CHAPTER II

DRAM A OF THE VEDIC AND POST VEDIC TIMES
It has been generally accepted that the times when the Vedas were composed were the times when the Indo-Aryans had settled down in the Punjab and their expansion eastward was in progress. Basing his argument on K.N. Panikkar's book 'A Survey of Indian History' B.N. Luniya has observed: "The Aryans gradually mixed up with the non-Aryans and then expanded eastwards. When the Aryans had settled in the Punjab they had fought under their chiefs against the Dasyus, the non-Aryans. When the Aryan had developed territorial authority, the Aryan chiefs became kings of regions. When the Aryan settlement expanded to the Indo-Gangetic plain in the east, a new monarchy of Bharatas came into power. As the kingdom of the Bharatas contained a much larger percentage of the non-Aryans or the indigenous people, the new monarchy was organised on a different basis. It had little common with the chieftaincies of the Aryan settlements or the Punjab. A struggle for sovereign powers between the two political systems. The Aryan and the non-Aryan, was therefore inevitable. Thus the great battle of the 'ten kings' was fought. It is described in the Rig Veda. It is the first recorded event of importance in the Indian history. The Bharata king, sardar of the Indo-Gangetic plain, faced in battle the ten allied kings of the earlier Aryan settlements. This indicates that the "battle of the ten kings" was not a battle of the Aryan people. Non-Aryans under their own chiefs were ranged on both sides."

B.N. Luniya: 'Evo ut on o n n Cu ture .

Draft of the Vedas and Post Vedic Times.

PANJAB—THE EARLIEST ABODE OF THE ARYANS.
Such evidence of the co-existence of both the racial groups is however not conclusive at all. Did these Aryan settlers who entered Punjab from Afghanistan side uproot the indigenous population altogether along with the culture they possessed, was it a case of total dislodging and supplanting of the latter with the former or as is more probable the phenomenon was a process of slow diffusion, the Aryan blood mingling with the native and by way of an Aryan population getting mixed up with the new settlers, acquiring in the process an inferior social and economic status, has remained a point of controversy so far.

Some scholars have held that the Aryan invasion resulted ultimately in the Punjab acquiring an entirely 1 Aryan population. Even if it could be conceded that the invading Aryan hordes were ruthless and completely intolerant of the vanquished original inhabitants, which is only an extreme view and with which it is difficult to agree, the displacing process could only be a long drawn out one, covering a few centuries at least and the resulting protracted contact between the two peoples, though uneasy and bitter as should be expected, could not but result in substantial give and take in all cultural and social matters. Greater agreement however exists in favour of the viewpoint regarding the slow absorption and assimilation of a good remnant of the pre-Aryan population of the Punjab in the texture of the new formed society and it is largely conceded that quite a number of institutions that are known to have flourished in the Vedic and even

1. "The whole province, therefore was soon rid of the aborigines and was taken possession of entirely by the Indo-Aryans."

C.V. Sanyal: Epic India (1907) P.4.
post-Vedic periods took their origin as a direct result of this mutual exchange.

A part of the Rig Vedic pantheon is said to consist of the gods of the Harappa culture, Shiva, Shakti and Phallic worship is known to have belonged to these earlier times. Similarly the roots of some of the dramatic practices in the Vedic Aryan society have been traced in the pre-Aryan Indus Valley Civilization.

Cities were not known to the first Indo-Aryans who were nomadic and pastoral people. They had not yet attained that level of social organisation and urbanity that belonged to the natives they reduced to slavery and serfdom.

But despite the meticulously cultivated sense of racial superiority and vanity with which the earliest Indo-Aryans were imbued as conquerors and masters of the land they occupied, they had to acknowledge the cultural superiority of the vanquished by a tacit adoption by them of their ways, at the same time denying this very culture to its original custodians. Although ironical in the extreme, it was however the argument of the conqueror and a compulsion of history.

Artistic Drama of the Vedic Times.

Now it is known that there obtained some form of dramatic activity in the remote past of Indian Bronze Age. It could not however boast of a regular form and the 1.Obviously the pastoral Aryans who slowly conquered the local population assimilated their culture and civilizati 2. Luniya, Evolution of Indian Culture p. 71.

"The Aryan barbarians, who may have been the Indus Civilization's destroyers and were certainly its successors, eventually succumbed, as we know, to the race and culture of the older occupants of the sub-continent, despite of their efforts, to keep their intrusive race and culture unadulterated."
Vedic period in the Punjab do not boast of any thing superior either. It was an amorphous, shapeless and irregular thing and did not go beyond community dancing and choral singing accompanied by expressive guttur- culation and shouting. Some part of it was ritual.

And in case the Indus Valley had some sort of a passion play, Vedic times had none of this type like all folk arts it was spontaneous and unconscious and amounted largely to the rhythmic display of group hilarity. Some element of mimicry that was present there allied it to the representational art that is drama.

But it would be unrealistic to expect a well formed regular drama from the pastoral early Vedic society of the Punjab and even if something far less developed is in evidence here the phenomenon can be explained only as a result of cultural intercourse that took place between the Aryans and the early natives who it seems were decidedly on a higher level of cultural achievement than the former in the early days of Aryan penetration into the Punjab.

Very soon the neo-Aryan society fell into two main divisions, the Aryan and the non-Aryan, the conqueror and the conquered. It was from the earlier natives who came to be called Dasyus, that the low caste class of public entertainers was drawn. The ritual was the province of the Brahmin priesthood that was wholly Aryan.

YAJNA TRADITION

There has been little speculation about Yatras in the Vedic times. Dwarath Ogma only agrees with Keith when he says that Sanskrit drama developed not out of the sacrificial dialogues as is contended by some but under th
influence of Yatra like vedic popular play. The following observation of Dr. Keith in his Sanskrit Drama is very significant. "The dramas of ritual, therefore, are in a sense somewhat out of the main line of development of the drama and the popular has survived through ages in rough way in the Yatras, well known in Bengal, while the refined and sacreodalised Vedic drama passed away without a direct descendent."

Much significance has been attached to the fact that 'Yatras' originally were Shakti Yatras in Bengal while Krishna Yatra was a later innovation introduced by Chaitanya. Now Shakti-worship seems to have been practised in the Indus Valley and it is safe to assume that if at all there was some such thing as Yatra procession in those pre-historic days it was related to Shakti rather than to any other worship. The popular institution did not die out altogether and managed to prolong itself through Vedic times down to quite recent past in many parts of northern India, including Panjab.

'SANG' OF THE PANJAB.

Yatra in the Panjab is known as 'SANG' and although people in these days move in Sargas (Caravans) to the hill temples of Kangra Valley in which most of the cities, sacred to mother goddesses are located, alongwith singing and dancing parties, the practice is steadily being discontinued as a result of the improved and more secure communications that came about after India became independe.

Staging in these 'Sangas' of dramas has however, not come into evidence and may be, Panjab did not develop anything like the Tamas quoted by Sarasath Gjah in his Hindi work 'Hindi Natak'.

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DRAMA IN THE PANJAB
like the Bengal Shakti or Krishna Yatra or otherwise gave it up in very early times.

According to one belief Vedic times knew a class of people known as Shailooka who had acting for their profession. Later Vedic literature refers to a number of crafts and professions showing greater specialisation in the economic life and along with fishermen, jewel-makers, washermen, rope-makers, barbers, bow-maker, wood-gatherer, boat-men etc., 'actors' are also mentioned. Some professions according to Altekar were followed by both the Aryan and non-Aryan. These event 1 came to be regarded as low. Acting seems to have been one such profession and actors thus came to be regarded as of low caste.

According to Dr. Ojha, Shailooks are referred to in the text of Shukalya Yajur Veda. Who were these people? Did they form a caste belonging to the lower order of composite non-Aryan society in the Punjab in the early days of Aryan settlement in the tract? Although 'Shailook' has been regarded as 'actor' he might have been merely a person required to make arrangement for holding a Yajya (sacrifice) along with some others. In the text referred to above he is more a musical accompanist than an actor.

Besides Shailooks entertainers are separately mentioned (specifically meant for providing entertainment

2. "Daushitaki Brahmana reckons dance, song and music as arts but Parasurama Trihya Sutra disapproved these for the use of the men of the three higher classes." Keith: The Sanskrit Drama p. 229.
3. Dr. Ojha in his 'Hindi Nataka'
while another class of Sutras is stated to be persons of
the profession of systematic dancing. The existence of
Rushilava is also indicated. The Shilocks Sutras and
Rushilavas seem to have had well defined professions for
themselves, very much similar in nature but nothing there
is that might go to show that these people were in any way
better than ordinary popular entertainers and had any
claims to the specific dramatic art as such.

SACRIFICIAL CEREMONIES.

But sacrificial ceremonies which formed the
popular mode of Vedic worship were not always sordid
affairs, as one would believe, because of their association
with such a serious thing as religion. Religious ritual
in remote past was not all solemnity but could occasionally
be good fun too. In the Vedic and post-Vedic pantheon, gods
of all description, awful in aspect or even carrying human
failities in their august persons were included. Some of the
most important were personifications of carnal desires and
liked a bit of fun and frivolity around them. Thus ritual
and religious ceremonies would have choral singing, group
dancing and also a bit of drama, if not invariably, at
least occasionally. That all this did contribute towards the
popularity of the sacrificial ritual and augmented its
effectiveness is not to be doubted but whether it ever
attained to even the lowest level of dramatic art, is a
most point.

Real evidence in support of the stipulation that
drama as such was known to the early Aryans is not forth-
coming. I am inclined to agree with Das Gupta and Day who

1. "In the Harivamsa we find elements which are of importance
as indicating the material from which drama might develop."-Kejile: The Sanskrit Drama, p. 24.
Drama in the Panjab

Doubt the existence of drama proper in the Vedic period.

"It seems therefore" they opine "that even if the elements of drama were present in the Vedic times, there is no proofs that drama, in however rudimentary form, was actually known. The actor is not mentioned, nor any dramatic or terminology occurs. There may have been some connection between the dramatic religious ceremonies and the drama in embryo. According to Dr. Mahendra there is a list of all classes and professions but the word 'Nata' does not occur.

Dance, an important constituent of the early drama was, however, there Drama is a composite art. Music and dancing are enumerated among the pastimes of the Panjab Aryans of the Vedic Age. War dancing, other forms of group dancing, music accompanied by the lute, flute and drum are mentioned in the Vedic texts. Women are known to have been experts in dancing and singing. They displayed their skill in dancing and music to the accompaniment of lutes and symbols." In Rig Veda, the Dawn is compared to a dancing damsel. Such a girl does not seem to be rare in these days and the sages who composed the Vedic hymns were not unaware of the beauty and charm of a nimble footed young female dancer. But dance and music taken singly do not make drama, which it seems was not there.


3. Luniya Evolution of Indian Culture P. 58. "Women in particular loved to display their skill in dance and singing to the accompaniment of lutes and symbols." Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta: An Advanced History of India (1956) P. 32.
THE VEDIC DIALOGUES.

If it be so, what may be made of the 'dialogues' such as Paruvas: Urvashi, Yama Yami, Indra Indrani, Brihkapī and Sarva Panis dialogues that occur here and there in the Vedas. "In the Rig Veda," for instance, writes Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, "we find a very remarkable service of dialogue hymn in which two or more character address each other in verses which are looked upon in orthodox Vedic tradition as having been composed by the characters or personages themselves, who are ordinarily superhuman or divine. Thus the famous Paruvas and Urvashi hymn (Rig Veda X95) embodies one of the most romantic stories in literature, that of mortal hero's love for a heavenly nymph and the story unfolds in the course of a conversation between the hero and the heroicine which takes place at a critical point in the story itself when the hero meets his long lost love, only to lose her again, perhaps for ever. But this tragic ending was later modified by a promise on the part of the divine heroine to meet her human lover again and an actual fulfilment of that promise. Here we have capital material for a drama which is certainly not religious but fundamentally romantic. The Vedic Aryans, therefore, had a kind of crude drama which utilized 2 traditional story material. "The existence of the secular

The silence of Indian tradition is all the more remarkable because there do exist in the Rig Veda itself a number of hymns which are obviously dialogues and which are expressly recognized as such by early Indian Tradition Keith: The Sanskrit Drama (1934) P.13.

2. Suniti Kumar Chatterji: Indian Drama (Publication Division) - Introduction P.6.
popular story is implied and the dialogues are indeed there pointing out to the possible existence of drama, may be very crude. And yet it seems difficult to go the whole hog with Chatterjee. The Indian scholar is prove to be credulous and eager to trace the origin of many an art and science in the Vedas. It is given out that these dialogues, some very small, are nothing but one act plays of old and as such were the precursors of the Hindi small plays of today.*

Dr. Mahendar states that the occurrence of fifteen such dialogue pieces is undisputable and some more are indicated in Rig alone. What was the precise use to which these Védic 'Sambadas' were being put? We cannot take it for granted that there subsisted a practice of reciting these out at times of certain appropriate religious ceremonies, for there is no evidence in support. Further also it would be naive to believe that anything appearing in the dialogic form is always meant to be acted or was ever acted out and in view of the very apparent absence of any references to the dramatic practices of any sort by way of tradition or

1. "Prof Von Schroeder has a theory that the dialogue hymns and certain other monologues, for instance X.119 are relics of Védic mysticis & an inheritance in germ from Indo-European times." Keith: The Sanskrit Drama P.16.

2. "There is therefore a priori no fatal objection to assuming that the period of the Rig Geda knew dramatic spectacles, religious in character in which the priests assumed the roles of gods and sages in order to initiate on earth the events of the heavens." Keith: The Sanskrit Drama (1954) P. 16.

3. "But we must not exaggerate the amount of representation, it falls very far short of an approach to drama." Keith: The Sanskrit Drama P.24.


5. "He (Max Muller) conjectured that the 'dialogues' was repeated as sacrifices in honour of the Maruts or that possibly it was acted by two parties, one representing Indra, the other, the Maruts and their followers." A.B.Keith:The Sanskrit Drama (1954) P.15.
or written word in the past, we are obliged to take these as essays in dialogic discussions or narrations and nothing more. These dialogues are of three types, depending upon the number of characters that indulge in talking. There are dialogues of two as well as three characters while in some only one character addresses an audience which is not a dialogue proper.

That these dialogic writings were being used in the ritual of the age, is by and large a conjectural notion. But we know that in the Vedic period there was no public cult of worship. There were no temples and religious ceremonies were not congregational either while drama means at least a public show. Thus ritual in the ancient times could hardly assume the nature of a dramatic performance of any significant proportion. Soma Sacrifices that takes us to the consideration of the Soma sacrifices in some of which little drama has been noticed to have happened. These sacrifices however belong to much later epic times of India and we will take up a discussion about these at the appropriate place. It should suffice here to say that technique of worship in these post-Vedic days became subtler and more intricate with the result that the worshippe or sacrificer would often in a sufficit of devotion forget himself and simulate the deity and unwittingly act his or her part. In support of this, Dr. Mahender quotes 'Soma Sacrifices' for an example in which the Soma seller is actually

1. Dr. Ram Charan Mahender, Hindi Ekanki, P.8.5. "There are, however, nothing but elements here, and we have reasonable certainty that no drama was known. In the Yauvveda we have along lists of persons of every kind covering every possible sort of occupation, and the term Nata, which is normally the designation of the actor in the later literature is unknown." Edith: The Sanskrit Drama, 25.

beaten at the end. Thus Soma-seller is an actor in the ritual who receives the thrashing. Besides this specific instance, similar simulation of characters could happen in the observance of ritual which could under favourable circumstance lead to the sprouting forth of drama but this actually did not come about in the ancient Punjab.

LATER VEDIC RITUAL

We have tried to realize the significance of Vedic dialogues and speculated about their being dramatic pieces. We have also gone into the possibility of priests assuming the roles of the gods whom they wanted to propitiate and in this way unknowingly turning into actors in a limited sense. Ritual of the Soma Sacrifice is an instance in which real drama seems to have been employed and acting did take place on a somewhat primitive level.

KATYANA'S SHRUT SUTRA

More than all others, Soma Sacrifices are important in this particular context. We therefore revert to these because in them the suggestion of an actual dramatic performance does occur. In Katyana's Shrout Sutra a soma seller is chastised for selling King Soma at exorbitant rates on the occasion of Soma drinking festival.

Dr. Dashrath Ojha has in his 'Hindi Natak' disclosed that it is an example of a small play that was actually performed by the Aryans as part of a Shrout ceremony of the Vedic ritual. The Aryan ritual for the most part consisted of sacrifices (Yagyas or Yajnas), Soma Sacrifices being among the most important.

2. Katyana: Shrout Sutra 7.6.25.
SOMA SACRIFICES

Seven Soma Sacrifices or seven Yajnas are prescribed, one called Vajapeya (Strength draught) may be of popular origin and could be performed by rich persons belonging to all the three upper classes. A Chariot race would also be held on the occasion. In Raja Suya (the royal consecration) sacrifice, the King on the anointing day, after 13 month long preliminaries were completed, is made to sit on an Udumbara wood seat covered with a tiger skin. He is anointed or by sprinkled with a fluid, compounded of butter, honey, different kinds of holy waters and other ingredients poured over him from a cup of Udumbara wood. Soma libations and offerings follow next after which he enacts a mimic raid in his chariot on the cattle of his kind-folk at whom he discharged his arrows. He then sits on a throne covered with a tiger skin and plays a mock game of dice with a cow as the stake in which it is arranged that he wins. Then comes the concluding 1 bath.

Another Soma Sacrifice starts with the formal selection of the priests who should be quite large in number. Only the kings and the wealthy would perform the Yajna. After the priests have been selected the sacrificer and his wife were consecrated. There is enacted next the ritual force of buying the Soma in mock exchange for a cow of which the seller is deprived immediately. The Soma is then borne on a cart to the sacrificial place where it is

2. "There is an interesting instance of this (element of dramatic representation) in the ritual of the Soma purchase for the Soma Sacrifice." (Keeth: The Sanskrit Drama P. 23.)
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Indian Vaivas and Greeks.

Comparing the early Indians to the people of ancient Greece, John Gasenier says that in their early history, the noble Greeks who later gave us the philosophy of Plato and the sculpture of Phidias, did not differ greatly from the Indians on the Plains or the Ainos of the Island of Sangaliou who have a similar rite (public ox-killing and eating year by year) revolving around a sacred bear.

Similarly the worship of potency in some form or the other was prevalent in many other countries also and was not an isolated Indian phenomenon alone. Another observation by Gasenier is significant. He writes: "Life, we may add, was also ascertained by the worship of potency in an animal (some times a plant like the soma of the Hindus) in which the ancestral spirit and the tribe's unity were often incarnated. It became customary for the community to sacrifice a bull, horse, goat or other creature and to incorporate its mana or magical power by partaking of its flesh and blood. Then, since it was a serious business to kill sacred animal, its death was symbolically "undone" in various ways."

Gasenier believes that theatre gained a lot from such ritual. After having given an idea of the ancient day ritual prevalent in various lands, he goes on to say that "in this bewildering complexity of ritual, we see the content of the theatre broadening tremendously."

and we also see its structure taking shape.

**CONDITIONS IN THE PUNJAB.**

This otherwise very coherent statement by Gaster does not, however, seem to apply very much to the conditions in the Punjab. Keith has been some 2 elements of drama into the Aryan ritual but observes that it has no direct descendant; since according to him "it was somewhat out of the mainline of development of the drama " and " the refined and sacramentalised Vedic drama passed away without a direct descendant."

In fact there was not much or mentionable drama in the Vedic ritual. Shall we take such incidents as the mock raids or that of chastising the sons seller as instances of drama in the post-Vedic times? Since *śrāvas* belong to post-Vedic period, in fact centuries later than the times of the Vedas, these drama like occurrences belong to the later Vedic times alone. It is by no means sure whether such like incidents were actually performed in the manner described. Lastly the mock play of the type is no drama, for drama implies a conscious imitation of and action which consciousness was not present in the ritual to which the references pertain.

Given if given credence that some sort of imitative action is implied, although not very conscious, as it might be, still there seems to have existed no drama as a separate independent art and which a ritual could never be as a whole. It does not fail to point out that there was no drama as such.

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1. T.B. PETERMAN: "History of Drama."
2. "Prof. Wulbrandt, on the other hand, is satisfied that we have actual ritual drama before us and Prof. Konow insists that these are ritual dramas." Keith: *The Sanskrit Drama*. p. 25.
3. Keith quoted by Dasrath Cjha in his "Hindi Natak".
4. See Chapter III.
in the Punjab of as late as the Sutra times or to be
less vague, in the centuries preceding the Indo-Greek
contact i.e. at least up to the 4th century B.C. Further
more, these stray group activities of strictly private
nature as all ritual of old was, do not partake of the
character of drama of whose origin Bharata speaks in his
Natyashastra and it is clear that drama of the Vedic
ritual was so fragmentary and unimportant as an art that
no Indian literary critic ever took note of it in the
past. It was immaterial therefore, for the origin and
development of drama in the Punjab, or in the rest of India.

NATYAKA- THE FIFTH VEDA.

We have discussed at some length in a later
Chapter I the socially felt need for an instrument of
universal entertainment and moral instruction as an
alternative to Vedic ritual which was meant only for the
upper three classes of the twice born and from which the
lowest Shudras were strictly excluded. From its very nature
and the function it was sought to fulfil drama on its very
inception, could not have evolved out of ritual under the
then prevailing social conditions of Indian society. Accord-
ing to Bharata, Shudras were without a Veda for their
difficulties and thus the 5th Veda, the Nātya Veda was
composed by Bharmanda to this Veda all classes were admitted
freely. In fact the chief distinction between the ex-
sclusively Aryan four Vedas and this later Nātya Veda was
that Nātya Veda was of secular nature and for all
classes equally and without distinction. Both Aryan and
non- Aryan were its votaries. This state of affairs could
only come about after the period of clash between the
two was over and thus drama of Bharata's conception came to
the Punjab quite late after the Vedic age. Even post-Vedic
age ritual has not much to do with the origin or real
drama in this part of the country.

That Bharta calls the art of drama the Fifth
Veda with its four constituents drawn from the four Vedas,
leads us to another conclusion - that drama came after the
compilation of four Vedas was over. This, it is said, was
done in the Epic times and thus the birth of drama came
about in the post-Epic or during the latter part of the
Epic period at the earliest and could not at any rate
belong to the Vedic times.

One patent fact should always be remembered that
Bharta in the Drama as described by him in Natya Shastra
refers partly to the preliminary forms of drama and in a
major way to the much later classical drama about which
we will have to talk a good deal in the following chapter.
Drama of the ritual does not seem to have provided even
the frame work of the later drama in our case and was not
at all related to it even indirectly. The Indian drama was
not Vedic, in which case it would have been almost entirely
a Punjab product, noreven post-Vedic, nor born of ritual
of the Epic times but a far more modern phenomenon than
what some of our leading indologists have sought to establis

1. "Brahma agreed. He took material from the existing Vedas
and created the Natya Veda where in, the text ( )was
taken from the Rig Veda, the music from the Soma, the
action from the Yajur and Rasa,(or artistic flavour) from
the Atharvan.,"
G.J. Deshpande; on Sanskrit Drama in Indian Drama,
(Tul. Div) 5,14.