

Keshavrao Bhole: Excerpts from his *Mazhe Sangeet*

Translated and annotated by
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Introduction: When sound came to film, it brought with it a near-global degeneration of cinema into utilizing conventions drawn primarily from the stage, often abandoning highly advanced languages developed during the silent era. Not least in India, where the numerous actors, scenarists, and music directors employed by the 1930s studios from the theatre brought with them a stylistic transplanted wholesale from the Parsi theatre (Imperial, Minerva and Ranjit studios); the commercial Calcutta stage (exemplified by Debaki Bose's Vidyapati, 1938, or Madhu Bose's Raj Nartaki, 1941); the Kannada Company Natak (Gubbi Veeranna)—and at the Prabhat Film Company where Keshavrao Bhole worked, the Marathi Sangeet Natak.

Whatever their formal differences, two of the norms that all stage-inspired film has always adhered to—norms that are now, in different guise, presented to us by so-called 'realist' film-making—have been those of the privileging, above all else, of the synchronous spoken word. And second, the establishment of theatrical continuities. It was Ritwik Ghatak in Indian film who, besides being the first film-maker to use cinematic sound (including, in this, music) in *Ajantrik*, 1958, introduced the most substantial theory of sound aesthetics now available: 'Sound In Film'¹. This essay, and its subsequent elaboration into Kumar Shahani's classic 'Notes Towards an Aesthetic of Cinema Sound'², was at its simplest an assertion that what is usually understood as musical time relates mostly to cinematic space. This space, unlike theatre space, is not static but mobile, not continuous but discontinuous, and indeed often functions most effectively not as present but as absent space³.

Long before Ghatak made his films there were a few music directors grappling with filmic discontinuity in the technical problems it posed: to orchestration, to defined shot lengths and the need for music to 'bridge' editing cuts, to the problem of musical and space volume as for example in the earlier live recording of songs, and later, even more drastically, with the invention of playback. A classic of this period is Fattela/Damle's Prabhat studio production of Sant Tukaram, 1936, with its repeated and extraordinarily successful transference of musical into cinematic rhythm⁴. Its music director, Bhole, was also one of the first Indian music directors to find certain theoretical formulations for orchestration, the speech-music relationship, and to use new instruments like the piano, the Hawaiian guitar and, he claims at one point, also the Sitar, in film music. Like Govindrao Tembe, his predecessor at Prabhat, Bhole was also a theatre man; like Tembe, too, he wrote extensively about his practice. Tembe was, as former associate of Bal Gandharva and later owner-producer of the Shivraj Natak Mandali, one of the foremost protagonists of the Sangeet Natak mode in his day; while Bhole had already attempted orchestral techniques in the play *Andhalyanchi Shala*, 1933, a major modernist intervention into the Sangeet Natak. As the following excerpts from his book *Mazhe Sangeet: Rachana Ani Digdarshan* (Bombay: Mauz

Prakashan, 1964) indicate, much of Bhole's controversial film practice polemicized, at times openly, with that of Tembe.

The following translation features excerpts from two chapters of Mazhe Sangeet, dealing with the film Amritmanthan, 1934, and Sant Tukaram, 1936. They have been chosen and annotated very much in terms of a subsequent history, as an early and direct precedent to problems being faced even today by film-makers and music directors.

— A.R.

Amritmanthan

In October I was contracted to do two films by the famous Prabhat studio of Kolhapur, an offer that followed my achievements in the music of the play *Andhalyanchi Shala*...

One of the first things I did was to procure a good piano from the James Company, which I dispatched to Prabhat. That instrument, when it arrived, already publicized my somewhat 'new' approaches to music...⁵ Rajaram-bapu Purohit and Vasant Desai played with it like children introduced to a new toy. They experimented with it and were particularly enthralled by the shifts in frequency that took place when they pressed the foot-pedal. I found their experimentations useful; and when I joined, they were the ones who had mastered the instrument.

Before Prabhat, I had composed music for one Marathi and two Hindi films...and what these had taught me was what one must *not* do when composing music for films. I realized, for instance, that Hindi film music was substantially in the tradition of the Urdu stage. Later Govindrao Tembe was to perpetuate the same theatre-inspired convention in his films. It was never to occur to him that film was in any way different from the stage⁶.

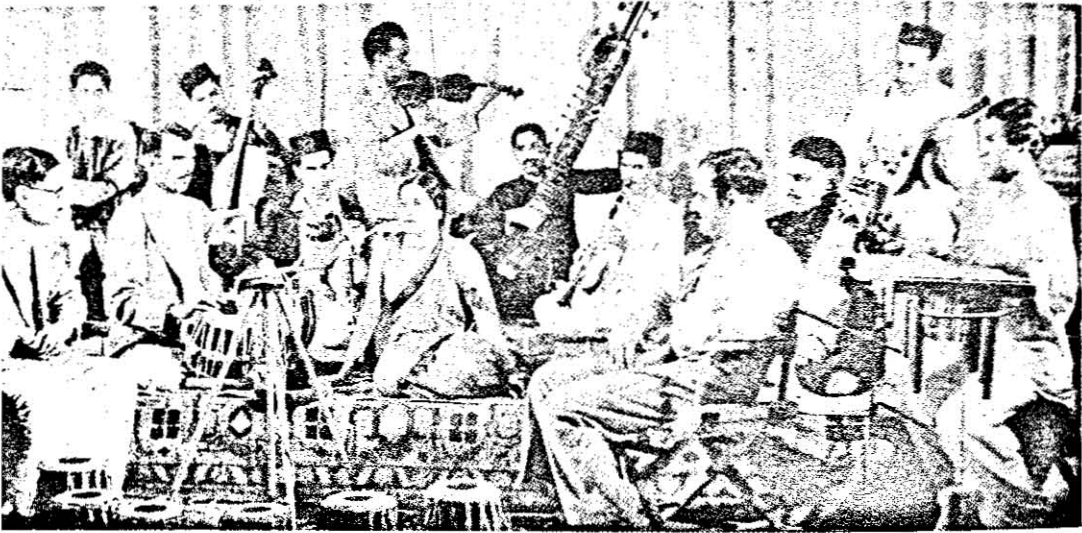
Between 1919 and 1930 I had seen several excellent silent films at the Capitol, the old West End and the Opera House. At Capitol and Opera House the theatre had an orchestra pit in which was seated a full-scale English orchestra which would play while the film went on and would elaborate the emotions portrayed with its myriad combinations and sound volumes. The conductors, at these two theatres particularly, were very good [and] *Lady Of the Camille*, *Faust*, *Scaramouche*, *Gold Rush*, *City Lights* and *The Blue Angel* were some of the great films [they] brought to life. The tonalities, the particular timbre of each instrument and how they could come together so magnificently engaged my mind. I was baffled by the way they could play different *swaras* in different scales and yet not make a mistake, not sound flat. Those lined sheets of music before them, the way some instruments were silenced while others were introduced, and their combinations, sometimes so soft and then so grand, evoking such

sentiments. When we played or sang our music in groups everyone played the same *swara*. It is now that I understood the system of chords, when three notes combine at the same time, sometimes in harmony, sometimes *vivadi*⁷.

It was the pianist that particularly fascinated me. He would hold his rhythm with his left hand and play something quite different with his right. If I tried the same thing on my pedal-organ I only produced chaos... My first lesson was therefore to see how Western musicians played as they 'read' the music before them. Our harmonium, of course, only follows the singer while our various percussion instruments—the Tabla, Mridangam, Jhanj, Tal, Tuntuna, Ektari—keep the beat. While we emphasize the aural, they keep to the written score; this, I concluded, was the basic difference. Listening to this music proved useful later, leaving me with the sole regret that I never did formally train myself in the Western classical musical system at the time.

Talkie films started in 1929 and I saw *Showboat* and *My Sonny Boy* at the Capitol and the Excelsior. As I heard Paul Robeson's magnificently powerful voice and Al Jolson's sentimental renderings I knew that I was participating in the first experiments being made in talkie music. Because this music was part of the soundtrack recorded on the print, it did away with the live orchestra which was something I have always regretted. Even today, in theatre, I feel that the prerecorded mode falls short of what a live violinist can achieve. The very placement of the loudspeaker militates against the term background music; it is right there, in the front, even when it is supposed to come from a distance. In the performance of *Jugar*, the Ovis that were supposed to come from a distance were played right up front. And so seldom does the live speech of the actor match with recorded music that I felt convinced that recorded music has no place, on stage at least⁸.

We started rehearsing *Andhalyanchi Shala* in 1933. I was looking for places in the play that needed musical support. The song sequences were easier: I intended using the piano, organ, Sarangi and violin. I kept trying new places to see how the music worked. I used song compositions from Khayal, Thumri and Dadra... Working from the way [English films] used music I realized that the moments when characters were filled with emotion, or engulfed with fear or danger, particularly required musical sustenance. Even instruments were chosen according to the emotional qualities of the sequence. Passages of *shringara* naturally lent themselves most effectively to music⁹. The trilling, flying, notes were used to great effect. Often they achieved their lilt in mid-scale by combining different instruments—the violin especially. Sometimes they strummed the violin



The Prabhat orchestra with Shanta Apte (centre). Courtesy: Narayan Mulani.

like a Sitar (they called it *pizzicato*). All this was to explain what were until then insoluble mysteries to me. It was also to introduce me to my favourite instruments: the piano, violin and Hawaiian guitar. I used the piano extensively for *Andhalyanchi Shala* and (later at Prabhat) along with our raga-based instruments the Sitar, Sarangi, Been and cello which when played with *ghasit* gave a scale similar to the grandiose Western music...

"What instruments do you have here?" I asked Vasant Desai. Apart from my carefully stored piano there was a large seven-reed organ, a smaller two-reed, two Sarangis, a few Tablas and two violins without strings. "Is that all?" I marvelled at how one of India's foremost film studios could manage for so long with just this much. How to compare this motley lot with the magnificent orchestra of the New Theatres studio? I was determined to do away with the discrepancy... Two months later I employed more musicians: two violinists, a Sitar player, another to play the Dilruba; the latter was played by Shamrao Kale who also played the cello and Been. We got Tablas of different scales and assembled a Tabla-tarang. And then, with organ, Sitar, Dilruba, Tablas, piano, cello, harpophone (we added the Been later) we started rehearsals of *Amritmanthan* in earnest.

The plot of the film revolves round the conflicts between Buddhism and entrenched religious orthodoxy. The King, influenced by Buddhist ideals, has banned human and animal sacrifice in the land. The High Priest and his confederates plan to have the King killed—and succeed. The film begins in



Shanta Apte in Indian
National Art Pictures' Swayam
Siddha, 1949. Courtesy:
B. Sobhraj.

an atmosphere of fear. There is the hideous statue of the goddess, the Priest and his men gathered in the dark: the Priest standing in the middle swathed in shadow. "Killer of demons, the victorious Goddess Chandika", goes the prayer in slow, ominous chant. I composed this prayer in *raga* Hindol. The instruments were also orchestrated to emphasize the sombre and fearsome mood¹⁰. Whatever the Priest wants he claims to be the desire of the Goddess Chandika; the recurring line, "The Goddess Chandika desires...", is followed by two piano strokes whenever it is uttered. The music for the plotting scene, composed in *ragas* Hindol and Lalit, is however played on the harsh sound of a steel-wired Sarangi. The knife, which is to determine the man who shall kill the King, falls before the Sardar...

By the time the Sardar returns home it is evening. His daughter Sumitra (Shanta Apte) has entered the bedchamber with incense sticks, followed by her brother Madhav (Sureshbabu Mane). I've used an evening melody for the song: '*Kiti sukhara yeta nisha*'. And since the song is accompanied by much mischief between brother and sister I've only used such *swaras* as would expand the action on Sitar. It seemed an appropriate instrument but a difficult one: even the New Theatres had not used it until then. Before the

children sleep they sing a prayer which I had composed in simple Tilak-Kamod. So the progression so far had moved from the fearsome chant to the lilting Kafi and now rested on this serene melody.

The children sleep. The father gazes upon his beloved children; their bonds of love were shortly to be shattered by his nefarious mission. Chandika's desire has to be fulfilled, the decision to do so is also evident on his face. The distressed notes of the Sarangi are heard; Asavari serves the emotionally tense mood well.

The King is asleep on his bed. The courtesans dim the light; a musician on the Been plays the strains of Kambhoji. A figure enters and plunges a knife into the king's heart. A maid awakens and shouts, others enter. The killer is trapped. We see the Princess (Nalini Tarkhad) rush into the room. In the hubbub we hear voices saying "The Priest, the Priest". The music is also lowered until with the final whisper we have complete silence.

[In the next sequence] when the children reach the spot where their father had bidden them to meet him they see soldiers arriving with his corpse. The body is thrown to the dogs with a soldier standing guard. Madhav tells Sumitra: "Without a proper cremation our father's soul will never rest in peace. You must distract the soldiers with a song while I rescue his body. Endure this ordeal and help, me." Holding back her tears she sings '*Rahi Mama Manasat...*' How does a girl sing before her father's corpse? The use of traditional forms has been excellently demonstrated here. Indeed, we did things in this sequence that haven't been rivalled in the cinema.

The Princess becomes Queen of the realm. But power is effectively controlled by the Priest; even the Queen dreads his domination. He parades the arrested Madhav before the Queen. I have used no music at all in this scene [except when] the Queen ascends the throne, when we hear a full, yet measured, score. Preparations for the sacrifice [of Madhav] are in full swing. There is general discontent evident among the people about the Priest's decision. He narrates the legend of the churning of the oceans to substantiate his argument. The ritual begins. It is interrupted by a bolt of lightning, thunder and rain. Madhav leaps straight towards the Queen, rescues her and heads for the deep forest.

Superimposed on the High Priest's narrative about the churning of the oceans is the visual description of the myth itself. For this we shot the visuals first and added sound later, on edited film. There was no scope for music, though the violin and clarinet were used to simulate sound effects like cries¹¹.

In the jungles it is dawn. Madhav lectures the Queen on her true duties and she has to listen, for he has saved her life. The next morning she steps

by a beautiful lake; we see lotuses in bloom, bees hum, playful and carefree. The *koel* calls and the Queen in a burst of pleasure sprinkles the water around and drinks from it. With the first '*kuhu*' of the *koel* the music starts with the gentle notes of Des *raga* on Sarangi. Holding the Queen in the foreground, the notes precede the song to follow. The music accompanies her every gesture. The Sarangi is perfect for the curving elaboration of gestures¹². Following the introductory phrases she sings '*Sanjivani vani vitrata mana ramvaya ravi yeyi*'. Seeing the unrestrained freedom of all nature she dreams of her own freedom. Enamoured by Madhav's affectionate spontaneity she defies the guards when they come for her. The Sarangi is so intensely enlivening that nearly four minutes of screen time pass by. I don't think there is another sequence in the film so elaborately adorned with music as this one: Des is an ebullient *raga*, and the Sarangi player gave it all he had. Here we have also a remarkable conjoining of visual and aural patterns; it is this that lends such charm to the Queen's song when it comes.

When the scene shifts back to the forest, Madhav sits on a tree and sings of springtime: '*Vaibhavshali priyakar gamala/Bhetaya ye nija ramanila*' and the Queen joins in with '*Divya drishti maja pranayacha dehi/Prem labhale dhyeya umajale*'. At this moment the voice of the High Priest is heard: "Your Majesty, it gives me pleasure to see you so well". The two songs mentioned are both attractive and erotic; more important, they are necessary preludes to the eventual union of Madhav and the Queen. I took the basic melody for the Queen's song from the repertoire of Lucknow's famous Kathak exponent, Bindadeen.

Meanwhile the news of her brother's sacrifice has driven the sister Sumitra insane. In her madness she sings the song '*Hai daiva/Kay dav sadhila*'¹³.

The people of the kingdom finally rise in arms against the High Priest. In the temple the Priest shuts the door; later, the people break it open. The scene alternates between what is happening inside and the chaos outside. Here the violin stands out. The organ, piano and clarinet fuse in with a mixture of *ragas* in the lower octave while the violin plays in the upper¹⁴. Before the Priest can sever his head the people rush in; they are dumbstruck by what they see. Here we only used music linked to the Priest's terrible self-sacrifice. The film ends with '*Amrut prakat jhale*' in *raga* Bhairavi; I borrowed Master Krishnarao's '*Shyam mohan pyare*' but changed it to suit the song.

Indeed, in this film I composed only one entirely original tune: for the song '*Dahi jiva chintanala*' that Sumitra sings in the *ashram*. I was not yet used to composing original works and mainly reused what I had heard

before. Nor did I place any great value on originality.

The opening scene of this film lends itself remarkably to musical elaboration. During rehearsals I timed every sequence with a stop-watch, and composed my phrases to given durations. And then, to demonstrate the effect to the director as much as to actors and musicians, we would play to the action in rehearsal. But we had a remarkable and unforeseen result: the actors started choreographing their performance to the music, finding a rhythm that they matched with their movements, speaking their lines to the curves of the music. I had sensed this effect in the play *Andhalyanchi Shala* itself: the pace of the performance was bound to the music so that every performance lasted only for a precise duration.

In the opening scene Chandramohan only rehearsed with music. Watching his acting I would get new ideas about the music itself. We could also exercise greater control over sound volume than ever before. In talkie shots we were able to keep the background music in the background. The pitch and qualities of the spoken voice helped us choose our instruments as well, so there was no interference in frequency. It helped us choose our octaves¹⁵.

I was extremely keen to eliminate all 'theatrical' music in *Amritmanthan*. I wanted all the songs to fit the narrative just as the dialogues did. If songs did not 'fit', we had to find devices that would make them fit, and so I used background music preceding the song in such a way that the song itself appeared to emerge spontaneously¹⁶. For '*Kiti sukhada*' [as Sumitra walks with a light step, places incense sticks and walks from room to room to arrive at her bedchamber, she spies the sky, bedecked with stars, and this leads into her singing], Kafi fitted easily into the sequence. We particularly wanted to establish the contrasts of mood that would heighten each other [this sequence follows the terrifying one of the plot to kill the King]. This device from Shakespeare's theatre I was familiar with.

The background music that preceded this song was in Kafi as well but for that I had only used the piano. This too had been 'fixed': it accompanied Sumitra's movement up to the shot of the sky and then merged into the song. We had detailed the Queen's '*Sanjeevani vani...*' Every song was thus worked out, and fixed in the rehearsals (including its duration). Lines that had a purely theatrical effect were deleted; the orchestral addition between lines was worked out in terms of visual action, and not just for its sound. The actors had to interact through gesture rather than the more common practice [even today] of just standing and listening to the music.

I was particular that each word had to find its particular rhythm: in '*Kiti sukhada*' the beginning of the line '*Sinchit jagata asha*' had to come at the beginning of the rhythmic cycle; the nasal consonants in words like *sinchit*.

gandha, manda, had to fit their place in the rhythm. To my mind this is true of even the spoken word.

To shoot a song with action meant taking several shots at different distances. Sometimes trolleys were used, at other times they placed a static camera, all of which affected the singing. For the '*Kiti sukhada*' song Sumitra completes one entire *mukhda* as she springs past the bed before the shot is over; when the next shot begins she has moved to the *antara*. Some of the action called for our invention of a primitive playback mode: how could Shanta Apte sing *and* jump on the bed simultaneously? Shantaram said, let her sing the song as best as she can; after the shot we can record the line and insert it. We did four songs like this, including the action into the singing...Nalini Tarkhad's song '*Sanjeevani vani*' was taken in a single shot.

After *Amritmanthan* I came to a few conclusions: I decided that if music, vocal or instrumental, was at all required to heighten narrative pacing or intensity, it should be organized towards establishing a particular atmosphere, or character, or emotion. This is not easy: one has to stop the music when it has served its purpose. One should not insist on certain *ragas*; instead the music should be at one with its context. Songs should never be restricted to one character, and orchestration should be limited to the specific needs of the singer's voice, its power, its ability to enunciate words and its *swaras*.

Sant Tukaram

The popularizing of the *bhagwat-dharma* through mass movements had been a Marathi tradition from Sant Dnyaneshwar and Namdev to Tukaram; it was intended explicitly to organize people, regardless of caste differences, to fight oppression. In the Pravachan and Keertan, which were modes of communicating with the common people, the poets used Abhangas and lyrics drawn from their experiences of daily work. The instruments were the simplest possible: the Tal and Mridangam. The intention was to enable people to sing these lyrics, which were drawn from popular cultural forms. The influence of the folk Bhajan was massive; Dnyaneshwar and Namdev also drew from North Indian Bhajan forms. That classical-*raga*-based music also existed in Dnyaneshwar's time is known from the repertoire of Yadavas like Gopalnayak; but the extent to which music sung in *durbars* influenced forms like Keertan, Ovi, Abhanga and other forms of *varkari* singing is debatable.

Our intentions of taking traditional music from this history will now be

evident. Like the environment, we wanted the music of *Tukaram* to be as historically accurate as evidence of the past allowed. In the early days Haridas Keertans followed their initial invocations with a Dhrupad recital. But Dhrupad does not seem to have influenced the Abhanga or Ovi forms; it has been the Tappa, with its lighter *zamzamas* and more delicate rendition of the poetry of song that influenced the Keertan, Bhajan, Lavani and Natyasangeet. Even so, devotional singing has seldom been able to assimilate the complicated renditions of even the Tappa; their singing usually emphasizes the simplicity that allows for collective singing. The distinction is demonstrable in the way the Abhangas were sung: with emphasis upon simplicity of notes and rhythm rather than complex vocal pyrotechnics. This extended into modes of living, of dressing: a working people's music. This was the logic we had to follow in the film, and this meant that a large part of the responsibility would be on me.

I started work on the Abhanga that Salomalo has stolen from Tukaram and sings in the Vithal temple. In the film this Abhanga is heard from the very beginning: from the credit titles, and then the opening visual of Tukaram himself ('*Pandurang dhyani/Pandurang mani*'). His simplicity and transparent sincerity is contrasted with Salomalo's performance; [Salomalo] tries to pass it off as his own and his rendering is showy and ostentatious. I wanted to make this contrast evident as I rehearsed Bhagwat, who played

Vishnupant Pagnis in Prabhat's Sant Tukaram, 1936.
Courtesy: Narayan Mulani.



Salomalo. The shot of Tukaram is wiped, and replaced by one that contrasts with it in every way: Salomalo, in highly ornamental dress, picks up the last line and continues in his highly theatrical style. There is a visual contrast, but the sound contrast had also to be worked out. Salomalo picks up the words '*Pandurang dhyani*' in a theatrical falsetto and stops the '*dhyani*' with an abrupt Khayal-like *khatka*. I had worked this beginning in *raga* Behag. Bhagwat, being an experienced singer from the Rajapurkar Natak Mandali, found this kind of theatrical singing easy. I recalled the two Haridas singers I had seen in Bombay; I had worked the music here in the same fussy, affected, *shringar*-ridden and effect-oriented style. With flailing arms Salomalo replaces the word '*Tuka*' of the author with his own. At the words '*Salo mhane*' there is a verbal "Ah!" Of the spectators, punctuated by prose, sometimes with a repetition of the last beat of the rhythmic cycle as Salo clips his *tala* to wake a sleepy viewer, and ends on the high octave. Once, when the accompanying singer says '*Salo mhane*' in the lower octave, he stops the singing and repeats the words on the upper scale. Often he intersperses his words with long *tans* to show off his style and, to demonstrate his own sincerity, for *bhav* to '*nirala nahi duja*', his voice gets choked and he wipes a tear from his eye. To impress the people of Dehu as a poet and *keertankar* he has two accompanying singers—one with a large Veena, the other with a Tal, and a Pakhawaj player on the side. With such feudal paraphernalia does he sing, and an outsize Tal shaped like a fish, as he displays his devotion and undermines Tukaram ('*Salo mhane/mojuni maravya paijara*').

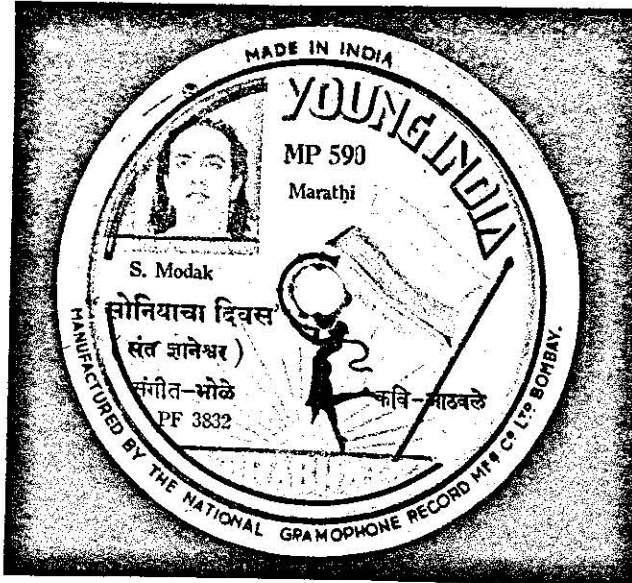
It is from this musical opening that the dramatic narrative now takes off. As Jijai washes her buffalo she hears the words '*Pandurang dhyani*' sung softly in the compound and flies into a rage: Tukaram's devotion to the 'black god' has ruined her household and driven the family into poverty. Her son is ill and she wishes that he would do something practical. [This leads to the] miracle sequence when her son gets well, but Salomalo publicly bans Tukaram from entering the temple.

Accepting the blame and his exile, Tukaram turns to take a last look at the icon and sings: '*Tuka jhala sanda/Vitambiti pore randa*'. The entire temple is empty as he mourns his banishment. To evoke this isolation in the massive empty space I used bells of various notes rhythmically underlining the Abhanga. Since this Abhanga actually continues from Tukaram's speech, the sense of distress also builds right from the dramatic into the lyrical¹⁷. Even more than Vishnupant [Pagnis] rendering [the song], it is in the way this scene has been constructed that its sense of enveloping tragedy emerges. The lyric itself was a traditional one, but effective...

Salomalo hurries to his mistress [the courtesan Sundara] to boast of his

success in perpetrating the downfall of Tukaram. And says, "... now sing a Lavani to celebrate". And she sings '*Chalali jwani vaya*'. The actress Shanta Sharma (Majumdar), coming from a middle-class background, had difficulty with the erotic words and seductive gestures and her voice was limited.

All of Tukaram's Abhangas have Kartal, Sitar, Sarangi and Mridangam except '*Anu kiti re sadaya*' where I used the Tabla, because while singing it Tukaram has some dance movements. For Sundara's Lavani I used all the above instruments and a Tabla that would suit the erotic renderings of a courtesan. In general our choice of instruments was in keeping with the tradition: Tal, Mridangam, Chiplya, Kartal, Sitar, used with Abhanga and Bhajan. We avoided all brass like the trumpet or saxophone. On several occasions we obtained very precise instruments: for Pagnis we ordered a special Tal from Tarkar Company, Bombay, which matched his voice scale. At the end of the film when his fortunes turn and he has a large following, for Abhangas like '*Pail ale Hari*' and '*Amhi jato*'—we had over a hundred people in the audience playing the Tal and several *nalkaris*, [and] we had to invite and select all these men to give the scene its scale and authenticity. And in the scene where Tukaram gives all the grain he has received from Gyanba's field—the song '*Phukache te luta sare/Vhave amar sadaiva*'—we have a scene where there is no Tal and no Mridangam, just the words '*Bolava Vithal/Karava Vithal/Jeevabhava*' punctuated by people's '*Dhanya*' as they take the grain away.



A disc from Prabhat's *Sant Dnyaneshwar*, 1940, with music by Keshavrao Bhole. Courtesy: Society of Indian Record Collectors.

Tukaram's wife Avali feeds her children with *bhakri* and, without having eaten a morsel, takes some food and goes in search of her husband. Atop the mountain Tukaram celebrates all of nature's beauty as he sings 'Vikshavalli amha soyari vanachare/Pakshihi susvare alavaiti' and its elaboration 'Yene sukhe ruche ekantacha vas/ Nahi gunadosh anga yet/ Tuka mhane hota manasi sanvas/Apulichi vas apanasi'. It is noon and the sun blazes overhead. Even the birds have returned to their nests for a brief respite. On this calm and placid afternoon it was logical that Tukaram should sing in the *raga* Sarang. As he sings we see Tukaram gradually descending into silence and sleep, but this Vishnupant couldn't do... Another strange problem was that he inevitably went off-tune at the word 'susware'. It was after this harrowing experience that we decided that rather than film the visual first and then record the line later it would be easier and cheaper to record first and have the words sung in synchronized lip movement. In doing so we invented the playback technique, which we used later in *Amar Jyoti* in the song 'Suno suno banke prani'. □

NOTES

1. Ghatak, Ritwik: 'Sound In Film' chapter in *Cinema and I* (Calcutta: Ritwik Memorial Trust/Rupa, 1987).
2. Shahani, Kumar: 'Notes Towards an Aesthetic of Cinema Sound', *Journal of Arts & Ideas*, No. 5, Delhi.
3. Ghatak himself gives an example of musical evocation of absent space in Satyajit Ray's *Aparajito*, 1956:
In *Aparajito*, Sarbajaya and Apu are returning to the village from Benares: the train leaves the bridge behind; soon through the windows one can see the landscape of Bengal, green and beautiful. Just then on the soundtrack you hear that theme tune [of *Pather Panchali*]. Just once for the whole length of the film, but once is enough. A comment, a correlative between the past and present floods your mind with the memory of Nischindipur... of Durga and the white cotton fields. [*Ibid.*]
4. Kumar Shahani on *Sant Tukaram*:
The greatest achievement in *Sant Tukaram* is of course the performance by Vishnupant Pagnis. But this performance, as in the work of Chaplin, is rarely hampered by stylistic devices... Such simplicity can rarely be repeated, even by the authors themselves. The transformation of subject-matter into form and content is hardly ever possible... In the exposition itself, the basic content of dignity has been established by the simple means of Tukaram's movement about the hips and Salo's uncontrollable movements (less rigid but composed on the *tamasha* pattern with two lackeys on his side) and the Ravi Varma-like posed sensuality of the prostitute. ['The Saint Poets of Prabhat'. Reprinted

in T.M. Ramachandran, ed.: *Seventy Years of Indian Cinema*. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985.]

5. Bhole often exemplifies his musical modernity with the piano, the use of which he undoubtedly pioneered in Indian film. It has been suggested in polemic however that, given the introduction of the harmonium and the organ (traceable to the Portuguese) to most forms of, for example, Keertan by the late 19th century, according to Ashok D. Ranade, the piano is not nearly as radical a departure as Bhole would suggest.
What is interesting in this essay is the way Bhole consistently relates the piano to its *orchestral* possibilities, and, further, to the *visual* and often specifically *cinematic* demands made upon musical orchestration. See note 15.
6. Govindrao Tembe's writings on the subject are perhaps the most solid efforts of the early talkie era to define a stage-influenced aesthetic. See especially his essay 'Chitrapat Sangeet' (chapter in *Jeevan Vyasanga* Vol. 1; Kolhapur: Govindrao Tembe Smarak Samiti, 1956) where he contends that most of the music used in film is superfluous given the possibilities of achieving identical results with pure sound effects, and that instruments like the harmonium should be used to underline such effects. See also Tembe's 'Chitrapatache Kathanak' (in three parts; *Ratnakar*, Sept. 1930; Nov./Dec. 1930; Mar./Apr. 1931).
7. The system of harmonics (involving upper partials of 'overtones') in Western classical music has often been used as a paradigm for film-editing as well (classically Eisenstein's formulation of overtone montage). The commentative possibilities of music that, as Bhole says, works in *vivadi*, are perhaps most remarkably used in Indian film in Salil Chowdhury's compositions.
8. Bhole points out in this essay how for *Amritmanthan* they defined a rudimentary system of playback. It was precisely this naturalistic aesthetic of sound volumes that Bhole defends here that in fact led to Prabhat continuing their preference for live scores in opposition to playback well into the 1940s.
9. A good instance of how naturalist stage conventions of the pathetic fallacy were inducted into early Indian film. See also note 12.
10. This opening sequence with its celebrated telephoto-lens shots of the Priest's eye is also the first time we see a full-blown realization of V. Shantaram's German *Kammerspiele*-inspired expressionist style. That ominous chant, accompanying low-angle tracking shots and patches of inverted light, were a classic instance of how Bhole was able to find traditional musical references for expressionist intent (seen in a more elaborate mode in *Kunku/Duniya na Mane*.)
11. Using musical instruments for effect-tracks has been often explored by film-makers. A classic recent instance is the work of the Soviet film-maker Tarkovsky. In Indian film, both Ghatak and occasionally Ray have used this to advantage (Ray often very much within the Tembe sense—see note 6—in, for example, *Ashani Sanket*), Ghatak in his musicalization of nature through sound and musical effects (for example the plucked strings of the Sarod to accompany falling raindrops in *Titash Ekti Nadir Na*, 1973).

12. Neither the filming of the song in a single shot nor the musical devices Bhole describes here in fact rescues this sequence from its sheer theatricality; its calendar-art version of a 'non-indifferent nature' is an interesting counterpoint to his repeated assertion to do away with all 'theatrical' music, barring in this scene the mildly innovative use of the koel's call.
13. Borrowed, Bhole says, from a Ghazal that was part of the repertory of his guru Kadarbaksh Sarangiwala—'*Baat sakiki na tali jayegi*'—and used already on stage. This particular song, and its Hindi equivalent '*Kamasinime dilpe gamaka*', were among the most popular songs in Indian film of the time, and went a long way towards establishing Shanta Apte as a major singing star.
14. This particular background composition combining piano with brass in the lower octave and violin in the upper must surely remain one of the Bhole's most innovative bits of music in film.
15. This rather casual mention of what was in fact behind some of the finest performances in Prabhat films—exemplified above all, of course, by Vishnupant Pagnis in *Sant Tukaram*—does nevertheless reveal how the studio was able to bring such cultural homogeneity to its films. Despite Prabhat's consistent emphasis on 'traditional' forms, it was precisely the absence of a hegemony of traditionality that allowed them to bring such degrees of unity to filmic elaboration, and to overcome the crisis of discontinuities (mentioned earlier).
16. An otherwise conventional practice in film music, rendered somewhat remarkable by its effort to ground its beginning purely in a sound effect.
17. Continuities of speech and music, one of the greatest achievements of the film. Bhole quite rightly points to the move from the dramatic to the lyrical.