

Preface.

Each new form of modern Western theatre has brought with it, a heavy load of philosophical discussion about human predicament. For example, an understanding of **Brecht's** Epic theatre strongly depends on the understanding of the philosophy of Marxism on which the idea of Epic theatre is built. This situation is more intense in the case of the Theatre of the Absurd. Because of its very name this form provokes people to wonder how there can be a theatre of something like Absurd. Unless the whole philosophical position behind this form is grasped, its concept itself does not make much sense. For example, Martin Esslin (1978) and J.Killinger (1981) explain the Theatre of the Absurd in terms of the philosophy of Existentialism. This situation in modern theatre made scholars look at even older classical forms of theatre from the point of view of their philosophical background. In this work, this approach of looking at a form of theatre from its philosophical background is being extended to classical Indian theatre. Though the form of traditional Indian theatre which has been taken up for focus here is *Ras Līlā* of Vrindavan, this work is an attempt to trace the philosophical background of the general Vedic type of Indian theatre called *Natya* of which *Rās Līlā* makes a part.

Līlā, the Theatre of 'play' or the Theatre of 'playfulness' is like the Theatre of the Absurd in as much as it also makes people wonder, how there can be story, theatre of any **serious** discussion centered around things like 'playfulness.' Just as the understanding of the philosophy of Existentialism helps in understanding the Theatre of the Absurd, understanding of the philosophy of *Gauḍīya Vaisnava* school helps in understanding the *Līlā* theatre. Though *Līlā* theatre is one of the widely discussed form of Indian theatre among international scholarship on Indian arts forms, its philosophical background, which is provided in this work, was not explicated earlier.

As the international theatre science discourse heavily draws from the theories of Western Drama, it is inevitable to use those categories to discuss any form of theatre as part of the international

theatre science discourse. In fact, this work attempts to plead for a caution against the **uncritical** application of these categories of Western Drama while talking about non-Western forms of theatre, in this case the traditional Indian theatre. This caution includes a caution against using the categories of Sanskrit poetics of traditional Indian theatre while talking about Western Drama also. This is the reason why this work places Western Drama for a comparison with the various forms of traditional Indian theatre and attempts to expose problems with the **uncritical cross-cultural** application of categories.

A word about sources. Except a few, **all** the sources cited are primary works. Most of them are original plays and articles of the playwrights and authors cited. References given are to the anthologies of plays and articles in which these plays or articles have been included in original. Some of them are English translations of other languages (French, German and so on), again **primary**. The few secondary sources resorted to could not be cited in their primary form due to difficulty in their availability.

It is in the fourth chapter of this dissertation that the *Līlā* performances and the associated activities of the participants in *Us* are discussed. But this description can be grasped between the lines only with a theoretical background provided in the third chapter. The *Gauḍīya Vaisnava* interpretation of *Līlā-5* discussed in this chapter presupposes the ideas of and the philosophy behind the *Nāṭya Śāstra* which is discussed in the second chapter. As the discussion in this dissertation is addressed to students of Western Drama in general, the appropriate beginning for the discussion of even the ideas in *Nāṭya Śāstra* should be with the ideas in Western Drama which is the focus **of the first** chapter. Thus, **chapters from** first to third provide the theoretical background for the understanding of *Līlā-5* by a student of Western Drama and *Nāṭya*, by gradually moving from Western Drama through *Nāṭya* and *Līlā*. The reality to be understood from this theoretical background, is pictured in the fourth chapter. The final chapter is concluding chapter, which sums up the discussion, and limitations and scope of the discussion.