PREFACE

The primary focus and concentration, in the traditional theatre forms in India, is on the specialisation of their presentation. All these forms borrow their thematic-material from the common sources, such as Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana, Gītā-Govinda and Puranas. But their respective, and characteristic nature of presentation, to a large extent, is determined by the use of music, songs, musical instruments, styles of singing, rhythm-patterns and stylised speech rhythms. The coherence of action through character, situation and dialogues is maintained through the means of music. The aesthetic of these traditional theatres depends on the dexterity of their musical forms.

In my survey of traditional theatre forms in India, I discovered that it is impossible to find a living traditional theatre in any region which does not use songs, speech rhythms, orchestral music and drums. The various forms, difficult to codify or enumerate, differ from region to region and even in the same region they vary in their musical style and function.

Music is an integral part of the total dramatic world of India an essential element of the traditional theatre forms like the Jātra of Bengal, Sautanki and Swāng of North India, Bhavāl of Gujarāt, Tamāśā of Maharashtrā, Yakṣagān of Karnāṭaka, Therukoothu of Tamilnād, Rāmliḷā
and Raslila the cycle plays of Rama and Krishna themes, classical dance dramas like Kathakali, and the only Sanskrit drama Kundūdiattam still performed in Kerala on the traditional stage by the Chakyārs. All these forms use music Vocal and instrumental, chants, rhythmic groans and stylised speech patterns with a definite dramatic function.

In the ancient hymn chantings and the folk ballads, the singer-performer was essential. The Daskatānas of Orissa, the Būrrākathā performers of Andhra the Khāk-Undhal singers of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, and the Dhādis of Punjab are superb ballad singers with high dramatic quality. Simple songs of narration, invocation and descriptive passages in the epics and chantings of religious mantras are made vivid and dramatically moving by the singer performer. The art of the actor is hidden in the singer, who emotionalises and charges the listeners with a graphic portrayal of the characters and events, etching out the scenes with gestures and facial expressions ranging from the subdued tones to the terrifying. The Kathākār in a village square is in fact an actor-singer, combining in him the most ancient art of story-telling and impersonation by pure 'Abhinaya'. According to Dr. Kapīla Vatsyayan, most of the traditional theatres belong to the group of singer-performers -- "Close to the village community but a class apart is a group of professional singers, dancers,
musicians and actors, who are differently classified all over India as Bādas, Nāts, Gandharvās, Binkaras etc. This is a group for whom the performance is a vocation, not a social, tribal or agricultural function. They are in and yet out of society, a community or group recognized since the days of Panini. They move from place to place. It is this group of people which has been responsible for the mobility of ideas, forms and styles between the villages and urban centres. They have also been the vehicles of expressions of protest, dissent and reform, the carriers of reform movements and the articulators of satire and social comment and thus the instruments of socio-cultural change. The contemporary forms such as Bhavai, Nautanki Terukoothu, Veethinatakam, Ottanthullal etc., belong to this group. In artistic form their technique ranges from acrobatic to pure spoken drama. The word gesture relationship is, however, minimal. Of late these forms have been termed folk drama, traditional theatre, even street theatre and folk dance. The essence of these forms ranging from ballad recitation and melodic singing for puppetry, acrobatic, dance and theatre, derives from the social sanction and liberty given to make social comment. It is this which links them together."

*Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, "Traditional Indian Theatre: Multiple Streams", National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, Chapter 1, page 3-4.*
The tradition of Indian theatre spurs from a common impulse, various theatre forms characterised by different styles, techniques and genres are branches of the same tree they have the same roots and the sources. What makes our tradition most remarkable and fascinating is it's aesthetic integrity and unity, the beautiful blend of form and content, the rhythms of action and movement, language of the body, poetic symbolism, stylised modes of acting, songs and music.

The language of theatre is not only in the text of words, the movement or in the sounds, colour, lines and effects, but in the unity, and integrity of these elements. According to Artaud, 'The theatre, which is in 'no thing', but makes use of 'everything' -- gestures, sounds, words, screams, light, darkness --redisCOVERS itself at precisely the point where the mind requires a language to express its manifestations."

"A mention of the performing arts of India immediately brings to one's mind the single-bodied and many­ armed image of Durgā, or of Siva in his form as Nātarāja, ever destroying, ever creating new forms of the dance Tandava. These symbols in plastic form suggest at one level the unified equilibrium, the still-centre, and at the other, the continual play of 'energy' and rhythm in plural forms. The two aspects are interconnected and mutually dependent. The varied art forms like the multiple arms and hands, though distinct and separate, are all limbs of the same body; the seeming heterogeneity and multiplicity are the different modes of the Tāṇḍava."


The present study deals with music, its dramatic function in our theatrical tradition, and its vital role in the formation of its character. It is also an effort to know that how far the basic musical sense is essential in the creative process in an art form specially in theatre.

Music in fact is the culmination of every art. It is the means and the end of art. It depends on sounds for its symbols which are related to natural sounds as such it embodies more of abstract and aesthetic values than any other art form. In Vishnu-Dharmottara Purana we find a basic principle laid down for artists, -- "Without the knowledge of the art of dancing the rules of Chitra (sculpture) are difficult to be understood. Without music dancing cannot exist nor music without singing. He who knows the rules of singing knows everything properly." The basic sense of music is essential to start a creation and the ultimate in art form becomes music-like in its perfection.

The present study cannot only rest on the lyrical effusion of music's spiritual and abstract values but at the same time take a dispassionate view of the musical techniques and functions.

*Vishnu Dharmottara Purana, Vol. III, critically ed. with introduction by Dr. (Miss) Priyabala Shah (Gaekwad's Oriental Series - No. CXXX, Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1958, Ch. II, Shloka 1-11 — dialogue between Markandaya and Vajra, p. 3).
What is dramatic music? Is it the singing of a dialogue having an emotional design, a metrical pattern and nuances with appropriate notes, pitches, stresses, pauses and punctuation to extract the meaning of the speech to the full? Or is it the use of different tones, tunes, songs, orchestral compositions and drum rhythms at particular moments in a play to embellish and heighten the dramatic effects? I would consider the term applicable to both.

In the classical music or non-dramatic singing, the singer leaves behind the words, and the notes and alankaras take over, like ānas, mūrkis, khatkās, gamaks, zamzams, meendh etc. and the audience marvels at the singer's masterly use of the notes and their combinations.

In dramatic singing, the words have to be clear and important and the music is almost like speech. In a drama, the singing chorus accentuates a situation, elaborates the poetical images, similes, references, emotions and puts in perspective the incidents, relating the past and the future.

Throughout the ages, philosophers, poets and dramatists have emphasised the importance of music. Bharata Muni in his advice to the practitioners of theatre says "One should first of all bestow care on songs. For songs have been called the bed (base) of the drama. The song and the playing of musical instruments being well-executed, the performance of the drama does not encounter any
The western philosophers and drama theorists have also given equal importance to the primary function of music in our lives and in the dramatic arts. Plato banished poets and artists from his 'ideal republic' but allowed musicians to stay because they create harmony.**

Aristotle refers to the prominence of music while talking about his theory of 'imitation'. According to him, Arts "in most of their forms are all in their general conception modes of imitation.... and the imitation is produced by rhythms, language, or harmony (melody), either singly or combined."** By 'language embellished' he means

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**"And therefore, I said, Glaucoc, musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because, rhythms, and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful...." Plato, (The Republic, Book III)- "The Portable Plato" edited by Scott Buchanan, Penguin Books, 1977, p. 389.


a) Poetry (drama) in general according to him has sprung from two causes each of them lying deep in our nature and they are the instinct of imitation and the instinct for 'harmony' and rhythm. Ibid., p. 15.
The great guru of realistic and psychological acting of this century, Constantin Stanislavski says, "Dialogue is supposed to be sung." He saw endless possibilities of conveying the inner life and our experience on the stage through musical speech. He writes, "What can we express with our ordinary registers of five or six notes...? We realise how ridiculous we are.... (When) we have to convey complicated emotions. It is like playing Beethoven on a Balalika.... Speech is music."

Bharata Muni in Śātya-Śastra observes, "One should recite a dramatic composition which is free from literary defects, possesses best characteristics and has

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b) Further defining tragedy Aristotle asserts, "Tragedy then is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in language, embellished with each kind of artistic ornament...." p. 23.

c) "Every tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality - namely, Plot, Character, Diction, Thoughts, Spectacle, Song." Ibid., p. 25.

d) "...of the remaining elements song holds the chief place among the embellishment." Ibid., p. 29.

*By "language embellished" I mean language, into which rhythm, 'harmony' and song enter. By the several kinds in separate parts, I mean, that some parts are rendered through the medium of verse alone, others again with the aid of song." Ibid., p. 23.

(literary) qualities and in such a recitation one should observe proper rules relating to the utterance of the notes and their Alankāras.«

From the times of Bharata Muni to the modern era of theatre-practitioners, music has remained the soul of drama in India. The great poet-playwright-musician Rabindranāth Tagore saw words in terms of colours and rhythms. He believed, "The language of words belongs to the world of man and the language of music to the world of nature. Words convey a distinct concept with a definite and limited meaning. But the domain of music has no definite bounds -- in fact, it is impatient of limitations. That is the reason why man has dealings with his fellowmen in the language of words, while music provides him with a mode of communication with the vaster world of nature. When music is wedded to words, it signifies much more than what the words can ever mean by themselves. It's range becomes wider and deeper. It lifts the joys and sorrows of man to ethereal heights. His emotions and feelings take on the colour of the horizon at dusk and dawn and become one with the voiceless and the great unknown. From the beginning of history, therefore, man has been striving to harmonise his everyday speech with the eternal message

of Nature." Tagore gave a primary place to song and music in his plays. Sometimes himself acted as the singer Sutardhar. The Narrator in his song-drama 'Phalguni' announces: "I do not need props and scenery on the stage. Let me paint a picture on the canvass of your mind with the brush of music." Tagore employed music to heighten emotions, philosophise, objectify inner reality, bridge time and space in his plays. His songs and music served a definite dramatic function.

Although I witnessed many traditional theatrical forms and studied their musical styles, I have concentrated on the musical contents, rhythms, and function of song in the cycle plays of Rasilila at Brindaban.

I visited Brindaban many times during the period of my research work, attending Rasilila performances, meeting the gurus, the Swāmis, devotees, temple priests and Dhrupad and Ras singers. These scholars and gurus are the living libraries and creative research centres and they have been my main reference books. Also, music being still an art in India which cannot be written down for its complete understanding because there is no perfect notation system to capture the subtle nuances and

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"Rabindranath Tagore "Rabindranath Tagore Centenary Number", (Sangeet Natak Akademi), New Delhi, 1961, p. 101."
microtones of our music. In my study the gurus and Swamis were a great help in my fuller understanding of the Raslila and the various musical aspects used for dramatic purposes in our traditional dramas.

I have divided my research thesis in five main sections: Vedic rituals and dramatic singing, Dhruta songs in Sanskrit drama and the dramatic function of classical Rāgas; Music in the traditional theatre like the Jātrā, Bhavā, Nautanki, Tamāshā, Yakshagān, Therukoothu, Bhagavata Melā, Raslilā and Ankā-Nāts; The Raslilā of the Braj with historical, literary and philosophical background with Krishna theme and the origin of Rās: The principle elements of the Rās and the Lilās with detailed study of the padas, dance, costumes, colours and musical traditions of the Dhrupad and the singers in temples and their dramatic import; the use of music in the South-Asian traditional theatre; use of music by Western dramatists and directors, by the contemporary Indian directors and playwrights with sidelights on Rabindranath Tagore’s conception of musical dramas and dance operas. A short chapter is given in the end, a summing up of the possibilities of greater and richer role of music in our dramas, the debt we owe to the traditional forms for enlarging our theatrical consciousness and the influence of our musical theatre forms on the western world of theatre.
In the arrangement of chapters and subjects I have tried to follow the chronological order but not always so. For example, traditional theatres like Tamāṣhā and Nautankī which developed in the 18th and 19th centuries have been clubbed together along with the other traditional theatres before the Rāslilā sections. Reversed time sequences and flash-backs occur. These are for a fuller and better understanding of the subject.

I am grateful to Swami Ram Swarup Sharma who interpreted his Līlā scripts to me and gave time to explain many terms and dramatic motives of music to me; to Swami Hargobind for his generous explanations and methods of working; to the late Swami Ladali Sharan Ji Maharaj for his ancient wisdom and preserved knowledge of Rāslilā, music and philosophy; to Kanwar Lal for his stimulating talks; to Phul Sevaki Dhrudas and principal singer Damodar Ji in the Sāmāj singing of Rādhā Vallabh temple. I was guided on the spot by aesthetic principles and observations and relating these to the other traditional theatrical forms and thus by a comparative understanding put the Rāslilā music and performance in proper perspective.

Thanks are also due to Purshotam Ji Maharaj of the Jai Singh Ghera for allowing me to witness Ashtyām Līlā in his temple and giving me historical and musical background; to Sharman Lai Aggarwal for his genial and warm presence.
in the various temples and Ras performances; Lakshman Prasad Chobey, the famous Dhrupadist of Mathura who sang and explained to me Vishnu Padas and Haveli Sangeet; Shri Ram Narain Aggarwal for explaining the musical modes and rhythms in Nautanki and comparing and contrasting these with those in the Rās Līlā; Shri Balji Chaturvedi, the great Rās singer of Dwarkādīsh temple in Mathurā; Shri Rām Chander Ji Monga of Laxmi Narain Temple in Chatta Bazar, Mathura; and other Swāmis, singers and chance acquaintances on the spot.

With a deep sense of gratitude I remember late Dr. V. Raghavan for his prompt replies to my enquiring letters; I am grateful to Dr. Kapila Vatgyayan for her illuminating comments; Dr. Deva of Sangeet Natak Akademy for his kind attention during my listening sessions; to Birju Maharaj for demonstrating to me the differences in the Kathak style of Lucknow Gharana and the Rās Nrit; Guru Singaljit Singh for his explaining the Manipuri style of Raslīlā; Mohan Khokar for his analysis of the Rās Nrit; Dr. Suresh Awasthi for his comparative descriptions of Rāslīlā and Rāmlīlā, and to late Acharya Brahaspati ji for his admonishing remarks.

My research guides Prof. Sumati Mutatkar, Dean, Music and Fine Arts Department, Delhi University, and Prof. Balwant Gargi, were most generous in checking and
rechecking my thesis - a work which would not have been complete without their patient and watchful guidance.

I spent days in the Brindāban Research Institute which has many precious handwritten original manuscripts of saint poets and records of eyewitness account of Ras with historical and musical background; the Mathura Museum for sculpture and freizes depicting Krishna cult in the stone almost 2,000 years ago; consulted the libraries of Sahitya Academy, National School of Drama, Sangeet Natak Academy and National Archives, New Delhi, apart from visiting Krishna temples and Ras Mandapas in the entire Braj area.

A few scholarly books of recent authors were of immense use to me in my research and understanding of the Ras tradition, literary and historical background of Braj Bhoomi, of these Krishnaadatt Vajpai's "Mathurā-parichay" and "Braja Kā Itiḥās", Prabhu Dayal Mittal's, "Braj kī Kalānōn ka Itiḥās". Dr. Vasant Yamdagni's, "Rāslīlā Tathā Rasānukarān Vikās", Ram Narayan Agarwal's, "Braj kā Rās Rangmanch." Prabhudayal Mittal's "Ashta-Chāp Parichay", Ram Chandra Shukla's "Hindi Sahitya kā Itiḥās", Deshrath Ojha's "Hindi Natak-Udāv Aur Viṅguś", Baba Tulsi Dass's compilation of "Bīyālis Līlā", Norvin Hein's "The Miracle Plays of Mathura", Dr. Kapila Vastyan's, "Traditional Indian Theatre: Multiple Stream" and "Traditions of Indian Folk Dance", Balwant Gargi's "Folk Theatre of India", 

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J.C. Mathur's "Drama in Rural India", Swami Prajñābanda's "Historical Development of Indian Music" are of particular interest to the keen students of the Rāslilā for understanding the philosophical, literary, musical and dramatic background. Also, I found Dr. M.S. Randhawa's "Kangra Paintings" and "Kangra Paintings of the Bhagavata Purana", Dr. B.N. Goswami's "Pahari Paintings of Nal Damyanti theme" and Dr. Mulk Raj Anand's numerous articles on theatre, dance and music in the special issues of "Marg" of great help to me in understanding the inter-relation of the pictorial arts with the performing arts and their deep debt to music. Apart from these Frederick Salmon Growse's "Mathura, a District Memoir" written in the last half of the 19th century, is an important source book without which no scholar or researcher can proceed with the study of Rāslilā or any cultural or historical or literary aspect of the Braj Bhoomi.

I have given full references where quotations are used, but I have avoided to mention the details of dates, publications and authors where the phrase of a line quoted is too well known to demand explanation.

I have avoided cluttering each page with the original quotations in Hindi and other language but have put them in the end in a appendix.

Apart from the list of important books and journals related to my research subject, given in the bibliography,
I have mentioned separately the names of plays, quisas, musical dramas and folk plays which were consulted while writing this thesis. The names of important Gurus, Swamis, Rasdharis, directors and traditional actors have been listed to guide students who may be interested in a more advanced study in any of the branches of the study of traditional theatre.

Photographs of the Gurus, Rāslilā actors and musicians taken on location by this researcher, pictures of Rāslilā and Krishna legend, musical and acting traditions preserved in stone and in painting have also been given. I am grateful to Mathura Museum, National Archives of India, National Museum, Sangeet Natak Akademi, Brindāban Research Institute, the Royal Archives of the Maharaja of Banaras at Ram Nāgar Fort, Archeological Survey of India, and Govt. Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

Most scholars who made study of the Natyashastra had either literary interest or philosophical. Actors and directors considered this voluminous treatise as their source book for acting and production, and musicians found in it the fundamental rules of music. Very few actors-singers made a combined study of the Gāṇa (song) Vādya (music) and Nātya (acting). As a singer-actress, I have been concerned with the scientific relationship of the three - particularly the dramatic function of music in the traditional theatre.
My own work has been that of a singer-actress one who has worked in many traditional and directed folk plays. This intimate knowledge, due to the performing nature of my subject, has been of great help to me to grasp, codify, relate, assess and understand the use of music in our traditional theatre.

My research sheds light on the musical and performing aspects of the cycle plays of Rāmalīlā and other traditional forms which are being corrupted by the modern mass media. Still the core and essence of these forms are intact and their musical structure and balance, though fluctuating due to the changing times, are still vivid and powerful enough to give us the glimpse and joy of that aesthetic experience which the villagers, the devotees, the rural people and the highly cultivated classical minds experience.

My research work is only an effort to relate the two sister arts -- music and drama -- and see their complex and inextricable relationship.

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