

## CHAPTER-II

### NATURE AND CLASSIFICATION OF SANSKRIT DRAMA

In Sanskrit Literature, *Kāvya* is the generic name comprising all forms of poetical compositions in *Samskṛta*. Two species of *Kāvya* are recognized: audio-visual (*dr̥śya*) and aural (*śravya*). Of the audio-visual again there are two classes: drama or *Nāṭya*, and representation by gestures with a musical background or *Nṛtya*.

Drama is the reproduction of certain situations so as to induce in the spectators a sense of identification with the hero and other characters by the way the actors render them.<sup>1</sup> Thus drama is literary piece written for representation on the stage, say, it is largely for a theatre; and the theatre is a place where people meet to hear the dialogue and to see the action of the play or representation by actors.

*Bhārata* defines representation as that are of an actor by means of which he re-creates the sentiments (*rasa*) inherent in the original situation forming the theme of the drama under enactment.<sup>2</sup> Such sentiments are so re-created that a spectator of taste could only resonate with them. Representation is possible in four ways: physical, verbal, decorative and emotional.<sup>3</sup>

The *Nāṭya* is also technically known as *rūpa* or a show because it is a scene. Accordingly it is called a *rūpaka*, for it contains the assumption of parts by characters.<sup>4</sup> There are ten kinds of *Rūpakas* which are known as *Nāṭaka*, *Prakarāṇa*, *Bhāṇa*, *Vyāyoga*, *Samavakāra*, *Dima*, *Ihāmṛga*, *Utsrtānka*, *Vīthī* and *Prahasana*. Of these types *Nāṭaka* and *Prakarāṇa* are popular among playwright. A special reference to their constitution is, therefore, necessary.

**NĀṬAKA:** Among the ten primary forms, the *Nāṭaka*<sup>5</sup> occupies the first and foremost place in Sanskrit *dramaturgy*.

*Nāṭaka* or Drama is the depiction of some event or events in the life of a distinguished prince or saintly character (*Prakhyāta Rājarshi*)<sup>6</sup>. The person chosen as the hero of a *Nāṭaka* may be deemed distinguished if he is well-known in history. According to the *Abhinava Bhāratī* the distinction may be a quality either of the hero or of the action or of the place of action.<sup>7</sup>

However, there is, a divergent view taken by a school of thought presented by *Viśvanātha*, Śiṅga Bhūpāla and *Sri Kṛiṣṇa Kavi*, author of the *Mandāra Maranda* who believe that a *Nāṭaka* can have only a *Dhīrodātta* hero, and may not have a hero of any other class, namely, the *Lalita*, *Uddhata* or *Śānta*. Such a limitation imposed by this school is untenable, for this view contradicts an explicit statement of *Bharata* that the dominant quality of a hero of a *Nāṭaka* may be, either *Udatta*, *Udhata*, *Lalita* or *Śānta*<sup>8</sup>. Nor is this view supported by the practice of the Playwrights. For example, the *Nāṭakas* like *Svapnavāsvadattam*, *Ratnāvalī*, *Tāpasavatsarāja*, *Pratigñyā-yaugandharāyaṇa* have *dīra-lalita* heroes, and *Veṅṛisamhāra* has a *dhirodhatta* hero in *Bhīmasena*.

On the other hand, there is a second school of thought which opines that the hero could belong only to the *dhīra-lalita* class. *Sāgaranandin*, of this school enjoins that *dhīroddhata* hero should represent a god or a superhuman being, a *dhīra-lalita* is a king, a *dhīrodatta* is a minister or a commander of forces, and *Dhīraśānta* are *Brāhmanas* and *Vaiśyas*.<sup>9</sup> This view which holds that a hero of a *Nāṭaka* should be *dhīrodatta* only. Here it differs from the *Bharata*'s construction of a *Nāṭaka* who opines that the gods should be *dhīrodhatta*, the kings should be *dhīralalita* and so on<sup>10</sup>. This is a general instruction which applies to all characters. The former instruction of *Bharata* is a special one in as much as it refers to the heroes only. Correctly following this view *Gunachandra* makes a modification and says that kings are of fourfold nature<sup>11</sup>.

Apart from the above, the hero of a *Nāṭaka* should be a saintly prince (*rājarshi*). It implies that he should be possessed of balance of mind and other sage-like virtues worthy of imitation. *Viśvanātha*, on the otherhand says that the hero of a *Nāṭaka* may be a mortal, a divine or a pseudo-divine person<sup>12</sup>. Here he points out the mortal one in *Duṣhyanta*, who can, of course, be identified as the hero of *Śakuntalā*.

Next to the above, *Bharata* directs that a *Nāṭaka* should end with the achievement of such objects as pertaining to peity (dharma),, sensual enjoyment (*Kāma*) or wealth (*Artha*) by the hero<sup>13</sup>. And together with the above three there should be the *Puruṣhārtha*<sup>14</sup> i.e., to get liberation. *Viśvanātha*<sup>15</sup> also adopts that the four *Vibhūtis* as cited by *Bharata Muni* should be present in case of a hero.

According to the law of dramaturgy, the other element of a *Nāṭaka* is sentiment or the *Rasa*. As *Bharata*<sup>16</sup> says that *Śringāra Rasa* would be present in the *Nāṭaka* which is very shining one. *Āchārya Ānandavardan*<sup>17</sup> says that the presence of *Śringāra* would be must in any *Nāṭaka*. According to him – “In the endless world of poetry, the poet only is the creator. This world changes according to his wishes. If the poet is a lover of the world (*śringārin*), the world of poesy is also permeated with *Rasa*; on the other hand, if he is an ascetic, everything is tasteless.”

Regarding *Nāṭaka*, *Viśvanāthas*<sup>18</sup> opines that the theme of the drama would be famous and include five *Saṅdhi s* where there would be a number of qualities. The sentiment of the *Nāṭaka* would either be *Śringāra* or *Vīra*<sup>19</sup>. For accomplishment of other deeds, there would be the presence of four or five important persons.

In the view of *Abhinava*, gods are not fit to be the hero of a *Nāṭaka*. While, in the opinion<sup>20</sup> of *Dhanañjaya* and *Dhanika*, the principal plot of the *Nāṭaka* which is well-known, the hero may be a great king born in a renowned family or may be a god. The hero of a *Nāṭaka* is endowed with charming

qualities, is exalted (*Dhīrodhātta*), glorious, eager for fame, a preserver of the three *Vedas*. The sentiment would either be Heroic or Erotic. Thus it is found that *Bharata* and *Dhanañjaya* and their commentators become almost agree on the point of selecting a hero, sentiment, etc. and so on in composing a *Nāṭaka*.

A *Nāṭaka* includes the five *Sandhis*, *Avasthās*, *Arthaprakṛtis*, *Episodes*, *Episodical incidents*, *Episodical conditions*, which are appropriate to the plot. It also consists of subdivisions of *Sandhis* and many other embellishments. Its heroes are generally exalted but there may be the other kinds of heroes also. It deals with the character of kings, their bravery, good qualities and lineage. It is also divided into at least five Acts in number, conforming to five *Sandhis*. It also covers almost all other elements of a drama.

**PRAKARAṆA:** *Prakaraṇa* is the other type of *Rūpakas* where the poet plans the entire plot of the play and creates out of his imagination its hero and other characters as well<sup>21</sup>. The originality of the plot is the main feature of a *Prakaraṇa* which alone distinguishes it from the *Nāṭaka* group.

The *Prakaraṇa* deals with an account of a *brāhmaṇa*, a minister or a *Vaiśhya*. The hero of this type of shows (*Rūpaka*) would generally be of *Dhīraśānta* or of *Dhīrodātta* character. But certain limitations should be followed at the time of Composition of such type. The hero of the play is to be depicted with human reservations as an ordinary individual and a middling character as opposed to the semi-divine one like *Duṣhyanta* or *Purūravās*. No divine character is to be introduced in a *Prakaraṇa*. The low characters like slaves, dancing girls and their paramours, gamblers and game stars could be used with advantage. The heroine may be a married lady, *i.e.* wife of the hero, or may be a courtesan. But such a blending of two types of heroines in a *Prakaraṇa* finds less importance with *Bharata*<sup>22</sup>.

The *Kāvyaenduprakāśa*, on the other hand divides *Prakaraṇain* three types, namely, Simple (*śuddha*), Artificial (*Dhūrta*), and Mixed (*Miśra*) according to the type of the heroine it contains. When the heroine of the play is

a wedded lady it is of the Śuddha type. with a courtesan as the heroine it belongs to the dhurta class; and with two heroines, the wife and a courtesan, it is of the *Miśhra*<sup>23</sup>. *Viśvanātha* holds that the motive of the dramatic action should be, no doubt, *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma*, but that should be essentially decadent (Sapaya)<sup>24</sup>. The additional limitation imposed by *Viśvanātha* has no support in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. And in the practice of the playwrights too, what *Viśvanātha* holds could be true only in case of the *Mṛeekatikā*, but does not find application to the *MāltīMādhava*, not to the *Mallikā-Maruta*. *Viśvanātha* continues to say that in a *Prakarāṇa* the hero should be only of *Dhīra-praśānta* type, and the erotic alone could be the ruling sentiment.

**BHĀṆA:** *Bhāṇa* or a monologue is a one-act play. Wherein the hero speaks for himself as well as for other characters who are imaginary and supposed to speak in absentia. It is feigned as though the speech of the addressee is proceeding from void. In fact, while staging a *Bhāṇa* it is only one actor that appears on the stage who addresses to a feigned listener and, for begetting his reply introduces the expression, “what, do you say” (*Kim bravīshi*) and himself speaks out the statement of the addressee. That is why it is called a *Bhāṇa* or a monologue<sup>25</sup>. The plot of the play is purely a creation of the poet’s own imagination. The body of the play measures to a single act only, and as such, it has only the opening (*Mukha*) and the conclusion (*Nirvāhaṇa*). To a large extent it contains a description of knavish exploits by a senior parasitic engaging a host of other accomplices with him. Rakes and parasites, whores and strumpets, match-makers and procurers form the dramatis persone with gaiety and mirth as their chief occupation. In their pursuits mainly valour and blissfulness (*Saubhāgya*) are depicted. The hero is gay character (*lalita*) whose mode of behaviour is ruled over by the *Bhāratī Vṛtti*. The heroic and the erotic are the main sentiment in a monologue, and as subsidiaries, the furious (*Rudra*) and the comic (*hāsya*) could be conveniently introduced. One of the important characteristics of the monologue is the use of all the ten subdivisions of the Gentle dance (*Lasyangas*)<sup>26</sup>. By virtue of predominance of the *Bhāratī*

*Vṛtti*, Various sub-division of humour (*Prahasana*)<sup>27</sup> find place in a monologue. In other particulars it borrows the pattern from the *Nāṭaka*.

**VYĀYOGA:** *Vyāyoga* or a Military spectacle is a type of shows wherein several characters disagree with one another<sup>28</sup>. A *Vyāyoga* deal with a popular topic and its chief characters are also well-known (*Khyāta*). The term ‘well-known’ is used here in the same sense as in the case of a *Nāṭaka*<sup>29</sup>. The body of the play is shorn of two junctures, the Development and Pause, and is made up of only three junctures, the Opening, the Progression and the Conclusion. The style is, on the whole, vehement; and the dispute is related to anything save a woman. The hero of the play is invariably of *Dhīrodatta* nature mostly behaving in a sober way or the *Śāttati Vṛtti*. The behaviour of his adversity is mostly vehement and characterized by the *Ārabhatī Vṛtti*. The majority of characters in this type of play should be of men. Whereas the entire play has hardly any womanly softness about it there is paucity of female characters. It is a one-act play, and the duration of action is generally limited to the course of one day only. *Bharata*, however, directs that the hero of a *Vyāyoga* should not be a divine figure, or a king, or a sage<sup>30</sup>.

**SAMAVAKĀRA:** *Samavakāra* is a dramatic representation in which there is fusion of several types of actions, characters, and motifs<sup>31</sup>. It is a peculiar in its composite elements and differs from an average show in several respects.

It cannot have a mortal hero according to *Bharata*, *Dhañanjaya* and *Śāvadātanaya* who specifically direct that the hero of *Samavakāra* could be one from among gods and demons<sup>32</sup>. *Viśvanātha*, on the other hand, observes that they should be gods and men<sup>33</sup>. He adds that these heroes should be of the gallant (*Udāta*) type<sup>34</sup>.

A *Samavakāra* has only four junctures, namely, the Opening, the Expansion, the Pause and the conclusion; and the whole of action is to be spread over three acts only. It has the absence of Catastrophe or the *Vimarśa*

*Sandhi*. Duration of action displayed in the first act is expected to take the longest time, i.e. six *muhūrtas*<sup>35</sup>. And the entire action will endure nine *muhūrtas* or eighteen *nādikas*.

The sentiment ruling over the action of the play should, in view of the type of the heroes leading the action, be chiefly heroic or furious. The erotic sentiment will, however, have its place in such show. Under the circumstances, it is obvious that the play will afford little room for the soft bearing (*Kaiśikī Vṛtti*) and more for the heroic and the horrific ones, the *Sāttvatī* and the *Ārabhaṭi*.

*Bharata* holds up that it always contains three types of horror, three types of passion and three types of deception<sup>36</sup>. The types of horror become three according as they spring respectively from an animate object like a lion or a wild elephant; an inanimate object like a bolt or a lightning; and from both the living and the lifeless objects as shouts and shrieks in a confusion caused, say, by conflagration or an invasion. The three kinds of passion are pious (*dharma Śringāra*), the Voluptuous (*Kāma Śringāra*) and mercenary (*artha Śringāra*) which differs according as they respectively relate to love with a married consort, for a spinster or an adulteress, and for concubines and harlots who are gained merely for pecuniary consideration.

*Bharata* directs that metres employed in a *Samavakāra* should be mostly irregular<sup>37</sup>, generally consisting of six or seven syllables in a foot. Viswanatha, on the other hand, prescribes that a *Samavakāra* should better have long and heavy meters like *Sragadharā*.

Lastly, in a *Samavakāra* there is one more convention: the use of the Drop (*bindhu*) and of the introductory scene (*Praveśaka*) is forbidden<sup>38</sup>. With these peculiarities a *Samavakāra* does in other respects follow the scheme of the *Nāṭaka*, subject, however, to one exception, viz., more copious use of the different members of *Vīthī* and *Prahasāṇa* should be made in a *Samavakāra* than what is done in a *Nāṭaka*<sup>39</sup>.

**ḌIMA:** Ḍima follows the pattern of a *Nāṭaka* with following points.

“It has only four acts and four junctures omitting the Pause (*garbhāsandhi*). Invariably it contains the furious (*Raudra*) sentiment, and does not admit the comic nor the erotic sentiment. It has sixteen principal characters, one more vehement than the other. They are mostly Gods, *Yakshas*, *Rākshasas*, *Piśācas*, and other infernal beings (*Pretas*). Occasionally even the *Mahārājas*<sup>40</sup> are also included. The mode of the behaviour of the characters is either heroic (*Śāttvatī*) or horrific (*Ārabhatī*) which remains conspicuous by deeds of magic, sorcery, duels and exciting feats. It also depicts the solar and the lunar eclipses and the fall of Stars and meteors in course of its action. There are no introductory scenes like the *Viṣkambhaka* or the *Praveśaka*, and the duration of action extends to a period of four days spread over the four acts of the play<sup>41</sup>.” The plot of a *Ḍima* should indeed be well-known (*Khyāta*).

**ĪHĀMRGA:** *Īhāmṛga*<sup>42</sup> is a one-act play or a play in four acts. The hero is necessarily a vehement (*Uddhata*) character, whether a divine or a human being. The whole plot hinges round the acquisition of a woman, mostly a celestial damsel, who is difficult to obtain. There are feuds and combats on her account, leading to a tragic end, though the actual death of the hero is to be tactically avoided from the stage. The plot of the play is of a mixed kind, partly, invented by the poet and partly, legendary. It is necessary to bring the leaders of the episode (*Patākā Nāyaka*) on the stage. They could be mortal or divine, but ever-ready to rise to the occasion and help the hero. According to *Viśvanātha* the number of such auxiliaries should be ten, making a total of twelve characters in all<sup>43</sup>.

**UTSRSHṬĀNKA:** *Utsrshṭānka* depicts a well-known story. *Bharata*, however, permits even an imaginary plot to form its basis. It has only moral characters. Mainly it contains the pathetic sentiment (*Karuṇa-Rasa*); and there is a total absence of strife and affrays. It has profuse lamentations of bewailing women, and speeches full of remorse and sorrow, but the end is never tragic. There is only one and one mode of behaviour, namely, the *Bharata Vṛtti*. It is

called an ‘*Utsrshanka*’ for the reason of absence of other *Vṛtti*’s; and as such, it is an isolated piece dealing with the one incident of bewailing of a person whose life is about to end<sup>44</sup>.

**VĪTHĪ:** *Vīthī* is a one-act play<sup>45</sup> with a fictitious plot. Although the rulling sentiment is erotic; other suitable sentiments could nevertheless be introduced. It contains only two junctures, the Opening and the Conclusion; all the same, it evinces within its short compass all the sources of the plot (*Arthaprakṛtis*), the germ, the drop, the episode and others<sup>46</sup>. It contains a regular Induction (*Prastāvaṇā*) and gets introduced with an abrupt dialogue (*Udghatyaka*). The characters are only a few, preferably one or two, who would manage the conversation on the stage anticipating replies through speeches from void. According to *Kohala* it is supposed to have all sorts of characters, both high and low<sup>47</sup>. Gentle Dance (*Lāsyāṅgas*) in this play is essential according to *Bhojarāja* whereas it is optional according to *Kohala*<sup>48</sup>. *Vīthī* has its own thirteen sub-divisions known as *Vithyanagas*. These *Vithyanagas* as sub-divisions of the *Vīthī* which also serves as one of the elements of the *Bhāratī Vṛtti* should be essentially adopted in the preliminary frame-work of the Induction of a play. They could also be freely used by the playwrights at almost all the places as and when needed. The title, ‘*Vīthī*’ itself signifies that it is like an avenge open for all kinds of shows and could profitably be used in all the junctures.

**PRAHASANA:** *Prahasana* is a farce with comic characters. It contains all the ten sub-divisions of *Vīthī*. It is presented in costumes suited for comic scenes like the motley dress; and the language is also light so as to tickle the audience to laughter<sup>49</sup>. The *Prahasana* is of two kinds: regular (*Śuddha*) and irregular (*Saṅkīrṇa*). The former type contains characters like monks, *brāhmana* s, heretics, servants and parasites; whereas the latter contains vehement and low characters like harols, strumpets, slaves, villains and hangers on. There is yet a third type of farce recognized by the *Daśarūpaka* and the *Madara Maranda*. The third type is distinguished by the name *Vikṛta* or the

modified farce, and contains such characters as eunuchs, chamberlains and even ascetics presenting a lover's character and making speeches full of amorous humour and dalliance. *Dhañanjaya* further adds that a farce may contain almost all the six varieties of the comic sentiment<sup>50</sup>. *Singa Bhupāla* details the different elements of a *Prahasana*, which are ten in number<sup>51</sup> and could be generally employed in all types of shows. One of the important characteristics of a *Prahasana* is the presence of all the features of Gnetle dance (*Lāsya*). In regard to other particulars, the junctures and the modes of behaviour, it follows the pattern of *Bhāṇa*.

These are the ten principal varieties of shows to which may be added a *MahāNāṭaka*<sup>52</sup>, a play of the *Nāṭaka* pattern with ten or more acts like the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* or the *Hanumān Nāṭaka*. There are also a few minor varieties called *upa-rūpakas*.