

# THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE MUSLIMS TO MUSIC IN INDIA AND SRI LANKA

It goes without saying that Muslim culture has tremendously influenced and enriched the numerous aspects of Indian culture, of which Indian music remains the most outstanding example. In fact, the very distinction between the two great systems of Indian music, the Hindustani and the Karnatic, has been the gradual outcome of the north of India coming under the impact of Muslim culture since the beginning of the second millennium of the Christian era. It is true that the two systems had already developed certain distinctive characteristics before the Mohammedan invasions took place, but both the systems drew on the same sources and were guided by the same principles, the difference being one of style determined by linguistic and ethnic factors. At a very early age, much earlier than the coming of the Moghuls, North Indian music had travelled westwards to Persia, Arabia and Greece, and exercised a considerable influence on the music of those lands. It is interesting that the musical traditions of Persia and the Arab lands which had been enriched by Indian music and brought to India by the Muslims have in their turn exerted a lasting influence on Indian music, transforming it into an art of great beauty and grace.

Indian music, as all other art forms in the world, essentially has a religious origin, and continues to play an important role in the religious life of the Indian people. Even today, there is no religious worship, ceremony or festival, especially among the Hindus, in which music does not play an important part. It is established that, during the early period, music was largely confined to the temple from whence it drew inspiration and sustenance. However, a change took place in the wake of the Bhakti movement that swept across the Vaishnavaite India during the medieval times. The medieval saints of India with their emphasis on the individual soul followed an eclectic form of religion which combined the Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic and Jaina ideologies. The Bhakti way of attaining 'mukti' or salvation is by absolute faith and prayers and an intense adoration for some personal ideal of God.<sup>1</sup> Since songs and prayers were an integral part of the Bhakti cult, music was encouraged outside the temple. Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* composed towards the close of the 12th century A.D. is the musical outburst of the heart of a devout Vaishnavaite. This work has had a great influence on Indian music of later times. The Bhakti movement was in full force in Northern India when the Mohammedan suzerainty was getting established in that part of the Indian peninsula. Although Islam as a religion did not encourage music,<sup>2</sup> the Moghul rulers, except for

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<sup>1</sup>. D.P. Mukerji, *Indian Music: An Introduction*, Poona, 1945, p.10.

<sup>2</sup>. This in fact leads to the pertinent question as to how the Muslims practised music and were able to make such an outstanding contribution to the art. It needs be mentioned here that there is not a word of direct censure against music in the Qur'an. Music indeed is an indispensable item in the social life of the Arabs. The Islamic traditions in favour of music are almost as weighty

a few puritans like Aurangzeb, were lovers and patrons of music. Some of them were even serious pursuers of the art. The climate was, therefore, favorable for the fusion of the two cultures in the domain of music. The Muslim rulers collected eminent musicians, theoreticians and connoisseurs of music in their courts. They held musical soirées in their durbars as well as at public places and promoted music as a secular art. In fact, the greatest contribution of the Muslims to Indian music was that they freed it from the monopoly of the Hindu temple and transformed it into a great, liberal, secular art. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the golden era of Indian music runs almost parallel to the Moghul period in Indian history.

The present North Indian classical music is undoubtedly the best product of the synthesis of the Hindu and Muslim cultures. The theoretical framework and the spiritual character that it inherited from the Hindu tradition came under the influence of the imaginative mind and liberal temperament of the Muslims, and the result was an art characterised by refinement, beauty and grace. While the two cultures had many points of conflict, music acted as a unifying factor. On the plain of music there was no discrimination between the Hindus and the Muslims, and there were many great Hindu musicians serving in the durbars of Muslim rulers inasmuch as many Hindu princes employed Muslim musicians in their courts. Examples are galore throughout the history of Indian music. Tan Sen and Alla-ud-din Khan, two great figures in Indian music, were born Hindus. Muslim musicians sang Dhrupads and Khyāls addressed to Hindu deities with the fervent devotion of the Hindu saints, and some of them even composed songs in praise of Hindu deities. The following excerpt from an appraisal of the contemporary Sehnaï maestro Ustad Bismillah Khan is illustrative of the spiritual synthesis that has been achieved in the sphere of Indian music.

... his vigorous training started under ... the younger *mamu* Ali Bux ... His devout uncle's favourite venue for practice in Varanasi was a quiet spot surrounded by temples on three sides of the bank of the sacred Ganga. Practising all alone and with meditative concentration into the late hours of the night on this sacred Pancagangaghat Bismillah had many a transcendental experience.<sup>3</sup>

Indian classical music has no brands as Hindu classical music or Muslim classical music, and for centuries Hindu and Muslim musicians have united their efforts in enriching one and the same system of music. Both Hindu and Muslim musicians worked hand in hand to keep the torch of musical tradition burning, but when the Indian states began to fall one by one in the face of British aggression, Indian music, bereft of royal patronage, fell on evil days.

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although not as numerous as those against it. Vide H.G. Farmer, *The History of Arabian Music to the 13th Century*, London, 1929, pp. 20-38.

<sup>3</sup>. Susheela Misra, 'Bismillah Khan: An Appraisal', *Illustrated Weekly of India*, April 20, 1969, p. 43.

## AMIR KHUSRAU

The interaction between foreign and Indian musical traditions began to take place with the beginning of the eleventh century A.C. when the Muslim impact was first being felt in North-Western India. Even the early Mohammedan rulers of India like Mahmud of Ghazni (997 - 1030 A.C.) had poets and musicians in their courts.<sup>4</sup> Al-Farabi, the famous philosopher in the court of Mahmud, is claimed to be the inventor of the instrument known as Koanoon.<sup>5</sup> The twelfth century was a period marked by constant wars between the Mohammedan Sultans and Indian princes; as a consequence, all cultural pursuits suffered a serious setback. Towards the close of the next century music once again returned to the Indian royal court. Both All-ud-din Khalji (1296 - 1316 A.C.) and Mubarak Shah (1316 - 1320 A.C.) were noted for their love of music.<sup>6</sup> This period saw the dawn of a cultural revival, the most conspicuous personage of the time being Amir Khusrau whose pioneering work set about a change in the course of Indian music. Historians are silent about his achievements in music, and quite understandably extol him as a prolific writer, poet, statesman and soldier. He was born in 1253 A.C. at Patiala near Delhi and learnt under the great saint Nizam-ud-din Auliya. He enjoyed the favour and patronage of six or seven successive Sultans of Delhi, from Balban to Ghiyas-ud-din Tughluq. The most notable of his patrons was, however, All-ud-din Khalji whose reign probably coincided with the most fruitful period of his creative life. A man gifted with many talents, Amir Khusrau took a great interest in Indian music and devoted a substantial part of his time for the cultivation of the great art. Eventually he became a great master of the art and even Gopal Nayak, the musician from the Deccan who had been taken to Delhi by Sultan Khalji and who had been acclaimed as the greatest vocalist of the day, recognised his greatness.<sup>7</sup>

Amir Khusrau is traditionally credited with the introduction of a number of singing styles and the invention of several musical modes and musical instruments. Khyāl, the most popular form of classical vocal music today, is said to have been first introduced by him. The Dhrupad style of singing of later origin which enjoyed primacy for about three centuries since the days of Tan San retreated before the growing popularity of the Khyāl and has now fallen almost out of vogue. Tarana is another

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<sup>4</sup>. Atitya Begum Fysee-Rahamin, *The Music of India*, London, 1925, p. 21. See also A.V. William Jackson, *History of India*, Vol. 3, London, 1906, p. 31.

<sup>5</sup>. Fysee-Rahamin, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>6</sup>. S.N. Haidar Risvi, 'Music in Muslim India', *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 15, No. 3, July, 1941, p. 336.

<sup>7</sup>. Fysee-Rahamin, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

contribution of Amir Khusrau to Indian music,<sup>8</sup> a style of singing which uses instead of meaningful words certain syllables like *tom*, *nom*, *lom*, *dhani*, *tara*, *nana*, *dim* and is sung to *tāla*.<sup>9</sup> The introduction of the semi-classical form of singing known as Kawwali is also attributed to him. It is the devotional music of the Muslims, usually sung in chorus, and enjoys wide popularity among Muslims of North India.

Amir Khusrau is also credited with the invention of the Sitar, the most popular stringed instrument in North India.<sup>10</sup> This seven or six-stringed instrument with a fretted finger-board and a sound-box of dried gourd covered with wood and mounted by a transverse bridge, receives its name from the Persian word 'seh-tar' (three-stringed) as the instrument originally had only three strings. Another contribution of Amir Khusrau is the ubiquitous North Indian percussion instrument, the Tabla.<sup>11</sup> It is said that Khusrau, having observed the mellow sound of the Indian drum Pakhawaj, adapted the instrument to the North Indian music by cutting it into two halves!

Amir Khusrau is also said to have invented a number of *rāgas* and *tālas* some of which are still popular. The better known *rāgas* of his invention are Jeelab, Sajgiri, Sarparda, Yemen, Yemen-Kalyan, Rat-ki-Puriya, Barava, Toḍi and Purvi. The names of the *tālas* or time-measures invented by him are given as Jhumra, Aḍa-Chautal, Sulphak, Pasto, Phirodasta and Savari.<sup>12</sup>

### SHARQI AND TAN SEN

Sultan Hussain Sharqi, ruler of Jaunpur from 1458 to 1480, not only encouraged music but was himself an accomplished musician. As a Kawwali singer he is recognized as being second only to Amir Khusrau.<sup>13</sup> To Sultan Sharqi are attributed a number of *rāgas* such as Jaunpuri, Sindhi-Bhairavi and several varieties of Todi and Shyam.

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<sup>8</sup>. Op.cit., 66; Laksminarayan Garg, *Sangit Visarad*, 3rd ed., Hathras, 1961, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup>. Vide infra.

<sup>10</sup>. H.A. Popley, *The Music of India*, London, 1921, p. 107; Fyzee-Rahamin, op.cit., p. 54.

<sup>11</sup>. Laksminarayan Garg, op.cit., p. 23.

<sup>12</sup>. Op.cit., p. 22f.; Fyzee-Rahamin, op.cit., p. 21.

<sup>13</sup>. A. Halim, 'Music and Musicians of the Court of Shah Jahan,' *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 19, 1945. p. 359; Popley, op.cit., p. 89.



The most wonderful musical personality India has ever produced was Miyan Tan Sen who adorned the court of Akbar, the greatest of the Moghul emperors of India (1566 - 1605 A.C.). A great singer and composer of Dhrupad, the most dignified style of vocal music of the bygone era, Tan Sen occupies the pride of place in the history of Indian music as a pioneer in many ways. Tan Sen's Guru was the celebrated musician-saint Haridas Svami Dagur (b. 1512 A.C.) who lived in the forest hermitage of Vṛndāvana of Kṛṣṇa fame on the bank of the Yamuna. Having heard of the greatness of this musical genius from Tan Sen, Akbar once paid a special visit to him in the company of Tan Sen. In order to entice the great singer to sing his heart out Tan Sen had to resort to a ruse. He sang in the presence of Haridas a certain *rāga* deliberately introducing a false note. The Guru was quick to detect the error his pupil made and began to sing the *rāga* in its pure form by way of a lesson. He was soon carried away by the mood of the *rāga* and sang for hours together while the Emperor listened with rapt attention. That was an unprecedented musical experience for Akbar. When the singing stopped, Akbar turned to Tan Sen and asked, 'Why don't you, Tan Sen, sing like your Guru?', Tan Sen quipped, 'O Great King, I sing in your darbar whenever you beckon me to sing. But my Guru sings whenever his heart beckons him. That's the difference.'<sup>14</sup>

It is said that Tan Sen was a Hindu Brahmin who became a convert to Islam. Baiju Bawra was another Muslim singer, a great Dhrupadist, who was also attached to the court of Akbar. Two other well-known Muslim musicians in Akbar's court were Baaj Bahadur and Taana Taranga Khan.

Tan Sen composed a large number of Dhrupads some of which are still popular among the Dhrupad singers. But no systematic study has been made of all that he wrote, though a collection of a large number of his compositions has been brought out by Shri Prabhu Dayal Mital of Mathura.<sup>15</sup>

The descendants of Tan Sen known as Seniya musicians preserved the old tradition of Dhrupad singing perfected by Tan Sen. Lal Khan Kalawant in the court of Shah Jahan (1628 - 1666 A.C.) was one of them. The Seniya musicians of Jaipur are now almost extinct. The instrumental tradition of Tan Sen gradually branched off into two groups, the Binkars and the Rababiyars. The former specialized in the Bin, the North Indian counterpart of the South Indian Vina, and the latter specialized in the Rabab (the prototype of the modern Sarod), a fine Mohammedan instrument which Tan Sen himself played. Expert players of both these instruments are rare nowadays. The last of the great Binkars was the late Mohammed Wazir Khan. The late Mohammed Ali Khan was the representative of the Rababiyars. The days of the great Rababiyars now seem to have gone never to return.

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<sup>14</sup>. Lakshminarayan Garg, op.cit., p. 24; Popley, op.cit., p. 16f.; R. Sirinivasan, *Facets of Indian Culture*, Bombay, 1962, p. 40f.

<sup>15</sup>. B.V. Koskar, *Indian Music: Problems and Prospects*, Bombay, 1967, p. 81.

It is said that none of the four sons of Tan Sen had any inclination to carry on the musical tradition of their great father. The eldest son, Bilas Khan, had given himself to a roaming life and lived in the wilderness. When Tan Sen died the question arose as to who should be his successor. His pupils vied with each other for supremacy and the public could not decide as all were equally good. In the meantime, Bilas Khan returned from his wanderings and was grieved to see his dear father dead. Seeing his father's pupils fighting for their guru's place, he proclaimed, 'Whosoever can move my dead father by the power of his singing will be awarded the turban'. Since no one took up the challenge, Bilas Khan himself started pouring his heart out singing a new species of Toḍi which he had composed. The story goes that the rendering of this *rāga* was so harrowing that the dead body of Tan Sen did actually move. This melancholy *rāga* now bears the name Bilaskhani Toḍi.<sup>16</sup>

Tan Sen has enriched Indian music by inventing a number of lilting melodies. By introducing the Komal Gandhara and both varieties of Nishada to the *rāga* Malhar, which omits them as a rule, he created the beautiful *rāga* known as Miyan-ki-Malhar (Malhar of Miyan Tan Sen).<sup>17</sup> Miyan-ki-Todi, Miyan-ki-Saranga and the extremely popular Darbari Kanada are the other *rāgas* which bear the stamp of Tan Sen.<sup>18</sup>

Tan Sen lived at a number of places such as Rewa, Agra, Delhi and lastly Gwalior where he spent his last days.<sup>19</sup> He is still remembered as the greatest of all Indian musicians. A festival of classical music called Tan Sen Festival is held annually by the Madhya Pradesh Government in collaboration with the All-India Radio to mark the anniversary of the great singer. The modest grave in Gwalior in which Tan-sen's body lies buried is daily visited by musicians and music lovers from all parts of India. A large tamarind tree has grown overshadowing the tomb. There is a belief among musicians that by chewing the leaves of this tree one could improve the sweetness of one's voice.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>. Fyzee-Rahamin, op.cit., p. 89f.

<sup>17</sup>. Mani Sahukar, *The Appeal in Indian Music*, Bombay, 1943, p. 37; Popley, op.cit., p. 40.

<sup>18</sup>. B.V. Keskar, op.cit., p. 85.

<sup>19</sup>. Vaman S. Pandit, 'Tansen - the Indian Orpheus', *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. 154, No. 1, 1960, pp. 175-178.

<sup>20</sup>. Fyzee-Rahamin, op.cit., p. 23.

## ROYAL PATRONAGE

Akbar's love for music and his active encouragement of the art by employing reputed musicians in his court, holding musical soirées, and lavishly rewarding his protégés went a long way in promoting Indian classical music. According to some sources the Emperor himself was an expert player of the drum known as Nakkara.<sup>21</sup>

Akbar's son, Jahangir (1605 - 1627), who succeeded his father in 1605 was a cultured man and a great patron of music. His court was adorned by such talented musicians as Bilas Khan, Chattar Khan, Kheramadad, Makkan Parveshad and Hamjad, all of whom were reputed singers. It was during his reign that Somanatha in the Deccan wrote his famous *Ragavibodha*.

Shah Jahan (1628 - 1658), son of Jahangir, was himself an accomplished singer.<sup>22</sup> Dirang Khan and Lal Khan were two celebrated musicians who served his court. The two Hindu musicians, Ramdas and Jagannath, were also attached to the durbar of Shah Jahan. It is said that once the Emperor paid Jagannath the musician's wealth in gold! Ramdas for his part received a remuneration of Rs. 100,000 from Abdur-Rahim Mirza Khan Khanan.<sup>23</sup>

Aurangzeb (1659 - 1680) was perhaps the only Moghul emperor who was averse to music. The story of how musicians of his time demonstrated their protest over the sorry plight of music under his regime and the Emperor's answer to the crowd is too well known to be recounted here.<sup>24</sup> Most of the other rulers greatly encouraged music, employed great exponents of the art in their courts, and some of them were themselves accomplished musicians. The last Moghul emperor who patronized famous musicians was Mohammad Shah Rangile (1719 - 1748). Among those who adorned his court were Adaranga and Sadaranga, two great Binkars.<sup>25</sup> They were also great composers of Khyāl songs which are sung by musicians even today. Most of these songs are associated with their esteemed benefactor. They are superb compositions of great beauty which still remain unsurpassed. Although these two musicians taught the Khyāl style to their numerous pupils, they neither sang it themselves nor encouraged their family members or descendents to do the same. But as composers they have enjoyed

<sup>21</sup>. R.L. Roy, 'Social Position of Music and Musicians in India', *The Indo-Asian Culture*, Vol. 11, 1962 - 66, p. 240.

<sup>22</sup>. Loc.cit.

<sup>23</sup>. Op.cit., p. 239.

<sup>24</sup>. Vide Popley, op.cit., p. 16; Fyzee-Rahamin, op.cit., p. 88.

<sup>25</sup>. Popley, op.cit., p. 20.

tremendous popularity for the last two or three centuries. This is borne out by the fact that a music festival called Sadarang Sangit Sammelan is held annually in Calcutta.

Besides these great personalities in music there have been innumerable experts throughout the Muslim period, who have made significant contributions to Indian music, in its various aspects. Indian music is a highly individualistic art and individual musicians have, therefore, played an important role in enriching the Indian musical tradition. We shall now examine some of the important aspects of Indian music that have come under the influence of and been enriched by the Mohammedan musicians.

### DHRUPAD

Although the Khyāl style of singing is, according to tradition, as old as the Dhrupad style, it is the latter which held the ascendancy in the field of classical music till about the 18th century. However, some claim that Amir Khusrau's contemporary, Gopal Nayak, was an exponent of the Dhrupad style. But the more widely accepted view is that this style of singing was first introduced by Rajah Man Singh Tanwar of Gwalier (1486 - 1516).<sup>26</sup> It was, however, in the hands of the Mohammedan singers that it flowered into a vocal style of classical status. It reached the zenith of its glory during the time of Tan-sen who had learnt it from his *guru*, Haridas Swami Dagur. Originally it was a simple form of music of a religious nature, which the Muslim musicians ornamented and gave a courtly dignity.

The word 'Dhrupad' comes from the Sanskrit 'Dhruvāpada', a type of metrical composition mentioned in the early works on Sanskrit dramaturgy and music such as the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.<sup>27</sup> The main features of a Dhrupad composition are that it is first sung in slow tempo and then the singer keeps on singing it in different tempi such as double, treble, quadruple, octuple and so on in successive stages. Therefore, it deliberately omits the *rāns*. It is sung in the four integral parts of a musical composition, i.e. *Sthāyī*, *antarā*, *sañcārī* and *ābhogī*. The Dhrupads are usually composed in Braj Bhāṣā, Hindi or Urdu. The rhythmical composition is normally preceded by long *ālap*.

Lal Khan Kalavant (artiste), court musician of Shah Jahan, and son-in-law of Bilas Khan, was acclaimed as the greatest Dhrupadist of his time. Both he and his son, Khush-hal Khan, received the title "Guṇasamudar" (Ocean of Virtues or Knowledge) from the Emperor. They were also lavishly rewarded on several occasions.<sup>28</sup> The two sons of the great Dhrupad singer Bairam Khan and the late Ustad Faiyaz Khan were the

<sup>26</sup>. Op.cit., p. 88; Fyze-Rahamin, op.cit., p. 23.

<sup>27</sup>. Vide *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Vol. IV, Gaekwad Oriental Series, Baroda, 1964, Ch. xxxii.

<sup>28</sup>. A. Haleem, op.cit., p. 357.

only musicians of the recent past who could sing Dhrupads with any perfection. In present-day India there are very few Dhrupadists who deserve the name, and this great style of singing has now become a thing of the past. Zakiruddin Khan and Allabande Khan, the two sons of Bairam Khan who died in the latter half of the last century, are considered the greatest of the Dhrupad singers of modern times.<sup>29</sup> In the orthodox exposition of the *rāga*, in technique and style, and also in the unusual command over the *śrutis* or microtones they were unparalleled.<sup>30</sup> Some of their compositions are rated among the best Dhrupad compositions. The last Nawab of Rampur, the descendant of a celebrated musical house, was a great patron of Indian music and the tradition of Tansen was still alive in his court. The Nawab himself was an expert singer of Dhrupads of Tan-sen.<sup>31</sup>

### KHYĀL

The Khyāl style of singing is entirely a Muslim contribution. With its invention traditionally attributed to the legendary Amir Khusrau, it gradually gained in popularity, and by about the close of the 18th century it ousted the stately Dhrupad which had dominated the scene of Indian classical music for about three centuries. The literal meaning of the word 'khyāl' is imagination, and this imaginative quality of its rendering gives the artist a freedom which the Dhrupad with its self-imposed rules of discipline could not provide.

Although tradition traces the origin of Khyāl back to the late 13th or early 14th century, it was during the time of Sultan Hussain Sharqi of Jaunpur that it came to the fore as a classical form. It however appears to have receded before the Dhrupad which was still commanding the highest position among the vocal styles. There has however been a revival of Khyāl during the reign of Shah Jahan, and we hear of at least two outstanding Khyālists during this period--namely, Raja Id Singh Bor and Raja Ram Shah of Khargpur. There was a number of Dādrā, Khyāl and Tāranā compositions to the credit of the latter singer.<sup>32</sup> It was however during the reign of Mohammad Shah Rangile (18th century) that the Khyāl ascended to its position of glory.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup>. S.K. Chaubāy, *Indian Music Today*, Allahabad, 1945, p. 33, 69f.

<sup>30</sup>. Op.cit., p. 69.

<sup>31</sup>. Popley, op.cit., p. 96.

<sup>32</sup>. A. Haleem, op.cit., p. 359.

<sup>33</sup>. Laksminarayan Garg, op.cit., p. 27; Popley, op.cit., p. 89.

The modern Khyāl has emerged as a result of the cross-fertilization of the Hindu and Islamic cultures. The beauty of this style of singing lies in artistic flourishes and embellishments like *gamak* (grace), *tānālap*, *tān*, *bolān* and *sargam* and also in the absolute purity of the notes sung. A composition of Khyāl may deal with a Hindu theme (a devotional song for instance), but the imagination, vigour, beauty and appeal in its rendering are essentially reminiscent of Muslim influence. Its achievements and popularity are largely due to the contributions made by the Muslim musicians. Its technique and style have been fashioned by them. The development of Khyāl as a fully-fledged classical vocal style took place during the time of Sultan Mohammad Shah (1719 - 1748). The two great Khyāl composers, Adaranga and Sadaranga, belonged to the court of this ruler.<sup>34</sup> The other Khyālists of note of this period are Haddu Khan, Hassn Khan, Nathu Khan and the great Mathan Pir Buksh.<sup>35</sup> For the past two centuries or so Muslim singers have dominated the Khyāl scene. The names of Abdul Karim Khan and Faiyaz Khan, two outstanding Khyālists who lived in the early part of this century, are still fresh in our minds. The death of Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan and the tragic loss of Ustad Amir Khan in the late sixties have left a vacuum in the field of Indian vocal music.

### TAPPĀ

The Tappā, originally the songs of the camel and mule drivers in the Punjab, is another typical Mohammedan type of song. These songs relate the story of Heera and Ranji. Although Tappā is inferior to Khyāl as a classical form, both forms have much in common. Both have the two distinguishable parts, *sthāyī* and *antarā* and use the same *tālas*. The speciality of Tappā lies in its technique based upon a series of vigorous *tān* combinations. This style of singing was first introduced by the famous singer Shouri Mian of Lucknow, (the court musician of Asaf-ud-daulah, the king of Oudh).<sup>36</sup> He converted the simple ditty of the desert into a cultivated form of singing.<sup>37</sup> These are usually written on love themes and sung in *rāgas* of lighter variety like Kafi, Jhinjhuti, Pilu, Barawa, Bhairavi, and Khamaj.

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<sup>34</sup>. According to some authorities the Khyal style was introduced by Adaranga and Sadaranga of the court of Mohammad Shah Rangile while some others believe that it was an invention of Sultan Hussain Sharqi. Vide Deepali Nag, 'Indian Classical Music', *Art and Letters*, Vol. 22, No. 1 1948, p. 17; Sultan Ahmed, 'Indian Music: Theory and Practice', *The Calcutta Review*, Vol. 57, No. 3, 1935, p. 252.

<sup>35</sup>. S.K. Chaubey, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>36</sup>. *Op.cit.*, p. 38; Popley, *op.cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>37</sup>. Fyzee-Rahamin, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

## THUMRI

The Thumri is a semi-classical type of romantic song. It is distinguished from the highly classical Dhrupad and Khyāl by its laxitude in the elaboration of a *rāga*. While the former are *svara-pradhāna-gāyaktī* or vocal music in which prominence is given to the musical note, the Thumri is *bol-pradhāna-gāyaktī* where prominence is given to the wording and the musical notes are moulded and modulated to bring out the emotional content of the song.<sup>38</sup> Apart from this emphasis on verbal-tonal embellishments than on purely tonal ones, the other prominent characteristic of Thumri is that it is generally the *śṛṅgāra-rasa*, the amorous sentiment, that is evoked. The Thumri developed in the company of the Kathak dance which thrived in the courts of the later Muslim rulers of North India.<sup>39</sup>

The origin of Thumri is generally attributed to the royal court of Oudh, especially that of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, a great patron as well as a practitioner of music and dancing, who was dethroned by the British in 1856. However, music historians prefer to show that its roots lie in greater antiquity.<sup>40</sup> The home of the Thumri in any case is Uttar Pradesh, particularly the two cities Lucknow and Benares, which have given rise to two different styles. The Lucknow style is an invention of the famous musician Sadiq Ali Khan and reached its perfection in the hands of Mōzzuddin Khan who has been acclaimed as the greatest Thumri singer of recent times.<sup>41</sup> The latter's teacher was the famous Bhaiya Sahib Ganpat Rao. A celebrated composer of Thumri songs was Quadur Pia who wrote a large number of compositions ideally suited to the Lucknow style. Laalan Pia and Samad Pia were two other famous composers of Thumri.<sup>42</sup> The late Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan, the well known Khyālist, and the late Begum Aktar excelled in Thumri as well.

## GAZAL

The Gazal is a popular type of love song couched in Urdu which came into prominence during the nineteenth century. The very word 'gazal' is of Persian origin,

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<sup>38</sup>. Jayadeva Singh, 'The Evolution of Thumri' in V. Subramaniam, ed., *The Sacred and the Secular in Indian Performing Arts: Ananda Coomaraswamy Centenary Essays*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 130.

<sup>39</sup>. Premalatha Sharma, 'The History and Origin of Thumri with Special Reference to Gharanas', in V. Subramaniam, ed., op.cit., p. 111.

<sup>40</sup>. Jayadeva Singh, op.cit., pp. 124-132.

<sup>41</sup>. S.K. Chaubay, op.cit., p. 45.

<sup>42</sup>. Op.cit., p. 47.

and its roots are traceable as far back as the fourteenth century, Amir Khusrau being its accredited inventor. The most prominent characteristic of Gazal is the influence of Muslim culture and the Muslim temperament. It was generally not considered a classical musical form. But in the hands of recent exponents such as Barkat Ali and Begum Akter it has gained high prestige in music circles. While the early Gazals were characterized by a rigidity of form, these two artistes by their improvisations and thematic elaborations have been highly successful in broadening its vistas.<sup>43</sup>

### KAWWALI

This type of song which is religious in content and appeal is yet another contribution of Muslims to Indian music. Although as religious music its scope of appeal is limited, it is becoming popular among the general masses of India. Kawwali is the name of a Persian rhythm and the compositions are generally in Persian or Urdu. It involves a vigorous singing style and the rhythm is usually provided by the *dolak*. Kawwali is rendered by groups who have developed its particular style and technique and are recognized as Kawwals. Indeed, this is the only type of Indian music that can be indulged in even by those Muslim religious communities for whom all the other varieties of music are banned. Mazar in North India is the birthplace of Kawwali and some of the best Kawwali performers can be heard at the religious fair held annually at Ajmir. The Kawwalis are also sung in places of Mohammedan pilgrimage where there are religious tombs. Their rendering is very much similar to the Kirtans, the devotional songs of the Hindus, but Kawwali is markedly a mixed product of the Indo-Muslim culture.

### MARASIYA

The Marasiya is another typically Mohammedan form of song which describes the battle in which the grandsons of Prophet Mohammad were killed. These are sung in the mornings during the days of the Moharram festival. The *rāgas* used are mixed and the words are chanted in a recitative melody.<sup>44</sup>

### TARĀNĀ AND DĀDARĀ

In other styles of singing such as Tarānā and Dadārā too the Mohammedan influence is too conspicuous to be ignored. In the recent history of Indian music, the Tarānā has been associated with some of the great musicians such as Bahadur Hussain Khan and Tanras Khan. The late Ustad Amir Khan too used to sing beautiful Tarānās, particularly at the conclusion of a Khyāl recital. Dādrā songs are so called because they

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<sup>43</sup>. Ashok Ranade, 'The Musical Evolution of Gazal', in V. Subramaniam, ed, *op.cit.*, pp. 135-36.

<sup>44</sup>. Popley, *op.cit.*, p. 90.



are usually sung in the tāla Dādrā (a metre of six beats). Today the Benares style of Dādrā is becoming very popular. Mozzuddin Khan was also an expert singer of Dādrās.

### TREATISES ON INDIAN MUSIC

The Muslim musicians appear in history more as expert practitioners than as theoreticians. It is by and large the Hindu pundits, many of whom were Sanskrit scholars, who have made the greater contribution to the theory of Indian music. However, there are at least a few names of Muslim theoreticians who have made significant contributions in this field.

The earliest work which can be mentioned in this connection is Lahjat-i-Sikandar Shahi (still in manuscript) of unknown authorship written during the time of Sultan Sikandar Shah of Delhi (1489 - 1517 A.D.).<sup>45</sup> The next important work written by a Muslim is the Rag Darpan (Mirror of Music) of Faquirullah (Saif Khan) who at one time was Governor of Kashmir. This work purports to be a translation of Mān Kautūhal by Raja Man Singh of Gwalior (1486 - 1516 A.D.). The latter work was the result of an attempt to systematize Indian music in the light of the changes it had undergone since the advent of the Muslims. The Rāg Darpan, however, contains much additional information derived from other sources, and gives a vivid picture of the musical activities of the time.<sup>46</sup>

During the early nineteenth century a Muslim theoretician attempted a novel classification of the *rāgās* and suggested for the first time the use of the present Bilawal *thāṭa* as the primary scale or *śuddha saptaka*. This theoretician was Mohammad Reza, a nobleman of Patna, who wrote his treatise in 1813. The work was Nagmat-e-Asafi in which he suggested this new arrangement. Mohammad Reza's contribution is also significant for the systematization of the *rāga* classification in the North Indian system. Instead of the earlier arbitrary grouping of the *rāgās* and *rāginīs* (the traditionally recognized 'male' and 'female' melodic patterns), Reza grouped them according to their melodic affinities. He suggested the *rāgās* Bhairava, Malkauns, Hindol, Sri, Megha and Naṭa as the six principal *rāgās* under which all the other *rāgās* or rather *rāginīs* and *rāga-putras* could be grouped according to their melodic similarities.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup>. R.C. Majumdar, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 2nd. ed., Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan; Bombay, 1967, p. 146. The only extant MS. of this work is said to be at Tagore Museum, Lucknow.

<sup>46</sup>. A. Halim, op.cit., p. 355; S.M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India*, New York and London, 1964, p. 120, 252.

<sup>47</sup>. Popley, op.cit., p. 21, p. 42, p. 54.

In placing the Bilawal scale as the primary or *śuddha* scale, Reza laid the foundation for the present Hindustani system of scales. With this arrangement each note of the octave was to be placed on the first *śruti* (microtone) instead of the last *śruti* as hitherto practised.<sup>48</sup> Under the earlier system *rāga* Kanakangi (the Karnatic counterpart of the Hindustani *rāga* Kafi) approximated the *śuddha* scale. Thus, while the Karnatic system still retains the earlier arrangement, the Hindustani system adopted the Bilawal scale as the primary scale, making a clear distinction between the two systems. Later, towards the close of the nineteenth century, Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande further elaborated on Reza's thesis and developed the now accepted *rāga* classification of ten *thātas* of the Hindustani music.

About the same time, the ruler of the former state of Rampur, Sahebzada Nawab Saadat Ali Khan, who was an expert player on the Rabab, began writing an excellent book on Indian music in Urdu, which was unfortunately left unfinished because of his premature death.<sup>49</sup> At the turn of the present century Thakur Nawab Ali Khan of Akbarpur brought out a collection of nearly 300 Dhrupad and Hori songs of the House of Rampur in his book in Urdu, Muarifat-e-Naghamat.<sup>50</sup>

### INVENTION OF INSTRUMENTS

We have already seen that Amir Khusrau, the first great figure in Hindustani music, has been credited with the invention of two of the most popular instruments in use today - the Sitar and the Tabla. Quite a few other instruments are also considered to be the inventions of Muslim musicians. The invention of the Rabab, perhaps the oldest of them, is attributed to one Sikandar Zulquarain, which name believed by some to be the Indian version of Alexander the Great. This plucked instrument with a wide shallow belly made of wood and covered with parchment, was a favourite of Tan San.<sup>51</sup> Today it has fallen out of vogue.

The Sahnai which outshines all other wind instruments in richness and depth of tone, gets its name from its inventor Hakeem Ali Sahnai.<sup>52</sup> This remarkable folk instrument elevated to the status of a classical instrument by the living virtuoso Ustad Bismillah Khan, remains up to this day a monopoly of Muslim musicians. Bismillah Khan hails from an illustrious line of Sahnai players of Benares and has done yeoman service to popularize the instrument within and outside the boundaries of India.

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<sup>48</sup>. Fyzee Rahamin, op.cit., p. 14.

<sup>49</sup>. Popley, op.cit., p. 96; Fyzee-Rahamin, op.cit., p. 14.

<sup>50</sup>. Sultan Ahmed, op.cit., p. 253; Fyzee-Rahamin, op.cit., p. 14.

<sup>51</sup>. Popley, op.cit., p. 112f.

<sup>52</sup>. Popley, op.cit., p. 112f.

The Sarangi, a combination of the Sarod and the Dilruba, and whose tone closely resembles the female human voice is again an invention of a Muslim musician, Hakeem by name, who is not to be confused with the inventor of the Sehnaï.<sup>53</sup> The Sarod, the rival and 'masculine counterpart' of the Sitar, is the next significant Muslim contribution. Although its inventor is not known for certain, it was the late Ustad Allah-ud-din Khan, the greatest of all musicians who lived in this century, who perfected this instrument and displayed for the first time its immense capabilities. The Sūr-śrīngār, the modern descendant of the Rabab, was invented by Syed Kale Ali Khan Bahadur, a former Nawab of Rampur.<sup>54</sup> The Sūr-vīṇā, a sitar-like instrument without frets, was invented by Kale Sahib, a prince of Delhi,<sup>55</sup> and the Nai, a wind instrument similar to the Sehnaï and invented by Omar Aiyar are the other instruments gifted to Indian music by Muslim musicians.<sup>56</sup>

### TECHNIQUES AND THE GREAT MASTERS

The techniques of instrumental playing, particularly of the Sitar and the Sarod, are mainly those that have been tested and accumulated in the families of Muslim musicians. The principal techniques of Sitar playing are those that have been developed in the Gauripur Gharana. Inayat Khan who has been regarded as the greatest Sitarist of all times represented the fifth generation of an unbroken line of Sitar players in the Gauripur Gharana. His father was the celebrated musician Imdad Khan, the Surbahar maestro. Inayat Khan's two sons, Vilayat Khan and Imrat Khan, are carrying on the great tradition of their father and grandfather respectively. Vilayat is indisputably the greatest Sitar player of today while Imrat who is also an outstanding Sitarist of the younger generation maintains his position as the best living exponent of the Surbahar. The other great Sitarists of India in modern history are Amrit Sen, Rahim Sen and Nihal Sen, all of whom were Seniya musicians who lived in the last century.

The two conventional styles of Sitar composition today, the Masitkhani and the Razakhani, were invented by two Muslim musicians who flourished in the nineteenth century. Masit Khan of Delhi introduced the slow type of composition named after him while Ahmad Raza Khan of Lucknow introduced the fast type known as Razakhani or the Lucknow style.

The techniques of the Sarod have been handed down in two families, that of the late Ustad All-ud-din Khan of Maihar and that of Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan of Gwalior. Ali

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<sup>53</sup>. Op.cit., p. 55.

<sup>54</sup>. Popley, op.cit., p. 113.

<sup>55</sup>. Fyzee-Rahamin, op.cit., p. 57.

<sup>56</sup>. Loc.cit.

Akbar Khan and Ravi Shankar, Alla-ud-din Khan's son and son-in-law respectively, are the two illustrious exponents of the Sarod and the Sitar respectively of the former tradition and the young Amjad Ali Khan, son of Hafiz Ali Khan, has shown great promise as an outstanding Sarodist.

In the field of vocal music we hear of Baz Bahadur, King of Malwa, whose musical expertise is still remembered in the way of voice production known as the Bazkhani Bhaj. In the course of the present century India lost quite a number of outstanding vocalists. One of the first to go was the famed Abdul Karim Khan who excelled in both Khyāl and Thumri styles. The next great figure, Faiyaz Khan, a master of Khyāl, Dhrupad and Thumri styles, whose manly and vigorous voice stood in sharp contrast to the clear and mellifluous voice of Abdul Karim Khan, died in 1950. Both these were veritable giants of vocal music. Bade Gulam Ali Khan and Amir Hussain Khan died in 1968 and 1969, respectively. Of these the former who had been a victim of paralysis in his old age defied his illness when he sang. A great exponent of Thumri he was rightly called 'the King of Thumri'. He was compelled to wind up almost all his Khyāl recitals with his famous Thumri composition 'Kya karo sajani - Aya na baalamn.' However much he told his audiences that he had learnt something more than 'Aya na bālamn' they would not let him go until they got their demand. Alla-ud-din Khan, the proud Guru of Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan, died in 1972 at the ripe old age of 104.

One of the greatest tragedies in the recent history of Indian music was the death of Amir Khan in a motor car accident in Calcutta in 1974. At the time of his death he was just 62 years old and at the height of his fame. Noted for his comparatively short but elegant Khyāls and smart Tarānās, which he rendered in his melodious, soft voice, Amir Khan was a veritable master of his art. All his Khyāl renderings were marked by their imaginative quality, serenity and refinement. It was indeed a good fortune that he became accessible to the ordinary masses through such classical films as 'Jhank Jhanak Paayala Baaje' and 'Baiju Bawra.'

### THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

Despite the loss of the greats mentioned above, India can still boast of a number of young hopefuls who are continuing the great traditions of their worthy predecessors. Ali Akbar Khan's eldest son, Ashish Khan, is an up-coming Sarod player. His second son Dhyanes (under whom the writer of this section took his first music lessons in India) was an extremely talented player, and his untimely death a few years ago is no doubt a great loss to Indian music. Imrat Khan (the present writer's *guru*) and his nephew Rais Khan of Bombay have proved worthy torch-bearers of the Gayaki school of the Sitar. Shameem Ahmed, a pupil of Ravi Shankar, is another young Muslim Sitarist who has shown great promise. We hope Bade Gulam Ali Khan's son, Munwar Ali Khan, will one day rise up to the expectation of his late father. The two brothers, Salamat Ali and Nasakat Ali (who died a few years ago), from Pakistan are considered two of the best exponents of Khyāl and Thumri styles in recent times. Although

physically separated from India for political reasons, they sing the same Hindustani music enriching it with their individual creativity. Lastly we should not forget two great musicians who provide Sarangi accompaniment for all great singers of India. These two, Sagir-ud-din Khan and Laddan Khan, carry a great responsibility on their shoulders by assisting these artists to give of their best. The role of an accompanist in Indian classical music is no simple task. He should not only be familiar with all *rāgas* but also be able to maintain the same high standard as that of the vocalist. In this respect Sagir-ud-din Khan's providing Sarangi accompaniment for a Khyāl singer is a real treat to watch.

India lost two of her most notable Tabla players of this century in the demise of Keramatullah Khan and of Ahmed Jan Tirakkwa, both in the 1970s. Keramatullah Khan was acclaimed as one of the best accompanists for instruments like the Sitar. The next great Tabla player who is still with us is Ustad Allah Rakkha. Alla Rakkha's son, the young Sakir Hussain, has already shown great promise as a Tablist of the calibre of his illustrious father.

A description of modern Hindustani music will not be complete without a reference to the outstanding Muslim contribution to the field of Indian film music. Naushad Ali will be remembered at all times for the genre of film music he has originated. The haunting melodies he created for the films Rattan, Moghul-e-Azam, Deedar, Baabul, Divana and many other films seem to have a perennial appeal. Among the singers the late Mohammad Rafi and Talat Mahmud and Shamshad Begum have left an indelible impression in the hearts of millions of film-goers not only in India but also in other lands such as Sri Lanka, the Middle East and the West Indies.

In the foregoing pages we have attempted to trace a brief history of Indian music beginning with the Mohammedan invasions up to the present day with particular emphasis on the contribution of the Muslim musicians and their royal patrons to North Indian music. The Muslims with their liberal imagination and vigorous temperament still play an important role not only in further enriching the already rich musical heritage of India but also in introducing this great art to lands lying across the boundaries of India.

### SRI LANKA

The contribution of Muslim musicians to the development of the musical tradition in Sri Lanka has to be understood in the context of the history of modern Sri Lankan music, particularly the history of modern Sinhalese music. The classical music practised today by Sinhalese musicians is the North Indian classical music; and the light music created by them except for a few melodies derived from folk songs is on the whole based on the North Indian system. Thus we may say that the Sinhalese musicians today are heirs to a tradition in whose creation the Muslim musicians played a prominent role. Even among the Tamils in Sri Lanka, although the classical musical system they follow is the Carnatic, as far as their light music is concerned the impact of North Indian music is unmistakable. We now propose to narrate briefly how the North Indian musical system came into prominence in Sri Lanka.

Unlike India, Sri Lanka does not have a long tradition of music with an unbroken history from ancient to modern times. The reason for this may be the fact that Buddhism which dominated the cultural life of the island from about the third century B.C. did not encourage either drama or music. However, we note from literary sources that Indian music was known in the island especially in the elitist circles. We have evidence from some poems such as the *Kav Silu Miṇa* of the 13th century, one of the earliest *māhakāvya*s in Sinhalese literature, which is generally believed to have been written by King Parākramabāhu II and from the *Sandēsa* poems of the period 14-15 century that this knowledge went beyond theory and that instruments such as the *viṇā* and several types of drums were in general use.<sup>57</sup>

It is generally believed that in early times a single system prevailed in India before its bifurcation into Northern and Southern systems. But from about the 14th century there was a distinct influence from South India. Finally, in the early 18th century, a Sinhalese scholar even produced a treatise on music based on the Carnatic system, although it was more a theoretical exercise, for, little of what was described therein was actually practised by musicians in Sri Lanka.<sup>58</sup> At this time a form of folk opera called Nāḍagam was becoming popular in the Southern and Western coastal areas of the island. This theatrical form whose music was essentially Carnatic was much in vogue during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As time went on and the Nāḍagam got entrenched in the Sinhalese folk tradition, the music assumed a distinctly Sri Lankan flavour.<sup>59</sup>

The popularity of the Nāḍagam gradually dwindled and by the mid-nineteenth century a new musical expression was much in need. This was because the same melodies were being used over and over again and there were no innovations to sustain audience interest. At this time Sinhalese music lovers were being introduced to the rich and novel experience of Hindustani music by way of the Indian pilgrims visiting Kataragama and also through the Indian and Malay regiments stationed in the island.<sup>60</sup>

Following upon this random contact with Hindustani music there occurred a momentous event in the year 1877. In the month of May of this year a theatre troupe

<sup>57</sup>. For details see M.B. Ariyapala, *Society in Medieval Ceylon*, Colombo, Dept. of Cultural Affairs, 1968, pp. 258-268.

<sup>58</sup>. See Devar Surya Sena, 'Sinhalese Music' in S. Sanmuganathan ed., *The Pageant of Lanka Souvenir*, 1948, pp. 61-65.

<sup>59</sup>. E.R. Saratchandra, *Sinhala Gami Natakaya*, Colombo, Dept. of Cultural Affairs, 1968, p. 162.

<sup>60</sup>. Wilmot P. Wijetunga, *Svara Lipī Sahita Sinhala Nrtya Gita*, Colombo, Govt. Press, 1966, Introduction, p. xi.

from Bombay named "The Hindustan Dramatic Company" arrived in Colombo and held a number of performances winning great acclaim from the local audiences.<sup>61</sup> The form of theatre presented by this troupe was melodramatic in character wherein music was lavishly used. And, apart from the new theatrical technique and the grand spectacular display that was presented through magnificent stage sets and rich costumes and various mechanical devices, a major attraction of the plays was the highly melodious music they contained.<sup>62</sup> The tremendous popularity of these plays inspired a Sinhalese journalist and social worker, Calutantrige Don Bastian Jayaweera Bandara, popularly known as C. Don Bastian (1852-1921), to present a Sinhalese play named "Rolina" in the same genre six months later.<sup>63</sup> The North Indian dramas became so popular in the island that several other troupes followed from Gujerat. Thus the "Parsi Elphiston Dramatic Club" visited the island in 1882 and the "Parsi Victoria Theatrical Company" followed in 1889. Among the plays presented by all these troupes the most popular was "Indar Sabha" said to have been written by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah.<sup>64</sup> Its popularity also prompted a Sinhalese playwright named James Pieris to produce it in translation.<sup>65</sup> Later John de Silva, the most prominent Sinhala dramatist in early 20th century, brought out a Sinhalese transliteration of the Hindustani original so that the amateur Sinhalese musicians could practise the Hindustani songs.<sup>66</sup>

Following the lead given by C. Don Bastian in 1877 a number of Sinhalese dramatists ventured to write and produce plays in the new genre which came to be known as "nurti" to differentiate it from the old Nadagam. Thus playwrights such as W.C. Perera, I.C. Jansz, R. John Perera, John de Silva and others were able to bring out nearly fifty plays during the period 1877-1900.<sup>67</sup> The music in these operatic plays was, as other things, borrowed from Gujarathi originals. The usual melodies were based on Dādrā, Gazal and Kawwali styles. And as time went on the imitation was coming to a dead end and the need arose to look for new melodies.

<sup>61</sup>. Tissa Kariyawasam, *Sinhala Natyaye Vikasaya 1867-1911*, Colombo, 1979, p. 26.

<sup>62</sup>. For descriptions of these plays see D.V. Hapuarachchi, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

<sup>63</sup>. Kariyawasam, *op.cit.*, p. 26f.; D.V. Hapuarachchi, *Sinhala Natya Itihasaya, 1860-1911*; Colombo, Lake House, 1981, pp. 124-131; pp. 342-348.

<sup>64</sup>. See Kariyawasam, *op.cit.*, p. 39ff. For Wajid Ali Shah vide supra, p. 15.

<sup>65</sup>. Wijetunga, *op.cit.*, p. xv.

<sup>66</sup>. *Op.cit.*, p. xvii.

<sup>67</sup>. Based on information from Wijetunga, *op.cit.*; Kariyawasam, *op.cit.*; Hapuarachchi, *op.cit.*

It was John de Silva who took the initiative here by enlisting the services of Pundit Wishwanath Laujee from Gujarath to compose melodies for the play 'Siri Sangabo' which was staged in 1903. John de Silva was one of the prominent figures among the Sinhala nationalists of the day who were working hard to bring about a Sinhalese-Buddhist cultural revival.<sup>68</sup> It was his conviction that the Hindustani music being a part of the culture of the people of Northern India was an Aryan legacy to which the Sinhala people also had a claim. Hence he wrote in the Introduction to his play "Siri Sangabo" in 1903:

The art of music was well established during the time of the ancient Sinhala kings. When we examine some of the metres that are used in our extant poetry, we note that they are based on the *rāgas* and *tālas* prevalent among the North Indians. For example, the Samudraghosa metre used in the *Salalihini Sandesaya* is the *rāga* Pilu of Hindustani music. . . . In this way we note that the metres used in our ancient poems fall within the system of *rāgas* and *tālas* found in Hindustani music.<sup>69</sup>

John de Silva got Wishwanath Laujee to provide music for a number of plays: "Siri Sangabo", "Sri Vikrama Rajasinghe", "Ramayanaya", "Uttara Rama Caritaya", "Sakuntala", and "Ratnawali". When Laujee returned to India in 1907 he left behind several musicians among whom were two Muslims, Amir Ali and Abdul Asiz, who continued to serve the dramatic company of John de Silva.<sup>70</sup>

Following the lead given by John de Silva another leading dramatist, Charles Dias Amaratunga (1876-1944) also brought down an Indian musician. This time it was a Muslim named Amir Khan. The plays of Charles Dias were regularly staged in the Tower Hall constructed in 1911 and it became the most popular venue for the Sinhala theatre. During the period 1914-1925 the following musicians are on record as having served the Tower Hall orchestra: Amir Khan (Harmonium), Madhu Mohamed (Sehenai), Mohideen Bai (Tabla) and Brahmuddin Khan (Harmonium).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>. For the career of John de Silva see Sarath Amunugama, 'John de Silva and the Nationalist Theatre', *The Ceylon Historical Journal*, Vol. xxv, Nos. 1 - 4, 1978, pp. 285-304.

<sup>69</sup>. Quotation from Wimal Dissanayake, *John de Silva ha Sinhala Natakaya*, Colombo, Dept. of Cultural Affairs, 1974, p. 23.

<sup>70</sup>. Information gathered from L.D.A. Ratnayake, *Nitijna John de Silva Nataka Itihasaya*, Colombo, 1963, pp. 45-129.

<sup>71</sup>. L.D.A. Ratnayake, *Tower Hall Nataka Itihasaya*, Colombo, 1972, pp. 250-256.



Although by this time several Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamils had become accomplished musicians in the Hindustani tradition the virtuosity of Indian artists had a special appeal. Thus during the second and third decades of this century several accomplished Indian musicians among whom were a number of Muslims, adorned the orchestras of the Sinhala Nurti world. Thus mention may be made of Sultan Bux, Abdul Sattar, Pyora Sahib, Sadalal Maganlal, Amta Lal and Mohanlal Baladev.<sup>72</sup> The musician who made the greatest impact on the Sinhala theatre and music after Laujee was Professor Nawab Khan Aassi from Punjab who headed the Tower Hall orchestra from 1926 to 1929. Aasi who was in the service of a leading theatre in Bombay was brought down to Sri Lanka at great expense. He was a master in the Kawwali form and the great popularity of the Kawwali style in Sinhala music for several decades to come may be attributed to his virtuosity. In Aasi's orchestra there were two highly accomplished Tablists, Iba Bai and Ahmed Bai. Indeed at this time the presentation of the music of Aasi and his orchestra became the prime concern of the Tower Hall authorities. Hence they employed several playwrights to write plays wherein his lilting melodies could be accommodated. It needs mention here that the Indian musicians who arrived in the island from time to time became instructors to many Sri Lankans. Wishwanath Laujee held music classes at Grandpass and Nawabkhan Aasi taught music to several Sri Lankans, among whom was K.D. Nicolas Perera who later became a music director at Tower Hall.<sup>73</sup>

The Nurti phase of Sinhala drama was a momentous one particularly in relation to the history of music in Sri Lanka. During this period the North Indian music became strongly entrenched in Sri Lankan society and we may say that as far as the Sinhalese people are concerned it revived the tradition of Indian classical music which was in vogue among them in ancient times.<sup>74</sup>

One of the noteworthy features of the Nurti phase in the history of Sri Lankan music is the prominent role played by Muslim musicians. When we scan the names of the Indian musicians who arrived in the island to captivate the hearts of local audiences with their masterly presentation of the rich and alluring Hindustani melodies, we note that the majority of them were indeed Muslims.

The heyday of the Nurti theatre was the first three decades of the 20th century. It was during this period that many of the Indian masters mentioned above were associated with the Sinhala theatre. After many of them went back the traditions they had established were continued by Sri Lankans who had been their students and

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<sup>72</sup>. Wijetunga, op.cit., p. xxi; Ratnayake, op.cit., p. 241.

<sup>73</sup>. Ratnayake, op.cit., passim; Wijetunga, op.cit., p. xxiii.

<sup>74</sup>. E.R. Saratchandra, *The Sinhalese Folk Play and the Modern Stage*, Colombo, Ceylon University Press, 1953, p. 124.

assistants. Here we note that among the Sri Lankan musicians who thus served the theatre world in early 20th century there were several Muslims who have gone on record for their virtuosity. Thus for example, Abdul Aziz of Kollupitiya, Mohamad Ghouse of Grandpass and Ismail Rauther of Moor Street may be mentioned.<sup>75</sup> And, among the actor-singers of Tower Hall a well known figure was H.M. Sein Deen popularly known as Manzil Kumar.<sup>76</sup> When we talk about the actor-singers of Tower Hall a figure who naturally comes to our mind is the Muslim lady Luxmi Bai, the idol of Nurti theatre during the 'thirties and the 'forties. It needs mention that she was one of the first Sri Lankan women of any community to have taken to the theatre.<sup>77</sup>

Nurti declined in the face of competition from the film. In the 'thirties and early 'forties there were attempts to produce films in Sri Lanka and finally in 1947 were screened the first two Sinhalese films "Kadaunu Poronduwa" and "Asokamala". Like the Nurti from which they took over, the early Sinhala films were musicals. Significantly the music of "Asokamala" was composed and directed by Mohamad Ghouse, an Indian Muslim who had settled down in Sri Lanka. In the composition of melodies and in orchestration, Ghouse was undoubtedly one of the finest music directors the Sinhalese film has ever had and his creations still remain favourites among music-lovers of Sri Lanka. After "Asokamala" Ghouse provided music to two more films, "Sangavunu Pilitura" and "Eda Raa" and to the ballet "Salalihini Sandesaya", before his untimely death in 1955. He was furthermore an expert Gazal singer and an accomplished player of many instruments. But the Harmonium was his forte.<sup>78</sup>

Ghouse also should be given the credit for the initiation of two of our foremost musicians today - W.D. Amaradeva and Mohideen Baig. Amaradeva (then known as Albert Perera) was just out of school when Ghouse recognized his talents and appointed him the Assistant Director of music of "Asokamala" and made him sing two beautiful songs "Bhave bhita" and "Ayi kare yamek ale",<sup>79</sup> thus launching the career of one of the foremost composers, music directors, singers and instrumentalists in Sri Lanka today.

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<sup>75</sup>. Ratnayake, op.cit., p. 257.

<sup>76</sup>. L.D.A. Ratnayake, *Sangita Itihasaya*, Colombo, 1945, p. 22.

<sup>77</sup>. According to Ratnayake, 1972, p. 267 she joined Tower Hall in 1937 and was paid Rs. 400.00 a month, one of the highest salaries at the time.

<sup>78</sup>. We are indebted to Mr. G.W. Jayantha Aravinda, presently Director of Aesthetic Education, Ministry of Education, for providing us with this information.

<sup>79</sup>. Amaradeva has acknowledged these facts at a press interview some time ago.

Similarly, Mohideen Baig, a young Indian Muslim who had come to Sri Lanka with his uncle was enlisted by Ghouse to be a playback singer in "Asokamala". Henceforth Baig was one of the most sought-after playback singers in the Sinhala film world. As a composer and singer he remained a great favourite of music lovers until his untimely death which occurred during eye surgery.

The 'thirties and the 'forties saw another significant development in Sinhalese music when disc recordings came to be produced locally. The gramophone was a very popular medium at this time and it penetrated even into remote villages. Radio broadcasting which began in 1923 also gave a fresh impetus to the popularity of music. In this phase of Sri Lankan music there were several Muslim singers who became great favourites for their masterly presentation of Sinhala songs in the Kawwali and Gazal styles. Most prominent among them were S.A. Ahamed Mohideen, A.R.M. Ibrahim and T.F. Latif.

To come to more recent times, in radio and television broadcasting there were several well known Muslim musicians who served in the orchestras of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and the Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation. They are: Mohamad Sali, Ibrahim Sali, A.J. Karim and M.A. Latif--all but the last named have now passed away. Karim was a well known singer as well; and Latif has made his mark as a music director by providing music for several Sinhala films.

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