



Dr. V. Raghavan reading his paper.

THE DANCE • A Brief Day to SEMINAR • Day Account

The Seminar on the dance arts of India, the first of its kind to be organised by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, was inaugurated at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, on March 30, 1958, by Dr. P.V. Rajamannar, Chairman of the Akademi. Over 350 artists and 40 scholars and critics participated in the Seminar.

The Secretary of the Akademi, Miss Nirmala Joshi, in her report, outlined the objects and ideals of the Akademi and narrated its various activities and achievements.

Dr. Rajamannar, in his opening address, pointed out the existing spirit of rivalry, intolerance and misunderstanding between the different schools or systems of music and dance all over the country and pleaded for more sympathy, understanding and appreciation of the various styles that existed in this vast land. His earnest appeal to all true lovers of Indian culture was to develop a sense of respect and

regard for authentic traditions, irrespective of linguistic and regional differences or attachments.

“India has been famous for its spirit of tolerance in religious matters”, he pleaded, “and I do not see why a similar spirit of tolerance cannot be shown in matters of art, particularly music and dance.”

A Misnomer

Emphasising the need for new forms, Dr. Rajamannar asked that, apart from the preservation of old traditions, was there no scope for the creation of new forms? His answer was ‘yes’, “provided the inspiration is genuine and the creation is authentic and original and not a mere imitation”. He was of the view that the word ‘Bharata Natyam’ as it was used now, was a misnomer for the following two reasons:

- (1) “Natyam”, he said, “is not a very appro-

priate term for the solo dance which goes by that name”, and (2) “even if Natyam can be used loosely for mere dance, one cannot say that this is the only dance form, which is according to Bharata” and, therefore, he was of the opinion that in the revival of the interest in dance art, greater attention should be paid to the protection of dance dramas as envisaged by Bharata in *Natya Sastra*.

Referring to the preservation of old traditions, he posed the question whether there was any scope for the creation of new forms and replied in the affirmative. He said that the infinite variety of folk dances in the country had enough material for any gifted choreographer to create new dance forms.

Dr. V. Raghavan, of Madras University, one of the Directors of the Seminar, thanked the Chairman, Dr. Rajamannar, for his very illuminating address on the opening day which, he felt, would be a sort of guide for the deliberations of the Seminar.

Dr. Raghavan's Paper

In the afternoon session of the opening day, Dr. V. Raghavan read a scholarly paper on Bharata Natyam. He covered a vast field and took his listeners to the distant past of India's history and traced the development of the art of dance as evolved and practised in India for over 5,000 years. He quoted profusely from various classical treatises in Sanskrit and Tamil to show the various styles and techniques developed during this long period and dealt with some aspects of them in more detail.

“Bharata Natya”, he said, “was an extraction and an essence of the interpretative art of Indian dance and could be claimed as one of the greatest creations of the artistic genius of the Nation”. As solo dance, as different from other forms of dance drama, Bharata Natyam was the national dance art *par excellence*, he said.

After discussing the various changes that had crept into this ancient art, he said: “while none can oppose new creative activity, mere change due to insufficient understanding of the traditional pattern cannot lead to any progress. The transposition of certain items of recital, according to one's fancy or to suit exigency like dress and other miscellaneous pieces and

dances newly added, may not appeal to all. Similarly the attempt to short-circuit the process of fresh original creative activity by using new types of song—a *Tanavarna* or a *Kirtana* of the Trinity—cannot be commended. These songs were there when the great dance masters were moulding and setting the standards for this art. If they did not prefer these, we should think well before we take them up. The *Padas* cannot be substituted by other kinds of songs, the speciality of songs intended for *Abhinaya* lies in the scope they give for emotional elaboration, richness of feeling and certain elabouration and correctness in the depiction and unfolding of the sentiment.”

Talking of *Abhinaya*, he said: “this art of Bharata Natya has a feature which marks it off from the dances of other nations in a manner as no other feature does it. It is an interpretative expression through an elaborate system of *Abhinaya* which could run close to the text of the song, word by word”.

Stage Performances

Referring to the actual performances on the stage, he regretted the slovenliness and careless manner in which most of the dances were presented today. Taking the first item in a performance of Bharata Natyam, *Alarippu*, he said “the dancer when she goes back should do so with grace, without jerk, jumpy or stamping of steps and pointed out the uselessness of trying to enrich the movements of *Alarippu* by bringing into it unnecessary *adavus*.” He pointed out that “in *Jatiswara* also, where music appears, the arms should move or whirl and the body bend or rise according to the curves and sways of the *Raga* and its *Svarajati*. Lifting of the arm, the *rechaka* of the neck, wheeling, lifting of the leg and stepping should accord with the *gamakas* of the *Ragas* as well as the *aksarakalas* of the *Tala*; one cannot just thrust the hand in haste.”

He regretted the unfortunate appearance of a new art pattern that one saw in modern recitals which were completely divorced from music and resembled the play-back stars of the screen. Talking of *Abhinaya*, he said: “the dancer could and should then unfold her *Abhinaya* in a gradual and artistic manner. Bharata has set forth this style of gradual unfoldment of *Abhinaya* and Kalidasa has offered his brilliant gloss on it through *Malavika* and *Pandita Kausiki*”.



Shrimati Devika Rani Roerich, Shrimati Anjani Bai Malpekar and Shrimati Menka photographed during a session of the Dance Seminar.

Six stages

He then referred to the six stages in this; the first was *Suca*; the emotion had entered the artist and permeated her limbs which now tingled with it. The limbs had not yet started expression, all the same a fresh glow or affectation had shown itself all over the personality; the words of the songs were still inside but the meaning was just suggested or indicated here; hence the name *Suca*. The second stage was *Ankura*, the first sprouting of expression should be essential and brief and they were the first effects showing themselves on the facial features.

Talking of *Karanas*, he said: "they are components of the larger sequences called *Angaharas*. Without understanding this truth that it is a moment in a flowing movement, if one flings a *Karana* in, one is doing violence to the art" and, therefore, he pleaded for caution and patient study in the use of this *Karana* by bringing about the needed reformation along the right lines. He suggested not only the starting of a dance teachers' college but also to get together some of the foremost living *Nattuvanars* and, with their help, framing a new system of syllabus for training youthful dancers.

The second paper, which Dr. Raghavan read on April 1, was a sequel to his first paper dealing with *Uparupakas* and *Nrityaprabhandhas*. He,

again in his scholarly way, dealt with the subject fairly exhaustively and quoted extensively from some of the authoritative treatises of ancient days.

In conclusion, he asked what were the results of this long sweep taken by us; he answered them by saying that:

1. We know from this that the ancient Indian stage was rich and had numerous forms of performances in its repertoire;
2. the art of dance was not static, but was putting forth new forms continuously;
3. in the creation of these fresh forms, the classical authors took freely popular forms and built them up in the classical idiom;
4. the regional and popular elements enriched the dance art with their own contributions which were far from being ignored and utilised.

Shri Krishna Rao's Paper

The second paper that was read on the opening day by Shri U. S. Krishna Rao of Mysore University was on "Modern Trends in Bharata Natyam". After making the usual observations of the origin, antiquity and the



Kumari Padmalochani demonstrating Shri K. P. Krishnamoorthy Pillai's paper.

various styles of Bharata Natyam, he referred to certain changes now coming into vogue in present-day recitals.

He referred to the *Pancharatna Kirtanas* being converted into dance-*varnams* by teachers like Shri Vazhavoor Ramiah Pillai. *Tana-varnam*, as taught in Pandanallur School, and incidentally referred to certain experiments of his own like the *Adidano Ranga* and *Kaliya Mardana*, in Kanarese. He was of the view that the Pandanallur style was known for its crisp and brisk *adavus* and *adavujathis*; Ramiah Pillai's school for its spectacular rendering of *thirmanams* and *Jethis*; and the Madras school for its grace and delicacy of movements.

He made a reference also to what he called "Mysore Style", with its rich variety and intri-

cate foot-work. A special feature of this Mysore style, he added, was that its *Muktaya adavus* were rendered differently from that of the Tanjore School and in the *Abhinaya* there was a preponderance of Telugu *Javalis*. Considering the present-day popularity of Bharata Natyam and its ramifications all over India, he felt that group dancing or ballet form of Bharata Natyam would be more welcome than the solo type of dancing.

He referred to the experiments along these lines by Shrimati Rukmini Devi of Kalakshetra and Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai of Ahmedabad. He suggested the introduction of classical dance in schools and universities, facilities for research and scope to evolve new systems of presentation, provided the teachers had the courage to go away from the time-honoured system prevalent today.

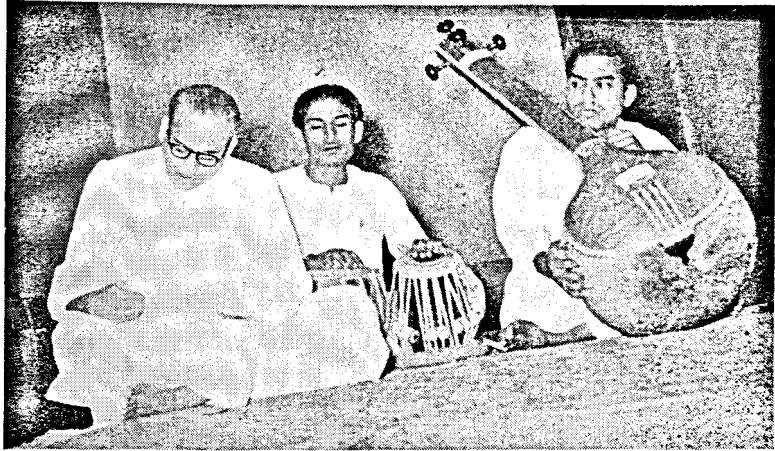
Discussion

Much discussion did not follow these two papers, except a question by Shri A. C. Pandeya as to the period when the name Bharata Natyam was given to this particular type of dancing in South India. Dr. Raghavan replied that the name was given to it in recent times, while the old name for it in the South was *Sadir* or *Nautch* or *Dasiattam* or *Koothu*. Shri Vinod Chopra suggested that considering that Bharata Natyam included all major schools of dances in the country, why not give a new name to this South Indian School, Dr. Raghavan replied that there was no need for any such change in the name as people in the country had got used to this particular name for this particular type of dance.

Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai asked Dr. Krishna Rao what was there so special in Mysore style of dancing which was not found in the Tanjore School, or the Madras School? He affirmed that there was a lot of difference, and on the next day he tried to demonstrate the same.

On the second day, Kumari Roshan Vajifdar, a pupil of Pandanallur Krishnamurthi Pillai, read a paper on "Nayikas as a theme for the Bharata Natyam Classical Dance Style" and demonstrated it with suitable *Abhinayas* by rendering two songs from Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*. This was followed by a paper on "Jethis in Bharata Natyam" by Shri K. P.

Shri M. S. Kallianpurkar
reading his paper on Kathak
dancing.



Krishnamoorthy Pillai, and was ably demonstrated by his pupil, Kumari Padmalochani.

Shri'Appa Rao's Paper

In the afternoon, Shri V. Appa Rao read a long and interesting paper on "Kuchipudi School of Dance", tracing the origin and history of this special form of Bharata Natyam as practised in Andhra Desa. He pointed out the similarities between this particular type of dancing and that of the Melathur type as practised in the Tamil district of Tanjore. He felt that for some unaccountable reason, this art was being ignored and not encouraged in South India and was not even considered a classical type of art. Smt. Rukmini Devi corrected him by saying that Kuchipudi dance had always been considered as a classical dance art and another form of Bharata Natyam.

Kumari Kanchanamala later gave a short demonstration of Kuchipudi style of dancing.

An interesting paper on "Melaprapti" by Shri T. K. Swaminath Pillai was read and demonstrated by one of his students. This form of art, which was in vogue for centuries in the temples of South India had long been given up, and he pleaded for a revival of the same. It was the practice in olden times to do *melaprapti* before the actual recital of Bharata Natyam began with its first item of *Alarippu*. The demonstration included *Shodasopachara* as it used to be performed inside the temple till very recently.

The highlights of the programme on April 1 were a paper on "An Analytical Study of Kathak Dance" by Shri M.S. Kallianpurkar, with

demonstrations by such master dancers as Shri Shambhu Maharaj, Shri Lachhu Maharaj and Shri Birju Maharaj, and an *Abhinaya* exposition by Smt. Bala Saraswathi and *Jethi* demonstrations by Kumari Priyamvada.

Kathak Dance

The subject of Kathak Dance was dealt fairly exhaustively with appropriate demonstrations at their proper places which enhanced the value of the paper. Dr. D. G. Vyas's paper on "Kathak Dance and Classical Dance Tradition of Northern India", was read before Shri Kallianpurkar's paper, and covered also the traditional forms that existed in this particular style in Northern India.

The demonstration of the *Jethis* by Kumari Priyamvada, a talented pupil of Smt. Bala Saraswathi, was rendered with intelligent understanding and in telling sculptural poses. Smt. Bala Saraswathi later rendered two *Padams* one in *Edukula Kambodhi* and the other, her most popular repertoire, *Krishnane Begana Baro*, in her inimitable style.

Smt. Rukmini Devi's Plea

The fourth day session began with a very interesting discourse on "Bharata Natyam Shastra in Practice" by Shrimati Rukmini Devi Arundale, of Kalakshetra. She spoke at length of her own training in Bharata Natyam by great teachers like Smt. Gauri Devi and Shri Pandanallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, and emphasised the need for students being trained according to shastric traditions. Her emphasis was on the spiritul aspect of Bharata Natyam



Shri Birju Maharaj demonstrating Shri Kallianpurkar's paper on Kathak Dance.

and she deplored the modern tendencies to step down that aspect by the rising generation of dancers. To her *Bhakti*, as expressed through *Shringara Rasa*, was more the true character of Bharata Natyam than mere *Shringara Rasa* as expressing the physical side of human emotions.

It was her practice, she said, to avoid such of the *Padams* and *Javalis* that emphasised this physical aspect of *Shringara Rasa* and she also avoided such of the *Padavarnams* that were composed and sung in praise of kings.

Smt. Bala Saraswathi questioned this eschewing of certain songs arbitrarily. To her also, she said *Shringara Rasa* was a very vital element in the *Bhava* representation in this art.

Dr. Rajamannar's View

An interesting discussion followed this, in which the Chairman, Dr. P.V. Rajamannar, intervened and said the songs of Jaya Dev and Kshetragna were full of *Shringara Rasas* and they did not, in any way, suggest unspiritual qualities. He said whatever might

be the mental reactions to the problem of sex in Modern India, in the past, Indians were neither ashamed nor afraid of it. He instanced Mithuna sculptures on the walls of Hindu temples and the exquisite paintings dealing with *Shringara Rasa* as proof of his statement. He said when a song from Gita Govinda was rendered, the dancer should try to keep in mind the spirit in which that song was composed by the author.

Smt. Rukmini Devi replied to the points raised in the discussion and said she was not for the elimination of the sex element either in the songs or in the *Abhinaya* but pleaded for presenting them with certain amount of dignity and purity. She said she was not against sex as such but against sexiness, which was the lower aspect of *Shringara Rasa*.

Shri A. C. Pandey's paper on "Bharat Nritya (Natwari)" created some interest among the students of this dance and also to his suggestion that the present name Kathak should be changed to Bharat Nritya (Natwari). Shri Pandeya felt that the songs for Kathak dance should revert more to *Dhrupad* and *Thumri* styles. Kumari Sundri Chablani a pupil of Shri Kallianpurkar, demonstrated certain aspects of the Kathak Dance.

Kumari Priyamvada, a disciple of Smt. Bala Saraswathi, presenting "Adavus".



Shri Projesh Banerji's Paper

The afternoon session opened with a very informative paper by Shri Projesh Banerji on the different kinds of folk dances that were prevalent in Uttar Pradesh. He covered quite a vast field in this subject and referred to some hitherto unknown types of folk dances found in Northern India.

After this, the Seminar considered and accepted a number of resolutions and recommendations presented to the Seminar by the participants, the most important of them being the starting of a training college for dance-masters, scholarship and financial aid to deserving artistes, exchange of visits by dancers from one region to another, the publication of some or all the papers read in the Seminar. This was followed by a demonstration of *Navarasas* by Guru Kunju Kurup, as practised in Kathakali. He was later requested to demonstrate a small piece from his well-known dance item known as *Kuchela Upagyanam*.

Guru Gopinath, of Natanaiketan in Madras, demonstrated the training in Kathakali by three of his students and showed the different *Kalasama* and *Hashtas* that had long been in



Shrimati Rukmini Devi Arundale reading her paper

use in traditional Kathakali dance with their appropriate gestures ; and himself illustrated, as the last item, a well-known Kathakali presentation of the story of the "Bee and the Elephant".

Prof. Humayun Kabir's Plea

The Union Minister for Culture, Prof. Humayun Kabir, then addressed the Seminar. In the course of his address he said that in his opinion, the tradition in dance art or any other form of art was not a mere repetition or imitation but really a recreation, which meant not a monotony in art but a continuity of it. Art, he said, should be unique and at the same time universal and the aim and object of this Akademi should be to bring about this uniqueness and the universality of art.

He made it clear to the Seminar that the Akademies should be autonomous bodies, with very little interference in their activities from the Government. He said, like the make-up man and stagecraft man in a play production, the Government should be in the background and the artistes should be given complete freedom for their expression and creative activity.

Two interesting and informative papers on "Manipuri Dance", a lengthy paper on the "Dance Tradition in Assam", an illustrated talk on the "Ritual Dances of South



Kumari Sarada demonstrating Smt. Rukmini Devi's paper

India”, a short paper on the “Music in the Dance-Drama of Tagore” and a paper on the “Literature and Other Sources of Indian Classical Dance”, were the features of the session on the fifth day. The last paper on the “Literature and Other Sources of Indian Classical Dance” by Shri K. Vasudev Shastri, Curator of the Tanjore Saraswati Mahal Library, was taken first. After the usual references to the origin, antiquity and historical background of the art of Bharata, Shri Shastri referred to the numerous sources that were available even now for a proper study and understanding of this ancient art and named the many texts that were available in different languages in all parts of India.

He made special references to the *Natya Sastra* of Silalin, *Sangita Samaya Sara* of Parsvadeva, *Shringara Prakasa* of Vira Bhallata, the well-known *Sangita Ratnakara* of Nandikesvara, *Nrittaratnavali* of Jayasenapati, *Sangita Damodaram* of Subhankara, *Sangita Darpana* of Damodara Misra, *Anumapatnam* (name of author not given), *Sangita Makaranda*, compiled by Vedasuri and *Sangita Saramrta* of King Tuljaji of Tanjore and other texts in Tamil and Telugu, and pleaded for a proper editing of these works not only for library but for giving theoretical knowledge to practising dancers.

Manipuri Dance

The paper on “Manipuri Dance” by Guru Amubi Singh and Pandit Atombapu Sharma gave interesting information on the origin, the history, the different techniques and styles of this art. They named the following principal types of Manipuri Dance :

1. Augrihangen,
2. Chingkheifol,
3. Ke ke ke or Thabol Chongbi,
4. Lai haraoba,
5. Natapala Kirtana,
6. Rasa,
7. Shan shenba and
8. Khubak ishei.

They pointed out the important effects of Manipuri Dance on the dancer himself, which



Demonstration of an “Adayu” used in Kathakali presented by a member of Guru Gopinath’s troupe.

were due to the production of religious ecstasy through *Bhakti Rasa*. To create this effect was the primary purpose of the dance, they asserted. This paper was later illustrated by suitable demonstrations.

This paper was followed by an equally interesting and informative paper on “Manipuri Dancing” by Smt. Nayana Jhaveri of Bombay. Assisted by her two sisters, she demonstrated the various salient features of both the *Lasya* and the *Tandava* styles of the art. The demonstration included the various movements of the body and the feet with their different *Lasya* and *Tandava* types to be seen in *Chali*, *Bhangi Parengs* and *Pungol Jagoi*. Brief references were made to costumes, make up; and finally Smt. Jhaveri herself illustrated the *Navarasas*. “Dancing in Manipuri”, she said, “has been fulfilling its functions to the fullest throughout the centuries, in relation to both individual and the society. To the individual, it has brought spirituality and to the society, solidarity through purest delight”.

Dr. Maheswar Neog’s Paper

The last paper to be read and demonstrated in the forenoon of the fifth day of the session was a very lengthy and interesting paper on the “Dance Tradition in Assam” by Dr. Maheswar



Shri K. Vasudev Shastri reading his paper.

Neog. He traced the origin of the art of dance in Assam, (*Pragjyotisha* or *Kamarupa* as it was known in ancient days) to the time of Valmiki, and traced its growth and development through the intervening centuries. He referred to the incentive given for its revival by Rabindra Nath Tagore and the interest taken by Visva Bharati scholars like Dr. P.C. Bagchi. In his opinion, there should be more than 10 classical types of dances and not four as it was often claimed if *Natya Sastra* and *Abhinaya-Darpana* were to be considered as authoritative sources.

He referred to the Vaishnava influence in the dance arts of Orissa, Manipuri and Assam and traced their historical background. He classified the present dance forms that existed in Assam into three categories, "The Nati Style of Temple Dance", "Neo-Vaishnava Ojha Pali Dance" and "Non-neo-Vaishnava Ojha Pali Dance". He made a reference to the Satra dancing which was evolved towards the end of the 15th century by the Vaishnava saint and reformer, Sankaradeva. Other dances referred to were Rasar Naach, a kind of Rasliila, Yudhar Naach and Jhumuras. Some aspects of these dances were later illustrated by a group of dancers who came from Assam. An interesting feature of one of the items was the interpretation of *Dasavatar* through that technique.

In the afternoon session, Shri Mohan Khokar, Head of the Department of Dance,

Baroda University, read a paper on the "Ritual Dances of South India" and later illustrated it with lantern slides. "South India", he said, "is the home of a number of exclusive religious usages, and these also include several types of ritual dances. These dances are practised more or less throughout the Peninsula, but particularly in Malabar, Cochin, Coorg, Tamilnad and South Kanara".

He classified the Malabar dance into three categories:

1. Dances in honour of Bhagvati;
2. Healing Dances;
3. Dances for Serpent-worship.

The general name for these ritual dances, as practised in Malabar, was *Thaivattam*, mainly in connection with the worship of the Goddess Bhagvati. The dancers were called by such names as Gulikan, Gurikanmar, Bhairavan, Koodangurikal, Kuttichattan, Karnavar, Puttan, Chamudi and Kurumba. Another type of ritual dance practised by the people living in the remote parts of Malabar and Cochin was known as *Malayan*, which was also a kind of dance for driving away evil spirits. These dances were usually performed in the stillness and darkness of the night.

Snake Dance

The Snake Dance, known as *Pambukali*, was connected with the cult of snake worship. In Cochin, such castes as the Parayans, the Velans, the Panans and the Ishuvans had their own type of dances for Bhagvati worship. The dance practised by the Panans was known as *Panakali*. In the adjoining state of Coorg were to be found similar types of ritual dances, where sacrifice of pigs was a very important element.

"South Kanara has another form of ritual dance known as *Kulia*. The dancer begins in slow tempo and steadily works his way up till finally he surrenders himself to a kind of abandoned frenzy. After the climax of his performance has been reached, he ceases to dance and stands as if in a daze. It is then that the spectators go to him by turn and ask him various questions about themselves. His words are treated as divine and prophetic and accepted with full faith. At the end of the entire proceedings, the people give fruits, flowers and nuts

as offerings to the dancer who represents the demon-god they hold in veneration”.

Tamilnad has been known for its variety of spiritual dances. The two better-known are the *Karagam* and *Kavadi*. *Karagam* dance is usually performed before the monsoon in every village and town to propitiate the rain-god and at times these performances last for several nights. *Kavadi* dance is usually performed by devotees and priests who undertake a vow to go on pilgrimage to places like Palani, Tirutanni, the shrines of God Subramanya. Varieties of *Kavadi* dances, such as Subramanya Kavadi, Coconut Kavadi and Sugarcane Kavadi, all these are types of ritual dances as known and practised in South India from time immemorial.

Shri Santidev Ghose read a short paper on “Music in Dance-Dramas of Tagore” and illustrated it by reciting a portion of Tagore’s Valmiki-Pratibha and later, one of the girl artistes rendered a short song from Tagore’s musical drama, “Chitrangada.” This was, however, illustrated not in Manipuri but Bharata Natyam style.

Shri Devilal Samar’s Paper

Shri Devilal Samar opened the 6th day of the session with an informative paper on “Folk Dances of Rajasthan”. After a few preliminary remarks about the tribes that lived in this region, he proceeded to describe the numerous types of Rajasthani Folk Dances that were in vogue even today. He divided them into two main groups: (1) Community Folk Dances and (2) Professional Folk Dances.

Under the first head, he described the dances known as *Ger*, which was usually performed by the Bhils on Holi festival days; *Ghoomra* dance, meant for festivals and special occasions in which even women participated; the religious dance-drama of the Bhil’s known as *Gauri*, a dance of the rainy season; a dance of the hill tribes that lived in Abu and Sirohi, known as *Valar*. Though it was essentially a dance performed by men, women also took part occasionally; *Geeder* dance, of the Shekhavati area of Rajasthan, performed during the Holi festival; *Ghoomra* was considered as the national dance of Rajasthan and was performed by women during all festivals and ceremonies; a group dance performed in the same region



Guru Kunchu Kurup, Guru Amubi Singh and Pandit Atombapu Sharma photographed at a session of the Dance Seminar.

known as *Dhamal*; *Dandiyan*, a dance in which sticks were used as in other parts of India; the dances of Sansis and Kanjara, both tribal dances; the dance of the Snake Charmers and the *Rasiyas* of Bharatpur, which were sung and danced in the month of *Phagun*. He made a reference also to a dance by children performed during Ganesh Chaturthi in the Shekhavati region, known as *Chok Chandni*.

Under the second head, 'Professional Folk Dances', he described briefly the *Bhavai* type danced by several communities in Rajasthan; the ballet type performed by the Kamar tribes known as *Terahtal*; *Kachehi Ghori*, a kind of dummy-horse dance like the Tanjore one; warrior type of dance known as *Pabuji-Ki-Phar*; and the *Dhol* dances of Jalore performed by the Sargaras of Jalore.

He referred also to the different types of dance-dramas, like *Turra-Kalangi*, a style developed in Undaipur area a hundred years ago; another common type prevalent all over Rajasthan known as *Rasdhari*; *Kuchamani Khayal*, *Khayals* of Chirawa and Shekhavati; *Ramate* of Bikaner and Jaisalmer and the dance-drama known as *Gandharva*, which was now almost extinct. This paper was later illustrated by a film show.

Smt. Shrimati Tagore's Paper

The second speaker for the day was Smt. Shrimati Tagore, a student of Santiniketan and a pupil of Rabindra Nath Tagore. She read a paper on "Tagore's Dance-Drama," as presented by Santiniketan students, first at Santiniketan and later all over India. She referred to such earlier musical plays as *Barsha-Mangal*, *Vasantotsava*, *Seshbarshan*, *Ritu-Ranga* and other musical pieces. *Chitrangada*, *Syama* and *Chandalika* were dance compositions specially composed for dance-dramas which were quite popular in his days.

She made a reference to the introduction of Manipuri, Kathakali, Bharata Natyam and other techniques in his dance-dramas.

Describing the high aesthetic character of Tagore's dance-dramas, Smt. Shrimati Tagore said: "Like a master-weaver, Rabindra Nath gathers the threads, selecting and blending rhythms and moods, dance-sequences and melodies, emotions and words, and weaves them together into a harmonious whole. Songs and dance



Demonstration on Smt. Nayana Jhaveri's paper.

rhythms and words are here so interdependent that one without the other becomes meaningless and at times almost ridiculous. Rabindra Nath's dramas are, therefore, to be taken in their entirety; to appreciate them, they must be seen and heard. Tagore's dance-dramas have predominantly female characters, Manipuri and Kathakali being the two main dance techniques used in his plays".

She emphasised the importance given by Tagore to the artistic production of plays on the stage and the valuable contribution made by him in its improvement by devising and designing beautiful costumes, suitable texts and proper lighting effects. For, to Tagore, atmosphere was more important than the dance or play itself and to create that atmosphere, he had the services of such great artistes as Nanda Lal Bose, Abanindranath Tagore and his own daughter-in-law, Smt. Pratima Debi. In all his dance-dramas, he was never afraid to introduce even foreign elements if they served his purpose.

There was a short Kathakali recital in the

traditional style by Shri Gopinath dealing with *Keechaka Vadha*.

Shri K. S. Karanth's Paper

The morning session's last paper was on "Yakshagana" by Shri K. Shivaram Karanth. The earliest reference to this dance-form of *Yakshagana* in Kannada went to 1105 A. D. and 1185 A.D. though in a disparaging way, he complained. He traced the further development of this art during the 16th and 17th centuries and referred to the contribution made by the early writers, and dancers of *Yakshagana*. The themes for the dance-drama were usually stories from the Vishnu Purana, the Shiva Purana and other religious stories.

He made a special reference to the peculiar features of the costumes worn by the *Yakshagana* dancers and regretted the bad taste that had slowly crept into it in modern times. Being an open-air show, there was no special stage arrangements or curtains or decors except a 20 ft. by 20 ft. enclosure marked by poles or leaf decoration. These dancers were mostly farmers from villages and they performed in temples during the months of December to May. There were no regular schools to teach this art anywhere in Konkan and if this art was to be saved, he suggested, efforts should be made to encourage and foster *Yakshagana* by getting more troupes trained as in other dance arts in India. Later, there was a demonstration by one of the *Yakshagana* dancers in gorgeous costumes.

Shri S. S. Paranjpe's Paper

In the afternoon session, Shri S. S. Paranjpe read a paper on the "Dance Tradition in Maharashtra and Konkan." Maharashtra, he said, had been from ancient times the repository of traditional folk dances. Though classical dance art was practised in Maharashtra, the girls dedicated to god known as *Muralis* were the traditional dancers.

Some of the dances performed by tribes, like the Gond, the Bhil, Thakur and Katkari were named after the instruments they used, such as *Dholacha Naach*, *Tamboricha Naach*, *Tarapicha* and so on. The dance-form known

as *Dandar* was practised by low class people of Vidarbha; the fishermen's dance known as *Kolyacha Naach* was restricted to the coasts; the agricultural class known as Kunbis had a dance of their own known as *Gauricha Naach* the stick dance known as *Ripri* and *Goph* and the devotional dance like the *Dindi* and the *Kala* were some of the most popular of the traditional dances in Maharashtra. Some of these dances were described in detail by Shri Paranjpe. He made a passing reference to the variety of *Kala* dance as practised in Konkan. The *Dashavatar* dance, Radha Krishna dance and the dance known as *Tamasha* were also described at length.

"Dance Tradition in Bengal"

The last paper for the day was on "Dance Tradition in Bengal" by Shri Santidev Ghose. He referred to the disappearance of the old form of music-dramas that were performed during *Yatra* and said what was seen today was the court dance introduced by the Muslim kings, especially Wazid Ali Shah, Nawab of Lucknow, who came and settled in Calcutta after the Sepoy Mutiny. A class of dancers known as *Khemtawalis* were to be seen even now in different parts of Bengal.

Most of the dances in East and West Bengal centred round religious festivals and social functions of the village communities. Dances like *Dasavatar Dhup* were usually performed by men on these occasions. During Puja celebrations, one could see several varieties of folk dances in Bengal. One of the most interesting types of dance was to be found among the Baul community. *Bhadu* was another interesting folk dance in vogue in West Bengal and puppet shows were also common in those parts. The music dance known as *Chhou* was popular in the districts of Purulia. This was a kind of dance-drama. He also made a reference to the contribution of Rabindranath Tagore and Uday Shankar in the revival of those folk dances not only in Bengal but all over India. He pleaded for the revival of community dancing by the village people which was a feature of the social life in the villages in the ancient days.

In the morning session of April 6, seven



Shrimati Mrinalini Sarabhai reading Smt. Shrimati Tagore's paper.

papers were read and discussed. The first to be taken was a paper on "Dance Tradition in Bihar" by Shri Hari Uppal, who gave interesting information on the various folk and tribal dances as seen in Bihar today. He referred also to some of the interesting features in these folk arts.

Dances of S.-E. Asia

In his paper on "Dance Art of South-East Asia" Shri G. Venkatachalam referred to the early migration of Hindu colonists to Sumatra and Java from Kalinga, South India and Gujerat about 2,000 years ago and to the great Hindu empires that flourished in those islands for over 1,000 years.

After making a passing reference to the various monumental remains of both Hinduism and Buddhism, he traced the origin and development of the various dance art forms developed in the island of Java, specially the puppet and the shadow plays for which Indonesia had been famous for a long time. The introduction of human characters, instead of puppet and

shadow figures, was by a Sultan of Soerakrata a few centuries ago, which was known as *Wayang-Wong*. This art was a combination of both dance and drama in which not only the priests but royalties also participated.

The Sultans of Djogja and Soerakrata had for centuries, he said, maintained court dancers among whom were the princes of royal blood. In the earlier *Wayang-Wong* shows, the dancers wore masks and when the art became secular and courtly, gorgeous costumes and ornaments were later introduced. *Wayang-Wong* recital was usually held in the large open hall of the palaces of the Sultan and often lasted for six hours or more.

"Javanese dancing, like Kathakali" he said, "is more acting than dancing". *Serimpi* dances were usually performed by four small girls, usually the daughters of the Sultan, accompanied by instrumental orchestra, called *Gamelan*.

He described the dance as follows: "Dancers put one foot in front of the other and glide along with bent head, half-closed

eyes and sunken shoulders as befitting girls of noble birth. Their faces and arms are painted and their natural eyebrows are shaved to be replaced by artificial ones. As a skirt they wear a long *sarong batik* (hand-painted cotton cloth), a corner of which is rhythmically kicked to the right and left by the dancer. Their body is laced into a tight velvet bodice, and on their head they wear a crown. The *sarong* is always brown. The long gliding file of dancers kneel down, facing the Sultan, their hands lifted to their foreheads as a gesture of prayer and worship. Slowly they rise again, and with a peculiar rhythm, they perform the same movement at the same time—limp, snake-like movements—following one another in slow succession. They bend their bodies to their right and to their left, always with knees bent low, with their pointed fingers they take up the end of the sash and throw them backwards over their shoulders, and at the same time their fingers tremble and shake. The joints of arms and fingers bend backward and forwards like the opening of a flower. There is no singing or acting on the stage, there being only movements of extraordinary vigour and skill and animated poses full of meaning. The musical accompaniments are behind the curtain, and the *dalang* narrates the story in the usual manner. There is not much *Nritya* or *Abhinaya*, as we have in India, and on the whole, there is more restraint and refinement in the execution of the dance pieces. The graceful gliding of the legs and the gentle movements of the neck to the soft tunes of the *Gamelan* contrast strikingly with the more vigorous movement that we see in Kathakali. The stage settings also are exceedingly refined and interesting. No crudely-painted curtains or decors adorn the stage.”

Born Dancers

In Sumatra the Sudanese people living in the mountain regions had dance forms of their own. The Sudanese, like the Javanese, were born dancers and actors; and while the dances of the latter had been much influenced by Indian ideals and traditions, the Sudanese dances had remained pure and were both vital and vigorous.

Next, he referred to the dance forms prevailing in the island of Bali and to the well-known dances like *Legong*, *Jangar*, *Rangda*, *Barong* and others. Passing references were

also made to such dance art forms as the *Kandyan* in Ceylon, *Khon* and *Lakon* in Thailand and *Sampich* in Cambodia, all of which strongly bore the impress of Hindu art and culture and often dealt with Hindu *Puranas*, the two most important influences being the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

“Dances of Kashmir”

A paper on “Dances of Kashmir” was read by Shri P.N.K. Bamzai. He said though there was no definite record of the development of the art of dance and music in Kashmir, still one could find brief references to them in the pages of *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana. From a passage in *Rajatarangini*, one could infer that the practice of temple dancing and the employment of *devadasis* in the temples, had existed in Kashmir round about the 11th Century A.D. A study of the sculptures on the walls of the temples in Kashmir also revealed the existence of certain dance art forms.

In a book on “Dancing” written during the early Muslim period by one Srivara, mention was made of some very famous dancers like Ratnamala, Deepmala and Nirpmala. *Hafiza* was a dance popular among the upper classes during the Muslim period and even some of the Pathan Governors patronised dances. *Wattal Dumhal* and *Hikat* were other forms of dances that were practised in the valley right down to the 19th century.

He made a passing reference to the masked dance of the Buddha priests in Ladakh, which was a form of ceremonial dance, depicting the struggle between the forces of good and evil. *Bhangra* in Jammu was a type of warrior dance still performed in certain seasons in that area. A brief description of the costumes and other appurtenances that pertained to this art was given.

Other Papers

Shri Chandra Kumar Upadhyay of Nepal briefly traced the history of dance traditions in that mountain country and demonstrated certain types of folk dances that were even now to be seen. A short demonstration followed the paper.

A learned and interesting paper on “Shaivism and Vaishnavism in Indian Dance”

by Shri Mohan Khokar was the next one. He dealt with the subject exhaustively and covered a vast field. After tracing the history of Shaivism and Vaishnavism both in North and South India, he referred to several sources in literature from which the artistes found inspiration for their sculptural representations on the temple walls of both Shaivism and Vaishnavism.

Shri Vinod Chopra's Paper

Shri Vinod Chopra's paper on "Dances in Films" was followed by a film show showing how dance sequences were introduced in the production of a film. He explained the difficulties that a Dance Director had to confront when attempting to incorporate suitable dances for the story and the creation of the necessary atmosphere with appropriate background, costumes, etc. He regretted the deterioration of dance items in films today and gave the causes for such deterioration. In order to produce better dance sequences in Indian films, he pleaded for a more sympathetic and intelligent co-operation from the directors, the producers, and also the censors.

The afternoon session was completely devoted to a fine demonstration of the Kandyan style of dancing by one of the most famous exponents of the art, Guru Guneya, who was helped by his son, Somadasa, and a drummer. He demonstrated the 18 forms of Vannamas; the 12 fundamental footsteps and some technical features like *Kasthirama*, *Thirnanava* and others.

Kandyan Dancing

This was preceded by a short paper read by Shri Noeyal Peiris, Director of the Dance Institution in Colombo. He traced the history of Kandyan dancing to a distant period and showed how it had been preserved as a hereditary profession by families of the present exponents for over 1,000 years.

The dancers, he said, were mostly from the peasant stock, whose services were requisitioned in certain seasons in connection with the Perahera festival at Kandy.

"Ceylon takes pride in tracing her known history to the Asoka period when the great



A demonstration of Yakshagana.

Emperor sent his own son and daughter as the first missionaries, who gave to our people the inestimable gift of the Buddha Dharma. You will see, therefore, that we are racially and culturally one, although Ceylon may have developed the Indian culture she inherited on her own distinctive lines", he concluded.

Recommendations

The last day was devoted to the consideration and adoption of resolutions submitted to the Seminar by the several participants. A general discussion followed this. Among the recommendations were :—

- (a) sponsoring of a project for the collection and display of all-India traditional dance-drama costumes, ornaments and instruments ;
- (b) giving encouragement and recognition for such dance-dramas as *Yakshagana* as a classical art form ;

(c) preservation and development of Kathakali dance by giving financial and other assistance to the existing Kathakali institutions;

deserving candidates, teachers and scholars in the various dance styles.

Presentations

(d) making film records of the most prominent ritual dances of India, with necessary information about their aesthetic aspects;

This was followed by presentations to the foreign delegations. The Chinese Delegation

(e) preservation of authentic traditions of Manipuri dance as practised by the older generation of Manipuri Gurus;

was presented with a bronze statuette of the Goddess Saraswati, a metal plaque with dance figures, an *angavastram* and the publications of the Akademi. The Ceylon Delegation was given a copper plaque with an embossed silver figure of Nataraja, an *angavastram* and the Akademi publications. The Nepal Delegation was given a plaque with dancing figures, an *angavastram* and Indian dance head ornaments in silver.

(f) special scholarships by the Akademi for dance-students of younger age-group for training and dancing as well as in teaching, apart from the scholarships given by the Government;



(g) arranging tours for eminent exponents of Kathak dance to the dance festivals in South India and similar visits of the exponents of Bharata Natyam to the festivals in the North;

Shri Nityanand Kanungo, Minister for Commerce, participated in the general discussion and gave some very useful and constructive suggestions.

(h) establishment of an institution for the revitalisation of Kathak dance under the guidance of the foremost Gurus;

The Vice-Chairman, Smt. Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, declared the Seminar closed with a short speech, thanking the participants for their interest and enthusiasm and assured them of the Akademi's sincere desire to do its best for the development of the art of

(i) sponsoring of a study tour to South-East Asia by a party of artistes and scholars to explore the dance-material in the dances and dance-drama traditions of that region and;

Shri Chathunni Panikker demonstrating Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai's paper on "Traditional Concepts and New Forms"

dancing in the country.

(j) institution of educational awards to

On behalf of the participants, Smt. Mrinalini Sarabhai and Guru Gopinath made suitable speeches.