Plot of the Sanskrit Drama

Chapter-I

Qualitative analysis:

Sanskrit rhetorecians use the term Kāvyā to denote all sorts of poetical compositions. Kāvyā may either be 'abhineya' (drṣya) or 'śravya': the former comprises all types of dramatic compositions which are primarily meant to be enacted and are appropriately designated as 'rūpa', 'rūpaka' or 'nātya', while the latter includes all other varieties of Kāvyā which are meant to be read, recited and heard.

"Nāṭya is imitation," says Sgn. and in support of his view quotes:

avastāḥ yā tu lokasya sukhadukha-samaudbhavā /
tasyāstvabhinayah Prājñāir - nātyamityahidhīyate//

1. DR. I. 7
2. NLRK. 11. 8-11. The NS. (GOS. XV. 126; XVI.5) uses kāvyā and Nāṭya as synonyms.
3. NLRK. 11. 266; 11, 2283-2284.
4. NLRK. 11. 267-268. The verse, as it is, does not occur in any of the present versions of the NS. The first half is undoubtedly the same as that of V. No. 142 of 19th chap. of the NS. (GOS) and the second half seems to be similar to that of V. No. 144 of the same chapter. Rucipati in his com. on the An. rā.(r. 9) attributes the verse to Bharata and reads 'tadiyānukṛtīḥ' in place of 'tasyāstvabhinayah'. 
Here Nāṭya has been used in the sense of dramatic representation. It is the 'abhinaya' (imitation on the stage, i.e., dramatic representation) of states or situations of human life arising out of joy and sorrow. Through fourfold 'abhinaya' (āṅgika, vācika, sāttvika and āhārya) the characters portrayed in drama are represented on the stage. The term 'abhinaya', according to the NLRK, owes its origin to the fact that it brings the events depicted in the drama, before the eyes of the audience and makes out the meaning of the composition.

Nāṭya has been highly eulogised by Bharata and later authorities alike. It is as sacred as the fifth Veda and its different elements are said to be taken from different Vedas. It is also the highest of all arts to comprise in itself all sorts of knowledge and learning and gives pleasure to all without any distinction of cast and creed. In praise of Nāṭaka Sgn. quotes

5. DR. I.7. avasthā-nukṛṭir-nāṭyam.
6. NLRK 1. 269 and 11. 2282-2285.
7. NS. GOS. I. 15.
9. NS. GOS. I. 116; XIX. 143.
the following verse from an anonymous source:

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\text{api sakyeta vidvadhbir-muktir-abhyāsa-kausālāt /}
\]
\[
\text{na tu nāṭaka - vidyeyam sarvalokānu-raṇjani //}
\]

It is interesting to note that the verse, attributed by Śaṅkara to no less an authority than Prajāpati himself, places 'nāṭakavidyā' even above 'parā-vidyā' in India where 'mokṣa' has been universally proclaimed as the highest end of human life. This single verse amply demonstrates the reverence with which ancient Indian critics took up drama and dramaturgy.

The richness of Sanskrit drama can be comprehended from the list of names of the types of 'rūpakas'. The NŚ, though speaks of ten 'rūpakas' describes eleven types of 'rūpakas' including the Nāṭikā. The NLRK and some other works deal with the 'upa-rūpakas' also.

10. NLRK. 11. 25-26. The Verse is also found in the Bhā.pra. (P.222, 11,16-17) where the reading of the first half is :-

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\text{api sidhyeta Viduṣām etc. Śaṅkara in his Ra.ca. (Abhisāku, P.116) attributes the verse to Prajāpati. Another verse on the eulogy of Nāṭaka and attributed to Pitāmaha by Sgn. (NLRK. 11. 15-16) is also found in the said work and also in the Tippanī of Narahari in the same context as belonging to Prajāpati. (Abhisāku, P. 116 and P. 296) This verse also, is found in the Bhā.pra. P. 238. 11. 2-3.}
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Dr. Raghavan informs that Bahurūpa Misra in his gloss on the DR. reproduces the entire portion of the NLRK. 11. 14-26. NLRK. Eng. Tra. P. 60. The NŚ. itself and Abhi.bhā refer to Brahmā in several places.
Of these 'rūpakas' Nāṭaka and Prakaraṇa are recognised as full-fledged drama with all the Sandhis and Vṛttis (Pūrṇa-sandhi and Pūrṇa-Vṛtti). Between these two types, Indian dramaturgy accepts Nāṭaka as the main type. Similar like all other authorities on the subject takes up Nāṭaka first for the treatment of his subject and institutes interesting discussions on the qualitative analysis of the plot of drama, for the proper comprehension of which some preliminary observations are necessary.

In Sanskrit dramaturgy the story of a play is variously called as 'Vastu', 'ākhyāna', 'itivṛttā', 'itihāsa', 'kathā' and 'samvidhānaka'; In the NS. the theme of a drama has been described as its body. Now, from the qualitative standpoint of analysis, later authorities beginning from Dhanañjaya, are of opinion that plots of drama are of three kinds:- the renowned, invented and mixed. When the plot is derived from the mythological or historical (itihāsa-pūrṇa) sources, it is renowned (Prakhyāta). The plot is said to be invented (utpādyā or kalpya) if it is a creation of the poet's own imagination. The mixed type of plot (miśra) is partly invented and partly derived from historical or mythological sources. This type of plot is derived but refashioned or remodelled by the poet to suit the purpose. As a general rule, the invented story cannot form the subject-matter of a Nāṭaka. The NC. is most vocal on this point and says, 'kṛpta-varjyaṁ tu nāṭakeṃ' Plays of Prakaraṇa, Prakaraṇikā, Prahasana and Vīthī types have their plots invented by the poet. The plot of a Nāṭaka should always be renowned (khyātētvṛttta). Ag. informs us that according to his preceptor, the quality of being prakhyāta for a story depends upon

11. NLRK. l. 2173.
12. NS. Gos. XIX, 1 itivṛttām tu nāṭyasya śārīrām parikṛtttītam.
13. Dr. I. 15-16; Bhā. pra. P 203.11. 13-15; RS. III 5-6
14. NC. P. 3
threefold renownedness. The hero of the story himself, his activities and the country he lives in, - all are required to be famous.

The above division of the plot of a drama into three kinds is undoubtedly of later origin. The NS. nowhere has explicitly divided the plot as renowned, invented and mixed. From the descriptions of different types of dramas, it appears that the NS. recognises only two kinds of plot, ‘prakhyāta’ and ‘upādyya’, to be taken up for different types of dramas. In theory and in practice all sorts of stories found a place in the rich dramatic literature in India. But the best or the highest type of drama i.e., the Nāṭaka has been restricted to deal with the stories found in the two epics, the Purāṇas and the Brhatkathā, and these works have all along been accepted as the perennial source of the themes of Nāṭakas in India.

Sgn. quotes from the NS. the description of Nāṭaka which says that the theme of a Nāṭaka should be famous; it should be related to the renowned activities of famous and noble heroes belonging to the families of royal sages and having

divine supports or having divine sources. By families of royal sages Sgn. means
Lunar and Solar dynasties and adds that the renowned activities are those that are
'lokānām - anurañjanaṁ karma'. The determination of Rāma in carrying out his father's
command, his heroic discharge of duty in slaying Rāvana to avenge of the wrongs done
by the latter through the abduction of Sītā and also difficult tasks like the
offering of own body by Jīmūtavāhāna have been cited as illustrations of renowned
activities of the heroes.

Regarding the quality of the plot of a Nāṭaka Sgn. remarks :-

nāṭakasyetivṛttam bhavati upāttam
prati-saṃskṛtam ca/upāttam purāṇa-siddham
rāmādi-vṛttāntaḥ/Pratisamskṛtam upāttam
kevalaṁ kavīnā kīṃcid-utpādyā-vastvī!

16. NLRK. 11. 32-33. Prakhyāta-vastuvishayam. Prakhyatodatta-nāyakam/Kājarṣi-
vamsa-caritaṁ tathā divyāsrayotthitam// The NS. (GOS. XVIII. 10) roads,-divyāśray
-opetam' instead of 'divyāśrayotthitam' of the NLRK. 'divyāśra-yopetam' according
to Ag. means 'having divine helpers' Cf. Abhibhā. NS. GOS. Vol. II, P. 412. Full
gloss on the expression 'divyāśrayotthitam' in the NLRK.is missing. The NLRK only
says, 'divyaṁ maheśvaram - Jēmūtavāhanādīnām caritaṁ (ll. 45-46) and then that
there is a gap in the ms. as suspected by Edgerton, informs Dr. Raghavan. NLRK.

17. NLRK. 11. 44-45, 1. 2189

18. NLRK. 11. 39-44.
Thus according to Sgn. the plot of a Nātaka, though taken from any traditional source, can be refashioned by the poet and that this is explained by the observations of the 'Muni.' Muni here may mean either Bharata or any other old authority.

The problem now arises who is this Muni according to whose view the plot of a Nātaka can be reshaped from its original form. The NS. is quite silent regarding the matter, Bharata neither categorically gives nor denies the liberty of the poets in refashioning the plots of Nātakas.

In actual practice, however it is found that all our renowned Nātakas are based upon stories the frameworks of which are borrowed from traditional sources but nowhere the story is represented as it is found in its original source. In every case it is 'Prati-sāmskrita' or refashioned.

Historically speaking, Nātaka had its beginning in some crude and simple form of 'rupaka' like Dīma and Samavakāra but gradually developed through ages into 'Pūrna-sandhi' and 'Pūrna-Vrtti' Nātaka proper. At this primary stage, it can be

\[\text{NLRK, II. 47-50. Saṅkara in his Ra.ca. on the Abhi. šaku (P.162) seems to have quoted from the NLRK, when he remarks, 'uṇātma Pratisamskṛtam ceti Vṛtti-dvayam'. Here Saṅkara quotes, 'Pañca Pañca catuh-ṣaṣṭi-catuḥ Pañcaika-vimsati/ sadvimsa-navatiryatra tadāhur-nātakam budhāh//'saṁvimsa' is obviously a corrupt reading; it should be 'saṭ-trimśat', as in the exposition of the verse Saṅkara himself states. The verse occurs in the NLRK. (II.1858-1859). Here the reading is 'aṣṭaika-vimsati'. Bhā.Pra. (P.222 II.8-9) gives the verse with the reading found in the Ra.ca. The verse concerned is not Sgn.'s own, as he introduces it (I. 1857) saying 'ata evocayate'. At the conclusion of his exposition on the verse Saṅkara says 'etacea vistareṇa ratnakośe kathitam'. This 'ratnakośa' is undoubtedly the NLRK. Other instances of Saṅkara's borrowing from the NLRK. will be shown in due course.}\]
presumed, that simple and short stories in their original form from the epics and Purāṇas were sufficient to meet the demands of drama. But in a full-fledged drama like Nāṭaka, those stories were required to be elaborated and refashioned. The poets took the liberty of remodelling the plots to give them proper shape of Nāṭaka and to make them more appealing to the audience. Thus, in every Nāṭaka some portions of the plot are found to be 'upāṭṭa' and some 'pratisamākṛṭa'.

Among the texts on dramaturgy the Bhā. pra. informs us that it is Mātrguptācārya who enjoins that the plot of a Nāṭaka, though taken from a traditional source can be refashioned by the poet. This statement of Śdt. is attested by a quotation from the text of Mg. found in the Ar. dyo. commentary on Abhi. śaku by RB. Dr. Raghavan Points out that Sgn. directly borrows here the view of Mg. It thus appears that Sgn. here refers to Mg. by the word 'muni' who, keeping an eye on the actual practice of the day, enjoins the right of the poet in reshaping the plot of Nāṭaka, the framework of which is to be borrowed from the traditional source.

For various reasons Mg.'s description of Nāṭaka as quoted by RB. is interesting. It says :-

1. Prakhyāta-vastu-viśyaṁ dhīrodāttādi-nāyakam/
2. rājarṣi-vamsa-caritaṁ tathā divyā-srayānvitam/ //
3. yuktam Vṛūḍhi-vilāśadyair-guṇair-nānāvibhūṭibhiḥ/ //
4. śṛṅgāra-vīrā-nyatara-pradhāna-rasasamsrayam/ //
5. prakṛtyavasthā-sandhyaṅga-sandhyantaravibhūṣanaiḥ/ //
6. patākā-sthānakair-vṛttam pataṅgaśca (tadaṅgaiśa ṛ) pravṛttibhiḥ/ //


It is evident that Sgn. directly borrows the expression 'Kimcid-uptḍyā-vastu' from the tenth line of the above quotation. Taking into consideration the actual practice as discussed above, the texts of Mg. and Sgn. may be interpreted to mean that the plot of a Nāṭaka is to be borrowed and at the same time may be refashioned. 'Upāṭta' and 'pratisanksṛta' in this sense indicate two characteristics of the plot and imply that though the framework of the plot of a Nāṭaka should always be related to the achievements of the epic or puranic heroes yet the poet is free to handle it in a manner suitable to his own purpose. The RS. accepts this principle and says that the theme of a Nāṭaka should be 'khyāteti-vṛttasambaddha', (connected with some renowned story), allowing thereby the scope of refashioning. The DR. allows this scope of the poet in clever terms and shows the reason. It says that the poet is free to discard or change the incidents in the life of the hero, as described in the source, which are not in

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23. Abhi-saku. p.9. It is apparent that Mg.'s description of Nāṭaka does not vary materially from that of the NS. First three lines of the above description appear to have been taken directly from the NS. (GOS., XVIII. 10,11). Ninth line carries the same sense as is contained in V. No.12 in the said chap. of the NS. The NS. does not specifically state anything regarding the main Rasa of a Nāṭaka while Mg. enjoins that either Śrīṅgāra or Vīra should be the main Rasa (1.4 in above quotation). Later authorities perhaps, are influenced by this dictum of Mg. (Cf. Bha.pra. P.233, 1.3; RS.III. 131; Sd.VI.10) Fifth and sixth lines of above quotation are found in the RS.III.132.

24. RS.III.161.
conformity with the desired Rasa or go against the merits of the hero. The Bhā. pra. and the SD. reiterate the same. The ND. also maintains the same. Several instances from existing Nāṭakas have also been cited by Dhanika to show how poets very often take the liberty of changing and rejecting incidents of the lives of heroes, as described in original sources. The ND. seems to be more practical in stating that the poets, while depicting traditional stories, freely innovate new situations and reject old ones for the sake of making the Nāṭaka more attractive to the audience.

It may be added here that all the works on Indian dramaturgy pay unconditional respect to Bharata and profess to follow him. The present NS. also acquired a sanctity, almost religious in character, centuries before the days of Ag. It may be presumed that had there been no support of the NS., at least an implicit one, no theorist could have stated so explicitly that the epic and puranic stories could be refashioned by the poets. Ag.'s silence also on the matter cannot be explained otherwise. Similar was the position of the playwrights. Without the sanction of a 'ṛṣi', possibly none could have remodelled an 'ārṣa'-story for fear of hurting the feelings of at least the orthodox section of audience. On the other hand, remodelling of traditional stories was a practical necessity for the avoidance of boring repetitions. Thus both theorists and playwrights sought for an 'ārṣa' sanction which they certainly derived from the NS. It will not be out of place to point out here that a simple epic story, depicted in its original form in a Nāṭaka, cannot be expected to portray diversities of prosperity, amorous pastimes and so forth, as demanded by the NS. itself. Thus, it will not be unjustified to conclude that the NS. implicitly supports the general practice of remodelling traditional stories in Nāṭakas.

25. DR.III.24-25 and Avaloka; ND.I. 18; Bhā.pra. P.233 1.22, P.234 1.1; SD.VI.50 and below.
27. NLRK. 1.34. NS. GOS. XVIII. 11. nāṇā-vibhūṭibhir-jutamṛddhi-vilāsādir-gunaśeṣa...../
Dr. Raghavan says, "Themes are of three kinds, Renowned, Invented and Mixed, Prakhyatä, Utpädyä and Miśra" and about 'Upätta' and 'Pratisamsktta' of the NLRK. He remarks, "These are two subdivisions of the first type of the plot, the Prakhyatä." But Sgn. does not divide the plot into Prakhyata, Utpadya and Misra kinds. Moreover, this division refers to the theme of drama in general and not of Nāṭaka only. Like all other authorities Sgn. maintains that the invented story forms the theme of Prakaraṇa etc. It appears then that according to Sgn. also, plots of dramas are of three kinds, Upätta, Pratisamsktta and Utpadya corresponding respectively with Prakhyata, Miśra and Utpadya of others. Thus Upätta and Pratisamsktta cannot be taken as two subdivisions of Prakhyata.

Sgn. further maintains that even the lives of historical or contemporary kings may form the subject matter of Nāṭaka. This view deserves special treatment, as it is opposed to that commonly held and finds support from no other authority excepting Sdt. who declares:-

29

Prayojana-vaśāt-tat-tu vartamānam-api kvaeti/ This is the gist of Sgn.'s statement:-

Vartamānam-api-nāpater-mahābhūtasya kavi-buddhi- prakarśad-āśādita-bija-bindvādikam yadi bhavatiḥbhavatyeva nāṭaka-viśayam/

At the outset, it should be pointed out that any insignificant contemporary king cannot be featured in a Nāṭaka according to the NLRK. The contemporary king should be an exceptionally endowed individual (mahābhūta), so that the Poet may find scope to develop his life-history into the theme of a Nāṭaka.


30. NLRK, 11. 51-53.
The events of his life, selected for the treatment in a Nāṭaka, should be suitable to be invested with the Arthapraṅktis and also to be divided into Kāryavasthās, Sandhis etc. Sgn. seems to mean that if such an endowed contemporary king is found, the playwright is free to delineate the events of his life in a Nāṭaka and the Śastra imposes no injunction against this. What, however, is exactly meant by 'Varttamana' is not clear. It may indicate historical as opposed to epic and Puranic or simply contemporary, belonging to the age to which the poet himself belongs.

The traditional story of the composition of Nāṭya out of the elements of all four Vedas by Pitamaha himself, the use of the term 'itiḥāsa' to denote dramatic plot, and also the subject matter of the first dramatic performance, i.e., the defeat of the demons at the hands of gods, as recorded in the NS., all tend to suggest that in its origin drama certainly utilised current old stories. But the NS. nowhere explicitly prohibits the lives of contemporary kings from being depicted in Nāṭaka.

It is Ag. who most emphatically opposes the above view, championed by Sgn. The great commentator of the NS. maintains that lives of contemporary and historical kings should not be depicted in any form of drama (Nāṭya) not to speak of the Nāṭaka, the highest form of drama. But that there were earlier adherents of the view which was in favour of portraying the activities of contemporary kings in dramas, is borne out by the statements found in the Abhi. bhā. itself. In the first chapter of the NS. Ag. refers to a view, said to be held by some, according to which a poet may please his master by depicting the latter's life in Nāṭya. Ag. opposes the view on the ground that some of the 'rupaka's are to deal with

31. NS. Gos. I.19. itiḥāsa mayā srṣṭāḥ etc. Abhi. bhā. on it says, 'itiḥāso daśa-rūpakam.'

32. NS. Gos. I.57. yathā daityāḥ surair-jitāḥ.
Invented stories and some with renowned stories according to the NS., so, there is no scope of Prabhu-carita in Nāṭya. Here Ag. remarks, - "naca vartamāna-caritā-nukāro yuktah" and adduces arguments in his favour. He maintains that the disinterestedness necessary for aesthetic response or moral edification may be hampered by the spectator's personal reactions to the proximate events of the life of a contemporary king, depicted in a Nāṭaka as hero. Later in the 18th chapter of the NS., Ag. further remarks that if the life of the hero of a Nāṭaka is picked up from contemporary history, his high achievements, described in the drama, may fail to convince the audience and it is for this reason that Bharata speaks of Prakhyāta again and again. Even a god should not be featured as a main hero in a Nāṭaka according to Ag. who, however, maintains that divine heroines and gods as secondary characters may be introduced in Nāṭakas. A hero in a Nāṭaka says Ag., is generally portrayed as subject to separation and pathos etc., and a god cannot be so represented without being dragged down to the level of

33. NS. GOS. Vol.I. P.27. prabhu-paritoṣāya prabhu-caritām kadācin-nāṭye varṇāṇīyam-itī yathā dāityāh surair-jitā ityetasmād-labhyaśa iti kecidāhuh/ tadasat/.....na ca vartamāna-caritānukāro yuktah/ vineyānām tatra rāga-dveṣa-madhyasthatādīnā tanmayī-ḥāvābhāve pīterabhāvena vyutpatter-apyabhāvāt/

34. NS. GOS. Vol.II. P.413. tena vartamāna-rāja-caritām ca avaraṇāṇīyam eva, tatra viparīta-prasiddhi-bādhaya adhyāropasya akiñcitkaratvāt..../ etadarthameva Prakhyāta-grahāṇām prakarṣa-dyotakām punah punarupāttam/
ordinary human beings. Thus, according to Ag. neither a contemporary king nor even a god could be featured in a Nāṭaka as hero. The hero of a Nāṭaka should always be one who is 'rājarṣi-vamsaprabhava'. The ND. simply repeats what has been said by Ag. in this matter in different words. The view of the DR. and its followers has already been discussed. Thus, with the solitary exception of Ādī, all other authorities on dramaturgy beginning from Ag., opine against the inclusion of contemporary kings as heroes in Nāṭakas.

An enquiry into the actual practice regarding the delineation of the lives of contemporary and historical kings in dramas by ancient Indian playwrights cannot but be interesting here. The enquiry may be started with Kālidāsa, though there has been a great controversy regarding his date. Dr. S.N. Dasgupta places him with sufficient reasons in the 2nd. century B.C., i.e., in the Śunga period. Accepting this date of Kālidāsa we can point out that the character of a contemporary and historical king has been depicted in a Nāṭaka by the Prince of Indian poets himself in his Mālavikāgnimitra. On the other hand, a drama,

35. NS. GOS. Vol.II. P.412. naca sarvathā deva-caritaṁ tathā-avaranāniyam/...
Prakarī-patākā-nāyakūdi-rūpeṇa...aṅgī-karaṇam.../.....
Yadi tu mukhyatvenaiva deva-caritam varṇyate tat-tāvadvipralambha-
karuṇādbhuta-bhayanaka-rasocitam cen-nibadhyate tan-mānuṣa-caritam-eva sampadyate/...
nāyikā tu di vyāpyavirodhini /...

36. ND. P.25. The ND. (PP.25-26) takes 'King' to mean one belonging to the Kṣatriya class only and not a coronated king, as Princes are very often depicted as heroes.

37. HSL. Cal. Uni. P. 739.

38. Cf.PHAY. Dr. H. Roy Choudhury, 5th ed., P. 391, "Pushyamitra died in or About 151 B.C.... and was succeeded by his son Agnimitra".
consisting of nine Acts and with a famous theme describing the activities of historical Personages like Buddha, Sāriputra and Maudgalyāyana; has been designated Sāriputra-Prakaraṇa by its another Ṭvaghosa. According to the NS, as interpreted by Ag., the plot of a Prakaraṇa may be invented or taken from 'anārṣa-kāvyya' like Bṛhatkathā etc., or similar works of other poets. The story of the drama Sāriputra-Prakaraṇa is neither invented nor taken from any 'anārṣa' source, known to us. That the story was not taken from any 'ārṣa' source like the epics and Purāṇas, that Śāriputra, the hero, was neither a king nor did belong to the family of any 'rājarṣi' and that Ṭvaghosa perhaps utilised some old 'anārṣa' source for the story might have been the reasons behind calling the drama a Prakaraṇa. It can also be surmised that Ṭvaghosa took the events, described in the drama, as contemporary even after four long centuries. It is also interesting to note that the Svapna-Vāsavadatta has all-along been regarded as a Nāṭaka though its story is not taken from any 'ārṣa' source. Candragupta certainly did not belong to any family of royal sages, but Mudrā-rākṣasa is a Nāṭaka and Ag. takes it to be so. Moreover, the

39. NS. Gos. XVIII. 45-46, and also Abhi. bhā. (P. 430) anārṣam iti Purānādi-vyatirikta-Bṛhatkathā-dyupanibaddham mūladeva-caritādi/āhāryam iti Pūrvakavi-kāvyād-vā-āharaṇīyam samudradatta-ceṣṭitādi/

40. NS. Gos. Vol. II. P. 410. It is to be noted here that Ag., as it appears from the above, is reluctant to admit the Bṛhat-kathā as an 'ārṣa' source. This lost work, perhaps, was not the source of the plot of the Mudrā-rākṣasa, as we have it. (See HSL. Cal. Uni. P. 265, the remark of Dr. De) Dhanika, however says (DR. below I/68, P. 34) "Bṛhatkathā-mūlam mudrā-rākṣasam" and quotes two verses which are obviously interpolated from Kṣemendra's Bṛhatkathā-māñjarī (II. 216, 217) (HSL. P. 265, fn. 2). The story of the defeat of the Nandas through the stratagem of Caṇakya and the installation of Candragupta, however, find mentions in the Viṣṇupurāṇa (IV. 24) Pariśīt-taparvan (VIII. 253-54) and some other minor works. See PHAI. PP. 265-270.
story as depicted in the drama is not taken from any known 'ārṣa' source. Later allegorical dramas like Prabodha-candrodaya, Moharāja-parājaya and Saṅkalpa-sūryodaya are all styled as Nāṭaka. The drama Moharāja-parājaya of Yaśāḥ-pāla, describing the conversion of Kumārapāla, the Caulukya King of Gujrat to Jainism; may be said to have featured a contemporary king as hero. The drama, of course, written after the death of Kumārapāla, but within a few years events cannot shake off 'varttamānatva' and assume 'prakhyātatva'. Moreover, the drama may be supposed to have written 'Prabhu-paritoṣāya' as the author himself served under Cakravartin Abhayadeva who reigned after Kumārapāla.

From the above, it may be concluded that the school of thought to which Ag. appears to belong has not been followed by some dramatists of later ages even. On the other hand, Bhāsa, Kālidāsa and Viśākhadatta appear to have given little importance to the theory that Nāṭaka should depict the lives of those royal heroes of epics and Purāṇas who led exemplary lives and that its theme should always be taken from some 'ārṣa' source as maintained by Ag. But the theory itself is old

41. Traditional accounts of the fall of the Nandas and the rise of the Mauryas are preserved in the 'ārṣa' source like the Purāṇas and also in the Buddhist and Jaina works. (See Dr. H.C. Raychoudhury; PHAI. P.269). But strictly speaking, neither the fall of the Nandas nor the rise of the Mauryas is the subject-matter of the drama. The plot, as it is described in the drama, is entirely invented by Viśākhadatta. Moreover, according to Ag. Bṛhatkathā is an 'anārṣa' source, as pointed out before. How then Ag. himself calls it a Nāṭaka cannot be explained.

42. Keith, The Skt. Dr. P. 254.
enough and this can reasonably be surmised from the adherence of Asvaghosa to it; otherwise Sariputra-Prakarana could not have been so designated. Among ancient theorists also, there was a powerful school of thought the adherents of which had no objection to the featuring of historical and contemporary kings as heroes in Natakas, as an erudite like Ag., as shown above, cannot be supposed to have fought against non-existent views or those advocated by negligible persons. Ag. further refers to a view as championed by Ghantaka and others which maintains that a king, whether he is renowned or not, is fit to be featured as a hero in a drama including 43 Nataka. Sgn. also seems to maintain that it is the story that counts and that the story should satisfy all the technical exigencies of Nataka as discussed above; the hero may or may not be a 'rājarṣi-vansa-prabhava' one. Sgn. distinctly says that the Vartamana King can be featured in a Nataka, if he is an exceptionally endowed (mahā-bhūta) one. A drama properly depicting the life of an exceptionally endowed historical or contemporary king can reasonably be expected to achieve its ultimate object which is moral edification through aesthetic pleasure of all sorts of spectators, as stated by the NS.

Thus, it appears that Sgn. here simply supports an earlier view and it cannot be said that he is the earliest authority to formulate the theory, as supposed by Prof. 46 Biswanath Bhattacharyya. The NS. nowhere explicitly prohibits the historical and contemporary kings from being featured in Nataka. On the other hand, it seems to have lend its implicit support to the view when it enjoins that the characters of kings

43. NS. GOS. Vol. II, P. 436. ghantakādayastvāhūḥ nāyako nṛpatīrityetāvan-mātram nātakādāvupajīvitaḥ na tu prakhyātatvamāpi/
44. NLRK. 11.51-52 (quoted above).
45. NS. GOS. I. 114-115.
46. Sāgarikā, lst. yr., 2nd. issue, P. 170.
and their activities, arising out of their joys and sorrows may be depicted in a Naṭaka. Mg. also says the samethings(in the ninth line)as quoted above. So, neither Sgn. himself nor the authority or authorities he follows, can be said to have violated any principle of the NS. in this vital matter.

It should also be remembered in this connection that according to Indian dramaturgy the plot of a drama is only its body and it is the Rasa that infuses life in it. Without Rasa the composition fails to carry out any sense. The success or otherwise of a drama depends upon whether it can or fails to evoke the Rasa (sentiment) in the minds of the spectators. It matters little whether the hero is a 'rājarṣi-vāṃśa-prabhava' one or a historical or contemporary king. This seems to be the view of catholic theorists like Sgn. and others whom he follows. Ag's. objection is based on the assumption that historical and contemporary heroes are incompetent to arouse aesthetic pleasure, the ultimate end of every literary activity. Those who favour the incorporation of historical and contemporary events in the domain of drama, certainly believe in their competency in evoking the same aesthetic pleasure, if only properly handled.

Moreover, drama is an art for the people. In its early days the people could be satisfied with the stories of legendary kings but which grew hackneyed in course of time, and there was certainly a demand for new elements. The first step adopted by the playwrights to meet this popular demand was presumably innovations in the framework of traditional stories. In due course this process brought about a

47. NS,GOS,XVIII. 12. NLRK.11. 37-38.
48. NS,GOS,XIX. 1. NLRK.1.216. iti vṛttam hi nāṭyaśya śārīraṃ Parikīrtitam.
49. NS,GOS,VI below verse 31. na hi rasādrte Kaścidarthaḥ Pravarttate.
complete change in the details of those stories leaving only their bare outlines with the names of heroes and heroines to survive, as is evident in extant dramas. For the same reason some playwrights ventured to introduce historical and contemporary stories in the field. Puritans, naturally, opposed the idea and Ag. seems to have voiced their view in his Abhibhā. This tussle between the catholic and Puritan groups of critics is a natural feature in the history of every literature. Indian theorists have all along sought the sanction of the NS. for their views and as a result serious divergences have crept in so far as the interpretation of this ancient text is concerned. Sgn. seems to have gone a step further and declares that it is not the profession of the Śāstrakāra to punish the learned who deviate a bit from the chalked-out path. Śāstra is not to obstruct the progress of literature and this seems to be the view of a true critic in the modern sense of the term.

Sgn. seems to have had no objection against the portrayal of gods as heroes in Nāṭakas. He himself states that Nāṭaka is the imitation of past activities of gods etc., and quotes the following verse from the NS. in his support:

devatānāṁ manuṣyaṅāṁ rājāṁ lokahatmanāṁ /
pūrvavṛttānucaritaṁ nāṭakaṁ nāma tad-bhavet //

The GOS. edition of the NS. reads the first half of the verse as:

devatānāṁ rṣiṅāṁ ca rājāṁ cātksṛta-medhasām /

50. NLRK. 11. 1732-1733. Ādhyātyavṛttiśu Pāṇḍitesu
   na đaṇḍamākarsati śāstrakāraḥ/
A manuscript reads 'nāṭya' in place of 'nāṭaka'. There are several other variants also. The reading 'nāṭya' indicates that the verse refers to the contents of drama in general and not of Nāṭaka only. The word 'nāṭaka' may also be used in its generic sense to mean 'rūpaka'. In any case, the verse sanctions the representations of gods as main characters in dramas, including Nāṭaka.

From above discussions it follows that it is the quality of the hero that determines the suitability or otherwise of the plot, to be depicted in a Nāṭaka. The NS. in this matter simply states that the hero of a Nāṭaka should be renowned and exalted or magnanimous (Prakhyātodatta-nāyakam). The word 'Udātta' is very important here, as it has given rise to different opinions regarding the type of the hero of a Nāṭaka.

The word 'Udātta' has not been explained in the NLRK. Abhi-bhā. refers to the view of Śaṅkuka who is said to have maintained that the word 'Udātta' implies that from the epics renowned characters only are to be selected. But according to the teacher of Ag., the word 'Udātta' refers the third type of renownedness as two others have been included by 'Prakhyātavastu'. Ag. himself states, 'Udātta iti vīra-rasa-yogya uktaḥ', and adds that all the four types of Dhīra-lalita, Dhīra-prasānta, Dhīroddhata and Dhīrodātta have been included by it. Thus according to Ag. the hero

51. NLRK. 11,27-30. NS. GOS. XIX. 145, also mss. readings given there. The Tippani of Narahari on the Abhisāku (P.295) reads 'nāṭya'. Śaṅkara in his commentary on the same (P.162) reads the verse as it is found in the NLRK. The Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa (Khaṇḍa III, Adhyāya 17, V.No.7) also says, "caritam tridasānām vā nāṭakam tatra kṛttitinam/"

52. NS. GOS. XVIII. 10.

53. Cf. Supra f.n. 15.
of a Nāṭaka may belong to any one these four types.

Dr. S.N. Shastri maintains that Sgn. seems to adhere to the school of thought according to which the hero of a Nāṭaka should belong to the Dhīra-lalita class only and goes on to prove the untenability of the view by citing instances of Nāṭakas having Dhīroddhata heroes. He also declares that Sgn. has misunderstood the real implication of Bharata's instructions contained in the following lines.

\[
\text{devā dhīroddhate jñeyāḥ syur-dhīra-lalitā nṛpāḥ/}
\text{senāpatir-amātyaśca dhīrodātaḥ prakīrtitāḥ/}
\text{dhīra-prāśāntā vijñeyā brāhmaṇā vāṇijastathā //}
\]

Dr. S.N. Shastri appears to have overlooked the full relevant text of the NLRK, which distinctly says:

\[
\text{sarvathā yena sarvaṃ samāpyate sa khalu}
\text{nāyakaś-catuḥ-prakṛtikāḥ/dhīroddhataḥ/dhīra-lalitaḥ/}
\text{dhīroddattaḥ/dhīra-prāśāntaś-ca/}
\]


55. LPD. Vol. I, PP. 4-5.

56. NS. GOS. XXIV. 18-19, KSS. XXIV. 18-19.

57. NLRK. 11. 260-262.
It is apparent that like Ag. Sgn. also maintains that the hero of a Nāṭaka may belong to any one of the above four types. Following the above general instructions of the NS. the NLRK. then states that the goods are Dhīro-ddhatas (vehement), a king is Dhīra-lalita (gay), the general and minister are Dhīro-dāttas (gallants) and a learned (śrotriya) Brahmin and merchant are Dhīra-prasāntas (quiet). Besides these, mixed types of heroes have also been recognised in the NLRK. which further adds that these types are determined by their mode of conduct in love matters. The NS. reads the verses, quoted above, in connection with the description of 'upacāra'. Sgn. is fully conscious that the above division of heroes in the NS. is a general instruction, mainly related to the behaviour of the heroes in their love affairs. The NS. as it appears, here points out the most dominating quality of main characters in a drama and thus lays down some general principles regarding the delineation of characters.

That there was a school of thought of which Sgn. has wrongly been supposed to be a supporter by Dr. S.N. Shastri, as stated above; has been borne out by a reference in the Abhi. bha. Ag. informs us that some opine that the hero of a Nāṭaka should be of a Dhīra-lalita type and this follows from the instructions contained in 'devā dhīroddhata etc., of the NS. (quoted above), because a king only should be featured as hero in a Nāṭaka and according to the NS. he belongs to the Dhīra-lalita type. Ag. opposes the view and points out that Janaka, Rāma etc., depicted as heroes in Nāṭakas do not belong to Dhīra-lalita group. Ag. most ingeniously interpretes the verses and arrives at the conclusion that the hero of a

58. NLRK. 11, 262-264. The printed text reads :- pādacāreṣu bodhavyāḥ tatra ta iti. Dr. Reghavan rightly suggests that 'Pādacāreṣu' is a corruption for 'upacāreṣu'. NLRK. Eng. Tra. P. 72.

59. NS. GOS. Vol. II. P. 414.
Națaka may belong to any one of those four types. The ND. follows this interpretation of Ag. and goes a step further to declare that kings may belong to any one of the four types, \( 'rājānastu caturvidhāh' \).

Thus, there has been a controversy, even among earlier authorities, regarding the interpretation of the description of four types of heroes in the NS. and also regarding the admissibility of those types in Națakas. Sgn. clearly states that all the four types are suitable to Națakas. Ag., followed by the authors of the ND., admits the same in a clever way. It has been shown that there were other views also.

The DR. seems to have bypassed the controversy. It maintains that the hero of a Națaka should always be a Dhīrodātta one. In this respect, later works like the RS. and SD. follow the DR. If Dhanika's interpretation of the term 'udātta' is accepted, the view does not appear to be so untenable as taken to be so by Dr. S.N. Shastri. According to Dhanika:

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61. ND.I. 7 Cf. also the commentary on P.26. eva varṇaniya iti sva-yoga-vyavasthāpakaṇṭa evaivaśaḥ nānyaya-vyavaśchedena.

62. DR.III.22; SD.VI. 9; RS.III.130.

63. LPSD. P. 4.
According to this interpretation, undoubtedly a new approach to the problem, the hero of a Nātaka should be described as surpassing all others around him in merits. The character of the hero in any serious drama should be the most impressive one so that the attention of the audience may easily be focused on his acting. Sanskrit drama closely observes this Principle. The NS. itself and authorities like Sgn. and Ag. give stress on this point in their own way, as has already been shown. The DR. as interpreted by Dhanika also tries to achieve this end in an ingenious way. With above interpretation of the term 'udātta' Dhanika finds no difficulty in declaring Jīmūta-vāhana as a Dhirodātta hero. The view, however, has been severely criticised in the ND.

The division of the heroes in dramas into Divya, Adivya and Divyā-diivya groups is decidedly of later origin under the influence of Vaiṣṇavism probably and of the 'avatāravāda', the doctrine of divine incarnation. The NS., the NRK, the Abhi. bha. do not refer to this view.

64. DR. Avaloka. P. 37.
65. DR. Avaloka. P. 38. ato jīmūtavāhanāder-dhīrodātattvam-iti.
66. ND. P. 26. Ye tu nāṭakasya netāraṁ dhīrodāttam eva Pratijñānte, nate munisamayādhyavagāhīnaḥ, nāṭakeṣu dhīra-lalitādīnām-āpi nāyakanām darśanāt kavisamayābūhyāśca. This criticism is solely based on the traditional interpretation of the term Dhīrodātta and the writers seem to have turned a deaf ear to the new interpretation of the term given by Dhanika.