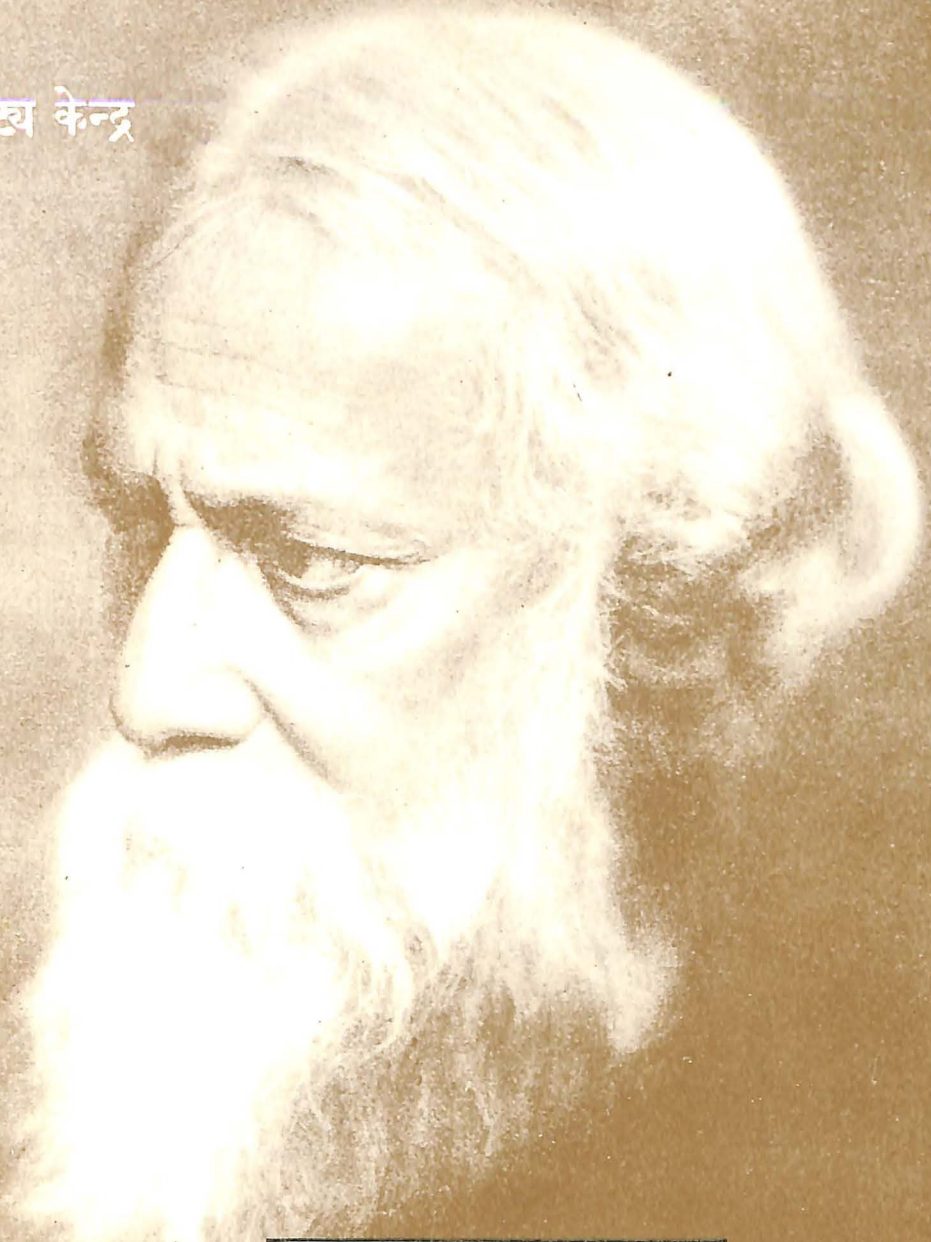
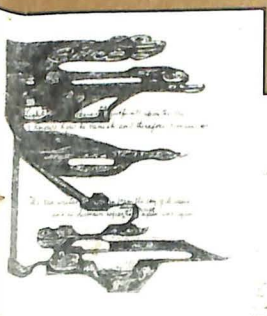


राष्ट्रीय संगीत नाट्य केन्द्र



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*Cover Picture:*

Rabindranath Tagore. Inset: Tagore in *Valmiki Pratibha*; a still from *Strir Patra* and Tagore's drawing and paintings.

*Design:*

Zehra Tyabji

# NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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# रवीन्द्रनाथांची रंगभूमी

फु. ल. देशपांडे

[The year 1981 marks the 120th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore and the centenary of his play *Valmiki Pratibha* which was first produced at Jorasanko on February 25, 1881. To commemorate the occasion we are publishing here excerpts relating to *Valmiki Pratibha* from the first of the Tagore Lectures which was delivered by P. L. Deshpande, at Pune, under the auspices of the University of Pune, on February 28, 1980.

—Editor]

स्वतःच्या 'कवी' ह्या भूमिकेविषयी बोलताना रवीन्द्रनाथ सहजपणाने म्हणाले होते — "आमि कवि आमि शुधु expression दिइ"—मी कवी, मी फक्त expression देतो. कवीने फक्त एक्सप्रेसशन द्यावं. उगीच भाष्य करीत बसू नये. असा एक सरळ सोपा व्यावहारिक अर्थ ह्यातून निघतो. पण शेवटी expression देणारं, अभिव्यक्ती करणारं हे व्यक्तिमत्त्व किती समृद्ध होतं हे पाहायला लागल्यानंतर त्या 'फक्त एक्सप्रेसशन'ला एवढं मोल का येतं ते कळतं. फुलझाडं देखील आपल्या व्यक्तिमत्त्वाचं फुलातून expression च देत असतात. पण ती माती, ते आकाश, प्रकाश, वायू, पाणी ह्यांतून त्या त्या फुलझाडाने जे सतत शोषण चालवून आपली वाढ करून घेतलेली असते ती तपस्या दृष्टी-आड करून चालत नाही. त्या सगळ्या तपस्येची कथा त्या फुलातून प्रकट होत असते. पंचमहाभूतातून मुळातल्या बीजाची वाढ करायच्या क्षमतेतूनच कमळाचं कमळपण आणि गुलाबाचं गुलाबपण सिद्ध होत असतं. त्या एकाच फुलात माती, आकाश, पाणी, प्रकाश यांतून लाभलेले रूपरसरंगंधाचे सारे अंश म्हटलं तर दडलेले असतात आणि म्हटलं तर फुललेले असतात. आणि म्हणूनच रवीन्द्रनाथांनी नाटक लिहिणं आणि इतर कुणीतरी नाटक कंपनीसाठी नाटक लिहिणं यांत फरक पडतो. कारण ते लिहिण्याच्या मूळ प्रयोजनातच फरक पडलेला असतो. त्यामागली प्रेरणा निराळीच असते. त्यामुळे ते नाटक देखील स्वतःच्या नियमाप्रमाणे फुलतं.

आपली विशिष्ट अनुभूती किंवा आपल्याला जाणवलेलं नाट्याला आवश्यक असं द्वंद्व, नाट्यरूपानेच प्रकट झालं पाहिजे असं त्यांना जेव्हा जेव्हा वाटलं तेव्हा तेव्हा त्यांनी त्या अनुभूतीला त्यांना जसं नाट्यरूप द्यावंसं वाटलं तसं दिलं.

त्यांच्या व्यक्तिमत्त्वाच्या जडणघडणीत भारतीय आणि युरोपीय साहित्य, संगीत, धर्मविचार, लोकव्यवहार आणि जन्मजात लाभलेली बुद्धी यांचा वाटा आहेच. पण त्यातून कसलंही अनुकरण झालेलं आढळत नाही. थोर साहित्याचा आस्वाद घेताना देखील रसिकाच्या भूमिकेतल्या त्यांच्या असामान्य प्रज्ञेचाही आपल्याला साक्षात्कार घडतो. त्यांनी जसा कालिदास भोगला तसा किती रसिकांनी भोगला असेल याची मला शंका आहे. रवीन्द्रनाथांचे आणि निसर्गाचे नाते तर विलक्षण रहस्यमय वाटावे असे आहे. ऋतुचक्राच्या फेऱ्यांबरोबर वृक्षवेलीत पालट घडावा तसा ह्या माणसाच्या वृत्तीत फरक पडायचा. प्रत्येक ऋतूतल्या वाऱ्याच्या झुळकीचा किंवा उन्हाचा निराळेपणा उघड्यावरच्या वृक्षवेलींना जाणवावा तसा त्यांना जाणवत असल्याच्या खुणा त्यांच्या साहित्यात सतत दिसून येतात. आपल्या साहित्यात केवळ पुढल्या प्रसंगाची खुलावट करायला उपयुक्त असा पडदा म्हणून त्यांनी निसर्ग वापरला नाही. माणूस, निसर्ग आणि ह्या विराट विश्वाला व्यापून राहिलेलं चैतन्यतत्त्व—ह्या तिन्ही generatorsमधून निर्माण झालेला एक प्रवाह त्यांच्या व्यक्तिमत्त्वातून वाहात होता आणि त्यातूनच त्यांचं सर्व क्षेत्रांतलं कार्य चालत होतं. म्हणून रवीन्द्रांच्या संगीताप्रमाणे त्यांच्या नाट्यरचनेतला स्वयंभूषण आपण ध्यानात घेतला पाहिजे. कदाचित ह्या दृष्टीनेच रूढ अर्थाने ज्याला नाटक म्हणतात तसले नाटक मला लिहिता आलं नाही असं त्यांनी म्हटलं असावं.

इथे स्वयंभूषणाचा अर्थ अजिबात कशाशीच त्यांच्या प्रतिभेची नाती जुळली नव्हती असा मात्र करायचा नाही.

नाटकाच्या बाबतीतच बोलायचं झालं तर वयाच्या बाराव्या वर्षी रवीन्द्र-नाथांनी शेक्सपियरच्या मॅक्बेथ नाटकाचं बंगालीत भाषान्तर केलं होतं. ईश्वरचन्द्र विद्यासागरांना हे भाषान्तर ह्या बाल-लेखकाने ऐकवलं होतं. राजकृष्ण मुखोपाध्याय म्हणून त्या काळी कटकच्या लॉ कॉलेजातले प्राध्यापक होते ते त्या प्रसंगी हजर होते. त्यांनी छोट्या रवीला त्यातल्या डाकिणीच्या संवादांची भाषा आणि छन्द बदलायला सांगितला होता. त्याप्रमाणे बदल करून ते हस्तलिखित तयार केलं होतं. आज बाकीचं हस्तलिखित उपलब्ध नाही पण रवीन्द्रग्रंथ परिचयात हा एवढा डाकिणीचा प्रवेश मात्र छापलेला आहे.

कलकत्यातल्या भद्रसमाजाची नाट्यकला आणि पल्लीसमाजाची म्हणजे ग्रामीण बंगालातली नाट्यकला ह्यांच्यात भेद निर्माण झाला होता. कलकत्याची धंदेवाईक रंगभूमी ही ब्रिटिश रंगभूमीची बऱ्यापैकी नकल होती. महाराष्ट्रातही तोच प्रकार होता. एक मात्र खरं की बंगाली लोकरंगभूमी, बंगाली

उत्सव, सण, देवळातल्या जत्रा ह्या प्रसंगी आपल्या प्रेक्षक टिकवून होती. पडदे, सेटिंग, प्रकाश-योजनेची जादुगिरी ह्यांच्यावर ह्या रंगभूमीची भिस्त नसे. नाटक रचणारा कवी आणि आपल्या अभिनयातून ते नाटक श्रोत्यांपर्यंत पोहोचवणारे नट आणि नटी ह्यांच्या सामर्थ्यावरच ह्या लोकरंगभूमीचा प्रपंच उभा होता. इतिहास, रामायण, महाभारत, पुराणं, लोककथा यांतून संविधानक मिळायचं. जात्रा किंवा पाँचाली नाटकातले हे कलावंत नुसत्या शब्दांच्या जोरावर प्रेक्षकांना महालापासून ते जंगलापर्यंत आणि ऊन-पाऊस-चांदण्यातून हिंडवून आणीत होते. विजा कडकडल्याचंही शब्दातून कळायचं आणि डोळ्यांपुढे पिंपळाचा पार दिसत असूनही शब्दसामर्थ्याच्या, संगीताच्या आणि अभिनय-कलेच्या जोरावर सारा राजपरिवार समुद्रपर्यटनाला निघाल्याचा आणि त्यांचं जहाज वादळात सापडल्याचा साक्षात्कारही प्रेक्षकांना व्हायचा. एखादं गाणं त्यांना धरतीवरून स्वर्गलोकात घेऊन जायचं. सारी भिस्त अभिनयावर.

इंग्रजांनी लोकरंगमंचातली ही शक्ती न पाहता त्याला 'कूड' किंवा गावंढळ ठरवलं आणि भद्रसमाजातल्या इंग्रजी शिक्षित बंगाल्यांनी वास्तवतेच्या नावाखाली एक वरपांगी सुबक, गुळगुळीत आणि अनुकरण करताना सत्त्वहीन झालेली अशी रंगभूमी उभी केली. विंगेतून प्रवेश करणं वास्तव आणि अंधारातून खुल्या अंगणातल्या चबुतऱ्यावर चढणं 'कूड' ठरायला लागलं. इंग्रजांच्या अनुकरणातून चातुर्याने उचललेल्या कारागिरीलाच लोक नाट्यकला मानायला लागले. चतुर कारागिरीदेखील प्रेक्षकांवर आपली जादूगिरी करून जाते. ती प्रकाश-योजनेच्याच नव्हे तर शब्दांच्या आतषबाजीनेही करता येते. सर्वसामान्यांना भुरळ पडते ती असल्या आतषबाजीचीच. त्यामुळे जिथे कलेच्या आणि कारागिरीच्या जोड साहाय्यातून धंदा करायचा असतो तिथे कारागिरी कलेवर मात करताना दिसते. लोकांची गर्दी नाटकाकडे नेमकी कशामुळे खेचली जाते, याच्याकडे नाटककंपनी चालवणारे मालक लक्ष देऊन असतात. आणि एकदा आर्थिक नफ्यासाठी कंपनी चालवणं हा हेतू ठरला की ती नाटक कंपनी असो की इतर कसली कंपनी असो तिथे विक्रेता आणि गिन्हाईक हेच नातं संभवतं. रवीन्द्रनाथांनी त्या काळातल्या कुठल्याही नाटककंपनीसाठी नाटक लिहिलं नाही. त्यामुळे प्रथम ते मुक्त झाले ह्या नट आणि प्रेक्षक ह्यांच्यातल्या विक्रेता आणि गिन्हाईक या नात्यातून. त्यांच्या अंतरंगभूमीवर ते ते नाटक जसं जसं त्यांना दिसत गेलं - ती पात्रं जे जे बोलत गेली, सुखदुःखाच्या आणि निरनिराळ्या द्वंद्वांच्या हिंदोळ्यावर झोके घेत गेली, गात नाचत गेली तशीच ती त्यांच्या कागदावर उतरली गेली आणि रंगभूमीवर बोद्धू चाटू लागली.

तरुण रवीन्द्रनाथांच्या मनावर The Origin and Function of Music ह्या हर्बर्ट स्पेन्सरच्या निबंधाचा वराच परिणाम झाला होता. भावना कलापूर्ण रीतीने प्रकट करायला शब्द सुरांची संगत कशी शोधतात यासंबंधीचे विचार ह्या निबंधात मांडले होते. हा विचार रवीन्द्रनाथांना नवा होता अशातला भाग नाही. जीवनातली सुखदुःखं गीतातून सांगणाऱ्या लोकसंगीताचा त्यांच्यावर चांगला संस्कार होता. पण हर्बर्ट स्पेन्सर हे फार मोठी मान्यता मिळालेले तत्त्वज्ञानी होते. त्यांनी ह्या सुरांच्या ओढीच्या रहस्याचं फार चांगलं विश्लेषण केलं आहे. रवीन्द्रनाथांच्या शब्दांत सांगायचं म्हणजे – “ हा निबंध वाचल्यावर मनात आलं की निरनिराळ्या भावांची अभिव्यक्ती गाण्यातून प्रकट करून ती नाटकाच्या रूपाने का मांडू नये ? ” ह्या विचारातूनच १८८१ साली म्हणजे वयाच्या २० व्या वर्षी त्यांच्या ‘ वाल्मिकी प्रतिभा ’ ह्या गीतनाट्याचा जन्म झाला. क्राँचवध पाहिल्यावर दरोडेखोर वाल्या कोळ्याच्या तोंडून श्लोकांची निर्मिती होते याच विषयावर हे गीतनाट्य लिहिण्याची प्रेरणा ह्या तरुण कवीला व्हावी यामागे एक इतिहास आहे.

रवीन्द्रनाथांच्या जोराशांको वाड्यात एक ‘ विद्वज्जन समागम सभा ’ ह्या नावाने साहित्यिक, तत्त्वज्ञानी, कलावंत अशा मंडळींची बैठक भरत असे. आपण ह्या ‘ सभे ’तर्फे एक नाटक करावं असं घाटत होतं. रवीन्द्रनाथांचे वडील बंधू ज्योतिरीन्द्रनाथ हे फार चांगल्या दर्जाचे व्यासंगी विद्वान कवी आणि विशेष म्हणजे संगीतप्रवीण होते. रवींवर त्यांचं नितान्त प्रेम. रवीन्द्रनाथांच्या विकासात ज्योतिरीन्द्रनाथांचं स्थान फार मोठं आहे. रवीन्द्रनाथ ह्या सभेला १९ वर्षांचे असल्यापासून हजर राहायचे. त्याच सुमाराला दस्यू रत्नाकराचा वाल्मिकी कवी झाल्याच्या कथेवर विहारीलाल चक्रवर्ती यांनी शारदा मंगल नावाचं दीर्घकाव्य लिहिलं होतं. ते प्रसिद्ध झालं त्या वेळी रवीन्द्रनाथ १३ वर्षांचे. त्या काव्याने बंगाली रसिकांना वेड लावलं होतं. त्यातून ह्या वाल्मिकी प्रतिभेचा जन्म झाला.

२५ फेब्रुवारी १८८१ ला जोराशांको वाड्याच्या गच्चीवर मांडव घाटून स्टेज वगैरे करून वाल्मिकी प्रतिभेचा पहिला प्रयोग झाला. त्यात त्रिंशतल्या रवीन्द्रनाथांनी वाल्मिकीचं, त्यांचे बंधू हेमेन्द्रनाथ यांची १५ वर्षांची मुलगी ‘ प्रतिभा ’ हिने ‘ सरस्वती ’चं काम केलं होतं. हे नाटक पाहायला आलेल्या आमंत्रितांत श्रेष्ठ बंगाली कादंबरीकार बंकिमचन्द्र चतर्जी होते. बाहेरच्या प्रेक्षकांपुढे रंगभूमीवर नट म्हणूनही रवीन्द्रनाथांचं हे पहिलं पदार्पण होतं. त्यापूर्वी त्यांनी ज्योतिरीन्द्रांच्या ‘ ॲमॉन् कर्म आर कोरबोना ( “ असं काम पुन्हा करणार नाही ” ) नावाच्या आणि ‘ मानमयी ’ नावाच्या नाटकात कामं



केली होती. पण ती नाटकं घरातल्या कुटुंबीय मंडळींसाठी होती. ठाकूर परिवार तसा खूप मोठा होता. स्वतः रवीन्द्रनाथ हे चौदावं अपत्य होतं हे आपल्यापैकी पुष्कळांना माहिती असेल. त्यामुळे त्याही नाटकांना प्रेक्षकगण पुरेसा होता.

‘ वाल्मिकी प्रतिभा ’ नाटकावर विहारीलाल चक्रवर्तींच्या ‘ शारदा मंगल ’ काव्याचा खूप प्रभाव होता. आणि संगीत रचनेत ज्योतिरीन्द्रांचा वाटा होता. ते पियानो तयार वाजवीत. त्या सुरात गुंगून रवीन्द्रनाथ गीतरचना करीत. वाल्मिकी प्रतिभेतली काही गाणी रागदारी चिजांच्यावरची, काही ज्योतीदादांनी रचलेल्या सुरावर तर काही चक्र विलायती सुरावरून घेतली होती. डाकूंच्या टोळीची गाणी इंग्रजी बॅण्डच्या चालीवर आहेत. ‘ आयरिश मेलडीज् ’ नावाचा गीतांचा एक सचित्र संग्रह प्रसिद्ध झाला होता. आपल्या जीवनस्मृतीत रवीन्द्रांनी लिहिलंय – “ त्यात एक वीणेचं चित्र होतं. त्या वीणेचे सूर माझ्या कानात वाजत होते. ” वाल्मिकी प्रतिभेत,

वाणी वीणापाणी  
करुणामयि –  
अन्धजने नयन दिये  
अन्धकारे फेलिनो  
दरश दिये लुकाले कोथा देवी आयि ।

अशी एक वनदेवींची विलापिका आहे. ती ह्या आयरिश मेलडीच्या सुरावर रचली होती. ह्या गीत-नाट्याबद्दल रवीन्द्रनाथांनी फार मार्मिकपणाने लिहिलं आहे. ते म्हणतात, “ वाल्मिकी प्रतिभा हा वाचायचा काव्यग्रंथ नाही. ही संगीताची एक नवी कसोटी आहे. अभिनयाबरोबर ते कानाने ऐकलं नाही तर त्याचा आस्वाद घेणं संभवत नाही. युरोपीय भाषेत ज्याला ‘ ऑपेरा ’ म्हणतात त्यात वाल्मिकी प्रतिभा बसत नाही. इथे नाट्यविषयाचा सुरांच्या साहाय्यानेच अभिनय करायचा आहे. स्वतंत्र संगीताचं माधुर्य ह्यात फार थोड्या ठिकाणी आहे. ”

रवीन्द्रनाथांचं हे स्वतंत्र एकट्याचं नाटक म्हणता येणार नाही. त्यात ज्योतीदादा आणि त्यांचे मित्र अक्षयकुमार चौधरी यांचाही हातभार लागला आहे. तरीदेखील वयाच्या एकोणीस-विसाव्या वर्षी लिहिलेल्या ह्या गीतनाट्यात पुढल्या काळातल्या त्रिपुल नाट्यनिर्मितीची बीजं सापडतात. निष्पाप कौंच पक्ष्यांच्या वधाने व्याकुल होऊन आणि त्याबरोबरच संतापून जाऊन दिलेला शाप श्लोक होऊन प्रकटला. ही घटना रामायणाच्याच नव्हे तर सगळ्याच

कलानिर्मितीमागलं एक रहस्य सांगून जाते. अनुभवाची उत्कटता नसेल तर ती निर्मिती एक चांगल्यापैकी कारागिरी होऊ शकेल. सुरुवातीलाच मी आपल्याला सांगितल्याप्रमाणे जीवनातल्या नाना प्रकारच्या घटनांचा अत्यंत उत्कटतेने अनुभव घेण्याची रवीन्द्रनाथांची शक्ती ही अलौकिक म्हणावी अशीच होती. जीवनातले अनुभव पूर्वग्रहापासून अलिप्त राहून, परंपरेने लादलेल्या आचारविचारांच्या चौकटींना न जुमानता घेण्याची त्यांची साधना आयुष्यभर चालली होती. कुठल्याही वैयक्तिक किंवा सामाजिक व्यवहाराकडे त्यांना वेफिकिरीने पाहताच येत नव्हतं. जीवनाकडे अशा जाणतेपणाने पाहण्यासाठी मनावर कसलीही काजळी येऊ न देता ते मुक्त आणि निर्मळ कसं राहिल याची खबरदारी घ्यावी लागते. जिथे आपल्या प्रतिभेतून फुलं निर्माण करता येतील तिथे फुलं आणि जिथे अग्निपराग निर्माण व्हायला हवेत त्यावेळी अग्निपराग ही विश्वाच्या निर्मात्याची भूमिका साहित्य निर्माण करणाऱ्यालाही घ्यावी लागते— ही त्यांची श्रद्धा त्यानंतरच्या त्यांच्या निर्मितीतून सतत प्रत्ययाला येते. त्यातल्या नाट्यनिर्मितीच्या वावतीत ' वाल्मिकी प्रतिभा ' ही गंगोत्री म्हणावी लागेल.

' वाल्मिकी प्रतिभा ' नाटकातून आणखीही एक गोष्ट साधायचा प्रयत्न झाला. त्याचा नाट्यकलेशी प्रत्यक्ष कला म्हणून संबंध नसला तरी त्याला सामाजिक संदर्भ आहे. १८८१ म्हणजे एक शतकापूर्वीची आपल्या देशातली सामाजिक परिस्थिती डोळ्यांपुढे आणा. सगळे सामाजिक विचार-आचार रूढींना करकचून आवळलेले होते. बंगाल्यात तर हिंदू कुटुंबातही गोपा होता. आठव्या, नवव्या वर्षी मुलींची लग्न लावून देत. कुलीन ब्राह्मणात तर एक एक ब्राह्मण पन्नास पन्नास मुलींशी लग्न स्वतःच लावायचा. जे सुधारक मानले जात त्यांची सारी सुधारणा इंग्रजी आचारांची वरवरची नकळ करण्यातच होती. एरवी घरात बायका पडद्याआड. फारतर साहेबाच्या मडमेनी चहाला बोलावळं तर घोडागाडीला पडदे लावून बंगल्यापर्यंत पार्टीला जायचं. पायात बूट घालून ! टागोर कुटुंबात असली दोंगी ब्राह्मसुधारणा नव्हती. खुद्द रवीन्द्रनाथांना आपल्या मुलाचं लग्न एका बालविधवेशी लावून दिलं होतं हे आपल्याला ठाऊक असेल. टागोर कुटुंबाला तर बाळीतच टाकलं होतं.

अशा त्या काळात आपल्या घरातल्या मुलींना स्टेजवर नाटकात काम करायला उभं करून तो प्रयोग केवळ कुटुंबियांनाच नव्हे तर शहरातल्या इतर आमंत्रितांना दाखवायचा हे तत्कालीन समाजाला धक्का देणारं कृत्य होतं. सुधारणा, स्त्रियांची मुक्ती वगैरेबद्दल बोलताना आपल्याला पुनर्विवाह, हुंडाबंदी, आंतरजातीय विवाह, लग्नापूर्वी स्त्रीशिक्षण एवढी मर्यादित क्षेत्रं दिसतात. त्याची आवश्यकता तर आहेच. पण घरातल्या तरुण मुलींनी रंगमंचावर जाऊन

नाटकात काम करणं, गाणं म्हणणं हा देखील स्त्रीचं शील भ्रष्ट होण्याचाच प्रकार त्या काळात मानला जात होता. 'कचित् गानी पतिव्रता' हे वचन शिरोधार्य मानलं जात होतं. अशा त्या काळात आपल्या कुटुंबातल्या मुलींना नाटकात गायला उभं करणं हे त्याच मुक्ती चळवळीतलं एक पाऊल होतं हे आज आपल्या ध्यानात येत नाही. आजदेखील नाटकात काम करायचं जाऊ द्या पण नाटक पाहायला जायचं की नाही हा निर्णय घरातली स्त्री कमवती असली तरी बऱ्याचशा घरांत पुरुषांनीच ध्यायचा असतो. घरातल्या मुलींना नाटकात नाचवल्याबद्दल तत्कालीन सनातनी वर्तमानपत्रांतून टागोरांच्यावर गरळही ओकण्यात आलं होतं. मला स्वतःला वाल्मिकी प्रतिभा नाटकाच्या प्रयोगाचं हे सामाजिक महत्त्वही लक्षात घेण्यासारखं वाटतं.

आणखी एका बाबतीत 'वाल्मिकी प्रतिभा' नाटकात एक धाडसी प्रयोग केला गेला होता. 'संगीताची ही एक कसोटी आहे' असं रवीन्द्रनाथांनी म्हटल्याचं मी आपल्याला सांगितलं. त्यांनी नाटकातल्या वाक्यांचा प्रवाह आणि संगीत यांचा मेळ लयीला महत्त्व देऊन केला होता. म्हणजे चालीला भारतीय संगीतातल्या तालांच्या ठरावीक आवर्तनातच बांधून ठेवलं नव्हतं. भावने-प्रमाणे एकाच गीतात लय जलद आणि ठाय केली जात होती. आपल्याकडे जुने कीर्तनकार कधीकधी गद्य वाक्याला सूर जोडत असत. त्यात तालबद्ध सम किंवा काल यांचा मात्रानिविष्ट संबंध नसतो. बंगाल्यात 'कथकता' नावाच्या लोककलेत ही पद्धत आहे. तिला ह्या गीतनाट्यात पुन्हा स्थान मिळालं. संगीताची चाकोरी ही शब्दांचा संपूर्ण भाव स्पष्ट होण्याच्या आड जिथे येऊ लागली आणि भावानुकूल सुरांची जागा जेव्हा त्या त्या राग-रागिण्यांत परवानगी असणाऱ्या सुरांनाच द्यायची सक्ती जाचक झाली त्या वेळी गीतनाट्याच्या संदर्भात रवीन्द्रनाथांनी रागप्रधान संगीतालाही आपली जागा दाखवून दिली. वयाच्या एकोणीस-विसाव्या वर्षांचे अभिनय, नाट्यलेखन, रंगसज्जा, ह्याविषयी इंद्रजांच्या अनुकरणामुळे जे ठरावीक आडाखे तयार झाले होते त्यांचीही कसोटी पाहायला रवीन्द्रनाथांनी सुरुवात केली. त्यामुळे प्रायोगिक रंगभूमीचे भारतातले आद्य प्रवर्तक असल्याचा मानही रवीन्द्रनाथांनाच द्यायला हवा.

'मुक्ती' हा रवीन्द्रनाथांच्या जवळ जवळ सर्वच नाटकांचा मध्यवर्ती विचार आहे, असं म्हणायला हरकत नाही. जीवनात माणसाला जखडून टाकणारी अनेक बंधनं आहेत. सामाजिक, राजकीय, आर्थिक, धार्मिक अशा निरनिराळ्या प्रकारच्या बंधनांतून हा प्रवास करायचा असतो. निसर्गाने लादलेली बंधनं तर आहेतच, पण माणसाने निरनिराळ्या कारणाने निर्माण केलेल्या आणि कालबाह्य झालेल्या किंवा निरुपयोगी झालेल्या चौकटी तोडून

मुक्त होऊ पाहणाऱ्या माणसांच्या जीवनात येणारे संघर्ष रवीन्द्रनाथांना नाट्य-लेखनासाठी प्रेरणा देताना दिसतात. रवीन्द्रांच्या मनातल्या विचारांच्या आणि भावनांच्या कल्लोळातून ही सारी पात्रं आकार घेत असतात. मग कधी ते नाटक चातुर्वर्ण्यात अगतिक होऊन पडलेल्या हिंदू समाजाच्या रथाचे चित्र उभं करणारं ' रथयात्रा ' असो, लोकांना आपल्या ताब्यात ठेवण्यासाठी आवश्यक असणारी लोखंडी चौकट मोडून सत्ता लोकांच्या हाती आली पाहिजे हे सांगण्यासाठी लिहिलेलं ' रक्तकरवी ' असो, पोपटपंचीला ज्ञान समजणाऱ्या शिक्षणसंस्थांची ' अचलायतने ' कशी झाली आहेत हे दाखवणारं नाटक असो किंवा मुक्त जगात वावरण्याची ओढ लागलेल्या अमळला रुग्णशय्येवर पाडणाऱ्या नियतीच्या कठोरतेचं वास्तव दर्शन घडवणारं ' डाकघर ' असो. कविमनाला लागलेल्या मुक्तीच्या ओढीतून निर्माण झालेली ही नाटकं आहेत.

इथे मुक्ती याचा वास्तवापासून पळून जाणं असा उथळ अर्थ घ्यायचा नाही. उलट ह्या जगात अधिक चैतन्याने जगण्याआड, जडाशी जखडवणाऱ्या ज्या अनिष्ट प्रवृत्ती किंवा रीती आहेत त्यांपासून मुक्ती असा अर्थ घ्यायला हवा. सार्वजनिक सुखदुःखात तर इतक्या मिळालेपणाने शिरलेला रवीन्द्रनाथा-एवढा दुसरा प्रतिभावान माणूस नसेल. रवीन्द्रांच्या बाबतीत एक गोष्ट मला पुन्हा सांगावीशी वाटते. सौंदर्य हे त्यांच्या जीवनात सत्याइतकंच महत्त्वाचं मूल्य होतं. निसर्गात दिसून येणारं ' रौद्र ' ही सुद्धा शेवटी सौंदर्याच्या निर्मितीला आवश्यक असणारी घटना असते. प्रकाशाला पारखे होऊन भीतीपोटी निर्माण केलेल्या नाना प्रकारच्या भितींच्या आड जगू पाहणारा समाज हा खऱ्या सौंदर्याची अनुभूतीच घेऊ शकणार नाही याची त्यांना खात्री होती. असला समाज निर्भय मनाने मान उंच ठेवून जगू शकत नसतो. आणि मग धर्म, रूढी, राजकारण यांच्या अवास्तव प्राबल्यातून मानवी जीवनात जडतेचा आणि पर्यायाने असुंदराचा, कुरूपतेचा प्रवेश होतो. ज्या ज्या क्षेत्रात ही अशी कुरूपता त्यांना जाणवली त्या त्या ठिकाणी त्यांनी प्रहार केलेले आहेत. हे सौंदर्य पाहू शकणारं मन घडवणं म्हणजेच ' माणूस ' घडवणं हाच त्यांचा कलावंत कवी म्हणून धर्म होता.

मरिते चाहिना आमि शुन्दर भवने मानुषेर माझे आमि बाँचिबारे चायि । - ह्या सुंदर भुवनात मी मरू इच्छित नाही तर माणसांमधेच जगू इच्छितो - असं म्हणणाऱ्या रवीन्द्रांच्या नाट्यसृष्टीत हाच ध्वनी गायकाने निरनिराळ्या रागांतून स्वरसृष्टी उभी करताना मागे षड्जपंचमाचा अखंड सूर चालावा तसा घुमत राहिलेला आहे. ' वाल्मिकी प्रतिभा ' नाटकात लागलेला हाच सूर आहे.

जुक्त करो हे सन्नर शंगे  
 मुक्त करो हे बन्ध  
 संचार करो सकल कर्मे  
 शान्त तोमार छन्द  
 [ युक्त करी हे सर्वासंगे  
 मुक्त करी हे बन्ध  
 संचारू दे साय्या कर्मी  
 शांत तुझा तो छन्द - ]

हीच ह्या साय्या मागची प्रेरणा आहे.

दस्यू वाल्मिकीच्या दस्यूंचं दल बालिकेच्या रूपातल्या 'सरस्वती'लाच  
 देवीपुढे बळी द्यायला आणीत असतं. वाल्मिकीच्या अंतःकरणात पहिला दयेचा  
 पाझर तिथे फुटतो. दस्यूंच्या हातून तो त्या बालिकेची सुटका करतो. पाशवी वृत्ती  
 जीवनातल्या सुंदरतेचाच बळी देत असते. त्या सरस्वतीची मुक्ती केल्याशिवाय  
 कलावंताला सरस्वतीचं वरदान लाभत नाही. त्या मुग्ध, सुंदर सरस्वतीविषयी  
 ओढ निर्माण झाल्याबरोबर जगातल्या निर्घृणतेकडे पाहण्याची एक निराळीच  
 दृष्टी त्या वाल्मिकी नावाच्या दरोडेखोराला लाभली आणि त्यातून एका महा-  
 काव्याची निर्मिती झाली. दरोडेखोर किंवा राजकारणी माणसं प्रथम सरस्वतीलाच  
 बंदीत टाकीत असतात. ' मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठाम् त्वम् अगमः शाश्वतीः समाः ।  
 यत् क्रौंचमिथुनादेकम् अवधीः काममोहितम् । ' हा श्लोक एकदम तोंडून बाहेर  
 पडल्यावर दस्यू वाल्मिकीची जी अवस्था होते ती तरुण रवीन्द्रनाथानी सहासात  
 ओळीत अतिशय प्रभावीपणाने मांडली आहे. तो श्लोक वाल्मिकीच्या तोंडून  
 उमटतो. नाटकात तो श्लोक मूळ संस्कृतामध्येच ठेवलाय - तो उमटल्यावर  
 स्वतःच आश्चर्यचकित होऊन दस्यू वाल्मिकी म्हणतो -

कि बॉलिनू आमि । ए कि शुललितो बानी रे  
 किछू ना जानि कॅमोने जे आमि  
 प्रकाशिन्नु देवभाषा  
 अॅमॉन कथा कॅमोने शिखिनु रे ॥

[ काय बोललो मी ?  
 ही कुठली सुललित वाणी ?  
 कळत नाही मला  
 कशी ही प्रकटली देवभाषा ?  
 अरे कसे शिकलो मी हे शब्द ? ]

पुलके पुरिलो मनप्राण  
मोधु बरशिलो श्रवणे  
ए की ! हृदय ए की देखी  
घोर अंधःकार माझे ए की ज्योति भाय  
अवाक् ! कोरुना हे कार ?

[ रोमांच उठले मनाप्राणात  
मधुवर्षाव श्रवणी  
हे काय ? हृदया, हे काय पाहतोय मी  
घोर अंधःकारात ही कुठली ज्योती प्रकाशली  
मी अवाक् !—कुणाची ही करुणा ? ]

कल्पना करा ह्या मूळ बंगाली ओळींना ज्या वेळी सुरांनी उचललं असेल त्या वेळी श्रोत्यांची अवस्था काय झाली असेल. आणि स्वतः रवीन्द्रनाथांसारखा तेजःपुंज तरुण ह्या भूमिकेत गात होता. त्यांच्या तरुण वयातल्या आवाजाबद्दल तत्कालीन रसिकांनी असा स्वच्छ आणि टिपेचा सूत्र ऐकला नाही अशा शब्दात प्रशंसा केली आहे.

असल्या दुर्मिळ प्रेरणेतून जेव्हा कलानिर्मिती होते त्या वेळी कुठल्या तरी परंपरेच्या चष्म्यातून कलेकडे पाहायची सवय झालेल्यांना कधी ती दुर्बोध वाटते — तर लोककलांच्या गंगोत्रीतून उगवलेली ही कला देखील उच्चभ्रू वाटायला लागते ! फारसा विचार न करता जगायला चाकोरी बरी पडते. “ शारीरिक श्रमापेक्षासुद्धा मानसिक श्रम करण्याचा माणसाला जात्याच कंटाळा आहे. मळलेल्या वाटेनं जाणं-येणं ज्याप्रमाणे शरीराला त्याचप्रमाणे मनालाही सुखावह असतं — असं आगरकरांनीच म्हटलंय. पण शेवटी होतं काय की चाकोऱ्याच प्रवासाची दिशा ठरवायला लागतात. आजूबाजूची कुठली दृश्यं पाहायची ते आखून देतात. आणि अमूक प्रकारची दृश्यं दिसली तरच तो प्रवास झाला असं वाटायला लागतं. साहित्यप्रकारांना अशा चौकटीत कोंबून टाकायला लागल्यामुळे त्या निर्मितीचा आस्वाद घेण्यापूर्वी त्या निर्मितीचं गोत्र-प्रवर पाहून ती त्या मातीत बसते की नाही यावर तिचं लहान-मोठेपण ठरायला लागतं. रवीन्द्रनाथांची नाटकं नाटकाच्या असल्या कुठल्याही रूढ कल्पनांत त्यांनी बसवली नाहीत.

# Rabindranath's Theatre

P. L. Deshpande

## Abstract

Speaking of his own vocation as a 'poet', Rabindranath remarked, "I am a poet, I merely give 'expression'." But the significance of this phrase can only be grasped if one bears in mind how rich the personality is which gives 'expression'. Trees, too, 'express' their selves in flowers. But can one forget the earth, sky, light, water through which trees and plants ceaselessly draw nourishment and the exacting toil which gives birth to roses or lotuses? The beauty, flavour, colour and fragrance of a flower perhaps conceal or maybe embody the soil, sky, water and light which sustained it. This explains why Rabindranath's 'creating' a play was so different from anyone else's writing drama. The original impulse that went into its making was different and the play flowered at its own pace, in the wake of its own laws.

Whenever Rabindranath felt that a particular experience or contradiction so essential to drama needed to be expressed, he moulded that experience into a dramatic form of his choosing.

Rabindranath's personality was, without doubt, shaped by Indian and European literature, music, religious thought, human contact and his own inborn intelligence. But he was never a mere imitator. Sensitive to the slightest change in the breeze wafted by the seasons, as aware of the warmth of light as a plant in the open, he never used Nature as a backdrop to unfold a situation. The spirit that animates Man, Nature and the Universe coursed through him and so his plays, like his music, had an originality of their own. Perhaps that explains his remark about not being able to 'write' a play.

At the age of twelve, Rabindranath translated *Macbeth* into Bengali. Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar and Rajkrishna Mukhopadhyaya listened to the boy-playwright read it out to them. Mukhopadhyaya even suggested some alterations in the metre of the witches' dialogue. The manuscript of the complete play cannot be traced but this scene of the witches (with the alterations) is available in print.

A century ago the theatre of Calcutta was split into two strands—the dramatic art of the *bhadra samaj* and that of the *palli* (rural) *samaj*. While the professional stage (as in Maharashtra) imitated the British theatre, the folk drama of Bengal was performed during feasts, festivals and *jatra*-s and continued to retain its hold on the audiences. These folk plays did not have to depend on curtains, sets or lighting but on the ability to communicate with the audience through the words of the poet-dramatist effectively enacted on the stage. The plots were based on episodes from the epics, *purana*-s, and folk narratives. The artistes of the *Panchali* or the *Jatra* tradition could carry their listeners from palace to forest or through rain, light or darkness on the strength of words, reinforced by music and acting; their voices could conjure a royal entourage embarking on a voyage and caught in a storm...

To the alien rulers this powerful folk drama appeared 'crude' and 'uncouth'. The Bengali middle-class, educated in British ways, created in the name of 'realism' a polished but lifeless dramatic form. Techniques borrowed from the British were rated as art. Lighting skills and verbal pyrotechnics dazzled the audiences and such 'craft' attracted business interests. The professional drama company took over, reducing the relationship of the artiste and the spectator to a trader-customer equation... Rabindranath, by never writing for a company, freed himself of all commercial ties and their mundane rationale. He created the characters that he discovered in his heart: what they said of their joys or sorrows, their conflicts and doubts, the way they sang and danced was put to paper and enacted on the stage.

Herbert Spencer's *The Origin and Function of Music* had a strong impact on the young Rabindranath. He began to feel that emotions could find expression in song and be shaped into dramatic form. Thus was born *Valmiki Pratibha*, the musical play written by Rabindranath in 1881, when he was barely twenty. There is a background to his choice of this particular episode from the *Ramayana* as the theme of his first attempt at drama.

The Tagore family mansion Jorasanko was the venue of 'Vidvajjan Samagam Sabha', a gathering of scholars, artistes and writers. Among these was Rabindranath's elder brother, Jyotindranath, an accomplished musician and scholar, who deeply influenced the poet's intellectual and artistic development. It was decided to stage a play. Earlier, Biharil Chakravarty's long narrative poem, *Sharada Mangal* (based on the transformation of the tribal Ratnakar into the poet Valmiki) had won unprecedented acclaim.

Rabindranath chose the same theme and the play was staged on February 25, 1881 at Jorasanko. The role of Valmiki was played by the poet and of Saraswati by 15-year old Pratibha, the daughter of Rabindranath's brother Hemendranath. Among the distinguished invitees was Bengal's leading novelist Bankimchandra Chatterji. This was Rabindranath's first appearance on the public stage.

The music for the play was based on classical *raga*-s, on some of Jyotindranath's compositions. As a boy Rabindranath had come across an illustrated edition of Moore's *Irish Melodies*, which had a picture of a veena. One of the songs in the play (*Vani veenapani*), the lament of a forest-goddess, and the chants of the robbers are set to these Irish tunes.

Rabindranath did not conceive of *Valmiki Pratibha* as a play to be read. If one does not listen to the sounds while it is enacted, then its flavour is lost. It is not an opera in the European tradition. The dramatic core is expressed through musical notes and there are hardly any occasions in it where the melody has an independent appeal.

The play bears the influence of Jyotindranath and his friend Akshaya Kumar Chowdhary. Even so it contains the seed of Rabindranath's future development as a dramatist. The killing of the innocent bird, the anguish and anger that it arouses, leading to the curse which is uttered in the form of a *shloka*, reveal not merely the mystery of the poetic impulse informing the *Ramayana* but all creative work. Without intense experience, artistic creation can only rise to the level of superior craftsmanship. For Rabindranath, every experience was realised at a deeply passionate and personal level (without the shackles of social conventions and bias), which led him to believe that the writer has to fulfil a role similar to that of the Creator. *Valmiki Pratibha* is the fountain-head of the subsequent works in which this faith finds expression.

*Valmiki Pratibha* should also be viewed in the context of the society of the times: the orthodox customs of some of its sections and the anxiety of other 'reforming' groups to ape the ways of the British rulers. Rabindranath married his son to a child widow for which his family had to face social ostracism . . . The emancipation of women is often restricted to issues of widow remarriage, dowry, better educational facilities. But it must also be remembered that this was a period when a girl had only to appear on the stage or sing or dance before outsiders to be branded a delinquent. Young *Pratibha* playing a role in the play was a step towards freedom and the staging of *Valmiki Pratibha* thus assumes a special social significance.

*Valmiki Pratibha* was a bold innovation: the flow of the words and music blended in a unique fashion with due importance to the rhythm of the whole. Instead of following the set cycle of a *tala*, Rabindranath adopted Bengal's *Kathakata* tradition where the expression of the emotion inherent in words was not confined to a rigid musical convention. Thus when he was barely twenty, Rabindranath had already begun to question notions of acting, playwriting, and decor borrowed from English norms and to evolve his own style. This makes him, in a sense, a pioneer of the experimental theatre in the country.

The core of almost all of Rabindranath's plays is freedom. There are constraints, social, economic, religious, political—and even those imposed by Nature and Fate—which burden human lives. They provoke conflicts in the hearts of men. Out of this struggle are forged the characters in Rabindranath's plays. *Rathayatra* is a picture of the chariot of Hindu society prostrated by the caste system. *Raktakarabi* is a plea for the triumph of people's power over iron barriers. *Achalayatane* satirizes institutions which equate parrot-like repetition with genuine education. *Dakghar* offers a glimpse into workings of a cruel Fate: the boy Amal, with his thirst for wandering free in the wide world, is chained to his sick bed. But Rabindranath's love of freedom does not denote a flight from reality. In fact, one can hardly imagine an artiste so involved in the joys and sorrows of common people. Beauty is for him as meaningful as Truth and *roudra*, the awe-inspiring element in Nature, necessary for the actual revelation of her beauty.

Rabindranath was acutely aware of the fears which oppressed institution-ridden societies and deprived men of the power to perceive beauty. Whenever such ugliness reared its head and warped human minds, he struck back; he believed that it was the poet's vocation to forge minds capable of perceiving beauty, that is to forge 'man' himself.

A creation such as *Valmiki Pratibha*, born of a rare poetic impulse and welling up from the springs of folk art, may yet be regarded as 'obscure' by those accustomed to well-trodden and familiar paths. But Rabindranath refused to follow the beaten track and to 'model' plays on lines set by conventional norms.

"I do not wish to die in this lovely mansion but to dwell within it with men." This thought finds echoes in the songs of his plays. In *Valmiki Pratibha*, the gang of robbers decides to offer 'Saraswati' (Knowledge) in the form of a girl as a sacrifice to their goddess. Overcome by pity for her plight, Valmiki frees the girl. The poet can never win the blessings of 'Saraswati', unless she is liberated . . . In the play the original *shloka* from the *Ramayana* is retained and after it is uttered, the dacoit, struck with awe, wonders how the words came unbidden, the flame flickered in the darkness . . .

One can imagine the impact of the original Bengali, with the brilliant young poet himself singing the words.



# Tagore and Cinema

Ajit Sheth

*[The year 1981 marks the 120th anniversary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore. It is also the Golden Jubilee Year of the Indian talkie. In this article Ajit Sheth traces Tagore's links with the Indian Cinema and his contribution to the more worthwhile in Indian film music.*

—Editor]

A little more than fifty years ago, Rabindranath Tagore, expressing his views on the cinema, revealed an almost uncanny grasp of the possibilities of its developing into a serious art-form. In a letter dated November 26, 1929, and addressed to his nephew Saumyendranath, he writes,

“The characteristics of an art-form are determined by the nature of its requisites. I believe that the expected emergence of cinema as an art-form is yet to take place. As in politics, so in art, the aim is independence. The aim of art is to express itself freely in its self-created world; otherwise its dignity is lost, the manifestation marred. That cinema has so long been subservient to literature is due to the fact that no artist has been able to redeem it from this slavery by dint of his genius. It is difficult, because in the case of painting, literature, or for that matter in music, the material requisites are not so expensive. Production of a picture needs not only talent but also finance.

“The principal element of a motion picture is the ‘flux of image’. The beauty and grandeur of this form in motion has to be developed in such a way that it becomes self-sufficient without the use of words. If some other language is needed to explain its own, it amounts to incompetence.

“If music can achieve profundity without words of the cadence of a melody, then why should not this ‘motive form’ be considered as a distinct aesthetic experience?

“If it has not been so, it is partly due to lack of talent and partly due to a muddle-headed public who, not being able to experience intellectual pleasure, has become a victim to sensationalism.”

Tagore's immense contribution to the world of art and entertainment is generally recognised. We know him as one of the most original composers of music that India has known. His songs form a rich and inexhaustible repertoire for his people. He is regarded as an innovator in the technique of dance-drama, an experimenter who introduced a perfect harmony of song, dance and poetry. As a painter, he was one of the pioneers of the modern movement in the country.

The youngest of the arts, the film, which is a synthesis of practically all forms of artistic expression, also bears the indelible influence of Rabindranath. The earliest Indian film-makers, both in Bengal and Maharashtra, relied mainly on theatre, on mythological and religious subjects and for a long time the cinema was really a picture in motion of action on a stage. Around the same time the popular works of leading authors began to be filmed. In those days it was literature which gripped the imagination of the educated class of Bengal. The Bengali mind was shaped by the novels of Bankimchandra, Tagore and Saratchandra and the plays of Girishchandra and Dwijendralal Roy. Tagore was more than an influence. He pervaded the thinking of the Bengali in every walk of life. Naturally, Bengali cinema, too, was deeply influenced in its earlier stages by his literature and songs. Unlike Bankimchandra and Saratchandra, Tagore was not only a writer but also a poet and a musician. As a result, the early cinema could draw heavily on Tagore's novels and music.

Ever since the silent era, several films have been made with Tagore's works as their base. 'Balidan,' a silent movie, based on one of his short stories, won nation-wide acclaim. After the advent of the talkie cinema, Tagore's dance-drama 'Natir Puja' and his humorous play 'Chirakumar Sabha' were produced in 1932 by New Theatres, featuring Bengal's noted stage and screen personalities like Shishirkumar Bhaduri and Premankur Athorthi. 'Gora' and 'Nauka Dubi', based on Tagore's novels and directed by Naresh Mitra, were among Bengal's earliest talkies.

In a recorded interview for my radio programme for *Vividh Bharati*, Nitin Bose narrated an incident which took place way back in 1917. It reveals Tagore as an ardent sympathiser of the film medium. Nitinbabu said: "In 1917, Prasanto Mahalanobis and Rathindranath Tagore, the poet's son, took me to Bolpur. Rabindranath was a close friend of my father. On that evening a dance recital on Tagore songs was organized on the terrace of Uttarayan, the house where Tagore was staying. Tagore asked me to film the programme. I filmed the recital patch by patch sequentially, and then processed the entire film in Prasanto Mahalanobis' laboratory at the Presidency College. When I projected the film before Gurudev, he complimented me and showed a great deal of interest in the technique of filming. Then he asked me to screen it again. I was so thrilled and touched by his words of encouragement that when the second screening of the film ended late at night, I presented the film to Gurudev and it is now Shantiniketan's property."

Tagore went out of his way to help the young director Madhu Bose with the scenario and script of the silent version of 'Giribala', a film based on his story, and was present at the film's premiere in Crown Cinema, Calcutta.

Tagore went to New Theatres with his dance and music troupe when his dance-drama 'Natir Puja' was picturized. A sum of five thousand rupees, out of the proceeds of this film, was donated to Vishwa Bharati. While Tagore was in the New Theatres' studio, his message on the occasion of his birthday was recorded with this film. This wonderful legacy was lost during the huge fire of 1940 which destroyed many of New Theatres' film classics.

In 1932, Tagore composed and sang a special song for the inaugural ceremony of Rupabani, Calcutta's famous cinema house. It opened with 'Bengal 1983', the first talkie directed by the celebrated P. C. Barua. Aware of P. C. Barua's serious approach to film-making, Tagore gave him a letter of recommendation which helped him to get an apprenticeship in the Fox Studio at Paris, where he studied cinematography under the famous French cameraman, Rogers.

In 1935, Pankaj Mullick went to Rabindranath Tagore to seek permission to record his famous poem *Diner Sheshe*, set to music by Pankaj Mullick himself. It was for a picture to be directed by P. C. Barua under the New Theatres' banner. Tagore showed keen interest in the story and suggested the title 'Mukti' for the film. He also recommended that two of his other songs be incorporated in the film and even changed certain words in his poem *Diner Sheshe* to improve its rendering into music. Thus, with the film 'Mukti', Tagore songs were introduced into films for the first time and at his own suggestion. *Diner Sheshe*, *Aaj Sabar Range* and *Ami Kan Pete Roi* were the songs which Pankaj Mullick and Kanan Devi sang in this film.

The Bengali films based on Tagore's novels and stories which were made in the 1930s and 1940s had a strong literary bias, and it was left to a later generation to make films with Tagore's stories as a base and with the accent on the visuals rather than on words. Without the use of too many words, Satyajit Ray superbly interpreted Tagore in 'Teen Kanya' and 'Charulata', so did Tapan Sinha in 'Atithi'. 'Kabuliwalla' (produced by Asit Chaudhary and directed by Tapan Sinha) brought Tagore's humanism undistorted to the screen. 'Kshudhita Pashan' (produced by Hemen Ganguli and directed by Tapan Sinha) sought to project cinematically Tagore's blending of fantasy with realism.

The popularity of Tagore stories with film-makers has continued unabated even after the birth centenary of the poet. In 1961, Satyajit Ray made an hour-long documentary on Tagore. Debaki Bose had earlier made 'Chirakumar Sabha', based on Tagore's well-known play. At the request of the Government of West Bengal he directed (in 1961) 'Arghya', based on four of Tagore's poems. Nitin Bose made 'Dristi Dan' and later 'Joga Jog'. Ajay Kar directed 'Malayadan' and Partha Pratim Chowdhury was prompted by two of Tagore's short stories to make 'Shuva Ar Debtar Gras'. 'Sandhyarang', 'Khokababur Pratyabartan', 'Nishithe', 'Shasti', 'Megh Roudra' and 'Strir Patra' are some of the other films which had as their base Tagore's stories. Of these 'Strir Patra', directed by Purnendu Patrea, is an outstanding work. It is now reported that Satyajit Ray's next film will be 'Ghare Baire' based on Tagore's famous novel.

The interest in Tagore's stories has not been confined to Bengal. The film industry in Bombay also drew inspiration from Tagore. Way back in 1945, Nitin Bose (under the banner of Bombay Talkies) made 'Milan' a Hindi version of the Bengali film 'Nauka Dubi'. Paul Zils made 'Zalzala' from Tagore's 'Ghare-Baire'. Hemen Gupta made 'Kabuliwalla' in Hindi. In recent years Rajashri Productions made a successful movie ('Uphaar') based on Tagore's short story 'Samapti'.

As is clear from his letter to his nephew, Tagore was not merely interested in cinema but aware of the latent strength of the medium. He realised that the

expenditure involved in making a film encouraged a certain amount of conservatism. A popular novel or play was sure to find general acceptance among the people. The Bengali directors of his time made worthwhile films based on his stories but within the limits of 'photographed theatre'; they failed to discover the true essence of the film medium.

Tagore knew that the writer, in common with the film-maker, thinks in images. The writer expresses them in words; the film-maker does so visually. Cinema is thus an expansion of the strict diction achieved by poetry and prose into a new realism where the desired image (without the mediation of a word-torrent) directly materializes into audio-visual perception. Tagore's highly developed artistic sensibility enabled him to grasp and voice this distinction more than fifty years ago—when the art of film-making was still in its infancy.

### Tagore's Impact on Indian Film Music

Tagore's impact on Indian film music has been equally remarkable. Many of our music composers have been influenced by Tagore's compositions. The impact was profound on Pankaj Mullick, the veteran music composer and singer of New Theatres. Pankaj Mullick was the pioneer who introduced Tagore songs in films. His contribution to the propagation of *Rabindra Sangeet* through film and radio is unique. No other composer took such pains to popularise Tagore music as he did.

Pankaj Mullick first introduced the use of an organ and also made judicious use of percussion in Tagore songs. His *Rabindra Sangeet* renderings have been a matter of controversy among the traditionalists. Nevertheless his songs have added to the beauty and texture of Tagore's music. As mentioned earlier, Tagore himself consented to Pankaj Mullick setting to tune the famous verse *Diner Sheshe*, in the Bengali version of P. C. Barua's 'Mukti'. *Pran Chahe, Jise Meri Yad Na Aaye, Pawan Chale Jor* are some of Tagore melodies immortalised by Pankaj Mullick in the music of Hindi films.

The translation of Tagore songs in Hindi by Pankaj Mullick encouraged other music composers to incorporate Tagore music freely in Hindi film songs. The only unfortunate element in this borrowing was that, unlike Pankaj Mullick, these composers never acknowledged the source. R. C. Boral, Timir Baran, Anupam Ghatak, Anil Biswas, S. D. Burman, R. D. Burman, Hemant Kumar and even Naushad have often lifted Tagore melodies and introduced them in their Hindi film songs without expressing their indebtedness to Tagore. For the film 'Kismet' (produced by Bombay Talkies), Anil Biswas composed *Aab Teresiva Kaun Mera*, which was directly prompted by Tagore's song *Pralaya Nachan Nachle Jakhn*. The well-known duet (*Sine Me Sulagte*) sung by Talat Mahmud and Lata Mangeshkar in the film 'Tarana' is inspired by Tagore's *Chini Lena Amarey*. Manna Dey's song *Mere Manki Dhadkan* (in 'Hamdard') is based on Tagore's *Mama Chitte Niti Nritte*. Sohrab Modi's 'Varis' included a duet sung by Talat Mahmud and Suraiya (*Rahi Matwale*) which was influenced by Tagore's song *Ore Grihvasi*. The old-time hit of Naushad *Bachpan Ke Din Bhula Na Dena* from the

film 'Deedar' is based on a song (*Churi Hoye Gechhe Raj Koshe*) from Tagore's dance-drama 'Shyama'.

Hemant Kumar is one of our popular exponents of *Rabindra Sangeet*. His composition *Man Mera Udata Jaye* is wholly patterned on Tagore's *Man Mor Megher Sangi*. Several of Hemant Kumar's Hindi film songs are similarly based on Tagore songs.

S. D. Burman has utilised Tagore melodies to the utmost in his compositions. These melodies invariably provided the material for many of his popular tunes. For example, years ago S. D. Burman had Suraiya sing *Naina Diwane* in 'Afsar'. The melody is copied note-by-note from Tagore's *Se Din Doo Jane*, which incidentally was also sung by Kanan Devi in the Bengali film 'Anirban'. Talat Mahmud's famous song in 'Sujata'—*Jalte Hai Jiske Liye*— is totally a Tagore melody (*Ekada Tumhi Priye*). More recently S. D. Burman composed a beautiful melody for 'Sharmilee'—*Meghachhayee Adhi Raat*. It is sung by Lata Mangeshkar and is more or less inspired by a Tagore song (*Laho Laho Tule Laho*). The duet in 'Abhiman', *Tere Mere Milan Ki Yeh Raina*, is based on Tagore's composition (*Jodi Tarey Nai Chini Go Se Ki*). *Jaye To Jaye Kahan* from 'Taxi Driver' also bears a closer resemblance to a Tagore song (*He Khaniker Atithi*). It is difficult to cover in this short article all those songs in S. D. Burman's repertoire which have Tagore's compositions as their musical base.

In recent years, there is Rajesh Roshan's *Chhuker Mere Manako* (in the film 'Yarana') which bears the influence of Tagore's *Tomar Holo Shuru*. R. D. Burman's song *Chhotisi Ek Kali Thi* from the film 'Jurmana' brings to mind Tagore's composition (*Basante Phul Ganthlo*).

Thus, right from the days of 'Mukti' to today's 'Yarana', Hindi film music has continuously drawn inspiration from Tagore's melodies. While analysing these Hindi songs, one factor emerges clearly: Tagore's songs present images which are apt to be lost, even perverted, in translation. They are essentially lyrics set to enchanting tunes with a distinctness which is their own. His compositions are poems with a beautiful cadence and rhyme, compounds of Sanskrit words adding a rare charm. The subtle alliteration and rhythm of the Bengali original disappear in translation.

In Tagore's creations, poem and music are inseparably one. He was a *Vaggeyakar*: he composed the words and the music at the same time. In his songs, words are necessary for the smooth unfolding of the hidden beauty and grandeur of a melody; while words in the song are symbols, the melody is its life. His songs are, therefore, musical as well as lyrical.

Tagore's contact with Dhruwad music (at the Brahmo Samaj), his study of the folk music of different regions of the country, his acquaintance with North Indian classical music and also the music of the West enriched the melodic content of his songs.

Unfortunately, in Hindi translation, Tagore songs seem to take on a different garb. When a literal translation of the words is attempted, they sound

ponderous or stilted. When the melody alone assumes undue importance, the aroma of the poetry is lost. Pankaj Mullick succeeded, to a large extent, in expressing in Hindi both the spirit of the words and the lilt of the melody found in the original Bengali composition. However, for most of the Hindi film music composers, the rendering of Tagore songs into Hindi still presents a temptation and a challenge.

In Rabindranath Tagore's own words,

"The language of words belongs to the world of man and the language of music to the world of nature. Words convey a distinct concept with a definite and limited meaning. But the domain of music has no definite bounds—in fact it is impatient of limitations. This is the reason why man has dealings with his fellowmen in the language of words, while music provides him with a mode of communication with the vaster world of nature. When music is wedded to words, it signifies much more than what the words can ever mean by themselves. Its range becomes wider and deeper."

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## Some Dance Sculptures from Assam

Kapila Vatsyayan

Although a certain amount of work has been accomplished on the architectural and sculptural traditions of Assam, there is to date no definitive study on the subject which has clearly established a chronology of the evolution of a distinct Assamese school of architecture and sculpture in its relationship to extant indigenous traditions and parallel developments in other parts of India.

Despite such a limitation and the incomplete and fragmentary nature of the evidence and the critical writing on the subject, the regional school is significant enough to demand the fuller attention of scholars. Its importance is further enhanced by the valuable material found in the excavations of the Ambari site carried out in 1969 and 1971 by the Department of Anthropology, University of Gauhati, in collaboration with the Central and State Departments of Archaeology. Many of these, including stone sculptures and terra-cotta figures, are housed in the State Museum at Gauhati, and in the Department of Anthropology, University of Gauhati. Alongside are the plaques and terra-cotta figures of the Tamreshvari Temple of a slightly later period. Finally there are the eighteenth century terra-cotta plaques of Jayasagar, Sibsagar District.

Our concern in this brief paper is to re-evaluate the sculptural figures relating to a few motifs of the earlier period (sixth to twelfth centuries) which have a relevance for a study of movement patterns, and which shed considerable light on the developments in Assam, in relation to other parts of India. In the study, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*,<sup>1</sup> an attempt was made to examine the sculptural evidence relating to the dance under three or four distinct categories. These were: (i) the *shalabhanjika* motif; (ii) the flying *vidyadhara* motif; (iii) the examples of dance movement in scenes relating to processions, performances, etc., and individual sculptures of dancers and (iv) the dance aspects of deities, normally termed as *nrttamurti*-s. Unfortunately, at that time, no examples from Assam were included, on account of the paucity of published material and because the valuable finds of Ambari and the adjoining areas had not then come to light. Nor was it possible to incorporate this evidence in the second edition of the book. A second look at the material from Assam is convincing proof of the thesis set out in that work that there appear to be certain Pan-Indian movements, which are common to all parts of India, at a given period and also that each school has a distinctive regional character, especially in the post-eleventh century period. We shall thus deal with a few select examples of these motifs from the sculptural remains of Assam, particularly Ambari, and would consider this as a necessary supplement to all that has been said on the subject in *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*.

Foremost is the *shalabhanjika* motif, which is seen on door *jambha*-s as railing and bracket figures throughout the whole range of Indian sculpture. We have held the view that while this motif can be seen as the expression of a

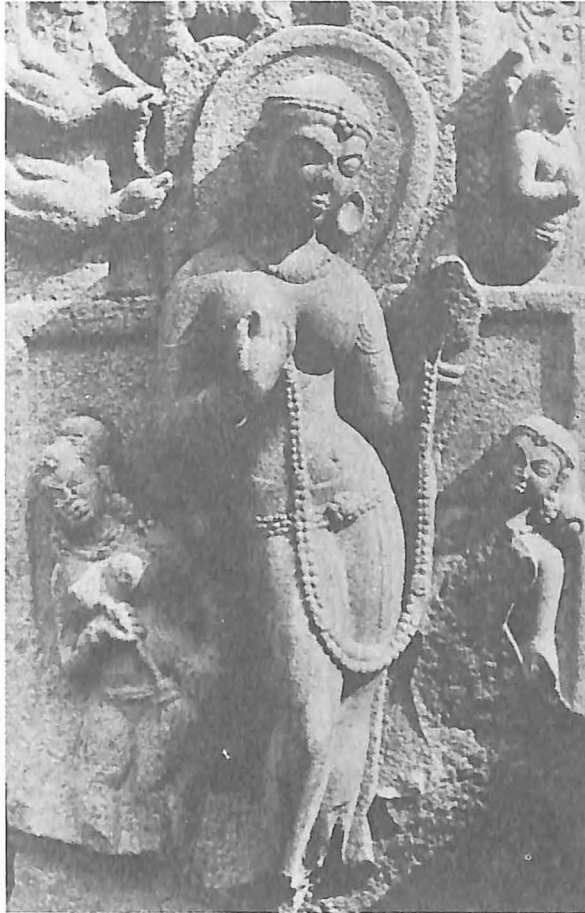


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'fertility cult' and a long-accepted myth of the *ashoka-dohada*, its formal elements are invariably related to the positions and movements termed in the *Natyashastra* and other texts as the *chari-s*. The *Natyashastra* speaks of one foot or leg movement culminating in certain positions, largely in 'place', called the *bhaumi chari-s* (earthly *chari-s*) and those that use both feet and legs, and indicate elevation from the ground, namely *akashiki chari-s* (aerial *chari-s*). The Indian sculptor makes frequent and prolific use of the movement patterns from the earliest times, even if the sculptural figure serves the purely functional purpose of a bracket as in Sanchi. Examples can be found from the Ranigumpha caves of Orissa

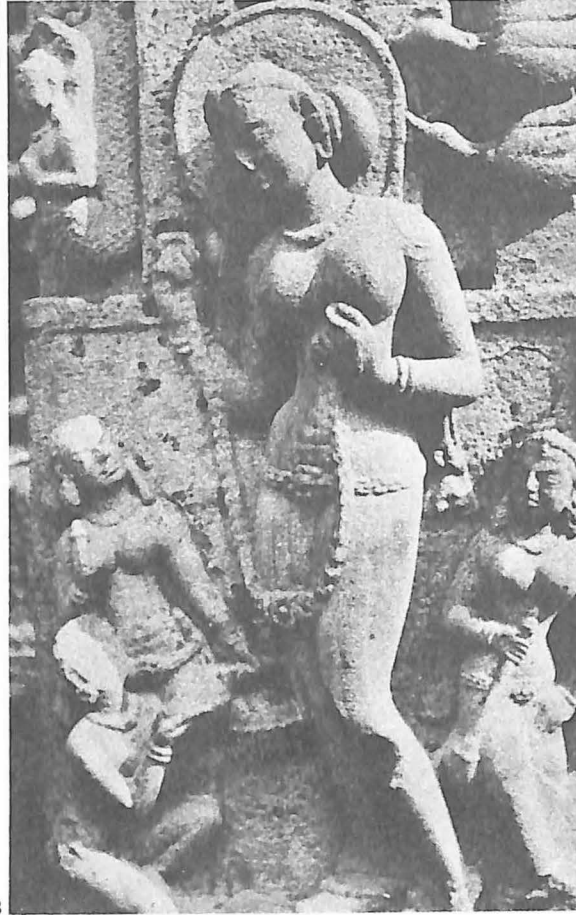


(circa first century B.C.) right till the seventeenth century in South India. Bharut, Mathura (in the early period) and Bhuvaneshwara, Konarak, and Khajuraho (of the medieval period) present a fascinating variety of the poses of sculptural figures which present the *shalabhanjika* motif. In Assam, although we do not find many examples of the motif in the early period, the medieval sculptures of the Ambari and other sites in Gauhati reveal a popular preoccupation with the motif. The Ambari and Gauhati examples have thus to be seen in relation to their precursors in Gauhati and in relation to contemporary developments in Khajuraho, Bhuvaneshwara and the Bengal school, roughly from the tenth to twelfth century A.D.



1A

The precursors of the Gauhati and Ambari *shalabhanjika*-s and *dvarapalika*-s are the two beautifully-executed figures of Ganga and Jamuna in the ruins of the Shiva temple, Dah-Parvatia, Tezpur (Darrang District) also called Daha Parvatia and belonging to the sixth century (Illus. 1, 1A, 1B). These undoubtedly recall to mind the Deogarh gate and the *jambha* figures of the Gupta period, the Besnagar Ganga,<sup>2</sup> and the female figures of the Elura caves (Illus. 2).<sup>3</sup> The continuity of movement with a marked restraint is characteristic of all these figures. The Dah-Parvatia examples tell us of a similarity of approach, where each



1B

of the two figures has a *samapada* of one foot and a slight *kunchita* of the other foot. The knee of the leg, which has the *kunchita* foot, is slightly bent in all the examples. The *abhanga* is also clear and we find no sharp lines or angles. The upper torso is slightly bent without any accentuations and this is very close to the Besnagar Ganga. However, there is no tilt of the neck in either the Deogarh examples or the Besnagar Ganga, or in the Elura cave *jambha* figures. A close comparison of the examples of the three sites reveals very deep affinities, but also certain differences in the manner in which the same pose has been treated. What is true of the quality of flowing movement in the body is equally true of the drapery and the jewellery. The transparent skirt coming down to the ankles is evident in all these examples; so also is the waist girdle, and the economy of ornamentation, both of the upper and lower limbs. The coiffure, however, is distinctive in each case. Other distinguishing features are the spacing of the *gana*-s and minor figures who invariably accompany the motif.

But the ninth to eleventh century examples are a far cry from these early examples. In three examples from the Gauhati Museum, we find a marked change from a flowing curve to definite lines. The earlier flow is replaced by a terseness of treatment, which has some features in common with the Bhuvaneshwara, Khajuraho *shalabhanjika*-s and those of Rajasthan but there is also a distinctive



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regional character in all the examples. They cannot be mistaken for the figures of either Bhuvaneshwara or Khajuraho.

The *chauri*-bearer from the Majuli Tea Estate, Darrang District, (circa tenth century) stands frontally in a clear *samapada* of both feet, even if the feet have been broken now (Illus. 3). The deflection of the hip to one side and the torso to the opposite is clearly and precisely delineated. In none of the earlier examples of Assamese sculpture, do we see a *dola hasta* but here there is a perfect *dola hasta* of one arm and she holds the *chauri* in a half-*mushti* by the other. The bust is full and rounded and the neck is in *anchita*. While it would be impossible to identify the figure as a standard example of the *shalabhanjika*,



its stylistic features quite obviously make it one amongst the many interpretations of the same motif. The facial features of the figure, however, are distinctive and so are the ear ornaments. The other *dvarapalika* (Illus. 4) shows a further development of movement, for here she stands in a clear *svastika chari* position, with one foot in *samapada* and the other in *kunchita*. While she holds the *khadga* in one hand, with the other she holds a *darpana*. This holding of the *darpana* is quite different from the treatment of this motif in either Bhuvaneshwara or Khajuraho. Each single movement of the upper and lower limbs is clearly seen in terms of parallel vertical lines instead of curves. The modelling is bold. The tiara on her head is a characteristic feature of many sculptures from Assam and we realise that it is this tiara which then crystallises into the crown and head-dress of the sculptures of Assam in the Ahom period. We find thus that although the thematic content and the principles of movement are similar, the treatment is distinctive. Finally there is yet a third example from Gauhati, called the *Alasya-Kanya*, which is a perfect depiction of the *shalabhanjika* motif. Here while there is a *svastika* of the feet, the *kunchita* foot is replaced by the *agratalasanchara* and the curve of the torso is markedly attenuated. There are



many ornaments and we observe a greater sense of movement. While the three are in a series, there is a progressive development from a rather rigid *samapada* position to dynamic *svastika* movement. Taken together they are a continuation of the trends seen in the Ganga and Jamuna figures of Dah-Parvatia but also related to contemporary trends of the ninth and tenth century. All these are also related to the sculptures found in the Tezpur temple in Darrang District.<sup>4</sup>

The motif of the *vidyadhara* or the *gandharva* has also become known to Indian sculpture since the second or first century B.C. and one of the earliest examples comes from the Ranigumpha caves of Udaygiri and Khandgiri. Gradually it becomes a pervasive motif in not only Indian but all South-east Asian sculpture. While not many examples of the motif are found in the sculptural remains of Assam, there is an outstanding example of the motif from Gauhati (Illus. 5). Encircled in an oval shape, the *vidyadhara* is seen in a characteristic pose of the *vrshchika kuttila karana*, holding a garland. Its treatment is frontal, without that twist of the waist, so characteristic of the Khajuraho Dulaheo Temple *vidyadhara*-s. There are, however, many features which link it to the



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*vrshchika karana* motif seen in the Rajiva Lochana Temple and also in Khajuraho.<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere we have drawn attention to the characteristic feature of the depiction of the flying motif, which to our mind draws its inspiration from the movements of this generic group described in the *Natyashastra* as the *vrshchika karana*-s.<sup>6</sup> The one leg infolded, with a marked bend of the knee, and the other free in space to extend backward or sideways is known to many schools of Indian sculpture. The example from Gauhati also belongs to this family where an identical approach is adopted. Again, except for the special headgear, which is evident in most Assamese sculpture, the figure is very much a part and parcel of the larger group of flying figures found in all parts of India.<sup>7</sup> All these (with the solitary exception of two examples from Sanchi) are *gandharva*-s or *vidyadhara*-s, without a pair of wings and seen in a movement cadence called the

*vrshchika karana*. The example from Gauhati is in the *vrshchika kuttila* with one infolded leg and the other extended with an out-flexion of the calf. In treatment, it differs from the Aihole figures and the Rajiva Lochana figure,<sup>8</sup> on account of an almost frontal treatment of the torso. The Khajuraho *vidyadhara*<sup>9</sup> is the closest mirror image, both for the position of the legs and the treatment of the torso. Purely stylistically, the Gauhati *vidyadhara* lies somewhere between the Aihole and the Khajuraho *vidyadhara*-s.

Judging from the prevalence of the *shalabhanjika* motif and its depiction and that of the flying *vidyadhara*, it would appear that there was an affinity between the sculptural reliefs in Assam in the ninth-tenth century and those in many other parts of India.

Although both these categories are important indicators for recognizing the adherence to certain movement patterns of the *Natyashastra* tradition, the more valuable reliefs are those which capture the dance scene per se. Here again we have significant evidence from Assam. In the ruins of the Tezpur Town, Darrang District, there are a few panels which show a pair of dancers carved within a rectangular frame.<sup>10</sup> In each there is a dancer accompanied by a musician, either a drummer or a flutist. The dancer in nearly five of these panels is in an identical pose. The lower limbs are invariably in an *ardhamandali*, with bent knees and all that we have termed as the *kshipta* position of the legs and knees. In each case, one foot is in *samapada* and the other in *kunchita*. In short, the position of the lower limbs is common to all the *karana*-s of the *ghurnita* or the *valita* variety. One arm is raised, with the hand at the level of the head, and the other is extended in a *lata hasta* in front. Since, except for a single example, one arm does not cross over to the other side but remains in the centre, it cannot be identified as the *kari hasta* movement. The differences arise out of a variety of ways in which the torso and neck movement is captured by the sculptor. The closest parallel of a similar movement comes from dance figures seen in Rajasthan<sup>11</sup> where we find a single dancer enclosed in rectangular areas. They are seen in a variety of poses. A few amongst these capture a movement reminiscent of that captured by the Assam reliefs.

Of great significance is a scene of music and dance from the tenth century from Gauhati where, inspite of its present mutilated condition, one can quite clearly observe an attempt at capturing a full music and dance sequence dynamically. There are three figures, one of a dancer in the middle, the second of a drummer and the third of a seated figure who may well have been a vocalist, or a director (akin to a *nattuvanar*) of the performance. Both the drummer and the dancer are depicted in an open *ardhamandali*, with a much wider space between the feet than the examples quoted above. The proportion of the upper and the lower limbs leaves an impression of an elongation, a greater sense of flow than those of the *dvarapalika*-s and the *shalabhanjika*-s or the pair each of musician and dancer in the Tezpur panels. Although it is not possible to be certain about the nature of the foot-contact, it would appear that while one foot is in *samapada*, the other was possibly in a *kunchita*. The drummer holds a drum of the *alingya* variety and has a slight *abhanga*. The dancer is in a *prshthasvastika*, and there is definite turning around the *trika*. Many examples of this type of movement can be seen in other parts of India,

particularly the Śasabahu Temple, Gwalior, and in Kerala.<sup>12</sup> One hand is raised high above the head and the other is gracefully extended to its own side in a *lata hasta*. Had this scene been complete, it would have received the same attention as the *prshthasvastika* seen in a figure from Allahabad.

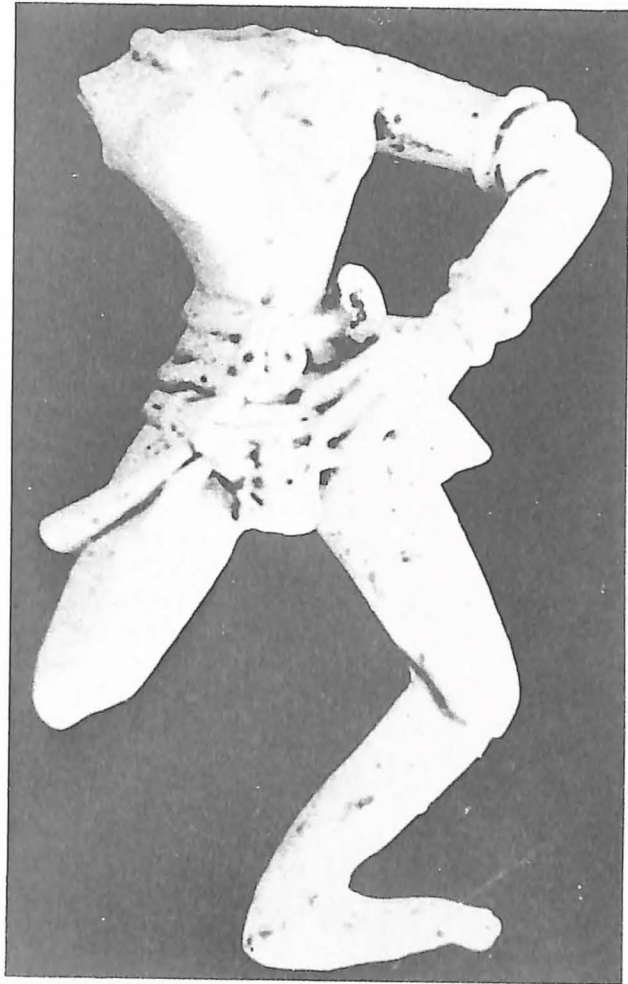
The entire composition makes it clear that in Assam, as in other places, there was a style of dance which depended for its kinetic vocabulary on the *ardhamandali*, the *svastika* and *prshthasvastika* and *uromandala hasta-s* and the *lata hasta-s*. Both the Tezpur and Gauhati sculptures offer evidence of the fact that at least until the tenth century we cannot identify any movement which we today associate with either Manipuri or for that matter *sattra* dancing although a *kshipta* position of the knees is seen in the latter. Nor do we find the typical *khāl* or *pung*. The drums are all smaller.

Finally, to this period belong the two important finds from Ambari, not in stone, but instead in terra-cotta. There is a female torso which without doubt was the figure of a dancer, even if the lower limbs and the arms are



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today missing (Illus. 6). M. K. Dhavlikar mentions this figure in his report on the Ambari excavations.<sup>13</sup> He says, "When complete this would have been one of the finest figures of its class in the entire range of Indian art. The sensitive modelling bears eloquent testimony to the high attainment of the artist. The voluptuous breasts and the attenuated waist add to the sensuous curves of the body. The figure is probably that of a semi-divine nymph (*apsara*). Stylistically, it is related to the *surasundari-s* on the Sun Temple of Konarak (Orissa). Made of extremely fine kaolin, it was fashioned in two parts, the front and the back pressed out of two separate moulds and then joined together. The thin-ribbon of clay joining the two parts is visible at the sides. On the basis of stratigraphical and stylistic evidence, the figure can be dated to *circa* 8th to 10th century A.D."

This general description speaks of the aesthetic qualities of the figure and while we may not agree that she is related to the *surasundari-s* of the Sun Temple, Konarak, it is clear that she does manifest a highly evolved tradition of sculpture, fully acquainted with the norms of sculpture technique, and using these norms with consummate artistic skill. Indeed its significance is enhanced by the fact that perhaps it is the only terra-cotta figure in the round which

captures movement so perfectly. Its proportions, 18.1 cm height and 10.3 cm width of the breasts and 9.4 cm width of a narrow waist, are impressive. While examples of free standing sculpture in stone and in bronze are found in other parts in India, there are hardly any other examples of terra-cotta figures of these proportions in the round which depict the full human figure in a moment of dance. Although no definite surmises can be made, it would perhaps not be incorrect to speculate that her lower limb position was in an *ardhamandali* and that the arms were in a position akin to that which we have mentioned in the reliefs referred to above.

The other terra-cotta figure reinforces our impression for here is a perfect example of the *ardhamandali* in absolute symmetry (Illus. 7). The modelling is as perfect and the movement is without doubt of a dancer arrested in a dynamic moment of movement. Its chiselled quality, its perfect proportion and balance make it a figure which is in a class by itself and is an invaluable addition to our knowledge of the prevalence of a developed tradition of both sculpture and dance in Assam. Its *ardhamandali* is without any deflection of the hip in an *abhanga*, a feature characteristic of the Bhuvaneshwara and Konarak sculptures. In this respect, if a comparison must be made, it can be only to the central dancer of the famous dance panel from Harshagiri, Rajasthan.<sup>14</sup> As a terra-cotta figure depicting the dance it is unique and needs to be better and more widely known.





For comparison we can refer here to an example of a tenth-eleventh century Shiva dancing figure from Numaligarh where a similar type of movement is captured. Although the two media are different, stylistically one can seek clear



affinities (Illus. 8). Indeed the latter is also very close to the dancing Tripurari Shiva from the Deoparbat Numaligarh figure from Golaghat.<sup>15</sup> Apart from the Tripurari Shiva mentioned above, who is seen in an *urdhvajanu* movement, there is the Chandrashekhara Shiva dancing on a bull found in the river-bed, Uzanbazar, Gauhati. His pose, too, is in *urdhvajanu* (Illus. 9).<sup>16</sup> A slightly later Nataraja from Ambari is also in *urdhvajanu* (Illus. 10). Other examples from Ambari of Vishnu, Surya, Ganga and Jamuna tell us the same story.

This then brings us to the last category of the dancing *gana*-s and the deities. Here, too, not many examples are to be found, but we have enough examples to support the view that, as in the case of the first three groups, there was a consanguinity of approach. The principles of movement followed in the depiction of a Shiva *gana* (tenth-eleventh century A.D.) and that of the Nrtta Ganapati are similar to what we have noticed in all the other figures. In the Shiva *gana*, a definite *asana* has been captured, but the Nrtta Ganapati is in a powerful dancing movement; in a *kshipta* of the legs, one foot in *samapada*, and the other in *kunchita*; the arms, one in *uromandala* and the other in a clear *kari hasta* (Illus. 11). There is also a marked deflection of the hip balanced with an extension of the torso in the opposite direction. The terra-cotta dancing figure is an example of perfect balance and symmetry in restraint; the dancing Ganesha of a powerful movement in exuberance and asymmetry. One diagonal



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relates the movement of the arm and the opposite leg and another is formed by the line of the *kari hasta* and the flowing trunk. The impression of a dynamic tension and joyful abundance is created by the intersecting lines of these diagonals, all placed within the circumscribed space of the horizontal rectangular area. A very different treatment of the theme is seen in the Ganesha dancing on the *vahana* on the walls of the Kamakhya Temple.<sup>17</sup> Here he is set in a vertical frame, and one can discern the clear movement of the *samapada* feet and the *kunchita* foot with a *dola hasta*. Although the example is not quite as chiselled as the famous example from the Bharata Kala Bhavan, Varanasi,<sup>18</sup> it is a close parallel of the latter. However, the dancing Ganesha from Barpukhurir Holeswar, Tezpur, compares favourably with the Varanasi dancing Ganesha.<sup>19</sup>

We see thus that between the sixth and twelfth century Assam witnessed a sustained development of an architectural and sculptural tradition which had many interesting points of contact with parallel movements in other parts of India. Also, inspite of these affinities, one observes a distinctive Assamese character which begins to make its way from the sculptural reliefs from Daha Parvatia and culminates in the regional school of Kamakhya. This conclusion can be reached also by examining motifs other than those we have considered here, but since our main concern was with the evolution of movement patterns, the few examples included here illustrate the Indian phenomenon of an interaction between different schools at a given moment of time, as also a gradual evolution of a distinctive regional style.

While one could go on to narrate the history of Assamese sculpture in the post-Kamakhya period and the many significant finds, mostly in terra-cotta, found in different sites between the seventeenth and eighteenth century, these belong to another type of development which has many local variants unconnected with what we find in other parts of India. From amongst these, one is particularly interesting. This is a dance scene where we find three dancers, all in a *svastika* pose. The *ardhamandali* has given place to an erect posture with a definite elongation of the figures. The central figure possibly has a *karkata hasta* and the other two are seen in an *alapadma* of one hand. Finally, there is the dancing figure of an ascetic belonging to the eighteenth century. This figure is unique on account of the ritualistic type of dance it depicts. The horizontal lines of the torso, suggesting ribs, are in deep contrast to the vertical lines of the upper and lower limbs. The *trishula* and the other implements are quite obviously indicative of the ritualistic character of the dance; the knotted coiffure, the tilt of the head and the distinctive open position of the lower limbs in an *ardhamandali* (which may have been nearer to the *mandalasthana* rather than the *vaishnavasthana*) make the figure unique. There is hardly any other stone relief or terra-cotta figure which portrays a similar type of ritual dance. More needs to be known about this figure from textual or creative literature before any final conclusions can be drawn from this sculptural relief alone.

While we have here restricted ourselves to the sculptural evidence and have not related it to the inscriptional records and the fund of historical evidence in chronicles and creative literature found in Assam relating to the dance, it is necessary to point out that such portrayal of dance movement could have been possible only if there was in fact a flourishing tradition of the dance at different levels of society and these examples could not be based either on the imagination of the artist or models found in other parts of India. Although little is known about the history of theatre and dance in Assam of the pre-Shankaradeva period, there is enough inscriptional record of a flourishing tradition of the *devadasi*-s in the different temples of Assam. Perhaps the earliest reference comes from the Tezpur Copper Plate Grant of Vanamala (ninth century A.D.) which speaks of a group of women who were dedicated to the temples. There is a clear reference here to the offer of the *devadasi*-s to the temple of Hatakesvara or Hataka Sulin at Tezpur.<sup>20</sup> Scholars like Dr. P. C. Chowdhury and Dr. B. K. Kakati have drawn our attention to the use of the word *Dulaharigana* for women dedicated to the temple.

Later, several references are found, during the Ahom rule, to the nature of land grants and the manner of worship in the Shiva and Vishnu temples. A careful perusal of the epigraphical evidence from Assam on which much valuable work has been done by Mr. Gait, Dr. Neog and others<sup>21</sup> may yield corroborative evidence of these sculptural finds.

This would then need to be seen in relation to texts like the *Hastamuktavali* and the commentaries of the *Gita-Govinda*<sup>22</sup> and the pictorial evidence in the *Chitra Bhagvata* and other texts.<sup>23</sup> Thus far, from a perusal of some of this material, one can gather information on the nature of the shrines, the priesthood and the tradition of the *devadasi*. But except for the *Hastamuktavali*, no epigraphical record or literary evidence throws light on the technical aspects of the dance, such as the pose, *bhangi* and the various *nrtta* movements. However, this requires further probing and no conclusions can yet be drawn on the basis of the published material. Perhaps Assamese scholars will without doubt unearth literary evidence which will support the sculptural evidence and thus help in reconstructing the history of dance which ultimately culminated in a style of dance which we today recognize as the *Deodhani* tradition on the one hand, and the *Oja-palli* and *Sattra* tradition on the other. This article is an exploratory attempt on the basis of a few (but certainly not all) examples of the sculptural finds of the earlier period.

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## Notes:

1. Vatsyayan, Kapila. *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*. Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, 1968. Chapter IV, Sculpture and Dance, hereafter referred to as V., K. *CIDLA*.
2. See Agrawal. *V. Gupta Art*. Plate for Deogarh door-frame; for Besnagar Ganga.
3. V., K. *op. cit. CIDLA*. Fig. 15. Female figures from Rameshwara Caves.
4. Nath, R. M. *The Background of Assamese Culture*, published by A. K. Nath, Shillong, 1948, Pl. X, 3. Dancing images, Bamuni Hill, Tezpur, hereafter referred to as Nath, R. M. *B. of A.C.*
5. V., K. *op. cit. CIDLA*. Figs. 49 and 50, Fig. 49 from Rajiva Lochana Temple and Fig. 50 from Dulahdeo Temple from Khajuraho.
6. V., K. *Vrshchika Karana*, an article in the *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Arts. (JISOA)* Vol. V. (New Series), Part II, 1972-73.
7. V., K. *op. cit. CIDLA*. Figs. 39 to 55.
8. *Ibid*, Fig. 44 and 49.
9. *Ibid*, Fig. 50 from Khajuraho.
10. Nath, R. M. *B. of A.C.* Pl. X, 4 & 5, R. M. Nath describes these as scenes of Bihu dancing, but there is nothing in common with these examples and what one observes of Bihu dance today.
11. V., K. *op. cit. CIDLA*. Fig. 90. A scene of dancers from Jodhpur. (See third figure from right).
12. *Ibid*. Fig. 97, dance figure from Sasabahu temple, Gwalior (11th century) and Fig. 98 from the Trivikramamangal temple, Kerala (12th century).
13. Dhavalikar, M. K. 'Archaeology of Gauhati', *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, Vol. XXX-XXXII, 1973, pp. 137-149, description on page 143. Also see. 'Ambari Excavations', *Journal of Poona University*, Vol. 35, 1972; *Indian Archaeology*, 1968-69. A review *Excavations at Ambari*, pages 3-4 and Pl. IV (b).
14. V., K. *op. cit. CIDLA*, Fig. 91, from Sikar: Harshagiri, the Purana Mahadev temple, 10th century and also see Fig. 93, figures on the left in the Chalukyan panel of Shiva and Parvati on Nandi.
15. Nath, R. M. *B. of A.C.* Plate XII, Tripurari Shiva from the ruins of Deoparbat Numaligarh, Golaghat.
16. *Ibid*. Pl. XIV, ii. Chandrashekhara Shiva dancing on Vehicle (River bed Uzanbasar, Gauhati).
17. *Ibid*. Pl. XIII, iii. Ganesha dancing (on the wall of the Kamakhya temple).
18. Bharat Kala Bhavan. See Ganesha.

19. Nath, R. M. *op. cit. B. of A. C.* Pl. XVII, ii. Dancing Ganesha from Barpukhurir, Holeshvara, Tezpur.
20. Rajathananda Das Gupta, 'The Institution of the Devadasis in Assam', *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. XLII, Part II, August, 1965, Serial No. 128, pp. 555-578 and particularly pp. 570-571.  
Also see Bhattacharya, V., *Kamarupa Sasanvali*, pp. 62-64 and Chowdhury P. C., *A. History of the Civilization of the People of Assam*.
21. Neog, Maheswar, *Prachyarsasanvali*: an anthology of royal charters inscribed on stone, copper, etc. of Kamarupa, from 1205 A.D. to 1847 A.D. English Introduction and Text.  
Gait, Edward A. A. *History of Assam*, 2nd edition, Calcutta, 1926. Bhuiyan S. K. *Kamarupar Buranji*, Gauhati, 1930, etc.
22. Neog, Maheswar, 'Two Commentaries of the *Gita-Govinda*.' *The Journal of the Music Academy*, Vol. XXV, 1954-55.
23. *Bhagavata-Purana* Finds. Two illustrated manuscripts; one of Book VI painted by Vadha Ligira and the other of the Tenth Skanda found in Bali-Sattra.  
See illustrations in Nath, R. M. *B. of A. C.* Plates XXXV and Neog, Maheswar, *The Art of Painting in Assam*, Gauhati, 1959, Figs. 6 and 8 and 22 and 23. The last depicts a *maharasa*.

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## Illustrations :

1. Dah-Parvatia from Tezpur Gupta temple doorway, with Yamuna and Ganga, *circa* 6th century A.D.
- 1A. Detail of above: Ganga.
- 1B. Detail of above: Yamuna.
2. River Goddess. Sita ki Nahani Cave, Ellora, *circa* 6th century A.D.
3. *Shalabhanjika* from Majuli, Darrang Dist., Assam, *circa* 10th century A.D.
4. *Dvarapalika* from Majuli, Darrang Dist., Assam, *circa* 10th century A.D.
5. *Vidyadhara* from Ambari, Gauhati Museum, Assam, *circa* 10th century A.D.
6. Broken torso; terra-cotta, Ambari, Dept. of Anthropology Museum, University of Gauhati, Assam, *circa* 8th century A.D.
7. Terra-cotta figure of dancer, Ambari, Dept. of Anthropology Museum, University of Gauhati, Assam, *circa* 8th century A.D.
8. *Gayasura* from Numaligarh, Gauhati Museum, Assam, *circa* 10th century A.D.
9. *Nataraja* from Uzanbazar, Gauhati, Gauhati Museum, *circa* 9th-10th centuries A.D.
10. *Nataraja* from Ambari, Gauhati Museum, Assam, *circa* 10th century A.D.
11. Dance of Ganesha and Kartikeya, Gauhati, Gauhati Museum, Assam, *circa* 9th century A.D.

*Seminar on Nata Music, Manipur State Kala Academy, Imphal, Manipur, May 26-28, 1981.*

A proposal made by Dr. M. R. Gautam, Vice-Chancellor, Indira Kala Sangit Vishvavidyalaya, Khairagarh, was accepted by the Manipur State Kala Academy, Imphal, which agreed to conduct a three-day seminar on *Nata Music: The 350-year old Vaishnava Sankirtana Tradition*. The proposal emphasized that there were considerable influences on *Nata Music* of the *raga*-s and *tala*-s sung in Hindustani and Karnatic Music. The secretary of the Academy, Prof. Ch. Manihar Singh, accepted the responsibility of organising the seminar which was held from May 26-28, 1981 at the Gandhi Memorial Hall, Imphal. Musicologists and musicians from both the Hindustani and Karnatic systems took part in the seminar.

The seminar began with the paper *South Indian Folk Music* by B. V. K. Shastri of Mysore. He mentioned two types of music: (i) music sung at home or in interiors and (ii) music sung in the open, in theatres or chants. He played recordings of 15 types of music of the states of the South (except for Tamilnadu), including some of instrumental music, such as the Panchavadyam of Kerala, about which there might be a doubt as to whether it is folk instrumental music at all. This was followed by an oral presentation by B. Jayantakumar Sharma on *Traditions of the Folk Music of Manipur*. He explained that primitive songs were sung with the three notes *Sa - Ga - Pa*, and then gradually the other notes were developed. The entire paper was based on vocal demonstration or music on the *Pena*, a popular bowed instrument of Manipur.



The second session started with a lecture on *The Raga-s of Karnatic Music* delivered by Dr. R. Sathyanarayana of Mysore. The lecture was well-presented with recorded tapes of *raga-s*. He classified the *raga-s* on the basis of definition, scale, organic analysis, *alap*, improvisations set into songs, the *Janya-Janaka raga-s*, *Raganga—Bhashanga—Upanga raga-s*, *Ghana-Naya-Deshya* and the similarity with folk tunes. The same topic was continued by T. S. Parthasarathy of Madras. He dealt with the theoretical and historical aspects of Karnatic *raga-s*. The session concluded with the paper *The Raga-Ragini System in Hindustani Music* by Dr. Indrani Chakravarti of Kurukshetra. She outlined the historical background of the *Raga-Ragini* system, with illustrations of 6 *Purusha* (male) *raga-s* of the *Hanumana-mata* still surviving in the oral tradition of Hindustani music, though the textual conception of this system was no longer in practice. After the papers, a practical demonstration of *Nata Sankirtana* in *raga* Mauri was presented by Sri Lakhpati Singh and his party.

On May 27, the morning session began with the paper *Gamaka-s of Hindustani Music* by Dr. M. R. Gautam, who defined *gamaka-s* with illustrations (rendered by Kumari Alapana Munshi) in different *raga-s*. For example, the seven types of *Komala Gandhara* used in the seven *raga-s*: Darbari, Adana, Nayaki, Todi, Multani, Bageshri and Mian-Ki-Malhar with oscillations. He described all the fifteen *gamaka-s* defined by Sharangadeva in the context of present day Hindustani music. In reply to Dr. Chakravarti's doubts about the use of terminology in respect of *Ullasita* or *Ghasit* and *Plavita* or *Meend*, it was argued that some oscillations were used differently in contemporary vocal and instrumental music. The next paper *Gamaka-s or the Aesthetic Graces Employed in Karnatic Raga-s* was presented by Dr. S. Ramanathan. He defined the *Dashavidha Gamaka-s* of Muttusvami Dikshitar along with Subbarama Dikshitar's fifteen *gamaka-s*, illustrating them with examples in vocal music. Dr. R. Sathyanarayana's comments on this presentation were: (i) the terminologies of the Hindustani and Karnatic systems should be fixed; (ii) *gamaka-s* should be defined in terms of vocal, instrumental and in terms of both (vocal and instrumental combined). The session concluded with the paper *The Concept of Tala in Karnatic Music* presented by T. R. Subramaniam of Delhi. He emphasized the need for musicians of the Karnatic school to pay more attention to *shruti-s* than to *tala-s* and for musicians of the Hindustani school to gain more control over *tala*, without depending too heavily on the tabla player. Both the sessions were chaired by Shri H. Dwijamani Dev Sharma who sought some clarification about the existence of some *tala-s* (Brahma, Rudra, Lakshmi etc.) in vogue in *Nata* music. Dr. Ramanathan explained that the Brahma *tala* was used in the South only in temple festivals. Dr. Gautam stated that these *tala-s* were still known mainly to mridanga players and also to some of the tabla players of the Hindustani school of music.

The evening session was chaired by Dr. M. R. Gautam. The first paper, presented by Sri Ph. Devakishore Sharma, was on *The Evolution of Nata Music in Manipur*. He described the historical background of *Nata* music and mentioned the six *raga-s* and thirty-six *ragini-s*. The peculiarity in *Nata* music was that it followed six *Dasa-s* (servants) and thirty-six *Dasi-s* (maids) with some *Uparaga-s*. The striking point was that all the *raga-s* belonged to only the *Shuddha* (pure) *svara-s* and there were no *Vikrita* (modified) *svara-s*. Sri Parthasarathy, Dr. Sathyanarayana and Dr. Chakravarti laid stress on the task of tracing the

original texts of the different schools. This was followed by Sri S. Thanil Singh's paper on *Tala used in Nata Music* with illustrations. Dr. Chakravarti observed that the Hindustani and *Nata* Chautal were synonymous, with the same *matra*, metre and divisions, excluding some local *bol*-s used in Pung. The session concluded with *Ariba Pala* demonstrated by Sri Parijat and his party.

The morning session, on May 28, started with the recordings of the Gurus on *Nata raga*-s. Guru Ibot Singh performed two *raga*-s and Sri Ibotombi Singh tried to delineate all the six *raga*-s according to the notation. The six *raga*-s were Mallav, Mallar, Sri, Vasant, Hillor (Hindol) and Karnataka (Karnat) according to the *Panchama-Sara-Samhita* of Narada. The delegates and observers made a few observations on *Nata* music in relation to Hindustani and Karnatic music.

According to Dr. Ramanathan, Mallar was almost the same as Bhupali or Mohanam excluding the concluding notes *Sa - Ri - Ma*. Likewise, Sri and Karnataka resembled Shankarabharanam or Bilawal and Navaraj (of the Karnatic style). Dr. Sathanarayana maintained that, in *Nata* Music, (i) Spiritual content was present; (ii) *Ghar* (*Sthayi*), *Panchama* (*Antara*) and *Dirgha* (*Sanchari*) could be roughly assimilated with textual *svasthana*-s; (iii) *Pancham* could mean not only the *Pancham* of *Shadja* but any fifth note of the *Graha*; (iv) Recording of the actual pitch of the notation should be made; (v) the notes of Shankarabharanam could be imposed on every *raga* with some variations of other notes. He felt that a systematic investigation was needed. Shri Singhajit Singh proposed that *Nata* music should be allowed to remain as it was and there was no need for further study or investigation. Replying to him, Dr. Sathanarayana and Dr. Gautam maintained that one could assimilate unknown musical tunes only through notes. The aim of *Shastra* (theory) was to direct the mind away from the subconscious state to the conscious one and every scholar should try to arrive at true knowledge.

In the concluding session, the consensus was that the seminar had been successful in probing the subject in depth. After expressing their gratitude to the State Kala Academy, the delegates placed on record their observations: (i) in regard to the six major *raga*-s as presented at the seminar, correspondences could be traced to Shankarabharanam and Harikambodhi of the Karnatic and Bilawal and Khamaj of the Hindustani systems of music; (ii) a few *gamaka*-s, *tala*-s, the segmentation of *raga* structure, the classification of *raga-ragini*-s were similar to the theoretical aspects of and practical use in Indian music. The seminar recommended that steps be taken to widen the areas of practice, knowledge and appreciation of *Nata* music through adequate dissemination and scientific investigation.

The evening ended with a short cultural programme of vocal and instrumental recitals by the delegate-artistes. The participants were Dr. Indrani Chakravarti (sitar), Kumari Alpana Munshi (Hindustani vocal), Sri T. R. Subramaniam (Karnatic vocal), Dr. M. R. Gautam and Dr. S. Ramanathan (Hindustani and Karnatic vocal respectively) and Kumari Y. Ranjana Devi (Manipuri *Sankirtana*). There was a warm response from the audience to all these items.

INDRANI CHAKRAVARTI

## Obituaries



Palghat Mani Iyer, one of the greatest exponents ever of the *mridangam*, died at Cochin on May 30, 1981. He was seventy. Born in Palghat, son of Sesha Bhagavathar, he was initiated into the art of playing the *mridangam* by Vidwan Chathapuram Subba Iyer and began accompanying his father at concerts when he was only ten years of age. Later he studied with the great *mridangam* Vidwan, Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer. Even as a young man he made a name for himself and he was soon much in demand as an accompanist. He played with masters like Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Maharajapuram Vishvanatha Iyer and, above all, with Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar who encouraged him.

Palghat Mani Iyer's most significant contribution to Karnatic music is that he changed the *mridangam* player's approach to accompaniment. While in the traditional style of accompaniment, the *mridangam* player kept the structure of the *tala* clearly in front of the soloist and elaborated on it primarily within the framework of the *tala*, Mani Iyer created a style in which the *mridangam* player closely followed the melodic line, with all its stresses, decorations, *gamaka*-s, so faithfully that he often reminded a soloist of a *sangati* or *sangati*-s that he might have inadvertently missed. Of course, his touch was magical and his left hand so sensitive and controlled that he could play all the notes in the octave on it. Above all, he knew the true value and meaning of 'silences'. It was when he accompanied Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar that these attributes came out best—the meaning of tone and its infinite variety, the eloquence of silences, the nobility and dignity of simple and obvious usages, the element of surprise, and, above, all, real and meaningful innovation without doing violence to tradition, to *sampradaya*.

Palghat Mani Iyer was 'the gentle perfect knight' of accompanists. He never tried to dominate the soloist, but it was inevitable that quite often the sheer artistry of his playing diverted the attention of the audience from the soloist to the *mridangam* accompanist.

Palghat Mani Iyer's refusal, in the last years of his life, to play before a microphone stemmed from his genuine conviction that the mike was responsible for distorting the natural qualities of the voice and the instruments and also largely responsible for the deterioration of the voices both of singers and instruments.

In 1940 the Maharaja of Travancore made Mani Iyer his 'Asthana Vidwan'. He was the recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi's Award in 1956. The Music Academy of Madras elected him its President and conferred the title of Sangeeta Kala Nidhi on him in 1966. The Tamil Isai Sangam honoured him as 'Isai Perarignar' in 1968 and the President of India conferred on him the Padma Bhushan in 1971. He was most reluctant to perform abroad, but played at the Commonwealth Arts Festival and the Edinburgh Music Festival, in 1965. He also toured the U.S.A. recently.

In the words of Dr. Narayana Menon: "He is 'irreplaceable', and as far as the world of music goes, his death is really a *great loss*. Virtuosity or excellence in performance by itself does not make for *greatness*. Many attributes go into greatness—character, perception, the ability to apprehend music and a musical situation both intuitively and intellectually. Palghat Mani Iyer had a generous measure of all this. To me personally, listening to him was an experience; knowing him, a revelation. And now he has gone. And all we can do is to pray (or sing) in Thyagaraja's words:

*Ni nama rupamulaku nitya jaya mangalam*

(To your name and form, may there be *mangala* for ever.)"

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[ Picture: Courtesy M. Sundaresan ]

### *Vazhenkata Kunchu Nair (1910-1981)*

In the death of Vazhenkata Kunchu Nair on February 19, 1981, the world of Kathakali has lost not only a celebrated artiste but also a distinguished scholar and teacher. A pupil of Pattikamthodi Ramunni Menon, Kunchu Nair dominated the Kathakali stage for several decades. His style was marked by precision and economy. He served with distinction as Principal of both the Kerala Kalamandalam and the P. S. V. Natya Sangham, two of the prominent Kathakali schools of Kerala. He considered his art not just a profession but an instrument of worship and self-fulfilment. He received in his lifetime all the honours that a Kathakali artiste could aspire for. He was a recipient of the Padmabhushan Award and also the Sangeet Natak Akademi's Award for Kathakali. His death, after a long illness, was not altogether unexpected, but it leaves a void that is not easy to fill.

### *Mankulam Vishnu Nambudiri (1907-1981)*

The renowned Kathakali artiste, Mankulam Vishnu Nambudiri, died in Trivandrum on April 19, 1981. He was trained by Keerikkattu Sankara Pillai, Kochu Pillai Panickar and Kurichi Kunjan Panickar. He also studied with Keerikkattu Velu Pillai and the celebrated artiste, Mathoor Kunju Pillai Panickar. Though Mankulam could enact almost all the roles of the Kathakali repertoire, his name became synonymous with the *Paccha* (green-noble) characters. His own favourite *vesham* was that of Sri Krishna.

Mankulam was honoured by the President of India with the Padmashri in 1971. He was the recipient of several other awards, including the title of *Kalaratna* conferred on him by the Travancore Devaswom Board. He founded the "Samastha Kerala Kathakali Vidyalaya" at Keerikkattu, a school where he himself trained young aspirants in the art of Kathakali.

### *N. S. Ramachandran (1907-1981)*

Prof. N. S. Ramachandran, the well-known scholar of Karnatic music, died in New Delhi on May 8, 1981. He was Director of several stations of AIR and later, Chief Producer, Karnatic Music, AIR. Subsequently he was for five years Dean of the Faculty of Music, University of Delhi. His contributions at seminars or in academic journals (like the *Quarterly Journal*) were scholarly and perceptive. He wrote musical drama, operas, orchestral compositions and songs in Sanskrit which were presented by famous artistes like M. S. Subbulakshmi, M. L. Vasantha Kumari and Semmangudi Sreenivasier. His service to Karnatic music was recognised by the Sangeet Nataka Sangam of Madras which conferred the honour of *Kalaimamani* on him in 1971.

### *B. C. Deva (1921-1981)*

B. C. Deva, the noted musicologist, died in Bangalore on May 28, 1981. For his work on the tonal structure of the *tanpura* he was awarded the Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal's first doctorate in musicology (*Sangit Acharya*). He specialized in the psychophysics of Indian music, ethno-musicology and the study of musical instruments. He was associated with several learned societies and the author of a number of books published in India and abroad. He was for many years Assistant Secretary (Music) of the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

*Bansi Chandragupta (1924-1981)*

Bansi Chandragupta, art director for most of Satyajit Ray's films, died in New York on June 27, 1981. His first assignment was as assistant to the art director of Jean Renoir's *The River*. He worked with Satyajit Ray on sixteen films, including *Pather Panchali* (1955) for which he worked as full-fledged director for the first time. He was subsequently art director for 50 films, among which were those made by such well-known directors as Mrinal Sen, Basu Chatterjee, Shyam Benegal and Aparna Sen. He also directed documentaries, his *Ganga Sagar Mela* winning the President's Gold Medal in the Short Film Category.

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## Book Reviews

THE *RASARNAVASUDHAKARA* OF SIMHABHUPALA. Critically edited with introduction and notes by T. Venkatacharya (Professor of Sanskrit, University of Toronto). Published by the Adyar Library and Research Centre, Adyar, Madras, 1979, pp.CXXXII + 524, Rs. 110.00 (*In Sanskrit and English*).

The critical edition of *Rasarnavasudhakara* (hereafter referred to as *RAS*) will be welcomed by the community of scholars and students interested in Sanskrit drama, dramaturgy, poetics, erotics and the performing arts.

*RAS* belongs to the group of works devoted exclusively to *Rasa*, specially *Shringara*. Rudrabhatta's *Shringaratilaka*, Dhananjaya's *Dasharupaka*, Bhoja's *Shringaraprakasha*, Sharadatanaya's *Bhavaprakasha*, Bhanudutta's *Rasa-tarangani* and *Rasa-manjari*, though different in their expanse, belong to one group in the sense that they give supreme importance to *Rasa* in *Kavya* (*Shravya* and/or *Drishya*). They have been grouped as 'later writers on *Rasa*' by S. K. De. *RAS* has been hailed by M. Krishnamachari as a work that presents "a vivid and elaborate treatment of the canons of dramaturgy inclusive of the governing *Rasa*-s and probably the most comprehensive work on the subject so far available; its importance is enhanced in literary history by the several works and authors quoted in it, and so far it forms a landmark for historical research." S. K. De, on the other hand, has a general remark for the works of the above group. He states that none of them "adds anything new or original to a subject already thrashed out to its utmost." The present critical edition supplies all the necessary material for a close examination of these divergent viewpoints and for a balanced evaluation of *RAS*. The editor has refrained from giving his own evaluation to avoid creating a bias among readers.

The critical apparatus, that is the manuscripts and printed editions used for the present edition, have been described meticulously. The identity of the author Simhabhupala or Singabhupala in the *Recarla* clan has been established conclusively in the introduction. As far as the content of the treatise is concerned, the editor has discussed the following topics: (1) The five *arthopakshepaka*-s; (2) The *sandhiniyama* and *kramaniyama* of the *sandhyanga*-s; (3) The type of *prahasana* to which the *Bhagavadajjuka* belongs; (4) Rudrata mentioned in the *RAS*; (5) Whether Bahurupamishra is later than Simhabhupala; (6) The meaning of the word *vasaka* in *Vasakasajjika*; and (7) *Rangaprasadana* or *Rangaprasadhara*.

All these topics (except No. 5) pertain to dramaturgy, mostly *Dasharupakavidhana*. The reason for singling out these topics for special discussion has not been indicated by the editor. Perhaps he did not want to repeat the discussions of scholars like the late Dr. V. Raghavan (*Studies in Shringaraprakasha* pp. 717-719). Nevertheless, all the discussions in the introduction are enlightening and penetrating. Regarding the author's indebtedness to previous authors, the editor has supplied valuable material in the footnotes to the text, wherein the parallel treatment of the concepts referred to has been analysed in great detail. The works of Bharata, Abhinavagupta, Bhoja, Dhananjaya and his commentator

Dhanika, Sharadatanaya and several other authors have been compared with *RAS* at relevant points with great pains and critical acumen. A serious student of the subject will benefit immensely from these notes and can easily reconstruct the place of *RAS* in the literature on dramaturgy and erotics.

The absence of a notice, in the introduction, of the Sudhakara commentary on the *Sangita Ratnakara* by Simhabhupala strikes the reader, but the notice of this work in the footnotes makes up for this apparent lapse.

*RAS* has been out of print since long and the reprints that were attempted were not critical editions. The present edition, which is 'critical' in the real sense of the term, will serve the purpose of serious studies in Sanskrit literature both in its *lakshana* and *lakshya*. Although *RAS* is a text of *lakshana*, the discussion of *lakshya* texts that it embodies makes it a valuable document of applied criticism. In this respect a close comparison with Dhanika (author of the *Avaloka* commentary on *Dasharupaka*) will be rewarding. The editor has supplied all the necessary tools for such a comparison.

As regards the influence of *RAS* on later authors, the editor has compiled a list of texts wherein *RAS* has been cited. One could add here the name of the *Nataka-chandrika* of Rupa Gosvamin. In an introductory verse of this work, Rupa Gosvamin has mentioned *RAS* as one of the texts on which he draws heavily.

The editor deserves to be commended for the thoroughness which has resulted in this excellent edition.

PREM LATA SHARMA

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A GUIDE TO KATHAKALI by David Bolland, National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 1980, Rs. 30.00 (*In English*).

The author, in his Foreword, claims that this work is written by a layman for laymen. "It is an attempt to explain in simple language what Kathakali is all about. Above all it is intended to help anyone who is not conversant with the art, or who knows little about Hindu mythology, to enjoy a performance which is very difficult to follow unless one has some understanding of what is happening on the stage."

To this extent, the claim of the author is justified and the book is really useful. It is useful not only to non-Malayali readers but also to the sophisticated among modern Malayali audiences who consider it a privilege to enlist themselves as members of a Kathakali Club, but know nothing about this classical performing art!

The book contains three parts. Part One (*Kathakali in a Nutshell*) includes a short history of the art, the training, the characters, the make-up, the costume, the stage, the musicians, the actors and the performance. Stories of thirty-six



plays are narrated in brief in Part Two. Part Three contains miscellaneous information: a list of characters grouped under different types of make-up; Kathakali characters and the plays in which they appear; a list of authors with the dates of composition of their plays; an alphabetical index to plays; and a glossary of technical words. A few plates, in colour and black and white, are published at the end of the book.

The main drawback of this guide is that it is criminally silent on a vital aspect of the art of Kathakali. Though Kathakali is a conglomeration of a variety of fine arts and useful arts, its most prominent feature, one that attracts the audience, is the language of gesture it employs in rendering ideas. In fact, one cannot think of Kathakali without associating it with the language of hand-gesture, let alone other aspects like facial expression and complex foot-work which enhance the expressiveness of the play's action. The utility of this book would have increased twofold if the writer had included a short note on hand-gestures, along with pictures or diagrams illustrating them.

S. K. NAYAR

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CINEMA VISION, The Indian Journal of Cinematic Art, Vol. I, No. 3, July 1980, Bombay. Annual Subscription: Rs. 65.00 (Inland); \$ 16.00 (Abroad). (*In English*).

After dealing first with the silent era and then with the advent of the talkies, *Cinema Vision India* now turns its attention to 'new cinema' in India. The thematic presentation makes the issue as valuable as a book to be preserved. As in the previous issues it remains, so far, way ahead of other serious film magazines in India in the systematic collection of informative articles on the theme to which an issue is devoted. In the present issue, there are reports on the new cinema in as many as eight states, perhaps the most fascinating among them being the story of Tamilnadu—the latest to join the club. Besides, the Film Finance Corporation (now The National Film Development Corporation), the film society movement, the national film policy as framed by the Karanth committee, the 16 mm infrastructure, the Heggodu experiment (of showing classic national and international films to villagers) are discussed. Anyone who reads the issue from cover to cover will doubtless form some idea of what is going on in the field of new cinema.

There is no dewy-eyed idealism here; virtually all the reporting and discussions are pretty cold-blooded and clear-eyed if not cynical. There is, in fact, an undertone of disparagement; to the writers, there is no new cinema worth the name, no useful film society movement, no film policy, nor, with rare exceptions, any honest talent among new film makers. Shyam Benegal is criticised because he has surrendered to the box office, others because they cannot communicate with a mass audience. The government has not done anything worthwhile either, because distribution and exhibition problems remain unsolved. State government subsidies have often been misused; film societies are too few and are not interested in Indian cinema.

Satyajit Ray, writing on 'The New Cinema and I', says little about new cinema and a lot about his own experiences. Admittedly, the story of his experience is interesting but it throws little light on new cinema and tells us still less about what he thinks of it. Iqbal Masud, as usual, offers some insights on particular issues in a readable style, but celebrates a sort of critical ad hocism, reacting sharply to any suggestion of unifying strands, not to speak of a 'thesis', which, to him, is anathema.

Such divine discontent could have instilled in us some hope for the future, were it not for the fact that there is a somewhat persistent sketchiness about the way the issues are framed and the facts put together. The result is a kind of superior newsletter with bits and pieces of comment thrown in such as some film societies and their federation are liable to do with less regularity or comprehensiveness, with poor presentation and still poorer proof-reading. However, even such magazines at times run good analytical articles which *Cinema Vision India* has so far tended to lack in. Despite all that Sanjit Narwekar has to say about film societies (he would throw away the baby with the bathwater), the Asansol Film Study Centre did raise the money, by selling coupons, to publish Amitabha Chatterjee's book on Ray (which won the book award this year). Many of the essays in the book have been published before in film society magazines in Bengali. *Cinema Vision India's* claim to be 'India's First Professional Cinema Quarterly' is thus not fully realised as yet as far as its contents are concerned. One hopes that it will, with the valuable work so far done, develop greater depth and commitment in its approach in future. Perhaps, by the time Volume II unfolds, it will become the outstanding magazine it deserves to be.

CHIDANANDA DAS GUPTA

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INDIAN MUSIC IN PERFORMANCE by Neil Sorrell and Ram Narayan. A practical introduction with accompanying cassette recording by Ram Narayan. Foreword by Yehudi Menuhin. Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1980, 190 pages, 14 illustrations, 85 musical examples in western staff notation, £14.95 (*In English*).

To write about music, to introduce music in words is a general problem and more so, if Indian music is to be explained to western listeners. The problems are not merely those of terminology. There is also the gap between theory and practice. Indian music reveals its true essence only in the creative performance of individual artistes. Furthermore, great musicians are often, quite understandably, reluctant, and even unable, to verbalize at length about music, particularly in terms of the viewpoint of a listener. Hence, a western listener, in his search for deeper and wider knowledge, will find himself abandoned between treatises, mainly theoretical in nature, and creative performances which go beyond the capacity of comprehensible verbal explanations.

The book under review seems the first to have found answers to tackle this problem. No doubt, the cordial co-operation of the two authors is the firm foundation of the book. Ram Narayan—undoubtedly the leading sarangi player of our times and one of the greatest and most sincere representatives of Indian music with the widest international acclaim—contributes his art in an excellent choice of musical

examples. These are recorded on a cassette starting with simple exercises and developing into a complete performance. His music as well as his comments on each fundamental detail form the actual and most valuable substance of the book.

The second and equally important characteristic is the manner in which Neil Sorrell has introduced, explained and systematised the musical examples, in addition to transcribing them into western staff notation. It needed, in fact, the experience and knowledge of someone familiar with both worlds of music, Indian and western, and Neil Sorrell belongs to that rare category. He is Lecturer in Music at the University of York and has also studied the sarangi under Pandit Ram Narayan for a number of years. The vast initial research and preparation by this scholar has resulted in a profoundly written and brilliantly organized survey of the actual performance of Indian music—crystal clear in definition and systematic in order. It forms a most impressive and striking 'package' of invaluable information, perfectly comprehensible to any devoted listener of western music or student of Indian music.

This leads to the third important aspect of the book—the approach to the subject. The book aims at bridging the gulf between theory and practice, in other words "to get to know what actually happens." How does an Indian musician conceive of his art, how does he practise and prepare for a performance? How much of a recital is improvised? How does a musician derive *palta*-s from the scale of a *raga*, and how does he ultimately apply such *palta*-s to the performance of a *raga*? What intricate details and subtleties occur in the interplay between *raga* and *tala* during a performance? And finally, what are the underlying priorities which motivate the musician?

The author discloses the answers through a systematic presentation of the important components of a performance, arranged in sequential chapters, that grow, one out of the other. It was certainly necessary to restrict the subject to North Indian classical music alone. We may also safely say that the author wisely based this introduction on the art of a specific leading master rather than on a collection of various views from different sources and traditions. The latter method would have inevitably lead to generalisations of a more abstract nature. The true picture of Indian music can only be revealed when it is projected through the art of an individual musician.

Consequently, the author devotes the first chapter to Ram Narayan, describing the various stages of his life and career. One should, of course, not expect, in this context, a biography of the usual kind. The author focuses emphatically and extensively on all the personalities and events that were significant to the artistic development of Ram Narayan's music. It is precisely this concentration on the very details of his musical life that makes the chapter another invaluable source.

The next chapter gives a precise informative survey of the important instruments of North Indian music and leads straight into the sequence of the last four chapters, which commence with a discussion on the methods of practice. Here the first music exercises played by Ram Narayan are given both in staff notation and as a cassette-recording. The succeeding chapters introduce the subtleties of *raga*-s and *tala*-s. The accompanying musical examples, both in staff

notation and on cassette, systematically show how the musical elements are gradually shaped and moulded into a performance.

The concluding chapter presents a complete performance of Shri *raga*, the whole of Side Two of the cassette. The performance is set down in staff notation which runs over 15 pages. The listener is thus given the unique opportunity of also following a *raga* visually, to the minutest detail.

The authors Neil Sorrell and Ram Narayan cannot be sufficiently commended for the enormous effort they have invested in their attempt to afford the listener 'an inside view' of the actual creative process in Indian music. To date, no other book on this subject has revealed this with such clarity. They have done a great service to the international world of music, and there is no doubt that "Indian Music in Performance" will be an invaluable and indispensable source-book to western-trained music lovers and students in India and abroad.

JOACHIM BUEHLER

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TRADITIONAL INDIAN THEATRE: MULTIPLE STREAMS by Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1980, Rs. 32.00 (*In English*).

With her *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan laid a strong foundation of methodological studies in the performing arts in general and dance in particular. The work traced the history of Indian performing arts in their framework of interrelationship to the second century A.D. as seen in the context of the unity provided by the Sanskrit language. Dr. Vatsyayan then sought to present a contemporary spatial picture of the living traditions at the tribal and rural level in her second work *Traditions of Indian Folk Dance*.

The work under review tries to bridge the gap of a thousand-year time span from the tenth century A.D. to the nineteenth century A.D., covering the large grey area during which innumerable theatre forms and genres existed and developed. They are to be seen even today in a staggering multiplicity of styles.

Dr. Vatsyayan has, in a logical and a rational manner, used the term 'theatre' in its totality (rather than as just dance and music) as the true indicator of this period. The growth of the regional languages during this period and the oral traditions are taken into account within a framework of relationship rather than dissociation. The in-depth study of the various forms, genres and styles (of the theatre) draws our attention to the continuation of the *Natyashastra* tradition as seen in the multiple flowering of forms. Dr. Vatsyayan is extremely well-equipped to undertake this task as she has an intimate knowledge of several languages and a live contact (spanning over four decades) with the performing arts. Her sharp and perceptive observations on the presentation of these forms, and her logical deductions shed valuable light on certain areas of study (through interconnections), thus providing a broad framework and a meaningful approach.

Dr. Vatsyayan succeeds in presenting a close-up view of certain forms as a model and follows a similar exercise for the study of the other forms to

illustrate her thesis. For instance, the in-depth study of Kutiyattam provides an excellent example of her methodology. She draws attention to the regional schools of poetry, drama, dance and music which affected the growth of Kutiyattam. Her observations are then supplemented by references to the political, social, and cultural background, especially as it affected and continues to condition artistic tradition and performance. She takes into account the rigid caste structure of society and the inbuilt channels of mobility and change within the seemingly hierarchial and insulated groupings. One notices the contribution of other forms like Chakyarkoothu, the advent of the *Gita Govinda* in Kerala and its influence, other Sanskrit and Sanskritic theatrical traditions, the continuum of the *Natyashastra* tradition, the performances in the *Kuttambalam*, the *natyadharmi* approach, the word and movement relationship, the *angikabhinaya*, the *vachikabhinaya* and the role of the *vidushaka*. Moving on multiple planes, the discussion includes the dimensions of eternity and, at the same time, a preoccupation with Time, here and now—in a word with contemporaneity. The amalgam noticed in the use of the languages ranges from Sanskrit to Manipravala to colloquial Malayalam. The Kutiyattam manuals, like many dance texts and commentaries found in Kerala, elaborate and develop the tradition of the theatre.

In her introduction, Dr. Vatsyayan postulates some basic hypothesis which any serious student of theatre could utilise in future for micro studies of individual forms. Dr. Vatsyayan maintains that there are many and not one tradition of the performing arts in this vast geographical area. All are characterised by an amazing multiplicity of genres, forms, styles, and techniques. Even the contemporary scene belies all classification in terms of the clearly defined categories of western performing arts into classical and folk; sophisticated, self-conscious, individual artistic creation and collective participative activity; and spoken drama based on word, musical note or gestures or movements. Nor can they be classified into the neat categories of opera, operetta, the symphony or the chamber orchestra. What appears most vital is the absence of the insulation of different categories in Indian traditions.

In spite of the complexities and an apparently eternal timelessness, Dr. Vatsyayan demonstrates, with examples and by building meaningful interconnections, that each of these traditions (as prevalent in different regions of the sub-continent and at different levels of society) can at best be identified both in terms of the evolution of artistic form and style in time and its socio-cultural milieu in space. This is best seen in the layers of different moments of time in a seemingly contemporary form, establishing a characteristic cultural pattern within which the traditions of the performing arts flourished. Dr. Vatsyayan also undertakes a comparative study (with a view to illustrate the phenomenon of unity and diversity, abstraction and concretisation, interconnections of regions and interdependence of forms within a region) rather than a descriptive and analytical study of each form. She has attempted to show the links with the tribal and ritual practices (for instance, in the Chhau forms); the elements of the continuum of Sanskrit drama; and the movement of one form from one region to another. In some cases, groupings are attempted by virtue of geophysical proximity and literary tradition. Sometimes it is the survival of a historical movement like the *Bhakti* movement (which continues in some parts of India and not in others) as seen in the typical examples of the *Rasalila*-s of Vrindavan and Manipur.

The content of these forms, Dr. Vatsyayan observes, is capable of adaptation to a local situation and temporality (here and now). While the theme may be concerned with eternity at one level, it invariably has a local colour and contemporary validity. The two levels are part of the dramatic structure, whether it be a ballad form, or the puppet or the street theatre or for that matter the more rigorously structured forms like the Kutiyattam, the Kuchipudi dance-drama (Bhama Kalapam) or the Yakshagana. The purposive denial of the unities of time and space is well brought out. Dr. Vatsyayan refers to the other approaches of studying the theatre. For instance, treating the forms in their regional distribution and taking the forms of each region separately and presenting them in the chronological order of their origin and evolution. Secondly, regrouping them in terms of their stylistic and formal features, which cut across regional boundaries, and treating them together. However she does not follow the first approach because some work has already been done on a regional basis. She has wisely avoided the second approach for two reasons: it would be hazardous to do so unless the chronology and history are firmly established and it cannot serve any useful purpose unless the primary source is analysed. Also, it can be undertaken meaningfully only through teamwork. Therefore the broad approach she has employed is most welcome since it clearly shows the process of eternity and contemporaneity, continuity and change, unity and multiplicity, interdependence and autonomy, so typical of the Indian cultural phenomenon.

It often happens that after submitting the final draft to the publishers the writer happens to see some rare performances which compel him to revise his observations. Dr. Vatsyayan has referred to the electrifying performances of Bhavai at Morvi (a little before the floods) which she aptly describes as a vibrant tradition with a fantastic range and polyvalence of content, language, stage techniques and musical modes. She modifies her earlier observation that it was 'a languishing albeit crude survival of a five hundred year old theatrical form.'

The present study is further enriched by tables and charts which give the reader an idea of the various elements discussed and their presence in the theatre forms. The two appendices at the end of the book and the select bibliography will help scholars who intend to undertake micro studies.

More than forty monochrome and nine colour plates give the reader a glimpse into the salient features of the theatre. The sketches and diagrams contribute towards an understanding of the intricacies of a form and offer an approximate idea of the stage arena.

With the sustained excellence of her writings on various aspects of the performing arts, Dr. Vatsyayan has given us one more volume which illumines the period proverbially referred to as the Dark Ages of the performing arts. The book is a necessary reference work for any serious scholar and student of the theatre.

SUNIL KOTHARI

SAJAN PIYA, a biography of Ustad Khadim Husain Khan. by N. Jayavanth Rao, Sajan Milap, Bombay, 1981, Rs. 20.00 (*In English*).

One would hardly have expected the smiling and friendly music lover, N. Jayavanth Rao, to be a capable author as well. *Sajan Piya*, a biography of Ustad Khadim Husain Khan, is a very readable, enjoyable and educative book. Written in a lucid and easy style, the book traces the origin of the *gharana* system as a whole, with reference to the Agra *gharana* in particular.

Sentiment is a great driving force and N. Jayavanth Rao, in his book, takes us on a pleasant and sentimental journey, traversing the history and origin of the Agra (Atrauli) *gharana*. The first two chapters outline in a chronological order how the fusion of the three *gharana*-s, Agra, Gwalior and Atrauli, occurred, resulting in the presentday style. Subsequent chapters deal with Ustad Khadim Husain Khan in his capacity as student, teacher and composer. The author reveals the qualities of Ustad Khadim Husain Khan and expresses his deep respect for the Ustad and his contribution to Indian classical music. The sincerity with which Ustad Khadim Husain Khan teaches his students is indeed praiseworthy. It is not uncommon to find students desperate and disappointed when Ustads fail to impart knowledge. Apart from the sincerity of purpose, there is the ability to teach—an added quality which many teachers lack. We learn from this book that Ustad Khadim Husain Khan is a master in the technique of teaching. His punctuality and simplicity are, of course, well-known and the author brings out these virtues very vividly in the book.

The history of Indian music has many unexplained and unravelled gaps where precise information is absent and, therefore, some of the categorical statements made in the book are open to question. The author's friendly pen might be viewed as 'unfriendly' by the followers of other *gharana*-s. It is risky to use superlatives in describing the exponents of a particular *gharana*: "Ghagge Khudabaksh . . . came to be accepted as the most *sureel* voice of his generation and century " (p. 19); "Natthan Khan was known to be the most outstanding performer of his time" (p. 23); "He (Faiyaz Khan) reigned supreme in the field of classical music for well over a quarter of a century" (p. 25).

It was interesting to discuss the area of the compositions of Ustad Khadim Husain Khan with some serious students of music. A few of them felt that the book would have been more valuable had some of the compositions of Ustad Khadim Husain Khan been printed in it with text and notation. Since Ustads usually prefer to impart knowledge only to deserving (*supatra*) students, this suggestion could be a matter of opinion.

The author feels depressed as he observes the prevailing scene in the world of Indian classical music and its "disturbing" trends. One cannot help feeling that his gloomy forecasts tend to overlook the twin elements of sensitivity and imagination which have, without doubt, enriched the improvisational character of our music. As in all evolutionary processes, during stages of development and periods of transition, traditionalists are always somewhat aggrieved and nurture misgivings about the future. Patronage has today shifted from the classes to the masses and it is undoubtedly true that new trends in Indian classical music

require to be carefully monitored by great and responsible musicians. But having accepted that, we must concede that evolutionary processes will continue to move on, towards their natural and succeeding steps. Since we are on the subject, one wonders what Ustad Khadim Husain Khan himself feels about the contemporary music scene. How does he visualise the future? The book projects the views held by the author (at this stage) rather than those of Ustad Khadim Husain Khan.

It is believed that sentiment sometimes colours the vision and one, therefore, appreciates why the author has not found any shortcomings in the Agra *gharana*. His unswerving devotion and respect for the *gharana* is naturally responsible for some of his biased assessments. How otherwise can one explain his remarks that Agra is the only complete *gayaki* (comparable to VIBGYOR) while all the other *gharana*-s represent only one colour or shade of the rainbow? (p. 29).

In any case, one has to remember that N. Jayavanth Rao's sole purpose in writing this book is not to create any controversy or denigrate other *gharana*-s, but to delineate various aspects of the Agra *gharana* in a systematic and logical manner.

I, for one, was delighted to read this book and I am sure that music lovers will agree with me that the genuine and sincere efforts of the author need to be commended. One can only wish and hope that more such books will be written by young, educated, and musically initiated persons (like N. Jayavanth Rao) on different aspects of Indian music.

ARVIND PARIKH

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GUJAR GAYA VAH JAMANA. An anthology of autobiographical insights and contemporary assessments on Pankaj Mullick, compiled and edited by Ajit Sheth. Published by the Pankaj Mullick Music Foundation of Sangeet Bhavan Trust, Bombay, 1981, Rs. 20.00 (*In Gujarati*).

This publication (released on Pankaj Mullick's third death anniversary) comprises of sixteen well-presented chapters of his autobiographical narration rendered into Gujarati from the original Bengali writings (*Ganer Surer Asankhani* and *Ganer Zarna Talay*). It is preceded by an informative preface *Tame Shun Keval Chhabi?* (after Tagore's song *Tumi Ki Kebali Chhabi*) by the compiler-editor. It also contains photographs of Pankaj Mullick, and tributes to him and reminiscences by eminent personalities. The publication includes an exhaustive list of Pankaj Mullick's recorded Bengali film-songs; the compositions of well-known writers (including Rabindranath Tagore) sung by him since 1930; recorded Hindi film-songs and non-film-songs; Sanskrit compositions; a list of films of which he was the music director and books written by him.

In the words of Satyajit Ray: "Pankaj Mullick earned legendary fame and popularity as a singer and teacher of *Rabindra Sangeet*. He devoted his whole life to this cause using the media of the film, the radio and the gramophone and succeeded in endearing himself to music-loving Indians all over the country."



Pankaj Mullick himself declared, "*Rabindra Sangeet* is my life. Therein lies my redemption." The book amplifies and illustrates in detail Satyajit Ray's statement, and also sheds light on Indian Cinema right from the days of the silent era to the stage of the talkies, with its background music and playback singing.

The autobiographical chapters reveal the dignified manner in which Pankaj Mullick lived up to his convictions in the face of incredible difficulties. The close ties that bound Ajit and Nirupama Sheth to Pankaj Mullick have made it possible for the author to touch on aspects of his personality not covered by the autobiographical section. Among these are Pankaj Mullick's pioneering activities in the field of background interlink music; his successful plea for the singer's right to royalties on his record; the influence of western music on his songs etc. Certain significant facts referred to in the book are worth mentioning: Pankaj Mullick's deeply devotional temperament inherited from his family; the episode of the gift of harmonium from a relative; the singing of a Tagore song on a rainy day that ultimately carried him to All India Radio (in 1927); his initiation into the *Tappa* style; his training in classical music with Durga Pada Babu; his apprenticeship in *Rabindra Sangeet* with Dinendra Nath who insisted on a thorough understanding of the poetry of a song.

Pankaj Mullick used to broadcast *Rabindra Sangeet* and other compositions and also gave weekly lessons in music on AIR. These included Tagore songs, devotional, patriotic and folk music (of Bengal), the songs of devotion (in Hindi) of Surdas, Nanak, and Mira and Sanskrit hymns and prayers such as *Mahishasura Mardini*. His abilities as an excellent music teacher have been gratefully acknowledged by accomplished singers like K. L. Saigal, Kanan Devi, Asit Baran, and K. C. Dey.

The book also records that memorable occasion when Pankaj Mullick met Gurudev Tagore and received his personal blessings to propagate *Rabindra Sangeet*.

The history of Pankaj Mullick's long and dedicated association with the New Theatres, Calcutta, is in a way the golden period of his life. He worked there devotedly with veteran screen personalities like Nitin Bose, R. C. Boral, P. C. Barua, K. L. Saigal, K. C. Dey and many others. The tale of his unflinching loyalty to New Theatres in spite of financial temptations and some humiliating experiences is quite exemplary.

After Independence, he was closely associated with the late Dr. B. C. Roy. For fourteen years (1953-67), he planned and successfully presented Folk Entertainment Programmes some of which (like *Gangavataran*) impressed Pandit Nehru very deeply.

The book is enriched by authentic quotations from the writings of some of Pankaj Mullick's eminent contemporaries like Kanan Devi, H. K. Bose, P. C. Mahalanobis to name a few. Every chapter of the book begins with a key-song sung by him. The original songs, reproduced in the Bengali language and in the Gujarati script, are followed by Gujarati translations which contribute to an understanding of their poetic merit. The reader is thus offered a vivid account of the *sadhana* of years which resulted in these wonderful melodies that cast their spell on listeners.

The publication was released at the Tata Theatre and the impressive audio-visual presentation which accompanied it and the recital of some of his more popular songs (in which an appreciative audience joined spontaneously) was a fitting tribute to Pankaj Mullick.

Ajit Sheth deserves to be commended for this labour of love which provides Gujarati readers glimpses into the life of a well-loved personality. A Hindi rendering of the book is planned and it is hoped that the Foundation will embark on this undertaking to enable the contents of this excellent publication to reach even wider audiences.

PINAKIN TRIVEDI

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