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Cover: The head of an old puppet, estimated to be at least four hundred years old,
discovered from Paruthippully Village.

Last Cover: The head of a puppet said to belong to the eighteenth century.

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Pavakathakali

The Traditional Glove-Puppet Play of Kerala

G. Venu

Pavakathakali is the name given to the traditional glove-puppet play of Kerala, the practice of which is confined to the Palghat District and a few surrounding places. In Palghat District itself, it is centered around the remote village of Paruthippully where a few families have traditionally been its custodians and practitioners for several generations.

This glove-puppet play came to be called *Pavakathakali* in the eighteenth century. The word *Pava* means 'puppet' and *Kathakali* means 'story-play'. When Kathakali, the famous classical dance-theatre of Kerala, came to Palghat, it naturally influenced the glove-puppet play which had already been in existence there. The Pavakathakali artistes began to dress their puppets in Kathakali costumes and also adopted the themes of the *Attakatha*-s (the compositions meant for Kathakali) for their puppet performances.

Kathakali grew out of an earlier art-form called Ramanattam which originated in South Travancore in the second half of the seventeenth century as a result of the pioneering efforts of the Raja of Kottarakara. Kathakali came to North Kerala towards the end of the seventeenth century and soon flourished and spread there under the patronage of the Raja of Vettathnadu. Evidence proves that, even before the advent of Kathakali, the glove-puppet play was very popular in the villages of Palghat District. In the home of one of the families in Paruthippully, which have specialised in the glove-puppet play, the present writer discovered a puppet which, archaeologists affirm, must be at least four hundred years old. More significantly, this puppet carved out beautifully in wood, bears no resemblance to Kathakali figures, which decisively shows that the glove-puppet play must have existed in Palghat long before the advent of Kathakali. The hairstyles of this puppet and the ornaments worn on the hair are remarkably different from those found in the ancient sculptures of Kerala. Its ears are elongated like those seen in the images of the Buddha. But, another puppet belonging to the eighteenth century, which this writer discovered, is modelled closely on Kathakali performers. It resembles the *Pacha* character of Kathakali, differing from it only in that it does not have a *chutti* (decorative white border) on the face.

Puppets

The height of a puppet varies from one foot to two feet. The head and the arms are carved delicately in wood and joined together with thick cloth cut and stitched into a small bag. The puppets are beautified with different paints, small and thin pieces of gilded tin, the hard carapaces of big bees, transparent corals, the stem of the feathers of the peacock etc. The manipulator inserts his hand into the bag and moves the hands and head of the puppet with his fingers. The hands are manipulated with the thumb and middle-finger and the head with the index-finger.

The Artistes

The Pavakathakali artistes (called Andi Pandaram), belong to a few families of Paruthippully village. Their mother-tongue is Telugu which suggests that their ancestors were immigrants in Palghat from Andhra Pradesh. It is believed that their ancestors, belonging to the Veera Guru Shaiva community, came and settled in Palghat centuries ago. Today, they speak Malayalam outside the home; in the house, however, they speak a mixture of Malayalam and Telugu. They now live scattered in some thirty villages around Palghat, but in each village they live as one solid group. In Paruthippully village itself there are about a hundred Andi Pandaram families, of which only three or four practise the art of Pavakathakali. None of the other families of Paruthippully and the other villages are known to have ever practised or performed this art.

The Andi Pandaras are great devotees of Lord Subrahmanya and are well-known for their acquaintance with all aspects of Subrahmanya-worship. In fact, they earn their livelihood by arranging and performing *puja*-s in honour of Subrahmanya for devotees and by organising pilgrimages to the famous Subrahmanya temple of Palani, for which they have been invested with special rights and privileges. Many families seek their help whenever they plan to perform a *puja* at home. The Andi Pandaras gladly accept these invitations, which are mainly for *puja*-s in the months of December, January and February. The Andi Pandaras have in their possession all the materials of Subrahmanya worship such as a small idol of



Bhima and Hanumana in Kalyana Saugandhikam.



A scene from Uttaraswayamvaram.

the Lord, *kavadi* (semi-circular arch-like or bow-shaped wooden frame decorated with peacock feathers and carried aloft by the devotees) and other such objects which they carry to the house where the *puja* is to be performed. On reaching the house, they perform *puja* before the idol and *kavadi*. Then, one by one, the children of the house take up the *kavadi* and, placing it on one shoulder, go round the idol three times while the Andi Pandaras blow the conch, beat the *chengila* (gong) and sing hymns. While performing the *puja*, the Andi Pandaram wears the holy thread and ties a miniature Shivalinga (the phallic emblem of God Siva) round his wrist. After the *puja*, the members of the house treat the Andi Pandaras to a sumptuous feast (*Andioottu*), at the end of which they are also given *dakshina*. Those families who regularly call the Andi Pandaram for *puja* give him on the first Monday of every month two measures of rice and *dakshina*. Each Andi Pandaram is allotted a number of houses and he alone goes to those houses for the monthly *bhiksha* on the first Monday. Through this arrangement each Andi Pandaram gets *bhiksha* from about forty houses every month. On days when there is no *puja* in any house, the Andi Pandaras visit various villages with their puppets.

Pavakathakali in the Past

For the performance of Pavakathakali no specially-built stage, platform or equipment is necessary. It is usually presented in houses where the cultural background is appropriate for the performance. The musical instruments are the same as used for Kathakali—*Chenda*, *Chengila*, *Ilathalam*, *Shankh* and so on. The minimum number of artistes required for a good performance of Pavakathakali is six.



Uttaran with his wives in Uttaraswayamvaram.

When a troupe of puppeteers arrives at a house, *Nilavilaku* (an oil-lamp made of brass used in Kerala for all religious and sacred functions) is lit in the eastern courtyard of the house and the puppeteers stand before it and sing hymns in praise of the gods. Next, in response to an invitation from their hosts, they present a story through Pavakathakali. Sometimes the performance lasts for one or two hours, but on certain special occasions like Tiruvatira or Shivaratri, the show continues throughout the night. Foregoing sleep and remaining awake is a religious observance on certain nights when Pavakathakali troupes are specially invited to come and perform throughout the night. The puppeteers are paid a handsome fee (called *Avangu Panam*, meaning 'stage-money') for their performance. In addition, the leader of the troupe is usually given a fine, brocaded *dhoti* by the master of the house. The spectators also present the artistes with gifts in cash (called *Poli Panam*) or kind, each according to his financial means. The episodes usually performed in Pavakathakali are from the *Mahabharata*. They include *Kalyana Saugandhikam*, *Uttaraswayamvaram* and *Duryodhana Vadham*. It is said that the Tamil story *Aryamala Natakam* was also performed in the past. There was a greater demand for Pavakathakali in the villages of Tirur, Kottakkal, Valancheri, Desamangalam and Guruvayur. Pavakathakali was in vogue and alive till about thirty years ago. The most famous and talented Pavakathakali artistes of the past, who are not alive today, were Andivelan, Kuttiyappu Velan, Karappan, Raman, Chinnan, Thengara, Chami Velayudhan, Chamu and Veeran. Of these Chamu, who died only six years ago, was a prominent puppeteer. With the passing away of these artistes, the art of Pavakathakali fell into decay and was on the verge of extinction.



Valala and Trigartta in Uttaraswayamvaram.

Revival

In 1981, serious work was undertaken to revive this dying art-form. Smt. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Former Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, happened to see some old puppets at the Government Museum at Trichur. When she learned of the slow decline of Pavakathakali she realized that urgent action had to be taken to prevent the decay of the art. With the aim of reviving it, she entrusted to the present writer the task of making a detailed study of the condition of Pavakathakali (in its native village of Paruthippully). To my dismay, I learnt that there were only three surviving practitioners who knew something of the techniques of the art and they were incapable of presenting even one play fully.

We collected as many old puppets as were available and as much information about the details of this art as possible. Then we selected six villagers and for two years gave them intensive training in music, puppet-manipulation and puppet-making. The Sangeet Natak Akademi granted scholarships to these trainees. When this training was over, the play, *Kalyana Saugandhikam*, was revived in its full form. The Department of Culture, Government of India, was good enough to offer some financial aid for its revival. With its assistance, a number of new puppets were made and the play, *Uttaraswayamvaram* was composed. In May 1984 the Pavakathakali troupe was invited to participate in the XIth International Puppet Theatre Festival held in Poland. This art-form is now developed and protected by Natanakairali, an organisation based at Irinjalakuda in the Trichur district of Kerala.

Categories of Music

Ashok D. Ranade

Introduction

Musical categories are those fundamental classes in which the totality of the musical material available in society can be naturally organized. The categorization leads to corresponding categories of kinds of experience of different musics. To gain an insight into musical categorization is to become cautious in claiming universal validity for musical theories or judgements. In spite of inevitable and inbuilt overlaps, these categories denote distinguishable and valuable experiential contents. The categories pose differing questions and necessitate the construction of conceptual frameworks of varying philosophical import. If musical reality is to be construed in its entirety, all musical categories need to be identified and examined. The four categories sought to be identified against this background are: primitive or tribal music, folk music, art or classical music and popular music. These four categories do not and need not exist in all societies concurrently and in equal proportions. However, their presence or absence constitutes in itself a fact of cultural dynamics demanding an interpretation. In general, the more the number of existing musical categories the more the degree of socio-cultural complexity in the society under consideration.

What are the criteria according to which these categories are differentiated?

No identical criteria can be employed because the four terms and the corresponding concepts display inherently differing orientations. For example, the terms 'tribal' and 'primitive' are traceable to ethnological biases, while the term 'folk' owes its origin directly to folklore. The two terms 'art' and 'classical' (interchangeably used in India), are clearly products of an aestheticizing impulse while 'popular' is a term linked to cybernetic processes and operations of the mass media. However, irrespective of terminological sources, it is clear that, in the present context, the major thrust could only be the experiential content of associated musics.

Primitive or Tribal Music

The adjectival terms 'primitive' and 'tribal' are often used as near-synonyms in musical perspective studies. Though both the terms represent attempts to categorize a particular kind of cultural manifestation, the term 'primitive' appears to be more accommodative in etymology as well as in usage. Besides, the term also carries a more qualitative (albeit a more general) connotation. On the other hand, the term 'tribal' suggests a narrower range as also a more direct linkage with anthropology. In its root-meaning, 'primitive' suggests 'the most ancient phase' while 'tribal' signifies 'that which pertains to a group of clans under a recognized chief and usually claiming common ancestry'. Indian terms used as corresponding to 'primitive' and 'tribal' are *adivasi*, *vanya*, *aranya*, *girijan* and *adim*. While the first and the last terms draw attention to the aspect of antiquity, the rest refer to habitat (an ethnological criterion). In the present context, 'primitive' and 'tribal' allude to a type of musical expression genetically related to a particular body or group

of people producing the music referred to. Further, the people described as 'primitive' etc. are generally assumed to denote those in the food-gathering, hunting, pastoral and agricultural stages of human development. The non-musical and the ethnographic orientation of the explanations offered for the terms 'primitive' and 'tribal' can hardly help in answering the question relevant to the present discussion: What is 'primitive' in music and why? As most of the data on music usually accepted as primitive has been the result of ethnographic and ethnological investigations, it is difficult to avoid equating primitivity in music with the music of the primitives.

Perhaps it might be useful to dwell a little more on dictionary sources to understand the shades of meaning that the terms have acquired. Through such a scrutiny, chronological, aesthetic and sociological weightages become clearer and one can appreciate why the term 'primitive' is to be preferred to 'tribal' for the present discussion.

Primitive

1(a) not derived, primary; (b) assumed as a basis.

2(a) of or relating to the earliest age or period; (b) closely approximating an early ancestral type; (c) belonging to or characteristic of an early stage of development; (d) relating to, or constituting the assumed parent speech of related languages.

3(a) elemental, natural; (b) relating to, or produced by a relatively simple people or culture; (c) naive; (d) self-taught, untutored.

A further set of meanings refers to the qualitative aspect of the term with more directness.

1(a) something primitive; (b) a root word.

2(a)(1) an artist of an early period of a culture or artistic movement; (2) a later imitator or follower of such an artist; (b)(1) a self-taught artist; (2) an artist whose work is marked by directness and naivete; (c) a work of art produced by a primitive artist.

3(a) a member of a primitive people; (b) an unsophisticated person. (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, G. and C. Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass., U.S.A., 1981, p. 907.)

However, it is symptomatic that the same source does not define the term 'tribal' in any comparable depth. It merely notes: 'of, relating to, or characteristic of a tribe' (p. 1237).

It, therefore, seems safe to conclude that the term 'primitive' has a wider cultural connotation while the term 'tribal' has been chiefly employed to denote producers defined in a particular ethnographic context. At one point of time, the term 'tribal art' would not have been acceptable and it would not have appeared tautologous to use the phrase 'primitive tribe'. It is obvious that during its semantic development the word 'tribe' suggested a context and projected a content with the minimum value-overtones. This has also happened in India. In addition, the term 'tribe' has acquired a specifically Indian connotation. This is the reason why Nadeem Hasnain's recent work refers to more than a dozen definitions

of the word 'tribe' but finally lists the four major characteristics stated by D. N. Mazumdar as more relevant to Indian conditions. (Nadeem Hasnain, *Tribal India Today*, Harnam Pub., New Delhi, 1983, p. 17). The main features of Indian tribes, according to Mazumdar, are stated below in a slightly abridged form:

(1) In tribal India a tribe is definitely a territorial group.

(2) All the members of an Indian tribe are not linked by ties of kinship, but, within every Indian tribe, kinship appears as a strong, associative and integrating principle.

(3) Members of an Indian tribe speak one common language, their own or/and that of their neighbours.

(4) There are other distinguishing features of Indian tribes such as dormitory institutions, absence of institutional schooling, a moral code different from that of Hindus and Muslims etc.

Even after obtaining an idea of the Indian definitional deviations the question remains: Is it inevitable that a category of music carry a definition which is producer-oriented and *not* product-oriented? Are there no qualities in the product which need to be described as 'primitive'? Without facing the question squarely it will be impossible to identify the presence or absence of primitive qualities in the music produced by non-tribal societies. It is necessary to define musical categories with a focus on the experiential content of music. To follow the submerged Darwinian trail instead and to regard primitive music as the original music of less 'cultured' man is to deny that the primitive in music is a legitimate channelizing of an authentic musical impulse of human sensibility. In other words, what is primitive in music is to be determined by using musical criteria. Further, it is not to be assumed that primitive music is music produced by people categorized as 'primitive'. Being directly related to human experience, and not social hierarchy or allied factors, the primitive in music is found to produce recurrent, pervasive and legitimate moulds relevant to a particular human musical experience and expression. If music is not to be equated with a body of sweet sounds acceptable to an anaemic aestheticism, it is imperative that all musical categories be treated with adequate seriousness. This does not lessen the importance of the ethnographic evidence and data on tribal music. However, it means that the data is to be treated as providing a basis for conceptual discussion of the categories of music and the experience associated with it. To put it differently, features of 'tribal' music are to be noted so as to facilitate the detection of their existence in urban literature and sophisticated societies. Their appearance in such a setting justifies their being described as 'primitive'.

Characteristics: Primitive Music

Primitive music and dance are so closely connected with the day-night and seasonal cycles of the concerned people that they can hardly be separated as music and dance respectively.

Music is for everyone, everything and for almost every occasion. All critical phases in the human life-cycle find their expression in music. Almost everything *causes* music. To that extent, music enjoys a high degree of cohesive relationship with the process of living.

As a formulation, song is more important than music in the primitive way of life. It is symptomatic that a majority of primitive societies have a word to denote a 'song' but many lack a word to indicate music. However, 'song' as understood in primitive parlance is a very different entity. Every manifestation of an undifferentiated performing impulse becomes a primitive song. On the other hand, non-primitive usage allows music a wider application than song.

Primitive music is highly ritualistic. It is ritualistic even when it is not a part of any ritual! In other words, one senses a pervasive ritualistic charge in every performance. The type of ritualism suggested is detected through an atmosphere of intense preoccupation of the participants with every detail, a certain elevated psychological stance among the performers and an air of inner compulsion communicated by them. Alert attention is paid to psycho-physical aspects seemingly unconnected with the act of performance. It is, therefore, next to impossible to arrange for the performance of primitive music without or outside the framework defined by the general ritualism described earlier.

'Audience', as is normally understood, has a very unusual role to play in performances of primitive music. Almost everybody participates though in varying degrees. At the same time, it is also true that performers seem to direct the music to some entity external to them. Music does not take place for its own sake or for viewers or listeners, and yet it has to reach out in order to complete itself.

On the whole, the 'primitive' in music relies more on rhythm than on melody. Primitive rhythms become manifest through instruments, movements, percussive speech or a similar mode of vocalizing. Rhythm (as contrasted with melody) controls primitive music to such an extent that instruments conventionally employed for melodic purposes are also pressed into rhythmic service. In addition to its overall preponderance, rhythm in primitive music also possesses definite structured and substantive qualities that need to be discussed separately.

Melody in primitive music is primarily characterized by a marked indifference to the quality commonly described as sweetness. So much of the non-primitive and the non-folk music is avowedly made sweet or melodious that the resulting qualities are (mistakenly) considered to be musically obligatory. It is symptomatic that the performers themselves, while rating performances, seldom apply the criterion of sweetness.

The role of language and literary expression in primitive music needs separate consideration. Here, language is not regarded as indispensable. Meaningless syllables and sounds appear in abundance. In other words, phonetic patterns rather than linguistic patterns receive more scope. Half-formed sentences, proverbs, slogans or similar formulations and other literary nonentities earn legitimacy in primitive musical compositions. Lack of 'literary' quality is thus closely linked with the general anonymity prevailing in primitive music.

As a matter of routine, the 'composer' remains unnamed in primitive music. More importantly, collective composing is allowed definite scope. Alternatively, it has often been pointed out that even though a particular tune is crystallized or consolidated into actual use by a single person, the tune partakes of many existing ones and, to that extent, it could be said to have been hovering in the air. That the same available corpus of tonal and rhythmic moulds is often linked

with new phrases and occasions suffices to create a 'new' song. This interpretation of the concept of creation or originality is unlikely to gain acceptance in other categories of music.

Music, so closely linked with the human life-cycle, can hardly be expected to have direct relationships with all its referents. As a result, symbolism becomes an important characteristic of primitive music. In fact, the act of performance as well as its peripherals embody symbolism. Symbolic processes and objects are numerous and both are employed at various levels of prominence and intensity. Primitive music makes a generous use of non-musical resources and this is often achieved through symbolistic operations.

Special reference needs to be made to the varied use of musical instruments. They are often regarded as non-musical objects and their simultaneous existence on two planes adds to their evocative power. Their unusual shapes and sizes as also the techniques of sound-production can be traced to the non-musical content of the musical instruments. In spite of the overall multi-purpose character of musical instruments, their musical roles are precise to the degree of being firmly associated with affective states of mind and definite music-making events. Their being equated with emotional states increases their general potency as agents in communication processes considered in a larger context.

Characteristics: Folk Music

A striking feature of folk musical expression is the relative paucity of instrumental music in it. One reason is, of course, the dominant position that 'song' occupies in folk music as a whole. Further, it is important to note that instruments are chiefly employed in folk expression to accompany the sung expression and instruments, by themselves, tend to be content imitating and reflecting the vocal expression. By and large, folk instruments lack the capacity for prolonged solo performance. On account of their innate and limited elaborational potential they remain best suited for accompanying roles entailing spurts of separate but short solo-playing. Besides, instrumental music as such makes a heavy demand on acquisition of technical skills—largely a specialist-phenomenon. This degree of professionalism can hardly be imagined in folk music. Finally, the limited scope afforded to instrumental music can be traced to the accent on collectivity in folk music. The element of community-expression and the individualism involved in instrumental music run in contrary directions. It is also possible that entertainment, a prominent drive behind instrumental music, constitutes a weaker component of folk musical structures and hence the paucity of instrumental music.

Collectivity is one of the most important of the characteristics of folk music. It is symptomatic that only two of the four major musical categories, namely popular and folk, bear names that reflect the aspect of collectivity!

The collectivity of folk music is of a far-reaching nature. Collectivity as a controlling agent marks the conception, performance, propagation and the emotional content of folk music.

Creation of folk songs is seldom attributed to single individuals. For some time it was averred that songs are created collectively. A more accepted position is that they are communally recreated. A particular cultural group is motivated at a particular period in a particular manner towards the creation of certain musical

material as a cumulative result of the prevailing socio-cultural environment. As a consequence, a folk song or its parts begin to acquire a shape. It is as if the entire atmosphere is charged with the song even though it assumes the final form, a crystallization, through the agency of an individual. This is the reason why the general anonymity of a folk song seems meaningful since it is a recognition of the collective contribution to the emergence of a song. At the same time, describing the emergence as recreation allows the individual his due share.

Apart from the slightly speculative explanation offered for the collective recreation theory there is yet another discernible and more direct factor. On a majority of occasions a new song merely presents an edited, modified or altered version of songs already in existence. Songs that had come into existence continue to be in the social repertoire only after society has processed them according to its requirements. This is the background against which stanzas are dropped or newly introduced in prevalent songs. To that extent a folk song is a continuously created entity.

Propagation of folk songs exemplifies collectivity because they are sung or heard by and/or for groups. All song-types are, of course, not collective in equal proportion in an actual performance but the exceptions do not render the general observation invalid. Further, the collectiveness is frequently related to the effectiveness of the songs rather than their actual propagation. In other words, they may need a group to achieve an impact though their non-collective existence or performance may not be an impossibility.

However, the most important aspect of the collectivity of folk songs is their emotional content. Folk songs hardly ever embody the ordeals, crises or love-hates of an individual. Their content is generalized to ensure a universal appeal. The same concern for reaching the maximum number of people is reflected in their tunes. This becomes clear when folk songs are structurally analyzed. The thematic recurrence of events particular to the human life-cycle (e.g. birth, initiation, marriage, death etc.) or seasonal cycles is thus traceable to the collectivity of folk songs.

It should be clear that the remarkable durability of folk songs is largely due to the comprehensive role collectivity plays in them. They outlive generations because they address themselves to the societal mind rather than the individual spirit. They also express eternal human problems rather than topical issues. A folk song is aptly described as the voice of the collective mind.

Very often, folk music has been defined as the expression of an illiterate who perforce resorts to the oral tradition in order to perform, propagate and preserve it. However, the observation seems to have special validity in relation to cultures where art-music is reduced to writing in a major way. The phenomenon of the oral tradition needs to be understood differently in Indian and similar other contexts.

Durga Bhagwat, the eminent folklorist from Maharashtra, quotes Rajshekhara (twelfth century) as stating that the poetry of children, women and the low castes travels from mouth to mouth. Obviously this merely confirms the prominence of the oral tradition both in folk and sophisticated expressions. It is relevant to discuss here those of the functions which are directly connected with features of folk music.

Firstly, it is due to the oral tradition that all kinds of changes can be brought about in the folk song compositions which (as mentioned earlier) are continuously created. Changes are facilitated because of the unwritten nature of these compositions.

Secondly, every culture generates and carries forward a corpus of folk songs. The very formation of such a corpus becomes possible because individual songs and song-sets are transmitted from person to person and from generation to generation. Song-corpora are created by a process of slow accretion and the existence of a flexible core is an essential pre-condition for the formulation of a corpus.

Thirdly, it is due to the oral tradition that techniques of composition and preservation are evolved. In this way agents of consolidation as well as tendencies towards change are supported in their respective tasks.

Folk music enjoys a mixed motivation. Individual, societal and artistic motives bring it into being. However, folk music is specifically characterized by societal motives which have a close logical connection with the collectivity discussed earlier. An important point to be noted is the unambiguously non-musical thrust of the societal motivation. Folk music is expected to respond to social needs of a didactic nature as opposed to the aesthetic demands related to art music. Admittedly, there are folk-manifestations which entertain but even these are found to have a social and predominantly non-art function.

The societal motivation of folk music becomes obvious through its connections with religion, language, rituals, sacraments and such other cultural manifestations. Folk music assumes its prevailing character due to its non-musical contexts, which act as live forces responsible for the conception, performance, propagation and reception of folk musical expression. It is logical for folk music to be defined as an expression of a particular culture. Such a description emphasizes its regional, linguistic, as well as religious orientations. The functional element in folk music also offers proof of its societal motivation. This is not to suggest that folk music does not possess art-content. What is stressed is that the societal thrust is always to be detected in combination with a variety of other motives.

The functionality of folk music can also be appreciated at a more psychological level. The frequent thematic insistence of folk songs on cultural myths make repeated allusions to societal dreams or the past heritage signifies a subtler functionality. Folk music performs the function of representing non-musical, cultural realities on account of its social motivation. This explains why the corpus of a society increases during those periods when the societal mind undergoes stresses and strains or is at least unusually stimulated.

Another characteristic of folk music hinted at earlier is that (for all practical purposes) it has no beginning and no end. Theoretically speaking, every composition or a song-type can be said to have crystallized into a stable shape at some particular point of time. However, when one says that folk music defies chronological placement one's aim is to stress its all-time appeal. In fact, the anonymity of folk music is, to some extent, a result of the non-importance of the time-dimension. When there is a very close and definite connection between music and a particular event, personage or period the relevant music may make an exit

from the permanent musical corpus. Folk music is undateable like culture and cannot be described as old or new and, in that sense, it is always contemporary.

Folk music is both changeable and unchangeable. The particular kind of flexibility folk music enjoys is causally connected with its nature. The proneness as well as the reluctance to change need to be explained. It embodies conservatism and adaptability.

Conservatism

Folk music is conservative because it is an expression of the collective mind. Society is less eager than an individual either to accept the new or to reject the old. A societal mind is more than the sum-total of individual minds. It is motivated differently at various levels and hence a change in any of its expressions is a complex and slow process.

Folk music is informed by diverse motivations and it is obvious that the satisfaction of all or most of the motives is a rare phenomenon. Change is accepted only when diverse motives have successfully completed a series of mutual influences.

Folk music mainly treats those themes that possess a universal appeal. Prior to finding a place in folk music, themes seem to be subjected to numerous eliminations. To introduce changes in such a time-tested entity is, therefore, the culmination of a lengthy process completed with considerable difficulty. Changes in folk music are results of a real cultural inevitability.

The functionality of folk music also acts as an impediment to change since it does not enjoy an independent existence. If its functional partners do not undergo changes, musical change alone is inconceivable.

However, the reluctance to change is not equally intense in case of all types of folk music. In this respect, the following observations are germane.

(i) Music associated with religious ceremonies, marriage and other rituals etc., displays extreme conservatism.

(ii) Comparatively speaking, music related to love, separation and other such common human experiences is more likely to change.

(iii) Folk expressions, bound with entertainment items such as games, dances etc., are prone to change.

(iv) The easiest to change are those musical features which a performer or a particular group among them seems to prefer.

Adaptability

(i) If those who perform are themselves motivated to change the performance of the music concerned, then alterations are easily introduced. A related feature is the role of the spirit of competition in case a large number of performers is involved.

(ii) Folk music changes on account of its largely unwritten tradition. Language, articulation, composition and such other aspects undergo unintentional changes when the corpus of music is being transmitted from person to person

and from generation to generation. A near-total reliance on memory is causally related to the changes detectable in a majority of cases. Too often, the debates about the 'original, traditional or the authentic' in folk music are a consequence of the unintentional changes finding their way into the existing corpus.

(iii) Folk music migrates when the people to whom it belongs shift their base. This is the case when, for various reasons, a group of people (individually or collectively) leave the place of their origin for a different domicile. On account of the change in environment, their folk music (which they otherwise cling to) undergoes changes. Somewhat disconcertingly, melodies might migrate independently! Thus one may come across near-identical melodies irrespective of distances, dissimilar texts and performing traditions. These are aptly described as 'wandering melodies'.

(iv) Another factor that may introduce qualitative changes in folk expression assumes special significance today. When a body of songs etc., is taken up by castes or groups of people who are professional performers, changes are introduced because they are inclined to improve the performances. Usually the interest is in creating a better impact on the audiences by injecting better techniques or superior skills in the performances. Very frequently, the performing models thus created tend to affect the originals! However, such a pattern of mutability takes the music nearer to art-music.

(v) Exposure to educational influences, too, makes for changes in folk expression. Even if the entire corpus is not changed, significant changes in style, idiom and presentation are inevitably introduced. In a way these particular changes may be described as indirect changes because they are the result of cultural developments brought about by education.

Perhaps, the most important single factor responsible for changing folk music is the proximity of art-music. The consequences of this musical and cultural neighbourhood need separate consideration.

Art-music and Folk music: Primitive and folk music can be meaningfully distinguished by the fact that the latter enjoys the proximity of another musical stream which the former does not. To that extent, primitive music operates in musical isolation. On the other hand, in the case of folk music there is the constant possibility of a continuous exchange of influences with both primitive as well as art-music. In fact, the existence of more than one stream of music in itself indicates cultural complexity. The use of multiple language-layers, recourse to the written form, the nature of the prevailing economy, the rate of industrialization as well as mechanization are some of the factors conducive to a more complex cultural milieu. To a certain extent, cultural complexity suggests a corresponding multi-stream musicality. Folk music is, therefore, prone to a variety of controls symptomatically indicated by the operations of art-music. A detailed enumeration of how art-music affects folk music is better revealed in the musical analysis of the latter.

National Expression: Owing to its close relationship with a particular people and their culture, folk music can be regarded as a form of national expression. Diverse culture-groups can hardly be expected to have the same or similar folk music. In this context, countries such as India pose a special problem since, in spite of the cultural oneness of the country, almost every region has folk music particular to it. Hence these folk musics, being confined to particular people, can

be described as national expressions, though such a characterization overlooks the political orientation of the term 'nation'.

An interesting factor to note here is that the vocal music of a 'nation' is more homogeneous than its instrumental music.

An additional nuance in the situation is that more than one nation can have the same art-music as a common tradition and hence art-music cannot be strictly regarded as national expression. This is obviously not so in the case of folk music. Once again, the Indian situation needs special consideration with its single culture, two developed systems of art-music and several regional expressions of folk music. However, the point to be stressed is that folk music, more than any other musical category, is closely and innately connected with a particular culture.

Geographical Ties: In a manner of speaking, folk music being national expression automatically proclaims its ties with a specific geographical area. It is, therefore, logical that folk expression reflects the surroundings, the natural phenomena in its content. However, the close ties with a particular locale are a consequence of the relationship folk music has with a particular culture. Apart from the broader cultural causation, folk music keeps close to the geographical locale because of its characteristic responsiveness to nature as a force. The seasonal cycle, agricultural, pastoral and oceanic operations all find a place in folk music. However, this is not to suggest that nature reflected in folk music corresponds to the actuality. It is possible to detect the depiction of nature in a manner that a particular community would wish to be surrounded by it! This may be interpreted as a direct response to the encompassing natural phenomena—though in a dialectical manner! (Perhaps the one exceptional case of Israel might suggest that geographical ties constitute a dispensable feature of folk music. The nation was preceded by its folk music!).

Migratory Potentialities: Considering the stress on the element 'one culture, one group and one region', it may appear that folk music as an entity cannot migrate. However, this is not so. On account of migrations and also due to its largely unwritten tradition, folk music is characterized by a noticeable mobility. That which sounds good is accepted, modified, assimilated to be pressed into service. Instrumental expression migrates in greater measure and more easily. Comparatively speaking, vocal music is closer to a culture and brooks dissociation from the people only under exceptional circumstances.

Characteristics: Popular Music

Popular music is *one* feature of a sub-culture known as popular culture. It is, therefore, helpful to define popular culture and prepare the conceptual background for a discussion of this musical category.

'Popular culture is a surficial manifestation of cultural forces operating in a society partially responsive to aesthetic motives. The partial aesthetic responses are chiefly results of three factors: impact of the mass media, repercussions of the changes in patronage and intermittent as well as interrupted functioning of commercial and religious pressures'.

One more factor needs to be noted before the characteristics of popular music are discussed. It must be remembered that the 'popular' is *not* an aesthetic

concept. Along with some other terms such as 'amateur', 'professional' and 'modern', the term 'popular' has socio-economic, cultural and chronological aspects. As a consequence, to discuss popular music is to bring in extra-musical values and criteria. Considering the fact that a large segment of the total musical reality of any modern society is represented by popular music, it deserves special attention.

(i) *Universality*: Universality has two aspects—chronological and territorial. Popular music is universal for all practical purposes.

It would be incorrect to assume that popular music is a special creation of the twentieth century. The intensive American study of the category and the phenomenal growth of the mass media—a prominent shaping influence in the category—during the century has resulted in a tendency to confine the emergence and operation of popular music to present times. However, this is not strictly valid. The primary cause for the genesis of the category is the simultaneous existence and independent operations of various sub-cultures in a society. It is obvious that a homogeneous society is purely a theoretical concept. All societies have sub-cultures operating at various levels and with differing intensities. In other words, social homogeneity and the equality of sub-cultures are ideals or possibilities only in a Ramrajya! In reality, all the sub-cultures in a society do not take to art-music but are more attracted towards folk and popular musical expressions. To conclude, society is characterized by inevitable socio-cultural distinctions leading to musical differentials. The situation in turn causes a circulation of musical forces creating, in the process, the ever-changing category of popular music.

(ii) Popular music is subject both to 'middle-class' influences and to the effects of urbanization. The fact of being a multi-layered society and the processes of urbanization are causally related. If 'industrialization' is not interpreted too technically, it implies recourse to new modes of production and employment of new means for the purpose. The migration from rural areas to cities for earning one's livelihood and the emergence of a new technology recur so frequently that they can be described as regular historical features of all growing cultures.

(iii) Various factors contribute to a situation where more and more people enjoy leisure hours. They tend to be engaged in hobbies and seem keen to spend more time on personality development or enrichment. As a consequence, various disciplines—arts, crafts etc.—are often pursued with motives that are semi-aesthetic and semi-commercial. Popular music is one of the products of such a situation. Entertainment, education, desire for commercial gain and other diverse drives are simultaneously operative in popular art.

(iv) The mass media have a special role to play in relation to popular music and deeply influence its conception, propagation and reception.

(v) It has often been suggested that when popular music finds roots in any culture, there is a perceptible rise in population. Large-scale redistribution of population on account of migrations is also detected. It has already been pointed out that lack of homogeneity in a society is a precondition for the emergence of popular music. Population growth becomes a significant factor because a smaller population is likely to be more homogeneous than a sizeable populace. The latter tends to inevitable stratification which, in turn, gives rise to popular music.

(vi) Various socio-economic and cultural developments contribute to a change in the patronage offered to artists, craftsmen and cultural communicators

in general. For example, the source of patronage passes from princes, zamindars and religious sects etc., to music-conferences, music-clubs or circles, broadcasting and television stations, gramophone companies etc. This is a qualitative shift. There is a noticeable difference in the discerning powers of the audiences created by the new patrons. One of the consequences is that performers feel a need to find the lowest common denominator in music-receptivity. On a majority of occasions this is the reference point around which popular expression tends to range.

(vii) The change in patronage affects popular music almost immediately (which is not the case in folk and art music). The responses of audiences to producers and propagators of popular music allow for a very short time-lag. In other words, popular music is a category which perhaps exhibits the greatest synchronization between supply and demand.

(viii) This remarkable near-correspondence of stimulus and response is because popular music is a product of the entertainment industry. Supply and demand, production costs, distribution and sale, market survey and research etc. build up an entire mechanism related to production rather than creation. In popular musical operations, art and aesthetics are, if needed, nonchalantly relegated to the background. That is why popular music can hardly be understood if its business compulsions are not taken into account.

(ix) In a manner of speaking, the most important motivation for popular music is the satisfaction of the more obvious musical needs of the masses. Art-music tries to manipulate the time-dimension and thereby win ascendancy over it; folk music goes around it. On the other hand, popular music deliberately attempts to keep pace with the times. Import, expression, titles, blurbs and write-ups on disc/cassette recordings, therefore, attain their final shape only after the ruling fashion of the day has been ascertained. This is the reason why popular music may be described as 'journalistic' treatment of musical material.

(x) Popular music is functional, in the sense that it is tied up with a specific mode or fashion which society prefers at a point in time. Fashions have a task to perform: the creation of easily manipulated devices of image-building or image-reinforcement. By their very nature, fashions have to change frequently. To create popular music is to create musical fashions.

(xi) It may appear that popular music is more likely to be musically inferior because a majority of its shaping forces are non-musical. However, this is not so. A heartening feature is that popular music demonstrates a spiral rise in quality. Examination of the musical material reveals that popular music gives credence to the concept of progress in music. On account of its alertness and its proneness to changes, it proceeds from music of lesser quality to one of better quality. Popular music which appears later in time may be superior because its assimilative genius ensures more of acceptable musicality after a reasonable lapse of time.

Characteristics: Art-music

(i) The most significant feature of art (or classical) music is the aesthetic intention of the performers. Here performers are set apart from musicians in the other categories because of their basic 'art' intent. The product, however, does not necessarily enjoy aesthetic validity because of the motivation! But one cannot

overlook the qualitative difference between the respective motivations of the primitive, folk, popular and art musician. In the field of primitive music, the performer is engaged in playing a role; the folk musician entertains or participates in a collective duty-filled task; the performer in the area of popular music caters to a mass need, the art musician seeks to establish himself as an artiste according to his own understanding of aesthetic norms or criteria. These may or may not be explicitly verbalized but their existence is beyond doubt.

(ii) Art-music is distinguished by the simultaneous operation of two traditions: scholastic and performing. Of necessity, the former relies on writing and the written text. More importantly, it follows the procedures inherent in every form of codification. Rules, methods, techniques pertaining to music are systematized in accordance with established practices. It is obvious that the scholastic tradition depends on the existing performing tradition for its raw material. But inevitably the former lags behind the latter. This is because scholastic traditions are equipped to take cognizance only of those items which have consolidated or crystallized in the life-pattern of a society. A helpful conceptual parallel for the phenomenon exists in the mutual relationship between grammar and literature in any linguistic tradition.

(iii) Art-music necessarily concentrates on selected performing aspects such as vocalization, instrumentation, movement or *abhinaya*. In other words, art-music displays less of a package character in comparison with musics that belong to the other categories. Art-music channelizes or deliberately isolates modes of expression and cultivates them intensively in order to achieve greater and perceivable effects. This is why art-music performances can be easily described as concerts of vocal or instrumental music etc.

(iv) It is art-music which offers scope for 'solo' performances. In no other musical category are the roles of the main and the accompanying performers so clearly defined and differently developed. To isolate the solo element and allow it to shape the entire performance requires a highly differentiated sensibility. To this end art-music formulates aims, methods and techniques specifically leading to the emergence of family-traditions, schools etc. with their own marked personalities.

(v) In art-music, one is confronted with a whole array of musical forms chiefly based on patterning the general musical elements in specific structures of notes, rhythms, tempi etc. On the other hand, non-art musical categories abound in forms which owe their existence to non-musical factors such as events in human life-cycles, seasonal changes and associated rites and rituals. Forms in art-music also evince the existence of a hierarchy based on the degree of technical virtuosity. In other words, certain forms are regarded as more prestigious because of the demands they make on the skill of the performers. On examination, highly musicological criteria are found to have been employed to erect the hierarchy.

(vi) Art-music features a highly structured teaching-learning process. As a consequence, *gharana*-s come into existence, *guru*-s enjoy an exclusive following, reputations as effective teachers are built up, disciples are initiated with due ceremony and musical 'pedigrees' are traced and treated with respect as well as pride. Methodical 'curricula' come into existence even if they are not necessarily written down; material complementary to teaching-learning, such as anthologies of compositions, notations, codifications are prepared, preserved and often guarded with utmost secrecy.

(vii) Audiences of art-music are a class apart on account of their non-participatory contribution! Compared to other musical categories, art-music depends for its efficacy on the presence of more organized audiences, who are expected to have developed a taste preparing them to receive the sophisticated impact of art-music. Perhaps no other musical category finds it so essential to 'educate' its audiences as does art-music. Further, the audience is also expected to contribute to the 'making' of a performance by expressing appreciation or disapproval in accordance with established norms forming part of a total cultural pattern. Acquisition of a taste for art-music or its appreciation includes 'learned' behaviour and it is symptomatic that attempts at conducting appreciation courses in art-music are well received.

(viii) Art-music is also characterized by its all-round efforts to combine with other forms and thus to create composite art and art-forms. The process appears a little paradoxical in view of the purposeful delinking with other arts in the first place. However, the paradox disappears once the differing motivation is appreciated. The delinking of art-music from other manifestations initially takes place so as to enable art-music to demarcate its area of operation and develop effectively its own special identity. On the other hand, the later efforts to effect a reunion with dance, drama, painting etc. are designed to enrich the total aesthetic experience. The emergence of ballet, opera, *ragamala*-paintings is to be traced to this 'enrichment' motive.

(ix) At every level, art-music employs abstraction. For example, it diminishes the scope afforded to language and literary manifestations, reduces the importance of topical and functional relationships with rituals and routine life-patterns. As a cumulative effect of these measures, it creates its own universe of reference and tries to adhere to a contextual framework of musical elements alone. Therefore, the non-representational, patently arabesque quality of art-music is often commented upon and the qualitative similarity of art-music to the world of mathematics is repeatedly averred. Abstraction necessarily means a total dependence on musical parameters for perception of music and this explains the comparatively confined appeal of art-music as music.

MOHINI ATTAM—Form and Technique

Kanak Rele

Mohini Attam is the Dance of the Enchantress. Its home is what we now call Kerala, created after Independence by the amalgamation of the princely states of Travancore, Cochin and the Malabar District of the former Madras State. It is a coastal land, bounded by the ghats on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west—a situation which has given it a certain degree of isolation from the rest of the mainland. This geographical isolation has deeply influenced the social, cultural and political evolution of Kerala which, in many respects, developed in a manner distinct from the neighbouring areas.

Pre-history lists some *adivasi* tribes as the original inhabitants of Kerala. These tribes practised a culture which was highly totemistic and its remnants are to be found even today in Kerala's society. Before the invasion of the Aryans, the Dravidians settled down in large tracts of Kerala and a great majority of people exhibit the distinct social characteristics of the ancient Dravidian race. Then came the Aryans and their contact with the powerful Dravidian culture gave birth to a very distinctive milieu which has been remarkably free of sectarian rivalries. This troublefree passage of the mainstream of society created an ethos which resulted in the revival of Hinduism by Shankaracharya and in an intense impetus to Sanskrit learning and the classical arts. A very robust and fascinating facet of this artistic growth was the theatre in Kerala. Elsewhere in India creativity was expressed in magnificent architecture and sculpture while in Kerala the entire human body came to be used as a dynamic medium, as the supreme material for artistic expression.

These theatrical arts in Kerala can be roughly divided into three groups: ritual and cult arts (Bhagavati Pattu and Teyyam); non-ritual but religious arts (Chakkyar Kuttu, Kutiyattam, Krishnattam and Kathakali) and secular arts (Tullal and Mohini Attam).

The secular arts are so termed because they are not directly connected with any cult or religious occasion; they can be performed anywhere for any social occasion and are free of the heavy ritualistic fervour typical of Kerala's social order.

With the exception of Mohini Attam, not one of these arts is chiefly a dance form based on the classical precepts laid down in the ancient texts like the *Shilappadikaram*, *Abhinayadarpanam* or the *Natyashastra*. A predominant feature of almost all these theatrical arts is that they are not just "dances" but very 'theatrical' in nature, with a noticeable preponderance of the *natya* element. They are, in effect, what is called "Total Theatre".

Mohini Attam, a lyrical and enchanting dance form, became the sole vehicle for feminine interpretation developed on the lines of the other classical dance styles of India. It is a solo dance of sheer visual beauty, far removed from the ever-vigilant supervision of the temple and the grip of rituals. Devotional fervour is permissible but not mandatory. Religio-philosophical tenets are not allowed to interfere with the central idea of dance—its soul—enchantment. The very name expresses its aesthetics. (Mahavishnu appeared as Mohini, the enchantress, and danced the dance of enchantment to cast a spell of his *maya* on the *danava*-s.) The natural beauty of the Kerala landscape provides ample inspiration for its lyrical and lilting movements. Its rounded body kinetics, the distinctive heave of

the torso and the soft walk create the sensation of the verdant paddy fields, the undulating palm fronds and the rippling backwaters of Kerala.

Some scholars trace Mohini Attam to the second or third century A.D. (to the era of the great Tamil epic, *Shilappadikaram*), whereas others maintain that it was created in the middle of the eighteenth century in the court of Maharaja Svati Tirunal of Travancore at his behest. Neither premise is correct.

All the dance forms of India are the end products of a long process of evolution, change and improvement in keeping with the constantly changing social structure. Since dance and music were two very highly developed arts in the *Shilappadikaram* era, we may surmise that Mohini Attam has its roots in the dance form which was practised in Kerala during that period. Literary evidence shows that it was very much in vogue in the beginning of the seventeenth century A.D. and thus must have had its origins before that. It is between 400 to 600 years old. At the same time it is more or less certain that Mohini Attam acquired its affinity with the Bharata Natyam technique and Carnatic music, and thereby its repertoire, in Svati Tirunal's court. It may be presumed that, with his highly developed aesthetic taste, Svati Tirunal realised the potential of this exquisite art and accorded it patronage with the best of intentions.

The standard Mohini Attam repertoire, being practised by most of the dancers, runs almost parallel to that of Bharata Natyam. A traditional Bharata Natyam recital today comprises *alarippu*, *jatisvaram*, *shabdham*, *varnam*, *padam*, *javali*, *shlokam* and *tillana*. In Mohini Attam there is no item similar to *alarippu* or *shabdham*; instead, *chollukuttu* is danced as an invocation with lyrics resembling the *shabdham* appearing at the end of the item. The *sapta tala* and *panchajati* system of Carnatic time measures is employed in these items. Owing to the ethnic affinity existing amongst the South Indian people, one finds that the popular *raga*-s of the Carnatic system are followed even in Kathakali, Ottam Tullal etc., excepting in Kutiyattam which, in any case, is a *natya* in the traditional sense of the term. But the major difference is in the style of singing which, in Kerala, is called *sopanam*. It is very distinct from the mode followed in adjacent areas like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Again, Mohini Attam is the only art which does not use the *sopanam* style and utilises the Carnatic style of singing instead.

Technique of Mohini Attam

Indian dance is a combination of body movements and manifestation of sentiments by way of these body movements and facial expressions. According to the ancient Indian tradition, *natya* (theatre) includes *nritta* (dance), *geeta* (song) and *vadya* (instrumental music). The traditional Sanskrit plays were staged through the use of gestures, costumes, songs and dances; only the quantum of each component varied according to the nature of the stage-presentation. Thus, dance was also considered to be a *natya* and the tenets laid down in Bharata's *Natyashastra* and the subsequent treatises apply to dance as well. The most relevant treatises for Mohini Attam are: i) Bharata's *Natyashastra*; ii) Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabharati*; iii) Sharangadeva's *Sangeetaratnakara*; iv) Nandikeshvara's *Abhinayadarpana* and v) Maharaja Karttika Tirunal Balaramavarma's *Balaramabharatam*.

According to these treatises, the technique of *natya* (and, therefore, of dance also), consists of the four *abhinaya*-s (histrionic representations), two

dharmi-s (practices), four *vritti-s* (styles), four *pravritti-s* (local usages), *siddhi* (success), *svara-s* (notes), music, lyrics and is finally related to the stage itself. The first four include the technical aspects of the dance form. Music and songs, though irrevocably associated with dance, have a very distinct position of their own as apart from actual dance.

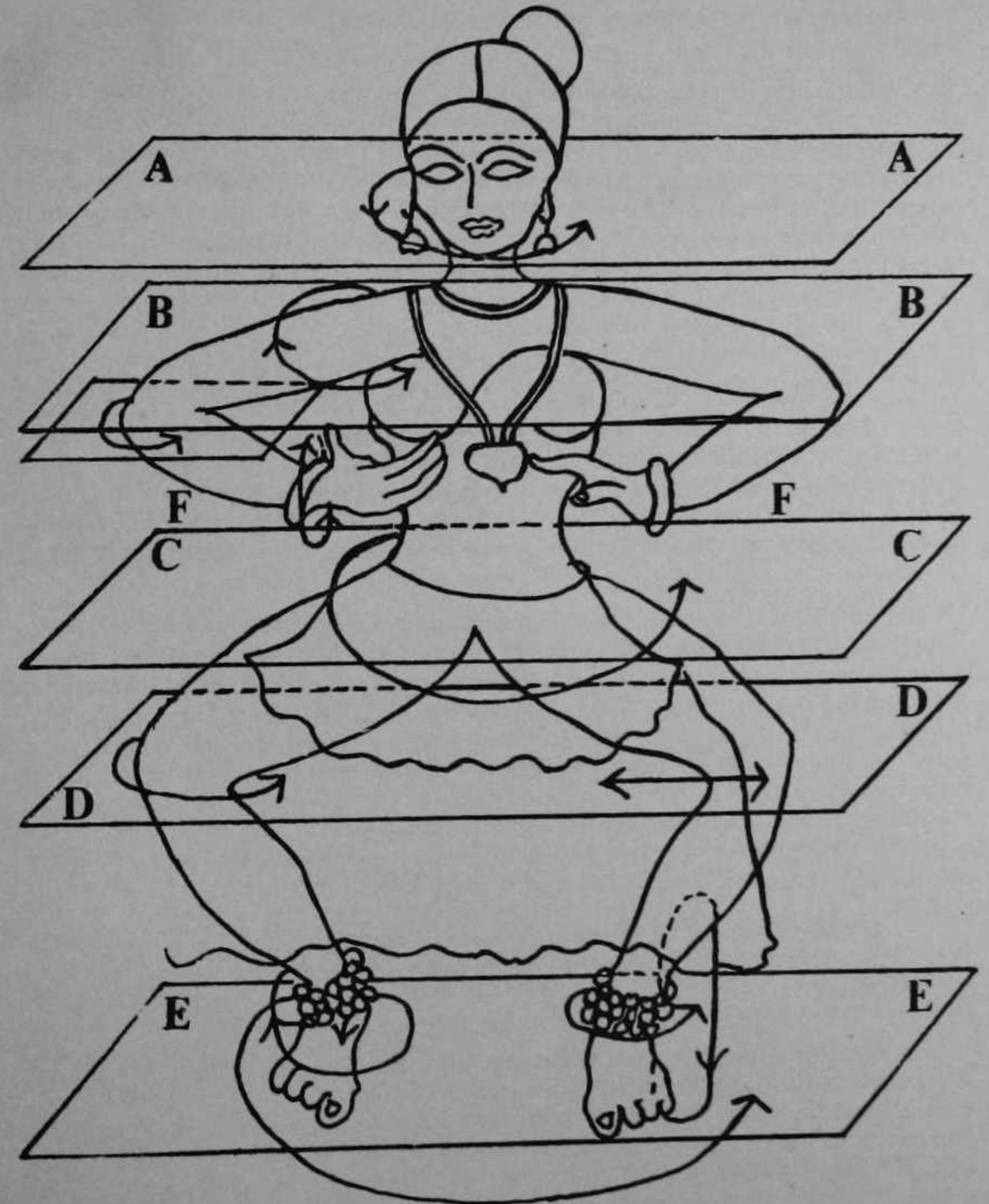
Traditionally also, dance is of two types: *nritta* (pure abstract dance which does not convey any specific meaning) and *nritya* (emotive dance where the meaning and sentiments embodied in the song are interpreted through a suitably codified language of gestures and facial expressions). Both *nritta* and *nritya* employ *angika abhinaya* whereas only *nritya* interprets *sattvika abhinaya* directly, and yet both have to accord with the overall impact intended for the dance style and adhere to the manner in which the body, with its different limbs, is moved in the space round it.

There are certain principles that bind and govern these movements. They include rules relating to the use of the various limbs of the body, the rhythms to be followed, as also the exact manner in which the body is to be swayed, turned or bent. Different styles of dance are based on different rules and yet all claim allegiance to standard texts like the *Natyashastra* and the *Abhinayadarpana*. The differences that we see in the contemporary dance styles are due to their having flourished in the different parts of the country. Over the centuries, the original practice assumed different forms in different regions and thus arose regional texts pertaining to the dance practice of that region, as has happened in the case of the *Balaramabharatam* in Kerala.

Indian classical dances in general are divided into two groups. The body movements in classical dance are in strict conformity with tradition. These body movements follow two theories of movements: volution and revolution.

When the theory of volution is practised, the body of the dancer is divided into two halves at the waist. The lower part, while preoccupied with interpreting the rhythmic syllables into movements of the feet (footwork), does not generally follow the course taken by the upper half. The upper half of the body moves in the form of a semicircle, with the middle or waist acting as the centre. And every movement of the body goes in the form of a V (volution), with its two prongs acting as radii and meeting at the centre. Thus, the entire arc of the semicircle can be divided into the desired proportions, with the radii supporting it and meeting at the centre. This will be most obvious in the pure dance (*nritta*) portions. The different styles may modify this rule to a certain extent, but the basic principle is the same. Similarly, the other joints of the body, like the shoulders, the elbow, the wrist, the knee, the ankle, also follow approximately the same principle.

The other theory of movement is revolution. As in volution, here, too, the body of the dancer is divided into two halves, but with a major difference. The upper part of the body is made absolutely independent of the lower part; and the connecting point between the two parts is the extremely flexible vertebra immediately below the centre of the back part of the waist—known as the 'lotus', the real soul of the dancer. The movements of the upper part of the body go in revolutions, with the lotus acting as the pivot, the entire impression being created of a broken back. Even the movements of the neck, shoulders, elbow, wrists, knees, ankles, follow the same principles.



Revolution

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Both the styles have a hidden beauty to project. Volution—that of harmonious lines, following precise geometrical patterns, creating an atmosphere of majestic grandeur. Even the stepping, in keeping with this theory, is very crisp. There is a certain jerkiness, but that blends ideally with the central principle of the style.

The style of revolution creates an atmosphere which is lyrical. There is no geometric precision. In contrast, the movements are beautifully well-rounded, a difficult task since great care has to be taken to prevent the movements from degenerating into ugly, haphazard wriggings. Force—there is in plenty. But it is released in a very controlled and graceful manner, in order to create an impression of vivacity projected without angularity. Thus, even the stepping is not so very forceful, neither is there any harsh stamping, except may be at the end of a long series of movements, to declare the end of the previous sequence, and herald the beginning of the next. Even here the stamping is not quite as hard as in the case of volution. Mohini Attam follows the theory of revolution. It is a style abounding in beautiful lyrical movements, yet exhibiting a conspicuous strength of purpose.

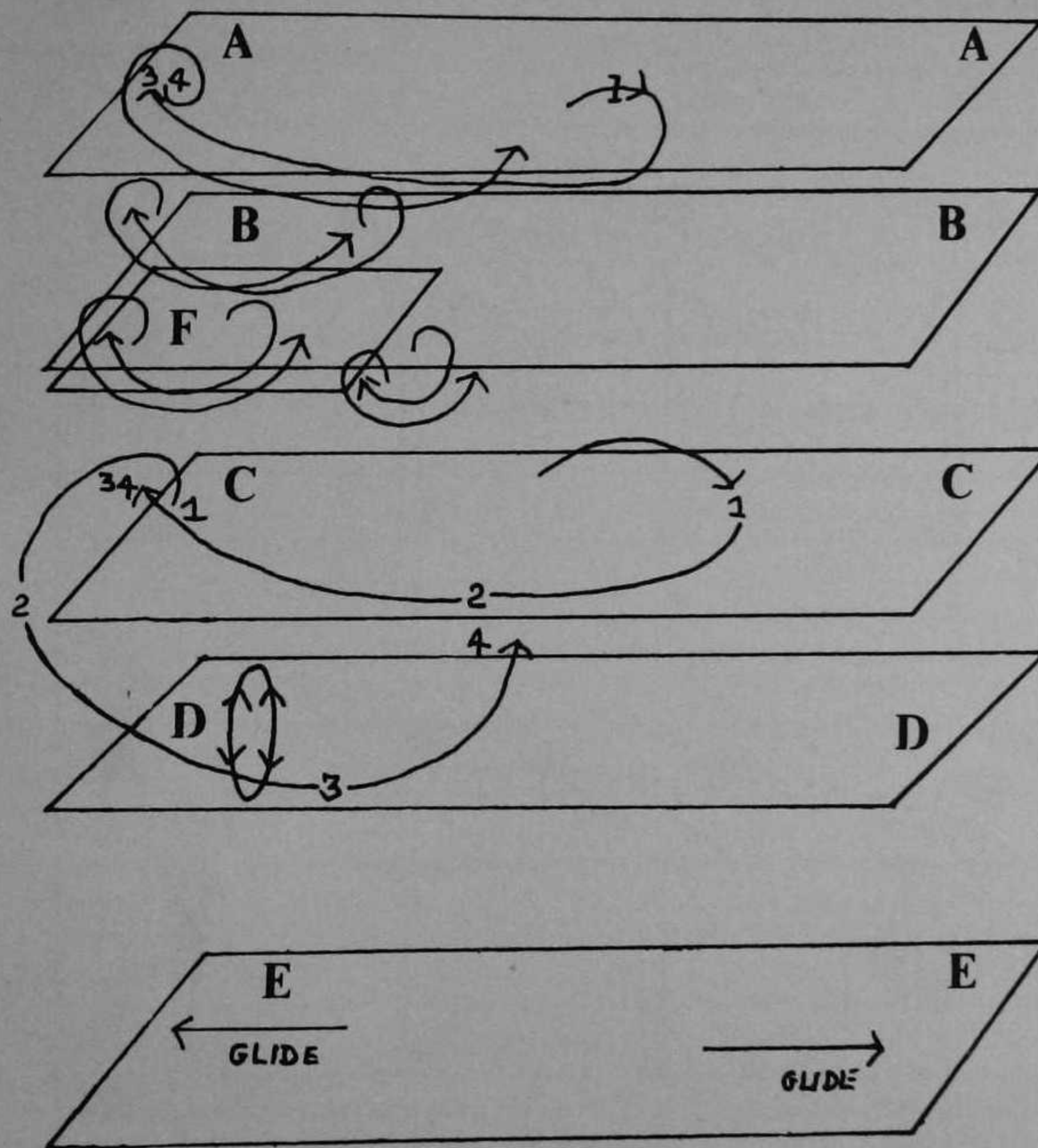
This spiral kinetic pattern is nowhere as evident as in the pure *nritta* patterns. In any classical dance style, *nritta* is made up of the smallest basic dance unit which starts with a static pose and ends up with another pose, both the poses being connected with cadence of movements of the entire body, but usually highlighting one particular limb. In Mohini Attam, this smallest basic unit is called the *adavu*.

The traditional texts, generally, divide the human body into *anga-s* (major limbs) and *upanga-s* (minor limbs). Head, arms, torso and the legs are the major limbs whereas those situated in the face (eyes, eyebrows, nose, cheeks, chin etc.), the palm and fingers, the foot and the toes are the minor limbs. For each limb or pair of limbs, certain basic postures together with the variations in movements have been specified. An *adavu* then becomes a well-specified movement of the major limbs that connects two basic and static postures. This specific movement is cast in the particular style of body kinetics. An interesting point of reference here is that even the *Natyashastra* has specified such smallest units of dance; there they are called *nritta karana-s* (Chapter IV) and they are 108 in number.

Upon analysing the available *adavu-s* of Mohini Attam, it is found that they are either the *nritta karana-s* of the *Natyashastra* performed in the spiral mode of kinetics or are a combination of the movements of the major and minor limbs specified in the *Balaramabharatam* and performed in the spiral kinetics.

How does one interpret these basic stances and the "path" taken by the limbs while performing the movement in terms of diagrams? Rudolph Laban, in his book *Choreutics* says: "It is possible to follow and to understand the continuous creation of spatial impressions through the experience of movement. The relationships between single spatial appearances cause movements to follow definite paths. The unity of movement and space can be demonstrated by comparing the single snap-shots of the mind with each other, and showing that the natural order of their sequences and our natural orientation in space are based on similar laws".

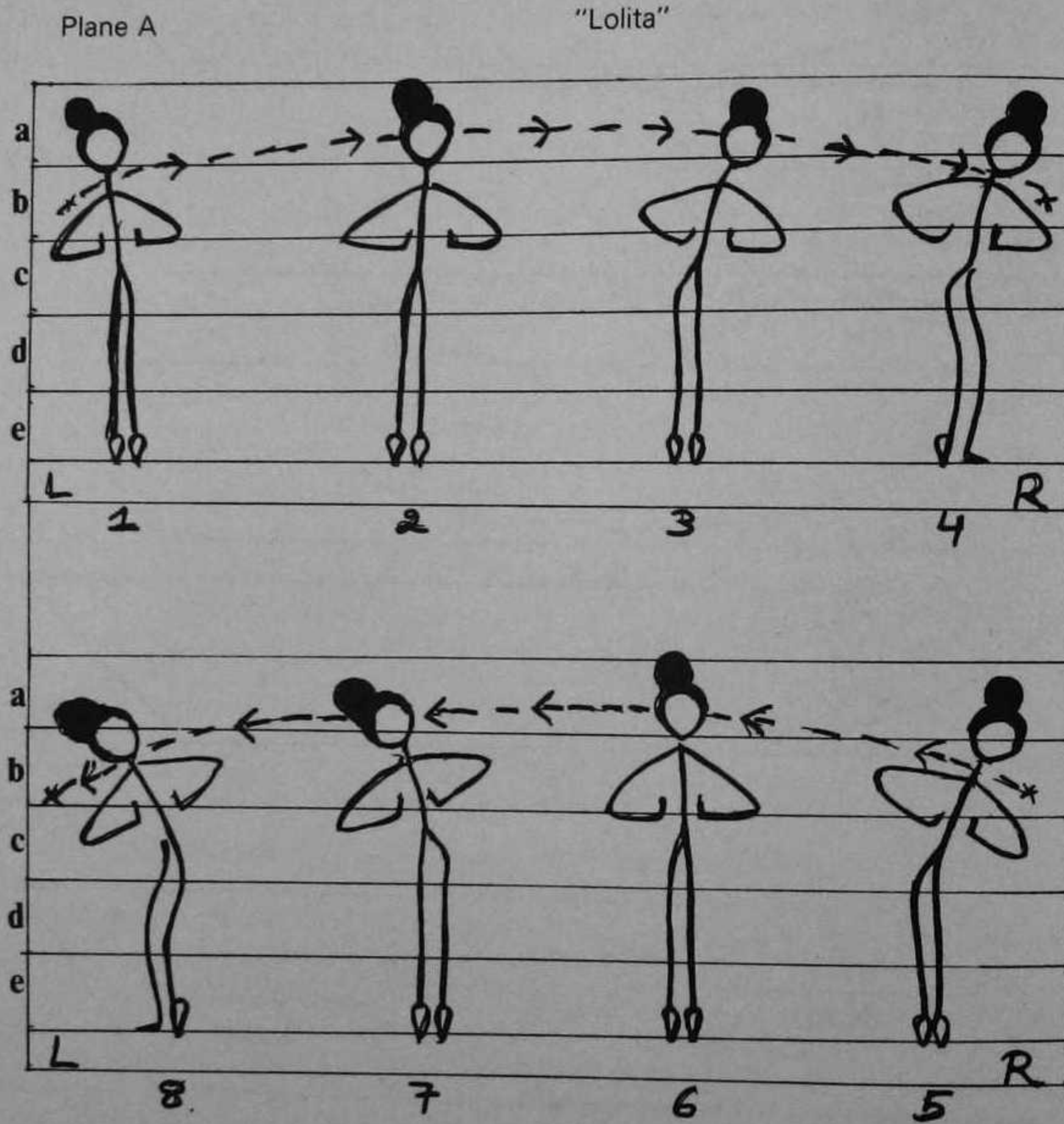
Since Indian dancing is not so much of a time-space art as it is a time art, the spatial planes have to be extended horizontally rather than vertically. I have adapted the planes to suit the Indian body in dance movements. These planes are



Revolution or Spiral

six in number (A, B, C, D, E & F) at the five horizontal levels of movements. Sketch 1 illustrates these planes whereas Sketch 2 illustrates the trace-path followed in the "revolution" kinetics of Mohini Attam. This division gives a six-fold grouping of *adavu-s* as follows. (In each group only one or two have been illustrated).

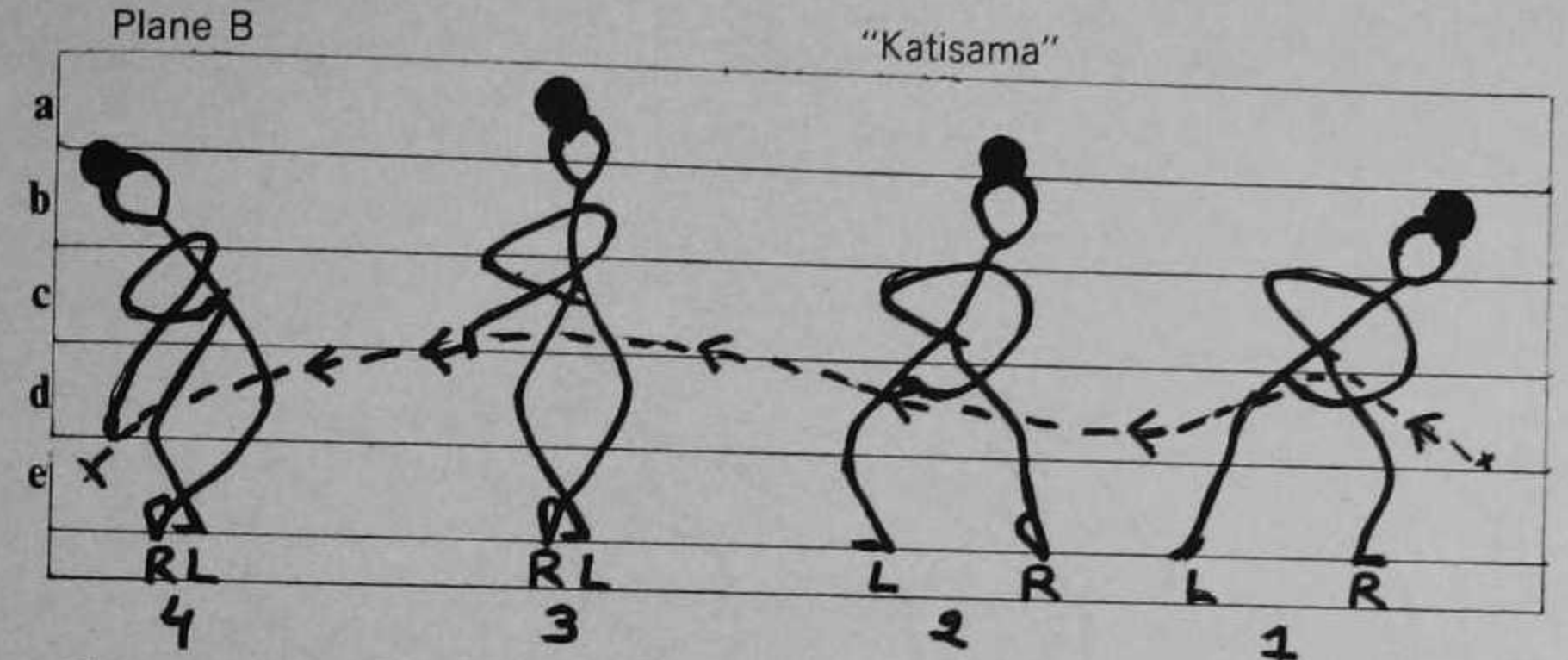
Plane A: *Shira-Griva* (Sanskrit)
Tala - Karttu (Malayalam)
Head and neck.



Sketch 3: *Lolita karana*: "The hands should be *rechita* (decoratively moved) and *anchita* (palms raised at right angles to the forearm) and the head, *lolita* (moved from side to side) and *vartita* (in a rounded movement) on the sides" (*Natyashastra*, Ch. 4, Shl. 166).

The *lolita shira* is given in both, the *Natyashastra* and the *Balaramabharatam*.

Plane B: *Vaksha-Parshva* (Sanskrit)
Marvidan - Varibhagam (Malayalam)
Chest and sides.



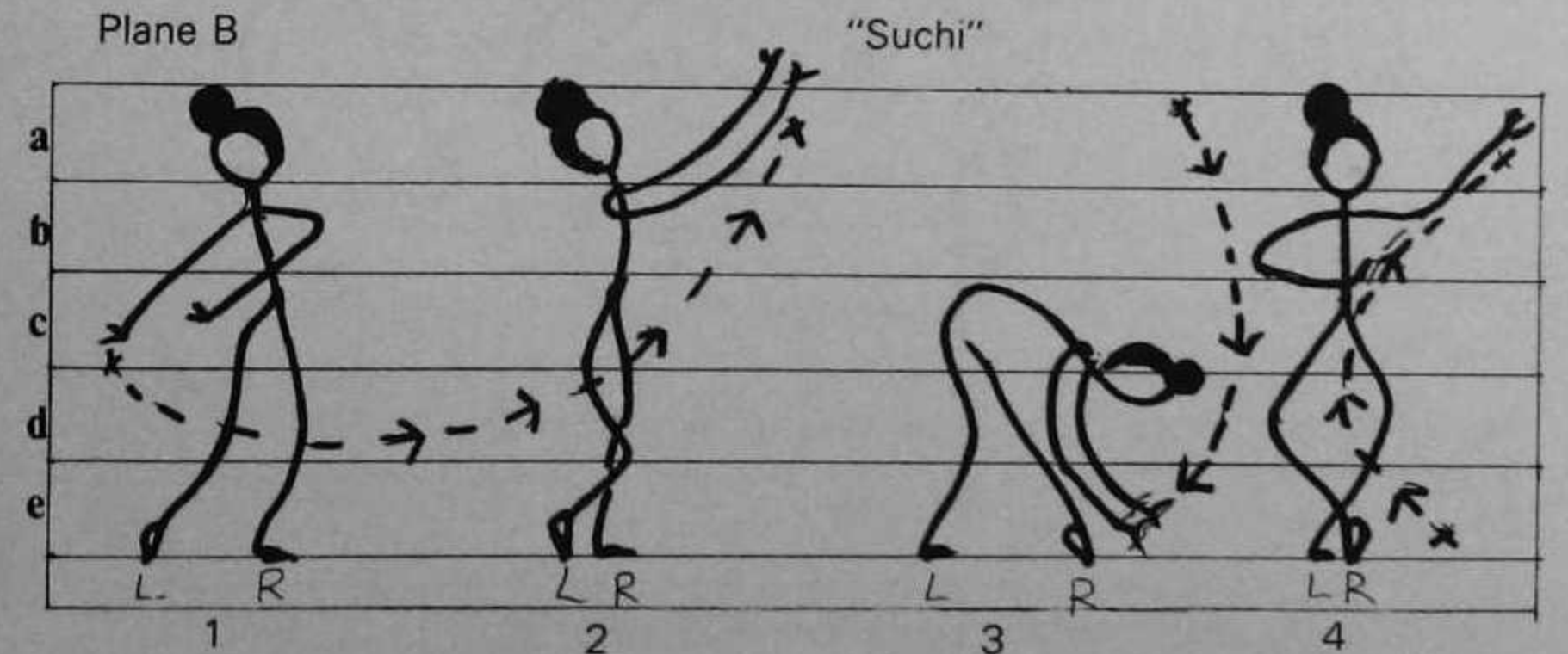
(Please note that this particular movement begins in the right and ends in the left).

Sketch 4: *Katisama karana*: "After the *svastika* (crossed at the ankles) position, the feet are to be separated. Of the two hands, one is to be placed at the navel and the other in the region of the hip, sides in *udvahita* (raised)" (*Natyashastra*, Ch. 4, Shl. 80).

It also uses the following movements of the *Balaramabharatam*.

Udvahita Vaksha: When the back is bent slightly and the *vaksha* is raised (Shl. 14).

Anata Parshva: When the left or the right side is bent on one side (Shl. 11).



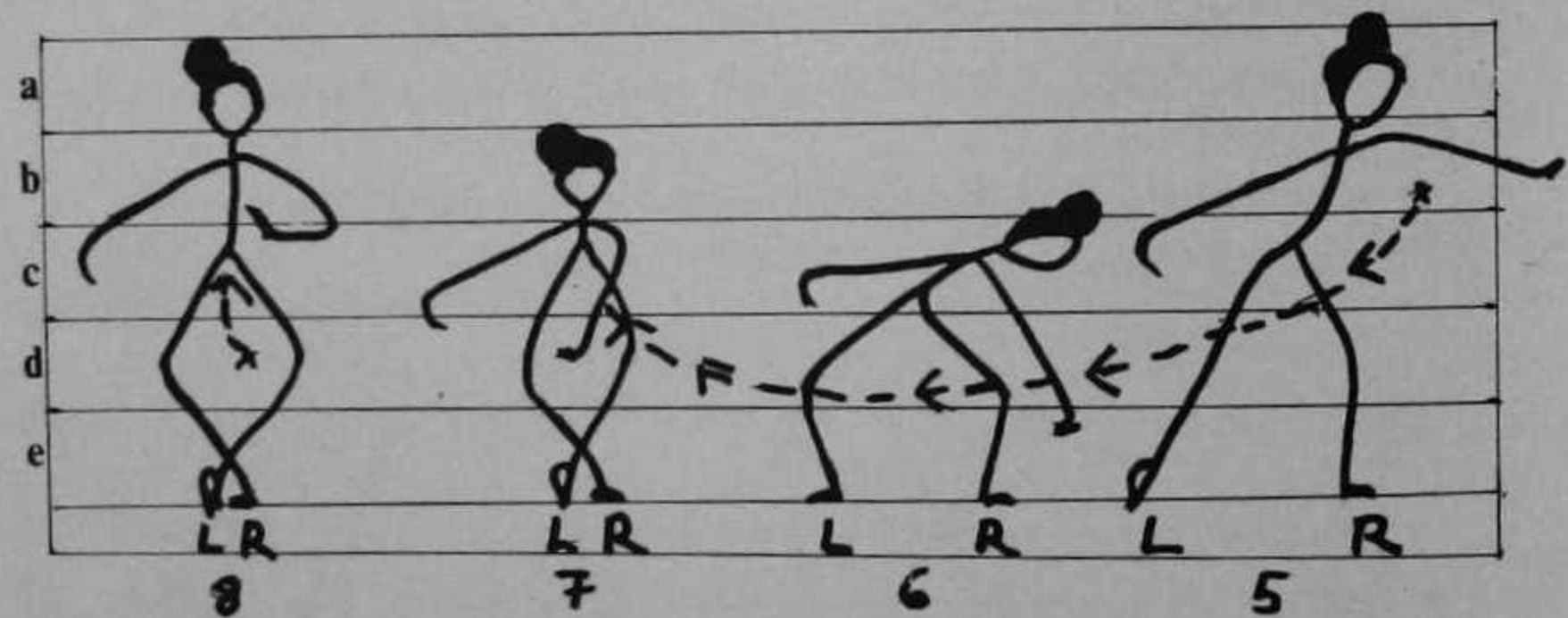
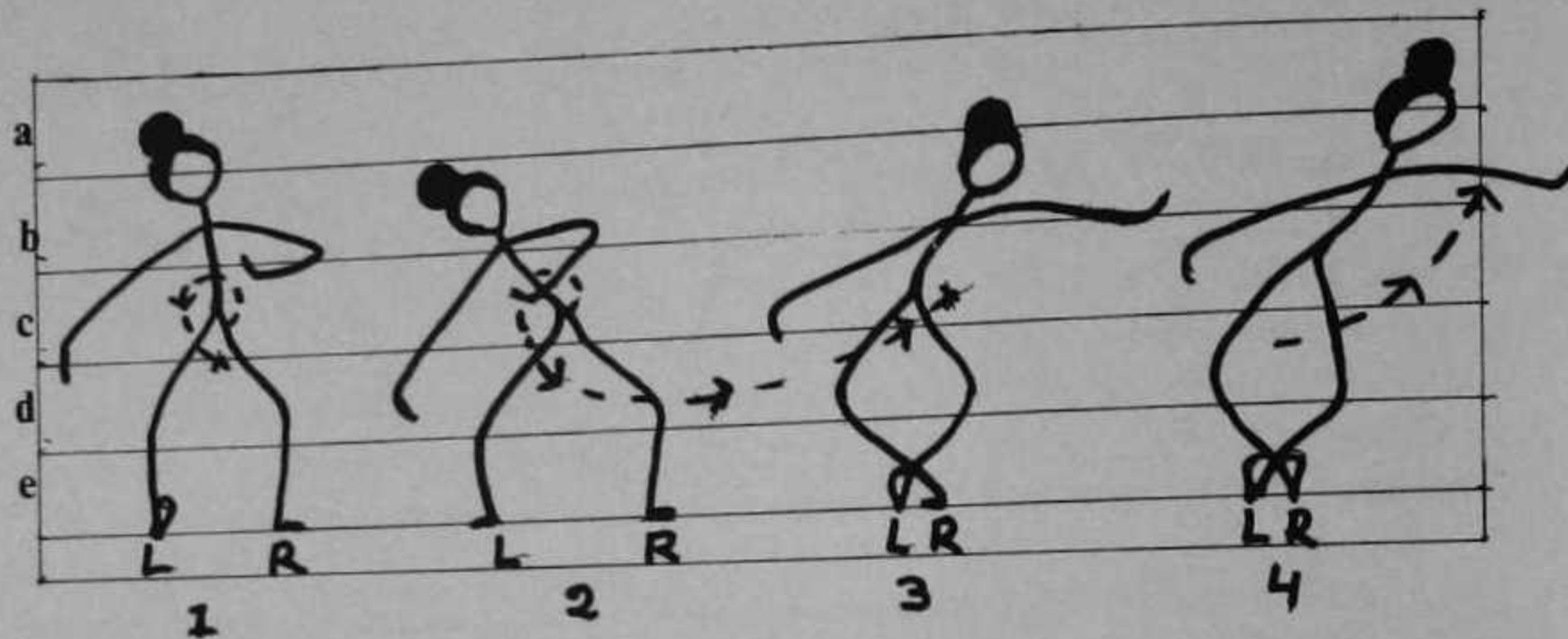
Sketch 5: *Suchi*: "A *kunchita* foot is to be raised and put forward on the ground, the two hands to be in harmony with the performance." (*Natyashastra*, Ch. 4, Shl. 137).

Plane C: *Kati* (Sanskrit)
Arketu (Malayalam)
 Waist and hip.

(The movement is called the *chorippu* turn of the *kati*).

"Rechita Nikuttita"

Plane C



Sketch 6: *Rechita Nikuttita karana*: "The left hand should assume *lata* (like a creeper) gesture, the right hand to be *rechita* and the left foot, *nikuttita* (raising the heel of the toes and then bringing it down)" (*Natyashastra*, Ch. 4, *Shl.* 90).

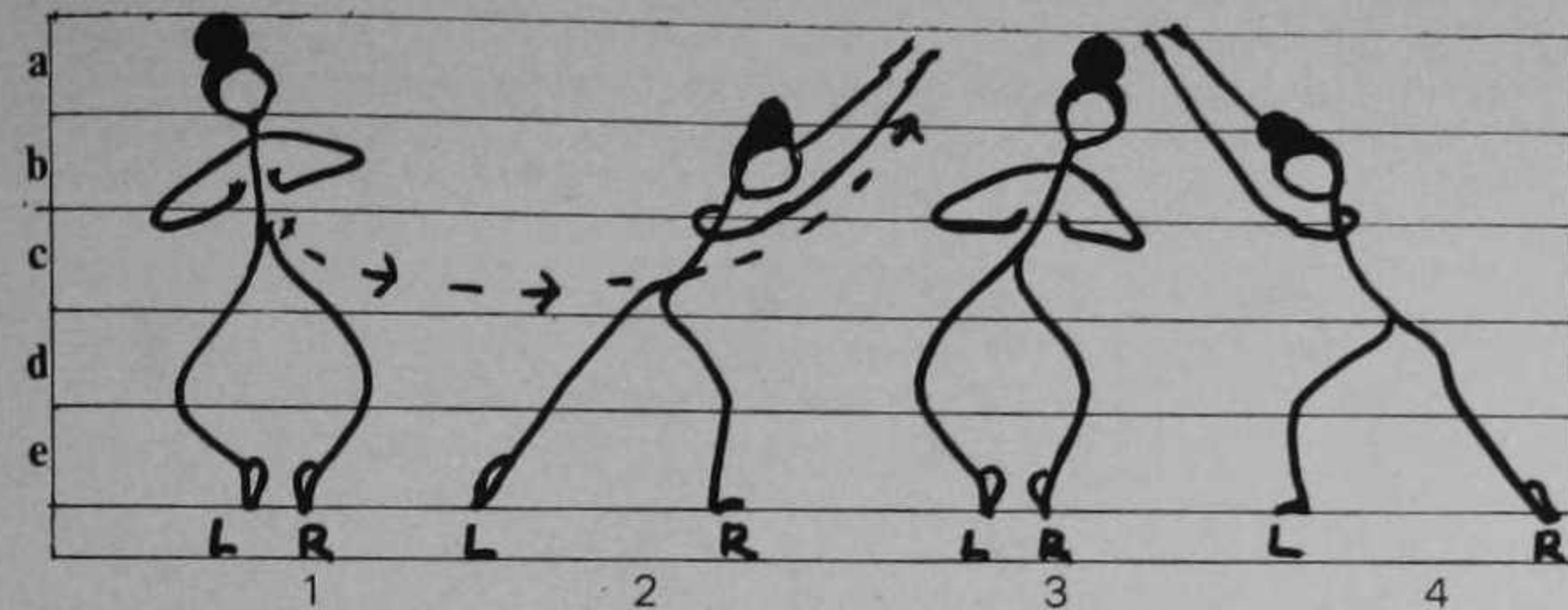
It also has the following movements of the *Balaramabharatam*:
Rechita kati: "When the *kati* is moved about many times" (*Shl.* 13).

Vivartita kati: "When the *kati* is moved to left or right side" (*Shl.* 21).

Plane D: *Uru-Janu* (Sanskrit)
Tuda - Kalmuttu (Malayalam)
 Thigh and knee.

Plane D

"Gridhravalinaka"



Sketch 7: *Gridhravalinaka karana*: "One foot should be stretched backwards with one knee bent slightly. The two arms should be stretched" (*Natyashastra*, Ch. 4, *Shl.* 135).

It has also the following movements of the *Balaramabharatam*:

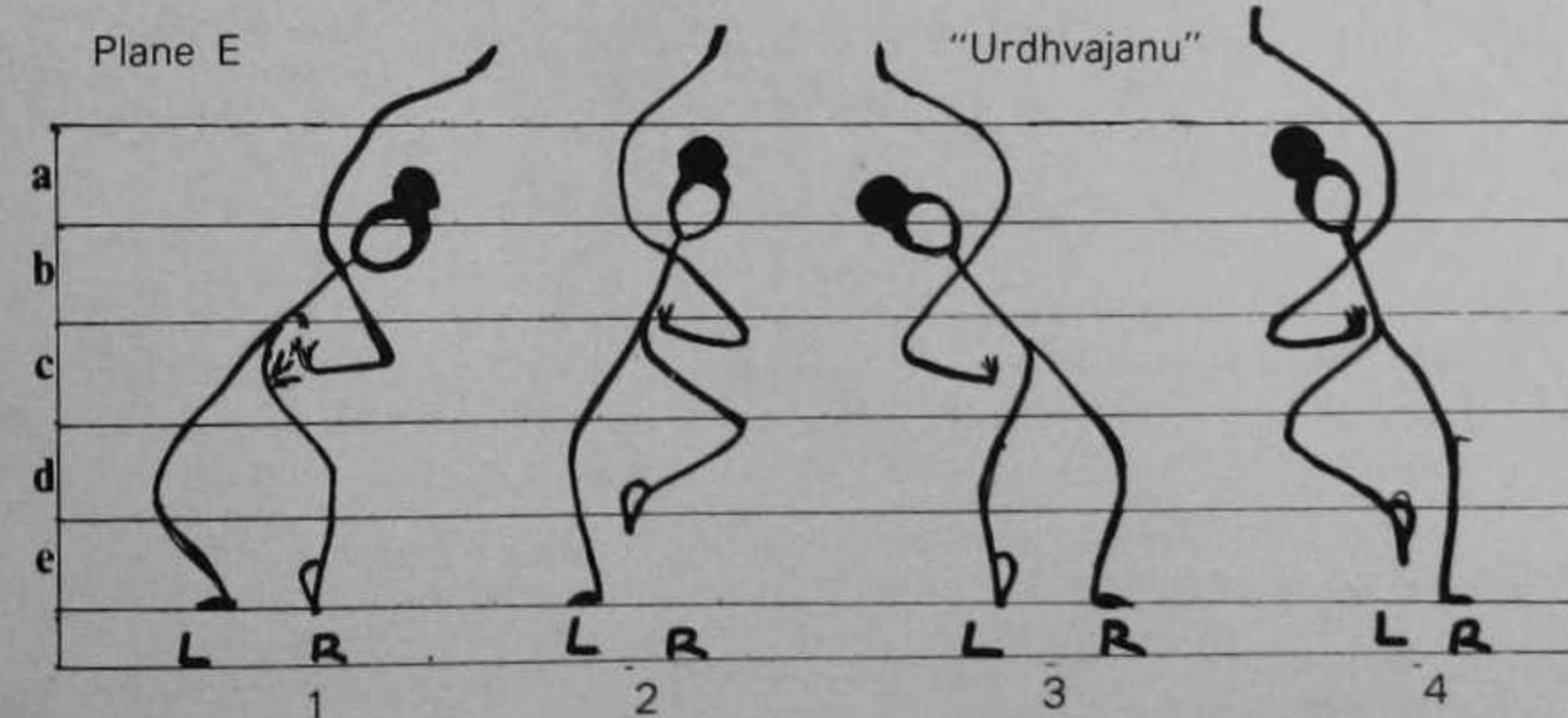
Ekajanunata: "When one knee is bent by four fingers and the other is straight" (*Shl.* 29).

Akrishtasuchika janu: "When the feet are pushed forward and backward separately" (*Shl.* 52).

Plane E: *Pada* (Sanskrit)
Pada (Malayalam)
 Foot.

Plane E

"Urdhvajanu"



Sketch 8: *Urdhvajanu karana*: "A *kunchita* foot is to be thrown up and the knee should be held up to the chest. The hands should be in harmony with the dance" (*Natyashastra*, Ch. 4, *Shl.* 86).

It has also the following movements of the *Balaramabharatam*:

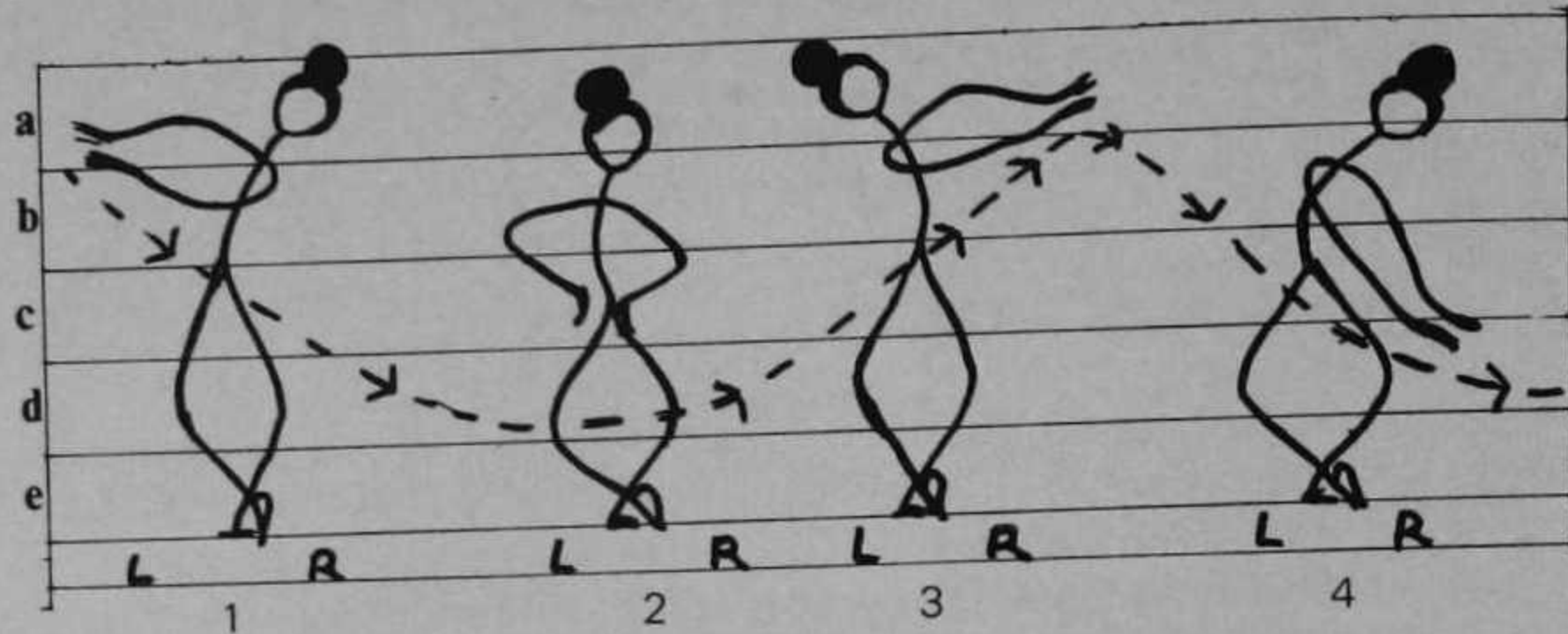
Udvartita asthira pada: "When the left or the right foot is raised upto the waist and comes down on the ground" (*Shl.* 65 and 66).

Plane F: *Manibandha* (Sanskrit)
Manikattu (Malayalam)
 Wrist.

It has also the following movements of the *Balaramabharatam*:

Plane F

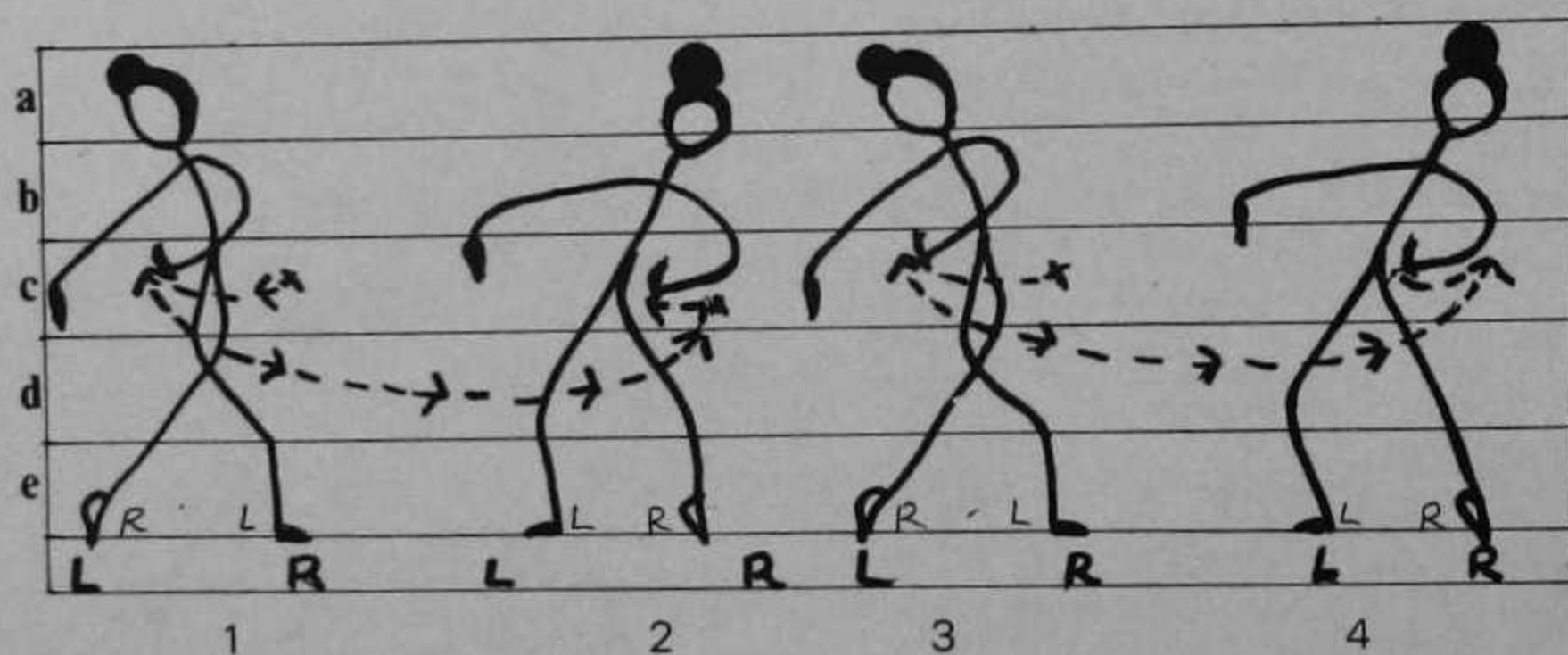
"Adhastala lola"



Sketch 9: *Adhastala lola*: "When the wrists are waved from side to side with the palms facing downwards" (*Shl.* 42).

Plane F

"Parshva lola"



Sketch 10: *Parshva lola*: "When the wrist is waved around with the palms facing the sides" (*Shl.* 52).

Vivritta Uru: "When one thigh crosses the other and the other leg is separated" (*Shl.* 14).

Following a process of splitting and regrouping, it is quite possible to create some new "combination—*adavu-s*" by highlighting the movement of a specific limb in its functional plane. The movement selected for this treatment should be either from the *Balaramabharatam* or the *Natyashastra* in order to preserve the continuity of style and unity of purpose. Moreover, all the movements are to be kept within the orbit of the "revolution" theory of kinetics.

The affinity that all the Kerala arts enjoy, specially in the fields of the *sopanam* mode of singing and the *tala* system, must be extended to envelop Mohini Attam as well. One cannot be foreigner in one's own birthplace. Even a cursory inspection of a dance style would reveal the parallelism and intertwining of the kinetics and aesthetics of the dance and its music. In this respect the "tying and untying" (*jatha* and *latha*, as it is called) kinetics of *sopanam* (which can also be described as *andolika*) is ideally suited for the lyrically rounded and swaying dance movements of Mohini Attam, and must replace the Carnatic style of singing.

Each of the classical dance styles has its own structure and repertoire and corresponding nomenclature springing from the soil which nurtured it. Today's Mohini Attam is the only borrower in this respect.

Aesthetically, kinetically and structurally, the dance and music of Mohini Attam must dig deeper roots in the soil of Kerala and tap the common mainstream of its cultural ethos for sustenance and healthy growth.

Classical purity is necessary, even indispensable, but what is classical purity in each individual case must be determined. If the kinetics are faithfully adhered to, then the purity of the style would automatically follow. Variations, innovations and, above all, change are inevitable in a dynamic society. But, if the intrinsic value of the dance is retained, there is negligible threat of destruction; on the contrary, one may even expect enrichment.

This process has already begun for Mohini Attam.

Musical Curiosities in the Temples of South India*

H. V. Modak

South India is often described as a land of temples. The *gopuram*, a pyramidal multi-storeyed tower built over the gateway to a temple, dominates the landscape of every village or town. Such temples represent some of the finest specimens of ancient architectural sculpture and engineering—architecture and sculpture rooted, as the other arts, in religious fervour. The sculptors treated various subjects, such as music and dance. The walls, pillars and brackets (or corbels) are decorated with carved figures of gods, goddesses, stylish lions, graceful elephants, horses, warriors, musicians, dancing girls and many other representations.

The temples play an important role in the social, economic and spiritual life of the people. Entire villages and towns, in fact, have grown around these temples.

The Pallava kings, who ruled South India from the sixth to the ninth centuries A.D., were pioneers in temple construction. The monolithic cave temples and the bas-reliefs at Mahabalipuram, 60 km south of Madras, comprise the oldest storehouse of art and history in the country.

The art of temple construction reached its zenith during the Chola hegemony, from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries. The art of bronze sculpture also attained perfection during this period, the most outstanding being the representation of Nataraja, or Lord Shiva, in the 'cosmic dance' pose. The successive dynasties of the Pallava, Chola, Pandya and Nayak rulers endowed and enriched this land with temples and monuments.

In the world-famous temple of Nataraja at Chidambaram, 240 km from Madras, one can see the sculptural representation of 108 postures relating to Bharata's science of dancing. Similarly, the ancient sculptors infused music in the stones used for temple construction. They not only used their skill in carving figures of musicians playing on musical instruments, but also chiselled wonderful objects producing musical tones. Situated in various temples, we find musical pillars, musical stairs, bronze and stone musical icons, musical bells, and musical pipes made of stone.

Musical Pillars

The South Indian sculptors used their amazing skills to chisel rocks and shape musical pillars, the 'stone pianos'. This art was at its best during the period of the Vijayanagar kingdom, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. These pillars adorn the temples at Hampi, Tadpatri, Lepakshi, Thadikombu, Madurai, Algarkoil, Courtallam, Tenkashi, Tirunelveli, Alwartirunagari, Suchindram and Trivandrum. (See Figure 1).

Hampi is a deserted city near Hospet in Karnataka State and the former capital of the Vijayanagar Empire. The Vitthal temple, though incomplete, is the grandest structure of the period. In its Music Hall are found fifty-six clusters of musical pillars of varying construction. Tadpatri, near Guntakal, and Lepakshi, near Hindapur, are small villages in Andhra Pradesh. The temples here are beautiful,

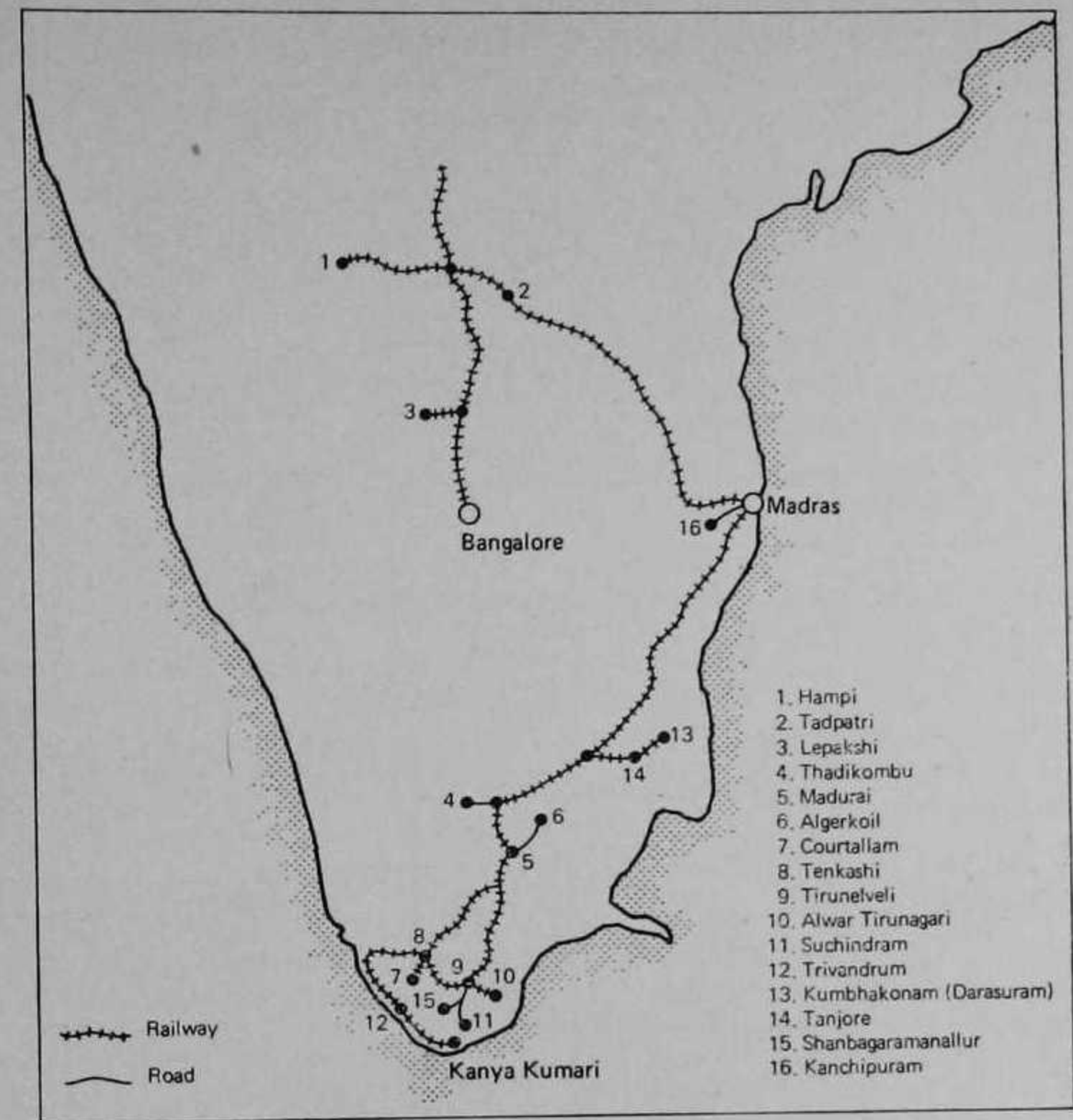


Fig. 1 Sites of musical curiosities.

fashioned in the Vijayanagar style. Thadikombu, a small village near Dindigal in Tamilnadu (Madras) State, has a temple with nicely carved pillars. Madurai's famous Meenakshi Temple is an exquisite example of Dravidian architecture and sculpture. (Dravidian, together with Northern and Chalukyan, is one of the three main Hindu styles.) The most interesting feature of this temple is the thousand-pillared hall built in the sixteenth century. The pillars bear a repeated motif of a stylized dragon. At the entrance to the hall, there are two clusters of musical pillars; there are similar pillars in the outside corridor as well.

Algarkoil is 18 km from Madurai. The hall facing its shrine contains some fine sculpture; its musical pillars are in good condition. Courtallam, Tenkashi, Tirunelveli and Alwartirunagari are in the Tirunelveli district, and there are two large clusters of fifty pillars in each of the temples at the latter two places. Suchindram in Kanyakumari, India's southernmost district, has a temple known for its musical pillars. Trivandrum boasts of musical pillars in good condition at the famous ancient temple of Shri Padmanabhaswami (Vishnu).

But what are musical pillars? They are columns of stone clustered round a central, massive pillar supporting the roof. Figure 2 shows the cross-section of one such cluster, found in the Tirunelveli temple. If the pillars are tapped with a light,

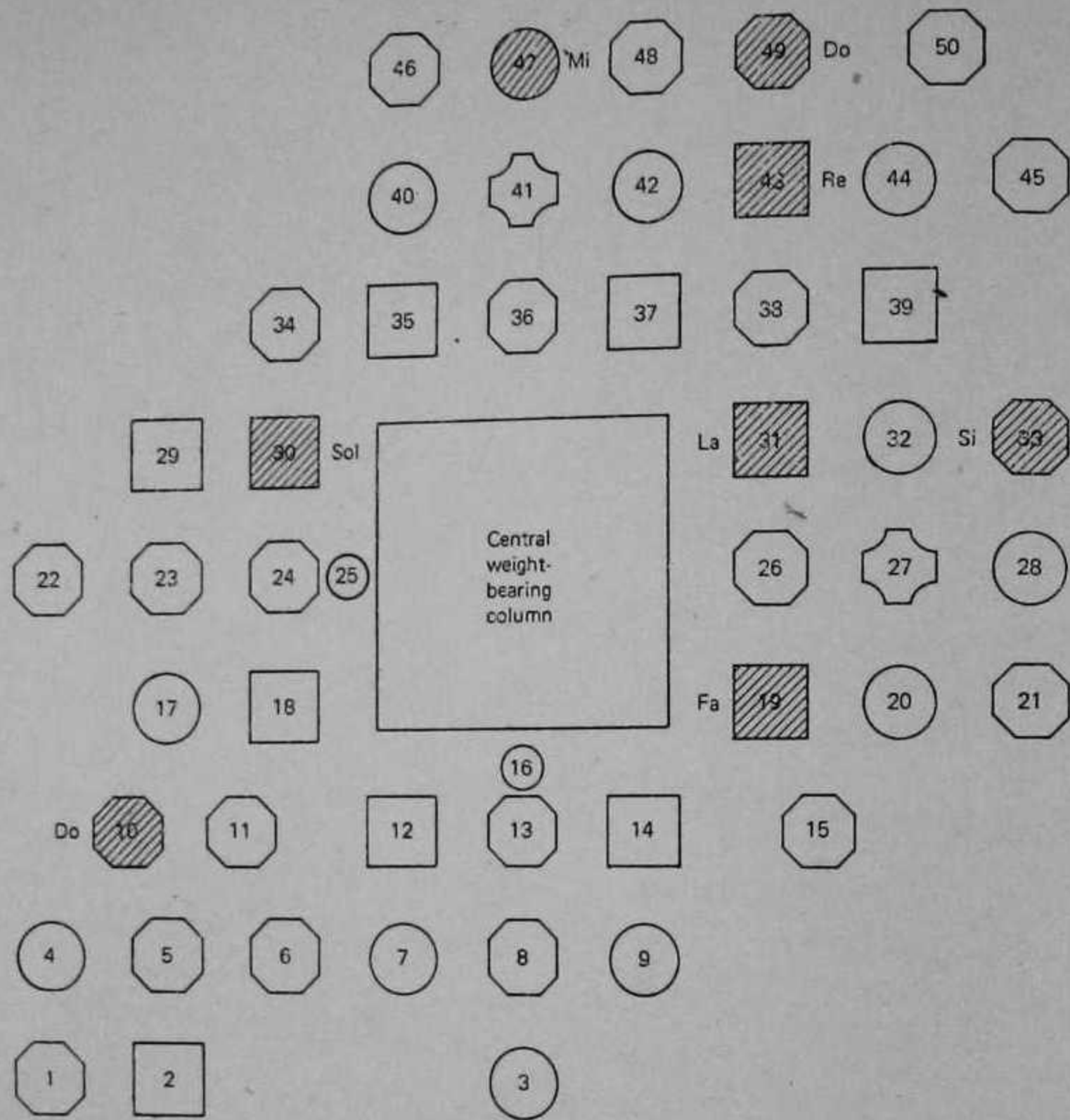


Fig. 2. Cross-section of a cluster of fifty pillars found in the Sri Nelliappar temple at Tirunelveli.

wooden mallet, they produce notes of various frequencies and their quality is somewhat similar to that of a xylophone. The pillars are of various shapes: circular, square or octagonal. The pillars range in height, in various temples, from one to two metres; those forming a single cluster are of the same height, but they differ in cross-section and shape. The entire cluster of pillars, with massive base and top (capital), is carved from a single block of granite. The pillars thus form firm columns, clamped at both ends, and they are not as hollow as one might think. The number of pillars in a cluster varies from three at Lepakshi to fifty at Tirunelveli and Alwartirunagari.

The Science of the Pillars

Systematic study of the musical pillars was undertaken by the author, assisted by S. R. Chandorkar, S. Parameswaram and K. V. Desa, in work supported by the Government of Maharashtra. One of the aims of our study was to measure the frequencies of the notes emitted by the pillars in order to ascertain which

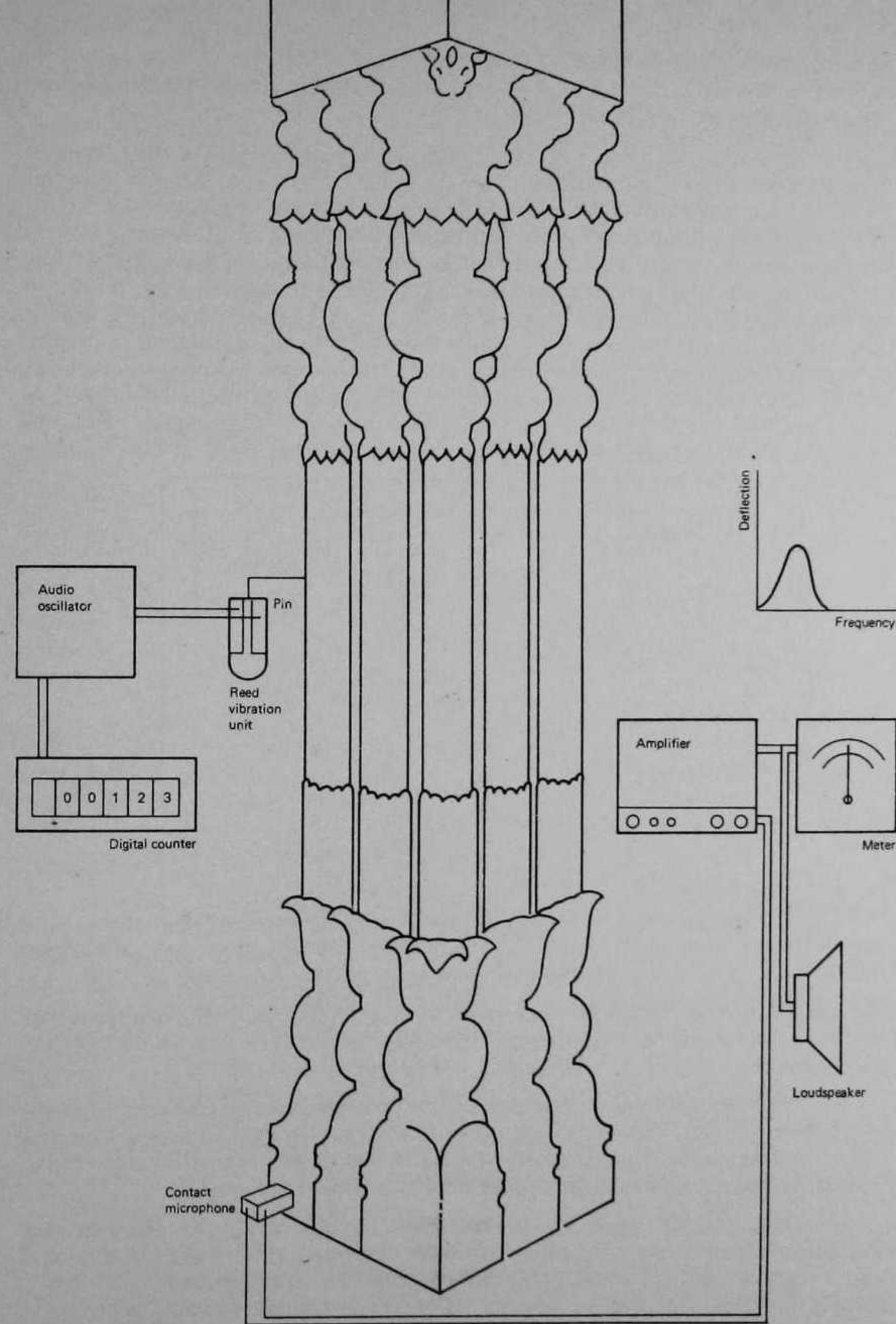


Fig. 3. Experimental arrangement in method to measure accurately frequencies of vibrating musical pillars.

musical scales could be fitted to them. An early method was to tape-record the sounds, and then submit them to frequency analysis at the Electroacoustics Research Laboratory in Pune.

In a later method, resonance technique was used to obtain accurate measurement of the frequencies after the pillars had been set into resonant vibration by a reed-vibration unit. (The experimental arrangement is shown in Fig. 3). The reed-vibration unit is connected to an audio-oscillator, and vibrations of the reed are 'coupled' to the pillar. As the audio-oscillator frequency is varied, the pillar emits an audible note in resonance. The audio-oscillator frequency in this position is the frequency of the pillar. For more accuracy, a digital frequency meter is used to read the oscillator's frequency. To obtain the exact resonance setting, a contact microphone is clamped to the base of the pillar. The microphone signal is amplified, and the amplifier output is connected to a meter as well as to a loudspeaker. At resonance, the meter shows a maximal reading and the loudspeaker gives the loudest audible note. The pillar resonates when the frequency of the oscillator

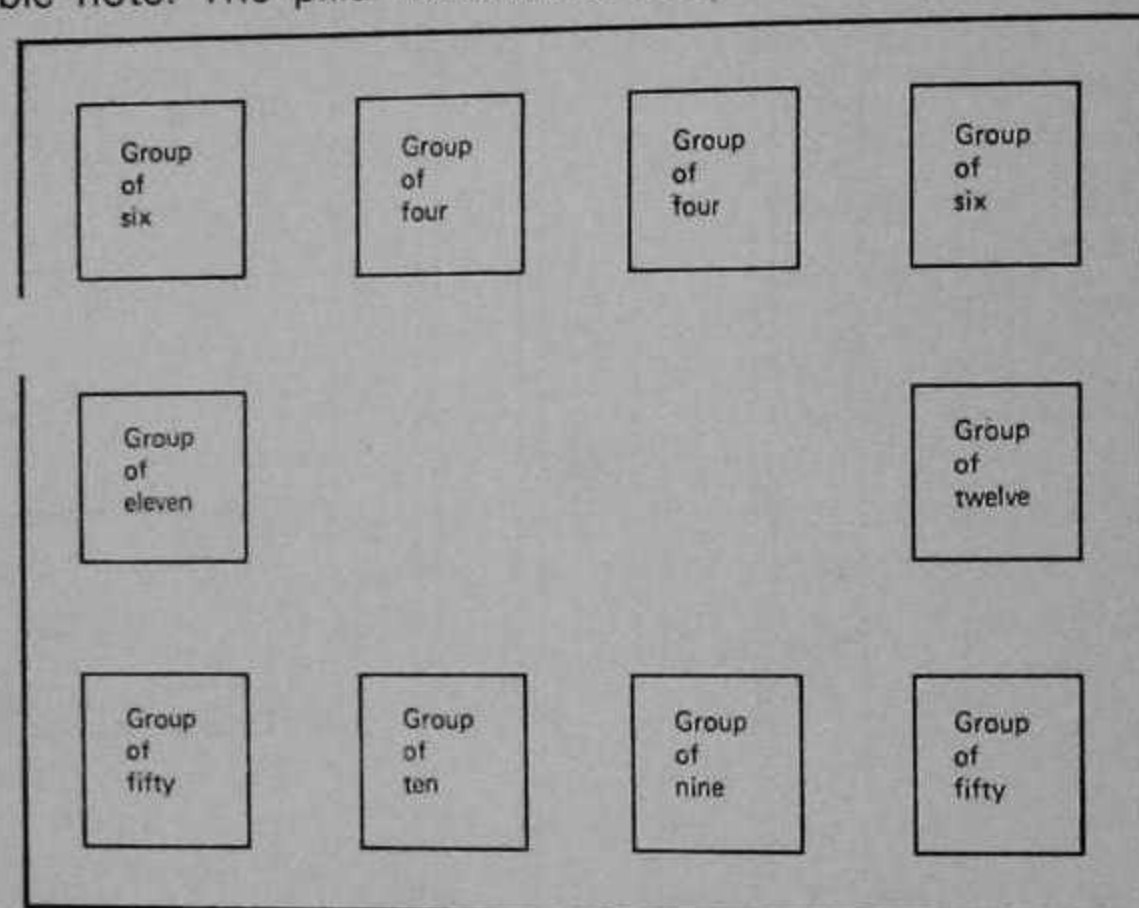


Fig. 4 General plan of the musical pillars found in the hall facing the main shrine, Sri Nelliappar Temple, Tirunelveli.

coincides with the fundamental frequency or any of the pillar's overtone frequencies. Hence, using this method, overtones emitted by the pillars can also be determined.

The resonance method has been used to establish the frequencies of the pillars in the Swami Nelliappar Temple at Tirunelveli. Figure 4 shows the general plan of the musical pillars in the hall facing the main shrine there, whose cross-section (in the left-hand cluster of fifty pillars) is shown in Figure 2.

Thus, musical pillars are looked upon as solid bars firmly fixed at each end. For a bar of uniform cross-section rigidly clamped at both ends, the relative frequencies of the fundamental and the overtones (1, 2) are given by f_1 , $2.756 f_1$, $5.404 f_1$, $8.933 f_1 \dots$ and so on, where f_1 is the fundamental frequency as given by:

$$f_1 = \frac{1.133\pi}{l^2} \sqrt{\frac{Qk^2}{\rho}}$$

where l is the length of the bar, ρ the density of the bar, Q is Young's modulus (an elastic constant) of the bar's material, and k is the radius of gyration.

In the cluster of fifty pillars (Fig. 2), there are few pillars of nearly uniform cross-section. These have a rough surface and hardly any decoration. The measured

TABLE 1 — Measured and theoretical relative frequencies of pillars

Pillar No. 1 and cross-section	Measured frequency in Hz	Measured relative frequency	Theoretical relative frequency
28 (circular)	$f_1 = 149$	1.000	1.000
	$f_2 = 388$	2.604	2.756
	$f_3 = 780$	5.235	5.404
35 (square)	$f_1 = 170$	1.000	1.000
	$f_2 = 468$	2.753	2.756
	$f_3 = 910$	5.353	5.404

1. The pillars have been arbitrarily numbered for identification.

and theoretical relative frequencies of two such pillars are given in Table 1, showing a close agreement of the results. The slight deviation from the theoretical values is attributable to the roughness of the surfaces as well as minute variations in the cross-section.

Some Music-making Physics

Most of the pillars have a decorative structure and the cross-sections of these pillars are not uniform along their length, resulting in a deviation of relative frequencies from those of a uniform bar. It is interesting to note, however, that in the case of some pillars the overtones generated are harmonics. When tapped, these pillars produce pleasing tones. The measured frequencies of three such pillars, taken as specimens, are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2 — Frequencies of overtones produced by selected pillars

Pillar No.	Fundamental in Hz	First overtone	Second overtone
	(f_1)	(f_2)	(f_1)
2	150	396	750 ($5f_1$)
33	118	306	612 ($2f_2$)
22	132	396 ($3f_1$)	660 ($5f_1$)

Comparing the relative intensities of the fundamental frequency and overtones (from an analysis of recorded notes), we note that the fundamental is weak. What we hear is mainly the sound of first and higher overtones.

Although there are fifty pillars in the cluster examined, only one or two musical scales can be (nearly) fitted among the notes emitted by the vertical sculptures. This is because the frequencies are not properly distributed. The serial numbers of the pillars forming one of the Indian musical scales, Multani, are shown below:

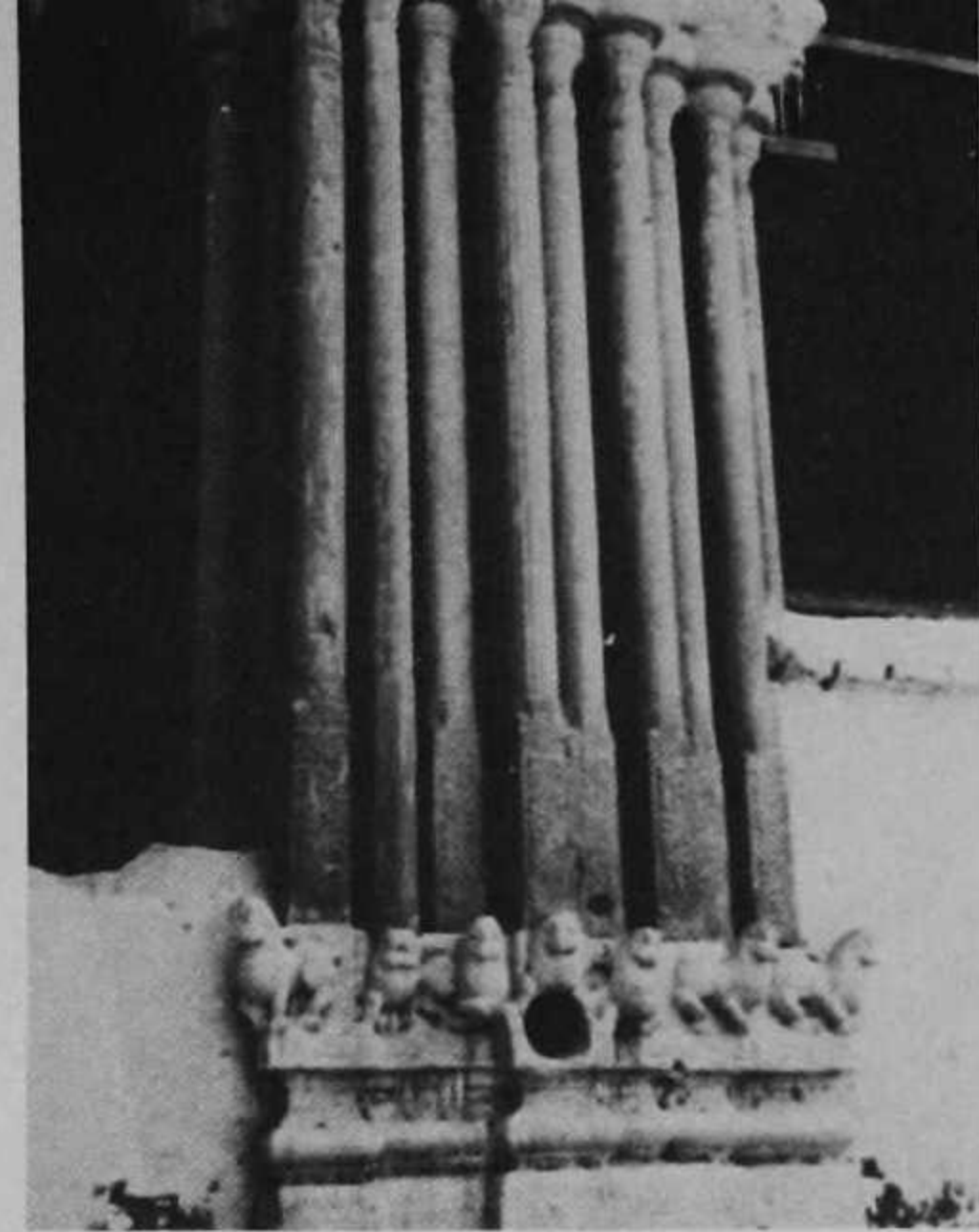
Note	Do	Re	Mi	Fa	Sol	La	Si	Do
Indian notation	<i>sa</i>	<i>ri</i>	<i>ga</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>dha</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>sa</i>
Pillar number	49	43	47	19	30	31	33	10

The first six notes correspond to the first overtones of the respective pillars and the last two notes correspond to the second overtones of the last two pillars.

The pillars that emit notes according to the musical scale are not suitably situated within the cluster. It is, moreover, difficult to strike the pillars that are in the inner rows; so that it is not easy for a single artist to play music on the pillars. It would appear, therefore, that musical pillars were not constructed for the playing of music of the present-day type composed of seven or more notes. It appears that the pillars might have been used for accompaniment music,



Musical Pillars, Music Hall, Vitthal Temple, Hampi.



Musical Pillars, Alwartirunagari.
(Note the resonance cavity).

composed in three to five-note combinations, as in religious hymns. It is possible to select the pillars near each other producing notes in such scales.

The author has recorded an artist singing a religious song and accompanying himself by striking the pillars. And, because rhythm music used in singing or dancing is composed of few notes, it can be played on the pillars. We have also recorded rhythm music, with the artist using metal rings slipped on his fingers in order to play the pillars. Frequency analysis of musical pillars found in other temples leads to similar conclusions.

Sculptural and Masonry Sources of Music

By using a contact microphone and an amplifier-loudspeaker system, a cluster of musical pillars can be converted into an electromechanical instrument, such as an electronic guitar.

The halls in which musical pillars have been installed have no side-wall enclosures, so that the sounds coming from the pillars are not modified by room acoustics. In some clusters, we find two or three pillars having the same frequency. In these cases, when a single pillar is struck the other pillars of the same frequency begin vibrating by resonance.

If a singer should stand close to a cluster and sing loudly in tune with the pillars, the pillars resound, albeit very feebly, because of the impedance mismatch between air and stone. The sound of resonating pillars can be made audible by electronic amplification.



Musical Pillars, Thadikombu.

A recording of vocal music (specifically, religious hymns), with electronically amplified accompaniment, has been made of resonating pillars. The accompaniment is automatic, not played on the pillars.

Recently, the ancient art of chiselling stone musical pillars has been revived, and the construction of new pillars has been undertaken by sculptors at Mahabalipuram.

The designing of musical pillars opens new fields in musical acoustics and the art of carving. I, for one, believe that retaining musical standards along with sculptural beauty can be achieved by using modern science and research methods.

Musical pillars have suffered deterioration, in some places, because visitors have hammered on them with hard objects. In order to avoid further damage, it is suggested that a contact microphone, with amplifier and loudspeaker system, should be used during exhibits to visitors, whereby a mere, light tap on the stone gives a loud sound.

Musical Stairs

Kumbhakonam, in Tanjore district, was once a capital of the Chola kings, and the city and its surroundings are studded with many shrines. Near the city, at Darasuram, we find stone musical steps, the sides of which are very beautifully



Musical Stairs, Darasuram, near Kumbhakonam.

carved. When seven of the eight stair treads not fixed to the ground are struck, each produces a different tone.

Musical Icons in Stone

Beautifully sculptured figures of fine workmanship are also known, cut from the same granite stone as that used to construct musical pillars. In Tanjore's Brindeswara temple, there are icons of Lord Ganesh and Garuda. In the Vishnu temple at Shanbagaramanallur, there are icons of Rati and Manmatha, and similar sculptures are found in the Krishnapuram temple of Tirunelveli District. The various limbs of these icons, when struck, give out distinct musical notes.

Musical Icons and Bells in Bronze

There are also musical icons cast in bronze, similar to the stone ones. There is a bronze icon at the Tirumangali temple, near Kancheepuram, called the Seven-note Maha Vishnu. All seven notes of the octave are produced when the statue's seven limbs are struck. There are also musical bells of bronze; one with a cluster of seven bells is to be found at the Raja Kelkar Museum, Pune. Each of its bells yields a different musical note.

Stone Musical Pipes

At the above-mentioned Siva temple of Shanbagaramanallur, there is a musical pipe drilled through a stone pillar supporting the roof; the pipe is conical

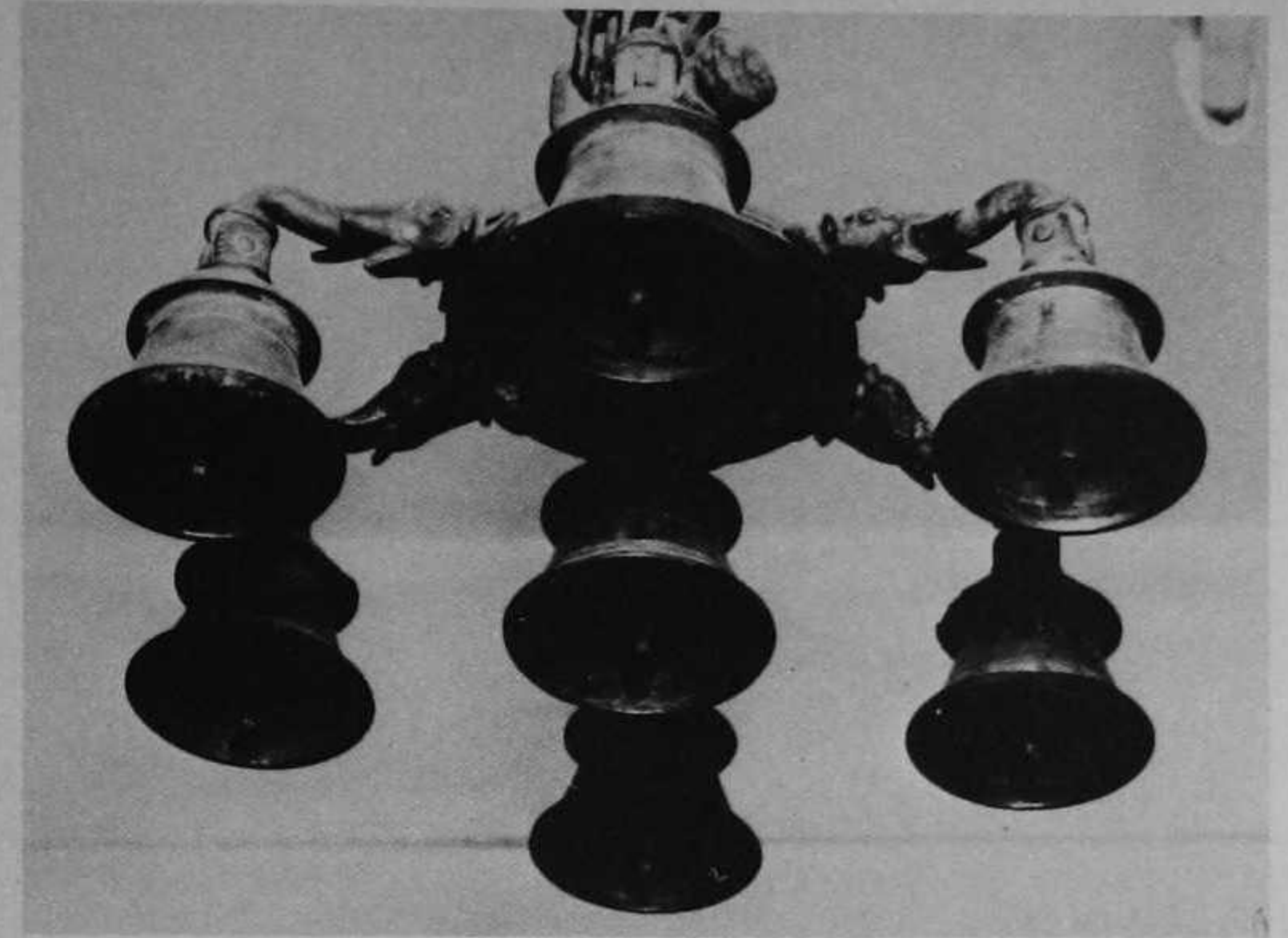


Musical Icon, Lord Ganesha, Tanjore

in shape. When blown sharply from the other end of the pipe, the sound produced is similar to that of a brass blow-pipe.

Nagaswaram pipes made of hardwood are used during festivals in daily temple rituals, for weddings and at other social functions. In the Sri Adi Kumbheswara temple at Kumbhakonam, there are two Nagaswaram pipes made from soapstone. Each pipe is 55 cm in length, including a 17-cm brass mouthpiece. A long, narrow hole runs the length of the pipe, flaring to a width of 2.5 cm at its end. The shell of the pipe is formed by three pieces held together with metallic rings. Two, similar stone pipes are to be found in the gallery of musical instruments of Pune's Raja Kelkar Museum.

There is also a stone pipe, called Mukha Veena, still used in the Sri Adi-Nath temple at Alwartirunagari (in Tirunelveli). Excluding its mouthpiece, it is 20 cm long, though it is made of a single piece of stone and has a tapering hole. This



Musical Bells, Raja Kelkar Museum, Pune

pipe, said to have been presented to the temple by a Nayak king, was originally employed in the dance recitals that were performed in the temple.

Conclusion

Musical pillars and similar objects made of stone have preserved for us a treasure-chest of knowledge concerning ancient music and art, a chest that can be opened and researched in a scientific way.

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- *Article from IMPACT OF SCIENCE ON SOCIETY, Vol. XXXV: 1/2. © Unesco 1985. Reproduced by permission of Unesco.

News and Notes

Workshop in Voice and Speech, Bombay, July 12 to September 6, 1985.

The need for an intensive and methodical training programme in speech is generally and keenly felt in India. A recent and serious attempt to meet the requirement in theatric speech was the 30-session Workshop in Voice and Speech organized by the National Centre for the Performing Arts and conducted by Ashok D. Ranade (Asst. Director, Research & Ethnomusicology, NCPA) from July 12 to September 6, 1985 at the Centre.

Each session of the Workshop was divided into three parts dealing with theoretical problems, voice and speech exercises and *asana*-s. The thirty participants in the Workshop (selected from among the eighty who had applied) included in the main-persons working in areas which give prominence to the spoken word. Two of the lectures, on *Introduction to Voice Culture* and *Disorders of Voice*, were open to members of the Performing Arts Circle.

Among the important theoretical themes discussed were: Male and Female Voices, Respiration, Pitch-Disorders, Intensity-Disorders, Voice-Disorders, Punctuation and Delivery, Speech Disorders, Voice Types, Microphone and Voice, Voice and Diet, Voice and Culture and Voice and Yoga.

The Voice and Speech exercises were related to monotone, breathing, pitch, alphabet projection, speech-pacing, varieties of prose and poetry, speech-improvisation, speech-modulation etc.

The medium of instruction of the Workshop was English with the exercise material drawn from the Hindi and Marathi theatre traditions.

In the discussions that followed the general lectures and in the Workshop sessions, it became apparent that individuals from different professions were interested in voice and speech training. Teachers, lawyers, programme presenters and students 'voiced' a desire for a shorter course conducted specially for them. The upper age-limit (of forty) stipulated for the course aroused some disapproval! It was also pointed out that the course needs to be conducted in other areas of the city for the convenience and benefit of more people. The use of material from regional theatre-traditions met with theoretical approval from all the participants. However, rather surprisingly, the material posed difficulties for them in terms of comprehension and the actual work on it. The participants also expressed the opinion that there should be provision in the course for follow-up action.

Gadkari Award for V. V. Shirwadkar

On November 24, 1985, the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Natya Parishad bestowed on veteran Marathi dramatist, V. V. Shirwadkar, the Ram Ganesh Gadkari Award of Rs. 10,000/-, instituted as part of the Gadkari birth centenary celebrations in 1984-85. It is funded by a grant of Rs. one lakh from the Government of Maharashtra. V. V. Shirwadkar is the first recipient of the award. While the award is in recognition of his total contribution—which stretches over four decades—to Marathi theatre it is specifically meant to acclaim his play *Natasamraat*. After



Tarkateertha Lakshmanashastri Joshi felicitating V. V. Shirwadkar.

having written many ennobling tragedies, and translated *Macbeth*, *Othello* and Jean Anouilh's *Becket*, Shirwadkar portrays in this particular play the Lear-like story of an ageing actor cast in the mould of great Marathi thespians. Shriram Lagu created this role, and four more actors followed suit. More than a thousand performances of *Natasamraat* have been staged. It has also won the Sahitya Akademi prize.

It is appropriate that an award named after Gadkari should have gone to V. V. Shirwadkar. Both are kindred spirits, poets of the loftiest fancy and masters of the Marathi language. Gadkari died at the early age of 34 in 1919 but left a legacy which V. V. Shirwadkar, along with a few other Marathi poets and playwrights, gratefully accepted. At the age of 75, V. V. Shirwadkar shares a dramatic tradition with Gadkari, and has enriched it with a stream of challenging plays.

The honour bestowed on V. V. Shirwadkar has been universally acclaimed and the tributes paid to him during the award-giving ceremony and the excerpts staged from his plays together made for a memorable event in Marathi theatre.

—DNYANESHWAR NADKARNI

Book Reviews

FROM STEREOTYPE TO METAPHOR: THE JEW IN CONTEMPORARY DRAMA by Ellen Schiff. Published by the State University of New York Press, State University Plaza, Albany, N.Y. 12246 (U.S.A.), 1982. Price not stated. (*In English*).

The author of this scholarly study, said to be the first comprehensive one on its subject, is Professor of French and Comparative Literature in an American college. In her Preface she refers to two statements about Jewish personae as providing a "workable method" of identifying them. The first is Ben Gurion's, that a Jew is anybody who says he is; and the other Sartre's that the Jew is one whom others consider a Jew. This means that Jewish characters in plays who neither acknowledge their Jewishness nor are explicitly considered by the other characters as embodying it are excluded from this survey.

"One of the most interesting consequences effected by this method of identification," states the author, "is the mandate to scrutinise characters who, though they are not Jews, insist that they are and are taken at their word." The last sentence of the book sums up the subtle and complex argument which this aspect of the author's analysis leads to. The Jew, it seems, "can play any role intended for a human being."

The title of the book, which is echoed in the heading of the eighth chapter ('The Jew as Metaphor'), relates in fact to three categories: the traditional, the changing modern, and the wholly new interpretation of Jewish identity or consciousness. Twentieth-century social, ethical and religious predicaments are clearly the source of the third, for which nothing in the Jewish past has prepared us.

Stereotypes constitute the tradition of Stage Jews, but the author does not make the mistake of merely discussing examples. Her thesis illustrates their variety so that, paradoxically, many Jewish characters in the chosen plays are as different from other Jewish characters as they can possibly be. Taken together, though, they still remain a type, if not always a stereotype.

The chapter on the 'Modern Heroes of Biblical Drama' emphasises this variety in discussing seven plays, including (to mention only the best-known ones), *The Flowering Peach* by Clifford Odets and *The Firstborn* by Christopher Fry. The author's view is that they "demonstrate the value of biblical Jews to the post-1945 stage." She claims that if there is one generalisation that may be made about "the unhaloed hero of the Bible, it would be his ordinariness." Granting this, it is still doubtful if the audience regards it in the same light as non-Jewish ordinariness.

'Myths and Stock Types' examines, among other plays, *The Price* by Arthur Miller, *Invitation to the Chateau* by Jean Anouilh, *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter and *The Merchant* by Arnold Wesker. The last-named is "a radical reworking" of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. We are told that though it "destereotypes Shylock" it ends in "a sardonic note of victory for the play's fuzzy-thinking young bigots." So much for the uses of destereotyping, whether in plays about Jews or in surveys of such plays.

It is also not very reassuring to be told of "two observations to be ventured about stereotyped Jews on the post-1945 stage." The first is the "possibility" that the myth about Jews as monsters "may finally be attenuating . . ." (the tentative idiom is itself depressing). The other is that formulae Jews today "faithfully mirror the world they live in." This means that they have an aesthetic validity, which does not prevent them from becoming sources of false generalisation.

Guilt, alienation and similar characteristics are not restricted to Jews. Nevertheless, I cannot help feeling that the equation between those qualities and Jewishness is likely to prevail.

Reading the chapter on 'The Jew as Other' confirms the same impression, however interesting it may be for literary reasons. Even 'The Jew in a Jewish World', for all its emphasis on outstanding theatre achievements and on the "attraction" of the contemporary Jewish theatre for non-Jewish audiences, ends on a very minor note. The Jewish experience is depicted here as not very different in essentials from the non-Jewish experience, which makes little or no difference to the reactions of the non-Jewish theatregoer or reader.

The Jew as a "representative figure" may be seen in that universal light by a few liberal persons, no more. The author mentions "the extraordinary international success of *Fiddler on the Roof*" but I suspect that such a success has little to do with "the broader relevance and appeal of life-affirming Jewish plays." Popular entertainment has its own reasons for by-passing popular prejudices.

The second part of the book has three chapters and a conclusion on 'The New Jew'. It may come as a surprise to many readers that a "significant body of dramatic literature which treats the Jew as outsider" is by Blacks. Also, that "there is a marked interest among Jewish playwrights" in Black characters. So the first chapter in this section "focusses, with just two exceptions, on works written either by Blacks or by Jews." The author finds affinities between the two groups. Summaries of these plays are quite lengthy, for which there is some justification.

The crucial question in that chapter, and in the subsequent one, 'Crisis of Conscience and Consciousness', is whether it makes any difference to Jews in their relationship to non-Jews that the plays discussed "challenge conventional values and repudiate orthodox principles." It is difficult to fully grasp the reality depicted and the obstinacy with which it persists, which is the tragedy of the Jewish people. The author writes: "These works perturb. The horror and vulnerability they conjure up spill off the stage and overwhelm the beholder."

I am sure they do. But the world beyond the theatre, to which the author refers in the conclusion, offers today no redemption for either Jews or non-Jews. Perhaps it helps to understand that world by understanding *The Jew as Metaphor* for "mankind in general." No more.

—NISSIM EZEKIEL

G.N.B.—A Biography by T. S. Vedagiri, K. S. Muthuraman and K. S. Mahadevan. Published by G. B. Duraiswamy, 158, Santhome High Road, Madras, 1985, Rs. 25.00 (*In English*).

During the 1940s and '50s, G. N. Balasubramaniam—or GNB as he was popularly known—carved a secure niche for himself as one of the stalwarts on the Carnatic music scene. His dashing stage presence, his association with films and, above all, his trend-setting, spirited style of singing set a fashion in vocal pyrotechniques and came to be imitated widely. All this made him a 'star' among musicians and a 'hero' to the masses. He was a bold experimenter and combined intelligent singing with massive popular appeal thus adding a dimension of glamour and glitter to the classical platform. He was also a composer, a teacher with an impressive lineage of disciples and one of the first 'educated', articulate musicians.

This volume has been brought out by his son as a tribute to the memory of the virtuoso who died in 1965. Included here are biographical details and the highlights of his musical career, comments from accompanists, critics, contemporaries, scholars and lay admirers, and some of GNB's own writings on music as well as his presidential address at the Madras Music Academy Conference. A posthumous tribute, the descriptions throughout are, naturally, in terms of superlatives: his music was "memorable", "scintillating", "brilliant"—this is the leitmotif of the book and perhaps deservedly, too, for such was GNB's stature. A short chapter by his son at the end adds a human touch, providing a glimpse of GNB as father and householder.

Admirers of GNB will welcome this compilation.

—SAKUNTALA NARASIMHAN

PANCHAMASARASAMHITA OF NARADA AND SANGITA-DAMODARA of Damodara Sen. Edited by Guru Bipin Singh with Hindi translation by Dr. Lalmani Tiwari. Published by Manipuri Nartanalaya, Calcutta, 1984, Rs. 30.00 (*In English, Hindi, Sanskrit & Bengali*).

It is well-known that, with the popularity of Vaishnavism in Eastern India, many texts on Music and Dance came to be written, emphasising aspects like *kirtana*. Narada's *Panchamasarasamhita* (16th-17th century) consists of four *Adhyaya*-s comprising 20, 24, 67 and 27 verses. The first *Adhyaya* tells us how the disciples of Bharata propagated *Sangita* in the three worlds. It also enumerates the qualities of an actor. The next *Adhyaya* deals with topics like *natya* and the four *purushartha*-s, four kinds of *abhinaya* and definitions of *sangita*, *tandava* etc. followed by a description of the *mridanga*. The third *Adhyaya* describes the *raga*-s that are sung in Bengal. The sixteen thousand *raga*-s have been described as originating from the sixteen thousand Gopis during *Krishnalila*. The last *Adhyaya* mentions the eighteen *tala*-s popular in Gaudadesha. The present text broadly follows the texts like the *Naradasamhita* and *Sangita-Damodara*; however, in the context of *tala*, it follows the *tala* of the *kirtana*, which has been influenced by Carnatic Music.

The text of the *Panchamasarasamhita* based on the manuscript of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, is printed at the end. This is followed by the text of the three *Adhyaya*-s of *Sangita-Damodara* by Damodara Sen, describing the *tala*-s and the *Dashavatara Prabandha*.

The edited texts present material useful for comparing them with other texts like *Shri-Krishna-Rasa-Sangita-Sangraha*. The textual criticism, though brief, is illuminating. Guru Bipin Singh deserves to be congratulated for this critical edition; so also Darshana Jhaveri for her Introduction. The proof correction could have been more careful, though. The Sanskrit text is followed by the Hindi translation. Translations in Bengali and Manipuri are published by the Manipuri Nartanalaya, Manipur.

—S. A. UPADHYAYA

THE GANGA TRAIL—Foreign Accounts and Sketches of the River Scene by Jagmohan Mahajan. Published by Clarion Books, 36-C, Connaught Place, New Delhi 110 001, 1984, Rs. 325.00 (*In English*).

The book under review deals with one interesting aspect of the many-faceted Indo-British history. This multi-coloured history of British dominance over Indian territory is revealed not only in the political dealings, treaties, or affairs of trade and commerce by the well-known East India Company, but in many chapters dealing with the more edifying aspects of human life, observation of human nature and professions and their documentation. There is an overall understanding of the environment these 'foreigners' lived in. Many a Britisher who came to India on official duty soon became a lover or patron of its arts and crafts. It is a known fact that the development of Indian miniature painting received a new impetus because of the keen and sustained interest of these foreign officials, or their ladies. Lady Impey, for example, wife of Sir Elijah Impey, Chief Justice of Bengal (1774-1782), is famous for the set of Ragamala paintings that were painted under her guidance and supervision. Richard Johnson, of the Bengal Civil Service of the East India Company, who was appointed Resident to the Court of the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1783, was an ardent admirer of Indian music and painting and had collected albums of exquisite miniatures, many of them painted especially for him at a time when the earlier classical style of miniature painting had—for various reasons—died a slow but steady death.

This book, by Jagmohan Mahajan, captures the fascination with the exotic beauty and picturesque landscape of India and its people, be it the Himalayan Hills, the plains, the rivers, the temples, or the various professional or ethnic groups. This fascination, as it were, created a new style of painting and depiction that was completely alien to the traditional Indian tendency of idealisation present in the scenes and sequences in miniature painting. This new trend was a kind of photographic documentation, a true-to-life reportage of costumes, professional groups, their technique of working, of Indian birds, flowers, trees, monuments or, as in the book under review, of the beauty of the Indian landscape. The Indian painters, being on the look-out for new patrons, were soon able to adjust their skills and shift from traditional techniques to this novel method of seeing the environment and human beings in their natural settings.

The Ganga Trail reveals the thrust of the new style. It offers a chronological background of the visitors, writers and landscape artists who 'sailed up and down the river Ganga'. The author analyses their descriptions and conceptions about this sacred river of the Hindus, its importance in the religious life of the people, the picturesque "scenes on the banks of the river". The often meticulous observations of the earlier life and landscape, technique of boating, methods of trading along the river, boat-building, life on the riverside, temples etc. emerge as an important historical document.

The book starts with a chapter 'Oriental Sapphire', dealing with the earliest references to the river Ganges. The famous Greek astronomer and geographer of the second century A.D., Ptolemy, divided the Indian region into *India intra Gangem* and *India extra Gangem*, the region west and east of the Ganges, respectively. This idea of India prevailed as late as the eighteenth century.

The famous Chinese pilgrim Hieun Tsang, who travelled for fifteen years in India, left a detailed account of life along the river. King Harsha of Kanauj travelled together with him along the Ganges upto Prayag (modern Allahabad) in the year 643 A.D. There, at the confluence of the holy rivers Ganga and Yamuna, they observed the great festival (*Kumbha Mela*) which is still celebrated every twelve years with great pomp.

An interesting chapter ('Customs and Ceremonies'), describes the various rites of penance and death at the riverside. Other travellers were enchanted by the scenes of daily life along the river or at the *ghat*-s while slowly moving down the waters in their budgerow. "In tracking, the budgerow is not more than a yard or two from the water's edge, and nothing can be more gratifying to the eye than the moving panorama which the scenery of the Ganges exhibits . . ." These words of Emma Roberts might be representative of the impressions many foreign visitors had of the riverside. The artist's eye observed: "The fine antique figures never fail to present themselves when (he) observes a beautiful female form ascending these steps from the river, with wet drapery, which perfectly displays the whole person, and with vase on head, carrying water to the temples". These words were written by William Hodges, the first British professional landscape artist to visit India (1780-1783). Other chapters deal with "Water of Immortality", "Customs and Ceremonies", "Scenes from a Budgerow", "Up the river", "Spell of Varanasi", "Discovery of Source", "Flora and Fauna", "Fairs and Festivals", "Steamboats on the River", and finally "Railways and Jet Boats".

—JYOTINDRA JAIN

ASPEKTE DES TANZES—Gestern, heute, morgen by Walter Sorell. Published by Heinrichsofen's Verlag, Wilhelmshaven, 1983, Price not stated (*In German*).

It is not given to many to offer deep insights into the essence of such complex and divergent artistic phenomena as dance, music, literature and the fine

arts, to trace their interrelations, to bridge past and present and even different cultures. But such is the thrust that Walter Sorell's book *Aspects of Dance — Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* takes upon itself—and renders meaningful. One has but to scan the table of contents to assess, with a glance, the bold brushstrokes—pitfalls for the inexperienced—with which the author, a seasoned dance critic, sweeps across the cultural landscapes: dance as sacred art, dance East and West, its social commitment, its interactions with music, literature, especially poetry, with painting and sculpture and, of course, the critic's role in it all.

Let me give you a sample of the latter: "I expect the critic", the author says, "to enter the theatre with a feeling of reverence and in the knowledge that there is a divine spark in every creative act. He should neither be guided by his emotions nor his intellect, but all his senses. He ought to leave behind him, more than any of the spectators, all the impressions of the day, deposit them as it were, like his overcoat at the wardrobe. He should sit with eyes and ears all open, with the curiosity of a child and the knowledge and wisdom of an experienced lover of art." This certainly is an attitude that is not easily acquired, but the result of a lifelong effort.

Here is how Sorell sums up the process: "When I worked with Ruth St. Denis, she already looked back to full seven decades of active life and nevertheless insisted on making plans for the next 20 years. She taught me to strike a balance between my lifetime and the necessities of life, to intimidate Death by ignoring him (she lived upto the age of 96). Mary Wigman imparted to me human and artistic integrity. José Limón conveyed how to express and form everything with a sense of dignity. George Balanchine taught me to doubt each and every word that suggested confidence in my abilities. I myself acquired the gift of humility towards every created work and shaped word."

These two quotations would enable the reader to gauge the level from which the book draws. Here is a storehouse of very probing historical and contemporary cross-references between dance and the other art-forms, that provides ample and pertinent illustrations, without ever appearing didactic and without any unnecessary heavy technical vocabulary.

The author believes in dance being essentially a phenomenon of ritual and ecstasy celebrating movement, hence life. He is aware that the secret of "Movement in stillness" of Indian sculptures lies in its deep spirituality, and sees in the Laocoon group, in its entanglement between free movement and the fetters of fate, the highest Western expression of tragedy. He defends the dreamlike quality of the never-never lands of classical ballet which remind us that even the safest of acquisitions are basically ephemeral—love above all. But he also claims a rightful place for social commitment, frustration and despair in the theatre and dance of today.

The great themes of classical ballet, he argues, reflect upon "the impossible" (Gautier) and appeal to the unconscious, whereas modern dance forms tend to push out the frontiers of the possible. Speaking about modern dance, Ann Halprin states: "Ballet has a tradition and that is its strong point; ours is that we don't have one."

The book's forte is that the part is forever aware of the whole and *vice versa* which makes the illustrations and examples so telling and the generalizations so concrete! Sorell reminds us that dance has all along been in a friendly and often

intimate conversation with the other arts. Henri Matisse, Edgar Degas, Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Jean Cocteau visualized this in their paintings and drawings, but so did Vaslav Nijinsky, Mary Wigman, Anna Pavlova, José Limón. Poets have been known to have fallen for dance: Nietzsche, Valéry, Mallarmé, Rilke stand out. And what would rival the contribution of composers like Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky or even a John Cage? Summing up the music and dance dialogue, the author justly opines: "Great music has as yet never helped to immortalize a bad ballet. But great ballets have been known to be choreographed to bad music."

But *Aspects of Dance* is first and last a critic's book. Critical assessment constitutes, therefore, its very heartbeat. Walter Sorell acts as a witness to the dance scene of his times and singles out for us some of the great creations of this century: Nijinsky's *Faun*, Michel Fokine's *Dying Swan* (first interpreted by Pavlova), George Balanchine's *Four Temperaments* (with Nureyev and Haydée), Martha Graham's *Lamentation*, Alwin Nicolais' *Tent*, Jerome Robbins' *Afternoon of a Faun*, Mary Wigman's *Niobe*, Kurt Jooss' *Green Table*, Anna Sokolov's *Rooms*, Frederick Ashton's *Illuminations*, Isamu Noguchi's *Seraphic Dialogue*, John Cranko's *Taming of the Shrew*, John Neumeier's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *St. Matthew's Passion*, Pina Bausch's *Tanztheater*. Judging the impact of creative genius, he feels on the whole "that the errors of great minds are more meaningful and helpful than the achievements and truths of small-minded people."

Some of the chapters written in the vein of stimulating digressions are charming additions to the book: the one on inspiration, for instance, or on dance therapy and on the language of the hands ("Dance is unthinkable without the hands", said José Limón).

Even granted that the book relies heavily on Western traditions and at times adopts a feuilletonistic style, the reader (unfortunately, for the time being, only someone knowing German) will find it singularly enriching, a work of love.

—GEORG LECHNER

FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS—A Study of Peter Brook by Edward Trostle Jones. Published by Peter Lang Publishing Inc., New York, 1985, Price not stated (*In English*).

Editors may not realise the impact of their guidelines—"Write a review of about so many hundred words"—but they can sometimes colour a review making it overblown compared to what a modest work can command or reduce it to a synopsis and six adjectives when the work demands a serious stretch of analysis, evaluation and comment. The editor of this journal gave no such guideline: which is the third type of handicap, for a reviewer then has only the work and his response to it to determine size, shape and colour to his review, not even having the customary Rupees-per-hundred words to provide motive force!

Following Directions is the curate's egg. So let me say briefly why it is good in part and disappointing in part.

- *It is a thesis—and reads like one—dry, unemotive.
- *It also has the virtues of a thesis: thoroughness of research, abundance of facts.
- *It is well-researched, with quotes, and quotes of quotes, to support a point that the author wants to make.
- *It leaves out almost no step in the ladder of Brook's fast and early climb to fame and, as a result, often becomes a chronicle rather than an in-depth appraisal of Brook's work.
- *It is not a biography either; little or nothing is written about Peter Brook, the man, except his parentage. If at all Brook's theatre philosophy is dealt with, that is effected in the chapter which uses extracts from Brook's own *The Empty Space* to express how Brook perceived theatre and its various incarnations.
- **Following Directions* is also a devastatingly comprehensive coverage of the creative work of Peter Brook. In fact, this very comprehensive-thesis quality of the book is its one great asset. For it encompasses in its about 200 pages all that Peter Brook, that great theatrical mind and creative force, has generated. The author has seemingly left out nothing. For this, *Following Directions* will have its own devoted student following.
- *Read about Hitchcock, or Shakespeare, or Stravinsky. Then go to the actual film, text or music of that master to form your own experience to set off against that of the biography, thesis or critique. But when you read a book about a theatre event, it is gone never to be recalled or experienced by posterity. This is the greatest handicap that the author faces and there is also the frustration which the reader is bound to develop as he reads the lavish menu of Peter Brook's achievements but cannot taste any experience.
- *How one wishes that *Following Directions* had been written by a Kenneth Tynan: to evoke, to recreate the many magical moments of the work of Peter Brook. To keep alive, not mummified, the theatre event. But then, you can't have everything in life.

A ticket to Peter Brook's "Mahabharata" when it comes to India in 1987 will cost more than this book. But then personal experience of a Brook masterpiece will live with you longer than any book on your shelves.

—F. K. R. M.

AMRITA SHER-GIL: A BIOGRAPHY by N. Iqbal Singh. Published by Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1984, Rs. 150.00 (*In English*).

After returning to India in the thirties from her Parisian art education, it did not take long for Amrita Sher-Gil to become a sensational legend in the art world here. Many factors contributed to this phenomenon. Firstly, her distinctive beauty. Secondly, the aura of her mixed parentage—her mother was Hungarian by birth and her father came from a Sikh aristocratic family. Thirdly, what might be considered the most genuine reason—the quality and significance of her art itself.

Add to this such inextricable facets of the legend as Amrita's involvement with a series of men.

When a biographer such as Iqbal Singh, who had known his subject intimately in her youth, undertakes to project the mystique of Amrita's art and personality it is not an easy task. This is because he has to confront the obvious contradictions in her career. Take Amrita's paintings, for example. Amrita had her training in Paris (where she began her bohemian life) at a time when great artists of the *avant-garde* like Picasso, Braque and many others had started consolidating their position on the European art scene with notable impact. And yet, Amrita had been exposed only to the academic exercises of the Establishment. There is no evidence that she had been affected by 'modern' art as it had emerged around her.

In itself this is a contradictory position because Amrita was during the same period very sensitive to the music of Bach, the novels of Dostoyevsky and the art of Van Gogh. However, there is no practical evidence in the student efforts (of this artist) that she was in any way different from colleagues of her age. Mysteriously enough, Amrita had been affected by the 'mythical' paintings of Gauguin made during his exile in Tahiti. It is this germ which blossomed when she returned to India in December 1934 at the age of twenty-one. It was also to cross-fertilize with the influence of miniatures which, a few centuries ago, Indian artists had produced in the very soil and environment which became Amrita's after she settled down here.

Iqbal Singh charts out her journey which covers Simla, Lahore, Bombay, South India, Allahabad, Delhi and the parental estate of Saraya in the Punjab. In some of these places she spent several months, painting, socialising and getting entangled with young admirers; some others she just passed through.

The artistic identity of Amrita Sher-Gil developed during these years in a miraculous manner. Gone were the vestiges of studio-oriented Parisian academism. Instead, we find Amrita responding to a series of rustic Indian types with immense empathy. When Amrita paints Indian women as in *Group of Three Girls* or *Bride's Toilet* and Indian men as in *Hill Men* or *The Brahmacharis*, we find on their faces a sort of philosophical quality which has come down the distant ages. The physical stance of Amrita's subjects also subtly expresses an Indianness, an ethnic grace going back to antiquity.

There are, of course, other paintings which have become classics: *Camels*; *Elephant Promenade* or *Elephants Bathing in a Green Pool*. With a keen eye Amrita mapped out the natural environment, the animals and the simple architectural features of the rural milieu. Here again we experience a sense of everything we see continuing with little change through the endless stream of Time.

Amrita was eager to see, to absorb impressions and also to enjoy her new-won fame. Iqbal Singh quotes a number of senior and junior contemporaries describing the impact she made. A few, like Karl Khandalavala, were close to her. Iqbal Singh writes with discretion, affection and, above all, respect for Amrita in whose life he, too, featured as a friend and confidante. For his biography, he has also found his contact with Vitor Egan—Amrita's Hungarian cousin and her husband—of much use. Much light is also shed on Amrita's private life by Helen Chamanlal.

Amrita's attitude towards artists and art critics may be considered some-

what cantankerous; but this was actually another side of her perfectionism. Her letters also show her intensity. One may say that the surface was all "glamour girl"; but inside was a thinking creature who was greatly gifted. There are many witnesses in this book who vouch for Amrita's unusual zest for living. In other words, one must see and judge Amrita Sher-Gil primarily in relation to her paintings. And, considering that she was matchless in her time, one is ready to separate the chaff from the grain in the story of her life.

This story had a tragic ending. She died after a brief and sudden illness on December 6, 1941. She was only 29. More than four decades after her death, Iqbal Singh has placed in our hands a useful biography and this in spite of the unfortunate hurdles he encountered while collecting material about his subject. The book is a warm tribute to one who may unhesitatingly be called a phenomenon.

—DNYANESHWAR NADKARNI

LIVING TRADITIONS OF INDIA series published by Mapin International, Inc., New York. Available in India at Mapin Publishing, Chidambaram, Ahmedabad 380 013.

CRAFTS OF GUJARAT. Editor: Jasleen Dhamija, 1985, Rs. 295.00 (*In English*).

VOTIVE TERRACOTTAS OF GUJARAT by Haku Shah. Edited by Carmen Kagal, 1985, Rs. 250.00 (*In English*).

KALAMKARI by Nelly H. Sethna, 1985, Rs. 195.00 (*In English*).

Crafts of Gujarat concentrates on a region which saw the confluence of many cultures, Aryan and Hellenic, Parthian and Mughal. Four great religions—Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Islam—left their mark on the art of this area. The Introduction traces the various influences absorbed by Gujarat and emphasizes the manner in which it retains its distinctive traditions. The topics covered include embroidery, ornaments, textiles, woodwork, stonework, metalwork, pottery and votive terracottas and festival crafts, while a glossary provides meanings of the special words used by makers and wearers. Excellent photographs document the details and ambience of the pattern and style of these arts.

Votive Terracottas of Gujarat contains information useful to anthropologist and potter alike. Socio-economic data blends with the world of myth, legend and ritual. Haku Shah's insight into the tribal mind is the result of long association and rapport with communities not easily accessible to outsiders.

In *Kalamkari*, Nelly Sethna, who is one of those actively associated with the revival and revitalisation of this art, outlines its development in Masulipatam and Kalahasti. Visually, the book captures the mellow nuances of vegetable dyes and the appendix provides details of plants, minerals, and processes used to produce these beautiful fabrics which have earned world-wide fame.

Let us admit it, there is something very comfortable about traditions.

The gradual accretion of knowledge, of methods, customs, rituals and behaviour provides a ready answer to situations which arise and confront us. The pattern so formed and so carefully preserved, with codes of approval and disapproval, comprises a complete universe.

These excellently-produced books with texts written by authorities, who have made serious and sympathetic studies, provide windows for us into the lives and works of communities which, I think, are larger and seemingly more gracious than our own urban cultures. I presume that these books will be looked at by urbanites like us and are not meant for those who form the subject matter of these books. I don't suppose they will need them anyway.

Nevertheless, an important question does arise: What exactly do these books do to us and what are they expected to achieve? Are they simply elegant, informative extenders of our awareness, making us feel a trifle jealous of the cohesive life style portrayed in them. The excellent reproductions and presentation convince us that they achieve all this and possibly more—at first glance.

If one lingers over these and allied issues and returns to these books, other questions flood the mind and one's own conditioning asserts itself. Certainly my life and, I am sure, the lives of many other like me, bear little or no relation to the lives of those who made, and, in some cases, are still making these splendid objects.

Living in conditions where old traditions are at a discount, the contemporary artist, unlike his folk and tribal counterpart, is not provided with ready-made purposes. He has to create his own relevances which is not always easy. What he loses by way of security and the certainty offered by tradition he gains in terms of freedom. But the acceptance of this freedom can be full of dread and it requires the greatest of grit and nerve to persist in charting directions in a swift-moving and changing society. The contemporary artist does not and cannot rely on a repertoire of techniques: he has to fashion these in terms of what he has to say.

I may appear to be digressing; but I think that it is important to bear this difference in mind when considering the products of traditional societies.

One question which invariably rears its head and not only with me but also, I imagine, with those who are responsible for the political and economic development of our country. Are we going to bring "progress" with its concomitant of money, commercialism and technology and our special brand of diseases to these, till now self-contained, societies? Or, are we going to bypass them? And, is it possible that they can avoid being infected? Can we envisage a state of affairs where an economically dynamic (and maybe squalid) society can exist side by side with a poor but culturally cohesive society? Gresham's law of currency seems to operate here, too, if one were to judge by the proliferation of cheap plastic buckets, sandals and toys which have already made some inroads into such societies. Upon the kind of equation arrived at, will depend the continuance or discontinuance of traditions which are still alive.

Haku Shah himself remarks on the changing interaction between craftsmen and the consumers of their wares and intermediaries. Apparently, in an effort to survive, the Kalamkari craftsmen were able to adapt themselves and successfully

cater to European design requirements in the nineteenth century. Nearer our own times, the same thing is happening. Quite recently, a team of "top" European and American designers was invited to see what they could do with Indian crafts. I suppose it was expected that they would provide designs which, when executed, would find markets abroad. What could be better than a scheme whereby the craftsman would receive a steady stream of cash, the country earn much-needed foreign exchange and the foreign importer get "handcrafted" items at low prices. It appears that the contagion has already begun.

There is only one casualty and since that is a somewhat intricate and fragile process it wouldn't be difficult to argue that this is some quirk of my 'critical' mind. I refer to the delicate process by which a shade of a thought or a feeling, an idea, which doesn't always have to be great or profound, finds its objective form whether in painted or woven fabric, clay, stone or wood, or in just words and sounds. As an artist I know that there is a constant interchange between what appears in the mind and the material I work with—the manner of functioning influences the faculty of selection and one must be on one's guard to see that a style does not lapse into a habit. The division of function which is envisaged for the craftsmen—designs supplied by one person, executed by another, and sold by a third is perilously close to a factory division of labour. And what's so wrong with that, you may ask? My answer would be—nothing wrong at all if you are looking only for handsome objects and if your satisfactions are limited to the seduction of your eyes. The decorative arts can be limited to just that.

For instance, how should one respond to pages 60, 61, and 65 in Nelly Sethna's book on Kalamkari? All the three are temple-hangings from Kalahasti. The first two were made in the nineteenth century, the third in our own times. They are all of the same prototype. The myths and legends which they depict may be different but these have been fitted into a preconceived formulated form. They would undoubtedly be impressive to the devotee whose spirit and temper is, in any case, disposed to receiving when he or she enters the shrine. The hanging is a backdrop; its propriety is assumed and doesn't even need any scrutiny. If you've entered one of these crowded shrines you would know that the procession for *darshan* is fast-moving and that there is no time for the kind of careful study which is possible as in the case of these plates in this book. These hangings have separate functions when considered in their intended location and when transferred into an Art Book. The collective pictorial tradition may provide a readymade formula to the craftsman, but for me and the likes of me, if I've seen one, I've seen them all. Endless, formal repetitions are boring and only dull the senses.

In *Crafts of Gujarat*, Plates 106 and 107 display a rich ceiling in the *Haveli* of Anand Prasad Amin. The author V. S. Parmar tells us that this is probably the most magnificent ceiling of its kind in Gujarat. Magnificent, opulent—no wonder because those who commissioned it were rich revenue farmers under the Gaekwad rulers! Now, these very qualities of pomp and splendour are at a discount in our times. Our avowed aspirations are for an egalitarian society in which elegance is synonymous with simplicity and high thinking, though admittedly this is a far cry yet.

The ceiling is clearly intended to impress and succeeds in doing so. So much so that, in our awe-struck state, we cannot establish any kind of intimate relationship with it in spite of the familiar Krishna and his gopis. It belongs, like Kubla

Khan's pleasure dome, to a different time and realm. With our recently opened democratic eyes, we are also likely to be interested in the social and economic conditions of the artists and artisans who produced such works. It is 'convenient' to isolate aesthetics from all other major concerns which feed it. Thus, without any trouble to our conscience, we may be expected to declare a parchment lampshade to be aesthetically satisfying even though it was made from the skin of a victim at Buchenwald. (Conversation reported by Anil DaSilva between her and Francis Newton Souza which took place in Paris, 1953.) This is obviously an extreme case and most of us would wince at it whereas we do not feel so affronted when we are told that the craftsman received a pittance for a splendid example of his art.

The question inviting speculation is whether such magnificence and opulence, no matter how strong the tradition, can survive as a live force in our changed circumstances. Inherited and developed skills can atrophy when there is no need for them or, as has occurred in Nathdwara, the craftsmen will turn their skills to providing current day needs. The same man who can produce the traditional *nath* will willingly make what to some of us may seem vulgar and kitschy. He does not claim to be any kind of arbiter of taste; he simply has the skill to paint any kind of subject in any kind of style you want.

When traditional societies stop being so traditional, their age-old arts and crafts must also undergo change. On the one hand, we are preparing ourselves for the twenty-first century and, on the other, we seek to hold fast to traditional values. The more confused among us would like a bit of both. But whatever happens, whether it is a determined leap or a mere bungling along, I hope that our folk and tribal communities do not meet the same fate as did the Red Indians.

I have strayed and allowed my autumn thoughts to grow. Yes, the artifacts are beautiful and the sense of aesthetic is sharp and acute. The fabrics are breathtaking and still command the attention of the world. The work done by the Handloom Board in protecting the craftsmen is commendable. Vishwakarma, an exhibition of traditional textiles, showed that the textile master craftsmen can still spin out magic. Whether only the very rich can afford them now is a question that need not be asked. Pinnacles of achievement are not for all to possess and we should, if we haven't done so already, acclimatise ourselves to the thought that equality will not mean an equal distribution of the highest quality goods!

Turning the pages of *Crafts of Gujarat* at random, the book opens on pages 134 and 135. Meticulously crafted objects on both pages—and see what it says about the kitchen utensils from Kutch: "Traditionally, vessels were designed for utility rather than for beauty." As if there can be such a divorce in good design. This kind of concept of beauty is content with decoration. "Vessels for liquids were shaped (shouldn't this be *are* shaped if it is a living tradition?) according to whether the liquids were hot or cold, to be poured or stored. On the extreme left, the milk vessel is fashioned so that it is bottom-heavy and protects the milk from being spilt if the vessel is shaken or jolted accidentally . . ."

True enough, the broad mouth ensured that the milk which squirted from the udder would not fall outside the vessel. The gentle curve at the bottom would sit with poise on the milkmaid's head. Here is an object lesson in design—where the form fulfils the function. And so it is with *Karandio*, a circular box with a cone-shaped lid used as a dowry box, and the *Banto*, which the caption tells us " . . . is

originally thought to have been designed during the Mughal times for the storage and protection of jewellery. Legend has it that the emperor Akbar used a similar box in which to keep his *pagdi* (turban)."

Very interesting indeed and, again, one encounters a superb sense of design. But I would not know where to keep this *Banto* and the anti-dowry act makes the *Karandio* redundant (or should do). In any case, jewellery is now better protected in bank lockers. Gleaming milk bottles and huge vans will have—to some extent—already displaced the milkmaids and their elegant vessels. All these objects now find refuge in Crafts Museums and, as decorative objects, in the homes of either "craftlovers" or the nouveau riche who have no convictions of their own and buy the opinion of interior decorators, themselves experts at what they call creating taste.

The really sad thing is that these objects should be cherished as things. The makers of these books have done this, forgetting that beneath their materiality lies a far deeper mystery which, if our architects and designers could only sense, leave alone grasp, could illuminate the tasks of building for the twenty-first century. A proliferation of a prototype does not necessarily evoke a sense of life but an understanding of its principles and their extension into other forms would certainly make for a living tradition. With too few exceptions alas, the scene does not show much evidence of design ingenuity whether in architecture or other products. Our country cousins have shown more wisdom, so far.

—KRISHEN KHANNA

REHEARSALS OF REVOLUTION—The Political Theatre of Bengal by Rustom Bharucha. Published in India by Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1983. Simultaneously published in the U.S.A. by the University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, Hawaii. Rs. 100.00 (*In English*).

Deserved or not, Bengali theatre has a reputation for being more political in content and bias than the other language theatres in India. Stirrings of nationalism had appeared early in Bengal activated, ironically enough, by the spread of English education and western ideas imparted by the British rulers themselves. Theatre—again an English import—was avidly adopted by the rising Bengali middle-class in Calcutta. Inevitably, this form of popular entertainment was used as a means of spreading the nationalist message. Thus, political theatre in Bengal has an ancestry which goes back to theatre itself. In fact, the very first play Dinabandhu Mitra's *Neel Durpan*, staged in the first public theatre in Calcutta (1872), was also the first overt play of protest against British exploitation in Bengali dramatic literature. Thereafter, over the next seven decades, political plays on patriotic themes were the staple of innumerable productions.

Bharucha is not particularly preoccupied with the political theatre of this period. He is concerned with the period after Bengali theatre had made a break with the past in the mid-forties and, opting out of the commercial stranglehold,

had taken on a left political colouration, thanks to the Communist Party's front organization, IPTA (Indian People's Theatre Association). The organization was known for its pioneering spirit, organizing zeal and boundless energy. Soon IPTA itself lost its leadership but it spawned innumerable groups and enough talent to give Bengali theatre a vigour which carried it to a position of pre-eminence.

The author had set out to record the achievements—and failures—of the political theatre of the period ushered in by IPTA. But, in actual fact, he has chosen to concentrate on two theatre personalities, Utpal Dutt and Badal Sircar. Leaving aside the introductory 54 pages, 136 of the remaining 182 pages of the written text have been devoted to their career and work. Thus, the overall view which the book gives of its subject is lopsided and partial.

Utpal Dutt is, of course, the best known exponent of political theatre in Bengal. The author has dealt with many of his productions in some detail and has examined his strident views on theatre as a potent instrument for preparing the masses for revolutionary action. Bharucha's admiration for Dutt's extraordinary talent and prolific output is unconcealed. But he is not wholly uncritical. He justly points out that Dutt's penchant for and preoccupation with providing entertainment to entice people to his theatre so that he can preach his Marxist formulations to them is self-defeating. These methods make his dramatization of people's struggles "so grossly simplified that it trivialises the intricate processes of revolution". However, it is curious that the author hardly mentions *Manusher Adhikarey*, one of Dutt's most significant political plays. He devotes, on the other hand, many pages to the electioneering street corner play *Din Badaler Pala* and misjudges both its importance in shaping the politics of the times and its theatrical worth.

No one could be more different from Utpal Dutt in precept and practice than Badal Sircar. The latter's Third Theatre has not only nothing in common with Dutt's ideas; it negates them. Which makes their juxtaposition and the near-exclusive attention to them in a book on the political theatre of Bengal a little baffling. The author himself writes that Sircar's theatre is "not explicitly political . . . His theatre is content with merely disturbing the consciousness of its spectators." If that be so, then Sircar's contribution to Bengali dramatic literature and theatre, considerable as it is, can hardly be extolled and expounded as a major influence on the political theatre in Bengal.

Several limiting factors have, I suspect, flawed this otherwise laudable attempt to write an account of and appraise the political theatre of Bengal. One of these is the author's lack of familiarity with the language and his reliance on the inadequate number of plays he has personally seen. His dependence on the guidance and views of one or two "critics" has also been of doubtful value. Some spelling and factual errors, omissions (Kali Prasad in place of Kali Prasanna, *Chak Bhanga Modhu* is in prose not verse, to mention only two such) show a carelessness not expected of so serious a student of Bengali theatre as Bharucha.

Despite the blemishes, however, the author deserves our thanks for the pains he has taken to record some aspects of contemporary Bengali theatre. How many of our self-proclaimed Bengali theatre-lovers have done so?

—K. RAHA

Cassette Reviews

RAVI SHANKAR (Sitar) & ALI AKBAR KHAN (Sarod). Side A: Dhun: Palas Kafi. Side B: Raga Bilaskhani Todi. EMI 6TC 02B 6128.

VILAYAT KHAN (Sitar). Side A: Raga Tilak Kamod. Side B: Ragamalika in Bhairavi-Thumri. EMI 6TC 04B 7157.

RAM NARAIN (Sarangi). Side A: Raga Saraswati. Side B: Raga Maru Bihag/Pilu Thumri. EMI 6TC 04B 7171.

JNAN PRAKASH GHOSH (Harmonium) & V. G. JOG (Violin). Side A: Raga Shyam Kalyan. Side B: Raga Jhinjhoti/Mishra Kalengra/Dhun. EMI 6TCS 02B 6131 (Stereo).

ULHAS BAPAT (Santoor). Side One: Raga Gujri Todi. Side Two: Raga Hamsadhvani/Dhun. RHYTHM HOUSE 230 336 (Stereo).

MALHAR KULKARNI (Flute). Side One: Raga Malkauns. Side Two: Raga Nagamani/Thumri Mishra Khamaj. RHYTHM HOUSE 230 338 (Stereo).

DINKAR KAIKINI (Vocal). Side One: Raga Jog. Side Two: Raga Basant/Dadra Mishra Khamaj. RHYTHM HOUSE 240 335 (Stereo).

SHRUTI SADOLIKAR (Vocal). Side One: Raga Bhimpalas. Side Two: Raga Yaman. RHYTHM HOUSE 240 337 (Stereo).

LALITH RAO (Vocal). Side One: Raga Goud Malhar. Side Two: Raga Kafi Hori/Raga Sohni. RHYTHM HOUSE 240 339 (Stereo).

FIROZ DASTUR (Vocal). Side One: Raga Gavati. Side Two: Raga Saraswati/Thumri Gara. RHYTHM HOUSE 240 340 (Stereo).

RAM MARATHE (Vocal). Side One: Raga Nat Kedara. Side Two: Raga Adana/Raga Paraj-Kalingada. RHYTHM HOUSE 240 341 (Stereo).

PADMA TALWALKAR (Vocal). Side One: Raga Alhaiya Bilawal. Side Two: Raga Bhoop/Raga Sohni. RHYTHM HOUSE 240 342 (Stereo).

BEGUM AKHTAR (Vocal). Bengali Light Classical Songs. EMI 4TC 02B 2583.

HEMANTA MUKERJEE (Vocal). Songs of Rabindranath. EMI 6TC 02B 5088.

CHEMBAI VAIDYANATHA BHAGAVATHAR (Carnatic Vocal).
EMI 4TC 03B 3195.

RADHA & JAYALAKSHMI (Carnatic Vocal).
EMI 4TCS 03B 3177 (Stereo).

SHANKARAN NAMBU DIRI (Carnatic Vocal).
EMI 6TCS 03B 6706.

This batch of 17 cassettes, released by the EMI and the Marketing Division of Rhythm House, is fairly representative of contemporary styles and vogues in Hindustani as well as Carnatic music. Of significance in the Rhythm House repertoire is the inclusion of younger but conspicuous talent alongside established veterans. To lend variety to the fare, there are also two cassettes featuring the popular music of Bengal.

Speaking first of instrumental music, pride of place goes to the sitar-sarod *jugalbandi* by Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan. Teamwork is the very soul of *jugalbandi*. And, in the case of these two masters, *jugalbandi* always seems to come naturally to them. While, therefore, each side of the cassette reveals the duo as undisputed masters of their respective instruments, the complex resources of the sitar and the sarod lend themselves to the kind of musical partnership which has few peers in the field. The result is that both Palas Kafi and Bilaskhani Todi emerge before us as brilliant portraiture, as well-knit and coherent as in solo.

By contrast, the harmonium-violin duet presented by Jnan Prakash Ghosh and V. G. Jog does not quite come up to the accepted standard of a *jugalbandi*. True, both of them are acknowledged masters of their respective medium. But the instruments, as it happens, have their own tonal angularities and hardly contribute to the homogeneity so vital to any musical duet. At best, the cassette makes for just pleasant listening.

Vilayat Khan's genius is seen at its best in his presentation of Tilak Kamod. Crystal clarity of tone, felicity of phrasing, incisiveness of rhythm, beauty of design and majesty of proportion are the hallmarks of his presentation. The *ragamalika*, on the other hand, sounds rather patchy and loosely-knit.

Ram Narain's Hindustani version of the Carnatic *raga* Saraswati unfolds a quiet, serene mood. The *raga* treatment is lucid, indicating his feeling for formal balance and design. His rendering of Maru Bihag, despite many imaginative sequences and rhythmical skill, is not quite so satisfactory.

Ulhas Bapat can be said to have made the grade as a perceptive santoor-player. All his pieces are wholly tuneful and the unfoldings are marked by a keen sense of pattern and proportion. There is a delightful lilt in his Hamsadhvani which adds to the evocative element in the *raga*.

Malhar Kulkarni's presentations on his flute impress the listener with their tonal grace, rhythmic elegance and clarity of expression. There is, of course, the unmistakable influence of that pioneer, the late Pannalal Ghosh—a trait that marks all flute music today. His Malkauns, to my mind, has an abiding impact on the listener.

Leading the list of vocalists are Firoz Dastur and Ram Marathe. Both are in their sixties, and though their advancing age shows in their recitals, it is also true

that the presentations reveal the undoubted proficiency of these veterans and their adherence to tradition. Old-time votaries, in particular, will welcome these cassettes, because the stalwarts still afford them quite a few shining glimpses of their past glory.

Dinkar Kaikini is also somewhat of a veteran, but he still continues to dominate the classical music scene on account of his basically eclectic approach. He sings his melodies in a virile style noted for its keen sense of aesthetics.

Eclecticism is also the keynote of the styles of Lalith Rao, Shruti Sadolikar and Padma Talwalkar. It is a happy augury that these three young women have emerged as major talents in the field today and hold out every promise of forging ahead. Although they have been professionally groomed in different *gharana*-s, each has evolved a style of her own, marked by a sense of highly perceptive musicianship. Rhythm House deserves to be congratulated for its initiative and vision in projecting such talent at this opportune moment.

This reviewer does not claim to have any deep understanding of Bengali regional music and Carnatic music. Begum Akhtar's light classical songs and Hemanta Mukherjee's Rabindra Sangeet cannot, therefore, be fairly evaluated in terms of their musical and poetic import. Both the singers are great names in the wider world of light classical and popular music, and the sheer 'artlessness', the spontaneity with which they sing their pieces, comes through vividly in the cassettes. Bengali connoisseurs, one feels sure, will listen to their music with renewed delight.

Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar and the singing duo, Radha and Jayalakshmi, rank among the leading lights of Carnatic music. They have presented their favourite *kriti*-s of Thyagaraja, Shyama Sastri, Dikshitar, Purandaradasa and Swathi Tirunal with aplomb, confidence and verve. Carnatic *rasika*-s will most certainly regard these cassettes as a cherished acquisition.

Last but not the least is the up-and-coming Carnatic stylist, Shankaran Nambudiri. This teenager has a thin, almost girlish voice, but it has an amazing range. Unlike some young *vidwan*-s of the new generation of vocalists from the South, the young man appears to adhere to a conservative style. The *kriti*-s he has sung sound so good that one is left in no doubt that he will go far as he acquires maturity and experience.

— MOHAN NADKARNI

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