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*Cover:*

Ottam Thullal, a popular folk form of Kerala.  
(Pictures: David May. Design: Ratnakar Sohoni.)

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## Foreword

With this issue, the N.C.P.A. Quarterly completes ten years of publication. In order to provide for more space and a wider spectrum of contents, the editor has decided to combine the September and December issues into one. The Quarterly does not carry any editorial. It has no hard-and-fast editorial policy except "to develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts". It is addressed to the adult cultivated reader, not necessarily to any specialist, but to one with a serious interest in the arts.

Looking back, one realises the range of the Journal's interests: in theatre, from early Sanskrit drama and the architecture of ancient *koothambalam*-s to "the theatre of all possibilities" and the search for an experimental theatre; in music, from an examination of the *Dattilam* to contemporary jazz and pop; in dance, from the *Natya Shastra* and its many commentaries to the contemporary dance scene; in the visual arts, from the earliest stone sculptures and cave paintings to Expressionism and modern film posters. And a host of areas and movements in time and space leaving out very little of any significance.

What are these 'areas' and 'movements' in time and space? Here are a few examples: a whole issue devoted to the great composer of Karnatic music, Muttuswami Dikshitar (guest-editor, the late Dr. V. Raghavan) on the occasion of the bi-centenary of his birth; the American composer Lou Harrison on Schoenberg on his birth centenary; the Soviet music scholar Boris Yarustovsky on Shostakovich, an obituary; Prof. Shigeo Kishibe on Noh, the traditional theatre of Japan; Thakur Jaidev Singh on Amir Khusru; José Maceda on his researches and findings on Philippine music; Prof. Richard Hoggart on the arts and education in the late twentieth century; Habib Hassan Touma on the *maqam*-s of Arabic music; T. Khrennikov on Khatchaturian; Balasaraswati on the structure of Bharata Natyam recitals; an interview with Dadu Indurkar, the great *tamasha* artiste; an article on *Kudiyattam* by Kunjunni Raja; Prof. Trần Văn Khê on the water puppets of Viet Nam; Prof. Kwabena N'ketia on African music; special numbers devoted to Music Education, and The Centenary of Recorded Sound; Satyajit Ray on the making of a film; Prof. Cyril Harris interviewed on theatre acoustics; a new theory of consonance by Dr. Raja Ramanna; not to mention contributions by a host of Indian performing artistes, scholars, critics, intellectuals, young and old, like Shombu Mitra, P. L. Deshpande, the late Moti Chandra, Vijay Tendulkar, Adya Rangacharya, Kishori Amonkar, Shyam Benegal, Mani Kaul, Kumar Shahani, Prof. B. N. Goswami, Dr. Shivram Karanth, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Prof. S. Ramanathan. What else is there? Anniversaries, Obituaries, Workshops, Festivals, Competitions, Awards—not just local ones, but from the world over.

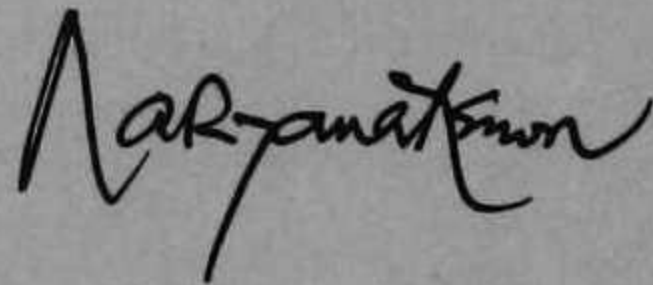
The Special Issue, represents the Quarterly's wide compass: Prof. Kurt Blaukopf, the sociologist and music scholar, writes on Haydn; Prof. Ivan Vandor on the ritual music of Tibet. The issue includes Balasaraswati's reflections on Bharata Natyam; the late Dr. V. Raghavan's comments on some of Swati Tirunal's dance compositions; Vijay Tendulkar's reminiscences of those moments in theatre which have left a lasting impact on him. Richard Schechner, the American stage director, describes in vivid detail the Ramlila of Ramnagar. The links between the

performing and visual arts are traced in Jyotindra Jain's article on the depiction of Rasa and Garba in the arts of Gujarat and in Devangana Desai's interpretation of the sculptures in the Lakshmana Temple of Khajuraho.

This enormous range and variety spread over time and space, as was stated earlier, would have been, if not handled with care, a hotch-potch, a potpourri of this, that and the other. But throughout there is a focal point in the presentation of all this material, binding the many-splendoured world of art spread over centuries of growth and development. It is a vast and exciting project and its full story has not yet been told. As a distinguished scholar has stated: "It is an exciting story, how music has for thousands of years been held in balance between the basic facts that, on the one hand, sound is vibration of matter ruled by mathematical ratios and that, on the other hand, musical art works are immaterial, indeed irrational. And a still greater fascination is to see in how many different ways the two counterpoises have been kept equal, and how, with all these differences, races living far apart went similar ways and met in strange, unwitting teams: Greeks and Japanese; Indians and Arabs; Europeans and North American Indians."

What is true of music is true of the other arts. There is an interdisciplinary element built into it all. That is as it should be for a journal of any Performing Arts Centre.

All this is the work of our indefatigable editor—observant, sensitive, meticulous. Our thanks and congratulations to her. We should now await the Quarterly's Silver Jubilee Year.



Narayana Menon

## Reflections

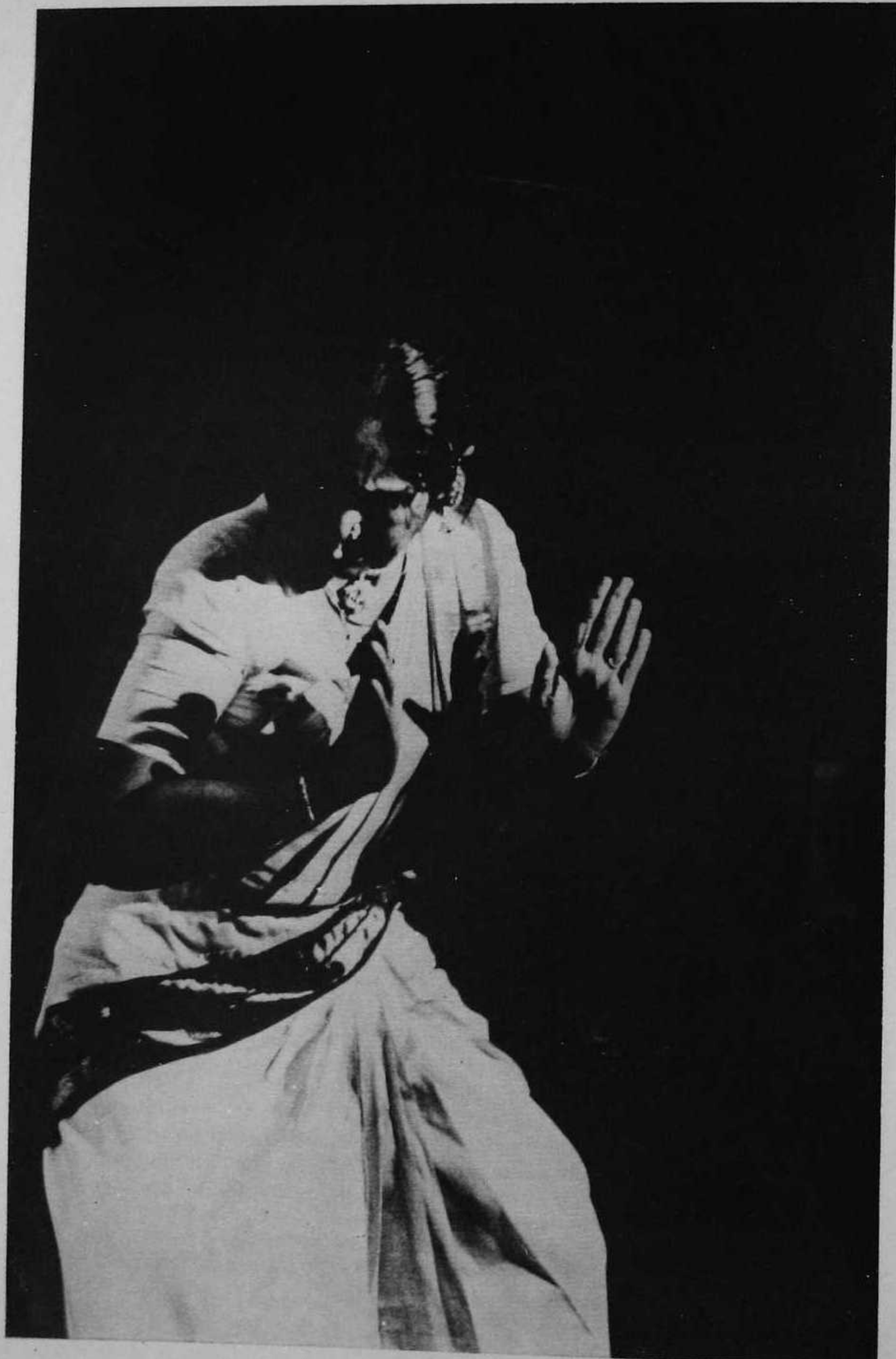
(On the art of dancing, in general, and Bharata Natya in particular)\*

T. Balasaraswati

I take this opportunity to present a few of my reflections touching the art of dancing in general and Bharata Natya, the dance system to which I am blessed to belong, in particular.

What is dancing? Dancing is the natural, therefore universal expression of the human species whereby it finds its unity with the cosmos and its creator. The cosmos is the dynamic expression of the static source, the one Supreme Spirit, in orderly and beautiful movement. As God has created man in His own image, man, too, has the natural urge to fulfil his dynamism in an expression of orderly and beautiful movements. This expression takes the form of dance.

In the macrocosm, or *Andaandam* as we call it, we witness the unceasing dance of the planets moving round the sun which is the hard core or nucleus of the solar system. On the other extreme, we also see within the minute atom the perpetual dance of the electrons moving about the proton, which is its hard core. This must necessarily be reflected in the microcosm, which we call *Pindaandam*. Here you have the soul or Self or *Atman* as the static hard core, which, in the ultimate realisation, is experienced to be the nucleus of not only the individual, but of everything from the atom to the planets, suns and stars. This unmoving hard core-*Atman* of man, by the power and grace of which he moves, is none other than God. The individual is basically the mind. The mind is ever in non-stop movements called thoughts. These movements can find their fulfilment only when they go around the *Atman* in perfect order and beauty. But unfortunately, while the dancers in the macrocosm and within the atom are orderly and conform to a pattern or beauty, the thought movements of the mind lack both. The mind seems to be hardly aware of its hard core. Without order and beauty these mental movements flow in chaotic disarray. So man is not at peace either with himself or with the world at large. Though at the conscious level he acts thus, deep within the sub-conscious he is not satisfied and yearns to orientate his mental movements to the *Atman*, in order and beauty. In this effort he arrives at religious truths and practices which put him in the correct orbit around his Source. But this, too, does not give him total satisfaction. Now comes to his succour the indefinable instinct of artistic creation, which makes him more natural than what he takes to be natural, by giving him the fulfilment which the so called "natural" is not able to. His artistic expression takes the form of dancing, with its free law of order and beauty of pattern. This wonderful art of dance imparts a discipline to his otherwise wayward mind. The rigour of the discipline is annulled for him by the joy of its beauty. Though outwardly the gestures and movements are physical, they conform to music and rhythm which belong to the domain of the deeply spiritual. So the body itself is transfigured as a symbol of the spirit and this art of dance enables man, too, like the planets and the electrons, to become aware of his hard core and circle round it.



That is why dancing is a universal phenomenon, prevailing in all climes and times.

Physically man lives by dancing to the music of his breathing and the rhythm of his pulse-beat. Spiritually he gives meaning and purpose to this physical living by the art of dance with its music and rhythm.

This natural, spontaneous fulfilment through dancing has taken diverse forms of expression in various nations and cultures of the world, in keeping with the genius and milieu of each community.

I consider it an ennobling experience to see here representatives of many such dance-systems. Though we seem to be different as branches, we all have the same common stem of artistic fulfilment through bodily movement; all of us take root in the common universal yearning to miniature the orderly and beautiful dynamism of the One Over-soul. We are united in our aim of expanding and elevating our minds to the vastness and height of the one super-mind.

But unity, we know, is not uniformity. And the very life-breath of art is unity in diversity. So we have many dancing systems. I express my sincere admiration and adoration of all these systems.

Yet, you will understand my own personal involvement in and identification with that particular system of Indian dancing, called Bharata Natya, which is perhaps the most ancient of the dancing systems of the world.

I wish to take this opportunity to tell you about some of the salient features of Bharata Natya.

As far as my knowledge (or ignorance) of the various other dance-systems of the world goes, the purpose and purport of dancing—that is, of man's finding his essential hard core through the beauty of regularized movement—is realized mostly at the sub-conscious level; so that, at the conscious level, the dancer is not necessarily aware of its inner spiritual meaning. He or she may even take it as nothing more than an exalted experience in the sensual and sensuous.

It is here that Bharata Natya—the hoary and holy art of Indian dancing—cuts deep into the conscious and sub-conscious levels and revealingly brings to the forefront that it is ultimately and intimately oriented to the hard core, variously called the *Atman* of God. It is a revelation not only to the performing artiste; but, in an equal measure, to the audience also.

Bharata Natya achieves this primarily by its *abhinaya*, gestural interpretation of songs on divinities and divine themes alone. Secular subjects as ends in themselves are avoided in the choice of songs and hymns for gestural interpretations.

Of course there is a purely rhythmic side to Bharata Natya called *Nritta*, where there is no portrayal of sentiments, scenes and events, but only delicate and dexterous display of rhythm-patterns; no lyrical text, but only drum syllables.



Here, too, while there is nothing outwardly divine there is also nothing secular. The *Nritta* part is utterly bereft of sensual movements. It is a world of art all its own. And art as art is of the spirit and, therefore, is itself divine, without its having to describe the divine. So here, too, the artiste and the audience feel the spirit-oriented aspect of dancing, but in a subtle way.

But this aspect is made more explicit in what constitutes the major part of Bharata Natya, namely *abhinaya*.

"More explicit", I said. That does not mean that the beauties of suggestion and subtlety are lost sight of, and the divine import is brought out nakedly. This is far from the truth. The divine is divine only because of its suggestive, subtle quality. So, in *abhinaya*, though the artiste and audience have the direct inward experience of the divine, the outward expression which is responsible for creating that experience is only suggestively and subtly so. Be it not mistaken that since Bharata Natya is God-oriented it must be just like the austere and rigorous "religious dancing" in certain communities, which precludes most of the feelings and emotions as sensual. On the other hand, Bharata Natya is a veritable treasure-house of the whole gamut of human experiences, emotions, feelings, sentiments and ponderings. All the nine essential basic sentiments which we call *rasa-s* namely *Shringaara* (amorous love), *Haasya* (humour), *Shoka* (pathos), *Roudra* (anger), *Veera* (heroism), *Bhaya* (fear), *Beebhatsa* (disgust), *Adbhuta* (wonder), *Vaatsalya* (tender affection, as of a mother for her child)—all these with their innumerable attendant emotional conditions are expounded in Bharata Natya, culminating and consummating in the tenth *rasa*, which is called the *rasa* of *rasa-s*, namely *Shaanta* or tranquility. With God as the centre, all these emotions and feelings are also divinized and elevated from the level of the sensual to that of the spiritual. By the inexplicable power born of the union of music, lyric, rhythm and gesticulation, the feelings and emotions are released from their limited, individualized locus and expanded to universal proportions where there is only pure spirit with nothing of the sensual.



A Bharata Natya recital from start to finish is so arranged as to make the body shed off its "body-ness", step by step, in the process of realising the divinity of the spirit encased within the body. Though it is an art blossoming entirely through bodily movements, these very movements enable the blossoming of the body to fructify into the fruit of the spirit.

Here I shall point out a remarkable feature of Bharata Natya. Most of the songs interpreted are couched in the seemingly erotic language of the Lady Love (*Jivatma*) longing for her Lover (*Paramatma*), who, of course, is God.

Incidentally, this perhaps is an additional reason why Bharata Natya is mainly practised and performed by the fair sex. The basic reason may be that the dynamic power of the self (*Shakti*) itself is always considered to be feminine and its static source masculine. Bharata Natya is one of the sixty-four arts and sciences mastered by anyone, including man, who wants to become a full scholar. Princes have been taught this art. The presiding Deity of Dance, Nataraja, too, is a male God. With all that, it has been mainly a woman's art. But it is *equally enjoyed and experienced* by men as audience. Later, I shall refer to the audience's active participation in the art. By the very fact of the lover being God, the union longed for is understood to be not of the physical but of the spiritual. It is the yearning of the individual soul for merger in the cosmic soul that is figuratively expressed in the erotic idiom. With this understanding, the dancer interprets the sensual in its spiritual setting. The spiritual quality of Bharata Natya, therefore, is not achieved through the elimination of the sensual, but through the seemingly sensual itself, thereby sublimating it.

This God-centred character of Bharata Natya is mainly fostered by the key role played in *abhinaya* by our mythologies, which we call *Puraana-s*. The songs have numerous reference to *Puranic* characters and events. The mythological characters, especially the divinities, are not obsolete to us, but are more living than those who live by our side. Many of us recite with devotion portions from



our *Puraana-s* during our daily religious observances. We are never tired of listening to discourses on the *Puraana-s* by erudite scholars. We have our holy days to worship the various divinities. Our magnificent temple sculpture owes primarily to the *Puraana-s*. Above all, we love those divine characters not only as the sublime, but also as the sublime simplified to our own level so as to sublimate us. Steeped as we are in our *Puraana-s*, the dancer considers it her unique good fortune not only to portray through *abhinaya* the devotee but the deity itself.

Later, I shall refer to improvisation in the Bharata Natya system. But here itself, I must point out that a very rich harvest of such improvisation is reaped by the artists from out of the fertile field of our mythologies.

It will be rather difficult for those without moorings in our *Puraana-s* to develop rapport with our dancers. Of course, insofar as the artist is absorbed and wrapped up in the *Puraana-s*, her life-blood pulsating through the *abhinaya* will itself inspire a kind of understanding even in a foreign audience, at least for the dance.

There are among the various type of songs employed in *abhinaya*—such as *padam*, *varnam* and *jaavali*—some of which are in praise of the patron of the composer, often the king or local chieftain. Even here, the King of Kings alone is taken to be the real hero of the song. Moreover, the song will have glorious references to the tutelary deity of the patron. Now this particular part of the song will become the main plank of the artist for weaving episode after episode from our mythologies concerning that deity.

The dancer personates the deity, on the one hand; on the other hand, all the divinities of the Hindu pantheon have themselves danced on some occasion or other. So you have the dancing forms of many of our deities like Ganesha, Muruga, Kali, Saraswati, Krishna, culminating in the Supreme Lord Shiva as Nataraja, the King of Dance.

Attesting to the divine orientation of Bharata Natya, it has come down the ages only by being nurtured in the temples as one of the many offerings to the Lord. Hereditary dancers called *devadasi-s* have dedicated the art to God Himself, performing it in His court.

This God-centred aspect is common to all the dancing systems of India like Kathak, Kathakali, Manipuri, Odissi and Kuchipudi. All these systems derive from Bharata's *Natya Shastra*.

Another important feature of Bharata Natya is that the actual dancing is not the performance of a group or troupe, but of an individual artiste. Recent innovations in Bharata Natya include group-dancing with a number of performers doing different roles. But this comes more within the domain of opera than Bharata Natya proper. These recent innovations do not and cannot deprive Bharata Natya of its essential nature of being a single artiste's performance. A troupe is there in the background to assist the dancer, to give her vocal and instrumental support. But the actual dance performer is, what may be called, a soloist. The one artiste herself takes the roles of the many characters in the compositions. Let it be noted that the dancer does not put on any make-up to

physically personate any of the characters. She is in the typical feminine Bharata Natya costume, portraying all the characters, including male. This also is another aspect of the art's suggestive quality. There are no scenes and scenic effects. The artiste herself has to create all this. It is a wonder that the single performer through her facial and other bodily expressions and the highly meaningful finger-gestures called *mudra*-s, creates both the locale and all the characters. In split seconds the self-same artiste takes the roles of deity, devotee and even the devil.

It is here that Bharata Natya justifies its being called a Yoga, that is spiritual discipline of perfecting the mind to mindless serenity. The expertise of the artiste in such rapid change of far-differing moods enables her to gain the moodless equipoise of Yoga.

Another notable feature of Bharata Natya is that the songs are vocally rendered by the artiste and the background musician. It is not dancing just to the tune of instrumental music, but dancing to the words set to music. Yet it is not just dancing to the words in their superficial meaning alone, nor is the music detached from the words and their full (inner and outer) meaning. My point is that the songs must be vocally rendered by the danseuse herself while she dances. Since she cannot do the singing with gusto because of the physical exertion of dancing, a background musician sings with her, and usually her dance master himself renders the drum syllables. Yes, these drum syllables must also be vocally rendered, even when they are not set to music as in the opening piece, *Alarippu*.

The artiste has to bring out through gesture not only the outer meaning of the words of the songs, but has also to interpret all their implications and inner meanings, sometimes even building up episodes around a single line. But all through this she must not change the actual words of the song that she is vocally rendering. Yes, even while she is enacting, in gestures, monologues and dialogues that are far removed from the actual words of the song, she must not utter the words fit for those situations, but only repeat the same actual words of the lyrical text. That is whereas she is bodily, facially and figuratively gesturing myriad changing moods and environments, she vocally adheres to the same unchanging phrases in the text. One more interesting feature here is that, though the words are the same, she makes endless variations (of sound or *abhinaya*) called *sangati*-s in the music set for the words, variations which help to bring out the many shades of the inner meaning of the text. It is only when the artiste is a true musician and enters into the spirit of the song through music that she can interpret in gesture the song to perfection by simply keeping the movement of her hands and eyes in consonance with the ups and downs, curves and glides, pauses and frills in the music, irrespective of the actual words of the song but in keeping with the dialogue woven in gesture around them. This is justified by quoting the dance-scriptures which, of course, admit *Vachikabhinaya*. But I sincerely feel that *Vachikabhinaya* belongs to drama and dance-drama and not to dancing *sui generis*. For I consider that this feat of achieving perfection simultaneously in the variation (in gesture and music) and non-variation (in the sung word) helps greatly in achieving strength and clarity of mind—which again is an important factor in Yoga. Another remarkable aspect of Bharata Natya is the great scope it affords to the artiste's imagination especially in the *abhinaya*. She can improvise ad infinitum moods and situations to

bring out the full content of the song. Even in the *Nritta* part of rhythmic foot-work, where the unity of music prevents her from taking too much liberty, she can to some extent express her native imagination in improvisation. As for the gestural part of *abhinaya*, her wings can soar to the very skies of freedom.

"Skies of freedom", I repeat, because I mean it. It is freedom through discipline, not freedom from discipline. It is not licentiousness of the individual mind, but it partakes of the nature of the liberty and grandeur of the cosmic mind. Strict adherence to the disciplines of the *Natya Shastra* (the scripture of Bharata Natya) and to tradition in each and every matter touching gesture, rhythm, music and all the other aspects is absolutely required. This strict binding on the outer individual mind itself releases the universal divine mind encased in its innermost recesses—like the outer case of the rocket releasing the inner satellite up to the skies, free from the gravitational pull of earth. This is the "sky of freedom" to which I referred, where echoes and emanations from the Master-Mind itself help the artiste to improvise. At its zenith, though it appears to be the individual's, the artiste gives up her individuality and surrenders to the Universal Principle totally.

Another noteworthy feature of Bharata Natya is the quality of the gestures. These gestures must never be taken to be the gestures used in everyday life or in drama and cinema acting. *Abhinaya* is as far from acting as poetry is from prose. No feeling, no emotion, no mood, no experience, no locale is gestured in a realistic, matter-of-fact way. They are all expressed in the suggestive language of the imagination. Forceful contortions and violent movements are out of place in Bharata Natya. Yet it does not just portray the soft side of life. The deepest and weightiest subjects are conveyed by suggestion in a more striking manner than through direct stage-acting. Dignified restraint is the hall-mark of *abhinaya*. Even in the best of laughter, there is a restraint on the mouth movement; even at the height of wonder, there is a limit for opening the eyes; even in the white-heat of amorous sport, the danseuse has no use for movements of the torso but gestures only through the face and hands. It is this decency, decorum and dignity that imparts to Bharata Natya its divine character.

The *hasta*-s or hand gestures may be said to be the alphabet of the suggestive language of Bharata Natya. Many of these *mudra*-s are common to both the *Tantra-Shastra*-s and Bharata Natya. *Tantra-Shastra* is an arduous ordeal of religious disciplines meant to divinise the physical body in various ways, and here the *mudra*-s play an important part. The very fact that these same *mudra*-s occur in dancing alone bears testimony to the religious character of Bharata Natya. How these *mudra*-s acquire new meanings artistically in Bharata Natya is a subject which deserves study. Suffice it, if I point out a single example. The *mudra* of joining the tips of the thumb and the fore-finger is called *Chin-mudra* in the religious scriptures, meaning the 'Sign of Wisdom'. It is the Wisdom of realising the one-ness of the individual soul (signified by the fore-finger) with the One Over-Soul (signified by the thumb). Now, the *Chin-mudra* is accepted in this scriptural sense in dancing also. But see what new meaning it acquires in addition. It is the 'Sign of Wisdom' only when the palm is held in a graceful slant. The same *mudra* when the palm is held stiffly upright depicts the valour of the Bowman who holds the arrow between the two finger tips. When, with the palm's back to the audience's view, the danseuse touches the mid-point of her eye-brows with this *mudra*, it conveys her putting on the mark of beauty, the *tilak*. So the same *mudra* stands



for three such entirely different concepts as spiritual wisdom, valour and preparation for meeting her lover.

Bharata Natya gestures eliminate all the inessentials and depict concepts and objects strikingly by creating minimal semblance to the original, mainly by virtue of the *mudra*-s. For example, in the other dancing systems, including the Indian systems other than Bharata Natya, an elephant is gesturally depicted only with a fund of details like its high and bulky size, pillar-like legs, winnow-like ears, resilient trunk with its different movements, majestic gait etc. But see, how with the simple *mudra* of the four fingers—the stiffly bent first and fore-fingers signifying the tusks and the drooping middle two fingers denoting the trunk—the elephant is unmistakably suggested in Bharata Natya. Similarly a cow has to be gesturally presented in the other systems rather laboriously. But in Bharata Natya those same two fingers which stood for the elephant's tusks become the horns of the cow when tilted up perpendicularly, and the other three fingertips joined together picturize the face of the cow, and with a wave of the right hand the danseuse also represents the cowherd who drives it.

So you will notice that there must be the participation of the audience, too, in understanding and filling up the gestures which only suggest. This scope given for the imaginative faculty of Bharata Natya makes it an art to be appreciated and assimilated by the spectator, not passively or even intellectually but through artistic imagination bordering on intuition.

Bharata Natya is an art oceanic in width and depth. I just took you a few steps on its shore. I hope the vision you had of the ocean will inspire you to dive into it and cull its pearls yourselves.



\*This article is the text of the address delivered by T. Balasaraswati to the Committee on Research in Dance (CORD) at Hawaii in August 1978.



### National Identity and Universalism in Music

[A note on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Joseph Haydn]

"And now we are on the threshold of understanding the language of music".

Kurt Blaukopf

This year, many countries celebrate the musical genius of a composer who was born as the son of a craftsman in the small Austrian village of Rohrau, in 1732. Though Austria was then a powerful European empire, the small village was far removed from the mainstream of life and the farmers living there had to do statute labour for the nobility. Haydn's road was a road leading out of this restricted life into the big wide world. He even travelled as far as London. Already, during his lifetime, his works, which include more than a hundred symphonies, oratorios, masses, chamber music, etc., made him famous in many countries. How was it possible for the son of a simple peasant who did not know a note of music to rise to such artistic heights?

In answering this question, I will not enlarge on the history of Haydn's life, but shall limit myself to a few characteristic trends in this life which, to my mind, are highly topical today. I refer primarily to the correlation between cultural identity and universal validity. Everyone listening to Haydn's music will immediately sense that it is rooted in the Austrian tradition and in the Austrian scenery. How then is this specific national identity of musical expression compatible with the universal validity of Haydn's music? This question is closely related to the question of the grammar and syntax of musical language.

The quotation heading the present essay is by Narayana Menon (Fourteenth Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture, New Delhi, 1980). Menon's observations on the language of music are designed to bring the different notions of music into the right perspective. The notion of music, as an autonomous entity divorced from dance and language, is peculiar to the occidental development and is inseparably linked with musical notation. Other cultures subscribe to different notions, which justifies the use of the plural when one discusses the concept of music. Such an approach is also in keeping with modern thinking which has introduced the concept of "cultural identity" into the comparative study of cultures.

Haydn's music is an example of cultural identity translated into music. His life and work go to show that musical identity is no rigid concept standing only for that which is worth preserving, but, on the contrary, a very dynamic concept. The quest for independent musical expression is not meant to peter out in the deathly silence of the Forever Unchanged but is aimed at reflecting human life. Human life, however, is also tied up with the achievements of foreign cultures. The specific values of a national musical culture may well incorporate foreign assets. Such influence is also manifest in the spirit and compositional technique of Haydn, notwithstanding his unmistakable individuality.

When Haydn was thirty-four and had still some way to go before reaching the height of his fame, a remarkable essay on the "Viennese taste in music" was published in a paper issued in the Austrian capital. Among others it said that each country, each province has its own dialect and taste shaped by the prevailing inclinations of its leaders. Two or three outstanding writers, it said, could change the taste of an entire nation; and the same number of composers could shape and establish musical taste. Haydn was mentioned as one such creator of the "Viennese taste in music".

In what way did Haydn help to establish a musical taste whose special character became gradually perceptible? His composing was, to a considerable degree, oriented towards developing the grammar and syntax of an autonomous music, i.e. an instrumental music that could dispense with correlations to language, gesture or dance. There is one field where this trend is most pronounced: in his compositions for string quartet. In numerous works which Haydn wrote for an ensemble of two violins, one viola and one violoncello, he demonstrated, developed, and greatly enriched the artful interplay of four voices. His compositional work for string quartet was, as is repeatedly mentioned in the literature, the field where his artistic innovation became most strikingly manifest. It was not, as we ought expressly to underline, music for *performance* in front of a public but rather music to be *played* by those who wanted to engage in such an activity for its own sake. It was not Haydn's intention to meet the needs of an "audience" in the modern sense but

rather to satisfy the needs of the many music-lovers of his time, who wished to devote themselves to musik-making. In logical consequence he endowed each individual part with a significance of its own. Haydn's string quartet style is a style in which the leading voice (mostly the first violin) retains its role, but in which important tasks are also assigned to the other parts. In the Harvard Dictionary of Music this is described as "a technique of writing in which fragments of a melody are given to different instruments taking turns. This technique, which is frequently used in symphonies, quartets etc., appeared first in the works of Haydn and Mozart".

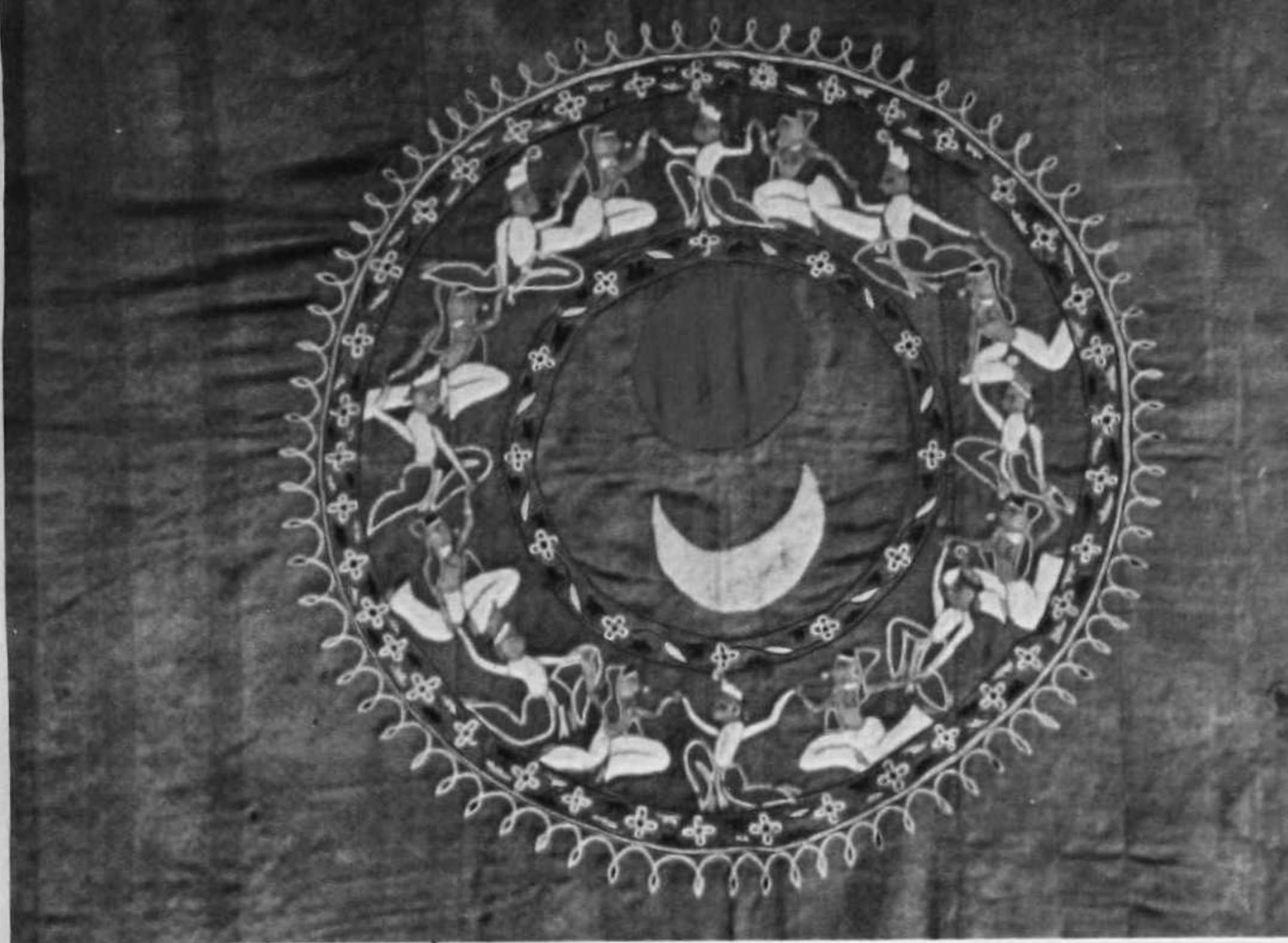
In concentrating on the independent role of the musical sequence, Haydn not only changed the correlations among the individual parts but introduced a totally new type of musical sequence. With each individual voice having a say in the musical conversation, this conversation was—also in the metaphorical sense—subjected to a new order, to a new formal partition of the conversation sequence. The outcome was the so-called sonata form which was to become the hub of musical thinking in the era of Viennese classicism. It implied new demands on the listener whom Haydn expected to take in the sequence of musical thought while listening. As soon as an audience in the modern sense (i.e. a concert audience) is formed, this challenge takes effect. Musical action is replaced by mental action, by the constant alertness of those grasping the musical sequence while listening. They have to follow the development of musical thoughts. "Development" is also the word used in more recent terminology for the middle part of the sonata form, which commences with the exposition and ends with the recapitulation. It is surely not Haydn alone who deserves credit for having formed this musical language pattern. But it was in his works that the structure was presented in so masterly a fashion that, in the nineteenth century, English books of reference even went so far as to call the sonata form "the Haydn form".

It would go beyond the scope of this article to dwell on the social and intellectual preconditions of Haydn's achievements. Still, it ought to be mentioned that they were not attained in a period of social stagnation but in an era of rapid social change: during Haydn's lifetime the peasants of his country were gradually liberated from statute labour, a more tolerant relationship was initiated between the different religions, compulsory education was introduced, a civil law system was drafted which, in its basic outlines, is still valid today and for a brief spell (between 1780 and 1790) even censorship was suspended in Austria.

This process of modernisation also affected Haydn's musical creation. Slightly exaggerating the point, one might say that Haydn turned from a composer who wrote for given events, or to meet obvious demands, into the creator of works with a claim to eminence beyond regions and time. The stages of this transformation left their mark on Haydn who lived to the age of seventy-seven. When, in 1761, he was engaged as musician by a prince, his letter of employment obliged him to accept directives concerning his compositional work. Haydn's activity was strictly tied up with the requirements of the court he had to serve. Any music he wrote bore the mental imprint of the event it was created for and was designed to live up to the expectations of a certain circle of persons. Seven years later, Haydn received a commission for a cantata from a patron living in the vicinity. In a letter delivered with the composition, Haydn asked to be forgiven if the work was not fully to the patron's taste, emphasising that he had had difficulty in composing it, since neither the persons nor the place had been known

to him. More than thirty years later a radical change can be observed in the composer's self-estimation. He had long moved from the restrictedness of a princely court in the province to the capital Vienna. He had come face to face with his own fame in more than one country and had received homage to his person and his symphonies in London. Now, Haydn no longer composed for particular events, but he drafted works on music sheets that were to retain their importance beyond any particular event—beyond his immediate surroundings. In a letter to the director of a musical association on an island in the Baltic Sea, unknown to him, he wrote, on September 22, 1802, that it was his greatest wish to be judged by each nation where his works were heard as a priest not completely unworthy of this sacred art.

Towards the end of his life the claim to universalism had also taken root in Haydn's thought. But the basis of his endeavours always remained the strong foothold in his musical home-country. He was open to outside influence, while preserving his cultural identity. If he could witness the acclaim won by his music even in far-off continents, he would certainly be a little surprised. We would probably have to explain to him the colossal, to him surely frightening, military, political, social and technical developments that took place before the sphere covered by his music could be so hugely expanded. I doubt whether Haydn would be quite happy about the vehicles—radio, record and musicassette that have spread his fame so widely. He might admire the modernisation of all countries in our world, but he might be filled with concern about the fact that this modernisation is so often accompanied by a Westernisation and that the cultural identities of individual countries seem in jeopardy. Such speculations may appear idle, but they have the undeniable merit of bringing home to us the mutual relations existing among national cultures. It is in the Austrian tradition to regard these relations not from an egotistic-national angle but in a tolerant vein. We are proud that Haydn's music is acclaimed almost everywhere. But we know that there is not only one but many musics. Let them all be heard in the concert of peoples.





## Rasa and Garba in the Arts of Gujarat<sup>1</sup>

Jyotindra Jain

I

*Rasa* and *garba* are two interrelated and exceedingly popular forms of dance in Gujarat. The purpose of this article is not so much to trace the general chronology of *rasa* and *garba* from literary evidence as to examine the local Gujarati varieties of these dance forms in relation to their plastic and pictorial depictions. Literary sources, however graphic in description, do not always provide an accurate picture of the visual aspects of dance. Therefore *rasa* and *garba* as depicted in the visual arts of Gujarat might serve as a guide to an understanding of some features of these dances otherwise not easy to construe.

Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan<sup>2</sup> has given a sufficiently exhaustive and analytical account of *rasa* as described in the *Harivamsha*, *Vishnu Purana*, *Shrimad Bhagavata* and *Brahma Vaivarta Purana* as well as the commentaries of Nilakantha on the Puranas. Vasant Yamadagni<sup>3</sup> and Ramanarayana Agrawal<sup>4</sup> have published full-fledged monographs on the *rasaleela* of Vraja and other related subjects. The aspects covered by them will not be dealt with in this article.

The descriptions of *rasa* in the Puranas make it clear that it is a circle-dance in which the participants move with hands interlocked. It appears that *rasa* included several types of circle-dances:

- (1) Those where several *gopi*-s formed a circle with Krishna in the centre;<sup>5</sup>
- (2) Those where Radha and Krishna danced as a pair together with other *gopi*-s or other pairs of *gopa*-s and *gopi*-s;<sup>6</sup>
- (3) Those where Krishna multiplied himself and actually danced between two *gopi*-s thus forming a ring with one *gopi* and one Krishna.<sup>7</sup>

The Puranas and many other works of classical literature also refer to a dance form called *hallishaka* (*hallisaka*). This was supposed to have been similar to *rasa* wherein, according to one description, all the *gopi*-s danced in a circle. But Bhasa<sup>8</sup> also describes Krishna's dance on the hoods of the snake Kaliya as *hallishaka* and, therefore, it is difficult to define accurately the nature of *hallishaka* dance.

### The Gujarati Traditions

Gujarati literature from the 15th century onwards is full of descriptions of *rasa* which follow the Puranic tradition as well as the local forms of the living traditions of these dances.

The major Gujarati literary works with significant descriptions of *rasa* include<sup>9</sup> Nayarshi's *Phagu* (15th century), Narsi Mehta's *Rasa Sahasrapadi* (16th century), Vasanadasa's *Krishna Vrindavana Rasa* (16th century), Devidasa's *Rasa Panchadhyayino Sara* (17th century) and Vaikunthadasa's *Rasaleela* (17th century). Moreover Bhalana's *Dashamaskandha* and Bhima's *Harileela Shodashakala* (both 15th century), Keshavadasa's *Krishna Krida Kavya* (16th

century) and the works of Premananda, Madhavadasa, Ratneshvara, Lakshmidasa (all 17th century) contain descriptions of *rasa*.<sup>10</sup>

In the living tradition of Gujarat there are *rasa*-s performed by men alone, or by women alone or by men and women together. Sometimes a *rasa* called *dandia-rasa* is performed where each participant holds a pair of sticks in his or her hands and claps them to maintain a *tala*. Some *rasa*-s are performed without sticks. Sharadatanaya<sup>11</sup> (12th century) in his *Bhavaprakashana* enumerates three forms of *rasa*, namely, *latarasaka*, *dandarasaka* and *mandalarasaka*. Of these *dandarasaka* was surely the *dandia-rasa* mentioned above. About *latarasaka* two types of interpretations are possible. Either it was a dance of couples, each entwined in an embrace like the *lata* or creeper, or it was a dance in a circle in which all participants held hands to form a running 'creeper'. The latter type is frequently represented in painting and embroidery. *Mandalarasaka* was certainly exclusive of these two types, and, therefore, was perhaps a *tali-nritya* or a dance with *tala* indicated by the clapping of hands. As we shall see later, all these forms have been described in literature and depicted in the arts of Gujarat.

In this context it would be relevant to refer to Pandit Pundarika Vitthala's *Nrityanirnaya*<sup>12</sup> (16th century). Here *dandarasaka* is described in detail. Vitthala says, 'the sticks should be as thick as the thumb, sixteen fingers long, straight, without knots, rounded, of good quality wood, decorated with shellack and wrapped in silken cloth for smooth handling while dancing'.

It would also be appropriate here to mention other Gujarati dance forms such as *kuddana*, *hinch* and *hamchi*.<sup>13</sup> Hemachandra<sup>14</sup> explains *kuddana* as *rasa*. The word is related to the Gujarati *kudavun* meaning to jump. This must have been a dance form with rhythmic jumps. In *hinch*, which is performed, even today, in the month of Shravana, in the Vaishnava temples of Gujarat, two or more women dance in a circle, moving with extremely swift movements. The word *hinch* is related to Gujarati *hinchavun*, to swing, and therefore is indicative of the swinging movement of the dance. *Hamchi*, as a literary form and as a form of dance, is mentioned frequently in Gujarati literature. One of the earliest references is in Narsi Mehta<sup>15</sup> (15th century): "Radha and Hari are in the centre and the *gopi*-s are in a circle around them, (she) performs *hamchi* with Hari and 'takes' clapping from hand to hand." Another related expression is *hamchi khundavi* meaning 'to take strong jumps of *hamchi*'. This indicates a dance form in which jumping movements were involved. This author has seen a ritual in Surat in connection with the goddess Randal,<sup>16</sup> the wife of Surya. The ritual dance was called *randalno ghodo khundavo*, literally 'to jump forcefully like the horse of Randal'. Here two women, in a half-squatting position, jumped, moving swiftly in a circle. Perhaps *hamchi khundavi* was one such form.

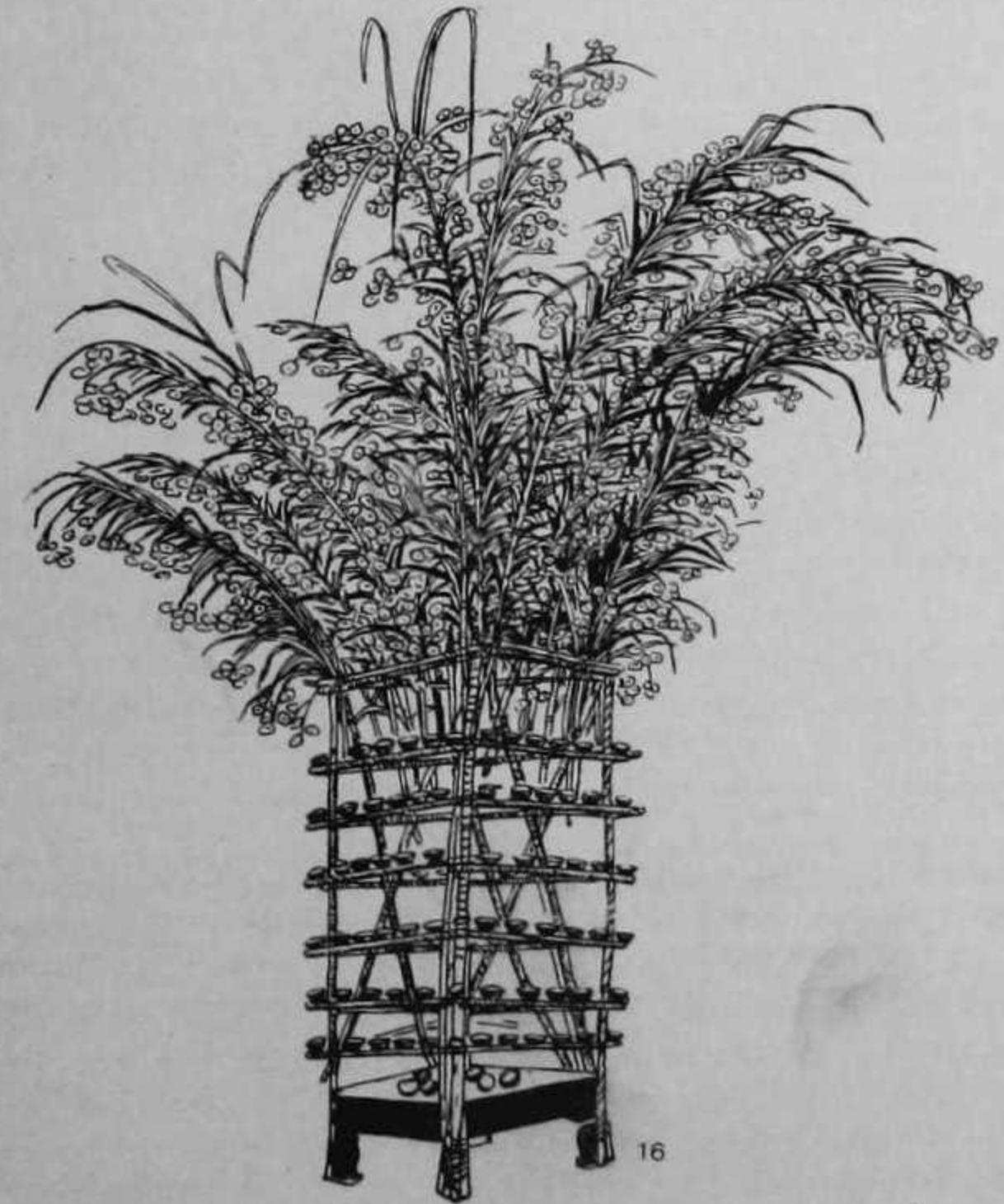
Closely related to *rasa* is the *garba* form of dance. This form is peculiar only to Gujarat and no mention of it has been made in any literature outside Gujarat. *Garba* is mainly performed by a group of women moving in a circle and maintaining *tala* by the clapping of hands.<sup>17</sup> It can be broadly generalised that *rasa* is more connected with the cult of Krishna and *garba* with that of the Goddess. Originally these two forms had these cultic affiliations. But it must be pointed out that though this is generally true, occasionally there have been instances where the Krishna cult is connected with *garba* and the Devi cult with *rasa*. Famous lines

such as *Radha gori garbe ramva chalo*<sup>18</sup> ('O Radha, the fair one, come to perform *garba*...') or ... *Rami Bhavani rasa gaun guna garbi re*<sup>19</sup> ('I sing the glory of *garbi* (wherein) Bhavani performed the *rasa*') can serve as examples of the phenomenon.

It should be noted that *garbo* refers to an earthen pot, its surface pierced by several holes, and with a wick-lamp inside. After placing such a pot in the middle, the women dance around it in a circle singing the *garbo* form of songs. Thus *garbo*, the special type of earthen pot, also provides the name for the forms of literature and dance.

Several conjectures have been made by scholars about the etymology of the word *garbo*. Usually it is attempted to derive the word from Sanskrit *garbha-deepa* (inner lamp) or *deepa garbho ghata*<sup>20</sup> (pot with a lamp inside). These are only conjectures and it is highly probable that the origin of the word was not in Sanskrit but in local usage.

The word *garbi* also deserves to be discussed in this context. In some areas of Gujarat, a wooden structure, with shelves or platforms for holding multiple earthen lamps, is placed in the centre and a circle dance is performed around it. This wooden structure is called *garbi*. (Illus. 16.) When excited by the rhythm of the dance or possessed by the goddess, a few of the men lift the *garbi* on their head and dance in that position.



Apart from being a wooden structure of a special kind, *garbi* is also a special form of literature. The *garbo* songs are generally elaborate, narrative in character and vigorous whereas *garbi* is supposed to be compact and delicate. But this distinction does not hold good if we analyse examples of these literary forms.

Narsi Mehta was one of the earliest poets to use the word *garbo* in place of *rasa* in the Vaishnava context. For instance, *Garbe rame shri gokulnatha ke sange gopi bani re lo<sup>21</sup>* ('The Lord of Gokul performs *garba* (dance) along with *gopi*-s'). *Garba* and *rasa* truly merge in Narsi Mehta. In almost all literary descriptions of *rasa*, the only source of light is the moon. But Narsi Mehta refers to himself as *divatia* or the holder of the lamp in the *rasa* of Krishna and the *gopi*-s.<sup>22</sup> This holding or placing of lamps in the middle is more associated with *garba* and, therefore, seems to indicate an influence (on the poet) of the local dance form of that name.

II

### Depictions in the Arts of Gujarat

A large variety of *rasa* and *garba* dances are depicted in the painting, sculpture, wood-carving, embroidery, tie-dyed fabrics and printed textiles of Gujarat. An analysis of some of these will contribute to a deeper understanding of the visual forms of the dances and their variations.

The idea of the 'cosmic' *rasa/garba* was the theme of several of the late medieval poetic works of Gujarat. Poet Bhanadasa composed a *garba* which became known as *gagan mandalni gagardi* meaning 'the pitcher of the heavenly hemisphere'. In the first four lines the poet says:

'O glorious *garbi*, the pitcher of the heavenly hemisphere!  
I sing the glory of *garbi*, (wherein) Bhavani performed the *rasa* (dance).  
O glorious *garbi*, the sun, the jewel of the day, is the lamp (inside).  
I sing the glory of *garbi*, the light is provided by the moon.'<sup>23</sup>

As mentioned earlier, it is customary among the devotees of the Goddess in Gujarat to place *garba* or a perforated earthen pot, with a burning lamp inside, in the centre and perform a circle dance around it. As has also been noted before, Narsi Mehta pictures himself as 'a holder of the lamp' in the *rasa* of Krishna and *gopi*-s. In the 'cosmic' image of the above-quoted *garba* of Bhanadasa, the place of the burning lamp is taken by the Sun and the Moon forming the lamp-bowl and the flame respectively.

Amazingly enough, the idea of 'cosmic' *rasa* or *garba* has been beautifully depicted in a Kathi embroidery of Saurashtra, belonging to about the first quarter of this century. Its Saurashtrian owner described it in a significant sentence: *Chanda-surajni sakhe kahn-gopi rasa rame chhe* (Krishna and the *gopi*-s are performing *rasa* in the presence of the Sun and the Moon). The *rasa-mandala* in this embroidered piece is conceived in the background of greyish blue satin, indicating the sky. Inside the *mandala* is patched a large red satin disc to represent the Sun and a yellow satin crescent form to represent the Moon. (Illus. 1.)

The tradition of depicting this type of cosmic *rasa* in art is rare but, combined with literary and popular expressions, it seems the idea was deeply rooted in the minds of the people.

*Latarasaka* is (as has been stated before) another form mentioned in literature. In all probability it was a circle dance in which the participants formed a running 'creeper' by holding each other's hands. In the various media of arts such as tie-dye, embroidery, painting, etc. *lata* or the creeper of participants can be seen formed, not only by joining hands, but sometimes by holding a shawl or a *dupatta* between each of the two participants and thus forming an unbroken circle. (Illus. 2.) The concept of the 'creeper-dance' has been expressed more literally in an embroidered Chamba-rumal. (Illus. 3.) Here, each pair, of Krishna and a *gopi*, moves in a circle and all the dancers hold between them a lotus with a long stem, thus forming a running 'creeper' of lotuses.

Gujarati literature refers to *phudadi*, a play of Radha and Krishna in which the two participants stretch out their hands in a crossed position at about 90 degrees from the torso and, after obtaining a tight grip of each other's palms by interlocking them, they speedily revolve in a circle. Premananda<sup>24</sup> (17th century), describing a *rasa* on the bank of the river Jamuna, says, '(Krishna) revolves in *phudadi*, holds her close and leaves nail-marks on the thighs.' The *phudadi* type of dance finds ample expression in art. In one of the embroidered wall hangings of the Kathis of Saurashtra, Radha and Krishna are shown engaged in *phudadi* in the centre, while other *gopa*-s and *gopi*-s perform *rasa* around them. (Illus. 4.) The Kathis inhabited, in the main, the central region of the peninsula of Saurashtra which was once known as Kathiavad after the Kathis. Kathi women were skilled embroiderers; their work was marked by charming figurative work in herringbone and chain stitches. Religious themes, including *rasa* and *garba*, frequently figured in their textiles.





The dance had widespread popularity. In a Rajasthani painting done on a *tambura*, Krishna and Radha are shown revolving in *phudadi*, and attended by musicians. (Illus. 5.)

In the *bandhani*-s, the tie-dyed veils, of Kutch and Saurashtra, specially the silken ones, it was customary to have, in the field, a large circle formed by dancing women. One such *bandhani* from the Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad, shows sixteen women in a circle, each one with one hand fully raised upwards and another slightly extended frontwards. (Illus. 6.) A *rasa* performed by sixteen women has been mentioned in *Bhavaprakashana*.<sup>25</sup> In the tie-dye technique, the motifs are constructed by dots and are, therefore, stylised rather than realistic. The silk veils of the women of the Bhatias, Lohanas, Bhansalis, and the Hindu Khatri of Kutch usually contained depictions of *rasa/garba*. In these depictions there are no sticks in the hands of the participants, who are all women, and so it is possible that the dance shown here is *garba* where the *tala* is kept by the clapping of the hands.

Another example of such a dance with *tali* conducted extensively by women is in an embroidered skirt. (Illus. 7.) Here each participant is shown in motion with hands parted to clap rhythmically. The dancing figures appear just above the hem border of the skirt, thus forming a circle along the border. Each figure is framed in an arched *torana* and delicately worked out with fine detail of costume and ornaments.

The *rasa* dance in which Krishna multiplied himself to be able to make



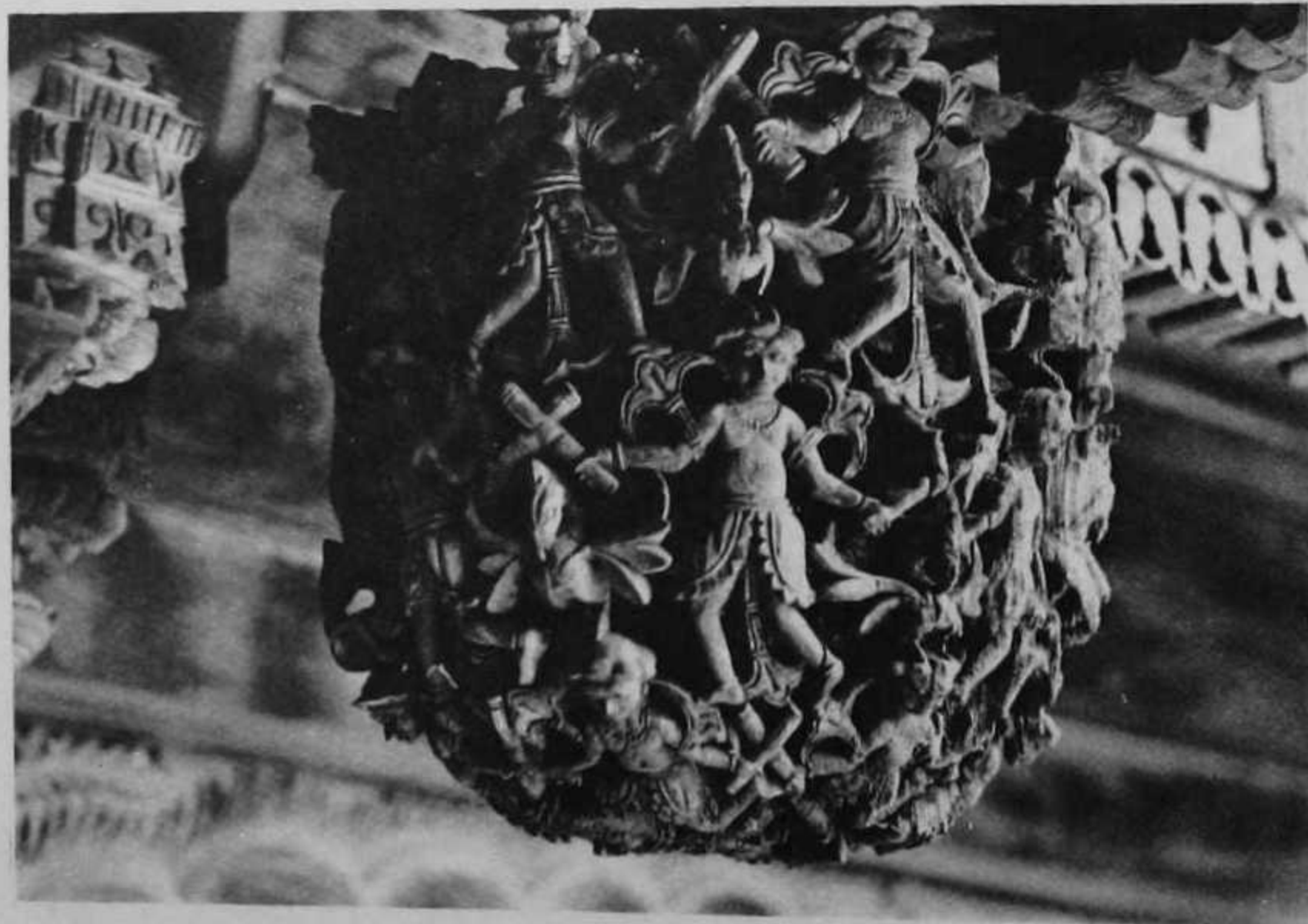




every *gopi* feel that Krishna was dancing with her alone has found profuse expression in the wall paintings of Gujarat. The domes of the entrance halls of dozens of Mahadeva temples in Gujarat are adorned with paintings. The circular dome is usually divided into many concentric circles or bands, which are ideally suited for the depiction of *rasa* and *garba*. (Illus. 8, 9, 10.) In the wall paintings of the dome of Vajjnatha Mahadeva temple, near Gandhinagar, this type of *rasa* is depicted but curiously enough each *gopi* is shown as a winged fairy. (Illus. 9.) Such figures started to appear in the local art forms of Gujarat under the influence of Islamic and Christian cultures. The variety of textiles and costumes depicted in the *rasa* scenes in the wall paintings of Gujarat is truly amazing.

Many wall paintings, wood carvings and textiles also show *dandia-rasa*. In a carved wooden bracket in the Swaminarayana Temple at Muli (in Saurashtra) three tiers of *dandia-rasa* of men are shown in a space not bigger than 2 x 2 feet. (Illus. 11.) *Dandia-rasa*, as depicted in the arts, shows that the participants could all be women (Illus. 12), all men (Illus. 11) or men and women together (Illus. 10).

In some printed domestic floor-spreads, canopies and ritual wall hangings from Gujarat, one often sees *rasa* depicted in a straight line rather than in a circle. One such *dandia-rasa* occurs in a printed canopy from Saurashtra, now in the collection of the Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad. (Illus. 13.) In all



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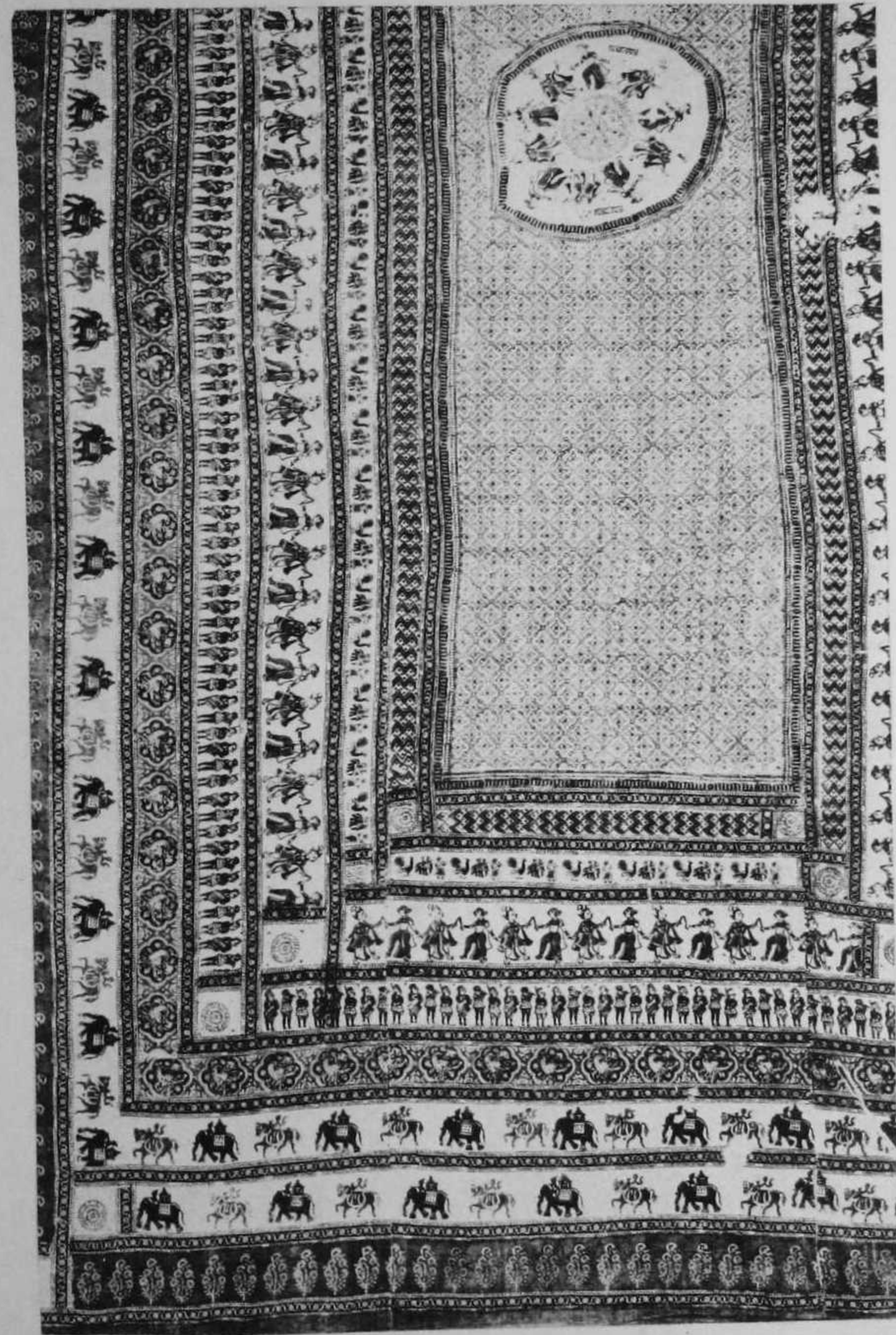
probability the linear depiction of *rasa* is only a manner of pictorial expression, but actually represents the circle dance. The most interesting feature of this depiction of *rasa*, however, is that each participant is holding only one stick instead of the usual two. The line is formed by alternate figures of Krishna and *gopi*. Each Krishna holds with his right hand the left hand of the next *gopi* and each *gopi* claps the stick held in her right hand with that held (in his left hand) by the next Krishna. This form of dance, with one stick, was probably in vogue in earlier times in Gujarat. It is not described in literature or seen any more in actual practice. Once again, we have here an example to demonstrate that the depictions of dance in the visual arts can bring to light those forms which are either extinct or not perceptible through any other source.

12



It is only very rarely that the *garba* dance with *garba* pots placed in the centre finds depiction in art. One such depiction is on a carved wooden chest from Saurashtra: only two *garba* dancers are shown flanking the *garba* pots. The two dancers are *pars pro toto* and, therefore, actually represent the whole dance. (Illus. 14.)

The nine pots of *garba*, representing *navadurga*, have been carved in a niche in the stepwell of Adalaj, near Ahmedabad. (Illus. 15.) Quite often the villagers come here to complete the marriage ceremony in front of this sculpture. They open the knots tied to the shoulder-cloths of the bride and the groom in front of this depiction of the Goddess Durga. After this they perform *garba* dance in the entrance pavilion of the well.<sup>26</sup>

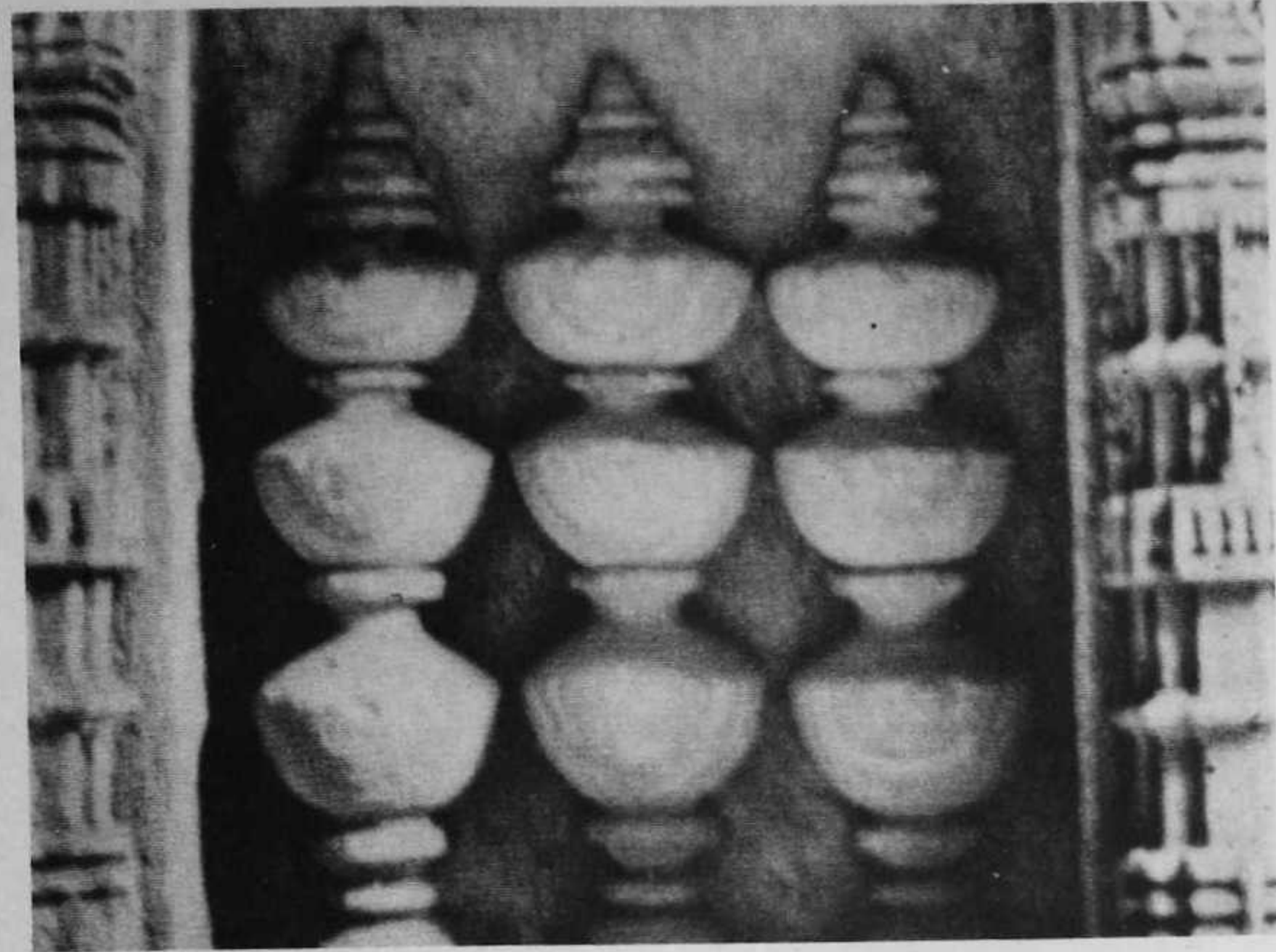




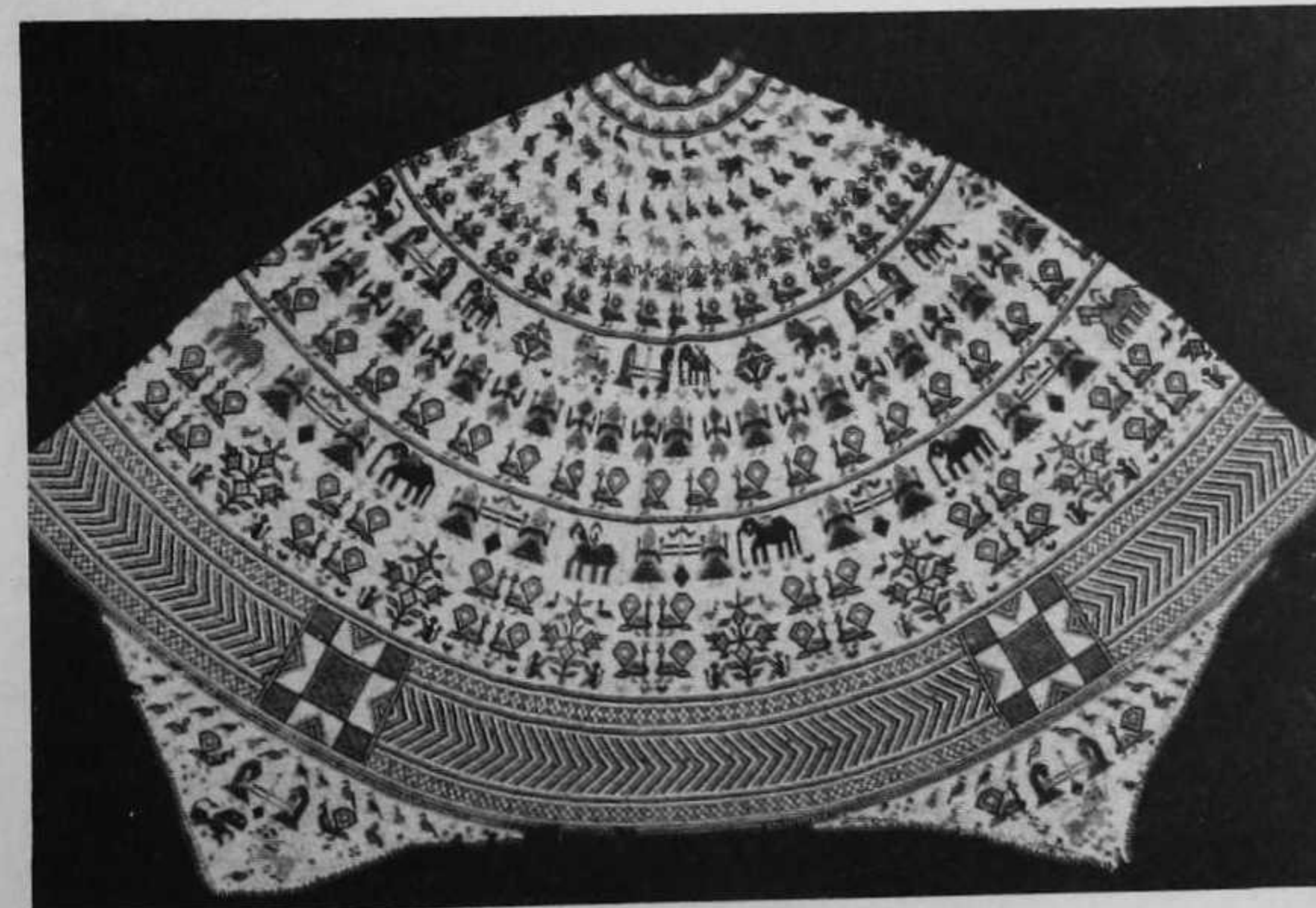
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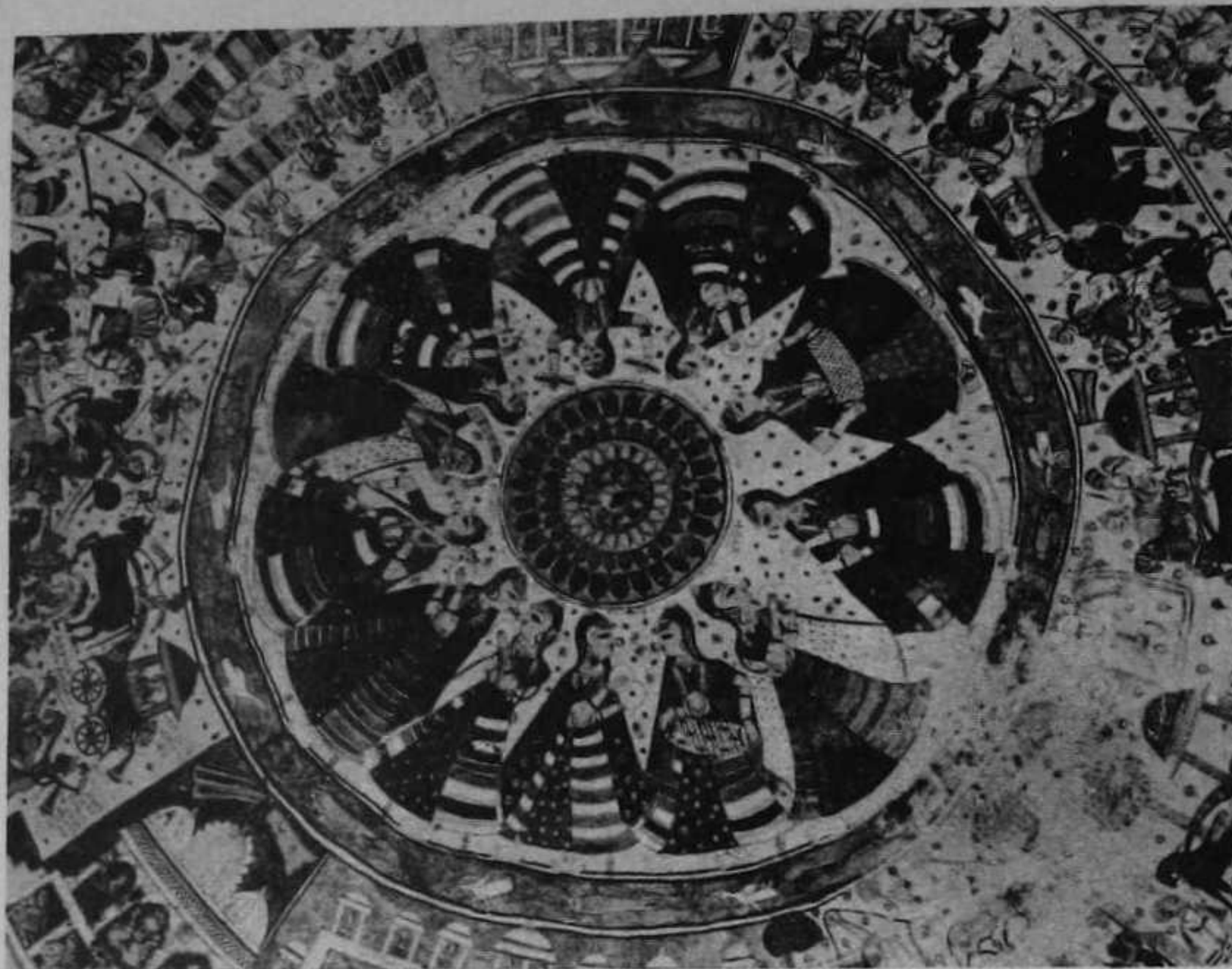
1. The material for this article has been collected during my tenure as a Homi Bhabha Fellow. I am grateful to Dr. H. C. Bhayani for his guidance; to Shri Martand Singh and Shri Subrata Bhowmik of the Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad, and Dr. Eberhard Fischer of Museum Rietberg, Zurich, for drawing my attention to and providing photographs of some depictions of *rasa*.
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6. Gupta, Jagdish, *Gujarati Aur Vrajabhasha Krishnakavya: Ek Tulnatmak Adhyayan* (in Hindi), Allahabad, 1957, p. 132.
7. Vatsyayan, Kapila, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
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9. Gupta, Jagdish, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Bhavaprakashana*, Gaekwad Oriental Series, No. 45, Baroda, 1929, p. 294.
12. *Nrityanirnaya*, unpublished manuscript in the Oriental Institute, Baroda, quoted in Majmudar, M. R., *Gujarati Sahityana Svarupo* (in Gujarati), Baroda, 1954.
13. I am grateful to Dr. H. C. Bhayani for drawing my attention to these.
14. *Deshinamamala*, edited by R. Pischel, Poona, 1938, p. 97.
15. *Narsi Mehtani Kavya Krutio* (in Gujarati), edited by S. Jesalpura, Ahmedabad, 1981, p. 146.
16. Surya's wife Chhaya, unable to bear his brilliance, left him and went into the forest, where she assumed the form of a mare and stood under a tree. Surya, hoping to persuade her to return to him, took the form of a horse and danced in front of her. In imitation of this event, even today, in the rituals of Randal (also known as Rannade, the wife of Surya, in the Gujarati tradition) the custom of dancing like the horse of Surya still prevails. This is done by the chief priest of the ritual, often in trance, or by other women. In fact in one of the songs of Randal the dance is described as *hamchi*, see *Randalna Geeto* (in Gujarati), edited by M. Jodhani, V. Jodhani, Ahmedabad, 1967, p. 162.
17. In Saurashtra, men perform the *garba* dance.
18. Majmudar, M. R., *op. cit.*, p. 535.
19. Published in *Prachin Kavya Manjari* (in Gujarati), edited by J. Trivedi, Ahmedabad, 1965, pp. 195-196.
20. Jani, Arunodaya, *Garbani Vyutpatti. Utpatti Ane Rahasya*, in *SVADHYAYA*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Baroda, 1978.
21. Jesalpura, S., *op. cit.*, p. 145.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 154, 179.
23. Trivedi, J., *op. cit.*
24. *Premanandani Kavya Krutio* (in Gujarati), edited by K. Shastri and S. Jesalpura, Ahmedabad, 1979, p. 776.
25. *Bhavaprakashana*, *op. cit.*, p. 246.
26. Jain-Neubauer, Jutta, *Iconography of Sculpture in the Water-monuments of Gujarat*, in Prof. A. N. Jani Felicitation Volume, Baroda, in press.



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## Extra-musical Factors as Determinants in the Performance Practice of Tibetan Ritual Music

Some Considerations on Ethnomusicology.

Ivan Vandor



Since the time cultural anthropology, behaviourism and sociology began increasingly to influence ethnomusicological studies, it has become almost fashionably axiomatic to consider music as determined by socio-cultural factors. We were, and still are, told on innumerable occasions that music does not exist in a vacuum and that it, therefore, must be studied in the broader perspective of general culture which would thus reveal music's full significance. Even the behaviour of the musician during the performance and those gestures of his which are directly related to his instrument's playing technique are sometimes said to concur importantly to determine the musical style.

The various general reasons for such trends of thought are, of course, of a historical but also of an ideological nature, and we may add that they do not seem unrelated to cultural fashions. In fact, those very trends may also be regarded as a reflection of the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times. But, at a more specific level, it may well seem that at least part of the responsibility for the direction in which those trends led the development of the field of ethnomusicology could be found in the nature of its very name—coined, as is well-known, by the two musicologists Jaap Kunst and Curt Sachs in 1940—"ethno-musicology". The prefix "ethno", which stands for "ethnology", opened up the gates to the impact of new ideas and new ways of looking at the theory and the methodology of the field, a novelty which, on the one hand, created much controversy and, in some cases, in the view of this writer, even theoretical excess. On the other hand, it undoubtedly injected fresh blood into the study of music on a worldwide basis, opening up musicology to the social sciences, thus obliging both cultural anthropologists and musicologists to cope with different and often opposing ideas, and to revise or adjust their own credos to the new problems raised.

Among these new problems, a good number still await solution, such as, for example, the phenomenology of the link between the social or the cultural and the musical, which was often hoped to be solved by the two combined forces of musicology and cultural anthropology, when not by broader interdisciplinary inquiries. But, in spite of many efforts, these two scholarly fields seem to be doomed to remain fundamentally separated (as the late Alan Merriam's abortive effort of "The Ethnomusicology of the Flathead Indians" shows), and the dream of an interdisciplinarity which would find the key to global musicology—a dream which nourished two or even three generations of ethnomusicologists—finds itself considerably shaken. The musicologically-oriented ethnomusicologist, as he is now called, considers music primarily as an autonomous system which constitutes his realm of study; whereas the anthropologically-oriented one—who actually seems to be purely and simply a cultural anthropologist more than any kind of musicologist—considers music as a product of man in society, focusing, therefore, his inquiries on the "musical man" in a given cultural frame of reference and on music as a product and reflection of a socio-cultural reality. As a consequence of the latter attitude, problems such as, for example, the aesthetic and intrinsic value of art do not seem any longer worthy of investigation, since what becomes relevant is social value. What is beneath the historical and social changes and interactions, that deeply rooted aesthetic and existentially meaningful experience, or what at least remains of it—which after all contributes to give sense and direction to life for the members of all cultures—can be more or less disregarded as a serious matter for inquiry and study. This permits, as a result, to equate a Beethoven quartet or a highly artistic performance of an Indian *raga* with an Elvis Presley song, or to simply overlook the aesthetic qualities of African music in favour of its social function. Whereas this is, of course, perfectly legitimate from a sociological point of view, it is far from being acceptable to the musicologist as his own method of investigation in his own field.

To be sure, the problem of intrinsic or extrinsic value, which reveals two quite different approaches to the world, is an old philosophical problem, but it may be worth pointing out the consequences of one of these approaches, when additionally combined with some more specific trends of thought, for the field of ethnomusicology.

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Thus, from the point of view not of the study of man but of that of music and its methodology—music being, after all, the aim of all musicology, be it "ethno" or not—the anthropological assumption, while obviously potentially able to give additional insight into the general musical phenomenon considered from a cultural point of view, appears to be insufficient. Moreover, it may at times be theoretically misleading, especially when it considers the cultural-musical relation as a one to one relation based on causality (cf. J.H. Kwabena N'Ketia's criticism in "The Juncture of the Social and the Musical: the Methodology of Cultural Analysis" in *The World of Music*, 2, 1981). This view would, in fact, imply that what is culturally relevant should have a reflection on the relevance of music, or, by deduction, and the other way round, that what is irrelevant to the study of culture should also be irrelevant musicologically. I would like to show the fallacy of such a theoretical standpoint by presenting some concrete cases of non-musical factors determining some variable aspects of the instrumental performing practice in Tibetan ritual music, in which what is of prime importance to the musicologist may be irrelevant to the student of culture.

We can distinguish two major groups of variables stemming from extra-musical factors in the orchestral performance of a Tibetan ritual: variables in the orchestration itself and variables in the musical performance. Within the first group we can, in turn, distinguish two other categories: that concerning the association of the musical instruments with the divinities (the one related to the nature of the particular ritual would oblige us here to enter into too many details); and that related to contingent situations, for instance the absence of a performer (it must be added

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that the musicians of the Tibetan ritual ensemble are all monks). As far as the association of the musical instruments with the divinities is concerned, it must be said, very generally, that in the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon there exist two major groups of deities, the fierce ones, often called "Protectors of Religion" (Sanskrit: *Dharmapala*), and the pacific ones (Tibetan: *Zhi-Ba*). Some musical instruments are associated with the first group and some with the second one, with the result that quite often aspects of the orchestration depend on which category of deities are evoked during the service. As for the absence of one musician or more, this is not unusual, especially in the small monasteries, where the monks are also busy in all the practical activities required there, and where some of them may be performing a ritual in a private house on request, or simply be away (for instance, on a pilgrimage). Consequently, some instruments will not be played. In some monasteries, like in the monastery of Gyütö (*rGyud-sDod*), one of the two types of cymbals (the *Sil-sNan*) can be played only by those lamas who have reached a certain hierarchic status; if these monks are absent, those cymbals will not be utilized.

The second major category of variables, that regarding the performance itself, is related to the occasion of the performance as well as to the time at one's disposal. On important liturgical occasions, the ceremony is performed in a slow and solemn fashion. On the other hand, on a normal day and when the monks have little time at their disposal, the ritual is performed in a considerably quicker tempo. This fact brings about a number of changes, concerning, in particular, but not only, the relation of the shawms (*rGya-gLing*) with the rest of the ensemble. Since the pieces of the shawms' repertoire seem to be independent of the music of the rest of the ensemble and simply juxtaposed to it, and since, therefore, their tempo does not follow the changes in tempo of the performances of the same ritual on different occasions, many performances present new combinations in the relation between the orchestral parts.

The above-mentioned variables, perhaps too briefly and generally presented here, are but a part of all the variables, which include also those determined purely by musical factors, found in this particular tradition. (For a more detailed account, see: Ivan Vandor, *La musique du Bouddhisme tibétain*. Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1976, pp. 26-27 and 38-44; or its German translation: *Die Musik des tibetischen Buddhismus*, Wilhelmshaven: Heinrichshofen, 1978, pp. 27-29 and 41-48.)

A question now naturally comes to mind: are those differences and changes in the performance practice considered by the Tibetan lamas themselves actually as differences and changes? In other words, are these variables, apart from the obviously necessary awareness of the musicians, given any conceptual consideration? The answer is no. The music is regarded to be only an aspect of the ritual, and an aspect which is not even indispensable, a fact which, in turn, explains its only relative importance. It is the ritual which must be performed, with its prayers, moments of meditation, chants, and the use of the small *damaru* (an hour-glass shaped drum with rattles) and the hand-bell (*dril-bu*), particularly important for its symbolism. But the music as such does not affect in any sense the efficacy of the rite. When it is performed, it is all for the better, for it is an additional offering to the gods and is beneficial to mankind. But when it cannot be performed, it is just all for the worse. As a matter of fact, there are even monastic

traditions which make practically no use of music. Thus, if the place of music in general is far from being at the core of the ritual, one can well imagine what little consideration is given to the specific existence of the variables occurring in the performances.

If we refer now to the problem raised in the first part of this article, we may note that the existence of these variables, even if they are determined by extra-musical factors, may be of importance to the study of general culture only to the extent that they reflect a given cultural reality. The musicologist, on the contrary, for whom the understanding of the mechanics of the musical performance is of prime importance, will consequently inquire about the extent in range of those variables. In so doing, and, needless to say, after having been of course acquainted with the structural laws governing the music itself, he will be led to discover the whys of those variables. Thus, through his purely musicological inquiry, he will have an insight into the underlying conceptual world and the cultural behaviour of that given society which are relevant to the study of music.

In conclusion, we may now venture to suggest that the student of music, after having taken into account all extra-musical factors directly conditioning the musical performance, could extend his research to the degrees of relevance of the impact or influence of the non-musical on the musical. In this sense, he could then attempt, as a further step, to outline a taxonomy based on the musical performance as a point of reference, which would have then to be developed. In this way, all pertinent cultural aspects—in the broadest sense of the expression, which might include as well elements of the spiritual history and reality, so often misregarded—would enter the picture. Methodologically, such a procedure would then correspond to a centrifugal process having the study of music *per se* as its centre, thus engendering and revealing a universe of significances.

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## Illustrations:

1. Damaru (hour-glass-shaped drum)  
Photo: I. Vador
  2. Monks playing the Kanglingis (horns)  
Photo: M. Junius
  3. Monk with Rölmo (cymbal)  
Photo: I. Vador
  4. Short bone-trumpet  
Photo: M. Junius
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## My Drama Education

Vijay Tendulkar

I did not learn drama at a school. Those days there were no drama schools. No theatre workshops either.

Reading well-known foreign plays. Watching our own productions—good, bad or indifferent. Getting involved in productions. Learning from one's mistakes. Discussing with others who shared my interests. This, in the main, was my drama education.

Fortunately, my family had a passion for the theatre. My father acted in amateur productions. He was a devoted drama practitioner at a time when people were firmly convinced that a *natakwalla* was a degenerate, when no rooms could be found in respectable localities for rehearsals of even amateur productions. Rehearsals used to be held in red-light districts. My father clung with equal determination to his respectability and to his mad passion for the theatre. He refused to become a professional actor but he stayed awake nights on end for rehearsals and did a job as a clerk during the day. This was his daily grind. After I was born, he stopped acting in plays, but he continued to direct amateur productions. Holding on to his fingers, I went with him to rehearsals. I was never bored. Once rehearsals were over, I used to watch the actual performance and go backstage with my father. The atmosphere there was even more interesting than the performance, and more so because men played female roles.

My elder brother used to act in plays. I remember how fascinated I was by the similarities and contrasts—in his behaviour at home and the way he conducted himself, as a different person, on the stage. I found it altogether strange—this transformation.

Both my father and my brother used to write. My father wrote several plays, but he did not publish them. He believed them to be inferior to the creations of giants like Kirloskar, Deval, Gadkari or Warerkar. But when the mood seized him, he recited with fervour scenes from his own plays, and even sang the songs. My brother wrote a couple of plays. He, too, did not publish them or perhaps they could not be published. But he was an avid student of drama. Everyone envied his collection of dramatic literature which included criticism, biographies, plays. Whenever he read anything worthwhile, he would recommend it to me and explain why it ought to be read. He used to distil its essence so exceedingly well that I would sleep with the book by my pillow. I've read it, I would tell him.

Quite unconsciously, these influences were at work—and it was during this period (when I was about eleven or twelve) that I saw the Prabhat film *Manoos*. I can't say that I fully understood the film but I was struck by the way its characters spoke—like real people. When the actor who played the policeman

spoke, I felt that it was a policeman speaking. It was the same when the prostitute spoke. The policeman's old mother, or the prostitute's drink-soaked uncle seemed real. You didn't feel that they were mouthing words written by someone else. You thought that the words were said on the spur of the moment, that they stemmed naturally from the situation. At that point in time I found this captivating and wonderful. It was so unlike the films I had seen till then, and certainly quite different from all the plays I had witnessed. I was overwhelmed by the 'true'ness of *Manoos*. Afterwards I saw the film many times over. I learnt from it how characters ought to speak. *Manoos* taught me the art of dialogue. The dialogues for the film were by Anant Kanekar.

When I was about sixteen or seventeen, I used to while away the hours I played truant from school (because I didn't want this to be known at home) watching excellent American films, all paid for by my tuition fees. Whether I understood a film or not, I was there in the cinema house. The Second World War raged. It was a time when (among others) Greta Garbo, Norma Shearer, Greer Garson, Joan Crawford, Paul Muni, Leslie Howard, Charles Laughton, Clark Gable, Spencer Tracy, Robert Taylor, Eroll Flynn reigned. The American and British films of the time were informed by a kind of romantic idealism. I saw again and again *Emile Zola*, *Louis Pasteur*, *The Good Earth*, *How Green Was My Valley*, *The Citadel*, *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, *Blossoms in the Dust*, *Romeo and Juliet* and other well-known films. Not that I grasped all that was depicted but the films left their mark. They did not contribute directly to an understanding of drama, but I feel that there is some kind of relationship between those films and my plays. Theme, story, build-up of situations, contours of characters and, most important of all, the life-view which formed their base influenced me greatly.

Aside from excerpts in school text-books, what is called classical Marathi drama hardly left any impression on me during those intermediate years. I think that it was the films of the time which shaped me.

The magic of the stage first captured my heart during an open-air performance at Marine Lines. The Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangh used to organise a festival of plays every year. Deval's *Zunjarrao* (an adaptation of *Othello*) was being staged that evening. Baburao Pendharkar (already renowned for his portrayal of the villain in films) was to make his first appearance as *Zunjarrao*. Desdemona was going to be played by Snehaprabha Pradhan. K. Narayan Kale, and (if I am not mistaken) Chintamanrao Kolhatkar, Raja Paranjpe and other well-known artistes formed the cast. P. L. Deshpande was on the organ. I had watched many performances in that *mandap* but the atmosphere on that particular evening was different. It was charged with the enthusiasm, the air of expectancy of thousands of spectators. A tremor passed through the crowd when the third bell rang and the curtain parted. The clear and vibrant words of Chintamanrao Kolhatkar reached us, and drew a response. But the audience was waiting for the entry of *Zunjarrao*. Baburao Pendharkar entered, wearing the dazzling costume of the Moor—and there was no applause! For an instant, sudden silence descended on the huge audience. Then a drawing in of breath, a sigh from the whole mass gathered there. I was way behind in a seat among the last rows. But to this day I seem to hear that drawing in of the breath. The masterful presence of the resplendent, haughty and untamed *Zunjarrao*, the lighted area of the stage and

the sigh emitted by thousands of spectators under an open sky. I experienced for the first time in my life a revelation of the magic of the theatre. The very core of my being awoke to the realization of what a shattering experience a play could be. Perhaps the night had something to do with my becoming a playwright.

What is a play? A text? Words, dialogue? Word delivery and the rise and fall of the voice? Hand gestures, facial expressions? All this was part of the plays I had witnessed. And, of course, there was the setting to indicate where and when the action was taking place. . . . Around 1947 or 1948, a British troupe came to perform here. At that time such occurrences were rare. They were to do scenes from Shakespeare in the Capitol Cinema (which was once a playhouse). Those days I used to work for a newspaper and my father and I lived in a book godown. I took him with me, hoping to show him a specimen of Western theatre. Among the items we watched were one or two scenes from *Hamlet*. The show got over and for quite some time my father didn't utter a word. When I questioned him, he said "I have seen Ganpatrao Joshi's *Hamlet* several times over. We used to believe that *Hamlet* could be portrayed by Ganpatrao Joshi and him alone and without doubt he was a great actor. But what I watched then was not *Hamlet*, but Ganpatrao Joshi. I realised this after I saw tonight's performance. Today we saw the play *Hamlet*."

What my father gleaned through this comparison, I understood quite independently in my own way. The words in *Hamlet* have their own natural rhythm. It was effectively expressed in the performance through the movements of the characters and particularly those of the actor who played *Hamlet*. These movements on the stage had a sense of rhythm, a consistency and meaning, a touch of beauty. This controlled motion held the audience and indirectly helped to convey the essence of the play. The visual and the aural did not function as separate entities but merged to create the performance. This was new to me. I used to see characters on the stage enter, depart, rise or sit down—simply to serve the plot of the play or because they wanted to. This particular performance taught me that these physical actions had something to do with the latent meaning of the play and the glow in a performance.

Of course, I never saw Natvarya Nanasaheb Phatak in his prime. But I did see him act in his later years and in one performance I witnessed something that I'll never forget. A play by Kamatnurkar called 'Shree', presented by Lalitkaldarsha, with noted actors like Bhalchandra Pendharkar, Chintamanrao Kolhatkar, Master Dattaram in the cast. Nanasaheb Phatak was doing the role of the young Kusumakar, still in his twenties. He had played the part years ago when the play was first staged. He was young then; now he was an old man, and looked it. His heart was not in the performance. The other actors performed with the utmost sincerity. He, on the other hand, was listless, coming in, going out, saying his lines without a flicker of energy or interest. As the performance limped on, the veteran actor increasingly became a target of the audience's displeasure. The other artistes were seen desperately trying to hold the play together while Nanasaheb was in the process of demolishing it. Then came a scene when Kusumakar, who has left his home at a tender age, returns. . . . He is now a criminal, and is hiding behind an almirah in his own home. He hears his father speak to someone about his misdeeds. The remarks wound Kusumakar to a point where he emerges out of his hiding place



and says, "I wasn't like that. I didn't want to be a criminal. You made me into one". It was a longish speech. . . The elderly Nanasaheb, quite unconvincing in the role of young Kusumakar, faced his father, who, in fact, looked young enough to be his son. Nanasaheb began his accusation—his words faltered at first—and suddenly they sounded true. The heavy and hoarse voice became (heaven alone knows how) tender, spontaneous. I don't recall what happened afterwards. The voice I remember—coming in waves, piercing the heart. A plaint, a bleeding wound was embodied in the voice and the words compelled us to forget the discordant and insipid spectacle on the stage. At that moment I did not see the aged Nanasaheb and the actor who played the role of his father. Before me stood a tender and sensitive youngster and his stern disciplinarian of a father. Towards the end of his speech Nanasaheb felt he had said a sentence wrong. In trying to say it right, he said it wrong and a loud *tuch . . . tuch* rose from the audience. Then derisive laughter. Nanasaheb retreated into the earlier 'detached' attitude and the play bundled to a close.

Of course, theatre is illusion. But there can be a false and a true illusion. All of a sudden an actor's voice had cast its spell on us. Right before our eyes the performance transcended all kinds of barriers to become a 'true' illusion. The voice held us for the time being, conveyed to us a real hurt. So real that the jarring and ugly spectacle on the stage disappeared and the voice created another vision—that of our imagination. The voice we heard at that moment was neither theatrical nor jaded; it was vibrant and true. I encountered here another element of the magic of theatre. False theatre, true theatre. What's real in the play. What's real in actual life. The 'real' in the theatre (for the time being) eclipsed the 'real' in actual life. The voice, and the voice alone, triumphed over what was visible to build a total illusion. Granted that theatre is a visual medium but pure sound (*nada*) or words can sometimes on their own bring life into a play and even keep it alive.

I was to learn later that a performance could speak with utter truth and exceptionally well *without* sounds or words and in total silence, literally banishing them from the theatre.

A French 'mimic' named Marcel Marceau was performing in Bombay. Today the word 'mime' is familiar enough in our theatre circles. Those days the word was not unknown but still a stranger to us. I went to the performance, curious to find out what 'mime' was all about. The final performance (in Bombay) was at the Birla Matushri Sabhagar and I managed with difficulty to get a seat in the last row. Between me and the stage was a mass of spectators. It was a full house.

The performance began with one of Marceau's associates standing silently on the stage, carrying a board on which was written a single word, conveying the theme of what was to follow. Then Marceau enacted it, without words or sound. He had no aids except his body. No sets, props or actors playing other roles. The body was clothed in tight-fitting, stretch clothes. The face was smeared with white—like a clown's.

The performance started with simple, everyday situations. Walking, walking fast, climbing. Walking in the face of a storm, with its whirl and roar, and dragging

every step. Marceau was 'walking' glued to a spot—demonstrating every manner of walk. What he expressed was the human determination—at times a mindless determination—to walk in the teeth of opposition or adversity. Then Marceau became the cyclist in love with his bicycle. Of course, there was no bicycle. He created its presence through his movements. He offered a glimpse of the small, charming details of this relationship. He got on this 'false' bicycle and rode it with fluid ease. Avoiding collisions, he cycled with skill and caution through a crowded thoroughfare. He negotiated a climb, then a steeper climb with increased dexterity, panting a little later because of the unbearable strain on his body. He was bathed in perspiration. . . At long last, relaxed and carefree, he wheeled down a slope.

The entire audience (and they were not 'experts') sat enthralled by this slim body and its movements. There were no props, the face was masked and not a sound was uttered on the stage. For an hour and a half Marceau conducted a genuine dialogue with more than a thousand spectators. He communicated experiences of life at various levels. He made us laugh, he had us stricken with fear. He made us sit up and think. He was a cyclist, a studio-photographer, a man-about-town, a submissive husband leading a dog by the leash, a sculptor. Then Chaplin, David and Goliath. All this in those same tight-fitting stretch clothes. Through the sole medium of his body. With the clown-like mask on the face and remaining practically at the same spot throughout. . .

Time, space, distances, people, things—were all absent, but made 'real' by a single touch of mime. So real that you could actually see. When Marceau became the studio-photographer he had us visualizing the presence of a whole family (with its own share of oddballs) gathered to have a picture taken. Wordlessly, he seemed engaged in tackling an irksome clan. The stage came alive with an (imaginary) group of people around whom Marceau, as photographer, fussed.

For a second, Marceau's face was human but his hands became butterflies. A hand became the butterfly, then the net, then once again the butterfly; he was the detached observer, watching the scene. In a corner his body shrunk to express David and emerged almost immediately with the giant proportions of Goliath. The fight took place with a kind of screen between and it was so real that we couldn't bring ourselves to believe that there weren't two antagonists locked in mortal combat right in front of us.

Someone has fun using a lot of masks and he gets trapped into one. He is paralysed with fear and, after a lot of effort, as he frees himself of the mask, you see the tremendous relief he experiences. Marceau presented the situation in two or three minutes but his mime had the same, if not greater impact than a full-length play. Without words, characters, props but, more importantly, without a face. Because the face was covered with a clown's make-up and could not express anything independently. Marceau's sole mode of expression was his body.

The performance astounded me. In the days that followed I felt an aversion for words. I didn't want to hold a pen in my hand, to mouth words. I felt that nothing spoken could be as effective, direct and unadulterated as Marceau's mime. This body language could vanquish words. It was universal, basic and poetic. Though it attained philosophical levels, it was accessible to all. It was so simple

to understand. So, why use words at all? Words tended to confuse: what you had to say couldn't be communicated as lucidly as Marceau could and it might even be lost in passage.

The writer in me felt deflated after Marceau's performance. I realised the limitations of my medium. This sort of realization is necessary. It's a corrective, alerting you to the euphoria created by words. You begin to use them with care and a sense of responsibility. You become aware of a meaning that lies beyond words. You think of ways of capturing it without words. In short, Marceau's performance forced me to re-examine the medium of theatre, and to pay attention to its non-verbal components.

A little before Marceau's performance, I had witnessed the staging of *Kaksha (Boundaries)* by Tara Vanarase. It was the story of a girl who had decided to devote her life to her parents. A young man of rather ordinary calibre, a kind of dependent in the household, loves her but she doesn't care for him. She is in love with an intelligent and handsome young man. But she doesn't have the courage to marry him and leave her home. So she is afraid to express her love for him in words. The young man senses her feelings, would like her to respond and agree to marry him. Since this has not happened, he is annoyed with her. He gets his medical degree and decides to go abroad. He comes to her house with sweets (to celebrate his passing the exam), distributes them, and, when he offers some to her, says a little bitingly, "I'm going."

The last scene was being enacted. The girl stood at the door of the kitchen. Her father and the young man (the dependent) were in the centre of the stage. The hero was on his way out, at the door.

At this point the light on the stage was extinguished. It came on again—almost at once. The heroine called out to the departing hero: "Wait." The father and the dependent stared at her in surprise. The hero stopped at the door. She began to speak, pouring out her love, her suppressed passion. She raged against her own defeatist attitude and stepped forward with stern resolution to take the hero's hand. "Take me with you. I am yours." Or something to this effect. She walked out of the house with the hero. Again the lights on the stage were extinguished.

In a few seconds, the lights came on. The heroine was standing at the door of the kitchen. Motionless like a statue. Silent. She was staring at the door through which the hero had left. Her father and the dependent were watching the scene as though nothing had happened. In any case, nothing was going to happen now.

Actually nothing happened and yet a lot did happen. Nothing happened but a lot did happen for an instant in the girl's imagination—something that the audience wanted to happen, what they actually did see happening before them—but then it never did happen—and what was communicated to me was the heart-rending chasm dividing the two. That the heroine's mental dam was breached, that she walked out with the hero towards a better future was depicted on the stage and immediately afterwards, through a change in the light arrangements,

she was shown, still in her father's house, weak and defeated. The awareness of her situation was frightening. And it had been effected by an ordinary technical device.

It's not a novel technique and it wasn't so unusual to employ it—even in those times. But the performance left an imprint on my mind. The hero left and what the girl experienced was directly communicated to me without words.

The performance set me thinking. How can one translate into another medium this 'experience' which the spectator undergoes in theatre? It can't be achieved in this living manner in a novel, a poem, or a painting. The cinema, believed to be a more potent medium than theatre, cannot evoke this 'experience' in the spectator. The experience can be 'related', 'explained' and effectively 'portrayed'. But in the medium of film, the experience cannot be simultaneously evoked on the stage and among spectators. This can only happen in theatre. The performance of *Kaksha* reinforced my faith in theatre and demonstrated this distinctive power of the medium.

The realisation dawned on me once again in yet another manner when I saw a remarkable Russian film-version of *Hamlet*. Like Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet*, it was not merely a filming of the play. It treated the play as raw material for the creation of a film called *Hamlet*. The director sought to match his cinematic technique with Shakespeare's dramatic devices and to create through the film the impact of the play.

There is a scene in Act Three. The King, in a repentant mood, is at the front of the stage. Hamlet, boiling with rage, is at the back. Each delivers his soliloquy, independently. It's an incredibly 'theatrical' situation. Shakespeare, while he carries the story forward, tells us a great deal about the relationship of the two—and in a brief and telling manner. The scene cannot be conceived with Hamlet without the King, or the King without Hamlet, or the King alone at first and Hamlet by himself later.

This 'theatrical' scene could not fit as a visual in the Russian film, where the director was determined to interpret *Hamlet* in purely cinematic language. And what 'specifically' cinematic device did he adopt to convey the rich and complex appeal of the scene? Perhaps the film maker was at a loss, and used a worn stratagem. He had the repentant King face a mirror—and in doing so accepted defeat at the hands of the theatre medium.

But what is theatre? A story told through dialogue? Ideas propounded by various characters? Is it what the playwright writes for the purposes of a performance? Or is a play something that has purely literary value? We brood over these problems. As far as I am concerned, the problem was solved, to some extent, when I saw a performance of 'Dear Liar'.

It was staged by a British troupe. 'Dear Liar' is not a play in the conventional sense of the word. The text wasn't meant to be 'played' on the stage and it contained no conscious awareness of literary values. Here were old and intimate letters written by two individuals. One was a man and the other a woman. The

theatre's connection with these letters (and it was an important one) lay in the fact that the man who wrote them was George Bernard Shaw and the woman was the famous British actress of the time — Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Their relationship could, in the normal run of things, be described as a love affair. But there was in it more of bickering than love, more verbal skirmishes than poetry. But running like a thread through all this was a strong mutual attraction.

Actually, the performance was a 'reading' of the letters by an actor and an actress. They did not supplement the text with their own words; there were no technical gimmicks. The set was an area suggesting a division into a drawing-room and a study. On one side was the actor reading Shaw's letters. On the other, an actress reading Mrs. Campbell's. Both held their scripts in their hands but they knew their lines. A short introduction by the actor doing Shaw's 'role' and the 'letter-reading' commenced. It maintained such a pace that I was hardly aware that the intermission had been announced. And the post-intermission part was even more gripping.

The performance had the glow of first-rate theatre. The audience laughed and was serious in the right places. It responded as readily to the repartees in the letters as it would have to sparkling dialogue. Something was taking shape in front of us. The characters were coming alive. Like a play, the reading blossomed, evolved, moved forward. Towards the end I felt exhilarated—I had seen an excellent (and a different kind of) play. A senior and successful dramatist-director of the time was sitting next to me, watching this 'different kind of play'. When we rose after the performance, he smiled, rather maliciously, and said "So, whatever the Sahibs do is first-rate."

The performance was not just exhilarating. It had me thinking. This wasn't a play of the usual kind. The words were not intended for the stage, not even for the ears of outsiders. Even so this letter-reading was as engrossing as a play. How did it manage to fulfil all the expectations that we harbour about a play? And if this reading could be so effective on the stage why should one regard it as 'inferior' in any way to a play? Why not stage such 'plays'? A realistic play had necessarily to be a text (meant to be staged), with two (or, if possible, three) acts, a regular story-line, and several characters. Not merely that. Its presentation had to be realistic. Such was the staunch belief of all of us—the young theatre practitioners of those days. We gave second place to Puranic, historical or verse plays. It was important that the dramatist should write a play and the director present it in a 'realistic' manner. In the advertisements and the printed versions we used to emphasize the fact that it was a realistic social play.

Around the time a Drama Festival was organised in Calcutta by its leading theatre groups, the aim being to collect funds for a playhouse. Shombhu Mitra was the moving spirit behind this endeavour. Arvind Deshpande and I decided to attend the Festival in the hope that it would afford us a fairly consistent picture of the Bengali theatre scene.

Shombhu Mitra presented *Barbar Banshi*, a social play. He had had it written for the occasion and directed it himself. The play depicts the tragic plight of an ordinary middle-class individual, struggling to live according to Gandhian

ideals. He is accused of malpractice and fired from his job. Almost destitute, he shifts his family to a slum. His own values are at odds with this environment. The family faces a series of difficulties and his beliefs seem to be not just ineffectual but wrong. There is a scene where a *goonda* enters his home and kills his son in front of the family.

The performance had progressed well enough; it had begun to hold the audience. Now this particular scene was about to be enacted. In keeping with the 'realistic' theme and presentation, was a naked bulb hanging on a wire. Suddenly it was extinguished. The stage came to be bathed in red light as the murder sequence was being enacted. Then the red light was put out and the naked bulb was again lit. The play continued.

I didn't go backstage to meet Shombhu Mitra. The red light had jarred my senses. I met him on the following day and he asked me what I thought of the play. I was their guest, I fumbled a little. Then I said: "I liked it but there was one thing about which I wasn't quite convinced. It jarred somewhat. I don't see how a director like you could do such a thing." If there was a touch of impudence in my remark, Shombhu Mitra chose to ignore it. He asked me quietly, "What was it you found jarring?"

I think my reply was a little outspoken: "What place has this kind of red light in a 'realistic' play? Where did it come from? And what's more important—the naked bulb in that 'room' on the stage went out. Why? Who extinguished it? And how come it was lit again? What's the justification?"

Shombhu Mitra was silent for a moment and I thought I had put him in a spot. Then he answered me calmly. The tone was sympathetic. "I have seen many of the realistic plays on your Marathi stage. You have mikes in front of the stage or hanging down from above. What's the 'realistic' justification for these amplification arrangements? Is realism or naturalism an ism like Gandhism or Communism or Socialism? Is it an ideology? I agree that we should stand firmly by our principles. But is realism an ideology or is it a style of stage presentation? A technique? If it's a technique for staging plays, should it be considered more important than the play and its thematic content? Is the impact important or 'realistic' technique for its own sake? Is a battle important or the kind of weapon used? Weapons in the service of a battle or a battle in the service of weapons?"

I was in a quandary. Shombhu Mitra continued to speak: "In my kind of theatre, we consider the thematic content more important than the technique. The technique is significant only to the extent it helps to communicate the essence of the play to spectators. I am ready to adopt any mechanism if it helps to make the performance more effective. Do our spectators expect or prefer a particular technique? Do they insist on 'purity' of techniques? They are accustomed to the use of a whole number of techniques in a play or *khela*? Why shouldn't we take advantage of their attitude to achieve the right impact through our plays? If the performance is not likely to be 'false', or if it is not going to interfere in any way with the thrust of the theme, I will use every kind of technique to ensure the right kind of impact on the audience. I will extinguish or bring in lights in a 'realistic' play without any kind of logical explanation and, if necessary, I will even upturn the whole stage."

Shombhu Mitra spoke calmly and the expression on his face was introspective. He didn't mean for a minute to sermonise me. But I did learn a lot from what he had to tell me. He had literally dragged me out of the clutches of mistaken and obstinate beliefs.

Later I had an opportunity to go to the States. As I watched the experimental plays in the off-off Broadway playhouses, I began to shed my concepts of theatre. I learnt that there could be many, many kinds of theatre. We were used to performing plays that would satisfy our spectators. The experimental plays I watched there started off by depriving the spectator of his cover and his mask and then confronting him with a disturbing play. What we would have considered impossible was for them a casual, everyday affair. We had fixed notions of what a playhouse should be. They offered countless examples of cellars, garages, stables and dilapidated sheds serving as playhouses.

I went to the Black Theatre to watch a performance of *Ain't supposed to die a natural death*. The majority of the audience was black and the play a scathing indictment of the plight of negroes in America. The hero is, naturally enough, a young black. He pines for a good life but the situation around pushes him into becoming a criminal. Towards the end, the guardians of law and order ambush him. The young body, ridden with bullets and writhing in pain, is shown in the throes of death. It seemed to me to be an extraordinarily effective climax to the play. But the performance didn't stop there. Undeterred by the presence of the police, a wretched old hag limped to the centre of the stage and, with the corpse for testimony, bitterly cursed the blacks for putting up with their misery. Instruments produced grim and strident music to match the vehement rhythm of her speech. To me this final sequence seemed an unnecessary accretion. The story of the young black, the manner of his death—he was wiped out like a rat or a mongoose—was effective enough to communicate the point of the play.

Backstage, I was introduced to the director. He asked me my reactions. I said: "Everything was quite effective. The play had a powerful ending when your boy died. What was the point of the old woman's rhetoric at the end? The killing of the boy said everything there was to say." He smiled: "You didn't like the end. That's alright. It wasn't meant for you. It is for our black audiences. Our theatre is addressed to them and the last speech is meant for them. We feel they need to listen to those words. They are not for you."

The last sentence was like a slap in the face. But it was also an eye-opener. For whom is a play intended? For an audience? An audience rooted in the very same background from which the play stems. An audience sharing its traditions, tastes and its ambience. Stage any play you want to—but these are your audiences and your play is meant for them. They will decide its fate. It is they who will laugh or weep during its performance. It is they who may sit up and think or get plain bored. The rest of the world may applaud or discard your work—that's of secondary importance.

So I studied theatre in the theatre itself; I studied theatre in films and studied theatre even in music.

I am not very familiar with the *shastra* of music and I have never felt a strong urge to study it. But in my own way I love classical music. There was a time when I attended innumerable concerts. Now I always have records or cassettes of classical music for company. There is in the music of Ameer Khan, Bhimsen Joshi, Pandit Jasraj, Kumar Gandharva, Kishori Amonkar and Jitendra Abhisheki a genuine instinct for the dramatic. A good play has its own structure, weave, rhythm and pace. (The pace, in keeping with the play's theme, may perhaps be at times very very slow but it is always a controlled pace.) I discovered all these elements in classical music in addition, of course, to the sheer joy of listening to it. In this respect, Kishori Amonkar's music teaches me a great deal. Besides, it has one more important element: it is spontaneous, improvised 'on the spur of the moment' and yet it has an extremely assured awareness of structure. A particular recital may click or not click. But it never sprawls, is never distended, and never moves forward piecemeal, in jerks. It brings to mind the movement of the lines of an accomplished painter. The painting in itself may be perfect or not quite so, but that it is organically unified is taken for granted. I believe that a good play or performance must embody this quality.

Sometimes activities wholly unrelated to art contribute to a better awareness of its essential quality. Freestyle wrestling is one such example. Armed with a season pass (to which I was entitled, being a newsman), I regularly visited the Vallabhbhai Patel Stadium at Worli.

"These freestyle contests are not 'contests' at all. They are performances enacted for viewers with the outcome predetermined, settled in advance." This used to be the common objection raised against this kind of wrestling by ardent fans of Indian wrestling. But I never could see the point of this kind of argument. We don't hold it against good theatre or, for that matter, all theatre because it is 'theatre'. "This is happening before us"—the illusion has to be successfully maintained for an hour or so—that's all we ask. The enactment must be well-planned and well-orchestrated. Performances are not 'spur of the moment' enactments though the illusion of 'spur of the moment' is important. Quite a few of the wrestling bouts which I saw were excellent theatre. I still recall that they made me hold my breath or miss a heart beat. The wrestling arena held a hero and a villain. Maybe both were heroes in a sense. The roles played in the wrestling arena by these 'actors' were projected in the advertisements through fresh gimmicks. They were shown masked or *burkha*-clad. Their entries were 'dramatic', their dialogue with the spectators was (in its own fashion) well-rehearsed. The way they were 'presented' to the spectators had its 'theatrical' angle. The commentator raised expectations to a pitch. The rounds themselves were so 'arranged' that they had to be gripping. Thousands of spectators used to be madly involved in the contest. They were smitten when they saw their hero cornered, or in torment, lacerated by (artificial) pain. They roared and danced with joy, when he was winning. They hurled abuses at his rival. "*Maro saleko, lagao, bagal de, samhalke re*", they yelled. The whole stadium screamed advice, was on its feet dancing, roaring. I did the same. I clapped hundreds of times—unreservedly.

Those bouts were sheer melodrama. But the contest between Dara Singh and Randhava had neither the elements of deafening noise or crude drama. These two were like a pair of hissing snakes engaged in fatal combat, casting snare after

snare. The wrestler would free himself of one only to find it replaced by yet another. The rounds continued. The whole stadium held its breath, and watched them in frozen silence. Every single moment—something new, unexpected happened. The audience watched, not wanting to miss a single move. Not a howl, not a single act of frenzy. A tightly welded, sinewy performance unfolded and cast its magic spell. It was a thrilling experience. Those wrestling bouts were a kind of theatre which taught me all the distinctive elements in the construction of a play.

I think that each one has to decide for himself his own drama technique. Its general norms can at best be a guide but put together they do not add up to create a good play. And some of the world's best plays are exceptions to most of these norms. You have to have the medium of the theatre flowing in your bloodstream and stamped in your brain—then perhaps you might get to write a good play. And if you manage to write one good play in your whole life—that's some achievement. Because after my experiences with several other media, I now realise that theatre is the most difficult of all. Quite often, your play may be good but not 'theatre' or it might be 'theatre' but not so good!

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## Swati Tirunal's Contribution to Dance

V. Raghavan

Swati Tirunal has a place in the history of Indian classical dance. His *kriti-s* are often heard in our concerts but it may not be so widely known that of the 300 and odd compositions by the Maharajah, a substantial part, over 80, relate to dance. The presence of Vadivelu (of the Tanjore Quartette) at his court added this additional dimension to the Maharajah's creative efforts and his zest for this art. Their collaboration was most fruitful and the Maharajah's work is further proof of the fact that music and dance are two lotuses borne on the same stalk.

Tanjore Subba Rao, initially the Maharajah's tutor and then his Dewan, was himself a lover of music and dance, and was instrumental in bringing to the Maharajah's court famous *devadasi* dancers from Tanjore, Srirangam, Tiruchendur and other centres in the Tamil country. Subba Rao wrote in one of his letters that there was no end to music and dance in the palace. The visit and performances of the *Sadir* artistes from the Tamil districts were responsible for the development of the solo performance called Mohini Attam, whose origins and evolution in Kerala are otherwise obscure.

The Maharajah's dance-compositions cover all forms of dance music, *Chowka* or *Pada-Varna-s*, *Svarajati-s*, *Pada-s*, *Javali-s* and *Tillana-s*. Most of his *Chowka* or *Pada-Varna-s*, 17 of them, are in Sanskrit and his skill is to be seen not only in the use of this medium for the expression of the moods and feelings of love, but also for the attainment of *Svarakshara* beauties. The texts of some of these *Pada-Varna-s* have not been correctly handed down or printed and I had to put in some hard work on the texts of two of these Sanskrit *Pada-Varna-s* (*Sa Vama Rusha* in *Kamas* and *Dani Samajendra* in *Todi*). Some of these Sanskrit *Varna-s* have a common *Dhatu* with the Telugu *Varna-s* of the Tanjore Quartette: for example, *Sa Vama Rusha* in *Kamas* has its Telugu counterpart in *Sami Ni Rammanave*; *Dani Samajendra* in *Todi* has its counterpart, not in *Danike* in the same *raga*, but in another in the same *raga*, *Dani Sati*.

In *Dani Samajendra*, the *Nayika*, pining in separation (*Virahotkanthita*) speaks to her *sakhi* of the pangs of suffering. "Since Lord Padmanabha does not come, I suffer. The vernal days which delight women are barren for me because they have been ignored by Lord Padmanabha. Every night I think of Him. The bees sing; on the boughs of the tree, cuckoos coo poignantly. He gave me his word of honour and it abides in my heart. That Padmanabha, Lord of Lakshmi, the remover of all sufferings, the speaker of honeyed words, and He, of the soft smiles, do make Him benign towards me! I am lying here alone with my arm for pillow. Who is there to protect me but Him? Where can the Ganga go except to the sea? Go to my Lord, see that my heart's desire for realising manifold happiness with my Lord is fulfilled. The night has drawn to a close; the sun is already on the east, ending the *koka* bird's separation from its companion. The cool, fragrant morning breeze is blowing from the south. Ah! my dear girl, bring

quickly to me that abode of excellence and taste, Lord Padmanabha." The meaning of the *Varna* helps the spectator to follow it as it is being sung. One can notice the *Svarakshara* beauties which start with the beginning of the *Pallavi* itself. A *Pada-Varna*, is, compared to a *Kriti*, a multi-splendoured thing which has to be watched very closely with knowledge and attention. The build-up of the interlaced *Jati-s* in the different *nadai-s*, the alternating *Svara-Sahitya* passages, the repeated endings of progressively increasing bars of the *Svara-s* in a particular *Svara*, the *Muttayi* or *Ettukkada Pallavi* and the sequence of *Svara* and *Sahitya* passages, which return to the *Ettukkada Pallavi*, the *Tatti-muttu-s* in each, in which the song, the *attam* and the *abhinaya* figure together—all these make the *Pada Varna-s* unique creations in the history of dance in any part of the world. (See Appendix One).

Swati Tirunal was also a linguist. Although his main linguistic medium for creative work was Sanskrit, he composed in Malayalam, Telugu and also in Hindustani. Naturally he knew Tamil, which was in closest proximity to his mother-tongue. So far, no Tamil compositions of his are known. But I was lucky to learn of his Tamil *Varna* in Kalyani and Adi which K. P. Sivanandam, descendant of Vadivelu, brought to my notice from his family manuscripts. Many years ago, I collected, in my own native place, Tiruvarur, some palm-leaf music manuscripts, one of which was full of *Shabda-s*; two of these *Shabda-s* were on Swati Tirunal and were unknown in Kerala and I published them in the Journal of the Music Academy, Madras. Music manuscripts in the Tanjore District are, therefore, likely to yield more discoveries of music material relating to Swati Tirunal.

Personally I think that Swati Tirunal touched the high water-mark of his creative work in his *Pada-s*. There are at least 66 *Pada-s* of the Maharajah so far known: 50 in Malayalam or Manipravalam, 11 in Sanskrit and 5 in Telugu. Of the 33 *raga-s* used for these *Pada-s*, 6 are rare ones: Purvakambhoji, Malavasri, Saindhavi, Ghanta, Gauri and Navarasa. He also created a long unusual *Ragamalika-Pada* in 8 *raga-s* ending with Bibhas or Bhupala. An interesting fact about this *Varna* is that there is a Telugu counterpart of this on Lord Venkateshwara, supplying *Sahitya* for the *Chittasvara* portion and with *raga* Ahiri in place of *raga* Nadanamakriya. Among the *Pada-s* of the Maharajah which are better known are *Kalakanthi* (Nilambari), *Valapu Tala* (Athana), *Alarsaraparitapam* (Surati), *Itusahasamulu* (Saveri) and *Aliveni* (Kurunji). The invitation (in recent years) to several dancers to the Navratri Mandapam recital in Trivandrum provided an opportunity for learning more *Pada-s* of the Maharajah.

In the Sanskrit *Pada-s*, there are echoes of Jayadeva and Kshetrajna. *Viditam Te* (Surati) and *Sadhu Jane Tavasayam* (Athana), both depicting the *Khandita Nayika*, bear the impress of one of the *Ashtapadi-s* in Canto VIII of the *Gita Govinda* (*Yahi Madhava Yahi Kesava*), with an expression which is close to Jayadeva in some places. In *Entu Mama Sadanattil* in Kalyani, the offended lady sarcastically asks her erring lover whether he had come to a wrong house, mistaking hers for that of the other woman. In the Sanskrit pieces, *Virahotkanthita* and *Khandita Nayika-s* feature prominently since they are the most common ones.

One of the *Pada-s* depicts the rare *Nayika*-type called *Duti-sambhogavanchita*, one betrayed by the messenger girl who went to bring the incorrigible

*Nayaka* but succumbed to his advances. This is a type depicted by Amaruka and following him a few Sanskrit poets. A Tamil *Pada* on this theme is the one in Saveri. *Unnait Toodanuppinen Ennadi Nadandadu Ulladu Uraippai Sakhiye*; 'I sent you as my messenger. What actually happened? Tell me the truth'. Following more closely the Sanskrit verse *Svasah Kim, Tvarita Gamad*, on this *Nayika* type, Swati Tirunal has a Manipravala *Pada* in Poorvakambhoji, in *tala* Atanta (*Kamini Mani Sakhi Tava Mukha Innu*). Seeing the different patent marks of dalliance on the maid's limbs, the *Nayika* questions her; the maid gives her evasive replies and is finally caught:

My friend, you most lovable one.  
Why has your face perspired so much?  
*Because of the heat of the sun.*

Why have your beautiful eyes become redder?  
*Your lover uttered all manner of things and I grew angry on your behalf.*

Young lady, your dark tresses are all dishevelled; why?  
*Well, a breeze has been blowing all along the way.*

How has the *kumkum* paste been rubbed off?  
*Through drawing over my upper garment too often.*

Your whole body is emaciated!  
*Ah! I went up and down to him so many times for you.*

All that you say is true. Listen! Is not this mark on your lip  
that of the lovable Shri Padmanabha who has had a happy time with you?

For poetic charm, we may cite the *Surati Pada* (*Manasi-Madana-Tapam*) in which the *Nayaka* addresses the *Nayika*. The lover compares his mind to a poor deer. It is hit by the arrows of the hunter Cupid, now caught in the dark thickets of the beloved's heavy tresses, now climbing the mountains of her high breasts, and then descending.

Then there is the Telugu *Pada* of Swati Tirunal and another in Malayalam or Manipravala. First *Valaputala* in Athana. It is a lady's plaint addressed to the *Sakhi*. "Can I endure the effects of this love? Is it proper for my Lord to tarry like this? My girl! Padmanabha, beautiful like the flower-arrowed Lord of Love, has ignored me now. Ever since I was young, I have believed that He was very compassionate towards me. My heart is completely overpowered by Cupid. My luck has deserted me." (See Appendix Two).

The second *Pada* is *Jalajabandhumih* in Surati. Here also the separated lady addresses the *Sakhi*. "The sun is dipping into the sea. The southern breeze begins to blow. Alas, my friend, I am no longer able to control my mind. It is difficult to tell you how intense are my pangs of love. Delusion is overtaking my mind; my limbs are sagging. The breeze from the flower-garden, the warblings of the bees, increase my suffering, O friend!" (See Appendix Three).







( तेलुङ्गपदम् )

अठाणरागः—चापुतालः

पल्लवी

वलपु तालवशमा ना सामिकि  
चसलमुसेय न्यायमा

(वलपु)

अनुपल्लवी

अल्लगुविस्तुनिसमानुडौ श्रीपद्मनाभुडु  
नेलतयिपुडु नन्नु निराकरिचने

(वलपु)

चरणानि

चिरुतप्रायमुनाडे चिगुरुबाणि वानि  
करुणासागरुडानि कलिकि चसाल नम्मिति  
मरुनिषाणमुचात मगुव ना मनसेन्तो  
परवशमायने भाग्यमिटुलायने

(वलपु)

इलनु नाप्राणेशुडे मानिनितो गूडि  
जलजाक्षिमितिमीरि सरसलाडु चुसाडो  
पलुमारु ननु जूचि पलुकुलाडिनदेळ  
तेलियवचिनेवो चेलियरी ईवेळे

(वलपु)

सोमकिरणमु चात सागेसैन निञ्चटिरेयि  
राम राम नाकु रमणि युगमायने  
कामकेलिलो नन्नु कलचियुण्डनविभुडु  
नामीदनुच्च नेनरु नातिमरिचनेमो

(वलपु)

पल्लवी

(1) ; प म - प . प प म ग ॥ सा , पा , = ; प म पा ; ॥  
वल पु . ता . . . ॥ . . . व . श . ॥

नि सां नि पा = ; ; नीं निं शी ॥ सं नीं पा ; = पा व्य निं सं निं पा  
सा . . . . . जा . . . ॥ सा . . . . . मि . कि . . . ॥

(2) नीं पा मा = पा ; सा पा नि व ॥ ग ग सा , प - , प म पा ; सं ॥  
व ल पु . ता . . . ॥ . . . व . श . . . ॥

नि सां नि पा - ; ; निं सं रिं गं ॥ रिं सं निं पा , = पा , व्य नीं ; ॥  
सा . . . . . जा . . . ॥ सा . . . . . मि . कि . ॥

रिं सां सां = सं निं पा व्य नीं पा ॥ प म व्य प म ग = ग म प नि प म  
य स ल मु . . . सा . . . ॥ . . . य . . . व्या . . . य .  
रि म ॥

री ; सा - ; ; निं सं रिं गं ॥ रिं सं निं पा , = पा , व्य निं सं निं निं व्य ॥  
सा . . . . . जा . . . ॥ सा . . . . . मि . कि . . . ॥

(वलपु)

अनुपल्लवी

; पा मा = पा , सा सां ; ॥ सं रिं सं सं , = , व्य निं सां ; ॥  
अ ल गु . . . वि ल ॥ तु . नि . . . = . . . सा मा . ॥

सं नीं सं , = शी ; सां ; ॥ सं निं शी सां शी - निं सं निं व्य पा ; ॥  
नु . डौ . - श्री . प द ॥ ग . . . जा . . . मु . . . कु . ॥

; नीं सां = शी, सं सं शी सं ॥ सं ली शी सं शी = सं ली व्या व्या ; ॥  
 . ने ल - त . यि . . पु . . तु . न न . नु . ॥

; या, व्य = ; नीं, सां जां ॥ रि सं ली पा, = पा, व्य नीं सं ली व्य ॥ नीं  
 . नीं . श . क . रिं प्र ॥ च . . . . . ने . . . . . ॥  
 (वलपुताळवडामा)

अशां

; व्या व्या = व्या ; व्या ; ॥ व्या व्या ; = व्य पा व्य व्य नीं, ॥  
 . चि रु त . प्रा . य मु . न . . डे . . ॥

पा मा पा = सं ; सं ; ॥ सं ली शी सं ली प = प नि पा नि नि प म ॥  
 . चि गु रु . बा . पि . शी . . . . . वा . . नि . . . . . ॥

पा प म पा = नि सं व्या पा ; ॥ मा, व्य प म जा = ग म पा व्य नीं, ॥  
 . क . रु मा . . सा . ॥ जा . . रु . . तु . . जी . . ॥

; म रु - नि वा । जागु - चात । ; गं गु - व नो । म न - संतो ॥  
 ; प र - व श । मा - यते । ; आज्य - किदु । लो - यते ॥

वलपुताळवडामा

\* \* \*

Appendix Three

(मणिप्रवाळपदम्)

सुरदीरागः—चापुताळः

पल्लवी

अलरशरपरितापं बोद्धवति-

स्नळिषेणि पणि बाले

(अलर्)

अनुपल्लवी

जलजबन्धुमिह जलधियिलणयुन्नू

मलयमारुतमेरु मम मनमतितरां बत विवशमायि सखि (अलर्)

चरणानि

वळरुन्नु इदि मोहमेळोमले

तळरुन्नु मम देहं कळमोळि !

कुसुमवाटिकयतिलुळवायोरळिकुलारव-

मतिह केल्पतुमधिकमाधिनिदानमयि सखि

(अलर्)

शशियुं चेन्नलायी संप्रति सून-

शरनुम्मे रिपुवायी

शशधरनेरुमुखि सरसनोडिनि मेल्ले

भृशतरार्तयताम्ममाखिलशुचमये कथयाशु सुदति नी

(अलर्)

जळधरसदशशोभनेन्कांतन् श्री-

जळजाक्षनञ्जनाभन्

कलयति किमु कोपं करुणवेटिञ्जुळिल्लमलं

बत तामसन किमिह जवान्मम साधयेधिसतम्

(अलर्)

पल्लवि

; सां सां = सं ली नी व्य पा ; ॥ प नि व्य प म सा - सा, जा प, म ॥  
 . अ लर् श . . . . . र . ॥ प . . रि . . सा . . . . . ॥

म जा शी ; = ; ; ; रि म ॥ पा ; ; = ; ; रि म प नि ॥  
 प म . . . . . चोल् ॥ व . . . . . ति नू . . . . .

सां सां सं रि = सं ली नी व्य पा ; ॥ पा व्य प म सा - सा, जा म पा म ॥  
 . न लि . वे . . . . . पि . ॥ प . पि . . . . . ॥

ग प व्या नि व्य पा = गा, जा प म जा रि ॥ शी ; रि म = स शी स सा ; ॥  
 . . . . . ले . . . . . ॥ . . . . . ॥

<sup>2</sup> ; सं सं - सं लि नी व पा ; ॥ प लि व प म सा = सा, ग पा, म ॥  
 . अ ल र इ . . . र . ॥ य . . रि . . ता . . . . . ॥

म ग शी ; = रि म म सा रि म ॥ प सं लि व पा = पा, रि रि म प लि ॥  
 प म . . . . चो ल ॥ व . . . . . ति न् . . . ॥

सं सं नि रि सं = सं सं लि व पा ; ॥ रि म प सं लि व पा = म, ग म प म ॥  
 . न . लि . वे . . . जि ॥ प . . . जि . . बा . . . . . ॥

प म सा नि व = प म सा ग प म ग रि ॥ शी ; रि म = स शी स सा ; ॥  
 . . . . . ले . . . . . ॥ . . . . . ॥

"अलरइर"

अनुपलपि

(1) ; नी नि सं = नि व पा ; पा ॥ पा, पा, = प लि मा पा ; ॥  
 . ल . ल . ल . . . व ॥ व्यु . वु . मि . . ह . . ॥

; प म पा = पा नी नी ; ॥ सं सं लि नी व = नी सं सं ; ॥  
 . ल . ल . वि . वि . ॥ ल . ग . . . यु न् नु . ॥

<sup>2</sup> ; सं लि नि रि = सं सं लि नी व नि सं ॥ लि व प पा, = प लि मा म ; ॥  
 , ल . ल . ल . . . व न् ॥ व्यु . . वु . मि . . ह . . ॥

; ग पा = पा नी नी, ॥ सं रि सं लि नि व = नी सं सं ; ॥  
 . ल . ल . वि . वि . ॥ ल . ग . . . यु न् नु . ॥

सं लि सं = शी मं गं सं शी, सं ॥ सं सं लि नी, = नि व व नी सं शी ॥  
 म ल य मा . . रु . . र ॥ म . . . . ह . . म म ग न ॥

नि शी सं = सं लि नी व पा पा ॥ प लि व प म सा ग = रि मा स रि म प लि ॥  
 म ति त श ग . . व न ॥ वि . . वे . . इ . मा . वि स . र्वा . ॥

"अलरइर"

चरणं

; , ग मा = मा ; मा ; ॥ मा सा ; = सा, ग पा, म ॥  
 . व ल रु न् नु . ॥ ह्रि डि . मो . . . . . ॥

म ग शी ; = ; ; रि म ॥ पा ; ; = पा सं लि नि व लि सं लि व ॥  
 ह म . . . . न् ॥ नो . . ग . . . . . ॥

पा रि रि मा = पा सं लि नि व पा ; ॥ पा व प म म ग = सा, ग म प म ॥  
 . . त ल रु . . . न् नु . ॥ म . म . . . दे . . . . . ॥

म प व्या नि व पा = प म सा ग शी रि प ॥ म ग रि मा म = स रि म म म ॥  
 . . . . . ह म . . . क . ल . . . . . गो . वि  
 . . . . . ॥  
 . . . . . ॥

कुसुम । वाटिक । ; यतिलुळ । वाया ॥  
 शिबिकुलाश्व । गतिहृकेळपतु । मधिकमाधिन । दानमधि साधि ॥  
 "अलरइर"

\* \* \*

Appendix Four

श्लोकं

॥ रागमातिका ॥

कल्याणी खलु यत्कथा त्रिजगतां पापौघावेध्वंसिनी  
 यल्लावप्यमशेषगोपकमनीनेत्रैकसंभोहनम् ।  
 सारङ्गं बत नक्रभीतमगतिं योऽपालयत् सत्वरं  
 बाहुर्यस्य च शङ्कराभरणजित् पायात् स वः केशवः ॥



## Ramlila of Ramnagar: An Introduction

Richard Schechner<sup>1</sup>

### *Texts, Oppositions, and the Ganga River*

The subject of Ramlila, even Ramnagar Ramlila alone, is vast... It touches on several texts: *Ramayana* of Valmiki, never uttered, but present all the same in the very fibre of Rama's story; Tulsidasa's *Ramcharitmanas* chanted in its entirety from before the start of the performance of Ramlila to its end. I mean that the Ramayanis spend ten days before the first *lila* up on the covered roof of the small 'tiring house-green room next to the square where on the twenty-ninth day of the performance Bharata Milapa will take place; there on that roof the Ramayanis chant the start of the *Ramcharitmanas*, from its first word till the granting of Ravana's boon: "Hear me, Lord of the World (Brahma). I would die at the hand of none save man or monkey." Shades of Macbeth's meeting with the witches: "For none of woman born shall harm Macbeth." Ravana, like Macbeth, is too proud.

Nothing of this until the granting of Ravana's boon is heard by the Maharaja of Benares, or by the faithful daily audience called *nemi-s*, nor by the hundreds of *sadhu-s* who stream into Ramnagar for Ramlila summoned by Rama and by the Maharaja's generosity in offering *sadhu-s dharamshala-s* for rest and rations for the belly. The "*sadhu rations*" are by far the largest single expense in the Ramnagar Ramlila budget—Rs. 18,000 in 1976. Only the Ramayanis hear the start of the *Ramcharitmanas*—they and scholars whose job it is to "do and hear and see everything." But this, we soon discovered, is impossible: too many things happen simultaneously, scattered out across Ramnagar. While Rama is in Chitrakut, Bharata sits at Nandigram; when the army of monkeys and bears moves toward Rameshwaram, already Sita, with a band of devoted female spectators, awaits them in the Ashoka Garden of Lanka; when Lakshmana is wounded by Meghanada's *shakti*, and Rama pitifully mourns his fallen brother, Hanuman is more than a mile away chasing after the herb that will revive Lakshmana. And even when the story itself is over, and Rama coronated, his lesson preached in the marble gazebo of Rambagh, his crown removed for the last time back in the *dharamshala* near Ayodhya, and the five boys who are the *swarupa-s* returned to ordinary life, the masks—some of papier-maché, some fashioned from copper and brass—put away for a year, the Ramayanis continue to chant until every last syllable of Tulsidasa's text is sounded.

But there is more to the Ramlila texts than the *Ramcharitmanas*. Tulsi's masterpiece is the generating kernel of the performance, but like a tree springing from a great tap root, the branches are spread far and wide. There are the *samvada-s*, dialogs actually spoken during the 30 or 31 nights (depending on the lunar calendar) of the performance. These *samvada-s* were assembled and written during the 19th century. They are intended to translate the feeling—the *bhava-s* and *rasa-s*, if you will—of the *Ramcharitmanas* into a spoken language that ordinary people can understand. Thus Rama's story is twice told, at least. For each segment of narrative the chant of the Ramayanis alternates with the dialogs of the characters speaking *samvada-s*. And if the Maharaja is the principal audience for the *Ramcharitmanas*—the 12 Ramayanis always sit close to him—the *sadhu-s* and others especially devoted to Rama crowd up near the *swarupa-s* (who speak

most of the *samvada-s*). In between are vast numbers of spectators—literally people who see more than hear, as the story is acted out. Thus there are three main texts: *Ramcharitmanas*, *samvada-s*, spectacle.

Consider: the Ramayanis sit in a tightly closed circle, their leader concentrating on the palm-leaf manuscript on which Tulsi's text is written. This text is illuminated at night by burning torches. Far away from the Ramayanis, lit by petromax lantern, and sometimes by blazing flares, are the characters of the Ramlila who utter the *samvada-s*. There are many such characters: Rama, Ravana, Lakshmana, Sita, Hanuman, Angad, Guha, Narada, Bharata, Dasharatha, Sugriva, Shiva, Brahma, Indra, Mantara, Kaikeyi, Parashurama, Vasishtha, Sumantra, Janaka, Vibhishana. I list them this way, and not according to their ritual importance—the five *swarupa-s* first—because in Ramlila these gods-characters-beings present themselves to me simultaneously as actors, as performers of a story, as physical theatrical presences. I am not alone in considering them thus. I spoke to a man in the crowd of spectators:

Everything there (at Ramnagar Ramlila) has a naturalness. If they say "Ashoka tree" they have an Ashoka tree, if they say "jungle" they go to a jungle, if they say "Ayodhya" they show Ayodhya. Other Ramlilas, it is more drama. There are fancy clothes and loudspeakers and electric lights. Here the Maharaja preserves the spiritual side. He makes certain everything is done right.

So there is, in addition to the literary texts, the performance text and the actual mise-en-scène, with the Maharaja, as uber-director, the overseer of everything, the director of the *vyasa-s* who do the day-to-day directing and who can always be seen standing onstage, *regiebuch*s in hand, whispering the dialog into the ears of the role-players, making certain that each *samvada* is correctly spoken, giving signals to the leader of the Ramayanis so that the alternation between *samvada-s* and *Ramcharitmanas* is correct. Behind this intricate staging is the Maharaja. The performance text he preserves is a 19th century one.

Actually, the mise-en-scene, and the Ramlila environments—the actual settings for Ayodhya, Janakpur, Chitrakut, Panchavati, Lanka, and Rambagh—were mostly constructed in the mid-19th century, when Ramnagar Ramlila most probably originated. Some parts of the environment—the pathways through the back parts of Ramnagar, the countryside setting of Nishada's *ashram*, the great Durga tank and temple which serve as *kshira sagara*, Rambagh itself (which was once a Maharaja's pleasure garden), the Maharaja's many-chambered Fort (or palace) up against the flowing Ganga: these all pre-exist Ramnagar Ramlila, and have been absorbed into it totally—as Rambagh has, now no longer in use except as a staging place for Ramlila, and as temporary living quarters for the *swarupa-s* during some of the Ramlila, and, importantly, as the scene-and-technical shop where Atmarama, a man in the Maharaja's employ for many years, constructs the effigies and props for the entire spectacle. Some environments, like the Durga tank and temple, maintain their own very powerful existence, and merely lend themselves to Ramlila once a year—in much the same way that Rama comes to worship Shiva during this season. For Benares is a Shaivite city, and the Maharaja is greeted by the crowd with approving chants of "Hara, Hara, Mahadev!" But Kashi is, as I was told on many occasions, an island of Shiva in a sea of Rama. Nowhere, and at no time, is this more clear than during Ramlila season. The most ecstatic crowds, if not the largest, come twice during the month-long performance, when Rama himself performs the puja to the Shiva *lingam*: once after crossing the make-believe Ganga during his first day of exile; and once the day after Dasara at make-believe Rameshwaram.

I am still talking about the layering of texts: literary and performance texts. Each of these texts may be "read" independently of the others.

There is, too, the text of movement. For Ramlila is a performance of movements: pilgrimage, exile, circumambulation, pursuit, kidnapping and running away, processions. All this movement—movement in the story, actual movement through the environments of Ramlila, movement to get to Ramnagar from Varanasi, and back, by crossing the great Ganga—is balanced by the stasis of *arati* at the end of each day's performance. *Arati*, where the *swarupa-s* freeze and become pure *murti-s*: the images of what they are, pictures of action suspended in time, taken out of time, stopped. Thus also a text of complementary oppositions, of which there are many in Ramnagar Ramlila.

Let me name a few as they operate both conceptually and spatially, in both the narrative and the environments of Ramlila. These oppositions are more comprehensible if I summarize them in a chart.

Maharaja & Ramayanis: Shiva	vs	Rama, Sita, and other <i>swarupa-s</i> & <i>sadhu-s</i> : Vishnu
Tulsidasa, Valmiki, & the Great Tradition	vs	<i>Samvada-s</i> , <i>bhajana-s</i> , and the Little Tradition <sup>2</sup>
West bank of Ganga, the Varanasi side	vs	East bank of Ganga, the Ramnagar side
Stillness: <i>murti-s</i> , <i>arati</i> , "stations" <sup>3</sup>	vs	Movement; processions, pilgrimage, exile, flow
Town space	vs	Theatre space
Present historical time	vs	Time of Ramlila narrative
Mela	vs	Lila

These oppositions—and there are more—are not mutually exclusive, or hostile to one another. They complement each other, constructing among themselves a vision of the world that is whole. For example, the Maharaja exists in the field of energy created by Rama; and Rama exists as arranged for by the Maharaja. Not any Rama, but the Rama of Ramnagar Ramlila—a Rama who has auditioned





for the Maharaja, who is to be paid (a token sum) after the month of performing is over. For his part, the Maharaja is in a way a fictional character. There is no kingdom in secular modern India over which Vibhuti Narain Singh actually rules (as his predecessors and he, himself, until Independence, actually ruled). His existence as Maharaja is confirmed by his function as sponsor-producer of Ramlila. For the month of Ramraj is when the Maharaja of Benares is most visibly and demonstrably a king. It is during this month, more than at any other time, that he rides on his elephant, or in his 1926 Cadillac, is accompanied by troops and a military marching band; that he shows himself again and again as a king to assembled thousands who chant, when they catch sight of him, "Hara, Hara, Mahadev!"—an homage to the king of the city of Shiva that corresponds neatly to the homage this Shaivite king gives to Rama, Vishnu incarnate. Thus it is that a mediation occurs between Shiva and Vishnu, between the west bank where Varanasi is and the east bank where Ramnagar is.

Nowhere is this mediating dynamic more clearly operating than in crossing the Ganga herself. The Ganga is no ordinary river; her waters are holy. And to the thousands who cross Ganga each day to attend Ramlila some special *dharma* is achieved. That the Maharaja's Fort, or palace, is across the river is a result of the way the British occupied the country in the 18th century. But this aspect of military strategy has had more than military consequences: I am of no doubt that Ramnagar Ramlila has gained in importance because it is just near enough to Varanasi to gather audiences from there, and far enough to require crossing the Ganga. A very special balance and tension is thus obtained. So, too, the sharp bend in the Ganga's flow, making it stream from south to north as it passes Varanasi, putting the city on the west (rather than south) bank, has more than geographical consequences. At dawn one can bathe in the Ganga and witness the sun rising over her vast waters (during flood season). Sometimes, even the surface of the waters is broken by the surging backs of the population of dolphin who inhabit the river.

To get to Ramnagar Ramlila from Varanasi one must cross the Ganga—travel in the afternoon away from the westward declining sun and toward the brightly illuminated face of the Fort. Each day many thousands cross the river to attend Ramlila. There are several ways of crossing. A large steel bridge spans the river a few miles below Varanasi; a motor ferry leaves from the ghat near Benares Hindu University and docks close to the Fort; many private small rowboats ply the river. It was my impression that most people who attended Ramlila from Varanasi went by boat. Because the ferry operated only during daylight hours, a great fleet of rowboats, each seating around thirty persons, assembled each night to take riders back to Varanasi.

What a trip. Leaving amidst the tumult of the after-show surge of people looking for their friends, their pre-arranged boats, the fleet separated on the river as each boat went its own way. On many boats persons sang *bhajana-s*. By mid-river it was as if the boat I was on, appropriately skippered by an old man, gaunt and beautiful, named Ramdas, was alone on the river. Another opposition: the seething surging crowds of Ramlila versus the ascetic, quiet aloneness of the river. The Ganga is wide enough during flood season that it was almost as if we were rowing across the sea. Some nights blue lightning flashed, and the wind was fresh; we hastened to avoid storms—storms that could capsize a small boat. Toward the end of Ramlila, as the rainy season gave way to the glorious autumn clear weather, and the moon ran to full, the river sparkled. I experienced the vastness of Ganga, and her intimacy. After about one-half hour of rowing, and being carried by the swift current, the west bank was reached.

Different passengers alighted at different ghats. I stepped off at Assi. Others went down toward Dasheshwamed.

At least seventy-five boats worked the river. I realize that this accounts for only 2250 persons, and sometimes the crowds were closer to 50,000 and even, for Dasara, 100,000. Clearly many people walked home, and probably, also, my estimate both of the number of small boats, and their capacity, is underestimated. (I never cease to be astounded about the number of people who can crowd onto transport—bus, train, boat—in India.)

Be that as it may, the crossing to and from Ramnagar constitutes a big part of the experience of the Lila itself. For the Ganga is no ordinary river. Crossing it puts one in touch with a great life-stream. Songs sung upon returning from Ramlila included, in our boat at least (and many people travelled with the same boatman night after night, year after year), songs that were identified both with Rama and Gandhi:

King Rama, leader of Raghu dynasty,  
Born from Shankara's drum,  
Born from the waves of the Ganga,  
Husband of pure Sita.

Born from the mouth of the wise,  
Hail to Sita's Rama,  
And to Hanuman, who relieves us of our burdens,  
And grants us favors.

Hail to Mother Ganga.

This is very close to Gandhi's song (sung to the same tune):

King Rama, leader of the Raghu dynasty,  
Husband of pure Sita:  
May we worship this Sita-Rama.

He is known as Ishwara or Allah.  
May this God bestow good sense on everyone.

But the crossing of the river is not always peaceful. Sometimes boats overturn and people drown. Always, in the afternoon, on the ferry, there is a great rush and crush.

For example, on 23 September 1978, I noted what it was like to cross the Ganga by ferry:

Boatrush. Pushing down the muddy flood-slicked slope of Somnaghat toward the ferry. People rush furiously to get on the old boat. There used to be two of them, but one is layed up about a half-mile upstream. Who knows why, or when it will return to service. The ferry is free. The private boats can cost a rupee or more. On the ferry people pile up, bikes and all. From the shore to the boat is a narrow gangplank not more than three feet wide. So soon a wild, shoving, shouting bottleneck develops. There is screaming and shouting and jostling. Bikes are handed over the tops of peoples' heads to friends already aboard. People squirm into the crowd or cling to the handrope and edge along the side of the gangplank. But often everything just stops: things get jammed up. There is a raging crowd on shore, an empty gangplank, a half-empty boat blowing its whistle signalling departure.

Three days ago as we arrived very early for the 3 o' clock boat three women with head-bundles of sticks squatted by the shore. They were the epitome of patience and labor. Their bodies were dark and as thin as the sticks they carried. (Someone told

us that these sticks would be made into toothpicks.) It was hot, in the 90s, and humid. After thirty minutes the boat arrived and the ordinary riot occurred. Finally the bikes were loaded, most of the men who wanted to go were on board. Only a few women. The three women with the loads of sticks waited patiently. Occasionally they approached the gangplank, and then they slid back as aggressive men shoved on by. The boat whistled; there was a last minute rush and surge of bikers. Always, here, there's more demand than supply. Over the little mud hill at the shore more passengers and bikers rushing to the boat. The boat's motor began. More men leaping from shore to ship. A single black bike passed over the heads of some men and thrown on board on top of the other bikes. Shouting. The boat pulls away.

And the three women were as they had been, standing helpless, and then squatting, to wait out the hour till the next boat.

I quote this because there is a tendency, in writing about Ramlila, to be swept up in devotion and admiration; and to forget the ordinary grind and helplessness of lots of people who may never themselves attend Ramlila in Ramnagar but who still, for me at least, comprise part of the Ramlila experience.

So one of the deepest oppositions is between the extraordinary time-space-narrative adventure of Ramlila versus the ordinary grind of daily living in north India. In a real way, Ramlila provides for a number of people a temporary relief from this grind, a festive season, a time out.

### *Narrative Structures*

The narrative structure of Ramlila is very important: it is through the story that much information concerning values, history (both mythic and conceptual), hierarchy, and geography are transmitted. People begin attending Ramlila as children, even babies; much is learned through osmosis. Naturally, the basic story of Ramlila is that of the *Ramayana* and the *Ramcharitmanas*.

Every Indian knows this story: many believe it to be historical fact. In its details it combines narrative themes from both *Iliad* (the war) and *Odyssey* (the wanderings). There is something deeply Indo-European in *Ramayana*. For Indians *Ramayana* defines the subcontinent's landscape: Rameshwaram where the great bridge from India to Lanka was built is the site of a temple; pilgrims can walk from Ayodhya to Janakpur. A small book by H. D. Sankalia, *Ramayana: Myth or Reality?* deals effectively (in my opinion) with questions not only of *Ramayana's* historicity, but of the more interesting problem of its historical presence within the Indian popular consciousness. This presence is renewed, and enhanced, each year by thousands of Ramlilas performed all across northern India. And nowhere is this historical-mythical consciousness more effectively represented than at Ramnagar.

At Ramnagar the whole *Ramayana* story is told, but with a few emphases and an addition different than what is related in Valmiki or the *Ramcharitmanas*. The classic Rama story has three parts: (1) Initiations, culminating in the breaking of Shiva's bow and the marriage of Rama to Sita; (2) Exile and growth to maturity through battle and ordeal, culminating in the war against Ravana; (3) Ramraj, which barely begins as the narrative ends. This story is set within various frames, all of which are very interesting from a literary point of view—and for what they tell us about the Indian ways of viewing "reality," but which are not altogether relevant from a theatrical perspective. That's because in theatre, in Ramlila, the story is shown, acted out, not told. At Ramnagar the story of Rama is divided into five parts: (1) A prelude where Brahma implores Vishnu to take the form of

a human and rescue the world which is being disturbed by demons (this section is in the *Ramcharitmanas*); (2-3-4) as in the classic versions; and (5) a postlude performed only at Ramnagar where the Maharaja and his family welcome the *swarupa-s* to the Fort, feed them ceremoniously in front of a huge assembled audience, and honor them publicly. The next day, in private, the Maharaja pays the performers for their services. These two actions—honoring Rama and his party publicly, paying the actors—bring the story of Rama into the field of force controlled by the Maharaja. First as guests and then as employees, first as mythic heroes and then as subjects, the Ramlila characters are adhered to the world, and necessities, of the Maharaja of Benares. This five-part narrative scheme can be outlined thus:

Event	PRELUDE	INITIATIONS		MATURITY	EXILE		
	Gods beg Rama to incarnate himself	Boyhood adventures Killing demons	Contest for Shiva's bow. Courtship of Sita. Marriage	Coronation stopped	Exile begins	Journey through the forest to Chitrakut and Panchavati	
Day	1	2-5		6-8	9	10-15	
EVENT	CRISIS	WAR	RETURN	RAMRAJ	POSTLUDE	Pay	
	Surpanakha appears. Sita kidnapped	Rama pursues Ravana	War in Lanka	Return to Ayodhya Bharat Milap.	Coronation and teaching	Ceremony at fort	Pay
DAY	16	17-19	20-26	27-28	29-30	31-32	

Figure 1

In terms of theatrical time, the whole cycle consists of a one-day prelude, seven days of initiations, twenty days of exile, two days of Ramraj, and two days of postlude.

This theatrical structure can be represented in another, more revealing, configuration:

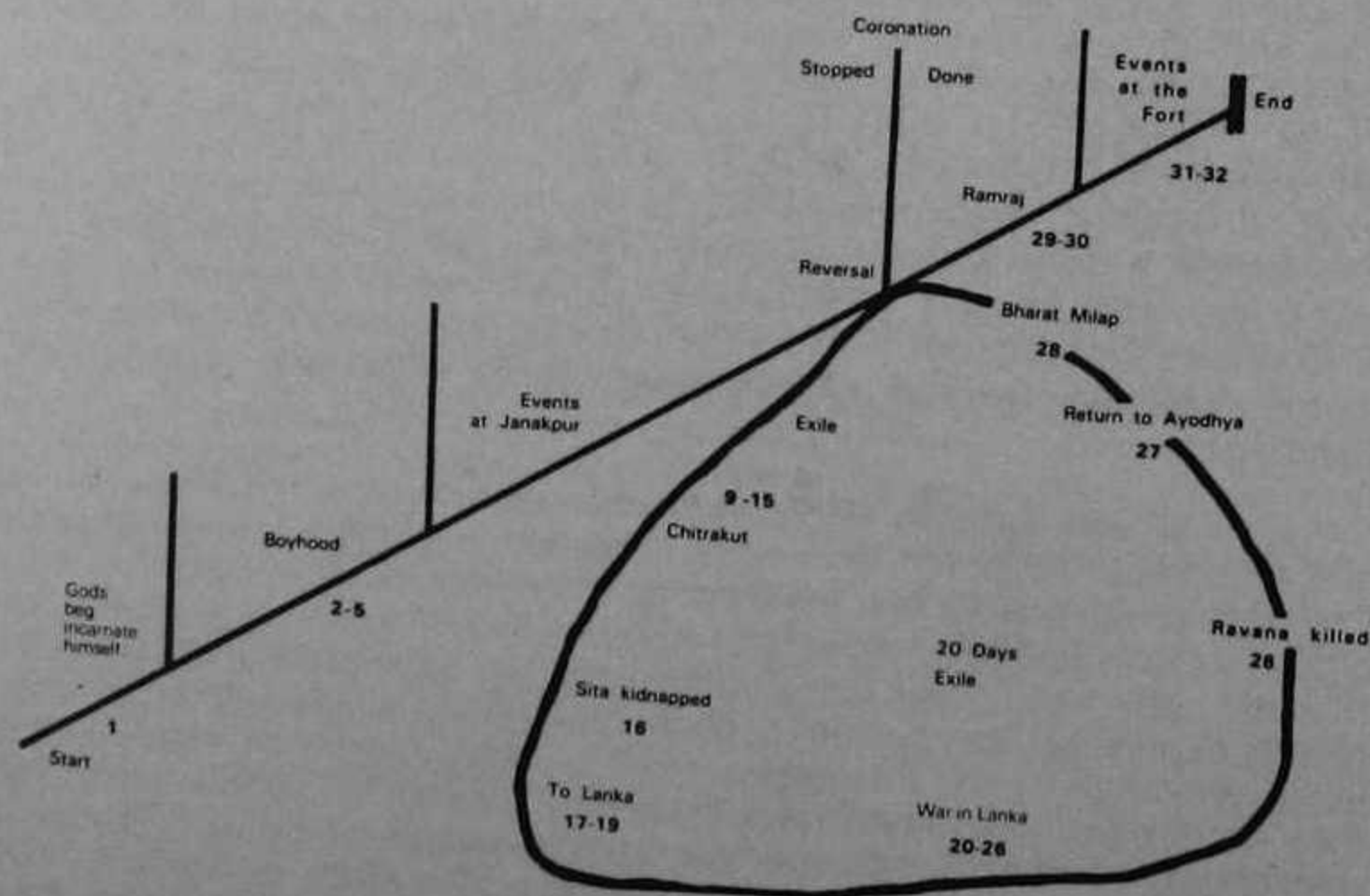


Figure 2

Without the interruption of Rama's coronation brought about by Kaikeyi's insistence that Dasharatha redeem his promises to her, there would be no drama; just a straight line from Rama's birth to his Ramraj. And without the drama there is no exile, no kidnapping of Sita, no war against Ravana. In a word, no point for Vishnu to be incarnated as Rama: a kshatriya, a lover, a householder, a protector of brahmins, a sanyasin. The loop from day 9 through day 28 is where most of the adventure takes place. It is, literally, Rama's journey in time and space from the safety of Ayodhya to the adventures that lay in store for him at Chitrakut, Panchavati, and Lanka.

Anthropologist Victor Turner has outlined a four-part sequence of what he calls "social dramas." These social dramas occur in trials, combats, rivalries, wars. Turner's idea applies very well to Ramlila of Ramnagar—where a great myth has been translated into a religious-aesthetic drama with many overtones of social drama. Turner:

I define social dramas as units of a harmonic or disharmonic social process, arising in conflict situations. Typically, they have four main phases of public action. These are: (1) *breach* of regular norm-governed social relations; (2) *crisis*, during which there is a tendency for the breach to widen. (...) (3) *redressive action* ranging from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal juridical and legal machinery, and, to resolve certain kinds of crisis or legitimate other modes of resolution, to the performance of public ritual. (...) (4) the final phase consists either of the *reintegration* of the disturbed social group, or of the social recognition and legitimation of *irreparable schism* between the contesting parties.<sup>4</sup>

It is no surprise that Turner's scheme fits Ramlila exactly. Turner constructed his concept of social drama from what he knew of aesthetic drama. What is interesting is how well this model works cross-culturally—in India as well as Africa (where Turner developed it to account for conflicts among the Ndembu) and Euro America where Shakespeare's plays and the works of other dramatists can be analyzed according to Turner's model.

For Ramlila the phases of the social drama are: (1) breach—when Kaikeyi makes her claim on Dasharatha; (2) crisis—Rama's exile, complicated by the kidnapping of Sita; (3) redressive action—the war against Ravana; (4) reintegration—the re-uniting of Rama and Sita, the Bharata Milapa re-uniting the four brothers, the coronation of Rama, and Ramraj. At all levels a reintegration takes place: at the level of lovers, family, state, and cosmos. One could also look at Ramlila in a broader perspective and identify the breach as when Ravana obtains his boon and destroys the altars of the Brahmins, terrifying the earth. Reintegration begins immediately with the incarnation of Vishnu as Rama. But then Vishnu's lila makes necessary the performance of the Ramlila story as a narrative within a cosmic reality in order to restore the earth to harmony. In this scheme, Ravana's surrender to Rama is the decisive moment of reintegration for it ends his rebellion.

At Ramlila itself, on Dasara day, this surrender of Ravana is performed with particular simplicity and beauty. On preceding days there have been great battles involving Lakshmana, Hanuman, Kumbhakarna, Meghnada, Ravana, and Rama. The victory in these battles goes to Rama's side, but not decisively enough to end the war. On Dasara day the narration of Ramlila itself is interrupted so that the Maharaja can play out his own story—a story that he shares with other Indian kings. On Dasara there is a special "weapons puja" in which the Maharaja displays in the courtyard of the Fort a panoply of swords, daggers, guns, and



other implements of war. We were not allowed to photograph this display—signalling that in some ways it was a sacred, at least a very special, manifestation.

Then in an extraordinary and magnificently theatrical procession of elephants the Maharaja makes his way amidst immense crowds of more than 100,000 from the Fort, down the main street of Ramnagar, and out to Lanka more than 5 kilometers to the southeast. My notes for Dasara 1978:

Maharaja enters Lanka on his elephant, followed by the others. They ride straight through the crowd past the battleground, turn and ride up and over the battleground. They leave Lanka the way they came—having stayed less than 10 minutes, never stopping, just passing through and over. What is the meaning of this strange procession that violates the performing space? It is the only time in the Ramlila that the Maharaja literally invades the performing space. Otherwise he remains firmly anchored at the back of the spectators, defining where the audience is. The "weapons puja" is what's left of a very war-like traditional display of kingly might that used to occupy Maharajas on Dasara. They would march their armies to the borders of their domain, proclaim the territory as theirs, confront their opposing number across the border and go home. Thus they showed their ability to make war; and they identified themselves, however vaguely, with the ancient horse-sacrifice, which Dasharatha himself performs in the *Ramayana*. Thus the Maharaja here in Ramlila is staking out his territory, saying in effect that the Ramlila is his. He boldly penetrates the performing space and cuts across the battleground, showing who's boss, who's king, and over what territory. He rides to the very edge of the Ramlila ground, the end of the Ramlila world—and he goes a few hundred feet beyond, then turns his elephants, and returns. This is the furthest out anyone playing a role in Ramnagar Ramlila goes. Then the Maharaja leaves Lanka; he does not see Ravana defeated. "It is not right," he told me, "for one king to watch the death of another."

But this is not all there is to Ravana's death.



Ravana actually doesn't die in battle. Rather, he surrenders. On the afternoon of Dasara, after the Maharaja has come and gone, Ravana sits in his chariot across the battlefield from Rama. Then, without another arrow being shot, Ravana rises, takes off his ten-headed mask, walks the length of the battlefield—about 150 feet—and touches his head to the feet of Rama. Ravana literally surrenders, gives up, to Rama. The crowd surges to see this surrender; cops wave great sticks threatening the roaring, surging crowd. Then, after surrendering to Rama, Ravana turns and walks off into the crowd. His son carries his mask. Later in that afternoon, after his role in Ramlila is over, Ravana will go to many of the owners of food and tea stalls to collect "Ravana's rent." In this way he gets paid for his performance. Those who operate businesses as part of the mela at Lanka pay Ravana for occupying space on his territory. Ravana does not stick around for the end of Ramlila, but returns to his village about 10 miles away. "I never see the end," he told me.

Later, on the night of Dasara, the giant effigy of Ravana is cremated. Through fire his being is liberated and ascends to Vishnu. The war is over.

### *Environments, Mise-en scene, and Directionality*

Just as there was a Troy and a Trojan War, so there were occurrences that underlay the *Ramayana*. These events probably took place in north and central India, from Ayodhya on the river Sarayu, south to Allahabad (Prayag), west to Chitrakut, and southwest to what was a forested area north of the river Narmada. But as the telling of the *Ramayana* spread southward along with, as part of, Sanskritization, so did its field of geographical references. "The gradual spread, first of the *Mahabharata* and then of the *Ramayana* into the Deccan, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, shows the slow absorption by society, high and low, of certain ethical values. (...) Simultaneously places all over India came to be associated with episodes in the *Ramayana*."<sup>5</sup>

As the *Ramayana* stories spread—were carried person-to-person south and east—they were identified with local deities and sacred places. Indian culture, like Japanese, does not reject its past when something new comes along. Rather the culture remembers everything and displays it in a palimpsest. Thus in many events, Ramlila among them, one can detect pre-Hindu, Hindu, Muslim, and English elements. Certainly the Hindu coloring is dominant, but it is not alone. The sacred rivers and crossings are surely pre-Hindu; the pomp of the Maharaja, and his very dress, owes as much to Mogul influences as to Hindu ideas of kingship; the Maharaja's marching band, his Cadillac, the petromax lanterns that are "old-fashioned" in the minds of most spectators, and traditional, are all of Euro-American origins. These are just a few examples of many that could be cited demonstrating the multi-cultural dimensions of Ramlila. But this multi-culturality is natural in India (as elsewhere).

The very geography of Ramlila of Ramnagar echoes with very ancient pre-Hindu and Hindu references. And the geography of Ramlila—its hilltops, rivers and river junctures, cities, temples, caves, trees, wells, and paths—are models of actual places that carry and emit bundles of significance. "The number of Hindu sanctuaries in India is so large and the practice of pilgrimage so ubiquitous that the whole of India can be regarded as a vast sacred space organized into a system of pilgrimage centers and their fields."<sup>6</sup> The centers indicate stasis, and the fields motion: this is the pattern of Ramlila from intense activity to the stillness of the *murti*-s during *arati*. The *Ramcharitmanas* tells the story of Rama's adventures as they were retold in the 16th century by Tulsidasa. These adventures differ somewhat from the *Ramayana*. In *Ramcharitmanas* Rama knows he is god, he knows the



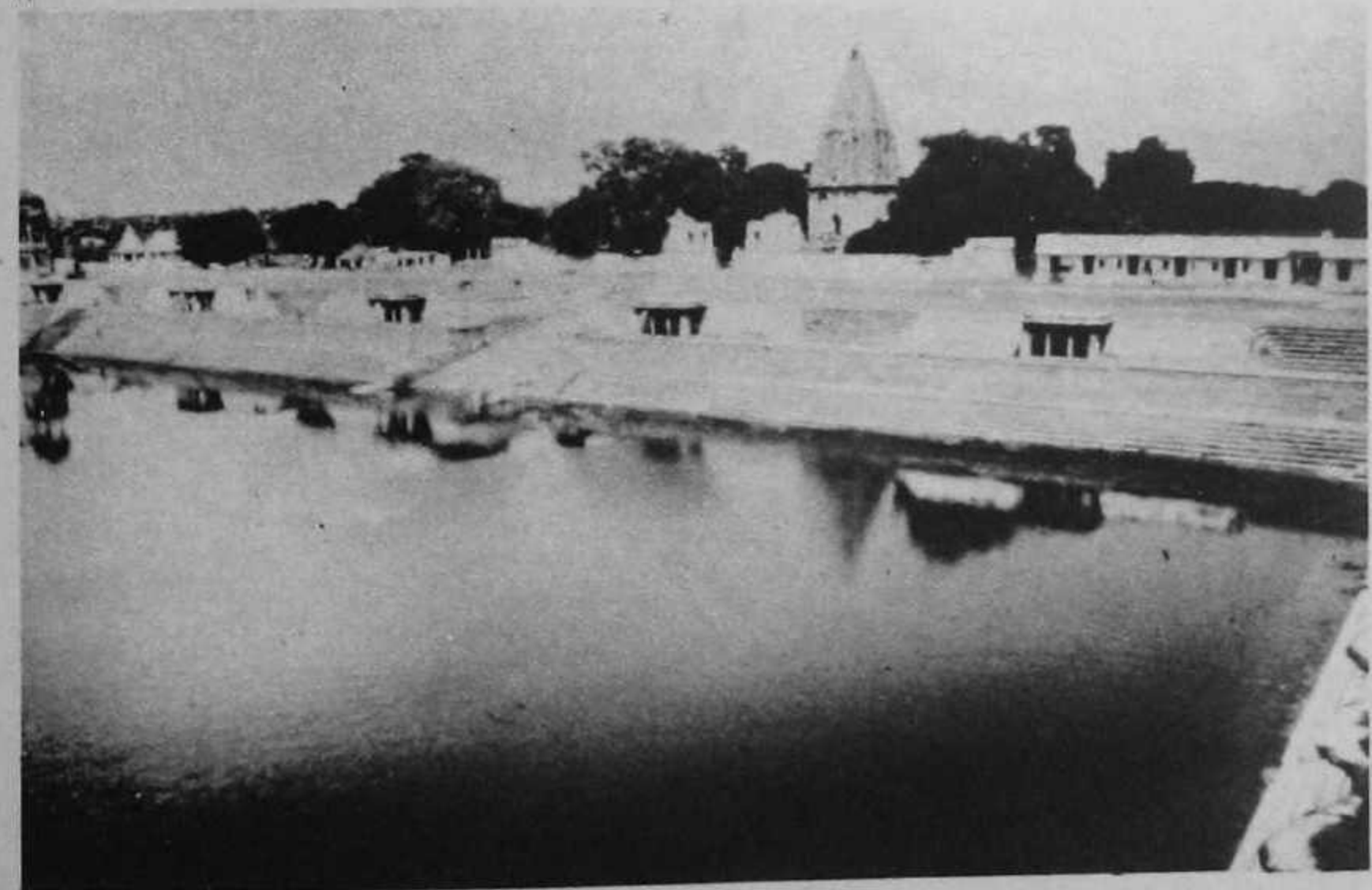
outcome of his adventures. Thus the whole thing becomes a kind of conscious and reflexive display: a watching in the mirror. This makes it very natural to the story that a crowd of spectators follow Rama wherever he goes. Rama is twice-born, his story twice-told. And Rama's adventures are actually his journey; and his journeys are the spectators' pilgrimages. Without exile there would be no kidnapping, and without kidnapping no flight to Lanka, and without flight to Lanka no great war—a war that is prepared for by a great march south and east from Panchavati to Rameshwaram, and across the great stone bridge to Lanka. Many Ramlilas are staged in environments that are spread over distances that make the spectators move from place to place literally imitating Rama by following him in order to attend to his story. This kind of processional performance is very common around the world. But, in my experience at least, nowhere is it so highly developed, so sophisticated and full of levels of meaning, as at Ramnagar Ramlila.

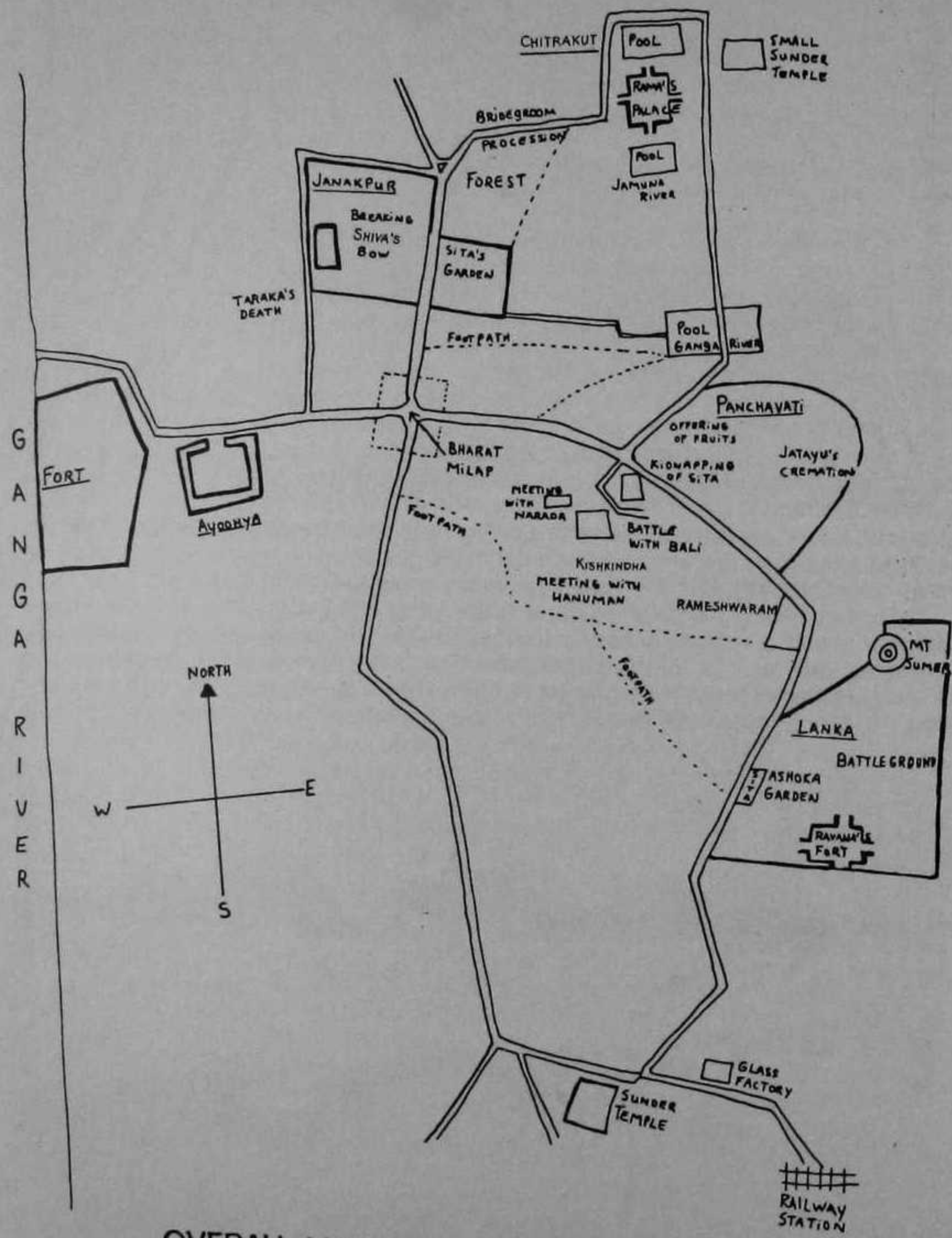
The audience at Ramlila takes naturally to a performance that includes processions—the crossing by Rama of an imitation Ganga and Jamuna, the long journey of Hanuman from Lanka northward to the Himalayas in search of the herb that will restore Lakshmana after he has been wounded by Meghnada's *shakti* weapon, the magnificently slow two-day return journey from Lanka to the boxing-ring like square where Bharata Milapa is staged, the regal procession on elephant from Rambagh to the Fort the night after Rama's coronation when the Maharaja feeds Rama, Sita, and the other *swarupa*-s. Or, on a more modest scale the thin line of followers behind Rama and Lakshmana as they wind through the back pathways of Ramnagar on Rama's first adventure—his encounter with the demon Taraka on his way from Ayodhya to Janakpur.

The Ramnagar Ramlila cycle condenses much of the Indian subcontinent into a comprehensible single sacred space with nine main stations: Ayodhya, Janakpur, Chitrakut, Panchavati, Rameshwaram, Lanka, Milapa Square, Rambagh, and the Fort. Add to these the ponds that serve as the Ganga and Jamuna and you have a map of sacred India according to the *Ramcharitmanas*. Remember that most of the spectators at Ramlila will not travel, even as pilgrims, far from where they were born. Their experience at Ramlila—during a month out from ordinary

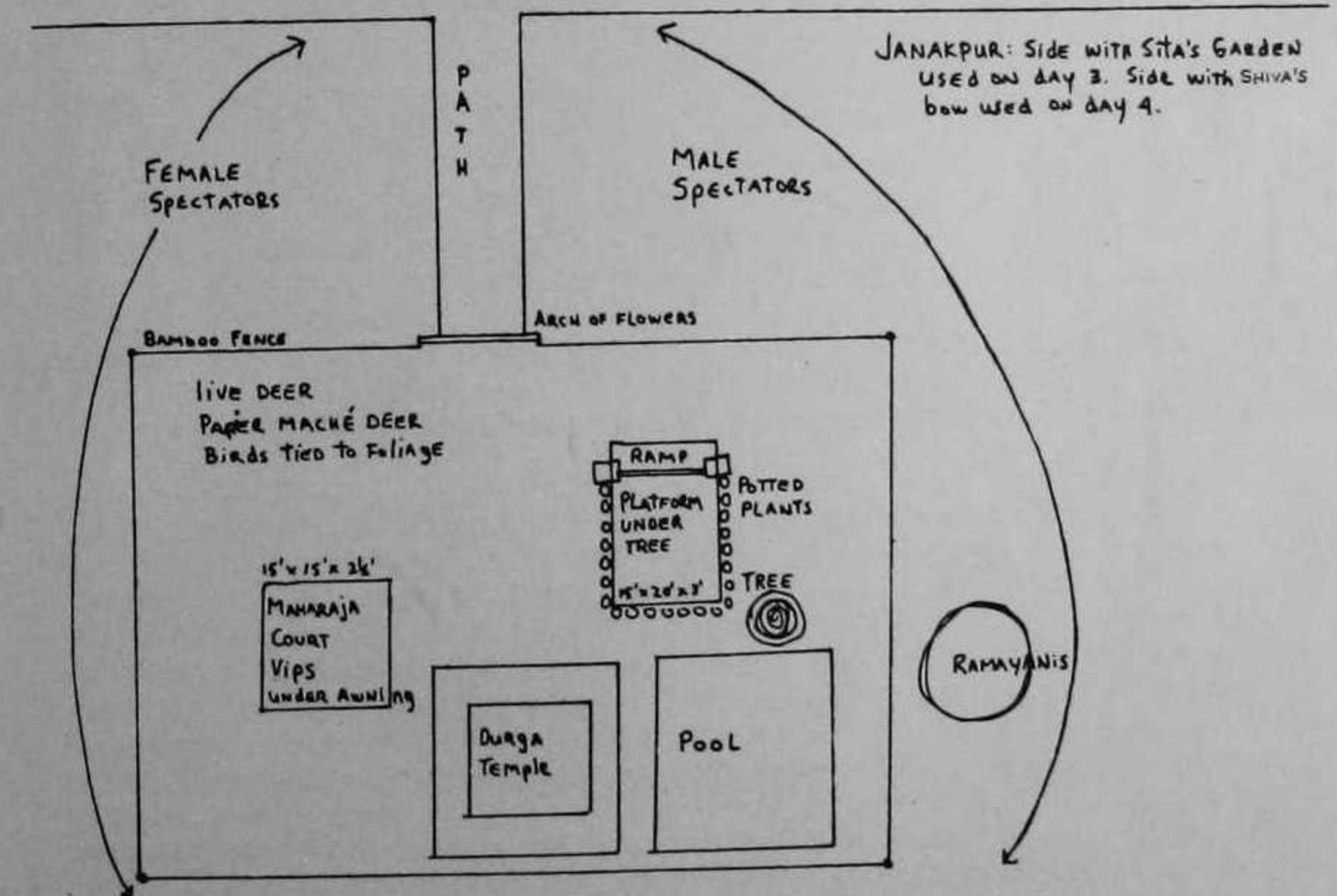
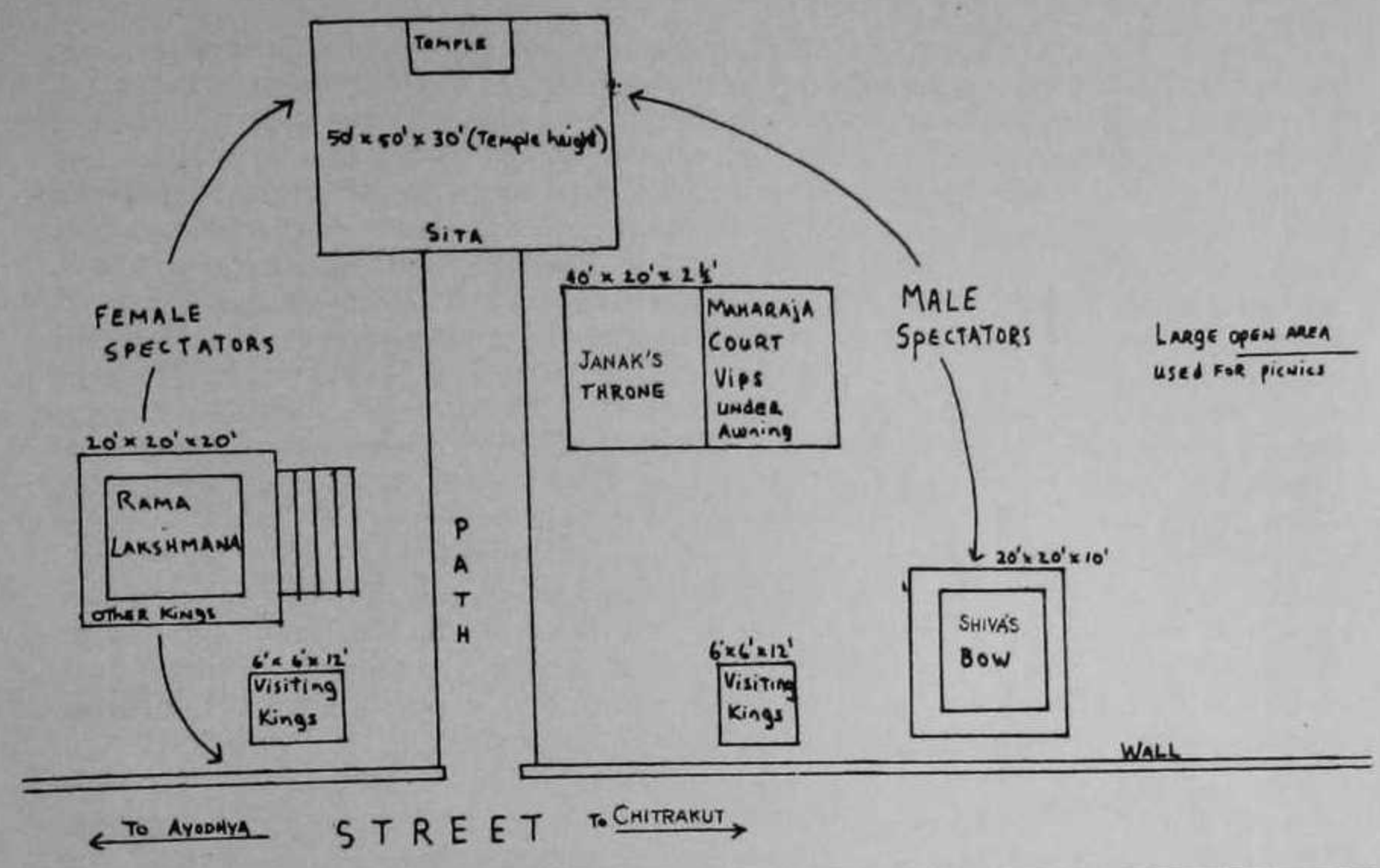
time—is a very actual moving through of Rama's India. Their experience of following Rama is somewhere between "going to a play," an entertainment, and some kind of ritual procession through a space that has become what it represents in much the same way as the boys who play *swarupa*-s have become *murti*-s. Without suggesting any disrespect, the feeling is parallel to what happens to Americans when they go to Disneyland and enter the "magic kingdom" or visit any one of the hundreds of "restored villages" that mark the American landscape. These places create, or re-create, or actualize, American history and imagination.<sup>7</sup> The stations of Ramlila are anchor points of a very carefully organized system of movements and directional significations.

Ramnagar, of course, literally means "town of Rama." I'm not sure whether the town name or the Ramlila performance came first. But like so much that is part of Ramnagar Ramlila the doing of a thing—literally (in the Greek sense) a drama—is tied in with the name of the thing done: thus Ramnagar, the boatman Ramdas, the technical director Atmaram. Others have been absorbed into their roles. Narada is called Narada in his ordinary life where he is the mahant of two temples in Mirzapur—his authority and wealth considerably increased because of his reputation as a powerful performer in Ramlila. Brahma was played in 1976 and 1978 by a man who had performed the role for decades, a man now said (in 1978) to be 96 years old, and looking it: his feeble voice, gentleness, and very distant-looking eyes becoming, for me at least, an incarnation as well as a representation of the god Brahma. Other performers are more ordinary in their theatrical identities. There is nothing Hanuman-like about the man who plays Hanuman, and a number of other roles too. But then there is "old Hanuman," now in his eighties, with a booming voice but not strong enough to carry both Rama and Lakshmana on his shoulders simultaneously, a requirement of Hanuman. But old Hanuman attends the *swarupa*-s wherever they are: in their *dharamshala*-s, resting, playing, eating, or rehearsing; or on stage where old Hanuman fans them with a fly whisk, holds their feet, and sees to their immediate needs. Thus this person who performed Hanuman in





OVERALL MAP OF RAMNAGAR WITH PLACEMENTS OF RAMLILA ENVIRONMENTS



ENVIRONMENTS AT JANAKPUR

Ramlila for more than 30 years now plays the role's essence as a stage-hand and personal attendant.

As with the characters so with the town of Ramnagar. During the first third of the 19th century, under the direct supervision of the Maharajas of that time, numerous stage settings were built throughout the town in order to provide places for the various Ramlila events. Thus the construction of special buildings and areas for Ayodhya, Janakpur, Panchavati, and Lanka. A pleasure garden of the Maharaja's was designated Rambagh and used for Rama's teachings on the next to last, or last day (depending on the lunar cycle) of Ramlila. Next to Rambagh is a very old—some say more than 300 years old—Durga temple with its 1000 square feet tank. The outer walls of Rambagh are used for the first day's lila where Ravana wins his boon and begins to terrorize the earth; next to the tank a great tent is set up to mark Rama's residence-in-exile at Chitrakut. And the road to Panchavati leads around the great tank and directly in front of the Durga temple where the procession stops and a scene is played. The Jamuna River is a body of water analogous to the Durga tank, on the other side of Rambagh, and the Ganga is a medium-sized lake not far from the Jamuna. (In earlier days, I think the real Ganga was used; at least old photos show Rama emerging by boat from it. But persistent floods and a general, if slow, trend toward modernization has shifted the Ganga scenes to the lake.) Then there is the Maharaja's Fort, certainly not built for Ramlila, but used in it. Finally there are the streets, pathways, and main square of Ramnagar which are used for processions, exile treks, and Milapa.

So there are theatrical environments of all types: built from scratch, adapted from what is already in use, and used as is as "found space." This layering of the types of environments employed give Ramnagar Ramlila an impressive reality of its own. It seems to properly belong to and in Ramnagar, and the special environments—Ayodhya, Janakpur, Lanka—emerge naturally from adapted and found spaces.

Once more, and very significantly, the actual orientation of these spaces, as well as their positions relative to each other, is a reasonably accurate model not only of India and Sri Lanka but also of Rama's movements through the countryside. Lanka is far to the south-east of Ayodhya (which is next to the Fort); Janakpur is to the north; Chitrakut and Panchavati to the north-east. Rambagh is also to the north-east—and this is where Ramlila begins and where Ramraj is celebrated with Rama's teachings. The north-east, I'm told, is an auspicious direction.

The action of Ramlila is thus both physical and narrative. The actual movement of the characters is itself a decisive part of the story. The first night of the performance, when the gods implore Vishnu to incarnate himself and rescue the world, takes place on and around the *kshira sagara* (the tank of the Durga temple), in the good-luck north-east. When Rama goes into exile he crosses make-believe Ganga and Jamuna as he heads from Ayodhya in the north-west back toward the north-east. After Sita is captured, Rama's army moves steadily south-eastward. This move is analogous to the historical movement through India of the Sanskritic culture the Aryan invaders of India brought with them. And it's no accident that, in parts of the south, Ravana is thought of as a hero, for at one level of the *Ramayana* story he represents the original culture of the area. Among the poems the Aryans brought with them was the *Ramayana*—or at least an *ur-Ramayana*. For this story merged with the Dravidian tales, and other native traditions. This merging included absorption of sacred places and routes. And it is this movement and absorption of sacred action and place that the Ramlila re-enacts.

After climactic battles at Lanka, battles that have looked more or less the same for 150 years, Rama victorious and his party are loaded into a great cart, the *pushpaka* which flies in *Ramcharitmanas* but is pulled with great vigor through the mud and over the better roads by the people of Ramnagar in Ramlila. The return trip is a recapitulation narratively and spatially of Rama's adventures. As Rama says in the *Ramcharitmanas*:

"Sita" said Raghubir, "look at the battlefield; that is where Lakshmana slew Indrajit, and those huge demons lying on the field were slain by Hanuman and Angad; and here were killed Kumbhakarna and Ravana, the two brothers who discomfited gods and sages. Here I had the bridge built and set up the image of Shiva, abode of bliss." The gracious Lord and Sita did obeisance to Shambhu. Wherever the Lord of Grace had encamped or rested in the forest, he pointed out every place to Janaki and told her the name of each.

Swiftly the car travelled on to the most beautiful forest of Dandaka, where dwelt Agastya and many other high sages; and Rama visited the homes of them all. After receiving the blessing of all the seers, the Lord of the World came to Chitrakut, there he gladdened the hermits, and the car sped swiftly on. Next, Rama pointed out to Janaki the Jamuna (...) then they beheld the holy Ganga. (...) "Next," he said, "behold Prayag (...) and now behold the city of Ayodhya."



7

Interestingly, the return trip in Ramlila is much more direct. For theatrical reasons the return trip takes only two days, and there is no retrogressive crossing of rivers, no visit to Prayag or Chitrakut. The *pushpaka* rests one night near a sacred tree, and another at Nishada's ashram. During the day local children play on it. And on the third night Milapa is accomplished in the main Ramnagar city square.

Once Rama enters Ayodhya to be coronated a marvellous conflation of time and space takes place. All the Ramlila places become part of Rama's kingdom, and the whole of Ramnagar becomes Ayodhya. Thus Rama goes to his Rambagh to preach, he travels through the streets of his Ayodhya—Ramnagar on his elephant as a king would proceed through his own capital. And finally he is welcomed by the Maharaja at the Fort: one king receiving another. There, assisted by the royal family, Rama and his family have their feet washed, are garlanded, and fed a sumptuous meal. This feeding takes a very long time, hours, and I mused that the boys who were *swarupa*-s for the last time during this scene were prolonging it, and deeply enjoying a unique situation where they were being honored, worshipped and fed by the Maharaja of Benares. Thousands of townspeople crowd into the courtyard of the Fort to watch.

Something very powerful theatrically and religiously takes place, creating a unique social, even political, situation. It climaxes during this evening at the Fort, but it has been present and building throughout the month of Ramlila. Since 1947 when India won its independence after a long and bitter revolutionary struggle, the principalities were abolished. After all, not only were Gandhi's and Nehru's ideals those of democracy, some of India's Maharajas were on the British side, less than lukewarm to Gandhi's populism and Nehru's secularism. A few years after independence the privy purses were discontinued. (Though the Kashi All India Trust, the Maharaja's foundation, receives money to produce Ramlila). Despite all this, everyone calls Vibhuti Narain Singh "Maharaja." And this title is not honorific or nostalgic, though it has elements of both. It is operational: it works in the world of today. Why is this so? The answer, in no small way, is to be found in Ramlila. For the Ramlila season, especially during the performances of the *arati* temple service that concludes each evening's show, the *murti*-s—literally "images" of the gods—the boys playing Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Shatrughna—are thought by many in the audience to actually be the gods they otherwise represent. It is a miracle analogous to Catholic transubstantiation.

The presence of the *murti*-s bestows on their patron, host, and theatrical producer a royalty that might by now be much diminished (as it is with some other former Maharajas). But it's not quite that simple. There is more like a symbiotic, syncretic feedback going on—a circumstance tied up to the whole physical setting of Ramnagar Ramlila, its function as a pilgrimage center, the particular sanctity of Kashi (ancient name of Varanasi/Benares) and the role in that sacred complex of the Maharaja. For a month, in a whole town, Rama lives and moves throughout the town. The Maharaja of Benares is the only person with enough religious-traditional force to sponsor a great Ramlila—to sponsor it, and participate in it as one of the principal figures or characters. For the Ramlila he sponsors validates his Maharajadom: it gives him a chance to appear on his elephant, displays him before the crowds in a *darshan* of regal splendor; it allows him to manage a great religious and devotional event, confirming in the popular imagination his own authenticity as a ruler-manager. And, through his daily practice of *sandhya puja*—where the performance stops, and everyone but the Maharaja rests, eats, strolls—the Maharaja publicly and yet secretly displays his religiosity. For often a temporary enclosure is set up into which the Maharaja retreats for *puja*: everyone can see where he is going, and everyone presumes to know what he is doing: yet he does it secretly.





Ultimately the climactic visit of mythic-theatrical Rama to the Fort of the actual-mythic-theatrical Maharaja is an intersection of ancient and modern, mythic and theatrical, actual and transformative, extraordinary and ordinary.

The details of the performance of Ramlila also underline the great importance of the environments, of movement, of directionality. More than half of the lilas include journeys, processions, or pilgrimages. Movement from place to place is the most salient theatrical action of Ramlila. The permanent environments for Ayodhya, Janakpur, Chitrakut, Panchavati, the rivers Ganga and Jamuna, Rameshwaram, and Lanka are linked by processions that trace the outline of the story. Instead of ending one day's show in place A and beginning the next day in place B, often the movement from A to B is the start of or even most of the performance. A very short scene in one place will begin a lila, and then comes a long procession to a new performance area. Some of these processions are great events: the marriage procession of Rama and Sita back from Janakpur to Ayodhya; the start of Rama's exile when many spectators, weeping, follow him into the forest; the procession of elephants on Dasara day when the Maharaja rides among the 100,000 or more spectators that line the way and follow him the more than 5 kilometers from the Fort to Lanka. Especially tumultuous is the two-day return from Lanka of victorious Rama culminating in Bharata Milapa.

For the performances of 1976 these were my notes:

Day 27, 7.30 p.m. After Sita passes her fire ordeal, she takes her place on a huge 20-foot-high cart next to Rama and Lakshmana. Dozens of male spectators tug on the two ropes moving the four-wheeled carriage out of Lanka and down the long road toward Ayodhya. Many in the crowd of 100,000 follow, and many go on ahead: the road is all people. After a few hundred yards the cart stops—it is Bharadwaja's ashram, where Rama will spend the night. *Arati* is performed. The lila is over.

The performers do not actually spend the night on set. They are carried back to their residence near the Fort. But interestingly enough, partly as a practical consideration, and partly to help the boys who play the *murti*-s to experience their roles, their place of residence changes during the Ramlila. They begin living near the Fort; then during the days in Chitrakut and Panchavati they live at Rambagh; during the days of war in Lanka they live in Lanka; and during the final days of celebration they live, once more, near the Fort. So the performers, too, make a ritual journey that is a model of the narrative. At the end of each night's performance the *swarupa*-s are carried back to where they will sleep, eat and rehearse. On that 27th day in 1976, I recorded this scene.

One of the last images of the night: five men trotting down the street with the five boys (*swarupa*-s) on their shoulders. These actors' feet do not touch the ground while they are in costume, while they wear the crowns that confer on them their status as *swarupa*-s. But this time as they go by, still in the costumes of their gods-characters, but no longer in the lila, there are no shouts of "Jai Ram!" from the crowd: the *swarupa*-s are noticed but not adored. Like temple ikons they are being put away for the night.

The twenty-eighth day's lila begins with several scenes happening simultaneously in different parts of Ramnagar, preparing for the Milapa convergence in the town's center. Near the Fort, Bharata and Shatrughna sit under a bower waiting for news that Rama is returning. In the Fort, the Maharaja and his court are mounting elephants for a grand procession to the Milapa square. Several kilometers away at Bharadwaja's ashram, Rama and his court are being very slowly rolled toward

Ayodhya. Sitting in their big wagon they look very much like a grand family: Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Jambavana, Hanuman, Sugriva and his nephew Angad, the forest chief Guha, the chief *vyasa*, several assistant *vyasa*-s, the old *vyasa* whose job it is to shout, "Keep Quiet! Pay Attention!" before each *samvada*—and others who have found their way into the cart. As the wagon rolls over ground covered before, Rama points out the sights to Sita: Here Lakshmana killed Meghnada, here the monkeys built a bridge over the sea . . .

8.30 p.m. Bharata gets the news from Hanuman that Rama is approaching. Bharata and Shatrughna set out for the high stage near the arch. Meanwhile the Maharaja and his party on elephants ride out to greet Rama and his party rolling along in their wagon. As the Maharaja passes the great crowd roars "Hara, Hara, Mahadev!" As the Maharaja proceeds down the street from the gate of the Fort to the Milapa square, flares are lit to illuminate him more brightly. People look up at him from the street, down at him from the roofs. The Maharaja greets Rama, takes *darshana*, and then positions himself at the Milapa square to await the reunion of the brothers.

9 p.m. Rama continues his slow advance. It reminds me of a Robert Wilson performance—you know what's going to happen, and can trace out in advance its map; but it takes forever for it to actually physically happen, and in that space of waiting, a certain meditation occurs. At every temple and at many displays of sacred *murti*-s Rama's wagon halts, he gives *darshana*, and the white flare of *arati* is ignited. Much could be made of the continuing importance, from perhaps pre-Vedic days, of fire, the sun, illumination, in Indian worship. Rama himself is scion of the Solar Race, a Sun King, a king of fire.

Up and down the street from the Fort to the arch several blocks beyond Milapa square are colored lights, puppet shows, small temples with groups of people chanting *kirtana*-s. Walas sell tea, sweets, snacks, temple beads, ochre and yellow powders for making holy marks, betel nuts, cigarettes. The sights, sounds, smells, sense of the whole thing is a perfect mixture, blending, of the sacred and the profane; to such a degree that the distinction is no longer viable. There is the experience. It is whole, total.

Some displays are traditional images rigged with contemporary engineering like the electrically powered figure of Hanuman who opens his own chest to reveal his heart on which is engraved an image of Rama and Sita. Some displays are of old-fashioned painted clay figures.

10.30 p.m. The wagon meets the square stage where the Milap will take place. Rama and Lakshmana step from the wagon onto the stage. Bharata and Shatrughna have been standing there for a few minutes. The four boys rush across the stage and embrace; they kiss each other's feet. The flares burn. The crowd roars. The Maharaja watches in what I suppose is full and joyous approval.

But the Maharaja maintains his mask perfectly. It is not possible to get inside or behind that mask. He is what he performs. Once I asked him:

RS: Do you believe that the boys are gods?

MR: If you see a Christian movie, like *The Robe*, what do you feel?

RS: I feel it's a representation, done with devotion maybe, but still a great distance from being god.

MR: The same, I feel the same.

But now, writing this some six years after that interview, and having watched the Maharaja throughout one entire Ramlila (1978), I think he misrepresented his feelings—insofar as those feelings are manifest in his actions. His actions speak devotion—and a seeing through the *swarupa*-s to whatever it is that he feels is divine. In the Hindu context the divine is not a simple thing to define, nor is it radically separable from ordinary human existence. As with so much else in Indian culture, the divine exists as a palimpsest: it is there in ordinary life, it manifests



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itself in incarnations and less forceful presences such as *rishi*-s, sages, sadhus, devout individuals; and it is present in an essential, highly refined, substance as the Ramlila *murti*-s who are, and represent, what they are presumed to be at the same time.

But not everyone feels—or acts during Ramlila—this way. Many are not watching *arati* but munching snacks; many come for the show alone, or do not attend at all. Even people of great authority. Ramchandra De, longtime personal secretary to the Maharaja, said in 1978 when Hess and I asked him why he didn't attend Ramlila anymore: "My views on Ramlila have not changed. It is all play acting. Can you take street urchins and make them gods?" De's opinion is definitely in the minority. His characterization of the *swarupa*-s as "street urchins" reflects his ironic sense of things. He knows as well as anyone the care with which the boys who perform in Ramlila are selected. The *vyasa*-s search for candidates who must be Brahmins, well-behaved, with "good looks" (itself a complicated criterion) and strong voices. Their families must agree to their participation in Ramlila which means giving up school for some weeks. Finally, when the number of possible *swarupa*-s has been reduced to the top candidates the Maharaja himself auditions them. He talks to them, listens to them recite, looks them over. He makes the final selection. They move to a *dharamshala* near the Fort in July and begin rehearsals. Although it isn't much, they are paid for their work. This payment, and the method of its achievement, signal a return to the non-Ramlila world after the cycle of performances is ended. The day after Ramlila ends the *swarupa*-s and major characters come to the Fort where the Maharaja thanks them for their efforts. In 1976 each *swarupa* got Rs. 440, a considerable sum, but no fortune—especially considering the work they did over more than three months. Other principal participants—actors, *vyasa*-s, technical director—are paid too. Many confided in us that the pay was inadequate. And the Maharaja complained that the funds available to him for Ramlila were inadequate. Wealth, which used to flow as from a limitless reservoir for a great Maharaja, is increasingly scarce. The Maharaja knows that this lack of funds threatens the Ramlila. He wonders how his "industries" will do, whether or not his son will be as devoted to Ramlila as he is: what the future of the whole enterprise will be.

There is, on the day before the full payment made in private, a public ritual payment of Re. 1 to each *swarupa* during the Kot Viday, or farewell at the

Fort. Nowhere is the special place of the Maharaja demonstrated more clearly than on this last day of Ramlila, a ceremony unique to Ramnagar. Although a portion of the *Ramcharitmanas* remains to be chanted, the events of the "thirty-first day" are outside the Rama story. Late in the afternoon (or at night, as in 1978, when an eclipse of the moon on the second day of Ramlila skewered the whole schedule), riding two magnificent elephants, the five *swarupa*-s arrive at the Fort. The Maharaja, dressed simply, barefoot, greets them as if they were visiting royalty. They are seated on a platform, their feet washed by the Maharaja, who also applies *tilak* to their foreheads and garlands them. He performs *arati* to them as if he were a temple priest (he is a Brahmin) and they gods. Then a full meal is served to them. While they eat the final portions of the *Ramcharitmanas* are chanted. As they eat the Maharaja is handed a Re. 1 coin by one of his attendants, and he hands this coin to a *vyasa* who gives it to Hanuman: in this way each of the five *swarupa*-s is paid. Then each of the Ramayanis and the other principal performers take Re. 1 from the Maharaja via the *vyasa*. I believe this public gesture of paying the performers is an affirmation, at the end of Ramlila, of the order of the non-Ramlila world: it shows who's king. A *nemi* (devoted Ramlila goer) disagrees: "It is the *dharma* (duty) of a king to give money to the Brahmins." As with so much in Ramlila the two interpretations do not cancel each other out. After the *swarupa*-s have eaten—it takes more than an hour—the Maharaja performs *arati* again. Then each of the *swarupa*-s takes his garland off and puts it on the Maharaja. This gesture is repeated with members of the royal family, each of whom gives and receives garlands from the *swarupa*-s. (At this time only are the females of the royal family out of purdah.) Then elephants arrive taking the *swarupa*-s back to Ayodhya where they give *darshana*, and the royal family retires inside the Fort.

The ceremony of the thirty-first day is trivalent: the Maharaja is paying off his entertainers, welcoming visiting royalty, and worshipping gods. All three events take place simultaneously, being accomplished by the same set of gestures—the meanings radiate outward through three frames, that of Ramnagar, of the mythic narrative, and of the cosmic-religious Hindu system of reality.

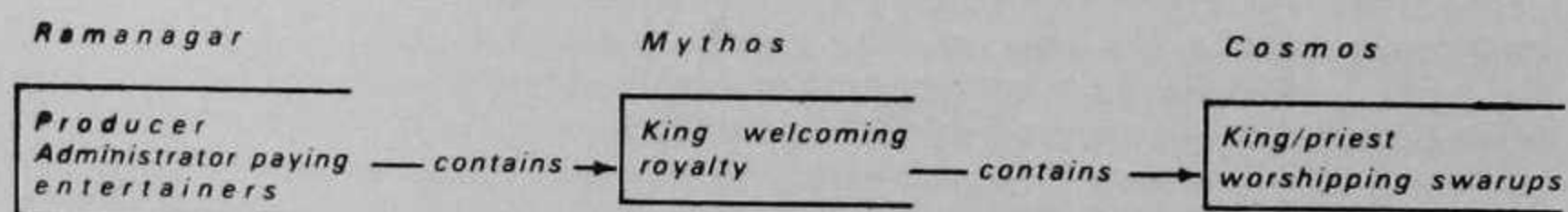


Figure Three

The largest event cosmically is contained within a mythic event which in turn is contained within the social order of Ramnagar. And through this ceremony of reduction, of the lesser reality containing the greater, and the private payment in the Maharaja's meeting room the next day, a month of extraordinary happening is ended; things are returned to the ordinary. In Turner's language, a reintegration has occurred.

*Performing Styles, Roles, Rehearsals, Directors, Staging, Iconography*

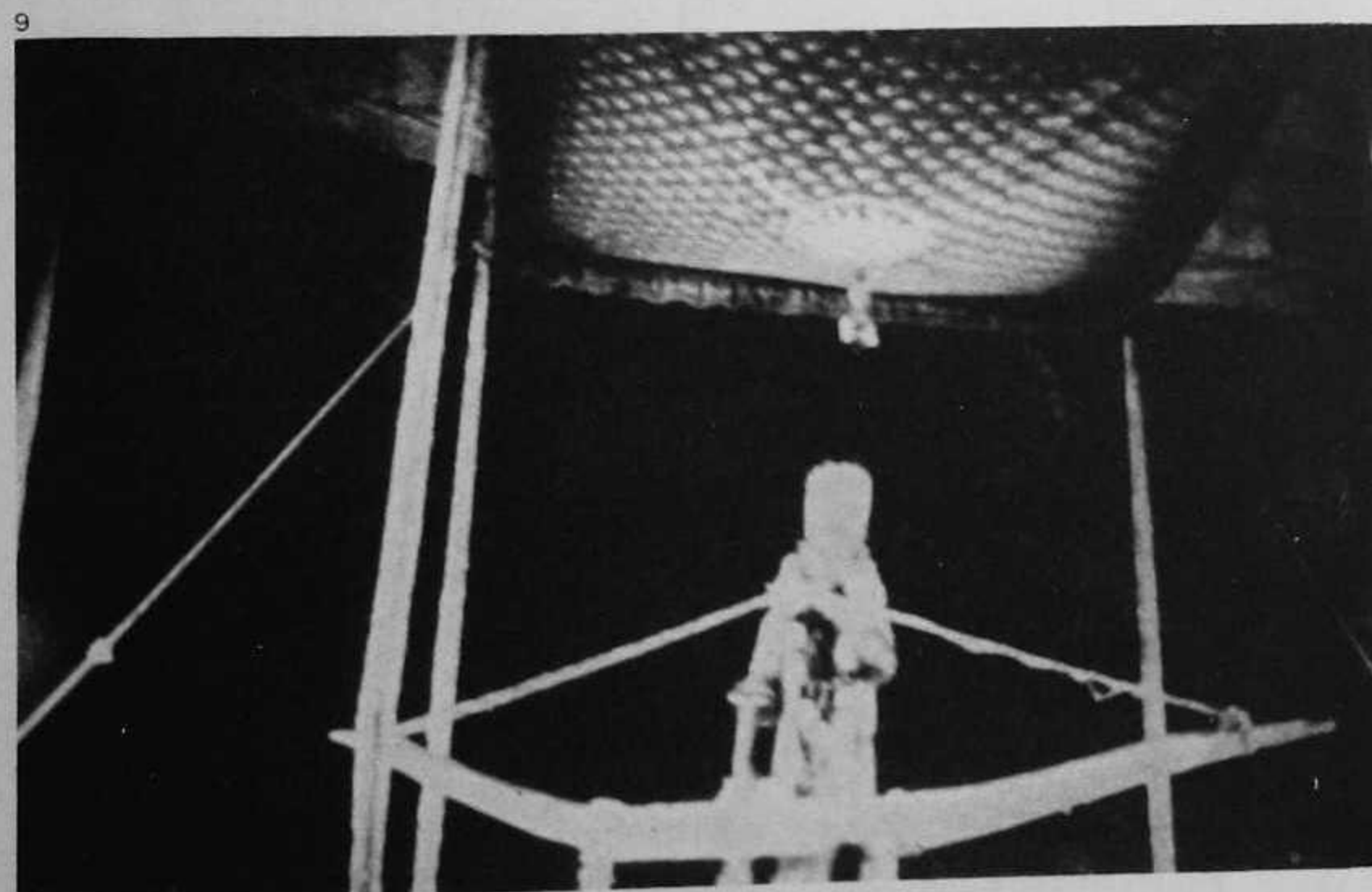
Earlier I quoted a spectator who thought that everything at Ramlila was "natural." This just shows what a slippery, culture-bound concept

"natural" is. From my Western perspective the acting styles and staging are anything but natural. More: they are not directly analogous to what is current in mainstream American acting or staging. The use of Ramnagar itself—both the constructed environments and the found spaces (streets, paths, streams, trees)—have more in common with experiments of the 60s and 70s than with anything in mainstream theatre. Ramlila is like the movies—for Ramlila is staged "on location."

The acting is mostly flat. Words are spoken, or declaimed in a sing-song fashion, and shouted so that the huge crowds can hear. Only rarely—as when Rama laments the wounding of Lakshmana, when Parashurama storms in angry that Shiva's bow has been broken, when Sita complains of her imprisonment in Lanka, when Angad engages Ravana in a spirited and often humorous dialog, when Narada sings his haunting song about Panchavati—does the acting carry emotional weight. Dialogs recited by characters other than the *swarupa*-s or those named above—and there are more than 30 characters in Ramlila with speaking roles—often mumble, so what they say is inaudible beyond the first few rows of spectators. Sometimes they even appear embarrassed by who they are or what they have to say, as when several teenage boys enact the young women of Janakpur who recite long speeches describing the beauty of Rama and Lakshmana.

The gestures of the actors remain the same scene after scene; these basic gestures do not depend on content. The most typical gesture is a sweeping motion of the right arm from the shoulder, with the hand and arm moving away from the chest making a broad semi-circle that sweeps over and includes the audience. The actors look mostly at the audience and not at the character they are speaking to.

Many big moments are non-acted. For example, the contest for Sita's hand. Many princes have to compete for Sita who will be given to the man who can lift Shiva's great bow. Several princes try, all fail. In their attempts no effort is made to indicate how heavy the bow is, how massive its size. Each prince perfunctorily stoops over the bow, pretends to tug at it, and fails. Then Rama steps up and effortlessly, without hesitation or doubt, lifts the bow, snaps his





wrists, and breaks the bow in two. Instead of this gesture revealing Rama's incredible strength, it underlines the fact that the bow is made of papier-maché, designed to break at the slightest touch. As Rama breaks the bow the white *arati* flare burns, a canon goes off, representing the thunder crack as Shiva's bow snaps, and the crowd roars. This impressive staging is not matched by the acting, which remains flat. Yet, for me at least, the non-acting fits perfectly with the ikonography and meaning of the scene. Rama's playful, even ironic, omnipotence is shown by the way he not only breaks Shiva's bow but exposes it as a stage prop. In Rama's—Vishnu's—lila the great bow is a toy. Then Parashurama storms into Janakpur yanking the mood back to that of conventional and effective drama. Often these two kinds of style succeed each other giving Ramlila a special tension—a sense of existing in two worlds at once, that of ritual and that of theatre.

The Bharata Milapa also conveys several levels and kinds of performance simultaneously. On an elevated square stage, something like a boxing ring, set up in the intersection of two main Ramnagar roads, the brothers enact their reunion after Rama's fourteen-year exile. After embracing and then laying prostrate on the ground and kissing each other's feet, the *swarupa*-s stand up in a straight line and face the crowd eight separate times, slowly rotating clockwise. Each time they face a direction the white flares associated with *arati* are lit and the crowd goes crazy. It is simple, abstract, extended, and moving: a sheer display of the five divine figures united at last showing themselves to all the assembled people. Thus the narrative drama is transformed at this moment into *darshana*.

So it is also, if less spectacularly, at the end of each night's lila with the performance of *arati*. Rama and Sita, and often Lakshmana too, are the "ikons" of the nightly *arati* service. Different characters wave the camphor lamp, Hanuman usually wields the fly wisk. During *arati* first white and then red flares are lit, brightly illuminating the scene and flattening the perspective so that it appears that temple *murti*-s are there, not living performers. The *swarupa*-s are carefully instructed in the pose they must maintain, their bodies stiff and still, their faces frozen. Spectators surge forward to take *darshana*. On one occasion, at the start of his exile, after crossing the make-believe Ganga, Rama performs the temple service to a Shiva lingam. This service is particularly exciting to the crowd which mercilessly presses inward to catch a glimpse of the action that brings together these two most powerful gods.

The *samvada*-s which the characters recite are dialogs in modern 19th century Hindi, but they are far from colloquial either in tone or meaning. The *samvada*-s repeat or elaborate what is chanted in the classical Hindi of the *Ramcharitmanas*. Classical Hindi stands in roughly the same relationship to today's Hindi as Chaucer's English does to today's. Thus, as in several Asian traditional theatres, some of the language spoken is not understood by most of the audience. And, as in Noh where the Kyogen tells the story in a more accessible Japanese, the *samvada*-s in a sense translate the *Ramcharitmanas*. But often, the *samvada*-s do much more than translate: they elaborate. The story of how King Janak got hold of Shiva's bow is not in the *Ramcharitmanas*, but it is in the *samvada*-s; the episode between Kaikeyi and Manthara is drawn out extensively in the *samvada*-s.

The *samvada*-s are rehearsed in two different ways. The *swarupa*-s change from year to year, though boys are encouraged to stay with the Ramlila for several years and move up the ladder of roles so that frequently enough a boy who plays Shatrughna or Bharata one year will "graduate" to Lakshmana or Rama in a year or two. Still there is much turnover, and extensive rehearsal. Training begins two months before Ramlila for up to ten hours a day (including a two to four hours



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siesta). For the first month the boys work just on memorizing the dialog. Then they learn how to speak and move. This practice is sheer imitation. One *vyasa* works only with the *swarupa*-s. He says a line, they repeat; he shows a gesture, they do it exactly the same. Everything is learned by imitating the *vyasa*: pronunciation, intonation, projection, rhythm, gestures, movement. During the performance itself, the *vyasa*, *samvada* book in hand, stands behind the *swarupa*-s making sure that all the words are said correctly, all the gestures acted precisely. In fact, if one is close enough to the action, you can hear the *vyasa* pronounce every word quietly into the ears of the *swarupa*-s: in an actual sense, the dialogs are twice done. Rehearsals are not over when performances begin. Each day the *swarupa*-s practise for several hours. Then another hour or two is spent in putting on costumes and make up. All the boys attend all the rehearsals. In 1976 the father of the boy

playing Lakshmana died in the middle of Ramlila month. It was not possible for the performer to continue to play Lakshmana because the death in his family polluted him. The boy playing Shatrughna took over the role. "I was at all the rehearsals, I knew what to say." The training pays off.

Within the conventions of flatness and ikonographic rather than naturalistic staging, the over-all effect of Ramlila at Ramnagar is very powerful. I remember from the 1976 Ramlila especially Sita's lament on day 25. After Rama fails to defeat Ravana, the whole vast crowd moves to where Sita sits imprisoned under the Ashoka trees. There, in the clearest voice of the Ramlila, Sita spoke and moaned, a formalized moaning that extended certain final vowels, their sound diminishing slowly, vanishing like smoke in the air. Her voice was clear, her moans moving without being sentimental. Still, the chief *vyasa* thinks the quality of acting has gone down:

In the past more rupees were spent. They get the same amount now but it buys less. If they do a good job, it is out of faith and love, and if that is lacking, the performance gets worse.

Hess and I spoke to the assistant *vyasa* who played Sita when he was young.

RS: When you played Sita were you possessed by her, or was it "just a role"?  
*Vyasa*: I get the feeling in my heart that I am Sita. It is written: Whoever is a true devotee becomes absorbed in God. When you're absorbed you behave as that person. If you cry it is a real crying. When the actor believes "I am the character," then he really cries.

This is very much the same kind of reply Jane Belo got when interviewing people in a Balinese village about their experience of being in a trance and performing various beings (animals, gods, household things like a broom).<sup>8</sup> We asked the same question of the chief *vyasa* and of the boy playing Rama.

Chief *Vyasa*: If in the play it says "it's raining," and you look into a clear sky, still it is raining.

RS (To Rama): When people come and touch your feet, what do you feel?

Rama: The feeling of God is in me.

RS: Why did you audition for Ramlila?

Rama: I have the desire, the respect for all the important people involved, and my faith. If you come from a poor family it is a good chance; and if you come from a rich family, it gives you a good reputation.

Earlier I asked the Maharaja how the *swarupa*-s are selected early in July. The chief *vyasa*—a temple priest at the Fort—has searched the neighbouring communities for candidates; about fifty boys are invited to the Fort to meet the Maharaja.

RS: How do you choose the performers?

MR: Voice, good looks, family bringing-up.

RS: What happens to the boys after their experience in the Ramlila?

MR: Some become *sadhu*-s, one became a *vyasa* and gives discourses on the *Ramayana*. This particular *vyasa* played all four roles (except Sita). For many years his voice didn't change so he could continue to perform.



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I suspect there is some romanticizing here in regard to the lives former *swarupa*-s live. Hess and I tried to track down a few. One man was a journalist and he said that his experience as Lakshmana, his work "in the theatre," opened up for him the possibility of a career in "communications." Another young man had played Rama in the early 70s, and had earned a great reputation for his sincerity in performance. It was said that he shed real tears when Lakshmana was wounded. This boy, very poor, was attending a religious school, though his widowed mother was finding it hard to pay the tuition. His ambition was to be a scholar. Most *ex-swarupa*-s had vanished into the population.

There are more performers in Ramlila than the *swarupa*-s. Some roles are hereditary—Ravana has been in the same family since the time of Iswari Prasad Narain Singh who ruled from 1835 to 1889: the time that Ramnagar Ramlila developed its present form. At present Ravana is played by both father and son. The scenes that are not physically demanding are played by the frail father, the rest by his more vigorous son. The son tells how Ravana came to be in his family:

The story is people were being selected there in Ramnagar (the Ravana family, called "Ravanraj" by all the neighbors, live in Surauli village about 15 kilometers from Ramnagar). My baba reached there in Iswari Narain Singh's time. His name was Ayodhya Pathak, and the king's minister was Bhau Bhatt. My baba reached the place where they were choosing among 18 men. Yes, an open selection. My baba's age was 35 to 40 then. So they heard the voices of all 18 men. My grandfather's voice pleased Iswari Narain Singh. He asked Bhau Bhatt, and Bhatt said, "Your Highness, he is Iswari Narain Singh. He asked Bhau Bhatt, and Bhatt said that for the other candidates you could have hopes—they were all younger and lived nearby. You may hope for them, but this one has fulfilled all hopes. The Maharaja gave the order. That was it. They gave my baba the book to study. He memorized it. Since then the part of Ravana has remained in our family. By now it's been about four generations. Ayodhya Pathak, Jogeshwar Pathak, Narayan Pathak—he's the one you see here, and his son, me, Kaushal Prasad Pathak.

RS: So Sri Narayanji has played Ravana for a long time?

Narayan: I have said the role for 58 years.

The man playing Parashurama has performed it 34 years. He says the role is already being passed on to his son.

Some people literally grow into their roles so that their physical being appears to be a reflection of their Ramlila identities. The man playing Brahma is 96 years old, with a feeble voice and very delicate gestures. He has played Brahma more years than he can remember. Other performers play several roles. The man who plays Vishvamitra also plays Valmiki, Atri Muni, Agastya, Lomas-rishi, and Trijata. Some of the best actors, such as the man who plays Angad, are young—and they came into Ramlila by accident. The family of the *vyasa* who rehearses the roles other than the *swarupa*-s, and who is in charge of all technical arrangements, had come into possession of a number of key roles, including Hanuman, Angad, Sugriva, and others: a total of 11 roles. Then, in 1977, a death occurred in this family during Ramlila season. This meant that a number of key roles had to be replaced immediately, causing a great strain on the performance, and perhaps even a decline in its quality. Through this crisis, the Maharaja recognized that too many roles had been centralized in one family. It was during the rush to find replacements that the man who now plays Angad was brought into the Ramlila. The process of decentralization continues.

In one case at least a Ramlila role has had a deep effect on the performer's non-Ramlila life. The man who plays Narada with great force is the *mahant* of two temples in Mirzapur, about 75 kilometers from Ramnagar. He is a relatively wealthy man. He moved to Mirzapur in 1957. But he was not always a *mahant*. He's been in the Ramlila for 30 years, since 1948. When he lived in Ramnagar he was "in the service of the Maharaja." He did various jobs: "I used to be the priest of the *shaligrama* for the Rani in her palace. I did all kinds of work. I did *puja-patha* (a general term for priest's work)." But with Independence "many people had to be let go, that was in 1952." I asked Narada—he is known by that name in or out of Ramlila—how he got involved:

My own story is this. When I was first at the Maharaja's, I was just a child, 13 years old. During the time of Ramlila my job was to stay with Ramji. Every year I was sent there, and since there was never any complaint about me, there was no objection. From 1929 to 1951, I stayed with Ramji for a month, and looked after all the arrangements. I was in charge of all their studying, training, teaching. You know the Ramlila books? Well, besides me you won't find anybody who has them.

RS: You have the whole *samvada*?

Narada: The whole *samvada*. If you come to my place I can show it all to you, the dialogs of all four *swarupa*-s. Then from 1951 to 1958 I was the *vyasa* for the *swarupa*-s. There was a baba there too, Baba Kamala Saran. He was very old. So I said to him, you just sit there, I'll do all the work, but you'll get the credit, don't worry. He, poor thing, was 80 years old. It was then that the Maharaja gave me a copy of the *samvada*-s. It took me three years, working an hour every day, to make a copy. I gave the copy to the Maharaja and he showed it to a German lady and she ran away with it. Now I'm helpless. He asks me for another copy. I say, "Look, I live in Robertsganj. My brother is old and sick. How can he write it?"

RS: After 1958, when Raghunath Datta took over the *vyasa* work, what did you do?

Narada: I became a projectionist in the cinema in Benares. I went to Calcutta to pass an

exam to be a projectionist. I was a projectionist for eleven months, and worked in the Ramlila for one.

RS: And since when have you played Naradji?

Narada: Always, for 30 years.

RS: So you played Narada all the time you were doing these other things?

Narada: Yes. Narada's part comes only for five or six days. The other days I spent with the *swarupa*-s.

RS: Who played Narada before you?

Narada: He also stayed with the Maharaja. When he played I used to stay near him. Nobody explained anything to me. I just listened to him and did it the way he did it. One day he said to me, "Listen, you do this work now." He went to the Maharaja and said, "I won't do this work now; my body has reached the state, my age, where I can't." The Maharaja asked who should do it. I was a *vyasa* at the time so he said to me, "You do it."

RS: We like your acting very much. How do you do it so well?

Narada: My experience is this. When I put on the crown and before Ramji, then I feel sure that I am really before him, only before him, I don't see him as a man. I see him as a *bhagwana*. At that time, if anybody tries to talk to me, I don't want to talk. At that time, everything appears extraordinary. What people call *tanmaya* (completely merging, losing a sense of the self). It's like when you're in love. Whatever exists, it's only Ramji, only he.

RS: Could the same feeling come to any good actor playing any role? As a projectionist you've seen lots of actors.

Narada: No, the same feeling couldn't come. Acting is done for money. When anybody works for money he just says, "All right, let me do my duty." But for him who works in a feeling of love, there is no question of money. Didn't I tell you before that the Maharaja can't make me work for money? It is my love, and only because of that I've reached this condition. By God's grace I've arrived here.

RS: What do you mean?

Narada: Imagine. I used to live with the Maharaja like an ordinary man. I got Rs. 50 a month. Now I have reached a high position. Everyone in the city respects me. A *mahant* is like a king. I get Rs. 1000 a month.

RS: When did you become *mahant*?

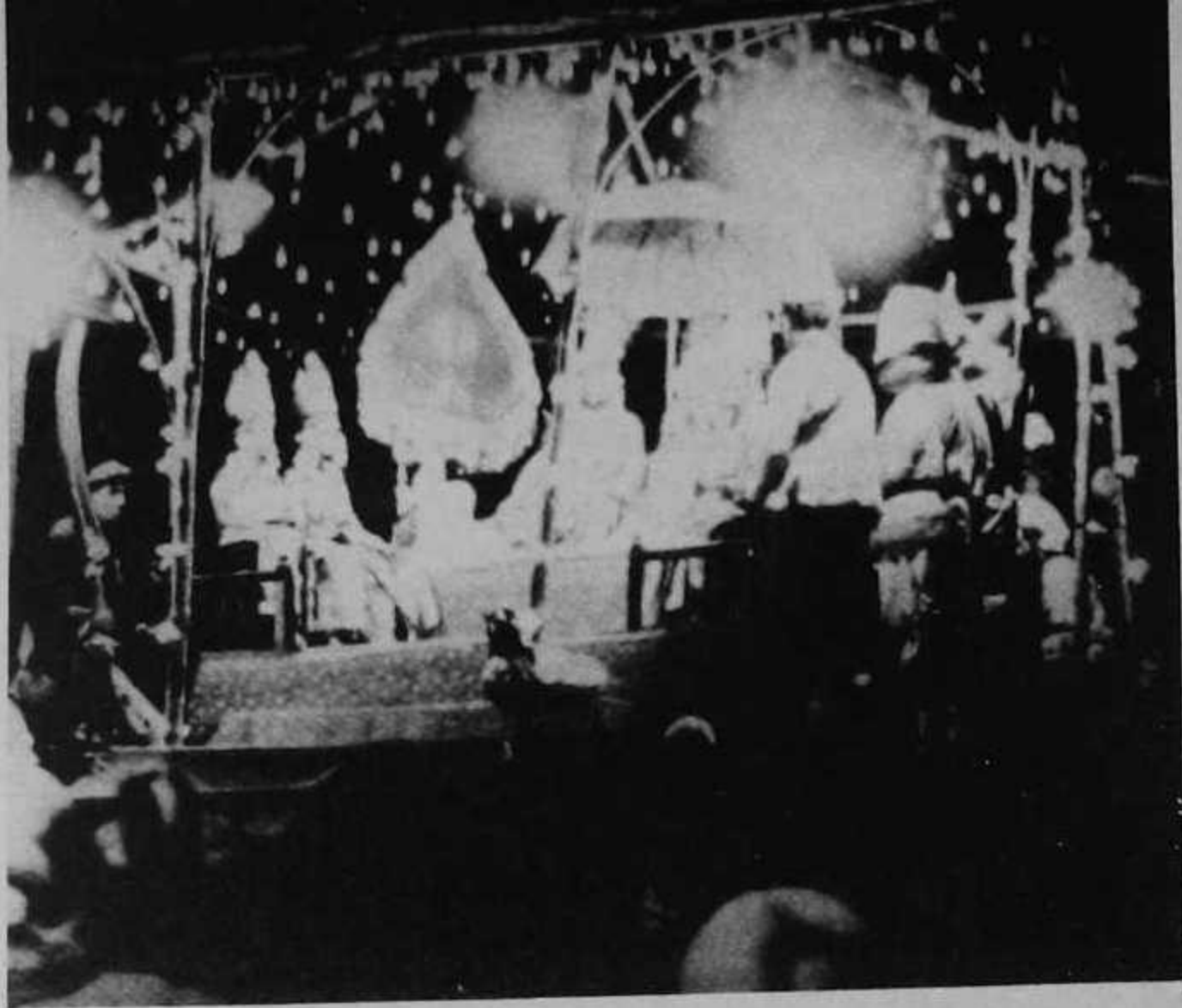
Narada: In 1970 my guruji passed away. And this is 1978. In 1970 it all came into my hands.

RS: Have Narada's words and personality influenced your life and your work as a *mahant*?

Narada: There is a proverb: "Whatever anybody does, it's only Rama. Man can do nothing by himself. The doer is only Rama."

Very few people know Narada by his actual name, Mahant Baba Omkar Das. The role of Narada he has played in Ramlila has come to define his ordinary actuality. And this, I'm sure, is due largely to the quality of his acting—his projection of deep sincerity, his demeanor which is imposing and authoritative, and his gifts as a singer.

Thus in Ramlila we are presented with an incredibly complicated aesthetics. At one extreme is the flat acting, at the other a role so powerfully performed that the player is absorbed into it, his whole present life is defined by it. The iconography of key scenes, and nightly *arati*, project Ramlila into the realm of the Hindu temple service with its manifestation of divine presence. Hereditary actors perform side by side with those who audition for roles on a yearly basis. Certain roles are



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not hereditary but still are controlled by families. The Maharaja, as producer, oversees the whole thing but it is too vast for him to know everything that's going on. This is in keeping with what seems to me to be perhaps an unconscious but still all-pervasive intention of Ramnagar Ramlila: to be more than any single human being can take in. As I wrote in my notebook after Dasara 1978:

No one, not even the most knowledgeable, not even the Maharaja, the *vyasa-s*, Atmaram the carpenter, the most diligent scholars, the most faithful *nemi-s* (who attend every performance)—no one knows it all. Even at basic level of what's being done day by day by everyone involved. No one even knows how many are involved. Where do you stop counting? With the direct participants? With the man who takes a month out every year from his work to fashion with his own hands the garlands that the *swarupa-s* wear each night for *arati*? With the *nemi-s* or *sadhu-s* who travel great distances to attend? With the spectators who attend irregularly? With the operators of the tea and *chat* (snacks) stalls who never see any lila at all, but who keep the *mela* going night after night? No one can see every scene because so many are simultaneous and occur far removed from each other in space.

Thus Ramnagar Ramlila creates its own model of the universe.

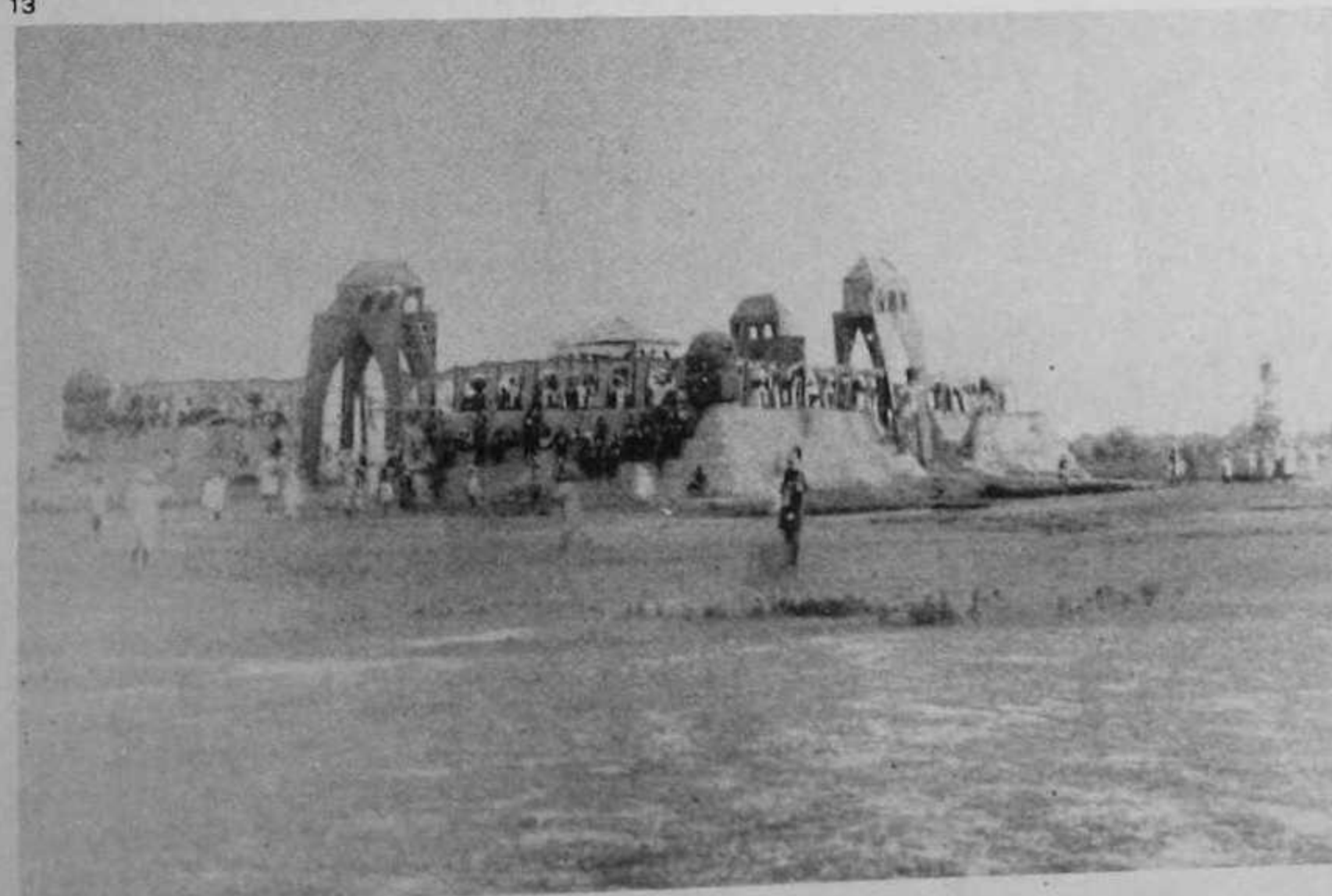
#### *The Future of the Ramlila of Ramnagar*

There's no doubt that Ramlila will continue to be celebrated in Northern India. But about Ramnagar Ramlila there are some problems which I can only touch on here. Money is getting tighter all the time, and tradition is wearing thin. Even given the fact that it is normal for people in India to speak of the "old days" as having more splendor, more piety, more devotional intensity (paralleling in everyday discourse the devolution outlined in the *yuga*-theory of history), it seems that Ramlila of Ramnagar is less opulent and less lavishly produced than earlier. A large part of this is a question of budget. Subsidy is given to the Maharaja by the Government of Uttar Pradesh, but it is not enough to keep Ramlila going. The Maharaja puts in his own money too. But he is in a difficult position. If he, or his heirs, become full-scale industrialists

they will sacrifice some of the authority they earn by virtue of their apparent "disinterest" in "the world." The Fort could be turned into a tourist hotel, but much will be lost that is intangible. For the Maharaja of Benares exists to some degree at least as a mystery. A mystery in the medieval European sense: an event whose causes and effects are merged. He is the causer of the Ramlila, and he is caused by the Ramlila. On the other hand, if some economically productive scheme is not found the sheer production elements of Ramlila—the effigies, the environments, the costumes—will grow shoddy. Already, there are Ramlilas I have seen that have better costumes. The Maharaja seems trapped, and with him the Ramlila: he can't be a Maharaja through and through and an industrialist through and through at the same time. The special situation of Kashi-Benares-Ramnagar-Ramlila precludes this double role. Thus he faces the contradiction of supporting a ritual superstructure by means of a modern infrastructure.

But the Maharaja of Benares is special because the Ganga and Kashi are special. Even as India has become a modern secular state, the ritual aspects of its culture, especially in the villages and in the village-like neighborhoods of the cities, remain resilient and alive. The Maharaja of Benares is able to maintain his identity as Maharaja purely on the basis of ritual: tradition, pomp, public religious devotion, Ramlila: theatrical activities. In Ramnagar Ramlila we have a fundamentally folk art perfected during the colonial phase of India's history, in a "princely state," continuing to exist in the modern era and reflecting the special qualities of Benares. This theatrical-religious-social event is of great interest to me as a theatre person, and I recommend it to Indian theatre workers. If Kathakali, and like forms, have developed meaningful and powerful aesthetics based on classical norms (reinterpreted to be sure), then Ramnagar Ramlila has developed its own aesthetics based on folk norms. These are even more appealing to me than the classical dance and drama. Ramlila uses myth, audience participation, political allusion, constructed and found environments, performers at all levels of skill and involvement, and even the existing socio-political circumstances to develop a performance of great diversity and power. Ramlila cannot be imitated, but it can be learned from.

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## Sculptural Representation on the Lakshmana Temple of Khajuraho in the Light of *Prabodhachandrodaya*

Devangana Desai

### References:

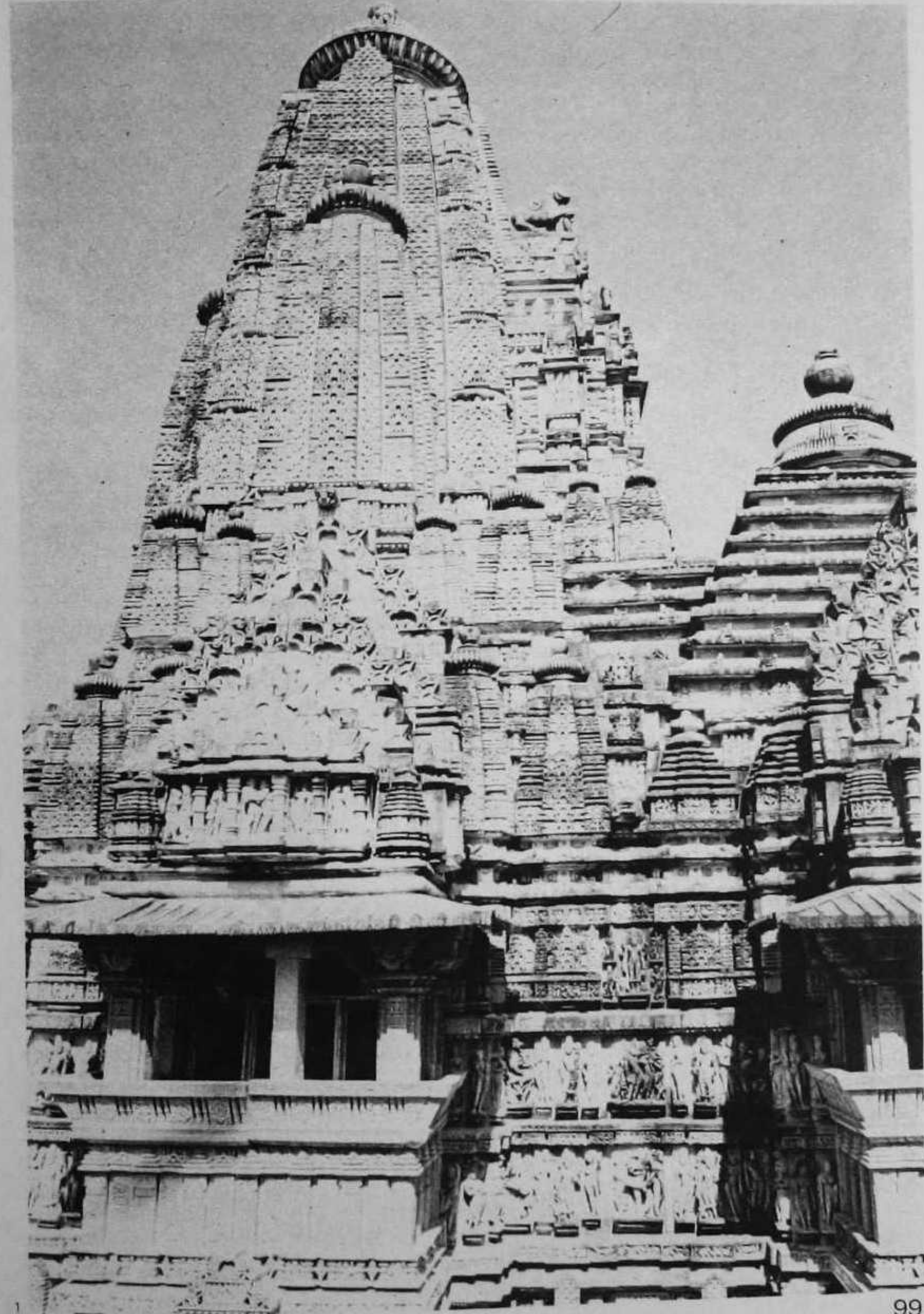
1. Research on Ramlila was carried out by Linda Hess and me in 1976, 1977, and 1978. Portions of the article here are adapted from our co-authored article, "The Ramlila of Ramnagar," TDR, Vol. 21, No. 3, September 1977: 51-82.
2. The distinction between "Great" and "Little" traditions was first made, I believe, by anthropologist Robert Redfield. I am using the application and elaboration of that idea as expressed by Milton Singer in his *When A Great Tradition Modernizes*. London: Pall Mall Press, 1972.
3. I am using the term "stations" as it is applied to "stations of the Cross," or the stations used during medieval cycle plays in Europe. Christ stopped at 14 stations on his way to the Crucifixion and down from it (carried to his grave). Easter processions frequently move from station to station with stops at each. This pattern of movement and stopping followed by further movement is typical also of Ramlila. I am not suggesting any connection between Ramlila and the Christian celebrations—just a parallel solution to analogous narrative situations.
4. See Victor Turner, "Social Dramas and Ritual Metaphors" in *Drama, Fields and Metaphors*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974. Also "The Anthropology of Performance" in *Process, Performance, & Pilgrimage*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1979.
5. H. D. Sankalia, *Ramayana: Myth or Reality?*. New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1973, 55.
6. Surinder Mohan Bhardwaj, *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India*. Delhi: Thomson Press, Ltd., 1973, 7.
7. I've written a long essay on "Restoration of Behavior" which deals, in part, with restored villages. See *Studies in Visual Communication*, Vol. 7, No. 3, Summer 1981, 2-44.
8. See "Trance Experience in Bali" in *Ritual, Play, and Performance*, eds. Richard Schechner and Mady Schuman, New York: Seabury Press, 1976, 150-161. Or: Jane Belo, *Trance in Bali*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1960. As trance-dancer Darja said: "When I've already gone in trance, my thoughts are delicious, but I do not remember it. (...) I feel just like a puppy, I feel happy to run along the ground. I am very pleased, just like a puppy running on the ground. As long as I can run on the ground, I'm happy."

\* \* \*

### Illustrations:

1. Lakshmana, Rama, Sita with Hanuman, Sugriva and others. Ramlila (circa 1920). From the Maharaja's private collection.
2. Ramayanis singing the *Ramcharitmanas*.
3. Rama worshipping the Shiva *lingam*.
4. Ravana's effigy atop Lanka on Dasara.
5. Hanuman carrying the mountain containing the herb which will revive Lakshmana. The two-mile trek continues for full two hours.
6. The Durga tank and temple near Rambagh.
7. Rama's party on the way back in his *pushpaka*.
8. The maharaja with *sadhu*-s.
9. Rama holds Shiva's bow before breaking it.
10. Sita.
11. Old Hanuman rests as behind him worshippers of Rama take his *darshana*.
12. After the coronation the great crowd takes *darshana* of the *swarupa*-s.
13. Ravana's fort in Lanka. (The same structure—of earthwork—is in use today.) Ramlila (circa 1920 or earlier). From the Maharaja's private collection.

\*The two pictures in colour represent the transformation of a young boy into a *swarupa*.



Krishna Mishra's allegorical play *Prabodhachandrodaya* (The Rise of the Moon of Awakening)<sup>1</sup> was possibly staged at the court of the Chandella dynasty associated with the building of the magnificent temples of Khajuraho in Central India. Eminent scholars such as Alexander Cunningham, Stella Kramrisch, Krishna Deva, Pramod Chandra and Hermann Goetz have associated the play with the Chandella court. In the Prologue of the play there is a mention of one Gopala who had helped King Kirtivarman of the Chandra (Chandella) dynasty to regain his kingdom from the Chedi King Karna (Lakshmi-Karna) of Tripuri (Jabalpur area). On several occasions in the Prologue there is a metaphorical use of the words *Kirti* and *Karna*. Kirtivarman's re-establishment of his kingdom took place around A.D. 1065.<sup>2</sup> To celebrate this victory, the *Sutradhara* was requested by Gopala to stage the play *Prabodhachandrodaya* which was written and given to him earlier on by Guru Krishna Mishra.

तद्वयं शान्तरसप्रयोगाभिनयेनात्मानं विनोदयितुमिच्छामः । ततो यत्पूर्वं-  
मस्मद्गुह्यभिस्तत्रभवद्भिः श्रीकृष्णमिश्रेः प्रबोधचन्द्रोदयं नाम नाटकं निर्माय  
भवतः समर्पितमासीत् तदद्य राज्ञः श्रीकीर्तिवर्मणः पुरस्तादभिनेतव्यं भवता ।

A sculptural representation akin to the subject-matter of the *Prabodhachandrodaya* can be seen on the Lakshmana Temple of Khajuraho, the largest Vishnu temple on the site. The inscriptional slab, which is now fixed in the *mandapa* of the Lakshmana Temple, was actually found in the *debris* accumulated at the base of the temple. Even so the date on the slab, V.S. 1011 (A.D. 954), is compatible (as has been shown by Krishna Deva<sup>3</sup>) with the sculptural and architectural features of the temple.

The fact that some of the features of the sculptural representation evoked memories of the characters in *Prabodhachandrodaya* stimulated a more detailed examination of the play itself. *Prabodhachandrodaya* is a philosophical allegory in six acts, combining the *Advaita* doctrine and Vishnu-*Bhakti*. In the play, the forces of orthodox religion, based on the Vedic order, unite to re-establish the ancient order against those non-Vedic, heretical forces which had earlier gained ascendancy. This theme has been presented in the play in the form of a contest between the royal forces (*rajakula*-s) of the two sons of *Manas* (Mind). Of the two, one is born of *Pravritti* (Activity) and called King Mahamoha (Delusion); the other is born of *Nivritti* (Repose) and known as King Viveka (Discrimination). The battleground is the town of Varanasi where Mahamoha has spread his influence, through his allies, namely, the Kapalika, the materialist Charvaka, the Jaina Kshapanaka, the Buddhist Bhikshu (or rather the non-Vedic followers termed *nastika*-s by the orthodox schools), and through such mental tendencies as *Dambha* (Deceit), *Ahamkara* (Egoism), *Lobha* (Greed), *Mithyadrishiti* (Error), etc. King Viveka's allies are *Mati* (Reason), *Shanti* (Peace), *Shraddha* (Faith), Saraswati, Vishnu-*Bhakti*, etc. These allies seek to bring about the union of Viveka and his estranged wife Upanishad—a union which leads to the birth of *Prabodha* (Awakening) and *Vidya* (Knowledge). *Vidya* dissolves the forces of Mahamoha. *Purusha* (Man) who was deluded into slumber by the power of King Mahamoha and had forgotten his identity with *Parameshvara* (The Supreme Being) becomes aware of his true Self with the birth of *Prabodha*.

The play can be viewed at least on three levels:

(1) the struggle between the forces of Delusion and Discrimination in the Mind

of Man (*Purusha*), and the defeat of Delusion with the rise of Awakening and Knowledge;

(2) the fight between the heretical, non-Vedic sects and the orthodox, established religion based on Vedic order;

(3) the combat between the forces of the Chedi ruler, King Karna (who is likened to Delusion), and Gopala (who fought him and is called Discrimination). The *Sutradhara* states in the Prologue that Gopala caused the rise of King Kirtivarman like the rise of Awakening by King Viveka who triumphed over Mahamoha.

The primary and central theme of the play, namely, the fight between Delusion and Discrimination, is a recurrent theme in Indian culture and philosophy. The names of the persons or forces associated with these abstractions would be changed according to the different contexts or patrons and these, in turn, would introduce variations in the second and third levels mentioned above. It is also interesting to note that the Chandella King Dhanga, who consecrated the Vishnu-Vaikuntha (Lakshmana) Temple at Khajuraho, was praised in inscriptions for the qualities of *Viveka* (Discrimination), *Prajna* (Intelligence), etc. The imagery of the attributes of *Viveka* and *Mahamoha* was also used in the service of Jaina religion in the allegorical play *Mohaparajaya* (Conquest of Delusion) staged in the royal court of Gujarat in the 13th century.

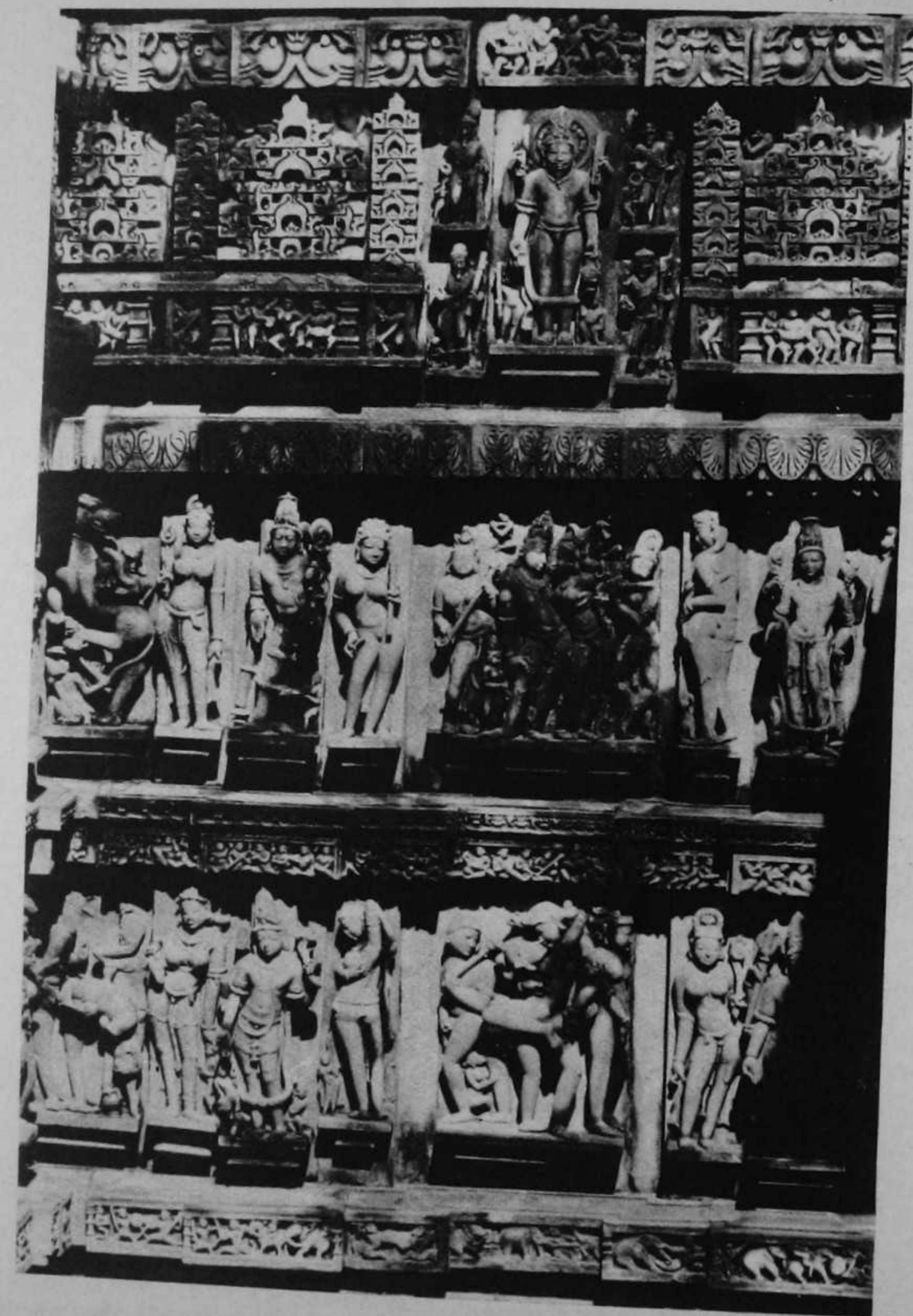
The tradition of allegorical drama was not unknown before Krishna Mishra. As early as the 2nd century A.D., we have an allegorical Buddhist play called *Sariputrprakarana*, generally attributed to Ashvaghosha, with personified figures of *Buddhi* (Wisdom), *Kirti* (Fame), *Dhriti* (Firmness), etc. Commenting on the allegorical genre of drama, A. B. Keith remarks, "It must remain uncertain whether there was a train of tradition leading from Ashvaghosha to Krishna Mishra, or whether the latter created the drama afresh; the former theory is more likely."<sup>4</sup>

We may mention in support of Keith's view that Jayanta, the author of *Nyayamanjari*, who lived in the 9th century, wrote an allegorical play called *Agama-dambara*.<sup>5</sup> Krishnamacharya and S. K. De also draw attention to the concept of philosophical allegory as embodied in the story of Puranjana in the *Bhagavata Purana* (IV, 25-28) which "might have suggested the method."<sup>6</sup>

The artists of the Lakshmana Temple were not unfamiliar with the *Bhagavata Purana*. Twelve *Krishna-lila* scenes, partly based on the version of this *Purana*, have been represented on the sanctum wall,<sup>7</sup> and the *avatara*-s (incarnations) of Vishnu are represented on the door-jambes of the sanctum as also in the principal niches of the temple. The temple enshrines an image of Vishnu-Vaikuntha, a composite deity combining Narasimha, Varaha and the *Saumya* (placid) aspects of Vishnu. It is significant that the play *Prabodhachandrodaya* as well as the inscription of A.D. 954 found near the base of the Lakshmana Temple have verses of prayers addressed to Vishnu-Vaikuntha. The play as well as the inscription support Trayidharma or religion based on the Vedas.<sup>8</sup>

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The well-planned yet distinct sculptural scheme of the juncture (*sandhi*) wall of the Lakshmana Temple deserves close attention. This is the wall which connects the sanctum (*garbhagriha*) and the great hall (*mahamandapa*) of the temple and



which on the ground-plan can be seen as formed by an overlap of two equal squares of the sanctum and the great hall. At Khajuraho, only three *sandhara* temples, with an inner circumambulation path (*pradakshina-patha*), have their juncture walls formed by an overlap of two equal squares, whereas the *nirandhara* temples, without an inner ambulatory, do not have an overlap of two equal squares on the juncture walls.<sup>9</sup>

On this overlapped portion, the juncture, which can be taken from the side of the hall as well as the side of the sanctum, the architects (called *Sutradhara*-s in Khajuraho inscriptions) of the three *sandhara* temples, viz. the Lakshmana (A.D. 954), the Vishvanatha (A.D. 1002) and the Kandariya Mahadeva (about mid-11th century), employ puns, and a double-meaning language.<sup>10</sup> The architect of the Lakshmana Temple is the first at Khajuraho to conceive the idea of placing erotic figures on architectural junctures. As Michael Meister has observed,<sup>11</sup> puns are used here by placing conjoint (*sandhi*) figures on an architectural juncture (*sandhi-kshetra*).

Further observations reveal a pun on the word *Digambara* through the placing of the figure of a naked Kshapanaka monk,<sup>12</sup> holding a *pichchhika* (peacock-tail feathered stick) in a row which has Shiva images on buttresses (Illus. 2) *Digambara* (clothed-in-the-skies) is an epithet of Shiva and also applies to the Jaina Kshapanaka monk mentioned mockingly in the *Prabodhachandrodaya* and other literary works of the period. That the Khajuraho artists were familiar with the pun on *Digambara* can be further supported by the invocatory verse in the inscription of the Vishvanatha Temple in which Parvati teases Shiva (*Digambara*) by confusing him with the Kshapanaka (*Digambara*) who carries peacock-tail feathers.<sup>13</sup>

But the architect of the Lakshmana Temple has not only used (on the architectural juncture) the device of pun (*shlesha*), a literary *alamkara* (figure of speech), but also attempted to present characters of a play, possibly *Prabodhachandrodaya* or its prototype. He has a well-planned scheme of two sculptural bands, the lower with images of Shiva on buttresses and similarly the upper with images of Vishnu. On the former band he has placed a royal pair in an erotic attitude and a Kshapanaka monk on the left. This group reminds us of the characters in *Prabodhachandrodaya*, King Mahamoha and his beloved Mithyadrishti, and the Kshapanaka who is their ally in the play.

In contrast to this group, the architect has placed, on the upper row, a dignified royal couple representing, as it were, King Viveka and his wife Upanishad. Their union is celebrated by two female figures playing music: on the left, the figure playing a vina might well represent Sarasvati who assisted Vishnu-*Bhakti* in bringing about the union of King Viveka and his wife Upanishad.

It is not merely the contrasting features of the two groups associated respectively with Shiva's and Vishnu's rows that strike one as representing the two royal forces of the play. The identification is further supported by two *surasundari*-s (divine damsels) on the side buttresses.

The *surasundari* near the erotic group on the lower row is arranging her necklace or the upper garment by raising her arm (Illus. 3). There is an almost



similar description of Mithyadrishti in the *Prabodhachandrodaya* (II-34) where King Mahamoha describes her as one who "exhibits sportfully rows of nail-marks on her arms on the pretext of keeping in place the garland (*mala*) which has slightly slipped from its place." King Mahamoha also tells her that she shines like a *shalabhanji* (statue) on the wall of his mind (II. 37).

मच्चित्तभित्तौ भवती शालभञ्जीव राजते ॥३७॥

This imagery has further implications. It suggests the influence of sculptural depiction on literature.

The identification of King Viveka can be further supported by the *surasundari* with *hamsa* (swan) on the right buttress (Illus. 4). This beautiful damsel represents the motif of Karpuramanjari, freshly bathed and arranging her hair. The name Karpuramanjari is given to this type of female figure in the labels of the Kirtistambha at Chitorgarh and in the 15th century Western Indian text *Kshirarnava*.<sup>14</sup> The water dripping from her hair is drunk by a *hamsa* (swan) seen near her left foot. *Hamsa* in Indian culture is symbolic of the quality of discrimination (*viveka*). It can discriminate between water and milk (*Nira-kshira-viveka*).

The artist has thus subtly made a suggestion (*dhvani*) through the figures of Mithyadrishti and Karpuramanjari. These *surasundari*-s as well as *mithuna*-s (couples), observed in isolation, are motifs of Indian temple art: they are auspicious *alamkara*-s (ornaments). But perceived in configuration and in the context of other sculptural figures they are revealed as part of the plot of the play.

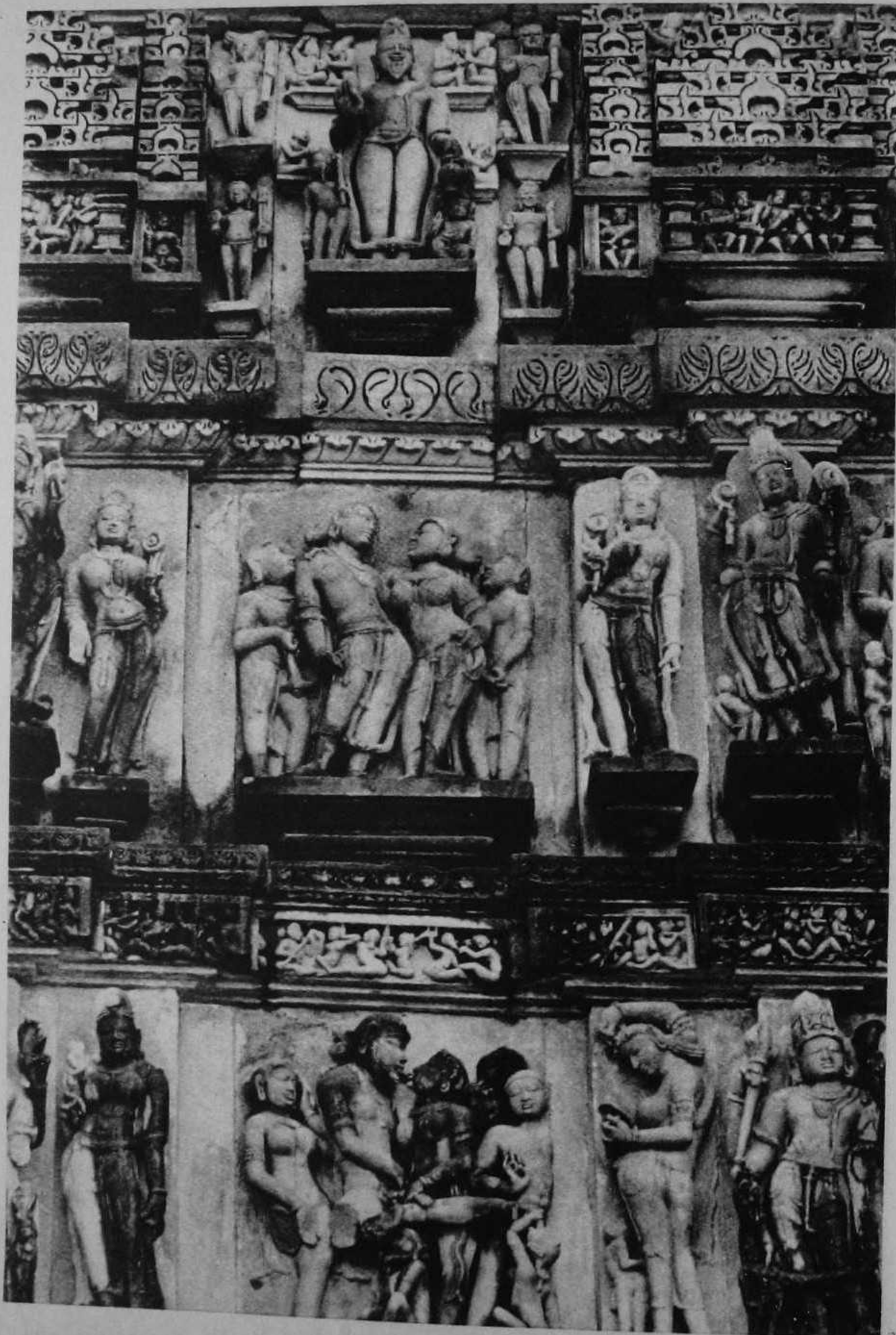
On the top panel (south wall), the hieratic image of Agni holds a book, water-pot, rosary and a sacrificial laddle. He is flanked by Tridandi ascetics holding three sticks (*danda*-s). These ascetics are supposed to possess control over mind, speech and body. The group could, at one level, stand for the Vedic order which is upheld in the inscription of the Lakshmana Temple and also in the play *Prabodhachandrodaya*. At another level, Agni could also represent *Shanta Jyoti*, *Nitya Prakasha* (Tranquil Light, Eternally Luminous) mentioned in the play in connection with the state of self-realization by *Purusha* (VI-27).

Sculptures on the outer wall of a temple are viewed by a devotee on circumambulating the temple, keeping the temple on the right. The south juncture wall scenes come first in the *pradakshina* and those on the north juncture wall towards the end of the round. So the north juncture wall represents the concluding part of the play, a drama intended to evoke *Shanta Rasa*, as stated in the Prologue.

The top panel on the north juncture wall represents an ascetic (*muni*) with an expression of repose on his face. He holds a water-pot in his left hand and his right hand is in the gesture of *abhaya* (Illus. 5). In the *Prabodhachandrodaya*, when Purusha has realized his identity with Parameshvara on the birth of *Prabodha* (Awakening), he says (VI-31), "Now I shall be a sage (*muni*), who is in a house only at night, who is not attached to anything, who does not ask for anything, who wanders in any direction without aiming at any fruit, tranquil, free from fear, sorrow, impurities and delusion."

The identity of Purusha and Parameshvara, the central concept of the philosophical play, has been suggested through the figure of the *muni*. Like the figures in conjunction (*mithuna*), the figure of the *muni* in the context of the play represents the fusion of the human and the divine, and is placed by the imaginative *Sutradhara* of the temple on the juncture which joins the hall for devotees and the wombhouse of divinity.





The narrative mode in presenting the allegorical play is different from that used in presenting myths and legends, for instance those representing Shiva Tripurantaka as the Destroyer of the Three Cities of Demons or Shiva as the Killer of the Blind Demon Andhaka. Indian artists, at least from the 8th century sites of Pattadakal and Ellora, seem conscious of the distinction that is to be made when myths are narrated in cosmic time and when stories are related in linear time. The Khajuraho artists of the 10th—11th centuries, unlike their contemporaries in the South (Chola and Chalukya artists), were not engaged in projecting stories in linear time. They were more concerned with the symbolic presentation of an idea or concept. They were influenced by the views on *Dhvani* (suggestion) discussed by the rhetoricians of the period. The *surasundari*-s (originally fertility figures) can represent Karpuramanjari, Lilavati, Darpana, etc. mentioned in the Shilpa texts. But viewed in the configuration of other sculptures of the Lakshmana Temple, each seemingly discrete figure or motif can be transformed into a character of the play. This is a unique mode of narration in which instead of a long frieze format or a vertical format we see the discrete figures as on a game-board, forming two opposite groups of the allegorical play, whose goal is seen in the self-realized Purusha standing above the rest like a *muni*.

The gap of about a hundred years between the sculptural representation of the theme and its presentation in Krishna Mishra's *Prabodhachandrodaya* could perhaps be accounted for by the possible existence of a play, now lost, but one which could have been the source for both. Many plays and poems mentioned and quoted by commentators and rhetoricians cannot be traced.<sup>15</sup> V. Raghavan had examined such lost Rama plays among which the play *Ramananda* had a Kapalika and a Kshapanaka paired together as characters.<sup>16</sup>

The support for this hypothesis of a lost play of the Khajuraho region is provided by a small inscription under the corner sculpture on the south wall of the Lakshmana Temple. The sculptured figures (now damaged) represent a monk and a woman, and the inscribed label below reads "Shri Sadhunandi Khapanaka."<sup>17</sup> Who can this Sadhunandi Kshapanaka be but a character in some play known to the artist of the Lakshmana Temple?

This period saw several plays which ridiculed religious teachers of rival schools. In the 12th century, the Khajuraho region (Kalanjara) had a *prahasanam* (farce) called *Hasyachudamani*<sup>18</sup> written by the Chandella minister Vatsaraja. The names of the characters of this play are Kapatakeli, Jnanarashi, etc. Another farce, *Lataka-melaka*<sup>19</sup> (Conference of Rogues), staged in the court of Kanauj in the 12th century, has characters such as the Kapalika Ajnanarashi (Heap of Ignorance) and the Digambara Jatasura. The "Sadhunandi Khapanaka" of the Lakshmana Temple could possibly be a name of the character in a play which is now lost, and which could have been the prototype of the *Prabodhachandrodaya* and a source of inspiration to the artist of the Lakshmana Temple. In any case, despite a gap of a hundred years, there is structural similarity between the *Prabodhachandrodaya* and the Lakshmana Temple's sculptural representation. Both have for their core a preoccupation with identical metaphysical concepts and their transmutation into the language of the plastic and performing arts.

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## References:

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## Illustrations:

1. Lakshmana Temple, Khajuraho, from the south.
2. South juncture wall, Lakshmana Temple.
3. *Surasundari*, Lakshmana Temple.
4. *Surasundari* (Karpuramanjari), Lakshmana Temple.
5. North juncture wall, Lakshmana Temple.

## News and Notes

*Seminar on Problems and Prospects of Manipuri Dance and Festival of Dances, Imphal, Manipur, May 20-22, 1982*

The Manipur State Kala Akademi organised a seminar on *The Problems and Prospects of Manipuri Dance* and a Festival of Dances at the Gandhi Memorial Hall, Imphal, from May 20-22, 1982. Several local gurus, exponents, scholars and critics participated in the seminar. From Calcutta came Guru Bipinsingh, Darshana Jhaveri, Guru Nadia Singh, Devyani Chaliha and Sunil Kothari; from Delhi, R. K. Singhjit Singh, Charu Singh and Guru Dani Singh.

Devyani Chaliha, a student of the late Guru Amubi Singh, presented a paper on the problems of teaching Manipuri dance outside Manipur and also demonstrated her method of training students, using Sanskrit terminology for the positions of feet etc. Two of her students gave a brief demonstration of an *ashtapadi* from *Gita Govinda*. R. K. Singhjit Singh expressed doubts about the use of Sanskrit terms and also referred to the *shastra* as going against the grain of Manipuri dancing. At one point it appeared during the discussions that the seminar was about to result in an argument: oral tradition versus *shastra*. But these arguments became irrelevant, particularly when Thambal Ngoubi, the foremost disciple of the late Guru Amubi Singh, offered a glimpse into the *abhinaya* of an *ashtapadi* (*Shrita Kamalakucha*) composed by him. As Prof. E. Nilakanta Singh averred, the guru never hesitated to consult the *Abhinaya Darpana* for the *vinayoga* of the *hasta-s*. Khetrinombi Devi, who is now seventy-nine, rose and performed *abhinaya* with the *hasta-s*; so did Thouranisabi Devi and it suddenly looked as though the women dancers were in their element. Here was a specific answer to those who denied the existence of a system of *hasta-s* or the relationship of the *prayoga* and the *shastra*.

It also became clear that some of the performing gurus and exponents were not well-versed in the *shastra-s*. But that does not prove that Manipuri dance is devoid of classical elements. Even in *Lai Haroaba* and in the dances of the Maibis, the *hasta-s* are clearly represented. Contemporary scholarship has explored many of these areas of investigation and it is not very clear why dancers feel intimidated by attempts to co-relate the *prayoga* and the *shastra*. Guru Bipinsingh and Darshana Jhaveri demonstrated how the relation could be established.

Guru Bipinsingh's work, in particular, was praised by a traditional guru like Lokeshwarsingh of the Jawaharlal Nehru Manipuri Dance Academy. Guru Bipinsingh has for the last four decades been attempting to concentrate on this area of study and demonstrate the relevance of the Vaishnava Sangeet *shastra-s*, and the manner in which the gurus of Manipuri dance evolved its *tala* system. For instance, the *tala-s* ranging from 4 to 68 beats divided into *Shuddha*, *Shalaga* and *Sankirna* (the last as two *pheratala*); the eight *Jati-s* found in various mridanga *raga-s* and *tala-s*, the system of more than one *koyacha* (*avartana*) in one *phering raga-s* and *tala-s*, the system of various *tala prabandha-s*; three different ways of *athaba* (*theka*); the system of various *tala prabandha-s*; three different ways of *athaba* (concluding of the *tala* composition) or three different ways of starting the composition (*graha*), the three *laya-s*—*Atappi*, *Mayay*, *Athubi*—and the relation to the structure of the composition of syllables and combination of the *laya-s*.



Ojha Ibohal Apabi and Ojha Thangjam Chauba conducting a class

The division of the *Lasya* and the *Tandava* as maintained in the *Naradapanchasarasamhita*, *Shrikrishnarasasangeetasangraha* and other treatises is a distinct feature of Manipuri dance. The description of the further divisions of the *Tandava* into *Prerani* and *Bahurupa* (as mentioned in *Sangita Damodara* and *Bhakti Ratnakara*) is utilised by Guru Chigui in his *Balarama Nartana (Nirtyati Baladeva)*. A technical dance like *Ponthajagoi* (a contest between Radha and Krishna) and the song *Chandavadani nachata dekhi* etc. are found in the *Padavali*-s. Descriptions of *Hallisaka* mentioned in the *Gitavali* and *Padyavali* by Rupa Goswami, *Brihad Krama Sandarbha* by Jiva Goswami and *Anandavrindavanachampu* by Kavi Karnapura, *Krishnabhavanamritam* by Vishwanath Chakravarti, *Govindalilamritam* by *Krishnadasa* Kaviraja are exactly reflected in the *Bhangi Pareng*-s of the *Rasli*-s. These researches deserve the close attention of traditional Manipuri exponents and also those who live in other parts of the country and propagate Manipuri dance.

In his paper, R. K. Singhjit Singh drew attention to the many ills that plague Manipuri dances. His plain speaking was welcome. He regretted the fact that commercialism had made inroads into Manipuri dancing, leading to cabaret-like shows in hotels. He felt that no pride was left among the Manipuris for their art and that they had failed to come to terms with changing times as a result of their living in their small, restricted world. The seminar and the Recommendations Committee agreed to adopt the suggestions made to remedy some of these ills. However, it was felt that resolutions could not help to improve the situation unless the Manipuris and the exponents of their dance owned responsibility for preserving the traditional values and spirit of the dance.

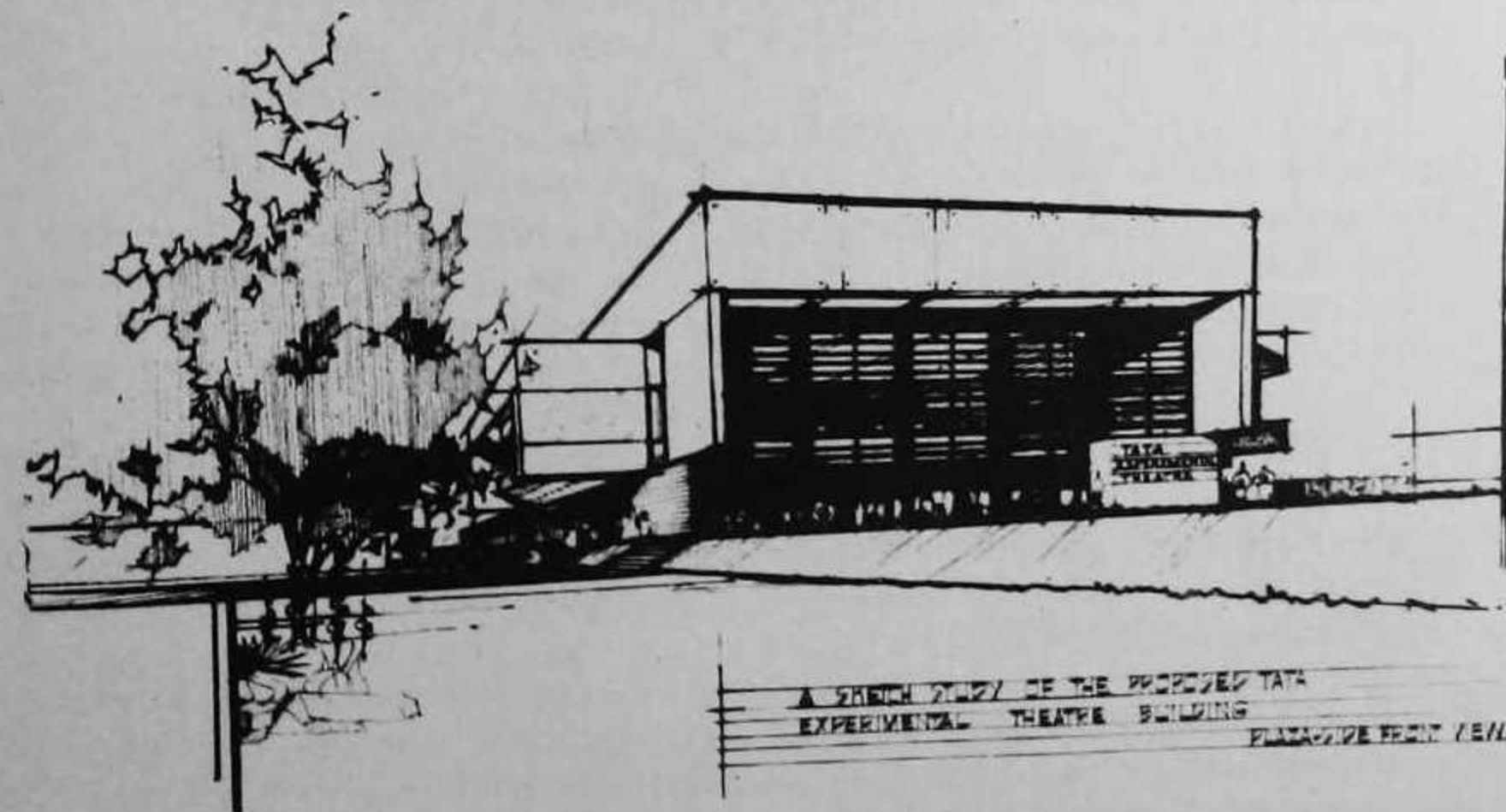
The dance festival arranged during the seminar gave the delegates an idea of the cross-section of Manipuri dances as several local and neighbouring groups were presented. Among them Panam Ningthou Dance and Kala Association from Andro village presented dances which served as an eye-opener for tracing the roots of presentday dances. Shri Govindji Nartanalaya's presentation of Subol Besh dance-drama left much to be desired as they lacked *aharyabhinaya* and unfortunately reduced the dance-drama to a Jatra-like presentation.

On behalf of the Central Sangeet Nataka Akademi, Smt. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (Chairman) and Dr. (Smt.) Kapila Vatsyayan (Vice-Chairman) presented scrolls of honour to twenty-six outstanding gurus and exponents of Manipuri dancing and related arts forms (on the 26th May, 1982) in a touching ceremony. Delhi Doordarshan recorded the event and rare excerpts by these gurus and exponents, some of whom were in their eighties. Among them Thambal Marik Devi's exposition of *abhinaya* was memorable. The exposition by these veterans was a revelation for many scholars and dance students.

—SUNIL KOTHARI

### *Tata Experimental Theatre, Bombay.*

The foundation plaque of the Tata Experimental Theatre was unveiled by Shri J. R. D. Tata on May 27, 1982. The theatre has been gifted to the National Centre for the Performing Arts by the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Company's founding.



Speaking on the occasion, Shri J. R. D. Tata said: "As Chairman of the Tata Iron and Steel Company, I am very happy that this old company of ours, born out of the inspiration and pioneering spirit of Jamsetji Tata, shows, seventy-five years later, that it is still open to new ideas." As Chairman of the Council of the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Shri J. R. D. Tata was equally happy that the Centre would be pioneering a new idea.

The 300-seat theatre will incorporate performing and seating areas of modules which can be shifted and re-arranged to suit the requirements of a production. The seating and staging units will be pre-designed and pre-fabricated, so as to make it easy to have them packed and stored quickly and with ease. A ceiling grid-frame and cat-walk system, along with 'wall-insert' systems over the entire theatre block, will provide total flexibility for modularized lighting and prop facilities. Loft-level performing areas will give added versatility to many a setting. A high-level Control Room facility will be available for visual co-ordination of the performances. Thus, it will be possible to stage—for a variable seating capacity—any type of performance: from a conventional "proscenium type" to one which might require complex and off-beat arena settings.

When the theatre opens its doors to the public, about two years from now, it will be an incentive to innovation. It should interest playwrights, directors, actors, sculptors, painters, dancers, and musicians alike. It will lead to closer co-operation among them, generate new concepts and perhaps create 'A Theatre of All Possibilities'. Its very flexibility will make it viable for both 'traditional' and 'experimental' productions since artistes will be able to use and shape it as they like, without let or hindrance, and audiences can share with them the excitement of their ventures.

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## Book Reviews

THE MUSIC OF MAN by Yehudi Menuhin and Curtis W. Davis, Macdonald and Jane's, London and Sydney, 1979, £ 10.95, (*In English*).

*The Music of Man* is the expansion of a television series which originated with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. It is, as a note to the reader says, "designed to increase your awareness and appreciation of the miracle of music and how it influenced all mankind throughout the ages." It is not, nor was it intended to be, an exhaustive history of music.

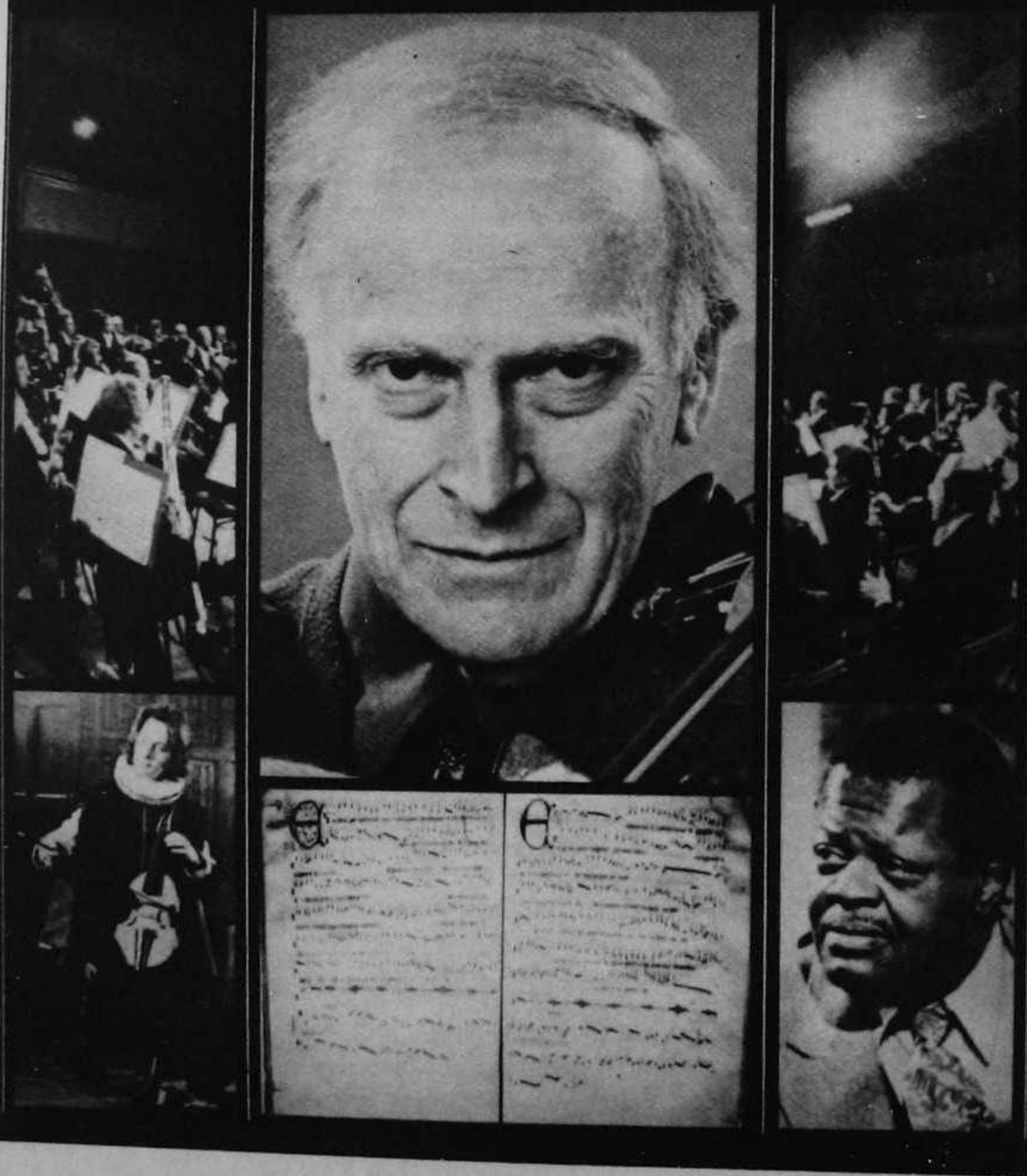
After having said that, I must say that it is one of the most illuminating, penetrating accounts of the world of music revealed to us through a fine, sensitive, refined mind. Yehudi Menuhin is more than a great musician. He is a humanist, full of understanding and compassion for all living beings. Music is a component of all that he sees and does and feels. What he says and writes has nothing of the academia which characterises so much of musical analysis and criticism in which music is interpreted in the framework of dates and places, forms and influences, themes and development. Musical criticism frequently deteriorates into evaluation couched in musical clichés, new creativity judged in terms of old judgements made within the limitations of narrow, often closed academic minds. It is, therefore, refreshing to read a book which places music in the perspective of life, sees it as an important and relevant component of living and of our physical and spiritual well-being. Who else will write about music like this? "To be in tune with oneself, with one's environment, with the music one plays and with those who listen, sounds almost pagan in its wholeness, in its total unity with nature. If that be pagan, then making music would seem to establish, paradoxically, a contact with the remotest human religious expression, for I am convinced that even sacred music must have its roots in the profane." Must it? I am not sure. But these are not arguments. They are convictions and we are inclined not to question them. These and similar convictions and observations contain the germs of profound truths which govern both life and music.

"Civilization", says Menuhin, "like life itself, never proceeds along a straight line in the manner of a Roman road, but follows peripheral motions such as the swing of a pendulum, the circular path of a wheel or the elliptical orbit of a planet. Progress may seem deceptively small, but it is measurable. Civilization depends upon just such wide and free-swinging motions, which constantly threaten to break away from their moorings for regeneration. It is only by exploring the extremes that we learn to locate the center. A cycle of emotions is as vital to us as is a variety of foods: we are capable of revelling in extremes, we crave our opposites, we put ourselves to the test, feeding on risk, dependent upon our adversaries, as sweet needs sour and hot need cold."

It is in the context of such convictions—and such concepts—that we see Yehudi Menuhin's summation of Johann Sebastian Bach. No dates of birth and death; nothing about his patrons; the dates of his works; first performances. But we get in the brief statement that I quote below a summation of the achievement and greatness of Bach which we can all—musicians, professors, critics or ordinary

# The Music of Man

YEHUDI MENUHIN AND CURTIS W. DAVIS



human beings—feel: "All my life I have played the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, a music whose purity expresses our highest ethics, our strongest morality, our noblest sentiments. It frees us from our baser selves, speaks to us of man at peace with himself and God, reflects the rhythm of a society which has established its faith and security. This is music standing on the pinnacle of human discovery and invention. . . The repeated rhythms and sequences of tones clearly helped to establish the principle of recognition and comparison, drawing on memory, and on trial and error. . . The fugue, for instance, is the very exemplar of thought, working by proof and reformulation, analogy and the refinement of memory."

That is from the first two pages of the first part of the book. The style, the mood, the exposition is sustained right to the end. This is from the last page and is on Bartók: "His passion was contained, his freedom disciplined. His music serves us as a higher conscience, asking ultimate questions. For we have seen that beauty and truth may assume many faces and many masks, but we need to make the effort to recognise them. We may lose something of the clarity of our definition of ourselves, yet discover in the process another kind of self, one which encompasses a greater truth, that of a total living experience in which death is a part of life, sorrow a modulation of joy, in our reach toward ecstasy and revelation. As the living cell must fulfil its destiny, following the dictates of its chromosomes, so, too, are we not ourselves spurred on by that star which illuminates the way to all our arts, propelled by a yearning which will not let us be, making possible masterpieces which we recognise to be the expressions of a greater self? . . . Bartók demands that we search for honesty, love and fidelity within ourselves, and reminds us that music will serve those who strive to live its harmonies."

That is the note on which the book ends. From the earliest recorded history that we have of the music of man to Bartók and, of course, even later—John Cage and Steve Reich, Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones—he writes with sympathy and understanding. It is a measure of the catholicity of his tastes, and the nature of his search, his quest: What is music? Why did we invent it? What is it for? And the answers might have been easier if he had not been the kind of person who says, "I am totally incapable of putting across one single sentence that has not contained at least the origin of my own idea or the conception of a fact as I conceive it". Is it stubbornness? Or, is it a sign of the strength of his convictions? In a world where, as the poet W. B. Yeats said: The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity, it is good to know that there are a few of the best who do not lack all conviction and who are full of passionate intensity.

In these eight programmes we get a connected account of the growth, the refinement, the validity, the purpose, the meaning of music. This is arrived at, not so much through scientific enquiry or discovery, as through perception, intuition, through senses other than the standard ones. And though his critical acumen is acute, he has the uncanny gift of seeing/hearing something good in everything. There are limitations, of course, understandable human limitations. "Because I have rejoiced in the many masterpieces of Western musical literature, it is from this experience that I must continuously draw," he says. But because he is talking about the music of MAN, this becomes a limiting factor, as Western music is only one

segment of a limited period in the story and growth of the enormous and many-splendoured world of music. And it is really the musical heritage of only a fraction of the family of MAN. But an 8-part T.V. series or a book of some 300 pages must function within limitations of time and space. The saving grace of the situation is that Menuhin, on almost every page, reminds us of his enormous intellectual curiosity, his awareness of the values and problems inherent in all systems and idioms and areas, his wide range of sympathies, and his desperate efforts to come to terms with them all.

Many oral traditions, he nostalgically recalls, have rhythms which have remained freer, less bound by the restrictions imposed by notation and large ensembles. And so we find in Greece, in West Asia, Central Europe, in India, rhythms of five beats or sevens and even more complex and sophisticated combinations. This gives such music, to quote him "an imbalance, an unpredictability, an elastic quality, a greater latitude for improvisation, which Western classical music has largely lost. It is a loss I regret, for I feel we have lost touch with an important heritage, part of the pagan in music, a natural freedom to which we are all born. It is also the imposition of what we fondly imagined was a superior order on an inferior chaos".

The last sentence is a devastating statement, a point that half-baked ethnomusicologists should try to understand. The most compelling parts of the book are his comments on the violin, his true and real discipline in life. What a lovely relationship he has established with that noble instrument! "The way to happiness, I feel, is to strive for the reconciliation of human achievement with the healing forces of Nature. There is just such an achieved reconciliation in a well-made violin . . . that could sing like the human voice. . . . To me this most feminine of strong instruments is an object to cradle and to caress. It responds to the player's slightest touch, and can become quite cross with him if he is not gentle and understanding. . . . Playing a Strad is a great and unforgiving discipline. You do not dare betray it. . . ."

Menuhin's feeling for the English language would seem as refined, as subtle as his relationship to the violin. Every shade of emotion is expressed and comes through with the clarity and force of a beautifully phrased musical passage. Here, words and music are matched and carefully knitted. "In this attempt to explore the music of man, my modest intention has been to demonstrate that it is music that welds spiritual and sensual, that can convey ecstasy free of guilt, faith without dogma, love as homage and man himself at home with nature and the infinite". In this book he has achieved a large measure of this with authority and grace.

—N. M.

USTAD RAJAB ALI KHAN by Amique Hanafi, published for the Ustad Alauddin Khan Sangeet Akademi, Bhopal, by Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1982, Rs. 20.00 (*In Hindi*)

The traditional method of orally transmitting and preserving Indian music discouraged, in a way, documentation of the manner in which music was practised and how musicians led their lives. As a result, it is almost impossible to ascertain precisely how the older musical forms were developed and presented in actual performance or the exact methods used by musicians to cultivate their skill. If, for instance, one wants to know whether *sargam* was sung in *khyal* during the time of Sadarang, where would one look for the sources of this information? This lacuna makes it difficult to determine the origin, use and change in meaning of technical terms in musical parlance. The situation, even as recently as the last century, was such that records of Rajab Ali Khan's birth-date are not available.

Amique Hanafi's book is to be welcomed because it is a painstaking attempt to present factual information, given the meagre sources available to him. Throughout the book he reveals, as a good scholar should, from where and whom he collected his information, and whenever he reaches any conclusions about issues in doubt (about Rajab Ali or his close associates) he provides adequate justification for his conclusions. Besides, his clear and concise presentation is remarkable for its sound content and logical development. In addition to its significance in terms of documentation of historical and social details, the book makes a notable contribution to music criticism.

Although the jacket-notes and the author himself do not mention whether he has had any musical training (the author humbly states he is not even a real *rasika*), the discussion both of Rajab Ali's music and music in general reflects the awareness and involvement of a true connoisseur.

Hanafi deals with the various aspects of Rajab Ali's life in an enlightened manner by constantly placing them in their contemporary perspective. The method he adopts to establish Rajab Ali's birth-date reflects his painstaking and research-orientated approach. It is somewhat amusing to note that he also corroborates the date which he arrived at with its astrological chart to confirm if Rajab Ali's character and life agreed with what was envisaged in the chart. Beginning with Rajab Ali's ancestry (the early wandering tribes of musicians such as *Doli*, *Dome*, *Sapere* etc.), he explains the difference between the *Mirasi* families (who inherited their musical knowledge) and the *Atai* (who had to seek it from elsewhere) and demonstrates that Rajab Ali came from the former stock.

The author then points to the important role of the *guru* (as the sole repository and source of musical knowledge) at a time when printing, speedy transportation and schools did not exist and one could learn music only from someone who practised it. The *guru*, moreover, was usually very selective and kept his knowledge within his own family and a small circle of disciples.

After a brief and stimulating discussion on the word *khyal*, its origin and form, Hanafi describes the training of Rajab Ali's father, Mogul Khan, under Bade

Mohammed Khan and his son Mubarak Khan. Virtuosity, vigour, a spirit of competition, acrobatics and surprises were among those characteristics of music which were appreciated at that time. Hanafi reveals that Mogul Khan's *guru*-s were renowned musicians, and that Rajab Ali, in fact, inherited their teachings through his father.

Later on, Mogul Khan sent Rajab Ali for training to the great *beenkar*, Bande Ali Khan, who left a permanent impression on Rajab Ali. It was a time when the *ganda bandhan* ceremony had to be performed. This was a symbolic, sacred and public rite which bound the two together for life, placing responsibility on the *guru* to impart his knowledge, and on the disciple to be devoted to his *guru*. The importance of the ceremony is illustrated in the following chapter: the two brothers, Aliya and Fatu, learnt vocal music from their father, a *sarangi*-player, but they were not recognised as musicians by veterans until they had performed the *ganda bandhan* with a noted vocalist, Tanras Khan, since learning from a *sarangi*-player used to be deplored.

The next topic deals with Rajab Ali's move to Kolhapur where Alladiya Khan served as the court musician of the Maharaja. Although there was open rivalry between the two, they respected each other's music. The author convincingly refutes the anecdote that Rajab Ali learnt Alladiya Khan's style by secretly listening to him. He had already imbibed the musical style of his father's *guru*, Mubarak Ali Khan, from whom Alladiya Khan had drawn inspiration. If Rajab Ali was at all influenced by Alladiya Khan's music, it was through the latter's *sarangi*-player, Haider Baksh, who had left him after a quarrel.

To ease the tensions created by the rivalry between Rajab Ali and Alladiya Khan, the Maharaja of Kolhapur sent Rajab Ali on a concert tour. At this point Hanafi relates an amusing incident to demonstrate Rajab Ali's pride, self-confidence and courage: the Nawab of Rampur sang and then he asked Rajab Ali for his opinion. The latter candidly replied that the Nawab was certainly the best musician 'among Maharajas'.

Hanafi then describes the deep religious streak in Rajab Ali's personality, which was moulded by Shilnath Maharaj, who also initiated him into *yoga* and *omkara sadhana*. More details about this *sadhana* (if accessible) would have been helpful to musicians. Hanafi also gives an account of Rajab Ali's recitals and his listeners' reactions including one incident which clearly demonstrates that Rajab Ali preferred to sing for knowledgeable listeners rather than for the general public. As Hanafi points out, those were times when classical music was, in fact, addressed primarily to initiated audiences and never attempted to win popularity among laymen. Hanafi mentions great artistes, such as Faiyaz Khan, Ameer Khan, Rahimudin Khan and Tirakhwa, who loved to listen to Rajab Ali and also lists the awards and honours conferred on him. When he was felicitated at Dewas in 1954, Rajab Ali said that after singing all his life, he had finally learnt how to sing *sa*. This itself indicates Hanafi's sound understanding of music.

The author's musical insight is similarly reflected in his perceptive observations about Rajab Ali's singing. Rajab Ali was sometimes denigrated—it was said that he was ignorant of the grammar of classical music because he used to deviate

from the *raga* structure. Hanafi spoke to several musicians to ascertain the truth of this criticism; he concludes that Rajab Ali, besides being an expert at technique, had a very firm grounding in musical theory, but that his temperament led him to seek for the new and unexplored. As a result, he deliberately deviated from the traditional *raga* structure to fill his music with surprises, which were both intelligent and artistic. Hanafi provides concrete musical examples to illustrate his point. For instance, when he sang mixed *raga*-s, Rajab Ali would start at any point and then express shades of the different *raga*-s to bring them together. He did not favour fixing the ascending and descending scales and developing the *raga* in the expected manner. In support of this observation Hanafi quotes the late Acharya Brihaspati: "The purity of a *raga* is in its *sadhana*, not in its final form at the concert, where it should come to life as a picture of emotions".

How Alladiya Khan played an important part in Rajab Ali's singing emerges fully when Hanafi speaks of the change in the latter's music after Alladiya's death. Rajab Ali wept saying that it was not Alladiya who had died but his own music, since for whom would he now sing? His music then became mellow and tender and lost its earlier fire and competitive spirit. It is to the credit of Hanafi that he is able to relate the change in Rajab Ali Khan's music to Alladiya's death. He compares their styles, highlighting the salient features of each. Hanafi is to be commended for giving the precise sources of Rajab Ali's recordings which he managed to find. Had he included a cassette of some of the recordings, it would have lent invaluable support to the book.

The chapter on Rajab Ali's personality is livened through anecdotes and interviews, which reveal him to be a generous, if eccentric, individual. These contrasting elements were also reflected in his music. The short biographical details of his students (Ganapatrao Devaskar and Amanat Khan) and the mention of his admirers (Ameer Khan and Kumar Gandharva) indicate the stature of Rajab Ali's personality and music.

The last chapter, which is entirely devoted to Rajab Ali's singing, includes a detailed description and analysis of his voice-production, vocal range, *riaz*, *tan*-s, control over *laya* and equal accomplishment in both *khyal* and *bhajan*. It provides a vivid and accurate idea of Rajab Ali's singing.

Hanafi's sound, lucid, and critical presentation is a welcome contribution to the field of music literature. If this book is translated into English, it will reach a wider audience and hopefully set a healthy example.

—PRABHA ATRE

TANJORE AS A SEAT OF MUSIC (During the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries) by S. Seetha, published by the University of Madras, 1981, Rs. 40.00 (In English).

It is well-known that the fine arts of music and dance were nourished by our temples and patronised by the royal courts. Among the centres which fostered these arts, Tanjore holds an exalted place. Firstly, it has remained a centre of music and dance for over 2,000 years. Bharata in his *Natya Shastra* pays a rich tribute to the proficiency of the people of the South in the field of music (vocal and instrumental) and dance.

Tanjore, the capital of the Chola kingdom, was a beehive of musical activity. Under the Imperial Cholas (10th and 11th centuries A.D.), a number of musicians and dancers received munificent grants from the kings. Later, when Tanjore came under the sway of the Nayak kings and Maratha rulers, the support to artistes continued without a break.

A well-documented history of South Indian music has long been a desideratum. Dr. Seetha's book satisfies that want eminently. The period she has chosen for her study, viz. the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, is rightly called the Golden Age of Karnatic Music. It was during this period that the *melakarta* scheme was formulated. It was the period of Kshetrappa, Pacchimiriya Adippaiah, Tyagaraja, Dikshitar, Gopala Krishna Bharati and a large number of other composers. It was during this period that the modern vina with 24 frets was designed. Several new musical forms like *varna*, *svarajati* and *tillana* took shape.

In the introductory chapter entitled Historical Perspective, the author traces the evolution of the *raga* system since the time of Matanga, shows how the *grama* system gave way to the *mela janya* system of *raga*-s and how the vina with the fixed frets was instrumental in ushering in the *Adhara Shadja* as the base. She points out how the geographic location of Tanjore in the deltaic region of the Kaveri contributed to the growth of fine arts because of the life of peace and plenty enjoyed by the people.

Under the Nayak rulers, Tanjore became 'a humming centre of Telugu literary activity.' Kshetrappa, the great composer of Telugu *pada*-s, was patronised by Vijaya Raghava Nayaka. The name of Raghunatha Nayaka was immortalised by his minister, Govinda Dikshitar, who named the vina designed by him after the royal patron. His son, Venkatamakhi, wrote his *Chaturdandiprakashika* adumbrating the 72 *melakarta* scheme.

Later when the Marathas came to rule Tanjore, the patronage continued on the same scale. Shahaji (1684-1712) was himself a musician and composer. His Telugu work, *Pallaki Seva Prabandham*, is a worthy contribution to the music of South India. Tulaja I (1728-36) wrote *Sangita Saramrita* in Sanskrit. Tyagaraja's father, Rama Brahmam, was a musician at the court of Tulaja II (1763-87), which it is said was adorned by as many as 360 musicians.

The chapter on the contribution of composers and musicians contains very valuable information. We learn about Giriraja Kavi, Soma Kavi, Rama Bharati

(who wrote Tamil *padam*-s), Vina Kalahastayya and a large number of other eminent composers. Virabhadrayya holds the unique distinction of being the earliest composer of *svarajati*, *ragamalika* and *tillana*.

The chapters dealing with the musical forms and musical treatises written during the period will be of great help to students of music. The author traces the adoption of Kanakangi as the *shuddha* scale of Karnatic music.

The value of the book has been enhanced by the inclusion of pictures of Shahaji, Sarabhoji and other rulers and by the appendix which contains the notation of some rare songs.

The bibliography is exceedingly impressive and the author is to be commended for her painstaking study of several manuscripts in the Saraswati Mahal Library. It is this material which provides us with essential data about the composers of this period.

The University of Madras deserves praise for having published this valuable work at a very reasonable price.

—S. RAMANATHAN

RAGA VYAKARANA by Vimlakant Roy Chaudhury. Translated by Madanlal Vyas, Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi, 1981, Rs. 85.00 (In Hindi).

*Vyakarana* literally means exposition. An explanatory work about *raga* can be called its *Vyakarana*, irrespective of whether or not it deals with its grammar.

In the present context, profiles of a large number of *raga*-s inevitably bring to mind certain other publications: Subba Rao's *Raganidhi*, for instance, which is outstanding for its comparative study of Hindustani and Karnatak *raga*-s; Bhatkande's source books (Kaufmann's *The Ragas of North India* is based on them) which analyse and organize the language of Hindustani music and give a detailed structural understanding of each *raga*; O. C. Gangoly's *Raga Ragini* which dwells on the *Ragamala* texts with their poetic visualizations.

Roy Chaudhury, in a style all his own, is content with the briefest description of numerous *raga*-s "the 'laws' of which have the potential to allow for a systematic elaboration which, in the hands of a master, transcends the limits of their grammar and is the art of the *raga*-aesthetic" (Preface, p. 5).

In his short Preface, the author describes *raga* as totally dependent on particular arrangement and juxtaposition of notes. And yet he affirms that *raga* is born in the union of *swara* (tone) and *pada* (word) and is a vehicle of *bhava*. Each *raga* is a *sankalpna* and has an ethos distinct from every other *raga* (Preface, p. 3):



जिस प्रकार 'सत्यनिष्ठा', 'साधुता', 'कूरता' आदि भाववाचक संज्ञाएँ हैं जो प्राणियों के गुणावगुणों की संकल्पना का ज्ञान कराती हैं, उसी प्रकार राग एक संकल्पना है। इसकी कुछ विशेषताएँ हैं जो प्रत्येक राग के लिए विशिष्ट ढंग से स्वर-विन्यास से गठित विशिष्ट शब्दों अथवा पदों के चयन से प्रकट होती हैं।

and

प्रत्येक राग के लिए विशिष्ट शब्द अथवा पद निश्चित हैं ताकि वे अन्य अनेक रागों से पृथक् रहें।

I am unable to understand this concept. Is it possible that something has gone wrong with the Hindi translation? (The original text, we are told, is in English.) But if Roy Chaudhury means what he says he has grossly missed the point: *raga* is a musical entity independent of the word.

Included in this collection are obsolete *raga*-s and also those which have no *bandish* or songs to support them. Versions of the same *raga*-s are also given. As a consequence we have a formidable number of entries: 706 from the North and 962 from the South. It is surprising that even though the material for this book is collected from a large number of acknowledged *ustad*-s and excellent libraries, the *raga-lakshana*-s, unlike those of Subba Rao, Bhatkhande and Kaufmann, are not corroborated—a serious omission in a work of this kind.

The short Glossary includes familiar and unfamiliar terms which could have been explained more clearly. For instance, *komal* is merely:

कोमल स्वर जैसे रे ग ध और नि Does महत्त्वदर्शनि mean बहुत्व ?

*Raga*, however, is described at some length but haphazardly. Modes of classification (*Shuddha—Chayalag* and so on) are listed.

Twenty *raga*-s are mentioned as basic and, strangely enough, include Kaphi, Shankara and Sindhu. Bhatkhande's enumeration of the distinctive features of the Hindustani *Paddhati* is quoted almost verbatim. There is also a list which groups *raga*-s of the same variety (Kannada, Nat and so on, but Goud is not mentioned). Some *raga*-s come under a double heading: Kamod is mentioned as a variety of Kalyan and has also a group of its own which is confusing.

Southern *raga*-s are given with only their *arohana*-s and *avarohana*-s but the Northern ones are described in more detail. Most of the known *raga*-s are in accordance with the usual practice. The term *thata* is not used in the sense of *mela* but seems to describe the manner in which the frets are adjusted on a sitar for playing a particular *raga*. *Pakad* is not the precise musical phrase or signature of a *raga* but an extended version of *arohana* and *avarohana* which is useful since no *ragasanchara* is given. Sometimes the components of *mishraraga*-s are not evident in the given notations. The time of performance is not in *prahara*-s but in accordance with the Indian Standard Time which will obviously create problems for those who perform our *raga*-s in other parts of the world.

This work will serve as a handbook but more usefully it will provide ideas for new *raga*-s—some beautiful ones—since Roy Chaudhury was a trained sitarist and had considerable musical sensibility.

—GEETA MAYOR

RAIGADH MEIN KATHAK by Kartik Ram, published for the Ustad Alauddin Khan Sangeet Akademi, Bhopal, by Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 1982, Rs. 25.00 (In Hindi).

Indian Dance and Kathak, in particular, are areas of art where only a few textbooks in Hindi are available. We have hardly any works based on the experiences of Kathak artistes or collections of the compositions of veterans. The scant number of works published in English usually contain identical and rather limited information. Rarely does one encounter a researched base, focussing on the stages in the evolution of Kathak in their historical or cultural context. In such a situation, this small work *Raigadh Mein Kathak* is more than welcome. It embodies the experiences of Pandit Kartik Ram (the senior of that legendary pair 'Kartik-Kalyan' which won acclaim at Music Conferences in the 1940s) who was attached to the court of that generous patron of the arts, Raja Chakradhar Singh Maharaj of Raigadh.

Pandit Kartik Ram received his training in Kathak from Pandit Jailal and Pandit Shivnarayan of the Jaipur *gharana* and Acchanmaharaj, Lacchumaharaj and Shambhumaharaj of the Lucknow *gharana*. As a result, there is a catholicity in his approach which is amply reflected in the book: The *bandish*-s in the repertoire of most of the veterans of Kathak are included, with the name of the composer or the *guru* who transmitted them, and accompanied by notation. All of which is proof of an alert and discerning mind and an excellent memory. One realises what an asset this will be for a student of Kathak. Formerly he had to imbibe knowledge of the art from what his *guru* told him, retain it in mind, and since he did not see the need to put it down in writing, he passed it by word of mouth to a deserving student. In the process, words and phrases (*bol*-s) were changed, the stresses (*vajan*) altered, and compositions suffered on account of those lapses. Pandit Kartik Ram's work will make it possible for a student of Kathak to compare the compositions which have been transmitted to him with the originals and verify his own texts. I only wish that in notating the compositions, Ramlalji, Pandit Kartik Ram's son, had selected the Paluskar rather than the Bhatkhande system. Had he done so, one would have had a clear picture of the total number of syllables and the positioning of pauses within the span of a single *matra*, and consequently also the actual *vajan* of the *bandish*.

The first part of the book, which contains a brief history of the princely state of Raigadh and the contribution of its ruling family to music, includes information which till now has not been easily accessible to the general reader. But the remarks (in the third part of the work and in the book, as a whole,) on the distinctive style of the Raigadh School of dance are not sufficiently clear.

Pandit Kartik Ram states that Chakradhar Singh Maharaj's compositions embody both aural and visual attributes. The compositions listed under

मत्स्यरङ्गाक्षी, पक्षी किलकिला और मीन, गजपरण विचकी, बीणापाणि, कल्लोलनी, fall within the usual category of *Paran*, *Natvari* and *Parmelu*. *Parmelu* usually contains, in addition to the sounds of the *pakhavaja* or *tabla*, those of other instruments (solids, wind, stringed, etc.). It appears that Chakradhar Singh Maharaj went beyond these sounds to add those of birds, beasts, and water creatures. Bearing this in mind, his compositions have an aural and, on account of their titles, a visual dimension. But the author does not explain how these qualities are expressed or experienced in the actual course of the rendering of a composition. The author describes 'beauty and grace' of the body as the chief characteristic of the Raigadh School. But since there are no photographs, in the book, one can hardly discern how the 'beauty and grace' of the Raigadh School differs from the famed 'beauty and grace' of the Lucknow *gharana*.

Pandit Kartik Ram's usage of the general terminology of Kathak is somewhat different from the way these terms are defined and understood today. As a result, it is difficult to grasp how the *bol*-s scripted under the various heads *amad*, *paran* etc. differ or to discover the distinctive traits which would justify their inclusion under those headings. For instance, the *bol*-s दिगदिय दिगदिय थेई (p. 49) and ताबोथुगा तकिटथुगा तकिटतकथे कितकथो (p. 53) have been described as *paran*, instead of being called *tukda*, *sangeet*, or *natvari*. The *bhashabheda* in the composition नगी भररी कुकु तकजग (on page 50) is more like *paramelu* but this composition is also described as *paran*. There are several instances of this kind in the book. Does this discrepancy between the definition of a term and its examples suggest that the practice of arranging *bol*-s according to their type is not a part of tradition? And if such a practice did not exist, which of the veteran *guru*-s started it? Why is there even today a degree of controversy round this system of classification or categorization? These are some of the questions that naturally arise in the mind of the reader.

The fourth and last part is devoted to Chakradhar Singh Maharaj's literary compositions. The concept of the two *geet*-s (*Bhavageet Ashtanayika* and *Bhavageet Navarasa* on page 110) is quite novel. The rest of the compositions, which fall with the categories of *thumri*, *dadra*, *khamisa*, *gazhal* etc., are fairly routine in their nature.

Apart from these compositions meant specially for *abhinaya* in Kathak, the book makes mention of some of the Maharaj's other literary compositions. *Nartan Sarvasvam*, *Tala Toya Nidhi*, *Ragaratna Manjusha*, *Muraj Paran Pushpakara* are related to music research. Besides there is a reference to his novels, poems and other literary works. Once the works relating to music begin to be published, we will be able to assess better Chakradhar Singh Maharaj's contribution to the arts. However, the fact that he supported Kathak *guru*-s of the calibre of Kartik Ram and presented (on the strength of his warm acceptance of all schools) the inherent riches of Kathak is in itself a remarkable achievement. Pandit Kartik Ram deserves our gratitude for demonstrating in a genuine and simple manner (through this work) his dedication to his patron and art.

—ROHINI BHATE

GREAT MASTERS OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC by Susheela Misra, Hem Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1981, Rs. 60.00 (*In English*).

This collection of pen-portraits of twenty-six high-ranking musicians, ranging from Amir Khusrau to Amir Khan, is clearly addressed to the layman. There is no attempt at an analysis of the musical achievements of these artistes. The facts presented are not newly discovered on account of any scholastic procedures and the writer seems to admire all the musicians in an equal measure. As a result, the writing can only serve the purpose of providing brief outlines of the lives of great musicians.

MALUSHAHI. The Ballad of Kumaon by Mohan Upreti, Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, no date, Rs. 30.00 (*In English with Kumaonee ballads in Devanagari script*).

KARYALA. Folk Theatre of Himachal Pradesh by S. S. S. Thakur, Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, no date, Rs. 20.00 (*In English*).

Both the booklets are examples of fairly useful documentation of folk-practices in the field of the performing arts. They are illustrated, non-technical and brief; they definitely succeed in providing those readers (who are not from Himachal Pradesh and Kumaon) with a good idea of the history, highlights, and contemporary relevance of these two folk-forms.

Upreti describes fairly well 'the secular romantic ballad', *Malushahi*. He notes features like prose-verse proportion, accompanying instruments, stylistic and linguistic usages, etc. He also supplies summaries of ballad-versions used by three traditional ballad-singers, namely, Mohan Singh, Gopi Das and Jogaram.

Some of Upreti's observations are interesting. For example, he states that if the ballads are used functionally to enthuse people working in fields or to drive away evil spirits, then the non-rhythmic portions are longer (p. 9). He also asserts that changes of style can be an indication of lack of authenticity (p. 10). Such observations can gain validity only when a larger sampler of the same genre is taken. But, as an insider, his views on such matters should provide researchers with requisite raw-material helpful in the process of theorizing. Since there is no attempt to supply notation of any sort, one wonders whether he, too, has not been overwhelmed by the 'literary' orientation or bias of folk-lore methodology. Nevertheless, the booklet makes good reading.

In contrast to *Malushahi*, which is predominantly a song-form, *Karyala* is folk-theatre accompanied by ritualistic features such as lighting the four corners of the 'acting' area, offering obeisance to Mother Earth before performance. Thakur sets out to deal with the 'rhythm, rhyme and reason' aspects of the form and more or less succeeds in the task. Describing the successive parts of the total presentation (which he compares to a variety entertainment programme), he argues that the form exhibits attractive features with a contemporary relevance in respect of 'instant' performance, inexpensive presentation, involvement of a large number

of people and rural appeal. The *Karyala* repertory consists of successive renderings of items entitled *Sadhu Ka Swang*, *Jhoolna*, *Saheb Ka Swang*, *Nawab Ka Swang*, *Kanchani Ka Naach*, *Jogi-Jogan*, and lastly *Daag-Daon*. Thematically, these items deal with metaphysics, slap-stick elements, confrontation with the 'Saheb', marital fidelity and ultimately with witchcraft. The rural bias is clear and Thakur's claim that the form can accommodate modern themes (like family planning, for example) seems plausible since the extreme flexibility of the structure is very noticeable. Further, he has a point when he tries to connect various features of the form with the *Natyashastra* edicts. Bharatmuni is discovered again and again in folk-practices and numerous writings with an area-study bias have underlined this fact.

—ASHOK RANADE

THE SACRED DANCE OF INDIA by Mrinalini Sarabhai, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1979, Rs. 16.00 (*In English*).

UNDERSTANDING BHARATA NATYAM by Mrinalini Sarabhai, A Darpana publication, Ahmedabad, 1981, Rs. 50.00 (*In English*).

*The Sacred Dance of India* briefly describes the major types of classical dances of India, namely, Bharata Natyam, Kathakali, Kathak, Manipuri and Odissi. Dance-dramas, like Bhagavathamela Natakam and Yakshagana, have also been included, in addition to Chhau dance and various other folk dances from different parts of India.

A cursory examination of the book in order to discover (either from the author or from the publishers) the exact objective of the publication drew a blank. In recent times there has been a mushrooming of publications on the performing arts, and, therefore, one expected the leaders in the fields of publishing and art (who have come together to publish this book) to be forthright in explaining their basic viewpoint. In fact, when an author is well-known the readers' expectations are bound to be high.

The use of diacritical marks (based on systematic classification of the sounds in the spoken utterance of words in Sanskrit, Tamil and other Indian languages) and a glossary of technical words would have served as an aid to lay readers. The layout of photographs and the text could also have been better planned.

The title 'sacred' dance can only convey one meaning: "a dance that is worthy of reverence or one performed in a sanctified context." Naturally readers would look for some convincing arguments explaining why a contemporary audience should attend an Indian dance recital in all seriousness to appreciate its sacred nature.

In conclusion, it must be said that the author has within her abundant potential to create something (whether in dance or in writing) which could have been beautifully channelized to produce a publication that would have served as a pathway towards a better understanding of the principles underlying the classical and sacred dance of India.

The second book is an attempt to introduce in brief the various classical dance styles of India, providing a background of mythology and history, followed by a detailed and illustrated discussion on one of the major classical dance styles of India, namely, Bharata Natyam.

The author, in her Preface, describes this publication as a textbook based on lectures she delivered to students of dance at Baroda and Ahmedabad and hopes that it might be of value to them "in their study and quest of knowledge of our ancient heritage."

The book depicts most of the essential characteristics and concepts of Bharata Natyam and is an addition to the many books that have been published so far on the same subject. It relies mainly on treatises and manuscripts and is, duly, illustrated. However, its content and form could have been better projected.

There are certain glaring errors. For instance, the Tamil epic poem *Silappadikaram*, which contains references to dance, is described as "a complete treatise on dance, drama and music" (p.45).

Apart from printing mistakes, absence of logical sequence of thought is noticeable. In Chapter One, on page 3, the author's remarks on the time span required for training are followed by a discussion on the *mudra*-s used by the priest in the act of prayer and a stanza from *Abhinaya Darpana* explaining the basis of *rasa*. These disjointed ideas are compressed in one small paragraph.

This reflects lack of sufficient rigour in examining the text of the publication before it was printed. In some parts of the book, the spelling of Tamil words has not been carefully scanned so as to convey the right and proper meaning of a term. Similarly, the splitting of conjoint words in the Tamil language is faulty [*Tattadavu*; *Nattadavu* (p. 33)].

Though many of the illustrative photographs depict correct postures, a few of the poses deserved closer attention. For instance, *Nattadavu* 2.a, 2.d; *Pakkadavu* 3.h. The illustrations of hand gestures, however, call for appreciation.

This book, particularly its latter portion, might serve as a useful reference work for serious students of Bharata Natyam.

—V. GAYATRI

AT THE CENTRE: Fifteen musicians of Madhya Pradesh by Mohan Nadkarni, Ustad Alauddin Khan Sangeet Akademi, Bhopal, 1982, Rs. 30.00 (*In English*).

*At the Centre*, in Mohan Nadkarni's own words, "is a modest attempt to assess the contribution of fifteen noted musicians from Madhya Pradesh to the age-old musical tradition of North India." The criteria for selection include: the fact of the artistes having roots in Madhya Pradesh; their being alive on November 1, 1956, the day on which the reorganised State took birth, and that the author should have personally met them and heard them perform. The book contains interviews, analysis and some biographical information and photographs.

The Foreword by M. V. Kamath has a few remarks about the essential qualities of a critic. Among those listed are knowledge of music and the ability to embody this knowledge meaningfully in words; the patience to let an artiste grow in a concert or over a lifetime before pronouncing judgement; the decency to be critical, without being mean or hurting the artiste; and the integrity to be impartial and straightforward in assessment. It must be admitted that Mohan Nadkarni possesses these qualities in fair measure.

It is a little uncertain (if we go by the Foreword) whether the book is "more on evaluation than on life-style" or intended to fill "a sad dearth of biography of our musicians." The author himself states that its main purpose is not to give an artiste's biographical profile, but to evaluate his or her musical contribution. Mohan Nadkarni has been introduced (in the Foreword) as a critic "who has a way of putting an artiste down gently without hurting the latter's susceptibilities by recognising his virtues more than revealing his shortcomings." Actually the statement about "putting an artiste down" confuses the issue of music criticism and the role of the critic, who, ideally speaking, should neither acclaim nor denigrate an artiste but point out the merits and shortcomings of his art in the context of his own style and tradition.

Again, it is also very unlikely, as the Foreword implies, that the author really believes that Ustad Ameer Khan's limited repertoire in performance was a shortcoming. The ability to present even one *raga* to perfection is quite independent of the possession of a large repertoire of a hundred-odd *raga*-s. As a matter of fact, those close to Ustad Ameer Khan know that he not only had a fairly large repertoire, but that it also included rare *raga*-s.

Another point made in the Foreword is that the first performance of the Dagar Bandhu in the West did little to "propagate" *Dhrupad*, because the audience was left in a "daze". Is this reaction not natural for an audience uninitiated into Indian classical music? How many people in India, itself, genuinely appreciate classical music or pursue *Dhrupad*? Later, the Foreword mentions that the author does not think much of the Westerner's appreciation of Indian classical music. How is this related to Amjad Ali Khan's statement that "classical music institutions established abroad by some of our leading artistes have not produced any musician of calibre"? The point is that whereas a critic needs sufficient practical experience to gain some insight into the performer's problems, a listener does not have to be a performer to appreciate music.

Mohan Nadkarni's understanding of contemporary conditions affecting artistes is revealed in his discussion of the plight of artistes of promise (Ajay Pohankar), the turning of musicians into organisers (Amjad Ali Khan), the role of accompanists (Kiran Deshpande), the true nature of *jugalbandi* (Dagar Bandhu) and the choice of music as a career (Buddhaditya Mukherjee). He places artistes and their art in a wider context, thus offering important clues to their lives as musicians. The sub-title for the sketch of each artiste is also well-conceived, and the general portrayal is interesting.

However the author's task of evaluating the contribution of artistes is difficult since the list ranges from those "on the threshold" to "the true Acharya". Really speaking, each artiste should be evaluated in terms of his assimilation of

the tradition that has come down to him from previous generations, his interpretation of that tradition in the context of his contemporaries and his innovative and enduring contribution to tradition. Thus the same norm of evaluation cannot be applied to both Allaudin Khan and Buddhaditya Mukherjee or Rajab Ali Khan and Ajay Pohankar. Even in terms of their individual contributions, can they be placed together? Moreover, although several of the fifteen artistes have achieved high standards in performance or seem to be on their way to this level, one cannot state with certainty that they have made a noteworthy contribution to North Indian classical music. Or are we to assume that good performance is in itself a contribution in the sense of continuing a tradition?

The articles are mostly biographical sketches and reminiscences of the author's encounters with the artistes. Very few of them really deal with the artiste's contribution, and, unfortunately, even the scanty biographical material does not always provide relevant information, for instance the date and place of birth, which are important for an assessment of their careers in a social and historical context. The quotations which project the artistes' own views about music are quite enlightening and this leads one to conclude that a more interview-oriented approach would have probably helped to bring the reader closer to the artistes' line of thinking.

At this point it is worth noting that a primary consideration in an author's mind should be his readership since the content, language, scope and presentation of his subject depend on its requirements. Thus, if he is addressing a scholarly and musically literate audience, he would have to be far more technical than if he were writing for a layman. It is not clear as to what kind of reader *At the Centre* is addressed. French and Latin expressions such as *confrère*, *au fait*, *magnum opus*, etc. seem out of place because an ordinary reader with moderate knowledge of English may not be acquainted with them. In addition, there is a liberal use of Hindi technical terms and, without a glossary, it is difficult to understand the descriptions or analysis of the artiste's music.

The sketches are mainly based on the author's personal encounters, but one would have appreciated references to his sources of information. It would be useful, for instance, to be told where to find Abdul Halim Jaffar Khan's articles on Amir Khusro. A research-oriented approach would have made the information provided more readily acceptable. It has been mistakenly said in the book that no commercial disc of Rajab Ali Khan is available. It is also strange that one of the central features of Ameer Khan's singing, *sargam*, is entirely omitted in the discussion of his musical contribution. When a brief mention of *sargam* is made, it emerges in a misleading manner, implying that Ameer Khan did not favour *sargam* singing in general. The author also states that Ameer Khan "cared most for improvisation with words in *khayal*-singing" and even sang *boltan*. It is true that Ameer Khan used words while singing *alap*, but he rarely sang *boltan*.

In general, Mohan Nadkarni tends to describe the artiste's music mainly in terms of its effect. What is it exactly that makes Allaudin Khan's or Sharadchandra Arolkar's music "spiritual" or "divine"? Describing someone's music tends to be intimately related to one's own subjective experience of it and particularly so when one is not entirely concentrating on the description of technique and

form. This is reflected in the constant use of adjectives which describe only the effect of music rather than the musical activity that produced that impression. For instance, the author says that Hafiz Ali's music has "an assertive dignity" and "his instrumentation made it sound extrovert, and, therefore, impressive." A technical description of the musical process itself, such as Hafiz Ali's *alap* and *tan* patterns, his use of tempo, his instrumentation technique, and what effect each of these created in developing the *raga* or form, would have been more valuable. If a cassette recording is made available with such writings, it would render the descriptions concrete and help to support the analysis.

Mohan Nadkarni does make an attempt to discuss the contribution of the instrumentalists Allaudin Khan and Abdul Halim Jaffer in terms of their fusion of styles and playing techniques. However, the styles or techniques which are thus fused are not adequately described, and so one does not get a clear idea of what they actually did. The articles on Ameer Khan and Kumar Gandharva have the best technical descriptions about musical activity itself.

—PRABHA ATRE

ADITALA. THIRAKWAN SHAILI by Narayan Joshi. Published by Narayan Joshi, Bombay, 1981, Rs. 60.00 (*In Hindi*).

The book is in two parts. The first (of about 22 pages) includes a short introduction and the system of notation devised by the author. The second part (of 108 pages) contains compositions of solo *tabla* in *Aditala* (*Tritala* or *Teentala* of sixteen beats). The author expects students to play these compositions on the *tabla* with the help of the notation which accompanies each composition.

Apart from the notation system devised by the author, there is nothing new or special in the first part of the book. In fact, Narayan Joshi has used vague terms to describe the style of the late Ustad Thirakwa Khan Saheb, without defining clearly how it differs from that of others or explaining its special attributes (not to be found in other contemporary or older styles). Was there a distinct *Thirakwan Shaili* with a special technique or originality in the compositions? It is well-known that Khan Saheb Thirakwa was the greatest and most popular of the disciples of the late Ustad Munirkhan, who himself was a great *Vidwan*, blending in his style the positive features of sound-producing techniques (*tarkib*) and better compositions of the Lucknow, Delhi and *Ajrada gharana*-s, in addition to the specialities of his own Farukhabad *gharana*. To achieve this fusion Ustad Munirkhan developed his own *tarkib*-s and his style was popularized by his worthy disciples, namely Ustad Thirakwa and Ustad Ameer Hussain Khan. Instead of characterizing the Ustad's style as *Thirakwan Shaili*, the best way to distinguish his playing from that of other artistes would be in terms of the words used by Ustad Alla Rakha Khan to describe his performance:

ऐसा तबसा - वादक और ऐसे हत्ते फंजे निर दुर बुजुर्ग से साल भी पैदा नहीं होंगे ।  
Indeed, Ustad Thirakwa himself never claimed that he had any style of his own. Defining the difference between his *vadan-shaili* and that of his contem-

poraries, he said, "हम बुजुर्गोंकी बात बनाते हैं, वे अपनी बात बनाते हैं." Thus it was the Ustad's mastery over the Farukhabad style and several other of the qualities that make a great performer, which made him an outstanding player and not any special *shaili*, different from that of other well-known performers of the Farukhabad *gharana*.

Sometimes this style, developed by Ustad Munirkhan, is also referred to as the Bambai *gharana* to indicate Ustad Munirkhan's own contribution to the Farukhabad style and the fact that he spent many years of his life in Bombay. [The special characteristics of the various *shaili*-s of *tabla* are described on pp. 223-247 of Arvind Mulgaonkar's *Tabla* and there are notes on Ustad Munirkhan (p. 311) and Ustad Thirakwa Khan (p. 318) in his work.]

The author of the book under review deserves admiration because the notation devised by him indicates on which part of the instrument and how (arrangement of fingers etc.) a *bol* should be played. There is no other known attempt at such a notation of *tabla*. Volumes have been published on the texts of *tabla* compositions, as recited orally and handed to students from the masters. However, the system of notation adopted in them can only help us recite the compositions. They are not of much use as far as playing them on the *tabla* is concerned. In fact, it might be better, especially for learners, not to try performing with reference to these books and on the basis of the few instructions they contain about how to produce *bol*-s like *na*, *ta*, *dha*, *din*, *tirkita* etc. The method might spoil the process of *nikas* or *nikal* of the learner beyond correction, making it very difficult for him to change habits once formed. That is why Narayan Joshi's attempt is to be welcomed for it fulfils a real need in our own times when a pupil cannot be with his *guru* throughout the day and night.

Another good feature of the book, one of practical use, is that the author has given the compositions in a sequence which would make possible a well-knit solo performance of short duration.

Despite the author's serious attempt to work out a complete and proper notation, there still remains a doubt as to whether Shri Joshi's intention in doing so will be wholly fulfilled. A few reservations regarding the notation are listed here:

(a) *Tirkita* is represented by the notation  $\text{बअ३ब}$ . In the book *tirkita* forms part of *kayada*-s as well as *rela*-s, or is found even elsewhere in many *tabla* compositions. The same arrangement of fingers on *daya* and *baya* is employed while playing *tirkita* in both the *kayada* and *rela*. However, the rendering of *tirkita* has to be made softer in a particular way in the *rela*, a process which cannot be explained by any oral or written description, not to speak of trying to indicate it in the form of a notation. One can only "watch, listen and practise" under a proper *guru* to learn it.

(b) Under the heading *र्याही पर की उँगलियोंकी हलचलका विवरण* the author states that the function of *anamika* is simply to support the middle finger (ब) or go together with (ब) to produce *bol*-s. This is not correct. The *anamika* is also used independently (ब) for sound-producing in compositions with repeated *tirkita* (*tirkita tirkita*). The *ta* in the first *tirkita* is played by *anamika*; otherwise it is almost impossible to play *tirkita tirkita* in a very fast tempo. Surely Ustad Thirakwa must have used this *tarkib* which is known to most of those who have been trained by a proper *guru*.

(c) The book contains no instruction as to how and where *dhir* or *dhir dhir* should be played, though the author has used the signs  $\bar{T}$  or  $\bar{r}$ , to represent these *bol*-s in the compositions in the book.

(d) In expressing, *ding dina* the author (in accordance with his notation  $\bar{दुं ब सा सा}$  or  $\bar{दुं ब दुं सा}$ ) has suggested the use of *madhyama* (middle finger) for producing the sound *ga*. Most of the artistes of the Farukhabad *gharana* use *anamika* for this purpose (i. e. for *ga*). Unless *anamika* is used for *ga*, it is well-nigh impossible to play this expression at a very fast speed. There are many examples where *anamika* has to be used independently for producing specific *bol*-s and not merely for supporting the middle finger as suggested by the author.

The notation could have been made simpler and less complicated. There is no special advantage in indicating the *kinaraka dha* as  $\bar{सा}$  and *thapka dha* as  $\bar{साँ}$ . Since  $\bar{सा}$  and  $\bar{साँ}$  represent *madhya shadja* and *tara shadja*, respectively, the reader might unnecessarily feel that the sound of *thapka dha* is exactly of double frequency of the sound of *kinaraka dha*. This is not so. Only the type of sound is different (*kakubheda*) and *thapa* is louder than *kinara* but the *svara* (in terms of frequency) is the same provided the *tabla* is properly set to tune.

Admittedly any notation system, howsoever detailed, has its limitations as far as solo *tabla* is concerned and the author could have done better justice to the subject with the background that he possesses. He could have achieved his objective had he been more specific and careful in writing the introductory part of the book which also includes his notation system. He is vague, unnecessarily brief which make the understanding of his short and simple thesis difficult. For example, what is one to understand by the following sentence?

मुख्य आधार जगहसे उठता है, कुदता है 'सा' साँ, षड्ज का आधात आधार उसी तरह स्याहीके बोलोंका आधार।

—VIVEK JOSHI

INDIAN PAINTING TODAY—1981. Jehangir Art Gallery Publication, Bombay. Publisher: Ram Chatterji. Designer: J. Nath. Rs. 160.00 (*In English*).

This handsome book commemorates the Jehangir Art Gallery's thirtieth year. It represents twenty-two painters, each with a single full-colour plate, a photograph of the artist, a note on him by a critic and, with some exceptions, a short statement by the artist himself. Some essential biographical information about him is also provided.

Of the critical notes, five are by D. G. Nadkarni and four each by Ram Chatterji and Ananda Das Gupta. The rest are distributed, one or two each, among eight critics. Ram Chatterji, who is Honorary Secretary of the Gallery, does not announce himself as editor but obviously he is.

The book has a preface and a historical introduction, unsigned but again, obviously by Ram Chatterji. The blurb, too, is by him. Despite all this, he does not explain the principles of choice. Apparently, there were none. The blurb refers to the included painters as having "responded to the Gallery's call to participate in the show", which preceded the publication.

The painters excluded, then, did not respond to an invitation. Many excellent artists may be counted among them, and *all* the women artists. Isn't it a mistake, to put it mildly, to proceed on such a basis, which has no editorial choice? And that, too, where editorial choice matters most.

To proceed. In theory, the idea of asking the represented artists to make a statement about their work is admirable. In practice, it has proved disastrous. One is virtually obliged to be grateful to the artist who remained silent. I quote a few extracts from "The Artist's View" as examples of pretentiousness:

"Gods and Goddess descended on earth at Ellora and Elephanta for a rendezvous after creating the holocaust called universe."

M. F. Husain

"In so far as my painting is concerned, I do not know whether to call it guided intuition or revelation. . . ."

G. R. Santosh

"I have sought to discover my inner self. . . ."

K. K. Hebbar

"I believe it is a great revolutionary roll (sic!) of mine to liberate people from the bonds of the familiar and enlighten them with reproduction of the image from my life's page and expression."

Sunil Das

And so on, at best, naive, at worst, nonsense.

As for the critics, they have chosen to be reckless in their claims for the artists' achievements. They are also extravagant to the point of meaninglessness in their linguistic flourishes. Rarely does the critic try to help the reader understand the artist's aims and methods, his themes and his treatment of them. I quote a few examples:

"Gaitonde's work . . . springs as it were from the depths of being and becoming to leave behind on the canvas the residue of a revelation that takes one to a distant horizon to scan the limits of art."

S. V. Vasudev

"Paritosh never shifted from the point where he started. Throughout the years he has realised that it is not the content alone which makes a painting a painting. . . ."

Ananda Das Gupta

(Every student of an art school learns this lesson in his first year).

"With his sound knowledge of the science of art, Bendre knew what to paint and how to paint."

Ram Chatterji

However impressive "science of art" sounds, it is as essentially misleading as "art of science." And to say that a painter knows what to paint and how to paint is to pay him an empty, worthless compliment and no more.

The painters and critics I have quoted, and many others by implication, will undoubtedly resent my view of their "sincere" statements. I leave it to my reader to judge whether or not I am justified in finding them of little use.

—NISSIM EZEKIEL

## Record Reviews

### MORNING & EVENING RAGA-S

SET NO. EMSE 101 (*Stereo*)

ALI AKBAR KHAN (Sarod). Side One: *Raga* Ahir Bhairav; *Tala* Teental. Zakir Hussain (Tabla). Side Two: *Raga* Nat Bhairav; *Tala* Teental. Shankar Ghosh (Tabla).

EMSE 101 A.

RAVI SHANKAR (Sitar). Side One: *Raga* Mishra Pilu; *Tala* Teental. Side Two: *Raga* Patdeep. Alla Rakha (Tabla).

EMSE 101 B.

RAVI SHANKAR (Sitar) and ALI AKBAR KHAN (Sarod). Side One: *Raga* Shree; *Tala* Jhaptal. Alla Rakha (Tabla).

PANNALAL GHOSH (Flute). Side Two: *Raga* Darbari.

EMSE 101 C.

### RAGA MOOD

SET NO. EMSE 102 (*Stereo*)

VILAYAT KHAN (Sitar). Side One: *Raga* Yaman; *Tala* Teental. Side Two: *Raga* Yaman; *Tala* Teental. Manik Rao Popatkar (Tabla).

EMSE 102 A.

IMRAT HUSSAIN KHAN (Sitar). Side One: *Raga* Desh; *Tala* Teental. Shanta Prasad (Tabla).

BISMILLAH KHAN (Shehnai) and V. G. JOG (Violin). Side Two: *Raga* Jai Jaiwanti; *Tala* Teental. Mahapurush Mishra (Tabla).

EMSE 102 B.

VILAYAT KHAN (Sitar) and BISMILLAH KHAN (Shehnai). Side One: *Raga* Gurjaree Todi; *Tala* Teental. Shanta Prasad (Tabla).

BISMILLAH KHAN (Shehnai) Side Two: *Raga* Behag; *Tala* Teental.

EMSE 102 C.

E.M.I. have just brought out a couple of attractive sets of Hindusthani instrumental music, 3 L.P.s in each set. These are, quite obviously, not new recordings, but carefully selected recordings of some years ago, re-arranged and re-pressed with new labels. One could describe these offerings as old wine in new bottles. The new bottles are elegant and attractively packaged, and the wine really of vintage quality.

One set is devoted to Ali Akbar Khan (sarod), Ravi Shankar (sitar) and the late Pannalal Ghosh (flute). Their discipline springs from Allauddin Khan and the Senia *gharana*. Each has a style in keeping with the instrument he handles, and character and individuality like all creative artistes; yet these pressings reveal a kind of family resemblance, the feel of a shared heritage. This comes out best in the Ravi Shankar/Ali Akbar duet. Each understands the other well. The two anticipate and follow each other's line of thought and development, but show subtle stylistic variations in performance and expression. The sarod and the sitar show their different colours, but, in their hands, blend perfectly. This is *jugalbandi* at its happiest. Unless there is a meaningful rapport between the two participants and unless they have musical affinities, a *jugalbandi* becomes a mere matching of skills and of virtuosity.

The second set is dominated by that supreme artiste of the sitar, Vilayat Khan, and that incomparable shehnai player, Bismillah Khan. I am not forgetting Imrat Hussain Khan who gives, in some twenty minutes, a lovely sketch of Desh (with Shanta Prasad on the tabla); again, a family resemblance there, with a sure touch of his own.

These two sets would make charming gifts. For young people, with limited resources, they provide an excellent starting-off point to build up a collection with musicians of the calibre of Vilayat Khan and V. G. Jog all represented in it, with accompanists like Shanta Prasad, Alla Rakha, Zakir Hussain, Mahapurush Mishra, Shankar Ghosh to match them. And for those of us who are exposed to their frequent public appearances today, the two sets provide nostalgic memories of their youthful exuberance and quite phenomenal techniques.

What are the high-lights of this little "anthology" of Hindusthani instrumental music? There is Vilayat Khan's spacious Yaman on two sides of one disc. There is hardly any independent *alap*. He moves straight into the *gat vilambit* and, within the contours of the *tala*, he elaborates the *raga* with the strength, confidence and grace we have come to associate with his playing. There is Ravi Shankar's Patdeep—*alap*, *jod* and *sitarkhani gat*. What a study in contrasts these two fine sitar players are! Rarely have we had two such masters at any given time—Vilayat Khan, traditional, faithful to the genius of the instrument he handles with such facility, every *gat* singing to you; Ravi Shankar with shades of the veena in his *alap*-s, a penchant for rhythm, innovative, always in search of new values to absorb, whether from the *tala*-s of Carnatic music or the deep sonority of the surbahar and the veena. It is our good fortune to have had them both for the last thirty years or more, to have watched the slow but steady flowering and maturing of their fabulous talents and wonder what else they have to offer us in the years to come. We need them both for their contrasted styles and temperament, and their individual ways of striving for excellence. Two Vilayat Khans wouldn't have given us the same excitement, nor two Ravi Shankars.

I am not forgetting Ali Akbar Khan's Ahir Bhairav and Nat Bhairav, nor Imrat Khan's Desh and Pannalal Ghosh's dignified Darbari. Ali Akbar is unique. What gruelling discipline he went through in the hands of his father and teacher who straightjacketed him within the framework of a great tradition. Yet, or perhaps for that very reason, his playing is a superb example of the transformation of that

straightjacketed discipline into what appears an inborn and intuitive feeling for the essentials of music. It is like the transformation of knowledge into wisdom.

As I said earlier, these are two sets to possess and cherish. The music is impeccable. But EMI could be more careful about little details. In the set entitled *Morning and Evening Raga-s*, one *raga*, Patdeep, is really an afternoon *raga*; another, Darbari, is normally associated with midnight. The other set is called *Raga Mood*, whatever that might mean. The notes which go with the sets are good and useful, but occasionally cloying and embarrassing with phrases like "the mysterious awakening of eternity" or the "sanctity of tonal pattern".

—N. M.

TALAT AZIZ: *Images (Ghazal-s)*.  
MUSIC INDIA 2LP Set 2675 504 (Stereo).

BHUPINDER: *Shabnam (Ghazal-s)*.  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 807 (Stereo).

PINAAZ MASANI: *Aapki Bazm Mein (Ghazal-s)*  
MUSIC INDIA 2392 985 (Stereo).

ANURADHA: *Nagma-e-Mohabbat (Geet-s & Ghazal-s)*.  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 814 (Stereo).

PANKAJ UDHAS: *Mu-Kar-Rar (Ghazal-s)*.  
MUSIC INDIA 2392 981 (Stereo).

SALMA & SABINA— sing the hits of ABBA in Hindi.  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 813 (Stereo).

USTAD HAFEEZ AHMED KHAN. Side One: *Khayal: Raga Basant Mukhari; Thumri: Raga Bhairavi*. Side Two: *Khayal: Raga Rasranjani; Tarana: Raga Shahana*. Accompanist: Ustad Nizamuddin Khan (Tabla); Ustad Sultan Khan (Sarangi).  
MUSIC INDIA 2392 931 (Stereo).

T. N. SESHAGOPALAN—Live Concert. Carnatic Classical (Vocal) Vols. I & II.  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 834; 2393 835 (Stereo).

RAVI SHANKAR with ALLA RAKHA. Side One: *Raga Hameer*; Side Two: *Tala Farodast; Raga Gara*  
MUSIC INDIA 2392 895 (Stereo).



G. S. SACHDEV. Bansuri—The Indian Flute. Side One: *Raga Maru Bihag*; Side Two: *Raga Jog*. Accompanist; Zakir Hussain (Tabla).  
MUSIC INDIA 6405 611 (Stereo).

JAGANNATH & Party: Shehnai *dhun-s*.  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 832 (Stereo).

BRIJ BHUSHAN KABRA: *Bankhand Ki Koyal—Marwari Byah Ra Geet*. Compilation:  
Smt. Leela Devi Somani.  
HMV ESCD 2890 (Stereo).

SILSILA. Music: Shiv-Hari. Produced & Directed by Yash Chopra. Lyrics: Javed Akhtar, Rajinder Krishan, Nida Fazli, Hasaan Kamal, Dr. Harivanshrai Bachchan.  
HMV PEASD 2046/2047 (Stereo).

UMRAO JAAN. A film by Muzaffar Ali. Music: Khaiyyaam. Lyrics: Shahryar.  
HMV ECLP 5724.

CHASHME BUDDOOR. Story, Screenplay, Dialogue & Direction: Sai Paranjpye.  
Produced by Gul Anand. Music: Rajkamal. Lyrics: Indu Jain.  
HMV ECSD 5717 (Stereo).

ANUP JALOTA. *Rang De Chunariya (Bhajan-s)*.  
MUSIC INDIA 2393 805 (Stereo).

MAHENDRA KAPOOR. *Hari Naam Japo (Bhajan-s)*. Music: Anup Jalota.  
MUSIC INDIA 2392 986 (Stereo).

IMMORTAL THUMRI-s: Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, Ustad Barkat Ali Khan, Girja Devi, Ustad Nazakat Ali Khan, Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan, Begum Akhtar, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, Prabha Atre.  
HMV ECLP 2811.

The batch of discs under review is an interesting one. Interesting not because of unusual content; in fact, quite the opposite is the case. The batch is interesting because it represents a large cross-section of what the recording industry puts out today. Obviously, it is this kind of music that sells, and perhaps sells in this proportion. The listeners lap it up (or do they?) because they may not have much of choice: the two main media, AIR and Doordarshan, broadcast exactly this kind of music. As a matter of fact, many of these artistes are often heard on the Vividh Bharati Channel of AIR and in programmes like Arohi on Doordarshan.

The categories in which the twenty-one discs can be grouped in alphabetical order would be: classical; devotional; folk; film; *geet-s* and *ghazal-s* and reissued songs. There are a couple of discs of instrumental and vocal music, each in the classical section. As one listens to the music on these discs, the first thing that strikes one is the futility of compartmentalizing modern light music. The boundaries that distinguish one kind of music from another seem to blur. This pattern has been emerging over the past few decades. Ustads and pandits complained that the

*khayal* had become 'lighter' and leaned towards the *thumri* style. *Thumri-s*, in turn, were becoming more like *ghazal-s*. The 80's however seem to have taken an irrevocable step towards 'phirmi' *geet*. For one thing, the percentage of light songs, call them *ghazal-s*, *geet-s*, *nagma-s*, *bhajan-s* or what you will, has increased enormously. There are, in this batch, six discs of *geet-ghazal-s* (not from films), four from films, two *bhajan-s* and one disc is based on the music of ABBA, the European group. (This time the songs are in Hindi, written by Ameet Khanna). There are two discs of *bhajan-s*, sung by Mahendra Kapoor and Anup Jalota. That puts seventy-five percent of music in the category of light music. The singers, Bhupinder, Pinaaz Masani, Anuradha, Talat Aziz, Pankaj Udhas, Mahendra Kapoor and Anup Jalota, are all from Bombay's glittering film-scene. Some have established themselves as leading play-back singers; others hold promise and are waiting in the wings. The songs they sing have (because of this background) a lot more in common than their disc jackets might suggest. Add to this the fact that almost all the discs are recorded by Daman Sood. Though he has done a wonderful job of bringing out the beauty of the blend of a variety of timbres in the orchestra, the instruments are repeated in many discs. Perhaps they have been played by the same musicians in most of the recordings. All this makes the sound somewhat repetitious. It is difficult to discover an inspiring passage or a charmingly surprising tune. By the time one gets to the fourth *ghazal* of any of the performers, a feeling of suffocation sets in, making one gasp for fresh air. Of the two discs of Talat Aziz, the traditional *mehfil-like ghazal-s* in the second volume seem to put him in a more relaxed mood and it is bound to have the same effect on listeners. Bhupinder's album, despite very modern orchestration and shorter *ghazal-s*, brings out his rich voice beautifully. A couple of his *ghazal-s* are enjoyable, if one has stayed away from *ghazal-s* for a few days! Anuradha and Pinaaz have given a good account of themselves but, unfortunately, that is not enough in this sort of music. Musical composition, orchestration and lyrics together determine the success or failure of a disc. The *ghazal-s* chosen for Pinaaz are certainly better than those chosen by Pankaj Udhas. The Pankaj Udhas disc definitely suffers because of the quality of the *ghazal-s*. But this is not the only drawback of the disc. He has a new kind of voice but again this voice has not yet developed an identity, something which can perhaps be achieved after more experience.

The ABBA music in Hindi produces a very curious effect. The songs have a sound that is quite close to the original ABBA. The 'Hindi' of the songs makes the voices give out a nasal timbre and two songs move so close to Spanish music that they could be confused for Latin American pop music. *Toba Toba*, the first song in the album, is an example of the plagiarism practised by Hindi directors. Moreover, in all the songs, the lyrics are mutilated and, even after considerable effort, the words cannot be understood.

The vocalists who represent the Hindustani and Carnatic systems of music are fairly popular artistes. Hafeez Ahmed Khan has been on the musical scene for quite a long time and deserves to be taken seriously. His Basant Mukhari, Shahana, and Rasaranjani are chaste enough to be regarded as representative of his Rampur-Sahaswan lineage. However, one finds that he has an unnecessary tendency to show that he can reach *kharij*. There is also the feeling that the Ustad's voice is not what it used to be a few years ago. T. N. Sheshgopalan, the vocalist featured in the Carnatic *sangeet* double-album, has been recorded in a recent live

concert in Madras. He is quite impressive, presenting a repertoire full of variety. It includes, among other items, a *bhajan* in Hindi by Meerabai, Tyagaraja's *Yochana Kamala* in *raga* Darbar, and a *tillana* by Ariakudi Ramanuja Iyengar. The main piece is a *Ragam Tanam Pallavi* in Dharmavati. The first volume has an interesting *Thaniavartanam* coming at the end of the *Dikshitar kriti (Sri Rajagopala)* in *raga* Saveri and *Adi tala*, the percussionists being Guruvayur Dorai (*mridangam*), T. H. Vinayakam (*ghatam*), G. Hari Shankar (*kanjira*). Kudukottai Mahadevan plays the *morsing*.

The three albums exclusively featuring instrumental music include three performers presenting a classical repertoire, while Jagannath and Party present a shehnai ensemble of folk tunes. Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Alla Rakha have, on their album, the *raga*-s Hameer and Gara, and Farodast *tala* in solo tabla performance. The recording—at least of the disc sent for review—was so poor that it robbed the beautifully played Hameer of its freshness and depth.

G. S. Sachdev offers a neat presentation of the *raga*-s Marubihag and Jog. He strikes one as a very promising virtuoso, but his instrument has an inherent fault: the *tivra madhyam* always sounds a wee bit sharper than it should. This is obvious in his rendition of Marubihag. Zakir Hussain's tabla is unobtrusive and soft. The recording was done in 1976. Why has it taken so long to come in the market or for review?

The Jagannath and Party album is a good example of folk tunes rendered in an urbanized manner. The musical content of the *dhun*-s is very rural but the instruments that accompany the shehnai include a swarmandal, tabla, and a full-sized tambura. For its clear enunciation, though, this shehnai playing is very endearing. There is honesty and a forthright quality in this recital. Also an uncontrollable and impatient urge to play variations.

The folk music presented by Brij Bhushan Kabra on the album of wedding songs from Marwad is hardly different from the film music of the last few years. This is because of two complementary reasons: 'Philmi' music directors have in the past borrowed liberally from the folk tunes of Rajasthan and B. B. Kabra has chosen playback singers like Sudha Malhotra to sing these songs which he himself has orchestrated to suit the palate of the modern listener. Because of the Spanish guitar chords and organised rhythms, the songs could pass for a wedding sequence in a film.

Folk music for wedding scenes has also been included in another double-album under review. Hari-Shiv (Hariprasad Chourasia and Shivkumar Sharma) who have directed the music for *Silsila* have also played on their instruments to the accompaniment of an electrified vibraphone, arpeggio played on strings, and a kind of modulation. The record, like the film, was a highly publicized affair. But both failed to live up to expectations. It was rumoured that the recording quality was partly responsible for the failure and the album proves that the rumours do have a basis. The other album of film songs, containing folk music, is from *Umrao Jaan*. The songs should have had a stronger flavour of the period. (The disc jacket does have it.) Two of the numbers are traditional wedding songs of Uttar Pradesh sung by Jagjeet Kaur, and a *zhoola* (swing song) by Shaheeda Khan. The latter is quite

disappointing. There is also a *ragamala* sung by Ghulam Mustafa Khan and his two disciples. This and the traditional songs have obviously earned the National Award of Best Music Director for the composer Khaiyyaam, who certainly deserved it even before this film.

The Rajkamal film-score, with music leaning towards a semi-classical style, and Indu Jain's lyric, which is a spoof on the run-of-the-mill Hindi film song, make the album of *Chashme Buddoor* a charming bunch of songs. The songs, with a new approach, are quite modern without being too westernized. The disc-jacket, however, is in its design an exact copy of a Barbra Streisand album called *Guilty*.

The two records of *bhajan*-s have Anup Jalota featured as composer in both and singer in one. The one where he only composes is sung by Mahendra Kapoor. These *bhajan*-s have the exact form of film songs, complete with a women's chorus, vibraphones, side-rhythms, and introductory and interlude musical passages. The devotional aspect is clearly a thin veneer, while the core is very wooden, emotionless and synthetic.

The reissue of *thumri*-s in a collection of eight of the grand old numbers is a fitting tribute to this vanishing genre of music. The intense note in the Jogia of Abdul Karim Khan, the *phirat* in Barkat Ali's rendering of *Tum Radha Bano*, the magic of Bade Gulam Ali's voice and the ring of truth in Begum Akhtar's *swara* create a longing for their kind of music. It is not just a matter of nostalgia but of an appeal which remains unfaded and strong even now. It is in comparison with this disc that the newer light songs remind one of what Dr. Johnson had once said about a maiden novel of an author. Transposing his words, one might say, "The other discs have many good and new things in them. Unfortunately those that are new are not good and those that are good are not new".

—BHASKAR CHANDAVARKAR

TWO MAN SOUND—DIAMANT, Charlie Brown, Copacabana, Frou Frou, Brigitte Bardot, Mariana.  
MUSIC INDIA 6302 084.

ENDLESS LOVE—DIANA ROSS AND LIONEL RICHIE.  
MUSIC INDIA 6337 182.

LE GRAND ORCHESTRE DE PAUL MAURIAT—"REALITY".  
MUSIC INDIA 6313 159 (Stereo).

STEP BY STEP—EDDIE RABBITT.  
MUSIC INDIA 6302 152 (Stereo)

Curiosity leads one to examine the quality of popular Western music on albums that have sold by the million abroad and now released in India. They are listed in order of the reviewer's personal choice.

TWO MAN SOUND is also the group's name. Brilliant, interesting Brazilian music, it includes 'Ritmocada', the authentic street music of Rio during carnivals. 'Vini Vini' is like a Goan tune (stemming perhaps from the Portuguese connection). The album's sales exceeded a million, which indicates the fascination the West has for Brazilian music and Latin American rhythms which have Afro roots.

ENDLESS LOVE is the sound track of the film of the same name. From symphonic studio orchestra to hard rock, by "Kiss" to pleasing pop by black American vocalists Diana Ross and Lionel Richie to a disco track by Cliff Richard—all are under one roof. "Kiss" has sold records worth over Rs. 200 crores and Diana Ross, now a millionairess, is also involved with Hindu spiritualism.

Paul Mauriat's "REALITY" is a large orchestra with strings like a modern-day Mantovani originating from France. This is about the tenth Mauriat release in India.

Eddie Rabbitt's STEP BY STEP is mushy music and easily the least durable of this guitarist-singer and song-writer in the American 'country' style.

These albums help to illustrate what is *not* jazz. Even its slight traces are absent—jazz may be good for the spirit but recording companies know that it spells disaster commercially.

—NIRANJAN JHAVERI

## Valuable Books on Performing Arts

### 1. Index of Songs in South Indian Music

Gowri Kuppaswamy & M. Hariharan (Eds.); 970 p.; 25cm. 1981. Rs.350/-

The present compilation covers more than ten thousand compositions in South Indian (Carnatic) music arranged in alphabetical order. An attempt has been made to codify the essential features of these songs with a view to making them easily accessible. In addition to the General Index, there are four other sections in the book viz. Raga, Composer, Tala and Language. The corresponding cross-references of the Raga, Composer, Tala and Language mentioned against each entry can be found in these respective sections.

### 2. The Music and Musical Instruments of Southern India and the Deccan

C. R. Day. Introduction by A. F. Hipkins. 181 p., ill. (colour); 25cm. 1977 (c. 1891). Rs. 125/-

A thoroughgoing investigation into the historic origins of Indian music in general and southern system in particular. The present reprint will be avidly read by musicians and musicologists both in India and abroad.

### 3. The Opera in South India

S. A. K. Durga. Introduction by M. Balamurali Krishna. Foreword by D. H. Damodaran. 176 p., plates; 22cm. 1979. Rs. 60/-

The musical plays of South India which can be considered as the Indian counterpart of the western opera have been studied in this book in great detail. In addition, the book devotes a whole chapter to the production of opera in the course of which the author has made a spirited plea for the training of singers and stage technicians.

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