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Bagrawat or Dev-Narayan *Bhopa* with *Jantar*. (Photo: Vivek Anand)

Last Cover

Bhopa of Pabuji with *Gujari*. (Photo: Vivek Anand)

Bhopa Kushla Ram in *Parh* performance, wearing female costume. (Photo: Rupayan Sansthan)

Design: Ratnakar Sohoni

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

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Epics of Rajasthan

Komal Kothari

Introduction

An oral epic consists of narration of a story in poetry and prose, song accompanied by a musical instrument (if sung in a group, the musical instrument is not necessary); it sometimes includes dance and dramatic enactment by the performer. Each of these elements requires independent and in-depth investigation. In any given society, traditions of story-telling, oral poetic compositions, melodic forms, musical instruments, dance and drama have their own history and a social relevance necessary for continuity. All the elements put together can be said to be a performance. Once designated as performance, two aspects become very important: the performer and the audience. On the performer's side, the question of his recruitment to the tradition has its own ramifications: Why does he attract an audience which is interested in participating in the performance? In finding answers to all such questions, one starts to discover a picture of the oral epic traditions in India.

For convenience of study, it may be necessary to isolate the epic and its performance from the whole of society; but as soon as this is achieved, it is necessary to place it again into the totality of society. Stuart Blackburn and Peter Claus rightly observe that "it is essential to collect, as well as to analyse their (folk epics') performance context." Blackburn has tried to analyse the actual performance, its deep ritualistic situations and relevant impact on the narration or enactment of the epic. Brenda Beck has sought to bring out the local folk epic's relationship with the Great Traditions emerging from the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. Folk epic scholars are trying to come to grips with the problems, with appropriate stress on one aspect or another.

Living in Rajasthan as I do, the attempt to obtain an in-depth view of the folk epic genre in relation to folk music, folk musical instruments, folk narrative, folk performing arts, with due importance to the ethnologic groups involved in the activity, has widened the horizons of study. The problem of deification of the folk epic hero set me on the track of folk gods and goddesses and definitely provided certain clues to an understanding of the epics.

The Pre-performance Situation

Let us begin by examining the pre-performance situation, the performance itself, the post-performance situation and the renewal of the cycle. The pre-performance situation takes us to the problem of who is going to perform, how and where he received the expertise, when is he expected to perform etc. The different traditions in Rajasthan suggest the following:

An individual or a team of two or more prepare themselves to render a performance of the epic, mainly because their society nurtures a religious, social or other need for it. The segmented and stratified society of India sometimes creates a specialized caste, a hereditary group for performance. In the case of the *Pabu* epic performance, Nayak or Thori is the hereditary caste-group functioning

as performer. But this is not entirely true even with the *Pabu* epic. The Raika group singers of the *Pabu* epic cannot be described as specialized epic singers, without any musical instrument. Again, with the *mata* (pot-drum) version, a specialized section comes into existence. An essential difference between caste hereditary groups and general caste groups as performers is inherent in performance-audience relations. Hereditary performers perform for an audience, whereas the general caste group sings for the group itself (it does not have an audience). But the general caste group definitely has its own leader, and the others join him in the singing. The leader has to imbibe a certain amount of expertise in the memorization of the epic. The leaders always emerge from the supportive groups; it is here that new lead-singers get their initial training. The recruitment procedure is as simple as a child learning its mother tongue. But this is not true of the professional hereditary caste performers. The new recruit has to learn to play the musical instrument, master it and perform for others who definitely have a preference for one performer. He has to compete to stay in the tradition with his own caste brethren. The same is true for the *Bagrawat* epic singers. We have till now been able to identify the castes of Nayak or Thori and Bhil performers of the *Pabu* epic as professionally engaged in *Pabu* epic singing. As for *Bagrawat*, there are professional groups (not necessarily hereditary), from the Gujar, Gayari, Kumhar, Mali, Bhand, Turi, Bhat and Balai castes. There may be several other castes who are engaged in this. For a general caste group, we have come across Gujar, Jat, Gayari and tribal Bhil.



Bhopa Jawarji with Ravan hatha
(Courtesy: Rupayan Sansthan)

Epics like *Amarsingh Rathod*, *Nihalde-Sultan*, *Sivaji-ro-Biyavalo* are sung by the professional caste group of Jogis, accompanied by the *Jogia Sarangi* and the *Bhapang*, a rhythmic string instrument. These Jogis are confined to the eastern districts of Rajasthan, namely Alwar, Jhunjhunu, Bharatpur and Shekhawati.

Deval is a particular tradition of epics related to characters of the *Mahabharata* — Arjuna, Bhima, Abhimanyu. But common to the *Mahabharata* and *Deval* are only the names of the characters. All *Deval* episodes begin after the whole action of the *Mahabharata* has come to an end. An epic from Tamilnadu has recently been reported about *Shet-Konth Ravanam*. It continues after the end of the *Ramayana*. Here it says that finally Sita has to fight the Hundred-Headed Ravana because Rama was reluctant to embark on another major war. A similar epic has also been described in *Bundelkhand-ki-Sanskriti aur Sahitya* by Ramcharan Hayaran Mitra, where Sita ridicules Rama and Lakshmana for not killing the real Ravana. The brothers sought to fight the real Ravana, but he proved to be invincible. So Rama requested Sita to kill Ravana which she did by transforming herself into Kali or Mahashakti. These types of epics are mostly rendered by general groups of different regions. In some cases, certain castes alone join but usually the middle and low groups of the village participate in the singing, accompanied by musical instruments such as *Tandura*, *Dholak*, *Manjira* and *Khartal*.

The epics of *Goga*, *Teja* and *Bhabhoota Sidh* are sung by the general groups. *Goga's* life is recited with *Dhak* (an hourglass-shaped drum); *Teja* is rendered with the two-flute instrument (*Algoza*) and also without any instrument. *Bhabhoota Sidh* is rendered on *Sarangi* or *Kamayacha* in the western region.

The fourth group of epic-singers are again professional caste musicians but they render the epics during marriage and childbirth ceremonies. This ceremonial epic-singing has a religious or social significance and is sung for entertainment and enlightenment. Training for the rendering of these epics is rigorous because the new recruit has to master a complicated string instrument and learn the couplets by heart. The prosodic meter and musical composition follows well-knit rules. Most of the romantic tales are included in such epics: *Dhola-Maru*, *Jalal-Boobna*, *Moomal-Mahendra*, *Khinvji-Abhal de*, *Nagji-Nagwanti*, *Saichi*, *Jasma-Ratanpal*, *Saini-Bijanand* are a few examples.

In terms of the pre-performance situation, we have to conclude that whenever a chordophonic instrument intervenes, the professional groups have some sort of training. Where people in general render the epic with elementary rhythmic instruments (different types of autophones or membranophones), no formal training of any kind is envisaged. The professional epic-singers have to move from village to village to find their patrons. Unlike romantic epic-singers, *Pabu* or *Bagrawat* epic-singers do not have fixed *Jajman-s* (patrons). The caste group singers mainly assemble in their own village or arrive at fairs and sing the epic at night. Sometimes neighbouring village also invite them to a night-wake ceremony. None of the above-mentioned performers ever get possessed themselves. But there are a few exceptions. Sometimes, the epic-singer claims possession by either Bhaironji or Bhomiyaji but never the main deity related to the epic.

The pre-performance situation of the audience is thus the most important factor. Somebody has to decide to have a session of epic singing. It can be an individual, a family, a caste, a group of neighbours or the village as a whole. It never happens that singers start reciting the epic on their own in the hope of attracting an audience. A member or members of different group(s) feel a spiritual or material need to call for such sessions. This may arise from continuing illness in the family, deaths occurring in quick succession, chronic illness, a barren woman keen to bear a child, an epidemic or ailments among the caste, a financial disaster, a legal case pending in court, blindness, leprosy, impact of a witch, ghost or other malevolent spirits. Any sort of persisting difficulty initiates a desire to hold a session of an epic performance. A person may vow that once his difficulties are over he would arrange for a performance of a particular epic. He needs to have faith in the particular deified hero. Performances are always held at night. However, epic sessions are even held to earn spiritual merit. Among Gujars, it is an accepted practice to pay for the painted scroll and donate it to the performer. The first session of an epic performance has to be held at the patron's house and he has to pay for all the ceremonies to which the performer is bound.

It is important to note that the *Jagran* (night-wake) ceremony is an organic part of the belief system. *Jagran*-s are held during childbirth, marriage and death ceremonies and accompanied by sacred and devotional songs. These are described as *Ratijaga* for childbirth (during *mundan*) and marriage (*Maya*), and *Dangari-rat* for the night-wake for death. Any important happening in the family might result in a *Jagran* ceremony—the construction of a new house, excavation of a new well, acquisition of land for cultivation or winning a case in a law court. When no epic performance is held, *Jagran* sessions include devotional songs. Whenever a new shrine is established, *Jagran* has to be held; only after the ceremony is the efficacy of an icon accepted. Before night-wake, the idol is just an ordinary relief stone but after the ceremony it is bestowed with all the respect due to a god or goddess. Epic sessions in the form of night-wakes come within the boundary of religious merit.

The Performance Situation

Once the decision to hold a night-wake is taken, the performance comes into the picture. The performers are invited either to the home or to the shrine or the temple or to the site of the well or the field. Members of the family, neighbours and friends are invited to join. The host has to provide tea at night to the audience and the performers who move in a leisurely way. Usually about fifty people attend. Early next morning *Lapsi* (a sweet prepared from wheat and sugar) is distributed.

During the performance of the *Pabu* epic, the marriages of Goga and Pabu himself are the two main occasions when the performer requests the audience to offer money for the ceremonies as is usually done during weddings. He announces each donor's name and blows his conch. The same types of offerings are made during the recitation of the *Bagrawat* epic. But in other *Jagran*-s one does not find such offerings. The performance then is part of the story, song and dance. It is true that long epics are not sung in full in these sessions. The *Pabu* epic is hardly recited till the marriage ceremony of Pabu and that leaves out more than half the epic. *Bagrawat* hardly arrives to the great war of the twenty-four Bagrawat brothers. Epics like *Deval*, *Tola-de-ri-Bel* or *Rupan-de-ri-Bel* are completed in one

night. Group singers usually continue to sing for two or three nights to complete the epics depending on the vow of the host. (I have not yet tried to observe different sessions from the point of view of editing or elaborating the version to suit the occasion. Some of the tribal epics are also rendered during the day, with a big group of male and female singers and dancers. Night-wake is important for them but the day is not ruled out for such recitations.)

Epic performance of caste-groups have a definite yearly cycle to follow. Practically three-fourths of the area of rural Rajasthan has *Heed* sessions (another name for the *Bagrawat* or *Dev-Narayan* story) during Divali (October). Immediately after the end of the Divali festival period, another epic, *Hiraman*, is sung in the Kota-Bundi-Tonk region. The *Teja* epic is sung during Savan and Bhadva (July-August-September) in several parts of Rajasthan. All the fairs and festivals during this period have young groups moving and singing *Teja*. The tribal Bhils say that they sing *Ambav Bharat* during Navratri, in September, followed by *Heed (Bagrawat)* during Divali. Later on they move to the story of Rama. This annual cycle has yet to be finally identified in different regions with different groups. The compulsion of this cycle may have a lot to do with the epic performance itself.

The two important festivals of Divali and Holi arrive just before the harvesting season and involve a long period of celebrations. In the month of Asoj (Ashwin: September), the *Shradh* fortnight marks the beginning of Divali. This fortnight is devoted to ancestor worship. Any member of the family dying at any period of the year is ritually remembered. The following fortnight is Navratri which is followed by Dashara. It is believed that during Navratri all the gods and goddesses are at the peak of their power and bestow their strength to the people. All the shrines of gods in the rural areas come alive and start functioning. Most of the complicated cases of family discord are mediated through trance during this period, and particularly on the eighth night of Navratri. Dashara marks the end of Navratri. It signifies the victory of Rama over Ravana; but when one examines the rural festival of these fifteen days, one realises that it has mostly to do with the multifarious gods of the region. All new religious shrines (*Than*) come into existence in this period and replacement of icons is also accomplished during Navratri after a night-wake ceremony. These fifteen days have also to do with the growing of seeds (*Javara*) which are ceremonially immersed in the lake, river or well. *Javara*-growing is repeated in the month of Chaitra with the Gangore festival or Chaitri-Navratri; it marks the death ceremony as well. The day the family members leave their village to immerse the mortal remains (after cremation) in the river Ganga, the seeds are put in an earthen pot or at Pathwari. The growing seedlings are ritually immersed at some water source. It seems that *Javara* is related to the death ritual and becomes important during the fortnight of the Divali and Holi period marked for ancestor worship. Dashara takes us to the final Divali festival which is celebrated on *Amavasya*. Similarly, the Holi festival culminates on *Purnima* after a series of other festivals and is followed by another set of festivals. The long duration of these festivals and the invocations to the ancestors, as well as to the various godlings of the villages, are important religious occasions reserved for the recitation of epics which, in turn, are related to the invocation of certain deified human beings.

(I have yet to work out the whole calendar of epic performances in different regions of Rajasthan. The tribal people of this region strongly adhere to this calendar for their epic performances. In some cases, the cycle is very strictly observed: the epic is prohibited from being enacted except during the designated period.)

Death as a Salient Feature

Stuart Blackburn touched a very important aspect of the epic performance by recognizing 'death' as its salient feature. While describing the performance, its intensity and ritual depth, he has recognized the birth story of god and the death story related to ordinary human beings. Both types of stories have a different movement and yet merge into each other.

Death is recognized as an important element by all scholars of the oral epic tradition. Words like 'hero', 'heroic deeds' and 'heroic death' always arrive in a sequence. A hero, who achieves his aim or the object for which he performed heroic deeds and yet lives on in the story, is never deified. Romantic tales ending in comedy or tragedy do not find a place in ritualistic or sociological epic-lore. Let us see whether the element of violent death has anything to do with our epic performances.

The general belief in India is that a dead person's spirit roams in space for twenty years after his death. His spirit moves in different *Loka*-s and only if it is properly propitiated by his living relatives, does he achieve *Moksha*. The elaborate death and *Shraddha* ceremonies designed by Brahmins, with the recitation of the *Garuda Purana*, establish the point. At the folk level, different beliefs and rituals surround the efficacy of the dead person's spirit. The first cognizance of a dead person's spirit appears in the concept of *Pitar* or *Pitrani*, also designated as *Purvaj*. Among higher castes or *Savarna* caste groups (whose family structures are strongly geared to a patriarchal format), it is mostly the male members who achieve the status of *Pitar*. Dead female members are known as *Pitrani* but, in most cases, this is so in case of the premature death of a woman. Then her husband is allowed a second marriage. The second wife has to propitiate the dead wife who is recognized as *Pitrani*. Unmarried girls are never propitiated after their death. But, in the case of male members in the family, a married boy or a young man who dies is propitiated as *Pitar* or *Purvaj*. But all the deaths in society do not enter family worship as *Pitar*. The dead man's spirit has to manifest itself, in some form or other, to the living members of the family. The spirit of the dead person starts possessing a member in the kin-group and expresses desires which remain to be fulfilled. This is a very powerful possession. Sometimes this spirit does not possess any particular person but starts functioning malevolently causing harm to the immediate family group. The family, unable to find a reason for the tragedy, approach a shrine of the folk god and the possessed *Bhopa* explains the unsatiated condition of the dead person's spirit. Sometimes, the dead person appears in a dream and demands propitiation. This feature is evident in life-cycle rituals, ceremonies and folk-songs but what I would like to stress here is that all *agat maut* (accidental, violent deaths), or those spirits of dead men who do not find salvation, retain their existence and power on the earth. *Pitar* or *Pitrani* or *Purvaj* are effective godlings in a limited family group. To begin with, these spirits are malevolent, but after propitiation they become benevolent and the family continues to invoke them for its welfare.

Among tribals, dead males and females both appear as godlings and are known as *Moga* (male) and *Mogi* (female) among Garasiyas, and as *Sura* (male) and *Matlok* (female) among Bhils. There are long formulaic songs for *Moga-Mogi* and *Sura-Matlok*. Death ritual among these groups is very elaborate and a *Bhopa* performance in which the life of the recently dead person is enacted is an important element. One must note here that the hourglass-shaped drum (*Dhak*) is played with songs for the invocation of a dead person's spirit.

Let us now look at those dead men's spirits invoked or worshipped by a whole village or a defined region. In the western desert part of Rajasthan, the name for a god is *Bhomiya*. Another similar god is known by the name of *Mama*. *Bhomiya* or *Mama* or generic names for those warriors who pursue the robbers of village cows and die in the fight. The story would be as follows:

Cows owned by different families are collected at one place in the village and then taken by an appointed *Gwala* (cowherd) for grazing in nearby fields. Robbers find it easy to kill or frighten away the cowherd. The message is received in the village. The war drum is played; the villagers assemble and request a brave man to pursue the robbers and bring back the cows. Usually a Rajput, who is properly armed, volunteers to do so. A fight ensues. If he dies in the fight, he is propitiated as a *Bhomiya* or *Mama* god and worshipped by all. This story will invariably say that the warrior was beheaded by the robbers but he still continued to fight, sitting on horseback and with swords in both his hands. There grew a lotus flower in place of his head and eyes appeared on his chest. He returned victorious, riding his horse but headless. Some known group of women must express wonder at this headless warrior and then alone will his body fall from the horse. Another effective method of bringing him down would be to throw cold water mixed in indigo colour.

In most of the villages of the desert region, one finds a shrine for a known or unknown *Bhomiya*. The same god appears in Gujarat as *Palya*. In the second part of the story, *Bhomiya*, *Mama* or *Palya* manifests himself through a medium, that is, by possessing somebody. The possessed person is known as *Bhopa*. Once the *Bhomiya* shrine becomes active through this medium, it starts solving the problems of the people around. The effective and truthful disposition of a *Bhopa* in trance spreads his fame far and wide and people start arriving from different regions. Songs are composed on *Bhomiya* and he becomes the most popular god of the region. As soon as the *Bhopa* institution comes to end, the shrine is abandoned and forgotten except for the icon and the platform on which he was once installed.

The *Pabu* epic is the elaborate story of a *Bhomiya* god; so also, *Teja*. The *Teja* story says that though Teja was married as a child, he did not know about his marriage till his sister-in-law satirically referred to it. Teja, as a young man, proceeds to fetch his wife from the village of his in-laws. On the way he sees a huge fire in the forest and a snake struggling on a burning tree. He takes pity on the creature and, with his spear, removes it from the fire. But the snake is angry. It wanted to die because it was tired of moving on its belly. The enraged snake wants to bite its saviour. Teja promises to return after meeting his wife for the first time. The snake relents. Teja goes to the in-laws, is received well by

his father-in-law and his brother-in-law but insulted by his mother-in-law. He is offended and ready to leave. But his wife and her girl-friend Hira manage to cool his temper. That same night, Hira cries out that her cows have been robbed. The feudal chief, who would have saved her from this calamity, is not in the village and Teja offers to fight. He pursues the robbers, overpowers them and leads back the cows. But Hira complains that her one-eyed bull has not come back with the herd. Teja says that Hira cannot be normal; why is she asking him to risk his life for a worthless bull? Hira explains that she is an incarnation of Shakti and Teja has to go again. He returns with the bull. He is so badly wounded that no part of his body is free of injuries. He then leaves to fulfil his promise to the snake, who wants to know where it can bite Teja since no part of the body is free of wounds. Teja offers his tongue. The snake bites him and he dies with the blessings of the snake: "Teja will rule over snake-poison." Teja is now worshipped as a snake-cure god in practically three-fourths of Rajasthan. But he is again a form of the *Bhomiya* god.



Pabuji's *Bhopa* and his wife with *Parh*
(Courtesy: Rupayan Sansthan)

It is important to note that the same motif from the Tamilnadu epic *Muttupattan* is reported by Blackburn. Cattle-grazing or the cattle-keeping activity of a pastoral society has a lot to do with such deifications. For instance, a god like *Jhunjhar*. A person enters into an argument, which is followed by a clash with another individual or group of people, and then he dies a violent death and manifests himself through dreams, possession or is recognized by another *Bhopa* as one to be propitiated. Sometimes the spirit of a dead warrior may also manifest itself and win the respect of the region. For *Bhomiya*, the identification is complete and true; for *Jhunjhar*, it may be anonymous at certain places. A similar god is also known as *Sagas* in the southern region of Rajasthan. In the case of a dead Muslim, he is designated as *Khaiis*. In the central area of Rajasthan, *Jhunjhar* is not a god born of a person who faced violent death, but just an ordinary ancestor.

There are many beliefs around the mode of death and after-death which conjure an army of gods and goddesses. *Sati* is treated on par with the Mother Goddess (*Shakti*) and is traditionally worshipped, but not all *Sati*-s are categorised as goddesses. Women who go through the *Sati* ritual for social or political reasons or as a result of the husband's death on the battlefield are not part of the hierarchy of goddesses. Only those *Sati*-s are remembered, worshipped and deified who manifest themselves in some form or other after their immolation. As long as they remain thus effective in the timescale, they survive. The others are forgotten. Narayani Sati of Alwar, who belonged to the barber caste, has a short epic on her. Her husband died due to a snake-bite. An intense desire to become *Sati* overpowered her. This is known as *Sat-ugano*. With the help of a stranger, she immolated herself with her husband's dead body. She later appeared in a dream to the ruler of Alwar and expressed the wish that a shrine be erected for her, with a temple of Lord Shiva nearby. This was done and Narayani Sati has a huge fair held in her name and a large section of the population believe in her powers. There is a similar story about a *Dholan* (a caste of professional musicians). A woman was once crossing a forest with her husband. A stranger tried to molest her in a secluded spot, but right at that moment a Rajput suddenly appeared, challenged the stranger and died in the fight. The *Dholi* husband had by then run away. *Dholan* decided to immolate herself with the Rajput saviour. She is worshipped around the Beawar region of Rajasthan. There are many such *Sati* shrines with long narrative songs describing the episode and the powers a *Sati* wields over human beings after her death. Rani Sati of Jhunjhunu and Rani Bhatiyani of Jasol and Jaisalmer are two important *Sati* shrines in Rajasthan.

In the desert region of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Sindh (now in Pakistan), there are other types of *Sati*-s (*Shakti*-s) who immolated themselves before their marriage. Goddesses like Avad, Temdaray, Bhaderiya Ray, etc., are referred to as seven sisters who transformed themselves into birds and flew away. Malan is another type of goddess, who has teeth and can speak and eat like an adult right from the moment of her birth. She seems to be like a demoniac child and is burned by her parents in the hut itself. She manages to survive and, finally, before her marriage, declares herself a goddess. For such goddesses we have long poetic compositions by medieval poets.

These long descriptions are necessary for an understanding of the sociological aspects of epics as they move in the format of death sequence, followed by possession, songs, rituals and also epics.

We have yet to describe these epic performance situations, (as has been done by Stuart Blackburn), to reveal the underlying relation between performance and deep ritual. Through experience and observation, I am convinced of the intimate and organic relationship between enacted scene and ritual. But I am not able to understand one element in his description: whether it is the singers of epics who go into trances, or whether somebody else gets possessed. It seems from his description that the possessed one is not from among the epic-singers. In that case, it might be important to know who this person is and how he goes into a trance. What is his role while he is possessed, and otherwise? The person who is possessed is known as *Bhopa* (priest) or *Ghodla* (horse). At some shrines, the line of the *Bhopa*-s is hereditary; elsewhere, the new *Bhopa* is appointed by the god or goddess during a night-wake ceremony of the village.

The role of *Bhopa* does not end with going into a trance; at this moment, believers start asking for mediation for their problems: illness, family troubles, partition of property, rights over lands, epidemics among cattle, the weather forecasts, the appropriate time for sowing seeds to ensure the success of the crop, etc. If the oracles of a *Bhopa* in a trance situation make him effective and popular, then, in turn, that particular god or goddess will become more acceptable than others of the same region.

The deified heroes of epics who have their shrines in different villages and belong to the tradition of trance and mediation can be listed thus: Dev-Narayan (trance of Bhairoon); Pabu; Teja; Goga; and Bhabhoota Sidh (in many forms). There should be many others, but the data about them has yet to be collected. There are a number of epics about the Mother Goddess (Mataji), but they are all of mythical origin, although trance does appear. Especially among the tribals and those living in the desert areas, there are many such goddesses with various names (Ambav, Chamunda, Amali, Peeplaji) and episodes woven round them. Most of the tribal goddesses are represented as Kul Devi, progenitor of the distinct family line. We have been able to record the *Ambav Bharat* epic from a Bhil group, but it has yet to be scripted and analysed. These *Bharat*-s (epics) seem more on the lines of the 'Birth' stories of Tamilnadu reported by Blackburn, with the difference that these stories do not draw much from classical epics or Vedic or Pauranic mythology.

Caste Factors

Peter J. Claus raises an important question regarding the hero. He says: "The central characters of the four epics (*Kamba-Toihi*, *Madeswer*, *Koti Chenayya* and *Katamaraju*) range from low caste warriors to kings; from religious saints to devoted lovers." He adds: "There is more consistency in the fact that the heroes become deified and in that the epics form a part of the performance tradition". Another allied question has been raised about the epics being rendered and attended by low caste groups, with Brahmins missing from the scene.



Bhopa Dhanji of Dev-Narayan (*Bagrawat*) in dance form
(Courtesy: Rupayan Sansthan)

With the exception of mythical epics, all others come under the title of legend or history. The heroes of such epics are referred to as though they lived at some or other point in time. The dimension of time or historical period and the space or region in which they operated are important. Most of the epics of Rajasthan date from the tenth century onwards. No epic refers to a hero before this century. Why has this happened? Can we find any answer to it? Once we attach the concept of history to the hero, there are heroic deeds, his sacrifices, his achievements and all he did in his lifetime. How does he find his place in oral folk memory? Classical and bardic historians of the medieval period mention

hundreds of kings, thousands of incendiary wars, bravery, victory which did result in carving out new sovereign territories, kingdoms and royal lineage but none of them entered folk memory. These heroic figures are barely remembered in epic performance. On the other hand, we have a long list of heroes never mentioned in classical history. Though they are referred to as kings in the epic, it is difficult to place them in a proper historical perspective in their own time. Pabu is said to be the son of Rao Dhandhal or Rao Asthan, both of whom are in the direct line of the rulers of Marwar. But what was the area ruled by Dhandhal and Asthan in their own time? A very insignificant area, not even recognized by the neighbouring kings. If Pabu or his elder brother belonged to the main line of the rulers of Marwar, their position would have been different. According to the law of primogeniture, Buda and Pabu had no place in the lineage of the main ruling family. Their status could not have been more than that of ordinary brave Rajputs. Yet each becomes the hero in folk oral memory. His adventures and exploits are sung. Dev-Narayan comes from a Gujar family, which can at no stage be recognized as the reigning line in any area. Dev-Narayan's father, Bhoja, was a cowherd. But he receives prominence, represents all the heroic elements, and finds a place in oral memory. Teja or Goga are again insignificant persons in terms of social standing, but appear as formidable gods against snake-poison.

Can we conclude that medieval heroism, as recognized and approved by its time, did not reveal itself in epic heroes of the oral tradition? Were there sociological, religious or other causes which created these heroes? Heroes who came into existence *not* on account of their social status or because they sought to establish themselves as great kings or emperors? This can clearly be seen from the list of their heirs who never occupied the position of kings or rulers. Here, we need to examine those deep social and religious metaphors which are created from the structural aspect of a given society in which birth, marriage and death are ritualized in one way or another.

The Inner World of Social Reality

It is the capacity, the effective nature and supernatural power of the hero to mediate after his death which makes him what he is in the oral epic. The epic takes us to the inner world of social reality and not to the mundane fighting capacity of an earthly human being.

This also applies to the saints or the historically recognized *Sati*-s of any region. The Queen of Chittore, Padmini, was a *Sati* who immolated herself with hundreds of other women and is eulogised by bardic poets. But she never found a place in the inner world of faith or belief in Rajasthan's society. As opposed to her, ordinary women from the barber or musician caste entered oral memory because of their efficacious handling of worldly problems in a timeless dimension.

Another question can be raised in this context: Do characters of the folk epics represent models to be followed? Ramachandra and Sita are models. He who is truthful, keeps his word and remains firm against demoniac values is designated under the Rama syndrome. Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Draupadi are regarded as ideal characters in Indian society. Is this true about characters of the oral epic? By no means. Nobody would say, "Become like Pabu or Bhoja or Teja

or Goga." Nor would women be blessed and expected to behave like Deval, Jaimati or any other female character in the oral epic. We have the following proverbs:

1. *Pabu ne mile jaka Thori-i-Thori*

(Thori is a low, untouchable caste. Pabu gets only Thori-s around him.)

2. *Bai ra bhag vhe-i to Pabu to Bhopo ban ja i*

(Refers to the poverty of a person who cannot even get a daughter married. The proverb says that if the daughter is lucky, her husband might become a *Bhopa*.)

3. *Jaya rand Jaimati*

(Jaimati is a heroine and the incarnation of a goddess in the *Bagrawat* epic. But she is referred to as a woman who destroys the family and gets her kith and kin killed. *Rand* is an abusive term for a widow. As also for a woman who keeps the family in turmoil.)

4. *Jaimati Bhoja Khapavani or Bhoja Khapavani Jelu*

(The proverb refers to a woman who manoeuvres the death of her husband as was done by Jaimati in the *Bagrawat* epic.)

These are but a few samples of the attitude to important characters of oral epics. We have not been able to procure more material or information on this aspect from villagers. But generally the characters are not referred to as models. They are feared rather than respected as a measure of human achievement. There seems to be a reason for this. All the folk gods and goddesses are benevolent as well as malevolent. Once they are happy, they make you happy, wealthy and healthy. But show them the slightest disrespect and they become vindictive. The term for such a character is *Rusth hovano aur Tusth hovano*. Stories about religious fasts, as related by women folk, always stress the negative and positive role of the god or goddess. The story is completed with a sentence: 'As you were kind and benevolent to such and such, be kind to me.'

The Female as a Moving Force

It is important to note that the hero is always directed by another deeply involved personality who prompts him to undertake one venture after another. The moving force is always a female character. In the *Pabu* epic, Deval plays this role. Jaimati does the same in *Bagrawat*, Kankali in *Jagdeo Panwar*, Hira in *Teja*, Kachal in *Goga*, and Sorath in *Rao Khangar*. It is explicitly stated in these epics that all these women were born to eliminate or annihilate the heroes and they are always referred to as having come from a supernatural world. The Rajasthani words for elimination or annihilation are *Chalano* (to hatch a plot for the eventual deception of someone) and *Khapano* (to annihilate). These epic performers say that Sita was born to ensure that Rama was annihilated and Draupadi to have the Pandavas annihilated. All these female powers are placed on par with the concept of *Chalano* or *Khapano* of the great heroes. They are designated as *Sagati*, which is Rajasthani for *Shakti*. Deval, Kankali, Hira, Kachal, and Sorath were fairies from Indralok, who had to take birth to complete the task of eliminating the heroes. Jaimati of *Bagrawat* is also a *Shakti* but has come from Baikunth, the abode of Lord Vishnu.

If we examine the classical concept of *Shakti*, we find that *Shakti* took birth at the request of gods harassed by a demon or demons, who had received the boon of immortality from Lord Shiva. Whether it is Bhasmasur or Mahishasur, their demoniac actions disturbed the peace and calm of the abode of the gods. The gods parted with their powers and weapons individually in a sacrificial ritual and thus was born *Shakti* with immeasurable power. She annihilates (*Khapano*) the demon or demoniac power. Durga, Amba, Uma and other *Shakti*-s have a similar mythical background.

But the question which emerges from the oral epic is: Why did *Shakti* take birth to eliminate from the world just, good and brave heroes? Whether it was Rama or the Pandavas, Pabu, the Bagrawat brothers, Teja, Goga or Jagdeo Panwar? All of them were noble souls. But the truth is that these *Sagati*-s importune the heroes to move as they want. They can be cunning, even crooked, in the pursuit of their aims. All these epics refer to the wilful actions of these *Sagati*-s and speak of the responsibility they assumed when they took birth on earth. Next to the hero, the most important character of each epic is this *Sagati*. This supernatural element of the villainous female character places the epic story on a remarkably different plane from that of historical reality.

Brenda F. Beck's exposition regarding the Great and Little Traditions or the process of Sanskritization raises many important points. Her search for a pan-Indian epic performance tradition needs to be thoroughly examined, but this search might need a different route than its direct relationship with the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*. It is quite true that these two great tales are epics and the works which we are trying to understand are also epics. But the life and the vicissitudes of these classical epics are beyond the scope of our imagination. We notice continuous additions, alterations, different philosophical and mythical manipulations, narrow interpretations of the main characters and episodes to suit a particular faith or religion and the impact of time and changing values. The same stories appearing, in parts, in the *Dharma Shastra*-s, the *Upanishad*-s, the *Purana*-s and other classical or Brahmanical treatises have so submerged reality that it has become almost impossible to thread them into contemporary epic performance. Both the classical epics exist in a literary and written tradition and they continue simultaneously in the oral tradition but on a very different plane and value system. I shall cite only one example from the tribal people of Rajasthan. The Bhils and Garasiyas sing the *Ramayana* epic. Now the classical epic presents Sita as a demi-goddess, full of virtue, faithful to her husband, and establishes strongly the monogamic format of the family. Among the tribals, monogamy is not a great virtue by any standards. Premarital sex is not prohibited nor is any social stigma attached to it. In such a society, can Sita play the same role as in the classical tradition? The *Ramayana* of the Bhils says that, after Sita's abduction, Rama was quite diffident and did not know what to do. Ravana's wife, Mandodari, says to Ravana, "By abducting Sita you have created a powerful enemy but presently he is alone in the forest. Why don't you kill him when he is far away from his seat of power?" Ravana accepts her wise counsel and sends an army to attack Rama in the forest. Rama is depicted as shaking with fear in the face of Ravana's army. And then comes Hanuman, from nowhere, to protect Rama. It is Hanuman who defeats Ravana's army. The same episode is related in the Garasiya *Ramayana*.

Here, Rama is shown weeping when he finds that Sita is abducted. Laxmana argues with him. "Why do you weep for a woman? I will get you as many Sitas as you want!" But Rama is firm and Laxmana finally agrees to join Rama in the search for Sita. These examples can be multiplied and a conclusion will have to be drawn akin to the concept of parochialization. Even so, that would simplify the whole phenomena and the function of the epic in the life of different peoples with a different social reality and their own mythology.

The first step in an understanding of the phenomena of Sanskritization would be to recall the hundreds of 'parochialized' versions of the great epics. When Pabu is designated as an incarnation of Laxmana, he might have emerged from such versions and not from the classical tradition. *Pabu* epic singers do say why Laxmana had to be re-born. In the final war between Rama and Ravana, Ravana proves to be invincible. Laxmana plays a trick. He goes to Ravana in the disguise of Mandodari and worms out the secret of his life. Ravana confesses that his life exists in one of the eyes of the seven horses of the Sun. If somebody were to pierce this eye with an arrow and let it fall in a cauldron of boiling oil, then alone would he die. Laxmana, disguised as Mandodari, leaves and after a few moments the real Mandodari arrives. Ravana complains to her about her inquisitive query regarding his life-secret. Mandodari pleads complete ignorance and Ravana finally says that he will die on the following day. Rama and Laxmana are ready to kill Ravana the next morning. All is set, the bow and the arrow, the cauldron of boiling oil. They wait for the exact moment when the sun will arrive within the compass of the target. The dying Ravana hails Rama, who says that since he has uttered his name, his own revenge against Ravana is complete. But for Laxmana, this revenge is still due. Simultaneously, Ravana's sister tries to take a few rounds around Laxmana. Some epic-singers say that Mandodari did the rounds. These rounds are part of the marriage ritual. Laxmana then has to be born again as Pabu; Ravana as Jindrao (Pabu's brother-in-law); Surpankha or Mandodari as Phulmati (Pabu's wife).

This explanation of Laxmana's rebirth has nothing to do with the classical version of the *Ramayana*. Besides, when we go deeper, we find that Laxmana, like Pabu, did not kill Jindrao, though he was an adversary. Jindrao was finally killed by Zhardaji, the son of Budaji. The painting sequence of the *Pabu Parh* (the scroll), where the figure of Ravana is drawn in the region of Soomra, reveals that it was from this kingdom that Pabu robbed the camels. Why did Pabu incarnate have to complete his marriage with Surpankha or Mandodari? All these riddles cannot be solved through interpreting the classical epic. Our efforts must surely take us to the path of other oral epic traditions.

A closer examination reveals that the impact of the classical epics is often quite enigmatic and confusing. Could this have happened in a given society, as a result of its desire for a higher status? Perhaps. Status is something which is material and physical whereas the mythical lore of a given society has a deeper significance. These myths are their own charter. A group identified itself through these myths.

The question of hierarchy in the social structure has been stressed in several Indian area-studies and anthropological research. But most of the studies

have emerged as a result of looking at lower sectors from the vantage point of higher social segments. What has, at some stage or other, a lower caste to say about the higher caste? To seek an answer, we tried to find some oral generic tradition where this attitude of a lower group could come out openly, fearlessly and without any inhibition. We encountered the tradition of genealogists of lower castes who recite not only the names of the family-tree but reveal the mythical origin of the cosmos, the universe, the sky, the earth, water, vegetation, human beings and continue right down to the contemporary family. It is here that one finds that the close and hard grip of their own mythology is quite at variance with the classical tradition or the social stratification existing at that time. These aspects of myths would receive priority in future studies. Fortunately, a study of the oral epic tradition leads us directly to this path.

The characters of the epic grow from a deep mythical understanding or its own charter and their cunning and courage have direct roots in the situation. Pabu is a straightforward and brave person to start with. What he wants are faithful and courageous warriors to conduct robberies. He gets Chanda and Dhembha (twins) and Harmal and Salkha to help him. Thus prepared, he offers his niece to Goga Chauhan. But her parents reject this proposal. Pabu cunningly suggests to Goga that he should come in the form of a snake (as he is a snake-god himself) and bite the innocent girl. Then he should cure her so as to win her hand in marriage. Pabu is party to this deceitful action.

Bhoja, the hero of the first part of the *Bagrawat* epic, cleverly manages to throw Roopnath (a form of Lord Shiva) into a cauldron of boiling oil. Roopnath is not a simple person either. He had killed a lot of people who sought to reach his secret meditation site and had collected their heads in a cave. The heads could talk and warn Bhoja about his future. This was the reason for his cunning device of throwing the saint in the cauldron.

In *Pabu* and *Bagrawat*, the heroes resort to cunning in the very beginning of the stories, but as the action proceeds, both the heroes become puppets in the hands of other important characters who assume a more active role. In the *Pabu* epic, the Chanda-Dhembha-Harmal team stay with the hero and Deval conspires to create an intricate web of incidents to get Pabu in. Similarly, after the episode of the saint being put in the cauldron, the action passes on to Niha or Neva, Bhoja's younger brother, who always stays with him and his twenty-two brothers. Bhoja remains a tool in their hands and from then onwards Jaimati manoeuvres the story. The heroes play no significant and independent role. As for courage, both the heroes participate minimally in the ensuing wars. It is felt that their miraculous powers and blessings are enough to achieve victory. A significant point to note is that the heroes are not expected to take part in the battle and prove their mettle. However, both are transported to heaven with their horses.

But this may be the case with only a particular type of oral epic. In the other epics like *Nihalde-Sultan*, *Teja* or *Goga*, the heroes conduct most of the wars and display valour and cunning.

The tradition can help us, beyond the analysis of episodes and characters from the epics, if we try to understand the circumstances in which the story

originates. And that will take us back to the circumstances of the death of the hero and death as generally understood in a given society. The concept hinges round life-after-death and its power to mediate, resolve and participate in the continuum of life. Pabu or Devji are popular today, not only because of their epics but on account of their power to cure camels, provide protection to cattle, safely chart the life of the family and so on. If their efficacy in these matters comes to an end, we will have to see whether they survive in their historical and natural environment.

The Romantic Epics

The romantic epics have a very different context. Generally, the professional caste musicians sing these epics accompanied by developed musical instruments. These singers have a large repertoire of songs for a few romantic epics. The same stories are also told in prose and poetry by the *Bhat-s* (genealogists) and proficient story-tellers in the rural areas; they are never sung.

The professional caste musicians arrive at the houses of their patrons for life-cycle ceremonies and render ceremonial songs. In the evenings, special sessions (*Kacheri*) are held and the musicians either render songs or sing one or two tales, generally at the request of the audience which consists of not more than twenty to thirty people. Immediately, the family members and neighbours join in the session. The most important aspect of the performance is that each member of the audience listens attentively to the song and responds appreciatively in some way or other.

These epics cross all the boundaries of the caste hierarchy. No particular caste is identifiable with the epics. As each caste group has its own caste musicians, the epics move among all the groups and performances are usually held amongst well-knit and intimate family groups. Three important caste musician groups are Langa, Manganiyars or Dhadhi and Dholis. All the groups sing romantic tales but out of thirty active caste musicians only one or two are able to render the whole of the romantic epic.

The episodic material of the story is mainly in prose; the same is used only for long arguments between the characters or for emotional situations. The dialogue may be long and, in that case, song constitutes a good part of the tale. The description of the hero's beauty, his valour, his fort, his horse, and his accomplishments are also sung. Similarly, a description of the heroine, her lasting beauty, her qualities, is also to be sung. The separation situations provide the emotional grid for the musical and poetic expansion while the rest of the story is rendered in a somewhat high-pitched speech form. Parts of the epics are often sung as independent songs because they express an emotional incident or the pangs of separation. These independent parts, which are complete in themselves, have become very popular and most of the caste musicians are able to render these items. Some of the romantic epics are: *Dhola-Maru*, *Nagji-Nagwanti*, *Beenjha-Sorath*, *Jalal-Boobana*, *Khinvi-Abhal de*, *Saichi*, *Jasma de-Ratanpal*, *Saini-Bijanand*, *Mumal-Mahendra* and *Sasvi-Punu*, etc.

In contrast to the sociological epics, romantic epics have a literary flavour and have been composed by known or unknown poets in strict prosodic meters.

Though they are rendered by illiterate caste musicians, the poetry had appeared in written form. One can trace the literary tradition right from the twelfth century onwards. Some of the epics have been elaborately written in Prakrit and Apabhramsh languages and have come down to the present Rajasthani language. However, the written form has not destroyed the variations of a given epic. Different regions or different caste musicians sing the same story differently with each, however, insisting that his version is the oldest and most authentic.

The favoured meters of all such epics are *Doha* and *Soratha*. A *Doha* would consist of 4 lines (each divided into four parts) consisting of 13, 11; 13, 11 *matra*-s respectively. The count is made on short and long syllables and there is a rule that the second and fourth line should rhyme. There is a pause after the second line. *Soratha* has the opposite combination of 11, 13; 11, 13 *matra*-s and the second and fourth line do not rhyme. Here is an example of a *Doha* (proverbial).

LAKH SAYANAP KOR BUDH,
KAR DEKHO SAB KOY
ANHUNI HONI NAHI,
HONI HUVE SU HOY

(You may have thousands of good intentions or wisdom in millions; Do whatever you can; But nothing will happen if it has not to happen; finally what is destined will happen.)

One of the important aspects of the *Doha* is that the four lines should convey a complete image in itself, independent of the preceding or following *Doha*.

Similarly, a *Soratha* should convey an idea or image complete in itself. Here is an example from the love-story of Nagji and Nagwanti, where Nagwanti says:-

NAGA SAMO NA KOY,
NAGAR SARO NIRAKHIYO
NAYAN GUMAYA ROY,
NEH TUMINE NAGJI

(None is like Nagji, I searched again and again in the whole city; weeping and weeping I lost my eyes, all for your love, Nagji.)

There are many types of *Doha*-s and *Soratha*-s. Change in rhyming rules, use of particular alliterations, and keeping or deleting the pause in the line can vary the form of the *Doha* and *Soratha*.

The process of memorization is by rote i.e. the performer has to learn the couplets by heart and should be able to recall them appropriately and exactly while rendering the story. A refrain line is added to these couplets in the songs to facilitate the musical composition, adhering to the rules of the rhythm and its inner variation. Such compositions allow for improvisatory melodic singing interspersed with the virtuosity of the rhythmic accompaniment.

These epics are rendered in many modes of the musical scale. Some of the scales are recognized by the name of the heroine. A *raga* is known as Maru (*Dhola-Maru*) and another as Sorath (*Beenjha-Sorath*). No narratives are sung

for heroines like Soob, Sameri and Asa but couplets identify them as heroines of some stories.

The whole process of training and performing and the social context is completely different from that of the *Pabu* or *Teja* epics. These romantic stories were composed in poetic form and the manuscripts are available right from the twelfth century onwards. However, it would not be true to say that the musicians render only a particular poet's compositions. It is a mixed fare drawn from many poets and some anonymous ones as well.

As one listens to the musical performance, one realises that the story line is very thin and does not embody any concept of religious merit or sanctity. However, I would not like to vouch for the sanctity or otherwise of *all* the romantic tales. On the border areas of western Rajasthan, romantic epics known as *Vait* are rendered among Muslims. They have a significant role to play among Sufi adherents. As for the well-known romantic tales, *Shirin-Farhad*, *Umar-Marvi*, *Sasi-Punno* and *Heer-Ranjha* etc., the liberal and humanist Sufi movement often inserted religious and symbolic metaphors in their narrative flow.

Ravivarma's Patronage of the Performing Arts (Fifth Century A.D.)

S. V. Sohoni

Royal patronage was indispensable to the performing arts in ancient India, and a palace-campus included facilities for dance, music and drama. The clearest mention of this type of performance before a select audience is in Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitram*. But we have an entire stone inscription containing a record about a project, concerning the promotion of the fine arts, in honour of Madana, the god of love, on a pillar erected under the command of King Ravivarma (485-519 A.D.) of the Kadamba dynasty, which ruled from Vanavasi, Dharwad District in Karnataka.

This stone pillar inscription was discovered in the village of Gudnapur in March 1971, near the Kadamba capital itself. To appreciate fully the contents of this unique record, we have to take into account the fact that Ravivarma, apparently, thought it necessary to safeguard against any possible implication or impression that his project for a shrine for Madana, along with two dance-halls in front of it, did not satisfy any canons of propriety. He did not want his intention to be attributed to any excessive interest in or devotion to the fine arts as such, and even much less to any support on his part to a wanton, libertine way of life. He, therefore, made special attempts to ensure that his scheme was not viewed in this light.

We have no information, whatsoever, regarding the circumstances which prompted Ravivarma to implement this project. It is on record that one of his queens had performed *sahagamana*, and it may be assumed that she was deeply attached to him.

One relevant detail about another shrine of Madana within a royal campus is of interest in this context. In a record of Krishna III of the Rashtrakuta dynasty, belonging to a period much later than that of Ravivarma Kadamba, there is a reference to a *Kamadevayatana* erected on palace grounds. It was obviously, meant to be used by his royal courtesans—'*Prajavilasini pataka sannihita—Kamadevayatana—purobhage*'. If a similar motive was entertained by Ravivarma, one may say that the wishes of his own queens had nothing to do with this project of a *devalaya* of Madana along with a pair of dancing halls in front of it. All the three structures were close to the residential rooms in Ravivarma's royal palace in his capital city and used for public celebrations of festivals every year. As will be pointed out later on, a reference to the spring season contained in this inscription is phrased in a language which closely resembles the description of Madanotsava in *Ratnavali*, the *Natika* ascribed to Harsha, and composed about a hundred years after Ravivarma's reign. In this description, there is a specific mention of the participation of members of the courtesan community in the Madanotsava celebration. There is little doubt that, in the associated activities based on gaiety and abandon, this group of artists played a prominent role along with other citizens.

One aspect of *prashasti*-s of individual rulers recorded in ancient times deserves to be taken into account. Just as there was a conscious attempt at a classification of heroes and heroines based on their qualities and performance,

associated notions were also considered while narrating the careers of rulers in *prashasti* compositions. That was why, while stating the ancestry of a hero of a *prashasti*, his record of achievements had to be then logically mentioned. In this case, Ravivarma's genealogy was detailed, followed by an account of his political conquests. Ravivarma was a *dhira-lalita* type of *nayaka*, as it were, and he had to be shown as *nischinta* (free of worries) before being described as taking a positive interest in the fine arts. He had already conquered his neighbouring kings and his mind could, therefore, be at peace when he undertook this project of constructing a temple of Madana along with its two dance-halls.

In fact, there is a vein of self-defence in this record: when it was being drafted, those responsible for its text were fully conscious of the fact that Ravivarma's project was in itself not as grand in scope or as sacred as many other schemes undertaken by earlier kings or by contemporary rulers. This record is yet another example of a problem facing royal secretariats in ancient times and one which seems to exist even in modern, democratic conditions. It is the problem of having to advance a justification for an act when it is not so easy to do so.

Ravivarma's text writer responded to this requirement, which called for a certain amount of ingenuity, by referring to Vishnugupta's *neeti*. He stressed the fact that Ravivarma had very diligently studied this *neeti* and also the religious scriptures. This was a very subtle suggestion. The reference to Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is important in itself. Further, Kautilya stressed, as perhaps no other authority did with equal emphasis, the parity of values of all the three *purushartha*-s (*Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama*). If, among them, any one deserved preeminence, it was *Artha*, which was basic to the other two, (*arthamoolau—dharmakamau*). This was a fundamental principle of ancient Indian culture. It was repeatedly affirmed in our two great national epics and enunciated in almost mathematical terms by Kalidasa.

It is a pity that the inscription has lost a few words in line ten, which refers to this concept. What is lost might have contained a reference to a specific religious scripture, just as the portion which is available refers to Vishnugupta's *neeti*, that is to Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. I think I am justified in making this suggestion because the consequent body of conviction or *nishtha* in the King's mind resulting from a study of Kautilya's work and also the work of obviously another authority is referred to as *Lokadvaya udbhooti—bhavini*. This means it served two worlds. *Arthashastra* is useful for mundane matters and the other must have been deemed essential to ensure progress in the other world. It was in this manner that the pursuit of *Kama* was accorded the same status as either *Dharma* or *Artha*. This statement is preceded by that in line nine about *pranata*, *bheeta* and *nashta samantas* as a factor in Ravivarma's material prosperity. These terms were developed on the basis of Kautilya's authority. There is a list of defeated kings in line twelve. In line eleven, there is a reference to Ravivarma's subjects being engaged in pleasantly passing their life-span, giving away in charity, as well as making full use of their own resources. Ravivarma is described as caring for his subjects the way he might fondle his children on his lap. In line twelve, there is a claim that other kings did not come within miles, even of a title of Ravivarma's excellence.

Then follows a statement which, again, is meant to boost the significance of the project in hand: यस्य पुण्य-निम्नगा बन्धो *Yasya* stands for *yena*, and the clause means "By that Ravivarma who had carried out a project of bunding or putting an irrigational dam on a holy river (or many such rivers)"; and moreover, दुर्गञ्च यस्योरुपर्वतम् (by him who had also built a number of forts on a mountain range). तेन वैश्वमन्मथस्येदम् रविणा क्षितीन्द्रेण कारितम् ॥ "By that very Ravivarma who had caused to be built this shrine of Manmatha". In other words, the plain intention was to assert that Ravivarma had formerly upheld the requirements of *Dharma* and *Artha* and had then proceeded to undertake a project towards recognising *Kama* as an equally important *purushartha*, and worthy of being pursued by a model king for that reason. It was also intended to convey that Ravivarma's priorities were *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama*—in that order. He was not exclusively obsessed with *Kama*.

Having indicated Ravivarma's faith in Kautilya's teachings as well as in a purely religious text of a high authority and then mentioned that his subjects were very happy with him and had subscribed to the prescribed ways of both *dana* and *bhoga* throughout their lives, a reference was deliberately made to Ravivarma's other public works like irrigation projects, building ghats on sacred rivers and the construction of forts on strategic points in a mountain range (or ranges). We have no data at present about any details of Ravivarma's military and civil works, mentioned here. He held sway over large territories between the Narmada and the Kaveri. One must await further evidence to locate one or more of these projects.

Ravivarma's secretariat took into account three more points which are of major interest to us in this connection—

(a) It was emphasised that whatever land was acquired for supporting the endowment for the temple and two dance-halls scheme, no landholder could have had any complaint that he was being forcibly evicted from his land. (b) Two precautions were clearly taken. Land was acquired through negotiation and on payment of more than its assessed value. (c) The other salutary consideration borne in mind was not to acquire all the required land in one single region but to obtain it from several areas. This was done to ensure that the incidence of acquisition was diluted.

The record does not contain the usual text of verses denouncing those who would fail to implement the arrangements for the maintenance of this project in future generations. It was plainly stated that it was hoped that good sense would prevail and the contingency of a breach of the terms of the grant would not arise.

* * *

GUDNAPUR INSCRIPTION OF KADAMBA RAVIVARMA

1 जयति सुर वधूनां मन्मथः कामिनीनां.....
राज्यो.....म्य ज्या कि . श्यामवा...

- 2 अथ बभूव हारितीपुत्रो मानव्यगोत्रोद्भवो द्विजः.
वीरशर्मैति वेदकुलमतिः.....सास. वेदमाकरोत्तद्विजोत्तमः
कुलमभूत्कदम्ब नारा ततस्तस्यात्कर्मिन्वृत्ती क्षितौ ॥
- 3 योऽथ वीरशर्मणो ज्येष्ठः श्री बन्धुषेणः प्रियात्मजः
स हि बभूव क्षत्रवृत्तिलतामूलगुणाम्बुप्रसेचि[तः]
तत्सुतो मयूरवर्मैति वेदाङ्गविद्या विशारदः
नृपतिरास विक्रमैकरसः शुभलक्षणलक्ष्यविग्रहः ॥
- 4 योऽभिषिक्तस्त्रिदशरोनान्या राज्या...कबन्धुना
भ्रमरकान्तावृन्दसङ्गीत विकसन्नवाम्भोज...
भुजगराजभोगदीर्घभुजः सुहृदात्तभोगो भुवः पतिः
तत्तनूजः कु(क)ङ्गवर्मा स राज्याङ्गभङ्गत्सदा द्विषाम् ॥
- 5 तत्सुतो भगीरथो नाम नियतं...रथः नृपतिरासी-
त्सत्यत शौर्यगाम्भीर्यविद्याकलान्वितः श्रीमतो
भगीरथस्य सुतो रघुरास राजापराजितः रिपुगणैस्सम्पराय
मुखे रघुसत्वविक्रान्तिधीगुणैः ॥
- 6 तत्कनिष्ठश्री कदम्बकुल.....नरपतिः
काकुस्थ इत्यास काकुस्थवत्सत्वधीगुणैः तस्य सनु-
शान्तिवर्मैति नाम्ना प्रजाशाना(न्त)येऽभवत् क्षितिपति-
र्भूवधूतिलको भूमीश्वरेभ्यो गुणाधिकः ॥
- 7 तत्सुतो मृगेशनामा.....मृगपति प्रभाव
सत्ववर्द्धमृगनाथलीला विशाम्पतिः समभवन्मृगेश
शावनिभो जगतीपतेस्तस्य धीमतः रविरिति स्वनाम-
तुल्यवपुः कैकेयपुत्र्यां सुतोऽनघः ॥
- 8 यो निहत्य विष्णुदासनृप.....प्राप राज्य-
म्बाल्य एवाशदशमण्डलीमण्डितम्प्रभुः स्वात्मसत्व-
व्योमसम्भूतलक्ष्मीन्दुलेखानवाम्बुदम् बालराजं संगुणे
सबलन् यो नीतवान्मृत्युवश्यताम् ॥
- 9 विनयसम्पदा श्रुतेन स[दा].....प्रणतनष्ट
भीतसामन्ता ववृधे च लक्ष्मीस्तथा तथा ॥ अस्त्रशक्ति
तोमरापात्रकुन्तेषु निष्पाम्पराङ्गतः तुरगविद्यारूढरूढ-
मतिर्बाह्यश्च यो न द्विषेवपि ॥

- 10 या च नीतिर्विष्णुगुप्तकृता [सु]वन्धु].....
अधिजगाम यस्तयोर्निष्ठाम् लोकद्वयोद्भूति भाविनीम् ॥
उपनताहि गङ्गानुनाटकोङ्गाळपाण्ड्यलुपादयः
यस्य च ज्ञान्निभ्रति प्रीत्या भूम्यात्म दण्डार्थं सञ्चयैः ॥
- 11 यस्य चापि मरुतोद्भूत चतुरर्णवाण्ण[वो भु]वि
तत्र तत्र सर्पता शुचिना यशसा दिशोवर्त्तनी कृताः ॥
ध्वसिते तयोस्तभीतिरसा यस्मिन्स्वधर्मे व्यवस्थिताः
सुखमवागुर्हानभोगरताः पित्रोरिवाङ्कस्थिताः प्रजाः ॥
- 12 संस्पृशन्ति भूवभूपतयो नाद्यापि लक्ष्मीलतातरोः शौर्य-
रत्न[ज्यो]तिना यस्य गुणभूषणानां कलामपि ॥ यस्य पुण्य-
निम्नगा बन्धो दुर्गञ्च यस्योरुपर्व्वतम् तेन वेदम
मन्म-थस्येदम् रविणा क्षितीन्द्रेण कारितम् ॥
- 13 दक्षिणेऽस्य राजवासगृहम् [वा]मे तथान्तः पुरोहस[त्]]
नृत्तशाले द्वे पुनस्सौम्ये प्राग्भागमाश्रित्य विष्टिते कुसुम-
गन्धवाहिभिर्दिशशिरैर्धृतिहारिभिर्दक्षिणानिलैः यत्र
षट्पदावळी धूमः सन्धुक्ष्यते मन्मथानलः ॥
- 14 अपि च फुल्लरेणु धूसरितो रतिविग्रहच्छेव [द]क्षिणः
यत्र कामयुद्धसन्नाहपटहः कठरौति कोकिलः ॥ तत्र चित्त-
जन्मनो जगतः स्थितिसंक्षयोत्पत्तिकारिणः स्थापितो मधौ
मधौ लोकनयनारविन्दोत्सवो महः ॥
- 15 यदि न युज्यते महस्तु मधौ कुर्यान्नृपो माधवेऽथवा
सम्भवेद्यदा तदा कार्यः कालावधिदश्रेयसावधः ॥
भगवतो मदनस्य निर्याणे कार्यानुयात्रा महीक्षिता
यदि न वेद्यते न निर्व्वन्धः सर्व्वासुखात्था यतः क्रियाः ॥
- 16 अनेन नयनाभिराममपदिज्य [चेतो वा]...गृहरुचिर वस्तु
भूपति सुखैषिणा कारितम् ॥ इतः प्रभृति रक्षणेऽस्य
सुखकीर्त्तिधर्मेऽस्यः प्रमाणमवनीश्वरास्समयधर्म्म
रक्षापराः ॥
- 17 अथास्य कामजिनालयस्य [पूजा] संस्कारार्थमसौ
महाराज श्री रविवर्म्मा इडिऊरग्रामं कान्तारार्थ्यप[टी]
कलङ्गोडग्राममोगूरु ग्राम सीगिन दक्षिणे गुडु तटाकं
वन्धयित्वा तस्य तटावस्योदकेन यावन्निष्पद्यते ताव-

- 18 दभिनवक्षेत्रञ्च दत्त्वा पुनरिमानि ब्रह्मचारिक्षेत्राणि महा-
वेङ्गुलिग्रामे वत्सककोटग्राम क्षेत्रन्तस्मिन्नाजमानेन
द्वादशनिवर्त्तन पुराणक्षेत्रन्तस्योत्तरतस्थलञ्च चतुर्विंशति
निवर्त्तनम् ॥ १ ॥ कलङ्गोडग्रामसीम्भ्येव ओलुककीहलञ्च
- 19 कोद्रववापक्षेत्रपर्यन्तम् ॥ २ ॥ इडिऊर ग्रामस्यापि सीम्नि
ब्रह्मचारि क्षेत्रमेकम् ॥ ३ ॥ दहक वेङ्गुलिग्रामश्च ॥ ४ ॥ एस^{७७}
पगापरतीर प्रवाहनिष्पद्यमानक्षेत्रवेदमस्थानञ्च तटाकाध
श्चतुर्निवर्त्तनमात्रम् ॥ ५ ॥ नवनद्यपरतीरे
- 20 यावत्सोपानैकोद्देशस्तावत्सीमा चास्योत्तरतो महापथः
बृहत्तटाक केतकीप्रस्रवण पद्मतटाकोदक निष्पद्यमानक-
न्तसमीपजातैः पुष्पफलोपभोगैस्तरुभिस्सह एडकडे
संज्ञकञ्च क्षेत्रम् ॥ ६ ॥ सत्तुरग्रामे च क्षेत्रम्
- 21 राजमानेन पञ्चनिवर्त्तनं पुव्वासिक खण्डेन भक्तप्रस्थेन च
सह ॥ ७ ॥ तस्मिन्नेव ग्रामे अन्यच्च पण्णिवर्त्तनं क्षेत्रम्
समान्यं सपनसवृक्षञ्च ॥ ८ ॥ अम्बिलकुण्डितटाकस्य
पश्चिमदिशा शृङ्गात्प्रभृति दशनिवर्त्तनं पुरातनक्षेत्रम् ॥
- 22 अतः परञ्च पुक्कोलिक्षेत्रं कृताकृतन्तस्य क्षेत्रस्य परिमाणम्
पूर्वाशा दक्षिणाशा[यां कम्म]कूरसीमासंस्था उत्तराशायां
एस^{७७}नदी संस्था ॥ ९ ॥ एवमेतानि नवब्रह्मचारिदेय
क्षेत्राणि सताम्रशासनानि ब्राह्मा(ह्य)ण्य (ण)हस्तेभ्यः क्रीत्वा दत्तवान् ॥
- 23 वनवासकान् चातुर्विद्या.....तान् च परीक्ष्य स्त. स्य च कृतान्मौल्यात्
बह्वधिक
- 24 मौल्यं दत्त्वा ब्रह्मचारिभ्य...अथ च राजदुष्टं कूट. सन कर्तुन्
चातुर्विद्य [स] म
- 25 .मदाय इदमशोभन...[स्थै]श्च परीक्ष्य तेषांसर्वस्वह[र].....
- 26 हाकि[नि]पलि कामदेवालयस्य पूजासंस्कारार्थं
कली[लि] ग्रामम्पद्मावत्यालयस्य पूजासंस्कारार्थम्मुकूण्ड्य-
- 27 न्वयाय सर्व्वनमस्यन्दत्तवान्...लोकोऽपिशाचः नित्यविस्तीर्णतुष्ट

From Traditional Theatre to Total Theatre

Chandrasekhar Kambar

As far as Karnataka is concerned, traditional theatre is nothing but folk theatre, which has emerged as a vital need necessary to express the life-substance and experience of the folk mind. Since religious experience represents the highest form of life-experience to the folk mind, even art-experience has to achieve the dignity of the divine. Therefore, all folk performances are by nature artistic, in the sense that they imply community participation. This is one way of explaining the origin of the folk drama. That is, all folk performances are part of a religious festival or fair conducted in the name and for the participation of a local deity. No folk dramas are performed purely for public entertainment.

As forms of cultural gesture, folk plays (and folk art in general) tend to be highly decorative, sometimes even irrelevant. The decorative element is apparent in elaborate details (of dress, song) and the tolerance of overacting and of unwanted characters and actors. These decorative elements are not an essential part of the performance and do not always enrich the totality of the structure of a play.

Since the outline of a folk play is broad, familiar, simple and clear, the performer does not have to bring home to the audience its total effect. Therefore, we cannot expect a folk play to have the kind of organisation or unity of experience or totality of structure that we expect and often find in an art play. This means that a folk play is simple in all respects—structure, plot, theme and performance. For example, the story or 'plot' is a well-known local myth, the characters are mostly stock characters and the attitudes exhibited are all straightforward and familiar. This simplicity and technical difficulties like the lack of stage appurtenances lead the folk performer to use 'stage conventions'. Stage conventions are a set of formulae mutually agreed upon both by the performer and the audience. The function of the conventions is to make communication easy. A gesture on the stage, for example, is easily communicated to the audience when the response to it is already presumed by the performer.

But a folk performance is something more than 'conventional' action. What grips the audience in spite of the enactment of conventional gestures is the amount of improvisation that leads to the conventions. No two performances of the same play can be alike. Since there is no fixed text (i.e., dialogue) or action, it is all a matter of the performer's individual talent.

A folk play is found in its authentic and only form in performance and not in any other form as in the literary play. In the folk play, we cannot emphasize any one of its aspects of performance such as music, dialogue, dance or gesture. All these are mutually dependent and reinforcing. In other words, the folk play, like song and dance, is a performing and temporal art.

The folk theatre, both in its origin and development, is the product of a stable and organic society; it is not the sudden efflorescence of a cultural or

social revolution. Its experiences belong to the pool of community experiences and, as such, it tries to reach all sections of society. Its religious origin clearly indicates its 'participatory' nature. A folk play is made of and caters to those simple gestures and attitudes which form the basis of the community's religion. Its simplicity has another function. Religion, in its pure form, is highly individual; it becomes part of a society only when it is realised as a ritual. Perhaps, this explains why all folk plays are part of a ritual embodied in a popular myth.

Since the function of the folk theatre is not to stir the emotions or the minds of the audience (as the theory of 'Catharsis' would suggest) but to strengthen certain established attitudes, it aims to entertain only in parts. Surprisingly enough, these interludes of entertainment (like the humour of the *Kodangi*, the Fool, or a comic episode about an ill-matched pair, or the improvised humorous dialogue) are more spontaneous and creative than the other parts of the play. The audience relishes these parts more than the rest and sometimes a performance is remembered more for such entertainment than for its relevance. It is interesting to note that it is in these comic episodes or interludes that we find a reference to and a lighthearted treatment of contemporary life—an element which is not part of the original scheme. The original core of the play retains, as usual, its mythical dignity and distance.

If rural culture is part of the traditional life of our country, what is the place of folk theatre in our cultural equipment? Is it possible to relate it to our contemporary needs—that is, to our artistic needs? Answers to this question could be more speculative than definite. As many cultural historians have pointed out, India is a medley of various cultures, a mixture of diverse and sometimes mutually exclusive attitudes. ('Unity in diversity' as the popular slogan says). But a closer examination reveals that the needs and equipment of the urban middle-class society are certainly different from those of rural society though sometimes both these societies live side by side to their mutual aggrandisement.

With this knowledge, what can the modern literary dramatist and playwright learn and so borrow from the traditional theatre? He does not have the joy of anonymity that the folk playwright enjoys. Also, his needs and equipment are radically different. The modern playwright believes in the perfection and finality of his creation. Once a play is written, it is no longer amenable to improvement—except perhaps in the form of editorial and printing corrections. A play is written once and for all. That is, the modern playwright is more consciously artistic than the folk playwright. What then is the relevance of the folk theatre to such a modern artist who writes with a different sensibility and for a different (and many times, indifferent) audience?

The folk theatre differs from its literary counterpart in technique, intention and audience. As has been pointed out time and again, the folk theatre is part of a ritual and its function is mainly ritualistic; therefore, it is more of an on-going process rather than a finished product. Its only medium is performance. The actor in the folk play is not only a participant but also its interpreter in a very definite sense of the word. He interprets in dialogue what is presented as song. That is, song and music here are more basic than dialogue and the dialogue is flexible—can be stretched out or cut short at will. Above the actor, there is the

Sutradhara who is a director-cum-actor, controlling and directing the movement of a performance, depending on his understanding of the audience's needs. But, the general movements of a performance like the entrance and exit of a particular character are all matters of simple activity to the actor.

The modern literary dramatist is not only its creator but also its first director. He gives directions to the actor in the form of 'stage directions' in the text. His audiences are sophisticated, urbanised and drawn mostly from the upper middle class. The folk poet organises his theme in terms of song, music and also, as an ancillary, in dialogue, but the literary playwright organises his theme in dialogue and directed gesture. He has none of the conveniences of a homogenous audience and has lost all communion with the folk mind. His theme is personal in conception (sometimes highly so) and becomes socially accessible only through the medium of language. A play, once written, has to wait for a director to select it for staging. The success or failure of a play sometimes depends on the skill of a director. Occasionally, the director is more imaginative than the playwright and so much so, that a performance of the play might surprise the writer himself. The modern director is more of a literary interpreter than just a skilled organiser.

The modern theatre is not related to ritual. But the folk theatre, deeply rooted as it is in ritual, cannot possibly avoid becoming a museum piece. What then can the modern playwright salvage from it?

The folk theatre is a bundle of conventions which determine the theme or substance and the form and mode of performance. But, both the form and substance are so tightly fused that the one cannot be separated from the other without damaging the total structure. In other words, the theme or substance of a folk play—which is generally local myth—is reinforced and substantiated by formal elements like gestures, song, dance and other stage conventions. If we abstract the gestures from a folk play (more properly, a performance), the abstraction carries with it overtones of its substance. We cannot enjoy a song from a popular folk play without being reminded of its context, whereas a pop tune from a film can live even outside its framework and continue to do so. Therefore, the modern playwright, who borrows from a folk play, has to be very conscious of the overtones of his borrowed element. Moreover, since the substance of the folk theatre is at the farthest remove from contemporary life, it cannot be assimilated by the modern playwright if he happens to be consciously modern. Once again, what he can abstract from the folk theatre is at best a set of conventions.

We have already seen how the use of conventions is a necessity—both technical and thematic—for the folk play. It is a wonder how these conventions have continued to operate as pure conventions and not as anything else. One possible explanation is that a gesture is convenient to handle—because of its rigidity of form—if it is conventionalised and not turned into a symbol. A gesture that becomes a symbol is far more difficult to manage because it demands, on the part of the playwright, an awareness of its organic relation with the totality of his play's structure. Conventions are easy to detach and displace.

It is here that the playwright can reap some profit. A modern play has greater organic unity. The playwright, if he wants to use a borrowed element



A scene from Chandrasekhar Kambar's *Jokumaraswami*.

in his play, must assimilate it in such a way that it becomes an indivisible part of the play's structure. In other words, if the modern playwright uses a convention from the folk theatre—either a gesture, dance, song or a stock character—he can do so only by turning that element into a symbol. What is only a convention in a folk play becomes here a symbolic mode. Since technique in the folk play is a matter of conventions, the technique can be and is—as examples will show—used by the modern playwright. This is what we mean when we describe *Rishyashringa*, *Hayavadana* and *Jokumaraswami* as written in the *Bayalata* technique or total theatre. In these plays, the success of the technique lies in the way a conventional gesture is turned into a symbolic exposition of the theme. For example, the convention of the *Bhagavatha* or *Sutradhara* introducing the character for the first time, is used in *Rishyashringa* to bring out the hero Balagonda's lack of identity. The *Sutradhara* asks the character to introduce himself to the audience. But Balagonda is unable to identify himself in a manner which can easily be communicated to the audience or establish an identity mutually agreed upon by both. Balagonda's gesture helps to establish the theme of lack of identity and communication which is so central to the play. Another instance of a convention used with effect is found in *Jokumaraswami*. Here again, the *Sutradhara* asks the characters to introduce themselves. The characters are introduced by the servants of the Gouda in such a way that they help to establish the symbolic and, therefore, ironic relations with the Gouda and also with each other. The Gouda's wife, for instance, is introduced as his farm which suggests the Gouda's property-mania and possessiveness. This also suggests the theme of fertility and exploitation.

But here is an obvious difficulty. The modern playwright, using such a technique, is limited in his choice of theme, plot and character. The folk play is built around a local myth. A modern playwright using a myth—however strong and rich its archetypal significance—unnecessarily limits himself to an oversimplified and sometimes irrelevant attitude. In India, rural culture runs counter to urban preoccupations. Therefore, a myth can never be interpreted in terms of contemporary urban life. Correspondingly, the language has to be a specific dialect and this imposes problems of communication.

It seems a pity that the urban audiences can never identify themselves with a play of the traditional type. They always retain a sympathetic distance and view such a play more as curiosity than as something relevant and immediate. Our society, segregated as it is into so many classes, does not aid the growth of drama. Indian society is changing—for better or for worse—but it seems to be in no way in step with a dramatic art characterising that change. When a modern playwright studies a folk play, all he can do—as G. M. Hopkins said in another context—is to “admire and do otherwise”.

Ethnomusicology in the Indian Context

Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy

There is no single widely-accepted definition of ethnomusicology, although the term has been in use for more than thirty years. Perhaps, the principal reason for this has been that scholars generally provide prescriptive definitions based on their perceptions of what the field should involve, rather than attempt to produce a single definition which would encompass all the areas studied under the rubric of ethnomusicology.¹ The closest to a descriptive approach has been the sometimes-used adage, "ethnomusicology is what the ethnomusicologists do", which, of course, defeats the intent of definition.

Of the prescriptive definitions, several are current. One, which is perhaps the most popular, defines ethnomusicology as "music in culture",² or its variant, "music as culture"³. Both of these assert the importance of the cultural context in ethnomusicology; they tend, however, to minimize the importance of the study of musical sonorities, musical theory, as well as the history of music, all of which have been examined by ethnomusicologists, particularly with reference to the non-Western art traditions. Another definition, "The study of orally transmitted traditional musics",⁴ tends to exclude the traditional art music of cultures such as China and Japan (and, of course, Western art music) simply because they employ written materials. It also ignores recently devised musical forms, because no tradition has yet been established from one generation to the next. A third definition, "The study of living musics",⁵ tends to exclude historical studies which have always been a part of ethnomusicology, especially in connection with the art musics of Asia. A fourth, "The study of non-Western and folk music",⁶ excludes not only Western classical music, but the modern non-classical forms (e.g., pop, jazz, rock, etc.) which have been recognized, at least by some, as constituting a legitimate area for ethnomusicological research.

While each of these definitions reflects trends in ethnomusicology, none of them does justice to the whole field. It seems to me that the study of ethnomusicology must include the study of sonorities as they exist today, as well as their historical backgrounds, which undoubtedly provide an important clue to the evolutionary processes involved; but ethnomusicology attempts to go beyond mere sound, towards an elucidation of our understanding of humanity through music. It attempts to throw light on individual and community traits not only through an examination of musical structures, but also through social interactions as manifest in musical behaviour. While the objectives of a particular research project in ethnomusicology may be "to enumerate, describe, classify or compare musical performance forms",⁷ the eventual aim must be directed to a study of the nature of man and the search for explanations to account for the particular patterns of music and musical behaviour which he adopts.

Thus, I would like to propose the following definition of the field:

"The study of humanity through music, musical behaviour and all phenomena related to music making."

Such a definition is necessarily broad in order to encompass the vast range of studies in ethnomusicology. It does not exclude studies focussed entirely on music sonorities, since these provide an insight into aesthetic proclivities of particular musicians and the musical community at large; nor does it limit the studies to the contemporary period, to particular cultural areas or specific forms of music.

Ethnomusicology, under this definition, would naturally subsume the term "musicology", as suggested by Charles Seeger many years ago.⁸ While this is rationally defensible, it does not take into account the historical factors which led to the need for a term such as *ethnomusicology* in the first place. The general acceptance of the term by the Western community of scholars indicates, not so much its appropriateness, but the need for recognition to be accorded to certain types of music studies for which there was previously no academic slot. In the Western world, the terms "music" and "musicology" have been appropriated for Western art music and its study, much the same as in India, where they refer primarily to the indigenous classical traditions. In this regard, Nettl writes:⁹

So in the Western world, we developed books called "The History of Music" and courses called "Introduction to the Art of Music", which dealt with only one kind of music (i.e., Western art music). The assumption seemed to be that the basic principles of this kind of music were universally valid, either because it was the only "true" music or because all other kinds of music simply represented its generative stages, or perhaps degenerations.

Even today, major American universities continue to list courses such as "Music History" and "Music Theory" which refer only to Western art music, as though no other musical tradition has either history or theory of any significance. Looking back to the beginnings of ethnomusicology, there were several Western scholars who were drawn to other forms of music, regarding them neither as generative stages of Western art music nor as degenerations, but rather as viable alternatives to Western art music. These scholars, however, found little or no recognition in academic circles of the time as all music, other than Western art music, was regarded as a "subfield of musicology that dealt, by implication, with 'sub-musics' worthy only of being compared with the great art music of Europe".¹⁰ Indeed, the term which preceded ethnomusicology, *vergleichende Musikwissenschaft*, or comparative musicology, tended to reinforce the view of 'sub-musics' whose principal value lay in that their study might contribute to a better understanding of the history of Western art music. In India, too, an equivalent attitude tends to prevail, that the non-classical forms are either generative or degenerative forms of classical music. I do not mean to suggest that such a view is totally without value, but that it is an extremely limited and demeaning view of individual music cultures.

The term *ethnomusicology* (originally, with a hyphen, ethno-musicology) was coined by Jaap Kunst in the early fifties and, although there is some discontent with it, the area of inquiry which it symbolizes has gained academic recognition as a field of study in its own right. As evidence of this, in 1976, the International Music Society with the American Musicological Society and the Society for Ethnomusicology co-hosted a conference in Berkeley, California, which was devoted mostly to ethnomusicological content.

There is little doubt in my mind that the adoption of a disciplinary name has had much to do with the acceptance of the field. Furthermore, the term *ethnomusicology* is not as inappropriate as some scholars tend to feel. It is derived from the Greek "ethnos", meaning nation, race, people, etc., and when one takes into consideration that one of the main early motivations was the desire to study the musics of different nations, races and peoples, this prefix seems quite reasonable. However, some tend to associate "ethno" with "ethnic", which originally referred to "Gentiles, non-Christians, heathens and pagans"¹¹ and now tends to refer, in a somewhat derogatory or condescending way, to minority groups on the basis of race, social status or custom. But ethnicity is not limited just to minority groups nor to racial interpretations. People who share specific customs or conventions also share a measure of ethnicity, whether or not they belong to a single nation, community or race. The classical music traditions (both Western and Indian), for instance, go far beyond a single nation, race or community; yet, the heterogeneous followers of these traditions exhibit a measure of common ethnicity merely because they share a particular music convention. The prefix *ethno* in ethnomusicology draws attention to the fact that music is a product of people, not just an isolated abstract entity, and that the final purpose of the study is to enhance our understanding of humanity, not merely of musical sonorities.

It is interesting to note that some of the strongest criticisms of the term *ethnomusicology* have come from ethnomusicologists themselves who feel that the term *musicology* should have the same broad perspective and not be limited to the history and sonorities of Western art music. Thus, they argue, the term *ethnomusicology* is redundant. The fact remains, however, that in the West, the field of musicology is firmly entrenched in European-based art music and other music traditions are given little consideration. Perhaps, in course of time, the two fields will merge, but not until musicologists are convinced that musical traditions other than their own are equally deserving of study in their own rights.

If we were discussing the languages of the world, this kind of problem would not exist since it has long been accepted that language is an important key to the understanding of culture and the way that people think. Music is, however, not regarded in this light. There is a widespread unconscious assumption that all forms of music are motivated by the need for artistic expression and abide by universal aesthetic principles. What is not often recognized is that music is basically functional; it is created and employed by peoples to express and satisfy individual and community needs, whether these be artistic or practical. Because music is much more abstract than language, it embodies many kinds of meanings and even simultaneous levels of meaning which are determined as much by the conditioning of the listener and the cultural context as by the content of the music and the intent of the performer. To the best of our understanding today, music does not follow any single set of universal principles, nor does it function like language, except on rare occasions. Nevertheless, it is no less important than language for the understanding of culture and ethnicity.

There is also a widespread feeling that non-classical musics are unsophisticated and rather simple and therefore not deserving of study. Even if we were to accept this notion that individual forms are sometimes musically simple,¹²

the fact remains that virtually every community in a country like India, has its individual form and style of music, in sum, probably far exceeding the variety one finds even in classical music. But it is not just the musical analysis which concerns the ethnomusicologist, whose primary concern is to determine why these individual traditions differ from each other, how they came into being, and how they satisfy individual and community needs. Unfortunately, in the Indian scholarly world, studies of non-classical music are held in rather low regard. Folklorists and literary scholars have published books on various types of folk and devotional songs, without a single word of music description, even though the texts of those songs were designed to be sung and would never be recited by members of the performing community. Even the appellation, poet-saint, given to Mirabai, Surdas, and so many others, reflects this prejudice, for all of them were in reality singers and composers of devotional songs, not just poets. If they considered melody and rhythm to be essential to their purposes and we are unable to understand why, surely the fault lies with us and should spur us on to greater efforts to understand the meaning and function of music. This is just the kind of research with which ethnomusicology is basically concerned.

To illustrate in more concrete terms the differences between a traditional musicological approach and an ethnomusicological approach, let us first consider attitudes and approaches to folk music. For instance, if a particular folk song employed only three or four notes, a musicologist would probably be inclined to regard this as "primitive" music and would very likely infer that the society producing that music was backward, not just from the musical point of view. This is like judging Western society by the tune of *Happy Birthday to You*. An ethnomusicologist would, however, look at it in a very different light, one in which the abilities or capabilities of the community would not be in question. A fundamental premise for the ethnomusicologist is to accept the fact that the music accomplishes satisfactorily the purpose for which it is intended. Thus, *Happy Birthday* is eminently suited to the group expression of joy on birthdays, or else it would not continue to be sung and would be replaced by some other song. The addition of melodic or rhythmic sophistications might improve the musical qualities of the music, but would not necessarily improve its effectiveness in its intended purpose. Rituals have evolved gradually over centuries and continue to exist because they are successful. In order to understand how a simple repetitive tune might be effective, terminology used in Information Theory can be instructive, especially the concept of redundancy. While all communication involves some measure of redundancy, in terms of the arts, especially music, redundancy plays a very special role. It is the principal element in setting and sustaining a hypnotic mood. An extreme instance of this is in the creation of trance to a repeated drum rhythm, a drone, or a continuously repeated phrase. An example of the last would be the *zikr* where Sufi novices repeat *La illaha illaha* over and over again in order to achieve a state of ecstasy. Repetitive movements including clapping, swaying, and shaking of the head are all part of this mood-creating redundancy. Even in classical music, one can say it is the redundant element, i.e., the characteristic shapes of the *raga* and the *tala*, already known to many members of the audience, which creates the basic mood, while the rendering of the performer serves mainly to modify or refine this basic mood. The village lady who sits at the grinding wheel and repeats a simple tune with only slight variation of words is indeed creating a special mood, a form of self-hypnosis which not only alleviates the tediousness of her labours,

but enables her to express feelings and ideas which would otherwise either not occur to her or would cause her great embarrassment if she were obliged to utter them in common speech.

What is not commonly recognized by folklorists is that under the "spell" of song, words have different meanings both to the singer and to the listener. Texts and translations when divorced from the musical context are not only incomplete, but may actually be deceptive. Thus oral myths and fantasies are usually rendered musically—the structure being strophic, with the melody repeating over and over again to create a mood for the reception of the events of the imaginary world.

Each community has its own musical genres and styles of performance which achieve a particular balance between new information and redundancy according to the needs and purposes of the community. Obviously, it is essential to know the purpose for which the music is being employed, but even if two groups use music for the same purpose, there is no guarantee that the musical elements employed will be identical. Nevertheless, certain patterns tend to be similar in such cases. For instance, many styles of scriptural chanting are similar in that they employ a tonal centre around which the "melody" pivots. On this kind of general level, some musical affinities based on function have been noted cross-culturally. The specific melodic and rhythmic patterns will, however, probably differ from one group to another. The fundamental question is whether or not the use of specific patterns by individual groups is purely arbitrary or has some rationale underlying it. Ethnomusicologists tend to believe the latter and have occasionally produced evidence to support this view. To give but one example, it has been suggested by more than one scholar¹³ that the musical intervals used by certain African peoples (e.g., Zulu, Bushmen and Nguni) in their songs have been derived from the harmonics which are produced on one of their prominent instruments, the musical bow. This is by no means the only example which could be quoted to illustrate the kinds of rationale ethnomusicologists have proposed in explanation of specific musical phenomena. Obviously, the explanation is not always related to the influence of musical instruments—in fact this was rather an exceptional case. Linguistic, socio-cultural, historical, psycho-acoustic and other considerations are also involved.

Let us now look at Indian classical music in order to illustrate the difference between a traditional musicologist's approach and that of an ethnomusicologist, bearing in mind that the ethnomusicologist is concerned not just with the description of a musical event, but with *why* the event takes a particular shape, *how* it functions musically and *how* this satisfies and fulfils individual and community needs.

We tend to take for granted many of the fundamental elements of our music; for instance, the fact that both our Hindustani and Karnatic systems are basically structured around solo performers. Why did we not develop concerted forms of music, or harmony and counterpoint? A Western musicologist, who tends to think of monophonic music as a generative stage of polyphony, would inescapably be led to the conclusion that we have not evolved as far as has the Western musical world. Whether or not this is true, can only be determined by the course of time. As far as we are concerned, however, we clearly prefer our music

to that of the West and do not feel that it is inferior in any way, nor that it belongs to an earlier evolutionary stage leading to polyphony. To an ethnomusicologist, however, this would mean that the monophonic/heterophonic form of Indian classical music is a reflection of a way of life and a collective aesthetic. Perhaps a partial explanation for our not having developed orchestral music may lie in the structure of traditional Indian society which has been highly stratified in terms of occupational groups—not the easiest conditions for the development of orchestral music which requires a fairly large number of performers functioning in synchrony. As this stratification breaks down in contemporary times, we see increasing evidence of orchestral music in India. In any case, the *hows*, and *whys* of these types of questions are among the principal concerns of ethnomusicology; although, to the best of my knowledge, no ethnomusicologist has applied himself directly to these particular issues.

Perhaps we should consider a more specific example from classical music to illustrate further the difference in approach between the musicologist and the ethnomusicologist. Most of the teachings of musicians and musicologists in India are primarily historical or descriptive. For instance, treatises describe (and prescribe) how a *raga* is (or should be) performed through abstractions such as *aroha-avroha*, *vadi-samvadi*, *jati*, *chalan*, *sangati-s*, etc. This would satisfy one of the 'how' questions with which an ethnomusicologist would be concerned, but these treatises give no explanation as to *why* a *raga* has to be performed in a particular manner, e.g., why certain *sangati-s*, *gamaka-s* or *tans* are necessary on certain notes in particular *raga-s* and not others. The usual answers to these kinds of questions are, "That's the way the *raga* is performed" or "That's the way my guru taught me". These responses are undoubtedly valid in their own context, but surely the structural patterns of *raga-s* are not purely arbitrary; they must have been created in response to stimuli, whether musical, social, psychological or historical. For example, a psychological or psycho-acoustic explanation to account for particular *raga* features might address them in terms of devices which enhance tension and resolution through the manipulation of consonances and dissonances in relation to the drone, melodic symmetries and asymmetries, and time delays and accelerations.¹⁴ It may be that some explanations will be beyond discovery, but so far, very few scholars have been concerned with such issues. Yet, it is the answer to questions such as the one posed here—why a particular *raga* has to be performed in a particular way in order to satisfy musicians and listeners—that will further our understanding of humanity.

From the foregoing discussion it should be evident that the field of ethnomusicology differs in many ways from that of musicology. Special training programmes in ethnomusicology at the M.A. and Ph.D. level are offered in a number of universities particularly in Europe and the USA, but, as yet, there is no such academic programme in India. The approaches at the different institutions vary, some emphasising music, others anthropology, folklore, area studies or other interdisciplinary perspectives. One of the most prominent of these is expressed by the term bi-musicality.¹⁵ This term, intended to parallel bilingualism in concept, implies fluency in two music traditions, the first one being that of Western art music since it was designed to be implemented within the structure of the American academic world. Participation in music performance of both traditions is thought to be an essential requisite for the achievement of bi-musicality. If such a concept

were to be adopted in India, one would presume that Indian classical music would constitute the student's first area of study and any other music tradition (including Western art music!), the second.

However, the underlying implication of bi-musicality, at least in the Western context, tends to reinforce the notion that ethnomusicology deals only with non-Western music (especially non-Western art music), a limiting view which has pervaded the field since its inception. Although the concept of bi-musicality is taken for granted by many scholars, its ramifications do not appear to have been discussed in print. In my opinion, there are two important considerations involved: the issue of the 'insider' versus the 'outsider', and the matter of specific culture bias which is probably an inevitable consequence to bi-musicality.

With regard to the 'insider'-'outsider' issue, it is presumed that a bi-musical person will have a foot in both camps; i.e., that he will be capable of understanding the point of view represented by performers of his second area of study, while retaining the ability to project himself into his first area of expertise in order to view his second area 'objectively', or at least as an 'outsider'. However, no ethnomusicologist would seriously argue that an 'outsider' could possibly have a deeper intuitive grasp of his second musical area of study than would an 'insider' of his own tradition. Nor would they seriously argue that a foreign scholar has a greater knowledge of the history, culture and music of Indian culture than an indigenous scholar, particularly in an erudite and scholarly environment such as India. Why then should foreigners study Indian music? The fact is that an 'outsider' can bring to bear a different perspective and approach which might help to illumine certain musical phenomena, at least for a particular type of reader. I could give many examples of the ingenious ideas and approaches suggested by Western students of Indian musicologists, merely because the Western students had not been conditioned by the traditions and conventions of Indian musicology. By the same token, I would fully expect bi-musical scholars from India, someday to offer new perspectives for the study of Western music. Yet, some Indian musicologists tend to be offended by the mere fact that Westerners publish on Indian music, as though this represented a form of cultural/scholarly imperialism. I do not believe this is a matter of West versus East, but that of 'insiders' versus 'outsiders'. It is all too easy to forget that an Indian of one community studying the music of another community in India is also an outsider. I am sure that he, too, can offer a perspective which might help to elucidate a particular musical phenomenon, especially for the community he represents. His views may have little relevance to the carriers of the tradition, but, on occasion, may also be meaningful to some of them. Perhaps the strongest argument for bi-musicality is that the bi-musical scholar has the training to be able to translate and communicate musical ideas from his second area of study to his first, only exceeding the original on very rare occasions, as in the often-quoted example of the Fitzgerald translations of Omar Khayyam's poems.

With regard to the second issue, the problem with bi-musicality and, to some extent, with all 'outsiders' is that they cannot avoid the specific biases of their own backgrounds, which, in the case of Western bi-musically trained scholars, is hardened by the culture-specific training in Western music demanded by some institutions in the USA and Europe. A student with a basic training in Western art music history and theory is not necessarily in a better position

to understand the music of any other tradition than a person with musical ability and no formal training. As a matter of fact, the former may be at a disadvantage since his ears will be attuned to tempered intervals and vertical perception of music. I have even encountered students with "perfect pitch" who have difficulty equating different performances of a *raga* simply because the *Sa* was at different pitches.

While there is no absolute solution to the problem of cultural bias, it seems to me that it could be diminished somewhat by broad-based training in ethnomusicology which treats both Western and Indian classical music as just two of the many ways discovered by mankind in response to particular physical, historical, social and cultural conditions. This is not to diminish them in importance, but to place them in universal perspective. With this objective in mind, a curriculum in ethnomusicology for the Indian context could include the following:

GENERAL COURSES

1. Introduction to Ethnomusicology
2. Music Cultures of the World
3. Musical Instruments of the World and their Classification
4. Music in Dance, Theatre and Ritual
5. Principal Music Notation Systems of the World
6. Comparative Music Theory
7. Acoustics of Musical Instruments

PRACTICAL COURSES

1. Oral Transcription of Music
2. Laboratory Techniques in Transcription and Analysis
3. Field Methods in Ethnomusicology
4. Audio and Video Equipment for Fieldwork
5. Documentation, Archiving and Retrieval Methods

DISCIPLINARY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY COURSES

1. Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology
2. The Anthropology of Music
3. Interdisciplinary Approaches in Ethnomusicology
4. Advanced Research Seminars in Ethnomusicology

With such a broad-based course of study in ethnomusicology, it would not be inappropriate to include courses specific to the Indian context. These might introduce ethnomusicological approaches to classical, folk, tribal and other forms of Indian music. The courses in ethnomusicology are envisaged for the post-graduate student, whose initial degree need not necessarily be in music, but could be in one of the disciplines related to ethnomusicology, such as anthropology, sociology, folklore, dance, theatre, and the like, provided the applicant can demonstrate knowledge of music or performing ability, whether vocal or instrumental. The proposed course of studies should have at least University affiliation so that appropriate higher degrees can be awarded to deserving students.

I have long felt that India, which probably has the largest variety of musical traditions of any country in the world, has not given them due recognition, at least in terms of the scholarly world. It is particularly disappointing, for instance, that we are not represented by a National Committee in the prestigious International Council for Traditional Music.

But, I am happy to note that there are signs of change. Academic institutions in India have recently become aware of the urgent need to document the performing arts and other oral traditions before they change drastically. Thanks to grants from the Ford Foundation, a number of Indian institutions have now acquired the technical facilities to carry out such projects, which have, heretofore, not generally been available in India; and proficiency in the handling of technical equipment is rapidly increasing. It is unfortunate, however, that there is, as yet, no established training programme available anywhere in India to produce the kind of scholars under whose direction technicians must operate in order to document these traditions effectively for future research. Further, little consideration has yet been given to the stages which must follow such documentation i.e., preservation, archiving and retrieval. This last involves the organisation and cataloguing of the documented materials in archives in such a manner as to facilitate the recovery of specific items.

The courses outlined above are designed to produce professional scholars who would be able to carry out effective fieldwork in ethnomusicology and the performing arts, prepare written documentation with knowledge of the appropriate methods for indexing, archiving, and retrieval of materials collected, as well as being able to conduct meaningful research based upon these documents which could be of immense educational value for all levels of society.

* * *

Notes and References

1. The range of studies carried out by ethnomusicologists can be seen in the issues of the quarterly journal, *ETHNOMUSICOLOGY*.
2. Merriam, A., *The Anthropology of Music*: Evanston, Illinois, 1964, p. 7.
3. Title of a book by Herndon, Marcia and McLeod, Norma; Darby, Pennsylvania, 1981.
4. The article on Ethnomusicology in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, London, 1980, by Barbara Krader discusses this definition by George List, as well as others.
5. *ibid.*
6. Nettl, B., *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, Urbana, Illinois, 1983, p. 4.
7. Ranade, A., gives these as the aims of a "complete investigation of a particular folk culture" in "Researches in Folk Performing Arts", *NCPA Quarterly Journal*, vol. XII, no. 4., Dec. 1983. p. 36.
8. In, "Toward a Unitary Field Theory for Musicology", *Selected Reports* vol. 1 no. 3, UCLA, Los Angeles, 1970.
9. *op. cit.* p. 37.
10. *ibid.* p. 8.
11. *Webster's New International Dictionary*, 2nd Ed., 1947.
12. Nettl, *op. cit.*, p. 10 would evidently be reluctant to accept this: "They (ethnomusicologists) consider all musics worthy of study, recognizing that all, no matter how simple, are in themselves inordinately complex phenomena".
13. e.g., Kirby, P., in "The Changing Face of African Music South of the Zambezi", p. 244, and Rycroft, D., in "Stylistic Evidence in Nguni Song", p. 221; both published in *Essays on Music and History in Africa*, Ed. Wachsmann, K. P., Evanston, Illinois, 1971.
14. This is the kind of approach I have used in my book, *The Rags of North Indian Music*, London, 1971.
15. The leading proponent of the bi-musicality concept was Mantle Hood of UCLA. He has discussed his ideas in, "The challenge of bi-musicality", *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 4, 1960, pp. 55-59.

News and Notes

Audio Technology Workshop-Seminar, National Centre for the Performing Arts, Bombay, April 27–29, 1984.

An Audio Technology Workshop-Seminar was organised by the National Centre for the Performing Arts on its premises from April 27-29, 1984. The Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology (ARCE) of the American Institute of Indian Studies participated fully in this event which was generously funded by the Ford Foundation. Folders given to participants also contained a set of research papers to serve as background and advanced reading for each of the sessions. A short bibliography and glossary of recording terms was also included. Thirty-two participants representing research institutes from all over India attended the three-day session.

The inaugural session entitled "Microphone: Structure and Types" was addressed by D. B. Biswas, Assistant Director (Electronics and Engineering), NCPA. This was followed by a workshop session on microphones conducted by Manoj Sharma, Recording Engineer, NCPA. A live music demonstration was arranged—with a male and a female singer, sarangi, tabla and tanpura—and participants were able to see a demonstration of different mikes and mike placements, to discuss each kind of sound in terms of recording problems and to observe the effect of polar patterns on the sound output.

In the afternoon session, Umashankar of the ARCE spoke on "Tape-recorders and Tape Types" with special emphasis on the tape-recorder's role in the recording chain, its mechanism and parts and on tape movement. An interesting discussion ensued in which participants asked for expert advice regarding preservation and selection of sound equipment, particularly in India where the best equipment is either unavailable or out of the range of their budget. In the workshop session, participants made recordings themselves with a variety of recorders and mikes; these recordings were later evaluated.

In "Recordist as Perceiver" N. A. Jairazbhoy of the University of California in Los Angeles focussed on the recordist's influence on the recording. He pointed out the difference between a recording as an ethnographic document and a recording made for the purposes of study and said that if only one kind of recording was possible, a recording of the ethnographic kind was the best as it included the audience, the ambience and the surroundings. The ethics of recording, the role of the listener and the contribution of the recordist were among the issues discussed later.

In the second day's session, D. B. Biswas spoke on "Studio-Recording Situations: Mixers and their Use." He explained how mixers, to some extent, could compensate the psychological element in hearing, and dismissed the general notion of mixers being complicated, bulky and not suitable for field work. He discussed the concepts of intensity and time (or phase) cue, pan potting etc., the importance of filters and of developing selective hearing. Participants were shown portable mixers and, in the workshop session, all the elements of the

elaborate mixing console were explained and their functions demonstrated. Different mikes (mono and stereo) and mike placements were used to demonstrate how a mixer could change the sound image; also, the advantages and disadvantages of each arrangement were enumerated.

The next session on "P. C. M. (Pulse Code Modulator) and Advanced Recording Techniques" was conducted by N. A. Jairazbhoy and Umashankar. The Sony PCM F-1, a digital convertor used with the portable video, has now made digital recording of a high quality available to non-professionals for a fraction of the cost of analog recorders of a similar standard. Umashankar described how the PCM converts sound into digits which are then stored on video tape and, since the digits do not deteriorate, the sound can be preserved for at least a hundred years with no loss. There is no loss in copying and every copy made from a digital master is identical to the master. Other advantages of the PCM were also cited. A demonstration of a live performance was done using the PCM F-1 and the analog spool recorders available at the NCPA and the pros and cons of each recording discussed. It was agreed that while digital recording had enormous benefits, being a new technology there were teething problems to overcome including the conditioning of the listeners.

The session on "Maintenance and Preservation" by D. B. Biswas covered in great detail preventive maintenance of sound equipment and preservation of magnetic tape and film. This was followed by a visit to the NCPA vault where the participants were shown how temperature and humidity controls were maintained.

In a special session "Computer Retrieval System and Indian Music" N. A. Jairazbhoy, Amy Catlin (also of the UCLA) and the ARCE archival staff demonstrated the ARCE retrieval system designed for the Apple II+ computer. The basic aim of this demonstration was to show the participants (many of whom were from research organisations) the relevance and convenience of computers for retrieval in a sound archives.

On the last day, a field trip was arranged to Bassein where the participants could put into practice the concepts learnt during the seminar sessions. It was market day in Bassein and participants recorded interviews in the market with a view to experiencing the handling of audio equipment in noisy surroundings, while trying to maintain the ambience. A recording situation of folk music was arranged in a nearby temple. A variety of percussion instruments and items had been specially selected by Ashok Ranade of the ARCE to present the recordist with a range of problems. Halfway through the performance, the artistes shifted outdoors to highlight the importance of environment in recording. Later, at the NCPA, an evaluation session was held where samples of the above recordings were played and analysed.

The participants said that they had benefitted immensely from the seminar and workshop sessions and hoped that many more training workshops of this kind would be organised in the near future.

Letters to the Editor

Madam,

I have read Subhas Chanda's letter in your issue of March 1984 regarding my review of *Raga Vyakarana* by Vimlakant Roy Chaudhury (*Quarterly Journal*, September—December 1982.)

It is a pity I misunderstood the parallel drawn by the author between verbal and musical languages. On reading the original passage (in English), I am convinced that had Roy Chaudhury expressed himself precisely, this need not have happened. *Varna* and *Pada* have specific meaning in musical terminology. *Varna* is not musical alphabet or notes but the act of singing (*ganakriyochyate varnah*). *Pada* is not musical 'word' or phrases but refers to the words or the text of a song. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that the author's meaning was totally missed. Believing this to be the case, I had suggested that something seemed to have gone wrong with the translation.

Obviously, *raga*-s given here do not have to conform to Bhatkhande etc. But, in an expositional (*Vyakarana*) work, especially of a traditional art, it is sound practice to give the source of the material on which the conclusions are based (in this case, *Bandish*-s for existing *raga*-s, names of texts where *raga*-s have been reconstructed and of composers when new ones are included), if only for the sake of authenticity. It is good to know that Roy Chaudhury wrote a separate book on musical terms, but this did not absolve him from giving a proper, clearly-stated Glossary here.

While classifying *raga*-s under separate groups, it is essential to state the salient features of each group. This has, unfortunately, not been done which leads to considerable confusion. I am glad that the point regarding the performance time of a *raga* has now been clarified by Subhas Chanda.

I would like to say once again that this book serves as a reference book, especially for those initiated in the music of *raga*-s, but, more rewardingly, provides a fund of ideas, many beautiful ones, which will extend the repertoire of our practising musicians.

Geeta Mayor,
'The Retreat',
Shahibag,
Ahmedabad.

Madam,

I wish to express my sincere appreciation of the excellent article "The Concept of *Tala* in Semi-Classical Music" by Peter Manuel published in the NCPA's *Quarterly Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 4, December 1983. Therein, he highlights the distinct nature of certain *tala*-s employed in semi-classical Hindustani music. I wish to seek clarification on some points.

Tala, in classical music, has always been expressed through the *kriya*-s or actions (of hands). The individual time units of *tala* are manifested through these *kriya*-s. And, identifying *tala*-s by the *matra* count has been adopted where all the *kriya*-s are of different durations, units such as *pluta*, *guru*, *laghu*, have been mentioned. Thus, the *tala*-s have been described either with reference to the total *matra* value or with reference to their *laghu*, *guru* structure. When *matra* measure is resorted to, each *matra* duration is manifested through a separate individual *kriya*, sounded (*sashabda*) or unsounded (*nishabda*). Thus, there would be as many *matra*-s as there are *kriya*-s. In the case of present-day Hindustani music, the whole picture is slightly different. We have the *kriya*-s, actions of hands, and in addition there is the *theka* of the *tabla*, namely the practice of playing specific syllables. Of course, it is the latter which is chiefly in vogue. In the case of the *kriya* system, we find that, in Hindustani music, the number of *matra*-s does not coincide with the number of actions of hands. And, instead, we observe that the *matra* value coincides with the number of syllabic groupings or *bol*-s or the strokes on the *tabla*. Even in Teentala, there are four *kriya*-s while the *matra* value is 16 which corresponds to the number of *bol*-s or strokes. Theoretically, the value should be four *matra*-s but it is sixteen, being guided by the *bol* structure. In Ekatala the value is taken to be twelve *matra*-s. While there are only six *kriya*-s, there are twelve strokes or sets of strokes for the *tabla*.

Thus, we see that, in Hindustani Music, the *matra* measure is apparent only from the "stressed patterns and the number of structural strokes" of the *tabla* and not from the *kriya*-s. Hence, when the author of the article makes a distinction between the classical and semi-classical *tala*-s on the basis that the former are identified by the number of *matra*-s while the latter by their stress patterns, and the number and order of structural strokes, the question arises regarding the validity of the distinction since the *matra* measure itself is based on the number of strokes on the *tabla*. It appears to me that the *tala*-s, which the author cites to establish a group of semi-classical *tala*-s, are those in which the number of *bol*-s or strokes is not equal to (in fact, is rather less than), the number of *matra*-s ascribed. This means that one syllable or stroke is sometimes extended to accommodate two *matra*-s, thus giving rise to a lot of flexibility and consequently room for *langra* gait to occur. Because of this lack of one-to-one correspondence between a stroke and a *matra*, there is bound to arise a dispute regarding the total *matra* value. The next step, as the author points out, would be, obviously, to consider these *tala*-s not in terms of *matra*-s, but instead in terms of units like *laghu*, *guru*, *pluta* etc. But then, the question is whether the inapplicability of *matra* value to some *tala*-s is sufficient ground for terming them semi-classical. We have seen above that the *matra* system as well as the *laghu*-

guru-pluta system are admitted under our *tala* system. There is no difference in the concept of *tala* entering here at all.

N. Ramanathan,
18, Fourth Main Road,
Raja Annamalai Puram,
Madras 600 028.

Madam,

I am very grateful to Prof. Ramanathan for his enlightening comments on my article, and in particular for pointing out the affinities between the stress-based *laghu-guru-pluta* system (described in medieval treatises and still operant in modern Carnatic practice) and the treatment of Chanchar *tala* in *langra* gait, wherein the number of *matra*-s is irrelevant. My article concentrated on the difference in concept between, on the one hand, this stress-based approach to *tala*, and, on the other, the *matra*-based Hindustani classical *tala* system. That is, within the North Indian context, there do seem to be two different approaches to *tala* (regardless of whether one or both have precedents in medieval or Carnatic theory or practice). Moreover, one wonders if the practical root of the stress-based approach in *langra*—i.e., the gross alteration of the pulse—is the same as the theoretical origin of the *laghu-guru* etc. system described in classical texts; that is, can we assume that that system originated from such a rubato treatment of the pulse? Such an origin would seem unlikely and, at any rate, impossible to verify. In this sense also, *langra* approach seems distinctive.

Of course, the inapplicability of *matra* value to *tala*, as Prof. Ramanathan observes, is a feature only of certain *tala*-s used in semi-classical music and should not be taken as a criterion distinguishing all of them; hence, I have termed certain *tala*-s (Kaharva, Dadra, Jat, etc.) as semi-classical only because they are never employed in pure classical forms, but rather in semi-classical contexts (aside from folk and film music).

Peter Manuel,
Deerfield Road,
Gates Mills,
Ohio, U.S.A.

Book Reviews

MOHINIYATTAM by G. Venu and Nirmala Paniker, G. Venu, Trivandrum, 1983, Rs. 80.00 (In English and Malayalam).

A book, which analyses and consciously formulates an understanding of the craftsmanship of a particular art form, is always welcome.

Kerala has always been known for the varied dance forms woven into the tapestry of its ancient heritage. There were two mainstreams of the tradition: the martial and the ritualistic. Around the fourth century A.D. the Nayars of Kerala began to wield great power. It was they who set up the *Kalari-s* which were training centres for physical endurance and the martial arts. This warrior class performed unbelievable feats of skill and their bodies were pliable and strong. Kalaripayattu became a superb art and there is no doubt that dancers in Kathakali had a close relationship with the form. The fight scenes in the dance dramas of Kathakali are reminiscent of the Kalari techniques.

The Nambutiris, who were aristocrats, loved the arts and encouraged them. Woven into the fabric of their lives were also the rituals of the temples, the recitation of *mantra-s*, the belief in good and evil forces. Devi was worshipped through a man, who, in a trance, articulated her desires, answered questions and danced waving a sword.

Within the temple walls, the *devadasi-s* (*Tevidichi* in Kerala) sang of devotion to God. A special theatre (*Kuttambalam*) was set apart for performances. Koodiyattam, which is perhaps the form nearest the ancient Sanskrit theatre, is even today enacted in the temples. Thus, sophistication and primitive rites together make Kerala a glowing storehouse of the arts in all their mystery and ritualistic communication.

The earliest literary works about the *devadasi* (or courtesan) in Tamil literature are *Silappadikaram* and *Manimekhalai*. Here, the tradition of the courtesan dancer is described in great detail. There were *devadasi-s* in all parts of the country, serving both as temple and court dancers. Many of them were consorts of royal kings. Others were dedicated to the temple. In the South, the dance perhaps had the same form but, since each region was a separate entity, local influences prevailed. One of the graceful forms danced by solo dancers in the temples of Kerala was called Mohiniyattam. Originally the structure was the same as in Bharata Natyam, but the form changed in presentation.

It was also natural that the technique of Kathakali, in its *lasya* aspect, as danced by the women characters, had some impact on Mohiniyattam and the style is very similar to the 'sari' dance of Kathakali, though with many variations. However, the names of the items have remained close to Bharata Natyam. The *Colkketti* is the invocation, followed by the *Jatiswaram*, *Varnam*, *Padam*, *Tillanna* and *Shlokam* as in Bharata Natyam. The authors refer to *Saptam* as the seventh item, though it is more plausible that it was the *Shabdham* of Bharata Natyam.

From Srimati Kalyanikutti Amma who taught me some *shabdams*, I had the impression that the *Shabdham* in Mohiniyattam is similar to that item in the Bharata Natyam repertoire, rather than denoting the number seven. The *mudra*-s used are, however, from the *Hastalakshana Deepika* of Kathakali, and the *abhinaya* is also more akin to Kathakali.

The authors of this book, G. Venu and Nirmala Paniker, in their excellent book on Mohiniyattam, trace the origin of this form to the *Nanniar Kuttu*, a ritual ceremony danced by Nambiar women. It is an interesting theory and one that we hope the authors will develop further. Today, that art is slowly dying out and traces of it can still be found in some temples of Kerala. It was a ceremony where solo dancers presented, for twelve consecutive days, the story of Krishna.

The Mohiniyattam technique, described in detail, follows the *Kaishiki* style of Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra*. The sixty *atavu*-s (*adavu*) are the basic steps, the alphabet of the dance. The costume is the same as was used in ancient days for the *devadasi*-s of Tamilnadu; and the hair was braided in a long plait decorated with white flowers. Some dancers wear their hair in the Kathakali style of a knot on the left side of the head.

The most fascinating and intricate part of the book is the system of notation developed by the authors. Codifying dance techniques is well-known in the West and began as early as the fifteenth century. The best known is perhaps Labanotation (called SCHRIFTTANZ) which Rudolf Laban published in 1928. It is still the most important system and all-inclusive. The Dance Notation Bureau in New York City under Ann Hutchinson teaches the system in a modified form.

In 1965, G. Venu made an attempt to record the *mudra*-s of Kathakali in a short work entitled *Alphabet of Gestures in Kathakali*. Later, in 1977, the Kerala Sangeet Natak Akademi published the work in book form. It was a major work and the first of its kind in India. The system is carefully thought out and has a remarkable and innovative relevance that can be of immense use to a serious student.

In India, where for thousands of years, music and dance have been preserved and passed on from *guru* to *shishya*, it is perhaps time to codify, in modern terms, the work of centuries. With the age of technology upon us, we have far to go to catch up with Western methodology. While studying with a *guru* is still the best way, (for it is much more than mere study), it does not preclude a communication of this method of aesthetic and practical understanding of the arts.

The authors must be congratulated for their attempts to record the dance in notation and it is even more creditable to have the text in two languages: in the language of the dance technique of Kerala, Mohiniyattam, which is Malayalam, and in the now universal language of English.

It is my sincere hope that all students of art will peruse the book and that the pioneering work of G. Venu and Nirmala Paniker will be the beginning of further research in the methodologies of communicative teaching.

—MRINALINI SARABHAI.

THREE PLAYS. PROCESSION/BHOMA/STALE NEWS by Badal Sircar. Published by Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1983, Rs. 35.00 (*In English*).

IN SEARCH OF FAMINE (*Akaler Sandhaney*). A film script of Mrinal Sen's film. Translated by Samik Bandyopadhyay. Published by Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1983, Rs. 35.00 (*In English*).

Here are two publications that command comment beyond the boundary of the creative work to be reviewed.

Further, we must welcome the new publishing venture, Seagull Books. Paperbacks of quality—in content and production—seemed to be the preserve of Penguins and Faber. Seagull convinces me that quality comes from care and love for the printed word. Both books are finely printed, well-designed and (pun intended) bound to last.

Commercial houses are known to support and subsidise sports—which reward the patrons with plenty of publicity. It is, however, most rare to find books being sponsored; and neither Badal Sircar nor Mrinal Sen have the attributes of mass readership. All the more reason for me to compliment Duncan Agro-Industries of Calcutta for sponsoring these two books; for, the very creative strengths of Sircar and Sen could be the proverbial millstone round a publisher's neck. Could this be the beginning of a cordial friendship between commerce and the creative writers of India?

Thirdly, the translations into English are smooth enough to make me only subconsciously aware of the Bengali originals.

And so, to the works of Sircar and Sen.

Badal Sircar has three longish one-acters in the Seagull book. Now, Sircar is not really a playwright of the proscenium. I believe he increasingly isn't even of the theatre as we in the cities know it, practise it. He goes back to the open space of the villages—and the parks or streets of the city today. All three plays—*Procession*, *Bhoma* and *Stale News*—are bereft of characters, that is, individuals; instead, Sircar uses actors as members of a chorus. And dialogue is, therefore, substituted by strong social statements. All the three plays are social and political. Yet the result is a powerful experience in which "theatre" as we know it recedes into the background while the playwright's comments and statements take over with a cumulative impact; the dialogue is often a narrative from history—a hundred years old as in *Stale News* or a hundred days old as in *Procession*. In all three plays, Sircar uses the detachment of the documentary: he forsakes "the crisis of the individual" to explore instead the "social, economic and historical forces" which are the warp and the woof of the crises in our society.

Procession is a montage on Calcutta: it captures the strangely self-destructive appeal of any megapolis. *Bhoma* is not of the city yet, it cynically is concerned with the exploitative relationship between the city and those on the land. But it is *Stale News* that for me is the most powerful. Perhaps because Sircar's documentary newspaper-cuttings approach and style work most effectively in laying bare the theme of exploitation in all its rawness, concerned as it is with the Santhal rising and its final, tragic betrayal and suppression.

While Satyajit Ray stays close to the heart, Mrinal Sen shows the indirect route to emotion through the intellect. I have always believed that Sen must maintain that an appeal to the heart is short-lived while the mind once effectively entered, has the ability to extend the artist's thought in time and scope. Committed to social analysis, Sen's films are "a calculated mixture of the fictional and the documentary" and in *In Search of Famine* Mrinal Sen most intelligently criss-crosses "art" and "reality". He questions the depth of commitment even of the committed, as he takes us as observers of a film unit that intends to come to grips with the tragedy of the Great Famine even as it fails to recognise the daily famine of the villages of today. Sen himself summarises it best: "How honest have we been in our artistic work, and where and when have we begun deceiving ourselves and hiding behind so-called aesthetics?"

Just a word of caution. This Seagull publication is not what is often promoted as 'the book of the film'. It is a filmscript which interjects description of camera angles and movements and of editing so that often you are alienated from the film-narrative flow. If, however, you are a film-buff and want to see with the eye of a fine director's camera, then this filmscript will more than satisfy.

In conclusion, I must say "Welcome, Seagull Books. And thanks for presenting the work of two very intelligent and stimulating artistes."

—F. K. R. M.

MUSIC EAST AND WEST. Essays in Honor of Walter Kaufmann. Edited by Thomas Noblitt. Festschrift Series No. 3, Pendragon Press, New York, 1981, Rs. 400.00 (In English).

Around 1969 I became acquainted with Walter Kaufmann's multiple achievements. Prof. B. R. Deodhar, my guru, spoke of him with admiration and also referred to his work on Hindustani *raga*-s. Later, I stumbled on some of Kaufmann's other articles. The wide range of his musical interests and activity was thus impressively brought home to me.

The same range is effectively reflected in the volume published to honour him. The contributions draw upon diverse musical cultures, such as the Indian, Persian, African, Turkish, Korean etc. Religious, classical and other categories of music are described, analysed and sources from other arts are also discussed in relation to musical themes. The work, as a whole, is characterized by seriousness and an intimate knowledge of subjects under discussion. To read such a book is rewarding but to review it proves to be demanding!

Appropriately enough, the book opens with Wayne Howard's well-researched essay on *Ottuttu*, the Yajurveda festival in Kerala. Howard documents the recitation-festival with a bias that can, to all intents and purposes, be described as one of cultural musicology — a discipline pursued and practised in India without conscious awareness. In consonance with the tenets of the discipline, Howard notes in meticulous detail the dress of the reciters, the rituals and the ritualistic objects, the various recitation modes and their individual features, notation etc. On account of his orderly and precise presentation, the entire ritual comes alive in its full majesty.

What is missing, however, is an explanation of why the described features occur at all. As the entire *Ottuttu* performance reveals an elaborate and a purposeful structure, an effort to establish a causal relationship between the structural features of the performance and the cultural, extra-musical matrix would have been in order. If Howard has an explanatory comment to offer on the symbolism of the *kurma*-shaped *phalaka* on which the *vaidika*-s are seated, there is no reason why the two actions included in the *abhivandana* are merely described (p. 7). A similar reluctance to go beyond the act of ethnographic recording is observed in his fascinating account of the phases of *kottu* (p. 35) and *ghosam* (p. 38). The virtuoso element manifest in these phases of the recitation would appear to be contradictory in spirit to the sacred character of the phenomenon unless the deeper, non-religious motivation of the 'festival' is brought into a neat explanatory focus. Stated briefly, a comprehensive oral tradition always provides secular occasions and inspirations to exercises of religious or sacred import so that the relevant performing moulds are preserved with minimum distortion. The very act of collecting together practitioners of the Yajurveda-recitation tradition in a format which includes a public demonstration makes the motivation clear. That there should be an in-built scope for displaying virtuosity and excellence is bound to determine the features of the recitation. These and other such explanations of the performing aspect cannot be ignored. Howard's affinity to his theme and the deep respect he has for the informants shines through — more's the reason why a culture-based explanation of the musical phenomena is expected of him.

Bonnie Wade's discussion is almost equally methodical, but the theme she chooses to tackle is itself minor in nature. As a theme, *Cadence Practice in Hindustani Vocal Music* lacks discursive potential. Therefore, her conclusion that *vadi*, *samvadi* and *sa* occur at: (a) the ending of the pre-*mukhada* melodic phrase; (b) the *sam*-point; (c) the final point of the *mukhada*-phrase if it extends beyond *sam* (p. 60), is less than impressive. It becomes apparent that, unless accompanied by new or additional explanations, descriptions fail to hold academic attention, irrespective of their fullness and sound methodology. However, her alertness in relying on the notated as well as on the actually performed pieces, and her insight into terminological and conceptual similarities between *Khayal* and Kathak practices arouse interest.

Terry Miller's essay on the classification of the Asian free-reed instruments or Hye-ku Lee's paper on the Triple Meter in Korean music are of interest for different reasons. The first clearly suggests that a different organological cartography seems to be necessary in the case of North-East India and the second alludes to the possibility of 3-beat rhythms and frameworks based on them, necessitating different evaluations in slower and faster tempi vis-a-vis their currency in general.

Alan Merriam draws pointed attention to the relationship between musical rhythmic structures and the concept of time-reckoning in extra-musical behaviour. It is obvious that areas of aesthetics and philosophy become relevant in such a discussion. With that art-music or classical music assert their autonomy as opposed to the life-integration enjoyed by folk, tribal or popular music etc.

To review a multi-aspected book is an unenviable venture. The book holds excitement-potential for many readers and for various reasons—a difficult achievement indeed!

—ASHOK D. RANADE

UDAY SHANKAR—A PHOTO BIOGRAPHY published by Ravi Shankar on behalf of RIMPA and the Uday Shankar Festival '83 Committee, N. Delhi, 1983, Rs. 75.00 (*In English*).

HIS DANCE, HIS LIFE—A PORTRAIT OF UDAY SHANKAR by Mohan Khokar. Published by Himalayan Books, New Delhi, 1983, price not stated (*In English*).

Two books have recently been published on Uday Shankar. The first is in the form of a commemorative volume published on the occasion of *Uday Utsav*, a cultural festival held in New Delhi in December 1983, to honour his contribution to Indian dance. Pandit Ravi Shankar, Pandit Rajendra Shankar and others connected with Uday Shankar through ties of blood and friendship were involved in the writing and production of this volume. The other, a comprehensive account of Uday Shankar's life, work and contribution to dance, is by Mohan Khokar, the renowned author, who has a deep knowledge of every aspect of dance and was intimately connected with Uday Shankar's dance career at various levels.

Both the books are readable and, because of the inclusion of rare photographs, worth possessing. Moreover, the printing, the text, the choice of photographs and drawings and the attractive layout contribute to their visual appeal.

The commemorative book has, naturally, limited emotional content stemming from the very objectives of the book's publication. Basically, it gives us a portrait of Uday Shankar on two levels: Uday Shankar, the exceptionally talented dancer, a wonder in his own lifetime, his dance tours, his immense popularity and fame, his dedication, his innovative experiments in dance and his total sway over dance lovers for nearly two decades. At another level, we become acquainted with the familial influences on him and his own desires and ambitions. The conflict between these two pulls and their occasional concord enriched Uday Shankar, the man. Dance lovers will find this portrait sufficiently informative and representative. Thus, the book fulfils the reader's expectations and, within its defined parameters, the comment on Uday Shankar's life, work and contribution finds an appropriate place. Dr. Sunil Kothari's detailed assessment of Uday Shankar's career printed at the end of the book is a discerning tribute to the great dancer.

The second book, by Mohan Khokar, is more far-reaching and comprehensive in its scope and in its insight into Uday Shankar, the man (father, son, brother, friend, organiser and teacher) and the artiste (dancer, choreographer, student, guru and colleague).

In the case of any individual, the relationships between the man and the artiste are always subtle and complicated. In assessing the artistic contributions of a particular individual, unless one takes into account both these aspects of his personality, one cannot say that a proper assessment has been made. A striking feature of this book is the focus on both these important facets.

In his Preface 'A Word', Mohan Khokar writes about his special relationship with Uday Shankar and describes how warm and intimate it was during the maestro's last days. In 'A Brother Speaks', Ravi Shankar pays a tribute to an elder brother, who was almost a *guru*. The five chapters which ensue span the years beginning with Uday Shankar's childhood and the period when he attained fame as an unrivalled, impressive and revolutionary dancer. In fact, one might say that these chapters are an extension of the text of the first book. The readability of the text is somewhat marred by the numerous excerpts cited from reviews of dance critics all over the world. However, the inclusion of posters, advertisements and drawings gives the impression of watching at close quarters the tremendous success enjoyed by Uday Shankar. The rare and beautiful photographs, while they serve as a poignant reminder of the Uday 'mania' which prevailed five decades ago, offer, at the same time, an overall view of Indian dance history. The entire text is presented in the form of eleven chapters, attractively titled, and, at the end, is a chronological listing of Uday Shankar's compositions.

An unexpected turn of fate brought Uday Shankar into contact with Madame Pavlova, the famous Russian ballerina, and he was drawn from the world of painting into the field of dance. This step was crucial for even during those five years of struggle after he had left Anna Pavlova's company, he never

once turned back or strayed from the chosen path. Uday Shankar's inherent talent and creativity were now reinforced by the skills he acquired during the two years in Pavlova's company—attractive stage décor, efficient management and serious thought to the planning of the programme itself. Thus, with the aid of this excellent organisational framework and without, in any way, affecting Indian dance traditions, modern Indian dance came to be born. For Indian classical dance traditions this was a period of stasis. There was barely any awareness of these traditions both here and abroad. One may say that Uday Shankar's Indian and, at the same time, innovative dance compositions brought glory to Indian dance and created almost a revolution in the art world of the time. Michael Chekhov, who lived with Uday Shankar at Dartington Hall, has written perceptively about what one can learn from him. The account is worth reading for a proper understanding of the medium of dance and its inclusion here has added to the book's value. Chekhov attaches great importance to three factors: the powerful undercurrent of tradition in Uday Shankar's dance creations, the fine blend of music in his dance style and his technique-based system of dance training.

At the India Culture League, Uday Shankar's School in Almora, this special technique and training was used to prepare the students, both mentally and physically, for the new dance style. For some time, Uday Shankar ran an ideal dance training centre with teachers of the calibre of Guru Shankaran Nambudiri, Guru Amubi Singh, Guru Kandappa, Ustad Allauddin Khan and others. As one reads 'A Cradle in the Himalayas', a description of the daily routine at this dance centre, one begins to wonder whether all this happened in a dream!

In course of time, Uday Shankar's unique dance style received its just assessment. Sometimes he presented Bharata Natyam, Kathakali, Manipuri in authentic form on the stage but his real achievement was that, by presenting a glimpse of the new dance style, he opened up vistas of creativity for the coming generation of dancers.

Unfortunately, the India Culture League was short-lived and the reasons for its closure are clearly spelt out in this book. During the final stage of the Centre's existence, Uday Shankar was totally immersed in his ideas for the film 'Kalpana'. It was released in 1947 and, though revolutionary in conception, was a commercial failure. From then was a depressing downward phase in Uday Shankar's career—a period described in the book with perception and in some detail. Mohan Khokar's interview with Uday Shankar is comprehensive and very thought-provoking.

This book, impressive and full of archival material of immense value, gives a rare kind of satisfaction even while it draws our attention to the sad truths of a man's existence. When the man and the artiste in an individual are attuned to the same *laya-tala-sura*, that person's life can assume a serenely beautiful form during the sunrise and the sunset years. But when the devotion to *laya-sura* becomes one-sided, the fading years, the end, do not quite match the glory of the rise.

