CHAPTER VII.

The Theatrical Aesthetics of Tagore.

Drama is a representation of life for visualization by human medium, a literature conceived in terms of the theatre. The drama of Tagore is an interesting phenomenon in the sense that it is a highly individual dramatic vision, for which a distinctive theatre art has been evolved by him, a new mode of performance being necessary for a new kind of dramatic imagination. The interrelationship of drama and the theatre assumes a special significance in the case of Tagore to whom conceiving a drama and presenting it on the stage, were the two inseparable aspects of a creative aesthetic process. The theatrical technique, to Tagore, was never a set arrangement to serve as a vehicle of representation, but it was a sensitive instrument to be creatively handled to yield all it is capable of. Every dramatist is vitally interested in the theatrical presentation of his plays. But the case of a dramatist working with a professional company is different from that of a dramatist who has to use amateur performers as a medium for his vision of life. In the former the agency is already 'trained' or moulded and it is a case either of agreement or disagreement or of compromise between the two parties, the writer and the performer. In the latter it is always a new trial, an experiment, a creative manipulation of the material to
realize the objective. In the case of Tagore, dramatic and theatrical technique is born of a process of adjustment between his creative urge and his limited resources. He remained ever an empiric, giving us new genres and new modes of presentation which are associated with private enterprise.

His activity as a practical dramatist extends over a period of six decades. This long period of time falls into three natural periods: The first from 1881 to 1901, the second from 1901 to 1921 and the third from 1921 till his death. The three stages in the evolution of his theatrical aesthetics are clearly stamped in the photoprints of the respective periods. The theatrical ideal of the first stage can be known from the photoprint of Tagore in the role of 'Valkimi' and of 'Raghupati', that of the second stage from the photoprint of 'Dakghar' and the third from that of 'Nritya-Natya' Chitrangada.

Tagore's initiation into the theatre was in the amateur theatricals of the Jorasanko household which had become a centre of private theatrical enterprise with an atmosphere distinct from that of the public theatre of Calcutta, which

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1. 'Rabinda Rachanabali', Vol.I, p.216
slavishly imitated the Western theatrical convention with an emphasis on the spectacular and the sensational. His aesthetic, histrionic and dramatic impulse found early expression in the congenial atmosphere of his family, through experiments in musical drama and histrionics. It was in 1881 that his first musical drama Valmiki-Pratibha was composed and staged, Tagore, then hardly twenty, appearing in the hero's role. The theatricals were a permanent feature of the Jorasanko family's cultural life, the talented members of the household, including ladies, and at times, intimate outsiders, acting different characters in a play. Performances were characterized by urbanity, earnestness, and love for experimentation. 'Raja-O-Rani' and 'Visarjan', dramatic conception on the orthodox lines, were also staged by Tagore with the members of the family in different roles. The chief feature of the performance of 'Valmiki-Pratibha', as may be known from the vivid description given by Abanindranath Tagore in 'Charoa', lay in an adaptation of the realistic stage-craft by amateur enthusiasts and a creative use

1. "I used to take the leading part in the performance of these musical dramas. From my early years I had a taste for acting and firmly believed that I had a special aptitude for it. I think I proved that my belief was not ill-founded." — My Reminiscences, p. 197.

of music in the service of drama. The performances of his plays in this period, are more or less marked by an illusion of actuality on the stage and depiction of the working inside the character on the ideal plane through the use of song and poetry. In the poetic dramas (Chitrangada etc.) towards the end of this period, he experiments in a variety of dramatic expression, where he dispenses with the use of the realistic stage.

The second phase begins with the establishment of his famous school at Shantiniketan, where 'Visarjan', his greatest success of the earlier generation, was once staged in 1902. For sometime, thereafter, his dramatic Muse remained inactive. He was actively contemplating the prospect of a 'new' drama. The problems regarding dramatic aesthetics engaging his attention at the time are clearly stated in the revealing article, "Ranga-Mancha" (1902). Viewed in the 

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2. (b) "Stage-a satyakar brish chhora habe, dotalar baranda theke tinir na soja chole gechhe stageh bhitore. Namaskar daridara bendha gachhpsa uporo jhuliye rakha hoyechha, scene t bujhe seguli namiye deon hobe. Padmaban, solar padmaphul, padmapeta baniye neter mato patla gajar parda por-por char-panchta stare jhuliye rakha hoechhe. Prathamta besh jhupsa kusar mato dekhabe pore ak akta parda uthe jabe, o-pas theke aste aste alo futbe ar aktu aktu kore padmabone Saraswati kromoso prokash pabe." Ibid, p.104.

(c) "Dinur akta posha ghora chhilo, roj ghoray chorto, Sei ghorar pithe amader luter mal bojhai kore Dinu stage-a elo." - p.107.

1. "Bharater Natya-Sastre Natya-Mancher baroana schhe. Tahate drisya-pater kono ullekh dekhite pai na. Tahate je bisesh kshati hoychhilo erup and mone karina. ... Avinoy-ke kabyer
light of the plays that followed, it is virtually the 
manifesto of his forthcoming dramatic activity. He was 
conscious of the value of the theatre as a national ins­
titution. That the alien theatrical convention, which he 
held to be chiefly responsible for vitiating our national 
taste, should be thrown overboard, he had no hesitation in. 
declaring. Its effect, he thought, would be wholly healthy. 

Tegore at that time was actively engaged in ransacking the 
forgotten and ignored coffers of the once dominant spiritual 
tradition of our indigenous dramatic aesthetics of the 

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adhinata sweeker karitei hay. Kintu tali baliya sakal kala-
vidyari golamee tahake karite haibe, amon ki katha achhe. 
Yadi se man gaurab rakhite chay, tabu je tuku adhenaata 
tahare atmastakasher janya nitantai na hoilei hay, soituku 
se jena gahan kare; tahare beshi se jaha kichhu abalam 
kare, tahate tahar ni jekhena na hay.....Kha bala ba-
habulna, natyokta kathaguli avinatar pekshe nitanta abas-
hyak. Kavi tahake je hasir kathati yegne, tahai layai 
tahake hasite hay; kavi tahake je kanyar abasar den, tahar 
layai kendiya se darsaker chhirkef jal taniya she. Kintu 
chabi-ten kena? Tahai abhinetar paschate jhalite theke, 
avineta tahake sristi kariya tole na; tahar ankamatra; amar 
mate tahate avinatar akshma, kapurushata prakash pay. 
Airupe je upaye darsakder mane bivram utpadan koriya se 
nihar kajfe sehay koriya tole, tahar chitrakarer kach hoite 
hiksha kariya esa. Tahai por dey...abhinay dukhte 
asyachha, taher ki nijer sambal kena kadeo nai? Se ki 
si? Biswas kariya tahar upar ki keno bishayei nirbhar 
kriber jo nai? Yadi taha satya hay, taba dabin den dileo 
amon sakal lek ke ticket bechite nai. A to addalater 
akhha sekekha deo nay je, pratyek kathaleko halaf kariya praman 
karikyer karite haibe. Tahare biswas kariya janya, ananda 
kariya janya asyachha, tahedigake a a thakmir ayojan keno? 
Tahara nijer kalpana sakti baiite chabi bandha kariya asa 
na - Katak tumi bojhalbe, katak tahara bujhibe, tomar sehit 
tahar eirup spasher samendha. Bilatre nakale amr a theatre 
kariyashhi, toha bhurakranta skta sfeta padarthe. Tahake 
nadano sakti, tahake spamar skaler darwar kachhe amiya deo 
duhasaddha; tahate Lakahmir penchali Saraswater padake 
pray achchanna kariya achhe. Tahate Kavi O guneer pratibhar cheye
classical Sanskrit drama and popular Bengali Jatra. The form of Jatra, of which he had gained personal experience in his boyhood, was more or less obsolete. He was not oblivious of its rawness, its lack of refinement, its looseness. Obviously it cannot take the place of the theatre, which, despite its degenerated state, has come to stay as a recognised institution. The discipline, the compactness, the speed and movement of the theatre, minus its gross artificiality must be fused with the freedom, the emphasis on 'imagination', the rejection of material accessories, the open air atmosphere of the Jatra-art. His originative genius slowly evolved a form of play-making and staging that grew almost naturally, out of the peculiar circumstances of the Shantiniketan life. In 1900, 'Sadarotsava' was written and staged. The play is conspicuous for its simplicity of treatment, spiritual note and dramatic

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1. 'The Yatras, without any regular stage, without scenery, without the artistic display of costumes, could arouse emotions which nowadays we scarcely experience while witnessing semi-European performances given on the stages of Calcutta theatres.' - Dinesh Chandra Sen, 'History of Bengali Language and Literature,' p.230.
2. 'Jatra performances used to take place in our house from time to time.' 'My Boyhood Days.' - p.22.
appeal. Both the ideals of dramatic composition and theatrical representation underwent a change. The complexity of passion, usually regarded as the sign of his "human interest", yields place to a spiritual awareness. The sources of external appeal go out for a marked inwardness. The speech relieved of whatever theatrical accent there was in his earlier plays. Songs in his earlier plays—"Raja-O-Hani" and "Visarjan"—did not grow out of the plays themselves, as in these. In the use of songs permeating the drama is noticed the effort to revive the spirit of the Jatra. The soul of the Jatra lies in its songs, and Tagore is our greatest song-maker. It is but natural that the musical genius of the Jatra should appeal to the musical genius of Tagore. In his later experiments along this line, the band of singers, "Ganerdal", has a function similar to that of the 'Juri' parties in the Jatra. It is of interest to note that this "Ganerdal" becomes a permanent feature of his song-dramas and dance dramas, where acting on the stage was accompanied by the singing of a band of singers. The Jatra was concerned with set religious and legendary themes; he turned it into an aesthetic medium for revealing man in his cosmic relationship.

A new theatrical ideal above all implies a new ideal of acting. At Shantiniketan where he had to build everything anew he developed his own individual style of acting.
acting, the vital medium of all drama. About the result of his experiment in orienting a new style of acting, Tagore says, 'Those who have witnessed these boys playing their parts in dramatic performances have been struck with their wonderful power as actors. It is because they are never directly trained in the histrionic art, they instinctively enter into the spirit of the plays in which they take part, though these plays are no school-boy dramas. They require subtle understanding and sympathy. With all the anxiety and hyper-critical sensitiveness of an author about the performance of his own play, I have never been disappointed in my boys, and I have rarely allowed teachers to interfere with the boys' own representation of the characters.'

1. "Raja: Ta ci chheter dalke bhala kore sekhane ho-chhe?
   Mantri: Akebarei na.
   Raja: Ki sarbonas! Thole -
   Mantri: Kabi bolen, burora chheleder yadi sekhate jai, ta hole o chheler peke jabe - chhelei thakbe na. Sei janya oder natya sekhanoe hoi ni. Kabi bolen, sahaje khushi haber vidya oder kachh theke amrao sikho.

   Mantri: Pachhe jara hat-pa narte siksha pasche tader daka hai ai bhaye se nijel senyasi sajbar bhar niyeche. Se bale, palar bishoyta jeman anarthak palar neter dal o temni ashikshite.'


2. 'My School', Personality, p.144.
It was an ideal of acting boldly forswearing the technique and mannerism of the public stage-artists who have no pretensions to artistic conscience or conformity to the principles of artistic truth, who invariably aim at scoring theatrical effect by 'restless mimicries of the surface of life'. For him theatrical activity is essentially an aesthetic activity. The art of acting as professed and practised by him tends to be, natural, spontaneous, suggestive and simple as against being affected, stereotyped, eccentric and imitative. The emphasis is on the exercise of the imagination. Where the art of acting is truly an art, like all other arts, it depends for its success on the active co-operation of the audience. This ideal of acting springs from the most natural histrionic impulse, which uses the unsophisticated, direct and simple devices. Care was taken to make acting not appear, as 'acting'. The performers were taught, rather inspired, not to 'act' the parts but to 'be' the parts.

This ideal of acting contrasts sharply the rhetorical and restless mode of acting associated with the histrionic method of the Western professional theatre. His criticism of Henry Irving, its best exponent, is helpful.

in understanding his own ideal. He deprecates, in unequivocal terms, the tendency in actors to imitate the outer and the real at the expense of the inner. He condemns the tendency to exaggeration and distortion which shroud the spirit which is intended to be brought out by the art of acting. He advocates, above all, the value of restraint.

The emphasis in these plays inevitably falls on the "ensemble playing", the team acting, for these are plays without any outstanding character towering above the others as in his earlier plays, 'Kaja-O-Rani' and 'Visarjan' and later plays 'Nair Puja', 'Chandalika' etc. The roles in these new plays are not cut out for professional stage heroes who whenever they attempt to impersonate the characters with their set stage technique find them rapid and refusing to come to life. These plays which

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appear to be outwardly lacking in actable qualities, require a different mode of acting, more delicate and more sensitive to their spiritual contents. The interest in a play like 'Dakghar', 'Achalayatan', 'Falgunee', 'Sarodatsab', lies in the totality of the dramatic design without undue emphasis on any single character or any single scene, the whole drama depicting a process of life. This special characteristic in these plays, was not only suitable for the young 'unskilled' performers of the Shantiniketan school but also in a way required the assistance of performers, who could sacrifice their 'individuality' to the need of the drama. "The less the actor creates or recreates and the more he remains simply an adaptable tool in the hands of the dramatist, the better actor he is."

An ideal correspondence between the dramatist and the actor is only rarely seen in theatrical activities, whether amateur or professional. "Acting (says Granville-Barker) is an art of collaboration - even as life is. The dramatist gives the actors a scheme of characters more or less detailed. To it the actors bring themselves, realizing it, physically, psychologically, emotionally and setting it in action. The content and importance of the contribution each party makes will very much - as in life.... The partnership between dramatist and actor approaches the mystic."

2. Ibid, p.35.
The dramatic mood in his plays from 'Sarodatsav' to 'Raktakarabi' requires a different handling. For example, 1 Dakghar's 'implicitness' demands a more spiritual and imaginative response from the actors who need not have so much of what we understand as 'technique' of acting. The relations between Anam and other characters are not only vital to the play, but also the play itself. The play is the drama of these relationships. Besides, the play is pervaded with a pensive wistful mood, a hunger for the outside world. If the staging cannot bring to life through suggestive outer movement the subtle drama of the interaction of personalities of different temperaments and principles, and intuitions of life, and this overhanging wistfulness of the whole dramatic pattern, and the underlying implications of human soul with which the drama's little world is charged, it is bound to be a dismal failure. The spiritual

1. "There are" says Granville-Barker, the celebrated playwright-actor-critic, "roughly - considering both today's and yesterday's - two methods of play-writing, that demanding explicit interpretation, and that in which much of the meaning is left implicit, to be conveyed by the actors, not in words nor even in very forthright action, but largely by demonstrating the sort of pattern made in the relations and attitude of the characters toward each other and in the contrasts between them, the dialogue stressing the significance of the design. Marlowe's, for example, is wholly 'explicit' drama, as is more primitive drama than his. So are Shakespeare's earlier plays, and his method in general remains throughout as explicit as the nature of play or character will allow it to be. Chekhov's method, on the other hand, and in quite another fashion Masterlinck's or Yeats', are implicit in the extreme." - Ibid, pp.39-40.

2. Every drama depends on the special theatrical technique that is necessary for its representation on the stage. A memorable instance is of Chekhov's play, 'The Seagull', which proved a complete failure when presented (1896) at the Imperial Theatre in the stereotyped mode of acting,
implication in these plays, (Serodatsav to Raktakarabbi) is so subtle that unless the performer grasps it, the staging is likely to be a meaningless empty show. As Tagore himself says, "Falgunee sambandhe bhabnar katha ai je, O jinisthi atyanta delicate – or aktu suttra chhinna hoye gele or khei khunje paoa shakta ha".

Despite his adoption of Jatra ideal and rejection of scene (drishyapat) in 'Rangamancha', Tagore's ideal of stage setting is not immediately realized. Painted scenery was a feature of his theatrical activity in the pre-Shantiniketan period. In place of the painted scene comes "Natural setting" (swabhik drisya), the flat 'perspectival' setting being replaced by the three-dimensional object-setting, in Shantiniketan. The locale in these plays being set in open air natural surroundings,

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but was an epoch-making stage success, when the newly founded Moscow Art Theatre staged it (1896) with the delicate and subtle technique appropriate to it.

1. "The case of Maeterlinck is somewhat analogous. One false note struck by an actor in a play like, 'The Intruder' or 'Palles and Melisande' might spoil the effect of the entire scene. Many scenes in "the Blue Bird", even in the well intentioned productions in America and France, were nearly ruined." - The continental Drama', B.H.Clark, p.190.

natural setting goes well with the spirit of the drama. This stage setting, however, shows a tendency towards the illusion of reality. Later, in the course of the historic staging of 'Falgunee' (1916) his stagecraft, undergoes a further change, seeking to emphasize the spiritual, the subtle, the inmost, through the employment of decorative stage-symbols with ready sensuous appeal, as is natural when outstanding artists like Gaganendranath Tagore and Abanindranath Tagore look after the stage-setting. The locale of Falgunee is an open air natural scene under the vast sky, which is suggested by the deep-blue curtain at the back with the moon and the stars fixed on it. This deep-blue background curtain comes to stay, because it so naturally fits in with the 'cosmic' atmosphere of his plays. The art of stage setting in Dakghar on the occasion of its performance at Jorasanko (1917), advances a step further. The scene of the dramatic action is the inside of a typical Bengali village cottage-home, where the central character is a virtual prisoner. The stage artists built a cottage-interior on the stage. Various subtle touches, that brought out the soul of the play, were introduced for effect, as the suggestive use of the 'vacant' stand for the bird, from which the bird had flown away.

1. "Dakghar" abhinay habe, stage-a-darrar ñedar upar Nandalal khub kare alpana ankle. Akhane khador chalaghar banano holo. Taktay korr lai rang, phare kulungy, choukather mathey latapata, thik jekhane jemanti darker jena akti paragenye ghar.....Sei neel pardar chand 'Dakghare'-o alo .....Ami akta pitaler pakhir dand-o ak pashe jhuliye deosalum, Nandalal balle, pakhi? Ami ballum, no pakhi ude gache sudha dandti thak. Sekhi dandti galpor idea-r sange mile gelo. Sabseshe ballum......Jac dokan theke akti khub
The experiment in staging 'Pulgunee' and 'Dakghar' made theatrical history. For the first time after the lapse of several centuries, theatrical aesthetics were seen at work, which without drawing inspiration from an alien source, regained the lost glory of the Indian theatre tradition of the classical period. His experiments to evolve an individual theatrical style attained in the performance of these plays a degree of definiteness. This new style of acting and stage representation came to be acknowledged as a distinctive type of aesthetic activity in the realm of the theatre.

His achievement drove him on to further theatrical experiments. He has moved in all his creative activities from one style to another, instead of holding on to one particular or special form. That is why we see Tagore soon outgrowing this brilliantly picturesque, though suggestive, decor. It is inevitable, that in the hands of great painters

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The stage would tend to emphasize the picturesque. In the third and the final phase of his experiment in establishing his ideal stage-art, he turns to free the stage from pictorial and decorative elements. Henceforth he turns to a proscenium, unadorned and unfurnished, presenting a neat open space for the performer's histrionic talents.

Henceforth, acting, which is the axis of the drama, becomes the main focus of imaginative stimulation. In 1929 on the occasion of the staging of Tapati he re-stresses his stage ideal, by repeating his disapproval of the use of 'drisya-pat' (scenic representation) which, he says, restricts the exercise of the imagination of the audience. His theory accords with all theatrical activity, ancient and modern, where realistic mimesis is not the chief concern of the

To Tagore the performance of a play was an aesthetic activity, a synthesis of a variety of sister arts, music, dance, colour, sculpture. In evolving this new stage-ideal Tagore got the inspired help of Sri Nandalal Bose, who was mainly responsible for giving practical shape and form to all Tagore's latter-day aesthetic ideals in staging a drama. The restrained but suggestive simplicity of Nandalal's stage-art leaves on the audience an impression of 'art hidden by its perfection'. The stage is made to function increasingly like the frame of a picture, not attracting attention to itself but heightening the effect of the picture within. The bareness of the stage is charged with significant atmosphere. Often architectural designs are seen on the stage not as decorative but as suggestive symbolic properties, stimulating the imagination of the spectators. The atmosphere is heightened by the harmonious blending of a few colours. The richly coloured costumes of the characters are set in relief against this suggestive background. His ideal stage, through experiments, took this form in the making of which entered meticulous aesthetic sensibility.

1 (a) "We have no trace in the drama of any attempt to introduce scenery into the representation. They remained as a background throughout the entertainment, and it was in the main left to the imagination of the spectator, aided by the descriptions of the poet, to conceive the beauties of the situation supposed to be presented to his eyes." — A.B. Keith, 'The Sanskrit Drama' — p.364.

(b) "For a dramatist.... who is a dramatist and wishes to hold his audience by the play itself, it is an advantage to have as few scenes as may be." A.C. Bradley. Shakespeare's Theatre and Audience. Oxford Lecture on Poetry. p.383.
This bare but effective stage is suited to every type of drama he has written, whether musical, or verse, or prose, or dance dramas.

The participation of girl students from now onwards opened up fresh avenues of theatrical experimentation. Female roles were conspicuous by their absence in the early Shantiniketan plays (excepting Raja). In contrast, the female characters in the plays of this period predominate, so much so, that they are the heroines in most of the plays which are named after them. Male characters in plays like Natir Puja and Chandalika are reduced to the barest minimum. In the three dance dramas the central focus is the heroine. When dance came to be used as the histrionic medium the importance of women characters was all the more keenly felt. For in his dance ideal the graceful movement of female dancers occupied a superior place. Not that he was blind and indifferent to the masculine vigour of the male dancer. This he used to set off and accentuate the sweeter movements of the nimbler bodies. The delicate sensitivity of these heroines, their strongly marked emotional waverings, all are reflected through this gorgeously impressive but complex medium of the dance-art. As a result of regular cultivation of dance, soon a new school of dance-art grew up at Shantiniketan, with the dance-technique of many schools of dancing, Indian and foreign. With his deep understanding
of the spirit of each, he creatively fused together different dance-forms and technique. As he had earlier liberated music from the academic formalism of classical rigidity, so he did set himself at a later date to liberate dance from its antiquity.

Dancing is not merely acting, but a heightened mode of acting. The essence of traditional Indian drama consisting of poetical — musical — dramatic appeal, dance is its fittest medium of representation, for it is through the symbolic, rhythmic gestures that the profound ideas and themes, elemental moods and sentiments, of the drama can be revealed and recreated before the spectator-audience. Dancer performers

1(a). "Dance is closely associated throughout the history of the Indian theatre with the drama... which finds the origin of drama in the sacred dance, a dance of course accompanied by gesture of pantomime character combined with song, and later enriched by dialogue, this would give rise to the drama." — A. Keith, 'The Sanskrit Drama' p.26.

(b) "The word 'abhinaya' may be said to be the means for disclosing to the spectators the beauty or manifold pleasurable aspects of the play which cannot adequately be appreciated by simply reading its texts. In consideration of all these facts, abhinaya may be termed the 'suggestive imitation' of the various moods and emotional states of characters in a play. Therefore inspite of an apparent similarity between abhinaya and acting, the latter term whenever it is used in connection with Hindu plays does not mean the same thing. From the word nata and Nata ... it appears that the ancient Hindus had their plays 'danced' and not 'acted'... Hence in course of the abhinaya of a play which is but a poem to be seen (drisya-kavya), rhythm in all its possible aspects plays an important part. And its rhythmical character made it suitable for the suggestion of the deepest and the most tender emotions which tend to evoke 'rasa' in the spectators. Unless we start with the conception of abhinaya as something allied to dancing, and meant for suggesting ideas and emotions..."
as in his song-plays, imitate the spirit of things they represent, such as the mood of waiting or expectation, of exultation, of a moral conflict or of self-fulfilment and so on. This kind of dancing ignoring the rigid adherence to classical dance-grammar concentrates on suggesting through gestures the soul of the thing imitated. That is why dancing inevitably entered into the realm of his drama as a special expedient of histrionic expression. Drama, dance and song co-exist here each sacrificing its individual self-sufficiency for a higher artistic coalescence. There is noble dramatic poetry here, but conceived in terms of the theatre. There is eloquent music here but as the vehicle of the drama's vision and as the basis of the dance. There is also the inspiring dance gesture, but only to subserve the central purpose of the drama which has shaped it. The miracle, for it is nothing short of it, could happen because of another miracle, the miracle of one man being at the same time, a poet, a dramatist, a singer, a dance-connoisseur and a stage-artist.

The theatre is a medium of mimesis. The many ways in which Tagore exploited the histrionic possibilities may be listed as follows: plain acting; acting by musical speech; acting representing song-portion with rhythmical gestures and prose-parts acted plainly; dramatic action emerging through singing unaccompanied by any acting; action

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pantomimed with the libretto sung or recited; dumb show
and shadow acting; song portion sung and danced by the
same player; and finally, dance-acting with singers seated
at a corner of the stage—a mode of acting, that transcends
the limitation of language and soars into the universal
medium of music and dance.

A-dramatic-aesthetic-experience-is-a-much-needed
stimulus-to-the-spirit-of-man. 'Baraha-Mangal', a musical-
Nature-ritual, staged in 1921, marks the beginning of the
new phase. The performance of the Nature-dramas, becomes
a regular feature of Shantiniketan life. Tagore is in-
creasingly interested in the production of his plays.
'Sarodatsav', his drama of man's communion with Nature,
is produced in 1922 by him at a public theatre in Calcutta,
Tagore appearing in the role of the Sanyasi. Next year,
'Bisarjan' is staged in Calcutta, with Tagore playing the
role of Jai Singh. The performance of 'Natir Puja' in
1926, initiates a new theatrical trend, inspiring, with
its simple but moving theatrical style, a new enthusiasm
in the amateur theatrical activity all over the country.
His first experiment in dance-drama was with 'Nataraj'
(1927). 'Topati', 'Raja-O-Rani' recast, with Tagore in
the role of King Vikram, was staged in 1929. 'Shapmochan'
a dance-drama with a human theme, was produced on the pub-
lic stage in 1933. 'Sarodatsav' and 'Raja', are revived
from time to time, Tagore appearing in his favourite roles in the two performances in 1935, (Sarodatsav at Shantiniketan and 'Raja' in Calcutta).

The staging of his three major dance-dramas and the high lights of his theatrical experiments in the last few years of his life. In the last decade of his life when his theatrical aesthetics reached a definite standard, Tagore undertook extensive cultural trips all over India with Shantiniketan troupe of artistes to popularize his new ideal.

Experiments in so different modes of dramatic and theatrical appeal are beyond the scope of the public theatre. Tagore's is a theatrical art, which is beyond the reach of the average performers especially in forms like song-drama and dance-drama, requiring from the performers virtuosity of a special kind and intimate knowledge of its ingredients. For the outsider, the staging of these plays is the most arduous undertaking. The art of Tagore is highly selective. The uninitiated are kept out of this ideal world.

The performance of a Tagore play usually is an aesthetic impression, a thing of beauty, which is not generally associated with the tense world of a (realistic) drama where, "human characters drown our attention in the vortex of their passions. It is an art that presents, through the sensuously

1. "It is an art; it is imagery for eye and ear and mind; it shows a characteristic intertexture." The Art of Drama. R. Peacock. p. 157.
captivating image of beautiful forms, pleasing visions to the eye, that awakens the heart by haunting melodies, — a delight to the ear, that by its spiritual rouse uplifts and liberates the mind. This is what the Indian drama has been doing in the past. Tagore has recaptured that for us in the present.

1. "No dramatist needs all the intensifying factors at once, but every dramatist needs some of them if he is to persuade us that his play has been launched by the imagination, by a need to speak, a vision to tell, and a feeling to be expressed. When these conditions are fulfilled we have the play that is dramatic art and has a style. It is then a picture and a music; a poetic image and a ritual; an illumination and a catharsis; an excitement in life and a serenity above it; a re-enactment in sense and a liberation in idea."

Ibid. - p. 246.