

Thoughts, Values and Culture: The Performing Arts

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In 1818 the Maratha armies were defeated at Khadki by the British. However, the cultural defeat of the Maratha people could hardly be dated so securely. Cultural events may find chronological placements but not so the processes leading to them. Even to identify events as 'culture' is problematic and there is no way to avoid an element of arbitrariness. Yet, the exercise of identifying and examining cultural events is worthwhile since it is impossible to initiate and channelize desirable social action or slow down/obstruct its undesirable march unless cultural processes are studied. Investigations into the performing mazes of a society are of special significance because they lead directly to the inner working of the societal mind ordinarily inclined to keep sensitive significances unwritten or even non-verbalized.

Against this background I attempt here a specimen analysis of the performing situation which obtained in Maharashtra during the period, roughly between 1800-1920.

A convenient starting point is offered by Nana Phadnis (1742-1800), chief adviser to the last two Peshwas - Sawai Madhavrao and Bajirao II. Phadnis, even while suffering from chronic illness and multiple disorders of the ear and stomach during his last years, once instructed the Maratha army commanders campaigning in the North to procure two items: a well-crafted perfume-container and two sitars (Bhave 1935:317). This, of course, is not a full-scale cultural 'event'-at the most a cultural 'happening'; however, it is symbolic of the cultural need felt in Maharashtra during the ensuing years for a sophisticated and sensuous art. I will examine the situation that leads to such a conclusion.

Artistry and Craftsmanship

The kirtan, or musico-religious discourse, as it developed into the form known as Naradiya kirtan during this period, came to rely more and more on the

writings of the Pant-kavis, or learned poets, for their contents. Shridhar (1958–1729), Madhvamunishwar (1680–1734), Amritrai (1698-1753), Mahipatibuwa Taharabadkar (1715-90) and Moropant (1724–94) became the mainstays of the kirtan performance.

These and other poets who followed the trail specialised notably in conscious, literary craftsmanship, often reaching artistic heights. Stylistic variety, prosodic mastery, richness of vocabulary and an attractive use of language made their compositions invaluable communicative supports. The kirtankars were deliberate, selective and effect-oriented; and constructed a kirtan performance with care. Artistry thus replaced the inspirational, spontaneous outpourings of the Sant-kavis, or saint poets. It must be admitted that though the saint poets usually impressed with their sincerity of purpose and intensity of expression, their untutored genius as well as their didactic zeal often made their product monochromatic. The Naradiya format is, by contrast, protean. The kirtan-performers' move to seek support in the 'learned' poets' writings was therefore artistically inevitable. The 'learned' poets offered a literary texture with a shimmer of its own which could hold the listener's attention—a prime requisite in any performing situation. It is not suggested here that the saint poets lacked variety in poetic-literary forms; but by the eighteenth century, these forms had lost their novelty. They also proved inadequate in one more aspect—the inherent scope allowed for musical elaboration.

In this context it is significant to note that the learned poets appear to favour the pada (roughly, a poetic composition) as a form of composition. It is difficult to define a pada since the form as well as the term enjoyed changing musical and literary connotations from the twelfth century onwards. However, some important features of the form as they appear in the work of the learned poets are noteworthy.

Firstly, a pada is a short poetic-literary unit which is easily comprehensible. The shortness of the constructional unit is further well-matched by the inclusion of a single, simple or at least identifiable emotion closely connected with the daily life of the common man. The didactic tone is not overbearing or harsh and is usually well-camouflaged. It is true that compositions of the saint poets also exhibit similar features but the overall tone of the devotional compositions is frequently demanding and commanding while the pada-composers tend to commend and persuade.

The padas customarily have a refrain and two or more stanzas. The refrain is 'catchy'-well-chiselled and dramatic, in that it seems to address the listener directly. The stanzas display a notable metrical variety and are structurally well-marked. As William Jones, the pioneering Indologist, had noted, the frequent metrical changes in Indian

literature were clear instances of a sophisticated, poetic modulation comparable to musical modulation (Jones 1994). Padas reveal a high degree and conscious interplay of sound-structures through the distribution of assonances, alliterations, rhymes and especially end-rhymes. The neatness of pada structures can hardly be rated too highly. They therefore become compact entities both quotable and memorable. Quotability depends mostly on successful use of well-turned, aphoristic and short constructional units. Memorability, on the other hand, hinges on the capacity of compositions to create a niche in the listener's mind. This last feature is linked inevitably to another pada feature, their musicality.

It is clear that the learned poets' metrical mastery, and especially the skilful changes they introduced within the compositional structure, proved conducive to rhythm, in the sense of tala, or a precomposed pattern of rhythmic beat (as distinct from laya, or tempo realised through a rhythmic beat). Thus pada music was endowed with a presentational compulsion. Plato's truism that 'tunes are persuasive while rhythms are compulsive' is thus well-proved in the pada. The padas stay in the memory because they are set in a tala frame. An accompanying feature is that the padas are frequently conceived in tune-moulds already in circulation. This is the reason why the same tune often acts as a structural mould for many compositions. The padas are 'hummable' and therefore lovable.

Finally, padas become musically more potent than other, and earlier, forms on account of an inherent, in-built provision for musical elaboration. Padas are not verses to be recited but compositions to be sung. Individual musicians, depending on their interpretative ability, can sing them 'more or less' expansively. Singers can, in other words, elaborate on musical ideas through padas which are expected to form a bouquet. Improvisation, variation, elaboration, accentuation and all other musical strategies sanctified by Indian musical systems get a firm foothold in the pada.

Performing Artistry: A Variation

The growing desire of the Maharashtrians to express themselves more artistically was hardly confined to the *kirtan*. Corroborative evidence is provided by yet another performing formulation owing its genesis to the period under discussion.

The well-known Marathi form lavani (an erotic song presented mostly by women) has a sub-genre known as baithakichi lavani (which is presented by women in a seated position) which offers a variation on the feature discussed earlier.

Even though the beginnings of the lavani are traced back to the 1560s, the later days of the Peshwa-rule brought it into prominence, if not to perfection. However, of immediate relevance is the specific contribution of Honaji Bala (1754-1844), a practitioner of tamasha, a folk dramatic form, of which the lavani is a component. Honaji's technical and aesthetic achievements were that he lowered the pitch of singing, slowed the tempo of singing, and set the fashion, at his patrons' desire, of composing in ragas and talas. He also began to employ the tabla, or the classical pair of drums, rather than the dholki, a simpler drum used in folk music, to provide the main rhythm accompaniment to the performer. Lastly, he continued the practice of rendering lavanis with the performer seated--a practice reportedly introduced by his uncle-preceptor, Bala Bahiru.

Each of these features contributed significantly to the final aesthetic impact.

The lowered pitch led to a more varied tonal colour as a wider tonal spectrum became available. It also meant less facial distortions and, consequently, more scope for deliberate and artistic facial expression and angikabhinaya (or bodily and facial movements used in acting). Performance in a lower pitch dictated enclosed and intimate acoustic spaces/surroundings. A music of nuances could therefore be thought of.

The slowing of the tempo, combined with the performer's sitting posture, made room for ada, or acting which accompanies a musical presentation. This was a kind of nrityabhinaya, or acting as part of dance, which was introduced in presentations of ada ki thumri, a thumri accompanied by ada, which formed an important genre of the Hindustani musical system. Abhinaya of this type was 'directed' at the patrons.

The deliberate exploration of ragas and talas not only allowed a free play of individual imagination but also necessitated the 'cultivation' of the singers' native talents. The fact moved their music (and them) nearer to the practitioners of highly codified music. It should be obvious that this is one of the reasons why the lavani, especially the baithakichi lavani, cannot be classified as 'folk' music. The use of the tabla, a tunable membranophone with a well-developed language of its own, also suggests elitist qualities of the form.

To opt for a larger system of art-music (such as Hindustani/Karnatak) and yet to evolve musical forms in the regional language involves no contradiction. However, not every region has taken advantage of this freedom. Bengal with its adaptation of the tappa (originally a form of Hindustani vocal music based on camel-

drivers' folk songs in Punjab) and Maharashtra with its lavani are, therefore, noteworthy examples. An assertion of regional identity may easily be deduced from the emergence of such forms.

It should be noted that the major Brahmin lavani-composers such as Anant Phandi (1744-1819) and Ram Joshi (1762-1812) are not credited with having raised the musical status of the form as Honaji did. The Brahmin composers' background influenced the language-texture of the lavani but no musical innovation can be ascribed to them. Two deductions seem possible: first, that the Brahmins found the lavani-music irresistible and braved social displeasure and other hardships to pursue it-although their contribution to the development of the form was more literary than musical; and second, that a non-Brahmin lavani-practitioner, by contrast, found attractions of classical music irresistible.

Could it be that through his art the non-Brahmin composer was trying to reach and retain a place of desired cultural elevation/prestige/legitimation?

Whether in the incorporated singing or dancing, baithakichi lavani was intent on nakhara or najakat (a graceful delicacy and charm in presentation) which was designed to replace the verve and vigour which had otherwise characterised the form. Further, the urge was to create a regional musical autonomy within a larger system of music. It is also possible to maintain that the musical circulation attempted through the lavani was intended to overcome the increasing stratification of the contemporary society. While doing so, both the caste systems—the chaturvarnya or four-old varna system and the regional jati system-received a real jolt.

Attraction of the Composite

A salient feature of the Naradiya kirtan is bringing together two main elements of any successful communicative endeavour: recreation (as distinct from entertainment) and persuasive, collective education (as different from direct teaching). The gradual emergence of a format with the purvarang or the former half devoted to the discussion of philosophical, metaphysical themes, and the uttararanga or the latter half devoted to the narration of an akhyana (story), bring out the purposefulness of the combination.

However, of equal significance is the composite character of the presentation. Rituals - sacred and secular, discourses - serious and academic, music ranging from recitation to singing, stories displaying the spectrum from straightforward narration to

convoluted plot-construction and finally enactment-these are some of the features that emphasize the compositeness of the Naradiya kirtan. The use of the rang-related terms (in contrast to the rasa-related aesthetics) in the kirtan cannot be a coincidence: it is really a package of musico-dramatic expression, well-designed to keep it distinct from a similar form of the folk-category. The artistry and sophistication of Naradiya kirtan distinguishes it from gondhal, a folk form in which both musical and dramatic elements are involved, and other related forms. Once again verve and vigour are discarded in favour of subtler effects and studied nuances.

In the lavani too, the composite character comes to the fore. The seed of the abhinaya-geet, sown by the dance form known as hallisaka dating from the *Harivamsha*, a devotional text describing Krishna's artistic expression, came to fruition in many Indian regions, with a common core and peripheral variations. Thus we have diverse regional forms consisting of song, instrumental renderings, dance, abhinaya and drama combined with solo expression dominating the show. The compositeness is not merely a coming together of elements in conflict, battling to gain supremacy. Compositeness of expression is a positive trait resulting from an act of aesthetic blending of expressive forces. The 'package' is not accidental and indicates cultural decisions taken to meet certain pressures built up by socio-cultural processes operating over a period. Instances of compositeness of lesser intensity are provided by multi-media presentations which rely more on administering repeated, varied and brief stimuli at quick intervals to ensure the receiver's attention. Such presentations fall short of compositeness because they fail to realise fully the aesthetic possibilities of the media as well as the sense-modalities brought together. It is therefore easy to appreciate that multi-media shows remained alive during the period, but only with diminished power, because the changing cultural atmosphere placed a premium on compositeness. Under the circumstances two alternatives were available: they could either shift allegiance entirely to the folk-category or evolve formats nearer to the acceptable models.

From Participation to Spectatorship

I submit that the most prominent distinguishing criterion devised by the Maharashtrian culture to determine the acceptability of performing formats, during the fast-changing times under review, was the opportunities offered by the formats for silent or non-participatory spectatorship. Traditional performing formats were therefore nudged aside to make room for mimics, magic-lantern shows, circus, music-drama, silent films and finally the talkies. The new forms were responsible for two major

processes. Firstly, they isolated creative persons and creative work, in order to elevate both to the status of artists and art, respectively. Secondly, the forms created conditions favourable to making creative manifestations accessible on an impersonal basis.

It is necessary to remember that the traditional performing formats implied an exchange of services during the performance. The 'act consisted of exchange in terms of both tangibles and intangibles. 'Who did what for whom' and 'who received what from whom for performing what were important questions and they were answered according to the norms—written and unwritten-governing the act. This entire process translated into patronage. On the other hand the new forms engendered a chain of actions in which the receivers could reach the performer and performance through a kind of commodity (irrespective of who the receiver was). Money for the facility of witnessing a performance' was the new act.

The new act meant that the performers could reach a larger number of people but face an increasingly heterogeneous and often indiscriminate audience. For the audiences, the search was then on for formats and performers who could provide 'many in one' to suit diverse requirements. The backdrop naturally proved inviting for Vishnudas Bhave to open a new vein with the musical play *Sita-Svayamvar* in 1843. By the 1880s, the genre of the Marathi sangeet-natak, or musical drama proper, became a reality and displayed the salient features noted below.

Ritualistic presentations expect, allow and encourage participation. The Bhave model initially had vestiges of the participatory theatre, which had, however, disappeared entirely by 1853. Ticketed performances became a routine, publicity and advertisements were intended to woo 'the public', reputed public figures were associated with the performance to lend prestige to the venture, rates were staggered, billing was changed. All these factors pointed to the performer's dependence on the new spectators who enjoyed the option of not attending, since they were not under a ritualistic contract or obligation to participate in the proceedings.

That classical music presentations, which had hitherto relied largely on court and temple patronage, were now compelled to appeal to the general public is also supported by evidence.

It is on record that Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (Gadgil), the pioneering music-missionary, had the credit of presenting the first music-concert by sale of tickets in 1887 at Rajkot.

Two celebrities, namely, Ustad Rehmat Khan and Ustad Alladiya Khan were asked to give a joint performance at a public concert in 1903.

Ustad Abdul Karim Khan customarily presented Sureshbabu Mane, a child prodigy in notating-demonstration, as well as a dog-trick, prior to his own vocal music in jalsas, or musical soirees.

By 1912, efforts were made to bring together music-lovers to form a club of serious music-listeners.

Pandit Vishnu Digambar frequently presented children's 'pyramid' shows and orchestra items (which included curious-looking instruments) prior to serious art-music. Later, he combined a *Ramayana* recitation with classical music concerts.

To meet the challenge posed by heterogeneous and untrained audiences it also became essential to create institutions and establish procedures to initiate listeners. Attempts made in Maharashtra and by Maharashtrians in music-education are well-known. They included the teaching of music in schools, preparing graded syllabi, writing and publishing books on music in regional languages, arranging exhibitions of musical instruments and organizing lecture-demonstrations. One cannot be sure whether claims for being 'the first of its kind' can be easily substantiated, but the events noted below speak for themselves.

The 'first' music-related event	Institutional/individual initiator	Year
Theatre in Bombay	Nana Shankarshet	1842
Book-publication	Bhaushastri Ashtaputre	1850
Institute for training and promotion	M/S Kabraji and Patel, Parsi Gayanottejak Mandal	1870
Promotional Activities through Press, Government patronage	B.T. Sahasrabuddhe, Pune Gayan Samaj	1874 onwards
Lecture-demonstration on music	M.M. Kunte	1884
Book on Hindu music in English	B.T. Sahasrabuddhe	1887
Scientific research and publication	K.B. Deval	1908

Emotional Conversions and Musical Conservatism

A very striking attribute of the Maharashtrian psyche during the period was its readiness to embrace behavioural extremes as a culmination of emotional conversions. I must add that the emotional conversions under discussion do not refer to religion.

Three major instances come to mind from the specifically regional music of Maharashtra i.e. the lavani. Anant Phandi (1744-1819), Ram Joshi (1758-1812), and Patthe Bapurao (1868-1945) plunged headlong into uncharted musical waters when they became practitioners of the tamasha and its music, the lavani. In doing so they deviated considerably from the accepted patterns of their own cultural milieu, reached the top in the new chosen fields of music and yet dramatically turned back to music linked to their original class and caste.

Other comparable and surprising turn-about are provided by Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (1872-1931) and Smt. Anjanibai Malpekar (1883-1974). In spite of a successful career as a performer-teacher in music, Pandit Vishnu Digambar turned to *Ramayana*-recitation as his mainstay. Smt. Anjanibai Malpekar regained her voice after a traumatic loss but left a career in concerts to pursue a life of devotional renunciation. A borderline case is that of Ustad Shinde Khan (1880?-1940) who led a life of an ascetic-musician.

Each of these personalities took decisions which can spark off discussions from various angles, but one thing seems to be clear: they followed instincts and emotions rather than a charted out, well-reasoned course of action. Further, their decisions were against the current, they were anti-conservative, to put it mildly. The shift which each of them registered from one kind of music to another as well as the nature of their musical plunges were reflections on the emotional aridity of the prevailing culture.

On the other hand, the contrary pulls exerted by music as a cultural component bears out an ethnomusicological truth: music is the last aspect of any culture to accommodate changes. There are some telling examples: The first relates to Babu Gokhale (d.1818), Bajirao II's military commander, who had in his employ, Vithoba Gurav Balkrishna of Pune and Manyaba of Satara. They were regarded very highly for their knowledge and skill in playing the mridang, a two-faced horizontal drum. According to their family custom, the Guravs provided mridang accompaniment only to male performers, and only on the occasions of kirtans, bhajans (devotional songs), or mehfiles (musical concerts). In 1841, Sardar Dajisahed Raste made Manyaba an offer of

one thousand rupees for accompanying female singers—an offer Manyaba refused, citing family custom as the reason. The second instance emerges from the corpus of religious music practiced by Marathi Christians. By 1855, nearly three hundred Marathi psalms and hymns were set to Western tunes to be sung in church. However, by 1874, a movement was afoot to render compositions set to indigenous musical tunes. The popularity of the deshi compositions over the 'Western tune-Marathi text combination is self-explanatory.

Yet another instance of musical conservatism is provided by a major dramatic troupe of those times. Pandoba Yevteshvarkar's Waikar Mandali, established around 1890, drew full houses for *Dyutvinoda*—a dramatic production with sixty-five songs, including fifty in major ragas. More importantly, Pandoba employed 'high' classical musical forms such as Dhrupad, Dhamar, Tarana and Sargam, in his music. He, in fact, made his Shankar-Parvati sing a duet in the Dhrupad form! In his preface to the play, Pandoba emphatically asserted his intention of restoring the purity of the *raga* through stage music.

The spectators' appreciation of this musical conservatism in *Dyutvinoda* was not an isolated incident, as is borne out by what followed. The play proved extremely popular and another troupe, the Swadesh Hitachintak Mandali (literally, 'Wellwisher of the Motherland'), run by Janubhau Nimkar wanted to stage it. When they did not get the requisite permission to perform the play, N.K. Gadre (1870–1933) wrote *Akshavipak* (1892), a virtual repeat on the theme and music of Pandoba's play. This new play, also distinguished by a kathak-style dance of Bhil-women set in tala dhamar, proved its popularity until about 1914.

Nationalism and Self-criticism

When Vishnudas Bhave brought his troupe to give drama performances in Bombay, the leaders of the newly-educated class such as Nana Shankarshet, Bhau Daji, and others, thought it their duty to attend the performances and even carry out managerial tasks for Bhave. They did so because they interpreted the staging of Bhave's 'Hindoo drama' as a nationalistic phenomenon.

Mr. Vishnupant Chhatre, the man who achieved the distinction of being the first to put up an indigenous Asian Circus, did so by publicly accepting the challenge offered by a European circus-owner in 1878. Balwant Tryambak Sahasrabuddhe, a pre-Bhatkhande disseminator and systematiser of music, preferred to write a book on

'Hindoo' music and continued to carry on a crusade in the 1880s to prove the advanced state of Indian music. The nationalistic stimulus of such acts could be easily divined. However, in music no 'ism' (let alone an abstract one such as nationalism) can be expressed so patently. Performing acts have more indirect ways of declaring ideological sympathies.

Two instructive examples, of notation and band-music, may be cited. On the one hand, the partisans of 'Indian' music never tired of expressing grave doubts about the efficacy of notation, arguing that Indian music was too complex for that. On the other, all major musicians and music-thinkers industriously invented their own respective systems of notation and claimed that their systems were in reality merely extensions of the tradition. In Maharashtra, Pandit Balkrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjkar, Pandit Vishnu Digambar, Ustad Abdul Karim, Pandit V.N. Bhatkhande - all followed this pattern of reasoning.

The princely states in India vied with one another to set up state-bands and tried relentlessly to get music set in Indian ragas composed for the bands. In a similar strain, efforts were made to organise 'orchestras' and present a concerted playing of instruments; the novelty of this format always found a response from contemporary reviewers. These and other similar instances are the combined products of the forces of nationalism and self-criticism working together.

Stage-plays, being representational, can give vent to societal feelings more directly. Young Kirtane's play (1861), the first bookish' play in Marathi, was of the 'historical genre. As many have perceptively pointed out, the British ban on Indians possessing weapons was largely responsible for the battle-scenes between gods and demons in the early Marathi stage-plays. A close examination of the play-texts or costumes would certainly yield more obvious data. But, as hinted earlier, the performing arts prove to be prophetic on account of non-verbal channels, symbolic processes and the unique formulae of combining observation-participation.

In music, the most logical evidence is the process of musical acculturation. It is significant that though Maharashtra had unequivocally opted for the Hindustani system of music (from the time that the system came to be so identified), no significant music-drama is without an impressive presence of singable tunes from Karnatak music. If 'Lokahitavadi' Gopal Hari Deshkukh, a pioneer reformer, dazzled readers by his heartfelt cultural self-appraisal from 1848, the playwright Bhave anticipated him. Later playwrights, Kirloskar and Deval, broadened the trail. By 1901, however, S.K. Kolhatkar startled his audience by an emphatic use of Parsi theatre music. The verdict was made

clearer by Govindrao Tembe ten years later in the play *Manapaman*. Musical revolutions on the Marathi stage began by deviating from - if not rejecting - the regional music in favour of the sweeter, sensuous and the non-elite.

A similar kind of evidence which is usually ignored is the emergence or acceptance of new performing formats as distinct from the content of a performance. An interesting example is the new vogue of dramatic monologues. Mr. Shankar Kashinath Garge, alias 'Divakar' (1889-1931), wrote his first piece in the genre in 1911 and wrote around fifty of them by 1918. As I have argued elsewhere (Ranade 1991), 'Divakar' felt like marrying the two dramatic 'tones', both of which were foreign to Indian dramaturgy. His readings of Shakespeare and Browning proved conducive to a movement away from a dramatic performing culture which was largely actor-oriented due to performing exigencies.

Yet another instance is that of the fresh, highly self-critical humourous prose of Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar. It began its provocative career from 1902 and owed its success in a great measure to the dramatic, conversational, dialogic mode it adopted. Madhav Narayan Joshi's *Sangeet Sthanik Swarajya athva Municipality (Municipality, A Musical, 1925)* was a satire with musical and cultural spoofs as its chief supports. Musically speaking, Joshi was in fact anticipated by Patankar Mandali's plays dating back to the 1880s. Adjectives such as weird, absurd or grotesque are inadequate to describe the quality of music which Patankar employed, while referring to the Kirloskar tradition as its model!

Conclusion

I have carried out the specimen analysis on four axes: artistry-craftsmanship, participation-spectatorship, attraction of the composite and finally nationalism-self-criticism. Obviously other axes related to patronage, performing and social mobility, importance of the written word as distinct from the pervasive oral tradition, are equally inviting targets. Such an extension of the thematic palette would be highly rewarding. At a later stage some mode other than the bipolar thinking could also be thought of. However, my thrust would be clear: no amount of cultural thinking is likely to be sufficient for a valid reading of a society unless the 'airy' clues of the performing traditions are taken into account

Notes

1. Among the different schools of kirtan, the Naradiya form is distinguished as being a one-man performance (in contrast to the Varkari kirtan which includes group singing of devotional songs) involving dramatics on a larger scale. For more details, see Ranade (1984:109-37).

2. The term Pant-kavis for learned poets also connoted the fact that they were Brahmins; it was contrasted with the term Sant-kavis which referred to a largely non-Brahmin, caste-egalitarian group of devotional poets of the Varkari tradition.

3. The pada-tunes which I am talking of are different from those of traditional vrittas, or prosodic meters. The tunes of traditional vritta constitute a feature which has contributed immensely to the enviable spread of musical literacy in India. Indian prosodic/metrical moulds also function as musical moulds. As self-sufficient musical units they permeate the musico-literary heritage of all strata of the Indian society.

4. The Indian dramaturgical tradition classifies abhinaya into four types: angika (bodily and facial movements), aharya (depending on stage property), vachika (speech, singing, etc.), and satvika (inspired expression).

5. Multi-media presentations are, in actuality, theatric manifestations, provided theatre is not unthinkingly confined to drama and especially to proscenium-framed performances. The most common multi-media forms in Maharashtra are the following: 1) Bahurupi, or a person whose performance (usually in private courtyards) entertains because it involves assuming various disguises, such as a woman, an obese money-lender and a herald inviting all to come to a marriage which has absurd elements in it; 2) Chitrakathi, a performer who tells, with the help of pictures drawn on boards, stories from the Indian epics, in a mode of narration which combines verse-prose as well as singing; 3) Garudi, a snake-charmer who plays a pungi (a blown instrument with a fixed tonal range), making the snake move its head from side to side as if in appreciation; and 4) Nandiwala, an entertainer whose trained bull shows certain tricks, such as 'answering questions, jumping with all four legs simultaneously in the air, dancing in a controlled fashion so that only the faint jingle of the bells around its neck is heard, etc. in a performance which involves no rituals.