GURU AMUBI'S VISION OF MANIPURI DANCE

E. Nilakanta Singh

Wherein lies the distinctive beauty of Manipuri dance? Every guru or artist worth the name faces his question and answers it in his own way. But still the question remains. It is not merely a matter of giving a few characteristics of Manipuri dance as distinguished from other schools of Indian dances. It is not surprising that a beautiful composition with all rhythm and gesture of Manipuri may be just dismissed by the people—'O, it is not Manipuri'. They are usually unable to give proper reasons why the piece is not exactly Manipuri. But they are right. It is not a matter of discussion or debate: it is a question of sensibility of a people, which is not unallied to the beautiful landscape, the green hills, lake and green grasses, small but beautiful rivers of the valley of this state. It is ultimately a matter of vision of Manipuri dance.

A certain musical text describes about the *lasya* style of Manipuri as something born of shyness leading to steps of modest beauty, moving like waves caused by a gentle breeze, like a swaying creeper characterised by restraint and dignity. This almost approximates to the beauty of this style. Recently I have watched an old exponent, a traditional middle-aged dancer and an established young dancer of Guru Amubi's school standing in a line and executing the steps of *Bhangi Pareng Achouba*, a *nritya prabandha* describing the various postures of Lord Krishna. I saw the different shades of beauty born out of the slightly different movements and stood fascinated by these. I could see how Guru Amubi created certain movements which were different from and also allied to the old movements. The old beauty was replaced by a new beauty and still we were moved by both. Because the sensibility and the vision remained the same.

It is said of Japanese Noh theatre that despite its use of magnificent costumes and masks its underlying principle is restraint. It is even said that its static attitude is more expressive than movement. There is something of this restraint and certain type of austerity about the spirit of Manipuri

dance. This is perhaps the reason why any onlooker attuned to other schools of Indian dance has a feeling that Manipuri has little abhinaya, little knowing that all the four elements of abhinaya are very much there in Manipuri also. But the viniyoga or use of them is entirely different. And Manipuri dance is not merely the movements as done by the dancer. It is sangeet in which there is nritya (dance). gita (music) and vadya (rhythm) all combined into a harmony. There is also the usual bhava (feeling), rasa (sentiment) and tala (metric cycle) associated with it. Add to this there is bhakti or devotion pervading the entire sensibility at least in the classical Rasa dances. People go to Rasalila not to watch the beauty of the dances, not to listen to the vocal music, but to relish the ananda (bliss) born of the composite beauty of music, movements and rhythm. Manipuri dance is Manipuri music made visible and the onlooker is supposed to bow down to the beauty of it in a spirit of utter dedication. It may be roughly described as the search for contemplative harmony.

It is not that Guru Amubi was not affected by his association with Uday Shankar in his Almora period and some of his compositions are touched by realism. In one of his weak moments he had to go to Abhinaya Darpana and had to borrow some of the hastas in his exquisite composition of Sri Krishna Vandana with the lines—Shrita Kamala Kucha of poet Jayadev. There is more of realistic touch and less of symbolic imagery in his ballet—Krishna Balyalila dealing with the childhood episodes of Lord Krishna, being perhaps inspired by what is called Uday Shankar style. But all these movements and postures have been so delicately integrated into the whole vision of Manipuri dance that people watched these pieces as if they were seeing an old classical piece. All these compositions do not violate the essence of the representative expression of traditional Manipuri. Amidst the endless rhythmic variations and turns and halfturns and jumps violent and not so violent, the centrality of his vision remains steady: a dignified restraint and a certain subdued eloquence.

The truth of this statement may be tested in the context of the various dance compositions done by the Gurus on and off the stage. Most of the movements betray more of angikabhinaya, intricate talas and rhythmic variations in the name of adding more colour and beauty to the traditional form. But unfortunately mosi of these often violate the Manipuri sensibility and do injustice to the spirit of Manipuri dance. This is because of the fact that the composers lack the vision and are often carried away by some of the images of Bharata Natyam, Kathakali, or Kathak. It is the vision which they have lost in the seeing of it; it is the knowledge they have lost in the knowing of it. Because such a vision is born out of contemplation.

A constant debate is going on among the gurus of Manipuri dance, over the question: should we go more to the shastras and enrich this tradition or move beyond the shastras to find the beauty within? Guru Amubi

SANGEET NATAK 50

appears to have been given the answer to this. Take as much as you can from the shastras, the environment and modern concepts but make it Manipuri in any case. Keep the steady flame of the Manipuriness of Manipuri, the shy, delicate beauty born of utter humility. You can add as many gestures as you like, utilise a number of talas in various tempos and enlarge the vocabulary of its music and expression. But the only test should be: it should not violate Manipuri sensibility which is the only yardstick for an art form called Manipuri.

It is to the credit of this great guru that all his teaching and new compositions always bore the stamp of this vision and whatever additions he made towards the rhythm and gesture of this distinctive school of Manipuri dance were also integrated with the centrality of his vision. The new always appeard to be old and the old appeared to be bathed in a new light, but keeping all the time the fragile delicacy and lyric quality of Manipuri dance. Slight gestures and movements were made here and there; words were added to music. A new beauty is born. But still the people would nod and say: "Ah, this is Manipuri, the best of it and the most traditional and representative of it". Herein lies the greatness of Guru Amubi Singh who left this world at the ripe age of 92, keeping himself ready both mentally and spiritually for the last journey.

PROF. E. NILAKANTA SINGH is a well known authority on the arts of Manipur. He was Vice-Chairman of Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy, Imphal, and Secretary of the Manipur State Kala Akademi. At present he is Director, Department of Culture, Imphal. He is author of several books on art and culture of Manipur.

"अप्राची सक ब्रमुची जिस्में श्रीम शिव शिव चानिसँद्री एकिएग्रीप स्यक्षेया स्पर्वेश्यक्षेयका योक প্রী মার্থরাম্ অমুবী জিংহ (নবেশ্বর) প্রকার ১৮০৬-খৃঃ ১৮४६ दलारेन थाओ ज्यावज्या (थामि) निर्दर्शनाम नू-चिड्की ज्यूका दलाक्रे । देशतम् अववनी म्यूलिए हो-विक्रा रंकान् विदेशिजभाजिति अकिय उरेतिया प्रक्रम लाख्या दलाक्रे । (ज्ञार्शिक्त ल्यंगवद्यं द्यकाम क्रांत्रक्षे) खंखर्व दिशाक्ता जी मादयाम् नाम् प्रिटर (सम्बन्)म-শক্ নাইবা নিপা অলনি । অহানবলে অহনুস্পানা-भी स्मान्त उरेपूना, हन्द्रकी दि यस २१५५ कर्नन् स-अवं लाम् भें भाषात्री दक्षवा सामूना स्ववाद्या अव्यक्त वा उवा लक्षा उर्राज्य । क्षम्या क्रकंत्र दलाक्ष्मी त्यम-व्याह नार्लाका (ट्यालमुकीः) की यदा श्रेलमा जनाही--यी (द्यारमञ्जानी दिस्ती) व्यक्षिये चर्च उड्डिस्टिस वेटमां · ४,९७५ (त्युन्यर्च (क)वय जंडिंडेब्रेस स्ट्रायत न्यामकी व्यवसाधु काउवा उरेवि । अकवा प्रक्रम्भ रहीवा परि-प्रावास्थ्य, नश उर्शेवरहार अक व्यस्त्री वर्णाम भेटन भामव्या प्र-इन्त् न्यस्तर्भी बाग्रस्थाक् सम्भापा छाउवक्षे । छारे सावि मडा छत्रकामा नाप्रकी कृष्ट भावा स्मिथ । मण्ड मण्ड उथेम लोक्सियाओं निमामन भागा भावता, मूलीयस थूकाक् श्रेटमधा अर रंग्रव , ट्याई विकाशी पत्काक् हिरवा कारा कराया मधरं उड़वा द्याता कंग सम्हा द्रिया व-िक् भाग अरु व्यक्ता ७१ नवभी सूद्यक्त टमम्माणि । माप्र-जीय बधका देखेंड र्याल्यायंकी पादाक्त्रा मंद्रवा शह, ज. सुरुष , कारहेल निस्टा न्यान भी विका रामण्य भूखन

द्यक्षवप्रजी ब्यव्हारे । भीतिस्त पह व्यव्हारा उदा क-यानि यस्थायनी प्रमूश्या व्यक्त भी का सम्म उदा द्वा, क्वा-रमारमम् उदा छउनू भर्म , निश्योदम् उदा छाउम्म , प्रश्व-य उदा रिक्का, नार्ष्ट्रम् उदा ध्वास्थान्द्वा , म्छन्यमूम् व्यम्-भर्म , मारेसाम् रेद्रासम् चित्र (म्हन्या स्माक्वित्र) व-विमहिस्ता जीन पिर स्मान यहे ।

त्याद्र व्याच्या अवा लमा उर्ग्रहा ।

प्राथमण्याय्या मध्याय्या प्राप्ता अप्ता क्ष्मिय्या व्याच्या भवा व्याप्त व्याच्या अवा लमा उर्ग्रहा ।

प्राप्त व्याप्त व्य

अग्रम । नक्द्यमा लचारकार्यको माल्य रामक निर्माक्षा ल

ध्वस्त्रमी औ नीना ध्रमण श्रूर रंगनवा दर्भणात्मक्रमा का त्या-नूर कावा र्योश्य । अञ्चली अद्या सूर्त्वानम्मा देनीन्यप्रवर्षा अद्यान्त्री महा निम्मूना भूर रंगवा उरेना र्योगम् करतीन्य। भ्रम् करवीं ।

इम्पिनं के लमेब लास्मा नाउटी । राधारी लाख्या (योभार लाखा । यात्र इताहान मशतावाना म्यानभूती हाराय अस्मान्त्रमा राभूना थावा श्राम् क्रिश्वरी न्यू हिस्ता उरेना कुरू जमूबीव या । जन्मा र्मानभूबी व्याग्य जाव्हकी ज-छोवा अरव कथापा अस्मिक्ना छत्रमा धामि छन्नवा का-नाकान दिव्य अक्षेत्र दवास्त्रपा (थर्मीख , मराक्का सायवाननी अर्फ वर्षेत्रार्थ. म्हारीम व्यक्तिया विकासमा सेन्य (व्यानामा-जाएं) हार्र छत्वं, १ हुन्ना टंमटेंड व्हागश्रं अवा अरेह्ना ट्रेनरे । व्यतिका नाक्षाक्षी खदूरत व्यन्त् न्या विविदा लेवा 'ज्रश्ली धानुजी' मा छहि ज्यमत्नाम् यक्तः छीवा सिथि। लार्य ह्यानमंत्रा व्याचा न्यान्यत्था दास दियालदा (दिश्विका विशादनमान् लियकः प्रानिभूव उपन्न अकामधी) अमिसकः घट्या व्यक्त्री आरंघ ह्यापद्व जी ववारवनान त्यरक्ता कीव्या म क्रम् धार्म थाए। क्रानिभूवता खानीवा कारावा प्रमा ही-ट्य राभ्ता नीरल घरम् अद्भा चाँडाओ ४१६ भूमधर् छ-उक् टार्स्ट्रीय उदा जरून उरेना यवक् श्रूवा जीन्य। घरेर-याक्रीम्बका जातीम लगत्मव व्याच्य त्मद्यंग्रात्मा दयवा म-क्क थना भाषा राभवीं अक्षी जल्ला जानान । भरिः ष्ट्र- विद्याद्रवेष्यान् त्यदंक्त्या द्यात्रिष्ट्रवा महित्ता न्यवं वास्त्रीय रकात्नव जीं व्यवस्थान त्वर्क्जी धर्मात्म त्यानगर्वीन

लामभी लाजाया अक्स लाम् माना इकाम नीम्या लामभी जामाया अक्स लाम् माना इकाम नीम्या लाम्या अक्स लाम् माना इकाम नीम्या लाम्या अम्या उद्या मान्या अम्बा प्राप्त भीम्या मान्या अम्या अम्य अम्या अम्य अम्या अम्य अम्या अम्य अम्या अम्

"अंदेन्ध्र झांअसा

प्रारम्भ ।

प्रमान्त्रमं भीक्षेटिया अकेश्य चास्य हाँ व्याप्तर्मी हर्मक्रिक्य स्वाप्त व्याप्त्रमं भीक्षेटिया अकेश्य चास्य हाँ व्याप्तर्मी हर्मक्रिक्य स्वाप्त व्याप्त्रम्थिय सम्भ व्याप्त्रम्थिय व्याप्त्रम्थिय व्याप्त्रम्थिय व्याप्त्रम्थिय व्याप्त्रम्भ व्याप्त्रम्थिय व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः विव्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः विव्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्तिः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्तिः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्भियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्यः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्रम्थियः व्याप्त्यम्यः व्याप्यम्यः व्याप्त्यम्यः व्याप्यम्यः व्याप्त्यम्यः व्याप्त्यम्यः व्याप्यम्यः व्याप्यम्यः

रकाहणाके वा मार्थ लीहिल द्याप्तणीवं 'त्याये रक्षिणं वा स्थाहणाके वा स्थाहणीवं क्ष्या प्राप्त क्ष्या व्याप्त वा स्थाप्त व्याप्त व्याप्

স্ট্রক্তী মেবোক অভোনবা জী থিংবাইকুঘ্ বাবু জিংহ