

Knowledge

TRADITIONS & PRACTICES OF INDIA

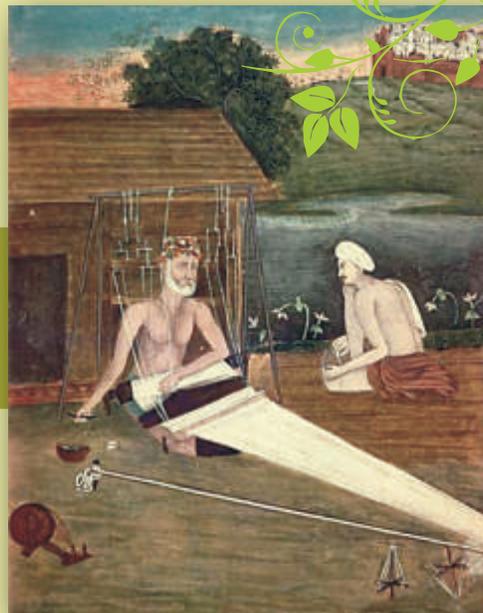
Textbook for Class XI



Statue of Kannagi, Chennai

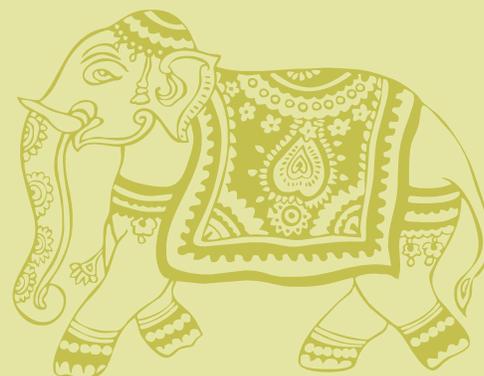
Module 10

Theatre and Drama in India



CENTRAL BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Shiksha Kendra, 2, Community Centre, Preet Vihar,
Delhi-110 092 India



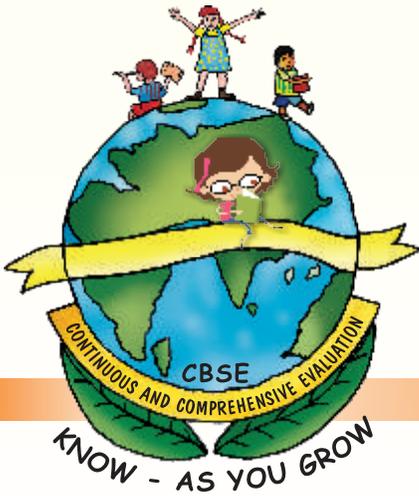
नया आगाज़

आज समय की माँग पर
आगाज़ नया इक होगा
निरंतर योग्यता के निर्णय से
परिणाम आकलन होगा।

परिवर्तन नियम जीवन का
नियम अब नया बनेगा
अब परिणामों के भय से
नहीं बालक कोई डरेगा
निरंतर योग्यता के निर्णय से
परिणाम आकलन होगा।

बदले शिक्षा का स्वरूप
नई खिले आशा की धूप
अब किसी कोमल-से मन पर
कोई बोझ न होगा

निरंतर योग्यता के निर्णय से
परिणाम आकलन होगा।
नई राह पर चलकर मंज़िल को हमें पाना है
इस नए प्रयास को हमने सफल बनाना है
बेहतर शिक्षा से बदले देश, ऐसे इसे अपनाए
शिक्षक, शिक्षा और शिक्षित
बस आगे बढ़ते जाएँ
बस आगे बढ़ते जाएँ
बस आगे बढ़ते जाएँ.....





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Textbook for Class XI

Module 10

Theatre and Drama in India



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Shiksha Kendra, 2, Community Centre, Preet Vihar, Delhi-110 092 India



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Preface

India has a rich tradition of intellectual inquiry and a textual heritage that goes back to several hundreds of years. India was magnificently advanced in knowledge traditions and practices during the ancient and medieval times. The intellectual achievements of Indian thought are found across several fields of study in ancient Indian texts ranging from the Vedas and the Upanishads to a whole range of scriptural, philosophical, scientific, technical and artistic sources.

As knowledge of India's traditions and practices has become restricted to a few erudite scholars who have worked in isolation, CBSE seeks to introduce a course in which an effort is made to make it common knowledge once again. Moreover, during its academic interactions and debates at key meetings with scholars and experts, it was decided that CBSE may introduce a course titled 'Knowledge Traditions and Practices of India' as a new Elective for classes XI - XII from the year 2012-13. It has been felt that there are many advantages of introducing such a course in our education system. As such in India, there is a wide variety and multiplicity of thoughts, languages, lifestyles and scientific, artistic and philosophical perceptions. The rich classical and regional languages of India, which are repositories of much of the ancient wisdom, emerge from the large stock of the shared wealth of a collective folklore imagination. A few advantages given below are self explanatory.

- India is a land of knowledge and traditions and through this course the students will become aware of our ancient land and culture.
- Learning about any culture particularly one's own culture - whatever it may be - builds immense pride and self-esteem. That builds a community and communities build harmony.
- The students will be learning from the rich knowledge and culture and will get an objective insight into the traditions and practices of India. They will delve deeply to ascertain how these teachings may inform and benefit them in future.
- The textbook has extracts and translations that will develop better appreciation and understanding of not only the knowledge, traditions and practices of India but also contemporary questions and issues that are a part of every discipline and field in some form or another.

This course once adopted in schools across India can become central to student learning: each student brings a unique culture, tradition and practice to the classroom. The content is devised in a way that the educator becomes knowledgeable about his/her students' distinctive cultural

background. This can be translated into effective instruction and can enrich the curriculum thereby benefitting one and all. This insight has close approximation with the pedagogy of CCE.

The course is designed in a way that it embodies various disciplines and fields of study ranging from Language and Grammar, Literature, Fine Arts, Agriculture, Trade and Commerce, Philosophy and Yoga to Mathematics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Metallurgy, Medicine and Surgery, Life Sciences, Environment and Cosmology. This can serve as a good foundation for excellence in any discipline pursued by the student in her/his academic, personal and professional life.

This book aims at providing a broad overview of Indian thought in a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary mode. It does not seek to impart masses of data, but highlights concepts and major achievements while engaging the student with a sense of exploration and discovery. There is an introduction of topics so that students who take this are prepared for a related field in higher studies in the universities.

The examination reforms brought in by CBSE have strengthened the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation System. It has to be ascertained that the teaching and learning methodology of CCE is adopted by the affiliated schools when they adopt this course. The contents have to cultivate critical appreciation of the thought and provide insights relevant for promoting cognitive ability, health and well-being, good governance, aesthetic appreciation, value education and appropriate worldview.

This document has been prepared by a special committee of convenors and material developers under the direction of Dr. Sadhana Parashar, Director (Academic & Training) and co-ordinated by Mrs. Neelima Sharma, Consultant, CBSE.

The Board owes a wealth of gratitude to Professor Jagbir Singh, Professor Kapil Kapoor, Professor Michel Danino, and all those who contributed to the extensive work of conceptualizing and developing the contents. I sincerely hope that our affiliated schools will adopt this new initiative of the Board and assist us in our endeavour to nurture our intellectual heritage.

Vineet Joshi
Chairman



Convenor's Note by Professor Jagbir Singh

In 2012, CBSE decided to introduce an Elective Course 'Knowledge Traditions and Practices of India' for classes XI and XII and an Advisory Committee was constituted to reflect on the themes and possible content of the proposed course. Subsequently Module-Preparation Committees were constituted to prepare ten modules for the first year of the programme to include the following Astronomy, Ayurveda (Medicine and Surgery), Chemistry, Drama, Environment, Literature, Mathematics, Metallurgy, Music and Philosophy.

Each module has;

- I. A Survey article
- ii. Extracts from primary texts
- iii. Suitably interspersed activities to enable interactive study and class work
- iv. Appropriate visuals to engender reading interest, and
- v. Further e- and hard copy readings.

Each module in the course has kept in mind what would be a viable amount of reading and workload, given all that the class IX students have to do in the given amount of time, and controlled the word-length and also provided, where needed, choices in the reading materials.

Each Module consists of:

- I. A Survey Essay (about 1500-2000 words) that introduces and shows the growth of ideas, texts and thinkers and gives examples of actual practice and production.
- ii. A survey-related selection of extracts (in all about 2000 words) from primary sources (in English translation, though for first hand recognition, in some cases, where feasible, the extracts are also reproduced in the original language and script).
- iii. Three kinds of interactive work are incorporated, both in the survey article and the extracts - comprehension questions, individual and collective activities and projects (that connect the reading material and the student to the actual practice and the environment).
- iv. Visuals of thinkers, texts, concepts (as in Mathematics), practices.
- v. Internet audiovisual resources in the form of URLs.
- vi. List of further questions, and readings.

The objective of each module, as of the whole course, is to re-connect the young minds with the large body of intellectual activity that has always happened in India and, more importantly, to

enable them (i) to relate the knowledge available to the contemporary life, theories and practices, (ii) to develop, wherever feasible, a comparative view on a level ground of the contemporary Western ideas and the Indian theories and practices, and (iii) to extend their horizons beyond what is presented or is available and contemplate on possible new meanings, extensions and uses of the ideas - in other words to make them think.

We have taken care to be objective and factual and have carefully eschewed any needless claims or comparisons with western thought. Such things are best left to the readers' judgement.

This pedagogical approach clearly approximates CBSE's now established activity-oriented interactive work inviting the students' critical responses.

It is proposed to upload the first year's modular programme to be downloaded and used by schools, teachers and students.

As a first exercise, we are aware that the content selection, a major difficult task, can be critically reviewed from several standpoints. We do not claim perfection and invite suggestions and concrete proposals to develop the content. We are eagerly looking forward to receiving the feedback from both teachers and students. That would help us refining the content choice, the length and the activities. We will also thankfully acknowledge any inadvertent errors that are pointed out by readers.

The finalisation of this course is thus envisaged as a collective exercise and only over a period of time, the Course will mature. We know that perfection belongs only to God.

If our students enjoy reading these materials, that would be our true reward.

Prof. Jagbir Singh
Convenor



Acknowledgement

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Content of Module 10



Theatre and Drama in India

1





Theatre and Drama in India: A Survey

Drama

In every ancient culture, drama, like similar other forms of art, has been of religious origin. It developed out of performances related to some aspect of religion. As time passed, the performances gradually assumed the regular dramatic spectacle, and the range of aspects treated was extended beyond the religious subjects.

The Beginnings

The earliest beginnings of Indian dramatic art can be traced back to the hymns and dialogues of the Vedas, which have a certain dramatic character. It is believed that the four constituents of Indian drama — text or plot, music, production or acting, and *rasa* (sentiment) — were originally taken from the *R̥gveda*, the *Sāmaveda*, the *Yajurveda* and the *Atharvaveda* respectively.

There are references to *nāṭaka* (drama) in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. The song and music and dances of the Kṛṣṇa legends further enriched this tradition of drama. An ancient playhouse excavated in Khandagiri caves near Bhubaneswar, Odisha, belongs to the 2nd-3rd century BCE.

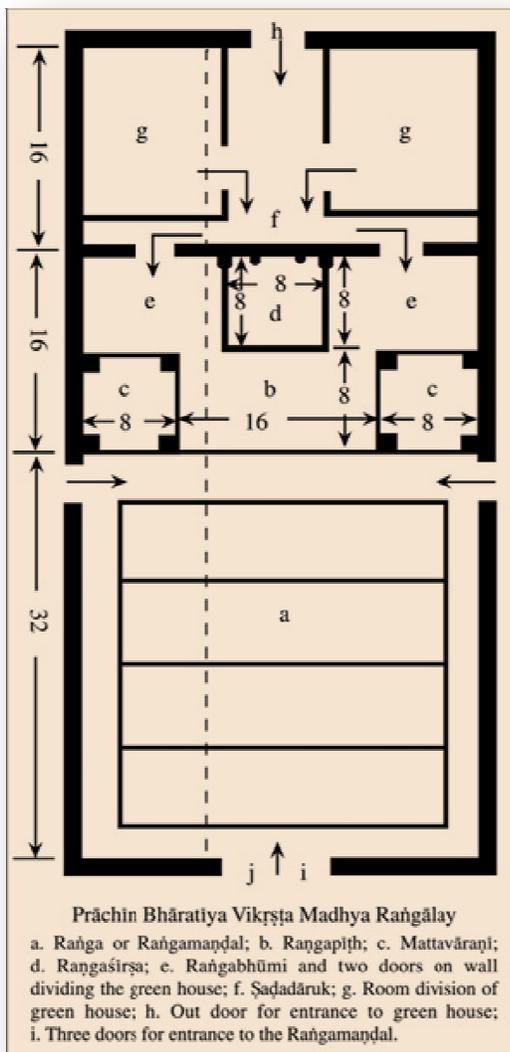


A 2nd-3rd century BCE theatre Khandagiri caves near Bhubaneswar
(Source: www.16sanskar.com/whatisnew.php?scatid=209)



Classical Period

Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (2nd century BCE), also known as *Nāṭyaveda* or the fifth *Veda*, is the first documented classical manual which primarily aims at describing the theory and practice of Indian drama and theatre. The topic is covered under the dynamics of *nāṭya* (dramatic art or acting).



Bharata says that one who performs *nāṭya* is *naṭa* (actor), and accordingly the form is known as *nāṭaka*. Dealing with the origin of *Nāṭyaveda* (science of dramatic performance), Bharata gives a comprehensive account of theatre. He describes three kinds of theatres or playhouses — *vikṛṣṭa* (oblong), *caturasra* (square) *tryasra* (triangular), all three preferably of moderate size, and each having three parts: *nepathya* (dressing room), *raṅgapīṭha* (the stage) and *raṅgamaṇḍala* (the auditorium). According to Bharata, a theatre of moderate size could accommodate 400 spectators. Some of the stages had two storeys, the upper storey being for the representation of action in the celestial sphere and the ground storey for that in the terrestrial sphere.

The plan of one type of playhouses described by Bharata; the unit of length is the cubit, about 45 cm.

In order to display the subtlest interplay of emotions Bharata elaborated four kinds of *abhinaya* (expression): *āṅgikābhinaya* (voluntary non-verbal expression) to depict the emotions or feelings of the character being played; *vācīkābhinaya* (verbal expression) to express emotions / feelings, tone, diction, pitch of a particular character; *āhāryābhinaya* (costume and stage expression) to enhance expression; *sāttvikābhinaya* (involuntary non-verbal expression) expressed by the presence of tears, mark of horripilation, change of facial colour, trembling of lips, enhancing of nostrils) to express the deepest emotions of a character.

Four methods of *abhinaya* (acting)

- **Gestures (*āṅgika*):** acting by the movement of the different parts of the body.
- **Oral (*vācika*):** acting through dialogues.
- **Spiritual (*sāttvika*):** expressions through gestures.
- **Properties (*āhārya*):** The material required for the play like colours, dresses and decorations. etc.

In view of the wealth of details and categories in the Nāṭyaśāstra, think how developed the tradition of Indian dramatic art must have been long before Bharata!

According to Bharata, dramatic presentation primarily aimed at giving rise to *rasa* (aesthetic sentiment) in the aesthete, with the ultimate purpose of moral improvement. He further said that dramatic presentation imparted *harṣa* (pleasure) to all who were unhappy, tired, bereaved and ascetic.

The disciples of Bharata after witnessing the drama, and analyzing the effect it has on them, realized that it brought about identification with the focus of the dramatic situation, to the effect that the audience realized through experience (because of generalization) that the four recognized objects or four ends of life, *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa* (righteousness, worldly possessions, desires, salvation) ought to be pursued.

Bharata in his treatise also described the ten major forms of drama (*dasrūpakas*) — *nāṭaka*, *prakaraṇa*, *samavakāra*, *ḍima*, *vyāyoga*, *iḥāmṛga*, *ūtsṛṣṭikāṅka*, *prahasana*, *bhāṇa* and



vīthī — their *itivṛtta* (structure of the dramatic plot) and the description of *nāyakas* (heroes) and *nāyikas* (heroines). He conceived of plays in terms of two types of production: *lokadharmī* (realistic), which involved the reproduction of human behaviour on the stage and the natural presentation of objects, and *nāṭyadharmī* (conventional), which is the presentation of a play through the use of stylized gestures and symbolism and was considered more artistic than realistic.

Major Indian Dramatists

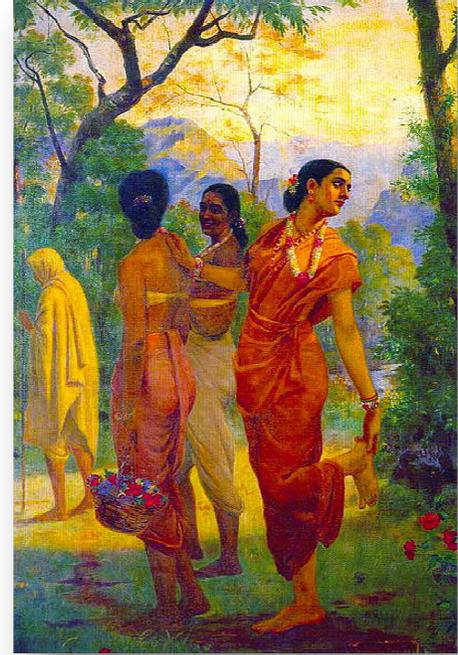
This phase of Sanskrit theatre includes the writing and practice of theatre up to about 10th century CE, based almost entirely on the rules, regulations and modifications laid down in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The earliest available dramatist is Bhāsa (3rd century BCE), followed by Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti, two other doyens of Sanskrit drama.

Bhāsa's plays are still very popular in *kutiyāṭṭam*, the only surviving form of Sanskrit drama (see section on *kutiyāṭṭam* below). All the thirteen plays of Bhāsa are generally short compared to those of later playwrights and most of them draw their theme from the Indian epics, *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. He is one whose plays are not bound by the rigid rules of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Bhāsa allows scenes that contain signs of physical violence to be shown on stage in plays like *Urūbhaṅga*. His plays *Urūbhaṅga* and *Karṇābharaṇa* are the only known tragedies in ancient India.

Kālidāsa, one of the 'nine jewels' in the court of the legendary king Vikramāditya of uncertain dates, is acknowledged to be the greatest dramatist of Sanskrit literature. He is known to have written three plays, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, *Vikramorvaśī* and *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, the last more commonly known as *Śakuntalā*. Europe was immensely fascinated by *Śakuntalā*; as a result it was translated into German, French, Danish and Italian. Goethe was so powerfully impressed by the play that he is said to have drawn

from it the idea of the prologue to his *Faust*. To a great extent, Kālidāsa followed the principles of drama laid down by Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra*. All the three plays open with the benedictory stanzas, technically known as *nandī*. The matter of the plots is well divided into acts. The heroes are of royal patronage. The language of the plays is mixed: educated people speak Sanskrit and the uneducated folk speak in Prakrit.

Śakuntalā stops to look back at Duṣyanta,
a scene from *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*.
(Courtesy: Wikipedia)



Bhavabhūti falls into the category of writers who emerged in the latter half of classical period. His *Uttararāmacarita*, written about 700 CE, is known as the best dramatic play of its time.

The Sanskrit plays were undoubtedly meant to be enacted; elaborate stage-directions were given as well as rules for seating the audience. The plays commenced with an elaborate ritual. Some twenty pre-play ceremonies (*pūrvaraṅga*) of music and dance were performed, nine of them behind the curtain. The *sūtradhāra* — the director, chief actor or stage manager — clad in immaculate white, entered with his two assistants and offered worship (*pūjā*) to the theatre's presiding deity to ensure success to the producer and good luck to the actors. After this, the *sūtradhāra* summoned the leading actress and opened the play with a prologue which announced the time and place of the play and introduced the playwright. The plays had five to seven *aṅkas* (acts). An *aṅka*



involves a change in the hero's basic situation as the *itivṛtta* (plot) develops. It is made up of a series of incidents that are related to the major character.

The basic plot in most Sanskrit plays centred around the hero who struggled for the object of his desire. There were five *avasthas* (stages): *ārambha* (beginning), *yatna* (effort), *praptyāśa* (prospect of success), *niyatāpti* (certainty of success) and *phalāgama* (attainment of the object). These five stages were intimately related to the hero's mental stages and were milestones in his march towards his attainment of object. These plays dealt with the exploits of a hero, either a royal sage or king, who was always successful in the end. The dominant sentiment was love and heroism. There was a strong lyric

Do you know why there were no conventions of tragedy in Indian classical period?

element and poetry seems to be the integral part of life, full of meaning and significance. There were no conventions of tragedy (although Bhāsa showed death on the stage in one of his plays).

Medieval Period

The Sanskrit dramas, to some extent, were for an educated audience or royal courts and likely to be performed in sophisticated theatres. In the course of time, there evolved a folk theatre out of rural roots; it was simpler, more immediate and closer to the rural milieu. This was the second phase of the evolution of theatre in India, which was based on oral traditions. This form of theatre, which started in the medieval period, has continued until today in almost every part of India. Initially the themes of these forms were based on stories from Indian mythology and epics; later they included secular themes ranging from romance, love and valour to social and cultural traditions to be performed in the language of the people in each particular area.

Every state of India has some form of folk theatre. Can you prepare a list of such forms across India?



Indian folk theatre is essentially total theatre, using songs, recitation, speech, poetry, music and mime in varying combinations. Now the theatre is used to educate people and for social reformation. Since India consists of varied ethnic groups, each developed its own kind of traditional folk theatres, using the regional language for communication. These theatres are known by different names in different Indian states, like *kuṭiyattam* in Kerala, *yakṣagāna* in Andhra, *bhavāī* in Gujarat, *jātrā* in Bengal, Odisha and Bihar, *nautāṅkī* and *swāṅg* in the states of north India, *tamāśā* in Maharashtra and *pāṇḍavānī* and *nāchā* in Chhattisgarh.

Kuṭiyattam

Kuṭiyattam (or *kūṭhiyattam*) is derived from the Sanskrit word *kūrd*, meaning to 'to play'. *Kuṭiyattam*, the only surviving specimen of the ancient Sanskrit theatre, remains a popular theatre form in Kerala. In May 2001, *kuṭiyattam* earned a rare honour when UNESCO declared it a masterpiece of human heritage to be protected and preserved. It is believed that Kulasekhara Varma Cheraman Perumal, an ancient King of Kerala, was the creator of *kuṭiyattam* in its present form. His book *Āṭṭaparakaraṇa* is considered as the most authoritative work on the art form till date.



A *Kuṭiyattam* performance

(Source: <http://kerala-culture.blogspot.in/2012/04/koodiyttam.html>)



Kuṭiyattam was traditionally a part of temple rituals, performed as a kind of visual sacrifice to the deity. It is normally performed in temple theatres that are decorated with exquisite carvings. Conventional in its make-up, costume as well as form, it is an elaborate blend of symbolic gestures, stylized movements and chanted dialogue and verse in Sanskrit, Prakrit and Malayālam. Sanskrit plays of the 7th or 8th century CE like Bhāsa's *Abhiṣekanātakam*, Mahendra Vikraman Pallavan's *Maṭhaviḷāsam* and Kulaśekhara Varma's *Subhadrā Dhananjayan* are among the most commonly enacted Sanskrit plays in *kuṭiyattam*. Its storylines also range from the narratives derived from Indian epics such as the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* to stories from Indian mythology.

Yakṣagāna

Yakṣagāna (13th century) is a very popular dance drama form from Andhra Pradesh. It is believed that a popular dance drama known as *Bahunātak* composed by Pakkuriki



Somanath about 1250 CE developed into the form of *yakṣagāna*. The storylines are based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Obayamantri's *Gurudācalam* (15th century) and Rudrakavi's *Sugrīvavijayam* (16th century) are two popular dramas of *yakṣagāna*.

Bhavāī

Bhavāī (14th century) is the popular folk theatrical form of Rajasthan and Gujarat. The pioneer of *bhavāī* was a Brahmin known as Asait Thakore or Ashram Maharaja, who lived in a village of Gujarat called Unjha. Initially, the *bhavāī* performance was presented as a religious ritual to propitiate Goddess Ambā, and it took place only during the religious festivals of Navarātra. Very soon it evolved into an important form of entertainment theatre. Subtle social criticism laced with pungent humour is the speciality of *bhavāī*. Humour plays a vital part in any performance and comes into play even while dealing with mythological personages. This predominance makes *bhavāī* unique among the traditional arts of India.



A *bhavāī* performance

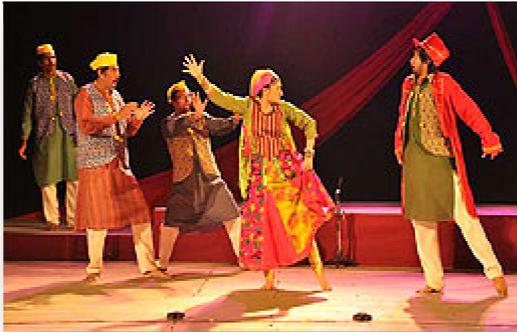
Jātrā

Jātrā (16th century) or *yātrā*, which means a procession or a pilgrimage, is the popular folk drama form of eastern India, mainly Assam, West Bengal and Odisha. This form of theatre traditionally credited to the rise of the Bhakti movement, dramatized the Puranic legends, folktales and episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Now the traditional content has been replaced by secular content. Music is the key element of this form. It is often very melodramatic with highly stylized delivery and exaggerated gestures and orations. *Jātrā* today is one of the most popular folk theatres in India. West Bengal alone has to its credit 300 *jātrā* companies, and *jātrā* competitions are held during the Durgā Pūjā festival.



Nautāṅkī

Nautāṅkī (18th century) is a popular form of theatre from north India. Storylines of traditional of *nautāṅkīs* range from mythological themes and folktales to stories of contemporary heroes. Traditional *nautāṅkīs* usually start late at night and go on all night.



The pleasure of this form lies in the intense melodic exchanges between the performers usually in a poetic form. It is remarkable how the verse written in only a few metres like *caubolā*, *dohā*, *bahretabil*, *daur* etc. is sung in a number of *rāgas* and styles with differing emotional impact. There is no intermission in these

performances. They are often punctuated with individual songs, dances and skits, which serve as breaks and provide comic relief to the audience. Kanpur *nautāṅkī* is uniquely fascinating.

Swāṅg

Swāṅg is the major theatrical tradition of folk entertainment in North India, especially Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. It is a musical folk drama which enacts near similar stories in all its related regional variations. These stories are in verse and are sung in different classical, semi-classical but mostly in popular folk musical modes. These performances have an interesting blending of narrative and dramatic verse and music. There is no intermission in these performances. A number of musical instruments like *nagāra*, *dholak*, *cimptā*, *khartāl*, *sāraṅgī* and harmonium add flavour to the dialogues. *Swāṅgs* of Hāthrasa and Bundūmīr of Uttar Pradesh have fascinating stories. Alī Bakhśa, Pandit Dīpa Cand, Swāmī Har Dev, Qutabī, Dhoom, Pandit Bhartu and Pandit Lakṣmī Cand from Haryana are



renowned for their enthralling performances. The U.P. Sangeet Natak Academy has been constantly performing *swāṅgs* to preserve this form.



A *swāṅg* performance (Source: www.indianetzone.com/34/swang_indian_form_theatre.htm)

Rāmalīlā

Rāmalīlā is an important form of folk theatre in India, based on the life of Rāma, ending up in the ten-day battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa as described in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Its festive staging takes place once a year at many places throughout India, and usually lasts for ten to twelve days where open-air productions are staged by local *Rāmalīlā* committees.



Tamāsā

Tamāsā, which means ‘fun’ or ‘play’, is a traditional Marathi folk art form, often with singing and dancing, widely performed by local or travelling theatre groups within the state of Maharashtra. Naughty episodes of *Kṛṣṇalīlā* (stories of Kṛṣṇa’s deeds) are invariably enacted in the opening part of a *tamāsā* play. The *lāvaṇī* songs, which are sung along with dancing, are delightfully naughty and erotic. There are two types of *tamāsā*:



dholkībhārī and the older form, *saṅgītabārī*, which contains more dance and music than drama. In Maharashtra, the Kolhati and Mahar groups are traditionally associated with the performance of *tamāśā*. Now in Maharashtra there are only 18 to 20 full-time *tamāśā* parties. Each *tamāśā mandal* performs approximately for 210 days a year all over Maharashtra and also some border villages of Karnataka and Gujarat. Loknatya Tamasha Mandal is Maharashtra's most popular *tamāśā mandal*.



Left: A *tamāśā* performance (Source:

www.sangeetnatak.org/deshparva/natyadarshan/tamasha.htm)

Right: A *lāvāṇī* performance

(Source: www.marathi-music.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/lavani-dance.jpg)

Nāchā

Nāchā is one of the most prominent folk dances equipped with Chhattisgarhi folk songs. This theatre form is not only entertaining people but it is a potent medium for social awareness. The dancers of *nāchā* enact the scene of the violent battle between king Kaṁsa and the cowherds who belonged to the Yādava community of the region. The Yādavas or the cowherds had the divine support of Kṛṣṇa. *Nāchā* glorifies the age-old truth of the triumph of truth over evil. Habib Tanbir has established this form at the



national level. *Nāchā* is a common form of performing art of Chhattisgarh that has added to the glory and grandeur of the state.

Raut nāchā in Chhattisgarh



Pāṇḍavānī

Pāṇḍavānī is a performance or storytelling evolved by the tribals of the Chhattisgarh. This narrative form was developed to tell the story of the five Pāṇḍava brothers and considered to be of two types – Kapilak and Vedamati. A team of *pāṇḍavānī* performers is composed of one main narrator-singer and one or two co-singers, who also play on musical instruments like *tablā* and harmonium. Habib Tanvir was able to bring *pāṇḍavānī* and *nāchā* from the remote tribal areas of Chhattisgarh into the national focus. Today *pāṇḍavānī*, like *nāchā*, is known and appreciated internationally.



Teejan Bai in a performance of *pāṇḍavānī*

(Source: www.indianetzone.com/46/culture_durg_district.htm)



Modern Era

The growth and promotion of Indian theatre and drama have taken a leap with the initiatives of Sangeet Natak Akademi, the National School of Drama. The theatre scene was full of unusual energy and there were several initiatives, both private and governmental, to encourage and promote theatre at different levels. There was also a great deal of exchange of ideas, plays and performances between theatre practitioners and scholars of theatre in the different regions that created a more unified vision of theatre in the country.

A host of playwrights all over the country wrote plays expressing deeply in a variety of forms. And there were thousands of groups busy interpreting these plays in different spaces, experimenting with theatrical forms. They made new experiments to evolve the concept of national drama by working on various styles and techniques from Sanskrit, medieval folk and western theatre. An interesting example of this pioneer attitude is the use of elements and conventions of traditional Indian theatre – such as music and song, dance movements, miming, locale and *sūtradhār* – in many recent productions.

Theatre has become a significant part of the life and culture of a region as the playwrights are trying to give dramatic expression to the basic and specific problems typical to that region in its own language. It uses Indian mythology, Indian tradition, Indian dance, Indian social and political problems – yet speaks of themes which touch any audience, the search for individual identity inside and outside, love, sexual fulfilment, security, the loneliness and emptiness of superficially successful lives.

Although the emergence of cinema has adversely affected the popularity of theatre as the main medium of popular entertainment, the new experiments in theatre and drama are reviving the interest of the people. All India Radio has been instrumental in

popularizing drama for a long time through its national and regional broadcasts. Some serious theatre groups like the Indian National Theatre, the Prithvi Theatre and others are contributing greatly to popularize theatre. There is a growing interest of our distinguished theatre people in exploring Sanskrit classical heritage.

Comprehension

1. Why was *Nāṭyaśāstra* called the fifth Veda?
2. What are the objectives of *Nāṭyaveda*?
3. Define *nāṭyadharmī* and *lokadharmī*. Cite examples from contemporary media. Do we see elements of *nāṭyadharmī* and *lokadharmī* in film industry and theatre practices in various parts of India?
4. What is the difference between Sanskrit and folk theatre?

Project ideas

- Create a presentation of different kinds of contemporary theatre, including even some minute details, and present it to your class.
- Search and explore to draw the base drawing or prepare models of all the three types of *nāṭyagrha* (playhouse) as described above along with specifications. Clue: Refer to chapter 2 in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (you may download its first volume from: <http://ia700700.us.archive.org/6/items/NatyaShastraOfBharataMuniVolume1/NatyaShastraOfBharataMuniVolume1.pdf>).
- Study other ancient theatre practices in the world. Collect relevant information along with images and share them with your class.



- Explore various folk theatre styles of India. Select one and get to know the minute details like language, theme, costume and style of presentation. Translate the dialogues and, songs in your own language and prepare with your group to present in front of your school.

Extended activity

- Collect and paste pictures for the *rasas* the following table.

Rasa	Painting	Sculpture	Dance
<i>śṛṅgāra</i> (amorous)			
<i>hāsya</i> (humorous)			
<i>karuṇa</i> (pathetic)			
<i>raudra</i> (furious)			
<i>vīra</i> (valorous)			
<i>bhayānaka</i> (horrific)			
<i>bībhatsa</i> (disgust)			
<i>adbhuta</i> (wondrous)			

- Form a theatre troupe with some of your classmates and prepare a play:
 - Identify a theme and its *rasas*.
 - Create a script and characters.
 - Convert the script into dialogues.
 - Perform the play using the four methods of *abhinaya*.

Further Reading

1. Bharata, *The Nāṭyaśāstra, A Treatise on Hindu Dramaturgy and Histrionics*. Manmohan Ghosh, tr. Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 2nd ed., 2 vols, 1967.
2. Dalmia, Vasudha, *Poetics, Plays of Performances: The Politics of Modern India Theatre*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.
3. Dharwadkar, Aparna, *Theatre of Independence*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.
4. Gupta, Manjula, *Some Essays on Sanskrit Criticism*. New Delhi: Sanjay Prakashan, 2002.
5. Jain, Nemichand. *From the Wings: Notes on Theatre*. New Delhi: National School of Drama, 2007.
6. Nehru, Jawaharlal, 'The Old Indian Theatre', in *The Discovery of India*. Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1989 (8th ed.).
7. *Theatre India*, Journal of the National School of Drama, no. 1, January 2012.
8. *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, Khand III*. Priyabala Shah, tr. Delhi: Parimal Publications, 2002.

Internet Resources (all URLs accessed in June 2012)

- Incredible India: 2000-year-old Sanskrit theatre — *kuṭiyattam*:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTPY1-RNo00
- Guru Ammannoor Madhava Chakyar: Kootiyattam, the classical Sanskrit theatrical form indigenous to Kerala (Padma Bhushan (Dr.) Guru Ammannur Madhava Chakyar (1917–2008) was a master of *kuṭiyattam*:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=w47m1cyefS4
- The theme in this video is about adventure and fun-filled episodes of Kṛṣṇa's childhood days, portraying his divinity and valour, and the killing of Kaṁsa:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-Mv0Z6zFWY
- Rajan Roshan , Rajasthani *bhavāi*:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yp7uFAoGo0c
- SPICMACAY, IIM Lucknow Chapter, *pāṇḍavānī* by Teejan Bai on 28 January 2011:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QpW6R1wEcQ&feature=related
- Teejan Bai's *pāṇḍavānī*:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMAN6XglPm8



- An introduction to *nautankī*, a theatrical genre, as performed particularly in the region of Hathras, Vrindavan and Mathura in India:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwDYtbVYDS4

Resource Centres for Performing Arts

- Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, New Delhi:
www.ccrindia.gov.in/
- National School of Drama, New Delhi:
<http://nsd.gov.in/>
- Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra, Delhi:
www.thekendra.com/
- Kerala Kalamandalam, Cheruthuruthy (Kerala):
<http://www.kalamandalam.org/keralakalamandalam.asp>





Primary Texts on Drama in India: A Selection

Nāṭyaśāstra (tr. Manomohan Ghosh)

The sages respectfully said to him [Bharata], 'O Brahman, how did originate the *nāṭyaveda* similar to the Vedas, which you have properly composed? And for whom is it meant, how many limbs does it possess, what is its extent and how is it to be applied? Please speak to us in detail about it all.' (1:2-5)

He then thought: 'I shall make a fifth Veda on the *nāṭya* with the semi-historical tales (*itihāsa*), which will conduce to duty (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*) as well as fame, will contain good counsel and collection [of other materials for human well-being], will give guidance to people of the future as well in all their actions, will be enriched by the teaching of all scriptures (*śāstra*) and will give a review of all arts and crafts (*śilpa*).'

With this resolve the Holy One (*bhagavat*) from his memory of all the Vedas shaped this *nāṭyaveda* compiled from the four of them. (1:14-16)

Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa, Khaṇḍa III (tr. Priyabala Shah)

Aum Vajra said: Therefore, O twice-born (Brahmin)! I ask you about the characteristics of *nāṭaka* along with its varieties. You know everything with distinction. So O Almighty! Kindly tell me about them.

Markandeya said: In a *nāṭaka* [drama], there is the review of the Purāṇas according to *itihāsa* (history) or in a *nāṭaka*, there is the life-history of Gods.



In the *kāvya* (i.e. *nāṭaka*) there may be one *nāyaka* [hero], or there can be a *nāyaka* and a *pratināyaka* [a hero's rival].

O King! All the *vṛttis* [styles of composition], all the sentiments (*rasas*) and all the usages of tenses (*kālas*) should be demonstrated in the *nāṭaka* by some contrivance.

It is said there can be five acts or auspicious ten acts in a *nāṭaka*, O king! In one act the activities of one episode are to be represented. Thereafter the activities of other characters should be contrived with some *yukti* [device] and *upanyāsa*.

O King! The incidents such as death, dethronement, the siege of a city and the fight should not be shown in the act.

The wise men should describe these incidents in a *praveśaka* [interlude]. There should always be two characters in a *praveśaka* and the characters should be of the servant class [*parijane*]. The hero (*nāyaka*) should not be there. When the two characters are not from the servant-class, it is called a *viṣkambhaka*.

The *nāṭikā* [short play] is like a *nāṭaka*, but it consists of four acts and its *rasa* is predominantly *śṛṅgāra* [erotic]. Similarly in *prakaraṇa* [drama with a fictitious plot], the plot is imaginary.

O the best of kings! There the hero is Brahmin or a merchant. A *prakaraṇa* should be written on the same line, but there should be four acts.

The plot of *utṣṛṣṭakāṅka* [a drama in one act] is either derived from *itihāsa* [history] or it is imaginary. Mostly the *vṛtti* [style] is *bhāratī* and the *rasa* is *karuṇa*. A god should not be made the hero.



In *bhāṇa* [a type of dramatic entertainment], the plot should be derived from *itihāsa*. It should represent the activities of one day. It consists of one day and is full of fights. The entire action is performed by one actor, by means of talking through the device of *ākāśa kathana* [speeches in the air].

In the variety named *samavakāra* there are twelve heroes, they may be gods or demons. There are three *śṛṅgāras* and three *kaptās*.

In *ihāmṛga* there are many acts and Gandharva is the hero. Its predominant *rasa* is *śṛṅgāra*. The *rasa* should arise from dissatisfaction of *yonirasa* (sex enjoyment)

In *vyāyoga* the activities of one day is represented. There is one hero and the *rasa* is *dr̥pta* [proud, arrogant]. In *vīthī* there are thirteen acts but there is no hero.

In *ḍima* the same [*dr̥pta*] *rasa* particularly *raudra* is there, god is the hero and the theme is well known.

Prahasana [a short farce] should be composed thus. There should be one act. There should be plenty of *hāsya* [comical] *rasa*. The heroes should be courtesans and *viṭas* [sensualist]. (17: 6-28)

Notes: The above extracts describe the ten different kinds of play, with their main characteristics.

Nāṭyaśāstra

In it [*nāṭya*] there is no exclusive representation of you or of the gods: for the drama is a representation of the state of the three worlds.



[In it] sometimes there is [reference to] duty, sometimes to games, sometimes to money, sometimes to peace, and sometimes laughter is found in it, sometimes fight, sometimes love-making and sometimes killing [of people].

This teaches duty to those bent on doing their duty, love to those who are eager for its fulfilment, and it chastises those who are ill-bred or unruly, promotes self-restraint in those who are disciplined, gives courage to cowards, energy to heroic persons, enlightens men of poor intellect and gives wisdom to the learned.

This gives diversion to kings, and firmness [of mind] to persons afflicted with sorrow, and [hints of acquiring] money to those who are for earning it, and it brings composure to persons agitated in mind.

The drama as I have devised, is a mimicry of actions and conducts of people, which is rich in various emotions, and which depicts different situations. This will relate to actions of men good, bad and indifferent, and will give courage, amusement and happiness as well as counsel to them all.

The drama will thus be instructive to all, through actions and states (*bhāva*) depicted in it, and through sentiments arising out of it.

It will [also] give relief to unlucky persons who are afflicted with sorrow and grief or [over-]work, and will be conducive to observance of duty (*dharma*) as well as to fame, long life, intellect and general good, and will educate people.

There is no wise maxim, no learning, no art or craft, no device, no action that is not found in the drama (*nāṭya*). (1:106-116)

Note: Here Bharata describes the characteristics of drama and the benefits it will bring to the audience.

Nāṭyaśāstra

There are three types of playhouses devised by the wise Viśvakarman [the heavenly architect] in the treatise on his art [śāstra]. They are oblong (*vikṛṣṭa*), square (*caturasra*) and triangular (*tryasra*). (2:7-8)

In the auspicious playhouse constructed with all the characteristics [mentioned above], cows, and Brahmins muttering [proper mantras] should be made to dwell for a week. Then the master of the dramatic art who has been initiated [for the purpose] and has put on new clothes, fasted for three days, lived away from his bedroom [literally, the dwelling house], has kept his senses under control and has [thus] become purified, will besprinkle his limbs with water over which purificatory mantras have been muttered, and consecrate the playhouse. (3:1-3)

Note: Here Bharata explains the ritual consecration of theatre buildings.

Nāṭyaśāstra

Its different parts which are to be performed in due order with the playing of drums and stringed instruments as well as with recitatives (*pāṭhya*), are as follows: *pratyāhāra*, *avataṛaṇa*, *ārambha*, *āśrāvaṇā*, *vaktrapāṇī*, *parighaṭṭānā*, *saṃghoṭānā*, *mārgāsārīta* and *asārīta* of the long, the medium and the short types. These songs outside [the performance of a play] are to be sung by persons behind the curtain to the accompaniment of drums and stringed instruments.

Then after removing the curtain, dances and recitals are to be performed with the laying of all musical instruments, and some song of the *madraka* class is to be sung, or one of the *vardhamānaka* class along with the



class dance [suitable to it] should be applied. Then should take place [one after another] during the preliminaries the following: *utthāpana*, walking round, benediction, *suṣkāpakṛṣṭā*, *raṅga-dvāra*, *cāri*, *mahācāri*, three men's talk and laudation. (5:8-15)

Note: Here Bharata describes the *pūrvaraṅga* (preliminary performance) to please the gods and the audience.

Nāṭyaśāstra

Just as connoisseurs of cooked food [*bhakta*] while eating food which has been prepared from various spices and other articles, taste it, so the learned people taste in their mind the dominant states [such as love, sorrow, etc.] when they are represented by an expression of the states with gestures. Hence these dominant states in a drama are called the sentiments.

(The relation between the sentiments and psychological states:)

Now one enquires, 'Do the states (*bhāva*) come out of the sentiments (*rasa*) or the sentiments come out of the states?' On this point, some are of opinion that they arise from their mutual contact. But this is not so. Why? It is apparent that the sentiments arise from the states and not the states from the sentiments. For [on this point] there are [traditional] couplets such as:

The states are so called by experts in drama, for they cause to originate (*bhāvayanti*) the sentiments in connexion with various modes of dramatic representation. Just as by many articles of various kinds auxiliary cooked food (*vyañjanā*) is brought forth, so the states along with different kinds of histrionic representation will cause the sentiments to originate.



There can be no sentiment prior to [literally, without] the states and no states without the sentiments [following it], and during the histrionic representation they are produced from their mutual relation.

Just as a combination of spices and vegetables imparts good taste to the food cooked, so the states and the sentiments cause one another to originate (*bhāvayanti*).

Just as a tree grows from a seed, and flowers and fruits [including the seed] from a tree, so the sentiments are the source [literally, root] of all the states, and likewise the states exist [as the source of all the sentiments].

(The eight sentiments from the four original ones:)

Now we shall describe the origins, the colours, the [presiding] deities, and examples of these sentiments. Sources of these [eight] sentiments are the four [original] sentiments — erotic, furious, heroic and odious.

The comic [sentiment] arises from the erotic, the pathetic from the furious, the marvellous from the heroic, and the terrible from the odious. (6:32-39)

Note: Here Bharata gives definitions of the eight *rasas*.

Nāṭyaśāstra

When the meanings presented by determinants and consequents are made to pervade (*gamyate*) [the heart of the spectators] they are called *bhāvas* (states).

As in these the inner idea of the playwright (*kavi*) is made to pervade [the mind of the spectators] by means of words, gestures, colour of the face and the representation of the temperament they are called *bhāvas* [states].



As they cause the sentiments relating to various kinds of histrionic representation to pervade [the mind of the spectators], they are called *bhāvas* (states) by those who produce a drama.

(*Vibhāvas* – determinants – explained:)

‘Now, why is the word *vibhāva* used?’ [Answer:] The word *vibhāva* is used for the sake of clear knowledge. It is synonymous with *kāraṇa*, *nimitta* and *hetu*. As words, gestures and the representation of the temperament are *vibhāvya* [determined] by this, it is called *vibhāva* [determinant]. *Vibhāvita* [also] means the same thing as *vijñāta* [clearly known]. On this point there is a *śloka*:

As many things are *vibhāvya* [determined] by this through words, gestures and the representation of the temperament, it is named *vibhāva* [determinant].

(*Anubhāvas* – consequents – explained:)

‘Now, why is the word *anubhāva* used?’ [Answer:] Because the histrionic representation by means of words, gestures and the temperament are *anubhāvya* [made to be felt] by this, it is called *anubhāva* [consequent]. (7:1-8)

Note: Here Bharata throws light on the constituents of *rasa*: *bhāvas* (emotions), *vibhāvas* (actors/stage-sets) and *anubhāvas* or gestures as crucial elements of emotional experience in theatre.

Nāṭyaśāstra

I shall now define [literally, relate the characteristics of] the two practices (*dharmī*) which have been mentioned before.



If a play depends on natural behaviour [in its characters] and is simple and not artificial, and has in its [plot] professions and activities of the people and has [simple acting and] no playful flourish of limbs and depends on men and women of different types, it is called realistic (*lokadharmi*).

If a play contains speech, activity, beings and states of the extraordinary kind, and requires acting with playful flourish of limbs and possesses characteristics of dance, and requires conventional enunciation, and is dependent on emotionally carried characters, it is to be known as conventional (*nāṭyadharmi*).

If anything used by [literally, among] people, appears [literally, set foot] in a play [literally, here] as endowed with a corporal form and speech the practice is [also] called conventional (*nāṭyadharmi*). (14:61-67)

Note: Here, Bharata explains two kinds of *dharmīs* (theatrical representations).

Nāṭyaśāstra

I shall now describe the tenfold division of plays together with their names, functions and modes of production.

For their definition (*lakṣaṇa*) plays are known to be of ten kinds such as *nāṭaka*, *prakaraṇa*, *aṅka* (*utsr̥ṣṭikāṅka*), *vyāyoga*, *bhāṇa*, *samavakāra*, *vīthī*, *prahasana*, *ḍima* and *ihāmṛga*. I shall describe their characteristics in detail.

Styles (*vṛtti*) are known as the constituent elements of all dramatic works [literally, poems]. Considering their production the ten kinds of play are considered to have proceeded from these.

Just as the *jātis* and the *śrutis* of notes (*svara*) constitute a scale (*grāma*), so varieties of styles make up the dramatic composition (*kāryabandha*).



Just as the *ṣaḍja* and the *madhyama* scales include all the notes, so these two [kinds of] dramatic compositions (*nāṭaka* and *prakaraṇa*) are made up of all the styles.

The *nāṭaka* and the *prakaraṇa* are to be known as made up of all the styles and they utilize all the different methods of constructions.

Plays of the *vīthī*, the *samavakāra*, the *īhāmṛga*, the *utsṛṣṭikāṅka* (*aṅka*), the *vyāyoga*, the *bhāṇa*, the *prahasana* and the *ḍima* classes should be made devoid of the graceful style. (20:1-9)

Note: Here Bharata explains *dasarūpakas* (ten kinds of plays).

Nāṭyaśāstra

In this connexion, heroines (*nāyikā*) are known to be of eight kinds such as, 'one dressed up for union' (*vāsakasajjā*), 'one distressed by separation' (*virahotkaṅṭhitā*), 'one having her husband in subjection' (*svādhinabharṭṛkā*), 'one separated [from her lover] by a quarrel' (*kalahāntarītā*), 'one enraged with her lover' (*khaṇḍītā*), 'one deceived by her lover' (*vipralabdḥā*), 'one with a sojourning husband' (*proṣitabharṭṛka*) and 'one who moves to her lover' (*abhisārikā*). (24:210-211)

Note: Here Bharata defines eight types of *nāyikās* (heroines).

Nāṭyaśāstra

I shall now describe their classes according to their conduct. Among these [characters], heroes (*nāyakas*) are known to be of four classes, and they belong to the superior and the middling types and have various characteristics.



The hero is described as being of four kinds: the self-controlled and vehement (*dhīroddhata*), the self-controlled and light-hearted (*dhīralalita*), the self-controlled and exalted (*dhīrodātta*) and the self-controlled and calm (*dhīraprasānta*).

Gods are self-controlled and vehement (*dhīroddhata*), kings are self-controlled and light-hearted (*dhīralalita*), councillors are self-controlled and exalted (*dhīrodātta*), and Brahmins and merchants are self-controlled and calm (*dhīraprasānta*) classes of heroes. (34:17-20)

Note: Here Bharata defines four types of *nāyakas* (heroes).

Comprehension

1. What is the difference between reading a play, watching a play and watching a movie?
2. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* introduces *asuras* or demons among the characters on the stage. Which characters in contemporary theatre or films would you parallel with them?
3. What are some of the recurrent themes that we see in movies? Compare them with those in *Nāṭyaśāstra*.
4. Drama is mimicry of actions and conducts of people. Work out some examples on the basis of *Nāṭyaśāstra*.
5. In the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, what are the various themes for performing *nāṭya*?

Match the following

Match these heroes as per the descriptions of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*:



1. Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Buddha, Rāvaṇa.
2. *Dhīrodātta*: the ideal man, brave, confident, determined, disciplined yet down-to-earth.
3. *Dhīroddhatta*: brave and self-controlled but very egotistical, hot-tempered, deceitful.
4. *Dhīralalita*: brave yet always very cheerful and pleasant.
5. *Dhīraprasānta*: pure at heart, confident and passionate.

Activity 1

Write a script using one of the themes for drama described by the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

Activity 2

Complete the following table: find the correct emotions (*rasas*) from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* corresponding to the first four entries, and find examples of songs/movies/dramas corresponding to the last four.

Song / movie / drama	Rasa (emotion)
Vande Mātaram (song)	
Angoor (Hindi movie)	
Comedy of Errors (play)	
Romeo and Juliet (movie)	
	<i>karuṇa</i> (pathetic)
	<i>raudra</i> (furious)
	<i>bhayānaka</i> (horrific)
	<i>bībhatsa</i> (disgust)



Activity 3

Recall your favourite movies and the best of your theatrical experiences. Make a list of themes/scenes that appealed to you the most. Draw similarities between present-day heroes and heroes described in *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Cite examples from modern-day drama/films/advertisements.

Activity 4

Read the given extract from *A Monograph on Bharata's Natyashastra* by P.S.R. Apparao on the origin of drama and do the activities that follow:

The gods got together to create a play *asuraparājaya* (the defeat of the demons) in the open air at the time of the festival of *indradhvaja* or Indra's flag. The production of this play offended the demons as it was pointing against them. The demons disappeared from the audience under the leadership of *virūpāksha* and saw to it that the speech, movement, and memory of the actors and actresses were paralyzed. Indra angered at the discovery of the hand of the demons in disturbing the production, beat them with his *jarjara* or flag staff. The production started again and the remainder of the demons started to frighten the actors and actress with their guiles. Then Brahmā ordered Visvakarma, the celestial architect, to construct a *nāṭyagrha* or a theatre so that admission could be restricted. Visvakarma, one of the gods, immediately brought into being a theatre. Brahmā also stated that the gods that guard the production and the theatre should be worshipped before a production started. The worship is included in the *pūrvaraṅgavidhi* or pre-presentational rituals.



- Search and draw pictures of different kinds of *nāṭyagrha* as described in *Nāṭyaśāstra*.
- Draw a comparison between contemporary theatre and *nāṭyagrha*.
- Explore where the *paramparā* (tradition) of artists bowing before entering the stage came from.

Let us explore

Read the following comment made by the *Nāṭyaśāstra*'s translator Manomohan Ghosh and explore:

It may appear that these items of the Preliminaries to be performed behind the front curtain have been made needlessly elaborate. But it is not so. In ancient times people due to different conditions of their lives, were not so much punctual in coming to the theatrical show, they did not come to it all at once and at any fixed time. Quite a long time passed before they all assembled. Hence from behind the curtain the Director offered to the early-comers (naturally the people who had no haste in their lives) whatever they could, while preparing for the actual performance. The same practice about the Preliminaries maybe observed even now in case of the *Jātrās* or the open air theatrical performances in Bengal.

Exercise

- What is the significance of *pūrvaraṅgavidhi* (pre-presentational rituals) in performing arts?
- How is *pūrvaraṅgavidhi* (pre-presentational rituals) conducted in various forms of classical dance and traditional theatre? How long does the ritual last?

- Collect and share various audio and videos on pre-presentational rituals from different parts of India.

Project idea

- Prepare a presentation on *aṣṭanāyikas* — the eight types of heroines — as described in *Nāṭyaśāstra*. (Clue: you can search the classical dances of India to get relevant images.)



Performer playing Sugrīva in a *kuṭiyattam* play (Courtesy: Wikipedia)



“Theatre is the highest expression of the civilization that produces it. Whether it expresses or interprets real life, theatre must summarize it in striking fashion: life is depicted as shorn of the insignificant accessories that burden it, reduced to its essential lines, generalized under a symbol. India’s originality wholly expressed itself in her dramatic art; she combined and condensed in it her dogmas, her doctrines and her institutions. ... The Indian genius created a new art, which the term *rasa* summarizes and symbolizes in a brief formula: the poet does not express, he suggests. ...

“Thanks to his audience’s natural faculties, the poet is certain of being understood without having to be explicit; he can dispense with an integral expression of the thought or the sentiment; he is free to choose, from among the elements of the idea or the impression, the most happy, exquisite, delicate or even subtle traits. The listener’s intelligence will seize on the hidden or veiled meaning, and good taste will be grateful to the poet for having been spared uninteresting details.

“The audience’s moral nobility imposes a moral obligation on the poet. ... Emotion is the essence of poetry: the drama will choose the noblest sentiments, and if it admits of any others, it will take care to relegate them to a minor rank and use them to enhance and glorify virtue.”

Sylvain Lévi, *Indian Theatre* (1890)
(tr. from the French by Michel Danino)







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