ABSTRACT

TAMASHA: PEOPLE'S THEATRE OF
MAHARASHTRA STATE, INDIA

By

Tevia Abrams

This study was designed to acquaint Western readers with Tamasha, the folk theatre form of Maharashtra State, India. It attempted to trace the history of the form and its development, its stylistic and formal features, its playwrights, performing artists, and sample script materials, and it focused attention upon the use of Tamasha by social and political groups for propaganda purposes. To the writer's knowledge, no general study of this kind is available in print in the English language apart from brief accounts in isolated chapters of books and in periodicals. Little material exists even in the Marathi language, a fact explained by the intellectual neglect of, and disdain for, Tamasha which continued down to the 1950s.

Research was conducted in Maharashtra during a nine-month period ending July, 1971. It was based on library materials, newspaper clippings, personal interviews, observations of productions, and a study of sample scripts in translation.

This study, completed in 1973, was limited to a consideration of history, form, practitioners, and uses. While certain conclusions

were arrived at, it was felt that there were obvious limitations imposed by lack of first-hand knowledge of the Marathi language. Any proper critical evaluation of the growing body of Tamasha literature must therefore await the hands of competent Marathi scholars.

On the basis of the materials studied and analyzed, the following observations and conclusions were made:

1. Tamasha emerged as a discrete folk theatre form in the seventeenth century, and it flourished largely outside the prevailing Hindu devotional tradition. More recently, it survived mid-twentieth century experiments in ideological propaganda without gross distortion of form.

2. Some of the early vigor and spontaneity of Tamasha was lost due to the effects of rapid social change, economic hardships among the artists, growing State Government regulation and censorship, and the challenge posed by the developing mass media.

3. From its earliest beginnings, Tamasha reflected Maharashtrian society, especially its secular features, in a manner which helped audiences to deal with their experiences of social upheavals, including changes in social, political, and economic conditions stemming from the modernization process. This observation was seen as the reason for Tamasha's continued strength.

4. Although the form originated in rural settings, and featured unsophisticated or "raw" entertainments, a more refined sophisticated version called Loknatya, or people's theatre, developed in the mid-twentieth century which appealed to the growing urban

middle-class. This has served to overcome neglect of Tamasha among the Marathi middle classes, including the intelligentsia.

5. Among the implications drawn for Western theatre practitioners and scholars was a suggested experimental transposition of some of the formal elements of Tamasha.

TAMASHA: PEOPLE'S THEATRE OF MAHARASHTRA STATE, INDIA

By

Tevia Abrams

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ii

LIST OF APPENDICES v

INTRODUCTION 1

PART 1. BACKGROUND TO TAMASHA

Chapter

I. DESCRIPTIVE FEATURES OF TAMASHA 11

II. HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TAMASHA 50

III. THE STATE OF THE ART TODAY 76

IV. THE POLITICS OF TAMASHA 133

PART 2. TAMASHA AS A TRADITIONAL MEDIUM OF MASS COMMUNICATION

V. EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN PROPAGANDA 152

VI. USE OF TAMASHA IN STATE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS . 181

VII. USE OF TAMASHA IN THE 1971 NATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN . . 201

CONCLUSIONS 209

BIBLIOGRAPHY 218

APPENDIX 235

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix Page

A. Glossary 236

B. A Sample Propaganda Tamasha Script For Government Development Programs 241

C. A Sample Propaganda Tamasha Script For Election Publicity: We Must Win This Time 275

D. Scenes From a Modern "Sophisticated" Tamasha: Katha Akalechya Kandyachi ("A Tale of the Union of Intelligence") 297

E. Shahir Sable's Muktanatya, or Free-Form Folk Play: Yamarajyat Ek Ratra ("One Night in Hell") 326

F. Shahirs of Maharashtra 371

G. Rules of the Stage Performances Scrutiny Board, Government of Maharashtra 378

H. Photographs 386

I. Plot Outlines of Tamasha Vags (Folk Dramas) 414

J. Historical Note on Maharashtra 426

INTRODUCTION

Tamasha is the principle folk theatre form of Maharashtra State, India. From its beginnings in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, it has achieved great popularity among the rural masses in the Deccan region, which includes the present State of Maharashtra and the northern part of Mysore State. Authoritative estimates claim there are some 10,000 Tamasha artists performing in more than 500 itinerant Tamasha troupes today. Tamasha troupes are of two varieties: sangeet-baaris (song troupes), which specialize in song-and-dance entertainments; and dholki-baaris (folk drama troupes), which offer more substantial theatre fare that includes dramatic presentations (vags) as well as songs and dances. It is characteristic of Tamasha today that the sangeet-baaris provide a bawdy rural ("raw") form of entertainment which is called assal (real, or true), and that the dholki-baaris present a more sophisticated and refined presentation (banavat, or artificial), which is now commonly referred to as loknatya, or people's theatre.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics of Tamasha and to discuss the utilization of the form by social and political organizations. It will provide a cursory history of the form and its development, and acquaint the reader with Tamasha's

stylistic and formal features, its performing artists, playwrights, and a sampling of contemporary and recent script materials.

Justification of the Study

The selection of Tamasha as a subject for study was determined by the fact that, although it is an intrinsically interesting and very popular form among both rural and urban audiences,[1] little has been written about it in the Western World.

To my knowledge there are no English-language materials covering the subject and scope of this study, with the exception of isolated chapters or paragraphs in overviews of Indian folk theatre,[2] a number of articles in periodicals, and clippings from Bombay and Poona newspapers. Marathi source materials, which were consulted in translation or with the assistance of informants, are relatively few in number, and this may be due to traditional intellectual disdain for the low-class Tamasha form. With the exception of published collections of popular Tamasha-style love songs and heroic ballads, and some mention in overviews of Maharashtrian or

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[1]The popularity of Tamasha will be established in succeeding chapters of this study.

[2]See especially the chapter on Tamasha in Balwant Gargi's Folk Theatre of India (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1962); Hemenchanath Das Gupta, The Indian Stage, Vol. III (Calcutta: M.K. Das Gupta, 1944), pp. 187-232; and the Marathi Natya Parishad (Marathi Dramatic Association) work, The Marathi Theatre: 1843 to 1960 (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1961), pp. 2, 6.

Indian theatre, the literature on Tamasha may be said to date from Independence, in 1947.[3]

What is especially noteworthy about Tamasha is that it has been utilized in recent years by propagandists in efforts to bring about social and political reforms in Maharashtra.[4] In this respect, Tamasha may be compared to the Jatra folk theatre form of Bengal State, which is reported to have been used for the same purpose--most particularly on behalf of the Communist cause.[5]

A knowledge of Tamasha should provide Western theatre scholars, playwrights, and producers with new experimental techniques, conventions, and formal elements for enlivening the theatrical scene in the First World.

It is also hoped that this study will stimulate Marathi scholars and theatre practitioners in the development of critical evaluation of the growing body of Tamasha literature--something which is still lacking, according to respected authorities.

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[3]The reader is referred to the bibliography of this study for listings of Marathi materials.

[4]The use of Tamasha by the Truthseekers' non-Brahmin movement in the 1920s, the Communist and Socialist experiments of the 1940s, and the present-day use of Tamasha in election campaigns and in State Government development support programs, are cited here as examples of such manipulation. Part 2 of this study is devoted to further discussion of the subject.

[5]A. J. Gunawarden, "Theatre as a Weapon: An Interview with Utpal Datt," The Drama Review, Vol. 15, No. 3 (New York, Spring, 1971), pp. 225-237. See also Sambu Mitra, "Drama in India Today," Cultural Forum, Vol. 15, No. 3 (n.p., May, 1964), p. 9.

Definitions

A number of definitions are required at the outset. While the origins of the word "Tamasha" will be discussed in Chapter I, the term will be used throughout the study to mean the most popular folk theatre of the State of Maharashtra, which emerged in the seventeenth century, and which still survives today.

There are two main kinds of Tamasha troupes: (1) sangeet-baaris (song troupes), which specialize in popular song-and-dance entertainments; and (2) dholki-baaris (folk drama troupes), which offer more substantial theatre fare that includes dramatic presentations as well as songs and dances.

A twentieth century addition to the traditional varieties of Tamasha troupes (sangeet-baaris and dholki-baaris) is the kala pathak, or cultural squad, which is now accepted as the designation for any Tamasha troupe, usually a dholki-baari, engaged in social or political propaganda.[6] Kala-pathaks will therefore be considered as a subcategory of dholki-baaris.

It is also necessary to distinguish between two kinds of Tamasha productions: (1) Raw Tamasha, which is expressed in Marathi as assal (real or true); and (2) Sophisticated, or refined Tamasha, expressed in Marathi as banavat (not real, artificial), or more popularly as loknatya (people's theatre). "Raw Tamasha" is defined as that rural strain of folk entertainment which derives from the original impulses present in the early historical development of the

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[6]See Part 2 of this study for full accounts of the work of the kala pathaks.

form, and which is characterized by such descriptive terms as ashlil (bawdy) and vishayasakla (sensual). The "sophisticated Tamasha" is a recent refinement of the form which has resulted in a more urbane and a wittier (if tamer) entertainment.

The expression "raw Tamasha" will therefore be used in this study when referring to aspects of productions by the lower or backward social classes destined for rural peasants in villages, or for working-class audiences in the cities. The language, songs, and dances are characteristically bawdy, lewd, and lascivious, and women and children, as well as members of upper-caste society, and the middle-class in general, do not, as a rule, attend productions.[7]

"Sophisticated Tamasha," on the other hand, will be used in this study to cover a more theatrically substantial and socially acceptable entertainment, performed in modern indoor theatres of urban centres, and on outdoor stages in the larger and more prosperous villages. The banavat (sophisticated) variety of Tamasha is often referred to as loknatya (folk or people's theatre), replacing in word but not in form, the art of Tamasha.

"Propaganda (prachar) Tamashas" are of the "sophisticated" variety. They were originally created by socially or politically committed performers, working in kala pathaks (cultural squads), in

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[7]The nature of "raw" Tamasha and its relationship to the tastes of the lower social and economic classes is discussed by V. K. Joshi, in his Loknatyachi Parampara ("The Tradition of Folk Theatre"), (Poona: Thokal Prakashan, 1961), pp. 10, 14, 17, 19, and passim. Among authorities interviewed on this point, I would cite agreement by the anthropologist and sociologist Durga Bhagvat, private interview, Bombay, January 10, 1971.

a conscious effort to change public opinion, or to spread awareness, or affect behaviour in a desired direction. Since Independence (1947), prachar Tamashas are being increasingly supported by government agencies and political parties on a paid professional basis.

"Folk media" is used interchangeably in this study with "traditional media" to express the notion that when folk theatre forms are used for propaganda, they serve as live and direct channels of communication; in contrast to the "modern media" or the "modern mass media" which serve as indirect (print or electronic) channels of communication. Because some propagandistic Tamashas receive support for extensive village and city tours, and because one program may be seen by hundreds of thousands of people within a relatively short period of weeks or months, the phrase "traditional (or folk) medium of mass communication" is also employed.[8]

Limitations

The study deals largely with history, formal elements, practitioners, uses, and sample script materials of Tamasha. It does not attempt to serve as a definitive historical and literary overview of the Tamasha form. It is essentially descriptive and deals with very few primary materials, except for some texts of early songs and a number of modern scripts in translation. There are obvious limitations imposed by lack of first-hand knowledge of the Marathi language.

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[8]See Part 2 for views of Tamasha as a traditional medium of communication.

Organization

Part I surveys the history of the form from its origins in the seventeenth century (during the declining years of Moghul rule in Maharashtra) to the present (1971), when the data for this study was collected. Because the writer assumes the Western reader will have little or no prior knowledge of Tamasha, information is provided on a wide variety of related subjects, including specific features of the form. Chapter I deals with structural elements, form, and conventions. Chapter II provides a cursory historical account of the art form down to the present. Chapter III presents views on the state of the art of Tamasha in both the "raw" and loknatya traditions. It concentrates upon the artists, the impressarios, the theatres, the challenge posed by the developing mass media, and the themes and aesthetic purposes of the most prominent playwrights working with the folk form. Finally, Chapter IV examines the controversy which developed since Independence as a result of the State Government's efforts to control Tamasha.

Part 2 provides a more comprehensive examination of what is, to my knowledge, the most significant trend in the development of Tamasha--its use for social and political propaganda.

Methodology

Criteria for the establishment of a suitable descriptive language for formal elements and theatrical conventions of the folk form were developed from a comparison of information gathered from Marathi books and articles (which were translated under my

supervision[9]), and from private interviews with the most respected and knowledgeable authorities on Tamasha.

To determine who the most respected authorities were, I relied upon the help of the founder-members of the Marathi Tamasha Parishad (Association), cultural and publicity officers of the Maharashtra Government, and other informants. The knowledge and information gained in subsequent interviews with these authorities on Tamasha was qualified by comparisons and cross-checking for accuracy. The material was again compared with the substance of the two existing Marathi works in print which serve as standards for knowledge of Tamasha to date--the publications by V. K. Joshi and Namdev Vatkar, mentioned above. By this process, the following persons interviewed were selected as the most respected authorities relating to history and description of the form and style of Tamasha: Vasant Bapat, Durga Bhagvat, Vinayak Bhave, P. L. Deshpande, Shahir Gavankar (now deceased), Rajaram Humane, Y. N. Kelkar, and Rajabhau Thitey. In matters of literary and/or theatrical judgment, the most respected authorities interviewed were: Vasant Bapat, Vinayak Bhave, P. L. Deshpande, Y. N. Kelkar, Vyankatesh Madgulkar, D. M. Mirasdar, Shahir Atmaram Patil, and Vijay Tendulkar. A list of persons interviewed is appended to the bibliography of this study.

By this method, a consensus of views was created, in the absence of a sufficient body of published primary or secondary

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[9]Some works, like V. K. Joshi's previously mentioned Loknatyachi Parampara ("The Tradition of Folk Theatre"), and Namdev Vatkar's Tamasha. (Kolhapur: Shettey Prakashan, 1958), were translated in their entirety for purposes of this study.

sources. Where the existing literature and the views of authorities interviewed could not resolve certain disagreements, I have added my own personal views and comments, for which I acknowledge responsibility.

Research for the study was carried out principally in Maharashtra during a nine-month period ending July, 1971. The work is based upon my own observations of more than thirty productions, personal interviews with artists, playwrights, scholars, State Government officials, and journalists, and readings of both primary sources (in translation, or otherwise with the help of informants), and secondary sources, including library materials, newspaper clippings, and a number of selected Tamasha-style scripts.

During the research period, I supervised the translation and adaptation of six complete Tamasha scripts, four of which are included in the Appendices to this study, as well as segments of many others. In the same period of time I attended more than thirty "raw" and loknatya Tamasha performances in the Bombay-Poona region, and I travelled with one itinerant troupe (that of Shahir Sable), for a one-night performance in the village of Dhebewadi, south of Poona. I also attended screenings of four Tamasha-inspired feature films.

For the purpose of maintaining a unified writing style, all foreign words used in this study are transliterated into English according to the versions appearing most commonly and consistently in English-language materials printed in India. All foreign words, except names of places and persons and most frequently used words

(e.g., "Tamasha"), are italicized (underlined in the text). Where required, translations of foreign words in the text will follow in adjacent brackets or after due separation by commas. For additional reference, a glossary of foreign terms related to Tamasha is appended.

Quoted segments of translations from foreign source materials will be credited in footnotes according to source and translator; but where no credit appears, it should be assumed that the translation is the work of Miss Nilima Vaidya as adapted by the author of this study.

CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTIVE FEATURES OF TAMASHA

The purpose of this chapter is to define "Tamasha" as used in this study, to describe the prominent elements or features of Tamasha, and to develop a frame of reference for further investigation of the folk form.

"Tamasha"

To begin, we must take note of the origins and usages of the word "Tamasha." The word is originally Persian, meaning "fun," "play," "entertainment," and it was brought to Maharashtra by the Urdu-speaking Moghul armies[1] which maintained Delhi's imperial rule in Western India from the fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth century. (See historical sketch of Maharashtra in Appendix J of this study.)

By the sixteenth century, the word "Tamasha" had accrued to itself a new meaning--a specific variety of popular entertainment for the Moghul armed forces. Namdev Vatkar claims that this entertainment

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[1]Namdev Vatkar, Tamasha (Kolhapur: Shettey Prakashan, 1958), p. 10; also Balwant Gargi, Folk Theatre in India (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), p. 73. It should be noted that the Maharashtrians evolved another meaning for the word "Tamasha," which serves as a pejorative adjective for "unsightly spectacle," "a confusion of loud sounds," and "low-class spectacle." Although it is conceivable that these pejorative meanings developed from upper-caste Maharashtrian reaction to the early "raw" Tamasha entertainments, the adjectival use of the word is regarded in this study as secondary to its meaning covering a specific form of entertainment.

was first performed in Maharashtra in 1599. It was made up of sensuous Urdu song forms and vigorous dances in the northern Kathak tradition,[2] characterized by precise footwork and rhythms, which were performed by male natch dancers brought from Delhi to amuse the Moghul armies.[3]

In time, however, the Moghuls recruited local Marathi acrobats, trumblers and other performing artists from some of the out-caste communities, such as the Mahars, Mangs, Dombaris, Kolhatis, as well as Gondhali religious minstrels. A description of how out-caste performers were recruited as Tamasha artists is found in Chapter III of this study.

The Marathis were influenced by, but they did not completely copy, the Kathak[4] patterns of dance and the Urdu singing; they brought many of their own indigenous devotional and secular entertainment forms,[5] which were eventually fused into a more complex structure, combining song, dance, and dramatic elements.

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[2]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., p. 10.

[3]M. S. Mate, Temples and Legends of Maharashtra, ed. by K. M. Munshi and R. R. Diwakar (Bombay: Bhavan's Book University, 1972), p. 67. It should be noted here that the tradition of using young male performers (natch poryas) to impersonate female artists was maintained by later Tamasha troupes down to the close of the nineteenth century. Patthe Bapurao's troupe (see Chapter II) was most instrumental in introducing female dancers and singers into Tamasha.

[4]Kathak is the classical dance style of northern India, Characterized by the stamping footwork of the dancer.

[5]Chapter II provides a more detailed account of the historical development of Tamasha as an art form in Maharashtra and includes details on such indigenous Maharashtrian folk entertainments as the dashavatar musical opera, the bharud dramatic poetry recital, the elite play of the gods called lalit, the gondhal minstrel song, and the kirtan musical sermon, all of which influenced Tamasha to some extent, according to Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., p. 15.

By the end of the seventeenth century, Tamasha had come to be regarded as the predominant folk theatre form of Maharashtra (except for the coastal Konkan region), as well as of the bordering regions of what is today Mysore State.[6] Although the form has continued to evolve over the years, incorporating new elements such as the vag (folk drama)[7] and, more recently, film songs and dances, and fully scripted segments, it remains substantially recognizable by Maharashtrians as "Tamasha" down to the present time.[8]

Varieties of Performing Troupes

It has already been mentioned that there are two main categories of Tamasha troupes--sangeet-baaris, which specialize in song-and-dance entertainments; and dholki-baaris, which offer more substantial theatre fare that includes dramatic presentations (vags) as well as songs and dances. The distinction bears repeating at this point since the elements of performance are, to some extent, different for each variety of troupe, as will shortly be observed in the description of formal elements.

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[6]Durga Bhagvat, private interview, Bombay, January, 1971; Vasant Bapat, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

[7]The vag form, which is described later in this chapter, is an outgrowth of nineteenth century experimentation with Tamasha, notably by Patthe Bapurao. See Chapter II for further discussion of Bapurao's place in the history of the development of Tamasha.

[8]In the Introduction to this study, it will be recalled, Tamasha is used to cover modern kala pathak (art squad) presentations by social and political propagandists as well as "sophisticated" loknatya (folk or people's theatre) productions, since both retain some or all of the formal elements of Tamasha.

The characteristics of a Tamasha troupe should also be outlined here as an aid to understanding of the formal elements. The sangeet-baari is made up, on the average,[9] of five to six female dancers and singers (one of whom is the star performer of the troupe),[10] a tabla-player or dholki-player to provide appropriate rhythms, a harmonium-player, and a tuntuni-player.[11] Many sangeet-baaris also feature a stock character called Songadya, who serves as an improvising punster and master of ceremonies.

The dholki-baari (also called dholki-phad), takes its name from the cylindrical, two-sided dholki drum, slung from the shoulders, which provides the most characteristic rhythms in Tamasha.[12] An average dholki-baari is larger than a sangeet-baari: it is made up of a leading male (occasionally female) actor, honorifically called "shahir" or people's poet; six to eight male actors cum choral singers, one of whom is designated as the troupe's songadya, while others may also double on small instruments--tuntuni, manjeera, or small brass cymbals, kade, or metal triangle, and the tambourine-like

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[9]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., pp. 108, 109. Vatkar's "average" troupe accords with my own observations of some fifty sangeet-baaris. (An evening of sangeet-baari entertainment may easily be made up of twenty-minute appearances by perhaps six or seven troupes, and it is possible for the interested observer to see a large number of troupes in a relatively short time.)

[10]See photo of Lata Lanka Nandurekar and her troupe, Appendix H, Plate II.

[11]See note on musical instruments in this chapter, infra.

[12]See photo, Appendix H, Plate I.

daf and halgi;[13] two or more attractive female dancer-singers; a dholki-player; and a harmonium-player.[14]

The dholki-baari provides the climax to a typical night of "raw"[15] or unsophisticated Tamasha entertainment, which may begin with songs and dances by one or more sangeet-baaris. Often, a dholki-baari may perform by itself the entire range of Tamasha elements in a night's entertainment. The sangeet-baari generally avoids dramatic elements in favor of light and sensuous musical entertainment, in a direct appeal to village elders as well as to the working class audiences in the cities.[16]

Numbers of Troupes

Estimates of the number of troupes in existence today vary, mainly because no exact count has ever been made. Such a count would, in any event, be quickly rendered out of date because troupes are itinerant in nature and they are continually changing, disbanding, or forming anew.[17]

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[13]See note on musical instruments in this chapter, infra.

[14]See photo of male performers in Shahir Sable's dholki-baari, Appendix H, Plate XIII; and photo of Sable's female singer-dancers, Plate XVIII.

[15]See definitions of "raw" and "sophisticated" Tamashas in the Introduction to this study, supra.

[16]Rajaram Humane, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

[17]In support of this view, I would cite private discussions with Vinayak Bhave and Rajaram Humane. Most troupes are constantly on the move, playing tours of villages, towns, and cities, according to festivals and seasons.

I shall rely upon government estimates given to me by Rajaram Humane, Director of Cultural Affairs for the Government of Maharashtra, who claimed there were 300 sangeet-baaris and about 180 dholki-baaris in existence in 1970, for a total of 450 Tamasha troupes. His estimates included 3,000 performers in the sangeet-baaris, and 4,500 performers in the dholki-baaris, which suggests an average of ten artists in a sangeet-baari and twenty-five artists[18] in a dholki-baari. Humane also counted another 2,500 artists who worked in smaller groups in the remote villages. According to this estimate, therefore, there were a total of 10,000 Tamasha artists in 1970.[19]

Average Age of Troupe-Members

According to Durga Bhagvat,[20] the average age-spread of Tamasha artists ranges from seventeen to fifty-five--an estimate which approximates my own observations and inquiries among members of three dholki-baaris and ten sangeet-baaris.

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[18]This figure appears to be high, according to my own observation of some twenty dholki-baaris, suggesting the average is more like fifteen. Nevertheless, some of my informants claim that a number of troupes do contain upwards of thirty artists--a fact which may help to explain the figure provided by Mr. Humane.

[19]Rajaram Humane, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970. Other estimates obtained are as follows: According to journalist Rajabhau Thitey (private interview, Poona, March, 1971), 800 troupes and more than 10,000 artists, which would make the average troupe total about thirteen artists; and according to Balasahib Gore, General Secretary of the Marathi Tamasha Parishad (Association), there were 500 sangeet-baaris, with an average of twelve artists in each, and 500 dholki-baaris, with some twenty-seven artists in each, for a total of approximately 18,500 artists (Private interview, Poona, February 26, 1971). Balwant Gargi estimates there are 800 troupes which provide a living for 40,000 Maharashtrians (Gargi, op. cit.).

[20]Private interview, Bombay, January, 1971.

The Tamasha Stage

Tamasha may be presented under a variety of outdoor and indoor conditions relative to performing space.[21]

In small villages, the performing space is usually a temporary raised wooden platform in a large clearing, or it may be a suitable area marked out on the ground with hundreds of spectators seated on the ground on three sides. The performing space must be at least ten feet by fifteen feet in order to accommodate a minimum of six persons and often twice or three times this number.[22] A simple undecorated backdrop adorns the rear of the stage area, and often there is a front curtain as well. (Paintings of outdoor, pastoral scenes may be found on backdrops used in indoor stages in cities.)

With the growing availability of electrical power, lighting is provided by electric bulbs strung over the stage above the heads of the performers, as well as by one or more flood-lights affixed on posts at the sides of the stage. Sound amplification is also provided with the aid of microphones and loudspeakers.

Some of the larger and more prosperous villages will make available to travelling Tamasha troupes more permanent outdoor stage facilities, possibly a sturdy raised platform, boxed in proscenium style, and facing spectators directly in front rather than on three

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[21]This section is based largely on personal observations of stage facilities, supported by readings and by discussions with Tamasha practitioners.

[22]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., p. 64.

sides. Technical facilities, however, are essentially the same as those available in the small villages. Audience capacity may easily reach several thousand.

Productions in towns and cities generally utilize indoor stage facilities: the "raw" Tamasha troupes are admitted to the poorer theatres in the poorer working class districts; while the more sophisticated loknatya (folk or people's theatre) troupes command the best and most modern stage facilities in the large commercial theatres. The urban centres of Tamasha are located in Bombay, Poona, Nagpur, Nasik, Ahmednager, Kolhapur, Sholapur, Satara, Sangli, Belgaum, and Aurangabad.

It should be added that there are few limitations to outdoor performing spaces for the better and wealthier troupes, some of which can carry their own equipment in transport vehicles, including costumes, props, lighting and sound equipment, and, in some cases, platforms.

Form Elements of Content

The structure of content components in a Tamasha production is characterized by a loosely arranged mixture of elements which may include traditional song-and-dance forms, farcical skits, and full-length dramatic folk plays. There is a great deal of freedom in the positioning of these elements, but the content will be designed to express the comic sentiment (hasya rasa),[23] according to the ancient system of rasas (sentiments).[24]

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[23]Durga Bhagvat, private interview, Bombay, January, 1971.

[24]See Chapter II, Footnote 7, infra., for an explanation of the system of rasas.

The Gan

A Tamasha production normally opens with a devotional song to Ganesha, the elephant god and patron of the arts. This is called the gan. Sangeet-baaris and dholki-baaris alike open their programs with the gan.

There are two kinds of gan: those giving prominence to Brahma and Lord Shiva, the destroyer; and those giving prominence to love and strength, or shakti, which means the reconciling parts, or power, of Shiva.[25] The shahirs (people's poets) who composed these gans traditionally competed with each other for supremacy in the eyes of the audience. Shahirs who worshipped Shiva were called Turewalas; while those who worshipped Shakti were called Kalgiwalas. The competitions, which ranged across other Tamasha song forms (including lavani love songs and question-and-answer sawal-jababs), reached their height between 1794 and 1854.[26]

Modern gan compositions are less theologically involved, and more concerned with praise of Ganesha in the hope of gaining artistic inspiration. An illustration of a modern gan is taken from a script prepared for election propaganda in Maharashtra on behalf of the Ruling Congress Party during the 1971 mid-term national election campaign:

Ganesha, I'm praying to you.
Listen to me,
Come to us in human form
And bless us.
You're fond of art

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[25] V. K. Joshi, Loknatyachi Parampara, p. 126.

[26] Ibid., pp. 126-129.

And this is just for you.
I hope it's appropriate.
Please inspire us.
The bonds between us are immortal.
We are ready to serve you.
Just support us always.
This is what we ask.[27]

Gaulan

The gan is most always followed by the gaulan--an improvised set of irreverent and saucy songs, dances, and sketches centered about the young Lord Krishna, his friend Pendya, his beloved Radha, and the old "Auntie" called Mavshi. Mavshi is always played by a male actor dressed as a woman, and "her" role is to steer the gaulans away from Krishna, who is himself generally disguised, and who is always teasing them. Mavshi tries to keep the gaulans on the road to Mathura--the holy city of the Hindus--where they plan to sell milk and butter.

The gaulan segment had its predecedents in earlier Maharashtrian folk forms, especially a certain skit (called kala) of the Dashavatar form which originated in the seventh century in the coastal Konkan region of Maharashtra.[28]

Most typical of the gaulan segments are those which deal with the Krishna-gaulan confrontation in playful manner, and which develop the sensual and titillating possibilities of the situation until Krishna relents and permits the women to pass. He generally

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[27]See Appendix C for complete text of script in English translation, titled We Must Win This Time.

[28]See Chapter II, infra., for more detailed discussion of the historical development of Tamasha.

exacts a special road tax which the gaulans promise to pay upon their return from Mathura. The following is a brief sample of dialogue typical of traditional gaulan segments:

ALL GAULANS

(In unison) You tell Krishna our pots are heavy with curds and milk. The pots are new and they're leaking and our saris are getting all wet. Please let us go.

(SONGADYA gives the message to KRISHNA who turns a deaf ear to the plea.)

RADHA

We won't pay him! We'll teach him a lesson. (To SONGADYA) Go and tell Krishna that if he's brave enough he should come and collect the tax himself. (SONGADYA passes the message back to KRISHNA)

KRISHNA

(To GAULANS) What are you waiting for? Is this a market-place?

GAULANS

We're going to the market.

KRISHNA

Without paying my tax?

RADHA

You're not going to get it.

KRISHNA

Then you can't pass. (Pause) By the way . . . the rule is that people can pay what they like.[29]

The dialogue goes back and forth in this manner until the gaulans agree to pay their tax. Some of the more contemporary and

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[29] V. K. Joshi, op. cit., pp. 164, 165.

socially committed gaulan segments of Tamasha include inspiring propaganda messages on such themes as milk scandals, language rights, and other aspects of social justice.

Sangeet Lavani and Other Songs of Sensual Nature

The gaulan segment is performed most often by dholki-baaris (the folk drama troupes), and less so by the sangeet-baaris (the song-and-dance troupes), which generally avoid dramatic elements in favor of purely crowd-pleasing fare that includes the traditional sensuous lavani songs, poetically evocative Urdu kavalis and gazals, and popular film songs. An evening of sangeet-baari entertainment would probably feature half a dozen troupes, each performing for about half an hour, and each climaxing its brief appearance with singing and dancing. On special occasions--village festivals or on weekends in the cities--a dholki-baari would complete the night's entertainment with a two-hour vag, or folk drama. If a dholki-baari is on stage for a full evening of entertainment, it will follow up on the gaulan segment with its own interlude of sensuous songs, dances, and poetic dialogues.

The range of these song and dance forms is wide: lavani love songs, in which the singer accompanies her own words through dancing; the poetically evocative Urdu Kavali and gazal song forms which are performed in intimate manner by an artist seated on the stage; chakkads, or poetic dialogues that simultaneously employ singing and mime; povadas, a rousing ballad form used by shahirs for hundreds of years; sawal-jabab, or riddle form, which was used

in question-and-answer dialogue set to music by shahirs engaged in the Shivashakti competitions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,[30] as mentioned above; and modern film songs and dances.

Most central to Tamasha is the lavani song. Lavani literally means transplantation, and it originally referred to the transplantation of rice. It derives from the Sanskrit lapanika, which is an adjective describing sensual beauty, and which has a second meaning--harvest song--deriving from the rice harvests.[31] Early lavanis were work songs, but the genre was gradually absorbed into the bardic and popular religious traditions.[32] During the Peshva period (rule by Prime Ministers, 1707-1818), the lavani became the main poetic song form in Tamasha.[33]

One popular variety of lavani depicts love, romance, reunion, separation, fickle love, history, and, sometimes, social conditions. One of the best remembered of the shahirs (people's poets) who specialized in composing lavanis of the sensuous kind is Patthe Bapurao (1866-1945).[34] An example of his lavani compositions will illustrate the thematic concern with fickle love: it is one taken

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[30]The form was revived by the late Shahir Annabhau Sathe during the 1940s, in his political use of Tamasha. (See Chapter V.)

[31]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., p. 56; V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 132.

[32]Ibid.; see also Durga Bhagvat's The Riddle in Indian Life, Lore and Literature (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1965), p. 35.

[33]V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 121.

[34]See Chapter II for further information about this shahir's place in the history of Tamasha.

from his vag (folk drama) called Mitha Rani ("Sweet Queen"). The lavani which follows comes at a moment in the play when Mitha Rani's husband has given up his earthly possessions to become a sadhu (mendicant):

MITHARANI

How can I live without you?
Look! I'm crying for you.
My eyes are swollen for you.

HUSBAND

You're a dangerous woman,
Troubling all my days,
Driving me to beg,
To poverty and rags.
Go away, or I'll beat you!

MITHARANI

But I'll give you everything.
Here, I'll sit next to you
And let you cut my throat.
Oh, where can I go
In this sad, sad world?

HUSBAND

You speak sweetly,
But you're really a witch,
And I no longer believe in you.
I must go away.

Women are all the same,
And Patthe Bapurao says:
You must control your mind.[35]

Another example of lavani comes from the Golden Age of Tamasha, during the reign of Peshva (Prime Minister) Baji Rao II. It is by Shahir Honaji who lived from 1754 to 1844. His lavanis were sung by the artist Bala Karanjkar, and the team became known

[35] Lavanis by Patthe Bapurao (Poona: Bapurao Jintikar Publishers, 1969), p. 78.

as Honaji Bala. The lines quoted here cover the theme of separation; in this instance, they express the sadness of the lonely lover:

> My love has flown away from me.
> Should I poison myself?
> How long can I control my sad heart?
> If you don't return soon
> I think that I may die.[36]

But in a less refined manner, the following fragment of an unidentified lavani which I heard at a "raw" Tamasha performance is saucy and lascivious:

> Let go my wrist, husband!
> I'm tired after a full day of housework,
> And all you want to do is make love.
> At least you could let me finish the cooking. . . .[37]

Until the close of the nineteenth century, lavanis were performed by male singers and dancers dressed as women. Today, the form is cultivated by professional dancing girls, richly clad in Maharashtrian nine-yard saris tucked in at the waist, and wearing ankle-bells that accentuate their intricate footwork.[38]

A chakkad, or poetic dialogue, may follow a lavani. It depends upon acting and singing ability, since the singer is called upon to simultaneously mime and act out states of feeling and action suggested by the lines of the song. Here is an example of a chakkad composed by Patthe Bapurao:

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[36]V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 222.

[37]Translated by Vinayak Bhave.

[38]For illustrations, see photographs, Appendix H, Plates VIII, XVIII.

HE

Oh, Pretty girl. Stay where you are.
Come and talk to me a while.
I'm wild about you, you know.
Don't spurn me.

SHE

Behave yourself! Always after me!
Why do you persist? My husband will come.
Somebody might come and somebody might see,
And they'll surely tell my brother-in-law,
And my husband will take it out on me.

HE

What lovely words! Such graceful walk.
You always dress to tease the eyes--
I've yet to see a husband permitting that.
And I'm wild to distraction about you.
My mind's lost its business sense. . . .

SHE

Keep in mind you'll ruin my life.
Think about that, I beg you,
Or, they'll send me to my father. . . .
And my husband will take it out on me.

HE

What a fine figure, and a good waist too.
I've never seen a husband like yours.
Tomorrow I'll see you so no one will see us.
Think of a time and place.
I've never seen a husband like yours.

SHE

Then, I'll be your sister,
And you can come home with me, dear brother!
Be calm, still your rage.
We'll have a ceremony to make you brother,
And you can buy me a sari.[39]

The sensuous element in these songs and poetic dialogues helps to maintain audience interest, which is an important

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[39] Ibid., pp. 172, 173.

consideration during a full evening of entertainment that may last from three to six hours. Serious dramatists[40] and film-makers in Maharashtra[41] have recognized the unique effect of mixing song, dance and poetic dialogue, and many have transposed the lavani form and the chakkad into their own works for their distracting and entertaining values. Today, some of the most popular Hindi and Marathi film songs are those based on lavani rhythms and styles. In another departure, writers working within the Tamasha tradition are using the same rhythms and modes of sensuous folk song as vehicles for modern social messages.[42]

Farce

In a dholki-baari full-length Tamasha production, the program segment devoted to songs of sensuality is an interlude. The next part of a typical production is the farce, and it serves as a prelude to the folk drama, or vag, which is still to come. In the farce, laughter, not the evocation of sensual awareness, is the primary aim. Situations from daily life--ill-matched marriages, prostitution, educational difficulties, economic and social problems--are all typical subject-matter.

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[40] Vishnudas Bhave's serious Marathi dramatic works, beginning in 1843, contained songs "derived from Tamasha," notes V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 156.

[41] G. D. Madgulkar, a Marathi film song-writer and producer, has spoken to me at great length of the use of Tamasha song and dance forms in film. (Private interview, Poona, March, 1971.)

[42] Part 2 of this study deals more thoroughly with this topic.

The farce derives from earlier examples brought to India by British theatrical troupes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and which were themselves influenced by the Italian commedia dell' arte tradition.[43]

The Vag, or Folk Drama

The vag is a nineteenth century outgrowth of the earlier improvised Tamasha skits and other bits of dialogue. Today, it is the highlight of a typical night of Maharashtrian folk entertainment. Traditionally, vags were created in the bullock carts and buses and trains used to move Tamasha troupes around the countryside: they were by nature unscripted pieces based upon short storylines and scenarios designed by the troupe leader and his actors. Actual dialogue was created upon the stage at performance time.[44]

For color and variety in vag, there is a mixture of dialogue, improvised humorous asides to the audience by the songadya, out-of-context by-play between artists, and songs and dances--mainly lavanis, but occasionally povadas (a ballad-form).

The language of the vag is simple and direct so as to be accessible to rural folk and the urban working-classes alike; however, the newer and more sophisticated vags are now being scripted,

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[43]Rajaram Humane, Cultural Affairs Director, Government of Maharashtra, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970; also Durga Bhagvat, private interview, Bombay, January, 1971.

[44]P. L. Deshpande, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970; Vyankatesh Madgulkar, private interview, Poona, January, 1971.

with reinfements in dialogue and wit created to appeal to the middle and upper classes.[45]

Themes and subjects for the vag cover mythology, history, nationalism, government, social evils, new ideologies, propaganda for various causes, and entertainment for entertainment's sake.

The vag has its own particular form, beginning with a chorus chanting in high-pitched manner the poetic lines of reportage (batavani) that help the audiences grasp the plot. This chanting is called mhani, and it is featured at key points in the vag to keep the plotline in focus for the audience, especially where extended improvised dialogue has made the story difficult to follow. It is suggested that mhani is delivered so harshly and loudly because it was traditionally the only way outdoor audiences could hear what was going on before the advent of electricity and the loudspeaker.[46] Highest notes in the mhani are most often carried by the surtes, or note-players, who sing while playing the tiny cymbals (manjeera), and the single-stringed instrument called the tuntuni, which produces a fixed continuous note. The rest of the chorus, as I have often observed, stand shoulder to shoulder, each performer cupping a hand over one ear while singing at a near shout. Leaning into the group are the dholki-player and the daf-player, both of whom fill the moments between each line of the opening chorus with wild beats and rhythms.

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[45]M. P. Shirshat, Secretary, Stage Performances Scrutiny Board, private interview, Bombay, November 28, 1970.

[46]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., p. 64.

A traditional vag[47] may open with a mhani about some legendary king called Vijay:

King Vijay ruled the land.
He was a very brave and handsome leader.
His subjects were happy everywhere.
One day he went out to hunt.
Look, now! Here he comes on horse-back.
He is riding through the forest.
Look at him ride!

Having set the scene for the audience, the chorus withdraws to one side, or it may exit, leaving the performing space clear for an encounter between the king and his mistress. The beautiful girl is concerned that he may not return; but the king is reassuring. He will return to her soon, he says. The girl exits; the king gallops away on his make-believe horse. He does a few turns around the stage to indicate he has travelled far. He stops, looks around, and remembers he has left his body-guards behind at the court.

In the distance, King Vijay sees a temple. He decides to rest there, and in a moment he is inside. A quick turn around the stage is the accepted staging convention to overcome limitations of time and space, permitting the king to appear inside the temple.

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[47]The example is cited by Vasant Bapat (private interview, Bombay, November, 1970), as a composite of several vags of the same genre dealing with fictitious accounts of legendary figures. It is included here to help the reader visualize the form and its staging conventions. My own observations of traditional vags in performance attest to the accuracy of Bapat's description of a generalized vag. V. K. Joshi (op. cit., p. 20), has also remarked upon the fact that the traditional vag storylines, based upon the legendary kings (Vijay, Vikram), are unending in their variety, and so fanciful, that one can only assume the stories are pure invention on the part of the actors or shahirs. The figure of the king is thus used as a quasi-historical prop to legitimize the story before an audience, although the story itself may be totally fabricated. For storylines of vags, and for samples of complete vags, consult Appendices to this study.

(See note on staging conventions, below.) The chorus returns to chant more details to advance the plot. Interestingly, the king may join in the singing, since his make-up is minimal and the audience is rarely concerned when an actor moves in and out of character. The chanting describes the king's chance meeting with a temple dancer. Another girl enters: the temple dancer. She looks to the audience in a very matter-of-fact manner, pouts disdainfully, and turns amorously to the king. From the chorus, the audience learns that this temple dancer is only making a pretense of falling in love with the handsome king, and that in reality she is a wicked witch who is casting an evil spell over him. The chorus withdraws again and the dancer-*cum*-witch sings and dances a beautiful and tender *lavani* to bewitch the king.

Eventually the spell of the witch is broken by the appearance of a faithful guard who, as it turns out, had wandered into the forest in search of the king after being informed by the king's mistress of fears for her lover. The king is restored to his senses and there is a happy reunion back at the court. Goodness triumphs over evil and the work ends happily, possibly with a concluding song performed in chorus. There are no prescribed rituals at the close of a *vag*.

Costuming and Makeup

Traditional Maharashtrian dress is used by Tamasha artists upon the stage.[48] Female performers, as a rule, wear brightly

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[48]See photographs of female and male performing artists in Appendix H.

colored Maharashtrian nine-yard saris, gathered and tucked in at the waist, and pinned to permit freedom of movement for dancing. The sari is trimmed in glittering silver or gold thread, which glistens as the artist moves about the stage.

Costume jewelry for the women includes bangles, sparkling earrings, noserings and necklaces.

A female performer's costume is complete once she winds a few strands of tiny linked ankle-bells (ghungrus) about each ankle. (Her stage movements are performed in bare feet, and each step makes a jingling sound.)

Makeup is minimal, consisting of highlighting of the eyes, painted lips, and rouged cheeks.

Male performers also use traditional dress, but here there is at least some variety available. An actor or musician may wear a white pyjama outfit or shurwar, or a Nehru shirt and dark-grey jacket, and a pheta (large colorful turban) wound around the side of the head. He may also wear earrings.

As with female artists, makeup for the male is minimal, requiring mostly highlighting of the eyes and a little rouge on the cheeks. Occasionally, a false moustache or beard may be used to enhance characterization for roles such as a chief minister or a wise old man, or possibly an evil person.

Costuming and makeup appear to be minimal in both "raw" and "sophisticated" productions. The latter, however, may occasionally call for special male-character costumes, such as those

required for a king, prince, policeman, sadhu (mendicant), government official, money-lender, and a tradesman.

Tamasha's lack of insistence upon elaborate costuming or makeup is matched by its minimal use of props, sets, and other trappings of stage decor.[49] The performer, as human instrument, is therefore the central focus of interest for the spectator.[50]

Acting Style

From the productions of vags (by dholki-baaris) which I attended,[51] I was able to determine that there exists a style of acting in Tamasha which differs from that of the legitimate, Western-oriented, Marathi theatre.[52]

Tamasha actors receive no formal stage direction, as opposed to actors of the legitimate stage, and they have evolved through

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[49]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., p. 65.

[50]Vinayak Bhave, private interview, November 10, 1970.

[51]Among the more than twenty performances of vags I attended, I include here only the most prominent: Shahir Sable's Aburaoche Lageen ("Aburao's Marriage"); Mirasdar's Tu Maji Ladki Myna ("You are my beloved Myna Bird"); Sabnis' Vichya Maji Puri Kara ("Fulfil My Desire"); Gadwhacha Lagna ("Donkey's Marriage"), a creation of Dadu Indurikar's troupe; Mumbaichi Kelewadi ("The Banana Seller of Bombay"), author unknown at this writing; and the popular, if melodramatic, Kalu Balu, author unknown at this writing. It should be noted here that efforts to determine acting style were based on observations of productions of vags by dholki-baaris rather than on the less structured song-and-dance productions by the sangeet-baaris.

[52]The only "serious" Marathi play I saw was Vijay Tendulkar's Ashi Pakhare Yeti ("Birds Fly Here"); but my observations of acting style on the Marathi stage were elaborated in discussions with Tendulkar, P. L. Deshpande, and Vyankatesh Madgulkar.

long apprenticeship a performing style which may be conveniently and descriptively called "theatrical,"[53] and which is defined here as a tendency for artists to focus their bodies, gestures, and speech in the direction of the audience. Focus upon the stage is reserved for the most intense moments of dramatic conflict. The style is further characterized by a rigidity of gesture during speech delivery.[54]

This directional focus and rigidity suggests the sense of awkwardness; but it is offset by additional features: vivid facial gestures, especially eye movement; moments of mime and stage business which do focus upon the stage; and, most importantly, the rich and pungent content of the dialogue, much of which is improvised.[55]

There are exceptions to the theatrical style, and these may be found among a handful of sophisticated loknatya[56] troupes which have adopted the conventional naturalistic acting style of the Marathi stage, leaving only the songadya free to play directly to the audience.

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[53]The term "theatrical" is suggested in the absence of any available Marathi descriptions of acting style in relation to Tamasha. Certain forms of Indian folk dance-drama, or classical Sanskirt drama, may usefully employ the term "stylized acting" to cover a formal arrangement of gesture, body movement, mime, dance-steps, and voice delivery; but, except for the Tamasha song-and-dance forms, the word "stylized" does not apply to acting in Tamasha folk drama.

[54]The rigidity and the general downstage focus may have evolved, in part, from the use of microphones for sound amplification. Since the growth of folk drama within Tamasha is a recent phenomenon, it would appear that the development of an acting style was influenced by the technical requirements of sound amplification; i.e., the need for actors to speak directly into a microphone.

[55]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., pp. 65-67.

[56]Dada Khondke's troupe is one example.

Informality marks the onstage relationship of performers. This informality is evident in the manner in which musicians and dancers wait around onstage after performing a musical number while a vag scene is being played out by actors. By joking, whispering, and occasionally even teasing the actors, dancers and musicians (who often appear to be actors in their own right), may disrupt intense dramatic moments in a vag scene, a fact which doesn't, to my knowledge, seem to disturb audiences.

If the acting style is devoid of refinements, objective standards, and formal stage direction, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to develop any criteria for judging a good Tamasha actor. We are forced to rely upon audience taste in this matter. From this perspective, it may be said that actors gain fame, adoration, and respect not because of the excellence of their acting talent, as one might define the term in the West (or even on the legitimate Marathi stage), but "because of their personal rapport with the audiences."[57] A good illustration of such rapport is that enjoyed by famed Tamasha actor Dada Kondke, whose innovative, witty, and satirical puns, asides, and humorous lazzi-like[58] stage business, have endeared him to Maharashtrians. At this writing (late 1973), Kondke was still starring as the songadya in the popular vag by Vasant Sabnis--Fulfil

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[57] P. L. Deshpande, private interview, November, 1970.

[58] Lazzis are improvised jokes, puns, or bits of stage business by a stock character of the Italian commedia dell'arte tradition.

My Desire. The work has played well over 1,000 performances since its opening in 1965.[59]

The audience rapport enjoyed by many songadyas[60] (and I might include here Nilu Phule and Dadu Indurikar), may be linked to the fact that spectators tend to judge a Tamasha troupe's acting talent by the excellence of its songadya.[61] It will therefore be useful at this time to examine the unscripted role of songadya.

Songadya is, as we have mentioned, a stock character in Tamasha, and he is found in most sangeet-baaris and in practically all dholki-baaris. "Sophisticated" Tamashas (loknatyas) often eliminate songadya by name, but there is always one character in every troupe who is expected to assume the role of jester anyway. Because of his special relationship to the audience and to the performers, songadya's antics and verbal witticisms are reminiscent of the naik, or stage manager in the Bhavai folk theatre tradition of Gujarat State, and there are comparisons with other Indian folk forms that could be drawn.[62]

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[59]It should be noted that the "run" is now limited to occasional productions in the larger cities and towns. In 1971, I attended two full-house performances of Fulfil My Desire in Bombay and Poona.

[60]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., p. 70. "Even in newspaper advertisements for a production," writes Vatkar, "one will often find only the name of the troupe's songadya."

[61]Ibid.; see also V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 247.

[62]See naik's role in Asaita Thakar's Vanio and Zanda Zulan, two Gujarati folk plays adapted by Farley Richmond and Tevia Abrams, from a translation by Harish Trivedi. (Calcutta: Writers Workshop, 1971.) For comparisons of songadya to counterparts in other Indian folk theatre forms, see J. C. Mathur's Drama in Rural India (New

Songadya may have a part in the gaulan segment of a Tamasha production, or he may be featured in the farce and then turn up again in the vag. He might simply wander around in and out of the dramatic action, interrupting the proceedings with unscripted jokes, witty remarks to performers, or asides to the spectators if he finds they are becoming bored or impatient. Since, as mentioned earlier, story-lines of gaulans and vags are often brief scenarios, dependent upon the quick wit of actors to maintain lively dialogue, a songadya may have to rescue the evening if his troupe is not in particularly good improvisational form.

Song and Dance in Tamasha

Song and dance in Tamasha contain both local and foreign influences. Since Maharashtra is culturally and geographically at the mid-point between North and South India, there are traces in Tamasha (particularly in the stamping footwork) of classic Kathak dances from the North, which were brought by the Moghuls from Delhi, as well as elements of the major Southern dances of Bharata Natyam and Kathakali, notably hand gestures, head and body movements, and the rolling eyes. These traces are, as Sudha Desai says of the dance in Gujarati Bhavai folk theatre, but "mangled shadows" of the original classical models.[63] Dance steps and accompanying gestures

York: Asia Publishing House, 1964), pp. 70-83; and Balwant Gargi's Folk Theatre in India (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1966), passim.

[63]Sudha Desai, "Bhavai: A Medieval Form of Ancient Indian Dramatic Art (Natya) as Prevalent in Gujarat" (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Bombay, 1955, p. 572). Miss Desai's comment about Bhavai holds for Tamasha as well, according to Vasant Bapat (private interview, Bombay, November, 1970).

and lyrics are, dramatically speaking, not at all evocative of the balanced system of rasas, or dominant states of feeling, but of easily comprehended sensual expressions. These steps, moreover, do not follow any set plans or choreographed patterns; they are determined by the music in free interpretation.

The stamping footwork of the dancers is designed to activate the ankle-bells in order to accentuate rhythms of the drum patterns of the dholki, while gestures of the eyes, the hands, and the body in general, are all focused to appeal sensually to the audience.[64] One such gesture is worth describing: while simultaneously singing and dancing a lavani song, a performer may express her[65] innocence and shyness before a persistent lover by shaking her head in wide-eyed wonder and biting on her thumbnail. This, apparently, is an erotic gesture among girls in the sangeet-baaris.[66]

Another gesture of more intimate nature is a shuffling, wiggling movement of a dancer's body, feet close together. While shuffling in a down-stage direction, she will drape one end of her sari over her head and move it from side to side. Her eyes will seek out now one, now another spectator, to communicate intense feelings of intimacy and desire. Generally, this gesture would complement suitable poetic lines of a song, possibly a lavani.

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[64] Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., p. 62.

[65] Since the introduction of female dancers and singers into the ranks of Tamasha troupes in the nineteenth century, (V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 155), all natch poryas (male dancers impersonating females) have been replaced. To this day, all feminine dancing and singing is performed by female artists.

[66] Vinayak Bhave, private interview, Bombay, November 24, 1970.

While singing an Urdu kavali or gazal, a dancer may sit cross-legged on the stage and express her tenderest feelings through head and eye movements and accompanying hand gestures and a swaying of the upper part of the body.

Musical Instruments

Music is an integral part of any Tamasha presentation, and mention must therefore be made of the instruments used in production.

Chief among the instruments is the cylindrical, two-sided dholki drum, which provides the essential rhythms for the song-and-dance forms of Tamasha. The dholki is twenty-one inches long and it is slung from the player's shoulder on straps, at hip level. At one end, the striking surface is six inches in diameter while at the other end the striking surface is eight inches in diameter. The curving barrel of the dholki is strung with ropes with which to tighten the striking surfaces for the appropriate playing tension. (Photographic illustrations of the dholki and other instruments used in Tamasha may be consulted in Appendix H, Plate I.)

The dholki-player sets both the pace and mood of a Tamasha performance: he provides undulating rhythms for performers; he plays counterpoint rhythm to accentuate a dancer's movements and gestures; and he often underlines dramatic moments of dialogue with mood-setting drum patterns.

The second most characteristic instrument used in Tamasha is the tuntuni, a single-stringed instrument which is plucked at regular intervals to produce a fixed and continuous note. The

curiously-shaped instrument is twenty-three inches long, and it has a mechanism by which the string may be tightened.

Other instruments used are the tiny brass manjeera or thal (cymbals), two inches in diameter, which are normally used to accompany devotional singing; the daf or single-faced tambourine-like instrument, about eighteen inches in diameter, which is beaten in sharp staccatto manner with a tiny stick; the halgi, a smaller version of the daf, which is just ten inches in diameter and which is beaten by hand; the kade, or metal triangle, measuring four to six inches on a side; the lejim, a jangling instrument of metal buttons strung like beads from wooden rods; and the harmonium,[67] an accordion-like instrument.

Tabla drums and tabla-dagga drums (properly called sambal), as well as a tiny one-sided cylindrical drum called kanjiri, measuring just five inches in diameter and about four inches deep, are also used by some sangeet-baaris. Occasionally, one may find a troupe using a clarinet--a unique addition to the Tamasha ensemble.

Finally, mention must be made of the ghungrus, or ankle-bells, worn by female Tamasha dancers to accentuate their movements.[68] As described earlier in connection with costuming, ghungrus are tiny metal bells, strung together in chains, which are wound about each ankle in two or more strands.

Musicians form a core-group playing in close onstage relationship to the dancers, singers and actors. In particular, the

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[67] See Appendix H, Plate XIII, for illustration.

[68] See Appendix H, Plates VIII, XVI, and XVIII.

dholki-player works intimately with individual performers, moving with them, leaning into their activity as if interpreting and enriching the performance for the audience through the sound of the drum.

Conventions of Tamasha

During the course of research for this study, a number of theatrical conventions[69] were observed and later verified in discussion with performers, playwrights, and informants. These conventions tell us something of cultural attitudes toward stage illusion, expression of time and space, and non-illusionistic artist-spectator involvement.

Conventions Pertaining to Time and Space

Realistic or naturalistic stage settings or props are unnecessary to suggest time and place in Tamasha, since there are no physical boundaries to time and place. By a variety of gestures, movement, mime, and word images in dialogue, an actor may convey to the spectator a richness of setting, time, and place. By accepted convention, the Tamasha actor is himself the instrument of all stage illusion.

When, in the composite *vag* mentioned earlier, King Vijay looks around and "sees" a temple, the spectators may be expected to see it. By the same token, when the king enters the temple and

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69. "Theatrical convention" is defined as an element of theatre practice which is traditionally accepted (in advance of performance) by both performer and spectator.

the temple-dancer appears, the spectators may also be expected to accept that they are now inside the temple.

It is also an accepted convention that actors may step in and out of character at any time and that they can (as in the case cited earlier of King Vijay switching from character to member of the chorus) switch roles quickly, enabling a troupe to play a wide variety of characters. Minimal employment of character costuming and makeup serve as aids to such arrangements, as noted earlier.

Another convention pertaining to illusion is the actor's quick turn around the stage which may tell the audience of a long trip completed and, possibly, of a new locale reached.

Facial expressions, movement, mime and gesture are all elements of a good Tamasha actor's technique by which to make these conventions work properly.

Involvement of the Audience

In both "raw" and "sophisticated" Tamasha performances, there is a good deal of out-of-character by-play between artists and spectators.

An actor, a singer, or a dancer, may single out individual spectators, or approach them as a group, and consciously proceed to joke, tease, or titillate. Sometimes an artist may be seeking public approbation; at other times, there may be an attempt by the Songadya to enliven the evening if attention and interest of the audience appears to be waning. In other cases, it is not uncommon for an actor to break out of an illusory moment in a production to

upstage his colleagues in an effort to gain stardom at the expense of his fellow professionals.

But given the "theatrical" style of acting described previously, and the sense of informality which prevails at performances, the involvement of artists and audiences appears as a natural and acceptable convention of the folk form which often results in much spontaneously improvised and witty humor.

Physical Involvement: Daulat-Jadda

A convention associated only with the sangeet-baaris of the "raw" Tamasha tradition represents a physical form of artist-spectator contact or involvement. It consists of the actual touching of artists by spectators who pay sums of money for special encores or favored requests. The convention is called daulat-jadda, and it developed from the Moghul practice of offering gifts to performers at a time when artists had no other means of support. It was strengthened after the British entry into Maharashtra in 1818 and the subsequent loss of Peshva patronage to Tamasha artists. Artists accepted gifts and blessed the donor in return: "May the wealth of the donor increase," or Daulat-jadda!"

However, the practice eventually degenerated into thrill-seeking contact with the artists, particularly after women entered the ranks of Tamasha troupes at the close of the nineteenth century. According to V. K. Joshi,

> . . . the giving of money developed into a lewd and teasing practice. A spectator would offer a coin to a dancer, and use the occasion to extend the moment of contact for the sake of pleasure. The gift was often made as payment for

audience requests--a favorite song or lavani. . . . There was also competition among spectators for requests, with the largest sums determining what would be performed next.[70]

Daulat-jadda also provided a socially acceptable form for the practice of prostitution among certain communities of artists,[71] but the State Government has exercised increasing control over the convention in an expression of puritan zeal which established itself immediately after Indian Independence was achieved in 1947.[72] Consequently, daulat-jadda has been reduced to little more than a tip which, legally, must not exceed a rupee (7.5¢) at a time.[73]

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[70]V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 166.

[71]See note on the Bhatu-Kolhati sub-caste, Chapter III, infra., for a discussion of prostitution among Tamasha women.

[72]See Chapter IV, infra., "The Politics of Tamasha."

[73]Taken as a whole, the conventions which physically include the audience appear to be socially in advance of some recent American theatrical encounter experiments designed to liberate the possibilities of contact between performers and spectators. The Living Theatre presentation of Paradise Now, for example, contains a planned, if not scripted, section in which performers walk through the auditorium, speaking directly to spectators, saying in frustrated manner that they can't smoke marijuana, that they're not allowed to take their clothes off. They seem to want to be able to establish more non-acting contact with the spectators, but they can't because of the constraints of accepted theatre conventions. Or, as Michael Kirby interprets it, the actor "seems to be aware of an audience . . . and he reacts to this situation by energetically projecting ideas, emotions and elements of his personality for the sake of the audience." ("On Acting and Non-Acting," The Drama Review, Vol. 16, No. 1 (T-53) (March, 1972), pp. 6,7.) More recently (1972) I attended a performance of the Liquid Theatre, an encounter theatre group at the Guggenheim Museum in New York which led the audience through touch sensations and mild encounters but would not break the convention of physical distance after the performance, in spite of a brief closing dancing session involving performers and spectators.

Wit and Humor

Since the major rasa, or sentiment, of Tamasha is hasya, or comic, based on the dominant emotion of laughter,[74] it is necessary to make mention of the means by which humor and comedy are expressed.

The verbal humor of the Tamasha artist is derived mainly from run-ons and liaisons of words and from existing words having double-edged meanings in certain combinations or contexts, which often yield two levels of meaning. One level invariably appears to be a normal statement; the other, generally, has a biting, satirical, or sexually arousing meaning. A few examples are provided below.[75]

The word istri is used in a casual remark, and the audience breaks into laughter. Istri means to iron; but stri means woman. In some cases, use of the word stri sounds more like istri. With this background, the following simple statement begins to have new possibilities: "Istri warms the clothes, while stri cools down the man."

Another example turns on the word janavar, which means animal, and the words Jana and var which together mean the husband of Jana. The following bit of dialogue takes advantage of the confusion:

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Who is he?

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[74]Durga Bhagvat, private interview, Bombay, January, 1971; see also brief discussion of the system of rasas, Chapter II, infra.

[75]I am indebted to one of my informants, G. P. Vaidya, for examples cited.

B

That's janavar.

C

How dare you introduce me as an animal!

B

Well, aren't you Janavar? Your wife is Jana and var means husband. Right? So, you're Janavar!

In yet another illustration, humor is created out of misunderstanding relating to the word viman, which means an airplane, and vimantal, which can mean either airport or a woman's lower parts.

MAN

What's that pendant you're wearing?

WOMAN

It's a viman (airplane), can't you tell? Do you like it?

MAN

Actually I'm not so much fond of the viman as I am of the vimantal.

Sometimes, run-ons of various words and lines serve to bring out unsuspected levels of humor. In an announcement at the beginning of one troupe's performance, the songadya, or jester, looks to the audience, points to the dancers of his troupe, yelling: "Yethe nach tamashe chaltat!" This means quite literally: "Here you find dancing and Tamasha!" The spectators, however, began to laugh because they perceived a double meaning in the statement. It seems that by pronouncing the line as "Yethe nachat mashe chaltat," a second meaning came through: "Here walk the fish dancing."

Linguists claim that Marathi lends itself to such double entendres because of the unique phonological processes at work in the language. These processes work to the advantage of the shahir-playwrights who are increasingly working to refine the Tamasha form, making it more sophisticated and enhancing its literary value,[76] without, at the same time, destroying the openings for improvisational talents of the actors.

The songadya, we have mentioned previously, is the main source of improvised humor in Tamasha, particularly in the sangeet-baaris, where most of the short gaulan segments and other brief dialogue moments are improvised rather than scripted. In addition to his quick wit, a good songadya will rely upon mime, farce, nonsense, and sex-laden jokes.

Namdev Vatkar provides additional examples of wit and humor in his book Tamasha.[77] One refers to double meanings and concerns the word gaath, which can mean either "meeting" or a "knot." In performance, the songadya asks another actor about where they ought to meet, but in the context of the words the question becomes: "Where is the knot?" A nonsense effect is gained here.

In view of the nearly bare-stage approach to production featured in Tamasha, the songadya's imaginative mime efforts can lead to much humor. Where a horse is required, the songadya may

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[76]Vijay Tendulkar, private interview, Bombay, December 16, 1970; Vasant Sabnis, private interview, Bombay, December, 1970. See more comprehensive discussion of the shahir-playwright in Chapter III, infra.

[77]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., pp. 70-74.

impersonate one, dropping to the floor and moving on his hands and knees; or, if a throne is called for, an actor playing the king may find himself sitting on the back of the songadya.

Sensuality in Tamasha

In the Introduction to this study, mention was made of the "bawdy" (ashlil) and "sensual" (vishayasakla) impulses which were operative in the development of Tamasha. This sensual strain is explained by the fact that Tamasha grew out of male-oriented entertainments for the Moghul armies stationed in Maharashtra.[78] The same lascivious appeal was noted when Tamashas were brought to the camps of the Maratha warriors,[79] especially from the time of Shivaji the Great[80] in the mid-seventeenth century.

In the early period, all the artists were males; the female roles were played by natch poryas, or young male dancers. Their songs, dances, puns, and gestures were lewd and suggestive.[81] In time, literary refinements were made, especially during the Peshva period of rule by prime ministers (1707-1818), and the sensual content was wrought with more polished artistry.[82] Prurient interest,

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[78]This fact has already been established at the outset of this chapter, supra.

[79]Vasant Bapat, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

[80]Shivaji's armies defeated the Moghuls in 1674, resulting in the liberation of Maharashtra. (See historical note on Maharashtra, Appendix J.)

[81]Vasant Bapat, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

[82]Idem.

however, became more pronounced late in the nineteenth century, after female dancers were admitted to the ranks of Tamasha troupes. This development, which completely transformed the folk form, is attributed to Shahir Patthe Bapurao (1866-1945), the famed composer of sensuous lavanis and other Tamasha-style songs, who first engaged women performers in his own troupe in the late 1800s.[83]

Today, the sensual impact of Tamasha is derived from a number of elements. In addition to the physical appeal and gestures of singers and dancers, and the attraction of the music, much depends upon the lyrics, the play of wit, and the dramatic content--most of which are provided by shahirs, or people's poets.[84]

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[83]See section devoted to Patthe Bapurao, Chapter II, infra.

[84]For a historical sketch of the shahiri tradition, see Chapter II, infra.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TAMASHA

The purpose of this chapter is to study the possible origins of Tamasha and to follow its historical development from its emergence in the seventeenth century to the present day.

Roots of Tamasha

In the absence of primary sources concerning the roots and origins of the Tamasha form, we are forced to rely upon recent theories and findings by Indologists and Marathi scholars.

Two accounts of the probable origins of Tamasha have been identified.[1] One suggestion, which is disputed because no factual proof may be found to support it, concerns a line of development of popular, low-class entertainments which ran parallel to the refined and esoteric Sanskrit theatre tradition, and which emerged as "Tamasha" after certain formal segments were yoked into the itinerant troupe system created by the Moghuls for the entertainment of their military forces.

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[1]Durga Bhagvat, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970. I am indebted to Miss Bhagvat for the basic delineation of both accounts and I rely upon her comments and qualifications. Her own view of the place of the Sanskrit tradition in India is that it was literally a sanskritization of earlier, popular folk elements rather than a unique esoteric and original tradition. While Miss Bhagvat's view is hypothetical, it nevertheless agrees with the second and more factually-based account of the origin of Tamasha as outlined below.

According to this account, a number of preclassical entertainment forms blossomed and declined in the Deccan region until the Moghul Tamasha entertainment troupes began to adopt the existing remnants.

A variant of this account, which applies to the national theatre scene, claims that the classical Sanskrit drama was itself but a branch diverted from an earlier and more basic secular entertainment tradition of mime. Both the basic tradition and the esoteric branch then continued to develop in parallel fashion. This view is upheld by the scholar Sten Konow.[2]

The views expressed above lend some credibility to the idea that the Tamasha folk form may have developed from a basic tradition originating in pre-classical times.

The theory is, however, discredited by another scholar, A. B. Keith, who denies the authenticity of information about pre-classical forms of popular theatre.[3] ("Classical" is defined as the variety of drama corresponding to the aesthetic system outlined in the ancient treatise on drama, the Natyashastra of Bharata.)

The second principal account explaining the roots of Tamasha is based on more factual information, and I will therefore accept its claim: that Tamasha developed among the Marathas in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries from the decaying remnants of the

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[2]Sten Konow, The Indian Drama, Tr. by S. N. Ghosal (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers, 1969), pp. 65-75.

[3]A. B. Keith, The Sanskrit Drama (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), pp. 49-57.

literary Sanskrit dramatic and linguistic traditions, which had never been very strong in the Deccan and which had been declining steadily following the invasions by the Moghul armies from the eleventh century onward.[4]

Among these remnants were two entertainment forms in particular--the prahasan and the bhana--which easily lent themselves to the popular and rustic entertainment needs among the Marathas. Both were secular forms and both provided openings for crude humor and satire among entertainment-starved audiences.[5]

Prahasans are thought to have originated in the twelfth century, and they were borrowed, according to Sten Konow, from the old popular stage.[6] They are one-act skits about social foibles, laced with spicy comments and puns. Chief sentiment or rasa of the prahasan is the comic (hasya), which derives from the dominant emotion of laughter, according to the ancient system of rasas as outlined in Bharata's Natyashastra.[7] The form was popular among dwindling pockets

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[4]The Moghuls established supremacy over Maharashtra from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries.

[5]Durga Bhagvat, loc. cit. The prahasan and the bhana are two types of classical drama forms out of a total of ten varieties collectively called Rupaka, according to the Natyashastra.

[6]Sten Konow, op. cit., p. 48.

[7]Bharata's system of rasas includes eight major sentiments: (1) Sringara, the erotic sentiment, which derives from love (rati), in union and in separation; (2) Karuna, the pathetic sentiment, from the dominant emotion of sorrow, or choka; (3) Raudra, the sentiment of fury, from anger, or krodha; (4) Vira, the heroic sentiment, from the spirit of valor, fearlessness and energy (utsaha); (5) Bhayanaka, sentiment of terror, derived from fear (bhaya); (6) Bibhatsa, the sentiment of horror and odiousness, based upon disgust, or jugupsha; (7) Adbhuta, the marvellous or wondrous sentiment that comes from the

of Sanskrit-speaking audiences down to the fifteenth century, and as the vernacular languages flourished in Western India, the prahasan passed into Marathi as a literary device and was later incorporated by the shahirs in their Tamasha presentations.

Bhana, on the other hand, is a one-man musical sketch which is improvised in the spirit of the dominant rasas of vira (heroic), and sringara (erotic). A bhana may contain a mixture of love poetry, humor, wit, music, and song. The oldest known example dates from the end of the fourteenth century, but the form does go back to the classical period. (Konow claims that bhana is directly descended from pre-classical mimes.[8])

There is also a sub-variety of bhana called misrabhana, which is worth mentioning here because of its influence upon Tamasha. A medieval example of misrabhana by the writer Kasipati Kaviraja deals in secular fashion with the adventures of Krishna and his exploits among the ladies.[9] The leap from misrabhana to the gaulan segment

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emotion of astonishment, or vismaya; (8) Hasya, the comic sentiment from the dominant emotion of laughter. Hasya is the main rasa of Tamasha and also of the Bhavai folk form of Gujarat. There is also a ninth sentiment which is generally considered apart from the other eight; it is called Santa, or tranquility, based upon quietude and mental contentment. As applied to the classic Sanskrit drama, Shakuntala, the theory indicates that the sringara rasa, or love, is dominent in the play and that there is a consequent graceful manner which pervades any work based upon sringara. In the same way, each play may employ a dominant rasa and the appropriate manner, so that the whole work maintains an elegant scheme or pattern denying the traditionally Western extremes of great tragedy and high comedy. For a more detailed explanation of the Natyashastra, see H. R. Mishra's The Theory of Rasa in Sanskrit Drama (Madya Pradesh: Vindhyachal Prakashan, 1964).

[8]Sten Konow, op. cit., p. 48.

[9]Ibid., p. 199.

of Tamasha (with its play of wit and song about Kirshna and the milkmaids), is a logical one to make in view of the direct line of historical influence. (There are other influences which helped to shape the gaulan segment of Tamasha, as we shall see when we consider the dashavatar form.) To strengthen the substance of the second theory, we must add to the decayed remnants of the Sanskrit traditions the influences of indigenously Maharashtrian forms of entertainment, the Northern Indian Kathak dances, and the pure Moghul forms (the kavali and gazal songs mentioned in Chapter I), brought to Maharashtra. Indigenous Maharashtrian elements are largely folk entertainments, most of which were religiously inspired, while others were purely secular. Some survive today in their own right although performances are rare occurrences. It is important to describe a number of these elements to demonstrate how they contributed to the formal structure of Tamasha.

The kal sutri puppet shows (source unknown), the dashavatar musical operas, bharud dramatic poetry recitals, and the lalit and gondhal festival entertainments represent the oldest folk forms known to Maharashtrians. The most ancient is believed to be the puppet shows.[10]

The first indications of real drama, which ultimately affected the development of Tamasha, are to be found in the

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[10] V. K. Joshi, Loknatyachi Parampara ("Tradition of Folk Theatre"), pp. 1-8. Joshi does not date the origins of the puppet shows, but he claims they served villagers as cheap representations of real Snaskrit drama, since the models were too sophisticated, esoteric, ahd expensive to perform (p. 4).

dashavatar form which had its roots in the seventh century in the South Konkan region, which is the coastal strip of Maharashtra, just north of Goa. Dashavatar literally means the ten incarnations of the god Vishnu. The dramatic material comes from the Hindu mythology and deals with Vishnu in the first four lives that are not human and the next four that are. The ninth form is the incarnation as Buddha, and the tenth is the form which will inaugurate a "new and better age."[11]

The form of dashavatar may be compared with musical opera. Performers are all males, one of whom narrates the story while the others mime the action and sing and partake in brief segments of dialogue. There is, however, no characterization expressed through build-up of dialogue. Characterization is sketched through narration only. Performances were held mostly during religious festivals, in the courtyards of temples.

A typical dashavatar play is the Story of Rama,[12] taken from the ancient Ramayana. It covers the banishment of Rama (one of the incarnations of Vishnu), to the forest, the kidnapping of Rama's beautiful wife, Sita, by Ravanna (personification of evil), and Rama's eventual triumph over evil with the help of Hanuman, king of the monkeys and the personification of devotion, Rama and Sita are happily reunited at the end of the piece.

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[11] R. C. Zaehner, Hinduism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 91.

[12] V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 8.

Tamasha has more in common (formalistically, if not in subject-matter as well) with dashavatar than with any other of the early Maharashtrian folk forms.[13] This is true especially of the component featuring story-telling through narration, mime, and song, which may be found in most segments of the modern Tamasha. More specific dashavatar features that influenced Tamasha are the skit called kala, which is similar to the gaulan segment of the later Tamashas, and a clown-like stock comic character reminiscent of the Tamasha songadya.

Dashavatar itself declined in popularity over the centuries, and it all but disappeared after the early eighteenth century, about the time the Maratha Peshvas (Prime Ministers) became involved in the fatal series of wars that culminated in defeat (1818) at the hands of the British. More secular Tamasha entertainments quickly filled the vacuum--the gaulan, the povada heroic ballads and the lavani love songs.

Another early dramatic entertainment which influenced the development of Tamasha, was the bharud, a form created by the Mahar untouchable community and used with effectiveness for devotional propaganda by the Maharashtra saints[14] who represented the bhakti cults of Hinduism.[15] The saints were reformers, and their goal, like

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[13]Vijay Tendulkar, private interview, Poona, February, 1971.

[14]V. K. Joshi, op. cit., pp. 34-41.

[15]Bhakti is one of three paths to the Absolute, according to the Bhagavad-Gita, the other two being the path of Knowledge (dnyana), and the path of action (karma). See R. C. Zaehner, op. cit., pp. 125-146. The bhakti cults flourished from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and among the renowned names in Maharashtra are Dnyaneshvar

that of the sixteenth-century saint-poet Eknath, was to break down social barriers among the people, especially those of caste.

The bharud was a dramatic form of poetic recital. It was written in simple, unsophisticated language in order that it could be understood easily by the rural masses. Eknath made great use of the bharud. He wrote some 300 compositions ranging across 125 different themes. His bharuds contained allegorical descriptions of the inequities of the caste system; the play of Krishna and the gaulans, especially his beloved Radha; the ways of gods and men; festival observances; and problems of daily life. Performances were conducted in private or community religious festivals; later, performers were born into the profession through heredity.

Eknath's bharud was fashioned along principles of beauty and sensuousness for popular appeal. The lines appeared outwardly romantic, but they had double meanings of a spiritual nature and the intended "messages" attempted to turn people toward devotion and the transcendentalist vision of Lord Shiva locked in loving embrace with his reconciling shaktis, or powers. Eknath, and the other poet-saints who came after him, turned often to the Krishna-gaulan myth as a frame-work for their bharud compositions. Some entertainments described the lives of the milkmaids and the qualities of Lord Krishna and of Radha. The mythological base as well as the

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(thirteenth century), Namdev (fourteenth century), Eknath (sixteenth century), and Tukaram (seventeenth century). Their writings included characteristic abhangas, or short devotional hymns. The bhakti movement originated in the transcendentalist vision of the intimate and inseparable loving unity of Lord Shiva, the destroyer, and his reconciling parts, shaktis--his powers. Later, folk artists influenced by the Maharashtrian saints, became known for their shiva-shakti performances, characterized by strongly sensual imagery.

form of the bharud were used as unchanging, familiar "pegs" upon which to hang their messages. As we shall see in Part 2 of this study, the same technique was adopted by modern social reformers and propagandists working with Tamasha.

The sensual beauty of songs and dialogues of the poet-saints appealed to the shahirs of Maharashtra who later shaped their own poetic conceits into a more secular entertainment that became part of the Tamasha form. Saint Janabi's dialogue for one of the gaulans, for example, expresses the secular flair of the shahir's creations, and is reminiscent of the later gaulan segments of Tamasha:

> (To RADHA) Radha, somebody's calling you. Somebody dressed in black and with a choli [blouse] decorated with a fine border. And she has diamonds in her hair. She's a devotee of Krishna.[16]

From the bharud came the more sophisticated and elite play of the gods--the lalit form--which served as court entertainment during religious festivals.[17] Because it was such a rarified entertainment, serious writers of the nineteenth century experimented with lalit (as well as with the gondhal and dashavatar forms) in their efforts to establish a sophisticated and thoroughly urban Marathi theatre tradition.[18] The work of Vishnudas Bhave (b.1819 or 1820), which is partly based on the lalit, is cited as the beginning

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[16]V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 41.

[17]Ibid., pp. 42-43.

[18]Hemenchanath Das Gupta, The Indian Stage, Vol. III, Introduction; see also The Marathi Theatre, 1843 to 1960 (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, for the Marathi Natya Parishad Dramatic Association, 1961), pp. 1-8.

of urban Marathi drama. Lalits are rarely seen today although All-India Radio tried for a time to revive it in the Poona region.[19]

Gondhals are minstrel songs in praise of the Goddess Amba Bhawani, performed at festivals or at the request of individuals for private celebrations, such as weddings. There are two varieties of gondhals which evolved over the years. The first is the simple program of Marathi devotional songs using four characters: a narrator (naik), an accompanist who provides the humor, and two instrumentalists on the damaru[20] and the tuntuni.

The second variety of gondhal was performed almost exclusively in villages and contained many songs and dances based on a single melody. Content of this second type of gondhal was woven out of stories on a variety of local, social, and devotional topics, and performances were done in the name of Khandoba, god of war. Performers were the devotees of the goddess Bhawani. By origin, they were Marathas of the cultivator caste (kunbi).

Today, gondhal has been reduced to decorative functions at private or public events. Whatever literary value there may have been in the form during the seventeenth century has long since disappeared. The gondhal gave to Tamasha its itinerant nature, its sense of troupe inventiveness and of improvisation. If serious

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[19]K. G. Kelkar, Program Executive, All-India Radio, private interview, Bombay, January 5, 1971.

[20]A small drum, with hourglass shape: A small ball attached to a string strikes the drumheads alternately when the player rolls the instrument from side to side, producing rhythmic beats. It is a popular instrument of Indian jugglers, wandering minstrels, and monkey trainers.

dramatists consciously tried to incorporate elements of its style in their own works, the Tamasha artists were more unconscious in their own borrowings that served to enrich the Tamasha form.[21]

To these early forms must be added the kirtan, a one-man musical sermon which may last an hour or longer, and which is interspersed with devotional songs (bhajans) sung in unison with gathered spectators. Because of its flexible nature, the kirtan provided the narrator-singer the opportunity of introducing a wealth of contemporary social considerations into his work.[22] Influence upon the later Tamasha form is traced to the inventive and supple use of language, especially in narrative and anecdotal double-entendres.[23]

Leading Marathi novelist, critic and musical authority, Professor N. C. Phadke, has spoken of kirtan and Tamasha as the two folk art forms unique to Maharashtra today:

> The art of Tamasha, which leads you to the temple of eros, and the Kirtan, which leads you to the temple of devotion, are two forms of art with no parallel in the rest of India. They are bound to survive and develop along with the general cultural development of Maharashtra.[24]

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[21]Vasant Bapat, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

[22]K. Narain Kale, "Form and Function of Mass Media," unpublished paper read at Symposium on Language, Arts and Mass Culture in India, Duke University, N.C., March 13-15, 1970, p. 6.

[23]Durga Bhagvat, loc. cit.

[24]Prof. N. C. Phadke, tape-recorded speech, reception for Tamasha artist Bapurao Punekar, Poona, August 25, 1970.

Emergence, Consolidation of the Form

In this chapter, discussion has so far been limited to the possible origins of Tamasha. It was suggested that the form developed out of the decayed remains of the short-lived Sanskrit dramatic tradition, and elements of the later Prakrit entertainments indigenous to Maharashtra, and that it combined with the dominant unifying force--the Moghul entertainment format which contained kathak-inspired dances and Urdu song forms.

There is no historical record of the actual emergence of Tamasha as a discrete form because it is part of an unwritten story of the lives of the untouchable classes and out-caste communities[25] in Maharashtra, who joined with Muslim artists to entertain the Moghul armies, and subsequently the rural populace.

Two claims, however, have been offered as probable accounts of the emergence of Tamasha. One is by V. K. Joshi, who believes the form emerged after 1686, replacing an earlier popular form, gammat, which had its own origins in 1490. The Tamasha of 1686 was called Khael Tamasha, or Tamasha performance.[26]

Another suggestion is that of Namdev Vatkar, who dates the first performance of Tamasha back to 1599. At the close of the seventeenth century, he adds, itinerant troupes were already engaged in tours of villages in patterns which have continued to the present

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[25]Untouchables were forbidden by caste tradition from learning to read or write, and the literate elites displayed no interest in recording the developing oral tradition among these communities.

[26]V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 95.

day. By working and travelling together in troupes, performers were soon able to adopt kathak dance influences and Urdu song forms and to enrich their productions with Marathi song forms, such as the povada ballad, and with dramatic elements of the dashavatar, bharud, lalit and other indigenous Maharashtrian forms. Eventually, the gan and gaulan segments were made formal additions to Tamasha.[27]

Although Joshi and Vatkar differ in their dating schemes, both allow for a process of introduction, integration, and consolidation of entertainment form elements through the seventeenth century.[28]

We must conclude, therefore, that no exact date can be placed upon the emergence of the form, as a fully integrated mixture of foreign (Moghul) and Maharashtrian components, and that the late seventeenth century may serve as the closest approximation to such a date.

The content of the newly emergent form down to 1707 (the end of the Maratha Kingdom) was characterized by masculine themes of battle, bravery, and war, and by harsh elements of raw, bawdy humor, and lewd dance gestures for amusement and titillation. The later refinements of the Peshva period introduced more gentle themes of love and religious devotion.[29]

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[27]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., pp. 10-20.

[28]The lavani song-and-dance form, as we have mentioned previously, was perfected as a refined element during the Peshva period (1707-1818); while the farce and the vag (folk drama) were additions attributed to the nineteenth century.

[29]Y. N. Kelkar, literary historian, private interview, Poona, July, 1971.

In any discussion of content, mention must be made of the shahir, or people's poet, whose compositions, poems, and, more recently, written scenaries and dialogues, represent the substance and literary core of Tamasha.[30]

The first in the line of respected shahirs was Agindas, whose nationalistic povadas were dedicated to extolling the bravery of Shivaji the Great. His best-known works are said to date from 1645, and they were composed in the "dangat" style of povada-writing, which was apparently reserved for war-time and which had nearly disappeared from disuse. In Shivaji's lifetime, dangat povadas were revived to help stir the people against the ruling Moghuls. According to Shahir Atmaran Patil, an authority on the shahiri tradition, these compositions were characterized by a lack of refrain, a stylistic feature that was continued by later shahirs, including Yamaji and Tulsidas, down to about 1731.[31]

During the Maratha kingdom, the shahir used his talents performing in Tamasha troupes in enemy camps in order to gain military secrets, and he also helped to inspire the populace to fight tne enemy. A "mirror of society," the "conscience of the people," he brought

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[30]For background information and views in this chapter on the relative artistic merits of the shahirs, I am indebted to conversations with Shahir Atmaram Patil (Bombay, March 11, 1971), literary historian Y. N. Kelkar (Poona, July, 1971), and to the following published materials: articles by Atmaram Patil, Shahir Hinge, Nagnath Shitole, Shahir Sable, and Rajabhau Thitey, in Shahir Naubat (March, 1970); V. K. Joshi, op. cit., Chapt. 10, pp. 185-240; Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., pp. 15-19.

[31]Atmaram Patil, "Such is the Shahiri Tradition," Shahir Naubat (March, 1970), pp. 11, 12, 73.

awareness and understanding through the medium of povadas and other shahiri entertainments.[32]

The Golden Age (To Baji Rao II)

Nanaji Peshve was the first in the line of Peshvas, or Prime Ministers. A lover of the arts, Nanaji was fond of singing and dancing, and he introduced Tamasha-style dancing in the court. In time, refinements were made, and on one occasion, a male dancer was disguised as a gaulan, with bells tied about his ankles to accentuate his movements. In this way, we are told, the modern lavani tradition was born.[33]

The Tamasha of Peshva times was known as Dholki-Tamasha, and a typical troupe was made up of a sardar or a naik (a stage manager, organizer); a dholki-player; a kade-player (tambourine-player); tuntuni-player; a male dancer or nachya, who impersonated a female; and three or four auxiliary performers (surtes, or zeelkari), who provided singing continuity. A shahir was generally in overall charge of the troupe. Performances included the following elements: the invocational gan; the gaulan, lasting about thirty minutes; a fifteen-minute heroic ballad (povada); and a final hour of lavanis, the exact length of this section depending upon audience enthusiasm. The closing number would generally be a mujara, which carries respect for the tradition of the great shahirs and which asks for their blessings. (The vag, it should be recalled, was developed

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[32]Shahir Hinge, "Strike the Daf of Your Faith," Shahir Naubat (March, 1970), pp. 17-20.

[33]Atmaram Patil, op. cit., p. 73.

only after 1818.) Artists of the time ranged themselves on either side of the Shiva-shakti rhetorical question: "Which is greater . . . the god Shiva, or power and strength?" The competitions reached their height after 1794.[34]

It was under the rule of the last of the Peshvas that the greatest support for the folk art was lavishly made available. Peshva Baji Rao II was accused of many vices--heavy drinking and indulging in sex orgies, among others. But his great passion was Tamasha. He brought professional women singers to Poona for the first time, and he housed these courtesans in a specially constructed building with fifty-two apartments.

Baji Rao's court poets and shahirs wrote lavani love songs especially for private performances by women artists,[35] with the result that a more intimate and delicate baithak lavani evolved as an alternative to the regular theatre performance style of lavani.

With generous support, the shahirs turned from compositions of the tough dangat povada, mentioned previously, to the more complex narrative-style povada, with its pleasing refrains, and to the lavani song form.[36]

Most revered of the shahirs of the Peshva period are Anant Phandi (b.1744), Prabhakar (b.1754), Parshuram (b.1754), Ram Joshi (b. 1762), Sagan Bhao (b.1778), Honaji (b. 1754), and Haubatti

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[34] V. K. Joshi, op. cit., pp. 122-130.

[35] Female singers and dancers did not at this time perform in Tamasha troupes; it was, however, permissible for them to appear in private performances (baithaks).

[36] Atmaram Patil, op. cit., p. 74.

(b.1794). Because the tradition of Tamasha rests so much upon the artistry of these shahirs, a word on each is called for.

Anant Phandi lived most of his life in Poona. He wrote many lavanis and povadas, and he performed in Tamasha troupes. Later in life he turned from pure entertainment to write and perform devotional songs, for which he gained wide fame. In a moment of despair, he wrote the following bleak lines in a povada:

> Oh, how the times have reversed themselves!
> The servant won't listen to his master.
> They have all become proud.
> The world's in such a mess.
> It's plunging into nothingness.[37]

Shahir Prabhakar came to seek his fortune at the court in Poona while he was in his early twenties. He is known for his compositions of povadas on historical themes as well as for his lavani songs. He did not, however, perform his own works.

Parshuram was a tailor by trade, but he gained fame for his lyrical lavanis. He received many commissions for compositions, mainly on themes dealing with Maratha rule and the post-Peshva takeover by the British. He was also highly regarded as a singer.

Ram Joshi's life-story is the most romantic of them all because he crossed caste barriers for the love of Tamasha. At the age of twenty he turned against his Brahmin background and left his home in Sholapur to travel with a Tamasha troupe, for which he wrote and performed lavanis and povadas. One of his many povadas deals with the changes in Poona after the Peshvas came to power:

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[37] V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 194.

The Peshva ministers are loved by all.
They've made Poona City a lovely place,
And built sufficient water tanks.
There's an ocean of water now, and no poverty,
And lots of people and crowded markets.
No city as fine as fair Poona.
All are happy except handfuls of beggars,
And everywhere there's entertainment.
What more can I say?[38]

Sagan Bhau was a Muslim from the village of Jejuri, near Poona. He started out in life sharpening knives to earn a living, but he soon turned to the performing arts, playing the single-stringed tuntuni and writing popular sensuous lavanis.

Honaji found his vocation as a shahir after working as a milkman. His popularity rests upon lavani songs dealing, appropriately enough, with the Krishna-milkmaid myths. His writing attracted the court circles and he was once invited to perform before Peshva Baji Rao II. As a result of his collaboration with the singer Bala Karanjkar, Honaji is now referred to as Honaji Bala.

Haubatti is not generally listed among the renowned shahirs, possibly because there was little sensual content in his compositions. His writing concentrated upon the sawal-jabab, or question-and-answer riddle form, and he is reputed to have written thousands of poems in this form. He died without having earned any public recognition for his talents.

In conclusion, the Peshva period is generally considered to have been the golden age of Tamasha. The folk form flourished as never before, largely because of generous patronage by the prime ministers.

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[38] Ibid., p. 197.

Decline

The abrupt end of Peshva rule came in 1818 when the British assumed control in Maharashtra. It was also the abrupt end of patronage for Tamasha. The artistry, particularly the poetry, declined swiftly and was once again thrown back upon daulat-jadda for support--a feature which quickly became debased, as noted previously. Loss of patronage also meant loss of whatever measure of social status the better artists had managed to acquire during the Peshva age. (To this day, with the exception of the urban loknatya artists, most Tamasha performers still lack any real social status or recognition as professional artists.)

Economic hardships and hunger and disease plagued the artists in their travels and during their performances, and this in turn led to a collapse of artistic standards.

Except for the brief career of Patthe Bapurao, and other isolated pockets of excellent performers and performances (from about 1880 to 1930), the state of the art declined steadily until the 1940s. In Patthe Bapurao, the tradition of pure entertainment found its last brilliant exponent.

Renaissance (Patthe Bapurao)

Patthe Bapurao (1866-1945), is generally acknowledged as the last of the great traditional shahirs who composed beautiful and sensuous lavanis, gaulans, and vags for Tamasha performances.

He was born in the Satara district, south of Poona. Like the famed Shahir Ram Joshi before him, Bapurao was a Brahmin. In

his youth he attended baithaks, or private Tamasha performances, given by the Mahar untouchable community, and soon he began to mix socially with the artists. He wrote new songs for them and taught them to sing properly in a manner which added form and structure to their Tamashas.

Protests by his family were to no avail, and the young poet left home to pursue his new-found profession. In Bombay, he formed his own troupe and quickly gained wide acclaim for his artistry. People came from all over Maharashtra to see his troupe perform, and there were day-long lines for tickets at his theatre in Bombay.

He wrote songs, gaulans, and vags with ease and with a "fine poet's touch."[39] He would create his poems onstage, on the spur of the moment. His poems were mostly about love and they were marked by a high order of lyricism. The sensual appeal may be appreciated to some extent in this English rendition of his lavani, "No Marriage for Me:"

Oh dear I don't want to marry!
I'm bored with men.
They're all unfaithful,
And their thoughts blow with the wind.
They always harass us poor women.
I've heard it all before.
That's why I won't have any wedding.
Women are naturally gullible.
They value virtue above all.
Marriage would be poison for me,
Or imprisonment for life.
Oh dear, I won't get married!

Why give a life-time to one man?
In the end, it's just a job.

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[39]Vinayak Bhave, private interview, Bombay, November 10, 1970.

What else can I say?
Oh, dear, I won't get married![40]

From a song expressing a woman's point of view, Bapurao could turn effortlessly to a male view. Here are a few lines from another lavani:

You're the best among one thousand.
None have your fine speech.
I wonder who your master is who guards you,
And who will ask for you in your old age?
Did you ever ask yourself?
Say, come into the courtyard and let me see your face.[41]

In 1905, he won the dancer Pavala at a contest of wits which is now legendary in Maharashtra. He married the girl but it was to prove the beginning of a decline in the fortunes of his troupe. Pavala eventually left Bapurao. He quit his profession after 1920 and died in poverty and obscurity in 1945.

But his legacy to the sensual tradition of Tamasha is said to be a rich one. To this day, his compositions and dramatic pieces are performed by troupes throughout the State. There is, I am told by informants, no great social concern or message in the body of his compositions; mostly, it is good entertainment. Bapurao may have been out of step with the times--there were a number of revolutionary movements sweeping the State while he lived and the "raw" Tamasha was everywhere in a state of decline--but he apparently knew how to charm Marathi audiences, and for this he earned an important place in the culture of Maharashtra.

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[40] My adaptation of a translation appearing in an unpublished paper by Miss Emily Estes, "Maharashtra Folk Theatre," for Colorado University, December, 1970.

[41] V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 206.

On the twelfth anniversary of Bapurao's death, the noted Marathi dramatist P. K. Atre (now deceased) was moved to declare: "Bapurao was not a name but an inspiration."[42]

If one can speak of Bapurao's work as effecting a renaissance of Tamasha it is in the sense that he set a standard for the dholki-baari Tamasha form: an ordering of elements which has become accepted throughout the State. He also established standard use of the vag for dholki-baaris,[43] and he introduced female dancers to the Tamasha stage. When Tamasha revived as an art form in the mid-1950s, the leaders of the revival turned back to Bapurao's standards as a guide for excellence and devotion to the form.[44]

Twentieth Century

At the start of the twentieth century only one performing folk artist was known to have amassed considerable wealth from Tamasha performances. She was Kausalya Kopar Gaunkar, who could command trays of silver from village rulers.[45] But she was the exception to the rule at a time when most artists lived in poverty, victims of a cash economy which was then penetrating villages and cities alike. Money was rapidly replacing silver, food, and other gifts, as payment to the artists.

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[42] Atre's comments were carried in the Bombay daily Maratha, December 25, 1957.

[43] V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 157.

[44] Rajabhau Thitey, private interview, Poona, April 3, 1971.

[45] Vinayak Bhave, private interview, Bombay, November 10, 1970.

The turn of the century was also the time of the rise of a new professional class of entertainment contractors or impressarios. This development, while initially beneficial to the performers, soon degenerated into a new kind of exploitation of talent.

The decline in performance standards and in the economic fortunes of artists affected the sangeet-baaris most seriously, and not until the 1950s was any effort made to improve the situation, as we shall see in Chapter IV of this study. (But even these recent efforts were only token ones, notwithstanding the highly vocal demands of a handful of concerned intellectuals.)

The early twentieth century was not as harsh upon the dholki-baaris. The vag folk drama form, as improved by Patthe Bapurao, quickly became the core interest of dholki-baari entertainment. But, by 1930, the economic malaise had begun to affect these performers, and vag presentations became dull and routinized, lacking in social interest, or even in innovative storyline creations.[46]

But just when the fortunes of the troupes (collectively) and the performers (individually) appeared to reach their lowest point (about 1930), a new impulse was being fashioned among the shahirs which was to have important consequences for the future survival of the Tamasha form, as well as for its new directions. The impulse was to be found in the writings, compositions, and performances of such shahirs as Sunbe, Naniwadekar, Gavankar, Amar Shaikh, Annabhau Sathe, and Bhandare--all of them activists, and all concerned with

[46]Namdev Vatkar, op. cit., p. 21.

effecting social or political change in Maharashtra. This new strain of shahiri creation was to reach its most complete expression in the years immediately preceding Indian Independence, and it would influence a new generation of shahirs prominent in the post-Independence period, particularly Atmaram Patil, Shahir Sable, Shahir Pharande, Shahir Hinge, and other artists.[47]

The seeds of this new, socially conscious shahiri tradition were sewn somewhat earlier, in developments dating back to about 1870, when Jotirao Phule, founder of the non-Brahmin movement, turned to writing povadas in an effort to disseminate his reformist ideas. Phule's followers, the Truthseekers, continued to utilize the povada in preaching to the people. Shortly thereafter, Lokamanya Tilak, the father of anti-British resistance in Maharashtra, also turned to shahiri methods and styles of composition and performance when he created the Ganesh festival in 1893.[48]

Povada singers worked unceasingly in the late 1930s and through the 1940s in pursuit of an independent India. They sought ideals from the works of Tilak and Gandhi, and they brought these ideals to the people in small propaganda troupes, called kala-pathaks, or cultural squads. Some of the more commited shahirs were jailed for their anti-British propaganda work.

The Communist cause produced the most eloquent and persuasive team of shahirs. They performed individually at first and later

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[47] Rajabhao Thitey, "Shahiri Union," Shahir Naubat (March, 1970), pp. 35-37.

[48] See Chapter V for further details on the use made of Tamasha elements by the Truthseekers and by Tilak's movement.

joined together to create their own Tamasha troupe. The most prominent names in this connection were Gavankar, Shaikh, and Sathe, of whom more will be said in Chapter V of this study.

After Independence, other causes caught the attention and the talents of the committed shahirs. These causes included linguistic rights for Maharashtrians; the Free Goa movement; the 1962 Chinese invasion of India; and the Indo-Pakistan wars.

From a twentieth century perspective, it is possible to discern three kinds of shahiri compositions: (1) Povadas and loknatyas on political, social, and educational subjects, with revolutionary zeal and fervor; (2) Shiva-shakti compositions to glorify history and to propagandise the mythological base of Hindu society; and (3) Sensuous lavanis, performed by Tamasha troupes in villages and cities. Of the three types, the first appears to be in favor today as social awareness and the modernization process develop. Nevertheless, the Shiva-shakti shahirs are still surviving, singing povadas about Peshva times. As for the sensuous tradition, it languished over the years. Patthe Bapurao was the last shahir of sensuous Tamasha songs and dances.[49]

Today, the tradition has lost some of its romantic allure, possibly because literacy rates have increased in Maharashtra and more people are able to read about historical and news events, and also because radio is pervasive enough in the villages to bring effective coverage of local, regional, and national events and issues,

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[49] Atmaram Patil, op. cit., p. 80.

Moreover, film is now reaching ever-increasing segments of the rural population. Finally, some of the greatest of the modern shahirs are no more. Sathe, Shaikh, and most recently Gavankar, are now dead.

Increasingly, the dedicated shahir is being manipulated to serve government or party politics.[50] Often, he is ignored unless he happens to be working with a well-known troupe, or unless he runs his own troupe. As we shall see in Chapter III, Shahir Sable is one of the few socially committed artists left who still runs an independent troupe.

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[50]As a result of a growing sense of concern for the survival of the shahiri tradition, hundreds of shahirs pooled their efforts in 1969 to establish a Maharashtra Shahir Parishad (Association). The following year, a shahir's conference was held to inspire the shahirs who once inspired the people. (A list of 328 of these folk artists may be consulted in Appendix F of this study.)

CHAPTER III

THE STATE OF THE ART TODAY

The purpose of this chapter is to present views on the state of the folk form today in both the "raw" and loknatya Tamasha traditions.

Attention to the distinction between the two traditions was drawn in the Introduction to this study, and the features of both were elaborated in Chapter I, while Chapter II provided the historical and chronological line of development of Tamasha from its rural (raw) beginnings to the urban (sophisticated, or loknatya) strain. It was also observed that both traditions were still flourishing side by side throughout Maharashtra and that the "raw" Tamashas were appealing to the villages and to working-class audiences in the cities, while the "sophisticated" Tamashas were becoming increasingly popular as wholesome family entertainments not only among the urban middle classes, but also in the villages.

The present chapter introduces a further distinction which is required for an understanding of the state of the art today: the "raw" tradition is largely an oral one, which does not easily lend itself to study of content materials (except, possibly, for shahiri songs), and which is best understood by a study of the performers who perpetuate the tradition; while loknatya has already established

itself in its brief history as a literary tradition, based upon a steadily growing body of literature (script materials) which may be studied by the interested scholar or critic.[1]

Because of this additional distinguishing feature, the method adopted to explain the state of the form today will be as follows: (1) In the absence of a written tradition of "raw" Tamasha dramatic content materials (excluding collections of shahiri song compositions), we will examine the social and cultural setting of the "raw" performers as well as the conditions of "raw" performance today; (2) because loknatya provides a wealth of content materials, we will consider the contemporary themes and the aesthetic purposes of the most prominent living playwrights, as well as the growing critical receptivity of loknatya by the theatre critics of the large daily newspapers; and finally (3) we will make some reference to the most recent challenge to Tamasha--the challenge of film and television.

The Raw Tamasha Tradition Today

The strength of the oral tradition which nourishes "raw" Tamasha is best understood by some acquaintance with the social and cultural background of today's performers. For this reason, attention will be focused upon the Kolhatis and the Mahars, two of the untouchable communities linked to the early history of Tamasha.[2]

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[1] In addition to published scripts (some of which are listed in the Marathi section of the Bibliography), there are typewritten copies of more than 5000 vag scenarios and full scripts in the files of the Stage Performances Scrutiny Board in Bombay. A section on the Scrutiny Board is included in Chapter IV, infra.

[2] For the discussion which follows on the Kolhatis and Mahars, I am largely indebted to Vinayak Bhave, journalist and Tamasha enthusiast (private interviews, Bombay, November 10, 24, 1970). The information has been verified by Durga Bhagvat in private interviews in January, 1971.

Kolhati artists were among the first to be recruited into entertainment troupes for the amusement of the warring Moghul and Maratha armies during the seventeenth century; while the Mahars carried Tamasha from the military camps to the villages.[3]

The Kolhatis

The Kolhatis are a Maharashtrian aborigines caste. Kolha signifies either a bamboo stick or a jungle. Chati means locality or village. The meaning of the two words put together is "jungle colony." The word Kolhati originated in an area of northern Mysore State and Southern Maharashtra, overrun by jungle; it was therefore natural that people from this area should be called Kolhatis.

The caste may have descended from the Munda civilization, which had spread, by the second century A.D., through South India, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Cambodia. The Mundas mostly raised pigs, since they lacked horses and cows--a factor which apparently hindered their social and economic development in a Hindu vegetarian society. The branch which moved to the jungles of South Maharashtra became known as the Kolha-Mundas and they later split off into various communities. One of these moved to the coast and became fishermen.

Not being bound by the meat-eating taboos of the Hindus and Muslims, the Kolhatis ate pork as part of their regular diet. To this day, the Kolhatis of the South Maharashtrian regions raise pigs as a primary occupation, and many Kolhati Tamasha artists return to this work in the off-season.

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[3]Among other untouchable groups associated with the history of Tamasha are the Mangs, the Marathis, and the Bhillas.

The tribes of the Kolhatis had originally undertaken their migrations in search of arable land. It was a matter of survival. As a result, they became semi-nomads, living in make-shift huts on the outskirts of cities, towns, and villages. Here they raised their pigs, made combs from buffalo horns, and demonstrated their renowned gymnastic abilities. In time, the Kolhatis developed as village acrobats and soon they formed troupes of tight-rope walkers with singing and dancing accompaniment. Eventually, the men were recruited into the Tamasha troupes, as we have mentioned previously.

But girls of the tribe were reputed to be the better acrobats, and they, too, were permitted to join the Tamashas, mainly the sangeet-baaris, when the taboo against female performers was overcome in the nineteenth century. The Kolhati women, it seems, were free of the prevailing social taboos. (The Kolhatis are structured along matriarchal lines.)

There are two main sub-divisions of the caste: the Mali-Kolhatis, and the more numerous Bhathu-Kolhatis. The Mali-Kolhatis were the subject of close study by the socially concerned journalist, Vinayak Bhave. He worked among them from 1958-1962, and he estimates their number today at 12,000, and that of the Bhathu-Kolhatis at 50,000.[4]

There were twelve and a half clans in the Mali-Kolhati sub-caste. "The half clan," says Bhave, "is the lowest on the social scale, and their members are obliged to marry only within their own

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[4]These figures can only be regarded as estimates since the listing of population by caste has been omitted from Indian census tables since the 1930s.

group. Fortunately, this half clan numbers only forty. The others are more numerous, ranging from 400 to 700 members."

The position of women among the Kolhatis is of special interest. They predominate over their men in numerical ratio. Prevented by taboos from marrying outside the main caste division, and subject to certain restrictions on marriages between the clans within the caste division, ten per cent of the women will never have the opportunity to marry. As a result, they tend to have few moral constraints. Given the predominant matriarchal structure, a woman might have as many men as she wished. Of the ten per cent who will never marry, most become mistresses or prostitutes to escape the overwhelming poverty into which they are born.

The Mali-Kolhatis today inhabit the western region of Maharashtra, which came under the rule of Shivaji the Great after his armies defeated the Moghuls in the seventeenth century. In an effort to reform village society, Shivaji instituted stringent moral standards which did not tolerate pre-marital relationships or prostitution. Fines were levied upon relatives for transgressions and women were ostracized from the main group. If there were transgressions from within the caste grouping, forced marriage might end the difficulty.

However, Shivaji's rule did not extend to the eastern regions of Maharashtra, where the Muslim Nizam continued to rule independent of the Moghuls. The Kolhatis living in this region, therefore, were never subject to the new moral code. This group survives today as the Bhathu-Kolhati sub-caste.

Among this more numerous sub-caste, the rule prevails that a girl who becomes a singer or dancer cannot marry. Consequently, if a parent of three daughters can marry off at least two (considering that females outnumber males), he can send the third into the entertainment world, giving her the freedom to become a mistress or to earn extra money as a prostitute. There appears to be no moral difficulty here and ostracism does not apply.

For these reasons, prostitution is openly associated with the Tamasha troupes made up of Kolhatis coming from Eastern Maharashtra. The tradition is also the cause of much trouble in modern Tamasha entertainment because it brings into direct conflict the Malis and the Bhathus. The Bhathu-Kolhati performers are relatively wealthy. Daughters born of out-of-marriage liaisons receive good education and fine artistic training in singing and dancing. They, in turn, attract rich men from the cities and towns. By comparison, the Mali-Kolhatis, although nobler in moral outlook, are poorer in their pockets, according to Bhave. The majority still live in small huts. Among the women who cannot marry, most will become faithful mistresses in relationships bordering on common-law marriages. Unfortunately, the more faithful they are, the poorer they remain as a community. And the competition with their Bhathu fellow artists, in matters of performance, education, and style of living, is exceedingly fierce.

Bhave noted instances where members of both castes performed together on stage as part of the same troupe, but ate and lived apart. "It is not uncommon to see girls of both groups fighting each other

backstage," he declared, "yet during performances they work remarkably well together."

Bhathu-Mali rivalry has been exacerbated by the modern theatre impressarios who have been importing Bhathu troupes into South Maharashtra where formerly the Malis dominated the sangeet-baari circuit. It would seem that impressarios are interested in bigger and better turnouts at the box-office, and that the Bhathus might be expected to attract such turnouts in expectation of the extra element of sensual titillation.

The situation in Eastern Maharashtra remains the same: the Bhathus still dominate and the Malis are less popular because of their sense of moral constraint.

The city of Jalgaon is a particular strong-hold of the Bhathu-Kolhatis. At Tamasha performances, a certain convention has developed between the all-male audiences and the female members of the performing troupes. If a spectator is interested in one of the girls, he may put some money in a match-box, walk up to the stage and present it to her in a form of daulat-jadda.

The gesture, however, is more than the daulat-jadda previously described. The man wants the girl. If she accepts the match-box, it is as much as saying she is willing to meet him afterwards. The price will be fixed after the performance.

Confusion may follow if a Mali-Kolhati girl performs at Jalgaon, unaware of the local practice. Unwittingly, she may accept the proffered match-box, which could lead to embarrassed misunderstanding, perhaps to a heated argument with an expectant male spectator.

The Mahars

Another of the untouchable sub-caste communities which continues to replenish the ranks of Tamasha troupes, are the Mahars. Linked racially to the central Europeans, the Mahars are believed to be part of the ancient Naga Culture of jungle dwellers which was scattered following struggles with the conquering Aryans.[5]

After settling in Maharashtra, the Mahars engaged in agriculture, but they were soon subdued and driven from their lands by the Scythians sometime after 2000 B.C. Being intelligent, however, they quickly adapted to the new conditions and they assumed new occupations of a more servile nature--watchmen, errand-runners, and disposers of dead cattle. By the first century A.D. the Mahars had become the largest untouchable community in Maharashtra. Today, they number some five million and they are to be found in closed communities on the fringes of nearly every village in the State.

Their lives were circumscribed by many restrictions: Mahars were not permitted to learn to read and write, which effectively prevented them from participating in the upper-caste Sanskritic religious culture of orthodox Hinduism. As a result, they developed a unique culture with their own forms of religious practice and devotional and dramatic forms. These forms were the prototypes of components of the later Tamasha entertainments. Moreover, the Mahars, who worked as agricultural laborers, were noted for compositions of songs on harvest themes which were, in fact, the earliest lavanis.

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[5]Mr. Bhave's source is Dr. Iravati Karve's Anthropometric Measurements of Maharashtra (Poona: Deccan College, n.d.).

The dramatic form they evolved was the bharud which was, as mentioned in Chapter II, an improvised kind of farcical play based on characters in Hindu mythology. The dialogue was broken by songs, notably ballads, accompanied by instruments made by the Mahars themselves--the tuntuni and the tambourine-like daf. Villagers from the higher-castes might attend performances, but the performers were looked upon with disdain.

From the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the bharud was used by the Maharashtrian saints to overcome exploitation and injustices in the prevailing caste system; but it was secularized during the rule of Shivaji the Great, in the seventeenth century. The songs and dialogues now spoke of love and the glories of political and military power. Elements of these songs and dramas were quickly absorbed within the larger framework of Tamasha--the melting pot of a variety of rural art forms as well as of artists from various castes.

The Mahars moved Tamasha from the military camps to the villages when they formed their own village troupes. By the late nineteenth century, they had become widely known for their dholki-baaris and their repertoire of vags or folk dramas.

Playwright Vyankatesh Madgulkar describes how a typical Mahar Tamasha troupe functioned about the turn of this century:

> They took their story material from mythology and from fables, such as the Arabian Nights. From the basic plot structure they would improvise a whole vag. One of the troupe members served as the director, and he distributed roles according to his interpretation of the scenario. At night, returning from their work in the fields of Southern Maharashtra, they would pause at a resting house and rehearse their planned productions.[6]

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[6]Vyankatesh Madgulkar, playwright, private interview, Poona, January, 1971.

The Mangs

The Mangs represent still another untouchable community in Maharashtra associated with Tamasha. The Mangs are normally employed in such menial occupations as disposing of dead cattle and making rope. Curiously, they also do duty to the State by serving as hangmen for executions. Among the better-known Mang artists was the dramatist Aba Mangrulkar, grandfather of the more radical twentieth century Tamasha shahir--Annabhau Sathe.

The "Raw" Tamasha Artist

A generalized view of a "raw" Tamasha artist may be drawn from writer Shankarao Kharat's interview with a Tamasha dancer and singer of the Kolhati caste.[7]

A Tamasha girl is in the prime of her professional career between twenty-five and thirty years of age. During these years, her earning capacity is at its peak; her singing and dancing attract wide audiences among the young and rich men. On some nights, a man offering tips in daulat-jadda may ask to return to see her in the morning. There is little danger of her running off with a suitor, however, because she never forgets that she has the responsibility of supporting her family back home in her native village. The rationale is a traditional one in India: the parents have given her birth and she must therefore support them throughout her own

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[7]Shankarao Kharat, "Light at Night, Dark in the Morning," Stree, February, 1971, pp. 12-16, 89, 91. Kharat's description agrees substantially with the information I obtained in private unstructured interviews (Bombay, November, 1970), with two female artists, Lata Kolhapurkar and Jayashree Kolhapurkar.

life. And the overriding factor of poverty makes it unlikely she could ever look forward to any other future.

How much money would she send home? An average figure is set at eighty rupees ($10.66) from her monthly earnings, which range from 500 ($66.66) to 600 ($80.00) rupees, depending on how much of an audience attraction she is. This earning capacity is generally much higher than that of her male colleagues.[8] After sending eighty rupees home each month, the female artist will use the balance for self support--food, clothing, and entertainment. It is very unlikely that she will have much money left at the end of the month for personal savings.

A girl working alone in a troupe must count upon her fellow artists as her surrogate family, passed on to them by her own parents. The bond is strong enough so that she will accept the guidance and counsel of her colleagues.

Most artists lack any kind of formal education. Girls from the Kolhati caste have little opportunity to receive any kind of education because they would be sent to travel as child apprentices with touring sangeet-baari troupes. Travelling constantly, there would be no further possibility of gaining an education. On the other hand, they quickly learn their artistry, and most are expected to acquire that certain professional quality which marks the seasoned stage performer.

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[8] Radhu Mali, who was sixty-three years of age in 1970, and who is a veteran songadya of the "raw" Tamasha circuit, told me that his average monthly earnings range from 500 rupees ($66.66) to 550 rupees ($73.33). Private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

Few girls manage to escape from this nomadic existence. Some may find a boy from their own caste, marry, and leave the troupe, or remain with the troupe, depending upon the husband's wishes. Others, with fine voices, may excel and find rich opportunities in the recording business. But these are apparently rare cases. Marriage is the most unlikely possibility because, as previously noted, the Kolhatis have a high ratio of eligible girls to eligible boys, and the girls are forbidden to marry outside their caste.

Among the most famous Kolhati-dominated Tamasha troupes, according to Shankarao Kharat, are those of Gulab Sangmannarkar, Roshan Satarkar, Yashonda Waikar, Mathubai Indurikar, Changuna Jejurikar, Shanta Uralikar, Haunsa Paru Jejurikar, Leela Padma Talegaonkar, Hira Haunsa Saswadkar, Shevanta Jejurikar, and Chabu Shirvalkar.

General Observations on the "Raw" Artists

The reason untouchable castes have traditionally provided so many of the artists for Tamasha troupes has already been suggested: as landless and dispossessed people, they were free from taboos respected by the higher castes and higher economic classes. One of these taboos concerned public performances. Acting was frowned upon by the higher castes in spite of the fact that it was recognized as necessary for devotional processions, songs, and performances. It must be remembered that the higher castes had priests to perform their rites for them as well as classical singers and sophisticated dramatic performers to help them enact religious celebrations.

Centuries ago religious rites could be practiced only in Sanskrit. Use of the vernacular languages would have been considered vulgar.

But devotional expression was no less important among the lower castes using vernaculars. The untouchables filled this need using the Marathi language. In time, these untouchable performers were recruited into the growing Tamasha tradition.

It wasn't until a handful of Brahmin shahirs became involved in Tamasha, that the higher classes and castes began to take note of the form. Shahir Ram Joshi was the first of this small group, who broke his sacred Brahmin thread in the Peshva period. In the modern period the most prominent Brahmin to join in Tamasha entertainments was Patthe Bapurao, who became something of a folk hero to the "raw" artists, as well as a model for the development of the "sophisticated" loknatya tradition.

"Raw" Tamasha Theatres and the Impressarios

Only the wealthy, "sophisticated" Tamasha troupes can afford to pay the crippling costs of production on the major urban stages. An example is the production of Vasant Sabnis' Vichya Maji Puri Kara ("Fulfil My Desire.") The reasons for the high cost of production in urban centres stem from the fact that the theatre is dominated by purely business interests which cater to middle and upper class tastes in entertainment. On this scale of values, Tamasha--especially "raw" Tamasha--is very far down the list.

On the lower rungs of this list, notes Vinayak Bhave, another system prevails, mostly outside the Bombay-Poona region.

This is the impressario system which exploits available Tamasha talent.

There are contractors in different parts of the State who hire a number of troupes on a per-diem basis. They rent or purchase appropriate halls, theatres, or outdoor stages, for each performance. Some contractors may set up touring arrangements for a group of troupes covering a number of villages, towns, and cities. Rates of pay for the artists vary, and much depends on the popularity of troupes or individual artists.

There are three types of impressarios: (1) Those who hire city theatres on annual contracts; (2) those who handle tours and manage buses, tents, and bamboo gunnysack staging materials, and enclosures; and (3) the outstanding Tamasha troupes which not only manage and produce their own shows but hire other troupes by sub-contract in order to present more fully-rounded programs.[9]

The first type of impressario is found in the cities and larger towns. He may have under annual contract the Bombay Theatre (Bombay) or the theatres at Sholapur, Kolhapur or Sangli. (The New Hanuman Theatre at Bombay and the Aryabhushan theatre at Poona are run on a different basis, as I will shortly indicate, because the owners themselves hire troupes of their choice for short or long term contracts, and both theatres are used solely for Tamashas the year 'round. Most good troupes in the State will eventually find their way into both of these theatres.)

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[9]Vinayak Bhave, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

The touring contractor represents the second type of impressario, whose activities are limited to village festivals and the good-weather season. For the most part, these impressarios are wealthy peasants or businessmen. Their investments in Tamasha are short-term and normally very profitable arrangements, but the artists rarely share in these good fortunes. There are exceptions, however, notably Chatarsingh Thugaonkar and Anandrao Mahajan, who provide for some share of the profits with the artists. Another, is the Tamasha enthusiast and founder-member of the Maharashtra Tamasha Parishad (Association), Rajabhau Thitey, a journalist by profession.[10] Mr. Thitey's experience is mostly related to loknatya, but it will be related here to indicate the method of operation of the second type of impressario.

Since 1967, Thitey has contracted individual artists, organized into five troupes, for annual village festival tours. More than 250 performances were staged in this way. Thitey takes professional care of this sideline occupation. He contracts each artist separately for each programme, then handles all the production details from correspondence to rentals, payment, and even the nature of the productions themselves. "I choose the themes and the story-lines every year and then I ask the artists to organize the shows accordingly," Thitey told me.[11] He has also written more

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[10] Idem.

[11] Rajabhau Thitey, private interview, Poona, January, 1971.

elaborate story material for these troupes, including a scenario for the vag, Sakha Majha Mantri Zala ("My Lover Will Become Minister.")

Twelve years earlier, Thitey received a 500 rupee ($66.66) annual grant from the Government of Maharashtra to send troupes to participate in theatre competitions. He registered the name Sampada Theatres, Poona, after the name of his daughter, and rapidly developed this sideline to the point where he was managing forty troupes for a ten-day period each year, sending them to the September Ganapati festivals throughout the State. This smounted to 400 performances each year. At the height of his contracting work, he did 75,000 rupees ($10,000) worth of business (gross) annually, but retained only 1,000 rupees ($133) for his time and efforts. The balance of the costs charged to village councils per troupe per day, went to the artists.

The third type of Tamasha impressario is represented by some of the more renowned troupes themselves. Rates of payment vary, and only top artists in the sub-contracted troupes will be offered equal pay with the main contracting troupe. The main troupes in this category include those of Bapu Narayangaonkar and Dattoba Tambe. Other renowned troupes, which commonly hire lesser-known troupes to work with them are run by elder successful female artists. These include Kamla Johara Jalaonkar, Manjula Kolhapurkar and Kamla Chandanpurkar.[12]

Methods of payment for artists vary. A sangeet-baari is paid on a basis which is different from that for the dholki-baari.

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[12]Vinayak Bhave, loc. cit.

Normally, a sangeet-baari troupe, which features mostly singing and dancing, will have a minimum of five or six female singers and dancers as well as a male harmonium player, male tabla or dholki player, and one or more additional male instrumentalists, as well as the male jester, or songadya. For such a troupe, the leader (generally a woman), gets three shares of the troupe's income. She commands two shares for her singing and dancing and the third is acknowledged hers because she owns the musical instruments. The other girls will receive two shares each if they are professionally accomplished artists, or only one if they are apprentices. It is conceivable a girl may receive one-and-a-half shares if she is considered somewhere between apprentice and professional. Musicians and the songadya come last on the scale of payment, with one share apiece.

Shares for a sangeet-baari troupe are divided after deductions from gross income of such common expenditures as travel, food, and rent. This situation leaves artists totally dependant upon gifts of money (daulat-jadda) during performances. If a troupe is lucky it may make an extra fifteen to 100 rupees ($2.00-$13.33) per day in this way, depending upon the looks of the women and their talents.

A different system of payment is involved for the dholki-baaris, which are largely composed of loknatya artists. Artists are traditionally paid a fixed daily wage, in cash. A typical troupe will have from ten to fifteen performers, including the leader, who is generally a man. Among the actors are the star performer, the hero, the villain, the songadya and, of course, the beautiful heroine.

In addition, there are at least two singer-accompanists, a harmonium player, one or two dholki-players, a cymbal player, a tuntuni-player, and perhaps one or two other instrumentalists.

Payment to these artists will vary from 150 rupees ($20) per artist per day to just ten rupees ($1.33) each per day. If the troupe has been contracted for an entire season of touring, an artist may additionally receive one-way travel fare in advance of the tour. This would still oblige members to pay half their own travel costs. From the point of view of the contractor, a dholki-baari may collectively command daily payment of anywhere from fifty ($6.66) to 1,000 rupees ($133), depending upon the season, the place, and the calibre of the artists.

The "good" season for both contractor and artist is the winter, when fairs and religious festivals are held throughout the State and the contractor can be sure of nightly audiences totaling 5,000 to 10,000 people.

The uneveness of the financial structure in the lives of Tamasha artists, in both raw and loknatya troupes, the exploitation by unscrupulous impressarios, and the resulting inability of many performers to rise above the poverty line, are seen as major factors in the steady decline of the level of folk artistry from the turn of the century to recent times. The problems are compounded by the fact that the majority of Tamasha artists come initially from backward and economically deprived castes and classes. Few own land for private cultivation and, when off-season comes, most become victims of seasonal unemployment, except for the better troupes

which move to the cities. Since there is no security in the profession, artists and their families are forced to stretch earnings of months into a year. As we shall see in Chapter IV, the State Government and bodies of concerned private individuals have tried to introduce economic and social measures to build a healthy base for the continuation of Tamasha. Many of these efforts, according to Rajabhau Thitey, have proven to be "steps in the right direction, but the situation remains serious for the poorer troupes, and many of the deprived artists are obliged to accept menial physical labor during the off-season to augment their meagre income."[13] Others are driven to prostitution.

The New Hanuman Theatre is a typical "raw" Tamasha house. Details of its operation accurately reflect the operation of similar theatres in Poona, Kolhapur, Sholapur, Sangli and other urban centres throughout Maharashtra.[14]

In a normal one-year period, some fifty sangeet-baaris and a dozen dholki-baaris may appear at the New Hanuman. This would include 500 artists in the sangeet troupes and 300 in the dholki troupes, for a total of 800 artists.

The average contract lasts one month, although a handful of the best crowd-pleasing troupes may remain for as long as a year

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[13]Rajabhau Thitey, private interview, Poona, January, 1971.

[14]Madhukar Nerale, proprietor, New Hanuman Theatre, private interview, Bombay, May, 1971. Additional material qualifying Nerale's observations and comments was provided by Rajabhau Thitey, Vinayak Bhave, and the manager of Poona's Aryabhushan Theatre.

or more. Normally, there is a large turnover, especially among the dholki-baaris.

The four months of the monsoon are the most profitable for the indoor Tamasha houses. It is a time when most of the "raw" troupes end their village tours and the artists head for their homes; but the best of the troupes come to the cities and install themselves in the closed theatres. This is also a time of renewed public interest because it provides city folk with the opportunity to see the best troupes in performance.

Attendance figures at the New Hanuman reflect a situation which occurs in a number of other cities during monsoon time. The theatre has a capacity of 600 spectators. During May to September (the monsoon period), weekday attendance averages 300 and weekends attract a full house, plus standing-room crowds. This contrasts sharply with attendance figures from October to May, when average daily attendance is down to about fifty persons; 350 on weekends.

But for a theatre entrepreneur, the upturn at monsoon time is not sufficient to check the continuing decline in profits and overall attendance figures. The situation is true for all "raw" Tamasha theatres, and the pattern contrasts sharply with the record-breaking houses that are recorded whenever new loknatya Tamashas are presented in the larger and more respectable theatres.

The decline of urban working-class interest in "raw" Tamasha may be credited to significant changes in public taste over the years, based upon the spread of education and the proliferation and popularity of film. Unfortunately, most Tamasha artists have

been unable to adapt styles of presentation and content to the changing demands of audiences, and many languish in the economically depressed conditions described earlier in this chapter.

In this situation, the proprietor of the New Hanuman, Madhukar Nerale, finds that it is becoming increasingly unprofitable to continue operations. But being devoted to Tamasha, he remains confident that the "raw" Tamasha will revive and that he can personally contribute to such a revival.

Efforts to Revive Raw Tamasha

From a look at his record, this confidence may be justified: Nerale continues to produce at the New Hanuman in the face of unprofitable operations through the greater part of each year and in the belief that his example will be followed by other producers. In addition, he provides work to hundreds of artists, and helps them to exploit opportunities for making extra money, such as private performances (baithaks), in halls or in private homes.[15]

Moreover, when artists under contract to the New Hanuman are asked to perform at State Government festivals, Nerale does not insist on financial shares of earnings. (The New Hanuman and the theatre at Sholapur are apparently the only Tamasha houses which do not demand shares; other contracting theatres have been known to ask for as much as half the fees paid to artists by the Government for festival performances.) During the Ganapati and other religious

[15]Nerale claims he screens prospective clients for baithaks because he is concerned about the "moral welfare" of his artists.

festivals, however, the theatre itself may contract troupes out and earnings may be shared equally between performers and Nerale.

Other efforts made by the New Hanuman to improve "raw" Tamasha include personal encouragement of new Tamasha entertainments at additional financial risk. One of these ventures was Nerale's backing to Dadu Indurikar's Tamasha troupe for production in late 1970 of a new vag--Donkey's Marriage. After tryouts at the New Hanuman, the production began a successful tour of villages, towns and cities. By the summer of 1971, and after seven months of touring, Indurikar had completed more than 160 performances. (Success radically changed the fortunes of Indurikar, whose career was almost destroyed in 1970 when his van and tents were deliberately burnt during a village tour, because of some rivalries with other troupes. It was at this time that Nerale came to his aid.)

As a theatre owner and manager, Nerale is in a good position to offer suggestions for reviving the "raw" Tamasha tradition and helping the artists as well as the indoor theatres throughout the State. He advises State Government cultural agencies to stop pouring money into "folksy" festival productions of the old and established songs and vags, and to support, instead, new Tamasha entertainments, written, prepared, and produced by the artists themselves (in a manner not unlike, but with a freer hand than, the support given to Government-sponsored troupes engaged in propaganda for social development programs). In Nerale's view, the art form would then become "a more accurate reflection of the changing times and changing tastes of audiences."

The Loknatya Tradition Today

> The 'sophisticated' Tamashas--the loknatyas--this is for educated people. We know the actors and the writers are well paid. But it is not our theatre. We are poor people, and our theatre offers only low wages.[16]

The above view is a "raw" Tamasha artist's distinction between "raw" and "sophisticated" Tamashas. There is a sense of resigned bitterness in these words, which is echoed in the comments of another "raw" artist:

> We are poor people and without education. So our voice never reaches the ears of government in the way that the more sophisticated artists manage. So they get more assistance than us.[17]

The distinction is clearly drawn along economic lines.

But claims for the loknatya artist are no less important for a comprehensive appreciation of the entire Tamasha tradition. Chief among these claims is that the "sophisticated" artists have succeeded in refining and making more widely acceptable the entertainments of their rural, rustic counterparts.[18] In the process, they have created a growing body of literature which is to be valued for its own sake by literary critics, scholars, and theatre practitioners.

The "sophisticated" artists are not typically members of the untouchable communities; they may have been originally recruited from these communities, but today they represent a cross-section of

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[16]Jayashree Kolhapurkar, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

[17]Radhu Mali, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

[18]Vasant Bapat, private interview, Bombay, November, 1973.

all castes (Brahmin to untouchables) and all economic classes. This is particularly true of the playwrights.

From personal observations and comparisons of "raw" and "sophisticated" productions, it was evident that the performers in the latter tradition were more professionally appealing and graceful than their "raw" counterparts. This was particularly noticeable among the female dancers and singers.

Loknatya was brought to popularity among the urban populations through a small number of star performers. Patthe Bapurao is often mentioned as a convenient twentieth century starting point, but the place of Shahir Amar Shaikh in the development of loknatya is generally suppressed because he upheld a radical Communist position. Shaikh's position in the development of loknatya is, however, significant, as we shall see in Chapter V. His singing voice is reputed to have been so powerful that it inspired many hundreds of thousands of people, possibly millions, during his lifetime.

With Bapurao and Shaikh, the list of stars of loknatya includes songadyas Nilu Phule, Dadu Indurikar (who represents a cross between "raw" and "sophisticated"), Raja Mayekar, Dada Kondke,[19]

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[19] Nilu Phule's performance in a Poona production of Mirasdar's vag You Are My Beloved Myna Bird impressed me as a brilliant illustration of an ideal songadya. His offhand approach to his role invited strong audience participation through laughter and comments from the floor. He has also made Vyankatesh Madgulkar's 1958 production of the vag Chaos All Around into a classic vehicle for his own personal talents as a comic. Dadu Indurikar is known today throughout Maharashtra as a fine songadya-type comic, appealing to the rural populace as well as the urban working classes. I watched his vibrant performance of Donkey's Marriage at a crowded outdoor theatre in the working class community of Chembur, a suburb of Bombay. Raja Mayekar was Shahir Sable's best character actor until he left the troupe to form his own in 1968. Dada Kondke burst

and many others with large followings in the cities as well as the towns and larger villages. At the base of this pyramid-type structure of loknatya artists are the shahir-playwrights, who support the growing loknatya tradition with literary underpinning, as will be shown shortly.

But loknatya has an important relationship to its "raw" counterpart entertainment. In the view of Vinayak Bhave, loknatya can only continue to blossom in the modern urban manner for as long as the "raw" tradition continues to provide the vital, if bawdy, inspiration at village level. Should the traditional patterns of Maharashtrian rural society break up for any reason, the "sophisticated" Tamasha would be cut from its "life-giving roots," and become something other than Tamasha in form, possibly reflecting more completely an urban-centered, industrial-oriented society.[20]

The Contemporary Shahir-Playwrights

Early in the course of research for this study it became evident that any attempt to learn something of contemporary themes and issues in the Tamasha tradition would involve some acquaintance with the literature of loknatya, since the "raw" tradition, as mentioned previously, is largely oral and oriented toward song and dance and does not easily provide dramatic content materials for

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on the loknatya scene in the mid-1960s with Vasant Sabnis' stunning vag Fulfil My Desire. I have seen this production twice, and watched Kondke's film Songadya, and from the reaction of the middle-class audiences in attendance, I am able to understand the claim of critics that Kondke is the King of the sophisticated songadyas.

[20]Vinayak Bhave, private interview, Bombay, May 24, 1971.

study and criticism. Accordingly, a special study was made of the leading living playwrights, their scripts, and production history of their loknatyas. These authors, or shahir-playwrights, are: P. L. Deshpande, D. N. Gavankar (who died in 1971), Vyankatesh Madgulkar, D. M. Mirasdar, Shankar Patil, Shahir Sable, Vasant Sabnis and Vijay Tendulkar.

From materials and interviews gained in this special study, and from efforts to become familiar with scripts and actual productions of works by the writers listed, I was able to justify selection of Sable, Sabnis, and Tendulkar, for inclusion in this section on the Shahir-playwrights. Their experiences will be explored in relation to their personal artistic aims.

Sable's experience will help to explain the post-Independence directions of the form itself; Sabnis' work will offer an insight into the infusion of popular satire in Tamasha, particularly the lively and improvisational quality needed to make Tamasha serve as a medium of mass communication; and the experiments by Tendulkar will provide a sense of aesthetic perspective from which to view Tamasha in relation to the serious or non-Tamasha Marathi drama.

Shahir Sable

Born in 1924 in the rural Satara district, near Poona, Sable was influenced at an early age by the Tamasha troupes which toured extensively in the area. As a teenager he composed and performed his own songs, many of which became extremely popular.

During the freedom struggle in the 1940s, Sable developed his talents by writing anti-British and reformist povada ballads. At the time, he was still at school, where he was strongly influenced by the Maharashtrian social reformer Sane Guruji, from whom he acquired insights into the problems of the working classes. Out of this ferment came povadas about foreign exploitation of the Marathas.

After Independence, in 1947, the time for stirring nationalistic ballads seemed to have come to an end, and Sable was eager to bring humor and entertainment into his performances. By this time, he was a seasoned artist on the folk theatre trail. He began to write scripts and he formed his own dholki-baari Tamasha troupe.

Sable turned to the full range of Tamasha music, song, and drama because he believed it was what the people wanted and because he knew the form intimately enough to manipulate it for his own brand of social message. On tour with his troupe, his best assets were his own singing voice and his own songs.[21] This helped him through the early years. But with time, he began to see the virtues, particularly for city audiences, of adopting a flexible approach to production. From his Bombay and Poona experiences, where he had to play in indoor, air-conditioned theatres, he became aware that the outdoor Tamasha form was not always suitable in an urban setting. As a result, he adopted some of the features of the indoor stage--lighting, sets, makeup, and other technical conventions--in order

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[21] V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 178.

to compete on better terms with the established Marathi drama and its three-act offerings. He also kept his productions clear of obscenities in dialogue, song, and gesture in order to attract the more class-conscious urban theatre-goer. As a result of his innovations, the form was sufficiently altered to earn the description loknatya (people's theatre) and later, muktanatya (free-form drama).

Muktanatya is Sable's term for his own reformation of the Tamasha form. There were previous experiments, of course, including those of Shahir Amar Shaikh and Annabhau Sathe in the 1940s, after which the term "loknatya" came into vogue as a cover for the growing sophistication of the Tamasha form. But Sable's approach was designed less for propagandistic manipulation of Tamasha and more for widening the possibilities to gain audience interest and involvement.

His muktanatya pieces date from the late 1950s, and Yamarajyat Ek Ratra ("One Night in Hell"),[22] produced in 1959 and 1960, was one of his more successful efforts which played 250 performances in Bombay alone.

One Night in Hell ties up images of poverty and social injustice as applied to the Sub-Continent (including India and Pakistan). There are only two songs in the work, and no dances; it is all vag or folk drama. In the kingdom of Yama, the god of death, who rules a region one may call Hell, a wandering soul representing a freedom-fighter, killed by the British before Independence, asks for the latest news of his country from two Bombay sidewalk dwellers

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[22]For full-length English-language adaptation of One Night in Hell, see Appendix E.

(Raja and Kisan) recently brought bodily to Hell by mistake. The following sample of dialogue, using simple language; is full of gentle ironies:

FIFTH SOUL

. . . We've got our Independence. That's comforting. I can rest in peace now. (Pause) . . . You've come from my homeland. Please let me touch your feet.

RAJA

No-no. Not us. We're sinners.

FIFTH SOUL

That's all right. You've brought me the most wonderful news. That's enough for me. (He touches their feet.)

RAJA

Then take me for Hindustan and you can take him . . . Kisan . . . for Pakistan. Now, just look at the two of us.

FIFTH SOUL

Dreadful sight. You both look so weak.

RAJA

Yes. That's because I'm starving and he's hungry.

KISAN

Oh, how I wish I had been shot during the revolution. I would have preferred death to slavery at the hands of the selfish.

FIFTH SOUL

You can't mean that. If everybody believed this then who would be left to serve the nation?

RAJA

Oh, there are many. So many. The big-shots have already organized themselves to serve her. We applied, of course, but didn't have enough money for a deposit. Our submissions were torn up. That's how it is.

But the Fifth Soul has the last word in this brief encounter. His parting line to Kisan and Raja is: "Those who are after money alone cannot love their country."

The play is done in simple, rural language, for the broadest possible appeal. Essentially, it is a vag with swift give-and-take dialogue found in most vags; but unlike the traditional vag, it moves the subject-matter away from the concerns of mythological kings and court intrigues and into the dirty business of modern, poverty-striken existence. Not since the Communist-inspired vags of the 1940s had writers during the 1950s (with the exception of P. L. Deshpande, in his vag Wanted A Leader) turned to such social concerns of the poor and the oppressed.

One of Sable's earliest efforts as a folk dramatist was Bapacha Baap ("Father's Father"), which dates back to 1956. It shows the seeds of the ideas later incorporated in One Night in Hell. Brahma, the universal creator, comes to earth and finds corruption and exploitation everywhere, but because of hospitality shown him by a simple farmer, he decides to help the lot of all farmers and to return again to change the social system. The work had strong appeal to villagers.

In 1957, Sable came up with a new folk play, Nashib Phutka Sandhum Ghya ("Your Fortune's In Your Hands"), which deals with two would-be fortune-tellers on a Bombay street, who soon give up their phony profession for gainful employment. One of them, Raja, turns to the audience at the close of the play and addresses them directly, in a manner stylistically in keeping with the Tamasha approach:

> I don't have the heart to leave this little corner stand. But, my friend suggests we try something more productive. So I'm going. But do me one favor, will you? Please look after my shop. Oh, and keep this in mind. We may have been phony fortune-tellers, but we are good people at heart. I mean, we only joined the profession because we were desperate.

To this, Raja's friend adds a moral:

> Yes. You can look after his shop. But don't let it tempt you. Your fortune is in your own hands. There is so much power in your hands that you could move the stars in Heaven if you had to. You are the creators of your own destiny. So, don't show your palms to fortune-tellers.

With Aburaoche Lageen ("Aburao's Marriage") in 1963, Sable contrasted the quality of life of the city dweller and the villager. There are moral overtones, and a lament for dying traditional values, but the treatment is subtle and basically entertaining, and there are songs and dances included to keep the audience interested.

In an experimental departure from Tamasha tradition, Aburao's Marriage begins not with the traditional gan-gaulan but with a half hour of lively and popular lavanis and film songs. Sable's idea was to capture the full attention of the audience and to create a warm and secular relationship between performers and spectators. There was to be no easy and distracting play of Krishna and the milkmaids. The song-and-dance set is followed by an intermission. The main dramatic piece, or vag, opens the second half of the show.

But Aburao's Marriage is not yet the end of the show. There is a second intermission which is followed by the "third act" called a "farcial chore." It effectively replaces the gan-gaulan segment even if it comes at the end of the entertainment. Here,

Krishna and the gaulans romp about a little, but it becomes quickly apparent that the humor has a biting edge. Krishna is now an unlikely revolutionary figure who tries to organize the gaulans into unions. The message to the audience says simply that the people should unite their efforts in order to set India free from economic domination by outside exploiters. The message is mixed with singing and dancing, as I observed on two occasions--at a village production and at a production in Bombay.

In the same year, he wrote Gyanbacha Mekh ("Gyanba's Satire"), which looks at the simple life of a farmer who is gullible enough to believe that a schoolmaster can educate his donkey, Gyanba, and turn the animal into an educated human being. The moment of social truth comes at the close, when the donkey is brought back to the farmer, who beats the animal nearly to death out of frustration at not having succeeded in the plan. The donkey finally cries out:

> Don't beat me! I'm your Gyanba. Remember a man can become a donkey but a donkey can never become a man. You're uneducated and so you were blind to truth and you sent me to the master to be educated. Well, he locked me up for six months, but I always remained a donkey.

Saying this the animal dies, and in the deepened dramatic moment Sable sends home his message with forcefulness, feeling, and sympathy: The schoolmaster comes to the realization that the whole thing was his fault from the start, and he promises to devote all his energy to educate the village illiterates, beginning with the farmer.

Sable's most controversial work was Andhala Daltai, ("Blind Man Grinds"). It was first produced in August of 1966 and it closed after 100 performances in 1967, in Bombay.

The plot of Blind Man Grinds follows an ordinary and quite undramatic series of events and encounters involving a Marathi village patil who comes to Bombay and who is appalled by the extent to which Marathis are suffering from economic domination at the hands of migrants from other regions--notably from Gujarat and Madras.

But the theme also expressed the general aims of the newly-formed Shiva Sena political party. Sable became interested in the party when it was first shaping its "Maharashtra-first" policy. This was the early period of the Shiva Sena, before it moved to the extreme right of the political spectrum in Maharashtra.

Sable's interest was born of his desire to counteract efforts by the Communists to gain power in the State. Shiva Sena appeared as a valid alternative force on the State level, and Sable had been impressed by the manner in which the party had exposed the Moral Rearmament movement's inroads in India as an unwanted alien answer to the nation's problems.

Blind Man Grinds was a boost to the Shiva Sena, which gained much publicity and popularity. The party warmly supported and encouraged Sable's troupe in turn. Shortly afterward, however, the party made its first election bid at the polls on an extremist platform which repelled Sable. The shahir withdrew his play and his support.

Today, he is still unaligned to any political party, but he remains committed to many of the social and political reforms which may be found in the policies of any number of existing left-of-centre political groups.

In recent years, Sable has turned to other writers to build upon his innovations, and he has commissioned authors to carry out his vision. For a start he collaborated with playwright Vijay Tendulkar in a moderately successful production of Footpayaricha Samrat ("Emperor of the Footpath"), which ran for just sixty performances. Tendulkar's experience in the venture is described later in this chapter. The basic idea for the play--the confusion of reality and dream among the sidewalk dwellers of Bombay--was Sable's.

As late as 1971, Sable opened a brand new Tamasha production in collaboration with Sai Pranjpye, a writer who is originally from Maharashtra but who now makes her home in New Delhi. Critical reaction, however, was not very enthusiastic, as an informant reported in recent correspondence.

The shahir also has plans for the future. He has circulated a proposal to establish a permanent salaried mobile theatre troupe, complete with truck, folding stage, light and sound equipment. Assured production tours of twenty-five shows per month would quickly make the project self-sufficient.

Like all theatre producers, the shahir has to submit his scripts to the Stage Performances Scrutiny Board. It is a cumbersome process, but Sable agrees that some restrictions are necessary for the sake of decency. Open expression of obscenity, personal or religious bigotry, he told me, can only serve to inflame passions and create rifts among people. His own scripts consciously keep clear of direct reference to any social, political, or religious

dogmas; but like a true artist, he will hint, suggest, symbolize and otherwise communicate his point of view to audiences.

In his thirty years as an entertainer, Sable has covered all the cities and towns and the leading villages of Maharashtra. Altogether, he has produced nine new Tamashas, six of which he wrote himself. Each production, containing new and old elements, normally tours for a year or more through different regions of the State.

Most of Sable's male artists, as I learned at first hand, hold full-time jobs in railway shops, and all were dedicated to the causes of unionism and social equality.

His troupe is unique among the Tamasha communities in that it is the only active group remaining independent of institutional or governmental support which devotes all its production efforts to social and cultural improvement of people.[23] Before their deaths in the late 1960s, Annabhau Sathe and Shahir Amar Shaikh shared the same distinction with Sable's troupe.

Audiences at performances by Sable's troupe vary in size from 1,000 to as many as 20,000 a night. I attended one performance at a Bombay dock, and I estimated the attendance at 5,000, mostly dock workers and their families. Because the artists don't work full-time for Sable, all out-of-Bombay touring arrangements are restricted to weekend engagements and, occasionally, extended two-week tours during religious festivals.

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[23]Rajabhao Thitey, private interview, Bombay, December 29, 1970.

In an average year, Sable's troupe will run sixty to seventy performances of one production in closed auditoriums in the cities. In addition he will undertake forty to fifty open-air performances a year in villages and at outdoor mass labor rallies in the cities.[24] In the villages, performance arrangements and salaries are handled by village councils, as I observed personally during Sable's village production at Dhebewadi in December, 1970.

As for contractual arrangements, each female artist in the troupe is paid approximately 100 ($13.33) to 150 rupees ($20) for a show, while male artists receive twenty ($2.66) to fifty rupees ($6.66) per show, depending upon experience. The premium for female artists is high because they serve to attract audiences.

The troupe generally travels by public transport--train and bus. When touring villages for open-air performances, the only packing requirements are those for custumes and musical instruments.

Sable's troupe averages sixteen artists, including three females--a singer, a dancer, and an actress. On tour, this number might be reduced to a dozen.

The Shahir's purpose, after thirty years of professional work as a folk entertainer, may have lost some of its youthful zeal, but it remains his guiding principle: "to educate the masses, to raise the level of the social and political consciousness of our people so that we can build a better society."[25]

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[24]These figures were verified by Vinayak Bhave, Rajabhau Thitey, and officials of the Maharashtra Government Stage Performances Scrutiny Board.

[25]Shahir Sable, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

Vasant Sabnis

Vasant Sabnis is assistant director of publicity for the Maharashtra Government, where he edits a fortnightly publication on the arts. When I first interviewed him in November, 1970, he was forty-seven years of age. His interest in Tamasha, he told me, dates from his childhood:

> I came from Sangli district where there were many Tamasha performances. My father was very fond of Tamasha. He used to buy the records of lavani songs as soon as they were issued, although they were always kept from me. Secretly, of course, I managed to listen to them and they fascinated me. I think this is how I first became interested in Tamasha. As I grew older I attended performances as often as I could.
>
> For writing purposes, I found that the vag form is very flexible. Maybe it's because it is such a relaxed form of farce, giving much scope to the writer as well as the actor. In serious drama, both writer and actor are locked into a restricted form. You can't go outside it.[26]

Sabnis has written more than six plays in Tamasha folk-style, two of which have been produced. A third play, You Are My Landlord, was in rehearsal when I left India in 1971.

The first production was Khan Khanpur ("King of Khan Khanpur"). It covered the traditional elements from gan-gulan and farce, to the main vag in just over three hours. The social concern of the script was its pro-prohibition slant; however, this "message" was reserved for the closing ten minutes. Khan Khanpur was produced in Bombay in 1960 and it ran for 100 performances on outdoor stages in the city's parks. Sabnis' own verdict on this first venture: "popular, but not a commercial success."

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[26]Vasant Sabnis, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

If Khan Khanpur proved to be a questionable success, his Vichya Maji Puri Kara ("Fulfil My Desire"), which opened in 1965, was a popular success. It was still running after nearly 1,000 performances when I left India in July, 1971.[27] The author himself plays a brief role in performances at Bombay and Poona. (This segment is replaced by another when the production tours without Sabnis.)

Fulfil My Desire established Vasant Sabnis as a writer of note. It also made a star of the songadya-style character actor, Dada Kondke, who produced the work.

The work may be characterized as social satire. It is not direct propaganda. Its relevance is kept timely and fresh by the clever wit of Kondke who constantly changes references and events in the script.

The story-line of Fulfil My Desire is very thin, centering upon the troubles at the court of a mythical king. The problems are those of corruption, petty thievery, and nepotism. Conceived within the loose framework of the vag, there is much room for improvised humour and wit as well as for displays of singing and dancing.

A sense of its satire may be gathered from the opening lines of the vag:

KING

What is the condition of our Kingdom today?

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[27]An informant, returned from Maharashtra in September, 1973, noted that the run was still continuing.

GUARD

Everything is fine. No need to worry.

KING

Have there been any thefts lately?

GUARD

No thefts, only thieves stealing.

KING

Any murders?

GUARD

Generally no, but . . .

KING

What about the percentage of murders?

GUARD

Two-point-five.

KING

What?

GUARD

This is government language so that the people shouldn't understand.

Reaction to this sort of satire is very warm and I have seen audiences convulsed in laughter throughout most of the work on two occasions. I was told that Kondke keeps updating the dialogue as the troupe tours. Coming to a town or village, for example, he may seek out a local official to learn about social and political issues, some of which will be referred to in the production the same evening. The effect is often one of surprise and it can provoke hearty laughter and applause.

An instance of Kondke's technique may be given. The script calls for the recruitment of a Chief Minister whose only qualification is that he is brother-in-law to the Minister. The new Chief Minister is a simple man, a cow-herd, whose orders sound like those only a cow-herd might make. One night, Kondke learned that a retired policeman would be in the audience. At a lively moment in the production, Kondke stopped the performance, turned to the giggling spectators, then looked back at the actor playing the new Chief Minister and said: "Don't worry about them [the audience]. Go on with the act. There's probably some poor retired policemen out there in the audience." The audience reacted immediately with laughter and applause, as everyone turned to look at the retired policeman in their midst.[28]

On another occasion, Kondke learned of the presence of an ex-finance minister of the Maharashtrian Government. This information was used in a moment of improvised dialogue right at the beginning of the vag when the King asked the guard about the state of the Kingdom. Kondke, playing the guard, replied everything was fine except in matter, of finance, and he continued: "Since the departure of our former finance minister, the economy is crumbling. Otherwise, everything else is fine." Laughter, whistling, and long appaluse were reported to have followed the remark.[29]

Sabnis gives credit to Kondke for keeping Fulfil My Desire alive for so many years. Kondke has become independently wealthy as

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[28]Vasant Sabnis, loc. cit.

[29]Idem.

a direct result of the production. He is now a film producer. (Interestingly, he was originally a salesman who acted with a small Tamasha troupe on a part-time basis. It was this troupe which produced Sabnis' first Tamasha-type play, Khan Khanpur. Kondke later left the troupe and created his own to produce Fulfil My Desire. He has become known throughout the State as a sharp political observer and an activist. During previous elections he participated in politically-sponsored entertainments, a fact which explains his ability to comment so forcefully upon the complex nature of the existing political power structure.[30]

Sabnis has covered a number of social themes in Fulfil My Desire, and I should like to trace some of them by quoting from the script. On audience involvement, Sabnis makes adroit use of the prologue to cover dialogue between himself and Kondke. Here, in a display of wit, centered on the place of Tamasha in contemporary society, Sabnis and his star performer poke fun at each other, bringing the audience directly into their confidence:

PLAYWRIGHT (SABNIS)

(To KONDKE) Didn't you want a story for loknatya--for your modern Tamasha?

SHAHIR KONDKE[31]

Not just any story, but a powerful one.

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[30] Vinayak Bhave, private interview, Bombay, November 24, 1970.

[31] Kondke has adopted the title of Shahir in the honorific sense which is sometimes used for a troupe's leader.

PLAYWRIGHT

I have a powerful story.

SHAHIR KONDKE

What is it about?

PLAYWRIGHT

Well . . . it's all about this King, you see.

SHAHIR KONDKE

Ah! Just a minute. I forgot something. What's in it for me? You know, I've heard a lot about you educated people. They talk a lot but they never pay up.

PLAYWRIGHT

What's money? The people out there (points to audience) are the ones who have to be paid.

SHAHIR KONDKE

Those people?

PLAYWRIGHT

Sure. They've spent some of their precious time and money just to see you, and if you do a good dramatic piece, then you'll gain their applause. You do that and then I'll pay you. I'll give you my turban.

SHAHIR

All right. These people are mine and I am theirs. I've known them for a long time. (To PLAYWRIGHT) Now, you say you're ready to part with your turban? You want to hear them applaud? Well, that's easy. I'll just ask them. . . . (Moves towards audience, but PLAYWRIGHT pulls him back.)

PLAYWRIGHT

Wait a minute! You think applause comes from begging for it? That's not the way to gain fame and applause. You've got to earn it by your art. Do a good piece of drama and you'll get your applause. Then you can have my turban.

SHAHIR

Well . . . if it's my duty to perform, then it's up to them to applaud.

PLAYWRIGHT

You do your work properly and they'll do theirs.

SHAHIR

But what if they forget?

PLAYWRIGHT

These are Maharashtrians. They'll forget everything else, but not applause.

SHAHIR

Whatever you say. But why not do it my way? First you give me your turban. I keep it if they applaud. If not, you can have it back.

PLAYWRIGHT

No deal. You'll have to win it by your art.

Nepotism is frequently attacked in the play. An example is seen in the vag section of the script, after the King has been informed by his guard of the death of his Chief Minister. To assuage his grief, the King goes to his harem. The guard and one of his ministers are on stage. The guard is curious about who will be appointed new Chief Minister:

MINISTER

You just leave that to me.

GUARD

But according to seniority, it should be the Inspector.

MINISTER

That's none of your affairs. (To himself) Yes. My wife's brother. My wife's been pestering me for so long

to find a job for him. Yes. Until now, there were no vacancies. The time is ripe. With him as Chief Minister, and myself as Minister, we can just about do as we please. Yes. . . .

GUARD

(Pretending not to have heard these thoughts) I mean, I was just curious to know.

MINISTER

My brother-in-law!

GUARD

Your brother-in-law! But he's a cow-herd! What does he know about the affairs of state? (Turns to audience) I guess that's how it is today. Seniority counts for nothing. Only influence works. (He exits to inform the inspector.)

Another social theme is the collective power of the people. Thefts have been plaguing the Court and the King finally becomes aware of the extent of the problem when he finds his own bed has been stolen. He is speaking to his Inspector:

KING

Are you sure it's the Chief Minister who is guilty?

INSPECTOR

Positive!

KING

What proof have you?

INSPECTOR

My eyes are proof enough.

KING

What if you're wrong?

INSPECTOR

Then, my sword and your head. [Note: The INSPECTOR has no sword; the KING does.]

KING

(Surprised) Do you know what you're saying?

INSPECTOR

What I mean is I have no sword and so there's no balance in my speech.

KING

(Gives sword to INSPECTOR.) Here. Now speak properly.

(Suddenly INSPECTOR brandishes the sword in the threatening manner.)

KING

What's this! (Frightened)

INSPECTOR

(Holding the sword to KING's body) This is what happens when power is put in the hands of the people. This is a warning to you. Take care!

KING

(More relaxed) Fine! Fine! This is good advice.

INSPECTOR

And so, what I really meant to say . . . your sword and my head.

In the segment quoted above, there are political overtones which, I am told, are not lost upon audiences.

To mid-1973, nearly a million people had seen Fulfil My Desire, and it is perhaps valid to speak of a production of this type as a vehicle of mass communication--a vehicle in which social and political references may serve as a means for sharpening the spectator's awareness of his own political environment.

Sabnis believes there would have been little mass appeal to the production had he tried to work within the framework of serious drama. He told me he knew enough about the folk-theatre tradition to realize that only Tamasha could serve to reach the masses: "Because the form accepts a less sophisticated kind of dialogue and language, it is more easily understood, more accessible to the common man."

However, according to the "raw" Tamasha artists I interviewed, Fulfil My Desire is a sophisticated city loknatya which is beyond the level of understanding of peasants in the small villages.[32]

Vijay Tendulkar

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the more successful playwrights of the modern Marathi stage. His probing dramas, some purely experimental, have achieved wide critical acclaim. At forty-two years of age (in 1971), he had written more than fourteen plays, including several in Tamasha style.

Tendulkar turned to Tamasha in the early 1960s to gain technical liberty and freedom of expression in his writing. His concern at the time was to communicate more effectively with broader-based audiences, and Tamasha seemed to offer more elasticity than the more formal Marathi stage.

His first experiment using the Tamasha form was Sari Ga Sari ("Oh, Lovely Ornament"), which was produced in 1964 by the

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[32]Private interviews with Lata Kolhapurkar, Jayashree Kolhapurkar, and Radu Mali, Bombay, The New Hanuman Theatre, November 24, 1970.

amateur experimental arm of the Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha, or Bombay Marathi Literary Society. It was conceived in rural colloquial language patterns, but it touched on such social themes as middle-class strife in the large urban setting of Bombay.

The play begins with a traditional gan and gaulan. Hero of the gaulan segment is Mukunda, one of Krishna's many names. Mukunda and his friend Pendya encounter milkmaids, as might be expected, on their way to Mathura to sell their milk products. But from the start, Tendulkar exploits the situation to comment on the contemporary scene as may be seen in this innovative description by Pendya:

> Ours is a beggar-land.
> We run this land of beggars.
> We are ministers of the illegal distillers.
> We have many bad village leaders. . . .

The gaulan segment features other innovations such as sending the gaulans to the laundry and forcing them to eat in restaurants.

Tendulkar proceeded to write the gaulan characters into the vag part of his script and, in the process, he turned Pendya into a Western-style existentialist character. Mukunda, for his part, now becomes a sedate and satisfied member of the urban bourgeoisie.

The plot of the vag is introduced by Pendya, in traditional povada song-form. It deals with the growing madness of Mukunda's father and the obligation to sell an expensive ornament belonging to Mukunda's wife, Manda, in order to help pay for the father's hospitalization. In a series of intrigues, proceeds from the initial

sale change hands several times, soiling those who come into contact with the money.

The play gave Tendulkar the opportunity to test the technique of breaking down a built-up sense of stage realism in order to involve audiences directly. As we have shown in Chapter I, Tamasha provides an acceptable convention for such experimentation. Tendulkar was thus able to have his characters talk about getting ready to play a drama about a mad schoolmaster, and Pendya is also able to speak directly to the audience, telling spectators that the bare stage is now a house, that the place is Bombay, and that the characters are now in a certain room where the action is about to take place. The characters not only introduced their surroundings, they also introduced each other. Some characters were made to protest that they didn't like the roles cast for them; another calmed the protestors: "Don't take it so seriously. It's just a play."

According to Miss Bharati Marathe, who acted and danced in the original production, the satirical intent appeared overly heavy for the essential lightness of the Tamasha form, and the play was consequently not a popular success. Being an amateur effort, moreover, the production had not been sufficiently funded to permit a long run in large theatres and to support such a run with the required publicity and advertising.

It also seemed to Miss Marathe that the audience was not yet ready for the satirical view of Krishna who, to this day, requires sensual or erotic treatment.[33]

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[33]Bharate Marathe, private interview, Poona, February, 1971.

For Tendulkar, the experiment with Sari Ga Sari was an important stage in his development as a playwright. The effort to make the Tamasha form suit his aim of personal expression created many interesting problems for both author and performers. The script underwent many changes during rehearsal, in keeping with the desire to develop a feeling of spontaneity on stage. In Tendulkar's view, the sense of spontaneity wasn't there, even at production time, because the cast had been selected from among actors of the modern Marathi urban stage who lacked the informality and the improvisational talents of regular Tamasha folk artists:

> What resulted was a naturalistic three-dimensional approach to characters when we should have succeeded in capturing a flatter, two-dimensional sense. Technically, a good Tamasha requires over-acting, like a caricature when compared with a photograph. We were limited to a sophisticated level of acting.[34]

Tendulkar's second experiment with Tamasha was a script commissioned by Shahir Sable, Footpairicha Samrat, ("Emperor of the Footpath"), and produced by Sable's troupe with limited success in 1969. The plot deals with the miseries of the sidewalk dwellers of Bombay and the bitter humor drawn from their dreams of travelling to the moon. The Bombay run closed after sixty performances.

The idea for the work was Sable's and Tendulkar was asked to write the scenario and critical points of dialogue. The material was then supposed to serve as a base for improvisation and development of a more fully rounded and spontaneous production. This development, however, was minimal since the actors ended up by relying exclusively on the script.

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[34]Tendulkar, private interview, December, 1970.

While Tendulkar had high praise for Sable's talents as a singer and artist, he said the other members of the troupe were not up to the standards he had expected. The main character actor, Raja Mayekar, had recently quit the troupe and a realignment of talent had been taking place--all of which affected the production.

The experience served to harden Tendulkar's feelings about the suitability of Tamasha as an outlet for his own creative expression:

> I came to the conclusion that in Tamasha the script is really only a pretext, and that the whole entertainment depends more on the actors than on the writer.[35]

Having read two of his non-Tamasha scripts in English translation (mimeographed)--The Vultures, and Encounter in Umbugland--I find it easier to understand Tendulkar's early concern about suitability of existing forms for personal expression. His themes, which touch the roots of social misery and political injustice, are too strong and certainly much too deep for any superficial treatment bordering on entertainment.

But for all his disenchantment, the playwright made a third attempt at utilizing Tamasha. The result was Ashi Pakhare Yeti ("Birds Fly Here"), which was originally produced in 1970 and which was still running at Bombay and Poona theatres in mid-1971. In this play Tendulkar borrowed some of the stage conventions of Tamasha and ignored the form. The plot, revolving around a simple love story, becomes a vehicle permitting more experimentation with direct communication between performers and spectators. Having

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[35] Idem.

previously failed to invite spontaneous improvisation in his Tamashas, Tendulkar now overcomes the difficulty by scripting an improvisational quality. For this purpose, he borrowed the character of the songadya and clothed him as a main character linking plot elements, and creating a line of communication between the actors and the audience with his witty asides. The effect, when I saw a production in Poona, reminded me of the narrator used by Thornton Wilder in his play, Our Town.

After three encounters with Tamasha, Tendulkar has concluded that he can successfully blend some of the techniques and conventions of the form with his own brand of serious drama. Further experimentation would be limited, he believes: "Tamasha is essentially an entertainment medium and it can be used for direct and not very subtle propaganda because of its broad, cartoon-like approach to language, wit, and acting styles."

For the serious Marathi dramatist, Tamasha would therefore seem to offer only technical freedom. Tendulkar, for one, found the experience refreshing:

> The closed stage has been limited in recent years to box-sets and three-act formal dramas. This was strangling Marathi theatre. We had to return to our indigenous folk form, Tamasha, to break the hold.[36]

For an artist who is not really interested in propaganda but in "artistic exploitation of my ideas," breaking the hold is sufficient for the moment. Tendulkar has most recently turned, for

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[36] Idem.

new formal inspiration, to the Bhavai folk theatre of Gujarat which, in his view, combines entertainment value with dramatic intensity.

Critical Notes

An indication that Tamasha is being increasingly accepted on the urban middle class theatre scene is the readiness of newspapers to review city productions of the loknatyas. Reviews now appear regularly alongside critiques of serious drama, music, and other performing arts events.

Several illustrations will demonstrate the awareness by critics of the theatrical values of the basic Tamasha form and their relevance for the wider Maharashtrian community. The examples are taken from the Bombay editions of The Indian Express and the Times of India, selected during the period, May 12-May 22, 1971.

In a review of Vinayak Patil's Tamasha-style play, Chakkarrao Maze Nav ("My Name is Chakkarrao"), the drama critic of The Times of India (May 12, 1971), reveals a keen and incisive understanding of the problems involved in adapting the rural "raw" form to urban loknatya. Noting the author has dispensed with the traditional gan and gaulan, the reviewer writes:

> For some time now, the repartee between the milkmaids on the one hand and Lord Krishna and his accomplices on the other, which makes up a gaulan, has been falling flat owing to a distinct lack of barbed wit and satirical innovation. From this point of view, the above course (dispensing with the gaulan) seemed a safe way out, but it considerably detracted from the wholesomeness and satirical impact of the play. . . .

The critic goes on to complain that much of the first half was wasted in preliminaries and that "it took a long time for the

play to come to the point." The review continues its critical attack which presumes a sensitive appreciation of the basic Tamasha tradition:

> A court danseuse provides terpsichorean entertainment at the slightest pretext. This adds to the roster of non-hereditary Tamasha danseuses lively young Shashikala Rao who knows all the tantalizing tricks of the trade. Bal Dhamankar has tuned the songs attractively but they cry for a trained playback voice.
>
> Patil himself as the main farceur is quite smart but fails to relieve the longwindedness of the play. The king, played by Bhai Anand, added to the fun by adopting a rustic lingo ill-suited to his royal status.

A few days later, both English-language dailies published reviews of the Bombay revival of Vyankatesh Madgulkar's Pati Gele Ga Kathewadi ("My Husband's Gone to Kathewadi").

An appreciative view appeared in The Times of May 17, touching upon the plot, the excellence of the performing talent, and the predominant sentiments (rasas) that alternated "between the lyrically romantic and the farcically comical." The review perceptively made mention of the use of music based on classical ragas:

> (The) tunes . . . , are catchy and, indeed, suggest that with adequate innovation, this musical version can be further developed into a light opera.

The following day (May 18), the Express ran its own critique, which was little more than a perfunctory check-list of plot elements and actors. The most critical comment was a statement that the piece was "very fine entertainment." It was evident the reviewer was looking at the production from the perspective of the urban Marathi stage.

In its editions that same day (May 18), the Times ran a review of a new Tamasha which opened in Bombay. The work was

Sharad Niphadkar's Kasa Chorun Baghtoy Mela ("Look How the Scoundrel's Looking at Me").

The review opened with a general statement which indicated the critic's positive stand on Tamasha:

> The Tamasha is fast becoming a more and more versatile vehicle of satrical comedy in the Marathi Theatre. Its stylistic range was once again demonstrated by Sharad Niphadkar's Kasa Chorun Baghtoy Mela . . . .

It is worth quoting further from this review because it deals with innovations in the utilization of the Tamasha for urban audiences:

> The innovations were evident in the gaulan which followed the invocatory song. While the usual altercation between Krishna and the milkmaids wending their way to the Mathura bazaar (and chaperoned by an 'auntie' customarily played by a male farceur) was about to warm up, an alleged member of the audience rushed to the stage loudly complaining about the way the mythological Lord was being ridiculed.
>
> While answering these objections, the major farceur, Madhu Kadu, also defended the Tamasha genre against the charge of obscenity.
>
> The youthful escapades of Krishna themselves are open to an interpretation which borders on some good-humored ribaldry.

The review pays solicitous attention to all the new ideas and nuances observed in the performance: "A fine piece of mimicry was offered by Ravindra Vasaidar . . . , Kamal Kumari danced expertly to the lavanis. . . ."

The same critic attended another loknatya performance a few days later (May 22, 1971) and reported back cheerfully:

> There are many distinguishing features about Kala Kunj's loknatya . . . Mazya Jaalyaat Ghaylaay masa ["I Hooked Him"].

> First, it is penned by Sulochana Nalavade, its leading danseuse, and her wit and sense of slapstick are both developed as her stage expertise.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Sulochana's play was preceded not only by the invocation and the gaulan but also the batavani (a satirical skit) in which her own ingratiatingly spicy delivery of the dialogue caught one's attention immediately. Most Tamasha danseuses, on the other hand, are content with some dazzling pirouetting and ostensibly glamorous postures.

The critic goes on to review the acting talents in terms of regular dramatic fare and he concludes with enthusiastic praise for the production.

These reviews indicate that loknatya Tamashas are not rare events in the major urban centres and that they are being appreciated mostly on their own terms by the newspapers.[37]

The Challenge of Film and Television

Film has borrowed much from the appealing elements in Tamasha. The lavani song-and-dance form has been used for both Marathi and Hindi feature films, and other musical and dramatic elements have also found their way to the screen in transposed manner. The process appears to have upset many folk theatre purists who believe the trend represents the slow degradation and destruction of the live tradition.

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[37] I was told by an informant that the Marathi papers are also taking solicitous interest in the loknatyas. In fact, the coverage is broader and deals with both "raw" and "sophisticated" Tamashas. There is, moreover, a regular weekly column in the Bombay daily Sanja Maratha which is written by an anonymous journalist who writes under the pseudonym Sittivala, or Whistler.

Whatever the arguments surrounding the challenge posed by film, the fact is that the spirit of Tamasha is being extended through the medium of film to broader segments of the public. The first film made on a Tamasha theme was Jai Malhar ("Victory to the God Malhar"). When it was produced late in the 1950s it became a sensational box-office attraction in cinemas. The success of this venture set a trend which still continues to this day. Another early Tamasha-based film was Ram Joshi, a biographical account of the life of the famed shahir who repudiated his Brahmin heritage to become a Tamasha artist.

In 1967, Sangte Aika ("Listen, I'll Tell You"), ran for more than sixty-five consecutive weeks in Poona. It depicted a corrupt landlord who seduces a Tamasha artist. The woman is avenged by the child of their union. More recent film efforts using Tamasha themes and structural elements have been equally successful. Among the newer Marathi films (to 1971), were Mala Tumchi Mhana ("Call Me Yours"); Kela Ishara Jata Jata ("Beckoned While Going"), and Dada Kondke's zany production, Songadya.

Critics claim that the sophisticated artists and the film industry are emasculating the native Tamasha form to exploit it, destroying it in the process; but others directly involved in efforts to revive Tamasha believe the opposing viewpoint: that the onus has now been placed upon the traditional artist to perfect his art and that the folk art form is still a vital one because it is so deeply rooted in the Maharashtrian culture. The "exploitation" and borrowing by the film industry may in fact indicate something of the inherent

strength of Tamasha as a continuing source of stylistic and thematic inspiration.[38]

Since 1971, television has come to Maharashtra, and it is expected that the same process (tapping the sources of Maharashtrian folk entertainment), will continue in the coming years. But it is only in the long-term view--accepting the eventual proliferation and public saturation of both film and television outlets--that a serious challenge could be made to the continued functioning of the live Tamasha tradition. "The threat can be foreseen," believes Vinayak Bhave, "and the proper counter-measures can be taken by cultural authorities to protect the form."

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[38]Vinayak Bhave, private interview, Bombay, November 14, 1970.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICS OF TAMASHA[1]

The purpose of this chapter is to describe efforts by the Government of Maharashtra and by concerned non-governmental groups and private individuals to regulate and influence Tamasha in the period following the attainment of independence in India. The conflicts and rivalries produced by these efforts will also be examined for their underlying political significance.

The 1947 Ban

Shortly after the establishment of Indian Independence in 1947, Morarji Desai, Home Minister for Bombay State,[2] declared a Government ban upon Tamasha performances. The official reason given was to rid the region of the "filth" of Tamasha; but in reality, the ban had two aims: to destroy Communist access to the people's mass medium, and to eliminate the "raw" and vulgar elements in newly independent India now imbued with puritan zeal and a new sense of national identity.[3] Since the Communists in 1947 still posed a

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[1]The title is used in the double sense: the external political manipulation of Tamasha; and the internal "politiking" among Tamasha Association members.

[2]Bombay State was the former political subdivision which incorporated Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Mysore. See historical note on Maharashtra in Appendix J of this study.

[3]Vinayak Bhave, private interview, Bombay, December 18, 1970; and Durga Bhagvat, private interview, January, 1971.

threat to the power structure, Morarji may have simply tried to eliminate one of the sources of the threat.

The ban was an apparent blessing for Tamasha, and the lowest point in the fortunes of the folk form marked the beginning of regenerated Maharashtrian awareness of the value of its own indigenous medium of expression. In effect, the ban served as a rallying cry for a small group of middle-class intellectuals (some of them fresh from recent experiences with the Anti-British movement), who stood up for Tamasha in the face of the Government's action. One of the leaders of this Group was Marathi journalist Rajabhau Thitey, of Poona. The private citizens' campaign made some partial successes after vigorous representations to the Government, and the ban was lifted, subject to certain conditions: censorship of scripts, payment of a production tax, and issuance of permits for performances.[4]

Marathi Tamasha Parishad (Association)

The campaign didn't end there. Thitey and his group continued to work for the creation of a state-wide organization which would recognize and promote the art of Tamasha and support its practitioners. Such an organization would be capable of lobbying for better conditions from the institutions of society and from the Government itself. Thitey explained to me precisely what he wanted at the time:

> My aim was to rekindle the flame of Tamasha by means of annual conferences. The decline in standards had gone so far

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[4]Durga Bhagvat, loc. cit.

> that there was a need to raise levels everywhere and even to offer demonstration and training of methods and techniques of performance to many of the practicing performers.[5]

In 1955, such an organization was established with the help of Thitey, sociologist-anthropologist Durga Bhagvat, journalist Vinayak Bhave, politician Balasaheb Gore, Tamasha patron Ahmed Shet Tambe, and others. The organization they helped to create was called Maharashtra Tamasha Parishad (Association).

Almost before it became operational, a political power-struggle ensued for control of the Parishad. In 1956, a splinter group of the Bombay faction tried to destroy the original association and take over its membership. The new group was called Mumbai Tamasha Parishad and it was the brainchild of Balasaheb Desai, ostensibly on behalf of the Congress Party, for political gain.[6]

The attempted split occurred because of political opposition to the seating of Shahir Amar Shaikh on the governing committee of the Parishad. The ground for opposition was that Shaikh was a Communist.

The Bombay splinter group couldn't break the Parishad, however, and it soon became disoriented. In 1959, it rejoined the Poona-based association, which changed its own name to Marathi Tamasha Parishad in a gesture of compromise.

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[5]Rajabhau Thitey, Journalist, private interview, Poona, January, 1971.

[6]Idem. Balasaheb Desai stood to profit personally from the split, in his capacity as contractor for one of the theatres, according to Thitey.

In assessing the usefulness of the Marathi Tamasha Parishad and its effect upon the Tamasha profession and the State Government, it is important to look back at the early history of the Parishad-Government dialogue.

When the first Parishad conference opened in 1955, most Tamasha troupes were in pitiful financial shape. Those which managed to survive the 1947 ban were subsequently harassed with taxes and oppressive licensing regulations. Living and working conditions were intolerable, and prostitution exacted a high toll in venereal disease among the woman artists.[7]

Poona's Aryabhushan Theatre was the site of the first conference and some 300 Tamasha representatives turned up from all over the State. Presiding over the event was a Poona Congress Party leader, Keshavrao Jedhe. There were also other political leaders, social leaders, journalists, and "educated women" in attendance, according to one of the reports in the Poona daily Sakal.[8] Improvement of Tamasha was the main issue.

All the guest speakers referred to the key-note theme, which was the need to convince the Government to stop harassing the Tamasha troupes with harsh regulations. Subsidiary themes included the reconsideration of the place of Tamasha among village illiterates and the backward classes; a new look at how cinema was influencing

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[7]In an unpublished survey conducted in 1959 by Durga Bhagvat, forty per cent of the female artists interviewed were suffering from venereal diseases. (From Rajabhau Thitey, private interview, January, 1971.)

[8]Sakal (Poona), June 26, 1955, Entertainment Section.

the traditional forms of mass entertainment; and a plea to the Government to give added support to Tamasha by promoting its use as a medium of development propaganda. Final recommendations urged the Parishad to place the plight of Tamasha directly before the Government.

The event received excellent coverage in most of the daily and weekly newspapers in both Marathi and English.[9] This publicity helped to generate public reappraisal of the place of Tamasha in society. The Government responded by establishing a Stage Performances Scrutiny Board to regulate Tamasha more effectively.

But the drive to further improve the lot of artists, collectively and individually, continued. A second conference of the Parishad was held in July, 1956, presided over by the humorist and playwright P. L. Deshpande, whose keynote address was aimed at overcoming middle-class hostility to the "vigorous" form of Tamasha and at promoting active support for the artists. The momentum was carried over with renewed energy to the third conference in August, 1957. This time, the scholar Durga Bhagvat was honored for her devoted efforts on behalf of Tamasha, and she was named president for the event. A set of resolutions emerged at the close, and they are worth quoting to indicate the state of the art in 1957, and the hopes of the profession for the future, particularly the call for Government help and understanding:

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[9]Newspapers consulted in English and Marathi (in translation), and specific dates of publication, are listed in the bibliography section of this study.

1. All shows should be tax free, because Tamasha is Maharashtra's indigenous entertainment form. It should be uplifted to the status it once enjoyed.

2. A license for a troupe should be valid for all districts and it should be paid for once only.

3. The Government's midnight closing hour for all entertainments hampers Tamasha troupes in the villages, where programs begin as late as 10 p.m. The closing hour should therefore be extended to 2 a.m., and this should be noted in troupe licenses.

4. A tax of one rupee (7.5 cents) per day per show should be taken.

5. Bombay Government should have Tamasha competitions and modest prizes should be awarded.

6. Old lavanis should be broadcast by radio centres at Bombay, Poona, and Nagpur.

7. Selections by the sangeet-baaris are no longer those of Tamasha song traditions. Film songs and popular bhajans are often sung today, and this is changing the public view of Tamasha. The Government should see that pure lavanis are sung.

8. In Poona, Bombay and Sholapur, theatres are graded in a manner which discriminates against the 'B' and 'C' category theatres. By this grading system, the Tamasha form has suffered further setbacks of a business nature. The Government should not disfavor the 'B' and 'C' grades.

9. We note that Tamasha lavanis and vags are now scrutinized and that stamps of approval are given by the Government's Tamasha Improvement Committee. We suggest that at least one person from Tamasha be named to this committee.[10]

With internal dissentions, a breakaway faction in Bombay, and little real perceived improvement among the poorer segments of the Tamasha communities, the succeeding Parishad conferences lost their initial zeal. They soon developed into convenient gathering

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[10]"Third Maharashtra Tamasha Conference," Mauj (Bombay), August 24, 1957, page unknown.

places for theatre contractors, for the better troupes seeking new work contracts, and for politicians seeking support from troupes in exchange for offers of contracts at election time. Nevertheless, the concerned guest speakers at these events continued to call for further understanding and support of the art and of the practitioners of Tamasha. Some studies were also launched to improve the existing knowledge about the real needs of Tamasha. Miss Bhagvat, for example, was encouraged to do a research project in 1958 involving interviews with some 2,000 Tamasha artists. Although the data, gathered in 1959, was never processed, Miss Bhagvat was still able to conclude that living conditions for artists were generally dreadful, that family life was practically non-existent for itinerant troupe members, and that children travelling with troupes were unable to identify their parents.[11]

Another study, which was never edited or published, was sponsored in 1964 by the Parishad. It was to have been a "who's who" in Tamasha, based on a collection of life sketches of 400 artists.

Government Responses to the Parishad Challenge

But for the most part, effective action involving Tamasha was left by the Parishad to the Government. Responding to the resolutions of the 1957 Parishad, the Government lifted the prohibitive entertainment tax from box offices, enabling artists to share in more of the gate receipts. Permission was also granted Tamasha artists to

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[11]Durga Bhagvat, private interview, Bombay, January, 1971; also Rajabhau Thitey, private interview, January, 1971.

claim certain priorities as regular artists in matters of housing and food rations.

More direct financial aid was made available by the State Publicity Directorate for propaganda tours of villages in support of development programs. Finally, the Cultural Department began to provide aid on an increasing scale in support of annual Mahotsavas (festivals) which bring together leading sangeet-baaris and dholki-baaris for week-long public displays of Tamasha talent.

According to Rajaram Humane, Cultural Affairs Director for the State Government, the Mahotsava was created to build the popularity of Tamasha among urban and educated classes. The intended effect, he told me, was to increase the measure of social status of the artists in the eyes of the urban middle-classes.

Mr. Humane was also developing plans to establish training camps for young Tamasha apprentices. The training would cover costuming, singing, dancing, and instructional work. (The camps were to have been operative by 1974.)

On the more repressive side, however, the Government in 1958 decreed: that female artists could no longer sit outside Tamasha theatres as live advertisements to their professional entertainments; that vulgarity in dialogue, song, and gesture was not to be tolerated; and that money offered in daulat-jadda could not touch the hands of singers and dancers.[12] (The Government had previously legislated limits to daulat-jadda.)

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[12] V. K. Joshi, op. cit., p. 184.

The 1971 Marathi Tamasha Parishad

Because of the changed political picture in India following the March 1971 national elections, and the electoral sweep by Indira Gandhi's New Congress Party, a new political balance was required in the ranks of Tamasha. In the light of political developments, it will be useful for me to report on the May, 1971 Marathi Tamasha Parishad, which I attended in Poona.[13]

On the surface, it was a happy occasion. Advance public excitement was generated by newspaper announcements and much public entertainment was featured to please the public. The best of the "raw" Tamasha troupes from the Poona region, and from Sholapur, Kolhapur, and Belgaum, were on hand. In all, there were twenty dholki-baaris and fourteen sangeet-baaris, with a complement of 1,200 artists. For a full week there were nightly open-air performances on a temporary stage in Poona's Nehru Memorial Stadium. Organizers reported total attendance at more than 50,000 people.

The official program, which lasted three days, featured speeches by film stars, writers, and State Government political leaders. Thousands applauded veteran film actor of the Hindi screen, Raj Kapoor, when he said that real and meaningful art could only come out of the life of the people, whereas the cinema produced art of an artificial variety because cinema actors were so far removed from the people. Tamasha artists, Kapoor insisted, were fortunately

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[13]Material for the section on the 1971 Parishad conference was gathered from personal observation, private interviews with organizers, participants, and guest speakers, and from English-language newspaper reports of the conference, notably the Poona Herald, Poona Daily News, Times of India, and Indian Express.

rooted in this life of the people. He recalled how swiftly the Government ban on Tamasha was lifted in 1948. It didn't work, he said, because no government could afford to ban a people's art.

Marathi humorist, P. L. Deshpande took up his favorite theme, and in an impassioned speech reminiscent of his appearances at previous Parishad meetings, he scolded large segments of the middle-classes for ignoring Tamasha. Defending the "vigorous" and lively art form, Deshpande urged Tamasha artists to shed their traditional feelings of social inferiority because they were endowed with the gift of "divine" art, and as such they were the equals of the more prominent Marathi artists and musicians.

In an attempt to draw the interests of women to an understanding and appreciation of the art form, one of the better known Marathi film stars, Jayashree Gadkar, reiterated Raj Kapoor's view that Tamasha performers were the truly genuine artists of Maharashtra. She advised the dancers in particular not to give up their traditional dress, especially the original nine-yard sari.

The luminaries of the entertainment world were followed by the social and political leaders, some of whom called for social and economic reform in the lives of the Tamasha artists. There were familiar references to the need for according social recognition and status to the artists, and resolutions were proclaimed demanding increased Government economic aid in the form of co-operative housing schemes, decent earnings, educational and training facilities, establishment of more Tamasha theatres in Poona and Bombay, and appointment of a State "Tamasha Officer."

Meetings and speeches continued by day and performances were held at night. On several occasions, evening entertainments started at 9 p.m., and continued until four o'clock the following morning.

The casual observer, however, would have been surprised to learn that this 1971 Marathi Tamasha Parishad featured a dramatic play-within-a-play, and that the entire proceedings were filled with bitter arguments and denunciations. The bitterness led to a new split with the Bombay group, which proceeded to set up a new and parallel organization reminiscent of the 1956 aborted split by the Bombay faction.

The present trouble centered around control of the Marathi Tamasha Parishad organization by officials of the New Congress party. Politics, we have noted, played a role in this organization since its beginnings when attempts to bring Shahir Amar Shaikh into the Parishad committee were thwarted by the Old Congress party; and politics were still at work in 1971 as seen in attempts to gain favor with the artists and troupes. The results of this lobbying activity are seen at election time when Tamasha troupes return favors by doing propaganda work.

The 1971 Parishad showed the same political concerns. As a result of the New Congress election sweep on the national level, its position on local and State levels was considerably enhanced and leaders moved swiftly to gain control of the Tamasha Parishad. They clearly succeeded, according to my informants.

One of the factors in favor of New Congress was the lack-lustre performance of the Parishad in recent years. Parishads have

come and gone and, with them, annual grants of 5,000 rupees ($666.66) for the organization; but for the most part, nothing dramatically positive had developed to help the lot of the Tamasha artists. From a strong beginning in 1955, 1956, and 1957, when the Government was pressured into taking positive measures, the organization had languished aimlessly. The 1971 Parishad provided a good opening for the New Congress Party to woo the Tamasha profession, with an obvious eye on the 1972 State elections.

While the Party was busy wooing the Tamasha artists, the new Bombay group, representing several hundred artists, struck a counter-blow by boycotting the May event and setting up its own organization. The leader of the new movement was Madhu Nerale, proprietor of Bombay's New Hanuman Theatre, referred to previously in this study. He held the belief, current in Bombay, that political motives were behind the activities of the Poona-based organization, and that little or nothing would be done to help the artists. He was, moreover, persuaded that the organization had lost touch with the individual artists to such an extent that many were indifferent to it. Figures on the 1971 Parishad conference supported Nerale: of the hundreds of troupes in the State, only fourteen sangeet-baaris and twenty dholki-baaris turned up for the conference in Poona. Only one troupe from the Bombay region attended, representing ten artists out of some 250 who worked more or less permanently in Bombay.

Nerale said the disaffection stemmed from the fact that the Parishad had, in recent years, failed to come to grips with the problems of the Tamasha professionals. Many troupes still had

difficulties in obtaining performing licenses, economic conditions were still pitiful for the majority of the artists, and the social and cultural positions of the artists in society had not advanced in the way that was promised over the years by guest speakers sent from various State Government ministries. In Nerale's view, blame for the situation is largely attributable to the fact that politicians had been in effective control of the Marathi Tamasha Parishad since the late 1950s. Nerale claimed, moreover, that people who had nothing to do with Tamasha could not hope to run an effective organization in the interests of the artists.

Nerale's concerns were echoed even in official quarters: in recent years, the Maharashtra Government's Ministry of Culture had been deliberately by-passing the Parishad in supplying aid directly to artists. The Tamasha Improvement Committee annually sponsored a Tamasha festival (a Mahotsava), costing some 75,000 rupees ($11,000). Greedy for more power, the politicians behind the Parishad had been making overtures to the Government to take over control of the annual festival. In the face of a refusal by the Ministry of Culture, the Parishad itself boycotted the Tamasha Mahotsava held in Bombay early in March, 1971. In a counter-move, the Maharashtra Government suspended further grants to the Parishad which amounted to 5,000 rupees ($666) each year.

Nerale drew the conclusion from this rivalry that a discredited part of the New Congress Party was trying to use the Parishad to further its influence and power.

Nerale's new organization was designed for the artists. It was to be run by them and it was to be devoted to solving their own problems.

Before I left India (July, 1971), some of the finest artists, troupes and influencial writers had joined the new group. Among them was Shahir Bapurao Punekar, leader of his own troupe and author of many vags.

The politics of Tamasha must not, however, blind us to the real gains made for Tamasha by the successive Parishad conferences and an ever-attentive State Government. The lot of many of the artists has improved considerably and, according to Thitey,[14] as many as eighty dholki-baaris have by now each amassed floating capital of roughly 100,000 rupees ($13,333) along with touring vehicles, tents, and lighting and electrical equipment.

Radhabai Budgaonkar and her troupe, for example, are worth between 300,000 rupees ($39,999) to 400,000 rupees ($53,333), including vehicle and tent. Thitey also estimated that the troupe of Shondi Kondi Patel, of Jalgaon, was worth about the same.

Before the Parishad came into being in 1955, very few troupes were prospering and a typical Tamasha artist would be lucky to earn a rupee a day. Today the majority of Tamasha artists can count on a minimum daily earning capacity of twenty rupees during the good weather season. It represents a modest income, providing the basic necessities of living and a little extra for family support.

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[14]Rajabhau Thitey, private interview, March, 1971.

The Parishad was also directly responsible for having pressured the Government into action. In addition to the legislation and assistance reported above, there are now annual pensions of 4,500 rupees ($600), to elderly retired artists, as well as:

> . . . travel concessions for troupes, grants for talented artists and funds for Tamasha co-operative institutions [mainly housing]. Classes for Tamasha aspirants are also held.[15]

The Government also appointed a literary collection committee under the chairmanship of the folk-art scholar, Sarojini Babar,[16] with a view to preparing published collections of Tamasha songs.

Stage Performances Scrutiny Board

The Government's Scrutiny Board was established in 1955 to censor Tamasha as a medium for radical propaganda and to curb the extremes of lewdness and coarseness found among many of the "raw" troupes. The Board's original concern was for Tamasha, but by 1960, the censorship net was extended to cover all stage performances, including serious (non-Tamasha) Marathi drama productions.

Rules of the Board deal with licensing and controlling places of public amusement (other than cinemas), and with public performances.[17] They provide for the right of the Government to rule on the suitability

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[15]Emily Estes, "Maharashtra Folk Theatre," unpublished paper for Colorado State University, December, 1970, p. 25.

[16]Miss Babar has most recently authored a short Marathi pamphlet, Tamasha, published by Anand Press (Poona: 1971). The work is brief and insubstantial, but it is essentially meant to explain the "low-class" Tamasha form to overcome middle-class disdain.

[17]Rules of the Stage Performances Scrutiny Board, Government of Maharashtra (Bombay), 1960. (Mimeographed) See typewritten copy in Appendix G to this study.

of all new entertainments. The producer of a Tamasha troupe is obliged to submit two forms, along with a basic script or scenario of his new production. One of these is Form "I", the application for "the grant of a Certificate of Suitability." It must be submitted two months before date of first performance. A second form, "J", is returned to the producer as certification of suitability. Between the first submission and the final receipt of his certificate, a producer may have to arrange with his authors for modifications, according to the decision of the Board.

The power to refuse a certificate is set out in great detail and it may cover any material which may be interpreted as being:

> . . . against the interests of the Sovereignty and integrity of India, or the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or involves contempt of court or is likely to involve the commission of any offence or involves defamation of any high personality (living or deceased) or of any person (living or deceased) of repute in the literary, social or political field or is grossly indecent, scurrilous or obscene or is intended for blackmail.[18]

The guiding principles of the Board are based on the preservation of moral standards and the prevailing laws.

Defending the Board's work is its secretary, M. P. Shirshat. He told me that in the five years he has worked for the Board only "some scripts and a few plot outlines" had been rejected, mainly on grounds of "indecent language."[19] In such cases, the Board either deletes objectionable portions or rejects the scripts entirely.

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[18] Ibid., Chapter XII, Rule 139.

[19] M. P. Shirshat, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

Rejection of Tamasha (mostly loknatya) scripts was becoming increasingly rare, Shirshat said; however serious Marathi drama was causing some concern. I learned that in 1967 the Board rejected Pratap Sharma's A Touch of Brightness, which portrayed the lives of prostitutes imprisoned in cages. (The cages exist in real life, and they are regarded as a Bombay tourist sight.) The Board found the play obscure from the point of view of staging, but the language was considered direct and offensive. "You see," remarked Shirshat, "we have to visualize the scripts at the same time as we examine the text." (Sharma has since filed a suit against the Board.)

After sitting in on a regular meeting of the Scrutiny Board at its Bombay offices, I was impressed with the relaxed manner in which the scrutinization process was conducted. Each session brings together a dozen experts from different sectors of society and each producer is asked to appear before the group to defend and otherwise discuss his proposed entertainment. It is a cumbersome process, but as the Board chairman C. P. Godsay remarked, it was the only way to comply with the Government's regulations. Godsay, incidentally, is an official of the Bank of India.

In the past, however, the regulations were observed with much greater care. I am told that in the 1950s Sarojini Babar used her position as member of the Scrutiny Board to censor performances of classic lavanis so that the underlying sexuality could be cleaned up and made respectable. The only public dissenting voice on the matter was that of another woman--Durga Bhagvat.[20]

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[20]Vijay Tendulkar, private interview, Bombay, December, 1970; Durga Bhagvat, private interview, Bombay, January, 1971.

Although a less prurient view has now seemingly emerged at the Scrutiny Board, the effects of tampering by censors may still be seen, and productions often display a diluted appearance. And where excessive Scrutiny Board interference may have been discontinued, many troupes have themselves taken it upon themselves to "pander to public taste by watering down their entertainments and by adopting popular film music and glittering but totally extraneous, stage techniques." In some cases, artists have become so sensitive to Government regulations that "they all start singing nationalistic songs if they see educated people at their performances."[21]

Script submissions to the Board are generally ten to fifteen pages in length. They present the vag scenario and segments of dialogue which carry the plot from start to finish; but it is understood by all concerned with the Board's activities that the script is really only an approximation of the real thing. The "real thing" is the final improvised product which occurs during actual production on the stage.

In the first year of the Board's operation (1955), a total of fifty-eight Tamasha scripts were submitted for certification. In 1956, the figure jumped dramatically to 253, and by 1969, it reached 348. The following figures were made available to me for the intervening years: 1957 (296); 1958 (254); 1959 (202); 1960 (275); 1961 (270); 1962 (331); 1963 (332); 1964 (448); 1965 (329); 1966 (397); 1967 (249); 1968 (356). Altogether, the total number of Tamasha script submissions from 1955 through 1969 was 4,398.[22]

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[21] Vijay Tendulkar, loc. cit.

[22] M. P. Shirshat, loc. cit.

The files of Tamasha scripts at the Stage Performances Scrutiny Board should prove a valuable source of material for further research into content analysis or literary criticism of the post-Independence period folk-theatre scene. They will not, however, contain the full text and flavor of live Tamasha vags which can only be completed effectively by fine folk artists with lively improvisational talents that go far beyond the confines of a script.

CHAPTER V

EARLY EXPERIMENTS IN PROPAGANDA

The purpose of this chapter is to study the most dominant feature of Tamasha in the twentieth century--its utilization for social and political propaganda--and to examine the effects, if any, of propagandistic manipulation upon the folk form itself.

Tamasha for Propaganda: An Overview

In our review of the development of Maharastrian folk entertainments (Chapter II), it was mentioned that content served utilitarian purposes. Pure entertainment needs were satisfied by the pleasing formal arrangements of the content components.[1] Thus, the poet-saints of Maharashtra composed enticing songs, dances, and skits to bring their moral teachings to the rural masses. In the absence of other means of mass communication, these popular folk forms served as "folk media," or "traditional media," of communication.[2]

When Tamasha developed as a publicly accepted form (about the time of Shivaji the Great), the entertainment value became more pronounced, but so did the message-carrying potential. In Shivaji's time, the messages no longer stressed themes of devotion and morality,

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[1]Mention was made in Chapter II of the dominant sentiment of Tamasha--*hasya*, or the comic.

[2]See definitions of these terms, Introduction, *supra*.

but secular and emotionally appealing ones of bravery, nationalism, and militarism, as noted in the discussion of the shahiri tradition in Chapter II. In the process, the poet-saints gave way to the new breed of people's poets, or shahirs, who roamed the Deccan singing stirring povadas in praise of the brave Shivaji. But at the same time, the folk artists could command such attention for their pure entertainment that many performed with impunity in the camps of the Moghul armies while they ferreted out military secrets for the Maratha chieftains.

The shift toward secularism became more pronounced after the British entry into India in the eighteenth century, when more worldly concepts of social and political reform came into open currency. But with the opulent reign of the Peshvas (Prime Ministers) in the eighteenth century, strong court patronage for shahirs and other Tamasha artists led to a flowering of the more lyrical and entertaining strains in the folk form, and it wasn't until the close of the nineteenth century that new waves of social and political consciousness were again noticed, mainly in response to British rule in Maharashtra.

The first issues of the modern period included the prevailing caste system, illiteracy, outmoded superstitions, and the oppression of women. Among noteworthy experiments early this century were those of Jotirao Phule's non-Brahmin organization, the Truthseekers (Sahitya Shodhak Samaj), and Lokamanya Tilak's freedom movement, of which more will be said in this chapter.

As the drive to Indian national liberation developed, more shahirs and Tamasha troupes began to include appropriate patriotic

themes in their songs and vags. By the 1930s, Tamasha had become a viable vehicle for anti-British propaganda, especially after the British authorities had banned the urban Marathi historical plays which tried to bring subtle messages of dissent to the people.[3] The folk form was exempt from precensorship because it was the least suspect of all vehicles.

But even as late as the 1930s there was still sufficient intellectual contempt for Tamasha which kept urban political and social leaders, as well as "committed" artists, from further exploiting the form. Those intellectuals who managed to break through this prejudice and work with the folk form dared to go only as far as using the accepted povada ballad form. Among them, as we shall see, was Shahir Naniwadekar.

It was the Communists who overcame the major social stigmas attached to Tamasha while they fashioned a strong instrument of propaganda out of it. The Communists were also responsible for raising the status of the form, since their experiments were finely and artistically wrought.[4] In this respect, the most outstanding names are Annabhau Sathe, D. N. Gavankar, and Shahir Amar Shaikh.

Further experiments by the Socialists and other political organizations and committed artists contributed to the refinement of Tamasha, making it an acceptable (if watered down and tamed)

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[3]Shahir Atmaram Patil, private interview, Bombay, March 11, 1971.

[4]Idem.

medium of entertainment, satire, and propaganda for both rural and urban audiences.

One point must be stressed in this discussion before directing our attention in greater detail to these twentieth century experiments in propaganda. It is that from the point of view of proper employment of rasas, or dominant states of feeling, propaganda is naturally fitted into the philosophical and aesthetic scheme of Tamasha entertainments.

The folk theatre form contains three basic traditions: (1) the entertainment tradition as expressed through lavani love songs and vag dramas, evoking very often the sringara (romantic) and the hasya (comic) rasas; (2) the more serious propagandistic tradition, concerned with ideas, which pursues the vira rasa (bravery) through the strongly masculine povada ballads as performed by the great shahirs and their accompanists; and (3) the devotional tradition according to the dictates of the bhakti transcendentalist movement which inspired folk troupes to express moral truths in the play of witty songs and dialogues.[5]

Thus, entertainment, propaganda, and devotion all find a logical reason for being in Tamasha.

The Jalsas of the Sahitya Shodhak Samaj

Jotirao Phule (1817-1890) was one of the earliest Indian reformers under British colonial rule to accept the challenge posed by new Western ideas to the traditional culture of India. But unlike

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[5] Idem.

the sophisticated, upper-caste views of his Aryan contemporaries, Phule was concerned with revolutionary transformation among the low-caste, non-aryan, peasant masses. His message was essentially wrapped up in the word "non-Brahmanism," but it also included condemnation of the caste system, uplifting the status of women in society, and proposals for sweeping social change at village level.[6]

The movement he founded (1874) was called Sahitya Shodhak Samaj (Truthseekers), and emphasis was placed literally upon seeking truth, guided only by individual reason. The organization disappeared after 1930 as the broader and more popular nationalist drive claimed the energies of more and more revolutionaries and other dissidents.

The Truthseekers utilized all the available mass media and traditional media outlets, including newspapers, pamphlets, posters, books, speaking engagements, and folk music and theatre presentations. The live programs were designed to spread the radical ideas of the movement among peasants in the remote villages. These presentations included religiously-inspired bhajan and kirtan forms, secular povadas, and complete Tamashas, called jalsas, or concerts, to distinguish their "high social purpose" from pure Tamasha entertainment.[7]

Most accounts of the work of the Truthseekers remain undocumented, buried in the recollections of surviving elders in society. From the accounts I was able to gather, the jalsa was one of the

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[6]Gail Omvedt, Jotirao Phule and the Ideology of Social Revolution in India. Unpublished article (Poona: 1971).

[7]Gail Omvedt, personal letter, April 1, 1971. Miss Omvedt notes, however, that early references to these programs (about the year 1918) use the phrase "Sahitya Shodhak instructory Tamashas."

movement's most potent devices in the rural areas at a time when the literacy rates were well below the present levels.

Jalsa programs were spontaneously created in villages and then sent out on tours in the region. Particularly strong support was made available in Satara district, south of Poona where, in 1920, a wave of rural uprisings against Brahmin authority was directly attributable to the effects of a jalsa tour. According to the folk scholar Y. N. Kelkar, there were a number of cases recorded in which jalsas so fired the passions of the untouchable peasants that the spectators went on to burn the homes, farms, and godowns of the Brahmins.[8]

The official organ of the Sahitya Shodhak Samaj provides more information on the use of jalsas. The publication is Din Mitra. On March 14, 1923, a schedule of jalsa performances in Ahmednagar district is made available. The issue makes note of the fact that a jalsa can address an audience "with humiliating effect."

On another occasion, Din Mitra notes that 900 spectators turned out for a jalsa performance at Tisgaon. The item claims audiences of 1,000 to 2,000 are not uncommon and that these jalsas are strong carriers of the movement's message, being more effective than speeches in village context.[9]

Among the authors of content materials for the jalsas was Tukaram Ganpatrao Bhosle (b.1885). One of his vags was Kulkarni-Lilamrut, written in the 1920s, and based upon an earlier book bearing

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[8]Y. N. Kelkar, private interview, Poona, July, 1971.

[9]Din Mitra, March 14; November 9, 1923.

the same title by Mukundrao Patil, publisher of Din Mitra. Both the book and the play deal with the treacheries of the Kulkarni, a village upper-caste leader. The hero in the play is a low-caste weaver. Class lines are strongly drawn.

Jotirao Phule didn't travel with the jalsa troupes but he did write many of his own abhangas and povadas on the subject of social reform. An early disciple, Shahir Dhondi Namdev, performed these compositions. Another follower was Prabhakar Bhalekar, who carried on Phule's cause after his death. Bhalekar also helped to recruit and organize the performing troupes which carried the jalsas to remote villages.

There is no accurate estimate of the number of troupes used for propaganda by the movement, but Shahir Atmaram Patil offered the figure of twenty-five. Some of the better-known troupes were those headed by Shahir Indurao Rane, Shankarao Baravkar, and Baburao Bundoba Bhoite.[10]

The Sahitya Shodak Samaj was the first sponsoring body for modern radical exploitation of Tamasha as a social weapon of propaganda. This experience was to serve as a base for later and more refined exploitation of the folk form.

The Melas of Lokamanya Tilak

According to Shahir D. N. Gavankar, Lokamanya Tilak helped to restore folk arts to the cities, overcoming the traditional urban and upper-caste disdain for them. He did so consciously, and with a

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[10]Shahir Atmaram Patil, loc. cit.

cleverly disguised social and secular propagandistic aim, and his efforts paved the way for later experiments in the use of Tamasha for propaganda in both urban and rural communities.[11]

Tilak, who lived from 1856 to 1920, was the leader of the Indian national liberation movement before Gandhi. He was a Maharashtrian, and he made use of a variety of Marathi folk forms, including elements of Tamasha to revive "the lost moral dignity and self esteem of the people."

In 1893, he created a revivalist movement centered on the Ganesh Festival, which he turned into a "a powerful engine for imparting instruction to the masses."[12] He organized the festival as an annual ten-day community event. The festival dealt with mythological material to disguise from British authorities the real political and economic messages. The idea quickly spread from Maharashtra to the entire country. Tilak repeated the process by infusing new meaning into the Shivaji Festival, this time based on the revered figure of Maharashtrian history in order to renew the people's dedication to nationalist ideals.

Tilak's innovative approach to propaganda centered on his melas, which literally means "gathering," but which is also used to mean a festival entertainment. The melas, which were inaugurated in 1905, contained songs and dramatic elements put together in a style

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[11] Shahir D. N. Gavankar, private interview, Bombay, March 11, 1971.

[12] O. V. Tahmankar, Lokamanya Tilak (London: John Murray, 1956), pp. 60-67.

reminiscent of Shahir Patthe Bapurao's experimentation with the vag form at about the same period in time. (Bapurao, it will be recalled, was working in the pure entertainment tradition to give new shape and form to the emerging Tamasha vag.)

As for propaganda content, the songs, povadas, and short dramatic skits were loaded with double meanings aimed against the British. Poets and singers, committed to Tilak's ideals, wrote and performed works which attracted even the upper classes, and which influenced a new generation of socially committed artists and intellectuals.[13]

The melas continued to be performed over the years at the Ganesh and Shivaji festivals and they were considered to be the most important propaganda vehicles for reaching the masses. Organization of the melas was carried out by the revolutionary group, Abhinav Bharat (Modern India), which sponsored underground activities against the British. One of the noted terrorists and freedom fighters of the day was Shahir V. D. Sarwarkar, whose povadas advanced Tilak's ideals, forcing the British to ban them in 1909.

The mela was popular and effective because of several factors. In the first place, it utilized folk forms which were both traditional and familiar to the people. Secondly, it struck a happy philosophical balance between materialism (mala), and spiritualism (atma). This balanced approach to content is a traditional means of reaching the common people and it is in a direct line of descent from Saint

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[13] Yugantar, Vol. 16, No. 21-22 (November, 1969), p. 61.

Namdev's ovis, or shephered songs, which featured direct statements in simple Marathi expressions.[14]

As we shall see, the lesson of the mela was not lost upon later radicals, notably Amar Shaikh, who often turned to the abhanga and the kolhati fisherman song forms in his efforts to diffuse modern ideas to simple peasants and fisher-folk.

The 1930s and Shahir Naniwadekar

Tilak's movement lost its momentum and disappeared entirely by the 1930s; but the melas did manage to achieve a popularity which surpassed the jalsas of the Truthseekers. By this time, however, the prevailing revolutionary spirit had settled upon one burning political issue: independence for India. With the disappearance of the jalsas and melas, Tamasha ceased to be an instrument of propaganda and continued to survive only as pure distracting entertainment.

But even at this time, a new thread in the story of experimentation with Tamasha for propaganda may be picked up. It is to be found in the work of Shahir Naniwadekar who wrote and performed activist povadas and lavanis that included advice to the people on methods of physical resistance in the coming struggle with the British. Other shahirs followed in this tradition: Muchate, Pralhadrao, and Sopandev Chaudhari.[15]

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[14] D. N. Gavankar, loc. cit.

[15] Shahir Atmaram Patil, "Such is the Shahiri Tradition," Shahir Naubat (March, 1970), p. 78.

It was Naniwadekar who brought Tamasha elements back to the city stages, just as Tilak's melas brought them to the city's streets and parks at festival time. It should be noted that, except for Patthe Bapurao's short-lived stage appearance in Bombay, there were practically no Tamasha entertainments on the stages of the major cities at the time. The theatres which are today dedicated exclusively to Tamasha performances--the New Hanuman and the Bombay Theatre in Bombay, and the Aryabhushan in Poona--did not exist before Naniwadekar.

Naniwadekar brought his activist-type folk material (including dramatic skits, povadas, lyrical lavanis, and nakals, or imitations of devotional kirtans), to the urban stage in 1936. The occasion was important. It was the annual conference of the Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad, or Maharashtra Literary Society. Although most of the delegates weren't impressed with the experiment, one man's interest was kindled: Shahir D. N. Gavankar, a povada-singer and interpreter of the ballads of V. D. Sarwarkar (who was referred to in our discussion of Tilak's melas).

Adopting Naniwadekar as his guru and accepting increasing encouragement from the Communist party, with its vision of class divisions and class struggles, Gavankar widened his repertoire of radical povadas and extended his work to include the whole range of Tamasha form elements.

From the perspective of the 1970s, we can now see that Shahir Naniwadekar was a vital link between the beginning of the independence movement in Maharashtra and its fullest and most profound expression

in folk art which extended from 1942 until the achievement of nationhood in 1947.

The Communists

If the jalsas and the melas helped to legitimize Tamasha as a viable vehicle for the advancement of social, political, and economic ideas, the Communists may be credited with exploiting it fully, raising its status, and refining it as loknatya. These Communists were primarily artists and their ideological commitment was woven and not hammered into their entertainments. The most noteworthy names among them were D. N. Gavankar, Annabhau Sathe, and Amar Shaikh.

In 1942, Gavankar formed a Tamasha troupe with the help of the Communist party, and it was joined shortly afterward by Shaikh, a composer and singer, and Sathe, a writer and actor. The troupe was called Lalbawata Kala Pathak, or Red Flag Cultural Squad. The group was at first loosely associated with the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), which had been formed in 1941 on a national level by progressive left-wing artists. Branches of IPTA quickly sprung up all through the country,[16] as socially committed artists joined in the growing propaganda struggle against British imperialism.

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[16]Many of these branches are still active today although IPTA has become politically neutral since Independence. Only the Kerala branch retains its original radical spirit. Many of the early IPTA artists in Maharashtra, like G. D. Madgulkar, went on to achieve fame in film, radio, and the recording industry.

Gavankar's cultural squad was reorganized in 1947 and renamed the Loknatya Kala Pathak, or People's Theatre Cultural Squad. This was a more formal link with IPTA which lasted until 1953, when Shaikh split with the more stalwart Communist ideologues--Sathe and Gavankar--and formed his own troupe called Amar Shaikh Nav Maharashtra Kala Pathak (Amar Shaikh's New Maharashtra Cultural Squad).

Shahir D. N. Gavankar

The early days of the Red Flag Cultural Squad tell much of the energies and talents of the man who organized it--Shahir D. N. Gavankar. The first production was Gavankar's own Tamasha vag, Bandya Divan ("Bandya the Accountant"), which dwelled on the evils of the black market. It opened with a traditional song form in which the "problem" was clearly set out before the audience:

> There was a moneylender in Badlapur,
> Who had a thousand acres of land.
> He thrived on black market gains.
> The lust for money knew no bounds.
> Bandya, the accountant, looked after his books.
> With war on the horizon,
> The moneylender looked to grain.
> He bought it cheap in cities,
> And sold it at a high price.

Gavankar was earnest in the script; there is little humor or witty satire to be found. He told me of the real life conditions in Maharashtra which existed in the early 1940s and which led to creation of the play:

> The black market was bleeding the people dry. It was nearly impossible to get decent food, staples, and clothing material. Prices were very high. The Communist Party was making strong demands for the institution of controls and for

> forceful lowering of the cost of living. So I wrote this Tamasha. . . .[17]

Gavankar's piece wasn't of the traditional variety. There was no devotional song at the start and no gaulan segment dealing with Krishna and the milkmaids; but it did utilize the traditional vag form which opened with a high-pitched narrative chant. It also made use of all the traditional musical instruments found in Tamasha, and it contained some of the best-loved folk song forms--lavanis, kavalis, chakkads, and the question-and-answer sawal-jababs.

But its content was tough and unrelenting in its exposure of the efforts of Bandya, the village accountant, to amass a great deal of wealth by hoarding scarce Government-controlled grain for subsequent resale at tremendous and illegal profits. Gavankar's insights are bitter:

> BALU
>
> . . . Do you know what the moneylender's asking for grain?
>
> TATYA
>
> I guess you haven't heard that there's government control on grain prices.
>
> BALU
>
> Hah! Controls! Once the village leader and the inspector are paid off a little, then all your government control goes straight to the moneylender.

A few moments later, Balu, a farmer, sings of the situation in its wider context, almost in the manner of a Brechtian song which broadens the specific situation of a segment of dialogue:

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[17]Shahir D. N. Gavankar, private interview, Bombay, March 4, 1971.

BALU

The times are pretty bad now.
The people are bleeding dry.
The black market's spreading wide.
Not a handful of grain anywhere.
It's the same in every village.
Where we're eating leaves and grass.
Price controls on paper only.
And, oh, what a chaotic mess!
It must be unique in all the world,
For the government to spite the poor.

The script is full of revelations and social truths, such as: "Behind Bandya is the moneylender, and behind the moneylender is the government." But there is a positive and purposeful answer which is developed by Gavankar, as Balu rallies his fellow farmers and sings:

There were leaders of the farmers' association.
I'll get them all to come.
The red flag flies for the poor,
And they're bound to come and help.

Through unified action by the poor landless peasants, the plans of Bandya, the accountant, are frustrated, and the hoarded stock of grain is distributed to all the needy on an equal basis at the true fixed prices. "Long live farmers' unity!" is the closing cry of all the victorious farmers.

This first production by the Red Flag Cultural Squad was originally performed in an open-air setting of a Bombay working-class district. It was greeted with warm response that cheered the artists and paved the way for still greater successes, notably the folk dramas of Sathe and the songs of Shaikh. There was also a Tamasha by the social reformer Sane Guruji which tried to rally audiences against untouchability. The Cultural Squad was, according to my informants, the most exciting theatrical phenomenon of the

1940s. As the fame of these artists spread, the size of the audiences grew remarkably, and it was not uncommon for 30,000 to 100,000 people to turn up for an outdoor performance.[18] Gavankar describes the enthusiastic spirit which moved the troupe:

> We normally travelled in a group of ten or eleven, one or two of whom would be women dancers. Throughout our tour, we avoided the traditional romantic aspects of Tamashas, and we emphasized good humor, strong satire, healthy caricature, and genuine folk music. Because of our artistic integrity, we were rarely criticized for poor taste and lewdness at a time when Tamasha was everywhere being snubbed by intellectuals and the middle-class.[19]

Sathe acted in the productions of the Cultural Squad and he was very popular as the songadya. According to Gavankar, the traditional role of the songadya was stylized and reformed so that it became increasingly sophisticated and purposeful without losing the all-important sense of spontaneity. The actors were apparently all familiar enough with each other to be flexible and adaptable to change in dialogue depending upon local conditions of production.

Gavankar continued to direct the work of the group until Shaikh's departure in 1953, after which Gavankar and Sathe regrouped their energies and formed their own kala pathak on a part-time basis. This arrangement continued to 1966, but a revival of the group was effected on behalf of the Communist Party during the 1967 national election. Gavankar, thereupon, retired from active production and performance.

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[18] Vasant Bapat, Vinayak Bhave, and Vijay Tendulkar vividly recall these performances of the 1940s.

[19] Shahir D. N. Gavankar, loc. cit.

Annabhau Sathe

Annabhau Sathe (1920-1969) was born into a poverty-stricken Mang family in the village of Vatagao. He quickly gained an intimate understanding of a wide range of Maharashtrian folk forms which included bhajans, gondhals, povadas, and kolhati and waghya-murali dances, as well as kirtans, vasudevs, and the more commonly known Tamasha elements. As a young man, he moved to Bombay where he found employment tending the dogs of a wealthy man.

Later, he found work in a textile mill where, during a labor strike, he came into contact with the teachings of the Communist Party. His cultural development owes much to his grandfather who was a well-known Tamasha performer and poet. Sathe imbibed both cultural and modern political traditions, and he is reputed to have given beautiful expression to the mixture in his own scripts and performances.

Sathe's innovative vags and lavani songs are credited with shaping Tamasha into a more sophisticated vehicle--loknatya, or people's theatre. This was people's theatre in the active sense; that is, in the sense of seeking out audience involvement and response in the realm of social and political ideas. Here, in the opening song of one of his loknatyas, we can savor the directness of his approach:

> They make black market money,
> And are more interested in the interest.
> They make their plans for selfish motives,
> That cut the throats of peasants.

I'm speaking about a story in that village,
Listen carefully. . . .[20]

In fashioning a tool so direct and forceful, Sathe followed Gavankar's model, Bandya the Accountant. He retained the sensual appeal of the traditional Tamashas, and refitted the question-and-answer form of riddle singing (sawal-jabab) to accept ideological material. A good illustration of his use of the sawal-jabab is taken from the 1948 vag Majhi Mumbai ("My Bombay"), at a point where a moneylender questions a worker:[21]

MONEYLENDER

This Bombay has so many languages and castes. How can you call it yours?

WORKER

Like the eagle has wings and the lion has claws. . . .

Or, to quote another example from the same work:

MONEYLENDER

We are the moneylenders. Do you think I can find more money here in Bombay?

WORKER

Why does the heron wait in the water?

These examples represent a forceful juxtaposition of images reminiscent of the severely disciplined Japanese haiku poems, with their great economy of imagery. But Durga Bhagvat assures us that the riddle form in Marathi tradition does have the same disciplined

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[20]Quoted by Shahir Atmaram Patil in Yugantar, Vol. 16, No. 21-22 (November, 1969), p. 15.

[21]Quoted by Shahir D. N. Gavankar in "The Shahir Who Revolutionized Tamasha," Yugantar, Vol. 16, No. 21-22 (November, 1969), p. 63.

quality. She quotes a modern example of a riddle: What can't see its own body? The answer is: the eye.[22]

Sathe's ingenious use of the question-and-answer form was designed to arrive dialectically at social truths, giving shape to the class struggles of peasants and workers against the rich.

Technically, Sathe used the stock songadya character to deliver the challenges to the audience and to engage their active participation. His vags almost always relied on few characters, simple story-lines, good poetry and songs, up-to-date dialogue, and fine jokes.[23]

Sathe wrote many novels and more than fifteen Tamasha scripts in the revolutionary struggle for the minds of peasants and urban workers. One of his most popular vags was the 1944 work, Aklechi Goshta ("A Tale of Wisdom"), which ran for more than a thousand performances and which was seen by more than a million Maharashtrians. It is possibly the most popular Marathi folk drama of all time.

Aklechi Goshta begins with a lavani song,[24] which sets out the social problem: in a small village there were two friends--a milkman and a moneylender--who dealt in the black market and in high-interest rates, forcing farmers to suffer. A poor villager dares to rise against the moneylender and sides are chosen. A battle of wits

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[22]Durga Bhagvat, The Riddle in Indian Life, Lore and Literature (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1965), p. 105.

[23]Shahir D. N. Gavankar, "The Shahir Who Revolutionized Tamasha," op. cit., p. 63.

[24]The opening song was contributed by Shahir Gavankar.

ensues. Each is to tell stories before appointed judges. The stories are recited in stirring songs, including povada ballads. The peasant leader wins and the moneylender is forced to leave the village.

The play concludes with a call for class solidarity. The moneylender is angered because he believes the winning peasant has been influenced by group meetings with fellow landless peasant farmers. The wedge between rich and poor is driven further by the peasant who replies bitterly:

> There are lots of dogs like you, Gundu, who barked and faded away. Even the all-powerful Hitler didn't succeed, and by comparison, you're practically nothing.

In script form, Aklechi Goshta covers a scant dozen pages; but in performance it often ran more than two hours, indicating the extent of improvisation infused into the production.

Sathe wrote his scripts with the idea of audience involvement in mind. It was not enough, apparently, to preach social and political ideas; the audiences should be expected to participate in the performances. This view dominated much of Sathe's work, and indeed the entire aesthetic framework of the dynamic Red Flag Cultural Squad. To illustrate, reference is made to Sathe's Shetjiche Election ("The Election of a Merchant"). The story-line is simple. It is the eve of an election and a wealthy merchant is standing as a candidate opposed only by a simple and poverty-stricken peasant. The audience is treated as if it were a crowd gathered to listen to the campaign speeches. The underdog peasant makes the most appealing impression, winning the crowd's admiration. At the close of the play,

all the actors on stage yell out the line "Who do we vote for?" All reply: "For the peasant!" In actual production, audiences were sufficiently moved to shout out the last line in chorus. This kind of involvement proved the most effective form of propaganda the Communists were able to devise in Maharashtra.[25]

Sathe's sense of drama never left him; not even in his songs, particularly his povadas. One of these povadas was composed during a Pakistani-Indian confrontation. It is Punjab, Delhi Cha Danga ("On the Punjab-Delhi Troubles"). It was first produced by the Red Flag Cultural Squad. The opening lines suggest its tone of intense patriotism--a virtue of shahiri compositions through history:

> Grouped against Delhi.
> Moving toward the city.
> It was the final hours,
> And the enemy's swords were sharp,
> Aimed at Nehru's government.
>
> Many Indian soldiers were killed.
> Totals will never be known,
> But all won their fame,
> And patriots were glad
> To die for the country.
> They were determined to save Delhi. . . .[26]

Shahir Amar Shaikh

Shahir Amar Shaikh (1916-1969) came from a poor Muslim family. With little education behind him he moved to Bombay as a young man to

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[25]D. N. Gavankar, private interview, Bombay, March 4, 1971.

[26]Annabhau Sathe, Punjab, Delhi Cha Danga ("On the Punjab-Delhi Troubles") (Bombay: Lok Prakashan Griha, n.d.), p. 1.

take up work as an automobile repair mechanic. In the 1930s, he lost his job as a result of anti-British activities and moved to Kolhapur, where he teamed up with a group of artists. It was here that he met Gavankar and Sathe--a meeting which was to culminate years later in the creation of the remarkable team of artistic propagandists.

In his lifetime, he published volumes of poems, songs, a drama, three povadas, and he also acted in film; but he is best remembered for live renditions of his own songs. Shahir Gavankar provides this moving description of a Shaikh performance which took place in January, 1944:

> It's midnight. Near Titwala, a village close to Bombay, at an open-air performance. Thousands of villagers are gathered, women and children among them. Nobody moves. Everybody's attention is centered on a platform. Standing on it is a tall, thin, dark man, who sings:
>
> 'The flame of hunger is lit in our stomachs,
> And we ask only for something to eat.
> You are the ones who brought pain to our hearts.
> How strange you cannot hear our cries.
> We are the ones who grow grain for your food,
> Yet our children are the ones who are starving to death.
>
> These were the words, with no musical accompaniment. Only a voice, with notes coming straight from a heart to reach the hearts of the gathered thousands. The young man finishes his song and wipes the tears from his cheeks. So do the spectators. Tears of joy. Their sorrows have been expressed. These are tears of release.[27]

According to Dina Pathak, a dancer with IPTA-sponsored musical entertainments in the 1940s, Amar was the inspiration of the troupe: "Nobody could hold back his voice." He apparently upstaged his fellow artists who soon found themselves playing

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[27]Shahir D. N. Gavankar, "Immortal Amor," Yugantar, Vol. 16, Nos. 21-22 (November, 1969), pp. 65-67, 80.

chorus to him. "But we forgave him, because he inspired the people and the people inspired him." [28]

Shaikh was the hero of industrial workers and peasants. Through his art, he gained the love and respect of Maharashtrians. He was, according to one account, "like a radio to the people . . . maybe television . . . a new vision and an inspiration."[29]

Composing songs as he travelled through Maharashtra, Shaikh would transform the current problems of the urban working man or rural landless peasant into forceful, compelling, and simple poetic forms, as we may see in his song, Call of the Workers. This song looks at the problems of class struggle and economic hardships from the different points of view of the labourer, the unemployed worker, the bedridden worker, the female worker, and the aged worker. The female worker worked at home and then in a factory, and she managed to scrape by until fate interfered and she bore a child. Soon there was no money for milk.

The stanza devoted to the old worker is even more bitter and ironic:

> I spent my life telling truth.
> My bones turned to ashes,
> But the safe of the boss
> Smiled at me.
> My life became weary,
> And I left, breaking my bonds.
> Now, I can no longer work.

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[28]Dina Pathak, private interview, Bombay, February 3, 1971. Mrs. Pathak says that Shaikh first started out with IPTA in musical entertainments which toured the countryside in support of radical causes. Shaikh was recruited for Shahir Gavankar's Red Falg Cultural Squad when new plays were made ready for touring.

[29]Sumant, Uncha Taan Uncha Matha ("High Note For A Head Held High") (Bombay: Abhinav Prakashan, 1959), p. 90.

In a final stanza, all the workers unite in a hopeful cry for mastery over economic injustice:

> Look! There comes
> The Red Flag Association
> With the stave of unity in hand.
> They tell us we should teach a lesson
> To all the thieves.
> But we must go forward
> On the road to unity,
> Even if there be bloodshed among us.
> Let's take up the red flag,
> And do away with poverty,
> And our misery.[30]

But times changed and the Communist front split into disaffected fragments after Independence was achieved in 1947. Shaikh, for one, abandoned the official party line and formed his own travelling Tamasha troupe in 1953 to work for new issues such as linguistic rights for Maharashtrians, the liberation of Goa, and social improvement among the peasants, particularly in the field of education. In 1962, during the Sino-Indian conflict, Shaikh resigned his membership in the Communist Party but retained his association with the ideological base of Communism. He was now free to support projects of his choice, and he proceeded to collect large sums of money for charities, including some 300,000 rupees ($40,000) for rural school-building programs.[31] He also supported revolutionary causes in India and Pakistan. Left-over profits were shared equally among the members of his troupe.

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[30]Shahir Amar Shaikh, Amargeet Amar ("Amar's Immortal Songs") (Bombay: Abhinav Publishers, 1951).

[31]Mrs. Amar Shaikh, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

Shaikh's troupe, Nav Maharashtra Kala Pathak, was active throughout the villages, towns, and cities in the State from 1953 until his untimely death in August, 1969, when his own bus overturned and crashed. His death was received as a blow to many Maharashtrians, especially since it came so soon after Annabhau Sathe's demise just two months previously. Two years later, in March, 1971, the third member of the original team of Communist artists--Shahir Gavankar--died of illness, bringing to a close an important era in the history of hard-line Tamasha propaganda.

As if to underscore this observation, I learned from Amar Shaikh's widow that the Nav Maharashtra Kala Pathak was revived six months after the Shahir's death under the new title, Amar Shaikh Kala Pathak, and that it was pursuing less radical interests. I was later informed that the troupe had been engaged by the New Congress Party to work for the 1971 re-election of Mrs. Gandhi. The Communist ideological strain had by this time lost its vital appeal among those who had once been its more eloquent proponents.

The Socialists and the Deluge

The Communist experiments of the 1940s encouraged other political groups to overcome lingering disdain for Tamasha among the middle classes and higher castes and to engage in their own propaganda efforts. The Socialists were the first to follow the Communists in the utilization of Tamasha.

The Socialist use of the form is essentially the story of one dedicated artist and teacher, Vasant Bapat, who developed his

political sense during the anti-British movement. (He was jailed in 1943 on conspiracy charges.) In 1947, he formed a Tamasha troupe to help sew more seeds of agitation as the date of Independence was drawing near.

In 1948 Bapat moved to Bombay to establish a kala pathak, or cultural squad, with the Socialist youth organization, Rashtra Seva Dal (R.S.D.) which had recently created a cultural wing. For years, R.S.D. produced songs, dances and vags, some of which were his own compositions. The productions carried none of the political fervor of the Communist Tamashas, but they did help to refine the form--cutting down on the traditional bawdy humor and removing lingering social stigmas associated with Tamasha artists.[32]

Bapat produced four of his own Socialist-oriented Tamashas, two by Vyankatesh Madgulkar, Shankar Patil's Galli to Delhi, a play depicting cheating and treachery from village to national levels, and many other works. The most noteworthy production, however, was the popular vag, Wanted A Leader, written by the humorist and playwright P. L. Deshpande. The work was an attack on government excesses and social injustice. It opened its run in the late 1950s and continued for a total of some 1,000 performances.[33]

Deshpande attributes the strength of the production to the fact that it was loosely formed and adaptable to changing social and political realities. This formula was later adopted in many

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[32]Vinayak Bhave, private interview, Bombay, December 14, 1970.

[33]Vasant Bapat, private interview, Bombay, November, 1970.

"sophisticated" Tamasha works, including the most recent success by Vasant Sabnis (Fulfil My Desire).

Both Bapat and Deshpande are today a little less enthusiastic about continued use of Tamasha for propaganda. In Bapat's view, the public wouldn't stand for too much propaganda mixed into its favorite entertainment form. "The form does have its limitation," he told me. "The fun is killed with too much dialectical discussion."[34] Deshpande, for his part, claims that

> . . . in spite of all the possibilities that a writer can find in the form, it remains essentially a vehicle of entertainment. But I am still fond of it. . . .[35]

If he were to write a new play in Tamasha form, Deshpande would now do away with some of the traditional elements--the gan and the gaulan--but at the same time, he would build upon the vag form which he believes "retains all the possibilities of what you in the West call Total Theatre." He enumerated these possibilities: (1) audience participation; (2) an uninhibited atmosphere in which improvised dialogue flourishes, encouraging communication between actors and spectators; (3) a free form, permitting actors to alter production content in accordance with changing moods among the audiences; (4) flexibility as to acting approaches; and (5) utilization of music, song, and dance as powerful sensory aids to communication.[36]

Bapat's R.S.D. Kala Pathak is still active today, but it has given up presentation of Tamasha vags in favor of pageants of lively

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[34] Vasant Bapat, loc. cit.

[35] P. L. Deshpande, loc. cit.

[36] Idem.

folk songs and dances. Bapat believes there is nothing further he can contribute using vags for the Socialist cause now that the task of refining Tamasha has been completed. But his political aim is still the same: to raise the level of social and political consciousness among the people, and to create a modern society not bound by divisions of religion, caste, or creed.

The Socialists' cautious entry into the live entertainment field proved to the more conservative ruling Congress Party that Tamasha was a safe and valid medium to be exploited as another vehicle of communication. By 1948, Congress used public funds to create several kala pathaks called Sarvoday, or Emancipation For All. The noted Marathi dramatist, B. V. Warerkar, organized the project for Congress and he also wrote a number of Tamasha scripts for the performing troupes. The party, however, couldn't manage to make effective use of the theatre from and it limited further support to hiring troupes for propaganda at election time. This approach was subsequently adopted by most other opposition parties, and it became common strategy to field Tamasha troupes as part of election campaign communication programs. Further discussion of the political use of the theatre form may be found in Chapter VII of this study.

From political usage, the accent soon shifted to social usage as Maharashtra became involved in a vast modernization program initiated by the State and national governments. The themes of freedom, national unity, and revolution faded from stages as songs and dialogues of paid Tamasha troupes began to promote family planning, small savings, agricultural improvement, prohibition, and other

projects of government five-year plans. The story of State Government use of the form is the subject of the chapter which follows.

Beyond institutional use of Tamasha, there are continuing modern propaganda experiments of purely individual expression. We have already mentioned the works of Sable, Sabnis, and Tendulkar in this connection. Sable, we recall, occupies the most interesting position with regard to propagandistic use of Tamasha because he is still committed to improvement of society and because he has not given in to the temptation of selling his talents to an institution or a political party. His political and social satires are, consequently, attractions to audiences representing both the left and centre of society.

Other non-aligned writers with "messages" for the people have been moved to experiment. Aside from Sabnis and Tendulkar, there are growing numbers of playwrights who are intrigued with the flexibility of the Tamasha form. Shankar Patil's Katha Akalechya Kandyachi ("A Tale of the Onion of Intelligence"), for example, was a polished satirical attack (in the mid 1960s) upon the opportunism of political leadership within the ruling Congress Party. The story follows an old Maharashtrian proverb which says that if a man is a fool he hasn't a brain but an onion which peels away into nothingness. Patil's vag played to large audiences in cities and villages. A shortened English-language adaptation of the script is appended to this study.

CHAPTER VI

USE OF TAMASHA IN STATE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the State Government's utilization of the Tamasha folk theatre form in information campaigns supporting development programs.

Development Programs

Central and state governments actively promote productions by folk artists in remote villages of India in support of a wide range of social and economic development programs including the well-known Five-Year Plans--"small savings," "agricultural development," "national integration," "family planning," and "prohibition." In Maharashtra, the Delhi-sponsored Marathi-language section provides occasional propaganda theatre performances; but it is really the Government of Maharashtra itself which is deeply engaged in this work.

In Bombay, the State Directorate of Publicity is charged with directing Maharashtra's development support communication campaign. Tamasha entertainments form part of the campaign.

Three Categories of State-Supported Troupes

According to the Deputy Director of Publicity for the State of Maharashtra (Mr. Kanetkar), a vigorous program of Tamasha-type performances was being pursued using three kinds of performing

troupes: (1) "A" troupes of professional stature, (2) "B" troupes of professional and semi-professional stature, at regional level, and (3) non-professional troupes at district level.[1]

The "A" troupes are engaged on a monthly basis to perform in villages throughout the State. Some of the troupes are sufficiently well endowed to be able to afford their own transport. Contractual arrangements call for the incorporation of at least two or three current development themes in an agreeable mixture of messages and pure entertainment. A performance in one village might include a few lavani songs and some dramatic segments dealing with the advantages of small families and with abstinence from alcohol. Another night, in another village, the focus may dwell upon growing more food and the promotion of personal savings.[2]

"A" troupes may be contracted to do about thirty productions a year, largely in villages with populations of from 2,000 to 3,000. A handful of the best troupes may do as many as twenty shows a month during the good season, or about 160 a year. Top rates for a good troupe are about 400 rupees ($53.20) per show. Average attendance is estimated at 1,500 to 2,000 people. Among the better-known Tamasha groups in the "A" category are "Appasaheb" Inamdar's group, Bal Ingle's Lok Ranjan (or People's Entertainment Troupe), and Shahir Liladhar Hegde's troupe.

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[1]Private interview, Bombay, February 24, 1971. Mr. Kanetkar is personally responsible for State Government exhibitions and live performances related to Government programs.

[2]See section dealing with the Appasaheb Inamdar troupe, this chapter, infra.

The "B" troupes, with both professional and semi-professional artists, are recruited regionally from the six major sub-divisions of Maharashtra. Artists reside and perform in their own regions. The schedule is less rigorous than that for "A" troupes.

The third category ("C" units) represents performers who are not up to professional standards, but who reside locally in their own communities. They are recruited at the district level. (Each region has four districts.) There are twenty-six district-level troupes in all, each numbering seven or eight performers.

The performing art units in all three categories are called kala pathaks, or cultural squads, and these are divided by the Government into Main Kala Pathaks and Sahiri Kala Pathaks. A Main Kala Pathak troupe is a dholki-baari which entertains through song, dramatic dialogue, mime, and dance. The Shahiri Kala Pathaks, or poetry cultural squads, are one-man and two-man shows featuring musical recitations of poems based on the Government themes mentioned above. Povadas, kirtans and bhajans--all traditional song forms--are performed in this way. Bhajans and kirtans are used because they are derived from devotional traditions and because the new messages they carry are more likely to be favorably received. Women, for example, might not welcome views on family planning if conveyed through newer, secular forms of entertainment.[3]

The Directorate employes forty entertainment troupes of all categories, and it is estimated that together they cover more than 400

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[3]Mr. Kanetkar, loc. cit.

villages in each twelve-month period, with a combined audience of approximately a million villagers.

The Publicity Department is trying to increase this coverage. The task is enormous when one considers that the total number of villages in Maharashtra is 38,000. When I left India in the summer of 1971, new budgetary demands were being made for a significant increase in the number of entertainment units, from forty to 200, permitting wider distribution of troupes throughout the State and helping to spread word of the Government's programs.

Effectiveness of the State-Supported Kala Pathaks

Measurement of the effect of these live entertainment programs upon the population could not be obtained from any official source, but rapid increases in acceptors of family planning methods[4] and in totals of personal small savings provided officials with some indications of their value, especially in the context of the combined use of mass media and traditional folk media programs. The Deputy Director of Publicity told me the State Government was convinced that theatre is an effective way of reaching the minds of peasants in remote villages, and that the *kala pathak* tours are important for this purpose. The overall publicity program, which is responsible for the Government successes includes, besides folk theatre productions, the recognized communication approaches--radio, newspapers, posters, Government change agents, films and, more recently, television.

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[4]See section on Family Planning, this chapter, *infra*.

Although there were no measurements of kala pathak effectiveness, some rule-of-thumb methods were being employed by the Government. A control of sorts is maintained by Government rural officers in the field who must sign the payment certificates for troupes immediately after each performance. The certificate declares that a performance of the required duration has been completed at the date and place agreed upon.

Additionally, district public relations officers are required to do spot checks on performances to determine whether a troupe is keeping up to good production standards. The spot check will also note attendance, coverage of Government themes, and overall public reaction. The rule of thumb for good standard of a kala pathak program is acceptance of a "sixty to seventy per cent positive reaction" among the total number of spectators at a given performance. In all the years of this ongoing program (since 1958), the figure has never dropped below sixty per cent, according to field officer reports.

Mr. Kanetkar believes his field reports provide sufficient indications of the value of the kala pathak program. "We also know from experience," he adds,

> that when we send Government agents to make speeches, most of the villagers walk out long before the end. But with entertainment offered in the known folk forms, the story is quite different. In fact, we haven't had any adverse reports from our observers in the field since we started our program officially in 1958.[5]

Although it is satisfied with its sixty to seventy per cent rating, the Government continues efforts to improve and update the

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[5]The troupe, run by V. L. "Appasaheb" Inamdar, was engaged for this work as early as 1954.

quality and content of presentations. From time to time, Kanetkar issues new instructions to the troupes he has engaged, sending the latest information on family planning, small savings, agricultural development, and other programs. The artists are expected to incorporate some of the new material as they move. Trust in the abilities and talents of the troupes, and feed-back reports by Government officers, are considered to be sufficient assurances that the overall program is developing and changing with the times.

Script materials are prepared by the artists themselves. Cost is a factor in this decision because if the Government had to provide its own scripts it would be obliged to pay higher fees to the troupes.

The Family Planning Story

In 1957, one year before the creation of the State of Maharashtra, Bombay State entered the national family planning program. Stress was placed upon educational programs and direct involvement of the people. Mass communication projects were devised to support these efforts, based on the premise that adoption of family planning practice was a matter of changing the prevailing attitudes. As an adjunct to the mass communication program person-to-person or live approach was promoted to reach people at village level, where literacy rates were low[6] and where the existing mass media could not penetrate sufficiently.

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[6]According to the 1961 census (a 1971 census was being taken during the research period), the literacy rate for Maharashtra was 9.8 per cent (38.5 according to the later tabulation of the 1971 census) as against 24.0 (29.0 in 1971) per cent for the entire country. Total population for Maharashtra was 39,554,000 (fifty million in 1971), or nine per cent of the total population of India. Seventy-one point

The strategy for Maharashtra's attempt to control its population growth rate follows an accepted communications model which is designed to move people from a state of ignorance through the ladder of knowledge, awareness, acceptance, motivation and action.

Program Effectiveness Relative to Family Planning

State Government expenditure on family planning from 1957 to 1970 was directly related to the yield or pay-off in the results. In 1957-58, the family planning budget totalled Rs. 82,661 ($11,021.46), the 1961-62 budget was Rs. 1,214,923 ($161,989), and in 1969-70 the figure had dramatically risen to Rs. 32,075,940 ($4,276,792). Results were not very significant in the initial years of the program but by March, 1961, 41,188 sterilizations had been performed. By the end of 1966, the total had risen to 219,241 sterilizations. A sudden spurt in the program occurred in 1967-68 when 332,329 sterilizations were performed in the twelve-month period.[7] Other figures might be cited for increase in the use of contraceptives, oral contraceptives, and intrauterine insertions, but what is immediately significant is that the estimated birth-rate for the period 1951 to 1960, which was 41.2, declined to 38.0 in the 1966-70 period. Moreover, the general growth rate for the period 1961-65, which was 2.55 per cent, declined to

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seventy-eight per cent of the people in the State lived in rural areas. These figures appear to justify the State Government's insistence upon utilization of face-to-face communication projects, including Tamasha entertainments.

[7]Recent information noted in the September, 1972, issue of Reports on Population/Family Planning (Population Council, New York), p. 84, shows that nearly half a million Maharashtrians had accepted sterilization during 1971, as compared to 1,934,000 for all of India.

2.53 per cent in the period 1966-70. The Government estimated it had prevented approximately 60,000 births in 1966 while estimates for births that year totalled approximately 1,733,000. Estimates for 1971 were 1,060,000 births and 360,000 births saved.[8]

Government sources claim that live theatre presentations, including Tamashas, were instrumental in achieving the limited success noted in the enormously complex area of family planning. Early in 1971, V. R. Gadgil, statistician in the Maharashtra Government's Demographic and Evaluation Cell, accurately predicted that the 1971 census would provide further indication of the impact not only of the family planning program but most of the Government programs directed to the public welfare, especially the five-year programs. He also noted that surveys were in progress in selected villages to provide more indicators of effectiveness in the use of both mass media and face-to-face communication efforts. At this writing, one such survey had already been completed covering six villages. It showed that the birth rate averaged 36.3, "a level appreciably lower than that prevailing in 1961, and 1.7 lower than the rate estimated for the entire state between 1966-70."[9]

Other indications of progress in the State family planning program are the national awards received by Maharashtra for best performance in 1960, 1963-64, 1964-65 and 1965-66. The indicators

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[8]All figures are provided by the Government of Maharashtra, Ministry for Public Health.

[9]Family Welfare and Planning, Maharashtra State, 1957-68, issued by the State Family Planning Bureau, Government of Maharashtra, February, 1969, p. 30.

of progress--minuscule in the larger framework of the country's growing population problems--nevertheless illustrate the validity of the Government's mixture of mass media and person-to-person approaches. The mixture includes:

1. Group meetings,
2. Slogans, posters, wall paintings,
3. Cultural programs utilising the performing arts of the folk tradition, including most of the elements of the Tamasha form,
4. Family planning literature,
5. Exhibitions,
6. Articles and advertisements in the press,
7. Other mass media, including cinema slides, radio talks, tape-recorded messages, special press features, matchbox advertisements, and exhibitions in public hospitals, health centres, and railway stations.

Folk Theatre Inputs in the Program

The cultural programs mentioned in (3), above, are of particular relevance to this study because they essentially recognize the importance of folk theatre in reaching the illiterate masses in the densely populated rural areas. In the view of Mr. Gadgil, "Folk theatre presentations do have a great impact in these areas and they complement all other efforts in our family planning program."

The theatre elements used for family planning propaganda include non-Tamasha dramatic presentations; kala pathak variety

programs utilizing the entire range of Tamasha forms; loknatya, or dramatic Tamasha presentations; kirtans; bhajans; povadas, and other forms. Mr. Gadgil supplied performance figures which were available for the years 1967-68 and 1968-69. They are presented in the table below:

Types of Entertainment	Number of Performances	
	1967-68	1968-69
Dramatic Programs (non-Tamasha)	92	90
Kala pathaks	133	491
Loknatya	22	158
Kirtans Performed Alone	104	422
Bhajans Performed Alone	25	523
Povadas Performed Alone	32	186
Others	25	97

The figures show conclusively the increased use of folk elements in Tamasha tradition, as against a new reduction in use of non-Tamasha, modern dramatic programs. More recent information, supplied to me in private correspondence to mid-1972, indicates a continuing trend in this direction.

Case Study: An "A" Category Troupe

The Directorate of Publicity gives top rating to one of the "A" category groups it supports for publicizing the Government's programms--the professional troupe of V. L. "Appasaheb" Inamdar. Inamdar's qualifications are impressive: he has a doctorate degree in music and a life-time background of social work in the villages of Maharashtra in support of modernization and development programs.

I sought out the troupe in Poona and met with two of Inamdar's sons, G. V. Inamdar and P. V. Inamdar, both members of the performing troupe. In conversations[10] I learned the troupe had been engaged in propaganda work for the Maharashtra Directorate of Publicity since 1954. Performers have come and gone over the years, but a nucleus of six permanent artists remain as a core group. On tour, the group recruits additional artists, rounding out the troupe to its full complement of eighteen, including four female artists. It is the only full-sized troupe playing the Government circuit.

The troupe maintains two levels of operation, enabling performers to keep their sense of perspective as artists first and propagandists second. For Government productions, the troupe calls itself the Kala Sangam Poona; but as independent artists, the group also operate a thoroughly commercial kala pathak.

For its Government work, the Kala Sangam group earns about 300 to 400 rupees ($40.00 to $53.33) per performance. In 1970, it was contracted for just over 100 programs in villages throughout the

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[10]G. V. and P. V. Inamdar, private interview, Poona, January, 1971.

State, for a gross income of more than 30,000 rupees ($4,000). Yet in a single evening's commercial production in the city, Inamdar's kala pathak may earn as much as 2,000 rupees ($266.66). However modest an amount the propaganda work pays, it still provides a measure of security in a profession which knows of very little security.

By 1971, after seventeen years of Government-sponsored work, Inamdar's Kala Sangam Poona boasted of some 2,000 performances; while his commercial kala pathak troupe, begun only after 1965, had produced a total of more than 800 performances.

Government propaganda work pays only one-way travel expenses, but Kala Sangam Poona is in the enviable economic position of running its own bus. The vehicle is large enough to carry a full complement of performers, along with costumes, musical instruments, props, portable scenery, drops, and lighting equipment.

Playing dates are arranged in remote villages where there is little direct contact with the mass media and where few people read newspapers even if they may be sufficiently literate. Performances are free. Since villages on Government-sponsored Tamasha tour itineraries are seldom visited by the better-known commercial Tamasha troupes (which stand to lose money on such ventures), the potential impact of a propaganda Tamasha troupe is very strong. Whether or not the potential has been realized, the Kala Sangam Poona has already brought its development support messages to some two and a half million people.[11]

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[11]Mr. Kanetkar, loc. cit.

Format of a Kala Sangam
Poona Production

Over the years, Inamdar has developed a swiftly-moving production format lasting roughly three hours. It is not, in the strictest sense, a typical dholki-baari Tamasha entertainment, with its gan, gaulan, songs and dances, and vag in the proper order; but it does make use of Tamasha's vital theatrical conventions, and its "messages" are woven through the whole in witty displays of dialogue and in some of the songs.

For a more concrete impression of Inamdar's approach, we will select highlights of an old Kala Sangam Poona script (which is included in its entirety in Appendix "B" of this study). From a study of this script, we may note that Inamdar bowed to convention and tradition in his presentation of gan and gaulan segments. However, an inspirational and patriotic song--a Maharashtra Geet--was superimposed upon the production and placed just before the gan. The emotional appeal of the Maharashtra Geet is evident in the lines of the closing stanza:

> Let the song of the Marathas be heard.
> Let its spirit be expressed in words.
> Let its faith dwell in the heart.
> And, if the time comes,
> Let us sacrifice life.

The gan which follows, is also designed to secure the interest of the people:

> . . . Inspire the uneducated and entertain the people.
> Weave garlands of our words
> So they will strike the right meanings. . . .

Inamdar's gaulan deals with the traditional play of Krishna and Pendya and the gaulans and the Auntie (Mavshi), but its aim is to

incorporate subtle messages about one or more of the Government's propaganda themes, possibly support for family planning, or for the armed forces, or simply for the elimination of social injustices:

THIRD GAULAN

> Mavshi, you've been selling butter for many years now and you still don't understand that there's a great demand for butter in this country. We need enough to butter up the people so that work will get done.

MAVSHI

> True True. That's how it is. Go to a district. . . . Or a village. . . . Or a government hospital. . . .

THIRD GAULAN

> Hospital? Why? . . .

MAVSHI

> . . . Just butter up the people there and you get proper medicines. Otherwise you're forgotten. Butter, my dear, is nothing less than a bribe. And that just isn't right. . . . You shouldn't be too generous with your butter. You just decide right now that you'll do the right thing and there'll be no question about bribes. . . .

The message, as may be observed, is woven into the traditional fabric of the gaulan. It appears not to betray the familiar form.

A song or two follows the gaulan and intermission ends the first half of the show.

Inamdar's real experimentation with the folk theatre format becomes apparent in the second half of the program, called Maharashtra Darshan, or "Glimpses of Marathi Folk Arts." Inamdar has selected a variety format based on a combination of resuscitated forms of folk music, dance, and dramatic playlets. In later scripts, Inamdar built his works with two or three folk forms out of a fund of elements which included:

1. Ovi songs, traditionally sung by women, on the joys and troubles of domestic life.
2. Bhupali, an early morning song of worship praising Lord Krishna.
3. Vasudev, songs and dialogues of the entertainer-preacher Vasudev, who is made to symbolize the old order that must change in the face of new social conditions.
4. Bhajan, a form of community singing that developed from the abhanga devotional songs of the poet-saints of Maharashtra.
5. Bharud, as we noted in Chapter II, is an early dramatic form used by the poet-saints from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries for religious propaganda among the peasants. It is essentially narration in verse--spiritual truths clothed in witty lines.
6. Warkari Dindi, circular group dancing made popular by the Vaishnav saints of Maharashtra for processions at holy places.
7. Lavani songs.
8. Gondhal, a form of traditional drama using devotional song recitations and narrations from mythology.
9. Konkan Geet (songs) and dance, originating in the coastal Konkan region, and including lore of the fishermen.
10. Waghya-Murali dances and music from the children who dedicated themselves to the god Khandoba. Waghyas are males; Muralis are the females.
11. Vag, the formal component of most dramatic Tamashas.

The sample Kala Sangam script appended to this study makes use of the vasudev, waghya-murali and vag, following the gaulan segment.

The Vasudev begins strongly: Vasudev is depicted as a reactionary old man who is out of step with the development needs of his country. The village patil quickly and successfully challenges these "counter-productive" views, as this exchange of dialogue relative to family planning shows:

VASUDEV

(Blessing Patil's Daughter-In-Law) May you be blessed with eight children.

PATIL

What's that? This is a curse, not a blessing.

VASUDEV

No curse, but a blessing.

PATIL

A curse, I tell you! Why don't you bless her with the children she desires? Eight is surely a curse.

VASUDEV

Ahah! Very well. (To D-I-L)
As many as you desire.

. . . . . .

PATIL

No! No! Don't say, "As many as you desire." You should say, "Two are enough, and a third if you really must have more."

Or, in another moment of confrontation on the theme of small savings, Vasudev begins as a man of little modern savoir-faire:

VASUDEV

Last year it went well. I worked three months and I saved two-hundred rupees. But it was stolen.

PATIL

But there's a better way. You can safely save your money at any post office.

VASUDEV

Why put it in the post office? I'll never get it back.

PATIL

Of course you will. . . . In fact, you get a government-stamped receipt, and if you save your money for five years, you even get some added interest.

VASUDEV

That sounds good.

The family planning theme is exploited again in the waghya-murali section which follows the vasudev. Waghya and the village patil are deep in discussion:

PATIL

This is why our country's in such a mess. Children! That's the only business that grows.

WAGHYA

But isn't the government asking us to grow more?

PATIL

Not in this field. They're talking about more food. And we've got enough mouths to feed as it is. As it is, sixty-four thousand new children are being born every minute in India.

WAGHYA

Nothing wrong with that. Some of them must be dying at birth.

PATIL

Some. About twenty-eight thousand of them die every day. That still leaves thirty-six thousand who survive and go on eating and growing. So, today is thirty-six thousand, and tomorrow is also thirty-six thousand, and. . . .

WAGHYA

Stop! Stop! Enough!

PATIL

At this rate, we soon won't have any place to live and nothing to eat. Why don't you go and see a doctor? Nine children indeed!

WAGHYA

I'm scared of doctors.

PATIL

Then send your wife.

The vag closing the production is called Talathi and the Social Worker, and it is graced with songs and more dialogue on village perceptions of the population problem in India. The closing song in the show is worth quoting here because it represents the high-point of Inamdar's message to his village audiences:

Listen to my story, remember it well,
Unemployment and poverty are everywhere.
We have come upon bad times.
The land, once golden, has turned to mud.

Do you see how bad the times are?
Do you want to make them right?
We'll have a better future,
If you think of family planning. . . .
Tonight!

As we have seen, care is taken to make the new themes appear to fit naturally and almost organically with the older folk forms. Traditional rhythms and melodies are retained.

Scripts are sometimes prepared by "Appasaheb" Inamdar himself. Other writers include the better-known sophisticated Tamasha shahirs, such as Vasant Sabnis, Divekar Guruji, and the brothers G. D. and Vyankatesh Madgulkar. These writers are all vitally concerned with

the Tamasha form and with the problems of writing popular material for the masses, and they all regard the State Government propaganda requirements as a challenge to their creative artistry.

Inamdar is himself most aware of the needs of the villagers in view of his early career as a rural social worker. He has convinced his Government superiors of the effectiveness of folk theatre as a means of communicating new ideas about an emerging society. At fifty-five years of age (in 1971), Inamdar was still very much involved in his work.

Effectiveness of the Kala Sangam Poona

Inamdar's sons claim there is good public appreciation of the entertaining elements of their Government-sponsored programs, but they believe that the propagandistic materials rarely meet with any great success, or acceptance. But audiences are patient, and they "bear" with the troupe until the really entertaining moments come along. In all the years of its propaganda shows, the Kala Sangam has never encountered outward signs of negative reaction. Booing or other disturbances have never been known to occur, which says a great deal for the good-will and patience of the people as well as for the quality of the troupe's artistry. When asked if villagers really do follow up upon the messages in their performances, Inamdar's elder son could not go beyond the following statement:

> We don't really know. All we can say is that when we do a good script we entertain people and when we do a so-so script we bore people. About what effect we have in the villages, that's something for the Government to say.[12]

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[12] G. V. and P. V. Inamdar, private interview, loc. cit.

For its part, the Government of Maharashtra maintains rule-of-thumb methods of judging audience reaction to the overall program, as noted earlier in this chapter. After every show, a block development officer and regional or district publicity officers send audience reaction reports to the Bombay Directorate of Publicity. Since these reports continue to reflect a positive reaction, the Government appears pleased with the work of the Kala Sangam Poona.

CHAPTER VII

USE OF TAMASHA IN THE 1971 NATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The purpose of this chapter is to study the use made of Tamasha in the Maharashtrian campaign for the 1971 national elections.

The Overall Communication Strategy for the Campaign

We have already mentioned the political use of Tamasha for election propaganda, but it is interesting to observe the phenomenon at closer range. I should, therefore, like to report on a specific campaign--the mid-term national election which was held in March, 1971. The election, it may be recalled, resulted in a stunning victory for Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's Ruling Congress Party. In Maharashtra alone, Ruling Congress won forty-two of the forty-four seats contested.

At the height of the campaign--in February, 1971--inquiries were made about the communication strategies adopted by the contending parties in the State of Maharashtra, but the scope of the investigation was limited to observations of efforts by Mrs. Gandhi's party,[1] since

[1]Much of the information in this section, including the propaganda Tamasha materials quoted below, was provided to me in February, 1971, by Dr. V. S. Ranadive, General Secretary, Maharashtra Pradesh

I was unable to enlist the cooperation of officers of the other parties.

The campaign was, by every account, a hurried one. The decision to dissolve the Lok Sabha (Parliament) before its full term was taken by Mrs. Gandhi because of the frustration encountered in running the country on Socialist principles against the obstruction by "reactionary forces" and "vested interests."[2] Campaign planners were consequently given little time for preparation.

The contending parties were quick to prepare a good deal of material for the literate public. All the parties throughout the country managed to flood available outlets with pamphlets, handouts, press releases on election issues and party platforms, posters, and stickers. There were new graphic symbols figuring prominently in all printed matter. The right-wing Jana Sangh Party used an oil lamp, while the Ruling Congress developed a new symbol of a protective mother-cow giving suck to her calf (the public). There were other symbols representing other parties.

For emotional appeals, there were organized demonstrations, mass rallies, processions, parades, and rousing speeches blared out live or on tape from loudspeakers mounted on trucks and jeeps. Other leaders were denounced as well as other symbols. On one occasion I was present when a Ruling Congress Party candidate, speaking from the back of a truck, tried to make light of the Jana Sangh by

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Congress Committee, Bombay, just several weeks before his untimely death. All later inferences on numbers of performances of propaganda entertainments and on total numbers of possible spectators are mine.

[2]Indira Gandhi, Why Poll Now? All India Radio broadcast, Delhi, December 27, 1970.

ridiculing their symbol of the lamp: "Not enough oil for the lamp!" On another occasion, I saw a Jana Sangh speaker, standing on a Poona streetcorner, strike back at the cow and calf of the Ruling Congress: "We all know who the calf stands for--it's the Government sucking the people dry through taxes."

In most respects, the campaign appeared to be much like one conducted in a Western country, without, of course, the benefit of the Government-controlled electronic media. Television was in its infancy; while radio was officially removed from the fray, even though it was not entirely capable of eliminating its pro-Government bias. What was truly unique about the Maharashtrian campaign, however, was the special effort expended by all parties to reach the illiterate rural masses. (In Maharashtra, the rural public constitutes 71.78 per cent of the population.)

The Role of Tamasha in the Campaign

The special effort included the use of mobile folk-theatre troupes to carry party platforms and promises into remote villages where only familiar forms of presentations could be counted upon.

Altogether, some 200 Tamasha troupes of varying sizes were employed in the State from January through February. The units were actually called kala pathaks, or cultural squads, and the average unit contained about nine performers, including singers, dancers, musicians and actors. Counting nine artists per troupe, a total of 1,800 performers were engaged in the political campaign. Of this total, the Ruling Congress Party alone supported 100 kala pathaks, or 900 artists.

About eighty-five of the Congress-sponsored troupes were hired by the candidates themselves. Another six troupes were signed on early in January to work directly for the central Maharashtrian Congress office in Bombay, and several more were taken on by the Congress House in Poona.

Each of the six troupes hired by the Bombay office was contracted for 200 performances between January 15 and the polling period early in March. These six troupes alone accounted for 1,200 performances over six weeks. Because of the decentralized arrangement which prevailed for the employment of troupes, there are no combined figures for the total number of performances. Nevertheless, an extremely modest assumption could be made that 200 kala pathaks could easily have averaged fifty performances, making for a total of 10,000 separate propaganda entertainments. Even such a modest assumption would, if true, indicate that a significant effort was made to reach the rural masses.

By making further assumptions, we can gain some idea of the size of audiences reached by the kala pathak programs in the election campaign. If there had been an average of 500 persons at each of the supposed 10,000 propaganda entertainments, then some five million villagers might have been reached during the campaign. A more pessimistic estimate might establish the average audience at 100 persons. In this case, the total audience would have been reduced to a million.

In either event--whether we use the low or high figures--the cost-per-unit of fielding 200 kala pathaks is still low. A troupe

could have earned about 2,000 rupees ($266) each[3] for the campaign and, multiplied by 200 troupes, the cost would have totalled 400,000 rupees (about $53,333). If the Congress Party's share for its 100 troupes was 200,000 rupees, ($26,666), and if its own kala pathak campaign reached half the low-estimate total of spectators (or half a million people), then the effort would still have been cost-effective, even if one were to question real effectiveness in terms of attitude formation and persuasion regarding the final vote at the polls.

Notwithstanding the assumptions I have been making, it should be remembered that there are 38,000 villages in the state and that the total population of Maharashtra is about fifty million people. What appears, therefore, to be a major undertaking, is at best merely a token effort to reach the people by one method, among many others.

Some of the flavor of the content in these kala pathak entertainments must be sampled to be appreciated. Working for the Ruling Congress Party were some of the finest talents in the State, including songwriter-composer G. D. Madgulkar, brother of playwright Vyankatesh Madgulkar; Shahir Jagdish Khebudkar, artist of fine standing in both the "raw" and "sophisticated" Tamasha traditions; and Shahir Atmaram Patil, former left-wing radical Tamasha composer-performer, and now supporter of a more moderate political position.

Since an English translation of Khebudkar's 1971 election Tamasha, We Must Win This Time, is included in the appendices to

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[3]A high average.

this study, I would like to sample some of the other materials prepared for Ruling Congress. One of G. D. Madgulkar's songs builds its through a series of questions:

> In whose hands is your India safe?
> Who will establish strong rule and give you hope?
> Who will wipe out the nation's poverty?
> And what if we do achieve economic development--
> Will anybody make proper use of it?
> And when farmers and workers go on strike--
> Does anybody really think of them?
> And just who landed us in our current mess?
> Well, that party is really powerful,
> And their leaders have vested power supporting them.
> And you would do well to consider all this,
> And make your choice yourself.[4]

The song moves forward through rhythms difficult to capture in English. It is not considered to be a particularly fine piece, but Party is made to appear the sympathetic underdog pitted against the goliath of power-hungry, reactionary forces.

Shahir Atmaram Patil's work for the Party included a short musical presentation with songs and dialogue based on the trythms of traditional gondhal songs used at weddings and religious ceremonies:

> . . . The Goddess of the country, Indira.
> Elect the cow and the calf.
> The people's parliament is in Delhi,
> But Delhi's controlled by the wealthy.
> There's Appa, Gappa and Morarjibhai,[5]
> Who suppressed the people's will.
>
> How did this wealthy stain come to power,
> And live like parasites on mango trees?
> We know that trees should be watered at the roots;
> But if parasites hoard the water, the trees will die.

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[4]Shahir Jagdish Khebudkar and G. D. Madgulkar, Povadas, lavanis and other propaganda songs. Script for use by Ruling Congress Party, 1971. (Mimeographed)

[5]Opposition leaders.

And as long as the rich survive this way,
The people's rule will never flourish.

A question follows in spoken voice: "What has the Prime Minister done for the people?" The reply is made in song:

Well, the people now have money in the banks,
But accounts are managed by thieves.
So the nation took care of this wealth,
Killing hopes of the helpless and the needy.
We countered by nationalizing the banks.[6]

The song continues, with music and dialogue, to expound on the various national issues, including the controversial withdrawal of State Government support for the maharajas (princes) of India, and rival claims by opposition parties. It urges the people--called significantly "little calves"--to wake up and win the election in their own interest. In one of the stanzas, the image of the cow (Ruling Congress) is tied to all the noble ideas of progress, and the image is then cleverly related to the little calves--the public--which will benefit in the end.

The Congress script materials were fully worked out, and little was left to chance or improvisation. This is evident from the full script of Khebudkar included in the appendices to this study. Although Tamasha purists scoff at the use of the folk form for political ends, those responsible for hiring the folk talent claim the information campaign was not to be looked at as pure art, nor as pure folk, but as part of overall communication strategy. At any rate, the political parties must have believed they were justified in the effort, both on moral grounds and on grounds of cost-effectiveness.

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[6]Shahir Atmaram Patil, Dramatic skit and songs. Script for use by Ruling Congress Party, 1971. (Mimeographed)

As for effectiveness at the polls, I am unable to report any direct relationship of the kala pathak program to the final vote;[7] but the Ruling Congress Party offered its own rationale. For Dr. V. S. Ranadive, General Secretary of the Maharashtra Pradesh Committee (until his death just after the campaign), folk theatre was a more potent tool of persuasion than speeches, especially in rural areas:

> We still have many peasants in our villages who haven't the staying power to follow political speeches, but we have seen from previous campaigns that they appreciate our messages when they are woven into Tamasha-style sketches, songs, and dialogues.[8]

Ranadive, whose activity in politics spanned thirty years, also believed he had developed a keen political sense which told him that a good folk theatre troupe wins more support for a candidate than any visiting political leader who may come to campaign on his behalf. Judging from the fact that eighty-five Ruling Congress candidates hired their own troupes, Ranadive's sense may be taken as authoritative.

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[7]The Ruling Congress won forty-two of the forty-two Maharashtrian seats it contested. Altogether, forty-four of the forty-five available seats were contested. The Old Congress Party contested nine seats and won none; while the Jana Sangh contested twelve and won none. In its sweep, the Ruling Congress gained ten seats over its previous total in Maharashtra in the dissolved Lok Sabha (The Times of India, March 11, 1971.)

[8]Dr. V. S. Ranadive, private interview, Bombay, February 27, 1971.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study, as noted in the Introduction, was to describe the characteristics of Tamasha and to discuss the utilization of the form, for propaganda, by social and political organizations. On the basis of the information provided in the body of the work, it is now possible to draw some qualitative observations and conclusions.

Part 1 provided the reader with the background required for some understanding of Tamasha and its place in the historical and cultural framework of Maharashtra.

A general observation gleaned from the historical account of the development of the folk form is that the first half of the twentieth century was a critical period of transition from the declining traditions of court patronage and village support to the new sources of support in a cash economy society. Only after the establishment of an independent India, in 1947, was a new trend discerned--the search by artists for additional help in the form of State Government aid.

Aside from the struggle for economic survival and other monetary considerations, the history of Tamasha during the first half of the twentieth century was marked by experimentation in efforts to make the form relevant to contemporary social issues as well as to broader segments of the population. These experiments led to the

development of the "sophisticated" Tamasha--the loknatya, or people's theatre--which is distinguished from its "raw" counterpart by its refinements in form and language. The refinement of the form has helped to overcome long-standing disdain of Tamasha among the Marathi middle-classes, including the intelligentsia.

From the views presented on the state of the art today (Chapter III), it is possible to conclude that some of the early vigor and spontaneity of Tamasha has been lost due to the effects of rapid social change, economic hardships among artists, and the challenge posed by the developing mass media, notably film. In particular, the "raw" Tamasha tradition appeared to be in a precarious situation, mainly due to social and economic deprivations affecting most of rural Maharashtra. It is now apparent that any real change for the better depends upon social and economic betterment of society as a whole.

Meanwhile, there appeared to be strong indications that the "sophisticated" Tamasha, or loknatya, was growing in public respectability and that it was finding a permanent place in the live theatre scene. The development was based, evidently, upon the increasing availability of professional acting, dancing, singing, and writing talents from the middle-class sectors of society.

These indications may be taken as a demonstration of the vitality and resiliency of Tamasha. The "raw" tradition represents an impulse strong enough, for the foreseeable future, to nourish the "sophisticated" theatre and film experiments in the cities; while the "life-line" to the people--the "raw" core--draws continued local

sustenance from the villages. (We recall that film-star Raj Kapoor was concerned about this matter when he urged Tamasha artists to stay close to the people so they would not work in a vacuum like that "artificial breed"--the film actors.)

In a later chapter, we observed that the efforts made by the State Government and by private bodies to regulate Tamasha have had a significant impact upon the folk form. From the positive standpoint, a measure of good taste has been instilled which has apparently resulted in increasing public acceptance of Tamasha as a family entertainment. Moreover, some social and economic improvement has been recorded among many of the performing troupes. A growing sense of social dignity has also been established to help Tamasha performers attain professional status as artists.

On the other hand, the interjection of rules and regulations by Government, particularly the censorship of presentations, has had the effect of stifling much of the volatile "raw" entertainment energies of the rural Tamasha troupes. The playwright and humorist P. L. Deshpande was especially concerned that this stifling of energy may lead to the "emasculation" of the native Tamasha of the native Tamasha impulse which "is vital to the nourishment of both the 'raw' and 'sophisticated' Tamasha traditions."[1]

Another troubling phenomenon which has assumed much importance in the lives of Tamasha artists is the continuing political manipulation of the Marathi Tamasha Parishad, an organization originally created

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[1]P. L. Deshpande, private interview, November, 1970.

by concerned individuals. The artists, as noted previously, have become pawns in the broader considerations of political power and influence.

Part 2 of this study investigated the use of Tamasha as a traditional medium of mass communication to advance certain social and political ideas and programs.

It was observed that upon India's attainment of independence, the radical (anti-British, Communist) use of Tamasha in support of revolutionary aims had, to all practical purposes, ended, and that a milder form of social and political propaganda had taken its place.

Indications of growing, if limited, success of some of the modernization and development programs--notably family planning--may be cited as proof of effectiveness of the State Government's information and motivation campaign. Tamasha, by implication, must be credited with some share of responsibility in this limited success.

Privately, however, some Government officials have admitted to me that they are not really convinced that Tamasha style entertainments are very effective in communicating social messages to the masses.

My own assessment, based on discussion with other writers, artists, Government officials, and All-India Radio officers (who make use of Tamasha elements in some programming supporting rural development aims), is that better attention to the artistic traditions of Tamasha as well as to improvements in scripting and staging of the propaganda shows could sharpen the overall effectiveness of the program. These views may be summed up as follows: a delicate balance is required

between good, recognized artistry, the new and traditional conventions of the Tamasha form, and propaganda content.

Any conclusive assessment, however, must await results of more objective research into audience receptivity of the live entertainments. If it can be shown by scientific research methods that Maharashtrian villagers are really being motivated by direct, face-to-face means of communication (alone, or in combination with the modern mass media),[2] then the program could be pursued with greater confidence in the future.

All-India Radio does have something more enlightening to say about measuring the effect of its own utilization of Tamasha materials for broadcast purposes. (A.I.R. is under constant Government pressure to extend the reach of Tamasha-type propaganda through the electronic mass media for additional support of current development schemes.) A.I.R.'s Listener-Research Office keeps a record of public reaction to its programs, and more objective indications are available to judge success and non-success. According to K. G. Kelkar, Program Executive in Bombay, some twenty folk plays had been produced to January, 1971, on family planning alone, "all of which have gone down very well with the public, judging by our mail surveys." On the other hand, other subjects, such as small savings and community development, have attracted little interest.[3] Reaction of this kind

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[2]The idea is pursued in a number of recent communication studies, including Everett Rogers' Modernization Among Peasants (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Wilson, 1969), see especially Ch. 6.

[3]K. G. Kelkar, All-India Radio, private interview, Bombay, January, 1971.

is instructive to A.I.R. which is now aware that Tamasha is a better medium of instruction than taped talks or lectures. Another lesson to authorities is that only minimal propaganda can be usefully infused in folk materials.

One gathers the question is no longer, "What proof is there to justify use of Tamasha for propaganda?" but rather, "How far should a propagandist commit himself to the utilization of Tamasha?" From the State Government's plans (in 1971) to increase the number of sponsored troupes from forty to 200 (as noted in Chapter VI), it may be seen that Maharashtra has chosen to respond to the second question.

A similar situation prevails with respect to the political use of Tamasha presentations in support of election campaigns. To my knowledge, no attempt has been made to correlate live folk theatre performances with poll results, or at least to study the effect of folk theatre as a variable in the total communication strategy for an election. Political parties, we have noted, appear to be content to continue a practice which has evolved since the 1950s.

The results of the 1971 election, as we have viewed it from the Maharashtrian scene, may support the continued confidence in propagandistic Tamasha preformances, at least as far as the Ruling Congress Party is concerned. But even if further study and research should find that this confidence is unwarranted and unscientific, many of those I have interviewed believe the kala pathaks (Tamasha cultural squads) will again be in the middle of the battle for votes and voter influence at the next election.

From the materials presented in Part 2 of this study, it is clear that Tamasha has survived the mid-twentieth century experiments in ideological propaganda without gross distortion of its form. In effect, ideological experimentation served to refine the form and to make it increasingly respectable for wider audiences.

Concerning the form itself, it may be concluded that Tamasha provides a great deal of plasticity to the playwright provided that certain limitations are observed. Our study (in Chapter III) of three playwrights--Shahir Sable, Vasant Sabnis, and Vijay Tendulkar--revealed the following major limitations of the form: (1) Tamasha is primarily an entertainment vehicle, in which the entertaining quality must be respected; and (2) Tamasha depends more upon the improvisational abilities of the actors than on the playwright, and the writer is therefore obliged to develop his works with sufficient flexibility to accommodate such improvisation.

It was apparent that both Sable and Sabnis were capable of working successfully within the framework imposed by these limitations; while Tendulkar was unable to fulfill his creative impulses.

One major technical feature of the form, however, served to benefit all three writers: the sense of relative freedom afforded by Tamasha's theatrical conventions, including the open stage approach to time and space; the utilization of actor-audience involvement; and the employment of a songadya (jester) for verbal wit and satire.

But gaps in our understanding of Tamasha still exist, notably in the critical evaluation of the growing body of Tamasha literature.

The field of criticism is still wide open in this respect for interested Marathi scholars. As suggested in this study, a wealth of script materials is available for such study at the Stage Performances Scrutiny Board Offices in Bombay.

Finally, there are implications to be drawn from this study for Western theatre practitioners and scholars. By a process of transposition, some of the elements of the form, conventions, and production in Tamasha could be adapted to purely North American requirements in the creation of a new and lively production format.

Western scholars have by no means exhausted the lessons that can be gained from Asian theatre traditions. There remains much to be gleaned, much to be transposed. This transposition of conventions and forms must be encouraged if theatre is to move toward more meaningful and honest relationships between performers and audiences, and if these relationships are to deepen and enrich the human experience.

From Tamasha, specifically, we can borrow an unusual form of variety theatre presentation--a fast-paced show of music, dance, dramatic pieces--all worked into a unified whole. A troupe of actors, singers, dancers, and musicians could together work out the shape of the content which would be based upon prior study of the old and new music, vaudeville, and theatre traditions of America, and thematic concerns in the environment and among people. The idea would be to seek a basis for identification with audiences, although this might ideally work only for one ethnic group or one geographically limited community at a time.

By working together, the members of the troupe would hopefully develop a sense of spontaneity and ease reaching directly to audiences.

The close relationship of music to the dance and to the drama, and of the whole to the audience, would be sought in production. With careful direction, the form could be an agreeable and infectious mixture of music, dance, wit, and satire.

To date, the closest North American approximation of this approach may be found in the work of the San Francisco Mime Troupe. But the transposition or Americanization of Tamasha could, I believe, take a more broadly based direction (across social and economic class lines), and initiate a strong rapport between performers and audiences.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

Baari: Troupe. There are sangeet-baaris, which are Tamasha song-and-dance troupes, and dholki-baaris (also called dholki-phads), which are basically dramatic troupes performing farces and vags, or folk dramas.

Bhedic compositions: Riddles in song and verse forming questions and answers, and displaying fine wit.

Chakkad: Short poetic dialogue units on the subject of love, set to music.

Daf: Large tambourine-shaped percussion instrument which produces a flat but striking beat.

Daulat-Jadda: Money given to Tamasha artists by spectators at performances. The practice originated in Moghul times, but is now found only in "raw" (rural or unrefined) Tamasha performances in villages and in a handful of theatres in Bombay, Poona, Kolhapur and other large towns.

Dholki: Two-sided drum, shaped cylindrically and suspended by straps from the shoulders. It is the most characteristic instrument in Tamasha and provides the form with its essential rhythms for singing and dancing.

Dholki-Baari: A dramatic troupe, with its own musicians, singers and dancers, which performs farces and vags, or folk dramas.

Gan: The opening segment of any complete Tamasha performance. It is a devotional song for the god Ganesha, patron of the arts, to whom invocation is made for almost any happy celebration or occasion.

Gaulan: The second segment of a Tamasha performance which is a light-hearted and often lascivious treatment in song, dance, and dialogue of the young Krishna's encounter with the gaulans (or gopis or milkmaids) on the road to the holy city of Mathura.

Ghungrus: Ankle bells of a Tamasha dancer.

Halgi: Percussion instrument which looks like a tambourine, but which is actually a smaller version of a similar-looking instrument called the daf.

Jatra: A village fair at which Tamasha troupes often perform. (It is also the name given to the folk theatre form of Bengal.)

Kade: A metal percussion instrument in the shape of a triangle, used in Tamasha performances.

Kirtan: A one-man performance in song and narrative of stories from Hindu Mythology. The Kirtankar is the storyteller. The form originates with temple story-tellers. Traditional Kirtans are performed to this day, but modern content has also been introduced by State Government agencies to spread messages of family planning among traditionally-minded women, especially in small villages.

Lavanis: Sensuous, often lascivious poems which have rhythms and metres enabling them to be sung in particular ways, to instrumental accompaniment--a harmonium, tabla or dholki--while one or more dancers will freely give vigorous and soulful expression to the emotions expressed in the text.

Molak: The owner of a Baari or troupe.

Manjeera: Tiny, brass cymbals, struck in rhythmic accompaniment to the dholki-player.

Natch poryas: Young male dancers who played women's roles in the early Tamashas. It wasn't until the turn of the twentieth century that they were replaced by women.

Ovi: Shepherd's song.

Paise: India's smallest unit of coinage. One hundred paise equal one rupee.

Povada: Originally battlefield ballads in praise of heroic kings, warriors, struggles and political events. The lines are long and regular and are used as pure narrative. It might also be described as rhythmic narrative, the rhythm being provided in the lines of the ballads themselves.

Rupee: The value of the Indian rupee in 1971 was 13.3 cents. Seven and one-half rupees were equal to one U.S. dollar.

Sangeet-baari: A song-and-dance troupe performing mainly lavanis, Urdu songs (gazals and kavalis), and film songs.

Sardar: The leader of a Tamasha troupe who may assume the main dramatic roles as well as the direction and choreography of productions.

Shahir: Literally, people's poet; also, an honorific title assumed by the poet-dramatist; sometimes used in an honorific sense to denote the leader of a dholki-baari Tamasha troupe.

Songadya: The jester of any Tamasha troupe whose improvised antics and dialogues are designed to keep audience interest from flagging.

Tuntuni: A crude one-stringed folk instrument used in Tamasha.

Vag: A humorous dramatic presentation by a dholki-baari.

APPENDIX B

A SAMPLE PROPAGANDA TAMASHA SCRIPT FOR GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

APPENDIX B

A SAMPLE PROPAGANDA TAMASHA SCRIPT FOR GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The sample script reproduced here in English adaptation from the original Marathi was written and produced for village tours by the Kala Sangam (Performing Arts Troupe), Poona, at the request of the Government of Maharashtra Directorate of Publicity. The Kala Sangam is headed by V. L. Inamdar.

The script dates back several years. It has not been published and there are no copyright restrictions governing its reproduction here. The author is Prakash Inamdar. Translation and adaptation: Nilima Vaidya and Tevia Abrams.

Kala Sangam is one of the better-known troupes engaged in a live folk media campaign for the Government in support of national and regional development and modernization programs.

ANNOUNCER

Shahir Appasaheb Inamdar and his party will perform a cultural program. It will begin with the Maharashtra Geet composed by the late Shripad Krishna Kolhatkar, and it will continue with the entertainment program.

(The cast sings the Maharashtra Geet)

You are beautiful and rich,
Our beloved Maharashtra.
Like mountains pushing to the sky.
Your history is like that,
And the sky is the limit of your ambitions.

What are palaces to temples of the heart?
Big and miraculous centres of gentle languages,

Her heart, her chastity brightens the house . . .
. . . . . .
Let the song of the Marathas be heard!
Let its spirit be expressed in words!
Let its faith dwell in the heart!
And, if the time comes,
Let us sacrifice life for the just cause.

ANNOUNCER

And now, we start the real program, with a prayer to Ganesha [the gan], followed by the gaulan.

(The cast sings the devotional gan)

Poet of poets, oh, Gajanan!
Listen to the Vedas.
Inspire the uneducated and entertain the people.
Weave garlands of our words
So they will strike the right meanings.
Order the seven notes to play in the throat
Of a skilful singer.
Make Sidhi dance divinely with Saraswati
On the stage, oh Ganesha!
The Ganesha is pleased.
Oh, speak to us now!
Oh, tuntuni player, let's hear you too,
Make joyous your rhythms.
Oh, Dimdi, speak! You too, Tikan!
Sound out, you cymbals.
Oh dancer, get up and stamp your feet!
Why are your dancing bells silent?
Oh, Songadya! Fix your turban.
Humor should be ready on your tongue.

(SCHOOLMASTER enters. SHAHIR and SONGADYA look to him)

SHAHIR

Hello, master.

SONGADYA

Hello, master.

MASTER

Greetings, everyone. That was a fine gan. I liked the singing very much, especially because I never heard it before.

SHAHIR

Naturally. How could you have heard it before? You're one of those old-fashioned people who never paid any real attention to the devotional gans. Shahirs Ram Joshi and Honaji Bala were among the up-to-date new generation writers, even if they are long dead now.

SONGADYA

Brand new, of course.

MASTER

Funny, isn't it? . . . That being "new" is considered "good."

SONGADYA

Funny? What do you mean by funny?

MASTER

What I mean is, when a person sees something new he always runs head-long for it. And what does he get?

SONGADYA & SHAHIR

What?

MASTER

Only a new label. Inside, there's nothing of substance.

SONGADYA

You mean our new generation lacks substance?

MASTER

Only a new lable. Inside, there's nothing of substance.

SONGADYA

You mean our new generation lacks substance?

MASTER

No. No. Why should I label everything? (Pause) Alright, now . . . just what do you think is going to happen now?

SHAHIR

How should I know? How can I tell what's supposed to be in front of us?

SONGADYA

Easy. Look out there! The lights are on and we can see so many people in front of us.

MASTER

Sure, but what's supposed to happen in front of those people out there?

SONGADYA

You seem to be in a fix.

MASTER

Not at all. The problem is simple. The gan is over . . . I mean traditionally. It's like looking at an approaching train. When you see the engine, you know there are coaches following. The same when you see a tree in the sun. You know there'll be shade beneath it. And with people, you know there's love. (Points to SHAHIR) But with the phony holy man like that one . . . you suspect there are some women following, like the ones you see behind every phony sadhu all over our country. (Sighs) What I really mean is, don't you plan to do the gaulan part of this program now that the gan is over?

SHAHIR

(Laughs) I never suspected such a withered old leaf could have its touch of green.

SONGADYA

But Shahir . . . this green touch is more bitter than you think.

MASTER

Is that so? What do you mean by that?

SONGADYA

Let me tell you in a proper traditional way. Take any tree, for example. Let it be a peepul tree or a banyan. No matter how old they are, they turn green in the dry season.

MASTER

What's so special about that? That's a purely natural thing.

SONGADYA

(To audience) Why is this old trunk with new leaves worried about the gaulan?

SHAHIR

Look, Master, we've got the gaulans ready.

MASTER

If they're ready, let them come!

SHAHIR

Why do you want to rush them? Just because I say they're ready, that's no reason to rush it. Maybe they've got problems backstage.

SONGADYA

Those young milkmaids will be going to Mathura. They may get lost. Did you ever think of that? Well, just to help them along, we've asked Mavshi (Auntie) to accompany them.

SHAHIR

Of course! We must have a Mavshi.

SONGADYA

Let's face it. The Gaulans can't go anywhere unless they've got their Mavshi. Now if they are all set to go to market at Mathura, we can start the Gaulan. Otherwise no gaulan.

SHAHIR

And that means no program!

MASTER

Oh, boy! The trouble we're going to have finding a Mavshi.

SONGADYA & SHAHIR

What do you mean?

MASTER

I mean today you can get all kinds of new things, but anything traditional--like your Mavshi--is difficult to find.

SONGADYA

Look, master. We need a Mavshi at any cost. Age is no problem, and even if it's second hand, it'll do. Or give us the spare parts. Even that'll do. Only, we must have a Mavchi!

MASTER

(To audience) Alright, everyone! Since we can't ignore this problem and considering your desire for further entertainment, I am prepared to become the Mavshi. (MAVSHI is traditionally played by a man dressed in a sari as an old lady.) Right! Call the gaulans!

SONGADYA

I'll call them. But remember, master, you'd better not end up in a maternity hospital.

(Enter GAULANS, singing)

I am the child of Nand and Yeshoda.[1]
The ball rolled into a pond.
Young Krishna was a terror to the people of Mathura.
He made them dance all the time.

MAVSHI

(To GAULANS) Come! We're off to Mathura! I hope you've all decided to go.

GAULANS

Yes! Yes! Definitely.

MAVSHI

All dressed up? Got all your ornaments? . . . Your goods?

GAULANS

Yes. Everything.

MAVSHI

(To FIRST GAULAN) What exactly have you taken?

FIRST GAULAN

I've got buttermilk.

MAVSHI

(To SECOND) And you?

---

[1]Krishna's parents.

SECOND GAULAN

Me? I've got mlik.

MAVSHI

Good. (To THIRD) What have you taken?

THIRD GAULAN

Butter.

MAVSHI

Butter? That's a silly thing to take. Butter's gone down at the market. You'll never get a decent price for it.

THIRD GAULAN

Mavshi, You've been selling butter for many years now and you still don't understand that there's a great demand for butter in this country. We need enough to butter up the people so that work will get done.

MAVSHI

True. True. That's how it is. Go to a village. . . . (Mimes the buttering of bread, using both hands) Go to a district. . . . (Some gestures) Or a village. (Some gestures) Or a government hospital. . . .

THIRD GAULAN

Hospital? Why? . . .

MAVSHI

You should see a hospital. Fine experience. Just butter up the people there and you get the proper medicines. Otherwise, you're forgotten. Butter, my dear, is nothing less than a bribe. And that just isn't right. People really shouldn't offer bribes. You shouldn't be too generous with your butter. You just decide right now that you'll do the right thing and there'll be no question about bribes. (To FOURTH GAULAN) And you, my sweet. . . . What have you taken?

FOURTH GAULAN

I'm clever. I've taken some stale molasses.

MAVSHI

Clever! Clever! But who do you think will want to buy stale molasses?

FOURTH GAULAN

That's not important. Today it's the stale variety that goes. Plenty of customers, and they're paying high prices.

MAVSHI

Ah! That's because they can make home-made wines and liquors with it. That business pays well. But think of all the homes ruined by drink! And think of the part your sale of stale molasses plays in the destruction! Those who earn money in this way have to share their money all along the line. The police, for example. Probably, they'll never get caught. It's only the poor people like us, who get it in the neck. Don't get involved, pigeon. (To All) Let's go, everyone! It's late. No stopping on the way.

(MAVSHI and GAULANS go round in circles on the stage. Enter PENDYA, friend to KRISHNA.)

PENDYA

Stop! Stop!

MAVSHI

Whom are you talking to?

PENDYA

You, of course.

MAVSHI

Oh. (Continues on her way with the others)

PENDYA

Stop!

MAVSHI

What? Whom are you talking to?

PENDYA

You!

(MAVSHI continues her journey with the others)

PENDYA

(In English) Stop!

MAVSHI

(Stops) Oh, now I've just got to stop.

PENDYA & GAULANS

Why?

MAVSHI

Because he's talking in Sahib's language. English.

PENDYA

Sahib's?

GAULAN

What does that mean?

MAVSHI

(To Pendya) His Sahib was here for a hundred and fifty years. Somehow or other we managed to get rid of him, but his language stayed on.

PENDYA

Oh, I see.

MAVSHI

You're blocking our path. Who are you?

PENDYA

Don't you know me? I'm your . . .

MAVSHI

Inspector?

PENDYA

Do I look like one?

MAVSHI

I don't know. On whose authority have you stopped us?

PENDYA

My King's authority.

MAVSHI

Who's your King? Oh! Now look here! We've just got to get to market.

PENDYA

Then, pay my tax.

MAVSHI

First, you let us go to sell our goods, and then we'll pay your tax.

PENDYA

I'm always getting cheated like this. You're not going! That's final! Pay my tax!

MAVSHI

No! Why should I pay taxes to a slave?

PENDYA

Alright. I'm a slave. And he's my King. And you . . . gaulans . . . are members of his harem.

MAVSHI

Okay. If he's the King then we're his wives. And you're the slave. Then you just tell me how can a slave block the path of the King's wives?

PENDYA

Oh, but I'm a special slave. The King likes me. And I can stop anyone I please. . . . You or the King.

MAVSHI

Go on!

(All the GAULANS push PENDYA aside and continue on their way. KRISHNA enters, joins PENDYA and together they block the GAULANS.)

KRISHNA

Stop! One step more and it's . . . Pakistan!

PENDYA

Oh! Pakistan? (To AUDIENCE) Ah, now he's a column of tanks.

MAVSHI

(To GAULANS) All right, lovelies. I guess we'll just have to stop now.

FIRST GAULAN

Why, Auntie?

MAVSHI

Can't you see? Haven't you got eyes in your head?

FIRST GAULAN

I can only see red signals.

MAVSHI

That's the problem. The switch is closed.

KRISHNA

Am I a railway system? Obviously no one recognizes me here. I am Krishna of Mathura.

MAVSHI

Ah! But such a nice young man!

KRISHNA

Now you know who I am.

MAVSHI

Of course not! You don't look like a god.

KRISHNA

This auntie is very cheeky. Let's ask the others if they know me.

MAVSHI

If any of our girls know you then just take what you want and let us continue on our way.

KRISHNA

Alright. Ask them.

MAVSHI

(To FIRST) Do you know who this animal is?

FIRST GAULAN

No.

MAVSHI

(To SECOND) And you?

SECOND GAULAN

No.

MAVSHI

(To THIRD) Look at this building, my dear. It's an old historic structure. Damaged by the recent floods here in Poona, but not fully repaired like the old fort in Poona. Just look at it! Ground floor, a garage with two taxis and some trucks. First floor, small hotel. Second floor, a radio repair shop. Don't you recognize it by now? Krishna indeed!

THIRD GAULAN

No, Auntie.

MAVSHI

(To FOURTH) What about you?

FOURTH GAULAN

(Looking at KRISHNA) Ah . . . (Smiles)

PENDYA

What? Speak up!

FOURTH GAULAN

(To KRISHNA) Is it really you? Where have you been all this time?
(To MAVSHI) Yes, Auntie. I know him.

MAVSHI

(Dancing about) Ahah!

KRISHNA

Mavshi! What are you doing? Let the girl speak.

FOURTH GAULAN

On our way to Mathura, there's a small river.

PENDYA

(Interrupts) Is it the Jamuna?

MAVSHI

Sh!

FOURTH GAULAN

When we cross it, we reach an incline.

PENDYA

Yes. And you've got to climb a little.

MAVSHI

I said quiet!

FOURTH GAULAN

After climbing, we have to walk a bit . . .

PENDYA

(Interrupts) And then a little more . . .

MAVSHI

(Mimicking PENDYA) . . . And then you crawl a little further?
(Admonishing) Just keep quiet, will you?

FOURTH GAULAN

. . . And after walking a little, there's a peepul tree . . .

PENDYA

Right! Exactly!

MAVSHI

Where are we? You're both getting me all confused.

PENDYA & KRISHNA

(To FOURTH GAULAN) And are we there . . . somewhere in the branches of the tree?

MAVSHI

Ah! You know that tree.

PENDYA

Yes, because we generally sit beneath that tree for forty-two hours every day.

KRISHNA

Stupid! Only twenty-four hours in a day.

PENDYA

Well, I only reversed the number and I got forty-two.

KRISHNA

That comes from all your gambling and playing with numbers. You should get some education. An ignorant man has no hope in the world. Why, today we can send men to the moon. You've got to keep up with developments.

PENDYA

Okay. Next week I'll go to Mathura and I'll enroll in night school. And I'll teach the master. Whoops! I've reversed things again.

KRISHNA

Forget it now. Let the girl finish what she was saying.

FOURTH GAULAN

. . . And around the peepul tree there's a circular bench.

MAVSHI

This is so touching! (Looking to the imaginary tree) I can see a beautiful lady sitting there . . .

PENDYA

What's the matter with you? Why don't you let the Fourth Gaulan speak?

FOURTH GAULAN

. . . And in the branches of the tree, I see Krishna and his friend Pendya.

KRISHNA

What does she mean?

MAVSHI

She means you were sitting there selling something. . . . Look at their clothes. (Looking to the "tree.")

PENDYA

I see him too. He looks just like a minister without portfolio.

MAVSHI

Yes. Just look at his face. He looks so well fed.

PENDYA

Krishna, this is an insult to us. Let's get their names.

FIRST GAULAN

Shakuntala!

SECOND GAULAN

Madhubala!

THIRD GAULAN

Zadpala. (Note: a tree with leaves)

FOURTH GAULAN

Mandarmala! (Note: the title of a popular Marathi drama)

FIFTH GAULAN

Radhabala! (Radha is Krishna's beloved)

PENDYA

Mavshi, what about you?

MAVSHI

Vayajanti Mala!

PENDYA

Tell us your real name.

MAVSHI

I can't do that until I tell you my husband's name.

PENDYA

Why is that?

MAVSHI

Because he's four years older than I am.

PENDYA

How do you know?

MAVSHI

Because I was there at the time of his birth. . . . No-no! I mean my grandmother was there.

PENDYA

(Starts the sentence for her in official manner) My husband's name is . . .

MAVSHI

His name is Sri Bhausahib. But do you know what I call him? . . . (She pretends to be shy)

PENDYA

Hurry up! Pay us our tax and then go.

MAVSHI

But we have no money.

PENDYA

Then you'll have to entertain us. Sing us a song and you'll be free to go.

MAVSHI

Song? Listen.

Dance of the Gaulans.
Oh beautiful child of dark complexion.
Do not stop me, let me go home,
Or, there'll be trouble at home.
Please let me go!
You say you are the great lord Krishna.
Your name is loved by all.
How do you get along
With sixteen thousand milkmaids?
Tell me, explain this wonder.

The bank of the Kalindi River
Is a very pleasant place.
Why do you bar my way?
On my head, a heavy pot.
Don't stop me, or my husband will beat me,
And my mother-in-law will be angry,
Because work's not getting done,
And the baby will cry until I'm home.
Oh, don't play that flute of yours.
There's magic in it,
But your Radha's fed up with your magic.
Oh, why does love have no bounds?

PENDYA

Lovely, Auntie. Can any of your other milkmaids sing like you?

MAVSHI

Come on, Radha. Show him that you can sing.

(RADHA'S song and dance ends the GAULAN segment. This is followed

by the MAHARASHTRA DARSHAN, or
GLIMPSES OF MARATHI FOLK ARTS.)

MAHARASHTRA DARSHAN

1. VASUDEV, THE DANCER-PREACHER

(Note: Through VASUDEV's performance, the principles of Bhagvad Dharma, or the way of truth, are put to the people in simple language. Vasudev is still a popular form in villages, where he educates in word and in song about religion and about the world.)

(Characters are VASUDEV, PATIL, the village head, and PATIL's DAUGHTER-IN-LAW. An ANNOUNCER sets the scene.)

ANNOUNCER

(To Audience) Now, Vasudev will play his role in this show. He's got a pair of tiny cymbals, ghungrus around his ankles . . . just like a female Tamasha dancer. And on his head, colorful peacock feathers. He may not look like a very intelligent man, but don't be fooled. . . . He's a man of many talents. This is our village artist, but because of his appearance, we mistake him for a begger. But, our Vasudev has brought us some new message. (Setting the scene) And now, everyone, it's sunrise. Look! There's the Patil's house. And there, in the large courtyard, is the Patil's daughter-in-law. She's grinding grain. Enter Vasudev, singing. The children in the house rush out to listen. . . .

VASUDEV

(Singing)

Pay no attention to empty boasts.
Don't listen to cheap slogans,
And don't be frightened by the lion's roar.
Steel your mind! Be strong!
And take the name of Mahadev,
Take the name of God.

Our brothers are at the front,
Fighting for their lives.
Hold with them who trust in us,
By giving blood and wealth.

Many men will die.
Their women homeless made;
But in our hearts they'll live again.
And victory is yours . . .

Well, Patil, how did you like my song? A gift of grain? . . . A little money? . . .

PATIL

Yes, yes. Just a moment. (Calls to DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.) My dear? A little something for Vasudev. It's been a long time since he's been around.

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

I'm coming. (She gives some grain to VASUDEV and waits to be blessed.)

VASUDEV

(Blessing) May you be blessed with eight children.

PATIL

What's that? This is a curse, not a blessing.

VASUDEV

No curse, but a blessing.

PATIL

A curse, I tell you! Why don't you bless her with the children she desires? Eight is surely a curse.

VASUDEV

Ahah! Very well. (To DAUGHTER-IN-LAW) As many as you desire.

(NOTE: In Marathi, the traditional blessing for women is ashta putra, which means eight sons. In recent years, the government family planning campaign has changed the blessing to ishta putra, or, as many sons as you desire. This has been widely publicized.)

PATIL

No! No! Don't say, "As many as you desire." You should say, "Two are enough, and a third if you really must have more."

VASUDEV

Oh, that reminds me. The other day, I was in somebody's office and there was a notice-board with an advertisement about a large family which couldn't make ends meet because there were too many children. They had nothing to eat and were forced to beg for food. I'm just telling you what was on the notice-board. Me? . . . I'm just a simple man. Anyway, let's forget it. (To DAUGHTER-IN-LAW) What's your husband's name? (DAUGHTER-IN-LAW can't speak because she is shy.) Not the modern version, but his real Marathi name.

DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

Listen. We were sixteen of us under my father's wing. I was his pet. When I was young I used to play in the forest. This worried father. Father feared my short temper. I was very short-tempered, you know. Father thought I'd never get married. He searched the whole village, forgetting his own social position. Finally, he met my seventy-five-year-old mother-in-law, who looked just like a goddess. She had a nice son and I was soon betrothed. He's respected by the whole village because of his wealth. Jayaji Rao is his name.

VASUDEV

What a fine name you've taken. (To PATIL) May I ask something more? Just a little favor . . . five paise more? (Paise is India's smallest unit of coinage.)

PATIL

All right, but tell me what will you do with it?

VASUDEV

I'll use it for food.

PATIL

You probably earn five to ten rupees a day, don't you? (VASUDEV nods) Surely, you manage to save some of it.

VASUDEV

Last year it went well. I worked three months and I saved two hundred rupees. But it was stolen.

PATIL

But there's a better way. You can safely save your money at any post office.

VASUDEV

Why put it in the post office? I'll never get it back.

PATIL

Of course you will. The money won't go into anybody's pocket. In fact, you get a government-stamped receipt, and if you save your money for five years, you even get some added interest.

VASUDEV

That sounds good.

PATIL

In your songs you said our brothers have gone to fight. But they need rifles, tanks and canon. Where can we get this?

VASUDEV

Where? I'll tell you. America and Russia.

PATIL

That's just leading our country to destruction. You need wheat? Approach America. Artillery? Try Russia. Is there a country left in the world from which we haven't begged for something?

VASUDEV

What can we do? We haven't enough money.

PATIL

That's what I'm trying to tell you. If you open a savings account, the country can make use of your money.

VASUDEV

Don't try to fool me. How can a country make use of my money?

PATIL

Not you alone. If we all save, then we can create industries which will help us to become self-sufficient.

VASUDEV

But what's in it for me if I save?

PATIL

Just let me tell you. There's quite a bit. Your money can help to build schools and colleges. Your children can receive education there. Some of your children may grow to be doctors, lawyers.

VASUDEV

Oh! My son will become the boss. And I'll be his father?

PATIL

But this will happen only if you do what I say.

VASUDEV

Okay. Give me five *paise* more and I'll buy some tobacco. (Takes the money offered to him and exits dancing. The others exit also, except ANNOUNCER.)

ANNOUNCER

From what you all have seen here, you have surely noted the importance to our country of family planning and small savings. Next on our program is a beautiful *lavani* song and dance.

(A *Lavani*-Dancer enters and performs a song-and-dance number. The opening verse of the *Lavani* text is quoted below.)

Walking gracefully along,
My figure attracts the young men's eyes,
They look at me and say:
"Ah! Someone great has come."
And when I stroll down village lanes,
Excitement grows with every step.
. . . . . .

2. WAGHYA-MURALI

(Waghya is a male child dedicated to Khandoba, the god of war. Muralis are female devotees. Both devote their lives to this god and entertain his disciples with dances and music. The custom of dedicating children in this way is now banned.)

(Characters are: WAGHYA, a village PATIL, and ANNOUNCER.)

ANNOUNCER

And now, our Waghya-Murali. They are the disciples of Khandoba, god of war, but they're bringing us some new kind of message. I can see something going on in the village. There! In the courtyard of the Patil's house! Let's see what Waghya is saying.

PATIL

Come on, Waghya.

WAGHYA

Coming. (He dances and sings a song)

I came to the watering place
Where you're hiding,
Spying on me from a distance.
And now you've hit me with a pebble.
My earthen pot is broken.

I'm a girl just come of age.
You're a highwayman,
Stopping innocent girls,
Stealing their affections.
What a profession you've made!
You've stolen my heart.

Now, my body's all wet.
My young body trembles.
Why did you hit me with a pebble?

PATIL

Today's program should be a good one.

WAGHYA

It can be.

PATIL

Why?

WAGHYA

Because I'm starving.

PATIL

Haven't I given you enough already?

WAGHYA

Not enough.

PATIL

How can you say that?

WAGHYA

Because I have a single wife and eight children. . . . And a ninth is on the way.

PATIL

Stop! Stop the train! That's too many.

WAGHYA

Train? That was god's gift! There's nothing we mortals can do about it.

PATIL

This is why our country's in such a mess. Children! That's the only business that grows.

WAGHYA

But isn't the government asking us to grow more?

PATIL

Not in this field. They're talking about growing more food. And we've got enough mouths to feed as it is. As it is, sixty-four thousand new children are being born every day in India.

WAGHYA

Nothing wrong with that. Some of them must be dying at birth.

PATIL

Some. About twenty-eight thousand of them die every day. That still leaves thirty-six thousand who survive and go on eating and growing. So, today is thirty-six thousand, and tomorrow is also thirty-six thousand, and . . .

WAGHYA

Stop! Stop! Enough!

PATIL

At this rate, we soon won't have any place to live and nothing to eat. Why don't you go and see a doctor? Nine children indeed!

WAGHYA

I'm scared of doctors.

PATIL

Then send your wife.

(This segment ends with a song and dance)

WAGHYA AND PATIL

(Song)

The mountain peak is shining.
Sun's up! Let's take our meal,
And go down to the farm,
Where the fields are as green
As the shining emeralds
Beneath the early rays,
And ears of corn
Sway in the breeze.
To left and right, the crops are rich.
Wake up, dear farmer!
Wealth knocks at your door.
The morning breeze is cool.
Come on, wake up, dear farmer!

(This song ends the program for shorter performances; but longer shows continue with the following segment.)

3. VAG: TALATHI AND THE SOCIAL WORKER

(Characters are TALATHI and SARPANCH, village chiefs; PATIL; KOTWAL, a lesser village officer; MOHAN, the Dholki player; HIRA and HAUNSA, Tamasha dancers; SADASHIV, a villager, and the SOCIAL WORKER.)

TALATHI

(Greeting SOCIAL WORKER) Hello. Where is the meeting today?

SOCIAL WORKER

At the Sarpanch's house.

TALATHI

Why is it being held there?

SOCIAL WORKER

Because today is special. His son is to be named. And since we're all invited to the ceremony, we might as well meet there.

TALATHI

We should take a gift. Can't go empty-handed.

SOCIAL WORKER

What can we take this year? It's his eleventh child, you know. Why not a sealed envelope with nothing inside?

TALATHI

Good. I was going to give five rupees.

SOCIAL WORKER

Waste of money. Let's go!

(They move around the stage.
SARAPANCH waits at his door.)

TALATHI AND SOCIAL WORKER

(Greeting SARPANCH) Hi.

SARPANCH

Ah, it's good to see you. (To SOCIAL WORKER) First, we'll have the meeting, and then we'll break off for lunch.

SOCIAL WORKER

Fine. I'm ready.

SARPANCH

Let's begin. Whatever we decided last time has been carried out. (To SOCIAL WORKER) I hope it's done.

SOCIAL WORKER

Yes. The sand and gravel have been piled along the roadside. All we need is the steamroller. Also, the supports for the new school are in place, and bricks and stones have been brought to the site. Only the walls and the roof remain to be done. We're almost finished. As for the hospital, the medical staff has arrived. They're staying at the temple. All we have to do now is hire a contractor to build the hospital.

SARPANCH

Wonderful! Everything's being done so swiftly.

SOCIAL WORKER

I've got some submissions here. Here's one from our school headmaster. He says that every day more and more children are being educated. Last year, two hundred and fifty children received education in our school, and this year, the figure may reach four hundred. More each year. We should build a new school, he suggests. Ten classrooms measuring twenty by twenty.

SARPANCH

Send the request to the District Board.

SOCIAL WORKER

Second submission is from the doctor. Number of patients growing daily. In a four-month period, the number went from fifteen to a hundred. He recommends hiring an assistant physician. Also, he hopes the hospital will soon be built.

SARPANCH

This can also go to the District Board.

SOCIAL WORKER

Third submission. The government food-distribution shopkeeper. He needs more grain. Population growing too fast for our food allotment.

SARPANCH

I'll handle this myself. I'll see the government food officer. Very important matter. This business never seems to come to an end. We

build a school and then it becomes too small. We made good plans for a small hospital, but I can already see it will be too small by the time it's ready.

SOCIAL WORKER

That's true. Something must be done.

SARPANCH

And soon.

SOCIAL WORKER

Here comes the Kotwal.

KOTWAL

I've got some people outside who want to meet you. Mohan the *dholki*-player and Hira the Tamasha dancer.

SARPANCH

Ah! Good. Good. The right time. Ask them to come in. (KOTWAL brings MOHAN and HIRA) Welcome. Glad to see you. (To KOTWAL) Make arrangements for the accommodation of the artists, will you? (To HIRA) This meeting is too serious and weighty. We need some pleasant diversion. Will you sing us a song?

(MOHAN begins playing on the *dholki* and HIRA dances and sings a *lavani*)

HIRA

(Song)

He came to my door.
His looks pleased me.
He came to the ceremony
With a coconut in his hand.
You cast a magic spell by giving it to me.
You made me feel so silly.
Really! This is your great talent!

Seeing you, my heart began to pound,
And you won me over.
Let me tell you a secret,
And don't forget my words:
You don't know what kind of magic you did,
But we'll soon be reaping the fruit.
Really! This is your great talent!

I was twenty-one for the first,
And twenty-five for the fifth;
But now you've gone away
Leaving us to face what comes.
Your children shout your name,
And I sit just helplessly,
Still hoping you'll return.
Really! This is your great talent!

SOCIAL WORKER

Look! She's also brought out the same problem in her song. He goes out for pleasure and his family's left behind. (To HIRA) Have you found him yet?

HIRA

That's why I've come here. I want to lodge a complaint. Either you find my husband, or you look after the kids.

SARPANCH

Who? Us? What are you saying?

SOCIAL WORKER

Is all this true. . . . What you were singing about?

HIRA

Of course it's true, because I've given up my art. That's what happens to all Tamasha girls. When we have children, it's all over for singing and dancing.

PATIL

True. True. Once the audience knows a dancer's got children, they frown on her.

HIRA

That's what happened to my elder sister. In her prime, she'd get a hundred rupees a night, but when it was learned she had children, the gifts and praises ended. She had to give it all up.

PATIL

What's she doing now?

HIRA

She sells food at a bus-stop and earns thirty, maybe forty, a day. Strange, eh? First they rushed to her because of her artistry, and now they rush to her because of her hot potato patties.

PATIL

Yes. People are really strange.

(HAUNSA enters; all eyes turn to her)

HAUNSA

Ah, there you are! (Looking to TALATHI) I thought so! Let's go home.

TALATHI

(To HAUNSA) You go. I'll be home soon.

HAUNSA

What's the matter? Are you ashamed of Me? Why don't we let everyone know about it? . . .

PATIL

First tell me who you are. (To TALATHI) Who is she?

TALATHI

I'm her husband and she's my wife, by marriage. You were there for our wedding.

PATIL

But I was there to see the other ladies. All right, now. What's the problem?

HAUNSA

Listen, and then pass judgment.

(Song)

I am his wife by marriage.
He's such a husband!
You five officers ask him . . .
Since the day we got married
He's never bought me a single sari.

Ask, if it's true or not!
He roams about without a job,
And tells fine stories to everyone.
How is he supposed to feed us?
It got so bad he almost killed us.
He says he's going mad.
You five gods . . .

(Now TALATHI sings in reply)

TALATHI

(Sings)

Patil, don't listen to her.
We've enough to eat at home;
But her thoughts are with her father's house:
Her body's here, her soul is there.
You five gods . . . ask if it's true or not.

(HAUNSA sings her reply)

HAUNSA

(Sings)

Such fine tales!
His house is almost empty,
But at my father's home
Horses, cattle and bullocks roam.
Even his mother is sheltered here.
You five gods . . .

TALATHI

(Sings)

Patil, you know the truth.
Her father is my uncle.
I was forced to marry her.

PATIL

I still can't understand your problem.

TALATHI

(To HAUNSA) Why don't you go home?

HAUNSA

But I want to know!

TALATHI

(To PATIL) Then, listen to me, Patil. She can't have a child. . . . That's the real problem.

PATIL

So. What are we supposed to do? We haven't yet established a department for such troubles. Have you tried praying? Let me tell you about my father. He was desperate to have children. So he went to temple at Pandharpur and sat in the doorway determined not to leave until his prayers were answered. Well, he waited not only for the next month period but three long years. Then, one day he got a cable from his wife saying she had given birth to a son. He was so happy that before going back to his home, he made special offerings to God. You know, of course, that I'm that son.

SOCIAL WORKER

The older generation really believed in God. But the youth today have lost the faith.

(From backstage, shouts of "Leave me!" "Leave me!")

KOTWAL

(Runs on stage) I'm dead! Dead! Save me!

SOCIAL WORKER

Calm down. Relax. Who's dead?

(SADASHIV enters)

SADASHIV

Me! I've come to tell you that this Kotwal wouldn't let me in here.

PATIL

No arguments, please. Today is a special day. The naming ceremony for my son.

SADASHIV

What does that matter to me? My wife has just killed herself.

PATIL

Is that true? Did you do it?

SADASHIV

Why should I want to kill my wife? Oh, misery! When the ninth child was born, the doctor said she wouldn't survive a tenth. But it happened. When she found out she was pregnant, she said it would be better to die beforehand. And so she jumped into a well. I heard the noise. I went to see what the trouble was but I was too late to help her.

PATIL

What will you do now? At least she's saved from your hands. Now you can look after your nine kids.

SOCIAL WORKER

(To audience) What you've seen here is not so strange. It happens every day. At the least, there's a lesson to be learned. You can draw your own conclusions. (He sings)

Listen to my story, remember it well,
Unemployment and poverty are everywhere.
We have come upon bad times.
The land, once golden, has turned to mud.

Do you see how bad the times are?
Do you want to make them right?

We'll have a better future,
If you think of family planning . . .
Tonight!

SARPANCH

It's true!

SOCIAL WORKER

(To SADASHIV) All right. But first you better prepare yourself to meet the police.

(THE END)

APPENDIX C

A SAMPLE PROPAGANDA TAMASHA SCRIPT FOR ELECTION PUBLICITY: WE MUST WIN THIS TIME

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A SAMPLE PROPAGANDA TAMASHA SCRIPT FOR ELECTION PUBLICITY: WE MUST WIN THIS TIME

The script reproduced here in English adaptation from the original Marathi was written by Jagdish Khebudkar of Kolhapur for the Ruling Congress Party of Bombay and was intended for production in the 1971 mid-term national election campaign. The script has not been published and there are no copyright restrictions governing its reproduction here. Translation and adaptation: Nilima Vaidya and Tevia Abrams.

1: GAN-GAULAN

(Enter SHAHIR and his accompanists, followed by SONGADYA)

SONGADYA

(To SHAHIR) What are you doing here?

SHAHIR

Don't you know? Boy, you're behind the times! Haven't you a clue about what's happening?

SONGADYA

You tell me. Wherever I turn, there's a meeting. People gathering everywhere.

SHAHIR

And the shahirs (poets) are there singing about the elections.

SONGADYA

Elections? Ah! I thought they were praying or begging or something.

SHAHIR

Well, they pray too . . . in order to satisfy the gods. Why don't we do the same and seek their blessings?

SONGADYA

All right. Let's try a gan. One that will please the gods as well as the people.

SHAHIR

All right. Let's go! (He prepares to sing.)

(Enter two dholki players)

Ganesha, I'm praying to you.
Listen to me,
Come to us in human form,
And bless us.
You're fond of art,
And this is just for you.
I hope it's appropriate,
Please inspire us,
The bonds between us are immortal.
We are ready to serve you,
Just support us always,
This is what we ask.

SONGADYA

The gan sounded fine. But how do we know what the Ganesha answered?

SHAHIR

How can anybody know that right away? You've got to wait for an answer--right or left.

SONGADYA

Hey! Don't use those words. They smell of politics and politics reminds me of color . . . Red.

SHAHIR

Well, what color do you like best?

SONGADYA

White! Pure white.

SHAHIR

That's no color!

SONGADYA

Actually, I like three colors, counting red.

SHAHIR

Which?

SONGADYA

Orange on top. White in the middle. And green on the bottom. This gives me a peaceful feeling. (Pause) Our flag.

SHAHIR

Look over there. (Points forward) Something's happening. What kind of peaceful feeling is that?

SONGADYA

What? Have we come to Calcutta?

SHAHIR

No. Gokul. This is the place where Krishna and the Gopis lived.

SONGADYA

Then, it must be the election campaign. I hear Krishna's coming to make his choice among the gaulans. The milkmaids have mounted a campaign and they're all fighting about which one's better. This one says, "I'm good, she's bad, elect me." And others say the same.

SHAHIR

Who do you think Krishna's going to elect?

SONGADYA

No time for discussion. Here come the gaulans.

(Enter gaulans dancing)

SHAHIR

Why are they just dancing like that?

SONGADYA

It's not dancing. It's campaigning. Come on, let's break it up. You pretend you're Krishna and I'll be your buddy Pendya.

SHAHIR

I'm ready.

SONGADYA

Alright. One . . . two . . . three!

(SONGADYA raises his hand imperiously before the dancing GAULANS. They stop dancing. MAVSHI, or Auntie is their leader. She is played traditionally by a man dressed in a *sari*.)

PENDYA

Who are you?

MAVSHI

Who do you think I am?

PENDYA

Don't be cheeky! Krishna's asked me to stand here.

MAVSHI

What are you standing for? And what's your symbol?

PENDYA

Whatever you like, but my name is Pendya.

MAVSHI

So! You're Pendya.

FIRST GAULAN

(To MAVSHI) He's nobody to be scared of, auntie.

SECOND GAULAN

Let's push him aside and move on.

THIRD GAULAN

Yes. There's no need to be afraid of him. But you must show some respect.

MAVSHI

Respect? What for?

THIRD GAULAN

Because he's the people's representative.

SECOND GAULAN

Then, what are we supposed to do?

THIRD GAULAN

First, we should apologize for being rude.

FIRST GAULAN

Why?

THIRD GAULAN

Because, my dear, your future is in his hands.

MAVSHI

How's that?

PENDYA

You see, Krishna is all set today to elect some of the gaulans. He's going to do some special test and he's asked you all to stand in a single line.

MAVSHI

But he won't be able to judge properly if we just stand in a line.

FIRST AND SECOND GAULAN

Right. She's right.

THIRD GAULAN

(To FIRST and SECOND) Then what do you suggest?

FIRST AND SECOND GAULAN

We can plan a propaganda campaign.

THIRD GAULAN

That's an idea. But you ought to make sure you won't end up condemning each other.

MAVSHI

We'll see to that.

PENDYA

There he is, ladies. Krishna himself.

(As KRISHNA enters, GAULANS begin to move in a circle around the stage.)

KRISHNA

Pendya, who are these ladies?

PENDYA

Your candidates.

KRISHNA

Ah! Then they ought to be tested.

PENDYA

Why not a little enjoyment before your work?

KRISHNA

Good idea. (To GAULANS) Who are you, ladies? Where are you going? And why are you waiting around here?

MAVSHI

(To THIRD GAULAN) Look! He's already cross-examining us.

SECOND GAULAN

(To KRISHNA) We're all gaulans.

FIRST GAULAN

We're going to Mathura to sell milk, curds, butter and butter-milk.

PENDYA

In that case, you're obliged to pay taxes.

KRISHNA

Pendya! You look after each of these gaulans!

PENDYA

(To GAULANS) Okay, ladies! What've you got?

SECOND GAULAN

Me? I've got curds.

PENDYA

Why is the color red?

SECOND GAULAN

Because the milk burned.

PENDYA

(To KRISHNA) She's got curds. But they're red in color.

KRISHNA

Hold a deposit and exact a heavy tax.

PENDYA

(To FIRST GAULAN) And what've you got?

FIRST GAULAN

I've got butter.

PENDYA

Why is the color black?

FIRST GAULAN

Because I'm dark.

PENDYA

(To KRISHNA) This one's got butter. Color's black. And it looks stale.

KRISHNA

Tell her there's no market for black butter.

PENDYA

(To MAVSHI) What do you have?

MAVSHI

Buttermilk.

PENDYA

Yellow buttermilk? And why is it mixed with so much water?

KRISHNA

Pendya! Take a big slice of tax on that one! (Looks around) Who's left?

PENDYA

(Looking to THIRD GAULAN) This one. What've you got?

THIRD GAULAN

Plain white milk.

PENDYA

(To KRISHNA) I think she's an honest milkmaid.

THIRD GAULAN

That's because we truly and faithfully serve the public.

PENDYA

Look, Krishna. Even her thoughts are pure and good.

KRISHNA

Let her go, tax-free.

MAVSHI

(To THIRD GAULAN) You've got some kind of influence with him. That's not good. Your innocent looks are spoiling it for the rest of us. (To KRISHNA) This is not a fair election!

PENDYA

Are you standing for election yourself?

FIRST GAULAN

Don't say anything against her!

SECOND GAULAN

(To PENDYA) Another word against Mavshi and I'll pour all my curds over you.

KRISHNA

Don't fight with them, Pendya. I've got an idea. (To GAULANS) Each of you state your case, and I'll choose the best story.

MAVSHI

Agreed. Let's begin.

PENDYA

(To SECOND GAULAN) What's your name?

SECOND GAULAN

My name is Red.

PENDYA

Red?

SECOND GAULAN

Yes. Because everybody likes this color at home.

PENDYA

How many people at your home?

SECOND GAULAN

Five. They're all called comrades. There are more, but they're abroad right now.

PENDYA

Where?

SECOND GAULAN

In Russia. They're earning money.

PENDYA

What will you do if Krishna elects you?

SECOND GAULAN

I'll nationalize all the cows. And I'll put them all into government barns. And all the milkmen and milkmaids will work for the government. They'll work and earn on a fair basis. Those who don't agree will go without.

PENDYA

And what about the milk?

SECOND GAULAN

It will be stored in the government dairy. Those who need it can come to get their quarter-liter per day.

PENDYA

And what will you do with Krishna?

SECOND GAULAN

His rights as a god will be taken away, because I don't believe in gods, his kingdom will be confiscated, and he'll be obliged to seek work in the government dairy.

KRISHNA

Pendya, throw her out of India!

PENDYA

(To SECOND GAULAN) Did you hear him? You better not show your face again. (Pushes her offstage; to FIRST GAULAN) What's your name?

(PENDYA pushes SECOND GAULAN offstage)

(To FIRST GAULAN) What's your name?

FIRST GAULAN

Miss Yellow, if you please, sir.

PENDYA

How many in your family?

FIRST GAULAN

Two.

PENDYA

What will you do if Krishna elects you?

FIRST GAULAN

I'll make everybody in society equal in height.

PENDYA

How will you do that?

FIRST GAULAN

I'll line everybody up and I'll cut the legs off those who are too tall. That will make everybody equal.

PENDYA

And what about the cows?

FIRST GAULAN

Equal distribution to the people.

PENDYA

And what about Krishna?

FIRST GAULAN

His kingdom will also be distributed equally among the people.

PENDYA

And Krishna himself? His hands, legs, feet . . .

KRISHNA

That's enough. This one ought to be banished.

(PENDYA rushes FIRST GAULAN off-stage, then turns to MAVSHI)

Now, what's your name?

MAVSHI

Old Black!

PENDYA

What a funny name!

MAVSHI

Yes. You see, my family holds old ideas.

PENDYA

Then why is your second name Black?

MAVSHI

Because we oppose the Whites.

PENDYA

What will you do if Krishna elects you?

MAVSHI

I'll make a law that all milkmaids should pray to the cow every day. Only milkmen and milkmaids will be allowed to live in our community. Everybody else will be forced to leave.

PENDYA

What will you do to Krishna?

MAVSHI

I'll send him to bed and I'll look after everything.

KRISHNA

Pendya, tell her to come back when her heart grows to be as big as her body is now.

(MAVSHI exits)

PENDYA

(To THIRD GAULAN) What's your name?

THIRD GAULAN

Miss Radha White. (RADHA is KRISHNA's love) I'll give up my life in the service of Krishna. I'll share all his joys and his sorrows.

KRISHNA

I'm pleased with you. I represent the Indian public.

THIRD GAULAN

And I, the Ruling Congress Party.

(All three sit and join hands.)

(END OF GAULAN)

LAVANI SONG

(All Sing)

How are you, Red Brother?
Is it true what people say?
Yesterday, it seems, you went to Russia,
And you had some secret talks.
Aren't you ashamed
Of all this devotion
To a foreign country?

Yesterday, it seems, you began some struggles:
The raids spread quickly out of hand.
You plundered and you murdered--
Maybe that's what you like,
But why do you want the people's votes?

Yesterday, it seems, you attended a meeting,
And said some nasty things:
You shouted till your voice gave out.
Why are you standing for elections?
Your faith lies beyond our borders,
A blot on the nation's pride.
At least that's what people are saying,
So don't be angry when they call you traitor.

2: FARCE

(Enter TATYARAO and APPAJI)

TATYA

I can't see a thing!

APPA

Are you blind?

TATYA

Ah, it's you! Where are you going?

APPA

To your house.

TATYA

What for?

APPA

To straighten something out. I'd like to know what all this chaos is about.

TATYA

Elections.

APPA

But it's early for that.

TATYA

No way out. Parliament was split.

APPA

What happened?

TATYA

Because the Supreme Court didn't accept the government's ending of the princely purses.

APPA

What was wrong with what the government did? These young Maharajahs are living off properties their forefathers had earned. And today they sit around while the poor starve to death.

TATYA

Right. But nobody understands that. God knows what the Court thought when they sat in judgment against the government.

APPA

This should never have happened.

TATYA

Maybe it's a good thing. Because it shows that some of the criticisms about Indira are unfounded. For example, they say she's lusting after power.

APPA

If that's true, she wouldn't have dissolved parliament.

TATYA

That's what I mean. Indira's lust is not for power. She's after a better society. Just let her win this election and she'll put a ten-point plan into immediate action.

APPA

Plans! We've had so many in the past. But not one of them has helped the poor.

TATYA

Thoughts are free, Appa. But we should judge by what we see before our eyes. Congress has already done much for the poor.

APPA

Other parties can do the same. All of them have plans.

TATYA

Then, why are they so far behind?

APPA

Well, just let any one of them get elected.

TATYA

We have some ideas about that. What about the elections of the past?

APPA

Economic problems!

TATYA

What did that have to do with anything? If you want to win votes, you have to win minds.

APPA

But this time, it'll be difficult.

TATYA

Why?

APPA

Because you Congress people have changed your symbol. The bullock-cart was useful only for the farmer. The new symbol of the cow and the calf applies to all classes of society. Cow stands for the New Congress and the calf is the public. Truth will not die. The majority will be ours.

APPA

We'll see what happens. The time is not far off.

(END OF FARCE)

3: DRAMATIC VAG

(Home of the wealthy old lady, DESHMAMI, who symbolizes the aunt to the entire nation.)

DESHMAMI

(To her servant) Nirbhalya! (He enters) Where's our accountant? Must speak to him! Absolutely! Some things are going to be changed around this house, and I must speak to him.

NIRBHALYA

But you just got rid of him the other day. (The accountant referred to is Shri Chavan, who was ousted from Indira's Cabinet but later brought back because of his personal power. This vag is an attempt at an "explanation" of this action.)

DESHMAMI

Certain things he did weren't right. Divanji's behaviour seemed to rub this household the wrong way.

NIRBHALYA

Was that the only reason for kicking him out?

DESHMAMI

Well . . . You can't go against the majority, you know. If you want to keep the trust of those around you, you sometimes have to sacrifice even the truth.

(Enter DIVANJI, the accountant)

DIVANJI

Absolutely correct, Deshmami! It doesn't matter whether it's your house or the whole country . . . if a man is right for the job, that's all that's important.

NIRBHALYA

Who ever said you weren't the right man?

DIVANJI

It doesn't matter. Those who wanted to do me in have already said it.

NIRBHALYA

It must have been some silly misunderstanding. Your place is here . . . with us.

DIVANJI

You can say it. But what's the point if nobody else around here feels the way you do?

NIRBHALYA

Everybody feels sorry, and they go 'round asking why such a faithful man should be kicked out.

DESHMAMI

Well, it isn't just a one-sided story. People are still divided.

NIRBHALYA

(To DESHMAMI) Then it's up to you to explain his virtues. But right now, let him come back to work.

DESHMAMI

I can't. The household wouldn't hear of it. The best thing I can do is to hold an election for the post.

NIRBHALYA

Oh-oh. Then Divanji's sure not to get his job back.

DIVANJI

Why not? I've got the right to stand as a candidate. . . . Haven't I? I may even be elected again. (To DESHMAMI) I'm leaving now. But I promise when I return it will be as a candidate.

DESHMAMI

(To NIRBHALYA) You might leak this information to the newspapers. Also, let word of this election spread through the town. Then, prepare for elections.

(She exits)

NIRBHALYA

What a squeeze I'm in! Between this lady and those candidates. . . . I can never see the light.

(Moves around the stage, spreading word through the town. People gather round him.)

Listen everybody. Our Deshmami has kicked out Divanji. A new appointment must be made. Anybody interested in applying for the post, please fill out the election forms.

ONE MAN

Ah! Elections! Can I participate?

SECOND MAN

If you're sure to win, you can. Otherwise you lose your deposit.

(All exit and reappear in a group at the home of DESHMAMI. There are candidates holding flags in their hands. Enter DESHMAMI.)

DESHMAMI

Welcome, everybody!

NIRBHALYA

If our Divanji is anywhere in your midst, please ask him to come forward.

FIRST CANDIDATE

What for? Do you like him so much?

SECOND CANDIDATE

Then why did you kick him out in the first place?

THIRD CANDIDATE

Then just give him back his job.

FOURTH CANDIDATE

Why did you bother to hold an election in the first place? Look at all the trouble we went through. (All start shouting.)

DIVANJI

Candidates really shouldn't be shouting like that. They're supposed to be leaders of our society. If we don't follow normal rules and regulations, then we don't have any business standing here at all.

NIRBHALYA

You're right.

FIRST CANDIDATE

Hah! Anybody can make such pious declarations.

DESHMAMI

Alright. What do you have to say for yourself? What plan have you got to improve this house?

FIRST CANDIDATE

Equal rights . . . equal money. Nobody will be poor and nobody will be rich.

SECOND CANDIDATE

Don't listen to him. Whatever he says is false.

DESHMAMI

(To SECOND CANDIDATE) Your behaviour just now is quite improper for our house. I doubt if you'll be of much use.

SECOND CANDIDATE

Not true! You'll regret these words. I may shorten your lifespan. . . . Why, I may even cut off your head!

NIRBHALYA

You can do what you like outside this house.

(Pushes SECOND CANDIDATE offstage)

THIRD CANDIDATE

What a mess! (Looks around) Anyway, I should put forth my own proposals. So . . . here goes. Ah . . . old is gold. That's what I think.

DESHMAMI

Sorry. We don't want anybody with old ideas. The world is changing too quickly . . . and my house must keep up with the times. Now, tell me honestly. Have you got any new plans?

THIRD CANDIDATE

New plans do nothing but deceive the people. My views are valid for all time. They will do the most good. You must therefore elect me.

DESHMAMI

You'll never get elected by forcing the electorate to your will. Do you think you're the only one with good plans? (Shakes her head negatively) This won't do at all. (To DIVANJI) Now you can speak for yourself.

DIVANJI

Me? I've nothing to say. I could note that I'll carry on whatever good I've done before. No promises I can't keep. First, I'll do my duty. . . . And if the people will have me, I'll serve them again.

CROWD

He's right! Elect him! We want the old Divanji back!

DESHMAMI

Alright. I declare Divanji elected.

(All rejoice and sing a *lavani* song.)

Beware, you voters:
Don't lose this chance!
Don't forget to use your vote!
This party's as concerned as you
About the future of the nation.
So, get behind us everyone!
Don't give up hope!
Our hearts are filled with the people's good,
Don't give in to false promises.
We can face up to our opponants,
So, please keep faith with us.
Everyone tells his own story
In order to gain the popular vote;
But there are many lies in the telling.
So, don't go by words alone.
The other parties envy Congress,
Because by serving man we're serving God--
Don't sell out your precious vote!

THE END

APPENDIX D

SCENES FROM A MODERN "SOPHISTICATED" TAMASHA: *KATHA AKALECHYA KANDYACHI* ("A TALE OF THE ONION OF INTELLIGENCE") BY SHANKAR PATIL

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SCENES FROM A MODERN "SOPHISTICATED" TAMASHA: *KATHA AKALECHYA KANDYACHI* ("A TALE OF THE ONION OF INTELLIGENCE") BY SHANKAR PATIL

The original Marathi script, written by Shankar Patil, with songs by Kavi (poet) Sanjiv, was first produced at Bhave Natya Mandir, in Sangli, on September 14, 1967. It ran for several hundred performances throughout Maharashtra. The full-length script was published by Prapanch Publishers, Poona, January, 1969, and the copyright is held by Mr. Patil.

Although a full-length English version has been translated and adapted by Nilima Vaidya and Tevia Abrams, with permission from the copyright-holder, the present shortened version was selected for inclusion here as an example of how a Tamasha might be presented to audiences in America. In fact, an experimental production was directed by the adaptor at Michigan State University in October, 1971, for a benefit entertainment in aid of Bangladesh refugees in India. The production featured Maharashtrian musicians and American actors in Maharashtrian dress.

SCENES FROM

KATHA AKALECHYA KANDYACHI

("A TALE OF THE ONION OF INTELLIGENCE")

in Maharashtrian Tamasha folk theatre style

by

Shankar Patil

Translation and Adaptation

by

Nilima Vaidya and Tevia Abrams

(By special permission from Shankar Patil)

CHARACTERS

SONGADYA, (Jester)--found in most tamasha troupes.

TATERAO

AUNTIE, who always accompanies the Milkmaids, and is played traditionally by a male actor dressed in a *sari*.

TWO YOUNG MILKMAIDS (called Gaulans in Marathi)

STAGE MANAGER

AVCHITRAO, central character

SAIDU, his father-in-law

CHANDANI, AVCHITRAO's wife, and dancer in the troupe

JASWANDI, wife to SONGADYA

MAN, who locates the lost AVCHITRAO

DOCTOR, with tool kit

TWO VISITORS to AVCHITRAO, the political leader

EDITOR

SECRETARY to AVCHITRAO, the political leader

FEMALE ADMIRER to AVCHITRAO the political leader

TWO EXTRAS

(Stage is dark, SONGADYA enters)

SONGDAYA

Lights! Turn on the lights, will you? (Lights on stage come up) That's better. (Claps hands, looks to wings) Okay, everyone! Onstage! (Claps hands) Come on!

(Entire cast moves onstage, including musicians, and they all proceed to organize themselves with instruments, makeup equipment, bags of food, chairs, making loud noises, dholki-player practising, etc.)

SONGDAYA

(To cast) Hurry it up, you guys! (To audience) This is Tamasha . . . the folk theatre form of Maharashtra State, India. Tonight, we recreate for you a slice of Maharashtrian fun and satire. (Musical fanfare) Me? I'm Songadya . . . the clowning master-of-ceremony in any Tamasha troupe. A typical troupe is made of musicians, a dancer or two, a couple of singers and a few actors. A musical Tamasha troupe may have six to ten performers. A dramatic troupe averages a dozen to fifteen performers. A lot of troupes in Maharashtra. More than five hundred. Performers? . . . About ten thousand. But if you count their wives, husbands, lovers, children, parents, grandparents, uncles and brothers and sisters . . . then you've got about fifty thousand people who depend for a living upon . . . Tamasha! They're always on the move, these troupes . . . playing the villages, towns and cities of Maharashtra. The State's population is fifty million and a majority of the people live in some thirty-eight thousand villages. To give you the flavor of the folk form, we're going to do some scenes from one of the more sophisticated Tamashas . . . A Tale of the Onion of Intelligence . . . by the contemporary Marathi writer, Shankar Patil . . . translated and adapted for English production by Nilima Vaidya and Tevia Abrams. The form of the work is a traditional one. It begins with a brief musical invocation to the elephant god, Ganesha. This is called the Gan, and it's followed by the Gaulan, or play of Krishna and the milkmaids. This is a short, saucy encounter and very secular, with songs and dances tossed in. After the Gan and Gaulan segments, the drama or vag begins. And now, through the magic of cutting and editing, let's assume the Gan or invocation has just ended. There are two characters onstage. (Lights fade up as TATERAO enters and music stops.) Taterao . . . That's him. (Pointing to TATERAO) . . . And Songadya . . . That's me.

TATERAO

That's it. The invocation is finished.

SONGADYA

Now we need something more substantial to fill the belly. Where are the milkmaids? (SONGADYA gets down on hands and knees and puts his ear to the ground.)

TATERAO

What are you doing?

SONGADYA

Listening for their footsteps . . . Ah! Our breakfast is coming.

TATERAO

(Gets up.) We'll stop them. There'll be lots of fresh milk for sure.

(Enter TWO MILKMAIDS and AUNTIE. SONGADYA stops them.)

SONGADYA

Stop! Stop!

AUNTIE

What is it?

SONGADYA

What group is this?

AUNTIE

None of your business, young man.

TATERAO

(To SONGADYA) They're milkmaids. Can't you tell?

SONGADYA

But they're wearing ankle-bells. I thought they belonged to some theatre troupe.

AUNTIE

We . . . are . . . milkmaids!

SONGADYA

We've been waiting for you.

FIRST MILKMAID

Why? What's wrong?

SONGADYA

Nothing. I'll come right to the point. Got any milk?

AUNTIE

Well, we're just on our way to the market at Mathura. Anyway, who do you think you are, asking for milk?

SONGADYA

Me? I'm Krishna's under-secretary. (Points to TATERAO) And this man is Krishna's personal secretary. And now, lady, let's have the milk.

AUNTIE

Milk? We haven't got any.

SONGADYA

No lies. Milkmaids always have milk.

AUNTIE

But I'm telling the truth.

TATERAO

(To SONGADYA) Don't listen to her. Seize their belongings.

AUNTIE

You don't believe me.

SONGADYA

Come on, Auntie! You call yourselves milkmaids, don't you?

SECOND MILKMAID

What can we do? Modern dairies are too competitive.

TATERAO

Alright then . . . what else have you got to eat?

SONGADYA

Aw, they're not going to cooperate. Let's inspect their belongings.

AUNTIE

Look here. We've got to go.

SONGADYA

Not when you're hiding food. Come on, Auntie!

AUNTIE

Go 'way! There's nothing!

SONGADYA

Alright, then. Since there's no milk, how about a song?

AUNTIE

You're starving and you can still think about a song?

SONGADYA

Sure. I'm a true lover of the arts. Besides, music helps me forget hunger.

FIRST MILKMAID

(To AUNTIE) Let's get it over with so we can move on.

AUNTIE

All right. We'll sing.

(Girls strike a singing pose and everybody on stage freezes. SONGADYA breaks out and moves downstage to address the audience.)

SONGADYA

They won't sing. No time. (Lights fade down. Spot on SONGADYA. Others exit. Music in softly.) We move on now. After the Gaulan

or Milkmaid section . . . you find it in every TAMASHA . . . comes the vag, or drama. It always opens with music and singing. For my song, we've got time. (Lights fade up as musicians play.)

(Song)

This is a story
Of the onion of intelligence.
About a man so headstrong and proud,
His wife would cry, "What can I do?"
"How can I look after him?"
"Oh, what can I do?"

(Song ends. Enter STAGE MANAGER, SAIDU and AVCHITRAO, who is still getting ready, fixing makeup, and preparing to put on his King's crown.)

STAGE MANAGER

Everybody ready?

SONGADYA

(Examines AVCHITRAO's make-up.) Look at Avchitrao's make-up!

STAGE MANAGER

It's all right. He'll look like a king as soon as he puts on the crown. (To AVCHITRAO) Come on, Avchitrao! Get that crown on your head! You're supposed to be playing the King, remember? It's show-time! And what about your moustache? As stage manager, I demand to know.

AVCHITRAO

I'm not putting on a moustache. And I've decided not to wear the crown. In fact, I don't like the part.

STAGE MANAGER

What's the matter, Avchitrao?

SONGADYA

I know. He's on strike because he hasn't had his shot of rum.

AVCHITRAO

Right. First you find me a rupee so I can buy a drink. No rupee, then it's good-bye.

STAGE MANAGER

You can't pull out like that! You're in this drama whether you like it or not.

AVCHITRAO

You can do what you like. Me? I'm going.

STAGE MANAGER

Come on, friend. Be reasonable.

AVCHITRAO

Bye-bye! (He exits)

SONGADYA

Hey! Look at this! (He points to SAIDU.)

STAGE MANAGER

What's wrong with Saidu?

SONGADYA

Only half his face is made up. And just half a moustache.

STAGE MANAGER

(To SAIDU) What kind of make-up is that?

SAIDU

They said I've got only half a share in the take tonight. So . . . I figured I'd do half my make-up. Also, I'm considering saying only half of all my lines.

(Enter CHANDANI)

STAGE MANAGER

(To CHANDANI) Chandani! Chandani! What's happening to us?

CHANDANI

(Puzzled) What's wrong? Anything wrong?

STAGE MANAGER

We're ruined! First your husband clears out . . . and now your father refuses to finish his make-up. (Rushes offstage, mumbling) Ruined! Ruined . . . .

CHANDANI

(To SAIDU) What's the matter with you? And where did my no-good husband go?

SAIDU

. . . Half a share means half my lines. It's only right.

CHANDANI

This is the third time he's run off like this. How are we going to run our troupe without him?

SONGADYA

Why don't we join up with another troupe?

SAIDU

Then what'll happen to my half share?

CHANDANI

What's the matter with you? Here our troupe is falling apart, and you're still worrying about half a share!

SAIDU

I'm not asking for much, you know. Just half a rupee.

(Enter JASWANDI)

JASWANDI

Somebody outside.

SONGADYA

So? Is this a police station?

(Enter AVCHITRAO, pushed onstage by a MAN. He appears to bounce like rubber.)

CHANDANI

Avchitrao! What's wrong with him?

SONGADYA

Drink. What else?

CHANDANI

But it's never happened before. (To the man who brought her husband) Where did you find him?

MAN

On the sidewalk. He didn't have any rings or money on him, did he?

SONGADYA

No valuables; only debts.

(The MAN exits. SONGADYA tries to push AVCHITRAO but he springs backward.)

CHANDANI

What's wrong with him?

AVCHITRAO

First give me a rupee. . . . I refuse to sit. . . . Day and night I'm going to stand. . . .

SONGADYA

He's in a bad way.

AVCHITRAO

(To CHANDANI) Second . . . couldn't you make five nice things to eat? Third . . . burn a stick of incense. . . .

CHANDANI

What's he mumbling about?

SONGADYA

He must be in real trouble. (To AVCHITRAO) Why don't you sit down? (AVCHITRAO kicks him) Maybe we should call a doctor. A brain specialist.

SAIDU

I know one. He lives just around the corner.

SONGADYA

Alright, I'll go and find him. (He exits)

(AVCHITRAO continues to mumble. CHANDANI is nervous, upset. SONGADYA returns in moments with DOCTOR.)

SONGADYA

Here's the Doctor.

DOCTOR

I'm a brain specialist. Medicine for madness, goodness, stubbornness, and etcetera and etcetera.

(DOCTOR heads directly to JASWANDI)

SONGADYA

Not her! She's my wife.

DOCTOR

Don't worry, I'll set her brain right in no time.

SONGADYA

I'm telling you, she's not the patient. (Points at AVCHITRAO) There's your madman.

DOCTOR

What nonsense! First, I'll cure this one.

SONGADYA

But she's not mad! She's good.

DOCTOR

Yes, yes. Goodness is also one of those diseases of the brain. Just ten strokes of my trusty hammer, and she'll come 'round.

SONGADYA

Oh, boy! That's the end of her.

(SONGADYA closes his eyes and sits. AVCHITRAO is still mumbling. DOCTOR turns to him.)

DOCTOR

Ah! This looks more serious.

AVCHITRAO

Day and night I'll stand. . . .

DOCTOR

No! Definitely not. You'll have to lie down.

CHANDANI

Doctor. You do whatever you think is necessary.

(DOCTOR brings AVCHITRAO down to the ground. After looking him over for a few moments, DOCTOR gets up and pulls a sad face.)

CHANDANI

What is it, Doctor?

DOCTOR

His onion of intelligence has become enlarged. Seven layers. We'll have to remove three. Should I operate?

CHANDANI

Can you do it?

DOCTOR

Here's a saw.

SONGADYA

You can cut a tree with that thing.

DOCTOR

Come on! . . . Bring a table! Heat up an iron rod! (Claps his hands) Hurry! Come on!

(Background music is used as cover for the operation. Doctor operates with his back to the audience. We hear the sound of hammer breaking the skull, and then the cutting of the saw. The onion is removed. Layers are cut away and the onion is put back again. The head is nailed up.)

SONGADYA

Is he still alive?

DOCTOR

If there's any movement in a day or so, then he's unconscious. If not, assume he's dead.

SONGADYA

Will you have some tea before you go?

DOCTOR

It was a big operation. What can a cup of tea do? I need a big meal.

(He exits)

CHANDANI

I hope his madness is cured.

SONGADYA

Maybe he'll become a teacher, or at least a clerk.

SONGADYA

(To audience) AVCHITRAO has been operated upon by the Doctor. Three layers of his onion of intelligence have been cut away. He is now a schoolmaster. (To his wife) Jaswandi!

JASWANDI

Don't shout! I can hear you.

SONGADYA

Now there's speech control in this house!

JASWANDI

Don't shout! The master has given instructions.

SONGADYA

Why? Is there some kind of energy lost if you shout? What kind of silly teaching is this master propagating? Use less light and save on electricity. Don't use the stove too much . . . waste of kerosene! And now, talk less and conserve energy. What nonsense!

JASWANDI

Shouting disturbs the neighbors.

SONGADYA

I'm telling you, Jaswandi, this is all the result of that operation on Avchitrao. It's turned a good Tamasha artist into a dumb schoolmaster. Get me some matches, will you?

JASWANDI

Matches?

SONGADYA

For a cigarette!

JASWANDI

No smoking! And no chewing tobacco. Master doesn't approve.

SONGADYA

Hell! Will you get some matches. I might as well die if I can't live.

JASWANDI

(Gives SONGADYA some matches) Here!

(SONGADYA lights cigarette. Enter AVCHITRAO sniffing air. SONGADYA hides cigarette in his hand.)

AVCHITRAO

What's that smell?

SONGADYA

Nothing. Incense.

AVCHITRAO

No. It's tobacco. Who's been here today? (Sniffs)

(Enter SAIDU and CHANDANI, talking)

SAIDU

(To CHANDANI) Before his operation, he played fine dholki drum. Now, it's gone. I'm ashamed to call him son-in-law. He's stopped us smoking and drinking. And from performing on stage. How are we supposed to live? I'm going to start up a new troupe.

CHANDANI

Father!

SAIDU

What can a man do here?

SONGADYA

He's right. This is no longer the house of Tamasha artists; it's a middle-class home of a middle-class family.

SAIDU

(To CHANDANI) You stay with him. Good-bye. (He exits)

AVCHITRAO

(Yawns) Well, tomorrow's another day. School begins early. Good night!

(He begins to move off.)

CHANDANI

Now, what do we do?

(All freeze onstage, except SONGADYA, who turns to audience)

SONGADYA

Simple. We called for the Doctor. We thought another operation would fix him up. It was easy. I simply clapped my hands, like in some folk play, where the King calls for his servant.

(He claps his hands and the DOCTOR appears. He also freezes.)

But the second operation only made matters worse. AVCHITRAO became a primitive and ran off to the jungle with a social do-gooder. It was after that that we all decided to remove his onion of intelligence for good!

(Loud musical introduction begins and all except CHANDANI and SONGADYA exit. CHANDANI sings and dances. SONGADYA tries to collect money from audience.)

CHANDANI

(Song)

Young men live and die for me,
And oh, they all fall in love with me!
Whose fault is it?
Whose fault is it?
Rich folk have their maids,
And birds have their mates
Oh! Look what God started!

I'm from the village Satara.
They say I'm good-looking,
And I walk gracefully.
Even my husband used to whistle,
And I liked it.
And I liked it.

(Exit CHANDANI. SONGADYA speaks to audience)

SONGADYA

After his third operation, AVCHITRAO became . . . believe it or not . . . a great political leader. In this climactic scene, I play the part of a servant to this noble personage. Two people have come to his office.

(Enter TWO VISITORS and sit.)

We are all awaiting the arrival of the great AVCHITRAO! (To the VISITORS) Stand up, please. The master has come! (All stand.)

FIRST VISITOR

We're lucky, by God!

SONGADYA

Sh! He's coming.

(Enter AVCHITRAO followed by his FEMALE SECRETARY and a FEMALE ADMIRER. SONGADYA exits.)

AVCHITRAO

Please be seated. (SECRETARY pushes VISITORS into seats.) Forgive me for being late. Those tours take up so much time. (To FIRST VISITOR) Ah, but let's forget all that. How are you? (To SECOND VISITOR) And you? (To SECRETARY) Check through this mail, will you?

FEMALE ADMIRER

What a fine speech! I heard him. There was a lot of applause.

SECRETARY

(While looking through letters) Deafening applause! It was marvelous. Not since Nehru . . . .

FEMALE ADMIRER

Nehru would have praised him for such a great speech.

SECRETARY

Nehru was a man who knew how to choose leaders! He would have taken him straight to Delhi with him.

FEMALE ADMIRER

And once he chooses, a man is set for life.

FIRST VISITOR

(To FEMALE ADMIRER) What did he speak about?

FEMALE ADMIRER

Indian Culture. What else is there to talk about? Well, I must be off. (To AVCHITRAO) Thank you for this opportunity. Good-bye!
(She exits)

SECRETARY

Here's a check. Five thousand. For the tender you accepted. Remember? . . . For construction of the dam.

AVCHITRAO

Later! Later! Not just now.

SECRETARY

I'm sorry.

AVCHITRAO

(To FIRST VISITOR) And you . . .

FIRST VISITOR

You promised to come to our village, remember?

AVCHITRAO

(To SECRETARY) What was the date?

FIRST VISITOR

Second of October.

SECRETARY

Schedule's full. Sorry.

FIRST VISITOR

But the program's all arranged. And you promised!

AVCHITRAO

The fourth of October. I can't help it.

SECRETARY

(To FIRST VISITOR) Are the roads in good shape?

FIRST VISITOR

Seventeen miles of good road. The approach road is just three miles. That's a bad one.

SECRETARY

Then how can you get there by car?

FIRST VISITOR

If doctors can get through, I don't see what the problem is.

SECRETARY

But he's not a doctor. He's a leader! His Impala is worth fifty thousand, you know. It doesn't go just anywhere.

FIRST VISITOR

Well, why don't we compromise? We'll use the budget we have for road repairs and put it all into this one road.

SECRETARY

But what if there's not enough in your budget?

FIRST VISITOR

We'll worry about that. Maybe take a little out of the school building fund. Maybe a little from the hospital budget.

SECRETARY

I mean to say we'll definitely come to your village on the fourth of October.

FIRST VISITOR

(To SECRETARY) Make sure you come along.

AVCHITRAO

How can I leave her behind? She's my goddess of inspiration.

(FIRST VISITOR exits.)

AVCHITRAO

(To SECRETARY) Good! Now what about the mail?

SECRETARY

The weekly cheque from the Vilaspur Cinema. Also some invitations for speaking engagements. . . . And here's a letter from Delhi. Three Americans are coming to study farm methods here. They'd like us to prepare a program.

AVCHITRAO

Look in the files. Same program we use for the foreigners. We'll show our cash crops . . . sugar cane . . . grapes and turmeric. Keep them away from our grain. If they find out we grow our own they'll eventually cut down on free food shipments. When they've done with the tour, we'll throw in a cultural program. It'll give my wife the chance to dance a bit.

SECRETARY

But how would that look?

AVCHITRAO

I don't care. Let my whole damn family come out and perform once in a while. They'll justify their living in front of the people. (Calls to CHANDANI) Chandani?

(Enter CHANDANI, without ankle-bells)

CHANDANI

Excuse me.

AVCHITRAO

Some people are coming from America. I want you to dance for them.

CHANDANI

Me? But I haven't performed in years.

AVCHITRAO

Do you have to teach fish to swim? You just put on your ankle-bells. The rest will come naturally. (Turns to SECOND VISITOR, who is seated.) And who are you?

SECOND VISITOR

I'm a relative. . . . Cousin to your wife's sister's husband.

AVCHITRAO

Why have you come?

SECOND VISITOR

You're big here. Maybe you can find me a job.

AVCHITRAO

What are you doing now?

SECOND VISITOR

Nothing.

AVCHITRAO

Any education?

SECOND VISITOR

What would I be doing here if I was educated? What's influence for if you can't use it?

AVCHITRAO

Come and work with me. I'll give you a full-time job.

SECOND VISITOR

Doing what?

AVCHITRAO

Nothing. Just accompany me on tours and meet people.

SECOND VISITOR

That sounds good. Alright.

AVCHITRAO

But a word of warning. You've got to be absolutely loyal to me.

SECOND VISITOR

How could I betray a relative?

AVCHITRAO

Fine. Come and see me in the morning.

(Exit SECOND VISITOR. Enter an EDITOR)

EDITOR

(In strong English accent) May I come in? I'm an editor.

AVCHITRAO

Daily, weekly or monthly?

EDITOR

I have many publications. They help me earn money from the rich.

AVCHITRAO

What do you print?

EDITOR

One publication is called Paduka. We print photos of gods and goddesses and biographies of leaders. This pays for publication.

AVCHITRAO

Why did you come here?

EDITOR

To interview you. Maybe to dedicate an issue of Paduka to you.

SECRETARY

You mean give you money?

EDITOR

Well, elections are getting near. You can think of it as an investment in publicity.

AVCHITRAO

That's different.

EDITOR

Good. There's not much to the interview. All you have to do is fill in the blanks. Like date of birth . . . .

SECRETARY

The later one. To make you look younger.

AVCHITRAO

Ah . . . well, I was born in the . . . forties.

EDITOR

Look. I'll say you took part in the struggle for independence when you were a boy. You were fearless. Bullets couldn't stop you. You blew up railway tracks and burned buildings. . . .

AVCHITRAO

But remember . . . all this is for a good cause.

EDITOR

My problem. Don't worry. Now, what about education?

SECRETARY

That's not important.

EDITOR

Don't worry. I'll say that his work with the leaders of the Quit India Movement of the Forties cut short his brilliant academic career.

AVCHITRAO

Fine! Fine!

EDITOR

Any troubles with the law?

AVCHITRAO

Well . . . yes. Three times. I was involved in a fight. Once I was arrested for theft, and the last time . . . I was caught forging a check.

EDITOR

Marvellous! You went to jail three times . . . in 1920, 1930 and 1942 . . . because of anti-British activities.

AVCHITRAO

But how does it fit if you write I was born in 1940?

EDITOR

That doesn't matter. Nobody pays attention to the details.

(Enter SONGADYA)

SONGADYA

Taxi's waiting, sir.

AVCHITRAO

Is my speech ready?

SECRETARY

Use the one from the tour.

AVCHITRAO

Good. I remember that one. (To EDITOR) We'll be back in a few minutes.

EDITOR

Got to wait. I need your picture.

AVCHITRAO

Chandani! (Enter CHANDANI) Have you started rehearsing your act? (To EDITOR) She used to be really good. (To CHANDANI) This is an Editor. Maybe he'll take your picture.

(AVCHITRAO, SECRETARY exit.)

EDITOR

That Secretary of your husband's . . . She's pretty close to him.

CHANDANI

He's become like a husband to her. Maybe her fifth. If you want the truth, I'll tell you. Avchitrao's become a leader because of us. (To SONGADYA) It's true, isn't it?

SONGADYA

Sure it's true. Do you think he's got brains of his own?

EDITOR

How dare you speak like that about such a man?

CHANDANI

It's true. We made him what he is. He was out of his mind and he had to have his onion of intelligence peeled away. That's how he came to be a leader.

EDITOR

Fantastic! I can run a special issue. Maybe blackmail him.

SONGADYA

A political leader must be somebody with no brains!

(Enter AVCHITRAO)

AVCHITRAO

(To EDITOR) Now! What about the interview?

EDITOR

Question? How much is it worth to you if I don't publish the truth about your onion of intelligence? My guess is twenty thousand rupees.

AVCHITRAO

Twenty-thousand?

SECRETARY

(To AVCHITRAO) Nothing to worry about. We can turn the tables on him.

EDITOR

I'll publish a special issue.

SECRETARY

We'll file suits against you.

EDITOR

Payment by the twentieth of the month. (He exits)

(From offstage, actors yell slogans about the new issue of EDITOR's magazine, SPUTNIK. Enter two MALE EXTRAS.)

FIRST EXTRA

So! His onion of intelligence was peeled away!

SECOND EXTRA

You don't need brains to become a leader.

FIRST EXTRA

What a story! It must be propaganda for the elections.

SECOND EXTRA

Wonder who that brain specialist was.

FIRST EXTRA

We'll know soon enough.

(From offstage, people shouting. "Did you read it? . . ." "Did you hear it? . . .")

SECOND EXTRA

(To AVCHITRAO) I've come to express my sympathy.

AVCHITRAO

Sympathy? This should be a time for rejoicing! I'm famous!

FIRST EXTRA

Awful, what they've published about you.

AVCHITRAO

Wonderful!

SECOND EXTRA

And now he's made a name for himself.

AVCHITRAO

Maybe I should throw a party to celebrate.

(Enter DOCTOR)

DOCTOR

Save me!

AVCHITRAO

What's happened, Doctor?

DOCTOR

They're all after me! They all want me to peel away their onions of intelligence.

SONGADYA

They're all greedy.

DOCTOR

(To AVCHITRAO) Help me! I'll teach you my secrets and then you must do to me what I did to you.

(From offstage crowd chants. "We want our onions of intelligence peeled away! We must become leaders!" Lights fade to black, as music comes up.)

(THE END)

APPENDIX E

SHAHIR SABLE'S MUKTANATYA, OR FREE-FORM FOLK PLAY: YAMARAJYAT EK RATRA ("ONE NIGHT IN HELL")

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SHAHIR SABLE'S MUKTANATYA, OR FREE-FORM FOLK PLAY: YAMARAJYAT EK RATRA ("ONE NIGHT IN HELL")

The original Marathi script by Shahir Sable was first produced at the Amar Hind Theatre, Bombay, on October 16, 1960. It was published by Ram-Krishna Book Depot, Prarthana Samaj, Bombay, April, 1964, and the copyright is held by Mr. Sable. Translation and adaptation: Nilima Vaidya and Tevia Abrams, by kind permission of the copyright holder.

YAMARAJYAT EK RATRA

("One Night in Hell")

A Muktanatya, or Free-form Folk Play

by

Shahir Sable

First produced at Amar Hind theatre,
Bombay, October 16, 1970

Translation and Adaptation

by

Nilima Vaidya and Tevia Abrams

(By special permission of Shahir Sable)

Original Marathi version published by Ram-Krishna Book Depot, Bombay,
April, 1964

CHARACTERS

RAJA

KISAN

YAMA, King of the Kingdom of Hell

FIRST SOUL

SECOND SOUL

THIRD SOUL

FOURTH SOUL

FIFTH SOUL

SIXTH SOUL

TWO MESSENGERS, JAMPAK and BHAMPAK

TWO ANGELS

ANNOUNCER

(KISAN enters)

KISAN

No! No! We're wasting our lives. The life of a dog is better than ours. In all of Bombay, we can't find a simple job . . . What rotten luck!

(Sings with sarcasm)

Bombay's a big place.
A fine and lovely place.
It's a bed of roses!

Beautiful description, isn't it? That, my friends, was the observation of the late and great Tamasha artist, Patthe Bapurao. He compares life to a flower. But who is so lucky today as to be able to lead a life as gentle and as beautiful as a bed of roses? More like a bed of thorns . . . for people like us . . . who live on the sidewalks of Bombay. Just look at my buddy, Raja. What a sound sleep he's having on the ground! Does he have any worries? Raja! Raja! Is this a life?

(Sings)

Have you seen Bombay?
That youthful place . . .
Where business booms . . .
And ships just come and go?

(Enter RAJA, wrapped in a cotton blanket and a cap. He rubs his eyes.)

RAJA

Stop that noise! What are you doing? All day long you sing! What a waste of time!

KISAN

I was singing to amuse myself. A *lavani* poem from some folk play.

RAJA

You mean you weren't shouting? It sounded like a loudspeaker. Anyway, dear *Brahma-deva* . . . God of creation . . . I think you ought to get some sleep for your sake and mine. Don't you want to sleep, Kisan?

KISAN

What else have I done in life?

RAJA

Singing. But that's no profession.

KISAN

No, not singing. I'll die first.

RAJA

You can pull a handcart.

KISAN

In my weakened condition? Look at me! Could I pull a handcart?

RAJA

(Thinks) Ah! There's one thing. Even the government recognizes it. There's a lot of barren land near Bombay. Why don't you cultivate it? Do you know our country needs all kinds of young, unemployed people? Think it over. You can be part of the "Grow More Food" campaign.

KISAN

And what'll you do?

RAJA

Me? I'll carry on . . . just like always. Not everybody can grow more food. Some have to grow more business. That way lies progress. Me? I'll grow more children if I ever get married. That way lies national expansion.

KISAN

Ah! What an existence! Even cats and dogs are better off than we are.

RAJA

Enough! Let's go to bed. Somebody will steal our place on the sidewalk. Like last night, when two coolies slept in our spot and I had to curl up in his basket.

KISAN

Wicker basket?

RAJA

I realized where I was early this morning. I woke up bouncing around, and all the buildings of Bombay were swaying in the morning breeze. One of the coolies was carrying the wicker basket on his head, and I was in the basket.

(Both men exit.)

CHORUS

(Song in povada form)

One day the King of Hell was deep in thought.
Counting the souls in his great domain.
Two were missing; error in the books!
Yama sent messengers to set them right,
But the messengers were raw,
And enchanted by the city sight,
They made greater errors in the night.

(Enter JAMPAK and BHAMPAK the messengers.)

JAMPAK

Bhampak! Where are you? I can't see you. This big town is too distracting; all I see for miles around are people. Don't know whom to pick.

BHAMPAK

Me too. I just can't choose.

JAMPAK

Don't worry. Two heads are better than one. I'll help.

BHAMPAK

You're not going to take me for one of those missing souls . . .

JAMPAK

No! No! Let's just hurry and take two lives from here. The sooner we get back to Yama, the better.

BHAMPAK

Wait! We can't just pick on anybody. It'll be our heads if we make any mistakes. Didn't Yama give you the names, places and addresses?

JAMPAK

That's the problem. He forgot.

BHAMPAK

Well, what do we do now?

JAMPAK

I say we go ahead and take any two lives. It doesn't matter. Two drops from the ocean. Nothing, I tell you.

BHAMPAK

You're right. Lets go. (Thinks) Are we supposed to take two lives or two souls? I can't remember. If we take lives and if Yama wants souls, then we've had it. Also the other way around.

JAMPAK

What a fix! And we're new on the job to top it all. You sure you can't remember Yama's exact words?

BHAMPAK

He didn't say anything specific. But we can assume he means soul.

JAMPAK

Maybe. But still we're not sure.

BHAMPAK

Compromise! Let's take two bodies. That way we're safe.

JAMPAK

(Happily) Good idea. Yama can make his own choice.

BHAMPAK

Fine. Now, for the choice. I'm not used to heavy loads, so let's choose some light people.

JAMPAK

(Looking around) Ah! There! Two paper-thin people, over there! . . . Asleep on the sidewalk.

BHAMPAK

Fool! Those are poor people with no shelter. That's why they're sleeping there.

JAMPAK

All the more reason to take them. We can free them from this weary life and give them shelter.

BHAMPAK

All right. Let's go. You take the legs, I'll take the heads.

(They exit)

ANNOUNCER

We now take you from Earth to the Kingdom of Hell. Yama, God of Hell, is riding towards us on his buffalo. Don't try to look for him. You can only see him when you're dead.

CHORUS

(Sings povada)

In the Kingdom of Yama nothing goes wrong,
And nothing is gained through influence.
The good go to heaven,
And sinners to hell.
And truth and justice prevail.

FIRST ANGEL

(To SECOND ANGEL) Dear buddy. Snap to it! Yama's coming.

SECOND ANGEL

Dreadful! Ugly! He tries so hard not to be seen. That's why he's asked the sun not to rise. But he can't hide his sloppy frame. Look, how fat he's becoming! Have you ever seen such a sight in your life? (Music is heard) Here he comes! Look smart.

(ANGELS snap to attention. YAMA enters on a buffalo. All bow to him. He pats buffalo.)

YAMA

(To Buffalo) Get out! (Animal doesn't move. YAMA shouts) Well! What do you want . . . raise in pay? (No movement) All right. An

increase of five rupees. (To ANGELS) And from you two, a cut of five rupees. (To buffalo) Now, go! (Animal waits) Quick march! (No movement) Double-quick-march!

(Animal leaves, YAMA speaks to ANGELS)

How is the Kingdom?

FIRST ANGEL

The same.

YAMA

Yesterday, I made an error in the books. I sent two of our messengers to make good some losses. Have they returned?

SECOND ANGEL

They're useless, those two. They won't be back so soon.

YAMA

Don't be cheeky. They're new here and you're just jealous of them. Do you know who they are?

SECOND ANGEL

No sir.

YAMA

One is a close friend and the other happens to be my brother-in-law. If I have them fired, what do you think my wife would say?

BOTH ANGELS

Sorry. This is beyond our understanding.

YAMA

That's alright. Get me my mace.

(The ANGELS get the mace which is so heavy it drops and catches fire.)

YAMA

The mace is angry.

ANGELS

(Shouting) Save us! Please save us!

YAMA

Death to you sinners! (Extinguishes the fire and turns to ANGELS) Quickly! How many have you killed today?

ANGELS

One hundred and five.

YAMA

(Surprised) Why two more?

FIRST ANGEL

Well, we're just going by your list.

YAMA

Only from the list?

(From offstage, shouts of "No!" "No!" are heard.)

(To souls offstage) Well, then, all you souls . . . How did you get here?

ALL SOULS FROM OFFSTAGE

Our bretheren.

YAMA

One at a time, please. (ANGELS bring them onstage, one by one. YAMA to FIRST SOUL) You! How did you come?

FIRST SOUL

I drank some iodine.

YAMA

Take him away.

(FIRST SOUL is taken off.)

SECOND SOUL

I fell in the elections and I never rose again.

YAMA

Then raise him.

SECOND SOUL

(Happily) Where?

YAMA

On a spear.

(ANGELS take SECOND SOUL away.)

THIRD SOUL

The temple of my love was destroyed, and so I said goodbye to the world.

YAMA

Build a tomb in his honor and take him away.

(THIRD SOUL is taken off.)

FOURTH SOUL

I promised my love I'd place her in my heart. But after marriage my heart was strained by her three hundred pounds of weight. And so I died.

YAMA

Don't lift such heavy loads.

(FOURTH SOUL exits.)

FIFTH SOUL

My family died of hunger. Me too. So I ended up here. Can any arrangement be made for my meals?

FIRST ANGEL

Alas! He seems to be hungry. Let's give him some food.

YAMA

What do you think this is? . . . A food distribution centre? All these uninvited people dropped in on me, and now there's a mistake in my accounting system. Punishment will be the only food handed out here!

FIFTH SOUL

We came here for justice and mercy.

YAMA

If we show you mercy, what are we to do with the souls who came here legally?

ALL SOULS

Mercy! Forgiveness! Peace! . . . .

YAMA

That's the Kingdom of Rama, not Yama! (To ANGELS) Hurry up! Make your selections for Heaven and Hell!

FIRST ANGEL

We've done the sorting. The ones with red labels go to Heaven. Those with black go to Hell.

SIXTH SOUL

But I'm sure I'm good enough to deserve Heaven!

FIRST ANGEL

Look, here! If you've got a black label, you go to Hell. No grumbling.

ALL SOULS

Justice! We want justice!

FIRST ANGEL

We have no power to undo what's been done. If you like you can appeal to the god of justice.

YAMA

(To SIXTH SOUL) You want to appeal, do you? Well, you'll have to post a bond of two red-labelled souls before you leave here.

SIXTH SOUL

But I don't know any red labels. How about four black ones?

YAMA

No deal. They belong to me anyway.

SIXTH SOUL

Who says so? They paid their income tax.

YAMA

I don't believe it. If they had paid their tax they'd be marked for Heaven. Obviously they dodged their payments on earth.

SIXTH SOUL

(To SECOND ANGEL) Here's twenty-five paise. Take me to Heaven, will you?

SECOND ANGEL

Only twenty-five? Cheap-skate!

SIXTH SOUL

I'm sorry. There are two of you. I'll make it fifty.

SECOND ANGEL

Sorry, we're incorruptible.

SIXTH SOUL

What a mess! They won't even take a simple bribe. How can anybody hope to run an organization like that?

YAMA

(To ANGELS) Hurry. Open the doors to Hell and get them all in. (Looks at his watch) We're already on overtime.

(All exit except FIRST ANGEL; enter JAMPAK and BHAMPAK)

BHAMPAK

Don't shut the doors yet! Where's Yama?

FIRST ANGEL

Gone to bed. It's late.

JAMPAK

Why? Is he sleeping off any sins?

BHAMPAK

What are we supposed to do with the two souls we brought for him?

JAMPAK

Not souls, stupid. Lives! Two lives!

BHAMPAK

Souls, I said! And if you say another word, I'll take your life.

FIRST ANGEL

What's all this business about souls and lives?

BHAMPAK

Listen to me. We picked up two souls.

JAMPAK

(To BHAMPAK) How do you know for sure?

FIRST ANGEL

How can two people with influence ever make mistakes?

JAMPAK

(To ANGEL) Do you know who you're talking to? (To BHAMPAK) And you . . . don't try to put one over on me just because you're older than I am.

BHAMPAK

I'll show you a thing or two. Just you wait until Yama retires. I'll be taking over . . . because I'm his friend. We're old buddies from way back.

JAMPAK

But you forget I'm his brother-in-law. Anyway, we've got this problem on our hands. Let's make a decision now.

BHAMPAK

Damn it! Anything we decide should be right, because people with influence are never wrong. We may not have practical knowledge like the others . . . but, we can read and write.

FIRST ANGEL

Great!

BHAMPAK

(To JAMPAK) See how he accepts us now?

FIRST ANGEL

Would you mind explaining what it is exactly that you've done?

BHAMPAK

Listen. (Hesitates, turns to JAMPAK) You better tell him.

JAMPAK

(To ANGEL) Well, you see . . . It's not easy to put it into words. Actually . . . ah . . . we had a commission to perform for Yama . . . and we . . . ah . . . came back with two people . . . since we weren't exactly sure about whether soul or life was wanted. That's it.

FIRST ANGEL

Marvellous! You've done something out of the ordinary. Fine intellectuals! You'll probably find yourselves unemployed when he hears about it. (Laughs)

BHAMPAK

What are you laughing about?

JAMPAK

Anything wrong? (Thinking; then to BHAMPAK) Bhampak? Do people with influence ever go wrong?

BHAMPAK

(Happily) Never!

FIRST ANGEL

Fools! Have you ever seen live human beings in Hell? Imagine what can happen! Human clay mixing with our souls. Do you know what can happen? The souls will turn into ghosts, that's what.

BHAMPAK

(Worried) No! . . . Then, we've really done it.

JAMPAK

(To BHAMPAK) Psst. Let's slip him a bribe. We'll find a way out.

BHAMPAK

(To ANGEL) We're innocent! Innocent, I tell you! Please show us a way out of this mess!

FIRST ANGEL

Hell! Why don't you ask your father in Hell?

BHAMPAK

We're truly sorry.

FIRST ANGEL

(Softer) Maybe I can show you a way out.

JAMPAK

We'll do whatever you say.

FIRST ANGEL

Then bow down.

JAMPAK

(Happily) That's easy.

(JAMPAK and BHAMPAK bow to to each other.)

FIRST ANGEL

To me, silly!

JAMPAK

You? Alright.

(They bow to ANGEL.)

FIRST ANGEL

Now, where are your charges?

JAMPAK

In the waiting room.

FIRST ANGEL

Bring them here. I'll draw a circle so they won't escape. (He kneels and draws a circle) There!

(All exit. An ANNOUNCER enters and speaks to the audience.)

ANNOUNCER

Due to a slight error committed by Yama's messengers our two sidewalk dwellers from Bombay . . . Raja and Kisan . . . find themselves trapped in Hell.

(Clock strikes midnight. RAJA awakens thinking it's morning. He tries to walk but falls. He feels around and comes to a circular wall which surrounds the two of them. He wakes KISAN.)

RAJA

Is it morning? I can't tell. It's dark. And where does this wall come from? I can't see it, but it's there. There are ghosts somewhere.

KISAN

(Waking) Keep quiet. I'm trying to sleep.

(KISAN tries to get up and walk. He encounters the same invisible wall.)

Is there a wall? Oh, Raja, we're dead now. We're not in Bombay. This isn't the sidewalk.

RAJA

Where are we?

KISAN

We're in the Kingdom of Yama. Look! There's the door of Hell. See what's written on it? (Reads) Heavenly Hell, Private Limited.

RAJA

Does that mean we're dead?

KISAN

Since we were brought up with our bodies intact, we can't be dead. Look! The door of Hell is opening.

(From offstage, voices of dead souls. RAJA and KISAN are frightened. They close their eyes.)

RAJA

If you say we're not dead, then how did we get here? (More frightened) Look! Ghosts are looking at us from behind the door. My friend, I think we are dead.

KISAN

Is that so bad?

RAJA

Yes. Because I missed all the great things in life. Like taking bribes for example. I never knew the pleasures of wealth.

KISAN

Dying is not under our control.

RAJA

But you were always so fed up with life.

KISAN

What do you know? I've seen things no living person should see. I've taken enough insults in life. I remember seeing a cabaret performance . . . (Noise of ghosts shouting)

RAJA

Boy! Just listen to them. Should I go and see who's gone to Hell? There's a big opening in the doorway.

KISAN

No, I'll go. But you hold on to me.

(While holding him, RAJA steals something from KISAN'S pocket.)

Shame on you! You've brought your nasty habits with you.

RAJA

Well, I thought I should keep in practice.

KISAN

(Looks in door-way) Oh, what a surprise! I can see most of your friends. . . . There's Dhania, Mania, Bania. . . . They're the ones who really deserve to be in Hell.

RAJA

Do you think there'll be room for us? Kisan, you've got to find a way out of here. You know so many people. Don't you have any influence here?

KISAN

Not here.

RAJA

Well, then, I think I know a way. Lets' have a cultural program. And we'll call all the leaders of Yama and maybe, if they like the program, we can ask them to send us to Heaven.

KISAN

Good idea. But what if they ignore our request.

RAJA

Then we'll approach Yama himself.

KISAN

But will he understand a cultural program? I mean his culture is only about death.

RAJA

Then, what if we approach the Supreme God?

KISAN

What do you think this is . . . a school where you go to see the principal?

RAJA

Why not go to the top? Even if he doesn't understand. I mean it's the same on earth . . . so many people in high places who don't understand anything . . . and still, we go to them . . . nd they pretend to know.

KISAN

But it's not permitted here. Everything will get all mixed up. Like home-made wine.

RAJA

Good! Then there'll be good demand for it.

KISAN

Oh, nobody drinks that here. The nectar of the gods is the thing in this place.

RAJA

Forget it. I'm going to prepare some tea. A cup for you. One for me. And maybe one for Yama, and then the angels . . . .

KISAN

But what effect would that have?

RAJA

I don't know, but even a small bribe can't hurt.

(From backstage a musical flourish and FIRST SOUL enters.)

FIRST SOUL

(Laughs) Good. Good! I'm happy to hear your suggestion, Raja.

RAJA

(Frightened) A ghost! Oh, this is the end! And he knows my name. Who are you?

FIRST SOUL

Don't you recognize me?

KISAN

I think we're surrounded by ghosts.

FIRST SOUL

Don't be frightened. I'm your friend, Shet.

RAJA

(Thinking) Ah, Shet! It's you. How did you come here?

FIRST SOUL

Heart attack. It was in yesterday's news. I went to the race-track. My own horses were running. All of them placed and I won a handsome sum.

RAJA

It must have been a fluke.

KISAN

But you should have gone to Hell. What are you waiting for?

FIRST SOUL

I thought I might set myself up in business right here. Your idea of making tea is excellent.

RAJA

(To KISAN) Look. Even here it's the same thing. You know what I think? As soon as we get processed, we'll be kicked right out. Just like back home.

FIRST SOUL

Stick to business. Let's not waste any time. (Asks RAJA) Who's this man?

RAJA

This is my friend, Kisan.

FIRST SOUL

All right, gentlemen, shall we start our business?

RAJA

With what? No money.

FIRST SOUL

No need to worry, I'm here. How much do you need?

RAJA

But you're forgetting you're dead. Your money's back down there.

FIRST SOUL

I'll manage that. Let's stick to business.

KISAN

(To RAJA) These people are born rich. They know how to get money when they need it.

FIRST SOUL

(To RAJA) Don't listen to him. People like us don't show off our wealth.

RAJA

Now, what about the idea of making tea?

FIRST SOUL

Good idea, but there's no profit in it. Why don't you try nectar? The nectar of heaven. If you can market that you'll be able to put up a big building on this spot inside of two years. Guaranteed! You see, there's not much you can do about watering down tea. . . . But, with nectar . . . .

KISAN

You'd mix something with it?

FIRST SOUL

Sure. I'd do it. My children could do it. Everybody does it.

RAJA

I don't understand.

FIRST SOUL

It's a long tradition in our family.

RAJA

A shame! A blot on our nation's record.

FIRST SOUL

Wrong. We are totally shameless. Nobody gives a damn about things like national shame.

KISAN

(Sings)

Now we learn what business is:
It's all mixed up.
We call it the nation's strength,
And we say we're proud.
But, there are stones in our grain,
And oil in our butter,
And water in milk.
This is our shame,
But people don't care.

RAJA

(To FIRST SOUL) Shet, you better go. The messengers will be looking for you.

(FIRST SOUL exits.)

Oh, God! Save us from all these ghosts! (They see another SOUL entering) Look! Look! Another one.

SECOND SOUL

Don't be afraid of me. I'm not just any departed soul. I am the father of them all.

RAJA

That's it. Now I know we're really dead.

SECOND SOUL

No, not yet. I can't let you die just yet. You'll have to perform a little service for me. You see, I want to get married.

KISAN

You mean you're not married yet?

SECOND SOUL

I haven't been able to find a priest. But now I've found you.

KISAN

Who were you on earth?

SECOND SOUL

The husband of the most horrible woman.

RAJA

And you wan't to marry again?

SECOND SOUL

Yes. Maybe here I can enjoy the pleasures of married life.

RAJA

No, you're wrong. Wherever you go it's the same.

SECOND SOUL

But this time, the one I've chosen is really nice.

RAJA

That's what they all say at first.

SECOND SOUL

Ah, but she's in love with me!

RAJA

Can we have a look at her?

SECOND SOUL

If you really want to. But, she's not exactly your normal kind of woman. She's something of a vampire.

KISAN

Where is she?

SECOND SOUL

(Pointing) Right there, sitting in that tree. Ah, here she comes. Head first.

RAJA

We can only see her feet. What about her face?

SECOND SOUL

She won't show it until we're married.

KISAN

She seems to be quite cultured . . . but are you sure she's got a face?

SECOND SOUL

Let's hope so. Here she comes.

(Enter the VAMPIRE)

RAJA

(To KISAN) Look. Her feet are on backwards.

SECOND SOUL

Don't be afraid. Let's get on with the marriage, shall we?

(He takes VAMPIRE by hand and brings her to RAJA and KISAN. They both stare at her. SECOND SOUL speaks to the men.)

Now, don't stare at her. Let's hurry, or I'll lose her.

RAJA

(To audience) What an ugly bird! Frightening. Face like black tar. . . . And I'm supposed to unite this couple?

SECOND SOUL

(To VAMPIRE) Come on, dear. Don't be shy. (To RAJA) She's shy because it's all new and exciting. You see, this is a real love-marriage.

RAJA

Ah, that's nothing. They're all shy . . . first or fourth time 'round. They're all shy.

SECOND SOUL

Stop that. Please hurry.

(KISAN and RAJA act as Brahmin priests in a hurried marriage ceremony lasting a few moments. They hold up a sheet to separate the couple, then mumble a few words, and finally they draw the sheet away.)

KISAN

There. You're married now. (To SECOND SOUL) You know, something just occurred to me. Your wife on earth made a contract to be yours through seven lives. And what if she comes here?

SECOND SOUL

(Angry) She won't come here.

RAJA

You're right. She was a goddess on earth so she'll probably go to Heaven. You'll never see her again.

SECOND SOUL

She was no goddess. (Points to VAMPIRE) Here's a real goddess! Maybe I'll let you see her face.

(He lifts up her veil, then screams in shock.)

Oh! No! I'm dead! I'm dead!

RAJA

What's the matter?

SECOND SOUL

She's my wife!

RAJA

Of course she's your wife! We just performed the ceremony.

SECOND SOUL

I mean she's my original wife. . . . The one who made the contract for seven lives.

RAJA

That's what I always say. Wherever you go, it's the same.

VAMPIRE

(Beating SECOND SOUL) So! You left me on earth to do mischief here in Hell. A good thing I followed you.

RAJA

Why do you beat him? Can't you live in peace now?

VAMPIRE

I don't need your suggestions. All men are the same!

(She drags SECOND SOUL off-stage, mumbling.)

Are you hurt, my love?

(They exit.)

RAJA

(To KISAN) She's got a tender spot after all. Maybe they'll be happy.

KISAN

Naturally. Men are always taken in by the charms of women. It's mohini . . . the charms of a woman. (Musing) Mohini . . . Mohini . . .

(On hearing these words, THIRD SOUL enters--an old man leaning on a walking stick.)

THIRD SOUL

Yes . . . Mohini . . . Mohini . . . Is somebody calling for my Mohini?

RAJA

(To KISAN) Who's he? Is he looking for his love? . . . At his age?

KISAN

Maybe he's looking for his daughter.

RAJA

Ah! You were saying Mohini, Mohini. And now he comes with a stick. He's going to beat us. And it's all your fault. (He cowers in fear)

THIRD SOUL

(To both men) Did you call her name just now?

KISAN

No, no. Not us.

THIRD SOUL

Who are you? Where are you from? And how did you get here . . . in human form?

KISAN

We're from Bombay.

THIRD SOUL

I'm happy to meet you. I'm from Bombay, too. (Looks to both men) Have you found my Mohini?

RAJA

Yes, I got a little of it.

THIRD SOUL

Then, how is she?

RAJA

Very good.

KISAN

(To RAJA) You met her? Where?

RAJA

What do I know about his Mohini? I'm talking about Mohini tobacco. A fine chewing tobacco. Not very expensive. And excellent taste . . .

KISAN

You fool! The man is asking you about his daughter. (To THIRD SOUL) Isn't that right?

THIRD SOUL

Yes, she's my only daughter. And she should be getting married soon. Have you seen her? (Both nod negatively) Now, how will I ever know if she's married or not?

RAJA

I'll tell you. You give me her address and I'll go and meet her. (He makes a move, but hits the invisible wall) Whoops, sorry. I don't think I'll be able to do that. Why don't you put in a long distance call? You can probably do it free from here.

KISAN

Stop that! (To THIRD SOUL) She's still unmarried? Is she young?

THIRD SOUL

She's over thirty.

RAJA

She'll do.

KISAN

What do you mean by that?

RAJA

I mean she's old enough.

KISAN

For whom?

RAJA

For whoever wants her . . . except the two of us.

KISAN

(To THIRD SOUL) Why didn't you get her married off at the proper age?

THIRD SOUL

I tried, but I couldn't arrange a proper match. And then I died.

KISAN

It's no good looking for a proper match after a girl reaches thirty. I believe a father should start looking around when his daughter reaches the age of fourteen.

RAJA

Actually, I think he's come to the right place to look for a match.

THIRD SOUL

Yes, young man. . . . You can have your fun. But it wasn't my fault. She wanted to be free to finish her studies.

KISAN

But if she's pretty, there shouldn't be any problem.

THIRD SOUL

She's pretty, all right, but it's her age.

RAJA

Probably the attraction of her beauty must have passed its prime by now.

THIRD SOUL

At first, I was ready to offer a dowry of five thousand. Then I made it ten. Hearing this, a young man approached me. But he wanted me to raise it to fifteen thousand. This gave me heart failure. That's how I got here.

RAJA

What kind of beggar was it who asked for such a sum?

THIRD SOUL

On the contrary, he was a very rich man. He had many flats in Calcutta and Delhi, and lots of servants and cars. How could I ever think of giving my daughter to a beggar?

KISAN

(Musing) Delhi? . . . Calcutta? And asking for such a large dowry? I hope it wasn't Madhav Kharate.

THIRD SOUL

That's him! How do you know him?

KISAN

That man would have swallowed your fifteen thousand rupees in no time, along with your daughter. Thank god, you're saved!

THIRD SOUL

Why?

RAJA

Because he's a rogue, that's why.

THIRD SOUL

But how can a big shot like that be a rogue?

RAJA

Oh, because he has six wives and eight or ten children. He was engaged to four other girls but I never found out what happened to them.

THIRD SOUL

Did each one go willingly, or were they forced into it?

RAJA

Yes, they willingly followed in the direction of their dowries.

THIRD SOUL

What about the parents? Were their eyes closed to the truth?

RAJA

Just like you. Weren't you all set to give up your daughter along with ten thousand? Do you know him? He had many names.

THIRD SOUL

What a surprise! And all those poor wives and children!

KISAN

Don't worry about them.

RAJA

I see Yama's looking for you. (Looks offstage)

THIRD SOUL

Then I'd better go.

(He exits.)

KISAN

(To RAJA) Why did you have to hurt the old man? Opening his wounds about his daughter. For something like that they may not even let you go to Hell.

RAJA

Ah, go to Hell yourself! Me? I'm taking a shortcut to the Moon. (Looks to the sky) Look how near it is. (He tries to go but comes up against the invisible wall.)

(Enter FOURTH SOUL--a former scientist holding a telescope to his eyes. He is examining the heavens.)

FOURTH SOUL

Where is the Moon? Any my Baby Noon?

RAJA

This one's different, isnt he Kisan? I think he's looking for his little baby girl. Or, maybe it's a boy.

FOURTH SOUL

(Sees the two men) Who are you? Have you by any chance seen my little Noon?

KISAN

You've come to the wrong place. No children here.

FOURTH SOUL

No, no. It's my Baby Noon. I sent it off with a pair of monkeys inside.

KISAN

Nothing here.

FOURTH SOUL

(Surprised) You haven't heard about my Baby Noon? How ignorant can a man be! You're far behind the world, sir.

RAJA

Not behind. We've been ahead of the world since we left it far behind.

FOURTH SOUL

Let me tell you what I am, sir. I am a scientist. I made many important discoveries. My discovery of nitrogen gas, for example, shocked the world. Single-handedly, I conquered nature.

RAJA

But as I see, nature ultimately conquered you.

FOURTH SOUL

No! No! I'm immortal. The rocket Baby Noon, which I sent off with its precious cargo of monkeys, is undoubtedly an inspiration to Mother Nature herself and all her living creatures. By this deed, sir, I have become immortal. Now, just tell me where this Mother Nature is. I'd like to shake her hand.

RAJA

I think that's enough, now. Just what was so special about your rocket experiment?

FOURTH SOUL

The idea was to find a suitable location on the Moon for human settlement.

RAJA

What will you do with the earth when everybody decides to move?

KISAN

Maybe he'll grow jungles all over the place.

FOURTH SOUL

Correct! Absolutely! Once everybody goes to the Moon, we start growing jungles.

RAJA

What if the plan fails? . . . And you bungle your jungle?

FOURTH SOUL

Uh-uh. The plan is foolproof. Once man inhabits the Moon . . . .

KISAN

Then he'll be able to relax at last. When man is hungry he'll just stretch his hand out to Earth and pluck leaves from all those new jungles you're going to grow.

RAJA

What do you propose to do on the Moon?

KISAN

Just sleep.

FOURTH SOUL

That's it! Sleep is vital. Sleep is the god of man.

KISAN

That's blasphemy . . . taking the name of god in vain like that.

FOURTH SOUL

You don't know how precious those monkeys were to me. My whole future depended upon them. In fact I died with their names on my lips.

KISAN

Why didn't you go in place of them? Frankly, I don't think there would have been much difference either way.

FOURTH SOUL

A scientist, sir, is a scientist. And a monkey is a monkey.

RAJA

And nature is nature.

FOURTH SOUL

(Angry) What did you say?

KISAN

He says you're a great man.

FOURTH SOUL

Of course I'm great. Do you know that another of my discoveries is so powerful, it can destroy the world in seconds. I call it hydrogen. Now, you be the judge. Is there anybody greater than me?

RAJA

Your father.

FOURTH SOUL

(Angry) What's that?

KISAN

He's just saying that if you're so great, imagine what your father must have been.

FOURTH SOUL

This may be one of my future discoveries, and I wouldn't be . . . .

RAJA

(Looks offstage) Look, mister great scientist! Yama's out there trying to discover <u>you</u>.

FOURTH SOUL

Oh, my god! I must be going. Now, what will I do with this telescope?

RAJA

You can leave it with us. We'll take care of it.

FOURTH SOUL

Yes. Take care. It's my whole life.

(He exits.)

RAJA

It's five o'clock. I think Yama should be coming for us. What will we do then? (Frightened)

KISAN

There's nothing to be afraid of.

(Sings Bhupali-type early morning song.)

Wake up! It's dawn--
And the sun will soon be here . . . .

(From backstage, slogans are heard: "Long Live India!" KISAN and RAJA are interrupted and go to see what's happening. Enter FIFTH SOUL.)

FIFTH SOUL

(Shouting as he enters) We'll go forward! We're not afraid of guns! . . . .

RAJA

Even here there's war. Oh, Lord, save us!

FIFTH SOUL

(Speech-like) The revolution of the thirties! And the revolution of forty-two! The bullets of the British rained down on us like pellets of rain from the darkest clouds. And we brave soldiers fought against the storm. Why? For your Independence, that's why! With shrapnel in our legs, we fought. But are you independent now? Who will tell me the good news?

RAJA

(To KISAN) Is this a hero from some drama?

KISAN

Looks like somebody who fought and died for Independence. I think he was shot. He looks like a real soldier. Anyway, he doesn't seem to know we've made it to Independence.

FIFTH SOUL

(Seeing the two men) How did you get here? (Muses) Do you know my country?

RAJA

What country?

FIFTH SOUL

You don't know my India?

RAJA

Not at all!

KISAN

India is Hindustan.

RAJA

Hindustan! Well, I know Hindustan.

KISAN

It's also Bharat as well as India.

RAJA

I never knew a country can have so many names. (To FIFTH SOUL) We're Indians.

FIFTH SOUL

(Happily) Indians! Then, please tell me . . . is the country independent now?

KISAN

Yes.

FIFTH SOUL

And has the nation progressed much?

RAJA

Progressed? Of course! Why, just the other day, she was progressing so fast that she overran her spare parts.

FIFTH SOUL

Is the nation so fragmented?

RAJA

The only place to see it as a whole is in the museum.

FIFTH SOUL

What a great pity! But at least we've got our Independence. That's comforting. I can rest in peace now. (Pause) You've come from my homeland. Please let me touch your feet.

RAJA

No-no. Not us. We're sinners.

FIFTH SOUL

That's all right. You've brought me the most wonderful news. That's enough for me. (He touches their feet.)

RAJA

Then take me for Hindustan and you can take him . . . Kisan . . . for Pakistan. Now, just look at the two of us . . . .

FIFTH SOUL

Dreadful sight. You both look so weak.

RAJA

Yes. That's because I'm starving and he's hungry.

KISAN

Oh, how I wish I had been shot during the revolution. I would have prefered death to slavery at the hands of the selfish.

FIFTH SOUL

You can't mean that. If everybody believed this then who would be left to serve the nation?

RAJA

Oh, there are many. So many. The big-shots have already organized themselves to serve her. We applied, of course, but didn't have enough money for a deposit. Our submissions were torn up. That's how it is.

FIFTH SOUL

Look, friends. Those who are after money alone cannot love their country.

(Enter SIXTH SOUL)

SIXTH SOUL

My ticket! My ticket! (Sees the other three) Have you found my ticket?

RAJA

What ticket? Ticket for film? or drama? or Tamasha?

SIXTH SOUL

I don't know. My ticket to come up, they said.

FIFTH SOUL

(Surprised) You need a ticket to come here?

SIXTH SOUL

Not for here. They let you come here without a ticket. I was talking about my ticket for the election slate. My party leader said he'd give me one so I could stand for election. I lived on this hope. But at the last moment he had a heart attack and he came right here. Naturally, I followed him. There was an open sewage pit near his home and I was so upset I jumped into it.

RAJA

(Holds his nose) You might have found a better location.

SIXTH SOUL

I didn't stop to think. Now, gentlemen, I'd like to know if you've seen this man. I'm out to kill him.

RAJA

I just saw him heading towards Heaven.

FIFTH SOUL

Pity! How can such a man go to Heaven?

SIXTH SOUL

He must have used his influence. I know very well how he became party leader.

FIFTH SOUL

Who are you?

RAJA

He's a leader. Just look at him. Can't you tell?

FIFTH SOUL

(Happily) Oh! You're the leader of my India? Then, let me touch your feet.

RAJA

Just a minute! Don't touch him! All politicians are a pack of wolves. They take advantage of the nation's independence to pad their own pockets.

FIFTH SOUL

(To SIXTH SOUL) But how did you get here?

SIXTH SOUL

Walking.

RAJA

It's the saints and the sadhus who go walking to Heaven. You know how they do it? They get up early in the morning at about ten, and then they stuff themselves with dried dates soaked in butter fat. Then they walk a little . . . perhaps as many as ten steps. Then, five steps back, and to replace this great expense of energy . . . a long intoxicating drink of coconut juice. After this, fifteen steps forward and lunch at twelve o'clock. The luncheon menu is modest. A large vessel of pudding . . . some chappaties . . . rice . . . and perhaps twelve dozen bananas. It's a tradition. Sure ticket to Heaven.

SIXTH SOUL

It's my tradition! What's the point in justifying all this to you? You wouldn't understand anyway.

KISAN

Oh, I can explain it. (Sings)

They play a game with Hindustan.
Don't tell it to the gods.
They deal in fraud and theft all day,
And call them righteous ways.

Their pockets lined with money,
They reach elected heights.
But pretty soon they change their tune,
Forgetting public rights.

FIFTH SOUL

(Sadly) What a sad situation!

(FIFTH SOUL exits.)

SIXTH SOUL

Now, how will I ever get my ticket?

RAJA

(Pointing) Look! There's the messenger. He's come with your ticket.

SIXTH SOUL

(Happily) My ticket!

KISAN

Yes. To hell.

SIXTH SOUL

As long as it's a ticket! At last, I've found a ticket.

(Exits mumbling)

My ticket . . . my ticket . . . .

KISAN

(To RAJA) There go two great patriots. One died for the nation . . . The other for political power. Which is the greater patriot?

RAJA

Political power.

KISAN

Why?

RAJA

Because that politician managed to get his ticket even here.

(Backstage, a clock strikes six o'clock.)

KISAN

Must be dawn. I never knew there was night and day up here. You heard the clock striking six, didn't you? Should we sing a devotional song? . . . A bhajan?

RAJA

I think a sensuous lavani would be more suitable to the occasion.

KISAN

But the gods like early morning songs. Helps them to get up.

RAJA

Sing what you like.

(Offstage announcement about the entry of YAMA. A flourish.)

RAJA

I think Yama's coming.

OFFSTAGE VOICE OF YAMA

You earthlings! Be blessed!

RAJA

Hello! Hello? Who are you that you should bless us?

YAMA (OFFSTAGE)

I am Yama! You can return to earth. An error has been committed by my messengers. The correction has been made. You are free to go.

KISAN

Can we have a look at the great Yama before we go?

YAMA (OFFSTAGE)

No.

RAJA

At least let us see the buffalo you always ride upon. I hear he's a handsome animal.

YAMA (OFFSTAGE)

Not possible.

RAJA

Are we really such dreadful sinners that we can't be given the opportunity of seeing you?

YAMA (OFFSTAGE)

It isn't that. My buffalo is on strike.

KISAN

But, Maharaj . . . How did this happen?

YAMA (OFFSTAGE)

Since you people came from earth new ideas have been infecting our domain. So, please don't linger. Just go!

RAJA

How are we supposed to go?

YAMA (OFFSTAGE)

There's an aircraft waiting for you.

(Noise of aircraft engines.)

Just hold on to the wings.

KISAN

So. It seems that an error may be corrected up here. That's not the way it is back home. (To YAMA) Anyway, we're ready to go in spite

of the imperfections on earth. What we've seen here is no picnic. All those lost souls, sad and searching. It's almost worthwhile struggling to create Heaven on earth. Maybe then some of us will be able to find moments of happiness.

(Sings)

We'll work to make a Heaven of earth.
Man is good enough and clever.
Heaven and Hell have little to tell.
Man is good enough and clever.

(THE END)

APPENDIX F

SHAHIRS OF MAHARASHTRA, BY REGION

APPENDIX F

SHAHIRS OF MAHARASHTRA, BY REGION

The appended list of 328 shahirs, or people's poets, was compiled for a special issue of the publication Shahir Naubat.[1] The issue was dedicated to the long tradition of shahiri writings and compositions and especially to an association meeting held February 28 to March 2, 1970. The list includes those shahirs living at the time. A number are now deceased, including Shahir D.N. Gavanker, of Bombay.

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[1]"List of Maharashtrian Shahirs," Shahir Naubat (Poona: Hindustan Press, March, 1970), p. 70.

SHAHIRS, BY REGION

Bombay (62)

Atmaram Patil
P.D. Khadilkar
Krishnarao Sable
Dada Kondke
Liladhar Hegde
Madhu More
Chandu Bharadkar
Rambhau Khamkar
D.N. Gavankar
N.D. Bhide
Eknath Shinde
Ramakant Jadhav
Raghunath Modak
Shantaram Nandgaonkar
V.S. Naniwadekar
Narayanrao Surve
Vasant Bapat
Bapu Deshmukh
Pundlik Pharande
Datta Jadhav
Thorbole
K.G. Lokhande
Bhaskar Mungekar
S.H. Thatte
S.P. Bhosle
Jagtap
Jagnath Shinde
Madhav Shyamsunder
Ganpat Satpute
Advilkar
Datta Borkar
Gopalji Surve
Sadanand Lokhande
Vishnupant Sonavane
Manohar Joshi
Nivrutti Khatavkar
Vasant Puranik
Anant Agate
Shivram Chavan
R.V. Durgude
Baliram Deshmukh
Vasudel Dani
Patilba Nana Jadhav
Gajanan Lakambare
Bhagvanrao Londhe
Bhondeve
Yeshwant Palsule
L.A. Pradhan
Keshav Chavan
Chandrakant Manjrekar
Madhu Thakur
Sadanand Kanitkar
Narayanrao Mote
Vishwasrao Pawar
Piwalkar
Atmaram Ingalkar
Yeshwant Jadhav
Rambhau Merekar
Shrikrishna Thakur
Baburao Dhavle
Ganpat Patil
Mrs. Sushilabai Ranade

Poona (37)

Kisanrao Hinge
Yogesh
Vamanrao Mote
J.M. Nangre
J.G. Nargolkar
Nana Kasbe
Hanumant Padghal
Dnyaneshwar Mule
Suresh Parchure
N.D. Vairagar
D.S. Naniwadekar
Maruti Jadhav
Mohamadbhai Didhikar
Rambhau Shimpi
Ulpe
M.A. Naniwadekar
Baburao Galange
V.G. Phadke
Dagdoba Barbhai
Dyandeo Kate
Baburao Dhulekar
Sharapbhau Babre
D.G. Jagtap
Babanrao Poman
Rajabhau Deshmukh
Anna Marlolkar
Sampat Gaiwad
Ram Deshmukh
Bal Pataskar

Dattatraya Hingamire
Jamdade Patil
Madhukar Painter
Himant
Dnyanoba Shirsagar
Jejurikar
Balkrishna Shinde
Pachange Ranganath

Sangli District (35)

Raghunath Dikshit
Ramgauda Patil
Ram Savant
Daulatrao Khot
Apparao Khot
Bajarang Anvi
Pawar
Anantrao Suryavaunshi
Gangaram Jagtap
C.K. Patil
Shankarrao Nikam
M.A. Kulkarni
Jagamswami
R.B. Chaugule
R.V. Yadev
Vamanrao Kulkarni
Baburao Vibhute
Ranjam Vanganikar
Shankarrao Patil
S. Mule
Panditrao Kulkarni
Ramdas Satpute
Vishnu Suryavaunshi
Baburao Shervande
Shankar Appa Mendhe
Laxmanrao Sathe
Ovhal
D.B. Kapse
Ranganath Methe
Pandurang Nangre
Vishnu Kute
Baburao Narvade
Bapurao Mali
Bandopant Joshi
Shankarrao Shiralkar

Satara (19)

Tukaram Jadhav
Baburao Nipane
Dagdoba Magare
H.D. Patil
V.L. Shinde
P.D. Kadav
S.K. Yadav
R.M. Mangsulikar
H.A. Sapkal
Chinchene
D.V. Ekbote
G.V. Shinde
V.L. Bhoi
A.V. Pisal
L.K. Shirsagar
Raosahib Jagtap
Prabhakar Dhulaji
Ratnakar Veer
Devkule

Dhulia (8)

Pandurang Hekate
Nagesh Moghulaikar
Avinash Vani
R.M. Patil
Haribhau Patil
R.V. Indoriva
D.G. Vatar
B.N. Gosavi

Kolhapur (23)

N.M. Pethkar
J.J. Shingte
Pandurang Parkar
Mogbul Vaghmare
Krishna Chavan
Madhukar Shant
Kuntinath Karke
Koli Master
Jagdish Khebudkar
Piraji Sarnaik
Shripatrao Lokhande
Avherikar Guruji
Hindurao Sankpal
V.R. Pawar
T. Tenai
M.D. Ghatge
P.G. Potdar
Shriram Mande
Gopinath Julkarni
Maruti Maskar

Balaram Samkal
Ramchandra Irekar
Rajaram Patil

Nagar (6)

Kisanrao Gore
N.M. Landge
P.R. Vhaval
S.N. Savale
R.Y. Punde
H.R. Yadav

Sholapur (5)

R.B. Kulkarni
Y.P. Kher
Bhosle
Baburao Purandare
Bandopant Vaghapure

Dharashiv (2)

Sharif
Shrirang Deshpande

Parbhani (4)

Laxminarayan Sahu
Satyanarayan Purohit
Vithalrao Lubak
Prabhakar Vaikar

Bheed (2)

Gopalrao Kanelkar
B. Salegaonkar

Aurangabad (24)

B.K. Deshmukh
Ranganathrao Gujarmali
L.A. Veshav
Raji Saleem
Murlidhar Golatpaonkar
Ranganath Maharaj
Dr. Pawar
Dr. Gopalrao Joshi
Shelke
S. Ghodke
Balwantrao Joshi
G. Ahirkar
Pannalal Dayama
Ranganath Shotriya
Kedar Sharma
Rambhau Kale
Tatyarao Joshi
P.D. Gosavi
C. Kale
S.M. Sonur
Bhimrao Kulkarni
Sudam Magar
M. Jain
Sabre

Nanded (2)

V.G. Lurlekar
V.S. Chavan

Jalgaon (13)

Keshavrao Marathi
Sakharam Joshi
B.G. Jagtap
P. Jamkhedkar
Kisenrao Bansod
R.B. Joshi
A.B. Jadhav
N.R. Attardey
Rajaram Vani
B.K. Ingle
M.L. Khedke
K. Kumawat
N.V. Mistry

Nasik (12)

Vamanrao Kadam
Satyawar Suryawhanshi
R.M. Naniwadekar
A.V. Mule
Vasant Naid
Harishchandra Gaikwad
A. Parkhi
G.M. Nikam
A.V. Jagtap
R.V. Terekar
Datta Kachi
Pratap Pardeshi

Thana (13)

N. Kapde
G.M. Khare
Bhaskar Raut
Shankarrao Kulkarni
Gajanan Wekhande
Kamalakar Patil
N.D. Darmamehar
Keshav Damle
Nagesh Kamli
Pandurang Patil
Harilaxman Patil
Harkare Guruji
G.N. Khataukar

Ratnagiri (7)

Nazre Guruji
S.D. Agashe
Kamalakar Wadkar
Chandravadan
Harish Savant
Berde
V.K. Ware

Amrawati (9)

Kisanrao Varpe
Motiram Chaudhari
Bhojane Patil
Mahadeo Amle
Ramesh Pawar
Suman Bandhu
Sharadchandra Singwha
Manohar Kavishwar
Suryakant Dahikar

Vardha (3)

Vithoba
Mahadev Kanare
Maruti Dada Kadu

Yawatmal (2)

Vishram Ranoji
H.M. Ghormade

Chanda (3)

Prabhakar Ghate
Champaral Ghate
Dadan Hajare

Akola (4)

Chorvat
Dedi Dive
Dr. R.G. Rajankar
Devrao Lote

Bhandara (1)

N.A. Bhurade

Nagpur (15)

P. Bhingane
Pudalikrao Wag
V.N. Darvane
Prabhakar Nichkawne
Manikrao Motghare
P.L. Bhakre
Ramrao Patil
Ramachandra Kohaliwale
Vyankatrao Patil
A.G. Shrinivastav
Sharad Muthe
Anant Phandi
Suparao Deshmukh
Raoji Thakre
Suresh Savant

Colaba (7)

J.V. Date
C.V. Khade
Gowind Patil
H.M. Bhand
Shankarrao Telangi
Vasant Mandkar
Bhandu Patil

Buldhana (9)

B. Dhanasingh
Pundalik Gavle

Sampat Ahir
Gokulsingh Shatriya
Vasant Teburne
R.R. Thorat
Bapurao Patil
Lalibhau
Dhongarwas

APPENDIX G

RULES OF THE STAGE PERFORMANCES SCRUTINY BOARD, GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA

APPENDIX G

RULES OF THE STAGE PERFORMANCES SCRUTINY BOARD, GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA

The rules listed here are concerned with licensing and controlling places of public amusement (other than cinemas) and with performances for public amusement, including melas (festivals) and Tamashas. They were established in 1960.

CERTIFICATE OF SUITABILITY

137. Application for Certificate of Suitability:

1. Any person who desires to hold or provide for any amusement performance, whether with or without tickets, shall, two months before the date on which such performance is to be held or provided for, apply to the Chairman of the Board for the grant of a Certificate of Suitability therefor.

2. Such application shall be made in Form "I". Any application which does not contain information about all the particulars, contained in the said Form, to the satisfaction of the Board, may not be considered by it.

138. Grant of Certificate of Suitability, with or without conditions:

1. The board may, after considering the application and obtaining such further particulars as it may deem fit, issue a certificate of suitability in respect of such performances either without any modification of the script, or with such modifications which the Board considers are not open to any of the objections specified in rule 139. Such certificates shall be issued in Form "J".

2. If the Board considers, from the script submitted for scrutiny or otherwise, that any such performance is open to any of the objections specified in the next succeeding rule but the deletion or modification of a part or parts will render it suitable for public amusement, the Board shall communicate to the applicants the proposals for the modifications and

give him a reasonable opportunity of making the necessary modifications. If the Board is satisfied with the modifications agreed to be carried out by the applicant, the Board shall issue a Certificate of Suitability in respect of the performance in Form "J" and specify therein the conditions subject to which it is issued.

139. Power to refuse Certificate of Suitability and guiding principles therefor:

1. The Board may refuse to grant a Certificate of Suitability in respect of any such performance, if from the script or otherwise, the Board considers that the performance, or any part thereof is against the interests of the Sovereignty and integrity of India, or the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality, or involves contempt of court or is likely to involve the commission of any offence or involves defamation of any high personality (living or deceased) or of any person (living or deceased) of repute in the literary, social or political field or is grossly indecent, scurrilous or obscene or is intended for blackmail.

2. Subject to the provisions contained in sub-rule (1), the Board in exercising its power to sanction or refuse a Certificate of Suitability shall be guided by the following directions: General Principles, which shall guide the Board:

(i) No performance shall be certified as suitable, which will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence sympathy of the audience shall not be thrown on the side of crime, wrong-doing, evil or sin;

(ii) Standards of life, having regards to the standards of the country and the people to which the story relates, shall not be so portrayed as to deprave the morality of the audience;

(iii) The prevailing laws shall not be so ridiculed as to create sympathy for violation of such laws.

Application of General Principles: It is not desirable that a performance shall be certified as suitable, which--

(A) Deals with crime in such a manner as to--

(i) Extenuate to Criminal Acts;

(ii) Depict the modus operandi of criminals;

(iii) Throw the glamour of romance and heroism over criminal characters;

(iv) Enlist the sympathy or admiration of the audience for criminal characters;

(v) Hold up to contempt those responsible for, or engaged in the prevention, detection or punishment of criminals;

(vi) Create the impression that crime pays or is a normal incident of ordinary life and not to be reprobated.

(B) Deals with vice or immorality in such a manner as to;

(i) Extenuate vicious or immoral acts;

(ii) Undermine the accepted canons of decency;

(iii) Depict vice or immorality as attractive;

(iv) Cast a halo of success or glory round the vicious or immoral;

(v) Enlist the sympathy or admiration of the audience for vicious or immoral characters;

(vi) Suggest that the attainment of a laudable end is justified by vicious or immoral means or improper motives;

(vii) Create the impression that vice and immorality are not to be reprobated.

(C) Deals with the relations between the sexes in such a manner as to;

(i) Lower the sacredness of the institution of marriage;

(ii) Suggest that illicit sexual relations are ordinary incidents of life and not to be reprobated.

(D) Brings into contempt the armed forces or the public services or persons entrusted with the administration of law and order and is intended or likely to;

(i) Wound the susceptibilities of any foreign nation or any community or the followers of any religion;

(ii) Foment social unrest or discontent to such an extent as to incite people to crime;

(iii) Promote disorder, violence, a breach of the law or disaffection or resistance to Government.

. . . . . .

(F) Attempts to defame;

(i) Any high personality (living or deceased);

(ii) Any person (living or deceased) of repute in the literary, social or political field.

(G) Is grossly indecent, scurrilous or obscene, or is intended for blackmail.

140. Access to Chairman and members, etc:

The Chairman, members and Secretary of the Board shall be given free access to any place where any amusement performance is to be or is being performed or exhibited, and two seats in the highest class of accommodation shall be reserved for them by the organiser of such performances. The Honorary Readers appointed by the Chairman of the Board for scrutiny of scripts shall also have such free access and be given such accommodation.

141. Power to suspend or cancel Certificate of Suitability:

1. If the Chairman or any member of the Board considers that the whole or any part of the performance actually performed or exhibited was not scrutinised and certified by the Board, or had actually been excised by the Board, he may make a report of the fact to the Board and also to the Licensing Authority.

2. On receipt of such a report, the Board may suspend or cancel the Certificate of Suitability granted under Rule 141, and shall report the matter to the Licensing Authority as early as possible.

142. Re-examination of scripts:

Notwithstanding anything contained in these Rules, the Board may at any time of its own motion or on a representation made to it in that behalf re-examine the script of any amusement performance in respect of which a Certificate of Suitability has already been granted by it under Rule 138 and if the Board is of the opinion that the script is unfit for performance for public amusement on any of the grounds referred to in Rule 139, the Board may suspend or cancel the Certificate of Suitability granted by it under Rule 138. The Board shall communicate its decision to the Licensing Authority.

143. If any Certificate of Suitability granted under Rule 138 is lost a duplicate copy thereof may be granted by the Board on application.

144. Nothing in these Rules shall apply to amusement performances [of] . . . Tamashas and Lavanis, the Scripts of which were published before 1900 A.D., provided that after each publication no additions or alterations have been made to such scripts.

145. Except in the case of Melas, the scripts of which were not scrutinised and passed by the Board, nothing in these Rules also apply to any amusement performances which are licensed under any Licensing Rules in force in Greater Bombay immediately before the commencement of these Rules.

Provided that the Board may, at any time of its own motion or on a representation made to it in that behalf, examine the script of any such performance and if the Board is of the opinion that the script is unfit for performance for public amusement on any of the grounds referred to in Rule 139, the Board may declare that the exemption from the provisions of these rules granted by this rule in respect of such performance is withdrawn. The Board shall communicate its decision to the Licensing Authority.

FORM 'J'

(See Rule 141 of the Rules for Licensing and Controlling Places of Public Amusement, etc.)

Certificate of Suitability issued by the Stage Performances Scrutiny Board.

No. of the certificate

Date of issue

Name of the applicant

Name of the party represented by the applicant

Address of the applicant

Date of application

Title of the script and name of the author

Name of the publisher

Year of publication and number of the edition

Certified that the script of the above mentioned amusement performance is suitable for performance or exhibition for public amusement in the State of Maharashtra provided that the following conditions shall be complied with:

Conditions:

Chairman,
Stage Performances Scrutiny Board,
Government of Maharashtra, Bombay.

Rule made by State Government

The Chairman, Members and Secretary of the Stage Performances Scrutiny Board shall be given free access to any place where any amusement performance is to be or is being performed or exhibited and two seats in the highest class of accommodation shall be reserved for them by the organiser of such performance.

FORM 'I'

(See Rule 140(2) of the Rules for the Licensing and Controlling Places of Public Amusement, etc.)

Form of Application for Certificate of Suitability of Amusement Performance

Full name of the applicant

His age

His address

Name and address of the party on behalf of which the application is made

Nature of the performance (whether Drama, Tamasha, Mela etc.)

Title of the script submitted for scrutiny

Name of the author

Name and address of the publisher

Year of publication

Number of edition submitted for scrutiny

Number of copies submitted

Date:

Signature of the applicant

(1) If an applicant cannot sign the application form he can send it with his thumb impression taken in the presence of a Police Patil or a Mamlatdar and attested by him.

(2) Any person who desires to hold or provide any amusement performance shall at least two months before the date on which such performance is to be held or provided for the first time apply to the Chairman for grant by the Board of a Certificate of Suitability therefor.

(3) Such application shall be made in Form 'I'. Any application which does not contain information about all the particulars mentioned in the said Form to the satisfaction of the Board may not be considered by it.

APPENDIX H

PHOTOGRAPHS

"Still-life" of Maharashtrian folk instruments used in Tamasha. Centre, the large circular percussion instrument, the daf, and to the left is the one-stringed tuntuni (standing), which is partly hidden by a smaller daf called halgi, resting in foreground upon the two-sided dholki drum. Slightly to the rear and right of the large daf are two drums that look like tabla-dagga but they are more properly called sambal. Further to the right is another tuntuni. Tiny drum in front of the large daf is called a kanjiri, and the jangling instrument strung to wooden rods are the lejim. Lost in the foreground, and to the left of the lejim, are the small cymbals (thal or manjeera).

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

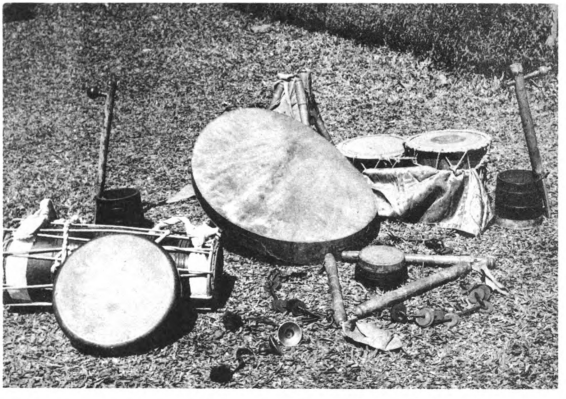

Plate I

PLATE II

Lata Lanka Nandurekar, third from right, and members of her own sangeet-baari, or music-and-dance troupe.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE III

Shahir Amar Shaikh, in 1968, a year before his accidental death. A masterful, inspiring propagandist for the Communist cause and, later, for linguistic rights of Maharashtrians, he used the Tamasha form to spread his ideas and helped to shape the form to suit modern social needs.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

Plate II

Plate III

PLATE IV

A farmer prods his animals in a scene from Shahir Amar Shaikh's 1965 production of Jau Tethe Khaoo ("Wherever We Go We Eat").

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE V

Shaikh reaches climactic moment of patriotic ballad in Wherever We Go We Eat.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

Plate IV

Plate V

PLATE VI

Plaintive expression of starving beggar is captured by Shaikh during rousing ballad from Wherever We Go We Eat.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE VII

Note accompanists to Shaikh. From left, instruments are: tuntuni, cymbals or thal, daf, and dholki (drum). Dholki and daf traditionally set rhythms in Tamasha, and there is intimate improvisational interplay between singer and musicians.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

Plate VI

Plate VII

PLATE VIII

Farmer's dance performed with typical Tamasha stamping footwork (to gain maximum sound from the ankle-bells), and hand gestures, from Amar Shiakh's production of Wherever We Go We Eat. Note dholki-player working closely with dancers.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE IX

Shahir Liladhar Hegde's troupe performing for the youth socialist movement, Rashtra Seva Dal (R.S.D.), which sponsors village tours of Tamashas to further its aim of secularizing Maharashtrian society. Shahir Hegde has more recently accepted government-sponsored work in publicizing national development programs among the rural masses.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

Plate VIII

Plate IX

PLATE X

Vasant Sabnis, right, author of the brilliantly successful Tamasha-style play, Vichya Maji Purikara, ("Fulfill My Desire"), has written himself into opening moments of the play with leading star Dada Kondke. The piece is a satirical look at social and political injustices and false personal morality.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE XI

Sabnis' play owes much of its success to Dada Kondke, left, whose improvisations and witty lampoons of local social and political figures and situations are enormously popular.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

Plate X

Plate XI

PLATE XII

Shahir Sable, age forty-eight when interviewed in 1971 for this study, has been directing his own sophisticated brand of Tamasha-type entertainments for more than thirty years. His avowed aim: to raise the level of social consciousness of the people. His troupe includes full-time workers at Bombay railway shops; his appeal is directed to urban classes and rural peasants.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE XIII

Sable, at microphone, and members of his troupe during opening devotional song at a performance.

(Rjdatt Photos, Bombay)

Plate XII

Plate XXIII

PLATE XIV

Sable, in the 1940s, as a musician and ballad-singer who performed povadas (ballads) through the countryside in support of Indian national independence.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE XV

Sable's 1968 production, Aikyachi Wadi Budruk ("A Place Called Budruk"), featured noted character actor Raja Mayekar. Mayekar has since quit Sable's troupe to form his own.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

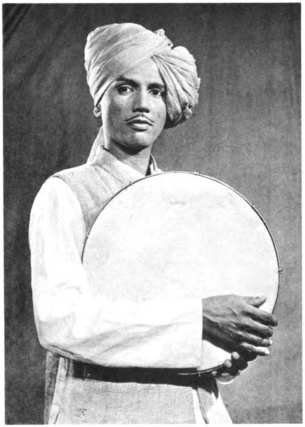

Plate XIV

Plate XV

PLATE XVI

A song-and-dance sequence enlivens a scene from A Place Called Budruk.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE XVII

Raja Mayekar is seen here in a 1968 production of Sable's Yamarajyat EK Ratra ("One Night in Hell"). Note use of stylized costuming reflecting Sable's attempt to experiment with methods of presentation by the adoption of indoor theatre techniques.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

Plate XVI

Plate XVII

PLATE XVIII

Although these Tamasha singer-dancers are dressed in traditional nine-yard Maharashtrian saris, and wear ghungrus, or ankle-bells, they carry a special message of modern intent. The girls are seen in a performance of Sable's Andhala Daltai ("Blind Man Grinds"). The piece was a call to Maharashtrian awakening and served for a time as support for the right-wing political party, Shiva Sena. When the party began actively to contest local and state elections, Sable withdrew the play and his personal support, since he believed his status as an artist was being compromised.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE XIX

Dadu Indurikar, long-time "raw" Tamasha character-actor and Songadya (jester), tours with his troupe in a successful production of Gadhavacha Lagna ("Donkey's Marriage"), written in 1970 by Shahir Vadgondar with support from Bombay's New Hanuman Theatre.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

Plate XVIII

Plate XIX

PLATE XX

Scene from Donkey's Marriage features Radhu Mali, Tamasha actor of long standing, who rose from humble peasant beginnings, but who believes he has gained very little economically or socially from his profession. His average monthly income is 150 rupees ($20), and he is normally unemployed three months of each year during monsoons.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE XXI

Indurikar's troupe, moving through audience in a climactic moment from Donkey's Marriage.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

Plate XX

Plate XXI

PLATE XXII

Baburao Punekar, a leading Tamasha artist, is honored at a 1970 ceremony in Poona by the Marathi novelist Professor N. C. Phadke.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

PLATE XXIII

P. L. Deshpande, Marathi humorist and playwright, performs his own monologues that keep audiences spellbound. He has also written scripts in Tamasha-style, including Wanted A Leader, produced in the 1950s for the Socialist youth organization, Rashtra Seva Dal, or R.S.D.

(Rajdatt Photos, Bombay)

Plate XXII

Plate XXIII

PLATE XXIV

Daulat-jadda, the tradition of offering money for song or dance requests, is a special feature in "raw" Tamashas and an important convention permitting real contact between audiences and artists. Photo was taken at the Aryabhushan Theatre, Poona.

PLATE XXV

More daulat-jadda at the Aryabhushan Theatre, Poona.

Plate XXIV

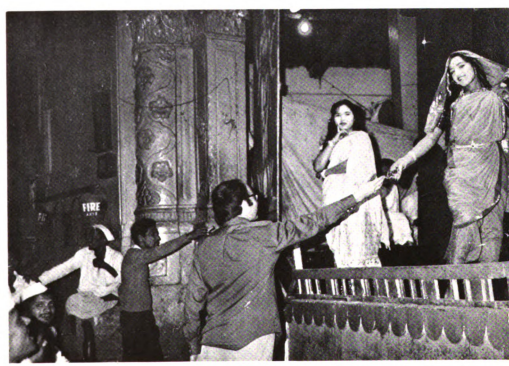

Plate XXV

PLATE XXVI

Scenes from A Tale of the Onion of Intelligence by Shankar Patil, translated and adapted for English-speaking Western audiences, were presented at Michigan State University in 1971, for a benefit in aid of Bangladesh refugees in India. Marathi musicians and American acting students were used for the production.

PLATE XXVII

Gaulan (milkmaids and Krishna) segment of A Tale of the Onion of Intelligence at Michigan State University production.

Plate XXVI

Plate XXVII

APPENDIX I

PLOT OUTLINES OF TAMASHA VAGS

(FOLK DRAMAS)

APPENDIX I

PLOT OUTLINES OF TAMASHA VAGS (FOLK DRAMAS)

(1) A traditional vag deals typically with mythological or pseudo-historical characters. One concerns a certain King Vikram who is told by a wise man about untold wealth that might be found in the Himalayas. A wicked minister confides to the audience that he will arrange for the King's handsome young son to go to the mountains in search of the great wealth. It seems the minister is jealous of the prince and is conspiring with two servants to have the lad killed on the expedition. The plot is somehow uncovered when the prince's sweetheart disguises herself as a man and goes off with the King's loyal servant to hunt for the prince in the Himalayas. The prince is located and the wicked minister is apprehended. Ultimately, the wise man's pious posture is seen for what it really is--a sham.

(2) Andhala Daltai ("Blind Man Grinds"), by Shahir Sable, written in 1967, is based on the proverb which notes that a blind man grinds but a stray dog may eat the flour being ground with complete impunity. The vag is moralistic, almost right-wing in its political implications, depicting the exploitation of Maharashtrians in their own society (in Bombay) by Gujaratis and Madrasis.

A village patil comes to Bombay where he meets a Marathi basket carrier who unfolds his tale of woe, bemoaning the fate of Maharashtrians in the cosmopolitan environment of the city and blaming other regional groups for unemployment and deprivation among Marathis. One after the other, more Marathis encounter the patil to tell of their victimization. When the patil at last tries to help he is rewarded with a beating.

Frustrated, he asks the basket carrier the way to the railway station. He is ready to return to his village.

(3) Aika Ho Aika ("Listen to me"), by Shantaram Patil, 1951, follows the pattern of most simple vags which are designed to appeal to simple village folk. The plot involves a love affair between Dinkar, son of a former Tamasha dancer, Myna, and a rich upper class girl, Shobha. The girl's father is against the proposed marriage because of the boy's family background. The boy, however, is unaware of his mother's former profession. Myna, realising the moment of truth has come, tells her son the story of her youth. It is acted out as a long flash back, taking up almost the entire length of the play. In the revelation, we learn that Shobha's

father is no paragon of virtue himself; that twenty years ago he was chasing Myna, and that he was in fact the cause of all her troubles until she was saved by the man who was to become her present husband.

At the end of the flash back, Shobha's father is made to feel remorse and he finally gives permission to his daughter to marry Dinkar. The play ends happily.

(4) Asun Adchan Nasun Kholamba ("A Wife in Name Only") by Chandrakant Shettey, 1968, is a witty farce about conflicting family loyalties, featuring a daughter who appears more devoted and loving to her father than to her husband. The daughter's impetuousness and conniving lead her to demand a cow as a gift from her husband. When the husband returns one day with the cow, his father-in-law comes upon the scene to claim it as his own. We learn the old man had arranged to sell the animal to his son-in-law while disguised as an old farmer.

It soon becomes apparent that the sale was all part of a plan by the old man to liquidate his assets and to move into his son-in-law's home. Unfortunately, when the old man searches his pockets, he realizes with a shock that he has lost the money earned from all the transactions. The anguish is short-lived, however, because it is soon revealed that the son-in-law had actually outwitted his father-in-law and conviently picked his pocket.

The result is a happy one. The wife is forced to turn to her husband for security and protection, and craftiness is extolled as a virtue. Romantic love appears to have little to do with the story.

(5) Bapacha Baap ("Father's Father") by Shahir Sable, 1956, follows the exploits of Brahma, the creator, who returns to earth because he wants to judge the situation of the world for himself, having heard that mankind is trying to reach out and challenge the gods. Accompanied by the god Narad, he drops in on a temple where people are singing devotional songs. The scene appears normal enough until the visitors became aware that the temple is dedicated to the builder instead of to god. Brahma and Narad next visit the home of the temple-builder who nearly turns them away until they tell him they are wealthy businessmen. The builder turns warm and effusive and he invites them inside where they watch helplessly as the man feeds his dog huge quantities of food.

Next stop in their travels is a depressed slum where the two gods are accosted by a poor man. The visitors pose as film producers and the poor man tries to impress them with his acting talents and invites them to his own dramatic club which turns out to be an illicit liquor shop near a temple. The offended gods leave.

They soon reach a pilgrim site where a little boy offers lodgings and a tour of the religious objects for a price, but the visitors move on until they meet a phony holy man who is more interested in money than devotion. Another disappointing confrontation occurs with a school master who takes them to be inspectors.

By this time, the two celestial tourists are ready to return, filled with disappointment at the state of corruption upon earth. But a chance stop at a poor farmer's hut changes their hearts. Brahma is so touched by the farmer's unselfish kindness that he is moved to remark, at the close of the play: "Until today, I have been called the father of mankind. But today, I know there is somebody greater. It is this farmer. Today he is my father. Today, he is father's father."

(6) Daag ("The Blot") by Namdev Vatkar. In a preface to the third edition of the script (1961), Vatkar says the play represents the true story of a Tamasha dancer from an untouchable caste. In the play she is called Shakuntala, a member of the Mahar community.

The work opens upon a Tamasha rehearsal. Shakuntala is dancing, watched with admiring eyes by Bapurao, a Brahmin by caste. The rehearsal is interrupted when Shakuntala's brother, Vithal, returns from his studies in the city. He announces to everyone within earshot that he plans to marry a Brahmin girl. Bapurao is dismayed, declaring the idea absurd because it would destroy the caste system. A quarrel ensues between Bapurao and Vithal, but it is quickly broken up by the entry of Dr. Ruby, a woman doctor, who has come to tell Bapurao that his brother is in hospital and in urgent need of blood. Bapurao, however, is heartless; he can't bring himself to volunteer his own blood because of some old feud over the succession of his family's estate. Dr. Ruby leaves in a huff. She is a former member of the Mang untouchable community, we are told, who later converted to Christianity.

A sub-plot is developed to further complicate the story. Shakuntala's father enters; he is badly beaten, having dared to draw water from the well traditionally used by Brahmins. The point is starkly made that untouchables are still second-class citizens in spite of modern attempts to do away with the social evils stemming from the caste system.

More complications occur when Vithal learns that the parents of his would-be wife are opposed to the union, and he is further victimised by Bapurao and his brother (now released from hospital) who come to talk him out of the marriage.

One of the catalysts advancing the action of the play is Dr. Ruby. She returns to urge Shakuntala to speak out in the name

of truth and justice. Shakuntala does so. It seems that as a young girl of sixteen she was abducted by Bapurao and, with promises of marriage, she became a Tamasha dancer. Bapurao sent her back home when he learned she was pregnant. Care for the pregnant woman and later for Shakuntala's child was assumed by the good Dr. Ruby. With the story now in the open the doctor berates Bapurao's brother: she tells him there were no Brahmins willing to donate blood for him and that the only one who came forth with the gift of life was Shakuntala's father.

Instead of solving problems, the news serves to further inflame the passions of the villagers. Vithal, for one, is victimised to the point of agreeing not to pursue his marriage plans.

Dr. Ruby comes up with one suggestion to help Shakuntala: both Shakuntala and her child should be baptized into Christianity in order to escape the viscious cycle of caste recriminations. It seems like a good idea and suddenly the songadya (jester) of Shakuntala's troupe comes forward to declare that for love of her he would also become baptized. From the morass of problems and indecisions, Vithal gains new strength and urges his sister to marry songadya and leave her child with him. Dr. Ruby takes this as a rebuff and she leaves.

In another scene, Bapurao's brother asks Dr. Ruby to remove the untouchable blood from his body. It seems he is also being persecuted by his fellow Brahmins. In his new state of awareness and understanding, he waives his objection to Vithal's proposed marriage.

The unwieldy play ends when Shakuntala leaves her little son with her brother and goes off with songadya to begin a new life.

(7) Deshbhakta Ghotale ("Ghotale the Patriot") by Annabhau Sathe, published in 1957, deals with the patriotic social worker, Ghotale, who travels from village to village to publicize State Government five-year programs. In one village in Southern Maharashtra, Ghotale finds he is the victim of hostility and suspicion among the peasants. The patriot is the guest at the house of the village patil who, we learn, is despised for his harsh rule and economic domination. On the second day, the patil and the social worker go on rounds through the village but the villagers refuse to listen to the government-sponsored messages. A general meeting is arranged by the patil, but it turns out to be a failure. Ghotale refuses to speak publicly after insults are directed at him. The mission is a total failure, and the patriot heads off in the direction of another village.

The implication for the audience is that a new spirit, free of alliances with the traditional oppressive power structure

(symbolised by the patil), is the only way to reach the rural masses directly. By further implication, largely because of what is not said, that new spirit was to be found in Communist ideology. At the time of the writing of this play, the Government had already imposed strict control and censorship of all Tamasha productions.

(8) Gadwhacha Lagna ("Donkey's Marriage"), first produced by Dadu Indurikar and his troupe in 1970, begins with Indra, king of the gods, expressing offense at the indiscretions of his son. By means of a certain curse, he sends the handsome young man to earth in the form of a donkey. The curse is to be lifted only if the donkey succeeds in marrying a particular princess on earth.

The scene shifts to earth where a farmer is seen trudging home with his donkeys. He looks up to find an extra donkey has joined the others, and decides to keep the animal. At the court of the local king, meanwhile, the princess--object of Indra's challenge to his son--is undergoing questioning about her choice of a husband. She replies she will accept anyone capable of building a three-storey house overnight. The idea, she says, came to her from Indra, in a dream. The king is disturbed but he nevertheless agrees to his daughter's wish, and he proclaims the challenge to all, coupled with a warning that those who take up the call and fail will lose their heads.

The donkey-prince is tempted by the dare and he gets the farmer to secure from the king a note agreeing to give his daughter to his son, even if the son be stupid or mad, or just a silly "ass," provided the challenge is successfully met.

That night, the three-storey house is built and the king is forced to proceed with the wedding between his daughter and the donkey. But in the midst of the bizarre wedding ceremony, the donkey turns into a handsome prince. The story of the curse is now explained and the play ends on a happy fairy-tale note.

(9) Hapapacha Maal Gapapa ("It Doesn't Belong to Us") by Madhukar Lokhande and Sharad Joshi, written in 1957, concerns the simple peasant existence of two farmers who firmly believe that if they plant a horse in the ground they will reap a crop of horses. They plant a dead horse and head home. In their absence, an Arab bedouin comes into view, leading two fine horses to the field to graze. The bedouin himself wanders away just as the farmers return. They are overjoyed to see the first of their new "crop" of horses grazing happily. Legal complications follow when the bedouin returns to claim his animals. But by shrewd legal logic the farmers win their case. Their argument before the village patil was that if one planted corn one reaped corn, and if one planted rice one reaped rice. Logically, therefore, planting a horse would produce horses!

(10) Jalimanchi Peekli Karvanda ("The Fruit is Ripe") by R. Bargir, 1970, deals with Shripati, son of the village patil, who is watching a lively Tamasha performance. He appears to be attracted to the star dancer, Chandra. The girl is also the favorite of Krishna, son of another village head. In fact, Krishna has persuaded the girl to stay behind in the village for a time.

Shripati is jealous; he offers Chandra money for a private performance at his house but she refuses. Shripati now learns about the liaison between the girl and Krishna. This comes as a complete surprise because Krishna is supposed to be engaged to marry Shripati's own sister, Laxmi. When Krishna enters, a quarrel erupts. Chandra and her father are both upset about the turn of events. The old man tries to get Krishna to give up all claim to his daughter. Meanwhile, Shripati tells Krishna's father about the scandalous behavior of his son. Subsequent pleas to Krishna are useless; the young man finally decides to leave home and to join Chandra's Tamasha troupe.

One day, while Krishna is away, Shripati confronts Chandra in a bid to win her over. She refuses and some strongmen are used in an effort to take her away. Krishna returns conveniently and a fight breaks out. Chandra's father ends up in hospital.

Shripati is at his wit's end. He tells his sister Laxmi about the situation and she then goes to Chandra to resolve the problem. Not satisfied with this attempt, the jealous young man visits Chandra and forces her to dance, using a whip for persuasion. Krishna happens to return at this moment and he flays Shripati with his own whip.

On another occasion, Shripati tries a more gentle and romantic approach but this too is conveniently interrupted, this time by his sister Laxmi, who now sees her brother's evil ways.

Shripati leaves and Laxmi tries to get everybody to accept the marriage of Chandra and Krishna for the sake of harmony. Krishna learns the good news from Chandra and the marriage date is fixed. But a trick is played and after the ceremony, Krishna learns that his bride is really Laxmi in disguise. It was all a plan cleverly designed by Chandra who, it turns out, is really a half sister by previous marriage by her mother to Shripati's real father, now deceased.

The complications are resolved by bizarre revelations and there is general happiness and a closing song in praise of morality and truth.

(11) Kalu Balu, a vag normally performed by "raw" Tamasha troupes. Power and rivalry is the dominant moving force of this clumsy

melodrama. An army chief professes his love for a beautiful queen, whose husband, the king, has been ill for some time. The chief, plotting to usurp the throne, plots the death of the king, suggesting the queen herself administer poison in her husband's medicine. Unknowingly, the king's younger brother is the one who administers the loaded medicine. The king dies but not before two loyal constables, aware of the plot, try to prevent the king from drinking the poison. From this high point of action and interest, the rest of the piece is devoted to apprehending the guilty. Justice is served in the end even if the king is lost.

(12) Kunacha Kunala Mel Nahi ("Chaos All Around") by Vyankatesh Madgulkar, written in 1958, takes a critical look at the contemporary political system. A simple uneducated dhobi (washerman) is given a few impressive words to memorize and he is then propelled into a position of power. The result is a farcical comment on the inane, high-sounding speeches of many political leaders.

(13) Lavangi Mirchi Kolhapurchi ("A Spicy Tale From Kolhapur") by Shankar Patil, 1968, is a witty piece about a man who couldn't be satisfied with just one wife. Jaisingh is the main character. He is a wealthy married peasant who suddenly develops a strong interest in a saucy Tamasha dancer Sundra. Friends persuade him not to marry again but to take the girl home with him as a concubine. Jaisingh's wife and the rest of the family are naturally disturbed about the turn of events. Jaisingh's father-in-law is particularly angry and he storms over to the house to give vent to his wrath. The visit, however, coincides with that of Sundra's mother who has come to beg for the return of her daughter. Suddenly, there is a flash of recognition between Sundra's mother and Jaisingh's father-in-law, and the audience now learns that the two are lovers from way back and that they are in fact the parents of Sundra. Jaisingh is given permission and blessings to marry Sundra.

After the marriage the two wives begin to quarrel bitterly. Jaisingh is forced out of the house, a fact which shocks the women into a semblance of peaceful coexistence for the sake of harmony. Jaisingh is eventually persuaded to return home.

In time, however, the rivalries break out again, but just as Jaisingh is ready to leave the house once more, a third woman enters in search of him. It appears she had fallen in love with him during his recent leave from home. Now the two wives unite against the common enemy. In a compromise solution suggested by Jaisingh's friends, the third woman is eliminated and the wives agree upon a division of labor at home in order to keep the peace.

(14) Mitharani ("Sweet Queen") by Patthe Bapurao, was written early this century, and follows the fortunes of a king's daughter who has married a pauper. The couple is evicted by the angry king

and they travel a great distance until they meet another king who tries to alienate the affections of the princess. The young woman spurns the advance and the king is thereupon moved to adopt the traditional Indian pose of humiliation and to accept the woman as his "sister."

The songadya (jester) assumes an important role in the piece; he saves Mitha Rani from her troubles and he advances the plot action as well as whatever little humorous intent there may be. The young husband believes the worst of his wife and he is moved to reject the material world by becoming a sadhu, or holy man.

(15) Nartaki ("The Dancer") by Gopal Takalkar, 1968. Like most vags meant for simple peasants of the backward classes, this tale concerns the fortunes of a shahir or poet and the two loves in his life.

Early in life the shahir is thwarted by his father, the village patil, in his attempt to join a Tamasha troupe. He is sent off to college to pursue a career in agriculture. Eventually, he marries a girl who is so frightened of him that he is forced, for the sake of personal solace, to resume composing songs and dialogues for Tamasha troupes. When he begins to suspect that his wife has had previous marital affairs, he leaves home and takes up with the lovely Radha, a Tamasha dancer. He joins her troupe and love blossoms between them.

Back at the shahir's home, his wife Laxmi is visited by her male cousin at the moment when her father-in-law is away. The shahir returns home just as the cousin is about to embrace his wife. Believing his wife to be completely unfaithful, the shahir storms out again.

The cousin swears revenge and manages to gain the confidence of Radha's father in his attempt to destroy the love between Radha and the shahir.

In another scene, the shahir's wife visits Radha who had been unaware of her love's married state. Radha later suggests to her love that he had misunderstood his wife's basic goodness. The shahir then proposes that all three might be able to live happily together--something which Radha's father strongly objects to. The old man informs the evil cousin who makes a new bid to win away the girl's affections when the shahir is absent. To do this he rends the girl unconscious with some chloroform. Upon his return, the shahir is saddened not to find Radha and he is told she willingly went off with the cousin. He returns to his wife.

When Radha regains consciousness, the cousin tries to make love to her, but at this convenient moment a member of his wife's

family comes to tell him she's at the point of death. The cousin remains unmoved and the relative is driven to kill him. Radha's father is told of the situation and he volunteers to accept guilt for the murder in order to win respect for his own intransigence.

Radha is brought to the shahir's house, and all past differences between the shahir and his wife Laxmi are explained. Radha takes her leave very regretfully, praising her lover's artistic gifts.

(16) Prema, Tuje Naav Vasana ("Lust For Love") by S. B. Chavan, 1968, is the story of the life of the great Tamasha shahir, Pathe Bapurao. The vag traces the well-known events in the life of the renegade Brahmin who quit his family ties to join a Tamasha troupe. The story of his romance with the dancer Pavala is also included, notably the manner in which the shahir won over the girl in a play of musical riddles called sawal-jabab. Toward the close of the work, however, the decline is predictable: caste differences eat away at the relationships between the shahir and the rest of the troupe. The stars quit and the quality of the artistry of the troupe declines. Pavala leaves and Bapurao himself is brought to ill-health, poverty and loneliness in the end.

(17) Tara Rani ("Star Queen"), a story which comes originally from the literature of the Jains and the Buddhists, and which found its way into folk drama as a vag in the 1940s, according to anthropologist Durga Bhagvat. Tara Rani is a Tamasha artist who abandons her tiny son and her daughter in the streets. The daughter is adopted by a wealthy Delhi businessman, while the son is taken in by another wealthy man from Vijaypur. Years pass, and by chance, brother and sister meet and fall in love. They marry and produce a son. In a vision the god Shankar reveals to the mother the truth about her husband, whereupon the woman commits suicide. The young husband, meanwhile, comes to the place where his mother (Tara Rani) lives. He meets her and, like Oedipus, he and his mother become lovers. A son is born of their union; but Tara Rani is soon visited by Lord Shankar, and she learns that her lover is really her son. She, too, kills herself, taking the life of her new-born infant son with her.

(18) Teen Pidhyancha Vairi ("Enemy for Three Generation") by Pandurang Jadhav, is a work of the 1960s which deals in melodramatic fashion with long-standing family feuds and current struggles and jealousies--all centered about affections of lovely Tamasha dancers. Against this background, an unscrupulous village patil corners a newly arrived Tamasha dancer, Radha, and her dholki-player Waghya. A series of private performances are arranged for with handsome payments to the artists. The patil's wife learns of the situation and with the help of her uncle Ramji, she confronts her husband but gets beaten up for her effort.

Radha comes to the conclusion that a man who puts drink and women above his family is useless and she decides to leave. The patil is stubborn and locks up the girl in his house.

A public performance is planned by the patil in spite of the artist's protestations. The event is to become the climax of the play. Ramji's long-lost son, Krishna, returns with his friend, posing as military officers. During the performance, the lights go off and Radha disappears in the confusion. Rumour has it that Ramji's son has returned and has freed the girl, and the patil, blind with rage, captures Ramji as ransom for return of Radha. Soon, the village learns that Krishna has also managed to free Ramji and that the patil, his servant, and Waghya, the dholki-player, are in hot pursuit. To make matters more complicated, the patil's wife also disappears.

The unravelling is a complicated affair. At a critical moment, the wife sheds a disguise and claims that she was responsible for freeing Radha and Ramji. Krishna then appears on the scene to resolve hidden truths about the old family feud. Shots are fired in anger, and Ramji is killed by mistake by the patil, but with his dying breath he gives his blessings to the union between Radha and his son Krishna. The patil realises his mistake in having distrusted Ramji all these years, when in fact it was Ramji who had tried to protect his family.

(19) Tu Maji Ladki Myna ("You Are My Beloved Myna Bird") by D. M. Mirasdar, first produced in 1970, was inspired by an episode from the tales of the Arabian Nights. The play concerns the fortunes of a king's man-servant and his queen's maid-servant. It appears that creditors are threatening to kill the man-servant, who is driven to ingenious ruses to escape payment. The situation reaches a crisis when the man-servant suggests to his wife that she inform the queen of his own death. The ruse works and the queen is sufficiently moved to make a handsome gift of money to her servant. Fresh from this triumph, the man-servant goes to the king to tell him of the death of his wife. The king is also moved to offer a good sum of money. Later, when the royal couple learn the truth, they both rush to the servants' home to investigate. They find the couple alive and well. But the shock is too much for the king. He literally dies of shock.

(20) Vichya Maji Puri Kara ("Fulfil My Desire") by Vasant Sabnis, was the big hit of the late 1960s, and it was still running in 1973. The work opens with the King discussing the affairs of state with his Minister and his Police Inspector. News comes that the Chief-Minister is dead. The King is overcome with sadness and he goes off to console himself in his harem. Meanwhile, the Minister and a Guard discuss the replacement of the Chief-Minister. The Guard notes that, according to custom and

seniority, his own friend, the Police Inspector, would be due for the appointment. The Minister, however, has already decided that his own brother-in-law will have the post. This choice is made to placate his very demanding wife.

The Minister has his way, and his brother-in-law assumes the vacant post. The new Chief-Minister, however, is a cow-herd who blunders about in animal-like fashion, abusing his new-found authority. He also develops an interest in the Police Inspector's sweetheart, a Tamasha dancer (who livens up the performance with several song-and-dance numbers). The Inspector and his girl plot to get rid of the new Chief-Minister by involving him in court theft. At first, he is encouraged to engage in petty theft, but the situation soon reaches a climax when the Tamasha dancer persuades the Chief-Minister to steal the King's own bed. This ultimate act, and a proposed marriage ceremony between the dancer and the Chief-Minister, finally serve to open the King's eyes to the truth. The King now takes the initiative to restore order in his Kingdom, and he banishes the Chief-Minister and offers the Inspector the post rightfully due him. The Inspector is also married on the spot to his dancing girl. The _vag_ ends happily and the virtues of truth and justice are praised.

APPENDIX J

HISTORICAL NOTE ON MAHARASHTRA

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Since Tamasha is the indigenous folk theatre form of Maharashtra State, a brief note about the region is called for.

The present political division of the State came into being in 1958. It was born of regional agitation by the Marathi populace for linguistic rights. The establishment of Maharashtra broke up an unwieldy political union with what is today the State of Gujarat. The old political union was called Bombay State, and it had unsuccessfully tried to forge a bilingual sense of unity among the Marathi and Gujarati speakers since its creation in 1954. Before this time--in fact, since Independence--Bombay State had been a tri-lingual arrangement which included the present State of Mysore. Rivalries among Marathis, Gujaratis, and Mysoris, however, sparked the separatist troubles that led to the later subdivisions.

Maharashtra today covers an area of 118,530 square miles in Western India, including the Western Ghat mountains and the Deccan plateau. The population, according to the 1971 census, is fifty million, or just under a tenth of the population of the entire country.

The principle language is Marathi, but there are large concentrations of Gujarati speakers in Bombay, Poona, and other major cities. Migrations from the North (after the partition of India) brought sizeable numbers of Hindi-speakers, and, more recently, there has been an influx of Mysoris and Madrasis to the Bombay and Sholapur

industrial regions, further complicating the traditional linguistic and cultural patterns of the State of Maharashtra.

The modern Marathi language developed from old Indo-Aryan through the middle Indic Prakrit, or old vernacular, called Maharashtri. It also borrowed much from Sanskrit and, to a lesser extent, from Arabic, Persian, English and other languages.[1]

Maharashtra is one of nineteen states making up the political framework of India. Total population of the country is listed at 547 million, according to the 1971 census.

Little is known of the history of the Marathas before the Christian Era. They rose to prominence in the first century A.D. under King Shalivahan, who is supposed to have fought and defeated King Vikram, which appears unlikely since they were both separated in time by some 135 years. Shalivahan's real or mythical personage may be a matter of conjecture, but his dynasty is supposed to have ruled in the Deccan region to the end of the third century, after which it was defeated by the Maratha house of the Rashtrakutas. The famed Chalukyas opposed the Rashtrakutas and established supremacy early in the sixth century.

The Rashtrakutas returned to power about the middle of the eighth century. King Govind III may be singled out as the most prominent ruler of this dynasty. But in the continuing wars for control, a second Chalukya dynasty was established two hundred years

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[1]Indira Y. Junghare, "Marathi Tadbhava Phonology: A Generative Approach," Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute, Vol. 29 (1968-1969), p. 37.

later, in 973. Chief among the Chalukyas in this period was Vikramditya II. (Vikram and other kings of the medieval kingdoms appear as chief pseudo-historical characters in many Tamasha vags, or folk dramas, with very little relevance to historically accurate detail. Storylines of a number of these vags appear in Appendix I of this study.)

The last of the Chalukyas was Vira Soma (Someshvar IV), whose possessions passed after 1190 to new dynasties, the Yadavas of Davgiri, and the Hoysalas of Dorasamdura. Ramachandra, of the Yadavas, was the last independent sovereign of the Deccan before he submitted to the advancing Moghul invaders in 1309. With its seat of power in Delhi, Moslem rule continued unbroken for 350 years.

It wasn't until the seventeenth century that the Marathas regained their sense of sovereign destiny. In 1674, the great Kshatrya (warrior caste) leader, Shivaji, led his armies to a complete and stunning victory over the Moghuls and re-established an indigenous Marathi-controlled territory in the Deccan.

From the social point of view, the bulk of the Marathas may be classed as Shudras, or low-rung members of the Hindu caste structure. The Brahmins of Maharashtra, however--especially the Chitpavan community of the coastal Konkan region--constitute an intellectual elite.

The Oxford History of India, from which most of this historical account is taken, quotes from Mountstuart Elphinstone's own History of India, published in 1841, to describe the Maratha character:

> Though the Marathas had never appeared in history as a nation, they had as strongly marked a character as if they had always formed a united commonwealth. Though more like to the lower orders in Hindostan than to their southern neighbours in Kanara and Telingana, they could never for a moment be confounded with either. They are small sturdy men, well made, though not handsome. They are all active, laborious, hardy, and persevering. If they have none of the pride and dignity of the Rajputs, they have none of their indolence or want of wordly wisdom. . . . A Maratha thinks of nothing but the result, and cares little of the means, if he can attain his object. For this purpose he will strain his wits, renounce his pleasures, and hazard his person; but he has not a conception of sacrificing his life, or even his interest, for a point of honour. . . .[2]

After Shivaji's death, the princely line declined rapidly as a result of internal dissensions which broke the Maratha Kingdom into a loose confederacy. The Kingdom was revived for a time with the rise of rule by prime ministers, or Peshvas, who were mostly Chitpavan Brahmins from the Konkan region. Under the rule of Peshva Baji Rao II (who came to power in 1740), the Maratha power reached its height, and it was during this period that Tamasha entertainments were given their greatest boost, including court protection, which resulted in a veritable golden age of lavani songs, chakkads, shahiri povadas and performing troupes. But the Peshva rule soon weakened itself in frustrated expansionist wars, and by 1818, the British literally had to substitute their authority "for no authority at all."[3]

Regional pride among Marathi speakers reappeared after India achieved national independence in 1947. It was pride fed over the

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[2]Vincent A. Smith, The Oxford History of India (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 3rd ed., p. 410. For a historical sketch of the early kingdoms, see pp. 213-219; also H. Arbuthnot Acworth's Ballads of the Marathas (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1894), Introduction.

[3]Vincent A. Smith, op. cit., p. 572.

years by concern about economic inroads made by migrants from the North and the South at the expense of the Maratha people. This pride manifested itself in right-wing political movements pledged to Marathi-first programs and rights. Although these movements represented fringe activities, they hastened the eventual creation of the State of Maharashtra.