

**LESSON-1**

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**MEANING, PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF CULTURE**

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The change that we are now witnessing through the media revolution, post-industrial technologies and global communication networks has generated apprehensions about emergence of a uniform, homogenised culture. A number of scholars are talking about 'clash of civilisations' in the decades to come. Cultural hegemony is bound to give rise to conflicts than those generated by the colonial economic order in the nineteenth century. What can be done to preserve and enrich the large numbers of distinct cultures that exists today in the face of this rapid globalisation and standardisation of ways of life? People are looking to India to see whether this country, with its 5000 years of uninterrupted civilisation, will provide some answers which might lead to a social harmony wherein there is respect for creative diversity. It is imperative to learn about the meaning, perspectives and approaches to the study of culture.

**Meaning**

The word 'culture' and 'civilisation' first came to be used in an idealistic sense in Western Europe from the second half of the eighteenth century. It is generally admitted that culture is not a part of nature but it is something acquired. It is not an individual acquisition but handed down from the past as part of a tradition. In this sense culture gets defined as the tradition of values of self-realisation. Values are the objects of valuing, a fundamental human activity. Valuing implies seeking, choosing and approving. At the level of human mind the seeking becomes self-conscious and critical and its objects as well as the process of seeking become symbolised. The expression and communication of valued experiences gives a socio-historical actuality to the ideal process and the cultural world is created as historical tradition of the human endeavour for self-realisation.

The familiar view which the historians tend to take is to think of culture as something possessed by a certain society located in a certain area or age as some definable group of people. Culture here becomes the form and achievement of a certain society, a social tradition. If culture is thought of in terms of achievement, achievement needs definition as much as culture. The definition of society is also equally difficult. If we define a society as a super-institution or as a complex of institutions, what is it that is central to an institution? Institutions are centred in ideas and habits. An idea induces an attitude. This is crucial to an institution. It is the ideas in the light of which one appraises the institutions and also recognises the inner value of consciousness of a society and together they are called culture.

If culture is not a complex of industries, technology or social organisation can it be a form or pattern including these as well as other phenomena? The notion of culture as an overall form comprehending variety of social experience and thought needs some explanation. Whitehead speaks about a form of the forms of thought and Oswald Spengler suggests the concept of an all-inclusive form. The possibility of systematising the forms of specific kinds of intellectual activity comes to be envisaged at a late stage of the development of culture and such

effort in its retrospective orientation seems to look upon creative activity as typical and repetitive. The awareness of different types of activities of an age or society tends to produce in the mind an increasing sense of order and connection. Can this sense of unity be described as a form? Does culture form a unity of this kind? Does it have this kind of interrelatedness? What actually produces the sense of unity in a culture belongs to the subject and not object. It is the unity of cultural awareness only.

### **The Western Tradition**

The basic experience with which mankind begins has its levels drawn from the physical, the vital and the rational. Elements from these three levels of experience continue to form the key-experience for cultural tradition. It is the sense of death that appears to be a dark window from beyond which something beckons, a shade that flits across the mind. The experience of the vital on the other hand is a sense of life. The contradiction between the sense of death and life was reconciled in rational terms. In the first rational theory of the reconciliation of life and death in the west, arose the dichotomy of God and Man. The distinction between them is a distinction in terms of power and being. God is a being unknown but endowed with power and will. Man, on the other hand, is also a being, with a limited power, endowed with will. Man does not succeed always. This basic contrast between Man and God continues throughout the history of western religion.

The relationship between Man and God oscillate between a number of possible modes including rebelliousness. Man's rebellion takes the form of either denying God or of seeking a way to equal him. How is man equal to God? By magic or by science. Nature appeared to the western man as a mystery and a challenge to be known and mastered. Since God was conceived as the creator and master of nature, God and nature became the creator and created aspects of a single reality. The rationalistic western tradition identifies the soul with the mind, and the mind with form. Even matter and behaviour are patterns of motion of which the reflection in logos is form. The Man-God dualism which is central to the tradition tends to lead to the Spirit-Matter dualism. Whether it is Aristotelian or scholastic or modern, it is all capable of being considered as a development of the same tendencies where what is analysed, what produces the form, is the sentence, the proposition. 'In the beginning was the word, the word was with God, the word was God'.

### **Usage and Definitions**

In its early uses in English, culture was associated with the "cultivation" of animals and crops and with religious worship, hence the word "cult". From the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries the term culture was applied to improvement of human mind and personal manners through learning. During this period, the term came to mean improvement of society as a whole and a synonym for "civilisation" (culture as the opposite of barbarism). With the rise of Romanticism the term designated spiritual development in contrast to material and infrastructural change. In late nineteenth century inflections of tradition and everyday life dimensions were added. Ideas like "folk culture" and "national culture" emerged around this time. The German concept of '*KULTUR*' broadly equated culture with civilisation and with individual or collective moral progress. Another usage of culture was championed by anthropologists in the beginning of twentieth century, and that remains central to the discipline till date. It asserts that "culture" is to be found everywhere and not just in the high arts or in western "civilisation". Raymond

Williams in his work '*Keywords*' beautifully sums up the historical shifts into three current usages.

- (1) To refer to the intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development of an individual, group or society.
- (2) To capture a range of intellectual and artistic activities and their products (film, art, theatre). In this usage culture is more or less synonymous with "the Arts".
- (3) To designate the entire way of life, activities, beliefs and customs of a people, group or society.

In their study of the meanings of "culture" the anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn collected number of academic definitions of culture and identified six main understandings.

- (1) Descriptive definitions which see culture as a comprehensive totality making up the sum of social life and listed various fields which make up culture (example, Tylor).
- (2) Historical definitions which tended to see culture as a heritage passed on over time through generations (example, Park and Burgess).
- (3) Normative definitions, where one form suggested culture as a way of life or rule (Wissler) and another form which emphasised the role of values without reference to behaviour (example, W.I. Thomas).
- (4) Psychological definitions which emphasised the role of culture as a problem solving device, allowing people to communicate, learn or fulfill material and emotional needs.
- (5) Structural definitions which pointed to the organised interrelation of different aspects of culture.
- (6) Genetic definitions defined culture in terms of how they came into being cultures as product of intergenerational transmission.

In the second half of twentieth century understandings of culture shifted in subtle ways. The core usage of the term could be understood in the following manner:

- (1) Culture needs to be understood as something distinctive from and more abstract to the material, technological and social structural realities.
- (2) Culture is to be understood as a patterned sphere of beliefs, values, symbols, signs and discourses.
- (3) Certain "autonomy of culture" is to be accepted and culture should not be perceived as a mere reflection of underlying economic forces, distributions of power or social structural needs.
- (4) The study of culture is not to be restricted to the Arts, but is to be understood to pervade all aspects and levels of social life.

### **Classical Views on Culture**

Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber represent 'classical' or 'modernist' interpretations of the role that culture plays in social life.

#### **(A) Durkheim:**

- (1) Culture bonds the individual to the wider group through the socialisation process.
- (2) Culture helps potentially disruptive individuality at bay.
- (3) Individual identity must be replaced by collective group identity for society to 'work' in a state of consensus.

(4) Collective identity and culture are necessary for social order to be established and maintained.

**(B) Karl Marx:**

(1) Culture, or ruling ideas and values, is produced by a ruling group in order to justify its dominance over others.

(2) Culture acts as a constraint on the individual, leading to social order and control.

(3) Individuals must realise their true class identity in order to break free from ruling-class oppression.

(4) Class consciousness and identity leads to revolutionary social change, and to the creation of a new social type and a new social culture.

**(C) Max Weber:**

(1) Societal evolution is haphazard and accidental.

(2) It is human action and interaction that cause social change and societal evolution.

(3) The outcome of this interaction can never be predicted in advance.

(4) Cultural ideas and values are independent of the economy and of how production is organised.

### **Perspectives and Approaches to the study of Culture**

1. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu is the most important figure in cultural theory and cultural research today. He has developed a number of concepts like field, habitus and cultural capital. Three kinds of capital determine social power and social inequality. Economic capital describes financial resources. Social capital is concerned about social ties that people can mobilise for their own advantage. Bourdieu's cultural capital is a concept that has several dimensions.

- Objective knowledge of the arts and culture
- Cultural tastes and preferences
- Formal qualifications
- Cultural skills and know-how
- The ability to be discriminating and to make distinctions between the "good" and "bad".

2. The field generally known as British cultural studies is one of the important influences on cultural theory. There is a primary interest in exploring culture as a site where power and resistance are played out. Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall are the luminaries. Graeme Turner has summed up the strengths of British Cultural Studies as:

- (1) A vigorous argument for the autonomy of culture.
- (2) Clear understanding of the links of meaning to power and social structure.
- (3) A theoretically rich, interdisciplinary approach for decoding texts and ideologies.
- (4) An ability to incorporate agency through an understanding of political strategy derived from Gramsci and ideas about reading from communications and literary theory.

3. It is often remarked that the structuralist movement arrived like a tidal wave in the 1950s, radically transforming the way we think about culture. Ferdinand de Saussure, a French linguist laid the foundations of structuralist approach to language as well as culture. According to him, language consisted of an acoustic image (words,

sounds) linked to concepts (thoughts or ideas). His method involved mapping out a language system at a given moment in time, instead of accounting for it as a historical product. He also insisted on the need to differentiate *langue* (language) from *parole* (speech). *Parole* referred to actual empirical instances of language use while *langue* was a structure or sign system that underpinned *parole*. In his *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure suggested that it is possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as a part of social life and called it *Semiology*. His perspective became a major approach to the analysis of culture. Developments in anthropology, psychoanalysis and cultural studies have established *Semiotics* as an innovative and powerful tradition that covers diverse disciplinary fields.

Claude Levi-Strauss is regarded as the leading structuralist theorist of culture. The major strength of his approach was his ability to map the autonomy of culture. He showed that cultural systems had their own rules and logic of operation. Ideas about *bricolage* and systems of transformation are also widely applied to cultural creativity and change in both western and non-western contexts. However, his critics point out that the ideas of power are curiously absent from his work. There is no understanding of the ways that mythologies might become institutionalised because they support certain interests. Another criticism is that Levi-Strauss sees culture as an abstraction that is able to exist without active human intervention. Agency seems to be denied with culture operating in a deterministic way. There is little space for strategy, agency or individual reflexivity in the Levi-Straussian universe.

The French intellectual and philosopher Roland Barthes was another pioneer of structuralist approaches to culture in 1950s. He argued for a close convergence between linguistics and cultural inquiry and heralded a movement toward post-structuralism. Barthes applied *Semiotics* to food system, rituals etc. He extended the signifier/signified to other fields through *Syntagm* and *System*. His *Mythologies* decode French everyday life and culture. According to Barthes, signs within culture are never innocent, but rather they are caught up in complex webs of ideological reproduction. A key aspect of *Mythologies* was the use of the distinction between *denotation* and *connotation*. Denotation referred to the liberal meaning and connotation to the extra meanings (mythological) that are layered on top. Barthes combined semiotics with critical theory. This legitimated the study of popular culture in academic circles. Barthes showed that even junk-culture activities like wrestling or mundane objects like the automobile were fair game for the analyst's pen. By 1970s his ideas influenced British Cultural Studies on advertising, news programming and the print media.

4. Michel Foucault in large part was responsible for constructing and institutionalising the post-structural model. Discourse is perhaps the central motif in Foucault's thinking. A discourse can be thought of as a way of describing, defining, classifying and thinking about people, things and even knowledge and abstract systems of thought. Discourses were never free of power relations. They arise out of the power/knowledge relationships between groups of people. Power was a fundamental and inescapable dimension of social life. Foucault introduced number of key ideas like micro-physics of power, capillary nature of power, fragmentary and incomplete nature of power, constructive nature of power and the concept of governmentality. Foucault sought to develop a history of the hidden and the silent in historical studies to understand those who are on the 'forgotten', 'silent' and 'powerless' side of these differences. His method is useful in creating cultural identities.

5. According to W.T. Anderson, the editor of the *Fontana Post-Modernism Reader*, postmodernity has occurred in four key areas of social life namely the concept of self has

become mouldable, morality has dissolved, there are no rules or set ways to behave in art and culture (no distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture) and the process of globalisation has had a dramatic effect on the world. The world appears a much smaller place due to global communications, world travel and tourism and the spread of ideas across the globe. There is an "epistemic suspicion" which is at the core of postmodernism. We should relentlessly interrogate our conceptual categories for evidence of power/knowledge. We should attempt to uncover hidden biases behind the concepts we use and the ways that they work to reproduce relationships of domination. We need to rethink our understanding of knowledge as something that is outside power. The attack on science and modernity has in turn led to an interest in the texts and representations through which knowledge claims are constructed. Knowledge is seen as the product of textual strategies and ways of writing. For many postmodernists this era is characterised by a shift away from production towards an economy, culture, identities and lifestyles based on consumption. Knowledge has become a commodity and a form of power rather than an absolute truth. Just as truth fragments into a plurality of truths, traditions have been replaced with pluralities of traditions. Search for dominant cultural meaning has been replaced by an individual search for meaning and lifestyle has become a matter of choice.

6. Twentieth century has witnessed lot of research on the production and reception of culture, most notably in mass communications, film, television studies and sociology. It is an approach which reflects contemporary inquiry. Despite pluralism in theoretical paradigms some common principles can also be identified in this perspective.

- (i) While accepting broader definitions of culture tangible products such as art, a book, a film or a broadcast could also be studied ("Recorded culture", "Cassette culture", "Cultural products", "Cultural object", etc.).
- (ii) A model derived from mass communications research sees culture as something similar to a message that is produced, transmitted and received. The primary aim of analysis is to assess the impact of cultural, technological and social factors.
- (iii) The central focus is on the concrete agency of actors and institutions rather than on abstract social forces.
- (iv) Cultural forms are not to be studied as abstractions but in their specific contexts.

The field of *consumption or reception culture* is a component of mass communication research. The American communications research tradition originated with Lazarsfeld. This tends to be positivistic in orientation and organised around concepts like transmission of information and opinion, particularly how voting behaviour is changed by viewing a political broadcast. This field is strongly influenced by the British Cultural Studies tradition and recognises the ability of the audiences to be critical of dominant ideologies and the match/mismatch between their readings and the ones that are intended. Television programmes, for example, are "texts" that have to be "decoded" by viewers who use a particular "horizon of expectations" in making sense of them. In reception culture there is greater emphasis on the autonomy of the individual to generate their own private meanings. A major concern is with pleasure, play and fantasy as responses to texts. David Morley, David Buckingham, Janice Radway and John Fiske are some of the prominent writers in this field.

Philip Smith has evaluated the production and reception cultures and summarises the positives as follows:

- (1) Causal links and processes can be clearly traced to specific institutions and actors.

- (2) Rigorous methodologies are often used, especially in comparative audience research.
- (3) Culture is treated something concrete rather than something reified and outside human agency.
- (4) Research objects tend to have clear research findings rather than open-ended theoretical speculations and assertions.

There are two common criticisms of the aforesaid area of cultural research. The content of cultural production tends to be accounted for with reference to the demands of the audiences, the censorship of gatekeepers, technological advances and so on. Such a position threatens the ability to theorise the autonomy of culture. Another concern is that the field tends to work with a limited definition of ‘culture’. The idea of culture refers to so much more than just ‘the arts’ or creative products as they are conventionally defined. It can also include everyday life, ideologies, rituals, discourses and so on. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, Robin Wagner Pacifici, Barry Schwartz and Robert Wathnow are some of the notable writers in the field of production and reception culture.

## **Conclusion**

Globalisation can be defined as ‘those processes, operating on a global scale, which cut across national boundaries, integrating and connecting communities and organisations in new space – time combinations making the world in reality and in experience more interconnected. The idea of cultural identities emerge on personal and group identities based on religion, gender, class, ethnicity and nationality. In modern times the cultural identity which has had the most important influence on the formation of subjects is the notion of national identity. The decline of the nation-state and the acceleration of globalisation process have certainly affected national allegiances and identities. Postmodernists claim that the process of globalisation can be seen as either liberating or constraining. The plurality of cultural meanings on offer due to globalisation means that individuals can ‘pick and mix’ from them and modify their identity in line with ever changing and expanding world. However, the rapid expansion of cultural influences might create uncertainty – it might lead to confusion, chaos and cultural disorder as well. Media critic McLuhan wrote as early as 1960s about the creation of a ‘global village’ and a ‘global culture’ based on new technology. Globalisation has raised questions about how individuals experience time and space, and how they experience and create culture and identity. Some see it as a source of liberation and creativity, others view it as presenting us with further risks and damage.

## **Long Questions:**

1. Examine the usage and definitions of the term culture by anthropologists.
2. What is culture according to classical sociology?
3. Discuss the various perspectives on the study of culture in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Suggested Readings:**

1. Warren Kidd, *Culture and Identity*, Palgrave, 2002.
2. Philip Smith, *Cultural Theory, An Introduction*, Blackwell, 2001.
3. Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies*, Routledge, 1996.
4. Diana Crane, *The Production of Culture*, Sage, 1992.

## LESSON 2A

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# PLURALITY IN INDIAN CULTURAL TRADITIONS

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### I

#### **Introduction:**

What is the cultural tradition of India? India is a land with rich and ancient heritage going back to 3000 BC. The Harappan Civilization along with the Mesopotamian Civilization and Egyptian Civilization stood as the earliest civilization of the humankind. India has the distinction of being one of the few countries of the world, along with China, to have a continuous tradition from ancient period. It is a synthesis of diverse cultures that have co existed over a period of time, with several different strands, sometimes meeting sometimes conflicting, sometimes merging, but continuously co-existing.

In recent times, 'culture' has become one of the most common words in all kinds of public discourse. 'Police culture', 'Welfare culture', 'Enterprise culture', 'Research culture', 'Youth culture', 'Media culture' and so on. There seems to be no limit to its applicability in almost any context. Social groups may be differentiated from each other by their differing attitudes, beliefs, language, dress, manners, tastes in food, music or interior decoration, and a host of other features which comprise a way of life.

#### **Plurality of Indian Culture**

India offers a unique plurality of traditions. Among these the Brahminical concept of *dharma* which describes the duties of the individual has often been regarded as dominant because many rights merely follow from these duties. It is a basic question whether modern concepts of human rights interfere with traditional notions of *dharma*, because in the law books of the *Dharmashastras*, there is no equality before law or equal protection of law, since society has been arranged through a rigid system of social hierarchy based on caste. By its very nature, the caste system goes against respect for an individual's dignity. It has been called the 'duty-first value system of Indian culture' and reflects some of the principal differences between the political traditions of India and Europe. Unlike in Europe, man and society in India have been perceived as antagonistic to each other, while in western political philosophy the triangle of 'individual-society-state' functions as the key to the explanation of major developments.

However, as several studies on caste among the Indian Muslims have shown, while the influence of Hindu social norms on the Muslims might partially explain the continued salience of caste among them, it does not fully explain how the Muslims of the region came to be stratified on the basis of caste in the first place. It also ignores the role of sections of the *ulama*, scholars of Islamic jurisprudence, in providing religious legitimacy to caste with the help of the concept of *kafa'a*.



The caste system was described in the *Rig Veda*, an ancient Brahmical text, as a social order intended to maintain harmony in society. It divides people into four main *varnas*, but there also are those outside the system, the "untouchables" (*Avarnas*). Though discrimination based on caste has been outlawed since India's constitution was adopted in 1950, the practice still pervades society.

Caste, which was a matter of vital importance to the Vedic Brahmins of India, was one of utter indifference to the Buddha, who strongly condemned the debasing caste system. In his Order of Monks all castes unite as do the rivers in the sea. They lose their former names, castes, and clans, and become known as members of one community, the *Sangha*.

Like a lot of other countries in the world at the turn of the century, India seems to be confronted with a double challenge. From the outside it is the multifarious and multidimensional process called globalization; from within we witness developments of disintegration called ethno-nationalism or religious fundamentalism. Both are interlinked, both tend to have a wide range of implications, and both might undermine the traditional concept of the nation-state. During the last decade, crises symptoms in India have multiplied. Many social (particularly caste) and religious conflicts present a threat to secularism and democracy. Thus, many questions about India's political identity have to be posed or reformulated again and possible new answers have to be considered. Since a dialogue by its very nature has to be an open-ended process, it was not expected that the contributions to be discussed at the workshop should consider all relevant aspects of or come up with answers in a strong logical sequence. Instead, the idea was that they should be able to raise questions that have specific political consequences and social implications and indicate possible directions along which answers could be found. Such eclecticism, a necessary part of a dialogic process, has been responsible for a degree of tentativeness regarding both the concepts used and the conclusions pressed in the analyses.

India is a vast country with many languages, religions and ways of life. The manner of living, dress, habits and customs in the cold Himalayan region is different from the hot and humid south India. The difference in language has been the basis of growth of varied literature in the different parts of the country. India seems to be an epitome of the world, in that it is a mixture of many ethnological groups, such as Aryan, Dravidian and Mongolian. Yet, it is amazing to see the wonderful unity of India under this superficial diversity. Thousands of years of living together have knit us into a large cultural unit. More than a thousand years ago, Sri Sankara demonstrated the unity of India by founding centres of learning in the four borders of India—Badrinath in the north, Sringeri in the south, Dwaraka in the west and Puri in the east. Even today the priest who performs *puja* in Badrinath is a South Indian who comes from near Cape Comorin, and those who offer worship at Rameshwaram are from the north.

The population of India as per 2001 Census comprises of Hindu (80.5 %), Muslims (13.4%) Christians (2.3 %), Sikhs (1.9 %), Buddhists (0.8 %), Jains (0.4 %), and other communities (0.6 %). With India's population now at one billion, this means substantial numbers in each category. India's states vary as to the degree of religious diversity. Kerala, for example, is one of India's most diverse states. Its population is Hindu (57%), Muslim (23%) and Christian (19%). Jammu and Kashmir state is predominantly Muslim, but it also has a very large Buddhist population in its Ladakh region. Punjab has a large population of Sikhs..

Christians are a majority in Mizoram (85%), Meghalaya (64%), and Nagaland (87%). About a quarter of the population is Muslim in Assam (28%) and West Bengal (24%). The

highest percentage of Buddhists live in Sikkim (27%) and in Arunachal Pradesh (13%). A small proportion of the population belongs to the tribes, which worship spirits in nature, such as Arunachal Pradesh's *Donyi Polo*, focused on worship of the sun and moon.

### **Plurality in Religion:**

One of the typical characteristics of Indian culture was its diversity, syncretization and synthesis which could also be seen in the area of Indian religion. There is a popular notion that India's ancient religion( or religions) was Hinduism ( actually Vedic Brahmanism) and it claims a special connection with texts such as the *Vedas*, the *Dharmashastras*, and the *Puranas* etc. During the period of epics and the *Puranas* which date to the Gupta era, the religion came to be called Hinduism. Hinduism was not a monolithic religion, but more a labyrinth, criss-crossed at different layers and at different regions, sometimes maintaining their distinctiveness and at other times giving the impression of merging, to present a unified religion. This intense syncretization of the local religions of India had first come to be grouped together and termed Hinduism by the census enumerators in 1891 onwards, when they had sought to identify the varied religious practices of India, which could not be termed Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Muslim, Christian or Zoroastrian..

Jainism and Buddhism emerged during the period of the *Upanishads*. They posed a great challenge to Brahmanism. The appeal, the personality and the sincerity of Mahavira and the Buddha had a strong impact on the people of India. Their teachings centered on a way of life and an inner experience, rather than on sacrifice. With the decline of Buddhism, Saivism and Vaisnavism emerge, reflecting the syncretism and synthesis of Brahmanic and local religions.

Islam is India's second largest religion. The branches of Sunni, Sh'ia, and Ismaili Islam have all found homes in India. At independence, many of British India's leading Muslim figures migrated to Pakistan. Muslim centers such as Hyderabad largely lost their elite subcultures. One can see Islamic influence in all the spheres of Indian culture.

Christianity is practiced by about 2.3 percent of India's population, about nineteen million in all. It is one of India's fastest-growing religions. The new Christians join a tradition that includes communities that go back almost to the founding of Christianity, the Syrian Christians. Conversion to Christianity can be observed in different parts of the sub-continent.

Sikhism is professed today by about sixteen million people in India. Twelve million in Punjab, about one million in Haryana, another half million in Delhi, and three-quarters of a million are in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. At independence, Punjab lost its western half to Pakistan. Sikhs are usually identified with their visible and distinctive turban, beard, and steel bangle, to those who cut their hair and dress in Western style.

Buddhists are less than 1 percent of the population (about 7 million in 2001). As recently as 1951 Buddhism seemed almost defunct in the land of its birth, with only 181,000 Buddhists counted in that year's census. Like Christianity, Buddhism due to its simplicity has developed a mass appeal among Dalits, which has let them to embrace Buddhism in increasing number since 1950. The resettlement of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, and refugee Tibetans in India has raised Buddhism's profile in the land of its birth. In 1956, B.R. Ambedkar led the conversion of half a million Dalits to Buddhism by receiving initiation from the hands of the senior Buddhist teacher in India. Buddhism's appeal to Ambedkar reflected three factors: it is

indigenous to India; it is a world religion; and its message is humanistic and egalitarian. With this great upheaval, Buddhism may truly be said to have revived in India and from being what A. L. Basham calls, - 'the cherished dream of a few' to have become once more 'the living hope of millions'.

India has today approximately 3.4 million Jains, mostly in western India: Maharashtra (about one million), Rajasthan (600,000), and Gujarat (500,000). Industry, commerce, finance, publishing, law, and education are areas where Jains have found distinction. Jainism has profoundly influenced aspects of Indian thought, from religion to Gandhi's concept of satyagraha, nonviolent resistance, etc.

### **Plurality in Languages**

There are eighteen official languages recognized by the Indian constitution and these are spoken in over 1600 dialects. India's official language is Hindi in the Devnagri script. However, English continues to be the official working language. For many educated Indians, English is virtually their first language, and for a great number of Indians who are multi-lingual, it will probably be the second. The country has a wide variety of local languages and in many cases the state boundaries have been drawn on linguistic lines. Besides Hindi and English, the other popular languages are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Oriya, Telugu and Urdu.

Some Indian languages have evolved from the Indo-European group of languages and these were the languages of the Aryans who invaded India. This set is known as the Indic group of languages. The other set of languages are Dravidian and are native to South India, though a distinct influence of Sanskrit and Hindi is evident in these languages. Most of the Indian languages have their own script and are spoken in the respective states along with English.

**Hindi** is spoken as a mother tongue by about 20 percent of the population, mainly in the area known as the Hindi belt comprising Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. It is the official language of the Indian Union.

Ancient oral **literatures** appear to have made the jump to written form sometime between the era of Ashoka and the Gupta Empire. The oldest readable texts are Ashokan edicts dated to the third century B.C. Knowledge of other texts relies on scholarly reconstructions and comparison with sources such as coins, archaeological sites, and art. Two north Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, took their literary form around the fourth century A.D. Ilanko Atikal's south Indian epic *Silappadikaram* ("The Jeweled Anklet") represents an important independent tradition. Playwrights such as Kalidasa produced enduring works such as *Meghaduta* ("The Cloud Messenger") and *Shakuntala*, named for its heroine. A third favorite play was *Mrcchakatika* ("The Little Clay Cart"), attributed to King Shudraka. This is the story of a poor Brahman merchant who falls in love with a noble courtesan. Popular literature includes the animal tales of the *Panchatantra* and the Buddhist *Jataka* tales. The enduring appeal is seen in retellings, such as the 1980s television series of the two north Indian epics, comic book versions, and websites.

A movement away from Sanskrit to vernacular languages emerged, stimulated by the development of bhakti traditions, which featured songs and poems celebrating the individual's longing for union with the deity. Bhakti movements emerged first in south India, and then moved

north. Tamil poets also created a rich variety of secular poetry. The ninth through twelfth centuries were significant for the development of the Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada languages. In Karnataka, tenth- through twelfth-century poets developed a form of free verse. Development of regional languages intensified in the thirteenth through eighteenth centuries. Bhakti literatures continued to develop. The interaction with Islam—now also developing its distinctive cultural focus within India— intensified this process. A counterpart to the bhakti movements, which emphasized the common nature of all humans and religions, was the elaboration of institutions of sacred kingship in Hindu-ruled zones of south and eastern India. These emphasized hierarchy and relied upon ritual specialists who sustained Sanskrit traditions.

The Bhakti poets include Guru Nanak (1469-1539), founder of the Sikh religion; Sur Das (ca. 1483-1563); Meera Bai (ca. 1516-1546); Kabir (1440-1518); and Tulsi Das (1532-1623), whose works have been the most influential. Sur Das composed in Braj Bhasha, a form of Hindi associated with Mathura and devotion to Krishna. Little is known of the historical Meera Bai beyond her status as a Rajput princess. Meera Bai abandoned her earthly husband to devote her life to adoration of Krishna, who she felt was her true husband. Her songs passed down in medieval Hindi, Rajasthani, and Gujarati. Indo-Islamic genres also developed. One genre tells of a hero's adventures. Highest acclaim was reserved for the poetic Urdu-language form called a *ghazal*. Poets developed this to a high art, using a simple basic structure of a sequence of two-line rhyming couplets with internal meter and alliteration. The *ghazal* genre expanded to encompass diverse themes ranging from love to social protest.

The first important Indo-Islamic poet was Khusrau, the pen name for Amir Dehlavi (1253-1325). All the Indo-Persian poets, including Mughal emperors, used pen names. The last emperor Bahadur Shah (1775-1862), composed under the pen name Zafar (Victory). The two most distinguished poets wrote virtually at the end of the Mughal period: Mir (Mir Taqi, ca. 1722-1810) and Ghalib (Mirza Asadullah Khan, 1797-1869), whose career as poet laureate to the last Mughal emperor was interrupted by the failed rebellion of 1857. In the early nineteenth century, Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) established vernacular language presses and translated Sanskrit texts into Bengali and English. Indian authors began to develop the novel. In Bengal, Bankimchandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) published several historical romances such as *Anandmath* ("The Abbey of Bliss" [1882]), about the 1779 Sanyasi rebellion in Bengal. Novelists working in Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, and Hindi produced works on themes ranging from military adventures to romances and detective stories. The most renowned nineteenth-century novel is the Urdu language *Umrao Jan Ada* (1899), by Mira Muhammad Hade Rosa (1857-1931). This is the tale of a Lucknow courtesan caught up in the tumultuous months of 1857, and of her life in the revolt's aftermath.

The failed rebellion had the most telling impact on the poets who had been attached to the Indo-Islamic courts. The famous poet Ghazi (1797-1869) lost both friends and patronage. Libraries and important collections of poetry were destroyed. This sense of a lost world is evident too in the works of Urdu poets such as Azad (1830-1910) and Hali (1837-1914). Another response to this crisis of Urdu-language arts and the Indo-Islamic subculture arose as Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) created the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh in 1875. Efforts to revitalize intellectual life included founding literary journals, and establishing poetry and writing prose. Modern Indian writing received Western attention when Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was awarded the 1913 Nobel Prize for literature. His most acclaimed work

*Gitanjali*, "Song Offerings," published first in 1909 in Bengali and then in English in 1912, affirms life and trust.

Modern Hindi began its development in forms such as the novel, particularly the works of Premchand (1881-1936).<sup>21</sup> His style was social realism and his field was village life, seen in works such as *Godan* ("The Gift of a Cow" [1936]). The generation of writers born as the nineteenth century turned to the twentieth century wrote of social concerns such as in the work of Mulk Raj Anand (b. 1905), particularly his *Untouchable* (1935), which tells of a day in the life of an outcaste sweeper.

### **Plurality in Society**

Society is the very basis of our Indian culture. It centered around the *Varna* system, consisting of the *Brahmanas*, *Kashtriyas*, *Vaisyas* and *Sudras*. There are also many outcastes and untouchables in Indian society. Social hierarchy is most deep-rooted in India's civilization. The caste system has long been close to the heart of Hinduism, and even such enlightened Hindu reformers as Mahatma Gandhi never dared to attack it. Indeed, Gandhi insisted that caste was but a natural reflection of human differences. Some people were "born" to preach, others to fight, still others to handle money, or do strenuous manual labor, even as men and women were endowed with different natural functions. Modern Indians insist that freedom put an end to caste, even as a constitutional amendment abolished untouchability, but Brahmanic "purity" and "impurity" remain the polar stars of India's social hierarchy. Fears of pollution, carried to their ultimate extreme, gave birth to the dreadful outcaste group called "Untouchable," who emerged as the lowliest members of Hindu society. Traditional caste and class patterns have changed considerably over the past century and half, under the impact first of Western modernity, then of independent Indian modernity. Article 17 of India's Constitution has, fortunately, abolished untouchability since 1950, explicitly forbidding its practice "in any form." Deep rooted, irrational prejudice, however, dies slowly. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), who chaired the committee that drafted India's Constitution, was a British Barrister, who received his Ph.D. from Columbia University and served as Nehru's Minister for Law. Ambedkar was so bitterly disappointed toward the end of his life, that he embraced Buddhism. Millions of others who were born low-caste Hindus have been converting themselves to other faiths including Islam and Christianity.

Traditionally, untouchables have always performed services vital to "caste Hindus," including sweeping, disposal of carcasses, leatherwork, and menial services. Untouchability is abolished by law in modern India.

No institution in India is more important than the family. Family life is in many ways the heart of the caste system, since that is where caste values are taught and learnt, and where the way of life called "Hindu family" was something of a microcosm of ancient Indian society and remains to this day India's most vital social unit of continuity, the stuff that caste communities are made of, more important than the individual at one end of society's spectrum, or the nation at the other. For at least three thousand years, most north Indian families have been patriarchies, ruled by elder males whose word was law, and whose sons brought home brides to live jointly under their father's roof, within his domain. Work and its fruits, entertainment and its pleasures, were jointly shared by members of the extended Indian family, which usually embraced three generations, sometimes four. Globalization has affected the traditional family structure and values in many ways.

Ancient Indian law treated women as perpetual minors, requiring “protection,” first by their fathers, next by their husbands, and finally by their sons. In other words, women could never take care of themselves or live alone. Even prostitutes became “slaves of the god,” kept by temple Brahmans. Much has changed since then. Widows are no longer burnt, pre-adolescent girls are no longer forced to marry, one woman served as prime minister of India for more than a decade and a half, and more young Indian women now become doctors, scholars, and scientists. Matrilineal families appear to have been widespread throughout most of south India until quite recent times. Women in patriarchal Indian families are much less powerful.

## **Unity in Diversity**

Is there a unified Indian culture? Is it based on caste religion or region? Unity in diversity has always been the distinguishing feature of Indian culture. India’s cultural history of several thousand years shows that the subtle but strong thread of unity which runs through the infinite multiplicity of her life, was not woven by stress or pressure of power groups but the vision of seers, the vigil of saints, the speculation of philosophers and the imagination of poets and artists .

The basic concepts of unity and diversity of the manifold societies in India have never been looked into in a systematically satisfying manner. This may be due to the fact that ever since the discussion of a homogeneous nation state arose, the task to incorporate India’s heterogeneous society into the picture was fraught with immense dangers. Along with the construction of Indian nationality, however all democratic values had to meet the demand for national integration. Thus mobilizing power of a functioning mass democracy itself became the main agent to lead the Indian ‘diversity of diversities’ to a national ‘converging horizon’.

Language has posed a problem to all our political leaders. The late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, adopted a far-sighted and realistic policy in the matter. The main source of the trouble is that the regional languages are not being given full opportunities for development, between English on the one hand and the rising claims of Hindi on the other. It is not surprising that there should have been considerable apprehension that the regional languages, some of which can claim great antiquity and a well-developed literature, may continue to be neglected in free India, as they were in the British regime. The only way to assure these languages full scope for development is to make them media of education at all levels including the university. To meet the demand for integration the Constitution of India has recognized eighteen official languages.

The word caste is not a word that is indigenous to India. It originates in the Portuguese word *casta* which means race, breed or lineage. The phenomenon of caste has probably aroused more controversy than any other aspect of Indian life and thought. Susan Bayly’s cogent and sophisticated analysis explores the emergence of the ideas, experiences and practices which gave rise to the so-called ‘caste society’ from the pre-colonial period to the end of the twentieth century. Using an historical and anthropological approach, she frames her analysis within the context of India’s dynamic economic and social order, interpreting caste not as an essence of Indian culture and civilization, but rather as a contingent and variable response to the changes that occurred in the subcontinent’s political landscape through the colonial conquest. The idea of caste in relation to Western and Indian ‘orientalist’ thought is also explored. Most studies of caste in India deal with the classical Hindu caste system or with its present forms among the Hindus. Since caste is the basis of the Hindu social order and is written into the Brahminical texts, studies of caste have been largely Hindu-centric. Following from this, the existence of

caste-like features among non-Hindu, including Muslim, communities in India is thus generally seen as a result of the cultural influence on these communities of their Hindu neighbours or of Hinduism itself. This claim is based on the untenable assumption of a once pure, radically egalitarian Muslim community in India later coming under the influence of Hinduism.

India being the largest democracy in the world with a civilization more than five thousand years old boasts of multiple cultural origins. The cultural origins of the Indian subcontinent can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilizations, the remains of which are cherished even today. Since the late 18th century India was under the influence of the British Empire until 15th August 1947 the day when India gained independence. India is a land of diverse cultures, religions and communities. There is great diversity in our traditions, manners, habits, tastes and customs. Each and every region of the country portrays different customs and traditions. But though we speak different languages yet we are all Indians. 'Unity in Diversity' has been the distinctive feature of our culture. As history tells us that there has been active participation from people of different caste and religion.

## **Conclusion**

India at present is facing many problems. The biggest of these is the problem of communalism and terrorism. In fact, it is the biggest threat to humanity and to the unity and integrity of the country. The gender inequality is another major social issue causing concern in the Indian society. The Indian society is highly prejudiced against the female gender. Basically a male dominated society, decision making at family and political level is almost single handedly handled by the men. Customs such as dowry are worsening the process of subjugating women in the society. Of late, with social awareness about women's vital role in the development of a community or the country, there has been a change in the perception of gender equations in favor of women. Education of women, giving the women a greater say in decision making in the family and the governance are emphasized. In spite of significant leaps made by India in the economic front, poverty is still a dominant social reality. A majority of the population of India lives in utter poverty without access to health care, housing, drinking water and education. Major policy change has to be enforced to better the lives of these millions souls if India is to become a truly desirable place to live in. Education is still a privilege in this country. Providing Primary education has been the motto of the government. Our efforts have yet to pay the desired results in this direction. Lack of education is the primary obstacle to the nation's development. India should educate the masses if its hope of becoming the global knowledge superpower is to become a reality.

We must also clearly understand that it is not 'cultural integration' that we are looking for. Cultural variations/pluralism will continue to exist and in no event should these be suppressed; nothing can be more dangerous for the well-being of the country. The issue of the deepening of national consciousness can be fostered by two programmes: (i) the understanding of our multifaceted cultural heritage, and (ii) the creation of a strong driving faith in a great future for our nation. The first could be promoted by well-organized teaching of the languages and literatures, philosophy, religions and history of India, and by introducing the students to Indian architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance and drama in its various phases.

For cultivating democratic values, special emphasis has to be laid on the development of qualities such as a scientific temper of mind, tolerance, respect for the culture of other religions

and regional groups, etc. These will enable us to adopt democracy, not only as a form of government, but also as a way of life.

**Long Questions:**

1. What are the cultural traditions of India?
2. Discuss the plurality in Indian Religion?
3. Indian society is a caste based society. Is it a factor which divides Indian society?
4. In what ways does the pluralism in Indian traditions enrich our culture?
5. Discuss how the multi-faceted Indian culture helps in unifying India?
6. Is there 'Unity in Diversity' in Indian culture?

**Suggested Readings:**

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4. Rasheeduddin Khan, (ed.) *Composite Culture of India and National Integration*, Shimla, 1987.
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## LESSON 2B

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### VARIETIES OF CULTURE

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#### **Introduction**

It is generally seen that the meaning which people attach to the word culture is good taste and refined manners. Culture can be defined as all the ways of life including **arts, beliefs and institutions** of a population which are passed down from generation to generation. Culture has been called "the way of life for an entire society." As such, it includes codes of **manners, dress, language, religion, rituals**, norms of behavior such as law and morality, and systems of belief as well as the art. India is a vast country with many languages, religions and ways of life. We have varieties of culture in the Indian subcontinent which are broadly divided and listed below:

#### **Tribal Culture**

A unit of socio-political organization consisting of a number of families, clans, or other groups who share a common ancestry and culture and among whom leadership is typically neither formalized nor permanent. There are many tribes in India and all over the world and each tribe has its own unique culture. Some tribes may even have cultural distinctions within their different clans. But some traits are generally common among most tribes. For instance, originally most tribes are animists. Most tribes have festivities which include dancing and singing. Most of these festivities involve consumption of alcoholic beverages. In spring, Manipuris, Santhals and Oraons celebrate Holi when they drench each other with colour. A very popular festival of the Manipur is the Gopi dance celebrating the love of Radha and Krishna.. Most tribal marriages are based on love matches, with the bridal couples getting to know each other before marriage. They have distinct Food and drink habits, Social rites, etc.

#### **Folk Culture**

Folk culture refers to the localized **lifestyle** of a **culture**. It is usually handed down through **oral traditions** necessitated by their linguistic, ecological and agricultural conditions, relating to a sense of **community**, and demonstrates the "old ways" over "novelty". Folk culture is quite often imbued with a sense of place. If its elements are copied, or removed to, a foreign locale, they will still carry strong connotations of their original place of creation. The folk have drawn on the rich traditions flowing from the *Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata* and the other major traditions. Folk traditions have been highly enriched by regional variations. The folk traditions act as source of education for their community. They use different means such as folk tales, parables, proverbs, folklores and songs and a vast area of knowledge embedded in the oral tradition from time immemorial, thus unraveling the inner pattern and motive of Indian society.

Folk traditions created for specific occasions like the birth of a child, marriage harvest, festivals, funeral and other sacrificial rituals possess certain common qualities shared by whole of India. The human need for the knowledge of history has increased in our contemporary world, and it is

generally accompanied by the nostalgic feeling of historical continuity with past generations. On the other hand, the past is usually idealized as an unsophisticated, simple "counter world" that is opposed to the neurotic and chaotic present day. Folklore traditions are perceived as the impersonation of that unaltered, stable and desirable "lost world" that are documented and deposited in archives in their authentic original form. The term 'folk song' appears to convey a somewhat rigid connotation, as it embraces the idea of relating to all the people comprising a 'folk'. Folk songs have never functioned the same way for everybody in a community, they have never been current among all people, but only in particular groups of internal interactive communication, whose structure may vary considerably. In different age, people sing different songs with different companions. In its primary function, folk song is a serving object in manifestation of community life. In its secondary function folk song is experienced as a triumphant object and a spectator experience is developed in the contemporary society the use of the song as a tool in life-shaping experiences has been replaced in many cases by a spectator experience.

### **High Culture and Popular Culture**

Popular culture is often understood as the culture of the mass of people or of subordinate classes. The contrast is with high culture, understood as the culture of educated elite. Popular culture, according to this view, is therefore Hollywood cinema, television, popular music and romantic fiction. High culture is French cinema, opera on television, classical music and poetry. High culture therefore refers to what are the greatest artistic and literary achievements of a society. Clearly what counts as the greatest is going to ultimately be a matter of values – judgments about what should or should not count as high culture. Low culture on the other hand refers to a wide variety of cultural themes that are characterized by the masses. At various times low cultural forms have included the cinema, certain forms of theatre, comic television, folksong and dance.

A simple example illustrates the difference between high and low culture: a painting of a nude woman hanging on the wall of a gallery is art (part of high culture) whereas a picture of a naked woman published in a mass circulation newspaper is certainly not art but the very opposite of art namely low culture. The justification for the distinction is found not in the cultural form itself (a picture of a gallery is man or women is much the same whatever medium it is presented in) but in the theoretical elaboration of that form. When a painting is hung in an art gallery what is being admired is the skill and composition the cultural references and representation. When a picture appears in a newspaper these are absent and all that is left is a titillation factor.

### **Courtly Culture**

Court is a social institution, focusing on its organization and structure, protocol and relational dynamics of its members. The origins of the courtly culture in India goes back to the Mauryan period (320-185 B.C.) but gained their first expression in terms of source materials under the post-Mauryan dynasties of northern and central India- the Sakas, Kusanas, Satvahanas, Guptas and other dynasties. The pattern and practices which emerged during these periods gradually developed and were rearticulated within the context of the new political order established by the Turkish Muslim rulers and later the Mughals. But courtly culture in medieval times arose gradually from post Asokan times.

The Culture of court had to play major role in the social units such as city, temple, bazaar, even the village, cultivation of aesthetic sensibility at court, jewellery, dress, cosmetics, palace architecture, garden food, erotic love, and social processes such as feudalism, state formation. But also the courtly culture was a complex set of practices which were formative and constitutive of political life in early medieval India.

## **Media Culture**

There is a significant relationship between culture and media. The very development of the field of media studies has been premised on an understanding of the centrality of the process of media consumption in contemporary social and cultural developments. The genesis of mass culture lies in western imperialism which used it to influence the developing countries. There is a danger for the developing countries' cultural sovereignty from the major disproportions in the mass media field between these countries and the leading western nations. Western nations produce the lions' share of television and radio programmes, and they own dozens of permanently operating communication satellites.

## **Film Culture**

Since pre Independence Day film culture has become one of the most pervasive features of Indian culture. Indian films are categorized into mythological, commercial/popular, art, historical/period films etc. Commercial films are generally associated with modern, non traditional life style and youth identify profoundly with film culture. Elders often deprecate film culture as vulgar, corrupting and immoral and attempt to discourage their children from viewing it. Many intellectuals charge that while entertaining the audience it distracts, manipulate and alienate them, obscuring class consciousness and mechanisms of dominance, and promoting a combination of neo-feudal values with the most reactionary aspects of bourgeois ideology. Dada Saheb Phalke was the father of Indian Cinema. Bombay Takies, Gemini films, Raj Films, Prithvi Films were the indoor studios where films were shot. Now-a-days shootings take place in outside locations. Himanshu Ray, Gurudutt, Raj Kapoor, Govind Nihlani etc are some of the prominent film makers. This is reflected in Manmohan Deesai's statement "I want people to forget their misery. I want to take them in the dream world where there is no poverty, where there are no beggars, where fate is kind and God is busy looking after his flock." Similar are the expressions of Subhash Ghai, David Dhawan etc. Indian cinema could also be regarded as one of the major culturally unifying features in Indian society. Hindi film dominates the cinema in north India and is screened throughout the country.

## **Television Culture**

As the most prominent domestic communications technology, one which constitutes the central entertainment and informational mode, Television occupies an extremely significant cultural space. As with the early radio and rising use of internet, television conflates the public and private spheres. The technological advancements are often seemed to have transformative (if not utopian) consequences for the TV audience. The new telemetric services, Video recorders and video discs will make a more personal use of the medium possible. The user will be able to decide what to watch and when to watch. It will be possible then to move beyond the fixed mass audience which has been characteristics of TV history. The growth and content of television programming in the second half of twentieth century all over the world especially India could be read as media imperialism. Television's rapid transmission of distant words and pictures has

challenged cultural practices that once emerged from particular geographic spaces. Indeed as the audience view television they now claim membership in several communities at once, the group of family and friends seated in the room, the entire community of national filtering televised images in ways unique to the national culture' and the international community of media cognoscenti, people around the world bound together in their knowledge of language, rhetoric and quirks of this or that programme or program genre. In the past four decades television has become a part of Indian popular imagination with images and ideas about television making their way into songs, paintings, cartoons, postcards, wood carvings, magazines and radio talk shows. The impact of television, particularly western programmes on the value and attitude of young people has been the source of much public discussion. Many regular male viewers often said that television shaped the attitudes and behaviours of young women too much, and women said that television swayed children too much. Many pointed towards changes in fashion a preference for western clothes, length of dresses emphasis on slimness, wearing of dreadlocks and use of rap/hip-hop language and posturing etc. as examples of how television influences young people. Every session of TV watching to which the whole of the Indian middle class is addicted turns out to be a study circle for acquisition of certain sort of ideology and cultural taste.

### **Cassette culture**

It refers to the trading of home-made audio cassettes, usually of rock or alternative music. The culture was in part an offshoot of the **mail art** movement of the 1970s and 1980s in both the **United States** and the **United Kingdom**. Several factors made the "cassette" boom occur: obviously the recording format of the cassette tape was important. However, it was the fact that bands did not need to go into expensive **recording studios** any longer. **Multi-track** recording equipment was becoming affordable, portable and of fairly high quality during the early 1980s. One could purchase a "four track" cassette recorder and get a reasonable sound at home. Therefore, due to inexpensive (or less expensive) recording and the ease of duplicating tape there was an increase of recording artists. Add to this the fact that **college radio** was coming into its own. For many years there were non-commercial college radio stations but now they had a new found freedom in format. With the influx of new music from sources other than the major record companies - and the quasi-major medium of college radio to lend support - the audio boom was on.

Changes have also been occurring in the market share of various genres. Although the music industry is still heavily dominated by the genre of Hindi film music, non-film music has significantly expanded its markets. This includes the genres of international music (primarily Western classical and popular music), classical Indian music (both north and south Indian traditions), devotional music, regional music (non-Hindi language music and musical traditions), and the new genre of Indipop.

### **Regional Culture**

Regional cultures of the world occur both by **nation** and **ethnic group** and more broadly, by larger regional variations. Similarities in culture often occur in geographically nearby peoples. Many regional cultures have been influenced by contact with others, such as by **colonization**, **trade**, **migration**, **mass media**, and **religion**. Culture is **dynamic** and changes over time. In doing

so, cultures absorb external influences and adjust to changing environments and **technologies**. Thus, culture is dependent on **communication**. Local cultures change rapidly with new communications and **transportation** technologies that allow for greater movement of people and ideas between cultures.

## **Fashion and Culture**

Since culture is understood as a whole way of life, it is obvious that fashion and style cannot be left out when we are talking about culture. It is integrated and powerful in people's everyday life. It has to be understood as a way to communicate within a system of institution, organization, groups, and conventions. People use fashion as a non verbal way to communicate through symbols, which generate meanings in everyday lives. Fashion provides people with a voice. Some groups use fashion as tools of expression to protest against social standards and signalize difference such as, military camouflage pants, emblem of royalty etc. The genesis of dress starts with first adornment of the upper palaeolithic age. In ancient times, evidences about clothes and garments come from artistic representations such as rock paintings, tomb reliefs, papyrus paintings or sculptures. From pre-historic to Graeco- Roman period, in early Indian and Middle Eastern and Far eastern regions, fashion was subject to cultural changes, which was accompanied by countless practical inventions and discoveries. Throughout the history of humankind, fashion relics have been used as a way to reconstruct the contemporary history and cultural manners of the period and the particular state of art.

## **Market Culture and Consumer Culture**

Market Culture and Consumer culture is premised upon the expansion of capitalist production which has given rise to a vast accumulation of material culture in the form of consumer goods and sites for purchase and consumption. This has been greeted as leading to greater egalitarianism and individual freedom by some and is regarded by others as increasing the capacity for ideological manipulations and seductive containment of population from some alternative set of better social relations. And also the emotional pleasure of consumptions, the dreams and desires which became celebrated in consumer culture imagery and particular sites of consumption generate aesthetic pleasures. Consumer Culture which penetrated western world has now intermingled with the Indian society. The household goods,cars, fashion goods etc. are very much popular every where in Indian household.

## **Culture and Globalization**

Both the words, culture and globalization are terms that acquired great visibility in the last two decades.

In general, “globalization” refers to a set of processes involving interaction between different peoples, institutions, communities and organizations across political and culturally constituted borders. It is a complex and historically dense set of processes which like culture itself, may be simultaneously conjunctive and entirely contradictory. It can be viewed from three angles:

1. As processes which are largely constituted around changes in the global capitalist economy as the latest phase in the history of imperialism. In Indian context, globalization is referred to as an actual process of integrating the Indian market to the world market.
2. Culture and globalization are key terms literally sprinkled in Media. There is globalization of cultural forms. Globalization is driven primarily by communications, media and cultural 'flows' (the notion of globalization is seen as new form of imperialism (Americanization), in which the US is the de facto world government. The globalization of cultural form is achieved notably through advertising, logo promotions and its connection with entertainment. The iconic figures of cultural industry get to be associated with products as icons of mass-selling leading consumer brands. Names of Amitabh Bachchan, Sachin Tendulkar and Shahrukh Khan and recently Mahender Singh Dhoni and Hritik Roshan become important from this perspective.
3. As a relatively new phenomenon, involving the formation of institutions that have transcended older political and organizational institutions like nation.
4. Globalization is articulated through various socially constituted formations- global, national, imperial, regional and local.

Globalization has deep roots in history, but is assuming a more formidable demeanor through the conduit of new media and information exchange processes which are drawing complex ideologies and meaning into greater contiguity and contest. Recent changes worldwide that can be encompassed under the broad rubric of globalization have brought about some osmosis between the specialist and popular concepts of culture

### **Oral Culture and Narratives**

Periodization analysis has tended to treat orality as a closed cultural system, beginning somewhere between 60,000 and 1, 00,000 years ago ending with the arrival of writing (4000 B.C) or movable print (Europe, A.D 1451). Oral culture may be characterized by pre-eminence of orality, though this fundamental language technology may have been supplemented by graphic and artistic forms, dance music, rituals and other meaning codes like smoke signals. In any case the beginning of the technology of language remains elusive since spoken language leaves no residue, no artifact for archaeological investigation. Language a complex system of communication is associated with the migration of humans across the globe and the imperatives of new forms of economy, environmental adjustments and social organizations.

Narratives concern the ways in which the stories of our culture have been put together. Narratives can inform versions of past and have the power to shape how the present might be understood in relation to them. In folk tales the same stories may be narrated in multiple ways. Social and historical events are shaped by discourses and these have often narrative dimensions. The traditional value system and the spiritual flight have been passed from one generation to another through oral and narrative traditions of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* etc. Narratives are common to all societies and are presented in many different forms such as oral, visual, filmic, television, written etc.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, the study of the varieties of culture in the Indian subcontinent help us to understand our multifaceted cultural heritage. With the passage of time, the cultures at different levels have felt the influences of changing environment and technologies. Recent global changes have brought about greater interaction between cultures leading to new forms.

## **Long Questions:**

1. Discuss the varieties of Culture.
2. Discuss the impact of globalization on Indian Culture.
3. Discuss briefly the difference between high culture and popular culture.
4. Differentiate between tribal culture and folk culture.
5. Discuss the tradition of courtly culture in Indian history.
6. Media culture often has great impact on the minds of people. Discuss.
7. Do you agree with the view that films, music cassettes and fashion are expressions of Indian culture?
8. What is Consumer culture?

## **Suggested Readings:**

1. B.P. Sinha, *India's Culture- The State, the Art and Beyond*, Oxford University Press, 1998.
2. Boris Erasov and Yogendra Singh, *The Sociology of Culture*, Delhi, 2006.
3. Toby Miller, *A Companion to Cultural Studies*, MA, USA, 2001, 2006.

## LESSON 2C

### SOCIAL CONTENT OF CULTURE

#### (Select Examples)

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#### (I)

#### **Mahabharata**

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Any epic literature generally documents a period which is prior to that of early recorded history. The epic is essentially a literary crystallisation of the heroic ideal. Epic literature is intrinsically a part of the oral tradition, composed, compiled and collated over many centuries from bardic fragments and enriched with interpolations of later times. The appeal of the epic varies in accordance with the particular society to which it relates at particular points in the text.

- (1) The narrative sections of the epic seem to depict societies of tribal chiefships moving towards the change to a state system with monarchy as the norm.
- (2) The didactic sections in contrast assume a highly stratified society with frequent reference to caste functions than lineage functions.
- (3) The epic involves the class and kingdoms of virtually the entire northern half of the subcontinent, but the core narrative focuses on the Kuru and Panchal territory of the upper doab.
- (4) Dominant archaeological culture of the region is PGW (Painted Grey Ware) succeeded by NBPW (Northern Black Polished Ware).
- (5) Genealogies as given in the epic provide a series of lineage patterns.
- (6) The central events revolve around conflict between collateral cousins on the succession to a political inheritance. The right of primogeniture was still in a state of flux.
- (7) The first big occasion for gift giving in the epic is the *rājasūya* sacrifice to be performed by Yudhishtira, described in *Sabhaparvan*.
- (8) Slaves are generally said to be those captured in war or born of slave mothers or reduced to slavery as a result of loss in gambling.
- (9) Epic society as depicted in the narrative sections has little use for the storing of wealth and there is a constant urging that it be distributed.
- (10) *Bhagavadgīta* is a conversation between two *kshatriyas* on the battlefield where one of the warriors, Krishna presenting himself as God incarnate, convinces the other warrior of the necessity of returning to the battle.
- (11) The marriage of Arjuna to Subhadra, a cross-cousin marriage, is much celebrated in the southern versions, while it is a problem to be dealt in northern versions.
- (12) The dicing scene is one of the pivotal scenes in the *Mahabharata*. At its conclusion the Pandavas have lost their kingdom. Draupadi has been molested and humiliated and war between the Kurus and Pandavas is inevitable.
- (13) Kunti, Madri and Gandhari's situations provide rich narratives on how people struggled with the ordeal of infertility during the epic age. Diversity of worldviews are possible on this issue then and even now.
- (14) There are many instances of challenges and responses in *Mahabharata*. The problem is political and sacrificial violence and a whole range of solutions have been offered from *Mimāmsa*'s denial that killing in sacrifice is harm, to *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga* position that householders should perform only vegetarian sacrifices to *Bhagavadgita*'s *Karmayoga*. The



mechanisms available in the tradition for addressing challenges is equally important. The ritual verbal contest allows the authors to articulate new questions and yet stay within the boundaries of older sacrificial discourse.

(15) The study of folklore and the living tradition of *Mahabharata* cults throw a new light on the relationship of the epic with its rural traditions prevalent in various parts of India.

## (II)

### Perceptions of Ajanta's Past

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Art forms are important constituents of any culture. Since the writings of scholars like James Fergusson, James Burgess, John Marshall and others, histories of Indian art have witnessed change over the years with the inclusion of more information, new discoveries and multi-dimensional perceptions and conceptualizations. Here, we would consider the visual and written creation of art remains at Ajanta, located on the Deccan plateau northeast of Bombay, to observe the social content what gives the past meaning. This was discovered by a British official in 1819. The architecture, sculpture and paintings here belong to different phases ranging from the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. (Satavahana period) to the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (Vakataka-Gupta period).

- (1) The paintings at Ajanta were produced in a social context. The paintings during each phase show unity of execution. In other words, these reflect the guild tradition which promoted work in one accepted style. The portrayal of animal and plant forms were created by the guild artists who were not monks or ascetics. So, these paintings are not merely religious art but rather symbolize a form of popular art.
- (2) Ajanta's paintings exhibit a distinctive style in its plasticity and fluidity of line, but these also show influence of paintings at Badami and Bagh.
- (3) Ajanta style had deep imprint on the later forms of popular art. For example, it became a source of inspiration for artists involved in the revival of a nationalist school of Indian art in Bengal in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since then, Ajanta's past emerged as a significant symbolic icon of the cultural politics of India. In the early 1950s, it was recognised as an international treasure and paintings and other remains were preserved with the assistance of UNESCO. The penetration of Ajanta's remains into popular culture can be seen in the form of postcards, posters, hotel decorations, etc till today.
- (4) Multiple styles at Ajanta suggest continuity and change alongwith interaction of different cultures during different phases of history. The paintings depict contemporary society or life, not only in the Deccan but also in other parts of India. For example, the scenes from the *Jatakas* (which portrays the conditions in North India) reflect life in northern India. This means that the artists came from all over India to work at Ajanta.
- (5) Royal patronage played important role in the developments at Ajanta. In this context, the remains indicate that the driving force behind the patronage was political and not religious. Thus, patronage was bound to be influenced by any political change.
- (6) The panels at Ajanta present the contrasts in the material culture between the Satavahana period and the Vakataka-Gupta period. The differences or transformation can be easily observed in the dress-pattern and ornaments worn by women and men in different phases. For example, the heavy anklets of the Satavahana period give way to very thin in the Vakataka-Gupta period. Similarly, in the Satavahana period, men covered the head with a turban which was wound round the head in tiers, but in the latter period the simple turban was replaced by very elaborate gem-studded crowns worn by kings and princes. However, the common men sported long hair with rolls and curls.

- (7) The colour of the garments also underwent change. In the Satavahana period, the garments were usually white while in the Vakataka-Gupta period these became colourful.
- (8) The change in life-style is also reflected in the use of other objects too. In the earlier period a common man used simple furniture and the royalty used a seat with side arms but without a back, which was influenced by the Roman empire. By the Gupta period, seats with a back but without arms became common as it allowed seating in Indian fashion with cross-legged posture. The royalty now used elaborate and adorned thrones with animal supports (*simhasana*) and a high back.
- (9) The arms and weapons too became advanced and effective with the passage of time. The Satavahana bow was a simple one with single curve. In the later period, the bow was made of two pieces of horn or wood and joined by a metal plate. The swords were rare in the earlier period but by the Gupta times they came to be used widely. Likewise, the light two-horse chariot was replaced by a four-horse vehicle with a box-like frame used by the royalty.
- (10) The layout of the dwellings are also shown differently. In cave 10, the Satavahana monastery is laid out with an open courtyard in the centre with rooms on all sides. This plan is similar to that of the rock-cut *viharas* in Western India dated from *circa* 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. to 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. The dwellings of the later period consist of a set of rooms with a *verandah* in the front.
- (11) Ajanta paintings, nevertheless depict the contemporary life observed by the artists. This can be clearly seen in the depiction of the Buddha and stories related with his life. They probably could not visualise the life in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. For example, the Buddha is always shown as wearing a robe. In cave 17, the Buddha is with a robe of a monk whereas Rahul, his son, is wearing shorts and a sleeved tunic. This suggests that the Indian artists generally lacked the perception of the past and while portraying the past events, they consciously painted contemporary life. This is very much true for secular themes, though in religious subjects they were guided by traditions and certain conventions. In the case of religious subjects the donors and canons restricted the creative freedom of the artists.

Thus, the paintings at Ajanta symbolize the mixing of past and present with both elements existing simultaneously.

### (III)

#### **Nataraja Cult and Social Content of Chidambaram Temple**

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- (1) Temple as a place of worship is conveyed by various terms like a house of God (*Devagriham*), residence of God (*Devalaya*) and the waiting place (*Mandiram*). Earlier temples have received attention due to their existence as grand monuments. The sacredness and structural significance of the temple is not to be measured in architectural terms only. Temple as a monument is not to be considered in isolation.
- (2) Temples can be treated as an object of study. They are expressions of society and culture. They played a vital role in the construction of the society. The temple inscriptions informed viewers about its multifarious significance. The patronage provided by dynastic kings helped to establish a special relationship between Kings and patronized temples, the endowments and grants made to the temples reveal the composition of the social groups existent in a particular society and also the element of contestation and

domination among the social groups are highlighted in temples. Temples therefore are the best evidence available on the important changes in the society and also provides answers to the cause of those changes.

- (3) Temple's role in moulding the society is illustrated by a case study of Chidambaram temple and its associated Nataraja cult. Chidambaram is mainly a temple city and a famous Saivite centre. The place of pilgrimage (*Tirtha*) in India boast a collection of legends and hymns known by the name *mahatmyam* which gives genesis of Chidambaram temple and evolution of Nataraja cult. The legends when meaningfully interpreted provide assistance in the re-construction of cultural traditions. The legends started accumulating when the Chola state started emerging. The Chola monarchs by patronizing Chidambaram temple legitimized their power. Patronage to Nataraja cult is reflective of change which occurred in the idea of kingship of Chola Empire. There was a shift from cult of royal linga to a Pan-India sanskritized God which offer Cholas a more universal legitimacy.

The performance of *ananda tandava* dance in Chidambaram for both Chola kings and *bhaktas* is indicative of the increasing importance of *bhakti* in society. With the *bhakti* movement the lower class reject the orthodox Brahman dominance.

The legend describing the dispute between Siva's consort Kali (representative of matriarchal society) and Siva himself (symbolizing patriarchal society) and Kali's defeat can be viewed in the context of subjugation of matriarchal society and dominance of patriarchy.

- (4) The temple traditions at Chidambaram show that all Chola Kings were devotees of Lord Nataraja who maintained intimate associations with Chidambaram. After Cholas, Pandyas played a central role in ritual patterns of Chidambaram, a role that no Chola or Pallava ruler had taken up inspite of the rulers close connection with the place. From fourteenth century onwards there was a rise in priestly power and political ties in Chidambaram weakened. The temple tradition of Chidambaram showed aspects of continuity to the tradition and political forces provides the basis for change to take place.
- (5) The temple inscriptions reveal different type of donors who endowed freely to the temple and which gave them an elevated status. The donors of twelfth century were members of royal family and local chieftains powerful both in terms of land and prestige. In thirteenth century there was a change in the social balance of the society. A new set of donors were brought to the forefront namely *Settis* who acted as grantors of gifts for the first time. The fourteenth century epigraph reveals the growing tendency of the royalty and royal officials to endow the temple.

Temple of Chidambaram provided an institutional base around which the society could re-build its sense of self understanding and social identity. Temple and its related activities are of significance for the entry it provides in the construction of social, cultural and religious dimensions of any sanctified place. Temple is a platform in the words of Burton Stein for "Interactions and Transactions" in a particular society.

(IV)  
**The Cult Of Gisu Daraz**

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The grave shrine of the famous Chisti saint Gisu Daraz at Gulbarga is treated as the most important object of Muslim devotion in the Deccan. Both as his *khankah* (residence, when he was alive) and the tomb-shrine, this cultural edifice has been casting profound social significance on the popular imagery within as well as outside the Deccani topography. Revered alike by all sections of society - Hindu-Muslim, rich-poor, powerful-weak, and thereby transgressing all forms of narrow and orthodox social barriers, this edifice bears the testimony of meteoric rise of Gisu Daraz (an outsider) to such an exalted position in the politico-spiritual and social life of Deccan.

**Making the cult of Gisu Daraz and its immortalisation**

- (1) Gisu could have been seen as an outsider within the spiritual and temporal circles of Deccan. But his elevation as the spiritual heir of Nizam-al-Din Auliya and Nasir-al Din Mahmud and his service as one of the most important spiritual leaders of Delhi, spanning for four decades brought immense popularity to him. His popularity followed the entire course of his travel from Delhi to Daulatabad and the prospect of his taking up the residence in the Bahmani kingdom, created excitement both in the ruling circles (including the sultan) and the common people. Therefore, he was not perceived in the Deccan as an outsider.
- (2) His *Khankah* at Gulbarga left imprints on the contemporary Deccani minds through its religious and spiritual activities organised on daily basis. Gisu's spiritual lectures and *Khankah's* musical sessions not only attracted full time spiritual seekers but also lay devotees who visited the saint seeking his blessings in their pursuit of more mundane goals.
- (3) The royal recognition and appreciation extended to the saint and his Khankah also helped strengthening of the cult of Gisu Daraz. The Bahmani state as an Indo-Muslim state under Firuz (A.D. 1397-1422) was at its political and cultural ascendancy. Gisu's association to it thus acted as one of the factors contributing to his rapid rise to such an exalted status.
- (4) The Khankah also assumed quasi-political role. Gisu, exercised spiritual dominion over Gulbarga. Firuz, naturally, sought the blessings of the saint to help secure his own claims to legitimate authority in the areas and over the people, he ruled. Timur's destruction of Delhi has fueled Firuz's ambition to make Gulbarga the most splendid of India's provincial capitals, a true successor to Delhi's former glory. In Gisu Daraj, he found the spiritual successor to India's most distinguished Sufi order and a scholar of formidable repute, who if adorned his court, his capital would become the true heir to the legacy of the recently ruined Delhi.
- (5) Gisu also contributed to the immortalization of his cult by deviating from the usual norm of spiritual succession. He had secured his position through his appointment by his predecessor Nasir-al-Din Mahmud. On his turn, he nominated one of his sons, Saiyid Ashgar as his spiritual successor and thereby converted the principle of succession

through appointment into the principle of hereditary succession. Naturally, He transformed himself into a cult.

- (6) The Bahmani sultan Ahmad also contributed to this process of immortalization. He constructed the magnificent mausoleum of Gisu and ever since the edifice began to attract flocks of people on daily basis, thereby converting the tomb into a shrine. The sultan also gave liberal land grants to Gisu's successors to enable them to up-keep themselves as well as the tomb shrine. This added economic strength to the cult.
- (7) Although some Sufi saints had arrived to Deccan prior to Gisu Daraj, such as Burhan al-Din Gharib, Shaikh Zain al-Din Shirazi, Shaikh Siraj al-Din Junaidi and others, Gisu contributed the most to the stabilization and indegenization of Indo-Muslim society and polity in Deccan. His career helped transform the Deccan from what had been an infidel land available for loot and plunder (as the Khaljis and early Tuglaqs of Delhi Sultanate had perceived), to legally inviolable abode of peace.
- (8) By the time of Muhammad Qasim Firishta (d. 1611), the famous Deccani chronicler, the cult of Gisu Daraj had firmly established itself. He quotes in his *Tarikh-i-Firishta* that a Deccani on being asked whom he considered the greater personage, the Prophet Muhammad or the Saiyids; the Deccani replied that although the Prophet was undoubtedly a great man, yet Saiyid Muhammad Gisu Deraj was a far superior order of being. The process of internalisation of an outsider in the Deccan and his immortalisation as a cult had been completed by that time, as it appears out of the above quote.

## (V)

### Cricket as a 'Cultural Object'

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The unifying role of cricket in a country of both physical and psychic divides has not been adequately studied. The breakdown of the early political synthesis is reflected in the social tension and rising aspiration of those classes which have been out of power structure for centuries. The politics of consensus has been replaced by identity politics. A new volatility is visible in the assertion by social groups from the bottom of the caste structure. India in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is desperately in search of an unifying symbol. Cricket is one such facilitator of integration.

(1) For the cricket loving Indian masses Ishant Sharma and Zaheer Khan are the he-men handing down death orders to adversaries around the cricket playing world.

(2) Cricket is to India what football has been to Latin America for long. In a society thwarted by bad governance, corruption and accumulating frustration, cricket takes the people to a make-believe world of fulfilment. In the victory of the team a fan experiences a success that has always eluded him. Cricketer has taken over from yesterday's Bollywood hero.

(3) Social scientists researching the larger meaning of cricket read Mohammad Azharuddin's 182 at Eden Gardens in 1993, as an important chapter in the social history of the game. Winning the Calcutta test against England is the most significant aspect of this happening.

(4) Brian Lara's 375 against England came in the backdrop of a social debate among the Carribean people about their cultural propensity caught as they are between America and Great

Britain. Lara came to embody the Island's old ties with England by a flash of his cricketering genius.

(5) Cricket has accommodated every social segment and reflected its hopes and ambition. It promoted Sachin Tendulkar (from a middle-class Brahmin family) and Vinod Kambli (a Dalit from Bhandi Bazaar) together. Both captured the nation's imagination and became folk-heroes.

## (VI)

### Reading the Film '*Lagaan*'

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The twentieth century has been the century of the moving image just as the nineteenth century of the still photograph. What particularly characterises film is motion and emotion. The Americans identified the key quality of the new medium and nicknamed films 'the movies' while the British called films 'the flicks' or the 'pictures'. Film studies developed out of English Literature and Cinema History out of the discipline of History. Both the fields come under cultural history in a wider sense. Film can be legitimately treated as a cultural object. *Lagaan*, is basically a film with a peasant hero. The following social content can be observed in this film.

(1) The composition of Team Champaner is representative of a mini India. You have the Hindu-Muslim-Sikh triad, people from various occupations and social settings (various castes) and a dalit as well.

(2) The cricket match itself is carefully constructed, the eleven plus boy Tipu and coach Elizabeth contribute to the win. Elizabeth brings in the Christian component.

(3) Three performances that turn the match are the leg-spinner's hatrick, the injured batsman's heroic innings and the captain's century with the last ball six. These feats were performed by the handicapped dalit Kachra, the Muslim Ismail and the peasant hero Bhuvan.

(4) Kachra's disability should be seen as the physical symbol of his social standing. Kachra, the dalit suffers a double handicap, physical and social.

(5) The struggle against the colonial oppressor is brought out through non-violence.

(6) The depiction of the *raja* as a closet nationalist conveys Gandhi's idea that the national movement should not extend to the Indian princely states.

(7) Unity of classes of the colonised against the coloniser is portrayed.

## LESSON 3A

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### (i) Sanskrit Kavya- Kalidasa's *Ritusamhara*

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#### **Introduction**

Kalidasa is one of the literary genius and great dramatist of our country as his dramas and poems are unparalleled and bring forth the scene in front of the eyes as we go on reading his works. He was the court-poet and one of the *navratna'* at the court of Chandragupta Vikramaditya (357-413 A.D). His writings viz. *Meghdoot*, *Ritusamhara* (lyrics), *Raghuvamsa*, *Kumarasambhava* (epics); *Shakuntala*, *Malvikagnimitra*, *Vikramorvasiyam* and *Abhijnan Shakuntalam* (Plays), *Urvashi*, etc. are few which are the best and cannot be easily forgotten. His birthplace was probably somewhere in Malwa and from his glowing description of Ujjayini it appears that he was a resident of that city.

According to a tradition, he was an illiterate and after being rebuked by her learned wife, Kalidasa was said to have called the goddess Kali for help and was rewarded with a sudden and extraordinary gift of wit and poetic excellence; The word Kalidasa means the slave of goddess Kali. Kalidasa was a devoted worshipper of goddess Kali as well as of Lord Shiva. He seemed to have travelled a great deal throughout India and his graphic description of the Himalayan region supports it. He was well-versed in the *Vedas*, the philosophy of *Upanishads*, the *Puranas*, medicines, astrology and astronomy. According to Vincent Smith, Kalidasa's literary career extends over a period not less than thirty years.

So far as the writings of Kalidasa are concerned, the nature has everywhere played a significant role. Even *Ritusamhara*, the work of Kalidasa under study, contains brilliant scenes depicting the beauties of nature where the human feelings have been brought in full accord with the voice of nature. Erotic scenes are interspersed here and there and the poet has successfully interwoven the expression of human emotions with brilliant and graphically detailed pen picture of the nature.

#### **Ritusamhara**

*Ritusamhara* is much shorter when compared with his other works. It consists of 144 stanzas of various meters, describing the course of pastoral love, through the six seasons of Indian year. In order to understand clearly the six seasons of India vis-a-vis Gregorian months, a table is given below:

<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Ritu</b>	<b>Season</b>	<b>Hindu Months</b>	<b>Gregorian</b>
1.	Grishma	Summer	Jyestha to Ashadha	May - July
2.	Varsha	Rainy	Shravan to Bhadrapada	July - September
3.	Sharad	Autumn	Ashaviri to Kartik	September- Nov.
4.	Hemant	pre-Winter	Mrigashira to Pousa	Nov. - January
5.	Shishir	Winter	Magha to Phalguna	January - March
6.	Vasanta	Spring	Chaitra to Vaishakha	March-May

*Ritusamharam* (Description of the Seasons) - a work of Kalidasa must surely be regarded as a youthful composition as it is distinguished by rather exaggerated and overly exuberant depiction of nature. *Ritusamharam* where *Ritu* means season and *Samharam* means to kill, but, here it is the garland of seasons or medley of seasons, around a God called year. It is not annihilation of seasons as per wording - *samharam* - but here six seasons are the make up material for the presiding deity of Nature, namely Shiva-Parvati, the five faced God Shiva, whose five faces symbolizes with five subtle elements of creation. The work contains only one item - praise of the seasons and yet it has its own prominence in poetry. This work is also famous for his *upama* - upama Kalidasaya - simile, with its various shades like metaphor - condensed simile; pathetic fallacy, personal metaphor, etc.

In this mini-epic there are six chapters - each describing a season and it starts with *Grishma* (summer) season. In these different songs, the effects of the season on men, women, and animals and on nature like creepers, flowers, rivers and forests are described lucidly. Kalidasa starts with the description of summer as the heat is terrible and oppressive; the ladies removing the heavy clothes show a preference for the lighter ones; music is being resorted to and the traveler is not able to see through the clouds of dust raised by powerful winds. Along with these pictures, we have those of the deer running after the water and deceived by the 'sheet of blue sky; of the serpent resorting to the peacock's tail for shelter and forest fire playing havoc in the forest with the help of a friendly breeze.

The dry weather and the extreme heat condition makes the land extremely parched and thirsty elephants seeking water are not afraid of lions. The elephants, oxen and lions, scorched by fire have flocked together like friends, giving up hostilities and quickly emerging from grass, where they are tormented by fire. They rest by a river with broad sandy banks. Everyone yearns for a few drops of rain to soak the soil. "But even in the time of extreme heat, one gets joy through mangoes and the cool moonlit nights," writes Kalidasa, "and in some places a wonderful house with a water fountain, various kinds of jewels and juicy sandal - paste, charming mansion - terraces nicely redolent of perfumes, wine rippling with the breath of the mouths of sweethearts, music on a well-strung instruments, inflaming passions - the amorous enjoy these at nights in summer. Women allay the heat felt by their lovers, by round hips having silk - clothes and waist band having silk clothes, by their breasts having garlands and other ornaments and smeared with sandal-paste and by their hair fragrant with the cosmetics used in bathing."

Of all the seasons the *Varsa* (Rainy) has beauty of its own, satisfying all the five senses of man at the same time, hence, Kalidasa loves it in the extreme. Kalidasa welcomes the rainy



season in the following terms:

**Ahoy! The bewitching cloud moves like a wild elephant,  
And with fresh showers it captivates the hearts,  
And thunder lightening roars resonant like the beat of drums.  
Enthralling the lustful hearts with lovely splendour  
The lustrous cloud with his lightening standard  
Steps into the sky like an Emperor proud.  
Sweetheart, the rainy season has come.**

His another lyrics, the *Meghdoota* is mostly based upon the same material as in the *Ritusamhara* but to a great extent, more enlarged and polished par excellence. Thus the river appears as a woman in this poem, the *cataka* and the *balahaka* appear, the *abhisarikas* proceed in the light of the lightening in, and the blooming *kadamba* and the opening *ketaki* appear in; but everywhere one misses the exuberance of the *Meghdoota*. In one of the verses on the rainy season, Kalidasa writes: "very much frightened in their minds by lightening and the clouds thundering fiercely and deeply, women closely embrace in sleep their lovers, although they have (before) behaved themselves badly". In a verse of *Ritusamhara*, Kalidasa writes:

**The muddy rivers with enhanced vigour,  
Uprooting the trees from their banks,  
Go to their lover the Ocean with furious speed  
Like immodest wanton women.**

The *Sharad* (autumn) season comes next to the rainy season which is beautiful in appearance like a newly bride and the people look forward to celebrate festivals with cheers and joy. Kalidasa writes: "the earth is whitened by the Kase flowers; the nights by the moon, the water of the river by swans, the lake by lotuses, the forest region by the *saptacchada* trees bent with the burden of flowers and the grounds by the *malati*. Sweetheart! Sharad brightens the sequel." He further describes the beauty of the autumn seasons in another verse as: "the sky, from which clouds have disappeared, which is strewn with moon and stars, has the magnificent beauty of lakes, full of blooming lotuses, where the royal swans are sitting, which are adorned with water having the sheen of *markata* gems (emeralds)". The autumn remains pleasant but the afternoon can be hot, that is why, it is almost like a second summer. However, the weather changes and one can feel the nip in the air.

The *Hemant* (pre-winter) season shows the sudden nip in the air, the chilly winds in the morning and night and the biting cold at the end. In the words of Kalidasa, "the *Hemant* season arrives which is charming with crops and the appearance of new sprouts, in which the *lodhra* tree flowers, corn ripens, lotuses perish and snow falls". He further writes: "in this season the round bosoms of ladies with beautiful breasts are not (now) decked up by the charming pearl-strings (which are) white by the colour of sandal-paste, and which resemble snow, *kunda* flowers and the moon."

The *Shishir* (winter) season is more severe form of frost. The temperature drops really low and the people are seen wearing layers of clothes. Moreover, the severity of winter is not as

much as in the western countries. It only snows in the hilly region and the South India hardly experiences any winter. In this season, the earth is covered with clusters of grown up rice and sugarcane which is adorned with the cries of *krauncha* birds stationed in some places in which the feeling of love is exuberant. At the same time, the people resort to the use of the interior of the house with the windows closed, of fire, of the sun's rays, of thick garments and of youthful ladies. The people now do not enjoy nights cooled with the thick fall of dew and the rays of the moon, which are beautifully adorned by numerous pale stars. Kalidasa writes: "May this cold seasons always give you happiness, in which sugar-confections are plentiful, (which is) charming with sweet rice and sugarcane, in which there is much of sexual sports in which cupid becomes intense, (and which is), the cause of the heartache of those (who are) separated from (their) lovers."

The next comes the *Vasanta* (spring), the season of new life, with blooming flowers all around, charming mango-blossom and sweet music of bees. The *Vasanta* is popular for harvest festival celebrated in different parts of India and during it 'fragrant winds blow, evenings are pleasant and days delightful. On women's face having leafy,decorations and resembling golden lotuses, the drops of perspiration appear spread beautifully like the setting of pearls amidst gems. Kalidasa further writes: "Today cupid is variously stationed-tremulous in women's eye, languid with wine; pale in their cheeks; hard in (their) breasts; deep in (their) waists and plump in (their) lips". In another verse he lucidly explains the behavior of cuckoo and bee in the following terms: "The male cuckoo, intoxicated with the liquor of the juice of mango-blossoms kisses with passionate joy his mate; this humming bee in the lotus, too is doing agreeable and liked things for his beloved".

Kalidasa's love for nature is reflected from the following verse: "The young *atimukta* creepers whose love blossoms are sucked by intoxicated bees (and) whose tender sprouts are waved and bent by the gentle breeze, violently excite, when observed, the minds of lovers". He further explains the mental state of a traveler in this season in the following style: "Seeing the mango trees in blossom, the traveler, whose mental condition is distressed on account of the separation from his wife, shuts his eyes, weeps, grieves, close his nose with the hand and laments loudly". In the end, Kalidasa writes:

**Lovely blossoming mango groves are his lovely arrows,  
Kinsuka is the bow and black bees its string.  
Bright moon is his imperial canopy,  
And the spring breeze is mighty elephant.  
Kokils sing like minstrels,  
Behold ! He has conquered the worlds.  
May that victorious Cupid shower benefaction on all.**

## **Conclusion**

Thus, this exquisite little poem, in spite of its limitations, does give the assurance of greatness to come and in itself shows the sensitive mind of the poet, seeking life and beauty in

the outside universe eyeing man, animal and nature in one glance. The elegance of description cannot be expressed in few lines. *Ritusamhara* is a delightful read as Kalidasa is a poet par excellence of human love and nature. Prof. MacDonell praised *Ritusamhara* in unqualified terms: "Perhaps no other work of Kalidasa manifest so strikingly the poet's deep sympathy with nature, his keen power of observations and his skill in depicting an Indian landscape in vivid colour". M.R. Kale observes that the *Ritusamhara* has nothing to be compared with the passages from the *Raghuvamsa* or *Kumarasambhava* and one is more inclined to agree with Professor Ryder who says: "The seasons would neither add greatly to his reputation nor subtract from it".

### **Long Questions:**

1. Write a brief essay on the *Ritusamhara*.
2. Discuss the salient features of the different seasons of India as described by Kalidasa in his work

*Ritusamhara*.

### **Suggested Readings:**

1. B.S. Upadhyaya, *India in Kalidasa*.
2. M.R. Kale, (tr.) *Ritusamhara of Kalidas*, Bhartiya Kala Prakashan, Delhi, 2007.
3. R.S. Pandit (tr.), *Ritusamhara*, General Books, 1947.
4. T.G. Mainkar, *Kalidasa: His Art and Thought*, 1971.

## LESSON 3A

### (II) THE PRAKRIT LITERATURE - GATHA SAPTASATI

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#### **Introduction**

When the hymns of *Rig Veda* were composed, the ordinary tribesmen spoke a simpler language more closely a kin to classical Sanskrit. The *Veda* itself gives the evidence of dialectal differences. By the time of the Buddha (6<sup>th</sup> c.B.C.) the masses were speaking languages which were much simpler than Sanskrit. These were Prakrits which developed in three distinct stages. The Early Stage (600 to 200B.C.) comprised Pali which became the language of the *Sthaviravadin* Buddhists; the Prakrit of the Asokan edicts and the oldest Jain *Sutras* and the Prakrit of the early Sanskrit dramas like those of Ashvaghosa. The middle stage (200 B.C. to 600 A.D.) comprised Prakrit passages in the classical Sanskrit dramas, works like Hala's *Sattasai* and Gunadhya's *Brihatkatha* and the Prakrit grammars. These Prakrits include *Sauraseni*, spoken originally in the western part of modern Uttar Pradesh; *Magadhi*, the official language of the Mauryan court and the edicts of Asoka; *Maharastri*, spoken in the north-western Deccan and the non-canonical language of the *Svetambara* Jains and Jain *Ardha-Magadhi* which became the sacred language of the Jains. The third stage (A.D. 600 to 1000) comprises *Apabhramsha*, a vernacular of Western India which achieved literary form in the middle Ages and was used by Jain writers in Gujarat and Rajasthan for the composition of poetry. A similar degenerate Prakrit was used in Bengal by a few late Buddhist poets, and is the ancestor of modern Bengali.

#### **Gatha Saptasati**

The book *Gahasattasai* in Prakrit, is more popularly known as *Gatha Saptasati* in Sanskrit. It is also known as *Gahakosa* which is a collection of 100 *Maharashtri* Prakrit lyric and exotic verses par excellence. Since Prakrit had been a dialect of the masses, it was supposed to have a better emotional appeal than Sanskrit. This work contains the best selected lyrical poems, independent, unconnected with each other, full of meaning, abounding in suggestive or figurative speech rather than in *laksana* and *abhidha*, with depth of emotional feelings. It is not a small wonder that Prakrit poetic composition had reached such a peak in the first or second century A.D.

The compiler of *Gahasattasai* is Hala, the *Kavi-vatsala* (literally 'affectionate' towards the poet), who was the lord of Kuntala *janapada*. The "Country of Kuntala" represents the south-western region of Hyderabad of modern Andhra Pradesh. In a *gatha* of his own composition, the *Satavahana* king, Hala states that he has composed, rather collected, only 700 *gathas* adorned with *alankars* (figure of speech) out of ten millions of such verses. This book provides much information about the history and culture of Andhra and Maharashtra people during, before and after his rule especially in the field of social, economic and religious life of the rural people. But *Uttarapatha* (generally North India), the Himalayas and the Ganga are not mentioned in any of the *gathas*. The river Yamuna is mentioned only once but the Vindhya ranges have been mentioned time and again. Of the rivers of the Deccan, the Goda or Godavari, the Narmada or Reva, the Tapi or Tapti are mentioned in different contexts. Hala, the sixteenth ruler of the

Satavahana line reigned sometime during the first half of 1<sup>st</sup> c.A.D. So, the social picture of culture and civilization which was revealed in the *Gatha Saptasati* may be regarded as relating approximately between 2<sup>nd</sup> c.B.C. and 2nd c. A.D.

Since *Gatha Saptasati* is a compilation, we find the names of several poets, men and women. Among male poets, we have Rairaj (Ratiraja), Mianga (Mrganka), Hala, Pavarasena (Pravarasena), Kesava (Kesava), Gunadhya, Anirudha, Maarande (Makaranda), Kumarila, Candasami (Chandraswamin), Avantivamma (Avantivarman), Hariuddha (Harivrdha), Nandiuddh (Nandivrdha), Pottisa, Bhoja, etc. Among female poets mention is made of Reva, Sasippaha (Sasiprabha), Roha, Girisuta, Gunamugdha and others. The popularity of the love songs of this anthology is revealed by the fact that it had at least six versions and eighteen commentaries. Jain authors also have commented on it. The commentators have compared the verses of *Gatha Saptasati* with the *dohas* of Bihari Satsai. In this anthology of Prakrit love lyrics, the tender and sensuous feelings are expressed in female voice. The women are chaste, virtuous and faithful or else unrestrained (*Svairini*), faithless, mistresses and courtesans. They talk about landscapes, rain, clouds, peacock dance, water springs, the Vindhya, the Sahyadri, the Narmada and the Goda (Godavari), which indicate the locality of the compositions of most of the verses. The anthology is a rich collection of maxims and popular sayings and throws good deal of light on popular customs and conventions of the contemporary society. On the whole the poems centre on separations and parting, about grievances and resentment and above all supreme love - depicted in a poetic and artistic manner.

Hala's *Gahasattasai*, Amaru's *Amarusataka* and Govardhan's *Aryasaptasati* are the most important lyrical works, depicting tender and delicate sentiments of love in Prakrit and Sanskrit. These works have exercised considerable influence on later poets like Biharilal who has composed his *Dohachhanda* or *Aka-grantha* (lyrical poem) named *Satsai* having 700 stanzas in Braj dialect. Many of his stanzas are based on the *Gahasattasai* of Hala.

Some of the selected *gathas* (stanzas) where a sentiment is expressed in a few words, filled with ideas, saturated with intense emotion are as follows:

No suffering is called worse than the separation of lover and beloved, especially when the lover goes away. A woman, whose husband has gone far away from home, suffers from mental distress generated by love. It is known as *prostita - patikii* in the Sanskrit literature.

1. Under the pretext that the girl had been bitten by a scorpion, she was led in presence of her husband to the house of her paramour - physician having been held by the hands of her skilful confidantes, while she was singing round the pair of her hands.
2. In separation she is painful as poison and in union she is very much full of nectar. Has the creator really made her with both these things in equal proportion?
3. O mother-in-law! The beloved person is ever-charming, as he is pleasant to the eyes when seen, endearing to the mind when thought of, and agreeable to the ears when talked of.
4. The wanton woman has so tamed the dog with food and drink that it (the dog) welcomes her paramour, (but) barks at the owner of the house (her husband) when he comes in.
5. The heroine tries to reach her husband by writing a letter, but she was unable to hold the pen even to write the word *Svasti* (used in expressing one's approbation in the beginning of letters), let alone write the letters.

6. The heroine is narrating her state of mind to a friend, saying: 'The writing pen being held in wavering perspired hand, stumbled, O dear friend, I was unable to write even the word *Svasti*, how could I write the whole letter.
7. Ultimately, when all her hopes were beguiled, giving her expression of her feeling of anguish on account of love, the maiden 'begs of the moon to touch her with the same rays, she has touched her lover travelling in a distant land. '
8. Somehow the time passes. It is time for her husband to return. "But what shall I do? How shall I behave?" She ponders. "Shall I show my anger?" and "will he try to pacify me?" She does not know how to receive him. When he actually arrived, it was an occasion of rejoicing, yet she hesitated to adorn herself with festal dress as she never wanted to embitter the grief of the neighbouring lady whose husband was still on journey.
9. A lady is talking to a guest: O Guest! Since you are suffering from night blindness, mark properly during daylight that my mother-in-law sleeps here; by negligence you may not fall on our cot. Here the lady is warning the guest not to come near her bed as her mother-in-law would be sleeping fast nearby. But actually she is inviting him to come to her bed in the night.
10. As the two breasts of hunter's wife gradually develop, (the following) five things (begin to) wither her waist, her beloved one, her relatives, the village youths and her co-wives.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, the *Gatha Saptasati*, which is full of lyric and erotic verses was the first and foremost pioneering work in Prakrit which paved the way for the development of the Prakrit literature in different parts of India. This literary work compiled by Hala, the Satavahana king, provides significant facts regarding the socio-economic and religious life of people in Andhra and Maharashtra regions in the contemporary period

### **Long Questions:**

1. Write an essay on the development of the Prakrit as a language.
2. Write an essay on the *Gatha Saptsati*.
3. Analyse the growth of the material milieu at the time of Satavahana King Hala on the basis of *Gatha Saptsati*.

### **Suggested Readings:**

1. A L Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, Vol. 1, New Delhi, 1981.
2. Jagannatha Pathak, *Gatha Saptasati*, Chaukhambha, Varanasi, 1969.
3. J C Jain, *History and Development of Prakrit Literature*, Manohar, 2004.
4. Parmanand Shastri, *Gatha Saptasati*, Prakashan Pratisthan, Merrut, 1965.
5. Radhagovinda Basak, *Gatha Saptasati*, The Asiatic Society, 1971.
6. Rhys Davis *History of Prakrit Literature*.

## LESSON 3 B

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### INDO-PERSIAN LITERATURE: AMIR KHUSRAU'S WORKS

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#### **Introduction**

This lesson traces the origin and growth of Indo-Persian literature with special reference to the life and works of Amir Khusrau. Amir Khusrau popularized Indo-Persian literature through several innovations like *ghazlas*, panegyrics, elegies, love stories and several prose works. He took pride in praising the land of his birth in the indigenous Sanskrit and Hindi poetry.

#### **Origin of Indo-Persian Literature in India**

As a literary language, Persian in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, performed the same function in the eastern half of the Islamic world (viz. Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, India as well as Anatolia) as Arabic in the western half (Arabia, Levant, Egypt and North Africa). Both were the cultural and administrative languages of these two respective regions of the Islamic polity. The Turks, who came to India towards the close of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., were deeply influenced by the Persian language which had become the literary language of Central Asia and Iran from 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Thus in India, while Arabic (language of the Prophet) remained largely confined to a narrow circle of Islamic scholars and philosophers, Persian became the language of literature and administration. The origin of Indo-Persian language can thus be said to have commenced with the arrival of Turks in India. Although a part of a larger production of Persian literature, the Indo-Persian literature specifically refers to the works of those authors who were native to or wrote in India.

India came into contact with the emergent new Persian culture around the third quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> century when Sind was made a part of the Safavid kingdom of Iran. But a more formal relationship between the Persian language and the Indian sub-continent was established with the formation of Ghaznavid power in Punjab in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by Mahmud of Ghazni. Mahmud's institutional innovations at Ghazni in the form of the position of *malik al-shu'arā'* (poet laureate), has been considered as crucial for the development of a certain style of royal and courtly patronage of literature. From Ghazni, the Persian literary culture reached Lahore, which was the strategic base for Mahmud's ventures into Hindustan. Besides the plunder seeking warriors (or *ghazis* as they were called), large number of Persian speaking people settled in and around Lahore which became an important centre, politically and socially equal to Ghazni itself. It gradually attracted scholarly and literary figures from Iran, Khurasan and other parts of Central Asia. Thus the city of Lahore emerged as the first centre of the cultivation of Persian language in India and the region of Punjab witnessed the beginning and efflorescence of a high Persian literary tradition. Among the poets associated with this region and its vicinity (including Uchh) was the great Abul Faraz Runi and Masud Sa'd Salman, acclaimed by Persian literary critics as innovators and masters of a new diction.

After the conquest of northern India by the Ghorids in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Delhi became the capital of the Muslim rulers in India and at the same time Ghazni lost its former glory and was subsequently deserted. Consequently, the dignitaries, the intellectuals and enlightened class of people migrated from Ghazni to Delhi which was turned in to an important and a big centre of Persian learning. From this period onwards, Persian flourished in Delhi and



beyond. When Mongols under the leadership of Chenghez Khan ravaged the Perso-Islamic world, there was a continuous exodus, from these regions, of poets, Sufis, jurists, scribes along with artisans, courtiers and other men of note, who sought asylum in relatively peaceful conditions in India. The Persianized traditions of these groups came to be implanted deeper in the north Indian milieu.

In the meantime, a large number of dedicated Muslim missionaries from Persia and Central Asia as well as other Islamic lands were active in India. Most notable among these were Persian or Persian speaking Sufi mystics, whose saintly bearing and passionate preaching were important elements not only in the conversion of many Indians to Islam but also in the spread of Persian language and culture. They also laid the foundation for a number of Sufi orders (*silsilahs*). Persian lyric poetry has always been popular with the Sufis as a symbolic expression of their love of the divine and their longing for union with God. Thus the Sufi brotherhoods and their hospices (*Khanqahs*) also became instruments for cultivating Persian poetry among the Indian Muslims. Sufi conversations (*malfuz*), letters and discourses on religious practice were all written in Persian.

The sultans of Delhi of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, extended generous patronage to Persian scribes, writers and poets along with the men of piety, through revenue grants such as *imlak*, *auqaf*, *idrarat*, *wazaiif* etc. The royal patronage to Persian continued even after the disintegration of Delhi Sultanat in the Muslim kingdoms of Kashmir, Gujarat, Bengal as well as in the North Deccan under the Bahmanids. They helped extend Muslim rule and with this Persian language and culture, to most part of the sub-continent, as far east as Bengal and as far south as Hyderabad. Although for the most part, these dynasties were not ethnically Persian, they were so culturally and thus became propagators of Persian language, literature and the way of life.

Persian language and literature in India was further enriched by the contribution of great Persian poets of Indian origin. Besides Abul Faraj Runi and Masud Sad Salman (of Lahore), who were pioneers in introducing Persian literature in India, there were many others, who played no small part in providing a sound base to the Indo-Persian literature. One of the eminent Persian litterateurs in those days was Tajuddin, a Persian poet of Indian origin. He was a native of Delhi and lived there during the reign of Sultan Iltutmish. The other two Persian poets of the indigenous origin, whose accounts are available, were Shihabuddin and Aminuddin. The former was a native of Badayun while the latter belonged to Sanam situated in the vicinity of Patiala. In succession to these two poets, there appeared on the scene, two great mystic poets Khwaja Hasan Sijzi Dehlavi and Amir Khusrau Dehlavi, both of whom were closely associated with Chishti Sufi hospice of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. Besides their significant contributions towards the growth of Indo-Persian literature, their poetry is also noted for its sense of universal Sufi message, transcending religious and sectarian differences. Thus, the Persian writers in India were either settlers from Central Asia or children of those settlers who spoke Persian as their mother-tongue or first language. Explaining the cultural situation in which Persian became an important literary language for people coming from different parts of the Islamic world to India, Mohammad Wahid Mirza opines that the common language of these people was the same (Persian) and these early settlers laid the foundation of the Indo-Persian culture, that was to find its perfection in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century under the great Mughals.

## Amir Khusrau and his works

Of all the great Indo-Persian poets of the pre-Mughal period, critics (both contemporary and modern) consider Amir Khusrau as the greatest as he not only excelled all his predecessors and contemporaries in writing excellent prose and composing all sorts of Persian verses, such as *qasida* (panegyrics), *masnavis* (long narrative poems), *ghazals* (lyrics), *rubai* (quatrains) and *qata* (fragment of a *qasida*), dealing with varied subjects like philosophy, mysticism, love and ethics, but also laid the foundation of Indian style in Persian poetry which served as the model for his successors under the Mughals. As for the cultural context of Khusrau's writing, it can be said that this was the time when, while on the one hand an attempt was being made by the Delhi Sultans to bring about political centralization in north India, the life in the region itself came to be influenced by Persian language and culture which was a part of the process of the synthesis of Indo-Islamic culture. At the same time, Persian itself was influenced by its interaction with north Indian languages, which was reflected in the use of Hindawi words, concepts and metaphors that appeared in the writings of early Persian poets of India such as Masud Sad Salman. The shaping of this Indian-Persian diction, better known to the literary critics as *Sabk-i-Hindi*, in fact signified a dialogue between the Persian language and the Indian cultural ethos. It developed as a result of constant interaction between the literary matrices of India, on the one hand, and of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia on the other.

Abul Hasan Yaminuddin Khusrau, better known as Amir Khusrau (c. 1253-1324) had an aristocratic lineage. His father, Amir Saifuddin Mahmud was a migrant to this country and had settled at Patiyali in the district of Etah (Uttar Pradesh). He was enrolled in the army of Sultan Iltutmish (c. 1210-1236) and was holding the title of amir among the nobility. The poet's mother was the daughter of Imad-ul-Mulk, one of the foremost nobles of the realm. Khusrau was born at Patiyali and after the death of his father was brought up by his maternal grandfather, Imad-ul-Mulk, who was also a great patron of poets and scholars. Thus, Khusrau not only received a good education but also spent his early life in the company of poets and scholars of fame.

Amir Khusrau wrote in a period when art and poetry was intimately connected with patronage. The poets and artists had to attach themselves to kings or noblemen, for whom they worked and were rewarded and maintained by the patron, in return. Although patronage had its own negative consequences (rivalries and jealousy among poets to attract patron's attention, flattery and demoralizing obligation and consequently sycophancy) but on the other hand, by placing the artist/poet above the pressure of material requirements, patronage enabled them to devote himself whole-heartedly to his work, besides providing the inputs of the impeccable taste of the medieval Indian aristocracy. Khusrau started writing poetry at an early stage of his life and as his fame spread he was patronized by several Delhi Sultans and royal princes of varying temperaments. As a courtier, Khusrau served all his contemporary Sultans of Delhi, who extended their patronage to him not only for his extraordinary poetic talent and enviable scholarship but also, as modern scholars say, for the gentleness of his disposition, nobleness of his behaviour, liveliness of his discourse and ready wit and flowing humour. Khusrau, in his writings, has therefore, showered lavish praises on his patrons (Prince Malik Chhaju, Prince Mahmud and Sultans Kaiqubad, Jalaluddin Khalji, Alauddin Khalji, Mubarak Shah and Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq) in exquisite style to express his gratitude towards them.

**Amir Khusrau's works, compiled during 1272-1325 AD, fall in different categories:**

1. The five *diwans* (collection of *ghazals*, lyrical poems, panegyrics, elegies etc.) - *Tuhfat-us-Sighar* (Gift of youth, 1272 A.D), *Wasath-ul-Hayat* (Meridian of life, 1283 A.D), *Ghurrat-ul-Kamal* (Prince of perfection, 1294 A.D), *Baqia Naqiya* (Remnants of purity, 1316 AD) and *Nihayat-ul-Kamal* (Pinnacle of perfection, 1325 A.D).
2. The five *masnavis*, modelled on the *khamisa* (five *masnavis*) of Nizami (1141-1202 A.D) - *Matla-ul-Anwar* (Dawn of Lights, 1299 A.D), *Shirin-o-Khusrau* (a legendary love story of Khusrau and Shirin, 1299 A.D), *Majnun-o-Laila* (a legendary love story of Laila and Majnu, 1299 A.D), *Aina-i-Sikandari* (Mirror of Alexander, 1301 A.D) and *Hasht Bihisht* (Eight Paradises, 1302 A.D).
3. The five historical *masnavis* – *Qiran-us-Sadain* (Conjunction of Two Auspicious Stars, 1289 A.D), *Miftah-ul-Futuh* (Key of Victories, 1291 AD), *Khidr Khan-o-Dewal Rani* (Love story of Khidr Khan and Dewal Rani, also known as *Ashiqqa*, *Ishqiyya* and *Manshur Shahi*, 1315 A.D), *Nuh Sipih*r (Nine Skies, 1318 A.D) and *Tughlaqnamah* (1325 A.D).
4. **Prose** works – *Khazain-ul-Futuh* (Treasures of Victories, also known as *Tarikh-i-Alai*, 1311 A.D), *Afzal-ul-Fawaid* (Greatest of Blessings, 1321-25 A.D) and *Izaz-I Khusravi* (Inspiration of Khusrau, compiled between 1283 and 1320 A.D).

While enjoying the patronage of various Sultans and princes, Amir Khusrau wrote a large number of historical and romantic *masnavis* providing information on history, culture, civilization, beautiful landscape; discourses on Philosophy, metaphysics, religion, celestial science along with romance full of metaphors, similes and imageries. His first historical *masnavi*, *Qiran-us-Sadain* is about meeting of Bukhra Khan, an affectionate father with his undutiful son Kaiqubad sitting on the throne of Delhi. Sultan Kaiqubad has been typified by historians as a reckless and silly ruler but Khusrau, through this work has given a glamour and luster to his name. Although written with a combination of *qasidas* and *ghazals*, this *masnavi* is considered as a visual commentary of the historical event. The *ghazals* have been used here to express the poet's feelings contemporary with that part of the story which has been described. In this way the poet, having been present through out the campaign, throws himself in to the scene and is able to produce a mixture of lyrical and epic elements. Although the subject of the story is dry, Khusrau makes it interesting by a vivid description of the city of Delhi, its buildings, pomp and grandeur of the royal court, social life of the nobles and officers, suppression of the Mongols as well as the flora and fauna in and around the city.

*Miftah-ul-Futuh*, another historical *masnavi* of Khusrau, provides the details of the military campaigns of Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji (an old admirer of the poet), the revolt of Malik Chhajju (under whose patronage the poet started his public career) and its suppression along with the victories achieved by the Sultan in Karra and Jhain together with his military advance to Ranthambore. Another important literary work of Khusrau is *Khazain-ul-Futuh*, which is a panegyric account of the first fifteen years of the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji. Although a literary work (prose), its significance lies in the fact that this is the lone contemporary account of the reign of Alauddin Khalji. Herein, Khusrau has written about Alauddin's conquest of Gujarat, Chittor, Malwa and Warangal along with an eye-witness account of the Deccan campaigns of the Sultan's commander Malik Kafur. Historical importance of the work also lies in its description of the administrative reforms of Alauddin Khalji as well as in its geographical and military details.

In *Khidr Khan-o-Deval Rani* (historical *masnavi*), Amir Khusrau has brought to limelight some of the brighter aspects of Alauddin's character as well as of events ignored in the contemporary historiography. Although a love story of Deval Rani (daughter of Gujarat ruler Karan) and Khidr Khan (Alauddin Khalji's son), it also provides a short historical sketch of Muslim rulers of India besides highlighting the peaceful and prosperous condition of India under Alauddin's rule, after his successful repulsion of the Mongols. Significance of this work also lies in the fact that while describing Alauddin Khalji's victory over Gujarat and Malwa it also provides the topographical details of these regions. The other side of this *masnavi* is its treatment of the true romance between Deval Rani and Khidr Khan wherein Khusrau provides a fresh charm to this romance by adding richness of fancies in its description of the pathos and passions of wistful longing thus making it a "masterpiece" of romantic literature.

Among all the works of Amir Khusrau, *Nuh Sipih* (Nine Skies) is considered as the most significant not only for understanding his attitude towards Hindustan, but also for showcasing the virile productivity of his poetic talent. Khusrau wrote this historical *masnavi* for his patron Mubarak Shah Khalji who, as a ruler, has not received much appreciation from the historians. The importance of this *masnavi* lies more in the fact that it contains multifarious topics such as praise of God, Prophet, Mubarak Khalji's accession to the throne, his military expedition to Deogir, description of Delhi and its superiority over other important cities of the world along with vivid details of the climate of Hindustan, its flora and fauna, sciences, religious beliefs and languages. This work is quite remarkable as it is full of pride for the land of Khusrau's birth and also for the projection of India as a unified cultural zone despite its diversities in flora and fauna, language and religion.

*Tughlaqnamah* is the last historical *masnavi* of Khusrau which he wrote for his patron Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq. This work gives valuable historical information about his successful military campaigns including his victory over Khusrau Khan (a powerful noble and claimant to the throne of Delhi). Despite providing important historical details through these historical *masnavis*, Amir Khusrau is not counted among historians but among great poets. Historically, however, the importance of these *masnavis* extends to various aspects. One strong point of Khusrau is that he has given a lot of chronological details which is considered more reliable than even that of Ziauddin Barni (most notable among the contemporary historian). Besides, these *masnavis* also highlight the contemporary social conditions (an area ignored by the contemporary historians) along with descriptions of war tactics, military campaigns, cities, occupations, music and dance. He, being more of a poet and less of a historian is important because as a poet his choice of subjects was different from the style of writing of historical subjects. Consequently, the lacunae in the contemporary historical writings can be completed with the help of his writings.

Besides historical *masnavis*, Khusrau wrote other *masnavis* which are considered as masterpieces, worthy of being compared with the writings of great Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi. Amir Khusrau's *Shirin-o-Khusrau*, is considered as an imitation of Nizami's *masnavi* of the same title. Besides describing the well known romance it contains panegyric for Alauddin Khalji as well as poet's own knowledge of astronomy and astrology. Khusrau's another *masnavi* *Majnun-o-Laila* again is a reply to Nizami's *masnavi* of the same title. This *masnavi* besides containing a panegyric for Alauddin Khalji, provides a genuine touch to a fictitious romance of Laila and Majnun. Comparing the writings of Nizami and Khusrau, in *Shirin-o-Khusrau*, M.W. Mirza writes that "Khusrau has written this old romance in a highly artistic style in which he hardly falls short of Nizami."

*Hasht-Bihisht*, another *masnavi* of Amir Khusrau, has been widely acclaimed by modern scholars for its description and perfection of versification. The entire text is full of fictitious stories, but they have been so beautifully written with excellent expression of narration of facts that even minor details have not been glossed over. S.S. Abdur Rahman opines that this is the peculiar feature of this work and no other *masnavi* of the Persian language can be favorably compared to it in this respect. Another scholar, Maulana Syed Sulaiman Ashraf also says that this *masnavi* possesses all those qualities which are regarded ornaments for the art of writing a *masnavi*. Besides *masnavis*, Khusrau has written a number of *Qasidas*, *diwans* and *ghazals* from which the readers get a glimpse of Khusrau's flight of imagination and flow of style together with the depth of the subject matter.

Another important aspect connected with Amir Khusrau's life was his leaning towards Sufism. During his entire life, as a servant of the royal court, he had to mix in societies of divergent nature, had to take part in luxuries and accompanied his royal patrons in such military campaigns which at times were also aimed at gaining wealth from the spoils of victory. But despite being in the company of such divergent class of people he remained a religious man and a true disciple of his spiritual preceptor, Khwaza Nizamuddin Auliya. He amassed great wealth under the patronage of his royal masters but he spent all either for his family or friends or for displaying love for his spiritual guide or for the poor and needy living in the latter's monastery. A number of legendary stories have been narrated to describe the mutual love and attachment of these two, master and disciple. Khusrau sang for his teacher and wrote a number of poems (*Manqabat*) in veneration of the Sufi saint. In his *Afdal-ul-Fawaid*, he has collected a large number of his discourses. Thus Amir Khusrau had an important role to play in the spread of Sufi culture in India through his poetry and music. The measure of his devotion to the Sufi saint can be gained by the fact that Amir Khusrau also did not survive long after the death of his teacher and died in 1324 A.D.

### **Amir Khusrau's Innovation in Indo-Persian Literature**

Ziauddin Barni in his famous work *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi* remarked that "there were poets in the reign of Sultan Alauddin Khalji such as had never existed before and have never appeared since. The incomparable Amir Khusrau stands unequalled for the volume of his writings and the originality of his ideals; for while other great masters of prose and verse have excelled in one or two branches, Amir Khusrau was conspicuous in every department of letters. A man with such mastery over all forms of poetry has never existed in the past and may perhaps not come into existence before the Day of Judgment." One of the modern critics of Khusrau's works, Shibli Numani also writes that "no person of such comprehensive ability has been born in India during the last 600 years and even the fertile soil of Persia had produced only three or four persons of such varied accomplishment in 1000 years". The various forms of Persian poetry, which were popular during Khusrau's days, were *qasidas*, *masnavis*, *ghazals* and *rubaiyyats*. Firdausi, Sadi, Anwari and Hafiz were the celebrated poets in these forms of Persian poetry, but their sovereignty does not extend beyond a certain frontier. Firdausi did not cross the boundary of the art of writing *masnavis*, Sadi does not touch *qasidas*, Anwari had no liking for comparing *masnavi* and *ghazal*; Hafiz remained confined to the art of writing *ghazal*; but under Khusrau's sovereignty lies *ghazal*, *masnavi*, *qasidas*, *rubais* (*rubaiyyats*) and other poetic sections which are beyond calculation. These statements of various modern and contemporary critics alike clearly point towards an element of uniqueness, an innovation in the writings of Amir Khusrau.

Khusrau began his apprenticeship in poetry by placing the best passages from the master (Nizami) before himself and trying to model his work on them as evident in his *Shirin-o-*

*Khusrau* and *Majnun-o-Laila*. In the former, Khusrau relates the old romance in a highly artistic style like his master Nizami, in some places he proves himself to be a great dramatist and more skillful painter of character than the old master. The latter poem written in elegantly simple and tender style is his first poem of the *khamisa* and Khusrau in it, proved himself as great a student of psychology of love and emotion as any Persian poet. Although Khusrau's romantic *masnavis* (also known as *Panj Ganj*) are closely modeled on Nizami's *khamisa* but Khusrau resorted to the plan of putting into verse the stories and incidents which Nizami had examined and thrown aside as incapable of artistic rendering.

In the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, the trend of poetry and in some cases even the subjects were borrowed from the Persian literature. Barring Khusrau, Indian poets chose and sometimes copied the style of their masters. The *qasidas*, the *masnavis* and *ghazals* were thus inspired by Persian poetry. Although Khusrau wrote his *masnavis* and *qasidas* in the conventional style, he stepped on untrodden paths with absolutely new themes and new subjects. Khusrau's love for originality and his contempt for mere plagiarism in thought or style, urged him to infuse a new spirit in to the old art, to seek out for him a style both original and striking. This endeavor of Amir Khusrau is most evident in his *Qiran-us-Sadain*, which was the first long poem written in a *masnavi* form. According to M.W.Mirza, his *masnavi* gives the effect of a picture composed of figures painted separately and independently and then put together, with a suitable background, to represent the scene the artist wanted to depict. The most original feature of the poem, according to Mirza, is the introduction of *abayat-i-silsila* to serve as headings for different chapters and a number of *ghazals* each of which echoes the sentiment of the chapter immediately preceding it and serves to relieve the monotony of the *masnavi*. These *ghazals* also express the poet's feelings contemporary with that part of the story which has just been described.

Another innovative aspect of Khusrau's writing was in the field of selecting contemporary event as the theme of verses. This is best exemplified in his historical *masnavi*, *Khidr Khan-o-Dewal Rani*. All the characters in it are real whom the poet knew familiarly and had seen with his own eyes in all the incidents he describes. The story belongs to the domain of history and not mythology which was the favourite subject of the former writers and yet it has all the charm, all the romance and all the piquancy of the older stories. Another significant departure in this work from earlier writings is depiction of a human theme and real human emotions rather than the artificiality of verse writing traditions.

A feature unique to Amir Khusrau's writing was depiction of attachment to the land of his birth and patriotism describing its superiority over other countries in respect not only of fauna and flora but also of culture and learning. This according to Ayaz Ahmed was an innovation in Persian literature of supreme importance. This aspect of Khusrau's writing is particularly noticeable in both *Qiran-us-Sadain* as well as *Nuh Sipihr*. Another innovative aspect of Khusrau's writing style, visible again in *Nuh Sipihr*, was in the method of organization of the *masnavi* which has been divided in to nine parts (*Sipihr*), headed by an introductory verse and concluded by a *ghazal*. The innovation of splitting the poem with different metres was an extremely noble idea as it served to impart freshness and distinction to each part. This originality of Khusrau's style of writing can also be seen in *Khazain-ul-Futuh* where again one notices the division of narrative in to paragraphs of unequal length, each composed of analogies derived from a particular thing like star, fire, water etc. This introduced a variety in to an otherwise monotonous narrative and split it up in to divisions each devoted to a particular topic.

Another field of Persian verse writing, where Amir Khusrau surpassed his predecessors as well as the contemporaries was the lyrical poetry or *ghazal*. In the domain of Persian poetry,

Khusrau is considered as father of Persian *ghazal* in India just as Sadi was described as the father of Persian *ghazal* in Iran. Although Khusrau introduced in to his *ghazals* the simplicity, sweetness and elegance of Sadi's style, he was able to see the lacunae in Sadi's *ghazals* and evolved for himself a lyrical poetry not produced by any Persian poet. The uniqueness of Khusrau's *ghazals* mainly arose from the fact that he was an expert musician and had a keen ear for melody and harmony and his selection of words imparted the flow and rhythm to the verse. Moreover most of his *ghazals* were written in simple but elegant style and the language used was the ordinary everyday conversation in his time. Besides, while the *ghazals* of the earlier Persian writers like Sinai, Rumi and Iraqi were steeped in Sufism, Khusrau's *ghazal* was lyrical in quality as he tried to keep himself aloof from philosophical considerations and made poetry a vehicle to capture the range of human emotions. Thus by toning down the high seriousness of the Persian *ghazal* by his common touch and light humour Khusrau also tried to bring about a synthesis of Indian and West Asian attitudes. Mohammed Wahid Mirza opines that Khusrau's lyrics have a peculiar finesse and subtlety of ideas that most of the Persian poets lacked. Another modern critic, Mohammed Habib has remarked that in him, for the first time the sustained *ghazal* has reached its high water mark.

### **Amir Khusrau's Hindi Poetry**

As pointed out earlier, Khusrau, unlike his contemporaries, took pride in praising the land of his birth through a vivid description of its charms and beauties and while doing so he displayed similar enthusiasm, fervor and spontaneous affection which are marked in the indigenous Sanskrit and Hindi poetry. Commenting on Khusrau's famous *masnavi*, *Khidr Khan-o-Deval Rani*, M. W. Mirza writes that "the entire poem breathes of patriotism, the artist's love for the land of his birth. It is fragrant with the smell of *kewra*, the *karna*, the *champa* and the hundreds of sweet Indian flowers and spices, and is luminous with the bright Indian sun and the pale cool moonlight. The poet sprinkles here and there, words of Indian origin that blend beautifully with Persian and give to the poem a distinction and a peculiar elegance." In the same *masnavi*, Khusrau has also highlighted the superiority of the Indian beauties and the skills of the Indian artisans over those of the Islamic world. In *Nuh Sipih*, Khusrau advances cogent arguments to show that India is a paradise and is superior to any other country with regard to climate and flora. He holds that the science and wisdom which are found in India can not be excelled and maintains that all branches of philosophy are found here, and the people are well versed in Physics, Mathematics, Astronomy and other physical sciences. Khusrau's patriotism for this land did not allow him to ignore Hindi (*Hindawi* as it was popularly known) which was the language of the masses even though he wrote extensively in Persian, the language of the classics.

Amir Khusrau's writing of Hindi poetry has been debated by some scholars on the ground that Khusrau never collected his Hindi verses in his life and no collections were made immediately after his death and also that the verses that caught the fancy of the populace were transmitted orally or through private collections to the succeeding generations. But from the writing of Khusrau himself it is clear that he not only wrote extensively in *Hindawi* but was also proud of his knowledge of Hindi. Besides, his Hindi works mention many contemporary events, manners, customs and even articles which were then in vogue. Moreover, as pointed out by Ayaz Ahmed, Khusrau chose Hindi *doha* (couplet) to express his emotions during a highly sentimental moment of the death of his spiritual preceptor Nizamuddin Auliya in 1325 AD. Yusuf Hussain writes that Taqi Auhadi, a 17<sup>th</sup> century scholar, who visited the court of Jahangir in 1606 AD, speaks of Khusrau's Hindi poetry. The famous Urdu poet Mir Taqi Mir confirms in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that Khusrau's Hindi songs were popular in Delhi up to his

times. All these evidences clearly prove that he indeed wrote poems in Hindi, though as he himself observes, he did not attach much importance to his Hindi pieces and scattered them among his friends after having scribbled them on bits of paper. It is not surprising in the view of the fact that *Hindawi* was the folk dialect at that time and was yet to grow in to a supple instrument of poetic expression and therefore could not be accepted as a medium of classic literature which Khusrau intended to produce.

Even though Amir Khusrau never gave a serious thought to his Hindi poetry and considered it as a pastime, his mastery over the spoken language of Hindustan was remarkable. One scholar has remarked that while his Persian poetry placed him among the maestros, his Hindi verses, which most sincerely depict his love of the motherland, earned for him the title of *Tuti-i-Hind* (The Tuti of India, Tuti being a singing bird of Persia). This is also reflective of the popular applause which he earned for his light poetry in Hindi, comprising subjects of Indian masses. Khusrau's greatest passion was originality and in the words of M.W.Mirza, he always wanted to do some thing new, to break away, as far as possible, from the trammels of custom and tradition and to tread paths hitherto untouched by human feet. It is then easily conceivable that the same love of innovation goaded him to write Hindi verse in a new style. His greatest achievement in this regard, a fact recognized by almost all historians of Hindi literature, was that he was the first poet to use a simple and popular form of Hindi called *Khari Boli* and in this way he became the first exponent of the poetic usage of Hindustani which later branched off in to *Khariboli* Hindi and Urdu.

Amir Khusrau's Hindi verses consists of *dohas* (couplets), *pahelis* (riddles), *mukarni* (verses with double meanings), *Do-sukhane* (answers with double meanings), *Geets* (small songs), *ghazals* with alternate Persian and Hindi lines, *chaupade* (quatrain) and a small Persian-Hindi dictionary known as *Khaliq-Bari*. His contributions in Hindi verses range from high philosophical and metaphysical verses to the highly suggestive and erotic songs for the musicians. His *pahelis* depict him as a poet of the masses and present him as a native Indian who had seen the Indian life and culture from the closest angle. Like Kabir, Dadu, Raidas or other early saint poets of Hindi, Amir Khusrau used mixed language while writing his Hindi poetry as he was not shy of using any words derived from any source. One can find not only Persian words blended with *Khariboli* Hindi; but an admirable sprinkling of dialects like *Braj Bhasha*, *Awadhi*, *Bhojpuri*, *Kanauji*, *Rajasthani*, *Purbi* and such other forms of spoken Hindi of his age. At the same time he strove to liberate Hindi from Prakrit and Apabhramsa influences and helped it to become a *Deshbhasha* in the true sense of the word.

The variety and range of subjects in the Hindi verses of Amir Khusrau has left the critics bewildered. He was equally at home with child's riddles, as with sublime mystic note. His utmost concern with the flora and fauna, geography and place names add to his versatility as the Hindi verse writer. His subjects include village women gathering round a well, beloved's pangs when the lover is separated, a traveler's woes and loneliness, the wonders of the firmament and cosmic powers and many more. This reaffirms that Khusrau composed on commonplace subjects of essentially Indian life. The variety of his verse forms add to the delight of his compositions. A few Hindi words, though sparingly used, have also added a wonderful grace and beauty to Khusrau's Persian verses. This is how he justified their use in his Persian works. It has been argued by the modern day critics that Khusrau was as great a classical poet as popular he was as a minstrel of the masses and it is this characteristic of this poet which earned him the title of *Tuti-i-Hind* than anything else.



**Long Questions:**

1. Analyse the factors that facilitated the origin of Indo-Persian literature in Medieval India prior to the coming of Amir Khusrau.
2. Critically examine the significance of Amir Khusrau's writings in understanding the history of his times.
3. Briefly outline the major differences in the literary works of Amir Khusrau and those of his predecessors and contemporaries with regard to Persian verse writing.
4. Highlight the contributions of Amir Khusrau towards the growth of Hindi literature that earned him the title of *Tuti-i-Hind*.

**Suggested Readings:**

1. Mohammad Habib, *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*, Delhi, 2004 (reprint).
2. Mohammad Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusrau*, Delhi, 1974 (reprint).
3. Zoe Ansari (ed.), *Life, Times and Works of Amir Khusrau Dehlavi*, Seventh Centenary commemorative volume, National Amir Khusrau Society, Delhi, 1977.
4. Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India c.1200-1800*, New Delhi, 2004.
5. Yusuf Husain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*, Bombay, 1962.
6. Sheldon Pollock (ed.), *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions From South Asia*, Berkeley, 2003
7. Ayaz Ahmed, "Amir Khusrau- The Tuti-I-Hind", in *Indo-Iranica*, vol. 24, Numbers 1 and 2, 1971, pp. 82-95.
8. S. S. A. Rahman, "Amir Khusrau As A Genius", in *Indo-Iranica*, vol. 30, Numbers 1 and 2, 1977, pp. 1-20.
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**Conclusion**

Amir Khusrau was a literary genius, who made significant contribution in the field of Indo-Persian and Hindi literature. His compositions in different literary forms reflect various aspects of life ranging from romance to philosophy. The observations based on his own knowledge of astronomy, astrology, geography, flora and fauna are also praiseworthy.

## LESSON 3C

### URDU POETRY AND PROSE: MIRZA GHALIB

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#### Introduction

In this lesson the history of the origin of the Urdu language and literature with special reference to the contribution of Mirza Ghalib is attempted. Ghalib brought in innovations in verse and prose. The origin of Urdu is generally traced to the advent of Muslims in India particularly the Turks. While the Turkish army spoke Persian, the inhabitants of the city spoke Khari Boli. The interaction between military establishments and Muslim immigrants resulted in the evolution of Urdu as the common language.

#### History of Urdu Language

Urdu is a part of Indo-European language and its origin in the Indian sub-continent can be traced to the advent of Muslims in India. The word “Urdu” has a Turkish origin and it literally means ‘army’, ‘camp’ or ‘horde’. The Turkish army stationed in Delhi, from the time of the Ghorids (1193 A.D onwards), was known as Urdu or *Urdu-i-Mualla*, the exalted army. It is generally believed that while this army spoke Persian, the inhabitants of the city spoke an early form of Hindi known as *Khari Boli*. The interaction of the foreign army with the local communities led to the amalgamation of indigenous and Persian language spoken in these military establishments. This process was not confined to the military establishment alone but extended to a larger cultural level interaction between the indigenous population and other Muslim immigrants such as traders, travelers, Sufi mystics and other settlers. This interaction led to the evolution of Urdu as the common language with its distinct characteristics.

Although Urdu is said to have originated in Delhi, scholars like T. Grahame Bailey point out that the earliest Turkish armies first entered and settled in Punjab and Lahore and frequently inter-married with the indigenous people. In the due course of time, as a result of this cultural synthesis, must have spoken the language of the country, modified of course by their own Persian mother tongue. The basis of early Urdu was thus, old Punjabi, which must not have differed a great deal with the *Khari Boli* Hindi. The points of divergence between *Khari Boli* and Urdu are very few, the main distinction lying in the fact that while *Khari Boli* uses few, Urdu many Persian and Arabic words. In north India, the word ‘Urdu’ came to be applied to this common language primarily to distinguish it from *Khari Boli* and Persian. Here it was called *Zaban-i-Urdu*, the language of the army or *Zaban-i-Urdu-i-Mualla*, the language of the exalted army. In course of time, the word *Zaban* was dropped and Urdu came to be used alone.

Besides north India, another area of significance in the early as well as later growth of Urdu was Deccan. Few important historical events have been associated with the early growth of Urdu in the Deccan. One of these is the imperialistic designs of Sultan Alaaddin Khalji (1290-1320 A.D) which led to a series of imperial military expeditions in few parts of the Deccan led by his military commander, Malik Kafur. Another being, the Deccan campaigns of Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughlaq and transfer of his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, during 1326-1327 A.D. These historical developments helped in the transportation of Urdu to Deccan by the Turkish army, scholars, Sufi mystics, traders etc. But more important perhaps, was the foundation of the independent Deccan kingdom of Bahmani, in opposition to the Delhi Sultanat in mid 14<sup>th</sup> century. Rulers of the Bahmani kingdom, though Muslims, discarded many of the conventions of the north and remained intent on developing their own culture. Thus, despite their strong affiliation with Persian, the cultural language of the Muslims in India, they nevertheless, decided

to cultivate their own language in preference to it. They thus adopted Urdu which was influenced by local vernaculars especially Gujarati and Marathi and subsequently managed to impose them in large part of the Deccan. However, the language here was not called Urdu but *Dakhni* or *Dakni*. Thus spoken Urdu has two variants; i) *Dakhni* (spoken in the Deccan) and ii) Northern Urdu spoken in north India originating from Delhi.

Thus, one of the unique features of Urdu language was its capacity to absorb words and expressions of other popular languages which in turn, enriched its own vocabulary and expressions. Besides, Urdu also incorporated historical events, myths and symbols as well as the poetic meter and verse forms of various Indian languages. All these elements were woven in to a unified medium of expression giving Urdu language its true Indian foundation. The languages known from its beginning as *Hindavi*, *Hindi*, *Gujari*, *Dakhni* etc and which later came to be known as *Rekhta*, Urdu, *Urdu-i-Mualla* or *Hindustani* has been a common denomination of all the tongues spoken in the sub-continent. After having absorbed various regional characteristics and styles in the process of its spread from one corner of the country to another, Urdu established its own identity through a script of its own, containing features of both Arabian and Persian scripts.

### **Growth of Urdu Literature in the Deccan**

Between the emergence of Urdu as a distinctively recognizable idiom in the north and its elevation to the position of a literary language, there is a gap of at least two centuries. Throughout this period, Persian remained the literary language of the country. It was only with the decline of the Mughals that Urdu, so long held in check, began to make headway as a literary language. The first impulse towards this however, came from the south, where it had a flourishing literary career for about a century and half (1590-1730 A.D). Though Bahmani kingdom's contribution to the growth of Urdu literature in the Deccan is considered as negligible, it definitely gave Urdu a distinct identity. However, it was during the independent rule of the Adilshahis of Bijapur (1490-1686 A.D), Qutbshahis of Golconda (1512-1687 A.D) and the Nizamshahis of Ahmadnagar (1496-1633 A.D) that the real flowering of *Dakhni* Urdu as a literary medium took place. Sultans of these kingdoms were great patrons of art and culture, few of them themselves being great scholars. Their generosity attracted literary talent from far and wide. Although the court language of these kingdoms was *Dakhini* it was modeled on Persian literature. Nevertheless, *Dakhini* retained its indigenous colour in close contact with its cultural surroundings and vernaculars like Gujarati and Marathi. The desire to spread the doctrines of Islam also necessitated the use of vernacular and many holy men, who have always played an important part in the cultural life of Deccan, began to write tracts and even larger works in *Dakhini*.

Another important phase in the growth of Urdu literature in the Deccan began during the vice royalty of Aurangzeb, when large and renewed emigration in to south, brought the cities of south still more within the orbit of cultural and linguistic influence of the north. Under the Mughal influence, Urdu (*Aurangabadi*) acquired a firm footing in those parts of southern India, which had been longest and most intimately in touch with the north. In effect therefore, there were two languages current in the Deccan, the language of the outlying provinces where Mughal influences had not fully penetrated i.e. *Dakhini* and *Aurangabadi* (called Hindi in the 17<sup>th</sup> century), spoken in and around Aurangabad, which had been in long and direct contact with the languages of the north. The amalgamation of the linguistic and literary traditions of the north and south resulted in to coming in to being of a new standard of language and literature which was called *Rekhta*. One of the greatest *Rekhta* poet of Deccan was Shamsuddin Vali Ullah (1667-1741 A.D), popularly known as *Vali Dakkani*.

## **Emergence of Urdu Literature in Delhi**

Few scholars are of the view that the development of Urdu poetry in north India with Delhi as its centre, where it also reached its classical stage, was closely associated with *Vali Dakkani*. It has been argued that his visit to Delhi in 1700 A.D and the subsequent arrival of his *diwan* (poem) in 1727 A.D, created a sensation in the literary circle of Delhi with far reaching consequences for both Persian and Urdu as literary mediums. Mohammad Sadiq points out that Vali and his diwan not only helped crystallize the hostility of the people of Delhi to Persian (language of the elite) but also showed them the way by revealing to them the potentialities of their own language as a vehicle for poetry. At the same time, it is also believed, Vali, after having come in to contact with literary and spiritual celebrities like Shah Gulshan, gave up Dakhini in favour of Urdu-i-Mualla, the spoken language of Delhi, imbibing the features of Persian poetry in his ghazals. Thus, Vali is considered as not only the trendsetter in Urdu ghazal in the Deccan but having his impact felt in the north also. However, critics have argued that the influence of Vali Dakkani on the origin of Urdu poetry in north India, should be accepted with a little caution in view of the fact that initially, Urdu was the language of the Imperial camp and Delhi always had a large military establishment. Moreover, as a modern scholar has pointed out that from the 14<sup>th</sup> century Urdu was also the popular song language of the “Delhi singers”, known as *qawwals*.

One also has to see the growth of Urdu literature in Delhi in the context of significant political developments of north India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which also had its impact on the pattern of patronage on which, medieval Indian art and literature largely subsisted. The Mughal authority, in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was severely challenged due to the attacks of Nadir Shah, Sikhs, Afghans, Marathas as well as the British. Wars not only decimated the population in and around Delhi but also created an atmosphere of insecurity. At the same time, the Mughal court became a stage for the intrigues of various factions of nobles who were busy protecting their own interest. There were new claimants of power and resources among the diverse group of the nobility. In the changed socio-political scenario when the court and the nobility were getting impoverished, new patrons became important. Poets had to seek patronage from new political masters and therefore had to compose poetry in the language which was spoken in the Imperial camps and in the neighborhood of Delhi.

The movement in favour of Urdu was also fed by the sneering attitude of Persian scholars towards the native poets and scholars. But the prestige of Persian was bound up with the supremacy of the Mughals and when the power of the latter was in its waning phase, the revolutionary tendencies in favour of Urdu began gradually to take shape. As the possibilities of their mother-tongue as a medium for their poetry was revealed to the poets of Delhi and as Urdu as a literary medium took roots here, the status of other languages such as Braj Bhasha and Persian got undermined. It soon entered its classical phase and continued to prosper until the great watershed of the revolt of 1857. Persian however, continued to be used for scholarly and other serious compositions in prose throughout the classical phase of Urdu wherein elitism and sophistication was maintained. Even the biographical accounts (*tazkiras*) of poets were written by the accomplished poets in Persian.

## **Growth of Urdu Literature in Delhi before Ghalib**

Early 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of transition. The fortunes of the Mughal Empire, its aristocracy and the established nobility were on the decline. But despite the decline of the Mughal Empire and its aristocracy, there was an emergence of a new and affluent section in society whose source of the newly acquired wealth was a boom in the trading activities in Delhi

and surrounding areas. They aped the ways of the nobility and were described as *razil* (upstarts) by the contemporary Persian poets. The new breed of Urdu poets was attached to the household of this new rich class and nobles as companions (*masahibs*), which not only provided patronage to the newly emerging literary medium but also helped to maintain certain cultural atmosphere in these households.

One of the greatest among the early Urdu poets of Delhi was Sirajuddin Ali Khan Arzu (1689-1756 AD). Arzu, not only played an important part in championing the cause of Urdu by asking his famous pupils like Dard and others to shift from Persian to Urdu, but also, along with others, undertook the task of enriching and purifying it by absorbing in to it as much as possible, Persian vocabulary, sentiments and imagery. Later, his pupils like Mir, Sauda and Dard carried this attempt forward. Thus, the movement in favour of Urdu was sponsored chiefly by the Indian Muslim scholars steeped in Persian culture, language and literature. Their advocacy of Urdu therefore, took the form of large importations from Persian in to Urdu poetry. Notable contemporaries of Arzu were Sharfuddin Mazmun (1689-1745 A.D) and Zahuruddin Hatim (1718-1739 A.D). Hatim was the leading poet of the age of Muhammad Shah, a great patron of arts and literature and during whose reign large number of poets assembled in Delhi. Despite the fact that early Urdu poetry was heavily inspired by Persian verse, these early Urdu poets of Delhi adopted words from dialects current in the vicinity of Delhi and wrote in the idiom of the day, without conforming to the prescribed usage, spelling or pronunciation of Persian and Arabic words.

In the later phase of the growth of Urdu literature in Delhi, before the arrival of Ghalib on the literary scene, prominent Urdu writers of Delhi were Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan (1700-1781 A.D), Mir Taqi Mir (1720-1810 A.D), Mirza Muhammad Rafi Sauda (1713-1780 A.D) and Mir Dard (1719-1785 A.D). These 'four pillars' of Urdu are known not only for purifying and enriching it but also for introducing *ghazal*, which later became the most popular form of Urdu poetry. Mazhar was the first poet to write verses in Urdu modeled on Persian. Sauda was a versatile writer who introduced many verse forms in Urdu such as *qasida* (an ode) and was also to use satire to express his observations of the times. Mir used Urdu as a medium to throw light on the contemporary life of Delhi after the attack of Nadir Shah and his sack of Delhi. The brilliance of Sauda's satires and the pathos and imagery of Mir's love poems, showed the immense literary potential of Urdu for the first time. Dard was a famous *ghazal* writer and was another important figure in the purification movement of Urdu. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the efforts of these poets helped Urdu acquire both strength and credibility as a medium of literary expression. A modern biographer of Ghalib, Pavan K. Varma, opines that this development, coinciding with the social acceptance of Sufi *tariqah* (manner, etiquette) and the loosening hold of the Islamic orthodoxy, created an appropriate intellectual milieu for it to replace Persian as the de jure lingua franca of the Mughal court.

### **Mirza Ghalib and his Age**

At the time Mirza Ghalib was born (1797), the Mughal Empire was hastening to its decline. The Mughal royal family had suffered humiliation at the hands of the Rohillas and then by the Marathas, who occupied the city for a brief period. The British entered Delhi in 1803 as victors after defeating the Marathas. Very quickly the infrastructure of British control was established. The Mughal ruler was made British pensioner and though the Empire lingered for another 50 years, it was shorn of all its power and authority. Theoretically however, the Mughal Emperor was still the sovereign ruler and the Jats, Rohillas, Marathas as well as the British needed the Mughal Emperor's name to give political legitimacy to their de facto power. The court etiquettes and rituals continued as before, even though the grandeur of the past was missing. The

transformation of power to the British was imminent but the survival of the Empire was crucial for the sustenance of arts and literature.

Mirza Muhammad Asadullah Khan Ghalib (1797-1869 A.D), who was born in this political background, had an aristocratic lineage. His father, Abdullah Beg Khan, was an officer in the Rampur army. After his death, Ghalib came under the ward ship of his uncle, Nasrullah Khan, who was a cavalry officer in the British army. After his death, when Ghalib was just nine, the latter's childhood was spent in his maternal grandparents home in Agra in comfort and shelter. He started writing Persian poetry at an early age, showing his preference to linguistics and literature over traditional sciences. His guide, Abdus Samad, who was addressed as ustad by Ghalib, was a noted scholar of Persian and Arabic. Ghalib started writing in Persian at a young age. But Ghalib's earliest biographer, Altaf Husain Hali, in his *Yadgar-i-Ghalib* (Memoir of Ghalib, 1897), tells us that even at this young age he wrote in Urdu as well. It was sometime during 1813-1815 (some say 1810) that Ghalib decided to move to Delhi, determined to take his place among the aristocracy and get his rightful due as a poet. The move perhaps, was also guided by the fact that the untimely death of his father and uncle had deprived him of an assured niche in the Mughal capital. Besides, Delhi, the seat of the Mughal court, was a more appropriate setting for Ghalib than Agra. This aspect needs a little elaboration.

The political turmoil of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had forced great poets like Mir and Sauda to leave Delhi and seek patronage at Lucknow, the capital of the British allied state of Oudh. But at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British colonial presence in Delhi had imposed a relative political calm and a sense of security in and around Delhi by suppressing lawlessness and brigandage. This went a long way in providing an atmosphere in which intellectual flowering could take place. Ralph Russell, another modern biographer, opines that in the half a century of internal peace, that followed the British political control, Delhi experienced something like a renaissance, a flowering of literature and learning. This renaissance was manifested in various ways, one of which was the radical Muslim religious reform movement, led by the family of Shah Waliullah, one of the most important thinkers in the history of Indian Islam. This resulted in a long-drawn out conflict between the traditionalists and the radical reformers. As a corollary to this, Delhi developed as a famous centre of Persian and Arabic studies related to theology, attracting students from as far as Balkh and Bukhara in central Asia. The exodus of the poetic talent to Lucknow was also halted and Delhi again became the centre of a group of distinguished poets. Urdu too received a new impetus. Shah Waliullah's son, Shah Rafiuddin produced in 1803, an Urdu translation of Quran, a significant event not only in the history of religious movements but also in the history of modern Urdu prose, of which it was a pioneer work.

This revival of poetry also owed a great deal to the encouragement of the Mughal court which, deprived of all far-reaching political power, turned more and more to cultural interests. It patronized Urdu poetry just as its predecessors had patronized Persian. Under the reign of Bahadur Shah, who himself was a great Urdu poet and wrote under the title of *Zafar*, the Mughal court became the pivot, guiding the efflorescence in Urdu writing. Regular poetic symposiums (*mushairahs*) were held at the palace as well as other places in the city. Gradually, the writing and appreciation of Urdu poetry became essential learning for any aspirant to the cultural life of the city. Ghalib took his place among the city aristocracy on equal terms and was fully involved in the intellectual life of Delhi. Prominent contemporaries of Ghalib in the Urdu literary circle were Momin and Zauq, latter being the officially appointed poet laureate of the Mughal court and personal ustad of Bahadur Shah Zafar.

Since patronage was still a major pre-requisite for the growth of literature and the Mughal Empire seemed capable of providing semblance of it even in the face of its obvious decline, poets still hankered for the king's attention. However, one important point to note about patronage in the Mughal period is that patronage of learning and letters was one of the expected social functions of the nobility and the established poet could look to receive patronage simply because he was an accomplished poet. An occasional panegyric of his patron and odes on special occasions was expected of him, but this was not the basis of this 'patron-client' relationship. Thus, Ghalib never considered writing occasional panegyrics for, both his Mughal and later British masters, as injurious to his self respect. But the biggest irony facing the leading poets of the times, including Ghalib, was that despite Bahadur Shah's patronage, the political condition had only left the Mughals with the sensitivity to appreciate poetry, but not much resources to financially reward those who wrote it. Ibrahim Zauq was the royal tutor and did receive financial remuneration for his services but it was not possible for the court to extend its largesse to many others. The rivalry between Ghalib (poet laureate of the city) and Zauq (poet laureate of the Mughal court) can be explained in this background.

It is not surprising to see Ghalib, invoking past in his writings, which was in sharp contrast to his own financial difficulties in the present. Ghalib's publicly stated preference for Persian over Urdu has also been explained in the background of the above phenomenon. It has been argued that, even though Urdu was the popular living language of the time, it was a product of political chaos and decline and was also not the lingua franca of the surviving imperial order. Thus, Hali noted that Ghalib did not consider writing in Urdu as an accomplishment. One of his frequent lament was that while there were admirers enough of his Urdu *ghazal*, there were none to appreciate his Persian odes. Pavan Varma opines that Ghalib's reaction was in keeping with the times: an attempt to glorify his past and assert his continued relevance in order to escape the unpalatability of the present. But unlike his predecessors and contemporaries, whose thoughts were dominated by bitter awareness of the decline of the Mughal Empire and yearning for the return of the former glory, Ghalib did not feel this loss and was prepared to come to terms with the British dominance. He was fascinated by the material achievements, on which British power was based and the possibilities for the future, which these achievements opened up.

### **Ghalib's Urdu *ghazals***

A modern biographer and critic, Muhammad Sadiq, argues that judged by the volume of his Persian verse and the just pride he took in it, Ghalib should be classified as a Persian poet. But he wrote exquisitely in Urdu and later adopted it as the medium of all his prose, including his letters. Ralph Russell, another modern biographer, considers Ghalib as one of the greatest poet of south Asia and greatest poet of two of its greatest literary languages, Persian and Urdu. It is true that in the initial phase of his Urdu writing, his poetry was heavily impregnated with Persian, but it was criticized by his friends and parodied by others. Subsequently, he destroyed much of his over Persianised compositions and wrote in a much simpler and purer style.

Be it Persian or Urdu, most of Ghalib's verses were written in the form of *ghazal*, which was the most popular of the traditional genres of verse writing. The *ghazal* consists of a series of couplets, each one of them encapsulating the entire theme. Sometimes however, the theme continues in other couplets, as witnessed in a few *ghazals* of Ghalib. But typically, every couplet of the *ghazal* is an independent, self-contained entity, thus leaving enough scope for the changing mood of the poet. One of the distinguishing feature of Urdu verse is that they are not written but said, and the poet, who says it, presents to his audience (generally in a *mushairah*) by reciting it to them, and it is only later that they appear in print. *Ghazal* is a short poem, rarely comprising less than five or more than twelve couplets. The range of themes in *ghazal* is quite

vast and any thought, which can be encapsulated in a simple couplet, can be included in its theme. However, the theme of 'love' dominates the *ghazal*. Urdu poetry, from the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards consists mostly of "poems about love" and not "love poems" as it was free from the demands of realism. Ghalib's poetry is a fine illustration of this. In verse writing the genius of a poet lies in his range of thought and the style of presentation. Ghalib excelled his predecessors as well as contemporaries in both these aspects.

For Ghalib, *ghazal* was not just an exercise in conventional themes but the expression of thought and feelings which accorded with his own. Although, all the traditional themes of *ghazal*, found a place in his verses including that of passionate, all-consuming love of a man for his mistress, Ghalib brought about innovations in the presentation of the stock character of the *ghazal* especially with respect to such themes as love and religion. In the sphere of religion or mysticism, he showed in a new light, a man's relationship with God as well as that of God's role in the universe. The distinctive, characteristic qualities of Ghalib's Urdu poetry, identified by his modern biographers are: i) a keen, un sentimental, detached observation of man, God and the universe ii) a strong sense of independence and self-respect iii) a strong passion for originality in what he has to say iv) an ability to enjoy to the last drop, everything that the life brings and v) a dry, irrepressible and unabashed humor, which he is capable of bringing to the treatment of any theme, including those, on which he feels with the greatest seriousness and intensity.

### **'Love' in Ghalib's *ghazals***

Although Ghalib wrote on diverse themes, the theme of love was dominant, which he brought out in the form of his *ghazals*. In fact the term *ghazal* itself originally meant something like 'conversations between lovers'. In a *ghazal*, the poet lover expresses his passionate love for his beloved. In the couplets of Ghalib, this aspect occurs with astonishing regularity. He writes of being overwhelmed by love, of powerlessness in the face of love, of the joy of loving even if one's love is not returned, the even greater joy if it is returned. He also speaks of compulsions to love, even if the beloved spurns him or even if it violates all the social and religious commands of the community in which the beloved lives. One of the characteristic features of Ghalib, where he seems to have broken from the traditional *ghazal* poets is that, while treating the experience of love in his poems (including his own), he could express it as a detached non-participant observer.

Another important distinguishing feature of Ghalib's poetry is the unorthodox manner in which he portrays love and its characters. The love which his *ghazals* portray is an illicit love. The poet's beloved may be someone's fiancée or wife or a courtesan or a handsome boy. Such type of love and lovers were frowned upon in the medieval Indian society (of which *ghazal* itself was a product) and such lovers invariably entailed suffering and distress. Another dimension of love, depicted in these *ghazals* is that, the beloved (she or he) may not be a human beloved at all. The poet may express love for God or for any ideal in life to which he may commit or surrender completely. Thus in a *ghazal* (including those of Ghalib), love had both the dimensions-Physical and Mystic. The poet uses a language and symbolism which enables him to speak on different meanings of love at the same time.

The depiction of earthly love in the Urdu *ghazals* of Ghalib and other contemporary poets has to be seen in the context of its legitimacy in the medieval Indian society. In that age, marriage was an alliance between families to maintain social status, and had nothing to do with passionate, romantic love. But marriage did not always prove to be a safeguard against such a love outside of it. But this love was a severe test for both the lover and the beloved and since permanent union of lovers was non-existent, love ultimately proved to be a tragedy for all concerned. It was this stressful love that provided the dominant theme of *ghazal*. In a society



where segregation of sexes was strictly followed, another outlet of love was homosexuality. In a cultured society of Ghalib's day, such love, though strongly condemned in orthodox Islam, was a common place and in practice evoked no hostile reaction. Any such emotional experience of the poet, found its expression in his poetry and so, one of the 'beloveds' of the Urdu *ghazal* could be a handsome boy. Another consequence of the segregation of sexes, along with low educational and cultural level of respectable medieval Indian women, was the institutionalization of the salon of the courtesan. In a highly conservative society, the *kothah* of the courtesan, alone provided the most easily accessible forum for men to mix socially, and without inhibition, with women. This also provided the setting for much of the symbolism and imagery of the poetic renaissance of the times. Thus, in the Urdu *ghazals*, quite often, image of the beloved became the image of a courtesan.

Another important dimension of 'love' depicted in the Urdu *ghazals*, including that of Ghalib, is the mystic love, which is often blended with the earthly love. The passionate, illicit love between two human beings is used as symbols of the similar love of the mystic lover for his God, his divine beloved. The whole structure of mystic love is built upon the deep emotional relationship of the lover with God. In this situation, the seeker of God relies on love of God for guidance without the intervention of the learned or self-proclaimed true guardians of religion. Such radical methods of the mystic lover are therefore considered by the orthodox as subversive doctrine or in an extreme form, as blasphemy. Thus the mystic lover shares same dangerous prospects as the earthly lover of a human beloved at the hands of the society. Moreover, in the *ghazal* tradition, the beloved is portrayed as extremely cruel to the lover but the lover accepts, without hesitation, all the misfortunes, including death. In many of Ghalib's *ghazals*, the expressions of earthly and mystic love are interwoven. Thus, some of his couplets can be taken in earthly sense and others in divine sense but many of them could be taken in both senses at the same time. In this way, the standard metaphor, used for human beloved proves to be appropriate metaphor for the divine beloved too. One such example of Ghalib's verse based on the above convention is:

**“Though I have passed my life in pledge to all the age's cruelties**

**Yet never was the thought of you once absent from my mind”**

By the 'you' in this couplet, Ghalib may mean a woman or God or any ideal, to which he was passionately committed or all of these things.

### **Ghalib and Religion**

Ghalib's outlook on life was a kind of revolt against restrictive morality and his ideas on religion were in opposition to those of the orthodox. At the time of his arrival in Delhi, the intellectual life of the city, as mentioned earlier, was dominated by the religious controversies between traditionalists and radical thinkers. These controversies were not confined to theologians alone, all educated Muslims were affected by it and, in general terms, allegiance would be given to one side or the other. But Ghalib's own position was characteristically different, though his closest friend, Fazl-i-Haq, was the main protagonist of the traditionalists. Ghalib did not allow his admiration of Haq to dominate his own judgment. Although we do not possess any detailed knowledge of the evolution of Ghalib's views on religion, his own attitude towards God was not always one of reverence. He shared the views expressed by preceding Persian and Urdu poets that man was a helpless puppet in God's hands, yet he is unfairly accountable to God for his actions. Such sentiments however, occur with a touch of humour in Ghalib's writings.

Ghalib's attitude on religion was akin to those of the Sufi mystic lover of God. He lived his life by principles, radically different from those of the orthodox, personified in the *ghazals* as sheikh, an elder or a religious leader. He rejects with contempt, their doctrine of prescribed conduct of life motivated by hope of reward and fear of punishment in the life to come. Thus, Ghalib writes:

“Abstinence wins no praise from me. What thought be it sincere?”

Behind it lies raw greed to win reward for virtuous deeds.”

The reference to wine (prohibited to Muslims on earth), the *saqi* (the wine server) and the tavern, occur repeatedly in his poetry, but in keeping with the best traditions of the Indo-Persian poetry, mostly in symbolic terms. Ghalib never kept the Ramzan fast and was prepared to admit it. He admitted his vices (wine drinking and gambling), ridiculed the sermonizers and in general, lived a life-style of flamboyance, whenever his financial condition permitted him to do so.

God, according to Ghalib, was not to be found in the idol in the temple or through obeisance in the mosque. The truly spiritual could not be constrained by such narrow categorization. Underlying this contempt for religious rituals was a profound eclecticism, a deep-seated conviction in the brotherhood of the human race, each of them being symbols of the divinity and love of the one almighty. Ghalib's secular ideals can be measured from his expressed desire to ultimately settle down in Banaras (most revered of the Hindu places of worship). Ghalib's contempt for established tenets went down well with the eclectic Sufi mood of the times. This eclectic mood itself had played a catalytic role in the development of the Urdu language. Although Persian was the court language of the Mughals as well as that of the Islamic orthodoxy, it never became the language of the masses. The evolution of Urdu, gaining from Persian, but drawing real substance from the idiom and vocabulary of the everyday language of the people, thus, also went a long way in bringing about a cultural synthesis.

Following most *ghazal* poets, Ghalib also uses the common mystic concept of God revealing herself/himself in the beauty of the universe and therefore equates the worship of beauty with the worship of God. The embodiment of the beauty worship could be equated with a beautiful woman or a handsome boy. Here we can get a glimpse of the symbolic use of Hinduism, as the embodiment of the worship of beauty. The orthodox Muslim opposition to the Hindus was also related to their idol worship. To the mystic thinker like Ghalib however, it is not important whether they worship idols but whether in doing so, they are expressing in their own way, a true love of God. The idol, according to Ghalib, was the symbol of irresistible beautiful mistress that a lover idolizes and adore. She, at the same time, is also the symbol of the divine beloved. Ghalib's views on religion may match with the mood of the *ghazal* of the times but it is true that his verses were not simply exercises in the conventions of the *ghazal*, but expressions of his own beliefs and practice.

### **Ghalib's Letters (Prose)**

Mirza Ghalib's literary genius was not only confined to verses but prose as well. His Urdu prose is mainly in the form of letters. He was a prolific letter writer and some scholars believe that, his place in Urdu literature would have been assured only on the basis of his letters. Hali in *Yadgar-i-Ghalib*, has even remarked that “wherever one looks, Ghalib's fame throughout India owes more to the publication of his Urdu prose (i.e. his letters) than it does to his Urdu verse or to his Persian verse or prose.” Mirza Ghalib's letters contributed immensely to the evolution of modern Urdu prose, as most were published in his lifetime. His letters provided the foundation to easy and popular Urdu. Before Ghalib, letter writing in Urdu was highly ornamental and

artificial. Ghalib changed the whole course of Urdu letter writing by keeping it simple and replacing artificial with natural. He made his letters 'talk' by using words and sentences as if he were conversing with the reader. He once wrote to a friend "I have invented a new style through which correspondence has become conversation. From a distance of a thousand miles, you can speak through your pen, and enjoy company despite separation." Although letters took some time to reach but until the institution of newspaper was introduced, it remained the most important source of dissemination of news. His letters were very informal and at times he would just write the name of the person and start the letter. This simple, direct and conversational style was definitely an innovation of Ghalib in Urdu letter writing. *Urdu-i-Hindi* and *Urdu-i-Mualla* are his two famous books of Collection of Letters.

Most of Ghalib's letters were addressed to his friends and patrons, his *shagirds* (Pupils) and admirers, belonging to all sections and classes of society. Ghalib expended a great deal of time and effort in their composition as he considered this to be a literary pursuit. Interestingly, his Hindu *shagird*, Munshi Hargopal Tufta, was the recipient of the largest number (totaling 123) of his letters. Aspiring poets also sent him their compositions to seek his advice. In his replies, he invariably put in a couplet or two of his own and gave a detailed account of how the aspiring poet was faring. Free of conventional artifice, his letters contained vivid descriptions and witty dialogues, literary and lexicographical insights, political commentary and more - all in a simple and supple language.

Thematically speaking, Ghalib's letters not only give an account of the happenings in the life of the poet but are also a live testimony to the tumultuous times that he lived in. He was a witness to the age of decline and end of the Mughal Empire and also lived to see the Revolt of 1857, and its bloody aftermath. Thus, apart from his literary significance, these letters also have a historical relevance as they provide a detailed first-hand account of the life and times of Delhi during that period. Ghalib's letters, especially those after the revolt and re-capture of Delhi by the British, reveal the poignant pain and agony of a man who sees his city and also his way of life that he so loved and admired, brutally ravaged and destroyed by the British. But more than the absence of friends and familiar faces, what hurt Ghalib the most was the absence of people who could speak his language in intellectual and emotional terms. Thus, in 1861, in one such letter he wrote to his friend "Delhi people now mean Hindus, or artisans, or soldiers, or Punjabis or Englishmen. Which of these speak the language which you are praising? .....where is Zauq? Where is Momin Khan? Two poets survive: one Azurda- and he is silent; the other Ghalib- and he is lost to himself, in a stupor. None to write poetry and to judge its worth....." In this manner, his collected letters in Urdu, provide an interesting insight in to 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial India.

## **Conclusion**

Mirza Ghalib is regarded as one among the 'four pillars' of Urdu. He became popular for his contributions to Urdu poetry and prose. He won a number of admirers for his Urdu *ghazals*. Nevertheless, his Persian compositions are also noteworthy. His letters depicting the decline of the Mughal Empire and recording the life in Delhi during the Revolt of 1857, help us to understand the contemporary history.

**Long Questions:**

1. Give a brief account of the origin of Urdu language and literature in India.
2. Account for the factors that led to the growth of Urdu literature in north India in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
3. In what sense Mirza Ghalib's Urdu *ghazal* marks a departure from the conventional Urdu verse writing?
4. Describe the concept of 'Love' as expressed in Ghalib's Urdu poetry.
5. Analyse the significance of Mirza Ghalib's letters in the promotion of modern Urdu prose.

**Suggested Readings:**

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## LESSON 3D

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# RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF VERNACULAR LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE : A SURVEY

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### Introduction

India is a multi-lingual and multi-cultural country. Her multi-linguism is an important ingredient to her multi-culturalism. India's multi-culturalism has not been an overnight or sudden development. Instead, it is rooted in her thousands of years of accumulated historical and cultural progression. This progression, in turn, has been a combined product of her frequent cultural trysts with contemporary forces which came and settled in India from outside (such as the Aryans, Turks, Afghans, Mughals, Britishers etc.) along with their diverse cultural components on one hand and India's own geo-political and cultural diversities, on the other. The genesis of India's multi-culturalism, therefore, lies in openness and a remarkable degree of her cultural permeability which has enabled (and is still enabling) integration and assimilation of vital cultural components from diverse sources.

The root of her multi-linguism is not too far from this genesis. India's linguistic plurality may also be attributed to this process of cultural synthesis, which has been so thoroughly influenced, periodically modified and continuously perfected by her own local and regional cultural variations on one hand, and her ever willingness to assimilate words, grammatical rules, literary styles and formats of languages of external cultural groups.

This chapter is an attempt to unravel aspects of otherwise a very complex process involving origin and subsequent development of Indian vernacular languages and literature. It has been divided into three sections: the **first section** deals with definition and meaning of vernacular language; the **second section** attempts to outline the origin and various stages of growth of vernacular languages in India; and the **third section** makes a survey of growth of each of the vernacular literature along with literary masters and their prose and poetic masterpieces.

## I

### Defining The Term 'Vernacular' And Its Meaning

The term vernacular has been derived from the Latin word *Vernaculus*, which literally means native or domestic. The *Illustrated Oxford Dictionary* defines the term (in its noun connotation) as 'the language or dialect of a particular country', or 'the language of a particular clan or group', or 'homely speech'. It is further defined (as an adjective) as a language of 'one's native country; not of foreign origin or of learned formation.'

It appears from the above definition that a language which is either of a foreign origin or is that of an elite group, does not qualify the application of the term. On the contrary, a language of commoners and also of local or regional origination may safely be termed as a vernacular language. In its historical context, one may presume that vernacular languages co-exist with elitist language(s) in the same human formation. An elitist language, usually, has a rigidly codified grammar, literary styles and forms. It enjoys the status of principal dialect and medium

of literary expression and has a much wider territorial application. A vernacular language, on the other hand, has much less comparative territorial application and is much less codified grammatically or otherwise.

In Europe, during the ancient times, Latin enjoyed the status of the elitist language. As the language of the Great Roman Empire, it had assumed the pan-European character. It served as the main vehicle for literary expression and was governed by rigid grammatical laws, literary forms and styles. Other European languages, such as Greek, German, English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Romanian, Italian, Russian, Bulgarian, Polish etc., merely enjoyed the vernacular status vis-à-vis Latin.

In the Indian Subcontinent, Sanskrit has been the oldest language. It has been used by the elitist circles of different eras. Strict grammatical laws, structured formats and literary styles have codified this language and its literature. Historically, it has been in application, simultaneously or separately, in all parts of north India. In comparison, other languages of India viz., Pali, Prakrit, Apbhraṃśa and a host of Indo-Aryan languages – Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Sindhi etc., (hereafter to be referred as the Indo-Aryan languages in this chapter), may only be treated as vernacular languages of north India vis-à-vis Sanskrit. In India, south of the Vindhyas, Tamil has assumed, historically, the status of a classical (elitist) language on similar parameters, as outlined above for Sanskrit. The other south Indian languages such as Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam, though, prominent in their respective localities, assume vernacular status vis-à-vis Tamil.

In this chapter, therefore, such classical languages and their literature as, Sanskrit and Tamil have deliberately been left out. This is due to the fact that the chapter intends to assess and survey vernacular and not classical languages and their respective literature. Urdu and Indo-Persian have also been left out, for these have been dealt with separately.

### **Intext-Questions**

1. The term *Vernaculus* derives its origin from  
(a) Latin      (b) Greek      (c) German      (d) French
2. Which of the following statement about the meaning of vernacular language is not correct.
  - a. It is the language of common people.
  - b. Its application is, usually, confined to a specific locality.
  - c. It has strict grammatical and stylistic codifications.
  - d. Elite circles, usually, do not use it.
3. Arrange the following south Indian languages in the order of their origins.  
(a) Telugu      (b) Tamil      (c) Malayalam      (d) Kannada
4. Arrange the following north India languages in the order of their origins.  
(a) Prakrit      (b) Pali      (c) Sindhi      (d) Apbhraṃśa
5. Find the names of at least two prominent texts written of Sanskrit and Tamil Grammar.

## II

### Origin And Development Of Vernacular Languages In India

The issue of the origin of Indian Vernacular languages has long and intensely been debated among prominent linguists. A majority of them co-relate the origin with large scale tribal migratory movements to India from outside, such as the Negrito, Austrich, Kiratas, Aryans etc. The progression of Indian languages from Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, and Apbhansha to modern Indo-Aryan languages in north India, according to their opinion, was an outcome of cross-influences of specific dialects with which these tribes had migrated to India. Similarly in south India, another set of migrants viz., the Dravidians, laid the foundation of languages, such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam as major along with a host of other minor languages.

This section is divided into three parts: **part A** lays down the general outline of the origin of the Indian vernacular; **part B** deals with roots and early development of each of the major north Indian languages; and **part C** accounts for the early development of south Indian vernaculars.

#### (A) Origin Of The Indian Vernaculars: A General Outline

Some form of language, as a means of communication, might have existed in India in her pre-Harappan age. However, the first definite evidence of a script and writing comes from the Harappan civilization. Various seals, found at different Harappan sites, bear some syllables. Historians believe these to be a part of a well crafted Harappan script. Unfortunately, till date, historians are not able to decipher this script inspite of plenty of scholarly time, space and energy devoted in its pursuance. The bulk of the earliest deciphered literature pertain to the Vedic age (1500-600 B.C.). Commonly termed as the Vedic literature, it includes the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aryanakas and Upanisads. It was followed by an era of classical Sanskrit masterpieces- the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and a series of the *Puranic* literature. Simultaneously, plenty of literature was written in other languages, as well, viz., Pali, Prakrit, Tamil etc. Thence onwards, we find continuity and proliferation of literature in various languages. Some of the prominent linguists have tried to search the roots of the north Indian vernaculars in the large scale tribal migration from West Asia from about 2500 B.C., to different parts of Asia and Europe. One of its branch migrated to North Asia and laid there the foundation of Semite group of languages. The other migrated to Europe and developed there languages such as Greek, German, French, English and others. Yet another branch migrated to South Asia, entered the North-Western India around 1500 B.C., and developed Sanskrit, the oldest of known Indian languages. On the basis of common roots of origination, dialectic and phonetic similarities, these languages are put in the family of Indo-European languages. The North Indian vernaculars have been given a comprehensive name- the Indo-Aryan languages. India, south of the Vindhyas, has also witnessed origin and gradual development of vernacular languages. Of these Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam constitute major dialects. Others like Tulu, Kodgu, Kopta, Kurukh, Malto, Gondi, Kui, Kullami and Brahui are some of the minor dialects developed therein. Linguistically, these languages have been put under three categories viz., Dravidian, Andhra and Brahui. The Dravidian languages include Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam along with a host of minor languages on the basis of common origination i.e. Tamil. The Kannada is the principal dialect of the Andhra languages along with some minor languages. Brahui developed independent of these. Historians, however, put these languages in one category viz., the Dravidian languages.

## (B) Early Development of North Indian Vernaculars

Sanskrit, the oldest of the Indian vernacular languages, remained in circulation between the fifteenth and eighth century B.C., as Vediki. It developed three major regional variants viz., the north-eastern, middle and eastern Vediki. It was followed by an era of refined Sanskrit between the eighth and fifth century B.C. This phase continued with the three major regional variants of the previous era. Due to excessive complications and classicism, which gradually crept in this language and its literature, it no longer remained a language and medium of literary expressions of common people. The next phase of vernacular development, therefore, witnessed a bifurcation of language in classical Sanskrit, used exclusively by the contemporary elitist formation in both speech and writing formats, on one hand, and Pali, a simpler and much less complicated dialect and literary medium, used by the contemporary people in general, on the other hand. This phase remained in circulation between the fifth century B.C to the beginning of the Christian era. During this phase, another regional variant i.e. the southern, came to be added to the already existing three such variants, as mentioned above.

Pali, gradually, gave way to a modified dialect, namely the Prakrit. Its marked domination as the principal dialect continued between the first and fifth century A.D. However, between the fifth and tenth century A.D., Prakrit developed Apbhhransha (corrupted form) of all its four regional variants. Therefore this era is called as the age of Apbharansha. Finally, from the tenth century onwards, the modern Indo-Aryan languages began to develop from the four regional Apbhhranshas.

Let us now analyze, in brief, the beginning and early developments of each of the north Indian vernaculars along with its prototypes. The origin and development of the modern Indo-Aryan languages, In particular, may well be comprehended through the following chart.

Region	Prakrit (A.D.100-500)	Apbhhransha (A.D. 500-1000 )	Modern Indo-Aryan Languages (A.D. 1000-Till present)
1. Sindh	Brachada	Brachada	Sindhi
2. Multan and adjoining region	Kekay	Kekay	Lehanda/Multani (Western Punjabi)
3. Modern Punjab	Takka	Takka	Punjabi
4. Madhya Pradesh	Saurasheni	Saurasheni	Gujarati, Rajasthani western (Paschimi) Hindi, Pahari
5. Awadh	Ardha-Magadhi	Ardha-Magadhi	Purvi (Eastern) Hindi
6. Eastern India	Magadhi	Magadhi	Bihari, Assamese, Bangla & Oriya
7. Maharashtra	Maharashtri	Maharashtri	Marathi

Source: Bholanath Tiwari, '**Bhartiya Bhashaon Ka Udbhava Aur Vikas**', in Dr. Nagendra (ed.), *Bhartiya Sahitya ka Samekit Itihas*, p.79, Hindi Madhyam Karyanvaya Nideshalaya, Delhi University., 1989



## **Prakrit**

Prakrit emerged as a dialect, different from Sanskrit, as early as the Vedic age. By the time of the Buddha, the masses began to speak this language, which was a much simpler language in comparison to Sanskrit. Gradually, several associated dialects developed from Prakrit, such as Pali, Magadhi, Ardha-Magadhi, Sauraseni, Maharashtri etc.. Pali is one of the important variants of the early Prakrit. Spoken probably in the region of Sanchi and Ujjaini, it became the language of the Sthaviravadin Buddhism. Magadhi was the official language of the Mauryan court. The majority of the Ashokan edicts were inscribed in this language. The Ardha-Magadhi, probably a later hybrid of Magadhi under the influence of the western Prakrit, eventually, became the sacred language of Jaina monks. Sauraseni, a dialect originally from the western Uttar Pradesh, was particularly used in drama for the speech of women and respectable people of the lower orders. Maharashtri was spoken in the north-western Deccan. It was primarily a literary language, especially, popular for lyrical songs.

### **1. Apbhransha**

It was essentially a vernacular of the western India. Some of its features have been noted in the *Panchatantra* of Bhasa (3<sup>rd</sup> c.A.D.). Scholars believe that the beginning of the use of this speech may be traced in the drama *Sariputraprakarna* of Ashvaghosha. The *Mudrarakshasa* of Vishakhadatta also shows familiarity with this language. The author calls it Dhakki. This vernacular was used by jaina writers of Gujrat and Rajasthan for the composition of their poetry.

### **2. Sindhi**

The word Sindhi is connected to Sindh. Etymologists believe that it developed from its original Sid or Sit and began to be referred to the Indus river (Sindhu) and its adjoining tract. The dialect of this region, eventually, came to be referred as Sindhi. As evident from the chart, its prototype existed as Brachada during both the Prakrit and Apbhransha phases. From about A.D 1000., it began to assume the form of modern Sindhi. Some of the early texts, such as Bharat's *Natyashastra* (2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.D.), Chinese travel accounts (7<sup>th</sup> c.A.D.) and the *Kuvalayamala* (8<sup>th</sup> c.A.D.) etc., make sporadic references to Sindhi as a language. It became a regular literary medium from the fourteenth century onwards.

### **3. Lehanda/Multani (Western Punjabi)**

Lehanda literally means west or sunset. It is also, therefore, known as 'Paschimi' (Western). It developed as the principal dialect of western Punjab (Multan, now in Pakistan). Abul Fazl, in his *Ain-i-Akbari*, calls this language as Multani. It may be inferred from the chart that it developed from its prototype-Kekay, through the Prakrit and Apbhransha Phases.

### **4. Punjabi**

The term originated from the Persian word Punjab, meaning 'the region/land of five rivers', (viz., Sutluj, Ravi, Bias, Chenab, and Jhelum). The term Punjabi, therefore, refers to the principal language developed in this region. It is clearly demonstrated in the chart that it developed from its proto-type Takka through its Prakrit and Apbhransha phases. From 1000 A.D. onward, it began to assume its present modern form. Since, the dialect is principally spoken by the Sikh community, it is also known as 'Sikkhi', or 'Khalshi'. Further, on the basis of use of a particular script in this language, it is also known as 'Gurumukhi'.

## 5. Gujarati

The name Gujarati developed from its original Gujarat, which in turn, is a modified form of the term 'Gurjara', one of the branches of the Saka tribe which came to India at about fifth century A.D. From A.D 1000 the name Gujarat began to be applied to the specific territory north and south of the Mount Abu. Surprisingly, the term Gujarati as a language is first used as late as the second half of the seventeenth century by Premanand (1649-1714) in his *Dasham Skandha*. As is obvious, Gujarati developed from Saurasheni through both the Prakrit and Apbhransha phases. The beginning of Gujarati literature is believed to be from the twelfth century onwards.

## 6. Rajasthani

Like Gujarati, it also developed through the Saurasheni Prakrit and Apbhransha phases. Linguists believe that the early Rajasthani formed one of the dialect groups of modern Hindi as well. They further point out that some of the hilly dialects, such as Himachali, Kumaoni, Garhwali etc., have originally been developed by the people of Rajasthan after they migrated to these areas.

## 7. Hindi

In its present form, it is a collection of 18 dialects. Its early development is marked by two principal forms viz., the western (Gujarati & Rajasthani variants) and the eastern (in the variants of Bengali, Assamese and Oriya) Hindi. It also developed in the form of Pahari Hindi, with Nepali being the dominant language of this group.

Of the 18 dialects, three viz., the Khariboli, Brajbhasha and Awadhi are particularly notable from the perspective of commendable literature these developed and thereby immensely contributed to the growth of modern Hindi. The Khariboli originated at around A.D 100 from a local dialect called Kauravi, particularly spoken in Meerut and adjoining region. Components of other dialects, such as Bangla, Punjabi, Braj etc., may also be found in it in their original or modified forms. Some eminent literary personalities like Gorakhnath, Amir Khushrau, Ramananda, Kabir, Raidas and Namdev etc., extensively used Khariboli in their writings.

The Brajbhasha also developed from Saurasheni Apbhransha. The term 'Braja' literally means pasture land, symbolizing the western Ganga - Yamuna Doab. The language developed therein, eventually, employed the same term as its name. Some of the finest early literary specimen of this language may be seen in the writings of Surdas, Nandadas, Narottamdas, Nabhadas, Keshavadas, Raskhan, Bihari, Bhushan, Deva, Ghanananda etc.

Awadhi, also known as the eastern Hindi, originated from 'Koshali, the local dialect of Koshal (one of the Sixteen Janapadas around 6<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.). Conventionally, it is believed to have originated from Ardha-Magadhi. The earliest traces of Awadhi is found in a group of inscriptions between 200 B.C. and A.D 100, namely Sohgaoura, Sarnath, Rumindei, Khairagarh etc. Hemachandra, Malik Muhammad Jayasi, Kabir, Tulsidas etc., were some of the prominent literary figures who used Awadhi in their writings.

## 8. Bangla (Bengali)

Etymologically, the term originated from Banga, the ancient name of Bengal. It developed through the Prakrit and Apbhransha eastern Magadhi. Bengali is also variously known as 'Gaudi', 'Prakrit', 'Magadhi', 'Gaulli', etc. It is quoted as 'Gaulli' in the *Kuvalayamala*, the Eighth century text. The modern Bangla developed as a language from 1000 A.D. It became a literary medium from the twelfth century onwards.

## 9. Assamese

Assamese is the principal dialect of Assam. The name Assam (previously also known as Pragjyotishpur and kamarupa) is believed to have its root in its medieval Kingdom founded by the Ahom tribe. From Ahom, developed Assam and from the latter, developed the name of the principal dialect of this region. The Assamese originated from the north-eastern Apbhransha of Magadhi. The earliest traces of writing in Assamese appear in the *Prahladacharita*, of Hema Saraswati.

## 10. Oriya

It developed from the southern apbhransha of Magadhi. It is the principal dialect of Orissa and certain portions of Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. It is also variously known as 'Odiya', 'Utkali', and 'Odri'. It is referred as 'Udra' in Bharat's *Natyashastra* (2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.D.). The first instance of its use as a modern language is found in the Urgama inscription (105 A.D.) of Anantavarman.

## 11. Kashmiri

Linguists believe that along with the Aryans, another sub-branch of the Indo-European family had entered India through a place called Chitral and settled in Kashmir and the adjoining region of Gilgit and Dardistan. Kashmiri language, according to these scholars, developed from its root Darad Paishachi, the language developed in this region. Darad Paishachi developed into paishachi Prakrit, which in turn, entered the next stage of evolution as Paishachi Apbhransha. Eventually, from about the twelfth century A.D., the modern Kashmiri began to assume its present form.

## 12. Marathi

The word developed from its root Maharashtri. It was the principal dialect of the present Maharashtra in its Prakrit and Apbhransha variants, between the first to tenth century A.D. The earliest reference to Marathi as a language is found in the *Kuvalayamala*. Subsequently, it has developed nearly 39 dialects and sub-dialects. Konkani is probably one of the most important of these dialects, although it has almost assumed the status of an independent language in recent years. Marathi became a medium of literature from the twelfth century onwards.

### (C) Rise and Development of South Indian Vernacular Languages

As we have noted above, south Indian vernacular languages comprise major dialects like Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam, along with a number of minor dialects. Tamil is spoken principally in the region from Cape Comorin to Chittoor; Kannada in Mysore and parts of Hyderabad; Telugu, from Chennai northward to the border of Orissa; and Malayalam in Malabar (Kerala).

**1. Tamil** Tamil is the oldest of the Dravidian languages. In its literal sense, the word Tamil symbolizes sweet attribute of this language. It is also known as Urva and Malabar. The vast literature produced in south India around the beginning of the Christian era as a result of the three Sangam (assembly of Tamil poets), is the first major literary specimen of Tamil. The *Tolkapiyam*, (2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.D) text on grammar, refers Tamil in a definite sense of language. As it is indicated elsewhere, this language is not treated in this chapter in detail, for reasons already been explained.

**2. Kannada** It is also known as Karnat, Karnataki, Kannadi, Kanari, Kenara, etc. Some of the early texts e.g., the *Mahabharata*, and the *Paishachi Brihatkatha* of Gunadhya use some of the above-mentioned names for this language. Etymological root of the term Kannada is somewhat disputed. It has been interpreted as the region of 'black soil', 'fragrance', or 'high attitude'. The earliest specimen of Kannada is found in a prose rock inscription found at Halmidi.

**3. Telugu** Linguists argue that Telugu has originated from Andhra group of dialects. The term Andhra has been referred in the context of a tribe of this locality in some of the early texts such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The etymological root of Telugu is also disputed. Some scholars believe it originated from the word Trilinga i.e. three hills, symbolizing Kaleshwar, Shrishella and Mimeshwara which formed the boundary of Andhra Pradesh. Some other scholars believe that it is the modified form of the word Telugu which literally means southern language. The earliest use of Telugu may be noticed in some seventh century rock inscriptions of this region. Regular literature began to be produced in this medium only from the twelfth century A.D. onwards.

**4. Malayalam** Originally, Malayalam remained an integral part of Tamil for long. It was from the fourth century onwards that it began a gradual branching off from Tamil. The term Malayalam literally means hilly region. A good part of its vocabulary still is indistinguishable from the early Tamil roots. Of the prominent south Indian languages, it has been the last to begin literary activities.

## INTEXT-QUESTIONS

1. Which among the following was the official language of the Mauryan court?

(a) Sauraseni (b) Magadhi (c) Maharashtri (d) Pali.

2. Which of the following has been called as Multani by Abul Fazl

in his *Ain-I Akbari* ?

(a) Sindhi (b) Hindi (c) Lehanda (d) Gujarati.

3. Which one among the following is associated to Kauravi, a local dialect spoken in Meerut?

(a) the Khariboli (b) Brajbhasha (c) Awadhi (d) Aadhunik Hindi.

4. Which one among the following has its roots in Darad Paishachi?

(a) Marathi (b) Kashmiri (c) Oriya (d) Bangla.

5. Which one of the following south Indian languages was the last to begin literary activities?

(a) Telugu (b) Kannada (c) Malayalam (d) Tamil.

### III

## GROWTH OF VERNACULAR LITERATURE: A SURVEY

Having discussed the origin and early development of Indian vernacular language, it is imperative to turn our attention towards production of bulk-loads of literature in each of these vernaculars by eminent literary stalwarts of successive generations. Emanating eventually in the form of poetry, each vernacular has exhibited broadly two distinct themes: religious and secular. In the category of religious literature, major texts were either translated or adapted from classical texts of other languages, mostly Sanskrit, or were own original compositions in a particular vernacular. Early poetic compositions in almost all of the Indian vernaculars centered on religious and mystical themes. This was largely due to the casting influence of the medieval socio-religious reform movements. The Bhakti and Sufi movements had brought the whole of the Indian Subcontinent under their sway. The Bhakta and Sufi saints lived and worked in the midst of the common people. They needed to reach out to them (common people) in order to spread their socio-religious and philosophical messages. They, therefore, chose local vernaculars for their speech and writings for the maximum impact. Such spirited enterprises gave tremendous boost to the growth of vernacular literature of India. The secular poetic compositions also show two broad trends: first, poetic compositions dealing with grammar or literary styles, and second, translations/original writings on scientific and mathematical themes.

The medieval literature of Indian vernacular also received strong impetus from court-patronages. Eminent poets and writers were promoted by various royal courts through generous gifts and grants. Telugu, for instance, received tremendous support from Krishna Deva Raya (the Vijayanagar ruler), whose court was adorned by the 'Ashta-diggaja', or eight great learned men of Telugu. Other vernaculars of India also received similar royal support.

In its modern form, various forms of prose writings viz.,-long essays, novels, short-stories, playwright, newspapers, periodicals and journals etc. have developed as specialized form of literary works in almost all major vernaculars of India. Poetry is still an important area of literary works. Themes, metres and tone and tenor of poems have assumed the character of the modern age poetry. Whether prose or poetry, vernacular writings in India have significantly been influenced by modern course of Indian historical developments. Thus, the advent of the European trading companies in general and the British East India Company in particular, activities of various Christian missionaries in various parts of the country, the course of freedom movement, emergence of modern socio-religious intelligentsia etc., have tremendously influenced and contributed to the multifarious growth of Indian vernaculars.

Let us make a survey of each of the major Indian vernaculars.

#### 1. Pali

Originally, it meant 'a series, or a line'. Later, it came to indicate the sacred words of the Buddha, as also the texts which embodied the Buddhist teachings. It signifies the language of the Buddhist texts. Needless to say, therefore, Pali literature multiplied mostly around the conduct and teachings of the Sthaviravadin Buddhism.

As it stands today, it includes the scriptures, commentaries and semi-canonical texts. It consists of three sections called *Pitakas* (baskets): the *Vinaya* ("conduct"), the *Sutta* ("Sermon") and the *Abhidhamma* ("Metaphysics").

The *Vinayapitaka* contains the Buddha's pronouncements, spelling out rules for the conduct of the monastic order. With each such rule, the circumstances, which led the Buddha to pronounce it, is also given. The *Sutta Pitaka* is the largest and the most important of these *Pitakas*. It has five *Nikayas* (Chapters).

- (i) *Digha* (Long) *Nikaya*, a collection of long sermons ascribed to the Buddha.
- (ii) *Majjhime* (Medium) *Nikaya*, shorter sermons are placed in this group.
- (iii) *Samyukta* (Connected) *Nikaya*, collections of brief pronouncements on kindred topics.
- (iv) *Anguttara* (Graduated) *Nikaya*, a collection of over 2000 brief statements arranged in eleven sections on the basis of the graduated numbers of topics treated in these.
- (v) *Khuddaka* (Minor) *Nikaya*, miscellaneous works in prose and verse viz., the *Dhammapada* ("Verses on Virtue"), the *Theragatha* and the *Therigatha* ("Hymns of the Elder Monks and Nuns") and the *Jatakas*, a collection of over 500 poems briefly outlining folk-tales and other stories to be told in the words of a narrator etc..

The third *Pitaka* consists of a number of works on Buddhist psychology and metaphysics. The most important of these books is the *Kathavatthu*, ascribed to Tissa Mogaliputta (the Buddhist monk who presided the third Buddhist council at Pataliputra). In the category of the semi-canonical works, some of the major Pali works are the "Questions of Menander" (*Milinda – Panha*), an account of the discussions of the Greco-Bactrian king Menander and the monk Nagasena; verse chronicles like the *Dipavamsa* ("the Island Chronicle"), the *Mahavamsa* ("Great Chronicle") and the *culavamsa* ("Lesser Chronicle"). These chronicles not only portray the history of Buddhism in Ceylon, but also give valuable information on political and social history.

## 2. Prakrit

From the earliest times down to the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., inscriptions were composed exclusively in Prakrit. The foremost among these are the Asokan inscriptions. Later on, many significant literary texts were written in this language.

Jaina canonical works occupy a very important place in Prakrit literature. The first attempts to systematize the preachings of Mahavir were made in Patalipurtra council in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.; but they were finally rearranged, redacted and committed to writing in the Vallabhi council in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The canonical texts were composed in the Ardhamagadhi speech. Some of the important Jaina texts are-the *Acaranga sutra*, which deals with monastic codes, *Nayadhammakaha*, collection of Mahavir's teachings, *Bhagavatisutra*, which sheds some light on Mahavir's life..., and the list goes upto twelve such texts called *Angas*. Each *Anga* has an *Upanga*. Later on, many commentaries were also written on these *Angas* and *Upangas*.

A number of other important works were also written in Prakrit. Thus *Setubandha* of Pravarasena, describing Rama's Ceylonese expedition, is an important poem in Prakrit. Similarly, *Gauda-Vaho* of the 8<sup>th</sup> century poet Vakpati, is another important Prakrit text which describes the exploits of Yashovardhan, the king of Kanyakubja. Certain dramas, technically called *Sattakas*, were exclusively composed in this language. The *Karpuramanjari* (c. A.D. 900) of Rajasekhara is the most important work of this type. Anthologies of detached stanzas on love and maxims are found abundantly in this literature. The *Gathasaptasati* of the Satavahana king Hala, which comprises about 700 stanzas about love depicting the varied phases of south Indian rural life. Narrative literature such as the *Brihatkatha* of Gunadhya, are also fairly extensive in

Prakrit. Among the scientific works, lexicographical works such as the *Paiyalacchinamamala* (A.D. 972-73) by Dhanapada and the *Desinamamala* by Hemachandra, are important Prakrit literary works.

### 3. Apbhransha

We have noted that the traces of this speech began to appear from the beginning of the Christian era. From the tenth century onwards, Jaina monks and Buddhist writers began to utilize this medium for their literary expressions. The metre *Doha*, peculiar to this language was adopted as a powerful form of expression of religious and philosophical thoughts. Literary works like the *Paramatmaprakasha* and the *Yogasara* by Joindu, the *Pahudadoha* by Ramosimha (10<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.) and the *Vairagyasara* by Subhacharya are some of the important Jain texts in Apbhransha. Stray poems dealing with morals, maxims, ethics, religion, discourses and legends are very commonly found in this language. The *Kirtilata* of Vidyapati (14<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.) is a major literary work in Apbhransha.

### 4. Modern Indo-Aryan Vernacular Literature

#### i. Assamese

The earliest traces of Assamese are found in the writings of the Siddha cult of Buddhism during the eighth century A.D. However, Assamese became a vehicle of literary expression only from the twelfth century A.D. The first major writings were confined to the genre of rendering translations of popular Sanskrit texts such as the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavat Gita* or particular episodes therefrom, into Assamese. Hema Saraswati's *Prahladcharita* and *Hara-Gauri Samvada*, Harihara Vipra's *Babruvahanar Yudha* and *Lava Kusas Yudha* were some of the major works in this genre. Madhava Kandli and Kaviratha Sarasvati were other prominent literary persons of this era. Later on too, such religious works continued to be composed or translated from the Sanskrit original into Assamese. Kaviraja Chakravarti's *Brahmavaivarta Purbha* (c. 17<sup>th</sup> c.A.D.), is a major example of this pursuit. The *Vishnu Purana*, the *Bhagavat Purana* and the *Harivamsa* were translated by Gopal Chandra Dwija (c. 17<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.) whereas Bhattadeva translated the *Bhagavat Gita*.

Some of the non-religious works were also translated into Assamese. These included poetical romances, like the *Mrigavati Charita*, *Madhava- Sulochana* and *Sakuntala Kavya*. Besides, many Sanskrit works on medicine, astronomy, arithmetic, grammar, architecture etc. were also translated.

The whole of Assam passed under the sway of the strong Vaishnava movement during the fifteenth and sixteenth century A.D. Sankaradeva (1459-1569) and Madhavadeva (1489-1596) were the key architects of the Assamese Vaishnava movement. They made rich contributions to the development of the Assamese literature. The *Kirtana-Ghosha Ghosha* of Sankaradeva is known as the Bible of the Assamese Vaishnava literature. It is an anthology of devotional songs. Madhavadeva's *Rajasuya* depicted organization of this sacrifice by the Pandavas (an episode from the *Mahabharata*).

A notable feature of Assamese poetry of this era was the emergence of a new form of poetry called the *Charitaputhis* particularly from the second half of the sixteenth century. The *Katha-Guru Charita*, the biography of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva, compiled in the second half of the seventeenth century is a monumental work in this genre.

The Assamese prose began to develop from the sixteenth century A.D. Sankaradeva was also a playwright, an actor and a musician of repute besides being a poet. He composed a number of one act plays interspersed with songs. These are known as *Ankiya nats* in Assam. Bhattadeva (1558-1638) translated the *Bhagavat Gita* in prose. The *Buranjis*, the Chronicles of the Ahom court emerged as the highly developed form of prose literature containing periodical reports, judicial and revenue records, diplomatic correspondence etc.

Apart from the strong Vaishnava movement, court patronages, extended to prominent literary personalities of this era, was another important factor which provided a great impetus to the proliferation of the Assamese literature. The famous Hema Sarasvati lived in the court of Durlabh Narayana, a king in western Assam around the beginning of the thirteenth century. Madhava Kandali was patronized by Mahamanikya, the king of Chachar. The Ahom Kings also extended patronage to eminent Assamese poets and writers between the sixteenth and eighteenth century A.D.

The Modern Age of Assamese literature set in with the British occupation of Assam in the nineteenth century. Subsequent to it, a large number of American Baptist missionaries, such as Rev. N. Brown, O.T. cotter, M. Bronson, W.M. Ward etc., came and settled in Assam. In order to spread the message of the Christ, they learnt the local vernacular and began large scale publication works in Assamese. The *Arunodaya*, a monthly periodical was started by them in 1846. Works on Assamese grammar, dictionaries, journals were published in large numbers. Hemachandra Barua's *Hemakosha*, an important Anglo-Assamese dictionary was published during this period. *Jonaki*, an Assamese journal was started in 1889 by a group of Assamese in Calcutta.

The last hundred years have been an era of unequalled enthusiasm for Assamese literature. The old *nataka* form has been replaced by new type of drama. Similarly, the old Kavya form has started giving way to the new age poetry of the English romantic type. Rajani. Bardoli (novelist), B.K. Kakati (essay writer), L.N. Benzbarua and Hema Gosain (new age poets), Hemchandra and Gunabhirain Barua (playwright) have been contributing tremendously in their respective areas of literature and the process continues unabated.

## ii. Bengali

Bengali literature traces its origin to some *Charyapadas* (folk songs), written between the tenth and twelfth century A.D., by the followers of the Sahaja cult of Buddhism. It was followed by the blossoming of the medieval phase of Bengali literature between the fourteenth and the eighteenth century. This phase exhibited three major trends: (1) Vaishnava poetry (2) translations and adaptations from classical Sanskrit texts and (3) Mangala Kavya. The eighteenth century, from this perspective, is viewed as a period of decadence as the literature of this period lacked freshness and vigor. The British occupation of Bengal, establishment of British administration, introduction of English education and its impact on the receptive Bengali mind and activities of Christian missionaries in Bengal etc., were some of the important factors which heralded the advent of the modern age in the realm of Bengali literature, manifesting in the form of new age poetry, plays, novels, short-stories, journals, periodicals etc.

Chandidasa (15<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.) was the first of the Vaishnava poets of Bengal. His numerous devotional lyrics tremendously influenced the next generation of Bengali bhakta-poets and their literary compositions. Similar influence was commanded by Vidyapati. Although, his own language was Maithili, yet his poems were mostly observed into Bengali. The central figure of the Bengali Vaishnava movement and the architect of medieval Bengali literature was Shri



Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1533). He composed numerous bhajanas which along with his life and activities became the focal point of Bengali Vaishnava literature during the succeeding centuries. A host of Vaishnava poets, such as Murarigupta, Narahari Sarkar, Ramananda Basu, Shekhara etc., wrote excellent poetry. A number of biographical texts were written, of which Krishnadasa Kaviraja's *Chaitanyamritam* is regarded a monumental work.

Many Sanskrit texts were translated or adapted in Bengali. Kirtivasa Ojha rendered Bengali translation of the *Ramayana*. Similarly, Kashiram translated the *Mahabharata*. Maladhar Basu Gunaraja Khan wrote the famous *Srikrishnavijaya*, which is essentially a Bengali adaptation of the *Bhagavata Purana*.

The Mangal Kavya was a peculiar poetic form of medieval Bengal, deeply rooted to the life of the common mass. These narratives were produced in sizeable quantity. Manikdaya and Mukundaram were some of the leading exponent of this genre of Bengali literature.

The modern Bengali literature has been developing both in terms of quantity and variety of literary forms. The latter has multiplied in the form of new age poetry and prose. The prose form has further proliferated in newer forms like drama, fiction (novel), newspapers, periodicals & journals etc. Michael Madhusudan Das (1824-1873) was a notable poet of this age, whose magnum opus *Meghanadavadha* is reflective of the new age poetry. The earliest Bengali prose works were written by a Baptist missionary William Carey (1761-1834) and some of his contemporaries like Ramram Basu, and Mrityunjaya Vidyalankara. The Baptist missionary of Serampore started the first Bengali newspaper, a weekly named *Samachara Darpana*, in A.D 1818. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a leading literary luminary of this era whose *Vedantagrantha* written in A.D 1815 ,is perhaps the most lucid work of the early Bengali prose. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, through his prose writings, contributed so much to this literature that he is regarded as the 'father of the literary prose in Bengali.'

In the last hundred years, the modern Bengali literature has been taken to newer heights in all of its literary forms. This age has produced great names in the field of literature. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894 ), wrote masterpieces such as the *Anandmath* , *Devi Chaudhrani* etc. and emerged as one of the best writers of modern Bengali fiction. Rabindranath Tagore's (1861-1941) poems and writings such as *Gitanjali*, *Gora*, *Ghore-Baire* etc. have accorded unprecedented height to it. Swarnakumari Devi (1855-1932), a daughter of Debendranath Tagore, by virtue of her writings, emerged as the first notable woman writer in Bengali. Sarat Chandra Chatterjee (1876-1938) emerged as one of the greatest Bengali novelists whose *Devdas* and *Parineeta* are still counted amongst the best of the Bengali novels. The list of such literary giants and the pace of development of modern Bengali literature both, are growing in leaps and bound in the present times.

### iii. Gujarati

The beginning of Gujarati literature is also traced to conventional folk songs of the region. The first phase in the development of Gujarati literature from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century, is characterized by two main literary forms, viz., the *Prabhandha* or the narrative poem and the *Muktaka* or the shorter poem. The period between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century may be assumed as the second phase in the development of this literature. As in other places of India and with other vernaculars, decadence also set in the life and literature of Gujarat during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Gujarati literature entered its modern era, developing and perfecting various literary genres, such as new age poetry, drama, novel, short stories, essays etc.

The first literary work distinctly in Gujarati was *Bharatesvarabahubali* rasa of Salibhadra. Soon, it developed the *Prabandha* and *Muktaka* genres of poetry. Many heroic and poetic romances and *Rasas*, or long poems were composed in the prabandha style. The *Kanhada-de-prabandha* of Padmanabha (c. A.D. 1456), narrates Gujarat's heroic stand against the Muslim invaders and the fall of Somnath. In these poems romantic fiction is interspersed with historical facts. The *Sadayavatsa Katha* of Bhima (c. A.D. 1410) falls in the category of poetical romance, which is a pure fiction, based on popular legends, with exaggerated descriptions of love and adventure. The *Revantagiri rasa* of Vijayasena is a specimen of the *rasa* literature. Such works are more true to contemporary life in spite of their mythical character.

The Muktaka literature also registered steady growth. It developed a peculiar form, namely, the *Phagu*, which meant a short poem with separation (*Viraha*) as its main theme. The *Phagu* composers such as, Rajashekhara, Jayashekhara and Somashekhara dealt, for example, with the most popular theme of that era in their respective *Phagus*, i.e., the tragic love of Rajala for Neminatha.

From the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Gujarat began to be swept across by powerful currents of Vaishnava Bhakti movements. The major strain in the literature of this period is religious and mystical. Some of the major poets of this era were Narasimha Mehta (c.1500-1580.), and Bhalana (c.1426-1500). Narasimha Mehta, on account of the richness of his imagination and the variety of his creative activity, is considered as the father of Gujarati poetry. Bhalana and Akho also made rich contributions to this literature with their distinct styles of poetry. Premananda Bhatta, who may be described as the greatest poet of Gujarat of all times, actually came much later, i.e., the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. About fifty-seven works, covering an enormous variety of literary themes and forms, are ascribed to him.

The modern period in Gujarati literature begins from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In poetry, works of eminent poets like Dalpatram Dahyabhai (c.1820-1898), Narsinhrao, B.Divetiyas (c.1859-1937), Manishankar Kant, Nanalal, Balvantrai etc., heralded the onset of the modern period. Narsinhrao's *Kusumamala* (1887) introduced the western lyric as the principal form of poetic expressions in Gujarati. The Persian *Ghazal* began to be used extensively along with folk songs. Nanalal composed exquisite folk songs and is regarded as the greatest lyric poets of modern Gujarati. A new trend set in by 1930, when a new generation of poets under the influence of Gandhism began to compose poems and songs with national liberation as the central theme.

The modern Gujarati prose also developed on similar lines. Govardhanran Tripathi's (C.1855-1907), four-decker *Sarasvatichandra* has the quest for the national self as its central theme. Ramanlal Desai's *Divyachaksu* vividly portrays the picture of the Civil Disobedience Movement. K.M. Munshi (1888-1971) enlarged the scope of fiction writing through his historical novels. Pannalal Patel excelled in the regional novel. Even, Mahatama Gandhi made immense contributions to the modern Gujarati prose through his writings. Besides, a vast number of articles and notes, he wrote *Hind Swaraj*, *Atmakatha*, *Dakshina Africana Satyagrahno Itihasa*, *Arogyani Chawi* etc.

Modern Gujarati literature has also made forays into the genres of short story and playwright. Gaurishankar Govardhanram Joshi is regarded as a master short-story teller. His *Dhumketu* reflects his command over this art. Ramnarayan Pathak is another master of the Gujarati short story. Similarly, emulation of western playwrights began as early as the eighteen-fifties. Ramanbhai, K.M. Munshi, Chandravadan Mehta and Yashwant Mehta are some big names in this genre of writing. Ramanbhai's *Rai no Parvat* is considered to be the best dramatic work in this language.

#### iv. Oriya

The earliest traces of Oriya writings appear in the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards in the form of short lyrics and satirical poems. The Oriya literature first assumed a proper shape and a definite character through the compositions of the great poet Saraladasa, who wrote the Oriya *Mahabharata* in the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D., and the literary works of the five associates (*Pancha Sakha*) of which Balaramadasa and Jagannathadasa, were the most important literary figures.

The period between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. is regarded as the medieval phase of the Oriya literature. Normally, two trends are visible in this period: (i) court poetry with emphasis on ornament and intellectual fancy, and (ii) Vaishnava poetry which laid strong emphasis upon love. However, these two trends were quite often mixed up: the court poets adopted Vaishnava themes and the Vaishnavas indulged in the literary sports of the court poets. *Upendra Bhanja* (1670-1720) was the most important poet of the first category, whose compositions made invaluable contributions towards the development of Oriya poetry. The Vaishnava poets of Orissa were under tremendous influence of the Bhakti movement of Sri Chaitanya. This group was represented by composers like Dinakrishnadasa, Abhimanyu Samanta Simhara and Kavisurya Baladeva. The *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata-Gita* were the invariable sources of material. The *Bidagdha Chintamani* of Abhimanyu Samanta Simhara, is a leading example of the writings of this group.

The modern age set in Oriya literature in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The contact with the west through English education brought about a radical change in Oriya literature. Prose literature began to develop sinceforth in various forms, such as, novels, dramas, short stories, journals etc. The modern Oriya literature also came under the influence of the nationalist movement for freedom and Gandhism.

Radhanath Ray (1849-1908), regarded as the father of Oriya poetry, Madhusudan Rao (1853-1912), Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1918) etc., have heralded the pace of the onset of the modern era in Oriya literature. Radhanath Ray's compositions exhibit influence of western ideas. Senapati, who developed Oriya prose, portrayed in his compositions, grassroots accounts of rural life.

Some literary groups, organizations and their activities are also contributing to the development of modern Oriya literature. The Utkal union conference of 1903, founded by Madhusudan Das and the Satyavadi group of writers, a product of the nationalist movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century etc, were some of such groups/organizations. *The Prachi Samiti*, worked in the field of research and brought to light a number of ancient works. Vishwanatha Kara and Nilamani Vidyaratna started their magazines in Oriya. Gopala Chandra Praharaja produced a monumental *Bhasa Kosha*, a multi-lingual dictionary. This multifaceted growth of modern Oriya literature continues unabated.

#### v. Marathi

Ever since its emergence in the latter half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the Marathi literature betrayed profound religious and philosophical fervor, which continued till the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D. From the 17<sup>th</sup> century, however, we begin to find secular compositions. Such works found expressions in the *Povadas*, a poetic genre, a kind of ballad describing the lightning warfare and selfless valor of the Marathas, and also *Lavanis*, another poetic genre, romantic in

character with a deeper appeal to the erotic sentiments. Another genre of writing developed and dominated the Marathi literature from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century was *Bakhars* or chronicles of historical events. The beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the advent of modern age in this literature as well. Biographies (both in prose and verse), works on Marathi grammar, dictionaries, newspapers, periodicals, essays, historical novels, dramas and satirical writings, etc., began to be produced on a large scale, besides the continued swarming of new age poetry.

The first three hundreds years of the Marathi literature was dominated by religious and philosophical themes. Mukundaraja was a very important poet of this age who wrote primarily for the masses in chaste popular language. His *Vivek-Sindhu* is one of the finest specimen of the early Marathi literature. The poet- saints of the Mahanubhava cult, by virtue of their marked contribution to Marathi poetry and prose, are regarded as the builders of early Marathi literature. These poet -saints composed seven long poems. They also produced sizeable prose literature- mainly biographical or philosophical in character. Some of the important prose works are the *Lila Charita*, the biography of the founder saint of this cult Chakradhara ,the *Govinda Prabhu Charita*, the biography of Govinda Prabhu, the preceptor of Chakradhara, and the *Siddhanta Sutra Patha*, which contains sermons regarding day to day life.

The next stage of Marathi literature witnessed towering personalities, such as Jnanadeva, Namdev, Eknatha and Tukarama etc. Jnanadeva's literary skills and philosophical depth are aptly reflected in his *Bhavartha-Dipika*, popularly known as *Jnaneshvari*, and the *Amritanubhava*. The poetic compositions of other saints Eknath and Tukarama reached to common people in their own language and left deep imprint onto their thoughts and minds. Tukaram is particularly known for his *Abhanga* or short lyrical poems, which made direct appeal to the people through the intensity of their lyrical quality. Ramdas Samrath, the great saint preceptor of Shivaji, was another literary Stalwart of this age. His *Dasabodha*, reflected a combination of devotional and religious fervor and liberation and national reconstruction. The last great poet of this age was Vamana Pandita, who composed poetry in an ornate Sanskritized style.

The latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D., witnessed beginning of the new age Marathi poetry. K.K. Damle (also known as Keshavasuta) created new norms in the poetry of love, nature, social consciousness and neo-mysticism. By 1930, a group of poets known as the *Ravi Kirana Mandal* popularized many traditions of simple Marathi poetry. Madhav Tryambak Patvardhan and Yashvant Dinkar Pendharkar were the lead composers of this group. The earlier *Povadas* and *Lovanis*, however, continued alongside. The former harped on the Maratha glory of the Peshwa courts and the latter continued to pick up love themes.

New age Marathi prose also registered a steady progress. The first Marathi grammar and dictionary appeared in 1829. A host of thinkers and social reformers made direct contributions to the new age Marathi prose. Bal Shastri Jambekar (1810-46 .) started a daily paper, *Darpana* in 1831 and the periodical *Digdarsana* in 1841. Vishnu Shastri Chipulkar (1850-82 ) founded the newspaper *Kesari* in 1881, which under Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak assumed an all India status. Gopal Hari Deshmukh allies Lokahitawadi (1823-1892 ), Gopal Agarkar (1856-1895 ),

Jyotibha Pule (1827-90), Lokamanya Tilak (1856-1920). S.M. Paranjape (1864-1929 ), N.C. Kelkar (1872-1947), V.D. Savarkar (1883-1966 ) etc., gave vent to their thought through their writings on a wide variety of issues ranging from social, philosophical, mystical to political and national.

Marathi novels also multiplied during this age. Hari Narayan Apte (1864-1919 ) was a great novelist whose *Ushakala* and *Mi* portrayed all aspects of life in the contemporary Maharashtra

and are counted amongst the finest specimen of Marathi Novels. A new trend in satirical and humorous writings also developed around this time. S.K. Kolhatkar, Ram Ganesh Gadkari and C.V. Joshi are some of the great names in this field.

The Progression of Marathi drama enlisted invaluable contributions from Vinayak Rao Irtane (1840-91), Anna Saheb Kirloskar and others. Anna Saheb's plays *Sakuntala* (1880), *Saubhadra* (1882), and *Ramarajya-Viyoga* (1884) mark high water mark of Marathi plays.

#### vi. Punjabi

The first phase of Punjabi literature [between A.D.1200-1500] was dominated by poetic works on religious mysticism, heroic ballads and folk literature. Gradually, there emerged poetical romances, adopting popular love stories of a legendary character, Indian as well as Persian. During the second phase [the 16-18<sup>th</sup> century] good progress was registered in Punjabi prose. This phase also witnessed a number of religious and philosophical works translated from Sanskrit. The modern era in Punjabi literature set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The establishment of the Christian missionary at Ludhiana which set up the first printing press in the Punjab was one of the pivotal factors responsible for this transition. Subsequently, the tone and tenor of this literature modulated itself in accordance to some of the important events taking place in the contemporary Punjab, viz., the Ghadar, Akali and communist movements. In the Post-independence era, institutions like Punjabi Sahitya Academy (Ludiana), Kendriya Punjabi Lekhaka Sabha (Jullundhur), and Punjabi University etc., are playing a very important role in the promotion of Punjabi literature.

Masud Farid-uddin (1173-1265) a mystic poet of high order was the pioneer of early Punjabi mystic poetry, followed by a number of such Hindu and Muslim poets. Guru Nanak (1469-1539) was another important luminary who composed verses and songs in large number preaching castelessness, and advocating a Universal, ethical, anti-ritualistic, monotheistic and highly spiritual religion.

Guru Angad (1539-1552), the immediate successor of Nanak, collected Nanak's oral teachings and put them down in a new script, the *Gurumukhi*. Another Sikh Guru, Arjun (581-1606) brought together the *Vanis* (words) of previous Sikh Gurus and those of other saints like Kabir, Namadeva and Raidas to form the *Guru Grantha Sahib*. His own monumental work *Sukhamani* is one of the longest and greatest medieval mystic poems. The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh surpassed all the Punjabi poets of his age in volume and variety. A number of poetic romances were also written. *Hir Ranjha*, written by Waris Shah is probably the best of these poetics. The earliest specimen of Punjabi prose appeared in the form of *Janam Sakhis* (biographies of Gurus), *Bachans* (sayings) and *Parmaraths* (commentaries on scriptures).

Modern Punjabi literature began to develop in the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The first Punjabi newspaper was started by the Christian Mission at Ludhiana. Rev. J. Newton wrote the first Punjabi grammar text. Two of the earliest dictionaries were published in 1838 and 1854 respectively. The birth of the Singh Sabha movement rendered further impetus to the development of this literature. Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) wrote a number of novels such as *Sundari*, *Vijay Singh* and *Baba Naudh Singh*. He also composed long poems such as, *Rana Surat Singh*. Other notable contemporary poets were Puran Singh (1882-1932) and Dhani Ram Chalrik (1876-1954).

Events, such as the Ghadar, and emergence of Akalis and Communists in the Punjab, shifted the focus of this literature from mystical and religious to national and the political

themes. Mohan Singh, Amrita Pritam, Santokh Singh, Takht Singh etc., were some of the important composers of modern progressive poetry.

Punjabi drama also reached unprecedented scale of development during this phase. A host of playwrights have appeared on the scene such as I.C. Nanda, Sekhon, Balwant Gargi and others. Their dramas exhibit higher standard of excellence. Punjabi novels have greatly been contributed by some of the leading novelists, such as, Nanak Singh, Amrita Pritam, Narindarpal Singh, Surindar Singh Narula etc. Another set of leading literary figures such as Sant Singh Sekhon and Kulwant Singh Virk have infused a new lease of life to short story writings.

Publication of magazines, such as, *Preet ladi* and literary journals, e.g., the *Panja Darya*, *Punjabi Dunia*, *Arsi*, *Alochna*, *Sahitya Samachara* etc., has been making rich contributions to the modern Punjabi literature.

### vii. Sindhi

Sindhi literature made a humble beginning in the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The early Sindhi poetry, like those of other contemporary vernacular, was dominated by religious and mystical themes. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century, under the influence of Persian poetry, the theme of Sindhi poetry began to shift towards romanticism. The British conquest of Sindh in 1843 proved to be a blessing in disguise from the perspective of development of this literature. Sindhi had no fixed script before the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After the British conquest, it was decided to employ Arabic characters for Sindhi and an alphabet of 52 letters was adopted to form the standard script. Subsequently, Sindhi literature entered its modern phase. Dramas, novels, Short stories, essays, literary criticism etc., have all ever since been registering a speedy progress. Institutions like the Sindhi Sahitya Society (established in 1914), have greatly been contributing to the enrichment of Sindhi literature.

The early phase of Sindhi literature was dominated by the well-known trinity of Sindhi poets-Shah Abdul Latif (1689-1752), Abdul Wahab, better known as Sachal (1739-1850) and Bhai Chainrai (1743-1850). These poets were clearly under the influence of the Sufi mysticism. Shah Abdul Latif's subtle Sufi thoughts, characterization, graphic description of scenes and beauty of his compositions have earned him the epithet of the greatest Sindhi poet. Sachal is said to have composed over one lakh verse in Sindhi. Sami was the first known Hindu Vedantic poet who composed more than 15,000 verses in the form of *Slokas*.

Although, Sindhi poetry started with its principal form *Dohas* and *Sarathas* etc., the 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed introduction of the Persian poetry forms viz., *Ghazal*, *Qasida*, *mathnawi* etc. Some of the prominent composers in this genre were Muhammad Gul, Mulla Muhammad Qasim, Shams-Ud-Din Bulbul etc. Satirical poetry and those based on Sindhi folk-tales also made great headway during this period.

Sindhi prose is comparatively of recent origin. The British conquest of Sindh facilitated large scale translation and publication of books on Christianity. The earliest prose writing appeared, however, in the form of the Sindhi translation of the *Quran Sharif* by Azizullah in 1746. The British impetus to Sindhi literature came in the form of publication of not less than 15 books, including 4 grammars and 5 dictionaries, before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century A.D. This was followed by publication of several dictionaries and grammars, viz. *English-Sindhi Dictionary* by Lakshmana-Vishnu Paranjapaye (1868), *Sindhi-English* (1910) and *English-Sindhi* (1933) dictionaries by Parmanand Mewaram etc. Gradually books on folk tales of Sindh, art, science, biology, history, geography etc., also began to be published.

Sindhi playwright witnessed a large number of translations as well as writing of original dramas. Mirza Qalich Beg translated most of the Shakespearean dramas, whereas he wrote original ones like *Laila Majnu* (1880), *Khurshed* (1887) and *Shakuntala*. King Harsha's Sanskrit drama *Ratnavali* was also translated in Sindhi in 1888. European dramatists, such as Ibsen, Sheridan etc., were also introduced to the Sindhi literature. Khanchand Daryani, a leading Sindhi dramatist, wrote a large number of original dramas – the popular among them being *Gulab-jo-gul* (1920), *Zamindari Zulum* (1928), *Ratna* (1924), *Zamane ji Lahar* (1929) etc.

Sindhi novel too, has a humble beginning. Jagat Advani was the first prominent Sindhi novelist. His focus, however, was to translate novels from other languages. He translated in Sindhi, works of novelists, such as Sharat Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Munshi Prem Chand etc. Gradually, original novels also began to appear. Mirza Qalich Beg wrote *Dilaram* (1888) and *Zeenat* (1890). Some historical novels were also written, such as Dr. Gurubkhani's *Nur Jahan* (1915) and Abdul Razzak's *Jahan Ara* (1935).

Sindhi short story began with religious themes and with emphasis on moral values. Soon, however, these began to be written on social and historical themes. Bherumal's *Prem-Jo-Mohatam* (1914) throws light on family life. Nirmaldas Fatehchand's *Sarajini* harps on Hindu-Muslim unity. Amarlal Hingorani, Usman Ali Ansari and Nanikran Mirchandani are some of the other important names in this field.

Similarly, a number of essays have been written by essayists, such as Mirza Qalich Beg, Sadhu Hiranand, Permanand Mewaram, Lalchand etc., on religious, philosophical, literary, patriotic, Sufi and social subjects.

Literary criticism is the product of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Fazil Shah, Hotchand Gurbukhani, Bherumal etc., are some of the leading contributors to this branch of Sindhi prose.

### **viii. Hindi**

The origin of Hindi literature is usually traced in the writings of the Nathapanthis between the tenth and eleventh century A.D. The writings of this period, however, remained poor in literary value. The first phase of the development of Hindi literature, namely, the *Adi Kala*, began from the 11<sup>th</sup> century, with Rajasthan being the main centre of literary production. The bulk of literature produced during this period belonged to two prominent categories, viz., one, composed in ballad form and meant for group singing accompanied by dance (*Raso*) and the other, written in a more literary style, using different metres and propagating a well knit story of hero's romantic and warlike pursuits (*Rasa*). The second phase (1318-1643), namely the *Bhaktikala*, witnessed wholesome composition of Hindi verses on religious, moral and mystical themes on the lines of two dominant schools of Bhakti saints, viz., the Nirguna and Shaguna schools.

The period between 1650-1850 is regarded as the third major period in the development of Hindi literature. The poets of this age belonged to the elite class and were academicians by profession who not only practiced but also theorized on poetry. The main theme of Ritikala poetry was carnal love. The fourth period, namely, *The Adhunik Kala*, began with Bharatendu Harish Chandra (1846-1884 A.D.), who is known as the 'Father of modern Hindi literature.' The early years of modern Hindi poetry was dominated by themes on contemporary social, political and economic problems with a note on national regeneration. As a reaction to this overemphasis on moral aspects of human life, the modern Hindi poetry entered its next phase known as the *Chyavada*, wherein natural human impulses became core of poetry. This trend continued till 1937. The contemporary Hindi poetry comes under the influence of the Leftist ideology which

found expression in two rival trends: one is Progressivism (*Pragativada*), which can be defined as people's poetry directly inspired by the Marxian philosophy; the other is called experimentalism (*Prayogavada*) or new literature, which looks upon experiments or constant quest as the essence of life and literature.

The modern Hindi prose also began to assume concrete shape from 1850 onwards. Dramas, novels, short stories, newspapers, periodicals, literary criticism etc. – all such variants of prose have established their independent and distinct identities in the realm of the modern Hindi literature.

In the *Rasa* category of the *Adikala* literature, Narapati Nalha's classical poem the *Bisaldev Raso* is a commendable work. It was written in the latter half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Its language is very close to Rajasthani Dingal and the theme deals with the grief of a woman whose lover deserted her in anger. The greatest work in tradition of the *Raso* literature is the *Pritviraj raso*, ascribed to Chand Bardai, a bardic poet of the court of Prithvi Raj Chauhan of Delhi and Ajmer. It is regarded as the first epic poem in Hindi on account of its literary merit.

The Hindi literature during the *Bhakti Kala* had saint poets of both Nirguna and Shaguna schools and Sufi mystics. They composed their verses on religious, mystical and social themes. Kabir (1398-1518) composed a number of songs and Verses (*Sakhis*), which are noted for their literary excellence. On the mystic plane, Kabir's compositions assume a modest and devotional tone. On the social plane, Kabir is out spoken. He severely strikes against all social and religious abuses which had crept into the contemporary Islam and Hinduism. He was followed by other saint poets of the Nirguna school viz., Dharmadasa, Guru Nanak, Dadu, Sundardasa etc. The Shaguna compositions had two broad divisions: notes of devotion to Rama and Krishna. The Rama worshipping Shaguna group was led by Tulsidasa (1532-1563), whose *Ramacharita Manasa* is an epitome of the medieval Hindu culture. Of the Krishna worshipping Shaguna group, *Surdasa* (1483-1563) was the most prominent saint poet, whose *Sura-Sagra* is one of the masterpieces of medieval Hindi literature. Vidyapati, Nandadasa, Hita Harivansa, Mirabai and Rasakhana etc., were some of the other prominent saint poets of this school, whose poetic compositions also made rich contributions to the contemporary Hindi literature. The Sufi-mystics, on the other hand, under the influence of Persian style of poetry, wrote poetical romances based on common love tales of the Hindu and Muslim life. Malik Muhammad Jayasi's *Padmavat* (1540), Kutuban's *Mrigavati* (1501), Manjhan's *Madhumalti*, Uthman's *Chitravali* (1613) and Nur Muhammad's *Indravati* etc., are invaluable compositions of this category of medieval Hindi literature. Another great literary personality of the period was Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khana, who adored the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar. This statesman- poet composed poems on moral values and virtues.

The first noted poet of *Ritikala* was Kesavadasa, who was followed by others like Chintamani, Mati Rama (1617-1716), Bihari (1603-1663), and Deva (1673-1767) Another great poet Bhushana, belonged to this group, although, the theme of his compositions, invariably, was heroic struggles of Shivaji against the Mughals.

Bhartendu Harish Chandra's compositions initiated the modern age in Hindi poetry. This process was subsequently continued by Acharya Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi (1870-1938), Ayodhya Singh Upadhyaya 'Hariaudha' (1865-1946), Makhan Lal Chaturvedi, Balkrishna 'Navin' and Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'.

However, overemphasis of these poets on moral aspects resulted in a reaction which found expression in the *Chayavada* of Jaya Shankar Prasad. Prasad's *Kamayani* is an epic



portraying the eternal struggle of the human soul against the background of the modern age. Surya Kant Tripathi 'Nirala', Sumitra Nandan Pant and Mahadevi Verma etc., were some of the other exponents of *Chayavada*. Post Chayavad, modern Hindi poetry has been diversified into many newer areas.

The first original Hindi drama in the real sense was *Nahua Nataka* (1857), written by Gopal Chandra, father of Bhartendu Harish Chandra. However, the Hindi drama owes its beginning to Bhartendu, who by effecting a compromise between the techniques of the Sanskrit and the western Drama, produced the modern Hindi play and brought it to stage under his own direction. Some of the popular dramas written by him are-the *Andher-nagari*, *Bharat-durdasha*, *Satya Harishchandra* etc. Jayashankar Prasad also wrote some ever-popular dramas e.g., the *Chandragupta*, *Dhruvswamini*, *Skandagupta*, etc. Mohan Rakesh's *Aadhe-Adhure*, *Ashadha Ka Ek Din* and *Lehron Ke Rajhans* are regarded as highly reputed plays. Modern Hindi novel is also a product of modern age. Munshi Prechand (1880-1936) wrote a number of novels which were inspired by the socio-political ideas of western masters like Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens. The *Godan*, *Gaban*, *Rangabhumi*, *Nirmala* and *Sewasadan* are some of the novels written by Premchand. Newer forms of novels have developed in the present times, boasting of such names as Jainendra, Yashpal, Shri Lal Shukla etc.

Literary criticism is yet another form of modern Hindi prose which has evolved only recently. Acharya Ramchandra Shukla, Acharya Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Nand Dulare Vajapaye, Ram Vilash Sharma, Dr. Nagendra, Dr. Namwar Singh etc., are some of the leading literary critics of modern Hindi literature.

#### **ix. Kashmiri**

Literary activities in Kashmiri vernacular started not earlier than the fourteenth century A.D. However, it is from the eighteenth century A.D. that one may note a continual spurt in all major forms of writings, viz., religious and secular poetry and prose – drama, novel, literary criticism, short story etc.

One of the most famous literary figures in Kashmiri, during the early period, was Lal Ded, the woman saint poet of the fourteenth century Kashmir, who is regarded as the second Rabia. [The first was Rabi al Adawiya (d. A.D 801) of Basra, who is regarded as the first woman mystic in the Islamic tradition.] Lal Ded is placed first in time amongst Kashmiri poets and is also considered the maker of modern Kashmiri language and literature. She composed a number of verses or *Vakhs*. The *Vakh* is a four line stanza, complete in itself. Her *Vakh* helped make Kashmiri an adequate vehicle for the expression of philosophical thought. She adapted Sanskrit forms of words to the use of Kashmiri, coining new words in the process. Her poetry pervades the countryside even today.

Kashmiri literature rapidly developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. New and valued forms of poetry multiplied in quantity. Parmananda, Prakash Rama and Krishna Razdan are some of the important poets of this age. Parmananda wrote allegorical narratives on Hindu religious themes. *Radhasyamvara*, *Sudamacharita* and *Sivalayah* are some of his important works. Prakash Rama composed the Kashmiri version of the Ramayana. Krishna Razdan composed popular devotional songs in the tunes of rural folk songs and ballads. Some of the prominent Muslim poets of this age were Mahmud Gami, Rasul Mir, Wahhab Paru etc. Among Gami's chief works, are *Yusuf-Zulekha*, *Khushrau-Sirin* and *Laila Majnu*. Wahhab Paru translated the *Shah Nama* of Firdausi. J.H. Knowles rendered in English a collection of Kashmiri folk-tales and proverbs. The

close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was also marked by progress in song and *ghazal* and witnessed the birth of a distinctive type of comic-satiric ballad called *Lodi-Shah*.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the forceful impact of new inferences from several quarters-the growth of Indian nationalism, knowledge of western thought and literature, new developments in the literature of other north Indian regions, etc. Ghulam Ahmad Mohzur (1885-1952) was the first poet of note, whose poems embodied many of these influences. He was followed by Abdul Azad (1905-1948), who composed poems with the socialistic bias. Other well known poets of the present times are Daya Ram Ganju, Zinda Kaul and Ghulam Hasan Beg 'Arif.' New literary forms such as drama, novel and short story have developed and are registering a steady progress.

## 5. South Indian Vernacular Literature

In this category, we shall outline the major literary trends, texts and forms along with major poets, writers, dramatist etc. in Kannada, Telegu and Malayalam vernaculars.

### i. Kannada

The early Kannada literature was dominated by Jain writers. Srivardhadeva and Syamkundacharya were prominent composers of this period. Srivardhadeva wrote *Chudamani*, a commentary on *Tattvartha-Mahashastra* in 96,000 verses. However, the earliest extant work in Kannada is the *Kavirajamarga*, a work on rhetoric and poetry, written by Nriptunga (generally identified with the Rastrakuta king Amoghvasa I ( 814-880). The *Vaddaradhane of Sivakoti* (c. A.D. 900) is another important work of this age. Written in prose, it narrates the lives of some of the Jaina saints.

The next stage of Kannada literature was dominated by the 'Three Gems of the Kannada literature', - Pampa, Ponna and Ranna. Pampa ( 941), writing under the patronage of Arikesari II, a feudatory of Rashtrakuta king Krishna III, composed the *Adipurana*, which narrates the life-story of the first Jain Tirthankara. His other major works, the *Vikramarguna Vijaya*, also called *Pampa Bharata*, contains the authors own version of the Mahabharata story. Critics have unanimously hailed Pampa as the most eminent among Kannada poets. He was followed by Ponna (950). His *Shantipurana*, deals with the life story of the sixteenth Tirthankara, Shantinatha. He also wrote *Bhuvanai-Karmabhyudaya* and *Jinaksaramale*. The Rastrakuta ruler Krishna III, gave him the title Ubhayakavichakrayarti i.e. 'supreme poet in two lang -uages i.e., Sanskrit and kannada'. Ranna, who adored the court of the Chalukya King Taila II and his successor, wrote *Sahasabhimavijaya* or *Gadayudha* (982.), which reviews the story of the *Mahabharata* with particular reference to the last fight between Bhima and Duryodhana. He also composed the *Ajitapurana* on the life of the second Tirthankara, Ajitanatha. Two other works of Ranna, the *Parashuramacharita* and the *Chakreshvara-Chrita* ,are no longer extant. By their monumental works, the great trio- Pampa, Panna and Ranna, have immortalized Kannada and have earned the well merited title 'Ratnatraya' (The three gems) for themselves and the epithet "Golden age" for their period.

The Jaina influence on Kannada literature continued in subsequent centuries-in the form of biographies of Tirthankaras or other Jaina notables, Jaina versions of Sanskrit classics like the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*, and fictional compositions intending to establish supremacy of the Jaina sect over other contemporary religions and sects. Nagachandra wrote the *Mallinathapurana* (1105), biography of the nineteenth Tirthankara; Karnapriya's *Neminathapurana* (1145.) is a biography of the twenty second hankara Neminatha ; Janna's

*Ananthanathapurana* (1230) is a biography of the fourteenth Jain Tirthankara; Madhura wrote *Tirt Dharmanthapurana* (1385.) on the life of the fifteenth Tirthankara etc. Nagachandra's *Ramachandra Charitapurana* gives the Jaina version of the Rama legend wherein Rama becomes a Jaina ascetic and attains nirvana at the end. Brahmasiva wrote '*Samayapanikshe*' with a view to establish the superiority of Jainism over all other creed.

After the Jains, the Vira-Saivas contributed the most for the development of Kannada literature. Showing a predominant preference for the prose medium, this sect had over two hundred writers. It included many women writers as well, the most prominent of these being Mahadevi yakka. Basava (1160) and his mystic contemporaries Allama Prabhu, Chennabasava and Mahadevi yakka invented a new type of prose composition called *Vacanas* (*Vachanas*), noted for their simplicity and use of simple Kannada.

The period witnessed some notable changes in Kannada literature. The champu form of compositions went out of use and *Shatpadi* and *Tripadi* new meters, representing verses with six and three lines, respectively came into vogue. The Vira-Saiva movement produced two categories of Kannada literature; first, stories of reforms and devotees and second, expositions of doctrine. The *Basavapurana* (1369.) of Bhimakavi and the *Mala-Basava-raja-Charita* of Singiraja (1500) dwell at length on miracles performed by Basava in his life time. The *Prabhulinga-lile* of Chamarase (1430) has Prabhulinga (Another name of Allama Prabhu, an associate of Basava) as its hero and in Virupaksha Pandita's *Chenna Basava Purana*, Basava's nephew Chenna Basava is treated as its hero. In the category of the literature of the doctrine, Lakkanna's (a Lingayat minister at the court of the Vijayanagar ruler Devaraya II) *Sivatattva – Chintamani* is a treatise on the tenets and rites of the sect. The Vira-Saiva literature continued to be written on large scale during the subsequent centuries.

The Vaishnava Movement cast another major influence on the development of the Kannada literature. However, it began to exert strong influence on Kannada literature only from the time of Krishnadeva Raya, the famous Vijayanagar ruler. Two dominant form of Kannada Vaishnava literature developed during this age: first, translations and adaptations of classical Sanskrit texts and secondly, popular songs composed by *dasas* (medicant singers). Prominent poets such as Narahappa and Timanna rendered the Kannada version of the *Mahabharata*, whereas Narahari, who also called himself Kumara Valmiki, produced the Kannada version of the *Ramayana*. Catu Vitthalanatha translated the *Bhagavata*. In the second category of the Vaishnava literature, Purandaradasa was 'the earliest, most prolific and most famous of these singers.' Kanakadasa, was one of his contemporaries and a very important dasa in his own right.

Although, the early and medieval Kannada literature displayed a predominant religious fervour, some outstanding works on non-religious themes were also prepared. Writing important treatise on Kannada grammar was one such literary domain. Nagavarma II (c. mid- 12<sup>th</sup> c. A.D.) was one of the most important grammarians of this age. His *Kavyavalokana* is an important work on Kannada grammar and rhetoric. His *Karnatakabhashabhushana* is another major work on Kannada grammar. He also wrote *Vastukos*, an important Kannada dictionary. Kesirja's (c.1260)*Sabdamanidarpana* is viewed as the standard grammar of Kannada. The writings on Kannada grammar continued throughout this period. The *Karnatakasabdanusasana* (1604) of Bhattakalankadeva is the most comprehensive text on Kannada grammar.

Similarly, some very important works were written on science, and scientific themes. Chavundaraya's *Lokopakara* (1025) is a guide to daily life on various subjects such as astronomy, astrology, sculpture, consumption, cookery etc. Shridharacharya's *Jataka-tilaka* (1049) is the earliest work in Kannada on astrology. Kirtivarma's *Govaidya* is a work on

veterinary science, half medicine and half magic. Similarly, Rajaditya dealt with mathematical subjects in several *ganita* works like *Vyavahara-ganita*, *Kshetra-ganita* and *Lilavati*.

Another major feature of the medieval Kannada literature was producing collection of short stories which came into existence from about the sixteenth century. The *Tenali-Ramakrishna-Katha* is a leading example of writing in this genre.

The next major phase of development of Kannada literature set in from the nineteenth century onwards. It was preceded by an era of degeneration and decline in the literary standards which continued throughout the eighteenth century. English was taking a firm root in the educational system throughout the Kannada region exposing, thereby, Kannada poets and writers to modern poetic and prose forms and western science and culture. The life and sentiments of a modern secular society became the main theme in preference to the old stories and episodes of the Epics and Puranas. At first, for about two or three decades, the Kannada men of letters helped on translations and adaptations from English or the more progressive Indian languages like Bengali. Later on they began to pick up themes from their immediate surroundings involving complex socio-economic and political dimensions.

The new age Kannada poetry is dominated by scholar-poets like B.M. Srikanthayya (1884-1946), D.V. Gundappa, K.V. Puttapa and others. They produced poetry of every kind – lyrical, narrative, dramatic, devotional, secular and even satirical.

New types of literature e.g. novel entered Kannada through Bengali. M.S. Puttanna (1854-1930), K.S. Karnata, A.N. Krishna Rao, T.R. Subba Rao etc., are some of the prominent Kannada novelist of this era. Their themes ranged from social and court life, poverty and neglect, and even extra-marital love.

Short story and drama are two other modern forms of the Kannada prose. Masti venkatesha Ayyangar has been regarded as a supremely talented master storyteller. In the realm of drama, prominent names such as Chamaraja Wodeyar, Basavappa Shastri, T.P Kavlasham etc., are some of the phenomenal names.

## ii. Telugu

Telugu became a regular medium of literary expression from the tenth century A.D. Throughout the course of the medieval era, religious themes dominated the literary works of this vernacular. The contemporary Vaishnava and Vira-Saiva movements cast a profound influence on Telugu writings of this age. These were either translations or adaptations from classical Sanskrit texts such as the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Bhagavatas and others, or biographies of prominent religious leaders of these sects. However, secular works on grammar, science and mathematics, although lesser in quantity, were also written.

The early Telugu religious literature was dominated by the era of '*Kavitraya*' – the three poets of Telugu. They were Nannaya (11<sup>th</sup> century), Tikanna (1220-1300) and Yerrapragada (1280-1350). Their major claim to literary acclaim rested on their Telugu translations of the *Mahabharata* or some episodes therefrom. The *Ramayana* was another Sanskrit classic which was put to Telugu translations. Kona Buddhiraja (13<sup>th</sup> c.A.D.) and Hullaki Bhaskara (14<sup>th</sup> c. A.D) were the early translators of this text. The most popular version of the *Ramayana* in chaste Telugu, however, was authored by a sixteenth century low caste poetess Molla. Bamma Potana's (1400-1475) translation of the *Bhagavata* and Pillalmarri Pina Virbhadra's 'translation of the *Jamini Bharata* were some other such important works in this category. Vira-Savism began to exert influence on the religious life of Telugu from the twelfth century. The poets wrote either

on the fundamental tenets of this sect or biographies of important Vira-Saiva leaders. Mallikajurna Pandit's *Siva-Tattva-Saram* is an important exposition of this faith. Similarly, Pallukari Somantha (14<sup>th</sup> c.A.D.) wrote important Saiva texts such as the *Panditaradhyacharita and Dvipada Basava Purana*. One of the greatest poet of the Saiva faith was probably Srinatha (1365-1440). His major works like *Panditaradhy Charita, Sivaratri Mahatmya, Haravilasa, Bhimakhanda* and *Kasikhanda*, clearly demonstrate his staunch support to Saivism.

Medieval Telugu literature entered its golden epoch during the reign of the Vijayanagar ruler Krishnadeva Raya (1509-1529). Under him and his team of eight great poets (the Ashthadiggaja) which adorned his court, the practice of writing Telugu translations of Sanskrit classics, gradually started giving way to original writings on the Puranic themes. Krishnadeva Raya's *Amuktamalyada* or *Vishnuchittiya*, which deals with the life of a prominent vaishnava saint of south India (*Alvar*) Vishnuchitta, is counted among the five great 'Kavyas' in Telugu. Allasi Peddana, Known as the *Andhrakavipitamaha* (Grandfather of Telugu poetry) wrote *Manucharita/Svarocisha-Sambhava*. Another great poet of Krishnadeva Raya's court was Nandi Timmana, the author of *Parijatapaharana*, which deals with an episode of Sri Krishna's life. Bhattumurti's *Vasucharita*, Dhurjati's *Kalahasti Mahatmya*, Madayyagari Mallana's *Rajashekhara charita etc.*, are some of the other Telugu masterpieces pertaining to this era. The most interesting of the *Ashtadiggaja* was, however, Tenali Ramakrishna. He is still remembered as a court jester known for his humor and jokes. He, however, was also a talented poet and his *Panduranga Mahatmya* and *Udbhatcharyacharita* serve as good specimen of the contemporary Telugu writings.

As mentioned earlier, inspite of this era being dominated by bulk writings on religious themes, non-religious themes and works on grammar, science and mathematics, were not altogether neglected. Nannaya wrote the *Andhra-Sabda-Chintamani*, which is regarded as the first Telugu grammar and earned for him the title *Vaganusasana* (Lawgiver of the language). Vemulavada Bhimakavi composed *Kavijanasraya* which deals with Telugu grammar. Similarly, Ketana's *Andhra-Bhasha-Bhushana* is another important work on grammar. His *Dasakumaracharita* is a translation of Dandin's work, earning for him the title 'Abhinava Dandin'. He also rendered the Telugu translation of Vijnanesvara's *Mitakshara*. Baddena composed the *Nitishastra-Muktavali*, a treatise on Politics. Eleganti Peddana translated the *Lilavati* of Bhaskara under the name *Prakirna Ganita*. Srinatha's *Srinagara-Naishadha* is the translation of Sri Harsha's *Naishadhakavya*.

After the fall of Vijayanagar, standards in Telugu literary production began to deteriorate. Except for minor works like folk dramas, produced at the various capitals of the Nayakas, there was no significant development in the Telugu literature.

It entered its modern phase in the nineteenth century. Kandukuri Viresalingam (1848-1919), a noted religious and social reformer, was the first major stalwart of modern Telugu literature. He wrote the first novel, play, research thesis on the lives of Telugu poets, autobiography and the first book on popular science in this vernacular. Chinnaya Suri (1808-62) was one of his contemporaries. He made valuable contribution to the preparation of a comprehensive grammar and laying the foundation of Telugu prose in its present form. Gurjada Appa Rao, a junior contemporary of Viresalingam, wrote the first collection of short stories. He also wrote a play *Kanyasulkam* which strongly advocated the need to bridge the gap between the spoken and written Telugu and drawing his inspiration from folk- songs, he introduced a new meter verse called *mutyalasaran*. Another notable writer was C.R. Reddy, who wrote the first long essay in modern literary criticism. He was also the first writer on economics in Telugu. His contemporary

Lakshamana Rao, initiated historical research in Andhra. Once these trends started, new age poetry, novels, plays, essays, short stories, historical research, literary criticism etc., developed as specialized branches of this vernacular. It once started as a literature primarily under the influence of Sanskrit, then of English and Bengali, it has now established its own independent identity and is in living contact with the main streams of world literature. Thereby, it has acquired a world outlook.

### iii. Malayalam

Malayalam is believed to have evolved from 'Kodum-Tamil', one of the variants of the ancient Tamil, prevalent during the Sangam period in the modern state of Kerala. One of the earliest form of Malayali writings appeared in the form of *Palaiyapattus* or old songs. These were popular ballads of various kinds i.e songs sung in marriages, or in praise of respective deities, or in particular festive occasions. *The Brahmanip-Pattu*, for instance, is an important variety of such songs which is sung in marriages. The earliest extant literary work, however, is the *Unnunili Sandesam*, an anonymous poem of the fourteenth century. The *Chandrotsava* and the *Lilatilakam* were other important poems of this period.

Meanwhile, the development of *Chakkiyar-Kuttu*, a dance recital of literary works, from about the thirteenth century, gave a strong impetus to the Malayalam literature. It was clearly supplemented by Champus (works in mixed prose and verse) based on Puranic stories and episodes. They were mostly written by Nambudiri Brahmins, a class well known for their wit, sarcasm and literary skills. The *Ramayana Champu*, written by perhaps the most famous of them, Punam Nambudiri (15<sup>th</sup> c.A.D.), and the *Naishadha- Champu*, written by Malamangalam Nambudiri (16<sup>th</sup> c.A.D.), etc., are some of the finest examples of this genre of Malayali writings.

Poetic compositions continued alongside champus and Chakkiya-Kuttu. These showed variety in themes: *The Ramachaitam*, written sometimes between the tenth and thirteenth centuries A.D. by an ancient ruler of Travancore; the *Bhashakautilya*, a Malayalam commentary on the Arthashastra of Kautilya, written by an anonymous writer. Many other such works were composed.

The medieval Malayali literature has greatly been contributed by the Niranam poets, so called from their native village Niranam. These poets tried to develop an independent Malayalam style, relatively free from the domination of Sanskrit or Tamil models. They also popularized a metre which takes its name after them, Niranavrittam. Rama Panikkar, who wrote the *Ramayanam*, *Bharata Gatha*, *Savitri Mahatmyam*, *Bhagwatam* and others, was perhaps the most prominent of the Nirnam poets. Owing to his rich literary contributions to this language, he has been called the Chaucer of Malayalam. Attakatha or Kathakali, a variety of dance-drama was yet another popular form of medieval Malayalam literature. The Raman-attam of Kottarakkka Tampuran is counted amongst the first such (extant) Attakathas. Many Attakathas were written subsequently-about two hundred kathas have so far been listed. Ravi Varman Thampi (1783-1863) was perhaps the most outstanding author of Kathakali masterpieces. This form of literature received ready patronage from royal courts and the feudal nobility.

Malayalam literature has entered a new (modern) era from the second half of the nineteenth century. Factors contributing to this transition includes introduction of a new system of education in Kerala in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, activities of the Christian

missionaries, the establishment of Madras University in 1857 which extended its activities to Kerala etc.

First and one of the most important of the modern Malayalam literary figures was Kerala Varma, a renowned Sanskrit and Malayalam poet and scholar. He wrote the *Mayura Sandesham* and also produced the Malayali translation of *Shakuntala* of Kalidasa. More significantly, the Travancore government of the time entrusted upon him to lead its planned programme of developing the Malayalam language by the production of suitable text books for all classes. Equally significant was the role of the Granganore School of poets in the development of the modern Malayalam literature. Under the leadership of poet Vermani and his son, this school broke the domination of Sanskrit and took the literature to the masses. Another notable literary figure was A.R. Rajaaja Verma, who also attempted to set the Malayalam literature free from Sanskrit forms and traditions. This movement gained further momentum from the writing of Vallathol Narayana Menon and Kumarn Asan.

Modern prose literature in Malayalam has been the outcome of the Text Book Committee (headed by Kerala Varma) and the new education policy. Novels and short stories began to appear. They were mostly translations or adaptations from English. Soon, however, original writing in this genre assumed the centre-stage. The *Indulekha* written by O. Chanty Menon, *Martanda Varma* and *Rama Raja Bahadur*, written by C.V. Raman Pillai etc., represent completely original and matured form of Malayalam novels. Appan Tampuran, K.M. Panikkar and K.K. Menon etc., are some other well known Malayalam novelists. In the field of short-stories, writings of eminent literary personalities, such as Thakazhi, K.T. Muhammad, D.M. Pottakkad etc., are important. Malayalam dictionaries and grammatical tests began to appear as early as the 1840s. Benjamin Bailley, a Protestant missionary, published a Malayalam-English dictionary in 1846. Herman Gundert, a German scholar, produced an authoritative lexicon in 1872. It is based on a comparative study of the Dravidian languages. Through, elementary grammars had been produced by some of the Christian missions, A.R. Raja Raja Varma produced the *Kerala Paniniyam* which not only provided Malayalam with an authoritative grammar but helped standardizing Malayalam metres.

The growth of drama is another important field of modern Malayalam literature. It began with Kerala Varma's translation of *Abhijnana-Shakuntalam*. Recent years have been witnessing original dramatic works, combining live social background with progressive intellectual, cultural and economic backdrops.

## INTEXT-QUESTIONS

1. The *Charitaputhi*, a poetic form, is connected to which of the following literature?  
(a) Gujarati (b) Bengali (c) Malayalam (d) Assamese.
2. Who among the following started the first Bengali newspaper the *Samachar Darpana*?  
(a) Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (b) Raja Rammohan Roy (c) The Bapsist Mission Of Serampore (d) Devendra Nath Tagore.
3. The *Phagu*, a short poem with separation as its main theme, is associated to which to which of the following literature?  
(a) Bengali (b) Oriya (c) Gujarati (d) Assamese.
4. The Satyavadi group of writers promoted which of the following literature?  
(a) Oriya (b) Gujarati (c) Multani (d) Punjabi.
5. Who among the following wrote the *Bhavarta-Dipika*?  
(a) Jnanadeva (b) Eknath (c) Tukaram (d) Ramdas Samrath.
6. Who among the following wrote the *Padmavat*?  
(a) Malik Muhammad Jayasi (b) Kutuban (c) Manjhan (d) Uthman.
7. The *Vakh*, a four line poetic stanza is associated with which of the following Bhakti Saints?  
(a) Kabir (b) Mirabai (c) Lalded (d) Rabia.
8. Pampa, Ponna, and Ranna are regarded as the Three Gems of which which of the following literature?  
(a) Telugu (b) Tamil (c) Kannada (d) Malayalam.
9. The Kavitraya- Nannaya, Tikanna and Yerrapragada were associated with which of the following literature?  
(a) Telegu (b) Tamil (c) Kannada (d) Malayalam.
10. The Attakatha or Kathakali, a variety of dance drama, enriched which of the following literature?  
(a) Sindhi (b) Multani (c) Kashmiri (d) Malayalam.

## Conclusion

It is evident that almost an uninterrupted process of multicultural synthesis has been one of the most cardinal features underlining the progression of the Indian civilization. As one of its prominent outcomes, Sanskrit and Tamil developed in the north and south India, respectively, as the classical languages of India. Sanskrit, subsequently, paved the way for its simpler and more popular variants in the form of the Prakrit, Apbhramsha, and eventually the Indo-Aryan (Indic) languages. Tamil, in a similar fashion, helped directly or indirectly, evolution and growth of other south Indian languages, such as Kannada, Telugu and Malayalam. Subsequently, all these Indian vernacular languages began to produce their own distinct literature. The proliferation of these vernacular literature has further and immensely been contributed by factors like spread of the Bhakti movement in different regions and localities, advent of the European trading companies, establishment of printing press and publication of magazines, journals and newspapers, activities of Christian missionaries in various parts of the subcontinent, rise of English educated Indian, intelligentsia and socio-religious reform movement spearheaded by it, the Indian National Movement for independence etc. The process of proliferation continues unabated. The existence of a number of vernacular languages in India lends her a distinct multilingual character, which in turn, is an important ingredient to her multiculturalism.



**Long Questions:**

1. Comment briefly on the process of rise and development of the North Indian vernacular languages.
2. Trace the evolution of the South Indian vernacular languages.
3. Bring about the salient features of the North Indian vernacular literature.
4. Highlight the salient features of the South Indian vernacular literature.
5. How did the medieval Bhakti movement get represented in the contemporary north and south Indian vernacular literature?

**Suggested Readings:**

1. A.L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, 39<sup>th</sup> impression, Rupa & co., Delhi, 2002.
2. Dr.Nagendra (ed.), *Hindi Sahitya ka Samekit Vikas*, Hindi Madhyam Karyanwaya Nideshalaya, Delhi University,1989.
3. K.A.Nilkanta Sastri, *A History of South India, From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, O.U.P. (paperback),1990
4. P.N. Chopra, *The Gazeteer of India,History and culture*, Vol.I, Publication Division Of India, 1988.

## LESSON 4A

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# HINDUSTANI MUSICAL CULTURE: A STUDY

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### **Introduction**

In this lesson we will study the evolution of Hindustani musical culture in four phases. We will see how the changes in patronage patterns and socio-cultural environment influenced the course of its development and lead to experimentations and variations in the realm of audience-oriented arts. Hindustani music provides a good empirical study in this regard. We will also learn about some important musical treatises compiled during period under review.

### **The Early Medieval Musical Tradition**

In Indian tradition dance and music are expressive of devotion. They form an integral part of the socio-religious rituals and festivities and rituals, to the extent that Bharatmuni's *Natyashastra* (third century AD) has enjoyed the status of being the fifth Veda. Traces of its tenets remained ingrained in one or the other form in the performing arts especially in music, dance and theatre. The Indian dramatic art is called *natya* in the *Natyashastra*. It is the art of representation in which speech, music and appropriate gestures are all harmoniously blended.

The other important work which had an overwhelming sway on the pattern of entertainment, the communities of performers and their patrons was the celebrated *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana (fifth century AD). It became a normative byword for future generations.

#### **(i) The *devadasi* system**

The *devadasi* system was an important component of ancient and early medieval musical culture. As a modern scholar, Dr. K. Sadasivam, remarks: 'This institution has exerted and extended its sway over several disciplines of human art and thought and even politics. It had greatly influenced the musical, dance, dramatic, sculptural, painting and linguistic traditions of the country.' This system was not specific to any region; the literary and epigraphical sources show its prevalence throughout the Indian subcontinent during the period under review. Kalidas mentions in *Meghaduta* that the Mahakal temple in Ujjain resounded with the sound of the ankle bells of the dancing girls. Hiuen Tsang (7<sup>th</sup> century) records that 'women played music, lit lamps and offered flowers and perfumes to honour the sun-God at Multan. According to an Arab Traveller Ibn -al Athir three hundred musicians and five hundred dancing-girls were attached to the temple of Somnath at the time of the invasion of Mahmud Ghaznavi during the tenth century. Several of the *puranas* – *Matsya Purana*, *Kurma Purana*, *Bhagwat Purana*, and *Shiva Purana* – recommend that arrangement should be made to enlist the services of singing and dancing girls to provide vocal and instrumental music and dance at the time of divine services. For these services they were paid by the temple either in cash or by endowments of land. The ruins of the temples of the north India reveal it well that the practices of the sex cult were prevalent in many of them. In almost all the temples which have survived the ravages of the medieval period are adorned with erotic sculpture. The *devadasi* system appears to have been very popular in the

Shiva temples. In these temples the fertility and cult was merged with the *tantric* concept; subsequently it was accepted by the Vishnu, Buddhist and Jain temples as well.

*Devadasis* were known by various names such as *pātras* and *māhāris*, *vilāsini*, and so on. The existence of graded hierarchy among them is also suggested by the literary sources and inscriptions. It may, however, be added here that the systematization of the *devadasi* institution is not as pronounced in north as one finds in south India. In north India this institution declined due to lack of patronage to temples.

## **(ii) The ganika**

Sanskrit *natak* (drama), *kavya* (poetry), and *akhyayika* (story), especially *Mrichchakatikam* (sixth century AD), *Kuttanimatam* (ninth century AD), and *Dash Kumara Charita* (tenth century AD) bring out interesting details about the cultural activities of the upper layer of society from the sixth to the tenth centuries. The courtesans were seen intimately engaged in various types of artistic pursuits, including literary discourses. They were the repository of fine arts and stagecraft, especially the *ganika* who attained proficiency in sixty-four arts and had an expert knowledge in the art of love-making. The *ganika* dominated the city life and occupied an important place in the society.

## **(iii) Temples as centre of cultural activities**

Temples was not exclusively a place of worship in Indian cultural tradition. Much of the social and political life of the community, especially in villages and small towns, centred round the temples. Social functions, political discussions, and even business transactions often took place here. To the temples were attached the theatre, halls for discussion on religious and philosophical matters.

By the end of the seventh century A.D. classical Sanskrit drama and stage craft has reached its zenith and had become a passion with the people of sophisticated tastes. Many of the best Sanskrit plays were written during this period and have elaborate stage directions which suggest that these were written for the viewers with the object of entertainment. As a result, the number of skilled stage artistes burgeoned during this period.

## **(iv) Communities of performers**

The variegated community of performers included actors, dancers, singers, players on instruments, mime artistes, rope dancers, jugglers, tap dancers, wandering bards, and lastly the courtesans, trained in the long standing tradition of skilled entertaining. *Shilpi*, *shilpajivi* and *kushilava* are the terms used for stage artistes and musicians. Most of these artistes, including the *ganika* were drawn from the *Sudra* class.

Communities of performers frequented the urban centres, especially place of pilgrimage like Kashi, in order to earn their livelihood. The temple precincts were the usual venues for the entertainers. Exclusive musical gatherings were arranged in the *rangshala*.

## (v) Musical forms

References to performance practices are scarce. From *Manasollasa* of King Someshwara, compiled in AD 1130, it appears that musical performances were formalized by this time; a suit or cycle, *sudakrama*, of seven traditional songs – *karna*, *ela*, *dhenki*, *jhombada*, *lambaka*, *rasak*, and *ektalika* – followed by a large composition in the *kanda* metre, and a small concluding song constituted the standard concert format. Other musical forms were specific to some occasion or festivity. For instance, *shatpadi* was used in story-telling, and *charchari* was performed at the time of the *kusumayudha-parv* (the holi festival). There were many vernacular songs called after a particular metre, such as *dodhaka*, *dvipadi*, *giti*, *chatushpadi* which could be rendered in any musical metre (*tala*).

During the thirteenth century a detailed description of the ancient and contemporary *prabandha* (composition) forms is available in *Sarangdeva's Sangitaratanakara*. He mentions *ela*, *karna*, *variani*, *rasak*, and *ektali* rendered in fast tempo. Many of these forms were accepted in their traditional as well as improvised forms during the medieval period.

## Medieval Music Culture

### (i) Changes in the patronage pattern

The establishment of the Sultanate of Delhi in the beginning of the thirteenth century brought a change in the cultural set-up of northern India. As the new elite had come from a culturally developed region and their traditions were in many ways different from those current in northern India, major change appeared in the patronage pattern. There was a sharp decline in the status of *ganikas*, who occupied a coveted place in Indian cultural tradition. The new patrons, who conformed to Turko-Persian traditions of art and culture, had no knowledge and understanding of the Sanskrit language and lacked interest in the arts which were the attributes of a *ganika*. As a result she lost her pride of place in society.

While in the pre-Sultanate days *Sangit* was the amalgam of acting, dancing and singing, and the knowledge of the stagecraft was considered an essential accomplishment for the fashionable people of society, in the new scheme of entertainment theatre had no place. The elimination of theatre from the *majlisi hunar* (accomplishments appropriate to convivial assemblies) led to a tremendous decline in the status of the theatre artistes. A further change was brought about in the connotation of the term *sangit* during the period under review; it now included the three arts of vocal music, instrumental music and dance.

The arrival of scholars, artisans and performing artistes from major centres of Islamic culture owing to the devastations caused by Chingiz Khan in A. D. 1220-21 led to the further strengthening of Persian traditions in India to which early Sultans firmly clung. However, this aloofness could not be maintained for long, and a slow process of assimilation to indigenous culture and performance practices started during the later half of the thirteenth century.

## **(ii) Transition from Turko-Persian to Indo-Persian musical forms**

The transition from Turko-Persian musical traditions began more markedly during the reign of Sultan Muizzuddin Kaqubad (r. 1287-1290). In him the performing artistes, who were sitting idle at his grandfather Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban (r. 1267-87), found an agreeable patron. According to Ziauddin Barani, the author of *Tarikh-i Firuzshahi*, there grew a colony of musicians, pretty-faced entertainers, jesters and bhandis from every region in the vicinity of the palace Kilukhari where the Sultan held public audience. He further writes that Indian performing artistes, courtesans, slave girls, and slaves were trained in the Persian language and instructed in the manners and customs of the court. They were also trained in Persian music (*sarud*), and playing of *chang*, *rubab*, *kamancha*, *maskak*, *nay*, and *tambur*, the instruments used in the Persian cultural sphere. Experts in Persian and Indian music composed eulogies of Sultan in the form of *qaul* and *ghazal* which they rendered in every musical air.

Barani's observations are extremely significant. In fact, they reflect the efforts of Indian performing artistes to adapt to the changing demands of the period and match the taste of the new patrons. They mastered the Persian language which had emerged as the language of the new aristocratic circle; they became expert in the latest styles and techniques of musical arts popularized by the central Asian and Khurasani musicians. Thus, there was a temporary set back to the community of *natas*, the traditional instructors of *Sangit*. By adapting themselves to the new artistic requirements they retained their status as instructors of musical arts until the end of the seventeenth century.

A process of the assimilation of Indian and Persian musical tradition also started about this time. Many of the early medieval musical forms such as *suryaprakash* and *chandrapakash* began to be performed by Muslim musicians. These forms have been mentioned in the Persian musical treatises as *marg* music, and their knowledge was considered essential for the *nayaks* (maestro) even as late as the nineteenth century. Geet had a profound influence on many of the musical forms which took place during the thirteenth century, especially *qaul* which had a striking similarity with it to the extent that it was regarded as the equivalent of *geet*. Some of the instruments, especially *nay* or *shahnai* became associated with Indian rituals and festivities.

A fair picture in the realm of vocal and instrumental music is available in *A'ijaz-i Khusravi* of Amir Khusrau, written in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, which has an entire section on music at the court of the Khalji Sultans. About the royal entertainers Khusrau remarks that Instrumentalists and vocalists remain nearest to the throne and enchant the listeners with their humming and graceful string-play, and that their melodies attract people as honey seizes bees. Khusrau's appraisal of the *qawwals* of the royal court provides an idea of new techniques of song and rhythm as developed in Delhi; their musical compositions bewildered the musical composers of Arab and Persia. They employed handclaps for making the rhythm. Even the most exalted and proud vocalists were taken aback by their art.

## **(iii) Synthesis of court and folk performance tradition**

It was in fact a unique phenomenon of the fourteenth century that court culture came in close contact with folk culture through persons who were intimate with both the circles, and Khusrau was the foremost among them. He was a master of the Persian language and a prolific poet and prose writer. Barani mentions his great expertise in the art of singing and melody-making. Khusrau enjoyed the longest tenure of association with the court. He also had strong

links with the Sufi *khanqah* of the Chishti order which was the most effective venue of cultural sharing. He was a devotee of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (d. 1325) and well versed in the practices related to *sama* (Sufi music). Thus Khusrau had the rare opportunity of acquiring knowledge of Turko-Persian court traditions, as well as Indian classical and folk traditions, which were taking roots in *sama*. He combined this knowledge in the fashioning of *qaul*, *tarana*, *tillana*, *naqsh*, *nigar*, *basit*, *fard*, *farsi*, and *sohla*.<sup>1</sup> In these musical forms Khusrau blended Indian and Persian music techniques. For mass appeal he composed songs in *desi*, the spoken dialect of the Delhi region. Khusrau, thus, tried to join two musical cultures, which became the foundation stone of Hindustani music.

These new forms gained currency through the community of *qawwals*. They became the custodians of Turko-Persian traditions and at the same time they popularized the new forms. The *sama* music was Indianised and attained a status of its own through this class of performers.

During this period the traditional *prabandh* form was denounced by Indian poet saints and adopted *chhand*, *pad*, and *doha*. They also began to compose in regional languages. It is in this scenario that most of the musical forms, such as *shabd*, *dhrupad*, and *bishnupad* took shape in due course. A good part of medieval music, thus, evolved in a religious setting, but one which assimilated strands from both popular Hindu and popular Islamic forms.

The traditions which evolved with the Khaljis continued to flourish during the fourteenth century under the Tughlaqs. Glimpses of these are preserved in the accounts of The Arab travelers Ibn-i Battuta and Shahabuddin al-Umari, who came to India during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq (r. 1325-51). The musicians of Delhi lived in a separate colony called Tarababad which was located near Hauz- i Khas. Their colony (Ibn-i Battuta calls it “market”) was one of the largest in the world. A similar locality/market existed at Daultabad, the new capital founded by Muhammad bin Tughlaq in the Deccan. Interestingly, both these places had mosques which were frequented by women musicians in large numbers.

#### **(iv) The revival of theatrical arts**

This period witnessed, to some extent, the revival of theatrical arts in the form of *paturbazi* (performance by a *patur*). It is likely that the term *patur* or *patar* stemmed from Sanskrit *patri* (an actress). Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi refers to one *patur* in the *akhara* (a sort of playhouse) of Sultan Alauddin Khalji who was a *swangi* and excelled in the acting and make-up of a *jogan* (a *yogini*). One can infer that some of the courtesans acquired expertise in different

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<sup>1</sup>*Qaul* was a musical form of Arabic origin. In it verses were rendered along with rhythmic syllables.

*Tarana* was a musical form akin to *geet* in its rhythmic structure. In its rhythmic syllables were interwoven with the text.

*Tillana* was a musical form wherein rhythmic syllables were rendered in place of song-text.

*Naqsh* was equivalent to man a musical tradition in Prakrit.

*Nigar* was a counterpart of *suravrti* (*sargam*).

*Basit* was like *chhand* and was a kind of *geet*.

*Fard* was a form of *tillana* wherein a single verse was incorporated in the *tal* oriented musical structure.

*Farsi* was a form of *tillana* in which verses from *ghazal* and *qasida* were rendered along with rhythmic syllable.

*Sohla* was a musical form rendered on the occasion of festivities. Later on it became associated with the devotional music of the Sikhs.

kinds of make up and the art of disguise which was known *swang* during this period. *Bhagat-bazi* was another important art which found vogue around the sixteenth century. It was similar to *bhandeti* in its essentials except in respect of make-up. *Bhagat-bazi* survived as a favourite pastime of the upper classes until around the close of the eighteenth century.

#### (v) Musical arts in the Mughal capital Agra

The performance traditions developed under the sultans of Delhi continued to flourish even after the decline of the Delhi Sultanate in the new centres of art and culture Jaunpur and Gwalior, which emerged during the late fifteenth century. Musical arts witnessed unprecedented progress in both these places. By this time the fusion of the Turko-Persian and Indian musical traditions was effected in such a way that it contributed to the emergence of a new musical culture which found favour with all sections of society. All these elements contributed greatly to the emergence of a rich classical tradition of the Mughal court at Agra under Akbar. He patronized musicians and singers from different regions and countries on a grand scale. His court was a great confluence of the musical geniuses from different regions of India as well as from all around the Persian cultural sphere. Pandarika Vitthala, the musician and musicologist from south, characterizes his court as *sangitarnavamandi*.<sup>7</sup> Agra emerged as one of the leading centre of musical arts in northern India under him. The leading forms were *dhrupad*, *bishnupad*, and *khayal*, *Karrakka* and so on.

Akbar's period is extremely important for the development of devotional poetry and music in the Braj region. *Braj-Bhasha*, the dominant medium of poetic expression and the favourite song language of the composer musicians, attained a classical status only after the establishment of the Mughal court at Agra. The famous *asht-chhap* poet-musicians like Haridas, Sur Das, and Nand Das flourished during this period. *Ras-lila* also attained classical status in the Braj region.

Information about the community of performers is extremely limited in the sources. The *Ain-i Akbari*, however, discusses the performing artistes at some length which makes it clear that most Indian performing artistes belonged to a caste or tribe whose profession was singing and dancing. They played one or more instruments or an art form which lent its name to the caste; for instance *hurukiya* – who used to play on *huruk* – or *bahu-rupi* who practiced the art of disguise. Dance was exclusive to a few castes – *natwa* and *kanjari*. The *kirtaniya*, *bhagatiya*, *bhanvayya*, *bahu-rupi*, and *bhands* may be classed as theatre artistes. From the account of Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, the author of *Zakhirat ul Khawanin*, it appears that *luli*, *huruki*, *domni*, *kanchani*, and *kamachini* were the leading classes of female singers and dancers. The most reputed were the *kanchanis*, who attended the grand weddings at the houses of the Mughal nobles for the purpose of singing and dancing. In festive seasons they used to be admitted to the seraglio and even allowed to visit the Meena bazaar. Shah Jahan often enjoyed their company.

From Shah Jahan's time onwards music did not remain merely a channel of entertainment, but continued to develop into a very minute science. Many connoisseurs of music developed an interest in the principles and theories related to various aspects of music which resulted in the compilation of numerous musical treatises on theory and performance traditions of Hindustani music in Persian most of these were written during the reign of Aurangzeb.

The rich musical culture of the latter half of the seventeenth century, which corresponded with the reign of Aurangzeb, is clearly evident in *Rag Darpan* and *Tuhfat al-Hind*. In spite of the fact that Aurangzeb 'gave up' music from his tenth regional year, he did not prohibit it for others. The Mughal paintings also reveal many interesting details about the contemporary musical culture, musical instruments, and performance traditions.

#### **(vi) Developments in the realm of music in Shahjahanabad**

From about the middle of the seventeenth century, artistic and cultural activities shifted from Agra to Shahjahanabad, the new capital city founded by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, popularly known as Dehli. During the reign of Muhammad Shah, the *Qila-i Mubarak* (the palace-fortress, popularly known as *Lal Qila*) had become the centre of cultural activities.

The musical arts received patronage of an exceptional nature not only from the court and the elite circles but also from a large section of the local populace. Dancing and singing became a favourite pastime as well as an integral part of all the festivities. No occasion of mirth or festivity was ever wanting in these two arts. Sufi Assemblies (*mahfil-i sama*) were regularly arranged at the tombs and shrines of saints on the occasion of urs and certain dates of the month, especially the *nauchandi*. Even for ceremonies of sorrow such as *Muharram* there had developed a special kind of music recitation called *marsiya-khwani*. As a result the number of professional artistes burgeoned. A large number of outstanding singers flourished during this period. The number of popular artistes was beyond count.

It is often maintained that music began to lose its grandeur and refinement during the eighteenth century, and pure classical music declined considerably. General debasement is said to have set in during the period. A closer examination of the available literature, however, makes it clear that the expression 'decline' implies a decrease in the popularity of some of the elite styles such as dhrupad and the growing vogue for *khayal*, *tarana*, *tappa*, and other *dhun* based musical forms. This departure was not due to lack of any skill as outstanding singers from the family of Tansen, and nayaks (super musicians) flourished in large numbers during this period. Instead, it was due to the emergence of new patrons who came to prominence in the changed social and political conditions and demanded such forms which had the backing of the popular musical traditions of Delhi. They insisted on their own distinct tastes and traditions. Thus, the period was not one of decline but rather one of transition with some important changes and modifications.

In fact, there was a crucial reduction in court patronage after the invasion of Nadir Shah (1739), who deprived the Mughal ruler of the immense treasures and riches. Dargah Quli Khan, the author of a contemporary Persian travelogue *Muraqqa-i Dehli*, pointedly remarks that 'since the invasion of Nadir Shah, His Majesty Din Panah abstains himself from the musical soirees and has suspended them at court'. As Mughal emperor and his nobility were losing fortune, the elite artistes were obliged to seek patronage from the patrons who were affluent enough to extend sustenance to these eminent court artistes. This proved a boon for the popularization of those court techniques which were hitherto forbidden to the general populace. True, music lost to certain extent its sophistication and elitism, but it can not be denied that greater interaction of the court artistes with those who had always performed for the commoners brought in results of immense significance. Most importantly it led to the blending of classical and folk traditions.



A significant feature of the period was that music, by and large, had come under the domain of the dancing girls and courtesans. Most of them were well-versed in this art and were trained by accomplished musicians of the time. Dargah Quli Khan, the author of the Persian treatise *Muraqqa-i Dehli*, has mentioned a number of dancers and singers of the royal court who were as authentic and acclaimed as many master musicians of the time with whom they used to compete. These courtesans used to live in great style and most of them were well versed in the manners and courtesies to be observed in the mehfiles (*tehzib-i akhlaq*). The professional artistes were numerous and prosperous is asserted by contemporary literature. Most of them commanded respect in high society.

Music was appreciated in all circles. Musical assemblies were attracted large audience. As Dargah Ali Khan tells us, people started arriving at these gatherings since morning. The Festival of *Basant*, celebrated at the onset of spring, was a great occasion for the performing artists of Delhi. The festivities and the hustle and bustle that commenced on this day continued for a week.

This period is especially important for the development of the *khayal-gayaki*. It was brought to perfection and popularized by Niyamat Khan Sadarang who was a master musician attached to the court of Muhammad Shah and was considered at par with the nayaks of old days. The popularity of *khayal* increased due to a number of factors mainly because it showed greater adaptability for rhythmic variations. *Kabitt*, *tarana*, and *Jangla* were the other popular styles of Delhi. *Bhands* used to be good dancers and musicians. The performance comedians and mimic artistes, the *bhands* (also known *naqqals*), known as *bhandeti*, was as integral to a gathering as dance and music. *Bhandeti* was a composite item of dance, music and mimicry.

*Qawwali* was integral to Sufi assemblies (*mehfil-i sama*), urs and other festivities. The music of sama originally belonged to the *khanqahs* where it was performed for the attainment of spiritual ecstasy. These song forms *qaul*, *tarana*, *tillana*, *sohla*, and other allied variants, which were created by Amir Khusrau, were integrated into a composite performance tradition in Shahjahanabad during the eighteenth century and came to be known as *qawwali* after the *qawwals*, with whom *qaul-tarana* and other allied variants were associated. *Qawwali* incorporated the stylistic features of *khayal* in many ways.

A number of changes appeared in instrumental music, too. There was a decrease in the number of *binkars* (*vina* players), while the popularity of sitar increased day by day. *Sarangi* became the standard accompanying instrument for courtesan's dance songs. Some new instrumental styles were also evolved.

The trends set in Dehli were perfected further in other places especially at Lucknow which emerged as the cultural hub of northern India during the late eighteenth century. The tradition of classical dance was revived at the Awadh court. *Kathak* as a dance style was developed and codified here and designed as a chamber art under the patronage of King Wajid Ali Shah. Regional patterns like *tappa*, *thumri*, and *dadra* were refined and became the most popular musical forms at Lucknow. *Marsiya-khwani*, the music associated with the ritual of *Muharram*, developed as an established art during the eighteenth century, and came to be known as *soz-khwani*.

The urban theatre of north India also took shape at Lucknow under the auspices of the king Wajid Ali Shah. However, it was the Indar Sabha of Mirza Amanat, produced outside the Awadh court, which gave a definite direction to theatre. This assorted variety of dance, drama and theatre paved the way of Parsi theatre in Bombay.

## **Music During the British Period**

### **(i) Changes in music patronage**

Fundamental changes in music patronage appeared after the establishment of the British rule in India. The British action against the local rulers largely cut off the courtly musical life and deprived the communities of performers of elite patronage. The new administrators showed little interest in 'native' performing arts and they treated the performing women as common prostitutes and delineation of *lasya* and *bhav-abhinaya* in dance was treated by them as lasciviousness. The new educated class also began to treat them with scorn and an era of orthodoxy prevailed wherein all such performances came to be viewed through the mirror of sexual morality to the extent that reputed courtesans stopped dancing. The courtesans began to lose their coveted place and patronage. New classes of patrons from the lower rungs of society began to extend their patronage to these arts and their practitioners. It ensured the survival of some of the traditions though in a muted form.

Vocal music was, however, not deprived completely of elite patronage though it remained confined to the courts of the Indian princes; in the absence of their genuine appreciation and noble patronage it could have almost become extinct.

### **(ii) Contribution of British scholars to Indian musicology**

The western scholars, however, went into a detailed study of Indian music giving explanation of various musical terms prevalent in the professional parlance. They dealt with the developments of traditions and trends of Indian music between eighteenth to twentieth centuries. They certainly brought hidden treasure to light. Foreign authors wrote about the historical and theatrical aspects of Indian music which had a great impact on those authors who were conversant only with the English language. Their writings created immense interest in Indian music. Many old treatises were translated into English and other languages. Sir William Jones founded the Asiatic Society in 1784. He was a great scholar and acquainted with the theory of music and his essay, *The Musical Modes of the Hindus* (published in 1793), is one of the earliest and significant contribution by an English writer to the study of Indian music. Mr. Clements and Mr. Deval of Sangli edited many books on music. Mr. Clements was one of those who opened new avenues of critical and comparative standards from the view point of the Westerners.

Captain N.A. Willard, who was in the service of the Nawab of Banda was the first to incorporate the Hindi and Urdu songs illustrating certain types of musical compositions along with their notations. He also tried to provide a glossary of some important Indian musical terms. He is the author of the famous work, *A Treatise on the Music of Hindostan Comprising a detail on the Ancient Theory and Modern Practice* which was published in 1834. It made tremendous impact on the authors of the late eighteenth century.

### **(iii) Contribution of Indian music scholars**

During the later half of the nineteenth century some eminent Indian scholars took to the study of Indian music. Sir S. M. Tagore is well known for his patronage to music. During the

period of 1867-1896 he published a number of books on music. Amongst these *The Universal History of Music* and *Hindu Music from Various Authors*, require particular mention. The publication of the great song books such as *Sur-Sagar* and those of the *Pushti marg* about this time also greatly revived the interest of the educated class in the old compositions.

Notable contribution towards the study of music was made by Pandit Vishnu Digambar, a learned disciple of Pandit Balkrishnabuwa, who was a great music scholar and brilliant musician of the Gwalior *gharana*. It was he who rescued music from the clutches of the vulgar caterers and popularized it amongst the educated classes. He also prepared the way for the theories of Pandit Bhatkhande and many others.

Pandit Bhatkhande established the current Hindustani music system on a sound foundation. His Hindustani *Sangīt-Paddhati* describes the theory of music. In it he has tried to trace the historical growth and transitions in the form of each *raga*, 2500 in numbers. It was a gigantic task. Classical music was till then a close preserve of the *ustads* and subject of admiration of only a few. Now it came to be appreciated by the educated classes. Theatrical arts were also rejuvenated in the new scenario.

## **Modern Period**

### **(i) Wide popularity of music**

Musically there is a mass awakening in modern India. Due to the efforts of the western and Indian musical scholars, music has regained its pride of place in Indian society as it had enjoyed earlier on. People of respectable families and even women started learning it. Radio and Television have widely popularized Indian musical arts even in the remotest areas. The role of films is also considerable in this respect. Many musical societies have been founded in cosmopolitan cities which are dedicated to the cause of music. They are also publishing rare musical treatises in Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu and other languages. The branch of ethnomusicology also developed to explore the domain of music which is not confined to one region or one style. Indian and foreign universities are regularly organizing conferences on different aspects of ethnomusicology wherein music scholars and practitioners of various instruments, vocalists and dancers are actively participating. The public demand for the inclusion of music in our educational system has, however, met with partial success.

### **(ii) Use of western instruments in Hindustani music**

Some of the western instruments, such as violin, harmonium, guitar, mandolin, and clarinet etc., are used extensively in Hindustani classical musical performances. Harmonium became very popular as an accompaniment with *thumri* and *khayal* during the early eighteenth century. It has produced very famous artistes like Bhaiya Ganpat Rao.

The modern orchestration and the choral group singing is purely an adaptation of the west. Performing instruments in the form of an orchestra also existed in Indian tradition and known as *vrind*, but its development in the shape of modern technique in orchestration is influenced by the west. This trait is more pronounced in Indian light music, especially film music. It has a large number of western instruments in the ensemble.

## Conclusion

Indian music is gaining tremendous popularity in other countries especially in the west. Although Indian artistes kept on visiting the west from time to time but the west never went so crazy about Indian music as in the last three decades. The credit goes to Ravi Shankar, Dagar brothers, Ustad Zakir Husain, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Ustad Bismillah Khan, and many others who have made the westerners to understand music in an Indian way. The dancing troupes organized by reputed dancers like Birju Maharaj, Sonal Man Singh and many others have also popularized Indian classical dances all over the world. The present-day music culture seems to be commercial and mechanical because it has confined itself within the barrier of self-interest. Yet one should also accept the fact that it is really becoming global.

## Long Questions:

1. Examine the nature of medieval cultural in northern India.
2. Give an account of music culture in the British period with reference to Hindustani music.

## Suggested Readings:

1. G. H. Ranade, *Hindustani Music (An outline of its Physics and aesthetics)*, Delhi, S. L. & Co., 1951, second revised edition, 1989.
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3. \_\_\_\_\_ "Female Performing Artistes in North India: A Survey", in *Art And Culture*, Vol. II, (eds) Ahsan Jan Qaisar & Som Prakash Verma, Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 2002.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ "Imperial Agra as the cultural Node: Late 16<sup>th</sup> to early 17<sup>th</sup> century", paper presented in a Seminar on Qazi Nurullah Shustari, held on 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> January, Agra, 2003.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ "Cultural, linguistic and literary Dimension of the poetry of the Vaishnava saints of the Braj Region", paper presented in a Seminar on 'Sufi and Bhakti Movements in Medieval India' held at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh on 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2004.
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## LESSION 4B

### MUSIC CULTURE IN SOUTH INDIA

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#### Introduction

Strange as it may strike us, music forms the only substantial cultural factor on which India would admit of a dichotomy into Karnatak and Hindustani systems. Music continues as the solid foundation of a cultural unity called South India or *Dakshina Pradesh*. This musical heritage extends from the Pallava-Chola times when the Nayanmars and Alwars sang their psalms, to our own times to-day, and territorially it binds all the four linguistic states of South India. The indigenous cultural traditions of India had always sought their haven in the South. From the point of view of history, research and reconstruction, what has been preserved in Tamilnadu and Kerala, is of utmost importance to the whole of India.

It is a matter of common knowledge that Indian classical music has its origin in the *Saamaveda*. *Saama* is from the Sanskrit root *Saam* which means 'to be on the level 'in unison'. Another meaning of *Saama* is simply 'a song'. *Saama* has borrowed the *maatu*, or words of the songs from the *Rigveda*, but *dhaatu*, or composition of its music, is its own contribution. The main contribution of the *Saamaveda* to Indian classical music is (1) A musical scale (2) Seeds of the *murchana* or scale system, (3) rudiments of aesthetics, (4) rudiments of rhythm or *tala* and (5) a system of notation.

The great classics of the Sangam age make a favourite theme of music. *Silappathikaram* gives a comprehensive picture. The text is a happy blend of *Iyal*, *Isai* and *Natakam*. Evolution of *pann* (*raga*), their eleven characteristics, key-notes (take offs) for different *panns*, exercises on three primary scales, twelve divisions of the octave in the twelve *Rasis* are all talked about in this text according to Tamil musicologists. However, an inscription found at Kudumiyamalai (Pudukkottai) is of primary interest. Mahendravarman I, the Pallava king is reportedly the author of this inscription. Mahendravarman's craze for music and his taste for *Nritham*, *taalam* and *layam* are borne out by the characters in *Mattavilasaprahasana*. The music referred to in the inscription belongs to the sphere *abhyasa gaana* (technical exercise) for developing finger technique in Vina play (*Chatushprakara-Svaragama*). The name of the *Vina* was *Parivadini*, a seven stringed *Vina*. When the inscription was carved probably the bifurcation of the two systems Hindustani and Karnatak had not come into existence. An inscription belonging to A.D 750 (Navdivarma Pallava III) states that *Tirupathigam* (singing the praise of God) had become part of temple ritual in the first half of eighth century A.D.

The institution of reciting (singing) the sacred hymns composed by the first three *Samayacharyas* came into existence in the ninth century A.D. and that of consecrating their images in the tenth century A.D. As endeavours of religious fervour they grew in intensity through eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Among the *Nayanmars*, Jnana Sambandha had a contemporary and close association with Nilakantha by name who was a player on lute, *Yazhpanar*. A story is recorded that one of the tunes of Sambandha could not be reproduced on the stringed instrument, the *yazh*. Aanaaya Nayanar, worshipped Siva with his flute music. The music of these times is represented also by the psalms of the Vaishnavite Alwars whose songs were sung, played on the lute, and even rendered in gesture according to tradition. We find reference to music and lute and with *Vina* here also.

The Vaishnavite hymns are now recited without music while the Saivite hymns of *Tevaram* are still sung musically. The music of *Tevaram* was being again and again re-identified and labelled in terms of the nearest approximations of the melodic modes of the music current in respective ages. The Tiruvaduturai Mutt Palm leaf manuscripts (A.D. 1742) has the following list of older melodies and their modern approximations.

**The ten *panns* of the day.**

1.	Puranirmai	Srikanti
2.	Gandharam	Hejjuji
3.	Kausika	Bhairavi
4.	Indalam	Lalita Panchami
5.	Takkesi	Kambhodhi
6.	Nattaraga, Sadari	Pantuvarali
7.	Nattapaadai	Naataikurinji
8.	Pazham Panchuram	Sankarabharanam
9.	Gandharapanchamam	Kedaragaulam
10.	Panchamam	Ahiri

**The eight *panns* of the night.**

11.	Takkaraga	Kannada Kambodhi
12.	Pazham Takkaraga	Suddhasaveri
13.	Sikaamaram	Naadanamaakriya
14.	Tiruvirattam	Sindhu Kannada
15.	Vyazha-kurinchi	Saurashtra
16.	Megaraga Kurunchi	Neelambari
17.	Kurinji	Malahari
18.	Aandhali Kurinji	Sailadesaki

**Three common *panns***

19.	Sevvazhi	Yedukula Kambhodhi
20.	Senturuthi	Madhyamavati
21.	Tiruttandakam	Begada

The sacred Tamil hymns of the Saiva Nayanmars, *Tevaram* esteemed as *Tamil Veda*, got accumulated in the Pallava period and later collected and codified by Nambi Andar Nambi during the grand monarchs Rajaraja I and Rajendra I. The institution of arranging their singing in the temples which began in 750 AD was further developed and regularly managed through state supervision. Paalur inscription of Rajakesari, Tiruvaduthurai inscription of Parantaka, Aandanallur inscription of Uttama Chola bear testimony to the practice of both singing and endowments to the singers. The chola state had a government superintendent of *Tevaram* called *Tevaranayakam*. Provision for singing of Vanishnava sacred hymns *Tiruvoymozhi* is also attested by inscriptions of the sacred composers of the Chola times there were royal composers like Gandaraditya and patrons like Sadayappa Vallal who patronised Kamban. Terms like *Vinaikhani*, *Geya-Vinoda-Vala-nadu*, *Nritta Vinoda*, etc. bear testimony to the importance of music and dance during the Chola period.

King Somesvara III of Kalyan, has bequeathed to us an encyclopedia called *Monasollasa* or *Abhilasitartha-cintamani* written in A.D 1131. It is one of the few available texts on Indian painting. The text contains valuable section on music and dance too. This text has influenced later texts like *Siva-tatvaratnakara* and *Silparatna*. Various music writers like Sarangadeva and

Parsvadeva are referred to in these texts. The music section of the Somesvara's thesaurus, which is used by Sarangadeva is indeed valuable. *Gita-Vinoda*, *Vadya-Vindoa* and *Tala-Vadyas* receives great attention. The treatment opens with *Prakirnaka* or miscellaneous topics like the merits and demerits of good and bad singers, qualities of voice etc. It talks about different types of songs which appeal to different kind of people. Somesvara enumerates the *Ragas* in classified sets, *the Suddhas*, *the Gaudas*, *the Sadharana's* and so on. *Ragas* bear the names of the region they come from like *Turuki Todi* etc.

The sub-section on *Prabhandas* is comparatively longer and includes illustrative compositions. The most valuable data here are the citations of actual songs in Karnataka-bhasha like *Satpadi*, *Kanda* and *Varna* in the same language. Somesvara mentions about popular folk-songs like *Tripadi* (corn-thrashing, love and separation), *Satpadi* (ballads), *Dhavala* (marriage songs), *Mangala* (festival songs), *Raahadi* (soldiers) and *Dandi* (by Shepherds). *Vadyas* and *Talavadyas* also receive adequate treatment. Somesvara's son Jagadegamalla Pratapachakravarti wrote *Sangita Chadamani*, available in Bikaner archives in manuscript form. Another Chalukya prince produced a work called *Sangitasudhakara*.

Under King Singhana (A.D 1210-1247) of the Yadavas of Devagiri, Sarangadeva of Kashmiri stock produced *Sangitaratnakara*. This was an epitome of all the earlier works. It uses Abhinavagupta's commentary on *Natyashastra* and *Bharatbhashya* of King Nanyadeva of Mithila. All later works reproduce from the *Sangitaratnakara* to a large extent on the fundamentals of music like *Srutis*, *Jathis*, older *Ragas*, *Prabhandhas*, *Talas* and *Prakiranaka* comprising voice, concert, composer etc. *Sangitaratnakara* occupies a position analogues to that of *Kavya-Prakasa* of Mammata on rhetoric. The values of this work is attested to by the large number of commentaries on this work. The author assumes a title *Nissanka*, and mention a new *Tala*, a new *Vina* etc. A little later, Parsvadeva wrote a music treatise *Sangita Samayasara* which refers to Bhoja, Somesvara and Pratapa and their music works. He was the disciple of Mahadevacharya and had high musical titles like *Sangitaakara* (the mine of music).

About A.D 1300, Gopala Nayaka had the musical prowess to compete with Amir Khusru. May be the seeds of Hindustani style was sown in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Deccan. Later on, Venkatamakin's *Chaturdandiprakashika* acknowledges that only Gopala Nayaka understood *Sruti* and was the promulgation of the *Chaturdandi* i.e. *Gita*, *Prabhandha*, *Thaya* and *Alapa*, a fourfold delineation of *Raga* forms Kallinatha, in his commentary on the *Sangitaratnakara*, cites one of the compositions of Gopala Nayaka in a series of melodies called *Raga Kadamba*. It should be noted that one of the four forms of *Chaturdandi Prabhandha* evolved into the *Kirtana* or *Kriti*. Kakatiya times record in inscriptions gifts to temple musicians for *Gita*, *Vadya* and *Nritya*. There are terms like *Mridangavadaka*, *Randhrapuraka*, *Kahaladhmata* and *Jalajakaranda-vadaka* etc. Kakatiya king Ganapati's time produced a treatise titled *Nrittaratnavali*. The text was written by Jaya-senapati (A.D 1253-54) and contains a chapter *Gitaratnavali*. This work is mentioned by King Tulaja of Tanjore in the later centuries. The Kakatiya temples bear testimony to the knowledge of dance and music through sculpture.

Palkuriki Somanatha, produced *Basava-purana* and *Panditharadhyacharita* during Prataparudra's times. The above mentioned works speak on music, the elements of art, kinds of instruments and a list of *Ragas*, 19 aspects of *Vina* playing, 108 *talas*, 7 kinds of *Alapa*, 22 *Gamakas* and 108 *Ragas* are given. *Ragas* came to be classified as *Shadava* and *Audava*, *Raga* and *Napumsaka*, *Sanga*, *Kriyanga* and *Upanga*. Music and dance were certainly very extensively practiced during the Kakatiya period. Other important works in medieval Andhra were Simhabhupala's *Rasarnava Sudhakara* and *Sangita Sudhakara*. Viranarayana produced

*Sangita Chintamani*, whose manuscript is available at Trivandrum. Another author added a supplement to this work titled *Sahitya Chintamani*.

Chatura Kallinatha, the commentator on *Sangita-Ratnakara* is the author of *Kalanidhi* (A.D. 1446-65). This is the only commentary available to us at present in print on *Sangita Ratnakara*. In the introductory verses Kallinatha describes the Karnatakadesa as the territory between Kaveri and Krishna rivers and the kingdom of Vidyanagar (Vijayanagar) on the banks of Tungabhadra river. On the tenth verse Kallinatha gives his bio-data. He was patronised by Immidideva who is assigned to 15<sup>th</sup> century. Kallinatha calls himself *Sakshatsangitadevata*. The colophons give other titles like *Abhinava Bharatacharya*, *Raja Vaggeyakara*, *Rayabhayakara* and *Todava malla*. King Tulaja of Tanjore quote him extensively in a later century, Kallinatha's work quotes heavily from Matanga, Barata, Navdikesvara, Vema, Dattila and others bearing testimony to the continuities in *Sangita* as well as *Sastras*. Lakshmidara and Kumba-Rana of Mewar are noteworthy writers on music.

The family of Tallapakkam poets, musician-devotees deserve special mention in the 15<sup>th</sup> and centuries. They composed heaps of *Sankirtanas* in Telegu on Lord Venkatesvara of Tirupati, most of which are engraved on copper plates lying in the temple there. Annamacharya, composed songs on philosophy and love. Pedda Tirumala, his son, made similar and more copious contribution. Chinna Tirumala, wrote two series of *Kirtanas* on philosophy and love and a short treatise.

*Sankirtana Lakshana*, a Telegu version of his grandfather's work in Sanskrit. This work is important in the history of the evolution of the form of South Indian musical composition. The compositions are a minefold for *Raga* research, as well as the devotional *Bhajana-Sampradaya*.

Sage Vidyaranya wrote a treatise on music called *Sangita-Sara* which speaks for the first time about codification of *Ragas* under a scheme called *Mela* or *Melapaddhati*. The time of Devaraya II (A.D 1423-46) was a period of great musical activity. Gopendra Tippa was interested both in *Sangita* and *Sahitya*. He wrote a gloss on Vamana's *Kavyalankara Sutras* and *Taladipika*. He deals theoretically with *Margi* and *Desi Talas*. During this period a Tamil devotee and composer, the author of *Tiruppugaz* (Glorious praise) flourished. Arunagiri glorified all the South Indian shrines of Subrahmanya, through his achievements in respect of the rich variety of rhythmic patterns. Krishnadevaraya's rule is also marked for musical activity. Lakshminarayana, bearing the title Royal musician and Todaramalla, wrote *Sangita Suryodaya* (manuscript available at Madras), Karnataka Saints belonging to the '*Dasakuta*' also flourished during this period. Purandaradasa, referred to as *Pitamaha* of Karnataka saints belonging to the '*Dasakuta*' also flourished during this period. Purandaradasa, referred to as *Pitamaha* of Karnatak music is well-known. Sripadaraya, a precursor to Purandaradasa, refers to Saluwa Narasimha in one of his songs. Of his numerous songs in Kannada, the *Bhramaragita*, the *Venugita* and the *Gopigita* based on *Bhagavata* are important. The whole of the tenth book of the *Bhagavata* was turned by him into Kannada songs. Vyasaraaya of the Madwa School and *Dvaita* literature also belonged to early Vijayanagara period who lived upto Krishnadevaraya's region period. Vyasaraaya composed lot of *kirtanas* called *Vrta Nama*, an alternation of songs and metrical verse. Vadiraja was another *Kirtanakar* of fifteenth century. The entire tradition crystallised into the genius of Purandaradasa (A.D 1480-1564) producing 4,75,000 compositions of various genres. From a banker's life, Srinivasa Naik (Purandaradasa) became a great devotee of Vittala of Pandiripura and migrated to the Vijayanagar capital in his spiritual itinerary, during Krishnadevaraya's time. Simple in diction and conveying devotion, ethics and high spiritual truths in a popular manner Purandaradasa became the bridge between the Karnatic and



Hindustani schools of Indian music. Probably, at this time that South Indian music attained a specific name Karnatak (Karnataka?) or Karnatic, Purandaradasa produced the beginners *Gita*, as well as elaborate and erudite *Sutadis*. He composed various types of songs, introduced the basic scale of *Malavagaula* and composed *Gitams* for the beginners in that scale. Kanakadasa was a distinguished disciple of Purandaradasa.

Ramamatya of Kondavidu, a contemporary of Ramaraya wrote the musical treatise *Svaramelakalanidhi* in the year A.D 1550. Ramamatya, refers to himself as a composer and grandson of the renowned musician Kallapadesika. Ramamatya described twenty *Melas*, beginning with *Mukhari* and sixty four *Janya-ragas* or derivative modes. The *Achyutarajamela Vina* obviously refers to Achyutaraya. To him belongs the credit of a clear recognition of the *Svayambu Svaras*, the upper partials or harmonics and the need for drone or *Sruti*. It is probably around this time that the frets on the *Vina* were fixed in such a manner that all *Ragas* could be played conveniently. Peddanna's *Manucharita* and *Vasucharita* also speak of *Vinas* around this time.

The Tanjore Court under the Nayaks continued the patronage that Vijayanagar was giving to music and dance. Raghunatha Nayak was himself a musician and expert in playing the *Vina*, *Sangita Sudha*, a musical work is attributed to him and his minister Govinda Dikshita. New *Ragas* like *Jayantasena* and new *Talas* like *Ramananda* came into vogue. Govinda Dikshita also speaks of *Sangita-Sastra-Samkshepa* or *Sangrahachudamani*. It is worthwhile to note that this works refer to an earlier work *Sangitasastra* by sage Vidyaranya and the dance-drama *Yahshagana* and its style of music.

Govindadikshita's son Venkatamakin wrote a treatise called *Chaturdandiprakasita* and set forth the scheme of seventy two *Melakartas*. This codification and classification of *Ragas* is a system different from the *Raga-Ragini-Putra-Putri System* of the north. It is built on the twelve *Swara-sthanas*, thirty six of the *Melas* being *Suddha Madhyama* and the other thirty six being derived from the change of this *Madhyama* into *Prati Madhyama*. This scheme of seventy two was strictly a theoretical idea and all the *Mela* were not current in his time. In the course of his book, Venkatamakin describes only nineteen *melas* and while describing *Ragas* he doesn't use his scheme. It has dealt with about fifty *ragas* in *Tanappa* style of *Nyasa*, *Amsa* etc. *Tanappa* and *Honappa* appear to be Kannada names and Govindadikshita and Venkatamakin were themselves Kannadigas. King Tulaja of the Maratta Tanjore sheds more light on the term "*Chaturdandi*", in his work *Sangita Saramrita*. *Chaturdandi*, has "four bars" namely *Gita*, *Prabandha*, *Thaya* and *Alapa*. New *Ragas* are sung in *Alapa* and *Kriti* and *Kirtana*, but in those days they were sung in all four forms. Definitive songs, *Lokshaya Gitas* for many of the parent and derivative *ragas* were composed in the post - A.D 1650 period.

Tanjore had by now become the seat of music. Renowned musicians and composers gravitated to Tanjore. The most eminent of these was Kshetrajna of Muvvapuri, who composed *Padams* in Telugu. These compositions were couched in classic Telegu and set in slow tempo bring out the *Raga Bhava* in full. Each *padam* depicts a mood of love, *Sringararasa* with God, the deity Gopala of Muvvapuri. Sri Ramadasa of Bhadrachala, Narayana Tirtha, the composer of *Krishna Lila Tarangini* and the *Melattur Bhagavata Mela* also belong to this period.

Tiruvarur in Tanjore District occupies a place in the musical map of South as Bayreuth for western music. This was the birth place (as if by appointment) of the Trinity of Karnatak music, Thyagaraja (A.D. 1767-1847), Muthuswami Dikshitar (A.D. 1775-1835) and Syama Sastri (A.D. 1762-1827). Thyagaraja is claimed to have authored twenty-four thousand compositions. The number available to us at present is just seven hundred and five. His contribution to the world of

music can be better appreciated by taking stock of the *Raga* media he inherited, along with the other two. Dikshitar refers to himself as *Vainika-Gayaka* (a vocalist and a master of *Vina*) and *Pandita tara*. The *Vina* endowed him with style while his scholarly zest enabled him to give exhaustive expositions of individual *ragas* as well as the science of *ragas*. Syama Sastri's *Sarman* was Venkatasubrahmanya. His *mudra* was "Shyama Krishna". Unlike his two contemporaries whose output was prodigious, Shyama Sastri excelled in *Swarajatis*, *Manji* and *Anandabhairavi*. It is usual to point out that among the Trinity, Thyagaraja is noteworthy of *Bhava*, Dhikshitar for *Raga* and Shyama Sastri for *Tala*.

### Conclusion

Classical Karnatak music was preserved through practice and was handed down by tradition from *Guru* to *Sishya*. The *Gurukula-Vasa* dwindled both in duration and devotion gradually. *Bhakti* (devotion) is basic and integral to the art of music in South India. The great music composers beginning with *Tevaram* and *Divyaprabandham* have been Saints and teachers of the path of devotion. Music has played the role of a *Sadhana* of *Bhakti* to a personal God. Cultivation of pure music, of instrument and voice, irrespective of words of the song, has been considered *Nadayoga*. The history of the art of music shows a dual stream of Ganga and Yamuna, a treatment invigoration and enrichment of the main tradition by local forms which were fitted into the basic technique and higher ideology of the classical tradition. The *Desi* supplied the material, the *Marga* refined it and assigned it a place in the larger and richer scheme. The popular and the classical thus became the two currents of the energy of our culture.

### Long Questions:

1. Give an account of the different musical traditions of South India.
2. Examine the nature of music culture of South India in pre-Vijayanagara times.
3. Examine the nature of music culture of South India in post-Vijayanagara times.

### Suggested Readings:

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2. P. Samba Murthi, *South Indian Music*, 1968.
3. T.V. Kuppuswami, *Carnatic Music and the Tamils*, 1992
4. S. Seetha, *Tanjore as a Seat of Music (During 17th, 18th & 19th centuries)*, 1981
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## LESSON 4C

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### INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCE

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#### **Introduction**

All artistic endeavour of men are symbols through which they communicate the deep and abiding feelings and emotions which are beyond ordinary speech. Art is one of the most essential activities for the mere existence of men, just as religion is. It is the fundamental need of human beings to communicate. Bereft of the means of communicating with other human beings a man ultimately loses all his senses and either degenerates to the animal level or even dies. Art is communication at the deepest and lasting level.

True art has that indestructible quality that outlasts life, conditions, trends and all the changing conditions of this dynamic world. And transcending the barriers of time it effects people in a very deep and moving manner. This is true of all art and specially of dancing which because it is totally dependent on the human body, is the most malleable art. And it is the oldest one.

The cultural history of Bharat is of a very ancient origin – something that cannot be pinpointed. One can surmise that it is probably one of the oldest cultures in existence today. This culture is made of many glorious facets – just as a diamond is. One of them is its robust and thriving theatrical tradition. By theatrical it is meant all that which pertains to what we term as the performing arts – drama, music and dance. All the three are irrevocably interwoven in the Indian context. Drama and dance appear to be like two sides of the same coin wherein music (*sangeeta*) playing the binding force. In the Indian context drama (*naatya*) cannot be devoid of dance (*nritta* and *nritya*) and music (*sangeeta* – both *geeta* and *vaadya*). All the three arts have played a very major role in the social life of our country from time immemorial. As early as the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the cultured sophisticated section of the society had felt the need to regularise the diverse theatrical practices abounding in the country which was then referred to as Jambudveepa. It was but natural that the vast geographical expanse that constituted the country which teemed with diverse Aryan tribes would bring their own cultural ethos. At the same time the original inhabitants had their own very well established cultures. The coming together of these diverse traditions in different parts of the country resulted in rather individualistic cultural strains. But one fact that emerges with certainty is that music, dance and drama were an integral part of human life. The country was very steadily achieving a cohesive social fabric, the cohesiveness embracing religio- philosophical thoughts, familial norms, economic governance and that unavoidable element, entertainment, which is essential for the well being of a normal human being. At some stage very early in its evolution the society also gave forth the caste system which resulted in polarisation of its members. The so called lower strata of the society had its own channels of entertainment, the higher strata having its own which was certainly sophisticated and well planned. It is to regulate this sophisticated element that an effort of gigantic magnitude was initiated which resulted in a text of unparalleled foresight and efficacy – The *Natyashastra* (Science of Dramatergy) enveloping the performing arts, delineating a very definite and precise set of rules which guides the triad of drama, dance and music. A later development dictates that the authenticity of any performing art is tested on the dicta of this particular set of rules propounded in the *Naatyashastra*. The *Natyashastra* is attributed to the

legendary sage Bharata and the scholars and performers of every era have sworn allegiance to it. As for the components of this art of *naatya* (which includes the other performing arts music and dance) Bharata says “ I shall create a fifth *Veda* on *naatya* with *itihasa* and which includes all *shastras* and will give a review of all the *shilpas*”. And again he states :

**“There is no wise maxim, no learning, no art or craft, no action that is not found in the drama (*naatya*)”.**

The *Natyashastra* is thus neither a treatise exclusively for drama as advocated by some nor a treatise on dance as believed by some other votaries. On the contrary the rules guiding the practice of dance have to be very carefully and discerningly culled from the dicta of Bharata generally meant for drama. Once this sifted and sieved set of rules is determined dance emerges as an independent art yet it continues to be an integral part of drama.

About the nature of his *naatya*, Bharata states, “When human nature comprising joys and sorrows is depicted by the means of representation (*abhinaya*) like *aangika*, *saattvika* etc. it is called *naatya*”.

Without going into a detailed study of the dicta of the *Natyashastra* let us turn to the technique that it delineates. In the above referred *shloka* Bharata introduces us to the component “*abhinaya*” and its two varieties – *aangika*, *saattvika*.

Before man can achieve anything, he must breathe and move. This movement is the source of life and dance is the supreme movement which was very essential to primitive life. Failure to understand and appreciate dancing is failure to understand not merely the supreme manifestation of physical life, but also the supreme symbol of spiritual life. What then is dancing and its significance?

Dancing in its widest sense is the personalised human reaction to the appeal of a general rhythm which marks not only human life but the universe. Dancing is an arrangement or pattern in space as architecture and painting and sculpture are and employs spatial rhythm. And like music, it is an arrangement in time employing rhythm. Thus dance is the only art which can be called time-space art, employing rhythm in both the spheres – audible and visual.

The earliest evidence of the art of dancing in India comes from the post-neolithic culture – Indus Valley Civilization or the Harappan culture, which “in all its maturity was in existence at the beginning of the third millennium B.C.”. There are two very beautiful statuettes – that of the torso of a male dancer from Harappa and a copper figurine of the dancing girl from Mohenjo-Daro. These figures not only stand testimony to a very advanced stage of the artistic creativity of the sculpture but also to the fact that dance as an art must have played sufficiently important part in the life of the people and was in an advanced stage of development. For these statuettes appear to be conveying the tremendous relationship of man’s innermost nature to that of the force of the external nature surrounding him. There have been a good number of statuettes from the excavations in this area but none seem to come in this class where a very definite physical attitude is sought to be conveyed.

Historically the flowering and popularity of the performing arts have fluctuated from era to era. Upon a systematic inquiry, there emerges a very definite and precise set of rules which guide these performing arts – specially music, dance and drama. Another fact that emerges is that the authenticity of any performing art is tested on the dicta of this particular set of rules. And unanimously this set of rules has been attributed by scholars of every era to the unique text called the *Natyashastra* ascribed to the legendary sage Bharata.

## *Natyashastra*

The *Natyashastra* (science of Dramaturgy) is a unique work of Sanskrit literature. Judging by its title, this voluminous text should deal with theatre, but it is in fact, an encyclopedia which deals with allied subjects and arts which go with the theatre and successful stage presentation. The aim of not only the art of *naatya* but all arts according to the ancient Indian art thought which can more appropriately be termed as Hindu thought, is the creation of *Rasa* (the aesthetic object) through the *Rasasvaada* (the aesthetic experience).

His instructions envelop chiefly

- 1) The dramatist - In the writing of his play, the language to be employed characteristics of different types of plays and the analysis of their structure.
- 2) The stage manager and director - Their qualifications, the ritual that they follow, their duties etc.
- 3) The actor and the actress - Their qualifications, physical attributes, proficiency, characterization, casting.
- 4) The *pooja* and preliminaries - The entire ritualistic aspect connected with the stage presentation according to Hindu thought.
- 5) The auditorium - Specifications, construction and the religious ceremony to be conducted for consecration.
- 6) The greenroom Manager - Costume and makeup of the different characters.
- 7) The music - Musical accompaniment for a stage presentation which include the theory of music in general singing of songs, playing of various types of instruments, *taalas* etc.
- 8) The dance - The dance movements appropriate for men and women and their classification.

As found in the *Natyashastra* the technique of *naatya* (drama) which applies broadly to dance as well consists of the following three major components.

### 1. *Dharmee* (modes of presentation).

*Dharmee* is of two types – *lokadharmee* and *naatyadharmee*. The Indian dramatist very early in the history of development of this art realized that to determine the correct technique of the presentation of *naatya* (inclusive of dance) the exact place and quantum of realism will have to be very accurately laid down. The *lokadharmee* is the realistic mode of presentation where the natural behaviour of people is represented on the stage.

The *naatyadharmee* is highly conventionalized or stylised mode of presentation.

The former appears to be more natural while the latter is definitely studied and preconceived as well as preplanned.

2. Vritti (styles of composition).

Bharata lists four vrittis – *bhaaratee* (verbal), *saattvatee* (grand), *aarabhatee* (energetic) and *kaishikee* (graceful).

3. *Abhinaya* (type of acting).

This can be termed as representation. Bharata lists four abhinayas *saattvika* (to do with the soul), *aangika* (to do with the body), *aahaarya* (make up, costuming etc) and *vaachika* (spoken words, songs etc). The etymology of this term is very interesting and revealing. This term is of the greatest importance to the study of dance as it is undertaken today.

<i>abhi</i>	:	near, towards
<i>ni (naya)</i>	:	conduct, guide
<i>abhinaya</i>	:	conduct, to represent on the stage, mimic.

The term *abhinaya* thus can be interpreted as “an act of conducting towards or near”. This act of conduction is towards the spectator from the stage and is of the nature of mime. The thing to be conducted is the idea, subject or the soul of the stage presentation. So it is quite natural that this act of acquainting the spectator with the central ideas or theme of the stage presentation should be of various kinds like the bodily movements (*aangika*), spoken word (*vaachika*) etc. And the most important thing to be remembered is that this particular act of conducting towards is performed by the performer.

This would mean that abhinaya is the primary means or vehicle for the communication of the experience of the world; so drama (*naatya*) and dance are stage presentation where the experiences of the world are communicated by means of abhinaya. Thus there cannot be any drama or dance without *abhinaya*.

At this juncture it would be pertinent to understand Dance.

## Dance

Dancing in its widest sense is the personalised human reaction to the appeal of a general rhythm which marks not only human life but the universe. It is this rhythm which regulates the universe and is the most essential and basic requirement of human life. It is this rhythm which is called “*laya*” in Indian art philosophy that influences all the physical and spiritual manifestations of life. And dancing based and woven round rhythm, then assumes a tremendous importance for man and also assumes spiritual qualities.

It is the fundamental need of human beings to communicate. Art is communication at the deepest and most lasting level. Transcending the barriers of time it affects people in a very deep and moving manner. This is true of all art and specially of dancing, which because it is totally dependent on the human body, is the most malleable art. And it is the oldest art.

The art of dancing then would mean two distinct components.

## Dance

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Form : Tangible

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Content : Intangible

To the Indian concept of dance, neither of the components by itself could sustain the totality of dance.

The Content of dance down the ages was religion and various philosophical thoughts. One and all, these spiritual and intellectual beliefs of the people strived to take man nearer to the Supreme and to ultimately merge with the Supreme and achieve “*moksha*” (Salvation). For those who were of a simpler turn of mind, who could not grasp the higher metaphysics provided by the lofty schools of philosophy, Hinduism found an answer in the simple mode of “*bhakti*” (devotion) which would lead them towards the Supreme and “*moksha*”.

The form of dancing is a more tangible concept. It is very easy to observe and study the form of dance as it exists today. It is also an easier task to know of the form of dancing through ages from sculpture, painting and the evidence available from literature.

Apart from leading the practitioner and the beholder towards “*moksha*” all true Indian arts (and more so classical) have a second and an equally important aim to achieve- that is the creation of the supreme aesthetic experience – the “*Rasa*”.

In India eventual classicism was based on the gradual development of the composite theatrical tradition towards a well defined form governed by a set of definite rules which emerged gradually the set of rules being codified in the *Natyashastra* which appears to be the only extant text on dramaturgy available to us. Rather than calling it a text one should call the *Natyashastra* a workman’s manual.

If one looks around the classical dance scene today one notices the fact that almost all the dance styles adhere to the *Natyashastra* whereas individually they may also follow some regional text or a more concise one like the *Abhinayadarpana* or the *Bharataarnava* – both attributed to *Nandikeshvara*.

It needs to be noted here that the term “*nritya*” as we understand it today has not been used by Bharata – there is no mention of this term in the *Natyashastra*. The entire aim of the *Natyashastra* dicta is to create *Rasa* (aesthetic experience or enjoyment) and it sets about to achieve this aim by the practice of the two *dharmes*, four *vrittis* and four *abhinayas*. It also deals with what can be termed prosody, music inclusive of *talas* and other co-related subjects.

Just as after Bharata the new term to describe emotive dance adopted by practitioners and scholars alike – *nritya* there emerged another dichotomy in the classification of dance – *tandava* and *lasya*. Bharata uses the term *tandava* rather frequently. It appears that in Bharata’s opinion any dance should be kept under the *taandava* category. The term *lasya* is once again not used by Bharata – the word used by him is “*sukumara*” that is the gentle or delicate dance. Yet today we very freely use the terms *taandava* for male oriented and *lasya* for female oriented dance.

This leads to the following categorisation :-

## Types of Dance

- a) *Nritya* which is abstract dance; in the *Natyashastra* it is either discussed as *tandava* or under the general category of *aangika abhinaya* and is dealt with under various movements of different parts of the body.
  - b) *Nritya* which does not find any mention in the *Natyashastra* the term having come into vogue in the subsequent centuries. A study of other texts based on the *Natyashastra* like the *Abhinavabharati*, *Sangeetaratnakara*, *Bhavaprakasha* and others highlights the fact that this type of dance is geared towards the projection of *bhavas* which are mental or emotional conditions inherent in human psyche in general.
  - c) *Taandava* which is the vigorous dance suitable for male representation.
  - d) *Laasya* which is the gentle or delicate dance suitable for female representation.
- Let us now consider the four *abhinayas*.

## Abhinayas

### i) Saattvika abhinaya

*Saattvika abhinaya* is all human activity (*abhinaya*) which is directly the result of the concentrated mind – as rising in the ‘manas’ – and is employed in either *nritya* or *naaty* because of its imitating human nature. *Saattvika abhinaya* is that sentiment (*rasa*) which is created by the psychological state (*bhaava*) of the mind on the particular situation. This *rasa* permeates among the spectators, thereby enveloping them also in the concentration experienced by the dancer. Thus it is the *Saattvika abhinaya* of the dancer which guides the enjoyment and experiences of the spectator, in whom the sentiment or *rasa* is created directly due to the *bhaava* as being expressed by the dancer, or *rasika*. (one who enjoys the presentation)

Bharata lists eight basic emotions (*sthaayi bhaavas*) giving rise to the eight sentiments (*rasas*) at the aesthetic universalized, depersonalized but intensely human level.

### Sathaayi bhava

Rati  
Haasa  
Shoka  
Krodha  
Utsaaha  
Bhaya  
Jugupsaa  
Vismaya

### Rasa

Shringaara (enchantment or erotic)  
Haasya (laughter)  
Karuna (sorrow or pity)  
Roudra (Anger)  
Veera (Courage or Valour)  
Bhayaanaka (Fear)  
Bibhatsa (Disgust)  
Adbhuta (Wonderment)



To these was later added the *Shaanta Rasa* which came up as a result of the intensely moving *bhakti* cult appealing to the masses.

Bharata also lists 33 *vyabhichari bhavas* or transient states.

**ii) Aangika abhinaya**

This *abhinaya* deals with the physical activities and movements of the body and is represented by gestures and postures.

Bharata divides the bodily movements as ;

- i) Pertaining to the body itself which he calls *shaareera* which is manifested through the major limbs (*angas*) – *shira* (head), *vaksha* (chest), *kati* (waist), *paarshva* (sides), *trika* (hips), *uru* (thighs), *hasta* (hands) and *pada* (feet).
- ii) Pertaining to the face which he calls *mukhaja* and is manifested through the minor limbs (*upaangas*) – *bhru* (eyebrows), *puta* (eyelids) , *taara* (eyeballs), *naasaa*\_(nose) , *adhara* (lips), *chibuka*\_(chin), *ganda* (cheeks), *danta* (teeth).
- iii) Cheshtaakrita – Pertaining to body in general which is again of three types – *shakha*, *ankura* and *suchaa*.\_

Out of these types of *aangika abhinaya* it is the *mukhaja* combined with the *hasta* that is most relevant to the conveying of ideas and the creation of *rasas*. This does not mean that the others have no part to play; the body functions as a whole and so the other parts of the body have to follow suit. It only means that the other parts play a secondary role.

The later texts have added one more classification and that is *pratyangas* where the movements of the *grivaa* (neck), *baahu* (arms), *jaanu* (knee) *gulpha* (ankles) also have been included. These works are the later works like *Abhinayadarpana*, *Sangitaratnaakara* etc., a fact which confirms the premise that the post Bharata period saw the emergence of dancing as an equally important art with an individuality all its own. Dance has primarily to do with the movements of the body and thus it is but natural that the concept of *aangika abhinaya* would receive greater importance.

**iii) Vaachika abhinaya**

This *abhinaya* deals with the use of speech and vocalisation in *naatya* as well as dance representation. This would include the *svaras* (the musical notes to be sung in the songs, playing of instruments etc.), *sthana* (pitches), *kaaku* (intonation) etc. In dance it also includes the songs or lyrics which accompany a performance.

**iv) Aahaarya abhinaya**

This *abhinaya* deals with the use of costumes, jewellery, make-up etc., in theatrical representation.

The above study brings home the fact with renewed vigour that same as there was a tradition of the science of dramaturgy there developed in India an equally tradition bound science of dance ,both being quite akin to each other nevertheless running along as two definite and distinct streams. With the passage

of time, unfortunately for India, one of the streams – drama – all but dried up. But the mainstream of dance continued to flow and still does. It has been able to do so because of the very definite set of rules guiding its scientific presentation thereby maintaining its exquisite beauty – our classical (*shaastriya*) dances

Examined against this background one begins to appreciate the unity in diversity of the contemporary classical Indian dances.

All these dance styles sprang from different areas of our country and are the products of the culture of a definite ethnic group. And yet all trace the root source of their origins to the technique of dance as first codified in the *Natyashastra*, the diversifying elements being the language, musical mode, body kinetics and the overall aesthetic principles being followed. Let us have a brief introduction to each of them.

### BHARATA NATYAM

Bharata Natyam is the glorious dance style from the southern state Tamilnadu. One cannot hazard a guess as to when it arose out of the soil of the Dravida culture. One finds references dating from the first few centuries of the Christian era to a very vigorous system of dance and music being practiced at the highest professional level in the Dravida country.

Today's Bharata Natyam is the end product of this great tradition. It had several names like *Chinna Melam*, *Sadir*, *Dasiattam* etc. It was also called "*Bharatam*" not after sage Bharata; rather the term is derived from three essential facets of the style : "*Bha*" from "*bhava*" (mental state or emotion). "*Ra*" from "*raga*" (musical mode) and "*Ta*" from "*tala*" (time measure).

Traditionally it was the proud privilege of the dancing girl "*Devadasi*" (servant of God) to practice this glorious art. The roots of this system can be traced all over the country but the system appears to be of a special significance in the South.

These devadaasis were servants of God but they were also great scholars, great experts of their art and despite adverse conditions, it is they and their great spirit which have perpetuated this art.

Bharata Natyam is designed as a votive offering to be placed at the feet of the Lord. As such it must be remembered that most of the dance items are either religio-philosophical in nature or are in the form of straight forward *bhakti* lyrics in praise of the glory of the Lord. But it also has items which are secular in nature. It is intended as a solo presentation but may have more than one dancer occasionally.

Technically Bharata Natyam has a judicious blend of both *nritta* and *nritya*. The Bharata Natyam technique lays a great stress on the very correct and well defined lines that the entire body specially the torso and the arms have to maintain. The erect and upright position of the torso, the elegant stance of the shoulders thrown back give it an angularity which is crisp, at the same time attractive.

*Nritya* in Bharata natyam of course uses the *Rasas* specified by Bharata. For *hastas* (hand gestures) it follows the Sanskrit text "*Abhinayadarpana*" by Nandikeshvara.

The musical mode is classical Carnatic with its elaborate *tala* system. The songs and lyrics for the *nritya* items are, by and large, selected from the writings of the South Indian saint-poets, the Tanjore quartet who created the present day repertoire and some contemporary poets.

The *aaharya* (costumes) is usually uniform since it is a solo dance. No matter what sort of a character the solo dancer is portraying there is no change in the costume. By and large the

costume worn today is stitched. The jewellery is that worn by the Tamil brides – appropriate for the bride of God, the *devadasi*.

**Leading exponents** Dr. Padma Subramaniam, Smt. Chitra Vishveshvaran, Smt. Alarmelu Valli, Smt. Malavika Sarukkai, Smt. Leela Samson, Smt. Shanta and Shri. Dhananjayan.

### MOHINI ATTAM

Mohini Attam of Kerala a lyrical and enchanting dance form, became the sole vehicle for feminine interpretation developed on the lines of the other classical dance styles of India. It is a solo dance of sheer visual beauty, far removed from the ever-vigilant supervision of the temple and the grip of rituals. Devotional fervour is permissible but not mandatory. Religio-philosophical tenets are not allowed to interfere with the central idea of dance-its soul-enchantment. The very name expresses its aesthetics (Maha Vishnu appeared as Mohini the enchantress, and danced the dance of enchantment to cast a spell of his *maya* on the *danavas*). the natural beauty of the Kerala landscape provides ample inspiration for its lyrical and liting movements. Its rounded body kinetics, the distinctive heave of the torso and the soft walk create the sensation of the verdant paddy fields, the undulating palm fronds and the rippling backwaters of Kerala.

Some scholars trace Mohini Attam to the second or the third century A.D. (to the era of the great Tamil epic, *Shilappadikaram*), whereas others maintain that it was created in the middle of the eighteenth century in the court of Maharaja Svati Tirunal of Travancore at his behest. Neither premise is correct.

All the dance forms of India are the end products of a long process of evolution, change and improvement in keeping with the constantly changing social structure. Since dance and music were two very highly developed arts in the *Shilappadikaram* era, we may surmise that Mohini Attam has its roots in the dance form which was practiced in Kerala during that period. Literary evidence shows that it was very much in vogue in the beginning of the seventeenth century A.D. and thus must have had its origins before that. It is between 400 to 500 years old.

Mohini Attam is the dance that reflects the enchantment that is life, its enjoyment and relish that creates the state of Beautitude. By its virtue it casts a spell of *maayaa*, a mesh net of illusion, on the beholder bathing him in the *raaga* of enchantment leading him towards knowledge along the path of enchantment, and beauty.

In the past two decades Mohini Attam has been cast into a new repertoire rooted in the rich Kerala theatrical tradition. Also an extensive use of *Sopana Sangitam* is being made for the musical arrangement. *Sopana Sangitam* is a style of singing which is indigenous to Kerala; it has some exclusive *raagas* not to be found in other systems, but by and large the Carnatic raagas are adapted to the *Sopana* mode of singing.

**Leading exponents** : Dr. Kanak Rele, Smt. Bharati Shivaji, Smt. Kshemavathy, Smt. Dipti Bhalla, Smt. Leelamma.

## KATHAKALI

Kathakali is the story dance from the southern state of Kerala. Kathakali literally means “*Katha*” story and “*Kali*” means a dance or a performance. It is a composite art where different actor-dancers take different roles. The stories are usually from the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. Kathakali is a very majestic art and when you see the costumes you realize how much thought and how much aesthetic values have gone into the making of this art. The entire idea is of ‘total theatre’ where there are acting, music – both vocal and instrumental and also the colour psychology and costumes playing equal roles. A performance starts by lighting of the ceremonial lamp. It has just two wicks – one wick is towards the audience and the other towards the stage. It signifies that the light of knowledge must spread not only to the actors but also to the audience. And what is the message? The message is very simple. It is “the victory of good over evil”. Kathakali can be described as the “theatre of imagination” where demons and good beings clash in the realm of imagination, where the good beings are eventually victorious.

Kathakali make-up is the most complicated and the most colourful of all the make-up in the Indian classical dance styles. The make-up is called *vesham* and it follows the colour-psychology.

The characters are divided into certain broadbased groups. The *uttama* characters that is the lofty characters, the *madhyama* characters that is the middling characters and the *adhama* characters that is the lowly characters. And each sort of character has its own colour combinations as follows :

For instance when there is a green base applied on the face which is called the *pachha* make-up, it is meant for the good or high sort of characters. The middling characters have a knife-like pattern *katti* painted on the cheek. The lowly of characters, the thorough going rascals are called the beard or *taadi veshams* and they have red and black colours predominating. The cheek is outlined by a white outline which is called *chutti* and which is made up of the strips of cloth which are bound together by a paste made up of rice flour and lime.

Historically Kathakali is the end product of a long line of theatrical practices. The germs of Kathakali are to be found in the *Kutiyaattam* the Sanskrit drama which has been the preserve of the *Chakkyar* Brahmin community for almost 2000 years. There are reference to be found in the Southern epic *Shilappadikaram* which describes a dance that *Chaakkyaar* presented in the honour of the victorious king. The present form of *Kutiyaattam* was finalized in 1000 A.D. Together with the *Chaakkyaar*'s art flourished Nangyar Kuttu performed by women. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century we come to the next phase in the development in the Krishnaatam which presents the Krishna cycle in eight days. Later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century developed the *Raamanaattam* which presents the Rama cycle. It is *Raamanaattam*, which is no more practiced, which resulted in Kathakali.

**Leading exponents** : Shri. Kalamandalam Ramankutty Nair, Kalamandalam Gopi, Nelliode Vasudevan Namboodiri.

## MANIPURI

Manipuri is from the north-eastern state of Manipur. Manipur literally means “the city of jewels”. It is indeed a jewel. Surrounded by very beautiful hills and verdant fields this lovely state has given forth one of the jewels of Indian culture and that is Manipuri dancing. Dancing is a way of life with the people of Manipur. The people are deeply religious so no worship, no poojaa is possible unless it is accompanied by song and dance. As such every inhabitant knows how to dance and sing and many of them also play various instruments. The present Manipuri repertoire or the form was created sometime in the end of 17<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> in the reign of Maharaja Shri. Bhagyachandra. The present dance style, the classical part of it, has two major streams. One is the *sankeertana* which is the devotional aspect and the other is *raasa*. The people who are by and large Vaishnavite in their faith have deep religious fervour towards Krishna and as such the different *raasas* that Lord Krishna is supposed to have performed with the *gopis* of Gokul on the banks of river Yamuna predominate in the presentation. The gorgeous colourful costumes enhance the aesthetic beauty of the dance style which has both *tandava* and *lasya* very well defined. The *tandava* aspect is presented in various drum dances *Pung-cholom* and dances with cymbals in the hands *Karalala cholom*. The *laasya* aspect is presented by the ethereally beautiful and delicate movements representing the *gopis* and Radha.

The early pre-Hindu dances of Manipur were of an animistic nature; then came dances offered as worship to Shiva and Parvati in their native *avataaras* and then came *vaishnavism* which put in deep roots and is the chief religion of the state.

The present Manipuri repertoire has three major streams.

- i) *Sankeertana* which is deeply religious and ritualistic in nature.
- ii) *Raasas* performed by Krishna and *gopis*.
- iii) *Lai Haraoba* which is the oldest traditional stylized dance.

There are three types of *Rasas* – *Kunja Rasa*, *Vasanta Rasa* and *Maha Rasa*. *Kunja Rasa* describes the meeting of Radha and Krishna with the help of the *sakhis* in a *kunja* or arbour.

*Vasanta Rasa* describes the divine play of *raasa* by Krishna and the *gopis* and the resultant jealousy of Radha and their eventual reconciliation. This dance is usually performed at the time of spring and ends with movements representing throwing and splattering of colour by Krishna and Radha which is reminiscent of the Holi festival.

*Maha Raasa* captures the spirit of the divine *raasa* danced in a circle by Krishna and the *gopis*.

The *Sankeertana* is presented by the two types of *choloms* the *Pung Cholom* and *Kartaala Cholom*.

Manipuri is characterised by its fluid movements. Each movement appears to flow into the next one. It also has extremely graceful movements of the wrists and palms. Though having a wide variety of taala patterns; unlike other Classical dances, Manipuri does not employ heavy and harsh pounding of the feet. The footwork is executed predominantly on toes lending the dance

its renowned ethereal quality. The female dancers appear as if they are almost gliding in the air. Drum dances form an integral part of this dance style. Almost every dancer knows how to play on the *Pung* and most male dancers perform the *Pung cholom*. *Pung cholom* literally means the drum dance. Here the dancer dances with the *pung* which is Manipuri percussion instrument. It is perhaps the most beautiful manifestation of the abstract concept of taala being presented in a concrete form. The dancer dances and accompanies himself with the drum.

**Leading exponents** : Guru Singhajeet Singh, Jhaveri Sisters, Preeti Patel.

## ODISSI

A 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D text *Vishnudharmottara Purana* says, “*vinaatu nrityashaastrena chitrasootram sudurvidam*”. The sage propounding this text says that without the knowledge of dancing the other plastic arts cannot be comprehended. This very clearly shows the co-relationship of sculpture and dance. It is said that dance is mobile sculpture and sculpture is frozen dance. In this context the classical dance style Odissi from Orissa is a shining example. Odissi is redolent with sculpturesque poses which are reminiscent of the glorious stone sculpture of Konark and other temples. Odissi is characterised by simplicity of grace. Odissi is believed to have originated in the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. but got a tremendous fillip in the 12<sup>th</sup> century when Poet Jayadeva, who was a great devotee of Lord Jagannatha at the Puri temple, wrote his immortal love song *Geetagoavinda*. It is said that he wrote it specifically for being interpreted in dance and music and his wife Padmavati who was herself a *devadaasi* danced it in the temples of Orissa. These *devadasis* in Orissa are called *Mahaari*. There is another wing of this dance which is danced by nubile young boys called *Gotipua* and these are the boys who indulge in more acrobatic dancing. Odissi, if one has to describe its characteristic, believes in the exposition of beauty, its sculpturesque poses and the lovely *tribhangi*, that is the triple bend in the body – always reminds us of the beauty of Indian art in general.

As we come down the centuries we find unbroken chain of the twin traditions of the singing of the *Geetagoavinda* as a daily ritual of the Jagannatha temple and the *Mahaaris* dancing at fixed times as part of the temple rituals. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Vaishnavism as a religious sect became the main religion of the people of Orissa and the *Bhakti* cult received a great impetus.

Technically Odissi is a highly stylised dance combining the precepts of *Natyashastra*, *Abhinayadarpana* and *Abhinayachandrikaa*

Both *nritta* as well as *nritya* wise Odissi has a thoroughly systematized and exhaustive technique. The most prominent feature of the technique being the various bends – *bhangis* – of the body, the *tribhanga* aspect – or the triple bend in the body of the Indian sculpture and iconography being fully exploited in Odissi.

The steps progress from the basic simple stamping of the foot accompanied by the neck, waist and hip-bend. Sometimes the chest moves diagonally enhancing the sculpturesque effect. Odissi being close to sculpture, utilizes the principles of image making like the *sootra*, *maana* etc. Odissi movements combine in them crispness as well as lilt. The positioning of the arms and hands is in the square. The movements usually follow the direction and cadence of the sides and the *kati* and balance the entire structuring of the dancing body.

**Leading exponents** : Smt. Sonal Mansingh, Smt. Kumkum Mohanty, Smt. Madhavi Mudgal, Smt. Kiran Sehgal.

## KUCHIPUDI

Kuchipudi is a dance style from the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. It can be rightly called a dance drama. Kuchipudi, in effect, is the concept of total theatre where there is the combination of all the four *abhinayas* like *vaachika* – spoken words, *aangika* – physical movements, *saattvika* - that which has to do with the sentiments human emotions and *aaharya* – the costuming.

Kuchipudi is a small little village in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. And the dance style or dance drama is traditionally practiced by very high caste Brahmins. It is believed that it was created in the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and later the saint Siddhendra Yogi added a lot of vim and vigour into the dancing. The most characteristic feature of this dance style is its scintillating and very vivacious footwork and body movements. It has a lot of conquertery in it because it has to do a lot with the feminine aspect.

The basic purpose of Kuchipudi is extollation of the virtues and great deeds of Lord Vishnu and it follows the *Bhaagavatam*. In Kuchipudi traditionally no woman is allowed to take part and the female roles are enacted by nubile Brahmin boys. It is also a composite art in the sense that different actors enact different roles but no art can be static. In the past three or four decades solo items have been created and are being performed.

In the development of Kuchipudi two *yogis* appear to have played a key role. These are Tirtha Narayana Yati and his disciple Siddhendra Yogi. Both of them were devout *bhaktas* of Shri. Krishna. Their great love manifested into outpouring of exquisite *bhakti* literature. Tirtha Narayana wrote the Krishna Leelaa Tarangini in the form of a musical opera. The disciple Siddhendra Yogi wrote the famous *shringaara kaavya Paarijaatapaharana*. While presenting this in the form of dance-drama he shunned the *devadasis* and, instead, selected nubile Brahmin boys to enact the roles. This dance drama is performed even today and stands as a masterpiece in this genre.

The technique of Kuchipudi exhibits a fine balance between *nritta*, *nritta* and *naatya* elements, the last preponderating in the *vaachika abhinaya*. Thus the Kuchipudi actor/dancer not only sings his pieces and dances them but also himself speaks the dialogues.

Two very characteristic facets of Kuchipudi performance are the character of the *Sutradhaara* (conductor) of the performance and the *praveshadaru* which is a small composition of dance and song whereby each character announces himself/herself and reveals his or her identity in the most skillfull manner.

Another special feature of the presentation is *pagati veshamu* which is a comic sequence in a play but which is not from the original text. This is added to relieve the seriousness of some of the original sequences and are acted out impromptu.

**Leading exponents:** Shri. Vedantam Satyanarayana Sarma, Smt. Yamini Krishnamurthy, Smt. Shobha Naidu, Smt. Swapnasundari, Smt. Radha and Shri. Raja Reddy.

## KATHAK

Kathak, the classical dance style from north India conjures up visions of scintillating footwork and lightning *chakkars* (pirouettes). The word Kathak is derived from the word *Katha*,

that is story. In ancient times the wandering bards used to go from village to village and recite chiefly the two epics- the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In order to make their art more attractive they started adding song and dance into it.

Sometimes during the muslim invasion the Persian influence came into the art brought in by the dancing girls who were called *tawaayafs* and thus a very spiritual dance slowly started turning into a court presentation. Today what we see in Kathak is a blend of these two streams. It has the courtly atmosphere at the same time it is highly spiritual.

With the advent of the Muslim rulers, from temple dance Kathak turned into a concert dance. This resulted in two different streams developing – one relying on the Hindu patronage in the court of Jaipur and the other with the backing of the Muslim courts of Delhi, Agra and Lucknow. Yet in both these streams Kathak came to be treated as a solo art where the touch stone of excellence was the virtuosity of the solo dancers, specially his command over *laykaari* or footwork.

Specially in the Jaipur-stream the emphasis almost totally shifted on *nritta* making the style a vehicle for forceful mechanical display. While the Muslim patrons had no overpowering preference for mere rhythmical pyrotechnique; they fancied an art that was full of human sentiments and worldly situations. Thus their brand of Kathak laid stress on *nritya* full of *bhava*. Thus this Kathak turned out to be more graceful and sensuous. This stream came to be recognized as the Lucknow *Gharana* and it came into existence in the time of Wajid Ali Shah of Oudh - The chief architect was one Thakur Prasad whose two sons Kalka and Binda Din perfected it.

It is Wajid Ali Shah's contribution to the development of Kathak which is noteworthy. He was an accomplished dancer and musician and a good poet in Hindi and Urdu. He spent lavishly on dance and music, much to the disgust of the British of the East India Company, who dethroned him and exiled him to Calcutta and annexed his principality Oudh. Till his death he lavished his pension on Kathak and music.

A noteworthy facet of the Kathak *nritta* is the *chakkar* or the pirouette or spin which is performed at a lightning speed and which and in a superbly balanced flourish and pose.

**Leading exponents** : Pandit Birju Majaraj, Smt. Kumudini Lakhia, Shri. Rajendra Gangani, Smt. Uma Sharma Smt. Prerana Shrimali, Smt. Shasvati Sen.

### **Conclusion**

The study of the origin and development of various forms of Indian classical dance, the important constituents of performing arts, enable us to understand the artistic achievements of people since ancient times. The evolution of different forms is linked to the socio-economic and religious changes in different regions of the subcontinent.

### **Long Questions:**

1. Give an account of the Classical Indian Dance forms with reference to either Bharata Natyam or Manipuri.
2. Do you subscribe to the view that Bharata's *Natyashastra* was a workman's manual for drama, dance and music?



**Suggested Readings:**

1. Kapila Vatsyayan, *Indian Classical Dance*, Publication Division, New Delhi, 1974.
2. Enakshi Bhavani, *Dance in India*, D.B. Taraporewala & Co., Bombay, 1965.
3. M.Bose, *Classical Indian Dancing*, General Printers, Calcutta, 1970.
4. Ragini Devi, *Dances of India*, Calcutta, 1962.

## LESSON 4D

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### THEATRE CULTURE IN INDIA

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#### **Introduction**

Rabindranath Tagore once said that a nation's culture is judged by the standard of its theatre. The great Russian actor and producer, Stanislavsky, described the stage as an index of the aesthetic taste of a nation. And in his characteristic way Bernard Shaw declared, "A national theatre is worth having for the sake of the nation's soul". The literature of each language abounds in plays which have never been produced and which may not be worth producing, but which may have poetical and other literary qualities to sustain them. But they do not belong to the theatre. In the art of the theatre the written play is something like the script in the art of the film.

It no doubt furnishes the basis, the framework, and the substance of the play as produced. But there are other things besides the written play which go to make the final performance. There are the actors and actresses, there is the producer, there are scenic arrangements and lighting effects; costumes and make-up are equally important, and very often there is music. The art of the theatre is a composite art, and a product of collaboration between artists and technicians.

#### **The Classical Theatre**

Ancient Hindus had a very high conception of the art of the theatre. The art of drama which included dance – was fashioned out of the four *Vedas* (*Natyashastra*). The words were taken from the *Rigveda*, the *abhinaya* or visual representation was taken from the *Yajurveda*, the music from the *Samaveda* and the *rasa* from the *Atharvaveda*. The art is extolled as capable of securing the four-fold objectives of life, of increasing one's fame, promoting self-confidence, and increasing one's skill in handling men and things. It is described as an art which helps the growth of generosity, firmness, courage and grace. It will drive away pain, sorrow, despair and mental affliction. The following characteristics of a drama as narrated by Brahma, according to the introductory chapter of Bharata's *Natyashastra*, demonstrate the highly developed and comprehensive conception of drama which the ancient Hindus had:

"The drama is a representation of the state of the three worlds. In it sometimes there is reference to duty, sometimes to fame, sometimes to peace, and sometimes laughter is found in it, sometimes fight, sometimes lovemaking, and sometimes killing. This teaches duty to those bent on doing their duty, love to those who are eager for its fulfillment, and it chastises those who are ill-bred or unruly, promotes self-restraint in those who are not disciplined, gives courage to cowards, energy to heroic persons, enlightens men of poor intellect and gives wisdom to the learned... The drama, as I have devised, is a mimicry of actions and conducts of people, which is rich in various emotions, and which depicts different situations. This will relate to actions of men, good, bad and indifferent, and will give courage, amusement and happiness, as well as counsel to them all. The drama will thus be instructive to all, through actions and states depicted in it, and sometimes arising out of it. It will also give relief to unlucky persons who are afflicted with sorrow and grief of overwork, and will be conducive to observance of duty as well as to fame, long life, intellect and general good, and will educate people. There is no wise maxim, no learning, no art or craft, no dance, no action that is not found in the drama. Hence I have devised the drama in which meet all the departments of knowledge, different arts, and various actions."

While Greek Drama was growing in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. during the celebration for the festival of Dionysius which was brought from Egypt, Indian drama had also developed; for, dance, music, dialogue etc. are already in the *Vedas* and historians of Indian Drama have held that Indian Drama had a native origin, a religious and ritual origin. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Panini speaks of two hand books of Aphorisms for actors (*Natasutras*). In the 4<sup>th</sup> century Maurya court the minister-poet Subandhu in his *Vasavadattanatyadhara* experimented a new form of drama. The first proper Sanskrit drama grew out of the festival of Indra's Banner and was the initiation of acts of God, the triumph of Gods over demons. Out of this developed the Heroic play (*Nataka*) depicting godly kings of the Epics. From this high epic theme, the play had, by the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., come to historical kings like the romantic Udayana.

Bhasa was a great pre-Kalidasa dramatist. He handled with consummate skill themes of love and separation, interlinked them to political fortunes and schemes and even produced a number of one-act pieces. The ancient theatre in the distant past evolved a variety of forms. The theatre reflected the social milieu of Courtesan, clown etc. and portrayed allegorical characters like faith, fortitude and knowledge. While the Heroic play held before the people the ideal of the noble kings of the Epics and Myths, the social play (*Prakarana*) in one or two acts presented the pretensions of the higher rungs of the society and the vice of the lower sections. Bharata's *Natyashastra* (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. – 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.) gives a full and rich picture of the classical theatre, the ten types of play, three kinds of play-house, the variety of the play, its sentiments and aesthetics, speaking, acting, make-up, production, qualities of spectators, music etc. The *Natyashastra* is the most elaborate treatise of the ancient world on Drama.

The contributions of the great trio, Kalidasa, Sudraka and Bhavabhuti to the classical theatre is well known. Visakadatta is another noteworthy name in this context. He had the genius to harness and exploit politics. King Harsha wrote *Nagananda*. Rajasekara wrote *Karpuramanjari* in pure Prakrit. In the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, a number of irregular and shorter forms grew. About fifteen varieties of these, referred to as *uparupakas* (minor theoretical forms) are described in works of dramaturgy, attesting the freedom, imagination and experimentations.

Even if most of the themes of the classical plays and some of the forms of classical drama may not command today the appeal they once had, the classical conception of dramatic art, its technique of presentation of mood and character in the play and of producing it on stage, will not fail to attract the thoughtful playwrights, producers and critics today because of their intrinsic value and essential aesthetic quality. Bharata described Drama as both *drishya* and *sravya*; to be seen and heard.

The Sanskrit drama opens with a prologue in which the manager and a companion converse and introduce the poet and the play. The theme is organised in acts called *ankas*, ranging from four to ten. There may be a change of scene within the act, but no scenic divisions within an act are indicated. The acts contain a continuous action not exceeding the duration of a day. The acts may have an introductory scene with higher or lower characters, the purpose of this being to give the link or continuity in the story and to enlighten the audience by narration, report or dialogue; about events which could not be shown on the stage in the course of main acts. No character can enter without having been indicated already. The text of the play is in mixed prose and verse style, the verse appearing wherever there is need for a striking expression or heightened effect. Like the mixture of prose and verse, there is also a mixture of the learned and popular tongues, the higher strata and the educated male characters speaking Sanskrit and the lower classes and the ladies, barring courtesans, speaking Prakrit, sometimes of different kinds; according to the number and nature of the lower characters. The action may be of short duration or one spread over

years, and, similarly played in specific place or spread over different places. The theme may be taken from well-known epics or invented or mixed; even when the story is well known, the dramatist could make innovations to suit his dramatic idea and purpose, for what the Sanskrit drama endeavours to present is a harmonious character and harmonious emotional impression in the spectator's hearts. The drama should have a happy ending.

The older and major forms of drama (*Rupaka*), took into its fold later and lesser forms, the *uparupakas*, different kinds of dance-drama. These *uparupakas* passed on the art to regional dance-dramas in Sanskrit-cum-local language and in pure local languages. *Ankia Naats*, *Yatras*, *Yakshaganas*, *Bhagavata Naatakas*, *Krishnattam*, and *Kathakali*. These *uparupakas* preserved the tradition and genius of indigenous theatre, and supplied the materials, methods and means for all pioneers in modern times to revive and re-create an Indian theatre in authentic style, in contrast to the other modern stage which had hitched itself to a distant star in an alien sky and had since been spending its energies mainly in trying to catch up with trends and models abroad.

### **Ancient South Indian Theatre**

An account of the ancient South Indian theatre is available in the *Arangerru Kaadai* of *Silappathikaram* and the learned commentary of Atiyarku-Nallar while there are about a dozen lines in the epic, the commentary runs to over 20 pages. Several other works like *Agathyam*, *Bharatam*, *Muruval*, *Jayantham*, *Guna Nul*, *Seyirrium* and *Kuttu Nul* were available. It is obvious that there must have been a large body of ancient dramatic works in Tamil to have necessitated so many treatises on the grammar of drama. Indeed the classical division into *Iyal*, *Isai* and *Natakam* shows that the Tamil drama had an independent position.

In ancient Tamilnadu, *Natakam* was a sub-division of *Kuttu* or dance. The institution of dance was purified and brought under two main divisions *Shanti Kuttu* (intended for the enlightened section of the community) and *Vinodakuttu* (for backward sections). *Shantikuttu* embraced among others *Abhinayam* and *Natakam* (For example *Kathakali*). *Silappathikaram* counted among the artistes qualifications not only beauty of form and proficiency in music and dancing, but also birth in a good family. However, early Tamil works show that dancing girls and prostitution were recognized as a necessary social institution of *Marutham* (the land of paddy fields, wealth and luxury). Among the various classes of *Vinodakuttu* may be mentioned *Kuravai*, *Tholpavai*, *Vidushaka Kuttu* and *Veriyaattu*. Various forms of acting and drama in Tamilnadu and Kerala have to be understood against the background discussed above.

The dramatic representations can be divided into three classes: (1) Indigenous (*Kuttu*, *aattam* etc.) including those acted in temples and those acted in public places other than temples. (2) Imported (*Yatras*) (3) Devil dances and propitiatory dances such as the fire-dance, *Bhadrakali* dance etc.

*Yatras* are prevalent only among Brahmans, and the actors should be only Brahmans. The performance was sacred and took place in the temple. The representation seems to have been imported. The actors are called *Bharatas* and the play is sometimes called *Bharatanatyam*. It is also called *Sakkiyar Kuttu* (*Sakkiyar* is a Malayalam Corruption of the Sanskrit *Slagya* = "celebrated" "best"). Some people also perceive it as a corruption of Buddhist deriving it from the Buddhist play *Nagananda*.

### **The Folk Stage**

The decadence of Sanskrit drama was due by the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Sanskrit language had ceased to be the language of the people. Over different regions it had developed into different well-established dialects known as *apabhramsas*. Each *apabhramsa* dialect was soon to

assume a form – to be known by the 15<sup>th</sup> century in its trial form – as one of the modern Indo-Aryan languages. This language of the people was still far from creating its own literature though, in some first literature made its appearance by the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In contrast, the South Indian languages, not derived from but only influenced by Sanskrit, had a literature of their own by 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Naturally between 9<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries there could not be written dramas. Absence of written plays, however, should not mean absence of the theatre. Over centuries and under the influence of the *Natyashastra* theatre artistes had developed into a distinct caste called “*charanas*”. These *charanas* could be taken as the descendants of the *Sutas* (bards of the epic days). They recited the traditional stories and received patronage from the kings and nobles. This patronage added to their repertoire. In addition to the traditional heroic poems, the bards would now sing the glories of their patrons and their ancestors. Royal patronage gave a fillip to the rejuvenation of the Indian theatre (Lakshmana Sena of Bengal and King of Jodhpur can be cited as examples).

The rise of the cult of devotion (*Shaivism* and *Vaishnavism*) influenced the theatre in two ways. Firstly, it induced a number of kings in different parts of the country to build temples. The increasing number of temples meant increasing number of ‘play-houses’ and a direct encouragement to dance and drama. In many instances the dancers and *Sutradharas* were assigned to these temples. It was their duty to arrange shows of dance and drama. Every architectural work of the time has concerned itself with the dramatic arts by caring an entire show in all its details. Often times, the king himself would be the composer (and even the choreographer) of a dance-drama. The institution of *Charanas* had brought into existence moving groups of performers and these groups could travel to different places and give their offerings (in the form of shows) to the deity.

It was no longer in the medium which people could not understand but was enacted in the vernacular. The *Bhaktas* (Saints) sang their songs conveying knowledge and experience to the people directly and naturally. It is a historical fact that the beginnings of literature in most of the Indian languages can be traced to the songs and sayings of these saints. The *Bhakta* could not only sing but also dance in gay ecstasy. With increase in popularity, his dance and song led to community-singing and community-dancing. He sang mostly about the life and deeds of God. The epic *Bhagavata*, dealing with the life story of Krishna, provided most of the inspiration. Between the Saint (the individual) and God, there was no longer any intermediary, which fact often times, turned a song into a dialogue. For example in Jayadeva’s *Gita-Govinda*, we come across a dialogue between Radha (the individual self) and Krishna (the universal God). The folk-stage of India has to be understood against the background discussed so far.

### **Search for a New Theatre**

It is interesting to note that the decline of the Mughal empire and the dawn of the modern theatre took place almost simultaneously. Upto the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the folk-literature was active and growing, without a new Kalidasa or Bhavabuti. The learned were more and more developed to evolving and establishing different schools of philosophy with the use of Sanskrit. In the courts of kings, poets and writers were respected more for their knowledge of both Sanskrit and the regional language. The upper strata of society were too busy with political affairs to be interested in the arts. It was easier to find a *Sayanacharya* who wrote commentaries on the Vedic collections than a Kalidasa even as late as Vijayanagar empire. The rise and popularity of the folk theatre rejuvenated by the influence of *Bhakti* doctrine seem to have established the theatre as a pastime only for the ‘lower’ people. *Mitravinda-Govinda*, in the Kannada written in 1896 by an army officer Singaraya is an example of the kind of plays that were available.

Translations and adaptations of earlier plays were undertaken under the patronage of kings. In a country like India no man had his existence in society except as a member of a caste. The British conquest created two new castes, the superior untouchable (*mlechcha*) the conqueror, and the newly educated Indians (another untouchable caste) who feared and flattered, hated and admired, and obeyed and initiated the superior *mlechhas*'. Out of the conflict between these two groups was born the modern Indian theatre.

### **The Bengal Theatre and Others**

The British had settled in Bengal much earlier than in any other part of India. The newly-educated class of Indians thus first came into existence in Bengal. For their entertainment the Britishers depended on 'home' products. In respect of theatre, too, we can imagine them either putting up English plays themselves or arranging for visiting groups from 'home'. Against this background we come across Herasim Lebedeff (Russian adventurer) and Mr. Goloknath Doss translating and staging two comedies *Disguise* and *Love is the best Doctor*, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 1795. The next 50 years witnessed a great upsurge in the establishment of modern theatre. The changed and changing outlook brought about by English education was responsible for the establishment of the first Bengali theatre by Prasanna Kumar Tagore in 1831. Here English plays were produced by Indians. English translation of *Uttara-Rama-Charita* was also staged. When a new audience comes into existence the search for a new theatre was also set in motion. Similar things were happening at Sanghi in Maharashtra. The performance of a *Dashavatara (Yakshagana)* play was staged. One Vishnudas, in 1843 prepared a mythological play called *Sitasvayamvara*. (see for details *The Marathi Theatre 1843-1960*, published by popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1961). It is this performance which laid the foundation of Marathi theatre which grew and by 1925 reached the pinnacle of its glory. The freedom of speech for the clown and the make-up of the demons show the influence of *Yakshagana*. But the signing of songs by different actors is a significant departure from tradition.

It is interesting to find an attempt to blend tradition and modernity. In Bengal, the Lebedeff theatre had created a desire in the new audience for suitable plays. Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Merchant of Venice* were rendered in Bengali. English models provoked nostalgic respect for the best in our own tradition. The first play giving expression to social reform was *Kulin-Kul-Sarbasva*, written in 1854 by Ram Narayan Tarkaratna dealing with the problem of polygamy. Under play *Inder Sabha* was staged in 1853. Parsi Natak Mandali was founded in the same year. The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 inspired the Indian Theatre. Bengal and Maharashtra, the two regions where the spirit of revolt against East India Company was more active, took the lead. In 1872 the National Theatre was built in Kolkata. Vishnu Das Bhave, became active in Bombay. Vinayak Janardan Keertane wrote many plays on 1857 themes. Dinabandhu Mitra wrote *Nil-Darpan*. These are indications that a class of dramatists were coming into existence which considered that a play should hold the mirror to social conditions. Between 1857 and 1870 not only were more plays written but also more and more performances given (For example, Michael Madhusudhan Dutt).

### **The Professional Theatre**

Bombay is a commercial centre, the Parsis a commercial community and the professional theatre is a commercial venture. The Sangli production encouraged repeat of shows, to maintain a group of actors and to go to cities like Poona and Bombay to stage plays. Vishnudas Bhave rented a play-house in Bombay and collected money. His first Hindi play, *Raja Gopichand* recorded a collection of Rs. 1800 in one night. The promise of good returns encouraged the commercial venture.

Within ten years there were almost a dozen groups in Maharashtra. They were yet to become theatrical companies. With the construction of play-houses and with assured audiences in cities, the situation changed. The performances came to be organised on a regular basis. Parsi companies came into existence by 1850s. They visited South India also. Karnataka through up the first professional group in 1877 at a place called Gadag. Sarasa Vinodhini Sabha and Sumanorama Sabha came up in Bellary. The type of plays produced in South were mythological. Professional theatre became achieve throughout India.

### **The Urban Theatre**

It is commonly believed that the advent of Indian films was one of the main reasons for the decline of drama. The conversion of play-houses into cinema houses, the desertion of stage-actors for the films and play-wrights being attracted to writing film scripts are cited as the reasons. With the new education, a new outlook was being formed. A large number of educated Indians were enamoured by English plays. They studied them in their schools and colleges but not the Sanskrit plays. But in the last two decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century we find translations of Shakespeare's plays, Kalidasa, Bhavabuti, Harsha and Bhattanarayana. Social plays were also written (For example, *Sangit Sharada* in Marathi). Rabindranath Tagore's plays are classic examples of urban theatre. *Valmiki Pratibha* (1881), *Raktakarabi* (1924), *Mukta Dhara*, *Nalir Puja* and *Taser Desh* are the most important ones. It is obvious that Tagore was trying to evolve the type of drama suited to its essential purpose. His poetical dramas recall the earlier traditional form of Sanskrit plays. His symbolic dramas are a protest against what was current then in initiation of Shakespeare's plays. He has no stage-directions about the setting etc. because real drama lies in the poetry of writing. Since his expression was more on the expression of the meaning, he experimented with dance-dramas as well.

The first elements of realism were introduced in the 1920's by Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, Naresh Mitra, Ahindra Chowdhri and Durga Das Banerjee. Probha Devi and Kanakvati were two able actresses. Sisir Kumar Bhaduri dominated the Bengali stage for half a century and he took the art of acting to new heights. It was he more than anyone else who brought about the transition from formal rhetorical acting to modern realistic acting on the Indian stage.

As a result of the political consciousness among the masses a 'progressive' or what is called leftist tendency emerged in 1930's. The idea of 'progressivism' influenced literature and drama. To imperialism were added dictatorships like Fascism and Nazism. When the Second World War began, some of the progressive writers were nationalists (in the sense they yearned for India's Freedom). They organised the IPTA. It included writers like Khwaja Ahmed Abbas and Manmath Ray and it provided scope and encouragement to actor-producers like Sombhu Mitra. It brought out new dramatists, new actors, new themes and an active theatre. Under the leadership of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, the *Indian National Theatre* (INT) came into existence. This had a socialist thought from the left wing of the Indian National Congress. They were also nationalists. Significantly the first production of the INT was a ballet based on Nehru's *The Discovery of India*. INT is an all India institution with its branches all over India.

### **Conclusion**

Through poetry and drama man reveals himself to himself. He mirrors his soul, he expresses the desires, the urges, the hopes, the dreams, the successes and the failures in his struggle to make himself at home in the world. *Kavya* is of two kinds – *Shravya* and *Drishya*. The latter is *nataka* or drama. The dramatist or the playwright delights us by the perfection of his art, its variety, its music, and its mood. The dramatist shows us the heights and depths to

which man can rise and fall, he induces in us sympathy for the good and hatred of the evil. He affects our feelings directly and conveys ideas indirectly.

**Long Questions:**

1. Examine the theatre culture in ancient India.
2. Account for the institution of Chayanas and their contribution to folk-theatre.
3. Give an account of the professional or urban theatre with reference to either Bengal or Maharashtra.

**Suggested Readings:**

1. Adya Rangacharya, *The Indian Theatre*, NBT, Delhi, 1971.
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