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Cover Picture:

Detail from an illustrated manuscript of the *Ramayana* dated 1649 painted at Udaipur by Manohar. (Courtesy: Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay).

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Ramacharitamanas of Tulsidas — An Appreciation

Suresh Awasthi

Ramacharitamanas of Tulsidas, written some 400 years ago, is an epic poem of great poetic merit on the Rama saga. It occupies a unique place in the entire body of Hindi poetic literature and has greatly influenced the social conduct, the values and ideals of the people of North India. In narrating the Rama story, Tulsidas' primary concern is to lay down the norms of social and moral conduct, *Lokadharma* and *Lokaniti;* but he is fully conscious of his role as a poet, and his greatness lies in maintaining a delicate balance between the poet within him and the preacher and the reformer. *Ramacharitamanas* is read and enjoyed both by the illiterate and the educated with equal relish; it serves as a source of inspiration, for a better and nobler life. Its influence is wide and deep and many of its verses, which express higher values and truths of life, have merged with and become part of the oral literature of the people.

Ramacharitamanas, though it follows the *puranik* tradition of handling the Rama theme and is actually a religious work portraying Rama as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, strikes the reader at the same time as an exceedingly sensitive and creative poem. It is Tulsidas' poetic sensitivity which has enriched many of the episodes of the story and made them moving. In his treatment of situations or characters he imparts to them a certain universality and it is this universalisation of various sentiments that makes his poetry great and of eternal value. He handles with great skill and sensitivity a large variety of situations and complex human relationships and portrays with equal insight and understanding a whole galaxy of characters. He does not limit the description to great heroes alone, but includes ordinary human beings, demons, animals and birds in his narration of the story.

Tulsidas has a grand design before him and he starts his epic poem with a grandeur aptly suited to the Rama saga, which has a noble and rich cultural content. He acknowledges his debt to the many sources of the Rama story, but also proclaims that he is writing the story in *Bhasha*, in the language of the people. He chooses *Avadhi,* one of the major dialects of Hindi. He says:

नानापुराणनिगमागमसम्मतंयद्रामायणे निगदितंक्वचिदन्यतोऽपि।
स्वान्तःसुखायतुलसीरघुनाथगाथा भाषानिबन्धमतिमंजुलमातनोति॥

"In many ancient circumstances,
And other scriptures is recorded Rama's fame,
And for my own delight in language choice and clear,
I write in song the full account of Raghunath. . . ."

Every student of Tulsidas knows that he borrowed the story material and many poetic utterances from the *Valmiki Ramayana*, *Adhyatma Ramayana*, *Shreemadbhagavat*, *Hanumannatak*, and *Prasanna Raghava Natak*. But no one can doubt his originality and poetic stature. His command over the language is superb and his poetic insight is most unusual. His devotion to his epic hero has charged the entire poem with emotional intensity. He is very clear about the purpose and the function of poetry and its role in contributing to the good of the people. In a statement of eternal truth he says:

"Only that language, that poetry and that wealth is good, which does good to all the people like the holy Ganga."

कीरति भणिति भूति भलि सोई।
सुरसरि सम सब कर हित होई।

The Rama story was first immortalised by the poet Valmiki in his Sanskrit *Ramayana* written about 2000 years ago. For centuries the *Ramayana* theme continued to attract poets and artists. After the *Valmiki Ramayana*, there was a long and rich tradition of *Ramayana* poetry and plays in Sanskrit.

A page from a manuscript of the Ramacharitamanas

Following the Sanskrit tradition, modern Indian languages also produced a considerable body of poetic and dramatic writing on this theme. Like the *Ramacharitamanas* of Tulsidas in Hindi, we have *Ramayanas* in other Indian languages. The better known ones are the *Kamba Ramayana* in Tamil, *Krittiwas* in Bengali, *Ranganath* in Telugu, *Pampa Ramayana* in Kannada and *Adhyatma Ramayana* in Malayalam. The *Ramayana* tradition with its grand design and noble character is a vital element in the culture of India and has greatly influenced the life style of the Indian people and enriched the plastic and the performing arts.

The *Ramacharitamanas* also greatly encouraged and contributed to the development of the traditional theatre form *Ramaleela*, which is based on the Rama legend. The *Ramaleela* has a continuous tradition of more than four centuries and is performed in several styles all over North India. It is quite possible that in some form the tradition of *Ramaleela* existed even before Tulsidas. But there is no historical evidence of this tradition. It is believed that the *Ramacharitamanas* was used as the main text in *Ramaleela* during the life-time of Tulsidas. Tulsidas conceived many episodes of the story dramatically and many verses of the epic poem are in dialogue form. This suggests that for the dramatic design of his epic poem he took inspiration from certain features of the *Ramaleela* as they existed in his time.

Apart from the *Ramaleela* in the Hindi region, some type of religious plays based on the Rama story had become prevalent by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in many parts of India. Some of the forms of the *Ramayana* theatre in various regions of the country gradually decayed or could not develop further. But the *Ramaleela* of the Hindi-speaking regions was further enriched and its tradition became firmer with the use of the rich text drawn from an epic poem like *Ramacharitamanas*.

The traditional *Ramaleela* is of a processional character. It is more like a pageant and has developed its dramatic form on the basis of a recitation of *Ramacharitamanas*. It is the recitation which commands priority and determines the structure of the performance. The recitation provides the base-line on which the dramatic structure of the *Ramaleela* is constructed. The recitation of the *Ramayana* has a religious significance. The theatrical form based on recitation was primarily evolved to propagate *Ramabhakti* and the word *leela* itself has a theological significance and metaphysical connotation. There is a group of singers called *Ramayani* attached to the play and they recite the entire text of the epic poem, sequence by sequence, stopping at various points of dramatic significance to give scope to the actors to present certain prose dialogues which are quite often a paraphrase of the verses. Gestures are an added element in the dramatic action.

The *Ramaleela*, as a theatrical form, evolving from the recitation of *Ramacharitamanas*, enters into the second phase of its development when the recitation is organised in front of the main characters of the story Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, called *Swarup*, who are seated on a throne. Such a grouping of the characters is called *Jhanki* or *tableau vivant*. In the *Jhanki* style of presentation of the *Ramayana* elaborate rituals and ceremonials are

observed, devotional songs are sung and the audience becomes an integral part of the performance. The *Jhanki* style of presentation of the Rama story is really not an enactment of the story, but certainly the *Jhanki* represents an art form which is semi-dramatic and which is also a step forward from visual art.

The *Jhanki* played an important role in the development of the traditional theatre, and, in particular, the religious theatre, *Ramaleela* and *Rasaleela*. The *Jhanki* or *tableau vivant*, as an art, is half-way between painting and drama. It encouraged and preserved certain basic elements of theatre. By adding 'living' actors and making them say the text and the singers recite it, a new theatrical dimension was added to the *Jhanki*. The *Jhanki* or *tableau vivant* is a dominant feature of all the mediaeval arts, that is to say both the performing and the plastic arts. It was in the *Jhankis* (presented as part of the processions and pageantry on various socio-cultural and royal occasions) that the basic principles of both painting and theatre were evolved.

From the presentation point of view there is a very interesting practice of the processional style of *Ramaleela* in places like Ramanagar. Several permanently built locales are utilised for the presentation of the story. The drama moves from one to another. The town is used as a theatre with permanently-built locales such as Dashratha's palace, Janak's palace and his garden, Chitrakuta, Panchavati, Ravana's palace and Ashoka Vatika, where Sita was kept in captivity. On the day when Rama leaves for the forest with Lakshmana and Sita, a large audience of nearly ten thousand follows them, sobbing with grief.

Apart from the dramatised episodes, there are many spectacles and processions presented on the streets and other public places as part of a *Ramaleela* performance. Rama's wedding, his exile to the forest, his battle against Ravana, the meeting with Bharata after his return to Ayodhya and his coronation are some of the episodes which are performed as spectacles. In some centres, there is a greater emphasis on floats, pageants and tableaux depicting scenes from the Rama story. These are taken out in a procession through the town every evening and some of these episodes are also enacted that very night. In some centres, the *Ramaleela* is performed in a large arena theatre. The scenes are mounted on carts which move in the arena while the audience squats on all the sides on tiered seats. The characters sitting on the floats often come down to present some of the action on the level-ground playing area.

The *Ramaleela* is a theatre of conventions. These conventions and practices are a continuation, often in an adapted or changed form, of the practices of the mediaeval and classical Sanskrit theatrical traditions. The whole approach to the dramatic presentation, to the conventions employed for the treatment of time and place and to dramatic speech, to the multiplicity and simultaneous nature of the action, to the alternation of prose and verse dialogues, and to their elaboration by impromptu dialogues, to using a group of singers for singing the entire dramatic text are some of the practices of the *Ramayana* theatre which truly represent the spirit of the Indian theatre.

Rama and Sita as depicted in the Jhanki.

The *Ramayana* is also performed in many other forms and styles of *Ramaleela*. One of the forms is the localised *leela* presented as a play on a curtained stage. In this form again the *Ramacharitamanas* is recited by a group of singers. This style of *Ramaleela* is greatly influenced by the professional Parsi theatre of the nineteenth century. The *Ramaleela* is also presented as operatic ballet, as opera and as drama proper.

The Rama theme is ideal material and it has attracted artists through the centuries. It served as an excellent theme for dramatic presentation. It has been extensively performed in a variety of theatre forms and dance styles in different regions of the country. Kathakali, (the classical dance-drama of Kerala), Yakshagana, (the highly stylised and developed operatic drama of Karnataka), Ankia Nat, (the lyric drama of Assam performed in the Vaishnava monasteries) and the Chhau dances of West Bengal, all deal with the Rama theme. The Rama theme is used in almost all forms of puppet theatre, namely, leather puppets, glove puppets, rod puppets and marionettes.

The *Ramayana* theatre is the richest and the most representative form of our traditional theatre both in terms of the story and the spoken-word

material, in terms of music and dance content and production styles. It is also an enduring and significant element of our traditional culture and represents the life of the people in its totality: their beliefs and ideals, their conduct and customs, their arts and crafts. The *Ramayana* theatre represents an integrated approach to theatre, incorporating elements of the literary, plastic and allied theatre arts. It is total theatre. The stylised costumes and make-up are integral to the total scheme of stylisation and provide a basis for a non-realistic approach to the theatre. The imposing head-gear and stylised make-up used in Kathakali and Yakshagana are extremely effective devices of stylisation. The masks and make-up of characters like Ravana, Hanumana and Garuda have attracted the greatest attention and inspired craftsmen to evolve stylised approaches, resulting in a variety of conception and interpretation of these characters. The embroidered *zari* mask of Ravana used in the *Ramaleela* in Ramanagar is a most exquisite piece of art.

Apart from enriching the traditional theatre *Ramaleela*, the *Ramacharitamanas* has also inspired and enriched our traditional painting styles. Drawing inspiration from the *Ramacharitamanas*, the *Ramayana* episodes were painted right from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century in different styles of miniature paintings. The *Ramacharitamanas* written in Avadhi, the spoken language of the people and one of the main dialects of Hindi, made the story so popular with the masses that the traditional artists readily responded to its appeal and painted the Rama story.

In the fifteenth century the practice of painting in Northern India was greatly influenced and enriched by the growth of poetic literature in Hindi. This poetic literature dealing with the love legend of Krishna, the Nayak-Nayika theme and the musical modes, *Raga Ragini*, served as excellent material for miniature paintings with their dominant lyrical character. The *Ramacharitamanas* held a distinctive place in art along with the other literature in Sanskrit and Hindi painted by the artists.

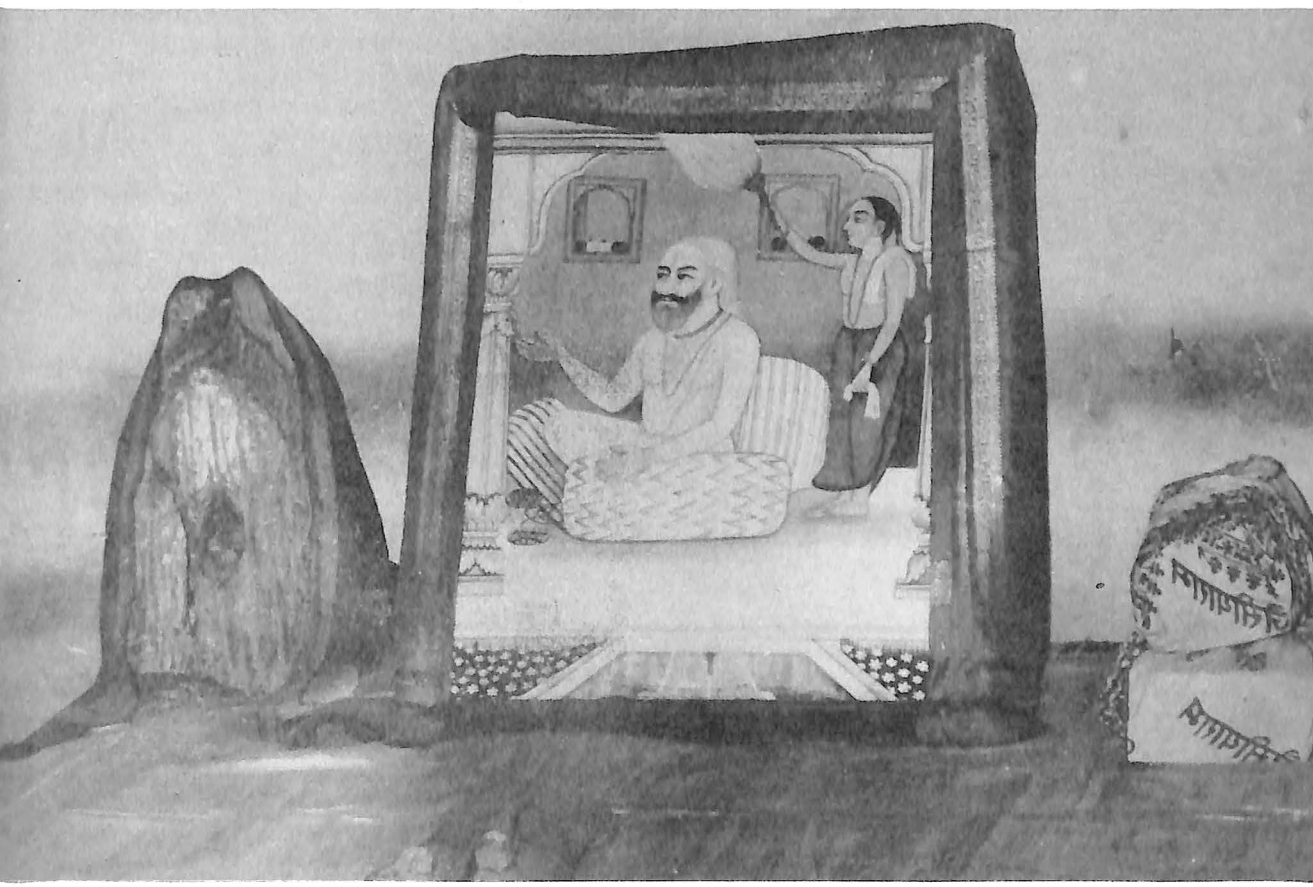
The *Ramayana* paintings have a special dramatic quality, and the pictures look like a dramatisation of the story. There is progression of action. There is a definite scheme and a pattern of organising the action and the scenic units. The artists seem to be primarily concerned with the telling of the story and relating it dramatically. The dramatic characters are kept at a focal point. It is always the characters in these pictures who attract our attention most.

Out of the several *Ramayana* series in different schools of painting, one that exists today in twenty-eight pictures belongs to the pre-Kangra school. These pictures contain on the reverse the verses from *Ramacharitamanas*, describing the action portrayed in the picture. There are scattered copies of the *Ramayana* with paintings of the Mewar school, executed during the middle of the seventeenth century. There are some large-size paintings of the *Ramayana* done in the Kangra Kalam during the mid-eighteenth century. A copy of the *Ramacharitamanas* illustrated at some period of time during the early nineteenth century is preserved in the palace library of the Maharaja of Ramanagar, near Varanasi.

In point of view of subject material the Basohli paintings are really known for illustrating the *Bhagawat Purana, Rasamanjari, Gita-Govinda* and *Ragamala* paintings. But the artists of this school also painted several episodes from the *Ramayana.* It seems that the artists used one of the rescensions of the *Valmiki Ramayana* for their paintings. These paintings were executed during the middle of the eighteenth century. The glowing colours and the feeling of abundance of the *Ramayana* paintings in the Basohli style confer on it a distinct character of their own. The landscape in these paintings, though decorative, seems to play a role in the drama.

Akbar got the *Ramayana* translated into Persian; the text was also illustrated. The Pahari artists seem to have taken the cue from the Moghul painters and chosen the *Ramayana* as a subject from the early seventeenth century onwards. While some artists painted only selected episodes or *Kandas,* the others painted the entire *Ramayana*. It is interesting to note that *Ramacharitamanas* was also painted in centres outside the Hindi-speaking regions. There are scroll paintings based on the *Ramacharitamanas* done during the early nineteenth century in centres outside the Hindi-speaking region.

Supposedly a portrait of Goswami Tulsidas, painted in the nineteenth century



As in the field of the performing arts so also in the plastic arts the *Ramayana* theme has always attracted artists throughout the centuries not only in India but also in many countries of South-East Asia having a strong *Ramayana* tradition. Apart from the *Ramayana* miniature paintings in North India, the theme was also popular with painters working during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries in Orissa, Bengal, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Tamilnadu and Kerala. The artists painted individual miniature paintings depicting some of the important episodes or they illustrated a complete manuscript or one of the *Kandas.* In these illustrations sometimes the artists used the *Ramayana* in the language of the region. It was similar in spirit to the mode of the artists of the north who painted the *Ramayana* theme, drawing inspiration from the *Ramacharitamanas* of Tulsidas.

The artists followed the same principles and conventions for organising the various units of action as in *Ramaleela.* The problems and the solutions of treating time and space and organising the action are the same in painting as in theatre. These solutions were perhaps worked out in painting, sculpture and *tableau vivant* before they were adopted in the theatre.

This similarity of principles and conventions between the *Ramayana* painting and *Ramaleela* is of special interest both to the students of theatre and of painting. It may be difficult to determine as to who borrowed from whom, but there is no denying the fact that the *Ramayana* tradition co-existed in these two art forms and there was constant exchange between the two. We find a similar situation in the case of the Krishna paintings and the Krishna legend theatre, the *Rasaleela,* which co-existed for two centuries.

One of the main features of both the *Ramayana* theatre and the *Ramayana* paintings is the simultaneity of action and the multiplicity of locale. The main action portrayed in a painting or presented in drama is sub-divided into several action units. The dramatic locale is never static, and the play or the painting seems to move from one locale to other, from one action unit to another. We also find that the *Ramayana* theatre, *Ramaleela* and the *Ramayana* paintings use several levels for the presentation of action. This helps the artists both in the theatre and in painting to achieve simultaneity and multiplicity of action.

Nayana Pillai of Kancheepuram

(1887-1934)

T. Sankaran

Kancheepuram Subrahmanya Pillai popularly known as Nayana Pillai was born in a family of professional musicians. His great-grandmother is still remembered in Kancheepuram as "Mettu" Kamakshi, because the house of this musician was built on a steep incline. Her daughter Visalakshi (Thayee Ammal) was a violinist. In the days which followed, both these musicians were eclipsed by the renowned vocalist, Kancheepuram Dhanakoti Ammal (their grand-daughter) and later by Kancheepuram Nayana Pillai (their great-grandnephew). There are people who still speak of Kancheepuram Dhanakoti Ammal's powerful voice, her extensive repertoire of devotional songs in Tamil and her participation in the Sarva Vadyam during the Dussera festival in the temples. Her recordings of *Saroja dala netri* and *Ennadi metta talakku* are still treasured in private collections and recording institutions. She had two sisters namely, Kamakshi Ammal (Amma Ponnu Ammal) and Palani Ammal. Dhanakoti Ammal always appeared on concert platforms in the company of her younger sister Amma Ponnu Ammal.Their family guru was Kanchi Kachi Shastry and this accounts for the heritage of the compositions of Shyama Shastry, Subbaraya Shastry and Annaswami Shastry.

Subrahmanya Pillai was the only son of Amma Ponnu Ammal. He was the darling (Nayana) of the three sisters and in course of time he came to be known as Nayana to the public as well. Music was in his blood and continues to be so in the family. His two nieces, Kuppu Ammal and Ramu Ammal and his two sons Ratnaswamy and Rajaratnam were also his disciples. Kuppu Ammal has recorded a few songs for Saraswati Stores, Madras. Rajaratnam is now an instructor in the music school run by the Tamil Isai Sangham, Madras. His daughter Nilayatakshi who married Nageswaran (brother of Mridangam Subrahmanya Pillai of Palni) had a fine voice and in her younger days was in charge of the "balashiksha" of most of the disciples of Nayana Pillai.

Nayana Pillai frittered away his youth in the gymnasium, but the family vocation was too strong to be discarded. Contacts with eminent musicians and formal musical education was only a question of time. Unofficial apprenticeship under Ettiapuram Ramachandra Bhagavatar gave him a good start. The association with Kumaramalai Subrahmanya Swamiji was a real eye-opener. He became the inheritor of the Valajapet tradition of Tyagaraja's music. In later life, he worshipped the great violinist Govindaswamy Pillai as his *paramaguru*. Ettiapuram Ramachandra Bhagavatar, Sangeeta Kalanidhi Gopalakrishna Iyer and Puducheri Rangaswamy Iyer were prominent musicians who enriched the musical atmosphere of Kancheepuram when Nayana Pillai was still in his teens. Both Nayana Pillai and Madura Pushpavanam Iyer (another meteoric star on the musical horizon) were the accompanying

singers in the Harikatha recitals of Ettiapuram Ramachandra Bhagavatar who even today is remembered for his unique rendering of *madhyama kala swara vinyasam* and his wide repertoire of rare compositions. As a homage to this teacher, Nayana Pillai invariably rendered in his concerts the *kriti* in *Rudrapriya, Amba Paradevate* which he learnt from "our Bhagavatar". He followed the Bhagavatar throughout the length and breadth of Tamilnad as his 'chorist' and it was a lucky chance which gave him an opportunity to listen to the music of Konerirajapuram Vaidyanadha Iyer who had just then established a new tradition of "Kacheri Paddhati", laying emphasis on extensive *Pallavi* and *swara vinyasam*. Nayana Pillai was thrilled and would not rest until he was in a position to emulate Vaidyanadha Iyer.

Kumaramalai Subrahmanyaswamigal, an ascetic, was at this time staying in a temple near Nayana Pillai's house. Nobody could answer Nayana Pillai's prayers more competently than the Swamiji, who was himself a disciple of Brahmananda Paradesi who in his turn had inspired the *Guru Parampara* of Konerirajapuram Vaidyanadha Iyer. The Swamiji was an expert in *Pallavi, Neraval* and *swara vinyasam*—a feature which characterised the concerts of Konerirajapuram Vaidyanadha Iyer and Nayana Pillai alike.

The compositions of Shyama Shastri were a rich treasure in the family but Nayana Pillai turned to Tyagaraja for inspiration. In fact, he celebrated the annual festival at Kancheepuram and learnt as many as four hundred *kritis* of Tyagaraja from Walajapet Ramaswamy Bhagavatar and also from Jalatarangam Ramanayya Chettiar. The sources and methods he employed to improve his repertoire are too numerous to recount here. He practised almost daily on the pattern of a full length *kacheri* with all accompaniments. For full-throated reach without interruption he chose his Guruji's favourite haunt within the temple precincts. He lived for the art and died for it. He would neither play to the gallery nor belittle himself or his art for monetary considerations. He was never in very affluent circumstances but neither for love nor for money would he oblige his friend C. Kanniah of theatrical fame by singing a series of Tyagaraja *kritis* in praise of Rama.* With all his respect for the good intentions of his well-meaning friends, Dakshinamurti Pillai and Chowdiah, he would not agree to 'edit' music to suit the requirements of gramophone records. Even when he was in dire distress and badly in need of money for medical treatment, he refused to compromise as far as music was concerned. He would insist on singing elaborate *Pallavis* and *swarams* against all odds. Deviation from this path was considered *gurudroham*.

Nayana Pillai trained his disciples to provide suitable accompaniment and in the initial stages of his career, the *Pallavi* dominated his public concerts. But as his repertoire widened and his voice mellowed with constant practice, he would find a place for at least eight to ten *kritis* of

*Kanniah suggested that a string of *kirtanas* in praise of Rama without any *swara* appendages would constitute *Ramarpanam* or propitiation of Rama. Nayana Pillai hotly repudiated the suggestion. Mere *kritis* without *swara vinyasam* could hardly be considered *Ramarpanam;* and he would not do anything that would constitute a violation of his own guru's fascination for *swara vinyasam*. Consequently Nayana Pillai had to forfeit the *Kanakabishekam* offered by Kanniah.

Tyagaraja in his recitals. There was no *kriti* without a *raga alapana to* precede it or *swarams* to follow. He considered himself a student right through life and thoroughly profited by the masterly exposition of *apoorva ragas* by Govindaswamy Pillai who often accompanied him. Thanks to his perseverance, *Manirangu, Rudrapriya, Jayantasena* have come within the reach of students. In later days he took delight in elaborating *ragas* like *Jaganmohini* and *Mandari* as preludes to the *Pallavi*. Invariably his concerts started with some *kriti* in the *chapu tala* and a brisk *swara vinyasam*. This had a telling effect on the audiences. He popularised the singing of *korvais* and singing the *arohana* and *avarohana swarams* in *trikalam* while rounding off the "strings of Jatis" set to music. His favourite accompanist, apart from Govindaswamy Pillai, was Konnakol Pakkiri Pillai. He had great regard for the mridangists, Palni Muthia Pillai, Pudukkotai Dakshinamurthi Pillai, Palghat Mani Iyer, Palani Subrahmanya Pillai and Tanjore Ramdas Rao. He thoroughly enjoyed his dialogues with his accompanists. His own contributions were challenging, provocative and the great ones among the accompanists rose to the occasion, sometimes even improving on his poseurs, to the master's delight. He was not a composer of *kritis,* but he composed his own *Pallavis* in Tamil and in praise of Subrahmanya Swamy. They were set in twenty-eight *talas,* leaving out the seven of the *sarvalaghu talas* out of the "thirty-five". His concerts had no place for the usual post-*Pallavi* light music. The closing part of the *kacheri* was always reserved for *tiruppugazhs*. His association with Kadirvelu Pillai of Yazhpanam helped him to study the *tiruppugazh* closely. Even though these hymns are set in complicated rhythms he made them easy for his students to learn by singing them in devotional congregations. Thevaram Sarangapani Chettiar is one of his disciples who learnt several of these pieces. It is worth mentioning here that tunes for these songs were chosen with due regard to Karnatic music and tradition. Some of these have been collected by his disciple Sangita Kalanidhi Chittoor Subramania Pillai* and published under the auspices of the Annamalai University. He found a place in his recitals for a number of *tevarams* too. The music of the Tamils found an honoured place in his repertoire.

The *sishya parampara* consisting of over forty disciples is perhaps the only authentic evidence of his style and tradition. Even this is only indicative, and not exhaustive. He had the distinction of singing *Pallavis* composed by himself. He revelled in the thirty-two *kalai chaukam*. His disciple Seithur Sundaresa Bhattar records with pride the confidence and aplomb with which his *vadyar* sang a *Pallavi* in *tisra jathi ata talam* in thirty-two *kalai chaukam* set to the *sahityam "bhayamedu namakku"* in a concert arranged by Panchapakesa Shastry before a distinguished audience which included the Karaikkudi brothers, Konerirajapuram Vaidyanadha Iyer and Puducheri Rangaswamy Iyer. Citing another *Pallavi, then pazhani Vadivelane Arumughane Esan magane,* set in *chatusra jathi matyam* with *kaal edam eduppu,* another of his disciples, Mridangam Akhileswara Iyer explained the modus operandi of his guru for simplifying the exposition. Nayana Pillai treated this *chatusra jathi matyam* as *khandam* in application. Similarly he handled another

*Among the many disciples of Nayana Pillai should be mentioned, in addition to Chittoor Subramania Pillai, T. Brinda and T. Mukta.

Pallavi, Kumara Guru Parane Shanmughane, in *chatusra jathi jampai* with *araeda eduppu* as *misram* taken as a whole. Sangeetha Kalanidhi Chittoor Subramania Pillai often renders another of these *Pallavis, Vadivelan Adhiyarkku Anukoolan Devakunjari Manaalan* in *tisra jathi dhruva talam* in sixteen *kalai chowkam* starting on *samam.* Smt. D. K. Pattammal who delights in the tradition has recorded for the Columbia Gramophone Company one of the *Pallavis* composed by Nayana Pillai. He identified himself so deeply with *Pallavi* that some of his jokes were in terms of humorous *Pallavis,* such as *Chandaala Bhairavai* and *A Kaakara kaayalu tinna chilukaa Nee Kinta dudukaa.* Nayana Pillai had a weakness for *mandara stayi vinyasam.* He resorted to this either during *raga alapana* or *swara vinyasam.* He would not miss an opportunity to draw the best out of his accompanist Govindaswami Pillai playing in the *mandara stayi.* He did not believe in extensive *raga alapana;* but, on the other hand, he would sing a few minutes of *ragam* for every one of the *kritis* in *apoorva ragas.* Unless compelled to do so, he kept away from singing *tanam.* Paying his tributes to Govindaswamy Pillai in this particular aspect of *raga* elaboration, Nayana Pillai used to go into raptures describing a performance in the Rock Fort at Tiruchi when Govindaswamy Pillai drove home to advantage a request from the audience to sing *tanam. Sankarabharanam* was being elaborated, and Govindaswamy Pillai walked away with the honours of the day and Nayana Pillai never grudged it.

The joviality of his youth persisted through life even amidst the bitterness caused by the lingering illness of his last days. Under medical advice he was forbidden to sing but he was conscious and happy that his end was drawing near. He would deliberately sit up and sing *Bhoobharam gani sura bhusurulai janinchina nee bhakti bhagya sudha.* He was conscious of his mission in life and he had the courage of his convictions. Quite literally he used to run a *Gurukulam* where, in addition to feeding poor students, *Vidya Dhanam* was given gratis. His old mother who survived him, his wife Kuppu Ammal and his daughter took turns at imparting instruction at various stages to his many pupils.

A word about the collection of songs for his repertoire and the exposition of the songs will not be out of place. Walajapet Ramaswami Bhagavatar and Ramanaiah Chattiar were no doubt inexhaustible sources. He did not consider it below his dignity to learn *kirtanas* from his *sishyas.* It was Kalyana Sundaram Pillai of Tiruvizhimizhalai who brought him *Sive pahimam.* On another occasion he visited Veena Dhanammal who was bedridden. She expressed her desire to learn from him *Tanayuni broya* and readily consented to teach him in return *Dasaradhi* in *todi.* C. Ramanujachari of the Ramakrishna Mutt helped him with *Grahabala memi* and *Saketaniketana.* His rendering of *kritis* had the stamp of genius, of a master of *laya, swara, sahitya, anubhava.* His powerful voice, pure diction and expression lent colour and lilt to the *kirtanas* he rendered. Very rarely did he repeat *kritis,* but when he did, they showed freshness and individuality.

The *Sahitya* or the Literary Aspect of the *Thumri*

Chander Shekhar Pant

Classical music in Upper India is today in a phase which may be termed as predominantly the age of the *khayal.* To all appearances, the *khayal* is a vocal form; but it has been recognised by experts as having had its vital repercussions and counterparts in instrumental techniques and forms. It is for this reason that the use of an expression like the age of the *khayal* can be justified.

In spite of such a strong grip on musical style, the *khayal* has had its limitations. No sooner had it established itself on the high pedestal of the classical pantheon, than it found itself sandwiched between various sides. The highbrow, puritanical *kalawant* came forward with disparaging remarks about the liberties it took in some of its manifestations. The ordinary listener blamed it for its sophisticated techniques and the paucity and the blurred aspect of its word-content.

The result was that the *thumri* trespassed in this sphere and threatened to cast her own siren spell, to overwhelm and carry away audiences in her own favour. What could the *khayal* singer do in such a situation? And how was he to acquit himself?

Before a *khayal* recital has reached its climax, there is already a certain reaction in the hearts of listeners. The reaction is symptomatic of a keen longing to find some relaxation, some indulgence, some fulfilment. What does it all amount to? The artist is expected to sing a *bhajan* or a *thumri*—something really charming. something really enthralling. And his counterpart, the instrumentalist, must come forward with some *gat* in the *thumri anga,* some *kajri,* some *chaiti,* some *pahari.* What lies behind this direct and irresistible appeal which the *thumri* commands? Is it the melody or the word-content or both?

All literary and artistic manifestations have been recognised by Walter Pater and his French and German contemporaries as being governed by two dominant tendencies—classicism and romanticism. The classical element stands for authority, order, for the grandiose, the pure, the temperate, the pedantic, the conventional, the narrow and academic working out of refinement. The romantic element stands for liberty, strength, strangeness, curiosity, novelty, experiment and a revolt against and a departure from set rules and stereotyped practices; it stands for all that has a direct, unfettered and unsophisticated appeal.

Without any further digression let us discuss the main topic-namely the literary garb of the *thumri.*

The word *thumri* has been defined in the Standard Lexicon of Hindi Usage—*Hindi Shabda Sagar* of Kashi Nagari Pracharini—in the following manner. It is a small *geeta*, that is a song; a song with two movements, and one which does not have more than one *antara.* The other meaning given to the term is rumour or gossip. The dictionary does not give the etymology explicitly, but the root is clear. The word *thum* or *thumak* denotes the kind of dancing steps used by children in their frolic or in dance. It also denotes a gait which has, according to the *Shabda Sagar*, an air of pride, conceit or simulation with all its delicate, emotive shades or nuances (*thasak*). The affix *ri* is very often used in the sense of 'pertaining to' in the possessive or associative sense, like *Kisan Rukminiri beli*, like *hama-ri, tuma-ri.* Another word closely related to the topic is *thumka* which means of small stature. Thus, by its overall etymology, the word *thumri* is suggestive of a song, which is small in size, and associated with dance and all its delicate shades. At least in one of its aspects, the *thumri* is a reorientation and descendant of the *dhamar* which too has the three-fold meaning of special steps, rhythm, and the song associated with these. Like the *dhamar*, the *thumri* also has a branch devoted to those colour sports of Vraja, which have a devotional and festive tinge, touching as they do the *Rasa* of Radha and Krishna and the cowherds and the milkmaids of Vraja; the rhythm in its measurement is also of the same number of beats, namely the Deepchandi—sometimes evolving or simplifying into Chancher. As far as this aspect is concerned, Prof. D. Ojha is not far from the truth when he goes to Vraja to trace the origin of the *thumri* (*Sangeeta Kala Vihar*, August, 1959).

This cultural and only one-sided aspect of the *thumri* should not be carried too far because as a specialised art form of music, the *thumri*, as we know it to-day, has found its full-fledged development in Lucknow and Benaras; it is there that it reached its high water-mark. As Prof. S.K. Chaubey remarks, "Lucknow was its mother and Benaras its sweetheart. From these cities the *thumri* has travelled far and wide in the country"

I want to sound a note of warning, and caution those who regard the *thumri* as an invention of Wajid Ali Shah or Sadiq Ali Khan. Because already in 1834 when Captain Willard first published his work, *A Treatise on the Music of Hindostan*, the *thumri* had been recognised as an established form "in an impure dialect of the Vrajabhasha". As far as the literary aspect envisaged in the existing repertoire of the *thumri* is concerned, it is not possible to take up authentic examples earlier than in the time of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Lucknow who was born in 1822, installed on the *gadi* in 1847, forced to abdicate and sent to Matia Burj, Calcutta in 1856 where he died in 1887. "Wajid Ali Shah", as pointed out by Shri K.M. Munshi in his illuminating *Kulapati's Letters*, "had a fine command of the Persian language and was a master of Urdu. He wrote over a hundred works in these languages and his poems fill several big volumes. Himself an adept in music, he was the greatest patron of music and dance. In his days, music and dance were the breath of the *parikhana* and its master was the patron of the well-known Lucknow *thumri* . . . . . He dramatised his romantic poems and prepared a ballet known as *Rahas*—an Urdu corruption of the word Rasa. Its theme was the sport of Krishna and Radha. It must have been a delight to Wajid Ali Shah's admirers to see him, in his solid corpulence, playing the part of Shri Krishna with a *mukut* on his head, valued at a lakh of rupees . . . . . After

deposition when he lived in exile at Calcutta, Wajid Ali continued to stage his *Rasa.* Including technicians, the troupe numbered three hundred and sixty-one souls of which eighty-four were women. Their total salaries amounted to Rs.11,859 per month".

The learned author goes on to state, "Wajid Ali Shah was the father of the modern Urdu stage. At his command, Amanat, the well-known Urdu poet of Lucknow, wrote the famous *Inder Sabha* which became the model for all later Urdu plays. When the *Inder Sabha* was staged, Wajid Ali played the title role of Inder (Indra) and there is little doubt that his *paris* took part in the play. The romantic mysteries of Wajid Ali's court are certainly brought vividly to life in this realistic drama".

It is further noteworthy that in dance, Wajid Ali's guru was the famous Kathak dancer, Thakur Prasadji (the father of Bindadin and Kalka Prasadji, and the grandfather of Shambhu Maharaj and Achhan Maharaj). They all adorned a school not only famous for the Kathak dance but also for the *thumri* and particularly that aspect of it which is called *bhava batana,* that is an emotional interpretation of the *bol* in a sitting pose with rather informal gestures accompanying the vocal rendering in all its shades and nuances.

Thakur Prasadji, the guru of Wajid Ali Shah, was a specialist in the *Natwari*—the delicate feminine aspect of the Kathak dance. All these elements go to form the background against which the *thumri* worked out not only delicate graces like the *murki* but also the literary garb, most suitable for its requirements. It is remarkable, however, that the language which was chosen for the *thumri* was neither Urdu nor Persian, but Hindi. We shall presently see what kind of Hindi was chosen for the songs. As pointed out by Prof. Arnold, "Oudh was the garden, the granary and the queen province of India. The ruler was a Mussalman. Essentially it was a Hindu realm".

The doyens of *thumri* were, therefore, wise and far-sighted enough to choose the Hindi of the region to clothe the *thumri.* It was a mixed jargon of *Vrajabhasha,* interspersed with the rural jargon of Lucknow and of the eastern districts.

Thus, in his famous *thumri* in Bhairavi, Wajid Ali Shah mourned and wailed over his pathetic departure from Lucknow -

बाबुल मोरा नैहर छुटो जाय।
चार कहार मिल डुलिया मंगावो,
अपना बिगाना छुटो जाय॥

The pathos lies in the mood of a bride, departing from her parents, and is heightened by the deliberate act of sending for the palanquin and its four bearers. In spite of his masculine voice, the late Ustad Faiyaz Khan once brought tears to the eyes of a distinguished audience at a music conference by his rendering of this *thumri.*

The *bol* or the actual word or expression which is to be interpreted by the singer in all its emotive shades is the soul of the *thumri.* This requires a special temperament and an exuberance of emotion and imagination in the artiste. It also demands a restraint. The artiste must avoid the temptation of presenting an elaborate and lengthy passage of improvisations so characteristic of the *khayal.* The literary aspect is thus quite an important element in the *thumri.* The *khayal* singer can and very often does throw the words of his song to the winds. This is what a *thumri* singer cannot afford to do. No *thumri* singer can present a passage where the literary meaning is ambiguous, or where the literary garb does not suit the tender and delicate sense. The essence of that delicacy which belonged to the Lucknow of the time—with its *nazakat* and *nafasat*—had thus pervaded the mantle vouchsafed for the *thumri.* And this mantle was not a royal robe. It was a simple garment within the easy reach of any commoner.

One of the greatest of the *thumri* composers of Lucknow, Kadar Piya, fully understood this factor and once expressed his views in unequivocal terms. Kadar Piya was the son of a spurious descendant of the second emperor of Avadh. His original name was Wazir Mirza, and with full titles it was Mirza Bala Qadar Jung Nawab Wazir Mirza Bahadur (1836-1902). There is an article on him written by Shri Gopal Chandra Sinha in *The Journal of the Hindustani Academy.* He was a poet, a painter, a musician, and a scholar of Urdu and Persian, but chose the *Bhakha* as he called it, which is the Urdu corruption of *Bhasha.* When he was asked why he did not compose in Urdu, he replied, "I shall never do that in view of the common audience I have. I shall write only in *Bhakha*—the dialect spoken in the households of the Hindus of Lucknow and the neighbouring villages." Urdu, in his opinion, was meant for the select few. Kadar Piya has, therefore, used pure Hindi words, and where he has used words of Persian origin, he has shaped and moulded them on the Hindustani anvil. He was, in fact, a great protagonist of Hindu-Muslim unity. He has written a work named *Nayan-Dil Samvad.* The eyes and the heart each try to impute to the other the responsibility for the pangs of love. This idea frequently reverberates in his *thumris.* His life was typical of the aristocrats of his time. Apart from a number of illegitimate connections, he had seven wives. His refined, delicate, voluptuous, acutely erotic temper, with occasional devotional outbursts, is reflected in the text of his *thumris.* While many of his *thumris* belong to the type of *chhota khayals* in a lighter strain and have the concomitant spuriousness of a *raga*, he has also to his credit a large number of compositions which have a full-developed *thumri* personality, being in the slow tempo of the Deepchandi or the Punjabi Theka. Here is a typical *thumri* of Kadar Piya in the *raga* Zila Khamaj and the Deepchandi *tala*.

ए री गुइयां कैसे भेजूं पाती कदर ओर।
काहू को साथी, पाती आपही चली जाती कदर ओर॥
एक रैन अंधेरी पापिन, सूनी सेज जैसे सांपिन।
कैसे मोरा बारा जियरा, हाये, डसे जाती कदर ओर॥

Kadar's beloved is pining for him. She does not know how to send the message. How she wishes that the love letter could walk over to him by itself!

The dark night is a veritable sinner, and the forlorn bedstead lurks like a female serpent. It mercilessly stings her tender and innocent heart. Everything is feminine here—even the simile and the metaphor. And the ejaculation, *haye*, savours of the voluptuous, mingled as it is with the agony of separation. Again, in a *thumri* of Pilu, Kadar would like a sarcastic retort from a jealous and disappointed maiden.

मोरि अंखियां ढूंढ़ रही, हो तुमका पावत नाहीं कहीं।
कदर पिया, जिनका तुम चाहते थे, ना जानूं कौन देस गई॥

"You say—'My eyes are searching for you, but alas do not find you anywhere' Beloved Kadar, I do not know to which land she has gone—she whom you wanted". Another maiden complains of the enmity of her eyes, that are responsible for a kind of collision, and have got the heart involved and fatally wounded for no fault of its own.

मोरि अंखियों ने बैर किया देखो मोसे कदर पिया।
आप लरत और मनका फंसावत, इनही कारन घायल होत जिया॥

There is a typical *thumri* in Paraj which has for its theme the village well, where a maiden is painted in all colours of feminine fury and the caprice of dalliance; she threatens Kadar because he has been impertinent. Kadar, however, relishes it all.

मैं को रोको नाहिं पनघट पै जाने दो
काहे करत हो ठठोरि मोसें, ऐसी नाहिं
हूं मैं भोलि जानत हूं तुमरी घतियां सगरी
अपने गौंकि मोसे करत हो बतियां
चलो हटो, अचरा छोडो तो मैं का।
बेर बेर मोसे करत छेर ऐसो ढीठ कदर
तुम्हें नाहिं काहू को डर, काहे को छिन लेत गगर,
भला तोड़ो तो।

Such *thumris* cannot be translated. This *thumri* is an example of a song where three languages have combined to form one synthetic whole. The language of music, of poetry, of dance or gesture, and of fantasy has taken a flight with every manner of twist and turn and the shifting panorama of colour.

The *thumri* dwells on some deep-rooted sentiment, a situation or phase or mood typical of the villager or the common man. This is given a literary shape in the regional dialect and expressed in its musical and emotional context. All taboos and restraints are lifted. Eroticism releases itself in all its feminine sense and sensibility, in feminine delicacy and fury, with all those spasmodic twitches of the wrist, of the waist, the jingle of the *ghungru*, the cracking of the bangles and the jerky pull of the garment. There are charges and counter-charges. The darts of Cupid are hurled mercilessly. The glances are veritable shafts or sharp-edged daggers; the heart is wounded, it bleeds; jealousies and wailings and all the sallies and fitful whims and caprices of love stalk the scene.

There is no law, only unrestricted wooing. The Nayika is seldom *Sweeya*. She is *Samanya* or *Parakeeya*. A stranger comes and casts his magic spell and the maiden of Banaras is inflamed by this casual meeting -

परदेसी बालम कैसा जादू डारा।

It is into such a world of fantasy that the *thumri* composer carries his flights and dreams. He is tired of the *dhrupad's* grandeur and majesty, of restraint and decorum; he has had enough of the sophistication and mannerisms of the *khayal*, with its never-ending vocal gymnastics. He is tired of paying his homage and tribute to *Sapta-Sur*, to *Teen Grama*, to *Ekais Murchhana*, *Unanchasa Kootatan*. He no longer claims to swim across the unfathomable *Nadasagar* and there are no chances, therefore, of his getting drowned.

We may note here that one of the functions of art, in the words of Walter Pater, consists "in the removal of surplusage, from the last finish of the gem-engraver blowing away the last particle of invisible dust." And "the artist may be known" as Schiller said, "rather by what he omits". Even when he is in devotion, it will be a devotion to the personal god of the cowherd and the milkmaid, and that devotion will be in the context of sport and dalliance and will be garbed in unostentatious speech. Thus, Sanad Piya, another composer of Lucknow could put these words in the mouth of a maiden:

केसी ये भलाइरे कन्हाई, पनियां भरत मोरि गगरि गिराई, करके लराई।
सनद कहे ऐसो ढीठ भयो कन्हाई, का करूं माइ नहिं मानत कन्हाई,
करत लराई।

or another composer would say:

नाहिं परत मैंका चैन सांवरिया नाहिं परत मैंका चैन।

Even when the charm and spell of Krishna's flute is expressed, the *thumri* singer and composer will follow his own path. It will not be like the great Kalawant Baiju Bawara who composed and sang in the *raga* Shankara with all its grandeur and majesty:

बंसी नाद सुर साधके बजाय
प्रवीन कान्हाए सप्त सुर मधुर तान धुनि मनी
बैजू कहे प्रभू नर नारी फसपंछी,
मोहे और मोहे सुर नर मुनी॥

An anonymous *thumri* composer would express his feelings as follows, in Pilu:

कलेजवा के बासुरि की धुन लागी
हों अपने घर काम करत रहि
श्रवन सुनत उठ भागी, हे सखि श्रवन सुनत उठ भागी॥

Take another theme for comparison—the eyes. A *khayal* in Multani says:

नैन्न में आनबान कौनसी परी रे

Mian Tansen once expressed the unfathomable depth and pathos which he saw in the eyes of a tear-stricken maiden in a *dhrupad* in the *raga* Bihag.

रुमझूम भर आए परी नैना तेहारे
बिथुरी सी अलक श्याम घनसी लागत
झपक झपक उघरत मेरे जान तोरे।
अरुन बरन नैन तेरे तामे लाल डोरे
तापर अंबुज बार बार डारे।
कहे मियां तानसेन सुनो शाहे अकबर
उपमा कहां लों दीन, बिन अंजन कजरारे।।

But the *thumri* singer will express his sentiments in his own lighter and more direct way. For instance, Sanad Piya will say in the *raga* Bhairavi :

अब तोरि बांकी लोचनियां रे अब तोरि बांकी चितवन
मेरो मन बस किनो प्यारि प्यारि बतियां करके।
सनद कहे मोरा जिया नहिं माने
डारदिनो मोपे जादुसा कछु करके।

Tansen will have the patience to search for similes in heaven and earth, but poor Sanad is under a spell that has been cast on him, not by नैन or लोचन but by लुभानियां and चितवन. Note the full elasticity and resilience given to the synonyms, used partly as verbs, as dynamic elements in action rather than as something static. Another *thumri* composer would say हसके भरे तोरे नैन ..... and would dwell on the emotions in all manner of shades and colours by means of the *bol.*

There are a host of *thumri* composers belonging to the Lucknow school whose very pseudonyms savour of the *thumri* element—Kadar Piya, Sanad Piya, Najar Piya, Sughar Piya and Lalan Piya.

The last of these, Lalanji of Farrukhabad, needs special mention. He has composed *thumris* in the medium and fast tempo; they have a sparkling rhythm and yet they maintain the definite *thumri* in *raga* Khamaj, *tala* Trital, which has become very popular and is highly respected by Ustads. It is

सोहनी सोहनी मोहनि मोहनि मुरत वारि रे सलोने सांवरिया पे।

The *thumris* of Lalanji are a class in themselves. The most authentic version of a large number of Kadar Piya's *thumris* is contained in the Kramik series of Bhatkhande, because these were learnt by Padmabhushan Shri S. N. Ratanjankar directly from Kadar Piya's son, the late Nawab Chaulakkhi Mirza Murad Dahar.

Many of the *thumris* of Najar Piya were learnt directly from him by Raja Bhaiya Poochhwale and are published in his *Thumri Tarangini*, ठुमरी तरंगिणी along with the *thumris* of some of the other composers who have been mentioned earlier. I shall deal with only a few of such compositions which have a representative character.

There are some *thumris* which bear the stamp of Urdu, but such instances are rare. For instance, here is a *thumri* in the *raga* Tilang :

सांवरिया तोरे बारी में ना जैहो रे।
इस बारी में क्या क्या बोया इष्क मुहब्बत यारी
सांवरिया तोरे बारी ...

There are some *thumris* in the Punjabi language. This style has a monopoly of the *tappa* and is also used in the *khayal* and the *dhrupad*. For instance, the following *thumri* blends the *ragas* Bhimpalasi and Dhani.

सांडे नल वामनियां दिल भरिया सजन मन रामैया।
लटक लटक लटलैं नंदलादी हंस हंस मुस बतला वदियां।

The Punjabi language is not suited to the genius of the *bol*. It could not thrive in the realm of the *thumri* as it did in that of the *khayal*.

There are words from Surdas or Ghananand and other poets which also make their appearance in the realm of the *thumri*. For instance, लाग रह्यो मन राधा वर सों in Khamaj is a song by the famous *Riti-kala* poet of Brajabhasha, Ghananand. There is another *thumri* Kafi, *tala* Deepchandi which is akin to a *bhajan*. The words are attributed to Surdas. The Banaras school has followed suit in the *thumri* sponsored by the Lucknow school. It has some leanings towards the local dialect and some gleanings from the *chaiti* and *kajri*, the regional folk tunes.

नाहक लाये गवनवा रे मोरा
अरे आप तो जाय बिदेसवा रे छाये।
जब से गये मोरि सुधहुन लीनी, तुम तो छाये बिदेसवा रे।

The *thumris* of the Banaras School are comparatively free of the impact of Urdu, of patches of *Khari Boli.* Sometimes a *thumri* singer can start with a *thumri* and, as a kind of relief from the rhythmic procedure, can sing a series of devotional or love poems in the form of so many *antaras*, during which the drumming is suspended.

Like *Sama Vedic* music, the *khayal* and other forms which have their *stobhaksharas* (syllables of exclamation or ejaculation) the *thumri*, too, has its own syllables of exclamation. These are हां हां, हाय, हाये, हो रामा, अरे हांरे. These ejaculations have a definite role to play in the presentation of a song. They heighten the effect of the sentiment portrayed and help the repetitions and variations of the tune and sometimes they savour of the lascivious or the voluptuous.

Emphasis must also be given on a class of *thumris* which have a depth and a pathos of their own, which cannot be reproduced in any other form. To this category belong the famous *thumri* sung by the late Abdul Karim Khan, namely पिया बिन नाहीं आवत चैन, and the one sung by Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali कटे ना बिरहा की रात, सखि के बिन जोबना, जात, सुधि बिसराई मोरी. The phrasing here is simple and direct. There is hardly anything in the words which can aspire to pure poetry; but the language certainly inspires the singer to reach both the depths and flights of melodic imagination which are in tune with the feeling of pathos.

I made mention of the School of Bindadin. Bindadin has to his credit a large number of *thumris*, some of which are published in Bhatkhande's Kramik series. Here is an example of a *thumri* in Shahana *raga*, Trital *tala*.

जाने दे मैं का सुनो सजनवां
काहे करत तुम नित उठ हमसन रार
नाहिं नाहिं मानुंगि तोरि मैं अब।
छेर करत नहिं माने बरजोरि करे गहलीनि,
बिन्दा कहुं क्या मैं, नित उठ हम सन रार
नाहिं नाहिं मानुंगि तोरि मैं अब।।

Most of his *thumris* are full of the delicate yet sparkling expressions which harmonise with the *Natwari* form of the dance and give a solid grounding to the would-be dancer in some of its traits.

The *thumri* bears the imprint of folk elements, which are sometimes discernible in the literary garb as well. Here is a *thumri* in Desa which has affinities with the *Jhoola*.

आवो रि सहेली झोका दीजे
बरसत फुइया ए जि अब सैंया चलो झूला झूलें
हम सब खेलें।
सैंया ने झूला बगिया में डाला
पिया को बुलावें सावन गावें।

There is another *thumri* in Pilu, which is akin to Sawan—the folk festival of the most festive month of the rainy season. But here the theme is developed to unfathomable depths in a most refined manner—

लाग रही एरि ये सावन की झरी,
ए री मैं भीजत उन बिन कबकी खड़ी
अपने सें आयो पिया मेरो मन ले गयो
दे गयो री असुवन की झरी
एरी ए मैं भीजत उन बिन कबकी खड़ी।।

The words, in conjunction with the tune, have acquired a suggestiveness that cannot be translated.

I have deliberately omitted the Punjab School. The more apt word for it is the Punjab *anga*, and it is purely a musical technique of gliding swiftly over semi-tones or quarter-tones which a musician of any school may do when he is prompted by his fancy. It has hardly anything to do with the literary element and is beyond the scope of this article.

As in the political world, so in the world of art there are revolutions and counter-revolutions. Perhaps because there was a surfeit of the erotic, of the voluptuous or of devotion to a personal god of the cowherds and the milkmaids, it provided a reaction in Benaras. The *Nirguna* or the knowledge of the self was chosen as a theme for the *thumri*.

The true essence of the *thumri* is revealed when the artist surrenders completely to fantasy, to the sport and dalliance of love or the dejection and pathos that occasionally follows in the wake of such a feeling.

Schiller says, "Man is completely human when he is playing." C.G. Jung in his *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* echoes this sentiment. "Truth to tell, I have a very high opinion of fantasy. All the works of man have their origin in creative fantasy. What right have we then to depreciate the imagination?" It is linked with the very source of human and animal instinct. The creativity of the imagination frees man from his bondage to "the nothing but and liberates in him the spirit of the play. Something invaluable is won—a growth of independence, a step towards psychological maturity."

There are various demands that are made on art and letters and as pointed out by Walter Pater, all disinterested lovers of these forms regard them as "a sort of cloisteral refuge from a certain vulgarity in the actual world." The *thumri*, indeed, comes to our rescue. The entire endeavour of the *thumri* artist is directed towards making his art "pleasing—fine—as opposed to merely serviceable." No *thumri* is serviceable in the sense that a *dhrupad* or a *Lakshana Geet* is when it presents an authentic picture of a *raga.*

The literary critic or the grammarian may come forward with attacks on the language or the patchy and haphazard literary garb of the *thumri*. But he has to be warned that he is dealing with the language of music where poetry plays a subordinate role. In the choice of words and phrases, the *thumri* artist is often "back to the earliest divination of the finished work lying somewhere, according to Michaelangelo's fancy, in the rough-hewn block." Benedetto Croce in his thesis of *Aesthetics as a Science of Expression and General Linguistics* has rightly emphasised the impossibility of a normative grammar, the impossibility of creating language artificially. He has pointed out that the nature of expression supplies the method of discovering the scientific error which lies in the conception of a (normative) grammar, establishing the rules of correct speech. Good sense, he says, has always rebelled against this error. 'Language" says Benedetto Croce, "is perpetual creation. The ever-new impressions give use to continuous changes of sound and meaning, that is, to ever-new expressions. To seek the model language, therefore, is to seek the immobility of motion."

The *thumri* artist was far ahead of the *Riti-kala* poet of Hindi, indulging in formal *Nayika Bheda* or *Nakhashikha Varnana*. The *thumri* artist, throbbing with life, had a direct approach to language and emotion. He had his own "style". And this style is a characteristic "mould", a certain absolute and unique manner of expressing a thing, in all its intensity and colour, and into this the artist pours the whole content of his being.

In spite of some of its objectionable associations, the *thumri* is no doubt a flower of transcendant beauty, and beauty in the words of Kalidasa, can never be defiled and there is nothing which does not add to its charm—

किमिव हि मधुराणां मण्डनं नाकृतीनाम्

Veerabhadra and Ishwara in Daksha Yaga—Girija Kalyana.

Shree Dharmasthala Yakshagana Sabha

The Shree Dharmasthala Yakshagana Sabha presented three sequences—*Daksha Yaga, Girija Kalyana* and *Tarakasura Samhara* in the auditorium of the National Centre for the Performing Arts on August 13, 1973. Shree Dharmasthala is a *kshetra* situated in beautiful surroundings in the Belthangady Taluka of South Kanara. Legend has it that five centuries ago two divinities appeared in their glory before a Jain couple, Ammudevi Ballalthi and her husband Birmana Pergade, and enjoined them to build shrines and celebrate *utsava, parva* and *nadavali.* The temple of Manjunatha thus came to have its own traditional troupe of professionals who presented *Yakshagana prasangas.*

The roots of the *Yakshagana* tradition go back further for it is mentioned in the *Chandraprabha Purana* (A.D. 1105). Sarngadeva refers to the form in his *Sangit Ratnakara.* This style became part of the folk tradition and *Yakshagana prasangas* came to be written. They were woven round incidents in the epics and composed wholly in music. Some of the *ragas* they used are common to both Karnatic and Hindustani music. This music is conceived to suit the pattern of dance. The form is thus an amalgam of music, dance, and drama.

The troupe which performed at the Centre began with the introduction of a piece of cloth which was carried to the centre of the stage by two actors and served as a screen. Behind this curtain were two characters from the story; their backs were turned to the audience and their faces were directed towards the deity in the green room. The musicians sat at the back. One of them had a *shruti* box which was more like a harmonium. In the old days they used a *pungi* to indicate the note. Now it is the *shruti* box which performs this function. The musicians used a sort of *mridangam* which they called the *maddale*. This *charmavadya*—because the outer circle has a higher pitch than the *mridangam*—allows for a wider range. There is yet another drum, the *chande.* Another name for it is *ranabheri,* since it is best suited for the *veera* or *roudra rasa.* The cymbals used are called *jagate*. And during the battle scenes the din is also enhanced by yet another brass instrument, the *chakratala.* These two instruments maintain the pace of the performance, through the beat. And the percussion instruments vary their patterns of sound within the limits of this beat. Among the *talas* used are the *adi* (16 *matras*), the *rupaka* (6 *matras*), the *eka* (4 *matras*), the *tripuda* (7 *matras*), the *jampa* (10 *matras*) and the *ashta* (14 *matras*). The pace varies from sequence to sequence to harmonize with the mood of the incident enacted on the stage.

The key role in the performance is played by the *Bhagavata*. In this troupe the *Bhagavata* was K. Manjunatha whose father Shambhu *Bhagavata* was trained by an illustrious *guru*, the late Mambadi Narayan *Bhagavata*. The music that the *Bhagavata* sings suggests only the *chaya* of a *raga.* He does not elaborate

its structure. There is no *vistara* or *alapi.* The emphasis is on selecting a *raga* to harmonize with the sentiment in the sequence which is being enacted. The *Bhagavata* is the highest paid member of the troupe. In the old days he knew the text of the *prasangas* by heart. But most of the more widely-enacted *prasangas* are now published in book form.

Formerly the performance used to begin at seven in the evening and terminate in the early hours of the morning. The duration of the story proper was eight hours. The *purvarangam* lasted for nearly three hours. Nowadays the *purvarangam* is deleted and the actors perform for eight hours. The *purvarangam* had its own place in the scheme of a performance. It began with an invocation to Ganapati, which took place in the dressing room itself. Then the *arati* was brought to the *rangasthala* and a coconut was split open. This was the right kind of ritual, an auspicious beginning for the night's play. It was followed by the sound of the *shushka vadya.* Only the percussion instruments played. This served a two-fold purpose: it was an announcement that the show was about to begin and it helped to ward off the powers of darkness, unclean spirits (*bhutoochatanam*).

Then the *kodangi* entered the arena. This ugly figure performed a good deed. He could prevent an enemy from casting his evil eye on the performance and harming it. This was followed by the entry of Balgopals—two boys who were introduced by the *Bhagavata* and danced as the two divine brothers, Balaram and Gopal. Most young actors received their initiation into the *Yakshagana* by doing these roles. Their schooling as actors began in these roles. They carried a symbolic crown for Vignesha (God Ganesha, who removes all obstacles in the path to success). Another prayer followed: the *Ranga Puja*—worshipping the arena itself. Nowadays the *purvarangam* has no place in the performance. The dimensions of the arena follow the precepts set down in the *Natya Shashtra.*

There is a wheeled cart on the stage. It plays a multiple role. It can symbolise a throne, a chariot or an elephant. There is no need for any properties as such on the stage itself.

The *prasangas* are usually drawn from episodes in the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.* For instance, the Kurukshetra *prasanga* includes the actual fights and incidents in the Bhisma, Drona, Karna, Shalya *parvas*. But a modern version is likely to be more condensed and will highlight only the salient episodes in each of these. Episodes drawn from the Jaina tradition have now been absorbed in the *Yakshagana* tradition. The *Bharatesh Vaibhava*, a classic by Agari Shriniwasa Bhagavata, is a case in point. The *prasangas* include *Bahubali Vijaya* and *Padmavatiparinaya.*

In the old days the performance was usually arranged by a patron as part of a thanksgiving ceremony to a deity, a way of propitiating it. But now tickets are sold and the artists use mikes quite freely. For instance, the Shree Dharmasthala Yakshagana Sabha has on its roll thirty artists and a crew of seventy; the group carries its own dynamo. Formerly oil lamps lighted the arena. Then the petromax lamps came in. But now with a dynamo at their

Agni, Devendra and Varuna in Daksha Yaga—Girija Kalyana.

disposal to generate electricity, the actors can have as much lighting as they want.

They are out on tour nearly six months in a year, from Diwali to the beginning of the monsoon. The area they cover stretches from Coorg to Mysore. The temple has a vehicle of its own which transports the troupe from one place to another. To ensure that good artists remain with a particular troupe, the temple authorities offer them various kinds of incentives, including rights on certain lands or provide them with loans.

The *Yakshagana* is closely linked with village life and an outdoor atmosphere. That is why it is also known as *bayalata* or field drama. In South Kanara alone there are twelve such troupes. The largest number of performances are staged by the Katil Troupe where the goddess Durgaparameshwari is honoured and propitiated through these performances.

The *Yakshagana* has no use for masks. But the artists employ wigs to indicate baldness. In earlier times the stress was on dance and dialogue was reduced to the minimum. But, of late, the dramatic element seems to dominate the scene since expert dancers are hard to come by. The dialogue, for the most part, is improvised but it retains a classical flavour and remains true in spirit to the mood of the incident that is portrayed. The comedian, the *hasyagara*, has an important role to play in the presentation of a *Yakshagana* performance. He is an all-purpose man, plays as many as ten roles and is adept at changing his costumes within a few seconds. After the *Bhagavata* the highest paid artists in the troupes are the comedian, the drummer and the actor who plays female roles. When a rich patron organises a performance, it is the *hasyagara* who orders the *stree vesha* to sing the glories of the deity, the audience and most important of all, the donor himself.

For instance, in the performance presented by the Shree Dharmasthala Yakshagana Sabha the same actor, Gopalkrishna Joshi, played the role of the Brahmin, of Narada, and of *Shivayogi* (who, in fact, was Shiva in disguise). Gopalkrishna Joshi is fifty-six years old and has spent thirty-eight years with *Yakshagana* troupes. His father was an astrologer. He feels that education is important, so he insists on sending his sons to college. But the passion for drama runs in the family and the actors all feel that sooner or later the son will follow in his father's footsteps and join a troupe doing *Yakshagana.*

The whole point in being a member of a troupe is that an all-round training in this art is imbibed in the process of the performance itself. An actor begins by helping to carry the troupe's luggage and slowly graduates to acting in minor roles. He might even end up by becoming their leading star.

The costumes which the artists wore that evening and their gorgeous head-gear were all made by *gudigaras,* by puppet makers. They are experts in this field. The colour scheme follows a traditional pattern. The hero who embodies *veera rasa* must use red. Green is for *shringara.* Daksha must have red eyes and a beard. Those who are doomed to die during the performance and the *daityas* have to wear black. In the last few decades there developed a tendency to dress the gods in the style of Ravi Varma's paintings. The costumes of the female characters tended to approximate to 'reality'. So instead of the ornaments, the *abharanas* that graced the queen and her attendants, they now make do with modern styles in saris.

The make-up used by the *Yakshagana* artists is of special interest. There is no make-up man. Every artist is responsible for his own make-up. The base is zinc oxide. The artists use rice grain bound in calcium and lime. The lines sometimes have a depth of more than an inch and with that row of rice grain as a lining they have a kind of clarity which paint by itself can never have.

In the *Yakshagana* performance at the Centre, the role of the demon Tarakasura was played by Chandragiri Ambu, who entered the profession as a boy of fourteen. Then he usually helped to carry the luggage. He hails from the Kasargod taluka and at school he learnt Malayalam. He mastered

Veerabhadra and Daksha in Daksha Yaga—Girija Kalyana.

Kannada and has been an actor for the last forty years. He needs about four hours to do a perfect job of the make-up of Tarakasura. He is the one artist who can do the make-up of any character.

Like all other forms, the *Yakshagana* has to face the reality of a new and changing world. When it succumbs to the demands made by present

Varuna, Agni and Ishwara in Daksha Yaga—Girija Kalyana

day audiences, it loses its original flavour. But in spite of such shortcomings, it still retains a vitality which is clearly the result of the artists' own involvement in the performance.

(Thanks are due to the performers, to Shri Ramchandra Uchil and Shri B. L. Rao for the information they supplied on this subject to the Journal).

News and Notes

Akanth Sabarmati

The Gujarati stage in Bombay seems to be flourishing. On an average, one hundred and ten productions are staged in Gujarati. Unfortunately, just one or two out of these one hundred and ten are truly original Gujarati plays. Producers depend heavily upon hits in other languages, mainly Marathi, and, of course, English. Playwrights in Gujarati feel that Gujarati producers do not care for their own language; and the producers themselves are weary of tense and sentimental Gujarati playwrights. Thus lack of communication between the two is complete. There is some truth in what both the sides feel. Since I have had some fruitful training both as a playwright and as a director, I thought of the idea of a small-scale theatre unit, actually a miniature troupe, which was to act as a sounding-board for any new original Gujarati play. Also, as a parallel activity, we planned a Writers' Workshop.

In a school common-room, therefore, in last September I explained the scheme to a gathering of poets, fiction writers and playwrights. Straightaway we went into action. Several people suggested themes, which were promptly improvised, discussed and written out in the form of small stageworthy plays. The group was named *Akanth Sabarmati*. We decided to meet twice a week after dinner for a two-hour session. Each member was to bring a short-short play, of five or ten minutes' duration, for reading or discussion or for even a spontaneous enactment there and then by members of the group. We thought of different shades of Gujarati—spoken Gujarati—and insisted that the 'actors' should use only their 'native' tongue, with an emphasis on the spoken vocabulary, rather than on bland, colourless and literary Gujarati. We tried to draw 'actors' from different areas of Gujarat, and, within a month, we were ready with our first programme of several theatre-exercises, theatre games, and semi-rehearsed enactments of several short plays written as a result of the workshop's activities.

We enrolled a small group of 'patrons', paying a fee of ten rupees. We drew up plans for thirteen programmes; out of these, we presented four within this year. Our performances take place in a hall of a school, or in an open-air compound, where we use petromax for lighting.

During the first year of its existence our organization *Akanth Sabarmati* has been able to groom successful poets, uninitiated professors, and other men of letters, into writing short plays. The first collection of these short plays will soon be published under the title *Akanth* by Vora & Company, Ahmedabad. This volume will contain some thirty short plays, selected out of a total number of fifty. Sixteen out of these thirty plays have already been performed and with a slowly increasing degree of 'professionalism'.

On the performing side, we have been able to draw into the group young boys and girls, from schools and colleges. They are given intensive training in speech projection, body movement and understanding of the invigorating craft of improvisation.

On the writing side, having dealt with 'language', we are now studying the building of a 'character' right from its name, to its appearance, habits, mental state and other such relevant details. We now plan to go on to the plot, and to the exposition and structure of the play. Among the poets we have with us are Labhshankar Thaker, Chandrakant Sheth, and Chinu Modi. Manhar Modi, Hasmukh Baradi, Ramesh Shah and Suvarna Rye are primarily fiction-writers. Kapasi is a music-critic, Indu Puwar is a school teacher. As a matter of policy, the group has decided to do *only* Gujarati plays.

Madhu Rye

The Death of John Cranko

John Cranko, director of the Stuttgart ballet, died suddenly on June 26 during the return flight after his troupe's third and highly successful American tour. Cranko was born in 1927 at Rustenberg in South Africa. He was trained as a dancer at Cape Town and at the Sadler's Wells School in London, but very quickly turned to choreography. He produced works for the Sadler's Wells Ballet, the New York City Ballet, the Paris Opera, and La Scala, Milan—among other places. In 1961 he became director of the Wurttemberg State Theatre's ballet company in Stuttgart. In twelve years he made this troupe into one of the leading international dance companies. He succeeded in training a series of soloists whose ability is recognised worldwide. He developed a repertoire suited to educate both members of the ensemble and the public, and in which both the classics and modern works received their due. Cranko's story ballets are characterised by great humour, psychological depth, and dramatic intensity. His abstract works are no less important, and the two Zimmermann ballets demonstrate that he was not afraid of choreographical experiments either. John Cranko was one of few creators of ballet whose work attained attention and admiration beyond the relatively restricted limits of the ballet world. His death—wrote the Neue Zurcher Neitung—is "an irreplaceable loss for the Stuttgart ballet in Germany, and for ballet in the world".

The Berlin Film Festival Prizes

The twenty-third Berlin international film festival came to an end on July 3. The Golden Bear for the best feature film went to Satyajit Ray, the Indian director, for "Distant Thunder", (*Ashani Sanket*) because of "its artistically important, deeply moving description of human destiny". Ray demonstrates—by way of a village increasingly suffering from famine while, far away, the Second World War is taking place—varieties of human behaviour. . . how man becomes a voracious beast of prey and is helpless in the face of hunger and death. André Cayatte (France) received the Silver Bear as a special prize for *Il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu* whose subjèct is political blackmail. Silver Bears also went to: Yves Robert (France) for his spy comedy *Le grand blond avec une chaussure noire*; *The 14* by David Hemmings (England), which tells the story of fourteen orphaned brothers and sisters who prefer to organise their own existence, despite being cold and hungry, rather than be split up: *Los siete locos* by Leopoldo Torre Nilsson (Argentine) and *Toda nudez será castigada* by Arnaldo Jabor (Brazil) for the most remarkable presentations of social issues: and *The experts* (Die Sachverständigen), a socially committed first film by Norbert Kückelmann (German Federal Republic).

(Courtesy: Kulturbrief, Bonn)

Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards (1973)

This year twelve distinguished artists in the field of music, dance and drama have been honoured by the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

The award for Hindustani vocal music goes to Smt. Gangubai Hangal and for Karnatic vocal to Shri B. S. Rajam Iyengar. Shri Emani Sankara Sastri, the well-known veena player, who is Chief Producer of Karnatic Music at All India Radio, receives the award for Karnatic Instrumental Music and Shri Vishnudas Shirali, who for many years was associated with Uday Shankar as his Music Director and with the Films Division of the Government of India as its Director of Music, receives the award for Creative Music.

Two Kathakali dancers are among the award winners. They are Shri V. K. Nanu Nair and Shri Chathunni Panicker. Smt. Kumbakonam Bhanumathi receives the award for Bharata Natyam and Shri Laichongbam Kuireng Singh for Manipuri.

In the field of drama, Shri Ajitesh Bannerjee, the well-known actor and director, receives the award for direction; Shri Raghuramaiah, Telugu

actor, and Smt. Shova Sen, the Bengali actress, receive awards for acting. Shri Dadoo Ragho Sarvade Indurikar, the celebrated *tamasha* artist, receives the award for Traditional Theatre.

Shri K. S. Karanth has been elected a Fellow of the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

An Evening with Konrad Swinarski of the Teatr Stary, Cracow (Poland)

Konrad Swinarski of the Teatr Stary, Cracow, spent two days in Bombay. His visit to the country was part of the Inter-Cultural Exchange Scheme of the Government of India. Swinarski has evolved his own style of direction; and his life and background have perhaps gone into its shaping. From his mother's side he comes from a family of musicians. His father was a colonel in the Polish Army. He lost his parents when he was still a boy and an uncle who adopted him hoped to make a photographer of this talented child. He went to an art school but never graduated. That is why he still retains his fascination for settings and design. And he makes it a point to create the decor for at least one production in a year.

Swinarski spent two years with the Berlin Ensemble and imbibed the experience of the Brecht School. But when he returned to Poland, he charted out his own path. His maiden venture was *The Guns of Madame Carrar*, a translation of Synge's *Riders to the Sea.* Later he turned more specifically to Polish dramatists. In 1954 he presented *The Sailor*, a play written in the 1920s. It is about a hero who is to be glorified in a small provincial city. And there is yet another character who wants very vehemently to destroy the myth. The truth of the matter lies somewhere in between. But still the play's political implications were understood by an audience, which interpreted it as an attempt to explode the Pilsuduski myth in Poland. Swinarski is fascinated by Joseph Conrad, and feels that the Polish strain in this novelist holds a strong appeal to readers. That explains why Conrad's works have all been translated into Polish.

Once he got started in the profession, Swinarski preferred to do, not the better-known works of Brecht but plays like *The Private Life of the Master Race* and particularly because it was the Jewish Theatre in Poland which wanted it to be staged.

Durrenmatt's work occupies an important place in Swinarski's repertoire. But his main contribution lies in two fields: his 'black' interpretation of Shakespeare's comedies and his success in making the Polish classics come alive.

Swinarski believes that a play like *All's Well That Ends Well* has always been interpreted as a kind of fairy tale. He read a Polish translation of the play

made in 1897 and was surprised to read what the translator had to say on the subject: he said he had translated this dirty kind of play simply on account of his respect for Shakespeare. Swinarski tried to pick up the 'immoral' things in the play and discovered that *nothing* ends well in the play; and in the Epilogue the king really doubts if there is a possibility at all of a human being creating and ruling his own life. Swinarski allows the clown to be the most explicit representative of the idea that what matters most in human life is sex. He concentrated on certain dynamic areas in the text dealing with social hierarchy and ultimately chose to suggest that people agree to go on lying about the world they live in and making horrible compromises simply in order that life should go on in spite of being dirty. So, in fact, he made it in company with *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure* a problem play.

Swinarski's interpretation of *A Midsummer's Night Dream* is also quite unconventional. He gave it a contemporary edge. Poland, in spite of being a Socialistic country, still has a kind of 'feudal' society, with a ladder where somebody is down and another person up. Swinarski turned the costumes into robes of the Polish Baroque period. He felt that Shakespeare had intended the Epilogue as a mirror to the Court through the eyes of the workers. When Theseus says, "No epilogue, I pray you...But come, your Bergomask", he hints at a folk dance. As Swinarski puts it, "Of course we dance folk dances everywhere when we don't speak the truth about the government. The folk dance is a substitute for the truth being told". Swinarski admires this great invention of Shakespeare, his creation of such theatre scenes, his play-within-a-play scenes, (including the one in *Hamlet*) because they are so closely bound to the basic design of the play. And the fairies in his production become somewhat like a police force of the biological kingdom. They are just biological parts of the human kingdom, supporting the queen. The court of Titania and Oberon is pieces of human sensuality, listening, serving, doing whatever servants do in different courts. Swinarski interprets the figure of Puck as a kind of human fantasy. When Puck says his monologue, the courtiers try to catch him but as he is invisible, they just catch each other's hands and that's all there is to it.

Swinarski prefers the Polish translations of Shakespeare made in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century to the more recent ones. He thinks that modern adaptations are a very vulgar business. He himself hardly ever cuts the text, and if he does have to, it is only a few lines that he deletes. Ten years ago he did *Hamlet* in Israel and he said he would like to do it again in Polish conditions.

Swinarski's style of presentation has been described as neo-baroque and he is excellent in his handling of the works of the Polish romantic playwrights. He brings all kinds of brutal, naturalistic effects, so heightened as to appear almost beautiful. His most recent production *Dziady* by Adam Mickiewicz (which might be translated as *Ancestral Rites*) is a kind of spoken opera. In 1968 the same play ran into political trouble in Warsaw because of its anti-Russian thrust. Swinarski introduces chants, parables and silences. The rites begin in the foyer, and the actors move on an elevated catwalk. The Forces of Good are ranged against the Forces of Evil. And

A scene from Konrad Swinarski's production of A Midsummer Night's Dream

Swinarski assails the audience with live music, real beggars and live birds. And the play turns into a sort of ritual, a patriot's protest against the domination of his country by a foreign power.

One of his most talked of production is Buchner's *Woyzeck.* Here he succeeded in projecting the dramatist's vehement desire to put back the human soul into its body and thus demonstrate all the magnificence of man.

Swinarski's most remarkable production was the well-known first-night performance of Weiss' *Marat Sade* at the Schaubuhne Am Halleschen Ufe in Berlin. He collaborated with Weiss in the visualisation of the text, and suggested the stage directions. Though the play was, in fact, a sacrifice of a living man, the unfortunate Marat, it also became, in spite of or rather because of its cruelty, a picture of our present condition, involving the responsibility of the group to the individual and the individual to the group.

Swinarski's introduction to Indian literature was through a small book he found in a corner of his mother's library.—*Shakuntala* by Kalidas. He read it in two translations. He learnt to appreciate the stage direction—*Now they dance; Now they sing*. It was his first introduction to a form outside the orbit of the Realistic Theatre.

Swinarski has his misgivings about the situation in the theatre world of the West: the presence of an audience which adores being insulted because it is so well-established that its material existence can hardly be

touched. Swinarski finds that working in Poland is rewarding. At his theatre they have in all a staff of nearly two hundred and fifty and two arenas: one small auditorium for four hundred people and another which can hold an audience of eight hundred. They roughly work out a repertoire which includes modern Polish playwrights, a few Polish classics and some plays from foreign lands. They try to maintain a balance of all these three strains. There are two directors and they help the Selection Committee to choose the repertoire. The directors impose a kind of self-discipline. They avoid jokes aimed at Jews, or words deliberately intended to hurt the feelings of other nations. There is a desire in the country not to say anything against the Church. He says that is perhaps because people have greater faith in the Church than in God. Many of the works of the writers of the nineteenth century, Mickiewicz, Slowacki, Krasinski, Wyspianski excite young directors. They were not performed earlier on because of the influence and power wielded by the Church. Their appeal lies in the fact that they are poetic and realistic at the same time, and become a challenge to the inventiveness of directors.

Swinarski has done an adaptation of Aristophanes' *Birds*. He is not too impressed by the idea of doing the Greek classics in modern costumes. His theatre is not obsessively concerned with sex problems. The government or the municipal body which sanctions plays is usually quite a menable to the demands made by directors. In *Marat Sade* wholly naked figures were allowed to be seen on the stage because they were convinced that a serious artistic purpose actuated such a presentation.

The evening with Swinarski was a short-lived one. We wanted so much to hear what he had to say about the productions he saw in India, his impressions of our own folk forms and the modern stage. But there was so little time that we had to remain content with what we managed to hear from him even during this brief spell.

Natya Shilpi Celebrates the Centenary of the Founding of the Bengali Stage

Natya Shilpi (Bombay) celebrated the centenary of the founding of the Bengali Theatre on September 22 and 23 by arranging an exhibition of Bengali plays, displaying pictures of Bengali playwrights and photographs of the various Bengali plays staged in Bombay and Calcutta. Extracts were read from some of the Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi and English translations of Bengali plays. The programme included a dramatised reading in English of Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Sharmistha*, in Marathi of Tagore's *Dak-Ghar*, in Hindi of Dinabandhu Mitra's *Neel Darpan* and in Gujarati of Parashuram's *Chikitsa Sankat*. Two Bengali one-acters were staged: Jyotindra Nandi's *Jhauda* and Somyendra Chandra Nandi's *Pirandelor Mato*. Some of the old favourites from Bengali plays were sung. Gujarati renderings of Tagore's songs were also presented.

Ghashiram Kotwal: A Production Case-book.

(*The following account of the rehearsal schedule of* Ghashiram Kotwal *is written by Satish Alekar who assisted Dr. Jabbar Patel in directing it. The report conveys some idea of the labour and thought that went into the Marathi production.*)

Vijay Tendulkar wrote the play *Ghashiram Kotwal* towards the end of 1971. An amateur group of nineteen years' standing, namely the Progressive Dramatic Association of Poona decided to stage it. The play was directed by Dr. Jabbar Patel. It won the Second Prize in the Maharashtra State Drama Competition (1972) and Dr. Jabbar Patel was awarded the Best Director Award. It played to full houses for nineteen shows. Then certain elements of a particular political hue declared that the play was a distortion of historical truth. They stated that the playwright had portrayed only the negative side of such a great political personality as Nana Phadanvis. They insisted that all further performances of the play be cancelled. Later on, this insistence took the form of actual threats. The President of the Progressive Dramatic Association supported this point of view. He conceded that the performance as such was superb but he felt at the same time that it endangered social stability. He, therefore, announced his decision to suspend all future productions of the play.

In all, about ninety young people were directly or indirectly involved in the performance. After the President announced his decision to suspend the play, these young people left the organization and under the leadership of Dr. Jabbar Patel they formed a new organization, *The Theatre Academy,* which will soon embark on a programme of presenting the play again. Some of these talented young men and women had already staged one hundred and nine performances in eighteen months of Vijay Tendulkar's award-winning play, *Ashi Pakhare Yeti.*

Now to *Ghashiram* again. September 9, 1972, Ganesh Chaturthi, was the auspicious day chosen for the beginning of rehearsals. The first public show was arranged on December 12, 1972 at Poona. For three full months and three days the group rehearsed rigorously. Fifty-five characters in all had to make an appearance on the stage. Since the play was close in spirit to the traditional style of the *Dashavatar* and the *Khele* all the characters on the stage had to act, sing, and dance. This production was unlike any of the usual run of productions. We realised it was a difficult task that we were undertaking, to do. But we took it up as a challenge.

We made it a point to choose young artists; their average age was twenty to twenty-three years. To sing, dance and act for a duration of three and a half hours demands a fund of energy and strong lungs. The most interesting part of our endeavour was that except for the *sutradhara* and the other two important singers, not one of us had any previous training in music or dance. We could barely distinguish notes. But we were all of us exceeding-

ly fond of music. Besides, this was Dr. Jabbar Patel's maiden attempt at producing a musical play.

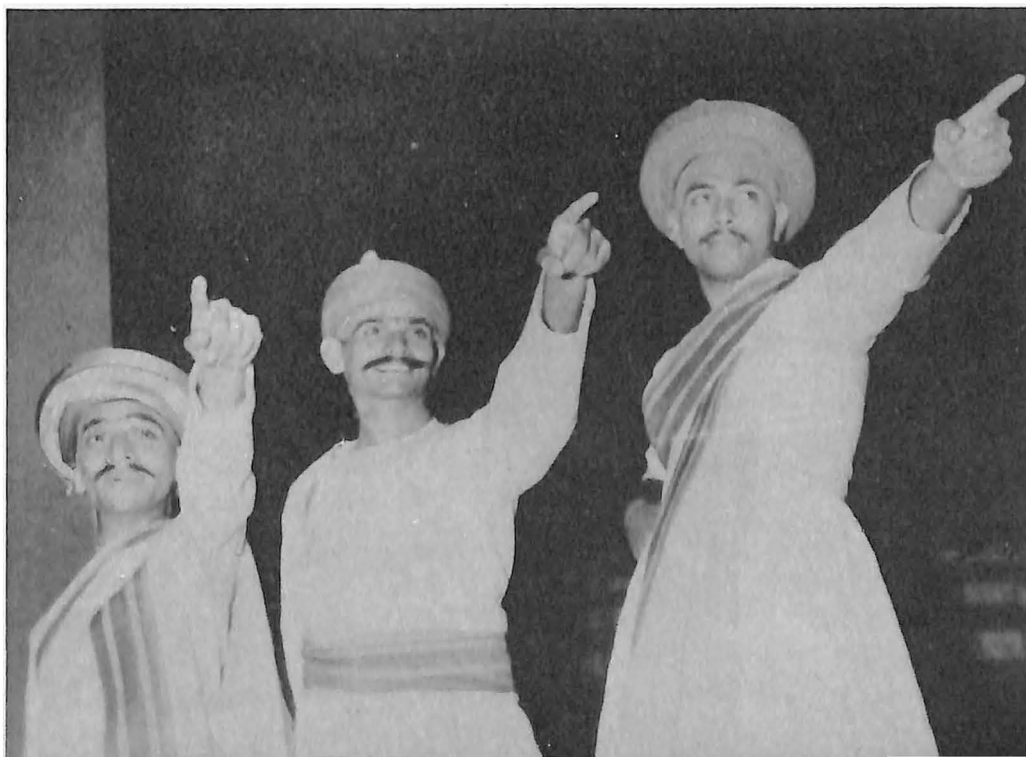
Alive to all the difficulties he would have to face, Dr. Jabbar Patel decided to break up the rehearsal schedule into four categories (i) learning to take every pace in rhythm; (ii) learning to sing in tune; (iii) working out the actions and gestures to accompany a song without actually uttering the words; (iv) blending all these elements to set the pace for the production, leading up to a climax. He decided to cut out drastically any element which seemed superfluous or out of place.

At first sight all these factors seem elementary, basic. But we were not used to producing such plays; none of us could sing a note with any degree of confidence. So it was necessary to create an atmosphere like one that obtains in a training camp before an actual contest, and to implement the specific tasks entrusted to us.

One cannot afford to forget the fact that the play was produced by amateurs. Most of the actors came to rehearsals after a full day's stint of work. Certain difficulties were to be anticipated: shortage of funds; good artists for female roles (in Poona it is almost impossible to find a girl who knows dance and music and is prepared to take part in a play); the demands of a regular job; the hardships faced by some of the artists; a place where the rehearsals could take place undisturbed.

We had to change the venue of the rehearsals twice. In one case the 'enlightened' citizens of the neighbourhood threatened to call in the police if we did not stop rehearsing near their house. Then we found a hall near a swimming-pool. If anyone was likely to be troubled at all, it would be the water in the tank and the cafe across. As soon as the rehearsals began,

The sutradhara *(centre) and the two main singers in* Ghashiram Kotwal.



a crowd began to collect outside the cafe. And they began to respond to the rhythm of the songs in the play. The rehearsals picked up in pace and the crowd outside the hotel began to swell. One day there were as many as hundred persons watching the rehearsals.

The main problem in a play such as this is one of casting. An actor might have a small part; he has to merge with the team and yet leave an imprint of his own identity on the spectators. Dr. Jabbar Patel tried out two or three individuals for a role before taking the final decision on assigning it. To find artists and expect them to rehearse for more than three months at a stretch was quite a problem. But the rehearsals started and we began to find the sort of actors we needed.

The entire production depends a great deal on rhythm, pace and tone. It is the *sutradhara* who ultimately binds these three elements. And perhaps it would have turned out to be too heavy a responsibility for a single individual. So it was decided to introduce two singers as support. The trio, the harmonious blend of three voices heightened the charm of the production. Shriram Ranade, the *sutradhara* had a voice with a limited range. Ravindra Sathe's was a trained voice, deep and resonant. His rendering of the *thumri, Jagi Sari Ratiya,* invariably won him the applause of the audience. Chandrakant Kale's voice had a lyrical appeal. The voices of the other Brahmins joined in to make the chorus. There were two important roles where the characters had to speak in prose: Nana Phadanvis (played by Dr. Mohan Agashe) and Ghashiram (played by Comrade Ramesh Tilekar). Their voices had a different ring, but were in keeping with the musical element in the enunciation employed by the other characters.

Now the rehearsals. The first step was the director himself reading out the play to the actors. The reading was accompanied by gestures, action, by a full explanation of the theme of the play and the nature of the characterization. The majority of our artists were acting for the first time in their lives. Then Dr. Jabbar Patel consulted the music director, Bhaskar Chandavarkar and the dance director, Krishnadev Mulgund. They worked out that correct blending of music, dance, and *abhinaya* which the play demanded, Mulgund trained the actors to take each pace in a particular rhythm, Chandavarkar started on the score and taught us the tunes, Dr. Jabbar Patel concentrated on the correct enunciation of words, on the facial expression and gestures that were to accompany them. All these three elements were harmonised by him at a later stage.

(i) *Learning to take every pace in rhythm*. The rehearsals began at nine-thirty at night and went on till two-thirty in the morning. The first fortnight the artists stood in a row, wearing a vest and shorts, and learnt to take every step in a specific rhythm. Mulgund had fixed four or five kinds of steps. Their pace varied. He took great pains to correct any faulty execution of his instructions. The *tabla* was played all along. This procedure continued till ten-forty-five at night. Initially the artists used to feel the strain of this physical activity. The steps were varied or completely altered to suit the mood of a sequence. This constant practice helped the artists a great deal.

Their work became lighter. The pace and tempo increased. Later, when *Ghashiram* used to be staged twice on the same day, and without a break, the actors realized how much this regular practice had helped to make their task easier. They had to wear the same costumes, have the same make-up throughout the two performances. They used to don the pink top to indicate their shaven heads and get into their costumes at two o'clock in the afternoon and they stayed clothed thus till one o'clock at night. But no one complained of fatigue or discomfort.

(ii) *Learning to sing in tune*. We used to begin practising the tunes at eleven o'clock every night. This was because Dr. Jabbar Patel had his dispensary at Dhond, a distance of forty miles from Poona. His train used to get in round about eleven and he used to catch the train going back to Dhond at three in the morning. This routine continued for full three months. Dr. Jabbar Patel and Bhaskar Chandavarkar supervised the musical rehearsals. Chandavarkar used to demonstrate the notes; sometimes. Dr. Jabbar Patel would suggest an alteration. After the music was finalised, we began to rehearse the tunes. In this production 'humming' has been employed on many occasions. Chandavarkar examined the voice quality of every single individual before choosing the note for this 'humming' refrain. The music rehearsals went on from eleven-thirty to about twelve-thirty or one at night.

(iii) *Learning to sing the tunes (without words) and accompanying them with the right gestures.* This part of the schedule began at about one o'clock. Most of the prose pieces are said by Nana Phadanvis and Ghashiram. Ramesh Tilekar, who played Ghashiram, is the Secretary of the Poona branch of the Communist Party and Dr. Mohan Agashe is attached to the Sassoon Hospital. They could only come to the rehearsals at about midnight. Dr. Jabbar Patel used to rehearse the dialogue with them and work out the gestures. The most important feature of this production (which has in it fifty-five characters) is the breathtaking quality of the actors' movements, particularly in the scenes of Nana's wedding and the ordeal by fire. In the first scene there are about fifty characters dancing on the stage.

(iv) *Blending all these to set the pace for the production*. One character might be singing a song, the others would stand like a human curtain or, in fact, become a part of its rhythm. Sometimes the gestures had to blend with the song. For instance, the entire human curtain would be swinging to a rhythm and singing a tune at the same time; or in the sequence of Nana's wedding demonstrate the tempo of its preparations in their action and sing at the same time; or walk in a funeral procession humming a tune; or enter Nana's palace shouting at the top of their voices. After a month of rehearsals other details began to demand our attention, namely the merging of *abhinaya*, music and dance. Two months of rehearsals, and the actual process of editing began. The sequences were joined. The phrases in the music which sounded superfluous were chopped. And the total impact of such revision was analysed. The process lasted a month. And the time schedule remained the same: nine-thirty at night to two-thirty in the morning. One day was set aside for rest.

After this rigorous round of rehearsals, it was decided to test the effect of the production on audiences and a show was arranged at one of the housing colonies in Pimpri, a suburb of Poona. This trial performance was indeed a great help. We understood the nature of the difficulties which we were likely to encounter in the actual course of a performance. We grasped at once where the pace tended to slacken. After the ordeal by fire the tempo tended to slow down a little. But with the introduction of the 'Malhari' song, the tense atmosphere created by the sequence was reinforced.

The first performance after this trial took place on December 12, 1972 in Poona. We had nineteen performances in all in Bombay and Poona. One such performance was witnessed by five thousand spectators of the Namdev Shimpi community.

(v) *The costumes*. Two special tailors were engaged to prepare the costumes. The dresses were housed in ten special tin trunks. Two of the backstage men were given the task of ironing the clothes. A *dhobi* had to be employed to wash them. We always had with the troupe two porters to carry the outfit. There were three make-up men and they began their work three hours before the performance.

The rehearsals, the performance of this tremendous play was a great experience in itself. Three months of rigorous rehearsals without a break was no mean achievement. There will be, I am sure, many performances of the play in the near future. But the sheer labour that went into the rehearsals left its imprint on all of us. For this reason each one contributed in equal measure to the success of the play.

Delhi Theatre Workshop : May 1973

(M. K. Raina, who graduated from the National School of Drama and has recently played the lead in 27 Down describes his theatre experiments in Delhi)

We decided to organize a Theatre Workshop not for experienced theatre people but for those who were interested in the theatre but could not afford to devote two or three years to theatre training alone.

The Workshop was conducted for two months, beginning with May, 1973. *Yatrik* initiated the programme and Max Mueller Bhavan, Delhi gave us all manner of assistance by allowing the use of its premises, cyclostyling facilities, etc. The curriculum was planned by Joy Michael and me. V. Ramamurthi was the technical adviser, helping us to deal with all the backstage problems.

There were thirty participants in all. The minimum age was eighteen;

the maximum was thirty-five. They were a heterogeneous group, drawn from different walks of life.

Initially there was no script to work on. The first point we emphasized was the use of the body: Yoga exercises, relaxation postures. In the hot summer months it was a gruelling task, particularly since the rooms where we worked were not air-conditioned. The participants were shown various films including Norman McLaren's films from Canada, based on movement. For instance, a film with a sports freeze as its subject or the movements of a body imprisoned in a net. We concentrated on making the actors observe the way people walked. We used one of the exercises from Grotowski—the use of a stick to hit at someone or to save oneself.

Then we also introduced the participants to painting; particularly to Picasso of the Blue Period. They also listened to a lot of music: Indian percussion instruments, bells, German chamber music, the works of modern composers. We wanted to try out their reactions to music.

The first step was to improvise a situation and represent it without resorting to language. For instance, the face was blocked like a mask and only the hands and feet were used to suggest the movement of a cloud. Then we went on to facial expression and worked on exercises in front of a mirror. Gradually, as the participants learnt to imbibe and use these methods, this activity took on the shape of a happening. They wrote out a script, rehearsed it for one or two hours and went through the performance even if there were gaps in between.

A point was reached when the participants demanded a play. We decided to do two plays: Lorca's *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* in English directed by Joy Michael and Gorky's *The Lower Depths* in Hindi directed by me. The translation of Gorky's play by Rekha Kowshik was available in book form. It was a straight translation. We improvised the sets ourselves. The participants took on the responsibility for all the tasks connected with the actual performance—ushering, drafting the advertisements in the newspaper columns, sending out the invitations, handling the box-office.

The Gorky play seemed too ambitious a project. In order to get the feel of his work, we saw the entire trilogy dealing with Gorky's life. We tried to understand the atmosphere of a doss-house.

I had myself some experience of watching the brass workers of Muradabad because I hoped to make a documentary on the subject. I remembered what the mornings used to be like, with the perpetual sound of a cough, hinting at tuberculosis. I tried to relate my experience of Muradabad to this play. I remembered those Muslim workers and their wise comment on why communal tension existed, "Property, wealth, women". They spoke of their fellow-workers. "But we can't live without each other". I had photographs of those people. I showed them to all those who were going to participate in the play and told them to observe the weak

eye-sight, the bleak look, the pallor of the complexion. We visited some of the slum areas around Delhi and a whole new world was revealed to us.

When we decided to begin our rehearsals, we broke up the play into units. Initially we did not pay much attention to casting. All the participants were beginners. We tried them all out for each role. Every role, even an insignificant one, had to contribute to the success of the play. When the actual decision was taken, it was the general consensus of opinion that seemed to matter most. The script was too literal. We went to the professors of Russian at the Jawaharlal Nehru University to get the exact feel of the original. We made notes from the various English translations of the play and chose the alternative we thought best. The poem in the play was translated into Hindi by one of our own actors, who was a worker in a biscuit factory.

We wanted to use the accordion and fortunately for us B. V. Karanth had a LP which perfectly served our purpose.

The costumes included very simple clothing which we borrowed from *Yatrik's* old stock. We got some *razais* and *kambals*. We did not have the resources to have lights. We simply used a pink filter on the lights that happened to be there, merely to create a turgid colour effect. We did not invite the press to both the plays. We stopped admission at six-thirty and some of the critics were annoyed. We realized that the best possible course for a group like ours was to go out to the housing colonies and not content ourselves with shows at the Fine Arts or Kamani theatres. We found that the architects who planned these colonies had provided for a dispensary or a library but had not thought of a small theatre for the residents. Some of the larger colonies housed thousands of people but there seemed no awareness of the need for a theatre.

We also came to the conclusion that the atmosphere was right for street-corner plays—using puppets, placards and posters. We worked out the idea of an International Political Chessboard with the names of the countries playing politics. We had a gun and asked the spectators to shoot and the target was the numbers of the thousands who were killed: Thirty thousand; fifty thousand. Not one spectator was ready to touch the gun.

We had a silent protest outside the American Embassy during the Bangla Desh struggle. We bandaged a colleague and treated him like a corpse, left him on the marble steps of the American Embassy. The police were called but they were amazed to find not a noisy group of demonstrators but a silent group, with this corpse, only demanding the right to present a memorandum to the authorities. We had about seven or eight street-corner shows and lots of people who normally never enter a theatre got a glimpse of our activity.

Our aim is to expand in these directions; to try and reach out to colleges, to housing colonies and perform on the streets. As long as we remain within the bounds of the theatres in the centre of the city, we will reach the elite and never get anywhere beyond a coterie.

Book Reviews

SANGITACHARYA PANDIT VISHNU NARAYAN BHATKHANDE by Dr. S. N. Ratanjankar, Maharashtra Rajya Sahitya Sanskriti Mandal, Bombay, 1973, Rs. 1.80 (*In Marathi*).

In the beginning of this century a few pioneering spirits exerted all their energies towards raising the status of Indian classical music. Pride of place must go to Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande for his contribution in this field. One must recall the fact that this was still a period when teachers were reluctant to impart all their knowledge even to their disciples. Whether a teacher revealed the correct text of a *cheeja* or the name of a *raga* to his disciple was all a matter of caprice. It was precisely during this period that Pandit Bhatkhande set himself the rigorous task of collecting hundreds of *cheejas* and publishing his findings. By doing so he facilitated the process of music education. An even more significant achievment was the contribution he made towards laying the foundations of modern music. He introduced a method and a system in this sphere and formulated a grammar of music. But his most important attainment, it seems to me, lies in the fact that he taught students of music to acquire a scientific and analytical outlook and an enlightened approach to music. Undoubtedly he deserves a place of honour in the history of Indian music.

Till now we have had no exhaustive biography of Pandit Bhatkhande. Dr. S. N. Ratanjankar has rendered all lovers and students of music a great service by providing them with an account of the life and work of this great scholar. Dr. Ratanjankar has provided the reader with a background of the conditions in the world of music during the second half of the nineteenth century. He tells us how the seeds of classical music were sown in this region. He gives us an account of the spread of music through the efforts of various vocalists and instrumentalists. With these events as a backdrop, he traces in brief the main landmarks in Pandit Bhatkhande's life. He mentions how Pandit Bhatkhande simultaneously pursued his studies at the University and began his apprenticeship in music. Then Dr. Ratanjankar turns to the life-work of Pandit Bhatkhande. He refers in this context to the formation in 1870 of the oldest music society in the country, *The Gayanottejak Mandal.* There is a brief mention of the early history of this organization and the help which it rendered to Pandit Bhatkhande. Dr. Ratanjankar describes the manner in which Pandit Bhatkhande's ideas influenced the members of this society.

Pandit Bhatkhande set himself the task of writing works in which music was dealt with in a scientific manner. Pandit Bhatkhande collected hundreds of *cheejas,* he composed a large number of *lakshana geet,* established institutions for the promotion of classical music. He re-organised some of these institutions. He took the lead in arranging music conferences on a national scale and brought musicians and musicologists on one common platform. He was responsible for imparting to them an awareness of the need to treat music as a science. Dr. Ratanjankar acquaints us with the scientific principles enunciated by Pandit Bhatkhande in the sphere of music, the *swarasthana* which he adopted and his system of classification of the *ragas*.

Appendix No. 1 lists the names of all those individuals who came in close contact with Pandit Bhatkhande. Appendix No. 2 carries excerpts from Pandit Bhatkhande's own writings. They shed light on his approach to music and reveal how modest he was as a person. One senses the discernment that Pandit Bhatkhande brought to bear in his appreciation of music. This part of the book and the warm yet discriminating tribute paid to Pandit Bhatkhande by Shri Vamanrao Deshpande are of immense value to the reader.

No serious student of music can embark on a comprehensive study of Indian music without taking recourse to Pandit Bhatkhande's writings. Any modern work on music, any scientific discussion on the subject by eminent scholars in the field or even by beginners almost always has as its basis either an adoption or a rejection of Pandit Bhatkhande's thesis. Many objections have been raised against Pandit Bhatkhande's views. Some of his detractors assert that Pandit Bhatkhande was not a performing artist himself and that he was hard of hearing. These factors are wholly irrelevant. But there are other more important and fundamental objections which demand our most serious attention.

Pandit Bhatkhande affirmed that the music of our *ragas* comprises of twelve notes and that apart from these we do not employ any *shrutis*. It is now universally acknowledged that the frequency of the *antargandhar* should logically amount to 300. Pandit Bhatkhande assessed it as 301 17/43 and he wrote under different names, such as Chatur Pandit, Vishnu Sharma and cited these as authorities to strengthen his claim. One expected from Dr. Ratanjankar some kind of answer to these objections and at least an elucidation of this point. And one feels naturally disappointed when one finds that the book contains no reference at all to this controversial issue. Dr. Ratanjankar is regarded as a true disciple of Pandit Bhatkhande. He spent several years with him and it goes without saying that he must have discussed in detail and imbibed in full the principles set forth by Pandit Bhatkhande. Who else but Dr. Ratanjankar is in a position to tell us about the scientific stand adopted by Pandit Bhatkhande on various subjects and the state of mind that prompted him to do so? Who else can one turn to except to Dr. Ratanjankar if one seeks for clarification on controversial issues?

Dr. Ratanjankar has not touched on such important points of dispute in this biography. He has referred to the vocalists and instrumentalists who came in contact with Pandit Bhatkhande. He tells us of the *khayals* that they supplied to Pandit Bhatkhande and when they came to be published. He mentions the places where Pandit Bhatkhande was received with respect, the honours that were conferred on him. He provides us with detailed information about the nawabs and princes who came under the influence of Pandit Bhatkhande. But one cannot afford to forget the fact that a number of musicians were opposed to Pandit Bhatkhande's grand task of publishing a collection of *khayals*. Some of them were motivated by the fear that their knowledge would be misused if it fell into the wrong hands. Perhaps they were naive and guided by misconceptions on this score. The musicians of the Jaipur, Kirana and other *gharanas* kept their knowledge to themselves, locked in safe custody. The trials and tribulations faced by Pandit Bhatkhande in countering this opposition and the bitter experiences he underwent find no reflection in this work. Really speaking, the very act of standing up to this challenge heightens the stature of an individual, and sheds on it an added glow. Had Dr. Ratanjankar described to us this side of Pandit Bhatkhande, we would have had a better picture of the facets of his personality.

The biography does not portray in full the details of Pandit Bhatkhande's personal life. Perhaps such details are not to be had or perhaps there was no way of seeking access to them. But there is no doubt at all that the work is conceived in a 'spirit of deep affection, respect and devotion to Pandit Bhatkhande. It is this aspect of the work which has made it so readable. Till now we have had no biography worth mentioning of such an eminent figure as Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande. And the need for such a work was felt all the more acutely because Pandit Bhatkhande's contribution towards the modernization of our music was so immense. Dr. Ratanjankar's book has gone a long way towards fulfilling this need. The work has been written in Marathi. This means it will have a limited readership. It needs to be translated into English and Hindi if it has to reach wider sections of music lovers. Perhaps this might inspire

another writer to embark on the task of writing a more detailed, a more comprehensive biography of Pandit Bhatkhande. That will indeed be an auspicious event.

MUKTA BHIDE

CHHAU DANCE OF PURULIA(by Asutosh Bhattacharyya, Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta, 1972, Rs. 30.00 (*In English*).

Twenty-five to thirty years ago, only one form of Chhau dance had received recognition. This was the Seraikala of Bihar. During the last ten years two other forms of Chhau have come to light, the Mayurbhanj Chhau of Orissa and the Purulia Chhau of West Bengal. To Dr. Asutosh Bhattacharyya goes the singular credit of having brought the Purulia Chhau to the forefront, not only in India but also abroad. Within five years, the Chhau of Purulia has attracted the attention of serious students and historians of dance and theatre both in India and abroad. The dancers have performed in Delhi and in some other cities of India; they have also toured Western Europe and aroused the interest of large audiences.

A fully authentic and academic study of the form is both opportune and welcome. Dr. Asutosh Bhattacharyya's equipment for fulfilling this task is beyond question. He has the distinction of being a scholar of Bengali and Sanskrit, an anthropologist and a lover of the arts.

The monograph attempts to deal with the subject from all angles, and as comprehensively as possible. The book is neatly divided into thirteen chapters and supplemented by two Appendices. The chapters include a study of the anthropological and historical background of the ethnic types who perform the dance-drama and the historical development of the region. There are eight short chapters devoted to the different aspects of the theatrical spectacle, its origin, repertoire, costume, masks, music and technique. Three other chapters attempt a comparative study of Chhau and Kathakali, the Chhau of Purulia and the Chhau of Seraikala and Mayurbhanj and finally the Chhau of Purulia and the traditional dances of Bali. The Appendices contain interesting accounts by two foreign scholars. One is by David Reck and the other by Milena Salvini.

The chapters devoted to the history of Purulia and the anthropological background are easily the most informative and educative. The literary, inscriptional and sculptural evidence is carefully sifted to prove that although today Purulia may belong to what has been termed as the 'little tradition', it was an important cultural centre centuries ago. And although this is not explicitly stated, it is clear from a reading of this account that in Purulia, as in many other parts of India, many cultural traditions mingled and there was a continuous dialogue between the purely indigenous culture of the region (which was mainly non-Aryan and un-Sanskritised) and the succeeding waves of the great Sanskritic tradition with its fund of literature, myths, and legends. Again, as in other parts of India, the post-fifteenth century years witnessed the phenomenon of the assimilation of the Vaishnava cult into existing artistic and cultural traditions. Dr. Asutosh Bhattacharyya delineates these channels of communication and these processes of assimilation and interaction.

The artistic form 'Purulia' is the result of this amalgam. It retained such earlier aspects as animism, fertility, harvest dances and the tradition of the *gram-devata*. The themes of the two epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* also penetrated deeply into the thematic content of the plays. In technique and in theatre-conventions, the regional characteristics continued to dominate. Dr. Bhattacharyya puts forth an interesting interpretation of the word *Chhau*. There has been some controversy over the meaning of the word. According to him, its origin can neither be traced back to the word *Chhaya* (Shadow), nor to *Chhavani* (Cantonment) as suggested by some scholars, but to the Sanskrit word *Sang* (Swang)—one who dresses himself to represent another character. Dr. Bhattacharyya also suggests that it is likely that the word Chhau is derived from the Munelari word *Chhak* meaning ghost. Either of these derivations are possible. Even so Dr. Bhattacharyya's argument remains somewhat inconclusive; it admits the possibility of further exploration.

In another chapter Dr. Bhattacharyya takes pains to prove through internal and external evidence that the form originated in Purulia, in West Bengal and not in Orissa or Bihar. While the point is well made, perhaps it was not so necessary to emphasize it, as the regional origin of each of these forms is self-evident. A description of the inter-connections between Purulia and the other dance-drama and plastic arts traditions of West Bengal would have been of more interest to the readers. It is still a mystery how such a fairly sophisticated form evolved in an environment of seeming isolation.

Dr. Bhattacharyya's account of the performance, the exits and the entries, the drumming and the invocatory songs is written with a sense of involvement and delight. Animal masks and their deliberate attempt at realistic similitude is an unique feature of this style: what would have interested both students of literature and theatre, would have been a more elaborate analysis of the reasons of this feature.

In his chapter on *Music*, Dr. Bhattacharyya take pains to explain that the absence of vocal music distinguishes this dance-drama from any other form. However, a closer reading of the descriptions themselves makes it clear that although vocal music or the word-gesture relationship is absent in this form, the introductory verses as also the sung music (even if it is drowned in the thunderous drumming) continue to play an important part in the play.

While everything about the play, the repertoire and the music, is described, the movement technique of the dance, (and this in spite of Milena Salvini's Appendix) has not been analysed and broken up in depth and with any incisive insight. This is, indeed, the weakest part of the book. The Purulia dance-drama uses physical movement in a manner which is totally different from any other dance style in India. Its vocabulary of movement deserves an independent study.

The chapters devoted to comparative studies make interesting but unconvincing reading. Much more work will be necessary before a relationship between Purulia and Bali and Purulia and Kathakali can be established.

In spite of some of these drawbacks, the monograph is a valuable contribution to the critical literature on traditional dance-drama. It is hoped that this study will serve as an incentive to others to attempt other such rounded studies on the two other forms of Chhau, namely Seraikela and Mayurbhanj.

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

INDIAN FILMS 1972 by B. V. Dharap, Motion Picture Enterprises, Bombay, 1973, Rs. 35.00 (*In English*)

The lack of facts and figures relating to the Indian cinema has long been bemoaned by everybody who has ever experienced a serious need to make use of them. The number of film journals in India is said to be about four hundred, but publications devoted to statistics, filmographies, that is publications which generally facilitate a factual study of the film scene are virtually non-existent. If you needed to know the total number of films (at a given moment) of even a well-known director or a popular star, there is no one source where all the information can be found. We simply do not possess any equivalents of the sort of valuable reference material that is currently exploding in the West, equivalents of publications like Leslie Halliwell's *The Filmgoer's Companion,* Peter Graham's *A Dictionary of the Cinema,* or Peter Cowie's annual *International Film Guide*, not to mention those heaps of books devoted to a study of the works of individual directors.

Attempts at publishing reference works pertaining to cinema in India have been sporadic and few and far far between. In 1952, there was V. Doraiswamy's *Asian Film Directory and Who's Who.* In the following year, the Film Federation of India published *Indian Motion Picture Almanac and Who's Who,* which was a sort of revised edition of an earlier publication, *Handbook of the Indian Film Industry,* published in 1949 by the Motion Picture Society of India. Sometime later came the *Directory,* published by the journal *Screen*. Since then, Firoze Rangoonwalla, the film critic, has brought out those two valuable reference books, *Indian Films Index* (1968) and *Indian Filmography* (1970). Despite the individual and collective utility of these and other publications, the available reference books fall much too short of actually meeting the possible requirements of academic studies or even routine journalistic undertakings. Apart from Marie Seton's recent book on Satyajit Ray and Eric Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy's *Indian Film*, there hardly exists any notable description of the Indian cinema. This state of things is certainly traceable, in part, to the dearth of factual information.

It is against this background that B. V. Dharap's *Indian Films 1972,* needs to be welcomed. It provides a list of all films, in various languages made in the country during the year under review. The book goes beyond merely giving film titles; it attempts, on the whole, to provide detailed credits (cast, director, cameraman etc.) for each film. It even lists the songs of each film, identifying the songs by titles. And a brief synopsis accompanies each film that has been listed. The book also includes a list of the year's short films. In quantitative terms this is an arduous task, and more so since it happens to have been undertaken by an individual, without any institutional support. B. V. Dharap deserves a word of encouragement for his labours.

In terms of quality, however, the volume is, to put it mildly, highly unsatisfactory. The synopses that are provided seem to be extremely sketchy, besides being badly written. The synopsis for *Aankhon Aankhon Mein*, to take a random example, reads: "A family story where intrigues affect the young people and lead them to desperation. Destiny plays important part in their lives". The story of *Dastan* is summarised thus: "It is a true to life story according to makers. Its principal characters are ironies of life and the follies of fate. Its locale is the inside of man and inside of woman". This kind of information is not exactly factual, and it is not likely to win the confidence of more serious-minded readers.

According to the synopsis that goes with *Koshish*, a "lot of drama passes by" before some developments take place. The story of *Wafaa* is summarised thus: "A love triangle, call of human duty confront through a family drama interspersed with court scenes". And *Ustad Mera Naam*: "This is a crime thriller having law-makers and breakers in conflict with a romance between fellow-travellers well-woven". In the reference to *Jawani Diwani*, the item *cast* includes some sixty-three names running to nine lines of print, while the story is disposed of in three lines.

The section on short films lumps all certified 'shorts' together and the definition of shorts includes advertisement quickies like *A. M. Brand Gingilly Oil* and *Kristal Kleen Breath*.

Almost every other page of the book is disfigured by spelling errors. Right on page one, a dual role is described as 'duel' role. At another place 'revival of faith' becomes 'arrival' of faith. In several places, the hero 'bursts', rather than busts, a crime gang. One synopsis refers to a business 'magnet' and also to a 'psychiatriatic' patient. On another page Rehana Sultan becomes 'Sultana'. V. Shantaram's *Pinjra* is described as a 'dance-drama' simply because the characters in it are mainly *tamasha* artistes.

All this is said not to denigrate the book as such. It is not as though the book is without any value at all. What one seeks to emphasize is that stricter quality control should have been exercised during its production. The author's ambition to make the publication a regular annual deserves success. It is only to be hoped that the following issues will have less of the slapdash look which characterises the present volume.

BIKRAM SINGH

GHASHIRAM KOTWAL by Vijay Tendulkar, Nikantha Prakashan, Poona, 1973, Rs. 5.00 *(In Marathi)*.

The unique dramatic form employed in *Ghashiram Kotwal* is the most significant feature of the play. It has no precedent in the history of the modern Marathi theatre. The modern Marathi theatre has drawn heavily on the theatre traditions of the West, on the creations of Shakespeare, Moliere, Ibsen and other playwrights. But in turning to the West for inspiration, it tended to ignore a variety of dramatic forms which had for centuries held an appeal for Marathi-speaking people, and which had been nourished and sustained by their support and patronage. These indigenous Marathi folk forms were dismissed as rustic and meaningless. In actual fact, these forms represented a folk tradition which had in it a tremendous potential of dramatic expression. The Marathi-speaking world had been creating its own dramatic universe through various forms like the *gavlana*, the *tamasha*, the *dashavatara*, the *bharud*, the *kirtana* and women's folk songs. The rich and colourful world which was mirrored in these forms fulfilled the people's need for dramatic entertainment. But till quite recently, Marathi playwrights conducted themselves as though they had nothing whatsoever to do with these forms and acted accordihgly. There was an urgent need for some

positive thinking on the methods by which these genuinely indigenous forms could be pressed into the service of the modern Marathi theatre. This task has been accomplished by Vijay Tendulkar's recent play, *Ghashiram Kotwal.*

In a brief introduction to the play, Tendulkar strikes a note of warning. The work is not a historical play, he says. It is an a-historical legend, which combines music and dance and has history for its base. These remarks have not attracted from drama critics the attention which they deserve. The folk forms mentioned above do not conduce to what is known as the Realistic Theatre, the kind of theatre which still wields considerable influence on the Marathi stage. The world of make-believe which these forms evoke or suggest and the world of make-believe implied in the Realistic Theatre are two different things. The world created by such forms as the *lalit, bharud,* or the *vag* of the *tamasha,* or the *dashavatara* is, in a sense, a world of legend. It is peopled by kings, queens and courtiers who need not even bear any names. We do not judge this world by applying to it the norms of realism, because it hovers on the borderland of reality and fantasy, the credible and the incredible. But we do not label it as false and unconvincing. The events in this world appear crude to some extent, but they do have a layer of deep meaning. The men and women who inhabit and hold together that world are corporeal, but seem disembodied beings. We must view them in this light. There is indeed a world of difference between their movement and dialogue and the movements and dialogue of the characters in the Realistic Theatre. The latter seeks to depict reality while the former portrays only what is essential, and that alone is what is suggested. It might even appear that the men and women there are like the kings and queens in a pack of cards. Both kinds of plays present themselves to us in a peculiar rhythm of their own, but through the indigenous dramatic forms there emerges a rhythm that has a distinct appeal to our senses; the entire rhythm delights both the eye and the ear. This is one of its most significant features. It helps to give shape to the world of make-believe, to that realm which flickers between reality and fantasy. Nor is this all. There is another point of distinction. The Realistic Theatre utilises in the main the media of dialogue and action; the indigenous theatre forms employ, in addition, the elements of music and dance. That is why the imaginative world that they create has a distinctive quality. Whether it is the *lalit,* the *tamasha* or the *bharud,* the dramatic element in it is projected simultaneously with music and dance. Had it failed to project itself through that style, the world of make-believe to which it sought to transport us, would have been difficult to create.

Tendulkar has employed various folk forms, familiar to the Marathi-speaking people in order to create the imaginative world of *Ghashiram Kotwal.* The question that theatre lovers should have posed themselves is whether this world of make-believe (which oscillates between reality and fantasy, which evokes reality and is yet unrealistic), has been sustained undisturbed from beginning to end by the dramatist. Do the men and women who inhabit this world, who are made of flesh and blood and bear names, do they appear disembodied or nameless? To select a character like Nana Phadanvis, and then to start analysing whether he bears the stamp of historical authenticity or to begin an investigation into the historical evidence regarding his conduct—that is not the function of dramatic criticism. Such issues can perhaps to raised in the context of this work and anyone has the right to do so. But that does not conduce to the assessment of the work as a play. The questions which seem relevant to me are. Is the character of Nana Phadanvis (as he is portrayed in the play) in keeping with the inherent temper of the play? Is the character highlighted? If, when we watch the character of Nana in the play, we are reminded of Nana Phadanvis, the historical personage, then is it our own fault or the dramatist's? The fault would lie with the dramatist if his Nana Phadanvis were to stray away from the world of make-believe implied in the play and become, in a realistic sense, Nana Phadanvis, the 'historical' personage. But if he fits in with the world of the play along with

the other characters, there should be really speaking no ground for any complaint. If Nana appears before us in the imaginative world of the play as an intelligent statesman directing the destinies of a state during its period of decay, we should thank the dramatist. If the portrayal of Nana Phadanvis takes on a 'representative' garb—and that is what, I think, it does—then there must be something wrong with our own mode of viewing a play. Abhinavagupta, the eminent authority on *Poetics,* has spoken of seven elements which impede literary appreciation. He has mainly referred to those associations of a particular time and place which are an obstruction in the path of the enjoyment of a work of art. Those, who when they watched the play, bore constantly in mind the historical figure of Nana Phadanvis allowed this intrusive element to mar their enjoyment of the performance.

It is possible to pose another question here. If Nana Phadanvis had appeared in *Ghashiram Kotwal* not as Nana Phadanvis but merely as 'the chief adviser to the Peshwa' and if he had remained as nameless and hazy as the other Brahmin characters, would not that have sufficed? Had the dramatist followed this course, then the events of history which inevitably unfold themselves before our eyes, at the very mention of the name. Nana Phadanvis would perhaps not have had the same effect, and the intrusive element, mentioned earlier on, would then not have made itself felt in any way. This question undoubtedly merits some consideration. How is it possible for the spectators to watch a character bearing the name Nana Phadanvis and yet be asked not to accept him as the historical figure. Nana Phadanvis? One is, therefore, forced to conclude that had the character of Nana Phadanvis been as hazy and nameless as so many of the other characters in the play, it would have been certainly better. But was it possible for the dramatist to do this? A little reflection on this point will make it amply clear that had he followed this course, that dramatist would have found it extremely difficult to communicate through the play what he wanted to say. The figure of Nana Phadanvis has invariably been accorded an important place in the records of incidents, both real and imaginary, or in mere gossip about Ghashiram and his activities. No one can today overlook the fact that Ghashiram was a protege of Nana Phadanvis, his creation. The dramatist wanted to draw a vivid picture dramatising the social decadence in the last years of Peshwa rule. To do so, he sought the help of the legends that had grown round Ghashiram and for this purpose, he adopted the dramatic technique which has been described in detail earlier on in this review. When the decision was made to present a vivid play based on music and dance and supported by the legends that had grown round Ghashiram, it was wellnigh impossible for the dramatist to call Ghashiram by any other name. Ghashiram in the play must figure as the real Ghashiram. But then how could Nana Phadanvis who had shaped Ghashiram's career and conferred on him the title of *Kotwal* of Poona figure in the play, and yet not bear the name of Nana Phadanvis? For that matter how could he bear any other name? It is not as though Tendulkar did not face such a dilemma. He seems to have realised that the solution to the problem was a difficult one if he wanted to stick to the 'purpose' of the play. Therefore, he seems to have allowed Nana Phadanvis to play his role as the historical Nana Phadanvis in the play. As a result, the final product was a blend of fact and fiction and the audience, remaining at a particular level of the world of imagination, stumbled against stark facts. But in the given situation this could hardly be avoided.

The question which now needs to be examined is whether the choreographic opera which Tendulkar sought to create—with its atmosphere of make-believe—has, in fact, been created at all in its entirety. Do the men and women vivified in this make-believe continue to remain alive right from the beginning to the end and on that plane? I, for one, hold that the nameless Brahmins both men and women and the soldiers move about convincingly enough in the world of make-believe; they fortify that world and contribute right till the end to its organic unity. I have explained earlier on that the inclusion of the character 'Nana Phadanvis' in this world

was inevitable and Tendulkar undoubtedly endeavoured to assimilate the character in the distinctive genre of the play. It was not so easy to accomplish this aim by merely retaining the name Nana Phadanvis for this character. And, therefore, Tendulkar attempted to portray the character on a flat, two-dimensional plane, without allowing it to acquire any roundedness. The attempt was to project before the audience not Nana Phadanvis, the individual, but to portray him as a type of the class of statesmen to which he belonged. And this attempt has, on the whole, turned out to be a success. Nana's manner of speech, his bearing and his gait have a rhythm which is entirely in harmony with that of the other characters. The audience hardly ever gets the feeling that Nana and the other characters do not together make one integrated world of make-believe. In portraying the character of Nana,Tendulkar attempted to blend it smoothly with the world of song and dance that he sought to create. He needs to be congratulated for having succeeded in his objective.

But the character of Ghashiram does not fit into this world of fantasy. Firstly, Ghashiram cannot move on the plane on which the other characters shaping that world move; he just cannot live on that plane. The audience cannot but fail to notice almost from the very beginning of the play that this character slides away and isolates itself from the world which the others inhabit. All the other characters, including Nana, seek to create through their music and their dance a world of make-believe, hovering on the fringe of fact and fiction. But Ghashiram fails to fall in line with that rhythm either through his speech or deportment; he can hardly be said to enrich the element of fantasy. His manner is throughout prosaic. He moves on a plane which is altogether different from that on which other characters move. His plane is that of melodrama; it projects reality in loud and garish colours. The contradiction between these two different planes tends to confound the audience. The spectators who have lived with the other characters in the world of fantasy are rudely dragged into the world of melodrama. This gives rise to a discordant note, and mars one's appreciation of the play. If the play fails at all, it is in this respect.

Everything said and done, the play *Ghashiram Kotwal* points to new directions in the development of the Marathi theatre. The play presents a clear example of how indigenous forms like the *lalit, tamasha, kirtan, dashavatara* and *bharud,* which have their roots in Maharashtra, can contribute to the growth of the Marathi drama. It is a pity that the the performances of the play were suspended. That magnificent production of *Ghashiram Kotwal* by Jabbar Patel and his team was an unforgettable experience. In the interests of the Marathi stage, the Marathi-speaking public, and our dramatists and drama-critics in particular, should have had an opportunity to witness the play over and over again. That would have contributed to the refinement of the taste of our theatre-goers; and it would have gone a long way towards deepening the understanding of dramatists and drama-critics about our own theatre forms and the great potential that lies in them.

W. L. KULKARNI

Translated from the original Marathi by S. M. Bhandare