INTRODUCTION

India is one among the greatest of repositories of performing arts, particularly those of classical, folk, devotional and modern traditions. The sheer enormity and diversity of its cultural expressions in music, dance, drama and theatre are the envy of many nations around the world. When we hear the word ‘Indian theatre’ Sanskrit drama will flash in our mind. The study about the origin and development of Sanskrit drama has been a complex one engaging the endeavour of many scholars.

The first well arranged work that one could find on Sanskrit dramaturgy is the Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata. In the field of Sanskrit dramaturgy the place of Bharata’s Nāṭyaśāstra is unique by its antiquity as being the pioneer work in the field. And in it the dramaturgy has been discussed so elaborately, touching all aspects and not leaving a single one that it presupposes the existence of some theatrical works already written, in whatever form they may have been. As theory presupposes practice, it can be very well inferred that there could have been works on dramatics written in many forms on which Bharata based his magnificent work - The Nāṭyaśāstra.
Bharata himself has shown the divine origin of drama. According to Bharata, Lord Brahmā created the Nāṭya Veda in response to the request of the deities in charge of the ‘eight directions’, to synthesise a fifth Veda. This Nāṭya Veda was audio-visual, entertaining and accessible to all castes especially the Śūdras and women who were not allowed to recite the Vedas. The fifth Veda containing all the sastras and history was thus made. It contained the elements of the four Vedas. The mode of subject orientation was adopted from the Ṛgveda, mode of rendering (song) from the Sāmaveda, mode of indication (acting) from the Yajurveda and appreciation of expressed sentiments from the Atharvaveda.

2Kālidāsa in his Mālavikāgnimitra, while describing the term ‘Drama’ in a poetic way, echoes what has been stated above.

1. महेन्द्रमुख्यवैवैस्कतः किन्त पितामहः। कीडनीयकमिच्छामो दृश्यं श्रव्यं च यद् भवेत्॥
   न वेदव्यवहारं संशयायः। श्रूवाजातिषु।
   तस्मात्सुरुजापरं वेंद्रमं पतन्त्रमं सर्ववाणिकम्॥
   एवमस्विति तानुक्त्वा देवराज्य विसृज्यं च।
   सम्मार चतुर्गुणं वेदान्य योगामास्याय तत्तवित॥
   धर्म्यमर्थं यशस्यं च तोपदेः ससंगमम॥
   भविष्यतशं लोकस्य सर्वकर्मकुदर्शकम॥
   नात्यायं पतन्त्रमं वेंद्र सेतिः जायं काश्यपमु॥
   एवं संकल्पमयं भगवान् सर्ववेदान्तुसस्या
   नात्यायं तत्तथं चतुर्गुणादिभक्तविवस्य॥
   जगाह पाठ्यमुख्यवेदात्मः मीतमेव च।
   यजुवेदादिभिन्यान् सारानाभ्यं त्रिपिठ॥
   वेदोपवैः संबद्धो नात्यवेदो नमत्माना।
   एवं भगवता सुष्टो ब्रह्माण्य सर्ववेदिना। NS I 11-18

2. वेदानसिद्धमानन्तरं मुनयः। कालं कलु चाक्र्षुषं रक्षणेऽमुक्तगत्वितको स्वय়ং बিভद्रं ब्रह्म।
   त्रागुण्योद्बक्त्रेत्रौ लोकोपरितं नानां द्रुततेन नारं भिन्नरुपेऽजनस्य बहुधाप्येकं समाराधनम्॥
The sages believe this to be a charming visual offering made to the divine beings. It has been divided into two by Lord Śiva himself within his body in unison with that of Umā. Thus the three qualities, multitudes of mundane deeds and the various experiences evolved.

Indian Philosophy treats drama as an audio-visual ritual (yajña). The above statement delineates that in the latter there is action, in the former, acting. Ceremonies in a yajña are related to one another. All the acting in a drama are connected to the main plot. A yajña is a religious ritual; so is a drama. Drama is always pleasant, as its form is artistic, realising the aesthetic sublimation.

Scholars have tried to trace the origin of Sanskrit dramas in;

(1) The dialogue hymns of the Vedas

(2) The religious activities accompanying yajñas

(3) Secular activities,

(4) The possible foreign influence.

From the Mahābhāṣya it is evident that one can listen to the actor as well as the singer. It is typical to present an absolute proof to establish that during Patañjali’s time the drama in its full form of action allied to speech was present. The argument that all the elements of drama

3. Yajña - A selfless action which is meant for the welfare of the society.

4. पतञ्जलि:, पातञ्जलमहाभाषयम् नतस्य शृणुति, वनिकस्य शृणुति 1.4.29. अगासीपरम: 2.4.77. नतस्य भुकतम् 2.3.67. तिम्बात् स्वीपुस्योज्जिनि भूकुमे टाप्र प्रसन्यति 4.1.3.
existed in primitive form may thus be accepted. Numerous data are available to conclude that the folklore, prose, dance and mime have been inseparably connected to one another. Several such associations were the constituents of religious and magical ceremonies. All these go back to explain that the root nāṭ in Prākrit form is equivalent to the root nṛt in Sanskrit. The root nṛt stands to mean 'dance'. In the further elucidation there is a statement that common Sanskrit word nāṭaka is treated as neuter gender. Nāṭa (actor) is masculine gender. According to the grammar in Sanskrit to make nāṭa (bhrukumsa) in masculine gender need not be suffixed by tap (a suffix used to denote feminine gender). This statement is indicative of the fact that nāṭaka existed and deep discussions were conducted during period of the Mahābhāṣya. The fact that literary dramas begin with the introductory prayer, nāndi goes to prove that the 'mime-dance' and the dramatic performance that originated from it constituted an essential element of the religious cult.

Some scholars have stressed on the possibility of the secular origin of drama. Weber Albrecht⁵ writes in his work that it has been uniformly held hitherto that the Indian drama arose, after the manner of four modern dramas, in the middle ages, out of religious solemnities and spectacles and also that dancing originally subserved the religious

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purposes, but in support of this latter assumption, not a single instance was met in the śrāuta or grhya sūtras. Taking the support of Bharata R.V. Jagirdar6 writes, it is interesting to note that everything had connections with lower castes. Not only the art and the advocates, but even the first patron of drama was an anti Vedic if not a non-Aryan king. King Nahuṣa is spoken of as the first patron of drama in the mortal world. It can be seen that Sanskrit drama has the least to do with religion and religious rites; that it is the work of people treated as anti-Vedic, fiends and that its origin is to be sought in the interest of the castes lower to Brahmans. Jagirdar draws the conclusion that it was thus the post epic sūta and not the puppet shows, that oriented dramatic representation. He further states that it is the recitation of epic and not that of religious hymns that was used on the Bhāratī stage, and the recitation of the sūta and the kuśīlavas formed the Sātvatī stage. On the Kaiśikī stage the dansuse (naṭī) was introduced; and the Ārabhaṭī was the final mode of the ‘full body in action’. In its structure from beginning to end, Sanskrit drama took its hero from the sūta and the epics in such a way that he never recited and from the religious lore or any matter from the host of Vedic Gods. To sum up, all the above discussions point to the pertinent fact that Nāṭya has been structured keeping in mind common man has the target audience.

There must have been an interaction and amalgamation, fusion and synthesis among many blends of culture. The ritual did not consist merely of the singing of songs or recitation in honour of the God, it involved a complex round of ceremonies in some of which there was undoubtedly present the elements of dramatic representation, that is, the performers of the rites assumed for the time being, personalities other than their own. We do not have the slightest evidence to underline that the essential synthesis of the elements and development of a plot, which constitute a true drama, were made in the Vedic age. On the contrary there is every reason to believe that it was through the use of epic recitation that the latent possibilities of drama were evoked and the literary form created. Though the origin of Hindu drama may be dated before Pāṇini, when the rituals connected with Lord Śiva might have gradually given rise to this art, we do not possess any definite proof to establish the time during which such an event occurred.

**INDIAN TRADITIONAL THEATRE - A STUDY OF ITS AESTHETICS AND DYNAMICS**

It is commonly believed that the traditional theatre in many ancient Indian cultures had religious and mythological attributes. Such a theatre is becoming increasingly irrelevant in the context of urbanised societies. Some consider the traditional theatre as a mere museum piece having only limited archival value.

It is true that the traditional drama is mostly associated with
the religious rites also and that this type is more spectacular and richer in artistic techniques and content than the drama dealing with the social life. But few realise that the traditional theatre of both religious and secular attitudes and values is fully integrated with the unified character of life and depicts the total life of the people.

One of the striking traits of the religiously motivated and ritualistic theatre of India is that it presents contemporary social life and sharply projects secular values. The social content is imparted into these plays through impromptu prose-dialogues often spoken by the jester and the minor characters. In the 'Song dialogues' the men and materials of the plays are kept in their superhuman divine positions. They are brought down to the human and social level of the actors themselves through impromptu Prakṛt prose dialogues. Comments on social evils are often made with greater pungency in the secular plays, dealing with medieval legends, popular history and social themes.

The element of dynamism is inherent in the very nature of the structure and the aesthetics of the traditional theatre. It does not become static and rigid with codified laws. It keeps changing and adapting itself to the new socio-cultural contamination, hybridisation and assimilation of new material and techniques constantly enlarging its dimensions in time and space. The religion-oriented traditional drama having evolved and grown in the temples during the medieval centuries, when left the temples and came on the streets in the form of a grand processional and
pageantry drama, it freely adopted and assimilated many elements from the social life of the people. It integrated into the main stream, manifestations of the social life of the people, their beliefs, customs ceremonies, their plastic and graphic arts, poetry music and dance.

Artistic continuation and constant exchange of content and techniques in various art forms of folk and classical traditions is a feature of global aesthetic and cultural history. Such continuation is a case true to India also.

**NATURE AND CONVENTIONS**

Indian traditional drama, like its counterpart in any other country, is the richest and most deep-rooted element of the traditional culture. It is a composite art in its most comprehensive sense of the term. Traditional theatre represents many stage conventions and dramatic practices of the Sanskrit theatre and it is also the inheritor of the medieval variety theatre. The convention-based theatre presents an interesting fusion of the realistic, stylised, illusionistic and presentational elements. It enjoys the freedom from the unities of time and place. It also determines the scheme of stylisation. There is great elaboration and improvisation.

**MUSIC AND DANCE**

The traditional theatre of various types and of different regions is operatic in character and the acting is highly stylised. Music and dance are essential and integral elements of the theatre and become important
factors in building up its distinctive character. The play is really sung and danced and spoken and enacted.

Music is the very dynamics of the traditional theatre and it determines the space, the rhythm and movement of the drama. It grows from within the drama and is functional and organic. It accompanies the actor’s entries and exits and helps in accentuating his gestures and movements. For example, in Kathakali, in the story of Narakaśuravadha, the śṛṅgāra of the celestial damsels (apsaras) and their kummi (a special type of dance) are described. This creates an atmosphere of easiness and happiness. But the next is the purappādu of Nakrataṇḍi. The music is changed and hence the atmosphere. Many instances like this can be seen in Kathakali, Kūṭiyāṭṭom and other performing arts. Music is highly stylised in Kathakali and Yakṣagāna. The drum is predominantly used in the traditional theatre and has great acoustic and dramatic value. The orchestra plays in union with the vocal line and repeats the melodic phrase giving relief to the actor to present choreographic patterns and enrich his gestures by an elaborate interpretation of the text.

With dance-like movements, striking poses and codified gestures the play builds spectacle of choreographic beauty and pictorial charm. In the temple-based drama the dance content is very rich and highly developed, but in secular forms like Khyāl and Terukūttu it is rather then, just enough to sustain the choreographic character of the play. The
music and the choreographic structures of the performance are interdependent and fully integrated.

CONVENTIONS OF SPEECH

The practice in the traditional theatre is guided by a set of conventions and the nature of stylisation. These conventions and the scheme of stylisation are determined by the staging conditions of the plays and dramatic values of the traditional theatre. There is a whole set of conventions determining the nature and the delivery of dramatic speech. Repetition, superimposition, simultaneous speaking and alternation of the speech between the character and the chorus are some of the devices of the speech delivery. The alternation between the singing of the chorus and the actor-dancer singing his lines or presenting a drama sequence is recitation, mime and dancing.

There is the alternation of the prose and the verse dialogues and sometimes more than one language is used in dramatic dialogues. There are impromptu prose-dialogues having the nature of the secondary spoken word, elaborating the content of the song dialogues. The dialogues are often treated as comments and spoken or sung by a chorus. There are soliloquies, semi-soliloquies, and monologues. The speech treated through many conventions and presented as chanting, singing and rhythmic prose extends the range of the theatre and lives beyond the words.

In the scheme of dramatic speech the use of chorus in most of the forms of Tamasa and Terukkuttu and the temple-based forms, like
Rāsalīla, Rāmalīla and Ānka Naṭṭall in line with the essential tenets of Nātyadharma. The chorus in Indian theatre has a different character though it performs many functions similar to that of the chorus in Greek theatre.

**PRELIMINARIES**

One of the many features of the traditional theatre is the elaborate *pūrvarāṅga* - preliminary. The classical Sanskrit theatre observed elaborate preliminaries which have been described in great detail in the Nāṭyaśāstra. The only surviving form of Sanskrit theatre, Kūṭiyāṭṭom performed in the temple-theatres of Kerala, follows the practice of the Sanskrit theatre and there is a great elaboration that it takes four to five days in the presentation of the preliminaries. There is a prelude, an invocatory song, formal presentation of the characters of the play, the introduction of the time and a discourse on some philosophical subject. The preliminaries in the traditional theatre are presented on the pattern of the Sanskrit theatre, in an adapted and simplified version. *Sātradhāra* and *vidūṣaka*, the two stock characters are the main functionaries in the presentation down from the Sanskrit theatre.

**TIRAŚŚILA**

The use of *tiraśśīla* in many forms such as Rāsalīla, Yakṣagāna, Kūṭiyāṭṭom, Kathakaḷi etc. is an interesting practice of the traditional theatre. A coloured piece of cloth, sometimes having two or three strips of different colours, is used on the stage. It is held by two stage
assistants and used several times during the course of a performance to manage the entries and exits of the characters and to monitor the time and space. On the bare and natural ‘stage’, just a floor-area or a platform stage, used for the traditional plays, the change of locale and time is managed by the use of *tiraśśīla*. Thus the time and space are treated non-realistically and metaphysically.

The *tiraśśīla* device in Kathakaḷi has been greatly cultivated and formalised. It is used to usher in certain types of characters, generally royal aggressive and the ferocious, such as Hanūmān, Rāvaṇa, Bāli and Duryōdhana.

**ACTOR-AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP**

Intimacy between the actors and audience is a factor, which vitally determines the nature of the Indian traditional theatre making it a participative theatre. Intimacy is achieved through many devices and conventions. Traditional theatre is predominantly an audience-conscious theatre. In case of the social and secular theatre, a performance is a community activity and the audience is deeply involved in it. For example in Muṭiyettu one can see this relationship very well. In the battle between Kāli and Dārika the spectators will encourage them by standing on both sides and the performance of the comic character Kūḷi is fully appreciated if at all the audience is also active. In Kūṭiyāṭṭom and Kathakaḷi for the character like *niṇam* etc. also, audience’s support and co-operation are needed.
ACTOR’S THEATRE

According to the Indian classical theatre the acting is an audio-visual commentary and the actor as well as the audience participate in a highly concentrated art which calls for the utmost attention and absorption on both sides. The actor is well-versed in all sorts of the theatre-acting, mime, dance, music etc. Traditional theatre, by adopting certain practices and evolving many conventions, has strengthened the position of the actor and his art in many ways. This is a technique of ‘trance’ and of the integration of the actor’s psychic and physical powers from the most intimate layers of his being. His refined instincts thus spring forth in a sort of ‘trans-lumination’.

In conclusion it can be said that Sanskrit drama originated from the primitive ballad poetry and including elements of popular dance and music, passing from its rough form came to be a fully developed and perfect form in the mighty hands of Bhasa, Āśvaghoṣa, Śūdraka, Kālidāsa, Viśākhadatta, Bhavabhūti etc. and then, degenerated in the hands of lesser playwrights, and became stereotyped. It combined the two cultures in itself, the pre-Āryan and the Aryan and also fused religion with the secular themes. Drama in general may be said to have evolved from two causes, each of them, lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation implanted in man from childhood; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated. The theory of imitation accepted by all the dramatic theoreticians, in one way or the other, pinpoints the fact that
man instinctively wants to imitate and reproduce what he observes, and he gains pleasure in his creation. Sanskrit drama also must have originated, like other arts, being aroused through this significant and psychological phenomenon.

From the plays one can learn that Sanskrit theatre was sophisticated, if at times somewhat uneven in quality. Some of the finest poetry of the ancient world may be found in Sanskrit drama, and several of the ancient plays compare favourably with dramatic literature elsewhere in the ancient world. A survey of the plays and dramaturgical texts lead us to believe that the theatre was conventional. That is, it called upon actors and spectators alike to understand and decipher a complex code of gestures, movement patterns, and vocal or verbal expressions. Sanskrit theatre also was multidimensional. Dance and music contributed to the overall effect, although the extent of their interaction with dialogue and verse is far from certain. This was a theatre of imagination; costume and make-up were stylised and symbolic, not replicas of those of everyday life or of a particular historical period in the scenery was used sparingly, if ever, in the staging of plays. Special buildings appear to have been constructed for performances. Theatre had a sacred significance. Numerous rituals accompanied the construction of kūttambalam, manḍapām etc., the stage was consecrated before performance, and from all the evidence, theatre served a religious function, as well as being entertaining and educational.
At no other time in India's long history has one genre of theatre been so universally understood and imitated throughout the sub-continent. This was primarily due to the predominance of the Sanskrit language, which was used in court and in religious rituals. Various forms of Prākṛts (local languages and dialects) are also found in the surviving works. But Sanskrit was the language of major male characters; and although the theatre of this period thus had a multilingual character; it is regarded as Sanskrit rather than Prākṛti theatre. Sanskrit theatre was the national theatre of its day, reflecting the dominance of civilization represented in the plays throughout India. As a court and temple-supported art, theatre was exclusive rather than popular in its appeal.

Although Asia boasts of many other ancient civilizations, India seems to have been the first country of the continent to support an active, sophisticated theatre. And yet the theatre in India came into being at a relatively late date, compared to the development of theatre in Greece. However, the theatre finally took shape in India about the 2nd century B.C.. It confined virtually uninterpreted for at least twelve hundred years, and when it came to an end it did not disappear overnight. Beginning around the 10th century A.D. no more significant dramatic poets appeared on the scene, but from time thereafter, authors tried their hands at writing Sanskrit plays in the style of acknowledged classics.

Thus one can see a continuity in Indian theatre which was becoming more developed and refined. Starting with the folk art forms
like Teyyam, Paḍayaṇi etc it travelled to Kūtiyāṭṭom through Muṭiyettu in which some classical touch is there. From Kūtiyāṭṭom, which is the typical art form of Kerala's traditional theatre, Naṅgiarkūttu evolved. At the same time Kṛṣṇanāṭṭom was flourishing in which Nṛttatva was given more importance and acting was supported by music. Kathakaḷi is the most refined from of all these which is blended with Nāṭya, Nṛttatva, Nṛtya, music, rhythm etc. The most advanced form of Indian traditional theatre is Tanatunāṭakam. This is a mixture of traditional and the modern theatre. By keeping the pattern of traditional theatre it makes appreciation of rasa more easy and transparent.
CONCEPT OF ABHINAYA IN GENERAL

After discussing the origin of drama, construction and concept of the play house (Maṇḍapavidhāna) worship of the deities of the stage (Raṅgadaivatapūjāvidhāna), characteristics of Tāṇḍava dance (Tāṇḍavaḷakṣaṇa), Rites in the Prologue (Pūrvaraṅgavidhāna), emotions evolving appreciation (Rasavikalpa) and exposition of emotion (Bhāvavyāñjaka) in the chapters I to VII, Bharata deals with the use of head and face (Uttamāṅgābhinayā) in Ch. VIII. When Bharata is asked by the sages what abhinaya is, and about the details of abhinaya, he starts an elaborate discussion on the same. In this discussion one could see a psychologist, a physiologist, a behavioural scientist, an anthropologist, a naturalist, an aesthetician and a dramatist all at the same time in Bharata. Bharata starts with the derivation of the word abhinaya. Here the stanza-

अभिपूर्वस्तु गीत्र धातुरभिभिमुख्यार्थनिर्णये।
यस्मात् पदार्थानम् नयति तत्साधिभिनयः स्मृतः॥

It may be explained as - abhi is the prefix. The root niś means, obtaining or achieving something. According to the sutra ‘एर्च्’ the suffix ‘अर्च’ is to be added to abhi+ niś to obtain the form ‘abhinaya’. The root niś with the prefix abhi means to bring forth. Since the poetic senses are brought forth to the spectators or since the objects are being carried towards this direction it is called abhinaya. Further, since the objects are represented by means of gestures of the torso and limbs - both main and
auxillary - it is again designated as abhinaya. Bharata further delineates the four fold abhinaya -

आध्यको वाचिकशैव ह्वाहार्यः शतिककस्तथा।
ञ्रेयस्तवभिनयो विप्रायस्तुर्धा परिक्षितः॥

The representation in a dramatic performance is of four kinds as Āṅgika - gestural (conveyed by bodily actions), Vācika - vocal (conveyed through words), Āhārya - costumes and make-up (conveyed by dress, ornaments, facial and body colouring and line making etc.) and Śātvika - related to the mind (by the manifestations of the internal feelings such as stupifaction, unconsciousness, perspiration etc.)

Bharata attaches great importance to the Śātvika mode and deals with its detailed intricacies in chapters VI & VII. Expression of feeling is conveyed to a stranger only by gestures or through organs. Hence Āṅgikābhīnaya and mutual conduct or movements on the stage comes next and it is dealt with in chapters VIII to XIV. The mode of verbal delivery is then taken up which extends over chapters XV to XX. Then comes Āhārya i.e. facial make-up, scenic appliances and props, discussed in Ch. XXIII. The musical auxiliaries to intensify the emotional effects otherwise produced have been dealt with in chapters XXVIII to XXXII.
The gestural representation is of three kinds viz. Śārīra (related to limbs) Mukhaja (facial) and Ceṣṭākṛta (by the movements of the entire body). This is in combination with śākhās (hand poses) aṅgas (major limbs) and upāṅgas (minor limbs). In short Nātya has six sub-divisions consisting of aṅgas (major limbs) like the head, the hands, the hip, the chest, the sides and the feet. For its representation these six major limbs along with the six minor limbs such as eyes, eyebrows, nose, lips, cheeks and chin are put to use. Sthāna (The various body poses by virtue of the lower limb position) cāri (movements of single foot) and maṇḍalas (series of caris performed together) and gaits (gati) may be included in the Ceṣṭākṛta.

There are six kinds of Śārīrābhinaya. They are Vākyam, Śucā, Aṅkura, Śākhā, Nātyāyitam and Nivṛtyaṅkuram. Vākyam is Vācika, which

7. पदात्मकस्य शायिरे वाक्यं सूचारुःस्तथा।
शाखा नाट्यपयति चैव निवृत्यधुर एव च। NS XXIV 40
consists of various sentiments, meanings mixed up with rhythmic poem and prose both in Sanskrit and Prākrit. The meaning of a word, which is conveyed by Saṭṭvika and Āṅgika and is again expressed through words, is Saṭcā. Āṅkura is that which a highly talented artist automatically brings forth as manodharma. (extempore innovation). Saṅkhā is the elaboration of abhinaya involving head, face, ankle, thigh, hand and foot. Attributing something to a Nāṭya by the hint of abhinaya is Nāṭyāyitam. It is a special aspect of time that will survive only till the entrance of the next character. Nivṛtyaṅkuram is the mode of acting by which a character is acting a sentence, which is said by another, through Saṭcā, by relating it to himself. Bharata says:

अस्य शाखा च नूतं च तत्वेवाहुर एव च।
वस्तून्यभिनयस्येह विजेयायनि प्रयोक्तृथि:।।||
आदिकस्तु भवेच्छाया हादुरे सूचना भवेत्।।
अङ्कहारविनिष्ठं नूतं तु करणाश्रयम्।। NS VIII 15-16

Āṅgika has got sub-division as Saṅkhā, Āṅkura and Nṛtta. Saṅkhā, as stated earlier, is the gesture, which consists of various poses and utilisation of arms, especially the palms, while Āṅkura is only an indication that is made on the basis of the meaning of the previous passages of the text. That which is accomplished through karanaś and aṅgahāras is Nṛtta.

The differentiation of Nṛtya, Nṛtta, and Nāṭya is relevant here. That which demonstrates moods and meanings exclusively through the limbs (Āṅgikābhīnaya & Saṭṭvikabhīnaya) is known as Nṛtya. The movements
of the body devoid of all kinds of abhinayas (gestures) in the manner prescribed in connection with Āṅgikābhinya and do not convey any specific meaning are known as Nṛtta. The Nātya described by Bharata, consisting of the indication through gestures of the sentence, meaning and the moods, is employed only in dramas. At present only Āṅgikābhinya is being dealt with here.

**GESTURE AS A LANGUAGE**

Each mode of communication has a language of its own. Alphabet is the basic element of a language. Even a single syllable can communicate ideas. But in some particular contexts ideas can be communicated without uttering even a single syllable. Or in other words, gesture begins when vocabulary ends. A gesture by head, hand, eye etc. can do this. People communicate ideas occasionally with the help of a series of gestures. But they do not have a refined style of communication using gestures. It comes only as a subsidiary to spoken language. If observed curiously, it could be found that a fine system of communication, which exceeds the spoken language, can be developed through gestures. Then it becomes an art. This is precisely what Bharata did in his work.

Like every language, the 'gesture-language' also has its own alphabet. In a language a group of syllables makes a word; a group of words a sentence and so on. Thus they can give a comprehensive idea of any subject. The 'gesture language' also follows similar system. A single gesture can convey a meaningful idea and a group of gestures, which is
equivalent to a sentence, can be used to convey many ideas. Thus, anything in the world can be expressed by the wilful and systematic use of a group of gestures. According to Bharata all that happen on the stage is a dramatic expression of gesture. The movements of the limbs of the body - chiefly eyes and hands interpret the Vācikābhīnya performed by the vocalists prominently. Bharata in the NS developed the idea of gestures by any aṅga, upāṅga or pratyaṅga into a wonderful pattern. Thus, from the practical point of view, in the NS, the gestures come as a part of Śarīrābhīnaya. Hastābhīnaya is also included in it. Bharata describes hastābhīnaya in detail in chapter IX of the NS. He terms the ‘gesture by hand’ as hasta. It is also called mudrā. ‘मुद्रं यति इति मुद्रा’. That which gives pleasure is called mudrā.

During the earlier days mudrās were connected with the act of worship. By pleasing all the gods and by destroying sins the mudrās bring forth the four fold puruṣārthas. In aesthetic performances the artists contemplate God and try to please people by enacting a character’s words or feelings through the mudrās. It is believed that such an expression can accomplish the pleasure of Gods, men and even the joy of all the animals of the world. When used as a medium of communication in Nātya and Nr̥tta, mudrā is developed to the level of a highly communicable
language. Mudrā is symbolic and significant when used aptly and effectively.

The NS divides hastas into three types - asamyuta, samyuta and nṛtta hastas. The first is expressed by single hand while the second, by both the hands to express meaningful words. Nṛttahasta is just to add aesthetic appeal to Suddhanṛtta. Bharata enlisted 24 asamyutahastas 13 samyutahastas and 29 Nṛtta hastas.

असंयुतमुद्रा:—
पताकक्षिपताक्ष तथा वै कर्तिरिमुखः।
अर्धचन्द्रो हारालक्ष गुकुलन्दस्तवेव च।।
मुद्रिक्ष शिखरांक्ष कपित्य: कटकामुखः।।
सूचास्यः पताकक्षः: सर्पांजिरा: मृणार्द्धक्षः।।
काङ्क्लकोंलपायक्ष चतुर्ये भ्रमरस्तथा।।
हंसास्यो हंसपक्षः सन्दृशो मुकुलस्तथा।।
उर्णनाभस्ताप्रचूडङ्कलन्तिविशरीरति:। NS IX 4-7

All Indian theatre forms in their essential aesthetic elucidation obey in fundamentals, the NS of Bharata. The introduction of the mudrās into the stage business is a typical contribution of India. Hence Indian works on dramaturgy like the NS, Abhinayadarpana, Sangītaratnākara etc. seriously and elaborately discussed the structure and utility of the mudrā. But many of the mudrā used in Kerala theatre are different from those enlisted by Bharata. The Kerala theatre has its own way of expressing
the mudrās. At the same time it follows the NS also. This may be because of the fact that they follow a text known as हस्तमुद्राविद्यमान (Which is popular as हस्तलक्षणविद्यमान) for the delineation of the mudrās. (Some experts opine that the mudrās used in Kerala theatre are codified and made into the form of a text, by an unknown author). This fact is clearly expressed through the performance of Kūṭiyāṭṭom, Kathakali etc.

Hastalakṣaṇa-pādīpikā is an ancient text depicting the mudras. Date of the text is supposed to be 10th century A.D.. The author, as already mentioned, is unknown. Most of the scholars believe that the author must be a Keralite. No serious study has yet been done on this work. The HLD enlists 24 mudrās to be used by single hand (asamyuta) or both hands (samyuta). Most of the mudrās bear names similar to those found in the NS. But their applications (viniyoga) are entirely different.

According to the HLD the 24 mudrās are.

हस्त: पताको मुद्राख्य: कटको मुद्रितिविपि ।
कर्तरीमुखसंज्ञ शुकुतुण्ड: कपित्वकः॥
हंसपक्ष शिखरे हंसास्म: पुनरुग्जलः।
अर्धचन्द्र शुकुरे ग्रमस्तूचिकामुखः॥
पल्लवक्षिपताकक्ष मुगशीष्विद्यस्तथा।
पुनस्परशस्त्रां वर्धमानक इत्यथः॥
अर्पल उपमाग्निभ मुकुल: कटकामुखः।
चतुर्विशिष्टितित्येते कराराम्यानसम्मतः॥ तन्न 12-5

A mudrā has a beginning, a course and an end or fulfilment.
While a Kūṭiyāṭṭom or Kathakaḷi or any such art form is closely observed, one can undoubtedly feel and experience that a process of coding and decoding is taking place in all the cases. *Padārtha* are coded into the *mudrās*. E.g. lotus, Sun etc. During the performance, the *mudrās* are decoded into the *padārtha*. In three ways a *padārtha* can be coded into a *mudrā*. Thus there can be three types of *mudrās*. They are (i) Imitative (e.g. lotus), (ii) Suggestive (e.g. a bee on a flower) and (iii) Symbolic (e.g. a demon, a female etc.)

It could be seen that several art forms in the world theatre accepted body language as a strong medium of communication. But *mudrā* as a powerful medium of communication cannot be conspicuously seen elsewhere other than in Indian theatre. It lends Indian theatre an independent and unique existence. It is an asset that Indian theatre ever possesses as far as Indian dramaturgy is concerned. Therefore serious studies and research in this field deserve more attention.
NANDIKEŚVARA AND BĀLARĀMA VARMA - THEIR VIEWS IN RELATION TO THE HASTALAKŚAṆADĪPIKĀ

The presentation, transfer and transmission of knowledge in any branch of wisdom occur through a series of serious teachers and the pupils. In India the entire process is accepted as a divine one and is referred to as the guruśisyaparamparā. When the guruśisyaparamparā is analysed in large frames of time, one could find different sectors formed through specific periods. Each sector has its teacher and a series of followers. Such a sector develops even into a large school of thought. Later, when sub-sector develop further schools of thoughts are evolved. Each large school which followed a single teacher referred to him as ācārya. An ācārya's views are learnt by the ensuing generations. Their views are analysed, interpreted at times rewritten in the light of the experience gained by a pupil or a school during a given period. This is essential, natural and also recommended by Bharata.

When we consider the top layers among the disciples of Bharata, over a hundred names have been mentioned. Some authors, for example, P.V.Kane refers to hundred and five disciples as Bharataputras. This shows the intimacy built between the teachers and the taught. Hence it is necessary that a study on any subject must begin by realising the origin of the texts of the subject as originally viewed by ācāryas.

Among the immediate disciples of Bharata, Dattila and Kōhala have written separate treatises. Dattila was a devout follower of Bharata
and never differed from him in his expositions, so that, when later writers wanted anything to support Bharata, they invariably invoked Dattila. Dattila’s work embraced music and dancing and its merit is seen from the existence of a commentary on it called Prayāgastabaka.

Nandikeśvara or Nandin was the first to receive the initiation into the science of music from Lord Śiva. His views have been referred to by later writers as a school of musical thought alongside of Bharata. While Bharata confined himself to music in relation to drama, Nandikeśvara stressed on the musical requisites for cermonials and festivals.

Later writers have expressed that Nandikeśvara differed widely from Bharata not only in his theories but also in the nomenclature. AG, for instance, quotes a verse as Nandimata in connection with mrdaṅga.

In this discussion the views of Nandikeśvara (AD) and Kārtika Tirunāl Bālarāma Varma (BRB) have been considered along with those of Bharata, as the hastābhīnaya mentioned in them lie very close to those mentioned in the HLD. As the author of the HLD is unknown hitherto, probably an author-based reference could establish the relevance of the prayōgas and, viniyōgas specified in the HLD.

**NANDIKEŚVARA AS IN ABHINAYADARPĀṆA**

Abhinayadarpaṇa is a work on dramaturgy written by Nandikeśvara. The date of the AD is also under controversy. However, it
is assumed that the AD was written after Bharata's NS. The AD treats in detail with the Āṅgikābhīnaya which includes gestures, postures and movements dependent on feet.

The gestures include nine gestures of head, eight gestures of eyes and different types of hand gestures. The hand gestures include the gestures by both the hands (samyutahasta), gestures by single hand (asamyutahasta) gestures for representing different gods, the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu, different castes, various relations, nine planetary deities and the method of moving hands in dance.

After treating gestures, the AD treats postures and various movements of the body depending principally on feet. They are:-

i) Maṇḍalas and sthanakas or sixteen modes of standing and resting

ii) Utpāvānas of five kinds or leaping movements

iii) Bhramaris of seven kinds or flight movements

iv) Cāris, and gatis (eighteen kinds of gaits).

One peculiarity is noticed in the treatment of the above items. Unlike that of the gesturers, in definitions of various postures (except in the case of sthānakas) the feet movements are not accompanied by their viniyāga (application). An explanation of this fact is available at the end of the AD in the following terms:-
“Mandalas, utplavanas, bhramaris, cāris and gatis according to their relation to one another, are endless in number and variety. Their uses in dance and drama are to be learnt from the sastra, tradition of the school and through the favour of good people and not otherwise.” This probably shows that at a very early time when no work was complied, the uses already recorded in case of the above movements, depended solely on the principle known to teachers.

THE ABHINAYADARPANA AND THE NĀTYAŚĀTRA

Bharata-śāstra has been many times referred to as an authentic in the AD, and it corroborates the essentials of the NS, chapters VIII to XI which treat Āṅgikābhinaya in detail. Hence the comparison of the two works is necessary.

(a) Head gestures - According to the NS (ch.VIII) there are thirteen gestures of head which Nandikesvara has only nine. Among them five gestures have common names in both the works; besides this, the names of two gestures agree partially.

(b) Eye gestures - According to the NS (ch.VIII), there are three classes of eye-gestures, such as (i) eyes for expressing eight rasas
(ii) eyes for expressing sthāyībhāvas, (uninterrupted psychological states) and (iii) eyes for expressing saṅcāribhāvas (complementary psychological states). But the AD is not so elaborate in its classification. It enumerates only eight kinds of them.

(c) Neck-gestures - The NS (ch.VIII) enumerates nine kinds of these gestures while the AD gives four kinds of them. The two enumerations possess no common name.

(d) Hand-gestures - Though the NS and the AD agree in classifying the hand-gestures into three classes, and these three classes possess many common names, they differ as regards the number in each class as well as in their definition and application.

(e) Cāri - According to the NS, cāris are thirty two in number and are divided into two classes; (i) earthly (bhauma) and (ii) aerial (ākāśagāmī). But the AD has only eight cāris and they constitute only one class by themselves. The two works, have no common names in their maṇḍalas.

BĀLARĀMA VARMA AS IN BĀLARĀMABHARATA

Bālaramabharata is a treatise on histrionics, mainly dealing with Āṅgikābhīnaya and primarily based on Bharata's NS and Šāṅgadeva's Sangītaratnākara. Though the work is based on numerous previous works, it is also the result of the practical knowledge of the author about the Kerala-stage. The BRB is, therefore, all the more important for those
interested in the field on Indian dramaturgy.

The BRB brings forward a general account of the various topics relating to the science of Nāṭya and it presents a detailed analysis of the various techniques of Āṅgikābhinaya. It is well known as the work of Kārtika Tirunāḷ Bālarāma Varma Maharaja of Travancore, popularly known as the Dharmarāja who ruled over the country for forty eventful years from 1758 to 1798 AD. He was not only a strong benevolent ruler, but also a poet and an artist and a patron of art and literature.

The text is not divided into chapters. It is an elaborate description of āṅga-upāṅga-pratyāṅga-abhinayas based on rasābhivyāṅjakatva and bhāvasvarūpa.

The BRB deviates from other texts on dramaturgy in several aspects. It describes 209 śīrōbhedas, 40 asamyutahastas, 27 samyutahastas, 7 vakṣōbhedas, 6 parśvabhedas and 9 kaṭībhedas.

Unlike the NS and other texts on dramaturgy it mentions about 14 sthirapādas, 16 asthirapādas and 204 sthirāsthirapādas. It does not contain any elaborate description on rasa as Bharata did in the NS.

It is remarkable that the lakṣaṇas and viniyōgas of anga, upāṅga and pratyāṅga are assessed based on rasa, sthāyi and vibhāva. Rasaviniyōgācārca (discussion on the application of rasa) has also been done in this work. Netrābhinaya in relation to each sentiment is precisely
depicted. In the BRB the author gives the definition of *pratyaṅga* as भावरसविशेषहितत्वं प्रत्याङ्गत्वम्। According to the BRB the upāṅgas expose the emotional status which the *pratyaṅgas* elucidate the meaning with reference to the textual or interpretational contexts. The definitions are more practical oriented, hence more functional. They do not convey the emotions or varying moods.

The author depended on various texts for writing his book. It is sure that the HLD which was popular in his period was also been taken as a standard for his evaluation. What he did was that he accepted and rejected some gestures from the texts available in his time with profound discrimination and manifested new ones with his practical knowledge in the art forms of Kerala theatre.

10. उपाङ्गस्य लक्षणमाह - भावरसविशेषहितत्वमुपाङ्गत्वम्।
नयनादिण्यपुपाङ्गेऽसु भावरसबोधकत्वसम्भवात्।
प्रत्याङ्गस्य लक्षणमाह - भावरसविशेषहितत्वम्।
प्रत्याङ्गेऽसु प्रीवादितु भावरसविशेषहितत्वसम्भवात्
अर्थक्यायामार्ककारित्वेऽप्रत्यानामहितत्वसम्भवात्।