

who is ambidextrous. For Arjuna as *Savyasachin* knows how to use both his left hand, which is feminine and his right hand which is masculine. Hence both *Brhannala/Savyasachin* and *Ardhnarishwara* are great dancers, both are also great archers, both combine the feminine and masculine elements, both have extremely erotic natures, but can be ascetics; both have strong cerebral characteristics as well as the warrior moods.

Modern day brain lateralisation theories talk of the right hand as male and the left hand as female, and divide functions, capacities and processes of knowledge to different sides of the brain--right and left. Hence art, intuition, metaphor, music are the functions of the left hand because they process information in spatial terms; and physics, rationality, words, logic, war are functions of the right hand as they process information through time.

Also the discoveries of contemporary scientists and philosophers: Einstein's space/time continuum, Bohr's theory of complementarity, Sri Aurobindo's Gnosis: support the metaphor for the union of polarities which these traditional, symbolic figures represent; and suggest that these images from the traditions are merely forerunners of a new way to think about reality.

*Brhannala* as a production emerged out of the research and thought processes that went into this material. It was an allegory concerned with polarities and their union, elliptically imaged through events in Arjuna's life.

It is important to mention here that after *The Trojan Women*, I was no longer interested in representational

theatre which reflected every-day reality. Influenced by evolutions within traditional Indian thought and physics, both of which questioned the nature of perceived reality, I departed from the use of realism in the content of Adishakti's productions.

And now it is this syncretic nature of folklore, that draws Adishakti to it, particularly after its experience with the processes of the production *Brhannala*. It is interested in releasing the multiple voices which have contributed to the plurality of folklore in general. Within the lore surrounding the Draupadi Worship for instance there is accommodation for diverse elements which reflect the plurality of reality : The Islamic element in the region find representation in this lore. Adishakti is interested in allowing voices such as these to express themselves along with others in a multi-layered way in the text of its productions.

The language that Adishakti has performed its productions in has been English. This has facilitated in reaching a wider global audience awareness for Adishakti. However ,so as to locate the English within an Indian context, it has been exploring the languages of Tamil and Malayalam; a work that it plans now to deepen. The turn of phrase of these languages when literally translated into English displaces them and not only reveals their original sense in a startling manner, but it also enriches our use of the English language. For example a daily exchange of greeting in Tamil, which I hear every morning from my balcony, translates as: *And how are you I hope?* Response: *Somewhat, I think*. One can only marvel at the layers of meaning packed into this greeting released by the translation.

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**H o m a g e**

**THOTTAKADU RAMAKRISHNAPILLAI : A LOVER OF FOLKLORE**

*Thottakadu Ramakrishnapillai* (1854-1920) was born in Chengelpet and studied at the Free Church of Scotland Mission school at Kancheepuram. When Ramakrishnapillai was twelve, his parents sent him to Chennai for higher studies. He traveled all the way by bullock cart, singing folk songs and narrating folk tales along with his travel companions. This new experience was to leave a lasting impression on him. Ramakrishnapillai went on to study at the Madras Chirstian College. After passing the martriculation examination in 1870, he joined the F.A. programme and his main subject was Logic. His classmate Lazarus, the translator of *Thirukural*, often played the role of critic to Ramakrishnapillai's poetry.

With a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy, Pillai worked as Chief Librarian at the Madras Literary Society where he came into contact with 20,000 books. It was then that he began to research various folk beliefs, tales and superstitions : the lines on the squirrel's back, the sounds made by the wall-lizard and so on. In simple and lucid English, Pillai explicated the customs and manners of villagers and the various heroic tales popular amongst them.

Pillai went on to head the committee incharge of the Tamil Lexicon published by the University of Madras. He was closely associated with other folklore scholars such as Selva Kesavaraya Mudaliar, Namasivaya Mudaliar and S.Bhavanandam Pillai. He authored many books of prose and poetry in English, most of which are concerned with the epics and folk traditions of India. He was known for his excellent command of the English language as well as for his simple, straightforward prose style.

His books include *Life in an Indian Village*, *Tales of Ind and Padmini* (an Indian romance). *Life in an Indian Village* is an amusing and clear portrayal of the manners and customs of the inhabitants of a village in the Indian presidency. It gives a sketch of Indian village society from the inside. *Tales of Ind* is a collection of epic narratives in English. The epics themselves are of Indian origin : *Seeta and Rama*, *The Story of Prince Desing*, *The Story of Rudra*, *The Korathy's Lullaby* and so on. He was also the author of several essays and articles on Indian tradition in the journal published by the Madras Christian College.

The world of folklore scholarship is indebted to Ramakrishnapillai. In more ways than one, we could call him a lover of folklore.