Chapter-1

History of the Theatre
“Theatrical and dramatic elements are present in every society; no matter how unsophisticated or complex it is. The elements are as evident in the dances and ceremonies of primitive people as they are in our own political campaigns, parades, sports events, religious services and children’s make believe.”

Interest in the origin of the theatre has increased steadily since the late nineteenth century, when anthropologists began to be fascinated by the problem. In the beginning, people gradually became aware of forces that appear to control their food supply and the other determinants of existence. Having no clear understanding of natural causes, they attribute them to supernatural or magical forces. Next they began to search for means to win the favour of these powers. Over a period of time, they perceive an apparent connection between certain of the devices they have used and the outcome they have to bring about. These devices are then repeated; refined and formalized until they became rituals. At this stage the entire group usually performs the rite, while the audience is the supernatural forces.

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1 History of theatre by Allyn and Bacon, inc. University of Texas- Austin page- 1
force. Stories or myths usually grow up around the rites to explain, illustrate or idealize them. Often these myths contain elements based on real events or persons, although they are usually considerably transformed in the stories. Frequently the myths include representatives of supernatural forces which the rites celebrate or hope to influence. Performances may then impersonate the mythical characters or supernatural forces in the rituals or in Accompanying celebrations. This impersonation is one sign of a developing dramatic sense.¹

As people become more sophisticated, their conceptions of supernatural forces and casual relationship change. As a result, they abandon or modify some rites. But the myths that have grown up around the rites may be retained as a part of the groups oral tradition and in some instances stories based on myth may be acted out in simple drama divorced from all ceremonial concerns. When this occurs, the first significant step has been taken toward theatre as a specialized activity and thereafter the asthetic gradually come to replace the utilitarian or religious aim of rituals.²

OTHER THEORIES OF ORIGIN

¹ History of theatre by Allyn and Bacon, inc. University of Texas- Austin page- 2
² Breasted, James H. The Development of Religion and thought in Ancient Egypt. New York, 1912 page-11
A number of scholars have sought the origin of theatre in story telling. They declare that to tolerate and listen to stories are fundamental human traits. Consequently, they suggest a pattern of development in which the telling of tales (about the hunt, war or other feats) is gradually elaborated; at first through the use by the narrator of impersonation, action and dialogue and then through the assumption of each of the roles by a different person. According to this theory, then drama and theatre originate in the narrative instinct. A closely related theory sees theatre as having gradually evolved out of dancing that are primarily rhythmical and gymnastic or from imitations of animals movements and sounds. In each, it is in large part the virtuosity and grace valued and supposedly these qualities are encouraged until they are elaborated into fully realized theatrical performances. Both of these theories depict the theatre as developing quite independently of rituals.\(^1\)

In the fourth century B.C., Aristotle argued that man is by nature an imitative creature that he takes pleasure in imitating persons, things and actions and in seeing such imitations. In the twentieth century, a number of psychologists have suggested that man has a gift for fantasy, through which he seeks to re-shape reality into more satisfying form than those encountered in daily life. Thus fiction permit people to objectify their anxieties and fears so that they may confront them

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\(^1\) GASTER, Theodor, Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East. New York 1950 Page-32
and fulfill their hopes and dreams. In this sense, then, the theatre is one tool where by people define and understand their world or one whereby they escape from unpleasant realities.¹

THEATRE AND DRAMA IN ANCIENT GREECE

GREECE: Written records according to origin of theatre are found when the Athenian government accorded official sanction and financial support to drama. This connection between theatre and state began in 534 B.C. When Athens instituted a contest for the best tragedy presented at the city Dionysia, a major religious festival. Although tradition credits Thespis with the invention of drama, some ancient accounts place him as late as sixteenth in the line of tragic poets. This disparity is probably due to imprecision in the original meaning of tragedy, a term now thought to date from a time when the chorus danced either for a goat as a prize or around a goat which was then sacrificed. Unfortunately, none of the theories about how the term tragedy originated provides important clues as to how the dramatic form we call tragedy evolved.”²

THE ORIGIN OF TRAGEDY

¹ KIRBY, E.T. Ur-Drama: The Origin of theatre, New York, 1975 Page-65
² The Greek theatre of the fifth century before Christ Berkeley, 1920 Page-51
The earliest still extant account of how Greek drama originated— a chapter in Aristotle’s poetics states that tragedy developed out of improvisation by the leaders of dithyrambs. Consequently, it may be helpful to look briefly at the dithyrambic form, a hymn sung and danced in honour of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and fertility. And was performed by a band of men provided with goat like horns, ears, hoofs and tails and clad in goat skin (or in a goat hair loin band) in imitation of Dionysus’s attendant sprites the satyrs on account of this costume the choreutae were sometimes called tragoi, which is the Greek word for “Goats”; in certain localities, as the dithyrambs became quasi literary and took on a dramatic element, its name was changed to satiric drama; still later, as these tendencies increased, especially through the addition of an actor, the satyr play come to be called traigodia (goat song) derived from the nick name applied to the caprine choreutae; the chorus still consisted of satyrs and since these were Licentious bestial creatures, the performance was yet crude and undignified.

Aeschylus (524-456 B.C.) was possibly the first to raise to abandon satiric choreutae and was certainly the first to raise tragedy to the rank of literature; during the fifth century each poet was required to follow his group of three

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tragedies at the dramatic festival with a satyr- play as concession to the satiric origin of the performance.”¹

**TRAGEDY IN THE FIFTH CENTURY**

Our knowledge of Greek tragedy is based almost entirely on the work of three playwrights of the fifth century: Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Most of the tragedies begin with a prologue which provides information about events that have occurred prior to the opening of the play. Next comes the parodos or entrance of the chorus; if there is no prologue, the parodos begins in the play. The paroclos of extant plays vary in length from 20 to 200 lines; they introduce the chorus, give exposition and establish the proper mood. Following the parodos, a series of episodes, varying in number from three to six and separated by choral songs, develop the main action. The exodus or concluding scene includes the departure of all the characters and the chorus.”²

All extant Greek tragedies are based on myth or history. Each writer was free, however, to alter the stories and to invent motivations(which are seldom provided in myth) for characters and events. Thus, though dramatists might begin with the same basic story, they ended with widely different interpretation of it. Agathon, writing at the end of the fifth century, was the first to invent stories for

¹ The Megala Dionysia and the Origin of Tragedy”, Journal of Hellenic Studies, XXIX(1909)
tragedy, but his example was never widely followed and none of his plays has survived.”¹

GREEK COMEDY:

Comedy was the last of the major dramatic forms to receive official recognition in Greece, not being admitted to the city, Dionysia until 487-486 B.C. Its history prior to that time is largely conjectural. Aristotle says that comedy grew out of the improvisations of the leaders of phallic songs, but since there were many phallic rites, it is not cleared which he had in mind. Some of the pre-dramatic ceremonies were performed by a chorus who at that times masqueraded as animals, rode on animals and carried an animal as a representative; there were also choruses of fat men satyrs and men on stilts. The rites often included a procession with a chorus who sang and danced as they carried large phallic symbols aloft on poles. These ceremonies provided opportunities for considerable by play and mockery between participants and spectators. All of these elements have a parallels in early comic drama.”²

² Cf. Aristotle's Poetics 1448 a 1f
Comedy was sufficiently developed by 487-486 to be accorded a place at the city Dionysia. The names of a few early comic dramatist have been recorded: Chionides, who supposedly won the prize at the first contest; Magnes who won eleven victories with such plays as Birds, Fig Flics and frogs; Ecphantides, who is said to have written a more refined comedy than that of his predecessors; Cratinus, credited with twenty one plays and thought to have been the first truly outstanding comic writer; Aristophane’s chief rival, noted for his witty satire and inventiveness.”

All of the extant comedies of the fifth century however are by a single author, Aristophanes (448-380 B.C.). The most noteworthy characteristic of Aristophanic comedy is its commentary on contemporary society, politics, literature and above all the Peloponnesian war. The plays are organized around a

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1 “The introduction of comedy into the city Dionysia, University of Chicago Decennial Publications, VI 266PP”
ruling theme, embodied in a rather far-fetched “happy idea”. Although the events of most old comedies could not occur in everyday life, Parallels with real events are abundantly clear, the fantastic exaggeration serving to the point up the absurdity of their life counter parts. In addition to fantasy farcical situations are typical, and considerable emphasis is placed on the pleasure of eating, drinking, sex, wealth and leisure. Coupled with the comic elements are some of the most beautiful lyrics and some of the most obscene passages in Greek literature.”\(^1\)

THE GREEK THEATRE

Both tragedy and comedy among the Greeks were coral by origin; the centre of their theatre was a circular “dancing place” called an orchestra, in the middle of which stood a “altar”. When an actor was added to the tragic choreutae, it became necessary to provide a dressing room where he might change his mask and costume. This temporary structure was called “scene” and at first stood outside the spectator’s range of vision.

\(^1\) “The introduction of comedy into the city Dionysia, University of Chicago Decennial Publications, VI 268PP
THE GREEK THEATRE

Afterward it was brought immediately behind the orchestral circle and then served also as a background in which the front of a dramatic action was performed.”¹ Its face was pierced by doors; usually three nut sometime only one, which were conventionally thought of as leading into as many different houses.

The scene-building often had two projecting side wings called Parascenia. The front of the scene building and of the Parascenia came to be decorated with a row of columns, the proscenium. The top of this proscenium was used by actors when they had occasion to speak from the house top or were thought of as standing upon some elevation.”² In the course of time, it was employed also for divinities, especially in epiphanies at the close of tragedies. Since this spot was never invaded

¹ Haigh "s" the Altic theatre reversed by Pickard- cambridge in 1907 page 63.
² Haigh "s" the Altic theatre reversed by Pickard- cambridge in 1907 page 67.
by singing or dancing of the chorus and was the only place reserved for actors exclusively, it came to be called the logium or “speaking place.”\(^1\) Behind the logium was the second story of the scene building known as the epicenium; its front wall was pierced by one or more large doorways. Past each paramecium a “side entrance” or parodus lead into by the audience before and after the plays and during it by the actors and the chorus. The parodus were often framed by beautiful gateways, The remainder of the orchestral circle was surrounded by the auditorium, the “theatre” proper Chorus and actors stood on the same level in the orchestra or in the space between it and the scene-building. There was no stage in the Greek theatres until about the beginning of the Christian era.”\(^2\)

**INFLUENCE OF ROMAN THEATRE ON GREEK THEATRE**

Under the influence of Roman theatre, Greek theatre was provided with a stage, these technical terms naturally acquired a somewhat different significance. The proscenium was still the columned wall in front of the scene building, but it now stood upon the stage and the stage itself was logium. Whenever theophanies acquired a still higher level, this was furnished by the top of the proscenium, which was called the theologium or speaking place of divinities.”\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Ibid – Page- 194  
\(^2\) Ibid – Page- 224  
\(^3\) Flickinger, Plutarch as a source of information on the Greek theatre (1904) page 55.
It is usually assumed that after 458 all plays used the scene as a background. The scene could easily made the demands of most plays. Since the majority are set before a temple, palace or some other type of building. But what of those works set before caves, in groves of trees or in army camps. Some historians have argued that a few stock sets, designed to meet the range of possible locales, were used. Other have argued that a few symbolic properties (such as shields to identify the army camps or shells and rocks to indicate a seashore, or a single tree to suggest a grove) were merely added to the otherwise undisguised scene house. Still others have suggested that the Spoken line provide the necessary indications of locale and the façade of the scene served ‘as a conventionalized background for all plays.”

1 Butler James H. The theatre and drama of Greece and Rome. San Francisco 1972 page 178
In the fifth century, a limited account of machinery was available for special effects. The most important devices were ekkyklema and machine. The ekkyklema (a device for revealing tableaux, most often bodies of characters killed offstage) was probably a platform that could be rolled out through the central doorway of the scene. On the other hand some ancient accounts state that it was revolved or turned, while others associate it with the upper story of the scene house or with the side doors. The mechane or crane was used to show characters in flight or suspended above the earth. Occasionally characters are said to be in chariots or on the back of birds, insects or animals while at other times the actor seems to have been suspended by a harness.\textsuperscript{1} The crane was most often used for the appearance of Gods, but certain human characters in tragedy might require it. In comedy it was often used to parody tragedy to ridicule human pretensions. Other essential

\textsuperscript{1} Exon, “A new theory of ECCyclema” (1901) 132 page.
properties included chariots drawn by horses, biers of dead bodies, statues of various Gods and torches and lamps to indicate night scenes. Furniture was rarely required in tragedy and was restricted to couches for person too ill or too weak to stand. On the other hand both furniture and other common domestic article were numerous in comedy. In neither comedy nor tragedy were properties and to create the illusion of reality; they served to make some dramatic point.”

**AUDITORIUM**

In Greek Theatres, the auditorium and scene houses were always separate architectural units. Between them lay the orchestra and parodoi (or entrances into the orchestra at either end of the stage house). The parodoi were used primarily by the chorus, although actors might enter there as well. The parodoi were also used by the audience as entrance or exist from the auditorium. The first theatron of the theatre of Dionysus was the hill side which sloped down from the Acrpolis. Originally Spectators probably stood to watch performances, but stadium like seating may have been erected during the sixth century, for the first major remodeling of the auditorium, undertaken shortly after 500, was probably caused by the collapse of wooden seats.

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1 Exon, “A new theory of ECCyclema” (1901) 134 page.
At this time, the hill side was regarded to change the slope and a series of terraces, on which rested wooden benches; were probably laid out. When the odeion was built in the 440s, the slope was changed again and a number of supporting walls were added. The seats seem to have remained temporary for Aristophanes refers to them as Ikria, a term normally reserved for wooden benches. Stone seats may have been introduced gradually but the stone auditorium was not completed until sometime between 338 and 326 B.C."\(^1\)

It is estimated that the competed stone auditorium seated 14,000 to 17,000 persons. Nevertheless, only a small portion of the population could have attended the theatre at any one time, since in the second half of the fifth century Attica had about 150,000 to 200,000 residents."\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Roy C. Flickinger The Greek theatre and its drama University of Chicago press(1936)- page 62.
\(^2\) Roy C. Flickinger The Greek theatre and its drama University of Chicago press(1936)- page 64.
AUDIENCE

The central seat in the front row was reserved for the priest of Dionysus, seats were also reserved for other priests and priestesses, for certain state officials visiting ambassadors and the persons the state wish to honour. The audience was composed of men, boys and slaves and women. Officiais were responsible for keeping order and for checking tickets to see that their holders sat in the correct section. Violence in the theatre were punishable by death.\textsuperscript{1}

HELIENISTIC THEATRE

The era of Hellenistic theatre began in 326 B.C. with the reign of Alexander the great. Athens continued to be a major cultural centre; but its preeminence was challenged in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century by Pergamum and especially by Alexandria, which became the literary capital of the Greek world because of its library and institute for literary research.\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1} Hamilton; Edith, the Greek Ialay New York,1952 Page-222.

\textsuperscript{2} Webester T.B.L, Greek theatre production 2nd ed. London 1970 page 113.
The Hellinistic age saw many changes in theatre. One was initiated by the victory festival held by Alexander at one of which he said to have assembled 3,000 performers from all over the Greek world. Thereafter the occasion on which plays might be presented was numerous since rulers began to encourage worship of themselves as gods and to establish festivals in their own honour. Consequently, plays were no longer performed exclusively at Dionysian festivals. The rapid expansion in the number of festivals created a demand for qualified performers, and perhaps as a result the theatre of Hellinistic period became almost totally professionalized. A major step in that direction was taken with the formation of a guild of performers. Sometimes called the Artists of Dionysus.\textsuperscript{1}

Almost all scholars agree that the Hellenistic theatre building was fully developed by about 150 B.C. probably the most important Hellinistic innovation was the high raised stage. Varying from 8 to 13 feet in height, it was

\textsuperscript{1} Webester T.B.I, Greek theatre production 2nd ed. London 1970 page 116.
sometimes as long as 140 feet, although it was only from 6½ to 14 feet deep. Since paraskenin were eliminated, this long narrow platform was opened at both ends. In some theatres, ramps parallel to the parodoi led up to the stage; in others, steps to the orchestra were provided at the ends of the stage; in still others, the stage could be entered only from the scene house. The front edge of the stage was supported by the proskenion rose at the back of the raised stage. Often two facades were approximately equal in height. In some theatres, the proskenion overlapped the outer rim of the orchestra circle by a few feet, although in others the full circle of the orchestra remained entirely visible. The auditoriums underwent no significant changes, but they varied widely in seating capacity, ranging from 3,000 at oropus to 25,000 at Ephesus.1

As time passed the façade of the second story also underwent a number of changes. During the second century B.C., the Episkenion, which originally had been fitted from one to three doors, was converted into series of sizable openings (or thyromata) varying in number from one to seven. These thyromata, a varying about 10 to 12 feet in width and extending upwards as high as the roof would permit, were separated from each other by narrow upright supports. Thus, on the upper level there was a long shallow forestage backed by a rear stage equally as

1 Pickard Cambridge the theatre of Dionysus is Athens Oxford 1946 Page-178.
deep or deeper. This change is usually associated with the decline of the chorus and the increased use of high platform for the high action.”

Although the Greek theatre continued until after 500 AD, its vitality declined rapidly after the first century BC, the Roman gradually gained power over all the Eastern Mediterranean and though Greek ideals persisted for a time, Romans standards eventually superseded them. After the first century AD, most of the theatre were modeled to conform more nearly to the Roman ideal of architecture. These remodeled structures are usually called Greco-Romans, since they have some features characteristic of each type. Many purely Roman theatres were also erected in Greek territories. The theatre in Athens was not immune to these changes, although it long resisted them. The theatre of Dionysus retained its classical form until sometimes between the third and first centuries B.C. When it was remodeled along more fashionable. Hellenistic line. The theatre of Dionysus was and for various kinds of spectacles until at least the fourth century A.D and perhaps longer. Thus ended a truly remarkable history, for few other theatres can boast 1,000 years of continuous usage”

INDIAN THEATRE


Prehistoric rock paintings present a panorama of very rich dance culture. Here simple intricate and acrobatic dance postures, ballet compositions, decorative ornaments, masks and head dresses, costumes and make up as well as musical instruments and singing are observed. The enactment of hunting expeditions, the imitation of animals and birds, impersonation of spirits, performance of ritual reminding Aristotle, who said that imitation, is natural to men and it is also natural for all to delight in the works of imitation. All the basic ingredients of theatre were present in primitive dancing. Hence it is called the mother of theatre. Since its inception dance has contained an urge to communicate an emotion, an experience, a myth in a dramatic way. Hence the history of theatre starts with dance." ¹

¹ History of Indian theater by M.L. Vardapande, first published in India 1987 page.10
INDUS CIVILIZATION: Mohenjodaro and Harappans, the two big cities of the oldest civilization have all the amenities like bathroom, kitchen and drainage system of a high order and so the rich culture must have its own dramatic amusements though we know little about them but evidence shows dance was one of them. In addition to terracotta figurine of dancers, a stone and a bronze dancing statuettes of great charm has been found.

A male dancing figure full of vitality sculpted in greyish limestone was found at Harappa. Art critics have described it as Nataraja the divine dancer of Indian
mythology and art. Another important find at Mohenjodaro is a bronze statuette of a slender gracefully supple female dancer in an uninviting posture. She is wearing nothing on her person except ornaments like bangles and a necklace with a triple pendant.

Her left leg is placed forward at the knee. Her right hand is placed akimbo on her hips. She looks as if she has taken a stance and is about to break into movements. This fascinating bronze figurine is not only indicative of the sculptural skill of the Harappan people but also of the rich dance culture they possessed."

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS:

Some musical instruments were also located by the archeologists who excavated various Indus sites. Also engravings on seals and amulets give us a clue to the variety of musical instruments developed by people belonging to this culture.

1 Bhavanani, Enakshi, The dance in India Tarapore wala 1965 page 46
Stringed musical instruments with bridge and a twang both made of shells found at Lothal. An arched harp probably made of a wooden bracket and metal string is seen on a seal. Castanets, drums, whistles of lay and cymbals were also popular musical instruments of Harappan people.

MASKS:

At Mohenjodero hollowed masks with horns were found. Made of baked clay they seem to have been molded. Some masks are without horns. One of the masks has a beard which is shown on the chin by marking shallow incised lines. These masks are quite small but cleverly designed.\textsuperscript{1}

DANCING GODS:

After the downfall of Indus civilization, the Aryans settled to India. It is interesting to note that Vedic deities were not only fond of the dramatic arts,

\textsuperscript{1} Bhavanani, Enakshi, The dance in India Tarapore wala 1965 page 48
including music and dance but also were performers. The Sama Veda was specially devised to set music hymns in praise of various deities. Because they believed that hymns sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments appeal to God most. The Chandogya Upanishada says, "Those who sing with lyre sing him only hence the singers become rich with wealth. (Tesmat te dhanasanayah 1.7.6)"

Commenting on a well known Rig Vedic hymn (5.33.6), Sayana speaks about dancing Gods-nrutyamano devata. According to Winternitz, Indra is shown in this hymn representing his deeds through dance. This mighty deity of clouds, thunder and rain who is immensely fond of intoxicating Soma juice is described in many hymns as a dancer and also one who makes other dance of nature of clouds, thunder and rain- reflected in Indra's movements."

THE GLORIOUS EPICS:

In the Ramayana and the Mahabharata numerous references are made to various theatrical arts including dance, drama, and music as modes of popular entertainment.

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2 Danielou, Alain, Hindu Polythesm, Routledge & kegan Paul, 1964. page 34
The advanced stage of these arts is indicated by the technical terms used in their context which later found their way into works like Natya Shastra. Technical terms related to music like Tristhana Swara (three notes-mandra, madhya and tara), tala (rhythm), laya; terms related to dance like nrutta (pure dance), nruttya (dance with acting), lasya (dance pose); terms related to the science of aesthetics like rasa are found in the Ramayana and point to systematization of these art forms.

In the Mahabharata references are made to puppet and shadow pays along with regular dramatic performers."¹

The Ramayana mentions enacting plays. In the Ayodhya Kanda friends of Prince Bharata are shown entertaining him with stories, instrumental music, enchanting feminine dances and enacting humorous plays.

.........sabhayan: chakrire kathah

¹ Bhattacharya, Haridas (Ed), The cultural Heritage of India, Vol IV, Ram Krishna Mission institute of culture, 1956. Page-59
The term *nataka* denoting drama is clearly mentioned in the verse. In the same chapter occurs the term *vyamishraka*, which commentary explains "Prakritadi bhasha samishrita natakadishu." That means a play composed in various languages including Prakrit, a multilingual play. We know that in classical Sanskrit plays languages including Prakrit occur. Bharata has framed elaborate rules regarding who should use Sanskrit and who Prakrit and other tongues. The practice of using various languages in a play is termed *vyamishraka* of the Ramayana. This leaves us in no doubt regarding the existence of drama proper in the epic age.

The Mahabharata strongly supports this contention. It speaks of Nataraja Shiva who laughs, sings, dances and plays various musical instruments along with his ganas. He jumps, yawns weeps and behaves like an insane or drugged person and speaks in a pleasant voice too. He wears various masks, legs, stomach and remain surrounded by ganas.

"Haste gayate chaiva nrutyatecha manoharam

Vadayatyapi vadyani vichitrani ganeryutah"
valgate jrumbhate chaiva rudate rodayatyapi

unmatta mattarupamcha bhashate chapi suswarah

aneka kati padaschyaya anekodaravakraadhruk

anekopani parshvaschyaya anekoganasanvruta"

- Danadharma Parva

This description of the Lord of Dance throws light on the various practices people of Pashupata sect have adopted, dancing and singing among them.

The Mahabharata refers to dancing halls attached to palaces and known as nrutyashalas, where the art used to be taught to princesses and gifts of royal harems. Erotic dances of apsaras, heavenly damsels of exquisite beauty are described where we see them swaying their waists casting alluring glances and shaking their bosoms. But the most important reference to the dramatic art is made in the Sabhaparva. In describing the assembly hall of Brahma this book says:

*Nataka vividhah kavyah kathakkhyayikkarikak*

In the assembly hall of Brahma Various dramas along with epics, stories and myths were presented. It is interesting to note that in the Ramayana drama is only mentioned as a genre, but here it is suggested that there are various kinds of drama.
This suggests a definite development. The assembly halls of others Lokapaas like Indra, Yama, Varuna and kuber are also mentioned, and it is said that they al were entertained with musical instruments, dance songs humorous skits( vaditram nrutyagttam cha hasyam lasyamcha sarvashah), but it is only in the assembly hall of Brahma that nataka was present. Probably the author of the epic was aware of the myth about Brahma creating the science of dramaturgy or Natya Shastra.”

**PUPPET THEATRE:**

The Mahabharata refers to yet another popular mode of theatrical entertainment in India; the puppet theatre. Some of earliest known Literary references to puppet and shadow theatres are found in the epic. Man must have created a puppet with animation long ago. Anthropologists assert that puppet like masks and cave paintings formed part of the magical rituals of ancient man living in caves thousands of years ago.

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An urge to create his likeness or caricature and give it movement like him might have been another compelling factor for the creation of a puppet. In some magical rituals puppets representing an enemy are created and tortured with the belief that in reality he will suffer the same fate. Behind this ritual action is the concept of sympathetic magic which is Inherent in the ritual hunt dances. The Mahabharata however refers explicitly to the art of puppet and shadow theatre. The kind of puppet smiles which we find in the Indian epics is also widespread in ancient classical Literature. They point to the existence of puppetry as a form of popular entertainment in the ancient world.”¹

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The term Sutradhara literally meaning thread holder used in the puppet theatre as well as in drama proper induced scholars to explore the possible links between two forms of theatrical entertainment them.

Puppets are manipulated by string or thread (sutra), hence the manipulator is called Sutradhara, holding of strings. In classical Sanskrit plays, he is the stage manager, director and in this capacity holds the string of dramatic performance. Hence, figuratively he is also Sutradhara. As the literal meaning of the term precedes its figurative meaning some scholars think puppet plays must have preceded actual drama proper in India.

Scholars have rejected this theory out right. Hillebrandt says, "From the definite existence of the puppet play in ancient times there is nothing to conclude about its priority to the drama. rather it holds a brief for the previous existence of the drama. As the dramatic events are an imitation of life, so the puppet shows are
the reproduction and imitation of the drama with in a small extent. It is possible that the drama borrowed some terms from the puppet comedy."\(^1\)

**KAMASUTRA OF VATSYAYANA:**

In the Kamasutra of Vatsyayana, quite interesting information about various types of puppets and puppet plays is found. In one of his verses Vatsyana mentions Kunlata Satakarni, a satavahana ruler of the 1st century BC. The Kamasutra is quoted in the works of Kalidasa. This helps to place him in the early centuries of Christian era.

The Kamasutra truly reflects the antiquity and popularity of the puppet theatre and its variants. Kamasutra imports useful information that apart from wood (daru) the puppets were made of thread (sutra), animal's horns (gaval), elephant tusk (gaja-danta), honey comb wax (madhuechista), flour (pishta) and clay (mrinmayi). The best way to entertain and seduce young girls, says Vatsyayana is to organize the performance of puppet plays and present them with puppets made out of these materials."\(^2\)


\(^2\) Burton, Richard, the Kamasutra of vatsyayana, George Allen & unwin, 1965 page 141.
Another fact that shows the antiquity of Indian theatre is Krishna's theatre. In his book "The Indian theatre" E.P. Horrowitz remark: "the oldest Indian dramas, or rather colloquies (Sanvadas) were not composed in Sanskrit but in Prakrit. Indeed, Originally Prakrit Samvedas were mysterious too, either Krishna or Shiva acting or dancing the principal part. Favourite episodes from Govinda’s meaningful life were the staying of Kansa and the binding of the heaven storming titan.

Large crowds came to witness these open air spectacles.
The grand finale, a merry roundelay of the bright Gopis, proved a special attraction. Rival worshippers flocked in equal numbers to the wanton bacchanals held in honour of Shiva."¹

Even Bharata in his Natyashastra indirectly acknowledges the association of various theatrical arts with different ancient rules, pre-vedic origin. In his chapter in the Puravranga he says, "playing musical instruments, singing and dancing appears Yakshas, nagas, guhyakas, daityas, danavas, ganas; including bhutas. Festivals known as Mahas or jatras, full of theatrical entertainment, were hosted in honour of theses deities. Later literature speaks of yakkha, Maha Naga, nandi Maha, Rudra Jatra, Giri Jatra where common people used to assemble to worship and to enjoy songs, dances and music provided by entertainers. The ritual worship

¹ Horowitz E.P, The Indian theatre Benjamin Bloom, 1969 PAGE-172
of these deities included theatrical art relics which are still found in rural India and tribal bells of the country."\(^1\)

**THE MYSTIC DANCE:**

The Raas is a dance by sportful Krishna with young and beautiful Gopa girls on the bank of the river Yamuna on one fragrant autumnal fullmoon night. In the Krishna cult, this mystic dance has a special ritualistic significance; Leela means the various deeds of the divine cowherd which includes Raas. Through the ages the tradition of enacting Raas and other Leelas of the Lord has remained alive in Vrajbhumi. It is in Bhasa's play 'Balacharita' written four centuries before the birth of Christ, the first significant mention of this dance of the cowherd community and the mode of its theatrical enactment. Bhasa describes how, along with other young boys, Krishna and Balaramas danced joyously with colourfully attired Gopa girls fair as the golden Champak flowers."\(^2\)

**THEATRE:** R.A.Zairaz bhoy makes an interesting observation. He says: "Since there is no evidence in Indian literature prior to the Greek advent of the performance of the plays in specially built theatres, we should not reject the possibility that the concept of staged performance was introduced by the Greeks._ _ _ _ _ " Bharata refers to a round (vikrishta) theatre which inevitably recalls the

1 Rangacharya Adya, drama in Sanskrit Literature popular Prakashan 1967 Page-160
2 Rangacharya Adya, drama in Sanskrit Literature popular Prakashan 1967 Page-158
Sigma-shaped or Semi-circular greek theatre while Bharata's further recommendation that the play house should have two floors on different level is paralleled by the Greek wooden stage having upper stories already in the 5th century B.C.  

HISTORY OF EVOLUTION OF THEATRE IN INDIA: In the Mesolithic cave paintings in India, an interesting drawing in which a dancer and a musician are shown performing on a raised platform has been found. A rock cut Auditorium was found at Bhimbetka near Bhopal which was used by the aboriginals of the region to perform rituals and dance in the pre-historic period. The open space in front of the auditorium rock was also till recently used for community dancing. Large assembly halls were found in the Indus cities probably, these Sabha Grihas were used for staging musical performances also.

The Rigveda in its tenth mandala alludes to the thickening clouds of dust that arise from dancers' feet (X.72). It seems encircled by the admiring audiences, the Vedic Nrutus or dancers used to perform in a performing area marked on a plain ground. We also find a reference to an open air dance performance in the prithvi Sukta of the Atharva Veda. The hymns says: 'This is the earth on whom with clamour loud, men that are mortal sing and dance.' the arena marked for

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1 Foreign Influence in ancient india, by R.A. jairazbhoy,Asia publication House (1963) PP. 103
2 Aggrawala V.S. Bharatiya kala. Prithavi parkshan, 1966 page-113
performing dance, ritualistic or otherwise, is the starting point of the evolution of theatre."¹

In the early Buddhist literature we find clear reference to theatre or Ranga. Ranga as a Place of theatrical performance is mentioned in the Jataka tales which belong the 6th century BC. The Ayoghar Jataka says: a juggler performing in the theatre (rangamazze) with his sleight can deceive the people’s sight. The theatres described in the Jataka tales are of two kinds – open air and covered ones. Around the samajja-mandal or circular dancing arena seats circle upon circle tier above tier used to be arranged (chakkaticakke manghctimanche bandhimsu). It seems that wooden scaffoldings used to be raised around the performing arena. This compares well with the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens. Probably early Greek theatres were of the same type as described in the tales like Vidurapandita Jataka."²

Pavilions were also erected for staging dramatic performances or wrestling bouts as per descriptions of Ghata Jataka or Guttila Jataka. The pavilion made of cloth used to be decorated tastefully with colourful flags, bunting and provided with seats tier above tier for the spectators. Buddhist Vinaya texts inform us about

¹ Bloch, T. ‘Caves and Inscriptions in Ramgarh Hills; Archeological Survey of India Report, 1903-04(page-64)
² “An Introduction to theatre” by frank M. page-220 Prachi Parkashan, 1979
mischievous theatre goers Assagi and Punabbasu who spread their robes in the theatre (ranga) and invited the dancers to perform on it.\(^1\)

Patanjali also refers to naughty spectators whom we meet in the *Chullavaggo*. They mischievously asked actresses: “Whom do you belong to? Whom do you belong to?” For they received an equally naughty reply: “To you! To you!” (*natanam striyo rangam gata yo Yah preehati kasya yuyam kasya yuyam iti tam tam tya tya ity ahuh*-VI.1.2).\(^2\)

Ancient Buddhist literature frequently refers to theatre halls or ranga which leaves us in no doubt that theatre halls existed in India at least from the 6\(^{th}\) century BC. Playwright Bhasa appears on the scene in the 4\(^{th}\) century BC and provides us with authentic information about contemporary theatre. Along with the term *ranga* he speaks of the *nepathyā* or retiring room adjacent to the stage proper. A stage-retiring room unit probably existed long before Bhasa.\(^3\)

It is quite clear from the text of Bhasa’s play that the happenings in the *nepathyā* were not for the spectators to see. Hence it is obvious that a wall or curtain divided this unit in the theatre with a connecting door giving access to the actors in the *nepathyā* to the stage. After preliminaries, the sutradhara, till now

\(^1\) Jain J.C. Life in Ancient India as Reflected in the Jain Canons, New Book Company, 1947 Page-199
\(^2\) Keith, A.B, The Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, theory and Practice, Oxford University press, 1924 Page 92
\(^3\) Aggarwala V.S. Bhartiya Kala Prithvi Parkashan, 1966 Page 115
facing the audience, turns towards the nepathy (nepathyabhimukhamalokya) and calls out to his consort-nati-who comes on the stage from the nepathy. This explains the stage-retiring room relationship clearly.

From Bhasa’s play Pratima Natakam it is clear that the stage property was stored in the retiring room behind the stage and was guarded by a person the director deputed. The name of the female guard in the play is given as Reva. The stage property returned to the nepathy after use is referred to in the play as nivrutta ranga payojanam.”¹

It is quite obvious from the plays of Bhasa that Indian theatre was in an advanced stage of evolution in the 4th century BC. The adjectives used to describe the courtesan Vasantasena indicate that some sort of professional training was imparted to actresses who wanted to enter the theatre. In the first act of the play Charudattam the heroine Vasantasena is described as rangapraveshena kalanam chaiva shikshyaya, trained or educated in the art of centering the stage, in other words actresses were specially trained to act on the stage.”²

Taking all these things into consideration, one feels that the basic unit of the theatrical structure, the stage and retiring room, existed at the time of Bhasa or even much earlier. The playhouse Bharata describes in detail in Natya Shastra

¹ Aggarwala V.S. Bhartiya Kala Prithvi Parkashan, 1966 Page 117
² Aggarwalw V.S. Bhartiya Kala Prithvi Parkashan, 1966 Page 120
existed centuries before him. The other valid evidence to show that permanent playhouses were constructed for entertaining people. In the Arthashastra Kautilya prohibits the construction of permanent playhouses near a village. He feels this type of diversion may affect agricultural operations adversely."¹

SITABENGA CAVE

Some scholars point at Sitabenga cave on Ramgarh hill in Madhya Pradesh and the rectangular amphitheatre excavated at Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh as evidence of Indian theatre structures inspired by Greek models. T. Bloch has made a structural study of the caves in the Ramgarh hills and has also interpreted the inscriptions found in them. The inscription at sitbenger gives a clue that it might have been used for theatrical performances, musical concerts and sessions of poetry reading. The inscription reads:

(11) adipayamti hadayam! Sabhava-garu kavayo. e rastayam....

(12) dule vasmtiya! hasavanubute! kudasphatam evam alam g. (t.)

Poets venerable by nature kindle the heart, who... At the swing festival of the vernal full moon, when frolics and music abound, people tie garlands thick with jasmine flowers around their necks.

¹ History of theatre by Allyn and Bacon inc. University of Texas Austin Page-225
T. Bloch writes:

The great festival of the vernal full moon in the Phalguna, the modern Holi, is still called dol jata or swing festival in Bengal, and the name is by no means inappropriate. Its mention in connection with the charms of poetry to reason. There must have existed a very ancient connection between the rustic frolics of this festival and the later dramas."¹

One need not dispute the conclusion of Bloch about Sitabenga being a pleasure resort people frequented to enjoy music, dance or theatre with poetry. India has a long tradition of holding theatrical festivity on the hilltops as we have already seen. There is nothing particularly Greek about it. Ancient Buddhist literature, epics, poetry is replete with references to such enjoyment. The Nasik cave inscription of Gautami Balashri speaks of Utsava and Samaj (E.I., Vol VIII, p 60) and the Hathigumpha cave inscription of Emperor Kharavela (E.I., Vol XX, p 79), also of the same period, speaks of the dramatic festivity the venue of which seems to be the caves in the respective hills. An inscription in nearby Jogimara caves also supports the contention of Bloch by pointing to the existence of a devadasi. She might have been attached to the temples on the top of Ramgarh hill. The inscription reads:

¹ Bloch T. Caves and Inscription in Ramgarh Hills. Archeological Survey of India Report, 1903-04 page-80
Sutanuka nama

Devadasikyi

Sutanuka nama Devadasikyi I

Tam kamayitha bal (a) no seye

Devadine nama Elupadakhe I

Sutanuka by name

a devadasi

Sutanuka by name, a devadasi

The excellent among the young men loved her,

Devadinna by name, skilled in sculpture

The word lupadakhe is interpreted differently as puppet-player, banker and painter. Painter because the cave is painted. Among the paintings we see dancing girls and musicians. Bloch however takes seye to mean ‘a place to lie down’ and
says that the translation in that case would be “Sutanuka by name, a \textit{devadasi},
made this resting place for girls. Devadinna by name, skilled in painting.”

Besides, the deep artificial grooves running from north to south and from
east to west would serve no useful purpose. They could not have been drains, for
having no openings rainwater would merely collect within them and find no outlet.
But these so called steps would be very suitable as benches to seat an audience
watching a play or similar performances acted in front of them... There is
sufficient space in front of the small rock-cut amphitheatre for the erection of a
stage, and the benches themselves might easily have seated 50 or more spectators.

The interior forms an oblong, 46 by 24 feet. Along three sides run broad
rock-cut seats, 2½ feet high and 7 feet wide, slightly terraced by lowering the front
a few inches. The ground near most important feature is however two holes cut
into the floor at the entrance. They were evidently made to hold wooden posts, to
which a curtain was fastened to shut out the cold air of winter nights when the
audience retired to the interior. At such times the spectators would be seated along
the broad benches and the dancing party in front of the curtain that closed the door.

That the plan of the small amphitheatre in front of the cave, with its
hemispherical rows of rock-cut seats rising in terraces above each other and with

\footnote{54 The Critique of Indian theatre, Archeological Survey of India Report 1903-04 Page 102}
the pathways between them arranged somewhat like concentric circles and radiant resembles the plan of a Greek theatre cannot be overlooked. It will likewise be admitted that the adoption of the shape of a Greek theatre in an Indian building that served similar purposes has a strong bearing on the question”.

RANI GUMPHA

Another interesting cave theatre is located in Udayagiri hill near Bhuvaneshvar. Describing the double-storied magnificent rock-cut cave of the 2nd century BC called Rani Gumpha Percy Brown says:

This “abbey church” is a double-storied production with its cells ranged around three sides of an open courtyard, the fourth side comprising the frontal approach. A broad terrace, projected form the upper story, was originally supported on structural pillars, either of wood or stone, and these formed the verandah of the ground floor. A stairway cut in the rock at the
side gave access to this upper terrace on one face of which there is a spacious throne with arms and a foot rest, evidently the seat of honour of the abbot or other high dignitary. While the general arrangement of the cells indicates that most of them were for the accommodation of the monks, there are several supplementary chambers and recesses evidently devised for special purposes connected with the ritual, In addition there are rooms or for the preparation of offerings. In addition there are rooms for storing sacred vessels and vestments, with a place for the custodian or sacristan.

It may therefore be inferred that this arrangement of courtyard and terraces forming the Rani Gumpha constituted an open air theatre in which scenes depicted in the sculptured frieze around it were brought to life by being performed on festive occasions as a kind of passion play in the same way that the so-called devil dances are celebrated in the monastery (Gumpha) quadrangles of Tibet.¹

INDIAN CONCEPT OF DRAMA

According to ancient Indian tradition drama is a life size art practically nothing is left out of its cope. There is no knowledge (Dhyana) ,no craft (shilpa) It also means the performing arts of dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments together. Trividho shilpam nrutyam gitam vaditam cha – kaushitaki Brahana,

¹ Indian Architecture: Buddhist and Hindu, 1976 by Davids and Mrs Rhys page 29-30
Drama unfolds same by scene, act by act, the variegated saga of human life in all its complexity and colour giving total aesthetic experience culminating into joy or rasa."¹

In the first chapter of Natya shastra Bharata makes definitive statements about the nature of the dramatic art. He says;

(i). Drama is an imitation (anukeertanam) of the emotional states of the entire universe comprised of three worlds (Haven earth and nether world)."²

(ii). Drama (natya) is an limitation of the world with all its seven geographical divisions."³

(iii). Drama is animitalion (anukaranam) of emotionally rich (nana bhavopasampannam) actions and conducts of people (Lokavrulta) in different situation (nana awastha)."⁴

(iv). When human nature (Lokasya Swabhava) with its joys and sorrows (Sukhadukkha saman vita) is depicted by means of physical and other modes of acting (abhinaya) it is called drama."⁵

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¹ NS:1.116
² NS:1.106
³ NS:1.118
⁴ NS:1.111
⁵ NS:1.122
(v). An imitation of the actions of the people is called drama.”¹

(vi). The depiction of actions of people is called drama.”²

According to Indian tradition as reflected in the natya Shastra entire universe is the theme of the drama. The universe is comprised of two things: man and this environment. They appear in the poetry and drama as alambana vibhavas and uddipana vibhava. The characters in the play like the hero, the heroine are alambana vibhavas and the external environment is uddipana vibhava. The emotions, feelings of the dramatic characters are manifest through their visual expression, acting in the case of drama. As these expressions follow emotions or bhavas they are called anubhavas. Bhavas are of two kinds: sthyi (permanent) and asthayi or vyabhichari (fleeting, temporary). The synthesis of these factors gives rise to aesthetic emotions or rasas.”³

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>VIBHAVA</th>
<th>Man+His environment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alambana</td>
<td>Uddipana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seat of Emotions</td>
<td>Excites Emotions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ NS:1.121
² NS:1.105,112,116,117
³ NS:26.22.23
SHRISHANUKUKA wrote a commentary on the Natya Shastra in the 8th century which, though lost to posterity, has partially survived in the form of a few quotations given in the later works like Abhinavabharati, Dhwanyaloklochan and Kavya prakasha. While explaining the Rasa Sutra of Bharata he has explained, the concept of imitation or anukarana and introduced the idea of inference or anumiti to elucidate the theory of aesthetic communication in the context of drama. His basic theory is actor imitates, spectator infers.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) Shrishnakuka,” Commentary on the NatyaShastra Page-123
The process can be explained with the help of a diagram;

![Cycle of Imitation Diagram]

The Theory of Rasa:- There are eight principal Rasa or impression which might be aroused by a dramatic poem Srinagara – which might call the emotion of love; Vira-the emotion of heroism, Bhayanka-the emotion of fear or terror. Bibhatsa-the emotion of disgust, Adhbuta-the emotion of pathos or tender grief Randers-the emotion of anger. Hasya-the emotion of laughter Each of these may have many sub-division and in anyone work various rasa may be employed, although the types of drama are determined by references to rasa which is most important and although it is recognized that every rasas is in agreement with some and hostile to other.”

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1 The theory of drama ALLARDVCE NICOLL (1969)
Aristotle (384-322 BC), well known pupil of Plato and the tutor of Alexander the Great, has also used the term ‘imitation’ but in a positive sense. Like Indian dramaturgists he also emphasizes the role of ‘imitation’ in the artistic creativity. He considers imitation as a natural instinct (IV.6) and explains how it is a part of the creative faculty of artist (1.2,3,4) in his short work know as Poetics. In the context of dramatic arts poetry he says:

Object of imitation is men in action. Tragedy is an imitation of action (IV.2). Even dancing imitates character, emotion and action (1.5,6). Epic poetry and tragedy, comedy also, dithyrambic poetry and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms are all in their general conception modes
of imitation. They differ, however, from one another in three respects,-the medium, objects, the manner and mode of imitation, being in each case distinct.

Aristotle’s concept of imitation of action’ is not present in the definitions of drama found in the Natya Shastra, some scholars say."¹ For instance Keith says: ‘The doctrine that the drama is an imitation does not differ from the doctrine of mimesis, but there is an essential distinction in what is imitated or represented; in the shastra it is a state or condition, in Aristotle it is action’ (Sanskrit Drama, p355)." ²

ELIZABETHAN THEATRE:

The Elizabethan age witnessed the richest period in the history of England. The Renaissance coloured the thoughts and ideas of the people of Elizabethan age. Under the influence of the Renaissance the Elizabethan people made efforts to free themselves from the rigid institution of the middle ages, feudalism and the churches and to assert their right to live , to think and to express themselves in accordance with a more flexible secular code. man started to think for themselves and to question accepted beliefs. They turned more and more to the present world, to the problems of gaining wealth or statecraft of discovering itself through

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¹ Shekher,1, Sanskrit Drama: Its origin and Decline Munishuram Manoharlal 1972 Page-354
² Shekher,1, Sanskrit Drama: Its origin and Decline Munishuram Manoharlal 1972 Page-355
exploration and scientific experiment of heightening its enjoyments through art and literature.

Elizabethan theatre saw its golden period in the hands of Shakespeare, Marlow and Ben Johnson. In fact Elizabethan theatre is known as Shakespearean theatre. Morality plays saw degeneration after the period of 1500 and it attracted little serious attention from producers or critics. Great changes occurred during the period 1480 to 1540; due to such pressures as, theatrically, the rise of touring professional actors extra-dramatically and the renaissance of learning and reformation, the religious drama of the of the middle ages, which had no connection whatever with classical drama or stage, took its origin in the church service. At first the choir seems to have been the stage; but as the drama lost direct connection with the service, its required more room, and spread from the choir to the nave, while the audience was crowded into the aisles. This stage was
undecorated; but from the first, certain properties, as the sepulcher, the altar, the cross, or the manager were centers of dramatic interest.\textsuperscript{1}

After the clergy, actors had entered- perhaps in procession- each took his pace at some property, or by a chair, or a simple platform against one of the pillars; when required by action, he moved from one place to another, but when not taking part in the play he remained quiescent at his appointed station. The essential of this stage arrangements, then were fixed place called loca, sedes, domus or maisons, occupied by different actors and specifically designated and localized; and a neutral space, or platea, without localization properties. The essentials of the presentation so for as they differed from modern- r classical practices, were, first, that the actors all remained in sight of the audience throughout the performance; second that various places could be represented at the same time; third, that the neutral un propertied platea might be used to represent any place whatsoever.\textsuperscript{2}

When, by processes that were similar and nearly contemporaneous throughout Western Europe, the drama was transferred from Latin to the vernaculars, from clerical to lay actors, from the church to the market place, it carried with it these essential traditions, more realistic properties are the natural accompaniments of growing dramatic art but don't change the methods of

\textsuperscript{1} A chronical history of the London Stage, 1559-1642, by Fleay F.G. Vol-I Page-196
\textsuperscript{2} Hazlit, W.C. The English Drama and Stage under the Tudor and Stuart princes, 1543-1664, Roxburgh library, 1869 page 173
presentations. The great out of doors religious plays, although varying much in other particulars, maintained fixed and propertied stations for individual actors and an un propertied and un localized neutral zone."¹

In addition to the long cyclical dramas and the early moralities intended for out–of – door performance; there were shorter plays from the bible, or plays dealing with miracles of the saints, even plays from secular story, requiring less time, fewer properties and a simple stage setting in France. It is clear that many of these shorter plays as the miracles acted indoors by the Puy de Notre. Dame, or the later plays by the confriries, had a far simpler stage setting than the great out-of-door plays. though they might retain a multiple setting, the maisons would be few; and moralities and farces might be accommodated on a bare stage."²

During the middle ages, however, there is little to indicate any marked departure from the principles of liturgical performances. We do hear occasionally of a property that was to be of great service later, the curtain. in the eleventh century "Adam" the lower part of paradise was curtained, so that Adam and Eve could retire from view by stooping behind it. In the Chester Pegeants, The lower story was curtained off as the retiring room, and in the ludus coventria. Curtains were sometimes used to discover actors to the audience. Some attempts were being

¹ Collier, J.P. The History of English dramatic poetry the time of Shakespeare: and the Annls of the stage to the Restoration; 1831Page 302 Vol-I
² Chambers E.K. The Me Stage Vol- 2 Oxford 1903 Page 79
made to discriminate between on and off the stage and some use was made of curtains. But in general the medieval performance exhibited all its actors before the audience, represented different places at the same time by mean of properties and used the neutral un propertied space to represent all other places."¹

In many other respects besides that of staging, the medieval stage handed its traditions down to the sixteenth century. Its drama was in the hands of amateurs, it developed methods and traditions of acting. It undertook the representation of all kinds of scenes and events in the open air, without the aid of a roof, wall, scenery, or artificial light. Its stage was exposed to spectators on all sides. Not only in these general respects, but in the nature of situations, types of character and methods of acting, it created traditions that influenced Shakespeare's stage. In the matter of costume, for example, this influence can be traced. On costume medieval plays largely assigned to certain guilds in order to secure the most attractive exhibition possible of dress and properties. The play the 'Magi' was given to the jewellers, the play of "Naoh" to the ship builders the play of the "harrowing of the hell" to the bakers; and the various guides view with each other in costly, elaborate costumes, as well as in effective acting. Entertainment processions and various celebration of court also served to foster public taste for expensive dress and machinery. Costume on the Elizabeth stage was likewise elaborate and anachronistic, and contributed

¹ Chambers E.K. The Me Stage Vol. 2 Oxford 1903 Page 105
largely to stage spectacle. however strange and conventional the medieval stage may seems to us, it was often as realistic as its limitations would permit. A praticable art was provided for the play of "Noah"; a lake of sea was represented by an actual ditch when possible; and a palace, at least by a throne. Compared with modern realistic effects, this stage may well be called symbolic; but it strove to make its mimic world approach as near to the real world as possible, though it cheerfully accepted inadequate means and refused to permit any necessary incongruities to destroy the enjoyment of illusion."

By 1500 the European stage had started on its transitional era. Knowledge of the classical theatre as well as of the classical drama was revived. In Italy Latin plays were given elaborate presentation and humanistic imitation were now acted and not merely recited. In England neither the classical theatre nor drama was to exercise much direct influence for another fifty years nor is Mr. chambers quite right in including the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary in his volumes on the medieval stage. But if both stage and drama were still medieval, both were changing. In England old miracles, and moralities continued, but farces, secular stories and educational and controversial matters competed with Biblical and moral

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1 A chronicle History of the London stage, 1559-1642, by Fleay F.G Vol-I Page -245
subjects. the older forms were giving way to short morality, usually mixed with farce, a kind of play that took the name interlude.\textsuperscript{1}

The medieval methods of performance could still be found, not only in the surviving guilds plays, but in the performance of such here plays as Lindsay's "Three Estates" and Skeleton's "Magnificence" and indeed in the many other plays given at court, or at some place where elaborate presentations could be provided. But this kind of play was gradually disappearing Instead of out-of-door performance once a year, the public was coming to desire frequent short plays. The schools and universities became the chief centers of dramatic activities, and a class of professional actors was growing rapidly in importance.\textsuperscript{2}

The so-called Interludes represent the new method of performance: very short plays, requiring only an hour or so to act, and suitable for performance either indoors or outdoors, by a few actors, or an extemporized stage. the main difference between this performance and that of the middle Ages was the recognition of the longer remained in a view, unless they were taking part in the play. Another difference is found in the small importance, it was difficult to the Domus or Loca. In this simple performance, it was difficult to provide elaborate properties; the stage was generally a small platform, and may be said to represent the medieval

\textsuperscript{1} Lawrence, W.J. The Elizabethan playhouses and other studies. Stratford 1912, Page-272
\textsuperscript{2} Matthews B-A Study of Drama 1910 oxford university Press, Page-170
platea. When, however special places were represented, they seem to have been as carefully propertied as were the maisons and Domus. In the interlude, the drama was brought indoors, given a platform by the travelling professional companies.\textsuperscript{1} Though the main movement was lowered to simplification of the stage to suit the exigencies of the shorter plays and the travelling companies, there were tendencies in the opposite directions.

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The court of Henry VIII in its early years was much given to entertainments and spectacles. These shows involved extravagant expenditure on machines, costumes and properties. Huge pageants were wheeled into the halls, laden with imposing castles, bowlers, mountains or other structures, in which gentlemen of the court represented some allegorical or mythological device. These shows with

\textsuperscript{1} Matthews B-A Study of Drama 1910 oxford university Press, Page-172
their tableaux and pantomimes and their accompanying music and dancing, required only scanty dialogue and bore little resemblance to regular drama but they unquestionably encouraged elaboration and not simplicity in dramatic representations.  

In the main they offered no marked departure from similar tableaux and spectacles of preceding reigns though they adopted new device and amusements from abroad, as notably the Italian Masque. But they tended to presume the multiple setting of the medieval stage and to elaborate it. In the presentation of the play or any kind of spectacle at court or university, the opportunity was seized for building castles, mountains and clouds and for preparing realistic hunting scenes, rainstorms battles and so on. Such performances were, of course, by amateurs gentlemen of the court or university; but they might also be shared in by the professionals players of interludes. Indeed the professionals gained their only status in society as servitors of king or noble, and might earn their living partially by performing at court and partially by performing at court and partially by travelling from town to town. Further a special class of actors was created by the employment of choir boys in acting plays. The children of the royal chapel gained

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1 Calendar of letters and Papers, Foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII. Ed. Brower, J.S., et al 1862- New Yorl Page 113
an especial prominence through their skill in dancing, singing and acting, Henry VIII and in the early Elizabethan’s reign surpassed the adult professionals in court favor. The court stage thus tended, to create a special set of theatrical practices different from, whatever the variety of theatres or methods of staging it was not until 1576 that the drama had a permanent and influential abiding place, and not until then do we have any stage or playhouse which can certainly serve as a models for the future.”¹