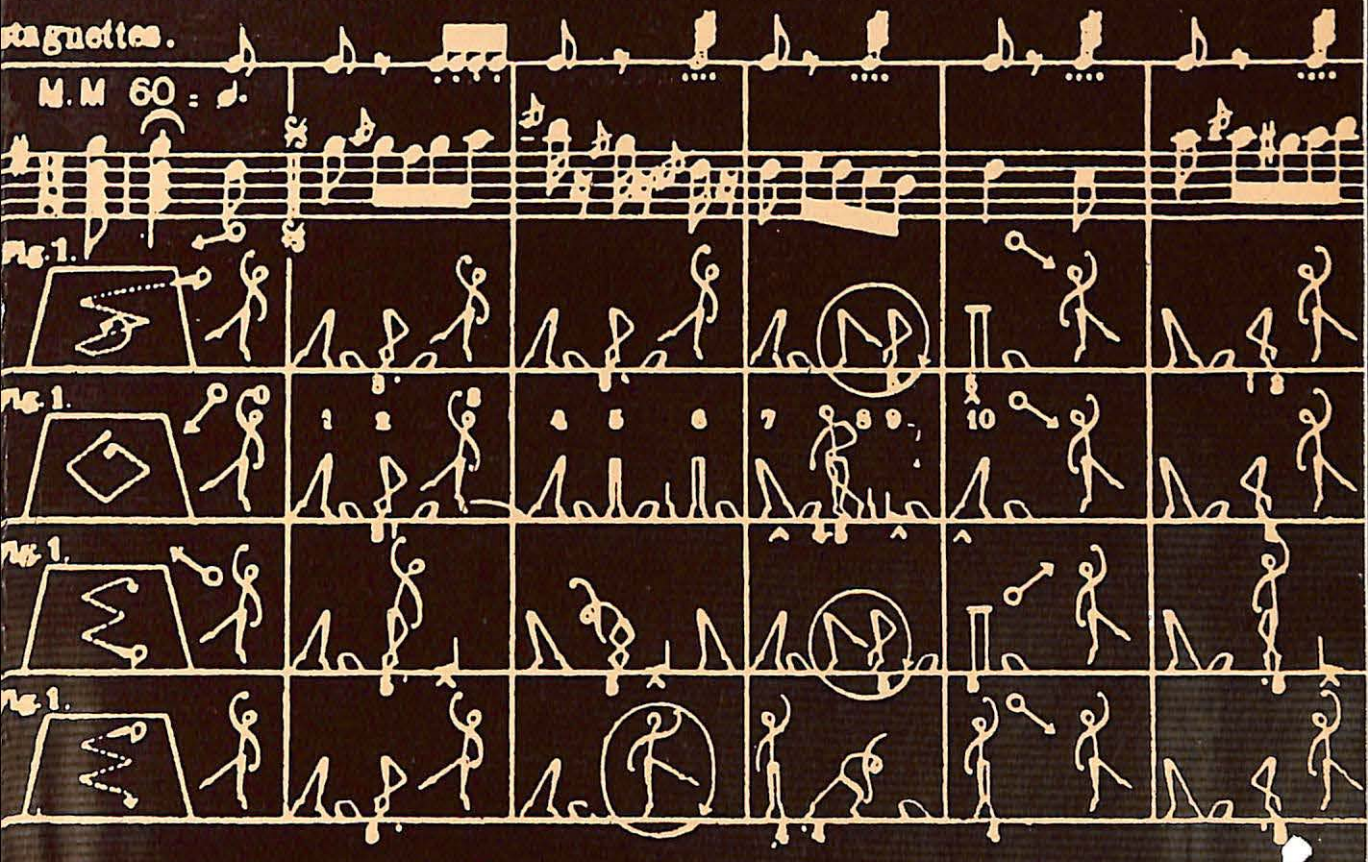
rn System, (1887) Germany. From "Grammatik der Tanzkunst".




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# NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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# *Prahlada Nataka*

## A Window on a Syncretic Performative Tradition

Sitakant Mahapatra

In Orissa, largely due to historical reasons, there is a remarkable continuity between classical, folk and tribal art-forms. It was one of the last regions to come under British rule. This led to the late introduction of English education and other modernising influences and subsequently, in a large measure, to Orissa's economic and industrial backwardness when independence came in 1947. But this also had the beneficial effect of allowing the various rich forms of folk-art and folk-culture to survive in their original, and relatively pure, forms. Orissa is also an almost open ethnographic museum with a large variety of tribal communities at various stages of acculturation and primitiveness. These communities have been endowed with rich autonomous cultures which have acted and reacted on the classical and folk art-forms of the neighbouring non-tribal world. The result is a rare evidence of classical-folk-tribal continuum which is hardly seen in such profusion and intensity elsewhere in the country. This is true of Orissi as a classical dance, of the Chhau dance of Mayurbhanj, of the Pata painting originating from the Jagannath temple, of the Sahi Yatra of Puri and of a number other plastic, performing and literary traditions. *Prahlada Nataka*, a play composed around 1860 in Oriya and attributed to Raja Ramakrishna Deva Chhotray of Jalantara, amply reveals this rich continuum in its literary and performative aspects.

Jalantara is now a part of Andhra Pradesh. The former palace of the king of Jalantara lies in ruins but there are about thirty-five distinct amateur, village-theatre companies in the Ganjam district of Orissa adjoining Andhra Pradesh who perform the play. How this performing tradition traversed from the court to the villages and the present form of the play took shape should be a matter for elaborate and detailed study. In fact, the performance deserves to be placed in the larger context of the literary, ritual-religious and performative traditions of Eastern India and more particularly, Orissa.

### *The Play: its Authorship & Composition*

The story narrates the emergence of Narasimha (the man-lion *avatar* of Vishnu), from a stone pillar of the royal court to mangle and kill Hiranyakashipu, the demon-king. Tortured by his father Hiranyakashipu, who demands that he abandon uttering even the name of Hari or God, Prahlada does not relent and insists, instead, that Hari is present in all objects in the Universe, animate or inanimate. At this, the demon-king points to the stone pillar of the court and asks Prahlada whether Vishnu or Hari is present in it. When Prahlada's reply is a firm affirmative, he kicks the pillar in anger at which point Narasimha emerges from inside it, tears Hiranyakashipu apart and blesses Prahlada. Narasimha is one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu.

The play has been edited by the Orissa Cultural Affairs Department in 1973 (Oriya Manuscript No. 46 in the Orissa Museum). The manuscript travelled from the

Madras Oriental Manuscript Library (No. 1984) to the Provincial Museum located in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack on 3rd August 1938 and later to the State Museum at Bhubaneswar. The copy of the manuscript appears to have been prepared in 1921-22.

While the play is attributed to Ramakrishna Deva Chhotray of Jalantara, it is possible that Gourhari Parichha, the well-known poet who was a contemporary of the king and a friend of the Jalantara court, composed part or maybe even a bulk of the play. It is said that Gourhari had dedicated this play to the king of Jalantara and that during his lifetime the play had not been well publicised or staged. After Gourhari's death, the king is supposed to have claimed credit for its authorship and sent copies in his own name to the different royal courts of Ganjam. It is a historical fact that the kings in Ganjam district were not only lovers of art, literature, music and dance but also personally practised these arts. More particularly, they actively encouraged the performing arts. The dedication of literary works to kings or Zamindars, in return for patronage received, was a common enough practice in 19th century feudal Orissa.

A comparison of *Prahlada Nataka* with other poetic works of Gourhari Parichha for internal evidences of similarity of idiom, emotive flavour, style and language etc., is yet to be made but even a broad analysis shows that *Prahlada Nataka* could be a syncretic work of more than one author including Gourhari, King Ramakrishna and other minor authors. The play incorporates diverse styles and idioms and also reveals a deep knowledge and understanding of Sanskrit poetics and dramaturgy, Puranic lore, astrology, politics, economics, medicine, traditional religion and philosophy and above all of classical music. Gourhari's other compositions like *Vastrapaharana* (*The Stealing of the Garments*), *Gita Govinda* and the numerous *chaupadi*-s (included in *Gourhari Granthabali*, or *The Collected Works of Gourhari* edited by Aparna Panda and published in 1926) reveal a vein of lyricism and romanticism so it is difficult to regard him as the author of many of the terse, academic and dry pages of the play.

The *Ganjam District Manual* refers to the founding of the small kingdom of Jalantara in South Orissa by the Sun-king Gajapati Purushottama Deva (1466—1497) on his victorious return from Kanchi. He is supposed to have defeated the Chief of Savaras (a primitive tribe who inhabit the Ganjam hill tracts even to this day), founded the kingdom of Jalantara and installed his son Govind Chhotray Deva on the throne as the first ruler. Historical evidences prove this and also place Ramakrishna Deva Chhotray's reign between 1857 to 1905. At the end of his rule, the Estate was sold to the Raja of Vizinagram by the British Government for arrears of *peishkush* (royal dues).

*Prahlada Nataka* is a very unusual play. Unusual in its combination of Oriya and Sanskrit *shlokas*-s, of colloquial, light and occasionally boisterous dramatic statements with songs based on classical *raga*-s and well-defined *tala*-s, of using both the *Sutradhara* in the pattern of Sanskrit plays and a *Gahaka* as in traditional folk-opera. It also incorporates certain contemporaneous Oriya poetic conventions, and traditions of both *Danda nata* of Ganjam and *Desia nata* of Koraput districts. Like the former, it uses techniques of trance, visitation, ritual worship of images, exorcism and masks, reminding one of the Tantric *Shakti* cult and the performances associated with it. On the other hand, like *Desia nata*, it also uses lyrical folk tunes and stories. Some scholars also point to the influence of *Yakshagana* literature.

The play contains as many as forty-two Sanskrit *shloka*-s and eleven Oriya *shloka*-s or invocations. There are 126 songs which use thirty-five *raga*-s[1] and six *tala*-s[2]. There are twenty male and five female characters in the play. The *Sutradhara* appears on several occasions in the play. This and the traditional *Nandipath* and the *Vaitalik* musical interlude are elements of the Sanskrit dramatic tradition even though it would be wrong to categorise it as a full-fledged play in that tradition. There is no systematic emphasis on presentation of the different *rasa*-s as in Sanskrit plays. The pattern of dialogues, the movement of the main theme, the mechanism of presentation, the sustaining spirit of the main ideas, the categorisation of Acts and Scenes, the types of *nayaka*-s and *nayika*-s and the general sense of conventional propriety and decorum which are the hallmarks of the traditional Sanskrit play cannot be discerned in *Prahlada Nataka*.

The role of the *Gahaka* in the play is indeed very interesting. He announces dramatic incidents, makes possible the appropriate pace of the play's development and is, in fact, the prime director of this movement. He determines the entry of characters to the stage, the events and the modulation of emotive sequences and serves as the vital lifeline between the characters and the audience.

The presentation and the management of the stage have certain special characteristics. Speaking of dramatic performances in rural India, J.C. Mathur commented :

"Places of performance are, therefore, so arranged as to reveal the beauty and colour of the costume and the intricacies of the dances to everybody and to enable the audience to share intimately the pleasures of poetry, the rhythm and melody of the songs .... While in the Ramalila large audiences sit on both sides of the performing arena and stage, the spectators of the *Prahlada Nataka* of Ganjam district of Orissa, occupy the space between the two parties of performers (*Drama in Rural India*, page 13)." This seems to be based upon wrong premises. From this description, it would appear that he is referring to the performance of *Vadi pala* or *Jatra* where the rival performers face each other.

*The Stage & Presentation*

In *Prahlada Nataka*, the major requirement is a medium-sized, flat wooden stage, with steps or stairs forming an essential part and leading on to it. The flat portion just above the highest stair is used as the throne for the demon-king Hiranyakashipu. The audience can, therefore, sit mostly in front of this wooden platform and on the three sides. The ground immediately in front of the last step is the second element of the stage and is used for a number of scenes in the play. The audience naturally has to sit a little distance away in keeping with the requirements of proper viewing since some of the events take place at a considerable height and at different levels on the wooden staircase. The stage and presentation arrangements normally have the following features :

1. In the final act, a pillar is erected opposite the main stage (open area in front of the wooden stairs) and it is from this pillar that Narasimha, the man-lion *avatar* of Vishnu emerges.

2. Narasimha is brought from the green room to the pillar in such

a manner that the audience cannot see him. He is kept hidden behind the pillar until the king rushes down the stairs in a rage and kicks or hits the pillar.

3. As the Narasimha mask is very huge, the actor has to wear a fairly massive turban to which the mask can be securely fitted.

4. The mask of Narasimha is not an ordinary decorative mask. It is treated as sacred and to ensure that it commands proper respect from the wearer and audience, it is ritually worshipped both at the beginning of the performance in the green-room and throughout the year in a nearby temple.

5. Formerly, the scene where Narasimha tears away the demon-king until his entrails emerge was mimetically presented on the stage. Legend has it that one such presentation led to the real killing of Hiranyakashipu by Narasimha who was 'possessed' beyond control. Since then a different practice is followed. In the final act, Hiranyakashipu now flees to the green-room and Narasimha chases him with a wild roar to the deafening applause of the audience. In some performances, Narasimha is also restrained by several persons who pull at a rope tied to his waist.

6. The orchestra, the *Gahaka*, the *Sutradhara* and their helpers take their place on one side of the stage and the performers enter from the opposite side through a pathway carved out among the audience.

7. Besides the *Gahaka* and the *Sutradhara*, there are two more lead singers and three to four subsidiary singers participating in the enactment.

8. Ritual purity is imposed on the performers, extending to certain restrictions on food and dress. In one village, the author was told that convention demands abstaining from sex (at least a day prior to the performance), from eating meat and from dressing gaudily outside the area of the stage.

The acting area thus comprises three distinct parts: a wooden stage with a large flight of stairs serving as the throne and the court of the king with ministers, commanders and other courtiers sitting in descending order of importance on the stairs; the open flat ground just in front; and a pillar facing the main stage. This gives the entire presentation a panoramic and spectacular appearance and helps in creating a sense of dramatic realism.

*Sahitya Darpana*, the celebrated text on aesthetics, lays down the parameters of the different *rasa*-s. In fact, the soul of Sanskrit drama was *rasa—Rasashrayam Natyam* (the play rests on the *rasa*-s). In *Prahlada Nataka*, four *rasa*-s predominate: *Hasya, Karuna, Bhaya* and *Raudra*.

*Raudra rasa* characterises the speeches of Hiranyakashipu when he prides himself on his own powers as the conqueror of the three worlds, when he



*Hiranyakashipu, Prahlada and Queen Lilavati.(Courtesy Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi).*

admonishes his son Prahlada to give up uttering the name of Hari, when he orders his ministers and others to penalise Prahlada and when Narasimha emerges from the stone pillar. The element of fright is evident on the face of Hiranyakashipu when Narasimha finally emerges from the pillar and advances menacingly towards him. The face, which was bursting with bravado and grandeur minutes ago, is now deadly pale, and stricken with panic. *Karuna rasa* is embodied in the utterances of the queen Lilavati, wife of the demon-king. There are strong elements of humour and hilarity in the dialogue between the gatekeeper at Hiranyakashipu's palace and the sage Narada, between the *Dasi* and the *Dhaima*, in the dress and dialogue of *kela-keluni*, Shukracharya and Chandamarka. Besides these four dominant *rasa*-s, there are also traces of *Shringara rasa* (in the dialogue between the king and the queen) and *Vatsalya* (in the queen's concern for her son Prahlada) at different points in the play.

Viswanath Kaviraj's *Sahitya Darpana* defines not only the various *rasa*-s on which Sanskrit drama depended but also the types of *nayaka*-s and *nayika*-s. The *nayaka* is supposed to possess eight *sattvik* qualities:

शोभाविलासो माधुर्यं गाम्भीर्यं धैर्यतेजसी ।
ललितौदार्यमित्यष्टौ सत्त्वजाः पौरुष गुणाः ॥

In the play, Prahlada, the hero, symbolises the quality of *dhirodatta* while Hiranyakashipu, the anti-hero, represents the *dhirodhatta*. Similarly, Lilavati can be characterised as a *sviya nayika*.

Nowhere in the play is there any definitive mention of acts or scenes. There is only a mention of "the end of the first day and night" after the birth of Prahlada. The play used to be performed either for three nights or seven nights on the pattern of Ramalila. Historical evidence indicates that initially the normal period during which the play was performed was seven nights. Gradually it was considered too long, both by the performers and the audience and, therefore, reduced to a three-night performance for modern audiences. There is also a one-night performance which skips over what is considered inessential, retaining only the basic core of the theme. The general pattern of dividing the play into three or seven parts is as below:

Three nights' break-up: (a) From the invocation to Ganesha to the birth of Prahlada; (b) From Prahlada's visit to the house of his Guru to the sacrificial offering to Chandi; (c) From the threats administered to Prahlada by the demons on the king's orders to Hiranyakashipu's death at the hands of Narasimha.

Seven nights' break-up: (1) The penance of Hiranyakashipu; (2) The birth of Prahlada; (3) His education and upbringing; (4) The punishment meted out to Prahlada through Gajakarnavira and the wild elephant; (5) The chastising of Prahlada through his being thrown from the top of a mountain, sacrificially offered to Bhudevi and cast away in a cave; (6) Prahlada's ordeal by fire, his abandonment to snakes and incarceration in prison; (7) The killing of Hiranyakashipu.

The theme of Prahlada has been very widely used in Indian Puranic literature and performing arts throughout the centuries. In the words of J. C. Mathur, "like a spring with a common source, these stories well up in Bhagavat Mela of Madras State, Kuchipudi of Andhra Pradesh, the Lilas of Uttar Pradesh, the Ankiya Nata of Assam and the Yatra of Orissa and Bengal. The story of Hiranyakashipu, the demon-king and Narasimha, the lion-incarnation of Vishnu is a theme with an all-India appeal" (*Drama in Rural India*, p. 77).

In Puranic literature, there are four major references to this theme of Hiranyakashipu, Prahlada and Narasimha: (1) The Fifth Chapter of the Bhumi Cantos of the *Padma Purana;* (2) The Sixteenth to Twentieth Chapters of the 1st canto of *Vishnu Purana*; (3) The Ninth Chapter of the 4th canto of *Devi Bhagavata*; and (4) The first ten Chapters of the 7th canto of *Srimad Bhagavata*.

The description of events and situations in these works as also in the Sanskrit *Narasimha Purana* agrees in broad details. The essence of the theme is, in fact, identical. After learning of the death of his brother Hiranyaksha at the hands of Lord Vishnu in his Varaha incarnation, Hiranyakashipu pleases Brahma through deep penance. Brahma blesses him and grants him a boon: Neither man, god or animal can kill him; he cannot be destroyed on earth, in the sky or on the oceans or by any weapon; he cannot be annihilated during day or night. In fact, what actually happens is that Hiranyakashipu is killed by a hybrid of man and beast, Narasimha. He is torn apart on Narasimha's lap with the man-lion using his hands and fingers to destroy him during the hour of gathering dusk. Narasimha emerges from the pillar in the final act, kills Hiranyakashipu and his anger is not quenched even by the invocations of Indra and other gods. Only Prahlada's prayers finally succeed in calming him down and he becomes his former self.

While the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have Rama and Krishna as *avatar*-s and the *Bhagavadgita* has only Krishna, later *Purana*-s (such as the *Agni Purana* and the *Varaha Purana*) and Jayadev's *Gita Govinda*, refer to the ten incarnations of Vishnu including Narasimha. In fact, the *Narasimha Purana* refers to eleven incarnations, one of them being Krishna.

Orissa has a tradition of using the Prahlada theme in *Yatra, Leela* and plays. Of the literary works produced on the theme, mention may be particularly made of the following :

1) *Prahlada Nataka* of Kishore Chandra Harichandan Jagadev, the king of Surangi in Ganjam district;

2) *Sangita Prahlada Nataka* of Padmanav Narayan Dev, the king of Paralakhemundi;

3) *Prahlada Nataka* of Ramachandra Sur Deo, the king of Tarala;

4) *Prahlada Charita* of the popular dramatist, Vaishnav Pani; and

5) *Prahlada Nataka* now under discussion.



*Hiranyakashipu.*
*(Courtesy: Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi).*

All of them use the theme to illustrate the supreme value of unflinching devotion to Vishnu and the importance of the incarnation of Vishnu as Narasimha or man-lion. The thematic treatment as also the storyline is more or less the same. While Vaishnav Pani uses more of colloquial Oriya, the other four authors, all of whom were kings in southern Orissa in the nineteenth century, use a mixture of the Sanskritised and colloquial idiom. It is difficult to explain why the theme had a special appeal to the royal authors. All of them incidentally were worshippers of Vishnu. Of these four plays, *Prahlada Nataka* is, indisputably, the most impressive in terms of literary and theatrical achievement.

The play begins with an invocation to the guru, a customary practice in all the performing arts in India. This is followed by invocations to Lord Ganesha (also called Gananatha), and to Bhagwati Sharada or Saraswati.

Ganesha is invoked both in a Sanskrit *shloka* and an Oriya song. While the Sanskrit *shloka* is well-known, the Oriya song is quite interesting in its own way and sung in *raga* Bhairavi set to Athatala:

> "We bow at the feet of Lord Gananatha. Oh son of Parvati, who rides a mouse, has four hands and an elephant's head, grant us your blessings. He, who carries an elephant prod and is obese. Lord Gananatha, whose ears flap like fans, and who is charming. Carrying six types of offerings to you with incense, lighted candles, betelnut, and fragrant flowers, Shri Nrupakeshara Ramakrishna Vira hastens to kneel before Lord Shankar's son."

The story is then introduced by the *Gahaka.*

> *Gahaka:* Invoked in so many ways, Lord Gananatha appeared and spoke thus.
> Ganesha: Oh, Leader of the *Nataka,* why do you invoke my name?
> *Gahaka:* Oh, Remover of Obstacles, I pray to you, let our play proceed without hindrances.
> Ganesha: So be it.

Later, after invocations have been sung to Saraswati and Narasimha, the *Gahaka* further says: "I now invoke the great poets to bless the efforts of humble men who would narrate the story of the appearance of the fourth incarnation of Vishnu. Listen to how the tale begins. Oh, learned pundits, listen with pleasure to the style of this *nataka.* Do not find fault if it fails to have the right elegance of poetry for I am unlettered by nature. Even in my dreams I have kept poor company. Yet I make bold to appear before you bearing in mind the feats of Hari."

Thereafter, the *Sutradhara* reels out a long list of *swara*-s, *raga*-s, *nayaka* types etc. The *Gahaka* intervenes once again to begin the real play, indicating its context.

> "Then the great king Parikshita looked at Sukadeva and asked him how it was that Sesanka Vihari was born out of a pillar in the form of Narasimha, and what it was that Prahlada said to his father, what were the punishments inflicted on him and how Kamala's Lord, enraged, killed Hiranyakashipu.

Relate the full story and, in so doing, take away the burden of sin. Hearing this, Sukadeva began the tale."

This is how the *Gahaka,* the lead singer, begins the play. In effect, he is the most important link in the chain of dramatic events.

In *Prahlada Nataka,* the divine presence of Narasimha is brought onto the stage by the technique of trance or spirit possession, by magic and ritual which plays such an important role in most primitive cultures. An individual, a family or even the entire community may face a calamity or a tragedy in the form of an epidemic or death at the hands of man-eating tigers or the depredation of wild animals, or devastation by floods or earthquakes. Unable to discern the proximate or remote cause of such tragedies through reasoning and logic, the primitive mind attributes these afflictions to the wrath of malevolent gods of spirits, who are sought to be placated by suitable offerings. Often, such propitiation may not be for the negative purpose of warding off disasters but for invoking their blessings for peace and prosperity.

This propitiation assumes many forms and a vast complex of ritual-religious ceremonies may be associated with it as a sort of attempt to appease and thereby gain control over unspecified and unknown forces of nature. The forms of propitiation are often a combination of (a) ritual chantings, invocations or incantations, (b) certain purificatory rites involving the person or persons offering worship and the physical space where it is being sanctified, (c) physical objects such as food or drink, flowers, incense etc. and (b) accompanying plastic or performing arts such as specially designed paintings, icons or murals and song and dance numbers. All such magical activities invoking the spirits or "powers" involve three major aspects. Bronislaw Malinowski characterised them as — things said, things done, and a person officiating. Hence, the spell, the rite and the condition of the performer are the basic ingredients of the ritual performance. The *bejuni* (the woman who is possessed) in Kondh tribal society, the *ojha* in Santal or the *kudan* (the priest) in Saora society, is literally possessed by the spirit he or she invokes and ultimately represents, and then utters certain clue statements leading to the understanding of the specific causes of disease or death. In *Prahlada Nataka,* the same technique is followed in a performative context. The ritual initiation is parallel to primitive trance-possession. In this case, the actor-priest who is to wear the Narasimha mask is required to perform a fairly elaborate *puja* propitiating and invoking the spirit of the mask. The ritual worship includes sacred water, flowers, coconut, sandalwood paste, incense, lighted lamp, and prescribed *mudra*-s of the hand. The worship is conducted off-stage, and prior to the performance while the orchestra play. All the performers gather around the mask and sing prescribed invocations to Vishnu. This ritual is, in fact, only a continuation of the worship of the mask in a nearby temple throughout the year. At the time of the performance, the worship shifts from the temple to the dressing room. John Emigh, Associate Professor of Theatre Arts at Brown University, U.S.A., is now working on a translation of *Prahlada Nataka.* He quotes some villagers in the Ganjam district: "The performer who wore the mask received a dream in which the spirit of the mask stated that he would no longer enter into the performance because he was not being properly worshipped. The mask then became so heavy that no one could lift it".*



*The killing of Hiranyakashipu at the hands of Narasimha.*
*(Courtesy: Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi).*

In contrast, the person playing the role of Ganesha wears only a papier-mache elephant mask and jumps off a floorboard to do a vigorous dance before blessing the performance in response to the invocation to him. Saraswati also blesses the performance. Female roles in *Prahlada Nataka* are performed by males even to this day. One must note, however, that, unlike Narasimha, neither Ganesha nor Saraswati are supposed to possess the respective performers. The Ganesha mask is only a part of the costume; it is never worshipped in a temple nor at the site before the performance begins. The pattern of representation is mime and not direct *becoming*.

The orchestra is very important in the play. There are a large number of *raga*-based songs. Appropriate instrumental accompaniment is, therefore, crucial. Normally, the orchestra consists of two *mridangam*-s five or six sets of cymbals, a harmonium, two or three long trumpets, a small *mahuri* and a conch shell. The shell is generally used to herald Narasimha's entrance onto the stage in the final

act of the drama. The dramatic actions are paralleled by appropriate musical scores and flourishes. The *Prahlada Nataka* thus has elements of the classical Sanskrit play, folk opera or *jatra, Desia nata* and *Danda nata* even while its theme is admittedly classical. The presentation, however, borrows liberally from the folk and tribal motifs of adjoining areas. Only recently, scholars have begun recognising this linkage of classical, folk and tribal patterns, not only in this particular play and its performance, but in Indian performative art-tradition in general. Secondly, this tradition also has an intimate relationship with the religious and ritual traditions of society. John Emigh, I understand, is likely to take up a detailed research project on this "inter-play" and I entirely agree with his view that "the assimilation and syncretic use of several performance traditions by the poets, musicians, and royal patrons of Jalantara, and the later diffusion of the work into the villages of Ganjam through the court of Chikiti present a fascinating example of the dynamic interplay between classical, folk and tribal traditions" (Unpublished text).

* * *

*Notes:*

1. Arup, Aravi, Asabari, Ahari, Kalyan, Kalyani, Kamodi, Kedargouda, Khamaj, Chantaraba, Jhinjoti, Todi Punnaga, Desh, Desi Khamaj, Desiya Todi, Nabaraju, Nabaraj, Nata, Nadaramakriya, Panta, Barali, Punnaga Marua, Puri Kalyani, Bihag, Bhairavi, Marua, Mukhari, Yamuna Kalyani, Regupta, Shankaravarana, Shree, Shrota, Saberi Sindhukhamai, Sahana, Hindustani Todi.

2. At Tal, Atha Tal, Adi Tal, Ek Tal, Jhula, Rupak.

* * *

*("Dealing with the Demonic: Strategies for Containment in Hindu Iconography and Performance" — *Asian Theatre Journal* — Vol-I No. I, Spring 1984, p. 26)

# *Pallavi* and *Kriti* of Karnatak Music: Evolutionary Processes and Survival Strategies

Amy Catlin

While conducting ethnomusicological research in Madras from 1976 to 1978, I began to perceive a relationship between certain processes of musical change evidently taking place within the realm of performance practice, on the one hand, and changing patterns of socio-cultural organization surrounding musical activity on the other. These processes were first pointed out to me by musicians and musical experts living in Madras. Their opinions, although undoubtedly valid in their own right, were not always easy to substantiate. My own perceptions of these patterns were necessarily shaped to a large extent by my background in western musicology and performance practice, especially in the realm of vocal music, as well as through graduate training in ethnomusicology and anthropological approaches to the study of performance. In attempting to find concrete evidence for the perceived phenomena, I eventually arrived at the arguments put forth in the present paper.[1]

The musical change to be documented here consists of two related elements. First, the performance of *pallavi,* a primarily abstract, minimally texted variation form, has undergone a radical decline during the past fifty years, causing strategies to be devised for its preservation. There is some evidence to suggest that *pallavi* has, at the same time, been acquiring some of the characteristics of *kriti* style. Second, in certain contexts, the performance of *kriti,* a texted song form, is becoming increasingly similar to performances of *pallavi,* by virtue of the inclusion of abstract materials formerly found primarily in *pallavi* performances. "Abstract" is used here to indicate those purely melodic and rhythmic features of performance which are largely independent of lyrics. Texted song forms such as the *kriti* are by nature dominated by words, at least in their archetypal form, and are considered here to be less abstract than *pallavi,* whose texts are minimal. Thus, the performance of *kriti,* in certain contexts, is apparently acquiring more abstract features hitherto characteristic of *pallavi* performances.

It is posited in this argument that both *kriti* and *pallavi* began as relatively simple forms to which accrued, over the generations, enhancements of techniques, embellishments, and similar features of performance practice which render both forms highly complex musical entities laden with abstract qualities at the present time. Performers of *kriti* still seem to be increasing those abstract musical elements in their renditions of these songs, while *pallavi* performers appear to have reached their zenith in this regard some fifty years ago, after which time they evidently began to reduce the complexity of the form considerably, and to adopt some elements from the more popular *kriti* performance style.

The hypothesis offered here concerning these changes is that they have been affected by the new constraints which characterize musician-patron-audience relationships as they have evolved since the ascendancy of Madras as a principal musical center from the turn of the last century. In order to support this hypothesis, evidence for musical change will be presented first, followed by the evidence which shows that these changes are related, at least in some part, to socio-cultural factors.

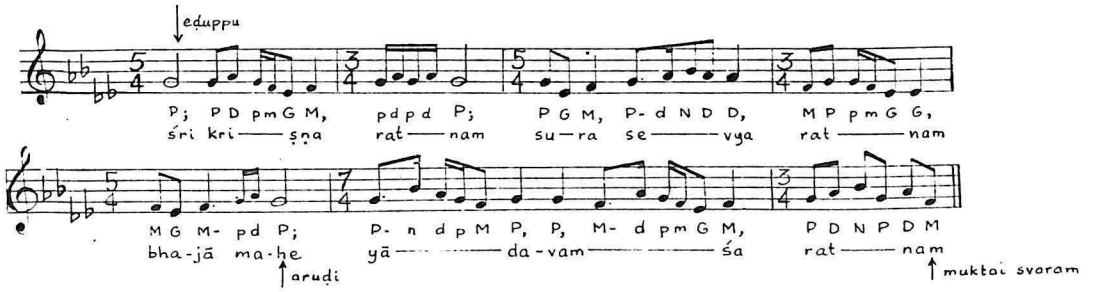
*Musical Change:* Pallavi

The term *pallavi* is derived from the Sanskrit root for a sprout, shoot, bud, or other young growing extension of a plant; it is sometimes used more abstractly to mean "spreading" or "expansion" (Monier-Williams 1899: 610).[2]

The *pallavi* form consists of one line of text which may be intricately laced with literary devices such as conundrums, palindromes, and multilevelled symbolic references.[3] These texts are often in Sanskrit, although vernacular and multi-language texts are also common. In the initial statement of a *pallavi* theme, the line of text is sung to a set melody in a specific *ragam* and *talam,* so that the line has a distinct melodic contour and metric underlay. In the past, the musical setting of the *pallavi* text was composed impromptu as evidence of the musician's creativity. In order to demonstrate his erudition, as well as to ensure the spontaneity of the setting, the court patron presiding over a *pallavi* performance could declare, immediately before the performance, the text, *talam, ragam* or even the entire theme to be improvised upon, thereby allowing virtually no time for the musicians to rehearse. Such a situation rarely occurs today, since individual patronage has been replaced by the group patronage of concert audiences.

As illustrations of the performance contexts characteristic of the nineteenth century, and the types of *pallavi* themes considered to be especially worthy of praise, two examples will be given here.[4] In one performance, a specially invented *talam* was created by "Pallavi" Seshayyar (1842-1902) on the occasion of the Pallavanatham Zamindar's music conference held in 1888. The name for the invented *talam,* Kalinadam, was devised using the Katapayadi *sutra,* a formula used for such purposes based upon the Sanskrit alphabet. The *pallavi* text came from a pre-existing Sanskrit *shlokam.* For this *pallavi* theme and its execution, the musician received a gold chain and a sapphire from the zamindar.

Example 1. Pallavi Seshayyar, composer. *Pallavi* theme in Kalinadam *talam,* Todi *ragam.* Structural points indicated. (Shankar Iyer 1971:110-111).

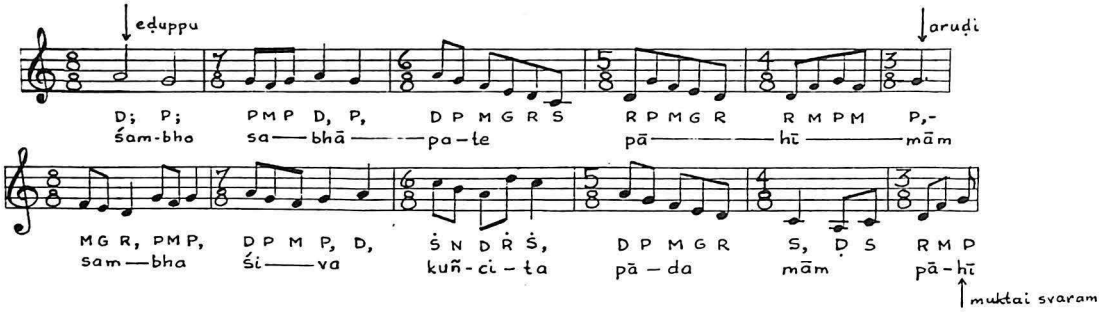



Translation: Let us sing the praise of the jewel Krishna, the jewel honored by the gods, the jewel of the Yadava dynasty.

In the second example, the renowned singer Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer had an audience with the prince of Venkatagiri, who asked for a *pallavi* whose counts were divided in the form of Gopuccha *yati* ("Cow's tail", or with progressively diminishing

rhythmic values). These counts were to be merely a succession of individual beats, rather than the hierarchically differentiated groupings found in traditional *talam*-s. The result was the following *pallavi* theme in Arabhi *ragam,* with 8, 7, 6, 5, 4 and 3 beats per division, for which the singer received quadruple the sum of 108 rupees given to the other competing musicians.

Example 2. Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, composer. *Pallavi* theme in unnamed metrical format (Gopuccha *yati*), Arabhi *ragam.* Structural points indicated. (Shankar Iyer 1971:62-3).




Translation: Oh Shiva, Lord of the dancing hall of Chidambaram, protect me; Shiva, with the arched foot, protect me.

As Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer's biography illustrates, the performance of *pallavi* was often in the form of a contest between a resident court musician and a visiting challenger. After the initial statement of the *pallavi* theme, the two musicians set out to execute the musical assignment in a contest of skill and imagination. The original theme would then be repeated and varied, sometimes for hours, according to a seemingly infinite repertoire of variational and improvisational techniques, many of which were formulaic in nature. Highly abstract musical structures governed the competition, often so complex that only the initiated cognoscenti could perceive them and appreciate the sport. The text and its relative rhythmic proportions remained unchanged throughout, while the singers repeated the words endlessly in a manner reminiscent of *mantra* recitation, varying the melodic materials and rhythmic subdivisions within the syllables. Finally, with a panel of musical experts to guide him, the patron would proclaim the victor, and silks, jewels, and gold would be disbursed among the contestants according to their skill. Such competitions enjoyed great popularity as court entertainment during the nineteenth century, and probably in the eighteenth century as well.

*The* Pallavi *Singer's Techniques*: The abstract improvisational and variational techniques in the *pallavi* singer's repertoire can be described in terms of seven main categories, each containing numerous subtypes. Many of these were subsequently adopted by *kriti* singers, as will be shown later. According to one performer and musicologist, Prof. T. Shankaran, the details concerning some subtypes have remained the secret property of a few musicians. "It is not easy to research these matters, because the deliberate intent of the musician was to confuse his opponent or partner" (1977, personal communication).[5]

The seven categories in the *pallavi* singer's repertoire were, in the order of performance: 1) *ragam,* 2) *tanam* (statement of *pallavi* theme), 3) *sangati,* 4) *niraval,* 5) *kalpana svaram,* 6) *anuloma-pratiloma,* 7) *raga-talamalikai.*

These same techniques are still followed by *pallavi* singers today. The first two, *ragam* and *tanam,* occur prior to the statement of the *pallavi* theme, exploring the *ragam* without the introduction of *talam. Tanam,* however, differs from *ragam* in that intermittent pulsation is introduced, paving the way for the constant pulse of the *pallavi* section which follows. These two introductory sections are without text, although syllables such as *nom, tom, na* and so forth are often sung, as well as devotional words such as *anantam* (infinity).

After the obligatory *ragam* and *tanam* sections, which could both be quite lengthy, the musician sings the *pallavi* theme at least twice without variation, in order to allow musical accompanists (most typically violin and *mridangam*) and listeners to become familiar with it. This theme follows certain conventions which will now be summarized, following descriptions by Sambamoorthy and others.

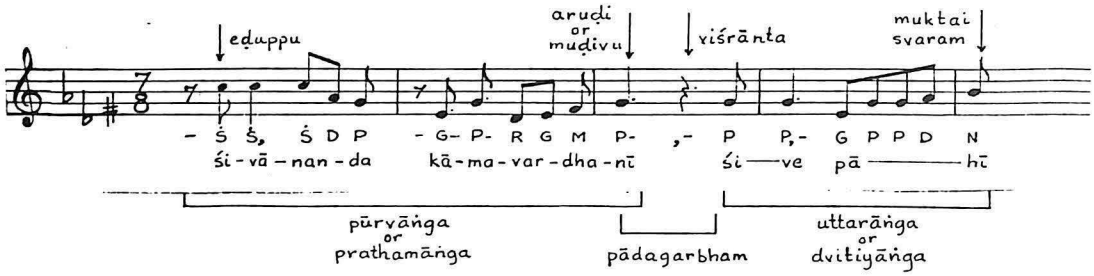
Pallavi *Theme Structure:* A "proper" *pallavi* theme should consist of two sections. The first (*purvanga, prathamanga*) must end on a strong beat, either the first beat of a *talam* or another strong beat in the cycle. This moment of arrival is called *padagarbham* (Sanskrit: line + inside, middle) and consists of two elements. The first is the above-mentioned final note of the *purvanga,* which is called the *arudi* or *mudivu* (Tamil: ending, conclusion). Its pitch should either be identical to the first note of the entire theme, or else its *samvadi* (a fourth or fifth away). The second element in the *padagarbham* is a rest (*vishranti*) following the note.

The second section (*uttaranga, dvityanga*) of a *pallavi* theme must end one note above or below the first note of the theme, thus providing for a smooth melodic transition back to the beginning. This final note is called the *muktai svaram* or *muttaipu* (Tamil: *muttai,* front). It leads back to the beginning of the theme, called the *eduppu* (Tamil: to awake, produce musical sound) which normally falls on the first beat of the *talam* or a certain duration before or after the beat.

Examples No. 1 and No. 2 illustrate many characteristic features of nineteenth century *pallavi* themes which differ from typical "modern" *pallavi* themes. First, they are fairly lengthy. Second, they employ complex metric structures of an "academic" nature, without easily recognizable recurring units. Third, the melodies tend to meander and are not readily grasped upon first hearing.

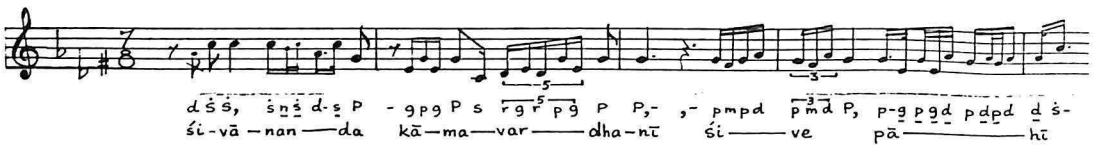
The following *pallavi* theme (Example No. 3) is taken from a recent performance by the prominent female vocalist, M. L. Vasanthakumari. It illustrates the "modern" style of *pallavi* composition. First, it is short and succinct. Second, it uses a non-classical *talam* considered to be derived from folk music, the 7-beat Mishra Chapu, which has an easily discernible structure. Third, the melody is "catchy", and may even be a quotation from a *kriti* by the singer's guru, the late G. N. Balasubramaniam, whose compositional style was uniquely tuneful and easy to grasp.

Example 3: M. L. Vasanthakumari, vocalist. *Pallavi* theme in Mishra Chapu *talam,* Kamavardhani *ragam.* (All India Radio Sangita Sammelan, New Delhi: 1977).




This notation gives the basic structural points of the theme. The following transcriptions, however, depict the theme as it was actually performed with ornamentation.

Example 4: *Pallavi* theme transcribed as performed with ornamentation.




The Sanskrit text addresses the goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, by one of her other names, Shive, the vocative form of her name, Shivaa, which is also his name in its feminine form. A pun is made on the name of the *ragam,* Kamavardhani, which means literally "increasing pleasure and desire", one of the important attributes of Parvati. The following translation in which the double meanings are italicised, should make this clear.

Text: *Shivananda Kamavardhani Shive pahi*
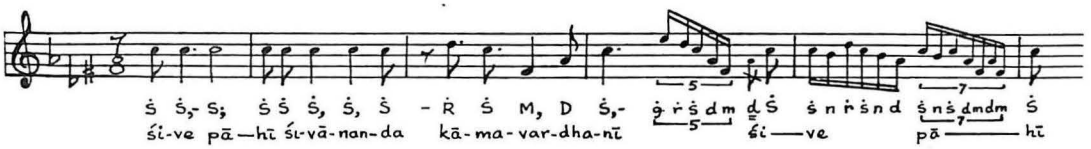
Translation: You who are the joy of Shiva, 1) Oh *Ragam Kamavardhani,* 2) and who *increases his pleasure and desire,* Goddess Shivaa, protect me.

*Techniques of Varying the Theme*: After singing the original *pallavi* theme several times, the process of variation commences. First, the *sangati* (Sanskrit: *sangama*: meeting with, an uninterrupted series) technique is employed, in order to embellish the theme further, altering different areas of the theme with each repetition so that its melodic contours are eventually exaggerated and transformed.
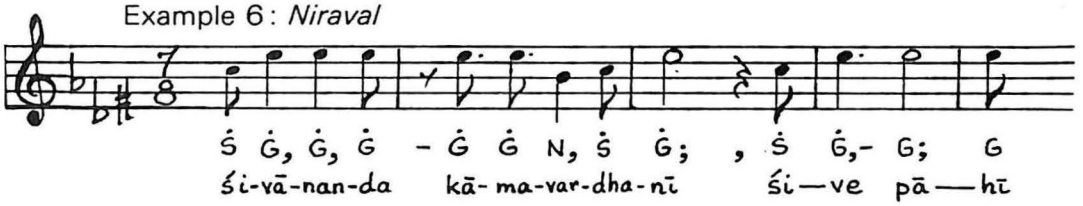
After a number of *sangati*-s, the singer introduces the second section, *niraval* (Tamil: *niravu,* to make level, to spread evenly, especially with a horizontal circular motion). Here, the singer abandons the shape of the original *pallavi* melody, replacing it with level recitations of the text on successively higher pitches, as seen in Examples 5 and 6 below. These phrases alternate with elaborate melodic flourishes, encompassing an octave or more. Normally, the singer retains the original rhythmic underlay of the

text in both the *sangati* and *niraval* sections. Example 5 shows the use of the upper *ga* as a reciting tone; Example 6 shows the use of the upper *sa* as a reciting tone, with melodic flourishes interspersed.

Example 5 : *Niraval*
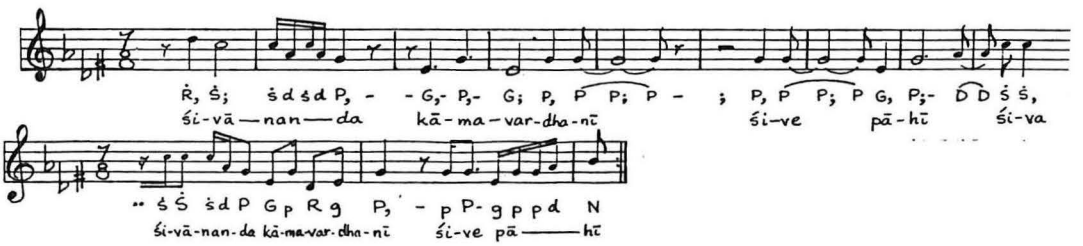



Example 6 : *Niraval*
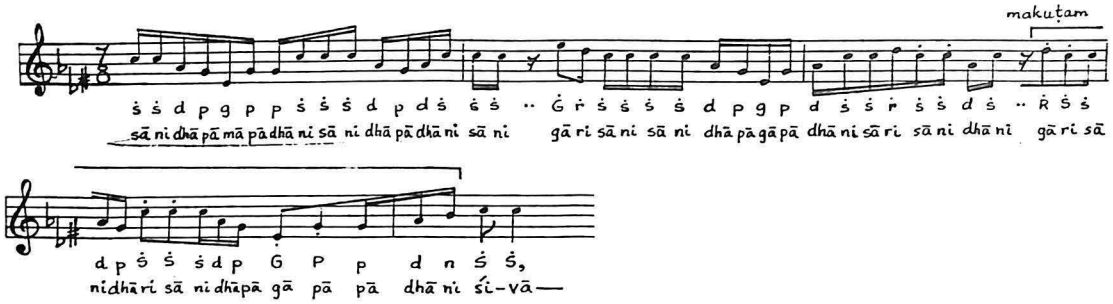



The third step in the sequence of variations is called *anuloma* (Sanskrit : *anu*, with; *loma*, tail; literally, with the tail, i.e., with the hair of the tail, with the grain, or in a natural order), in which the rhythmic values of the notes are systematically increased and then decreased with each repetition of the theme. A typical series of multiples used in *anuloma* would be 4, 2, 1, ½ and ¼, in which the theme would be sung with successively decreasing note values ranging from quadruple the original length to one-quarter the length of each note.[6] The following excerpts demonstrate the technique, with the original note values doubled and halved.[7]

Example 7 : *Anuloma*




The fourth variational technique, *svara kalpana* or *kalpana svaram* (Sanskrit : *kalpana*, forming, fashioning, creating, inventing; *svara*, note) permits the singer to extemporize phrases using solfege (*svaram*) syllables. After commencing the theme in its original form, the performer may break into *svaram* excursions until the beginning of the theme returns at its usual place in the *talam* cycle. Increasingly greater numbers of cycles are allowed to pass by as the musician creates longer and longer *svaram* passages. Simultaneously, the speed of the rhythmic subdivisions increases, while the basic pulse remains constant, until a melodic and rhythmic climax is created, called the "crown" (Tamil : *makutam*). The *makutam* functions as a cadential device which typically includes a threefold repetition of a phrase, similar to the *tihai* of Hindusthani music. The *makutam* must lead directly to the beginning of the *pallavi* theme.[8]

Example 8: *Kalpana svaram*
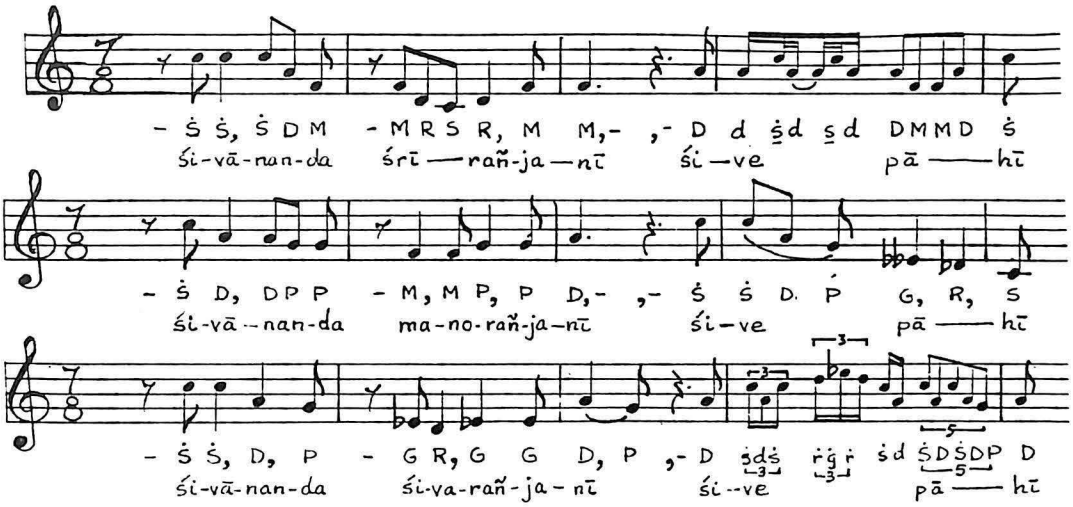



In the fifth and final variation technique, *malikai* (Tamil: garland), the singer refashions the original theme to fit a series of *ragam*-s or *talam*-s, called *ragamalikai* or *talamalikai*. In her performance, MLV cleverly weaves the name of the new *ragam* into the Sanskrit text, creating double meanings in each case. Thus, the *ragam*-s have been chosen by her not only for their interesting tonal contrasts but also for the literary possibilities inherent in their names. Shriranjani, Manoranjani, and Shivaranjani, which mean, respectively, "auspicious and pleasing", "pleasing to the mind", and "pleasing to Shiva", are substituted for the original *ragam* name, Kamavardhani. Each new *ragam* is introduced by *svaram*-singing, thereby revealing its identity gradually and engaging the curiosity of the audience. After all "bets have been placed" by the listeners as to the identity of each new *ragam*, the *pallavi* theme is stated in its new tonal garb with the substituted *ragam* name, and guesses can be verified.

The following texts and translations show the ways in which MLV incorporated the new *ragam* names into the original *pallavi* text during the *ragamalikai* section.

| | |
|---|---|
| "Shivananda *Kamavardhani* Shive pahi" | "You who are joy to Shiva, Kamavardhani *ragam,* and *increase his desire and pleasure,* Oh Goddess Shivaa, protect me". |
| *First new* ragam: | |
| "Shivananda *Shriranjani* Shive pahi" | "You who are joy to Shiva, Shriranjani *ragam,* and are *auspicious and pleasing,* Oh Goddess Shivaa, protect me". |
| *Second new* ragam: | |
| "Shivananda *Manoranjani* Shive pahi" | "You who are joy to Shiva, Manoranjani *ragam,* and *pleasing to his mind,* Oh Goddess Shivaa, protect me". |
| *Third new* ragam: | |
| "Shivananda *Shivaranjani* Shive pahi" | "You who are joy to Shiva, Shivaranjani *ragam,* and *give pleasure to Shiva,* Oh Goddess Shivaa, protect me". |

The original melody of the *pallavi* theme is altered in the following ways in this example of *ragamalikai.*[9]

Example 9: *Pallavi* theme in *ragamalikai*




Finally, the percussion accompanist(s) perform the "solo" or *tani avartanam* (Tamil: *tani,* alone; Sanskrit: *avartana,* turning around, revolving, repeating, circular motion), in which variations based upon the rhythmic properties of the *pallavi* theme are created. To conclude, the main performer usually restates the *pallavi* theme in its original form.

Although transcriptions of nineteenth century *pallavi* performances have not survived for us to examine today, the broad definitions of the variational techniques used and descriptions of the monumental virtuosity and durations of some nineteenth century performances suggest that they might have been similar to MLV's performance in overall form, while differing in length and specific details. Before discussing the socio-cultural background which surrounds these and other changes in *pallavi* performance practice, it is first necessary to proceed with a similar description of musical change in the *kriti.*

*Musical Change:* Kriti

The term *kriti* comes from the same Indo-European root from which we derive the English word "creation". It refers to that which has been composed, created, formed, or accomplished, thus implying a certain fixity of materials (Monier-Williams 1899:300-303). The *kriti* of South India is a three-part song form which dominates the repertoire of composed pieces in the classical tradition today.

The "father" of the modern *kriti* is considered to be the saint-singer of Tanjore, Tyagaraja (1767-1827), who is said to have elevated the artistic level of the form to previously unattained heights. As a *bhakta,* or devotee, of Lord Rama, he believed in the power of music to communicate directly with the Deity. Because

of his beliefs in the divine nature of music, he vehemently opposed the use of music in the princely courts, where music functioned to praise the worldly prince or patron, and frequently refused invitations to perform for such royal audiences, reserving his music for those devotional or ritual contexts which he found to be acceptable. Among these were his own household *puja*-s or ritual worship ceremonies, *guru-shishya* teaching contexts in which he led his disciples in songs praising the Divine, pilgrimages to religious shrines, and begging for alms in the streets of his village each day (Sambamoorthy 1970: passim).

The lyrics of Tyagaraja's *kriti*-s reflect the philosophy of the *bhakti* tradition. His texts are written in prose verse in his own vernacular dialect of Telugu, rather than the complex metrical poetry of the ritually sacrosanct Sanskrit language. They employ a vocabulary normally reserved for familiar relationships, allowing him to depict his involvement with the Divine in a very intimate manner.

The following is a typical *kriti* text by Tyagaraja.[10]

| *Pallavi* | Translation |
|---|---|
| nagumomu ganaleni najali telisi | You know my distress at not seeing your smiling face |
| nannu brovaga rada Shri Raghuvara (ni . . | Won't you bless me, Lord descended from Raghu? (Your. . . |
| *Anupallavi* | |
| nagaraja dhara nidu parivaru lella | Oh King who lifts the mountain, have not all your attendants |
| ogibodhana jesevaralu gare | Advised you properly, that you should visit me? |
| itulundudure (ni..... | Are they really like this? (Your. . . |
| *Charanam* | |
| khagaraju ni yanati vini vega canaledo | Did not the king of the birds come quickly (to bring you here), hearing your command? |
| gaganani kilaku bahu duram baninado | Did he say that the earth is too far from heaven? |
| jagamele paramatma evarito moralidudu | Ruler of the universe, Supreme Being, to whom can I appeal? |
| vagajupaku talanu nannelukora | Don't show unfriendliness<br>That is unbearable for me.<br>Take me under your grace. |
| Tyagarajanuta (ni. . . | You who are praised by Tyagaraja (Your. . . |

Here, Tyagaraja implores Lord Rama, manifestation of Vishnu and Tyagaraja's chosen deity *(ishta devata),* to mount the *garuda* bird, fly to earth, and show his smiling face *(nagumomu)* to his devotees. At the end of each section, the first line of text returns, following the transitional *"ni"* ("your") which leads back to the incipit, *"nagumomu"* ("smiling face").

Tyagaraja's musical settings, as handed down through the *guru-shishya* tradition as well as through published notations, make extensive use of *sangati*-s, one of the musical techniques also found in the *pallavi* tradition.[11] Tyagaraja was very particular that his students reproduce his compositions faithfully and ". . .made it a rule to jealously exclude all pupils with a tendency to improvise variations and embellishments of their own (PALLAVI-singers)" (Mudaliar 1893, para 112). Mudaliar's statement clearly implies that improvised *sangati*-s were once the prerogative of *pallavi* singers and were introduced into the *kriti* form by them.[12]

Today, a considerable degree of variability as well as change can be seen in performances of Tyagaraja's *kriti*-s by musicians in Madras. As a case in point, the *kriti, Nagumomu ganaleni,* will be discussed here. In a study based upon seven prominent performers' renditions, as well as five published notations of the composition, it was found that improvised *sangati*-s, *niraval, kalpana svaram, tani avartanam,* and *ragamalikai* were commonly employed devices.[13] As many as eleven *sangati*-s were performed for some lines of the song, while six *sangati*-s was the maximum given for any line in the published notations, the average being far fewer. Thus, it is clear that some of the technical devices from the *pallavi* tradition have found an accepted place in the performance of *kriti. Tanam* and *anuloma-pratiloma,* have, however, been eschewed by *kriti* singers mainly because they are considered to be too heavy, ponderous, and intellectual for a *kriti* performance.

One can only guess at the processes whereby improvised variations were introduced into *Nagumomu* as well as other *kriti*-s. According to Mudaliar, imperfect transmission was responsible, as well as inconsistency at the very source:

"Very few of his (Tyagaraja's) pupils lived long enough with him to learn all his difficult songs; it is easy to understand that with the varying capabilities of most of his students he could not possibly impart the same lessons to all; the choicest and most difficult variations *(sangati*-s) were necessarily left untaught, being beyond the reach of his best pupils; to a select few some more embellishments were consigned than to the bulk of his disciples, who were favoured with but a small modicum of the immense store of . . . music . . . The same words were set to music in different melody-molds . . . while the same music was arranged in different styles according to the requirements of the pupils. Mediocre singers who know but a few of the airs of this great composer strive to introduce in every one of his pieces variations belonging to other tunes by the same author, or more often interpolate creations of their own brains and tacitly pass them off as genuine." (Mudaliar 1892, paragraph 112).[14]

*19th Century* Pallavi *and* Kriti: *Contrasting Context and Content*

Based upon the characteristic features of *pallavi* performances of the nineteenth century which received large rewards from patrons, it is evident that

the aesthetic values prevalent in the courts during this period favored complexity, display, imagination, competition, and the affirmation of the patrons' position, power, and musical knowledge. While it would be a mistake to view the South Indian court environment in purely secular terms, the favored aesthetic values of the time were such as might be found in any court environment. *Kriti,* on the other hand, was undoubtedly inspired by the devotional *bhakti* movement and favored such values as sincerity, purity of expression, relative musical simplicity, limited improvisations, and the expression of devotional thoughts and feelings through music.

It appears that the two forms dominated in different performance contexts in the nineteenth century. *Pallavi* singers performed mostly in court settings and in the mansions of wealthy landowners. Chinnaswami Mudaliar lamented in 1892 that there were many eminent *pallavi* singers whose talents could never be appreciated by the populace at large, and described these singers as

> "... quite competent to extemporise PALLAVIS and variations in the classical style... How often do they electrify private audiences by their wonderful skill ... and yet how is it all lost to the nation like the splendours of a Chinese rocket shot into the sky, and the perfumes of the 'flower born to blush unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air'" (paragraph 114).

In contrast, *kriti* singers were considered to be less skilled in the art of music, and performed more frequently in non-ritual religious contexts of temple and village life: weddings, housewarmings, while asking for alms, and at *bhajan* gatherings.

Similarly, the musical materials used by the *kriti* and *pallavi* singers, appear to have been distinct to a certain extent in the nineteenth century. Both sang in *ragam*-s, but the *kriti* singers often preferred "lighter" *ragam*-s such as the *rakti ragam*-s and the newer *ragam*-s created by Tyagaraja, the so-called *apurva* (rare, unusual) *ragam*-s, many of them similar to melodies found in popular *bhajan*-s and *kirtan*-s. *Pallavi* singers, on the other hand, tended to be limited to the dozen or so "major" *ragam*-s, particularly the *"ghanam"* (heavy) *ragam*-s believed to be best suited for *tanam* expositions. Both sang in *talam*-s, but *kriti* singers like Tyagaraja often preferred the shorter *talam*-s, including chapu *talam*-s, again suggesting a connection with lighter devotional forms such as *bhajan* and *kirtan*. *Pallavi* singers, however, utilized complex *talam*-s having as many as 108 beats, which were comprehensible only to the initiated few.

Of the seven improvisational and variational techniques in the *pallavi* singer's repertoire described earlier, it appears that only *ragam, sangati,* and *niraval* were used by *kriti* singers such as Tyagaraja. In his case, biographical documentation refers to only one or two occasions when he performed *niraval,* and only one occasion when he performed *tanam* and *svara kalpanam* during an 8-hour rendition of a single *kriti* for his guru's musical associates (Sambamoorthy 1970:102). Normally, composed *svaram (chitta svaram)* and improvised *svaram (kalpana svaram)* sections were avoided by Tyagaraja. The association of such techniques with the *pallavi* tradition of the courts, as well as the unsuitability of *svara*-s for

expressing a devotional text may well have caused him and his followers to exclude them in their performances. Today, the same values are upheld by only a minority of musicians and music critics, who upbraid certain performers for embellishing Tyagaraja's *kriti*-s with extensive *svara* sections and other obvious excursions into their own creativity. Aside from their desire for authenticity, many of these traditionalists have virtually deified Saint Tyagaraja and regard any departure from his practices as tantamount to sacrilege.

*Socio-cultural Background for 20th Century Musical Change in* Pallavi *and* Kriti

As a result of the gradual disappearance of royal patronage of music in South India beginning in the late nineteenth century, and the concurrent shift of population to Madras, new performance contexts emerged in the early twentieth century — concert organizations or *sabha*-s, first private and soon made public, sponsored performances by musicians brought to Madras from the surrounding countryside, especially from the centers where music had formerly flourished under royal and temple patronage.[15] These concerts provided the grist for controversies in the newspapers and weeklies of young Madras. As in other aspects of South Indian life such as the ritual reform movements and anti-Brahmin political compaigns, the Brahmin's supposed domination over musical practices became a matter for intense criticism by other groups, as well as by Brahmin reformists. In particular, the elitist incomprehensibility of the *pallavi* was associated, rightly or wrongly, with the cultural stereotype of the arcane Brahmin scholar.

Some critics went so far as to demand the removal of the *pallavi* from the concert platform altogether, denouncing the form as "scholarly" and "meaningless". It seems that the popular audiences of the twentieth century demanded more text-related emotionalism from their artists, for which the *kriti* was ideally suited.

Two participants in the *pallavi* controversy of 1929 expressed the following views through the newspaper columns which convey a sense of the socio-cultural changes surrounding musical activity and performer-audience interaction of the time.

> "If *pallavi* is a treat for the initiated few, why should the uninitiated many be made to suffer from what appears to them a torment of torture? The present mania of the musicians to exhibit their scholarliness rather than their emotion is one of the main causes of the downfall of the *pallavi*. Surely the music performance is not the time or place even for the initiated to learn, much less for the uninitiated" (Subramania Iyer 1929).

> "Mr. Sambamurti (P. Sambamoorthy) says: 'To listen to a good rendition is a real intellectual treat.' But it is a treat no doubt to the initiated few. . . Let others try to understand and appreciate the musician's lofty flights in his *pallavi*. . . As Mr. Ramaswami Iyer put it, 'We must not forget that music parties have been nowadays transferred from the select audiences in private houses to the motley audiences of the *Sabha*-s. Indeed, music has been more or less democratized" (Krishnan 1929).

Changes in the musical values of Madras can be further explained as part of the process of "rationalization" described by Tamil sociologist R. S. Perinbanayagam (1971:211). In this process, the Sanskritic and Brahminic values which supposedly advocated blind obedience to ritual formulae and traditions were countered with new, "non-Brahmin" ideals of rational and intelligent (but not intellectual) behavior. The Tamil word *pakuttarivu* (*pakuttu:* to analyze; *arivu:* intelligence), translated as "rational", was an important term in the non-Brahmin movement. Perinbanayagam cites the Tamil stage and cinema as the most obvious channels for expressing aspects of this new philosophy. These were the arenas for glorifying the common-sense, wisdom and rationalism of the non-Brahmin Tamilian, the common man so long dominated by others.

As a result of the objections raised against the *pallavi,* a significant decline in its performance has become evident. Formerly, *ragam-tanam-pallavi* seems to have occupied the central portion of any formal performance, and its duration was seldom less than an hour, sometimes even lasting for several days. Today, however, if it is included at all, it is likely to be relegated to the latter portion of a concert, and rarely lasts as long as one hour. The daily radio broadcasts do not include *pallavi* renditions in their many hours of classical music programming; instead, a *pallavi* is featured only on alternate Sunday mornings for a brief forty minutes.

Similarly, the Madras Music Academy's yearly Festival schedules "scholarly demonstrations" of *pallavi*-s during the morning paper sessions, conducted under the aegis of the Experts' Committee, which functions as a modern-day vestigial survivor of the presiding patron and his court of advisors. The Academy also includes *pallavi* performances during the evening Festival concerts, although they are not actually performed as frequently as the printed programs in the Festival Souvenir Booklets would indicate. In January of 1979, a revival of *pallavi* protest was organized by some audience members who advocated the removal of *pallavi* singing from the Academy's evening concerts altogether. Their published objection declared that the proper context for such scholarly music was the morning lecture and demonstration sessions. Thus, while many musicians say that they would prefer to perform *pallavi* more often, it is evident that restless audiences and *sabha* organizers discourage them.

*Strategies for Preservation of Techniques*

One response has been for musicians to devise adaptive strategies in order to ensure the survival of *pallavi* techniques. It appears that these skills, which are acquired through painstaking mental and physical perseverance under the tutelage of a ritually sanctioned guru, are often very high in a musician's priorities for preservation. As Hopkins (1976:435) emphasises, the desire or intention to preserve musical materials is a crucial aspect of the survival potential of any tradition or trait, and should not be neglected in assessing patterns of musical change.

As part of an adaptive strategy, musicians have begun to streamline and modernize their *pallavi* renditions, as well as to make the form more easily comprehensible, so that the proportions and affect of the modern *pallavi* more

closely resemble *kriti* style. For example, musicians often involve the audience in the counting of the *talam* during their *pallavi*-s, and the *talam*-s chosen are more often the shorter, simpler ones more characteristic of *kriti*. As illustrated by MLV's theme in Example 3, *pallavi* themes are often selected from well-known *kriti*-s today, providing a familiarity at the outset, and texts are often in vernacular languages. Thus, mystification and alienation of outsiders are no longer the effects desired by musicians, but rather education and inclusion of a broader audience. The eminent *kriti* and *pallavi* singer, the late M. D. Ramanathan, spoke of this change in the artist's role in society, which he attributed to the removal of communication barriers between musicians and their listeners:

> "The mystery attached to *vidwan*-s in former days has almost gone away. I am sorry to say that it is a bit disturbed, because of the expense and spread of communication." (Lieberman and Catlin, 1978).

Another example of musicians' efforts to ensure the survival of *pallavi* techniques has been to incorporate them into their *kriti* renditions, particularly *sangati, niraval* and *kalpana svaram*. As mentioned earlier, this practice has not been accepted entirely without criticism by Tyagaraja's followers. The use of variational techniques in a composition is a delicate process requiring sensitivity to the composer's original expressive impulse. A musician's forays must create the impression of springing from the same poetic and musical impulse as that of the *vaggeyakara* (poet-composer). When this illusion is not convincing, critics censure the performer for indulging in meaningless academic or technical display. Thus, even when adopting *pallavi* techniques, *kriti* performers attempt to adhere to the original purpose of the *kriti* as intended by Tyagaraja: to express the devotional meaning and emotion of the text, even through the use of musical abstraction.

Today it is common practice for a musician to display his variational and improvisational skills within some of the *kriti*-s in any given concert. A *kriti* can still be performed without variations, especially in the initial and final stages of a typical *kaccheri* (concert). When a *kriti* occurs in the central portion of a concert, in the area formerly reserved for *ragam-tanam-pallavi,* it must be highly developed with the improvisational and variational techniques derived from *pallavi: ragalapanam, niraval, kalpana svaram, ragamalikai, tani avartanam* and competitive exchanges between soloist and accompanist. Thus, the "major" composition and *ragam,* and improvised materials for the evening sometimes lasts an hour or more, although its original song may have consisted of only a few lines of tuned text. However, if these materials give the impression of having been pre-composed, critics will find the artist deficient.

*Summary and Conclusions*

The present discussion has associated the *kriti* with the contexts of private worship and devotion and the *pallavi* with the context of court entertainment; their intermingling has been shown to be the result of adaptation to socio-cultural factors affecting a third context, the public concert. This process has been dependent upon certain principles which seem to characterise interaction between South Indian musicians and their listeners. One such principle is that these musicians

are specialists who tend to develop their technical capabilities in handling abstract musical materials over lifetimes and generations, and hence value those materials very highly. A second is that this process of development is recognized not only by the community of musicians, but also by some patrons and audiences. However, in the system of checks and balances at work in the new public marketplace for music, these capabilities are held in check by the preferences of other patrons and audiences for whom music functions in many different ways, not necessarily focussing upon the appreciation of developing abstract musical techniques. The large number of commercially produced *pallavi* recordings in the west, as compared with the virtual absence of *pallavi* recordings produced in India, demonstrates further the interaction between musicians and their consumers, particularly foreigners, as well as the desire on the part of musicians to promote their skills in performing *pallavi.*

A third and final principle to be mentioned here in the form of a general conclusion is that the development of the *kriti* has been dependent upon the gradual growth in musical appreciation and taste among public audiences in Madras, just as the development of the *pallavi* must have depended upon a gradual process of enlightening court audiences during previous centuries. The complexity of the nineteenth century *pallavi* was as much a reflection of the musical comprehension and aesthetic values and philosophies of courtly listeners as today's *kriti* style is a reflection of the skills and values held by contemporary Madras audiences. Over time, these capacities and values will continue to grow and respond to new socio-cultural factors, just as they have in the past.

These conclusions lead to several hypotheses which seem to apply to the South Indian context. First, because the *pallavi* was threatened with extinction, its practitioners borrowed elements from the *kriti*, which was considerably popular at the time. Second, the *kriti*, which was, in its initial stages, primarily a text-based form, has acquired much of the abstraction and virtuoso elements from the *pallavi* tradition, to the present point, when critics are beginning to object to the excessive use of these elements. One can thus see a cyclic pattern in process : musicians tend to develop in the course of time the abstract musical elements in their performance style, with a corresponding emphasis on virtuosity, gradually alienating all but the most knowledgeable members of their audience. When the patronage of this élite audience group is removed, in this instance through social change, the form begins to die. In the process of dying, the form squirms to stay alive (through its practitioners, the musicians who perform it) often by borrowing elements from other forms enjoying more popularity at the time. The fact that the *pallavi* borrows from the more popular *kriti*, can be seen as a strategy for survival, which may or may not succeed. The cycle, arising again in the *kriti*, has evidently reached its apex, for we now see critics condemning particular renditions of this form also for excessive abstraction and complexity.

This process is similar to the "upward mobility" practised by social groups in India. By borrowing from the court-based *pallavi* tradition, performers added to the sophistication and stature of the *kriti*, making it more complex, respected, and elevated in social stature. The question which arises is why there should be a need for this type of upward mobility in musical expression, when a form is at the height of popularity. The only explanation seems to be that professional musicians inevitably

build up their technical expertise, virtuosity, and innovative skills over a lifetime of endeavor and naturally incorporate these elements into their performances. In other words, performance without these creative elements would be considered dull and prosaic in the South Indian environment, both for the musicians, and for the more attuned listeners. This, then, begins the process of alienation with other sectors of the audience, and presumably a new form will arise to cater to the needs of this group. We may also predict that when this new form begins to take away from the popularity of the *kriti*, it will adopt its own strategies for survival, drawing from elements of the new form.

That this cycle is not limited just to the South Indian environment is suggested by the evolution of North Indian forms. *Dhrupad*, like *pallavi*, faced extinction as a performing art with the demise of its courtly patronage. Its stylistic survival strategies are not as obvious, perhaps because, to some extent at least, its survival has been fostered through foreign interest in its revival. *Khyal*, like *kriti*, has exhibited signs of upward mobility by adopting *dhrupad* techniques, e.g. *gamak tan*-s. There are signs, too, that *khyal* may be reaching its apex in the cycle, as *thumri* is beginning to receive more recognition. Here, too, we can see the early signs of upward mobility, as longer abstract *tan*-s and *sargam tan*-s are occasionally introduced into *thumri*, particularly by singers of the Panjab school, e.g., Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Barkat Ali Khan. *Thumri*, which is still thought to be a semiclassical form by many, is apparently waiting in the wings, ready to take over from the *khyal* as the prominent classical form, and is already girding itself by adding these abstractions and complexities.

Of course, there are many factors which can affect the rate and directions of change, among them government policies, the impact of mass media and the influence of foreigners. Nevertheless, in the Indian classical music environment, evidence seems to support these hypotheses governing the cyclic rise and fall of musical forms, and that musicians employ adaptive strategies which contribute to the preservation of traditional materials in the development of musical style.

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*Notes:*

1. Many of the ideas in this paper have developed in conversations with Nazir Jairazbhoy, as well as earlier discussions with T. S. Parthasarathy, M. D. Ramanathan, S. Ramanathan, T. Shankaran, T. Viswanathan, T. V. Gopalkrishnan, and many other Madras musicians. The paper in its present form is an expansion of that delivered in New Delhi for the ICAES in December 1978.

2. Frequently, however, the term is explained following the respected Asian philological tradition termed by Becker "etymologising", i.e., explaining a word using less historically rigorous methods (Becker, A., 1979). In this instance, one of the leading musicological writers of Madras, the late Dr. P. Sambamoorthy (1975: 23) wrote that the word *pallavi* is composed of the first syllables of the Sanskrit words *padam*, *layam*, and *vinyasam*,

meaning respectively "words", "time", and "variations". This is a somewhat specious derivation, however, which does not do justice to *pallavi* as we know it, because it overemphasises the importance of the text, while giving no credit to melodic improvisation. It does, however, draw attention to one important aspect of *pallavi* performance: the treatment of the texted tune which is subjected to a series of temporal augmentations and diminutions in one of the techniques of variation.

3. Instrumental renditions of *pallavi* and *kriti*, which are based upon the texted originals, have unique characteristics which will not be addressed in the present paper.

4. These are taken from the Tamil biography of Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer (1844-1893) by V. S. Gomathi Shankar Iyer (1971), who bases his accounts on the singer's extensive diaries.

5. Prof. Shankaran was referring specifically to *kaittalapidi* (Tamil: *kai*, hand; *tala*, meter; *pidi*, to catch), a subdivision of the *nagaswaram* tradition known as *rakti* of the *ragam-rakti-pallavi* cycle, which is similar to *ragam-tanam-pallavi*.

6. This technique is similar to augmentation and diminution in western music. For a detailed discussion of *anuloma* and *pratiloma*, see Widdess (1978).

7. Sometimes the *anuloma* section is followed by the reverse technique, called *pratiloma* (*prati*, against). Here, the durational value of each note in the original *pallavi* theme remains constant, while the units of the *talam* are clapped first at slower multiples of the original tempo, and then in increasingly faster multiples. *Pratiloma* is uncommon in *pallavi* performances today, although it was evidently a usual feature in nineteenth century *pallavi* renditions. In the MLV performance considered here, the singer did not include *pratiloma*.

8. In rapid tempi, the pitch of the note being named by Karnatak singers often becomes polarized around the pitches of stronger notes nearby, as shown in the transcription here. Musicians would say that subtle ornaments are being sung in such cases, or that intonation is stretched so that one note is being sung very close to another, i.e., *ni* is being sung very close to *sa*, as seen in this example.

9. *Talamalikai*, in which the theme is reset in a series of different *talam*-s, might occur next, although MLV did not do so in this case.

10. This translation was prepared with the help of T. S. Parthasarathy and M. Balamuralikrishna.

11. Although Tyagaraja's biographers (Mudaliar, Sambamoorthy, et al) posit that he was the first person to introduce these types of *sangati* variations into *kriti* performance, evidence seems to suggest that Tyagaraja's contribution in this connection was in the introduction of composed *sangati*-s as inextricable elements of his own *kriti*-s, and that singers were improvising *sangati*-s in *kriti*-s before his time.

12. The division of singers into those that sing *pallavi* and those that sing *kriti* holds, since not all singers today are capable of singing *pallavi*.

13. This is discussed in my dissertation (Catlin 1980), a copy of which is in the ARCE, Pune.

14. There is some justification for this view since there exists to this day a divergence of opinion regarding the *ragam* in which the *kriti* was composed. One reason for this may have been that Tyagaraja himself could have sung the *kriti* in different *ragam*-s on different occasions. It is now normally heard in the *ragam* Abheri, but there are several versions of this *ragam*, suggesting the kinds of tonal shift postulated by Jairazbhoy (1971) for North Indian *rag*-s. For further discussion of the changes in Abheri *ragam*, see Catlin (1980) 52-75.

15. Public concerts and radio programs today constitute the principal performance contexts for *pallavi* and *kriti*, resulting in stylistic changes which have also been noted by Kathleen and Adrian L'Armand: "Carnatic music is now largely a concert and public art, as distinct from its probable origins in temple and private worship and in its later function as private entertainment in the courts. The elements of devotion and competition which respectively characterized these two uses of Carnatic music are largely absent in the concert music of today." (1967: 27).


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## News & Notes

# NCPA/ISTAR RESEARCH COLLABORATION

A Report of Activities

The use of electronic techniques can add to the knowledge of traditional music, and the design of new electro-acoustical instruments and computer processing systems is capable of contributing to both musical preservation and creation.

Initial work in this direction was undertaken by James Arnold and Bernard Bel, who returned to India in 1979 with a grant of the International Fund for the Promotion of Culture (UNESCO). Their initial findings aroused considerable interest (see NCPA Quarterly Journal, Vol. XII, Nos. 2 & 3, Part One 1983). As a consequence, along with a group of leading Indian personalities, such as Pandit D. C. Vedi and Ustad R. F. Dagar, they decided to set up the International Society for Traditional Arts Research (ISTAR) in New Delhi in 1982. ISTAR is a centre for musicological and acoustic research on traditional music which gives emphasis to the documentation and preservation of dying art forms, a much neglected field. Its personnel consists of musicologists, musicians, electronic engineers, scientists and instrument-makers.

In June 1983, the Ford Foundation gave ISTAR a grant to initiate its research scheme. The National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) and ISTAR are joint collaborators in five scientific research/documentation projects. Research papers are published regularly in ISTAR's Newsletter. A brief report of the NCPA/ISTAR projects and their results follows.

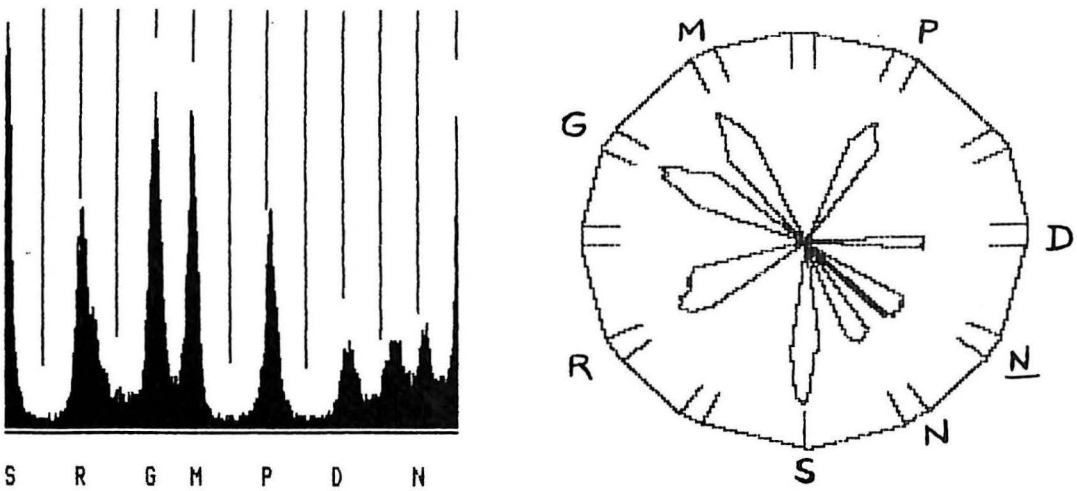
*Research and Development*

This project is directed by Bernard Bel, a French engineer who has been in India since 1979 doing acoustic research on classical music to prepare a doctorate of mechanics at Paris VI University under Prof. R. Siestrunck.

During the initial stage of the project, Bel designed and constructed a new type of melograph, the Melodic Movement Analyser (MMA). This analyser feeds data to a microcomputer which gives accurate displays and paper transcriptions of melodic lines as found in Indian music. Accuracy better than one *cent* (i.e. 1% of a semitone) at a sampling rate of 50 measurements per second has been achieved, thanks to digital techniques. Computer processing of pitch data also provides pictures of the 'statistical scales' of *raga*-s (*tonagrams*) revealing the tonal relations and the weights of the notes in the scale of a *raga.*

An enhanced version of the MMA, constructed for the laboratory of the NCPA, has been operative since January 1985. Recently Bel has designed a Fundamental Pitch Extractor which makes the analysis of old recordings possible.

Hardware and software developed by this project have proved helpful for the study of intonation (see ISTAR Newsletter No. 2 and 3) and support




*Tonagrams: the markings on the circular background correspond to the division of the octave into twenty-two microintervals* (shruti-*s*).

the creation of new notation systems. One of the leading ideas is to bring together traditional concepts and Indian musicology, the musical ideas of great masters, and facts derived from the scientific analysis of performed music. Together with Joep Bor, Bel is processing a representative number of nearly fifty major *raga*-s to understand and visualise the complex structure of these melodic species. It is expected that a better understanding of melodic patterns and of the perception of note treatment will serve as a solid base for new methods of music education.

Rhythmic and melodic patterns are linked together through structures which may be represented by linguistic models. To investigate this practically, Bel has created a new computer language to implement generative grammars on microcomputers. This expert system has been successfully used by James Kippen to analyse tabla compositions.

*Scientific Documentation of* Dhrupad *and Related Music Forms*

The project is directed by W. James Arnold, an American musicologist and ten-year Indian resident, who has studied Indian music and musicology under Pandit D. C. Vedi, Ustad R. F. Dagar and Prof. Prem Lata Sharma, and specialised in theoretical musicology.

Up to the present, scientific studies of North Indian music have focussed largely on the question of intonation. Thanks to the Melodic Movement Analyser (MMA), hardware-software computerised melograph, we can go beyond these

questions. "The challenge of musicology today in India is to come to grips with the phenomenon of Indian classical music at as sophisticated a level as the musician himself is used to thinking on during the act of creation. The issue is not intonation, classically and statically conceived . . . it is, rather, the form taken by the micro-evolution of pitch in time." (Arnold: *Darbari's Gandhar,* 1984). The vital point to study is the morphology of melodic movement. Are notes which are not intoned at the same frequency ratios, still perceived as the "same" notes if the shape of the approach is similar? The hypothesis is that they are.

The object of this project is to delineate new concepts for *raga* analysis, using and clarifying traditional Indian musicological terminology as far as possible. To achieve this, new scientific equipment is being used to isolate facts which are fed back to the musician for analysis.

A computer data processing analysis of three *alaap* sketches by three eminent musicians (Arnold: *Raga-rupa,* 1984) has shown that *raga*-s have a 'central core' of phrases which are heavily used. Analysis of an *alaap* played on the *been* by Ustad Asad Ali Khan in *raga* Darbari Kanada revealed strong morphological similarities in phrases belonging to the 'central core'.

According to an important *dhrupad* tradition, notes may be "inflected" in certain describable ways (Arnold: *Darbari's Gandhar,* 1984). These ways show up morphological differences useful for classifying pitch-line shapes abstractly. This allows us to move from the acoustic signal to its symbolic representation, intellectual cognition, and analysis. If *raga*-s have grammars, then it seems they also have "tongues" (patterns of pronunciation).

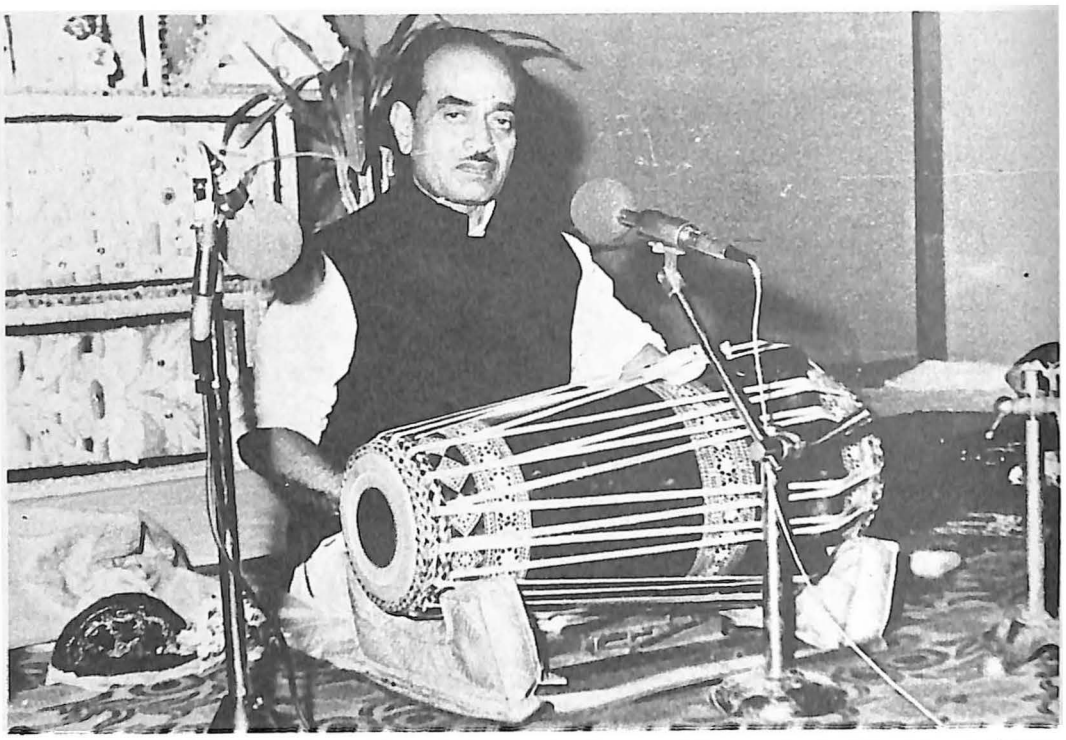
The project has also developed a data base for storing musical compositions in *sargam* notation (Arnold: *Computer notation and data base for North Indian classical music,* 1984). This is useful for comparative and grammatical studies of *raga*-s.

*An Audiovisual Library of* Dhrupad *Compositions*

The project is directed by Peter F. Mueller, a German musicologist and composer who studied Indology, musicology and comparative religions at German Universities and at the Banaras Hindu University and has been doing research on *dhrupad* in India since 1979.

This project was started in October 1983 with the aim of conducting an overall survey of *dhrupad* styles which are still sung in India, giving preference to preserving the heritage of old masters. The site of the project is the "Sri Chaitanya Prema Sansthana" (S.C.P.S.) in Vrindaban, an institution which has been active in the preservation and encouragement of *dhrupad* music since 1979 when the first "Dhrupad Mela" was held there. Since then, *dhrupad* festivals have become a yearly feature of this institution, and in 1983, the Sansthana established the *dhrupad* section of the "Vraja Kala Gurukula" which is closely co-operating with the project.

Source materials for the Dhrupad Library either come from the collection of the Sansthana or are recorded for the purpose of the project. All ISTAR



*Raja Chatrapati Singh on the pakhawaj during the Dhrupad Samaroha held in March 1984.*

recordings are done on a special 4-track system which allows the separation of vocal and percussion lines for musicological and acoustic analysis, thereby providing data for a full-scale study of the morphology of compositions. Texts are written down and translated, and notation of compositions will be done in the *sargam* and staff notation systems developed by ISTAR.

It is hoped that, in summer 1985, the archiving will be fully computerised, including *devanagari* texts of compositions. In this way, the Dhrupad Library—which is now the largest existing collection of *dhrupad* recordings—will develop into a data-bank useful for researchers and students of *dhrupad*. Already, a few scholars have expressed their desire to draw material from the collection for their research.

Altogether 411 items have been recorded during the first year of the project. Of these, 35 are *raga chalana*-s, 10 *mangalacharana*,-s 104 *alaap*-s, 74 *dhrupad*-s, 52 *dhamara*-s, 22 *sulphakta*-s and 34 other types of compositions. Twenty-five items of *haveli sangit* have been recorded, 44 *pakhawaj* solos, 14 of *rudra vina*, and 39 are recordings of Medieval European, North African and Middle Eastern music which have been selected for a comparative study. As specimens of each musician are also documented visually, 98 of the 411 recordings have been dubbed on video as well. The total duration of all the recordings done so far is approximately 80 hours.

During the last few months, a series of recordings of the *pakhawaji*-s Pandit Purushottam Das and Raja Chatrapati Singh have been completed. For the

coming phase, emphasis will be given to documenting and preserving the music of Pandit Ram Chatur Malik, the doyen of the Darbhanga tradition.

The complete Dhrupad Library (archive files and recordings) will be deposited within the premises of the S.C.P.S. in Vrindaban.

*A Linguistic Study of North Indian Rhythm*

This project is directed by Jim Kippen, a British ethnomusicologist, with technical assistance from Bernard Bel. Jim Kippen is a Western-trained musician who has been studying *tabla* since 1977. He has spent nearly two-and-a-half years researching in Lucknow and is in the process of submitting a Ph.D. thesis at the Queen's University of Belfast under Prof. John Blacking. Jim Kippen is at present engaged in teaching theory and method in ethnomusicology in Belfast.

The learning of *tabla* (or of any instrument) can be puzzling and disorienting to those who do not grow up with the sound system in their ears and generations of tradition in their blood. It can be like trying to study the geography of India with the sole aid of a street map of Bombay. This research project aims at providing a detailed map of reference in the context of which we can place and understand the position and importance of Bombay and other constituent parts of the whole. To give another analogy, our aim could be likened to that of a grammarian who provides the grammar by which the syntax of sentences in a language can be analysed and understood.

We are formalising models of *tabla* performance, of its individual compositional types, and of techniques of creation and improvisation. Thus, the student may grasp quickly with the aid of formal models many aspects of *tabla* that would usually take many years for the teacher to explain and for the student to comprehend. Therefore, it is the aim of the project not only to provide a powerful tool to aid in the teaching of the *tabla,* but also to create an awareness of many techniques that may otherwise disappear irrevocably from Indian music.

To help in the formulation of linguistic models of *tabla* performance, the project utilises a new computer device, the *Bol Processor.* This programme can be utilised either to synthesise or analyse *tabla* composition using generative grammars. The grammars are constructed from information given by the musicians relating

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TIN - - -  - CAR - -  - - PANC -  - - - CE  - - - -  SAT)
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*Two examples of Kathak* tihai-*s in* Teentala *composed by the* Bol Processor. *Parentheses have no rhythmic value.*

to structural and aesthetic rules relevant to compositional and improvisational practice. As the *Bol Processor* synthesises new pieces, musicians are also called upon to assess their 'correctness'. It has been found that sometimes a musician feels a piece 'does not sound right' despite agreeing that it is theoretically correct. Further investigation will aid in the understanding of musical aesthetics in *tabla*-playing.

This research is still in its early stages and to-date we have only dealt with a number of *qa'ida* structures as performed by members of the Lucknow *gharana,* as well as a small number of simple *tihai* structures. We not only aim to investigate other compositional forms such as the *rela, gat* and *chakkardar,* but also intend to collaborate with musicians of other stylistic schools to assess differences in approach to the same compositional types, so discovering a variety of 'dialects' within the entire *tabla* 'language'.

The implications of a new methodology are great and not just in terms of its contribution to pedagogical methods. It can be seen that this research relies on the musician both as informant and as analyst and offers a unique insight into some significant problems of cognition and musical perception.

*Research and Documentation of the Music and Life of Pandit Dilip Chandra Vedi*

The project is directed by Joep Bor, a botanist who started learning *sarangi* from Pt. Ram Narayan in 1968 and has been associated with Pt. D. C. Vedi since 1974. In 1984 he received a travel grant from the Dutch Ministry of Culture to work with ISTAR and NCPA.

The team consists of Pt. D. C. Vedi, scholar-musician, Issaro Mott, research assistant, and Wim van der Meer, Bhupender Seetal and Nupur Roy Chowdhury, collaborators and performers.

D. C. Vedi (born 1901) learnt from such stalwarts as Pt. Bhaskar Rao Bakhle (who died in 1922) and Ustad Faiyaz Khan (who died in 1950). He is widely acknowledged as one of the foremost living authorities on Hindustani music and, to quote Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, "one of the great masters and teachers of our time". As a representative of the old *dhrupad* and *khayal* traditions and as a creative thinker and composer, Vedi has been a lifelong outspoken opponent of the prevailing theories on music propounded in the beginning of this century by Pt. V. N. Bhatkhande.

Few musicians have been properly documented and fewer still have had a chance to express their ideas on paper. What has been written on Indian music is often confusing, tending to oversimplify or to ossify musical reality. Rarely does musical theory reflect the conception of experienced, contemporary performers, because rarely do the writers spend sufficient time with learned musicians (and use proper scientific methods) to understand the complex, dynamic principles underlying *raga* music.

The absence of an adequate written musical 'language', i.e. notation, is another reason why there is such a lack of understanding between orally-trained



*Pandit Dilip Chandra Vedi.*

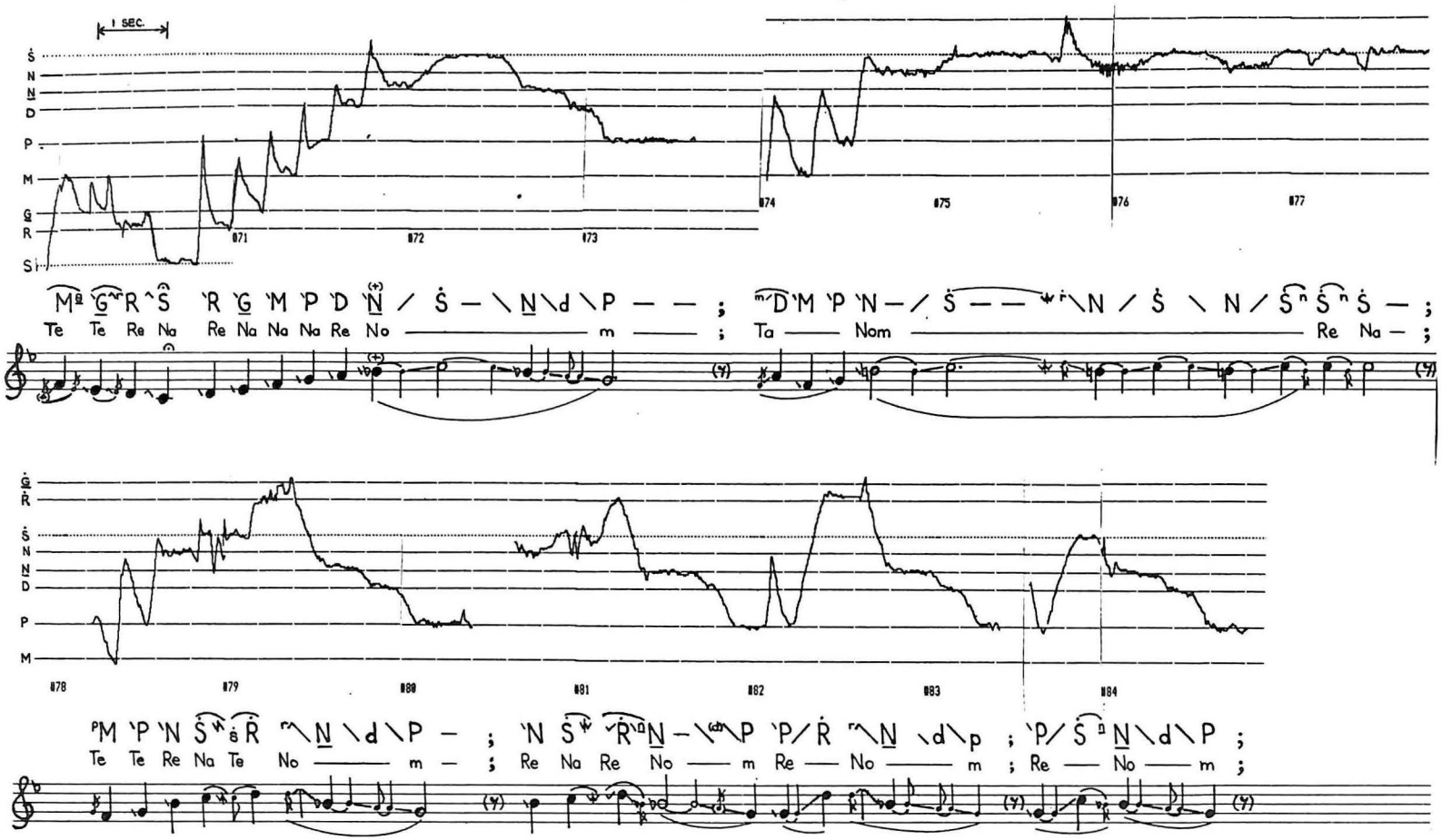
traditional performers on the one hand, and modern college students and researchers on the other. One wonders indeed how it is possible that scholars and musicians with such a fine sense for detail make use, if at all, of such imprecise notations.

*Fields of Research*

1. NOTATION: We have first focussed our efforts on developing a more workable notation system. Taking the conventional systems of Indian *sargam* and western staff notation as our base, we have endeavoured to modify and expand these in a way which is simple enough to be readable, yet sufficiently sophisticated to reflect the subtle tonal or melodic nuances and intricate rhythmic divisions that are so characteristic of Indian music (see ISTAR Newsletter No. 3). Graphs produced by Bel's MMA were helpful in clearly defining the nature of various note treatments and note connections, for which additional symbols have been proposed.

2. *GAYAKI*: Our first consideration while documenting the music of D. C. Vedi is to make his teachings accessible to students of music. Various levels of conceptualisation have been considered. The first and most difficult level is to project the *raga* in its totality. Only when a *raga* is presented in detail in *dhrupad* or *khayal,* with a systematically elaborated *alaap* or *barhat* and with *layakari, bandish* and *tana,* can we speak of a 'complete' *raga.* Naturally, Vedi pays particular attention to this field of documentation. After intensive training and rehearsal, his senior

Pt D.C. VEDI: Raga SINDHURA, ALAP (end), sung by Bhupender Seetal



disciples Bhupendra Seetal and Nupur Roy Chowdhury have recorded 15 *raga*-s and 31 compositions. Another dozen *raga*-s are in preparation. The pieces are all precomposed in such a way that they do not distort the overall structure and aesthetic balance of the *raga.* They project ideal images of the *raga*-s as Vedi conceives and teaches them. Part of the material will be automatically transcribed with the MMA and subsequently transnotated in *sargam* and staff notation.

3. *RAGA* SKETCHES AND COMPOSITIONS: Since it is virtually impossible to document the whole of Vedi's musical repertoire at this level, another aspect of the project is to record and transcribe melodic sketches of major *raga*-s and compositions. Though short and condensed, a sketch (*chalana*) is capable of creating a picture of a *raga* which is original, aesthetically pleasing and informative. In a few key phrases, it delineates the main features of a *raga* (see ISTAR Newsletter No. 2). The *raga* sketches are followed by one or more songs in various genres and *tala*-s.

At present, 98 *chalana*-s, 3 *svaramalika*-s and 32 *bandish*-es have been recorded in 76 different *raga*-s. The bulk of the material has been notated in *sargam* and 45 *chalana*-s fully transcribed in our expanded *sargam* with additional staff notation.

4. *RAGA* CLASSIFICATION: Each time a new *raga* has been introduced, a number of general questions are asked about that particular *raga* and Vedi's statements recorded. In collaboration with Wim van der Meer, we are designing a topographical *raga* classification taking various *raga* characteristics into consideration. This shows how individual *raga*-s are grouped and interrelated.

5. MEMOIRS: From the 1920's D. C. Vedi travelled widely throughout India as a professional vocalist. Performing on the invitation of rajas and at major musical conferences, he had ample opportunity to observe, meet and discuss musical subjects with old ustads and colleagues. Fortunately, Vedi has a remarkable memory, and he loves to recount all sorts of anecdotes about his gurus and others musicians of the past, the way they taught and thought, his friends and his 'rivals', and of course his own career. The many hours of recorded interviews which are in the process of being transcribed, provide rich material for a biography, as well as revealing aspects of the world of music in 20th century India, which have hitherto remained veiled.

Copies of the recordings will be stored in the Archives of the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Bombay and the Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology (ARCE), in New Delhi.

—BERNARD BEL & JOEP BOR

*Odissi Dance Festival '84, Bhubaneshwar, December 5-8, 1984*

As part of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Orissa State Museum, a three-day Odissi Dance Festival was organised at the Mukteshwara temple in Bhubaneshwar from 5th to 8th December, 1984. After the success of the Khajuraho Dance Festival, the Mukteshwara Dance Festival appears to be a major event in terms of bringing dance to wider audiences, using the backdrop of the temple and magnificent architecture in an artistic manner. There is a touch of magic about a dancer stepping from the temple precincts onto the arena in the evening, with the crescent moon rising in the east in the starlit sky, and the sound of the *jhalar,* the *pakhavaj* and the ankle bells reverberating in the atmosphere. This is precisely what happened when Sanjukta Panigrahi and Kumkum Mohanty (née Das) appeared on the stage in front of the Mukteshwara temple complex with lamps in their hands and crossed the stage to pay obeisance to Vighnaraja, seeking his blessings in keeping with tradition. To watch Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra playing the *jhalar,* to hear the sound of the conch (*shankhadhwani*), and see the *arati* being performed in the temple was a rare occurrence. Everything blended perfectly and one realised what it must have been to experience *vigalitavedyantara.*



*Sanjukta Panigrahi performing at the Mukteshwara temple complex during the Odissi Dance Festival.*

The programme included solo/duet and dance-drama presentations of Odissi dance. The festival seemed as though it was 'by the Oriyas, of the Oriyas and for the Oriyas'. Among the participants was a large contingent of young dancers training at the *Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya,* the *Kala Vikash Kendra* and the *Odissi Dance Academy* and stalwarts like Sanjukta Panigrahi, Kumkum Mohanty (the two leading dancers from Orissa),Ratna Ray and Aloka Kanungo. There were presentations at one level of the *Gita Govinda* dance-drama choreographed by Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra based on his excellent research work under the aegis of the *Odissi Research Wing.* At another, there were dance-dramas like *Sita Vivaha,* a popular presentation by *Kala Vikash Kendra* and *Usha Vilasa,* based on Shishusankar Das' work and imaginatively choreographed by Guru Pankaj Charan Das. The enthusiastic crowds applauded all the items and, on the last night, when Sanjukta Panigrahi and Kumkum Mohanty were to appear on the stage together, there was an unprecedented rush and nearly seven thousand people thronged to the grounds in front of the temple. There were people everywhere: on trees, terraces, walls, roof tops but once the dance began there was pindrop silence. Everyone seemed to be in a mood to appreciate the spectacle in a disciplined manner.

The festival was a huge success thanks to Subas Pani, the Director of Culture, who has set a good precedent by organising the event in an imaginative and efficient manner. As usual, some infra-structure will have to be evolved to meet the requirements of a festival of this nature. The cooperation of the Department of Tourism is essential. Since there exists a facility of 1,000 beds in five-star hotels and the distance between Puri and Konarak is now reduced by the Marina, developed as an added attraction, there should be no difficulty in organising the festival on a larger scale next year by inviting leading dancers of different schools and styles. If it materialises and if the Archaeological Department relaxes its rules, then even the *Konarak Dance Festival* can become a reality, without in any way posing dangers to the existing edifice and the environment.

—SUNIL KOTHARI

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*Fourth Natya Kala Conference, Madras, December 16-25, 1984*

The fourth Natya Kala Conference convened by the Krishna Gana Sabha from 16th to 25th December, 1984, at their auditorium at T. Nagar, Madras, was quite an improvement upon the previous three conferences. This year the Sabha invited Lakshmi Viswanathan (a disciple of Conjeevaram Elappa) to be the convenor, a task which had been handled by Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam for the last three years. Lakshmi's book on Bharata Natyam—*The Tamil Heritage*—was released on the occasion.

The conference was noteworthy for its wide range of dance demonstrations including scenes from the *Ramayana* dance-drama series of Kalakshetra, Kuchipudi by Raja and Radha Reddy, Manipuri by Rajkumar Singhajit Singh, Odissi by Sonal Mansingh along with a talk by the noted Oriya poet and scholar Jiwan Pani. There was a Kathak recital by Gitanjali with a talk by the present author; lectures on contemporary dance trends and experiments by Mrinalini Sarabhai and Astad Deboo. There were presentations on: *Kavuthvam*-s in Bharata Natyam by Chitra Visweswaran; poetry and *padam*-s in Bharata Natyam by Lakshmi Viswanathan,

the references to conflict in Indian dance-drama by Shanta Dhananjaya and Dhananjayan with a talk by Prof. V. Subramanian of Carlton University, Canada; Mohini Attam by Kalamandalam; *Kshemavati* from Trichur with two discourses on *Shivalila* by Balkrishna Sastrigal and on *Ramayana* by Prema Pandurangan. One session was devoted to responses from the *rasika*-s. All the sessions were held in the morning and, judging by the attendance, it must be said that the conference has come to stay and has succeeded in evoking enthusiastic support from audiences.

The conference is of great educational value. Similar attempts in other cities are also noteworthy. In Bombay, during the *Kal-ke-Kalakar* and *Haridas Sangeet Sammelans,* similar dance demonstrations were organised from 1970 to 1980. A dance appreciation course was also arranged in Delhi and other cities. But the unique atmosphere prevailing in Madras during December (known as the 'season') is unique. The audiences are critical and well-acquainted with the intricacies of dance and music. Moreover, it augurs well for dance that they have now opened up to and are in a mood to appreciate forms other than Bharata Natyam. To that end, the Krishna Gana Sabha has made a meaningful contribution.

This year there were very few papers for discussion. They were not received sufficiently in advance nor was a synopsis circulated before the session began. Thus the sessions remained restricted to dance demonstrations. At times an ambience was created and since no one liked to disrupt the mood, serious discussion or inquiry was not possible. The Sabha and the convenor will have to work out procedures to overcome this lacuna. There are no facilities for screening films or video cassettes or for slide projection. Therefore a great deal of research work remains unshared and various viewpoints are not discussed on a common platform.

These limitations can be overcome during the next festival by enlisting support from various voluntary agencies and institutions like the Max Mueller Bhavan, the United States Information Service and a few industrial houses like Enfield which share an active interest in the promotion of dance and have lent financial support to the Krishna Gana Sabha and other institutions.

The standard of dance demonstrations was high and succeeded in bridging the level of understanding between various groups of audiences. Students of dance benefited the most and it was heartening to learn that a young student had come all the way from Bangalore to attend the entire conference. The informal afternoon sessions were also interesting as they generated discussions and the dancers were willing to clarify the concepts. Krishna Gana Sabha has performed worthwhile service by organising the conference with the definite aim of bringing other forms to the notice of the south. There was a clear perspective that emerged successfully and earlier teething troubles now seem to be over. However, in the earlier years the scholars had presented well-researched papers. The Sabha should ensure that this valuable literature is published and not lost. With the help of the bright young practising dancers and scholars in the city, it should be possible to have the material edited and perhaps the Enfield group may come forward to support the publication project.

In the evenings, concurrent with the conference, the participating dancers gave recitals which were received well by discerning audiences.

—SUNIL KOTHARI

## Letter to the Editor

The June 1984 issue of the Quarterly Journal had included a review by Shanta Gandhi of Goverdhan Panchal's *Bhavai and its Typical Aharya.* We publish below a summary of the rejoinder by the author, Goverdhan Panchal, and of a letter from Hasmukh Baradi, one of our readers.

Shanta Gandhi regarded it as unfortunate that the monograph did not devote sufficient attention to the *rasa*-orientation which is a crucial element in *Bhavai* and to the colour symbolism intrinsically linked with *rasa.* Goverdhan Panchal contends that several writers of medieval Indian theatre forms (*Nrittabheda*-s, *Uparupaka*-s etc.) regarded them as *bhava*-based and not *rasa*-oriented. And *Bhavai* is a later, a third generation form.

Goverdhan Panchal refers to the reviewer's contention that *Rupaka*-s, *Uparupaka*-s and *Nrittabheda*-s were performed either in the open or outdoors and to her statement that there is a clear reference in the plays of Bhavabhuti and Harsha to open-air performances during a festival. He has grave doubts about the *Nataka* or *Prakarana* forms being staged outdoors and cannot imagine how *Uttararamacharitam,* with its subtlety and delicate nuances, could be staged amidst the din of a festival.

Goverdhan Panchal feels that Shanta Gandhi's statement that "Even surviving traditional forms are often performed indoors in urban theatres without any basic changes" will not be acceptable to serious theatre practitioners. The convention used by the actor of a *Bhavai-vesha* of turning to all four sides to repeat his line to project an audio-visual experience for all the spectators can hardly be duplicated in the proscenium theatre. Moreover, the magic of the costumes and makeup designed to be viewed in the half-light and half-darkness of torches evaporates in the glare of the 'floods' and 'spots' of modern theatre.

Baradi questions the efficacy of consensus among those actively engaged in folk theatre revitalization. He questions the validity of applying Indian aesthetic theories to every form of theatre—"Can and should one apply the *Rasa*-theory to Shakespeare or Ionesco?"

He is of the opinion that theatre architecture is both the producer and product of theatre conventions. And *Bhavai,* therefore, is most suited to public squares than to "the boxed, proscenium arch theatre" where only a partial view of the presentation is possible.

## Book Reviews

THE SHADOW PUPPETS OF INDIA by Meher Contractor, Darpana Academy of the Performing Arts, Ahmedabad, 1984. Price: Rs. 45.00 (*In English*).

India has the longest and richest tradition in shadow puppets, but the popular performing art forms and glamorous mass media have pushed them to remote villages where, hidden from discerning eyes, they have been languishing for more than a century. Perhaps, this may explain why certain western scholars, writing even during the early decades of this century about the Indonesian shadow puppets, wrongly said that India has no traditions in shadow theatre. If a westerner is ignorant about our traditions, it is understandable; but even many educated Indians do not know what shadow theatre is, let alone the differing styles that still survive in this country. Therefore, both the author and the publisher should be congratulated for this monograph on Indian shadow puppets.

The educated are now increasingly awakening to the fact that the folk performing arts are neither crude nor simplistic and that their aesthetic appeal is totally different from that of the highly evolved sophisticated arts. Their seeming simplicity stems more from a need for economy of expression than from any inadequacy. This awareness among the educated now brings folk arts more often to the urban areas and there are many who seek to understand them better. But since there are hardly any publications to satisfy this need, the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, decided in 1977 to publish a series of monographs on lesser-known forms of the performing arts. Of these, a few have already been published. The Darpana Academy, it appears, has a similar plan of publishing a series of monographs. The two series will complement rather than duplicate each other, since any form of art, folk or highly sophisticated, has many facets which can be viewed from different perspectives.

The first of the Darpana Monograph Series was on *Bhavai,* a fascinating form of the folk theatre of Gujarat. The second, which is under review, is on Indian shadow theatre traditions. It is written by Meher Contractor, one of the pioneers of contemporary puppet theatre in this country as also a sensitive puppeteer, a gifted teacher, a painter and a scholar. Drawing inspiration from the traditional shadow puppets, Meher Contractor produced for the Darpana Academy some fascinating contemporary shadow plays, but in this monograph she views the six differing styles of the age-old tradition more from the perspective of a scholar than a puppeteer. There is a wealth of information about how each of the six styles evolved and was presented in the traditional manner. She has touched upon the manner in which puppets are made and manipulated in each style, but had she considered them from the point of view of an experienced puppeteer the usefulness of this monograph would have been further enhanced.

One cannot help mentioning a few factual errors. For instance, the *tabla* is wrongly listed as one of the accompanying instruments with the *Ravana Chhaya* music. Similarly, it is a mistake to state that only one oil lamp is used as a source of light for the *Tholu Bommalata* show. These errors are, of course, of a minor

nature and in no way belittle the informative aspect of the monograph which, on the whole, is written with understanding and warmth.

The get-up and layout of this 20-page monograph with a magazine-type format is artistic and pleasing. Some of the coloured puppets, especially the Karnataka style of composite figures representing a scene, are fascinating and colourful. Readers could have formed some idea of their beauty if at least the cover page illustration had been in colour. The suggestion may be considered by the publisher for the second edition.

The monograph is useful, informative, well-written, and highly readable and may be recommended as a primer for a student seeking to be acquainted with the ancient tradition of shadow theatre in India.

—JIWAN PANI

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THE PROPER STUDY. Catalogue of the British Council Exhibition of Contemporary Figurative Painting in Britain (Delhi and Bombay) British Council, London, 1984. Unpriced (*In English*).

For the first time in many years, originals of contemporary British Painting were seen in India. In Bombay, the show, called "The Proper Study", was on view at the Nicholson Museum. The unifying theme being figurative art, the title of the show very pertinently derived from Pope's *Essay on Man*: "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan/The proper study of Mankind is Man." In Pope's times, the ramifications of the subject, of the manifold approach to a painterly study of man, were perhaps not known. The epithet "proper" thus assumes an added meaning, and the exhibition suggests sometimes disturbingly the wide range of figurative painting or, rather, human-oriented painting (for some of the canvases claim no human figure, search as you might) which the British have promoted during the post-war decades.

A comprehensive, well-edited catalogue helps us understand the situation in many interesting ways. One of the men responsible for the organisation of the show, Prof. Norbert Lynton, introduces it with a highly readable and provocative essay called "Reflections on the Painting Revolution of our Time". He informs us that in the 1960's photography gave the 'coup de grace' to figurative painting. The reaction was an 'overemphasis on the idea of autonomy in art which led to Minimalism and its extreme appendix Conceptual Art'. Thus the 'avant-garde of the 1970's, with its narrow, puritan approach, devoid of all joy in the senses, lost its creative impetus and began to stagnate'.

In his article, Lynton takes up the story from here and maps out developments which signified the revival of figurative art in Britain. In the process he traces the art trends that matured between the two wars. Among the intriguingly relevant references he furnished is one of the well-known scholar, Nikolaus Pevsner. Surveying *The Englishness of English Art* nearly thirty years ago, Pevsner dealt firmly with the British national inability to represent the human body as a living

reality. "The British", he said," are unsculptural *pace* Henry Moore; their inclination is towards linearity and sinuousness. Two-dimensional elegance is their forte."

Lynton comments that both puritanism and this flinching before the human body are symptomatic of an attitude that also determines British class distinctions and manners. For the artists represented in the British exhibition it must have been an uphill task to restore the cult of the figure and achieve it with a sensibility answering to changing times. Lynton talks about the training which some of these artists have had. The seeds of revolt were sown in certain art schools and by certain masters. It was not that there was no tradition of figurative painting in the twentieth century but this tradition had been suppressed and made faint by other tendencies.

Lynton says: "This exhibition celebrates high endeavour in an area where Britain has been traditionally weak and where she is now strong. It does not promote any 'ism' or '-ation', nationalism least of all." He attributes, to all the artists included, a seriousness of purpose and suggests that it is perhaps to the credit of the various non-figurative forms of art, which also flourish in Britain, that figurative painting has reached such maturity now.

To each painter in the show is devoted a critical write-up and a few pages of illustrations. Not all the paintings illustrated in the catalogue were actually exhibited, and hence the educative value of the catalogue is all the more enhanced. Seventeen painters have been selected for the show. Of these, artists like Francis Bacon, Lucian Freud, David Hockney and R. B. Kitaj are internationally known names. Artists like Howard Hodgkin and Anthony Green are known through their visits to India. The rest can become known only when such a show is treated as a beginning.

At the end, we have photographs and crisply-written biographical sketches of the painters.

Anthony Green reacts typically to his personal life. He paints obsessively pictures showing himself, his wife, his mother, his step-father and his father in surroundings which recall his childhood and youth. Green paints every year a picture called his wedding anniversary, where he exposes himself and his wife of long standing in an uninhibited fashion. Green is no doubt a figurative painter typical of modern British trends.

Two painters have been influenced by an Indian connection—Peter Kinley (who attended the East-West Encounter of Visual Arts) and Howard Hodgkin. There is much art here that is not conventionally lucid but one always derives an old-fashioned pleasure from the portraits of Lucian Freud and the self-flagellatory images of Bacon. The versatility of Hockney and Kitaj is astounding. Like many other artists they sum up the society of their times, capture the mood of complex environments and justify the pithy title of the show.

—DNYANESHWAR NADKARNI

ART HERITAGE Season 1984-85 (Catalogue). Edited by E. Alkazi, Art Heritage, New Delhi. (Unpriced) (*In English*).

Every year *Art Heritage,* run by Ebrahim and Roshan Alkazi in New Delhi, organises a season of exhibitions, big and small. To commemorate this event, a substantial catalogue is issued. The catalogue under review is the fourth in the series.

The two major exhibitions this time were those devoted to K. G. Subramanyan and Ram Kumar. After several years of teaching in Baroda's Fine Arts Faculty, Subramanyan has now settled down in Shantiniketan, his alma mater. Over the years he has created a variety of paintings, murals, terracottas and works in other disciplines. Not the least important is his scholarly critical writing. Compared to all this phenomenal activity, he has had very few exhibitions. The last big retrospective was in Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal, at the time of its inauguration, when he received the prestigious Kalidas Samman of the Madhya Pradesh Government.

The catalogue devotes many pages to this veteran artist. Archana Hebbar's long article traces the history of the revivalist movement in Bengal and the role played first by Havell and Abanindranath and later by Nandlal Bose and other teachers from Shantiniketan in nourishing the ego of Indian art. This historical information provides the right perspective for considering Subramanyan's life and times.

An interview with the master is most enlightening. "By choice", says Subramanyan, "I do not want to be mixed up with questions of belonging to mainstream, side-stream, or trend. I do not like to be pushed around and lose sight of the little bug I am chasing. But to chase it, I will crisscross any stream."

The material on Ram Kumar consists mainly of articles by Richard Bartholomew, well-known art critic (who passed away after the publication of this catalogue). Ram Kumar has traversed many paths to arrive at his present abstract notion of landscape. Bartholomew speaks with particular eloquence of the Varanasi paintings of Ram Kumar's middle phase.

A smaller section commemorates the show of Jaya Appasamy's collection of Indian paintings of the British period. (Jaya Appasamy, art scholar, also died during the year.) The specimens reproduced here shed refreshing light on the socio-political stratifactions of the British Raj.

Paintings, drawings, graphics and ceramics are the major genres pertaining to the one-man shows covered by the catalogue. *Art Heritage* has always offered a proper 'mix' of established artists and newcomers. Among the better-known artists who have held comparatively few exhibitions, there is the Shantiniketan sculptor Sarbari Roy Chowdhury noted for his formal versatility and his expressive portraiture. Quite a few of these shows are transferred to Bombay's Cymroza Art Gallery under an arrangement with *Art Heritage.*

Because they follow one another in succession, these exhibitions present a representative spectrum of contemporary trends. The illustrations in the catalogue, particularly those in the Subramanyan section, further enhance its value as a work of reference.

—DNYANESHWAR NADKARNI

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Feuillet System, 1700 (track drawing) Dance by Mr. Isaac, London 1709

