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Cover Picture:

Tansen Kalawant, Mughal School, Second half of the seventeenth century.
(Courtesy: Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay).

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Portrait of Tansen

Moti Chandra

There is a genuine desire among music lovers to discover the personality of a great artist. Stray details of his life, lively anecdotes, stirring or evocative moments during a performance go to build a picture of the man. And the externals of his personality are indicated by portraits, which, for all their limitations, afford a glimpse of the maestro.

The first six Moghul rulers prized learning and culture, and, above all, the art of miniature painting. While Humayun took the initial steps to develop this branch, it was Akbar who laid the actual foundations of a proper school of this art form.

The city built by Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri was the ideal locale for a community of craftsmen and aesthetes devoted to the pursuit of the arts. That remarkable chronicler of the times, Abul Fazl, has in his two works, the *Akbar Namah* and the *Aini Akbari*, left us a faithful account of the varied interests of Akbar's court. Akbar attracted a wealth of talent towards himself. The *Aini Akbari* has a special chapter on the art of painting and mentions Akbar's personal interest in the atelier at his court. The master painters were the two Persians, Abdus Samad and Mir Sayyid Ali; the rest of the artists were mainly Hindus. The painters concentrated on two branches of the art of miniature: book illustration and portraiture. In drawing a portrait, the artist's primary concern was to seize a likeness. Thus we have a pictorial record of the Nine Jewels who added lustre to Akbar's court. The most renowned among these was the musician Tansen. In the *Aini Akbari* there is an entire chapter on Imperial Musicians.

"I cannot sufficiently describe the wonderful power of this talisman of knowledge (music). It sometimes causes the beautiful creatures of the harem of the heart to shine forth on the tongue, and sometimes appears in solemn strains by means of the hand and the chord. The melodies then enter through the window of the ear and return to their former seat, the heart, bringing with them thousands of presents. The hearers, according to their insight, are moved to sorrow or to joy. Music is thus of use to those who have renounced the world and to such as still cling to it.

"His Majesty pays much attention to music, and is the patron of all who practise this enchanting art. There are numerous musicians at court, Hindus, Iranis, Turanis, Kashmiris, both men and women. The court musicians are arranged in seven divisions, one for each day in the week. When His Majesty gives the order, they let the wine of harmony flow, and thus increase intoxication in some, and sobriety in others".

Abul Fazl goes on to describe the principal musicians of the court and pays a tribute to Tansen: "Miyān Tansen, of Gwaljar. A singer like him has not been in India for the last thousand years."

The date of Tansen's birth is not certain. But there is a legend that he died before Akbar, for a *doha* supposed to have been composed by the Emperor himself says:

*Pithala so majlis gai, Tansen so rag
Hasibo ramibo bolibo, gayo Birabara satha.*

(Social life disappeared with Pithala; music disappeared with Tansen, and laughter, repartee and conversation with Birbal.)

It is difficult to reconstruct Tansen's early life and career because the biographical material which is available to us is so meagre. Badaoni in his *Muntakhabu't Tawarikh* mentions Tansen's apprenticeship to Muhamed Adil (popularly known as Adali), who was an accomplished dancer. He also says that Tansen was in the service of Raja Ramchand of Bandhogarh (Rewa) who appreciated his musical gifts and showered gold on him.

The background of Tansen's departure from the service of Raja Ramchand to join Akbar's court is recounted by Abul Fazl in the *Akbar Namah*.

"As the fame of Tansen, who was the foremost of the age among the Kalawants of Gwalior, came to the royal hearing and it was reported that he meditated going into retirement and that he was spending his days in attendance on Ramchand, the Raja of Pannah, His Majesty ordered that he should be enrolled among the court musicians. Jalal Khan Qurchi, who was a favourite servant, was sent with a gracious order for the purpose of bringing Tansen. The Raja received the royal message and recognised the sending of the envoy as an honour, and sent back with him suitable presents of elephants of fame and valuable jewels, and he also gave Tansen suitable instruments and made him the cheekmole of his gifts. In this year Tansen did homage and received exaltation. His Majesty was pleased and poured gifts of money into the lap of his hopes. His cap of honour was exalted above all others. As he had an upright nature and an acceptable disposition he was cherished by a long service and association with His Majesty and great developments were made by him in music and compositions."

There are also incidental references in the records of the time to the musical contests in which Tansen participated and to the hostility which he had to face from orthodox circles.

In his memoirs Jehangir writes warmly of 'Tansen Kalawant'. He says:

". . . there has been no singer like him in any time or age. In one of his compositions he has likened the face of a young man to the sun and the opening of his eyes to the expanding of the Kanwal and the exit of the bee. In another place he has compared the side-glance of the beloved one to the motion of the Kanwal when the bee alighted on it."

Jehangir observes that when the saint, Shaik Salim Chishti, was on his death bed, he requested Akbar to send Tansen to him. After Tansen had sung for him, the holy man died.

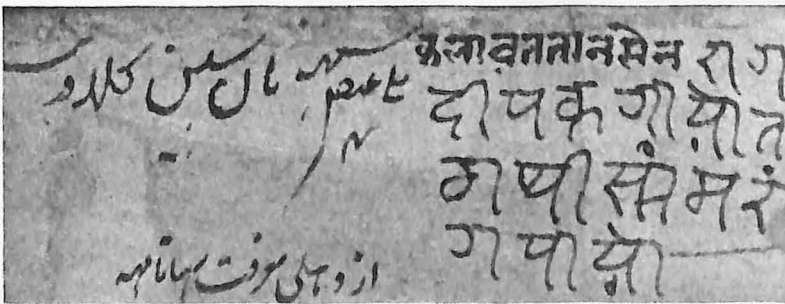
There is also the legend surrounding the meeting of Swami Haridas, Akbar and Tansen. It is believed that Akbar disguised himself as a *sadhu* and accompanied by Tansen, he went to Brindavan hoping to hear the sweet strains of Swami Haridas' music. When Tansen sang, he committed a mistake with the deliberate aim of prompting the Swami to correct him. The Swami then sang to demonstrate the right style to Tansen and Akbar's wish was fulfilled. When Akbar sought to find out why Tansen himself could not sing as beautifully as Swami Haridas did, Tansen's reply was:

"Your Majesty, I sing in the court of a mighty ruler, while my teacher sings in the court of God".

People came to regard this meeting as a historical fact and the dramatic episode even formed the subject of a Kishangarh miniature of the second half of the eighteenth century. The painting is in the National Museum, New Delhi.

When such legends surround the personality of a musician, it is only natural that art lovers and musicians should seek at least a glimmer of what the man was like.

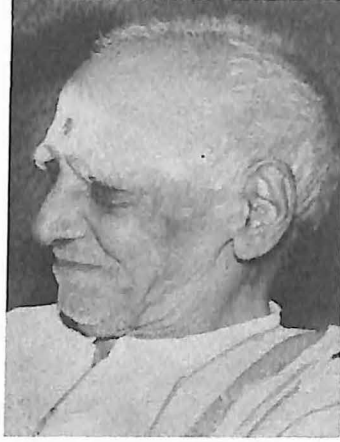
There is a portrait of Tansen in the National Museum at New Delhi. He is shown as a tall, dark man, with a sharp nose and a pointed chin. His hands are small; his fingers, sensitive. He seems to be clapping his hands, perhaps in the act of singing. The same attitude and features are reproduced in another portrait in the possession of the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay. Tansen wears a similar kind of costume as in the first portrait: an *atpati pagri*, a *jamah* reaching to the ankles, a *dupatta* crossed over the chest and a *kamarband* to which a dagger is fastened. His lips are open; he seems to be singing. There are inscriptions in Persian and Hindi at the back of the portrait. The Persian inscription reads: *Shabih Tansen Kalawant Az Delhi marfat Mahanath*. This means that it is a portrait of Tansen Kalawant and that Mahanath brought it from Delhi. The Hindi inscription is even more interesting. It mentions the name of Kalawant Tansen and adds a couplet: *Raga Dipaka gayo, tethi marana payo* Tansen sang the *raga* Dipaka and the fire ignited by his wonderful music consumed his body.



Facsimile of Hindi and Persian inscriptions on the reverse of the Tansen portrait in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

Papanasam Sivan (1890-1973)

R. Ganapati



Papanasam Sivan was born in 1890 in the village of Polagam in Tanjore District, the rice-bowl and cultural granary of Tamilnadu. His real name was Rama Sarman, and he was affectionately called Ramaiah. Sivan's life was very much out of the ordinary. Reticent to the point of self-abnegation, Sivan rarely revealed any details of his life. Sivan's father, Ramrita Ayyar, was a middle-class Brahmin, a land-holder of Polagam. His mother Yogambal was quite knowledgeable in Karnatic music. Ramaiah's earliest recollections are linked with the days of his childhood when he was regularly taken to the Siva temple in Polagam. He was especially drawn to the Divine Mother enshrined in his native village. In one of his very late compositions he extolled Her (*Karunai varumo*), calling Her *kula deivam*. Ramaiah was only six when he lost his father. Litigation left the mother a pauper and she was forced to leave with her children for far-off Trivandrum. Ramaiah and his brother received free education and boarding under the *oottuppurai* scheme in Trivandrum.

From 1898 to 1910 Ramaiah lived in Trivandrum where he studied at the Maharaja's Sanskrit School. Strangely enough, he learnt the Tamil alphabet only much later in life. He passed the *Upadhyaya* examination in the seventh year of his schooling. By then he had studied the five *Mahakavyas*, Kalidasa's *Shakuntalam* and a good deal of *Tarka*. (Later in his life he compiled a Sanskrit-Tamil dictionary.)

Sanskrit education was only of secondary importance to Ramaiah. What infused life and zest in him in those harrowing days was the recital of *bhajan*s regularly held at Putthen Street, where the saintly Nilakantha Dasar of Karamanai sang his moving songs in Tamil. The congregation at Karamanai was a *sat-sangh* of about three hundred devotees and disciples of Dasar.

Ramaiah began to sing in the procession in the holy *dhanur-masa*. His singing attracted the attention of Noorani Mahadeva Bhagavata, a musician attached to the court, who came forward to impart formal training in music to him. Another musician of note, Samba Bhagavata, taught him a few *varnams*. In 1910 he became a disciple of Nemam Natesa Bhagavata and left Trivandrum. The death of his mother, to whom he was deeply attached, was a great shock to Sivan. He broke off all family connections and became an anonymous mendicant, moving from temple to temple. During this period he spent several days at Marudanallur, which occupied a sacrosanct place in the *bhajana* tradition. Sri Venkatarama Desika, otherwise called Sadguru Swami, had founded a Bhajana Mutt there. Sivan listened to a discourse on the life of Bhadrachala Ramadas, the Golconda minister who had become a Ramabhakta and had to undergo untold sufferings at the hands of the Nawab. Sivan (as he himself wrote later) completely identified himself with Ramadas. That perhaps explains why in a number of songs he gives the composer's name as Ramadas, and not Ramaiah.

The moment Sivan burst into creative activity, his anguish turned into joy. But this was only the transient joy of the aspirant and not the serene and lasting joy of the seer. This passing exhilaration is fully reflected in the *raga* Kuntalavarali with which he clothed his first song, *Unnai tudikka* (Grant me the boon to sing Your glory), addressed to the Lord at Tiruvarur. A classical *raga* in Karnatic music is marked by majesty and melody (*ghana-naya*) and with both tautness and flexibility (*bigu-sukhu*). Kuntalavarali certainly is not such a representative *raga*. Later, a mature Sivan repeated the plea. He sought to be endowed with the gift of singing His name, and this time it was in Begada (*Unnai bhajikka*), a typical *raga* of the Karnatic school of music, one which Tyagaraja himself chose for his great song *Nadopasana*. Incidentally there is a song of Sivan on Saint Tyagaraja, and this is also in Begada. From Kuntalavarali to Begada—that is how the novice Sivan graduates to becoming the master Sivan.

Sivan's songs embody what in Sanskrit is denoted by the term, *hridayangama*. They go straight to the heart of the listener. The words and music were both Sivan's, which entitles him to the rare privilege of being called not only a *sahitya-karta* but a *vaggeyakara*.

Sivan's great predecessors in Tamil composition were Gopalakrishna Bharati, Muthu Tandavar and Arunachala Kavi. But in *sahitya* they cannot be said to have struck the correct equilibrium between the scholarly and colloquial. Their compositions alternated between *pandita-ranjaka* (appealing to the connoisseur) and *pamara-ranjaka* (appealing to the layman). Sivan's compositions were, in the words of the veteran musician, Semmangudi Srinivasa Aiyar, at once *pandita-pamara ranjaka*. They appealed to both.

Sivan composed hundreds of pieces. Some of these were extempore creations. For instance, his soothing piece in Sanskrit, *Siva ganga nagara nivasini*, was composed during the course of a conversation. He was moulded in the Hindu tradition of mendicant-singers who knew no rage for fame. He was the inheritor of "their pilgrim-blood, their birthright, high and holy". Sivan's

creations did not embody *ekanta shakti*, the peace of solitude. They revelled in the gaiety of the lively and gorgeous festivals of the temples of Tamilnadu. Following Tyagaraja, who has sung of the festival processions in Srirangam and Tiruvaiyaru, Sivan composed colourful songs, touching the processions of Kapalisvara of Mylapore (Madras), Devi of Nagapattinam and other deities.

Sivan hardly ever missed such festivals as Masi Makham at Kumbakona, Adi Pooram at Nagapattinam, Rishabha Vahanam at Tiruvarur, Saptasthanam at Tiruvaiyaru and the Brahmotsavam at Mylapore (Madras). For forty-eight consecutive years, and right till the ripe age of seventy, he led the *bhajan* in the Saptasthanam festival at Tiruvaiyaru, where Lord Panchanadisvara was taken in procession in twenty-four hours through seven *kshetras* within a radius of sixteen miles. From 1921 till 1972 Sivan's soulful music used to electrify the atmosphere of the four main roads of Mylapore during the misty hours of the dawn on each of the thirty days of *dhanur-masa*. "Grant me the boon to sing my *bhajana* forever. Pray, let me merge with the *tanpura*, and forgetting the world, spread the sweet music . . . born of my loving heart, throughout the four broad roads running round Your temple", he sings in *Anudinam Unai* (Madhyamavati). Sivan's love of *bhajana* prompted him to create compositions in praise of the progenitors of this school, Bodhendra and Sridhara Venkatesa.

Sivan was so unassuming that he never sought a position of vantage in temple processions. He used to be at the tail-end of the crowd, far behind the Oduvars, the traditional reciters of the *Devaram*. But his outpourings would galvanize the gathering and the crowd used to jostle around him. Recalling those days, Dr. V. Raghavan wrote: "At dead of night, as if in 'the night of the soul', every heart stood bound in the strains of the devotional songs of Sivan". On one such occasion, Sivan was singing in the rear during the famous Chitra festival of Madurai. Nadasvara-vidvan Chinna Pakkiri was in the forefront of the procession. He noticed to his dismay that all of a sudden the crowd of fans round him had begun to thin out. He discovered that they were gathered round Sivan who was opening out the flood-gates of music 'pure and undefiled'. Chinna Pakkiri was visibly moved and threw himself at Sivan's feet.

Sivan's travels brought him to Mannargudi—another "tossing about by the Supreme Power", as Sivan used to call it. There Sivan heard the great Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer for the first time. His fine voice (with its amazing range) and his prodigious invention enthralled the audience. But Sivan was not moved. The *raga* and *tala* were right. But what about the song, its substance? That was the chief concern of the composer in Sivan. The vidvan was doing *niraval* in Tyagaraja's *Enduku Peddala* (Shankara-bharanam). But was he alive to the sense and spirit of those Telugu words? He did not seem to be. And the audience did not seem to care. Sivan was touched to the quick and left the *pandal* in a huff.

It was six months after the incident in Mannargudi. Sivan was now in Alangadu and was told that Konerirajapuram was to give a concert there

in the evening. Sivan moved to the outskirts to avoid a confrontation. Late in the night, he wended his way back to the village. The concert had not ended. The sonorous voice of the vidvan soaked in the *bhakti-bhava* of Gopalakrishna Bharati cast a spell over Sivan. The musician was rendering Bharati's *Tiruvadi saranam* in Kamboji. He was elaborating it not only musically, but also bringing out its pathos in newer and newer shades. Sivan was drawn, as if magnetically, to the concert *pandal*. He complimented the vidvan, the tears trickling down his cheeks. An intimate friendship developed between the vidvan and the composer. The vidvan gained from the *bhava-jnana* of the composer, who, in turn, learnt a great deal from the *sangita-jnana* of the former. Sivan, of course, was younger in years; he admired Konerirajapuram, venerated him. In the Preface to the first volume of his compositions, Sivan calls Konerirajapuram "my Gurunatha". For seven long years Sivan listened to Konerirajapuram regularly. The vidvan was at his best when Sivan was among the listeners. Disciples of the vidvan, like Budalur Krishnamurti Sastrigal, affirm that Sivan's style of singing was mostly influenced by their master's mode of presentation. If Nilakanta Dasar was the inspirer of the lyricist in Sivan, it was Konerirajapuram who perfected his lyrics by enriching their musical content.

In 1917 Sivan married Lakshmi, daughter of Ayyaswami Ayyar of Nagapattinam. Some of Sivan's songs contain his own reflections on matrimony; he longed to be a *bhakta* and a *bhakta* alone without a trace of physical cravings or family attachments. Songs like *Unadudayai* in Pantuvarali cannot be grouped with the conventional or vicarious utterances of hymnists, depicting themselves as wicked victims of worldly passions. The words in *Marundalithu* in Gowla (*O Lord Vaidyanatha, give me the potion to cure the disease of lust*), and *Kalmanam Uruga* in Surati (*Why don't you melt my stony heart even after all my pleas for help?*) are so direct and poignant that they strike an autobiographical note. Of his wife, Sivan wrote that she was a *sahadharmani* and a gift from God. Four children were born. Now Sivan had to make a living and support his family.

Sivan had already made his debut as a performing musician. That was in the year 1918 and at the august *samadhi* of Tyagaraja at Tiruvaivaru. At that time Papa Venkataramaiah and Azhaganambiah Pillai had accompanied him on the violin and *mridangam*. Sivan had sung for well over three hours, in the concert fashion. His recital had been very well received. After that he had continued to give occasional recitals. Now he had to concentrate on his performances and begin giving lessons in music. His friends advised him to move to Madras where opportunities were greater. So Sivan left for Madras in 1929. He was able to build a rapport with his listeners in his *bhajan*s, which he sang for love; but when it came to singing on the professional concert platform, he found that his style did not impress audiences drawn from all walks of life. To add to this predicament, he found that his voice was failing. So the first five years of Sivan's stay in Madras turned out, in his own words, to be *ajnatavasa*, when he lived unknown to the world. But the connoisseurs of Madras hailed him as one of the greatest musician-composers, if not the greatest, in Tamil.

Rukmini Devi was one such connoisseur. In her opinion "there was no one in South India who lived the soul of music as Sivan did through his songs". When she started the Besant High School at Adyar, she requested Sivan to join the school as music-teacher. Sivan accepted the invitation.

Though the composer continued to live almost in *ajnatavasa*, his compositions began to find a hearing. But it was not Sivan who popularized them. Even in the few concerts he gave, he fought shy of rendering his own songs unless specially requested to do so. He concentrated on the Telugu songs of Tyagaraja and the Tamil pieces of Gopalakrishna Bharati. These he rendered superbly. But once the other vidvans learnt of his compositions, they sought them with enthusiasm. Masters like Muthiah Bhagavathar and Tiger Varadachariar became his admirers. Vidvans like Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Ayyangar, Musiri Subramanya Ayyar and later on, Semmangudi Srinivasa Ayyar, G. N. Balasubramaniam and Madurai Mani Ayyar, not to speak of singers like M. S. Subbulakshmi, D. K. Pattammal, N. C. Vasanthakokilam, M. L. Vasanthakumari began to sing Sivan's compositions regularly.

But Sivan had little or no sense of achievement. He did not feel he had accomplished great things. He did not even have a "personal" feeling of possession over his compositions. They came to him naturally. A particular instance will illustrate this. Sivan was captivated by a song *Chandrasekhara* sung in Sindhu Bhairavi by the Alathoor Brothers. He inquired who the composer of the piece was. "Why, it is *your* composition", said Alathoor.

Sivan *did* compose songs for the cinema. He considered this his second 'fall', the first being his entanglement with domestic responsibilities. This second fall was the logical outcome of the first. Sivan succumbed to the compulsion of circumstances. For the next two decades many Tamil films became box-office hits not so much because of the story, acting or costumes but because of the sparkling songs of Sivan. Some of the songs were devotional pieces in the more austere vein; others were light *ragas* for *pauranic* pictures, or those dealing with the lives of saints. Curiously enough, they, too, had a phenomenal mass appeal. But there was also an unfortunate side to the story. Sivan had to compose secular songs, love duets and comic doggerel. Sivan was bowed down by a feeling of guilt. This mood is reflected in some of his songs. In *Unai allal* (Kalyani) he wails at the feet of the Divine Mother. "You put a mask on me and made me strut on the stage". He had earned fame and wealth through the cinema, but he recalled with nostalgia the peaceful joy of the days of his *bhajana*-wanderings.

In all, Sivan composed nearly eight hundred songs for almost seventy films. He went on thus till 1950 when he retired from the field. His songs were refreshingly free of the cacophony, and the obscene *double entendre* of most of the film songs of today. They were light, but never cheap. Some of them became classics and found their way to the concert platform. Musicians of note, such as Musiri Subramanya Ayyar, M. S. Subbulakshmi, M. K. Tyagaraja Bhagavathar, Vasanthakokilam, Vasundhara Devi and Dandapani Desikar, sang them.

Explaining the reason for the great popularity of his film songs, Sivan said: "I do not write the words first and then set them to tune; nor do I have a tune to begin with, and then stuff it with words. Given the context of the play, I fill myself with its aesthetic potentialities. Then and there I get the illusion of expressing in words and music the feeling that ripened in my heart". It was not illusion, as he modestly put it, but genuine artistic awareness which made him identify himself with the aesthetics of a film situation. In fact, what Sivan has to say here is even more true of his classical, devotional compositions.

Another important event took place during this period. Ranga Ramanuja Ayyangar, known for his vast erudition in music, had a profound admiration for Sivan's compositions. He took it upon himself to publish a hundred of them. The book was acclaimed by competent critics as an important landmark in the Karnatic music tradition. In his Preface to this publication, Sivan writes with characteristic candour and humility, "I did not have the good fortune to learn the techniques of music and the grammar of Tamil under able masters. But I have made bold to compose, because of my conviction that God is intent only on love and not on prosody and poetics".

With the founding of the Tamil-Isai Sangam and the renaissance in Tamil culture, Sivan's compositions won wider notice. His songs were the mainstay of the Tamil-Isai platform. Sivan was fortunate enough to see in his own life-time the rapid spread of his music to all parts of the globe where Tamil was known and loved.

Around 1950 trends in film music underwent a change. Hybrid tunes and a less refined language came into vogue. Producers told Sivan that public taste had altered; they said they were forced to pander to it. Sivan refused to accept their arguments and to give in to their pressure. One might feel that it was his improved financial position which prompted him to do so. But that was not the case. Sivan decided to dedicate to Lord Siva whatever he had saved during his days of success in the film world. He felt that the only way to sanctify the self was to dedicate it to the Lord's service. It was really of a piece with the man Sivan that he spent all his savings in renovating the Siva Temple in his native Polagam. Sivan's retirement from the film world almost synchronised with the grand celebration of his sixty-first birthday. Most of the *rasikas* were happy that he had left the silver screen for good. The second, third and fourth volumes of Sivan's compositions, each consisting of a hundred songs, were published in the years 1965, 1969 and 1973 respectively. It was in the fitness of things that the Sangeet Nataka Akademi and the Sangita Nataka Sangam of Madras sponsored these publications.

Honours came to Sivan late in life. He had to wait till 1972 to receive the *Sangita Kalanidhi* award of the Music Academy. The Tamil-Isai Sangam conferred the title of *Isaiperarinja* on him. Towards the close of his life he was awarded the Fellowship of the Sangeet Nataka Akademi and the nation honoured him with the *Padma Bhushan*. What Sivan treasured most of all was the title of *Siva punya ganamani* conferred on him by the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram.

Among Sivan's later contributions special mention must be made of his opera on the Shaivite poetess Karaikkal Ammaiyar and his music for the dance-drama on the Vaishnavite poetess, Andal. Fittingly enough, his last work was his monumental *Sri Rama Charita Geetham* in twenty-four *ragas*.*

Sivan was dogged by financial worries even in the last decade of his life. More harrowing than his economic difficulties was his ill-health. But his musical thinking continued to be superb. He was so earnest, so soulfully sincere, that in the rare chamber-concerts he gave for discerning *rasikas*, he was able to strike total rapport with them. I heard him only in the last fifteen years of his life, when his voice had lost its easy flexibility. But it was always a unique experience listening to him. Towards the close of his life there were intimations of the majestic silence which is the source of music. "Enable us to attach ourselves to Him more closely. Then, at the appointed time He certainly lifts us up". Curiously enough, he sang this 'heavy' idea in the light *raga* Mand and in a nimble-footed rhythm (*Ramanai bhajithal*). It was as though the weightiest had become light in this mood of resignation to Unseen Hand. He reverted to Kuntalavarali, the *raga* of his first song but with a difference. In the first song he had prayed for the gift of music. Now in the same *raga* he sang, "I am tired of singing" (*Padi aluttenayya*).

Papanasam Sivan died on October 1, 1973 during the festival of Navaratri, when the Goddess of Music is propitiated.

* * *

Sivan is known for his mastery of the ideal form of the *kriti*. He himself describes the characteristics of a good *kriti* in his *Gana nasam* (Begada): "The song is a garland for God with the word-flowers exuding the fragrance of love; they are strung together in the thread on the seven notes". Tyagaraja (in his *Soga suga*) gives a more concrete description of the *kriti*. "The *kriti* must breathe the import of the Upanishads; it must be full of devotion and dispassion. It must be marked by correctness of notes, rhythmic pauses, words as easy to mouth as grapes that can be eaten; it must convey the nine emotional *rasas*".

From simple, recitative pieces suitable for mass *bhajana* to creations of architectonic structure—everything came under Sivan's golden spell. Among his stately musical edifices are *Kartikeya* (Todi), *Kanakkan* (Kambhoji), *Iha param* (Simhendhramadhyama), *Ka va va* (Varali), *Kalpakavalli vama Kapalin* (Ragamalika), *Mara Janaka* (Ragamalika), *Ninai maname* (Ananda Bhairav), *Saravanabhava* (Madhyamavati). Among his scintillating light pieces are the lullaby *Talo talo* (Kurinji), *Chandhrashekhara* (Sindhu Bhairavi) and the two Sanskrit pieces in Mand (*Nama bhajare*) and Kafi (*Krishna nama*).

*The disc has been reviewed in Volume II, No. 1, (March 1973) of this Journal.

Though his prototype was Tyagaraja, he was also greatly indebted to Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri. Some of his Sanskrit *kritis* like *Sri Shanmukham* (Bhairavi), *Samajavaragamana* (Madhyamavati), *Bala-subrahmanya* (Kedaragowla), *Sri Visvanatham* (Bhairavi) are reminiscent of Dikshitar. Others like *Ninai maname* (Ananda Bhairavi) recall the style of Shyama Shastri. Like Shyama Shastri's songs, Sivan's pieces abound in the natural flowering of *Svara-aksharas*, where the letter of the poetic text and the letter of the *svara* corresponding to it are the same.

Apart from his many *kritis*, Sivan composed *kannis* in couplets and quartets, *svarajatis*, *varnams* including *pada-varnams* suited for dancing, the folk type *chindu* and a *tillana*. He avoided secular themes except in his film songs. Neither the Freedom Struggle nor the Tamil Renaissance could elicit songs from him. In his most serious work, he was a true *bhakta*, asserting: "Let trials and tribulations drill us to the core; but let us not say even then the one word 'no God'." (*Illai enra sol-Kharaharapriya*). The world of the *bhakta* presents all shades of feelings—deep yearning, the joy of realization, peaceful resignation. He approaches the Lord like a love-lorn lass (*Nayaka-nayaki bhava*) of the *Kuyil 'kanni'* in *Khamaj*, a doting mother (*Vatsalya bhava*) of *Talo* in *Kurinji* or as a servitor (*Dasys bhava*).

Sivan could drive home his faith in God with a single word *undu*, noted to a bare *sa ri ga* in *Todi*. There was a force of conviction in the skeletal clothing of the *svaras* of *Vandadellam* (Hussaini) or *Ayyan Tiruvadiyai* (Poorvikalyani), or *Karunakari* (Kirvani), or *Siridenum* (Bhairavi). With amazing precision he would leap from the height of one emotion to the height of another. How effective was the dig at the Lord in the opening of *mariyadaitano* metamorphosed into surging devotion in the *charana*.

Sivan avoided unintelligibility in wording; he also avoided unfamiliar *ragas*. He mainly used what are known as the *rakti-ragas*. Even the few *apoorva-ragas* he handled were full of this *rakti*. He did not include the *Vivadi melas* or *ragas* in his compositions. He instinctively knew which particular *raga* could bring out a particular *rasa* and also the subtle shades of the *raga* which could project the minute shades of the *rasa*. Sometimes he endowed a light *raga* with new dimensions, as when he chose Navarasa Kannada to clothe the poignant idea, "Mother, am I a doll to be toyed by you?" (*Non Oru Vilayattu Bommaiya?*); or when he sang "What meritorious act had you done, Yashoda, to be called 'Mother' by the All-Pervading Parabrahman?" in *Kafi*. Tyagaraja, too, chose these two non-*gana ragas* to express his lofty thoughts on the all-pervasiveness of Rama (*ninuvina namadendu*), and the joy of realizing the oneness of the Name, music and musician (*inta saukhyamana*).

Sivan brought out the essence of a *raga* in the very opening phrases and particularly so in the case of *apoorva ragas*. For example, *Para devate* (Manirangu), *Akhilandesvari* (Shriraga), *Mahadeva* (Suddha Seemantini) contain the very life-breath of the *raga* in the opening strain itself.

Sivan had his weak points. Sometimes he strove without cause for a scholarly tenor or for effects, and this marred his otherwise beautiful com-

positions, like *Dinam ide* (Bhoopala) or *Sikkil meviya* (Kambhoji). His near-puritanical upbringing and religiosity were often an impediment in the path of the natural flow of simple feelings. The concluding part of *Vazhinadai chindu* is an example of this trait in him. Sivan did not try and develop certain latent talents within him. The last *charana* of *Thamasamen* (Todi) and the *charana* of *Kapali* (Mohanam) show the powers of condensation he had in descriptive poetry. Songs like *Gangaiyani* (Todi) and *Soundaryavellam* (Mohanam) show the richness of his imagery. He could also delve into the symbolic content of a *paurnic* episode; he says that the butter that Krishna stole was only the loving heart of the Gopi (*Sundararupa*-Shankarabharanam) or that Krishna was born in the prison of the devotee's heart (*Kanni* in *Vasanta*).

Sivan has often been referred to as the "Tamil Tyagaraja". In the words of Prof. R. Srinivasan, "After Tyagaraja, few have achieved such a standard of lyrical beauty, musical excellence and spontaneous aesthetic appeal as Sivan has done".

The *Dashavatara* Tradition of the Konkan

C. T. Khanolkar

The concept of the ten incarnations (*avatars*) of Vishnu is a very ancient one. The ten incarnations are Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki. The ancient seers built their beliefs about the origin of the universe and of all the living beings on it round these incarnations. These beliefs lay at the root of some of their artistic creations. The *panchamahabhuta* became embodied forms. If Matsya, the Fish, is Vishnu incarnate, Hayagriva is Shankhasura. The function of the particular incarnation was to destroy this demon (*asura*). Matsya made a hole in his stomach and forced him to bring out the Vedas he had swallowed. The story has an attractive flavour. The same appeal surrounds the tale of Kurma, the Tortoise. The earth trembled because of the rolling of the ocean. So Vishnu became Kurma and held it firm and steady on his back. Vishnu stands between Brahma and Mahesh, between birth and annihilation. He is existence (*sthiti*), symbolising the battle-ground of the two extremes which flank him. Ganapati stands for the principle of creativity, the primary element. It is embedded even in our most archaic traditions, this creative principle emanating from the world of destruction, from Shiva himself.

The *dashavatara* performance begins with a salutation to Ganapati who is accompanied by Riddhi and Siddhi.

“हेचि आवस खेलोरी बापूस जटियाळो,
मोरया बाप्पा मोरया झील सोंड्याळो,
ह्याच्या पानातलो त्येच्या पानातलो,
चवथीच्या दिवसाक होता भारी हुळहुळो,
भर चवथीच्या दिवसाक जन्माक इल्लो,
मंगलमूर्ति मोरया”

The *sutradhara* sings this *arati*; the language used in it is our village Malvani. A Brahmin enters. There is a touch of humour here and a dig at Brahmins in the dialogue which follows. The *arati*, too, has a satirical thrust. While Riddhi and Siddhi dance the simple *fugdi* and whirl giddily, there are a number of rather comic references to women and their ways. Then Saraswati enters, riding a peacock. The dance concentrates on hand gestures; the steps are elementary: one foot forward, then back, a simple rhythmic pattern following the *mridanga* beat. The *sutradhara* suggests the pace, *tha thai tha*. The actor playing the role of Saraswati wears a green sari (it is nine yards long and worn in Maharashtrian style). A wooden mask of a peacock's head is fixed to the belt round his waist.

After the dance is over, two women enter. They symbolize two rivers. They are accompanied by Madhavi, a Brahmin. Madhavi is a figure of fun. The two women complain that they have been defiled. Madhavi tells them that since they are rivers, people wash their soiled bodies on their banks. They pollute their waters. He advises them to carry flowers and leaves to the seers on the mountains. So these rivers course at night in the direction of peaks and return in the early hours of the morning, cleansed by the contact.

Then comes Shankhasura. He roars. "The sea's bounds may know a limit, the skies might perhaps admit confines, but our *Geeta* knows neither beginning nor end". He says,

"Like the lion in the jungle,
Like the Kulkarni in the village
He is Baji, the tiger in a *jatra* fair".

Shankhasura is clothed from head to foot in black. A red strip of cloth which hangs out of his mouth is supposed to be his tongue. He carries a crook in his hand. The villagers are scared of him because they know he uses his immunity to tear off the masks of the privileged and expose the scandals in their private lives. He warns the audience to set aside their usual addictions while the performance is on. He has a duel of words with the *sutradhara*. To most he may appear no different from the usual clown; but he is a folk figure in the truest sense of the word.

Even as Shankhasura's clamour continues, Brahmadeva enters. His four faces suggest the four Vedas. The *sutradhara* explains that Brahmadeva is in anguish because his Vedas have been stolen. Shankhasura tugs at Brahmadeva's beard, while the *sutradhara* addresses a prayer to Vishnu.

हा मातला हो असूर, नांव त्याचे शंवासूर
वेद धेवोनिया स्त्वर सागरातळी लपाला

Shankhasura wants to know who has the nerve to shout so loudly. The *sutradhara* says, "Your master has arrived". Shankhasura's retort is that he has disposed of the master, and in a vigorously rustic manner he goes on to ridicule Vishnu. A mock fight ensues and Shankhasura has the final say in the matter. "God must fear man, Man must fear God". Then Shankhasura agrees to submit to Vishnu and returns the Vedas to Brahmadeva. This part is known as the *adadashavatara*. It usually commences after eleven at night and goes on for two hours. Some *dashavatara* performances also begin after the Riddhi, Siddhi, Ganapati and Shankhasura sequence is over. The *sutradhara* is also known as *nayaki*. In the *adadashavatara* he carries the *tal* in his hands. He often repeats the time measure *tha thai tha*. A black cap or a scarf covers his head; he wears a coat, a *dhoti* and he wraps an *uparana* or a muffler round his neck.

After the *adadashavatara* is over, the *dashavatara* proper commences, at about two in the morning. The *sutradhara* takes up a position on the right side of the stage. Nowadays the harmonium and the *tabla* form the usual accompaniment. They were introduced about six decades ago.

The *sutradhara* initiates an *akhyana* with a *nandi*, which is usually sung in the *raga* Kedara. Then the main story begins. The *akhyanas* include well-known episodes from the epics: *Ravana Yuddha*, *Sita Swayamvara*, *Draupadi Vastraharana*, and so on.

Let us say the *akhyana* of Jalandara and Vrinda is being performed. The main character Jalandara leaps on to the stage from among the spectators. He glares at the sky and demands, "Who is my father? Who is my mother? Where was I born? Why am I standing in this desert?" He rants; he struts the stage. He gesticulates wildly. Naradmuni enters. Jalandara gives him a strange look; he asks him questions about his *veena*, the *chipalya* in his hands (*Chipalya* are wooden clappers with brass plates. They create a jingling sound). Narada tries to explain what a god is and advises Jalandara to go to Kailasa and engage in penance in the pursuit of knowledge. Narada leaves and Jalandara begins his austerities. He sits in meditation for fourteen years. Shankara is pleased and grants him a boon. "You will become immortal and win *Trailokya*", he tells him. He continues, "But there is one obstacle in your path. If your wife is defiled by another being, you will be struck dead".

Jalandara returns to earth, and becomes the ruler of a kingdom. He thinks of a way of averting death: he must avoid marriage. He busies himself extending the limits of his realm. His sword is his only true companion. But Narada appears again and warns him, "No *moksha* is possible till you see the face of your daughter-in-law or give your daughter in marriage (*kanyadana*)". In the Yadava dynasty there is a girl named Vrinda who is in love with you. She admires your prowess. Marry her and fulfil your obligations to the people". Jalandara obeys Narada's advice and marries Vrinda. He finds that she is a devoted wife. They are happy. She takes a serious interest in his duties as a king. She reminds him that he is a warrior. She says, "Your sword has now begun to rust. You conquered an empire when you were unmarried. But after our marriage you have not been able to annex even a province".

Jalandara sets out on a campaign of conquests. He captures the nether world and ascends to the sky, ready to face Indra. The gods are now terrified. Jalandara will be the victor. They turn to Vishnu for help. Vishnu knows the secret of Jalandara's end. He enters his palace and assuming the guise of Jalandara, he seduces Vrinda. She yields to him because she does not realise that he is not her husband, Jalandara, but someone else. As soon as she does so, Jalandara is killed in the battle which he is waging against the gods. His dead body descends to the desert stretch, where he was found at the start of the performance. Vrinda now knows that it is Vishnu who had ensnared her. Incensed by his guile, she curses him. "You seduced a devoted wife; you brought on Jalandara's death. For fourteen years you will wander insane in the world". So Vishnu encircles her funeral pyre for fourteen years repeating her name, *Vrinda, Vrinda*. He tells her, "I have become yours, with your name constantly on my lips. You will be born the *tulsi* plant and remain at the threshold of houses. Once in every year we will be bound in matrimony". This is one of the favourite *akhyanas* of

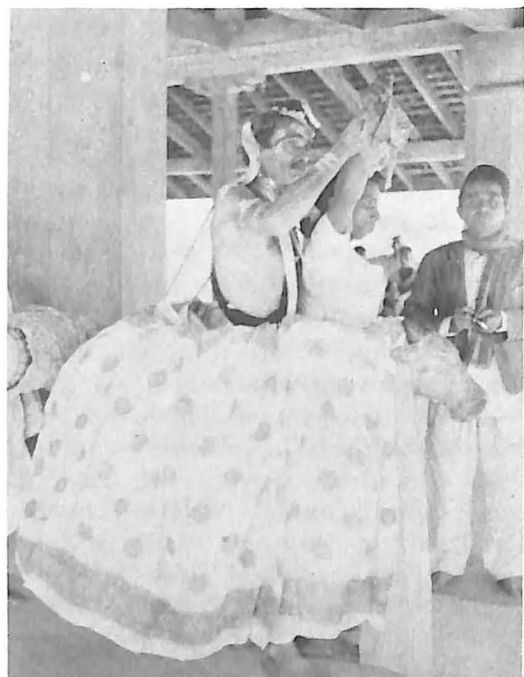
The Vetoba image at Khanoli



Vishnu



Saraswati



The Baswa dance

the *dashavatara* tradition. The stories in the *Navanatha Kathasara* (like those of Machchhindra or Gorakhnatha) also enjoy a great deal of popularity among the village folk.

It is the *sutradhara* or the proprietor of the group who usually decides which *akhyana* has to be staged on a particular night. But the leader of the village or the *pancha* of the *devasthan*a can suddenly suggest the performance of some other *akhyana*. This can happen even after the actors are through with their make-up. But even so, the troupe adopts a very understanding and flexible attitude and concedes to the request of its patrons. The *akhyanas* are not put down in writing but the actors pour their heart into the words and give them a true ring.

Most of the actors are musicians and the *rajparti* is invariably a good singer. The actor, who plays the queen's role, must sing well, too. The female roles are all acted by men. Babi Nalang, the well-known *dashavatara* performer, tried to get actresses for female roles. But his efforts met with no success. The religious traditions of the Konkan did not permit this innovation and the hardships accompanying the profession made it almost impossible for a woman to join it.

The tunes of the *dashavatara* are borrowed from our old stage hits; the words are altered. In the old days *dashavatara* actors used to sing before the actual commencement of a play by some of our veteran dramatists like Deval or Kirloskar. "But that music was based on the *ovi* form", this is what the old actors have to say. "Or if an actor could not master the original melody, the *sutradhara* would sing it as an *ovi*". The tunes of the songs sung before and after a regular dramatic performance were often composed by the *dashavatara* actors themselves or they used to get a Brahmin in the village to compose such melodies. One of the older and more gifted of the *dashavatara* actors Dada Patkar has himself composed such songs. Nowadays an actor occasionally picks up a strain from a film tune and sings it in the style of a *natya geet*. *Gela daryapara* is one instance of this practice.

Shankhasura in the *adadashavatara* and a few other characters speak the Malvani dialect. But once the *akhyana* proper commences, no character speaks Malvani. They speak literary Marathi. The *rajparti nat* employs ornate and difficult words, sometimes even without a full grasp of their meanings. The spectators do not understand him either. But as one of these actors explained to me, "If I don't use that diction, they won't believe it is the king himself speaking". The queen deploys the same idiom. Even the *rakshasaparti nat* does not hesitate to use it. But in his language there is more of sound and fury. The *rishiparti nat* employs the language of meditation. His tone is didactic.

The actors accent every word with so much emphasis that the meaning of a sentence gets blurred. Their style of utterance is easy to recognise and the voices are always pitched very high.

The acting styles are stereotyped. The *rajparti nat* adopts a heroic stance and the *rakshasaparti nat* assumes a grim and forbidding expression. The queen

must appear shy and humble when she is with the king and earnest and solemn in the *darbara*. She must wail piteously when she is grief-stricken and wring her hands in sorrow. The *rajparti nat* occupies the centre of the stage; the rest do not employ any definite gestures but they are bound by a strong acting convention which becomes a discipline and is soon recognizable as a style.

The fights have to be conducted in a particular fashion. Fist fights, sword fights, mace fights are a regular feature of many *akhyanas*. The actors circle round each other. The fights do not take place only between kings, or *rakshasas*, or *devas*. The king and queen may fight each other. Even the gods sometimes get embroiled in mutual strife.

The three forms of dance in regular use are *tandava*, *baswa* and *deepa*. Nowadays *baswa* and *deepa* are rarely performed. When the *baswa* is performed, the actor ties round his waist a kind of umbrella woven of bamboo sticks. It is a sort of covering used by farmers to protect themselves during the rain and it has a sharp edge, pointing towards the front, like the beak of an egret. It is a heavy object; in Malvani it is called the *irle*. It is tied round the waist and draped by a silken cloth. A bullock's wooden mask is fixed on the beak and Shankar and Parvati are supposed to be in it. With this appendage round his waist, the actor begins his dance. The *baswa* dance is now a rarity. Govind Dhondu Veturkar used to dance in this style but now he is too old to undertake such strenuous movements. The *deepa* form is in disuse. Bablo Aba Khanolkar who danced it proficiently died in 1961. When the *deepa* is danced, a brass *samai* (lamp with wicks) is placed on the head; in either hand there is a *thali* with a *niranjana*. The dancer whirls but the lights continue to flicker without a break. The *tandava* is still danced but it has now assumed a rather boisterous quality.

The *rajparti nat* wears a dazzling *kurta*, red, blue or purple in colour. It has a *jari* border. There are tiny, sparkling spangles embroidered on the fabric. The crown has the glitter of gold. The paraphernalia of ornaments includes bracelets, pearl necklaces, belts round the waist from where the swords hang. The *rakshasa* wears basically the same costume but he assumes a cruel and awe-inspiring expression. The *rishiparti nat* sports moustaches and a beard. He wears a clean *dhoti* and carries a water jar; a *rudrakshamala* hangs round his neck. The queen drapes a green, purple or red *sari* round herself. It is worn in the Maharashtrian style. The gods are clothed no different than kings.

The actors use light red make-up; there is *kajal* in the eyes, a saffron dot on the forehead. The arms and feet are also touched by light red colour. The demons use a brighter shade of red and even their eye-lids have the same tinge on them. The *rishiparti nat* has horizontal ash-lines on his forehead and a blend of red and white powder is smeared all over his body. Vishnu and Shankara use a bluer shade for their bodies. Those who do female roles also add a slightly bluish tinge to the colour they use and the arch of their eyebrows is emphasized by a strong line of black. Every actor is responsible for his own make-up. Most of the actors grow their hair long. The costumes and make-up material are all lodged in a trunk.

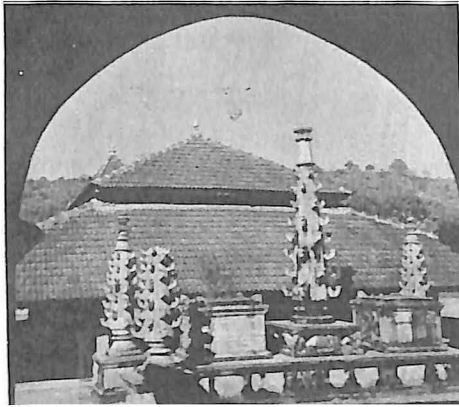
Nowadays the group tries to introduce the make-up conventions of our professional stage. They have begun to discard the *raal* and mud which they used in earlier times. Those days there was a predominance of red. Masks were also employed in certain situations. The actor who plays Ravana dons a wooden mask with ten heads. There were masks for Kumbhakarna, Khara-dushana, Narasimha and Kaliya but they are now in disuse. But even today Vishnu has two wooden hands fixed behind him.

Most of the actors doing the female roles are influenced by the style associated with Bal Gandharva. But the actors themselves aver that this style is descended from their own tradition and owes little to the professional stage. In any case, in the eyes of the urban spectator the similarity with Bal Gandharva's manner seems quite pronounced. But the male roles are all played in a distinctive style and show no trace of the conventions of the professional stage.

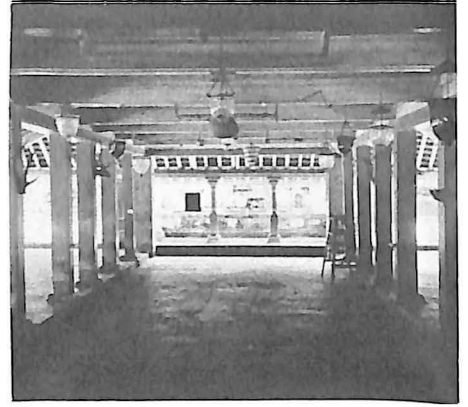
The *dashavatara* performances are held in a temple hall. The properties include a wooden bench. There is no curtain in the proper sense of the word. If a character is about to die, the *sutradhara* and another actor hold a sheet in front of the bench and the character slips away unseen. Sometimes performances are held in the open and the acting arena is screened on three sides by partitions made of leaves. Again a bench is the only kind of property in use.

The *sutradhara* stands to the right and the *mridanga* and harmonium players sit on chairs by his side. In the old days petromax lamps lighted the arena. Even today they serve as the main source of light in those areas where there is no electricity. As a rule, no mikes are required by actors during the *dashavatara* performances. In the district of South Ratnagiri there are nine *dashavatara* groups. An actor may shift his allegiance, but the company, as a whole, manages to maintain its own identity. It is believed that this folk form was brought to the Konkan by a Brahmin four centuries ago. Many maintain that the *dashavatara* style owes its origin to the Kuchipudi style of dance; others trace its inception to the Yakshagana tradition. The Brahmin who is said to have brought the style to the Konkan from Kerala lived near Walaval. A small image, *Gorevasa*, is housed in a tiny temple close to the Laxmi Narayan temple at Walaval to commemorate this event. The spot is regarded as a place of worship by *dashavatara* actors. By and large, Brahmins do not act in a *dashavatara* play. There are just a few exceptions to this rule. But strangely enough, Brahmins do act in the *lalit*, another folk form of the Konkan. They paint their faces and even speak the coarse language sometimes employed in the *lalit*.

The plight of the *dashavatara* actor is nothing short of pitiable. After the night's performance is over, the actor balances his trunk on his head, and climbs hillocks or fords rivers to reach a neighbouring village. The troupe usually camps in the open, quite often by the river bank. The season lasts for six months and the maximum that an actor is ever likely to receive for a night's performance is twelve or fifteen rupees.



*The Lakshmi Narayan Temple
at Walaval*



Ganapati



The puja basket



Ravana's mask

Gorakhanatha



Adadashavatara



Bhishma



*Brahmadeva
and
Shankhasura*

Kamsa





The stage in the open



Wooden masks

In the main, the *dashavatara* attracts the peasants. The middle-class strata of the villages keep aloof from this form. For the peasants it is linked with a religious ritual. During the performance an actor drapes a *sari* round himself and moves among the spectators with a *lamana* (plate) and a *niranjana* (lamp) in his hand. Usually a novice is sent out among the people with the avowed intention of curing him of stage fright. The *sari* gives him access to the sector where the women are seated. If he is shrewd and fairly attractive, he wins the favour of the audience. The patrons bring out their contributions more easily and the troupe expresses its approval of the young man.

The performance goes on almost till daybreak. The actor playing the role of Krishna breaks the pot of *dahi*. That is why the form is also called *dahikal* or *dhaykalo*. This religious flavour makes it acceptable to the villagers and, in the past, this element in it contributed to its popularity and success in the rural areas.

The Musical Evolution of the *Gazal*

Ashok Ranade

The *gazal* is perhaps the most popular form of Hindustani light music, in its vocal variety. As a form, it partakes of both literary and musical features and presents a rather complex picture in so far as its musical evolution is concerned.

For many reasons its musical evolution has not been properly traced. Firstly, the recorded versions of *gazal*-singing do not go back to more than seventy-five years. This means that it is only very late in its historical career that the *gazal* provides us with any evidence of how it was actually sung and so the recordings are perhaps not very useful in helping us to trace its early development. The *gazal* developed in the background of the *dhrupad-dhamar* and the *khayal* and parallel with the *thumri*. Obviously the *gazal* had accumulated a rich musical tradition around it at least since the fourteenth century and this tradition must have gone into its shaping. But no direct evidence of the process is available.

Musical literature, too, is silent in this respect. Firstly, the form was associated with the class of singing girls who did not enjoy a position of respect in the society of the time. Secondly, the form is usually considered as falling in the category of light music and hence our musicologists and theoreticians may perhaps be blamed for being quite thorough in their treatment of it but not very accommodative. Thirdly, it was discussed in detail as a literary form and perhaps that created the impression that the *gazal* had received an exhaustive treatment. To discuss its musical aspect on the basis of the available recordings seems to be advisable, though somewhat risky for, comparatively speaking, only a few specimens are available.

Musically speaking, the *gazal* seems to have evolved in three stages. They are the stages of metre-orientation, *thumri*-orientation and song-orientation. In spite of some degree of overlapping, the stages are clearly discernible in the recorded versions. When it was not advanced musically, the sung version of the *gazal* stuck to its metre in a rather rigid fashion. It was sung in a fast tempo; it lacked musical elaboration and also rhythmic variation. Quite often similar tunes were used, and without any change, for *gazals* which differed considerably in content. All metre is cyclical and thus it suggests beats that can be organized into a *tala*. Even so, to follow the beats too regularly amounts to a negation of musical creativity, although it does offer proof of a strict adherence to prosody. *Katil To Mere Dil* by Malka Jan of Agra and *Parda Nahi Hai* by Pyare Saheb are impressive examples of such adherence to prosody. There is no musical improvisation as such. Music is so regularly and exactly channellized that it ceases to

flow. The experience is more that of a recital than of a song set to tune so that it may be remembered. The metrically-oriented *gazel* is a musical recitation determined by prosody in which the singer is obviously reluctant to deviate from the metrical beats which totally control the expression.

The earliest signs of any conscious attempt to win freedom from these prosodic shackles are discernible in Gohar Jan, Shamshad Bai, Pyare Saheb, Bai Sundarabai, and others. In her *Jaban Khuli Bhi* Gohar Jan's performance reminds one of the Bal Gandharva type of *tana* patterns. They are fast, straight and vigorous; they are executed with admirable clarity. The patterns seem quite simple but a close analysis betrays traces of the intricacy of design which is the hall-mark of the *tappa*. This form of Hindustani Music gained stature in the seventeenth century. Shamshadbai and Bai Sundarabai are undisputedly Begum Akhtar's predecessors in so far as they have a masculine and sensuous touch in their voices. They also show an inclination towards an evocative, verbal articulation. Shamshadbai sings *Bamulke Dilbari* in a voice which is full of strength and Sundarabai does the same in *Gam Nahi*. Pyare Saheb made a distinct mark as a singer and experimenter. He amazes us on account of his unnaturally high-pitched voice and wide repertoire. His *Parda Nahi Hain* is typically metre-oriented. But in his *Yaar Ki Koi Khabar* he sings in an astonishingly slow tempo though the rhythm kept by the *tabla* is, in keeping with the usual tradition, fast enough. All these are attempts at a *thumri*-oriented style of *gazel*, which is truly realized in the music of Barkat Ali and Begum Akhtar.

A sub-classification seems to be unavoidable in the sphere of the *thumri*-oriented *gazel*. Barkat Ali's effort is replete with the *tappa* accent. Begum Akhtar's is not. Barkat Ali bursts upon the scene like a fresh force. His Patiala style is a combination of intricate and fast tonal patterns and thus an evocative and emotive use of words becomes possible. The tempo slackens and instruments like the harmonium and the *swarmandala* do not accompany the vocalist with mechanical regularity, but with a sense of mood and creation. Barkat Ali dazzles and moves at the same time. His *Ek Sitam* is a true representation of the *tappa*-accented and *thumri*-oriented *gazel*.

In Begum Akhtar there is a clearer awareness of the existence of untapped musical sources. A greater variety of *ragas* is used and with amazing flexibility. One finds *Bhoop*, *Mand*, *Gara*, *Tilak Kamod*, *Mishra Bahar* and scores of other *ragas* exploited with a probing sensibility. There is a lot of improvisation and in the *thumri*-oriented thematic elaboration, one notices the unmistakable stamp of the individual artist. There is no dichotomy splitting the artist-composer and the artist-performer. She is fused into one self. *Gam Ki Daulat*, *Wafa Nahin*, *Dil Ki Bat* or *Na Socha Na Samza* are examples of the *thumri*-oriented *gazel* in the real sense of the word.

Saigal and Malika Pukharaj illustrate the movement towards the song-oriented *gazel*. There is no improvisation but there are deliberate and planned tonal movements and pauses along with a slow tempo which allows the music to sink into one's consciousness. The instrumentation is slight, but

the tendency towards orchestration is marked. The trend culminates in the post-Saigal period in Lata Mangeshkar, Suman Kalyanpur, Mohammad Rafi, Farida Khanum, Mehendi Hasan (the last two are from Pakistan) and others. In this phase one becomes aware of a larger and more planned presence of tonal colour through careful orchestration. There are obviously more instruments and the technique of harmonization is consciously used. The composer's presence is felt in the tonal and rhythmic element of the compositions. It is intricate and imaginative. For example, *Koi Ummeed Bar Nahin Ati* by Lata Mangeshkar, *Koi Din Gar Jindgani Aur Hain* by Suman Kalyanpur are impressively complex compositions. One cannot hum these after a single listening. The tunes do not appear to have sprung from any particular *raga*. The *raga* is only a fleeting shadow. More often than not the *raga* is only an excuse for a deviation or serves as the original stimulus for the composition. But the composition, as a whole, prefers not to get bogged down in a *raga*. The performance seems to be fastidiously planned and executed and any 'feeling' on the part of the singer makes sure entries and exits. Nothing is left to chance, or to the mood of the moment. The stakes are too high to permit such a procedure. Interestingly enough, it is only at the song-oriented stage that we find *gazals* of high poetic merit being sung. Earlier on the artists were of a high calibre but the *gazals* betrayed a poor poetic standard. This was because it is only in a song that the word-content assumes an importance equal to that of the tonal-content. The song is a balancing act between meaning and music. In a song they interact; neither is passive. It is not as though Galib is sung more often because of his centenary year. He is sung because the *gazaal* has now developed into a song-oriented, musical expression.

Mehendi Hasan and Farida Khanum deserve special analysis. Both have good voices and they do *not* sing in a high pitch. Their singing is relaxed and assured and the listener experiences a soothing sensation. Our music directors and composers are still fascinated by the brilliance of the high pitch, which itself was a reaction against the uniform base of the Saigal era. But in doing so, they lose sight of the fact that the low pitch often permits a greater range and fullness of voice. There is less flash but more resonance in it. It also lends itself to an easier acceptance of the song because here the song seems to be within the reach of all voices. In addition, it affords a wider variety of tonal shades. *Na Gavao Nav Ki Neem Kash* by Mehendi Hasan and *Na Rava Kahia* by Farida Khanum prove the efficacy of the low pitch.

The song-oriented *gazaal* seems to have reached its zenith. Even though the development of a musical form is in no way predictable, it seems plausible that the *gazaal* will now move to a Free-Song stage where there will be no *tala*.

The Third Asian Music Rostrum (ASMR)

Alma Ata, USSR—17-20 October, 1973.

There were several noteworthy features about the International Music Council's Third Asian Music Rostrum which took place from 17 to 20 October, 1973 in Alma Ata, the capital of the Soviet Asian Republic of Kazakhstan, at the invitation of the Soviet State Committee for Broadcasting and of the Soviet National Committee of the International Music Council.

To start with, it was the first time this event was held on the continent whose music it is intended to feature. Previous sessions had taken place at Unesco headquarters in Paris.

Next, the range of music presented on this occasion extended over a much wider field than before. Indeed, each broadcasting organization which participated had been invited to enter for the ASMR one tape each of a maximum duration of sixty minutes of music from their country or region chosen from among any of the following categories: traditional classical music; traditional folk music; new music created in the traditional style; and new music which assimilates forms and techniques of other cultures.

Lastly, the Rostrum proper was followed on 21 October by a Symposium on *The Development of Musical Cultures in the Countries of Asia*. This was devoted to a series of fifteen reports followed by discussion. The main subjects discussed were: the significance of tradition in contemporary musical life; contemporary life as seen by Asian musicians; and national versus international, that is foreign elements in national styles. The sub-topics to which the participants devoted their attention included: "orchestras" of traditional instruments; the future of traditional instruments; traditional music theatre versus European culture; polyphony in a monodic culture; and the use of elements from other cultures (e.g. Arabic *maqam*) in orchestral music.

The entries of sixteen countries were listened to by an International Selection Committee of eleven members under the chairmanship of Dr. Narayana Menon. The members of the Committee had been carefully selected in

order to represent the different Asian cultures, that is Western Asia, Asian Republics of the USSR, Central Asia, East Asia and South-East Asia.

The sixteen countries admitted to participation were: Australia, Burma, Arab Republic of Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Syria, Turkey, USSR, and Yemen. The USSR was represented by entries from all nine Asian and Caucasian Republics.

The International Selection Committee had been empowered to select a maximum of four works from each of the four categories for which entries could be made. The sixteen works selected came from the following countries India, Armenia, Azerbaidjan and Japan—traditional classical music; Mongolia, Georgia and Siberia—traditional folk music; Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kirghizia—new music created in the traditional style; Georgia, Armenia and Mongolia—new music which assimilates forms and techniques of other cultures.

The ASMR is not a competition, but seeks rather to single out for world-wide promotion works and artists of outstanding merit. The above entries were considered by the International Selection Committee to meet these requirements. The International Selection Committee had, in addition been empowered to designate a maximum of two works from among all the categories for special recommendation. This it did in the case of the following entries from India and Armenia both belonging to the category of traditional classical music.

Traditional classical music:

Specially recommended:

India: *Raga Sankarabharanam*, followed by a *kriti* of Tyagaraja (*Swararaga-sudharasa*, *Tala: Adi* in slow tempo) performed by Emani Shankara Sastri (*Veena*) and Madras A. Kannan (*Mridangam*).

Armenia: *Overn Yelan* (The wind has started blowing) performed by J. Gasparyan and G. Gyurjan on two *duduks*, (double reed wind instruments).

This decision resulted in the addition of works from Pakistan, Indonesia and Iran to the list of items selected in this category.

The nineteen works thus selected will figure in a brochure which is to be published in the near future by the Department of Oriental Music or the National Conservatory of Uzbekistan. This brochure will be distributed to broadcasting organizations in Asia and in other continents.

Radio organizations which participated in the ASMR are committed to broadcast a certain number of the selected tapes in the course of the next two years. It is expected that many other organizations will request some of them. The International Music Council, for its part, will seek to make known internationally the artists involved.

The Symposium

Composers, musicologists and other representatives of musical life met at the Third session of the Asian Music Rostrum held in Alma-Ata,

noting that increased contacts between the musicians of Asia and Europe are possible only in a situation of peace and friendship, recommended that such a situation be strengthened and protected in every possible way in the name of a cultural development based on the collective security of the Asian and European continents.

The auditions which took place at the Rostrum and the discussions at the following Symposium raised a number of serious problems concerning the development of musical cultures in Asia. Principal among these are: the relation between national and foreign cultures; the assimilation of the achievements of non-Asian cultures by Asian cultures and vice-versa; the reflection of contemporary developments in traditional music; the use of polyphony in monodic cultures; the creative application of traditional music, both professional (that is, classical) and folk, in composition; the protection and development of traditional forms; the development of orchestras of traditional and folk instruments; the creation of original musical forms using ensembles; and national musical theatre (taking into consideration the experience of Oriental traditions). The experience of Socialist cultures in the musical field, as demonstrated at the Rostrum and during the public concerts, was generally to be of considerable interest in its potential application to the cultures of all Asian countries.

Most of the speakers at the symposium felt that, no matter how delicate the practical realization of a combination of national and foreign elements may be, this was in principle a fruitful way of proceeding. The point was not whether but *how* elements other than of one's own tradition be assimilated: as mere hybridation or as a fertilising and enriching force. In the education of composers and performers the world over such enrichment was a positive element and could on no account be considered as an imposition.

The participants in the Third Asian Rostrum believed that discussion of such problems should be continued at future Rostrums, as well as at all International Music Council symposiums. They should also be raised in the press, in particular in the International Music Council's organ, *The World of Music*.

The participants proposed the compilation of a Universal Music History. This project could be undertaken by the International Musicological Society, with the assistance of various scientific research institutes throughout the world. The International Musicological Society was requested to take the initiative in creating a group of experts to further this project, possibly at first on a regional basis. It was recommended that the Universal Music History be proposed to UNESCO for incorporation in the Organization's own programme.

Another recommendation of the Symposium concerned the compilation of a Universal Anthology of Folkmusic (in printed and recorded form).

It was further recommended that institutions of higher music education in all countries include in their curricula the study (in the form of courses, seminars, etc.) of musical cultures other than their own.

The Symposium recommended that, in its publications and other activities concerning Asian cultures, the International Music Council should co-operate with other similar major institutes in the world working on the study of the development of Asian cultures.

It was finally recommended that UNESCO be requested to publish in several languages the papers and report on the present Symposium, which concluded the fruitful work of the third session of the Asian Rostrum in Alma-Ata.

[Courtesy: *International Music Council*]

KALATMA GOMANTAK by Gopalkrishna Bhobe, Kala Academy Goa, Daman & Diu, Panaji—Goa, 1972, Rs. 5.00 (*In Marathi*).

In the *darbar* of Indian music, the small province of Goa holds a place of honour. This is obvious to any reader of Bhobe's book. It is true that the traditions of music took root, grew and spread in Northern India; various parts of the country gave us renowned artists who developed our music and raised it to greater heights. But no single province has produced such a wealth of musical talent and so many female singers as Goa. Bhobe himself had the heart of a true *rasik*; his love of music bordered on devotion and his knowledge of all its branches was immense. In this history of *kalatma* Goa, he refers quite spontaneously to the natural beauty which surrounded the artist, to the society that rated him and his art so low, and to the tremendous hardships that the artist himself had to suffer for the sake of his art. Bhobe sets down quite clearly how music, which was initially restricted only to devotional songs, came to be developed by the artists of bygone generations, how it gained in stature and earned renown for Goa in all parts of India.

The history of music from the year 1870 to recent times is quickly, yet surely, surveyed in this book. Bhobe records the contribution of the great artists of an earlier era, like Murarba Pednekar, Vithobanna Hadap, Saraswatibai Bandodkar, Bablibai Salgaonkar, Saraswatibai Jambawalikar, Mogabai Kakodkar or Tarabai Shirodkar, and also of the more important musicians of our time, like Anjanibai Malpekar, Kesarbai Kerkar or Mogubai Kurdikar. He even remembers to mention the very latest names in the field, like Madhu Pednekar, Ratnakant Ramnathkar and Shridhar Parsekar. Bhobe arouses the reader's interest in the destiny of such an extraordinary artist like Laya-brahmabhaskar Khampruji Parvatkar. There is a mention of many of those artists who excelled in branches of music other than singing; Bhobe refers to some of the well-known performers on the *sarangi*, *tabla* and the harmonium. All these names assure one that Indian music would have been the poorer without Goa and the gifts with which nature endowed her.

Bhobe writes in a rich and glittering vein, in a style which affords the reader the illusion almost of having actually seen and heard the artists Bhobe talks about; so deep and so true is the feeling behind the words. His earlier books, *Nad*, *Shapit Gandharva*, or *Sat Swarashri* also overflow with this same emotion. One feels a little disappointed that pictures of all these fascinating artists were not included in this book.

It is appropriate that the Kala Academy of Goa should print this book as their first publication, for in doing so they honour not only the writer but also his beloved land and the artistic tradition to which he was so sincerely devoted.

—SUHASINI MULGAONKAR

Translated from the original Marathi by Gauri Deshpande

THE WORLD OF COURTESANS by Moti Chandra, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1973, Rs. 50.00 (*In English*).

In the history of ancient India, the word 'courtesan' has a special connotation, and the role of this now defunct institution may be compared with that of the geisha in Japan. Our Sanskrit classics are replete with references to the existence of courtesans several centuries ago and to the legitimate place they occupied in the contemporary social structure. It is known that courtesans of the golden age of ancient Indian history were not just women who shed their physical allure on wealthy patrons but dedicated followers of the arts of music and dance. Indeed, they appear thus in a number of Sanskrit plays and epic poems.

Dr. Moti Chandra's is probably the first thorough study of this institution, and it is backed by an examination not only of ancient writings on the subject but also of the visual arts which are now accepted as eloquent testimony of the mores of pre-Christian India. A courtesan, as the author builds up her image, projects herself as a highly gifted lady endowed not only with considerable beauty but also with the qualities of graciousness, scholarship, wit and humanity. The State was fully aware of the importance of these courtesans and took care of their welfare, thus demonstrating that true catholicism of attitude which was so characteristic of the early period of this country's chequered history.

Dr. Moti Chandra has studied not only Sanskrit but also Jain and Buddhist literature. He is thoroughly acquainted with the key literary products of the Mauryan and the Gupta periods. He is also familiar with the text of the *Kamasutra*. His researches also cover the entire cultural personality of the India of the mediaeval period.

On the evidence of the *Natyashastra*, the author emphasises the role played by courtesans in the development of the performing arts. There were assessors to judge the quality of artistic achievement of actors and actresses and their verdict was based on the diverse specialised disciplines of their professions. Among these assessors were courtesans who judged the roles that depicted the behaviour of the inmates of the harem. The author paints a complete and authentic picture of those times; he places the institution of the courtesan within the socio-cultural frame.

An entire chapter in the book is devoted to courtesans as they appear in Sanskrit drama. A play such as *Mrichchhakatika* by Shudraka, with its popular heroine Vasantsena, is typical of the works the author has analysed in detail. Lesser known classics are also discussed. Among these mention must be made of the *Chaturbhani*, a collection of four *bhanas* or one-act burlesques by different authors, all belonging to the early fifth century A.D. This work (which has been edited and translated into Hindi with a commentary by Dr. V. S. Agrawala and Dr. Moti Chandra himself) deals almost exclusively with life in the quarters of ill-fame. It brings out the diverse aspects of a courtesan's metamorphosis within a changing social format. Particularly

informative from this point of view is the critique of Shudraka's *Padma-prabhratakam*. Shyamilaka's *Padataditakam*, with its touch of ribald humour, affords an intimate glimpse into the *vesha* district and the clients who patronised it.

Both from the point of view of geographical distribution and of historical development, courtesans in ancient and mediaeval India have never been studied as extensively as in this book. This mine of information is embellished with photographs portraying courtesans in our ancient sculpture. To look at these delicately chiselled monuments in stone is as much of an education as reading this erudite but highly readable book.

—DNYANESHWAR NADKARNI

KATHAKALI by Clifford R. Jones and Betty True Jones, published by the American Society of Eastern Arts and Theatre Arts Books, New York, 1970. (In English).

There was a time, not very long ago, when the performing arts of India were no more than exotic curiosities to the West. Its attitudes towards our music and dance were marked either by total lack of understanding or by romantic misunderstanding. The situation is happily different now, thanks to better cultural communication between India, Europe and the Americas in recent times. What is more, the West has occasionally thrown up individuals of remarkable artistic sensibilities with more than a casual, academic interest in Indian traditions. A notable example is the husband and wife team of Prof. Clifford Jones and Betty True Jones of the University of Pennsylvania.

Clifford and Betty Jones are fascinated by the traditional arts of Kerala, particularly Koodiyattam and Kathakali. They are not mere enthusiasts; both are performers, having been trained at the Kerala Kalamandalam for several years by some of the most outstanding teachers of our time. Their passionate devotion to Kathakali is evident in the little book *Kathakali*, under review.

The book is primarily intended to be "an introduction to the dance drama of Kerala", prepared on the occasion of the tour of the United States and Canada by the Kerala Kalamandalam Kathakali Company in 1970. But the meticulous care and accuracy with which it deals with the Kathakali tradition (in all its technical and theatrical details) and the sincerity and integrity with which the whole text has been written, make it much more than an impressive souvenir and raise it to the level of a definitive and scholarly document on the subject.

Kathakali is a highly stylised art. The training is long and "incredibly exacting". The book takes us, in the backdrop of the quiet of Kerala villages, through the *Kalari* (the traditional training school), the *Aniyara* (green room), right up to the stage where "throughout the night, until the cool hours of dawn, the magic world of India's ancient epics will live again....". We watch young boys being trained as actors by great masters; we have a glimpse of young musicians, whose development "is in every way comparable to that of the actor"; we marvel at the way ordinary human beings are transformed into gods and demons, kings, warriors and epic heroes in the *Aniyara* "where the final ritual of preparation for the actual performance takes place". And before the mind's eye the whole drama unfolds itself on the stage in all its beauty and grandeur.

Separate sections of the book are devoted to the historical background of this theatre tradition, its costumes and make-up, choreographic structure, musical accompaniment, preliminary procedures and acting techniques. The detailed treatment of such unique aspects of Kathakali as *Thodayam* and *Purappad*, *Melappadam*, *Kalasams* of many types, *Ilakiyattam*,

Thiranokku, the use of *Ragas*, *Talas* and *Kalas* to portray the full range of *bhavas*, is fascinating and instructive. The *hastas* (or *mudras*) of Kathakali are also explained with appropriate illustrations.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Kathakali is its make-up and costumes and the apparent similarity of the many characters in a story. In this respect Kathakali differs from other theatre forms. There is no attempt here to make up characters realistically or individually. They simply fall into the different 'types'. To those who see Kathakali for the first time this might appear absolutely mystifying. The authors deal with this aspect in great detail and explain the jealously guarded traditions and practices in a clear and lucid manner.

The book includes a short synopsis of selected scenes from the poetic texts of *Duryodhana Vadham*, *Kichaka Vadham*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana*, *Nala Charitam*, *Kalyana Saugandhikam* and *Kiratam*. This addition was obviously for the benefit of American audiences witnessing the performances during the tour of the Kalamandalam Company.

The authors strike a note of warning about the dangers inherent in the transition of Kathakali "from its original function as a socio-religious art form operating within the traditional culture, to the modern theatre stage....." A transformation is inevitable because of the confrontation of a changing society and changing systems of values. But it must be accomplished with "great intellectual perception" if it has to become a positive evolution and not make the tradition "something other than what it was before". This is true of every traditional art form in the context of a changing society and the point should not escape the notice of those charged with the preservation of artistic traditions in our country.

There is no doubt that the authors know the subject and their attractive style adds to the value of the work. It is doubtful if any other work on Kathakali in English contains as much authentic and useful information on the subject as this little book does.

Kathakali is profusely illustrated and, by themselves, the splendid pictures convey the joy and excitement of the Kathakali tradition. Jan Steward's layout is excellent and the pictures merge beautifully with the written text; each complements and enriches the other. The explanation of the transliteration scheme and basic pronunciation of Malayalam and Sanskrit terms as well as the selected glossary are all extremely useful.

There is also a companion disc, a long playing record of traditional Kathakali music, issued by the American Society for Eastern Arts. The performers are all senior members of the faculty of the Kerala Kalamandalam and include such well-known names as Neelkantan Nambissan, S. Gangadharan (both singers), Appukutty Poduval (Maddalam) and Chandra Mannadiar (Chenta). The pieces have been chosen carefully and are made up of traditional items as *Keli* and *Melappadam* and extracts from *Daksha Yagam*,

Uttara Svayamvaram and *Ramayana*. As is to be expected, the music is of the finest professional quality. So is the technical quality of the recording.

Altogether the book is a truly valuable contribution to the literature on Kathakali and can be strongly recommended to connoisseurs, students and laymen alike.

Say Clifford and Betty Jones:" Kathakali is a theatre of imagination. What you bring to this art, you will receive back a hundredfold. The price of entry is the effort of awareness". Their book is indeed a remarkable effort towards helping us achieve this awareness.

— K. SUBHAS CHANDRAN
