



Narayan Shripad Rajahans
alias 'Balgandharva'

1889 - 1967

Balgandharva inherited his inclination towards music from father, and dramatics from the maternal family. In 1908, Balgandharva joined Kirloskar Natak Mandli. He acted in 'Soubhadra', Tatyasaheb Kolhatkar's 'Veer Tanay', 'Mook Nayak', 'Mativikar' and 'Prem Shodhan'. Solely for the sake of Balgandharva's sweet, melodious voice Tatyasaheb was tempted to write a musical play. Kirloskar Natak Mandli produced 'Manapaman', a musical play written by Kolhatkar with great pomp and show on 12/3/1911.

The musical compositions in this play broke away from the tradition and relying more on classical base of 'Khyal'; became greatly popular. In 1913, Balgandharva, Bodas and Tembe broke away from Kirloskar Natak Mandli and set up a new company-Gandharva Natak Mandli on 5/7/1913. Within two months only, on 3/2/1913 'Mook Nayak' was produced. On 10/12/1916 Khadilkar's musical play 'Swayamwar' was enacted on the stage.

The play earned great fame and popularity for Balgandharva. Ram Gadkari's 'Ekach Pyala' also proved to be a great 'hit'. Gandharva Natak Mandli was burdened by a huge heap of loan because of a disastrous failure of the play named 'Droupadi'.

By 1926, Balgandharva repaid the entire loan with great efforts. Around 1933, the talking film had made an entry and the fate of the Marathi theatre was in doldrums. Balgandharva closed down his drama company on 1/1/1935 and joined films. But could not put his heart into films.

Along with Goharbai, he reappeared on the stage and delighted audiences, filling the vacuum created by Bhaurao Kolhatkar's absence. Melodious singing, very good knowledge of rhythm made Balgandharva becomes a legend on the Marathi stage, which had no parallel.

