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EVENING BLOSSOMS THE TEMPLE TRADITION OF SANJHI IN VRNDAVANA

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FOREWORD

The Indira Gandhi Centre for the Arts has endeavoured over these years, to explore to Indian cultural traditions on various planes and dimensions, as also through multiple viewpoints. Emerging out of the conceptual plan of the Centre, each programme is a part of a unified vision which seeks to identify both individual and local identity, as also interdependence and complementarity with other identities -- individual and local identity, as also interdependence and complementarity with other identities -- individual and collective. Equally important has been the Centre's endeavour to re-evaluate the processes of history by focussing on trends which are indicators of symbiosis, synthesis and coexistence rather than conflict and confrontation. Art in the singular or arts in the plural, being a cluster of manifestations which emerge from a worldview, situated in a socio-cultural milieu are effected by and in turn affect political decision-making. The arts thus reflect subtlety and sensitivity with the complex processes of human interaction as the confluence of diverse streams of thought and creativity.

Some regions in India over a period of time (as elsewhere in the world), have developed as cultural centres where both centripetal and centrifugal movement is evident. These centres have assumed the status of a specific culturally-defined region or area. The study of a dynamics of such centres and the plurality of the arts that have emerged out of these centres, have been the concern of the IGNC A in two of its major projects under the programme, the [Kshetra Sampada](#). The area of Tanjore with the Brhadേശvara temple as a focus in the South and the region of Vraja in the North, have been identified as the subjects of study. A group of scholars drawn from different disciplines have been investigating all aspects of these centres from the city planning, architectural monuments the sculptural and painting traditions, literature, arts and crafts not excluding its socio-economic structures. For carrying out this task as research methodology it became necessary to call upon the expertise of archaeologists, epigraphists, historians, and specialists in languages ranging from Sanskrit, Tamil, Modi, and Marathi, in one case, and Sanskrit, Bengali, Maithili, Rajasthani, Persian and Urdu in the second. Alongside, have been a group of scholars who have examined the living traditions of the regions, ranging from ritual practices within the precincts of the temple to a vast variety of craft traditions which are still prevalent.

Amongst the arts, no hierarchy has been established between great monumental architecture and the sensitive and delicate art of the garland-maker, the terracotta-maker and others involved in floral and floor designs.

The results of this research on both the projects will be available in the course of the next two or three years in the form of a series of monographs complemented by audio and video recordings. In each case, the primary prerequisite of a multilingual bibliography from secondary sources, a data base on primary sources, and textual material both in original and in translation, will be available. Alongside, will be monographs on the architectural aspects of the temples like ground plans, elevation plans, sectional drawings, and detailed analysis of architectural style. The architectural buildings, specially temples, were enlivened with ritual music and dance as 'seva' (service). The practices are prevalent in varying degrees. The results of the audio-visual documentation of the living traditions of rituals, the music and the dance, the drama the festivals will, perhaps, be a convincing proof of the efficiency of an alternate methodology for the study of the cultural region in India in the past and the present.

The monographs of Sanjhi, the humblest of the humble, and yet the most primary art is intrinsic to the rituals of Vraja. The publication of a monographs on this aspect is almost an auspicious heralding of other monographs and publications in offing. Pertinently Sanjhi is that twilight area between dusk and darkness where conjunctions take place and transitions are made possible. Sanjhi are made in a period of the astronomical calendar where ancestors are worshipped. It is popularly called the Pitr-Paksa (the period of the ancestors and the departed) or the Sraddha month. It is at this period that man makes communication with the departed ancestors and it is at that moment that the goddess Sanjhi and god Sanjhi are worshipped every day with a fresh creation. The mortal and immortal make communications. No grand festivities are held, Sanjhis are made day in and day out as daily ritual or service. The making of floor designs as part of daily rituals to herald auspiciousness to take vows and to welcome guests is known in many parts of India as Kolam, Rangoli and Alpana. Sanjhi however is more ritualistic in character because the designs are made within the precincts of the temple by temple priests and local artisans. The making of the design is a ritual act of rededication or Seva is itself a

Sadhana. The design once made, is worshipped, and then also obliterated. The end of the Pitr-paksa marks the beginning of Navaratra (new nine nights). This is the time for rejuvenation of the sprouting of new seeds and making of images of Durga, primordial energy, who too is adorned, worshipped and finally immersed in the waters.

The making and obliteration of the image, whether on floor or mud as in the case of Sanjhi and other Kolams and of image which are finally immersed in the waters, signifies a fundamental approach of the manifestation of form and its transformation, through the very act of ritual to beyond form and transform (Rupa and Pararupa). The essence and the efficacy is in the process, not the final product. Art is in the making, not in the end product for consumption. The monographs seeks to unfold the process.

The monograph by Shri Asimakrishna Dasa has been written with sensitivity and sincere attachment to the field of his study. Shri Dasa has spent many years of his life in Vrndavana coming from far-off USA, THE HOME OF HIS BIRTH, absorbing its ambience on many dimensions. He has been involved in the project of Vraja since its inception under the guidance of Shri Shrivatsa Goswami as the Project Director. The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts is grateful to him and Sri Caitanya Prema Samsthana (SCPS) for their collaboration, and to Ms. Robyn Beeche and Shri Jagdishlal Goswami, and all those who helped in documenting and recording an important and fascinating artistic ritual.

I should like to acknowledge the assistance and help of my colleagues, Ms. Krishna Dutt and Dr. Gautam Chatterjee, on the project and in the eventual production of the book, respectively.



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