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# **STAGE MUSIC OF MAHARASHTRA**

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## NĀNDI

Indian dramaturgy prescribes nāndi to be performed before a dramatic performance proper. When brought off according to the Sāstric edicts, nāndi used to be an elaborate affair with multiple functions. Chiefly, it was expected to suggest the main idea of the play, invoke blessings of Gods, and win the goodwill of the audience. Altogether, nāndi seems to prepare all parties concerned for everything that is to follow. Our discussion follows a similar plan. The present chapter is designed to discuss some preliminary issues, hint at ideas that are later summoned up for consideration and in this way to prepare readers for a rather compact treatment of a theme of major aesthetic and cultural significance.

Music and theatre are long known to have enjoyed a close relationship. It is no longer contended that their intimate association is to be interpreted as a mark of primitive quality in culture. On the contrary, it is widely recognized that theatric impulses of every culture need well-knit operation of music and theatre because in this way the theatric impulses gets a form, a frame-work. The additional advantage is that the frame-work itself succeeds in remaining non-representational. Therefore, it is no wonder to see music and theatre enjoying a relationship that is both congenial and congenital. From Greece to India and from Egypt to Bali, the story is the same.

However, theatre is a term with a very wide connotation. It is so comprehensive that it includes at least four major manifestations of a culture with a well-rounded performing tradition. They are: folk-performances, urbanized and sophisticated dramatic productions, religious and ritualistic presentations as well as gymnastic and acrobatic feats. For any researcher interested in examining inter-relationships, so accommodative a category is enough to prove a despair! To put it somewhat tamely, it means that while examining the role of so multi-faceted a phenomenon as music, it is not advisable to ignore the variety of theatric impulse and lump all its expressions together. If one is keen on getting truthfully acquainted with the historical and aesthetic implications of theatric development taken as a whole, it is imperative that theatre be subdivided into the above mentioned four categories, and further, that each of the categories be inspected separately in respect of its relationship with music before tackling the problem of theatre-music relationship. Hence it is necessary to consider stage-tradition as a separate and self-propelling activity vis-à-vis music, though the backdrop of the total theatric activity obtainable in a culture is not to be entirely ignored. In the pages to follow we try to study the historical and aesthetic development of the stage-music tradition in Maharashtra on the assumption that the temporary and deliberate isolation of the tradition will not be misunderstood.

Viewed as one of the four theatric manifestations, Marathi stage-tradition turns out to be a product of modern sensibility. Of course, using music with dramatic presentation has a long tradition in the region. For instance, Sharangdeva (1175-1247), the famous Maharashtra-based musicologist, refers to dramatic performers hailing from the Konkan area as those employing orchestra for accompaniment. Yet, without exception and hesitation, it must be stated that the modern Indian sensibility in all walks of life has been a cumulative effect of two tendencies coupled together: one constantly surging forward to project Indian identity, and the other displaying a continued urge to assimilate features of occidental culture. Further, it is to be noted that the tendencies were filtered and crystallized through educational processes initiated by the British during the period known after them in Indian history. As different parts of the country came under British rule at different points of time, dating the British influence acquires significance. The chronological gaps between the felt and the actual British influence exist in varying proportions in different regions of India. This is one of the main factors causally related to the fascinating spectacle of India remaining a single nation but simultaneously registering an impact of a cultural federation. There is no doubt that the unmistakable cultural confrontation triggered off by the British presence evoked some responses and reactions that were more or less common throughout the country. Yet, the cultural dynamics as it surfaced through literature, art, attitudes towards change and such comparable items differed from one region to the other. Evolution of stage-music is no exception. Therefore, though the modern stage was one of the common results of British influence in India taken as a whole, evolution of stage-music as such is not found to be as common. Therefore, it is advisable at this stage to briefly note features that distinguish stage-presentations from the three other theatric manifestations mentioned earlier. As suggested, stage-characteristics noted here have a pan-Indian application because the most important motivation that of cultural confrontation with the British - has been an all-India phenomenon. In a way, attributes of the stage-phase of theatric development in India listed here are of mixed origin. Some of them are technical in nature, some are social in character and some others exhibit aesthetic aspects. But this does not detract their validity because theatre in itself being a multi-faceted phenomenon, theatric development is bound to reflect a wide spectrum of socio-cultural change. Major features that mark the emergence of the stage-phase in Indian theatric evolution are:

(1) Acting-area is more perceptibly and efficiently segregated. A very easy mode of bringing this about is to elevate the acting-area. More importantly, this step represents a steady movement towards the use of the proscenium-stage with the related phenomena of wings, drop-curtains, front-curtain etc.

(2) Not only that the acting-area is portioned off, but actors and spectators also become more and more distinguished in the sense that a definite psychology of

viewing matures into a comprehensive and well-entrenched tradition. This is inevitably reflected in the seating arrangement as well as in the attitude of the audience. Hence, it is in this phase that the participant-status of the audience obtained in the folk and ritual theatre is relinquished. In its place we have the spectator - or an onlooker-status and it shapes the destiny of the presentations in various aspects.

In a way the two features discussed above move together and considering them at some length might prove useful.

It may be pointed out that the acting area is effectively isolated even in the case of folk-presentation like *tamasha* and ritualistic presentations like *dashavtara* and *gondhal* in Maharashtra. But in these presentations the audience surrounds the performers and usually separate levels are not used for performers and actors (except in the case of *tamasha*). Secondly, even though entries and exits of the characters, or the beginnings and ends of the performances are signalled and executed by using *pati* (a cloth held up and operated horizontally, as and when required) to screen the actors from the audience, the device cannot be understood as being equivalent to a curtain. It is clear that the front curtain, with its vertical movement and the 'finality-functions' also brings about a sharp division between the actor and the spectator. The division represents an important departure from the earlier, non-stage phase because it is symptomatic of a change in sensibility.



The first play house in Bombay

In this context, it is worth noting that the first 'hall' (as the auditoria where dramatic performances took place were called in the early days) was built in Bombay in 1842 and in Pune in 1854. (The hall in Pune was called 'Purnanand Natakgraha'). Before the halls came in vogue, open courtyards of private houses, town squares or temporarily constructed pandals were pressed into service to carry out the performances. To have specially constructed places for the staging of plays is to recognize the

independent status enjoyed by the activity.

Physical features of the space explored through performances are unambiguous indications of the increasing functional specialization of theatre components including the audience and actors. Elevation of the acting area, use of front-curtain and drop-curtains, employment of wings, use of special light-effects and such other features are to be considered in this context. Unfortunately, exact

chronicle of such details in respect of the Marathi stage-phase is not available. Yet, the following established facts are serviceable:

First 'ticketed' dramatic performance in a hall took place on 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1853 in Grant Road Theatre, Bombay. It was staged by Vishnudas Bhave.

Front-curtain came into use in about 1865. Vertically operated curtains became an established practice by 1873. First use of painted 'scenery' curtains was made by the Kolhapurkar Mandali in 1873.

Mr and Mrs Bennee introduced 'box scenes' in the Grant Road Theatre around 1873.

'Hilals', hanging oil-lamps and candles, were used for lighting before kerosene lamps were introduced around 1875. (Intensity of lighting obviously affected acting-style and quality). An Italian opera company had installed gas-lighting in the Grant Road Theatre, at its own cost in 1866.

However, as has been already indicated, the more significant change was of course in the attitude of the audience. Bhavalkar has aptly pointed out that the Bhave-phase of the Marathi-stage (i.e. the earliest phase, as will be argued in a later chapter) ceased to exist with the advent of the Kirloskar-age around 1875-80, chiefly because the new audience was composed of 'real spectators'. This audience was not inclined to get personally involved in the theatric action unlike the audience of the Bhave-phase. Audience of the Bhave-phase used to exclaim aloud, advise the actors, cry out at the entry of the demon or even faint at his sight-all due to its inability to assume the role of an onlooker. It is the participant-status as distinguished from the onlooker- or spectator-status which separates the ritual and folk theatres from the stage-phase of theatre. A gradual, weaning-away process takes place before a participant can become an onlooker. Stage-phase brings with it a new set of protocol and it contrasts perceptibly with behaviour-norms etc. associated with the other theatric phases. Evolution of the Marathi theatre is a good example. Dr Kumud Mehta has noted that the difference between the audience which attended dramatic performances at the British-built play-houses in Bombay around 1860s and the audience that attended productions in the hall built under the sponsorship of Nana Shankar Sheth during the same period, was precisely the more 'noisy' behaviour of the latter. There was a sharp contrast in the behaviour of the audiences, and the decorum observed. Both Bhavalkar and Mehta thus confirm the fact that till the 1880s, stage-sensibility was yet to emerge unambiguously and universally in Maharashtra. This was so because till that point of time the transition from participant-observer status to that of the onlooker-observer was not accomplished. Such a transition was a necessary precondition for the successful debut of stage-music in Maharashtra.



Having considered the first two features of the stage-phase in Maharashtra's theatric development together (due to their common effect of creating a special audience for the type of presentations discussed), let us turn to the other features.

(3) The stage-phase is essentially an urban manifestation of the theatric impulse of any culture. Maharashtra was no exception.

All major groups responsible for initiating the musico-dramatic activity were based in towns. For example:

Bhave-group (1843-62), Sangli

Bapat-group (1850-92), Ichalkaranji

Amarchandvadikar Natak Mandali (1855-?), Bombay.

Some other groups were established and flourished to varying extents in Pune (1855), Tasgaon (1859), Karhad, Umbraj, Satara, Vadi, Kolhapur (1865-98), Alte (1869-92) as also in Miraj, Chaulwadi, Bhir, Wai, Kurundwad, Belgaon, Ramdurg, Nargund etc.

It can be safely stated therefore, that within a decade from the inception of the Bhave-led stage-activity, there were about eight established groups. The number of such groups rose up to about 35 by 1879. All these groups had their original seats in towns or cities, and their tours took them over all the major towns in Maharashtra.

(4) In fact, the rise of stage-activity seems to have direct developmental links with the rise of the educated middle class.

It is not a coincidence that the urban centres which proved fertile grounds for the spread of the stage-drama were also the centres at which the new, British-initiated education took roots. In this respect the following details regarding the educational development in Maharashtra may prove significant:

It was in Bombay that the first step of far-reaching educational consequences was taken when the society for promoting education of the poor within the Government of Bombay' was established in 1815. Ultimately this institution came to be called 'Bombay Native Education Society'. Another Bombay-based important educational institution was the Elphinstone High School (est. 1824) which later developed into the Elphinstone College. Those trained in these two institutions were to become leaders in all walks of life in Maharashtra throughout the century and almost all of them were patrons of the new stage-drama movement.



Yet another decisive development was the founding of the Board of Education in Bombay (1840). In its brief life of about fifteen years, it laid foundations of a very comprehensive educational activity in Maharashtra. It laid down definite norms about establishing and recognising educational institutes, appointed inspectors to enforce standards, encouraged regional languages and prepared books in Marathi and Gujarati. This led to opening of schools in Pune, Bombay, Panvel, Thane, Ratnagiri, Ahemadabad etc. Facilities thus created to learn through Marathi medium were adequate to accommodate about 3000 students. In 1855, the Department of Education replaced the Board. Grant Medical College was opened in 1845 and the University of Bombay was established in 1857.

Expectably, Pune was the second educational centre, second in importance only to Bombay. When the Peshwa rule breathed its last in 1818, education was imparted by the individually-run Pantoji schools where the three R's were taken care of. Such schools were well-spread all over Maharashtra-in Pune alone there were 222 schools in 1818. In 1821—barely three years after the British flag was hoisted on Shaniwar Wada - the Sanskrit college was established to impart free education to one hundred Brahmin students in *Veda*, *Ayurveda*, *Nyaya* etc. i.e. in the traditional aspects of Sanskrit learning. However, the college soon changed its orientation almost completely. By 1837 Major Candy took over and Marathi language was introduced. By 1851 English was introduced, the college was renamed as Poona College and one section was opened to train primary and secondary teachers. In the same year Jyotiba Phule, a major social reformer and educationist, had opened the first school for women and in 1853 he also became a pioneer in opening a school for educating the scheduled castes. During 1862-63 the Poona College was bifurcated into two colleges-Vernacular College and Deccan College. The former used Marathi as the medium of instruction and the latter relied on English for the same purpose. The Vernacular College was transformed into a Training College for men in 1865 because (it is important to note) students were inclined to enrol in the Deccan College due to the ascendancy of English in day-to-day life and governmental service.

The moral of the tale is that products of the new educational processes were to be the ripe and demanding recipients of the new dramatic activity and its presentations.

In case this contribution of the newly educated and the new education seems indirect there was a more direct connection. The newly established schools and colleges took immediate and active interest in actual staging of plays on their own and more often than not the budding Thespians were seen and encouraged by the public at large. Some instances can be usefully listed:

Kalidas Elphinstone Society was established in 1867 and it staged *Abhidnyan Shakuntala* in English on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October of the same year. The Society chiefly consisted of the alumni but the present students themselves staged *Shakuntalam* (in Sanskrit) in June 1870. The collegians staged plays annually.

The Pune-students were certainly not to be outdone by their Bombay counterparts. The Deccan College students presented *Venisamhar* (1871), *Malati-Madhav* (1872) and *Uttarramacharita* (between 1873-77).

Progressive princely states also did not lag behind. For instance, Kolhapur, which had started an English School in 1851, converted it into Rajaram College in 1880. The college held a competition for new plays and G.B. Deval (who later became a major playwright) won a prize for his work entitled *Durga* in 1880.

Further, dramatic stimulation was not confined to the college level. Vishrambag High School, Pune, presented a reading of *Julius Ceaser* in 1872 and students of the school run by one Mr Baba Gokhale staged *Merchant of Venice* in English in the Anandodbhav Theatre. In fact this was the first occasion when the 'newly educated' gave a public performance in Pune.

(5) It is clear that the newly educated were inclined to sponsor the new stage-drama. In all probability this sponsorship was a facet of the nascent nationalism.

In Maharashtra all the social reformers, professors, lawyers and other new professionals appealed to the people and to the authorities to help and encourage stage-activity in every possible way. Since 1853, the Bhavetroupe was propelled into limelight by persons like Dr Bhau Daji, Nana Shankar Sheth, Sir Jamshetji in Bombay and eminent personalities like Prof. Kerunana Chhatre, Pt Krishnashastri Chiplunkar etc. did likewise in Pune.

After 1862, when the 'bookish' plays became the main fare, the educated inevitably became closely linked with the dramatic profession. Authors and playwrights were then regularly cultivated by the troupes.

(6) It can also be argued that the stage-phase needs a developed 'prose' to realize its dramatic goals.

In Maharashtra such a prose could be described as a natural and direct consequence of the new educational system. It is no wonder that the translated Sanskrit plays fall within the post-University period (i.e. after 1857). The only exceptions are *Prabodhchandrodaya* which was translated by Amarapurkar and Bapat in 1851 and the anonymous translation of *Shakuntalam* dated 1854 and Palande's translation of *Vikramorvashiya* of the same year. Eminent pandits of the calibre of Parashuram Ballal Godbole (1799-1874), Krishnashastri Rajwade (1820-1901), Ganeshshastri Lele (1825-1898), Shivramshastri Palande,

Shivramshastri Khare and Gunjekar translated 20 plays during the period 1857-1874 (apart from translations of poems etc.). On the contrary, till about 1879 only seven Shakespearean plays were translated from English into Marathi. The point is that unless a definite quality of an uninterrupted flow develops in a language outside the metrical mould, the stage-phase does not gather momentum.

Corroborative evidence is supplied by the development of the essay form in Marathi which was the sole vehicle of the all-round reformist activity going on in Maharashtra. 1850 to 1874 is the golden age of the early Marathi prose during the modern period. It was a prose with a secular content and it was also a prose of ideas that were directed at an unknown, imaginary reader. Periodicals were started in 1832 but it is from the 1850s that the prose became multipurpose and flexible. A supporting factor was that the printing industry came to Maharashtra very late, by 1818. The Mission-presses were the pioneers and they naturally eschewed the secular approach. The government owned and government-run presses were the alternative agency-but they were kept busy in educational and other activities of a more elementary nature i.e. text-book printing etc. Even when a private entrepreneur like Ganpat Krishnaji established a press its first product was an almanac (1831). (Later he branched off and published and printed *Vyakaran* by Dadoba Pandurang in 1836. He also printed *Abhidhyan Shakuntal* in 1869.) The point is that development of the required prose with adequate flexibility, secular comprehension as well as development of the printing industry-both contributed to the emergence of Marathi stage-phase. In turn both these were a part and parcel of the new social, political and educational awareness.

It is not an accident that The New English School, Kesari and the Kirloskar Natak Mandali, all started their careers in 1880! A similar lack of coincidence is suggested by the appearance of the first considerable body of imaginative prose which came into existence during the period Bhavé was shaping his dramatic genius. *Pilgrim's Progress* was translated by Hari Keshavji as *Yatrik Kraman* (1841) and Dr Ramji Ganoji produced more than 1000 printed pages of love-tales with didactic content around 1854 entitling them *Stree Charitra*. Krishnashastri Chiplunkar's translations of *Arabian Nights* (1861-65) explored the same vein with more stylistic finesse. The first collection of historical tales was *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1863) by Moroba Vijaykar and the publication of the first full-length romantic novel *Muktamala* (1861) by L.M. Halbe completes the score.

(7) The stage-phase is characterized by a steady and observable change in the patronage enjoyed by theatric activity. Moreover, the patronage-change represents a shift from the royal, aristocratic patrons to a widely distributed, culture-conscious, economically speaking less well-endowed class.

There is no doubt that the Marathi stage-phase was initially encouraged into existence by the royal or semi-royal families. But very soon, ticketed performances became a regular practice. Public shows became the main channel of income for the companies and special shows arranged for the princely patrons etc. only meant additional sizeable income and prestigious support. With the patronage-change, a comprehensive mechanism of securing and sustaining public support came into existence and action. It included items like varying admission rates, concessional rates, publicity and advertisement campaigns, contracted shows, staggering of performance-timings according to the local needs and concerted appearance of reviews, periodical-criticism etc. Needless to say, the change in patronage also acted as a conditioning factor in respect of choice of themes, language, music and such other matters.

The first ticketed theatre-performance of the pioneering Bhawe-troupe took place in the Grant Road Theatre, Bombay. The admission rates were: Box Rs. 4/-, Gallery Rs. 2/-, Stalls Rs. 3/-, and Pit Rs. 1/-. These proved high and were soon reduced to Rs. 3, 1<sup>1/2</sup>, 2 and 1 respectively. After 1870, when there were many more companies competing for the takings, there was a further reduction.

In its 1873 tour, the Altekhar company performed in Dharwar and advertised different admission rates for housewives and for women of questionable reputation (the rates were higher for the latter). In an announcement dated 1877, tickets purchased from a certain bookseller before the day of the performance were to be had at three-fourth of the actual price. Rates in Bombay were generally pitched slightly higher than those charged at other places.

Publicity of the performance was mainly done through wall-posters, hand-bills (distributed at city-squares etc.) and through 'proofs'—which were in reality detailed synopses of the play. The last were only distributed to those who purchased tickets of higher denominations.

A reference dated from the year 1865 makes a mention of 18 contracted performances of the Sanglikar troupe. An advertisement of the Altekhar company in 1877 is signed by a contractor - G.L. Kesarkar. Accounts of the same company also refer to one Mr Nanabhai (probably of Bhatia caste) as a contractor.

While in Bombay, the companies usually scheduled their performances on Saturdays. (Sundays were holidays in Bombay.) In other places Saturday and/or some other weekday was chosen. Performance-timings in Bombay stabilized around 9 p.m. by 1870, in other places timings were one hour later.

Performances were reviewed in the Language as well as the English papers. Longer review-articles were also in vogue. *The Times* (Bombay),

*Vartamandipika* (Bombay), *Dnyan Prakash*, *Shalapatrak* (Pune), *Kesari* (Pune) were some of the notable publications in this respect.

The point is that for an activity that was hardly referred to as 'Natak' till about 1855 (instead the term 'Khel' meaning performance was employed), activation of a market-mechanism pertaining to an entertainment industry reveals a quick and thorough urbanization. The change in patronage needed persuasion. No longer concentrated in the hands of one king etc., it was essentially a distributed patronage. Now it was not enough to please a king, it was necessary to cater to a 'public'. Especially since 1861, when the era of the 'Bookish' plays began, the patronage-quality changed more and at a faster rate.

(8) The stage-phase also signals a theatric sensibility which reflects a greater value attached to elements like plot-construction, adequate and realistic scenic effects and costumes as well as a clear preference for more 'human' themes instead of the supernatural. The criterion of realism is seen to gain ascendancy in production as also in reviewing.

It has been repeatedly pointed out that the pioneering efforts of Vishnudas Bhave marked a clean departure from folk-traditions etc. prevailing at his time. This was mainly so because the Bhave-mode was less episodic in respect of theme and handling of narration. Bhave's use of three 'Kacheri's, namely Deva (gods), Rakshasa (demons) and Stri (ladies) - along with Narad, Sutradhar and Vidushak was in reality a tentative attempt of introducing a deliberate construction of an enacted story in place of a mere projection of a narrative.

Bhave is also deservedly mentioned for having utilized his puppetry skills in making more manoeuvrable and more convincing masks for his Gods who thus gained in visual appeal and scored more in mythological realism. His other characters were also more inclined towards realism through costumes and make-up. For example, his demons were by all accounts, fierce without using masks and this must be attributed partially to a more efficient and 'realistic' make-up that Bhave could employ.

The inevitable and highly effective inclusion of battle-scenes in Bhave's performances has been commented upon. These scenes were made effective by giving enough scope for use of weapons like *Talwar* (sword), *Dandpatta* (long, flexible sword) by the actors who are reported to have spared no pains to acquire the requisite efficiency in martial arts and also to maintain a high degree of physical fitness.

In this connection, it must be remembered that after the final eclipse of the Peshwas in 1818, gradual but massive demobilization was taking place and this affected all the princely states. In a way, stage-presentations of the battle-scenes were symbolic recreations of the once-enjoyed martial superiority. Further, it is



to be noted that possessing weapons was banned in 1858 and the use of cardboard substitutes became necessary. This obviously ran counter to the new and strengthening canon of realism! The cumulative effect was to hasten the march towards more human themes. The logic was: if you cannot have realistic 'fights', have themes that do not need them!

(9) Perhaps as a component of the movement in the direction of over-all realism, the stage-phase also favours in a growing measure, a clear and definite formulation of dialogues rather than leaving them at the mercy of the actors concerned. At a further point of its development, the stage-phase accepts the convention of writing down the dialogues and thus expects the actors to commit them to memory. The culmination of the entire process is printing of the entire script of the play followed by the insistence of the audience that the printed word be followed during the performance.

In the Marathi theatric march towards 'stage' all these stops were pulled. Bhave's Akhyans (i.e. narratives, as they were significantly called) were printed much later in 1885, 24 years after he had retired from the vocation. His usual practice was to 'teach' the actors to recite - thus trying to ensure at least the minimum 'literary' flavour in the speeches delivered. The Ichalkaranjekar troupe, which took the cue from Bhave but succeeded in developing its own histrionic tradition is known to have maintained two types of written records pertaining to the dramatic presentations. One was known as *Bhashan-Granth* (containing speeches of various characters) and the other was a 'copy' that included verses. The latter also incorporated some stage-directions.

The 'bookish' plays which were entirely written and printed, came into vogue since 1861. Bookish plays were obviously the most deliberately constructed as far as dialogues were concerned. There is no doubt that the entire process of consolidation of dialogues was viewed with favour by the audience. It has been noted that 'handbills' of some companies included the assurance: the play will be performed exactly according to the book!

In this context some information from Dr Kumud Mehta's survey of the English Theatre in Bombay covering the period 1860-80 is relevant. She refers to the annual and prestigious staging of Shakespearean plays which were largely attended by the student-community. The students used to follow the performances with open books in their hands! It is not fanciful to suggest that this practice led to a craving for more literary dialogues which the actors could not be expected to provide on their own. A priority-shift in favour of literary quality was thus causally connected with the ascendancy that the bookish plays came to enjoy.

From the 1860s plays were being adapted/translated from Sanskrit and English in addition to those original plays written in Marathi. All these were printed.

About 30 bookish plays were actually produced during the period 1860-80. Actors used to the earlier tradition naturally grumbled about the new requirement of having to perform according to the 'book'. But they were soon convinced that knowing the speeches by heart proved conducive to better acting and inevitably the practice soon spilled over even to the older Puranic plays (as the Bhave-type plays were called). To conclude, the ultimate, unbreakable bond between the stage-phase and the process of reducing the full play to writing was firmly established within two decades from the beginning of the Marathi stage.

(10) The stage-phase also registers an accent on the overt and implied expression of a nationalistic fervour.

In Maharashtra the first bookish play was about a historical character instead of a mythological one. In addition, it was about a Peshwa ruler known for his glorious military victories that acted as a balm for the Marathas after their humiliating military defeat at the hands of Abdali in Panipat in 1761. (The play was *Thorale Madhavrao Peshwe*, by Kirtane, published in 1861.) Both these factors suggest a nationalistic sentiment. It has been plausibly argued that Bhave's mythological presentations too echo nationalism in a rather masked fashion. The battle-scenes, with the inevitable victory of the Gods over the demons hinted a Gods-Marathas, Demons-foreign-rulers identification. These plays were staged under the direct patronage of the Maratha chieftains whose total subjugation by the British was recent history. Given the circumstances, Bhave's presentations aroused nationalistic overtones in the minds of the audience. Allegory, innuendo, improvisation and such other oblique devices of expressing resentment against the alien rulers were to surface effectively in the later history of Marathi stage. Their embryonic presence in the early phase cannot be easily contested.

(11) Having reached a point of theatric take-off through the convolutions denoted by the features of the stage-phase discussed so far, the theatric evolution taken as a whole shifts its base from the wider theatric matrix and gets congealed into two stage-forms: prose-drama and music-drama.

It is in this sense that the Bhave-experiment of 1843 or the more refined Kirloskar-experiment of 1875 announce the beginning of the Marathi music-drama. As mentioned earlier Kirtane's first bookish play of 1861 records the first Marathi prose-drama. The task of tracing the equally fascinating and meandering evolution of the prose-drama is, however, outside the scope of the present enquiry.

Features of stage-development as an important phase of theatric development considered as a whole, are common to both prose and music-drama to a certain extent. They also possess a pan-Indian character within certain limitations. However, there are two major features which are clearly confined to music-



drama. They are also likely to be characteristic of Maharashtra. Their brief mention should suffice for our purpose.

(12) Early protagonists of music-drama are, at some level, aware of the possibility of music and drama combining to produce *Sangitika* i.e. opera, instead of *Sangeet Natak* i.e. music-drama. The awareness of the operatic expression might be conscious or unconscious and it might be reflected in minor/major presentation devices, terminological usage or reference-points in case of actual imitation or adaptation of operatic practices current in a different culture.

It is evident that the early protagonists of the Marathi music-drama i.e. Bhave and Kirloskar as well as its receivers like Chiplunkar were conscious of the probable correspondence it might have with the Western operatic tradition. For example, Bhave in his preface to the collection of dramatic poems (*Natyakavita Samgraha*, 1885) concludes that 'around 1880 music-drama troupe which the English call Opera came into being'. Kirloskar's preface to his second (and original) play *Saubhadra* (1883) admits to having incorporated some *Rasa*-s similar to those of English style (*Riti*). A stronger evidence is however, available in contemporary correspondence. Kirloskar's 1880 *Shakuntala* was so successful that friends and well-wishers became anxious about his next venture. Hence, there were continuous deliberations about the direction his efforts should take. In a letter dealing with this issue, Mahadev Chimnaji Apte, (High Court Pleader, Bombay) wrote to Kirloskar on 21.10.1882. In it he warns, '... even if your idea of being first in shaping a drama like an opera has succeeded (in case of *Shakuntala*) there is no fun repeating the idea unless one is sure of going beyond it.' But otherwise neither Kirloskar nor the reviewers of the first performance of *Shakuntala* in Belgaum (1875) refer to opera. However, when the same play was performed in Pune (1880) Chiplunkar likened it to an opera!

On the other hand, the term and the concept must have been in the air. The Parsi theatre-activity which started in Bombay around 1853 was more prone to the influence of the Bombay-based English theatre. Dadi Patel in his *Benajir Badre Munir* is said to have first thought of opera, and from this time onwards music called the tune in every respect! In addition, it is on record that the Western Operatic troupes performed in Bombay during the 1860s. In 1864, operas of Rossini and Verdi were staged in Bombay. (As usual Nana Shankersheth was one of the luminaries sponsoring the activities.) Inviting opera-troupes from abroad seems to have been discontinued later. But in matters of taste and cultural influence, the phenomenon must have lingered behind. There is no evidence to suggest that Bhave, Kirloskar etc. had the opportunity to witness an opera-performance. But the form was virtually hovering in the background while they went about their pioneering task. Perhaps they were ambivalent to it, but ambivalence too is a real relationship. On the other hand, another

contemporary major dramatic company run by Dongre did not hesitate to advertise itself as Bombay Royal Opera Company (1881), even though its productions included *Shakuntalam*. It is equally notable that the Parsi theatre appeared to be more inclined to follow the Western operatic tradition of a sort in actual performance and this might in turn be attributed to their general attitude towards the occidental.

(13) In continuation of the above argument, it can be maintained that the Occidental Seasoning in musico-dramatic relationship remains on the wane, if the regional culture has a strong base of art-music (which is known as 'classical' music in India).

Marathi music-drama was heavily biased in favour of Hindustani art music.

It is symptomatic that Bhave used the term *Ragiyat* (i.e. of the Raga-mould) to describe the music of his own plays and this he meant as a distinguishing mark of his music as compared to the music of *Bhagvata Mela* of the South that had originally inspired (or rather provoked!) him. Kirloskar widened and refined the same relationship.

It therefore causes no surprise to see that almost all of the major companies from Kirloskar onwards had at least one classical vocalist of high calibre as their 'music-director'. Weightage given to art-music is also evident in the fact that frequently classically trained musicians were inducted or rather rushed into companies (without insisting on the musician's acting capacities!). Yet another modality of promoting interests of classical music was when the chief singer-actor accepted a prominent vocalist as a Guru (irrespective of the fact that more often than not, the busy life of the touring company hardly allowed the actor-singer to have any serious '*talim*' from the Guru!).

The following details might prove useful to buttress the argument outlined above:

<i>Gurus</i>		
Dongre Sangeet Company	estd. 1881	Balkrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjkar (of Gwalior Gharana)
Waikar Sangeet Mandali	estd. 1890	Pandurang Gopal Gurav Yevteshwar (himself a vocalist and Dhrupad-singer)
Gandharva Sangeet Mandali	estd. 1913	Bhaskarbuwa Bakhale (Agra, Jaipur Gharanas) Govindrao Tembe (Jaipur Gharana)

Shivraj Company	estd. 1915	Govindrao Tembe
Lalitkaladarsh	estd. 1908	Pt. Ramkrishnabuwa Vaze (Gwalior Gharana)
Balvant Sangeet Natak Mandali	estd. 1918	Pt. Ramkrishnabuwa Vaze

Pt. Sawai Gandharva, Pt. Vinayakrao Patwardhan, Pt. Mirashibuwa, Pt. Bhatebuwa, Smt. Hirabai Barodekar and a score of others were chosen for their roles mainly on account of their abilities as art-musicians.

Keshavrao Bhonsale and Master Dinanath became disciples of Pt. Vazebuwa, Yeshwantrao Sarnaik accepted Ustad Alladiyakhan as his Guru in all these cases the Gurus were retained but serious *Talim* was hardly a reality.

One may conclude 'Unto the Marathi theatric tradition, stage was born. It had two sons in prose-drama and music-drama. Music-drama begat stage-music.'

## PYLONS OF CHRONOLOGY: I

### The Bhave Age

The 'when' questions generally prove to be thorny questions - especially in India, where at the slightest excuse the chronological sense seems to go awry! Musicians' births or deaths are remembered as tied up with 'the last day when the great comet appeared' or some such clue! Hence any attempt to chart events in their strict sequence often fails. Even geography, the second eye of history, is not always open in India. However, in case of stage-music of Maharashtra, the situation is now slightly better.



King Sarfoji of Tanjore, who probably wrote the first music play in Marathi

It can be safely stated that Marathi music-drama had its earliest, known manifestation in the Maratha State of Tanjore tucked away in the deep South and ruled over by descendants of Shahaji. The Tanjore dramatic tradition covers a span of about hundred and fifty years (1690-1855). The successive Incumbents to the throne - namely Shahaji (1684-1711), Ekoji (1736), Pratapsinha (1741-76) and Sharabhendra (1777-1832) contributed to it in varying proportions. All these sovereigns were closely acquainted with Southern culture though they assiduously kept up the Marathi cultural and literary traditions chiefly through generous patronage to artists, writers etc. from Maharashtra.

All these kings are credited to have authored about sixty-odd plays in total. Not all the plays however are available and probably the real

authors might have been the court-employees - at least in some cases. But the important fact is that there was a living and a continuous tradition of writing plays in Marathi and of staging them. It was V.K. Rajwade, the well-known historian who first discovered the text of *Laxmi Narayan Kalyan* and published it in 1906. Discovering it in a monastery of the Samarth Sampradaya, Rajwade persuasively advanced its claim as the first Marathi music-drama. Since then, Lele, Maya Sardesai, Sarojini Shende, Tara Bhavalkar and others have considerably added to our knowledge of the Tanjore-tradition. Relevant deductions made possible due to data gathered by these authorities can be put down as below:

(1) Tanjore-plays were meant to be performed at religious festivals associated with various deities and also on other auspicious occasions like marriage, birth of a son etc.

(2) These plays relied heavily on the *Yakshagan*-tradition of the South in matters of structuring and content. They were in the main flowerings of a court-tradition with a definite proportion of sophistication obviously derived from association with cultured princes and the professional performers they had patronized. The crux of the matter is that even though Tanjore tradition was genetically related to a folk-manifestation it was for all practical purposes an urban expression.

(3) The plays were replete with dance and art-music of the Southern style. Dance and music were the woof and warp of the dramatic fabric and the interspersed dialogues possessed a more or less flimsy dramatic and literary import. However, the tradition clearly differentiated between Natak and Mahanatak as two general categories and also referred to three other specific categories, namely: *Kalyan* (i.e. marriage-plays), *Zagda* (i.e. conversational plays) and the *Koravanji* (i.e. auspicious) plays. It is relevant to note here that such a differentiation always suggests long and abundant usage.

(4) The plays also exhibit an unmistakable imprint of performing conventions as prescribed and codified in Bharata's *Natya-Shastra*. Some salient features of the Tanjore tradition which correspond to Bharata's edicts are listed below:

(a) The performance took place in a temple courtyard, royal courtyard or in some such open space.

(b) Festivals were the main occasions for performances.

(c) There was a definite attempt at creating a performance-space and sometimes also of elaborately constructing an auditorium.

(d) Dramatic performances were not regarded as pieces of entertainment. They were revered as expressions of religious faith.

(e) Singing of propitiatory verses, worship of Shiva and Ganapati invariably preceded the beginning of the performances.

(f) After the beginning of a performance *Naman* (i.e. literally an act of expressing reverence through bowing, praise etc.) was enacted and considerable duration was allowed to it. It consisted chiefly of the entry of Ganpati, his blessing the performance, entry of Saraswati (Ganapati's consort) and her blessing the performance, followed by praise of other deities and the Guru.

(g) *Naman* was followed by *Sutradhar-Vidushak* and *Sutradhar-Nati* conversations respectively. Together, they indicated the rough outline of the story subsequently presented through the entire performance.

(h) Items described from 'a' to 'g' actually formed what was known as *Purvarang* according to *Natyashastra*. It was only in the post-*purvarang* phase that the actual story-narration (i.e. *Akhyan*) began and the theme (suggested earlier) was related to the episodes from the lives of the deities.

(i) Following the trail of the classical Sanskrit plays in which every act had a separate heading, the Tanjore (as also the Bhavai) productions named each of the sections separately.

(j) Manuscripts in the Tanjore-tradition plays were written down though horizontally in the manner of *Pothis*. Hand-drawn illustrations added to the visual appeal.

(k) The fore-part of the 'stage' was used by the characters in action. Instrument-players operated from behind them.

(l) Though more than one location was referred to in the plays, there were no scenery curtains. Character-movements were carried out strictly to the accompaniment of songs called *Dhruvas* in *Natyashastra* and *Daru* in *Yakshagana*.

(m) There was no front-curtain. *Yavanika*, *Apati* or *Pati* were the different names for the mobile, horizontally operated cloth that screened the characters as and when required.

(n) Play-text was couched in prose and verse but only the verse-portion was written down. (As already noted in the first chapter, writing down of the prose-portion was a major departure from the ritualistic theatre-phase and a step forward towards the stage-phase of theatric activity.)

(o) *Sutradhar* was all-in-all as far as the control and co-ordination of various performing aspects were concerned. Most of the times he was a Brahmin with traditional learning to his credit.

The enumeration leads one to the conclusion that the Tanjore plays illustrate a tradition of 'music-dance-drama' presentations which combined certain features of the religious-ritualistic and folk theatric heritage of the South with some others that were due to the genius of the patrons and sponsors - the Bhonsale kings. Unfortunately, it does not seem that the Tanjore plays were generally seen in Maharashtra proper. However, it is on record that folk artists from Maharashtra enjoyed Tanjore-patronage on occasions. Hence an exchange of



influences between Maharashtra and the pocket-Maharashtra in the South cannot be altogether ruled out. But at this moment all is conjecture.

To continue the debate about the 'when and where' questions, Sukhatankar has convincingly argued that if lack of continued and substantial intercourse with Maharashtra prevents Tanjore plays from successfully claiming the honour of being the first music-drama in Marathi, then it is the Gomantak-based presentations of Dashavatar which must be accorded the recognition for being so. He notes the following supporting facts:

(1) There is enough literary evidence in works of saint-poets to suggest that the musico-dramatic presentations were flourishing in Konkan even before the 13th century. More significantly, this tradition continued through the centuries. Performances of forms like *Jagar*, *Lalit*, *Kalsutri*, *Kala* (of three types, namely, *Gopal*, *Gaulan* and *Balkrida*), *Kathagan*, *Dhalo* prove the point.

(2) Impressive documentary evidence about the expenditure incurred in arranging the above-mentioned presentations has been unearthed from the account-books in the civil administration offices of many villages in Gomantak. Their geographical distribution and chronology speak of a continuing performing tradition:

Vere-Phonde Mahal	1766
Amone-Dicholi Mahal	1818
Dhargal	1819

The trading family of the Khalaps from Mhapse have preserved account-books which show similar expenditure incurred on the occasion of Shimga-festival in 1775 and 1785.

(3) A manuscript of a *Dashavtar* presentation dating back to 1818 has been preserved by Mr. Manerikar from Mhapse. The script, authored by one Mr. Raghunath Shet Savant also gives dramatic personae.

(4) Godse Bhatji's famous account of his travels through India during the days of the 1857 War of Independence graphically describes a musico-dramatic presentation in Gwalior. The fifty-strong troupe, led by Sadoba Natakvale, performed for the royal family as well as for the public. The story enacted was *Raja Harischandra*.

(5) Lopas Mendes, a Portuguese, stayed in Goa for a number of years. He published an account of his sojourn entitled *India Portuguese* in 1863. In it he not only describes the Dashavtari presentations in great detail, but also provides some sketches showing the seating arrangement, performing space etc.





Shri Vishnudas Bhawe,  
father of Marathi music  
stage

The argument put forward so far can be summarized.

From Sant Dnyaneswar's *Dnyaneswari* (1290) to Sant Ramdas's *Dasbodh* (1659), theatric heritage of Maharashtra was revealed in religious-ritualistic and folk theatric forms like *Bahuroopi*, *Bharud*, *Lalit*, *Kalsutri* and *Chayanatya*. One more significantly dramatic step was firmly taken in the Tanjore plays by 1690. The Konkan and the Gomantak regions encouraged the *Dashavtara* form with great intensity and purpose. In Gomantak especially, this must have proved an ordeal in face of the constant religious persecution under the Portuguese from 1542 onwards. In fact, the Portuguese rule proved a positive hindrance to this line of development because in 1557 they resolved and executed a ban on 'Puranik, Keertankar, Jogi, Gaurav and Brahmins' - precisely the people who shaped the religious-theatric impulse of the people. In addition, women from the courtesan class were also prohibited from residing in Gomantak from 1681.

It must be concluded that both the Tanjore and the Gomantak efforts fail to feature the characteristics of the stage-phenomenon as discussed and described in the earlier chapter. However, they precede Vishnudas Bhawe (1823-1901) who has been conventionally regarded as the father of Marathi music-drama and hence Tanjore and Gomantak efforts were considered in some detail. Marking the time-sequence of Bhawe's attempts should be the next logical step.

Vishnudas Amrit Bhawe was in the employ of Chintamanrao Appasaheb Patwardhan of Sangli - a small state in the south of Maharashtra. Bhawe's father had obtained 'English' military training in Belgaum and he was a court-favourite. Vishnudas's unusual interests in clay-modelling, sculpture etc. did not please his father but the king appreciated the craftsmanship and subsequently instructed him to produce plays after performances of a troupe from Karnatak in 1842. Barely in his twenties, Bhawe immediately set to work. Starting from scratch he produced *Seetaswayamvarakhyan* in 1843. He himself composed music and verses for the play, designed costumes and also perhaps finalized the dialogues. His efforts pleased the king and Bhawe went on to produce ten more pieces of similar vintage. In 1851 the king died and instead of the promised actual and material help, all Bhawe could manage to get from the court was 'four years leave without pay' for himself and his troupe with the permission to take up performing-tours. From 1852 to 1862, when he seems to have retired, Bhawe completed seven tours giving performances in Maharashtra - authoring 52 *Akhyans* during the years. To his credit goes the first ticketed performance in Bombay (14th February, 1853) arranged in the spacious garden of Mr.

Vishwanath Atmaram Shimpi. 'The Times' hailed it as the coming off of the 'Hindoo' theatre. In this same trip, Bhave saw an English play presented in the newly built Grant Road Theatre and ultimately succeeded in putting up his production in it on 9th March, 1853. This was the first ticketed; public performance of a Marathi play in a theatre. Bhave's troupe performed in Bombay almost every year and more notably he presented here *Gopichandakhyan* in Hindi - a very sure sign of urban and pan-Indian orientation of his efforts as opposed to the Tanjore and Gomantak traditions.

By 1862 the Bhave-mode had attained enough popularity to be widely imitated. His Akhyans were also used by all and sundry - there being no monopoly act in force. Symptomatic of the profession having succeeded in every way, there were dissensions in Bhave's own company. After his 1862 tour Bhave was not active in theatre, though he was invited to the Jamkhindi State in 1862 and to Gwalior in 1894 and perhaps he did put forth some productions there. He took to puppetry during 1874-75. In 1885 he published his 52 Akhyans along with a preface. This was his last significant activity before he died in 1901 of plague.

Around the time Bhave set out for his first tour, another drama troupe was formed in Ichalkaranji State, not far from Sangli. However, according to the ruler-family's (Ghorpade's) records the immediate inspiration was a performance witnessed by Balambhat Bapat (the Brahmin who formed the troupe) in Gokarn (Karnatak). Bapat was more than aided by Babaji Shastri Datar, a learned grammarian in the Sanskrit tradition. It was Datar who wrote and directed the plays and also composed the music. Bapat was joined a little later by Raghoba, a fine actor and a more venturesome manager. The company began its career around 1850 and was dissolved in 1892, (Raghoba had left it in 1884).

In the initial phase, the Ichalkaranjikars performed according to the Bhave-mould but soon added 'farces' to their repertoire. In 1862 the company made a major departure by producing the first 'bookish' play and then continued to do so. In its pioneering, and historically speaking, revolutionary productions, it presented adaptations from Sanskrit and Shakespearean classics. However, they were not music-dramas and hence they lie outside the scope of our present inquiry. One should only take note, that to open up a new dramatic vein they had to leave the music-drama category and switch over to prose. This meant that they could not register an innovation within the genre of Bhave-play. We have to wait till 1880s for Kirloskar to achieve the feat. Datar shastri continued to be the sole playwright of the company for twenty-five years and authored at least 50 scripts. His scripts possessed more literary flavour, exhibited more deliberate craftsmanship in narration and thus came nearer to plot-construction. He also employed Sanskrit, Hindi etc.

It has been already stated that the number of dramatic troupes touring and performing all over Maharashtra and even beyond, increased during the period 1862-79. These companies followed Bhawe, both in respect of the matter and manner of presentation, according to their varying capacities. Some appear to have added to the mould. For example, Dhondopant Sanglikar of one of the troupes hailing from Sangli was renowned for his ability to 'dance' (1867), as contrasted with the other companies which tended to pass off acrobatics as dance. Another troupe, styling itself as Nutan Sanglikar Mandali, was headed by Balwantrao Marathe who ran the company for about forty years (1870-1910) in such a successful manner that he could retire as a propertied man. However, what is more important is that his company went beyond Maharashtra-both towards north and south. In fact Marathe is stated to have had 32 Hindi plays in his repertoire. When music-drama came to the fore, Marathe adaptably changed the name of his company to Sanglikar Sangeet Hindi Natak Mandali and performed accordingly.

Yet another troupe was the Kolhapurkar Natak Mandali, headed by Narharbuwa who was an accomplished wrestler before taking up the Thespian art. His company (1865-1898) was also known as 'Chittachakshu chamatkarik Kolhapurkar Mandali' - meaning a dramatic company that performed feats which astonished the mind as well as the eye! The first painted scenery curtains were probably used by this company in one of their performances in Bangalore in 1873. The company carried its banner throughout the country-performances taking place in Tanjore, Kashi, Brahmavarta, Bangalore etc. The 'acting' of the company was highly rated. Historically significant is the fact that the future father of the Marathi music-drama proper-Annasaheb Kirloskar wrote *Akhyans* in the Bhawe-mould and also his first full-length play *Shankardigvijay* (1874) for this company. It must have been a salutary apprenticeship for him.

There were many companies which claimed the title 'Punekar', and they used different adjectives to identify themselves. Some of the mouth-filling adjectives are symptomatic of the drift towards the spectacular element and the concern for effectiveness—both born out of the growing competition in a highly urbanized activity. For example, *Chittachakshuchamatkritinidhan Samayrang Rasodbhav*, *Vibudhjanachittachatak Swativarsha* etc. are of interest in this respect. The last named company was famous because it had 'females' to act the relevant roles. Mhalsa, Neera, Vitha Kasarin were the early actresses and due to the prevailing social conditions they came from the prostitute class. The phenomenon of co-acting of the male and female actors is reported to have taken place from 1867.

All of the above-mentioned companies and similar others performed in the Bhawe-mould. Some of them changed to 'bookish' plays when that became the dominant mode. Many companies performed in Hindi and the Altekar company also seems to have performed in Gujarati. The companies predominantly relied

on Bhave's own compositions and/or on Kirloskar's compositions cast in the same mould. There were of course other poets too in the field but they appear to have been, at best, examples of imitative and not of innovative excellence.

Chronologically speaking, this brings us to the end of the pre-Kirloskar phase of the Marathi music-drama. As explained, a stricter chronological adherence may mean that the pre-Kirloskar phase be called the Tanjore or the Gomantak phase. But the companies-who were the body of the tradition-used Bhave's *Akhyans* and also his mode of presentation. Bhave was their model. The argument here is not one of origin of the Marathi music-drama. It is the effective existence of the stage-phase that we are concerned with. Hence the pre-Kirloskar phase is rightly described as the Bhave-phase.

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## PYLONS OF CHRONOLOGY: II

### The Kirloskar Age

In a manner of speaking, it is possible to maintain that Marathi music-drama was in gestation in a number of places, in a number of minds and also at overlapping time-areas. This is the reason why the chronological straight line suggested by Tanjore-Gomantak-Bhave phases should be considered a deceptive simplification. It is quite possible that Marathi music-drama enjoyed the privilege of multi-genesis - a phenomenon not rare in case of so complex a process as the emergence of an art-form. Perhaps it is also germane to remember that performing tradition is such a fluid reality that its continuous



Bandekar Buwa of Goa  
who inspired  
Annasaheb Kirloskar

evolution can hardly be punctuated at fixed chronological points. That is the reason why every detailed investigation trying to tackle the problem of a 'beginning' of an art-form unfailingly leads us further and further back into the past. This has happened in the case of Marathi music-drama. First the Bhave-plays, then the Gomantak-plays and now the Tanjore-plays seem to claim the honour of being the 'beginning' of the music-drama tradition. However, as has been argued earlier, the model which was intentionally and widely imitated was the Bhave-model. It was this widely circulated model that enlarged the scope and extent of the Marathi dramatic activity. The Tanjore-play can perhaps be considered as the dramatic prototype - a model-in-origin, but it was the Bhave-model which gained currency. While discussing a living tradition its ready and widespread acceptance makes the Bhave-model more important.

Soon the Bhave-model made way for what came to be known as the Kirloskar-model. It has been cogently argued that the Kirloskar-model owes its origin to K. J. Bandkar's plays performed in Dongri (Gomantak) around 1870. Bandkar was a well-trained *Keertankar* and thus possessed all the requisites to bring about refinement and expansion of various aspects accommodated in the Bhave-mould. Bandkar accomplished the miracle successfully and produced four plays: *Shuka-Rambha Samvad*, *Lopamudra Samvad*, *Nat-Subhadra Vilas* and *Ahilyoddhar*. (According to his biography published in 1910 only the last play was available then.) Kirloskar, while being employed in the Salt-range department of the British government, visited Dongri, saw Bandkar's *Shuka-Rambha Samvad* and was highly impressed by it. To his dismay Bandkar



refused to take his plays to places like Bombay or to make available the full script of the play (as each character had written down its own dialogue only, and hence no complete script was in existence). Kirloskar thus had to remain content merely with Bandkar's blessings.

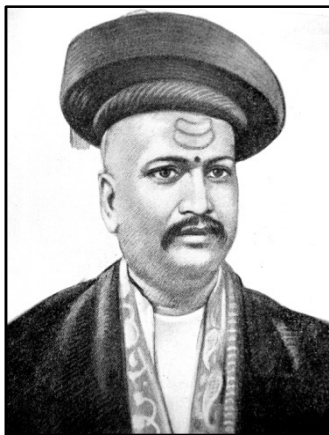
(For some time it was held that Sokar Bapuji Trilokekar should be credited with the first staging of Marathi music-drama as his *Nal-Damayanti* was performed in Bombay around 1878. However, evidence now available does not allow him precedence over Kirloskar.)

Annasahib Kirloskar (1843-1885) was born in Gurlhosur (Karnataka). Till 1866 he received education in various places like Kolhapur, Dharwad, Pune and in 1868 he accepted government service in Belgaum. Even during his student-days he was fond of leading his co-students in producing plays. (For example, in 1863 he had written and produced *Vikramcharitra* and a farce entitled *Elphinstone ani Bajirao* - while in Pune). Somewhere around 1860, he saw a Kannad company presenting a musico-dramatic play called *Parijat* - a play very much similar to what Bhave had been producing since 1843. This prompted Kirloskar to write and produce *Sangeet akhyans* like *Shrikrishna parijatak*, *Raas-krida*, *Vikramcharitra*, *Harischandra*, *Shuka-Rambha Samvad* etc. By 1860 there were numerous dramatic troupes circulating with the Bhave-model. Many of them immediately took to Kirloskar's *Akhyans*. They proved attractive due to their qualitatively better poetic content, variety in metrical construction as also the diversity of Ragas used in the songs. The next step in Kirloskar's evolution was his Goa-trip as described earlier. The visit must have helped him in getting a sense of vocational conviction: he must have arrived at the decision to become a playwright. In 1873, he wrote his first full-length bookish play-*Shankardigvijay*. Kolhapurkar Mandali having already produced many of his *Akhyans* presented his first play in Belgaum (1874). The production was acclaimed on all counts. However, Kirloskar must have realised that (with his successful handling of the *Sangeet Akhyans* and the impetus he received from Bandkar's productions) he was not cut out to continue writing in the 'bookish' vein. Soon he established the 'Bharatshastrottejak Belgaonkar Mandali' and wrote and produced *Sangeet Shakuntala*. Billed jointly with the *Kach-Devyani Akhyan*, the historic first performance of *Sangeet Shakuntala* (though confined to first four acts only) took place on the September 4, 1875. Marathi music-drama had arrived.

In 1878 Kirloskar accepted a job in the revenue department and shifted to Pune. The more widely-known and frequently discussed performance of *Sangeet Shakuntala* was the Pune performance which took place on the stage of Anandodbhava Theatre on October 31, 1880. Bombay saw the eagerly awaited performance on November 21, 1880. The full, six-acts show was presented in Pune on September 3, 1881. After some legitimate anxiety about how to keep

up the reputation acquired through a stunning beginning, Kirloskar wrote *Sangeet Saubhadra*. The first (three-act) performance (November 18, 1882) and the full-length presentation (March 1883) were very well-received. The Kirloskar Mandali was now so well-established that during 1880-83, Annasahib was touring Bombay, Sholapur, Indore, Dewas with the two-play repertoire. In 1884, the Mandali was reorganized; partnership-proprietary was introduced, and Mr. Sathe, a new and efficient manager took over the overall administration. Kirloskar wrote the first three acts of his third play, *Ramrajyaviyog*. A successful reading of the play took place in Indore but Pune was again chosen for the first performance (October 20, 1884). Unfortunately the play remained incomplete as Annasahib expired soon after in Gurlhosur where he had gone to recover after an illness (1885). As an actor his last appearance was in the role of *Dashrath* in *Ramrajyaviyog* (October 7, 1885).

In the final tally, the first major dramatist of the Marathi stage had contributed half a dozen *Sangeet akhyans*, one prose drama, two completed and one incomplete music-drama - all this achieved in a short span of about 20 years! But more significant is that he polished into perfection a new mould, a new framework to accommodate the total dramatic impulse of Maharashtra. His *Saubhadra* still retains its appeal and exhibits no wear and tear through the intervening hundred years.



**Annasaheb Kirloskar**

Kirloskar Mandali continued with its limited repertoire and an undiminished musical effectiveness. But it was obvious that addition to the repertoire was the need of the hour and G.B. Deval, a trusted and tried second-in-command of the late Kirloskar, successfully fulfilled it.

Born in Haripur, barely three miles away from Sangli (which was the seat of Bhave's pioneering dramatic activity) on November 13, 1855, Govind Ballal Deval had his education in Belgaum and Kolhapur. (Kirloskar taught him in school for some time.) After matriculating in 1878, Deval took a certificate course in Agriculture in Pune (1880). It was in Pune that Deval worked with Shankarrao Patkar in establishing Aryoddharak Mandali which rose to fame due to its successful staging of *Othello* (*Ajitsingh*), *Tara* (*Cymbeline*), and *King Lear*. Deval's *Iago* was rated highly. In 1882 Deval wrote verses/songs for the improved version of Kirloskar's *Sangeet Shakuntala* which was by this time a proven classic. In addition, Deval was also in charge of training new entrants in the troupe. Deval was engaged in minor journalism, dramatic activities and perhaps some teaching when he wrote his first full-length play *Durga* (1885) in response to a competition for new plays announced by the Rajaram College, Kolhapur. It came on the boards in 1886 and proved a winner. Next were



*Mrichchakatik* (1887) and *Vikramorvashiya* (1889), the former proving popular. His adaptation of *Othello* (*Zunzarrao*) was published in 1890 and was staged by the well-known 'prose-company', *Shahunagarvasi Mandali*, in 1891. Again in response to an award-competition declared by H.H. Holkar of Indore (1892), Deval adapted Banbhatta's Sanskrit prose classic *Kadambari* as *Shapasambhrama* and once again he won the prize. Having presented the first three acts (1893), the Kirloskar Mandali performed the complete play in Nasik (1894), Deval being put in charge of training the actors, he virtually became a director-writer. In the same year the Shahunagarvasi brought out *Phalgunrao Athva Tasbiricha Ghotala*, the prose original of the immortal music-drama *Samshaykallol* which Deval put up much later (1916) for the Gandharva Natak Mandali. Deval lost his wife in tragic circumstances in Haripur in 1897. It was at this juncture that he heard the news of an old prince marrying a young, poor girl and the news proved to be a gustatory impulse for his sole independent play, *Sangeet Sharada*. Completed in 1898, the full play was performed in Bombay in 1899 by the Kirloskar Mandali. In 1905, Deval retired to Sangli, chiefly because he had some difference of opinion with the Kirloskar management. Becoming a theosophist in 1910 he was leading a quiet life when the very core of the Kirloskar Mandali broke away to form Gandharva Natak Mandali in 1913 and Deval was enthroned as the *Natyaguru*. After transforming the prose-play *Phalgunrao* into *Samshaykallol* in 1916, Deval died of diabetes in the month of June of the same year.

The search for a new playwright was once again in progress and the Kirloskar Natak Mandali again proved instrumental in providing an outlet for a new dramatist with a fresh musico-dramatic vision. Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar (1871-1934) was a securely established literary critic when he took up the challenge thrown by Patankar, a popular dramatist whom Kolhatkar had severely criticized for the play entitled *Vikram Shashikala*. Kolhatkar answered Patankar's call to combat by writing his first play *Veertanay* (1896). A widely-read graduate in law and one who was exposed to the Urdu-Parsi theatre with its effective and catchy music-Kolhatkar was ideally suited to bring about a change and to open up new avenues both in music and dramaturgy. Till 1911, Kolhatkar flourished through his dozen plays which attracted various people for equally varied reasons. For example, budding writers were stunned into new consciousness of stylistic virtuosity, thematic romanticism and wit. Gadkari, Varerkar, Khandekar and many other major Marathi writers openly admitted his influence. The audience was enticed by the new music Kolhatkar had so liberally taken over from the Parsi-Urdu theatre. Kolhatkar's plots were also more deliberately constructed. He could boast of having written 'original' plays as opposed to the widely prevalent mythologicals that had been the pabulum of the Marathi stage right from its advent in 1843. Perhaps no less important was his encouragement to Heerabai Pednekar (1885-1951) who became the first

female playwright of the Marathi theatre when she wrote *Jayadrath-Vidamban* (1904) and the slightly more famous *Damini* (completed in 1908 and first performed by the Kirloskar Mandali in 1912). Even if not a 'learned' person, Heerabai was an accomplished musician and it is a pity that documentation of the tunes she contributed to the plays of Kolhatkar, Gadkari etc. is incomplete.

It is clear that Kolhatkar belongs to that rare category of playwrights who prove revolutionary but whose plays are forgotten sooner than can be imagined. While Kirloskar and Deval are still performed, Kolhatkar's plays have almost not seen footlights since 1937! However, as far as Marathi stage-music is concerned, *Veertanay* (1896), *Mooknayak*, *Guptamanjusha* (1901), *Mativikar* (1906), *Premshodhan* (1910) proved important because these plays shook the 'classical' foundations of stage-music conceived in the Kirloskar-Deval tradition. Instead of the wholesale reliance of this tradition on the art-music and folk-music of the region, Kolhatkar broke away to follow in the footsteps of the Parsi-Urdu theatre which kept its musical eggs in the basket of non-art-music.

In the interest of chronology it is essential to retrace our steps to some extent. This is so because the non-Kirloskar type of stage-music was tried out by at least four other companies before the Kirloskar Natak Mandali itself executed this major deviation around 1896 and made it the 'new way'. The moral is that the new music needed the forcing push of the Kirloskar Mandali to belong to the accepted category though originally it was thought of and followed by other troupes. They obviously lacked the prestige of the Kirloskar troupe.

The earliest was the Dongri Sangeet Company, which was also known as the Bombay Royal Opera Company. Established in 1881, the company was rightly famous for its *Indrasabha* (1881) - a spectacular production with music inspired by the Parsi-Urdu theatric tradition. Its main characteristic was inclusion of dance and dance-music. It should be noted that Dongri had also produced *Shakuntala*, *Vikramorvasiya*, *Mrichhakatik*, *Malati Madhav* etc. in translation. He had also used raga-based as well as lavani-oriented music. Pt. Balkrishnabuwa Ichalkaranjkar, the doyen of the Maharashtra-branch of the Gwalior Gharana of Hindustani art music, was his company-musician. Another art-musician, Porebuwa, was also employed in a similar capacity. The point is that Dongri did not go the Parsi-theatre way because he could not explore the Kirloskar-type music. He obviously made the deviation as a result of a deliberate choice.

Of equal meaningfulness is the musical stream introduced with characteristic boldness by the Patankar Sangeet Mandali which was also known as Mumbaikar Sangeet Mandali. Patankar hit the headlines with his *Vikram Shashikala* (1891). The irony of the situation is that this musical antithesis of the Kirloskar-type was inspired when Patankar saw a performance of

*Shakuntala*! Patankar is credited with two major musical innovations: he employed tunes from the contemporary Parsi theatre. Secondly, he emphatically used action-songs called *zagda* (quarrel), in which the hero-heroine were prone to sing-accompanying the singing with action that was suggestive enough to bring the house down. Without hesitation he used musical formulae employed by *tamasha* singers etc. in spite of their vulgarizing fall-out. He openly averred that his plays were meant only to entertain the *giran-babus* (factory-workers) of Bombay. All of his twenty-six plays were mainly staged in Bombay where he was a draw in certain localities. Patankar is a clear case of a conscious stereotyping of music directed at creating an appeal to a particular set of stock responses. He engineered the responses and this itself is an enviable achievement.

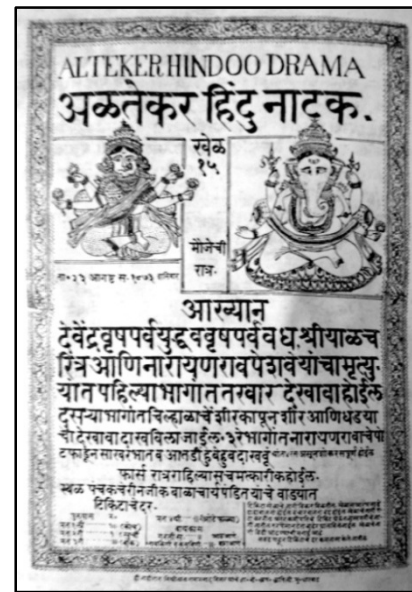
On the other hand Pandoba Yevteshwarkar's Waikar Mandali was well-known because of Pandoba Gopal Gaurav's insistence on using high-quality art-music in his plays. Started around 1890, the Mandali performed *Rasotsav* and *Dyutvinod* before full houses. The latter had in it about sixty-five songs and fifty of them were in ragas like *Jaijaivanti*, *Arabi*, *Sindhura*, *Adana*, *Suhag*, *Paraj*, *Vasant-Bahar*, *Bibhas*. In addition, he explored the highly 'classical' musical forms like *dhrupad*, *tarana* and *sargam*. Some characteristic practices in *dhrupad*-singing (singing the composition in double and then reverting back to the original tempo) were also employed. Patankar-Yevteshwar contrast is well-signified in the fact that Pandoba too had composed a duet to be sung by Shankar and Parvati but, it was such a far cry from Patankar's *zagda*! Govindrao Tembe, the well-known musician-actor-composer, has noted that it took him more than a month to learn the first line of a song from Pandoba-so deeply permeated was it with the intricacies of art-music! In the preface to his *Dyutvinod*, Pandoba himself declared that it was his intention to restore the purity of raga-music through his stage-music. He resented that the contemporary stage-music was almost ignoring art-music and sought to correct the imbalance. Though Pandoba's company was probably closed down by the turn of the century, he had attained a limited victory, in the sense that he did create an audience for his music.

Yet another neatly focussed musical insight running parallel to the Kirloskar efforts was evident in the productions of the Mumbaikar Natak Mandali (1899), a few years later named as the Rajapurkar Sangeet Natak Mandali (1903). Its productions, *Sant Damaji* (1904), *Shri Pundalik* (1905), and *Sant Tukaram* (1911), all depended fully on the corpus of devotional music practiced by the *varkari* sect. This sect has a tremendous following in Maharashtra from the 13th century. Babajirao Rane, the proprietor of the company, showed a keen dramatic insight in exploiting this vein in the musical make-up of Maharashtra. He employed two separate writers to take care of the prose and verse parts of his plays since 1905. (They were Vadhavkar and Tinaikar-both receiving Rs.

25/- only as salary). Of the three productions, *Sant Tukaram* proved such a hit that the Mandali could afford to build its own *Sant Tukaram Natakgraha* in Kalyan. It is also reported that the entire *Sant Tukaram* had been filmed. This must be counted as the first stage-talkie in Maharashtra-though no further details are available.

Obviously, the main achievements of this company transgress the chronological limits of the present chapter. Yet the moorings of the company were definitely in the earlier period. The company only reiterated the ever-present appeal that devotional music possessed in spite of the 'new musics' of Kirloskar, Patankar etc. It is no wonder that the pioneering cinematic vision and the business acumen of the Prabhat film company also came back to *Sant Tukaram*.

While counting the chronological pylons in the history of Marathi stage music, we have reached the turn of the 19th century. Though no major Mandali is left out, there were understandably many other companies that contributed to the total musical scene. For example, names like Kirloskar Anuyayi Lalit-kalotsav (first to present Deval's *Mrichhakatik*), Chittachakshu Chamatkarik Kolhapur Natak Mandali, Vidvajjanashrit Natyamod Prasarak Samaj, Vibudh Jan Chittachalak Swativarsh, Punekar Hindu Stree Natak Mandali, crop up repeatedly in the scattered memorabilia of the Marathi stage-music. But they were in reality only enlarging, imitating or often distorting the models set up by the chief protagonists. The main reference-points of the Marathi stage-music were unequivocally established by the activities of the four Mandalis: Kirloskar, Waikar, Patankar and Rajapurkar. In the years to follow the picture becomes more complex and yet the format outlined by these Big Four is not obliterated.



An early handbill of a touring company

## PYLONS OF CHRONOLOGY: III

### The Modern Age

The year 1900 becomes prominent and also a convenient divider in the chronological account of Marathi stage-music for four reasons: Firstly, because the number of dramatic companies which came into effective existence and made their contribution to the dramatic activity increased around the turn of the century. Secondly, the new post-Kirloskar music went on becoming stronger in currency from this time. Thirdly, a very potent polarization of musical styles started taking place. Two major musicians, Keshavrao Bhonsale (1890-1931) and Balgandharva alias Narayan Shripad Rajhans (1888-1967) were the chief protagonists of the two styles. Bhonsale's characterization of *Sharda* for the Swadesh-hitachintak Mandali in 1902 laid foundations of an iterative and forceful singing style. On the other hand, it was Balgandharva (so named by Lokmanya Tilak in 1898) who, playing the role of *Shakuntala* for the Kirloskar Mandali in 1906, proved bedrock of an equally expressive, recurring, persuasive, and slightly baroque style in singing. Finally, the beginning of the twentieth century also saw a steady decline in the influence of the 'Mandali' as an institution. The 'Mandali' as the controlling factor in creating or consolidating traditions of management/administration or performance, was gradually replaced by one or more 'star' performers.

Usually, the star-performer or a nucleus of them left the parent-company to form a new one or to join another, after they had attained a certain stature. Quite often, this parting of ways resulted in the use of new techniques, novel ideas of presentation etc. Kirloskar and such other mandalis always tended to create and consolidate their own conventions about various dramatic aspects. It also meant that after a lapse of time the companies began to expect from actors etc. a fidelity to *their* own tradition rather than to artistic modalities. It is no exaggeration to say that till the turn of the century actors did not leave the parent-company unless acting became impossible due to ill-health etc. (One glaring exception was however that of Balkoba Natekar of the Kirloskar Mandali. He was famous for his musicianship as well as for his fickleness!) Viewed in this background the growth and all-embracing importance of the star-performer which mainly led to the formation of new mandalis changed the picture. The process of realignment of institutional and individualistic forces had a direct bearing on the aesthetic aspect too. It is under these circumstances that the present chapter continues the strategy of giving due weightage to mandalis though the role of the individual performer is also kept in sight.

Kirloskar Natak Mandali entered into a new developmental phase with the entry of the legendary Balgandharva. After an unsuccessful trial in 1903,



Balgandharva finally joined the Mandali in 1905. From 1906 to 1913 (when Balgandharva left it and formed his own Gandharva Natak Mandali) the Mandali produced about nine new plays with *Manapaman* (1911, K.P. Khadilkar) making musical history on account of meritorious performances by Nanasaheb Joglekar and Balgandharva. Pt. Govindrao Tembe composed music for a major portion of the play and Marathi stage-music completed one more wider turn due to him. It could be reasonably stated that music of the Kirloskar-age was the dramatization of *keertan* and folk-song (esp. *stri-geet*); music of the Kolhatkar-age was dramatization of the rather saucy music of the Parsi-Urdu stage and that of *Manapaman*, was dramatization of Hindustani art-music and semi-classical *thumri*, *qawwali* style. Unfortunately, Joglekar died in 1911 and Balgandharva left the company in 1913.

Consequently, the manager of the Kirloskar Mandali, Shankarrao Majumdar, had to take initiative in both hands to find a suitable substitute for Balgandharva. He succeeded in his efforts when Dinanath Mangeshkar (popularly known as Master Dinanath) joined the Mandali. On account of his musical prowess, the Mandali could once more enjoy some prosperity. Urdu production *Taj-i-Wafa* (1915) and their staging of R.G. Gadkari's flashy, melodramatic and effective *Punyaprabhav* proved musical triumphs as Dinanath reached new heights of impact with his powerful and lustrous voice. However, Dinanath also left the Mandali to form his own in 1916. The Kirloskar Mandali continued with diminishing drive with Nanasaheb Chaphekar, Balwantrao Majumdar and Krishnarao Kolhapure successively in lead. Finally, Shankarrao Majumdar who had seen the birth of the company, also saw its extinction in 1938.

It was the Kirloskar Mandali which was the dawn of Marathi dramatic wayfaring and hence the closure of the Mandali sparked off considerable debate. One of the factors said to have contributed to the gradual disintegration of the Mandali was Shankarrao Majumdar's despotic attitude. It might have been so. But to complete the record, some of his other achievements must be mentioned. Firstly, it was due to his idea that the Mandali could get a theatre constructed in Pune as a monument to Annasaheb Kirloskar. The theatre was completed in 1909. Secondly, a more durable achievement was that he founded and edited a journal devoted to theatre for seven years spanning the period 1907-16. Called *Rangbhoomi*, the journal provided a good platform for persons of the calibre of R. G. Gadkari. Apart from this no mean feat, Majumdar himself contributed significant material to the journal, especially relating to the early history of Marathi stage and major personalities active during that phase.

Having sketched the development of the Kirloskar Mandali, it is logical to discuss its first off-shoot: the Gandharva Natak Mandali. As a culmination of continued disagreement with Shankarrao Majumdar, Balgandharva left the

Kirloskar Mandali in 1913. Centred around Balgandharva (as suggested by its very name), the Gandharva Natak Mandali was going strong till 1934 when Balgandharva decided to join Prabhat Film Company, chiefly in order to wipe off his enormous debts. However, he could not get the 'live' response he had so thrived on from the camera-craft and he terminated the contract. He revived the Mandali in 1936. The resuscitated company however could not regain lost glory and (ironically enough) Balgandharva left it in 1944.

It is not an-overstatement to say that Gandharva Mandali proved to be the main sustenance of the entire Marathi stage music. It produced eleven new plays and had eight old ones in its repertoire. During the twenty years of unprecedented musical abundance, Balgandharva had Kolhatkar, Deval, Khadilkar, Gadkari, Tipnis, Dongre and Desai as his playwrights and Govindrao Tembe, Bhaskarbuwa Bakhale, Bai Sundrabai, Master Krishnarao as his music-composers. In all probability, he must have been a record-setter in setting up an enormous variety of records! However, both the artist and the era were not statistically-oriented and it may perhaps prove too formidable a task to do justice to the achievements of the period through enumerations. Barring the last few years, Balgandharva was the only 'heroine' in his productions. He did try male roles out of consideration for his years. But soon it became apparent that people simply refused to mind his old looks in young roles! He played a male role for the first time in 1922 when he was thirty-four years old and later on sporadically. Altogether he enlivened 25 female roles in his career. If some of them were often omitted, some others received encores. Knowing the number of performances he put up in his life-long singing, the picture of his musical outpourings proves stirring and staggering!

Some other musical firsts could also be attributed to Balgandharva. He was the first actor-singer to bring out the accompanists from their modest position in the wings and install them in front of the stage, facing the actor and keeping their backs to the audience (1908). He was also the first proprietor-actor who employed art-musicians of high calibre and all-India stature as accompanists. Ustad Ahemadjan 'Thirakwa', the doyen of Farukhabad Gharana in *tabla* and Ustad Kadarbux (*sarangi*) were both on the staff of the Mandali. The former was on the payroll from 1928 to 1934 and the latter from 1920 to 1934. That Thirakwa's name appeared in the advertisements, showed his eminence as well as the recognition accorded by the Mandali to accompaniment. Balgandharva was also responsible for displacing the pedal-harmonium with 'organ' around 1920. (The latter was in reality a pedal-harmonium with better reeds and richer tone). All these changes clearly indicate ascendancy of music and singer in stage-craft and performance-practice.

Among all the actor-singers who shaped Marathi stage-music, Balgandharva's reign was the longest-and this also contributed to the supreme sway he held



over the imagination and taste of the music-lovers. It is significant that most of his contemporaries had ceased to be effective by 1933 while he continued to perform as an actor-singer till 1955 and as a vocalist till the end. From among his heroes, Nanasaheb Joglekar died in 1911, Govindrao Tembe ceased to be an actor-singer on the stage from 1922, Keshavrao Bhosale prematurely died at the age of thirty-one in 1921, Pandharpurkarbuwa expired in 1925, Vinayakbuwa Patwardhan opted for a full-time vocalist's career in 1932. Only Gangadharpant Londhe continued to draw a lone-furrow as a singer-hero till 1944. The point is that Balgandharva continued to provide an uninterrupted stream of stage-music of his own for over fifty years and inevitably his music became a reference pattern for the listeners. We must also remember that by 1920, gramophone industry in India had started recording stage-music. Balgandharva was heavily recorded (more than 113 songs). The fact that cheaper Japanese phonograph machines became available from 1928 must have compounded the interest in the media-propagated music, as broadcasting had already made its impact in 1927. The final truth seems to be that Balgandharva remained a major force for a very long time and he could therefore explore a majority of modern avenues open for music-making and music-propagation.

Continuing the parent-off-shoot-company logic, we have to go back a little to the Kirloskar Mandali. After Balgandharva left it, Majumdar, the ever-vigilant manager, did succeed in finding out another gem of a child actor in Master Dinanath (December 19, 1900-April 23, 1942) and exploited his talents to the full in *Taj-i-Wafa* (1915), *Kantomen Phool* and *Punyaprabhav* (1916). Soon Dinanath left to form his own company, the Balwant Sangeet Natak Mandali (1918). While in the Kirloskar Mandali, Dinanath had obtained useful training in *kathak* dance and *thumri*-singing from Pt. Sukhdev Prasad of Lucknow. Using his quicksilver imagination and equally mercurial voice and combining with them the daring innovatory spirit, he lost no time in making his own mark. Apart from staging the tried masterpieces like *Shakuntala*, *Saubhadra*; *Ramrajyaviyoga* and *Manapaman* (in which he used his own new tunes set to the older, already established songs) he also presented *Veervidamban* (1919, N.C. Kelkar); *Bhavbandhan* (1919); *Rajasanyas* (1922), *Vedyancha Bajar* (1923), (all the three by R.G. Gadkari); *Ugramangal* (1922 Vasudevshastri Khare); *Tratika* (1924, Vasudevrao Kelkar); *Randundubhi* (1927, Veer Vamanrao Joshi); *Sanyast Khadga* (1931, Veer Savarkar); *Gairsamaj* (1932, Motiram Vaidya); *Brahmakumari* (1933, Vishram Bedekar). In 1932, Master Dinanath started Balwant Pictures as an inevitable consequence of the desperation which was shadowing all stage-artists due to the advent of the talkie. The venture proved to be a financial disaster and Balwant Sangeet Natak Mandali finally succumbed to it.

At this juncture it is necessary to track back to consider Lalitkaladarsh (1908). The company represented a musical counterpoint to the Kirloskar-Gandharva

line of Marathi stage-music. Lalitkaladarsh owed its existence to Keshavrao Bhonsale who had made his dramatic debut in *Sharda*, brought out by Swadesh Hitachintak Natak Mandali in 1902 when he was barely ten years old! Keshavrao Bhonsale established Lalitkaladarsh in 1908 (along with twenty-seven partners who, however, soon left everything for Bhonsale to manage!) Bhonsale earned reputation on account of his forceful singing style and a matching voice. By the time he died (1921), he had skyrocketed to fame. In addition, he became the leading light of the forceful, aggressive singing style which clearly influenced male-actor-singers like Master Dinanath, Bapurao Pendharkar, Bhalchandra Pendharkar etc. He was one of the early examples of actor-singers who took pride in having notched up many 'once-mores' for their sole numbers. In his performances as *Sharda* (1902), Bhonsale is reputed to have earned more than seven 'encores' for some songs. The 'encores' obviously proved a great strain for the child-actor that Bhonsale was at the time, and Janubhau Nimkar—the manager had to request the audience not to press their 'appreciation'. According to the available supporting evidence, Bhonsale was thus responsible for accepting the 'encores' and laying the foundation of a convention that allowed music to have an upper hand. Later the convention was frowned upon by critics as the most obvious case of creating dramatic imbalance by giving an undue importance and scope to music as music. A truer feather in Bhonsale's cap was the fact that he proudly declared his company to be solely under the patronage of the 'people', when his contemporaries were vying with each other to flaunt their royal sponsorships! From 1916, Bhonsale made it a point to carry a banner proclaiming the *lokashray* of his company! It must also be remembered that while producing *Damini* (1911, Heerabai Pednekar, Nasik) Bhonsale stringed two firsts: Heerabai was the first female playwright of a music-drama and in all probability she was also the first female music-director. Bhonsale had Pt. Ramkrishnabuwa Vaze (1871-1945), the versatile and learned vocalist of the Gwalior Gharana, as his music-director from 1918 onwards. Though Bhonsale received some training from Pt. Vazebuwa, most of the plays for which he composed were staged after Bhonsale died.

Bhonsale was firmly established because of his role in *Rākshashi Mahatwakanksha* (1913), and then went on to reaffirm his musical eminence in *Haach Mulacha Baap* (1918), *Sanyashacha Sansar* (1919) and *Shaha Shivaji* (1921). He expired soon after the famous '*Manapaman* in collaboration', in which Balgandharva was Bhamini and Bhonsale, Dhairyadhar! (1921).

After Bhonsale's glorious performance in the combined production of *Manapaman*, and his subsequent untimely death, the company was courageously managed by Vyankatesh Balwant alias Bapurao Pendharkar (1892-1937) who, till then was content in secondary roles. An accomplished harmonium-accompanist in Bhonsale's heydays, Bapurao had received some

intensive training under Pt. Vazebuwa. In spite of an undistinguished voice, physique and looks, he very judiciously imitated Bhonsale in all possible ways and did not allow the Bhonsale-audience to shift its loyalties. On the other hand, Bapurao compensated for the lack of natural endowments with his penchant for handling new themes and techniques in his productions. *Satteche Gulam* (1922), *Turungachya Darat* (1923), *Shree* (1926), *Shikkakatyar* (1927) were noticed in this respect. During sixteen years Bapurao produced fourteen plays. The onslaught of the talkie in 1931 proved the proverbial last straw for Bapurao too! He was trying to keep the banner high by floating a cinema-wing when he died in 1937!

After Bapurao, his son Bhalchandra Pendharkar carried on the valiant fight for survival and finally staged a comeback in 1942. Along with revivals, he has also staged new music-dramas. *Duritanche Timir Javo* (1957, Bal Kolhatkar), *Panditraj Jagannath* (1960, Vidyadhar Gokhale) and *Jai Jai Gauri Shankar* (1966, Vidyadhar Gokhale) proved highly entertaining. Under him, the company still functions and Lalitkaladarsh thus gains the honour of proving the most durable of the music-drama troupes. Vasant Desai, a famed name in the Hindi film-world, had been Pendharkar's chief music-director till Desai died in a ghastly accident. By that time, however, Desai had contributed significantly to the revival of music-drama in Marathi.

Almost inevitably, the 'parent-company-off shoot company' phenomenon had extended to the third generation at least in case of the Kirloskar Mandali. Its offspring, the Gandharva Natak Mandali, shot forth Shivraj Sangeet Mandali run by Pt. Govindrao Tembe (1881-1955). To cap this evolution Shankarrao Sarnaik (1892-1971) branched off to form Yeshwant Sangeet Natak Mandali (1919)! Coming back to Shivraj Company, Govindrao Tembe formed and led the company (1915-1921). In addition to the old and tried war-horses like *Mooknayak*, *Manapman*, *Vidyaharan*, *Mrichhakatik* and *Shapasambhram*, Tembe produced *Chitravanchana* (1917), *Krishnakanchan* (1917), both by Vasudevshastri Khare, and *Siddhasansar* (Hindi, written by the Gujrati dramatist Mani Shankar Trivedi 'Pagal' in 1919). Of some interest is one detail associated with the play. Ahmad Bhaiya, a famous *dhrupad*-singer of the Atrauli Gharana, played the role of *Macchindranath* in *Siddhasansar* around 1921 for some performances! Tembe had already composed music for *Manapman*, *Vidyaharan* etc. and he had no difficulty in continuing the good work in his own productions. *Siddhasansar* was a big draw and proved equally productive when it was adapted as *Mayamachhindra* (1921) for the Prabhat Film Company. Tembe's discerning knowledge of the Hindustani raga-lore and his judicious following of semi-'classical' forms like thumri, ghazal etc. served him well in scoring music. He was also a fairly competent playwright and wrote five plays after Shivraj Company was closed down (in spite of trying to make it more secure by converting it into a 'limited' concern). Tembe then went on to

contribute to the nascent film-industry in an extremely versatile fashion though his cinematic successes are beyond the scope of the present enquiry. His versatility was also to lead him subsequently into writing librettos and composing music for two operas in his mature age (*Mahashweta*, 1954, Jaydeo, 1959).

As mentioned earlier, Govindrao Tembe's find and musical product, Sarnaik, was the proprietor of the Yeshwant Sangeet Natak Mandali (1914-1923). Originally a disciple of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan of Kirana Gharana, Sarnaik was so well-groomed by Tembe for stage that very soon he became well-known as 'Maharashtra Kokil'. In its short but successful career, Yeshwant Mandali produced new plays like *Patwardhan* and *Tulsidas* (1924, 1928, Tembe), *Soubhagyalaxmi* and *Satyagrahi* (1925, 1935 by S.A. Shukla). Symptomatically, its *Chalti Duniya* earned fame and money for the company. Many vocalists of repute like Ganpatrao Dewaskar, Sawai Gandharva and Wamanrao Sadolikar were associated with the company. By the time it was closed, the company was not only solvent but the proprietor too was prosperous-a rare event in the history of Marathi stage!

For all practical considerations, the period till 1933 was shaped by the abovementioned companies and 'stars' associated with them. Off course, there were many other companies and equally numerous actor-singers-and they made the scene fuller and richer. But compared to the heavy-weights considered earlier they could be safely taken as derivatives. However, some of their noteworthy gains can be mentioned here:

Raghuvir Savkar, leading the Rangbodhechhu Samaj, became well-known for his sensuous renderings of thumri-numbers interpolated into the play *Samshaykallol*.

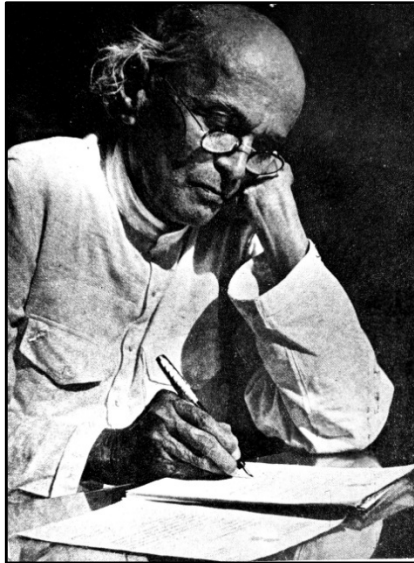
The drama-wing of the Nutan Sangeet Vidyalaya (1928-1933), led by Smt. Heerabai Badodekar earned fame because of the singing abilities of the participants (all belonging to the same family). Daughter of Ustad Abdul Karim Khan, Heerabai has appropriately won approbation for effectively 'translating' the Balgandharva-idiom of stage-singing through a female voice.

Anand Sangeet Natak Mandali and Balmohan Sangeet Natak Mandali run by Shamrao Shirgopikar and Damuanna Joshi respectively, were admired because they relied on child-actors! Predictably, these companies threw up good talent. The latter was an offshoot of the former and an actor-singer of Chhota Gandharva's (b.1918) calibre is its gift to the Marathi music-drama.

All historians of the Marathi stage agree that after the thirties Marathi drama, taken as a whole, shed its skin. After some halting experimentation and hesitancy coupled with some developmental lassitude it picked up again only in



the late fifties. The intervening years were not totally fallow but it was obvious that music-drama modulated very little and that too in a low key for about twenty years from 1933 onwards. It is as if it was in penance to facilitate a new birth. However, it is clear that stirrings of the new musico-dramatic conscience could be (retrospectively) detected much before the obvious aesthetic revolution of 1933 became a reality. The new avatar was well-established much later when M. G. Rangnekar's Natyaniketan became functional in 1941-42. But the earlier attempts can hardly be overlooked.



Mama Varerkar

For example, in *Kunjvihari* (1908, Mama Varerkar, Swadeshhitchintak Mandali) music was scored in such a manner that it exactly matched the movements. It was thus not allowed to spread over as an independent entity. The play had a longish but dramatically relevant verse-dialogue in which as many as six characters (Krishna, Gopi, Lalita, Radha, Pandya, Madhumangal) sang. It is reported that the entire scene was as effective as solo-singing current on the contemporary stage. The scene obviously speaks of a high degree of co-ordination in every respect and the achievements it represents are of operatic and choreographic nature. It is ironical that during the same period Gandharva Mandali shifted the accompanists from

their unassuming position in the wings and posted them in front - thus highlighting the ascendancy of singers and singing rather than that of music! It is a safe guess to say that this must have made the text of the song etc. unintelligible. If *Kunjvihari* could be described as an attempt to curb and direct music, then, another comparable effort of equal critical interest was Madhavrao Joshi's musical parodies which threw away the yoke of musical collaboration etc. Joshi's play *Vinod* (1913, Nutan Sangeet Mandali) was full of mock-imitations of famous songs from Khadilkar's *Manapman*, Vidyaharan etc. That he could repeat the formula with devastating effect in *Municipality* (1925, Anandvilas Mandali) proved that he had hit the target. Joshi wrote about thirteen plays full of ridicule aimed at social and musical pomposities and spared none. It is not hard to imagine that a successful musical style creates its own clichés and hence dislocation of musical stereotypes formed in all kinds of manner serves useful aesthetic purposes. Joshi's efforts were of this stock and the loosening of the musical grip over dramatic expression which he had facilitated proved beneficial.

These were, however, indications of the things to come during the thirties. Two productions during the forties marked the movement away from the surfeit of music experienced in the music-drama of the established variety. They were *Baby* (1932, Bhende) and *Andhalyachi Shala* (1933, Vartak) under the banners of Radio Stars and Natyamanvantar respectively. Both the productions reduced the number of songs considerably, (to eight and two respectively), performance-time for the plays was around three hours, encores were strictly prohibited in both, and once again the accompanying musicians were sent packing to the wings. In addition, background music was seriously used and music as such was relegated to the background! Keshavrao Bhole composed music for both the plays. However, these efforts, though appreciated by the discerning few, did not become a force powerful enough to control the evolution of the form concerned i.e. the music-drama. However, it could be maintained that they suggested a compromise solution, almost avidly accepted by at least two dramatists of the coming two decades: P.K. Atre and M.G. Rangnekar.

P.K. Atre (1898-1969) was a versatile personality. Educationist, dramatist, satirist, journalist, all rolled into one, he excelled in a brand of humour and wit that could reach the majority. The very fact that he could attract an audience which was also under the pull of the new entertainment force which cinema was, proved his capacity to accommodate simultaneously the sophisticated and the populist elements. Atre continued to write till the end but wrote eight important pieces during the period 1933-46. Essentially, they were prose plays of humorous and tragic import, and music was admitted under a sort of commercial pressure. Hence it is not surprising to note that music of these plays was not much different



P.K. Atre

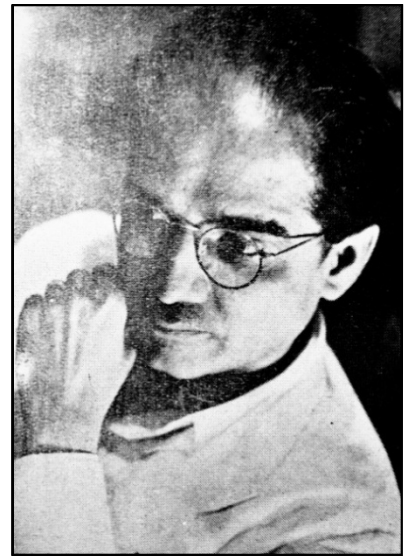
in character. There was economy in the number of songs included, but the basic strategy employed while composing and presenting them was the same as of the older plays. However, Atre's plays served the twin purpose of providing scope for new talent and avoiding a total break in a well-developed and fruitful tradition. A major actor-singer of Chhota Gandharva's eminence (alias Saudagar Gore) is a gift of the Atre-decade. Chhota Gandhary himself composed music for many of Atre's early plays. A feature of his composing worth mentioning was to have more than one alternative tunes for a single song. He used to try them out all before finalising a tune. It is also on record that, due to the undisputed popularity of *Gharabahr* (first produced in 1934), the then Indian Broadcasting Company relayed its entire performance directly from Opera House, Bombay. Balmohan Sangeet Mandali (1928-47 ?) produced ten of Atre's plays which were concerned in the fight for survival forced on the Marathi



music-drama. Atre went on to write a dozen more but they do not contribute in any substantial manner to music-drama of Maharashtra.

Thus we reach the forties, which were dominated by another dramatist of new sensibility: M.G. Rangnekar (b. 1907). Having established Natyaniketan (1941), Rangnekar went on to write and produce more than fifteen music-dramas in the next two decades and created a new, firm base for music-drama. Though Jyotsna Bhole (b. 1914) was his only heroine, he utilised the services of five music-composers of recognizably different capacities. D.P. Kergaonkar, closely acquainted with the gramophone industry, composed for five plays (including *Ashirvad*, 1941, the first production of the company); Master Krishnarao, the veteran vocalist and film-and-drama composer for four, (including *Kulvadhu* (1942), a great contemporary hit); Shridhar Parsekar, a imaginative violinist, composed for ten, including *Maze Ghar*, and *Vahini* (1945), *Rambha*, (1952); V. G. Bhaikar, a composer well-versed in the traditional *bhajan* lore for seven (including *Nandanvan*, 1942, *Radhamai*, 1954) and Keshavrao Bhole, a pioneering, veteran film-composer and music-critic (*Alankar*, 1944). Rangnekar has concentrated on prose-plays in the later phase of his career.

Rangnekar's middle-way is exemplified in many of his dramatic procedures. He has been the writer-director for most of his productions. In his very first production he tried to have all the accompaniment-music pre-recorded and have it played back during the performance through the public-address system (*Ashirvad* 1941). The attempt failed, but this emphasized his keen desire to completely control and co-ordinate the musical forces taken as a whole. Organizationally speaking, he departed from the conventional Mandali-concept when he decided not to house his artistes together. However, he had all his artistes on the payroll and prohibited them from participating in outside productions. Later, in 1952, he also converted the company into a private limited concern (though Tembe had attempted this in 1952). Shridhar Parsekar, one of his composers used *ghanta-tarang* (i.e. musical bells) for composing the invocation-music to replace *nāndi* of the traditional presentation (this was in *Maze Ghar*, 1945), again an imaginative movement away from the accepted practice of music-drama. The point is that Rangnekar has consistently stood for measured music, restricted singing, use of modern media and their techniques etc. but to an extent, palatable with the traditional idea of music-drama. He has not practiced and advocated any radical break-away from the stage-music current in



M.G. Rangnekar  
mainstay of the post-war  
Marathi music play

Maharashtra for a century. He has been a music-dramatic Buddha who has both preached and practiced a *Madhyam-marg*!

By the end of the fifties the picture that materializes is both changing and complex. Once again there is a definite revival of the traditional music-drama. The revival is marked by well-attended performances of the classics like *Manapman*, *Samshaykallol* etc. as well as presentations of new plays. Repeated performances of the old plays have been mainly facilitated by the new prevalent 'night' system in which a contractor of some such agency engages 'star' actors paid on per-performance basis. The essential feature of the system is that the participant stars do not form part of any cohesive system of production which includes regular rehearsals, dress rehearsal and final performance etc. Actors thus become efficient components of an ad-hoc arrangement. All the chief actors are brought together because they are 'draws' in their individual rights. Thus, at least theoretically, the possibility is of getting above-average sole performances if not a well-coordinated show. Chhota Gandharva is a good example of such a draw. He first started appearing on 'nightly' basis during the late forties when his fees ranged around a couple of hundred rupees per performance. Today his taking ranges around twenty-times the amount but still the plans are full within a few hours! Obviously, the arrangement seems to have satisfied all the parties concerned.

Reappearance of the general interest in the conventional stage-music is also borne out by the fact that an enterprising crafts-person like Smt. Suhasini Mulgaonkar could present more than a hundred shows of edited, one-person enactments of the classics. She started her *ekpatri* shows around 1960. However, after initial success they have not caught on.

Of more significance and value has been the contribution of Shri Vidyadhar Gokhale. A well-known journalist and a keen student of Sanskrit and Urdu literature, Gokhale correctly judged the confirmed and revived bent of the Maharashtrian mind towards the traditional, slightly melodramatic mould and refined on the model. In theme, construction, style and presentation his plays are cast in the conventional pattern. Gokhale started with a bang by presenting two full-fledged music-dramas in quick succession (*Panditraj Jagannath* and *Suvarnatula* on October 9 and 10, 1960). He has continued his triumphal, musical march thereafter through *Mandarmala* (1963), *Madanachi Manjiri* (1965), *Amrit Jhale Jaharache* (1965), *Jai Jai Gaurishankar* (1966), *Meghmalhar* (1967), *Chamakala Dhruvacha Tara* (1969), and *Swarasamradnyi* (1972). As far as music is concerned, Pt. Chhota Gandharva (*Suvarnatula*), Pt. Ram Marathe (*Mandarmala*) and Vasant Desai (*Panditraj Jagannath*) proved to be highly successful composers. It is to be noted that Gokhale has deliberately chosen themes and situations in which characters are forces because they are musicians. This has helped him in remaining 'realistic' in spite of the full-blown

rule of music as music. His dramatic strategy itself has been to execute variations on the theme of music. Inevitably 'singing' has again come to the fore. Gokhale is not by any means a spent force, but his dramatic strategy is bound to suffer from limitations imposed on it by his fidelity to one version of realism.

Gokhale's perception and reading of the dramatic situation having proved so accurate, it is no wonder to see that other prominent playwrights (who had so far concentrated on prose-drama) also felt drawn to music-drama. Vasant Kanetkar's plays (*Matsyagandha*, 1964, *Ashrunchi Jhali Phule*, 1966, *Meera-Madhura* 1968), produced by the Goa Hindu Association made their mark. The first two notched up more than five hundred performances each! Pt. Jitendra Abhisheki's score for the second play explored new avenues by taking inspiration from My Fair Lady type rhythmic prose. V. V. Shirvadkar's *Yayati ani Devyani* also proved successful. Equally appealing has been Purushottam Darvhekar's *Katyar Kaljat Ghushi* (1967) and *Ghanashyam Nayani Ala* (1968), with Pt. Abhisheki and Yeshwant Deo as music-composers. Due to the strong tide of revival, Pt. Vasant Rao Deshpande, Prasad Savkar, Ramdas Kamat, Jyotsna Mohile, Faiyaz and other actor-singers have been able to carve a niche for themselves. These and some other actor-singers continue their work more or less effectively.

Musically speaking, apart from revivals a fresh beginning has been registered in the late seventies by *Teen Paishacha Tamasha* (adaptation from Brecht by P. L. Deshpande), a whole new idiom of pop-music with the accompanying highly efficient use of the audio-systems as well as employment of musical instruments of timbre so far untouched in Marathi stage-music, has been a great breakthrough. Nandu Bhende (with Anand Modak and Bhaskar Chandavarkar in association) is the chief architect of the venture. Bhende, Sheikh, Madhuri Purandare sing effectively and do justice to the new idiom. However, it has yet to receive acceptance as a music-drama in spite of the predominance of the song-element.

The year 1980 has been invested with special importance as being the centenary year of the Marathi music-drama. (Historically this is not correct. This has been pointed out by many and a similar position is suggested in the foregoing pages). From here the usual problems that crop up due to the close range while assessing anything like a trend-setting potentiality becomes impossible--at least difficult. From the older tradition, Lalitkaladarsh remains the only Mandali in operation-though the set-up is radically different. It is therefore truer to say that it is the banner and not the Mandali which has escaped the transformations brought about by Father Time. The 'classics' are staged mainly by resorting to the 'night' system of engaging the required 'stars' on an ad hoc basis. The institutional structure that had controlled and furthered music-drama so far, seems to have weakened considerably. In addition, the basic concept of the

musico-dramatic relationship seems to be undergoing a significant change. But this aspect of the situation will become comprehensible only when the entire evolution of Marathi stage-music is examined from the angle of the music-makers involved.

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## THE MUSIC MAKERS

### Up to 1900

In the context of our discussion, the term music-makers connotes artistes belonging to two categories: music-composers and actor-singers. The impressive pedigree of Marathi stage-music has been a creation of the combined activity of the two. These composers and actor-singers operated within the framework of the Mandali and hence, at least in earlier phases both functioned as insiders-in the sense that they were involved deeply in the entire dramatizing process-keeping pace with it-almost at every stage of production.

Frequently, such a close association became possible because individual actor-singers of repute took care of the songs allotted to their own roles. On a majority of occasions classical vocalists of proven merit were engaged to select suitable tunes. As a rule these were based on classical compositions-*cheezs*-in the Hindustani raga-repertoire. It can be maintained that a slight advance in the direction of music-directorship (as understood today) was registered when the musicians engaged for the job proceeded to compose fresh tunes instead of relying on the ready material. Whatever the modality, the composers were kept in constant touch with the production processes. Obviously, the institution of the 'Mandali' encouraged the phenomenon to a great extent. A later variety of music-composer became a reality when composers started taking up the task as a specialized, isolated assignment. This meant that they accepted composing as a separate activity which may not form a part of the continuing production-process. The element of ad-hocism involved in this arrangement is not well-rooted in theatre-it is the film-composers who operate on these lines. However, the possibility of this practice becoming more common cannot be overlooked. Facilities for pre-recording and reproduction through better public-address systems are likely to bring the cinema-oriented composing into prominence. Sureness of effect is a highly desired commodity in all performing arts, and music-composing and composers are bound to welcome anything that ensures such an effect.

To begin at the beginning i.e. at the Bhave-phase, is to strain the investigative imagination due to inadequate documentary evidence. As has been argued earlier, the pre-Kirloskar or the Bhave-phase, was, in reality, a result of the functioning of numerous *mandalis* that were freely using Bhave's *akhyans* and also the performance-model set up by Bhave. Some *mandalis* like the Ichalkaranjikar, the Nutan Sanglikar, the Kolhapurkar etc. had been mentioned in this respect. Some general characteristics of music-making in their productions could however be noted:

(1) For his own productions, Bhave himself composed music. He also trained his actor-singers.

(2) In performances shaped according to the Bhave-model, all the singing was done by the *sutradhar*. Very frequently, *sutradhar*'s role was played by the proprietor himself. Singing was brought to the fore mainly on the following occasions:

- a) *Mangalacharan*
- b) *Ganeshstuti*
- c) *Sarasvatistavan*
- d) Thematic introduction
- e) Songs expressing responses of the characters to various situations.

(3) The main musical instruments employed were *zanz* (cymbals) and *mridang*. Both these being rhythm-instruments, it is obvious that musical richness realizable through melodic contours of accompanying string instruments was entirely missing.

(4) The musical moulds used by Bhave and his followers consisted of traditional prosodic and recitation-moulds like *katav*, *ovi*, *arya* as well as songs composed in *ragas* like *Sudh-Kalyan*, *Chayanat*, *Jhinzoti*, *Dhanyasri*, *Yaman* etc. *Trivat*, *Dhumali* were the commonly employed *talas*.

(5) Bhave's songs contain a bilingual element. Marathi and Hindi were the languages generally used.

The Ichalkaranjkar Mandali was responsible for an improvement in the Bhave-procedure. Datarshastri, the dramatist of the Mandali composed both music and verses as Bhave had done but he composed verses in Sanskrit and Kanadi also. Ragas like *Arabi*, *Behag*, *Nat*, *Sorat* and *Bhoop* found place in his music. Even if the Bhave-model continued to be the shaping influence, Datar's verse was more varied as well as refined. The attractiveness of the model was enhanced in one more respect: that of dance. Dhondopant Sanglikar of the Nutan Sanglikar Mandali earned a name for employing dance proper in his productions around 1867. It is known that Bhave's *vidushak* indulged in what could be described as acrobatics.

It is significant to note that though not enough details are available about the individual abilities of the actor-singers, two features of their voices invariably find laudatory mention: wide pitch-range and strength or loudness. It is understandable that in the absence of public address systems and the lack of properly covered sites of performance, high premium was placed on those voice-qualities which ensured audibility. In this context, Gopal Mainkar, Govind Karmarkar from the Bhave-troupe were often praised in contemporary accounts.



With the arrival of Annasahib Kirloskar and his Mandali, new voices and new composers were heard in greater abundance. In this phase also, total involvement in the production-processes was their prominent feature. No sound-recording from this era is available but the contemporary descriptions are detailed enough to give an idea of the richness of talent.

Earlier, while marking the chronological progress we have placed the Kirloskar-model in the centre of the post-Bhave development and thus we could detect four other dramatic strategies pursued by Pandoba Yevteshwarkar, Madhavrao Patankar, Vasudeorao Dongre and finally Babajirao Rane through their respective companies. An identical categorization holds true in case of music-makers. In this manner, the entire scene could be described as peopled by five major kinds of music-makers representing five musical strategies contending for supremacy. Though not in a strictly sequential manner, all these varied musical forces gained short-lived or more or less durable ascendancy in the history of Marathi stage-music. An illustrative analysis of the music-makers concerned should prove helpful in understanding the situation. In this regard, trying to answer the following questions will make it easier to assess their respective contributions:

1. Who were the singers? What were the special features of their singing?
2. Who composed music? What were the essential attributes of their compositions? What were the situations occasions on which music was used?
3. What were the musical instruments employed?
4. Did the composers utilize any specific musical moulds? What was their musical significance?
5. Apart from the above aspects what were the special characteristics of the songs as songs?

The first flowering of the Kirloskar-variety of stage-music was well-represented by two actor-singers who could be described as antithesis of each other. They were Bhaurao Kolhatkar and Pt. Balkoba Natekar respectively.

Bhaurao, affectionately known as Bhavdya, was musically untrained but possessed the gift of an extraordinary voice coupled with a keen dramatic sense. He had a high natural pitch and his voice was pliable, quick-moving, sweet and yet full of strength. To start with he was a 'heroine-party', but he lost no time in switching over to male leads as soon as he judged himself unfit for female-roles on account of changes in



**Bhaurao Kolhatkar**  
- the first heroine

looks and voice brought about by an advancing age. In his anxiety to bring forth an unambiguously masculine quality of singing, he is reported to have overdone the vigorous in voice-projection and such other aspects of singing. However, this must have been a transitional phase. It is to his credit that he could alter his bearing and singing-style to meet the new challenge with success. It transpires that his forte was the *lavani*-oriented songs and such other song-forms. As is known, these forms demanded great agility of voice and matching technical virtuosity. With his amazing vocal resources he could so invest a common recitation-mould like *saki* with musical appeal that the *saki*-singing of the Kirloskar Mandali had become proverbial for its excellence. A very important feature of Bhaurao's musicianship was the restraint he observed in singing. Never did he lose sight of the criterion of dramatic relevance while singing. Though he did not deny himself the luxury of responding affirmatively to 'encores', his singing-units were so designed and presented that they could avoid the imbalances of excess in spite of the repeats demanded and enjoyed.

Balkoba Natekar, who played the male leads was unmistakably a musical contrast. He was very soundly trained in the Hindustani art-music tradition. Having learnt dhrupad from Ustad Vazir Khan and *been* and *sitar* from other notables, he had consequently developed a strong classical core. This was clearly reflected in his music which was more deliberately artistic than dramatic. It is on record that the seniors in the Mandali often chastised him for over-singing. While playing the role of Narada in Saubhadra he used to sling a sitar around his neck instead of the expected *vina*. This too points out to his intentionally artistic projection of music. He cared for music as music and not as an auxiliary dramatic force. But he had succeeded in charming the audience with his singing. This was well-proved when, during his temporary estrangement from the Mandali he was replaced. The replacement was so resented that a public campaign was launched for his reinstatement! The presentations of the Mandali were not regarded fully satisfying without his participation. He played contrastive roles like Kanva (*Shakuntala*) and Krishna (*Saubhadra*), a sure indication of his musical ability as well as histrionic versatility. Though cultured, his voice had a slight nasal touch in the throw (again a feature widely shared by vocalists accustomed to the classical musical *mehfils*). For his first play, *Shakuntala*, he selected tunes for his own songs. It is clear that this was intended to facilitate the expression of his individual singing prowess. He preferred tunes that could rise above mere recitation and which could provide him with some scope for musical elaborations. For example, while selecting a tune for a verse in *Shakuntala* (*Abhinavlolup*, Act V), Natekar first composed it in *Bihag*. Later he also thought of alternative tunes in *Paraj* and *Sindh Kafi*. When Natekar sang all the three tunes to Annasahib Kirloskar, the latter liked them all and since then it became a practice for Natekar to render all the three tunes from behind the wings!

Natekar-like musical self-reliance in music-composing was, in reality, a pointer to the rather undifferentiated role of the composer. Moroba Wagholikar playing Dushyanta was very well-versed in the *tamasha*-lore and in all probability Dushyanta's songs were his creations. Annasahib Kirloskar himself was an experienced performer and an above-average singer who was deeply entrenched in the *keertan*-tradition. His easy and lucid versification, as also his inclination to use recitation-moulds in great measure, explain his contribution to stage-music. It seems that a sure distinction was made between versification and song-composing. The songs were intended to encourage musical elaboration while the verses were (in spite of being unambiguous deviations from prose) musically speaking, less than songs. Examined content-wise, verses employed were tuneful but stereotyped carriers of information while the songs introduced were effective vehicles for the actor-singer's artistry aimed at deepening the mood or accentuating the poignancy of the dramatic situation. This is the reason why majority of verses in *Shakuntala* did not obstruct the dramatic flow. In fact, out of about 200 non-prose items in *Shakuntala* not more than 20 could boast of in-built musicality! It is no wonder that altogether 107 non-prose items are titled as *pada* (i.e. verse), 41 as *saki* and 21 as *dindi*. The latter two are well-established prosodic moulds and though Natekar and the like were prone to exploit even these for musical showmanship, on most occasions the *sakis* and the *dindis* remained recitation moulds. Though the *padas* were in different *ragas*, a majority of them were not elaborated. A mere singing of their outlines was deemed sufficient to lend a variety to the presentation.

As far as the instruments were concerned, the first performance of *Shakuntala* (1875) in Belgaum was introduced with some sort of background music or curtain-raising title-music in which (according to the contemporary press report) band and *sitars* were employed. During the performance, *tanpuras* and *pakhawaj* were used to provide tonal and rhythmic accompaniments respectively. It is common knowledge among keener students of vocal music that to sing solely to the accompaniment of drone without the support of melodic instruments like *sarangi* etc. always poses a very strong challenge to the musician's command over vocal resources, technique and virtuosity. Bare instrumentation current in the Kirloskar-era could not be expected to buttress weak projection or to perform any masking trick to hide faulty execution of musical designs. It is to be concluded that singers of the era possessed commendable staying power and self-reliance.

Two minor details are worth noting. Kirloskar invariably used *sakis* for scene-endings. The *saki*-tune ends with a flourish and also on the octave (alternatively on the fundamental). This sort of stylized use of music and versification is definitely helpful in firmly establishing the dramatic structure (compare Shakespeare's use of rhymed couplets in scene-endings). Secondly, Kirloskar also had a recourse to *garba*, (Gujrati folk-tune), *thumri* and tunes entitled

*Karnataki*. Musically viewed, this indicated casting a wide net, but with discrimination.

From the other contemporary music-makers, Pandoba Yevteshwar's contribution stood forth as an all-out effort to provide full scope to art-music without diluting its musical substance. He employed *dhrupad*-like serious vocal forms and insisted on the grammatical purity of raga and the intricacy of musical design. He publicly deplored the absence of these very features in the 'popular' Kirloskar brand of stage-music.

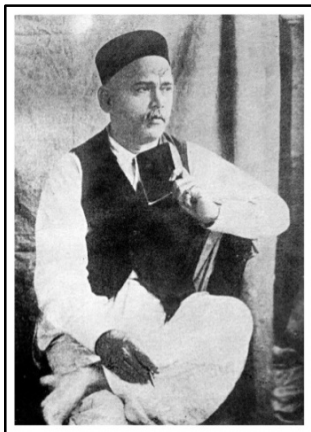
On the other hand, Dongre of the Bombay Royal Opera Company emphasized music of a very different appeal through his production *Indrasabha*. In it, he brought to the fore dance and dance-music. *Indrasabha*, as it was performed on the contemporary Parsi-Gujrati stage, was in essence a dance-music-spectacle. It had more of an intense audio-visual sensuality than dramatic appeal and Dongre obviously picked up this aspect. It stands to logic that he must have used musical instruments to match the demands made by the spectacular element that ruled over the presentation. However, no direct evidence to this effect is available. It is a sad truth that musical innovations, as compared to other stage-aspects, have always lagged behind in the history of Marathi stage-music and hence it is also possible that Dongre might have remained content with the conventional instrumentation. However, there are adequate indications to allow us to deduce that his musical strategy was non-Marathi in orientation.

Madhavrao Patankar, the third variant from the Kirloskar-model, also depended on the Parsi-Urdu stage - but his borrowings from the non-Marathi stage were restricted to *jhagda*-songs i.e. amatory action-songs of cheaper variety enacted by male and female leads. He appears to have evolved a curious mixture of vulgar aspects from the Marathi *tamasha*-music and the non-Marathi theatric features mentioned above. In addition, he indiscriminately lifted tunes that had attained popularity on the contemporary Marathi stage. Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar, a budding dramatist and literary critic, criticized Patankar's first play *Vikram-Shashilata* (1891) very severely and rightly on two counts: firstly because it did not borrow enough from the Parsi stage; and secondly because, whatever it borrowed it also invariably vulgarized! It is symptomatic that the musical highlights of his third play, *Satyavijay* (1892) could be tabulated as shown below:

Total non-prose items	58
<i>Jhagda</i> -situations and number of songs included	3 and 13 respectively
Band tunes	2
<i>Lavanis</i>	5
Songs sung by ghosts	2

Further, it is to be noted that many of the compositions were in *talas dadra* and *jhampa*-both known for a rhythmic lilt easy to follow even by untutored minds. The point is that in eve retrospect, Patankar's musical plan was similar to any uncompromising manufacturer supplying items that sell! Both he himself and his audience were satisfied with the format and both did not insist on musical or even dramatic quality or relevance.

Babajirao Rane of the Rajapurkar Natak Mandali concentrated on the devotional music of the *varkari* sect of Maharashtra, an offshoot of the pan-Indian *bhakti*-movement enveloping the country from the fifteenth century onwards. Rather unnecessarily Rane himself did feel apologetic because his productions did not include art-music and emphasized only *varkari*-music which is conventionally categorized as folk-music. He, therefore, removed the word 'Sangeet' from the banner of his Mandali. However, his efforts were decidedly music-plays because they largely depended on songs and singers for the realization of their dramatic potentialities. The most prominent actor-singer of his troupe was Rajaram Shukla, whose role of Tukaram became extremely popular due to the sense of deep involvement and authenticity that Shukla could communicate to the audience. The music of the play was in conformity to the traditional moulds of the *varkari* sect. Instrumentation, presentation, tune-contours and such other features were also governed by a similar consideration for realism. As indicated earlier, with Rane's productions we enter the twentieth century. Kirloskar Mandali continued to be the trend-setter even at the turn of the century. Hence, after having taken a close look at the Kirloskar contemporaries, the discussion comes back to it once again.



**Govind Ballal Deval**

Deval continued the ascendancy of the Kirloskar-model till the Kolhatkar-Kirloskar Mandali combination became effective in 1896 through *Veertanay*. Examined musico-dramatically, Deval's short but significant career consists of three turns: pre-Kolhatkar, post-Kolhatkar and post-*Manapaman*. Deval wrote *Mricchakatik* (1887) and *Vikramorvashiya* (1889) in which he continued on the Kirloskar-track. He began altering the course from *Shapsambhram* (1894) but completed the break-away only in *Sharda* (1899)-a play that succeeded Kolhatkar's epoch-making *Veertanay*. The final musico-dramatic turn was executed when Deval adapted his own prose *Phalgunrao* as *Samshaykallol* (1916) - which was a post-*Manapaman* phenomenon. On analysis it becomes clear that during the first developmental phase, Deval did bring about improvement in the Kirloskar-model because he refined and simplified the versification. But he did not abandon the musical

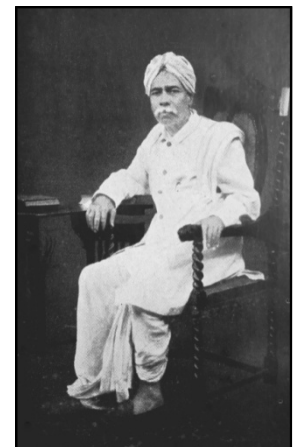


moulds practiced by Annasahib Kirloskar. Even the actor-singers involved marked a continuation. It is not surprising that during this phase Deval's plays were frequently found to repeat the tunes so well-inducted in the musical stream by his *guru* i.e. Kirloskar. It is instructive to compare break-downs of the musical moulds employed by Kirloskar and Deval in their respective first productions:

	<i>Shakuntal</i>	<i>Mrichhakatik</i>
<i>Pada</i>	107	83
<i>Saki</i>	41	39
<i>Dindi</i>	21	11
<i>Anjanigeet</i>	8	2
<i>Kamada (Shloka)</i>	7	8
<i>Ovi</i>	6	3
<i>Thumri</i>	2	<i>Thumri and lavani</i> 5 each

In a way, Deval's loyalty to the Kirloskar idiom, at least through the early years, is understandable. Firstly, because both Kirloskar and Deval had similar musical inheritance, it was difficult to conceive and concretize musical deviation without a change in the musical heritage. Deval had to wait till Kolhatkar successfully enlarged the musical repertoire. Secondly, in a manner of speaking, Kirloskar himself had taken a musico-dramatic leap in *Saubhadra* (1883) and in the process he had exhausted the potentialities of his own idiom. Hence Deval veered off substantially from the musical stylistics of Annasaheb Kirloskar only when Kolhatkar's total break-away was received and absorbed. It is therefore necessary to discuss Kolhatkar's contribution before taking up the second Deval-phase.

Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar was a very conscious artist. At the time of his very first dramatic venture, *Veertanay*, he stated in the preface that one of his intentions was to 'bring into circulation verses with new tunes'. He made no secret of the fact that these new tunes were taken up from the Parsi-Gujrati plays staged in Bombay during the period. Apart from being a creative artist, he was a critic of rare penetration. With an ever-alert critical faculty, he tackled the important musico-aesthetico-dramatic issue of *raga*-sequence to be followed in a music-play. It is known that musicologically *raga-raginis* follow a certain sequence. In his preface to *Veertanay*, Kolhatkar made a brief reference to the issue and gave his verdict that he preferred the criterion of using *raga-raginis* according to the *rasa* involved. His selection



Shripad Krishna  
Kolhatkar

depended upon and defended the twin criteria of musical variety and an intrinsic, dramatic appropriateness. On the same grounds, he did not care to compose 'new' tunes but chose and used the old ones in a novel manner and changed content. Analysed from the point of literary content his dramaturgy was intentionally directed at combining the *rasas* of *hasya* and *veer* and this is to be kept in mind while interpreting his musical design. It is possible to guess his motives if a distribution-table of the *Veertanay*-tunes is made.

Tunes from the Parsi-Gujrati plays	88
Saki	4
Dindi	2
Tunes from other Marathi plays	10
Total	104

When a comparison between this table and those of *Shakuntal* and *Mrichhakatik* provided earlier is made it becomes clear that Kolhatkar deliberately and radically transformed the format and substance of Marathi stage-music in his very first play written at the age of twenty-five! *Veertanay* proved two things at the same time. Firstly, it established Kolhatkar as a very bold and imaginative dramatic force and secondly, it proved that the forces clamouring for change must have brought on a tremendous pressure to compel an establishment like the Kirloskar Mandali to accept a complete musical changeover. Going a little further one also notices that in his 88 transplanted tunes, Kolhatkar had five duets, one dance-song and one marching song. Kolhatkar went on to write a dozen plays and eight of them were music-plays. His last music-play, *Vadhupariksha* (1928), was in fact a rewritten version of his prose-play of the same name written fifteen years earlier. Thus, it could be said that he ceased to be an active musical playwright by 1918-the year in which two of his music-plays were produced (*Janmarahasya* and *Sahacharini*). In all, his music-plays taken together, he wrote more than 600 verses/songs. Each of the four plays written before 1910 included around a hundred songs and the four post-1910 plays contained progressively less and less number of songs. For example, *Premshodhan*, *Sahacharini*, *Janmarahasya* and *Vadhupariksha* had 73, 43, 48 and 32 songs respectively. What is to be deduced? The deduction is that Kolhatkar had exhausted the potentialities of his dramaturgical strategy which was highly dependent on the Parsi-Gujrati theatre. In addition, he was unable to tide over the rising interest in the use of Hindustani art-music. He did not have any musico-dramatic answer to what had happened on the Marathi music-stage in 1911-*Manapman* of K.P. Khadilkar. Thus for all practical purposes, Kolhatkar's significant musical contributions arrived densely in the span of fifteen years (1895-1910). A revolution had taken place due to Kolhatkar but it

belonged too quickly to history and was almost forgotten. However, that does not lessen the importance of what he achieved. Briefly, his contributions can be enumerated as follows:



Heerabai Pednekar -  
probably the first female  
music composer

1. Kolhatkar's was a well-planned and conscious musico-dramatic rebellion which first broke out in *Veertanay* (1896). His musico-aesthetic and dramaturgical powers came to their full glory in *Mooknayak* (1901).

2. A very keen student of music and of theatre-music in particular, he was also a writer of considerable wit and linguistic talent. His forte was his close acquaintance with the semi-classical music current in the contemporary Parsi-Gujrati theatre as it was flowering in Bombay. This theatre banked on lilt and verve of music rather than on its melody. Kolhatkar was fully enamoured of this music but soon realized the one-sidedness of its approach. He evolved a compromise formula and successfully exploited it in

*Mooknayak* (1901). In this play he granted melody its rightful place along with the elements of novelty and variety. The comeback of melody signified two things in this connection:

(a) It meant use of already popular and current musical moulds from the corpus of Marathi stage-music.

(b) It also indicated use of *ragas* and compositions which could be musically elaborated and improvised upon by the actor-singers. Essentially, such compositions were free from the rhythmic straitjackets of the Parsi-Gujrati theatric music.

3. Use of rhythm-accentuating music in a pervasive manner was not Kolhatkar's sole musical strategy. He also emphasized dance-music, marching-music, duets, and choruses in his plays.

4. Except in case of *Vadhupariksha*, for which Pt. Ramkrishnabuwa Vaze selected tunes, Kolhatkar himself chose tunes for his plays. It is, however, possible that Smt. Heerabai Pednekar provided tunes to him after 1901. She was a known and talented professional singer.

5. Being his own versifier and tune-selector, Kolhatkar kept his verses close to the selected tunes in which rhythm was stressed. By adopting this procedure, he gained in maintaining precision of rhythmic emphases, but he was also forced to select and employ words etc. which were obscure. Consequently, elements of lucidity and lyricism in versification suffered badly. In addition, Kolhatkar's wit

also proved a curse as far as the power of reaching the audience (emotionally) was concerned. Overt and dry intellectualism could hardly be expected to endear him to the audience. It is highly symptomatic that he had begun writing his devastatingly penetrative prose essays since 1901. The medium of prose, the high wit-content and the reformist urge came to him naturally. His waning musico-dramatic powers were closely and causally related to his rise as a writer of prose with social commitment.

6. His musico-dramatic deviations were so deliberate that they could be plotted as point-to-point departures from the established practices. This meant that the deviations were detected in respect of all kinds of details. Some instances are noted below:

The established music-play invariably started with the *Sutradhar-Nati* scene. The convention was a link with the classical Sanskrit-drama and through it with the *Natyashastra* tradition. Kolhatkar severed these tenuous bonds. He substituted *Mangalacharan* for the *Nati-Sutradhar* scene and in it, tried out various prescriptions of song-combinations. For example, *Veertanay* opened with a scene in which young girls presented a composition as a piece of concerted singing. *Mooknayak* began with a scene in which young girls sang while on a swing. *Mativikar* started with *Ishastuti* from behind the curtain.

In the matter of *raga*-sequence also, he set aside the established conventions. The very first song (after *Mangalacharan*) in *Veertanay* was set in *raga Malkauns*, which was customarily reserved for later portions of a play. The first-night audience was shocked into new consciousness. As already indicated, Kolhatkar justified his choice on the basis of thematic content.

The established music-play in Marathi depended on non-prose items like *saki*, *dindi* etc. to a very great extent. Added to this, the later playwrights repeated a number of tunes from the earlier plays. Kolhatkar eschewed both these customs.

The established musical stylistics had also determined *saki* as a tonal mould to be used as a scene-ending device to aid effective exits of characters. Kolhatkar did away with this. In general his inclination towards prose (and also his command over it) led him to decide in favour of almost total elimination of recitation-oriented items from his tonal repertoire.

Another Kolhatkar-invention was employment of a song-cluster that approximated an operatic presentation. Of course a dense formation of non-prose items was not a novelty on the pre-Kolhatkar dramaturgical scene. But Kolhatkar's attempt was different. He grouped together songs that possessed singing potential. Very telling instances were found in *Veertanay* (Act I, scene 4) or *Mooknayak* (Act III, scene 1).

Kolhatkar's versification closely traced the contours of the Parsi-Gujrati tunes which the verses followed. Inevitably, Kolhatkar's verses were therefore full of stressed consonants, nasal consonants as well as close-knit, undependable, Sanskrit words. These verses lent themselves easily to the compulsively rhythmic outlines of the original tunes but they lacked the earlier dramatist's flowing, open line-endings which had proved suitable for singing, rhythmic adjustments and improvisations. Words in Kolhatkar's verses could not be melodically sustained. The cumulative effect was an implied encouragement to both the actor-singers and listeners to ignore meaning and give unhindered scope to the rhythmic aspect of musical sensibility.

Kolhatkar did not experiment with the instruments used by stage musicians. *Tanpuras* positioned in the wings during the early Kirloskar-phase had been replaced by the harmonium sometime around 1882. Kolhatkar continued the accompaniment-set employed by the Kirloskar Mandali.

Having considered Kolhatkar's contribution, it is necessary to discuss the second phase of Deval's development. As a majority of the actor-singers were common to many dramatists and tune-selectors, the actor-singers could advisably be taken up later.

Deval completed a musically significant stylistic turn in his play *Sharda*. In this play he evolved a formula which achieved a musical balance between selecting tunes from the sources tapped by the earlier music-selectors and new, more expandable, musical moulds. Thus tunes in *Sharda* consisted of borrowings from Marathi folk-music (*lavani*), recitation-moulds current in Maharashtra (*katav*, *phatka*, *saki*, *dindi* etc.), catchy tunes from the Parsi-Gujrati theatre and *raga*-compositions from Hindustani art-music with flexible, expandable structures. It is to be remembered that Deval was a witness to Kolhatkar's total and effective recourse to the Parsi-Gujrati tune-corpus. But he was also aware of the musico-dramatic dead-end that awaited Kolhatkar, who in effect practised a musical extremism in entirely ignoring the continuing corpus or repertoire of the contemporary music-stage. Deval also realized that the Parsi-Gujrati tunes possessed some negative features. To an extent they hampered the actor-singers' imagination-as the elaborative possibilities were restricted. Deval showed a better musico-dramatic insight as he judiciously used both the 'open' and 'closed' categories of tunes in *Sharda*. In the case of stage-music, durability of songs etc. is helped by the ingredient of lucidity. Deval's versification was full of it. Deval was an astute dramatist performer and he seems to have learnt all the lessons that could be learnt from the impact of *Veertanay*.

The mutual influencing act that took place between Kolhatkar and Deval can be counterchecked. It is seen that lessons of *Sharda* and the subsequent successes were also not lost on Kolhatkar. He followed the more successful musical



formula in *Mativikar* (1906) and to a greater extent in *Premshodhan* (1910). But by that time it was rather late in the day for him to regain the lost dramatic hold. He passed into dramatic oblivion mainly because he tried to construct plays of closed options.

In this context it is educative to compare tune-wise tabulations of two of Deval's plays : one pre-*Veertanay* and the other succeeding it.

Shapasambhrama (1893)	Sharda (1896)
Pada 76	Pada 74
Saki 25	Saki 6
Dindi 9	Dindi 5
Anjanigeet, anushtubh, arya, ovi 1 each	Katav, phatka, shloka, kamada, anjanigeet, lavni, mangalashtaka 1 each
Total 114	Total 92

Pada no. 49 is a chorus

Pada no. 68 is titled as *khayal*

However, on closer analysis yet another feature emerges. Though both the plays consist of an equal number of items in the *pada*-category, application of the criterion of possibility of musical elaboration yields to us a valuable insight in Deval's musico-dramatic design.

<i>Shapasambhrama</i>	<i>Sharda</i>
-	<i>Shastrokta ragas (Hameer, Sarang, Bageshri, Jaunpuri, Bhairavi, Bhoop, Bhairav) 7</i>
Light raga ( <i>Pilu</i> ) 1	Light ragas ( <i>Bahar, Jhinjhoti, Pilu, Adana, Mand</i> ) 5
-	Karnataki tunes 4
Marathi tunes 61	Marathi tunes 36
Parsi-Gujrati tunes 4	Parsi-Gujrati tunes 21

In this tabulation, 'Marathi tunes' mean tunes taken from earlier plays as well as tunes that were popular in contemporary society. Thus if *Shapasambhrama*-music meant repetition, continuity and acceptance, then *Sharda*-music could be

easily interpreted as minimal repetition, novelty, elaborative opportunities-all leading to immediate impact as also to a lasting appeal.

Deval went on to celebrate one more major musical victory and to complete one more musical evolution with his *Samshaykallol* (1916). But this comes much later and only after K.P. Khadilkar had led the way and also after Varerkar and Gadkari had started making their presence felt.

At this juncture, it is convenient to turn to the actor-singers.

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## MUSIC-MAKERS II

### Up to 1930

In the previous chapter we touched the turning point of the nineteenth century while discussing contributions made by various music-making agencies. Generally speaking, the Kirloskar-mould of stage-music became a part of history with the demise of Bhaurao Kolhatkar in 1901. A little later, both Keshavrao Bhonsale and Balgandharva were to introduce new musical moulds on firm basis. However, before this could take place, a small gap had to be filled in. Though not in an identical manner, two actors (born in 1875 with a month's difference) carried out the task admirably. They were Dattopant Halyalkar and Nanasaheb Joglekar. A brief comparison of their respective achievements adds a dimension to the entire musical scene apart from placing their individual contributions in proper perspective.

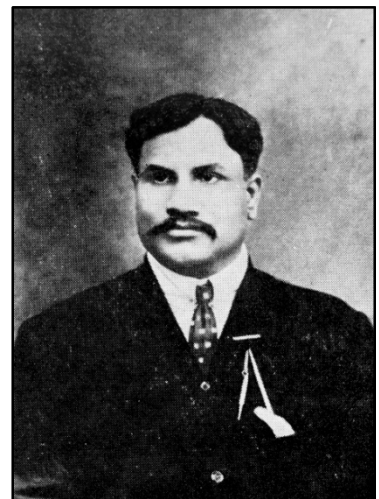
Halyalkar (b. 29.1.1875, d. 18.2.1916) started his acting career in 1884 and worked his way up to stardom through at least four *mandalis*. During thirty years of active life, Halyalkar consciously modelled himself after Bhaurao. Endowed with a 'he-man' physique and matching vocal resources, Halyalkar could play each role that Bhaurao had played with unfailing impact and authenticity. As a consequence, at least on three occasions he was reportedly invited by the Kirloskar Mandali to join the fold. These offers he declined chiefly because he did not want to be in a subordinate employee's position anywhere. The point is that he was never groomed purposefully as a substitute for Bhaurao though he continued to look up to Bhaurao as the inspiring model. Hence, he acted all male and female leads established by Bhaurao, e.g. Charudatta, Kodanda, Pundarik, Shoorasen and Subhadra, Manthara. In addition he enlivened new roles on his own in his characterisations of Tulshi (*Sambhaji*, Pathare), Shashikala (*Vikram-Shashikala*, Patankar, 1891), Vivek (*Manovijay*, Nevalkar, 1908) and Shankar (*Mahananda*, Apte, 1913).

Halyalkar did not receive any systematic training in music. He possessed an intuitive sense of pathetic and virile in music and he was also gifted with suitable vocal resources to actually project these qualities in performance. Such was the power of his voice that to get an adequate drone it was necessary for him to employ two or more large-sized pedal-harmoniums! The vocal assets fortunately did not remain idle as he could unerringly sense the implied musicality of song-items. He was, therefore, able to popularize songs/verses which were only perfunctorily sung by (even) Bhaurao! For example, his *dindi* from *Mricchakatik*, '*Shravani sakhichya*' (Act IV) had made an extraordinary impact throughout Maharashtra on account of his unique rendering. It is on record that he used to receive up to seven encores for it! Similarly, the simple-

looking composition from *Ramrajvaviyog* ('*Dhanya janma jahala*', Act I) or the fast-paced '*Agad bam bam*' (*Mahananda*) were applause-winners because Halyalkar's art bestowed musical eminence on them. Halyalkar played only female leads till 1898 and then onwards he concentrated on male roles as befitted his changing voice and physique. One instance of his acute sense of drama vis-à-vis voice-usage has been noted. In *Shapasambhrama* (Deval, 1894), Pundarik is engaged in mock-meditation in presence of Mahashweta-the heroine who is shown lamenting the ironical fact that she should lose her heart to a seer lost to this world! As is to be expected, Mahashweta expresses the sentiment through a song ('*Bahu shant dant*', Act I). To enhance the playfulness of the situation, Bhaurao used to intone the word '*satchitanand*' while Mahashweta was singing. Halyalkar's improvement was to employ a full-toned voice and a falsetto alternatively. In the first instance he practically drowned the heroine's song and in the latter voice-usage the changed 'unmanly' sounding timbre created fun! Obviously this is an instance of intelligent and conscious use of voice directed at exploiting the dramatic element of a particular situation.

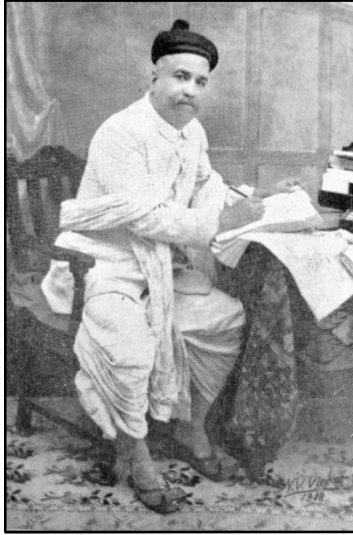
It can be concluded that though Halyalkar imitated in matters of singing style, the ultimate impact of his music was much more than mere imitation. It is better to say that he was a musical continuation of Bhaurao rather than a determined resemblance. It is pertinent to remember that Bhaurao was certainly less happy in male roles in which Halyalkar was at home. It is indeed a pity that Halyalkar did not get new and mature plays to project his histrionic talents. In the absence of good, new scripts he had to perform constantly under the shadows of comparisons with Bhaurao. However, the history of Marathi stage-music has to remain content by noting Halyalkar's contribution yet it had to withhold from him the credit of being a prominent protagonist of a new way.

If Halyalkar was an admirer-at-a-distance of Bhaurao, Nanasaheb Joglekar (b. 8.2.1875, d. 15.11.1911) was consciously selected and groomed to step in Bhaurao's shoes. Joglekar had aspirations to become a lawyer, though he had acquired training in Hindustani art-music before he joined the mandali. After Bhaurao's death, Joglekar also assumed proprietary responsibility of the mandali in 1901. His active stage-career however, stretched only to a period of a decade, as he died early. Born in a family of Haridas he started singing early in the traditional style of the *keertankars*. To an extent this proved a hindrance as far as a smooth adaptation to the stage-music mode, so effectively established by Bhaurao, was concerned. Inevitably, Joglekar was compared to Bhaurao-and that must have proved a difficult cross to bear. Making his debut as Kodanda (*Sharda*, G.B. Deval), he followed up



Nanasaheb Joglekar

with Vikrant (*Mooknayak*, S.K. Kolhatkar) and other hero-roles of varying musical merit. He was instrumental in bringing Balgandharva to the Kirloskar flock (1905), an event that was to bring untold fortunes to Marathi stage-music. It is clear that Joglekar would not have been remembered merely for these accomplishments in spite of his good voice, stately bearing, gentlemanly conduct and clean administration of the mandali. Fortunately, he did get an opportunity to make his distinct mark, however short-lived, and he was destined to enjoy the glory it brought him.



Krishnaji Prabhakar  
Khadilkar

The well-known prose-dramatist Khadilkar had been toying with the idea of authoring a music-play since 1909. Gradually he became acquainted with Joglekar's potentialities and completed *Manapaman* in 1910. The play had a fair measure of dramatic substance in the role of Dhairyadhar, the hero and to an extent it was intended for Joglekar in particular. The first night performance of the play (12.3.1911) suddenly and securely established Joglekar as a musical high-point in the history of Marathi stage-music.

The new music of *Manapaman* was well-launched due to Joglekar's sweet, high-pitched but slightly heavy voice. The slow-moving voice had not so far succeeded in dazzling the audience into musical subservience but with matching compositions and

*ragas* with dignified gait like *Malkauns* and *Jaunpuri* used judiciously, Joglekar sang impressively. Those who had seen this first Dhairyadhar could never accept the subsequent ones easily. Joglekar also took adequate care of the prose portion, as well as the coordination with other actors - so much so that he was rated as the most complete Dhairyadhar of all. Unfortunately, he died barely eight months after the first performance. However, he succeeded in creating a standard for male musical leads in a more modern idiom and also contributed towards establishing an equally comprehensive model for a music-play. It is apparent that *Manapaman* and Joglekar together definitely crystallized an improved type of music-drama and a musical hero. Whether Bhaurao, Halyalkar or Keshavrao Bhonsale or the later Dinanath could do that is open to question as they started as female leads and later evolved into heroes. It was not so in the case of Joglekar. He began and ended as a hero with an unimpaired image. The point is that the evolution of a stereo-type is essentially



Keshavrao Bhonsale



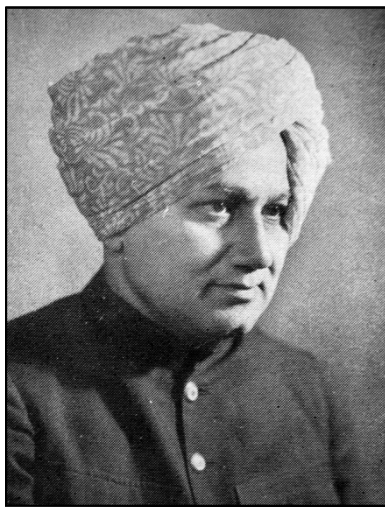
a process of continuous and concentrated exploration, and Joglekar admirably exemplifies an early version of it. He was the antithesis of Halyalkar in the sense that while the latter was interested in creating another version of Bhaurao, Joglekar was aiming at creating another type of a hero. Admittedly the objective was not fully realized, but that hardly diminishes the reality of the attempt.

One more Dhairyadhar contended for top honours during the same period. He was Keshavrao Bhonsale (b. 9.8.1890, d. 4.10.1921). He began his histrionic career at a very tender age and came into limelight in his role of *Sharda* produced by the Swadeshhitachintak Mandali in 1899. It is interesting to note that while Bhaurao Kolhatkar had succeeded in making Kodanda (the hero in *Sharda*) popular, Bhonsale's artistry made the character of *Sharda* the central point of attraction. This is clearly an instance of the interpretative freedom which is amply available in a music-play. Reportedly, Bhonsale's singing in *Sharda* started the convention of acquiescing to the encore-claims made by the audience even at the cost of transgressing the limits of dramatic propriety. However, Bhonsale's fame rests on his achievement by creating a forceful, iterative singing-style which laid emphasis on skilful execution of *tans* (especially the variety known as *jabdi* in Hindustani art-music) and an overall tone of aggression in music. One cannot say that Bhonsale changed the basic corpus of the Marathi stage-tunes. Rather, it can be maintained that he changed the musical substance through changes effected in the mode of presentation. Once he had established his own dramatic troupe, the Lalitkaladarsh in 1908, he re-affirmed his distinctive singing-style in *Rakshasi Mahatvakansha* (1913, Veer Vamanrao Joshi), a play of clashing swords, matching intrigues and dialogues. Music-wise the play totally depended on tunes bodily lifted from the other popular melodies from *Manapaman* and other categories of Hindustani art-music. It was Bhonsale's masculine style of singing that made the impact. His pronunciation of words was forceful, the voice-production relied heavily on an open A-vowel and the *tanans* were executed with marked stress (the extra punch being added through jaw movements). Thus, the cumulative musical experience was of a bold, ear-filling singing that assaulted one with a view to conquer into an aesthetic submission. He used to sing in 'white five' and, that should give us an idea of the 'power' aspect of his singing. Though it is true that all major matters of his vocalism was shaped through female roles, it was his Dhairyadhar that brought him lasting fame and also established his mode of singing as a major alternative polarity completing the equilibrium of tensions. The other polarity was the Balgandharva school concretised through the successive productions of Kirloskar and Gandharva Natak Mandalis. Unfortunately, Keshavrao also died young - almost immediately after the famous 'joint' performance of *Manapaman* in collaboration with Balgandharva. Looking back upon the three post-Bhaurao heroes, namely Halyalkar, Joglekar and Bhonsale, it is clear that they tended to become more and more of art-

musicians. It is significant that Bhonsale had unambiguously expressed his desire to take to the concert-stage as a vocalist and was consciously equipping himself for this role.

Providing a correspondingly effective and meritorious response, Balgandharva carried the polarization process to completion.

Two features bestow the honour on him. Firstly, he began from the beginning i.e. he did not make a debut as a child-actor and subsequently burgeon into female leads with a further transition into male leads. He started playing heroines when he was around seventeen. His voice had just broken when he gave his first unsuccessful trial for the Kirloskar Mandali in 1903 and it was on the mend at the time he passed his second audition for them in 1905.



Balgandharva (Narayan  
Shripad Rajhans)

When he made his debut soon after, he had an intensive and preparatory training in art-music. To all practical purposes, Balgandharva as a 'singer' evolved entirely on the stage. Due to his active and long career, Marathi music-stage and Balgandharva registered a parallel growth over a period of fifty years. Secondly, in contrast to many of his contemporaries, he did not nurse any ambitions to establish himself as an art-musician of a concert stature. Nor did he bother to equip himself with the lore of art-music as such. He concentrated on stage-music and on the task of being an actor-singer. This second feature of a single-minded devotion to the category of stage-music almost compels a corresponding evaluative single mindedness! His

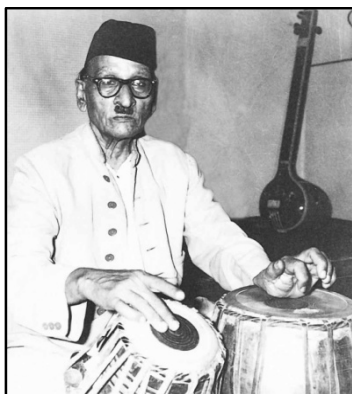
artistry is thus to be assessed in terms of musico-dramatic perspective rather than a recourse to critical canons of sheer musicianship.

Tracing his evolution, it becomes clear that he needed about five years to find his stage-bearings. During the period Balgandharva depended heavily on his natural gifts and intuitive sense of music. Among the natural gifts that he had one could mention an extremely supple and sweet voice and also an innate feeling for rhythm. His voice lacked robustness and the diction was not forceful. Yet, Balgandharva's voice possessed an adequate reach and the speech too had a sort of clipped clarity about it. Obviously, these characteristics suited the type of female roles he played. To further the description, his non-emphatic diction was also accompanied by an enveloping kind of melodic musicality that could be easily contrasted with the staccato and divisive style of vocalism which is intrinsically related to increasing rhythmic orientation. In Balgandharva's case the effect of musical continuity was placed higher in the scale of musical

priorities. Consequently, Balgandharva scrupulously stuck to tempi which were neither *vilambit* nor *drut*. Either of these varieties would have disturbed the continued projection of the vocal line which he valued so highly. His total approach towards stage-music was marked by a preference for persuasion through music rather than for compulsion with its help. The final impression one could carry was of naturalness and ease than of virtuosity and craftsmanship.

However, as indicated earlier, Balgandharva was passing through the process of stabilizing an independent identity till about 1910 - and till this date he was mostly engaged in playing roles in the older plays. It could be said that it was from *Mativikar* (1907) that his true advance towards the thespian individuation began and by the time K.P. alias Kakasaheb Khadilkar took to coaching him for *Premshodhan* (1911), Balgandharva had found his moorings. It is symbolic that he shifted the accompanists from the wings to their present position in 1910! With the now famous *Manapaman* (Khadilkar, 1911) Balgandharva also proved his ability to assimilate and transform a new musical idiom. Of course a large share of the credit goes to Govindrao Tembe who selected tunes for *Manapaman*. Unlike Kolhatkar, Tembe was a practicing musician in his own right. Tembe's accent was on choosing musical moulds that could be elaborated. Kolhatkar, who selected tunes for his own plays, was a contrast to Tembe, in the sense that Kolhatkar's general tendency was to pick out tunes which allowed scope for a perfect rendering but hardly made allowance for free elaboration. Thus it is not a coincidence that even Joglekar came to the forefront through the *Manapaman* compositions.

To come back to tracing Balgandharva's evolution, he proceeded from strength to strength and *Vidyaharan* (1913, Khadilkar) only confirmed the completion of the first developmental phase. Govindrao Tembe continued to be a tune-selector for *Vidyaharan* and in addition, also became the new hero. Significantly, for his role in *Vidyaharan*, Balgandharva himself selected the tunes by listening to



Ustad Ahmedjan  
Thirakwa

gramophone discs of Goharjan, Malkajan and other artistes of the same type. In 1911, Balgandharva also became a partner in the set-up of the Kirloskar Mandali - another sure sign of his having made entry as an independent force. In 1913, he broke away to form his own troupe which was named after him!

Musically speaking, Balgandharva was perhaps at his most balanced state at this juncture and surely displayed a full command of the musico-dramatic forces he was exploring and exploiting. A very alert corroboration of this observation is provided by Shree Nanasaheb Chaphekar who was carefully studying

Balgandharva with a view to model himself accordingly. Subsequently, Chaphekar went to become the first graduate actor-singer in Keshavrao Bhonsale's prestigious Lalitkaladarsh from 1921 onwards. Chaphekar had attended all the Pune performances of *Manapaman* around 1913-16 and he had meticulously 'timed' Balgandharva's performances. He had noted that Balgandharva never sang any *pada* for more than one and half minute except those which he elaborated and even the latter took Balgandharva about eight minutes each. It is evident that in spite of the all-round enchantment that his music was spreading, Balgandharva did not allow himself to be bogged down in his own music. Balgandharva's gramophone records also bear out the fact that from *Manapaman* Balgandharva had stabilized as a conscious artiste. On the other hand, his near-total reliance on musical intuition is evident from the discs which were pressed by the Beka company prior to *Manapaman*. It is a certainty that with Tembe's help Balgandharva came to musical maturity in *Manapaman*. An extra-musical event that underlines the undisputed ascendancy of Balgandharva is that in 1915 he became the senior partner in the Gandharva Natak Mandali. The second phase of his development could be said to have been completed around this time.

However, with the usual and inevitable overlapping, the third phase had already started around 1913 when Deval was installed by the Gandharva Mandali as the dramatist-trainer in-residence. Deval was being persuaded to write a play for the company and the play which he wrote was to prove instrumental in propelling Balgandharva towards the next developmental phase. In a sense, both Deval and Balgandharva were interchanging influences that brought about the change being discussed here.

It has already been hinted that Deval himself completed his final evolutionary phase when he adapted his own, earlier written, prose-play *Samshaykallol* in 1916. This play provided full scope for Balgandharva's soft, persuasive, iterative style of singing. It should also be noted that unlike *Manapaman*, Deval's play had a contemporary setting. Revati, the heroine of the play, is a cultured woman belonging to the professional singer's class and this characterization installed 'charm' as the reigning sentiment of the play. With tender humour and sweet music distributed in right proportions and with the addition of the total, pleasant atmosphere permeating the entire play, Balgandharva started becoming a draw even for the non-Marathi Bhatia, Gujarati and such other audiences. It is needless to emphasize that for any language-theatre, crossing the boundaries imposed by the language is of immense significance.

It was a proud achievement for the Gandharva Natak Mandali that it could produce another masterpiece of a different kind in the same year. Khadilkar's *Swayamvar* apart from being a costume-play also registered a major shift



towards Hindustani art-music. Pt. Bhaskarbuwa Bakhale, the legendary *khayal*-singer, selected tunes for the play and in this manner *khayal*-music in all its majesty became a dominant shaping influence in the unfolding of Marathi stage-music.

If *Manapaman* was Balgandharva's first major and serious initiation into the elaborative techniques of Hindustani music in general, *Swayamvar* afforded an opportunity to prove his full command over the techniques as also on their specific applications in the *khayal*-way. It has been already indicated that Tembe had employed forms of Hindustani semi-art music with a view to exploit the sensuous appeal these forms could generate even amongst lay listeners. However, as Tembe himself admitted, Balgandharva did not stop at learning these forms from Tembe. He in fact very soon stamped Tembe's tunes with his own brand of melody-oriented vocalism. In the final analysis, Balgandharva transformed the tunes into masked and sustained expressions of restrained pathos and eroticism.

Balgandharva's powers of bringing about a metamorphosis were again in evidence in his rendering of *Swayamvar*-music. Pt. Bakhale had chosen select specimens of dignified *khayal*-music for the play. He taught Balgandharva these tunes along with original *raga*-compositions on which they were based. Thus equipped, Balgandharva again demonstrated his faculty of assimilating a new musical idiom quickly and yet deviate from it. In *Swayamvar*, he picked up the essentials of *raga*-music but also succeeded in replacing the high seriousness associated with art-music, with a balanced sweetness. Neither did he exhibit an impatient disregard for the *raga*-rules nor was there a hasty attempt to do something sensational and revolutionary. It is known that his contemporaries set high value in intense emotionalism in music and realized their aim chiefly through displaying two primary colours of musical pathos and aggression. Balgandharva, however, opted for the subtler shades of controlled eroticism and melodiousness. Hence, his singing of *Bhimpalas*, *Bageshri*, *Bhairavi*, *Yaman*, *Bhoop*, *Kafi*, *Mand*, *Pilu* and such other *raga*-moulds, though conforming to the generic stamp of authentic art-music, was made more palatable and comprehensible. The procedure certainly involved more sophistication than is usually imagined. It is no exaggeration to say that in communicating this music of nuances with unbelievable ease and lack of pretence, Balgandharva brought about a consummate miracle.

In this phase, Balgandharva's music was texturally smooth, structurally intricate and rhythmically unstressed though complex. Due to exigencies of the female roles he played, as also in consonance with the general drift of his music, his voice-throw and speech-delivery were characterized by a very deliberate absence of forceful attack. His *alaps* were well-constructed and quick-moving. His music was not riveted around individual notes or tonal centres. In a way, he



held a consistent brief for a musical dialectic of short and fast-moving phrases raising a question which was usually to be answered by longer and spiralling phrases of matching tempi. No great variety was detectable in vocal effects concerning the parameters of pitch, volume and timbre. It was the melodic continuity, an uninterrupted musical flow, that was the supreme ruling principle of his even music. During the phase under discussion his *tanas* acquired a new intricacy. The new touch in intricacy is discernible when we notice that the pre-*Swayamvar* discs and songs relied more on intricacy of the *lavani*-type phrasing of *tanas*. His *tanas* were also marked by effortless execution. The variety of design was however lacking. In fact he continued to have the same *tanas* for all the compositions even in the years to come. It is highly significant that even though he could and did change the emotional colouring of his music in later years, his *tanas* remained the same! *Tanas* are the more intellectual part of art-music and no aspect of music has been so heavily subjected to methodical treatment and training as are the *tanas*. In absence of the required training and temperament Balgandharva remained the opposite of an intellectual in music. However, it must be granted that the repetitiveness in musical content was often compensated by the freshness he could bring to it.

Song after song and year after year, Balgandharva achieved this marvel of using and reusing his favourite musical patterns and yet invest the limited repertoire he explored with a sense of wide-eyed wonder. His device of reiterating the same musical phrase also falls within his overall strategy of employing repetition with a view to permeate the listener with the desired musical content. He used to select the most appropriate word/words and note/ phrase and went on to repeat them with variations which were themselves positioned in varied places. Apart from providing him sufficient scope to introduce the appropriate and accompanying gestural and facial *abhinaya* these repetition-variation combinations enabled him to convey maximum musical substance to the



Ram Ganesh Gadkari

audience with the maximum possible surety. The layman felt happy in having understood the music (though he might have in reality only succeeded in recognizing it!); the knowledgeable were touched by the facile artistry: but everybody was moved by the restrained, emotive and sweet musical continuity.

Two more musical high points could be mentioned from Balgandharva's later career. In *Ekach Pyala* (1919, R. G. Gadkari) he selected tunes for his own songs with Bai Sundarabai's help. His major pieces from this play were based on *quwali*-tunes, a musical genre in which Bai Sundarabai was extremely well-versed. Rendered in quick tempo and basically confined to 'lighter' *raga*-moulds, *quwalis* as a form project music that is easily received

though it is surely not a music which is easy to sing. In fact the *quwali* structure itself is not expandable and hence the form requires dextrous handling and emotive vocalism which is adequately instantaneous to generate immediate response. Secondly, *quwali* rendering does include some vocal flourishes, rhythmic patterns etc. which though necessary to create an impact on a layman are musically speaking, too quick-footed with twists and turns to appear dignified or mature. It is both to Sundarabai's and Balgandharva's credit that they skillfully eschewed this aspect of *quwali* while retaining the other attractive features. Finally, one more amalgamation is noticeable. The *quwali*-flourishes that are referred to above have been replaced in *Ekach Pyala* by somewhat pruned *tana*-patterns from the *lavani*-lore which had been the early matrix of Marathi stage-music. In this manner the music of *Ekach Pyala* could easily become a part of the mainstream of stage-music and yet introduce elements of novelty.

In *Ekach Pyala* Balgandharva reached dimensions and depths of pathos he had never dreamt before. Even in a simple musical mould like a lullaby, he moved with so much intensity that one wondered how the power of simplicity in his musical make-up was overlooked till 1919! The music of *Ekach Pyala* (Balgandharva's part) comes nearest to an ideologically expressive music. A calm (and not resigned) acceptance of fate was never conveyed so deeply through music. If there could be a concrete example of the music of forgiveness and reconciliation, it is to be found in the *Bhairavi*-composition *Prabhu aji gamala* (Act IV, scene 1).

*Draupadi* (1920, K.P. Khadilkar) and the *Manapaman* performance-in-collaboration (1921) confirmed Balgandharva's achievements. The final variety in musical triumph came much later in *Kanhopatra* (1931, Kulkarni) in which his rendering of *abhangs* (the traditional devotional music of Maharashtra) extended their scope and enhanced their dignity on account of a discriminate enrichment of their elaborative possibilities. This form of music achieved concert status due to such efforts. In 1934, Balgandharva had to disband the Mandali and join Prabhat film company. Even though a revived Gandharva Mandali breathed spasmodically till 1944, for Balgandharva it was a musical dead-end. Fifty years of music, twenty-nine years of stage-career, more than twenty-one roles and thousands of performances is certainly mindboggling statistics! With a sigh of wonder and admiration one could turn to his music-selectors. After all, their achievements proved to be the bedrock of Balgandharva's total contribution.

His chief music-selectors were Govindrao Tembe, Bhaskarbuwa Bakhale and Bai Sundarabai. His only music-composer was Master Krishnarao.

Tembe (b. 5.6.1881, d. 9.10.1955) was a versatile musician. A skilled harmonium-player, writer on music, actor (both stage and screen) and a music-composer, Tembe's supreme virtue was a sort of eclectic aestheticism. Known for his light touch in harmonium-playing, his entire musical phrasing reflected the better points of the instrument as also Tembe's approach to music. His outlook as realised in music could be described as purposeful, decorative, short-winded and feminine. His tune-selection for *Manapaman*, which established him firmly, clearly brought out these features.

Leaving aside the first three *Sutradhar*-songs (which were composed by Chintoba Gurav, an old-timer from the Kirloskar-fold), Tembe's tune-selection for the majority of the remaining fifty-one compositions of the play reveal his reliance on 'piano'-touch in music. His resorting to *dadra-quwali* forms of Hindustani music popularised by Goharjan, Malkajan and such other singers was causally connected with his musical temperament. The following enumeration may make the point clearer:

11 *Ragas* used (one composition in each): *Hameer*, *Kedar*, *Yaman-kalyan*, *Shankara*, *Bhoop*, *Adana*, *Jaunpuri*, *Bhimpalas*, *Miyan Malhar*, *Paraj* and *Malkauns*.

5 Karnataki dhuns

41 *Dhun ragas*: *Kafi* (2), *Jhinjhoti* (2), *Sindhura* (1), *Dhani* (1), *Khamaj Sargam* (1), *Khamaj* (5), *Pilu* (4), *Jilha* (2), *Pahadi* (2), *Tilakkamod* (2), *Jogi-Mand* (1), *Jhilha-Jangla* (1), *Jilha-Mand* (1), *Mand* (1), *Bhairavi* (2), *Purab Tunes* (10).

Further, it is also seen that Dhairyadhar, the hero, got five of the well-placed raga-compositions and Bhamini received the major share of the *dhun-raga*-based compositions. A yet closer examination also reveals that Bhamini's share included six pieces in *Dadra*, four each in *Kerwa* and *Dhumali*, and two each in *quwali* and *jhampa-talas*. The light touched idiom, fast-tempo, decorative elaboration and emphasis on *dhun-ragas* bring to the fore Tembe's non-classicism and his bias towards flexible singing-moulds that had a definite mass-appeal. However, two constraints seem to have acted on Tembe. Firstly, Balgandharva was so efficient in certain ragas that his music was regarded synonymous with these. Secondly, Tembe himself was enamoured of the *thumri-kajri-quwali* songs! It is no wonder that the only independently composed song in *Manapaman* was '*Prem seva sharan*' in *Bhimpalas* (Act IV, scene 2). In his next venture, *Vidyaharan* (1913, K.P. Khadilkar), Tembe was also accompanied by his guru, Pt. Bhaskarbuwa Bakhale and Balgandharva himself in selecting tunes. However, out of the total sixty song-items, Tembe selected tunes for more than thirty-three and that meant he was a major contributor towards the musical success that the play enjoyed. It is interesting to note that Tembe's selections viewed in the context of the total *Vidyaharan*-

corpus, show a clear shift in favour of major 'classical' ragas instead of the overwhelming former bias in favour of *purab*-oriented non-classical music as demonstrated in *Manapaman*. A proof of this changed orientation is found in the break-up of compositions for Kach, the hero, played by Tembe himself. Out of the fourteen songs of Kach, only two are in *dhun*-ragas, the rest being in major Hindustani ragas. These latter ragas were major in the sense that they enjoy potentialities of being extensively elaborated as *khayal*-singers are wont to do. It is customary to treat Pt. Bhaskarbuwa Bakhale's tune-selection for *Swayamvar* (1916, K.P. Khadilkar) as the first major introduction of *khayal*-music on the Marathi stage. However, the achievement must be credited to Tembe's name on account of his earlier and substantial effort of a similar nature in *Vidyaharan*.

Soon after, Tembe left Gandharva Natak Mandali and founded his own Shivraj Natak Mandali. For his own mandali (as well as for the later Yeshwant and Anandvilas mandalis), he not only composed music and lyrics but also wrote plays! However, he confirmed the musical trend he had accepted in *Vidyaharan* i.e. the trend to allow more scope for songs that could be elaborately expanded *a la khayal*-singers. Though he carried on the good work in the early film era (through Prabhat film company), his contribution to Marathi stage-music came to a stop around 1929. Late in his career he wrote two operas: *Mahashveta* (1954) and *Jaydeva* (1955). However he did not seem to have used any different musical frameworks in them.

One can conclude that Tembe brought about an esteemable change in Marathi stage-music in *Manapaman*. However, he reverted to the art-music-dominated model in his later ventures. It is symptomatic that Khadilkar thought it necessary and proper to publish notations of *Manapaman* compositions (instead of mere verse-anthologies or *padyavalis* as they were called) at the time of the very first performance. This unheard of procedure was in reality a recognition of the novelty of music in *Manapaman*. In the history of Marathi stage-music it is seen again and again that musical changes came to stay only if the actor-singer was left with adequate latitude to expand the musical moulds according to his own ability and temperament. Songs which compelled strict rendering in outline or those which were over-composed never enjoyed stability.

Pt. Bhaskarbuwa Bakhale, the tune-selector for *Swayamvar* (1916), obviously took a cue from the musical triumphs of his disciple i.e. Tembe, and concentrated on both *khayal*-repertoire and Balgandharva. Of the 60 compositions in *Swayamvar*, 29 were in major ragas of established elaborative capacity; the rest were distributed in ten *dhun*-ragas. Secondly, 22 compositions in sum were allocated to Rukmini (i.e. Balgandharva) and the rest were shared by Rukmi, Bhishmak, Krishna *et al.* Ascendancy of *khayal*-music and centrality of Balgandharva are easily deducible. Bakhale did not seem to be perturbed by

the fact that generous employment of inviting and flexible singing-moulds was almost to guarantee a complete seduction of drama by music under the prevailing circumstances! The phenomenal success of *Swayamvar* was largely due to the training he imparted to Balgandharva in the idiom of art-music. It was in *Swayamvar* that Balgandharva's singing became less intuitive and more deliberately artistic. Bakhale's method was to teach the original *cheez* along with the elaborations which could go with it according to the *raga*-rules etc. and also to take care that they were in agreement with Balgandharva's style of singing (by then well-established). The deep impact of Bakhale's methodical and intensive training could be felt even years afterwards, when Balgandharva used to consecutively reel off the *cheez*-stage-song couples in his solo-concerts. It was clear that Balgandharva did become more 'classical' after *Swayamvar* and the songs from this play helped the process of art-music permeation for the general listeners based in Maharashtra.

Master Krishnarao Phulambrikar (b.20.1.1898 - d.20.10.1974) was a *khayal*-singer of rare calibre and a prominent disciple of Pt. Bakhale. Like Pt. Govindrao Tembe, his career also spanned over to the film-era. In fact, beginning as a composer of stage-music around 1923 (though he had composed one song in *Draupadi* on his guru's instructions) he turned into a film-music composer for the Prabhat in the thirties and again returned to stage-music in a big way while working under the banner of Natya Niketan from 1942.

He was perhaps the first prolific music-director understood in the modern sense of the term. In the context of Marathi stage-music, it meant going beyond the phase of tune-selection and composing fresh, new tunes as per the demands of the song-situation. However, during the early Balgandharva-phase, Master Krishnarao did not alter the format of stage-music established by his guru Bakhale and hence relied on art-music of *khayal* and non-*khayal* variety. The newness of his music was fully felt in *Kanhopatra* (1929) where the tunes he composed for the traditional devotional compositions i.e. *abhangs*, simultaneously made them more musical and musically more expandable. It might be recalled that traditional devotional music had already been tapped in the early phases of Marathi stage-music. But in these ventures it was customary to adhere to the traditional tonal moulds and exploit thereby the religiosity of the audience rather than to make an aesthetic appeal to their musical sensibility. Master Krishnarao shunned this trodden and extra-musical easy road to effectiveness and ensured the desired musical impact by enriching the musical qualities of the compositions. Given Balgandharva's legendary adaptability and also the sure ability to convert any new idiom to his liking without sacrificing its efficacy, Master Krishnarao's contribution registered a deep impression. However, the composer's major directorial achievements in music came later in films and subsequently in the post-forties' revival of Marathi music-drama. As



far as Balgandharva was concerned Master Krishnarao's version of Marathi devotional music was the last new mould the former exploited.

The 1930s mark a watershed in the history of Marathi stage-music on two accounts. Firstly, due to various reasons the period witnessed the closure of as many as ten major mandalis. Secondly, the talkie arrived in 1931 - an event that led to a large-scale exodus of stage-artistes. However, some more vintage stage-music was heard before the catastrophe finally took place. Master Dinanath and Londhe were the major actor-singers who made this possible and the veteran Pt. Ramkrishnabuwa Vaze was the person who aided them through his tune-selections-primarily for the Lalitkaladarsh and to a lesser degree for the Balwant Mandali. Of course, there were many other actor-singers like Pt. Vinayakrao Patwardhan, Pt. Pandharpurkar, Pt. Shankarrao Sarnaik or Shri. Chaphekar and Bapurao Pendharkar etc. Tune-selectors like Panditrao Nagarkar were also of some help. But these and such others only confirmed the established singing styles and composing moulds. They helped in the continuation of the tradition but did not affect any enlargement of its scope or change the efficacy of its relevance. Hence a detailed discussion of their contribution is hardly necessary.

Master Dinanath's (b.29.12.1900 - d.23.4.1942) short and meteoric career was divided between two mandalis-the Kirloskar and his own Balwant. He arrived on the scene when paucity of new talent was felt (even by the Kirloskar Mandali). The fame of his extraordinary talent and voice had already travelled far from Mangeshi (Goa), his native place and many mandalis were vying to get him. Finally the Kirloskar Mandali succeeded in securing him (1914). Thus started the initial phase of a brilliant phenomenon that Dinanath was to prove himself to be. He made Kirloskar Mandali's non-Marathi productions *Taj-i-wafa* and *Kantonmen phool* and the later *Punyaprabhav* (1916, R.G. Gadkari) extremely effective. He soon left Kirloskar Mandali to form the Balwant Sangeet Mandali (1918). This completed the first phase.



Master Dinanath  
(Mangeshkar)

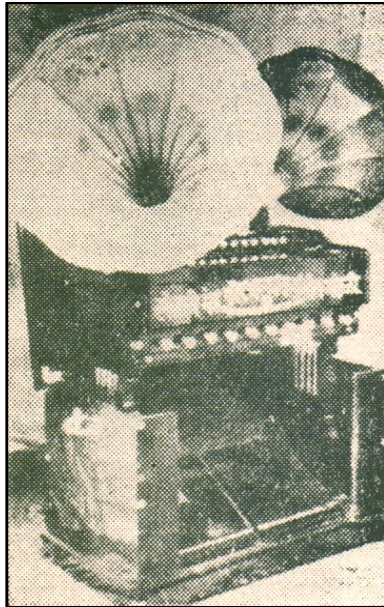
During this early period, it was obvious that the depleted Kirloskar Mandali was able to survive with dignity (in spite of the fact that Balgandharva had left it), chiefly on account of Dinanath's extraordinary voice and imaginative singing. Even at this juncture his presentations were marked by an unmistakable flash and aggression in singing - a mode which had been well-established by Keshavrao Bhonsale in contrast to the soft charms of Balgandharva's music. During this phase there was no accredited tune-selector for *Punyaprabhav* etc. Disc-recordings of Maujuddin, Goharjan, Malkajan and others, as well as the

appealing catchy tunes from the contemporary Parsi-Urdu theatre were the habitually tapped sources. In the case of *Punyaprabhav* occasional guidance from Heerabai Pednekar was also sought for.

However, Dinanath's genius really flowered when he enjoyed a base of his own and got a play which had a singularly suitable role-almost tailored for him. Latika's role in *Bhavbandhan* (1919, R.G. Gadkari) provided him with the unique opportunity of putting to test his newly found bearings. Apart from a new set-up, new play, he had also to contend with the crucial difficulties of reshaping a voice which had just broken. In a non-mythological, non-historical setting he played the character of an aggressive, socially urbane and suffragette tempered young heroine. The dialogues were fast-paced, explosively witty and in tune with the contemporary times. In a way, the quality of the prose and the inherent sensibility of the play served as a good continuation of Dinanath's evolving conception of music. He could therefore link up prose and music of the play with a demonstrable immediacy. The point is that even if the external frame-work or features thereof (like *raga*, *tala* etc.) were not new in *Bhavbandhan* music, their use by Dinanath was a clear shift towards modernity of presentation. This was a sort of presentation in which the quality in the prose portion of the play also struck an equivalence of quality in music. For example, it should be difficult to find so fast-paced a *Yaman* as that of Latika's '*kathin kathin kithi*' (Act I scene 3) in the entire corpus of the Marathi stage. What is worth noting is not the tempo of the song taken by itself. It was the fact of the correspondence in quality between the song-tempo and the pace of the preceding dialogue. Of course, it is true that fast-paced songs, valorous dialogues and the hero's 'strong' exit have a long, long history in Marathi stage-music! But these instances only exemplify the existence of a cliché. On the other hand, use of a softer *raga* like *Yaman*, in a fast-paced composition set in a *tala* like *Dadra* combined with a modern, female character in a social drama-all together mean a deviation from a cliché. This was surely a pointer to a changing sensibility.

Dinanath went on to confirm the elements of musical intensity and virtuosity in his roles of Padmavati (*Ugramangal*, Khare, 1922), Shivangi (*Raj Sanyas*, Gadkari, 1922), and Tejaswini (*Ran Dundubhi*, Vamanrao Joshi, 1927). The *veer rasa* in the first and the third roles was communicated effectively through his forceful singing. Though such a combination of 'female lead plus valorous singing' was not unprecedented, (with the historic 'Dandi march' around) the singing could be easily construed as patriotic. Thus, what could have been otherwise a veiled opportunity of music-interpretation became an unambiguous clarion-call of nationalism. In fact two songs from *Ranadundubhi* - '*Parvashata pash daivee*' and '*Divya swatantrya Ravi*' became victims of governmental ban. *Sanyasta Khadga* (1931, Veer Savarkar) reaffirmed Dinanath's ability to convey a message of patriotic fervour through music. In this phase, Dinanath's music

flowered into its full brilliance. Instead of remaining satisfied with dazzling and flashy virtuosity, it came to stabilize around a core of distinctive devices ordered into a coherent and sure technique which relied on full-throated yet slightly nasalized singing. The accent was on fast pace and intricate patterning.



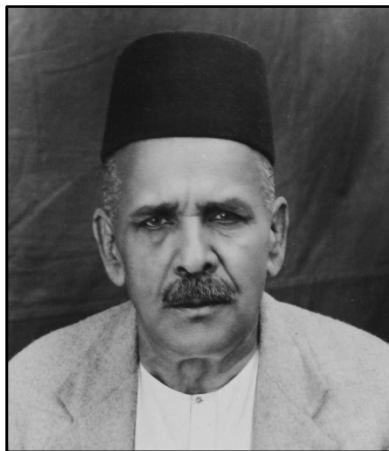
Pedal harmonium with  
horns or sonorous  
accompaniment

Adding to this overall strategy, exotic musical 'colours' like *lavani*, *thumri-dadra*, and *quwali* were skilfully assimilated. Vocalism peculiarities associated with these forms were authentically and discriminately employed. The ultimate effect was of viewing a mosaic of bright colours and hues evoking gasps and exclamations. Dovetailing of such variegated musical effects certainly required a mercurial imagination which Dinanath possessed in abundance. But of fundamental importance was the emotional intensity and sensitivity which could trigger off the imaginative forces with right proportion of heat and quality. Dinanath could boast of this too! Perhaps, the only weak spot in his singing at this point of time was a tentative touch in using the vast, traditional *raga*-corpus of Hindustani music and the innumerable elaborative devices that had been perfected by art-musicians. In all probability, Dinanath was, unconsciously, trying to

establish his own musical identity on priority basis, taking care to see that it differed considerably from the Balgandharva school. It seems certain that he had fairly succeeded in doing so by 1925. The task of permeation of his musical person with the 'classical' lore had to wait till this moment.

Hence, it does not come as a surprise that he formally became a '*ganda-band*' disciple of Pt. Vazebuwa (who was Dinanath's tune-selector for *Randundubhi*) in 1926. It is also significant to note that he played Dhairyadhar in *Manapaman* in 1928. Both the events can hardly be viewed and interpreted in isolation. The first was much more than an act of worldly wisdom, that of enlisting favours of a maestro who enjoyed great following, and the second was not a wise concession to his changing physique! The twin acts were indications of the altered state of his musical consciousness. Acceptance of Pt. Vazebuwa's discipleship was an act of recognizing short-comings in the musical make-up of an achieved status. Playing Dhairyadhar and changing and modifying tunes of the epoch-making *Manapaman* music was an act of iconoclasm and justifiable irreverence born of new perception and awareness of one's own potentialities. To touch a role so well typed required histrionic courage. To change the tunes that had been so affectionately accepted needed courage as well as ability. Dinanath proved equal to the task. His versions of Dhairyadhars'

songs are assuredly more meritorious and appealing. In this enterprise he was aided by the fact that he had found his feet by now in slow tempi and he had also acquired a better grip over the art-music techniques of elaboration, improvisation on the *raga*-idea etc. Dinanath's penchant for intricate *tanas*, his repertoire of exotic vocal flourishes imbibed from various musical forms, his imaginative twists and turns of the conventional *raga*-frames - all were happily synthesized in his *Manapaman* music. Liberal use of intonation-vowels other than 'A', skilful manipulation of nasal consonants, key-changing during musical elaborations were some of the other devices employed with confidence and power. By 1931, Master Dinanath had carved out a respectable niche for himself. He soon switched over to films and met an untimely penurious end in 1942.



Pt. Ramkrishnabuwa Vaze

At this point it is relevant to discuss Pt. Ramkrishnabuwa Vaze's (1871-1945) contribution to stage-music. He was the chief tune-selector for two major mandalis: Lalitkaladarsh and Balwant. Selecting tunes for a dozen plays during 1921-40 he proved an important factor in the polarization process that was actualized by Bhonsale and Balgandharva. Pt. Vazebuwa's singers were (mainly) Keshavrao Bhonsale, Master Dinanath, Bapurao and Bhalchandra Pendharkar over a period. In the early years Vazebuwa seems to have aided Bhonsale in merely transplanting popular tunes from *Manapaman* etc. (e.g. *Rakshasi Mahatvakansha*, 1913). Bhonsale, however, was able to bring something of his own to these tunes or tonal adaptations. Pt. Vazebuwa's tune-selection for *Satteche Gulam* (1922), *Turungachya Darat* (1923), *Krishnarjun Yuddha* (1925), *Sangeet Shree* (1926), *Shikka Katyar* (1927), *Sonyacha Kalas* (1932) as well as for *Ranadundubhi* (1927) achieved considerable success. The chief characteristics of his music can be summarized as follows:

1. He continued the Bakhale vogue of selecting high-power music of classical vintage with an additional penchant for unfamiliar *ragas*. Rare *ragas* like *Kanada* (rare varieties), *Nand*, *Khambavati*, *Jaijaivanti* became generally known to the stage-struck audiences only after he had effectively used them.
2. Use of rare *ragas* need not be however construed as falling for a gimmick. He seemed to follow the principle of internal appropriateness in music. For example, when Raja Shivaji was made to sing in *Shaha Shivaji* (1921, Tipnis) much criticism was levelled against the idea as per the canons of realism. Pt. Vazebuwa's reported retort was, 'But see in what *ragas* he sings!



3. Even when he employed common *ragas* like *Bilawal*, *Kafi*, *Sindhura* etc., they were always interpreted in a novel manner. For example, his tunes in such *ragas* were replete with unexpected twists and turns to the phrasing, or they were often accompanied by employment of new *theka*-patterns, or the tunes boasted of difficult placements of the *mukhdas*. In short he continuously surprised his listeners. It is significant to note that this was also the main asset of his own singing.

4. Considered from the aspect of using musical forms, he continued to throw a wide net and we find *khayal*, *dadra*, *tappa*, *thumri*, *quwali* etc. used liberally while selecting the stage tunes.

5. Another important technical feature was regarding the tempo used. Though he had not eliminated the slow-tempo from his tune-repertoire, a large proportion of his tunes relied on tempi which could be fairly accurately described as fast. Similarly, the within-the-tune elaborations and variations that he introduced were also fast-moving. In addition they were forceful, possessed well-defined tonal contours as well as unmistakable tonal flourishes, providing emphatic entry-exit points of music.

6. It has been rightly pointed out that quite a number of his popular tunes have their *mukhdas* placed in the upper ranges of the octave. Music made in such a way could hardly have failed to catch the listener's attention and thus they acquired a hold on their memory.

7. His music also provides a feeling of enhanced classicism chiefly on account of the highly structured *alaps* that went with it. This is in direct contrast with the tunes from the Balgandharva-school. While the Balgandharva tunes relied more on creating a sense of musical continuity, Pt. Vazebuwa's singers viz. Bhonsale, Dinanath and the Pendharkars, seem to have banked on the features of Vazebuwa's own singing i.e. force, abrupt surprises, structural clarity, ingenuity-all coupled with a high sense of deliberate and perceivable construction of musical designs.

From the point of view of dissemination of art-music, Vazebuwa's use of *ragas* of high classical content deserve special attention. Especially, when it is remembered that Pt. Yevteshvarkar had already tried to do a similar job in the early 1880s and had scored only a moderate success, Vazebuwa's achievement seems unique. Yet we should not lose sight of the fact that both Pt. Tembe and Pt. Bakhale had successfully created a more pro-attitude towards art-music in general during the intervening years.

One more feature of Pt. Vazebuwa's career as a tune-selector remains almost unnoticed. It is that he selected tunes for at least four (out of about a dozen) plays which were originally written as prose-plays earlier and adapted as music-



plays much later. This meant that he was hardly involved in the integral process of the play conceiving as a music-play. The play-structures were handed down ready-made to him to insert songs. One may view him as a fore-runner of the film-composer of the present-day who achieves a similar feat in a much more impersonal manner by conceiving songs while remaining out of the process of making of a film. This is not to downgrade Vazebuwa's contribution but to suggest that instances of music for such re-done plays might provide a basis for fresh aesthetic thinking on the subject of prose-music relationship in a music-drama, as in such plays prose and music are separated by considerable distancing in time.

Finally, as a tune-selector Pt. Vazebuwa was the last of the Romans ! After a total but fortunately short-lived eclipse of the Marathi music-drama during the 1930s, a new type and a new generation of music-composers came on the scene. They had a different aesthetic sensibility and philosophy and they were more likely to be covered by the modern meaning of the term 'music-director'!

If Pt. Vazebuwa was the last veteran of the early type of music-makers, then Shri. Gangadharant Londhe (b. 18.7.1902-d. 27.9.44) was the last actor-singer of the older type. Gifted with a high-pitched, open-throated, sonorous voice and a matching masculine physique, Londhe was on the boards of major companies like Kirloskar, Balwant, Lalitkaladarsh and Gandharva. For a while he also ran his own company named Rajaram Sangeet Mandali: Though he enlivened new roles in *Vadhupariksha* (1928), *Sajjan* (1931), *Premasanyas* (1940) etc. he won renown mainly on account of his ability to bring to new life the older masterpieces like *Saubhadra*, *Sharda*, *Samshaykallol* etc. with well-projected music of the vintage touch. He was also highly praised for the unerring ability to maintain a close relation between prose and music portions of the play.

In spite of occasional overstepping, the chronological termination-point of 1930, the limit suggested by the '30s is well-defined. The pre-modern period of Marathi stage-music and music-drama comes to a close in this year. The period between 1930-1942 was of course not totally devoid of dramatic activity as such. But as indicated earlier, many things happened during the period to stifle the voice of the stage-drama to such an extent that it is described with some justification as the dark age of Marathi drama: both prose and music. The totality of circumstances that led to the dramatic cessation of the histrionic activity can hardly be discussed in great detail in the present survey. A brief discussion is however attempted in the next chapter which deals with the revival of music-drama after the catastrophe.

## THE MODERN AGE

Indication has earlier been given about the near-total eclipse Marathi dramatic activity experienced during the decade 1930-40. It is natural that music-drama of the period also suffered from the adverse effects. They need to be discussed before the modern age is attended to.

Viewed in perspective, the severe dislocation that Marathi music-drama had to undergo does not appear to be a puzzling phenomenon. It is as if socio-cultural processes were leading to the catastrophe openly but the writing on the wall was not read. Vis-à-vis music-drama, two kinds of reasons led to its down-fall: The first set of reasons consisted of factors of socio-economic i.e. extra-aesthetic nature and the second set was related to the art of dramatics itself, as understood and practiced by the parties concerned. Both the kinds are briefly discussed below:

1. The prosperity enjoyed or adversity faced by any art-form depends a great deal on the conditions shared by alternative entertainment channels during a corresponding period. The fact is immediately connected to the fundamental strategies the concerned art-form employs.

In this respect, it is necessary to note that the silent movie made its first impact in Bombay in 1896 and the talkie came in 1931. During the intervening years, Marathi music-drama did not seem to have attempted total and intelligent appraisal of the overall entertainment-situation with a view to chalk-out and implement substantially and effectively modified stage-practices.

2. It is of course not denied that there are instances of drama-connected people who had become aware of the cinematic challenge. But unfortunately, those who waged an entrenched battle with the oncoming cinematic attacks, tried to do so on slippery grounds. For example, the Pendharkar-Varerkar-Lalitkaladarsh combine produced plays which tried to defy films in matters of scenery and allied crafts! It is clear that these were precisely the aspects in which the film-medium could not be challenged. The drama-film combat could have been a real fight only on dramatic grounds and not filmic grounds. But this was scarcely realized.

3. Marathi music-drama also suffered from a multi-channelled talent-drain during the time. In the first instance, as many as 15 major actor-singers who were active from 1919 had retired or died by 1931. In fact only Londhe and Pendharkar (from the older school) were active in 1931. Secondly, many actor-singers felt threatened enough to try to operate simultaneously in drama and cinema. In the then prevailing circumstances, their energies were adversely

divided. Thirdly, as many as ten mandalis had closed down due to straitened financial circumstances.

4. It is also worthwhile to remember that the educated class (which provided the chief clientele of the music-drama) was undergoing a change in dramatic taste. By 1925, Ibsenite dramatic trends had reached this audience. As a consequence, it had developed a keener craving for prose-plays and the thematic and presentation aspects that went along with them. Yet, Marathi dramatists and mandalis stuck to their old modes. Out of the total of 45 new plays produced during the period 1922-33, music-plays numbered as high as 30! The point is that it was absurd to force music-drama on an audience which was not in a mood to accept it.

5. It is obvious that Balwant and Lalitkaladarsh among the Sangeet Mandalis (as also some other prose-companies) had genuinely realized and accepted the necessity of change which, in their opinion, was to conform to the norm of realism. But their insistence on conforming to the canon even in music-drama showed an irrelevant aesthetic assessment of the music and drama combination in general. In spite of the ample opportunities of exposure to artistic trends from wider areas, a sure fondness for trends in the West (i.e. England and America) became the sole guideline. And even within this narrowed down sources of modernity, no attempts were made to learn from the non-Indian instances of music-drama combinations. For example, the operatic traditions were never studied and properly understood.

6. Since 1921, gramophone records of stage-music were multiplying. In addition, very cheap Japanese machines were marketed from 1927. The convenience, replay-facilities of the mechanism, obviously siphoned off some hunger for music which was otherwise satisfied by stage-performances. Another source of music listening became available through music-circles which became an established idea around 1925. Further, broadcasting began in Bombay in 1928. It could therefore be maintained that after 1920s, music-drama gradually diminished in stature as a source of musical entertainment.

Now we turn to the second category of causes that had conspired against a continued musical monopoly of the music-drama. As already indicated this category emphasizes the socio-economic and extra-musical aspect of the situation.

1. It becomes apparent that unlike the alert regard music-drama had displayed in the early days about the changes in audience, the post-1920 indifference towards the patrons was glaring. The composition of the audience that supported music-drama was changing fast after the middle of 1920s. The non-Marathi element in the audience, which had (to an extent naturally) came for spectacle and music was turning to films. It seems that the stage-performers

themselves almost tried to pursue the deserting audiences by switching over to films. But this was ridiculously futile, because most of the screening-time was pre-empted by American and English films. As early as 1921, the proportion was 90 per cent!

2. While the cinema was able to reach the rural areas, most of the mandalis hovered around urban centres. As indicated earlier, audience at these centres was by this time a split entity.

3. Every single entertainment genre of the period boasted of variety as a major attraction. But in spite of this fact, the Sangeet Mandalis tended to stick too long to plays that proved successful.

4. No sooner than the film-screenings began to prove lucrative, places till then used for dramatic performances were converted into cinema-halls with considerable rapidity. Marathi mandalis had obviously ignored the long-term business-aspect and their ad-hocism left them without a 'house'. Very few mandalis had thought of building their own *Natyagrihas*. In contrast, it is instructive to see how Madan Theatres-a premier film-company, went about securing footholds for itself. This film-company started showing films in tents in 1902. By 1920, it had 51 permanent theatres and the figure had reached to one hundred and twenty-six by 1931! Even though constructing a play-house is admittedly a more expensive proposition than building a cinema-hall, the situation was less forbidding than it seems. The dramatic troupes were to all practical purposes mainly urban-centred and hence with a little co-ordination they could have secured firm bases at least in the major centres. It was lack of foresight than lack of finances that prevented them in this respect.

5. The general economic conditions then prevalent in Maharashtra also affected the economics of the performing arts. During the period under consideration, industrialization processes started earlier had already created an impact. Obviously, Bombay and other cities were affected to the maximum. Introduction of the railway, starting of the cotton mills had radically changed the demographic character of Bombay (and other similarly placed regions). Now these regions had more people with cash to spend on recreation. But they were also less educated and as a rule preferred non-dramatic forms of entertainment.

The more immediate time-span of the 1930s was also characterized by the economic depression. Expectably, this brought about a change in the population-profile which in its turn, must have affected the patronage enjoyed by music-drama. Around 1931, the male population of Bombay had registered a sizeable decrease. The following figures are instructive in this respect:

	Male	Female	Total
1921	839,741	454,416	1,294,157
1931	828,855	473,660	1,302,515

The point sought to be made is that acting cumulatively, the economic factors initially diverted the audience from music-drama. The reduced patronage compelled the entertainers to operate at reduced levels of efficiency which further alienated the audience - thus completing the vicious circle!

Some other reasons are also mentioned as contributory to the decline and fall of Marathi music-drama. For instance, the depravity of the members of the profession, repeated disintegration of the mandalis and such other explanations have been put forward. However, these appear to be derived from grounds discussed earlier.

It is in this context that the feeble but real note of the modern avatar of Marathi music-drama was heard in 1933.

Of course subtler anticipations of the modern trends could be traced back to earlier time-points. For example, the choral-choreographic presentation in *Kunjvihari* (Varerkar, 1908), or the powerful musical parodies that came to fore in *Vinod* (Joshi, 1913) have already been referred to. However, a truer crystallization of the modernist sensibility could be heard only in *Baby* (1932, Bende) and *Andhalyachi Shala* (1933, Vartak). Keshavrao Bhole was in charge of music for both the plays.

Born in a family that took seriously to all performing arts, Keshavrao Bhole was studying medicine when his deep acquaintance with music and literature brought him in contact with K. Narayan Kale, Anant Kanekar, Parshwanath Altekar and like-minded souls. All these were disturbed by the contemporary, cliché-ridden Marathi drama and literature of the thirties. Bhole's main achievement is however to be examined in context of the early history of the Prabhat Film Company from 1933 onwards. His early work regarding stage-music was however pioneering and needs assessment. Both the productions i.e. *Baby* and *Andhalyachi Shala* lead to following deductions:

1. Perhaps for the first time in the history of Marathi stage-music, the definition of the term 'music' was widened to include deliberately and effectively used background music, as also a reduced role of vocal music.

2. Further, vocal music was no longer assumed to be a conscious projection of music largely couched in terms of classical or semi-classical styles of Indian music. Instead, lyrical poems converted into songs were employed as the vehicles of musico-dramatic expression. The lyric-poem or the song came to be distinguished from a *natya pad* that was the staple product of Marathi stage-



music. On account of the former's spontaneity, truer poetic quality and a tendency to discourage musical elaboration, the 'song' was gaining ascendancy over the *pad*.

3. Bhole also sensed the aesthetic phase that intervened between gradually feeling one's way towards a song and the actual singing of it. He rightly regarded this mediate phase itself to be an expression of character. Hence, one of his characters — Shirin (*Swastik Bank*, Appa Tipnis) initially hummed a song, then interrupted the humming with an engrossing business, again burst into *alaps* and finally came to a properly projected singing of the song. Obviously, the gradual concretization of the song-idea as such was intended to reflect particular psychological states of the character. Such attempts of closely following the dramatic situation went much beyond the conventional approach of filling the song-spaces.

4. In a manner of speaking, Bhole also showed music its proper place by shifting the musical instruments back to the wings and thus clearing their encroachment on the auditorium-space. Moreover, he used violin and piano instead of completely depending on the conventional pedal-harmonium etc. Employment of varied tonal colours and instrumental timbre surely connotes an enlarged musical vision and truer understanding of music as expression in sound, non-linguistic, as well as non-verbalized. He also employed fade-in, fade-out effects prior to the beginning of an act as also during an action in progress. Bhole's comprehensive musico-dramatic vision is also borne out by the fact that he treated sound-effects (usually discarded by music-composers as unmusical etc.) as falling within a composer's field of operation. His frustrated intentions to 'compose' sound-effects indicating a storm in *Takshasheela* (Vartak, 1933) serves as an indicator in this respect.

5. What distinguished Bhole from the comparables was his greater aesthetic awareness of the mutual relationship of music and literary content. An instance from the later part of his career could be quoted here (*Alankar*, 1944, Vartak). In this play, a satirical song came at the end of the play. Musical convention demanded that, being a conclusive piece, the song must be set in *Bhairavi*. To this unwritten law, Bhole (too!) acquiesced, but against his musical conscience. Because, as he unhesitatingly admitted later, the *Bhairavi* tune could hardly do any justice to the intended satire! To be responsive to a non-correspondence of this nature certainly required a sensibility much ahead of times!

6. The modern music-drama also made room for some other sub-characteristics:

(a) The number of 'songs' was considerably reduced.

(b) Song-tunes were less and less modelled on classical compositions.

- (c) The total performance time was pegged around a duration of three hours and singing-time of the individual song-numbers was proportionately cut down.
- (d) The female roles were played by women-and not necessarily of the 'professional' class.
- (e) Duet-singing etc. were often preferred over solo-singing.

However, the musical rebellion realized through their respective productions by radio stars, Natya Manvantar could not gather any momentum. The rebellion undoubtedly created a stir and also brought a new awareness to some. But it also proved that no effective musico-dramatic movement could be generated through a limited number of productions of a few non-professional (though inspired) lovers of drama. The protagonists of the modern music-drama soon went their separate ways and in the years to follow, Marathi music-drama was served chiefly by two new dramatists: P.K. Atre who was active from 1933 to 1947 and M.G. Rangnekar who operated from 1942 to 1955.

It is true that Atre allowed music (i.e. songs) in his plays only as a concession to the musical sweet tooth that the Marathi audiences had developed through the years. Yet, this employment of music under duress did not fail to provide a breather to the Marathi music-drama. As his plays were successful, their running also meant a continuation of the musical tradition. To all effects, it was a 'carry forward' phenomenon as there was no change in the basic strategy employed vis-à-vis using music. Song-spaces were dutifully created, all musical eggs were placed in the song-in-*raga* basket and so on and so forth. Examined musically, songs in his plays are 'light-weights' in the sense that they do not favour heavier classical *ragas* routinely used in the conventional Marathi music-drama. These songs also depend more on short, attractive, decorative phrasing than on structuring of long and detailed expositions of musical themes. Some songs from *Udyacha Sansar* (1936) and *Lagnachi Bedi* (1936) proved popular and the credit goes to singers like Chhota Gandharva, Panditrao Nagarkar etc. Incidentally, these singers' voices by themselves exemplify the pervasive light touch of the music discussed. It is also helpful to remember that mechanical aids like microphones etc. had started their reign and both voice-projection and pronunciation were the directly affected phenomena. Use of the public address system meant that audibility test could then be easily passed and therefore voice-production tended to be less forceful and pronunciation was less deliberately and rigorously formulated. (In case of both the singers mentioned above a sort of 'floating voice' feeling could be experienced even in their disc recordings). These singers stuck to the light touch throughout. Even though they elaborated the songs, the accent was on not appearing too methodical. The total thrust was towards musical informality. Atre continued to be effective till 1943

and then again much later in the post-60s revival of the conventional music-drama.

Thus we come to M. G. Rangnekar and his Natya Niketan.

Rangnekar's chief music-makers were Master Krishnarao as a composer, and Smt. Jyotsna Bhole and Master Avinash (Ganpatrao Mohite) as singers.



Master Krishnarao  
(Phulambrikar)

Master Krishnarao's music for *Kulvadhu* (1942) proved a resounding success. As discussed earlier, Master Krishnarao had already started his composing career in the later productions of the Gandharva Mandali. Afterwards he had scored both efficiently and meritoriously for Prabhat Films and had then come back to music-drama in Rangnekar's ventures. The point is that his sensibility had passed through multi-faceted influences when he made his second entry in music-drama. The following crystallizations could be noted as chief features of his stage-music:

1. Music has to be attractive rather than emotional.
2. Duets, structured conversationally, are found to be as effective as solo-singing.
3. The fundamental belief is that durable tunes are always made out of 'humable' tunes. Hence song-tunes must be structured within a gamut of as few notes as possible. It is also imperative that *mukhdas* must be 'catchy'.
4. Pleasantness as the overall tone of music, and variety of phrasing as the main strategy of music are the composer's chief props. It is symptomatic that Master Krishnarao repeatedly composed in *Bhairavi*, but without ever sounding its deeper pathos.
5. Most important was of course his achievement of creating a new idiom in which decorative and unhurried phrasing was produced out of notes very much limited in number. Not only that the phrases were attractive in themselves, but they also possessed scope for further variations. His music could be remembered with ease because it was simple in structure - a feature that easily acquires a hold over any audience. On the other hand, the actor-singers liked his music because it threw a genuine challenge to their imagination and intelligence - it being more difficult to create variations on a basically uncomplicated structure. Consequently, Master Krishnarao was able to please the actor-singers as well as the audience.

6. In addition, Master Krishnarao also possessed a knack of composing music quickly. In the changing life-style, speed becoming a *sine qua non* of efficiency, Krishnarao's ability to cope with such extra musical demands with cultural implications singled him out as a person of modern sensibility.

From amongst his singers, it is Smt. Jyotsna Bhole's contribution that stands out as extraordinary. After making her debut in an epoch-marking production of *Andhalyachi Shala* (1933), she continued her career under the Natya Niketan banner. She was the only female singing heroine in M.G. Rangnekar's productions. Though it is true that Smt. Heerabai Barodekar had already scored a first in the matter of 'classically' trained female singers taking up female leads in music-drama in 1929, (she played her first Subhadra in that year), Heerabai's contribution is to be relegated to a second place due to two factors:

Firstly, it is to be remembered that in the final analysis, Heerabai's singing was a continuation of the Balgandharva idiom. Whether she was enacting roles established by Balgandharva or was creating new roles as in *Meerabai* (1930, S.A. Shukla) or *Yugantar* (1931, N.S. Phadke), Heerabai fell back on Balgandharva's musical idiom.

Secondly, Heerabai's stage-career was too brief and intermittent to serve any fuller purpose. Heerabai disbanded her own dramatic troupe as early as 1933 and her later stage appearances were only occasional.

In contrast, Jyotsnabai proved a very efficient vehicle of a new musical idiom in addition to being a capable heroine of modern music-drama of social content. She was continuously in action for over twenty-five years!

Coming to the analysis of Jyotsnabai's music, one finds that her success recipe consisted of:

- (a) stress on limited elaboration of individual song-numbers,
- (b) an emotionally oriented singing which could hardly be associated with the conventional Marathi stage-music,
- (c) a closer relation between singing and acting which made a manifest attempt at synchronization,
- (d) a type of *abhinay* which was more cinematic than dramatic.

In this connection, it is helpful to remember that since 1923, reciting of poems of literary quality had already assumed the stature of a serious literary movement sweeping over urban Maharashtra. That was the year in which a new poetry-movement called 'Ravikiran Mandal' was launched with a fair amount of success in Pune. Similar group-activity was present in other towns too. Poets participating in this movement believed in the near-singing of a poem rather

than merely reading it aloud or reciting it in public. In addition, a lyric poet of B.R. Tambe's (1874-1921) eminence had also bestowed legitimacy on writing singable poems and also on singing them before a select audience. In sum, selecting a poem (and not a *pada*), setting it to a tune and rendering it as a *geet* had been a firmly established channel of expression around the period point under discussion. It can be maintained that what was to become 'popular' as *bhavgeet gayan* later was already in the air. In a way, Jyotsnabai's singing was *bhavgeet gayan* in a dramatic setting coupled with increased scope for musical elaboration than was usually considered allowable in *bhavgeet gayan* proper.

Ganpatrao Mohite, named Master Avinash in his Natya Niketan phase, was the other contributor to the musical scene. He was a product of the Balwant Natak Mandali and he had modelled himself on Master Dinanath. Master Avinash successfully reorganized his musical resources to meet the demands of the new music. In the process, he brought a new and impressively agile male voice to modern stage-music. His singing in *Kulvadhu* was a happy combination of the new idiom and a vocalism moulded in the classical style of conventional stage-music. However, his total contribution to stage-music of this period remained (when compared with Jyotsnabai's achievements) rather limited in scope, chiefly because of two reasons. Firstly, Avinash was not the only singing hero Natya Niketan put on the boards : others like Krishnarao Chonkar, Suresh Haldankar *et al* were also put forward. It was also a Natya Niketan policy to produce a new play every year. Consequently, Master Avinash got less exposure. However, he made a qualitative and historically significant impact which deserves consideration.

From about 1950 onwards is a period which is not overwhelmingly dominated by any single dramatist, actor-singer, composer or a company. The total musico-dramatic activity was fairly widely distributed. Secondly, contributions of many music-makers were restricted to a few though extremely popular plays. In general, what was taking place was more intense than varied and the contributions, when viewed historically, appear to enjoy a revivalist rather than a generative reputation.

To this category belong the compositions from *Suvarnatula* and *Panditraj Jagannath* (both in 1960, music by Chhota Gandharva and Vasant Desai respectively) or *Mandarmala* (1963, music by Ram Marathe). These and other plays by Vidyadhar Gokhale have proved remarkably successful as music-plays. But in essence, their music has followed the older and proven formulae: dominance of the song-form (in the *pada* category), undiminished importance of the *raga*-lore, employment of dance-forms of acceptable varieties (e.g. *kathak* in art-dance and *tamasha* etc. from the folk-repertoire). Expectably, a very insignificant role has been allotted to instrumental variety, background music and tonal colour in general. However, some of the music-makers have



succeeded in creating an impact of attractiveness if not of originality. A brief discussion of some of these will suffice to complete the picture of the period.

From amongst the music-composers, Vasant Desai and Jitendra Abhisheki are prominent.

Due to his active and close association with films from the early era, Desai brought a veteran's touch to bear on his stage-music. In this respect, special mention must be made of the instrumentation skills he had acquired via cinematic ventures as also his inclination to tie up musical flourishes with some visible (and tangible) gestures etc. Both these features were evident in his stage-music. Hence, whether it was in *Panditraj Jagannath* (1963, Gokhale) or in *Preetisangam* (1968, P.K. Atre) his songs lean on the accompanying, reinforcing visible action. His *Panditraj Jagannath* offers a rather 'aggressive' prayer to the sacred river Ganga, and his Govindbuwa declaims his *bhajan* in a *dindi* (i.e. a procession of devotees) along with ecstatic dance-movements. His use of a duet in *Dev Dinaghari Dhavla* (1970, Bal Kolhatkar) as a background song, or his use of background music in other plays also brought out notable uses of filmic influences he had absorbed over the years.

Jitendra Abhisheki (b. 17.3.1933) is a highly trained vocalist and he has succeeded in employing his knowledge of *ragas*-lore fruitfully. He has also taken care to create his own distinctive musical idiom in which verve and decoration are sought to be combined. Emotive use of voice (à la film-music) and rather over-stressed pronunciation of words are other characteristics of his idiom. His music for *Matsyagandha* (1964, Vasant Kanetkar) and *Katyar Kalajat Ghusli* (1967, Purushottam Darvhekar) proved highly successful. *Lekurey Udand Jhali* (1966, Vasant Kanetkar) contained musical phrasing popularized by *My Fair Lady* (a film based on the Shavian play *Pygmalion*). Apart from the 'rhythmic prose in tune' mould in this play, Abhisheki has otherwise followed the established groove in stage-music. His consistency and competence within a limited idiom have created for him a place of honour in the galaxy of music-composers.

Turning to actor-singers, Vasantrao Deshpande (1920-1984) loomed large over the post-fifties period. Having received an effective but a short duration training in *khayal*-singing in Patiala Gharana, and having passed under a deep impression of Master Dinanath's musical ebullience, Deshpande created a sensation through his role of Aftab Hussain Khan in *Katyar Kalajat Ghusli* (1967, Darvhekar). He brought an imaginative and a relaxed though fast-paced vocalism to match the dramatic import of the character (a mature art-musician) in the play. Though Deshpande was an actor-singer since the fifties it is only since *Katyar* that he secured a place for himself in the history of Marathi stage-music.

The other actor-singer well-established in stage-music is Ramdas Kamat (b.18.2.1931). Though not seriously groomed as an art-musician, he has displayed adequate virtuosity and competence as a singer through his roles in *Matsyagandha*, *Yayati Devyani* etc.

In addition to the above major contributors there are many who can be included in either of the two categories of music-makers discussed. For example, Jayamala Shiledar (b.1926), Shripadrao Nevrekar (b.1912-d.1977), Krishnarao Chonkar (b.1908), Bhalchandra Pendharkar (b.1921). Smt. Minaxi Shirodkar (b.1910), Prasad Savkar (b.1928) - are amongst the seniors who have served Marathi music-drama in varying capacities. Others like Udayraj Godbole, Prakash Ghangrekar, Vishvanath Bagul, Narayan Bodas, Jyotsna Mohile, Kirti Shiledar, Faiyaz etc. are comparative new-comers on the scene but have made their mark. However, the achievements of these have yet to gather a force which is sufficient to warrant a detailed discussion.

As to the composers, Neelkanth Abhyankar, Yeshwant Deo, Ram Marathe etc. have made their respective contributions (with Marathe also earning a name as an actor-singer). Attempts like *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1976, Vijay Tendulkar, music: Bhaskar Chandavarkar), *Mata Draupadi* (1975, Vidyadhar Pundalik, music: Ashok Ranade) have also a claim to consideration in a wider account of music-drama relationship in Maharashtra. But as far as stage-music in the accepted conventional sense is examined, the resume of the modern age as outlined should prove adequate.

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## THE SETTING:

### Acoustics, Audience and Administration

Art-forms flower and artists realise their full potentialities only if suitable setting is available. In fact, the overall environment as such assumes special significance in case of the performing arts as invariably (though partially) they lean on externalized factors like audience. In view of this characteristic, the accounts sketched earlier need to be supplemented with reference to those aspects that provide a setting to a dramatic activity. It is, therefore, proposed to examine conditions pertaining to audience, acoustics and administration which were the features that collectively shaped the total performance of the *mandalis*.

#### Acoustics

It is instructive to remember that in absence of the public address system till the 1930s, and because of the paucity of properly enclosed space for performances in its early career, music-drama was very largely controlled (as to the final shape of a performance) by acoustic conditions as originally obtained. The voices of the actor-singers, expectations and inclinations of the auditors, dialogue-formulation by the dramatists and all similar items were greatly influenced by the acoustic environment. Unfortunately, the performance places utilized by the *mandalis* have not been so far analysed according to the tenets of architectural acoustics. Information about sizes, shapes and material of the furniture items used for the stage property as well as the auditorium has not been consciously collected or tabulated. Echo and other acoustic effects experienced in various performance-places also need a methodical tabulation and analysis. Use of partitions, reflecting surfaces, absorbing curtains and such other traditional ways of controlling the acoustic behaviour of the concerned places, has also to be carefully noted as yet. Consequently, speculation backed by deduction have to be relied upon for our discussion. However, documentation of the quality of performances is fairly detailed though sometimes impressionistic.

For every dramatic performance of the conventional type, it is the stage which provides the first source of sound. It is the platform that generates all acoustic action. In this respect, the pre-Kirloskar or the Bhave-phase need not detain us long because, groping for a firm beginning, the *mandalis* seemed to perform almost anywhere. At the most their minimal requirement was some sort of sheltered space. Thus spacious courtyards, inner chambers or fenced-off gardens also sufficed. On rare occasions they performed in regular theatres in Bombay. Precisely due to this frequent change in the acoustic setting, related performance practices could not become stabilized and elaborate. A few

fundamental norms were, however, established and they continued to hold sway even in the later developmental phases of Marathi music-drama.

High-pitched voices and loud deliveries were held in high esteem almost universally. Audibility being the chief consideration, the preference was natural. Actors were regularly singled out for praise if they possessed these qualities.

The necessity of maintaining a minimum level of audibility also influenced the nature of the dialogue-content. We have seen that the audibility-precondition compelled employment of high-pitch etc. In turn, delivery actualized in this manner gave to the listeners a continuous feeling of being exposed to public utterances and declarations. Content wise and thematically speaking, the element of the personal, the private or the individual was absent or was at least overshadowed by the 'public utterance' character of the dialogues. Hence, all the 'emotions' had to be loudly proclaimed and responses to all types of situations were equally sonorously voiced. This was the reason why mythological and historical themes were so widely prevalent in the dramatic plots. As could be expected, characters of this type were superhuman. What followed was a simple logical extension. The characters, being larger than life, required 'higher and louder than life' voices to match their personalities. It is to be noted that this sort of matching could be easily insisted upon without causing any strain to the accepted contemporary critical principle of realism which was also evident in other departments of dramaturgy.

Apart from the dialogue-content, the quality of dramatic verse and the manner of its throw was also directly related to the acoustic setting under discussion. A brief look at the texture of the verse makes the point clear.

The verse of the Bhave-phase music-drama did not differ much from the prose of the same period and both clearly lacked craftsmanship and polish. It could substantiate a claim to be called verse only because it was accompanied by



Drawing room at the Sangli Palace, where Bhave usually performed plays

rhythm-instruments and secondly because it was recited and that too in *ragas*. It is highly significant that according to the then prevailing performance-practice, the content of the verse was first spoken in prose and the verse-recitation was only subsequent to it (by the *sutradhar* who was the only singing voice for all the characters). It is not to be forgotten that in 'shouting' one could only hope for a terminal clarity. Only the endings of the verses could be heard clearly. This was how the prevailing acoustics was responsible for the peculiar quality of the verse.

The other major component was the musical instruments. In the Bhave-phase music-drama it was natural that these were loud enough even without amplification. The pre-condition to be fulfilled was simple: they should be heard with an impact. It was also necessary that they possess a kind of toughness enough to withstand the uncontrollable temperature and humidity conditions of the near-open spaces. In addition, their utility (acoustic rather than musical) also depended on the fact that they did not require fine tuning. Their tonal spectrum was of such a character that whatever music they could create, it tended to be more rhythmic than melodic and more atonal than tuneful.

In short, the acoustic setting of the Bhave-phase was by and large determined by conditions which could be described in a single word: outdoor. Whether in music or in dialogues, there was hardly any room for nuances of sound. Both these uses of sound had to be so 'oversized' that the only effect they could hope to uniformly achieve was that of making an impact of having reached the listeners with power.

Finally, it is possible to note one more facet, though rather speculative, of the acoustic setting. Voices and sounds that reached the audience were, as we have discussed so far, 'natural'. In a way, this naturalness compelled the audience to be equally natural in its response. That is to say, as the speech-slurring, fading-out sentences, booming deliveries reached the audiences naturally i.e. without being processed by amplification, the audience had to complete the communication by its own participation i.e. through alertness, sympathy and imagination. In fact this is what we do in day-to-day interpersonal communication when it is successful. Lack of clarity, lack of speech-nuances are compensated for by our attention. Amplification of sound allows the listener to sit back and be a passive receiver. Bhave-phase audiences, on the contrary, had to sit up, be alert and complete the process. The audience concentrated and participated - the acoustic setting ensured it.

When we come to the Kirloskar-phase, the picture naturally becomes more complex.

From accounts of Kirloskar's early years in Belgaum, it is clear that during 1865-75 dramatic performances had shifted from the 'open space anywhere' position to various closed spaces like temples, workshops, big houses and ultimately to regularly built theatres. Acoustically, this shifting signifies that the audience was progressively seated in pre-arranged, definitely marked spaces at which the actors *directed* their vocal outpourings. Naturally, there was less 'shouting' on the part of the actors. They had now begun to enjoy the benefits of performing in a well-demarcated 'acoustic' space.

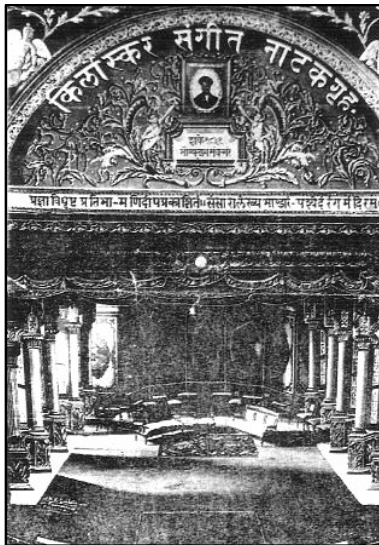
Further, the front curtain had become an established feature. Thereby stage-directions like 'from behind the curtain' could become acoustically, and



therefore, dramatically meaningful. It is reported that around 1875, performance of Kirloskar's play *Shakuntal* enjoyed background curtain-music which aroused interest and comment. Obviously, the curtain, which could effectively hide the source of sound and screen it, accentuated the spatial feeling of the sound.

This background music was reported to be a combination of 'band' and 'sitar' sounds. Though the alliance sounds curious today, it is worth noting that the varied timbre were differentiated and commented upon. This connotes a subtler response which was hardly imaginable in acoustically unprotected places.

The more renowned performance of *Shakuntal* in Pune (1880) reached higher peaks in all respects. The Anandodbhav theatre in which the performance took place was a three-tiered structure. The accompanying instruments were *tanpuras*, harmonium and *pakhawaj*, all played from the wings.



Kirloskar Sangeet  
Natakgraha

Some things are to be noted about all these particulars. Introduction of *tanpuras* definitely created a subtler standard of tunefulness for the actors. Secondly, playing the instruments from the wings achieved the trick of providing the actor-singers with a firm tonal base and at the same time not covering their singing and in the process making it unintelligible to the audience. It is also on record that the accompanying instruments (in this case the harmonium) was merely used to hold the 'drone' while the actor-singers were 'singing'. The instruments played music only when the actor-singers needed breathers.

As far as the actor-singers are considered, they were instructed to be solicitous about clear and forceful articulation. The instruction itself denotes closer acquaintance and understanding of the acoustic behaviour. The instruction was obviously followed as all the actors from this 'school' were famed for the projection of their voices, without obliterating their individual voice-qualities. From the earlier *Shakuntal* group for example, Moroba Vagholikar was noted for his *lavani*-type *tanis* rendered effectively with exploitation of the vowel 'i'; Natekar had earned a name for a sweet and slightly nasal voice.

It is an indicator of the improved theatre-acoustics that individual timbre of voices (and not merely the generalized qualities of high-pitch and loudness) could find a place in the contemporary accounts.

Coming to the auditoria themselves, it can be deduced that they were small and could accommodate about 450-500 persons though not with much room to

spare. Indeed, around 1884, the collector of Pune got all the auditoria in Pune inspected and passed an order restricting the management from admitting too many people. It is obvious that the stage too was small with not more than two or three drop-curtains. Two acoustical deductions follow. Firstly, due to the small size and the lack of heavy drapery etc, the stage, the source of sound, did not inordinately absorb acoustic energy generated by the actors. Secondly, the auditoria were small but overcrowded and hence absorbed sound, thus necessitating special efforts from the actor-singers regarding projection. That the stage itself did not absorb much sound is also corroborated from another angle. Photographic evidence suggests the smallness of the stage as well as the positioning of the actors. The positioning indicates that the actors were not compelled as yet to directly address themselves to the auditors, except perhaps in singing or in soliloquies. Further, the auditorium furniture itself chiefly consisted of wooden benches, tin-chairs etc. for the spectators. To that extent, the non-absorbent function was reinforced. It could be maintained that for all practical purposes, the Kirloskar-phase only reinforced the originally available acoustics of the auditoria rather than altering it radically in any manner.

However, things started to change as the dramatic entertainment came in greater vogue and when the entire activity started assuming larger proportions. The new situation invariably meant larger auditoria and more listeners. A fact pertinent for us is that during this developmental march acoustics was not totally ignored. Some pointers can be mentioned in this context.

Prof. Bhanu, a learned person, wrote an article dealing with the constructional aspects of theatres (1887).

Around 1890, the prince of Miraj (a small state in southern Maharashtra) had a new theatre built. The theatre earned mention for being roomy, for having more wing-space (in a *Mrichhakatik*-scene, a bullock-cart could be directly brought on stage!) as well as for giving good acoustic results. It also boasted of a spring-device that could bring an actor on stage from a basement in a moment. If we remember that till 1890, only Bombay, Pune and Satara had solidly built drama-theatres, then the Miraj-theatre suggests a significant advance.

In 1901 Appa Guruji, a keen observer, suggested that theatres should be more roomy and the actors should be heard properly. The inference is clear. Things were certainly moving but were yet outpaced by the new demands and the consciousness. Acoustics was no exception to the phenomenon.

However, beginning from an open space to protected, enclosed ones and then to theatres was certainly a movement forward, even acoustically.

On the other hand, compared to other acoustic factors, the actor-singers themselves proved rather regressive. In general they did not show any initiative

in getting the acoustics improved but adapted themselves to it. In some cases they even adopted a more individualistic approach than was justified in the acoustic context. For instance, Balgandharva started placing the accompanying instruments in front of the stage around 1909. To some extent this was because of his partial deafness. But to the audience the arrangement meant a crisis about the intelligibility of the words. Actor-singers invariably started planting themselves near the footlights in an attempt to carry music to more numerous, and in larger theatres more far-placed, listeners. It is quite probable that by this time all the characters were directly addressing themselves to the audience almost throughout the performance. Stronger projection became more and more necessary and an all-pervasive stylization replaced the naturalness. In quest of finding satisfaction for aural sensuality, organ (a pedal-harmonium with a deeper tonal quality), two *sarangis* etc. now became a rule. The heavy realistic scenery and a matching drapery of the historicals and mythologicals had already ruled out singing from the deep-stage. Added to it was the new instrument-placing. That made singing from the front-wings, also difficult. Taking into consideration that the instrument-source was now on a lower level than the artistes, (and also because it was more powerful), all this resulted in a perfect nailing down of the actor-singer to one 'singing spot'. The cumulative effect was the increasing accent on the high-powered or the continuously propelled singing-styles that finally became crystallized in the first decade of the present century in Maharashtra. It is significant that the practice of making *padyavalis* (booklets of texts of the songs) available at the time of the performance was firmly established during the period. As lowering of auditorium-light was not needed, song-texts could be consulted whenever required, thus reducing the unintelligibility.

As far as music is concerned, the acoustic aspect of the setting did not experience further change till 1931, the year by which the talkie and the broadcasting made listeners aware of sound-amplification. Yet, there was practically no change in the instrumental accompaniment, in the type of music employed or in the singing styles used. It is a tragic fact that so important an aspect as acoustics was not paid the attention it deserved during the development of music-drama.

## **Audience**

From the contemporary literature interesting information can be gleaned in respect of the audience-composition and the attitudes the listeners brought to the theatre.

Generally speaking, urban and non-urban centres differed in this respect. It is of course true that Marathi music-drama was largely urban-centred. Yet, audiences in Bombay and Pune differed from those flocking to performances in Satara,

Barshi, Solapur, Nagpur etc. The difference is mainly to be attributed to the new educational influences received via British-inspired institutions. Apart from persuasions exercised by the academic education on the urban audiences, they were also swayed by the comparative aspect of the situation because Parsi-Gujarati and to some extent the English-language drama was also active in the urban areas. Finally, there was a strong and wealthy non-Marathi element in the urban audiences. On account of the language handicap, this element was more inclined towards music and spectacle enriching the play. It is probable that the great influx of tunes originating from the Parsi-Gujarati stage-music corpus could be traced back to an unconscious effort of the Marathi drama industry to capture this segment of the audience.

Perhaps one more audience-feature also hinged on the urban-non-urban distinction. In the urban areas, unified sub-audiences could enjoy additional dramatic channel in operation. On the contrary, the non-urban audiences could have a recourse to only one channel. Thus in Bombay, Madhavrao Patankar could write and perform exclusively for the mill and factory workers while other social strata were being exposed to more sophisticated stuff at the same time.

This is the general backdrop on which audience-aspect of the setting is to be considered period-wise.

If the composition of the audience entertained during the Bhave-phase is examined, it becomes clear that it mainly consisted of newly and highly educated cream of the contemporary society along with the middle strata of the Marathi knowing populace. The former layer of the audience was very greatly motivated by a desire to encourage and uphold the Indian identity of the Bhave-phase drama. Not that they were *not* moved by artistic considerations, but the nationalist fervour was equally forceful.

Secondly, Bhave's presentations were generally patronized by Marathi-speaking people. To catch the pan-Indian rhythm Bhave had to stage a drama in Hindi (*Raja Gopichand*). The interpretation is that even in urban centres the audience could not be as yet attracted by music alone. Though the contemporary English press welcomed Bhave's venture as a true emergence of the 'Hindoo' theatre, for the Indians themselves, it was a language-theatre. In short, the audience was yet to be cosmopolitan enough to overlook the linguistic regional appeal.

In terms of theatre psychology, the Bhave-phase audience was described as uncritical and participatory. It was easily moved, both to tears and laughs, and it reacted strongly (and sometimes physically) to the simplistic black and white portrayals of dramatic characters. As indicated earlier, their responses contained more elements of ritualistic ecstasy than of a discriminating dramatic perception.

The Bhava-phase audience was of course not a monolithic entity. Bhava-troupe's success had naturally led to formation of many other troupes and some of them were of extremely inferior quality. They staged lewd mythological events under the name of drama. For example, some were known to have staged the *Katyayani vrata* in which *gopis* in nude participated behind a 'see-through' curtain! Obviously these troupes too had an audience. In all probability it was confined to non-urban areas. Such an audience probably took to drama only as a diversion from *tamasha*. Incidentally, street-corner nightly performances of *tamashas* were banned in Pune in 1850. Probably similar deterrent disfavours were apparent elsewhere too and that siphoned in some of the spectators. It is instructive to remember that the same trend continued to appear throughout subsequent history.

During the Kirloskar age the audience was more crystallized and there were segments which exhibited definite cohesion.

Firstly, the educated upper strata of intellectuals in the society were almost directly involved with the pre-production as well as performance-phases. Doctors, lawyers, professors, journalists, government officials were in the inner circle of the mandalis. Play-themes were discussed and new plays were read by this class of the audience. Some of them advised the actors and dramatists; some others wrote extensive letters in the press, and some presided over and spoke in dramatic conferences etc. They even did not think it below their dignity to man the doors for premieres etc. This section of the audience probably served as an intellectual and social ballast to the *mandalis*.

Again, we have a segment that patronized Patankar's vulgar dramatizations during the period (e.g. *Vikram-Shashikala* 1891). To his critics Patankar nonchalantly answered that his services in siphoning off audience from *tamasha* to drama should be recognized as useful.

A characteristic debate common to the Bhava and Kirloskar ages should be mentioned here, as it has a clear bearing on the attitude of the audience. During the period, music-drama turned out to be a far richer audio-visual attraction than other prevailing entertainments. Not surprisingly, professional nautch-girls and singers also found it irresistible. For a while, their right to admission was seriously questioned. Clearly some belonging to the privileged classes wished to appropriate the entertainment of the music-drama as they sincerely regarded it to be reserved for higher classes. However, commonsense won the day, though women from these classes were admitted only at higher charges! This sort of selective social outbursts of puritanism against professional performers have a long history in Indian culture and its nineteenth century manifestation does not (at least should not) cause any special wonder.



Another very significant tendency that rose to its full glory was the 'star' phenomenon. Balgandharva and other few artistes attained such a stature that they could start and set fashions for the contemporary society. Perhaps women were also attending the performances in greater numbers by this time. The segregation evident in the seating arrangement in the early days was also losing its hold. By the time of the first performance of *Manapaman* (1911), going to see a play together had securely become an 'in' thing for couples. Further, Balgandharva had also succeeded in capturing non-Marathi audiences and he was popular in the Bohra, Bhatia, Khoja communities as well.

What about the attitude of this wider and varied audience? As early as 1910, Annasaheb Karkhanis and Prof. Bhanu mourned the lack of a critical and mature audience which could hold the actors on a tight leash and prevent presentations of deteriorated standards. Karkhanis was a known dramatist and the latter a keen student of literature. From another quarter, an equally audience-damning observation was unambiguously made. Shankarrao Majumdar, an actor-turned-manager, the motive-force of the Kirloskar Mandali, incisively opined in 1909 that the Bombay audiences bothered less about the inner content of a play while that from Pune was highly critical in all respects.

Yet another variation is also available on the 'conscienceless' audience and the popular prestige which music-drama had acquired in the first decade of the century. It was the phenomenon of hordes of people seeking 'complimentaries'! Almost all who had occasion to manage the affairs of any mandali had strong comments to make on such clamourers for free entry. In an intensely satirical article, Majumdar likened these complimentaries seekers almost to beggars (1909). In contrast, Sathe, manager of the Kirloskar Mandali from 1884 to 1890 had noted with pride in his diary that even high dignitaries used to pay for their entry and serve as ushers!

Around 1920 the audience in Maharashtra was changing in respect of the basis of evaluation it applied. In a way this was in consonance with what was happening in other areas of life. By this time the audience started favouring 'nearer to life' themes and began applying canons of realism in matters of settings, decor etc. That is why the Lalitkaladarsh-Varekar combination could think of box-scenes, lesser number of drops, and also of themes like religious (re)conversion, problem of untouchability etc. (However music-wise, neither the cups nor the wine changed! This has already been discussed earlier). The audience was patronizing drama with consistency and also in considerable numbers. The year 1923 saw imposition of the entertainment tax, the final proof that even the government was tempted to view dramatic activity as a taxable industry!

From this time onwards and specially around 1930, coterie-audiences came into being. Categorizing of dramatic activity by an application of terms like commercial, professional and amateur etc. became meaningful because audiences subscribing to connotations of these terms became realities. Though often feeble, theatre movements came into vogue. With the coming of the talkie in 1931, the process became accentuated. Audiences, learning through their exposure to western films, slowly but surely reformulated their dramatic preferences. During these long years and till 1942, the following of music-drama progressively weakened and more often than not, it was nostalgia rather than a pull of vital attraction that made the public pay for performances of music-drama. In general, the audience was fragmented and the fragments developed their respective choices in no uncertain terms. For example, while a majority preferred films in general, a minority opted for drama only if it had social relevance, political message, realistic presentation etc. Yet another segment wanted to hear good singing in limited doses within the known dramatic frameworks, and this was taken care of by the 'night system'.

Even during the (Gokhale-led) revival of the post-sixties, the audience does not seem to have undergone further qualitative change, at least vis-à-vis music-drama. In the final analysis, the segmented audience of the contemporary scene presents a complex entity. Conventional music-drama, experimental dramatic music, stage-music in a concert format and the media propagated stage-music - all have their own respective clienteles. In spite of usual overlaps, these clienteles do not exhibit flexibility. Consequently, it is truer to say that stage-music is the weakest of the musical tributaries that criss-cross the musical map of Maharashtra. None of the audience-segments are sizeable enough to make any particular manifestation of stage-music a self-propelling, vital and generative activity. The loyalties are real but weak and what films did to music-drama is today done by film-music to stage-music.

### **Administration**

The third and the final component of the setting in which Marathi music-drama flowered is the manner in which the mandalis were administered or managed. Taken in a wider sense, administration or management included everything: public relations, finances, routine chores, training procedures etc. Various biographies, autobiographies, memoirs and diaries deal with this aspect in great detail, though in a somewhat scattered fashion. Examination of these sources not only reveals the inner life of the *mandalis* but also gives us new insights into the social and cultural life of Maharashtra. Our interest is, however, confined to those features of the internal run of the *mandalis* which made them centres of a varied cultural activity.

Before we proceed, two general observations need a reference. Firstly, though music-drama and prose-drama catered to different artistic needs of the milieu, the 'mandali' pattern remained the same. This was so because, fundamentally speaking, both these manifestations belonged to the same category of art i.e. performing arts. Secondly, within the sangeet mandalis as such one feature was common: from 1910 onwards, they revolved around one actor-singer, and mostly around the one who played heroine's roles. This had interesting repercussions, not necessarily conducive to a healthy growth of the institutional structure.

It was inevitable that in *mandalis* that followed the Bhave-model, it was the proprietor himself who controlled everything. For instance, in his troupe Bhave himself selected the theme, trained the actors in their speeches, composed songs and tunes and also took care of other production details. All the other members of his mandali were directly in his employ and they were paid on percentage basis. Bhave, the pioneer, was literal and strict about contractual obligations of the actors but the other mandalis were less rigid and hence could liberalize the dictatorial nature of the management. For example, the Ichalkaranjkar Mandali distributed the work among three persons before undertaking a tour: one each was kept in charge of finances, legal matters and disbursement of funds respectively. All the three together supervised all other tasks connected with play-production. The arrangement seems to be permeated with the spirit of co-operation. Further, the same principles of co-operation and equality were applied to the carrying out of the routine 'domestic' chores of the mandali. Thus the 'king', 'god' and the 'soldier', all washed utensils or cooked food etc. At the most, heroines did the lighter chore of serving food rather than roasting *chapatis*! This surely made for economy and self-sufficiency. These same interests were also furthered by another related measure. It was a general practice that one single person was called upon to play many different roles in successive acts. Thus an actor playing the king in the first act would even be a thief in the second act and a god or a sage in the following act. The measure, in spite of the simplicity involved, was not looked down upon even in the Kirloskar-age. In fact, so perceptive and keen a critic as S. K. Kolhatkar, while praising the pioneering work of Annasaheb Kirloskar, pointed out that Kirloskar was 'circumspect' in dramaturgy: he saw to it that one person could be employed to play more than one character!

Most of the mandalis used to rely on a financier of their choice for supplying them with the working capital before finalizing a tour. He was repaid after the tour was over and accounts of other concerned parties were also settled at the same time. A standard mandali consisted of about twenty-five members. Single tours usually lasted for about eight months, covering the period between post-Diwali and before-the-monsoon months. Till about 1880s, one single fairly successful tour yielded a total income of about Rs 2500 i.e. about Rs 240 per

month. Taking into consideration the general price-index (gold was sold at Rs. 16 per tola) and the general salary structure (a collector was paid Rs. 20 p.m.), the average financial picture cannot be called too grim. Income was also likely to be augmented through specially received prizes, awards etc. Of course both, acts of God and those of state, could ruin the rosy picture easily. Floods, epidemics, refusal of permission to perform etc. were always on cards. Indebtedness and pecuniary anxieties were not exactly unknown entities. Secondly, the pattern outlined above was associated with the better companies. There were surely others which probably operated just above subsistence level. Hence uncertainty and hard labour were not ruled out.

In this context the role of a contractor had assumed significance right from 1865 onwards. This was one of the ways of reducing the uncertainty of income. The contractors read the situation as opportunities for making profit.

Management-wise, with the advent of the Kirloskar Mandali many improvements were introduced. Firstly, within a short time after its initial successes, Annasaheb Kirloskar went in for a thorough reorganization of the mandali with a view to make it a truly professional unit. Thus, Mr. Sathe was appointed a full-fledged secretary (1884) and all the administrative work was entrusted to him. Secondly, a regular partnership deed was made and thus more 'heads' had more stakes in the running of the mandali. Apart from the partnership percentages, allocations towards Good Conduct Fund and Reserve Fund were specified. Excluding the partners, other actor-singers were employed on salaried basis and some of them received quite a sum! For instance, Balkoba Natekar, the star-singer of the early era, demanded and got Rs. 200/- p.m., though, due to his unstable loyalties, he was never considered for a partnership. The pattern continued after Kirloskar's death, and even after Bhaurao Kolhatkar's death in 1901.

About the time the second decade set in, almost all the major companies started revolving around their major singers and especially around their respective '*stree-party*' actors (i.e. actors who enacted the roles of the singing heroines). The point is that though there were 'stars' even in the early era, they were never treated as centres of loyalties. It was not so in the new orientation. Irrespective of the legal position, these 'stars' were the *de facto* owners. Not that they were undeserving. They were not exceptional abusers of authority. But their centrality changed the entire tenor of the activity. Plays were written, rejected, accepted or produced for them. Under the circumstances, the mandali-management once again became a sort of monomial construction - an expression with only one term. Imperceptibly, the involvement of the co-workers suffered in intensity. On and off the stage, it led to the attenuation of team-work.

In these one-man shows, all the advantages of a mono-cellular organisation were evident because those single men in authority were good artistes and cultured personalities. Mandalis therefore reflected the social commitments, political affiliations and musical leanings of their leaders. In all senses of the term, the mandalis were quick to act as centres of cultural communication between writers, musicians, artistes and other members of the intelligentsia. Many reputed vocalists could depend on the mandalis as their second homes. mandalis invited scholars etc. to lead discussions or deliver lectures on subjects having a bearing on the composite art of drama. Very frequently, through the medium of drama or through other indirect channels, political movements were aided by the mandalis. The mandalis also sponsored dramatic conferences.

However, many sensed the ultimate adverse effect the star-centred *mandali*-structures could have and a way out was sought. For example, Govindrao Tembe tried to make headway by floating his 'Shivraj' company as a limited concern with share-capital etc. around 1922, though he wanted to retain the residential nature of the older mandali. Much later (1942) M.G. Rangnekar succeeded in a similar attempt but he firmly avoided the residential feature. Rangnekar's efforts were also different in the sense that his *mandali* was controlled by a writer-director who also produced the plays. The 1933 Natyamanvantar experiment was motivated by sentiments of co-operation and idealism. However it was too short-lived to register any impact.

Today, the *mandali* is no more in existence. Professional dramatic activity is viewed as a commercial proposition. No dramatic troupe is run on residential lines. The music-drama that was produced and shaped by the *mandali* lingers behind, but without its original setting.

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## THE CURTAIN AND AFTER

Marathi music-drama has now reached a point where many questions come to mind. Can it continue to overemphasize the conventional triad of song-singer-singing and in the process, unnecessarily and unnaturally narrow the definition of music? How long can music-drama insist on solo-singing and the singer's foot-light hugs? Is it possible to hold that music-drama can still sustain itself on the supernatural and mythological and themes of such flavour? On the other hand, to what extent can it be expected to conform to the norm of realism and yet remain a music-drama? Further, can a near-total reliance on melody-oriented Hindustani music allow it to claim contemporary relevance?

Such questions can hardly be answered easily. But the future of the form hinges on producing satisfactory answers to them. One common quality helpful in answering them is the quality of accepting change. In the past, music-drama had changed rapidly, boldly and effectively. The historical accounts stand witness to its ability to borrow, adapt and assimilate from every possible source. It picked up *raga*-lore from the art-music tradition, prose-music fusion from the *keertans*, dance from the *kathak* lineage. It also stepped out to take up from the contemporary Parsi-Gujarati stage sensuous music, scenery and other devices of mass appeal. From the contemporary English stage (in India), it learnt to apply canons of realism and also to rely on a literary approach. In addition it used, rituality, stylization in speech and presentation from the almost submerged *Natyashastric* way that has permeated folk culture in India. Unlike its critics, music-drama as a form has not adopted a puritanical strategy. Hence there is every hope that it will survive the present stagnancy.

Meanwhile, it cannot be forgotten that Maharashtra owes its pervasive love for art music to the music-drama. It is the music-drama that had created a taste and spread a musical sub-culture. In Indian cultural history, music has frequently come to the rescue of a society that was facing disintegration under the impact of a stronger material culture. Marathi music-drama is also to be understood and evaluated in this perspective. There is every reason for its continued cultural participation.

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