Session III

A CITY OF CREATIVITY AND FRUSTRATION
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To the Bengali Bhadralok citizen of Calcutta, this city is considered to be a pace setter for the intelligentsia of the nation. They are aware of a galaxy of intellectuals in the nineteenth century who creatively responded to the stimulus and challenge of the west. Although the early spirit of 'nationalism' has not at all been replenished by a new spirit of nation building in present day Calcutta, the local Bhadralok citizen continue to hold on to the tradition that they are expected to be deeply involved in the world of intellect and the creative arts. In this collection of six essays practising scientists, painters, movie-makers, drama-critics, writers, dancers and music-critics discuss the problems of their various creative fields in the social and cultural milieu of Calcutta. Several writers discuss about the apathetic upper strata and the creative resilience of a section of the middle class. In the field of drama the creative genius of the Bengali middle class intelligentsia has been particularly effective in bringing into relief the social and personal problems faced by the people of Calcutta.
GROWING COMMUNITY OF SCIENTISTS IN CALCUTTA

Purnima Sinha

1. THE DOMAIN OF DISCUSSION

The number of people engaged in the field of scientific creativity or research in Calcutta is perhaps much larger than that in the various arts. The term ‘scientist’ covers an unmanageably wide range. In this paper I shall limit my discussion to the community of research workers in physics and chemistry distributed in the three categories of institutions in Calcutta namely, universities, autonomous institutes and directly government controlled laboratories. An attempt will be made to locate the sources of incentives and constraints in the sociocultural and organizational atmosphere of Calcutta within which the scientists have to operate. Many of the problems encountered by scientists of Calcutta are common to India in general. Some specific situations may be characteristic only of Calcutta.

2. METHOD OF STUDY

It should be mentioned at the outset that this paper is not based on a systematic investigation of the different aspects of all the major scientific institutions in Calcutta. I have mainly depended on informations gathered as a participant observer working in several institutions in Calcutta belonging to the three categories mentioned above. My personal observations have been supplemented by data gathered on the basis of interviewing a few scientists in depth. A historical perspective on the implantation of western science and its growth in Calcutta will be brought in only very briefly.

3. DISTINCTION BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC AND ARTISTIC CREATIVITY

It is necessary that we spell out the specific nature and requirements of the creative endeavour of science as distinguished from the creative arts to be discussed in this session. In the creative arts,
the very nature of expression follows distinctly individual courses
and it is possible for an artist to carry on his work almost all by him-
self or on the basis of interactions with a small localized group. Of
course, the artists too, require a critical audience for inspiration, and
communication with the international community of artists provide
a source of new ideas.

In the case of science, however, co-operation and mutual exchange
of data between people working in the same or related fields, is an
absolute necessity, at every step. Because, the pursuit of science
aims at unravelling the invariant absolute properties of nature, where
there is no scope for individual taste or convenience to influence the
results. The unique gaps in knowledge have to be filled in with
experimental data and logical interpretation, which has to be un-
controvertially acceptable by the total international community of
scientists working in the field. Any gap in communication causes
wasteful duplication and also hinders the growth of a complete theory
covering all the required informations.

The knowledge about natural phenomena obtained by science,
leads to attainment of power to manipulate nature for material
benefit, and thus the applied aspect of scientific research is inherently
connected with material prosperity. Unlike the artists, the scientific
community in an industrially underdeveloped country like India, have
to operate under the pressure of expectation from the society that their
research should lead to elimination of poverty and material distress
by increasing production. The scientists have to face the situation
of being labelled as belonging to an "underdeveloped" nation much
more directly than the artists because of the prevailing convention
of measuring the progress of a country on the basis of the state of
development of science and technology. The excellence of a scientific
research is easier to assess in objective terms than that of artistic work.
Unlike many of the arts which have vigorous indigenous base, in
the field of scientific research the Indian scientists are aware that
they are dealing with an entirely borrowed system of learning whose
centre of excellence lies in the West.

In order to understand the state of scientific research in Calcutta,
we have to find out whether the scientists work in an atmosphere
where they can and do effectively co-operate among themselves in the pursuit of advancement of knowledge and manipulation of natural resources for the well being of the country. Apart from objective assessment of their work, it is also useful to find out how the scientists in Calcutta feel about their own performance and about their institutional environment.

5. A BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF THE BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENCE IN CALCUTTA

Before describing the contemporary situation of scientific endeavour in Calcutta, it may be useful to review some relevant aspects of the nature of diffusion and development of scientific research in India during pro- and post-independence periods.

5.1 Early beginning

Calcutta being the headquarter of British administration, the people of this city were exposed to modern scientific learning earlier than any other place of India. Founding of Asiatic Society in 1784 in Calcutta marked the beginning of a centre of occidental learning. This was followed by foundation of Trigonometrical Survey in 1802 and Geological Survey in 1856, where British scientists in Governmental Service worked to serve the interest of Imperial administration and from which Indians were almost excluded as a matter of policy.

But even under such limiting condition, gradually an awareness about the utility of scientific and technological education was generated among some distinguished citizens of Calcutta. Some individual British scholars were also interested in spreading western education, including science, to the Indian people. The Hindu College was established in 1817 by the efforts of a few leading, influential and liberal Hindus of Calcutta. In 1855 it was taken over by the Government and renamed Presidency College where, in course of time, some arrangements were made for the teaching of science at the 'undergraduate' level under 'B' course. J. C. Bose and P. C. Ray both had their initial exposure to modern science in Presidency College. Later on these two pioneer Indian scientists received advanced training in scientific research in U.K. after which they joined Presidency
College as professors in physics and chemistry. Both of them carried on research in their respective fields in Presidency College laboratory and received international recognition for their contribution to science. Later on P. C. Ray joined Calcutta University and built up a nucleus of devoted research scholars in chemistry and J. C. Bose set up the Bose Institute.

5.2 Indian Association for the Cultivation of Sciences

While only a limited scope for scientific research was available under Government sponsorship in Presidency College, a Bengali doctor Mahendra Lal Sircar took the initiative in 1876 to set up an organization named Indian Association for the Cultivation of Sciences (IACS) completely independent of Government control. In 1907 C. V. Raman started working on various branches of physics in the modest laboratory of the I.A.C.S. during his spare time as an officer in the Finance Department of the Government of India. Later on, a number of devoted young scholars gathered around Raman, who was later on persuaded by Asutosh Mukherjee to join the newly founded Science College of Calcutta University as the first Palit Professor of Physics. The discovery of Raman Effect and the award of Nobel prize in 1930 created a level of confidence and enthusiasm among the researchers in Calcutta.

5.3 University College of Science

Post graduate teaching in science with facilities for research in laboratories became possible mainly with the efforts of Asutosh Mukherjee with liberal contributions from Tarak Nath Palit, Rashbehari Ghosh and Maharani of Khaira. One of the conditions of Palit’s endowment was that all the teachers appointed with the above fund should be of Indian origin. Asutosh Mukherjee persuaded the veteran chemist P. C. Ray to head the Chemistry Department and offered Palit Professorship of physics to C. V. Raman. It is on record that Asutosh, the chief architect of scientific education and research in Calcutta, searched out talents from all over India in order to build up a first rate tradition of teaching and research in all the science subjects. Teaching in physics was started in 1916 with a
few young scholars who had just obtained their M.Sc. degree in physics and applied mathematics from Presidency College. S. N. Bose and M. N. Saha were among these young teachers. In 1918 C. V. Raman joined as Palit Professor and later on D. M. Bose as Ghosh Professor of physics.

P. C. Ray and Raman set the pace for scientific research in Calcutta. The research scholars were expected to lead a life of austere devotion in the laboratories P C. Ray laid the additional emphasis that science should be utilized in building up national industries as he himself had done by founding the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works.

In 1914 Sir Asutosh took the initiative to organize the Indian Science Congress Association whose office and decisive control remained with the Calcutta scientists for several decades. The scientists of Calcutta also took the main initiative in establishing the National Institute of Sciences of India. The decisive eminence of Calcutta in the Indian scene of science continued upto 1940 although, between 1920 and 1930 a number of eminent Physicists and chemists of Calcutta like S. N Bose, M. N. Saha and Gnan Ghosh moved into other Indian universities obtaining better positions. In 1934 Raman went to Bangalore as Director of the Indian Institute of Science, leaving the scientific scene in Calcutta to be dominated almost exclusively by Bengali speaking scientists. It appears that the dispersal of a number of eminent scientists from Calcutta took place at a time before the Calcutta base could gain sufficient momentum.

5.4 The recent phase of development

During the second world war the British Government felt that it was no longer safe to limit British industrial enterprises to U.K. and that scientific researches in the colonies, particularly in India, should be directed towards strategic industrial development. In 1943, at the request of the then Viceroy, Professor A. V. Hill from Royal Society came and advised on building up a number of research institutions in science and technology. Among the few laboratories estab-
blished according to this scheme, Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute of Calcutta may be mentioned.

When India became independent in 1947, Government of India under the leadership of Jawharlal Nehru, planned to concentrate on developing the tempo of scientific education and research and industrialization, with the hope of quickly raising the standard of living of the people.

In 1948, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research was set up in Delhi with S. S. Bhatnagar as the first Director, according to the general plan outlined by Dr. Hill. Many national laboratories were established in quick succession, but none of the major laboratories dealing with physics and chemistry were located in Calcutta.

However, science in Calcutta, received its share of support from the public sector, resulting in rapid expansion of Government laboratories and Government sponsored autonomous laboratories. Universities also received support for scientific education and research through the U.G.C. As a result, the professional manpower and quantity of research in the various science subjects have increased exponentially during the first two decades after independence. If we look into the record of award of doctorate degrees in physics and chemistry in Calcutta University the pattern of expansion of trained scientific manpower and research becomes apparent. Between 1916 and 1947 Calcutta University produced 91 doctorates in all science subjects (2.8 doctorates a year), between 1948 and 1956, the same university produced 278 doctorates in these subjects (i.e., 27.8 doctorates a year). In between 1944 and 1948 only 3 physicists and 6 chemists received their doctorates (i.e., 1.8 doctorates in these subjects a year); during 1949 to 1965 the same university produced 119 doctorates in various branches of physics and 334 doctorates in pure and applied chemistry (i.e., on the average 30.2 doctorates a year).

5.5 A review of the historical background

It is apparent from the above account that the intelligentsia of Calcutta became aware of the importance of modern science, through
contact with the British rule. But the main thrust of enthusiastic involvement in the organization of higher education and research in sciences came from the Indians themselves, who were moved by a spirit of nationalism. This ‘spirit’ produced a few brilliant scientists but the available resources were inadequate to provide suitable positions and facilities for research for these scientists in the laboratories of this city for a sufficiently long period to generate a vigorous tradition of research.

In the background of this picture of relative stagnation during 1930–1947, the sudden expansion of resources since independence seems to have caught the Calcutta scientists somewhat unprepared and one of the major reasons for the general state of malaise in the field of science in Calcutta to day may be due to the abruptness of expansion.

6. THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

From our historical review it will be apparent that the combined factors of early exposure to western science in the strategically located city of Calcutta and the effective initiative of a section of Calcutta intelligentsia charged with the spirit of nationalism, led to the decisive eminence of this city as a centre of cultivation of sciences in the country. We have now to review how far the initial enthusiasm has been retained and expanded in the contemporary scene of vastly enlarged support from the Government.

6.1 A general state of malaise

One of our leading scientists, P. C. Mahalanobis states :

"Expenditure on scientific research in India perhaps has increased ten times since independence. A large number of laboratories and institutes have been established; and the number of scientific workers have increased considerably. And yet the output of scientific research of high quality does not seem to have been commensurate with the physical volume of expansion of facilities. There are complaints of lack of enthusiasm and frustration among young workers. It is generally agreed upon that before indepen-
dence, resources were meagre and the number of workers were also much smaller but there was enthusiasm for research; the quality of research also was reasonably high” (Mahalanobis 1960: 18-19).

The eminent chemist P. Ray makes similar observations on the quality of scientific research in India (Ray 1958: 249–254).

It is difficult to assess the quality of performance of a research institute unless a detailed study of all the aspects of research are made. But according to Sir Edward Bullard a general impression about the atmosphere in a research institute can be made even by walking around the different departments and talking with the people. A right climate of opinion is an indication of a good research organization:

“The work of a factory can be planned and measured and reasonable performance enforced without a very delicate considera-
tion of the wishes of the staff.

In a laboratory, if the staff are actively dissatisfied or even if they do not identify their own wishes and ambitions with the work, the establishment will quickly and imperceptibly lapse into mediocrity. There will be no very conspicuous signs that anything is wrong, the cost per worker will not change, the bulk of published work and unpublished reports may stay about the same; all that would happen will be the departure of a few bright young men, some difficulty in recruiting and an uneasy feeling among visitors that something is wrong with the establishment, and perhaps the staff complain more about the management than they should” (Bullard 1965: 264).

If we follow Bullard’s prescription in forming overall impressions on the three categories of institutions in Calcutta mentioned before we cannot escape the feeling that with the exception of a few individuals, or a few teams of workers or perhaps some sections of a laboratory, it will be apparent to even a casual visitor that there is a general lack of confidence and purpose and also resentment and frustration among the vast majority of research workers in .these
laboratories. In contrast, one learns from some old workers in Calcutta University laboratories and in the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Sciences that small groups of researchers worked in an atmosphere of dedicated enthusiasm around a few outstanding Indian scholars of international reputation. Although it is not possible to fully ascertain the truth of these nostalgic memories, yet they are important as relevant myths which guide the researchers even today.

7. STRUCTURE AND ATMOSPHERE IN DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN CALCUTTA

7.1 Calcutta University and attached autonomous institutes

In University College of Science the students are often found to complain about bad teaching, academic corruption and lack of guidance.

Many of the teachers on the other hand complain about lack of idealism and devotion among the students. Some of the old timers pass their time talking about the past glory of Calcutta University. A distinct change from the initial pattern of recruitment of teachers during the enthusiastic days of Asutosh is apparent in post-independence period. Instead of brilliant, active and young scholars, old and ‘experienced’ teachers, many of whom have discontinued research, are selected for most of the higher positions. Also, the tradition of recruitment of talented scientists from an all India base has completely broken down in favour of recruiting only Bengalis.

Two autonomous institutions, the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics and Institute of Radio Physics, were established within the university campus just after independence. Many young scientists got opportunity to work in these two new institutes during their initial period of growth. Although these institutes have been more open to receiving young talents in the faculty than in the original university departments, here again, some of the outstanding young scholars have left the Institutes to accept teaching and research assignments abroad. One gets the impression that even these
new institutions having better laboratory facilities and staffing pattern, are facing difficulties in sustaining the initial enthusiasm.

I have already mentioned that Calcutta University which has remained the main source of supply of new scholars is not being effectively replenished by brilliant young researchers. One, however, notices some flickering of enthusiasm and purpose among students working for doctorate degree even in the midst of the otherwise dull atmosphere in the old university.

The students, although generally complaining about lack of proper guidance and co-operation from other workers and non-availability of necessary facilities, somehow are able to work energetically with the limited purpose of getting a doctorate degree. In this general atmosphere of gloom one occasionally (though very rarely) comes across a few exceptionally brilliant teachers who maintain their optimism on the basis of their experience to enthuse the new generation of students who, they claim, are more alert than the average run of students in their own student days.

7.2 An Autonomous Institute: Indian Association for the Cultivation of Sciences—Recent Phase

We have already described the early beginnings of the IACS with its glorious culmination in the discovery of the Raman Effect. To-day from the humble establishment of Bowbazar street the IACS has a substantial set up with large financial support from the Union and the State Governments. The scientific as well as the administrative staff have increased many times since independence. The volume of research in physics and chemistry has steadily increased during the post independence decades, yet, we observe to-day a lack of enthusiasm and a sense of frustration and purposelessness among many of the research scholars. There is a general complain that while the number of research scholars have increased considerably, capable research guides have not increased proportionately.

7.3 Government Laboratories

The Government controlled laboratories in Calcutta have the usual rigid hierarchic structure with a heavy proportion of adminis-
tration staff. The emphasis is on applied research. One of the oldest research institutions, Geological Survey of India, was started in 1856 by the British Government with British scientists holding all the higher jobs and the Indians occupying only the subordinate positions. The formal structure of the G.S.I. has remained the same after nearly two and half decades since independence; only the positions are now all manned by Indians. The higher positions are recruited on an all India basis, while the lower staff in Calcutta are predominantly Bengali. In the culture of the laboratories in this massive survey department the emphasis is on being officially correct in procedure and in being formally obedient to the boss and being supercilious before the subordinate research staff.

The new institutions—the national laboratories have also adopted more or less the same model of rigid hierarchy as the G.S.I. with some minor modifications in structure. The equipments, library etc. of these institutions are kept in order and the routine functioning of these institutions are quite smooth. But signs of lack of enthusiasm and purpose in research becomes evident when one listens to the common topics of conversation and observes the behaviour of the research workers. Informal discussions among the scientific staff usually centres around speculations about the motives of the high officers, the salary scales, probability of a promotion, implications of various rules and regulations and plain gossips on topics other than scientific. Rarely one would find enthusiastic involvement in a scientific problem.

The prospect of attaining higher position, however, does provide some stimulus for initiative for a limited period. But the possibility of national development through contribution to science does not seem to act as a source of inspiration for a majority of the workers.

Although these institutes are primarily meant for promoting industrial research, the scientists often feel that their research ideas are not utilized by the industry. While many scientists complain that the industries are not science conscious, very many people in the industries feel that the scientists are not aware of the requirements of the industries. It seems that the two way channel of complementary nourishment is not adequately smooth.
7.4 Characteristic features in the general atmosphere

Although the scientists in different fields belonging to various institutions occasionally meet socially, there is very little effective professional collaboration and communication among them. As a result, scientific equipments as well as experiences available in the city are not effectively shared and utilized by the local scientific community.

8. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS: THE SPECIAL FEATURES OF SCIENCE AND SCIENTISTS IN CALCUTTA TO-DAY

The special features of science and scientists of Calcutta may be summed up as follows:

1. The Calcutta scientists are aware that this city played a pioneering role in developing a tradition and organizational base for scientific education and research in the country. They are also aware of the decisive eminence of this city in the sciences till the coming of independence. After independence, the claim of Calcutta as the most important centre for the pursuit of science gradually receded in favour of many other important centres developed in other parts of the country. This situation seems to have caused a sense of a damping of spirit among the Calcutta scientists in recent years. The young scientists of this city do not feel that great things in science are happening in their city.

2. It is not to be assumed, however, that scientific research has actually been declining in Calcutta in post-independence period. On the contrary, the number of professionally trained scientists and the quantity of research have increased many times compared to the pre-independence base line. Science in Calcutta is passing through a new phase. It is no longer a community dominated by a handful of individual towering stalwarts but it certainly sustains a much larger number of productive scholars than before, among whom quite a few are outstanding in their particular field of specialization.

3. The early enthusiasm of Calcutta scientists was charged with the spirit of renaissance and nationalism. Unfortunately, Resources
were inadequate to keep together the brilliant products of Calcutta University in the pre-independence period. Thus, when Calcutta was in the threshold of developing a self-sustaining tradition of modern science, particularly in fundamental research, the critical number of eminent scientists who could have trained a team of second generation of scholars could not be retained in this city with the meagre financial resources available at that time. As a result, when independence brought new funds and opportunities for science in Calcutta, by and large, the scientists were caught unprepared. New institutions were set up without adequately equipped persons in sufficient number to perform the required jobs.

4. In spite of P. C. Ray’s pioneering effort to involve Calcutta scientists in industrial enterprise resources were inadequate to push forward the programme and the British firms were not at all interested in developing modern industries around this city utilizing local scientific talents. The indigenous Bengali trading groups were deflected from industrial enterprise to investment in zamindari and real estate. The dominant Rajasthani commercial houses in Calcutta were also not interested in sponsoring indigenous applied research. The initial enthusiasm for science in Calcutta remained basically in the form of abstract intellectual pursuit of the Bhadralok middle class.

5. After independence, support for applied research could gain momentum endogenously only in regions like Gujarat and Bombay, where indigenous industrial entrepreneurs were there to utilize scientific research. It is difficult to find the counterparts of industry and management oriented scientists of western India in this city.

6. One of the main limitation of the organizational milieu of science in Calcutta is that institutionalized tradition has not developed to effectively bring together the scientists working in related fields from different institutions—universities, national laboratories and autonomous organizations.

7. In post-independence Calcutta one finds a decline of the endogenous informal structure of the earlier generation. The new Government sponsored institutions have in general failed to introduce
any major organizational innovation beyond the colonial bureaucratic model, where the heads and the higher officers are expected to behave as "Sahibs". This structure is sustained by the massive hangover of a servile "clerical" mentality generated in Calcutta during the British rule.

8. Science in Calcutta, even today, is virtually isolated from the lower strata of primary producers, the farmers and artisans, belonging to the lower castes (Sinha 1970). Greater participation of the above groups would perhaps have generated vigorous interest in applied research connected with national welfare.

9. Some eminent scientists of Calcutta like S N. Bose, have emphasised the need for propagating and teaching science in Bengali so that a massive enthusiasm for science is generated among all classes of the population. But, so far, these efforts have not gained much momentum.

10. On the whole, one would not be too far wrong in asserting that in spite of expansion of resources and opportunities and substantial rate of growth in scientific research and publication, the scientists in Calcutta suffer from a feeling of stagnation. They are aware that under the existing situation of poor coordination between relevant institutions, inadequate laboratory facilities, and lack of sufficient number of capable guides, they are often forced to work on obsolete and peripheral areas of modern science. Also, in many of the institutions meant for applied research, the scientists feel that their efforts are not substantially leading to national welfare.

There is a tendency among some social scientists to ascribe the root of the malaise in science in Calcutta to the national character of the Bengalis. It appears to me that a more rational approach would be to review the phasing of scientific endeavour in this city in the historical perspective outlined above. Whereas, for many of the centres of scientific research in different regions of India, new institutions are growing up with fresh enthusiasm, in Calcutta the problem is that of revitalization of a relatively fatigued tradition.

But generation of a purposeful optimistic atmosphere of in the field of scientific research is too complex and involved a problem to
be solved only by the efforts of the scientific research workers of this city.

References


THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL WORLD OF THE MEN OF LITERATURE IN CALCUTTA

Alokaranjan Dasgupta

It was in 1894 that Rabindranath wrote in a letter to Indira Devi Chaudhurani:

When in the village, I become an Indian. The moment I go to Calcutta I become a European. Who knows which is my truer self?

Looking further back one finds one Stravonius describing Calcutta as a nascent ‘metropolis’ in the year 1770 without this revelatory shock of split-psyche so amazingly scanned by Tagore. Things happened rather hurriedly during the period in between to mar the time-honoured complacency of a creative Bengali writer of the day. But Tagore was more disturbed with what occurred at that moment or in the immediate past. For there was a tendency among quite a number of literary potentialitics towards thwarting the advent of the urban individual assuming a typically occidental air. Sahitya (1890), the most popular literary journal of the time was edited by Sureshchandra Samajpati whose conservative attitude found expression in forming a literary group that would adequately resist all individualistic and urbanistic leanings. Tagore did a lot in his psychological novels to counterblast the move towards any such pseudo-normative groupism. But he failed utterly to form a group of his own while re-editing Bankim’s Bangadarshan. No sooner than he relinquished its editorship, subservient medium of anti-moderns like Ramaprasad Chanda, Radhakamal Mukhopadhyay and Induprakash Bandyopadhyay branded Tagore an outright egoist revelling in the immoral. We had to wait until Pramatha Chaudhuri, the precursor of French modernism in Bengali literature, held the Arnoldian position that urbanity in literature was first visible in Bengali Literature. On the eve of the First World War Chaudhuri
founded *Sabuj Patra* (1914) which succeeded in bringing about a modernistic milieu. But the intellectual accent of the Sabuj Patra coterie was not popular enough. The third decade of this century witnessed the publication of *Kallol* (1923) and *Kalikalam* (1926). The 'Kalloleans' in the history of modern Indian literature, were the first group of writers who believed in collectively fighting for the egotistical sublime, or call it the egotistical sinister, with a terrible gusto. Achintyakumar Sengupta, one of the leading members of the Kallol, has later rationalized the tension lurking beneath this movement. This is the summing-up of his attitude:

The malady of the age left its lasting imprint on the Kolloleans. The Kallol meant a paradoxical Juxtaposition. It was sometimes over-energetic and sometimes languid. Now it waged a war and again it lost its interest in survival. It resembled some of Turgeneiv's characters. To be more precise, they were Shelleyan in spirit and Hamletish in action. For they were in love with Death. It was then romantic to espouse death caused by a revolt—be it political or literary. Both literature and politics at that time aimed at rebellion and annihilation alike.

Despite this nihilistic anguish, it must be said that all that the Kolloleans succeeded in was to set a programme (*tendenz*) for their art. They fell for a purpose and stood by it and thereby ultimately only achieved, somewhat irritatingly, an institutional image rather than a solipsistic one. The common reader could easily identify himself with their creations. *Bede* by Achintyakumar was nothing but a frustrated vagabond of the middle-class society whose soliloquies had nothing private about them. *Pathik* by Gokul Nag, leader of the Kallol clan, was the sage of another, though dignified, tramp whose homelessness had a price-tag attached to it. For one thing, de-rooted humanity was a popular theme then and to fuse one's individuality with the people was an irresistible urge even with the egocentric writers.

1. Kollolayuga.
The 40-s intensified this drive, re-inforced this chaotic confusion of the ‘I’ and the ‘we’. Independence came along with massive immigration as its major feature. Estimated annual outflow of the displaced people into Calcutta Industrial region in the 1947-48 session was 2,58,946, the male-female ratio being 1,42,602 and 1,16,344¹. W. H. Auden took his theme of involuntary exodus and charged the helpless situation with a magical tenderness of love in a poem where the male said to its other-half:

Say this city hath ten thousand souls,
some live in mansion, some live in holes,
But this is no place for us, my dear,
this is no place for us.

But our poets of the late thirties and early forties harped on hatred and not on love. They chose Samar Sen as their mentor who pointed out the useless fertility and death to be the only real things and exclaimed even in his pre-independence prose poems:

Cholera, factories, gonorrhea, chickenpox,
floods and famines,
God’s own children made in this image².

The very next moment the poet would like to escape this horrible cityscape without any notice:

Far, far away from here is the land of the Mahuas. There all the time the stately Devadarus shed their mysteries on the roads. The breath of the distant seas stirs the quiet loneliness of the night. Let the Mohua flowers fall on my tired limbs, let their smell cover me³.

This somehow baffled a plain reader who definitely wanted to spell this riddle out. How could a self-conscious poet sacrifice his alienation to anonymity? This was the riddle which remained unsolved in the fifth decade of the present century Bengal. On a deeper probe it is discernible. Poets like Subhas Mukhopadhyay, Arun Mitra and

² 2. Tr. Manish Nandi.
³ 3. Tr. Samar Sen.
Birenndra Chattopadhyay fused the personal with their social ego because they could not free themselves from the collective norm presaged by their immediate predecessors. It was, of course, comfortable to wear a socio-political mask at a juncture when the city of Calcutta intrigued the writer with its unprecedented problems of growing population. The masses comprising immigrants and local inhabitants represented a puzzle to the poet who had to address a mixed audience. They tried to explore new possibilities, and thematically speaking, ushered in a new note of urban identity. While doing so, they mumbled a choral burden of boredom and social injustice.

The 50-s, on the other hand, witnessed the introduction of a social, experimental conscience without any ulterior end in view. The representative poets and novelists of this period did not stand under any banner whatsoever. Their one goal was to differ from each other not only in literary ethos but also in the mode of living. Sandipan Chattopadhyay, a very reliable storywriter of this period, has recently made an observation on this with a lot of fun:

I invited some of my relatives and a friend of mine at the first birthday party of my daughter. In puja I went to Mihijam with the family. That very year Pranabendu went to Mussoree with his wife. He travelled in a first class compartment. Utpal Kumar Basu has bought a car. The first Absurd Playwright Dipakkumar Mazumdar met with an accident in California, received several injuries, was heavily compensated by the insurance concern. The insurance had been arranged before. Jyotirmay Datta brought with him an air-conditioning machine from America, only to relinquish his covetable job in the Statesman. Socialism did not come through democracy, he admits, and yet he does not have the guts to suggest an alternative means. This is us¹.

Here we find a confessional, though amusing, account of the movement launched by the men of literature of the 50-s. Actually

speaking there was no movement at all. These people did not believe in any collective credo—social or political theme. Their artistic intention emerged from their autobiographical identities which did not simply have any connexion with group therapy. No wonder that the extrovert Samar Sen was perplexed to find these poets to be 'not that Catholic', meaning that they only addressed themselves and created inhibitive areas of their own. They might be accused of flinching away from all sort of reformer’s zeal that was residue of the last century. On the other hand, their credit lies in shaping the contemporary chaos of the city-lives into a sort of personal pattern.

Thus, the varying shift from the literature of commitment of the 30-s to the non-committal leanings of the 50-s may be shown by way of highlighting the purposes of their respective literary organizations. In the 30-s P.W.A., that is the Progressive Writers’ Association provided, the urban writers of the city with a forum, or to put it more awkwardly, a debate rostrum, to speak with a pro-marxist and anti-fascist bias. This assembly was adorned by the eminent literary personalities like Sajjad Zahir, Hirankumar Sanyal and Hiren Mukherji. It must be observed that even the pro-Gandhian Tarasankar Bandypadhyay and the anti Marxist Buddhadeva Bose were drawn to its vortex. Congress Sahitya Sansad, in reply, was founded and came to be known as a timid, self-defensive concern with a kind of enlightened motivation. Then in the later 40-s Abu Sayeed Ayub, the noted aesthetician, who once prepared the first valid collection of Modern Bengali Poetry in collaboration with P.W.A.-branded Hiren Mukherji, established Samakalin Sahitya Kendra to advocate the intergirty of new writers, challenging the propriety of ‘regimentation’ in the Marxian camp. There was no such canopy for the typical writer of the 50-s. True, with the advent of the sixties, a group of young castaway writers formed a much-abused organization called the Hungry Generation. But their accent was definitely apolitical. They spoke of their own anxieties and cravings. They shunned the code of decency to disturb the establishment. They did not produce a single line worthwhile. But the fervent faith in the lonely person that they intoned in their writings deserved one’s attention.
Chattopadhyaya, one of the top-ranking poets of the 50-s, has pleaded their case with a certain amount of bravado:

Well, these conceited citizens are poets, painters, prose writers, their ago ranging from twenty to thirty. Most of them are social in an anti-social way. Those who have discarded them have done so because they are devoid of any rigidly political or spiritual conviction. They want to draw their attention to the fact that each of them is rushing onwards to a faith of his own.

Thus the mode of faith is no longer politically oriented. This is amply substantiated by the role of the little magazines of Calcutta and its neighbourhood. It is a fact that some daily papers, including a couple of party journals, have been artificially trying to set literary groups on the basis of preordained creeds. Since there is no real urban community press to espouse the cause of the private individuals of the metropolitan area, it has been easier, indeed, for these papers with vested interests to purchase talented writers and form meaningless coteries which have attempted to retard the free urban outlook. Little magazines poured on in protest of the bossing of these 'big' magazines to safeguard the rights and prerogatives of each creative writer. What they have done for the cause of secularization and urbanization is immensely creditable. *Krittibas* (1954) deserves special mention in this connexion. This little magazine, mainly devoted to poetry, has always focussed contrary views side by side with equal justice. It has represented varied types of attitudes—progressive, reactionary, esoteric, exoteric and so on. Here I will cite from two poems in the same number of *Krittibas* to illustrate this ambivalence. The first one is by Arabindo Guha on Ganga in Haridwar:

*Refreshing, pellucid waters flow in Haridwar,*  
*Calcutta loses all its contours.*  
*I feel these waters flow everywhere,*  
*even in Calcutta.*  
*But you have never heard or seen such white*  
*symphony of waters in Calcutta.*
The next one is by Samsher Anwar bearing a queer title ‘This Calcutta and my lonely bed’:

Under the frost-bitten, rain-marred lamp-post
I have stood here, deserted, for the last
twenty years of my life,
Looking slantingly I have been watching the
criss-cross game of sorrow.
I fear, having stood thus for such a long time
one day I will be murdered while asleep.
If one calls this fated picture history,
then I accept history,
The creation and civilization that has grown
beyond my existence has no
meaning for me at all.
If I ever attach any meaning to a truth then it is
This Calcutta and my lonely bed.

Despite the fact that both the poets are ‘refugees’ from East Pakistan, two distinctive poses have been struck in these two poems. One attempts to ease the tension of life in Calcutta by taking a pilgrim’s plunge in the refreshing recesses of waters that revitalize a sensible, city-bred person. Another reflects a complete identification of the poet with the city-life with all its insecurities and unroost, pity and horror. This completes the cycle of urbanization in Bengali literature. In fact both the poets meet in that Calcutta which perpetually stands as the point of reference, the gravitational centre of our being and decaying.

The earlier writers were either idealizing this city or visualizing a brighter Calcutta. Buddhadeva Bose exalted the city as ‘a drop of honey in the lotus of limitlessness’. Jibanananda Das predicted that if we were sane enough Calcutta would one day be a living image of perfection. That was the romantic or at best the mystic way of eluding the problems of this city of ours. Jyotirindranath Tagore, an alien in his times, projected a mother-image of Calcutta in one of his Bengali versions of French verse. But Calcutta at the penultimate phase of the 20th century is, however, like a step-mother whose hatred has been turned into love by the undernourished members of its family. Or, does this metropolitan city now appear to be a necropolis only to challenge the real integrity of an urban creative writer?
DRAMA MOVEMENT IN CALCUTTA, 1944-69

Samik Bandopadhyaya

A process of deliberate commercialization was the persistent trend in the Bengali theatre from the mid-nineties of the last century till the emergence of Sisirkumar Bhaduri in the twenties of this century. The means that Amarendranath Dutt (1876–1916)\(^1\) adopted to attract larger sections of the community to the theatre included an emphasis on musicals and spectacular shows, the distribution of lucky gifts and sensational publicity. Amarendranath offered higher salaries to actors and actresses tempting them to leave their theatres and join his; he circulated lampoons and cartoons satirising the leading artists in the other companies. Apareshchandra Mukherjee, a contemporary actor, writing his memoirs in 1934, noted a revival of the half-akhrai and tarja tradition in Amarendranath’s publicity campaign\(^2\). There was a deliberate vulgarization of the attitudes sustaining the theatre. While the Star Theatre audience was expected to remain sober and quiet in the theatre, the Classic theatre audience could be more relaxed; indecent jokes shouted out at the top of one’s voice, whistlings, and loud comments were permitted by Amarendranath, even encouraged by him. Apareshchandra commented: “Amarendranath turned the theatre into a place where people came for sheer entertainment. The theatre had so long been bureaucratic; Amrababu made it democratic”. Publicity handouts circulated earlier had been badly printed on coarse paper; Amarendranath circulated leaflets printed on quality paper, with portraits of the star artists. The language used in these leaflets, which incidentally were then the primary means for theatre publicity, abandoned with a vengeance the more staid style cultivated by Girish Chandra Ghosh and Amritlal Bose, the earlier producers. There is reason to believe that Amarendranath’s family background had attracted a considerable section of the influential Kayastha community of the city. But his concessions to the vulgar taste for sensationalism, cheap humour,
sentimentalism, facile patriotism and showmanship had alienated the more enlightened and educated sections of the community. While the traditional Jatra retained its hold on the more conservative sections of the community, and the educated intelligentsia turned away from the theatre in sheer disgust, the commercial theatre catered to a mixed audience of the fashionable babus and those who came to the city on short visits.

Sisirkumar’s emergence led to a revival of enlightened interest in the theatre. In his earlier productions in the early twenties he utilized the services of some of the finest creative minds of his time; there were others who stood close to him, encouraging him and contributing to introduce him to a larger public; younger writers were drawn towards him. But Sisirkumar’s creative career was too shortlived to create an impact on the commercial theatre as a whole. It is difficult to explain his failure either entirely in terms of personal idiosyncrasy or in terms of institutional resistance. Anyway, the new clientele that had discovered something really valuable in the theatre as a form in the creative contributions of Sisirkumar, now moved away to support and sustain the new theatre movement of amateur companies. The educated urban middle class has been the mainstay of this new movement. The audience is still mainly drawn from college and university students, and those in the 20–40 age group with some collegiate education, and some interest in contemporary cultural or literary trends.

The new theatre movement in Calcutta traces its origins from the Indian People’s Theatre Association and its theatrical activities in the mid-forties—the first organized socialized initiative in the theatre as opposed to all earlier business initiative or private patronage. The immediate urge behind the IPTA was more social and political than theatrical. The IPTA was originally an affiliate of the Anti-Fascist Writers and Artists Association, organized in 1942. Group signing at public gatherings had been the first creative act of the IPTA. The organized theatrical activity grew out of the humanistic reaction to the man-made famine of 1943 and the sufferings that it caused. The first performances of the play Navanna, directed by
Shri Bijan Bhattacharya and Shambhu Mitra, were planned to raise funds for the famine-stricken; the initial production expenses were forwarded by the People’s Relief Committee; the loan was repaid from sale proceeds. The IPTA did not have a theatre of its own, but managed to put up about 35 performances at a number of public theatres, and at public gatherings, often to audiences of seven thousand or more. The first liberation of the theatre from the theatre houses was accomplished by the IPTA, for performing outside the theatre house had been undertaken but never relished in the past. The original cast of Navanna included at least three journalists, six whole time organizers of a political party, a medical practitioner, and only one with a professional theatre background. The IPTA had direct political affiliations. But the attitude of the creative artists in the IPTA was best expressed by Shri Bijan Bhattacharya in a recent exclusive interview: “We did not propagate the Party viewpoint. The country and its common people were our subjects. Our job was to prepare the soil; it was the job of the political people to sow the seeds. We were preparing and enlightening the people from a broad humanistic point of view”. The IPTA had a self-sufficient organization of its own, and did not have to depend on any political party for assistance in its day to day functioning. At a later phase the political involvement of the IPTA created organizational and functional complications. From the fifties there has been a recession on the part of the amateur theatre groups from direct political involvement and a conscious effort to find a more autonomous organizational identity. It does not mean, however, that the groups have given up their political interest. The political interest in choice of themes still remain a dominant interest, and political sympathies still determine the character of quite a number of theatre groups.

The organizational and economic pattern for the amateur companies in the fifties and the sixties was set by the IPTA in the forties. In fact, a large number of these groups had been started by artists who had their first theatrical training and experience in the IPTA. The members of a theatre group contribute towards the expenses in the form of regular subscriptions, and the projects till now remain non-profitable, with a persistent unfavourable economy. The very
few companies which find a professional standing and recognition and can put up performances regularly, do not normally afford to put up more than two shows a month. These companies have to pay an establishment cost in the form of rental for a rehearsal-cum-office, rental for a store room to keep the stage properties, costumes, etc., expenses for light refreshment (normally a few cups of tea) during rehearsals, and the production costs that go into every production. The situation at the moment is that there are only two companies performing twice a month, about ten performing once a month and others more irregularly. The performances are primarily limited to the New Empire Theatre and the Mukta Angan Theatre, which accommodate 600 and 395 respectively. For experiences have showed that the Rabindra Sadan with an accommodation of 1101 and Kala Mandir with an accommodation of 1103 rarely draw full houses; these two theatres are yet to become part of the theatre going schedule of the audience.

A commercial theatre in Calcutta pays a monthly rental varying from Rs. 3,000/- to Rs. 4,000/-. puts up a minimum of sixteen shows a month, can take advantage of the resultant economies in publicity and can advertise its shows more frequently and more regularly; it saves on the rental that the amateur groups have to pay for their rehearsal space or storage facilities, can employ its actors on a whole-time basis and can make them work harder and more; it can rent out space in the theatre building to stalls, and the auditorium on days on which it does not perform, to other organizations, normally at least ten days a month, fetching at least Rs. 6,000/-, often rising to Rs. 10,000/-. The commercial theatre companies and the Jatra companies enjoy railway concessions that are denied to the amateur groups. The amateur groups are at an obvious economic and organizational disadvantage when placed beside the commercial theatre companies. The growing prestige and popularity of the amateur theatre movement—often called “the other theatre”—in spite of these obvious handicaps is evidence of the great creative energy generated by the movement.

The impact of the new theatre movement has been felt in recent years upon the commercial theatre and the Jatra. Themes and styles
have been indiscriminately lifted from the new theatre. But more important still has been the importation of artists and technicians from the new theatre at professional rates. The *Jatra* and the commercial theatre have consciously tried to exploit the popularity earned so laboriously by these artists of the new theatre movement. There is not a single commercial theatre in the city at the moment which does not have its share of the new theatre artists. A more recent trend has been the importation of the theatre artists into the cinema. The cinema, still an infinitely more popular medium than the theatre, had added its glamour to the prestige of some of these new theatre artists, and the star glamour has in its turn drawn a new audience to the new theatre—an audience primarily interested in the live appearance of the celluloid star. How far the responses and demands of this new audience can influence the quality or organizational shape of the movement can appear clearly only later, provided this new audience stays on with the theatre.

A more interesting feature is the dissemination of the new theatre outside Calcutta. The performances by Calcutta troupes sponsored in mofussil towns by local organizations have become quite common in the last two or three years. A sample survey of the leading companies reveals that out of the 132 shows put up by Nandikar in 1968, 72 were sponsored shows in places like Durgapur, Asansol, Oaria, Kharagpur, Bankura, Chakbazaar, Barasat, Agarpara, Dum Dum, Triveni, Behala, Bansdroni, Kulti, Adra, Konnagar, Singur, Kandi, Howrah, Batanagar, Bonhooghly, Dhanbad, Baidyabati, Uttarpara, Barrackpore. The sponsors included nine College Students' Unions; the rest were local clubs and recreation clubs in the industrial centres. In 1967 Nandikar put up 27 shows on their own, and 43 sponsored shows; the figures for 1964, '65, '66 are 36 and 21, 46 and 81, 38 and 44 respectively. Another troupe, Nakshatra, in 1968 has performed in Chandnnagar, Bali, Chittaranjan, Asansol, Baruipur and Malda. Bohurupee has performed at Barasat, Kancharapara, Dum Dum and Santragachi in 1968, and at Uttarpara, Durgapur, Baidyabati and Dhanbad in 1969. Sponsors for the Bohurupee shows included clubs, libraries, and at least one Kalipuja committee. The plays staged by these companies have often been adaptations of foreign classics.
or stylized and symbolic treatments exploiting the more complex modes of theatrical expression. The same productions have appealed to the more select audience in Calcutta and the more assorted audience at any of these centres. The question of the growth of a common urban consciousness may be explored as well as the possibility of different levels of responses.

The heterogeneous composition of the amateur companies is a peculiarity not so noticeable in amateur theatricals abroad. Of the 33 members of Bohurupee, 7 are accountants, 11 are clerks or stenographers or typists, 1 a jute mill foreman, 2 publicity executives, 2 students, 1 medical representative, 1 Calcutta Corporation assessment inspector, 1 Customs Inspector, 1 executive officer, 1 university lecturer and research worker. Of the 20 members of Nakshatra, 5 are clerks, 2 school teachers, 1 college lecturer, 1 medical representative, 2 engineers, 1 freelance radio mechanic, 1 medical student, 1 radio announcer, 1 cold storage worker, 1 bank executive, 1 small businessman, 1 technical assistant, and 1 press and publications expert. Of the 26 members of Nandikar in 1968, 3 were college lecturers, 1 journalist, 1 government gazetted officer, 3 clerks, 1 postal peon, 2 school teachers, 1 shopkeeper, 1 store assistant, 2 technicians, 1 tailor, 1 sales representative, and 4 unemployed.

With the newly realized importance of the director in the new theatre, some of the directors have found it difficult to serve their form as part time workers in the field, and have chosen to give up their jobs and become freelancers, making a precarious living out of film and radio assignment and journalism; a few out of commercial art.

A new category of semiprofessional actresses are associated with the amateur theatre movement. They had been originally drawn towards the movement from economic necessities. With little education and considerable acting talent a semi-professional actress associated herself with a particular amateur company, which pays her a small allowance per show. She is free to supplement this rather uncertain income from participation in office club theatricals. Her association with a successful amateur company serves as an introduction. But some of these actresses are gradually coming to make a
more enlightened identification with the new movement, training themselves up emotionally and intellectually.

In the last few years amateur troupes from Calcutta have performed outside the State. The trend has started in 1954 with Bohurupee performances in New Delhi. In 1968-69, Bohurupee has performed at New Delhi, Allahabad, and Hyderabad; Nandikar at New Delhi, Bombay, Allahabad and Patna; Nakshatra at New Delhi. The audiences have included a considerable section of theatre workers working in the amateur Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati and Telugu theatres. Common stylistic and thematic elements are now shared by the new theatre movement in New Delhi and Bombay, where the impact is still confined to a much smaller sphere in spite of far better and more substantial support from the establishment and especially the Press. The Hindi theatre in Calcutta has come to have in the last two years very definite stylistic and thematic affiliations with the Bengali new theatre movement, while it still faces the larger problem of finding a big enough audience prepared to go along with its experiments. Anamika, the major Hindi theatre group, facing this problem, has extended its membership beyond its active group of artists. With a membership of 950, it has been able to involve at least emotionally a considerable section of the audience in its activities. The Anamika Kala Sangam, a sister organization, acting as an impresario unit, has organized performances in Calcutta by other experimental theatre groups in different parts of the country, helping to mould taste in Calcutta. A striking feature of Anamika is the number of linguistic groups it accommodates. Two of the three major roles in an important Anamika production are acted by a Bengali and a Bengali actress; a Gujarati businessman settled in Calcutta is one of their major dramatists and directors; an Uttarpradeshi from Benaras translates important Bengali plays for the troupe, has dramatized Hindi novels for the troupe, and has directed productions; a Marwari solicitor is their major director and actor; some of the major female roles have been handled by a Bihari student. Anamika has maintained on its own initiative a regular and close contact with Bengali theatre workers; it has produced important Bengali plays in Hindi translation even before they have been produced in the original.
In spite of the considerable creative effort that has gone into the drama movement in Calcutta, it still caters to a minority audience, while the majority is interested in films or the commercial theatre or even in the urban Jatra, which has, thanks to support from the popular press and certain stylistic and thematic modifications, regained a position in the city. One can trace a vicious circle in the limited scope for regular performances and inadequate publicity, a reliance on the minority, a choice of minority or elite themes, and the resultant alienation of the general playgoing public. State, municipal or public support has not been as forthcoming as elsewhere. Calcutta, in spite of its long theatrical traditions, is still denied a subsidized theatre, a phenomenon which is all too common in any enlightened city anywhere in the world. Subsidized theatres elsewhere in the world have been sponsored by the State, by the local councils or industry. In Calcutta all the three sources have been indifferent to the theatre movement. A number of the amateur theatre troupes have joined together to raise funds to have a theatre of their own and have been able to put up a number of performances with the best artists of all these troupes pooled together, artists in other fields have appealed for unds for this theatre.

A theatre for the new theatre movement may affect the audience at large and change it in quantitative and qualitative terms. The new theatre may be able to discover a centre from which communication becomes wider and easier, a stylistic form or a theatrical language which would be able to touch a larger audience. Regular exposure to the new theatre would train up an audience more used to and familiar with the new idioms of this theatre.

Notes

1. Amarendra Nath belonged to the Dutts of Chorebagan and was the younger brother of Hirendranath Dutta, the renowned Vedantist.

2. Aparashchandra Mukhopadhyay, in Rangaalaya Trish Batsar (Thirty Years in the Theatre) 1934, quotes one of these leaflets: "A tantalizing thrilling affair! Astounded playgoers! Humanity itself rocking to and fro with the action of the play! A glazy of beautiful women! Songs and dances galore! For a swim in a sixteen year old's tantalizing sea of charms!" Ramapati Dutt, Rangaalaya Amarendra Nath (Amarendra Nath in the Theatre) 1942, quotes another leaflet: "We do not sing ourselves our own victory. The fact of our tickets even upto Four Rupee ones
being entirely disposed of long before 8 P.M. on both the first and second nights indicates our position. All the leading Actors and Actresses are Classic’s own; Hence the success! The others—they simply beat the air—because a lame cannot jump, a blind cannot paint, a dumb cannot sing, never mind if he tries his best”—(the original English retained).

3. Younger writers who have recorded their admiration of Sisirkumar in the twenties include Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay and Achintyakumar Sengupta.

4. The exact breakup of costs and income for a single performance by an average theatre company can be gathered from estimates taken from two of the leading groups. The two groups are designated here as A and B. According to Group A, a single show at the New Empire Theatre costs roughly a minimum of Rs. 1,650 (including Rs. 800/- as house rent for a single show, Rs. 500/- for newspaper publicity and Rs. 350/- for costs for conveyance, lights, electricity, refreshments etc.), where a full house given a gross income of something round about Rs. 2,800/-, a show at the Mukta Aangan Theatre costs approximately Rs. 1,085/- (including a house rent of Rs. 235 and the other costs remaining the same), where a full house valuation amounts to Rs. 1,200/-. A show at the Rabindra Sadan or the Kala Mandir costs Rs. 1,850 (including a house rent of Rs. 1,000/- and the other costs remaining the same), where a full house given a gross income of Rs. 4,500/-. According to Group B, a show at New Empire costs Rs. 1,681/- (including Rs. 600/- as house rent, Rs. 92/- for the shifters, Rs. 300/- for publicity, Rs. 200/- for conveyance, Rs. 50/- for lights, Rs. 30/- for dresses, Rs. 32/- for stage properties, Rs. 32/- for makeup, Rs. 90/- for refreshments, Rs. 40/- for the handcrafts that take the accessories to the house, Rs. 50/- for the musicians, Rs. 15/- for requentions and Rs. 150/- for the semi-professional actresses), while a full house valuation amounts to Rs. 2,400/-, a show at Kala Mandir costs Rs. 1,835/-, where the full house valuation is Rs. 3,500/-, a show at Mukta Angan costs Rs. 1,184, where a full house gives a gross income of Rs. 1,300/-.

5. A long dialogue with theatre enthusiasts in Chittaranjan, a major industrial centre, revealed that a considerable section of the white collar workers were interested in the new theatre movement in Calcutta; they produced plays that were being produced by the Calcutta troupes, very often adopting original productional approaches; they brought in troupes from Calcutta and sponsored their shows in Chittaranjan; they organized seminars and symposia with theatre workers and critics from Calcutta as participants. Chittaranjan has about seven theatre troupes that put up about six shows a year. The two railway towns, sponsor two drama competitions every year, allowing these troupes to produce plays for the competition and allow the prize winners to perform twice more free of costs at the Institute halls. Chittaranjan has an open air theatre which is available at very low rent to these troupes. The theatre movement in Chittaranjan is closely affiliated to the movement in Calcutta.

6. If I am allowed to make a personal assessment strictly on criticical terms, I should like to assert that from what I have seen of the other major Hindi troupes from New Delhi, Anamika’s productions are productionally superior to theirs. Badal Sarkar’s play *Evam Indrajit*, which is essentially about the desires and frustrations of the Calcutta middle class, has proved to be one of the most popular plays tried out by the leading experimental troupes in Delhi and Bombay and elsewhere in the Hindi
translation. The first artistically significant production of this play came from Anamika. Three other plays by Badal Surkar have been produced in Hindi in Calcutta, New Delhi and Bombay and elsewhere; two of these are yet to be produced in the original. It is unfortunate that not a single significant Hindi play has yet been produced in Bengali, though some of these have already been translated into Bengali and remain unpublished scripts; one of those has been translated by a well known Bengali director and another by an Anamika playwright-director.
COMMUNITY OF ARTISTS AND SCULPTORS IN CALCUTTA

Mohim Roodro

Considering the fact that nobody cares for art in Calcutta, it is surprising the artists carry on. The artists carry on because they find that art is a thing that they have to go on with, they have no choice. They carry on against complete indifference from the society, because art is part of their systems as breathing is. But Calcutta does not care.

APPRECIATION AND BUYERS

Two major things are expected before one can expect art to thrive: art appreciation in general, and a buying community. Neither exists in Calcutta.

Calcutta has a large educated Bengali middle class population which is perfectly capable of appreciating art. My experience is that it is eager and willing to appreciate even the most experimental and new in art. But it lies in a potential state. These people may not be in a position to be buyers or patrons of art. But their awareness and keen participation is desperately needed to give the Calcutta artists that enlivening factor that brings maturity in art.

The reasons for this potential capacity for appreciation lying fallow are to be found in our faulty education and economic systems. Our education system, even if it rams down the gullet of the young ones certain doses of poetry and literature, does not take any serious interest in art. The average man, coming out of the school or college, feels somewhat familiar with the world of literature. He may even develop a need for it in his life. But nothing of the kind happens to him regarding art.

The economic factor needs hardly any explanation. The problem of existing from one day to another is enough preoccupation to keep
him detached from the world of art. And the transport system in the city is so bad that to carry oneself from one quarter to another is as painful as punishment.

The press could have bridged the gap considerably. The press in Calcutta is apathetic towards art. The average man never gets to know of exhibitions when they are on. The press does not report on them, and in nearly all the newspapers, the review comes out after many days are gone or even after the show is over. The reader is hardly benifitted, for when he reads about a show there is no possibility of seeing it. Appreciation of art does not grow from reading the reviews in the newspapers if the reader cannot see the actual paintings.

As far as buying of art is concerned, Calcutta has practically none of it. The only buyers are more or less the foreigners, the majority of whom are consulate personnel. An art that primarily depends on foreign passers by and tourists is bound to develop sicknesses. It becomes export oriented. Art is not a product of manufacture; genuine art is that which springs from within the artist and from within the society and landscape he lives in and from within the nature and history of that society. It cannot be created according to what may or may not please the consulates and tourists. Of course there are always one or two individuals amongst them who possess authentic taste for art, but by and large these people buy art to match the curtains and to be generous.

Not denying the monstrous poverty that opens its jaws across this teeming and dense city, it is also a fact that enough people have enough money here to support many times the number of artists that live in Calcutta. But Calcutta well off people, the upper middle class and the rich people, simply do not feel the need for art. A minor party with a few friends may cost them five hundred rupees in one evening, but to spend even one hundred rupees on a water colour appears to them as money wasted.

A well-off middle class person will buy saris, cushion covers, curtains, terylene outfits more and more as and when he feels more
and more money in his hands, but to by a painting for the wall is remote from his imagination. Often the artist is told that his prices are too high. But, it is our experience that art is not bought not because the prices are high, but because nobody thinks it worth buying. We have experimented by bringing down prices to great lows.

Art cannot be priced in the usual demand-supply cost of production-profit ratio. It will always remain to a degree arbitrary. Not all artists produce at the same rate. Some are prolific, some go slow. If there was a demand that was genuine and constant, most of the prolific artists will bring down the prices, for the demand will guarantee him sustenance.

True place for art is the home of the person who realizes that an art work is an object to communicate with.

However, neither kind of buyers exist in Calcutta.

GOVERNMENT ROLE

The government has a big role to play in the sustenance of art. For instance, art should be not just for the homes of those who can afford to possess it. Art should be where people gather. Public buildings should have murals on the walls, paintings, reliefs and carvings on the outside,—sculpture placed rightly. The Central Government has some such interest. It thus feeds some Delhi artists. But, even our new Government (the United Front) has no care for arts at all. For instance monuments of British rulers are being replaced with statues of famous Indians. Each of those replacements cost one to one and a half lakhs of rupees. Just this situation could have given the Government an opportunity to bring enthusiasm in the lives of the artists by announcing and asking for suggestions from all artists of Bengal. From all those submitted, a panel of judges could select the right ones. An exhibition could be held of all the ones that would be submitted. Thus, deserving artists would get chances to do some major works and earn some money. But the United Front prefers to follow the footsteps of its predecessors in many ways. None of these works are being announced and no invitation to all artists,
Thus the Government shows total indifference. The private sector is equally blind. Those who are building the large multistoried buildings that are going up all around in the city could easily have considered murals or sculptural decorations as part of the projects. The additional cost would be a fraction of a fraction of their total outlays. It is not money that has stopped them but lack of ideas, vision and taste.

Alas, even the very Central Government which put two large sculptures at the entrance of the Reserve Bank of India in Delhi did not bother to spend a paisa on art in its mammoth buildings in Calcutta.

NO COMMERCIAL GALLERIES

Art of course is treated as a commercial product practically everywhere in the world. The main feeders of artists in the West, for instance, are the commercial galleries owned by the art dealers. The art dealing game is quite a racket, but as yet, the artist really can only sell because the art galleries promote and deal with his works. The art dealers are specialists in salesmanship, and they have a role to play. It is much better than artists having to turn their own salesman. Calcutta has no art dealers. For a short while Gallery Chemould made a half hearted effort, but did not pursue. Kumar Galleries of Delhi maintained a branch inside the Grand Hotel for a time, but rolled it up some time ago. Two or three minor efforts were made by some others, to no effect. It can be said that not much real effort has been made in art dealing in Calcutta.

CALCUTTA ARTISTS AND OTHER INTELLECTUALS

Wherever art movement has been alive and thrusting, one notices that a close relationship existed between the artists and other intellectuals. Poets, writers, thinkers, philosophers and people in other creative fields all mingled together a lot, and in the process enriched each other a good deal. Intellectuals in Calcutta are not interested in art. It is a very uncommon event when one of them visits an exhibition.
Amongst the artists, depending on individual temperament, some read poetry, some literature, some go to see plays and some others take interest in the art of the cinema. But, there are amongst writers and poets of Calcutta individuals who consider their form of expression as the supreme height of creativity and even viewing art a relative misuse of time. Everything I have said shows that everything is against the artist. So, how do the artists exist in Calcutta?

There are two art colleges, the Government College of Art and Craft and the Indian College of Art. Each year these two institutions belch out a certain number of art graduates.

Where do they go?

Some teach in the two art colleges. But not many can be absorbed there after all. And it is not common that a teacher just leaves his job. He either retires or dies in harness. Vacancies thus are only far and few between. Others take up teaching posts in secondary and primary schools. Abysmally paid, most of them have to carry out many more duties than just teaching art. Another outlet is employment in the advertising agencies. There are only a few agencies in Calcutta, and vacancies there are not a matter of regular happening either. The rest find themselves in any odd job they can get hold of. A lot give up art.

NO PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS

Excepting veteran Jamini Roy, to our knowledge, there is not one instance of an artist in Calcutta who has actually succeeded in making a living out of painting. Jamini Roy, after his years of poverty, has to-day made good. Atul Bose, apart from the short periods of teachings, survived his free lance style, but not in the way he would have wished to, as a creative artist, but as a portrait painter. Thus, in the strictest sense of the world, there are no professional artists in Calcutta, but for Jamini Roy.

GROUPS

Artists in Calcutta form into groups now and then but disintegrate again. It does not seem to be in the Bengali character to function in groups. But two such groups have actually survived. The
Society of Contemporary Artists was formed in 1960 and is still going strong. This is quite an achievement. Most groups that are founded come together for financial and practical reasons, not ideological. Another group that was founded in 1963, and in spite of a period of moribund state has revived itself, is Calcutta Painters. There was a group named Young Artists Society, but nobody hears of them anymore. Another group appeared and disappeared, it was called The Art Council. I believe another group named The Canvas group is still existing, although not much is seen or heard about it.

As there are no promoters or patrons, the artists have to do all to show their works to the public. Singly, the expenses come too high for many. In a group the cost can be shared. There is another big advantage. A group draws greater attention from the public as well as the press. Also, a registered group, after 3 years of existence, can apply for a Lalit Kala Grant, which is given provided the group can satisfy the Akademi about certain stipulations. Such a grant is a great aid. The Society of Contemporary Artists is one of the beneficiaries, and thus they can to-day hold exhibitions in Calcutta and outside without much worry about cash.

EXHIBITING FACILITIES

Exhibiting facilities for the artists in Calcutta are pathetic. The Academy of Fine Arts on Cathedral Road has rooms that can be rented, but the lighting and arrangements of the rooms are far from satisfactory. The Calcutta Information Centre has a room that can be hired for this purpose, but not only that the room has no arrangements to hang pictures properly, it cost is fabulously high for the average artist, Rs. 260/- per week. The Birla Academy on Southern Avenue has built a very beautiful gallery to be hired out, but it suffers from the handicap that it is a bit out of the way, and is badly served by public transport system.

Essentially, the larger number of artists in Calcutta remain isolated from each other. There are no meeting points. There are two tea shops where some of them meet, fairly regularly, Sutripti in South Calcutta and New York Soda Fountain on Lenin Sarani.
SCULPTORS

The odds are even greater against the sculptors. Sculpture needs greater investment. Transportation is a hard and expensive job. As a result there are indeed only a handful of sculptors in Calcutta. And excepting veteran Debiprosad Roychowdhury, who is busy with large Central Government orders, there is not one sculptor who earns enough to live on sculpture. Even the ardent and wellknown Sarbari Roychowdhury, who was independent until a few months ago, has taken up teaching. As he has not taken up for money's sake,—he may be counted as the only sculptor who survived on sculpture in Calcutta, but how! The hardships that this sculptor had to undergo was only matched by his zeal for art.

TRENDS

Art had died a temporary death in India after the Moghuls. Then much later, during the British days, three art schools were established, in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. And the method of teaching was as in the West. A new, foreign method was imposed upon and the students learnt to imitate the nineteenth century western school of painting.

The Bengal school, founded by Abanindranath and Gaganendranath Tagores, made bold attempts so shake off this very alien form. They tried to discover a new the Indian traditional methods,—and in the process, through research into Persian, Chinese and Japanese styles, a new form evolved. Abanindranath had a number of disciples who in turn spread around the country and influenced others. In this way, the Bengal school played a noticeable part in the recent history of art in India. But otherwise, it has lost its hold progressively due to its sentimental, wishywashy and dreamland qualities. In order to discover India in art form, they took resort to depicting legends and historical events,—but failed to reproduce the reality of the day. The nationalistic trends in politics emphasized this school's role. It was a patriotic act, per se, to reject the western oil tradition and establish a neo-Oriental style. Yet, in a sense, it was fighting a losing battle against the onrush of the academic western style of painting.
The art schools put their biases towards the oil painting in the western style and the so-called "Indian painting" sections remained the lesser favoured departments.

But the academic western style that had percolated down to here was decidedly of a very dead nature. It was imitative, and imitation in art is tantamount to sin. It is doomed to failure and a second rate quality. A shake up was necessary. Calcutta group, founded in 1940, did it. Calcutta group decided to formulate, through individual and separate efforts, a new approach. Its members realized that the West had come for good, but banal imitation was worse than useless. They tried to bend the Western approach to accommodate Eastern spirit. And thus, the beginning of modern movement in art in India began in Calcutta.

It was the war that brought the catalysts. Many English and American educated people came conscripted in the army to Calcutta. It was in the contact with these people that the Calcutta group artists found the yeast. They discussed with these visitors, and saw books and reproduction of paintings and sculpture by modern artists of the West. But modern art took time to catch on. It was having a tough uphill task. Both, the nationally spirited 'Indian Painting' and academic style Western Painting hold their grounds strongly. And so, the Academy of Fine Arts' Annual Exhibitions showed all the three trends,—the minority still being the samples of the modern school.

Gradually, but decidedly, the scales were changing their balance, and if one had to merely study the annual shows of the Academy of Fine Arts, one noticed that modernistic works were on the increase. The resistance from the "Indian School" remained prominent, but the Academic western style took a steep plunge downwards. Going by the latest annual show, it has died its depth. Excepting a small number of "Indian style" paintings, the entire show was of modern art.

Modern art originated in the West. But, it has to-day spread throughout the entire world excepting the Communist countries, where it is banned. Its waves have reached and flooded our country
too. Art has now developed a form very international. Nevertheless, local flavours, some spiritual differences between arts produced in different cultures, are expected. Albeit modern, it should contain the story, the emotions, the feelings of India. Most intelligent artists are aware of this legitimate demand and they are working towards that way. But, as such a process is slow to develop, spectacular Indianization is not noticeable in the Calcutta field.

There are some, although they are very few and have made no mark as yet, who believes in the very important role of politics in art, that art should reflect and depict the struggle of the people against their oppressors. Those artists are aligned with lofty organizations. But because they are few and have not yet come out into open activity, one can say that there is no political polarization of any kind in the art field as yet.

STATISTICS

To find a table of accurate or even approximate figures of how many artists there are in Calcutta and what they are doing is absolutely beyond my capacity,—it will be the job of a thorough-going sociologist who can devote time and energy in plenty. My enquiries with artists here and there has led me to conclude that nobody has any idea as to how many artists there are in Calcutta.

The Government College of Art and Craft was found in 1864. The Indian College of Art and Draughtsmanship in 1893. Through all these years they have been manufacturing artists. Each year around 100 students pass out from these two colleges.

If a total could be worked out of the students graduating from these two institutions over all these years,—minus those who have gone away to other parts of India,—minus those who have given up art—minus those who have died, add those who are self-taught, and then an idea may be got of the possible number of artists in Calcutta.

CONCLUSION

The conditions in Calcutta are very against the artist. He has no buyers, no patronage, the state does not care, public bodies or
private enterprise are apathetic; his employment prospects are low, and when employed, more often than not he is badly paid; when he paints, he has not easy exhibiting facilities,—when he exhibits, he does not find an appreciative audience; the press does not care, the journals are not interested. *A total anti-situation.*

Yet artists live in Calcutta. Giant I.C.I. has not been able to eradicate cockroaches,—giant Calcutta indifference has not been able to stamp out the artists. Artists are like the cockroaches, indestructible,—excepting, I as an artist, prefer to think that we are much nicer than the cockroaches. An artist has no choice. He discovers himself an artist, and that is that. But what I think is surprising that considering the heavy odds against him, a number of good works are still being produced.

I do not wish my subjective involvement, I myself being a practicing painter, to make me so romantic and blind as to say that the general standard is very high. I am afraid it is not so. For this, I do not make the artists solely responsible,—this is inevitable. Such a negative atmosphere can only give very little scope for the artist to flex his muscles and find true expression. And, it is a matter of pride that in spite the general apathy towards the artists,—so many have retained their integrity—and are painting whatever little they can.

Nevertheless, when sometimes finger is pointed at the artists and they are told that their works are divorced from the reality of their surroundings, that their works do not reflect the sentiment and feelings and moods of the changing situation in the country, I am afraid, I have to admit that the accusation contains some truth. "Calcutta", the accusers say, "is not the place for sweet dreams,—it is here where the artist confronts harsh reality. Why does not his works reflect it?"

I place it to the sociologists again for research on this score, on the alienation of the artist from his people. I, however, would like to add that many of the really talented artists are unconsciously reflecting the tensions of the atmosphere, although they may not be identified with any specific movement,
I end my paper with the full assertion that I believe that there is
tremendous talent in Calcutta. It would burst out into efflorescence
under kinder conditions. I believe that the Calcutta educated middle
class public, once it is given the chance to see works of art, will fully
reciprocate with enthusiasm and eagerness. It has far too few oppor-
tunities to see art at all. Why blame it?

And the rich people are beyond redemption.
COMMUNITY OF DANCERS IN CALCUTTA

Manjusri (Chaki) Sircar

Only fifty years ago community of dancers in Calcutta meant a small group of dancers and their accompanying musicians and teachers who earned their living by entertaining so-called rich zamindars. The ‘Jalsas’ were all male parties comprising of well-to-do people who were not connoisseurs of dance. The quality of the patrons had an inescapable degrading effect and their dancing concentrated more on ‘Shringara’ with the exclusion of other ‘rasas’. Society looked down upon these dancers, who in spite of these severe limitation in the pattern of patronage somehow managed to keep the flickering flames of this noble art still burning.

Rabindranath Tagore for the first time recognized the aesthetic value of dance for modern citizen of India and introduced it as a subject in his institution at Santiniketan. It was not an easy task for him to make dancing as a worthy pursuit among the Bhadralok class. He faced severe criticism and protest from puritan Bramho-Samajists as well as English educated Hindus. In spite of this resistance the poet made amazing progress during his life-time.

Around 1917, Tagore brought a Manipuri dance Guru to Santiniketan to train the students and from then onward invited teachers of Kathakali and Kathak from the South to Santiniketan. He even introduced Ceylonese Kandiyan dancing, Javanese dance styles and made mild experiments with Western ballet forms with the help of a Russian ballet dancer. In his dance compositions he also utilized several folk dance motifs as well. In course of time he was able to create an environment in Bengal in which dancing as an art became respectable although some social resistance continued. Apart from playing the pioneering role of making dance a socially respectable art Tagore’s contributions will be gratefully remembered for his creative experiments with dance forms. His “dance-dramas” (Nritya-Natyas)
made a powerful impact on the middle class Bengali mind and a cultural movement was generated in which it became quite common for schools, colleges and clubs to organize Tagore’s dance dramas.

Men and women from middle class society became alive to the importance of dance as a new field of accomplishment. The patronage gradually shifted from the rich-class to the middle-class.

In the meantime Udayshankar’s international fame brought a new prestige for the professional dancers in India and for the traditional Indian dance forms. Although Shankar did not start dancing in Calcutta, he attracted several young men of Bengal to go to his centre in Almora and several of them chose Calcutta for their career in later years. A new generation of professional dancers appeared on Calcutta stages around the middle of the third decade of this century. For the first time dance was recognized as an independent performing art on the modern stage. In the thirties we found several Bengalee dancers making an impact on the dancing world. Mani Bardhan, Maharaja Bose and Pralhad Das belonged to this group. During this period Kathak dancers Jamunaprasad and Ramnarayan Misra started teaching in Calcutta. In the beginning Kathak was the dominant style in the music-cum-dance schools of Calcutta. But within a few years Guru Gopal Pillai of Kerala came to teach Kathakali and Guru Brajabasi Sing came to teach Manipuri. The group of young dancers influenced by Shankar’s dynamic way of presentation experimented with more creative dancing.

During the middle of the forties the leftist inspired Indian Peoples’. Theatre movement gained momentum and the emphasis of this movement was to combine folk forms with classical styles and the themes concentrated on urgent social problems. I.P.T.A.’s cultural movement brought to the forefront several gifted and creative dancers. Quite a few of them continued their creative life in Calcutta in later periods. Among them we find outstanding dancers like Shanti Bardhan who staged dance-dramas like ‘Discovery of India’ and ‘Panchatantra’. From the beginning of the forties ‘All Bengal Music Conference’ gave distinct recognition of dance in the world of music. Organizers like Manmatha Babu, Bhupen Babu, Lala Babu, Kishroo
Shing Nahar, Kishenchand Baral and impresario like late Haren Ghose contributed a great deal toward establishment of a professional field for the dancers. But still Tagore's overall inspiration was the dominant mode for the middle-class Bengali society specially in non-professional middleclass homes. One would like to know the condition of dancers and dancing in Calcutta in the two post-independence decades: how Calcutta dancers are carrying forward the initial creative impulse of Tagore, Shankar and I.P.T.A. movement—what new areas of expression are they exploring—what incentives the local environment is providing them and what frustrations they are facing in this city of Calcutta.

One change which the two decades have brought about is the stratification and segmentation of dance styles, whereas in the pioneer movements *synthesis* was the guiding spirit. At present stratification into distinct styles seems to challenge the earlier clan. One group is strictly devoted to classical styles like Manipuri, Kathak, Kathakali and Bharatnatyam. But still these dancers have limited audience. Large music conferences offer some opportunities to these classical performers but still dance is a side programme in such conferences. In recent years we feel a growing tendency towards specialization in terms of distinct forms. Kathak which held the major position in the classical field is gradually yielding ground to Bharatnatyam. Nritya-Bharati dance college run by Pralhad Das since 1945 introduced classical dance teachers like Maruthappa Pillai in Bharatnatyam, Guru Krishna Nair Guru of Kathakali, Guru Atamba Shing of Manipuri and Indrakumar Pattanayaka in Orissi for the first time to the Calcutta students. Recently Rabindra-Bharati University and Uday Shankar Culture Centre have brought together several dance teachers from beyond the borders of Bengal. Many students after completing their training have started teaching in the local schools. They have made several classical styles, once rare to the Bengalee students, available to the average students.

The other group of dancers although starting from strong classical background in their training are less conservative in attitudes towards rigidity of techniques. They are willing to blend various classical
forms into a creative synthesis. Here the great divide between the Northern and the Southern styles, which is so marked in the field of music is often crossed and we experience a unique harmony embracing various schools. This speciality of the group of modern dancers of Calcutta immediately attracts attention. From the beginning several of these dancers were influenced by Tagore’s conception of blending several styles and Uday Shankar’s dynamic presentation. Though Tagore did not establish any high professional standard of dancing during his life time, his dance-dramas demand intellectual maturity and fine skill in dance and drama techniques. During his time the dance drama forms were still in the budding stage. But he broke the tradition of so-called ‘Hindu’ dance and enlarged the theme of dance beyond Shiva-Krishna mythological themes. He raised fundamental moral issues about untouchability in ‘Chandalika’ on the basis of the Jataka story, criticized the age-old rigidities of traditional society in Tasher Desh and gave new dimensions to several ancient festivals like ‘Varshamangal’, ‘Vasantatsuva’ etc. The rigidity of stylistic approach of the traditional schools of dancing did not satisfy his creative mind. Although he himself was not a dancer, in choreographing the dances with the help of Gurus he demanded a relatively free quality in movement. His own philosophy of dance could be described in his own words: “There is no bounds to the depth or to the expression of any art which like dancing is the expression of the life’s urge. We must never shut it within the bounds of a stagnant ideal, nor define it as either Indian or Oriental or occidental for such finality only robs it of life’s privilege which is freedom”. He not only provided a respectable atmosphere for the dancer but also opened a new panorama for the inspired creative dancer.

Uday Shankar achieved a high level of artistic excellence in blending several styles into his own. He established a high professional standard in creative dancing. This influenced the Calcutta dance-world.

From both of these persons, a great poet and a great dancer, Calcutta dancers have drawn their inspiration for working on a much wider perspective in comparison to the dancers of the other cities in India who are still mostly devoted to one traditional school or the other.
Creative dance performances specially the dances choreographed on Tagore’s songs and poems have guaranteed audience in Calcutta. Due to this popularity certain problems have arisen. Big crowd of amateur performers have grown who are often misunderstood as representatives of this style. Many men and women without proper training appeared on Calcutta stages. Several institutions and organizers grabbed this opportunity of earning easy money by these unpaid or poorly paid performers. As a result the style suffered quite a bit in public estimation. To interpret Tagore’s songs and poems a dancer not only needs skill in technique but also a deep literary sense to feel the depth and subtlety of the subject. The danger comes from the more conservative classical-trained dancers too. Often a kind of crudity in showing off skill, a common feature among Kathak and Bharatnatyam dancers, kills the aesthetic essence of a dance performance. In spite of these twin difficulties, continuous efforts on the part of the inspired and deligent creative dancers, has made it possible to a great extent in choreographing Tagore’s songs and poems brilliantly. On many occasions Calcutta has experienced such good performances, especially those guided by the renowned exponent of Tagore’s songs Debabrata Biswas.

But a creative dancer often has to face the conservative attitude of some critics who sling discouraging remarks like “not after Tagore school of dance”. Unfortunately they have very little knowledge of Tagores’ own conception of dancing. Is there any such thing as Tagores’ school of dancing? Again, one cannot accept the experimental phase of dance of Tagore’s time as a standard style in specific choreographic order. It will be better to discard the idea of naming it as a school of dance and rather call it as a contemporary style inspired by Tagore.

In recent years the Calcutta Youth Choir has shown considerable talent in bringing the folk dances and songs in a lively and fine artistic way on the Calcutta stages. “Drums of India” are not mere repetitions of tradition but a new approach of performance—making the folk art a performing art on modern stage. Contemporary problems like flood, famine and the world problems like white imperialism in Africa
and focusing on man’s strife for beauty and a better world find expression in some of the creative dance compositions. Here one could remember the memorable dance demonstration of Sukanta Bhattacharya’s poem ‘Runner’ by Shambhu Bhattacharya.

Even in the performances of Tagore-inspired style there has been great deal of change in the manner of presentation. Many dancers of this group do not restrict themselves only to Tagore’s songs. There are blending of several classical traditional dances to express various themes such as a description of spring in Cita Govinda in Orissi or Rains of Vidyapati’s lyrics in Manipuri along with Tagore’s poetic music of rain and spring. Certainly, Tagore’s poetry widens the field. The effort is most effective. One enjoys the utilization of classic as a form of modern expression. Such performances are usually rich and vibrant with classical boldness and fine sensitivity and subtlety of Tagore’s music. Recently a group in Calcutta is working on two new dance-dramas ‘Chirantan’ and ‘Idaning’. The former expresses the eternal truth in the conception of the Upanisads while the latter deals with the contemporary society—the transitional role of women in middle class Calcutta society.

There is a growing tendency of interest in original folk dances. Recently Purulia’s Chou dance has made a great stir among Calcutta dance lovers.

Despite this growing interest and popularity the dancers suffer from frustration and economic reason is the chief cause. Since 1947, after the partition of Bengal, the number of dancers with some professional training have grown tremendously. The opportunities fail to keep pace with the growth in number. Most of the dancers come from the average middle class families. Male performers are few but almost all the teachers of dance are male. But unfortunately the teachers are poorly paid. It is a tragedy for Calcutta that even the famous Guru of Kathakali, Gopal Pillai could not be properly provided for. A male dancer has to face tremendous economic pressure whereas a woman dancer can afford to take dancing as a semi-profession and stands a better chance as a performing artist while her male counterpart has to lean on tuition as his sole prop for sustenance.
In the beginning of the new era of dance, the film industry provided a new economic field. We can recall the names of dancers like Sadhana Bose, Leela Desai, Shieila Halder who became famous through the cinema screen. During later period the producers developed an unhealthy commercial attitude and exploited the dancers as vulgar exhibitionists. Bengali film failed to provide any prospect for the fine dancers. Only recently in Satyajit Ray’s “Gopi Gain Bagha Bain” one finds a fine sense of imagination in using dance movements on screen. Udayshankar is working on “Shankarscope”—a dance fantasy—using various media on the screen and on the stage. We can expect more from dance if the dancer can work through different modern media specially through one like cinema screen.

Proper communication and understanding between artists and critics is essential for the growth of an art. Such communication and understanding exists in the field of art and literature. But dance reviews in Calcutta newspapers often seem to be funny and frivolous. In contrast to music, Calcutta does not yet have an authentic cadre of dance critics. Healthy and constructive criticism demands thorough knowledge of the subject and intimate understanding of the technical problems of the performer. Such critics of dance are simply not there in Calcutta.

The dancers in Calcutta suffer from intellectual isolation from the other fields of creative excellence also. Dance as a theatre art could make greater contribution as a powerful medium if the dancers could work together with poets, playwrights, painters, sculptors, photographers etc. Here one might recall Tagore again whose creative genius worked in unison and intimate collaboration with artists like Nandalal Bose and others to fuse stagecraft, make-up, costume and poetic music to blend harmoniously with dance. This is a common factor in the Western dance world also.

More than fifty years after the revival of dancing under the inspiration of Tagore where do the dancers stand socially? Do the former prejudices still prevail? To the larger section of our society, the image of a dancer is still blurred in the age-old prejudice. The vulgar dances and the crude and obscenity posters of Indian movies confuse
the average people who are not aware of the artistic world of dance. Only a few years ago a young fresh M.A. of Calcutta University was dismissed from a puritan-ridden college of South Calcutta on the ground of her being a performing dancer. This incident clearly brings out the mixed attitude of our society towards a dancer, particularly a female dancer.

It is usually unexpected for a boy or girl as a dancer to be considered as a suitable spouse in Calcutta, because very few parents in the middle and the upper classes consider dance as a desirable accomplishment in life. Most of the dancers in Calcutta have to go in for what is known locally as love-marriage, and marriages are arranged between dancers.

If we review the overall pattern of the community of dancers, we find certain characteristics which might be typical of Calcutta's complex society.

(a) The Bengali dancers are all from average middle class homes and a large proportion of them are from the relatively less conservative East Bengal families.

(b) A large number of male professional dancers have come from Kerala, Manipur, U.P. and recently from Madras and Andhra Pradesh and have settled down in Calcutta. Most of them speak fluent Bengali and communicate with their students through the Bengali medium.

(c) There is increasingly less isolation of the different stylistic groups in the different dance schools and troops. Very often a classical guru is seen to work with modern dancers.

(d) Although once I.P.T.A.'s cultural movement inspired the creativity of dancers in Calcutta, the dancers' circle unlike those in drama, music and literature remained politically unbiased. It is true that Tagore's and other contemporary dance dramas brought in social and other contemporary problems of our society into relief, but political considerations hardly has any hold on the dancing world. Dancing continues as an autonomous and independent mode of expression of the human mind.
(e) A recent tendency of getting tired of constant repetition of Tagore's dance-dramas is becoming apparent. This is a healthy sign of an urge to break new creative grounds and to deal with the vital problems of contemporary life. This half spelt demand for giving new and effective expression to the crisis of contemporary life should be a source of inspiration for the creative dancers of Calcutta. Unlike the effective modern drama movement Calcutta dancers have not yet been able to fully express the contemporary spirit. This will only be possible when creative dancers in Calcutta start operating in close collaboration and interaction with the practitioners in the other creative fields and a genuine cadre of professional critics grow. At this phase creative dancers will have to struggle hard to maintain their own steam.

In spite of several sources for frustration Calcutta's dancing community is unique in India. Although Calcutta cannot boast of any special indigenous classical style like some other cities of India but none can deny her the honour of being the birthplace of a highly sophisticated contemporary dance style.
THE MOVIE-MAKERS OF CALCUTTA

Mrinal Sen

To make a film, anywhere on earth or in space or under the sea, you need a camera and a sound recorder and also the necessary gadgets and, may be, more of these depending, of course, on your understanding of the medium and on their availability and your requirement. You also need raw film to record the visuals and the aurals, the words and the incidentals. And then with a heart to feel and a brain to operate and organize, you are to use all these materials to produce what the Americans term “movie”.

I am not an archivist; that is not my business. I shall therefore make no attempt to find out who was the first to collect all the available movie materials as well as the heart and the brain to make the first movie in Calcutta. But as a Calcuttan I shall no doubt have an enormous sense of pride if some one can prove beyond doubts that Hiralal Sen of North Calcutta had made his feature-length movie before the world could come to know of Edwin Porter’s The Great Train Robbery in 1904. As claimed by a certain quarter, this movie and another of the same length, one hour long, and by the same Hiralal Sen were full of innovations such as close-ups, pannings, tilts etc. There are many other stories about Hiralal Sen of North Calcutta including the burning of the entire work of his lifetime two days before his death in 1917. All these, if credence could be given to them, would certainly make the history of movie-making in Calcutta much more richer than what it is now. But there are other historians too who hold different opinion and have more substantial matters to prove that the first movie in India was made in 1912 by Dadasaheb Phalke of Poona.

Whether or not there is a valid case for Hiralal Sen of North Calcutta as the first feature movie-maker of the world, not to speak
of India alone, is predominantly an archival issue and not my meat. Quite in the fitness of things, therefore, I would keep apart from such intriguing, exciting, file-searching performances of the archivists and would rather dwell on the quality of stuff produced during the early period of the Calcutta movie-makers.

In the beginning, as elsewhere, there was camera with not adequate arrangement for proper lensing, there was raw film not enough sensitive, laboratory to process the film, editing table to cut and join and technical know-how to apply. The result, in the beginning, was just an assemblage of moving pictures coherent enough to record an event or, at most, a story. It was all very crude, never going beyond its physical perception, marked by total absence of characterization and atmosphere. The early stuff, because of a certain novelty never seen before, was quite saleable; the early audiences were the least demanding. Gradually, with sure success on the commercial front, the employer-appointed technician became more certain than ever about the use of tools and began to introduce "stiffer" variety in story-material. From independent scene to picturization of dance, from dance to mythology, from mythology to Alibaba, from Alibaba to farce, from farce to Bankim Chandra and even to Sarat Chandra. That was generally the march of events during the silent period of Calcutta movie-makers. With more cogent story to tell now, the need for controlled operation of the tools and the players became more evident which, eventually, led to more activities inside the studios and less in the exterior. To work inside the studios, you need additional gadgets. So there were more gadgets in Calcutta studios. The gadgets having definite properties, movie-maker making use of them invested his work with additional properties broadly on the technical plane. But, to be objective, not much of substance was achieved during the silent period. The basic reason was the absence of a reasonable awareness on social and artistic planes.

The sound came as it did elsewhere. With sound, movie became more life-like, more exciting, more saleable. And now, with having the benefit of the spoken words and the incidentals and also the music to create atmosphere, there were a few attempts here and there,
sporadic and independent, where one could find tendencies indicating some promise, technical as well as artistic, but the promise did not last long and in a total sense there was not any appreciable improvement in the standard. The movies mostly remained "talking pictures".

Small bits of near-competence in the movies of some individuals could by no means alter the general character and, as usual, the movies made in those days did collect the fattest possible revenue. With this enormous success at the box-office, the pre-war movie-makers found themselves in a state of absolute security and remained indifferent to the needs and the possibilities of this art-form. Economic success resulted in self-complacency, self-complacency to callousness, and it was perhaps due to such callousness that the movie-makers in those days could afford to stay far away from the "contagions" of other arts, particularly the contemporary Bengali literature which made tremendous advance during the 'thirties'.

And then came the war which made the severest kind of impact on our people. Things moved fast, too fast for one to comprehend. And the mind, in the midst of this confusion, moved faster. The artist could not escape the reality around him. At the end of the war, some of the movies started becoming noticeably different, both in Calcutta and Bombay. Several movie-makers, during that period of transition, derived a lot of inspiration from other arts, drama in particular, and almost inevitably a trend in Calcutta movies was about to take shape. What followed next was not without a constant sense of uncertainty. Activities were very often uneven, and the trend in the making got very much diffused when, at last, moved by the tremendous sight of the East Bengal refugees crowding, in successive waves, the streets of Calcutta, a man called Nimai Ghose came out into the open with his camera and with almost nothing at all. Nimai Ghose, an active participant of the Indian Peoples Theatre Movement and a cameraman, collected some meagre fund and a groups of non-professional players and even refugees, most remarkable of them all being an old woman, picked up from the depth of immense suffering who had just arrived from East Bengal and had known how one felt when leaving ones own homeland. With all these explosive
materials and very little money Nimai Ghose left the glamour-world of the movie-makers of Calcutta and made his own movie and named it Chinna-mool. True, it was not artistic enough, but it was no doubt very timely for more than one reason. Watching this movie one could see a certain courage, a certain conviction and a certain faith in a newer kind of movies neither known to the movie-makers of Calcutta nor to the metropolitans audience. A popular failure though in terms of of takings at the box-office, one could read on the faces of a very minority spectators the reverence of a new experience.

In 1952, the First International Film Festival was held in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. As far as Calcutta was concerned, the festival had an unusually remarkable role to play, that of stirring the imagination of the Calcuttans. To give you an idea of the impact the festival created I just take a page out of my old diary. It was a certain Friday and that was the time when I had nothing to do with the movies except nurturing an impossible hope that some time in future I would get into movies. I was at that time a medical representative, my job being detailing our products to the doctors. The writing on the page was as follows.

Friday · 10 a.m.—12 noon . Visiting doctors 4 will do. (My daily quota, however, was visiting 8 doctors).

3 p.m. . At Purna Theatre: Open City Rome by Roberto Rossellini.

6 p.m. . At Menoka: Jour de Fete by Jaques Tati.

9 p.m. . At Light House: Miracle in Milan by Vittorio de Sica.

That was the time I had. That was the time my friends had. That was the time the film-enthusiasts of Calcutta had too. They got busy, running like me from one theatre to the other religiously watching the wonder that was post-war world cinema. The Calcuttans thus became very active, they became more demanding and the “contagion” spread in the air which also partially invaded the film studios “corrupting”, so to say, the younger technicians. And, at last, in 1955, after
years of stress and strain, the greatest event in the history of Indian Cinema took place: the making of *Pather Panchali*.

With absolutely no experience in movie-making, Satyajit Ray collected a group of youngmen to work as technicians and, like Nimai Ghose, selected a group of non-professionals and also one professional actor and then walked straight into an unknown and uncertain world defying everything that was prescribed for the movie-makers of the Calcutta studios. The result was stupendous, giving him a place among the world’s living best. It was, in fact, the same old perennial landscape that Ray filmed, the same old locomotive running across the distant horizontal that he put in a sequence, the same old pond with stagnant water that came so many hundred times on our screen; and all these and many other typicals of the village visuals not unknown to our audience were recorded on the same kind of film by the same camera with no extra gadgets, but everything in the film, the visuals and auralss, assumed an entirely different dimension. What, in essence, made this difference? The movie-materials being the same, the heart and the brain at work were all that made all the difference. With the growth of science and technology making their headway in our country and with a tremendously growing sense of urbanity in Calcutta there was indeed an intense need for such a man to come and join the business of movie-making in Calcutta, a man like Satyajit Ray whom Louis Malle has rightly called “the spiritual child of Bengali Renaissance”. *Pather Panchali* set the ball rolling, a case for a new trend was sharply defined and the ethics of the movie most eloquently brought in. Years to follow saw many happenings in Calcutta, things that contributed significantly to the art of the movie. Trends took definite shape, styles in order to communicate ideas came up on the screen, and with the growth of trends and styles, cropped up problems of diverse nature. The years to follow *Pather Panchali* were indeed quite eventful when the medium was handled in different manner, problems dealt with differently. A movement, so to say, became very much apparent during the post-*Pather Panchali* period with Ray and a few others giving exceedingly animated account of themselves.

The movie-scene in Calcutta since *Pather Panchali* has taken an
altogether different turn. Talking about the film society movement, the societies are almost always in festive mood today, screening world movies of outstanding merit and all those suffering from mediocrity, studying movies in their minutest details and being religiously critical of every bit of thing done on celluloid. Over-enthusiasm does sometimes become tiresome, but what one notices from the activities of the film societies is an acute sense of awareness. And that is a phenomenon so much linked up with things taking place in a certain section of movie-making in Calcutta since 1955.

With this growing consciousness mostly outside and partly inside the studios, the future, at least on the surface, appears to be not that bleak, but to take a practical view of things, the present state of affairs is pretty uncertain. To do the minimum good to the investor who always wants maximum return at the box-office, a large audience is required, larger than what all our film societies can mobilize. And the majority of the audiences continue to patronize, as before, anything that is nearer gross stuff. So, here is one problem which, as in other countries, worries the conscientious artist. A constant sense of insecurity arising out of fear, fear of a possible financial crash, is liable to considerably cool down the enthusiasm of even an artist of ideological integrity.

And this is what we see today among our Calcutta movie-makers: more of cautiousness, more of rethinking and less of courage. The spirit of challenge is now seen to be in the process of liquidation. We see today more of conforming to the set rules rather than furthering the case of non-conformism. The trend that was built in the mid-fifties and pursued all these years in big and small proportions is now seen to be fast disintegrating. Movie-making in Calcutta is now tending to go what I would say an Establishment-way.

Whether in art, business or politics, the Establishment, to ensure its existence and growth, sets certain rules and uses its own machinery to tell others that the rules must be strictly observed. The Establishment in our trade is no exception. It has set norms for the story, prescribed rules for the application of the movie-materials, of techniques and has the last word on audience reaction. It has been trying
to convince others, if not itself, that the making of movies is its monopoly and not the "outsider's" business.

But the fact remains that in 1955 there emerged such an "outsider" who made an aggressive infiltration and set a trend of world stature. And now, with thirteen film societies functioning in Calcutta, with seminars and symposia being held frequently on various social and academic levels, with the fascinating urbanity that has grown in fairly large proportion among the Calcuttans and with remarkable cross-fertilization of different arts operating in the metropolitan cultural life, there is no reason why the spirit of the early fifties should not come back with greater vigour to the movie-making in Calcutta. What is needed today is challenging the authority of the Establishment as Ray did in 1955. Let the new forces defy the rules, let there be no compromise with the laws of the Establishment and let there be desperate efforts, as in 1955, to create new artistic conventions. What the movie-making in Calcutta needs today is aggressive infiltration which will open up new horizon even for the "insiders".
CO-EXISTENCE OF MANY MUSICAL TRADITIONS AND THE COMMUNITY OF MUSICIANS IN CALCUTTA

Rajyeswar Mitra

I

INTRODUCTION

It would be worthwhile to comprehend why the subject deserves scrutiny and discussion. Like other traditions, musical traditions have also evolved from the likings of different types of people inhabiting in Calcutta, who are the components of the society which has come to be known as the Calcutta Society. This means, by analysing the different musical traditions obtaining in Calcutta we are trying to appreciate the mental set up of the entire Society divided into so many groups. Or, in other words, various musical institutions reflect the different mental structure of a vast number of citizens and it is thus, an assessment of a popular society looked from a particular angle of vision.

Let us not go into the details of what is good or bad and what is wholesome or unwholesome. But, let us have an unbiased view of the entire position.

Now, what is a tradition? It means something coming down from generations, be it orally or through written texts, by specialized practice or by some customs prevailing in the family or among an ethnic group. We are interested in finding out whether certain characteristic of the entire society persists in spite of changing circumstances, due to deep emphasis in affection, beliefs and values. We are interested in finding out what are the persistent traditions in the sphere of music in Calcutta society.
EARLY MUSICAL CULTURE OF CALCUTTA WITH THE RURAL HINTERLAND CONTINUITY

Calcutta is not an ancient city, neither it has a long standing reputation of many developed traditions like other old cities passing through various turmoils of many centuries. Originally it consisted of some villages not marked by cultural activities. The British business community founded the city for their own advantage and it turned out to be the biggest city in India merely by accident of history. But the localities near Calcutta were more developed since earlier times Places like Serampore, Chandannagar, Chuchurah, Nabadwip, Santipur, Khardah, Shyannagar, Bhatpara, etc. were all populated by “cultured” people and the entertainments obtaining in these areas readily filled up the cultural vacuum of Calcutta.

Calcutta became the metropolitan city since the end of the eighteenth century and from that time onwards rich and influential people began to settle in Calcutta gradually from their village abodes. The required entertainments and different musical sects and groups gathered in Calcutta for finding patronage. Among them rural folk singers were not wanting. Kabiwallas, Jatrawallas, Panchali Singers, Kathaks, Dhapwallas, Tappa singers all assembled in Calcutta and formed groups. Among them, Kabiwallas were hailed with much enthusiasm and we all know what amount of patronage they obtained from the aristocrats. Kabi songs were not art songs in the proper sense of the term, but some popular lyrics rendered into music. It was a very lively pattern since it was in the form of a musical duel. Such boisterous songs and music were liked by the people of the eighteenth century. Music did not lack in varieties, but there was not so much of refinement. Calcutta Society was more or less the same old village society where different village patterns gathered in a concentrated form and from Calcutta one could guess what was the general mental set up of the whole country. It was the mentality of somewhat contented people who were rehabilitated in peaceful surroundings after an irksome period of insecurity and fear. The enlightenment of the modern age, however, did not yet cast its gleam on
these people although worn out ideas and practices of the mediaeval
ages were being given up by degrees.

III

THE LATER URBAN PHASE (19TH CENTURY)

Urban types began to grow with the advent of the nineteenth
century. New ideas of theatre, lyric songs (including Brahma
Sangeet), concerts, instrumentals etc. began to invoke new creations
whereas the old patterns continued to be modified and remodelled.
As for example, the old Akhdai songs were broken into Half Akhdai
to make it more popular. Tappas were polished and even folk patterns
like Agamani, Shyamasangeets were embellished with the touches of
Tappa style. Panchalis were renovated and various activities of
the society were eulogized or criticized through this medium. Dasarathi
Roy's Panchali was a new creation and the old enthusiasm of the
Kabi songs was reflected on this new variety. Classical Raga music
found a new impetus from the patronage of the interned Nawab
Wazed Ali Shah whose court attracted Ustads from various parts and
a section of Calcutta musicians eagerly liked to be initiated by them.
This marked the beginning of a serious culture of Raga music in the
city and identification of various singers with different Gharanas.

During the later nineteenth century certain popular varieties like
Panchali, Half Akhdai, Kabi, Tarja etc. lost their charm rapidly
and theatrical songs and lyric songs captivated minds of people more
readily. This would indicate that at the initial period of the nine-
teenth century there was a small enlightened circle who wanted some-
thing more refined in the art of music. But the same old masses still
liked simple enjoyment in the old pattern and this was also the trait
of Babu culture. These Babus of the nineteenth century patronized
Kabi, Panchali, Half Akhdai, Kathakata etc. on the one side and
also classical songs, classical dances of the Baijis on the other. During
the later nineteenth century there was a polished urbanized educated
class who also having been influenced by the puritanic movement of
Brahmoism did not like many of the old varieties, but enjoyed good
lyric songs produced by eminent intellectuals. Thus at the end
of the nineteenth century we find a peculiar co-existence of various musical trends which could be broadly divided into entertaining, devotional, lyrical and classical. At this time Calcutta comprised of people of various tastes and various traditions of music easily co-existed in the city. Although urbanized, the old culture and custom still prevailed in Calcutta and there was a peculiar mixture in the urbanized musical arts.

IV

SOPHISTICATION AND SPECIALIZATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Twentieth century dawned with more sophistications. Some of the previous traditions like Kabi, Panchali etc. went into obsolescence and others were modernized. Lyrics and dramatic songs were variegated and elaborated. Several distinct forms of the city’s own culture began to grow and the old unostentatious forms came to the field of theatre and other musical trades. The Gramophone Company started with utmost public support and enthusiasm. There was altogether a new awakening in musical appreciation while the catholic instinct of listening to all types of music still persisted. The first two decades of the twentieth century at least, showed that people were tolerant so far as different musical groups were concerned. Whatever might be the feeling of different classes, music was held as a common entertainment for all. Even if a statistics of the collaboration of Gramophone records with the citizens at this time could be taken, it would have been found that the tendency was to buy them according to merit regardless of the particular category to which they would belong.

Gradually, more changes occurred in our music and the cultural outlook was broadened immensely by the impetus given by a personality like Tagore and there was also repercussions of the creative movements in the field of dance initiated by Uday Sankar. Music was practised more liberally by the middle classes than before. Classical songs became more popular and conferences were organized for appreciation of higher musics. A class of lyric songs developed and was called “modern songs”. Actually this class was fostered by commercial interest and popularity was its criterion. Nevertheless, it has many good characteristics also and several composers and artists of no mean merit contributed to this category. Similarly, a
type more fit to be called classico-modern (Rag Pradhan, Ramya Giti) also grew. It was primarily classical, but the lyrical value of the songs was not neglected. Folk tunes were again favoured in some of these synthetic innovations. Several artists earned immense popularity in Calcutta by singing songs in various folk tunes.

By this time, however, music became ramified into several branches and a sense of critical evaluation grew among a section of the people. A tendency developed to judge the merits of existing musical varieties and to sort out their distinct appeals. Every tradition was scanned by its inner value. It is quite natural that this should happen with the spread of general education and in keeping with this, various groups arose in the musical society who chose particular classes of music according to their liking. It is this feeling of selective choice which prompted a deep appreciation for folk tunes during the thirties of this century. Why was it that some types of Baul, Bhatiali etc. became popular while Jatra, Panchali of the older days went out of favour? It was because the universal appeal of these songs was recognized and a new value was attached to them. This sense of finding out good in artistic creation also led to the wide appreciation of the Ghazals composed in Bengali by the poet Nazrul Islam. Hindi classical songs and Tappas were already existing but why did the Bengali songs of Jnanendra Prosad Goswami or Vismadev Chatterjee composed in classical style elicit so much public admiration? Its source was again this new sense of evaluation. It was curious that people would find so much interest in the Kirtans sung by Krishna Chandra Dey while the classical Kirtans were forgotten. It was because people had found a new appeal in these Kirtans which they did not get in older forms.

V

THE POST-WAR PERIOD: CRYSTALLIZATION OF EXCLUSIVE GROUPS

In the post-war period the tendency towards specialization was further developed in the music of our society as in the case of other aspects of culture. As a result different groups have crystallized rather firmly in the music world of Calcutta. One of the characteristics of such groupism is that one group is not interested in the other. Every group seems to be totally devoted to foster its own particular
taste. Often no love is lost between these different groups which
go under the categories of Modern, Tagorian, Folk, Classical, Instrumental etc. Perhaps the culture of music is being improved by such
individualistic efforts, but such existence of different musical factions
can hardly be termed as peaceful co-existence. There are many
musical institutions in Calcutta where the pupils can find out
the subject of their own choice and they can thus gather experience
in those particular subjects only. This also reflects the same self
centred tendencies which are now generally found among the
citizens.

Very recently certain loud and popular Western types of music
have gained popularity among a particular class. Calm and sedate
types of older songs do not attract them. They depend upon cinema,
cabaret and disc records for these songs. Primarily it is commerce
which is creating and fulfilling the demands of the people for music as
in the case of other spheres of culture. It is they who are controlling
this sphere and catering musical forms according to different tastes.
They are regularly scrutinizing the different mental levels of the
people and producing appropriate forms of music.

After a careful survey of the whole situation we may come to the
conclusion that the society itself has been very lucidly reflected in the
music of the city. It is usually found that those who are rich and
contented find satisfaction in calm and quiet and melodious forms
which include Rabindra Sangeet, lyric songs and Raga music. But
there remain a large section of people who are discontented, dejected
and struggling with various hostile forces generated in their families
or the society itself. They probably want to bring about a sensational
change in our music, because they find an inspiration in the loud,
often incongruous, sound effects produced by certain special creations
which are not compatible with classical and folk forms. I do not
know how their co-existence is to be explained, but as the society is
passing through abnormal times so also is its music. There is every-
thing, every possibility, resources and no dearth of genius either in
this city, but not the proper co-ordination as a whole, because organiza-
tion itself is perhaps lacking in this society.