

**Hind Islami Tahjeeb Ke Rang
Aqeedat Ke Rang**

PERFORMANCES: Zikr

Naseer Ahmad



The Richness of Assamese language and tradition is an established fact. Specially Sankardev, a Vaishnavite leader in Assam imparted a special dignity to Assamese society with his devotional songs popularly famous as Borgeet. A famous muslim religious leader known as Peer was born in Bagdad. His name was Shah Meeran, later called Azan Faquir who migrated to Assam in 1634/35. He learnt Assamese language and culture in order to propagate Islam. He took extraordinary pain to teach the Muslims the basic tenets of Islam through the help of devotional songs composed in Assamese. Such songs became popular and came to be known as zikkir. Zikkirs are performed in social gatherings and cultural functions. Zikkir is performed in a dance form by a group of nearby 20 persons led by an

accomplished singer. Zikkirs speak of the values of piety and honesty in personal life, and also the necessity of inter-community relationship in the composite society of Assam.

The Zikkir to be present here show how this great Peer united the people of Assam for a harmonious cultural and religious life in Assam.

One of the example of Zikkir is:

O' Allah, I have no feeling of difference,

O'Allah, I have no feeling of disunity and hate,

Whether a Hindu or a Muslim the same Allah's issues

I have only this feeling

Hindus will be placed in the pyre

Muslims will rest in the grave

Under the same earth

Azan Faquir puts such a devotional song to tune in Assamese in Zikkirs and spreads the principles of Islam through them.

PERFORMANCES: Qawwali

Warsi Brothers (Rampur)

Qawwali is a form of Sufi devotional music popular in the Indian subcontinent. Originally performed mainly at Sufi shrines throughout the subcontinent, it has also gained mainstream popularity. Often listeners, and even artists themselves, are transported to a state of *wajad*, a trance-like state where they feel at one with God, generally considered to be the height of spiritual ecstasy in Sufism. The roots of Qawwali can be traced back to 8th century Persia. During the first major migration from Persia, in the 11th century, the musical tradition of Sama migrated to the Indian subcontinent, Turkey and Uzbekistan. Amir Khusrau Dehlavi of the Chishti order of Sufis is credited with fusing the Persian and South Asian musical traditions to create Qawwali as we know it today in the late 13th century in India. The songs which constitute the qawwali repertoire are mostly in Urdu and Punjabi (almost equally divided between the two), although there are several songs in Persian, Brajbhasha and Siraiki. A group of qawwali musicians, called a party, typically consists of eight or nine men — women are, for all intents and purposes, excluded from traditional Muslim music as respectable women are traditionally prohibited from singing in the presence of men, though these traditions are changing — including a lead singer, one or two side singers, one or two harmoniums (which may be played by lead singer, side singer or someone else), and percussion.

PERFORMANCES: Bhand Pather : A Musicial Performance

A. Hanjura



Singing and dancing by bhandas has contributed a lot to the traditional music of Kashmir. Not only in Kashmir, but elsewhere, bhand pather (custom) has been prevalent from an ancient period. Nilmatapurana tells us that bhand pather was very famous in Kashmir and bhandas performed during festivals and other occasions. In Nilmatapurana, the word 'mandavanam' is mentioned, which means dance and songs by the bhandas.

'Bhand' comes from 'bhaana' a satirical and realistic drama, generally a monologue that is mentioned in Bharata's Natyashastra. The Bhand Pather is not a monologue but a social drama, incorporating mythological legends and contemporary social satire. Born Hindus, the bhandas converted to Islam and remain very secular in their outlook. The Bhand has to train himself, to be a skillful actor, dancer, acrobat and musician. The leader of the troupe is called 'the magun', a word taken from 'mahagun', a man of varied talents.

The bhandas dance to the tune of a specified 'mukam' and the orchestra include the shahnai, dhol, nagara and the thali.

PERFORMANCES: Tradition of Nassari

S. Ali Sajjad Abidi

Many art forms developed under the patronage of Mughal rulers of Awadh. One of these forms is Nassari, whose creator is believed to be Mir Bulaki, who used to write and read speeches in a form that had a mix of prose and poetry. His disciple Mohamad Rajatur and Tur's disciple Mirza Askari continued the tradition. However another of his disciples Mir Fida Ali began to deliver extempore speeches. He had a huger following and Hassan Nassar was one among them.

In the Nassari tradition, the speech began and ended in a poem and the rest of it was a mix of prose and poetry. The theme of Nassari varies from Hazrat Mohamad's birth to Imam Hussain's small army, and his death. For a long period Najmul Hassan Nassar was the only living exponent of this tradition. He passed away in 1967.

S. Ali Sajjad Abidi, who was influenced by Najmul Hassan Nassar from an early childhood and become his disciple, is now the only performer of this art form. Modulation of voice, rise and fall in tempo, are some of the important features of this art form.

PERFORMANCES: Rabia Basari - A Play

Seema Agarwal



“That one on fire with love and longing enamoured of the desire to approach and be consumed, that woman who lost herself in union with the Divine...”

These are Farid ud-Din Attar’s words for Rabi’a al-’Adawiyya who lived in Basra (in present day Iraq) in the 8th century. These could have been as easily said for another woman saint -Meera bai of Marwar who lived in the 16th century.

Rabi’a was born in poverty and made a slave; yet she rose beyond the confines of her situation to become one of the founders of Sufism- a branch of mysticism within Islam.

This performance retraces Rabi’a’s journey from birth to illumination- sometimes in her own words, as has been handed down by her biographers; and sometimes, echoing in the poetry and songs of Meera. All the references we get of Rabi’a paint her in awesome hues. She combines in herself a forbidding austerity with an all consuming passion that allows for nothing to stand between her and her Beloved. It seemed that her persona was demanding a choreographic structure stripped of all non-essentials yet able to convey the scorching power of her emotions. -And the challenge lay in not succumbing either to loftiness or mere emotionalism. Therefore all the aspects of choreography and the representation in the

performance seek to move away from the illustrative and towards the abstract, hoping to capture the elemental spirit of Rabi'a. Rabia is a unique inter-disciplinary effort of various fields of artistic activities.

Seema Aggarwal is a reputed Bharatanatyam dancer and choreographer, Abhilash Pillai, a renowned theatre director and a teacher in National school of drama, Sumantra Sen an artist and graphic designer and Gautam Majumdar a well know light designer.

Script : Mahmood Farooqui and Seema Agrawal.

Script developed using reference from "Rabi'a" - a biography in English written by Margaret Smith.

Translation by Prof. Mohammad Illyas from the original Persian work "Tadhkirat al- Awaliya" by Farid ud-Din Attar.

Translation of Meera's poetry into English by Shama Fatehally.

Narration : Dilip Shanker and Alka Amin. Sound Designer: Sandy. Light Designer :Gautam Mazumdar.
Set

Designing : Sumantro Sengupta. Recorded at Thukral Studios. Vocals : Vidya Rao, Chanchal Bharti & group, Sarfaraz Chisti, Nizam khan.Mridangam: Vaithreyi. Flute: Rishab Prasanna.

Collaborative Director : Abhilash Pillai. Concept and Choreography: Seema Agrawal

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PERFORMANCES: Milaad



Originating from the Arabic word, *Mawlid*, meaning birth, *Milad-un-Nabi* means, literally “birth of the prophet”. Functions celebrating this joyous event are celebrated in different ways in different parts of the world. While *Milad mehfils* are more commonly held all through the month of *Rabi-ul Awwal* and specially the 12th day to celebrate the birth of the Prophet, they are also organized to celebrate births, marriages, moving to a new home, starting a new business or any sort of auspicious event. In North India, they have made a special place in the lives of Sunni Muslims – just as the *majlises* have for the Shias. A typical *Milad* would begin with the recitation of verses from the *Quran*, followed by *Hamd*, *Naat*, and ending with *Dua*.

PERFORMANCES: Songs of Connectivity

Madan Gopal Singh

These songs had come to us from **Chisht, Khorasan, Samarkand**. They had also followed another route: from the **Persian** city of **Hamadan** they had entered the valley of Kashmir. How would they react even as they entered a space that was the closest to the imagined and long promised jannat as a reward for a life of piety and compassion? Is it hard to imagine how they would have consecrated Lal Ded, a Hindu Shaivite poetess from Kashmir, within the none-too-reverent a pantheon of Sufi saints and mendicant poets? Do we gape in wonderment at the magic wand with which they convincingly installed a Muslim Sufi saint Nooruddin as a rishi? They had also come to us from Benaras, Kasur, Lahore, Patial, Pak Pattan...

... Much later as I grew up my father told me about the 16th century Punjabi Sufi poet, **Shah Husain**, who like **Kabir** was a weaver but who insistently submerged his identity with that of his Hindu friend **Madho Lal** and wrote a bulk of his poetry in his name. And it did not take me too long to realize that the famous Punjabi love-legend, **Heer Ranjha**, was in fact a pulsating metamorphosis of the Hindu **Radha Krishna** myth into the contemporary life of the Muslim Punjab. A *Kaya Taran* as it was. Likewise, **Amir Khusrau's** forays into the *qawwali* I began to see clearly as a genre evolving and deepening in its spiritual content as a result of his interrupted sojourn in **Multan** and proximity to the followers of his *murshed's* teacher **Baba Farid of Pak Pattan**.

For **Khusrau**, the fluvial confluence of myriad languages of the Indic topography held an abiding lure. He would often write poems with one verse running in Persian and replicate the metre with precise exactitude in a local dialect in the next. This wouldn't have been possible had he not been intoxicated by the colours of the Indic community life – its rites of passage, for one; its work culture for another and its seasons and festivals for yet another. Its aromas, its kitchens! It is not surprising therefore to find him responding with such impassioned intensity to the irresistible charm of the mustard fields in full bloom much like the folk rhythms of the indigenous life did. Intoxicated, they seemed to traverse the registers of classicity and folk-culture with equal abandon. They joyously joined in the carnival of seasons. They composed and sang the baramaha - the almanac of our lives' temporal cadence. They made poetic installations of *Toona* – casting irrational spells to extend the domain of love. In this case at least the quasi-outsider, **Hazrat Amir Khusrau**, as much a native of a small village called **Patiali** as of a forgotten Turko-Persian lineage, provided unambiguous lead to the Punjabi poet **Baba Bulle Shah**. They wafted along the floating gauze of *abir* and *gulal* to traverse across the 'other' to suture religious divides through the carnivals of secular creativity. Thus would they transgress their own written unwritten codes and depict the **Caliphate** itself participating in the Hindu festival of *Holi*...

PERFORMANCES: Chahar Bayt (Tonk)

Badshah Khan



Literally meaning a quartet or four lines, this is a singing style among the pathan Muslims of north India. Stray settlements of pathans known as the Rohillas can be found in many places such as Rampur (UP), Tonk (Rajasthan), and Bhopal (MP), where they still follow some of their traditional performing arts of music and dance. Pathans love poetry, and there are special gatherings at night. They are thrilled by the moon and the darkness and go hunting or sit around the fire and recite poetry or sing and dance. This is when they hold competitions or akhadas of Charbait. As the original language of pathans is no more spoken, the Charbaits are composed in Urdu. The poetry is usually about war, bravery, romance and even religious themes. The Nawabs or aristocracy at Rampur, Tonk and Bhopal gave much patronage to this art which is sadly dying now.

PERFORMANCES: Naat Khani and Darood Khani of Kashmir

Manzoor Alam



Na'at Khani and Award Khani in Kashmir began with the arrival of Syed Ali Hamadâni. Shaik Ya'qub Sarfi, Mirza Kamil Khan, Badakhshi Habibullah Nawsharuui, Mullah Fakir Bahauallah Mattoo, Abdul Ghaffar Tawib, Mir Hussain Qadri, Ghulam Rasool Shaida are some of the other prominent Naat writers of Kashmîr.

The Na'ats were being recited at *Milad Majlis*, *Khanqahs malud*, (meetings at the Sufi shrines, (*asthans* of Sufi saints), at *Khânqâhs*, *shabeena majalis*.(evening gathering in the Khânqâh) Kashmiri poets in their Na'ats, apart from dealing with the traditional subjects, never missed to mention their own agonies and miseries and made supplication for their redressal from the prophet.

PERFORMANCES: Agra Bazar : A Play

Synopsis

In Agra, depression prevails over the bazaar and nothing sells. A cucumber-seller feels that if he could get a poem written about the qualities of his produce, it would sell better. He approaches several poets but they turn down his request. Finally he goes to the poet Nazir who promptly obliges him. He returns singing Nazir's song about cucumbers and customers flock for his product. Other vendors – the Ladduwala, the Tarboozwala etc. – follow suit and soon the whole bazaar is humming with Nazir's songs.

Around this main plot is woven the story of a young vagabond who pursues a courtesan and comes to a sticky end at the hands of his rival, a police inspector, whom he had earlier shamed in this game of love.

Director's Note

The play is woven around Nazir Akbarabadi's humanistic poetry, and humanism is the theme of the play. Nazir, a truly proletarian poet, often wrote on demand for vendors and traders, beggars and vagabonds, never caring to compile or publish what he wrote. His colloquialism and slang cut him off from the mainstream of Urdu poetry; his work was discovered generations after his death by a chance encounter of a literary man who was attracted by a beggar's song. Some material was recovered from Nazir's grand daughter and published in book form, though much of the total corpus is now lost.

Nazir never appears in Agra Bazar as no authentic account of his life is available. All we know is that the poet earned a modest living by giving tuitions to young children, refusing invitations and commissions from well-wishers like the Nawab of Lucknow.