Today theatre is retracing back to its roots: the religious exercises, rituals, chants, rhythms, human non-sensical voices, primeval instincts and tribal lore, wherein music is the chief element. Today there is a rediscovery of the indigenous traditional theatre forms. The new emerging theatre is experimenting with the verse drama, re-examining the idioms of poetic plays, rituals, music, masks, stylisation at a sense of total theatre, a sense which is deeply embedded in the Indian theatrical culture. Western dramatists and artistic directors like Meyerhold, Bertolt Brecht, Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook and Richard Schechner have revolutionised and enlarged the function of theatre. Today there is a cross-fertilisation of the theatres of the East and the West. In all these experimental or theatre of the Avant Grade music plays a dominant role.

In India itself there is a new awareness of our own tradition of theatre, its unique characteristics, its multiplicity, unity in spite of diversity, and inexhaustible variety of musical forms. Not only music is the integral part of our theatrical culture but dance, mime and verse, are inseparable. The performing arts share a deep affinity, an interweaving close-knit relationship with each other. They cannot be separated
the ethos that generates them, and can only be understood when firmly located in their context. They are bound in a common impulse. Dr. Kapila Vatsayyan beautifully defines the nature of performing arts in India*, a mention of the performing arts of India immediately brings to one's mind the single-bodied and many-armed image of Durga, or of Siva in his form as Nataraja, 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; seeming heterogeneity and multiplicity are the different modes of the Tandava".*

The most striking characteristic of traditional theatre forms is in its presentation. Every theatre takes its material from the same source as for example episodes from Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Gita-Govinda, but each form treats its material in a different manner in terms of its material in a different manner in terms of its specific

*Dr. Kapila Vatsayyan Traditional Indian Theatre; Multiple Streams*, National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 1980. Chapter 1, Introduction, page 1.
presentational style the way it uses songs, dance, mime, music, gesture and speech. Music with its varied usages, singing techniques, instruments and rhythm patterns, to a large extent determine the nature of a theatre form.

In all the forms of theatres sacral or profane, that which serves the function of healing, performing for the well-being of the community, the religious, magical and ritualistic or that which conveys the message of social reform, provides platform for political expression or feeds the audience with love-themes, tales of dacoits and saints, all pulsate with rich variety of music.

Today the Contemporary Indian Playwrights and directors are seeking inspiration from these forms and using music and songs in their plays with a new consciousness. Music has deepened their productions and given it a larger dimension. During the last twenty years, there has been a shift in the modern Indian drama in its form, style and presentation. It is moving from realistic to the more richer and stimulating experiences with songs and music.

Playwrights and directors like Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Mani Madhukar, Utpal Dutt, Girish Karnad, Sombhu Mitra, B.V. Karanth, Rajendra Nath and P.L. Deshpande have made diverse experiments in translating the folk and traditional theatrical conventions creatively in their works.
B.V. Karanth's 'Macbeth' in Yakashgana style was a daring experiment done with the highly trained actors of National Repertory which created quite a stir in the theatre world. Before that his production of 'Aandher Nagari Chaupat Raja' with the students of National School of Drama was marked for it's unusual use of music and rhythms. Sometime back renowned director E. Alkazi directed 'Laila Majnu' in Nautanki style for the school. Other productions like 'Saiyan Bhaye Kotwal', 'Mena Gurjari', 'Jasma Odan', 'Has Gandharva' to name a few, reflect the trends of contemporary musical plays prompted by the traditional theatres. Contemporary dramatists are also using folk songs, invocations, ballads, rituals, changing rhythms, matching them with irregular lines, tones, nostalgic melodies and songs of the wandering bards. Songs of the masses are the distillate of the creative musicality of the community, and their dramatic use can be extremely effective and moving. Music through the dramatic singing carries word pictures and imageries as conceived by the poet. In the earlier ballad poetry the word and music came together to the ballad singers who composed and sang. In the historical process, the word was preserved in books whereas musical contents and style could not be written due to the absence of notation system in those days. Indian music due to its complex nature and improvisational quality inherent
in it could not be recorded in any other medium except through oral tradition which in many cases changed the musical mode, diluted or supplanted it with innovations. All the same due to a Guru-Shishya Parampara and the hereditary schools of music the tradition was preserved from generation to generation.

The oral tradition of music is described by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy in these words:

"Since Indian music is not written, and cannot be learnt from books, except in theory, it will be understood that the only way for a foreigner to learn it must be to establish between himself and his Indian teachers that special relationship of disciple and master which belongs to Indian education in all its phases: he must enter into the inner spirit and must adopt many of the outer conventions of Indian life, and his study must continue until he can improvise the songs under Indian conditions and to the satisfaction of Indian professional listeners. He must possess not only the imagination of an artist, but also a vivid memory and an ear sensitive to microtonal inflections."*

Folk dramatists work in terms of a musical thought in the use of words. At times simple words, which are of very little literary significance, acquire emotional profundity and meaning. The richness of a poet's imagination, subtle nuances, the flourish of an emotion are vivified through dramatic singing.

*Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "The Dance of Shiva", (Sagar Publications), New Delhi, 1971, page 89.
In every class or society certain common norms of expressions, idioms, abuses, proverbs, love notes, modes of addresses emerge with the social development. Every area has its own atmosphere, traditions, accents, behaviours. The folk theatre mirrors these elements. Ballad singers reflect in their singing these un-translatable emotional behaviours and responses. But 'art' singers change and spoil these styles and can be misleading if used in a dramatic style of singing. For example, the 'Heer' melody sung with startling innovations has dimmed the echoes of Waris Shah's love-ballad. The playwrights and producers while using these folk ballads, melodies, songs should guard against the bastardisation of the forms. These forms if creatively used can be fresh, sublime and dramatically effective.

Some of the dramatists and directors approach these earthy forms with a practical attitude of a theatre experimentalist, who for the sake of rejuvenating the ailing theatre or simply to enrich and foster the growth of their theatre borrow interesting elements and without a deeper or specific understanding of the techniques and approaches of a particular form, impose them on their work. This kind of hybrid theatrical experiments can be extremely dangerous and misleading because they separate the performance from it's context, ethos and social conditions.
The western dramatists and directors have borrowed these traditional forms with a sense of guilt. Antonin Artaud while contrasting the Oriental theatre with the accidental asserts, "And it is because of the multiplicity of their aspects that they can disturb and charm and continuously excite the mind. It is because the Oriental theatre does not deal with the external aspects of things on a single level nor rest content with the simple obstacle or with the impact of these aspects on the senses, but instead considers the degree of mental possibility from which they issue, that it participates in the intense poetry of nature and preserves its magic relations with all the objective degrees of universal magnetism.

It is in the light of magic and sorcery that the 'mise en scène' must be considered, not as the reflection of a written text, the mere projection of physical doubles that is derived from the written work, but as the burning projection of all the objective consequences of a gesture, word, sound, music, and their combinations. This active projection can be made only upon the stage and its consequences found in the presence of and upon the stage; and the author who uses written words only has nothing to do with the theatre and must give way to specialists in its objective and animated sorcery."*  

For the western theatre there is a rich storehouse of staging ideas, solutions for playmaking, and acting techniques and the integral concepts of theatre. Whereas western approach to Asian theatre has been determined by immediate practical needs. In a production of Shakespeare's Two Gentlemen of Verona at Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford (witnessed by the researcher in Sept. 81), Valentine with his band of outlaws appears astride wooden horses similar to that of Abhootham of Tamil Nadu. Now there are special gates, postures and body-holds attached to the tradition of these horse-dancers - special rhythm of the body has to be observed, without this kind of understanding and discipline the horses in that production looked quite ridiculous and obtrusive.

According to Leonard C. Pronko, "The happy blending of style and content revealed by the theatres of Asia (and I mean content in the sense of overall action with its implications unverbalized or even incapable of verbalization) deserves our study and meditation, for the Oriental theatre has a number of lessons to offer the West. I do not mean a vague lesson of the 'Oriental spirit', but specific lessons in technique and approaches to particular theatrical problems.... The Asian theatre can offer us a rich repertory of techniques on which we may draw, seeking out Occidental parallels to Oriental classical forms. Not
imitation, but re-creation.*

Theatrical situation in India is an unusual conjunction of the modern (based primarily on the western models) and the traditional.

Today's dramatists and directors are reviving and re-examining our tradition and exploring the wealth of our dramatic music. The contours of a new Indian theatre are emerging and one can clearly see the role of the traditional theatre in shaping its form which will have some technical and presentational devices of the west, but in its import, colour and ethos it will be borrowing a lot from the indigenous theatre.

The oral tradition of music carried the dramatic structure from generation to generation and the root of dramatic singing can be traced in retrospect in the study of epic singing.

The singing characters like the Bhagavata, the Swami, the Ranga, the Vivek control the pulse of the play in a traditional theatre. In the contemporary theatre there is a need to train actor, like folk players, in music.

In a traditional drama the actors, singer, and players are given training from an early childhood. In

fact, they are born in a tradition. They assimilate rhythm and melody in their bodies. Their natural sensitivity and instinct come to the fore. It is like propelling the natural process of development. Their movement, footsteps, body actions and gestures are rhythm-based. Music runs in their bloodstream.

There is a revival of the musical theatre all over the world. The realistic theatre has become sterile. The future theatre in India will have music as its integral part. Today most of our new directors and playwrights are taking a lot from our traditional forms and using them creatively in their work. Songs are playing a very important part in their work. The tradition of songs and music is so embedded deep in the total psyche of our people that in order to create a live and vigorous theatre music must become a part of our theatrical tradition.