

Who owns the air?

A recent survey of the media comparing the news coverage of the government-owned media with that of the national press discovered that AIR and Doordarshan not only gave undue exposure to the ruling party but also suppressed and distorted news. **CHARU SHAHANE** reports.

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TWENTY six years after the introduction of television in India on September 15, 1959, two citizens of the country have stirred themselves to take the Government of India to court over the issue of its monopoly over television and radio. Their mothers are not restless — they wish to set up an independent broadcasting station for TV and radio and have been refused permission — but if they win the case, Minoo Masani, former Member of Parliament and P.C. Chatterjee, former Director General, All India Radio, might well be able to gift to parts of Gujarat and Maharashtra, an alternative to the failing monopoly of Doordarshan and All India Radio.

On September 7, this year, Masani and Chatterjee filed a writ petition in the Bombay High Court challenging the Government's monopoly over broadcasting. The Government rejected an application they had made to set up an autonomous station for radio and TV with medium power transmitters in western India. They wished to promote a public limited company with a board of directors of "high credibility and prestige" — not stooges of the Government nor influenced by private companies, says Masani, but, not surprisingly, were refused permission on grounds of "policy".

There is no law on the subject, points out Masani, "so they pleaded policy". The writ petition challenges this "policy" of the government to maintain total control over broadcasting. "If they make a new law regarding the monopoly of broadcasting, we will try to strike down the law," says Masani cheerfully grinning in court.

Before making an application for a licence to set up a broadcasting station, Masani and Chatterjee commissioned a study of television's English news, to ensure that TV is in actuality as biased as they, and the rest of the country, think it is. The study, done by a researcher, Padmanabha Menon, for the Indian Commission for Cultural Freedom and Indian Liberal Group, is an interesting document. It confirms the suspicion of viewers that Doordarshan not only gives undue exposure to the ruling party and distorts news, but also suppresses it. Menon monitored the English News during an important period — 90 days between April and August 1986 — and compared it with the news coverage of mainly the *Times of India* and, on some days, of the *Indian Express* and *Sunday Observer*.



Minoo Masani: independent news

Her observations are not surprising, but they are startling: A summary of the news telecast on selected days proves that there is an "excessive projection of ministers." On April 24, for instance, the papers did report on the front page were, among other things, a bandh in Darjeeling for the second day running, an invitation from Ramakrishna Hegde to S.M. Joshi and Sharad Pawar to settle the Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute and factional fighting in the office of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee.

On May 27, four out of six items focusing on ministers that the TV reported, were not reported by the press. They included events like the Vice President inaugurating a photography exhibition and releasing a book to mark Jawaharlal Nehru's death anniversary, and the PM contributing to the Jawaharlal Nehru Trust and inaugurating a seminar on Jawaharlal Nehru.

The papers also reported that Pranab Mukherjee had formed a "front group" — an event that was ignored by Doordarshan. On this day, May 27, the items the papers did report on the front page were, among other things, a bandh in Darjeeling for the second day running, an invitation from Ramakrishna Hegde to S.M. Joshi and Sharad Pawar to settle the Maharashtra-Karnataka border dispute and factional fighting in the office of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee.

Doordarshan suppresses and censors news that is "inconvenient" to the ruling party, the study says. On May 17, papers reported on the Karnataka-Maharashtra border conflict and Kamalapati Tripathi's plea on behalf of Pranab Mukherjee, said that the police massacre of Harijans at Arwal was pre-planned and that the danger signals preceding the Talcher fire were ignored. None of these was mentioned on DD's news.

On July 15, the news telecast included items on the Tamil United Liberation Front's discussions with President Jayawardene of Sri Lanka, the introduction of new machines at the Reserve Bank of India to clear cheques quickly, a tree plantation drive and the Avro-roboto Abram's handicraft centre. But the news that made headlines in every page — that Chinese troops had intruded on Indian territory — was ignored by Doordarshan.

When the TV news reported, on July 17, that the Prime Minister had expressed solidarity with the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, it thought fit to mention that 40 years had passed since India banned trade with South Africa. The telecast did not mention, however, that India's diamond trade with South Africa continues despite the ban — a sensational item of news reported by the *Sunday Observer*.

The study refers to other "inconvenient" news items that Doordarshan totally ignored — Charles Sobhraj's escape from jail and communal clashes in Ahmedabad — and mentions others that were reported on only when it became convenient to do so, like the Gorkhaland issue (once it became a political weapon for the ruling party).

Besides blacking out news, Doordarshan lies blatantly, says the study, or presents facts in a manner that promotes the idea that god's in his heaven and all's right with India. Its coverage of the Delhi bandh called by opposition parties to protest against the hike in certain essential commodities, was an example of its lies, as a newspaper edit pointed out: DD said that the bandh had "failed to evoke any response", while, in reality, it had been a considerable success. Another bandh on July 28 was reported, but newspapers largely ignored it, but newspapers the next day reported that 35 buses had been damaged and a Deputy Commissioner of Police and two others had been stabbed.

Some of DD's "exercises in newscraft" are, the study says, several items about the success of the 20-point programme, share-market booms, all-time high in vestments, record outputs of various crops, buffer stocks, increases in exports and increases in wages.

"Criticism of the government is not an attack on it" and is permitted by AIR's Code, which also applies to Doordarshan, the study points out, but Doordarshan invariably promotes the government by presenting only one point of view. When Masani and Chatterjee made their application to the Minister for Information and Broadcasting they mentioned that their purpose was to supplement AIR and Doordarshan's work "in a manner that would be objective, and not committed, as the government agencies are, to the official point of view, both in regard to news and features." The study is their proof, if any was required, to make their case stronger.

However, what is to come of all this? "We will probably win in the High Court, but it might be rejected by the Supreme Court," concedes Masani. But dreams are not banished by the dreamer's knowledge of their unreality, and Masani continues to muse over what could be.

"In Australia they've got a government broadcasting network and a private one — they compete freely," says Masani. That is what he has in mind for India. Not more control over an additional channel that some state governments have been asking for, but altogether independent stations.

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A natural balance

DOCUMENT. Our Commission Future, produced by the World Commission on Environment and Development, a United Nations agency established in 1983, raises several urgent questions about the natural resources situation on our planet. The Commission is currently chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Norwegian Premier, who was in India sometime ago to discuss the recommendations.

The World Commission report is an attempt to focus attention on the prime need to progress "from one earth home world", for if the earth continues to be politically divided into sectors which are ecologically not viable, then we will continue to have the kind of disasters which have become increasingly common in our world — droughts, floods, famine, advancing deserts, increasing loss of species, chemical pollution, and finally because of economic distortion and tension, prospects of atomic war.

In 1980 several U.N. agencies in a splendid joint effort produced The World Commission Strategy (WCS), which was launched by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in March 1980. The central message of the WCS was: use resources sustainably, preserve ecosystems, save genetic material. Essentially, *Our Common Future*, highlights principles and strategies which are not different (indeed they cannot be different) from the former document, but it is more readable and the interconnection between ecology and economics is so lucidly explained that scientists may in fact find the WCS more interesting than the WCS has done. In her speech, when the WCS launch, Mrs. Gandhi said: "Nature is beautiful, balanced. Each little thing has its own place, its duty and special utility. Any disturbance creates a chain reaction which may not be visible for some time. Taking a long-term view of life has changed global and national problems. The fragmentary view by politicians continues, and that is why the World Commission on Environment and Development has set into action."

The preservation of the life support systems of our planet is the responsibility of the rich and poor alike. Much has been said about the over-exploitation of natural resources, a small section of the affluent West, which of course is true. But, in India, we know how poor people pollute. Those who are poor and hungry will often destroy the immediate environment in order to survive. They will cut down forests, their livelihood will be gone, grass lands will be overgrazed, marginal lands, and in growing numbers



Withered trees: a global strategy is needed

they will crowd into congested cities. The cumulative effect of these changes is so far-reaching as to make poverty itself a major global scourge. The Indian countryside is a testimony to the correctness of this statement.

How do we get out of this situation? Surely not by exhortations to keep the countryside green. This global scourge can only be ended by a simultaneous effort at both national and international levels. The agricultural needs for higher prices for his goods if he is to get out of the mire of poverty; and national government will only be able to provide higher prices if the industrialized West, with its economic power, ceases to impose uneconomic prices on the exports of primary products from the developing world. There is also a second requirement: If commercial crops are given too much importance, the land and food crops are reduced, the vigour of the market can sometimes cause havoc which takes years to set right.

A rather striking example is provided by the situation in the Sahel region of Africa. In 1961, 62, the countries here produced 22.7 million tons of cotton fibre. Induced by the blandishments of international traders, the area under cotton was greatly increased so that the output rose to as much as 154 million in 1984, but while in the early 60's, food imports were mere 200,000 tons, in 1984 the imports of food amounted to a record of 1.77 million tons (an increase of over seven times). To compound the tragedy cotton prices fell steadily in real terms. "These figures do not suggest that Sahelian nations should plough up all cotton to plant sorghum and millet. But the fact that farmers who can grow cotton cannot grow enough food

duce 'social goods' such as improved air quality or increased product life, or that resolve problems normally outside the calculus of individual enterprises such as the external costs of pollution or waste disposal." Such a development will take place only when a strong public opinion insists on high environmental standards, and in this regard the Commission's report will undoubtedly play a major catalytic role.

A statement which will warm the hearts of all environmentalists in India is contained on page 39. It reads: "In the past, responsibility for environmental matters has been placed in environmental ministries and institutions that often have had little or no control over destruction caused by agricultural, industrial, urban development, forestry, and transportation policies and practices. Society has failed to give the responsibility for preventing environmental damage to the sectoral ministries and agencies whose policies cause it." This anomaly was clearly recognised by the Committee for Recommending Legislative Measures and Administrative Machinery for Ensuring Environmental Protection set up by the Government of India. The report was presented in September 1980, and one of its recommendations was to create posts of Environmental Advisers in all Ministries so that the impact of their actions on natural resources could be assessed and appropriately monitored. Unfortunately, this recommendation is yet to be implemented.

We have, in recent years, been educated about the medicinal and food values of the genetic material extant in our world, and the Commission's report naturally speaks about the supreme importance of preserving the genes. Just consider what may be lost, and forever, by our careless action. A primitive relative of maize was discovered in Mexico by chance in only a four hectare plot under threat of being exploited. "This wild species is a perennial; all other forms of maize are annuals. Its cross-breeding with commercial varieties of maize opens up the prospect that farmers could be spared the annual expense of ploughing and sowing, since the plant would grow again yearly in its own secret." I think we must agree that conservation is good business.

Our Common Future by the World Commission on Environment and Development. Published by Oxford University Press.

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PROFILE: Win Chadha

Secretive agent

BIG, bluff and hearty, a six-foot bulk of a man with a robust Punjabi taste for the good life complete with farmhouse and Mercedes to match, a self-proclaimed "bit player" in a scandal-shrouded arms-for-kick-backs deal, yet highly visible in each part of its sordid tale, he is all this and more. Commission agent or suave consultant? Non-resident businessman or a latter day Scarlet Pimpernel holding the sword of Damocles over a party and government enriched through bribes? This is Win Chadha, man of mystery.

From the untraceable confines of a plush US west coast residence, Wasekar Nath Chadha, a Partition refugee, scion of a prosperous sugar mill owner in Uttar Pradesh and the key man in the Rs 1,700 crore Bofors deal, contemplates a haven in Central America and fights a case in a New Delhi court.

He has forwarded medical certificates attested by doctors from the prestigious Hudson Medical Centre in New York. It pleads cardiac complications and diabetes and argues against physical appearance before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Bharat Bhushan. But Additional Solicitor General C. Ramaswamy is not prepared to accept it. Let doctors appointed by the Indian Embassy examine him. Only a medical certificate issued by them would be genuine, he says.

But how genuine are the Government of India's intentions? Extradition bill, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi exhorts the Reagan administration. His passport has been impounded, about ministers and officials from the corridors of North Block. No one, says the US Government, holds a valid green card and entered the country well before the Indian passport was impounded. File a criminal case against him, they advise Mercedes cars.

Impasse, for the government: the Enforcement Directorate claims it only has suspicions, and suspicions are insufficient grounds for filing a case.

Very convenient for Win Chadha, most convenient for the Indian Government. For he could blow the whistle on a lot of things: for starters how he got his power of attorney authenticated by the Indian consulate in New York when the hunt was on for him in India. Also, he could give the lie to the Government's assertion that his residence was raided: "They came and asked a few polite questions. They did not interrogate me nor raid my house," Win had told a senior journalist. His connections stood him in good stead.

These connections are corroborated by other defence agents and businessmen. His brother-in-law is in Air Force intelligence and another relative in the Defence Ministry's finance division. "He was sought after for his political links," says a consultant for an aircraft company. Congress (I) MP Kamal Nath describes him as flamboyant and a pusher who was very active in setting up meetings between Defence Ministry officials and Bofors executives, usually outside South Block since it was off-limits to agents. Dinner parties at the Bopchara, the Maurya Hotel's popular restaurant where a non-vegetarian meal for one person excluding drinks cost at least Rs 110, became frequent after Chadha became Bofors' agent in 1979. At a conservative estimate he must have spent about Rs 40 lakh on entertaining politicians and officials.

And he knew his worth, said a senior journalist who had spent a few hours in conversation with him at his Vasant Vihar residence. "The Chinese silk screen, the cut glass collection must have cost a fortune not to mention the four Mercedes cars."



"Bullshit," he recalls Chadha retorting. "Only one is mine." Then who owns the others? "My wife, my son..." What about his Vasant Vihar house, bang opposite DCM's Vimal Bharti Ram? "This is a rented house. If I had a house I would be living in a rented house." But he is silent about the farmhouse in Rajasthan, about 10 km from Vasant Vihar. A man not addicted to the whole truth.

He is equally mysterious about his origins. He claims to be a self-made man, technically qualified from Columbia, with a degree in sugar technology. "He travelled for a PhD in Columbia but does not say in what discipline," when, or whether he ever, a Swedish firm manufac-

turing spare parts for fighter aircraft. In 1978, Bofors acquired control of the company and it was renamed Bofors Aeronautics. Chadha was retained as agent and so impressed the new management with his "gun-ho" style, that in course of time he displaced Commander M.A.R. Rao, a retired naval armaments specialist, as the principal Bofors representative in the country.

Chadha was very proud of his profession, often contemptuous of others. "Go find a more honourable profession," was what he told some reporters when the Bofors muck began flying. But the impression holds that he tended to dress up information either to suit his convenience or because he was badly rattled by the furore over Bofors.

There is no doubt that his decision to leave India when the scandal broke in March was a wise one. And insightful businessman that he is, he had secured green cards for himself, his wife, son and in-laws 15 years ago. The cards had remained valid by the simple expedient of spending a month or two in the US every year. He is most unlikely to do anything which would render his deportation to India possible. Under US law, he is thus free to own property, run assets and businesses and transfer accounts. He can even transfer his alleged Swiss bank account to the USA.

So did he take off with the Rs 200 crore paid as commissions by Bofors? No two ways about it, say some. He took only a part of it, say others. A smoke-screen for the Bachchan brothers, for the Prime Minister and sundry ruling party politicians, allege still others. And always the damning facts: a contract with Bofors valid till December 1990, 100,000 Swedish Kroner as remuneration, 120-250 million Kroner as "winding up costs". Then the bland assertion of Lars-Erik Thunholm, president of Nobel Industries that "the recipients of the money have not approved that we break secrecy". But the secrecy can be broken if the Indian Government wants it to be. The pending gun deal can be used as a lever to get at the truth. But vaccination and double-speak is the order of the day.

Chadha could be a real fly in the ointment. Later he was a salesman for Borg Warner (USA) about the farmhouse in Rajasthan, selling special plastics for naval guns in south-east Asia. And then came Anantnag General Corporation in 1970. He brags that it had not been for him, western arms technology would never have come to India because of western fears that it would end up in the USSR.

Chadha began his life as a defence agent with Alpha Aero-nautics, a Swedish firm manufac-

For your eyes only

HOW safe are the cosmetics used to beautify one of the most important, but delicate organs of sense—the eye?

Ever since a team of British researchers established a link between *surma*, a traditional eye cosmetic, and severe cases of lead poisoning suffered by some Asian children in London, the safety of eye cosmetics has been a subject of controversy. While manufacturers speak of the therapeutic value of some of these traditional eyeliners, ophthalmologists strictly prohibit anyone—especially children—from using them. Consumer organisations, on the other hand, have been demanding strict control over their quality.

But despite a legislation like the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, the government has done precious little to regulate and monitor stringently the quality of these cosmetics sold in the market. Since these products come under the purview of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, each manufacturer has to have the relevant licence from the Drug Control Authority. But roadside vendors display a wide range of these cosmetics manufactured by unlicensed firms.

What are these 'Eye-beautifiers' made of? Earlier, *surma* was made out of antimony ore, but now it is derived from lead sulphide. *Kajal*, another eye cosmetic being used for centuries in the country, is nothing but carbon black. Modern-day eyeliners, are said to contain iron oxide. Anydrous lanolin, bees wax, are said to constitute some of the ingredients of eye shadow, which will also contain permitted colours.

A good quality "eyeliner" or *kajal*, according to experts in the field, is made by burning pure vegetable oil and collecting carbon black in sterilized containers. Probably a small quantity of ghee or butter is added for lubrication. But since carbon black can also be obtained by burning rubber or any other petroleum product it is very easy for a manufacturer to use cheaper, unsafe raw materials. Even though the end product, in such cases, can be toxic, it is unfortunately almost impossible to analyse the *kajal* to determine the raw materials used, say experts. Conversely, while *kajal*, made hygienically at home is "relatively safe", it is very difficult to pass judgement on the quality of those sold in the market. They say. Even the Bureau of Indian Standards has not formulated any specifications for *kajal*, because of certain problems inherent in analysing the samples.

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences, which has conducted extensive studies on the percentage of lead present in several cosmetics, some years ago tested ten samples of *kajal* obtained from the market. Many of the samples did contain lead, but since the quantity was less than two micrograms of lead per 50 mgms weight of the samples, it was said to be insignificant.

As far as *surma* is concerned, both ophthalmologists and pharmacologists are united in their opinion that it should be banned. The Bombay-based Consumer Guidance Society of India, which tested eight brands of *surma* during 1979, found that except for one, all other brands contained 28.7 to 85.7 per cent of lead. The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP), which tested three brands of *surma* sold in Malaysia, also found high levels of lead in the products. Following the CAP tests, the Malaysian health ministry conducted its own tests on one of the products and later banned the particular brand as it contained lead far in excess of the permissible limit. The Malaysian Government allows a maximum of 30 parts per million of lead in cosmetics.

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences also found in the 28 samples tested by it, varying amounts of lead. In one of the samples tested by it recently, the percentage was as high as 64.5 per cent. Even though a study conducted at the Institute on the co-relation between *surma* and lead poisoning did not establish a clear link between the two in children or in adults, rats fed with lead sulphide continuously for three months, showed an increase in the level of lead in their blood by three and a half times.

Pharmacologists believe the lead content in *surma* to be hazardous, as either during application or while rubbing the eyes, lead may get deposited on the finger and thus get into the mouth along with food. High levels of lead in the blood can adversely affect the nervous system and lead to impairment of memory. In children, it can retard intellectual development. Extreme cases of lead poisoning can lead to convulsions, coma and sometimes even death.

Experts in the field say that they have not been able to determine the safe level of lead in *surma* and this has come in the way of enforcing any standards for the product. Besides, quality for the product, the government also has to make it mandatory for all manufacturers of cosmetics to declare the contents as well as the expiry date on every product.

CHECK OUT

Pushpa Girimaji

JAPAN Month, which starts on October 13, 1987, will enable audiences in Delhi, Madras, Calcutta and Bombay to feast their eyes and savour the art and culture of Japan.

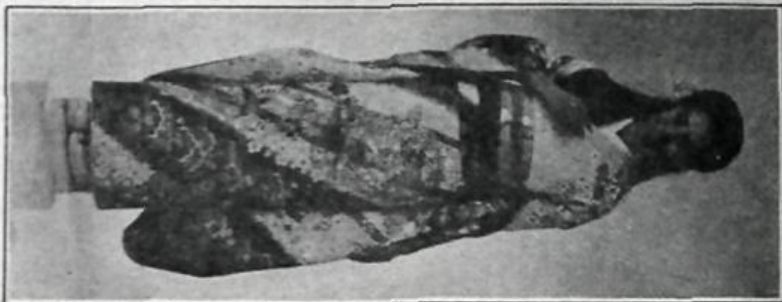
The different events attempt to present a wide-angled view of Japan, blending the traditional and the modern, the classical and the popular through the ages. For example, the Noh Theatre of the Kanzei school will present the ancient dance drama of Japan, while Shochiku Kageki-Dan Revue will perform the more popular and folk aspect of Japanese dance — with a glittering gala of 30 girls.

The Tea Ceremony of the Urasenke School will celebrate what for us is a national pastime but for the Japanese a ritual and a work of art. The Kimono show will bring to life another of the symbols we associate with Japan. The Photo Panel, the Arts and Crafts Exhibition, as also the Film Festival will attempt to convey the reality of modern Japan.

The Tea Ceremony symbolises the essence of Japanese culture. The ceremony was developed under the influence of Zen Buddhism, the aim of which is to purify one's soul by becoming one with nature, and the House of Urusenke which will perform the ceremony here is inextricably linked with Tea, as our music is with different 'Gharanas' in India.

At the Tea Ceremony, known as 'Chanoyu' in Japanese, green powdered tea called 'matcha' is drunk. The strict canons of Chanoyu etiquette are minutely observed to achieve "the aestheticism of austere simplicity and refined poverty", with an economy of movement achieved by only experienced masters.

The tea brought back to Japan by Zen monks returning from study in China was used as a mild stimulant to aid their study, and



The traditional Kimono (left) and a spectacular scene from Noh Theatre (top)



Fan dance by the Shochiku Revue



The Rising Sun in India

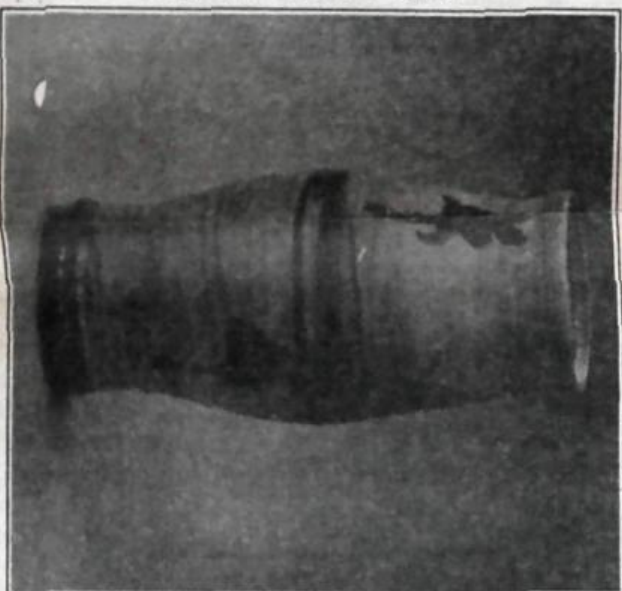
'Japan Month' which begins next week provides us a rare opportunity to discover the intricacies of Noh theatre and tea ceremonies, says LORRAINE NIVOGI

also as a medicinal herb. Today in Japan when people are invited to drink tea they anticipate sitting in a small room and enjoying each other's company in seclusion from the everyday world. The ceremony involves the appreciation of

the room in which it is held, the utensils used in serving the tea and the decor of the setting, such as a hanging scroll or a 'Chabana' (flower arrangement). The development of Japanese architecture, landscape, garden- ing, ceramics and the floral arts owes a great deal to the Tea Ceremony.

The national costume of the Japanese, the Kimono, dates back to A.D. 700. Typical Kimono motifs depict the beauty of the natural surroundings on fine dyed silk. Once worn daily, the Kimono today is only for formal wear and for traditional ceremonies.

Noh, Japan's classical theatre art, was created in the 14th century by a father and son team with a repertoire of 240 plays. After its establishment it was encouraged as a salon art of the aristocratic society. Its influence has permeated not only Kabuki and Bunraku but contemporary theatre as well. The ancient drama, with gravity and deliberation dwells on life and death, joy and anger, happiness and sorrow, the purpose being not just to divert but to move profoundly.



Equilibrant ceramic vase

hypnotically eloquent shaping of the chorus and the single movement of the actors, make it an awe-inspiring spectacle. The original Noh stage was built for the aristocratic audience and to recreate a sense of effect the stage floor is raised

unchanging pine trees, whatever the actual scene may represent. Of all theatres Noh perhaps makes the greatest demands on its audience by its complete disavowal of the theatrical device of effect the stage floor is raised

richest of robes and spout poetry. And the audience accepts the fact that the role of a beautiful girl is played by tottering old man with a quivering voice and heavy jowls visible around his mask.

At the back of the stage are seated four instrumentalists who play a staccato rhythm. The traditional Noh drama has a characteristic tempo called 'Jo Ha Kyu'. Jo is the introductory section and has a smooth and uncomplicated rhythm. 'Ha', the main theme of the play, is much slower, while 'Kyu' releases the tension of the play in quick and vivid action.

An integral part of the Noh drama is 'Kiyogen' which offers a light interlude between two Noh plays. It has its own distinct form of satire or mime or farce. The dialogue is more comprehensible, being based on daily parlance, and brings into the relief the profundity of the Noh experience.

The rigorous rehearsals that the Noh player is put through is compared with the process that culminates in the annual blossoming of a flower.

The first foreign music and dance brought to Japan was from the three ancient kingdoms of the Korean peninsula. Introduced between the fifth and the seventh centuries, the music was used to accompany Buddhist rituals. Later Chinese influences came into Japanese music, and dance from the continent was brought to Japan through official government

born 'Gagaku' between the 8th and 12th centuries.

At present 'Gagaku' is performed on rather rare occasions by the Music Department of the Imperial Household although it is also performed in a few shrines and temples. The musicians are mostly direct descendants of the ancient masters, the art being passed down the generations.

The word 'Gagaku' literally means elegant music. When the music is accompanied by dance, it is referred to as 'Bugaku' and when the music alone is performed it is known as 'Kangen' which literally means "wind and string" and actually signifies an orchestra of wood wind and percussion instruments.

The 'Bugaku' dance is unique in that the dramatic elements are of far less importance than in pure dance forms. 'Bugaku' strongly emphasizes symmetry not only in the frequent use of paired dancers but even in the basic movement patterns of the solo dancers.

It is divided into two styles — 'Samai' or the Left dance, has strains of dance from China, India and Indo-China as well as slow and gentle dances of Japan. The dancers wear robes of reddish colours. The second is 'Utsu' or Right dance, composed on the

The Japanese Folk Arts and Crafts Exhibition, Mingei will have some 200 items of ceramics, textiles, woven and printed designs, woodcut prints by Shiko Mima Rara and the work of master Potter Shoji Hamada.

The word 'Mingei' means popular crafts, and its chief characteristics are utility, anonymity, mass production, low cost, local flavour, the division of labour, and trust in others. The final object of art was thus a product of environment and tradition rather than of individual talent.

These ideals represent a severe criticism of the contemporary view of art as individual expression.

These, then, are some of the glimmers of Japanese art and culture, that 'Japan Month' will provide. While the Photography Exhibition more contemporary aspects, this mini-festival would seem to be a deliberate attempt to remind another society caught between tradition and modernity that Japan's traditional art and culture is alive and well, and cherished all the more in an individualised society.

Japan Month, which has been organised by the Japan Foundation, the Japanese Government and the Festival of India, will take place in Bombay, Delhi, Madras and Calcutta.

After Rukmini Devi ...

Rukmini Devi built Kalakshetra into a uniquely rich and innovative institution. But now, after her death, is it beginning to sink into self satisfied inertia? asks S. LALITHA.



dancer. Neck movements became delicate, elbows became angular and straight. The eyes and body followed the movements of the hands. Unlike the Vazirwadi style that is fluid, she cultivated very clean, staccato lines. And the Kancheepuram style, with its insistence on complicated rhythms is not to be found in the Kalakshetra style. Exaggerated *abhinaya* was modulated as the dancers did not have to open their mouths and pretend to sing.

In a short time day scholars and boudiers streamed into classrooms. The Central Government sanctioned funds and scholarships. Donations poured in from philanthropists and funds were raised by staging dance dramas.

Kalakshetra started attracting the best talents like Tiger Varadacharya, the great composer and Papanasam Sivan. Kathakali entered the portals of Kalakshetra under the master experts, Ambu and Chandu Panikkar. Be it the smallest of details like drawing a *kolam* with rice flour on the ground or making palm leaf *forams*, Rukmini Devi raised it to a fine art. Today Kalakshetra has 240 pupils on its rolls. Not all of them learn dancing. Some work for the Sangita Shromani degree in a post graduate course affiliated to the University of Madras and a few learn painting (Tanjore school) and other fine arts.

In the best traditions of the *gurukula* system the ratio of teacher to student is 1:4. The flute, mridangam, violin and veena are taught and the integrated course in Bharatanatyam includes the theory of music, yoga, Sanskrit and English. The music diploma is awarded at the end of five years while that in painting and dance after four years.

The Publications Division of Kalakshetra has done research on valuable manuscripts and edited as well as published a few. Its photographic section is equally famous.

KALAKSHETRA, or the abode for the arts is a quiet place today, since the death of its founder and mentor Rukmini Devi Arundhati last year. At a time when Bharatanatyam was a prerogative of the *devadasis* the setting up of such an institution was a major break from tradition — all the more so since its chief proponent was a Brahmin lady!

Rukmini Devi later spoke of the impact the first Bharatanatyam performance she saw had on her! "I was ushered into a new world of rhythmic beauty and

meaning and the discovery of such a beautiful and profound art restricted to a few specialists aroused in me a desire to do all that one individual could to spread an appreciation and to find young people who would dedicate themselves along with me to its revival as a factor in the cultural renaissance of India."

Under the branches of a big tree in Besant Gardens on the shores of the sea the first pupil danced. Thatched huts came up in the groves of Adyar. And these were the sylvan classrooms where Bharatanatyam was to be taught.

The curriculum included spiritual teaching and acquaintance with other art forms. Bharatanatyam had at this juncture receded into the tawdry halfheartedness of a decadence. Just like Chola sculpture that had in later times given way to exaggerated line and curve, Bharatanatyam had arrogated to itself inflated postures, superfluous and unclassical. Rukmini Devi purged the art form of this, giving rise to the distinctive Kalakshetra school of dance.

Eschewing the highly eroticised *stringara rasa* that had come to dominate most performances, the devotional aspect of dance was stressed instead. She gave dignity to the orchestra that earlier had to be mobile, moving along with the

The style itself was said to be a flat, clean style, rather clinical and correct. Leela agrees. "It was a clean, uncharacterised style but every style becomes individual only by your own inputs and mental experiences. A parent can only give certain basics."

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microfilm service used by newspapers and libraries in the country. The Dr Swaminathan Aiyer library contains rich material for research in Tamil with a collection of more than 1000 manuscripts. In an attempt to highlight the unity of all artistic endeavour Kalakshetra has revived traditional handweaving. Kalakshetra sarees have gained a reputation for themselves and this has provided employment to many weavers. A *Kalamkari* unit is also doing excellent work. The Kalakshetra endeavour impresses because it so effortlessly bridges the gap be-

tween the utilitarian and the aesthetic. The Kuttambalam in the Kalakshetra premises is an Indian theatre with a temple atmosphere where the performer feels involved and inspired.

According to celebrated dancer Leela Samson, herself a distinguished alumna of Kalakshetra, the institution is not interested in making soloists. Despite that, it is creating soloists. She herself snapped the umbilical cord (though she takes part in the institution's ballets unflinchingly) because she felt limited. The veteran diva, Yamini Krishnamurti, also fanned out from Kalakshetra to newer guru, and she says this is not just desirable but necessary for development of the dancer as well as the dance form. And for a person who wanted to perform, Kalakshetra was no place to be in because the best a good student could hope for was a teaching job in Kalakshetra itself.

Yamini and Leela both feel Kalakshetra was a great place to be in when one was learning the basics. "My aspiration started there and the technique has certainly given me strength. I have the greatest regard for Kalakshetra and specially for Rukmini Devi. In fact after teaching girls in Delhi I tell them I have nothing more to offer and ask them to go to other people. I have sent many girls to Kalakshetra itself," states Yamini.



Many students like the Dharmapalan have set up their own teaching academies. But today, like many great

New Kalakshetra has successfully alienated itself from not just the national stream but the cultural scene in Madras itself. Local dancers throw up their hands or shrug their shoulders when asked about Kalakshetra. You can't communicate with them in their refrain. We are the best. "We are Kalakshetra" is their refrain.

The younger people have to sit themselves up to breathe new life into the institution. They don't put up enough performances except for the dance dramas. In the performing arts performing is the action, and it would be a pity if a unique institution like Kalakshetra were to decline because of self satisfied inertia.

Rukmini Devi Arundhati: in the early days at Kalakshetra

A class in progress: thatched roof, rhythmic abhinaya

Kalakshetra auditorium: sylvan surroundings

D. SAMPATHKUMAR