

WHEN experts in the fields of physics, social science, music, dance and art begin to extend themselves in a cross-cultural meeting, the discourse inevitably hovers on the borders of disciplines.

Do the borders of our work and vocation become the 'borders of our lives' as the *Rolling Stones* once said in their pop song?

If of a serious and excavatory bent of mind, then the limits borders and boundaries of our work would surely make their correspondence with the lives that we lead and, the philosophical peregrinations could last forever.

Since, they can be so deep and so long, a very sensitive Anke Weigand-Kanzaki took on the initiative of setting up a seminar-workshop in continuation of one of the finer rituals of the Max Mueller Bhavan and the National Centre for the Performing Arts in creating interdisciplinary encounters.

She'd set the tone for the seminar when she urged for the need to dream and transcend rigid cultural norms and precision-locked theories — a vision broadly affirmed by the participating scholars and performers.

The German artists who came here and displayed a sample of their work positing new paradigms for art, were also making an appeal for the accommodation of the accident and, the necessity of working in contiguity with natural elements. The seething issues of ecology, or pollution enter aesthetic statements in simple eloquent ways.

We can then locate those so-called defining moments of an era in the work of such artists. We may see that their directions are being propelled by a new and modern *angst*.

The artist reacts by changing perceptions, transforming modes of seeing and believes in transcending the *angst* and the boundaries in an every-which-way of an individual temperament.

Fridhelm Klien's inclinations could be seen in the light of revolt against deified objects and the whole marketable circumstance of art. His paper which reads like a list of urgent refrains, stresses the joy of 'tilting over' of being on 'an edge' and being 'carried over' or making a 'glide' on a wave of experience. The body is a cold-warm, sensuous vehicle for the imagination to take flight. His installation prepared for the workshop was an attempt at showing the natural boundaries as created by evaporation from a box containing a mix of water and graphite powder.

Another kind of focus on 'original' activity or natural laws is manifested in the installation of Michaela Scheleuning who uses charcoal and

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paper and video film projection to emphasise human intervention in nature, metamorphosis and rejuvenation through energies such as fire.

On another plane, the dancer-choreographer, Chandralekha seeks a 'renewal of taut energy' 'a recovery of breath'. Along with the tensions of holding the body and electric, in yogic *asanas* and rejoicing in its controlled movements.

The sense of design with dancers and a space, in her programme, *Prana*, is a meditation in itself. It makes the awareness heighten towards earthy entities, immanently poised for levitation and spin into the astral strata of our universe.

The revulsion of being shelved or hung upon a wall for an arid immortal future, finds its own playful expression with Benno Kaiser, who monumentalises the relationship between art and nature through his

massive sand sculpture — figures and faces that stand impermanently; he piles them into form at the edge of the sea.

They appear as spectres and will disappear with the lush white tide, but their moments of appearance and visibility warn us about hazards to come. And as spectres must haunt, Kaiser sees to it that they do so with witty oracular joy. He should have made a great encounter with Manmohan Mohapatra, our own sand sculptor from Puri.

Also riding the alarmist wave is a multi-dimensional person, Jochen Kirchhoff who is engaged in the history of physics, the philosophy of music and depth ecology. The 'crisis of mankind' demands a transformation, a de-conditioning of cultural habits, he says.

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with its noise. Though everyone might imagine he or she knows Beethoven's 9th Symphony, real listening, was being denied as commercial emphasis of being seen at a concert hall was more important than listening. He calls for a meditative approach, pointing to an absence of spiritual traditions in the west.

The revolts in the music world as shown by atonal music and minimal music made attempts for a new consciousness of spirituality but, a state of stupor could hardly be considered an experience of transcendence. Kirchhoff, while acknowledging the modernity of composers like Phillip Glass and his view of music being a 'pure sound medium', prefers western classical Romantic music which, if approached in the right way offers meditative and spiritual enlightenment. The great Romantic, Richard Wagner had made

mention of hypnotic sound patterns and claimed 'supreme bliss' as the ultimate goal. This comes close to the Oriental shaping of the aesthetic values around music, he says.

Transcendence and transformation which seemed to have become the operative words in the discussions were once again used to describe the change that took place in the process of achieving Buddhahood or enlightenment.

Kishori Amonkar's exposition on the aesthetic attitude in music approximates the idea of 'supreme bliss'. She elaborated on the concept of 'The Feel', a state of mind which in its responsive condition can be transformed into Bliss. She explained the intricacies of the Yaman raag matrix and said that the limits, borders, and boundaries fuse, as music manifests itself in fluid expression. It rests on a structure as does language but a shift from an emotional state of mind to a purely tonal realm was necessary in high order music.

Though the term ethnomusicology is under doubt, chiefly by social theorists of the third world, Ashok Ranade culls his investigations in music and drama under this label. Fortunately it remains a nomenclature (for research limits one imagines). Three song makers Amir Khusru, Nidhibabu, and Honaji Bala were presented as deviant and dynamic creators of the genre of the song. They move away from the conventional musical practise of their times, from the common modes, and incorporate new melodies, words and rhythms. The boundaries of the song form are truly blurred.

While the Persio-Arabic and Brajbhasha forms make an amalgamation in the songs of Khusru, the Bengali *tappa* of Nidhubabu, is a curious mix of the Punjab desert melodising method and the Bengali folk language. Honaji Bala creates the genre of the *baithakichi lavani*, singing at lower pitch and in slower tempo to achieve 'delicacy' and 'persuasiveness'.

The most important point made by Ranade was that a merged Islamic-Hindu consciousness had been evolving in the musical world. This was because of an acceptance of each others 'ultimate values' and that music, especially the song could adapt to change and was in fact an indicator of cultural change.

How far these equations work in precise or one-to-one ways is of course a vexed question but, Ranade's observations could enervate the researcher in the sociology of music to link music and society in non-mechanical illuminations.