

STATE AS PATRON OF PERFORMING ARTS

Recruitment of Performing Artists for Different State Agencies

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The expression 'performing arts' has a very wide meaning and it includes music, dance, theatre and many other forms of artistic expressions. A brief introduction about these performing arts would be necessary to understand their significance.

Music

There are 2 main schools of classical music, namely Hindustani and Karnatak. Both schools continue to survive mainly through an oral tradition being passed on by the teacher to the disciple and this had led to the existence of family traditions called 'Gharanas' and 'Sampradayas'.

Dance

Dance in India has an unbroken tradition of over 2000 years. Its themes are derived from mythology, legends and classical literature. There are 2 main divisions of Indian dance, namely, classical and folk. Under classical are those dance-forms which are based on ancient dance-discipline and have rigid rules for presentation. Among the leading forms of classical Indian dance are Bharat Natyam which evolved in Tamil Nadu, Kathakali having roots in Kerala, Kathak, the principal classical dance of North India, Manipuri, having roots in Manipur, Odissi, having roots in Orissa and Kuchipudi, having roots in Andhra Pradesh. The folk and tribal dances are of numerous patterns. In north India, Kathak was revitalised as a result of the fusion of Mughal influence with Indian culture. Dance (Nritya) is the mixture of human movements—the basic stance, the series of poses in different contexts, the feet shift from one post to another, the gliding movements within the scope of the rhythmic cycle, etc. Nritya is based on the basic grammar of dance; it is the visualisation of the abstract through well

synchronised units of movement of major and minor limbs known as Charas, Mundras, Karnas, etc. and gesticulation of the hands and fingers through a variety of single-handed and two-handed poses. It is sign-language of the hands that makes people refer to Indian dance as the language of "Gestures".

Bharat Natyam is perhaps the oldest dance in the world as well as in India performed mostly as a solo-dance, the form evolved out of the dance-dramas of Tamil Nadu known as 'Bhagwat Mela Natya' and the devotional numbers of the 'Devidra Natya'. The dance-dramas were performed by devout brahmins mostly on certain special sacred occasions while the Devadasi dances were part of the temple rituals (Devadasis were a class of girls who were dedicated to temple-service from an early age).

Kathakali is literally a story-play, vigorous dance patterns, highly complicated hand-postures and elegant and colourful head-masks and the costumes are the main features of this West Coast dance. 'Abhinaya' is so highly glamorised & codified that each idea is depicted in a prescribed manner. The eyes, lips and each muscle of the face of the dancer becomes so mobile that they play a vital part in the story narration. Kathakali dances are performed in the open.

Odissi dance was originally performed in the sacred precincts of temples of Orissa by the Devadasis, Odissi still employs all the possible features of Nritya and Natya. An essential feature of this dance is the head-movement. The movements of the feet and leg are different in the dance style which lend distinct grace and charm.

Kathak still excels in intricate foot-work of an almost mathematical precision. It sums up the diverse influence on the dance traditions of this country. Kathak is the great dance par excellence harmonious with its setting of Marble courtyards, Lattice Balconies, Jewel Darbar Halls. The costume of Kathak dancer is a constant reminder of the Mughal influence on the dance.

The dancers of Manipuri sing and re-enact the devotional glory of the love of Radha and Krishna through 'Ras' dance comprising various phases of the ageless love of the divine lovers. The Maharasas is the chief number performed on the full moon day in October-November while the Basant Ras and the Kunj Ras are performed in March and August respectively.

Theatre

Theatre in India is as old as music or dance. The classical theatre survived only in a few parts of the country and the folk theatre can be seen in its original variants in practically every linguistic region of the country. There is also the professional theatre, which is mainly urban-oriented.

Besides, a rich tradition of puppet theatre is found in various parts of the country. Among the many forms prevalent are the string puppets, rod puppets, glove puppets and leather puppets (shadow theatre). There are several semi-professional and amateur theatre groups active in many large cities, performing plays in Indian languages and in English. In India, art has been a way of life; an entertainment aid to social development and spiritual awareness. Dance, music, painting, sculpture are considered sacred and designed to illuminate the routes leading to ultimate reality.

State Patronage for Performing Arts

Since time immemorial, the various forms of performing arts have received encouragement and financial assistance from government. In the Court of every King there used to be musicians, dancers and other artists. Moreover, in the feudal set-up of society in those days, there were a large number of Jamindars, Jagirdars and other rich landlords who used to give active encouragement and assistance to the artists. Even under the foreign rule by the Muslims and Mughal Kings, performing artists received a fair deal because those kings were very fond of art and good things of life.

However, when the Britishers came, the situation changed and direct patronage of the government became weak and ineffective. Therefore, during this period decline set in and it is only with the help of the landlords and other rich people that the various forms of performing arts could be kept alive. During the freedom movement, a new wave came and the freedom fighters started using the performing artists as medium for propagating their cause.

After Independence, the government of India and the various State Govts. appreciated the need for providing practical assistance and encouragement to the performing arts and took several measures in that regard. In fact, preservation of the classical heritage of the country, inculcation of art consciousness among the people and the betterment of their standards in the performing and creative arts are some of the objectives of the State policy now. In keeping with this, the Central and State Govts. strive in the promotion of art and culture through National and Regional Academies of Art, Dance, Drama, Music and Theatre. These institutions and the Department of Culture at the centre are helped in their objective by the medium of mass communication and voluntary agencies. Apart from this, some eminent persons associated with the performing of fine arts are from time to time nominated to Rajya Sabha in recognition of their standing in these fields.

With a view to propagating, fostering and developing the creative arts, the Govt. of India has set up three National Academies, viz. Sangeet Natak, Sahitya and Lalit Kala; the National School of Drama and the

Centre for Cultural Resources and Training. The encouragement to performing artists is given mainly through Sangeet Natak Akademi, National School of Drama and All India Radio. The Sangeet Natak Akademi (National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama) which was set up in 1953, fosters the development of dance, drama and music. Apart from coordinating and promotional activities it holds competitions, seminars and music festivals, presents awards to outstanding performing artists, gives grant to institutions of music, dance and drama and extends financial help to traditional ventures and scholarships to students. It subsidises and publishes research work of performing artists. The Akademi has set up a special unit for serving and documenting the various theatrical, musical and dance forms prevalent in the country. Its library has the largest collection of Indian classical folk and tribal music and dance and theatre items. The Akademi is running two national institutions imparting training in dance and drama, these are the Kathak Kendra, New Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru School of Manipuri, Imphal. The Akademi operates a scheme under which prizes are awarded to books in various Indian languages and in English on music, dance and drama. It honours outstanding performing artists by making them Fellows and presents annual awards. It holds from time to time a theatre festival in which theatre groups from different parts of the country present their histrionic talent. The Akademi is also exploring new avenues of research in music, including accoustics. Besides, the Akademi has a Gallery of musical instruments, Asavari, where a large number of classical, folk and tribal musical instruments are on display. Yavanika is another gallery housing a representative collection of fantastic masks, puppets and folk theatre costumes.

The major task of the Akademi is the preservation and documentation of folk/tribal performing arts. For this purpose, it has a documentation unit engaged in filming, photographs, recording and documenting the art in the various regions. The Akademi has an archival section of a large number of films, photographs, slides and tapes of recorded music. The material collected and collated is available for research students and scholars.

National School of Drama

The National School of Drama set up in 1959 is a constituent unit of Sangeet Natak Akademi and imparts training in the fields of acting, drama and production of dramas, conducting research and survey in classical, traditional and modern drama, fostering cultural and academic ties within India as well as other countries through exchange of personnel and research material. It also awards 3-years diploma course in dramatic arts. The School organises an intensive theatre workshop every year at a place where training facilities in theatre are not available. The other activities of the School are through the media of its various extension programmes like Repertory Co.,

Children's Theatre Workshop and organisation of intensive theatre workshops at different places in the country.

All India Radio

A.I.R. has been continuing to bring about an awareness and appreciation of Indian music—classical, light classical, folk and tribal. The major programmes through which AIR propagates music are the weekly National Programme of Music, the weekly programme of Classical Music by Young Artists, the monthly National Programme of Regional (folk and light) Music; the annual Music Competition to discover young talent and the annual music festival—the Radio Sangeet Sammelan. The Vividh Bharati Service of AIR broadcasts popular film and light music.

In addition to the above efforts, the Govt. of India also awards 75 scholarships every year for advanced training in Hindustani music, classical forms of Indian dance, traditional theatre, drama, painting and sculpture. A scholar gets Rs. 300/- per month for 2 years. Further, talented children in the age group of 10-14 years are awarded 100 scholarships every year for developing their talent in various fine arts such as music, dance, painting, sculpture. 25 scholarships are reserved for children belonging to 'Gharanas/Sampradayas'. A sum of Rs. 600/- a year is paid to those who undergo training at the place of their residence and double that sum who have to shift to a new place for training. In both the cases, tuition fee of upto Rs. 1000/- a year is also reimbursed. In addition to providing basic financial support to outstanding persons for creative work in various fields, for the performing artists in the age group of 25-65 years, 15 Senior Fellowships and 35 Junior Fellowships of the value of Rs. 1000/- and Rs. 500/- respectively per month each tenable for 2 years, are being awarded every year since 1979-80. These Fellowships are given for specified schemes and projects either suggested by the artists themselves or selected at the initiative of the central government.

The School for Cultural Resources and Training was set up in 1979 as an autonomous organisation fully financed by the Govt. of India. The Centre has taken over the scheme of propagation of culture among college and school students. The Centre organises a number of training programmes designed to create awareness of the fundamental principles underlying development of Indian culture in the various fields, namely, dance, music, theatre, painting, architecture, sculpture, etc.

Grants are also given to voluntary cultural organizations including those run by local bodies, municipal corporations working primarily in the cultural fields of dance, drama, fine arts, etc.

State support for performing artists is also given in the form of financial

assistance to eminent institutions in the field of performing arts to well established institutions of national/regional importance which have been doing good work in the field. Financial assistance is also provided to dramatic theatre groups and music ensembles, Orchestra units, children's theatres, puppet theatres, solo artists, etc. for approved projects.

Recently, the Govt. of India and the British Govt. organised a Festival of India in Britain from March to November, 1982. The aim of organising the festival is to portray the character, variety and quality of modern India through depicting the continuity of their traditional skills in folk and classical arts and the many aspects of craftsmanship and handlooms. This Festival has also provided much encouragement to the performing artists and a number of Indian dancers and musicians have given their performances in the festival.

Recruitment of Performing Artists

So far there has been no organised system of recruitment of Performing Artists. There is no separate organised service for any branch of performing art. In fact, most of such Artists are free-lance operators and self-employed workers in their respective fields and their main source of income is from the fee that they get for such performance. Some of them also run their own training schools. The jobs that are available with the All India Radio, Door Darshan, the various Akademies and other cultural organisations are also mostly contract jobs for fixed periods and not regular posts, carrying scales of pay and prospects of promotion. Hence, an element of insecurity prevails among the Artists and this is not conducive to full growth of the potential. There has been complaint from the Artists that there is no proper judgement in selection of artists for Govt. patronage.

In order to change the existing situation of uncertainty and of lack of confidence in the method of recruitment of the Artists, it is necessary that the matter is re-examined and suitable terms and conditions of service are evolved. The question of organising a separate service of Performing Artists may also be considered. This will involve framing of recruitment rules for the various categories of positions.

As regards recruitment, it would be better if the work is entrusted to an independent organization. Having regard to the special nature of the jobs involved, it would be expedient to set up a separate "Performing Artists' Services Recruitment Board".