CHAPTER III

GENRES OF DRAMA IN THE PANJAB
in this universe, title syth of an expiation of the origin of the art of drama is not reliable historically and is

There is a very intriguing statement in Bharata's Natya Shastra about the origin of drama. This highly impressive treatise on Sanskrit or Indian dramaturgy makes a legend of this business and in its introductory chapters narrates certain incidents which are purported to have taken place at the staging of the first drama in this universe. This myth of an expiation of the origin of the art of drama is not reliable historically and is hard even to interpret. Yet shorn of its legendary trapping it might suggest something of real significance and an attempt at interpretation is therefore worth while.

According to Bharata's Natya Shastra, Brahma (the god of creation) created the 5th Veda—The Natya Veda, as desired by Lord Indra who headed the Vedic pantheon. After necessary preparation, a play called "Asura Prajya" (The Defeat of the Demons) was staged. This play as is apparent from its name, had the triumph of Suras (Gods) over Asuras (non-gods or demons) for its theme.

Now, in case Suras stood for the Aryan people (as was generally the case) in Vedic Mantras and Asuras for the vanquished original inhabitants (the Vedic Daityas) the 1st Public performance of a play with such an offensive theme, should put the freshly defeated Asuras in furious rage and the Natya Shastra narration actually relates a similar reaction on the part of Asuras whose violent resentment the insulting performance provoked, with the result that they spoiled the show and brought it to a stan

1. In addition to the proverbial four Vedas. - G.S.
still by employing 'black magic' they seemed to be able to conjure up easily enough.

The scene of these momentous happenings is laid out in 'heaven' and heaven, (if we go by the symbolism employed and consistent with the interpretation given by us above) should mean the most cherished part of ancient Aryans in India, the land of seven rivers or Sapta-Sindhu as it came to be called soon enough and which was the land of the earliest Indo-Aryan settlements in this country.

The Asuras were provoked into a sullen mood of retaliation in the only form open to them, which was to attack the performance.

This much of legend may vaguely suggest that Indo-Aryans after establishing their colony in the Panjab started celebrating their victory over the natives by staging it in the open, and the defeated people, perhaps as a measure of further demoralizing them. When this was met with mounting protest and resistance, the players repaired into the security of walled and roofed and well protected play-house which was decidedly a later development.

It is not possible to believe that regular dramatic performances came to be given in the early days of Indo-Aryan settlement in the Panjab, for it would not be historically true. Thus the origin of drama in the Panjab, as also that of the closed theatre is a far later development. The descriptions given, however, provide

2. The major part of this area came to be known as Sapta Sindhu - the Land of seven Rivers. Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta: An Advanced History of India (1936) P28.
more reliable information about the nature and the subject matter of the earliest plays and the transition from an open air to a closed stage and the reason for it. Unreliable about the times and places, the Natya Shastra gives you reliable stages in the development of drama in this part of the country.

Another thing that is almost sure is that the references made here to dramatic performances do not in fact pertain to the period of regular and developed drama in India or for that matter the drama called 'Asura Prajya' did not possess the developed technique described later in the treatise itself. For all intents and purposes, it was a homely affair, simple in design and execution, played on the ground, among popular crowds, on the folk level. Nothing better could be expected in the beginning of the dramatic art.

The Times of Asura Prajya.

The two Epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata and the Pauranic lore are full of narrations which recount violent interventions on the part of Rakshashas and Asuras in the Yajnas (sacrifices) conducted by the Aryans in the order to pollutes them and the Asura Prajya seems to be of a piece with them and may belong to the stage of Epics and Itihas Pauran literature.

Historically vague as is the Natya Shastra story of the staging of the 1st Drama, it yet suggests the nature of the first phase of dramatic activity in this country, indicating its central content, which is about the triumph of the Indo Aryans over the indigenous Punjab population. This seems to have provoked vehement protest on the part of the local defeated ignemoble defeat
in the form of open air dramatic performance, which was real and relentless. This also shows that the intrinsic hostility obtaining between the Aryan and non-Aryan

Punjab society continued to be a real factor over a long period of time and the element of conflict in the social situation was very much there. Crude and even vulgar victory-plays were played in the Punjab amid Aryan popular applause and the fear of non-Aryan disturbances.

It was to make these dramatic performances safe from non-Aryan turbulence that a cloistered stage became necessary. This, however, was not the only reason. The crude mass theatre through an evolutionary process had to

1. References to Aryan-non-Aryan conflicts in the Rig Veda are many. The following account is illustrative of the period of clash between the two peoples:
   "More important than the internal conflicts of the Aryans were the struggles with the non-Aryans, which gradually led to a considerable extension of the Aryan dominion towards the east. To divodasa belongs the credit of fighting against a Dasa chiefstain named Shashikins. His policy was continued by Sugas who crushed a hostile combination of indigenous tribes on the banks of the Jamuna."


2. "75-76 (and afterwards) when the play was ready and Indra's festival continued in full force, the remaining Vighanas began to create terror for the actors.
   76-77: Having noticed these attempts caused by the insults of the Daityas (demons), I along with many sons approached Brahman (and said).
   "O the holy one and the best of gods, the Vighnas (the evil spirits) are determined to destroy this dramatic performance; so enlighten me about the means of its protection."
   77-78. "O the high-souled one" said Brahman then to Vishvakarmaya, "build carefully a play house of the best type."

   The Natya Shastra vol. I Chapter I (Translation by Manomenhan Ghosh) PP.11,12.
yield place to the refined and the class theatre. It was in the days of empires and big cities that a closed stage became possible and even desirable and marked the next stage of the development of drama in this country.

**DRAMA AT AN ALTERNATIVE TO RIGVDA.**

Bharat’s Natya Shastra has made another quite intriguing statement about the impelling social necessity for a theatre that developed in India and which caused Brahma to compose the 5th Veda of Natya. He says that the lower castes, the Dasys of the Rig Veda, were not allowed participation in religious ritual (the Sacrifice) and any other form of refined cultural entertainment open to them also was considered necessary. Since these Shudras could not be any other than the vanquished non-Aryan original natives of the land who, according to our lights, had known some little drama, it may be presumed that it was from these very classes that the first dramatic performers were drawn in the main. That this new Veda was created mainly for the sake of these very people, will argue in support of the contention that some dramatic practices were already continuing in them as a legacy of the Harappa culture when they were ever powerful by the Indo-Aryans and it was precisely from them that the new masters of the Punjab took up the art, perhaps as it seems, very slowly. Natya Shastra makes a categorical statement

1. “As the Vedas are not to be listened to by these born as Sudras, be pleased to create another Veda which will belong to all the colour groups (Varnas).” Bharat’s Natya Shastra Vol. 1 Chapter 1 (Translation Manomehan Ghosh) P.2.
that Bhartas, the acting caste, were Shudras.

SHUDRA ACTORS.

If Bharat was divine, how should his progeny be of Shudra caste? The band of Bharatas, as described in the Natya Shastra, consists of Mukotakula, Malayakar, Silpi, Karu, Kushilava, Sanika, etc., who according to the Dharam Shastras are sudras. Guamaya in his Artha Shastra describes singing and dancing as the duties of Shudras. Manu finds no offence if any one converses with an actor's wife (VIII-362) and lastly Rahuch, the royal patron of these actors was a veteran foe of Indra, the head of the Aryan pantheon (Rig Veda X. 99.7) Very clearly, acting and connected arts were cultivated by the low i.e. Shudras and these were all non-Aryan original natives of the country. We are thus inexorably led to the conclusion that the Indo-Aryans first picked up their bit of drama from the non-Aryans of the Punjab. This fact would also explain why Drama was a common pursuit for both Aryans and Shudras from the very beginning. That such a prolongation of tradition did come about has been admitted by almost all historians of Indian Culture including Luniya, Panikkar, Majumdar and many others.

It is also reasonable to believe that in atmosphere of political conflict, the Aryans tried to stage their victories in order to break the moral of their adversaries that this should have been resisted by earlier inhabitants was natural and very much to be expected, especially when

1. Since then the descendants of Bharat have been condemned to live on earth as Shudras. With the royal patronage of king Mahuwa, these Shudra progeny of Bharata have been able to spread the art of drama in the world. Bharat's Natya Shastra (Translation Manomohan Ghosh) Pp, 2. C.I. Deshpande: Indian Drama - (Publication Division) Pp, 15-16.
they tried to turn mining against the erstwhile custodians of the art and as it seems drew their actors from among the ranks of the non-Aryan Shudras themselves for this purpose. From foregoing, we may also conclude that secular drama had a different origin than religious drama of the Vedie ritual and while the former was based in the folk tradition going back into the pre-Aryan times of the Punjab, the latter grew independently and had its foundations in the Indo-Aryan ritual as it developed in the post-Vedic period of the Indian History.

LINES OF DUEL DEVELOPMENT.

After this initial spurt, the theatrical practices in the Punjab as in the rest of India seem to have assumed a dual development. A progressive achievement of natural adjustment and reconciliation between these two sections of the Punjab population brought about a radical shift in the themes of the plays. It seems clear that Auras or Rakshishas (hateful

1. This is how it is narrated in Natya Shastra

"100. Hearing these words of the gods, Brahman called the evil spirits and said " why are you out for spoiling the dramatic performance? 100-104. Questioned thus by Brahman, Virupaksha together with the Daityas and the Vignmas said these conciliatory words: ' The knowledge of the dramatic art (Natya Veda) which you have introduced for the first time at the desire of the Gods, has put us in an unfavourable light and this is done by you for the sake of the Gods, this ought not to have been done by you who is the first progenitor (Lit. Grand Father) of the world from whom came out alike gods as were as Daityas."

104-105. These words being uttered by Virupaksha; Brahman said, "Enough of your anger, O Daityas, Give up your grievance (Lit. Sorrow). I have prepared this Natya Veda which will determine the good luck or ill luck of you as well as gods as well as of the Gods and which will take into account act and ideas of you as well as gods.

106. In it (Natya) there is no exclusive representation of you or the gods; for the drama is a representation of the state (Bhavanukirtana) of the three worlds." Bharat's Natya Shastra part I Chapter I (Trans. Manomohan Ghosh) P.17.
finally resigned to their subordinate status and lost their resistance to the over bearing. Aryans who on the other hand, resorted to the playing of far more in no-curious drama which antagonised and offended none, once the Aryan superiority was irrevocably established.

The 2nd line of development was the transition from the open air to the close set and protected stage which was located in the cities. Incidentally this resulted in the progress of drama itself into two directions. From a popular folk play it passed into an affair of serious art and fine structure which was more or less the interest of the rich and ruling classes confined principally to the capital cities of the country. Secondly, the stage and the craft took long leaps of advancement, the drama from an amorphous and an irregular lay passed into a highly technized craft. From mass and rustic it now turned into class and urban theatre in character. The real Sanskrit or classical Indian drama came only after the stage had moved to the cities within the covered enclosures.

1 NATYA SHASTRA IS DATELESS.

The text of Natya Shastra is without dates and its manner and style of narration borders on legendary and poetic. More than sixteen years ago, a careful investigation of the linguistic, metreical, geographical and ethnographi
data of the evidence to be drawn from the history of poetry and music, of the Kamasutra and the Arithashast and from inscriptions, the present writer came to the conclusion that the available text of the Natya Shastra existed in the 2nd century after the Christ while the tradition which it recorded may go to a period as early as 100 B.C. (The date of Natya Shastra-in J.O.L. Vol. XXII 1934)." Mammoohan Ghosh: Introduction to his translation of Natya Shastra part I (1950) P.LXXXI.

"The date of the text is uncertain but we cannot, with any assurance place it before the third century A.D." Keith: The Sanskrit Drama P.18.
mythological when it comes to historical references, particularly in its introductory chapters so that all attempts at demarcating these remain widely uncertain. We cannot depend wholly on our power of interpretation for we may always be off the mark without knowing it. It is therefore that our tread must be wary, for we cannot be dogmatic in making assertions about chronology in this case. Yet giving the widest margin for error, we may cautiously believe that drama described in the later text of the treatise pertain to much later times, than the early days of occupation of Punjab by the Indo-Aryans.

The speculation given above regarding the nature of dramatic activity in the Punjab does not gain much support from proved historical data available to us from other sources especially if we fix its time too early in the Punjab history. It may be that there was some simple theatre persisting among the original non-Aryans who were not supplanted by the Indo-Aryans and being an activity of the lowest strata of the non-Aryan society remained unnoticed by the new comers and being wholly non-literary was not recorded and has failed to come down. Thus Vedic and post-Vedic times remained practically without an all inclusive and even normally developed dramatic activity.

LACK OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA.

In the foregoing we have come at some tentative conclusions about the various types of dramatic activity. J Scholler believes that certain parts of the present Natyashastra are interpolations. G.T. Deshpande on Sanskrit Drama in Indian Drama (Pub. Div.) p. 31.

According to Manomohan Ghosh, Natya Shastra is earlier than Kalidasa as well as Bhasa, G.S. Sunith Kumar Chatterji states in the Introduction to Indian Drama (Pub. Div.) at p. 12 that Natya Shastra is believed by scholars to go back to the fourth century A.D. at the latest. G.S.
that was current in the Vedic, post-Vedic and epic times and pointed out to the lack of real dramatic art in all these periods. The times of the origin of drama in the Panjab as a regular literary form remains a matter for conjecture and has remained so thus far, defying attempts at precise determination. The Vedic literature, most of which was produced in the Panjab, probably contained some dramatic pieces but whether these were enacted is a moot point. The Vedic ritual and religious ceremonies were exclusively for the twice born (Aryans) and the Shudra population was excluded. These non-Aryans Panjabis perhaps, had some drama of their own which along with themselves was disregarded in the beginning by the triumphant Aryans as the former alongside their cultural institutions were treated as untouchable. So long as this hostility between the two peoples persisted cultural exchange was minimum and drama and theatre came to be looked down upon by the Aryans for a pretty long time. Although, we have surmised that Vedic ritual and some other social practices of the Panjab Aryans were crypto-drama in parts, these were never taken to be things for a public stage. The real drama is composite, comprising many arts including not unusually, music, dance, acting and stage craft and about the origin of this regular drama nothing really definite is known. There is almost no archaeological data of dependable nature available to us nor there exists the testimony of the reliable written word. History and chronology were never strong points with the Indian Brahmin. On the other hand there is a very pronounced habit to reduce history itself into mythology and make mystery of the contemporary happenings. Under the circumstances it becomes our task...
to arrive at some plausible truth about the facts of history as they relate to the subject of drama, before proceeding to study the same in all its different aspects.

**THE MEANING OF 'NATAK'**

The word used by us here is 'Natak' as the equivalent of the English 'Drama'. If we take the ancient Indian definition, 'Roopak' should connote 'drama', and 'Natak' in fact is one of the main subdivisions of 'Roopak'. Since in common parlance 'Roopak' was dropped is now obsolete in the old sense, 'Natak' has assumed all the meanings carried by redundant word 'Roopak' and now stands for it to its complete exclusion. The etymology of the word 'Natak' should then provide some clue to the history of the art it connotes.

Natak is a Prakrit word and derives from Nat, original Sanskrit being Harit, meaning 'dance'. 'Natak' therefore, suggests two things. Firstly, the Drama evolved from Nat or 'dance', of course the popular type. And Secondly, it belongs to the Prakrit stage in the linguistic history of India. As a corollary, we can infer that as the Prakrit name suggests, it had also a popular origin. Under the circumstance stage too could not be other than a folk stage and undeveloped one in the I. A number of technical terms of the Natyashastra are of strange appearance and the frequency of celebral letters in them suggest Prakrit origin.
DRAKA IN THE TRETAYUGA

days of the origin of the art, which corroborates the Natya Shastra story of the passage of the open air theatre into a closed one due to circumstantial compulsions.

CONSIDERATION OF TRETAYUGA.

If we go by what Bharat has to say about the times when Natya was created we have to believe that it happened in Treta Yuga. Conditions in this Treta Yuga have been described. It is given out that the people of Jambu Dweep in those days were in a deplorable state of moral degradation. This part of the world which was an ally of the great god Indra, was overwhelmed by antagonist following which catastrophe Indra approached Lord Brahma and sought his help to regenerate Jambu Dweep in which moral corruption rooted so firmly was bound to result in the augmented strength of the Demons. Brahma, the creator very much concerned, conceding Indra’s prayer, created Natak, the 5th Veda for the uplift of the Jambu Dweep.

That Natak could serve as an instrument of both reform and entertainment is a very cogent observation, for most of the early drama was moral and religious. In those early days even entertainment could not be divorced from religion and morals and drama, even outside ritual was largely religious in spirit.

Another reason adduced for the advent of drama given in the same treatise is again based upon a social

1. 9-12. “O Brahmins, in the days of Yore, when the golden age (Krita Yuga) passed with the reign of Swayambhova (Manu) and the Silver Age (Treta Yuga) commenced with the career of Vaivyanata Manu and people became addicted to sensual pleasures, were under the sway of desire and agree, became infatuated with jealousy and anger and (thus) found their hap inee mixed with sorrow.... gods with Indra (Mahinda) as their head (approached) Brahman and spoke to him, ‘we want an object of diversion which must be audible as well as visible.’ Bharata’s Natya Shastra (Trans- Manomohan Ghosh) Part I Chapter I. P.2.
need of the times and the capacity of drama to fulfil it. As referred to, earlier, low castes were denied access to ritual and all religious ceremonies of the upper classes and they were provided with an activity within the reach of all castes and the Drama was invented for this purpose. The search for drama was, therefore, started when, as it seems, the Aryan settlers of the Panjab realized the need for the minimum measure of national emotional integration and struck upon the folk form that had thus far belonged to the Shudra castes only. Such realization could dawn only when after the internecine conflict was over, Shudras ha finally got reconciled to the status of a landless working class dependent on the Aryans, i.e., when the new social order after Aryan occupation of the Panjab, based on caste system was firmly established.

Placing both these ideas about the origin of Natak together, we can say that the Natak was adopted by the upper classes also as an instrument of moral reform and entertainment and as a concession to the have-nots of old, when the Treta Yuga was running. When came about this Treta Yuga is any body’s guess.

It seems that although caste distinctions were highly developed in the days of the invention of drama in the Panjab, these had not as yet attained the later rigour that rendered the Shudras pariahs and castes untouchables. Otherwise how could they sit together and observe a dramatic action in progress. Perhaps even then there existed below the Varnashram four main social divisions, still lower ranks of slaves and Chandals and these were not allotted any nook in the scheme of the
According to half legendry, half historical Pauranic lore the Krit Yuga (Golden era or age) extended over forty generations of Mannu, Treta over twenty five, while Dwapar was spread over thirty generations i.e. Krit lasted approximately for over seven and a half centuries, Treta four and Dwapar four centuries and 75 years.

Jai Chander Vidyalankar basing himself on Kashi Prasad Jaiswal’s article entitled, “Chronological totals and Pauranic Chronicles and the Kali age” published in 1917 in the Journal of the Behar and Orissa Research Society, calls these Pauranic age- divisions historical and makes out that 1015 years intervened between the coronation of Prikshit, the grandson of Arjan of Mahabharata and Maharaj Nanda of Magadha and this period constituted the Kali age. Before the dawn of Kali Yuga reigned thirty generations of Mannu, constituting the Dwapar age which thus fell some in hundred years before Maha Nanda, Nanda’s reign lasted roughly a year after Alexander’s death in about 322 B.C. and if we add four centuries to the 15th mentioned above, Treta Yuga fell at approximately 2000 B.C. and this was roughly the period of Aryan settlements on the Banks of Punjab rivers. Probably therefore the Aryans came to the Punjab in the Treta Yuga, when according to the Natya Shastra, the Natak 2.

1. Jay Chander Vidyalankar, Bhrati Kriht En Za Kha P.53.
2. Treta Yuga may however suggest on a remote antiquity as not an actual historical period. In that case we have to take the origin of drama in the period to which the writing in the Natya Shastra pertain and according to Manomohan Ghosh the tradition recorded in it may go back to a period as early as 100 B.C. G.S.
was founded in this country. Thus Punjab saw the genesis of drama before any other region in India.

Despite of the bewildering uncertainty that goes by these Aryan dates and periods, the suggestion that drama took its start in remote past when Indo-Aryans came to the Punjab and settled down here along with the indigenous people may yet be incorporating a tradition. This would also suggest that drama originated in India quite a time before 1 Bharat wrote his classic "The Natya Shastra."

**AGE OF PRATITAS**

According to the French authors of 'Ancient India and Indian Civilization' we had no Sanskrit work for quite some centuries after Pingle's Chhand Sutra as by then Prakritas, the living tongues, had asserted their existence as literary languages. The very patent fact that almost all the old 'sanskrit' plays make much profuse use of vario Prakritas of northern India, establishes without doubt that so called Sanskrit drama came to be written first of all in no other than the Prakrit age, which is known to cover twelve centuries lying between 6th century B.C. and 5th century A.D. Prakritas have been used in the plays of Ashava Ghoesh, Bhasa and plays of later dramatists which include Prachya Avanti Dukki (Takki) Shakari, Ghandali & Prakritas of the country. By the time drama came to be written in the country, Sanskrit was a dead language alre

'Bama, the caste ancestor of Natya Sura' may yet not be real historical person and the name most probably stands for collective authorship of the treatise, for Bharat were a class of people in ancient India given to the profession of dance and drama. Thus Bharat of the Natya Shast may only mean learned men of the Bharata caste. G.S.

1.Mason-Curset, Erabowski, Stern - G.S.
2.Dr.Shala Shankar Vyas: Hindi Sahitya ka Kritik Itihah Part I (Editor, Raj Bari 'Vande) P.270.
3.Ibid P.272.
In the north longar raga, Prakrit! pxm dominot a dip Omas lop 1 2

Mad Indian Olrllilm * lim

And in case the origin of our drama was popular and the stage passed from open air rural into closed urban type, it may be postulated that in a Prakrit age, the drama at the time of its genesis, was wholly Prakrit linguistically and the local Prakrit predominated, Sanskrit came along with the Sanskrit speaking characters and audiences found in the cities after the post-Buddhist revival. Here in the cities the popular drama turned to be exclusively meant for the ruling and rich classes as by then Sanskrit had become the language of court, religion and literature, in fact, of all cultural expression.

Again that excellent French book 'Ancient India and Indian Civilization' has made the following observation regarding the position of Sanskrit during the ascendancy of Prakrit:

1. Professor Levi holds this view C.C.
2. Keith, however, does not agree and has the following to say about the language of the early Indian drama:

"The drama which was nascent in Astanji's time must be taken to have been like the classical drama, one in which Sanskrit was mingled with Prakrit in the speeches of the characters. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . A different view is taken by Professor Levi. who conceives that the drama sprung first into being in Prakrit, while Sanskrit was only later applied at the time when Sanskrit, long reserved as a sacred language re-entered into use as the language of literature."

Keith, The Sanskrit Drama, p. 46.
"Sanskrit was not given up but having been set up as a sacred language, it was not suited for familiar use. It did not become the idiom of chancellories and governments offices until fairly late. Sanskrit the noble language: Pali, the sacred language of the Buddhists and the Prakrits which were regional KOI VAI lived side, although they flourished variously, according to the place, the time and the importance of the ideas which were clothed in them." This rules out Sanskrit for use in the drama of the times, for Sanskrit was reserved for religious writings by the non Buddhists and drama, from its very nature was secular and in case it acquired some religious content it was Buddhist rather than Hindu and Buddhists, in the earlier days, preferred Pali to Sanskrit for their religious writings. Only Mahayanaists took to Sanskrit later on.

Thus 6th century B.C. is the farthest limit upward for the birth of classical Drama in India. Actually real drama started coming up in the much later centuries to come.

We will now proceed further and endeavour to determine the times of the origin of drama in the Panjab in the light of other evidence available and helpful for this purpose.

The Sanskrit epic Ramayana when describing the pomp and show of the coronation ceremony of Rama, its hero, makes mention of Nata, dancers and singers entertaining the poulace gathered there in strength in that connection. Now this word Nata is curious and has been taken to mean 'dramatic players' by some. This may not be correct, for Nata, does not invariably connote an actor and it did not certainly do so before the advent of drama.

Never the less, the reference to actual and full fledged dramatic performance is unequivocal in the other Sanskrit epic, The Mahabharata. In that, staging of two long dramas 'Ramayana Natak' and 'Mauberambhushan Natak' is described in detail. To this, rather telling evidence of the existence of drama in a flourishing condition at least in times of the composition of Mahabharata, we may add the mention of two Nat Acharyas:

The Ramayana lends no aid to the attempt to establish an early existence of dramas; we hear of festivals and concourses (Samaja) where Natas and Nartakas, Natajatayasthapatikaraka delight themselves and even of the speaking of Natakas, in another passage, the term Vyamishraka denotes, if we believe the commentator, plays in mingled languages. But accepting all these references as genuine, which we are not obliged to do, the passages have manifestly no claim to early date, for other reasons than the allusions and leave us again without any early evidence."  

Keith: The Sanskrit Drama P.39.

"The Natas and Nartakas were present at such festivals which learned from the Ramayana; but we cannot say whether pantomimes and dancers are referred to".

Keith: The Sanskrit Drama P.50.

2. "Definite support for this view of the origin of drama (in Krishna worship) may be found in the account of dramatic performances which are given in the Mahabharata th supplement of the Mahabharata. That work cannot, as has been mentioned, be dated with any certainty or probability earlier than the dramas of Ashvaghosha and therefore, it cannot be appealed to as the earliest mention now extant of the dramatic art."

Keith :The Sanskrit Drama. P.47.
But here besides the mention of these two names who are given out as the authors of *Natasutras* nothing more by way of information is forthcoming. In Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* more cogent references occur, a study of which may be useful. The book enumerates a number of professional classes such as Nats, Natakas, singers, Vadaka, wandering story tellers, Kushilavas, Charans etc. but even the drama players as such are not mentioned. It is also known (through Arthashastra mainly) that in Kautilya’s time taxes were levied on performances by mobile companies of entertainers and that such companies from out stations were required to donate part of their local earnings to the rulers. Kautilya further states that arrangements existed in his time for the state training of artists, in all the 64 fine arts, which included ‘acting’, make up, painting, playing of musical instruments etc., and that court xmlns, slave girls and the actresses were imparted training in these vocations.

But then, all these books are of uncertain date of composition, some of these have appeared augmented an interpolated in several recensions from time to time, confronting us with the difficulty of separating the two. Panini was born in Shalatma, a village near Taxila in Ghandhara region of Punjab. In Sanskrit literature Panini is called Shalatmaka and was, it is said, known to king Nanda of Pataliputra who patronised his writing. In his *Uttras* there are references to Ghahdara, Sindhu (Sindhu Sagar Dea), Sauvira (Upper Sindhu), Eskhata (Shahpur, Gujrat) Medra (with capital at Shakala or Sankot Trigarta) (Pathankot, Kangra) Kalakuta (region from upper Yamuna to the satluj, Kuru etc.) Panini is acquainted with the Uttarapatha (the northern route) which graver as the artery of communication, the whole of norther from the mouth of Ganges to Bactria and of which a detail account with stages is given by the Greek Geographers. Panini acquainted with the northern division of India is very thorough V.S. Aggarwala: *Paninicaitin Bharta Varsha* Chapter 2.

original from the later additions and changes. Lastly there is the almost unsurmountable difficulty about interpretations of terms used.

Ramayana is believed to be the work of Valmik and Mahabhrrata, that of sage Vyasa. Luniya is very much correct to say that the epics as we now have them do not belong to any one age or any one author. Their present form is the result of additions from time to time in their several recensions. The latest recension of Ramayana is said to belong to 200 A.D. and that of Mahabharata about the same time or slightly later. "According to Winternitz the earliest date of the composition of Ramayana is consid ered 200 or 300 B.C. and that of the Mahabharata still earlier and probably the 11th century." In any case the Mahabharata in its latest edition may be still later composition than the 3rd century A.D. as given above and the one containing details of the staging of two dramas in it should be quite a late composition.

Panini and his great work on Sanskrit grammar are believed to belong to the 4th century B.C. Jaishankar Vidyalankar describes Panini's Ashtadhyayi to Nanda- Maurya Era. The mention in it of two Natya-Charyas with their Nat Sutras has provided a puzzle that has baffled solution so far. These Nat Sutras are not extant and seem to have perished beyond recovery so that we cannot know their contents. But Levy and Hillsbrandt have taken them to be manuals for actors (nata) though Weber and Konow have considered these to have been sets of rules for dancers.

and pantomimists and Keith has accepted their view.

In this Keith is a better guide and we have to take these Nat Sutras as rules pertaining to the art of dancing, rather than to drama proper. V.S. Aggarwala has taken Nat Sutras for 'treatises on dramaturgy' which presumption is not justified on many grounds.

Similarly his contention that at iv.3.38 Panini refers to 'dramatic literature' like Sishukranya and Yamasobhya is not justified for in fact there was no dramatic literature in the fourth century B.C. or else Panini wrote his work much too later, which is even less likely to be true. Ramayana does not mention drama and Mahabharata's text is not chronologically reliable at all. Most probably the references to dramatic performance in Mahabharata is a very later interpolation and quite un-authentic.

Similarly evidence of Artha Shastra is uncertain and unreliable.

Keith finds in Mahabhashya by Patanjali 'whose date is certainly to be placed with reasonable assurance about 140 B.C.' Keith, much more effective evidence bearing on the existence of drama but his deductions are open to dispute. Patanjali makes mention of dramatic

1. Manomohan Ghosh: Introduction to his translation of Natya Shastra by Bharata (1950) P.XXX.

2. [text not legible]

See also Paninikalal Bharatavarsa P.309-10, 330-31.
3. 'But we unfortunately are here as ever in no position to establish the meaning of Nat which may mean no more than a Pantomime.'

Keith: The Sanskrit Drama P.31.
representations by the Shaubbikas or Shobhanikas who
give before the eyes of the spectators an actual
demonstration of the incidents mentioned in the plays.
But which is more likely date. He however knows the perfor-
mances of RANAS-budha and Balibandha (plays two and
makes an clear reference to the dramatic performance.
In any case Pataanjali did not write his Mahabhaskya in
pre-Indo-Greek times and therefore makes no conclusive
indication of drama in India before the Greek rule in
its north west. Pataanjali is placed in the 2nd century
A.D. by some Indologists.

THE INSCRIPTION OF JUGIRASA.

The Jogimara inscription has been variously explained but Suniti Kumar Chatterji has found in it
the evidence in support of the existence of the dramatic
art in India in those days. According to him "We clearly
find in it an avowal of love by a young man called Deva
Dinna or Deva Datta (god Given) who was a Rupa-Daksha
by profession, for a girl Sutanuka (the beautifully slim
one) who was a Devadasi. The word Rupa-Daksha has been
variously explained and the common scholarly interpretative
basis, of course on early literature is 'one who is skille
in financial matters, accounts etc.' But the interpretative
that at first sight one would be tempted to give it would
be 'an artist, one who is skilled in the plastic arts
(rupa'). Deva dasi would be temple dancer, a young girl
dedicated to the gods and dancing, music and drama would
be her proper vocation." S.K. Chatterji, therefore, assumes

DRAKA IN THE PANJAB

that there came about a very modern situation for 3rd century B.C. in India... the love of amartist for an actress.

But Deva-dasi does not always mean an actress, she may be nothing more than a temple dancer. Rup-dakeha on the other hand could have meant an actor Rupak as we know meant 'drama' and Rup-dakeha could mean a 'skilled player'. Does this Jogimara inscription then, prove the existence of the institution of drama in the times of the inscription i.e. the third century B.C. As the interpretation is marked with doubt and as given above may be entirely wrong, Chatterji does not seem to stand on sure ground in arriving at the conclusion he has done. In the absence of more reliable evidence available, we cannot insist too much on the existence of drama in India or in the Panjab as early as 3rd century B.C.

The foregoing discussion seems to leave no escape from the driving conclusion that drama in India and for that matter in the Panjab could grow up in the period of Prakrit speech that starts with the 6th century B.C. but the actual time when drama made its start is by no means certain. Irregular theatre of some sort could have had its long drawn out existence even earlier but the tradition that flowed into the masterly plays of Ashava Ghosha and Bhasa could not have been there even in the early Prakrit centuries and was a much later phenomenon.

It can also be argued that in the beginning

dramas were unwritten and all - Prakrit and within the

I. Field Leonard W. elaborates: Indian Drama (Vol. 82)
limits of Panjab, local Prakrit or Prakritas were being used. From rustic to the sophisticated, from irregular to the regular, from open to the closed theatre, from all - Prakrit to multi-lingual dialogues in which Sanskrit came to be employed as well, were the lines of transition and progress for the Indian theatre. The circumstances in the Punjab could not be very much different. The inaugural Prakrit drama, however, remained unrecorded, composed and played as this seems to have been by the unlettered professional castes and have failed to come down to us.

The transition did come about. It could not be a very rapid development and must have been a slow process spread over centuries.