



CHAPTER - I
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of Performing Art

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India is one of the great repositories of cultural and literary heritage. The sheer enormity and diversity of its cultural expression in different genres like *kāvya*s, *nātakas*, music, dance and other Gandharva kalās are the envy of many nations in the world. Among them the most beautiful mode of artistic, aesthetic and cultural expression in India is “*nātaka*”. So it is aptly declared by Indian intelligentsia that- *kāvyeṣu nāṭakam ramyam*

We have a very rich and stirring tradition of performing art, that has survived the vicissitudes of time down to the present day. Indian tradition claims for *drāmā* of divine origin. We come across many beautiful dialogue hymns (*sambāda suktas*) in *Rgveda* that repose in their bosom the roots of this richest cultural heritage. The Indian epics bear all the testimony of a sufficiently developed performing tradition. The reference of *nata* (actors), *nartakas*, *sūtas*, *māgadhas* are found in the great Indian epics, Mahabharata and Rāmāyaṇa. When the festival was held before the marriage ceremony of Draupadi and it lasted for sixteen days we find references of ‘*natas*’ *nartakas*. The sloka runs like this¹—

*naṭa vaiṭālikaścaiva nartakāḥ sūta māgadhaḥ/
niyodhakāśca deṣebhyaḥ sameśyanti mahābalaḥ//*

— 1.175.16 Mahābhārata

In Rāmāyaṇa, during the birth of Dasaratha’s sons Ayodhya had witnessed a great festivity with the convergence of large number of people enjoying with enthusiasm and gaiety. On that occasion a large number of *natas* and *nartakas* were congregated there to display their plays and artistic skills².

*Utsavasca mahānāsīdayodhyāyām janā kulah /
rathyāsca janasambhādḥā nāṭanartakasamkulāḥ //*

— 18 sloka- Balakāṇḍa - 18th sargah

Coming to *Srimad Bhāgavatam* we get examples of fully developed dramatic art in those days. One among such examples is *Kunti*'s prayer to Lord Krishna She says³ —

māyā yavanikāchhanna majyādhokhyajamavyayam /
na lakhyase mudhadṛṣā nato nātyadhara yathā //

— Śrīkṛṣṇastaba Mahābhārata

'Covered by the curtain of *māyā*, transcending sense-knowledge, the unchangeable you are not known by the deluded, like the actor on the stage or *nata* is unable to know the stage manger or *sutradhara*.' The terms like *yavanikā*, *nata*, *nātyādhara*, all these show the full-fledgedness of the craft of performing art in Bhāgavata age.

Ancient Indian polity contains references of actor, actresses, dancers who were employed by the state for espionage.⁴ Pānini, the great Indian grammarian of sixth century BC speaks about "*naṭa-sūtra*" means principles of *drāmā*, that were laid down by '*śilāli*' and '*kusāsva*', the two ancient dramaturgists⁵. In *Kāma-sūtra* of 2nd cen. AD, we find sufficient traces of a rich dramatic tradition in ancient India.

The *Harivamsa* which is an integral part of *Mahābhārata* gives interesting details about ancient dramatic tradition and stage management. We find the description of the wrestling bout between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Balarām* on one side and *Caṇura* and *Muṣṭika* on the other side. The bout was held in the *mahāraṅgaśālā* of king *Kaṃsa*. The antiquity of this story is proved by the fact that it has also taken place in *Pāliḡaṭhā Jātaka*. In *Harivamsa* it is depicted that the main stage was supported by actozonal painted pillars, adorned with doors and crescent-shaped windows, accomodated with seats and cushions, decorated with banners of different kings, curtains and flowers. The pavillions of different kings were decorated with banners bearing the emblems of them.⁶

svakarmādravyayuktābhiḥ patākābhīrṇirantarm /
śreṇinām ca gaṇānam ca mañcābhāntyācalopāmāḥ //

— 29.5Harivamsam

The above description of the stage and auditorium is almost unique in early sanskrit literature and shows the high degree of sophistication attained by the stage managers of

ancient India. In *Harivamsa* we find the performance of two plays by the Yadavas at Sakhanagara of Brajanagara and in the capital of king *Vrajanava*. The first play was based on *Rāmāyaṇa* “*rāmāyaṇam mahākāvya muddesya nātakam kṛtam*”//⁷(93.6*Harivamsam*) the story was about the sage Ṛsyasṅga’s coming to *Ayodhyā*. Everything was perfect in that play, the performance, the decoration, the prologue, and the acting of the players.⁸

saṃskārabhinayau tesām prastāvanām ca dhāraṇam/

ḍṛṃtvā sarve praveśam ca dānavā vismayam gataḥ//

— 93.10. *Harivamsam*

The most important feature of the ancient performance is that the women were allowed to play the role of the ladies. It is a well - known fact that in the age of Shakespeare young lads were asked to play the role of the ladies . But in India we find the women artists playing the role of women even as early as the beginning of the Christian era. The second play performed by the *Yādavas* in the capital of *Vajranāva* was titled as *Rambhāvisāram* .

rambhāvisāram kauberam nāṭakam nāṅṛtustataḥ/ — 93.28 *Harivamsam*

The play was based on that part *Rāmāyaṇa* where the whole story of *Rāvaṇa*’s rape of *Rambhā*, mistress of *Nala Kubera* has been elaborately depicted . We also get the same story of *Rambhā* in *Mahābhārata* (3-280-59-60). The poet of *Harivamsa* further tells us that before the *Yadavas* started the actual performance of the play they entertained the audience with songs and dances . Several kinds of musical instruments are mentioned by the poet, they are *ghanam* (cymbal) *suśiram* (a kind of wind instrument) *muraja* (a kind of drum) and *ānaka* (a large drum) etc. (III.93-92) The *yādava* women sang the ‘*chālikya*’ songs with *Abhinaya* (II. 93-23) The *yādava* heroes also sang *Gaṅgāvatarāṇa* songs and by magic of illusion and acting the *yādavas* brought the mount *Kailāśa* on the stage.

kailāśo rupitaścāpi māyayā yadunandanam // — (II- 93-29)

All these descriptions prove the fine and delicate stage- craft of ancient Indian actors and actresses . This is the first definite reference of actual staging of plays in

ancient India which dates back to pre-Christian era. But nowhere in *Harivamsa* we find the mentioning of any classical dramatist including Bhasa. So long before *Bhasa* and *Aśvaghoṣa* we have a fully developed tradition of performing art in India that goes back to pre-epic period. Thus the germ laid by the Vedic seers and ṛsis, nurtured by different streams of śāstras, grew in to a grand literary and cultural culmination, that is 'nāṭaka', which is regarded as the finest fruit of Indian aesthetics.

Chronologically Indian drama stands solitary on the long pathway of time, uninterrupted, unfettered, continuous. It continued from several centuries before Christ until now, till the 21st century. That is a pretty long period which no other dramatic tradition of the world has ever lasted. The Greek tragedies lasted only for five hundred years. The Elizabethan theatrical tradition continued only from 15th century. The Japan has only seven centuries of continuous dramatic performance. But the glorious genre of Indian performing art has set an encompassing life span from the early epic period till now. So Indian drama can be called as the timeless traveller on the pathway of Art and Aesthetics.

The Epics form a landmark in the development of Indian literature. They have blended art with life, beauty with bliss and speculation with pleasure. The Epics are treated as the main-stay of literature for poets of posterity. The sloka of Rāmāyaṇa runs like this⁹—

āścaryamidamākhyānaṃ muninā samprakṛitāṃ /

paraṃ kavīnāmādhāraṃ samāptāṃ yathākramāṃ //

— Bālakāṇḍa - 4th sarga 26 sloka

Even the Dasarupaka advises the authors of dramas to draw upon the Ramayana.

Every generation has its own ideas and own ways of expression. The Vedic seers composed the vedic hymns in mantra style, which is the most intense, heightened rhythmic expression. Poetry becomes mantra when it becomes the voice of the inmost truth. The ancient poets and ṛsis have voiced the inner soul's rhythms. *Yogi Aravinda* also defines mantra as 'the highest and intensest revealing form of poetic thought and expression.'¹⁰ In epic days we have got a refreshing renovated thrilling style of easy

narration. Similarly in post-epic period we find a new, distinct style of expression known as “nātyām”. So the path of charm and appreciation thus has taken a new turn, a new form, that is enchanting and enthralling. Side by side, the process of codification, definition, systematisation was enfolding and consolidating the field of drāma, that is known as dramaturgy. Thus the craft of theatre and the poetic creations of theatre go simultaneously. That has made the sanskrit plays so uniform, unified and concentrated. So from Asvaghosa, Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Sudraka Bhavabhuti, Harsa, Murari, Rājasekhara upto the contemporary poets like Kṛṣṇamīśra etc, we have got an enormous flux of plays and the substratum has given to them by the authors of Dramaturgy. The Dramatists discovered the paradigm of innumerable definitions, techniques, types of plays, types of *nāyaka* and *nāyikā*, modes of acting, *bhāvas*, *hāvas*, emotions etc and they followed them to produce a paragon of beauty and bliss by their literary merits. The Dramatic representations are regarded as the pure expressions of joy - *ānandanīṣyandiṣu rūpakeṣu* says Dhanañjaya. In a play all the Vedic knowledge and the traditional or legendary lore are renarrated in a different manner. *vedavidyētiḥāsanāmākhyānaparikalpanam* says Nātya Śāstra.¹¹

Then the question comes spontaneously to mind that what are the original features of a play that makes it so special, so appealing, so close to human heart. What are the essential characteristics of *nāṭya* ? Those are -

1- Natya is sārva-varnikam.

In the opening chapter of Natya -sastra, Bharata gives a detailed description of the origin of fifth veda. He writes “in the old days the inhabitants of Jambu Dvīpa lived an unpleasant life which is not a reputable one. To improve the life style of the ordinary people, Brahmā created another veda that would be accessible to all, irrespective of their caste distinctions, as a Sudra had no rightful access to the sacred lore of the vedas. He created the fifth veda by drawing the text from *Ṛg-veda*, the music from *Sāmaveda*, the *avinaya* from *Yajurveda* and the *rasa* from *Atharvan*”(NS1-17)¹². Bharata, the shining star in the firmament of Indian aesthetics enlightens in an encompassing manner enlisting all the elements of a play in his *Nātyaśāstra*. Equiposing himself with

“*Brahmā*”, the creator of the sacred Vedas, Bharatamuni, declares ‘*srjāparam veda pancamam*’ which is, *sārvavarnikam*. Here the literature is democratised and made pro-people. The ordinary people who did not have accessibility to vedas and other *śāstrs*, are allowed to enjoy the essence of all vedas through fifth veda. It is a silent revolution through literature. Bharata showed his revolutionary thinking by executing this sense of respect for the low born people. Bharata further explains regarding the emergence of fifth veda that he created *Nātya veda* for mutual understanding between the high and low stratas of the society. The most heart-touching and humanising tendency of *Nātya* is that it is meant for public at large, including the sudras. It is expansive, encompassing, all inclusive, not exclusive like the Vedas. Bharata, the silent revolutionary of that age shows his reformatory attitude and pro-people thinking by saying that —

na veda vyavahāroayam samśrāvyaḥ śudrajātiṣu/

tasmāt srujam param vedaṃ pancham sārvavarnikam//

— *Nātya-śāstra, Chapter-1 Sloka-12*

Bharata has collected the essences and essentials from all spheres and configured it very carefully to get the end-product, that is “*nātya*”. So *nātya* is *sarvaśāstrarthasampannam* it is *sarvaśilpapradarsakam* so also *sarvakarmānudarśakam*. *Nātyaśāstra* says¹³ —

na tadjñānam na tadśilpam na sā vidyā na sā kalā // — 1/13- NS

na sa yoga na tat karma nātyesmin yat na dr̥syate /

sarvasāstraṇi silpani karmāṇi vividhāni ca //

—1st chapter 114 sloka N.S

2. *Nātya* is *Lokavṛtyānukaraṇam* :

Defining and delineating the essential features of *nātya*, Bharata gives the substratum to *drāma*, that is human life and action, *lokavṛti*. *Nātya* is the imitation and celebration of the human life and nature. Human conditions are the blend of worldly sorrows and happiness and *nātya* is the lifelike representation of it. So *nātya* is

nānāvastāntarātmakam. Thus the base on which nāṭya is founded is the multiple conditions of human life. It refracts, reflects and represents human life like a crystal analyses white beams of light spatially in the coloured bands of the spectrum. In Vedas and Upaniṣads, we come across the super discussion about atmā-paramatma, about the life before birth and after death. But nāṭya has flourished on human conditions of life on this earth. It is life expressed, life interpreted, life asserted.

3. Naṭya is Bhāvānukīrtanam :

Nāṭya is not confined only in the external happening of human life. It is an intense extravaganza of human emotions, so it is called *nānābhābopasampanam* and also *bhāvānukīrtanam*. It is the proclamation, promotion and presentation of different moods and emotions of the people.

4. Nāṭya is Viśrāntijanakam

Nāṭya is not only the repository of multiple bhāvas, but also the repose of repulse-ridden, repressive human hearts. Depicting the human psychological conditions, Bharata says in the first chapter of *Nāṭyaśāstra* - "People's hard sombre heart, suffering from the sting of Jealousy, burning with hate and lust, simmering under sorrow, the strokes of fear and treachery, all the mundane bhāvas torment us. *Nāṭya* comforts and consoles them, through amusement and refreshment, who are agrieved, miserable and forlorn. Through catharsis, the mind and heart of the spectator get a great relief. So it is *viśrāmajanakam* and *vinodajankam*

5. Naṭya is Lalitātmaka

Nāṭya is predominantly pleasurable to heart it is *Lalitātmaka* charming and elegant in nature. Composed with grace and grandure, *nāṭya* cheers up the heart of spectators in an appealing manner through *āṅgika*, *vācika*, and *śāitika* abhinayas. *Nāṭya* is *lalita* or agreeable, as it is enriched with *rasa*, *bhāva* and all other *aṅgas* or ingredients of *nāṭaka*. *Kālidāsa* the great poet of Indian soil, supports this view saying that- *naṭyam bhinnarucer janasya bahudhā prekṣam samārāadhanam*. Drama is an entertainment to common people of different tastes. (*Malavikagnimitram* 1.4)

6. Nāṭya is Hitopajananam

Nāṭya is not only meant for *vilāsa* or enjoyment but it is also *hitopajannaam*. It is educative and instructive. It makes the people conscious about their duties and activities. Visualising the varied life-story of super-humans, or heros, their actions, an ordinary human being gets influenced. So *nāṭya* works just like a sugar-coated pill for the people. They get the messages to behave like “*Rāma*” but not like “*Rāvana*”. This act contributes a lot in building the human characters and a balanced society, consequently contributing to the development of our nation. Thus the four *purusārthas* are accomplished through the medium of *nāṭya*. By beholding a play, a person can contemplate and decide his own course of action in proper direction.

7. Nāṭya is Alaukikātmaka

Though *nāṭya* is founded on average person’s life and conditions, but it is super-natural and transcendental in nature. The culminating and harmonising presence of *rasa* in *nāṭya* makes it *alaukika* or super-natural as the attribution of *rasa* transgresses the ten types of “*laukika pratitis*” such as imitation, *anukarṇa*, reflection, *pratibimbana*, painting, *citra*, similarity, *sādṛśya*, attribution, *āropa*, apprehension, *adhyavasāyah*, probability, *utprekṣā*, dream, *swapna*, illusion *māyā* and delusion *indrajāla* and five types of *laukika* knowledge like *yatharthajñānam*, *mithyājñānam*, *saṁśaya*, *anbdhāraṇa*, and *anadhyavasāya* *Nāṭya* can only be relished, as *rasa* is *āswadarūpa* it can only be experienced as it is *sākṣātkārātmaka*. It can not be known by all these worldly mediums of knowledge. It is a bridge that connects the hearts of the poet’s, the actor’s and the spectators in a blissful manner. Drama is a kind of blissful experience.

8. Nāṭya is imitation anukarṇa

Nāṭya is rooted in human emotions (*bhāvas*) sprouted from the human conditions and life and represented through imitation. A play is essentially imitative. Imitation is the natural instinct of a human being. It springs spontaneously with the human nature. Imitation is the base, the foundation, the back-bone of a dramatic representation. Imitation occurs thrice in a play, such as during the composition of the play, during the representation of the play through *abhinaya*, and during the enjoyment of the spectators.

Now the most important question arises, “Is imitation absolute or despotic ?” Bharata’s Nātya-śāstra says imitation is the basic principle of a play. But he does not specify for abosoluteness in imitation. To demarcate the delicate line of propriety in imitation he proclaims the concept of “*lokadharmi*” and *nātya-dharmi*.

9. Lokadharmi vis-a-vis Nātya dharmi-

In a play the characters and episodes are related to real world but to get the dramatic richness, intensity, and beauty they are modified, because nātya is essentially *sobhāpradhāna* Realism is one thing and dramatic beauty is another thing. These two aspects are termed as “*lokadharmi*” and “*nātya-dharmi*” by Bharata. *Lokadharmi* is associated with physical aspect while *nātya-dharmi* is connected with the aspect of beauty in the play.

A performance should be harmonious with the tendencies of the people (*lokavṛti*) but at the sametime it must be beautiful and enjoyable. The part of the performance which is harmonious with reality is called ‘*lokadharmi*’ while the part which is modified and magnified with the imagination of the poet is called ‘*nātya-dharmi*’.

Lokadharmi is the base of *nātyadharmi*. The relation between them is just like the relation between a wall and a picture painted on it. The picture can not exist without the existance of the wall, and a wall also can not attain beauty without the picture. So also *nātya-dharmi* can not have existance without *Lokadharmi* and *Lokadharmi* can not be expressed in a beautiful manner without *nātya-dharmi*. This interdependancy of the two dharmas or devices of drama makes them both equally important for the play and the poet has to strike a balance between them to make his play successful. Bharat defines *Lokadharmi*¹⁴ —

svabhāvabhāvopagatam śuddhaṃ tvavikṛtaṃ tathā /

lokavārtākriyopetamaṅgalilāvivarjitaṃ //

— Nātya Śāstra 14th chapter, 71 sloka.

It must be derived from natural activities of people. It must be *śuddha*, pure and *avikṛta* unaltered and unadulterated. It must be well-known and famous among people. It must be expressed with naturality without any exaggation. It must have natural actions as it is based no real human activities. *Nātyadharmi* is defined as¹⁵ —

ati sattvokriyopetam atisattvotivāṣitam /

lilāṅgahārāvinayam nāṭya lakṣaṇalakṣitam //

— N.S. chapter 14 sloka 72

It must be highly elevated and charged with highly evocative, and poetic imagination, enhanced and enriched with graceful acting, accompanied with the excellences of music, and it must be played by the expert and developed personalities.

Nāṭya is the domain of both playwright and the actor. When the playwright depicts the real life situations, as it is, that is called *lokavārta-kriyopeta*. When the same is enriched with imagination and dramatic subtleties as per the requirement of the stage direction and expression of emotion that becomes “*ativākya-kriyopeta*. We can take the example of *Sakuntalā*. In original, the story runs as the meeting of two persons, loving each other and the lover leaving the beloved and rejecting her prayer for acceptance. But *Kalidāsa* modifies it artistically by adding the episodes of ring, curse of *Durvāsā*, the forgetfulness of the king *Duṣyanta*, and again the union at the hermitage after the separation of seven years. By that the poet justifies king *Duṣyanta*'s act and highly elevates his character. The poet also very successfully maintains the dramatic tension till the end of the play, also he exhibits both the aspects of the main sentiment of the play, that is *śṅgāra*.

The writer makes some changes in the theme and the original characters for the reason of creativity and newness. When the characters are historical, their attitudes are also famous. If the writer depicts them faithfully they are *svabhāva bhāva pogata*. *Suddha* and *avikṛta* and these are treated as *lokadharmi*. But when the writer makes changes for the sake of poetic beauty, dramatic tension, and creativity these are known as *nāṭyadharmi*, as for example take- *Bhāsa*'s plays “*Dūtavākya*” and “*Urubhaṅga*”. The character of *Duryodhana* in “*Dūtavākya*” is same as in *Mahābhārata*. But in *Urubhaṅga* *Bhāsa* has changed *Duryodhana*'s character so much so that it becomes “*atisattva*” and “*atibhāvaka*”. Hence here it is called *nāṭyadharmi*.

Nāṭyadharmi has a vast province of literature. A soliloque, for instance comes under *nāṭyadharmi*. It is heard by audience and others but it is assumed that it has been

voiced by the inner self of the character. Sometimes the inanimate objects like a mountain, a place or a river, or the forest itself are personified in a play such as rivers talk with each other in *Uttararāmacarita* of Bhavabhūti. Sometimes some emotions are embodied or personified. All these comes under *nātyadharmi*, So when the human life is reflected in a play enriched with the excellences of *nātya* it is called *nātyadharmi*.

One can take another illustration from *Rāmāyaṇa*. *Rāma* went to forest to perform his duty for his father. But Bhavabhūti changes it in "*Mahāvīracaritam*". He has shown *Rāvaṇa* planing to ruin *Rāma* and wanted to bring him to *Dandakāranya*, and sent *Sūparṇakhā* as *Mantharā* in disguise. *Rāma* proceeding to forest while obeying *Kaikeyī's* order is *lokavārta kriyopeta*, but the imaginative changes of Bhavabhūti is *ativākyakriyopeta*. As the playwright wants to intensify the main sentiment he brings many changes in the situations of the play.

Nātya is *lokavṛttānukaraṇam*. It is imitation of human life and action. But can we really imitate the life of human beings with it's stark, naked reality? Poet's vision is based on the life of people, observing it sympathetically, but while reflecting in a play he remodels, remotivates, and renovates suitably as required and makes it idealized to be enjoyed and followed by others.

At this stage another point is also important that how much "reality" is to be reflected in a play or piece of Art. What should be proper and ethical? To what extent reality can be visualised in a play in the name of art? Now-a-days the excessive vulgarity and inhumanistic violence are depicted in the name of reality and also in the name of art. So the question is imitation should be to what extent naturalistic, realistic and dramatic? what is the extent of reality reflected as "*lokadharmi*" and *nātyadharmi*? The subtle demarcation must be made and adopted by the author and the actor by which the play will touch the heart of the spectator. The real life qualities and dramatic qualities must have subtle balance between them.

All forms of art is based on concept of propriety. Beauty is essential in art so also reality. We must know the limitations of both the devices and act accordingly. Through 'aucitya' or sense of propriety we experience beauty in *kāvya* and art forms. *Kṣemendra* says —

aucityam rasasiddhastha sthiram kāvyasya jivitam/

This concept of propriety is stressed by Bharata in regard to the experience of beauty in nāṭya. He says¹⁶ —

vayo'nurūpa prathamastu veśo,

veśonurūpaśca gati-pracārāḥ /

gati pracārānugataṃ ca pāṭhyam,

pāṭyānurūpa'bhinayaśca kāryaḥ // — 13th chapter Nāṭya Śāstra

The 'veso' or apparel must be according to age, the body movement must be appropriate to the apparel, the dialogues or *pāṭhya* must be suitable to body-movement and the acting must be according to the dialogues. Thus the propriety between all those parts of dramatic representation makes the play successful. Thus the author of drama shows shrewd foresight with subtle sense of beauty. He imitates the realities of life and with poetic creativity and gives them a new form, a new delectability and delicacy.

The most important feature that made drama more close to people is the introduction of *prākṛts*, the spoken dialects. Bharata also specifies for that saying-*nāṭyayoge tu kartavya kāvyā bhāṣāsamāśrayam*. The composition of nāṭya should be based on the local dialects (XVIII-43). The Daśarupaka also gives stress on pro-people and pro-society modes in a play. Dhanañjaya says - "In all representations in a play action and speech should be taken directly from the society and should be properly observed."¹⁷

desabhāṣākriyābeśalakhaṇāḥ syuḥ prabṛtayaḥ /

lokādebagamyaitā yathouicityam prayojayet // — II 63 Daśarupakam

So literature has turned, from mere luxury towards realities of society. The ordinary, average human being with pain and pleasure, with dreams and despair are presented in a play. Literature has become humanising in nature. It has become democratic, it has become all-inclusive through nāṭya.

Abhinaya - Mere imitation is not enough. In a drama the actor must identify himself with the person he is imitating and the situation he represents by the means of

gestures, physical and verbal. Therefore the sphere of *abhinaya* is divided into *āṅgika*, *vācika*, *sāttvika* and *āhārya*. *Āṅgika abhinaya* is divided into *ceṣṭā*, movements of the whole body. When limbs are moved, the action grows like the branches from a tree, one leading to another. The action of face is called *āṅkura* means sprouting of the feelings. The feelings are sprouted or reflected on the face of the actor. So the speeches and songs are like the foliage of the play. The dialogues are like the green leaves on a plant which shows the signs of life force and wholeness of the dramatic representation. *Vākyābhinaya* is deeply associated with vocabulary and *sāttvika abhinaya* is the object of *bhāva* or emotions. It flows out of the genuine innermost self overflowing the *sahṛdaya* with emotion.

Poetry in a play -

The human soul in intense emotion strives to express itself in verse. So the significant aesthetic pattern in a play comes from poetry. Poetry is the subtlest means of transcending the limitations of a play and the principle which leads to great aesthetic enrichment. Poetry is the root-cause of "*lalitātmakatā*" in a play. Imitation is one instinct of human nature. Next there is the instinct for happiness and harmony. Poetry in general seems to have sprung from these two causes, lying deep in our nature. The dramatic art is essentially dependant on poetic or lyrical form of perception as *nāṭya* is essentially endowed with "*Sukumāratā*". Bharata also declares that *nāṭya* is the integration of music, dance, acting and other crafts. So *nāṭya* is poetic in nature. There are certain relevant causes for interweaving of poetry with play. Those are —

- It gives extension to meaning and enhances the dramatic quality of the situation.
- It opens the way for exploration of thoughts, feelings, emotions and extension of sensibility.

- It is essential for dislocation of the subject matter for aesthetic relishment of that situation. As for example- the banishment of *Sita*. Here the author interweaves poetry that delineates the mental agonies of *Sita*. For few moments the subject matter gets dislocated for relishing the '*karuṇa*' rasa. The spectator halts for few minutes at that point. Eliot, the great critic has rightly said - "All poetry tends towards drama, all drama tends towards poetry". But poetic drama is not drama decorated with poetic

language only. But Poetry must justify its presence dramatically. It should not be superfluous.

○ It is required for imaginative richness in a play.

○ Poetry has greater scope and flexibility. It may lean towards the lyrical, or the meditative, or philosophical, or whatever without cutting loose from its anchor in the dramatic scheme.

○ Poetry is a kind of extra dimension, and poetic drama aims not only to excite us with the action, but also to reveal the significance of the action, using the state of heightened awareness and keener perception.

○ Poetry is a mode in which meaning is experienced most profoundly. It alone makes possible the creation of a complex artistic structure which corresponds to the totality of human experience and reproduces the different levels sensuous, logical, psychological and spiritual upon which life is lived. It is in fact the privilege of dramatic poetry to be able to show us several planes of reality at once.

Rhythm or metre is one of the two most distinctive features of poetry, the other is imagery. Images are the very essence of imitative language. They are a mode of apprehending reality. They enable the poet to say more than one thing and endow his thought with serenity and emotionality. In simile, a comparison is explicitly made and the terms of the comparison remain distinct. Poetry's sensuous richness is required to delineate the deeper, organic unity in a play. The reflective quality of poetry is utilised in a play which is an integral part of the '*abhinaya*', and thus poetry is essentially dramatic in function. By poetry we can emerge double the surface of life-like action, and reveal various pattern of human experiences through images. If we want to get at the permanent and universal we tend to express our selves in verse. So greatest dramas are poetic in form.

Structure of Play

Daśarūpakakāra gives a brief definition to drama *Avathsanukṛti nāṭya*. One of the definition of the art of theater in *Nāṭyaśāstra* is that- "the art of theater is not more

or no less than the nature of the world with its sorrows and joys represented in a play through acting". So plays are nothing but an aggregate of human conditions and human life.

In western dramatic criticism the genesis of drama is conflict. With the opening of conflict the plot of the play begins and the main objective is to resolve the conflict. This conflict theory builds up the structure of the play that is five-fold.

- 1) The initial incident in which the conflict originates.
- 2) Conflict intensifies
- 3) Turning point of the play where chances of the success are shown.
- 4) Denouement, where events leading to success are marked out.
- 5) Conclusion where the conflicts are resolved.

This structure of the play in western criticism is surprisingly similar to the structure of the Sanskrit plays.

- 1) First is the 'mukha-sandhi' which has the initial stage of the play called 'vija'.
- 2) Then we have 'pratimukha-sandhi' and development of the plot (*vindu*)
- 3) Thirdly the 'garbha-sandhi' leads to complications of the result.
- 4) Fourthly the obstacles are removed in *Vimarṣa-sandhi* and we have finally the *nirvahaṇa-sandhi* and *phalāgama*.

The elaborate structure of the plot is built both horizontally and vertically in a play. First comes 'kārya' or idea of action. It constitutes the basis of a plot and that is divided into five stages or "avasthās". At the commencement, that's called 'ārambha' with its most important feature *autsukya*, the desire to act.¹⁸

autsukyamātravandastu yadvijasya nivadhyate /

mahataḥ phalayogasya sa khalvāmbhya isyate // — Nāṭyaśāstra X.XI.10

Next comes the 'prajātna' effort phase. The continuous effort and then hope *pratyāsā*, as a result of earlier effort, a hope of attainment of fruit is born. The final and

fifth phase is “*Phalāgama*” - fruition. This is a universal concept, applicable to every action, every act, to reach the destination step by step.¹⁹

sarvasaiva hi kāryasya prārvdhasya phalārthibhiḥ /
yathānukramaso heitāḥ pañcāvastā bhavanti hi // — 15/21 N.S.

Life as a process of growth is spiritual as well as physical, from one stage to the next. These stages can be described in many ways, but fundamentally we include a foundation stage, a growth stage, perfection stage and finally the culmination stage. The process of growth is sometimes expressed by the metaphor of a tree from sprouting of grain.

This concept of stages or ‘*avasthās*’ in Natya shows the positive and optimistic aspect of Indian psychology. We desire to get something with deep concentration on it and by doing continuous effort. We nurture positive hope in our heart basing on trust and finally we become victorious. This fulfillment in our action is reflected in our art and culture. So the theatre is no exception to this reality. Thus “*Nāṭya-śāstra*” is illuminating with the pure positiveness and optimism at every step.

These steps of development can be called as the super-structure of the plot, which moves vertically. Basing on this structure, the plot unfolds horizontally in fivefold steps they are “*arthaprakṛtayah*”. The most important and primary step is the germ ‘*bija*’, as a great tree with all its luxuriance is hidden inside a small seed, so also the entire plot of the play is concealed under the ‘*vija*’ that grows, thickens, leads to fruition, with the progress of the ‘*kārya*’. The second phase is ‘*bindu*’, that nurturs the ‘*bija*’ and it stands for the uninterrupted continuity. While defining *vija* Bharata says²⁰ —

alapamātram samutsṛṣṭam vahudhā yatprasarpati /
phalāvasānam yacceiva vijam tadabhidhiyate // — 23, 21 chapter, NS

Vija, sprouting from the tiny small compressed cell of *rasa* and spreads every where in a play up to *phalāgama*. *Vija* is the point of commencement of the play. This stage is also called as ‘*mukha sandhi*’. *Vija* is nurtured by *bindu*; *Bindu* stands for uninterrupted continuity till the achievement of result.²¹ *Nāṭya Śāstra* defines *Mukha sandhi* as²² —

yatra vija samutpati nānārtha rasa saṃvabā/

kāvye śarīrānugata tanmukha parikirtitam // — 39-21 Nāṭyaśāstra

Karya springs from multiple '*bhāvas*' '*arthas*', and '*rasa*'. The next two categories are external developers of the subject matter and they help in progression of the '*vija*' from outside. Those are '*patākā*' the subsidiary plot and the second is '*prakari*' that is an episode or a chain of episodes. Finally comes the last stage, the culmination that is *phalāgama*. Thus the vertical division supply the super structure and the horizontal division give the texture, and the body to a play.

Thus, The "*arthoprakṛtayah*" joined together, projected on to the entire manifold nature of the subject matter, give rise to effect, a new category of five-spans (*sandhi*) of plot. The first span, or "*Sandhi*" witnesses the origin of germinal subject matter and is called "*mukha-sandhi*". The 2nd span consists of the manifestation of germinal subject, that is '*pratimudha-sandhi*'. Third is called '*garbha sandhi*', the transitory or temporary attainment of the fruit of action and the repeated, search for it. Then the reflection span "*vimarsa sandhi*" follows. The concluding accomplishment span is- "*nivrahāṇa-sandhi*". At this sage all the elements are brought together. The emotional integration brings a state of fulfilment of desires. Ṛg veda calls desire as the first seed of mind. Indian optimism trusts in the integrated aspect of desire. Which is reflected in a play through these *avastās* and *sandhis*.

"*itivr̥tta*", is the subject matter, *itivr̥ttam tu nāṭyasya śarīraṃ pakīrtitam* (NS. XIX). | It is the body of the drama. while '*rasa*' is the soul. (*Nāṭya Darpaṇa* P.55). Indian dramaturgy describes '*rasa*' as the soul (*rasaprāṇou nāṭyavidheḥ*) of the play, as soul is the essence of human body, that manifests all the qualities of a living being so also *rasa* activates the entire play. The plot, the characters, "*bhāvas*", "*Vibhāvas*", *vṛttis*, *ritis*, *gatis*, etc. everything are connected by one thread, interwoven by *rasa*. They all are subservient to the production of *rasa*. *Rasa* maintains the continuity and uninterruptedness a play. *Nāṭya-śāstra* calls dramatic performance a sacrifice²³ —

kriyatām nāṭyavidhivad yajanaṃ nāṭyamaṇḍape /

— Chapter-1 Sloka-119 NS.

In a sacrifice we have to follow the principle of integration, among the multiple acts. This desire to integration is reflected in the art of theater in India.

So a play, or 'Nāṭya' is a world of bliss so near to human heart, so close to human sorrows and happiness, returning sheer joy to sorrows, pure light to darkness. For this tormented earth nāṭya is the repose, over flowing in sweetness and splendour, greatness and grace. The question comes in to mind, what is that in Nāṭya which opens the door of divine bliss in to human consciousness ? What integrates the 'moods' and multiple actions of Nāṭya in to one harmonious blend ? A play is not made of dialogues and actings, signals and sounds, stillness and motion, noise and silence. It is the relationship and responses between the author and the audience. The subtle link that bridges, and holds together the author, the actor, and the spectator, that is 'rasa' and this concept of 'rasa' sculptured by Indian thinkers, is regarded as the greatest contribution to the world of art and aesthetics. So it is told - "*Rūpakam rasāśrayam*". The *Nāṭyaśāstra*, in describing the genesis of dramā, says - Nāṭya is characteristically a '*vinodana*' an entertainment and it is *viśrāmajanana*, a repose to those who are tired. To be able to do so, the drama must be 'relished (*āsavādya*)' by the audience, and drama to be relished by the spectator must have 'rasa'. Bharata says - in this world nothing exists or has meaning without rasa. '*rasādṛte na hi kaścītarthah pravartate.*' Rasa is the essence of drama. Rasa is the spectator's experience of testing or savoring the specific emotional states which the characters in the play are portraying through '*abhinaya*'. Rasa is not rooted in one's personal response or it does not lie in the art object. Being neither objective nor subjective *rasa* is the process of aesthetic perception itself. The state of aesthetic relish is represented as '*ānanda*' (bliss) an extra-ordinary state of relish.



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