AUGUST 13 — 19, 1977

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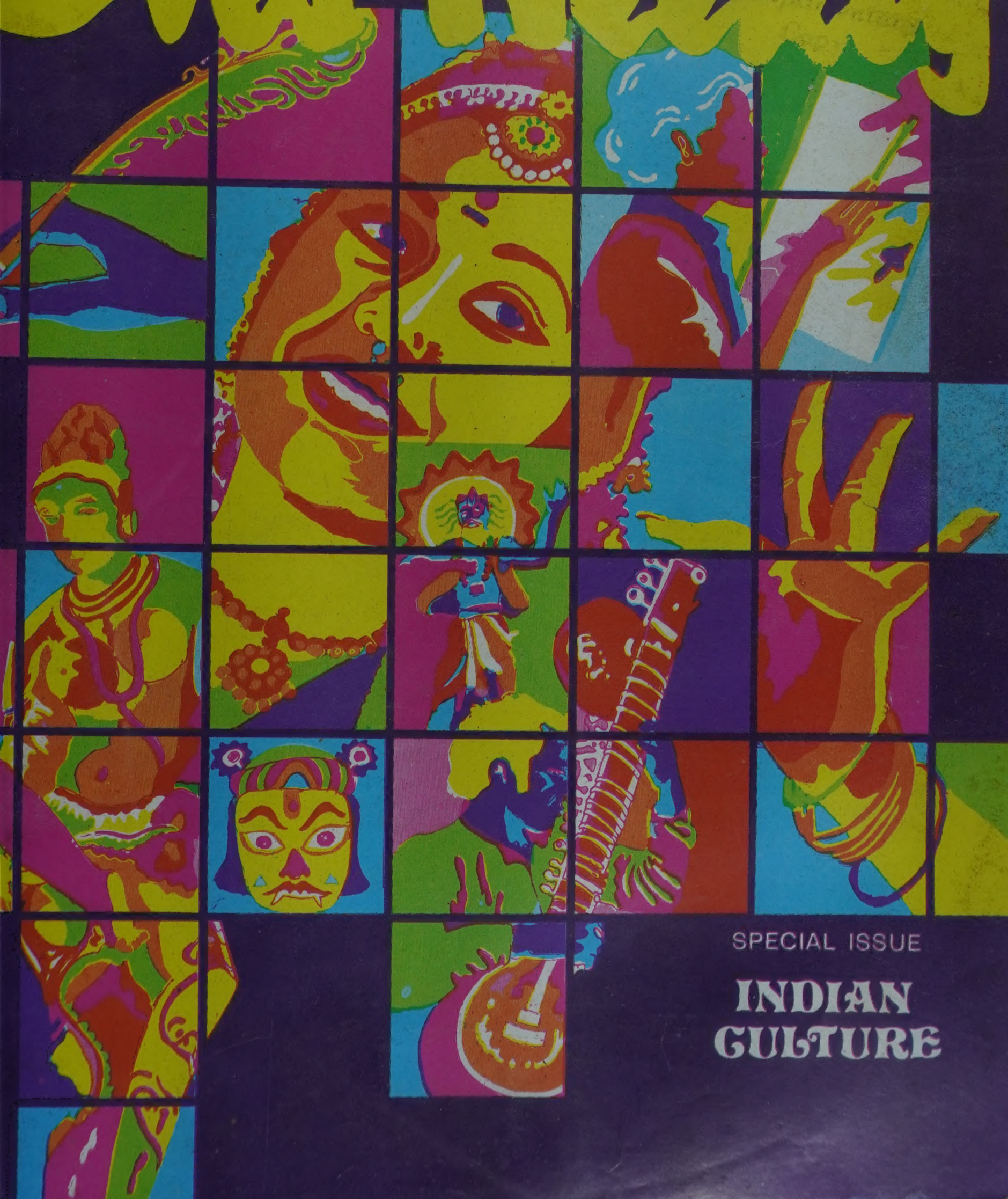
Eve's Weekly



SPECIAL ISSUE

INDIAN CULTURE

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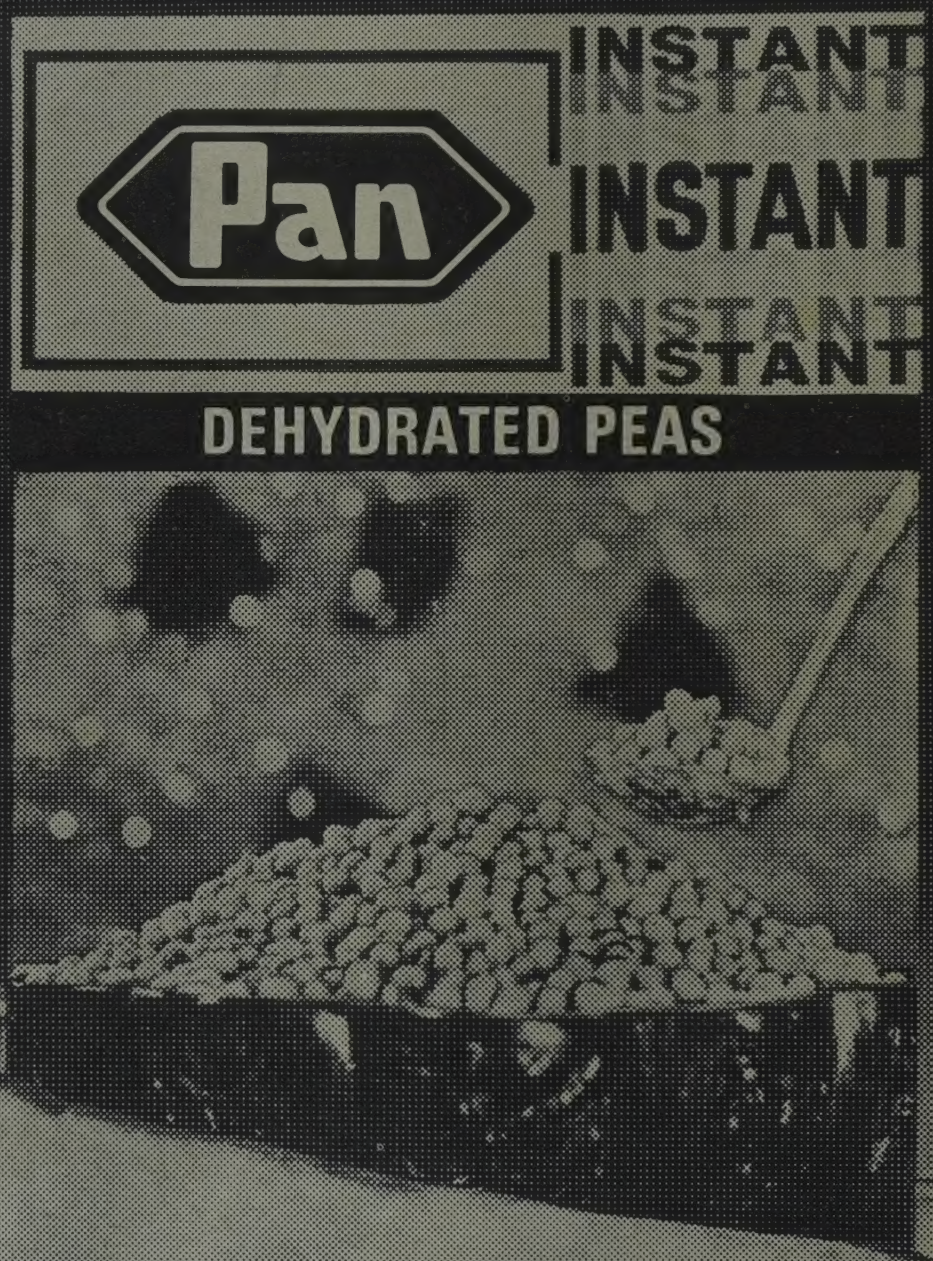

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NAINI TAL Oct. 29 (Samachar)

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Eve's Weekly

July-17-1976

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Suresh Chandra Chaturvedi

GARLIC

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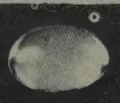
THE TIMES OF INDIA

BOMBAY, DEC. 3-1976

Eat Garlic and Cut Cholestrol

NEW DELHI, December 2: A medical study has revealed that garlic is effective in reducing blood cholestrol. An experiment by Dr. R.C. Jain, pathologist at the University of Benghazi in Libya has now shown that garlic reduces the cholestrol level.

He did the experiment on rabbits which he fed with a diet containing large amounts of Cholestrol for 16 weeks. Their aorta (main blood vessel) and liver were deposited with cholestrol but after giving them garlic, he noticed that the fat dissappeared and the blood cholestrol came down. Dr. Jain has reported the results of his experiment in "The Journal of Indian Medical Research". How exactly garlic brings down cholestrol level is, however, not clear, Dr. Jain said-Samachar.

ACTUAL SIZE  EASY TO SWALLOW

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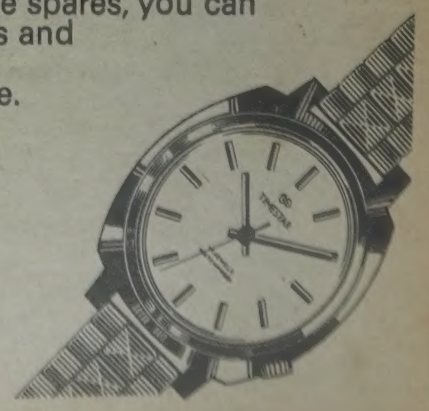

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CHAITRA PP-126

INDIAN CULTURE

On a mammoth canvas of civilization, sparkles the rich heritage of India's culture. With its immense diversity of caste, community and language, Indian culture is often misrepresented, even misused. The "parallel" urban culture, with its pseudo-Western leanings, treats the very word "culture" as some kind of status symbol. Indeed, Indian culture is hard to define — religion is its base, its essence is spiritual. The land of Tagore and the Taj continues to mystify the Western mind — the eroticism in the temples, the concept of the divine and the human, baffle the outside world.

This Special Issue is a humble attempt at portraying the wisdom and serenity of Indian culture., through Dance, Drama, Music, Literature, Art, Sculpture and Mythology. As Mario Bussagli has pointed out, "In the arts, Indian civilization mirrors a complete, complex and profoundly human world."

VOL. XXXI NO. 33 BOMBAY

CHAIRMAN J. K. SOMANI

PUBLISHER & MG. DIRECTOR J. C. JAIN

EDITOR: GULSHAN EWING

STUDIO: FAROKH REPORTER

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER: B. K, SANIL

PRINTER: R. S. SARANGAN

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT Sanj Vartaman Press, Bombay Samachar Marg, Bombay-400 023.

PROPRIETORS: Eve's Weekly Ltd., Bombay-400 023.

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Inland Rs. 85. Foreign Rs. 127 (Sea Mail)

a call for INDIAN RENAISSANCE

Anjani Dayanand

We must once again enrich ourselves, not by imitation or reproduction, but with a distinct leap in to the future

1947 was a watershed in india's history, 1977 is another. On both occasions in a gust of passionate intensity our peo le asserted their rights to live in freedom.

Against this background it becomes necessary, to evaluate afresh the basic tenets of India's culture.

To recover Indian thought, Indian character, Indian perception, Indian energy and Indian initiative, we have to return to the fountainhead of our ancient history, philosophy, art, literature, and learn to identify the revivifying influences that are inherent in them. The present schools and universities, by making available a grossly commercial, materialistic and insufficient European education, succeeded only in debasing our mind and character. This process will have to be reversed. We have to recover what we have lost. We have to rejuvenate the educational process to ensure originality, aspiration and energy amongst the new generation.

We look to our education to raise the mind, character and tastes of our people. We must resume India's interrupted endeavour and take up completely, and execute thoroughly, in the individual and in the society, in the spiritual and in the mundane life, in philosophy and religion, in art and literature, in thought and action, the full and unlimited sense of her highest spirit and knowledge. Our ideal should be a new birth in the spiritual society which we have always been.

When we look back at our culture and civilization, we are struck with amazement at the all-round achievement. There was no field — and this includes science, mathematics and medicine — in which India had not attempted and achieved credit, and in each, achievement had been on a large scale and yet with much attention to detail.

In literature, in the life of the mind, India lived greatly. Not only does she have the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita, but unequalled philosophic and religious poetry. The Mahabharata, our great national epic, is a gathering together in one massive effort — a complete story of the life of our people. There is a popular saying in our country that what is not in the Mahabharata is not there in the Bharata Varsha.

The long tradition of our architecture and sculpture and painting speaks for itself, even though it may only be through the ruins of stormy centuries of a bygone age.

Indian architecture — the great monuments of our temple-art — stand as a lofty testament to the endeavour of the human spirit, great in conception and design, and totally consecrated to the Divine.

The more ancient sculptural art of India, like her architecture, also springs from spiritual realisation and some of its creations evoke, to this day, a feeling of humility in the presence of the work of master-craftsmen.

Take, for example, the dancing Shiva 'Natraja'. It is an amazing creation, achieved by the artist offering himself to the Divine as an instrument through whom the spirit of the dancing Shiva manifested itself — the self-absorbed concentration, the motionless joy and peace, all achieved in the cosmic movement of the dance. It is said all our dance forms originate from this dance of Shiva and it is amazing how every posture and every 'mudra' has been etched out in the temple at Chidamabaram.

Indian culture and civilisation encompass the whole of life. Throughout, there is a free and frank discussion, recognition and examination of human existence in all its range and variety. The Indian social set-up with its four Varnas and the four Ashramas was an attempt to find a form which would be the base for developing a spiritual concept. This, no doubt, later disintegrated and degenerated but the ancient Indian idea was that man falls by nature into four types. This has never been contested. It was the degeneration of this concept and the stratification of society into the castes that was responsible to a complete perversion of the original idea. So, now the peculiar social mind of the Indian needs to be once again turned inward to identify the revitalising spiritual force which originally sustained a community, but which, perhaps, is no longer there. These springs will have to be found if we have to progress further.

Confronted with the huge onrush of modern life and thought, with the heavy increase that are being made by a completely westernised thought process, Indian culture will have to take a fresh look at itself and confront the raw, new, aggressive and powerful external forces with a fresh spiritual outburst from within, which alone will enable it to withstand the onslaughts and external pressures. A completely new creation of the spirit is what is necessary — not a mere emotionless sticking to old forms, because they happen to be good, but a rediscovery of new forms which are in harmony with our spiritual heritage; neither an imitation of European civilisation, nor a blind acceptance of the forms of the past can give us the solutions to our future. We have always been a tremendously creative, receptive and, at the same time, an active civilization. We have to once again enrich ourselves, not by imitation or reproduction of the past or of other civilisations, but by an effort to take a leap into the future so that India's true spiritual destiny can be realised in a new outburst of creative activity.

[Smt. Anjani Dayanand is Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. A brilliant IAS officer, she was formerly Deputy Secretary, Education and Public Health, Govt. of Tamil Nadu and Chief Secretary to the Government of Pondicherry.]

Cover designed by:
Panna Jain

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Nargis Chawla

THE REALITY OF INDIAN CULTURE

Professor S. C. Dube

The author is Director of the Govind Ballabh Pant Institute of Social Science Research, Allahabad.

Cultural consciousness in India suffers from elite bias—what is projected therefore, is what the urban literati would like it to be, rather than a view of the living culture of the people

All high civilizations are a blend of reality and myth. The peaks of excellence and conspicuous achievements representing high creativity often emerge in bold and clear relief in their cultural profiles; the mundane, the humdrum, and the odious components are often underplayed if not totally ignored. In the delineation of these cultures, the abstract and the philosophical, the artistic and the creative elements get overemphasized. What we get, in consequence, is a highly idealistic and normative elite view of culture and not a comprehensive picture of the total cultural reality encompassing the diverse strata and segments of society.

This is as true of Indian civilization as of other great civilizations of the world. Cultural consciousness in India suffers from elite bias and projects the essence and the dominant themes of Indian Culture as they are portrayed in the sacred texts. What is projected, thus, is a book view of Indian Culture — of what the urban literate would like it to be rather than of the living culture of the people. Curiously, to a certain extent, this cultural awareness has been generated by the discovery of Indian Culture by those coming from the West; it lacks historicity and analytical depth. The stereotypes created by pioneering Orientalists and Indologists have moulded our vision and thought-patterns in respect of the ideational and the structural dimensions of our culture.

When we speak of Indian culture, we often envision in it a degree of unity and integration that is really not there. Is it right to think of an Indian culture? There is such a thing as **Indian Culture**, but its intricate and complex weave must be understood in terms of stabilized cultutural pluralism. It essentially represents a heterogenetic growth, i.e., in different periods of history and in different regions a multiplicity of sources have contributed to the texture and designs of its fabric.

It would be inappropriate to compare Indian culture with a tree; it is not as if it has grown from one seed, has common roots and trunk, and is linked organically with branches growing in later periods of its development. It would be more accurate to think of it in terms of a river model — many streams, rivulets, and minor rivers mingling at different points to create a powerful mainstream, one in which the reality of the mighty river does not obscure the identities of the different currents whose waters go into its making. The contemporary culture of India is richer for the diversities that are built into its mosaic. It represents hundreds of folk forms as well as several sub-cultural and religious traditions that are blended into a functional and reasonably balanced and harmonious pattern.

The tribals have shaped our myth, ritual and belief patterns.

India is a multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multi-religious country. The most ancient ethnic elements in its population are the Negrito and the Proto-Australoid people. The latter are represented principally in the tribal communities of the country, but their genes have mingled, in varying degrees, with the rest of its population also. They contributed not only to the primitive technology of various levels but their invisible impact was considerable in shaping the myth, ritual, and belief patterns of the of the people.

The Mongoloid element was pre-dominant in the eastern region; at different stages of the evolution of Indian society there was definite ethnic mixing between the Mongoloid and the non-Mongoloid people. This element also added to the general cultural inventory, especially to material culture, belief patterns and world view. Cultural items emanating from it were widely diffused and were absorbed by the people in sizable areas of north, middle, and even south India.

The Caucasoid and the Mediterranean ethnic elements, representing the great north-south or Aryan-Dravidian divide, contributed significantly to the shaping of Indian traditions. The Aryan speaking waves of immigrants have doubtless made a very notable contribution to Indian culture, but their role is often exaggerated. They brought with them developed capabilities of philosophic speculation and oral literary

Keshava temple, Somnathpur, Mysore.

craftsmanship, but the earlier inhabitants of this land had incomparably superior material culture and technology.

The great Indus Valley civilization, whose reach according to recent excavations extended far beyond its local and assumed sphere, was not a creation of those speaking Aryan dialects. It was already well established when they came into India. The emergence of Indian culture represents a slow but continuous process of fusion and synthesis; cultural elements were selectively borrowed from one another and there was considerable cross-fertilization of ideas. The ethnologist today is intrigued by the inter-cultural borrowing and absorption which created a unity, under conditions of relative affluence and poverty. The ancient law givers recognized this reality and made appropriate situational and contextual concessions.

Not only is Indian culture not a close-knit monolith, it also does not enjoy the unchanging continuity that is often attributed to it. Traditions originating in antiquity have survived, but not without undergoing significant shifts of meaning and goal transfers. The Indian people cannot be said to have rendered unquestioning obedience to the dictates of tradition. Time and again they questioned the value premises underlying the social order, articulated their doubts, and vigorously came forward to offer alternatives. Change has been as

Inner dome of St. Francis of Assissi's church.

without at the same time destroying vital aspects of the diversities that are found in Indian culture.

To comprehend the reality of Indian culture it is essential to grasp its normative as well as the operative models. The classical tradition, embodied in philosophical and speculative works, did not represent empirical reality, nor does it represent the living culture of contemporary India. However, it cannot be ignored because much of its content was derived, abstracted and universalized from regional and local traditions. Through the traditional cultural media, mostly oral but also partly written, it was transmitted and diffused; making, in the process, a significant impact on the regional and folk forms.

In the Indian tradition **lokachar** — folkways and mores — have always had a pivotal role. Their resilience and adaptability never implied a will to surrender to the point of extinction. To understand Indian culture we have to examine it in its rural and urban dimensions as also in the contexts of the cultures of affluence and poverty. The urban segments approximated more closely to the classical model, though they did not discard folk elements altogether. Beliefs and rituals undergo change of form and transformation of meanings much a part of Indian tradition as continuity. There have been powerful currents of dissent and strong movements of protest and reform. Indian society has responded to the imperatives of changing historical contexts and equations of socio-economic forces. It has continued to emerge and to grow. With the development of the communications media and spread of education, despite many diversities, today we have evidence of the gradual emergence of a common mass culture.

The characterization of the Indian ethos suffers from subjective biases and cultural predispositions. There is a tendency to equate Indian culture with Hindu culture. Such portrayals often adopt a static view of Hinduism and its cultural manfestations and ignore its dynamic and variable aspects. At the same time, it is forgotten that Christianity is an old religion and that it had taken firm roots in some parts of the country and Indianized itself several centuries ago. The impact of Islam on the world view and life styles, on art and architecture, on music and dance, and on the culinary art at least of the north is consistently underplayed. In the same way the influence of other sub-cultural streams does not get the recognition that it deserves. The predominantly Hindu view of Indian culture fails even to take note of the powerful impulses generated by Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and many other less known cults and sects. Such a myopic vision distorts perspectives in respect of Indian culture.

The common thinking about the "spirit" or "essence" of Indian culture tends to be eclectic but selective. Some durable stereotypes persist and are uncritically accepted. The most pernicious of these is the one that regards Indian culture as "other worldly" — one with a strong emphasis on spiritualism to the neglect of material concerns of existential reality. It is necessary to remember that India has produced not only the **"Dharmashastras"** (ethico-religious codes) but also **"Arthashastras"** (codes relating to economic and political order) as well as **"Kamashastras"** (codes relating to erotica and bodily pleasures).

The **Laukik** — this-wordly — tradition in Indian culture has never been so feeble that it can be ignored. India has had a tradition of rational thought and even of scientific experimentation and empirical investigation. Another stereotype relates to the abject surrender of the Indian mind to the imperatives of preordained destiny. The validity of the assumption that acceptance of fate inhibits human action has never been convincingly established. More often, fate is a rationalization for the failure of human endeavour and rarely the cause of the absence of it. One often hears of **Sanatanadharma** — eternal ethico-religious social code — but viewed in an historical perspective it does not emerge as timeless and changeless. In different epochs there have been ferments within it which have altered, in varying degrees, some of the fundamental orientations of Hindu society.

Dharma itself has its foundation in the concepts of **Varna** and **Ashram.** Each caste within the Hindu fold is believed to have an ascribed status which cannot be altered. History disproves this by offering evidence both of upward and downward mobility; some castes have lost their rank, others have travelled up the ladder. The concept of **Ashram** — four stages of life representing the life of celibacy and learning, life of material pursuits and worldly pleasures, life of detachment and resignation, and life of renunciation — applied only to small segments of society. Those who did not merit recognition as "twice born" were released from many obligations implicit in the Ashram codes. On a more superficial level are mistaken notions, such as those ascribing vegetarianism and prohibition of widow remarriage to Hinduism. All empirical evidence points to the contrary; a majority of the Hindus ate (and still eat) meat of one kind or the other and they also practised and continue to practise widow remarriage.

The Hindu ethos presents some puzzling paradoxes. On the contemplative and philosophical level it believes in the equality of man, but hierarchy underlies many facets of Hindu social organization. This manifests itself in elaborate prescriptions and injunctions that determine ritual purity and pollution. In operational terms, the civilization has been inegalitarian, although on a metaphysical and conceptual level it accepted equality. The contradiction regarding the status of women is more baffling. Theoretically she is the embodiment of divinity — a category to be worshipped — but in actual practice she has consistently been viewed as fragile, as prone to defilement, and as one having a secondary and subordinate role.

It is amazing that a religion that attained majestic heights in its contemplative and philosophical endeavours tolerated and even encouraged exploitation, humiliation, and degradation of sizable sections of its population within its social framework. Understandably there were audible murmurs which occasionally exploded into violent protests, but in the final analysis the inegalitarian and unjust order triumphed. Some of the high achievements of Indian culture are a precious contribution to the total heritage of man, but at the same time it is also true that it was blind, dumb, and deaf to the inhumanity of man to man. The past cannot and should not be denied; it has a great deal in it to be proud of, but at the same time its uncritical glorification will lead us nowhere.

To understand Indian cuiture we should get closer to the empirical reality and invest historicity in its analysis. Contemporary Indian culture is complex and composite; processes of fusion and synthesis have been its constant features. Over the centuries even Islam and Christianity have acquired a distinctive Indianness. With the growth of national consciousness we have also witnessed the slow growth of what may be called the emergent national tradition. Today a mass culture is gradually emerging. It has several common characteristics, although it does not obliterate the uniqueness of some of the folk and regional forms. Above everything else, both in modes of thought and in styles of life, India is a participant in and contributor to the common culture of one humanity. It cannot insulate itself from powerful impulses from outside; happily it has not attempted any such thing.

Pictures courtesy: Govt. of India Tourist Office, Bombay

Dancing Shiva from Ellora, cave 21, showing the rhythm of the dance to the musicians' tune.

TRADITIONS IN SCULPTURE AND ART

Mulk Raj Anand

The extraordinary skill of the craftsmen—as evidenced in the large-scale frescoes—produced some of the finest art anywhere in the world

In common with the artistic expression of all early civilisations, Indian art evolved to satisfy spiritual needs after material necessities such as food and shelter, had been met. In the earliest known culture in India, the Proto-Dravidian, in Mohenjodaro, Harappa, Rupar, Lothal, Maheshwar and Navdatoli, there is evidence of this pattern of development. Following on basic social organisation, certain symbols, ideograms and images appeared — embossed seals with geometric shapes on clay pots, terracotta figures of a god similar to the future Siva, and bronze and stone idols. No unified system of belief is indicated — rather a kind of animism through which everything is ascribed to a spirit, a power. The emphatic female pudenda show an obsession with birth, fertility and procreation; the trident of the Siva figure indicates the awareness of power, the stance of the dancer, the appreciation of rhythmic movement and the belly of the Har-

Miniature showing animals in a forest (Moghul school).

appa-type torso, the love of volume and rotundity.

This primitivism characterises the terracotta remains of the next thousand years of Indian culture. Fertility images become expressions of the worship of the mother goddess, with big hips, protuberant breasts and pudenda even more emphatic than before. Female figures are more frequent than male and dryads, fauns, bird and tree spirits become elaborated into a pantheon of the forest life.

The Aryan conquerors, who probably destroyed the Indus valley civilisation as evidenced in the Mohenjodaro-Harappa civilisation (c. 1500 B.C.), brought with them a culture which deified the elements and their manifestations. As they inter-married with the Dravidian population, which they enslaved, they absorbed their fertility images as well as tree spirits, snake gods, ghosts and hobgoblins.

Vasanta Raga: Miniature showing the mood of spring in vivid colours.

Sita's agni-pariksha. Painting by Jamini Roy. (Collection: author)

They decorated their fire altars with abstract geometric designs, but did not use clay, stone or paint.

In the period of synthesis between Aryan and Dravidian cultures, a single cosmic philosophy was created: once there was Brahma, the Supreme One, the Creator; his union with his consort created the manifold universe, but the ultimate objective is to return to the One. In practice, this view of the cosmos was expressed in prayer to, and contemplation of, certain symbols, such as the lotus, rising on its stem-axis above the waters of the universe,

Panel showing couple on the doorway of Karla caves.

its petals open in all directions. The female pudenda of the surviving terracotta figures show that the female organs were worshipped as the source of life and the phallus, in the form of oblong stones, was exalted as the creator. Daubs of red paint on any wayside mound symbolised magical sacrifices to appease dread gods.

Some giant sculptures survive from pre-Christian eras. These seem to be funerary statues of kings, huge in volume, heavy, brooding and intense. The ghosts of kings may have been worshipped as in earlier Egyptian, Hittite, Assyrian, Babylonian and Achaemenid civilisations. Achaemenid influence in India

LEFT: Apsara tying ghungrus (bells) to her ankles before her performance. From Khajuraho.

RIGHT: Beautifully carved torso of Salabhanjika from Gyrazpur. Her discreet smile adds to her charm.

survives in the tall Persepolitan pillars, topped by lions, which Asoka caused to be erected in various places after his conversion to Buddhism, carved with his edicts proclaiming peace, goodwill and righteousness. The buxom Yakshi of Didarganj has a shiny surface known as "Mauryan" polish, which derived directly from the practice of burnishing surfaces common to the sculpture of the Achaemenid Empire. Between the 6th and the 3rd century B.C., this Empire, which had its capital at Persepolis in Persia, extended from the Nile to the Indus.

The rigid caste system, imposed by the Aryans on the Dravidian population and the aboriginals, had lost none of the harshness in the merging of the two cultures. A series of revolts against this system culminated in Gautama's rejection of Vedic Hinduism and his sermon at Sarnath, on attaining Buddhahood (Enlightenment), and it attracted a vast following among the oppressed. But the Buddha forbade images of himself, believing that forms promoted physical desire, which causes attachment to life on earth, thus distracting from the striving towards **Nirvana** (release from the cycle of birth and rebirth).

After his death, however, the old need for concrete imagery reasserted itself and stories of his birth and various incarnations, from animal to human and Bodhisattva (potential Buddha), were transcribed in stone near the burial mounds (stupas) in which his relics lay.

During the 2nd century B.C. onwards, an expressive art of relief sculpture developed around the **stupas** — in Barhut and Mathura in North India, Sanchi in Central India and Amravati and Nagarjunakonda in the Deccan. This was a narrative art, which assimilated the vitality of the early terracottas, the pre-

From Konarak (Jagmohana)

Monkey family, from Mahabalipuram.

ference for curves and volume and a primitivist depiction of dramatic scenes. These demonstrated the unity of all life — plant, animal and human. The rectangular panels of reliefs, as in Barhut, or circular medallions, as in Amravati, show superb skill at constructing a parallel world of creative imagination in which legendary human beings live and move in intricate compositions, transforming the vitality of living impulses into a lyrical art of the highest sensibility and technical skill in carvings of two, three and sometimes multi-dimensional reliefs.

At the same time as the gateways and outer walls of the Buddhist grave mounds were being decorated, a series of cave temples were being hewn from the rock in an arc-shaped area, extending from the western ghat mountains into the Deccan. Speculation has it that these holy places served as resting places for traders (Roman coins have been found on the sites), as well as shrines for pilgrims. The walls of these temples, and their relief sculptures, were painted, and once again the stories surrounding the Buddha supplied the main themes. The extraordinary skill with which the large-scale frescoes with crowded scenes were executed, has produced some of the finest art anywhere in the world, as witnessed in the Cave temples of Ajanta and Bagh. The technique of painting perfected here later spread to Sittanvassal and Badami in South India, to Sigirya in Ceylon, to Tsparang in western Tibet and Tun Huang in China. The paintings are composed in intimate relation with the sculptures and the total space areas are occupied with deliberate intent to possess the onlookers' consciousness of the whole cosmos with its miscellaneous life replete with vasanas or energies.

In the north, after Alexander the Great's infiltration into the Indus, Buddhist sculpture flourished in Gandhara, first under the Greek rulers and subsequently under conquerors from Kushan in western China. The hybrid art which developed in this period resulted in Buddha images modelled on the Greek god Apollo transformed into **Bodhisattvas**, potential Buddhas, and the enlightened one himself. It is probable that these images were known in Mathura under the Kushans, for the emperor Kaniska, who ruled a vast empire, including Gandhara, from three capitals — Kapisa in Afghanistan, Peshawar on the north-western frontier of India, and Mathura on the River Jumna — adopted the Buddhist faith.

The Indian craftsmen of Mathura certainly improved upon the Gandhara Buddhas; for in the Jumna and the Ganges river basins portraiture was inspired from within the imagination, through mental images, rather than modelled on handsome beings of the Graeco-Roman traditions. The ideal image of the Buddha was defined in a holy text as "round, round, seven times round." The Yogi figure of the Buddha, seated in contemplation in the lotus seat, progressed from the Katra Buddha in Mathura, with its sharply angular arms and legs, to the benevolent standing Buddha of Mathura, (5th century A.D.), the bronze Buddha of Sultanganj (6th century A.D.) and, most graceful of all, the Sarnath Buddha (5th century A.D.). This progression in Buddhist art influenced Hindu sculpture during the uneasy coexistence of the two main faiths in the classical renaissance of the Guptas from the third to the fifth centuries A.D.

One of the greatest works of world art, both in size and quality, which can be seen at Mahabalipuram, near modern Madras, is of the 6th century A.D. Commissioned by King Mahendravarman to inspire his armies, it depicts the episode from the Hindu epic Mahabharata, about the five Pandava princes and their hundred wicked Kaurava cousins. Carved as a giant relief on a wayside rock, it contains human and animal figures in dynamic movement and has the coherence of the crowded scenes of Ajanta paintings executed four hundred years earlier. Mahendravarman's son, Mammala, a devout Hindu, extended the tradition of the Mahabalipuram rock to the shore temples in Mahabalipuram, in which the human figures, both female and male, are conceived in cylindrical forms through which the master craftsmen achieved a new fluidity of movement. These large-scale carvings continued to be executed until the end of the 6th century, culminating in the reliefs cut into the rock in the Durga cave in Mahabalipuram, depicting the Supreme God Vishnu asleep.

The conflict between the two faiths, Hinduism and Buddhism, seems to have intensified

e desire of the priests of both to seek artis- patronage. The Hindus appear to have been ore successful and, from the end of the 6th ntury A.D. we get carvings of the gods from e post-Vedic pantheon, which excel much evious achievement in the creation of vol- mes, informed from within and ripening like owing fruit, and the virtuosity of the carver's isel. The pink sandstone Vishnu in Mathura th century A.D.) was foreshadowed by the anding sandstone Buddha (also in Mathura), hich had been carved at the end of the 5th ntury A.D. The recumbent Vishnu in Deo- rh, Central India (6th century), is remin- ent of the sleeping Vishnu in the Durga cave, it is an improvement on the latter in its armonious handling of rhythms. The Nar arayana relief in Deogarh (6th century) is vely enough, but static in comparison with e vitalist Marriage of Siva and Parvati panel Elephanta (6th century A.D.) and the mo- umental Siva reliefs in the Kailasa temple Ellora (7th century). The Mahabalipuram ck seems more like a rehearsal of dramatic ulptures when faced with the accomplish- ent of later monumental reliefs. The greatest hievement of the early mediaeval period of dia is the temple at Ellora, hewn on three des from solid rock.

In the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. the Hun vasions from Central Asia had intensified. uring the 7th and 8th centuries, the Arabs vaded Sind and Gujarat. But, in spite of e Hun incursions in the north and of the rabs in the west, temple-building continued the east, especially in Orissa. The princi- es of architecture, sculpture and iconography ere formulated in the "Silpashastra" — hand- ooks which conserved the traditions of the eative arts.

In the great sun temple of Konarak, the so- lled "Black Pagoda" in south Orissa — a ructure surpassed only by the great Buddhist mple at Borobudur in Central Java and the ngkor Wat complex in Cambodia — there are lossal free-standing sculptures of musicians,

rotic sculpture from the wall of the main rine in Konarak.

Sun god from Konarak

dancers, elephants and horses, as well as reliefs illustrating battle scenes and the drama of the union between male and female. The imaginative construction of the whole is realised by the integration of the sculpture into architecture — the movement of the figures releasing colossal energies into the static rocks.

In Khajuraho, this principle was carried further. Here architecture becomes sculpture and sculpture becomes architecture. The integral unity of the design is achieved by grouping the small conical **sikharas** into the texture of the big **sikhara**. The vivification of the whole is achieved by the use of the parable of creation, through love scenes of naked but tender character. The rhythmic intertwining of male and female forms celebrates sexual union, making the actual experience of loving into a sacred rite. Nowhere in the world has such grace been infused into the union of male and female as in some of the panels of the Kandariya Mahadeva, Lakshamana and Vishwanatha temples. The carving achieves a quality of finish for which all precedents seem to have been exercises in the perfection of the art of stone carving.

The itinerant craftsmen of northern India were doubtless involved in the building of the Siva temples in Rajasthan. For instance, the style of Khajuraho is obvious in much of the work in the Neelkanth Mahadeva temple in the forests near Alwar. A similar phase of constructivism flourished under the patronage of the Jain monarchs of Gujarat between the 11th and 13th centuries. On Mount Abu, they built a temple of white marble, transporting the stone from the plains below. The technique of the ivory carvers is used here, achieving fine details on the pillars and pediments which support the ceilings. The relief work is unique, because the decorations are not chipped, but scraped, with exquisite mastery of detail.

The grandiosity of the temple sculptures was balanced by several masterpieces created by the **cire-perdu** (lost wax) bronze technique, examples of which are the 6th century standing Sultanganj Buddha (now in the Birmingham Museum in the United Kingdom) and the Brahma from Mirpur Khas in Sind in the Karachi Museum. This method of casting bronze was quite widespread in Kashmir, in the Pala empire in eastern India and in Chamba in the Punjab Himalayas. In south India. this tradition was particularly encouraged under the Chola dynasty between the 10th and 13th centuries. Some of the best examples of this technique are of Siva as Nataraj, Lord of the Dance. The iconography of Siva as dancer, embodies the Hindu concept of rhythm. He is shown stamping the dwarf Evil under his right foot, with left leg upraised, arms poised in various gestures, inscrutable face surround-

Continued on page 55

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THEATRE IN INDIA

N. C. Jain

Conditioned by Western traditions and yet unable to break away from its inherent compulsions, Indian theatre has been in a somewhat schizophrenic situation until now

More than any other form of artistic expression, the theatre in India works under various contrary pulls, operating at more than one level. Its approach and methods, at least in the urban centres, have been conditioned by the western theatrical traditions and their changing modes. At the same time, it cannot entirely break away from the inherent compulsions of its own tradition more than two thousand years old, even if chequered and relatively static. One of the many consequences of this duality is the almost complete isolation and estrangement between theatrical practice in the cities, where the modern western-oriented theatre prevails, and in the countryside, where the traditional India theatre still holds sway.

The urban theatre, with its constant experimentation, novelty and often eye-filling spectacles, its effort either to entertain or to relate itself, howsoever superficially, to social and economic problems of everyday life, often tends to dry up, and goes through phases of creative sterility and disheartening apathy on the part of the spectators. The theatre in the countryside, in almost all parts of the country, on the other hand, with all its impoverishment and neglect, continues to perform the same age-old mythological, historical, legendary and folk themes in traditional styles without much innovation, and still attracts very enthusiastic audiences. Thus in each region two parallel streams of theatre co-exist without much interaction or even contact.

Then there are the compulsions of the uneven political-economic and social-cultural development of different regions with their own separate languages and literatures. This has also led to a staggering diversity of na-

ABOVE: Lalan Sarang and Sakharam Bhave in Vijay Tendulkar's "Sakharam Binder".

Utkarsh Muzumdar, Amrish Puri, Anuya Palekar and Satyadev Dubey (lying down) in Mohit Chatopadhya's "Achha Ek Baar Aur."

Harish Patel, Ratna Pathak and Satyadev Dubey in "Sambhog Se Sanyaas Tak," by Dubey.

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ture, quality and level of theatrical practice, both modern and traditional, making the Indian theatre scene highly complex and baffling.

This schizophrenic situation is somehow built into our modern theatre. When in the 19th century, with the beginning and consolidation of the British rule, the country came in close contact with Western Civilization, its ways of life, its cuture and its thought, and was overwhelmed by the encounter, one of the areas most affected was that of drama. Unlike music and dance, in the theatre there was near-total rejection of the age-old Rasa-oriented Indian aesthetics, and adoption of the completely different conflict-based approach of the Western drama.

As a result, a new kind of playwriting, imitative of Shakespeare, Moliere and other European playwrights, started in the country. In fact, for the first time after the decline of Sanskrit drama, a regular dramatic literature came into existence in all the Indian languages, particularly in those of the coastal regions. Naturally, these plays were staged in a different style, influenced by the methods and practices of the decadent 19th-Century, post-Romantic, Victorian British theatre There was, of course, some revival of interest in Sanskrit drama, but this was almost entirely academic and literary and did not affect theatrical practice as such. The influence of the local traditional forms was also marginal and confined to the use of music or to the borrowing of stories and plots. The new theatre, thus, started with a total break from the indigenous tradition.

The Indian aristocracy and the newly-emerging western-educated middle classes and intelligentsia in the cities enthusiastically welcomed this novel kind of theatre, so different and so much more exciting than their own traditional dramatic activity. Soon the patronage of theatre became a status symbol for them, as it is even now. In the process, however, theatre in the country experienced a new upsurge, unparalleled in many ways. Literally hundreds of plays were written in almost every Indian language and innumerable performers, some with great talent and virtuosity, and scores of a new genre of professional travelling and resident theatre companies came into existence in almost every region. The Hindi-speaking heart-land of the country which, for various socio-political reasons, failed to develop its own regular theatrical practitioners, was served by the travelling companies from the Bombay region, run by Parsis, Gujaratis Maharashtrians.

But within a few decades, by the thirties of this century, this exuberant energy exhausted itself and the new theatrical activity came almost to a screeching halt, in spite of the presence of some eminent stalwarts in the field in every language, including Shishir Bhaduri in Bengali, Bal Gandharva in Marathi, Gubbi Veeranna in Kannada and so on. This was not merely because of the advent of the movies and then the talkies, to which, undoubtedly, some of the human and material resources of the theatre were diverted, as in the case of the Parsi theatre which switched over to the films lock, stock and barrel, jettisoning theatre completely. It was no less due to the internal contradictions of this theatre, its superficiality, crude flamboyance and its penchant for elaborate spectacle. The truth is that with all its novelty, glamour and irresistible appeal, it had really failed to strike roots in the life and ethos of the people and to relate itself in depth with their general aesthetic sensibilities, to which the traditional theatre somehow continued to cater.

Om Shivpuri as Tughlaq and Sudha Shivpuri as the stepmother in Girish Karnad's "Tughlaq", directed in Hindi by Alkazi.

In the forties, a theatre movement was launched by the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). With its emphasis on the immediate, everyday experiences of common people rather than the upper classes, the IPTA sought to introduce realism in themes and simplicity and authenticity in presentation, as in "Navanna," Bijon Bhattacharya's famous epoch-making play on the Bengal Famine, directed by Sombhu Mitra. IPTA's work revived the gasping theatre to an extent and brought to it some vitality and relevance. But the movement suffered from an obsessive preoccupation with only the political aspects of reality, a tendency to use the theatre as an instrument to achieve narrow partisan ends and a neglect of vital artistic and aesthetic questions of theatre as a creative expression. Its impact, therefore, weakened in a few years. But meanwhile it had activised and inspired a large number of talented theatre people, experienced and established as well as young and fresh, who now tried to set up their own groups to continue their work.

The Sanskrit play, "Uttaram Charit," produced in Hindi by Habib Tanvir.

To a certain extent, IPTA's spadework led to a fresh upsurge in the fifties, this time artistically more significant. A number of those who left IPTA flowered into outstanding directors, striving to break away from the imitation of the Western models and to find an authentic indigenous idiom. In fact, with them, for the first time, the director as the main controlling creative element emerged in the Indian language theatre.

In Bengal, Sombhu Mitra, founded a new group, Bohurupee, with some other stalwarts like Manoranjan Bhattacharya, Gangapada Bosu, Kumar Roy and, of course, his exceptionally gifted actress wife Tripti. He began by staging realistic plays like Tulsi Lahiri's "Chhenra Tar," "Pathik" and others and eventually turned to Rabindranath Tagore's works, and the plays of Ibsen and Sophocles.

In Gujarat, Jaswant Thakkar and Dina Pathak, both from IPTA, established Natamandal, in which among others they produced a delightful play, "Mena Gurjari." In Delhi, Habib Tanvir, also coming out of I P T A, wrote and produced, in the early fifties, his "Agra Bazar," a musical based on the life and poetry of Nazir, the 18th century Urdu poet of Agra.

It is in the sixties that a series of developments changed the entire picture of our theatre. The newly-formed theatre groups and their restless directors needed new plays, as no worthwhile relevant theatre could be created by staging the existing superficial drama or even the foreign classics in translation. As if in response to ths need almost unexpectedly, there was a spate of significant original plays with new contemporary sensibility, in various languages, which continued for almost a decade. They explored a wide range of social and personal relations and questions with sensitive perception of the ironies and contradictions of life, boldness of treatment and innovations in dramatic form. Naturally, such an abundance of plays gave an unprecedented vigour and maturity to theatre in the country.

There was another important development. The newly resurgent Hindi theatre in the metropolitan cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, with directors like Satyadev Dubey, Shyamanand Jalan, E. Alkazi, Rajinder Nath, was feeling the shortage of plays more acutely than any other language theatre. As a solution to this problem, apart from staging the new Hindi plays, all those in other languages mentioned above and many more were translated into Hindi and staged, often even before their production in the original language. This trend has since continued unabated, making Hindi theatre the most affluent in stageable plays. Soon this led to another process, that of re-translations of these plays from Hindi into other Indian languages, though in some cases direct translations from the original were also made.

Thus one witnessed a most unusual phenomenon in Indian theatre—simultaneous productions of a play in more than one language at more than one centre. The theatre began to spill over the barriers of language and region and a wide exchange of scripts, directors, technicians and actors followed. Drama and theatre thus became truly Indian once again after a long time.

Another event of far-reaching repercussions was the setting up of the National School of Drama in Delhi, in 1959, by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, to provide the much-needed all-round training in the dramatic arts. Since the trainees were to come from all linguistic regions, the emphasis was intended to be on stagecraft, direction and general leadership rather than on acting. With the appointment of E. Alkazi as the School's director in 1962, the emphasis, however, shifted to acting and the production of plays.

The impact of the School's work on the theatre of the Hindi-speaking region is significant for creating a keen aesthetic sense and an awareness of the importance of the visuals. Some of the trained students have, through workshops and individual productions in the towns of U.P., M.P. Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab, generated a new enthusiasm for theatre as a serious artistic activity and not merely a hobby.

Thus, during the sixties, the theatre experienced both a vertical and a horizontal growth, with a number of playwrights, directors, technicians and actors active in the major centres. Directors like Shyamanand Jalan, Satyadev Dubey, Utpal Dutt, B. V. Karanth, and performers like Shriram Lagoo, Sulabha Deshpande, Bhakti Barve, Asit Bose, Mamta Banerjee, Tarla Mehta, Surekha Sikri, Uttara Baokar, Manohar Singh and Amrish Puri are names of which any theatre could be reasonably proud.

But along with this increasing volume and tempo of theatrical activity, a nagging uncertainty about its direction has also persisted, at least in the minds of some people, whether any genuine growth of our theatre is possible unless it forges its links with its own tradition. This was not a new realisation; some such efforts in the fifties have already been mentioned. In the sixties, Shanta Gandhi produced in the National School of Drama, "Jasma Odan," a Bhavai play in Hindi, which with its fascinating music, mime and many other non-realistic conventions, as well as its delightful, indirect contemporary comment, was an instant success with the ordinary and the discriminating spectator alike, and has remained so over the years.

Of late, many talented playwrights and imaginative directors have been attracted towards the traditional theatre forms of their regions. Girish Karnad's "Hayavadana," based on Karnatak's "Yakshagan," Vijay Tendulkar's "Ghasiram Kotwal," using conventions and devices of "Dashavatar" and other forms of Maharashtra, Chandra Shekhar Kambar's "Jo Kumaraswamy," utilising elements of North Karnatak "Bylatta," Mani Madhukar's "Ras Gandharva" patterned after Rajasthani Khyal, Utpal Dutt's Jatra-style "Surya Shikar" — they all indicate the new and most significant direction of Indian drama today.

Karanth's production of "Hayavadana", "Jo Kumaraswamy" and "Sattavara Neralu," productions of "Ghasiram Kotwal," in Marathi and Hindi by Jabbar Patel and Rajinder Nath respectively, are easily among the significant theatrical achievements of the early seventies.

The most consistent effort in this area has however been by Habib Tanvir who, ever since his "Agra Bazar," has continued to experiment with the traditional theatre in various ways. His "Charandas Chor," based on a Rajasthani folk tale and produced in Chhattisgarhi folk style with the players of the same region, is a unique theatrical achievement with its combination of sharp and relevant social comment and an unusually well-knit but imaginative dramatic form. He is also the only one among our eminent theatre-men who has tried to forge some links with the theatre in the countryside and to break the continued isolation between the urban and the rural theatre.

Yet another dimension of this attempt to go back to our own tradition is the recent interest in staging Sanskrit plays, (stimulated also by the annual Kalidas Festival at Ujjain.) Sombhu Mitra's Bengali and Vijaya Mehta's Marathi production of Vishakhdutt's "Mudrarakshas," Kalidas' "Vikramorvashi" in Sanskrit and Gujarati by Shanta Gandhi, Bhavabhuti's "Uttarramcharit" in Hindi by Habib Tanvir, Shudrak's "Mrichchhakatik" by E. Alkazi and Prabhat Kumar Bhattacharya, Bhasa's "Urubhang" and Bodhayan's "Bhagwadajjukam" by M. K. Raina in Hindi — all produced during the last 3-4 years indicate the new trend.

While a few of these have tried to reconstruct the original style on the basis of Natyashastra, most others have produced them in a relatively free and imaginative manner to make them accessible to an average spectator. In any case, this growing desire on the part of so many of our established and younger directors to turn to the classical Sanskrit theatre for a creative exploration, is certainly a forward step of our theatre on the road to its search for a true identity.

The latest situation in our theatre is one of expectancy, on the one hand, and of a keen desire to integrate itself more deeply at the grass-roots level with the community, on the other. While there is a stagnation in playwriting in almost all the languages, some of the active theatre workers are eagerly looking for simpler staging methods and a genuine authenticity of feeling and understanding in their work. Most of our significant and serious urban theatre remains amateur or, at best, semi-professional, without any worthwhile facilities or social support, though it has ceased to be mere entertainment and has increasingly come to acquire the status of an important form of artistic expression.

In this respect, its situation is not very different from the theatre in the rural areas, which also languishes in the absence of any serious interest of the community to rehabilitate it as an important and indispensable aspect of our cultural regeneration. One is tempted to think that only when the continuing isolation between these two streams of our theatre is completely broken and a common united struggle to win for the theatre its justified place in society is undertaken, will a genuine beginning for its regeneration be made.

Mr. N. C. Jain is not only an authority on theatre but also a journalist, musician, music and drama critic and teacher. He is the author of several books, too. He has held many administrative posts and is now Consultant, Centre for the Cultivation of Arts, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

ENGLISH THEATRE

The pioneers in English theatre themselves admit that it has no roots in Indian culture

Vijay Crishna

Whether he is parodying Hitler, the fanatical gleam in his eye, the guttural voice, the moustache bristling with eloquence or, playing a frothing epileptic, or a lady's maid, Vijay Crishna slips into the roles with seemingly effortless ease.

"Serious English theatre in Bombay has had its day," says Vijay in answer to a query about its fate.

Drawing mainly the urbanized

elite, "Parsis and business executives, it is the language that limits the audience," he notes. "If we could only have fresh writing relevant to the Indian situation by people who have the time and energy to put up their own plays! Look at the tremendous dynamism of the Marathi stage — it's almost a movement."

It is also the cost of putting up a play which inhibits theatre activity. "When you move into the world of high finance, it's no longer a fun thing, but grim business."

Another drawback is that "audiences want to relax and be entertained after a hard day, rather than see a play which makes them think." He cites the instance of "Tango" which flopped because it was a "play of ideas."

With a distinct flair for the emotion charged role, the part which demands a delicate balance between tragedy and comedy, Vijay rehearses, ("grinds away") in the evenings after a hard day at D'Cunha Associates where he works as an Accounts Supervisor.

Though a seasoned actor, Vijay occasionally forgets his lines, or is nervous and tense on first nights—"In that first moment before you step on stage, establish contact with your audience; sense whether they are with you or not. Then I am fine."

Vijay does not decline a role in a play which is unabashedly box-office gimmickry or even farcical. "As an actor I can't reject a role because it isn't serious theatre. You have to be constantly in training, otherwise I'd have to wait for a good role for a year or two. Comic roles are difficult, you have to have a sense of the comic and faultless timing; every night the audience may laugh at different jokes or they don't laugh at all, which can be quite off-putting."

"Why do I act?" he echoes meditatively. "There's a theory that most actors are exhibitionists. I don't agree. If anything, I am rather an introvert." That, I found hard to believe.

Pearl Padamsee

After the last strain of throbbing rock had died, and the cast had gathered to take their bow, a petite woman tripped on to the

stage to acknowledge the applause of ecstatic rock fans. The occasion was the production of "Godspell", Bombay's first pop musical, "imported" from the West and directed by Pearl Padamsee, veteran of the city's 34-year-old English language theatre.

"English theatre here has become a copy of a copy of a copy," confesses Pearl, who has been directing with the Theatre Group for over a decade the works of British, American and, recently, Indian playwrights. "I don't think the English-speaking theatre public here has any artistic life rooted in Indian origin."

Musical and sex comedies are the money spinners. "It's a sorry state of affairs. Have we failed our audience or do our audiences need this kind of situation?" she queries. The two musical extravaganzas, "Godspell" and "Jesus Christ Superstar" directed by the Theatre Group, were phenomenal successes and recovered all the initial costs of sets, costumes, lights, band, etc.

Author of "Hungama — Bombay Ishtyle", which is being made into a feature film, written in collaboration with Ratnakar Mat-

kari, Pearl is exploring the possibilities of a satirical revue.

"We need Indian playwrights with ideas which could be translated into living theatre." And towards this end, the Sultan Padamsee Award for Playwriting was instituted in 1968 to encourage dramatists who write in English, but who speak with an Indian voice.

Another solution, Pearl feels, is to have a small experimental theatre seating 200 people, technically well-equipped, inexpensive to rent, and fairly heavily subsidized by the state, where smaller groups, students and amateur bodies can experiment and create.

"Maniacal" about the theatre since her student days at St. Xavier's College, Pearl took a course at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Act in 1960, and studied Child Drama in Scotland on a grant awarded by the English Speaking Union of the Commonwealth. She also studied theatre in the USA and has been directing, producing and acting since 1965.

Jeroo Gorimar

Alyque Padamsee

It all started with my brother Bobby — Sultan Padamsee that is. He got interested in theatre— I am not quite sure how — and started producing plays with the St. Xavier's College Dramatic Society which was then quite moribund. He revitalised it and in 1942 did the first big production (Macbeth).

We were a large family — 4 sons and 4 daughters — and we, one by one, got into the theatre.

To me the excitement of direction is in the overall conceptual view of the play. And though the director is a secondary creator, there is a lot he can do to translate a script into concrete terms.

Why do I struggle with the theatre? Doing a full-time job and working at rehearsals in the evenings and week-ends is pretty hard work. But what it does for me is it allows the freedom of exploration. It's like an adventure; every play is an adventure — I don't know what the end result will be.

* * *

In the early 60s when I was doing a lot of American drama — Edward Albee, Steinbeck and Arthur Miller — it struck me rather forcibly that if the English language theatre were to continue in India, it has to develop a growth of its own. We couldn't go on doing plays, how-

ever great they were, about an environment and a society that the audience knows only second hand.

So in the early 60s we held our first workshop. Writers like Partap Sharma and Anavacha Gandhi began to work with actors in improvisation. The actors invented the dialogue while the situations were the writer's.

* * *

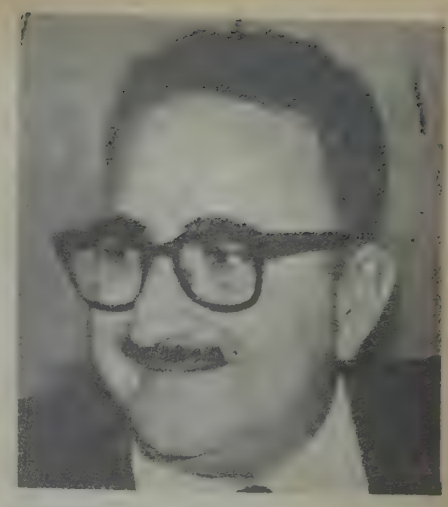
In "Gidhade" we had to use an English which is not English-English but is Indian-English. Though the characters originally spoke Marathi, I was anxious if it would come across as a play being spoken by Indians — not necessarily originally Marathi — but would transcend that uneasy gap between what we think English is in India and what English really is.

By a strange phenomenon since the British left, the audience has grown to thousands. I don't say a few thousands. It's many thousands. A smash hit like "Jesus Christ Superstar" played to over 50,000 people. Adi Marzban's "Ah! Norman" has played to even larger audiences.

* * *

No theatre in the world can pay business executive salaries to its actors. Laurence Olivier accepts a pittance from the National Theatre. He makes his money from films. Do you know that 70 per cent of people in Actor's Equity in the UK and USA are unemployed at any given moment? They are doing part-time jobs as waiters, tourist guides, any job they can get.

Excerpts: Courtesy, "Debonair".



Adi Marzban, versatile stage, radio and TV personality, has made an outstanding and lasting contribution to the Theatre, both English and Gujarati.

BENGALI THEATRE

Professionals and amateurs contribute equally to Calcutta's vital creative theatre

Iqbal Masood, Calcutta, and Basu & Rinki Bhattacharya, Bombay.

Iqbal Masood: To a newcomer the Calcutta theatre (specifically the "non-commercial" theatre) offers an embarrassment of riches: there are the Pantheon figures— Shombhu Mitra, Utpal Dutt, Badal Sarcar, and the Junior League—Arun Mukherjee, Sekhar Chatterjee, et al.

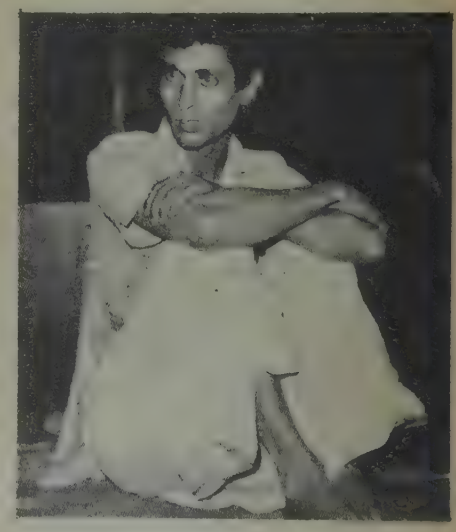
Shombhu Mitra, who has not been very active lately, is nevertheless one of the founders of the modern Bengali theatre. Shombhu and his wife Tripti both graduated from I.P.T.A. to form their own "Bohurupee".

His great breakthrough came with production of Tagore's "Rakta Karabi" in the mid-fifties. Till then, Tagore was thought to be beyond the reach of theatre because he was "lyrical." Shombhu dissolved this inhibition. Tagore's dialogue, earlier read or declaimed as poetry, was now reproduced as naturalistic conversation.

In the late fifties and early sixties, Shombhu Mitra's style of direction underwent a change. He began to veer towards what is called "pure theatre"—the portrayal of the finer frictions, the subtleties of character, the clashes of personality.

Since the mid-sixties Shombhu has been doing replays of his earlier successes. One gets the impression that he has been increasingly frustrated with what he thinks is the incapacity of the mass audiences to appreciate "pure theatre." But it would be a mistake to assume that he is burnt out. Recently he produced Badal Sarcar's "Jodi Arekbar" ("If Once Again"), a dramatisation of the fantasies of a group of people.

Rinki and Basu Bhattacharya: The Mitras are the architects of modern Indian theatre and the two greatest living artistes on the Indian stage. Tripti is not only a brilliant actress, but also a versatile stage director. Some of Tagore's multi-level, mystical works, such as "Dakghar," and "Gharey-Bairey" are now inspiring stage-plays under her direction.



Arun Mukherjee

I.M.: Utpal Dutt, is not merely a founder-member of the Bengali modern theatre, he continues to act as a permanent catalyst. Utpal started in the English theatre of Calcutta in Geoffrey Kendal's Shakespearana International in the late forties. Soon thereafter, he started his own group—the Little Theatre Group. After a brief honeymoon with the I.P.T.A., Utpal came back to the L.T.G. In due course it produced plays by Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Girish Ghosh and Tagore.

BENGALI THEATRE

Outstanding success came with the 1959 production of "Angar" which was about a colliery accident. This was followed by the celebrated "Kallol", in 1965, about the Bombay naval uprising of 1946. In 1967, his controversial "Teer", dealing with the Naxalite movement provoked his arrest.

The People's Little Theatre Group, currently active, was formed by Utpal Dutt and his affiliates in 1971. It has to its credit at least three outstanding theatrical successes of our time—"Tiner Talwar", a splendid evocation of the Bengali theatre of the late 19th century, "Duswapner Nagari", a portrayal of the "nightmare city", Calcutta in 1974, and finally, in 1977, "Ebar Rajer Pala", a bravura political satire.

R. & B.: Utpal Dutt tried and considerably succeeded in creating a different stage, a different audience and a different approach altogether. Utpal came to the Bengali theatre via the English stage and has not got over the difference in his stage orientation, and whatever good he does with his flair for dramatics he keeps undoing through his commercial commitment with popular films. He remains one of the most controversial figures of the Bengali theatre.

I. M.: Badal Sarcar, the the last member of the trinity, is a different kettle of fish. Effervescent, always dissatisfied with what he is doing at the moment, he is a protean figure.

R. & B.: "Evam Indrajit" is the most significant, most representative play of modern India. No other contemporary work projects the predicament of the intelligent youth at the cross-roads so poetically.

I. M.: Disillusioned with the proscenium he was one of the first in the country to turn to intimate theatre. He took a room in the famous "Academy" to work out his theories. He called it "Angam Manch"—arena theatre. The celebrated "Julus" took shape here. Later he found even a room too stagey and took to open air performances in a Calcutta park.

Shombhu & Tripti Mitra

Among the other groups special mention should be made of "Chetana", whose moving spirit is Arun Mukherjee. One of the first plays of the group was the "Story of Marich"—Ravana's nephew, responsible for the deception of Sita.

Theatre Unit is another notable group, led by Sekhar Chatterjee who originally belonged to the Little Theatre Group of Utpal Dutt. Theatre Unit won plaudits for its excellent adaption of some of Brecht's plays.

R. & B.: Ajitesh Bannerjee and Rudra Prasad Sengupta, a school teacher and university professor, have together

Utpal Dutt

started Nandikar's popular adaptation of European classics, the works of Pirendello, Brecht, Chekov and Wesker.

Mohit Chatterji's productions are abstract, His characters and situations, his composition of the stage are all bewildering, puzzling—but definitely thought provoking.

I. M.: Running right across the wide spectrum of Calcutta contemporary theatre are three features—its iconoclasm, its technical virtuosity, and its political bias. In this steamy and humid city, no gods are invulnerable, none immortal. This "idol-breaking" is rather surprisingly accompanied by a high degree of professionalism—not in the financial but in the artistic sense. These people have theatre in their blood. The fantastic devotion to order, form and detail is unequalled by any other urban theatrical movement.

The main problem of the Bengali theatre as in all such groups all over the country, is financial. Gate collections are just not adequate. The groups have to depend on private donations or borrowing at heavy rates of interests.

There is an air of dynamism and devotion to the cause of the theatre in Calcutta which will keep alive the creative spirit despite innumerable difficulties and hazards. I can confidently predict that on the basis of the present showing, the real innovations in the next decade in Indian theatre, both as a form of communication and as an art form in itself, will come from Bengal and Karnataka.

MARATHI THEATRE—

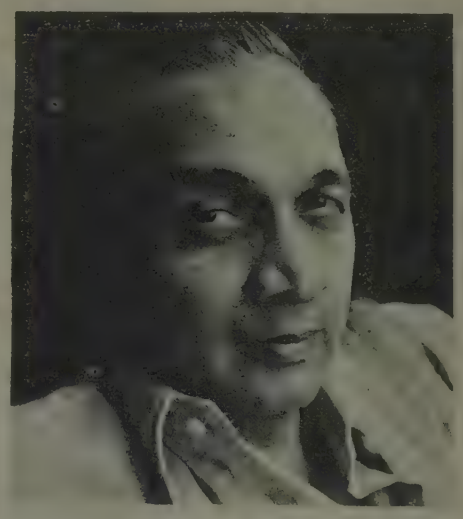
The last few years have seen immense creative activity by amateurs in Marathi theatre

Sunil Shanbag

Vijay Tendulkar

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the best known playwrights in India. His plays have been translated and produced in several languages. He is also a journalist and writer of short stories, but he is best known for his plays.

Two such plays "Gidhade" and "Sakharam Binder" had censorship trouble but Tendulkar was not deterred. "Baby" is also another example of this tye of play. Apart from these



plays, he has written many others, the more prominent being "Ghashiram Kotwal" "Ashi Pakhre Yeti" and "Pahije Jateecha". He has also written screenplays.

Talking about the choice of subjects for his plays, Tendulkar said, "I feel like writing on a particular subject because I feel concerned about it. To concern me, the subject or human situation must be vital, exciting and complex."

Tendulkar has always had one section of his audience applauding his work and another section, which included the censors, damning him for bringing what they call "sex and violence and crudity" on the stage.

Stating his position, Tendulkar said, "The situations in my plays are serious and logical enough and the aspects of sex and violence have been treated with honesty. Both these aspects are not new to the commercial theatre, especially sex. In fact, sex happens to be the pet subject of the commercial stage, but they treat it either as fun, or vulgarise it, or use it to create sensation. I treat the subject rather seriously. Sex and violence do have a raw quality about them. A man beating a woman, or sex as it is practised in a poor man's house, is not something aesthetically good to look at. What is more important is that these things can be meaningful in the context of a particular theme. I wouldn't like to portray them like a Ravi Verma picture or a scene out of a Sanskrit play. I depict them the way I see them.

"The censor trouble two of my plays got into did not deter me, but I am aware that the censors can create problems for me. They wanted me to rewrite 'Sakharam Binder' the way they wanted it to be staged, but I decide the way I want to write and not the censors.

"In Maharashtra today, the amateur stage is the most exciting movement in theatre, especially the plays that are staged at the Chabildas hall. New groups have come up and new forms have emerged and more than anything else, the Marathi theatre has made a break-through from its recent trend of naturalism and so called realism."

Sulabha Deshpande

Sulabha Deshpande has been on the stage ever since she was five years old. She comes from a theatre family. Her father was a producer of plays and her eldest sister Prema Sakhardande guided the cultural activities in Maharashtra during the Quit India movement. At a tender age Sulabha was already touring Maharashtra doing political

plays. She flowered into a powerful actress and in 1954 acted with the Vijaya Mehta-Kenkre group in Poona. Since then she has done numerous plays, commercial and amateur. She has also given brilliant screen performances in Satyadev Dubey's "Shantata, Court Chalu Ahe" and in Benegal's "Bhoomika". Her group, "Aavishkar", organised and now runs the Chabildas theatre.

"Till I finished my S.S.C. I took theatre for granted and never had to make a choice as such. I was not a trained singer, or a painter and so theatre seemed to be automatically the medium through which I had to express myself.

"I was 25 when I was offered a commercial role. It was a character role nobody else wanted to do — a 80-year-old woman in a play called "Rajemaster". This was a crucial time for me

and I had to decide whether to go commercial or stay in the amateur theatre. I accepted the role and worked hard on it and I was completely accepted by the "commercial audience." C. T. Khanolkar wrote an appreciate review of my acting.

"It was then I realised that if one works hard enough the audience is always appreciative. It is up to us to present them with a good performance. It is dishonest to do a bad play and justify it by saying that's what the audience wants."

Talking about the Chabildas hall that her group is running Sulabha says, that organising it was necessary because "there was need for a common place for actors and directors and also the audience to meet. We had the facilities of the Chabildas hall, but we thought we should extend the facility to all the other amateur groups as well. This hall solved to a certain extent the economic problems being faced by the amateur theatre, due to which we could do only about two shows a month. The audience would forget the play, and plays used to close down within five to six shows. Now we can do over 50 shows at Chabildas if the play is well received.

"A genuine experimental play needs as much exposure as possible. We need to reach out to the audience and influence as many people as possible. Many more centres like Chabildas must be opened in Vile Parle, Parel, Girgaum.

"I feel that the amateur movement may be approaching a period of stagnation. For a break-through, new blood and lots of activity are needed. "I have started working with children. As they are the audience of the future, it is important to instil in them a serious attitude towards the theatre when they are young.

"The critics too, can prevent stagnation. Generally the person active in theatre is too subjectively involved in his work to be able to see his weakness. It is up to the critics to criticise constructively and even to discuss the play with the director and the actors.

"The government or some private organisation must educate young people about theatre. There are moves to make people literate. We must also think in terms of educating the senses, developing the sense of music, painting. Theatre cannot be isolated from the other arts. Formal theatrical training develops all the senses.

"I feel that we have unfortunately created an aura of intellectualism in the experimental theatre and have gone too far from the people. Just because a poor man's/woman's senses have been undeveloped due to his/her social environment, it does not mean that the potential does not exist. There is the need for establishing a theatre that lies between the commercial theatre and the experimental theatre — a middle road to get closer to the people. Our middle-class playwrights need to study the working class situation in more depth and not in the superficial manner as is being done now. Theatre is not a middle-class prerogative."

Dr. Shriram Lagoo

Dr. Shriram Lagoo is one of Maharashtra's most accomplished and reputed stage artistes. He participated in the revival of Marathi theatre in the early '50s' when he was with the Progressive Dramatic Association in Pune. He has a long list of plays to his credit, both on the commercial and the amateur stage. He is an accomplished stage director also. Among the plays in which he worked there are several of Vasant Kanitkar's, Mohan Rakesh's "Adhe Adhure," Tendulkars "Gidhade," Mahesh Elkunchwar's "Garbo", Govind Deshpande's "Udhwasta Dharmsha'a" and Sophocles "Antigone". He has acted in Mahesh Elkunchwar's "Garbo," and several Marathi films.

Expressing his views, Dr. Lagoo said: "Theatre is a very serious form of art. Traditionally, its function has been to entertain and to educate. I want to go beyond that. A good work of art is one that makes you a better man. It should not only widden your knowledge, it should also give you a philosophy of life, make you more cultured, more civilised. To emerge as a great work of art theatre should do this.

"Though I come from a rather puritan family and though my father was 'anti-theatre' I didn't have to make a conscious effort to join the theatre. I was always interested in the medium. The only time I made a conscious choice was when I decided to leave my medical practice and become a professional actor."

Having done considerable work on both the commercial and amateur stage, Dr. Lagoo is quite clear about the differences between them in attitudes and relationships.

"The difference is clear. On the commercial stage the whole accent is on commerce, money. In amateur theatre the accent is on love of theatre.

"I am in a position, due to my acting career in films, to disregard the money. When I am acting I do not differentiate between the amateur and the commercial stage

"Recently, in the last twenty years, there has developed a serious attitude towards theatre. This attitude did not exist in the old theatre. This new movement may not have been totally conscious, but the most important thing was that people refused to compromise. The Golden Age of the Marathi theatre was up to 1920, after which it began fading and by 1950 Marathi theatre was practically extinct. It was in the early 1950's when some new thinking began and people like Tendulkar, Vijaya Mehta, Damu Kenkre, Kanitkar and many others began amateur work actively that the new style of theatre emerged. The amateur theatre must be given credit for the revival of Marathi theatre.

"The role of the actor in theatre is very important. If the actor is ideologically committed he would probably do better justice to his role, but it is not absolutely essential. It is sufficient if he is able to capture the basic philosophy of the playwright on an intellectual level. A major example is the Marxist professor I play in 'Udhwasta Dharmshala.' I am not a Marxist, but that did not stop me from understanding the playwright's point of view. Maybe I could do a better job if I was committed. But given the choice between a good actor not ideologically committed and a bad actor who is ideologically committed, I would not hesitate in choosing the former.

"I don't like categorising plays as 'political' and 'social'. "I am not scared of political implications, but I feel that if the play itself is bad, I would reject it.

"The Chabildas hall was very essential for the amateur theatre movement. It is the outcome of a whole movement and not the brain-wave of any one person or group. It has been in the air for a long time. We had been doing intimate theatre, but an organised effort was lacking which has been provided by the Chabildas hall. This sort of thing should be encouraged by everyone, including the Government. If I had the money I would build a fully equipped, air-conditioned theatre, with a limited number of seats so that there was no chance of it going commercial. There is no reason why the amateur theatre should not have the facilities enjoyed by the commercial theatre.

"I am afraid that the amateur theatre movement may be revolving around itself and not moving forward. I suppose it is inevitable after 25 years of progress. I only hope it is a temporary phase. I have been impressed by the new playwrights like Satish Alekar, Achyut Vaze and Kiran Nagarkar. As long as people keep on writing good plays, there is not too much to worry about."

THE "LIGHTED LAMPS" OF INDIAN LITERATURE

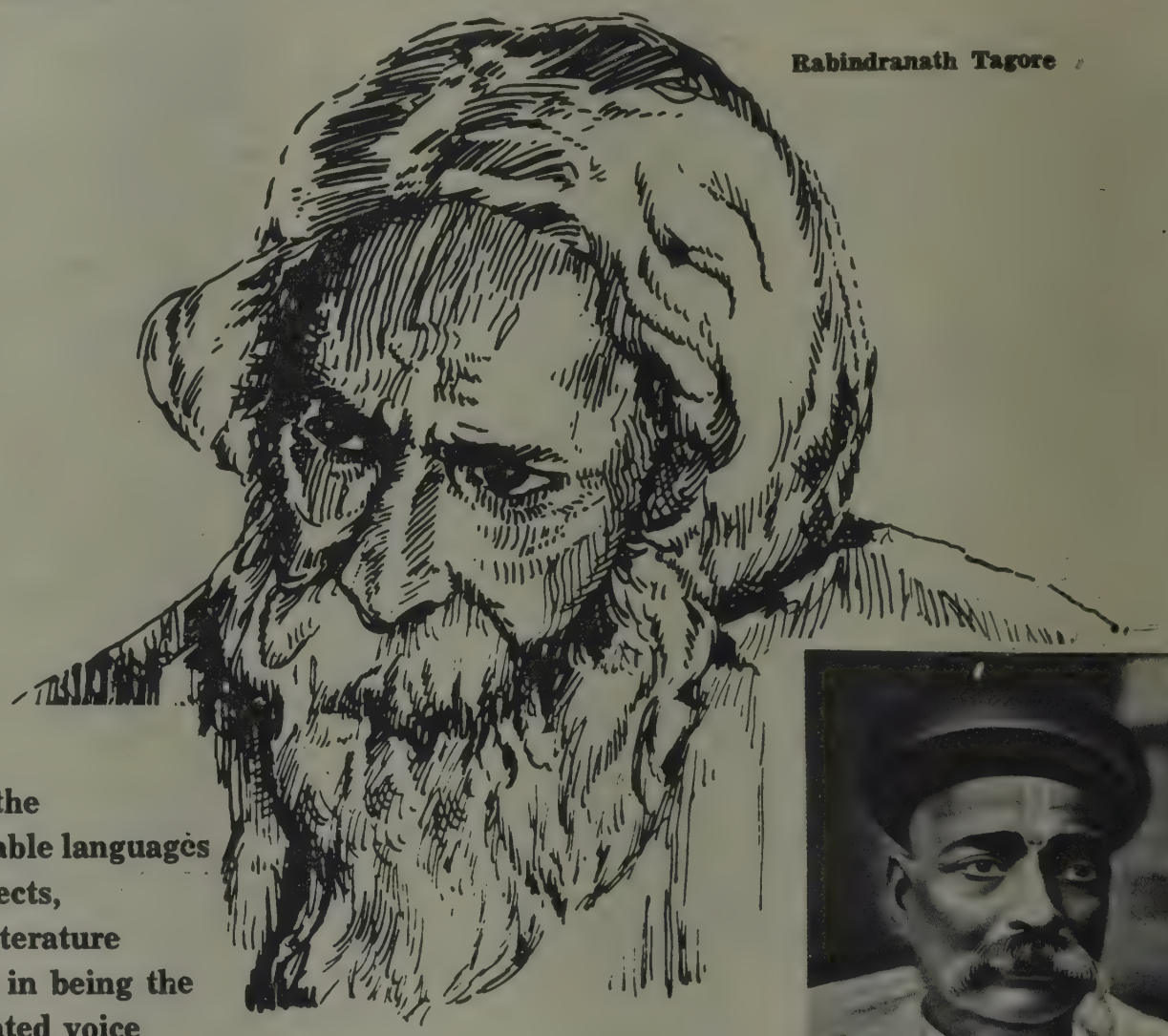
K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

Professor Iyengar is Vice President, Sahitya Akademi; and former Vice Chancellor of Andhra University.

It was Gurudev Tagore who said that since "Sahitya" meant "coming together," "In a country lacking in literature, the people are not knit together by a living bond; they remain separate." In the Indian subcontinent, although from time to time the rulers may have warred with one another, the people have managed to live together with the spontaneous togetherness of man, God and Nature experienced by dwellers in the wide-open countryside, or in forest recesses, or on mountainous slopes. Like music and dance, like religion and social life, speech and song too are the essential silken threads in the web of communal life, and impose on it the colour, flavour and rhythm of a humane culture.

The position in India, however, is complicated by the fact that many languages — as many as 150, perhaps, major and minor, and 500 dialects besides — flourish in this subcontinent. It is nevertheless a part of our faith and even of our experience that our languages and dialects do not really divide us, but somehow hold us together and enrich our taste for life. Languages are like lighted lamps, and several lights in a big hall only shed more — not less — illumination than a single light. People in India, especially in border areas or in the bigger cities, take to bilingualism or multilingualism as a matter of course; and this is particularly true of children as also of the working classes.

Fifteen hundred years ago, the Tamil yogi and poet, Tirumoolar, is said to have remarked (having traversed the land from the Himalayas to the extreme South) that while people in India spoke 18 different languages, the same heart, the same sensibility, spoke through them all. The multiplicity of languages and dialects needn't frighten us, for all derive from but four racio-linguistic origins — the rather peripheral Austric (Nishaada) and the Sino-Tibetan (Kiraata), and the more central Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. Actually, the current languages with a comparatively rich literature are not many. Besides hoary Sanskrit, which is still a living language and literature, there are perhaps a dozen more languages — Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Other languages and literatures recognised by the Indian Sahitya Akademi are Dogri, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Manipuri, Nepali, Rajasthani and Sindhi. During the last 150 years, English also has become one of the languages of India, and some of our significant writing today is being done in English. Of the 22 languages above enumerated, while Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu and English have an all-India vogue, the rest could be advantageously seen grouped in their regional distribution: Western (Marathi, Konkani, Gujarati, Sindhi), Northern (Rajasthani, Punjabi, Dogri, Kashmiri, Maithili), Eastern (Nepali, Manipuri, Assamese, Bengali, Oriya) and Southern (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam).



Despite the innumerable languages and dialects, Indian literature succeeds in being the orchestrated voice of India, rather than a mere Tower of Babel!

The purposeful co-existence in contemporary India of these score or more of languages and literatures, each with its own distinctive history, is facilitated by the unifying factors of geography, history and social and intellectual life. The diversity of scripts is doubtless a cause for initial exasperation, but most of the scripts in use today are derived from the phonetic Braahmi, used widely in India centuries before the Christian era; and anyhow people have learned to live with and even thrive upon all this diversity.

Winds of change have hit the subcontinent and its literature from time to time, but these too have embraced the whole country in course of time. Brahmanism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity; Sankara, Ramanuja, Ramananda, Nanak, Chaitanya; Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Theosophy: one after another they overflowed the place of their origins and achieved a general diffusion. The coming of the West, of Western commerce and industry, of Western science and literature, of Western manners and life-styles, and presently the gospel of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and the literary renaissance initiated by Bankim Chandra and Rabindranath, the revolutionary spirit unleashed, first by Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Sri Aurobindo at the time of the "Bande Mataram" movement, and later by Mahatma Gandhi in the 1920s and after, culminating in "Quit India", the partition and independence—all these at different times and in their different ways have brought about a quickening of the pulses of life and literature in India as a whole.

Rabindranath Tagore

Lokmanya Tilak generated the revolutionary elan which inspired Indian literature.

Under the surface, then, the twenty or more literatures of India — whether of Indo-Aryan or of Dravidian origin — have their deeper family-relationships and inter-family affiliations. It is possible also to trace parallel lines of development in most of these literatures of India, and locate the several layers and divisions in the content of the total literary heritage:

(1) Local matter, reflecting the life of the rural, hillside or forest people, their forms of worship, their beliefs, superstitions and recreations, the store of tribal or regional legends and myths and folklore, and the whole ethos of these communities with their roots in the dim past.

(2) Sanskritic and Dravidian matter, the long and impressive literary tradition from the Vedic to the Upanishadic, Epic and Classical periods (2500 BC to 1500 AD): the 1000 Rig Vedic hymns, the Sama and Yajur Vedas, and the Atharva Veda charms with a cosmological slant; the great Upanishads (or "the Himalayas of the Soul") with their inspiring seers and characters like Yajnavalkya, Maitrayi, Gargi, Nachiketa and Satyakama; the supreme national epics, the

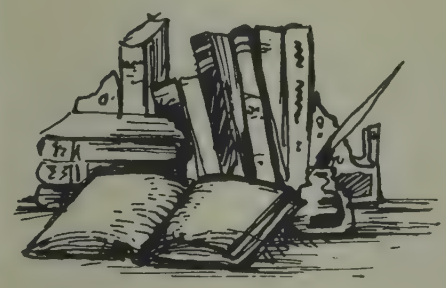
Sarojini Naidu

"Ramayana" and the "Mahabharata" and the many Puranas (notably the "Bhagavata") with the inset stories of Savitri, Devayani, Damayanti, Sakuntala, Ambarisha, Bali, Dhruva and Prahlad, and the immortal guides to Yoga and realisation like the "Aditya Hridaya" (in the "Ramayana"), the Gita (in the "Mahabharata") and the "Chandi" (in "Markandeya Purana"); the Jaina classics in Ardhamagadhi, and the Buddhist (especially the "Dhammapada" and the Jataka tales) in Pali; the classics in drama by Bhasa, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Sudraka and Bhatta Narayana, the prose romances of Dandin and Harsha, the exquisite lyrics of Sankara (e.g., 'Anandalahari"), the ethical exhortations of Bhartrihari, the erotic sequences of Jayadeva ("Gita Govinda"): also, the Tamil heritage since the ancient Sangam Age, the celebrated "Silappadhikaram" ("The Epic of the Anklet") on Kannagi the injured wife who becomes the goddess of chastity, the Buddhist epic, "Manimekhalai", the Jaina epic, "Jivakachintamani", limning the long-suffering mother Vijayai; besides, an immense body of Saiva and Vaishnava hymns that initiated the bhakti movement and the vogue for devotional poetry all over India in the middle ages and after.

(3) The matter (e.g. Zeud-Avasta, Shah Namah, the Arabian Nights and Sufi literature) imported from Persia and Arabia as a result of the coming of the Zoroastrians and the Muslims.

(4) Matter imported from the Western world since the 17th century onwards in the wake of the coming of Christianity, European science and thought and literature, representative Government and bureaucratic administration, and the more recent coming of Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, Existentialism and Absurdistic Nihilism.

There may be some overlapping, but in the main these four streams are doubtless there, one or two running temporarily dry perhaps, and sometimes the old and the new, native and foreign, fusing meaningfully. In the folk tales, songs and ballads, certain motifs — relevant to agricultural occupations, local marriage customs, or local deities personifying river, hill or legendary hero — tend to occur, and these again have a certain ba-



sic pattern of uniformity all over India. The Sanskritic influence spread in recognisable waves, and so did the Persian and later the Christian-European influence. To the indigenous literary genres of epic, drama, lyric, romance, didactic and devotional poetry, ballad and folk tale were now added the imported literary forms of tragic drama, the novel, the short story, sonnet, satire, the light essay, literary journalism, the radio script and political oratory.

What makes Indian literature, although written in several languages, verily the orchestrated voice of India rather than a mere Tower of Babel is the unifying force of this common "matter" that one confronts almost everywhere. The Tamil poet Subramania Bharathi (as translated by Prema Nandakumar) speaks for all-India and not for Tamil Nadu alone:

> The mighty Himavant is ours ...
>
> The generous Ganga is ours ...
>
> The sacred Upanishads are ours ...
>
> Here Brahma-Knowledge has taken root,
>
> And the Buddha preached his Dhamma here.
>
> Of hoary antiquity is Bharat. She's peerless, let us praise her!

Bande Mataram! Hindustan Hamara! — it is every Indian's voice raised in prayer or wholesome exultation. The "Ramayana", the "Mahabharata" and the "Bhagavata" have their versions — more than one, in fact — in almost all our languages, and several of them are classics in their own right, like the "Ramayana" of Kamban in Tamil and of Tulsidas in Hindi, and the "Bhagavata" of Potana in Telugu and of Jagannatha Dasa in Oriya. There has been a good deal of cross-fertilisation between the literatures of India, and like Sanskrit at one time, English is today a link language and link literature in India. In modern times, the classics in any one language are made available through translations to a national audience — for example, the novels of Premchand, Bankim and Sarat Chandra, of Hari Narayan Apte and V. S. Khandekar, of K. M. Munshi, of Tagazhi Sisashankara Pillai, the stories of Tagore and Masti Venkatesh Iyengar, the autobiographies of Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru, the poems of Dinkar, Adiga, Umashankar Joshi, Amrita Pritam and Sankara Kurup. The affinities between Tamil and the other three Dravidian languages, or between Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi, and indeed the links between Indian literatures — in linguistic organisation, in intellectual and emotional content, in the evocation of the physical landscape of India and, above all, in their spiritual impulsions going back to Vedic and Upanishadic times — are far closer than between the literatures of Europe or Africa.

In a survey of Indian literature that covers three or four thousand years, and today comprises literatures in more than twenty distinct and highly developed languages, the odd fact is the comparative paucity of women writers. But of course, the position is not different elsewhere! While women's creative gifts and literary sensibility are not inferior to men's they have long been forced to (or have been content to be) in the background of the theatre of life. "A room of one's own and £500 per year," said Virginia Woolf, were the basic requisites if a woman was successfully to cultivate literature; and women in the past have lacked such leisure and financial independence. Even so there was a Sappho in ancient Greece. There were Sanskrit poetesses like Vijjika, Subhadra, Vikatanitamba, Morika and Silabhattarika. India has known mystics and poets like Lal Ded in Kashmiri, Mira in Hindi and Andal in Tamil. In recent times, however, more and more talented women have embarked upon literary creation, and often with conspicuous success. Nalinibala Devi in Assamese; Pramatha Chaudhari, Sita Chatterjee and Maitreyi Devi (who won the Sahitya Akademi award this year) in Bengali; Dhiruben Patil and Lilavati Munshi in Gujarati; Padma Suchdev, another Akademi award winner, in Dogri; Binodini Devi in Manipuri; Mahadevi Varma in Hindi; Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Markandeya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal and Kamala Das in English; Kuntalakumari, Renuka Devi and Nandini Satpathy in Oriya; Rani Laxmi-kumari Chundawat in Rajasthani; Balamani Amma, another Akademi award winner, in Malayalam; Indira Sant, Iravati Karve, Durga Bhagwat and Godavari Parulekar (the last three, all Akademi award winners) in Marathi; Amrita Pritam, Prabhjot Kaur and Dalip Kaur Tiwana, all Akademi award winners, in Punjabi; Roma Chaudhuri and Leela Rao Dayal in Sanskrit; Kumudini, Savitri Ammal, Anutthama, Guhapriyai, Gowriammal and Rajam Krishnan (yet another Akademi award winner) in Tamil; Ranganayakamma, D. Visalakshi, P. Sri Devi and "Lata" in Telugu; and Qurratulain Hyder, yet another Akademi award winner, in Urdu.

But as yet the men overwhelmingly outnumber the women writers in India, and elsewhere as well. Numberless women have no doubt composed, as it were impromptu, songs and verse narratives for the delectation of small groups or for festive occasions, but such improvisations are seldom committed to writing or published. Like welcome breezes they have blown for a brief while, and have been forgotten afterwards. But all this will change in course of time. In Britain, for example, the women novelists are a growing number, and some of the best work comes from them. Likewise the situation will change in India too, with the spread of women's education and their general emancipation from the "dark rooms" and stifling grooves of the past. Women are born story-tellers, they have gifts of fancy and imagination and a lively sensibility, and they have the clue to the primordial wisdom of the Mother spirit that broods over the universe. Indian literature is exceptionally rich in its portraits of imperious, loyal, beautiful and wonder-working women — Savitri, Sita, Sabari, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari, Sakuntala, Urvashi, Damayanti, Nalayani, Kannagi, Manimekhalai, Vijayai and a host of others — but the creators of this gallery of women have been men. But we are surely on the threshold of a new age when woman will be co-sharer with man of the many tasks and arts of peace : education, culture, entertainment, sport, sculpture, painting, music, dance, drama and literature. There is little doubt that the future of Indian literature is immense and manifold and the role of women in the growth and fulfilment of this literature will be marginal no more as it has been in the past, but truly central and decisive.

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M. S. SUBBULAKSHMI

a great contribution

Chandu Mhatre

There has been no brighter star in the firmament of Indian classical music than M. S. Subbulakshmi. She has been acclaimed by the savants and the masses alike. She has achieved the almost impossible feat of achieving popular acclaim even while maintaining the purity of the classical tradition. She has never stooped to pander to popular tastes. Indeed, she has elevated the popular taste to her own level of sublime purity. Few musicians have contributed so much to the popularisation of the classical tradition in Indian music.

Heir to a great musical tradition, M. S. Subbulakshmi was born in the temple city of Madura on September 16, 1916. She was a child prodigy and began accompanying her mother, herself a very noted Carnatic music singer, at the age of seven. At the age of 15, the Gramophone Company of India brought out her first record. By 1934, at the age of 17, she had overshadowed her mother and become a soloist in her own right. In 1943, at the All-India Music Conference, held in Bombay, the doyens of Indian classical music accepted her as their peer and hailed her as a queen of melody. Having stormed the citadels of the purists, she set out to free classical music from the narrow confines of esotericism. Flaunting tradition, she lent her duet voice to the film "Meera" and overnight became the darling of the masses.

To M. S. Subbulakshmi, music was more that melody. It was an invocation to God. In the tradition of Thyagaraja, she was the foremost proponent of the Bhakti Cult. To her, music was a deeply spiritual entity. She sought to use the medium of music to bring the people of the world together and to strive for harmony between the material and the spiritual. Delivering the Presidential address at the 43rd Conference of the Indian Fine Arts Society in Madras in 1945, she summed up her musical philosophy in the following words: "When a person sings dedicating his heart and soul to God, thousands of people are brought into unison in a divine experience. Their emotional disturbances disappear and listeners get spiritual peace and contentment."

Bhakti is the essence and the very soul of her music. Any raga that she touches comes alive with the bhava of Bhakti. In conformity with her own belief, that only Bhakti music can plumb the depths of the human heart, Subbulakshmi has, over the years, preserved the predominantly devotional quality of her music. She is equally at home with a Thyagaraja composition as with a Meera bhajan.

Even while remaining faithful to the tradition of classical music, it is the mark of her genius, that she has never been afraid to experiment. She has refused to be bound by the rigidities of the classical tradition and in fact, it is her flair for innovation that has set her apart from the mere mediocre practitioners.

Unlke most Carnatic classical music savants, she has even dared to seek a measure of integration with Hindustani classical music. More than anyone else, she has contributed to a blending of the two great Indian musical systems and facilitated an exchange of ideas and tradition between them.

Many honours have come her way. As early as in 1954, she was awarded the Padma Bhushan. In 1955 she was bestowed with the President's special award for classical music. She had the unique honour of recording a special composition for the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi. On his personal insistence, she sang "Hari Tuma Haro" on his 78th birthday, tragically his last. This is the honour she prizes most among the many that have been showered on her.

It is the mark of her genius that she has refused to be bound by the rigidities of the classical tradition, and has never been afraid to innovate and experiment.

Nor has her fame been confined to this country. Her voice was first heard abroad at the Edinburgh International Music Festival in 1963. The Time magazine critic wrote of her very first appearance abroad: "The very appealing timber of her voice, her technical virtuosity and emotional absorption are beyond compare."

The Edinburgh Festival was followed by recordings for the BBC, a special recital in London, informal recitals in several cities of Europe, culminating in a performance at Cairo. The climax of her musical career was a concert under the auspices of the United Nations on October 23, 1966 — an honour which very few creative artists have enjoyed.

M. S. Subbulakshmi has lent her voice to many a great cause. Indeed, her contribution to charitable causes through the instrument of music exceeds Rs. 10 crores. Starting from the Kasturba Memorial concerts in 1943, she has lent her melodious support to scores of causes during the years. The God-given gift of melody has been primarily used in the service of man. In appreciation of her contribution, she was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay award in 1974.

The best part of M. S. Subbulakshmi is her utter humility. Success has not gone to her head. She has always considered her talent as a gift of the gods, given to her to help her to serve humanity better. Deeply spiritual, her success is to be attributed to her total dedication to music. The fame and the wealth that it has brought her has been merely incidental. She ranks among the all time greats in the great and hoary tradition of Indian Classical Music.

WHAT AILS CARNATIC MUSIC

"Subbudu"

(Dance and Music Critic of The Statesman)

Little or no attention has been paid to the lyrical content, but Carnatic music is an example of national integration—let this healthy trend be fostered

Like other things from the South, the grand concert in Carnatic music has stuck too long to tradition with little or no experiment. Whatever changes there have been in the pattern of the concert in the last fifty or sixty years owe less to logic and rationale than to the bias and eccentricities of individual artistes. The Carnatic music concert has no doubt acquired a certain arrangement, but one can hardly discern in it any design or evolved principle. Selection and arrangement of pieces to be sung are a matter of custom and habit. By a stretch of the term, one may call it tradition, but it has no force. No laws, written or unwritten, govern the artiste seated on the dais. If he is eccentric, or hot-headed, he can flout with impunity the expectations of the audience by steering along uncharted courses. There will of course be murmers of surprise or disappointment. But the artiste will not be arraigned, nor will he lose favour or grace. Rather too much allowance is made in our scheme of things for the entertainer. It is the piper who calls the tune, whether we like it or not. This accounts for the peculiar phenomenon in the music world of the South—the preponderance of impolite or eccentric artistes.

An average South Indian concert is an example of enthusiasm and ardour getting the better of comfort and convenience. It begins early in the evening and ends around the hour of supper. The duration cannot be predicted. If the out-of-town artiste has to catch the night train or plane, he may come to the Mangalam just when he has warmed up, as they say. If he has nothing else to do after the concert, he may sing until the milkman arrives. Much depends on the artiste's mood, the accompanists, the patience of the audience, and even the wind and the weather. If the musician fails to strike form the audience unceremoniously makes for the exit without so much as a by your leave.

SABHAS and VIDYALAYAS

Outwardly one may see in the mushrooming of sabhas and vidyalayas in the large cities a renewed interest in our fine arts. But there are unsavoury sides to this phenomenon. The sabhas have imported a kind of commercialism in arts that are becoming popular. Artistes tie up with or break away from particular organisations. This hampers the mobility of both artistes and accompanists. There is another danger. The sabhas, under obligation to their members to keep the organisations alive round the year, or at least to give an illusion to that effect, pursue the artistes to the bitter end. Flattering and profitable to the musician though the demand may be, his art suffers. Running up and down the country, they work their native genius or acquired skills to the last shred. They get too little leisure to improve their art. Contemplation and practice— the two imperatives for the progress of this art—are denied to them.

At the annual Music Academy festivals in Madras, for example, three sets of programmes are presented in a day. The organisers have to keep an eye on the box-office. As a result, older and veteran musicians are made to sing again and again. Each Vidwan brings in his train a devoted band of admirers. Appreciation is prearranged and predictable. The artiste's own performance of the day does little to alter it. No one is worried about the harm done to music, or the injustice to budding artistes that vested interest in the veterans and the gate collection produces. Only this accounts for the fact that the top musicians in the South are those who have been holding the field for more than three decades. Is our art so moribund that for almost a generation it has not yielded any fresh star to the galaxy?

Who will tell the old gang to sing their swan song and quit? Age, of course, has withered their voice and custom has killed all their variety. But the audience is ready to forget their incessant tonal lapses and put it all down to their moods. Is there such a thing called "mood" for a Carnatic musician? A professional can hardly be allowed the privilege of mood, especially when he contracts to give scheduled performances. He is morally under the obligation to give of his best. He owes this both to his profession and to the public who court him.

REPERTOIRE

Among the musicians of the South, there is a deplorable lack of repertoire. There is hardly a musician who can claim to have contributed at least five new forms a year. The audience, through long inbreeding perhaps, is prepared to suffer the same old complement of songs year after year. There is no expectation or ardour among the audience to make the musician sing new pieces. It is enough if he sings his own "masterpieces." All this indicates a deep rooted malady. One explanation for this may be that the concert is only an occasion for a temporary escape from mundane worries. Or is the music hall only a meeting place, a forum for gossip? Why, one asks in despair, are there, most of the time, at the adjoining coffee booths and buffets, large crowds who should be inside the hall? These are not healthy signs and bode no good for this art.

NEGLECT OF THE LYRIC

There is one aspect of Carnatic music—the lyrical aspect—which has suffered particularly from neglect. Carnatic music has been enriched by a variety of compositions by masters of lyrics who poured out their soul in their verses. The words have not only meaning but breathe the intensity of emotional experience. Their lyrics cover every aspect of human experience: love, devotion, faith, suffering, anguish and hope. So comprehensive and exhaustive is the legacy they have left us

that no new creation can escape their influence. Yet, little or no attention is paid to the lyrical aspect in our singing.

Take Thyagaraja for instance. It is well known that each one of his songs in praise of Rama is the product of a particular mood. Each is a creation born out of travail and deep feeling. The songs are intimately connected with incidents in his life. His songs are the record of mystic experience, of his personal suffering in his quest of the one God whom he worshipped. But I am yet to hear a musician who shows due consideration to this aspect of Thyagaraja's lyrics. Most Tamilians know little Telugu. But this is no excuse. Thyagaraja has written his songs in layman's language. They have been sung again and again. They have been translated into many languages. And yet, few artistes have had the humility or even the natural curiosity to understand the words of the composition which they render. But Thyagaraja can have the consolation that he is not the only one who has suffered such neglect. The mood of the composer has never been reflected in the rendering of his pieces by any musician, living or dead.

The point I wish to labour here is that there is a potential new dimension to Carnatic music in the lyrical aspect, which has remained practically untouched for decades. Given its due place in a concert programme, new vistas will be opened for the evolution of Carnatic music. The Pancharatna Kritis of Thyagaraja, for instance, are sung year after year during the commemoration festival on Bakula Panchami day. The last song "Entharo Mahanubhavulu Anthariki Vandanomu" is a piece of lyrical excellence. It says in utter humility: "Great souls there are many—I bow to all of them." This is invariably sung in raucous groups to the total neglect of its lyrical content. Undue stress is laid on technique.

Another sorry aspect in the practice of South Indian music is the complete absence of voice culture. Normally, sruthi (tune) is kept at a low key. This renders the lower registers inaudible and the upper ones inaccessible. Elongated gamakas have, therefore, become a rarity; where there should be glides and curves, one hears the "tharana" and "thomtharana". The result is that before the musicians cross their fifties, their voices decline to cooperate. Group singing then is the only way out. This is why top musicians of the South have to be assisted by their disciples.

It is time too that the status of the disciple is clearly defined. Obviously, we cannot go back to the days of "guru-sishya parampara." Whatever purpose such a system may have served once, socio-economic conditions and the temper of the times make its revival unthinkable. Royal or noble patronage is no longer available, nor is it necessary. More and more of the masses are becoming musicial minded. The average South Indian concert-goer today can identify most of the major ragas of the "melakarta" and point out lapses by the artiste. If music should grow and flourish, the artiste should be encouraged to respond largely to the reactions of the audience.

A word about the teaching of music will not be out of place here. There are, of course, colleges and schools of music but it is not these that produce the maestro. Largely, music teaching is outside the institutions. It is haphazard, and follows no clearly defined or scientific course. Syllabus is based on tradition and custom. The intricacies of the system have a fascination of their own. But the average teacher takes no trouble to inspire in his pupil interest or curiosity in the structure of the ragas and ther combinations. Theory and practice are not properly fused. Carnatic music has a clearly ordered foundation. Even the most intricate pallavi can present no problem if it is reduced to its arithmetical equations. A comprehensive and carefully prepared syllabus can cover the entire system of Carnatic music in a few years.

I now come to "swaraprastharas." Originally, this was meant to give an opportunity to the artiste to exhibit his skill or technical mastery over note combinations. These are in fact again a matter of arithmetic. The improvisations provide an opportunity for healthy competition between the vocalist and accompanists. And the audience is regaled. But this built-in diversion, like comic relief, has been overused. Artistes indulge in this exercise too often, sometimes in the course of every other song. In a programme of three hours, for example, it takes up half the time. Such incessant display of talent or skill may cater, perhaps, to a nebligible minority in the audience. For the rest, it is an avoidable infliction. If, on the other hand, it is confined to not more than three or four songs following a major raga, the musisian will have time to explore the other face of the art. The concert will gain in depth.

Lastly, a few words about the song content of the Carnatic music concert. It is needless to say that it should reflect the manifold features of the "melakarta." The bill of fare must include at least a few of the major ragas. The tempo (kala) should be alternated to break the monotony of a four-hour programme. The "Avartana" (invariably two—the long and the short) should be spread out evenly. In the selection of ragas, there should be no bias for the obscure. It is not by knowledge of obscure ragas that a musician can reveal his talents. He can display his skill by delineating the shades and nuances of the better known ragas which are fairly inexhaustible. Here lies the scope for correlating "kalpana" with performance.

THE V.I.P. MENACE

We have still not got over the age of patronage. In some form or other courtship and subservience survive. A popular form of currying the favour of the elite seems to be to invite one or more of them to grace the concert or "preside" over it, whether or not they have the remotest connection with fine arts. The arrival and departure of the VIPs do not appear to be, alas, bound by any known rules of punctuality or good manners. The VIPs are a busy lot. But surely, if they accept an invitation to attend a function, they could ensure they come in time or occupy their seats without much ado. The fuss made over their presence or absence disturbs the artiste and the audience. It is not unusual for even a celebrated artiste to suspend his recital to pay homage to the incoming or presiding deity. I remember a particularly regrettable incident in Calcutta, where a renowned musician while elaborating a "gana" raga, broke off abruptly in honour of a tardy VIP.

Carnatic music concerts have always reflected the average South Indian's catholicity and broad outlook in the sphere of music. At the concert are sung songs in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Sanskrit, Marathi and Hindi. In short, Carnatic music is an example of our much talked of national integration. Every effort should be made to foster this healthy trend. Our music has survived several assaults like the Isai movement, to put it in a strait jacket and will continue to do so.

BROAD OUTLOOK

If in spite of all that has been written above, Carnatic music has been able to sustain itself, it is solely due to a handful of innovating and enterprising artistes who have been able to keep the flag aloft. I refer to Mrs. M. S. Subbulakshmi, the nightingale of India, Lalgudi G. Jayaraman, the violin maestro, and Balamurali Krishna, the sweet voiced vocalist. Though past 60, "MS" has been able to retain the sonorous quality of her voice and with her intense feeling for the lyrics, she has been able to sustain audience interest in her concerts. In fact, she is the only vocalist who has a universal audience and her recitals are always a draw. A few years ago, a friend of mine, a young electronic engineer, sought my help and guidance in conducting a scientific research of the voice potentialities of Indian musicians. While most of the singers were unable to maintain the basic sruthi throughout their recitals, in the case of M. S. Subbulakshmi and Lata Mangeshkar the electronic ampreas remained steady, impeccably steadfast to the basic pitch. This probably accounts for Subbulakshmi's position in the galaxy of Indian musicians. Lalgudi Jayaraman on his part has composed many new Varnams and Tillanas and redeemed the violin from its vocal bias. Hitherto, Indian instrumental music, especially Carnatic, was entirely vocal in conception and it was Lalgudi who delved deep into the intricacies of sound and made this instrument speak for itself. Balamurali, though a controversial figure, has to his credit not only a golden voice of immense range, but also innumerable compositions set to all the ragas in the "Melakartas."

If Carnatic music is to have universal appeal and appreciation, there has to be a complete reorientation of approach. Old diehards like Semengudi Srinivasa Iyer and Alathur Srinivasa Iyer must graciously descend from the platform and make way for younger artistes. The first mentioned vocalist has given notice of his retirement for the umpteenth time now.

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LEFT: Shri Thyagaraja Swami, the greatest name in Carnatic music.

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THE SOUND OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC

Sumati Mutatkar

CEREMONIAL, FESTIVE AND RITUALISTIC SONGS HAVE ALWAYS OCCUPIED A VITAL PLACE IN THE FABRIC OF INDIAN LIFE

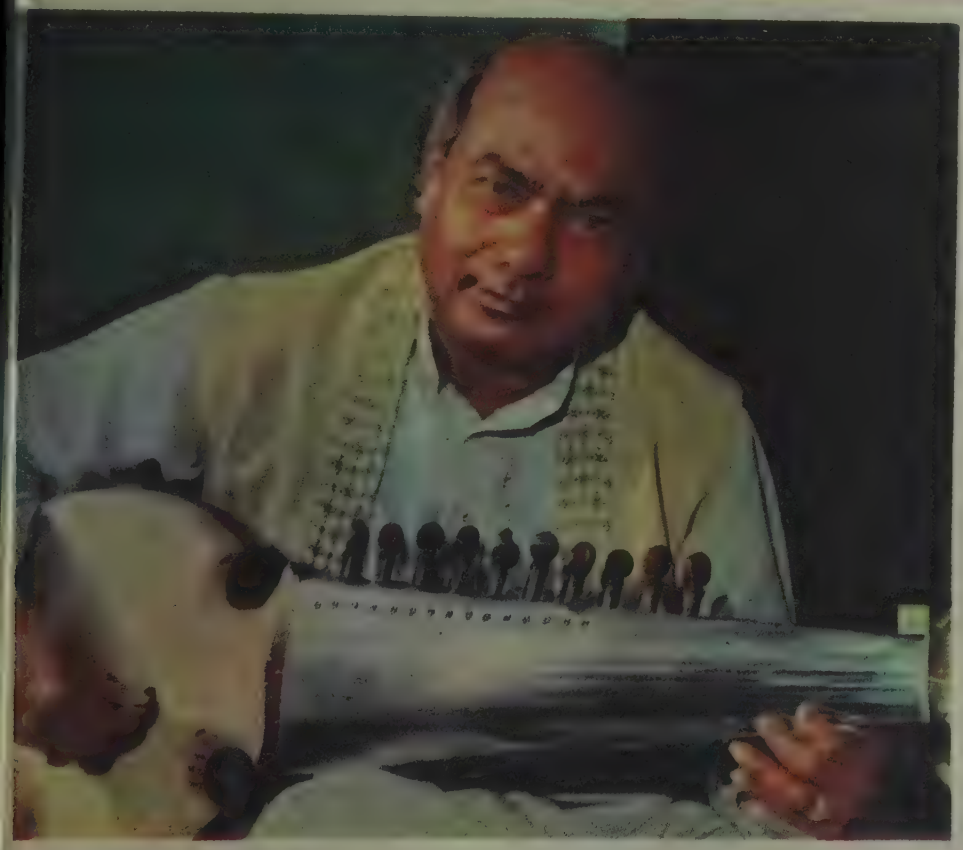
The aesthetics of music in India are embedded in her spiritual and philosophical traditions. The philosophy of music was also conceived and developed against the background of the Vedanta and the Upanishads. The "Absolute" is called the "Brahman." In our highest experience. Brahman is self-revealed as Sat (being), Chit (consciousness), Anand (bliss) — the Satchitanand. For the cardinal substance which is the basis for Ananda the Upanishads use the word "Rasa" (essence). It is the attainment of Rasa that leads to blissfulness. Thus Rasa and Ananda are the fundamental principles of Indian aesthetics and music is part of it.

A particular arrangement of sound characterised by musical notes and adorned by their varied movements, having the quality to delight the heart of humans, came to be called a Raga. In the triad of Raga (melody), Tala (rhythm) and Prabandha (composition) is contained all the essence and wealth of our musical form. From the earliest times the cultivation, enjoyment and appreciation of music has occupied a position of vital importance in Indian culture at all levels and in all spheres of life. Music in India can be envisaged in three broadly demarcated categories, and these are:

. Folk and similar varieties per-

VILAYAT KHAN

PARVEEN SULTAN



ALI AKBAR KHAN

RAVI SHANKAR

Photographs of Ravi Shankar, Vilayat Khan and Ali Akbar Khan: Jitendra Arya

Photograph of Parveen Sultan: Sanil

RAVI SHANKAR

missionary extraordinary

The secret of his success is his intense zeal. He brought about the "sitar explosion" in the West, bringing under its spell the Beatles, pop musicians, hippies, jazz enthusiasts and even—Yehudi Menuhin

K. C. Vajifdar

When we talk of the appreciation of classical Indian music abroad, we forget that half a century back, music and dance were looked down upon in India by respectable society. Singers, dancers and actors existed, but they were not accepted as equals of decent people nor was the vocation considered a decent one! Of course, artistes were patronised and on special occasions they were required to perform in temples during festivals or at special ceremonies like child birth, marriage and so on.

This was the state after centuries of alien domination. Indian classical music never held any great attraction for the West. Nevertheless, many musicologists like Fox Strangway, Popley (who also compared Hindustani and Carnatic music) and a few others made a deep study of Indian music. But never before was classical music so much appreciated or popular as it has become today. The person who is greatly responsible for this is Ravi Shankar.

The first serious attempt was made by Uday Shankar right from the 1920s. But it was not till 1930, when he took a group of Indian dancers and musicians and settled down in Paris, that he began to make some impact. He had in his orchestra musicians like Timir Baran and Vishnudas Shirali. He worked with his musicians and introduced a new kind of orchestration where only Indian instruments were used and he introduced musical interludes of classical instrumental music, special

sarod and sitar solos and tabla taranga. His dances attracted full houses all over Europe and America. The impact made by solo and instrumental music was simply great and, after the show, many musicians came to examine the instruments and discuss our music. Yet, the full impact of classical music had yet to be felt.

All this I learnt from Ravi Shankar, who had joined his brother at the age of ten and was put into school in Paris. He was always present at the rehearsals and watched everything with great interest. During one of my numerous interviews with him, he told me, "Many great musicians and artistes would come to the studio of my brother in Paris. They were interested but the general complaint about our classical Indian music was always the same. I heard them say patronisingly that Indian music is very 'interesting,' 'exciting,' 'exotic,' etc., and at the same time complaining that 'it goes on and on' and 'it is repetitious and monotonous.' And it always set me thinking."

LEFT: Fusion of Indian and western music. Ravi Shankar and Menuhin performing at the concert at U. N. headquarters on Human Rights Day in 1967. Alla Rakha is on the tabla.

As time went on, Ravi Shankar left the dance for music, and learnt with singleminded devotion Indian classical music from the great Ustad Allauddin Khan.

In Delhi, while in charge of the Vadya Vrinda of the All India Radio, he met many foreigners and tried to explain and demonstrate Indian music to them. It was in 1956, when he went abroad as a solo performer, that he tried out the system which he had developed, and it met with instant success. About this he explained to me:

"I knew that for centuries the people in the West have been in the habit of attending music recitals not exceeding two or two and a half hours at the most (excepting some rare opera pieces). I made it a point to give our music in small doses in the beginning, but I never westernised it. I took the idea more from the Carnatic style, which many people think to be more 'traditional,' 'pure' and 'orthodox.'

In this system they start with items of shorter duration and build it up to the main or principal item, which is known as "Ragam, Taram, Pallavi" which is sung or played for an hour or even more. But why do you smile?"

"Well," I said, "I have read of the criticism that you have adopted an unorthodox way of presenting Indian classical music to the audiences abroad. . ."

"That is what I am trying to explain," he interrupted. "When I adopted this method of starting with short pieces, I had also in mind that in the West the doors of the auditorium are closed when the performance begins and the people who have arrived even a little late have to wait outside till the end of the first item to take their seats. Now just imagine the situation if I started with the long drawn-out 'alap, jod, jhala,' followed by a slow, medium and fast 'gat'! The whole thing would take about an hour and a half or two hours, almost the whole time allotted to the performing artist! How would you feel if you were one among those who had come just a little late and were kept waiting outside for two hours?"

"Is this all you do to make the items acceptable?" I asked.

"No. I generally start with a short introduction about our instruments and music in general, before commencing, and by that time the audience would be more relaxed and could accept certain things—for example the absence of modulation in Indian music, as we have a fixed tonic. To the westerners, who are used to change of tonic after each item, our music sounds repetitious. I also explain certain informal habits like tuning during the performance, shaking our heads, appreciating each other. After all this I found the audience more informal, closer and more with me. . ."

Ravi Shankar also used to make careful selection of ragas and explain the scale, the emotional import and the time prescribed for its performance etc. But all this he did only in the beginning. After repeated tours he began to get more enlightened audiences. His real mission has been to present our music in a form that could be understood and appreciated, and he set about it with the zeal of a missionary.

Through recitals, lecture demonstrations, broadcasts, T.V. appearances, films, and his gramophone records, he began to make the impact of classical Indian music felt as no one before him had been able to do. He was also the first to present Indian music on the world platform when the UNESCO met in Paris, where he played along with the world's greatest musicians and musicologists. Played in the biggest auditoriums of the capitals of the world, our music attracted great attention. He acted as Professor Emiritus of music in the University of California in 1965. In 1967 he was the first musician in the world to be engaged as the Challenger Visiting Professor of music at the City College of New York. He started the Kinnara School of Music in Los Angeles in May 1967.

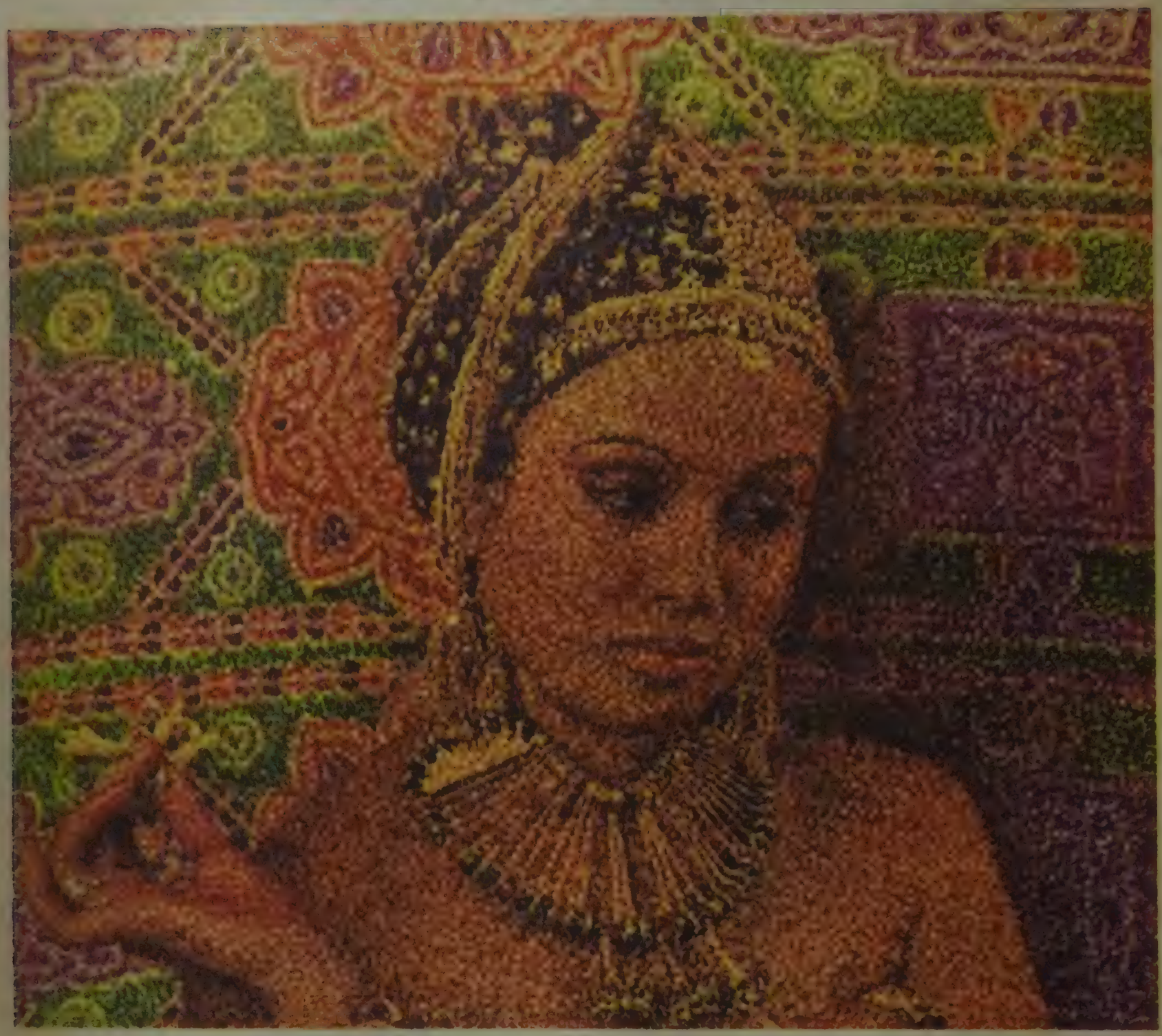
Then came the sitar explosion, when the Beatles used the sitar in one of their pop songs. Interest in Indian music was thus created on a very big scale among pop music fans as well as lovers of folk music and jazz. But this was not all. Indian music not only interested pop singers, the Beatles, hippies, folk singers and jazz players but also ethnomusicologists and classical musicians. Yehudi Menuhin, to whom can be given the credit for having created appreciation of our music among musicologists, was so fascinated that he made with Ravi Shankar the first experiment of playing together at the Bath Music Festival in the item "East Meets West." Thereafter, the music, composed by Ravi, was recorded. Then again at the UNO they played together on the tenth anniversary of the Human Rights Day and the disc has also become very popular.

The secret of his success is his zeal, which is backed by his great love for music and the desire to share the joy which music gives him with his fellow men. That is why Ravi is a success no matter where he plays—in New York or Nagpur, Trinidad or Tokyo, Hawaii or Hyderabad. It is largely due to him that so many foreigners have become interested in learning Indian music, so many universities have included the study of Indian music in the West and so many performing artistes are being invited to teach or tour abroad.

When I tried to compliment Ravi for his great triumph, he smiled and said, "It would be silly to think in terms of personal triumph. The one thing that comes out clear from the reaction of the West is that Indian classical music is being appreciated by all—young and old, and devotees of different forms of music—folk, classical, jazz, pop, etc. This is a great tribute to our music, because Indian classical music has an aura of completeness and has facets that attract musicians of different systems. So, it is not a personal triumph, but a triumph which I humbly share with the great cultural heritage which our great artistes and gurus built up and handed down to us. It is a matter of joy that our music helps in creating a sense of brotherhood between the peoples of the world. And I am sure you felt it when you were in the United States with me."

I sure did and also observed how much he was loved and adored by the young and the old, because his soul-touching music broke down all barriers

From the land of Ajanta and Ellora...



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KUMAR GANDHARVA

The legend has it that Mian Tansen was discovered for music when some musicians heard him copy the sounds of animals to protect his fields. For Shivputra Komkali, now famous as Kumar Gandharva, the beginning was just a little different. He began by copying recorded music and soon reached such a state of competence, that he started giving public performances. In an art as complicated as Indian classical music, this must be a record.

However, the learning bug did bite young Shivputra. His quest for a teacher brought him to Bombay where he started learning music from Professor B. R. Deodhar. Among his teachers Kumar fondly remmbers two names — Deodhar and Anjanibai Malpekar. In between, he recalls many others who helped him on, giving him their compositions "just out of love."

Recognition came quickly to Kumar. He cut his first commercial disc as a child. Even today you can hear it on the radio.

When Kumar was on the threshold of becoming a true celebrity, Fate stepped in. He had an attack of tuberculosis. A long illness and the loss of one lung finally saw Kumar out of the sanatorium. With only one lung left, how would he sing?

There is an interesting anecdote about Kumar's new source of insiration. He was watching goldfish in a friend's house. There he noticed that while the bigger fish sailed through the pond with grace and ease, the smaller ones would jut dart across. Their run was smaller, but it made fascinating viewing. "Why can't I be like the smaller fish?" thought Kumar. Thus was born the new Kumar style of singing.

Today, Kumar is something of a phenomenon. His music is unlike anything heard from any khayal singer and yet he is one of our foremost exponents of the khayal style. He has mastered the art of the brief phrase and has gone back to the folk idiom in doing so.

Kumar is known to have composed many ragas. I asked him about his technique of raga composition. He said, "The raga cannot be composed or created. It is swayambhu (self-creating). It only lies concealed in some folk tunes. It has been my joy and privilege to recognise its presence in a folk air and then to bring it out for all to see and admire."

Kumar Gandharva is a truly inspired person. When you meet him, you have the wonderful feeling that here is a man who is just not touched by all the adulation he has received from his fans and admirers. A bag over his shoulder, a smile on his lips, most of the time all your conversation elicits is but one word "wah" said in a high-pitched voice. And many scholars will tell you that that high-pitched voice has revealed to us an absolutely new facet of Indian classical music — its close relationship with folk music even after centuries of evolution into a formalised art form.

KISHORI AMONKAR

Among the female singers of today, Kishori stands alone — both as a singer and as a person.

As a musician, Kishori has an adulating throng following her wherever she goes in India. As a person she is outspoken but kind. Her interests vary from music to metaphysics. She can converse with you on music as well as on religion. As a matter of fact, for Kishori Amonkar music and dharma are just two branches of the same tree.

In the world of music, Kishori has always aroused strong feelings. While her admirers love her for her forthright and yet lyrical singing her detractors project her as something of a devil, deliberately destroying the basis of the raga system of music. The truth, as usual, lies somewhere in between the two extremes.

Kishori has had a varied training in music. Though the guiding influence on her music has been that of her illustrious mother Mogubai Kurdikar, Kishori has learnt from various people and imbibed many an influence to create her musical world.

A concientious rebel, Kishori boldly challenges the concept that the traditional raga structures are sacrosanct. "That the buzurgs used Pancham only in a particular manner in Bageshwari cannot be used to stifle my creative urge. Why should I follow blindly what the elders dictated?"

This attitude has created many problems even for some of Kishori's ardent admirers. She can sing with a deliberate disregard for the accepted form of a given raga. One has the feeling that it is being done merely to shock. But Kishori does not agree. She says that she is merely experimenting.

There was a time that some of us at least used to go to Kishori's concerts with almost a fear. "What raga is she going to distort today?" would be the unspoken worry. And Kishori would never disappoint us. Sometimes she would just sing a well-known raga in an absolutely unconventional manner and then go on to present an utterly impossible melody in absolutely chaste idiom. One used to think that Kishori is merely getting some impish delight in the process.

But one thing is sure. Kishori Amonkar has always been honest in her search for a newer expression.

The other day, Kishori surprised me. Said she, "I have now reached the conclusion that my experiments notwithstanding, it is only the classical idiom that is the correct idiom. I remember how I used to disregard all the advice my mother gave to me as a child. But today, after making numerous experiments, I have come back to the position my mother has always held."

However, no one should be taken in by Kishori's new-found love for tradition. This volcano of energy and inspiration is capable of confounding anyone — even herself.

PRABHA ATRE

Dr. Prabha Atre literally strayed into the world of music first due to chance and then due to opportunity. Hailing from a well to do family of Pune "where no one ever had anything to do with music," Prabha was intiated into Indian music by a teacher who had initially come to teach her mother.

Prabha's mother had been ailing for quite some time and the doctor, who was also a family friend, suggested that she take music lessons "merely as a diversion." The mother tired of the teacher and his music in a few days. The teacher had been called and it was a little awkward to pack him off in such a short time. So, young Prabha was induced to take a few lessons from him.

Prabha continued her studies in Pune and graduated with Science. Meanwhile, she came in contact with Suresh Baboo Mane, the illustrious son of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan. Music lessons had

MUSICIANS WHO MADE THEIR MARK

Surinder Singh

These great exponents of North Indian music have become household names all over the country

Kumar Gandharva

Kishori Amonkar

continued side by side with academic studies. Inspired by her lawyer uncle, Prabha next completed the degree course in law.

But wearing a gown and addressing gentlemen of the jury was not to be the career for Prabha. She first received a Government of India scholarship and studied under Hirabai Barodekar and then she was offered a job by All-India Radio and all her plans of becoming a lawyer came to an end.

Not that Prabha was unknown to musical circles. In fact, all along the time when she was dreaming of becoming first a doctor, and then a lawyer, Prabha's reputation as a pleasing vocal musician kept growing steadily. Therefore, when she told me that she did not quite intend to be a whole time musician, I was quite surprised.

Prabha Atre is today a reckonable musician. She has received one doctorate and is working for another. When I tried to ask her if she was not frittering away her energies in futile research when she should have been singing, she smiled and said, "Maybe I don't get enough programmes." Of course, she was only joking. Prabha just has boundless energy and must keep doing more things than one. Asked if she still felt that she should not have taken music as a career, she said, "Certainly not."

Proves, doesn't it, that where Prabha is concerned, Destiny alone knew what she should be doing?

PANDIT BHIMSEN JOSHI

The doyen of the Kirana gharana, Pandit Bhimsen Joshiji is definitely today's most popular vocalist of the country. Endowed with a powerful though slightly husky voice, Bhimsen has been in the top bracket of musicians for more than two decades now.

It was in 1955 that I first heard Bhimsen Joshi. He had come to sing in the Shankerlal Festival, Delhi. Raga Shudh Kalyan was the raga he sang. It was an electrifying performance. Joshiji singing on the stage was a sight those days. He would role his eyes, twist his hands, throw about his arms and, in executing some of his tanas, he would bring his mouth down to the dais and then move backwards executing an almost 108 degree arc in the process!

But his extraordinary physical antics notwithstanding, there was no mistaking Joshiji's musical genius even in those days. It was not possible to ignore the man.

Over the years, Joshiji has perfected his style. His gestures, even now a bit theatrical, have considerably mellowed. And his music has attained full maturity. His singing is systematic but all the times intense.

Talking to Pandit Bhimsen Joshi about his art is not the most revealing of jobs. Modest to a fault as far as his music is concerned, he says with obvious fervour that all that he has today is due to his guru the late Sawai Gandharva. That he has worked very hard to reach the peak, he does not deny. But he insists that even the inspiration to work came from his teacher.

Pandit Joshi loves the good things of life. His fondness for drink is well known. A musician friend of his told me this interesting story about Joshiji. A doctor admirer, worried by the damage heavy drinking had done to his vital parts, gave some medicines to Panditji. He also warned him that if he did not give up drinking altogether, he might not survive for more than one year. However, if he took the medicine and refrained from drinking, he might live a little longer.

Joshiji took the medicine; thanked the doctor for his concern and promised to lead an ascetic's life in future. In the morning, however, the friend saw Joshi consigning the medicine to the drain. Horrified, he remonstrated with Joshiji and reminded him of the dire consequence that must flow from his reckless deed. Bhimsen dimisissed his friend's protests with his impeccable logic. "I have thought about this. I believe it is better to drink and live for one year than to take this awful medicine and live for three years." This was nearly seven years ago!

In fact, this lust for life marks the art of Bhimsen Joshi. Whether he is singing a khayal or a thumri, an abhang or a Bhavgeet, his art always shows full environment. There is an urgency and intensity in what he has to say through his music and that is what draws audiences to this great crowd charmer A simple, guileless man. Joshiji can be generous or capricious at a given moment, but his urge to love and to be loved always shines through his ill concealed postures.

Today, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi's music is heard all over the country. The success has never gone to his head and true to the tradition of our musicians of yore, he remains a simple and devoted person.

GANGUBAI HANGAL

For over thirty years now, Gangubai Hangal has been one of the most popular vocalists of the country. Hitting the headlines in her early twenties, Gangubai or Gandhari Hangal as she was then called, came to the performing platform via the gramophone. Her admirers even today remember her 77 rpm records of raga Rageshwari, Durga and Bageshwari.

Gangubai began her musical training under Krishnappa Hulgur, a sitarist who taught her vocal music. But Gangubai maintains that it was under the late Pandit Rambhau Kundgolkar alias Sawai Gandharva that her music really flourished. She recalls with a fond smile how she would sing a wrong raga at the radio and then Sawai Gandharva would take her to task, chiding her softly for risking his reputation with her wrong singing.

When she was in her forties, an amazing change occurred in Gangubai's voice. Instead of the soft, feminine voice, her tone changed to the near tenor of a male voice. Perhaps a less determined artiste would have lost heart. But Gangubai Hangal was born to sing—with whatever voice the Almighty gave her. After another spell of hard work, she emerged again, now with her new voice. Today her singing, always intensely emotional, carries all the greater intensity because of the impediment of her voice. You can literally feel the trapped musician within emerging out in resplendent colours.

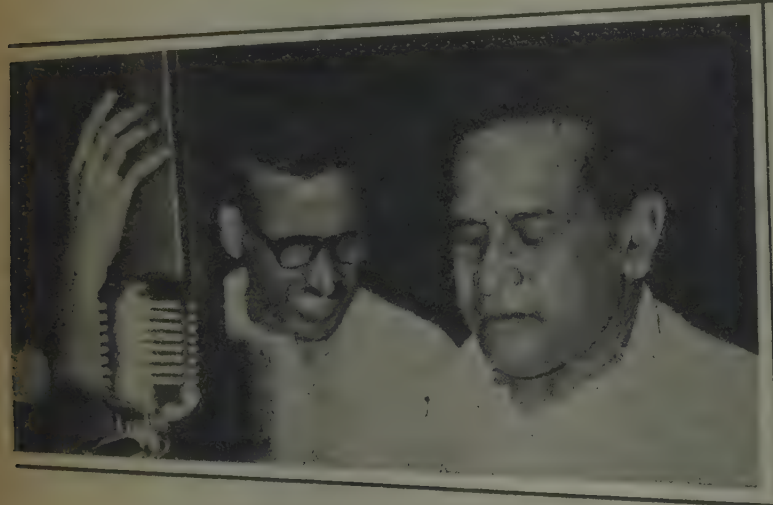
Gangubai Hangal has had a long and eventful career. She was singing when Kesarbai Kerkar was at her peak. She matched her musical wits with such giants as the late Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and the late Ustad Amir Khan. And she is with us today in excellent form and shape. It was therefore natural for any interviewer to ask her about her views on today's singers.

A very valid point that Gangubai Hangal makes in talking about the present day singers is the unseemly haste they show in reaching the audiences. Not many of our youngsters realise the importance of the long and strenuous practice that must go into the making of a musician. Many try short cuts to popularity. Regretably, some even achieve some measure of quick success. But the success always turns out to be illusory.

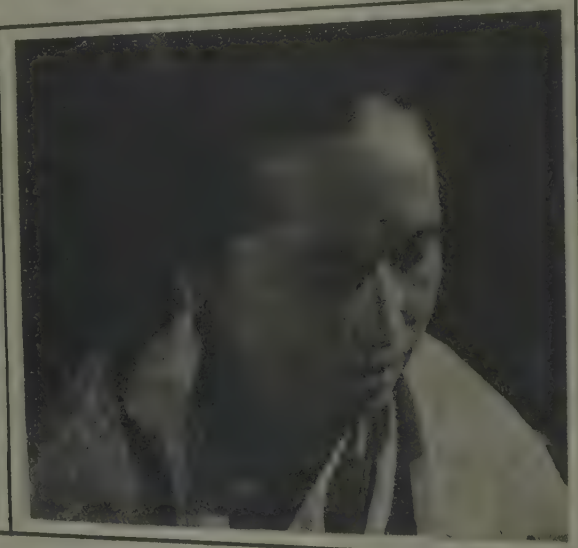
For lasting success, a musician must also be a scholar. In such a tradition-bound music as ours, it is very important that one learns the grammer and masters it before going before the public. And when Gangubai talks, you can see that she is not merely trying to appear didactical. She has lived her ideal and that is why she is 64 and still going strong. And that is why she is still training her daughter Krishna Hangal although Krishna is a competent performer in her own right. For there should always be a Hangal on the musical horizon.

LAKSHMI SHANKAR

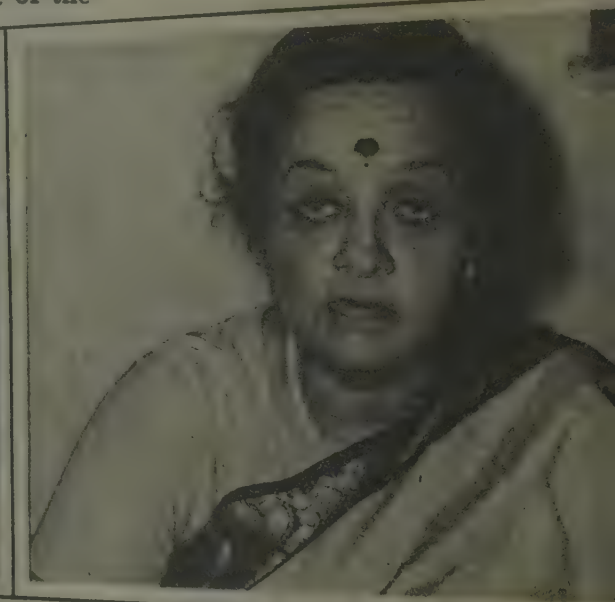
Lakshmi joined the illustrious Shankar family when she married the eldest of the Shankars, Rajendra Shankar. She came to



Pandit Bhimsen Joshi



Gangubai Hangal Pic : Jitendra Arya



Lakshmi Shankar

Udaya Shankar's troupe as a dancer—both Kathakali and Bharata Natyam. And she came to the world of vocal music by sheer will power and hard work.

As a dancer, Lakshmi had learned Carnatic vocal music. But in Bombay she met Ustad Abdul Rehman Khan of the Patiala gharana and she began learning from him. When her Guru-behen Nirmala Devi was scaling the heights of popularity with her Peelu-Bhairavi gramophone disc, Lakshmi was still learning. But so impressed was Rehman Khan with her talent that he took her to Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan just to impress the maestro.

Lakshmi's rise in the musical world was meteoric. Her fantastic vocal range—she can cover three octaves with absolute ease—and her tuneful singing brought immediate recognition.

Whatever his other qualities as a teacher, Ustad Abdul Rehman Khan brought out the thumri ang in Lakshmi most remarkably, but did not quite give her sound training in raga singing. This deficency was made good by Pandit Ravi Shankar who taught his sister-in-law the intricacies of pure classical music.

As a member of the Shankar clan, it was but inevitable that Lakshmi should go abroad. Today she is very well-known on the continent and the United States and has at least one tour concert annually in the West.

Lakshmi Shankar differs from many musicians in so far as she is free from the gharana arrogance that is the bane of our music. Her approach to music is sincere and intellectually honest. I recall having gone to her after a recital and asking her as to why she called the raga she sang as Kaunsi and not Kaunsi Kanhra. The subtle and clear difference she made between the two would have done credit to any Pandit.

Overall competence marks Lakshmi's singing. Whether it is khayal or thumri, she sings with complete ease. She has had some success in light music singing also, but honestly she can leave all her ghazal singing alone. It just does not suit her temperament.

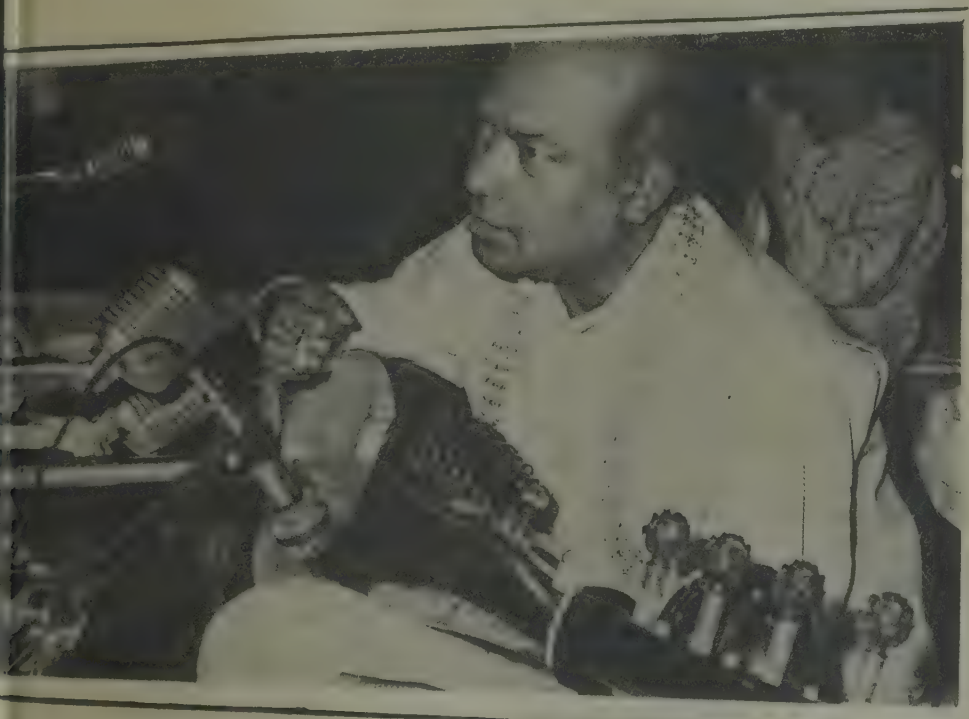
What is she doing about propagating music apart from giving performances?

Lakshmi Shankar has a ready answer to this. She is teaching her daughter and from the few recitals she has given, the daughter promises to be as good as her mother.

N. RAJAM

In North Indian music, the violin has yet to strike firm roots and whenever that happens, people will remember the name of N. Rajam.

N. Rajam comes to North Indian music via the Carnatic style. Her brother R. N. Krishnan is a well-known exponent of the Southern tradition of our music. In the South, violin is very popular both as a solo as well as an accompanying instrument. Our two traditions have a common root and right up to the middle ages, they had the same Shastra. It is only in the application of the note that the two mainly differ today and many musicians maintain that the difference is only skin deep.



Ustad Ali Akbar Khan

Be that as it may, N. Rajam, who was initially trained in the Southern tradition, came to the North Indian style when she came under the spell of the late Pandit Omkarnath Thakur. Panditji was a great musician. But he was also a rather peculiar person. He did not teach many students. In fact, today, N. Rajam is his only truly well-known disciple.

In learning music from a vocalist, Rajam was only following the age-old tradition according to which all instruments are supposed to follow vocal music. This rule is more strictly followed in the case of bow instruments.

Whatever Pandit Omkarnath Thakur's initial hesitation in teaching N. Rajam might have been, once he took her as a pupil, Panditji taught her with great love and care. A devoted girl, Rajam would accompany Panditji in all his concerts, thus not only gaining stage experience but also learning all the while from her Guru.

With her studies under Pandit Omkarnath Thakur, Rajam also took up a teaching job in the Benaras Hindu University from where she later obtained a Doctorate in Music. Thus scholarship and artistic achievement have gone hand in hand in the case of N. Rajam.

As a musician, N. Rajam's chief virtue is her chaste musicality. She brings out the essence of a melody with the reverence of a bhakta. In her music one finds the classical approach of a devotee rather than a mere performer.

N. Rajam differers from most other North Indian violinists in her handling of the instrument. For this she has mainly to thank her South Indian training. She has further improved some of the age old mthods of low wilding and fingering.

Endowed with a sweet temperament, Dr. N. Rajam is as successful a housewife as she is a violinist. Her husband is an architect and works in Benaras. The two ever smiling, soft and sophisticated, make a wonderful couple and one cannot help wondering if the harmony of N. Rajam's music is not a reflection of her happy household.

USTAD ALI AKBAR KHAN

While Ravi Shankar came to Baba Alauddin Khan via dance, Ali Akbar Khan was born to music—he is Baba's only son. It is therefore difficult to say as to when he started learning music.

Today, among the knowledgeable, of the Trinity of Ravi, Vilayat and Ali Akbar, Ali Akbar Khan is almost unanimously considered to be the best musician. Ravi is just a wee bit tradition bound and Vilayat perhaps strays from the tradition too frequently, but Ustad Ali Akbar Khan is the golden mean. He is at once creative and conventional.

For his conventional background, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan has to thank his father. Baba was a strict musical grammarian and a hidebound classicist. For him a raga was a sacrosanct entity. Its bounds had to be respected with diligent care. And this fidelity to the traditional form Baba passed on to his son. Today an Ali Akbar Khan recital of any raga has the stamp of authority.

Although he was reared up in an atmosphere of almost ascetic classicism, Ali was often lured by the haunting light music airs. He would just stray away from the raga following a whimsical vision. And he remembers how, whenever he was caught doing it, Baba would go for his stick and mercilessly heat him up. In fact, beating went on for Ali Akbar Khan along with his musical education.

That Baba did not spare the rod, did not quite save Ali Akbar Khan from being "spoiled." His creativity has survived all the severity of his father's life style. Today Ali Akbar Khan is the innovator of many ragas and his music has a spontaneity that is the envy of many a musician.

But it is in the handling of the sarod that Ali Akbar Khan has really done marvels. Before him there were two distinct styles of sarod playing. There was the dulcet toned style of Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan and the slightly heavy manner of his own father. Ali Akbar evolved a style entirely his own. His sarod is deep and sober in the alaap portion and light and gay in the lighter pieces. In between, it covers the entire gamut of sound production. Today, there is no sarod player who is not influenced by Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, though true to our tradition few admit the influence.

Like his brother-in-law Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan has also made the United States his home and is extremely popular in the West. Being a "true artiste" in his habits, the Khan is not quite as well organised as the Pandit, but his fans in the West are legion and like Ravi, whenever he comes to India, fond admirers flock to his concerts to listen to this marvel of sarod.

USTAD VILAYAT KHAN

Born in a family where the sitar has been played by the last seven generations, Ustad Vilayat Khan came very near to losing his heritage when his father died when Vilayat was under ten.

Ustad Inayat Khan was a famous sitar player and a proud possessor of the art of his forefathers. He put the sitar in the young hands of his eldest son when he should have been playing marbles. But that stood young Vilayat in good stead when the father died an untimely death.

Vilayat Khan's training is shrouded in mystery. Many claim that he learned from D.T. Joshi. But D.T. himself refuses to claim the guruship of this fantastic instrumentalist. Instead, he says that he merely helped Vilayat along and only returned what his father, the late Inayat Khan, has taught him (DT).

Whatever the extent of his formal training, the genius of Vilayat is undeniable. He learned from where he could and imbibed the influences of his contemporaries and elders. Among those whose influence the Khan even now remembers with pride are the late Ustad Amir Khan, th late Ustad Rajab Ali Khan and the late Ustad Fayyaz Khan.

Continued on page 59

INDIAN

CROSSING NAT

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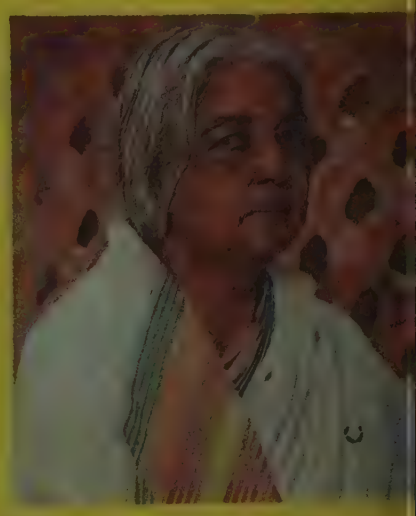
**AFTER FACING SEVERAL HAZ
VICISSITUDES, INDIA
AWAKENING AMONG THE
GLORI**

In the "Rigveda", closely related to the concept of the dancing Indra, is the concept of the apsaras, the celestial dancers. This concept later on becomes a popular feature of our mythology. When Indra assumes the character of a king with a court, they become his favourite dancers and musicians. The particular reference to Urvashi in the "Rigveda" indicates the existence of the art of dance. The well-known reference to Ushas as a dancer is not merely an adjective for the rising dawn; it is used by the poet in a beautiful, sustained image.

Dance embraced all spheres of life from the Vedic times in India. Its intimate connection with religion and the temple as its nursery needs no emphasis. From the 2nd century B.C. to the late 18th century A.D. we notice an unbroken tradition of diverse dance forms governed by common aesthetic principles as expounded in the "Natya Sastra" ascribed to Bharata.

Besides "Natya Sastra", various other texts on dramaturgy and the fine arts like "Sangitaratnakara" "Abhinayadarpana", "Natyadarpana", "Bhavaprakasha", "Sringaraprakasha" and various commentaries, manuals, innumerable dance sculptures and the living traditions speak of a cultural heritage of an impressive magnitude.

In the magnificent temples and their Natamandapas, dance-halls, a class of devotees called Devadasis used to dance the ritual dances as a votive offering to the presiding deities. This practice was in vogue till the early decades of the present century. The art of dance in India has faced many hazards and has passed through several vicissitudes. But on account of its intrinsic vitality it has survived through the ages and has



**Rukmini Arundale (Photogra
Bommal)**

remained an integral part
our culture and social life. C
sical Sanskrit literature and
expression in terms of liv
traditions of the solo dance
dance-dramas in their multi
and diverse forms all over In
is a pointer to the fact t
dance in India reflects age
traditions, cultural aspirati
and timeless beauty in m
splendoured variety.

ABOVE : Balasaraswati: Bharata Natyam (Copyright Photograph: Mohan Khokar)

LEFT: Yamini Krishnamurti: Kuchipudi

RIGHT : Birju Maharaj: Kathak (Copyright Photograph: Mohan Khokar)

DANCE:

AL BOUNDARIES

thari

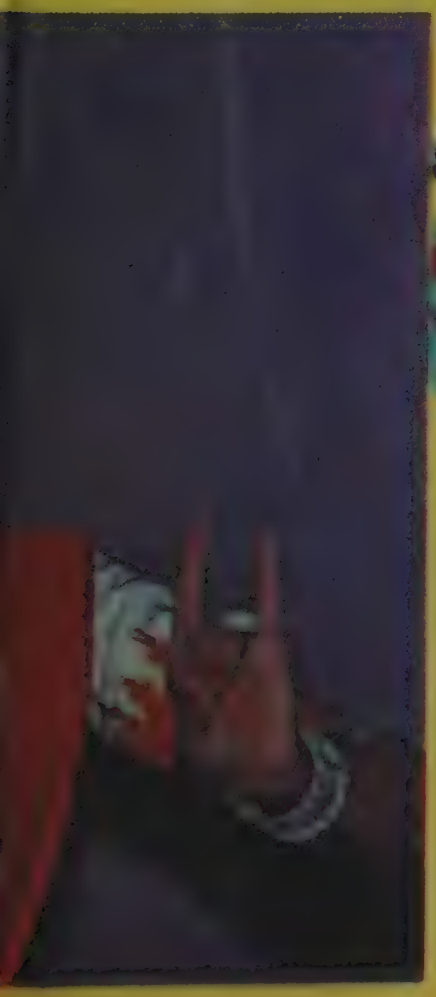
AND PASSING THROUGH GREAT CE HAD A MAGNIFICENT E WHO CARED ABOUT THEIR ERITAGE

When one surveys the history the Indian dance, its growth nd decline, and its resurgence nd recent revival, one cannot iil to be struck by the fact that ven during the period of poli-cal upheavals and lack of so-al patronage the different yles of dance were practised nd perfected by creative artistes different regions. The "family raditions" grew within these yles, and the "oral traditions" ere preserved by the masters ho nurtured them with dedica-on.

In spite of lack of basic edu-ation or academic knowledge nd unfamiliarity with Sanskrit m the part of the dance-gurus, neir contribution in their pre-ervation and perpetuation has een stupendous.

Taking into account recent istory, we notice that the gene-ation which went to schools nd colleges established by the ritish was totally isolated rom the traditions of the coun-

anjukta Panigrahi: Odissi (Co-yright Photograph: Mohan Khokar)



The Jhaveri Sisters: Manipuri (Photograph: Subodh Chandra)

try. Apparently the art of dancing had died by the 20th century and before the advent of Uday Shankar on the cultural scene, what could be seen of dance was only a degenerate form of dance — "nautch" in the North and the "sadir" in the South.

It is indeed interesting to note that the credit for accelerating the revival of Indian dance goes to two women who were ironically enough not of Indian origin—Anna Pavlova, the legendary ballerina from Russia, and

Kathakali dancers (Copyright Photograph: Mohan Khokar)

La Meri from the United States. Pavlova spotted Uday Shankar in London in the twenties and La Meri discovered Ram Gopal later on. Both of them inspired these two superb male dancers to turn to their culture and dance traditions. Anna Pavlova also helped Rukmini Devi to make a homeward journey and learn classical Indian dances. The early visits of Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, the pioneers of dance in America, gave a fillip to the languishing art of dance in India.

Though dance has largely remained the preserve of female exponents, it must be conceded that the contribution of a few pioneers like Uday Shankar, poet Vallathol, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, E. Krishna Iyer and of scholars like Dr. V. Raghavan has been of great value. Uday Shankar put Indian dance on the world map. His ballets were huge successes wherever he performed and awakened an unprecedented interest among Indians to disover their glorious heritage. However, he was not trained in any definite classical dance technique and his creations were innovative but essentially Indian in spirit. In his wake, Ram Gopal arrived on the scene, but with one difference. He went to the roots of our classical dance forms learning Bharata Natyam from great teachers like Pandanallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai and Kathakali from the legendary Kunju Kurup. He was a pioneer who showed to the world, with the help of his talented dance troupe, the grandeur of Indian classical dance styles.

Those were the years of fervent activities, national pride and discovery of our own indigenous fine arts. The era of revival had set in in a remarkable way. The art of dancing, which was abhorred, looked down upon and considered degraded, was now receiving a new lease of life. Other leaders in various walks of life were becoming aware of the art dating back to two millenia.

Its revival created a plethora of activities, particularly in the South. On the West coast in Kerala, the great poet Vallathol was propagating the cause of Kathakali, one of the finest and most gripping theatres in the world. His vision was unclouded and dedication exemplary. His untiring efforts saw excellent results in the shape of the Kerala Kala Mandalam, an institution where the best of teachers give training in Kathakali.

When he was propagating the cause of Kathakali, in Bengal, Gurudev Tagore, who was bewitched by the supreme beauty of the Manipuri dance, was all enthusiasm for it in his famous school Shantiniketan. The art of dance was now gaining social status on account of the untiring efforts of these visionaries. Tagore explored the possibilities of

E. Krishna Iyer, the advocate of dance

dovetailing dance to his exquisite poetry through his dance-dramas adding new delights to our consciousness.

On the Eastern coast in the South, the "advocate" of dance, E. Krishna Iyer, a lawyer by profession, a freedom fighter and a savant, left no stone unturned to restore Bharata Natyam its rightful place in society. He used to don female costumes and dance classical Bharata Natyam items before packed houses, because it was then danced by only Devadasis who were considered women of easy virtue. He fought the famous "anti-nautch" movement, gathering public support in favour of the revival of dance. His services will always be gratefully recollected.

Along with E. Krishna Iyer's efforts, the movement got a powerful impetus with the advent of Rukmini Devi. Hailing from an upper class orthodox Brahmin family, endowed with exquisite beauty and receiving support from Dr. George Arundale, her husband, she created history when, after learning from the legendary Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, she appeared on the public platform in 1935. She had to face tremendous opposition, but she carried on her crusade and succeeded in restoring to the art its rightful place in society. She emphasised the spiritual quality of the dance and broke the stigma against dancing. The starting of the Kalakshetra opened a new chapter in the history of Bharata Natyam. From its modest beginnings 40 years ago, it has achieved international fame as a school of classical dance, and has served as a model to other institutions.

Uday Shankar the pioneer

Stalwarts like Guru Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, Chokkalingam Pillai and Dandayuthapani Pillai taught dance at her institution; musicians like Tiger Varadacharya, Mysore Vasudevacharya and Papnasam Sivam imparted training in music. Appreciating the work she had undertaken, various scholars and pundits helped her to realise her dreams.

Rukmini Devi's services are of great significance in many ways. Her entry into the dance stage removed the social stigma attached to dance. The very idea of a woman from the upper strata of the society taking to dance was unthinkable in the 1930s, when it was still considered to be an art for women of easy virtue and courtesans. She faced public opposition and created a climate and public opinion in favour of this art.

She had an aesthetic approach towards the art. She brought dignity in its presentation; she introduced pleasing costumes, designing them with an innovative eye, exquisite colour combinations; brought in instruments like the veena in place of clarionet; made musicians sit on one side of the stage instead of following the dancer as was the practice; introduced the study of Sanskrit texts in order to correlate the theory and the practice; laid emphasis on correct recitation of the songs accompanying the dance; edited those portions which had brought a bad reputation to the art; introduced training in the art of nattuvangam, the accompanying music for the dance; choreographed dance-dramas, reviving the nearly lost tradition of Kuravanji dance-dramas and the tradition of Bhagavata Mela Natakas, which used to be performed in the villages near Tanjore; produced to date 22 dance-dramas including the Ramayana series and has left a legacy unequalled by any other dancer in quality and excellence.

Her students are legion, among whom one can easily recall the celebrated dancer Yamini Krishnamurti from the younger generation and Anjali Merh, Head of the Dance Department of the M. S. University of Baroda, who is carrying on the tradition of Kalakshetra training at the University level. When one looks back, one feels grateful to her for her vision and uncompromising attitude, upholding only the best in the art and Indian tradition.

Along with Rukmini Devi's epoch making work, the renowned dancer Balasaraswathi's innumerable performances, imbued with a rare artistry, rekindled the interest of the public in the art of dance. The traditional **nattuvanars**, dance teachers, started training high society girls and **arangetrams**, the debut before the public, became the order of the day. The contributions of exponents like Shanta Rao, Mrinalini Sarabhai, Kamala, the Travancore sisters, U. S. Krishna Rao and his wife Chandrabhaga, Vyjayanthimala, Indrani Rahaman, her mother Ragini Devi, Roshan Vajifdar, Ritha Devi, Chandralekha and a host of dancers too numerous to name here gave an unprecedented boom to an art which only a few years ago was completely neglected. The services of the Music Academy of Madras under the guidance of great musicians and the renowned scholar Dr. V. Raghavan, deserves mention, for it gave support to the art, according recognition by presenting dancers during its annual festival.

We have so far surveyed the South only. In terms of history and its far reaching social impact, the work of women pioneers and performers there gave a new life, to the art of dance. In other parts of the

Ram Gopal with Kumidini Lakhia

country also there was a great deal of revival work being done. In the field of Kathak, Madam Menaka (Mrs. Leela Sokhey) was a pioneer who composed ballets and introduced innovations in the lines of Rukmini Devi. She had participated in the Dance Olympiad in Berlin in 1936 and had won a gold medal for her artistic creations. Her academy at Khandala near Bombay was a fine dance centre where dancers like Shevanti, Shirin Vajifdar and Damayanti Joshi had received excellent training. Her work attracted other dancers from distinguished families to take to Kathak. The Poovaiah sisters, Sitara Devi and her sisters, Kumudini Lakhia, Rohini Bhate, Roshan Kumari and several others contributed in promoting this dance form and bringing to the fore its beauty and grace. They all gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Kalka Bindadin Maharaj and his descendents, Achhan Maharaj, Shambhu Maharaj, Lachhu Maharaj and the superb male dancer Birju Maharaj, in propagating the art of Kathak. In the revival of Kathak, the Jaipur gharana and its exponents like Sunderprasadji, Hanuman Prasadji and Narayan Prasadji, to name a few, played an important part. For want of space I have not mentioned the other gharanas and their exponents.

In Manipur, dance is a part of daily life. It is rare in Manipur for any one not to know dancing. It has a strong tradition, both religious and social. The great gurus like Amobi Singh, Amodan Sharma and, from the younger generation, Bipin Singh, brought a wider recognition to Manipuri dance by training, besides Manipuri dancers, non-Manipuri dancers like Savita Mehta and her sister Nir-

Madame Menaka, the pioneer in Kathak

mala, and the Jhaveri sisters who practised the art and performed it all over India. The legendary Mahabir Singh, Nabhakumar's pioneering attempts to bring the art to Gujarat, and the training imparted at Shantiniketan and Uday Shankar's Almora centre, enlisted a number of exponents of Manipuri. In Manipur itself, artistes like Suryamukhi and Tombino, Thambal Sna and others won great plaudits. The Jawaharlal Manipuri Dance College in Manipur, along with other institutions, preserves the tradition in the best possible manner. In Delhi, at the Triveni Dance Academy, Singhjit Singh and his talented dancers have won wide fame for their innovations and ballets in Manipuri style.

With independance, India entered a new era. Dance forms like Odissi and Kuchipudi received fresh impetus. Though Odissi was performed in the temples in Orissa till the early decades of the present century, precious little was known about this dance form. Credit goes to Indrani Rahaman for bringing it to the public platform of the major cities by her performances and researches in the fifties. Of course, in Orissa, gurus like Pankajcharan Das, Debu Prasad Das and Kelucharan Mahapatra, were imparting training and were themselves dancing in Raas parties. But the systematic study of this dance form is a post-independance feature. With the awakening of the national spirit and renewed interest Oriya girls have been learning dance, but its recognition on a national level came rather late. The most consistent and devoted dancer from Orissa happens to be Sanjukta Panigrahi who, along with her vocalist husband Raghunath Panigrahi, has dedicated herself to the propagation of Odissi, though she too was trained in Bharata Natyam at Kalakshetra under Rukmini Devi's guidance. Kumkum Das,

A sequence from 'Sabari Moksham' dance-drama from the Ramayana series choreographed by Rukmini Devi

another gifted artiste from Orissa, Minati Misra and other young dancers have helped Odissi gain its rightful recognition. From among non-Oriya dancers, Yamini, Ritha Devi, Sonal Mansingh, Kumkum Lal and others have presented it with great expertise. As it happened with Bharata Natyam, it has also become a craze to learn Odissi.

One important development deserves to be mentioned. Kathakali and Kuchipudi forms are essentially dance-dramas and are traditionally the exclusive preserve of male dancers. Kathakali, on account of its strenuous nature, was not practised by female dancers and the roles of women were enacted by males. For example, the late Guru Karunakaran Pannicker was so gifted in enacting the role of Panchali (Draupadi) that he won the title Panchali and was known as Panchali Karunakaran Pannicker. However dancers like Shanta Rao, Mrinalini Sarabhai, Ragini Devi, and Tangamani, wife of guru Gopinath, studied Kathakali and presented it on the stage with sufficient mastery. From the younger generation Kanak Rele and Tara Rajkumar (nee Nedungadi) have earned fame as Kathakali dancers. (Recently in Bombay, during the International Women's Year, girls from Kerala presented an all-women Kathakali performance in which even male roles were enacted by women dancers!)

In Kuchipudi village, the birth place of Kuchipudi dance, and its environs in Andhra, the legendary Vedantam Satyam impersonates female roles as per tradition. He is nearing forty and is pleasantly balding. But when he appears in the roles of Satyabhama and Usha, he casts a spell on his audiences with his superb artistry. He is vastly gifted and having seen his art I feel that few female dancers can match it. He invests his performances with such delicate finesse and bewitching feminine grace that one simply marvels at this unique artistic phenomenon. It reminds us of the great Kabuki actors who play female roles and the Chinese actor Ma Fai Lang. However he happens to be a solitary example at the moment, though his nephews Sitaramaiyya and Manikyal Rao are following in his footsteps and have shown bright promise.

From among the established exponents, Indrani Rahaman, Ritha Devi and Yamini Krishnamurti took to Kuchipudi dance form and brought it to the cities and public platform with great success. Yamini brought to its interpretation an intense passion and she continues to present it regularly. In her wake, a number of young dancers studied it and added it to their repertoire. In Madras the renowned Guru Vempatti Chinna Satyam trained young aspirants in his Kuchi-

Continued on page 47

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KATHAKALI

Mohan Khokar

The crowning achievement ...as theatre, it is tremendous, total

To Kerala — that lush if feebly rugged stretch of territory hemming the western coast of peninsular India —belongs the credit of presenting to the country one of the most imposing and colourful spectacles of dance one can hope to see anywhere — the Kathakali. Kerala has, through the years, spawned and nurtured several other varieties of dance too. However, Kathakali represents the crowning achievement, the showpiece, of the centuries-old tradition of theatre indigenous to the land. The character of Kathakali is heroic, majestic, epic. Its world is a magic world, where gods and titans materialise before one's eyes, to relieve their elemental furies and passions. Kathakali provides, in a manner nothing else does, a spirited commentary on the ethos and psyche of a people who cherish the art as one of their most prized possessions.

Though Kathakali, by itself, is an art not more than 300 years old, its actual roots can be traced to at least 1,500 years earlier. Kathakali marks the culmination of a whole process of synthesis, which began with the early animistic beliefs and practices of the region and continued till the recondite Sanskrit theatre, always a potent force in the religious and cultural life of the community, toned itself down for a more direct contact with, and appeal to, the people. Kathakali also symbolises a blending of the Aryan and Dravidian cultures, for, in shaping its technique, Kathakali assimilated various elements which it borrowed freely from the dances, dramas and ritual performances associated with these cultures relative to their place in ancient Kerala.

Any attempt at reconstructing the history of Kathakali will have to take into consideration practically every type of formalised dance, drama and dance-drama that existed in Kerala prior to the genesis of this art. Such a study should include the earliest type of ritual dance-drama in Kerala, the Mudiyettu, the oldest stylised theatre tradition of the region, the Koodiyatam, the ritual dances associated with the cult of the goddess Bhagavati, such as Therayattam, the socio-religious and martial dances, such as the Sastrakali and Ezhamattukali, and the laterly evolved dance-dramas, such as the Krishnattam and Ramanattam. The art of Kathakali incorporates the characteristic features of many of these dances and dramas and, as such arts are known to have preceded Kathakali, it can well be assumed that Kathakali evolved out of these earlier forms.

Kathakali is a very exacting art. It demands not only complete control of practically every fibre of the body but also intense sensitivity of emotion — the capacity both to experience feeling within and to transparently register this without. For this reason training in Kathakali begins early, and it is strenuous, and continues long. Boys are recruited at the age of about ten and they study for at least seven years before they are allowed small roles on the stage. During this period they receive a rigorous drilling to discipline the body as well as the mind.

The domain of Kathakali is peopled by superhumans, gods, demons, ogres, mythical birds and animals. To make the art come fully alive on the stage it is necessary to present the characters in a larger than life format. And this is where the extraordinarily clever expedient of disguise in Kathakali comes to play its abundant part. On the basis of their nature and qualities, characters in Kathakali are divided into various core types, each of which is represented by a set mode of make-up and attire. For example, good and noble beings, such as divine personages, brave kings and virtuous heroes, carry what is called the "green" make-up; in this the face is painted a light green and a white fluted ridge made of rice paste and lime is provided along the whole frame extending from the chin to the ears. Fierce, powerful and villianous characters don the "knife-shaped" make-up. Female characters generally carry a smooth pinkish coating on the face. Characters sporting beards, are of two main varieties — white, kindly and pious, and red, evil, destructive, beastly.

Equally important as make-up in Kathakali are costume and adornment. Here, too, set conventions are followed for set type of characters. Practically all male characters wear full-sleeved coloured jackets coupled with a voluminous skirt which is made to bulge all the more by accommodating several small cushions beneath the waist-string. Over the jacket are worn necklaces, epaulettes and bangles. Most male characters also wear head-dresses, which are made of light wood and are generally in the form of a conical crown fitted with an enormous disc at the back, the entire being emblazoned with fragments of shining metal, bits of mirror, shards, daubs of vivid paint and the like. For certain fiendish characters a tiny seed which acts as a minor irritant is inserted into each eye; this inflames the white and vastly vivifies the goriness of the portrayal. The bloodthirstiness of the characters which are even more savage and fierce, is sharpened by providing them with a pair of canine teeth which they bare sneeringly as and when it suits the projection. In total contrast is the dress of the females, for all it consists of is a full-sleeved jacket paired with an ankle-length skirt and a veil that drapes the head and flows down the sides to the waist. There are,

of course, many ornaments, like necklaces, bangles, ear-pendants and a waist-belt.

Hours before a Kathakali performance, which takes place only at night, drummers mount the open-air stage and begin to pound their instruments. This is by way of announcement. The persistent, insistent roll penetrates far and wide and draws people from all around to the focal point. When the audience is assembled, the tall brass lamp kept at the front of the stage is lit. The drummers gather in a cluster close to the lamp and play a flourish, which sets the pace for the performance to follow. The drummers then retreat and two men holding a colourful rectangular curtain appear on the scene. Behind this curtain two boys, neophytes, execute a series of steps and movements to the accompaniment of benedictory songs. This is known as Todayam and is offered by way of propitiation. The boys make their exit and are replaced by two performers, portraying usually a god and his consort. The musicians take up the song, and with this is presented what is known as the "curtain-look." In this the curtain is lowered a trifle and, after a dramatic pause, pulled taut again. This is done repeatedly, each time to give a tantalising glimpse, to reveal a little more, of the faces of the dancers. Eventually the curtain is removed in full and the two divinities appear in all their glory. This item is known as Purappada. The two dancers then retire and the musicians sing an extract from the Geet Govinda. Thus, through a forceful combination of dance, song, rhythm and colour, the audience is worked up to a mood of high expectancy — just the thing for the proper appreciation and relish of an art of the fantastic disposition of Kathakali.

The stage in Kathakali is simple: it is in fact stark bare. It has no backdrop, no scenery, no setting; it carries only a stool for the dancer to sit or stand on if the action so requires. There are two singers, one of whom handles a gong and the other cymbals. There are also two drummers. The drums play a very vital role, for through modulation of their tone and beat, which indeed is handled extremely dexterously, they are able to impart enormous vitality to the projection.

A Kathakali performance lasts all night long. The plays are from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. A common theme is that of a "vadha" or the deserved slaying of an evil adversary. Each play is composed of lines and songs, the former being in the form of pieces of narrative which serve as links between the different sequences of the play and also help carry the story forward and the latter words ascribed to the characters themselves. Every line of a song is rendered again and again and every word in it is projected through deliberate, studied expressional work. The hands play a very eloquent role. In between the songs are inserted brief and briskly delivered passages of dance which serve as adornment.

In the tradition, Kathakali is danced only by men and boys. In its style and delivery the dance is virile and expansive, involving perky leaps and bounds and purposeful movements and actions. The art is also invested with immense dramatic power, for, through gesture and expression alone, the performer is able to create the illusion of a range of mountains, a forest, animals, and what have you. The richness of the art equips it to take in its stride situations both of outright murder and mayhem and of tender love and pathos. By and large scenes of violence and torment and killing dominate Kathakali. In demonstrating brutality there is no mincing of the matter; often, the last gasps of the felled opponent go in tandem with the clawing out of his entrails by the worked-up opponent. And the impact of all this is magnified many times over by the accompanying deafening din and tumult generated by the drummers and cymbal-players and the phrenetic leaping and licking of the flames lost in their eerie, eternal dance. Indeed, as a form of art Kathakali seems to come from another world altogether. As theatre it is tremendous, total.

Mr. Mohan Khokar has been active in the field of dancing for over 30 years now. He was the head of the department of dance of the University of Baroda for 14 years and is now the secretary of the Sangeet Natak Academy, New Delhi. He has written two books, "Dancing Bharata Natyam" and "Indian Classical Dance".

MANIPURI

A lovely blend of feminine grace and virile folk dance

Kay Vee

The Jhaveri Sisters of Bombay and the Manipuri classical dance form from that tiny Shangri-La-like ex-kingdom in the Kachar region north-east of Assam are names synonymous.

Manipuri has an easy flow and elegance and is a blend of peerless feminine grace and virile folk dance. It has no cut, angular movements like Bharata Natyam but graceful glides and fluid movements. And the costumes above all are out of this world and ethereally wonderful.

A Manipuri dancer in flared-up parasol skirt and diaphanous **odhni** verily looks like a dainty damsel who has emerged straight out of a dream and is truly a sight for the gods. The Jhaveri Sisters best exemplify this by their elegance and grace and devotional fervour and attachment to the basic traditions of the Manipuri dance form in its pristine purity.

In the forties, dancing was in disrepute and was supposed to be done by nautch girls of easy virtue or devadasis as devotion to God. Girls and boys from orthodox families were not allowed to see a dance recital, let alone learn to dance themselves.

But the cultural renaissance which emerged from Mahatma Gandhi's social reforms at the time of the freedom struggle and Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan changed all that. Indians once again began to have pride in their music, art and dance and there was a revival.

Tagore himself used to stage dance dramas where he used the Manipuri dance form for feminine characters and the virile and explicit Kathakali form of Kerala for the male characters. This influence percolated to choreographers like Yogendra Desai and Govardhan Bansal in Bombay. The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and the Indian National Theatre were the main institutions behind the revival of dance dramas.

Thus, INT produced "Meerabai" in 1945 and the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan produced "Jai Swaminath" in the same year with choreography by Manipuri Guru Bipin Singh, who learnt

The Jhaveri Sisters

Manipuri from several gurus and who was in his younger days a prominent dancer of Madame Menaka's troupe, which used to practise in Khandala for six months and perform in India and abroad for the remaining six.

Nayana, who was a good amateur dancer, was offered the main Manipuri dancing role in both dance dramas and she performed with credit. She was again offered the main role in INT's production of "Amrapali" in 1947 when she again shone.

Nayana became interested in Manipuri and began training under Guru Bipin Singh in 1945. Later, her younger sisters, Ranjana, Suverna and Darshana joiner her.

Together they took rigorous training and later, guided by Guru Bipin Singh, they travelled to Manipur and studied further under Guru Amubi Singh, the guru of Bipin Singh, and learnt the traditional style of **lasya** (feminine grace) and **tandava** (virile male dance) and different types of Bhangi Parengs. Their main guru is Guru Bipin Singh who has assimilated the best from many gurus and is known for his inno-

vative choreography which sticks to the roots of basic Manipuri traditions and yet incorporates new movements not tried hitherto.

Thus they became familiar with the intricacies of Manipuri dance forms which fall roughly into four different categories—the **Ras-Leela,** the classical form of Manipuri, which is very delicate and graceful and incorporates **premlakshana bhakti,** the innocent love and devotion of cowherd maidens and gopis like Radha for Lord Krishna, as exemplified in the Gaudiya cult of Vaishnavism, the **Sankirtan,** which includes Mridang Chalan (dancing with drums) and Kartal Chalan (dancing with cymbals). Festival dances such as the Clap Dance and the Manjira Dance and the Leiharaoba, and Tribal dances which are vigorous like the sword and spear dance.

The language of the songs (padavallis) in Manipuri dancing is Brajabhasha, a combination of old Sanskrit, old Bengali, Maithili and Prachin. A **padavalli** is a garland of songs.

Ever since Maharaja Bhagyachandra adopted the Gaudiya cult of Vaishnavism as the State religion in 1764 the Manipuri temple dance has flourished. But because it was confined to hilly terrain, it remained obscure until the Jhaveri Sisters and earlier Guru Bipin Singh and Tagore thrust it forward for recognition as a major dance form. The Gaudiya cult originated from Bengal's Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.

The **Radha-Bhava** is evident in the life-style of the natives of Manipur, who still greet each other to this day with a cry of "Jai Radhe." The idea here is to be steadfast in devotion like Radha for her beloved Lord Krishna and have that same idea of total surrender to the Lord.

The Jhaveri Sisters themselves produced their first all-Manipuri dance drama, "Usha" in 1951, "Raj Nartaki Amrapali" in 1954 and later "Chaitanya Mahaprabhu". Later on they stuck more to the pristine classical form of presentation of items such as swaramala, telena, prabhandhas and so on.

The Jhaveri Sisters were at first looked upon as unwelcome intruders in Manipur, but when the dance gurus and the people saw their total attachment to the dance form in all its purity, they began to accept them as their own people. The crowning point came in 1955 when the Jhaveri Sisters were invited to perform in the sacred Govindji Palace Temple in Imphal, a thing that had never happened before.

They were the first outsiders to dance in that temple. The gurus who watched, blessed them. The Sisters backed by their father and Guru Bipin Singh, started in 1958 the Govindji Nartanalaya in Imphal, where they conducted a six-year Manipuri Nartana Visharad course. Guru Bipin Singh resigned from there after ten years and about three years ago, he started the Manipuri Nartanalaya in Imphal, Calcutta and Bombay. They conduct a six-year Visharad course and an 8-year Acharya course. Today there are more than 500 students learning Manipuri in various institutions, thanks to the filip given by Guru Bipin Singh and the Jhaveri Sisters.

The Jhaveri Sisters, Nayana and Darshana in particular, have done extensive research into Manipuri and rescued and preserved old manuscripts pertaining to it. Surprisingly, there is no Natya Shastra as such for Manipuri, but the dance form and its technique have been described at length in various religious documents.

Younger sisters Suverna and Darshana learnt initially from Guru Surendra Sinha, the younger brother of Guru Bipin Singh, and later from Guru Amubi Singh and Guru Bipin Singh. The sisters have over the years choreographed a number of nritya-natikas (dance dramas).

The Sisters have long emphasised the learning of drum syllables and even playing them if called upon to do so. Thus Darshana herself is a very good exponent of the **mridang** percussion instrument.

Nayana said there was a paucity of books and magazines on dance. Therefore, full credit must go to the "Marg" magazine for showing in articles, photographs and detailed explanations in depth of the various classical dance forms of India. The Jhaveri Sisters naturally wrote and edited and modelled for the photographs on the exclusive Manipuri issue of "Marg".

Manipuri has a bigger following in Calcutta than Bombay because of the Bengalis' affinity to Vaishnavism and the music and language of Manipuri. Darshana told me with interest that there is polygamy in Manipuri, now a Union Territory, because there are more women than men, that men are basically creative but lazy and women (the wives) do not consider it wrong to support the husband.

The Jhaveri Sisters were initially encouraged by their parents and later by their husbands. Darshana, the youngest, is not married however.

Nayana's daughter, Angana, and Ranjana's daughter, Lalana, too are now immersed in Manipuri and the tradition of the sisters is carried on by their daughters.

The Jhaveri Sisters have toured Africa, Europe and the Continent and regularly tour there every three years. They once gave 22 shows in one month in West Germany in a tour sponsored by the Indo-German Society there comprising Indian residents in West Germany.

All in all, the Jhaveri Sisters are doing a mighty fine job putting Manipuri as a major dance form on the map of the world.

DEVOTEES OF DANCING

Here are a few among those who helped Indian dances to achieve their present high status and international repute

KANAK RELE

Kanak Rele is a multi-faceted personality. She holds a degree in law and has recently completed working for a Ph.D. in Mohini Attam. Kanak Rele is the Principal of Nalanda Nrityakala Mahavidyalaya, and is also one of the foremost exponents of Mohini Attam and Kathakali in the country. All this have made her a pioneer in the field of dancing, one who has created new dimensions in the teaching of classical arts. This will be evident if one were to see the curricula which she has drawn up for study in the degree courses in her college. The students are expected not only to study the practical aspects of dancing itself, but also study the ancient texts on which the classical arts are based. They are expected to have a thorough knowledge of the allied arts such as music, sculpture, painting, etc. to have an understanding of the cultural development in the various periods. Above all, they are taught to teach dancing to other students and are encouraged to choreograph dance pieces on their own.

However, amongst all her achievements, the most valuable contribution is the establishment of Mohini Attam as a definite classical dance form of India. "Mohini Attam is one of the traditional dance forms of Kerala. During the reign of Maharaja Swati Tiruval, this art form was highly appreciated. Two of the gurus of the Tanjore Quartet migrated to the court of Swati Tiruval after the death of Serfoji Maharaja. This association with Bharata Natyam has resulted in certain common aspects between the two systems.

"Mohini Attam is of the same genre as Odissi and Bharata Natyam. It is a deliberately codified dance style which follows all the tenets of the Natya Shastra. The basic dance patterns or adavus in Mohini Attam have been derived directly from the Karanas in the Natya Shastra. The emphasis in Mohini Attam is laid more on facial expressions, rather than on footwork patterns. Mohini Attam is often considered to be a subsidiary form of Kathakali, which is totally wrong. As a matter of fact, in Kerala these systems are treated as two distinct forms.

"I found Mohini Attam a very beautiful form of classical art. This dance form, like the other clasical arts, had gone into a decline at the turn of this century. I have done a great deal of research work and experimentation in Mohini Attam.

"I have added more variation in the nritta patterns by combining the basic adavus in varied ways. I have also added more items to the repertoire of Mohini Attam."

One of Kanak Rele's innovations is the development of the kinetics involved in Mohini Attam. On this basis she has worked out certain special exercises for Mohini Attam. The theory of body kinetics is her original contribution in her research work, and this theory can be applied to any form of dance, and a system of basic exercises worked out.

It is Kanak Rele's ambition to win for Mohini Attam due recognition in the field of classical arts. Her total dedication as an artiste is towards Mohini Attam. She is training some of her senior students in this dance form so that more teachers will be available to teach Mohini Attam.

PARVATI KUMAR

Parvati Kumar is a guru and an erudite scholar in the field of Bharata Natyam. He combines in his teaching both the practical

DEVOTEES OF DANCING

and the theoritical aspects of Bharat Natyam. He has made equally great contributions in the field of ballet, and he has presented over twenty of them under the banner of the Indian National Theatre. The most noteworthy of them are "Discovery of India", "Rhythm of Culture" and "Dekh Teri Bambai".

As a teacher and scholar of Bharat Natyam, Parvati Kumar feels that in the classical arts we must follow tradition strictly. Often we may feel that a certain statement or rule of the traditional guru is unacceptable, but in the long run, inevitably they are found to have a meaning. When we criticise the traditional patterns, it is usually due to our misunderstanding of them. This view of Parvati Kumar may seem outdated to some of us, but his years of study have given him an insight into the value of old texts.

Parvati Kumar is not against modern innovations in Indian dance forms. "But such innovations cannot fit into the strict classical systems" he says. "Each character involves a different technique of its own. The mythological characters fit into the pattern of classical dances. Ravana can be portrayed through Bharata Natyam but Hitler cannot be portrayed through this form. Their qualities may be the same, but there is a difference in their general demeanour. Contemporary characters and incidents can be introduced into classical dances, but technques in these dance forms would need to have a wider scope."

On the other hand, Parvati Kumar is all for new innovations and experiments where dance dramas or ballets are concerned. "The modern dance drama form is not an extension of the folk or classical theatre. It has no traditional roots and hence the choreographer has greater freedom. I have used Kathak, Kathakali, Manipuri, Bharat Natyam and the various folk dance forms of India in my ballets. Each form of dance is suited to express certain moods and it is the combination of different patterns of sound and movements that create a ballet. The possible varieties are numerous, and I have always found it very exciting to choreograph a ballet.

"The different traditional dances can be combined to produce a very modern or abstract form. I was very successful in this experiment, especially in 'Dekh Teri Bambai', which we had taken to the Theatre des National Festival at Paris, along with a traditional ballet, 'Krishna Leela'. Ballet is really my field, where I feel my creative abilities utilised fully."

Parvati Kumar is not worried about the decreasing popularity of the classical arts. "Each age will bring its own artistes who will earn a name for themselves and their form of art. In every aspect of culture, in every country, there are periods of ascendancy, and phases of decline.

"Perhaps we gurus are partly responsible for the present decline in the classical arts. I give my students all the slokas from the original texts and this makes them lazy. At the parents' insistence, we often consent to hurried arangetrams and present on stage mediocre art. This has turned away audiences from even the good performances.

SHIRIN VAJIFDAR

Shirin Vijifdar is an artiste of long standing in the field of dancing. She gave her first performance in the year 1942 and several performances in India and abroad subsequently.

In almost four decades, Shirinji has seen many changes in the field of dance. She has known personally several of the pioneer artistes in the field of dancing and is planning to write about them, to revive the memory of their achievements.

Shirinji first emerged as an artiste in the field of music, but from her school days she had developed a love for dancing. After finishing school, she received regular training in Manipuri, Kathak and Kathakali.

"Some of the best training which I received was at the Menaka Dance Centre at Khandala. In those days we had to face much opposition from society as as well as our families for choosing dancing as a profession. It was much worse for me, because I was the first Parsi girl to go in for Indian dancing. The Parsi community raised several objections against my choice. In spite of all the odds several fine dancers made a name for themselves both within the country and abroad.

"Although the number of students learning dancing has increased, the feeling of dedication towards this art has lessened. I try to create an interest for dancing in my students before I teach them the classical styles. I teach the young children to dance to small songs which have been specially written for this purpose. I also make them wear bells from the beginning, because it gives them the feeling that they are really dancing.

Then I teach them certain exercises which I call technique exercises. These are a pattern of general exercises which I have evolved for dancers, with Manipuri as the base. I believe in artistes knowing more than one style of dancing, for it makes them not only more flexible, but also gives them greater insight into the classical arts."

Shirinji's unique contribution is that she has been a dance critic for almost two decades. Her sympathetic encouragement has helped many artistes in their careers.

"I am usually very sympathetic towards the artiste in my reviews. It is not easy to become a dancer. A dancer needs not only talent but also good looks and health and has to maintain these assets. Even after the completion of her study she cannot express her talent in an independent manner as other artistes can. She needs her guru and an orchestra in order to be able to give a performance. All this costs money, and except for a few artistes, the others can earn little from this profession. There are no institutions to look after dancers as they are solo artistes. I feel appreciation is due to young danseuses for the mere fact that they have chosen this art form.

"This is the reason that very few of them emerge as great artistes. As a dance critic I have seen most of the performances of most of the young artistes over a decade. Some of the traditional gurus teach the classical forms of dance excellently. At the same time, there are some new exponents of the art, who have greater imagination and therefore come up with good experiments. But unless good dancers are given adequate support by the government, private institutions and the public, it is difficult for classical arts to develop and maintain their full glory."

Saraswathi Swaminathan

MRINALINI SARABAI

To be a master in one field is common, but to become an authority in various fields rare. Mrinalini Sarabai belongs to that rare group of multiple geniuses.

Mrinalini started dancing at the tender age of five. She was admitted to the classes run by Louis Lightfoot in Madras to learn Western ballet, but this was not quite what she wanted. Bharat Natyam was to be her forte and she learned her first steps under Mannarkoil Muthukumaran Pillai. Later she danced her way to success under the able guidance of Conjeevaram Ellappa, Chokkalingam Pillai and Pandanallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillay.

A two-year stay in Switzerland gave her the opportunity to learn Greek ballet. She also completed her high school there.

It was in Bangalore that her whole destiny took a new turn. She came in touch with Vikram Sarabhai, who was not only a brilliant scientist, but a keen patron of the arts. They were married and right up to the great scientist's death, he was her guiding star and mentor.

With the help of Vikram Sarabhai, Mrinalini established the Darpana Academy in the most idyllic of surroundings—on the banks of the Sabarmati — to coach students in Indian dance, drama, music and puppetry.

While Indian puppets are appreciated by the people of Denmark, Indians have no love for this great art, Mrinalini complains. Darpana has a puppeteering section where students are taught the art of making puppets. Recently, it secured from Denmark an order for puppets depicting the whole story of the Ramayana.

Mrinalini Sarabhai is not just a dancer who spreads the rich cultural heritage of India all over the world. Many people may not know that she is also an excellent choreographer and the producer of many Gujarati and English plays. Her knowledge ranges from the ancient Vedas to modern trends in art and literature. She has written books in English and Gujarati. She also likes to write for children. She is the brain behind the Chinmayya Mission complex that is coming up in Ahmedabad. Mrinalini also edits a journal of Indian philosophy. She is the chairman of the Gujarat Handicrafts Board, and president of the Friends of Trees.

Mallika Sarabai, Mrinalini's daughter, is a chip of the same block. Mallika learned the intricacies of classical dancing from her mother and promises to follow in her mother's footsteps.

Prasanna Radhakrishnan

Continued on page 55

Continued from page 41

pudi Art Academy where his star pupil Shobha Naidu has won laurels for her art. However, Kuchipudi continues to be presented as dance-drama by male dancers in Andhra and is enjoyed by the audiences with equal enthusiasm.

Today the art of dance has achieved great popularity, crossing national boundaries. It has found a place in university curricula. The second generation of dancers has also taken to it with respect and dedication. Mamata Shankar, daughter of Uday Shankar, Mallika Sarabhai, daughter of Mrinalini Sarabhai, Angana Jhaveri and Lalana Jhaveri of the Jhaveri sisters, Jayantimala and Priyamala, daughters of Sitara Devi, Kiran Segal, daughter of Zohra Segal, Kavita Sridharani, daughter of Sundari Sridharani, and other young exponents have shown dedication in following in their renowned mothers' footsteps and one feels quite confident that these young dancers will preserve the glorious legacy they have inherited.

The dancers of today are not satisfied with mere performance. Some of them, with an inquiring mind and a genuine desire to understand the art better, have made a deep study of the ancient texts, sculptures and other dance forms. Foremost among these is the name of Kapila Vatsyayan whose monumental work, "Classical Dance In Literature And The Arts" has put the scholars and performers under a debt of eternal gratitude for her rare insight into inter-disciplinary studies, with particular emphasis on dance. She has given to the dancers a systematic study of the ancient art of India. From among the younger generation Padma Subrahmanyam with her researches on the dance sculpture called Karanas has evolved her own style and technique of dance. Kanak Rele has been working on the Mohini Attam form for a doctoral degree, supporting it with her researches. They certainly have posed a challenge to the critics to undertake a deeper study and better understanding of the dance forms. This process should lead to a healthy trend and bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The author, Dr. Sunil Kothari, is the first dance critic to receive a doctoral degree in dance from the department of dance, M. S. University of Baroda, for his thesis: "The dance-drama tradition and Rasa Theory." His contributions on dance appear regularly in art journals in India and abroad. He has toured extensively in India and abroad, participating in international dance seminars. He has been selected as an executive committee member of the Council of International Dance, UNESCO. Currently he is editing a book on Bharata Natyam for Marg publications. He is also the first Chartered Accountant to receive a doctoral degree in an entirely different discipline. He continues to teach accounts at Sydenham College, Bombay. The B./W. photographs in the article are from Dr. Kothari's personal collection.

BHARATA NATYAM

Kamala

Preserving The Art ...to recall a sense of divinity and dignity

The Bharata Natyam created by Lord Brahma and danced by Lord Shiva has gone through many changes.

According to the Natya Shastra the type of dance performed by the celestials in the presence of Lord Shiva are Tandva and Lasya. Varieties like Pushpanjali, Sabdam, Desini, Peruni, Prengini, Kundali Dandika and Kalasam are known as Sapta Lasya, of which the majority are non-existent today. Some are preserved and performed by the folk ritual dancers.

The Bharata Natyam we see and are taught today is the Sadir Pandhadhi style, which has been created and preserved by the Tanjore quartet. It consists of items like Alarippu, Kavuthvam, Jatiswaram, Sabdam, Varnam, Padams and Tillana. Here the emphasis is more on the "Abhinaya" than the "Nritta".

But this is not the only style of dancing in Bharata Natyam. Like they say "Gharana" in Hindi, we have a few other styles in Bharata Natyam. Like the Pandanallur style in which the "Nritta" is given more importance than "Abhinaya." In both these styles, the freeze and statuesque poses, which enhances the beauty of the dance have been completely neglected.

It is in the Vazhuvur V. B. Ramaiah Pillai's style that the defects of the two styles stand corrected. It was he who first introduced the poses which come out of the execution of the "Karanas." In his style the "Nritta" (Tandava) and "Nritya" (Abhinaya) are given equal importance.

Kamala in Bharata Natyam

When I first learnt dance, there were dance teachers and dancers who subjected it to severe criticism. Little did they realise that without the freezing of the Karanas poses in the dance it is rather dry. Today, we have many Natturavanars following his style.

In the present day Bharata Natyam, many interesting "charis", or leg movements, have been overlooked, and when I reconstructed and introduced them, I was vehemently criticised by our conservative critics who said that "We cannot accept them as Bharata Natyam."

So did many popular dance schools critcise if a "kirtana" by Swati Tirunal Maharaja or Thyagaraja Swami was included in a programme instead of a typical Padam and Varnam composed by the Tanjore quartet. This, I feel is not right or just at all, because the audience tend to be bored seeing the same theme over and over again. Generally the theme of Varnam is about a Nayaki's love for a reunion. When repeated again and again, this not only bores the audience, but also bores the dancer.

So, in the place of the Varnam, I introduced these Kirtanas, Dasavatara or Ramayana or Thiruvilaiadal. Though I was strongly criticised by critics, I was satisfied by my appreciative audience. That is why I feel it is not wrong to include items like these for a pleasant change.

Recently, while going through an article written by Shanta Sarbajeet Singh in the Illustrated Weekly, I got the impression that she has not yet witnessed a dancer who can give a delightful, graceful Bharata Natyam performance with subtle Abhinaya without the audience feeling the erotic meaning of the Padam or a song of Gita Govindam.

True, the songs composed by Kshetriya and Gita Govinda may have erotic meanings. So what? It is because its musical value is so great that we enact them.

I do agree with Shanta Sarbajeet Singh that Shringara Rasa is one of the most important rasas — as it pleases and elevates the audience to a higher level. For how long can one witness the rasas of grief, violence or humour? But it is a very wrong notion to assume that only Shringara Rasa is Bharata Natyam. For Bharata Natyam is a composition of all the Rasas.

The original dance according to the Natya Shastra does not give any predominance to one particular Rasa. I strongly feel that the original version was polluted not by our celestial dancers but by those who had to perform to please a particular Raja, Patron, Donor.

I also understand a dig to a particular community (Brahmin) for making certain changes. What we are trying to do is to bring back its original status — sense of divinity and dignity, otherwise continuing predominance of (or) excessive concentration of Shringara Rasa would continue; and we would

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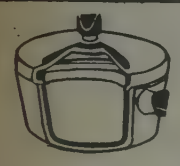

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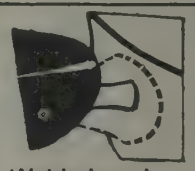

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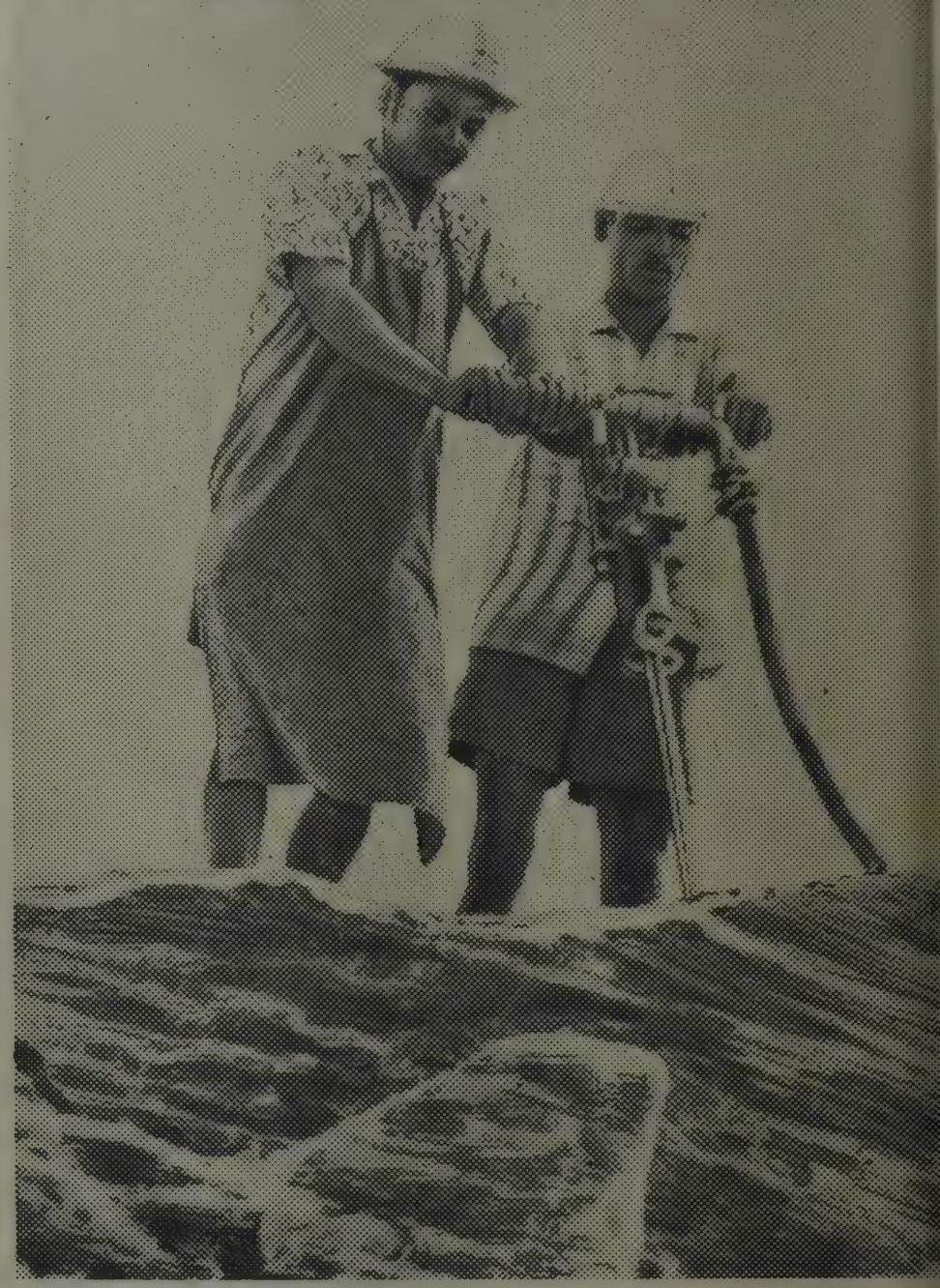

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have many more incidents like a man (from the audience) walking to the stage when Yamini was dancing to the tune of "Swami Ra Ra". If it continues so, well, we find ourselves with a Bharata Natyam i.e. vulgar debasing with no difference to that of a Cabaret.

Today when I go deep into the Natyashastra, I note many difficult acrobatic movements which demand physical fitness and suppleness of the body to be eliminated to facilitate easy dancing, e.g. Sadir style.

Many of our Nritta Hastas and Charis are conspicuous by their absence in Bharata Natyam though they have been adopted in Western ballet and other styles of dancing in India like Kathak, Odissi and Manipuri, etc.

I hope, at least in the future, the Government will look into the matter of cultural side to appoint an experienced dancer (as a performer and theoretician) to choose the right talent in the youngsters to preserve this art in full glory.

Kamala Laxman has inherited the mantle of the greats of yesteryear like Bala Saraswathi as an impeccable performer of Bharata Natyam. She combines deep theoretical knowledge and mastery of the art with unmatched beauty and grace.

KUCHIPUDI

Yamini Krishnamurti

Classical or Romantic?
...a clear and precise distinction

In "Bhama Kalapam", the foremost of the Kuchipudi classics, it is the braid that is presented to the audience first, flung dangling over a small velvet curtain. Then the curtain is pulled aside by the two handmaids and the "Ballerina" makes her entry with the words: "I am Bhama, Satya-Bhama am I." Thus in the elegant art of Kuchipudi, it is the dashing braid that has precedence even over the proud, flashing beauty.

This is the prized "Kaisiki Vritti" — the "tressy" style — spoken in Bharata's Natya Shastra as the very soul and spirit of the Decorative Passion, Sringaara, which in the classical stage tradition is the sovereign sentiment. The rest of the eight sentiments, including Shaanta, the devotional, can only play ministerial roles.

Since we are talking of the sentiments as found in artistic expression, I must straightaway strike a note of warning against sentimentalising, which is perhaps a particularly feminine failing (or is it?). To sentimentalise a sentiment is to make it ridiculous. In fact, to wallow in any sentimentality tends to denigrate that sentiment and only laughter, disgust or boredom results in the observer. The last mentioned feeling generally surfaces in an auditorium when the devotional mood is torn to tatters by repeated genuflexions. Because I avoid such pious exercises in my stage presentations (preferring to reserve them to my pooja room), I am accused by sentimental critics of lacking in the devotional spirit. I think that critics on the whole are a gullible lot; they certainly are

Yamini Krishnamurti

not infallible, whatever they may think of themselves. Actually, the critic is more sentimental than the dancer, for is he not the "rasika," the enjoyer of the "mood," while she is only the "vessel" (paatram) that carries it? I am quoting no less an authority than Abhinavagupta, the great commentator of the Natya Shastra.

Returning to sentiment, and with it to the spirit of romanticism in classical dance, the question arises whether the Kuchipudi dance — or for that matter Bharata Natyam in general — is classical or romantic. To me — and it is only from my practice that I can speak with any authority — the dance partakes of both — the classical and the romantic, but with a clear and precise distinction. I wish the critics were aware of this as unambiguously as the performer. In my dance, the line is always classical, the expression always romantic. To de-romanticise expression is like draining the rainbow of its colour. What is left? I am becoming poetical in my passion, but I feel strongly on this point. Expression must glow even in repose like the torsoes in our temple-sculpture. On the other hand, the lines of the movement — the **"angahaara"**, the rhythmic patterns — must be as hard edged as the facets of a diamond, not malleable like those of putty. These very critics who want more austerity in expression are indulgent towards laxity in line. This is, of course, being perverse. My "Krishna Shabdam", in the Kuchipudi style, is a honeycomb, while my "Natanam Aadinaar" is a vase of cut-glass. These things come to one ultimately not because one takes thought — nor because one has been taught — but like the "sookti-paaka", the ripeness of expression in a poet's mouth, it is the cumulative result of a series of births strung seriatim on one thread of fragrant memory.

If classicism means scholastic fidelity, I do not lay claim to it, for I have learnt from too many schools in my time. If romanticism means a preoccupation with the suggestive rather than the merely meaningful in expression, I am an unabashed romantic. I also feel — and have so expressed in my presentations — that ultimately in art as in life true salvation lies in being true to oneself. This may seem a truism, but its importance to the growth of a practical art like the dance is not sufficiently realised. The great masters know and admit this. Thus, in Kalidasa's **"Maalavikaagnimitram"** (Act 1 Scene 1), the dance teacher Ganadasa is made to say that his beautiful pupil, Malavika, is so expressive in her grace that the gestures he teaches her are re-presented to him "enhanced and enriched". ("Tattat viseshakaranaat pratyupadisateeva me baalaa".) Such humility and magnanimity can coexist — and they can only coexist — in true adepts.

In my own approach to my students — yes, I have begun to teach, though at present it is only my "second line of defence", so to say — I insist on strict adherence to given patterns, and I don't suffer slovenliness even from the girls with superior airs. But when I find a novice with the true spirit of dedication and possessed of what the books call "uttama prakriti" ("the excellent endowment"), I do not get impatient with her first faltering gestures or steps. For I know she is "the elephant-calf" (not in size, of course, but in potential greatness!) and in time will queen it over the rest of the "forest tribe." I have such "adivasis" in my school, but the kingdom of art (especially of a performing art) does not always belong to those who have staked the prior claims.

I must return to the challenging note with which I started — the glittering braid thrown over the curtain to herald the dancing prowess of its possessor. Strangely enough, till recently in this man-made world of makebelieve, it was a man (not infrequently balding!) who sported the "ornamented" braid, which could be more truly spoken of as purely "ornamental." The challenge was that it could be removed if there was anyone else (male, of course) who could dance better.

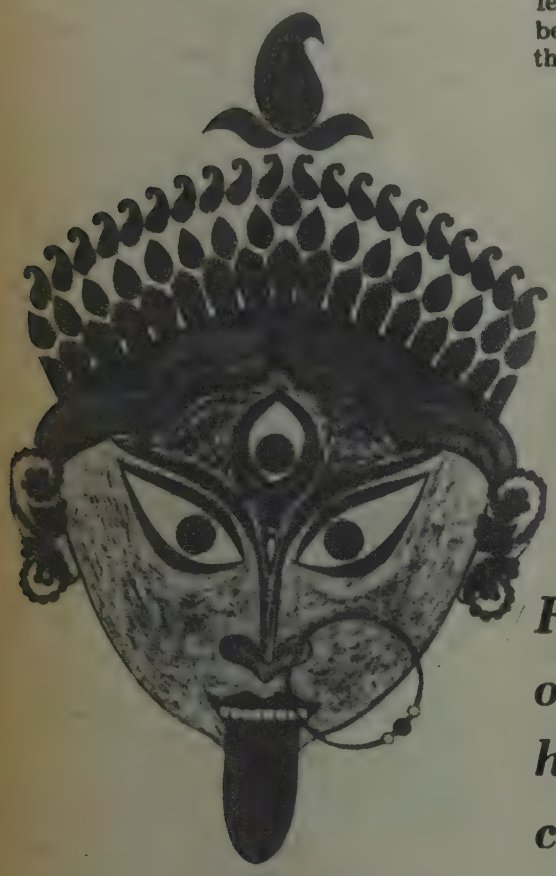
I believe I am the first danseuse who has successfully attempted to break this male monopoly so brazenly held on the traditional stage. All that the male impersonator stood to lose was his false braid and, of course, his "honour," but what is to guarantee honour that stands rooted in deception? In the case of a mere female, all is lost, since she loses her crowning glory! This helps me almost in the Euclidean fashion to put Q.E.D. to the proposition with which I began, namely, that in Kuchipudi dance the braid has not only the start of the majestic world but bears the palm alone.

I have written "seriously and merrily", combining insights with excitement to the best of my ability, keeping in mind the greatest writer of poetic prose. Now, as a parting gift, I shall leave the reader with a cloudburst, as it were, of "ideal-forms." I refer to the lovely verse in the Rig Veda (X. 72.6.), where the galactical universe is pictured as rising from the clouds of dust kicked up by the excited gods, dancing on a pre-cosmic stage.

I like this reference for two reasons — first, the gods were "well-excited" (**"su-samrabdhaah"**) as they danced, presaging that the world began well. This was good augury for the future. Second, the hymn is attributed to a woman seer named Daakshaayani, a daughter of the patriarch Daksha. Now Daksha had a host of daughters (this patriarch had, in fact, only daughters), but the patronymic, Daakshaayani, is given only to Sati, being the foremost of them. She was given in marriage to Shiva (who was probably made to dance by her!). In any case, the relationship of Dance with Divinity is rapturously intimate — it is conjugal. I had best conclude on this note of supreme felicity.

A danseuse of international fame, Yamini Krishnamurti's greatest contribution to our classical heritage is the revival of Kuchipudi as a major dance form.

MYTHOLOGY—
the myth, the legend and the folktales



Thousands of years ago the great forest of Dandakaranya was perhaps far more picturesque, with several hermitages dotting the region, than it is today.

And the river Tamasa, which flows sweetly to this day, must have flowed sweeter then, for, Sita, a refugee at the ashram of Rishi Valmiki and lately a mother, used to bathe in her waters.

And it so happened that while she was in the waters in a solitary area of the stream, unmindful of her clothes, some women from a forest-dwelling tribe observed her and they tittered.

Sita fixed her serene gaze upon them. And in the mind of the viewers, her gaze slowly got translated into a question that she put to them: Being women, how do you fail to feel that alone in the lap of Mother Nature, I am dwelling in the consciousness of motherhood, completely oblivious of the demands of social decorum?

The women repented, and the force of repentance drove them to shed their own clothes. The women of that small tribe living in not-too-easily accessible hamlets on the hills of Koraput still go without clothes. Innocent and affectionate, they seem to have realised the consciousness of motherhood to an extent in their entire personality. At least that is the overwhelming feeling this author had when he visited one of their hamlets a decade ago.

A PEOPLE LIVING IN MYTHOLOGY

It is a plain truth that there is no people in the world who live in their mythology as much as the Indians of the villages do. It is not easy for the so called sophisticated, who would naturally view the rationale behind the lifestyle of the aforesaid tribal women only as a legend, to appreciate the latter's mood and mind. For these women, however, the rationale is not merely a legend, but a truth as real as their hills, so much so that once when a certain religious mission induced a group of them to clothe themselves, they died in a few days — a fact I learnt from a dozen persons belonging to the community as well as outside it, however fantastic it might sound.

All we can say for a rational interpretation of the situation is, it was the consequence of a collective suggestion. Whatever it be, it is a significant pointer. If the impact of a character of the "Ramayana" could be so far reaching on a community which is not in the habit of reading the epic, we can imagine the position with regard to the people of rural India, for whom the epics have continued to be the source of an integral satisfaction since time immemorial. They have derived from them the contentment of all their emotions — the craving for drama, poetry, story, and the philosophies of life, besides gaining from them assurance and vision of a spiritual nature.

MYTHOLOGY AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Mythology has played a unique role in giving the nation a psychological unity. The "Ramayana" and the "Mahabharata" have numerous versions—the theme and the story remaining always the same, yet the local genius enjoying a great freedom in recreating them. Through their universal and unrivalled popularity, they were able to achieve an emotional integration which was stronger than what could have been fostered by a lingusitic or political unity.

Besides, the "Sthala Puranas", which enjoyed great popularity with the masses, drove home the spiritual concept of India as one nation by singing the glory of numerous places scattered all over the country and linking them to each other through significant stories. The backdrops of the

From the epics, our villagers have derived contentment of all their emotions

Manoj Das

A well known author, Mr. Das is Professor of English Literature at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry.

RIGHT: Women who committed Sati are the favourite heroines of both Indian mythology and history.

Jataka tales and of those in the "Kathasaritsagara" are not particular regions, but India in its entirety.

Legends belonging to the realm of mythology bear touching testimony to the nation-consciousness that prevailed in the remote past. Sage Agastya, the great integrator, on his journey from north to south, met the Chola prince, Kandaman, who was wandering in sorrow because his kingdom had run out of water! Agastya, while meditating amidst the Sahyadri mountains in Coorg, had come to know that a new river was about to be born. He met the King of Coorg, Kavera, and requested him to divert the course of the new river to the Tamil land. The king agreed and the needful was done to the great happiness of Kandaman and his people. The new river, Kaveri, was thus the symbol of sympathy between the people of two regions of a nation.

To speak of festivals and ceremonies originating from mythology which have been of vital importance to the collective life of the Indian, will require a separate occasion.

A PSYCHOLOGY STEEPED IN MYTHS

Scholars trace three main constituents of mythology—the myth proper, legend, and folktales. The analysis holds good in the case of India too, if we regard our epics, and the Upanishads, as assortments of myths proper. The Puranas contain partly myths proper and partly legends. For folktales, we have among others, the world's earliest collection of fiction and fable—the "Kathasaritsagara" and the "Panchatantra", both teeming with wit and worldly prudence.

The scope of the term, Mythology (**Mythos** in Greek is story and **logos** discussion) has far transcended its literal meaning. But it assumes a yet vaster connotation in the Indian context. Several of the ancient myths reflect questions and revelations that are profound and they have sunk deep into the people's consciousness.

To take an example, while the mystery of death has been a cardinal theme in the myths of all the peoples of the world, in India the belief in reincarnation dates back to the Rig Veda and the phenomenon of rebirth is a truism in all the branches of Indian mythology. Consequently, the conduct of a typical Indian cannot be interpreted strictly in terms of the factors that concern him in the life that he lives, as the vision of the life he expects to live in his next incarnation also influences his conduct. Behind some of India's most intriguing customs, say, the practice of Sati, lay such deep-rooted beliefs. Needless to say, a practice, bereft of its spontanous idealism and reduced to a custom, becomes only a grotesque caricature of the original truth, and that is what has always happened with the setting in of periods of decadence in Indian life and society.

But we have to remember at once that while several crude customs could be traced to mythology for their source, it is also mythology which has inspired the Indians through the ages, providing them with some of the most sublime characters and visions, unique in the mythologies of the world.

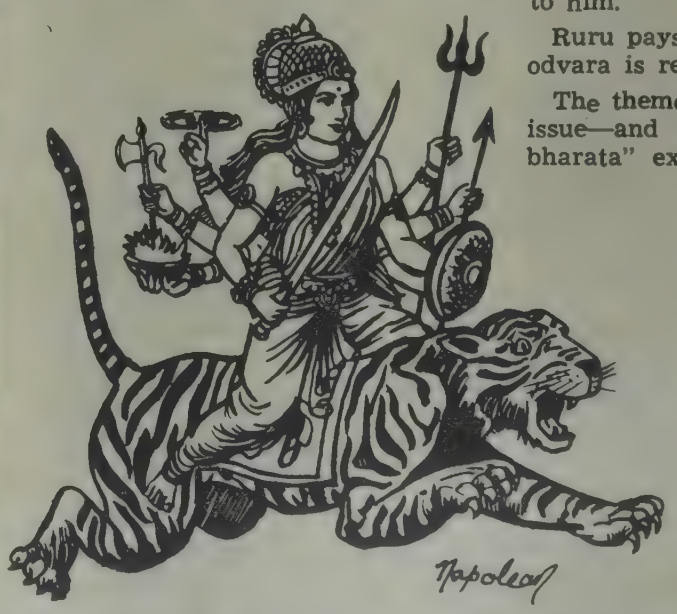
To find examples, we can still stick to the theme of death. An aversion to life certainly did set in as a credo for many Indians at a later tage, and the influence of such an attitude proved a wet blanket on social life and activities. But going back to mythical times, we see that their attitude to life was creative and robust, although to live life as it is was never accepted as an end by itself. Life, in fact, was looked upon as a scope and the means for the realisation of higher possibilities and exploration of truths hitherto unrealised.

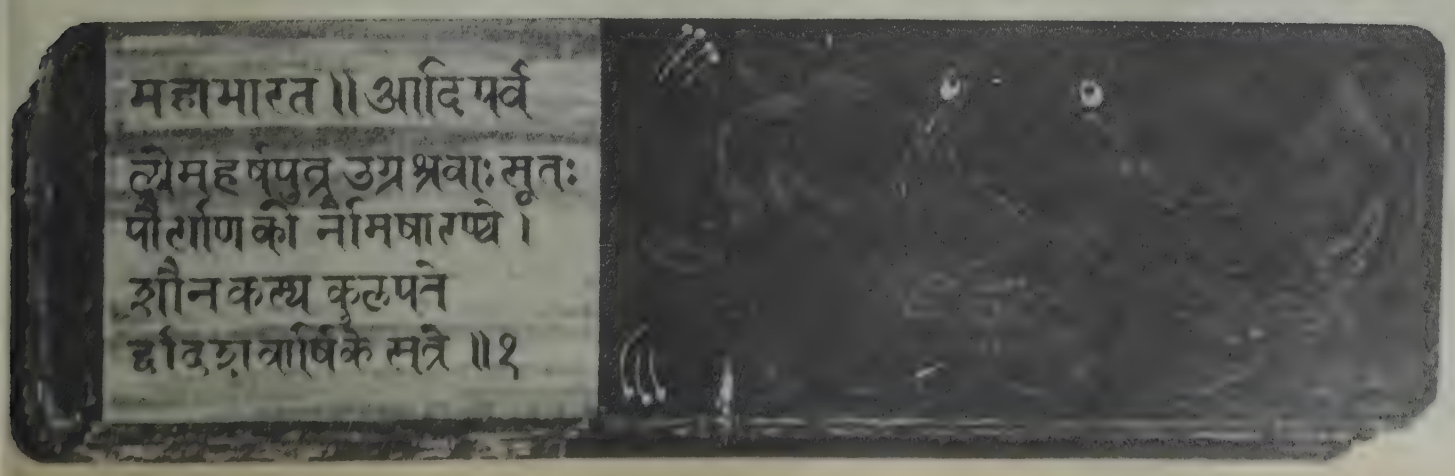
MYTHS OF PROFOUND SIGNIFICANCE

To such a concept of life, death was more of a challenge than a mystery. The Upanishadic story of Nachiketa is a precise instance of the human consciousness exploring the mystery through the strength of truthfulness and sincerity of the quest. But when we come to the legend of Ruru and Pramodvara, the diagnosis of the malady has already been made. Death can be tackled only by love. Pramodvara, the beautiful wife of Ruru, dies in the prime of her youth. At first stunned, Ruru soon turns his agony into a grim determination to win back her life. He is helped by the God of Love and he succeeds in visiting the nether world. But the God of Death cannot be placated by offerings or prayer. For bringing Pramodvara back to life, Ruru must pay the right price and that is half the span of life granted to him.

Ruru pays the price and Pramodvara is resurrected.

The theme grows into a greater issue—and through the "Mahabharata" exercises a far greater





ABOVE LEFT: Shri Rama shown fighting a rakshasa in a painting of the Mughal period.

ABOVE: Goddess Durga riding on her legendary Vahana, the tiger.

LEFT: A beautifully illustrated palm leaf manuscript with the opening lines of the "Mahabharata."

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MYTHOLOGY-

the myth, the legend and the folktales

mpact on the mind of the Indian omen—when it comes to the leg-nd of Savitri. The battle is no nore between love and death lone, but between destiny and ree-will too. Two mythological haracters which have sustained he spirit of Indian woman and ave calmly presided over her con-ciousness through her arduous ourney in this world and have iven her invaluable confidence n her own capacity, are those of ita and Savitri. While Sita is the ymbol of Satya, the truth that as emerged from the earth and as been stolen from none other han the divine custodian himself y hostile forces—they are so owerful—and is rescued again, howing the triumph of truth over alsehood, is lost to humanity again for man's sheer pettiness. So very unfortunate indeed is man—and the divine himself incarnating as man seems to be looking on helplessly!

It is impossible to exaggerate the value of the solace the memory of Sita has been to the suffering and ever-enduring women of India. And equally great has been the worth of the assurance that Savitri symbolises — that we have the power to change our destiny.

Napolean

Shri Vishnu on his vahana, the heroic Garuda.

LEFT: Aonther Mughal painting from the Ramayana showing Rama meeting Angada, while gods look down from above.

That some of the mythological legends have the potential to spring to new life, manifesting new significance, has been proved by Sri Aurobindo using the Savitri legend for the exposition of his vision of human destiny, through his epic, the "Savitri". If once upon a time the pure love of one woman conquered death for her husband, for the humanity of a day to come Divine Love can certainly do the same and much more. Of course, it has to be an ardently aspiring and much purer humanity, ready to be transformed into Gnostic beings.

SYMBOLISM IN DASAVATARA

There are opinions to suggest that certain areas of Indian mythology defy any attempt towards placing them in known time. Take the case of the story of "Dasavatara", the Ten Avatars. The commonly accepted meaning of **Avatar** is Incarnation (of the Divine). Etymologically, the word means one who has descended. The concept suggests that from time to time there has taken place the descent of a power from the perennial source of the Divine and such descents have been responsible for the evolution of consciousness upon the earth.

The first of the ten Avatars was **Matsya**, the fish, which could symbolise the primeval stir of life in the water. Thereafter comes **Kurma**, the tortoise, a new release of power that is capable of moving between water and land. It is followed by **Baraha**, the boar, the manifestation of an abundance of life-force.

Aeons flow by. Comes **Narasimha**, the man-lion, the link between the animal and the man, the lion representing the most beautiful and harmoniously developed creature from the animal world.

He is followed by **Vamana**, the dwarf, the dwarfness symbolising the primitive limitations of the human condition.

Thereafter comes **Parasurama**, the strong man with an axe, showing his capacity to take hold of external means for his use. Significantly, he is immediately followed by the Avatar of **Rama**, the ethical person, who disarms Parasurama, symbolising wisdom's superiority over physical prowess.

Krishna no doubt is the manifestation of a far too enlightened consciousness. **Buddha** comes to show the possibility of a different nature. While all the previous Avatars have striven to develop and ennoble the world, he shows a direction which could be taken by those souls who consciously choose to retire from participating in the evolutionary fulfilment of the world.

The tenth Avatar, **Kalki**, is visualised as one who would destroy the mlechchas, the barbaric men, and pave the way for the advent of a spiritual race of men. It is in the fitness of the vision of a world, which, once created, must have a sublime goal to reach. What a symbolic language describes as destruction of the barbaric may very well be an evolutionary transformation of the barbaric quality of man.

Those who believe that there have been several cycles of ages, a great deluge occurring at the end of each cycle, may take the earlier Avatars as originally belonging to a bygone cycle of ages which have been associated with new stories in our cycles of ages. In any case, the obvious symbolism in the story of the Avatars and the evolution cannot be ignored.

And, it is a fact that the latest anthropological research puts the origin of man back to a far remoter date than hitherto accepted, suggesting the emergence and disappearance of many a civilisation unknown so far.

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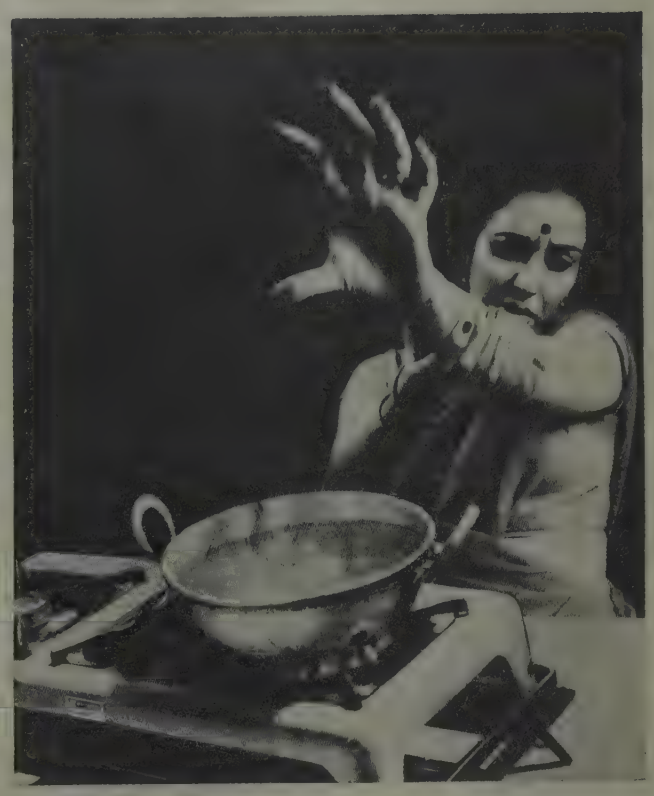

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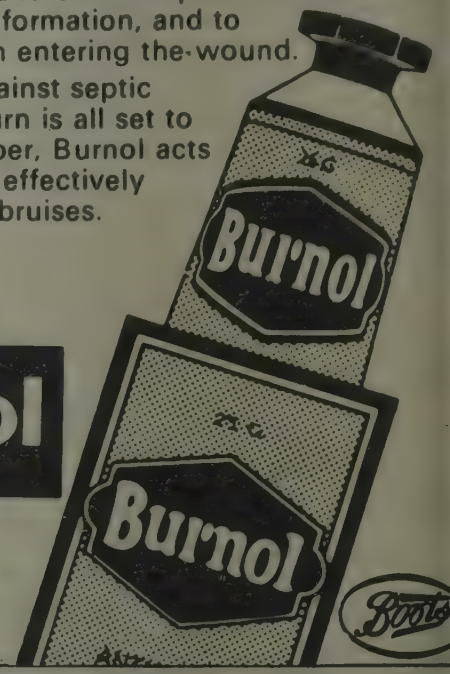

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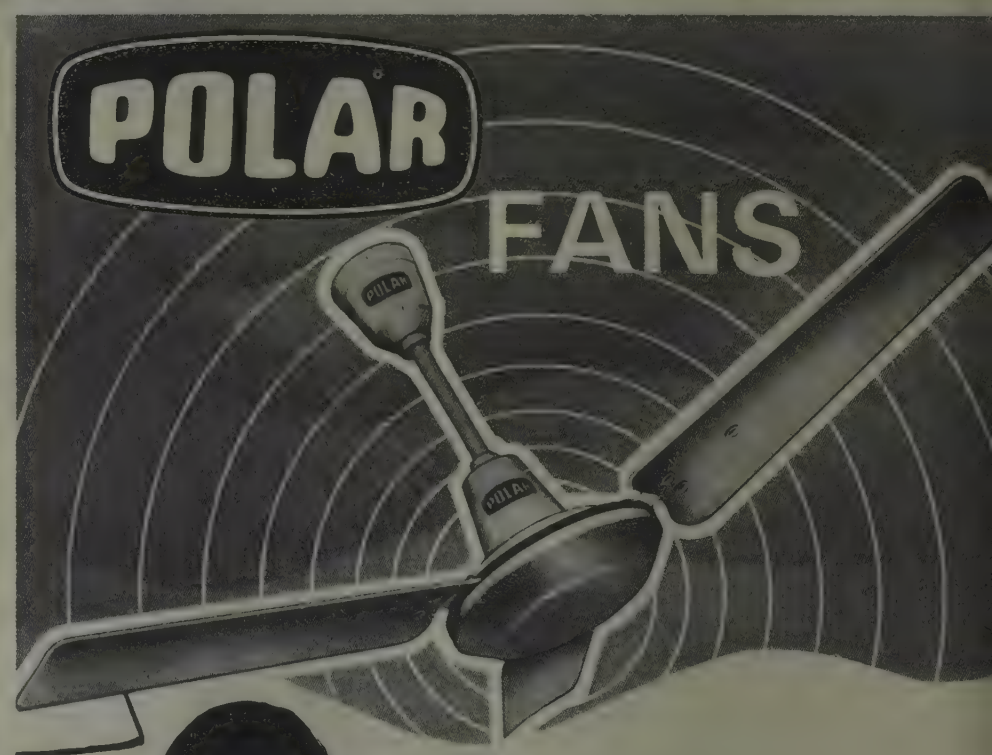

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Continued from page 15

d by the symbolic circle of fire of the universe transfixed in motion. Rhythm itself, as expressed in the controlled but violent movement of the dance, radiates from the perfected bronzes. Some of these are now in European museums, but one of the finest is in the Victoria and Albert Museum. There are other important bronzes, modelled by craftsmen of genius, of Siva's consort, the goddess Parvati, the Somaskanda compositions, and the portraits of the saints in various world collections. The **cire perdu** technique is still practised in south India, though decline of faith and ritualisation led to the diminution of creative fervour at the end of the mediaeval period and meretricious images began to be cast for sale in the "Art market."

The wall paintings of Ajanta caves reveal a rich knowledge of human life in all its splendour and misery

Indian Painting

The story of Indian Painting reveals certain highlights, in the long tradition of over 2,000 years, with many broken links in the chain of cause and effect. In recent times, however, Indian and world scholars have been attempting to rediscover the broken links. So what is offered here is a brief summary of the disconnected facts about the creative use of colour and line, from the earliest cave paintings till today.

Curiously, the non-representational styles of the moderns have an affinity with the earliest art of our country, in so far as we see the emphasis on line, the rich colours and deep feeling of the present day paintings in the most ancient. The perspective, too, tends to be two dimensional, the line musical, and the image more like a mental or memory image (**Dhyana mantra**), as it was in the remote past. The earliest paintings have survived mostly on the walls of cave temples, on palm leaf, cloth and paper and wood. Obviously, the colouring of walls in ordinary homes with ritualistic designs had preceded the murals, and the rhythmic activity of drawing was a part of ordinary life—the effort to create a magical spell to conquer the wild animals by ritual drawing and also, later, to exalt the soul above the habitual surroundings through the love of colours itself.

Thus the wall paintings of Ajanta caves were part of a prolonged earlier tradition, the climax of sensibilities trained not only in the handling of colours but also the rich knowledge of human life in its variegated splendours and miseries. Informed by compassionate understanding, which is the spiritual message of Buddhism, the Ajanta murals offer glimpses of an intense contemporary culture of that time.

Other wall paintings of before the 8th Century can be seen near Gwalior, Sittanvasal in south India and, later, in the Ellora Temple.

After the 8th century, the wall painting technique may have been practised mostly in folk culture, in the Alponas and Rangoli, and other forms of domestic decoration.

Also, there came to be a tradition of miniature painting on palm leaf and on paper. The Pala school in Bihar and Bengal (9th to 12th century) shows incarnations of the Buddhist mythology in the musical line perfected earlier in India, with simple but direct colours, imbued with devotional feeling.

Apart from this medioeval style in eastern India, there flourished in the West a similar Gujarati style which was, however, more emotional and widespread. The latter school produced mainly illustrated manuscripts on palm leaf between 1100-1350 A.D. and on paper between 1350-1600 A.D. with the period of transition during 1350-1450 A.D. which was the most vital. The subject matter of western Indian painting consisted of Jain teachings, the Krishna Lila, beloved of Vaishnava Hinduism, and themes of the secular life including dance and love making.

About the 15th and 16th centuries the folk tradition was refined both in the small courts of Rajasthan under the influence of Jain miniatures and in the Muslim paintings executed under the Sultanates of Malwa in central India and the Deccan in the South.

In the reign of Akbar the Great, the deep emotionalism of Indian genius which found continuous expression in poetry, music, dance and architecture was synthesised with the decorative impulses of the Persian and Indo-Persian or Moghul. Its Indianness must be emphasised in view of the retention by the painters of the indigenous love of line as a rhythmic flow of the hand, and the tenderness towards human life as well as the passionate love of colour, characteristic of the Indian peoples for centuries, while absorbing the decorativeness of the Persian styles.

The Rajasthani schools were thus contemporaries of the aristocratic art of book illustration and individual portraiture of the grandees of several Moghul courts from 1556 downwards till the 18th century. The delicacy and refinement and the sensibility of the Mughal emperors, had inspired the court painter to produce tones of a very delicate draftsmanship. And these elements percolated into later Rajasthani painting.

An almost parallel development was seen at the end of the 17th century in the early pastoral landscapes of the Kangra valley, where a number of feudal principalities flourished. In Basholi, Guler, Sujanpur, Tira, Nurpur, Chamba, Jammu, and Gharwal there was the rich fabric of Hindu poems like the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Krishna Lila and romantic ballets like Hamirath. The rhythmic qualities of the ancient Hindu techniques are here, with the centrality of vision imbibed from Moghul masters and joined to folk impulses deriving from the extinct fresco tradition.

A number of schools like the Deccani, the Sikh and of the bazaars of the major capitals mark the end of the late mediaeval tradition.

The coming of the European style naturalistic painting, and the photographic miniature portraits, debased the introvert ideals of India and there was a lapse from the old passionate intensity into the febrile techniques of the most superficial European styles.

The modern movement in Bengal, based on revivalism of old Indian art, petered out in a short time and fortunately, gave place to renascent impulses among the youngest painters, who seek to synthesise inner rhythms with new experiments in the way of handling colour.

(Mulka Raj Anand's opinion on the evolution of modern Indian culture will be published in our next issue.)

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand was born in Peshawar in 1905. He was educated in Punjab, London and Cambridge universities, but considers himself mostly self-educated.

He has travelled widely in many parts of the world and taught in various universities. Apart from his imaginative writings, he is the Founder-Editor of the famous journal "MARG" and author of several books on appreciation of the arts.

DEVOTEES OF DANCING

Continued from page 46

BALASARASWATI

Even Satyajit Ray's half-hour film on her is said to have done her less than full justice. In a sense no one can. When an artist like Balasaraswati creates an art that transcends her, Bharata Natyam takes on the Platonic form of Bharata's personal decree. Any attempt at interpretation of style and content must needs be faulty.

When Balasaraswati had her arangetram in Kancheepuram at the Amanakshi Amman Temple, when seven, great Veena Dhanam's granddaughter was clearly destined to be as great. Even, the guru, Narayana Pillai, who was present, was impressed.

Her subsequent career is the history of Bharat Natyam in this century. And when she went abroad for the first time in 1961,

she need not have been nervous, as she was. She was acclaimed, in Tokyo, as one of the three greatest living dancers — with Galina Ulanova and Margot Fonteyn.

In that precise format of a Bharata Natyam recital — **Alarippu, Jatisvaram, Shabdam, Varnam, Padam, Javali, Tillana,** it is in the concluding sections that her repertoire has obtained its unmatched reputation. Her **Abhinaya** (mainly facial expression and hand gestures) finds its greatest scope in Padams, and Javalis with its deep lyricism. Immemorial by her creativity is the Kannada padam **Krishna nee begane baro** in Yaman (chapu talam). Her sensitivity for music, to line and to form finds its apotheosis in this piece, suffused with its abhinaya that is a perpetual glow.

But whatever she has danced and still does (she is now nearly sixty) is a total delight. Her strong moral adherance to tradition, keeping away from the fireworks that explode for popular approval these days, has won her all the awards this country can possibly give her.

Her daughter Lakshmi carries on her tradition, as Balasaraswati carried on her grandmother's. Balasaraswati nearly gave up dancing some years ago when hit by bad health and malice. But she fought back. So certainly will the Bharata Natyam tradition, beseiged as it is today by some of its present practitioners. Her art and its dedication will make it endure for all times

S. Shankar Menon

KATHAK

A fast-moving dance which lends itself to the expression of modern themes

KUMUDINI LAKHIA, the renowned Kathak dancer whose innovations have raised many an eyebrow, explains her views to the dance critic DR. SUNIL KOTHARI.

Sunil Kothari: You have been criticised in Kathak circles for your experiments and innovations. I have seen your new choreographic pieces like 'Dwidha' and 'Drishtikon.' Is it an inner compulsion with you to experiment and create something new?

Kumudini Lakhia: I welcome criticism, as it proves at least one thing: that people react to my innovations and experiments in Kathak. I didn't suddenly start innovating. As I grew up I began to think about dancing — how and what it should be! I came to dancing by sheer accident. As a child I was forced to learn dancing because my parents thought it was the 'in' thing. When I started off, I hated dancing. I don't know whether at that time, I hated the type of dance that I was learning or dance itself.

Sunil: At that early age, whom did you you study under? When did your formal training begin?

Kumudini: From Ashique Hussain, a famous film star. He had a standing then just as Dilip Kumar or Rajesh Khanna has today. Ashique Hussain was an interesting man but when he started to teach me I hated him. I don't know whether I hated the dance or what he taught me. I feel it was the latter. I'd never like to imagine that dance could be something quite so hideous.

S: You returned to India in the year 1958, when I saw you performing with Birju Maharaj in the dance-drama 'Kumar Sambhava' at the All India Dance Seminar in Delhi. By then you were an established dancer of international repute. On your return how did you assess the dance scene in the Kathak field?

K: I do not wish to sound snobbish or sophisticated, but I did want the dance to be a little purer. I saw almost all the Kathak dancers and teachers in India and I was lucky to get the opportunity of meeting them, getting to know them and learning from them. I was awarded a scholarship by the Ministry of Culture to study under Shambhu Maharaj. I consider myself lucky to have received training from him. But after seeing them all, including Birju Maharaj, for whom I have great respect and with whom I still work whenever I get the opportunity, I came to the conclusion (I am talking about the period of my stay in Delhi immediately after coming from London in 1958) that it was not the dance that I disliked, but the way it was presented on the stage or the other things associated with it.

After I had started dancing professionally, (i.e. after the Bharatiya Kala Kendra period and after my Government scholarship) everytime I performed Kathak, I disliked myself and felt like giving up Kathak. I was terribly dissatisfied. And so when I settled down in Ahmedabad I decided to find out why I liked and yet disliked dance. I wanted to teach Kathak, to see

on other human figures what I liked and what I didn't like. After I started my dance academy 'Kadamba' and after having taught for many years, I now feel that I understand what I would like the dance to be. I don't say it is right or wrong. But it is the way I would like it. 'I' meaning the way I am, the way I want to see it.

S: Can you explain further, with some example?

K: Yes. For instance, let us take the perfection of line. When you stretch your limbs to a particular extent something happens. There is some kind of a connection between your physical movement and your inner emotions. The two meet at a certain point. It is the intermingling of these two points — the physical and the emotional — that is not achieved unless you have perfect freedom of physical movement. You can't experience it if you hero worship your guru. There has to be a time when you have to get away from your guru's personality and recognise yourself as yourself.

S: In our tradition, emphasis is laid on guru-shishya-parampara, so till you master the technique, you have to obey him. It is like learning Sanskrit by rote. Do you suggest that dancers, after learning for a brief period should embark on their own? Then the precious little the gurus have, would be lost!

K: I am not one for this guru-shishya-parampara. I don't want to be like my guru. I only want to obey him, to learn from him, to worship him, to give him all the honour that he deserves. **But when it comes to dancing I want to be me and not the guru.** And that is one of the main things Kathak suffers from.

As a critic you have so often complained about dancers who imitate their gurus, particularly in Kathak. All the present-day performers want to imitate somebody else. If one has danced for nine hours, the other wants to dance for 24, and the third would like to dance on a bicycle all evening.

But let us return to the basics. You don't dance with your limbs alone. People who think should dance intelligently. Every movement is extracted from a thought.

S: Let us grant that the technique has to be mastered. What about the content — the theme?

K: I do not think of the technique when I think of the theme. I would like the technique to serve only as the tool. It is like saying: 'I have these tools. I can make only chairs with them — a hundred different types of chairs — but not tables. My guru did not teach me how to make a table because my guru made only a chair.' Do you get my point?

Now if you have to express an emotion, you first think of what you want to express. It may be a theme from everyday life. I was choreographing 'Prem Chakshu', a theme with a blind girl as its centre. A Hindi professor from the Gujarat University said to me 'Why do you deviate from the Radha-Krishna theme in Kathak?' To me Kathak does not mean Radha-Krishna only. Kathak is a means and not an end. There was Kathak even before Radha and Krishna and before the Vaishnavas came on the scene. The Radha-Krishna theme should be treated as a transitory manifestation.

I believe that it is very important for dancers to contribute modern situations to their forms. An art form is like a train. It travels through different generations. It comes to us from the past. It is our duty to give this passing train incidents from the life we lead. For instance, the contribution of people living in the times of Nawab Wajidali Shah to the art is different from our contribution to it.

S: Can you mention any particular number you have attempted on these lines?

K: 'Dwidha' — Conflict, my solo danced to traditional classical music and to electronic music, where I have used a door frame as a prop, and I appear as any ordinary woman. I have tried to express through this number the conflict that one feels today. I explore this conflict of following the tradition and finding my identity as a modern woman in terms of dance, specifically Kathak.

In terms of pure dance 'nritta', I have attempted to create pieces in a group. My 'Dhamar' explores the excitement of the 'tala', not as a traditional dancer would use it to display virtuosity, but to show the pat-

terns, the movements, by using say 12 well-trained dancers. The focus is not on one particular dancer but on creating new patterns using the same technique with imagination. In 'Drishtikon', I use four frames and four dancers perform it together, solo, in duet, at different points of time. The lighting plays an important role by focussing attention on the dance as a whole. I have also used coloured gelatine papers hung from the ceiling and my dancers pass behind them creating new textures, new patterns of light and shade and space. I use levels, divide a movement through different human figures and see if it looks beautiful. The emphasis is not on sheer virtuosity. I believe in team work.

S: Are you satisfied running an academy and teaching? You are an established solo exponent and do not these responsibilities claim your time?

K: I think the ultimate aim and goal of all art is that it should be satisfying. It should be beautiful, and the students and teachers must derive some 'ananda' from it. Otherwise we might as well give it up. There are 'akhadas' and gymkhanas for physical activity. You may as well play tennis, if art is to be just an exhibition of your physical strength. And, the dance must be for today's generation. Sorry Dr. Kothari, if you and others are going to appreciate only what is 2000 years old, you may as well make a glass-case and put all our relics in the museum. As a teacher I am lucky, because all my students are educated and they appreciate the challenge that today's generation throws at us. You must have a pattern when you teach, in a proper framework. You go from one to the other and the students understand that.

My career as a solo exponent continues. No, the academy and its associate responsibilities do not come in my way. I have prepared my students to share the responsibilities. Not that I do not face problems. But one learns how to tackle them. Running a dance school does not deprive me of time for solo exposition. As a matter of fact, teaching has taught me why dance is so interesting. If I can pass on this attitude, this awareness to young dancers, that you do not have to copy the guru, but you must be yourself and enjoy dance, I am sure my goal will be partially achieved.

The technique available to us in Kathak is not going to hamper us at all. Kathak is a fast moving dance. All the practice of the spins and the tatkars (footwork) help a great deal in making one think fast. It gives you a lot of scope for imagination. As far as 'abhinaya' in Kathak is concerned, it is so natural and so much in keeping with the sort of life we lead today, that it is easy to express modern themes in Kathak. It lends itself beautifully to what we want to do — at least to what I want to do.

ODISSI

Strikingly different, this dance form bears close resemblance to sculpture

The antiquity of Odissi dance has been traced to an early sculptural representation in the Ranigumpha and Udaygiri caves in Orissa. Dr. Ananda Coomarswamy, ascribing the representation to the second century B.C., interprets it as a scene in a Natyashala or dance-hall.

The countless dance sculptures from the 7th century A. D. onwards speak of a highly evolved technique of a definite dance style. The **natamandapas** or the dance halls form a unique feature of the temple architecture in India and of temples in Orissa in particular. The Maharis—Devadasis—used to perform dance as a part of puja in the temples. Thanks to this order of devadasis, the art of dance survived in India as an unbroken tradition for several centuries.

In Orissa the tradition of consecrating dancing girls, called the Maharis, goes back to the 10th century A.D. There are inscriptions referring to their services and dedication. The temple of Jaggannath at Puri began to grow as a great religious institution. Odissi dance found a permanent place in the form of ritual service performed by the Maharis by the 11th century. The succeeding kings and dynasties ensured its maintenance. It was during the 11th century that the great poet Jayadeva wrote his immortal classic "Gita Govinda". It is a poetic idyll describing the love of Radha and Krishna. It was king Anangabhimadeva who introduced the songs of "Gita Govinda", called Ashtapadis, for the abhinaya-expressional section of the dance.

Another tradition of dancers called gotipuas was in vogue at the time of Ramananda Ray, the Vaishnava Minister of Prataparudra Deva. This tradition came to the fore in the 16th Century A.D. According to this tradition, boys were dressed as girls, and they used to perform outside the temple, and also on the occasions of Chandan Jatra and Jhoolan Jatra. It appears that Ramananda was strongly influenced by Saint Chaitanya who preached Sakhibhava (offering one's self to Krishna as a female attendant). These gotipuas were given royal patronage and there still exists in Jagannathpuri a special street where their descendants live. Some of the gotipuas still perform on festive occasions. It is pertinent to note that the present

day gurus of Odissi dance also belong to this class and thanks to them the art has come down to us in modern times.

The quintessence of Odissi dance is its sculpturesque quality. No other classical dance form has such close resemblence to sculpture. The **tribhanga**, the three body-bend aspect of sculpture, has been exploited to the maximum in this form. Like all other classical dance styles, Odissi has two broad divisions — Nritta (pure dance) and Nritya (the expressional dance). We have no exact knowledge about the Natya (the dramatic) element in this style; but it is possible to use the technique for the dramatic aspects of this dance. The dance style has been revived mainly in the form of a solo dance, though attempts have been made to use the technique for dance-dramas.

Odissi uses several body-bends and it is in this aspect that it differs strikingly from other schools of Indian dance. In the plastic variations of its poses one notices the similarity with the sculptural representations. Odissi is rightly described as mobile sculpture. With the head tilted on the left, with the left hip deflected and with the flexion of the right foot resting on the toe, the tribhanga pose brings to this dance form a sensuous and a rhythmic quality. The movement of the torso retaining the manner of the sculpture and broken into different units—the torso, hips, legs, hands —are a distinct feature of Odissi's use of the human form.

The repertoire as it was presented in the temple is conceived as one long item, beginning with an invocation and ending with a climax of pure rhythmic dance. The order is more or less as follows with slight variations: Bhumi Pranam (obeisance to goddess Earth), Bighnaraj Puja (in praise of Ganapati), Batu Nritya (in praise of Batuka Bhairava), Swara Pallavi (items of pure dance set to the swaras and bols of the pakhwaj), Abhinaya (expressional dance) to the text of the songs, and Mokhya, a fast-spaced rhythmic dance which concludes the programme.

For Abhinaya the Ashtapadis from Gita-Govinda and the Oriya compositions of some of the renowned poets are greatly favoured by the gurus. Their appeal lies in their poetic content. The "Gita-Govinda" gives scope to the dancers for delineation of the nayika-bhedas—the various states of mental agony and ecstacy of the nayika, depending upon the separation and union with her nayak. The songs are in Sanskrit and Oriya, but of late songs in Brijbhasha, Hindi and Avadhi have been also used for Abhinaya.

From among the Odissi exponents Sanjukta Panigrahi has been performing it consistently over the past two decades. She is considered the foremost dancer from the younger generation. From Orissa other dancers who are well known are Minati Misra and Kumkum Das. Dancers like Indrani Rahman, Ritha Devi, Yamini Krishnamurti and Sonal Mansingh, have presented Odissi in an evening of two or three dance styles. Other noted young exponents are Aloka Panicker, Madhavi Mudgal and Kumkum Lal.

In recent years the distinct style of Maharis as practised by Guru Pankajcharan Das and the Gotipua style by his own disciple Kelucharan Mahapatra has come to the fore. Each bears the mark of the individual genius of its exponent. As has happened in the case of other dance forms, Odissi too is undergoing a noticeable change. Today there is more emphasis on speed in pure dance pieces, and this accelerated pace often mars the beauty of line and poses of the Odissi dance form.

S. K.

THE SOUND OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC

Continued from page 31

taining to the different regions and sub-regions.

2. Temple traditions connected with religious cults.
3. Traditional or classical music.

The first category, the folk variety, has been an integral part of the socio-religious life of rural and tribal India. Ceremonial, festive and ritualistic songs and dances occupy a vital place in the fabric of Indian life.

The second category, the temple tradition, prevails in many Vaishnva cults and Sikh gurudwaras with long-established traditions of music as part of daily routine and worship. Music is a part of their prayer offering. Then there are the Devadasis who sing and dance for their Lord.

Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, the great vocalist, master of khayal, thumri, dadra.

The third category is the classical music of the North, about which I am going to deal with at length. Hindustani classical music has its roots in the ancient system of Hindu music, originating in and nurtured by Indian philosophical traditions. Like all other branches of knowledge, music in India was also taught and in the guru-shishya (teacher-pupil) tradition. The apprenticeship extended over years. There was no syllabus nor a formal examination, but a guru was expected to lead his talented pupil to high attainment according to his ability. The lack of writing led to the loss of many valuable compositions. Another disadvantage was the unhealthy competition between the guru's own kith and kin and the pupils from the outside. It was handed down mainly from father to son to grandson. Hence music came to be restricted to only a handful of gharanas.

Abdul Karim Khan, a great name in Hindustani music.

But in the last decades of the 19th century a new awakening and consciousness in cultural fields set in. Organisation of classes and preparation of graded courses were taken in hand. But it is the 20th century that stands out as the most historic and prolifically expanding period of all. Indeed, it has been a period of resurgence and socio-cultural change — an age of total musical explosion. During the Muslim rule music came to be considered a disreputable art, fit only for courtesans. It was the dedicated efforts of two revivalists, Pt. Bhatkhande and Pt. Vishnu Digamber, that helped restore music on its deserved pinnacle of glory. Their movement culminated in evolving a scientific system of notation. This not only has preserved the Ragas but formed a syllabus for students all over the country. It was the first conscious and successful step towards institutional the teaching of music.

Women were always considered better suited for performances because of their attractive voice and personality and all through the ages women's contribution to the art of music has been immense. Kalidasa's Malavika and also Vasvadutta were both singing heroines. Before the Muslim rule women were court musicians in many princedoms. Also, the learning of music was considered an indispensable accomplishment for princesses and ladies of aristocratic families. So the 20th century saw a change in social attitudes and perspectives, creating opportunities for the pursuit and enjoyment of music among all sections of society. Invaluable contribution has come from Abdul Karim Khan, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Pt. Paluskar, Pt. Onkarnath Thakur and Vinayakrao Patwardhan, who have won the hearts of millions in the country. In the same vein is the contribution of great women singers like Hirabai Barodekar, Kesar Bai Kerkar, Siddheshwari Devi, Rasoolan Bai, and very recently, Begum Akhtar and Parween Sultana. I would be guilty if I failed to acknowledge the tremendous boost given to Indian music by that great maestro, sitarist Ravi Shankar, who has spread it like a cult all over the world.

Begum Akhtar, exponent of thumri, dadra and ghazal.

With the seven notes of an octave, Hindustani music started its fascinating journey with compositions of Dhrupad and Dhammar. Both these needed deep voices and had very intricate Talas (rhythm). During the Muslim reign the Dhrupad and Dhammar gave place to Khayal — a simpler version of the Ragas, easily understandable by the average listener and extremely entertaining. Along with Khayal came the Thumri and Dadra. Thumri, with its sensuous "Bhav" and delicacy, was largely suited to women performers. Its lyrics too were linked with romantic episodes from Krishna's life with Radha and the Gopis. Dadra, with its easy beat, was more folksy and very winning.

Technological advances in the recording and broadcasting of sound have endowed Indian music with truly revolutionary dimensions, almost as if the Muse of Sound, descending from her heavenly abode, had graciously agreed to dwell in metals and plastics. Through the radio, the tape and the disc, the art of a creative musician who creates a new, elaborate musical structure every time he performs can now be preserved for posterity. Radio and television have also brought the general public in contact with classical music and a growing interest and awareness is evident everywhere. Music conferences, societies, academies and centres for the performing arts form a live factor in the increasing availability of music to large numbers in a vigorous, direct

Allaudin Khan, the guru, with Ravi Shankar (left) and Ali Akbar Khan.

Bismillah Khan

Photograph : Jitendra Arya.

form. Attendance at some of these conferences runs into thousands. This is an indication of the growing interest among the general, uninitiated public in classical music.

After the advent of talkies during the last four decades a formidable amount of film music has come into existence. This tends towards a more unconventional miscellany of sounds, but its easy appeal is all enveloping and enjoys widespread popularity among the masses. Lata Mangeshkar the nightingale and the reigning queen of film music has some four thousand songs to her credit and can render any film composition, be it light classical or folk, with ease and charm. She has a fascinating, magical quality in her voice. Brilliant composers of film music like S D. Burman, Roshan, Madan Mohan, Naushad and many new young entrants, have given the masses a taste for music.

Besides film music, another variety of popular music has risen in response to the demand for new modes of expression with themes of contemporary relevance. The themes are devotional, patriotric, romantic and have lyrics with ready appeal. These have a conglomeration of regional folk, classical and also non-Indian elements.

With opportunities for high national honours and awards, academic and professional positions and engagements, subsidies and organised promotion on his behalf, the musician is now entitled to a high social status.

Thus India is singing to the Sound of Music. A streamlined sense of direction is perhaps yet to come. The total picture, however, is one of an affirmative assurance and suggests a favourable future.

Sumati Mutatkar is the Dean of the Faculty of Music and Fine Arts, Delhi University, and holds several other important posts in the world of classical music. Trained by some of the most prestigeous maestros of Hindustani music, she has participated in and given performances at numerous national music programmes. She gave a series of performances in Kathmandu as a Government of India delegate and has visited Australia and Holland. She has the distinction of being the only woman singing Dhrupad and Dhammar.

Folk musicians of Rajasthan.

MUSICIANS WHO MADE THEIR MARK

Continued from page 37

With traditional training rather restricted, Vilayat Khan has had to depend on his talent alone to reach the top. In the process, he has created a marvel of a style. His handling of the instrument is near perfect. In Ustad Vilayat Khan's hands, the sitar is no longer an instrument, it is a projection of his personality. He can coax out of his instrument an incredible variety of sounds and whether it is the slow playing or the superfast tanas, Vilayat Khan never lets a note out that is not absolutely pure. In fact, tunefulness is just another name of Ustad Vilayat Khan.

Talking about his creativity, Arvind Parekh, Ustad Vilayat Khan's senior most disciple, once played back to me a gat in Hansadhwani composed on the pattern of the chimes of the Rajabhai Tower clock near which the Ustad had to live for a few days!

Vilayat Khan has a fantastic sense of humour. He can ape the idiosyncracy of anyone with perfect ease. And his humour does not spare even Vilayat Khan! He can narrate jokes at his own expense with equal glee.

But his sense of humour notwithstanding, Vilayat Khan is very touchy as a musician. He nearly created history at the Shanmukhananda Hall when he refused to play for an audience, a section of which insisted on disturbing him. Not all the entreaties of then Governor of Maharashtra, the late Nawab Ali Yavar Jung, could induce him to play during the evening. Recently in June, the Khan went to the British Embassy in Berlin to seek an entry permit for visiting U.K. The official there asked him who he was. "Ustad Vilayat Khan, the sitarist," said the maestro. "I don't know you," said the embassy official. 'Well if you don't know who I am, I see no reason to visit your country," was Ustad Vilayat Khan's reply. An admirer of Ustad Vilayat Khan who narnated the incident to me in London, also told me that in spite of the earnest requests of his admirers in U.K., the Ustad has refused to go to a country an important official of which does not even know who Ustad Vilayat Khan is!

SHARAN RANI

For sheer dedication to music, Sharan Rani stands alone among contemporary musicians. A beautiul woman, Sharan was born in a well-to-do and cultured Kayastha family of Delhi. The first we heard of her as a sarodist was as Sharan Rani Mathur, student of the Indraprastha College for Women in the Delhi University. She was the student of Ustad Ali Akbar Khan.

Fair complexioned and sharp featured, Sharan Rani was in those days known more for her good looks than her good sarod playing. Music, everyone thought, was just a hobby for this charming young thing.

But Sharan had other ideas. As soon as the Government of India announced scholarships for young and deserving students of music, Sharan applied for a scholarship to continue her musical studies under Ustad Alauddin Khan. The scholarship was granted, but Baba put quite a few conditions before accepting Sharan under his tutelage. "You will have to start from the first scale," said Baba. Sharan agreed readily to abide by all his wishes.

Three years of training under Baba Alauddin Khan saw Sharan blossom into a fine sarodist. Her name began to resound in all the major conferences of India. Sharan Rani Mathur would reach the highest rung of the professional ladder, everyone agreed.

But Sharan was not only a musician. She was also a woman. She lost her heart to a wealthy businessman of Delhi. The joyous strains of the shehnai changed Sharan Rani Mathur into Sharan Rani Kejriwal. Sharan tried dropping the surname altogether; then thought of taking up Jain as her surname and finally settled for Kejriwal.

In the meanwhile, Sharan's musical career suffered a major setback. The Kejriwals are rich and conventional. Domestic responsibilities also stood in the way of Sharan's professional activities. She could no longer go to attend conferences in far off cities and towns.

Sharan Rani's music is finished, everyone thought. For a time, Sharan grappling with the job of being a housewife seemed to justify the fears. Except on the radio, one hardly heard her name.

However, during all this time when Sharan Rani deliberately let the musician in her play the second fiddle to the housewife, she never forgot her instrument. Whenever she has appeared on the performing platform—and that is oftener now—Sharan has always won the applause of rasiks and pandits alike. In the world of music, Sharan Rani is a name as big as any other sarodist's. And that is a great achievement indeed!

CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ART

Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni

Most Indian artists initially failed to evolve a structure different from ancient tradition, as well as from European models. Later, however, rose a group of progressives who displayed non-conformist styles

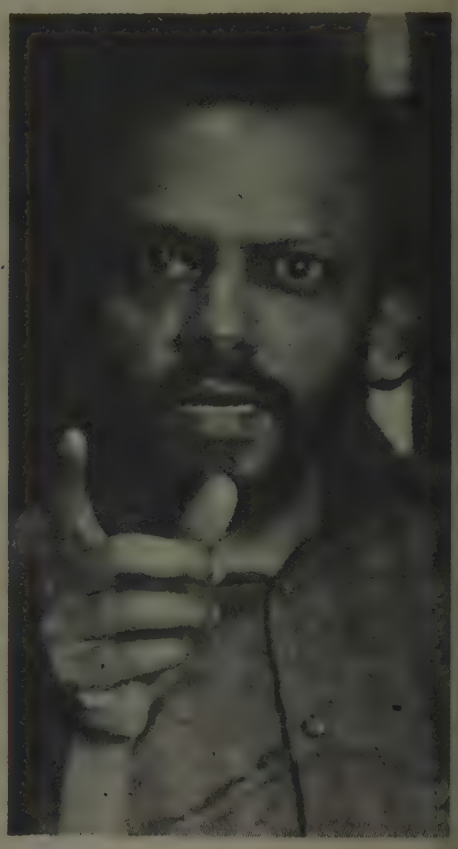
Even before the coming of independence one could feel stirrings in the Indian art world which suggested a deep discontent with a long-sustained status quo. This latter state of affairs was defined, firstly, by the blind adherence to academic methods of art education introduced by the British and, secondly, by a failure on the part of most Indian artists to evolve an anatomic structure different both from ancient tradition and from European models.

The Bengal School, led by Abanindranath Tagore, had made valiant efforts to destroy the stranglehold of British-oriented academism and to seek inspiration in indigenous traditions of painting. Later a rebel like Jamini Roy broke away even from the lukewarm approach of the Bengal School and founded a style and technique literally of the soil. During the years before the Second World War, Amrita Sher-Gil had also travelled towards indigenousness in her portrayals of rural men and womenfolk surrounding her Kasauli household.

But younger artists of the forties were still restless and considered both Sher-Gil and Jamini Roy as part of the Establishment deserving of demolition. In 1942 some young Bengali painters including Paritosh Sen and Nirode Mazumdar founded the Calcutta Group, and four years later came the Progressive Artists' Group of Bombay comprising such intrepid talents as Francis Newton Souza, S. H. Raza, Maqbool Fida Husain, K. H. Ara and others. Bonds between these two groups were forged a little later but, already on the eve of independence, they had started showing their work as a group and were flaunting their non-conformist manifestoes.

Souza, who left for Europe within a few years of the birth of the Progressive Artists' Group, still talks fondly of those fervent years. "Ours were then burgeoning talents," he says, "but elders like Dr. Mulk Raj Anand readily gave us moral support." Souza's own canvases not only captured the beauty of his native Goa with characteristically vigorous brush strokes but also highlighted the misery of the dregs of Bombay society. Ara's untutored hand created flower studies and still-lifes of abounding richness, while Husain created his own stylised human anatomy and projected it in vivid colours. Raza, who like Souza is now living abroad, pursued the landscape in its myriad manifestations—a pursuit which he has not given up even after crossing the barrier of abstraction.

LEFT: A canvas from M. F. Husain's "Prophet" series.



Francis Newton Souza

A study from Nalini Malani's series on the "human condition."

We know comparatively little about the exact road taken by the Calcutta Group, but painters such as Paritosh Sen, Nirode Mazumdar and Gopal Ghose did, indeed, succeed in relegating the two-dimensional and essentially bourgeois art of the Bengal School (with the great exception, of course, of Rabindranath Tagore) to the past. Long after its establishment, the members of the Group went to Europe and exposed themselves to the new winds blowing there. One finds a fundamental change in their work after this phase, the canvases becoming more rugged and virile in every aspect. In sculpture, Prodosh Das Gupta, Ram Kinkar, Chintamoni Kar and Sankho Choudhary carry forward the rebellious tradition of Devi Prasad Roy Choudhury, the pre-

Folk Musician
Painting by B. Prabha

siding genius of modern Indian sculpture.

All these senior painters and sculptors still command respect among their juniors. "Some of us now have a more definite ideological motivation," says Krishen Khanna, a banker-turned-painter who made his start with the Progressives. "We are no doubt committed to a specific political and socio-economic point of view," declares a young painter like Vivan Sundaram (incidentally, a nephew of Amrita Sher-Gil), whose paintings and drawings, like Khanna's, are full of frontal references to current affairs and personalities, stretching from Che Guevara to Indian politicians. These are treated in the context of a vast historical perspective and, in the case of a young painter-cum-critic like Gieve Patel, with an ample touch of satire.

We find today that even those whose current works do not have anything to do directly with politics are intellectuals with a stake in ideological matters. Such a painter, for example, is J. Swaminathan (long ago a Communist party worker) who has occupied himself with exploring what he calls the "geometry of space." In his paintings, apart from the free-floating and illogically gravitating forms, there are echoes of indigenous tradition. Swaminathan, too, was once part of a now disbanded group called "89", after a house in Jamnagar where it took shape. Other members included Ambadas, one of our finest abstractionists, Jeram Patel and Gulam Sheikh.

The names of Jeram Patel and Gulam Sheikh instinctively bring to mind the great contribution made to contemporary Indian art by the Baroda University. Year after year, teachers such as Bendre, Sankho Choudhary and K. G. Subramanyan have moulded young talents in painting and sculpture, who are now making a name for themselves in exhibitions and one-man shows all over the country. The Tantric-oriented painter, Santosh, the sculptors Pateria, Katt and Mrinalini Mukherjee, are all Baroda products. Jeram Patel and Gulam Sheikh are on the faculty, while their contemporary Bhupen Khakkar, who paints tongue-in-cheek views of ordinary folk (both Gujaratis and Parsis of the region), lives also in Baroda, although he has only a tenuous link with the faculty.

In Bombay and Delhi, which are the main art centres of the country, a few art galleries such as Chemould, Pundole, Dhoomi Mal and Black Patridge, have helped to establish experienced artists in the eyes of patrons and bring younger artists to the notice of connoisseurs. Painters such as B. Prabha, Ram Kumar, Akbar Padamsee and Gaitonde may be called market favourites, and the very variety of their artistic personalities can be cited as an indication of the catholic taste of buyers. Also steadily projected by these galleries are front-rank painters such as Jehangir Sabavala, Tyeb Mehta, Nalini, Malani, Paramjit Singh, Bhushan, Bikash Bhattacharjea, Laxman Shrestha and others whose appeal is, in various degrees, to the intellect. There is a dash of surrealism in the work of most of these painters and, today, this appears to be the dominating cult even among younger painters and graphicists.

Occasionally we find a rugged personality such as the sculptor-cum-painter B. Vithal, himself organising art galleries and such other promotional activities. A number of highly talented painters based in Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay have found a fruitful occupation in the Handloom Weavers' Design Centres. Among them is a budding genius like Prabhakar Barve who essays visual schemes oscillating between the Tantric and the surrealistic. Unfortunately, his art has not been consistently projected through successive shows although his painting "Blue Cloud", which won the Lalit Kala Akademi's national

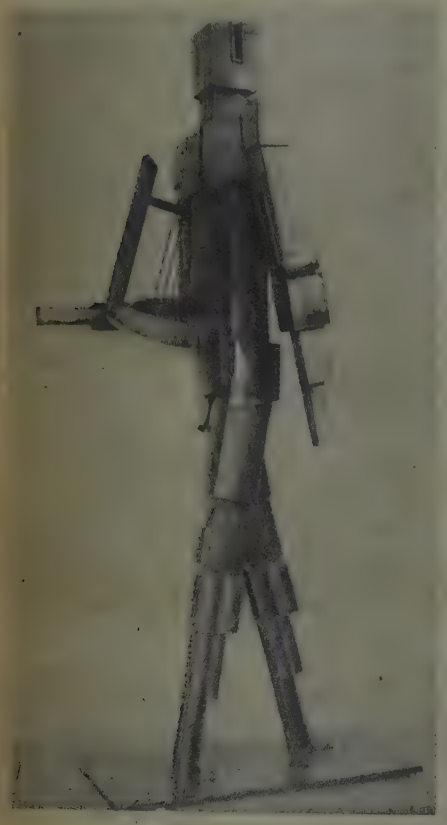
A painting by Prabhakar Barve (early period).

An early landscape by Ram Kumar.

An extension of J. Swaminathan's "geometry of space" series.

award last year, is indeed a work to reckon with. The young artists of the Cholamandal village near Madras, led by the couple, Vasudev and Arnawaz, are trying bravely to pursue painting and sculpture while earning a living on batik work and other such crafts.

The number of housewives who hold exhibitions of their paintings year in and year out is legion. Among the talent that surfaces to the top there are the better known names (some of whom have also successfully



"Orpheus" by Adi Davierwala.

shown their work abroad): Ila Pal, Lalitha Lajmi, Fatima Ahmed, Suruchi Chand, Meera Devidayal and Naira Ahmadulah. Pundole art gallery itself has sponsored during the past year or so several shows by women artists, including Arpita Singh, Mala Marwah and (earlier) Zarina. The Chemould stable includes Sunita Shrestha and Veena Bhargava, while Dhoomi Mal in Delhi can claim the untutored but charming Madhavi Parekh.

In the vast body of sculpture produced by the redoubtable Pilloo Pochkhanawala, we see a gradual divesting of master influences and an instinctive progress towards the monumental and the poetic.

Except for Mrs. Pochkhanawala and Ram Kinkar, most of the sculptors described above have been carvers; but the late Adi Davierwala turned spontaneously from carving to ambitious images in welded steel, projecting his own vision of ancient myths in a series of imposing sculptures. It would not be a mistake to single him out as the finest embodiment of all that is pure, creative and indigenous in contemporary Indian art.

HINDI THEATRE

Some of the most creative innovators in Hindi theatre are strongly linked with amateur theatre in other languages

Satyadev Dubey (ext. left), Ratna Pathak and Dilip Kulkarni in Dubey's own play, "Sambhog se Sanyaas Tak."

Satyadev Dubey

Satyadev Dubey is perhaps one of the most colourful theatre personalities in India. Starting from 1952, when he first came to Bombay to become a test cricketer, he has rapidly progressed and established himself as a stage director and actor, and has also proved himself a film script writer ("Nishant," "Manzilen Aur Bhi Hain," "Bhoomika") and film maker. The Theatre Unit, his organisation, became the pioneer of modern Hindi theatre in Maharashtra and had considerable influence on the Marathi amateur theatre. Some of his best remembered productions are Dharamvir Bharati's "Andha Yug," Agnihotri's "Anushtaan," Girish Karnad's "Hayvadana" and Mohan Rakhesh's "Aadhe Adhure." He has also written two plays in Hindi.

"Theatre helps me work out all my tensions and contradictions, something that real life would never give me the opportunity to do. The fact that the projection of your tensions and conflicts finds a response in other people makes you feel that your effort is worth it and that it is more than a mere personal satisfaction."

Dubey explained that he was not interested in absolute purity of style or medium. He summed up his involvement in theatre by emphasising his need to communicate. "I am interested in getting a feedback, in manipulating responses, not at the base level of advertising and Hindi cinema, but at a much higher level. It is important to try and get the audience to react at that level."

Dubey's quest has always been to find the "grammar of a genuine creative language. I want words which express beyond the banal, at a level where they provoke unknown associations."

When asked about the value of theatre in society, Dubey's answer was short. "Ask society the value of theatre! The fact that theatre has survived against all odds over hundreds of years only goes to prove its tremendous value to society.

Dubey's position in the theatre world has always been an interesting one. He has worked mostly in Hindi, though he has done a few plays both in Marathi and Gujarati. But he has been a tremendous influence on Marathi amateur theatre. Explaining this position, Dubey said, "Wherever I go I have been given due appreciation by those who feel that Hindi is the unifying language of the country. This is probably the reason why Hindi theatre manages to survive. Regarding my position, the fact that I have not received financial help from Hindi states, institutions and from the Hindi speaking people only makes it obvious that what I am doing is relevant only to the city of Bombay and, since the majority of my audience is Marathi, it goes to prove that my theatre has complemented or supplemented the Marathi tradition in some way."

If finance has been the problem, why hasn't Dubey gone commercial? "Why should I go commercial? Why am I not married, have children and work in a bank or in some 9 to 6 job? If I had all these, I would be in commercial theatre. Not having children and a wife and a time consuming job, I have to find work which will help me to live (not just exist) — meaningfully, zestfully, creatively and actively through all my waking hours. Commercial theatre won't give me that."

Sunil Shanbag

Girish Karnad
B. V. Karanth

The careers of Girish Karnad and B. V. Karanth have been so closely linked that many a writer has found it convenient to group the two men together and consider them as one unit. This, in spite of the fact that the two have also carved out separate careers for themselves, independent of one another. On his own, B. V. Karanth has directed "Chomana Dudi" while Girish made "Kaadu" and is a successful Hindi film hero, too.

B. V. Karanth is a quiet, shy man, modest to the point of self-effacement — a man who will respond to your two-sentence question with a monosyllabic answer. Girish, on the other hand, is the complete antithesis of Karanth — frank, outspoken and every bit a showman. And it is probably because of their contrasting personalities that they have remained sensitive to one another, helping one another when the need arose and yet taking care not to tread on one another's corns or careers.

Contrary to popular belief, the Karnad-Karanth relationship began much before they joined hands in 1971 to become the co-directors of "Vamsha Vruksha". They had met earlier when Karanth had translated (into Urdu) and directed Girish Karnad's English play "Tughlaq". Later, Karanth had worked as the Art Director on P. Rama Reddy's film "Samskara", in which Girish had shouldered the dual responsibility of script writer and leading man.

It was Karanth who was originally approached with the offer to direct "Vamsha Vruksha", but being steeped in the theatre and very unsure of the film medium, he in turn approached Girish Karnad, who by then was thoroughly captivated by cinema. The two untested directors managed to make a hash out of the story and the film was only salvaged by Arunavikas' editing genius. "Without this couple (Aruna and Vikas Desai) we would have been totally lost," relates Karanth. "By using practically all the editing tricks they knew, Arunavikas gave an entirely new concept to the material we had shot. And by the time they finished it

was an entirely new film." When the film won a number of awards (including the national award for best actor to Mr. V. Talgeri), they realised the immense responsibility to make good films that had been thrust upon them by discerning cine-goers.

Girish does not take his theatre career very seriously. "In fact, it was an accident that brought me to the theatre. I had actually wanted to be a poet," he reminices, "But I soon realised that I had absolutely no talent in that direction. 'Tughlaq' just happened to be a play; it could have been a novel or an epic poem or anything for that matter. The same thing happened with 'Hayvadan' and 'Yayati', they just turned

B. V. Karanth (left) and Girish Karnad.

out to be plays—I did not consciously plan towards them."

Why has he only concentrated on plays which are set in the dim obscure past? Is it an attempt to revive a long forgotten culture? He ponders over the question and then shakes his head in denial. "As I have said, I never did plan anything for the theatre. I agree that all my plays have a, let's say, un-contemporary background, but I hope that they have a contemporary significance," he says flippantly, and then in a more serious vein adds, "Corruption and bureaucracy (Tughlaq) and a girl's search for the perfect mate (Hayvadan) are, at least to my way of thinking, contemporary problems, too."

If Girish's stage career was accidental, Karanth came to the theatre consciously. After taking his Master's degree in Hindi from the Benaras Hindu University, Karanth won a scholarship to the National School Of Drama. Probably because of the NSD, Karanth was active only on the Hindi stage in Delhi. "Kannada theatre was an afterthought. It was only recently, when I shifted to Bangalore, that I came to think of it." Last year, he went on a tour with a repertoire of ten plays — five full-length and five short ones — and discontinued them when he began "Godhuli" with Girish Karnad.

"As far as the theatre is concerned, Girish and I have had only a playwright-director relationship. As an actor he worked on only two Kannada plays with me, and that too after we had co-directed 'Vamsha Vruksha'. In film making, we have had a more enduring relationship," says Karanth.

How do the two of them work as a team? Do they distribute the work between themselves? As a rule, Karanth looks after the acting and dialogue departments because his theatre work has given him enough confidence. "But in the final analysis, it would be difficult to segregate individual contributions. A particular scene may have been my idea, but both of us contribute so much to it that the final scene that emerges is due to combined effort."

Even today, when Karanth has won acclaim in the film medium as a director ("Chomana Dudi") and actor ("Kanneshwara Rama"), he continues to cling tenaciously to the theatre. Explaining this obsession, Karanth says, "I do not know what it is — probably the live audience — but the theatre is nearer my heart than films and I hope that I continue to work in it."

Sanjit Narwekar

GUJARATI THEATRE

The commercial formula is almost the norm today, despite the rich folk drama of Gujarat

Saraswathi Swaminathan

Dina Pathak

Dina Pathak is one of the veterans of the Gujarati theatre. She has been acting in plays since the early forties, almost from the inception of modern Gujarati theatre. As a teenager, Dina came into theatre with a definite purpose. She was a freedom fighter who worked for a socialist form of Government.

"We wanted to communicate with the masses at large and found in theatre the best medium. Theatre was never a mere medium of entertainment for me. I had a definite mission, a committment, and I tried to fulfil that through theatre.

"It was at this time that I saw a performance of Bhavai, a popular folk theatre of Gujarat, used by folk artistes as a platform for the discussion of social and political problems.

"I adapted the form of Bhavai and wrote several small plays called 'veshas'. One was the Nal vesha, referring to the water problem in the cities. Another was the Bus stop vesha.

"In Bhavai the Ranglo was the main figure. For the first time, I created his female counterpart, Rangli, which I used to play. Touring the cities, we gave over 300 performances in two years, but our performances came to an end when I was arrested."

"I have always worked in meaningful plays, purposeful roles. I do not care about being in theatre for the sake of theatre alone. To me theatre is meaningful only when we have something definite to communicate with a sense of commitment towards an ideology or goal.

"This is the reason why since the last two years I have not acted in any play, There is a dearth of good scripts and playwrights in Gujarati theatre."

Dina tried last year to establish a play wrights' workshop.

Dina wants to work with young people to revitalise theatre. "But the people who wish to work in theatre should not take it as a mere hobby, or a form of entertainment. I really wish more young people would take theatre seriously. I feel that the zest and the feeling of commitment is lacking in them.

"If you only have just five people with similar ideas, a good troupe can be established."

Mansukh Joshi

Mansukh Joshi can be described as a total production unit in himself. He has been in the theatre field since the last 35 years, working in the Indian National Theatre. Mansukh has directed several plays, the most well-known of which was Jesal Toral, with a cast of 500 artistes. He has specialised in folk and historical plays, for he likes to do plays which are basically Indian. Mansukh usually combines music, dance and drama in his presentations: he like to present total theatre to his audience.

He feels strongly that we concentrate our energy and resources on urban theatre activities. "The theatre which we see in the cities is at its best a hybrid of the West and the East, more so in Gujarati Theatre. Our productions aim at being cinematic and that is why they lose their charm when the option of seeing a film on T. V. is offered. For this we have to blame ourselves, that we have not created a more lively, different form of experience for our audiences.

"This is the reason why I prefer to bring live music and dances in my plays. Besides being basic Indian Theatre, in such plays we can present our traditional artistes and art forms in a contemporary context. The condition of our folk artistes is pitiable. Neither the government nor the private institutions care much for them. Many traditional artistes are leaving theatre.

"To me theatre is a cultural mission, a fight for cultural freedom, which my friends and I took up when we were in jail as freedom fighters."

Mansukh is also one of the foremost technical directors of the country, and is well known for his designs of sets, lights and costumes. Mansukh has been able to train a large number of young

Continued on Page 67

INDIAN FILMS:

THE ARTISTES WHO CARED

N. Bharathi

Over the years several dedicated actors, writers, dancers and musicians have blown whiffs of our cultural heritage over a very commercialised film industry

How does one talk of culture when one talks of cinema? At best one can only talk of various aspects of the cinema as having incorporated the various branches of our culture.

The cinema is still very much in its infancy here in India. Barring a few isolated instances one cannot give examples of excellence in this form of art. Like one would if one talked of the early Russian cinema or in the later period on the Continent. Like almost everything else, the earliest film themes centred around religion, magic, mythology: Dada Saheb Phalke's "Raja Harishchandra" and the famous Prabhat classic, "Sant Tukaram" made by Fatehlal and Damle. Good cinema invariably meant tales of gods, saints and mystics. Of course, music and dance have always been part of our cinema. But even these art forms reached degrees of respectability only much later with the entry of certain personalities into the craft.

Abroad too, the growth of cinema meant largely the assimilation of other art forms. Sergei M. Eisenstein had in fact a great deal of experience in the theatre and even in the designing of posters. Most big names in cinema have invariably turned out to be versatile in more than one field.

Sitara Devi

Photograph : Sanil

S. D. Burman, Lata Mangeshkar and Prithviraj Kapoor

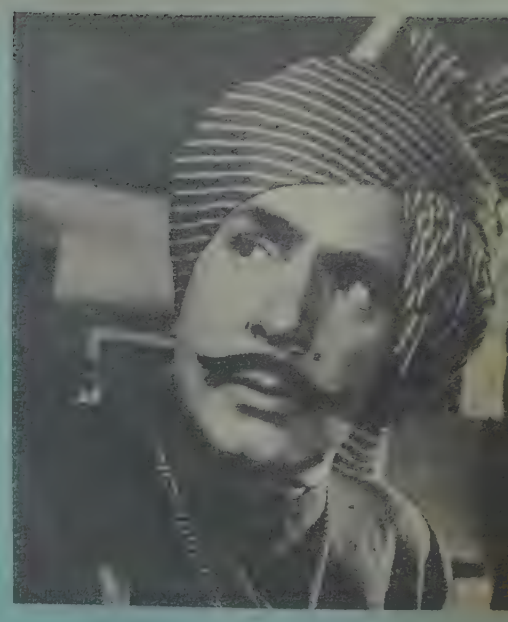
Charlie Chaplin wrote, acted in and directed his films and he also edited and scored the music for his films. Satyajit Ray is the only Indian parallel we can think of. Except for acting, he is as versatile as Chaplin, even operating the camera for his last three films. One remembers the fantastic musical score in "Jalsagar" (the English title of the film is "The Music Room"). Ray in fact started as a commercial artist in Calcutta with an ad. agency. Even now he finds time for children's book illustrations

and cover designs for books.

For the rest, talent would appear to be confined to one particular field. Like writing, theatre, dance and music. Theatre still has a near-stranglehold over films, the most enduring influence in this direction coming from Prithviraj Kapoor (Prithvi Theatres) and Sohrab Modi (Parsee stage). The coming of these two stalwarts marked the beginning of what has come to be famous as "dialogue" in Hindi films. When you had actors of this calibre the necessity arose for finding good people who could pen the lines for them, somewhat similar to the Marx brothers, whose gags were invented by the brilliant Jewish wit of Perelman. Hindi cinema found its writers in men like K. A. Abbas, Gulzar and Rajinder Singh Bedi, Dharamvir Bharati and Kamleshwar.

From Prithvi Theatres came a steady stream of actors — Prithviraj himself, to begin with, then his sons Raj and Shammi, followed by Shashi (whose birth was in Prithvi Theatres but training in Shakespeareana) close on their heels. The other stalwart of Hindi cinema, Balraj Sahni, was also a product of Prithvi Theatres.

Balraj Sahni combined many of those qualities which are the hall-marks of a man of culture. His Shanti Niketan, Sevagram and BBC background helped form his political awareness which came out strongly in the roles that he played — the dispossessed of "Hum Log" and "Do Bigha Zameen." It is a fact that Balraj Sahni believed in projecting his political ideologies so strongly on the screen that he refused the role of a saint in Manoj Kumar's "Purab aur Paschim" because he did not believe in religion and hence felt that he had no business playing a character that symbolised religion. It would help to remember that Balraj Sahni was also a writer of eminence (30 published works) whose presence in the film industry gave it a rare respectability and dignity.



Balraj Sahni

To this day, theatre continues to enrich Indian cinema. The best examples are Sanjeev Kumar, Amol Palekar, M. S. Sathyu, B. V. Karanth, Pandit Satyadev Dubey and Shama Zaidi. Shama is making a name for herself as a writer, art director and costume designer ("Shatranj Ke Khilari").

If the theatre has lent some dignity to the film industry then the contribution of the fine arts like classical dancing is no less. For an off hand example, take

Vyjayanthimala

Photograph :
Sheela Devi of Bhavnagar

Kamleshwar

Sitara Devi. The Kathak Queen (as she was christened at the age of 16 by Rabindranath Tagore) is one of the few dancers who combined the best traditions of the Banaras and Lucknow gharanas. Sitara Devi, who has put in 40 years of untiring service to popularising Kathak, agrees that she used cinema as the medium to appeal to larger audiences. "I didn't do any cabarets but insisted on at least one Kathak number in all my films, thereby popularising the art immensely," she says. Besides choreographing most of her dances, Sitara Devi has composed numbers for other actresses like Nimmi, Madhubala and Bindu. In her own films like "Phool" "Anjali", "Roti" and "Wattan" she always managed to put in a Kathak dance. In "Lekh," she pointed out, she danced only pure classical Kathak numbers. Besides bringing in the necessary classical touch to Indian film dances, Sitara Devi is proud that

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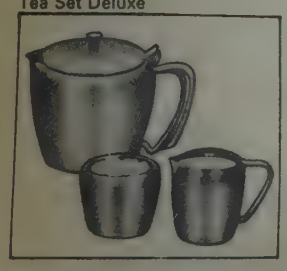

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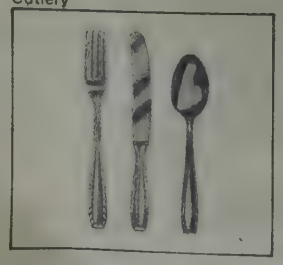

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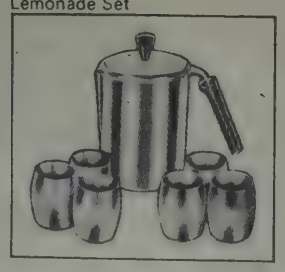

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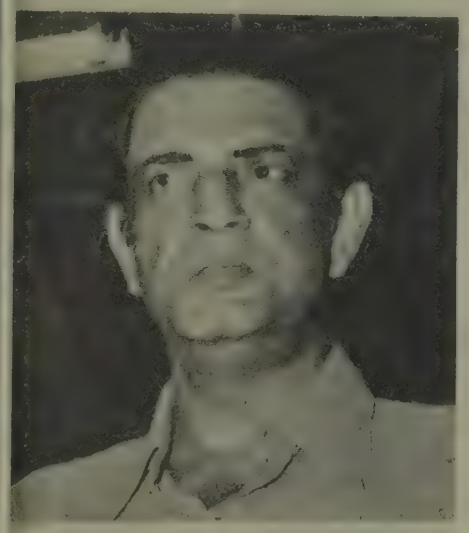
down upon as only fit for nautch girls before Sitara stepped in to popularise it and give it respectability.

If Sitara brought Kathak into the limelight, then Vyjayanthimala's big role in bringing Bharata Natyam to the notice of millions all over the country cannot ever be ignored. We've had Waheeda Rehman, Hema Malini, Padmini and quite a few other dancer-actresses in our midst, but Vyjayanthi has been a kind of pioneer. Vyjayanthi, who like Sitara, conducts classes to train students in classical dancing, has been a special cultural ambassador a number of times. Bharata Natyam may be a household word today. But it is to Vyjayanthi's credit that she was the first to popularise it on a mass scale via the film screen. Her dances in "Bahar", "Raj Tilak", "Asha" and "Pehli Jhalak" for instance were highly appreciated, perhaps for the first time, by the masses. Like Sitara and Vyjayanthi, we have dance composers of the calibre of Gopi Krishna who have brought to film dances the much needed classical base. Recent examples of his



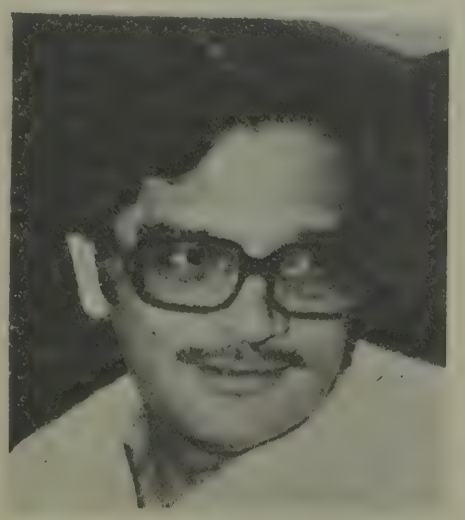
Satyajit Ray

choreography are to be found in "Mehbooba" and "Kinara."

In the sphere of music too, the healthy infiltration of culture into the film industry has been very obvious. Film music may seem to be a lot of noise or may have had its origin in the houses of ill fame. But gradually, many classical musicians have been drawn to the industry. Otherwise we would never have had music of the quality that Gulam Mohammad gave in "Mirza Ghalib" and "Pakeezah." Other names that spring to mind are those of Madan Mohan and Vasant Desai not to forget S. D. Burman who drew freely from popular North-Eastern folk music and brought it into films, or Naushad who did likewise with folk songs from U. P. In fact, the list is complete and meaningful when you consider that a maestro like Ravi Shankar has flirted briefly with film music ("Anuradha", "Meeraa"). And how can one ever overlook the fact that it was Ravi Shankar who handled the music for Ray's "Pather Panchali?"

When you talk of film music and the high quality tunes one got from musicians like Naushad and Gulam Mohammed, you cannot forget the voices behind those discs. There are singers and singers—sexy, lilting, sensuous, appealing. But a certain class came into it with Lata Mangeshkar and the rest of her family.

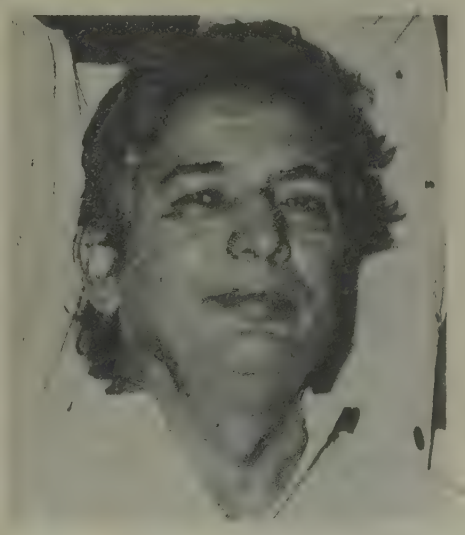
Film music is never complete without considering the men behind those catchy lyrics. On the one hand you have those two-penny lines which are best ignored. On the other hand, poetry has



Gulzar

seeped into film music (and into film dialogue) with the entry of poets and writers like Kaifi Azmi ("Heer Ranjha" for instance). There are others too like Gulzar, Sahir Ludhianvi (he brought Urdu poetry to Hindi film songs) and the late Shailendra whose simple but beautiful poetry appealed immensely to the common man.

We could go on and on with these names. From the IPTA we have men like Nitin Sethi and



Kaifi Azmi

A. K. Hangal and women like Shaukat Azmi whose presence in the film industry is most heartening. Men of letters like K. A. Abbas (his mark in Raj Kapoor's films is unmistakable) have been in the industry for many years now, raising the standard of Hindi films immensely. And with men like Kamleshwar around who brought culture with them . . . yes, we have come a long way from those days when the film industry was reputed to be inhabited by only pimps and prostitutes.

GUJARATI THEATRE

Continued from page 63

people in various fields of theatre. He has great patience and perseverance in his teaching. "Even after 30 years of independence, theatre in India has not emerged in its full-fledged calibre. Boys and girls who are enthusiastic over theatre as a profession, cannot take it up as a full time job, for economic reasons. Most of them work in offices and devote their evenings to theatre. We have to appreciate this attitude and try to keep them in theatre."

Mansukh in currently involved in research work concerning the folk theatre of India. He is presenting, on behalf of INT, a troupe of 12 artistes in Bhavai performances at the Shiraz Arts Festival at Iran, this month.

Sarita Joshi

Sarita is one of the most talented stage artistes of our country. Her experience in theatre is spread over a span of twenty years and she has acted in over fifty plays. Over forty of them have been in Gujarati, the others being in Marwari, Hindi and Marathi.

"In the early years of my career theatre was very different. We had a troupe of artistes who played stock roles — hero, heroine, villain, vamp, comedian.

During the last twenty years, innovations have been introduced. It was not very difficult for me to adopt myself to the new theatre form. It was exciting and I took to it. There were innovations in sets, lights and other elements of prouuction. The most important innovation was the emergence of the director. Now there was more scope for dramatisation of a play and acting gained more importance.

"The language in the plays changed and the dialogue was written in the spoken language.

"I enjoy re-creating my characters in every performance and re-living them every time. Only then can the liveliness, which is the basic charm of theatre performances, be sustained."

Pravin Joshi

Pravin Joshi is one of the foremost directors in India and since the last decade, he has been dominating the Gujarati stage. In over twenty-five years Pravin has directed about forty plays as the residential drama director of Indian National Theatre. He has also played leading roles in several of the plays.

In spite of the period of depression prevailing in Gujarati theatre at present, Pravin's plays have been well received. "This is possible because at INT we work as a very close knit group. We have our own theatre equipment, our technical directors.

"I am often asked why my plays are commercial. Often when a play is a success, it is termed as commercial, and when it fails at the box-office it is termed experimental. Experiment is a relative term, I have tried several experimentations in my productions — with new techniques, new themes. And recently, new playwrights, new artistes.

"I fact, our playwrights are able to write very few plays with an Indian background and based on Indian problems. Most of the so called Indian plays are mere melodrama and do not promise any interesting presentation.

"Hence most of us have to turn to western theatre for scripts. I have usually tried to adapt the works of difficult playwrights like Jean Anouill, Duren Matt, Shaw, etc. which offer more universal themes.

"I have done certain plays for sheer commercial gain too. The suspense mysteries and comedies that I do belong to this category. I am after all responsible for the financial security of my artistes and my institution. We have to keep our activities going and for that reason, occasionally we have to do a play mainly for the box-office.

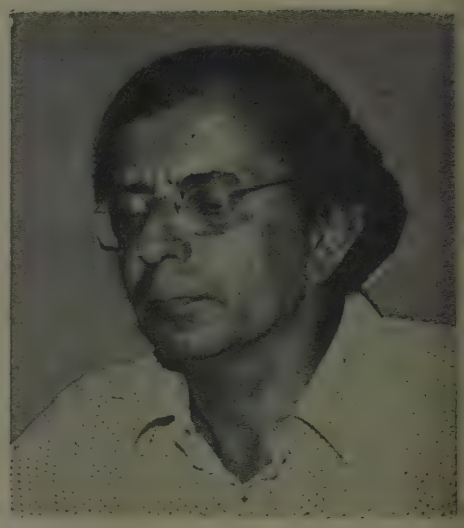
"In fact, this is the problem that all theatre people face in our country. No matter how talented you are, how idealistic you are, you cannot do plays totally the way you want to, because survival is a problem."

Indo-Anglian

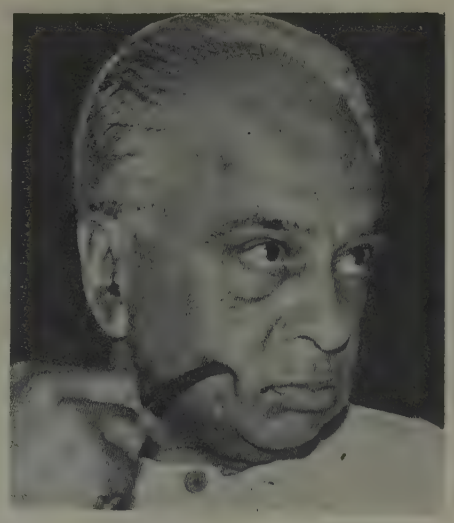
To its denigrators, it is a monstrosity and an abomination. But, says PROFESSOR P.S. SUNDARAM, a fair amount of Indian writing in English deserves the name of Literature

Keki Daruwalla

Kamala Das



Nissim Ezekiel



Mulk Raj Anand

R. K. Narayan

Nayantara Sahgal

Hybrids are somehow suspect, confused with bastards and despised accordingly. Luther Burbank produced by cross-breeding miracles in flower and fruit: and all of us prefer a graft mango to a wild. But even in horticulture the pure-mided Perdita would not compromise :

> There is an art which in their piedness shares
> With great creating nature. I'll not put
> The dibble in earth to set one slip of them.

Those who look upon English as a foreign language, and to whom the Englishman is not only a foreigner but still an enemy, will see in Anglo-Indian or Indo-Anglian a monstrosity and an abomination. To such, any contribution to Indian culture by Indians writing in English is **ab initio** an impossibility, and any claim to such contribution a vanity and a pretence.

And yet all of us are proud of Sri Aurobindo and Sarojini Naidu, would not want the writings of Tilak and Gokhale, Radhakrishnan and Nehru to be destroyed, and are pleased to hear of the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission in America, and of the increasing interest taken abroad in our philosophy, music and dance. The number of those using the English language in India goes up by leaps and bounds, and it will be idle to deny that a good many of those are competent and accomplished users of it.

To Gokhale the Indian connection with Great Britain was a blessing ordained by God. Tilak hated British rule but valued the English language as the milk of the tigress. Rajaji, whose love of India no sensible man will dispute, and whose thorough Indianness was as a beacon set on a hill for all to see, said more than once that the English language was the gift to us of the goddess Saraswati.

It is a perversion of facts and truth to say that the only interest Macaulay had in deciding that education in the subcontinent should be Western was to get clerks for the East India Company. Like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a contemporary and an Indian of Indians, he wished the country to go forward and take her place with the most progressive nations in Europe. If the price for this was that in course of time India would get out of the British Empire, he knew the price and was prepared to pay it.

"The history of Indo-Anglian literature," says Professor H. M. Williams, "is broadly speaking, a development from poetry to prose and from romantic idealisation to various kinds of realism and symbolism." One can understand how in the thirties of the last century, soon after English became the official language of India as a result of Macaulay's minute (1835), the dominant influence was of Scott and Byron, the romancer and the rebel. Calcutta was the capital of the country from the day the East India Company thought of India as one till 1910 when the capital was shifted to Delhi, and every "progressive" thought and action proceeded from Calcutta. The Bengali novelists owed much to Scott, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt's "Meghanad Badha" is as much the foster child of Byron as of Milton.

Poems like Derozio's (1809-1831) sonnets and his "Fakir of Jungheera", like Madhusudan Dutt's "The Captive Ladie" (1849) have today no more than a historical interest. Torulata Dutt who, like Derozio, died young (1856-1877) has on the other hand left behind one memorable sonnet "The Lotus" and at least one moving poem "Our Casuarina Tree" which can take its place in any anthology of English poetry. Her cousin, Romesh Chunder Dutt's (1848-1909) rendering into trochaic verse of the "Ramayana" and the "Mahabharata" (much condensed) is still reprinted in the Everyman's Library, but its monotony is an infliction on the ear in a way that neither the original Sanskrit **anushtups** nor Tennyson's "Locksley Hall" poems (which suggested the metre for the translation) are.

Sarojini Naidu, once regarded as the Indian Sappho and clinched as the Nightingale of India, has suffered in reputation not because of anything wrong with her poetry but merely because the kind of poetry she wrote is no longer in fashion. Her diction and imagery are impeccable, her technique near perfect, and she had a sense of humour and proportion

not inferior to those of any of her denigrators. "The Golden Threshold" (1905), "The Bird of Time" (1912) and "The Broken Wing" (1917) have not ceased to be poetry and become mere verse. What is wrong with the following?

For us the travail and the heat,
The broken secrets of our pride,
The strenuous lessons of defeat,
The flower deferred the fruit denied;
But not the peace supremely won,
Lord Buddha of thy Lotus-throne.

With futile hands we seek to gain
Our inaccessible desire,
Diviner summits to attain,
With faith that sinks and feet that tire;
But nought shall conquer or control
The heavenward hunger of our soul.

To his **chelas** Aurobindo Ghose was always Sri Aurobindo, and every word that he has spoken and written—and he wrote millions—sacred. That he was a great intellectual is beyond question. He had mastered English prosody in his teens; but line after pitiless line of his "Savitri" (which runs, if that is the right word, to more than 24,000 lines) leaves the reader bludgeoned and dazed rather than carried on wings. Surely the message of "The Life Divine" or the beauty of "Savitri" could have been conveyed and better conveyed in a tenth of their enormous length?

An anthology like R. Parthasarathy's "Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets" gives a good idea of the preoccupations of our own generation and how sensitive minds react today to what is around them. The poets are Keki N. Daruwalla, Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel, Arun Kolatkar, Shiv K. Kumar, Jayanta Mahapatra, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, R. Parthasarathy, Gieve Patel and A. K. Ramanujan. A significant omission is Dom Moraes (for copyright reasons?). Others might have been included, like P. Lal (if at least for his "transcreations"), Adil Jussawalla and Sujata Modayil. What is common to all these writers is that they no longer think in terms of the Cosmos or even their Country with a capital C, but are presumably interested only in their own individual problems. But Gieve Patel's "On Killing a Tree", or A. K. Ramanujan's "A River", or Nissim Ezekiel's "Night of the Scorpion" reach out far beyond the self, and say much in a little space: and that, in my view, is as good a definition of poetry as any.

The bulk of Indian writing in English has of course been in prose, not verse and a fair amount of this deserves the name of literature. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, a great name in Bengali fiction, wrote his first novel "Rajmohan's Wife" in English, (1864). This has no more than a historical value. The same should be said of B. R. Rajam Iyer's "Vasudeva Sastri" (1905) which bears the significant alternative title "True Greatness". One has to read these, and K. S. Venkataramani's "Murugan the Tiller" (1927) and "Kandan the Patriot" (1932) to appreciate the worth of the real novelists, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, Manohar Malgonkar, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Anita Desai and Prawer Jhabvala (not strictly Indo-Anglian).

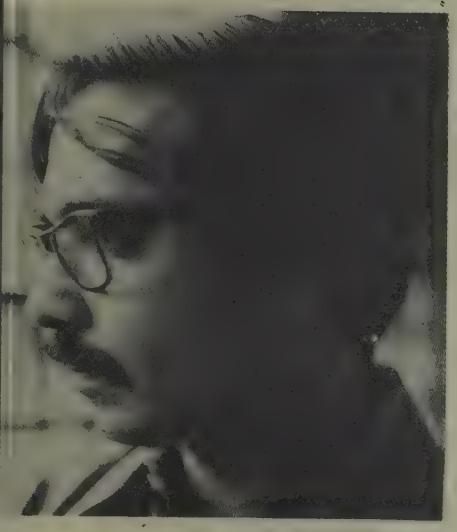
These latter are interested first of all in their story, and can at their best produce convincing characters. Anand the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, too often gets the better of Anand the story teller, but with all their faults "Untouchable", "Coolie", "Two Leaves and a Bud", "The Big Heart" are good as stories. Those who cry up Raja Rao as the truest Indian among the Indian novelists are more interested in propaganda for **adwaita** than the novel as an art form: only the very naive are likely to be taken in by the meanderings of "The Serpent and the Rope". He reveals his communal sense (in the original and best sense of that term) in "Kanthapura", his irony and compassion in the exquisite short story "In Khandesh", his rollicking sense of fun in "The Cat and Shakespeare". To associate the latter with the Upanishads is to degrade Yajnawalkya and Maitreyi. Even more exhilarating than "The Cat and Shakespeare" is G. V. Desani's "All About H. Hatterr," a splendid piece of foolery which yet has its value like Sterne's "Tristram Shandy".

Among the Indian novelists, R. K. Narayan deservedly has pride of place. The comic in his novels is obvious, the sadness underlying it which Graham Greene could see, our own countrymen are too much in a hurry to notice or too sophisticated to acknowledge. Kamala Markandaya's command of the language is admirable and "A Handful of Rice" or "The Coffer Dams" or "A Silence of Desire" has more than a mere story interest. What one can make of our politics in the way of fiction is brought out in Nayantara Sahgal's "This Time of Morning". K. Nagarajan's "Chronicles of Kedaram" and Khushwant Singh's "Train to Pakistan" are individual masterpieces, while Sudhin Ghose's tetralogy—"And Gazelles Leaping", "Cradle of the Clouds", "Vermilion Boat" and "The Flame of the Forest"—not only takes us to a delightful world of fantasy: the novel also reveal the old world charm of **bhadra log** in rural Bengal, and can be vitriolic in their satire as in the portraits of C. F. Andrews and of the young men and women of the Presidency and Bethune Colleges in Calcutta ("The Flame of the Forest").

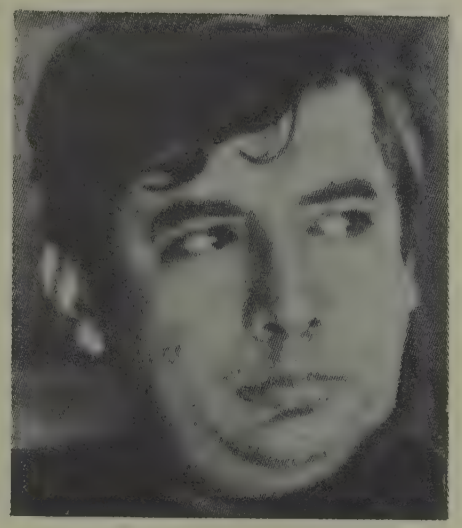
Nirad Chaudhuri is regarded mostly perhaps by his English admirers, as the greatest of the Indo-Anglians. His own countrymen are likely to be annoyed with him and put off by his perpetual admiration for the British and running down of the Hindu. But he is at least as often a stimulant as an irritant: a delightful eccentric such as the English clasp to their bosoms and we too, if we were wise, should appreciate.

It is not necessary to claim Gandhi and Nehru as literary figures, and critics who compare Nehru's prose to Shelley's poetry to the disadvantage of the latter —and this has been done—do not thereby enhance their own reputation as critics. There is some point in my dragging in this comparison, because in ensuring that the Indian contribution to English literature is of the right quality we have to wage our war on two fronts: against our foes who assert that an Indian whose mother tongue is not English cannot possibly produce anything worthwhile in English and is wasting his time and his readers' and even more against our friends to whom any standard is snobbery, and if the outside world is critical or half-hearted in its praise—to hell with it!

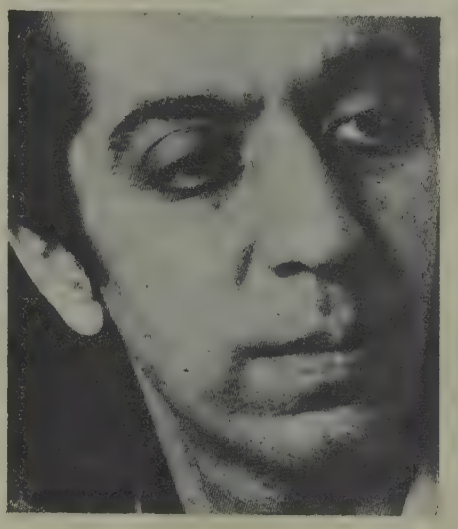
Literature



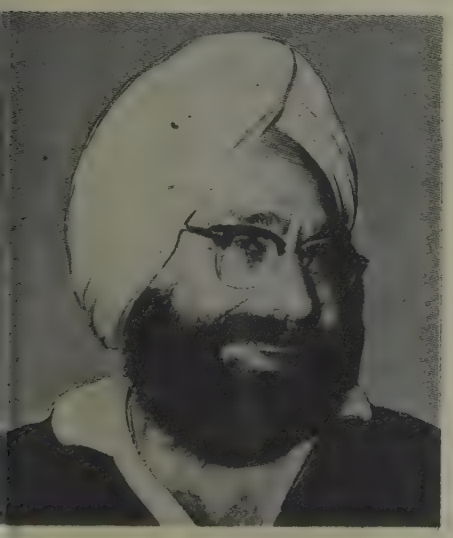
Gieve Patel



Dom Moraes



Adil Jussawalla



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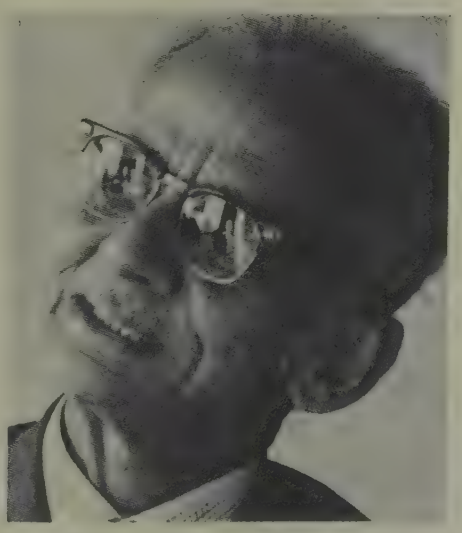

Nirad Chaudhuri

A professor of English since 1935 in Lahore, Orissa, U. P. and Jaipur, Professor P. S. Sundaram was also President of the All-India English Teachers' Conference in 1968.

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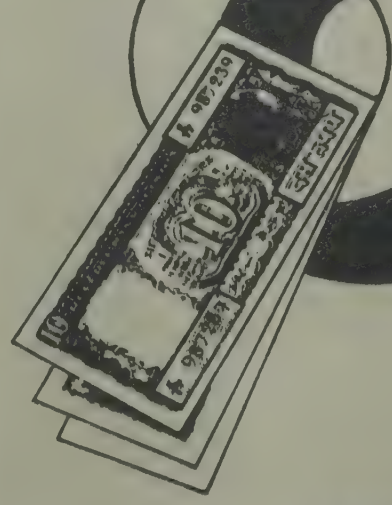

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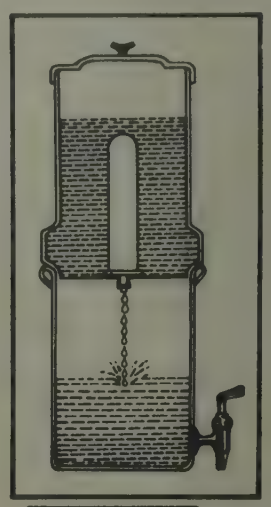

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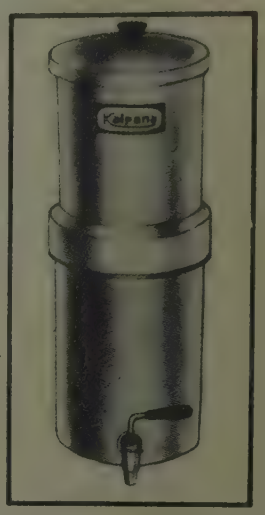

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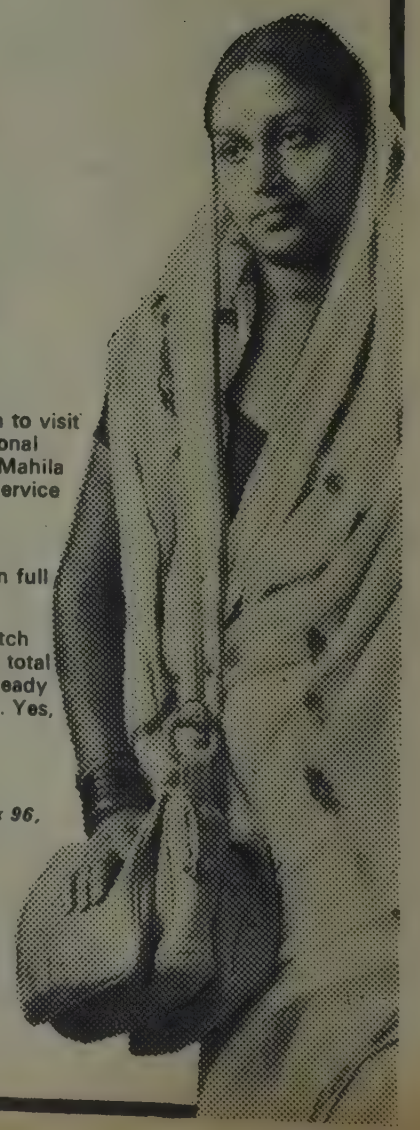

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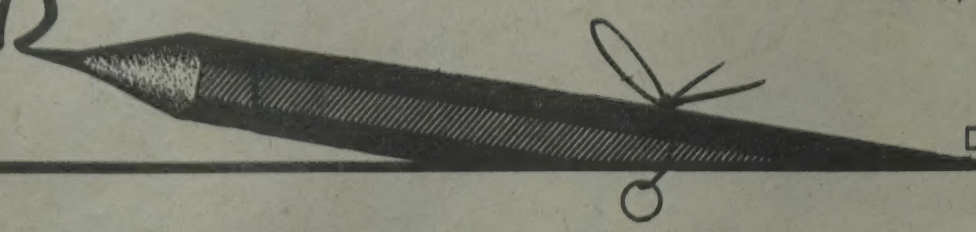

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