

Kala Vikash Kendra

(Address at the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Kala Vikash Kendra at Cuttack on 04.01.2003)

I deem it an honour and privilege to be invited to participate in the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of *Kala Vikash Kendra* of Cuttack, the premier cultural organization of Orissa and one of the reputed centres of culture in the entire country. In a country where mushroom organisations bubble momentarily and burst, it is indeed creditable that *Kala Vikash Kendra* had weathered the vicissitudes of private endeavour and successfully completed half century of glorious existence.

Fine Arts and Crafts are the spice of life. They bring cheer to a dull drab existence. They take one's mind from cares and distress of life and lift the mind into a realm of peace, beauty and joy. Shakespeare said in *Romeo and Juliet*:

When gripping grief
The heart doth wound
And doleful dumps
The mind oppress
Then music with her
silver sound
with Speedy help
Doth lend redress.

Fine Arts such as music and dance have been regarded as fifth veda in our land from time immemorial. It has been called Gandarva Veda. Lord Siva is the first dancer known to the world. In *Ayodyakanda* of *Ramayana*, Valmiki while enumerating the virtues of Rama says that Rama was trained in Music and Dance. In *Mahabharata* Arjuna while he was incognito as the eunuch Brihanalla, was teaching music and dance to Uttara the daughter of the king Virat of Matsya. Thus the great arts music and dance have come down from generation to generation from prehistoric times to modern days.

In India fine arts is intertwined with religion. Music has been the vehicle of *Bhakti*. The *Alwars* and *Nayanmars* of Tamilnadu, *Narayana Bhattadri* of Kerala, *Purandaradasa* of Kannada, *Thukaram* of Maharashtra, *Meera* of Rajasthan, *Tulasidas* and *Kabir* of North India, *Sankara Deva* of Assam, *Chaitanya Mahaprabu* of Bengal and Orissa, *Annamachariar* of Andhra and *Tyagaraja* of Tamilnadu had spread *Bhakti* through music.

The dance themes are also about gods and deities. Krishna Leela is the universal theme of dance of every kind. Thus every part of India has contributed to *Bhakti* through fine arts.

Orissa has been the home of many valuable social, religious and cultural traditions. It is here that Emperor Ashoka renounced war and became a votary of *Ahimsa* – non-violence. Kalinga secured an indelible place in the history not only of India but of the world. The marvelous towers of temple architecture at Bhuvaneshwar, the exquisite sculpture of Konark and the soul stirring images, Jagannath, Balbhadra and Subhadra in the ancient and venerable shrine at Puri are national treasures. In modern times the delicate Silver filigiri works of Orissa have captured the admiration of the entire world. In Music, Dance and Drama Orissa has a rich tradition. The gentle and supple odissi dance which has reached new heights under Kelu Charan Mahapatra, Sanjukta Panigrahi

and SonalMansingh is well known and deeply appreciated all over the world. The *Chau* dance is more ancient and is spread over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. No wonder that in such a rich and fertile soil, the Kala Vikash Kendra has taken firm roots and promises to be a perpetual tree.

Primordial Man was no better than the beast. He hunted for his food killed other animals including his own species and ate them. While other animals have remained the same whether the mighty elephant or the pretty peacock, Man has advanced in Science and Technology, Art and Literature and in fine arts like Music, Dance, Painting etc.,

Above all, Man has developed qualities like self restraint, kindness and compassion which enable him to live in peace and harmony with his own fellow beings.

In short, the progress of Mankind is measured in terms of his cultural growth. In a vast country like ours different regions have developed different patterns in Music, Dance, Handicrafts etc. For instance in India we have *Carnatic* music, *Hindustani* music, *Bengali* music and several types of folk music. In dance we have more varieties of classical dances than any other country. In Tamilnadu we have the *Bharatanatyam*, Kerala *Kathakali*, *Mohaniattam* and *Koodiyattam* which was recently recognized as classical dance by UNESCO, in Karnataka the *Yakshgana*, in upper India the *Kathak* an excellent form of natya, enriched by several other forms.

The Manipuri dance of North East India with its exquisite slow and subtle movement of their slumber, soft feet, the *chau* dance of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the *odissi* of Orissa and the *Kuchipudi* of Andhra besides countless local folk dances no less attractive than the classical ones. Similarly, different schools of painting and patterns of weaving in India had lent lustre to our life.

British colonialism denigrated the Indian medicine as Quackery, Indian scriptures as archaic obscurantism, Indian music and dances as forms cacophony and flooded the country with western goods and practices. The Temples and Rajahs the main supporters' of scholars, artists and craftsmen languished and with them the cultural excellence of India withered. The freedom movement rejuvenated pride in things Indian and national pride spurred the revival of all aspects our ancient culture.

It was at that time the Indian fine arts received a momentum. *Rabindranath Tagore's* poems, songs and plays became popular; Poet *Subramania Bharati* of Tamilnadu wrote from his exile in the French territory of Pondicherry, fiery patriotic songs and kindled masses' interest in things India.

Rukmini Devi Arundale from the elite family learned the Natya Sastra of the Sage Bharata, donned the dancer's dress and defied the orthodoxy of the times.

During those days *natya* was called "*Sadir*" the vulgar accomplishment of *Devadasis*. Rukmini Devi elevated it to the position of *Bharatanatyam* the accomplishment of the elite of India. She started the Kalakshetra in 1936 teaching Bharatanatyam, Music, Painting, Weaving beautiful patterns of sarees using vegetable dyes, developed in their own units.

The Kalakshetra is today Kalakshetra foundation (an institution of National importance) created by a Statute of Parliament.

My own association with Rukmini Devi was very long and I am fully aware of the trials and tribulations, she had passed through in building the temple of culture.

Likewise, when the ancient culture of Orissa was languishing without patronage, Late Babulal Doshi, a businessman of Cuttack with a group of culturally conscious

luminaries of Cuttack City tried to revive, patronize and propagate the performing arts of the State that led to the birth of Kala Vikash Kendra on this particular day in the year 1952.

I am aware that this institution had to pass through many ups and downs but it has survived that too successfully, to emerge as one of the biggest of its kind in Eastern India. The determination and sacrifice of Late Babulal Doshi helped his brainchild the Kala Vikash Kendra attain great heights. He also provided the right kind of infrastructural support for research development and propagation of Orissa Culture and performing arts.

His invaluable contribution will always be remembered by the art lovers of the State and the Country. The prominence it has achieved over the years is due to the significant contribution of many illustrious dignitaries namely Late Dr. Pranakrushna Parija, Dr. Harekrishna Mahtab, Biju Pattanaik, Kali Charan Pattanaik and many more. I am struck by the similarity of the cultural activities of Rukmini Devi and Babulal Doshi and the close association between them.

I saw a picture of Babulal Doshi and Rukmini Devi discussing the subject of their common interest and also a letter of appreciation of Kala Vikash Kendra's good work from Rukmini Devi to Kala Vikash Kendra. As the Chairman of the Kalakshetra foundation, it will give me immense pleasure to revive the old association and arrange for mutual exchange of programmes between Kala Vikash Kendra and the Kalakshetra foundation.

I am told that Kala Vikash Kendra has played an important role in grooming luminaries like Padma Vibhusan Kelu Charan Mahapatra, Padmashree Late Sanjukta Panigrahi, Mayadhar Rout, Ramani Ranjan Jena, Raghunath Dutta, Kumkum Mohanty and a host of others who have revived the temple dance of Orissa. This institution has also given to the State and the Country some of the eminent Gurus and contributed to the preservation of the heritage of Orissa.

In addition to imparting training in Music, Dance and Drama Kala Vikash Kendra takes interest in literary and other cultural activities also. The performances of the artistes of this Kendra are of the highest order and bring laurels to the State. I believe Kala Vikash Kendra will be successful in its endeavour to get All India recognition for Odissi Music as a Classical Music as was done for Odissi dance.

I am delighted to hear that the Kendra stages regularly national and international festival of Theatre, Dance, Music which help the people of the State to get exposure to the performance of many great artists from outside Orissa. In the present scenario of cultural explosion it is the duty of every Oriya to preserve its rich culture while enriching ours with the best in others.

But we should also guard ourselves so that the finer aspects of our cultures are not eclipsed in the name of modernism. And, I am sure Kala Vikash Kendra will provide the right kind of environment for preserving and projecting the essence of Orissan Culture.

I congratulate the promoters of Kala Vikash Kendra and hope, they will continue to serve the cause of Orissa's glorious cultural heritage in a sustained and committed manner which was the dream of Late Babulal Doshi. I wish the Kala Vikash Kendra prosperity in perpetuity.