theatres in the country. The influence of the peripatetic Parsi theatre however extended beyond the subcontinent traveling to Ceylon, Indonesia, Malaysia and even to England. Dr. Ghulam Sawar Yousof, reviewing a social history of the Bangsawan, the popular Malay opera form says:

> Parsi theatre groups began visiting Penang some time during the last quarter of the nineteenth century to entertain Indian merchants and Sepoy regiments, performing in the Urdu-Hindustani language. The Parsi Theatre gave way to local imitations, and eventually to bangsawan, with suitable adaptations in content, style and language, so as to make it suitable for Malaysian audiences. Bangsawan certainly inherited much from the Parsi Theatre, including a part of its highly heterogeneous repertoire of stories, its music, its technical innovations, and the whole idea of the sung and spoken drama, more popularly known in these parts, for want of a more appropriate label, as "opera."

See, Ghulam Sarwar Yousof, "A New Multi-Ethnic Art Form," in *The Penang File* 9 (November 2000).

See also, Mathew Isaac Cohen, "Look at the Clouds: Migration and West Sumatran 'Popular' Theatre," *NTQ* 19:3 (2003): 214-229; and Kathryn Hansen, "Languages on Stage: Linguistic Pluralism and Community Formation in the Nineteenth Century Parsi Theatre," *Modern Asian Studies* 37:2 (2003): 381-405.

15. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994):207.
16. Loren Kruger, *The National Stage: Theatre and Cultural Legitimation in England, France and America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992): 3. My emphasis.
17. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 10.
18. Ranajit Guha, "Discipline and Mobilize," 70. See also Partha Chatterjee, "A Religion of Urban Domesticity," in *Subaltern Studies VII* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993): 40-68.
19. For an engaging history of the Bengali theatre in the 19th century see, Sudipto Chatterjee, *The Colonial Stag(d)*, Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1998.
20. Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta.* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1989): 162.
21. Ibid. *The Parlour and the Streets,* 164.
22. Ibid. *The Parlour and the Streets,* 187.
23. Ibid. 187. Banerjee also provides a useful gloss on the "social category" of the bhadralok. He says of this class: "It was a social category embracing different strata of upper and middle income groups, landed interests as well as administrative employees and professionals. The outward manifestations of the *bhadralok* (to which members of the group had to rigorously conform), which were made possible by a basic standard of income, were (i) residence in a 'pucca' house, either through ownership or renting; (ii) attention to one's sartorial style in public; (iii) use of a chaste Bengali that was being shaped from the middle of the nineteenth century; and (iv) a noticeable knowledge of English language and manners." (54)
24. Ibid.,187.
25. Girish Ghosh was one among the new group of theatre workers who hailed from a middle class professional background. He began his career as a clerk in a commercial office in Calcutta. Amar

Mukherjee in his paper "Bengali Drama and Theatre" says of Ghosh's invaluable contribution to the stage, that he gave it a permanent and a public stature; made it self-supporting; introduced a standard of showmanship for the public theatre; brought actresses permanently to the stage; trained several actors and actresses; and finally he combined in his acting style the qualities of realism and sentiment. (Dr. Amar Mukherjee, "Bengali Drama and Theatre" in the FDSR, 70). See also Partha Chatterjee's account of the life of the renowned Bengali actress, Binodini Devi, who was trained in her art by Girish Ghosh in *The Nation and its Fragments*, 151-155.

26. For an account of the events surrounding the writing of *Nīl Darpan* and its performance and censorship history see *S. Banerjee, The Parlour and the Streets*, 183-189.

27. The Bengali theatre as Partha Chatterjee and others have shown was a 'public,' "modern, urban theater, national and clearly distinguishable from 'folk theatre'." It was and is to date an institution produced and patronized by the "literate urban middle classes." Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 7-8.

28. Ahindra Chowduri, "The Professional Theatre," in the FDSR, 379.

29. Consider for instance the attitude to the South Indian, Tamil company dramas among the elite, who 'shunned' them as lowbrow entertainment. Rao Bahadur P. Sambandha Mudaliar, a member of the "highly educated upper caste elite of Madras city" had this to say of the professional theatre, "Though there was a 'koothakottagai' (drama auditorium) close to the house where I grew up. . .and though Tamil dramas were staged often in different places in Madras city, I did not watch one even for five minutes. Not only that I did not watch [*sic*] Tamil dramas, but had great contempt for them." Quoted in M. S. S. Pandian's, "Tamil Cultural Elite and Cinema: Outline of an Argument" in *Economic and Political Weekly* XXXI: 15 (April 13, 1996): 950-951.

30. See Binodini Dasi, *My Story and My Life as an Actress*, edited and translated by Rimli Bhattacharya (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998): 5-12.

31. Sumanta Banerjee informs us that this play was among the earliest protest plays in modern Bengali Dramatic Literature. Written in the realist mode, the play dealt with the exploitation of Bengali peasants by British indigo planters, who forced them to cultivate indigo. The injustice meted out by the planters prompted a two-year peasant revolt from 1859-1860. This led to the colonial government's appointing of an Indigo Commission in 1860. The Commission's Report had to acknowledge that the system of forced cultivation was, "vicious in theory, injurious in practice and radically unsound." Dinabandhu Mitra's play written in 1860 draws upon the Report and events of the revolt. The play's translation into English in 1861 was undertaken through the initiative of an English missionary, Reverend James Long who felt that the plantation owners' treatment of the peasants was alienating a community of potential converts from the Church and England. Translated copies of the play were mailed to various influential officials, provoking a furore among the administration and the planters. The colonial administration was however compelled to pass legislation forbidding forced labor and cultivation. Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets*, 185-186.

32. Sudipto Chatterjee has shown that despite protestations affirming the radicalism of the Bengali theatre, epitomized by the *Darpan* plays of Dinabandhu Mitra and others, this genre was in the main, a means of assuaging, acting out a "fantasy of middleclass liberalism and humanism. It also plays out a little bit of imagined violence on the oppressors . . .which is however circumscribed by the bābu's social anxiety about revolts." Sudipto Chatterjee, *The Colonial Stag(d)*, 267.

33. Banerjee has pointed out that all these northern Indian towns had been a part of the 1857 rebellion.

Lucknow had been a critical centre for the revolutionaries, and continued to be marked as a sensitive area decades after the quelling of the rebellion. Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets*, 187.

34. Balawant Gargi, *Theatre in India* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1962): 109; *S. Banerjee, The Parlour and the Streets*, 188. *Cha ka Darpan* dealt with the brutal treatment of Assamese plantation labour by British tea planters in Assam. *Gaekwad Darpan* was about the humiliating treatment meted out to the Maharaja (King) of Baroda by the British Resident posted there.

35. *The Dramatic Performances Act* quoted in Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets*, 188.

36. Mukherjee entertained the Prince at his residence and broke with the Hindu convention of purdah (seclusion from outsiders, particularly men) when the women of the household were enlisted to welcome the visitor.

37. See Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets;* Tanika Sarkar, "Enfranchised Selfs" 546-565; Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 122-126. Banerjee offers a useful history of the farce (both in theatrical productions and in varied prose forms) and its function as a satirical commentator on reform, middle class norms, upper-class rivalry, political events etc. Farce was one of the principle dramatic forms used by the early Bengali stage between the 1850's and the 1870's. Banerjee suggests that it offered the modernizing Bengali middle class, opportunities to experiment with the vigor and lewd vitality of lower middle class speech and behavior. Responding to these 'breaches' in class conduct, the more conservatively inclined 'natives' established in September 1873 a "Society for the Suppression of Public Obscenity." Interestingly this organization and its campaigns worked in tandem with the enactment of the *Dramatic Performances Act.* As a consequence of these efforts against 'obscenity' the farce disappeared from public circulation by the 1890's and was difficult to come by, by the early twentieth century. (Banerjee, 166-185).

38. See Ahindra Chowduri's statement opening the "Discussions on Professional Theatre," in the FDSR, 386.

39. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 7. Chatterjee has aptly identified the new Bengali elite as a "bilingual elite" seeking equal felicity in the languages of the outer and inner domains—English and Bengali respectively.

40. Kathryn Hansen, "Parsi Theatre and the City: Locations, Patrons, Audiences," in *Sarai Reader 2002: The Cities of Everyday Life*, 41.

41. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 112.

42. See the first three chapters of Chatterjee's, *The Colonial Stag(d).*

43. See Kathryn Hansen, "Parsi Theatre, Urdu Drama and the Communalization of Knowledge: A Bibliographic Essay," in *Annual of Urdu Studies* 16:1(2001): 43-63. Hansen focuses on the communalization of the secondary literature produced around the Gujarati, Urdu and Hindi strains of the Parsi theatre. She claims that this was a retrospective tendency that undermined the genuine "eclecticism" of the Parsi's theatre's performative practices, and its attraction for viewers across linguistic and religious lines.

44. Petition submitted to the Governor, Sir James Carnac. Quoted in Kathryn Hansen, "Parsi Theatre and the City: Locations, Patrons, Audiences," in *Sarai Reader 2002: The Cities of Everyday Life*, 40.

45. Sir Jamshedjee Jeejeebhoy also established a series of crafts workshops in the 1850's, which grew to form the J.J. School of Art in 1857. This is perhaps the most renowned of Indian art schools.

His contemporaries Jagannath Shankersheth, Framjee Cawas and Mohammed Ibrahim Magba were at the forefront of emerging Indian capitalism. See Ashish Rajyadhaksha, "The Phalke Era: Conflict of Traditional Form and Modern Technology" in *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, Nos. 14-15 (July-December 1987): 48.

46. See Somnath Gupt, "The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development (1)", translated from the Hindi, abridged, and edited by K. Hansen, in *Sangeet Natak* Vol. XXXVI, No. 1 (2001): 7-8.

47. K.N. Kale, "The Professional Theatre in the Western Region of India" in the FDSR, 392.

48. See Somnath Gupt, "The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development (1)", 10. Gupt points out that the 'phrase 'Parsi theatre' signifies the playhouses built and operated by the Parsi community, along with Parsi playwrights, Parsi dramas, Parsi stages, Parsi theatrical companies, Parsi actors, Parsi directors, and so on. Also included are those playwrights and actors who were not Parsis, but who worked on a salaried basis for the Parsi theatrical companies. Further those companies, owners, and actors are counted who, while not being from the Parsi community and not being residents of Bombay, added the words 'of Bombay' to their theatre companies in order to show their connections to the Parsi theatre. For example, "The Jubilee Imperial Theatrical Company of Bombay had its origin in the present Uttar Pradesh . . .". (9).

49. Kathryn Hansen, "Theatrical Transvestism, in the Parsi, Gujarati and Marathi Theatre" (1850-1940), *South Asia* XXIV (2001): 60.

50. op.cit., 26

51. See Ashish Rajyadhaksha, "The Phalke Era: Conflict of Traditional Form and Modern Technology" in *Journal of Arts and Ideas,* Nos. 14-15 (July-December 1987): 52-58.

52. Anuradha Kapur, "The Representation of Gods and Heroes: Parsi Mythological Drama of the Early Twentieth Century," *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 23-24 (January 1993): 85-107.

53. Somnath Gupt provides us with a few examples of this from the work of Mehdi Hasan Ahsan:

> *Bhul-bhulaiya* (Labyrinth) based on details drawn from two plays, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night.* All the characters have been given Muslim names and the location shifted to Tatar country. An equivalent of Shakespeare's sub-plot in the *Twelfth Night* involving Malvolio, Andrew Aguecheek and Maria, is brought into the text, only this time it was meant to please the 'masses' with the presentation of a ribald narrative about wayward, amorous women. Shakespeare's storm and ship-wreck in the same play, is transformed here into an incident involving lighting striking a train. The details about cross-dressing and confusions of identity and the 'happy ending' remain however.
>
> *Dil Farosh* (The Merchant of Hearts) based on the *Merchant of Venice,* follows the basic plot line, though details and some scenes are abbreviated. Also details of plot are very loosely woven together.
>
> *Khun-e Nahaq* (Unjust Murder) was an adaptation of *Hamlet,* featuring Muslim characters, with events centered in Damascus. The play has been compressed to three acts instead of five in the original. Several changes were made. Characters were excised. There are also changes in the relationship between Jehangir (Hamlet) and his mother, lover, the ghost etc. The play

became very popular and was performed by different companies. It was also adapted for the screen, where it wasn't very popular.

Bazm-e-Fani (The Transitory Assembly) was a reworking of *Romeo and Juliet.* Once again the characters are all Muslim, but this time the action takes place in an Indian town, Firozabad. Also in a complete reversal of the Shakespearian plot, the tragedy is turned into an event celebrating comos. See See S. Gupt, "The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development (2)", 9-10.

54. This group which was constituted in 1861 (1863?) was among the most highly reputed of the amateur companies. A. Kapur, "The Representation of Gods and Heroes," 88-89. S. Gupt tells us that the club was founded at Elphinstone College, by one of the students Kunvarji S. Nazir, and assisted by the brothers Nasharvanji N. Parakh and Dhanjishah N Parakh, who were to become the club's most prominent actors. Most of the club's members were Parsis from well to do families. The plays staged were predominantly English dramas, particularly Shakespeare. The club's production of *The Merchant of Venice* brought D.N. Parakh, who played Portia, into the spotlight. As the club's membership grew, it was converted into a commercial company, called the Elphinstone Theatrical Company. K.S. Nazir was the company's owner. After turning commercial, the company performed plays like *Alladin and the Magic Lamp,* and the musical fantasy, from the courts of Awadh, *Indar Sabha.* See Somnath Gupt, "The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development (2)", 12-13.

55. See for instance, K.N. Kale, "The Professional Theatre in the Western Region of India" in the FDSR, 394-400, and Adya Ragacharya, "Drama and Theatre in Karnatak", 158. The latter, in his history of the Kannada theatre juxtaposes the 'discovery' of the classicism of the Sanskrit theatre with the work of Shakespeare. He says of the trends in the latter part of the nineteenth century: This was the time when what was called 'English education' had brought our educated people into contact with Shakespeare's dramas. This was also the time when western scholars had discovered for *ourselves* [sic] too the greatness of Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and other Sanskrit dramatists (158). Emphasis mine.

56. K.N. Kale, "The Professional Theatre in the Western Region of India," 397.

57. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments,* 7.

58. Translations of the *Shakuntalam* are not easy to keep track of. One version was translated into Urdu from Gujarati by the Parsi playwright N.M. Khansahab Aram in the 1870's. See S. Gupt, "The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins and Development (1)", 26. C.C. Mehta in the FDSR claims that Gujarati (Hindu) writers who had immersed themselves in Sanskrit and the 'Vedas' were translating the play in the same period (see C.C Mehta, "Hundred Years of Gujerati Stage, Drama & Theatre," 96). Annasaheb Kirloskar, the doyen of the Marathi musical theatre style, translated and adapted the play into Marathi "to suit the new prose-cum-music medium and staged it in 1880." (B.V. (Mama) Warerkar, "Marathi Theatre," in the FDSR, 191). K.V. Akshara points out that the 1880s saw the appearance of two translations of the play, one by Basavappa Shastri and the by Churamuri Sheshagiri Rao. (K.V. Akshara, "The Dreams of the Kannada Theatre: A Turn of the Century Narrative," in *Theatre India* No. 2, (November 1999):130. See also Romila Thapar's *Śakuntala: Texts, Readings, Histories.* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1999, 2000).

59. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* 38.

60. Pratibha Agrawal, "The Tradition of Hindi Theatre Criticism: An Overview," *Sangeet Natak* 115-116 (January-June 1995): 4-5.

61. That the 'real' nature of the Sanskrit theatre eluded most of the participants is not at all surprising given the fact that it was supposed, in the opinion of the Sanskrit scholar V. Raghavan, to have 'prospered' as a courtly art form around the second century B.C. The repeatedly cited *Natya Shastra* (composed by the Sage Bharata) similarly predated all living memory, with its antiquity being located to the period between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. See V. Raghavan, "Sanskrit Drama and Performance," 19-20.

62. Jagdish Chandra Mathur, "The HIndi Drama," FDSR, 132-133.

63. The overlapping claims of the national and the regional beset the institutional validity of these forms. Recall that two of the forms named here were recognized as national and as classical by the SNA in 1954. Kuchipudi was recognized in later years as national and as classical following strenuous lobbying by the Andhra Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademi. Kudiyattam's national status was interestingly enough assured by the fact that it was the only extant theatrical form which used Sanskrit as its linguistic medium.

64. N. Ramakrishna, "Kuchipudi Bhagavatam," FDSR, 305.

65. V. Raghavan, "Sanskrit Drama And Performance," FDSR, 30-32. Raghavan says: "In fact, in drama, the achievement of the ancient Indian genius in the Sanskrit medium is yet to be excelled in any Indian language." (32).

66. Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 111.

67. Consider for instance Dina Gandhi's presentation on "*BHAVAI.* The Gujerati Folk Drama" which alongside its critique of the degenerate elements of folk performance, makes a concerted attempt to locate the form's musicality within certain classical traditions of music, such as Dhrupad, Khayal and Thumri. Similarly, the form's commitment to narrative and to characterization are ascribed to their "true" and "faithful" "imbibing" of the "most important directive of our ancient treatise *Natya Shastra. . .*" See Dina Gandhi,"*Bhavai.* The Gujarati Folk Drama" in the FDSR, 106.

68. V. Raghavan, "Sanskrit Drama And Performance," FDSR, 25.

69. Ibid., 23. Folk traditions such as Tamasha, Nautanki and Bhavai were invariably associated with lower caste-class practitioners and audiences. The FDSR often suggests that these antecedents could well account for the degeneracy and tasteless vulgarity of these forms. See Dina Gandhi, "Bhavai: The Gujarati Folk Drama" 103-117 and C. C. Mehta, "Hundred Years of Gujarati Stage, Drama & Theatre," who claim that the Sanskritic elements in the Gujarati drama were preserved by the Brahmins and educated classes, 101; B.V. (Mama) Warerkar, "Marathi Theatre," 193. The Urdu-Gujarati Parsi theatre was similarly criticized as being "vulgar" and "obscure"—'sins' which in all probability reference the Muslim backgrounds of the playwrights. Shri. Narain Kale, "The Professional Theatre in the Western Region of India" in the FDSR, 398.

70. N. Ramakrishna, "Kuchipudi Bhagavatham", FDSR, 309-312.

71. Ibid., FDSR, 306.

72. Suresh Awasthi, "The Hindi Folk Drama," FDSR, 154-155. Emphasis mine.

73. See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983): 37-97.

74. *Sangeet Natak Akademi Report 1953-58*, 29.

75. Dr. P.V. Rajamannar, Chairman Sangeet Natak Akademi, "Welcome Address at the Inauguration" in the FDSR, 3.

76. Harley Granville-Barker, *A National Theatre* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., 1930): 2.

77. Ibid., I-27

78. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "Inaugural Address," FDSR, 7.

79. The reasons Ahindra Chowdury offers for his antipathy to State control over the theatre are mainly financial. He says: "Money will be available no doubt, but available so much that these theatres could be lavish but dramas and their quality of production would surely dwindle because of absence of competition among rival theatres." See Ahindra Chowduri, "The Professional Theatre," FDSR, 383.

80. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya responding to Mulk Raj Anand, during the "Discussions on the Indian Theatre in Context of World Theatre," FDSR, 356-357.

81. Balraj Sahni, "Traditional and New Drama" FDSR, 364.

82. See 'Progress Achieved in Implementation of the Recommendation of the Drama Seminar' in *Sangeet Natak Akademi Annual Report 1959*, 21. The Seminar's determining influence on the SNA and Central Government's policies are quite clear from this intervention.

83. *Sangeet Natak Akademi Report 1953-1958*, 28.

84. K.N. Kale, "The Professional Theatre in the Western Region of India," in the FDSR, 404.

85. Mulkraj Anand commenting during the "Discussions on Marathi and Gujarati Dramas," FDSR, 207. My emphasis.

86. Shri M. Bira Singh and Shri H. Romain Singh, "The Manipuri Theatre and Drama," FDSR, 185; see also C.C. Mehta: "These entertainment taxes and sales taxes nip in the bud the amateur enterprises which are really *experiments in play-making*. Professional theatres work with a profit-motive, but the amateurs do not. They cannot collect the deposit-money. Consequently they cannot make experiments. The fre growth of drama gets arrested." ("Discussions on Marathi and Gujarati Dramas," FDSR, 207), My emphasis.

87. Mulkraj Anand, "Indian Theatre in the Context of the World Theatre," in the FDSR, 348.

88. *Sangeet Natak Akademi Report 1953-1958*, 28-32.

89. "The virtue of amateur theatre movements, which are current in our main cities lies in the modesty or humility forced upon them by ignorance, with the implicit emphasis on the experimental nature of each achievement. The actors, the producers, the stage managers and the advisers on lighting, decor, costumes in all these bodies are also frankly amateur. And it is for this reason, in my opinion, that these movements have come to stay and may generate the necessary energy for a future advance towards good drama." Mulkraj Anand, "Indian Theatre in the Context of the World Theatre," FDSR, 348-349.

90. See K.N. Kale, "The Professional Theatre in the Western Region of India" FDSR, 392-405.

91. Inder Dass, "Problems of Amateur Theatre Activity in India," FDSR, 423.

92. As Chandra Kant Phookan argues on behalf of the amateur Assamese theatre, ". . . now, when the functions of Government cover almost all spheres of national life, cultural activities can, naturally, claim attention and action of the State, by removing the financial hurdles standing in the way of

normal development of the dramatic clubs. This would, perhaps, make the flow of creative energy to these clubs smoother. In brief, the Assamese dramatic clubs need to be subsidised, more urgently so because, . . .there are no professional troupes in Assam to keep the flag of theatre flying." "The Assamese Theatre" FDSR, 57).

93. K.N. Kale, "The Professional Theatre in the Western Region of India" FDSR, 404.

94. Ibid., 404-405.

95. Lakshmi Subramanian, "The Master, Muse and the Nation," 4.

96. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 35.

97. Ashish Khokhar's history of the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra (the Shriram Indian Arts Institute) is particularly useful for its evocation of the political and cultural milieu of New Delhi in the years immediately prior to and after independence. From Sumitra Charat Ram's reminiscences of the period's resurgent cultural scene it appears that the nationalist middle classes were pivotal to the transformations enacted in diverse spheres. Its members convey a sense of their centrality through the ubiquity of their presence, and through the singular mingling of the realms of culture with those of politics, social reform, high society, big business, industry and academe. See Ashish Khokhar, *Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra—A History: Sumitra Charat Ram Reminisces*, Lustre Press, New Delhi: 32-59.

98. Ranajit Guha, "Discipline and Mobilize," 70.

99. Etienne Balibar, "The Nation-Form: History and Ideology," 90.

100. Mulk Raj Anand during the "Discussions on the Indian Theatre in Context of World Theatre," FDSR, 354. My emphasis.

101. Snehalata Sanyal in the "Discussions on the Indian Theatre in Context of World Theatre," FDSR, 356. My emphasis.

102. Susie Tharu, Presentation at the International Conference on 'Rethinking Education and Culture,' Thiruvananthapuram, August 25, 2000.

103. Partha Chatterjee, *The National and its Fragments*, 35.

104. See also Geeta Kapur, *When Was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2000): 201 and Ashish Rajyadhaksha, "Who's Looking? Viewership and Democracy in Cinema," in *Cultural Dynamics* 10 (2) (1998): 179-180.

105. Partha Chatterjee, "The National State," in *The Nation and its Fragments*, 200-219.

106. For another discussion of this debate see Rustom Bharucha's "Notes on the Invention of Tradition" in *Theatre and the World* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1990): 256-261.

107. Ebrahim Alkazi, "Discussion on Bhavai," FDSR, 120-121. My emphasis.

108 J.C. Mathur, "Discussion on Bhavai," FDSR, 121.

109. Mulkraj Anand, "Discussion on Bhavai," FDSR, 121. My emphasis.

110. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, 36. .

111. Ranajit Guha, "Discipline and Mobilize," 70.

112. Pierre Bourdieu, "Introduction," *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986): 7.

113. Pierre Bourdieu, "The HIstorical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* Vol.XLVI, 1987:202.

114. From a conversation I had with Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan on March 21, 2001, at the India International Centre, New Delhi.

115. I would include among this group, events such as the Republic Day parades and the Folk Dance Festivals which transported the national people to the nation-state's administrative centre.

116. Questions of regulated and unregulated behavior undoubtedly suggest the connections between the efforts to normalize (universalize) the law of the land (either colonial or that of the sovereign state), the (in)visibility of communities before the eyes of the law, and the moral and other policing enabled by the possibility of such visual regulation. In the case of the Devadasi system, calls to *regulate* (bring within the fold of the normative) the community resulted in the launching of the upper-caste, class led Anti Nautch Movement in 1892, culminating in the passing of the *Madras Devadasis Prevention of Dedication Act of* 1947.

117. For a thorough and engaging examination of this transition see Amrit Srinivasan's "Reform and Revival: The Devadasi and Her Dance," in *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. XX, No. 44 (November 2, 1985): 1869-1876.

118. Gandhi says: "During the years of foreign rule our culture lived on, even grew in revolt, but it appeared as if it was growing without any roots, getting affected by alien influences right and left. Fortunately, its intrinsic value has stood the test and could not be shaken out of the roots. This miracle seems to have made us more conscious of the deep roots that do exist." Dina Gandhi, "Bhavai—The Gujarati Folk Drama," FDSR, 116.

119. Rukmini Devi Arundale claims that Kalakshetra tried to "blend the best of tradition and modernity in the realm of the arts. . ." The institution sought to revive the 'traditional' gurukulam system based on a close relation between the guru and her shishya (student), and emphasized the belief that "our arts and culture are intimately interwoven with religion in its widest ramifications." In Arundale's words, "it is the spiritual meaning behind an art form that is fundamental to the pedagogy of our arts. It is this deeper meaning that we convey to our students. Technique is not an end in itself; it is [only] a necessary part of learning an art." P.C. Joshi, "The Arts and the People: A Conversation with Rukmini Devi Arundale," in *Sangeet* Natak Vol. XXXVI, No. 2 (2001): 42.

120. Amrit Srinivasan's work on the Devadasi system reveals that prior to the strengthening of the Anti-nautch movement (1892-1947), their skills as performers and their alliances with wealthy patrons allowed the Devadasis and their menfolk opportunities to amass considerable wealth. Commenting on the singularity of the Devadasis' community organization and the connections between this "temple attachment," and guaranteed "sectarian purity," Srinivasan argues that "[A]rt as a corporate function and mode of livelihood ensured competence and continuity of practice." Amrit Srinivasan's "Reform and Revival: The Devadasi and Her Dance," 1870,1871. See also Pierre Bourdieu on the subject of the "magical" "transubstantiations" that obscured the "value" of the work of art in "The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. XLVI (1987): 204-205.

121. K.N. Kale, "The Professional Theatre in the Western Region of India" FDSR, 392.

Some Thoughts on Odissi Dance*

DINANATH PATHY

I. THE OBSESSION WITH CLASSICISM

In the Indian context there is nothing called classicism. The Sanskrit word shastriya, which is generally believed to be a translation of 'classic' or 'the classical', represents a misunderstanding of both the words, 'classicism' and shastriya. A shastra is a written text, a codified version of the practices of a given period which tries to claim an authority in a subsequent period of time. Dependence on the practice (prayoga) and later on the textual prescription becomes a tradition (parampara) with the people who follow it. While the shastra or the text remains constant, the practices that form the tradition become variables. Therefore, a need arises to write different texts in different periods of time. To comprehend and contextualize the variables in textual codifications, scholars resort to new interpretations (commentaries) and such attempts finally embody regional aspirations. While there is a basic text like Natya Shastra, there are other texts like Nartananirnaya [1].

Nartananirnaya is a remarkable work in that it marks a transitional point in the evolution of dance in India. In contrast with its precursors in the field, which follow in the main the descriptions of dances given by Bharata in Natya Shastra, the Nartananirnaya describes entirely new forms. These new forms were shaped by regional styles that were not included, though their existence was acknowledged by Bharata, which was termed by his successors marga, that is, the main path. The Nartananirnaya is of particular interest here because, on examining the dance tradition it describes, we find that it is this tradition in which present-day Indian classical dance styles are rooted rather than in the tradition of Bharata. The Nartananirnaya thus belongs to a period in which the styles that had a marginal existence in Bharat's time joined the main stream of dancing on their way to becoming the dominant current in the evolution of the art form.

In course of time there arose an idea based on these texts that there is a main stream, and, unless subsequent regional texts refer to the main texts as their source, they are not considered classics. This has happened with Sanskrit language vis-a-vis other languages. This equation keeps changing. In today's world, English is the main language and other regional languages are known as bhasha languages. The national (mainstream) and regional contexts become points of reference in our anxiety to be recognised as classical because

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there is every possibility that the mainstream tries to push all that is regional to the level of *deshi*. In a democracy, an attempt is constantly made by the regional to join the mainstream on an equal footing and get accepted as classical. These attempts acquire a validity when we try to understand how regional political parties play a major role in the formation of the central government.

These relations and contexts that were academic in nature change into political equations. Classicism is a complex[2] and vexed issue, while conceptual models and structural systems give the issue an intellectual parameter, textual traditions and living continuities give it applicability.

Kapila Vatsyayan, examining the issue, hints at specific terms like *shastra* and *prayoga* or *margi* and *deshi*, which are more relevant to the attempt to understand classicism in Indian dance. There are still other categories such as *natyadharmi* and *lokadharmi* involving the elite and the common as two societal phenomena.

In discussing the classicism of Odissi dance, Ratna Roy opens up a new perspective on the distinction between the classical and the traditional. She is of the opinion that the traditional would not be local or national but international or global, when the genres of dance would be pitted against ballet and would be found wanting not because of the lack of antiquity or defined grammar or years of training, but because of the terms attributed to them by the people of India. So, ultimately, the issue does not really belong to the realm of art but to the arena of politics, where Third World peoples have to define themselves as the 'other' and measure up to yardsticks constructed in a foreign tongue.

Classical[3] has very little to do with dance as a form because there is no Indian Dance form which is known as *shastriya* Bharatnatyam or *shastriya* Odissi *nrutya*. The word is used as a term for periodisation, sometimes to refer to pre-8th century, at others to pre-10th century and in some cases even pre-6th century developments in Indian art. In this sense, 'classical' is ancient and is opposed to medieval as well as the 'contemporary' or 'modern' (Vatsyayan, 1994: 23). Classical is obviously a Greek term used in the western context to denote both a period and a certain standard of artistic quality.

By opening up the issue of 'classical' in dance, we posit it in an international arena against what is known as primitive and folk and even deductively in the linear developments of classical ballet of the western world. We even come closer in theory and practice to the ballet dance form. How much we differ from their dance motifs is another matter. Little wonder then that the tribal (primitive), rural (folk) and urban (classical) classifications of socialists, placed in a unilinear progressive graph has not been able to contain the complexities of the Indian social structure, where the so-called *shastrik* is equated with the *laukika*, where the terms 'sanskritisation', and 'vernacularization' exist in a purely sociological context, where they denote the process by which a less affluent or privileged class of people begin to acquire the behavioral patterns of elite groups in a society.

Taking into account the spread of Odissi dance across coastal tracts of Orissa over a period of fifty years, one could clearly identify its elitist urban base as opposed to tribal

dominance in the western tracts and folk filteration in the southern parts of the state. Though the use of the term *shastriya nrutya* is vague, it has a sacramental and elitist connotation.

The term *shastra* in its contemporary sense stands for an abstraction from a set of facts, a technical manual, or treatise. It also refers to a literature or body of texts and differentiates itself from the oral. Therefore, a *shastra* is a deduced conceptual model which provided for applicability and thus offered scope for variation and modification. Each *shastra* is only a framework or structure and thus more universal than the local. So, in course of time, a basic text like *Natya Shastra* of Bharatmuni gave rise to several local texts. When we look at *Natya Shastra*, we benefit from the basic paradigms (or even preliminaries) like *hastabhinaya* (gestures of the hands) *sarirabhinaya* (gestures of the limbs), *carividhana* (explanation of the *cari* movements), *gatiprasara* (the different types of *gatis*), *mandalavikalpam* (diverse *mandala* movements), *aharyabhinaya* (costumes and make up). In order to comprehend the specificities of a regional dance form we have to depend on several regional texts such as *Abhinaya Chandrika*, *Natya Manorama* and *Abhinaya Darpana Prakasha*, being the well-known texts as far as Odissi dance is concerned. While pleading for classicism, the Orissan dance scholars upheld Bharata's *Natya Shastra* as their source book, but always depended heavily on regional texts. *Abhinaya Chandrika* furnished them with peculiar technical details of Odissi dance like new information on *Visama pada*, description of tala, costume, ornaments and makeup. Similarly, the *Abhinaya Darpana Prakasha* is one of the important treatises on Odissi dance. Though the author of the text *Abhinaya Darpan Prakasha* refers to Bharata in his book, he does not quote from *Natya Shastra*. The work displays remarkable regional flavour while describing *gita, vadya, nritya, natya vrittis, nritta* and *lasya* and *tandava* (Patnaik, 1990: 125). The author also discusses eight varieties of *sthanakas*, four varieties of *mastakabhedas*, and many other technicalities. The work is remarkable for the elaborate direction it contains for movement and placing of each *hasta* to indicate each different meaning.

Classicism also emphasises the applicability of the *shastra* and the term *prayoga*, which insists on *vyavahara* or *abhyasa* that is always rooted in the specificity of time and space. In a time and space framework, it comes closest to *deshi* and it would stand differentiated from the universal movement and constant flow of *shastra* (Vatsyayan, 1994: 25). Therefore, classicism is not just *margi* to be accepted on its own terms, but could also take the *deshi* along. One can argue that the *margi*, universal principles as well as the *deshi*, empirical facts, are both embedded in classicism.

Kapila Vatsyayan rightly concludes: "What is of greatest significance is the fact that *shastra* takes cognizance of the empirical, the applied in its fundamental conceptual framework and in this sense it is unique on one level, but representative of the Indian system on another, because it may well be a *shastra* of *prayog* or a *prayoga shastra*."

The Orissan revivalists had little understanding of such complexities, and therefore their idea of classicism differed in intent. The classical was considered to belong exclu-

sively to the temple and not to the streets. Debaprasad Das, not being aware of either the views of anthropologists that tribal, folk and classical are exclusive categories or the art-historical view of Niharranjan Ray that the three categories are not mutually exclusive, had intuitively thought Odissi dance to be an evolutionary phase of the primitive and that the classical phase of sophistication had been achieved through gradual chiselling and refinement. The idea of classicism in Odissi dance is so ingrained in the minds of the dancers, gurus and scholars that a slight modification of the specified style or adoption of primitive and folk elements into the prevalent style is termed *lokadharmi*. This is certainly a misunderstanding of *natyadharmi* or the classical, because one may argue that both the primitive and folk have qualitative and aesthetic qualities as art forms and therefore they should be viewed without bias. If this had not been the case, the dance texts, *Abhinaya Chandrika*, *Abhinaya Darpana Prakasha* and *Natya Manorama* would not have included folk dances in their codifications.

Abhinaya Darpana Prakasha[4] mentions *jangali nrutya* and its synonym *jakkadi* where men dance holding peacock feathers and swinging arms. This obviously resembles a Jhagidi dance of the Kondh tribals of Phulbani (*K. V. K Journal*,1997: 36). Nilamadhava Panigrahi (1995: 10) describes this dance as Turuska dance and connects its source to the Muslim invasions (could also be Mughals). It is quite revealing that Kairata (*Kirata*), Bahurupa (*Bahurupia*) and Chitra dance were performed by both men and women in *Abhinaya Darpana*. Could Kairata and Bahurupa be the tribal Kirata dance and folk Bahurupia dance we come across today? *Abhinaya Chandrika* codifies several tribal and folk dance forms to be performed on festivals and during processions; to cite a few, these are Bhilla, Cadduka, Patua and Tunga (Maya Das, 2001: 20-22).

The Odissi revivalists were obsessed with textual classicism without understanding the ramifications of the texts. They failed to appreciate the fact that both text and practice grow/evolve and texts need to be written often to sanction new practices (traditions), even if their idea of textual classicism was true. In this connection, the view of Nilamadhava Panigrahi about the name 'Bharata' is to be taken with a pinch of salt. Bharata or Bharatacharya may not always refer to the Bharata of *Natya Shastra*, it is a synonym of *nata*. *Amarakosa* mentions *Bharata ityapi nataka* (2nd *Kanda*—*Sukra Varga*—12th sloka). It would therefore be quite appropriate to name any drama teacher or expert dance guru as Bharata. Therefore, Sadashiva Rath Sharma's reference to *Bharatnatyam* in his *Marg* essay (Vol. XIII, 1960) could be considered a representative dance of Indian subcontinent and not necessarily of the South. Similarly, *gotipua* could be an exclusive dance of a group of boys and not necessarily of the *gotipua* as we understand it today. Texts are written and therefore proliferation is common while copying the texts.

Too much obsession with the texts[5] and not looking beyond them is a mistake as a text could be interpreted and reinterpreted in several ways. We should not be oblivious of the fact that textual codification is a process and our understanding of the term might be relative. How will we account for the author of *Natya Manorama's* Kerala connection? The

authors of *Abhinaya Chandrika*, Maheshwar Mahapatra, *Sangeeta Narayana*, Purushottama Mishra/ Gajapati Narayana Deva, or *Abhinaya Darpana Prakasha's* Oriya translator, Jadunath Singh/ Braja Sunder Singha belong to what is now South Orissa, which was once a part of Andhra Desa and the Madras Presidency. There is no trace of Odissi in this area even now. Moreover, the revivalists have tried to exclude all southern dance forms like sakhinata as anti classical labelling them as *dakshini*. Should *dakshini* be termed *deshi* and Puri-Cuttack area be identified with *margi*? Sometimes we, for our own convenience, shift our stand with regard to classicism.

But what we normally refer to as classicism in the context of Odissi is a completely different issue and has very little to do with texts or other categories discussed so far. Sangeet Natak Akademi,[6] an autonomous organisation of dancers, musicians, theatre artists, film personalities, dance and drama critics and connoisseurs, and funded by the government of India, accords classical status to a form of Indian performing art. One would be surprised that the Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi never passed a formal resolution (at least we do not find any reference to it in the writings of the revivalists) declaring Odissi dance as classical. It would have meant that at least Odissi dance was recognised as a classical dance form in its land of origin. Thereafter, perhaps the Orissa Akademi would have applied to the Delhi Akademi to declare Odissi as a classical dance whatever the result might have been. This would have been a perfect bureaucratic procedure. The constitution of the Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi would have been modified to include a clause to say that the Akademi reserves the right to upgrade any form from tribal and folk and raise it to the status of classical or weave elements with support from visual and textual evidences into a classical dance form. The Sangeet Natak Akademi also does not have any constitutional provision to declare a performing art form as tribal, folk or classical and upgrade any *deshi* category to *margi*. The Orissa Akademi has never felt such a need and the Delhi Akademi confers such status by convention. The Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi has no provision for declaring a visual art form as classical or otherwise, whereas its sister organisation, Sahitya Akademi, wisely and in all appropriateness, never declared Oriya language, a provincial language for the purposes of giving awards as a classical language. By convention and understanding, Sanskrit is considered the only classical language and, of course, it goes without saying that there are classics written in provincial languages. (Tamil was recently recognised as a classical language).

It would be seen that classicism is an issue concerned only with the performing arts, and that too specifically with Indian dance forms. Sangeet Natak Akademi *suo moto* did not accord classical status to any of the regional dance forms, and it anticipated a move, a pressure[7] which is always of a political nature backed by scholarship and creative work. There is no fixed procedure because certain forms like Bharatnatyam and Kathakali were instantly taken into the fold and Odissi had to struggle to get recognition first as a branch of Bharatnatyam and later as an independent form.One wonders if the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi should have had an Oriya Chairman (like Bhupen Hazarika from

Assam who propelled Sattriya dance into the classical fold) to see that Odissi dance was instantly accepted as classical. I enquired at the Sangeet Natak Akademi about a letter of authority which declared Odissi as classical. What letter, to whom ? was the curt reply of the officials. I tried to scan the proceedings of the Akademi, it was too laborious a process to excavate old files and this did not lead to any substantial findings. All we have are only the woes and worries mentioned in the autobiography of Kalicharan Patnaik in his fight for the cause of Odissi classicism. What was the Jayantika group for? Were they spearheading the cause of greater classicism or trying to reconstruct Odissi after it was accorded classical status by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi? Several questions come to the mind and finally we are tempted to conclude that classicism was an obsession and the clamour for classicism has not died down yet. The fight for Odissi dance was over, now it should be the turn of Odissi music to gain classical status.

The clamour for classicism is meant to attract patronage and recognition so that one could come to the level of other famous and renowned dancers like Rukmini Devi Arundale and Pandit Birju Maharaj. Classical status would enable artists to get Sangeet Natak Akademi awards, and ICCR foreign travel grants. With such intentions and aspirations, the issue of classicism has become politicised.

Around 1958, while a fierce debate over according classical status to Odissi dance was raging, Humayun Kabir, then minister in charge of Education and Culture in the Government of India, made a statement in the Parliament and his plea was that the Odissi dance had been accepted as a traditional Indian dance and its classical status would be decided in a committee[8]. In an article on Kalicharan Patnaik authored by Nrusingha Charan Samantsimhara, and published in booklet, *Mo Kalibhai* (1970), the author had confessed that Odissi got recognition as classical dance form due to the initiative of Kalicharan Patnaik and the blessings of Lord Jagannatha.[9] (Patnaik 1990: 342)

II. STYLE: FLOWERING OF A DANCE PERSONALITY

Any art form practised by an individual carries the stamp of his individuality. In a literary work, one seeks to locate the artist's individuality. However, painting and sculpture display ambiguity and are largely attributed to a community or placed in a specific period of history rather than traced back to individual masters. At present, research in art history[10] has made it possible to find out stylistic peculiarities in the area of visual art and ascribe a work or a group of works to a particular master. Apart from the choice of colours, compositional patterns, mannerisms in delineation of forms, and other peculiarities of an artist determine a style. Sometimes recurring features like costume, an architectural set-up, a distinctive landscape help one in identifying a style. In dance and music, the problems are of a different kind. One sees the musician and dancer on the stage singing and dancing but one normally fails to identify the gharana to which they belong. As individuals they are

known, but their work and their style remain a puzzle unless one is a discerning connoisseur.

Of course, in dance, there are certain features like costume, which catches one's imagination when one watches groups of dancers from different regions. For example, Kathakali is instantly recognizable. But distinguishing Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi and Mohiniyattam from each other proves somewhat difficult. Since they come from southern dance traditions they have similarities that blur the distinctions. To understand style and individuality in their dance we may dress them in the same fashion and colour and ask them to perform *nritta* not *abhinaya*. Our task will be rather difficult. Devadasi dance tradition is the source of most of the South Indian dance forms. Historically, Orissa is grouped with the South when it comes to studying style in art forms. Odissi dance tradition was sustained by maharis known as Telingi Sampradaya.[11] Moreover, Odissi dance revivalists also heavily relied on Bharatanatyam and Kathakali for elaboration of the dance form. Most of the important Odissi dancers like Indrani Rahman, Sanjukta Panigrahi, Sonal Mansingh, Minati Mishra, Kiran Sehgal and Guru Mayadhar Raut come from a Bharatanatyam and Kathakali background. It is therefore natural to find Southern dance elements in Odissi. Except the *tahia* on the head and *bengapatia* around the waist, the costumes worn in Odissi and other southern dances, the *sari* worn with a fan-shaped *panchi* in the front and *kachha* at the back are almost similar. Wearing a *kachha* is a southern fashion. *Veni* or the long plait donned by *maharis* and by Priyambada Mohanty and Sanjukta Panigrahi earlier in Odissi dance was also associated with Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam. Therefore, awareness about the southern dance forms will deepen our understanding of Odissi dance styles.

The pertinent question is how to distinguish styles in Odissi dance. A dance performance has to bring out stylistic movements (*angika*), express feelings, sentiments and moods (*sattvika*), and is accompanied by melodious songs and music (*vachika*) and display elegant costume (*aharya*). Primarily through these aspects a dance performance has to be understood, appreciated, and judged.

In the presentation of the entire repertoire, there is involvement of techniques as well as art. In learning a dance form, the student has to master the techniques, which are like learning the alphabet and the grammar while understanding limitations and determinants. At the learning stage, a student obviously cannot and should not cross the limits set by the grammar of the dance. But the sum of the techniques is not what a dance consists in. Art in dance, which is normally subjected to scrutiny, concerns a style existing beyond these rudimentary elements. Yet, only through these rudiments can one understand a dance.

Odissi dance has a fixed repertoire that has been largely accepted. This consists of *mangalacharana, sthayi (*or *batu)*, *pallavi, abhinaya* and *moksha*. These segments could be understood in terms of their property: *mangalacharana,* apart from paying obeisance to the mother earth, the *rangabhumi,* guru and *rasikas,* the spectators, also announce the arrival of the dancer. This is just an introductory part with invocatory song danced to *mardala* or pakhawaj with *ukutas*. The second sequence is meant to establish the visual essentials of

the dance relating it to different sculpturesque poses on the temple walls to the accompaniment of *mardala* (uttering bols like *khandi, gadi* and a *rasa*). The third sequence, *pallavi* is an elaboration of the visual connotation with the help of a musical mode, raga rupa. This is danced to both svara and tala. *Pallavis* are named after their ragas such as *Vasant pallavi, Kalyan pallavi, Sankarabharana pallavi . Abhinaya* is a sequence where the dancer with *bhava,* emotion mimes an Oriya song. The dancer has the opportunity to make appropriate facial expressions and communicate a *rasa.* The final dance sequence is called *moksha or* emancipation, release or finale. This again is a *nritta* dance but with a difference: no song is sung and the dancer follows the beats of the *mardala.*

A second look at the sequences of the repertoire would reveal its inner structure, which could be divided into two segments: *nritta* or abstraction with invocatory shlokas, mostly in Sanskrit as in *mangalacharana,* abstraction to confirm visual quality as in *sthayi,* abstraction to confirm lyrical quality as in *pallavi* and *pure* abstraction as in *moksha,* and *nrutya* (narrative) as in *abhinaya. Nritta* is not exclusive of *nrutya* but the emphasis shifts and depends on syllabic pronouncements. This two-fold segmentation is also known as *nirgita* (*nritta*) and *sagita* (*nrutya*)

Nritta is abstract in the sense that it has no meaning to convey except configuring the space with the help of the language of the body. Technically, it consists of a number of grammatical movements like *sthanaks, thani, chali, ghera or bhaunri, puhania, dian chari, mandala, rechaka, parija* and *hata (bandha)* (Debaprasad, 2002). A dancer uses these movements and gestures as needed in a dance performance and, in the initial stages, has to learn these movements, absorb them into his/her own bodily movements and assimilate the techniques. This is the time to negotiate and develop a relationship with the repertoire. Only then can the dancer achieve mastery like a good poet who chooses his own words and right expressions, an act indicative of determination, analysis and creativity.

In *nritta,* the dancer can talk of aesthetics and beauty, beauty of the movements and the whole being. Its magnificence lies in this. In *nritta,* the physical body becomes unimportant; it is the graceful movements of the dancing body that create the splendid language. In *nritta,* a dancer possessed of a style, grace and a perfect body creates superb dance images, s/he changes him or herself into those sculpturesque visuals. These are the high points in a dance and are the dancer's own creations, own manifestations. A dancer tries to capture these rare moods through dance, if s/he is totally immersed in the creative process. Through a lot of practice, a lot of work it comes naturally. These images or configurations are not pre- planned; they arise spontaneously. If a dance form is rich and if its grammar is coherent, the dancer feels like creating his own and adds to its richness. Herein lies the challenge of creating within a framework and going beyond that. This is what defines creativity and style.

In general, techniques are mastered but style emerges spontaneously when the techniques are thoroughly absorbed into the system and understanding is deep. When a dancer ends her/his training in acquiring these *adabhus,* s/he tries to build her/his own style. In

learning how to paint one acquires technical virtuosity by studying how to master a human figure, an animal, a bird, and a tree and many other motifs (*adabhus*) like in a dance. But the learning does not end there; s/he has to proceed further in order to create a picture entirely hers/his. This particular picture might belong to the tradition of her/his master but the picture is verily hers/his. This indicates her/his mastery over a style. By creating her/his own style s/he does not deviate from tradition but contributes to the evolution of a style. Unless the practitioners keep adding something of their own, the style reaches a dead end and becomes repetitive like a craft production. It is for this reason that improvizations are allowed in a particular raga within a gharana. Similarly, improvizations are a must in a dance. Normally, each line of the song is repeated many times in a dance so that the danseuse can improvise through *hastamudras* and *abhinaya*. In any improvization, *lokadharmi* (realistic practice) and *natyadharmi* (classical or conventional practice) are blended giving an opportunity to the dancer to substantiate her/his art. This is known as *manodharma* (Venu and Paniker 1995: 41 and 86). *Manodharma* acting could be altered depending on the imagination and vision of the dancer: In some other dance traditions (like in Mohiniattam), a second *pallavi* called *Anu pallavi* is added to create greater scope for renderings.

Going beyond prescription and rigidity and distancing oneself from techniques is art. All great artists and dancers say this and do this vigorously. This is a kind of revelation that comes to them. Aesthetics is about distancing, distancing from this physical body, which has acquired the technique; only then can a dancer convey love and anger, jealousy and fear through dance. One distances oneself from the realm of everyday and then enters the realm of beauty. You dance the same *sringara rasa*, but each time your dancing body conveys a different meaning.

Style consists in identifying oneself with the character one portrays while dancing. You have to sub-ordinate, surrender, forget your ego and finally yourself and only then can you create a style which would be aesthetically unique. A dancer has to consider herself an instrument of her own art. There comes a time in dance where your movements are all there, you are aware of all your movements but you rise above these. It ceases to be mechanical. Flowering and flowing out are required of you. When you rise above the movements, you are no more conscious of your dress, your blouse, or ornaments. When you rise above the movement, the movement is *nritta*. Then only *nritta* will be *moksha*, real release and freedom from the body.

Great dancers used to dance extempore. Birju Maharaj, the great Kathak exponent, danced and sang only two lines: it was the season of rains and it rained. The rain is like mother's milk because it is refreshing like that. Then he went on to show a woman opening the window and rain falling on her face and her closing the window. It was all done extempore on the stage (Lakshmi 2003: 305-306).

In Odissi *abhinaya* the masters excel in the area of style. It is the *bhava prakasha*, the expressive feelings, emotions and modes that dominate the dance sequence. They are full

of meaning, and the interpretations of a particular song differ. The dancer emotes the appropriate expressions that are in keeping with the import of the song and creates the right mood. The master dancer exploits all the possibilities which are otherwise not codified in a choreography to be expressive. Kelucharan's rolling on the floor in the concluding portion of *Kevata Prasanga,* when the boatman, out of pure joy, ecstasy and devotion, pays his respects to the very soil which Lord Rama has just trodden, constitutes a stylistic departure and a masterly feat. Similarly, in his rendering of *astapadis* of the *Gitagovinda,* particularly of *kuru yaduandana chandanasisiratarena* Kelucharan creates his own unique style with profound intensity. In the portrayal of Radha, her intensity of longing, her mood swings, Kelucharan rises far above the prescriptions of the choreography, travels beyond the limits of time and space and reaches a state of eternal bliss. (Ileana 2001)

The swinging of the torso and steadiness of the hips are among the major contributions of Kelucharan towards evolving a classical style of Odissi. In Kelucharana's style, the definite movement of the upper torso both in *tribhanga* and *chauka* are the master's peculiarities.

In Debaprasad's rendering of another piece of *astapadi, yahi Madhava yahi Keshava,* the bitter anguish of Radha at the deceitful behaviour of Krishna is brought out in extremely poised gestures and moods and it denotes his individual style. His inner vitality and understanding of the requirements surpass the limitations of the body.

Pankajcharana's style in *abhinaya,* especially in the delineation of *sanchari bhava* is extremely lyrical. His elongated body frame was eminently suitable for languorous moods in *abhinaya.* While doing *abhinaya,* he never opted for ornate footwork but dwelt at length on the pervasiveness of the mood. Similarly, Sanjukta Panigrahi had a distinctive style of her own, which was linear, punctuated with jerky, but lucid and vigorous movements and footwork. Her *abhinayas* were wavy and stylized to the point of being exaggerated but never unnatural. Her tall and slim body had a contoured artistry that was capable of sketching sculpturesque poses. She had devised a choreography number known as *moksha mangalam,* a concluding piece like *mangalacharan* but interlaced with *nritta* and *abhinaya.* Sanjukta was a great dancer who had the ability to transcend the limits of prescribed grammar. Without being populist, she had devised her personal style, which was unique among her contemporaries.

If one is allowed to attempt a comparison between dance and painting styles of the three eminent *gurus,* one could say that Pankajcharan had a Puri style, authentically Orissan (I am not using the word Odissi) in form and content like the images in *Sahijatras.* It was lyrical and devoid of ornate footwork. When I say Puri style I mean not the present touristic exaggeration and garishness. I refer to earlier lyricism that had nothing to do with unwanted deliberations. His style claimed affinity with *devadasi/mahari* style of Puri, which again is unshowy and subtle. His style is inward flowing; you could even label it as philosophical and introvert. Pankajcharan's personality goes very well with his style, which is somber, lucid, lyrical and confident.

Priyambada Mohanty is of the view that Pankajcharan's dance items (choreographs) have the stamp of the *mahari* tradition distinguished by *atibhanga* and a peculiar flip-flop walk. Some of his popular items are the *pallavis* in ragas *Sankarabharana, Arabhi, Kalyan, Gativilasa* and *Deshakhya*. His *sthayi* is sculpturesque, in which the transitions are very smooth but with assertive *chauka* punctuations. Although he is known for his lyricism, his vigour and vitality and the use of space as in *Glani Samhara* are stunning (Mohanty Hejmadi 1990:10-11).

Kelucharan was vivacious and populist in his style and in order to understand his art you can bring in the images of Cuttacki *medhas*. Kelucharan was modern not in the sense it is generally understood but in relation to two of his other contemporaries. He was extremely accommodative and in response to popular demands of his time, made his art over-ornate and most of the time gorgeous with unwanted intricacies. The flashes, which were spontaneous decorations, were also among Kelucharan's special stylistic features. He was extremely capable of being spontaneous when situations demanded him to be, and he always used his creative instinct (since he was from a *chitrakara*, traditional painter's family) to weave dance patterns. I had watched how Kelucharan once used his 'rolling' (sequence taken from *Kevata Prasanga)* to pick up a flower from the image of Jagannatha that was placed at a corner of the stage to offer it to Janaki Ballava Patnaik, the then Chief Minister seated on the other end. Rolling on the stage on the ground was a sequence in *dhuli dandanata*, and Bhagaban Sahu, the legendry drummer from Narendrapur in Ganjam district, used this as a very convincing repertoire in his drumming recitals. This kind of adaptability was Kelucharan's forte. Great masters do not ever commit mistakes. There is a famous Chinese saying: 'One who has arrived cannot make a mistake'. Once a Chinese master painter, while making a drawing, upset the inkpot by mistake and the ink got splashed on the paper. The master remained unmoved and created the image of a dragon out of the spilt ink. Kelucharan emphatically used to say that what he did and would do, would be Odissi, and he proved this by innovating and going beyond the limits of tradition.

Debaprasad's dance style could be compared with painted wooden images of Berhampur *Thakuranijatra*, a complete departure in stylistic manifestation comparable to both the images of Puri *Sahijatra* and Cuttack Dussera Durga *medhas*. While similarities could be discerned between *Sahijatra* and *Thakuranijatra* images, the Cuttacki images remained worlds apart. He was the most conservative of the three *gurus* and had a southern predilection keeping in tune with the waist movements of *sakhinata*, and *gotipuanata*. Debaprasad was in favour of using waist swings. He emphasised that such swings were of a local origin and were normally not adhered to in other classical dances. In Odissi it was known as *Samachhinna Udvahita*. He further said that in no sequences should the dancers' body be forcibly contrived, which might result in *asouthava* (inaesthetic stance). While delineating *rechaka*, Debaprasad laid great emphasis on *pada rechaka, kati rechaka, kara rechaka* and *kantha rechaka*. He was a stickler for the old Odissi style with its earthy movements (Mohanty Hejmadi, 1990: 16). His *abhinayas* are totally devoid of *sancharis*, adhering strictly to the

bhavas of the lyrics. He liked Oriya lyrics more than the Sanskrit ones. One can see flashes of Odissi practiced in forties and fifties in his style. On one hand he was extremely popular for his direct, bold, and less ornamented expressions, simple but meaningful gestures, sharp and targeted feelings; on the other, for his un-compromising attitude he was branded a traditionalist and conservative. His traditional outlook and conservatism did not limit him to the Jayantika repertoire but induced him to search for compatible motifs in Orissan folk and tribal performing arts. He went back to the roots to make Odissi authentic and saved it from the commissioned touristic styles. His search for earthiness took him to several *Prahalladanataka, sakhinataka* and *Ramanataka akhadas* in South Orissa. In the words of Priyambada Mohanty Hejmadi, Guru Debaprasad Das has played a very critical role in the development and popularization of Odissi deviating least from its traditions.

A distinguishing feature of Debaprasad's style was his application of *shavda svara pata* sounds to dance numbers in *mangalacharanas* like *Durgastaka, Devi Mahantmya, Shiva Tandava* and other *tandava* dominated dance choreographs. This added heroic and vigorous dimensions to otherwise *lasya*-oriented Odissi dance. His students, Durgacharan Ranbir, Sangeeta Dash, Sudhakar Sahu, Dhuleswar Behera, Gajendra Kumar Panda and Niranjan Raut dance in this style and have preserved this tradition.

Ramli Ibrahim of Sutra Dance Theatre, Malyasia has refined his master's style to a considerable extent. He uses his upper torso, shoulders, arms and hands in pure abstractions creating dance spaces charged with vibrant dynamism. His dance creates in me visions of painted wooden images of Durga, Kali and Rama. These lie dormant in *mathas* the year round and suddenly come to life when the festive occasions arrive. The strength and artistry imbued in those figures were a sort of perennial source of inspiration for Debaprasad and now remains relevant both to Ramli and me in terms of Odissi dance and painting.

A number of Kelucharan's disciples carry on their *guru's* style of dance. Most important among them are Sonal Mansingh, Kumkum Mohanty, Gangadhar Pradhan, Ratikant Mahapatra, Sujata Mahapatra and Aruna Mohanty. Of all, Sonal Mansingh excels as a creative dancer who has been able to evolve a style of her own. "Widely traveled, with an exposure to various cultures, she had imbibed a sharp and perceptive understanding of various dance forms and over the years has evolved her own art of aesthetic presentation" (Kothari and Pasricha, 1990: 115). To Kothari, Sonal's approach has been both artistic and cerebral, and she has shed light on the close relationship between poetry and dance. She has also a heightened awareness of *auchitya* in her presentations.

The lay visitors to dance performances may have no need for such an academic exercise and may not be interested, but they might be interested to know whose student the dancer was. *Kathak* dance tradition has four gharanas such as Lucknow gharana, Jaipur gharana, Benaras gharana and Raigarh gharana or Janaki Prasad gharana (Vaidyanathan 2004: 29) Similarly, Chhau has three recognizable styles such as Mayurbhanj, Seraikela and Purulia. Even Bharatanatyam has four styles such as Tanjavur, Pandanallur, Vazhuvur and Kalakshetra (Vaidyanathan, 2004: 99). In most recent publications on dance, four styles or

gharanas of Odissi have been mentioned: Pankajcharan gharana, Kelucharan gharana, Debaprasad gharana and Mayadhar gharana. Their able disciples, strong both in practical and theoretical aspects, should prepare separate manuals with clear-cut instructions for imparting training in each of the four gharanas. Teachers in the Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyala, Bhubaneswar should be in a position to teach the essentials of each gharana and their differences. There should be comparative analysis of stylistic peculiarities. Odissi dance needs an academic and creative overhauling on the basis of styles. If we label these four as eminent gurus responsible for reconstructing the dance form and consider them able to spread it through their disciples, we should then in all fairness concentrate on understanding and evaluating their styles and their differences. Otherwise, we would be doing a disservice to Odissi dance by rendering it prosaic and hackneyed.

Such ill-balanced emphasis on a few chosen gharanas in the field of pata painting has relegated into background Sonepur, Nuapatna, Paralakhemundi, Chikiti and Digapahandi gharana. Sooner or later a time may come for these painting gharanas to be completely wiped out. We should make sure a similar fate does not overtake Odissi.

III CHOREOGRAPHY: AN EVER-CHANGING PHENOMENON

Both in Sanskrit and Oriya, choreography may be called *nrutya prabandha* or *nrutya rachana*. It is a space-time construct with meaningful and pleasing visual quality communicating to the viewers the multiple and multilayered relationships achieved through a definite musical and rhythmic structure based on movement. The choreographer, through his imaginative devices, lays out a workable structure and time frame for his dancers to follow individually and as a group to bring out the *prabandha* to life. Music, light and other minimal stage properties enhance the quality of the performance. Although the choreographer uses a lot of traditional dance motifs such as *chauka, tribhanga, bhramari, chari, beli* and *thani*, he is not guided by the traditionality of these components, rather he reinterprets their contextuality and applies them to fulfil the design concept. The choreographer has to be all in one, a dancer, a musician, a light and set designer, a composer and, overall, a commanding voice with enough self-confidence to lead his/her dancers to the goal s/he has set for himself/herself and others. As Shanta Serbjeet Singh has rightly pointed out, he is like a juggler who can keep fifty objects in the air at the same time. Choreography is a three-dimensional projection or a spectacle that might appear as a highly geometrical configuration (*panjara*). But it liberates the dancers and sets them free to develop their own individuality within the framework of the composition.

A successful choreographer always chooses issue-based themes having contemporary relevance. It is extremely difficult to remain style-wise within the tradition and yet achieve contemporaneity in its presentation. A creative choreographer creates spectacles with human elements bisecting, intersecting, configurating and liberating a dance space with poise,

juxtaposition, void and fullness, all made meaningful to the viewers. In short, a choreography creates an illusion with meaning.

Dancing is a deeply ingrained instinct of human beings. Through gradual evolution it has become a natural mode of self-expression. Dancing excitedly at the advent of rain, dancing to celebrate a kill in some remote rock-cut caves, dancing to rejoice at a sumptuous communal feast, dancing over a victory are one part of the racial memory. These dances express outbursts of energy, spontaneity and instinct. These were performed through shared rhythmic patterns. When the primitive man enjoyed a settled pastoral life, dance formed a part of joyous community living. Sowing seeds, planting trees, and gathering a bounteous harvest were celebrated with dance. The village shrine and rituals associated with it provided the impetus. Shamanistic and ritualistic dances linked members in a society with celestial beings and the under-world of devils and demons. The metaphysical provided human beings with a view of the cosmos. The dancers enacted the cosmos dancing in a circle and tried to possess its spirit using masks. When we look at the dances of forest tribes and peasants, we realise the simple formations of the performances, their verve and vigour. There occurs a remarkable fusion of separate entities into the whole, which unfolds an amazing range of forms and lines. These were never choreographed as the term choreography is understood today, but may be regarded as historical progenitors of choreography.

Therefore, the earliest geometrical patterns of choreography are the circle and the square, which were identified with Bharata's *Natya Shastra*. Alice Boner's 'principle of composition' was intuitively developed while studying sculptural compositions.These were later substantiated by Kapila Vatsyayan's detailed textual study of *The Square and The Circle of the Indian Arts* (Vatsyayan, 1983). This study, which comprises the principles of *Natya Shastra, Vastu Purusa, Shilpa Panjara* and *Sangita Purusa*, contains useful insights into the basics used in a composition. The diagrams deal with the unmanifest and the manifest, the unstruck and the struck and the metrical cycle. The space-time prerequisite to choreography is an integrated science that gives us the world-view of Indian artistic traditions. Vatsyayan concludes that everything falls into a pattern, and the seeming heterogeneity of period, style, region or locality vanishes. There is always an eternal timeless fixed centre and an axis; and around this movement takes place both as rotation around its own axis and centre and a revolution in space and time. This study may sound too abstruse and academic but it has evolved from the intuitive to the structural, which has relevance to any choreography.

Choreography is a matter of redesigning the existing as well as invented dance motifs into a novel pattern with the help of the spatial grammar and time mathematics and of creating grace and harmony through the principle of correlatives and correspondences. The primary instrument of a dancer is her / his body. The creative instinct and the intellect construct the idea, and the body expresses it. The body has to be perfectly trained so that the mind can use it in any way it wills. The choreographer evaluates each movement and finds its unique quality. Apart from the design, the movement has to integrate intellectual,

physical, emotional responses and has to have a definite motivation. We are familiar with old movements, and most of us unquestioningly accept them. The choreographer does not merely accept a movement, but tries to understand it.

A few years ago choreography was unknown to Odissi. Dhirendranath's *Odissi Dance* does not make any exclusive reference to choreography, which has emerged as a highly sensitive and challenging area. There was hardly any choreography in the temple dance sustained by the *maharis* through the centuries. Nor was it known or understood by the *sakhipilas* and *gotipuas*. The revivalists had not determined the principles of choreography, and the great gurus of later years never properly understood what choreography was. They were all busy enlarging the span of the performance from fifteen minutes to two and a half hours and perhaps to fifteen hours. This was all that choreography meant to them.

It is observed that most Odissi gurus, while fashioning a new choreography, behave like a touristic pata painter who, in order to make a *janma pati*, birth painting or a *lila* painting makes unnecessary compartments, circles and triangles around and along the inner border. The painting becomes larger in terms of space, gets overcrowded with unnecessary ornamentations and loses its charm as a painting. Similarly, in dance-dramas, attempts were made formerly to string together in a disjointed manner, a variety of performances having little coherence and meaning. However, it remained a mixture, or what is called a 'free style'. This amounted to painting a large rectangular or circular pata painting having little bearing on the core theme. Now, even a *mangalacharana* item can be performed for full one hour and a half, *sthai* and *abhinaya* could be added to it in a clever way without announcing that one is really doing not *abhinaya* but *mangalacharana*. It reveals an anxiety only to lengthen a piece rather than give it a structural coherence.

Most of the dancers are concerned primarily with traditional performances, and do not wish to do more than perfect them, and dance them with all the virtuosity at their command. But there are only a few dancers who are possessed of creativity. They have the courage to venture into new territories of dance language; they cross the *lakshmana rekha* of the tradition to discover newer challenges. The choreographer grasps a thing, formulates its dance design, decides the beginning, crescendo and the end, and searches for new techniques and style. Everything said and done, dance is an abstract art. Conformity to actual conditions and insistence on symbolic representations are things which if carried too far can become an impediment to aesthetic presentation. Odissi, by its very nature and, for that matter, many other dance forms, are suggestive rather than expressive. The suggestions express moods and meanings. Therefore, these have to be subtle and meaningful. The dancer should not be over-expressive and emotional like in Jatra performances and films. The audience which is not discriminating might show its appreciation by clapping, but it makes classical dance items appear more filmy. Traditional hand gestures, *charis, bhramaris, belis* and *thanis* should be enough for composing a new choreography because these technical components could be reinterpreted, a new twist and meaning could be given to them. There is danger in borrowing the properties of other dance forms unless the borrowings are

cleverly manipulated and appropriated. But at the same time this may dilute the originality, the *nritta* aspects.

Expression is not to be confused with *bhava*; rather expression is a means of expressing *bhava*. The term 'expression' may be understood as interpretation or the science of interpretation (hermeneutics). Both gestures and expressions are part of hermeneutics and are within the larger domain of *abhinaya*. The problem in new choreography is how to situate a thematic requirement in choreography in terms of expressive dance motifs. Should the motifs be realistic or to say *lokadharmi* as generally happens in Jatra, theatre or should these be *natyadharmi* as in a classical dance recital? It is commonly said that ordinary movements of life should eventually support motif-building in a classical dance. In new choreography, such uncommon gestural expressions are needed and unless the interpretation is done artistically it loses its aesthetic value. An aesthetic experience is defined as "the awareness of the intrinsic value in a subject-object situation in which the felt qualities of experience are attributed to the object" (Prem Lata Sharma, 2000:29). Aesthetic experiences in dance are different from ordinary experience because, in a dance expression, it exhibits an organic structure having a beginning, growth and an end.

Kapila Vatsyayan's observation seems apt for new-age choreographers in Odissi although it is a general assessment of several classical dance forms :

> When a language begins to be used by a large number of people at different levels, there is a danger of abuse of language. Further, when a language moves into different cultural milieu, it acquires a regional flavour and occasionally the regional flavour results in liberties which are frequently taken with the grammar of the language, not by creative artists but by poetasters and imitators. If the analogy of language which is used creatively and abused is extended to the field of dance particularly classical dances, it will become clear that with the dissemination of these forms to a large number of performers and with these highly academic disciplines becoming fashionable and 'in' there has been an unfortunate decline in training standards, leading to an absence of the essential ethos of these dance forms.

Odissi dance has now become mostly dance-drama, which is otherwise termed ballet (Oriental ballet). How far dance drama conforms to a ballet dance is a different matter but why it came to be termed so is to be seriously examined. In Oriya, how dance-drama as a term is to be translated is difficult to decide. Should it be Odissi Jatra though drama or simply Jatra? While drama is basically a proscenium performance with colonial and post-colonial styles, Jatra is performed on a three-dimensional stage watched by people sitting around. When we say dance drama, a certain colonial ingredient is woven into it, which finally leads to ballet or Indian ballet. This is a 'free-style' performance which might eventually develop into Odissi choreography, but in the end, in actual performance, it remains an experimental contemporary dance.

Should dance-drama be termed *gitinatya* in Odissi dance style bereft of its dialogue

components? Perhaps one could say so and face stiff resistance from Odissi gurus and dancers. Without specially naming most of the contemporary Odissi dance choreographies, I could say that the dance-drama choreographies are almost like Jatras or *gitinatyas* with too many narrative elements enacted on the stage with real-life imitations. Modern Odissi ballet dancers without having the trained bodies of the European ballet dancers perform on the stage not using any of the codified Odissi *mudras* but using elaborate facial expressions and realistic body movements. In such performances, one gets the feeling that the choreographer has not done his homework and therefore no proper synchronisation of limbs and body movements takes place. The Odissi choreographer rightly believes that there is enough scope for Odissi ballet dances. But due to the lack of understanding of time and space and wrong use of *mudras*, the performance turns out to be spontaneous and expressive.

In Odissi ballet choreography there is excessive use of acrobatics and mass drill. But even this could have provided visual sharpness and balance if performed after days and months of rehearsal. The *hata nata* or the *bandha nrutya* of pre-Jayantika Odissi would have been quite helpful here but it was given up because it was difficult to learn and practise. At times Odissi choreographers use traditional rasa techniques for *mandali*, *ardhamandali* and at *bhramaris* and at other times impromptu actions to fill in the gaps.

The choreographer has to understand the implications of time-space dimensions and the use of the temporal and the spatial. In dance, the spatial character is displayed not on flat surfaces but in a volume of space having several dimensions. The temporal dimension is reinforced by its visual character. Taken together, they constitute the essential frame of reference in terms whereof a dance experience may unfold at higher levels of synthesis, its formal, gestural and expressive aspects.

Form is the most important component in a dance choreography. The word 'form' has at least three distinct meanings: (1) that the body of the work of art is regarded as the intermediary between the material and the content, the vehicle for the dance expression (2) that it is the structural organisation of the work of art, regarded as the relations between the parts, or ways in which the materials are moulded or patterned in a particular work; (3) a generic pattern or scheme of organisation common to a number of different works of art, e.g., tribal, folk, classical and European ballets.

My aim is not to deal with individual choreographies, catalogue them and then analyse them. My intention is also not to suggest changes in any of the existing choreographies which have been danced not once but many a time. I seek to understand the design that underlies the composition structure, the way it is exploited by dancers.

The intuiting of a temporal work of art as a whole depends on memory. In the appreciation of a work of spatial art, such as painting, we have the whole before us and, in a sense, we work from the whole into parts. However, in a temporal work of art such as music and dance, we have the parts presented in seriatim and in a sense we work from the parts to the whole. Apprehension of the whole, therefore, depends on memory. The concept of *bhavana* or *charvana* of Indian aesthetics takes full account of this process of grasping the whole by

contemplating the parts, which come in succession and sink into the subconscious (Prem Lata Sharma 2000:36-39).

While talking of ballet and classical dance we have to bear in mind the psychophysical nature of European dance and the spiritual nature of Indian classical dance. In the history of European dance as in music the tendency is to break the rules, which held good in their time and theory whereas, in the Indian context, continuity is maintained through gradual evolution and change. Theory in India has always been respected as an unfailing guide in evaluating and confirming the merit of all artistic creations; it was never challenged or repudiated by artists.

Odissi dance has emerged and evolved from a traditional Indian system of *Natya-Shastra* that has codified specific theories for application. Though Odissi dance has its own regional peculiarities, nevertheless its basic source is Indian. But, while choreographing a new composition, a choreographer will no doubt use traditional motifs but the structure will be his, entirely new. The principles leading to unity are those of dominance, harmony and balance and those leading to variety, the corresponding antithetical principles of thematic contrast and rhythm. Obviously, the above principles of organisation are articulated rather than discrete; almost always they operate in conjunction with one or the other. One of the highest ideals of formal organisation is a structure in which all the elements and units are so articulated, closely knit and interwoven into an organic whole in such a way that the dropping of a single note would be felt as a loss.

Thus, we see that certain choreographies are strictly embedded within tradition, but still absorb innovative ideas to be different from existing compositions. The others are completely experimental and may not finally lie within the prescriptive modes of traditional Odissi.

Choreographers should be aware of such distinctions and should not mix both traditional and contemporary compositions and claim for both styles the status of traditional Odissi. The situation of Orissan painting and sculpture is different: there are a set of artists who stick to traditional Orissan style and others to the modern and contemporary. Such distinctions help artists to grow and there is no confusion. Odissi gurus and dancers have hesitations about being labelled modern or they were aware of what they are doing, but do not like to spell out properly their choreography.

It is heartening that Odissi choreography has evolved and all the major gurus have choreographies, which they call 'items'. These items, which are mostly traditional, keep on circulating among their students and when each of them perform, they do so quite differently. Yet it is satisfying that still these are known as Deba Sir's, Kelu Sir's and Pankaj Sir's items. While the basic theme of the items remains the same, they evolve through the efforts of their custodians. An Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya student once told me that his teachers, Minati Mishra, Pankajcharan Das and Debaprasad Das used to permit him without hesitation to dance their items and the teachers also exchanged items among each other. The *dashavatara* (ten incarnations of the Lord) item is danced by almost all the dancers as

a kind of 'must' for setting the stage and it must have been danced a million times. This choreograph has lost all its edge, sharpness and novelty; yet an intelligent and imaginative choreographer can still make it new and enjoyable. What I try to hint at is that the sense of change brings freshness and novelty to a work of art. This is also possible within the totality of a tradition. A leaf, a flower, a tree must have been painted and sculpted a million times and more. But a leaf turned out by a master is a unique piece produced for the first time. Of course it is not only the choreography at work but it is also the perfect blend, technical virtuosity and the benefit of long experience, understanding and creativity. If it comes from a great master, he does not consciously change it for the sake of pleasing people, but it changes each time the master performs the same choreography. Change is an inbuilt component in a work of art. It understands and grasps the change in a different way. Most of the time we tend not to appreciate that which is stable, definite and known but that which provides the element of suddenness, the excellence, the *chamatkar* in a dance recital. These qualities emerge only from a master and not from an ordinary dancer and it has very little do with choreography but everything to do with the mastery of techniques. A master could alter the Jayantika ideas a thousand times but still could perform authentic Odissi.

But when you are trying to compose a new choreography and you are not intellectually sound, mere good dancing will not suffice. You have to be careful of other things, say of music. Music plays a very important role in composition, and in India these two sister arts have grown together. The composer cannot play a role which is subservient to that of a musician. It is observed that music is sadly lacking in new compositions. Therefore, the choreographer has to spell out his needs, and he should have the ability to take the choreograph in its totality.

With a number of bad choreographies of the *gitinatya* type Odissi has been polluted to a great extent. We have to remember that a good choreography is not an elaboration of a dance number, lengthening time and testing the patience of the viewers. Choreography is a creative work which demands vision, technical virtuosity, sharp and sensitive eyes and ears and a holistic approach to a composition. A composition, to lie within the parameters of Odissi, has to wholly conform to the dance tradition and has to follow Odissi music. Otherwise, a choreographer may choose a 'free style' and be completely on his own, but then his composition is bound to be experimental and not traditional Odissi.

A dance has to be treated as a text where the form, content and the aesthetics have to blend properly. The dance choreography should be read, appreciated and analysed as a text and preserved/documented for future use. Unfortunately for Orissa no adequate measures have been taken to treat dance as a text and to preserve it for posterity.

NOTES

1. *Nartananirnaya: A Landmark in the Literature of Dance*, in Berlinger Indologische Studien, Bandb, ed. Dr Inge Wezler (Reinbek: Verlag fur Orientalitische Fachpublikationen, 1991, p. 1)

2. As the curator of Art and Crafts in the Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar in the early seventies, I collected a lot of *papier mache* Ramayana masks from Jaypur town and primitive wood carvings from Digpahandi town in South Orissa. My colleagues in the museum did not approve of my action. They said, as the curator of the Orissa State Museum, I should collect classical objects and not folkish things. After a few days, they purchased (not collected) Cuttack silver filigree works worth one lakh rupees. I thought that the silver filigree works which were made from an expensive metal like silver were more classical than things made of paper and wood. Till date, Orissa State Museum has not been declared a classical museum and it has an ethnographic and handicrafts gallery.

3. "An eminent dancer like Sanjukta Panigrahi was not sure what the term 'classical' meant when Odissi was given the status of classical dance . She, in an interview to *The Telegraph* in 1993, said that 'I would say that acceptance of Odissi as a classical dance form did come quite late in the day. In fact, it was in the year 1966 when Guru Kelucharan was felicitated by the Sangeet Natak Akademi that Odissi dance was formally acknowledged." (Barnali Sen, *The Telegraph*, 10 April 1993: 8) Sanjukta Panigrahi was right in saying so, because all the fight for getting a classical status from the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, was to drum support for an 'Akademi Award'.

4. "We are aware of the controversy concerning Tigiria and Dharakote surrounding the Sanskrit author or even the Oriya translator of *Abhinaya Darpana Prakasha*. The Oriya translation reflects typical South Orissan Ganjami words like *Ete* (for *Ehi*) *Kuthare* (for *Kothare*) *Ko Sthalare* (for *Keun Sthalare*)" etc (Panigrahi, 1995:7) Should this regional dichotomy in terms of language be an issue in the debate on classicism?

5. A few years ago, somebody made a nasty and superficial remark that a dancer dancing with a four-piece stitched sari solapith *tahia* and *bengapatia* and Pandit Raghunath Panigrahi lending his melodious voice is bound to be classical. Even though the remark is an irresponsible one, it has a psychological import. It means that Odissi dance as a form could be classical, but whatever a dancer dances wearing an Odissi costume and in the name of Odissi dance can never be classical. Most of the time, a discerning viewer could feel the classicism and he would not need a text to confirm his feelings.

6. "When the question of the recognition of Odissi came up last year at the Dance Seminar organized by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, against the wishes of the Chair, to accept Odissi as one of the great systems of classical dancing in India, one of the arguments advanced was that Odissi is a variety of *Bharata Natya*. This was accepted by all those present as true; and it was on this basis that Odissi has been accepted by the Akademi as equivalent with *Bharat Natya* from the point of view of the annual awards." (Charles Fabri 1969 reprinted 1981 : 64)

   Recently the position of Odissi dance vis-a-vis the Sangeet Natak Akademi has changed. The Sangeet Natak Akademi every year gives an annual award to Odissi dancers. This year (2006), the Sangeet Natak Akademi award has been given to Kashinatha Puja Panda who is a great exponent of Odissi music. Would it mean that Odissi music has received the classical status? In present-day Orissa, there is a clamour for recognising Odissi music as classical.

7. I am reminded of a pertinent issue which has a bearing on classicism in art. Sitakant Mahapatra, the then Secretary, Culture, Government of India, had submitted a manuscript on *Osabhilasa* to the Lalita Kala Akademi, New Delhi for publication. This manuscript had contained English translations of the seventeenth century Oriya poems and nineteenth century drawings. The manuscript was sent to Karl Khandalwala for review. Khandalwala was the Honorary Editor of Ancient publication. He gave an opinion that, since that was a manuscript belonging to 'folk' category (a text or a painting belonging to seventeenth century and after cannot be brought under the classical category was the thumb rule) it could not be published.

   The Akademi had funds only under the publication head meant for printing 'classical texts' and 'classical paintings'. I was then the secretary of the Akademi. I could sense a 'design' to get the publication delayed. I told Khandalwala Saheb that in the Orissan context the time frame for 'classical' and 'folk' cannot be held valid, because in Orissa 'tribal', 'folk', and 'classical' exist simultaneously and the 'so called' time sequence did not hold good. Finally, the book was published with the help of funds allotted for 'classical' texts.

8. If by being classical a performing art form is benefited, why not make attempts to get *Chhaunata, Prahladanatak, gotipua and sakhinata* recognised as classical? At a time when the whole country is in ferment over the extension of OBC quota to 27 per cent and more, such a move will completely annihilate the tribal and folk forms. But who will take up the issue with the Sangeet Natak Akademi? There will immediately be pro and anti groups fighting each other and the academic issue will snowball into a major political debate.

9. *Deshe deshe jananam yadruchya hridayavallabha /*
   Ganam cha vandanam nritya tad deshibhidhiyate //
   On the basis of this above description Odissi can be seen as our *deshinacha.* We do not have *marginacha.* Since it is *deshi,* we have given the name Odissi to it. Our father and forefathers have discussed this. (See *Odissi Dance* by Kalicharan Patnaik, 1955 and *Odissi Nrutya Alochana,* 1978, P 131)

10. "Aside from the sixty-six folios of the *Amarushataka pothi,* illustrated on both sides with a great number of scenes, which are part of the Museum Rietberg's collection in Zurich, we have been able to trace two other palm- leaf manuscripts that are stylistically very close to the Master of Sharanakula's work: The first is the *Ushavbhilasa* manuscript illustrated in colour, now in the Orissa State Museum (OSM); the second consists of nine folios of a coloured *Radhakrishnakeli pothi* that is dispersed. Four folios belong to the Suresh Neotia Collection in Varanasi, and two leaves from the Konard and Eva Seitz Collection were recently gifted to the Museum Rietberg Zurich, which already owned a third folio. Two more folios are in a private collection in Germany." (Eberhard Fischer and Dinanath Pathy 2006: 47)

11. "The Ganga Kings, who were responsible for the construction of the Jagannath Temple at Puri and the institution of dancers and singers in ritual of Puri temple, had matrimonial relations with Chola and Chalukya kings of the South. It was natural then to notice the impact of southern culture on Odissi." (Rajguru 1978: 51-52).

BOOK REVIEWS

Bards Ballads and Boundaries: An Ethnographic Atlas of Music-Traditions in West Rajasthan

Daniel Neuman, Shubha Chaudhuri with Komal Kothari;

Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2006

The folk musicians of south-western Rajasthan and their music form a subject very worthy of research and the book under review excites, therefore, eager anticipation. A study thereof, however, leaves one with mixed feelings.

First, the credit side.

The art of the Māngaṇiyārs and the Langās, in particular, has now acquired an avid international audience. The serious student has also benefitted from and is quite familiar with the writings of the late Komal Kothari in particular. The work under review is very welcome as it takes a pioneering step forward in calling to service the tools of systematic survey, tabulation and cartography to aid and carry forward the work so far done by observation and insight. In a sense it translates observation into fact and fact into visuals. To one familiar with the terrain and its music-makers it is a pleasure and an asset to see all those villages and all those people in maps and in photographs, some of which latter are really praiseworthy. Those who have any experience of this sort of work will appreciate the difficulties involved in collecting data from 2,111 individuals—about 6,000-plus people—in the face "of problems of the standard sociological type". (The authors have recounted as an additional problem the absence of official detailed maps, but the District Census Handbooks did provide Tehsil-level maps and both they and the District Gazetteers did contain District maps.)

The book provides many interesting sidelights and nuggets of information. For example, the information about the Huḍkals is a bonus (p. 311). The note about the Meghwāls and their music (pp. 190-2) is very ineresting. It would have gained in worth if the information about the fourfold division of their repertoire had been further probed and elaborated: parā, paśyanti, madhyamā and the vaikharī are the four successively ascendant levels of sound (nāda) in the philosophical thought of India and it is very exciting to hear of folk-song classifications purportingly conforming to these levels.

In sum, there is a lot which is praiseworthy as far as the ethnography and its cartography are concerned, except that there is some lack of consistency and some minor overall shortcomings, to be mentioned later.

The ethnographic context of the music also comes out well. The major shortcoming concerns the treatment of the music itself.

The music of the Māngaṇiyārs and the Langās is not classical either in its premise or its propounding: it is a parallel, sui generis phenomenon fathered by sheer hereditary and honed virtuosity to which have been added, to a varying degree, some imbibed or even aped classical or pseudo-classical elements.

Chapter 9 of the book does manage to bring out the essentials of this situation albeit in a laboured manner. But the treatment of the "gāyaki", the lok-rāgas (folk-melodies) involved, and the one principal indicator of the parallel classicism, the uncany feel for the notes, the intervals and the consonances exhibited in the tuning of complex instruments such as the Sindhi sārangi seems to betray less than adequate exposure, study and internalizing.

As regards the gāyaki or style of singing, in a work having mainly to do with the art of the

Māngaṇiyārs and the Langās, lack of reference to the Jāngḍā style of singing is inexplicable. Of the song-types rendered in this style only Soḷā is mentioned and it, too, is misspelt as Solu; there is no mention of Bhāwan and Ḍoḍhā. Coming to the folk and the "midway melodies", the Māṇḍ in its triple connotations as rāga, style and the individual compositions has not been adequately dealt with and the supposition that there are four types of Māṇḍ has not been examined. Māṇḍ, like much else in the music of western Rajasthan, cannot be fully understood without the conjoined context of Sindh and areas contiguous with it. The work duly takes note of this fact: ". . . there have been extensive historical and cultural relations with Sindh to the west and Kutch and Saurashtra (in Gujarat) to the south" (p. 10). But beyond this the theme has not been adequately pursued. As a result, but for passing references, adequate notice has not been taken of Shah Lateef (1689-1732), his "Risālo" and its "surs" (sargas or chapters), without reference to whom and which it is not possible to know about the Āsā-Sāmerī family of lok-rāgas of which our Māṇḍ was a member or a bequest. This omission also results, for example, in 'Rāṇo" being mentioned as a lok-rāga whereas it is nothing but Kutcchi-Kāfī, the label "Rāṇo" having its basis only in some compositions about the legend of Mūmal and Mahendra,the Rāṇā or Rāṇo of Amarkot, the subject, incidentally, of Shah Lateef's "Sur Mūmal" in his "Risālo" being in that rāga, viz Kutcchi-Kāfī. Similarly, there is no rāga called Sasvi (pp. 96-98): the word in Sassui and "Sur Sassui" in the "Risālo" assigns five surs—Sassui, Māzurī, Desī, Kohiyārī and Hussainī—to the tragic tale of Sassui. If the so-called Sasvi rāga is also known as Sāmerī (p.98), then the rendering should have been compared to one of Sāmerī and, ideally, zeroed down to the concerned song or songs in the concerned "Sur" in the "Risālo". It may be mentioned that Sāmerī, too, is known to the "Risālo" as Sāmunḍī and provides the title for "Sur Sāmunḍī".

Similarly, again, not only do the cardinal centrality and relevance of Āsā and its tremendous vogue right from Gujarat to Himachal Pradesh, and, of course, in western Rajasthan, go unnoticed but the book also unwarrantedly announces the lok-rāga's extinction (p.110): it is very much alive in expressions as varied as the Bhawāi and the balladeers' songs of Gujarat and the singing of the ballad of Pābūji in Rajasthan.

Extended reference to the legacy of the Sūfi poet-musician saints of Sindh is necessary not only for understanding the lok-rāgas in the music of western Rajasthan but also for a proper appraisal both of the names of some classical rāgas occuring in the talk and the repertoire of the purveyors of this music and the apparent classicism of their gāyaki. The "Surs" of the Shah included these classical rāga-names: Kalyāṇa, Yamankalyāṇa, Śri, Desī, Kāmod, Kedār, Sārang, Rāmkalī and Bilāwal. The Shah was served and accompanied by the musicians Atal and Cañcal. The Kalām of Shah Inat (c. 1623-1712) was arranged under 22 "Suruds" or modes of singing, the titles of which included these classical rāga-names; Kalyāṇa, Śri, Rāmkalī, Dhanāśrī, Jaitśrī, Bilāwal, Desī, Sārang, Toḍī and Kāmod. Thus, the imbibing of some trappings of classical music by these folk-musicians need not be ascribed only to contact with courts and towns: it may as well be traced back to the Sūfi saint-poets of Sindh. And, of course, Sindh also gave birth to or shared a whole bunch of lok-rāgas like Āsā, Sāmerī, Kohiyārī, Mānjh (the Māṇḍ of Sindh), Mārū, Karahal, Soraṭh, and Kutchhī-Kafī. Thus, the music of western Rajasthan has necessarily to be understood in the composite context of, at least, Sindh, Gujarat, and western Rajasthan. Just to give one example, in western Rajasthan Sārang is associated with Malhār (p. 102): Shah Lateef also resorted to Sārang to welcome the rainy season.

As regards tuning, the material given on p. 234

does not go a wee bit beyond what Komal Kothari and Sudha Rajhans had already provided around 1970, in "Cirmi", 1967, and the monograph about the Langās, 1972; on the other hand, it omits information about the tuning of the 8 jhārās (misspelt here as Johra) and confounds the reader by omitting to identify the tīvra Mā and the komal Nī. The concept of the Sadārang gammā, denoting a chromatic tuning, perhaps, has not been touched.

And now, some comparatively minor points concerning the book as a whole.

Use of diacritical marks may pose problems for the lay reader as well as the printing press. And yet it is a must in a work like this where a lot of vernacular terms are involved and their right pronunciation is crucial. The absence of such marks in this book creates a host of problems. To give just a few examples, the spellings used give no idea of the correct pronunciation (given in each case within brackets here): barabagh (Baḍabāgh), ratijaga (rātijagā), mata (māṭā), jati (jātī), khamp {khāmp), par (paṛ), kalam Sufi (Kalām Sufī), gali (gālī), and vani (vāṇī). "Nathuri sarangi" will make better sense when written as Nāthū-rī sārangī, i.e., sārangī named after Nāthū.

A difference is sought to be made between dhani (dhani:owner) and the dhani (ḍhāṇī: hamlet); but how is the reader supposed to distinguish one from the other is the absence of diacritical marks?

If it was found impossible or inadvisable to use diacritical marks, then the next best thing would have been to modify the spellings, where ncessary and possible, to convey elongation and stress as in fact done on p.143 in the case of Loor and Teej; but this, too, has not been done. For example, raga (melodic formula) would have been more comprehensible as raag (and *not* as rag, as suggested on p.149, because that will denote to the non-Hindi-speaking reader something entirely different.

Some avoidable errors of spelling, enunciation and pagination have also crept in. Jaimati becomes Jasvanti and "King of Ran", Ranka King" on p. 86. Gorakhnath is spelt as Goraknath (p. 192). Village Satto near Myajalar in district Jaisalmer becomes Santo in the maps on pages 79 and 197 and Sauto on p. 78. Sanu, the village of Fazla, becomes Sonoo both in the text and in the map on p. 162. On p.142 Kurjan (Demoiselle Crane) is spelt as Khurjan. Kankroli become Kankroh on p. 87. (It is another matter that this shrine does not really belong to this assembly of what are essentially "folk" shrines). On the same page Nohar (tehsil) become Nosar. Page numbers for all maps number 37 and onwards need to be incremented by 6; so do all tables number 28 and onwards. This seems to have been caused by a later insertion of the chapter "Small Times Big Spaces".

Some factual errors are also there. On page 87 Ramdeora is rightly ascribed to tehsil Pokran of district Jaisalmer. But on pages 192 and 198 it is assigned to Jodhpur district. The book states that the legend of Ḍholā-Marwaṇ does not form a part of the Ḍholā epic of the Braj region. However, the story in question does not find a place in the epic in question though it occurs as one subsidiary to that of Nala and Damayantī.

On p. 84 it is stated that "The Par Bhopa of Dev Narayan are not hereditary priests or performers", but on the very next page Balai performers are stated to be the "hereditary musicians of Gujar patrons", though on p. 78 it has been stated that in the case of Dev Narayan the patrons and Bhopa are generally of the same caste, i.e., Gujar.

As mentioned at the outset, the book is very welcome; it would have been even more so if, principally, its musicology had measured up to its ethnograhpy.

VIJAY VERMA

Antarnaad: Sur aur Saaz

Vijay Shankar Mishra

Kanishka Publishers, Delhi, 2004

471 pages, Rs 900

This is doubtless a work of singular value. As a record of interviews—generally pointed—with thirty-nine leading musicians, four fascinating essays on Bharat Ratna awardees, and seventeen honorific, yet truthful ones on those musicians who are no longer with us but whose memories we surely cherish, it is to my mind *the only book of its kind so far*, and hence its review too has to take a somewhat unusual form. I have gone through it more than once; I had to, because it is packed with very interesting material and is, at places, instructive and quite informative as well. It has not been easy for me to pick all its salient features, but here I have been helped, in part, by a close reading of two (of the three) prefatory notes, one by Professor (Mrs.) Krishna Bisht, a former Head of Delhi University's Faculty of Music and Fine Arts and herself a very competent musician and musicologist; and the other by Shri Anil Sinha which has given me such information as the author himself could not provide in his own autobiographical preface (pp.XIII-XVIII) which is, however, not only readable, but also revelatory of the author's innate humility. Luckily, some of the book's key features have been well chosen by Mrs. Bisht; my own reading of the work has confirmed them; and I may list them as follows:

a. It provides truthful accounts of the artistes' own experience, reflections on music, personal struggles and familial environment, and thus fills a lacuna in our concern with the world of music as it presently is.
b. It also presents some controversial views, such as the one relating to the origin of sarod, in such a balanced way that the reader is able to decide on his own as to which of them really makes sense.
c. It highlights our musicians' widely shared emphasis that the world of sangeet is utterly free from the taint of communalism.
d. Care has also been taken to determine the duty and responsibility of the media, the society and the government towards our music.
e. Finally, besides being very well written, the book is distinguished by the author's ability to put questions to the artistes in such a way that is sensible, penetrating and determined, but never impolite.

As for the author's *preface* (titled अंतर्नाद की अंतर्यात्रा) I find it, very likeable. It convinces me of his eligibility for writing a book of this kind. What is more, in acknowledeging the author's own indebtedness to those who have assisted and encouraged him, his preface not only reveals his innate humility but his uncanny eye for detail which is perhaps due to a basic demand of tabla-rhythm in which he specializes, namely, scrupulous attention to the proper execution and ordering of the bols which the art builds upon, so as to project their individual sonant uniqueness. What, however, lends exceptional value to the book is its potential to provoke the readers' own thinking, in addition to providing them with a good deal of interesting information and a far better idea of our musician's ability to think and of their sense of values. This many-sided utility of the work should be clearly borne out as I now proceed to deal with its actual content.

However, in so far as this content is very diverse, I propose to divide my reflections into separate segments as follows:

A. *Informative Passages*

Here, I will refer to those pages which provide such details about the lives and work of our musicians as deserve to be better known. Some of these pages recount incidents that are very likely to make the reader chuckle with delight; and some other would make him feel a little edified because of the nobility (or at least gentility) exuding from

the musicians' exemplary attitude or attempts to make sense of some present state of affairs in a very balanced way.

B. *Questions and Answers*

Under this head I will list mainly those pages where the more penetrating questions and satisfying answers occur, with occasional comments from my side to help the reader to react more readily to the verbal exchanges. The questioner, in each case, is the author himself; so, to refer to him, the latter Q should suffice; but in the case of respondents—the artistes interviewed—who are so many, individual names will have to be given . Where the QA duels are specially striking, some extracts may have to be cited. This should make us realize that quite a few of our better known musicians are not only good performers but watchful and balanced thinkers as well.

C. *Accord and Dissent*

This segment will draw the readers' attention to those pages which show two musicians giving utterance either to different views on the same subject or to common grievances or problems. Generally, however, most of the chapters call for thorough reading, just because they teem with interesting material.

A. As I said, I have in mind the many incidents described in the book but the most delightful of these, involving Sharan Rani (sarod) and the tabla maestro Ustad Ahmad Jan Thirakwa, occurs on p. 252; and the most gripping one, because of its sheer bizarreness, relates to a detail of Ustad Bismillah Khan's riyaz (p. 318-319). However, these are not the only incidents that make the work fascinating, and even a quick look at the following pages /paragraphs should keep the reader glued to the book.

The big, middle para on p.55 which speaks of a very queer challenge faced and met with 'devastating' effect by the tabla maestro, Pandit Kishan Maharaj; first para on p.77 in the chapter on Jairam Potdar, presently director of Kathak Kendra (New Delhi) who is widely known not only as a superlative harmonium accompanist, but for his painstaking researches in the field of Marathi Natya Sangeet; the first para on p.98 which recounts Tarun Bhattacharya's santoor recital as an invocation of peace for the souls of those who lost their lives in the World Trade Center cataclysm; very touching accounts of the impact of some memorable Odissi performances by Sanchita Bhattacharya (pp.104-105); p.161 which tells us how Buddhaditya Mukerji, one of our top sitarists, heaved a sigh of relief on being told that the rhythmic clapping which once greeted the end of his 5-minute recital in Yugoslavia was an expression of hearty applause, and not of disapproval as it generally is in the West; a similar rarity on p.180 where Manilal Nag, another sitar maestro, gratefully recalls how in his up-and-coming years, and at absolute variance with the practice today, he was open-heartedly acclaimed—and so encouraged—by such a senior artist as Pandit Omkarnath Thakur; and, on p.191, a quite heart-warming account of how our musicians, like Pandit Mohinder Sarin, are sensitive to our armed forces' sacrifices.

It would however be wrong to believe that the work being reviewed is good only at narrating incidents. It also projects our musicians' tendency to respond, sometimes a little waywardly, but mostly quite sensibly to searching questions, and generally with the requisite measure of poise. Good or bad, the answers are almost always provocative, the very first interview (with Ustad Abdul Halim Jaffer Khan, pp.3-11) being a fine example.

B. Q. Why is your Ālāpa so brief?

A.H.Jaffer: Ālāpa is really meant to preface dhrupad singing, not for sitar playing. Further, a vilambit gat provides ample ground for playing reposeful tonal phrases. Hence, a long and leisurely ālapa before *tāla*-bound playing is relatively unnecessary (p. 4).

Q. In the light of the fact that our

instrumentalists today vie with each other in relating their gharānā to the legendary Tansen, would you like to say something about your own gharānā?

A. Gharānā! Tansen! I openly declare that I and my baaj have nothing to do with Tansen. As for the word gharānā, it is to me quite vacuous. Nor do I attach any value to the gharānās as such. How are they necessary? Is not Carnatic music flourishing without being hemmed in by gharānās? It is really very painful that people have succeeded in dividing (the world of) sur and laya on the basis of gharānās.(5)

Now, such unusual answers are bound to provoke any thoughtful reader into many questions. Personally, I regard this maestro as a superlative virtuoso, but here, to be sure, his thinking is awry. In innovating his distinctive Jafferkhāni baaj, I ask, is he dividing the art of sitar playing (on the basis of *sur*, tāla and formal graces) or just diversifying it? If the different gharānās specialize in different rāgas, or if, without any damage to its grammatical schema, they (the gharānās) present the same rāga differently (yet winsomely) by availing of varyingly designed compositions and utilizing formal graces and texts of dissimilar look, meaning and emotive hue, do they not make us aware of the exhaustless aesthetic potential of one and the same rāga? Diversifying, I repeat, is not the something as dividing. (It was well after expressing myself thus that I came across Pandit Bhim Sen Joshi's supportive views, on p.171). And, finally, does this sitar maestro propose a re-shaping of Hindustani music on the model of its Carnatic colleague? Should our very way of singing the individual swara become similar to that of our south Indian vidwans? Above all, is it not a hard, unmistakable fact that it is essentially our gharānās that have preserved and brought out the limitless creative reaches of our music. If the art of painting has thrown up such diverse styles (or schools) in the West as Impressionism, Expressionism, Abstract expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism, and Minimalism, is this to be taken as a disruption of this visual art or as a proof of the infinite scope it provides for creativity? The desire to be innovative is perfectly fair; but a glib condemnation of an established tradition which has given us maestros of diverse, yet comparable excellence is quite as improper.

Yet, to be fair to the totality of this maestro's answers in this opening interview, I must add that his other utterances (in this chapter) make admirable sense, and that the way he emphasizes, with the help of an actual example, the absolute absence of communalism in the world of music (p. 9, 4th regular para) or the pointed way he bemoans the state of music in Pakistan (in the immediately following lines) are refreshing eye-openers.

However, not merely its opening chapter but the entire book is replete not just with provocative, and (at places) questionable answers, but also with quite a few spirited yet well argued and (at places) even illuminating rejoinders which bespeak of our musicians'—even tabla players'—ability to think and argue competently. Here, at once, I feel impelled to refer to Chapter 27 which records the interview with Prof. Rangnath Mishra who not only poses the sensible question why some reputed gharanas of tabla do not make use of the inky circle when it is so visibly a part of 'the right one' (215), but even questions the propriety of pronouncing yoga as yogā(214); and, what is more, even hints at the possibility that rhythm may be given a place of pre-eminence in sangeet because it is able to charm us without the aid of words and tones graded in a scale (218). But in so far as limitations of space prevent me from dwelling on all the questions and answers at length, I may dilate on just one or two 'interviews' more, and then quickly list those pages, may be even paragraphs, which contain some striking verbal interactions. See for example the very next chapter which records the interview with the sarod maestro,

Ustad Amjad Ali Khan:

Some pointed (at places, even caustic) questions (p. 21, 2nd para), and some very satisfying answers, without even a semblance of getting irked; expression of fine sentiments in respect of the ideal nature of music as also of sensible views on (a) creation of new rāgas (20,21), (b) right tabla accompaniment (21,22), (c) introduction of intervals in the course of a single recital (22,23), (c) fusion in the realm of music (though a much better view on this specific form of creativity has been put forth by Vishwa Mohan Bhatt on p. 233) and (d) on Ustad Bismillah Khan's own and other music lovers' attitude to his need for financial help (28-29).

However, the crowning touches here are provided, first, by the maestro's amazingly balanced remark that though houses of worship are not absolutely essential (because the locus of true religiousness is the human heart), it is yet very wrong to destroy them (29, last para); secondly, by due emphasis on communal amity (30); and, thirdly, by the singular but by no means insignificant remark that, even like the elements, music is not tied down to any particular religion, and that though it cannot satisfy hunger, music can certainly nourish the soul (31).

The next 'interview' projects some very sensible 'answers' by Ustad Asad Ali Khan, our only Rudra Veena expert (33-37). What the maestro says about the future of veena-playing in our country (34-35) should make us all sit up apprehensively. Luckily, however, some relief is provided by what we are told about adherence to the *guru-shishya paramparā* of teaching at I.T.C., Kolkata. The next interviewee, Ustad Aasheesh Khan, is likely to surprise the reader by his preferring not only Buddhadev Dasgupta, but Sharan Rani as well to the far better known, Amjad Ali (41). But what I have found difficult to digest is what Aasheesh Khan has said about A.R. Rahman (42). Luckily, however, satisfying views expressed during the course of interviews far outnumber the questionable ones.

In spite of being an acknowledged concert artist, Kalpana Komkali's very right emphasis on the value of a mother's role in the family (42-46); the courageous and quite proper rebuttal of Kumar Gandharva's view that tabla-playing cannot claim to be an independent art by Kishan Maharaj, the first ever tabla-maestro to be honoured with the Padma Vibhooshan award (50), and his quite warranted opposition to excessively slow and quick paces of laya in music, as also to over emphasis on the *shāstriya paksha* of this art (51); Prof. G.C. Srivastava's very sensible disagreement with the view that institutional teaching in music is not producing any worthwhile results (58)—a reaction which issues, if a little more spiritedly, also from Principal Madhup Mudgal (183-184); Gundecha Brothers' correct definition of the right way to sing jungalbandi (62)—a view which is not only echoed by the Rajan-Sajan duo, but quite properly highlighted by them in the context of interpersonal relations taken quite generally (198); the many inconveniences of everyday living to which our topmost musicians are subject to, as listed not only by Fahimuddin Dagar (p.148), but by the famed Varanasi duo of vocalists, though the latter alone highlight the matter against the rampant craze for the game of cricket (204); Gopal Chandra Panda's revelation of the three rāgas and the three specific gamakas which distinguish Odissi classical music as rooted in the compositions of Jaideva (67) (and of which I have no knowledge at all); Sanchitā Bhattacharya's sensible explanation of why an Odissi recital generally begins with *bhoomi praṇām* (101), and her moving appeal to our political rulers (106); Principal Madhup Mudgal's balanced remarks on the differring value of words in classical and *sugam* sangeet (184, 186); Pdt. Mohinder Sareen's explanation of why exactly such sangeet should be regarded as *sugam* (188) and his mention of a little known, but important detail which the composer of *sugam* sangeet has to bear in mind,

that is, the precise moment where the singer may have to breathe restfully (190), and (in *my* view) a rightful protest against the continuing tendency to overrate K.L. Saigal as a singer (195).

It would however be wrong to believe that what I have said so far, on the basis of my first reading of the book, is all that makes the work fascinating and richly informative. The truth rather is that subsequent readings of the book have struck me with a number of other facts and arguments which I just cannot help but referring to.

Ustad Ahmad Jan Thirakwa's 25-year long stint as a tabla accompanist with Bal Gandharva in various plays, and his noteworthy open-hearted admission that he had not seen any other vocalist adapting variations of laya to expression of different rasas as effectively as Bal Gandharva could (80); admission of the intrinsically untuneful tone of *ga* and *dha* as they sound on a harmonium, along with an expert player's device to cover the defect, by such an admittedly competent harmonium accompanist as Jairam Potdar (90); an account of the main reason why vocalists have often preferred the harmonium to sarangi as an accompanying instrument (91-92); the non-aesthetic worries of today's professional musicians who no longer enjoy any royal patronage (95); a C.D. for de-stressing (produced by Tarun Bhattacharya) which is selling well even in foreign countries (97); Buddhaditya Mukerji (the sitarist) as the first Indian musician to perform in the British House of Commons (153); very interesting information (provided by Bhajan Sopori) about the musical ancestry of santoor, as also about the artist's own innovations in re-structuring the instrument and his distinctive playing of some taans (and use of *chikāri*) which is possible only on a santoor (167-168); Pandit Bhim Sen Joshi's inability to characterize any of his recitals as memorable, because he still sees some lacunae in his singing (174); a somewhat similar expression of the same inability by the famous violinist Dr. N. Rajan (133); and Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar's contribution to the propagation of dhrupad, and his emphasis on three such formal graces as I had never heard of earlier, namely, *padchedan, patjhad,* and *patākā* (136).

C. Be it noted that, on one point at least, this dhrupad maestro entirely disagrees with another very senior member of the Dagar family. According to Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar, the word *bāni* (and its 4/5 forms) are just the product of some individual's whims (138, last line). On the other hand, Ustad Fahimuddin Dagar insists that the Dagar *bāni* alone is that pure *bāni* which incorporates and builds upon all the essentials of sangeet. Both, however, agree in maintaining that it is better to regard dhrupad as an epitome of ancient Indian cultural values than as a mere genre of classical vocal music (136, 146).

All this should be enough to sustain the readers' interest in the book . Yet I cannot close this review without inviting their attention to what I regard as a superlative instance of how one's commitment to music can surpass every other interest. Once, when Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan, father of Amjad Ali, met the then President of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad, and when the First Citizen anxiously enquired if the ageing maestro needed any help, the latter's ready answer was: 'Sir! Just protect rāga darbāri, please; it is facing mutilation; and now, Sir, I beg leave to go—to be on time for namāz (17).

The book abounds in such fascinating material, and its multifarious richness make us feel beholden to the author.

S. K. SAXENA

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