Chapter No. 10.
THE PRESENTATION OF RĀSA-DANCE ON THE STAGE

Every year, from late fifties and sixties onwards, specially in the months of October and November, one comes across a number of advertisements in the news-papers of the Rāsa-Garbā performances, shows of various cultural groups and competitions. Usually the shows are ticketed and draw a large number of crowd from the cross-section of the Gujarāti as well as other communities in large cities, not only of Gujarāta, or Bombay, but also in other cities. A few groups travel abroad to Africa, U.K and U.S.A., providing cultural links, to the Gujarāti community settled there.

The process of transformation from streets to the stage of the Rāsa-Garbā is indeed interesting. In the last few years of the British rule, there was a set-back to the activity of dancing Rāsa and Garbā specially in the cities. The total concentration on the freedom struggle as well as the victorian attitude of looking down-up on the indigenous art activity by the rulers, did not provide any extra time nor the energy and a congenial receptive atmosphere for such an communal activity in the cities. The Rāsa and Garbā went under a cultural cathersis. When after independance, again they resumed the natural course, they werenot the same. A feeling of loss prevailed. To revitalise, slowly various
groups or Mandals were established and competitions organised by the Government and other cultural institutions. Also the need for change, variety and expression of contemporary thoughts prompted new innovations and experiments in the traditional form.

For a few formative years, the forms were presented as they were performed in the streets with slight change in costumes. The contemporary fashion of wearing 'salu' was adopted in Garbha (318) But these Rasa-s and Garba-s were too common and too simple for stage presentation. People looked for more creative and artistic expression. The new experiments with costumes, choreography individual dance movements and other technical tools of a theatrical production at times created beautiful images but I certainly feel the inherent spontenity is almost lost in the process.

The city men hardly ever perform the Dandiya-Rasa. So its presentation on the stage has not much caught the imagination of the city choreographers. Small boys in school are taught the Dandiya-Rasa by their teachers. There are youth forums and at times young enthusiastic teachers do bits and pieces of choreography. The Valmika yuvak mandala of Harijana-Vaasa, Jamanagar is one such group. Young boys of the area and the community perform the Dandiya-Rasa with various choreographic patterns (294, 295), popular Rasa-songs and simple body
movements. The costume of corani and kediyun add a rustic flavour and tradition of the pastoralists.

Choreographic patterns.

They use lighted torches in place of Danda (296). At times women join the group with a mixture of synthetic sarees and machine embroidered canias (299,300). They only prefer panchia or Athia which look dull and boring. Most of the city dwellers could imitate only the costume or maximum the musical accompaniment. A few could successfully perform the movements of the agricultural and such communities. These stage presentations (297, 298) invariably fail in presenting the real graceful yet vigorous Rasa dances. Many times girls perform Dandia-Rasa with using the sticks in place of claps (301) with graceful movements. With the competitions and presentations outside the villages of these traditional forms, each village has a few groups, who on and off perform in the cities. But they are able to retain the flavour of spontenity and vigorous grace, the specific features of the community, in their Rasa-s as to a larger extent most of them continue
performing them in religious and social context. The young Ahira boys and boys dressed as girls, decked in their festive clothes (302, 303, 304) do receive applause from the crowds.

More than Dandiā-ṛasa, Rāṣda or Garbī, it is the Garbā which has been the form, presented on the stage by various professional and amateur groups. Keeping the style of clapping and whirling as is common and popular (305 to 311) to all women, new movements are created within the framework. The new elements of walking with slight swaying hip movement, with claps or snapping fingers, at times create most unnatural and crude movements (312, 313, 314, 315) or add to the grace and beauty of the Gujarāti Garbā (316, 317). The walking (320) and running (319, 321, 322) instead of taking the 'thesā' is very common. The couples or pairs are formed for choreographic as well as movement variations. The pairs hold hands and clap with each other (324) as in Leta-rasaka, make sculptural forms by the pair alternately going up and down (335, 330). Create a feeling of two circles in one, by alternate dancer facing in and out from the centre, (325) clap with hands with the partners (327, 328) and so on. The chain formation or Srūkhala is formed by holding shoulders (331) or hands (332). The circle is chained and broken up (unchained) with slight touching of hands (333, 334). But apart from such popular, traditional stances and formations, some classical dance positions have also entered the realm of the Garbā. The
putting of the heel in front about a foot away from the other one, the hands correspondingly going down and up, correspond to one of the Naṭṭā-ādavu of Bharatanāṭyam (335, 336, 337). Such movements usually are executed with bad stances and do not look good. Depending on the individual capacity and imagination of the dance composer, and the performers, many variations are brought about, some harmonious others mediocre. (339, 340, 341).

The goph dance presented on the stage by city girls (343) has more colour with beautiful costumes, colourful strings and music than any movement variations. Apart from claps and snapping, (capti) Khaṇḍari, Maṇjiira, lamps, Ghadā etc. are now employed to bring variations. The walking, (344, 345) whirls, (347, 348) chain formations, (349) concentric circles, (350, 351) different styles of clapping, (353, 355) body turns, (352) find place in the Garbā with the Ghadā-s.

The earlier Garbā-s were sung with Khemto, Hinca or Dipacaṇḍī tālas. Now the same tāla-s and their variations are played on a number of percussion instruments with passages of slow, fast and off-beat rhythms. From the Desī Dhāla-s
and Garbā-s of folk poets, Narsi or Dayārāṇa, the Garbā-s are sung in profusion of melodies in classical Rāga-s like Sārangā, Khamāj, Dhamāri, Durga, Tilak-kāmod, Bhairavi and so on, with poetry of many a new poets. For the stage shows, the Garbā performers do not sing. The background music is provided by expert professional singers and a full orchestra with sitar, violin, tabla, Dhol, Nāla, Bongo etc.

There have been experiments like Jalataranga where five Garbās linked together corresponded to the stream, well, lake, river and the ocean, with a common factor of water. There have been Garbā-s of Asthanāyika-s. The All India Radio Ahmedabad, last year presented a comprehensive show titled "He Ma tvam eva sarvam", showing the growth of Garbā with the mother goddess cult to the modern context.

The costumes are hired from the shops or are specially made. The usual colours are ever popular red, green, yellow and blue in their multiple shades. There is a whole lot of machine embroidery and Jari used. Usually ornaments are of white metal. Some costumes have an aesthetic appeal but mostly they are over decorative and gaudy.

Going on the stage for the performance needs a lot of practice by the participants. The number of dancers have decreased. The tradition where the audience is the performer and vice-a-versa now has a wall of proceenium arch. It has
become a stylised form which needs definite preparation. The religious and social context have no relevance. The dis-association from its basic qualities would let the Garbā be a lively popular dance or a museum piece.