



KALAKSHETRA QUARTERLY
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THE CORONATION OF YUDHISHTIRA

COVER PAGE PICTURE

The two great epics of India, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana have moulded and enriched the character and civilisation of the Indian people, and have been a perennial source of spiritual strength to them.

The Mahabharata, composed many thousands of years ago by Maharishi Vyasa is not merely an epic but a veritable ocean of the many streams of thought—the philosophical, religious, political and other literature of that period. Above all it has for its core, the Gita which is acknowledged by the whole world as the noblest of scriptures. The gospel of *Dharma* runs through the epic like a golden thread. JAYA is the name by which the work is referred to, in the first invocatory verse of the epic. JAYA, which means victory, conveying the moral that ultimately Truth alone will triumph.

The sweeping drama of the Mahabharata comes to a climax with the battle of Kurukshetra. In this battle the puny Pandava forces, armed only with the strength of their moral right and guided by Lord Krishna Himself, are pitted against the mighty Kaurava army. After a heroic struggle, the Pandavas emerge victorious. Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandava brothers, was considered an embodiment of Truth and the Coronation of Yudhishtira symbolises the victory of *Dharma* over *Adharma*. The beautiful miniature painting on the cover page illustrates the Coronation of Yudhishtira after the Kurukshetra battle. As was the custom in those days, he performed the *Aswamedha Yagna* to which all the princes of the land were invited and bounteous gifts were given to the brahmins, the poor and the destitute people. Everything was done in magnificent style with music and dance and great pomp and splendour.

The Pandava brothers, Draupadi, Vyasa, Krishna, Satyaki and others, as well as guests, musicians and dancers are depicted in the picture. The names of all the important personages as also the general title of the picture, are written in Telugu.

The picture is in tempera on cloth pasted on a wooden plank. The fine lines and beautiful colouring are noteworthy. The painting is assignable to about the 17th century A.D. and is probably from Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh.

Technical notes on the painting kindly provided by Mr. V. N. Srinivasa Desikan, Curator, Archaeological section, Madras Museum.

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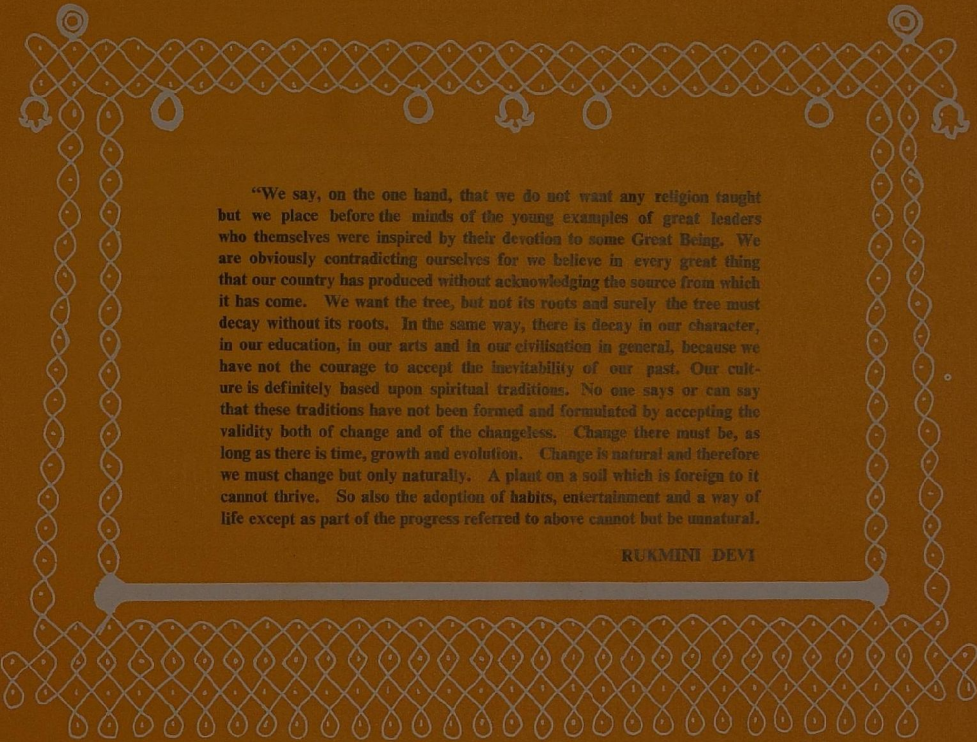
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CORONATION OF YUDHISHTIRA note on cover page picture	1
THE BHAKTI CULTS OF INDIA K. K. Pillai	4
THE CLASSICAL YOGYANESE DANCE B. P. H. Surjobrongto	9
THE CHITRAKATHA TRADITION IN INDIAN ART V. P. Dwivedi	17
DRAMATIC ART Paul Storm	23
THE NARRATIVE ART OF TIBET Lokesh Chandra	27
WAYANG KULIT Durai Raja Singam	31
HARIKATHA KALAKSHEPAM Alamelu Govindarajan	37

Cover page painting: Courtesy of the Madras Museum. Photo credits page 15- B. P. H. Surjobrongto: pages 12 & 13-Smt. Rukmini Devi: page 18 - Sketch of Ajanta painting, after Yazdani by artist Mohanlal: pages 18, 19, 20, 21 - National Museum, New Delhi: page 28 & 29 - Lokesh Chandra: page 33 - B. P. H. Surjobrongto.



"We say, on the one hand, that we do not want any religion taught but we place before the minds of the young examples of great leaders who themselves were inspired by their devotion to some Great Being. We are obviously contradicting ourselves for we believe in every great thing that our country has produced without acknowledging the source from which it has come. We want the tree, but not its roots and surely the tree must decay without its roots. In the same way, there is decay in our character, in our education, in our arts and in our civilisation in general, because we have not the courage to accept the inevitability of our past. Our culture is definitely based upon spiritual traditions. No one says or can say that these traditions have not been formed and formulated by accepting the validity both of change and of the changeless. Change there must be, as long as there is time, growth and evolution. Change is natural and therefore we must change but only naturally. A plant on a soil which is foreign to it cannot thrive. So also the adoption of habits, entertainment and a way of life except as part of the progress referred to above cannot but be unnatural.

RUKMINI DEVI

THE BHAKTI CULTS OF INDIA

K. K. PILLAY

Bhakti means devotion to God. Simple as it seems, it has been interpreted in different ways at various epochs of India's religious history.

In the early stage of man's history, Bhakti or devotion, even implying adoration seems to have arisen out of fear or desire, influenced by personal considerations. Later, and even now, Bhakti has often been prompted by personal wish or traditional practices. The benefit motive is dominant, and in early times iconic worship itself might have arisen in pursuance of that feature.

Take for instance the case of the so-called Indus valley culture.¹ We find a number of clay seals, figurines of terracotta and several stone images. The plenitude of the number of female figures of terracotta is conspicuous. The Mother Goddess seems to have held a prominent position. In all probability these were worshipped by the people. Such figurative representations were found not only in India, but also in various countries from Iran to the Aegean. The Egyptians worshipped the Sun and his personifications. Akhmaton, the Great Egyptian, said that "His (Sun's) bountiful rays are the life-giver and life-sustainer".² Obviously the people adored the Sun for their own benefit. There were other seals, probably imported, from the Indus Valley. Certain objects and motifs indicate indirect communication between the Indus Valley and Egypt from Sumer and Elam. For instance, "the device of a deity grasping a lion on either side is common in the three ancient civilizations—the Indus Valley, Sumer and Egypt".³

The Rig Veda has specific reference to the performance of sacrifices in order to gain favours. The principal

Gods mentioned in the Rig Veda are Varuna, the sky-god, Mitra conjoined with Varuna, the solar gods, Surya and Savitri, as well as Vishnu, representing the morning sun, Rudra, probably the precursor of Siva, Vayu, the wind god, Parjanya the god of rain, Agni, the god of celestial fire and so on. They were not worshipped as images but only as concepts, but they were adored with rituals and sacrifices, accompanied by *mantras*, uttered with devotion but often for obtaining benefits. For instance, the Rig Veda contains a prayer to Rudra imploring him to accept the *havis* (oblation) and spare the lives and property of the worshipper and his relatives. As the sacrifices became complex and varied like the *Rājasūya*, *Vājapēya* and the *Āśvamedha* the aim of securing certain benefits was conspicuous. Much erudition has been brought to bear on *Mantra* which is believed to be of help in promoting devotion. There is a view that even without the mental invocation the formal recitation of God's name itself has its efficacy.⁴ Bhakti with the selfish motive existed even in early times. But later, the nature of Bhakti was motivated by enlightened selfishness. Prayers were offered not for mere material well-being, but for freedom from birth and death. At times prayers were offered for the welfare of all living creatures. It has been rightly said that unselfish devotion or *Premam* as it was called, was the high watermark of Bhakti.

At times such Bhakti assumed a philosophic form. The tenth book of the Rig Veda presents the idea of the ultimate oneness of God and even in this abstract and idealised form prayers are offered to him with intense devotion.

Now comes a controversy as to the next epoch in the evolution of Bhakti. Was it first propounded by the

Dr. K. K. Pillay (born 1905), M.A., D.Litt, D.Phil. (OXON), has several erudite publications, to his credit. Notable among these are 'The Suchindram Temple', 'Early History of Nanchinad', 'Nattirina in its historical setting', 'South India and Ceylon' and 'A Social History of the Tamils'. He has also published many valuable historical works in Tamil. He has held the positions of Professor of Indian History, University of Madras, and Professor of Social Sciences and Area Studies. He was president of the Indian History Congress in 1970. He is at present, Director, Institute of Traditional Cultures, Madras.

Bhagavata or by the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita? No doubt the term Bhakti appears in the Upanishads for the first time and it assumes a well developed form in the Gita. But the Bhagavata seems to have been the first to preach the cult of unmotivated devotion to God. It is only one of the compilations which were handed down by word of mouth in the form of folk-songs, ballads and hymns.

The Bhagavata seems to have emerged earlier than the 4th century B.C., and was embodied in the Bhagavata Purana, several centuries later. Some hold that this most well-known of the Puranas, was composed sometime between the 6th and 9th centuries A.D. while others assign it to the 11th century A.D.⁵

We have the earliest authentic reference to the Bhagavata by Megasthenes. He speaks of the different cults associated with Vishnu and Siva to whom he accords the respective Greek names of Heracles and Dionysius.

Earlier, Pānini of 6th century B.C. mentions only Vāsudeva as the deity to be worshipped. Later Siva also was included though he seems to have been worshipped by the Indus Valley people even much earlier. The Vasudeva Krishna cult is indirectly mentioned in the Chandogya Upanishad. This also suggests that the Bhagavata influence spread earlier. Further it must be noted that the Vāsudeva-Krishna cult was contemporaneous with the Jain Tirthankar, Arishteni, who lived much earlier than Mahavira of 6th century B.C. Therefore, it can be said that the Vasudeva cult had appeared earlier than 6th century B.C.⁶ Much later, Mahayana Buddhism was influenced by the Bhakti movement of the Hindus.

This leads us to the consideration of the interminable controversy over the chronology of Vedic literature. Extremists once believed that the Rig Veda was as old as 8000 B.C. But the discovery of the Bhogaz-koi inscription on the one hand and the date of the rise of Buddhism on the other, leads one to conclude that the Rig Veda took shape some time about 1500 B.C. It would seem that after the Vedas and Brahmanas there must have appeared the Bhagavata following which came the Aranyakas, Upanishads and the Gita.⁷

The idea of Narayana, attains prominence in the Upanishads and becomes still better known as Vishnu in due course. The Gita, which appears in the Mahabharata contains the essence of the Upanishads. In the Gita, Vishnu assumes the form of Krishna. Was he a Dravidian or an Arya-Dravidian God? Some have suggested that he was a Dravidian deity as he was repre-

sented as sky-blue in colour. But then Rama and Vishnu too have been shown in that colour. No dogmatism is justifiable on this matter though it has been attempted by many scholars.⁸

The Bhakti cult had re-appeared in the Upanishads and it was developed by the Gita. The essence of the teaching of the Gita is unselfish love. Emphasis was laid on self-surrender and spiritual discipline as necessary elements of devotion to God. The view of D.C. Sircar that the Bhagavad Gita must have arisen about the 3rd century B.C. fits into our scheme of chronology though some scholars disagree with Sircar's view.

Saivism is said to have been earlier than the Vedic age since it is traceable to the Indus civilisation. But an organised cult of bhakti towards Siva does not seem to have arisen early, though Patanjali of the 2nd century B.C. speaks of the Siva-bhagavatas or devotees of Siva. Perhaps this devotion to Siva developed under the Sungas and later under the Guptas. Though we hear of the distinctive features of Kashmir Saivism, Kannada Virasaivism and so on, they are different from the Bhagavata or Bhakti cults of North India of early days. In fact the Saivaite Bhakti movement had its glorious development in South India from about the 7th century.

The Bhakti movements in Tamil Nadu: In Tamil Nadu, leaving aside for the moment other parts of India, Vaishnavait Bhakti cult seems to have had an earlier start. There appeared the Krishna cult, and perhaps Madurai of the South traced its name to Mathura where the Krishna cult had its great development. It has been suggested, though not proved, that the Southern Madurai became the centre of the Southern Krishna cult. The Yadavas had come to the south and had perhaps developed the worship of Krishna. Even earlier a section of the Vrsni people seems to have colonised the Pandya country.

However, one thing is certain. The Vaishnava Ālvārs or devotees had an early origin; the *Mudal Ālvārs*, as they are called, are assignable to the 5th century A.D. and they were followed by a number of Vaishnava devotees till about the 9th century A.D. The influence of the Bhagavatas was found among the Ālvārs. The Ālvārs were twelve in number. Perhaps the most prominent among them was Nammālvār.

The Ālvārs worshipped Vishnu, Nārāyana and Krishna with intense emotion and their outpourings invoke unstinted devotion to this God. It is not necessary to enumerate the names of all the Ālvārs here. But the

most important of them were Tirumangai, Peryālvār and his adopted daughter Āndāl and above all Nammālvār. Tirumangai was a Marava by caste and, true to the traditions of his caste, had taken to highway robbery in his early days. Later he became an ardent Vaishnavite and composed many songs on Vishnu, even though some of his songs were primarily directed against Jainism and Buddhism.

Peryālvār of the extreme south had sung very moving songs describing Lord Krishna's birth and early childhood. Āndāl is famous for her boundless devotion to God. Considering herself a Gopi, she imagined that she was the beloved of Sri Ranganāthā of the Srirangam temple. She sang some enchanting songs describing the Lord as her lover. Her emotional songs are repeated on occasions at Vaishnavite marriages. The next important Ālvār was Nammālvār or Satakōpā whose *Tiruvoymoli* forms the last and most valuable part of the *Nalayira Prabandham*. Nammālvār was a deeply learned devotee and his compositions are greatly respected. One of the Ālvārs, Kulasekhara belonged to the West coast and was a king of Venad in Kerala. His *Mukundamala* quotes a verse from the Bhāgavata Purana; this shows that this Purana must have been composed in or before the 9th century A.D.

On the whole, the Ālvārs were early leaders of Tamilian Vaishnavism representing the early Bhagavata cult. At their hands there was a marked fusion of Tamil with Sanskrit. Though the Ālvārs did not actively preach against the caste system, they disregarded caste distinctions. In fact, Tirupān Ālvār belonged to the Pana caste. South Indian Vaishnavism has always depended for its strength on the support of the masses. There is a tradition that Tirumangai was a contemporary of the Pallava king Narasimhavarma (A.D. 630-68) and if this is true, Tirumangai belonged to the 7th century and it can be concluded that the period of the Ālvārs ranged from the 5th to the 9th century. The Ālvārs were followed by Ācharyās who developed the philosophical aspect of the religion. Foremost among them was Rāmānujāchāriār, whose influence reached North India.

Saivism: About the same time in Tamil Nadu there was a great resurgence of the Bhakti movement among the Saivites. In respect of India as a whole, some think that Vaishnavism was earlier because Vishnu as such figures in the Rig Veda. But as noticed earlier Siva was known even in the epoch of the Indus Valley civilisation. Some time later there came about a fusion and the Vedic Rudra

became identified with the non-Aryan Siva. By the time of the Svetasvatara Upanishad, Siva was absorbed in the Vedic Pantheon and was given a lofty position as Mahadeva. The earliest specific mention of Siva is traceable to Megasthenes. In the age of the Guptas the worship of Siva assumed considerable importance. The Saivaite Bhakti movement however is only traceable to South India. Perhaps it commenced in the Kannada country but it reached a great height in Tamil Nadu. Sixty three Nayanmars or devotees are said to have composed emotional songs employed for the adoration of Siva. They went about the country visiting the Saiva temples and worshipping Siva with their ecstatic devotional songs. These were collected later, and came to be known as the *Thevarams*. This was the great epoch of Saiva Bhakti movement which ranged from the 7th century A.D. to 9th century A.D. These songs are sung in Saiva temples even to this day and we can see that the Bhakti movement initiated by the Nayanmars or Saiva saints had a long influence on the Tamils.

Among the Saiva Nāyanmārs the most prominent were Jñānasambandhar, Tirunāvukarasar and Sundarar. Sambandar set his songs to music of a high order. His *Thevarams* are not only famous for their devotion but also for their contribution to music. Tirunāvukkarasar, known as Appar, is stated to have been originally a Jain and was converted to Hinduism through the efforts of his sister. Sundarar was the last of the three saints whose devotion to Siva was that of a friend. He sang the *Tiruttondathogai* containing an account of 62 saints. He was the 63rd saint, according to Nambi Āndār Nambi. But there appeared perhaps a little later, the still more famous Mānikkavachagar whose outpourings are collected in the *Tiruvāchakam*. They are soul-stirring songs and there is a common saying that he who is not moved by *Tiruvāchakam* will not be moved by any song. His date is a subject of controversy. But in the light of the evidence from the Sinhalese source, *Nikaya Sangrahaya*,⁸ and the Pandyan epigraphs of the 9th century A.D., Manikkavachagar, a contemporary of Varaguna I, may be assigned to the first half of the 9th century A.D. He was opposed to Buddhism while some of the Saivaite saints were against Jainism. *Saiva Siddhānta* of Meykandar, a very popular work on Tamil Saivism, though philosophical, inculcated true devotion to Siva.⁹ It came subsequent to the Bhakti movement.

The new Bhakti cult of South India: Later there were undoubtedly many Tamil saints of great devotion and literary skill, like Arunagirināthar, Tāyūmānavar and Rāmalingaswamigal. Though they were famous for their

devotional poetry, and though they were influenced by the early Nayanmars, they did not belong to the wave of Saivaite Bhakti movement from the 7th to 9th century A.D.

A distinctive feature of the Saivaite Bhakti movement of the South was its deep emotional fervour and the use of simple language easily understood by the common people. Unlike the leaders of the Bhakti movement of North India in the medieval period, they did not preach against idolatry and caste, though they disregarded caste distinctions.

The Bhakti cult in North India: Certain features of the Bhakti movement in North India from about the 12th century A.D. are different from those in Tamil Nadu both in respect of Vaishnavism and Saivism of the earlier epoch. In the first place, the leading reformers in the North generally rejected image worship rituals and other ceremonies and positively opposed the caste system.

Secondly, they had to contend with Islam; but they did not oppose it. They tried to harmonise the two religions, Hinduism and Islam. Various forms of this conciliation and combination can be seen in the teachings of Kabīr and Nānak.

Thirdly, it is erroneous to think that the North Indian Bhakti movement owed its origin to South India as has been suggested by some, who hold that Rāmānanda, a follower of the Visishtadvaita of Rāmānuja was the precursor of North Indian bhakti cult in medieval times. This is not quite accurate. It is admitted that Rāmānanda was a follower of the creed preached by Rāmānuja. But it is wrong to think that Rāmānanda was a South Indian and that he was born in Mysore. In reality he was a native of Allahabad. But his advocacy of the Visishtadvaita certainly became popular in the North.

The medieval saints in Maharashtra prior to Rāmānanda were persons of different castes. In fact they created a major ideological revolution by their utter disregard of caste. For instance, there was Nāmadēva, a tailor (1270-1350) who was a robber-chief in early life. He became an ardent devotee of Vithoba, God of Pandharpur, but later considered Vithoba as no more than a symbol of the Supreme Soul that pervades the Universe. He was opposed to idol worship and he condemned fasts, pilgrimages, sacrificial ceremonies and all external observances.

Rāmānanda was a disciple of Rāghavānanda who belonged to Rāmānuja's creed of Visishtadvaita. Though a brahmin, Rāmānanda condemned caste, and by his

exposition of the Sastras he proved that the observance of caste discriminations was unnecessary. In fact, his twelve disciples included a Jat, a barber, a cobbler and a muslim called Kabīr. Their devotion to God was devoid of rites and ceremonies. He was thus the harbinger of a rational and coordinated form of religion, though his devotion to Rama was conspicuous, and it appealed to the masses in all parts Northern India. He was in a sense responsible for the revival of the devotional cult of the Bhagavatas; only he replaced Krishna and Radha by Rama and Sita.

Kabīr of the 15th century was the greatest follower of Rāmānanda. He tried to harmonise Hinduism with Islam. He thought that Rama was not different from Rahim of the Muslims. His emphasis was pre-eminently on strict moral conduct. Besides condemning the caste system, idol worship, sanctity of baths in sacred rivers and other formalities, he disapproved the orthodox Muslim practices like adherence to mosques, performance of Sunnat, and practices like Namāz and Rozā. In fact, his creed resembled that of the Sufis, for like them he laid stress on ardent love towards the Supreme God. In his propagation of sincere love regardless of formalities and in his stress on religious tolerance, Kabīr may be said to have worked towards universal religion. The view that Kabīr was influenced by the Upanishadic non-dualism and Islamic monism coloured by Sufi concepts does not seem to be an exaggeration. Even traces of Buddhist thought are traceable in his *Kabīrpanth*. He was not dogmatic at all. He condemned narrow creeds and sectarianism. The difference between the North Indian Bhakti cult and the South Indian 'neo-bhakti' cult must be clearly understood.

There were other saints of North India in the medieval period, like Vallabha (1479-1531) who though born in Andhra Pradesh went to the north and lived in Benares. A scholar and a devotee, he stressed the value of detachment from worldly pleasures. He preached devotion to Krishna and condemned carnal pleasures.

More famous was Chaitanya, a Vaishnava brahmin of Bengal and a contemporary of Vallabha. A social reformer like Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Nānak and Tukārām, Chaitanya was strongly opposed to caste distinctions and the ceremonial of the Hindus. But he did not condemn idol worship or pilgrimages.

It is significant to note that Jīva Gosvāmin, a follower of Chaitanya, wrote a work on the cult of bhakti and the Bhāgavata influence is unmistakably seen in it.

Nānak (1469-1538), the last of the famous medieval leaders of the Bhakti movement eventually became the

founder of Sikhism which harmonised Hinduism with Islam. The *Adi Granth*, the Bible of the Sikhs, contains the hymns of Kabir and Nānak. He had no faith in the caste system or in bathing in sacred rivers. Sikhism and Sufism resembled each other closely.

Guru Nānak was a strong advocate of Monotheism. According to him God did not belong to any particular people, Muslim or Hindu. Rightly has it been said that Kabir was the spiritual ancestor of Nānak. He said: "Abide pure amidst the impurities of the world; thus shalt thou find the way to religion".

Sufism: Among the Muslims there were certain leaders besides Kabir who advocated a happy compromise between Hinduism and Islam. Shaik Salim Chishti and Dara Shukoh were the leading members of this school, known as Sufism.

Originally the Sufis were interested in converting Hindus to Islam. But later on many Sufis gave up their evangelistic zeal and instead devoted themselves to a compar-

ative study of the religions and philosophies of India. Abul Fazl and Dara were foremost among them. The intolerant policy of Aurangazeb drove many Sufis to a conspicuous admiration for the Vedānta philosophy. Some Sufis even adopted idolatry as another way of worshipping God. Though there were different shades of Sufism, they were all considerably influenced by certain sections of the Bhakti movement. It has been rightly said that "Guru Nānak's thought, in no way differed from that of the Sufis."¹⁰

There were some features in common between Vaishnavism and Sufism. In the medieval period both these religions stress the need for self-realisation outside the limitations imposed by rigid dogma. The Islamic concept of equality and brotherhood of man greatly attracted the lower classes of the Hindus who had no access to the temples and the right to read the scriptures. Many of the Muslim mystics particularly Chishti and his followers showed a spirit of toleration towards other religions and creeds. They emphasized the essential unity between different religions and that constitutes the kernel of Sufism.

¹ Recent discoveries show that this civilisation was not confined to the Indus Valley, but had spread over various regions of Northern and Western India.

² It is interesting that the Bhagavad Gita also speaks of Sun worship.
A. D. Pusalker: *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. I, p. 155.

⁴ See *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute: Diamond Jubilee Volume*, p. 829 and *ibid*, p. 1941.

⁶ Some historians like R. C. Majumdar and K. A. N. Sastri think that the Bhāgavata Purāna was composed in South India. The basis for this view has not been indicated and it is open to doubt. Sastri however states that it contained the tenets of the neo-bhakti cult combined with the doctrines of Advaita. This is not accepted by specialist authorities on Vaishnavism.

⁶ The view of some that the cult of Bhakti owed its rise to Christianity or Islam is obviously unsustainable.

⁷ Conservative scholars of the Vedic age may not agree with this, primarily on account of well-established traditions.

⁸ The Harivamsa and the Purānas refer to the cowherd boy, Gopala-Krishna, the son of Vasudeva and Devaki. But elsewhere he is described as a Kshatriya king and a householder.

However, in early Tamil works Krishna is described as *Kāri-Kannan* or as dark-complexioned Kannan (Krishna). This refers to black colour and is different from that of Vishnu. Can Vishnu's association with cows as indicated by the epithet *gopa*, meaning herdsman, found in the Rig Veda (I. 22. 18) be responsible for the sky-blue colour? This is not convincing. Some *Avatars* of Vishnu alone are of the skyblue in colour. The suggestion that the blue colour of Vishnu is ascribable to the Matsyavatara seems to be valid. The fact that five Vrsni heroes were apotheosized and worshipped with the title "*Bhāgavat*" in the Mathura region probably by people associated with the old Yadava Satvata Vrsni clan is also worthy of consideration in this context. Only suggestions can be offered in a sphere where an indubitable answer cannot be given. In the Sangam works Tirumal is said to be blue in colour like the water of the ocean or the blue diamond. It is interesting to find that in some of the Sangam works in Tamil, Mal(Vishnu) is stated to be blue in colour; his body is said to shine like the blue diamond (Purnanuru: 56:5) or the water of the deep ocean. (Perumbanarruppadai: 29-31).

⁹ 'Nikaya Sangraha', the Sinhalese chronicle, p. 18 and C. S. Navaratnam 'Tamil and Ceylon', p. 95.

¹⁰ N. M. Bhutani: *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. IV, p. 610.

THE CLASSICAL YOGYANESE DANCE

B. P. H. SURJOBONGTO

Before explaining the real meaning of Yogyaneese dance I will try, by way of a general survey, to describe briefly the origin of the Javanese dance, its various aspects and its course of development.

We can distinguish four stages:

1. The pre-Hindoo stage
2. The Hindoo stage
3. The Hindoo-Javanese stage
4. The Javanese stage, which lasts to the present day.

THE FIRST STAGE

From a very small number of available data, scholars have been able to conclude that before the Hindoos set foot on Indonesian soil, there had been in Java a kind of animistic dance, in which the dancer wore a mask. This dance had a religious character, which is even now still noticeable from the fact that prior to any performance, an offering is made and incense is burnt. What the ancient dance was like and how it was performed, no positive information has been found in any historical record so far available.

THE SECOND STAGE

Since the arrival of the Hindoos in the Indonesian archipelago, the Javanese have received assets of great value, one of which is the art of dancing, which used to have a religious character. It is a matter of course that when the Hindoos came here they brought with them their religious dance or temple dance.

What it was like, and how it was performed, is a matter of speculation on the basis of the relief figures in the

Indian temples. Scholars claim that the dance should look much more sensual than what the reliefs in the temples of Java depict. We can see that the women's dance is considerably more vigorous than the Javanese Bedhaja and Srimpi dances because we can see that the arms and feet are raised fairly high, which shows that this imported dance has been adjusted to please the Javanese taste.

THE THIRD STAGE

A Dutch scholar, Mr. Th. B. Van Lelyveld, remarks in his book "De Javanese Danskunst" that the sense of beauty and rhythm of the Javanese is unequalled. Therefore it was not surprising that the Javanese soil was very well suited to receive and to cultivate the noble seeds of Indian culture.

Between the fourth and twelfth centuries the Hindoo-Javanese culture experienced a development which has been of great significance in the history of culture. This development is found not only in the fields of architecture and literature, but also in the field of dancing.

Since 1200 the Hindoo influence on dancing was superseded by the Javanese spirit and taste, which process was fully completed in the 15th and 16th centuries. This was partly due to the influence of Islam.

THE FOURTH STAGE

In this period which began with the fall of the Majapahit empire in 1478, the growth of Javanese culture came to a stand still. From that time on, Java suffered from a series of wars which ended only in the eighteenth



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century. It was then that the Javanese dance found much of its performance in the Javanese drama which is now called Wajangwong. The Hindoo influence is entirely gone now, and the dance can no longer be called a Hindoo-Javanese dance. It has become a truly Javanese dance with a wholly Javanese character.

It is to be regretted that the Javanese never writes down his knowledge in the form of books or letters. He is accustomed to spreading and teaching it orally, his excuse being that such a method sharpens the intellect. Therefore, our knowledge about the character and the science of the dance of past ages is virtually nil.

But we are fortunate that the art of dancing did not die when many other branches of art experienced a setback.

Why has dancing survived to the present day?

Because the Javanese art of dancing is a collective form of art, and not an individualistic one. A collective dance has an element of self-sacrifice in it, or self-denial, because it is founded on a society which has also a collective character with one pattern of thought, viz. *gotong-rojong* (i.e. the principle of mutual help), which means one end for all and all for one end. Therefore, self-denial is not an unusual feature in the Javanese character. An art which is collective and bound up by tradition, strong principles and rules developed through the ages, results in a unity that is everlasting and profound. This synthesis I will explain in more detail later on.

A dancer is a bearer and an envoy of his art. He is not interested in fame, spectators, fee or personal gain. He devotes everything to his art. He will never be satisfied with his achievement and will always seek to improve and perfect his performance. He is an ambassador of a high and noble culture.

A dancer in a grand scale Kraton performance for instance, who begins dancing at six o' clock in the morning with nobody watching him, will apply the same amount of dedication and concentration as the dancer who dances in front of thousands of admirers. He feels it his bounden duty to dance as best as he can as a member of the community of dancers, and he is determined to present a first class show.

An individualistic type of art is quite different. It is a personal art, where it is the man, the artist, who constitutes the most important element, including all his good and bad qualities.

What is the art of dancing? What is its definition?

Some people say that dancing is the movement of the soul revealed by the movements of the body and by gestures.

The Hindoos have a definition, found in the ancient classic Sanskrit book 'Natyasastra', which reads as follows: "A dance is a set of movements and gestures made by the arms, legs and other parts of the body which reveal a man's soul". Western scholars have also their definitions, one of which is that of de Cahusac: "Les differentes affections de l' ame sont l'origine des gestes, et la danse qui on est composee, est par consequent l'art de les faire avec grace et mesure relativement aux affections qu'ils doivent exprimer". A shorter definition is given by Giraudet: "La danse a ete l' expression d'un etat d'ame". Grawley gives us the following: "Dancing is an instinctive mode of muscular expression of feeling". All these definitions have one thing in common: the dance is an expression of the soul.

Is this true? I will try to explain that this thesis is not a hypothesis.

Like the other plastic arts, dancing requires instruments for its performance. And those instruments are provided by the human body. The condition of the body is no guarantee for the quality of the dance. That depends on many factors. Like in painting, the result of the work depends not only on the quality of the canvas and the paint. A mediocre violinist will not be more successful and impressive simply by using a Stradivarius. But those instruments of quality will be decisive factors if the artist can take the fullest benefit from them. This benefit cannot be fully obtained if the artist has not got the necessary technical skill and thorough knowledge. There is a saying in the artist's world which goes as follows:

"Art without knowledge is poor,
Knowledge without art is savage".

A dance is the expression of the soul, and so it is a form of expressive plastic art. This means that a dancer must be able to speak by means of the parts of his body, without his voice. To obtain this level, a dancer's mind must be filled with as much knowledge of dancing as possible, so that expression and plasticity achieve a state of balance or harmonious equilibrium. This takes a long time. It is not enough just to memorize the dancing movements by counting one, two, three, four. A dancer should not dance beyond his capacity, because this will result in a disturbance of the equilibrium and this in turn will lead to overacting. Therefore, profound

knowledge is necessary, so that the dancer can measure for himself his own capacity.

The art of dancing in itself is a very rich art of mime and has many nuances in its performance. A qualified dancer should be able to reveal his soul by using his body as the medium, particularly his arms, because it is the arms which have the greatest potential, and are clearly visible. From the way the hands and the fingers are moved, an observer can judge the intensity of the expression. A well-known dancer of Russia, Sacha Leonchew, said that the hands are the second face of the dancer.

Since the Javanese dance is an abstract and symbolic dance, all the bodily movements are also abstract and symbolic. It would be very odd indeed, if a realistic element were allowed to enter this classical Javanese dance, as for example, realistic expression on the face, because the classical Javanese dance is no copy of real life. I can imagine how queer it would be if an abstract painting were to include a realistic fragment. This would spoil or disturb the harmonious expression, unless, of course the dance is directed towards naturalism or realism. This will mean that the basic principle for the classical dance is to be abandoned. Facial mime is also known in the classical Javanese dance. There are three levels of mime: *pandangan* (concentrated prolonged gaze), *polatan* (general facial expression) and *pasemon* (an expression of character or soul on the countenance). This is one of the essentials of *djoged* (dancing). The facial expression should agree with the movements. The two should be conducted by the soul. It is the soul which determines the intensity of expression. Without the soul, the dance will be less alive, it will be empty and shallow, lacking depth, character and style. I think the same process takes place in painting. The painter's soul must move his hands to produce the plastic expression desired by his feeling. His movements become instinctive. Painting surely also requires an equilibrium in the expression and rhythm, in the division and utilization of space.

To increase the sensitivity of the senses in the auditory, visual and kinaesthetic field, a dancer has to train himself so that his soul can receive and absorb all impulses from outside, which are related to his role and his dance so that his soul can fill the expression of the movements with those impulses. The impulses are brought about by the sounds of the *gamelan* music, the narration, the melody, the song, the dialogue and the story. Therefore, total concentration is essential for the good performance of the dance, lest it should degenerate into "over act-

ing". Thus all those elements should form a synthesis, they should be fused into one unity.

The Javanese, who has by nature, a very keen sense of beauty, has developed over many hundreds of years something refined and exalted, which Western scholars have called almost perfect. The great Indian philosopher, Rabindranath Tagore, was most fascinated when he saw the Javanese dance during his visit to this country in 1928, and he said that he had never seen anything more perfect than the Javanese dance.

The sense of beauty and gentleness of the Javanese is found in their art of dancing. Coarse and violent scenes, charged with tension are well controlled and the tension is transformed into the plasticity of graceful movements. So, whatever the circumstance, the sense of beauty is always dominant. In this case, rhythm plays not an insignificant role, nay, it is even a decisive factor to guarantee the equilibrium between expression and movement. Ever since his birth the Javanese has been subjected to rhythm. A mother while rocking her baby in her arms will always sing a song. This is not limited to the rhythm of music only. It has a broader meaning. It implies the rhythm of life, of manners and etiquette. The rhythm guarantees the harmony between the internal and the external forms of life, which manifests itself in the state of balance in man's soul, which further leads to internal rest or spiritual peace. A Javanese, when rudely treated, will think to himself: "That man knows no rhythm". However, rhythm alone cannot enable the Javanese to create a true art of dancing of monumental dimensions by the standards of scholars—an art of dancing in the fullest sense of the word.

The process which has lasted many hundred years has produced a philosophy, which constitutes the essence or fundamental element of the specific *Ngajogjakarta* (Yogyanese) dance. With this "spiritual art" *seni kebatinan* (to avoid misunderstanding I deliberately don't use the term spiritual science) every movement and posture can be more alive and full and the expression can be more intense.

I think some elements of this spiritual art are present in every genuine form of art. For example, a painter will not be able to create something high and noble if his work is not based on the spiritual. His product will be flat, shallow, characterless, and lacking in perspective.

It is this spiritual art which we call *Djoged Mataram* (the Mataram Dance) for want of any other name. We have simply taken this name from our most prominent



Trijata and Sita

teacher (in dancing), Mr. R. P. Rija Kertatmadja, who in his turn, had his knowledge handed down to him by word of mouth from his own teachers of an older generation. The man who created the Yogyanese dance which is inspired by the *Djoged Mataram*, was no other than Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono I (1755-1792).

He created the dance in an atmosphere of war. Therefore the discipline of the dance is very rigid, like military discipline. The principles and rules of the dance are also very strict. Consequently the Yogyanese dance is considered by people of other areas as very exacting and difficult. The idea behind the dance is that the people should always be prepared and on the alert to face the possibility of war breaking out at any moment.

Under the Sultan's able leadership and guidance, Yogyakarta made considerable progress in the field of culture, including the art of dancing. It was he who introduced the grand scale performance of the *wajang-wong* play, *Gandawerdaja*.

What is the actual form of the Yogyanese dance?

There is generally a lot of misunderstanding concerning the Yogyanese dance. The Yogyanese dance is the

technique whereas the *Djoged Mataram* is its soul, its spirit. The two elements are inseparable. The Yogyanese dance without the *Djoged Mataram* is incomplete and imperfect.

Before one achieves this spiritual level of dancing, one has to go through a process of upbuilding, i.e. a technical build-up along with a physical and mental build-up. When this process is completed, the dancer has only attained technical skill. At this level he has not yet found his personal character or specific style, because he still lacks the profound knowledge. He will dance mechanically according to the fixed patterns. His interpretation of the dance as a revelation of his soul is still shallow. His acting is not yet in harmony with the function of his dance because the rhythm of his expression and dance plasticity is not yet balanced, so that the symbolic aspect is blurred, which indicates that the dancer cannot play his role well. In such a state the dancer will seek a way out by overacting, or by abandoning the style of his dance which will result in an uncontrolled dance. He needs some mental coaching and knowledge from a competent teacher.



Rama and the Golden Deer

Such a lesson should consist of five stages:

1. Elementary dancing;
2. Knowledge of the Yogyanese dance in its truest sense;
3. Intensification and elaboration of the dance;
4. Perfection or precision in the dance, in relation to the rhythm of the music;
5. The "spiritual art".

Why should the spiritual art be taught at the last stage?

Experience has taught that if a dancer is not yet fully master of his dance, he is not in a position to receive this spiritual art, because his soul is not yet prepared, because his mind is still focussed on the movements and postures which he has not yet fully mastered.

To attain the level of *Djoged Mataram*, full concentration is required, which has been mentioned as the first element, viz.: *sewidji*, which means that the dancer's whole being is focussed on the determination to present the best show that he is capable of performing, by applying all his efforts and his energy, all within the limits of his capacity.

The second element is *greget*. This is the conduction of the soul's dynamics into the plasticity of movement under perfect control so as to avoid coarseness.

The third element is *sengguh*, which means self-confidence. The dancer is to have confidence in his abilities, but he should keep it well under control and should guard against conceit.

The fourth element, *ora mingkuh* means briefly: no retreat. Under no condition shall the dancer give up his task as a dancer; sickness or personal interest shall not be an excuse. He should not run away from difficulties and should not be afraid of pain.

Such is the explanation of the four elements constituting the *Djoged Mataram*. At a glance they look easy enough to carry out, but in practice they will turn out to be extremely difficult. Talent, hard work and determination, and self-sacrifice are necessary prerequisites for the attainment of the highest level in the Yogyanese dance. Watching a top class dancer one may get the impression of ease and lightness, because every movement is well balanced against the rhythm of the music. It is just a dancer of this class who is free from any feeling of superiority or haughtiness, because the deeper he gets himself into the spiritual, the more he seeks to know about the essence of the *Djoged Mataram*. He will never feel that he has learned everything about dancing.

He will keep on studying and practicing until he can dance no more.

The crystallization process of *Djoged Mataram* has a two-fold character:

- a. Self-discipline, which implies internal as well as external self control.
- b. Ecstasy. A dancer who is in a state of total concentration is virtually in a state of ecstasy in which his entire mind is focussed on what is happening on the stage and on nothing else. Although he is in a state of ecstasy yet his body and soul are still under full control because the concentration does not cause physical nor spiritual tensions.

The *Djoged Mataram* covers a very wide field indeed. The spiritual art further becomes a philosophy of life with very high ideals:

1. Sewidji: the concentration of one's mind on one's ideal.
2. Greget: the determination to work hard in order to achieve one's ideal
3. Sengguh: the confidence that one will achieve one's ideal.
4. Ora mingkuh: no retreat, whatever difficulties present themselves.

The observance of these four principles can further be dedicated to the service of God.

1. Sewidji: always remember God.
2. Greget: be active and sincere in your service of God.
3. Sengguh: be proud that you have been created by God as a respectable being.
4. Ora mingkuh: resign yourself to whatever has been destined for you by God.

Such is the essence of the *Djoged Mataram*. The *Djoged Mataram* is a kind of dedication of life.

It is surprising to note that this philosophy of *Djoged Mataram* corresponds to what Th. B. Van Lelyeld says in his book "De Javanese Danskunst" about the science of dancing as described in the ancient Sanskrit work "Natyasastra", which was written several centuries ago. It is regarded as a universal science by western scholars. In that book it is stated that to the mind of the Hindoo, a dance can only be considered as a genuine art if it is founded on three basic principles, viz: *rasa*, *bhava*, and *vyanjana*.

1. *Rasa* is the emotion that can arouse subtle feelings in man's soul.

2. *Bhava* is the feeling aroused by *rasa*.
3. *Vyanjana* is the suggestion which can arouse the imagination, creating the mental picture of what the dancer is performing. This feeling can be heightened so that it becomes *bhava* which means 'love' and *bhava* grows into *rasasvadana* which finally rises into ecstasy.

To make it clearer: the dancer must experience with intense feeling the dancing-movements (*sewidji*) so that the emotion of the soul is aroused (*greger* and *sengguh*). With a very strong suggestion the dancer can see in his mind's eye what he has to perform. The fusion of these three principles will awaken a sort of love which will ultimately bring the dancer into a state of ecstasy.

For a comparison I will take an example from the *wajang wong*. An actor who has been given a specific role has first to understand the character he is going to enact. On the stage the dancer has to keep all his senses wide awake in order to receive and to feel keenly and profoundly the impulses described above. All this can bring about a suggestion, which will create a very clear imaginary scene.

The more completely a dancer has mastered his art, the greater his love will be for it, so that he will assume the attitude of *ora mingkuh*.

I have explained the state of ecstasy.

It is surprising to note that what has been explained in the "Natyasastra" is still maintained by our old teachers who in their turn received their knowledge from older teachers by word of mouth.

The Javanese drama is also closely related to dancing. The Javanese drama which is called *wajang wong* is a "trinity" composed of drama, dancing, and music. These items are inseparable, because they need each other, they complement each other and they work together harmoniously. None of these three elements is dominant. They are all of equal importance and status and this is really unique.

It is clear that the music in the *wajang wong* does not serve as mere illustration or background music, but serves to emphasize the creation of atmosphere needed for the story, so that the dancer can feel how he has to move and what posture he has to assume.

The dance is not a mere ornament of the music. It is clear that the music inspires the dancer so that he can interpret the drama rightly and accurately.

The philosopher Schopenhauer said, "If a certain scene, act, event, or situation, is accompanied by the right kind of music it seems as if the most secret meanings came out and they manifest themselves as the clearest and most accurate source of information".

Under the reign of H. M. Sultan Hamengkubuwono VIII all branches of art passed through a period of progress and change under the sultan's personal leadership and guidance, including the *wajang wong*. In that period mass-performances were staged no fewer than eleven times, each performance engaging about 400 well-trained dancers. The training period lasted one to one and a half years, with daily practices from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., except on Fridays and during the fasting month of Pasa. One performance lasted three or four successive days without a break. It began exactly on the stroke of six in the morning and finished at midnight. The next day, again punctually at six, the dance commenced, and this went on for several days. For a



Queen Suprabawati in the Mahabharata

dancer this meant the highest point in his dancing career, although it was very exhausting and required a very strong physique as well as a strong mind. For the performance, three or four groups of musicians were needed, and all members of the stage crew stayed in hostels as long as the show lasted.

Bedhaja or *Srimpi* practice, as part of routine training, took place every night, except on Thursday night and during the fasting month of Pasa.

When for a particular purpose a *wajang wong* fragment was required, the dancers would practice at night, so that the practice in the daytime would not be held up.

The Yogyanese *wajang* is not a mere piece of entertainment. The spectator, in order to enable his feelings to have contact with the atmosphere and to receive impressions from the scenes and the sounds, should keep open not only his eyes and ears but also his soul. Through those impressions the spectator can grasp the meaning of the play of lines and rhythm which complement each other and pursue each other and flow into the one unity called the dance. Van Lelyele calls it the living arabesques. It has been aptly remarked by

Mrs. Mantle Hood that the Javanese dance is intellectual. Indeed, to enjoy the Javanese dance, one must study it first just like an expressionistic painting, or an impressionistic or abstract one, which also requires adequate study for its full understanding and enjoyment. A dance is the stylization of ordinary everyday movements and postures involving the whole body, from the crown of the head down to the tips of the fingers and the toes.

All these movements follow certain fixed patterns and are simultaneous and continuous. The rhythm takes care that no "bottlenecks" occur in this "traffic" of movements and postures. Every movement should make sense and should be far removed from sensuality.

In the Yogyanese dance the stylization is carried so far that the voice too is stylized. The modulation of the voice is done according to certain fixed patterns and in harmony with the notes of the gamelan music.

I have said that the dancer's complete devotion is a sort of gamble where his whole being is at stake. He has to wager all his physical abilities, mental powers, and scientific knowledge for the achievement of maximum success so that the unification of the physical and the mental will produce a fascinating dance.

"It is one of the characteristic of a healthy national art that the artist has no need of vulgar extraneous efforts to make himself appreciated by his public. He is the exponent of national art culture, not a specialist shut up in a narrow domain of knowledge from which the world at large is excluded. Therefore he can be sure that a suggestion of his own thought-impressions will evoke a response from his public, just as a note of music finds a response in every wire tuned to the same pitch through which the vibration passes. Relying on his knowledge of sympathetic response from his public, he develops his representation of the natural facts and phenomena which form the framework of his art just to the point at which he knows it will communicate to others the exact impression of his own mind, and does not attempt a laboured and superfluous explanation of irrelevant facts. The imagination of the public he is addressing, supplies the complement of the imagination of the artist."

E. B. HAVELL

THE CHITRAKATHA TRADITION IN INDIAN ART

V. P. DWIVEDI

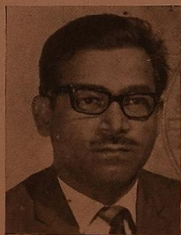
The universal appeal of art, especially paintings, stone and clay sculptures, made it an important media of communication much before the advent of the formal alphabet and language. Where words failed to communicate, figures easily succeeded in establishing rapport. That is why stories in the form of illustrations seem to have been quite popular in ancient and medieval India. In fact even in modern India (or for that matter in the whole modern world) 'comics' are more popular than other books among young children. Such illustrated stories have appeal for grown ups too. For those who cannot read or write, *chitrakatha*, narrative panels illustrating a story, is the only way out. In the following pages we shall endeavour to trace the place of this medium in Indian art through the centuries and its social significance.

These narrative panels have to be seen always in sequence, for a simple scene or a panel alone cannot make a *chitrakatha*. Secondly, the term *chitra* need not necessarily mean only painting. Narrative panels carved on stone, or on wood or painted on a wall, on paper, or on textile, can also make a *chitrakatha*. In this connection it is worthwhile to know the views of the ancient sages regarding the term, *chitra*, *ardha-chitra* and *chitrabhasa*.¹ While figures in the round were styled *chitra*, those in relief, low or high, were called *ardha-chitra* and those painted on a smooth surface having resemblance (*abhasa*) to the object portrayed were called *chitrabhasa*. It will thus be seen that for the depiction of *chitrakatha* only *ardhachitra* and *chitrabhasa* mediums were used. The *Jataka* stories at Bharhut and Sanchi are typical examples of *ardhachitra* and those at Ajanta

are classical examples of *chitrabhasa*, to cite a few examples. In this connection, it is important to note that Stone Age cave paintings or drawings, depicting different scenes, do not come into the category of *chitrakathas* as they mostly show individual incidents.

Archaeologists are of the opinion that even as early as Harappan times, the *chitrakatha* medium was popular. A pot from Lothal showing a scene of the story of 'the crow and the thirsty-deer' painted as a continuous narrative, confirms this opinion.²

The earliest literary reference to *chitrakatha* so far known is that from Patanjali's *Mahabhasya* (c. 140 B.C.). The text literally translated reads: "And how about the paintings?" Here too the historical present is employed. "In the pictures men can see the blows rained down on Kamsa and how he is dragged about".³ Both Luders and Hillibrandt have supposed that this refers to painters who carried around their pictures and described them aloud for a living, using the historical present while doing so. Some scholars, particularly Keith, have doubted this translation and have ridiculed the view that spoken words are implied. In any case, according to A. K. Coomaraswamy, whether or not there were spoken words, Patanjali's text provides us with the earliest extant evidence of the public exhibition of pictures; we learn that this dealt with the Krishna legend and though it is not so stated, it is very probable that scroll paintings were meant by the reference. Obviously, the idea was to show people the victory of Truth over Evil.



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Fig. 1. Chhadanta Jataka Scene, Ajanta Cave x, 2nd Cent. B.C.

Here mention may be made of the 2nd cent. B.C. cave paintings of the Satavahana period in Ajanta's cave numbers 9 & 10, both of which are *chaitya* halls. The *chaitya* is the counterpart of the Hindu temple and obviously was visited by many more people than the *Vihara*, which was meant for the residence of the Buddhist monks. The discovery of these paintings in the *chaitya* is thus full of meaning. Both these caves have *uddesika stupa* at their apsidal ends and contain fragments of some of the earliest surviving murals. The paintings in cave 10 show the worship of the Bodhi tree, the *Sama Jataka*⁴ and the *Chhadanta Jataka*.⁵ The *Samajataka* scenes show Sama hurt by an arrow, the hunter-king in a penitent mood, the sorrowing parents of Sama, and Sama restored to life. The depiction of this *Jataka* had many lessons to teach: that nobody should shoot an arrow without seeing the object being shot at, that one should feel repentant like the king of Banaras if they committed such a mistake and that sons should serve their parents faithfully as Sama did.

The *Chhadanta Jataka* too, is painted in several panels: The happy life of the six-tusked elephant and his queens in the lotus lake, near the huge banyan tree; the queen of Banaras pretending illness; the hunter sent to fetch the tusks; his cutting and bringing them to the queen; and her fainting at their sight (fig. 1).

Stupas at Bharhut⁶ and Sanchi⁷ also had several Buddhist *jatakas* carved on them in panels. It was intended to educate the devout visitors who flocked these monuments in thousands. Scenes from the life of the Buddha were also favourite topics for illustration. Sometimes these were inscribed for the edification of literate

visitors. Since most of the visitors were illiterate, these pictorial depictions or *chitrakatha* had an important role to play in contemporary society. While circumambulating the stupa, the visitors saw these illustrated stories and learnt the morals they had to teach. This tradition continued at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Sarnath, Nalanda and other such centres of Buddhist art. Scenes from Buddha's life; Queen Maya's dream, Buddha's birth, renunciation, meditation, taming of the elephant, offering of honey-bowl by the monkeys and

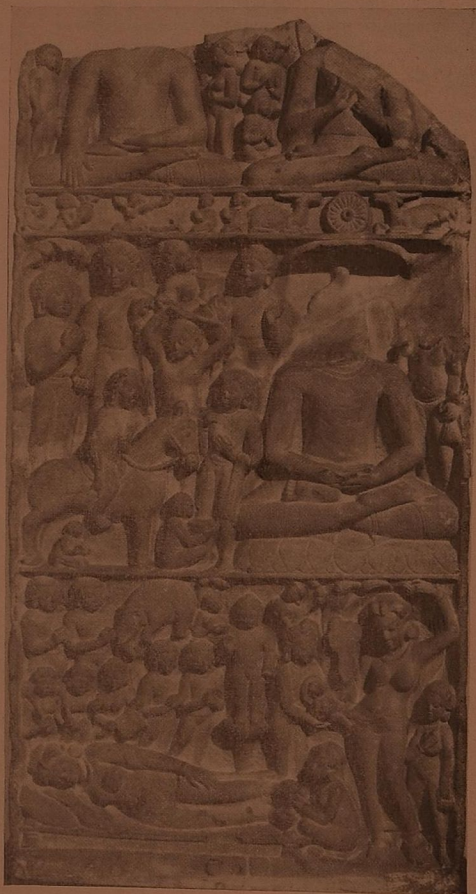


Fig. 2 Scenes from the life of Buddha: Sandstone, Gupta style 5th Cent. A. D. Sarnath, Varanasi

parinirvana, make an effective *chitrakatha* (fig. 2). Sometimes one wonders whether such stone carvings were inspired by their painted counterparts. The only difference is that whereas the scrolls (*patas*) were unrolled from top to bottom, in the stone stele the story runs from bottom to top.

We have seen that both Hindu and Buddhist monuments depicted such stories with a moral purpose in *chitrakatha* form, to make them more effective and easily understandable. The same is also true of the Jains. In the Jain Prakṛta text of *Aupapātika sūtra*⁸ the term *monkha* designates a picture-showman (actors, dancers, story-tellers, etc.) resorting to the shrine of the Yakṣa Purnabhadra. The later Jain traditions of carving *Ghoviśi* (twenty four tirthankara images) or making *Sahasrakṛta* in bronze is an extension of the same idea of *chitrakatha* in stone and bronze. In the later Jain temples, panels depicting scenes from the life of the Tirthankaras and their parents are also noteworthy in this context. Jain wood carvings⁹ also show such scenes, specially of Neminatha : the elaborate preparations for his marriage and his ultimate renunciation making an interesting and instructive story.

In many of the later references the picture-showmen are called *Yamapattika*¹⁰ because the pictures which they exhibited represented the reward for good or evil deeds to be experienced in the realm of Yama. The picture scrolls were therefore known as *Yamapatas*. Fertile human imagination has created as many different punishments as possible to frighten sinners and similarly presented many visions of happiness for encouraging men to engage in good deeds and to avoid sin.

A *Yamapattika* or a picture-showman is introduced in the *Mudrarakṣasa* of Viśakhadatta¹¹. In Act I, Chanakya's spy Nipunaka adopts the disguise of a picture-showman, remarking humorously that such were the men who earned a livelihood by means of that very Yama who slew all people. He enters Chandanadasa's home, carrying a scroll with figures of Yama upon it (*Yamapata*), and remarks, "I'll enter here, show my pictures and sing my song."¹²

Subsequently, reporting to Chanakya, he says, "spreading out the Yama scroll I commenced my preaching".¹³ These references provide us an insight into the many interesting practices prevalent in those days. We can infer that persons carrying *Yamapata* had easy access to private houses and that they sang songs at the time of exhibiting their scrolls. Here it is worth noticing that

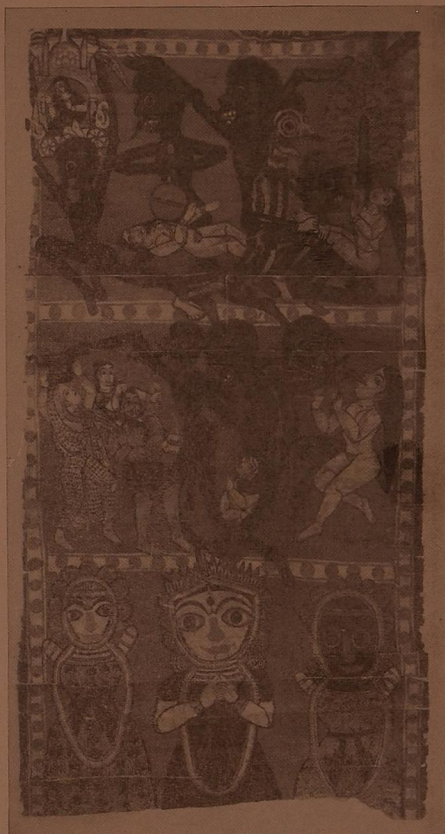


Fig. 3 Yamapata Painting on paper, 19th cent. A. D. Midnapur, West Bengal.

the scroll was spread, probably on the floor. In all likelihood it was a large horizontal scroll, painted on cloth, and because it needed a lot of space it was spread on the floor. The advantage of such painted scrolls over the stone-carvings was many. They were easy to carry from place to place, occupied less space in transit and because of their colourfulness, were more effective.

A similar reference to *Yamapata* is found in Bana's *Harṣacharita*.¹⁴ Bana mentions the *Yamapattika* as one who is surrounded by many street urchins, while he explains the significance of good and evil deeds and exhorts men to avoid sin and to strive in the path of virtue. He adds colour to his exhortation by his

impressive pictures and thus earns a livelihood for himself. According to V. S. Agrawal¹⁵ the *Yamapattika* carried a stick in his left hand in which was hung a scroll showing Yama riding a buffalo. In his right hand he held a reed, with which he pointed out the different scenes as he sang. This description points out two things; firstly, that the scenes depicted were connected with heaven and hell which necessitated Yama's portrayal and secondly, that the scroll must have been a vertical representation to be hung on a stick. We can further conclude that this must have been quite a common practice in those days to warrant its mention by Bana.

It is significant to note that these scenes of heaven and hell have been a popular theme through the centuries (fig 3) and can be seen even now on sale at the village-fairs as *Karni-Bharni* rolls, printed on paper.

Such scenes occur not only in India but wherever Indian sculpture has travelled. As in the land of its origin, a whole gallery of sculptured *Yamapata* is found on the base of the Borobudur stupa which, before it was covered up to strengthen the monuments, carried elaborately carved scenes from heaven and hell as described in the Buddhist texts.¹⁶ Beneath the level of the earth are reliefs representing the doctrine of *karma*, the cycle of birth and rebirth, of striving and non-release, of the 'wheel of life' etc. The idea, here too, was obviously to impress upon the visitor's mind the importance of doing good deeds. These carvings belong to c.8th-9th cent. A.D.

In this connection it will be worth mentioning the recent discovery of wall paintings at Nalanda,¹⁷ belonging to c.8th-9th cent. A.D. These paintings, painted on the plinth of a stupa, show probably the taming of the elephant and other scenes. During this period, Nalanda also seems to have specialized in manufacturing small portable stone-carvings and bronzes portraying the life of Lord Buddha. One such miniature stone stele is in the National Museum.

During the Mughal period the practice of *chitrakatha* seems to have been very popular. It is said that Emperor Akbar, who was not a very well-read man in the theoretical sense, soon after his accession to the throne, got the story of *Dastan-i-Amir-Hamza* (also known as *Hamzanama*) illustrated in large panels of about 65 × 40 cm.¹⁸ 1400 such panels were painted for him. They had illustrations on one side and writing on the other. Unfortunately, very few of these survive but even these few are full of impact for the viewers. Many more such

manuscripts were illustrated during Akbar's time¹⁹. The practice continued under Akbar's successors also²⁰.

During the medieval period also the tradition continued in the Jain community and we find long scrolls, called *vigayaptipatras*²¹ being sent to Jain munis, inviting them for *paryushana*. The scrolls depicted the city in many panels. These were quite long and were painted in such a manner as to be unrolled in vertical form, the sequence being from top to bottom.

The tradition of illustrating famous manuscripts in the *chitrakatha* form was wide spread during the medieval period. Rajasthani, Pahari, Deccani, Western Indian and Eastern Indian styles are well known for such illustrations. Although most of the miniatures of these styles depicted individual scenes, sometimes we come across miniatures showing more than one sequence of the same theme in panels.²² The themes include the two epics, the *Devi-Mahatmya*, the *Bhagavata* and other famous stories such as *Usha-Aniruddha*, besides the usual *Raga-Ragini* and *Nayaka-Nayika* subjects.

In Rajasthan, besides these small miniature paintings, the painters also made pata or cloth-scrolls illustrating the story of Pabuji Rathor of Marwar.

The Rathor pastoral hero, Pabu of Kolu, Marwar (Rajasthan) is venerated and deified as a protector of cows. Usually about 18' long and 4' wide, these patas are block as well as hand painted. Spreading these on floors or on walls, or tying them to the legs of a cot the bards sing songs in praise of Pabuji Rathor and explain the moral of these pictures.

Fig. 4. Kalamkari wall hanging, *Ramadarbār* hand painted on cloth. 19th cent. A. D., Srikalahasthi, Andhra Pradesh →

Fig. 5. *Tadaka Vadha*, carving on wood, 18th cent. A. D. Kerala. |
▽





Kalamkari, the printed calicos of South India, are printed with mythological scenes and are full of descriptions of these in the local language²³. Ramayana (Fig. 4) Mahabharata and Krishna-Lila are popular themes. Though these painted cloths were intended for use as temple canopies and wall-hangings, the illustrated stories in the *chitrakatha* form performed their moral purpose well.

In Eastern India the tradition of rolled paintings, known as *Jaranopats*,²⁴ still survives. Painted usually on paper of the cheapest variety, sometimes even on old newspapers, these scrolls average twelve to fifteen feet in length and are one or two feet wide. Apart from mythological stories, the theme sometimes is a condemnation of social injustice, ending with a picturisation of hell and of the evil-doer being tortured in retribution. The pictures on the vertical scroll are arranged in rectangular panels, one below the other. As the scroll is gradually unfolded, the *patua* sings explanatory ditties of which he is often the composer. The popular themes are: *Bahula-pata*, *Mānasa-pata*, *Durga-pata*, *Nahusa-pata*, *Sāvitrī-Satyavān-pata*, *Kāñchī-vijaya-pata* etc. *Jagannath* and *Krishna-Lila pats* from Orissa also belong to this category.

The wood carvings on South Indian temple "Rathas", also depicted *chitrakathas*. The themes included *Ramayana* (fig. 5) *Krishna-Lila* and other such stories.²⁵ Quite often these panels were painted elaborately to make the stories more attractive. The depiction of stories on these panels was usually horizontal and scenes started from right to left, as in the present example.

Such traditions have existed in other neighbouring countries as well. The Prince of Wales Museum has a *Sudhana-katha* scroll in its collection which is of Nepalese origin²⁶. In Persia it was known as *Surat khwan*.²⁷ The Chinese work, *Ying-yani Shen-lan*²⁸ (A.D. 1416) also refers to this practice. We have already referred to the Javanese depictions. These references show the universal popularity of *chitrakatha*. Scenes showing the 'Last Judgement' in the medieval cathedrals of Europe,²⁹ were also meant to convey the same message to deter people from the path of evil and to lead them to the path of virtue.

Thus we can say that the tradition of *chitrakatha* is quite ancient in our country and it has continued almost uninterrupted to this day.

¹ C. Sivaramamurti, *Indian Painting*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 1.

² S. R. Rao, *Lothal and the Indus Civilization*, Bombay, 1973, pl. XXVIII, A.

³ A. K. Coomaraswamy, 'Picture showman', *The Indian Historical Quarterly*, Calcutta, 1929, Vol. V, p. 182.

⁴ C. Sivaramamurti, *op.cit.* pp. 25-26.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ A. Cunningham, *Stupa of Bharhut*, Varanasi, 1962 (Reprint).

⁷ J. Marshall and A. Foucher, *The Monuments of Sanchi*, Calcutta (3 volumes).

⁸ A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op.cit.*, p. 183.

⁹ V. P. Divedi, 'Wood Carving' chapter in A. Ghosh (ed.) *Jaina Art and Architecture*, New Delhi, 1975, Vol. III, p. 438.

¹⁰ C. Sivaramamurti, *Some Aspects of Indian Culture*, New Delhi, 1969, p. 50.

¹¹ M. R. Kale (Trans.), *The Mudrarakshasa of Visakhadatta*, Delhi, 1965, p.p. 34 and 36.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 34. "Yamapatani darsayan gaitani gayami".

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 36: "Yamapatani prasarya dharmamupadisami".

¹⁴ Sankara (Comm.) *The Harshacharita of Banabhatta*, Nirnaya Sagar Press, Bombay, 1912, p. 153; *Yamapata* is also referred to in p. 138.

¹⁵ V. S. Agrawal, *Harshacharita: Ek Sanskritika Adhyana* (Hindi), Patna, 1964, p. 91.

¹⁶ H. Zimmer, *Art of Indian Asia*, New York, 1960, Vol. 2, pl. 47, a to c.

¹⁷ Seen on a personal visit to Nalanda in the summer of 1976.

¹⁸ Stuart Cary Welch, *The Art of Mughal India*, New York, 1963, pp. 23-24 and pls. 2a & b; and Abdul Fazl Allami, *The Ain-i-Akbari* (translated by H. Blochmann, Delhi, 1965, 2nd edition) pp. 115.

¹⁹ *Tuti-Nama*, *Babur-nama*, *Anwar-i-suheli*, *Akbar-Nama*, *Razm-Nama*, etc.; see S. C. Welch, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

²⁰ S. C. Welch, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-144.

²¹ Verrier Elwin, *Folk Paintings of India*, New Delhi, 1961, illustrations on pages 38 and 39 and Karl Khandalavala, Motichandra, Pramod Chandra, *Miniature Painting, a Catalogue of the Exhibition of the Sri Motichandra Khajanchi Collection*, New Delhi, 1960, p. 48.

²² Pratapaditya Pal, 'The enduring charm of Indian paintings', *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin*, Oberlin, Ohio, 1971, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, p. 89, Cover illustration.

²³ All India Handicrafts Board, *Indian Kalamkari*, New Delhi, 1978, p. 1.

²⁴ Verrier Elwin, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

²⁵ V. P. Divedi, 'Kerala Wood Carvings', *East and West*, N.S., Vol. 18, Nos. 3-4, Rome, 1968, pp. 335-339.

²⁶ Moti Chandra, 'A painted scroll from Nepal', *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India*, Bombay, 1950-51, Vol. I, pp. 6 to 14.

²⁷ A. K. Coomaraswamy, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

²⁹ H. W. Janson, *History of Art*, New York, 1966 (Ninth Printing) p. 263, figs. 353 and 416.

DRAMATIC ART

PAUL STORM

One of the main objects of Theatre Art is to bring people together, to unite them. Nowadays, even governments have understood this and send dramatic companies abroad to assist in forging international relations.

They know that the Theatre is a powerful means of international understanding. Think of it! During the three odd hours a performance lasts, you are subjected to a certain foreign atmosphere. You drink it in with your *senses*, you *hear* the music of the words even if you don't understand them, you hear the tunes underlining these words; you *see* the movements of the actor in settings and lighting, which serve to give the right value to his actions. They suggest his surroundings, evoke his moods. You *feel* rather than see them, i.e. when they are done well and unobtrusively. You are taken in by the continuous flow of events, you float on the swell of the general rhythm and suddenly you begin to understand the strange ways of foreigners.

In order to get a clear idea what Dramatic Art really stands for we have to go back to its origin. The classic forms of Theatre the world over, in India, Japan, China or Europe, had their origins in religious rites, in the religious dance. Not for nothing do Dance and Drama, Nritta and Natak, have the same Sanskrit root 'Nrit': to dance. Consider this word 'Dance', for there is no play, the intellectual comedies of Bernard Shaw included, which has not rhythm as its fundamental basis. In Greece, drama started with a dancing Chorus, singing and praising God. One individual stepped out of the group. Then a second, his opponent. Between the two parties appeared a third, as a reconciler. They depicted the sufferings of the Gods, the strife of heroes, their pride and their revolt against fate, but no Greek tragedy

ended without the 'Katharsis', the cleansing and deliverance of the victim. The aim of acting in India was to arouse a certain 'rasa' in order to uplift the public, to unify it and to instruct it in the right way of living. As a tragic end was forbidden, one should really speak in this connection of dramatic poems instead of dramas. All the same, here, as in other glorious periods of classic theatre, the aim was a spiritual one. If the spectator left the auditorium without having understood the meaning of his own sufferings, without "deliverance", without having been uplifted by the "rasa", the play would have missed the mark, however pleased the public might have been by the music, the song and dance, which performed, everywhere, an important part of the programme.

During the two thousand five hundred years of its existence, Dramatic Art underwent many changes. Time and again it has been declared dead, dead as a door-nail, and always new shoots sprouted out from the old trunk. It seems to live for ever. Nowadays, generally speaking, no Gods anymore stride the boards, no Kings suffer in agony. Contemporary drama depicts the life of man, you and me, the man in the street. It has come down from its lofty heights and in its fall it seems to have lost its glamour. It looks just a common thing, within reach of everybody, *an imitation of life*. Acting? Nothing more easy than acting! You have only to tread the stage and speak the same *words* you are accustomed to speak, by preference planting yourself before a microphone! In no art are there so many amateurs as in Theatre Art. In Holland, my country, there are ten thousand amateur groups in a population of ten million people. For singing, for playing the violin, you have



Mr. Paul Storm is a Dutch Actor and Director who was born in Indonesia but got an all-round European education. He studied the Humanities—Greek, Latin and Philosophy—at the University of Amsterdam (Netherlands) and went for his schooling in Art, especially the Theatre, to France. For twenty-five years he was an actor, first in France, then in Holland and where he became Director and one of the leaders of the Amsterdam Municipal Theatre. Sent out in 1950 to the West Indies by the Dutch Government to stimulate the Arts, and especially the Theatre in its former colonies he acted as a Liaison-Officer between European and Autochthonous cultures, directing plays, lecturing throughout the whole of the Caribbean area. As a great deal of the population in that part of the world consists of Indians, he came into close contact with Indian Culture; loved it, studied carefully its religion and philosophy and wished ardently to visit its home land. It took seven European years more of freelance acting, directing the Theatre, Television Film and Radio before his dream came true and when the Dutch Government sent him on a lecturing tour to India he came into contact with Srimati Rukmini Devi. He spent several years on the staff of Kalakshetra as teacher and director of stage craft.

to practise daily to master a technique. You would not dare to give a performance before friends till you have the technique. But acting! Up you go on the stage, light-hearted, unconscious of your clumsy movements and faulty pronunciation and the worst is that your parents, your aunts, uncles and friends, look adoringly at you and whisper: "Isn't she a dear?" It has never occurred to them that the instrument of the actor is his body, to be trained by physical exercises, acrobatics, dancing, fencing. He has to learn how to walk, how to sit, how to stand. He has to train his voice: respiration, sound forming, enunciation; his senses: how to look, to hear, to smell, to touch, to taste. He has to learn how to arouse his emotions in order that they are clearly felt by the audience, and to look simple and natural. In theatre schools in Russia, Europe, the United States, yearly, more than hundred boys and girls between seventeen and twenty-two apply for admission. We choose fifteen out of them. During the first term, five fall out. After three years of schooling some seven or eight remain. Out of these, perhaps two have talent. Then it takes ten years of playing every night before you are considered to be an actor. Talent is not enough. You have to study hard. You need perseverance, character, bad notices, (excellent, those) to succeed. If you are lazy and do not like to submit yourself to a rigorous discipline, out you go, ruthlessly! In China and Japan the education of an actor is even more severe. He starts at the age of six and it usually takes ten years before he is allowed to appear on the stage. Why? Why all this severity, this harshness, this ruthlessness? Because the theatre is still a holy institution, with its priests and devotees, who consecrate their entire life to it, give it all their thought, and are willing to suffer for its sake. Actors the whole world over form a clan. They gossip, they slander each other, they have impossible characters, are a lot of crazy people, but they immediately recognize another theatre man as one of their clan, love him for it and offer him their hospitality.

Is this art—which combines architecture, music, dancing, acting, lighting; which first of all demands "concentration"; which asks you "to be" and not "to pretend"—merely an imitation of life? No, it is no copy of reality, no false reality but a transposition of reality on a higher plane. Life in the theatre has to be more "real" than actual life. It is an intensified, more "truthful" life.

A play expresses in two and a half hours a part of man's life which covers in reality some weeks, three months a year or more. The playwright chooses out of it only the highlights and "compresses" life into acts and scenes. Hence it follows that there is no place for

"chance" in a play. The events are submitted to the rigorous law of cause and effect. Each word, movement, thought, emotion, scene, act has a special purpose, a special function. They are all interrelated and aim at one principal object: the central idea, the kernel of the play. We try to express this central idea in one sentence. Let me give you an example out of one of my own productions. In Shakespeare's "Much Ado About Nothing"—one of the so-called golden comedies along with "Twelfth Night" and "As You Like It", although in my opinion it is a silver comedy, as it lacks the mellow light in which the others bask—one of the principal characters, Benedict says in the last scene: "Man is but a giddy thing." This gave the cue to the whole production. Hence the *mise-en-scène* i.e. the staging of the play, the movements, the pattern of walking, the different rhythms of the succeeding scenes, the settings and the glittering, silvery lighting had to express man's life as a whirlpool. Against the enormous height of the pillars and the curtains, the movements of the actors looked like the wriggling operations on an ant-hill. It is a light comedy, but the author sits, as it were, on a tower from where he looks down on the life of man and says to himself with an ironic smile: "Funny people!" A light comedy, but the author's mentality is that of a melancholy man, who does not want to better the world, but only makes a statement: "How futile is man's action!"

To understand Dramatic Art still better, let us compare it with the film. Some fifty-five years ago when the film started its meteoric course, European theatre was plunged in naturalism. The more the cinema began to conquer the public, the more the theatre tried to equal its rival, imitated it, and wasted much energy in elaborate stage-settings. To make changes possible, as quickly as in the film, the revolving stage came into being, I believe, for the first time in Germany. I am told that in a production of Shakespeare's "Mid Summer Night's Dream", by the famous German director, Max Reinhardt, the trees were real trees and the fairies floated through the air, moved as the saying goes, "by hook and by crook". Thanks to the genius of the director and the excellent actors, the production proved a success, although it contradicted and trampled on the very laws of the Elizabethan stage. What a piece of luck that the theatre lost its race with the film! For now it had to reflect upon its essential nature.

The film mostly works as a narcotic. During one and a half hours, here in India for three, a poor man is able to forget the misery of his life. He imagines himself rich, one of the great, living in gorgeous palaces,

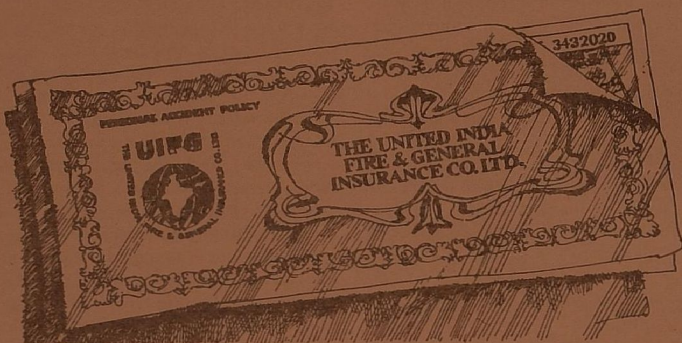
surrounded by beautiful women, eating and drinking merrily. He weeps at the sentimental story, the sentimental songs, and laughs at the pranks of the clowns, all for the price of a few cents. What he sees is real, or nearly real. Nothing is left to his *imagination*! When he returns home he has been amused, *seldom uplifted*! He falls back into his dreary existence, and I am certain, he scolds his ugly wife. How could it be otherwise as the aim of most film producers is to make MONEY? They work for the benefit of their own pockets, not for the benefit of humanity. I am not a determined adversary of film-making in itself! I love it. I have a son who is a film editor; I have myself played in films, was a member of the technical staff and I really like the atmosphere of a film studio, especially when you work behind and not before the camera. I like it for its hectic rushing, I love it in spite of its nerve-racking, interminable pauses, I love it for its crazy jokes—I have never laughed so much as there—but I am opposed to bad films, and these constitute, alas! thanks to the front-office, ninety five percent. Of course, there is commercialism in the theatre world too. But the majority of dramatic artists still cling to an ideal. When you give them a large salary and no work, as sometimes happens in repertory theatres, they pine away and literally fall sick. The stage is not a profession but a calling.

At the beginning of this century, some highly talented and idealistic artists grimly decided to liberate their beloved Theatre from the grip of Naturalism. Film and commercialism turned their thoughts back to the periods when dramatic performances were given in large amphitheatres, in the courts of temples, palaces or inns, with practically no more than a bare platform in the open air. They turned to Greece, to Kalidasa's India, to Shakespeare's England. As in those times scenery and lighting did not exist, the actor had to *suggest* his surroundings. He described the weather: wind, rain, thunder, not only with words, but indicated them by gestures or inclinations of the body, by symbolic signs: *hastas*. He went on a long journey or climbed a mountain by moving over the stage in a special way, to the accompaniment of drums and string instruments. He entered doors where no doors existed and moved freely, not limited by time or space, from palace to highway, from Rome to Egypt. Starting from these principles, the new directors trained their pupils. The Theatre became really Art again and the actor finally was restored to his own. The new movement had a tremendous impact, but after a decade of revolutionary manifestations, ebbed down. It is now to be found only in the Little Art Theatres.

We compared the theatre with the cinema. We saw that, where in films a real cloud is shown, the actor on the stage has to indicate it. The spectator finishes what is indicated with his own imagination and creates together with the actor without knowing he is doing so. We pointed out the difference of aim. Here an utter lack of spirituality, there the tendency to unify, to uplift. In order to clarify, I sketched in black and white as it were. It is not as simple as that, and there is of course much more to say about the difference between these two sister arts. For example, how in the film the close up brought the actor near the audience, so that one is able to see his slightest emotions, while the dramatic actor has to exaggerate his movements in order that they may be readable from a distance. There is also the continuity of acting on the stage and the hopeless breaking-up in film shots, lasting not more than two minutes and without any relation with each other. How on the stage the actor is lord and master, while in the film the director and the editor are supreme rulers; etc. What strikes me most in a film theatre is the loneliness of the spectator, strikingly demonstrated by the protruding balconies which generally cut the auditorium in two or more parts thus separating the audience instead of unifying it. Hence it follows logically that television, that extension piece of the film, breaks completely the unity of the audience and actors and brings you the performance home, where you can enjoy it quite alone. It is a symbol of the welfare state and of its spiritual poverty.

What has India to do with all this and along what lines should the resurrecting Indian theatre develop itself? From the foregoing it is clear that, in my opinion, the style and some of the principles of the Sanskrit stage should be followed, adapted to the modern age. That means: a poetic play, wherein song, music and dance are not inserted but form an integral part of the story; a tight, dramatic structure without boring didactics; a jettison of the traditional happy-end (ours is a dramatic period); stylized acting; little or no scenery; colourful costumes and the invaluable help of modern stage-lighting. There should be full-time theatre schools. To begin with: revive the old drama in a modern way. If you want to exercise yourself along other lines, adapt foreign classics in such a way that they turn out to be completely Indian plays. It is possible. I have seen it done in other countries. When you write new plays with the above-mentioned stage technique in view, choose subjects out of your own surroundings. You know best what belongs to you. Don't imitate Europe. Use only European technique. In short: BE YOURSELF.

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NARRATIVE ART OF TIBET

LOKESH CHANDRA

In the Vinaya of the Mula-sarvastivadin school it is enjoined that pictorial representations of the jatakas should embellish monastic interiors. It is narrated in the Vinaya that Anathapindada wanted to decorate the walls of the Jetavana monastery which he was about to offer to the Buddha. The monks did not know what to do. The Buddha said that the representations should be in four colours. When Anathapindada commissioned the painters they asked him, "What should we represent"? Then the Buddha said: "At the entrance portal, a yaksa holding a baton (*danda*), in the vestibule the Grand Miracle and the Wheel of Existence in five divisions (*gati*), and in the cloister the garland of jatakas (*jataka-mala*),....." So the paintings were started and while the painters worked, the monks washed near the frescoes bespattering them with water. They also lighted fires and blackened the frescoes with smoke. This earned them a reprimand from the Buddha. Finally when the paintings were completed, men came to admire them which brought about many conversions, even among the brahmins.

This passage provides an insight into the themes to be painted on convent walls. In the Ajanta caves many paintings are inspired by such Vinaya rules as for example, the Wheel of Existence (*bhava-chakra*) in the veranda of the seventeenth cave. The most frequently represented scenes at Ajanta are derived from the *jataka-mala* of Arya Sura.

In Tibet, the *Jatakamala* of Arya Sura was painted in several places at different times but the prime source for narrative murals was the *Avadana-Kalpalata* of Ksemendra, the celebrated polymath of Kashmir. Ksemendra, the son of Prakasendra was born around A.D. 990. His grandfather was Sindhu and his great-grandfather was Bhogindra. A distant forbear of his called Narendra was minister to King Jayapida of Kashmir. Prakasendra was a philanthropist, a patron of learning and a scholar in his own right. Brought up in material prosperity, Ksemendra had the best education under famous teachers, like the eminent rhetorician Abhinavagupta. Ksemendra's indefatigable energy, keen intellect and poetic eloquence rendered him a pearl among Sanskrit scholars.

Among the poetic epitomes of Ksemendra, the *Avadana Kalpalata* occupies a special place as it has inspired and moulded the Kavya diction of Tibetan and Mongolian literary masters. Ksemendra wrote the *Avadana-Kalpalata* in A.D. 1052 at the instance of his Buddhist friend Nakka, and with the cooperation of the great scholar Viryabhadra. When the light of Buddhism and its artistic glories were flickering out in Kashmir, Ksemendra set himself to capture the moral purity, enlightenment and beauty of the fading cloister walls in the varied flow of metres in the *Avadana-Kalpalata*. As his son Somendra says in the 108th chapter:

Gone are the monasteries in the flow of time, whose cloisters were painted in golden hues with charming murals of Buddhist avadanas and which held the eye in rapture. My father has collected these edifying tales, painted them in variegated hues of the poetic art, and it has verily become a magnificent and sanctifying vihara which transcends the onslaught of time.

The *Avadana-Kalpalata* soon earned distinction as an outstanding collection of Avadana stories illustrating the paramita vows, since it was written in the current style by an outstanding author. When Sakyasri (or Kha-che pan-chen 'the great pandit of Kashmir' as the Tibetans called him) visited Tibet in A.D. 1204 he carried with him a copy of the *Avadana-Kalpalata*. He presented it to the Sa-skya pandita Kun-dgah-rgyal-mtshah the same year, when the latter met him at Chumig. Seven decades later, in A.D. 1272, it was translated into Tibetan by Son-ston Rdo-rje-rgyal-mtshan with the help of the Indian teacher Lakshmikara.

This kavya soon became a Tibetan classic, an inspiration and model for literary style and masters were initiated into it.

After a careful collation with authentic copies then known, the Tanjur was newly edited under orders of the fifth Dalai Lama Blobsan-rgya-mtsho, by the lotsava of Hdar Nag-dban-phun-tshogs. This lotsava had also translated the grammar of Panini into Tibetan with the help of pandita Balabhadra of Varanasi who was residing at Lhasa at the time. The *Avadana-Kalpalata* was included in volume 93 of this Tanjur. The Tibetan



From the series of 31 woodcuts, we reproduce here the fifth woodcut which depicts the stories of Jyotiska; Rebirth; Sundari and Virudhaka. The story of Nanda is sketched in the upper left corner. The first small picture represents two persons, one confronting the other, as if in conversation; evidently Nanda and his wife. Immediately above, the Buddha preaching in Nanda's house. Lower down, on the right, the Buddha leading Nanda away, while someone tries to detain him and he turns to look on his wife

for the last time. Above, the Buddha preaching while Nanda longing for his wife, tries to leave the community. He is stopped by Sundari. The Buddha takes Nanda to view the torments of Hell, reserved for those who do not keep the precepts. The sinners are seen crowded into a chest and surrounded by flames; a demon is poking the fire. In contrast, higher up beyond the clouds, a brief sketch of Nanda's former life and the construction of the stupa which caused his rebirth as a prosperous man.

text, with Sanskrit in interlinear Tibetan transcription, was block-printed in A.D. 1662 in 620 folios.

While the *Avadana-Kalpata* served as a prime model for Tibetan litterateurs who were following the rhetoric styles of India, it also provided the source material for painting the walls of the monasteries as required by the Vinaya.

The Tibetan convents found it a lively source for translating into murals, in accordance with the prescriptions of the Vinaya. In Tibet, the earliest extant jataka representations are the carefully done illustrations of Ksemendra's poem. It illumined the graphic culture of the Sa-skya-pa and Phag-mo-gru-pa. It enlivened the wall paintings at Rgya, Snar-than and Jo-nan. After centuries of detailed pictorial renditions of the *Avadana-Kalpata* the need for handier authoritative models was felt.

In the first half of the 18th century, Gyur-med-ye-ses-rtse-brtan, caused the entire series of the avadanas of Ksemendra to be cut on 30 wooden blocks at the printery of the Narthang monastery, with a central *thanka*, thus constituting a set of 31 woodcuts. These

Narthang woodcuts spread far and wide in the Lamaist world, and painters copied these readymade models and displayed their ingenuity in putting colours in pleasing combinations. On every woodcut the episodes were identified by their chapter number in the *Avadana-Kalpata* and brief identifications from the prose summary.

Somendra, the son of Ksemendra, has in the preamble to his 108th avadana, conceived the work of his father in the imagery of the artist's brush illuminating a holy convent. When he supplements it with one avadana to bring it to the auspicious number of 108, he once more echoes the feeling that he is consecrating an image to this convent for eternity. The structures, murals and images of the great Kashmiri convents are lost, but their beauty is preserved in the folios of the *Avadana-Kalpata*. It has found a new epiphany in the work of Tibetan artists in all the purity of faith and faithfulness to the spirit of Ksemendra, as voiced by his gifted son Somendra.

To paint is to evoke. So here is a streaming flow of lines to germinate in inner spaces and silence.

COLOUR SYMBOLISM IN TIBETAN MURALS

The *Manikabum*, a Tibetan work of the seventh century, gives the symbolic colours appropriate for each of the six syllables of the Sanskrit Mantra AUM MANI PADME HUM.

The colour of AUM, the heavenly state, is white. White, both in Buddhist and orthodox Hindu symbolism, signifies heavenly purity and bliss. It is a symbol of Siva and of his snow-clad paradise, and also of Parvati, his consort. It may also represent water.

The colour of MĀ, the *asura* state, is blue. In Hindu orthodoxy blue is the colour of Vishnu, the Preserver, and his incarnations, Krishna and Rāma.

The colour of NI, the human state, is yellow, like the ascetic's robe.

Images of Buddha, as well as those of Maitreya and Manjusri, are painted a golden yellow. It is also the symbol of earth.

The colour of PAD, the animal state, is green while that of ME, the state of a hopeless being or goblin,

is red. This is in direct opposition to Brahmanical symbolism, in which red is the colour of the sun-god, Sūrya, of the solar sphere, the abode of spirits whose earthly migrations are finished, and also of Brahma, the Creator. King Harsha's father is said to have offered daily to Sūrya a bunch of red lotus-flowers, in a ruby red vessel.

The colour of HUM, the state of a devil, is black.

But in the Hindu Sāstras black symbolises the formless unconditioned state which existed before Creation, personified by Kālī, the Mother of the Universe and the Great Destroyer. The *Nirvāna Tantra* says, "As the lightning is born from the cloud and disappears within the cloud, so Brahmā and all the gods take birth from and disappear in Kālī."

The three *gunas*, or qualities of Matter, have their colour symbols — *sattvam*, white; *rajas*, yellow or red; *tamas*, blue or black.

WAYANG KULIT

S. DURAI RAJA SINGAM

As I stood watching the Wayang Kulit held in my home town, on the evenings of the Merdeka celebrations, nothing thrilled me as much as the scenes that I witnessed from the Ramayana. It made me recall a distant past when stories from this Hindu epic were told by Indian merchants, priests and story-tellers during sojourns in temples, at fairs and festivals. Here it remains for all to see in the Wayang Kulit, that well-known and much appreciated precursor of the modern cinema.

The word Wayang is Javanese, meaning shadow, and it became the Malay bayang, also shadow. The Malays have possibly forgotten its etymology and use it now where others might talk of a "show" or the "movies".

Kulit, or leather, reminds us that the cut-out figures for this shadow-play are made of thin leather or parchment whose translucency shows up even the colour with which the figures are painted. So in the Wayang Kulit we not only have an ancient form of cinema but a primitive technicolor effect.

If you have not had the good fortune to see one of these shadow-plays, then picture to yourself a crowd (by no means consisting only of children) squatting on the ground, gazing eagerly through the darkness of the night at a white sheet of cloth suspended in front of an enclosed shed.

Behind this screen are the lights, as bright as the most powerful lamps available can provide, and between the lights and the screen, manipulated with intricate skill, move the parchment figures to the accompaniment of an orchestra composed of drums, gongs and flutes, while the chanter sings the story as it is enacted on the screen.

Though the story depicted evokes much laughter from the delighted audience, it has religious significance. The performers begin each show with an offering of prayers to the blue-throated Siva (Nilakanta) and to all the gods of the Ramayana, requesting protection from sickness and poverty.

The conclusion of the performance (*lepas bermain*) contains such words as these:—

Oh, I salute you. Gentle rain is falling to refresh

the nymphs of Siva's heaven after the heat. Open the big gates, for Siva, the destroyer, is descending from the summit of heaven to expel all evil powers and all spirits of disease.

During the performance, as the shadowy figures cross the stage, there can be heard the high pitched chant of the story-teller (*dalang*), as he recounts the deeds of Rama and Sita and Lakshmana. Now we see the fearful figure of Ravana with ten heads. He appears to the tumultuous clamour of the orchestra, the growling crescendo of the chanter's voice, and the screams of the children in the audience. This evil figure comes to abduct the beloved Sita. To the delight of all, Hanuman, the Monkey God, comes to the rescue with his army and Sita Devi is restored to her husband.

Due to the clamour and noise of the performance it is not easy to follow the words of the story-teller; but no one minds, for the tale is familiar to all and a constant delight to young and old. The children revel in the exploits of Hanuman and his monkey hosts, in the actions of the beaked men and women, and tailed apemen with their agility of feet, the cloud carriages and the mammoth birds. The story of Ramayana has a natural fascination. Children in the north and north-east of Malaya are brought up on stories woven about Sri Rama, Sita Devi, Lakshmana and Hanuman.

They know innumerable stories out of the Ramayana, as found in the Hikayat Sri Rama. The adventures of Hang Tuah, of Burong Bayan and of Marong Mahawangsa and perhaps also stories from the Malay and Kedah Annals have been built up from folk-lore and myth with no little help from the Ramayana. On growing older they read stories from such works as the Bharatayuddha (the Mahabharata War) and Arjunavivaha (the marriage of Arjuna), all of which are drawn from Indian sources. How many of us have been fortunate enough to watch a class of Malay Special pupils and find ourselves delighted at the response when a lesson is taken on the stories of Rama and Sita? The answers reveal a wealth of folklore, so incredibly remote and yet so near and dear to their hearts.

The shadow play entertainment is performed on the slightest pretext but it also has its special occasions, as

on the all-important enthronement of a Malay ruler, on thanksgiving feasts and the rejoicing connected with the gathering of harvest, or on the circumcision feasting and celebration.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the very basis of the Wayang Kulit. The mere mention of Sri Rama is enough to recall to the minds of both Malays in North-East Malaya and Hindu Indians, the ancient ties between the two countries in language, literature, sculpture, dance and ritual, magic and wayang, place names, titles and religion. Says Winstedt: "The presence of every Indian influence that has ever reached the Malay Archipelago and Peninsula is to be found in the Malay version of the Ramayana, the Hikayat Sri Rama."

The heroic poem Ramayana, as known to the Malays, tells of the battle of Prince Rama against King Ravana of the Island of Lanka, present day Ceylon. Rama's army of monkeys under the command of Hanuman fought a life-and-death struggle against Ravana's army of giants to rescue Sri Rama's abducted spouse, Princess Sita Devi.

As in the Indian version, the Malay work consists of 24,000 thirty-two line verses in seven parts. In the Malay text, the name of Dasaratha's kingdom is given as Mansu Puri Nagara or Madu Pura Nagara, and the Malay story makes Sita a foundling daughter of King Dasaratha. The demon Rakshashi is called Sura Pandaki. The title Sri before Rama is a Malay addition, the hero being simply Rama in the original Sanskrit. The names of places for the most part in the Malay version bear no resemblance to those in the Indian text, the principal exceptions being Lenka (Puri) and Gunong Meru.

Ramayana characters are found in Malay charms recited by pawangs. Here is one from Kelantan:

Ilmu Pengaseh
Hai Raja Hanuman!
Aku tahu kan asal-mu
Ibu-mu tuan Puteri Sita Devi
Bapa-mu Raja Sri Rama.

This is a love charm called Ilmu Hanuman, which translated runs as follows:

Prince Hanuman
I know your origin;
Your mother was Princess Sita Devi,
Your father was Prince Sri Rama.

Here is another charm to attract beasts and spirits:
Obey my words, trapped elephant.

If thou obeyest not, thou shalt be killed by Sri Rama;
If though obeyest, the great Rishis will keep thee alive.

Sri Rama here is a demi-god invoked especially by elephant-hunters, and Hanuman, the monkey god, is an evil spirit. Medicinemen in Perak are taught to invoke Siva, Krishna and the heroes of the Indian epics, Sri Rama, Lakshmana and Arjuna.

In Malay magic, the encircling line drawn by magicians is called "garis Lakshmana", the Bomoh uses the word "garis" for "tali" and thereby hangs another tale. During their fourteen years' exile, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were in the jungle, living in a hut. Sita sent her husband, Rama, to gather fruits and begged him not to stay away too long. As he did not return soon, she asked Lakshmana to look for him. Lakshmana then drew lines in the form of a square round the hut in order to prevent any harm coming to Sita during his absence.

It was the world's first drawing and the prototype of what is now known to Malay magicians as the magic "garis Lakshmana."

In the decorative arts we find deer and other figures from the Ramayana. The Kijang, barking-deer, is the royal symbol of Kelantan. Some kris hilts represent Vishnu's bird, the Garuda, wingless but sometimes beaked, or a demon, Rakshasa, or very rarely Hanuman.

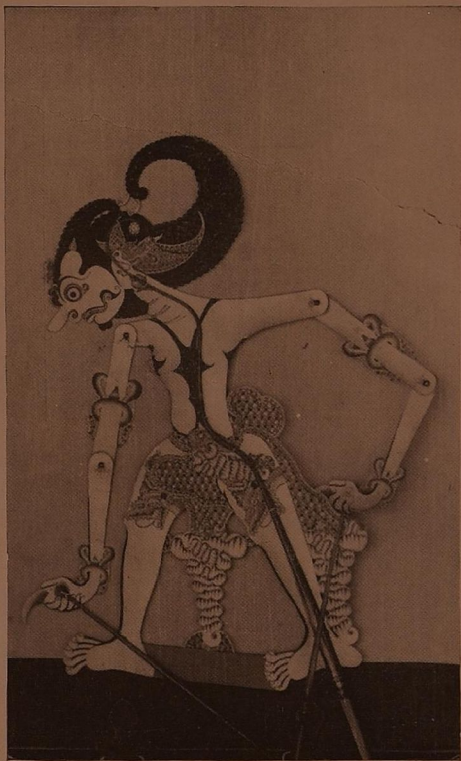
We have no ancient Premanan relics as in Java, depicting the abduction of Sita by Ravana and the firing of Lanka by Hanuman's tail. But thanks to the work of the 1957 Malayan Archaeological Expedition of the University of Malaya, there has been unearthed at Kota Kuala Muda in the North-West Malayan state of Kedah a two-foot figure of a headless Hanuman carved in stone. It is the best piece of stone sculpture so far found in Malaya.

Place names such as Sungei Laxmana in Perak, Kampong Rawana in Penang, Penkelan Rama in Malacca and Langkawi off the North-West coast connect us again with the Ramayana.

Langkawi Island off the Kedah coast was the kingdom of "Tegri lang-kah sukah," land of all one's wishes. In the golden age of Kedah it was the fairy land of Malay romance. In Malay legend, it is told that after the war between Rama and Ravana, the island became



Arjuna in Wayang Kulit



Bhima in Wayang Kulit

the home of the Garuda, the vehicle or riding bird of Vishnu.

The Kedah chronicler of Marong Mahawangsa seems to have been sufficiently satisfied, says Maxwell, "that Pulau Langkapuri, the scene of the Ramayana battle between Rama and Ravana, was identical with the island off the coast of Kedah which the Malays now call Langkawi, and which may have been called Langkapuri in former time. Successive generations of Kedah Malays have no doubt been ignorant of the identity of Lanka with Ceylon and have contentedly located their legend in an island of their own."

The Crown Prince of the State of Negri Sembilan is

known as the Tengku Laxmana. There are also further royal titles bearing the word Laxmana. This too was a title of Hang Tuah. The Sejarah Melayu tells how the word Laxmana came to mean Admiral. When Hang Tuah was a boy, he was very fond of the story of Sri Rama and used to compare himself with Lakshmana, Rama's faithful and brave brother.

When he challenged the boys in sport he would cry "Laxmana Lawan-ku", meaning Laxmana alone can be my opponent or I will fight only Laxmana. So Laxmana became Hang Tuah's nickname and when Sultan Mansur Shah made him his Admiral, the name Laxmana was identified with that office and has been so ever since.

The shadow theatre, doubtless of Indian origin, is one of the oldest dramatical forms of South East Asian culture. In Thailand and Cambodia, dance is given an important place in this form of drama, while in Bali and Java, music dominates the scene. But in Malaysia, it is the technique of animation that is given pride of place.

Kelantan, a province in Northern Malaysia, which was a part of the old kingdom of Shri Vijaya, the big Indo-Malay empire (known to have extended at times from Java to Ceylon and to Cambodia till its decline in the XIII Century) is the home of the Wayang Kulit. This is the only region that has been able to maintain the artistic traditions of Malaysia in music, theatre and crafts.

In spite of the Javanese and Thai influence, the shadow puppet theatre of Kelantan has over the centuries, developed a character of its own and can be easily distinguished from other shadow puppet theatres of South East Asia.





The Wayang Kulit is composed of nearly a hundred characters. Each figure is about 80 cms. high. Their number varies according to the dalang (puppeteer) who also resorts to the use of numerous secondary characters and accessories such as palaces, trees, enclosures and so on. Drawn according to fixed specifications, the figures are cut out, chiselled and finally painted in keeping with traditional rules, which gives specific attributes to all major characters. The principal characters can be differentiated by the colour of their faces and their ornaments. For instance, Rama's face is green, and Lakshmana's yellow or chestnut brown.

All the puppets are cut in profile and have arms articulated at the shoulder and the elbow. While the puppets of the neighbouring countries appear only as lacy shadows on the screen due to their thickness, the colours and hues of the Malaysian puppets can be seen clearly because of their transparency. Consequently the cutwork in them is less elaborate.



The sound part of the show is composed of two distinct parts, namely the spoken and the musical parts. The voice of the dalang and the orchestra are heard alternately, never together, except for the clash of cymbals to emphasise certain actions.

The orchestra is composed of an oboe, two pottery drums, two long drums with buffalo skin, two horizontal gongs, two suspended gongs and two small cymbals.

Music has an obviously secondary role in the show. Monotonous, given the restricted number of themes, it only serves to make the action on the screen more lively. The main attraction being the animation of the leather puppets, music is merely a rhythmic accompaniment and has no importance of its own.

During the dialogues, the puppets are rather static, and move only their arms. Then when the musical score begins, they move about on the screen. The dalang has to give them a three dimensional effect, that is both along the length and breadth of the screen and also in depth. This he does by moving the figures a little bit away from the screen so that they become bigger or smaller at will. This action gives a particularly spectacular sort of liveliness and relief to the characters. The dalang holds a puppet in each hand and manipulates them in a perfectly synchronised way. At the same time, the flickering of the lamp adds to the unreal in this combination of colours, sounds, and rhythms which gradually captivates the spectators and holds them spellbound.

HARIKATHA KALAKSHEPAM

ALAMELU GOVINDARAJAN

Harikatha Kalakshepam is a musical discourse describing a story or theme with a religious background. It is a composite structure where the many aspects of Indian music blend beautifully to give it a complete form. Though originally recognised as an important part of sacred music confined to temple-corridors, its popularity as a well-developed art-form grew and spread and in course of time helped its entry into concert halls.

Narration of Puranic lore was perhaps, already in existence in South India, but the Harikatha tradition owes its early growth to the Haridasas of Maharashtra, who gave it the necessary impetus for rapid progress and brought it within reach of the common man. The patronage given to its development by the Mahratta rulers of South India, themselves well-versed in many of the fine arts, was in no small measure responsible for its vitality and status. The South Indian ingenuity later seized the opportunity to dress up this art form to suit its own aesthetics, environment and needs.

Features of a secular nature were incorporated into its exposition to make it more attractive and appealing, but the genetics of its tradition had been securely and strongly implanted and its original individuality was well retained. The term 'Haridasa' was replaced by 'Bhagavata', but the name 'Harikatha' lingered and became permanent.

The credit of promoting Kalakshepam as a fine art goes to Sri Periana Sastri of Tanjore who was a great scholar and connoisseur of fine arts. It was left to this pioneer to groom Sri Krishna Bhagavata, as the best exponent of Kalakshepam and to give this musical form the cultural recognition which it enjoys even today. By

the close of the 19th Century, it was well established in its present form and Krishna Bhagavata's fame as an artist of outstanding merit and skill remains unrivalled in the field for ever. Many followed in his footsteps but as in any other art, only a few could reach the top. To mention a few, Sri Panchapakesa Sastri, Sri Mangudi Chidambara Bhagavata, Sri Muthiah Bhagavata, Sri Annaswamy Bhagavata are names to be reckoned with. Srimalathi C. Saraswati Bai had the unique honour of securing among them, a place of distinction she richly deserved. Her performances were of a very high standard. It will be presumptuous to go into the merits or talents of these artists though we are well aware of the fact that every one of them developed a style of his own. The number of "Kalakshepam" artists increased and we have happily with us today, many veterans in the field.

When we describe Kalakshepam as a composite art, we have in view the different arts that combine to give it the desired colouring. At the first instance, the performer, man or woman, must have that peculiar versatility which alone can make him a successful performer. Profound scholarship is essential; so is a knowledge of many languages. Fluency in speech, an easy and lucid style and clarity in diction are compulsory requisites. A good personality is, of course desirable. Well-versed in all the Puranic lore, legendery and otherwise, the memory of a Kalakshepam artist must be at his command, ready to quote from the texts and to draw parallels to suit the sequences in his narration.

Our temples have always acted as educational and cultural agencies. They have fostered activities imparting



Smt. Alamelu Govindarajan received her M.Litt., from the University of Madras for her research on the "Light Thrown on the History of Indian Music by Archaeological and Epigraphical Records" and was later awarded a Ph.D., by the same university for her thesis on "Musical instruments depicted in South Indian Sculpture". Other topics on which she has done extensive research include "Rhythm and Melody in the folk tunes of South India", "Sangam Literature as a possible source to guide the history of Indian Music" and "The Evolution of stringed instruments in Indian Music."

Smt. Govindarajan is also a talented veena player and vocalist. She is at present a professor of Music, Musicology and Research at the Kalakshetra College of Fine Arts. She is also a member of the Doctoral Committee of the University of Madras.

knowledge to the people while entertaining them with music, dance and folklore. While they catered to many tastes the aim was always towards a general cultural refinement and moral uplift. Stories depicting the victory of good over evil proved better substitutes than plain moral preaching and our Bhagavats were never at a loss to improvise new modes of approach to win the listeners' attention.

Music has always been a handmaid to religion and Kalakshepam is no exception. Its moorings sanction it. In the earlier stages its music was confined to simple tunes and forms like *Lavani*, *Khadgas*, *Abhangas* (all musical forms belonging to Maharashtra music) which were recognised as distinctive features of Kalakshepam. Another form exclusively used for Kalakshepam was *Nirupanam* which is really a short song epitomising the story that is to follow. They are composed in different languages and are set in catchy, attractive tunes. *Panchapadi* is the collective name for a group of invocatory songs sung at the commencement of the performance.

In the post-Tyagaraja period, an abundant stock of highly evolved musical pieces were available to the artists and those of Tyagaraja in particular were chosen to illustrate different emotions. But music never monopolised the performance. A Kalakshepam performer is viewed differently from the regular musician. He is associated with the role of a preacher and accordingly the people gather in large numbers at Kalakshepams to listen to outpouring from the scriptures, and to understand the doctrines of philosophy and piety better. Listening to the glories of God, one goes through an emotional catharsis momentary though it may be, and relaxes into a feeling of spiritual bliss. Themes for exposition are usually chosen from the epics like Ramayanam and Mahabharatam and from Puranas like Bhagavatam.

The purpose is to emphasize the supremacy of righteousness over evil and the skill of the Bhagavata is fully utilised to achieve this. He is a narrator, a musician, an actor and last but not least a dancer too, and his performance is based on all the roles moulded into one. It has been customary with the performers to illustrate certain incidents with dance movements and their rhythmic footwork, in the absence of abhinaya, is expected to be as gripping and meaningful as their vocabulary. The jingle of the anklets wound round their ankles provides rhythmic chimes as the Bhagavata dances round a lighted lamp. An atmosphere of sanctity is thus created about the place and every one remains rapt in attention. It is for this purpose, perhaps,

that a Kalakshepam performer delivers his narration, standing throughout the performance.

As in a music concert, the Bhagavata is provided with instrumental accompaniments on the violin and the mridangam and the players are seated on a bench on either side of the performer. An extra vocal support stands right behind the main performer to assist him. A rich imagination is also a Bhagavata's forte, but it must be channelised properly. We have an example of how a Bhagavata, while describing the haste with which God rushed to save his devotee from danger, chose to sing the musical phrases in a very fast tempo to illustrate the super-fast movements of the Lord's chariot-wheel, which had an immediate impact and was much applauded by the audience. Audience participation is usually total at such performances if the Bhagavata is capable of transmitting the joy or sorrow of the characters he is describing. He has to be watchful of the reactions and moods of the audience as well.

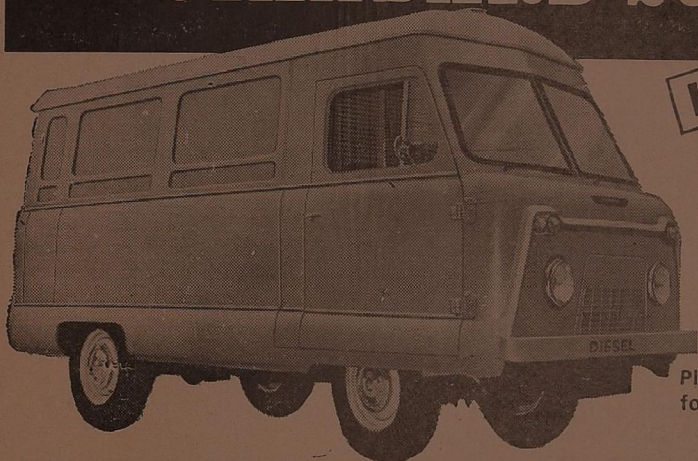
To an accomplished Bhagavata gifted with a rich musical, vibrant voice and a wide stretch of imagination, his multi-lingual experiences are valuable assets and his exposition can be treated as a good medium of mass communication. The All India Radio broadcasts such musical discourses regularly and the programmes, though condensed versions to suit the time limit, are popular and well-received. Television presents it as an audio-visual programme. Technical knowledge has brought Kalakshepam to our homes and we watch and enjoy it relaxed in the comfort of an easy-chair: Will this perhaps create new trends in the Harikatha tradition? Who knows?

A professional musician, vocal or instrumental, depends on his tonal embellishments to make an impression on the audience. The Kalakshepam Bhagavata uses a multi-pronged drive to achieve this. His recitative skills, extensive vocabulary, pleasing music, emotional and dramatic utterances, rhythmic punctuations and dance movements, interspersing the main theme with humorous and interesting anecdotes—all these contribute towards his success and he uses them all to best advantage to captivate his listeners.

Their devotional sentiments thus kindled and aroused, the listeners seem well prepared to join the Bhagavata in chorus as he closes his performance with the traditional Mangalam. A tumultuous applause follows and as they leave the hall, may be, they leave with the fulfilment of having been to a place of worship.

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