

FOLK ARTS OF MAHARASHTRA

A Folk art is the expression of the ethos of a community in music, dance or drama. Performance is its basic characteristic. It is an indivisible part of community life and culture. Community life manifests itself through Folk-arts relate to contemporary life are naturally inspired and instinctive Traditionalism is their hallmark. That is why the entire folk-lore is said to be “the science of tradition”. The legacy of Folk-arts is transmitted from generation to generation. Their form is like that of a banyan tree. The branches, leaves and exposed roots become old and withered and new ones sprout in their place. These manifestations of the people’s songs, dance and drama springing from amongst the people, for the people, go into bloom; the building blocks of contemporaneous community life which have outlived their relevance, drop off and new shoots of new expressions manifest themselves.

Mr. Richard Dorson, in this book “Folklore and Folk life”, while defining performing folk-art or what traditionally goes by the form folk-play, observes:

“Drama of any sort calls for the creation of a play-world by the players, generally though the use of conventional symbolic objects, masks, costumes, a special area for playing and conventional stylized actions.”

Indian culture is one of symbols. The core of Indian culture having a tradition of thousands of years was originally folk culture in which rites, action and plays relating to the power that underlines the governance of the universe, hold a place of extraordinary importance. These ritualistic commandments and ritualistic took the form of Performing Arts with changing times. Religious, sects, customs, traditions and faith exert a tremendous influence on the mass-mind.

Folk-plays give a visible expression to the religion, sect, tradition or faith of each group. In Indian culture, God is considered to be a great actor. “God” takes many forms/ Wearing suitable masks. The ten incarnations of God or His varied forms have been the subject of devotional praise in rural and urban cultures. This praise is sung not in songs along; it is expressed through dance and drama as well. Unless we take into account the fact that religious faith was the main prop of folk-plays, we cannot properly consider the performing folk-arts.

There is a pre-eminence of religious faith and gods and goddesses in folk-plays: rather, secularization of gods and goddesses is their principal component. The rites of fertilization in our farming culture, the shows of Panchmi and Behda performing by wearing masks of gods and goddesses and puppet shows can all be categorized as Folk-plays.

Folk plays have influenced the mass-mind on three levels: devotion, education and recreation. Performing folk arts started personifying the Supernatural power either as God or as another Element. Man started nourishing Nature out of fear. The expression which started out of fear took on the form of devotion, then pleasure, then social enlightenment and finally took on the form of material prosperity. If we take stock of the performing Folk-arts of Maharashtra they can be easily meshed together by the three underlying principles of devotion, education and recreation. Tribal, rural and urban are the three main stages of the evolution of our social life. In all these three stages, folk-plays or performing Folk-arts are found to have a place. Before considering the devotional plays staged by the devotional sect we shall have to take into account the

ritualistic plays which give expression to the magical, mysterious power in the universe. In tribal and rural cultures these ritualistic commandments comprise a world of their own and have left their singular impress on Marathi folk religion through ritualistic plays like Bohda, Panchmi, Gondhal, Jagran, Bharaad, etc.

Ritualistic plays have their roots in the faith of the people in God's incarnation on earth, His earthly life, His 'play' and His ascension. As the ritual is graphic it is called a ritualistic play Dashavatar and Khele of Konkan. Bhavaada of Nasik-Melegaon and some parts of Khandesh, and Panchmi of Marathwada, are varied forms of ritualistic play symbolizing God's incarnation.

Dr. Prabhakar Mande, a renowned Folklorist has elaborated beliefs prevailing amongst the village folk regarding ritual drama. Those are as follows –

- “1) The person who performs the role of a deity is possessed by that deity.
- 2) Such roles are performed exclusively by male-actors. Women during their menstruation period must not even cast their shadow upon the actor, if so happens, the deity gets enraged and does not move further.
- 3) Such a deity fulfils the vow, taken in its name.
- 4) The actor playing the role of a deity experiences tremendous physical power. Even 15 to 20 persons cannot control such a person.
- 5) The obstacles in the way of the procession automatically get removed.
- 6) At the time of the procession, there is a huge crowd. Many get sandwiched in the rush but no one gets hurt and no fatal accident takes place.
- 7) The actors wear genuine ornaments. If by chance, any ornament falls down, the deity stops and does not move further. These ornaments are never stolen.
- 8) Only bachelors can present the role of a goddess. The bachelor- actor gets married within a year.
- 9) The actor falls unconscious immediately after the performance is over. It takes for him three to four hours to regain consciousness.”¹

God descends on earth every year. He is worshipped in the form of masked idols which are taken in procession through the village to the accompaniment of music. In some places it is called Chhabina. People bow to the descended God with great faith, lay prostrate before Him, and pray to Him for deliverance. Because of people's religious faith in God's wrath as well as benediction, they have fear mixed with faith in the God that has descended. In the ritualistic play which have made their own imprint on the public mind, and which are variously called Akhadi, Panchmi, Chaiti, etc., God's masked idols and masked performers are venerated.

Bhavaada is in vogue in Khandesh. Performers are masked as gods and goddesses and brought on the road. They are taken in procession from place to place in torch-light to the accompaniment of song and dialogues. The ritualistic play of panchmi is presented in two parts: the prelude and the sequel. The leader, his companions Ganpati, Saraswati, Jester and others, make their appearance one by one. Performers doing the roles of Jogi, Gosavi, Bhaat Bhagat keep on performing throughout the night; so much so that the night seems too short for all of them to perform. Some performers who act worldly parts as opposed to those of deities, while attacking social flaws, administer pinpricks too along with laughter, Their chief aim is to debunk the pretentious: how the Brahmin shoves in false name while recounting the thousand name of God during worship, how the Medhanshi fortune-teller shows black as white and white as black, how the beggars at the

places of pilgrimage defraud the pilgrims by pretending to be blind, deaf or mute, etc. Such pretenders are exposed through many performances relating to worldly life. The admonition of the saint of Bhagwat sect to keep off false pretences in one's own interest is affirmed in the plays, whether ritualistic ones of the Panchmi variety or devotional ones like Lalit.

The nature of Performing Arts like Panchmi, Latin, etc. is double plaited. Even as devotees tell God that He and they are one. That there is no difference between them that they just indulge in some fun, they also act the part of God and sing His praise. Consequently, while making fun, they naturally take the liberty of name-calling such as 'barrel-tummy' for Shri Ganesh (i.e. Ganapati) or 'feathered hen' for Saraswati. Along with acting the parts of divinities like Ganpati, Saraswati, Riddhi, Siddhi, they also act the part of their devotees like Bhaladar, Chopdar, Chhadidar and so on. That is the religious strand of the plait.

Panchmi, Lalit, also depict the various castes and sub-castes in village life, their occupations and the good and the bad that is a part of it. A Panchmi or a Lalit has performers who act the role of members of the ordained fold-orders like Gandhalis, Waghye, Bhutye, of folk-singers and born mendicants like Souri, Mumda, Pordest, Kashi-Kapdi, Joshi, Bairagi, Vasudeo, Balsantosh and other folk-shows like Panchmi and Lalit are the means of diffusion of religion language, culture and sect, and are a cultural inter-mix. We see a representative gathering of languages and dialects like Hindustani, Kannad, marathi, Urdu etc. in Folk-arts like Panchmi and Lalit.

Panchmi, Lalit, which through night-long performances depict a commonality and contrast between the urban elite and the rural fold, between the affluent and the indulgent, the faithful and the faithless, the ritualistic orthodox and the name-chanting worshippers of an anthropomorphic god, the city dwellers and the rustic, have now undergone a metamorphosis. Village life, its rhythm, its customs and traditions were the mainstay of panchmi and Lalit. Now the cultural parameters of village life and the world outside having changing, the contemporary relevance of these art forms is getting corded. Lalit, Panchmi, Bohda, Bhavaada may be performed nowadays in the villages, but they must be considered as 'cultural relics'.

Khandoba, Amba, Bhawaani, Renuka and such other 'Home Guard' deities which are incarnations of Shiva and Shakti, have an altogether different cultural range. The ritualistic plays linked to these deities have, however, preserved their mould notwithstanding the mobility of folk-culture. Ritualistic play like Gondhal, Jogran, Bharaad are being staged in villages and hamlets in conjunction with family rituals even to-day. Performances of the the Jagaran of Khandoba, Gandhal of Amba and Renuka, and Bharaad of Bhairavnath on the auspicious occasion of a wedding or a thread-ceremony are a part of family tradition and familiar religious rites. The devotional congregating of Khandoba goes on singing his praise throughout the night in front of the deities symbolically installed in an alcoves made up of five sugar cane fronds, the place being illuminated by lamps and flambeaus. A similar devotional meet for Renukas and Amba take the form of Gondhal, Waghye and Muralya are votaries of Khandoba while Kadamrai and Renural Gondhalis are votaries of Amba Bhawani and Renuka.

Gondhalis regard Parshuram, son of Renuka, as their patriarch. Gondhal is an ancient South Indian dance form in which there was a progressive evolution of folk-deities and their messengers. There are two main types of Gondhal performed to the

accompaniment of musical instruments such as Sambal, Tuntunte and Manjiri, Kadamrai Gondhalis are votaries of the Bhavani of Tuljapur whose Gondhal is in a narrative form. It is also called Hardasi Gondal, Rajarambuwa Kadam of Parbhani, a doyen of Gondhalis, was a Kadamrai Gondhali. The Gondhal of this 105-year old great practitioner of that art was presented during the Festival of India in Paris in the precincts of the Eiffel Tower. The narrative Gondhal of kadamrai Gonghalis proceeds in the following order: Gana, Gavalan, Aakhayan (narrative) and, Aarati. Rajarambhuwa Kadam's Gavalan 'Radha Vilas' and his presentation 'Jambhulakhyan' were acclaimed throughout India-Gondhalis present mythological stories from Ramayana and Mahabharat in narrative poetry. These Gondhalis, presenting enact able narrative, were the harbingers of the dawn of Marathi stage. Gondhalis, who exhibit the three-fold way of acting, viz as total entity, corporal and oratorical, are as knowledgeable as Hardasi Kirtankars. The histrionic talent of Kadamrai Gondhalis and the style of singing of Remrai Gondhalis are their unprecedented contributions to the folk-theatre. A Gondhal starts with singing of four-line stanzas interspersed with explanatory remarks, followed by dialogue and then development of the theme. The Gondhali has the innate power of impersonation. Gondhal has been in vogue in Maharashtra from the time of the Kadamba dynasty. There are lineal families of Remrai and Kadamrai Gondhalis in Kolhapur, Kahur, Tuljapur, Pune, Satara, Sangali and in the neighbourhood of Aurangabad, Parbhani, Beed in Marathwada. Gondhal is a ritualistic play which has made a solid contribution to the Experimental Theatre 'Jambhulakhyan' of the Folk-arts Research Centre of the Indian National Theatre is a stage spectacle of Gondhal. This ritualistic play was so popular even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that saints of the Bhagwat sect wrote many allegories on Gondhal-the ritualistic play and Gondhalis-the votaries of folk-culture. At the Festival of India, Gondhal achieved recognition at the international level.

As in the case of Gondhal, the ritualistic play Jagran presented by Waghya and Muralys also has unique importance in marathi folk culture. Jagran is a ritual drama. "It is performed on certain festive occasions in the family and on auspicious days- such as on the Amavasya(no moon night) in the month of Magh, the Poornima (full moon night) in the months of Magh and Paush, or Champa Shashti, when the performance of Jagran is presented.

In a ritual drama, a traditional religious tale is presented and hence the artistes are taken as symbols of the divine beings. When the members of audience pay their homage to the Vaghyas and Muralis during the performance, it is a salutation to the divine characters, whom the artistes portray.

The conjunction of music, dance, drama which can be seen in Jagran is due to the fact that these are essential elements of a ritual drama.

As in any ritual drama form, in Jagran too the rituals supersede the performance. The artistes too as upholders of rituals, belongs to successive generations of Vaghyas.

In a ritual drama, the entire process of rites are built around a main God, as in Jagran, the focal point of the rituals is Lord Khandoba."² The saints of Bhagwan sect have composed much allegorical poetry on Waghya and muralys who are devotees of Khandoba. Although saints like Shaikh Mohammed Baba Shrigondekar, Madhva Munishwar, Niranjandas, Chaitanys Mahaprabhu, Basaveshwar, have referred to Waghys and Murlya as 'fallen angels' and described a murali as a 'vendor of vice' the votaries of Khandoba have regarded them with reverence as votaries of folk-culture. The word

'waghya' is derived from the kannad word 'Uggaya' which means a person who barks like a dog or who babbles on, Khandoba is fond of dogs. Small wonder, therefore, that Waghya also considers himself an incarnation of the dog.

The stage area for Jagran is consecrated by symbolically installing, in an alcove made up of five sugar cane fronds, the silver masks of deities like Khandoba Bhairavnath Amba and Bhavaani, with metal pots filled with wheat and rice and lighting of lamps and flambeaus. On this hallowed ground, jagran is carried on throughout the night to the accompaniment of musical instruments like dandi, tuntune, cymbals and bells. 'Jagran' means keeping the God awake along with oneself.

Jagran goes on throughout the night and is staged in two parts the prelude and the sequel. The prelude comprise performance of Gana, naman, invocation (to gods to come to the hallowed ground) Gavalan and assorted songs. The sequel consists of a narrative relating to Khandoba or associated deities. The narrative, in the form of a play, ends with the night. The rituals of Langortod and Aarati mark the end of Jagaran in the wee hours of the morning. It is a familiar rite to conduct a Jagaran on auspicious occasions such as a wedding or a thread-ceremony.

A Jagaran is also called 'an ancient drama'. Various narratives, i.e. enact able stories relating to Khandoba's incarnation on earth, His marriages with Baanaai and Khalsa, the story of His devotee Khaire, are staged during Jagran which has a great impact on the people pf Marathwada, Khandesh and Western Maharashtra, Like Vitthal from Karnataka Malhar (i.e. Khandoba) also from Karnataka, constitute an important bond in the cultural confluence of Maharashtra and Karanataka, Jejuri, Pali, Davdi Nimgaon, Shegud, Naldurg, Satare and Adimaillar are considered to be the holy places alive with his presence. In their environs Waghya and Muralya are considered as important as 'the ordained' by their jagarans, Waghya have conserved the tradition of mixing recreation with spiritual upliftment of the people. That is why the Tamasha and the Experimental Theatre of to-day searched for situations of strength in Jagaran. The Folk-arts Research Centre of the Indian National Theatre of Mumbai carried out fundamental research of the ritualistic play of Jagaran and organized the play 'Khandobhachan Lagin'. Lyricists like Haibati, Bapur Waghya, Ranju Waghya, Saganbhau, Dagdu Sali, Haribhau Sali composed songs on Khandoba. In recent years, Shankarrao Dhamnikar Jadhav also wrote many stories on Khandoba.

The devotional sect of Kannada vitthal and the folk-deity set of Kannada Malhari (Khandoba) are a special feature of Marathi folk religion.

That is why Dagdubaba Sali Shirolkar has made a meaningful mention of the devotional set and the folk-deity set in one of his songs. Truly, the ritualistic play of Jagaran has a great fascination for the Marathi mass-mind.

Research is going on at the Heidelberg University in Germany on the ritualistic play of Jagaran and on Waghya and Muralya, the devotees of the folk-deity Khandoba, Artist like Manikbhai Bhagwanrao Renuka of pune, Balladeer Shankarrao Dhamnikar-the traditional Waghya of Khamni (District pune)- Mhalsabai Chakte of Pimpalgaon (District Pune), Namdeo Sonavne of Shel-Pimpalgaon (District Pune), Martand Valke of Belapur (District Ahmednagar) secured a place of honour of this ritual play. In 1980, a conference of Waghya and Muralya was also organized at Sangli. Progress has been made in ridding the Devadasi tradition of the undesirable practices associated with it and uplifting the Jagaran tradition. Basic research made on this folk-art is contained in the

various books of historian G. H. khare , profound researcher Dr. Ramchandra Chintaman Dhere and a senior student of folk literature Sarojini Babar. Fundamental research on Waghye, Muralya has also been made by the German researcher Dr. Gunther Sontheimer, a student of Indian folkculture. The stage impact of the ritualistic play Jagran was gauged by the performance of the play 'Khandobachan Lagin' by the folk-arts Research Division of the Indian National Theatre under the guidance of Shri Ashok Paranjpe. I too made my small contribution to the research on this arts form.

Like Jagaran and Gondhal, the ritualistic play of Bharaad is also well-Known in Western Maharashtra and Marathwada. It is performed by the devotees of Bhairavanath but it's from is one of ritualistic songs. Dramatization is to a very small extent. Bharaad sings the praises of the deities on the Shiva and the Nath sects like Bhairavanath and Kanifnath. The musical instruments used in Bharaad are Damru, tuntune and cymbals. As in the case of Jagaran and Gondhal, Bharaad too is staged with metal post filled with wheat and rice and lighting of lamps and flambeaus. The musical instruments of damru and link Bharaad to the Shiva Sect.

Trance play and costume-trance play like Panchami, Bohda, Aakhadi and ritualistic play like Gondhal, Jagaran have survived through the flux of time, because ritual connection and religious faith have an unbroken bond with these ritual play.

The community lore of Dakkalwars, the story-telling of the fakirs of burning ghats, the illustrated story-telling of Chitra-katthe, the Sumbaran narratives of shepherds, the singing of God's praise by Vasudeo and pangul have an independent arts worlds of their own. These folk traditions are known to people throughout Maharashtra even today.

The spiritual revolution which took place throughout Indian in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and generated a wave of devotional chants in praise of an anthropomorphic god, received a phenomenal contribution from the galaxy of Maharashtra saints. Devotional plays originated in this very period. The unity of God and His devotee was the focal point of the spiritual teachings of the saints of the Bhagwat sect. That is why while trying to relate to God, the saints told Him that there was no severance between Him and them, that they were one. Further that God took many forms, as might be necessary. The saints and the devotees accepted as true the various incarnations of God, His 'play' and His praise. In this atmosphere sprang up Dashavatar, Lalit, Bhaarud and other devotional plays.

Konkan has a tradition of Dashavtar. In its Prelude, the characters playing the role of Sankasur, Shatji, Sutradhar, Ganpati, and Riddhi Siddhi make their appearance, while in the Seuel, some narrative from the Ramayan, the Mahabharat of the Puranas, is taken up. When viewing the narrative of a Dashavatar, one is reminded of mythological, musical stage-play. The female role in a Dashavatar is played by males. Carrying their masks in a big wooden box, the Dashavatar artistes of Konkan wander from village to village in the season of village fairs or festival. Samarth Ramdas has also referred to Dashavatars. The Dashavatar companies of Babi Nalang, Mochemadkar, Walavalkar, Parsekar and others have secured approval of the public and the Government to this art. At a Dashavatar performance, the box containing the masks is worshipped and the ground, on which Dashavatar is staged, is sanctified by breaking a coconut, a leman etc. there.

There is a lot of similarity in the Dashavatar of Konkan and the Lalit of Western Maharashtra. Both are devotional plays. In Lalit too there are roles of Ganapati, Riddhi-Siddhi, Saraswati, Sutradhar, Bhatji, the village Patil and so on. In the festival of Navratri, the Goddess is supposed to have occupied the throne and so Lalit is staged in front of her. It goes on for the whole night. Even through the day breaks, the roles are not exhausted. The characters of Bhaldar, Chopdar, Chhadidar, sing the praise of the ten incarnations of God.

During the course of the night, the role of Vasudeo, Waghye-Muralya, Gandhali, Kashi-Kapdi, Joshi, Balsantosh, Gao-dindigan, Raj-dindingan, Gao-bhaat, Raj-bhaat, blink men, Souris, mundha and others are played. The Lalit starts with a song-praying for God's benediction. Sant Eknath's Bharude are also presented in Lalit which also gives a true depiction of the social and religious life of the people in the times of the Yadav dynasty. Lalits are no doubt devotional plays. In the territory of the former princely state of Sangali, as also at Pimpalgaon and Umbraj in Junnar Taluka of Pune District, the tradition of Lalit still continues. In the village under the influence of Warkari sect, a Lalit is staged even to-day at the end of week devoted to Kirtan during the village festival.

Sant Tukaram has said that Lalit is shedding of the body (from the bond of life). When the devotee tests released from body consciousness and engage his mind continuously with the various incarnations or roles of God that is Lalit. From the culture represented by the Balsantosh, Pingalaa, Vasudeo, who are a part of the village life, to that represented by Souris, Kaikaai, Kohati, Joshi who are outside the periphery of the village culture, everything is encompassed by Lalit. Due to urbanization and industrialization the social and cultural bond between the village and the world outside has been ruptured. In the course of the flux of time, the devotional play like Lalit has survived like the mangrove shrub as a cultural relic.

The custom of singing the Bhaarude of Sant Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram, Eknath, during the pilgrimages (known as dindya) of the members of the Warkari sect to Pandharpur and also enacting them is practiced even to-day. When they are enacted with marks and costumes, they are called songri bhajan.

RECREATIONAL ART FORM - TAMASHA

Tamasha is a Persian word which is traveled through Urdu to Marathi. The term Tamasha means standing entertainment which is popularly known as 'KhadiGammal'. Balwant Gargi renowned Scholar of Indian Folk Theatre in his book 'Folk Theatre Of India' explained the tradition of Tamasha as follows, "When Aurangzeb died in 1707, the power in Maharashtra passed directly to Shahu, Shivaji's grandson, who established his throne in Satara, the citadel of Maratha power. He had eight ministers. The prime minister was called the Peshwa.

Because the ruler was weak, the Peshwas became powerful enough to shape the history of the Maratha kingdom. Bajirao I (ruled 1720-40), builder of the Maratha empire, was a great warrior and hunter, and fond of dancing. Chhatrasal, the rajah of Bundelkhand, was pleased with Bajirao's heroic deeds and presented him with a beautiful dancing girl, mastani, who, riding on horseback, went to wars by the side of Bajirao and

became his consort. Singers, poets and Tamasha dancers thrived during his rule. In his personal diary, Shahu mentions gifts of land and jewelry to Tamasha players.

For one hundred years the Tamasha flourished in the Maharashtrian land. Bajirao II (ruled 1796-1818) had classical singers, musicians and dancers in his court. He was musically wise and politically foolish. His indulgence in the arts resulted in his losing his kingdom to the British. When he was dethroned and sent to a small town in North India, he was allowed to take with him his singers, musicians and dancers.

Because of its erotic elements, Tamasha was in general spurned by the upper class. The first people to join in this form of entertainment were Mahars and Mangs, two outcast communities. The Mahars, scavenger by hereditary profession had joined the army as fighting men. Shivaji had a Mahar platoon. Even the British continued the tradition.”³ Balwant Gargi in his book has mentioned the Tamasha which is known as Sangeetbari or Tamasha in Courtyard which is for the affluent society and not for the common folk. Dholki-phadacha Tamasha is still popular in common folk.

Like the independent traditions of the ritualistic play and the devotional play, the tradition of the purely recreational play of Tamasha has also left its own distinct impress on Marathi folk-culture. The spiritual ballads of Kalgi-Tura pertaining to the pre-Tamasha era and the later educative, i.e. patriotic ballad poetry have contributed to the mental make-up of the public. Kalgi-Tura is a origin of Tamasha.

The Lingayat Koshti community used to present the spiritual ballad poetry of Kalgi-Tura. The singing style of Daangat balladeers has also left its mark on the ballad art. In the days of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, balladeers like Aagindas, Tulsidas were suitably honored. They were awarded a silver wristlet and a horse to ride and accorded a place of honour in the royal court. Kavirai Shivbhusan's example is known to all. During the Peshwas' time there was a galaxy of spiritual balladeers like Ramjoshi, Saganbhau, Honaji-Bala, Prabhakar, Haibati who, along with abstruse spiritual compositions, composed romantic Lavnya as well. There is a presumption that in the latter days of the Peshwas there was an excess of voluptuous living and romance. The contribution of the saints, the urbane poets and the strummers to the cultural make-up of the Maharashtra was extraordinary. In 1843, Vishnudas Bhave laid the foundation of the Marathi stage by his drama 'Seeta Swayamvar' In this very period, Tamasha struck roots in the field of Marathi stage, During the latter half of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth Lavani was being composed, but about the year 1850, Uma Babu of Bhilvadi near Sangli composed a poetic narrative (Vag) named 'Mohana Battaav'. This period is, therefore, considered to be the time of emergence of Tamasha.

The word 'Tamasha' is originally Farsi. It was imported into Marathi from Urdu and became well established there. In the 'Bajegari' Bhaarud of Sant Eknath, there is a reference to Tamasha. Later, it came to be called Khadi Gammat. In Sant Ramdas Swamy's compositions, there is a reference to Duff Gaane, Khadi Gammat, Duff Gaane, were the progenitors of Tamasha Uma Babu's Vag 'Mohana Battaav' Started the tradition of the 'Vag plays' in Tamasha. About the middle of the nineteenth century, Savlajkar Mandali staging their Tamasha in the neighborhood of Bhilvadi (Sangli) started flaunting their hereditary style of singing. The Tamasha contest of artists like Satu-Hiru, Bhau Fakkad, Pathe Bapurao, Hari Vadgaokar, Shiva Sambha Kavipurkar, Arjuna Wagholikar, Bhau Babu Mang, Haribhau Sali, Dagdu Baba Sali Shirolkar, Rama Vardhgadkar, Uma Chandolikar delighted the audiences of the theatres at Mumbai and

Musical Tamasha (Sangeet Bari) had its own independent run. Female artistes like Godavari Punekar, Satyabhamabai Pandharpurkar, Bakula Islampurkar, Lalit Changuna, Hirabai Avsarikar, Yamunabai Waikar had infused freshness in the presentation of musical Lavani. In recent years, with the award to Sangeet Natak Academy Puraskar and maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar to the female artist Yamunabai Waikar and Satyabhamabai Pandharpurkar, this art was crowned with Government recognition. Vag-samrat Dadu Indrurikar achieved for Tamasha a status in the theatre world at the all-India level. In the village of Maharashtra this art is flowing freely like a stream.

Ritualistic play like Panchmi, Bohda, Jakhadi, Dashavatar, Naman Gondhal, Jagaran, Bharaad; devotional play like Kirtan, Bhaarud, Lalit; the singing style of name-chanting; the educative pattern of ballads and the recreational mode of Tamasha have their impact on the Marathi mass mind even to-day. The inter-exchange between the folk theatre and the theatre of the write is continuing to date. Thinking of the Indian theatre at the threshold of the twenty-first century, it is that strong points of the folk theatre will contribute their natural power to the theatre of the elite in future as well. As rightly put by Dr. Mande ritual drama is the origin of drama. He explains, "Many theories have been put forth about the origin of drama. Before Frazer, it was believed that festivals were the origin of drama. Because in the festivals, characters used to dance on the stage wearing masks of animals or totems (Kulbinha). Frazer discarded the theory. According to him, drama is the remnant of the fertility –rite. The dramatic element of the fertility-rite, in the course of time, developed independently. Today, even this theory has been discarded. Anthropologists have come to the conclusion that, rituals must be at the root of folk-dances and folk dramas. Rituals acquired the form of a drama when they were started being performed publicly. Due to the presence of the spectators, the normal and natural actions of the ritual doer (Yajak) became dramatic. Later on the ritual doer was personified and rituals acquired the form of a ritual drama. Later on, the dramatic element developed independently. During the performance of rituals myth-stories used to be narrated. Then these stories were presented on the stage. It is possible that drama developed out of such drama looking performances. Such opinions are now-a-days widely accepted."⁴

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