to one another over the ritual beating of the drums and the clashing of the cymbals. There was something greedy in the way they vied with one another for the best shots.

At the end of the performance, the dancers assembled on stage and folded their hands in the traditional gesture of the *namaste.* In this gesture, which evoked an aura of submission, and the glittering array of cameras and zoom lenses and projectors — a minuscule representation of Western technology and power — I saw two conflicting worlds. Unlike Schechner, I am sceptical that the theatre is in the process of discovering "a world of colliding cultures no longer dominated by Europeans and Americans, and no longer dominable by anyone." (Schechner 1981, 113) The *chhau* performance made me realize only too bitterly how easy it is for the West to assert its dominance by virtue of its economic and technological power.

If interculturalism in the theatre is to be more than a vision, there has to be a fairer exchange between theatrical traditions in the East and the West. At the moment, it is Westerners who have initiated (and controlled) the exchange. It is they who have come to countries like India and taken its rituals and techniques (either through photographs, documentation, or actual borrowings). The sheer poverty, if not destitution, of most performers in India clearly minimizes their possibilities of travelling to the West. Only a few Indian *gurus* and dancers have had the opportunity to visit European and American countries for lecture-demonstrations and classes. Likewise, the exposure of many Western scholars and artists to the performance traditions of *kathakali, chhau,* and *yakshagana* remains limited in duration and depth.

What is urgently needed is a more sustained dialogue and exchange of ideas, techniques, and performance skills between performers and scholars from India and the Western world. Seminars on interculturalism in the theatre can certainly play a valuable role in fostering a closer understanding between the different cultures, though the discussions in the seminars are more likely to

generate performance theories rather than performances. Perhaps, a more enduring and vital form of exchange can emerge from the creation of workshops, involving Indian and Western performers, where communities, however fragile and fleeting, can exist for brief periods of time, and where differences can be sustained within harmonious experiences.

NOTES:

1. Artaud's "misreading" of the signs in the Balinese theatre is substantiated by Grotowski in his essay "He Wasn't Entirely Himself" (Grotowski 1968, 117-125). Characterizing *On the Balinese Theatre* as "one big misreading"—an ecstatic outpouring of perceptions that "slumbered in the depths" of Artaud—Grotowski claimed that the essay cannot be read as a manifesto for the theatre since Artaud explained "the unknown by the unknown, the magic by the magic."
2. This short essay entitled "Japanese Artists in the West" (Craig 1913) is one of the earliest critiques of interculturalism in the theatre. Focusing on the phenomenon of Japanese artists coming to the West "to study and imitate Western arts," Craig emphasized the political impulses underlying cross-cultural exchanges. A Japanese artist in the West, he stated, is more likely to think under the influence of his "government" rather than his "masters." In making his culture more accessible to the West, he succeeds in trivializing it by producing "quaint" versions of traditional techniques and conventions. At a seminar held at the Japan Society (New York) in 1982, which focused on the theoretical principles and techniques of Suzuki Tadashi, I could not help reflecting on how much the manifestations of interculturalism in the theatre have changed since Craig wrote his essay. Unlike Japanese artists in 1913, Suzuki was clearly not in America "to study and imitate Western arts." He was there to propagate his own system of acting in the West.
3. When considering Oriental stereotypes in Western productions of Indian plays, I am reminded of Lugné-Poe's symbolist interpretation of *Mrichchhakatika* (*The little clay cart*) at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre in 1895. In order to appear as "Indians," the actors painted their bodies with vivid streaks of red and yellow paint. They improvised costumes with pieces of cloth and ornaments, not unlike participants in an Ali Baba pageant. During the intermission, a pseudo-Hindu clad in a turban and the briefest of loincloths quietly stepped onto the stage, positioned himself dead center, and sat cross-legged with his back to the audience, his hands raised in prayer. This tableau crystallized some popular stereotypes of India in its depiction of the naked fakir, the devotional aura, and the stylized reverence. For more information on this production, see *Adventure in the Theatre* (Jasper, 1947).
4. It is interesting to note that Tairov's celebrated production of *Shakuntala* (produced at the Kamerny Theatre in 1914) was also a pretext, in a certain sense, for theatrical experimentation. Since the Indian theatrical tradition was almost entirely unknown in Russia, Tairov's actors were compelled to create original gestures, rhythms, and voice patterns. In doing so, they were in a position to free themselves from all tradition. It should be emphasized that Tairov did not produce *Shakuntala* to discover the tradition of India. On the contrary, he turned to Kalidasa to abolish the very idea of traditions itself. Of course, the only tradition he understood was his own; anything outside its perimeters was fundamentally alien and unknown. India did not, in a certain sense, exist for Tairov. In his words, it was "the great gulf that separated

it [the contemporary theatre] from the hoary days of Krishna" that enabled him to create his "new" work of art. (Tairov 1969, 56)

In Grotowski's *Shakuntala,* there was the same directorial impulse to free the actors of the Theatre Laboratory from the tradition of the Polish theatre. Like Tairov, Grotowski did not turn to Kalidasa to explore or comment on the literary/philosophical tradition of India. Unlike Tairov, however, Grotowski chose to confront certain aspects of the Indian theatrical tradition, and in doing so, he attempted to bridge the "gulf" between his own theatre and the tradition.

5. For a more detailed description see "The Ramlila of Ramnagar" (Schechner and Hess, 1977)
6. For Schechner, "The *drama* is what the writer writes; the *script* is the interior map of a particular production; the *theatre* is the specific set of gestures performed by the performers in any given performance; and the *performance* is the whole event, including audience and performers. . . ." (Schechner 1977, 44)
7. Brook is presently working on a production of the *Mahabharata* in Paris. When I met him at La Mama in New York two summers ago, I asked him what sections of the *Mahabharata* he intended to dramatize. He replied: "The whole thing."

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News & Notes

Maharaj Kalka Bindadin Kathak Mahotsava 1985, New Delhi, February 4-7, 1985

The Kathak Kendra organised the Maharaj Kalka Bindadin Kathak Mahotsava 1985 at the Kamani Theatre, New Delhi, from 4th to 7th February, presenting this time some new group works, suggesting a shift from solo presentations. Among the non-narrative new works were Birju Maharaj's *Angataranga,* Saswati Sen's *Vichitrachhanda,* Durgalal's *Svarachhanda* and Vijai Shankar's *Arpan.* The new narrative works were Mannu Lal Shukla's *Anvesha,* the late Guru Kundan Lal Gangani's *Madhulunthita* (remodelled by his son Raju and disciple Prerana Shrimali), Bhaswati Sen's *Antarhitatvam* for Sri Ram Bharatiya Kala Kendra, and Birju Maharaj's *Nrityarchana, Dhrupadika* and *Thumri Malika.* There were four solo performances by the Pakistani dancer Nahid Siddiqui (now settled in London), Rohini Bhate, Damayanti Joshi and Birju Maharaj. The descendents of Kalka Bindadin—Krishna Mohan, Ram Mohan (sons of the late Shambhu Maharaj) and Jaikishan (son of Birju Maharaj), presented *Paramparapravaha,* a traditional exposition of Kathak. From Calcutta, Om Prakash and Malavika Mitra presented a duet, *Yugal Nritya.* Besides, there were two traditional presentations—*Samaj Sangita* from Brindaban and *Pakshavadya Mandal,* a percussion ensemble on the pakhavaja. And, as terms of references for meeting points of classical forms like Odissi and *Sattriya* dances, Madhavi Mudgal and Arati presented two traditional numbers. Except for the *Atithi* ensemble number announced but not presented, the various performances were within the time limit and began punctually.

The non-narrative works had the usual footwork, the *chakkar*-s and the razzle dazzle. In Birju Maharaj's *Angataranga* —with the use of the curtain, the different parts of the body were sliced and attention was focussed on footwork or torso or hands. It had thus different levels. But, on later reflection, I find that, barring its novelty, non-narrative work is not the metier of Birju Maharaj. His forte lies in traditional works like *Thumri Malika* and *Dhrupadika.* He excels in Braja poetry and group compositions that enhance the beauty of dance modelled on miniature paintings in arresting kinetic imagery. The subtle *bhava*-s, the delicate emotions and exquisite lines, the *khubasoorati* and *nazakat* of the Kathak of the Lucknow *gharana* find joyful expression in his choreography. From that point of view, *Dhrupadika* and *Thumri Malika* scored over his other creative works and left an indelible mark. There was that rare confluence of *bhava, raga* and *tala* which made one aware of the raison d'etre of classical traditional Kathak and Birju Maharaj's supremacy in this area. The female dancers Saswati, Durga, Veronique as well as Kumudini Lakhia's students Aditi Mangaldas, Shubha and Darshini (who are now at the Kathak Kendra), the male dancers Bipul, Ashok, Raghav, Rajkumar, Ram Mohan and Krishna Mohan translate, under Birju Maharaj's supervision, his vision in a commendable manner.

The non-narrative works of Durgalal and Vijai Shankar suffered on account of the students' amateurish presentation. *Vichitrachhanda* by Saswati did not blend with the folk elements it embodied: the two remained apart. Also, Saswati's choreography, in general, did not differ much from what one sees at the Kathak Kendra under the influence of Birju Maharaj. The rhythmic variations were,

of course, fascinating. As a choreographer, her sister Bhaswati scored in the group alignments and visual imagery of *Antarahitatvam.* The images of water and earth, union and separation, joy and pain, body and soul, smile and tears were interesting though the work needs tightening and some rethinking about costumes.

Madhulunthita, originally choreographed by the late Guru Kundan Lal Gangani, has suggestive elements and Prerana danced very competently as a lotus. But the number needs skilful editing. *Anvesha,* based on a south Orissan folk tale, was good in parts but did not succeed in transforming the poet's imagination into a visual treat. The choreographer has a real problem there—to rise above and stylise the poetic touch.

Sattriya dance has elements of Kathak but the form has yet to crystallise and should have more rounded vocal accompaniment. Madhavi Mudgal's Odissi and Kathak explorations were important because she is such a consummate dancer, at ease in both the forms.

In *Yugal Nritya,* Om Prakash and Malavika Mitra succeeded in presenting a balanced programme and revealed their excellent team spirit. The *kavit*-s by Om Prakash were suggestive and danced in the Kathak idiom. Malavika is a gifted dancer and her presentation was full of dignity and restraint. With her *taiyyari* and flawless execution, she is bound to make a name for herself.

Rohini Bhate revealed superb command over *tala* and a fresh and new interpretation in *abhinaya. Natyasangita* and Kathak by Damayanti Joshi evoked nostalgia with songs from *Mandarmala*. Nahid Siddiqui's solo was in keeping with the contemporary Kathak scene. Birju Maharaj's *abhinaya* was as usual a pleasure to watch.

Samaj Sangita from Brindaban brought home the truth that traditional arts have a certain vitality with a symbiotic relationship between the way of life and the art form practised.

The lighting requires careful reconsideration since it often projected areas of darkness and did not quite augment the mood or help visibility. This is a complicated problem and can be solved only with many more rehearsals and with the help of experts.The exhibition of photographs in the foyer needed better display and lighting. The festival was able to focus attention on the recent trends in Kathak and lived up to its reputation as a major cultural event in the capital.

—SUNIL KOTHARI

East-West Visual Arts Encounter, Bombay, February 8-14, 1985

The East-West Visual Arts Encounter (February 8-14, 1985), was the fourth in the series organised by the National Centre for the Performing Arts and the Max Mueller Bhavan in Bombay. The previous three were on Music (January 1983), Philosophy (November 1983) and Dance (January 1984).

The excellent brochure published on the occasion included, in addition to the indispensable facts about the participants, dates, timings and so on, several useful items which reflected admirably the spirit of the Encounter. There was a statement on "Individual Creativity and Cultural Identity," a select bibliography, and some "Gleanings" from relevant texts by eminent authorities, Ovid and Cicero to





Coomaraswamy and Amrita Shergil. The brochure also provided some black-and-white as well as colour reproductions of works by participating Indian and Western artists.

The West was represented by artists from the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, France, Canada, the U.K. and the U.S.A. The seniormost and best known of them was Ernst Fuchs of Austria. The youngest at the meeting were Hans-Hermann Nicolai (b. 1955), Wolfgang Laib (b. 1950) and Wolfgang Baitz (b. 1948), all three from Germany, Henry Leo Schoebel (b. 1955), U.S.A., and Mark Prent (b. 1947), Canada.

Three of the Indian artists present normally live abroad: Prafulla Mohanti in London, S.A. Raza in Paris and F. N. Souza in New York. The rest were from Bombay, Calcutta, Baroda, New Delhi and Bangalore. The sculptors were Tapan Basu, Balan Nambiar and Piloo Pochkhanawala, the last-named being the only woman artist at the Encounter.

The morning and early afternoon sessions were for delegates only, though guests were often spotted. Almost every evening there was a Workshop, short films, followed by discussions and an Open Forum after which, too, films were shown. Almost all the meetings proved well worth attending, though it was not easy to assess the direct intellectual and artistic benefits.

What was meant to matter most was, of course, the actual exchange of views between Western and Indian artists not only as individuals but as distinct groups. Not unexpectedly, this was elusive, ambiguous and sometimes nondescript. Friendly feelings, on the other hand, were abundant. There were, it is true, a few personality clashes which seemed important when they took place. Later, they were quite rightly discounted.

The exhibition (of creations during the Encounter Workshops) at the NCPA's Jehangir Nicholson gallery supplemented the larger one at the Jehangir Art Gallery. Both helped viewers to make comparisons within the specific context of identity problems, influences and conflicts. There was no formal discussion of these exhibitions but the one at the Jehangir certainly dominated the informal, personal talks among the artists. Overhearing some of these, it appeared that the major issues between East and West could not be resolved. Even so, the spirit of cordiality which prevailed was embodied in the huge canvas where every square was painted by each of the participants and the whole symbolised the atmosphere of the Encounter.

Most of the Indian artists, in their official speeches or papers (with slides to illustrate their work), tended to offer only random subjective glimpses into their creative world. None was outstanding in his exposition. We shall forgive those who seemed entirely out of their depth when using words. The slides had to do the whole job.

The Western artists were better, on the whole, even when one had reservations about the significance of their work to our Indian perception of it. Wolfgang Laib's "Sixty-three rice meals for a stone", 1984, with brass thalis from Gujarat seemed to me an example of pointless experimentalism, which has a high reputation and sometimes popularity in the West. I hope no Indian artist follows in the footsteps of Laib and others like him. There is enough imitation as it is in the

prevailing "international art language" to which the brochure statement (by Jamshed J. Bhabha and Georg Lechner) alludes.

The "holograms" of Dieter Jung did not arouse the interest expected by him. While admitting the scientific and practical possibilities suggested by this genuinely new art form, I wonder how humanly expressive it could be. Surprise and even amazement is followed by the question: Does the three-dimensional intensify the emotional and intellectual element in visual creativity or does it merely bring it closer to the surface actualities of life and the world (with glamour added perhaps)? The technological breakthrough in this case may enter our normal lives without affecting radically our view of ourselves and of society, of art and aesthetics, of meanings and values.

It was notable that several of the Western participants had developed artistic, intellectual and cultural connections with India. Baitz has taken sitar lessons, Kinley has a knowledge of Islamic art and architecture, Lagoutte has travelled extensively in our country, as has Laib. Robert Marx uses "attitudes and stories from Indian sources". Nagel is "quite familiar with the . . . Indian art scene" and Schoebel is studying Indian miniatures.

None of them, though, has crossed permanently and thoughtlessly to our side of the human heritage. Some of our artists are nominally Indian, with no feeling for the Indian environment and culture. Some use Indian subjects but under various Western influences. Fortunately, that still leaves a few, such as Bikash Bhattacharya, Bhupen Khakhar, Gulam Mohammed Sheikh and others who explore, modify and genuinely experiment with Western styles and techniques.

The positive side of the Encounter: that a wide variety of views was freely expressed. The negative side: that rarely did a view face the challenge of its opposite. "The title of this conference", said Piloo Pochkhanawala, "amuses me, as if we are poised for combat and not communication". She added that if the boundaries were drawn, she would be in no-man's land as she was "a hybrid product".

I feel that the problems of hybrid products needed to be discussed at the Encounter, instead of abstractions and the nature of individual artistic achievements. As Bendre said at one point in his speech, "This is a very tame affair. The artists here are gentlemen. They have introduced themselves and their work very well."

The best moments of the Encounter, then, and we had a score of them, projected anger, revulsion, aggressive self-defense, bitterly ironic questions, and statements by one artist about another artist's work. After we had seen Brent's slides, Souza asked: "Has the whole world gone mad or is it only America that is sick?" He followed this up with a comment: "De Sade would have loved this collection."

Both the question and the statement were grotesquely unfair, yet curiously they were a real contribution to the "dialogue", which felt it like a shot in the . . . no, not arm, groin.

This Encounter was co-sponsored by Alliance Francaise, British Council, Lalit Kala Akademi and the United States Information Service. May the gods of East and West bless them.

—NISSIM EZEKIEL

Recordings for the NCPA's Archives

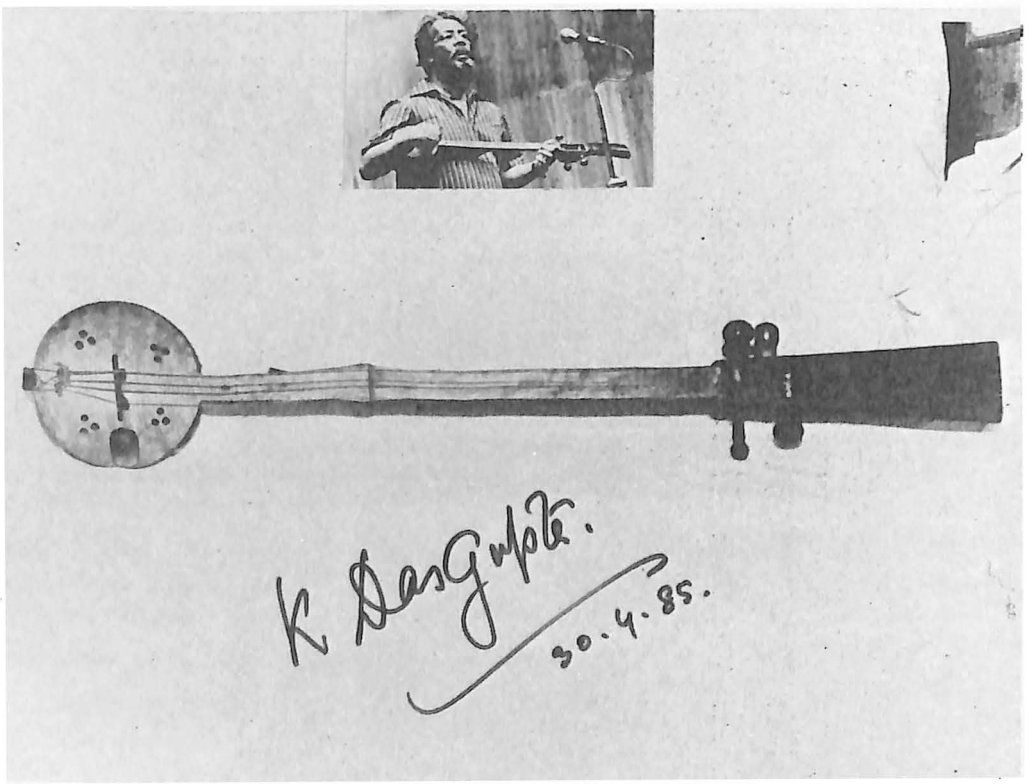
Kali Dasgupta, a fine exponent of the folk music traditions of Bengal, Assam, Bihar and the North East region, explained how his political commitment had led him to the people. During his wanderings, he came face to face with the folk, their mind and art. He collected songs, but without any plans of becoming a folklorist. He wrote down the texts of these songs and memorized the tunes. He soon discovered in the songs various social implications as well as musical meanings.

For the NCPA Archives he recorded a rare selection of Muslim women's songs from a larger corpus of marriage songs. He sang them with emotion, though his comments were mostly about their social relevance. When his attention was drawn to the musical aspects he *did* reveal a genuine non-technical concern and knowledge of music and matters musical.

He paraphrased one of the tender songs before rendering it.

> A girl says, "O my great-grandmother, please come with me!
> O my grandmother do accompany me . . . O my mother, why can you not be with me? . . . Because I am afraid of looking at the head of Rajah Mahipal . . . I am scared of his big eyes . . . "

Kali Dasgupta explained. "There is no Rajah. Mahipal is the prospective bridegroom. Notice the three family members who are mentioned. Clearly the girl is a mere child! Such is the exploitation . . . camouflaged in a song!"



Another touching melody referred to the human body as a clay-pot in the true tradition of Indian metaphysics and yet another raised the mystic question "Do you know the land you come from? The land where bodies hang head downwards?

Kali Dasgupta's comment was: These are anti-life . . they run down human reality. I will not sing them in my programmes!" It seemed a strange decision because the songs were highly musical. "But I know that . . . I will sing them for your Archives!" Such is the conflict between a sensitive ear and politically active mind!

We discussed in passing the tuning of the *do tara* instrument. It is used widely by folk musicians in Bengal and Assam. In spite of the suggestion carried by the name, *do tara* has four strings tuned in pa sa sa ma respectively. The *jod,* that is the two middle strings, are called *shur.* How does a singer select the correct fundamental for singing? When the singer had posed the same question to musicians, he had received an interesting but a slightly metaphorical answer. One of the artists had said, "One should hit the tenth correctly. How to judge the tenth? The eleventh breaks your breath and the ninth suffocates it . . . that is how!"

The *do tara* is usually made by the singer himself and four major *chanda*-s give a frame to melodies sung to its accompaniment. Rhythm and tonal contours are thus neatly bound together in these *chanda*-s. This sort of intertwining of the two basic musical elements surely justifies one meaning—shade of the term *chanda. Chanda* is that which conceals. It does conceal the rhythm structure but perhaps makes the music more integrated. Is this the reason why there is so little variety in folk melodies?

—ASHOK D. RANADE

PAINTED MYTHS OF CREATION: Art and Ritual of an Indian Tribe by Jyotindra Jain, Loka Kala Series, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, 1984, Rs. 90.00 (*In English*).

Along with other things, India accepted the concept of Art History from the West, because, by the nineteenth century, before the British took over, many Indians had forgotten the old cultures. And few, if any, members of the intelligentsia cared to notice the monumental temple architecture or the court arts of the Rajas and Nawabs. Besides, they ignored the tribal and folk creations.

Lord Curzon established the Department of Archaeology. And digging mounds for ancient cultural remains became the initial effort at dating the various eras of Indian art history, by estimating the possible dates of the pre-historic and historical phases of the various cultures in the sub-continent.

These initiatives were welcome, because so far there had hardly been any historical writing. The various periods were remembered as *Yuga*-s (*Krita, Treta, Dvapara* and *Kali*) by the Hindus. For the Muslims, it was from the *Hijera* of Prophet Muhammed, from Medina to Mecca, as also the battle of Karbala. For the Sikhs, the flight of Guru Gobind Singh from Anandpur to Nanded. Even the reckoning from the Vikram era was given up. *Before Christ* and *Anno Domini* soon became the acknowledged dates according to which time was measured.

Alexander Cunningham, Aurel Stein, John Marshall, R. D. Banerji, D. R. Sahni, A. Foucher, and others set out their researches in the Archaeological Survey, and Vincent A. Smith, I.C.S. wrote *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon.*

Some of the orientalists among the British felt that the approach of the datologists neglected the ethos behind the various monuments and temples and other creative arts. Among these were E. B. Havell, H. Cousens and Sister Nivedita, who began to write about the religious impulse that had resulted in patronage to the various temples, mosques and churches. Attention was drawn to the spiritual beliefs which had formed the basis of the Krishna-Radha cult of the Vaishnava tradition and often served as a disguise for the amours of the nobles and the revelry in their *Zanana*-s.

Ananda Coomaraswamy, born of an English mother and a Sinhalese Tamil father, assimilated both the historical and the inspirational aspects of Indian creative arts and postulated total appreciation as far as possible. But he bore in mind the dominant metaphysical concepts of faiths and their iconography, as interpreted in Hindu, Buddhist and Jain art. In fact, Coomaraswamy left out secular Mughal art and the European-influenced bazaar paintings of the later period because he felt they belonged to a tradition which highlighted the personal glory of patrons.

Stella Kramrisch, Charles Fabri and Hermann Goetz, as well as Benjamin Rowland, followed Coomaraswamy's approach. On the other hand, the British-oriented archaeologists, the historians and art critics like K. de B. Codrington, Percy Brown, Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra continued to stress the search for the exact dates of each work of art. American professors, particularly Walter Spink, sought to look for inscriptions to fix dates.

The German scholars, Zimmer, Goetz and Fischer, opted for a study of the social and ritualistic patterns underlying art works. This approach was reinforced

by H. D. Sankalia, Nihar Ranjan Ray and Mulk Raj Anand, with a view to extending Coomaraswamy's purview to a more total appreciation, based on the concept of William Morris that creativeness is all.

More recently, young critics, under the influence of Pupul Jayakar, have sought to venture beyond the highroads onto the tracks and bypaths, which lead into the interior of our country, to the villages and tribal areas. Among these few are Ajit Mookerji, Haku Shah, and Jyotindra Jain.

The youngest of these new pioneers, Jyotindra Jain, has sought to probe deeper inside India than most of his contemporaries. His book, *Painted Myths of Creation,* is one of the first essays depicting the unfolding of the creative life of a group of tribal people in South-east Gujarat.

Jyotindra Jain enjoys the advantage of a background of anthropological studies, conducted for his Doctorate. And, by sheer coincidence, he came into the field of art appreciation from the schools of Indology in Germany, which have emphasised the role of the collective unconscious. As part of the ritual of living it is evident in the expression in colour and clay by the folk of impulses stemming from organic urges, in symbols, in the exteriorisation of dream and fantasy images for self-knowledge.

He explores the mythical world of the Rathva tribe through the story of *A Forsaken Child,* his real mother, foster-mother, uncle and a marriage ceremony.

In this myth, with the characters Pithoro, Pithori, Babo Ind, Rani Koyal, Rani Kajol, there are echoes of surviving memories from ancient times. He describes the life of the Rathva tribe, their ethnic origins and their agricultural concerns.

Thus the painting of the myth of Pithoro and Pithori, which is not done by one artist, but by several members of the community, reveals the whole cosmos of their fantasy. The painters trace the human characters in the space area of the painting, place them in their proper area among the deities, Gotra Devi Bhehato, and Kohajo (protectors of the buffaloes, cows and horses) and build up their own myth of creation.

No summary can give an idea of the intricate inspiration which recreates the whole cosmos of the Rathvas.

Indeed, this study will reinforce the fundamental concept of Indian tradition that several tribal folk rediscovered their relationship with life and earth through ritual painting, as an act of faith, thus identifying themselves in answer to the question asked in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:* "Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going?"

It is almost a case history of the painting of a large wall painting by a tribal group together.

The fact that this group, like several other tribals, sacrifices a goat before beginning the ritual of painting, sings and dances, after the day's work, and celebrates the finishing of the mural by another sacrificial feast, shows the inner links of their symbolic expression with their energies.

There was a time when the European intelligentsia laughed at Carl Jung when, in his researches of man and his symbols, he plumbed the depths of the

human psyche and showed how every desire becomes a personal myth and seeks expression in symbols. Since then it has become a commonplace in the so-called advanced civilisations for the modernists to go back to the 'primitivists', the tribals and the folk to see how their images supply keys to the exploration of the unintelligible connection between fantasy and fact. Reason has been found to be not enough. The broad areas of history, in terms of dates, are known not to explain the inner urges of man and woman. The outer approach cuts through the interior, criticises the expression in images from the point of view of form, but does not touch the insideness, from the dèpths of which emerge the symbols which are the connecting link of the divided mind.

Of course, the symbol is only an abstraction of the many fantasies of the unconscious. But it is the dominant image of fantasy and touches on those currents when the unknown becomes organic impulse, thus releasing the soul into a kind of rebirth.

—MULK RAJ ANAND

PAKHAWAJ AUR TABLA KE GHARANE EVAM PARAMPARAYE by Dr. Aban A. Mistry. Published by Pt. Keki S. Jijina, Swar Sadhana Samiti, Bombay, 1984, Rs. 100.00 (*In Hindi*).

Considering the absence of any literature concentrating on the traditions of *pakhawaj* and *tabla*-playing, this extensively-researched book, with nine years in the making, and based on personal interviews with hundreds of people from far-off places must be regarded as an important landmark in the history and development of percussion instruments. It has thus become a source-book on the subject.

The special feature of this book is that the author is an accomplished solo *tabla*-player in her own right. Disciple of the late Tabla Nawaz Khansaheb Amir Husain Khan, she has practised intensively over the years, trained several disciples and given innumerable solo performances in India and abroad. It is indeed rare to come across a woman who is a solo *tabla*-player, and a Parsi at that. In the male-dominated world of prominent *tabla* soloists, she has managed to carve a niche for herself. Further, it is still more rare to find a solo performer of her standard embarking on research work of this magnitude and compass.

One must, however, take note of two important books on the subject published during the last decade: *Tabla* by Arvind Mulgaonkar (1975) and *Laya-Tala-Vichar* by Dr. S. V. Gokhale (1979). The latter is a huge volume of over 800 pages and deals with the dynamics of the science of the *tabla,* tracing its history and exposition as explained in the ancient Sanskrit texts. The former deals with all the practical aspects of *tabla*-playing and since it is intended as a textbook, it has had to cover varied features within its compact purview. Both these books, though important in themselves, do not deal exhaustively enough with the subject nor would it have been within their compass to do so.

The book under review is divided into two parts: The first deals with the *gharana*-s and *parampara*-s of the *pakhawaj* and the second with those of the *tabla*.

The opening chapter of the first part is devoted to the origin and development of the *gharana* system. The second chapter traces the history of percussion instruments from the earliest available text namely Bharata's *Natyashastra* which deals with *Pushkar* instruments variously described as *mrudang, panav, dardur* etc. Dr. Mistry also refers to a kind of drum in one of the terracotta figures in Mohenjodaro which is perhaps the precursor of the *mrudang*. Later in the thirteenth century, *Sangeet Ratnakara* by Sharngdev refers to the *mrudang* variously described as *mardal, muraj* etc., but the name *pakhawaj* does not appear before the fifteenth century. However, both the names *mrudang* and *pakhawaj* appear for the first time in one of the stanzas by Surdas in the sixteenth century. She, therefore, concludes that the *pakhawaj* and *mrudang* became popular towards the end of the fifteenth or early sixteenth century in the reign of Raja Man Tomar of Gwalior, who patronized the *Dhrupad* which necessarily required the accompaniment of the *mrudang,* otherwise called the *pakhawaj*. She further states that the present *pakhawaj* is only a sophisticated form of the earlier *mrudang*.

The third chapter, which deals with the *gharana*-s and their *parampara*-s, states that the *pakhawaj* was popular in Akbar's times (1556-1605) and one Bhagwandas has been described as having accompanied the famous Tansen. All *gharana*-s of *pakhawaj*-playing ascribe their origin to this Bhagwandas, perhaps differently described as Bhagwandin, Bhagwansinha etc. The remaining eleven chapters describe the various *gharana*-s such as Javli, Mathura, Punjab, Kudaosing, Nana Panse and others.

The second part of the book deals with the description of *gharana*-s and *parampara*-s of *tabla* and their origin in the eighteenth century: Delhi, Ajrada, Lucknow, Farukhabad, Banaras, Punjab, Bengal and the innumerable traditions obtaining in the native states, as well as in Goa, Muradabad. Besides there is Munirkhan and the Orissa schools, and the *pakhawaj parampara*-s emanating from Kudao Sing, Nana Panse, etc. A special feature of this book is that, in both the parts, the author has drawn particular attention to the distinctive characteristics of each individual *gharana* and *parampara* of *pakhawaj* and *tabla*-playing, supplemented by 33 geneaological charts (family-wise and disciple-wise) with the approximate dates of the players wherever available.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of the book is that she completely exposes the fallacy of the belief that the *tabla* is of Persian origin and the creation of Amir Khusrau. She backs her argument with two photographs of rock-cut figures in the Bhaja Caves near Lonavla (200 B.C.) and at Badami near Bijapur in the sixth century A.D. (see pages 110, 111 and the wrapper).

The question, however, arises as to when exactly the *Shai* or the black layer on either side of the *tabla* and one side of the *pakhawaj* came to be used. She suggests that in earlier times it consisted of a layer of fired clay. When it came to be mixed with iron filings still remains open for further research.

As mentioned in the preface, this is only the first volume of an ambitious project of four volumes, the remaining three being devoted to *Sathsangat, Kalakar ke Vadan-shailiya aur Visheshataye* and *Kalakar ke Apratim Bandishe* respectively. Let us hope that the remaining volumes will appear in due course.

—VAMANRAO DESHPANDE

MUDRAS IN KATHAKALI — Notations of 373 Hand Gestures by G. Venu, Natana Kairali, Irinjalakuda, Kerala, 1984, Rs. 80.00 (*In English*).

Kathakali is an ancient art form of Kerala, now very popular all over the world. Perhaps, it is the only dance form in which highly-developed gesture language with question marks and punctuation, is used. It is a complete language in itself. Anything and everything can be expressed through this medium — even the most subtle shades of meaning. The actors converse with the audience and get an immediate response from them. When an actor gestured 'come', laymen from the audience often responded by going upon the stage. Similarly, if an actor made any mistake in his use of *hastamudra*-s, someone in the audience would correct him. Gestures, thus, play a major role in a Kathakali performance.

G. Venu, himself a dancer, has the rare ability of being able to express his thoughts lucidly on paper as well. He deserves to be congratulated for his untiring efforts in researching, writing and publishing this useful, exhaustive and illustrated manual of 373 hand-gestures used in Kathakali. For him, this book is perhaps the culmination of two decades of painstaking research into the possibilities of documenting Kathakali *mudra*-s through the medium of a dance notation which he himself has evolved. This is also the spade work for the complete and exhaustive dictionary of Kathakali *mudra*-s planned by the author.

The preface is followed by a brief introduction to the Kathakali form and a discussion of its salient aspects — acting techniques, *hastamudra*-s, *nritta*, costumes and makeup, music and musical instruments, literature and performance. Next, with the aid of diagrams, the author explains his system of notation and how the various *mudra*-s are represented in the book. The symbols used to indicate different movements of the palm, the wrist and the fingers as also the combinations of symbols are explained in detail. The rest of the book consists of diagrams which show the variations of the twenty-four basic *mudra*-s. The presentation of the information is such that students and laymen alike will benefit from it.

G. Venu's book is, therefore, highly recommended for both students and scholars of dance, and I wish him greater success and fulfilment in his research efforts.

— GURU KRISHNAN KUTTY

LOK SAHITYA—Swaroop evam Sarvekshan. Dr. Satyendra Abhinandan Granth. Edited by Dr. Jawaharlal Handoo, Dr. Swarnalata Agrawal. Bharatiya Bhasha Sansthan, Mysore, 1982, Rs. 25.00 (*In Hindi*).

The felicitation volume under review performs the welcome task of reminding readers of the pioneering work carried out by Dr. Satyendra in Indian folklore. It also gives a perspective to folklore studies in the early stages in India by Indians, as they groped toward maturity.

Born in 1907, Dr. Satyendra registered the first scholarly impact in folkloristics with his thesis on *Braj Lok Sahitya* in 1947. Then on he never looked back and proceeded to undertake and complete various studies. His later work

covers a wide range of themes. Methodological mapping and compilation of folktales, descriptive recording of rituals with meticulous care, cultural study of proverbs with analogous material from the oral traditions and such other important categories of folk studies are embodied in Dr. Satyendra's steady and enormous output. Considering the advantages and the disadvantages of a pioneer, his writings provide a solid and sound base for further explorations in a vast field.

From a distance, it is clear that there are some characteristics commonly detected among pioneering Indian folklorists. During the first stage they were motivated by an underground nationalistic feeling which prompted them to compile and interpret Indian folklore as a reaction to Western cultural influences. Nothing could have been more appropriate as an assertion of Indian identity. However, during this phase there were misguided attempts to paint an unnaturally innocuous, innocent picture of the folk mind. As reflected in these early efforts, the folk mind could never do or think anything ugly, sinful or cruel! A further stage—of which Dr. Satyendra is a fair representative—was reached when folk studies were undertaken as scientific studies—though with a heavy bias towards 'literary' methods of investigating into expressions that are in reality performance-permeated. However, the studies were conducted on a more comprehensive basis and hence represented an advance.

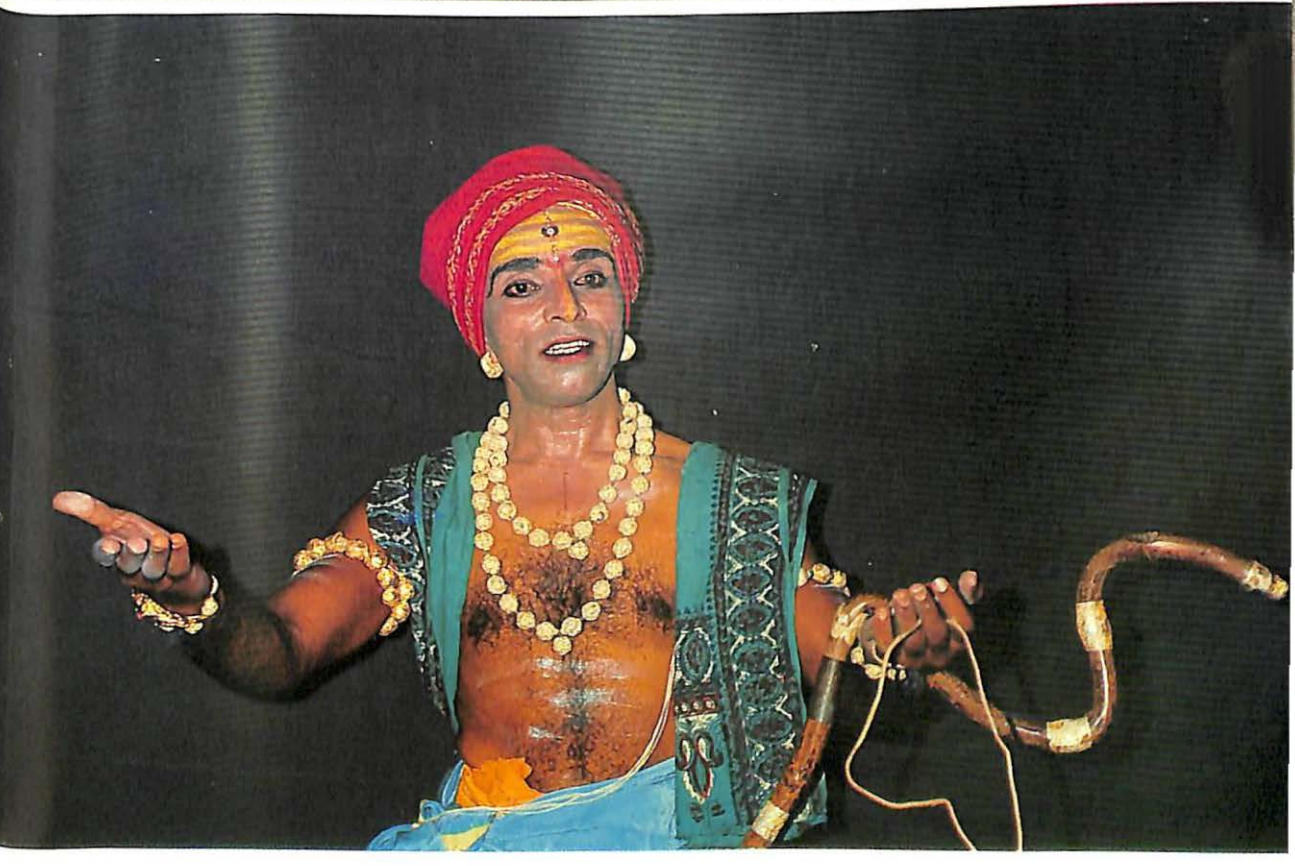
It is rather unfortunate that the second part of the volume, devoted to articles dealing with separate folkloristic themes, continues to show the same literary bias! The articles also suffer from unevenness in quality. For example, Dr. Pandeya's article (pp. 107-120) *Lok Sahitya ka Sankalan aur Kshetriya Anusandhan* makes very elementary methodological points. Dr. Chaturvedi's *Lokgeeton me Hasya* (pp. 121-127), too, does not rise above the level of a compiler's note! Dr. Kailash Chandra Sharma's treatment of the role played in plot-construction by two types of taboo is meaningful as far as details are concerned (pp. 128-139). The late Dr. Parmar's attempt to test the meteorological validity of observations on clouds, seasons etc. in folk proverbs is interesting. The late Shri Samar's statement on the folk puppetry of Rajasthan is fairly detailed—though there is no trace of analysis of any of the performance aspects! (pp. 160-170).

The third section, devoted to folklore and Indian languages, includes Dr. Handoo's treatment of Kashmiri compositions sung during the sacred thread ceremony (pp. 257-279). It, too, is entirely literary. If the package character of folk performances and rituals etc., is taken into consideration, the total indifference to analysis of performance aspects seems inexplicable. Slightly out of character but useful is an article by Dr. Sharma 'Kamalesh' (pp. 328-342) which confines itself to a brief historical statement of folklore studies in Gujarat. The fourth and the last section consists of answers of five litterateurs to questions pertaining to folklore. The responses from Mrs. Jainendra Kumar, Dr. Bacchhan, Amritlal Nagar, Upendranath Asha and A. Ramesh Choudhuri are extremely readable.

—ASHOK D. RANADE

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