

CHAPTER 4

A. MARATHI SANGEET NATAK: CULTURAL TRADITION OF MAHARASHTRA

The Sangeet Natak in Marathi is an unparalleled and multifaceted art. There's rarely a comparable traditional art form in the world. It is one of the brilliant highlights of Marathi cultural magnificence. It is necessary to examine where and how this art started. It will also be necessary to find out how this art developed and what were the factors responsible for its creation.

The Base Factors of the Creation of Sangeet Natak:

A.1. Sanskrit Natak:

Before Marathi Sangeet Natak, the free use of music in Sanskrit Natak is seen. There was a tradition of singing the shlokas in different metrical compositions in Mahakavi Kalidas' Abhidnyan Shakuntalam and Shudrak's Mrichhakatikam.

Actually, 'गीतं वाद्यं, नृत्यं, त्रयम् संगीतं मुच्यते' is considered one of the characteristics of Music.

A.2. Naandi:

From a psychological perspective, there's no medium as powerful as music. Sanskrit plays have a tradition of singing the Naandi with the three intentions of Eeshastavan, Mangalacharan, and Ashirvachan. The Naandi is also sung to ensure a smooth performance of a play. It is considered an excellent instrument for building the environment within the play.

A.3. Sutradhar:

आय गायता तावत | किञ्चिद वस्तु | तत्स्तव गीत स्रसादिते रङ्गे वयमदी प्रकरण भार
भामहे | आर्ये |
किमिदं चिन्तते | ननु गीयते |

This means that the Sutradhar asks the Nati to sing a lovely song and starting the play with the singing of this song creates an environment that is appropriate to the play.

On the Sutradhar's request, the Nati probably starts off the play by singing a song that is descriptive or describes a season. This is also beneficial to the construction of the play.

A.4. Bharatvakya

There is a tradition of singing the Bharatvakya at the end of the Sanskrit play. It is intended to thank God for the smooth performance and wish the audience well. In Bharatmuni's Natyashastra, in the chapter 6, shloka 10, refers instruments and singing to this.

A.5. Dhruvaageet

In Bharatmuni's Natyashastra, chapter 32, detailed information on the Dhruvaageet is provided. He has indicated five kinds of Dhruvageet, including 'Praveshika', 'Akshepika', 'Antara', and 'Naishkramika'. These kinds of Dhruvageet would be sung or played in different Vruttarachanas.

A.6. Sashabda Dhruvageet

For singing the Sashabda Dhruvageet, it used to be composed in various Vruttarachanas, which is why it is known as Sashabda Dhruvageet.

A.7. Nishabda Dhruvageet

There are no words in the Nishabda Dhruvageet, but various bandishes are played on different musical instruments.

Both kinds of Dhruvageet are used in Sangeet Natak for the purpose of creating an environment appropriate to the play and to entertain the lovers of Natak.

In the creation of Marathi Sangeet Natak, Sanskrit Natak is a source of inspiration.

Jnanpith Awardee and popular Marathi litterateur and poet, Kusumagraj, i.e., Vi. Va. Shirwadkar opines that the inspiration provided by Sanskrit Natak in the creation of Marathi Sangeet Natak is clearly visible. The English 'Opera' is very different from our Sangeet Natak. Since it ascribed importance to singing, the drama element is almost extinct.

A.8. Bhagwat Mele

Story matter is selected from the Shrimad Bhagwat Purana and a music-and-dance presentation is made on its basis. The poetry used has regulations but the prose does not. part. Through the poetry and help of the plot the characters using their own inspiration to develop the prose dialogues. This art form is in vogue in Andhra, Karnataka and South Maharashtra. This is another ancient form of drama.

A.9. Yakshagaan

This art form is highly popular in Karnataka. It is a dance-drama form. The dance-drama is based on one of the Puranic stories and it is a very dramatic

presentation. The characters present dance and drama based on the requirements of the plot and with costume and acting. This form has been popular in Karnataka since the 16th century. Everything is presented by means of a display of dance and music.

A.10. Dashavtari Khel:

This art form is based on the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu found in our Puranas. A stage presentation involves both prose and poetry to enact a plot for each of the avatars. There are regulations for the poetry part but none for the prose part. As per the needs of the plot, the different characters take inspiration from the poetry to say their prose dialogues. The plot is told in a dramatic manner, hence it is no surprise that this art form provided inspiration for creation of the Sangeet Natak.

A.11. Kathakali of Kerala

'Kathakali' is a classical dance-drama form of Kerala. It was started by King Kottaarkrura in the 17th century with the art form called 'Ramnatyam'. It is very popular even today. It uses Puranic stories for a stage presentation. It is a combination of dance, drama, song, instrumental music, sculpture and aalekham. It does not include any prose. The Kathakali exponent uses 24 gestures of the hand to develop the plot. It is extremely popular even today, in Kerala and the world over.

A.12. Ramleela of Uttar Pradesh

This is a 500-year-old art form based on Ramcharit Manas by Goswami Tulsidas. The dohas and chaupais in it are sung in Ramleela and on their basis the plot is developed by the characters who say the dialogues on inspiration. Episodes from the Ramayana are described here. There are no written dramatic regulation for the prose dialogues. Ramleela is performed very

enthusiastically in town and villages in northern India around the Navratra before Diwali. People attend it in great numbers and provide great response. Ramleela has attained the form a great festival.

A.13. Tamasha:

Tamasha is a folk art that has both music and drama within its scope. But the regulations for the musical compositions here are available and the characters say their dialogues from self-inspiration and on appropriate occasion. Which means that there are no regulations for the dialogues here. The Tamasha includes kinds of music such as Gan, Gaulan, and Lavani. The songs and dialogues in Tamasha are descriptive of the Uttan Shringaar. That is why it did not gain a respectable position in cultured society. Nevertheless, Tamasha is certainly one of the sources of inspiration for Sangeet Natak.

A.14. Gondhal:

When Sangeet Natak was born in the true sense, the Gondhal was a live, dramatic form of song that was already popular. The songs are mainly about Bhakti. They are in praise of Mahadev or Devi, generally. Sometimes, there is a song that describes a plot. The song in it is presented with acting, hence it also contains drama.

A.15. Lalit:

Lalit is a vigilant raga. Most of its songs are in rural language. Its objective is to establish the Lord's worship and Bhakti among people through the use of a plot. The number of characters is decided on the basis of the scope of the plot and they are used to present before people the story of a plot.

A.16. Bharud

The Bharud is a form of song for telling spiritual philosophy. There is a deeper layer of meaning to what one hears at first. Such Bharuds by Saint Dnyaneshwar and Saint Eknath Maharaj are popular. The presentation of the Bharud is done in a dramatic manner. It is also a very ancient art form.

A.17. Vasudev

In Maharashtra, this is recognised as a folk song form of art and is very popular among the masses. The songs are composed in the rural language. Vasudev performs the duty of waking people early in the morning by singing such songs. This form of song is also popular as a means of a people's awakening, but it is now almost extinct in urban settings. Yet, in the rural areas, it is very much alive. It has a part where songs are presented with acting; hence there is drama in it as well.

B. THE KIRTAN TRADITION OF MAHARASHTRA

The Kirtan tradition of Maharashtra is around 800 years old and it started in the 12th century. In Maharashtra, the Bhagwat religion was started by Saint Dnyaneshwar and Namdev and they are its ancient proponents. At Pandharpur, on the Ashadhi and Kartiki Ekadashi, lakhs of devotees gather for a glimpse of their beloved Lord Vitthal Panduranga, and they sing praises of the Lord through bhajan and kirtan. These devotees are known as 'Warkari'.

There are two kinds of Kirtan:

1. Warkari Kirtan tradition,
2. Haridasi Kirtan tradition

B.1. Warkari Kirtan:

The Warkari Kirtan is a collective presentation. The Kirtan is divided into two parts. The first is Brahmanirupan and the second is Kathanak. During the collective presentation, there is a leader and the others are his assistants. The presentation is based on the Abhangas created by the various saints. To further clarify the subject chosen for the Nirupan, a plot is put to use. The leader of the Kirtan is known as the Kirtankaar. Music and drama are most certainly parts of this art form.

B.2. Haridasi Kirtan:

This Kirtan is presented by a sole person who is also known as 'Kirtankaar'. The Kirtankaar is a highly knowledgeable orator, actor, musician, singer, a great pundit of the Hindu religion with mastery of the Sanskrit and Marathi languages. This Kirtan is also divided into two parts: a. Brahmanirupan and b. Kathanak, which is also known as 'Aakhyaan'.

The Kirtan is started with Ishastavan or Mangalacharan. For the Brahma Nirupan, an abhanga Bhakti composition is used and the subject is broached in the first half while in the second half an aakhyaan is used to tell a story. This story is only about the Nirupan in the first half. The story in the aakhyaan is told through verse and the Kirtankaar uses complementary prose dialogue on inspiration. The verse part is sung in classical, sub-classical, folk, and Bhakti music. It is also accompanied by verse-bound compositions.

Haridasi Kirtan can also be called a one-man Sangeet Natak. He alone presents the characters in the story of the Aakhyaan. His presentation, like Sangeet Natak, uses both prose and poetry. The only difference is that the poetic part has its own regulations but those for the prose part have none. Kirtankaar say the dialogues on own inspiration.

C. Sangeet Natak:

Definition: The plays where the plot is developed through both prose and poetry are known as Sangeet Natak. If either the prose or the poetry part is left out, it will be incomplete.

Format: The Marathi Sangeet Natak comprises both prose and poetry parts. Poetry, in comparison to prose, is a more influential medium and therefore our Sangeet Natak employ poetry along with prose with great skill. The song and music compositions in it are not merely means of entertainment but are the vehicles for the plot and an inseparable component. What will require 3 to 4 pages of prose dialogue can be told more effectively in just a few lines of poetry and this is a specialty of our Sangeet Natak.

So far we have seen many art forms parallel to Sangeet Natak. These art forms were in vogue before our Sangeet Natak. We cannot rule out the fact that these art forms contributed to the creation of our Sangeet Natak. The makers of the Sangeet Natak probably drew inspiration from these art forms. Still, the kind of Sangeet Natak we see today, we feel that it is certainly a distinct art form.

D. Influence of the Haridasi Kirtan

The part played by Haridasi Kirtan in the shaping of the Sangeet Natak is more obvious than that of any other art form. Just as Kirtan has two parts, first half and second half, the traditional Sangeet Natak also has two parts.

The old Sangeet Natak have such two parts. One is the entry of the Sutradhar-Nati and the other is the beginning of the actual plot of the play.

Dhruvageet:

D.1. Sashabda Dhruvageet

D.2. Nishabda Dhruvageet

D.1. Sashabda Dhruvageet:

In the Natyashastra of Bharatmuni, in the Purvaranga Prakaran, information on these Dhruvageet is given. The tradition of the Dhruvageet was intended to create the right environment for the play. Such Dhruvageet were known as Sashabda Dhruvageet.

D.2. Nishabda Dhruvageet:

The musical compositions played on instruments to create the right environment for the play were known as Nishabda Dhruvageet.

Both kinds of Dhruvageet would be followed by an interval and after that, the Naandi would follow, thus starting out the actual Sangeet Natak. This part is known as the Uttarardha.

E. Haridasi Kirtan and Sangeet Natak

E.1. Similarities and Differences:

As in Haridasi Kirtan, the old Sangeet Natak also had two parts: Purvardha and Uttarardha. The Kirtan's purvardha contained the Brahma Nirupan and the Uttarardha contained the Aakhyana. Similarly, in the Sangeet Natak, the purvardha contained Dhruvageet and the actual Sangeet Natak in the Uttarardha. In the Kirtan, both prose and poetry are used to develop the story components of the aakhyana.

Haridasi Kirtan tradition has it that all characters of the aakhyana are represented by the Kirtankar alone, but Sangeet Natak has the provision of various characters as required. In the Kirtan, there are rules only for the poetic part while in the Sangeet Natak there are written rules for both the poetry and

prose in it. As the Kirtankaar represents all characters, their dialogues are spoken by him alone. Hence, we may call it a one-man Sangeet Natak. But since the Sangeet Natak provides for various different characters, the drama contained in it is much more effective.

E.2. Sanskrit Plays as the Ideal

Sanskrit plays use both prose and poetry. There is a tradition of singing the shlokas, vruttas and verse compositions contained in them and prose dialogues are also included.

When Annasaheb Kirloskar created the first commercial play in Marathi, he had before him the ideal of the 'Abhidnyan Shakuntalam' by Mahakavi Kalidas. While creating Sangeet Shakuntal, he wrote the rules for his play on the basis of Kalidas' magnum opus.

E.3 Sangeet Shakuntal: Annasaheb Kirloskar

Balwant Pandurang Kirloskar, i.e., Annasaheb Kirloskar wrote and presented Sangeet Shakuntal on 31 October, 1880. There is a reference that tells us that before this, he had written Akhyanas for many Kirtankars. He was an excellent poet. That is the reason why he was able to compose many Akhyanas and that is why he was able to write such a powerful play as Sangeet Shakuntal. For that matter, all of the old playwrights were great poets as well. ¹

E.4. Sangeet Shakuntal:

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The opening of the commercial Sangeet Natak in Marathi was done by Shri Annasaheb Kirloskar's 'Sangeet Shakuntal'. This play was first staged on 31 October, 1880 at Pune, at the Anandodbhav Natyagruha on Amrutsiddhi Muhurta. This play is based on the great Sanskrit poet Mahakavi Kalidas' 'Abhidnyan Shakuntalam'.²

On 31 October, 1880, when the first stage show of 'Sangeet Shakuntal' took place, the play was incomplete and only four acts of the play were performed and these four acts were played several times over days. At that point, the theatre critics wrote, "When will Annasaheb Kirloskar show theatre enthusiasts the rest of the play?" Thereafter, Annasaheb completed the play in seven acts and performed full shows before the audience.

Enthusiasts had been waiting for this play with great eagerness, for which reason Annasaheb had to stage only the first four acts initially, without further delay. Here is an incident that occurred the day the play was to be first staged. In those day, a whistle was blown to signal the curtain to be raised, but the curtain was raised without waiting for this signal. At the time, the Sutradhar and the main singers were on the stage with flowers meant for the God of the stage, Nataraja. As the curtain suddenly opened, they decided to dedicate the flowers to the audience. This shows us that it wasn't only the public who were eager to watch this show but also the artistes themselves. This indicates how eager everyone was to witness this new art form.

E.5. Sangeet Saubhadra:

After the immeasurable success of Sangeet Shakuntal, Annasaheb Kirloskar created Sangeet Saubhadra. By this time, Annasaheb had gained immense public support in his role as a creator of Sangeet Natak. Sangeet Saubhadra is recognised as Annasaheb's independent creation. This play is based on the love

² Sangitane Gaazleli Rangabhoomi, Au.: Baburao Joshi, pg. no. 7

story of Lord Krishna's sister, Subhadra, and the brave Arjun. The play was staged on 18 November, 1882, and the very first show received full support from theatre enthusiasts. Till today, the play is loved by the enthusiasts and very popular.²

E.6. Sangeet Ramrajya Viyog:

This was the third successful Sangeet Natak by Annasaheb Kirloskar. Its shows were also very successful and it received rave reviews from the critics as well; but Annasaheb had diabetes and not keeping very well, because of which he was unable to complete the play. After a few day, he suddenly expired. This play was first staged on 20 October, 1884; but in comparison to Sangeet Shakuntal and Sangeet Saubhadra, this play was not popular. Even today, this play is only rarely staged.

Sangeet Saubhadra was the more popular play than Sangeet Shakuntal, and it was the fully developed form of Sangeet Natak. The Sangeet Natak that are staged today tend to imitate Annasaheb's works. This illustrious tradition of Sangeet Natak is over 125 years old.³

E.7. Sanskrit Plays

The Sutradhar in Sanskrit play acted as a narrator for the play's action and he would narrate the subject matter of the play to theatre enthusiasts. Praising the theatre enthusiasts, speaking to the characters in the play, offering descriptions of sentiments, and starting off the play by singing a shloka as well as delivering the Naandi and Bharatvakya were all tasks performed by the Sutradhar.

E.8. Vidushak in Sangeet Natak

The Vidushak in the play would be a friend of the Nayak (hero), a polymorphic persona, who would make statements, convey messages, was an

2 Sangitane Gaazleli Rangabhoomi, Au.: Baburao Joshi, pg. nos. 7 to 8

3 Sangitane Gaazleli Rangabhoomi, Au.: Baburao Joshi, pg. nos. 7 to 8

astrologer, an uninvited brahmin and so on.

E.9. Indrasabha Natak

This Sangeet Natak is written by Wajid Ali Shah of Ayodhya. He composed it in the beginning of the 19th century. Its story is developed through a song with composed music. The dialogues are in verse that is set to a tala. All compositions are based on raga music. The story is presented through dance as well. The Indrasabha Natak is a Sangeet Natak that seems to be a combination of the English 'Opera' and the folk drama art form 'Nautanki' of Uttar Pradesh. This play was very popular. It is said that it was this play that provided Annasaheb Kirloskar the inspiration to write 'Sangeet Shakuntal', the first Sangeet Natak in Marathi.

F. Marathi Sangeet Natak of Tanjavur

The Sangeet Natak created by Annasaheb Kirloskar is a fully developed form of the Marathi Sangeet Natak at Tanjavur. Marathi Sangeet Natak had started in the second half of the 17th century. In the 17th century, Bhosle, a descendent of Shiva Chhatrapati was ruling. Bhosle was a born king, a very erudite scholar, very diligent, and an artist. In addition to Marathi, he was proficient in Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu.

G. The Sangeet Natak Tradition of the Bhosle Kings

Sarphoji, Shahaji, Vyankoji, Ekoji, Tukoji, Pratapsinh, Shalbhendra, Shivaji II and other Bhosle kings ruled over Tanjavur in Tamil Nadu. These kings ruled from 1675 to 1855. During this period, they created several Sangeet Natak. Some of the works created by the Bhosle kings are as follows:
Lakshminarayan Kalyan, Prabhavati Kalyan, Parvati Kalyan, Usha Kalyan, Mayavati Parinay, Mibinda Parinay, Subhadra Kalyan, Rukmini Kalyan, Mohini Mahesh Parinay, Minakshi Parinay, Ganga-Kaveri Samvad,

Govardhanoddharak Natak, Panchbhasha Vilas, Harihar Vilas, Subhadra Parinay, Mrutyunjay Chiranjeev, Vivaahit Vilas, Radha Bansidhar Vilas and many more such plays were created by them and staged them. This theatre tradition of Tanjavur is a source of inspiration to our Sangeet Natak of today. Similarly, our old Sangeet Natak playwrights had the Sanskrit plays for inspiration.

Dr. Sarojini Naidu:

Dr. Sarojini Naidu wrote a research work titled 'Marathi Natakaanchi Gangotri Arthaat Tanjavari Marathi Sangeet Natak'. It describes in great detail how Marathi Sangeet Natak developed 1680 onward. It is an original work on the subject.

1. In south India, dance-and-music plays are an established tradition.
2. The Marathi Sangeet Natak of Tanjavur from the time of Bhosle is clearly under influence of the southern dance and music (period: 1675 to 1855) and that is how the creation of Marathi Sangeet Natak took place.

G.1. Lakshminarayan Kalyan

This was a Sangeet Natak that was written by Bhosle of Tanjavur, Shahaji Raje Bhosle, in 1680. It is one of the much-talked-about plays of the time. The Naandi for this play is in raga Todem and the tala Jhampa. It is as follows:

जय जयादि गंभीर । जय सुचीकारा ।
जय सकल आधार । जय रघुवीरा ।
जय श्यामल शरीर । जय रूप जितमार ।
जय असुर संहार । जय जय वीरा ॥ १ ॥
जय अंबुज नेत्र । जय इंदुनिमवक्र । जय पवन चरित्र

जय सुचरित्र । जय जन जलज मित्र ।
जय जानकी कलत्र । जय चरित्र गोत्र ।
जय नम नम पवित्र । जय जय नाम पवित्र ॥ २ ॥

G.2. The Form of Music in the Tanjavur Plays

Most of the music in the plays of the Bhosle kings is based on ragas.

The ragas include the following: Shankarabharanam, Bilawal, Puriya, Parju, Pun-nagavarali, Pantuvarali, Nate Karanji, Bhairav, Mayamalavgouda, Kedargouda, Mohan, Hamsadhwani, Surtee, Navroju, Anandi, Saveri, Kafi, Pahadi, Vrundavani Sarang, Manji, Nayaki, Genlipantut, Purvi Kalyan, Devgandhari and other raga references are available. This clearly means that the Bhosle kings' plays used the ragas prevalent in classical music. The kind of music and songs in the Tanjavur plays is clear from the following examples:

Play: Radha Bansidhar Vilas, Playwright: Shahajiraje Bhosle

मङ्गला चरण - नान्दी :

राग: नात, ताल: झम्पा (झपताल)

जय पार्वति रमण | जय पन्नगाभरण ॥

जय सुरनूत चरण | जय दीन तरण ॥

जय जलधी गम्भीर | जय सुरुचि कार ॥

जय सकल आधार | जय रघुवीर ॥

जय श्यामल शरीर | जय रुपचित्मार ॥

Another example of the kind of music in the plays at the time -

Play: Lakshminarayan Kalyan (Parinay-Vivah)

जय जयादि गंभीर । जय सुचीराकार ॥
जय सकल आधार । जय रघुवीर ॥
जय श्यामल शरीर । जय रूपचीतमार ॥
जय असुर संहार । जय जय वीरा ॥ १ ॥
जय अंबुज नेत्र । जय इंद्रनिमवक्र ॥
जय पावन चरित्र । जय सुचरित्र ॥
जय जनजलज मित्रा । जय जानकी कलत्र ॥
जय तरित गोत्रा । जय नाम, नाम पवित्रा ॥ २ ॥
जय दशरथ बाळ । जय कीर्ती विशाल ॥
जय करितनु लोळ । जय सुशीळ ॥
जय शमित अरीजाल । जय शशी नभभाळ ॥
जय करुणा विशाल । जय जय भक्तानुकुला जय जय ॥ ३ ॥

Third example:

नांदी: (मंगलम), आदिताल
महादेव शंकराते मंगलम ।
जय महेश चरीताय मंगलम ।
कर्पूरगौर रूपाते मंगलम ।
कल्याण चापाते सर्वमाळ भूषणाते मंगलम ॥
इन्दुशेखराते इभमुख जनकाते वंदित सुरवन्दाते मंगलम ।
पार्वती प्राणनाथे पाळीत निज दासाते सर्वज्ञ महेशाते मंगलम ॥

सूत्रधार: श्लोक
सामन्द गिरिजायुक्ता । सास्मित प्रिय भाषणः ।
शीवकारोतु कल्याणम । चन्द्रार्य शेखराजः ।
दारूक - मातृका, राग - पाडी, ताल - आदिताल

संतोषे नृत्यकरी । शामुनी विघ्न सारी ।
दंती मुख आला । देवा दनुज संहारी ॥ १ ॥
सिंदूर माथ्यावरी । शशिकला शोभेवरी ।
पाशांकुश परुशधारी । पापसंख्या सकल हारी ।
मूषक वाहन मोदक करी ॥ २ ॥
सर्वज्ञ दया करी । सर्प शोभे दोदांवरी ।
पार्वती शिवसूत पहा रंगांतरी ॥ ३ ॥

दारुक - मातृका, राग - पन्तुवराळी, ताल - अटताल
अभय मज दिधल्या । अनंते सांगेन विष्णुदेवा ।
अतिशुभ कार्यसिद्ध करी । शुभो दया करी विष्णुदेवा ।
मायेविणा पुत्र मज म्हणतात । जन विष्णुदेवा ॥ १ ॥
विनंती ऐक बरी । विवाह सिद्ध करी विश्णुदेवा ॥
आजी मन माझे स्वस्थ करी । माझी माय दाखवी हरी विश्णुदेवा ॥ २ ॥

The music created by the Bhosle king at Tanjavur was of this kind. Generally, the ragas in vogue then are found in the music for these Sangeet Natak. The shlokas from these plays have also been rendered into ragas and taals. ¹

H. Seeta Swayamvar by Vishnudas Bhave

In the city of Sangli, Maharashtra, in 1843, Vishnudas Bhave created the Sangeet Natak titled Seeta Swayamvar. This play had many shows and theatre enthusiasts received it very well too. The then ruler, Shrimant Raosaheb Patwardhan, witnessed a show by a Bhagwat Katha Mandali, but the Shrimant was not satisfied with the show, so he requested Vishnudas Bhave to write a Sangeet Natak and Vishnudas acquiesced to the request and created the Sangeet Natak Seeta Swayamvar.

1 Vedh Marathi Natyasangeetacha, Au.: Jayram Potdar, pg nos. 25, 26

H.1. Seeta Swayamvar

Bhave's play had many successful shows, but his Sangeet Natak was very different from the Sangeet Natak of today. It had verse compositions but no written code for the prose part.

Earlier, the narrator (Sutradhar) would sit in a corner on the stage with the musicians and manage the entire action. But in 1880, when Annasaheb Kirloskar staged 'Sangeet Shakuntal', there took place a major revolution in the area of Sangeet Natak.

I. The Revolutionary Shakuntal

Sangeet Shakuntal was a very different play in comparison to other such plays of the time. Its presentation was totally different. A sea change had taken place in the matter of its presentation. It had codes for both the verse and the prose, and therefore it is considered the first commercial Marathi play and the credit for that is given to Annasaheb Kirloskar.

J. Kirloskar's Use of Music

Annasaheb Kirloskar was erudite in music; that's why he was able to use in his Sangeet Nataks the various kinds of music very effectively.

He has used in his plays classical music ragas, semi-classical music, folk music, stree geete, vrutta and chhanda compositions such as saki, dindi, aryaa, anjani geet, kaamdaa, as well as lavani of Marathi tamasha, ovi, kataav, garbha, thumri, savai, and such other aspects of music; as a result, his music direction reveals the variety in music.

In the then popular Haridasi Kirtan tradition in Maharashtra, we find expert use of all such kinds of music.

J.1. Use of the Raagdaari Music ¹

Sangeet Shakuntal is considered a fully developed form of Sangeet Natak because in it Kirloskar has very effectively used Raagdaari music in it. The play comprises 210 song compositions. Of these, nearly 75% are based on Raagdaari music. In the play, Kirloskar has used nearly 50 known and unknown ragas.

Among the known ragas are: Khamaj, Malhar, Kafi, Jogiya, Malkans, Des, Bihag, Mand, Bhimpalasi, Bhoop, Deskaar, Lalat. The unknown ones are: Arbi, Shankarabharanam, Nilambari, Kalingada, Jangala, Anand Bhairavi, Barva, Asavari, Anand Bhairav, Sindh Bhairavi, Paraj, Lalita Gouri, Regupti, Gouri. That is why we may consider that Sangeet Natak promoted and brought classical music to the people. Common men and lovers of Natya came to know of many ragas and this way the foundation of Sangeet Natak became stronger.

J.2. Music for Sangeet Saubhadra ¹

Annasaheb Kirloskar's second and extremely popular Sangeet Natak was Sangeet Saubhadra, and it brought classical music closer to the people. That was because Annasaheb was well initiated in classical music.

In this play, in addition to classical music, various other forms of music such as Tamasha Lavani, Thumri, Carnatic raga music, and Tappa were also used. Raga Nilambari, taal Chatushra Jati – Rupak, Sindhabhairavee : Taal : Tisra, Jati Tevra (7 matra), Darbari Kanada : Chatushra Jaati (16 matra) Teen taal have been used by Annasaheb in Sangeet Saubhadra, which shows how knowledgeable he was in matters of classical music.

¹ Sangeet Shakuntal (Natak), Au.: Annasaheb Kirloskar, obtained from the Internet

¹ Marathi Natya Pada, Au.: Dr. A.D. Velankar, pg no. 99 to 101

K) Deval's Sangeet Natak²

Govind Ballal Deval was a prodigious and successful playwright, director and music director. He was one of the best disciples of Annasaheb Kirloskar and therefore he continued the music tradition of Kirloskar.

Deval's 'Mruchchhakatika' and 'Shaapsambhram' Sangeet Natak have the same kind of music as used in Kirloskar's plays, but his creation Sanshaykallol seems somewhat different because it does not contain Vrutta or Chhandaatmak compositions. He has used classical and semi-classical music in a greater measure in this play. It contains nearly 27 songs. But in earlier plays, the number of songs used to be 4 times as much. But in Deval's 'Sharda' the number rises to 3 times as much and also includes the use of Chhanda and Vrutta compositions. Sangeet Sharda is a play based on a social theme, therefore concurrent folk music, womanly songs as well as classical and semi-classical music have been used very effectively.

L. The Popular Music from Manapman¹

Manapman is Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar's first Sangeet Natak. Khadilkar was a top-notch literateur, journalist and a very capable playwright. He was a successor to Lokmanya Tilas as well.

His Sangeet Manapman received inconceivable success. Khadilkar was a top-class dramatist but he did not have much knowledge of music, therefore he entrusted the job of music direction to the highly prodigious composer, harmonium player and singer-actor Govindrao Tembe. Some songs in this play have also been set to tune by Nanasaheb Joglekar, Bal Gandharva, and Vitthal Mahadev aka Bapurao Phadke, but the main responsibility for music direction

² Marathi Natya Pada, Au.: Dr. A.D. Velankar, pg no. 106 to 164

¹ Vedh Marathi Natyasangeetacha, Au.: Jayram Potdar, pg no. 30

was given to Govindrao Tembe.

Tembe skillfully used classical music and semi-classical Purab anga music for this play. He has included in it Thumri, Dadra, Ghazal, and songs used in *kothaas* of the time. The semi-classical music includes compositions of popular exponents such as Malkajaan, Goharjaan, Maujuddin Khansaheb, and Pyara Khansaheb, woven into the music direction with great skill. The audiences loved these changes and therefore the songs in this play became popular and even today that popularity is intact.

Another reason for its popularity is that the play was endowed with a powerful singer-actor in Bal Gandharva. Bal Gandharva took the play to the highest peaks of popularity with his sublime singing and powerful acting.

L.1. Music in Vidyaharan, Swayamwar and Draupadi ²

All three plays were written by Krishnaji Prabhakar Khadilkar. All three plays had their music direction done by the lingual musician of the time, Gayanacharya Pandit Bhaskarbua Bakhle. He was known as a classical singer of the highest calibre. After his performance, no classical singer would ever perform. This proves just how capable Bhaskarbua was. He had acquired training in singing styles of three gharanas. Those included Gwalior, Agra and Jaipur-Atrauli gharanas.

In his music direction, he used the very best bandishes from all three gharanas as a base. His work on Vidyaharan, Swayamwar and Draupadi has left a very unique impression. Swayamvar received record popularity. This owes to Khadilkar's excellent dramatic code, Bakhle's skillful music direction and Bal Gandharva's top-class acting and singing. These three sublime factors have come together in this single play. That is why Swayamvar is still very popular.

2 Vedh Marathi Natyasangeetacha, Au.: Jayram Potdar, pg no. 31

M. Introduction to Ragas

In the olden days, classical music was limited to the chambers of the rich. But Sangeet Natak, through its classical and other music, brought the raga music right to the common man, who have immensely enjoyed it and learnt to tell the difference between various ragas.

1. Nath ha maza – Yaman, 2. Swakul tarak suta – Bhimpalas, 3. Sujan kasa man chori – Bhoop, 4. Mam atma gamala – Bihag, 5. Vairi maraya – Malkans, 6. Amrutachi gopala – Surmalhar, 7. Kanta majasi tuchi – Shuddha Sarang were the ragas that people got familiar with on account of Sangeet nataka. In Maharashtra today, the awareness of ragas is greater than in any other regions of India.

The audiences loved the Sangeet Natak so much that they would watch plays such as Sangeet Swayamwar all night. Bhaskarbua Bakhle's guru, Ustad Alladiya Khan Saheb, would also come to listen to the great Bal Gandharva.

N) Bhaskarbua Bakhle's Best Disciple, Bal Gandharva

Bal Gandharva had received training in classical music from Bhaskarbua Bakhle. The latter had provided a strong foundation in classical music to Bal Gandharva. Vidyaharan, Swayamvar and Draupadi – all three plays had music direction done by Bakhle and the bandishes in them had been taught to Bal Gandharva. That is why his singing was enriched. Although Bal Gandharva's singing developed along the lines of classical music, it was not given to classical music because Bakhle had taught him how to sing for Sangeet Natak. Bhaskarbua had also acted in plays and that is why he knew very well how to sing for the stage and was able to separately train Bal Gandharva for it.

N.1. Music for 'Ekach Pyala'

Bhashaprabhu Ram Ganesh Gadkari's 'Sangeet Ekach Pyala' was first stage in 1918. For the first time, music direction was entrusted to a woman musician and that person was Bai Sundarabai Jadhav. Sudarabai was famous as a top-calibre semi-classical singer. Many records of her songs had been published and was well-known, therefore she was chosen to provide music direction for Ekach Pyala. She has skilfully used classical and semi-classical music to create music for this play. Her tunes were so melodious that although the play was a tragedy, it was loved by the people.

Sudarabai's music direction enriched Bal Gandharva's song. At the time, Sundarabai would sing and act together in her *jalsas*. The Natya Geet in the present play are still very popular, for which the credit goes as much to Sundarabai as to Bal Gandharva.

O. Master Krishnarao Phulambrikar's Music Direction

Master Krishnarao was one of Bhaskarbua's best disciples and he was trained just as well as Bal Gandharva. He was a top-calibre classical singer, a singer-actor in Sangeet Nataks, and a very capable music director. He was music director for Khadilkar's *Savitri* and *Menaka*. Like Bhaskarbua, he also used bandishes from classical music in creating music for these plays. But as these plays did not have many performances, the tunes he provided did not become very popular.

Thereafter, he also provided music direction for author N.V. Kulkarni's *Sant Kanhopatra* and author Vasant Shantaram Desai's *Vidhikhit* and *Amrutsiddhi*. *Sant Kanhopatra* proved to be very popular because the baaj he used for the music proved to be very popular. Today also it is just as popular.

O.1. Light Music-Based Sangeet Nataks

In the 1940s, movies had started getting produced and the audience of Sangeet

Natak turned toward this new medium. Sangeet Natak had a tough competition. The decline of Sangeet Natak started. In this period, Motiram Gajanan Rangnekar produced a Sangeet Natak of a new kind. This kind of plays include the following: Ashirwad, Kulvadhu, Alankar, Tujha ni Majha Jamena, Ek Hota Mhatara, Kone Eke Kaali, Vahini.

The music direction for these has been done by Master Krishnarao Phulambrikar and Keshavrao Bhole. Phulambrikar had the experience of providing music for Sangeet Natak and he also provided music for movies, later on. For Sangeet Natak to compete with movies, they would require this new kind of music, which he provided for the Sangeet Natak he gave music to.

The new kind of Sangeet Natak had far fewer songs than before. Many of these songs are light music-based. That brought the audience back to Sangeet Natak and in many ways and to a great extent, these new plays proved to be successful. Keshavrao Bhole also gave such music for Sangeet Natak, which also proved to be greatly successful. A good measure of the credit for the success of these plays goes to Jyotsna Bhole – her attractive personality, acting and knowledge of vocal music, which revived the plays.

Rangnekar's robust code of dramatics, Master Krishnarao's and Keshavrao's timely and dedicated music direction, and Mrs. Jyotsna Bhole's powerful acting and singing helped Sangeet Natak succeed even in competition with movies. It was a short-lived success, though.

P. Eminent Drama Companies of the Later Period

Kolhapurkar

1.

The third major system is that of the Kolhapurkar Natak Mandali. It had also achieved high eminence. In the path carved out by theatre, its work proved to be significant as well. Established by a citizen of Kolhapur known as Narhar Gopal Sarde, it was named 'Chittachakshu Chamatkarik Kolhapurkar Natak Mandali'. According to Muzumdar, the company was established in 1861 by Narharbuva. But Govindrao Devasthali, the old scholar of theatre who has served the company, says that it was established in 1865, which is likely to be true. The timeline provided by Muzumdar for Narharbuva is truly amazing: Buva was born in 1840, started a drama company in 1861, which he ran for 42 years, till 1898, when he expired at the age of sixty-six. Any boy who knows his addition and subtraction will point out the errors in this timeline. If the years of his birth and death given above are true, it is clear that at the time of his death he was 58 years old and not sixty-six. And that is probably true. The year of death, 1898, is certain. Buva was active till the end, he ran the company almost till the end and his death was caused by tuberculosis. Taking all of these things into consideration, it is more probable that his age at the time of death was 58 years. In the timeline for the drama company too Muzumdar has made just such a blunder. If a company started in 1861 was run for 42 years, it should have been running till 1903! But the person who ran it himself expired in 1898! If Buva's year of birth is 1840 (and it ought to be), then it is only likely that he established the company in 1865. That's because before he started his own company, Buva had served in someone else's company and even before that, he had taken up wrestling for a career option. By the time he was through both these backdrops, Buva would easily have been 25 years of age. Therefore, from the evidence available, it seems that the company was established in 1865.

Kulkarni provides some information on the first company in Kolhapur. "The very first company in Kolhapur was started by Narayanrao Karkhanis. This company had an excellent dancer named Ganu Mevekari. In this company

there was also Narharbuva Savaashe, who later founded the 'Chittachakshuchamatkarik' drama company separately.” In the context of Narharbuva, Muzumdar says: “His childhood was spent in roaming about in Kolhapur. He was an expert at wrestling. And it was this skill that he used to earn the money to start a drama company in 1861.” Both facts (excluding the year given by Muzumdar) are true. That Narharbuva was a trained wrestler has been said by many. As a proprietor of the drama company, he was extremely principled, sincere, and courageous. Where dramatic skills were concerned, he was articulate, and very civil and impressive in behaviour.

2.

In Narharbuva's company, there was another personage who was just as important, Vinayak Damodar Kavthekar. In 1866, he appeared in Narharbuva's plays. “He spent approximately 30 years in theatre. In the tenth year, he appeared in plays. In 1896, he left this business and went home.” When he was a minor, he used to play the role of Rohidas in Harishchandra biographical plays. On one occasion, while performing this part, he impressed the king of Devaas, Parlokvasi Krushnarao Pawar. Later on, he received parts of the female lead. 'Dakshaprajapati Yadnya', 'Radhavilas', 'Parijata' and 'Draupadi Vastraharan' were the star productions of the 'Kolhapurkar Mandali' and Kavthekar excelled at playing the roles of Parvati, Yashoda, Satyabhama, and Draupadi in these plays. Vinayakrao, in his guise of a beautiful woman, looked as enchanting as any the mind could imagine. He played the female lead for many years, yet there was never a touch of hilarity in any of it. The Kolhapurkar Natak Mandali owed its existence to a great extent to him. The few personages renowned for playing female parts in old mythological plays, with all the attendant mannerisms, included Kavthekar.

Muzumdar writes with great respect for him: “The name 'Vinayakrao' for Vinya will perhaps sound unfamiliar to many of the old generation. Today's Vinayakrao is the Vinayak of those days. Because he acted in dramas, he was given to histrionics, but even since then he was so well-behaved that even

those who know him as 'Vinya' may revere him as well.” He further adds: “Like a good female character has a crowd milling around her, he had in his time just such a crowd after him. However, for that matter, he did not allow his vision to blur and lived a simple life. He had remained free from all addiction and stays that way even now ... He has built a house at Kolhapur (1913) and stays there these days. He has set an example for the next generation of how it pays to stick to a single drama group.”

Vinayakrao was of course one of the main proprietors. But in addition, there were many other personages with Kolhapurkar. For comedy acts, there was Raghoba Shenvi, for royalty characters there was Dada Kale, for female characters Bala Mirji, and for rakshasa characters Babajirao Misaal – these are mentioned without fail in the context of the given period. Muzumdar suggests Rambhau Sane as being one of the better actors. Vyankatbhatt of the company is known everywhere for his prowess in playing the role of the jester, but Ganpatrao Datar, a rakshasa specialist and a multicoloured actor; the great actor in villain roles, Vyankatrao Modak; and the renowned comedian Vyankatbhatt Puranik Wadikar are said to have joined the company after the present period, that is, after 1880.

3.

The Kolhapurkar company used Vishnudasa's poetry to an extent. Govind, or Govind Dasa's poetry would also be recited, says Muzumdar. “This poet's Banasur biographical play is renowned,” says Mazumdar. He has also included a couple of songs by the poet in his Kirloskar biography.

Narharbuva would himself play the role of the compere. If a play had a character of a wrestler in it, it would inevitably fall to him. In the plays 'Sairandhri' and 'Viratparva', the role of Jimutmalla would go to him. His role of Damit Rishi in Dakshaprajapati biographical play was well-received throughout the regions of Kolhapur. Once the company started doing bookish plays, the part of the hero in them was played by Narharbuva.

Narharbuva's Chittachamatkarik Mandali was known for one thing. Curtains

in different, vibrant colours were introduced to Marathi Theatre by them. Narharbuva was apparently given to emulation. He achieved the feat of making his company the avant garde through introducing new, interesting innovations by others. Emulating the Ichalkarajikar company, he brought to the stage prosaic or bookish plays. Taking his cue from the Parsi companies, he coloured the curtains to set up a similar vibrant onstage environment. Later, seeing how Kirloskar's musical plays had acquired popularity, he also introduced musicals.

The company's career and its efforts are generally available. The period after its establishment was a tough one. Dresses and property were measly. In such a situation, the company mustered its resources and went to Sawantwadi. There, it received good compensation, paid off debts, and the company started doing well. Touring brought the company to Belgaum in 1870. Thereon, it charted its true course toward prosperity. Muzumdar has quoted from the Belgaum Samachar Patra, a newspaper of those times; which clarifies how the audiences of the times perceived the dramatic art.

“As mentioned in the previous edition, the Karvir Natakware and Wadikar Natakware have initiated their shows. Each staged two performances this week. Karvirkars' show reminded the audiences of the Ichalkaranjikars. Their compere, jester, and royal characters played by Dada Kale, female characters played by Bala Mirji, and rakshas roles played by Babajirao Misaal are generally gifted in the various aspects of the art of drama.

He saw the performance and expressed satisfaction as well as gave the members of the troupe valuable garments and gifted cash. As the Maharaja of Devaas had invited them, the troupe went to Devaas. There too, the members were duly honoured. The word of the troupe's merit casually reached the ears of the ruler of Gwalior, Shrimant Jayajirao. He invited them to Gwalior. There too, as the Maharaja was amply satisfied, the troupe received substantially. This formal outing led to a significant improvement in the the troupe's financial condition.

Kolhapurkar members were all very religious. They felt they ought to visit Kashi, perform for the pundits of Kashi, and obtain their goodwill. From Gwalior, the troupe went touring to Kashi. They stayed there for several months and during that time they were able to successfully achieve what they intended. With their performance, virtue, and good conduct, the members were able to fully satisfy the Kashi pundits. The Athraapgad public also provided the troupe excellent lodging.

In 1874, Anna Kirloskar's play, 'Shri Shaankar Digjay', became popular. The Kolhapurkar troupe immediately staged it. That the Ichalkaranjikars used to enact it is amply evidenced. But it was the Kolhapurkars that first brought it to the stage. This may have been due to the chemistry between the troupe member and Anna. Narharbuva would play the role of Shankaracharya. In 1875, the troupe went to Thanjavur. For a few days, they intended to stay there. But their stay lasted a whole year. This indicates the extent of the popularity they enjoyed there. The people from nearby villages would also flock to the shows. The members of the royal family of Thanjavur were greatly pleased to witness the performances. The respected Shri Bhadrayi Baisaheb of the royal family, being highly pious, was greatly satisfied with the troupe's mythological plays. The troupe performed the play 'Shri Ram Rajyabishek'. On that occasion, she presented gold flowers with a great sense of faith at the feet of Lord Rama. From there, the troupe returned to Kolhapur. The succeeding tour by the troupe was apparently a very long one. From Kolhapur, the troupe went to Madras, and thence onto Padukotta. Thence, it travelled back north, right up to Gwalior. And from there, it went to Kolhapur, then Kashi, and then to Brahmavarta. After a long stay at Brahmavarta, the troupe came touring back to Mumbai. During the Mumbai tour, the troupe's reputation for acting reached the ears of the eminent High Court lawyer and connoisseur, Mahadev Chimnaji Apte. He was pleased to see one of the troupe's performances and then on became an appreciative well-wisher and advisor to the company. This is said to have occurred in 1878. Similarly, Dr.

Bhalchandra Krishna Bhatawdekar also grew very fond of the company. This then, is the broad history of Narharbuva's drama company from 1878 to 1879. From 1880 onwards, the company's functioning became even more specialised and it grew from strength to strength. But that part is at present beyond our scope.

5.

The above description bring to light certain virtues of the Kolhapurkar company. Their first virtue is the previously mentioned capacity for effective emulation. As soon as they saw a new plan succeeding with the audiences, they would immediately use it. Narharbuva had this eagle-eyed vision. Staging bookish plays and using colourful curtains are clear indicators of their capacity for emulation. Such emulation brings about progress. There's nothing wrong with it. Targeting princely states was an activity that proved to be the other virtue of the company, which is evident from the above description. The effectiveness necessary for such work was in ample measure in Narharbuva's personality. The Ichalkaranjekar company would also visit capitals of Marathi states such as Baroda. But it aimed to win the favour of the well-educated middle class and the bureaucracy. The Kolhapurkars on the other hand, wherever they went, directly targeted the sweet spot, the royalty in the form of the rajas and maharajas. In those days, the concept of drama was new and specially included religious sentiment, hence Narharbuva's acumen would prove to be of great benefit. Of course, this critical view must be taken with a pinch of salt. It wasn't as if the Ichalkaranjekar company would not cast so much as a glance in the direction of the royalty, or that Narharbuva never had faith in the well-educated class. It was only that the mind was inclined this way or that, that's all.

The credit for first taking tours out of Maharashtra, the Marathi region as it were, is ascribed to Narharbuva's company. Later, Balwantrao Marathe's Sanglikar company took to touring outside as well. Ascertaining whether it was the Ichalkarajikars or Kolhapurkars who first toured outside Maharashtra

is practically impossible.

Acharya Punekar

:6:

The fourth tradition was that of the Pune-kars. There is some information available on the three traditions described above. For that reason, it was possible to go beyond the writings of Muzumdar and try to get an estimate of the actual facts. About the Pune-kar Mandali, excepting some confidential information and two handwritten documents, no information is available. It is therefore necessary to rely on the writings of Pune-kar and his friends in the 'Rangabhoomi' magazine. These two are the main sources of information on Pune-kar.

One thing is almost certain. There could not be consistency in Pune-kar's tradition. There sprang forth several companies by the name of Pune-kar, which operated for some time then closed down. People from older companies would come together, enlist a couple of children, keep going as long as possible, and when trouble came their way four members would go their separate ways. Such was the condition that befell the Pune-kar Mandali. For the people in this period, the name 'Pune-kar' had almost converted into a surname. Their individual names would be strange and quaint. Muzumdar, who wrote in 'Rangabhoomi', had 'a friend' who described companies such as Chittachakshuchamatkrutinidhan, Samayrangarasodbhav, and Vibudhajanchittachatak Swativarsha - local companies that stopped as soon as they started – as Pune-kar companies.

In chapter 8 'E', the early Pune-kar companies of Nana Soni and Rambhau Oak are mentioned. Muzumdar talks of Anna Inamdar of Indapur. He conceived the idea of recruiting women into his drama company and brought it to fruition. Anna Inamdar's company was later owned by a man called Ramchandra Sathe and he brought fame to the company. The company was named 'Vibudhjan-Chittachatak-Swati-Varsha Pune-kar Hindu Stree Natak Mandali'. Among

companies named Punekar, this was the only one that lasted several years. It performed mythological plays in their era. Sathe himself would act the parts of gods very well. He had started acting in plays at a very early age. Doing Saraswati's work, he progressed through playing child parts and female parts to finally the God parts in his adulthood. Sathe was addiction-less. In spite of having recruited women for the business, his behaviour was always civil and pure. His company staged plays such as 'Keechakvadh', 'Babhruvahanakhyan', 'Bhishmaparva', 'Karnaparva', 'Banasur', or 'Ushaharan', 'Parijatak', and 'Narsinh Avatar'. Later, when prose plays were the trend, he also brought such plays to the stage. His company brought to the stage and popularised two plays – 'Rama' and 'Tara' – by Gopal Anant Bhatt Munsaf. After 1880, they also staged plays by Shankar Moro Ranade. His punekar drama company lasted till 1895. Thereafter, he left the business of drama and in 1900, he expired.

About the poet of this company, Muzumdar informs: "In addition, Ravji Shaharkar, Balwantrao Shaharkar, Ravji Barve, and others' poem would be recited by the Punekar drama company." Balwantrao, or Baba Shaharkar, was a Yajurvedi Brahmin known for astrology and yadnik karma and he would also compose theatrical and other poems, we are told.

:8:

In this Punekar company, Ravji Powar attained fame for the rakshas parts.

Among the few men who achieved fame for playing specific parts in the age of mythological plays, Ravji Powar is a name that must be counted.

"His speech was clear and interesting ... in 'Bhishmaparva', he'd play Bhishma's role. In 'Viratparva', he would be Keechaka. On days when both shows ran, all the three floors of Pune's Anandodbhav drama theatre would be packed to capacity by audiences who wanted to see him act ... his peak years lasted till 1878-79.

Ravba Powar had undue importance in the Punekar company. He was tall,

lean, with a long face, and a slender nose, which made his histrionics complementary to the role of large or rakshasa characters. His speech would last an hour, and was clear, pure, and interesting. The third important virtue necessary for the role of a rakshasa was his alacrity. Raoba Powar was extremely clever, so he had a good measure of it. (apart from that of Bhishma and Keechak). Bhavmasur, Banasur, Jayadrath, and Indrajit were other roles that he performed very well. But those roles did not really suit him. In looks, speech and his alacrity, Ravba Powar had no equal. His opium shop and other business he would tend well and also get his salary from various local companies that started and closed down. Around 1895, he suffered a disease of the molars and expired at the age of 65 in Pune.

“Along with Ravji Powar's, the name of Balwantrao Dake would be taken simultaneously. He was also a good performer of the rakshasa part. Ravan, Bhim, Kumbhak Pradhan were roles that he would always get. He also performed rishi parts well. In the context of rakshas parts, his key virtue was that his voice was loud and booming.” He would write letters for shopkeepers and other people and posted them, therefore he was named Dake. His name was Balwant Vishnu Shirolkar and was a Yajurvedi brahmin.

In the context of Sathe's Punekar company, Ganpatrao Devdhar was a renowned name as a great actor. In Punekar companies, he would play the main Dev part, he'd also have the part of the male lead in historicals and humourous farces. Ram, Yudhishtir, Harishchandra were the parts of patient males that he would play very well. He would play roles such as in Anarshacha Farce and Gulab Kakdi just as well! He had the divine quality of helping the other's role, playing his own part complementary to those of others. His voice wasn't very good, or he would have left Ganpatrao Joshi behind with his acting skill, according to a writer of Rangabhoomi.

:9:

But the real specialty of the Punekar company was that in their plays, the

woman parts would be played by women. A modern-day lover of theatre would be pleasantly surprised to note that in such an ancient time, companies could stage plays featuring both men and women and they ran successfully for years. Those that think of such a combined effort between men and women as a feature of modern society, will be enlightened to hear of this *deja vu*.

However, women from good families and artiste women weren't the same, at the time. That was because even in those times, women from good families could not conceivably be a part of a drama company. But it apparently did not do any damage to the cause of the companies. No one has ever said that companies that had women working in them were any less civil than males-only companies. About 25-30 years ago, around 1930, there had been a debate regarding whether or not women from good families should work in theatre. There was a major debate on whether or not women from respectable families should act in plays. It was an unwise attempt at stemming the pace at which the society was growing. When it was first suggested some eighty to ninety years ago that women should play female parts, it was necessary to protect the interests of the society of female artistes. This was just as inevitable now as it was then. Drama, in its essence, is a unisex art. In any time or society, it is only natural to suppose that men should play the male parts and women should play the female parts in a play. Whatever happened contrary to this, would be an artifice attributable to societal mores and religious beliefs.

In the 'Vibudhjan Chittachatak' Puneekar company had two or three women working on whom Muzumdar and 'a friend' provide some information.

“Mhalsa was a lovely, young wife with a great figure who used to provide quality but limited make-up services. In plays that were based on the Shringaar rasa, she would play the female lead. Roles based on the Karun rasa (serious or tragic roles) and farcical roles did not suit her. She had a counterpart named Nira who used to play roles based on Karun rasa. She was young, slender, and had ordinary looks, but she used to play roles such as Draupadi, Sita, Sulochana, and Tara very well. Both were courtesans, but in their acting there would be no stooping. Even when a male person needed to speak to them in privy, they did not behave in a way that could make him feel

bad. Nira was even a woman who religiously observed fasts and other rituals.” In the last days of the company, there was a woman working in it called Vitha Kasari, says Muzumdar.

:10:

Some information on Vibudhjan Chittachatak Puneekar company is available through Muzumdar's writings. But his writing is based on casual talk that has no corroboration. Plus, his writings almost lack chronological indications. That writing, therefore, does not give any idea of the sequence of events. What he has written is probably factual, but not history. 'A friend' writes in more credible manner than Muzumdar himself. The things he has written seem to have been witnessed first hand. His experience of those things shines through. No clear inter-relationship between Puneekar companies owned by Rambhau Oak, Nana Soni, and Anna Inamdar is provided by Muzumdar. The company established by Anna Inamdar went to Parshurampant Sathe later on and emerged as a prestigious but short-lived company, which is apparent from his writings. However, Muzumdar's claim that the company was functioning for close to 40 years sounds far-fetched.

:11:

Apparently, one of the Puneekars was a component of the Altekars. Some from the Altekars company had joined the Puneekars' group and this joint group was later under the banner of the 'Original Victoria Company' owned by Dadabhai Sorabjee Patel. This statement is made on the basis of three advertisements for the play 'Badaant' by the Altekars company at Altekars itself as well as what the descendants of the proprietors of the Altekars company had to say. One of the advertisements carried the following banner text in the context of its show in Pune:

“Anandodbhav Theatre Peth Budhwar
Come and See
Tonight
The Original Victoria Company, of Shett Dadabhai Sorabjee Patel, M.A.,

presents the famous Punekar Hindu Drama Company

Show at 16.00 hrs.

---x---

Saturday, 22 March, Evening

---x---

Chakravyuha, and Kachadevayani Akhyana”

Saturdays in March fall in 1873, 1879, and 1880. The year, therefore, has to be 1879. The advertisement mentions that the company would perform on the next two Saturdays in Pune before leaving. The second advertisement is for the show in Mumbai.

The third advertisement is in Gujarati language and script for the shows in Mumbai. Both these advertisements are given in the form of an addendum. The show mentioned in the Gujarati ad was a special show in Mumbai on November 12, 1879, for Diwali. Till mid-April, the company was in Pune. It looks like it went to Mumbai thereafter and stayed there for seven months staging shows.

This tells us of an unfortunate aspect of Marathi theatre. The affairs of theatre had become so enormous and unwieldy by 1879, many in the industry had become unemployed. Many were unable to look after their own interest. Among many such, some persons played into the hands of owners of Parsi drama companies who did successful business and became rich. These persons now performed under the patronage of these company owners. Marathis aren't practical. They cannot do successful business. They cannot work together with mutual understanding. Ultimately, they pandered to the Parsi Gujarati capitalists and had to become their servants. This is a regrettable state of decline we see here.

Altekar

:12:

Another important and mentionable contribution came from Altekars. 'Altekar Hindu Natak Mandali' was one of the better and prestigious drama companies of the time. The company does not have to its credit any innovative or influential work. Yet, its biography gives us an idea of the life style of the upper-middle-class drama companies of the time. For every one that belongs to the high-brow class, there are five of the middle class. This is one of life's principles. Since the society is filled with those belonging to the middle class, its scope and principles give us a true understanding of the society.

On the Miraj-Kolhapur railway road, around 3 miles from the Hatkanangle station, nestled at the foot of mountain, the Alte village has given to Maharashtra the contribution of many a worthy son. One of the main pillars of Lokmanya Tilak's national party, Sadashiv Khando Altekars from Karhad; his son, the renowned scholar, Dr. Anant Sadashiv Altekars; and Bandhu Ganpatrao Altekars; renowned litterateur and professor Madhav Damodar Altekars and his son, Manohar Madhav Altekars; these brilliant personages have their roots in Alte. These belong to the same roots as the Altekars belonging to theatre.

Renowned play director, Shri Parshwanath Altekars, also had the same roots. Chimanbhatt of the Joshi family of Alte village had four sons — Kashinath Bhatt, Ganesh Bhatt, Sitaram Bhatt, and Waman Bhatt. The youngest of these, Sitaram and Waman, started the Altekars company. It is not known when exactly it was started. But in a letter dated 17 May, 1871, one of the drama company left it, and it mentions that he paid the company due fine. After the company starts, the actors receive due training and then they leave – these events would probably have required at least two years approximately. This means that Altekars company would have been founded before May of 1869. Just how before that cannot be ascertained for the lack of more evidence.

The documentary materials belonging to the Altekars company contain some notes and letters. These prove that the company was roaming in areas close to the Alte village at the time. Hatkanangle and Rendal are names mentioned in these documents. A letter dated 17 March, 1872, seems to indicate that then the company was at Aashtaye and planning to carry on to Kolhapur thence. On 1 July, 1872, the company was at Kolhapur. In November of the same year, it

was at Kurundwad.

The available letters are of a familial nature, and written by Chimanbhatt, or after his demise by Kashinath Bhatt or Ganesh Bhatt to Sitaram Bhatt. In addition, six advertisements of plays have been found. All of these help us understand the life in the company to a certain extent. In the year 1873, July and August, the company was in Dharwad. It probably staged 25 shows there. In the May of 1875, the company must have been at Satara. In the December of that year, the company was in Mumbai, and performing at the Alfred Hindi Theatre at Grant Road. In July 1876, the company went to Belgaum. On 8 July, they performed the first show of Babruvahan Akhyaan there. They were at Pune in 1877. In the theatre near the homestead of Appa Balwant, shows were on and on 11 April, the 17th show was in progress. This means that the company was there since February. It must have carried on to Mumbai from Pune. In August 1877, it was in Mumbai and was performing at Grant Road Theatre and Elphinstone Theatre. In August 1879, the company was at Pune. In the November of that year, it was at Mumbai. A letter written to Sitarambuva at Panvel is available, which seems to indicate that thereafter the company went to coastal Konkan.

:13:

From the evidence available, whatever information could be obtained has been mentioned above. The timeline stretches from 1871 to the end of 1879.

However, it does not prove that the company stopped functioning after 1879.

According to a notebook containing information on the company:

“Shri Gurudatta's Notebook. This notebook should not be taken by anyone. In case it's taken, it should be duly brought back, no one should keep it. This notebook belongs to Sitaram Altekar. It was prepared at Barsi, on Ashadh Shudda 10, Monday. The year 1814 Nandan Naam Samvatsare.”

The notebook contains not only verses on Datta, but also a powada by the author of those verses on Anna Kirloskar. It contains the Kirloskar verses and

at the end, there's the 'Santaaan Gopal Akhyan', which is composed on the basis of the Bhagwat Dasham chapter no. 89 and useful in the play. The verses on Anna Kirloskar were written by Tatyaba Puneekar, a dramatic persona. It is in his handwriting and at Barsi, on 6/7/92, and accompanied by his signature. Other notebooks containing akhyanas also contain verses taken from Kirloskar's Shakuntal, Saubhadra, and other plays. All of this suggests that the Altekar company was functioning till 1892.

The company's accountant was a man named Bala Khare, a comical fellow. In the postscript written in a letter to someone at Alte, he has written to convey the best wishes from members of the company in hierarchical order. That provides information on the company's main office holders and other workers. The proprietor, Sitarambuva, used to play the parts of the compere. He was a poet as well. Many of his verses are found in the Akhyana notebooks. His younger brother, Wamanbhatt Joshi, was probably given the parts of the Gods or sometimes those of rakshasas. He was an able-bodied person. Waman Ramchandra Bhawe, aka Wamanrao Master, used to do the king parts (he once used to be a postmaster). He would take the king parts. Govinda Daddi, Bala Shahapurkar, and Hari used to play the female parts. Hari is known to have been very good-looking. Raghunath Raoji Gole and Krishnarao Kale were expert wielders of the sword. The Altekar company was especially famous for actors who had mastered the strokes of the sword. Reportedly, for his skill with the sword, Raghunath was gifted a sword by the Collector of Dharwad. The company had a jester named Vyanku Puranik. He was an expert at playing the jester. Whether Kolhapurkar company's Vyankatbhatt Puranik and the Altekar's Vyanku were the same is not clear. We have previously seen that Vyankatbhatt who played the jester joined the Kolhapurkar's in 1880. There's the possibility that only one man changed over to the Kolhapurkars then. In addition, Bala Khare mentions in the post script of a letter persons such as Balwantrao Kolhapurkar, Balwantrao Tasgavkar, Anantbhatt Guruji, Rambhau Joshi, Vishnupant Ankalkhopkar, Durgaram, and Krishappa (Pakhwaji). In 1877, during the Mumbai tour, a man named Govindrao Nipankar was a part

of the company. From the accounts, it is evident that he repeatedly took out loans, which indicates that he faced some hard times. Later, the Kirloskar company's play, Saubhadra, had a certain Govindrao Nipankar in the role of a rakshasa. Whether he and the previous Nipankar are one and the same is not known for sure. If that is true, he was probably playing the rakshasa role with the Altekar's company. The company's organiser and director, Sitarambhatt Chimanbhatt Joshi Altekar expired on Monday, 12 April, 1909.

:14:

Under the postscript mentioned above, Waman Bhatji (signed by Bala Khare) has written his own postscript. Therein, he has mentioned the Dharwad business visit of the company. This visit was probably the one in 1873. From Waman Bhatji's writing, the company did 25 shows at Dharwad and it seems the company received around 2,000 to 2,500 rupees in all. This means, for every show, the company made 75 to 80 rupees.

Another indication of the company's economic standing is provided by the accounts for the Mumbai trip of 1877, which papers were found in the company's book. The papers contain the accounts for the quarter month between 23 August to 30 September, 1877. The company's shows were on contract for this trip. At the time, the company did not have to bear the expenses toward the theatre rent and advertising. In the quarter month mentioned earlier, Rs. 341 have been credited and with a balance of Rs. 7, the rest of the Rs. 334 is the total expense. It included Rs. 50 given to a merchant at Pune, which the papers mention were sent with Gopalrao Date. If those were to be excluded, the Mumbai trip cost Rs. 284 in all. If the expenses on providing reserved funds to various persons are excluded, the lodging expenses are just Rs. 250.

A glance at the credit column shows that the company had a steady income off the contract with sums of Rs. 50, 60, 20, 30, and 50. The first contractor's contract would have expired on 5 September. Later, a Bhatia contractor named

Nanabhai came into the picture. The company seems to have received contract monies from him on an irregular basis. If that were not enough, he launders company money and eats almond sweetmeats off the company's money. As the contract money stops flowing in, the company is forced to borrow money. Till 30 September, the company has had to borrow Rs. 42. By the end of the contract, either the contract money was received or the loan was paid off. Such is the economic picture of a company fitting into the upper-middle-class of the times. This issue will be analysed further later on. Companies such as the Altekars could barely break even in those times, between 1870 to 1889. This conclusion will suffice for now.

:15:

It seems the Altekars company never went beyond mythological plays of the Vishnudasi method and farces. The average and young companies of the time went the same way. Going beyond mythologicals was a challenge that very few took up. Notebooks in the Altekars' vitae have been found to contain 44 handwritten legends. In addition, there's a list titled 'ready plays and such that have Hindustani parts' that contains 35 legends and 5 farces. Of the 35 legends, 19 are found while the other 16 are not. It means the company had more such notebooks. Of the written 44 and 16 that are only mentioned in the list made up 60 legends in the company's collection.

Of the written 44 legends, 17 are by Vishnudas and 7 by Anna Kirloskar. The other 20 include 4 by a poet named Sakham and 3 composed by a poet named Govind or Bal Govind. In one of the legends (Krishnajanma) the initial half is by Kirloskar and the other half by Sakham. The remaining 12 legends include one (Shriyalakhyani) that was composed by Sitarambhuva himself. Among the rest, some are in the form of verses created for kirtanas. Some are truly dramatic legends, but the name of their composer is missing.

The analysis given above provides some easy conclusions. Ordinary drama

companies of the time were mainly dependent on the legends written in the Vishnudas method. However, these legends in the Vishnudas method used to be made entirely crooked. They would contain changes such as addition of expletives, disregard for the order of the verses, changes in the words used, and other haphazard corruption. Vishnudas' legends were not available in printed form at the time. The poet himself probably did not have the chapters decided. At different times, different chapters became well-known. Over time, influenced by the changes introduced by the emulator and the compere made them so different as to be entire unrecognizable, which is not surprising. The changes brought about a great deal of impurity. The first half of 'Viratparva' contained Altekars' notebook indicated the extent of such impurity.

VIRATPARVA COMPARISON

After Vishnudas' legends, it was Anna Kirloskar's legends that enjoyed recognition in those times. At least it exerted considerable influence on the Altekars. Vishnudas had then retired from drama and Anna was enthusiastically pursuing it. Anna's compositions are juicier and lend themselves more easily to drama. That it would be popularised everywhere was only natural. What important to remember is that his legends were not all that corrupted. At times, some verses are excluded, sometimes there are sequential changes as well, but sentence formation and the scheme of the words are usually unchanged. This leads us to the conclusion that the Vishnudas legends were probably full of linguistic and semantic errors in the original itself.

In addition to these two, the Altekars used verses by Sakharam and Govind as well. It is said that they had a guy called Sakharam who used to play the part of a widow in Puranik's farce. Whether he himself composed the legends is not known. He has used the name 'Sakharam Prabhu' in the verses. He has composed legends such as 'Surat Sudhanwa', 'Simantini', 'Gajasur', and 'Gokarneshwar Charitra', which are available in Altekars' vitae. In addition, it

is already mentioned previously that he composed the latter half of 'Krishnajanma' and joined it to the previous half composed by Kirloskar. Sakharam's compositions are derived and mature.

Govind, or Bal Govind, writes poetry that is simple and witty. He has composed long legends based on 'Aranyakand' and 'Uttar Ramcharitra' and his half-written chapter on 'Ashwamegh' is found in the notebook. He has mastered the art of ideation. In the Uttar Ramcharitra, he has narrated the part from the banishment of Sita to the war over the Ashwamegha horse between Luv-Kush and Lakshmana-Bharata.

Did Sakharam Prabhu and Bal Govind write legends exclusively for the Altekars company or, like Kirloskar, composed them and then gave them to those who would use them? Sakharambuva Chambalika Sarnaik is said to have been a composer of mythological legends by Muzumdar. He has composed poems on Surat Sudhanwa, Narnarayan Charitra, and other legends, which were sung by the Sanglikar drama company, as per Muzumdar's information. One is led to wonder whether Sakharam Chambalika and the Sakharam Prabhu of the Altekars are one and the same. It is important to note in the context that Surat Sudhanwa is ascribed to both of them. Poet Sakharam's poetry is found in printed, mythological plays. Muzumdar has mentioned a poet named Govindadas or Govind and has said that Kolhapurkar company would sing his poems and that his Banasur legend was famous. Altekars' Govind probably called himself 'Bal Govind'. Therefore, these two must have been two different persons. The Banasur legend is one of the complete legends in the Altekars' list, but it is not available in written form in the notebook, so it is not possible to tell who actually wrote it. In addition, Govindatmaj Vasudev, Gopal, Shrirangatmaj Vitthal, and other names are found in some legends and verses. One of the notebooks contains part of the Shriyalakhyana along with some independent verses by Sitarambuva.

:16:

The mythological plays were included in their repertoire, but the Altekars were known for their farces. The company would have had many who could carry comic characters very well. In addition, the highly reputed Gopalrao Date – who performed the lead in farce plays – was a part of the company for a few years. 'When he was with the Altekars drama company, Date had achieved complete mastery of the farce.'

At the time, there did not exist adjectives such as 'Natavarya' or 'Natasamrat', but if one should imagine that for that matter there weren't any actors who deserved such laurels, he would be grossly mistaken. Expert and clever actor and improviser Gopalrao Date was one of the actors of the time. In the era of mythological drama, his name was at the lips of the drama-loving audiences for approximately 25 years. He was so popular once that as soon as the announcement was made that Gopalrao Date would be acting, the crowds would come flocking.

His full name was Gopal Narayan Date. He was born in Jamb village in Satara district in 1843. He went into theatre at a very young age, or rather 'he was carried off into theatre'. From Rambhau Oak's Punekar company to Amarchand Wadikar Natak Mandali at Mumbai and back to Pune's Vibudhjan Chittachatak Punekar Mandali – was how he travelled during his career. Parts of children, women, and then the jester – this was the sequence in which he advanced. The writer of musicals, Anna Kirloskar, was at Pune in the first half of his life, from 1863 to 1866. During this time, Anna would perform god parts and Gopalrao performed the woman parts. In 'Radhavilas', the role of Radha, in 'Gopichand Akhyan' that of Mynavati ... were roles that he was said to perform very well.

After he was through with the female parts, he began doing the jester parts. He possessed just the most desirable qualities for the jester's part – a sense of timing, quick wit, and mastery at imitation – which ensured that his work

became very popular with the audiences. Later, when farces were in fashion, Gopalrao took to the main parts in farces. Martand Nayak, Gulab Chhakdi, Anarsa, and other farces were made very popular by Gopalrao. The farces necessarily had elements of exaggeration and disgust. They would require imagination and the ability to imitate perfectly. Gopalrao possessed both in ample measure. Talking like an ignoramus, or pompously like a Moslem, pretending to be an old man and other such things were mastered by Gopalrao. Humorous farces later on metamorphosed into serious farces such as 'Narayanrao Peshwa's Death'. Date earned a name for himself in even those. His portrayal of Summersingh in that farce proved to be unparalleled. None could portray it quite the way he did, and it was said that none would ever. This part had been portrayed on the basis of his imaginative thinking and in a very special manner.

Portraying the rebellious and restless attitude of Summersingh was the core challenge.

“Sumersingh was initially reluctant to commit the terrible deed of murdering his master. But Anandibai deceitfully got him to take an oath, and was instigated to murder royalty. Later, when Narayanrao was in his clutches, his pitiable condition led Summersingh to indecision. When Anandibai saw this, she reminded him, “You are under oath, are you not a true Rajput?” Therefore, out of disappointment, in a fit of passion, and in sheer anger, he assassinated Narayanrao. Here, Gopalrao would best his own dramatic skill.”

This dramatic skill proved to be limited to Gopalrao himself. It did not prove a worthy accessory to the development of drama. Commitment wasn't one of his virtues. He never committed himself to any single company. He would switch from Amarchan Wadikar to Pune-kars to Dhondopant's Sanglikar company to Mahadevbhatt's Sanglikar company. “On account of his selfishness, he never stayed for long in a single play.” He wasn't a very good co-star on stage. Guruji provides information on him saying, “Gopalrao Date wasn't wellknown

only for his role of Summersingh; he had a swordsman's hands, performed the season dance, and imitated the tabla player very well too. If he did not have the ugly habit of downplaying fellow actors to enhance his own impression ... he would not have had to move from play to play.”

The Altekhar Mandali and Gopalrao Date were together for a long time. It would be reasonable to say that the reputation the company built for quality farces was owed mainly to Date. The company would specially advertise him. In the Mumbai show of the farce 'Jhansi chi Rani' on 9-8-1877, he had a part. Its poster carried the following content: “Notice: The renowned Gopal Narayan Date will impart colour to the show.” On 11-8-77, the farce titled 'Narayanrao Peshwa's Death' was staged. Its poster made a special note, “This show will feature the famous Gopalrao Date in the role of Summersingh.”

It is worthwhile to remember that the undesirable trend of advertising just one of the actors by name was in vogue for the last 80 years in our theatre. Date's pompousness was given special importance within the company. He would come for a specific show, with special provision for his railway and horse-cart fares, which the company had to pay for. This is evident from the accounts of the company. In short, Gopalrao Date was an ancestor of today's 'top actor' in 'nites'.

:17:

There had to be a companion for Date within the company, or at least someone who could partly fill his shoes in his absence. The previously mentioned writer, Bala Khare, was just such a comedian. One of his letters carry a postscript that shows what kind of humorous dialogue was employed in the farce plays of the time.

But farce wasn't simply a farce comedy full of jokes and humour. A prose play performed in succession to a mythological was the wider connotation that it assumed. 'Narayanrao Peshwe Yancha Mrutyu', 'Jhansiche Ranche Natak', and 'Thorle Madhavrao Peshwe' were all plays included in the category of farce. Gopalrao Date's main characters were performed in such plays.

:18:

Special attention was paid by the company to the arrangement of curious, flashy scenes to make the show more attractive. A poster for the company's Dharwad tour is available, wherein the show is described as follows:

“On 23 August, 1873,

the Aakhyaan,

Indra and Vrishaparva Yuddha and Vrishaparva Vadh, Shriyalcharitra, and Narayanrao Peshwe Yancha Mrutyu. In the first part, swordsmanship will be displayed, severing Chilhaala's head and show of his head and torso will be in the second. In the third, Narayanrao's belly will be torn asunder and the entrails shown. This will include four rasas and the Shok Ras will be completed.”

It was only natural for (companies with) actors of little acting skill to amaze audiences with loud show. This applied to many companies of the time that comprised average talent. Producing such loud scenes would have required considerable expense and skill at handicraft.

:19:

From the documents available on the Altekhar company, it seems they did not perform in any regions outside Mumbai in the north, Dharwad to the south, Panvel in the west and Barshi in the east. One of the papers found offers a list of 'Plays that are ready, with Hindustani portions'. It shows that the company had ready around 18 or 19 plays with Hindustani portions. But this does not suffice to show that the company ventured outside the Marathi region. Even in the plays performed in the Marathi region, the Hindustani part was possibly included only as a matter of formality or for several other reasons. Yet, proof that the company did travel outside, especially in the Andhra region, has recently been made available. There was a drama seminar held by the Sangeet Natak Akademi of Delhi in March 1956, wherein Banda Kanaklingeshwar Rao read a paper on Andhra theatre. The paper mentions that in 1880-81,

Wamanbhat Joshi brought his drama company to Andhra and performed his Hindi plays at Rajmahendri here. Rao has also stated that the company was Maharashtrian and that it belonged to Dharwad.