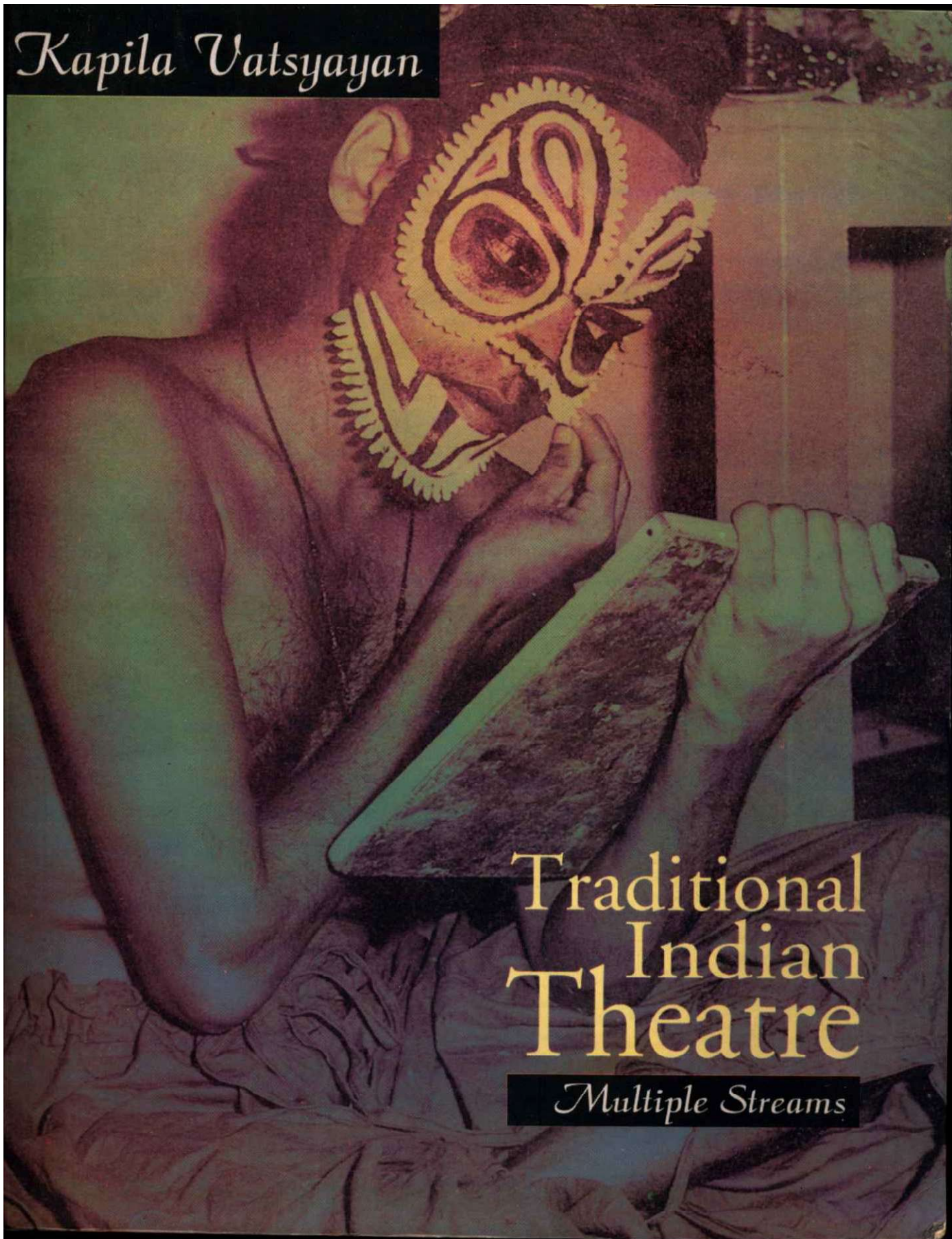


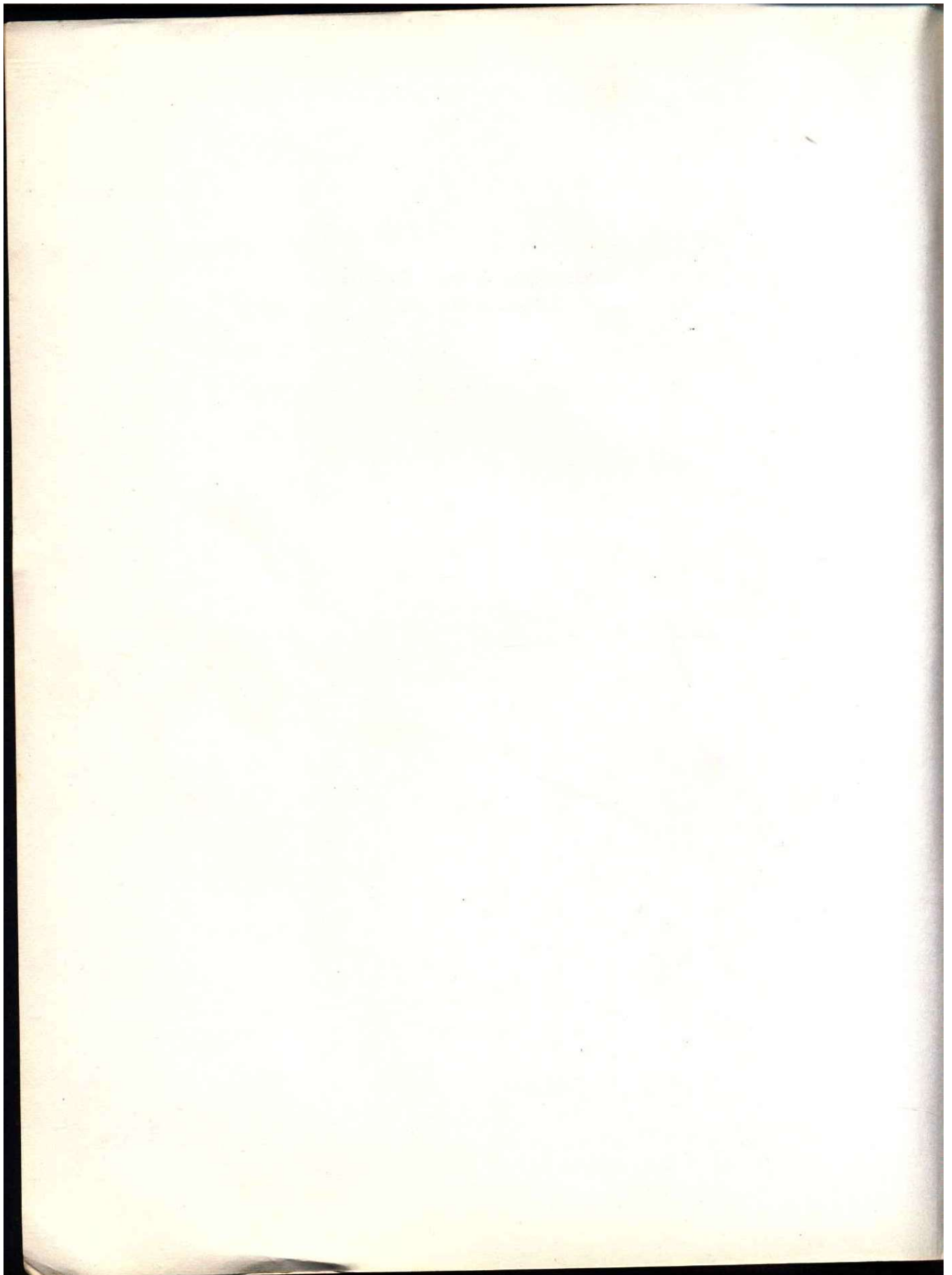
Kapila Vatsyayan

Traditional
Indian
Theatre

Multiple Streams



Traditional Indian Theatre
Multiple Streams



India—The Land and the People

Traditional Indian Theatre

Multiple Streams

KAPILA VATSYAYAN



NATIONAL BOOK TRUST, INDIA

Traditional Indian Theatre

Multiple Streams

KAPILA VATSYAYAN

ISBN 81-237-4461-7

First Edition 1980

First Revised Edition 2005

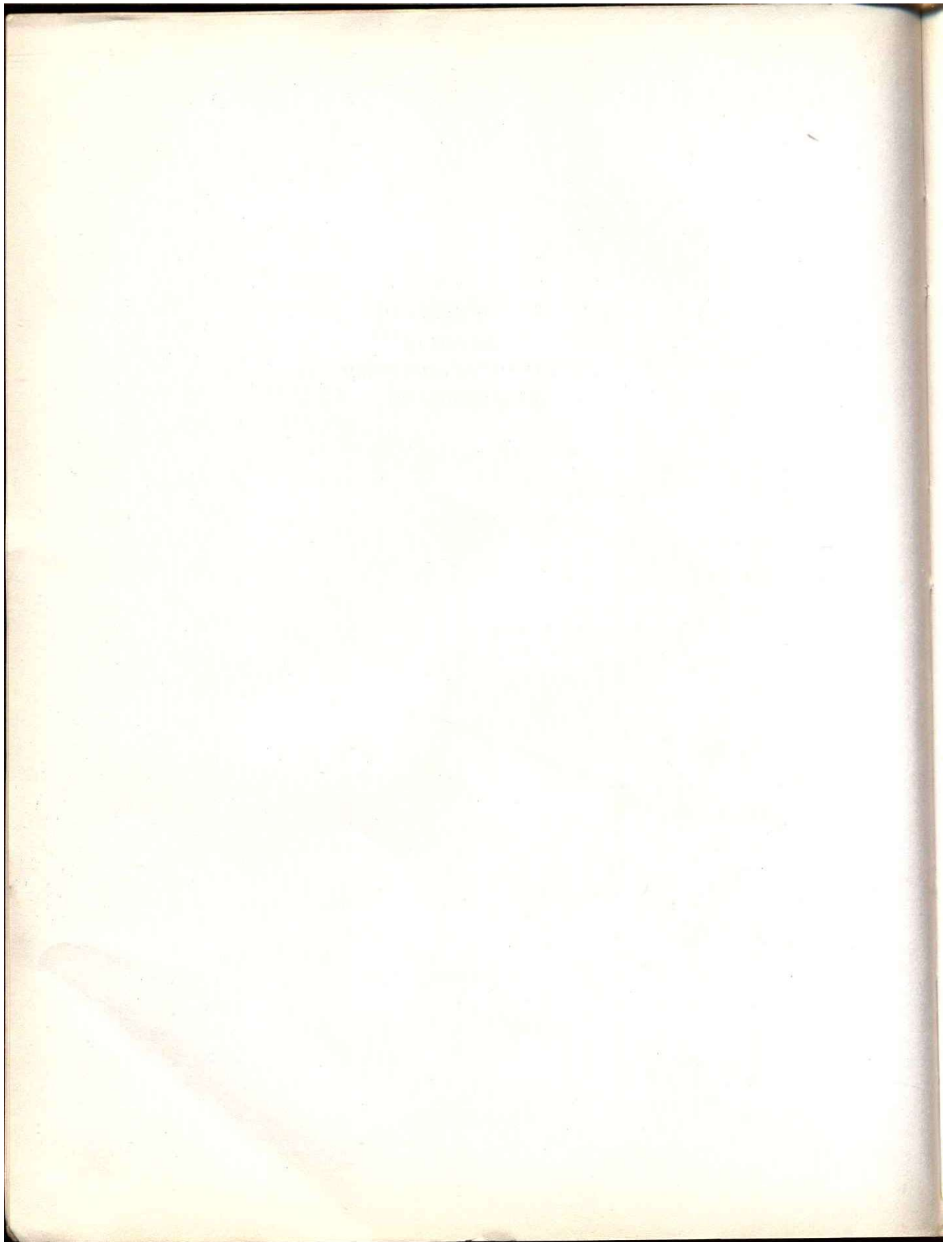
First Reprint 2007 (*Saka* 1928)

© Kapila Vatsyayan, 1980

Rs. 140.00

Published by the Director, National Book Trust, India
A-5 Green Park, New Delhi-110016

*To the Memory of
Dr. V. Raghavan
the pioneer of
modern critical scholarship
of the theatre arts*



CONTENTS

<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	ix
1. Introduction	1
2. Kuṭiyatṭam	15
3. Yakṣagāna	32
4. Bhāgavatamelā and Kucipuḍi	48
5. Chau	65
6. Mayurbhanj Chau	75
7. Puruliā Chau	82
8. Aṅkiā-Nāṭa and Bhāonā	93
9. Rāmāyaṇa and Rāmalilā	108
10. Rāslilā and Kṛṣṇalilā	119
11. Yātrā	133
12. Bhavāi	144
13. Svāṅga, Khyāla, Nautankī	155
14. Tamāśā	166
15. Conclusion	174
<i>Afterword</i>	185
<i>Appendices</i>	195
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	199
<i>Glossary</i>	207
<i>Index</i>	219

10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100

1. Introduction
2. The first part
3. The second part
4. The third part
5. The fourth part
6. The fifth part
7. The sixth part
8. The seventh part
9. The eighth part
10. The ninth part
11. The tenth part
12. The eleventh part
13. The twelfth part
14. The thirteenth part
15. The fourteenth part
16. The fifteenth part
17. The sixteenth part
18. The seventeenth part
19. The eighteenth part
20. The nineteenth part
21. The twentieth part
22. The twenty-first part
23. The twenty-second part
24. The twenty-third part
25. The twenty-fourth part
26. The twenty-fifth part
27. The twenty-sixth part
28. The twenty-seventh part
29. The twenty-eighth part
30. The twenty-ninth part
31. The thirtieth part
32. The thirty-first part
33. The thirty-second part
34. The thirty-third part
35. The thirty-fourth part
36. The thirty-fifth part
37. The thirty-sixth part
38. The thirty-seventh part
39. The thirty-eighth part
40. The thirty-ninth part
41. The fortieth part
42. The forty-first part
43. The forty-second part
44. The forty-third part
45. The forty-fourth part
46. The forty-fifth part
47. The forty-sixth part
48. The forty-seventh part
49. The forty-eighth part
50. The forty-ninth part
51. The fiftieth part
52. The fifty-first part
53. The fifty-second part
54. The fifty-third part
55. The fifty-fourth part
56. The fifty-fifth part
57. The fifty-sixth part
58. The fifty-seventh part
59. The fifty-eighth part
60. The fifty-ninth part
61. The sixtieth part
62. The sixty-first part
63. The sixty-second part
64. The sixty-third part
65. The sixty-fourth part
66. The sixty-fifth part
67. The sixty-sixth part
68. The sixty-seventh part
69. The sixty-eighth part
70. The sixty-ninth part
71. The seventieth part
72. The seventy-first part
73. The seventy-second part
74. The seventy-third part
75. The seventy-fourth part
76. The seventy-fifth part
77. The seventy-sixth part
78. The seventy-seventh part
79. The seventy-eighth part
80. The seventy-ninth part
81. The eightieth part
82. The eighty-first part
83. The eighty-second part
84. The eighty-third part
85. The eighty-fourth part
86. The eighty-fifth part
87. The eighty-sixth part
88. The eighty-seventh part
89. The eighty-eighth part
90. The eighty-ninth part
91. The ninetieth part
92. The ninety-first part
93. The ninety-second part
94. The ninety-third part
95. The ninety-fourth part
96. The ninety-fifth part
97. The ninety-sixth part
98. The ninety-seventh part
99. The ninety-eighth part
100. The ninety-ninth part

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first book entitled *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts* traced the history of the Indian performing arts in their framework of interrelationship until the 11th century. A second volume entitled *Traditions of Indian Folk Dance* followed. It sought to present a contemporary spatial picture of the living traditions at the tribal and rural levels. The large grey area comprehending nearly a thousand years of Indian history between the 10th and the 19th centuries and covering all parts of India remained untouched. For any meaningful framework it was necessary to bridge this gap. The task was challenging both on account of the evolution of regional languages and literatures, as also for the staggering multiplicity of genres and styles of the visual and performing arts. The unity provided by the Sanskrit language and a pan-Indian tradition appears to give place to an amazing plurality of traditions often mistaken for fragmentation and heterogeneity. Nevertheless a perusal of both medieval literature and examination of the living survivals of the several forms made it obligatory to explore this phenomenon; specially because the period has often been dismissed as the proverbial Dark Ages of the Indian performing and visual arts. Such a task could appropriately be accomplished adequately only as a teamwork project.

Despite the obvious limitations of a single individual attempting it, I felt that it was necessary to provide at least rough framework in spatial and temporal terms so that the contours of growth and the underlying unity of these seemingly diverse forms could be identified. The book would not of course have been written but for the persuasive request of some friends. As I began to explore the area I was convinced that 'theatre' in its totality rather than just 'dance' or 'music' which has been my chief concern was the true indicator of the period under discussion. Here the spoken and sung word and the 'movement' could not be dissociated from each other. It would be almost impossible to see these elements in isolation. Theatre was a total experience and multimedia expression comprehending the four types of *abhinaya* and the two levels of presentation, namely the *Nāṭya* and *Loka*. Also the prolific literary activity of medieval India convinced me that the origins of the so called folk rural forms lay as much in regional literatures as in the oral traditions. This deduction was further confirmed through an in depth study of the oral traditions. It was further confirmed through an in depth experience of the contemporary survivals of the theatre forms so far loosely termed as 'traditional' or 'folk drama'. Both

literary evidence and personal discussions revealed that the literate and the oral traditions should be seen in a framework of relationship rather than of dissociation. What appeared on the surface as belonging only to the rural masses without history and ancient links indeed embodied elements which were the continuation of tradition of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Questioning of some accepted hypothesis of the Indian artistic traditions became obligatory. First, whether the *Nāṭyaśāstra* system itself did not incorporate regional and local styles and second, whether or not the plural traditions were in fact multiple flowerings of the same tree. The result is the present volume. Its main aim is to trace the roots of these forms and the gradual development of these genres.

The contemporary manifestation has been placed against the backdrop of the literary and artistic history of the region.

Naturally, such a presentation can only be a starting point of further intensive individual studies of each form at the micro-level. The aim of the present study is to provide the basis of such a fuller reconstruction of each form and genre.

Understandably even a first attempt demands traversing of several regional literatures, plural miniature painting traditions and the other allied arts. Few can hope to master all Indian languages in a lifetime or have access to original sources. Despite my fortuitous circumstance of being able to follow half a dozen or more Indian languages, the limitation is fully recognized. Necessarily translations and secondary sources had to be relied upon, with the full recognition of the obvious limitations.

Besides, chronology of regional languages and literatures continues to be a matter of controversy. Dates remain an area of heated debate and dispute. In the case of some literatures, even dates of major landmarks, such as Kamban, remain unresolved. In such a situation where the primary purpose is not to establish chronologies and speculate on authentic dating but to follow the general contours of literary development, one could do no better than to rely on the chronologies suggested by critics and authors of the languages. The Sahitya Akademi series of Histories of Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali and Oriya have been helpful in this regard. I acknowledge sincere debt to the authors of these histories, as also to Sri K.M. Munshi and Sri M.R. Mazumdar in respect of Gujarati. For the historical account of Bhāonā and related forms I am indebted to Dr. Maheshwar Neog and Sri H. Barua. Dr. Maheshwar Neog also provided the opportunity for many stimulating discussions on the arts of Assam. For the detailed accounts of *Khyāla*, etc. Dr. Mahendra Bhanwat's work has provided rich material.

But theatre is an occurrent experiential art unrestricted to the written word. The experience and the discussion are indispensable. In this, I am grateful to scholars and savants in different regions of India. Foremost amongst these is the late Dr. V. Raghavan. It was at his insistence and persuasion that I took the first journey to Melattur as far back as 1949. He first introduced me also, to Kuṭiyattam, Yakṣagāna and Bhāgavatamelā. To him I owe a debt which cannot be articulated in words. Also I remember Sri E. Krishna Iyer's cooperation. Discussions with Prof. K. S. Karanth, Dr. Martha Ashton and Bhagavatar Gopal on Yakṣagāna have been most enlightening and rewarding. The several masters of Kuṭiyattam including Mani Madhava Cakayar and Ram Cakayar answered many queries.

Kunnjuni Rajas' monograph and Clifford Jones and Betty Jones' work on Kutiyattam have provided fresh insights. The most rewarding experience has been the stay in Kerala where I could satiate myself with these performances night after night.

Although literary material on the Chau forms is scanty, I have been fortunate in discussing many aspects of the forms with both the scholars and artists of the three forms. I should particularly like to thank Sri Kṛṣṇa Cand Naik and others for Mayurbhanj Chau, Guru Kedarnath Sahu and Raja Brijendra Singh Deo for Seraikalā and Sri Asutosh Bhattacharya, Smt. Purnima Sinha and Guru Gambhir Singh for Puruliā.

Repeated trips to Mathura and Vrundavan and discussions with Swami Ladli Prasad, Ramsvarup and Hargovinda enriched my understanding of the Līlā forms. I am indebted to them. The work of Sri Ramanarayana Agrawala and Sri Yamadagni has been helpful in rechecking defects of contemporary performance. Prof. Dashrath Ojha's work in *Rāsa* along with that of the late Sri J.C. Mathur's, specially their joint publication *Prācīna Bhāṣa Nāṭaka*, have provided valuable material for reconstructing the history of some of the forms. Prof. Dashrath Ojha has generously provided information and material. Indeed some of it I have not been able to incorporate in the study.

Besides the works of Sri K.M. Munshi and Sri Mazumdar, stimulating discussions with Smt. Sudha Desai and Sri Rasikalal Parikh clarified many doubts in respect of Bhavāi. Sri Mansukh Joshi and others from Gujarat have generously responded to queries. It was however after the manuscript was sent to the press, that I had the real exhilarating experience of Bhavāi at a festival held in Morvi, recently. After discussion with the Bhavāyās, particularly Sri Manibhai and Sri Babubhai, and specially after I had a chance to witness their electrifying performance, I would gladly modify some of my observations on Bhavāi which were based on earlier experiences. This latest experience obliges one to add that what I considered a languishing albeit crude survival of a five hundred year old theatrical form is in fact a vibrant tradition with a fantastic range and polyvalence of content, language, stage techniques and musical modes. To these masters I acknowledge my sincerest debts. This was a deep experience of learning.

Although Yātrā today has achieved a new high in commercial theatre, there have been occasions for witnessing authentic and genuine performances. Discussions with Prof. Asutosh Bhattacharya and Smt. Sova Sen have also been helpful.

Dr. Mahendra Bhanwat's work on Khyāla and Sri Devilal Samar's deep and extensive knowledge of the Rajasthan arts have always been useful. They have both provided occasions for witnessing performances and subsequent discussions. To them I am grateful.

Although much has been written on the Tamāsā in Marathi, the roots of which have been traced only to the oral traditions. Further probing into Marathi literature has led me to speculate on the literary sources of this popular form of theatre.

Despite my best intentions, it was not possible to include here many other forms, particularly Kariyāla from Himachal Pradesh and Bhāṅḍ Pather from Kashmir. Sri S.S. Thakur's monograph on the former scheduled to be published by the Sangeet Natak Akademi will undoubtedly fill this gap.

I am indebted also to the writers of all previous studies on the subject or particular

forms especially Dr. V. Raghavan, Sri Suresh Awasthi and Smt. Induja Awasthi, Mr. Clifford Jones, Sri Kunnjuni Raja, Dr. K.S. Karanth, Sri Balwant Gargi, late Sri J.C. Mathur and Dr. Shyam Parmar. The late Dr. V. Raghavan, Dr. Shyam Parmar and Sri J.C. Mathur were pioneers in the field and their absence will be long felt. It is a pity that we shall no longer be receivers of future contributions by these discerning scholars.

It was not altogether easy to collect or select photographs for the publication. In this sphere many institutions and individuals have been most cooperative. Mr. Clifford Jones readily provided excellent documentation for Kuṭiyattam, Sri Balwant Gargi on Yakṣagāna and other forms through Nibha Joshi of the National School of Drama. The Sangeet Natak Akademi's collections of photographs have been a helpful source. Thanks are also due to Haridas Bhatt of the Yakṣagāna Kendra Udipi, the Bharatiya Loka Kala Mandal, Anamika in Calcutta, Smt. Sova Sen, the Rangri Little Ballet Troupe, the Indian National Theatre, the Government of Assam Publication Division, Prof. Asutosh Bhattacharya and many others.

To Sri Balu Rao of the Sahitya Akademi, I owe thanks for perusing the chapters on Kuṭiyattam, Yakṣagāna and Bhāgavatamelā and for offering many helpful suggestions.

Dr. Lokenath Bhattacharya spared valuable time to edit a manuscript which presented many problems of transliterations, uniformity in English renderings, the maintenance of an easily readable style for an Indian lay reader. In all these matters he was extraordinarily helpful. Smt. Varsha Das has competently seen the book through the press. To them and others of the National Book Trust I am grateful. Sri S. Sharma typed the difficult manuscript and thanks are due to him.

And finally to Dr. S. Gopal, former Chairman of the National Book Trust, at whose active initiative the manuscript was begun.

Even at the cost of repetition it is necessary to say that this must be considered as a rough framework for further intensive and in depth studies of the several genres and multiple streams. The attempt here has been to see these multiple traditions in their essential framework of mutual relationships of some unifying principles, themes, content and many distinctive formal elements. It has also been my endeavour to raise some conceptual issues on the nature of interaction which takes place between different levels of manifestation, and to link the textual sources, both creative and critical, with the living contemporary traditions. If this can stimulate thought and arouse some interest in seeing the multifaceted vibrant traditions of Indian theatre both for their intrinsic value and as important indicators of the Indian cultural traditions, my task is accomplished. Further reading has been suggested for those who wish to probe deeper: the present work is by purpose written for the lay adult Indian reader in keeping with the objectives of the National Book Trust. Between the writing of the book and the publication there is a gap of four years; valuable material on the subject has appeared in the intervening period, which has been incorporated in the bibliography.

And lastly I acknowledge my grateful thanks to the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Foundation which gave me the opportunity to complete the manuscript. Much of the material was gathered over many years, but a part of it was also related to my study on

the *Gita-Govinda and the Indian Artistic Traditions*. In one sense this is an extension or a by-product of that study. The space and time framework of the two studies coincided, and the queries of one helped to support and reconfirm deductions on the other. Other data gathered in the course of the study of the *Gita-Govinda* will be incorporated in a subsequent volume which will be devoted specifically to the *Gita-Govinda* and the performing arts traditions of India between the 13th and 19th centuries.

Kapila Vatsyayan



INTRODUCTION

A mention of the performing arts of India immediately brings to one's mind the single-bodied and many-armed image of Durgā, or of Śiva in his form as Naṭarāja, ever destroying, ever creating new forms of the dance Tāṇḍava. These symbols in plastic form suggest at one level the unified equilibrium, the still-centre, and at the other, the continual play of 'energy' and rhythm in plural forms. The two aspects are interconnected and mutually dependent. The varied art forms like the multiple arms and hands, though distinct and different, are all limbs of the same body. The seeming heterogeneity and multiplicity of the several forms may be compared to the different modes of the Tāṇḍava.

Understandably, it is impossible to speak of one monolithic tradition of the arts, particularly of the performing arts in India, which depends and at the same time do not depend on verbal communication only.

There are traditions, and not one tradition, of the performing arts in the vast geographical area. All are characterised by a staggering multiplicity of genres, forms, styles and techniques. Even the contemporary scene belies all classification in terms of clearly defined categories of Western performing arts into classical and folk, sophisticated self-conscious individual artistic creation and collective participative activity, into spoken drama based on the word, musical note or gestures or movement. Nor can they be classified into neat categories of the opera, operetta, the symphony or the chamber orchestra. Further, the insulation of different categories from one another, so characteristic of Western forms until the twentieth century, has been absent here from time immemorial.

Nevertheless, in spite of these complexities and an apparently eternal timelessness, a close look reveals that each of these traditions as prevalent in different regions of the sub-continent and at different levels of society, can be clearly identified both in terms of the evolution of artistic form and style in time and its socio-cultural milieu in space. Layers of different moments of time can be identified in a seemingly contemporary form. Establishing, thus, a chronology of the cultural pattern, within which traditions of the performing arts flourished, becomes a highly abstract approach, an abstraction which on one hand guides the spirit of these forms, providing the fundamental unity or continuity and a sense of timelessness, and on the other is marked by an equal preoccupation with

multiple, concrete and varied forms and 'time present' which accounts for change and a continual flux.

Although it would be hazardous and difficult to provide an explanation for this apparent paradox of simultaneous static equilibrium and change and dynamism, it may be worthwhile to try to identify the underlying principles of 'commonality' or universality of cultural traditions of Asia, particularly of the performing arts of Asia, with special reference to India. In order to arrive at some conceptual hypothesis it would be necessary to mention briefly the spatial and temporal situation of these arts.

The spatial situation can be seen both in terms of levels of society and the nature of performance. It can also be seen in terms of the geographical distribution of the different racial/ethnic and linguistic groups.

In purely anthropological terms the levels naturally are tribal, village and urban; in artistic terminology they are sometimes called 'folk' and 'classical', the first implies community participation and the second refers spontaneously to systemized methods of expression— which imply community. Although never explicitly stated, 'folk' is correlated to tribal/village and 'classical' to the urban sophisticated, whether industrialised or not. These implied correlatives have been the cause of much misunderstanding regarding the Asian or the Indian arts. We shall presently examine the nature of such misunderstandings.

Nevertheless, let us begin with a brief account of the different layers of social structure which can be clearly identified in practically all regions of India.

A pervasive tribal belt passes through all parts of India: the dances of these tribal groups can be classified on the basis of anthropological, ethnical factors. Nearly thirty-eight million people of India belong to this category: their dance and music are examples of vigorous folk and classical styles.

There is the Himalayan belt extending from Kashmir to Himachal Pradesh and continuing further to the eastern hills of Bhutan, Sikkim, Manipur, Assam, and Mizoram. Those inhabiting this vast region include distinct tribal communities ranging from the Gujjars to the Bakarwals, and finally ending with the many tribal groups known generally as the Nagas. Chief among these are the Zeliangs, the Maos, the Tang Khuls, the Daflas, the Semas and the Aos.

Another tribal belt can be discerned at the foothills of the Himalayas and merging into the great plains encompassed by the rivers Yamuna and Ganga. Among the tribals of the foothills and great plateaus are several which can be grouped together on account of their social structuring of their life-styles. Again, subgroupings are possible. The tribes of the deserts and plateaus of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra form one macro group, while the Oraons, the Hos, the Marias and the Santhals and some tribes of Orissa constitute another. There are then the tribes which inhabit the plateaus and sea-shores south of the Vindhya. Among these tribes are some of the most ancient ones, such as the Todas, the Banjaras, the Venadis, etc.

An analysis of the music and dance of these nearly thirty-eight million people shows that these tribes make little or no distinction between verbal and nonverbal communication systems and techniques. Expression is total. Individually, this expression may be free, but

in groups it is mostly a conditioned movement or sound directly related to life function and experience, such as the hunt, etc. Also the song or the dance is a participative activity, but not spontaneous in the sense of allowing free movement. Like the tribal society, the artistic too are highly structured.

Next comes the stage of food-gathering, with a variety of magical fertility rites. Here the immediacy of life experiences is recalled in sound, rhythm and movement. Dramatic action makes its appearance for the first time; naturally, the spoken word and gestures assume a definite position. The fertility rites connected with the earth, the sun, and the moon play an important part here. The artistic form is conditioned not so much by the structuring of the tribal society as in the Daflas, the Aos, the Marias, the Hos and the Oraons, but rather by the functions of the rite: all the pole dances of India belong to this category. The beginnings of procession, music and dance can be traced back to the rites of the 'Jhum' cultivators.

There is then the organized village society whose origin can be linked with the Vedic concept of *grāma*. Nearly 75% of the population of this country and perhaps of some other parts of Asia have lived and continue to live within this social structure. These villages have been analysed from many points of view, both historical and sociological. Here music, dance and drama have been woven into agricultural functions and are integral to the daily and annual routines of the peasant. Many survivals and continuities of tribal society can be discerned in the agricultural rites connected with sowing, reaping, and harvesting. The origin of these, along with many dances of propitiation of magic and sorcery, goes back to an unknown antiquity. Thus, often a contemporary community dance contains in it elements of the original tribal life function. The Garbā and the Bhāngrā are typical instances.

Co-existent with the manifestations which are integral to the agricultural cycle of the life of the peasant are artistic manifestations based on the two epics and the many *Jātakas* and *Purāṇas* of Buddhist, Jaina and Hindu origin. In many parts of Asia these epics and *Jātakas*, often local and indigenous myths based on them and similar legends of the oral traditions, continue to play a vital role. The many pageants and tableaux and local forms of dances and dance-dramas developed from both the pure recitative word and its consequential interpretation through gestures, mime and song. The local variations of the epics have been considered as the permeation of the 'great' tradition to the 'little'. However, it is often forgotten that these local and regional forms in turn shaped many literary versions of the epics. A history of the development of the Rama theme will make this amply clear.

Close to the village community but a class apart is a group of professional singers, dancers, musicians and actors, who are differently classified all over India as Bhāḍas, Naṭs, Gandharvas, Vairāgīs, Bīnkāras etc. This is a group for whom the performance is a vocation, not a social, tribal or agricultural function. They are in and yet out of society, a community or group recognized since the days of Pāṇini. They move from place to place. It is this group of people which has been responsible for the mobility of ideas, forms and styles between the villages and urban centres. They have also been the

vehicles of expressions of protest, dissent and reform, the carriers of reform movements and the articulators of satire and social comment and thus the instruments of socio-cultural change. The contemporary forms such as Bhavāi, Nautanki, Terukoothu, Veethināṭakam, Ottānthullāl, etc., belong to this group. In artistic form, their technique ranges from acrobatic to pure spoken drama. The word-gesture relationship is, however, minimal. Of late, these forms have been termed folk-drama, traditional theatre, even street theatre and folk dance. The essence of these forms ranging from ballad recitation and melodic singing for puppetry, acrobatics, dance and theatre, derives from the social sanction and liberty given to make social comment. It is this which links them together. Our concern in the present study is in the main with this category of performing arts of India.

There is finally the urban, city-based culture, not necessarily modern, which has grown up from the tribal/village culture and has, in turn, affected it. Forms which developed within the framework of agricultural and other life functions and particular social organizations are carried forward and taken over in an urban milieu, though only after they have been dissociated from their original agricultural functions. There is no longer an integral relationship with the rigorous social structuring. Into the old form is now introduced a new literary content and a musical score. Classicity is the result. A mannerism and stylization are achieved through chiselling of the earlier forms and structuring them in relation to word and sound. This then has been the secret of the highly esoteric arts which have not lost their links with the earth and have in them the potential of continued rejuvenation through successive ages.

At this level the same, the *Purāṇas* and the themes receive a different treatment. The performers are professional or non-professional in terms of economic vocation but they are all dedicated academicians committed to the arts as a discipline of life and as a means of release.

This multi-layered pattern can be observed in practically every region of India; it can also be discerned in many parts of Asia, particularly, Java, Bali, some parts of Thailand, and Burma.

Can one postulate and sum up from this descriptive survey? It is perhaps hazardous but worthwhile. Roughly it may be stated thus. The arts developed in a framework of a local or regional distinctiveness which cuts across socio-economic stratification. There is a dialogue and interaction between varying levels and often there is much overlapping. The movement is a two-way traffic and not merely the penetration of 'great art' into popular levels. Tribal and village forms also affected and continue to affect 'high art'. Also, there is a clearly identifiable pattern of communication among regions at particular levels. Thus, there are two broad patterns: one, a vertical movement among forms of a particular region at different levels and socio-economic groupings, and another, a horizontal movement among regions where themes, content and forms have developed in a framework of continual communication at particular levels.

It could nevertheless be possible to identify contemporary artistic manifestation as tribal, village, semi-urban and urban, and delineate the paths of communication and

interaction among them in different regions and within a region, between tribal village and sophisticated forms. Merely as illustration, one may draw attention to forms in Orissa, Manipur, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh which provide excellent examples of this cultural phenomenon. There is, for example, a connection between the forms of the tribals of Ganjam district, the Pāikas, the dancers of Mayurbhanj, the Jātrā players and the Goṭipuas of the Ākharās and the Mahāris of the temples in Orissa. Channels of communication between the Kali, the Pulyāra Kali, Velakali dances and those of the Devī cult, the Theyaṭṭam, Theriyaṭṭam and finally Kuṭiyaṭṭam and Kathākali can also be discerned. Alongside are the elements of commonality and universality among sophisticated forms of dance, such as Odissi, Bharatnāṭyam, Kathak and Maṇipurī belonging to different regions of India.

This spatial situation has to be supplemented with a historical temporal perspective where we see that the traditions of the performing and plastic arts developed within a framework of interconnection and interdependence as a self-conscious awareness and principle and not as mere chance. While the Mohenjadarō civilization was urban, the Ṛgvedic society was pastoral and nomadic with many in-built systems of social cohesiveness and mobility. The *Sāman* was the meeting place of all. By the time of the *Yajurveda*, the magic ritual gestures and the symbolic use of the body had assumed importance. The *Atharvaveda* lays the foundation of a highly developed symbolism and a system of correlation between sense-perception and its expression and meaning: this permeates through all levels of Indian art normally termed as magical, ritualistic and esoteric. In the *Sāmaveda*, the concept of the *mārgī* and *deśī* tells us of the acceptance of levels. After the Vedic, both the upanisadic speculative thought and the Brahmanical ritual traditions gave rise to two parallel streams viz: a unified abstraction of spirit and a simultaneous symbolic concretization in form.

In aesthetics, this framework of the arts was recognized and articulated by the mythical Indian theoretician, Bharata, as early as 2nd century B.C.—2nd century A.D. He conceived of the theatrical spectacle as a total amalgam of all media and genres ranging from the spoken word to vocal and instrumental music, gestures, mime, décor, costumes, and finally, the inner states of being. He recognized the two levels of performance in the concept of naturalistic (*loka*, real) and stylized conventions (*nāṭya*) of the stage. He saw style as a mode of presentation ranging from the grand to the verbal, from the lyrical to the introspective. He also recognized the emergence of the regional variants in the concept of the *paravṛttis*.

It is thus understandable that the codifier of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* should begin his treatise by stating that he has created a fifth Veda by taking words from the *Ṛgveda*, music from the *Sāmaveda*, gestures from the *Yajurveda* and introspective states from the *Atharvaveda*. In asserting that this will be a discipline, an art unrestricted for all classes and groups of society, he points at the capacity of the arts to cut across all hierarchical stratification. There is evidence in these early texts of artistic activity at different levels and milieus, ranging from the purely recreational to the functional and finally to the highly professional. The writers of the lexicons and manuals such as Pāṇini, Bhartṛhari, Vātsyāyana, etc.,

clearly distinguish these levels and people through the use of many different words for different categories of performers and performance.

This and other formulations on the arts, dating from the 2nd to the 19th centuries, continue to subscribe to a world-view which accepts the phenomenon of the unity of a well-defined goal, a multiplicity of content operating in a framework of inter-dependence of forms and styles among levels and regions. For the theoretician and the practising artist both the unity and the multiplicity and fluidity principles were an unquestioned fundamental conceptual hypothesis, as also an empirical reality.

In course of time, while sophisticated forms emerged as highly stylized individual systems, alongside grew a variety of forms and styles, local and regional in character. These came to be termed as the *désī* forms. So prevalent, pervasive and powerful was the impact of these genres that the theoreticians and codifiers of the 10th-13th centuries included in their treatises a whole new category of artistic forms known as *désī*. The *désī rāgas*, the *désī karaṇas*, the *désī* forms of literature and painting, all found a full and candid discussion in the texts of the period. A perusal of these texts convinces us beyond doubt of the strength and validity of the principles of the traditions enunciated initially in the context of religion and conduct. These are the concepts of the *śāstrācāra* and *lokācāra*. The theorizer and codifier of the arts not only took note of the popular developments but also gave them theoretical and academic sanction. For this, he had precedents and models in the sphere of religion, philosophy and codes of conduct.

One may conclude that these traditions had an in-built mechanism of acceptance of 'change', of variety, of modification within a well-defined system of unity, and the 'eternal'. 'Timelessness' and unity, the everchanging dynamic innovative growth and development were complementary and not in tension and counter-opposition. Tradition and contemporaneity, static equilibrium and dynamic change, acquire a totally different meaning in this context. The one god assuming different forms or the one goddess with multiple arms was the natural symbolic manifestation of such a world-view.

The artistic forms in India are true indicators of this vision and must be studied not against a background of continual annihilation of earlier forms and their replacement by newer ones in a linear order; instead, they must be seen in a relationship of coexistence. A natural corollary was a deliberate attempt to break the insularity amongst the different art forms dependent in the main on the word, sound, gestures, mime, mass, volume, line and colour. By the 6th century A.D. this was such an accepted axiom that the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* embodies the principle through the story of a dialogue between a sage and a king. The king is taken through the successive disciplines of rhythm, music (vocal and instrumental) and movement before he is considered fit to create images for worship. An analysis of any one art or any particular genre is thus only a study of a pair of arms or one particular aspect of the god and not the totality. Despite this integral approach, there is the recognition of the autonomy of particular media and each is dealt with separately.

While, therefore, it would be a partial exercise to analyse genres only in terms of

their dependence on the word or sound or movement in isolation, it would be possible to cull out these elements against the background of interdependence and inter-connection of forms within a region and amongst regions, all operating within the principle of unity and multiplicity.

It would also be possible to discuss the salient features of each form in both time and space, which depend primarily only on the body as a vehicle of communication as distinct from those which depend on the word. The word *vāk* was nevertheless primary at all levels and the oral tradition provided the basis of communication even when the 'word' is communicated not as visual, but an aural experience.

How do we identify these forms in different regions and at different levels in India and what are the chief characteristics? At the tribal level, style is evolved through emphasis on particular parts of the body, particular limbs, as macro movement. This is unrelated to the word, but certainly related to the life function. The artistic form is governed by single units of rhythm used repetitively. Thus, while some tribal dances use the leg as a single unit, others use it broken up into the movements of the thigh and calf. While solo dancing may have an element of spontaneity, the group dances are conditioned and delimited; it is this self-conscious delimitation which accounts for style and mannerism. We can distinguish Nagas from the Marias and the Hos on account of these varied delimiting mannerisms and repetition of movements where only some parts of the body and not all are articulated. At the village level micro movements of the hand and foot contacts begin to play a part. In the fertility rite dances, trance and magic perform an important role. In some, many more parts of the body with micro movements begin to play a part. The human body is also used symbolically and in doing so, the aim is to arrive at an abstract design in space. Music, more often than not an indispensable ingredient, is not restricted to singing by the dancers. A separate group of reciters and vocalists accompany the dancers. The relationship between the word and the movement is loose, not tightly structured. The thematic aspects of these dances and songs range from fertility to agricultural functions to the presentation of stories from the epics. When we move on to the community theatre (professional or semi-professional) of the village street or court we find that the relationship of the word and gesture has undergone a transformation. Now the relationship is much more rigorous: the theatrical spectacle depends on the spoken or sung word alone, as also in its multiple interpretation through movement. The *Rāmalilā* and the *Rāsalilā* performances all over India are an example of this phenomenon. So also are dance-drama forms like *Kuṭiyaṭṭam*, *Yakṣagāna* and *Bhāmakalāpam*. A different order of relationship of word/sound movement and gesture emerges in the 'street' and pageant forms such as *Tamāśā*, *Bhavāi*, *Nautanki*, *Terukoothu*, *Veethināṭakam*, etc. The opposite pole in the street theatre is the acrobatic dance which has no meaning or word content and depends for communication on pure body-skill. The word-gesture relationship changes in the sophisticated solo forms. Here the literary word is set to melodic line, in a given metrical cycle, and is then interpreted either descriptively or symbolically by the dancer. The styles commonly termed as 'classical' in the context of dance, all use this principle; however, each can be distinguished from the other on

account of the use of the human body in distinctive motifs of abstract design. Distinct geometrical patterns guide their articulation techniques.

Thus, the sophisticated or stylized forms which continue to be deeply rooted in village and folk culture evolve a methodology of communication which is strictly regional at one level and universal on account of its abstraction at another. Examples of the pattern of evolution can be cited from all parts of India, but particularly from regions like Orissa, Manipur and Kerala, where different layering and levelling of society are still existent and clearly identifiable.

One common principle which determines the nature of movement at both the village and urban levels is the use of the human form as an impersonal instrument of communication. Expression lies not in spontaneous free movement, but in achieving impersonality through the very personal medium of the body. Indeed, it is this one major factor which gives the Asian dance and dance-drama forms a quality which distinguishes them from the similar forms of many other cultures.

How and when the Indian considered the body as an essential prerequisite for transcending the body constitutes a total history of Indian thought. Neither is this the occasion nor space would permit us to go into the complexities of these thought processes which manifest themselves in the Indian artistic traditions, particularly those which are related to the use and representation of the human form for communication either in the plastic or kinetic medium. The theoretical enunciation of these thought process was made by the early Indian aestheticians in the formulation of the *Rasa* theory which has guided the destiny of Indian art forms for nearly eighteen centuries. Scholars have dwelt at great length on different aspects of the aesthetic experience, the aesthetic content and the methods of communication content in this theory. We shall not go into these aspects here. However, let us draw attention to two principles in aesthetics. One was the purposive use of sensuous form to suggest states of 'being' and the other relating to certain laws of technique which allowed improvisation, innovation and change. The second has been termed *vyabhichārī bhāva* or what is commonly called *sañchārī bhāva* in music and dance. Through the *vyabhichārī bhāva* or *sañchārī bhāva* the artiste could interpret the permanent or dominant states, or major motifs (*sthāyī bhāva*) in as many ways as he liked and present a picture of the world from his distinctive view-point without departing from the overall structure of the given aesthetic theory.

The use of the human body as a vehicle of expression and communication was not restricted to what is termed, normally, as 'dance' or movement: it was brought to the aid of the 'word', *vāk*, whose primacy was unquestioned at all levels, particularly the village and the urban levels. On the word was superimposed the melodic note: the two together provided the essential prerequisites for interpretation through movement. The colour symbolism of the physical environment, costumes, make-up, head-gear all reinforced the other levels. The variety of genres which developed depended in varying degrees on the different blends of these disparate media and were not a result of the exclusive use of a single medium alone.

Thus, in the Indian context, when one speaks of drama, dance or music, one is

alluding only to the dominant or fundamental principle of the 'word' movement or sound and is not referring to these arts in isolation or in mutual exclusiveness.

A recognition of the framework of the interconnection of levels, the interrelatedness of regions, the inter-dependence of art forms, and the principles of eternity (of timelessness) and of flux (everchanging, ever-renewing manifestation) demanding a concentrated still centre and peripheral multiple expressions, is essential for a true understanding of the traditions of the performing arts of India.

The principles of eternity and of flux, of an ever-old and ever-new or renewing phenomenon, were integrated into Indian thought at its metaphysical as well as mundane levels. This then is the pattern of Indian performing arts. They can be vehicle of any contemporary concern, but the contemporaneity must be contained within the continual symbol of the eternal or at least the old. Multiple meaning or forms thus become the logical corollary. 'Theatre' is one amongst several other disciplines where the principle of the 'unmanifest' and 'varied manifestations' was embodied.

This general survey of the spatial and temporal contours of the Indian performing arts was necessary in order to clearly demarcate the area of our present study which attempts to deal with forms that cannot be identified purely as tribal on the one hand and urban on the other. In short, they do not come under the category of what are popularly described as 'folk' or 'classical' and yet there are many areas of overlap.

The geo-physical environment, the life-style in terms of modes of food-gathering and cultivation, the socio-economic structuring, the religio-political developments and the evolution of literary and plastic art traditions have all shaped and influenced these forms, as they have the other two categories of performance which do not concern us here. In turn, they have interacted with and influenced the growth of literary genres, plastic arts and performance at the rural and urban levels. The variety and multiplicity of content, form and technique of this category of expression performed either by the community (non-professional or vocational) or by professionals have led scholars to label the different forms in innumerable ways. Some have called them folk-theatre, dance or drama, others have used the term, 'traditional dance-drama' and yet others have called them popular rural theatre. Sub-categories have been made of folk-ballad, opera, dance-drama, arena theatre, changing-locale theatre, cycle-plays, etc. The list and the methodology of categorisation could be enlarged. Nevertheless, suffice it to say at this stage that behind these attempts at classification in recent years is the vague recognition that there is a certain commonality of approach which distinguishes these forms from purely tribal or village participative activity on the one hand and on the other, from the highly stylized individual expression of dance-forms commonly called 'classical' and normally associated with the urban.

Let us first begin by listing the forms in terms of their dominant medium of artistic expression and then attempt to relate it to the class or community of performers who are the chief repositories of some of these forms.

We have first and foremost the 'ballad' form which depends in the main on a literary composition, not necessarily belonging to the written or literate traditions of the country.

The performer normally is a solo artiste; or there are two individuals; or it is one narrator accompanied by a small chorus. These forms, from all over India, are known as the Pabuji ki paḍa of Rajasthan, Āllah-Udal of Madhya Pradesh, the Harikathā of Maharashtra and Gujarat, the Dasakāthia of Orissa, the Rāma and Kṛṣṇakathā of U.P., Punjab, the Burrā Kathā of Andhra Pradesh, Harikathā of Tamilnadu and so on.

There are then the cycle plays or what has been termed as Miracle plays revolving round the theme of Rāma, Kṛṣṇa or Durgā which are performed by a group as a spectacle and not by a soloist as in the case of ballad singing. Into this category fall the Rāmalilā prevalent all over India, such as the Rāmalilā of Banaras, Ayodhya and other parts of India, the Kṛṣṇalilā and Rāsalilā of Mathura and Vrindavan, and the many changing-locale and tableaux forms.

There are then the forms, which almost with design and purpose do not treat the two epics as sacred drama but interpret them as part of local culture. Often the content departs from the epics and the Kṛṣṇa theme and is based on the literary genres which developed in different regions. The Bhavāi and Tamāsā of Gujarat and Maharashtra, the Terukoothu, the Veethinātakam and the Ottānthullāl of Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Kerala, the Nautanki of U.P., the Khyāla of Rajasthan, the Bhāḍa Jashan of Kashmir and the procession theatre of Yātrā or Jātrā of Bengal, Orissa, Assam and Manipur, all fall into this category. Closely related to these, which are sometimes called street forms, are those performed in the precincts of a temple or village courtyard but which provide a link between the highly sophisticated drama and the improvised street theatre. They have a structure which is closer to the literary dramatic piece but is less rigorous. As examples can be mentioned the Aṅkiā-nāṭa of Assam, the Bhāmakalāpam of Andhra, the Bhāgavatamelā of Tamil Nadu, the Yakṣagāna of Karnataka. A class apart are forms like the Kuṭiyattam and which distinguish themselves from the others on account of their marked dependence on movement rather than the spoken word. An example in point is the dance-drama form known as the Chau with its three different versions from Seraikela, Burulia and Mayurbhanj.

The list is by no means exhaustive. For example, we have not included here the whole rich range of the puppet theatre which comprises glove, rod, and shadow puppet and string marionettes, the scroll-painting and narrative theatre, and innumerable others. Nevertheless, for purposes of study and analysis of the Indian performing arts this illustrative list, however sketchy, may suffice.

We may now try to correlate the different categories of performance in relation to the class or group of performers who are hereditarily trained artistes. Even a cursory glance will reveal that most of these performers do not belong to tribal societies but are members of village or rural communities. Further, except for the Rāmalilā, Rāsalilā and Aṅkiā nāṭa, all others are the special preserves of the semi-professionals or professionals and cannot be termed amateur recreational theatre, even if for some they may not be an economic vocation.

In the beginning we have spoken of the tribal social structure and the village or *grāma* structure. An analysis of village communities reveals that among these are several

who are known as the 'backward' classes but are not necessarily Śūdras in the traditional caste structure. Within the so-called 'backward' classes are the Vairāgis, the Binkāras, the Bhavāyās, the Gandharvas, the Bāuls, the Gājis and others. Many artistic forms mentioned above are the special preserve of these communities, and they seem to be the descendants of the semi-professionals and professionals listed in Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* and other texts dating from 2nd century B.C. to 14th century A.D. The performers of Bhavāi, Tamāśā, Khyāl, Nautanki, Terukoothu, Veethināṭakam, Bhāḍa Jashan belong to these classes. However, not all categories of performers come from the 'backward' classes. The performers of Chau are a varied lot ranging from the underprivileged of Purulia to the Vaiśyas and Kṣatriyas of Mayurbhanj, to the princes of Seraikela. On the other hand, Bhāmakalāpam, Yakṣagāna and Kuṭiyāṭṭam are largely, though not exclusively, performed by Brahmins or special subcastes, the Ambalavāsis of Kerala in the case of Kuṭiyāṭṭam being a typical instance. Some roles in the Rāmaliḷā of Varanasi and the Rāsaliḷā forms of Vrindavan are performed by Brahmin boys under fourteen. The Kṣatriyas largely, but again not exclusively, perform the Rāsa and Jātrās in Manipur.

From the above, it will be obvious that a classification in terms of castes and sub-castes reveals that theatre activity is not restricted to any one group or subgroup in society and that although most performers are professional or semi-professional, they range from the communities listed as the 'backward' classes to the Brahmins and Kṣatriyas. In short, social structuring forms a base but cannot give us a perfect criterion for the classification and subgroupings of these genres. Nevertheless, it is useful to bear in mind that while genres can be divided on the basis of content and form, they can also be classified in terms of the particular communities who have been the repositories of particular forms. An attempt has been made to classify these forms in terms of their regional distribution, in the class or caste of society and the literary content of their repertoire.

The growth of these forms can also be traced historically through archaeological and epigraphical evidence, literary source (including both chronicles and works of creative literature in Sanskrit), particularly from literature in the regional languages and from musical texts of the medieval period. This history can be reconstructed through a period ranging from the 2nd century B.C. to the 19th century A.D., especially between the 9th and 18th centuries A.D. This is a task too monumental to be undertaken in a study of this kind.

A superficial glance at the source material, however, convinces one of both their continuity and their tenacity for survival through many historical periods. They have originated, grown and developed through a political history marked by invasions, wars, downfall of kingdom, migrations and the growth of small principalities and states and the spread of socio-religious movements of extreme orthodoxy and of protest and dissent. Although no precise historical phasing or periodisation of the origin and growth of these forms can be attempted, it is nevertheless possible to date many of them. Some forms such as the ballad can be traced back to the Vedic and post-Vedic times; others to the period of classical Sanskrit literature of the 4th-5th century A.D.; yet others, such as

Kuṭiyāṭṭam to the 10th and 11th centuries. Many can be traced back to a later period, A.D. 1250 to 16th-17th century A.D., which is contemporaneous with the rise of regional literatures and a few are not more than fifty or a hundred years old when they evolved either through the impact of certain socio-political developments or through the individual genius of creative artists. Also, new forms are still evolving in contemporary India, both at the urban and the rural levels, in turn being enriched and enriching the already existing flow.

Our concern here is not to trace the historical development of these genres through the mass of source material which still needs to be collected, documented and analysed for purposes of any objective study. Our purpose is to study chiefly the contemporary manifestations, their linkages with similar manifestations in other parts of India and with each other in a particular region.

It is also not our purpose to undertake a close study of the technical and formal aspects through an analysis of the literary content, dramatic structure, musical melody, movement patterns, styles of costuming and make-up of each of these forms. This has been attempted in the case of a few forms but not all. Our effort has been to undertake a comparative study with a view to illustrating the phenomenon of unity and diversity, abstraction and concretization, interconnections of regions and interdependence of forms within a region, rather than a descriptive and analytical study of each form. This itself, we hope, will bear testimony to the rich and variegated fabric of what are known as the performing art traditions of India which cannot be classified merely as tribal or folk on the one hand and ritualistic or classical on the other. In our discussion, we have attempted to show the links with tribal and ritual practices on the one hand and the elements of the continuum of Sanskrit drama on the other. Regional grouping and blendings have also been identified with a view to pointing at the typical Indian phenomenon of mobility of one form from one region to another. In some cases groupings are possible by virtue of geo-physical proximity and literary traditions; sometimes it is the residual survival of a historical movement like the *Bhakti* movement which continues in some parts of India and not in others. Rāsālilā forms of Vrindavan and Manipur typical instances. Again, the theatre spectacle contains a wide variety ranging from myth, legend, epics, lyrical poetry based on works like the *Gita Govinda*, to social-comedy, satire, earthy banter and pure innovation based on local history and political developments.

The content is contained in a flexible form which is capable of adaptation to local situations and temporality here and now. While the theme may be concerned with eternity at one level, it also invariably has a local colour and contemporary validity; the two levels of meaning are in built into the dramatic structure, be it the ballad form or the puppet or the street theatre or for that matter the more rigorously structured forms like the Kuṭiyāṭṭam, the Bhāmakalāpam or the Yakṣagāna.

In most forms there is a distinct carry-over of the structures and conventions of the Sanskrit theatre in their purposive denial of the unities of Time and Space and in their inclusion of the conventions of preliminaries of the *Indradhvaja pūrva-raṅga*, the division of the play into plots and subplots, their use of *Sandhis*, the utilisation of the

hero-heroine types as the *nāyaka* and the anti-heroes, and the all important roles of the *sūtradhāra* and *vidūṣaka*. Indeed, the *sūtradhāra* is used as an important device for interlinking phases and as chorus; the *vidūṣaka* is used to connect two dimensions of time, the past and the present. The world of gods and men is brought together by him, with freedom and sharp innovative skill which lends an air of earthy concern for the immediate life around. Although the highly organised division of space of the Sanskrit stage is lost to many of these forms in their contemporary manifestations, they still adhere to some rough and ready conventions of the *Kakṣavibhāga* (zonal divisions) of the Sanskrit stage. Also the stylized gesticulation pattern, particularly of the hands (*hastābhinaya*), is absent or minimal in most forms. In this respect, Kuṭiyattam, Bhāmakaḷāpam and Bhāgavatamelā are closely in a category. The Chau forms, whether dramatic as in Purulia or lyrical as in Seraikela or dance-drama epic as in Mayurbhanj, are a separate category not dominated by word but by gesture (principally of the lower limbs), a very well defined vocabulary of movement with very distinctive principles of articulation.

The puppet forms from different parts of India can also be regrouped on the basis of their particular media such as shadow, rod, glove and strings on the one hand, and by virtue of their content and their relative relationship with the live dance or drama forms of the region on the other. The Yakṣagāna and the puppet theatre of Karnataka, the Gombeyatta, are examples of this kind.

The scroll plays and the narrative ballads form another group, where the sung or the narrated word is illustrated through a visual form through gesticulation.

Despite these groupings and categories, their affinities and their consanguinity of approach, spirit and content, the distinctive style and technique of each form gives each a personality unique and autonomous, with an inner life and external methodology of communication.

The last and final question is who are the audiences and how do they differ from those of the tribal and village dances and community singing. In the latter, there is hardly any distinction between the participator, the actor-dancer, musicians, and the audience; all join in. In these forms, while large audiences participate through active response, there is a clear actor-dancer-musician and audience-spectator-listener demarcation.

This broad classification, it is hoped, will be evidence enough of the complexity of the situation which is seemingly spontaneous and unorganised in the modern sense, but one which has a structure. We shall attempt to describe and analyse some of these forms in the spatial and temporal situations in the following pages.

It would be possible to treat the forms in their regional distribution and take the forms of each region separately. It would also be possible to attempt to present them in a chronological order of their origin and evolution. Finally, one could also regroup them in terms of their formal stylistic features, which cut across regional boundaries and treat them together. Each of these approaches has a validity, but the first approach as mentioned has not been followed as some work has already been done on the regional basis. The second is likely to be hazardous if one does not first establish a chronology

and history and analyse primary source material, a task which cannot be undertaken by any single author in its entirety. Thus, for facility, the third approach has been adopted while keeping in view the first two. It has also been necessary to adopt this on account of the objective of this study, which is to show the interconnections among forms of a particular region on the one hand and those of different regions on the other. This alone, we think, can provide an identifiable thematic unity to the work which necessarily takes into account what may seem a medley of theatrical manifestations and experiences, unconnected and heterogeneous.

It is the belief of the author that only such an attempt, however broad, can present a picture of the traditions of the performing arts, while pointing at the same time at the processes of eternity and contemporaneity, continuity and change, unity and multiplicity, interdependence and autonomy, so typical of the Indian cultural phenomenon.