CHAPTER VII - THE GREEK AND SAJSKRIT.

Great value has been hitherto assigned to the comparative method of study. In fact, by a properly directed comparative enquiry many new points of interest come to light and this method has enormously benefited particularly the study of the Vedas. Unfortunately in the realm of Classical literature, this method has rarely been properly applied. In so far as this method has been applied, most of the scholars have done it in a lop-sided manner, either to give vent to conceit or express submissive acceptance. In comparing, for example, the literary tenets of Sanskrit and Greek, the tendency of scholars generally is somehow to defend the Sanskrit by observing that Sanskrit possessed much before the qualities spoken of by the Greek theorists. In such observations, the scholars overlook the particularity of both the languages, which is dangerous. It should never be lost sight of that Greek is Greek and Sanskrit is Sanskrit, and in a proper enquiry into the literary merit of these, one should more engage himself in finding out the specialities rather than the common elements. The aim of comparative study should not be to prove one or the other superior or inferior. It should chiefly concern itself with a liberal as well as critical study of both and to find out the special features of the two. The judgment as to which one is superior to the other can thus be very easily given.
This much introduction, we think, is necessary before entering into a comparative study of the Greek and Sanskrit dramas from the standpoint of technique. So far as the presentation of the play on the stage is concerned, it should be borne in mind that there have developed so many different devices in both the countries according as their different conditions. The line on which the present comparative study is to run will necessarily be confined to the techniques of dramatic creation as obtained in these two ancient lands.

At the very outset, two facts should be taken into consideration. One is that the Greek method of dramatisation is based upon entirely a different basis from that of the Sanskrit method. The dramatic literatures of these two ancient countries have had their peculiar and unique circumstances which conditioned their development. The stage itself was greatly responsible for the very many peculiarities of the dramatic output of both the lands. The other fact is that the dramas of both the countries were successful in their missions in spite of the technical differences or the differences in merit. That is one cannot judge the merit of either by means of applying the same literary standard. These two facts, it may be said, if remembered, will save the enthusiasts from much banal criticism. The dramas of both the Sanskrit and Greek languages served the purpose of catering delight to their audience in their own capacity in spite of their limitations.

Keeping these observations in mind, our aim is to take up two dramas - one Greek and the other Sanskrit - and
compare them on the point of technique. The line of enquiry into the Greek drama, however, will be that which is applied to the Sanskrit drama and thus the discussion may well be divided into the following heads: 1) the Prastāvāna or the beginning; 2) the Pātra-pravesā; 3) the Intermediate scenes or the Arthopaksepakas; 4) the division into acts or Aṅkas; 5) Nirvahana or the end; 6) Characterisation and dialogue and 7) the total effect of the piece or the Rasa.

In a comparison, another formidable obstacle is the type of the plays. Greek drama excels in tragedy and on the contrary Sanskrit scrupulously avoids it. In order to find a common basis we have selected the only tragedy in Sanskrit, the Īrūbhaṁga of Bhāsa as representing Sanskrit drama and Oedipus, the king, of Sophocles as representing the Greek tragedy. We have picked up Sophocles, the second of the great Greek trio, due to the consideration that Aeschylus being the first the next in point of time must have been in a better position to display the dramatic art in its full bloom. In his Poetics, Aristotle also speaks of Sophocles as the truly representative Greek tragedian. Consequently Sophocles has here been accepted as the representative of the Greek spirit.

**Oedipus - the King:**

The theme of Oedipus's tragic recognition of his identity was a very favourite one with almost all the tragedians. "The story of Oedipus, according to our present knowledge was dramatised more often than any other legend. Some thirteen different authors, including Aeschylus, Sophocles..." (Thid., p. 118)
and Euripides are known to have written plays on this subject." (A Handbook of Classical Drama, Harsh. p. 113) The story of Oedipus and his sons form the central part of the Theban cycle of legends and it was widely known throughout the Hellenic world. Sophocles, accordingly, was judicious to have chosen this story for dramatisation and in the absence of Aeschylus's play, we may safely accept the view of Aristotle that this play is the best of its kind. "In the Poetics, the Oedipus is cited more frequently and praised more highly than any other play." The play is acclaimed by Aristotle as having a complexity of plot, neatness, sudden reversal of fortune and fine execution.

The story of Oedipus has been taken to illustrate the Greek conception of life. It has been rightly stated by Harsh - "The basic theme of the Oedipus is the irony of fate. No mortal man, however powerful and wealthy, can be pronounced happy until after he is dead; for no man, however wise, knows what the morrow will bring. This is the burden of the last complete choral song and of the last lines of the play. This was a basic conception in Greek popular thought...." (Ibid. p. 113) Thus irony of fate is the key-note of the theme and Sophocles stands in singular grandeur in his mastery in dramatising the theme.

The Ûrubhâma: The Sanskrit play, Ûrubhâma of Bhâsa, likewise is based upon the Mahâbhârata. In this play, the incidents of
the duel fight of Bhima and Duryodhana and the repercussions of it are dramatised and the playwright, singular in his attempt and success throughout the vast dramatic literature of Sanskrit, successfully depicts the character of Duryodhana as a real tragic hero. Bhāsa's conception of a tragic hero, it is interesting to note is a perfect one, even according to the Elizabethan conception, particularly that of Shakespeare. The character of Duryodhana attains in this short play a rare tragic grandeur and the reversal of fortune is brought about in such a masterly manner that it never fails to arouse the deepest sense of sorrow or 'the sense of waste' which is typical of the Shakespearean tragedy.

The Hero - Oedipus:

The hero of Sophocles's play is Oedipus. He is depicted as a man of strong will and as a generous ruler. His sincerity has been displayed in his earnestness to redress the wrong, supposed to be the cause of the plague on the land. Though he is brave and heroic, he faces the catastrophe for which we find no adequate reason to hold him responsible. It is entirely Fate which conspires against him and brings about his downfall. So, in this play human life is too much belittled, a mere thing as it is in the hands of all-powerful Fate.

The Hero - Ūrabhaṅga:

The conception of the hero of the Sanskrit playwright is different. Even though Fate is a great factor here as well, 'man' is not belittled. Even in his dying condition Duryodhana
retains the grandeur of an indomitable warrior, never failing to rise to the full stature of his fame. At the dying moment he revaluates his own life in a new light but finds no reason to blame his Fate. He looks at things in a new perspective and realises, though too late, that his was a wrong way. The death of Durvodhana is not so much a proof of the vanity of human life as how unrighteous designs lead to ruin. Thus the pessimistic note which we find in Oedipus (e.g. the last choral song) is entirely absent in Īrūbhaṭaғa.

The Beginning - Greek way:

All the Greek dramas begin, as a rule, with a monologue or a dialogue which is called the 'prologos'. Etymologically 'prologos means "an introductory speech" and 'prologos' in a Greek play is nothing but an introduction to the play. Three persons speak in the 'prologos' - Oedipus, Priest, and Creon and it is Oedipus who speaks first. Oedipus opens the play with a speech addressed to the people of Thebes, and in it he lets the audience know all the necessary information regarding his own name and position, the condition Thebes is in at the time etc. The Priest likewise makes it clear how the plague is devastating the land and he implores Oedipus to find out a way of riddance, as he is considered the 'saviour' of the country by the people. As an ideal ruler, Oedipus responds to it and says that he has already sent his kinsman and prince Creon to the Delphic shrine of Phoebus to get divine assistance. With the arrival and report of Creon the 'prologos' ends and the action gathers more momentum.
The Beginning - Indian Way:

The 'prastāvana' of a Sanskrit play, on the contrary, has an entirely different form. No principal characters are introduced in it. The Sūtradhāra or the stage-manager is the only character who calls his associate and while conversing with him refers to the main action, or the hero. Generally the Sūtradhāra prays to God and then announces the names of the play and the playwright and last of all he creates the just situation for the entrance of the hero and exits. In Īrūbhāṅga we find no announcement of the names of the play and playwright by the Sūtradhāra. Bhāsa, seems to have been very modest as regards giving out his personal identity. In none of his plays the playwright is mentioned and this is why there is a great problem, known as the Bhāsa-problem, in the history of Sanskrit literature.

In the Īrūbhāṅga, the Sūtradhāra after reciting his benedictory verse is about to announce something. But he is interrupted by a sound coming from behind the curtain. He then divines the meaning of the sound and finds before him his associate who enquires of him the whereabouts of a few persons who are approaching. The Sūtradhāra explains that these are the soldiers of the Great Kurucu war and that the duel fight between Duryodhana and Bhīma has begun, it being the last contest in the Kurucu-Pāṇḍava war. After this announcement he retires. Here ends the 'prastāvana'.

CONCLUSION:

From the above account it is easy to judge the merit of the two methods. So far as the introduction is concerned, both the ways serve their purpose. But the way in which the Greek playwright introduces his characters is definitely less dramatic than the Indian. The self announcement - 'I am Oedipus' or the like is completely prosaic and void of all charms. This problem of revealing the identity of the characters has been solved by the Indian theorists by resorting to so many devices. One such device is the 'prastāvanā'. In those days there were no printing machines nor there was any printed programme. So it would have become entirely impossible without the Sūtradhāra's help to know the names of the play and playwright. The technique of using a 'prastāvanā' saves the characters from giving a very prosaic self-announcement. The Sūtradhāra is very fittingly given the character of a mediator who being an outsider happens to know all the preliminary information regarding the play. He takes a position as if, on the border of the actual drama and he does nothing more than supply the link (literally, Sūtra) with the help of which the audience easily grasps the unforeseen events of the play. Thus the Sanskrit play is not cumbered with long speeches aiming at disclosing the identity of the characters on the stage. The 'prastāvanā' being only a useful means, the merit of a playwright may also be judged by a careful study of this. The master artists never indulge in long 'prastāvanas'. One may ask who is to acquaint the Sūtra-dhāra to the audience? No one else is required for the purpose. As common Brāhmaṇa, announcing the beginning of a play,
the Sūtradhāra requires no introduction at all. This character, moreover, is a typical one and hence requires no recommendation.

Another difficulty with the 'prologos' of the Greek plays is its irregularity. If all the plays, as a rule, begin with the hero, the audience may easily come to know him. But there are plays in which the character first to arrive is not the chief one and as such it cause confusion. This difficulty is the more felt by a foreigner who is unacquainted with the Greek practice. The Sanskrit play, on the contrary, can very easily be appreciated by any set of people provided they understand the language. This limitation is also felt in the technique of the Greek chorus. A Sanskrit play is directly approachable whereas a Greek play demands a foreknowledge of the dramatic theory.

Pātra-pravesā - Greek way:

Pātra-pravesa or the presentation of the characters on the stage in a drama is a problematic factor. The dramatist has to provide for an adequate explanation for bringing in any character. And that explanation is the more difficult as it is to come from the drama itself. The theorists have pointed out - 'Nasucitasya pātrasya pravesāḥ' i.e. there is no room for such a character in a play as is not properly introduced. This rule gives the piece a dramatic unity and saves the drama from being a mere collection of dialogues.

The Greek and Sanskrit both have invented their own methods of introducing the characters. The 'prastāvanā' is
already discussed. It is also a method of introducing the chief characters. There are other methods too practised in both the countries. The Greek ways of introduction are, in addition to the 'prologos', the Chorus, the messengers and the Supernatural. The last one has a double function. It, at times, hints at the future progress of the dramatic action and sometimes supplies the solution at the end. Strictly speaking the Supernatural does not usher in new characters but as this helps to bring about the next change in the dramatic action, this is also included in the list.

The Chorus serves too many ends in the Greek drama. One of the chief functions of it is to 'introduce a character entering the stage for the first time'. The Chorus is supposed to know everything. Though the Chorus represents the common Athenian people, it utters great truths and gives a moral colour to the play. It functions as the spokesman for the playwright. The Chorus has the same monotone everywhere, the sole interest being the speech. With their typical dress and mask the members of the Chorus are seen in all the scenes. The Choral songs have poetic effects as well and thus these bring in a dramatic relief in an atmosphere of overcharged emotions. Poetic skill is also felt in the different choruses of different playwrights and in their function of modulating the tone of the play, these attain rare poetic perfection in the hands of Aeschylus, Sophocles and other great artists.

Sophocles introduces the Chorus very skilfully. The command of Oedipus in the 'prologos' - "Summon hither the Theban
folk' - prepares the proper background for the entrance of the Chorus of Theban elders. The Chorus is loyal to the king. It gives voice to the suffering and woe of Thebes. It describes in feeling phrases the condition of the city which is 'a city perishing!'. They invoke the aid of all the gods - Zeus, Apollo, Artemis and Dionysus, so that the God of death may be driven out of the city. The choral song, the critics observe, may be considered as furnishing the emotional exposition of the play.

The Chorus, here works, it should be observed, as an 'intermediate scene' (Arthopakṣepaka) of the Sanskrit plays. It is just like a 'viśkambhaka' revealing the condition of the city and introducing the dramatic characters. Here also, Sophocles makes the blind prophet, Teiresias, enter the scene as announced by the Chorus. The Chorus, likewise, introduces the king and the queen, Jocasta in the second episode (line 531, 631-33). It is the Chorus, which acquaints the messenger from Corinth with the royal palace and queen in the third episode (line 927-28). The Chorus recognises the herdsman who saved the child, Oedipus in the fourth episode (line 1117-18). The Chorus announces the coming of Creon in the fifth episode (line 1416-18). The messenger is also used for the selfsame purpose once in the play. He introduces the afflicted Oedipus in the fifth episode (line 1294-95). These are the ways in which Sophocles introduces his characters.

Pātra-pravēśā - Indian way:

In Sanskrit drama, the main character is generally
introduced by the Sūtradhāra. But at times, the hero is introd-
ced after an 'intermediate scene'. This is done where a particu-
lar situation is to be shown and the hero to be presented as the
centre of that situation. The subject matter of the first choral
song in the Oedipus the King would have been placed first through
an 'intermediate scene', were the play composed by a Sanskrit
dramaturgist and the hero would appear as trying to solve the
problem. Whether the hero is to be presented first or his entrance
should be preceded by a 'vīśkambhaka' is left to the playwright's
discretion by the Indian theorists. The deciding factor of put-
ing a 'vīśkambhaka' first is the necessity of acquainting the
audience with the condition in which the hero is presented.

The intimation of the entrance of new characters is
given by the characters present on the stage. No group of men,
like the Greek Chorus, is seen in any Sanskrit play. The men on
the stage themselves announce the entrance. At times, the 'prati-
hārī' (female door-keeper) also introduces a character. An entire-
ly new method is seen in the Sanskrit drama in introducing a
character. It is the 'nepathyakti' or a speech from behind the
curtain. This technique is of a great help to the playwright
particularly in those situations where none is present to intro-
duce a new character.

The 'pātra-praveśa' in the Īṭāvānśika is done by the
Sūtradhāra and other characters. The Sūtradhāra introduces here
a group of soldiers who participated in the great Kuru war.
These soldiers introduce Baladeva who announces the entrance of
Duryodhana as he hears Duryodhana speak behind the curtain.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhāri, Durjaya, the son of Duryodhana and the wives of Duryodhana are all introduced by Baladeva. Asvatthāman enters reciting a verse and Baladeva recognises him. Thus in this play all the characters are introduced by one or the other dramatic characters themselves.

**CONCLUSION:**

So far as the technique of introducing new characters is concerned, it must be accepted that the Greek process suffers from limitations more than the Sanskrit one. The introduction of characters by the Chorus is bound to be stale and mechanical whereas the introduction of others by the characters in the drama itself is more natural and charming. The introduction of all the new characters by the same Chorus is a handicap which could not be surmounted fully by the Greek geniuses. The monotony, however, of this technique did not escape the notice of later dramatists and the function of the Chorus consequently grew more limited. As in the 'prologos' so in this technique, Sanskrit method is definitely more effective and natural than and therefore, superior to the Greek method.

The Intermediate scenes — Indian way:

A comparison of the two techniques of reporting the past events and critical situations will be of great value. The entire subject-matter of a drama is divided by the Indian theorists into two — one is 'raṃjaka' or 'sarasa' and the other is 'araṇjaka'
or 'virasa'. The 'sarasa vastu', as it is called, is given a full display through the acts and the 'virasa', but necessary 'vastu' is reported through the 'intermediate scenes' (arthopakṣepakas) placed before the acts. These are specially required for the reporting of those events which are prohibited to be shown on the stage. The non-presentable events are enumerated elaborately in the treatises. Though these are proscribed, these may, if necessary, be reported by short scenes known as, 'arthopakṣepakas'.

The Intermediate scenes—Greek way:

There is nothing known to the Greek theorists as the 'intermediate scenes'. But the problem of reporting the non-presentable was ever present before the Greek playwrights and they have solved it in various ways. We shall discuss a few of these here and compare those with the Sanskrit ways.

In the play, Oedipus the King, Sophocles narrates such incidents through: 1) the Chorus, 2) the Messenger, and at times 3) through the talks of the characters themselves.

The Chorus has been discussed already as a means of introducing new characters. In addition to that the Chorus is also the chief means of reporting such events as do not take place on the stage. Accordingly, we find the Chorus explaining to the audience the woes and sufferings of the City. Practically speaking, the reference to the plague in the City in the saying of the priest requires an elaboration and the playwright supplies
a fuller description of the disastrous change of fortune through the first choral song. Without this, it is difficult to realize the reason of Oedipus's eagerness to do something immediately. Not only by the choral songs but by the conversation with the Chorus also much information is furnished. The Chorus is given the status of a regular character and it is always present on the stage. The Chorus speaks with both the hero and the villain and everywhere its attitude is impartial. Though the Chorus represents on the stage the common men of the City, it does not voice the common men's ideas. On the contrary, the Chorus is used as the spokesman for the playwright, expressing the very thoughts and philosophic moralizing of the dramatist himself. The Chorus remains present throughout the play after its entrance before the first 'episode'. Through songs and conversations, the Chorus reveals the happenings off the stage and points out the significance of the actions and their consequences.

Sophocles presents his Chorus as a group of strong supporters of king Oedipus. The Chorus begins with the praise of the king and, at times, suggests the right path for the latter. Even when the king is accused by the blind prophet, the Chorus-singers do not support it. Though they have a strong admiration for the King yet they are more devoted to the gods and as a result, they alienate themselves from the king when they find him disbelieving the divine oracles. Whenever there is a quarrel, the Chorus tries to pacify the parties with reasonable arguments.

The Chorus and the messenger report the events that
take place after the fatal self-identity has been revealed to
king Oedipus. Violent scenes are, like the Sanskrit plays,
proscribed in the Greek plays. They are therefore merely
reported. The fifth 'episode' of the play begins with a
conversation between a messenger and the Chorus. The messenger
reports the manner in which the wretched mother-wife, Jocasta,
has hanged herself and how the cursed Oedipus has blinded him-
self by the 'golden clasp' of his queen's robe. After this
reporting the playwright presents Oedipus on the stage in the
described form. This scene is just like the 'viśkambhaka' of
a Sanskrit play.

The use of messenger is also found in the play for
the purpose of such reporting. The messenger already mentioned
is an example. Another example is the presentation of the
messenger from the Corinth. It is he who reveals the startling
truth that Oedipus is no kin of Polybus, the supposed father
of Oedipus and the king of Corinth. In the course of his con-
versation he reveals the manner how Oedipus reached the royal
house of Corinth and was brought up there as the son of Polybus.
(3rd episode, lines 1010–1050)

The third means by which the playwright reveals the
past happenings is the conversation of the chief characters.
The conversation between Oedipus and Jocasta that follows the
quarrel of Oedipus and Creon, brings to light the exact manner
and place of the murder of the former king, Laius. The account
of the murder given by Jocasta speaks of a host that killed
the king in a place where three paths met. This startles
Oedipus as he remembers himself committing such a murder at such a place. He becomes apprehensive as to the prophecy of Tiresias, the blind prophet. He finds a single ray of hope and wishes to ascertain the veracity of the account by summoning the only surviving eye-witness of the murder. The account says that the king was murdered by a host but Oedipus knows that he killed his victim all alone. So he says -

"If the same number still
He shall report, it was not I who slew him.
One man is not mistaken for a host.
But let him speak of one sole traveller
That turns the scale; plainly the deed was mine."

(2nd episode, lines 771-860)

The Intermediate scenes - Indian way:

In contradistinction with the Greek way, Sanskrit theorists have conceived the 'arthopakṣepakas' of five kinds to serve the aforementioned purpose. We find, accordingly a 'viṣkambhaka' in the beginning of the play, Īrubhaṁga. The Sūtrakṛtandra introduces the soldiers and retires. These soldiers converse with one another and unfold the exact situation of the battle. The fight being unrepresentable, these characters give a vivid description how the fight goes on between Durypo-dhana and Bhīma. They look at the wings and visualise the duel fight of the two heroes and acquaint the audience with it. These three soldiers supply us with the following pieces of information - the war has reached its final stage and all around the battle field the corpses of the warriors are strewn;
the entire battle field appears to be a deadly place, a great annihilation is to be seen all around; a duel fight between Duryodhana and Bhīma has begun in the presence of the few survivors of both the parties - Vyāsa, the sage, Baladeva, Kṛṣṇa, Vidura etc. In this duel, Bhīma proves weaker than Duryodhana and is about to be defeated, and Kṛṣṇa, apprehensive of the defeat of the Pāṇḍavas, suggests something to Bhīma by striking at his own thighs. Consequently Bhīma rises up and strikes the king on his thighs violating the rules of the fight. At this attack, Duryodhana falls down with his thighs broken. At this illegal striking of Bhīma, Baladeva, the preceptor of Duryodhana, gets enraged and leaves the place boiling with anger. The soldiers disperse at seeing Baladeva coming towards them. The 'vīskambhaka' thus ends introducing the angry Baladeva.

CONCLUSION:

The two methods having discussed, it is now easy to judge the merit of the two. So far as the reporting is concerned both the methods serve their purpose. It is in the manner of reporting that we are to find out merits and limitations. The reporting through the Chorus is more or less prosaic, sometimes tending to dullness. The Chorus-songs take the crude form of mere narration, when the Chorus soliloquises. Their impersonal and indifferent attitude also appears to be undramatic. With the very appearance of the Chorus the audience turns ready to listen to some philosophising or exposition of the dramatic theme. As a result, the sense of 'surprise and shock' that is considered to be the key-note of the dramatic
event, gets impaired. Mere narration can be quite bearable and
justified if the piece is a fiction or a tale. In a drama,
narration should also come through some expository means.
Aristotle has rightly objected to the narrative element in the
drama but we find plain narration in the speeches of the Chorus.
The peculiar omniscient character of the Chorus also is an impe-
diment which hampers the free development of the play. Though
the Chorus is always present before the audience, the members of
it are supposed to know everything taking place off the stage.
The poetic element of the choral songs has been highly spoken
of. Admitting this view unreservedly, one must hold that the
role of the Chorus is undramatic.

The technique of reporting past events by the chief
characters also suffers from great limitations. Such reports
make the speech unnecessarily lengthy and thereby hamper the
quick progress of the action. The report how and why Oedipus
fled from Corinth and killed Laius covers 62 lines. (2nd episode
lines 770-833) Lengthy speeches are never considered as a merit
of any drama.

In short, the Chorus is a very weak technique of
expressing past events and it is the more awkward in such cases
where the playwright unfolds the significance or the moral of
the play through it. For example, the last speech of the Chorus
in Oedipus the King, is void of all dramatic qualities. The
didactic tales like those of the Hitopadesa or the Aesop's Fables
may have such moral teaching as their aim but in perfect
literary creations such didactic teachings cannot be welcomed.
The relation between Ethics and Aesthetics is a highly disputed topic, still all the literary critics are unanimous on the point that in Aesthetic creations, Ethics should be subservient to the former. No statement is required to prove the fact that the end of life proves its fruition and the playwright should have depended solely upon his dramatisation to instil the truth of what he explicitly says through the Chorus.

In comparison, the Sanskrit method is much more charming and full of novelties. The 'vīṣkambhaka' used in the Ārṇa-bhāma is remarkably brief and by introducing only three soldiers the playwright gives a very vivid description of the desolate battle field and the fight between the two heroes. The clever hint of Kṛṣṇa and the wrath of Baladeva are also brought to light by this short 'vīṣkambhaka'.

There are other methods too. These are elaborately discussed in the Chapter on the 'arthopakṣepakas' (p. 41). That the Sanskrit theorists on dramaturgy were keenly conscious of the sense of dramatic unity and charm, is evident from another technique - that of reporting things that are happening simultaneously, known as 'ākāśa-bhāśita'. This technique is used when something is to be reported to the audience by a single character. This character looks at the sky and talks in such a manner to an imaginary person that the audience becomes aware of the facts. This technique is adopted to suit stage-conveniences.

The chief merit of all these 'intermediate scenes', is their brevity. No chief characters are used in such scenes
and through the conversation of such common characters as are closely connected with the chief characters, these necessary pieces of information are supplied. This technique, as it is proved, is definitely superior in charm and facility to the Greek one.

The division into acts - Indian way:

All the Sanskrit plays are divided into acts. The division is based upon the various stages of action. A full dramatic action consists of five stage - the beginning, efforts, prospect of success, conditional success and attainment of the result. These five stage, it should be observed, are present in every activity. It is the observation of the practical life that has led the Sanskrit theorists to recognize the five stages of the action and as the development of the full dramatic action depends upon these five stages, they thought of five acts in a drama.

The division into acts - Greek way:

As a remarkable contrast there is nothing as an act in the Greek drama. The different stages are marked, it may be said, by the choral songs called 'stasimons'. These 'stasimons' separate one episode from the other and thus divides the entire play into many sections. The Oedipus of Sophocles has got five 'stasimons' and thus the play is divided into six sections. All the sections are related to one another and are interdependent in nature.
The six sections of Oedipus:

In the Oedipus, the first section i.e. the 'prologos', bares before the audience the situation of Thebes and the deep concern with which the hero wishes to find out a way of solution. Creon, sent by Oedipus to the Delphian shrine, returns with the message of the God that the murder of the former king must be avenged and the criminal banished. This section marks the beginning of the action.

The second section, introduced by the Chorus, shows the action in its second stage, the 'effort' according to the Sanskrit theorists. This first episode presents the hero in a state of mental restlessness eager to find out the murderer. He asks all and then calls for the blind prophet, Teiresias who, peculiarly enough, wishes to avoid the answer first but being enkindled by the taunting remarks of Oedipus, gives out at last that Oedipus himself is responsible for the woes of the city - "Thou art unclean; for thee we are accursed". (lines 350-51) This news renders Oedipus the more restless and he begins to suspect a foul conspiracy against him with Creon at its head.

The third section, that is the second episode, shows the quarrel between Oedipus and Creon. Oedipus is fully confident as to his innocence, and denounces Creon strongly. Just at the time when their quarrel reaches its height, Jocasta the queen appears and appeases Oedipus who leaves Creon in peace as a result. Coming to know the cause of the strife, Jocasta tries to prove the falsity of the prophecies by recounting the
story of Laius's death. This story strikes hard at the self-confidence of Oedipus as he remembers to have killed one exactly at the place where Laius is said to have been murdered. In a frenzy he relates his own life and entreats his queen to send for the only surviving eye-witness of the murder. This section thus shows the action at its climax.

The same heightened emotional condition continues in the fourth section i.e. the third episode. Herein, we find a messenger from Corinth, who brings the news of the death of the Corinthian king. This news gladdens Jocasta as the death proves the prophecy that Oedipus will kill his own father, the king of Corinth, false. She calls Oedipus who, hearing the story of the death of his father from the messenger, is no doubt pleased but denies to go to Corinth according to the prayer of the messenger, fearing the other prophecy that he will marry his own mother. The messenger then reveals the most fatal truth that Oedipus is no kin to the Corinthian king and queen and that he was carried to the royal house by the messenger himself. The manner in which he received the baby Oedipus being related, Jocasta leaves the place and asks Oedipus not to delve any more into the matter. But Oedipus, though embarrassed at all these revelations, determines to have the whole truth and waits for the arrival of the shepherd, the only eye-witness.

The fifth section i.e. the fourth episode brings about the catastrophe. The old servant comes and at the repeated request of Oedipus narrates the story of Oedipus's childhood and how he was carried away by him and handed over to the Corinthian
messenger. This revelation upsets Oedipus completely and he
retires with the fatal realisation -

"Out and alas! so all atlast comes true!
Here let me look my last upon the Sun,
That sees father'd, mother'd, wived amiss,
And, whom I should not, sees that I have slain."

(lines 1182-85)

The sixth section i.e. the 'exodos' reveals the tragic
suicide of Jocasta and it brings before the audience the blood
stained Oedipus who has rendered himself blind. On the pathetic
disaster that has befallen Oedipus, the Chorus philosophises and
expresses the moral that a man can be judged as really happy who
is allowed by the Fate to end his life in peace. The action of
the drama, stirred by the cruel Fate against Oedipus, reaches
its consummation here and fittingly the play ends. Thus in the
Greek drama, the action is depicted in a graded scheme of
development though the acts are absent.

The Ürubhāṃga:

The Ürubhāṃga is a one-act play so no question of
acts arises. But the stages of action are fully depicted. As
has been said already, the action of the play starts with the
entry of Baladeva. The king Duryodhana is next presented in
his wounded condition. His thighs are broken by Bhīma violating
the rules and regulations of the battle. Though Duryodhana
never cared in his life for any such consideration as to whether
his own attacks on the Pāṇḍavas were righteous or not, he accuses
Bhīma for his unrighteous blow on his thighs. The lonely
Duryodhana, completely subdued, now realises the truth that he
is to reap the fruits of his own misdeeds. He can think no more of fighting. The final defeat works in his life a tragic reversal and he wishes, at this stage, the prosperity of the Pândavas. The first phase of his attitude towards the Pândavas is shown clearly in his conversation with Baladeva. Baladeva wishes to avenge the wrong done to Duryodhana but it is Duryodhana, the avowed enemy of the Pândavas, who pacifies him. This attitude indicates the thorough change in the outlook of Duryodhana.

The second incident is the meeting of Duryodhana with his parents. In the short conversation that follows, Duryodhana receives their blessings and expresses the desire to be born again as their worthy son. His pathetic attempt to prove himself right and victorious even at the point of death is really tragic.

The third thing, which reveals how he is affected by the final defeat at the hands of Bhīma, is the consolation which he gives to his two wives. He consoles them by pointing out the glory of a Kṣatriya’s death. As a dignified and honourable warrior he has never taken to his heels and he wishes that his wives should recognise that and cease to mourn for him.

The next phase of his life is more pathetic than the former one. He accosts his child, Durjaya and advises him to follow the Pândavas as affectionately as Durjaya did his father. (Ahamiva Pândavāḥ suśrūṣayita vyāḥ) His advice to follow and revere his greatest enemies is a clear denunciation of his own past. He finds none other save Yudhiṣṭhira who may give shelter to his dear son.
The meeting with Āśvatthāman completes the picture of his tragic change. Āśvatthāman was ever a close associate of Duryodhana and when he meets the king he is greatly moved to see him in that plight. At the question of Āśvatthāman - "Bhoḥ Kururāja! kim idam?" (O King of the Kurus! What is this?), the answer of Duryodhana is remarkable. He says - "Guruputra! phalam aparitoṣasya" (O son of the preceptor! it is the result of my discontent). In this statement Duryodhana admits the complete futility of all his former activities. The changed Duryodhana appears clean in his attempt to dissuade Āśvatthāman from his proposed ambition of killing all the Pāṇḍavas. Duryodhana has, it seems, suddenly changed to be a very considerate and righteous man who wishes to forget and forgive and to desist from all violence. Not only this, but at the taunting remark of Āśvatthāman that Duryodhana has lost simultaneously his thighs and his pride, he weighs impartially all the wrongs done to the Pāṇḍavas by him and says that the wrongs done by them are far less in comparison. Āśvatthāman is not pacified at these consoling remarks of Duryodhana. He pledges to kill all the Pāṇḍavas in a 'night-war' (nirāsāmera) and blesses Durjaya, the son of Duryodhana, as the next king of the Kurus. This announcement, however, pleases the dying king and he feels the approach of death and succumbs to it.

CONCLUSION:

The absence of acts in the Greek drama imposes a few limitations. The first thing is the presence of the Chorus which has already been discussed. The other difficulty is based on the 'unity of time'. The acts in the Sanskrit plays present such
incidents as happen in a single day. Thus the number of the acts tallies with the number of the days required for the dramatic incidents. The passage of time is indicated by the 'intermediate scenes'. Thus the time-factor in a Sanskrit drama never reaches the point of incredulity. But in the Greek drama the constant presence of the same Chorus throughout the play gives rise to a sense of discrepancy. Even when two episodes occur in different times and places, the presence of the Chorus impairs the 'unity of time and place'. Such a discrepancy can never occur in a Sanskrit play. Moreover, true soliloquies are not possible in a Greek drama due to the constant presence of the Chorus. So many functions entrusted to the Chorus render it undramatic and highly mechanical.

The Nirvahana:

The 'nirvahana' of a Sanskrit play is characteristically different from that of a Greek drama. In the play Oedipus, the 'nirvahana' or the Conclusion depends not upon the hero so much as upon the Chorus. It is the Chorus which voices the Conclusion, in Oedipus. Whereas the Conclusion in a Sanskrit play is brought in by the main agent of the action. It is Duryodhana who realises the end of his life and makes a revaluation, arousing thereby the sympathy of the audience.

The Characterisation and Dialogue:

The characterisation and dialogue of these two plays are exceptionally wonderful. Admitting all the limitations mentioned above, the Greek playwright, Sophocles successfully
presents the character of his hero in very bright colours. As we find no such serious deficiency in Oedipus for which his tragic reversal of fortune and utter ruin may be justified, the play has been classed as a Tragedy of Fate. The greatest proof of Sophocles's success is the fact that Oedipus the king is still now hailed as the best specimen of the type.

Duryodhana also is presented as a great tragic character, who having lost everything near and dear to him realises the truth that his selfish ways were all wrong and misdirected. His calm but dignified submission to his fate makes his character impressive for all times.

The Rasa:

Herein, in the attitude towards life, the Greek and Sanskrit dramatists are keenly contrasted. A sense of completion may be said to be the key-note of all the Indian plays. Whether the hero is romantic and despotic and intolerant in nature, his life is presented in its entirety. Though there is downfall in the life of Duryodhana, he has to blame none but himself. The intrinsic worth of human life is accepted and Fate is not made responsible for the catastrophe that the hero meets with. Thus the pathos has become the 'karuna-Rasa' and not merely a cause of grief.

But in the Oedipus the king, we find human power to be meaningless against the onslaughts of Fate. As a just and valiant ruler, Oedipus has nothing in him repulsive that may be responsible for the dire consequences that he has to face. He is not an immoral man and he, like a just ruler, is keenly alive to the
question of the welfare of his subjects. Still he faces downfall and he finds none to blame but the designs of the gods. This submission to the Fate has got in it the elements of hopelessness and helplessness of man. The presentation of man as a mere plaything in the hands of cruel Fate can never fully satisfy human beings.

CONCLUSION:

Thus it can be said, that the Sanskrit plays are superior to the Greek in point of technique, realism, and in the fulness of their appeal. So far as the questions of depth and sublimity are concerned, both are remarkable in their own spheres.