CHAPTER V

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There is hardly any Sanskrit play that does not begin with the stock phrase 'alam ati vistarena' or 'alam ati prasaæígena' which the Sûtradhåra utters immediately after he has made his entry. This phrase meaning 'enough of prolixity' is a reference to an elaborate programme of song, music and dance carried out on the stage just before the commencement of the dramatic performance. Since it took place on the stage ('rahga') before ('purvam') the play started, it was called Purvaraghg or pre-dramatic functions.

The Purvaraga served several useful purposes. In the first place, it was an invocation of the deities for the unhampered and successful performance of the play. Secondly, prayers were offered to the gods for their blessings for the audience, the performers and their teachers. Thirdly, it gave the musicians a chance to adjust their instruments and warm themselves up while the singers took the opportunity to try their voices. Lastly, as both Bharata and Abhinava rightly remark, it was useful to arouse and sustain the curiosity of a large section of the audience, mainly women, children and the rabble. It is common experience even today that such folk are the first to turn up for any play or concert. Moreover, the people of ancient India had very little sense of time and it took a considerable time before all the distinguished spectators assembled in the theatre-hall. Even at present times, a winter music festival in Calcutta seldom starts at the scheduled time, and, as a rule, the people expect the programme to begin at least one hour late. (This disregard for time on the part of the Calcutta music enthusiasts is, however, gradually diminishing, and there are at least a few music conferences which now commence at the scheduled time). Now the women, children and other enthusiastic persons who arrived at the theatre too early would become restless if the performance did not commence as

2. NS. xxxiv. 222; A.Bh. ibid., p. 213.
early as they expected. The Purvarāṅga served a very practical purpose in hushing such an impatient audience. A stroke on the drum would be sufficient to put them to silence. Thus the Purvarāṅga provided them with good entertainment for not less than one hour by which time most of the spectators of consequence arrived. A series of preliminaries which may have served a similar purpose preceded the early Greek plays too. A libation of wine was made to Dionysus and various proclamations were made. Even today, in the Japanese classical theatre of Nō, certain preliminary rites are performed before the proper performance begins; there is an invocatory dance-drama called Okina, a sort of ritual of longevity, followed by a comic interlude performed by extraneous characters who speak in informal colloquial language. There are reasons to believe that both these numbers were borrowed at a very early stage from the Sanskrit theatre. In the former are sung some Sanskrit phrases which are unintelligible to the listener on account of distorted pronunciation in peculiar Japanese accent and of their being delivered in a sing-song manner. There is a striking parallel between the preliminary comic interlude in the Nō theatre and the Sanskrit pre-play number known as Trigata.

The procedure of the Purvarāṅga has been treated at length in the Nāṭyaśāstra and the Bhāvaprakāsana. As time went on, this elaborate variety programme was gradually shortened; unimportant items were dropped and some of the important ones were abridged while some came to be incorporated in the Prologue of the play. We shall reserve our discussion on the changes the Purvarāṅga underwent at later times towards the end of this chapter and let us now see how the Purvarāṅga as described in the Nāṭyaśāstra and other treatises on dramaturgy was performed in its entirety and fulness.

According to the Nāṭyaśāstra and the Nāṭyadārpana, the repertoire of the Purvarāṅga consisted of nineteen items.

1. This was done by pouring wine on the ground in front of the statue of Dionysus erected at the centre of the orchestra, or circular dancing-place of the chorus.
4. See below.
Of these, the first nine items were performed behind the curtain. Since Abhinava places this curtain between the Raṅgapīṭha and the Raṅgasṛṣaṇa, this first part of the Purvarāhga must have been carried out on the Raṅgasṛṣaṇa. Then the curtain was removed and the rest took place before the audience. The nine antarjavānika or behind-the-curtain items are Pratyahāra, Avatāraṇa, Ārāṃbhā, Āśāvānā, Vaktra-pāṇi, Parighaṭṭanā, Samghoṭṭanā or Samghaṭṭanā, Mārgasārīta and Āsārīta. First of all, the musical instruments were brought and kept in their respective places. This was known as Pratyahāra which Abhinava describes as 'kutapa-vinyāsa' or placing of the orchestra. Then the female singers came and took their seats and this was called Avatāraṇa or stepping down. According to Abhinava, these two, though technically treated as two separate items, are, in effect, one and the same. He says that they are given as two separate items just to emphasize the participation of female singers in the concert. As to the significance and execution of the next seven numbers, the views of different scholars are at variance. Most of these scholars appear to have missed to note a very important word of obscure import, which Abhinava uses repeatedly in this context. This word is 'anusandhana' which, in the present context, would mean 'harmonious combination' or 'welding closely'. It signifies that every item was performed in such a manner that it was closely welded with the preceding and the following one. We shall see how the musicians playing sometimes together and sometimes by turns joined in the Āsārīta to perform a perfect orchestral piece. Neither Bharata nor Abhinava is sufficiently clear in his description of the performance of these musical numbers. It seems that the instrumental music and drumming played an important part in all the items beginning with the Ārāṃbhā. The first was a vocal recital to mark the beginning ('ārāṃbhā') of the concert. This consisted of only Ālāpa because, as we shall see later, no songs as such were sung before the curtain was drawn aside. At the end of this recital the instruments took over. Here the drums aided by the other instruments weaved some rhythmic patterns. It appears that

1. See above, p. 92.
2. NS. v. 9 ff.
3. Ibid., 17.
5. NS. ibid., 18a.
the drums were played against a background painted by the strings and the flute. This number was called Āsravaṇā because it called for everybody's attention ('āsamanāt āravyayati'). There, different styles of playing the instruments in the different Antarjavanikā members beginning from the Āsravaṇā. The Āsravaṇā was followed by the Vaktrapāni, another orchestral piece of shorter duration in which melody music played a prominent role. This was called Vaktrapāni because it was here that the musicians demonstrated for the first time finger movements on their instruments. In the Parighaṭanā, the stringed ('jyaś' = string) instruments took the lead, the flute probably serving as a drone. No drums seem to have accompanied this number. In the Sangaṇāṣṭa, the drums joined in again and in the meanwhile the flutist perhaps took some rest. The Maṅgāṣārīta appears to be a combination of the strings and the flute to the accompaniment of the drums.

In the Āsrītā we have a full-fledged music concert in which all the singers and instrumentalists participated. There were three kinds of Āsrītā, long, medium and short, based on the measurements of Tāla or time-beat used in them. The word Āsrītā' seems to have been derived from 'āsāra' which means a hard shower. It may be that this music played by the full orchestra gave one the impression of the lashing of a heavy rain. A dance of virile type set to the same music was known as Vardhamānaka.

It must be clear that these Antarjavanikā numbers did not present any songs as such, the role of the singers being to render pure voices devoid of any meaningful words. The different airs rendered in these items were, therefore, collectively called Āṣītās or Bahītās (or tunes without meaningful words). A fundamental difference between these nine behind-the-curtain numbers and the other onstage numbers (Bahirjavanikās) was that the former were mainly characterized by drumming and instrumental music ('tantrābhāṅgakrtānī') while dance, recitation and song found a place in the latter.

2. NŚ. xxix, 81, 112 ff.; xxxi. 79-65.
3. Ibid., xxx. 69; A. Bh. Vol.IV, pp. 180 ff., 190.
4. For these Antarjavanikā items, see also V. Raghavan: Music in Ancient Indian Drama, Bulletin of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, Vol. 4, March 1956, p. 7.
5. NŚ. xxix. 79 ff.
6. NŚ. v. 11, 30 ff.; xxix. 79, 82.
group (*nrtapāthya-vṛtām*)¹. Bharata has drawn a clear
distinction between the Nṛgita (in which instrumental music
played a prominent part) and songs proper (Sagita)². The
Nṛgitas have been ascribed a divine origin and we shall
relate here the account as given by Bharata, for it may
interest the reader.

Once upon a time, the celestial orchestra led by the
sage Nārada presented a programme of songs in praise of gods
before an assembly of gods and demons. This was followed
by an orchestral presentation which won great applause from the
gods. The demons seeing that the gods were highly pleased
with the performance, were greatly perturbed on account of
jealousy. However, on second thought, they decided to possess
the piece for themselves, instead of making much ado about it.
This uninvited intervention on the part of the demons offended
the gods who demanded that the number be dropped from the
repertoire. But Nārada appeased them saying that it would
be unwise to do so as it would serve to keep the demons calm³.

From this account it follows that one of the purposes
of including these musical items in the Purvarāga was to
please the demons who might hamper the smooth progress of the
whole performance. The Nātyāsāstra says that the Āravane
pleased the Daityas, the Vaktrapāni the Dānavas, the Pari-
ghaṭatanā the Rākṣasas, the Samghotanā the Guhyakas and the
Mārgāśīrtha the Yakṣas—all of whom are chimerical preternatural beings⁴. Abhinava says that the Āravane stood for
the first three items (Pratyahāra, Avatāra and Aṃrāha) as
well. Hence their omission from the list. He also quotes
a passage from a different version of the Nātyāsāstra, which
refers to them as three different items invoking Nāgas, Brahmins and Gandharvas respectively⁵.

Abhinava gives a detailed account of a view held by
Kirtidhara of the Nandikesvara school, that during the
Mārgāśīrtha four dancing girls entered with handfuls of
flowers and represented the mood of the music played in slow
tempo. After executing eight, twelve or sixteen

1. NS. v. 11 f.
2. Ibid., 56 f.
3. Ibid., 31-43.
4. Ibid., 45-47.
Angahāras, they scattered the flowers on the stage and made their exit. A similar dance number was given during the Āsārīta also. Such a practice was, however, not known to Abhinava.

At the end of this series of musical interludes, the curtain was drawn aside and the second and more important part of the Pūrvavāga was begun. According to the Nātyadāraṇa and the Nātyadārapaṇa, this consisted of ten items collectively called Bahirjavanikāṅgas, namely, Giti, Uttāpanā, Pārvatāna, Nāndi, Śuṣākvāra, Rāgadvāra, Cāri, Mahācāri, Trīgata and Prārocanā. The Giti or Gītaka is an application of a dance to a song composed on a particular theme. This item had significance because it was here that singing and dancing were combined for the first time. This might be followed by a Vardhamānaka danced by four dancing girls. The Bhāvaprakāśa enumerates this as a separate item, but Bharata makes its application optional and feels that it should be performed only if it suited the occasion. The Vardhamānaka was so called because in it song, music and dance gradually increasing in length and tempo progress towards a sort of crescendo. There were some who said that both the Giti and the Vardhamānaka were performed in synchronization. But it is clear that there were two music differences between the two. The Giti was a dance set to a song whereas the Vardhamānaka was a dance performed to the accompaniment of pure instrumental music known as Āsārīta; the Giti was a gentle dance while the Vardhamānaka was of vigorous nature.

In the Utthāpaṇa the Sūtradhāra and his assistant started the performance with speech and action. Then,

1. A harmonious combination of a number of body and limb movements is called a Kārāṇa. When meant to convey more specific meaning, hand-gestures are employed in addition to mere hand movements. There are a hundred and eight such Kārāṇas enumerated and described in the Nātyadāraṇa. Two Kārāṇas make a Mātrākā, three a Kalāpaka, four a Saṇḍaka and five a Saṅghātaka. A combination of two, three or four Mātrākās makes one Āngahāra. It has, however, been prescribed that the number of Kārāṇas in one Āngahāra should be between six and nine (See NŚ. iv. 30-33).
2. A.Bh. Vol. IV, pp. 120 f. 3. NŚ. vi. 12 ff.
6. Ibid., 13, 58; BhPr. p. 195. 7. NŚ. iv. 270 f.
9. NŚ. v. 13; xxxi. 69; A.Bh. ibid., pp. 283 f.
10. NŚ. v. 22.
turning to the four directions, they paid homage to the four Guardian Deities (i.e., Ipdra, Varuṇa, Yama and Kuvera). This was called Parivartana. It was followed by the recitation of the Nāndi, an invocation of gods, Brahmans and the king. The Nāndi might be punctuated by a Vardhamānā type of vigorous dance in the case of the mixed (Citra) Pūrvarāṅga. The next item was a Dhrūvā song (i.e., a song underlining a particular situation or mood) of the Avakṛṣṭā type, composed of meaningless syllables (śuṣkākṣaraih), and this indicated verses in praise of the Jarjara banner. The next item was called Raṅgadvāra because from this point commenced the representation through words and gestures. Here the Sūtradhāra recited in a loud tone a few verses in adoration of the deity in whose honour the performance was being held, and in salutation to the king or to the Brahmans. It seems that in the days of Śāradātanaya the verses had been replaced by songs for he says that, whenever the meaning of a song was gesticulated, the music should stop.

The Cārī and the Mahācārī invoking the erotic and the furious sentiment respectively were performed by the Sūtradhāra alone. According to the Bhāva-prakāśana, the former was accompanied by only one musical instrument while the whole orchestra provided music for the latter. It would certainly be much easier to produce the necessary effect in the latter case with all the instruments playing together than with a lone instrument. Abhinava says that the amorous sports of Śiva and Pārvatī might be glorified in the Cārī song while the Mahācārī song might describe a feat evoking the furious sentiment, the destruction of the Three Cities (Tripuramardana) by Śiva, for example. After the Mahācārī was over, the Sūtradhāra, the Pāripārvika and the Viduṣaka engaged themselves in conversation. This was a humorous dialogue in which the Viduṣaka’s incoherent and irrelevant prattle elicited smiles from the Sūtradhāra. This talk is

1. NS. v. 23.
2. Ibid., 24.
3. Ibid., 153 f.; for mixed Pūrvarāṅga, see below, p. 115.
4. A song sung in slow tempo (‘avakṛṣṭā-laya) is called Avakṛṣṭā. See below, Chapter VI, Section v.
5. NS. v. 29.
6. Ibid., 26. For Jarjara banner, see below, pp. 123 f.
7. NS. v. 113 f.
8. Bh.Pr. p. 199. 5 f.
12. This is not Viduṣaka the character but one of the assistants dressed as the Viduṣaka. See above, pp. 36 f.
13. NS. ibid., 28.
described as 'ekapada' which means most probably 'consisting of single words' (and not compounds)\textsuperscript{1}. Since the persons involved in this talk were three in number, it was known as Trigata or three men's talk. The Sātrānāra then gradually switched over to the Prarocana. The latter was meant for inviting the attention of the audience to the play, by an appeal to the praise of the plot, of the drama and such other connected things\textsuperscript{2}.

Śāradātānaya takes the Śuṣkāvakraṭā Dhruva as two different items, Śuṣkāvakraṭā and Dhruva, and includes another number called Trisāma before the Raṅgadvāra thus bringing the total number of items in the Pūrvaraṅga to twenty-two (including the Vardhamānaka)\textsuperscript{3}. The Trisāma was a dance without gestures by a dancing girl ('strinṛtya'), to the three tempi ('trilayam')\textsuperscript{4}. Šāgaraṇaṇin, too, argues that there were twenty-two parts in the Pūrvaraṅga, but mentions only ten of them, namely, Pratyāhāra, Mārjana, Gitaviḍhi, Brahma-prayoga, Cāri, Mahāśāri, Prarocana, Nāṇi, Digvandana and Jarjarastuti.\textsuperscript{5} The Mārjana, Brahma-prayoga, Digvandana and Jarjarastuti are most probably the same as Bharata's Āśrāvanā, Utthāpana, Parivartana and Raṅgadvēra respectively.

The Nātyāśāstra says that the Pūrvaraṅga items up to the Mahāśāri were intended for the propitiation of the different genera of supernatural beings. The following is a list of the supermen for whose gratification they were intended:

1. Pratyāhāra
2. Avatarana
3. Ārambha
4. Āśrāvanā
5. Vaktrapani
6. Parighaṭṭana
7. Saṃghaṭṭana
8. Margasārita
9. Āśārita
10. Gitaka
11. Vardhamānaka

1. N. v. 133 f. 2. Ibid., 29. 3. Dh.Pr. pp. 194. 20 - 195. 6. 4. Ibid., p. 198. 4 f. 5. NLRK. 1126-1129.
presented to Bharata by the two deities who were greatly impressed by a magnificent performance given by his troupe.

After taking five steps over the stage with an assistant on his either side, the Sūtradhāra scattered flowers on the centre of the Raṅgapitha called Brahmamardalīla, where Brahmā was supposed to be present. Then they saluted Brahmā touching the ground gracefully with their hands three times. With this the second song ended. With the third song which was in quick tempo, the Sūtradhāra stood up and circumambulated with dance steps the Brahmamandala once. He then called the aśperatorium-bearer, performed the ānasana or opening of the mouth and sprinkled himself with the holy water. With the third Sannipāta (i.e., at the end of the last line of the third song), he took the Jarjara into his hands. The fourth part of the Utthāpana was also performed in quick tempo. As first, the Sūtradhāra, with the Jarjara in his hands, muttered some Mantras or prayers and walked five steps towards the orchestra. The total number of steps and hand movements involved in the fourth Parivarta was sixteen, but in the case of the Tryasra type of Pūrvarāga, it was limited to twelve. Then he again made three salutations by touching the ground and the Utthāpana was over.

In the case of the mixed Pūrvarāga, the Utthāpana was followed by drumming, and dancing girls, dressed as goddesses, performed an Aṅgahāra dance.

The Utthāpana was followed by the Parivartanī-dhruvā, a song set to the Caturasra-tāla. This Dhruvā was couched in the Atijagati metre which consisted of four lines each containing thirteen syllables all but the last of which are short:

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This song also had four Parivartas.

While this was being sung to the accompaniment of instrumental music, the Sūtradhāra, moving on the stage with

1. See NS. i. 59 f.
2. NS. v. 72. The scattering of flowers was done as a step against any unforeseen impediments; the scattered flowers also served to beautify the stage (NLRK. 1172 f.).
4. Ibid., 190 f.
5. Ibid., 97 ff.
graceful steps, worshipped the four Guardian Deities turning towards the respective directions. He first bowed to Inâra turning to the east, then to Yama turning to the south, next to Varûna presiding over the west and lastly to Kuvera in the north, following which he circumambulated the stage walking in a clockwise direction. He then turned towards the east, and taking three steps paid homage to Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā respectively. The steps taken while saluting these deities were different from one another, and were respectively called Purusa (male), Strî (female) and Nāpumśaka (hermaphrodite). At the end of the Parivartana or walking round the stage, a fourth man entered with flowers in his hands. With these flowers he worshipped the Jârâra, the entire orchestra (or all the musical instruments) and also the Sūtradhāra. The movements of his feet were executed to the accompaniment of the drums. There should be no worded songs but those composed of meaningless syllables could be sung. After finishing his worship, the fourth man made his exit which was followed by an Āvākṛṣṭā-dhruva, a song composed of meaningless syllables and sung in the Caturasra-tāla in slow tempo.

The next was an item of great importance, the recitation of the Nândî, a benedictory verse (or verses) intoned by the Sūtradhāra praying for the well-being and prosperity of mankind in general and of the king and all those connected with the performance in particular. It was also a prayer for the success of the performance. Almost all the works dealing with dramaturgy state that the Sūtradhāra should recite the Nândî verse resorting to the middle note ("madhyamasvaram ārītah"). "Madhyamasvara" may be translated as either 'medium tone' or 'the middle note'. I would prefer the latter which means the 'madhyama' note (famuli) of the musical scale. It should be borne in mind that the Nândî was recited and not sung like the Dhruvāṅ. Since a Śloka-recitation is usually limited to the range of not more than five musical notes, it may be necessary to raise the reciter's pitch in reciting a Śloka, if an effective rendering is to be expected. But the case of a song is different. A song generally spreads from the lower (Nândra) to the higher (Tāra) octave. Because of its wider range of notes, it easily appeals to the audience. It is the usual

practice even today among many Indian singers to raise their pitch from the Sādja (do) to the Madhyama, when they chant a verse in śloka style. It is more precise, therefore, to say that the Śutrādhāra recited the Nāndī verse or verses, taking the Madhyama as the key-note. Abhinava is very clear when he says that this note was the Madhyama of the scale in which the Avārṣṭā-đrūva was sung\(^1\). It may also be noted that in the case of Sāma chanting, the key-note taken was the Madhyama note of the flute\(^2\).

The Nāndī was recited by the Śutrādhāra alone. At the end of each line of a verse, the two Pāripārvikas uttered the phrase 'evam astu' (amen) or 'evam ārya' (verily, Sir) and bowed down. In the case of the Citra Pūrvarāga, a short piece of pure dance might be performed in between the 'padaś' or lines of the Nāndī\(^3\). Because the Pāripārvikas also took part in the performance, Bharata refers to them as Nāndī-reciters ('nandipāṭhakāḥ')\(^4\).

After the Nāndī, a song of the type known as the Śuṣkāvākrāṭā-đrūva was sung. It consisted of four lines of fifteen syllables, the first nine and the last three being long. Bharata gives the following as an example of the metre\(^5\):

'digle digle digle digle jambukapalitakate tecam'.

The words should convey no meaning ('śuṣka' = dry)\(^6\). This was sung as an indication of the verses praising the Jarjara\(^7\).

The Śuṣkāvākrāṭā was followed by a śloka recited in a deep tone, in praise of the deity in whose honour the festival was being held\(^8\). Or it contained an eulogy of the king or of the Brahma\(^9\) or, according to Abhinava, of the Ārākṣya or tutelary deity of the patron\(^10\). This was the beginning of the Rāhgapāra. Then the Jarjara śloka, probably a verse glorifying the Jarjara, the Flagstaff of Indra, was recited and this was followed by the Rāhgapāra śloka, probably an eulogy of Viṣṇu\(^11\). After the Rāhgapāra, another verse was recited for lowering

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3. NŚ. v. 109, 153 f.
5. NŚ. v. 110 f.
6. Ibid., 112.
7. Ibid., 110b.
8. Ibid., 113.
9. Ibid., 114a.
10. A.Bh. ibid., p. 238.
11. NŚ. v. 114b.
the Jarjara. According to some, the Šuskakärtä was followed by an eulogy of the deity, a Jarjara Śloka, the Rāṅgavārā Śloka eulogizing Viṣṇu and another Jarjara Śloka for lowering the Jarjara. The Bhavaprakāśana suggests that a dance be included in the Rāṅgavāra of the Citra Pūrvareṇga. After a Śloka in praise of the deity had been sung, the girls dressed as goddesses, having scattered a handful of flowers on the stage, walked out and came back to perform a graceful dance. If the import of the song would be expounded through the dance, no music should accompany. During the pure dance known as Adgahāra, drums might be played. But Bharata warns that there should not be too much dance and song in any type of preliminaries, as it might be a strain both on the performers and the audience, and consequently the rest of the performance would fail to excite pleasure.

No sooner was the Jarjara lowered than the two Pāripārvikas withdrew to a side walking backwards, because the Cārī and the Māhācārī were to be performed by the Sūtra-dhāra alone. The Cārī began with a Dhruva called Adhitā in medium tempo and Caturāra-taḷa. It consisted most probably of twelve syllables of which the first, fourth, fifth and the last were long. Thus it may be scanned as follows:

Ahhinava cites another authority which defines the Adhitā as consisting of eleven syllables, the first, fourth, eighth, tenth and eleventh of which are long:

In both cases, however, the number of morae remains the same.

The Cārī seems, as its name suggests, to be a particular style of walking involving movement of the lower limbs. The Cārī movements depicted Śiva's amorous dance with his consort Uma, and, therefore, must be very graceful in their execution in contradistinction to the violent movements

1. NS. v. 115a.
2. A.Bh. Vol.I, p. 239.
4. NS. v. 159 f.
5. Ibid., 115b, 116a.
6. Ibid., 116 f.
7. Ibid., 117 f.
8. A.Bh. ibid., pp. 239 ff.
9. NS. ibid., 118 f.
in the Mahacārī. Here the Sūtradhāra stood in the posture known as Avahittha with his left arm stretched downwards and his head slightly tilted. Then he took the Jarjara, planted it on his navel and balancing it with his left hand, in the Pallava gesture, walked with graceful movements five steps raising his feet just one Tāla (span) above the floor. Then he stopped with the left Vedha and the right Vikṣeṣpa and recited one Āryā verse with love as its subject-matter. Abhinava says that the verse should describe things like Lord Śiva’s feigned anger during his love quarrels with Pārvati. At the end of the Āryā verse, he went round the stage once and retired walking backwards.

Before starting the Mahacārī, the Sūtradhāra handed over the Jarjara to the Pāripārvikā. Then a Dhruva song in the Caturasra-tāla was sung in quick tempo. It consisted of four lines of eleven syllables of which the first, fourth, seventh and the last two were long. The scansion may be given as follows:

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While the song was being sung, the Sūtradhāra took a few steps in the direction of the musical instruments and, making a Sūcī and then a Vikṣeṣpa, turned back. Then he took five strides with graceful Atikṛnta steps in quick tempo. While doing this, the feet should be raised to the height of three Tālas (spans). Checking his walk with the Vedha with his left foot and the Vikṣeṣpa with the right, he then withdrew with the same steps. Next he made three more

1. See below, Chapter IX, Section ii.
2. The Pātāka hand bent at wrist is called Pallava (NS. ix. 195). (All fingers stretched together and the thumb slightly bent to touch the index finger form the Pātāka hand. See below, Chapter IX, Section iii).
3. Vedha is the bringing down of one foot on toes, behind the heel of the other leg (A.Bh. Vol.II, p. 135; ibid., Vol.I, p. 231).
5. NS. v. 119-122.
7. NS. ibid., 125.
8. Ibid., 124.
9. Ibid., 125 f.
10. The raising of the foot standing on toes and the bringing of it down again on toes is known as Sūcī (See NS. x. 3.).
11. For Vikṣeṣpa see above, Foot-note 4.
12. For Atikṛnta steps, see below, Chapter IX, Section i.
steps facing the east and made the Vedha with the left and
the Viksepa with the right. At the end of this elaborate
series of movements, he recited a verse (i.e., the Mahasārī
verse) couched in words expressive of furious sentiment. He
then called the two Pāripārvikas, and another song accompanied
their forward movement. It should be remembered that all
these movements of the Sūtradhāra and the two assistants in
all the items beginning from the Utthāpana were made in strict
conformity with the rules laid down in the Nātyaśāstra.

The Significance of the Jarjara.

Tradition has it that, when the sage Bharata presented
a dramatic performance before Brahmā, the demons seeing that
it concerned the killing of Daityas and Dānavaś took offence
and instigated the Vighnas led by Virupākṣa to revolt, where-
upon the latter together with the demons, resorting to their
occult power, paralysed the speech, movement as well as the
memory of the performers. Indra who was present at the show,
oberving that the Vighnas and the demons whom the Rāga had
been infested with were at the root of the predicament, took
his banner and beat them off. Full of admiration for the
feat performed by their king, the gods expressed the wish
that his banner-staff with which the demons were beaten to
pulp (jarjarīkṛta') be called Jarjara and that trouble-
makers might flee at its very sight. Indra obliged them and
said, “May this Jarjara be for the protection of all!”. This
is the reason why a pole to represent the Jarjara was carried
in the Purvarāṣa to protect the actors against any mishap
that might chance during the course of the performance.

The Jarjara-staff used in the Purvarāṣa was a bamboo
reed (Veṣu) 108 Angulas long, with four knots and five links.
The five links (from top to bottom) were dedicated to Brahmā;
Śiva, Skanda, Viṣṇu and the Lord of Serpents respectively.
The first link was wrapped in white cloth, the second in
blue, the third in yellow, the fourth in red and the last in
particoloured cloth.

This banner-staff of Indra still survives in Tamil

1. N Ś. v. 128-133a.
2. Malignant spirits causing obstacles.
3. See N Ś. i. 64-75; N. B. K. 1130-1132.
4. NŚ. xxi. 1'4-181; iii. 78-80.
dance-tradition, and the custom practised up to this day in Indonesia of planting a tree or a twig before a play is begun can be traced back to this convention originated in the Sanskrit theatre. And the Purvaranga which still obtains in its simplified form in the folk and traditional theatres of India can be seen in its fuller form in Indonesia.

The Prologue

According to most of the works on dramaturgy including the Natyasastra, at the end of the preliminaries, the Sūtradhāra and his two assistants left the stage. The play was to be opened by a different functionary designated Sthāpaka who resembled the Sūtradhāra in every respect. He first gratified the assembly with verses couched in sweet words and then announced the play, the name of the playwright and other relevant particulars regarding him such as his family, his scholarship and his reputation. He then introduced the play resorting to any one of the conventional methods recognized by the authorities and left the stage before the first character entered.

Apart from the elaborate description given in the Natyasastra and the Bhavaprakāśana of the Purvaranga, we have no conclusive evidence to prove that it was performed in all its details at any stage of the long history of the Sanskrit drama. The utmost brevity of the prologues of the Bhāsa-plays may perhaps be explained as a result of the prolonged performance of these pre-play functions. But even then we cannot definitely say that all the items enumerated by Bharata were duly performed, for we see in the Bhāsa-plays the Prologue is opened by the Sūtradhāra as soon as the Nāndī is recited. Besides the Bhāsa-dramas there are also other plays, the Bhagavadajukīya, the Āścaryacūjīmanī and the Nattwilāsā kād name a few, which open with the stage direction "At the end of the Nāndī enter the Sūtradhāra". Even if we take the opening verse of the Prologue to be the Raṅgadvāra, we see that a number of items such as Ārtha, Mahācāri and Prarūpa has been

2. NS. v. 169; DR. iii. 2; SD. p. 531.
3. NS. ibid., 162; DR. ibid.; SD. ibid.
4. NS. ibid., 163-165; DR. iii. 5 f.; SD. ibid.
5. See below, pp. 293 ff.
6. NS. ibid., 166 f.; DR. ibid., 9 ff.
dropped altogether. Another revolt against the conventions governing the Purvarāga may be seen in the plays of Kālidāsa who included for the first time the Prarocana in the Prologue. A conversation between the Sūtradhāra and the Nāti or the Pāripārāvīka came to be regularly included in the Prologue, but it can hardly be called Trigata (or Three Men’s Talk) since it is more often than not a duologue and not a triologue as it originally was. In some prologues the Sūtradhāra scatters a handful of flowers on the stage, with a devotional recitation. This may have been done in lieu of the Purvarāga items like the Utthāpana in the course of which flowers were strewn on the stage by the Sūtradhāra. It seems that some of the most important members in the Purvarāga were inserted in an abbreviated form in the Prologue thus cutting down the duration of the Purvarāga to a minimum. As time went on, the Prologue began to increase in length amazingly and it can be inferred from this that the elaborate Purvarāga gradually fell out of vogue and was probably reduced to only a few music and dance recitals. Hence the Purvarāga is defined in the Nātyadarpana as the pre-play concert consisting of songs, recitations, drumming, instrumental music and dance. The work further says that in general practice, certain items in the Purvarāga were left out as they were considered either unnecessary or unimportant. Viśvanātha, too, asserts that in his days the Purvarāga was not properly observed. According to Kumāravaiśin who comments on the Pratāparudriya, the Purvarāga in practice was briefly as follows:

After the President (Saṃpāti) had taken his seat, the curtain was drawn aside and the special dancers entered the stage with flowers in their hands. The flowers were scattered on the stage and the performers (dancers and musicians) presented a special performance of dance, songs and music. The repertoire might consist exclusively of songs and music or of one item from each (i.e., dance, song and music). Some scholars hold that by the end of the tenth century A.D. the Bharatā Purvarāga may have ceased to be performed on the stage. As a result of the Sanskrit dramatic

1. See above, pp. 114 ff.
2. Ex., Garaṇākṣet in the Caitanācandrodaya, Pārvatiparasāya, Veni., Sr.T.Bh. & Sr.S.Bh.
3. ND. pp. 171 ff.
4. SD. p. 334.
preliminaries of the later period being almost restricted to musical and dance recitals, the Sūtradhāra had practically nothing to do in the programme. This must have made the service of the Sthāpaka redundant as the introduction of the play could be done by the Sūtradhāra himself. This fact is attested by Viśvanātha who says that in his days the functions of both Sūtradhāra and the Sthāpaka were carried out by the former alone.

Some later dramatists, however, attempted to revive this long-abandoned practice of opening a play by the Sthāpaka. But this does by no means imply that there was an actual revival of the old elaborate Purvarāgā. In the Karpūramaṃḍjari, the introduction of the play is thrust upon the Sthāpaka and the Pāripārvika because the Sūtradhāra and his wife who are to play the roles of hero and heroine, are busy with their make-up. The Nātyadarpaṇa mentions a play named Amālīgavatī-nāṭikā the Prologue of which opens with the stage direction "At the end of the Purvarāgā the Sthāpaka (enters)."

The change that the dramatic preliminaries had undergone at later times can also be inferred from the change of names of some of the Purvarāgā items. We have already seen that certain items were known to Sāgaramandin by different names. In his commentary on the Mālatīmadhava, Tripūrārī gives the first three items of the Purvarāgā as Pratyāhāra, Mārjana and Ālepāna. Kavikārapura understands the Pratyāhāra as 'the playing of drums for the first time behind the curtain'. Sāṅkara mentions Pratyāhāra, Mārjana, Srāvanā and Jarjarapūjā among the Purvarāgā members. Thus, so far as the existing evidence goes, the Purvarāgā in actual practice was far less elaborate and of less significance than the long programme of pre-dramatic performances described by Bhārata, which was chiefly aimed at creating the proper atmosphere for launching the play that was in the offing.

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1. SD. p. 331.
2. ND. p. 136.