

### An Elementary Idea about Bharata's Natyashastra

'Natyashastra' or 'the art of dramatic composition' is a text book ascribed to the Sanskrit scholar and dramatist Bharat. It is believed that he lived sometime around 2<sup>nd</sup> century. It is a key text on the origin, development, styles and techniques of composition about Indian drama. In a nutshell it is a treatise on drama. The first chapter deals with the origin nature, aims and function of drama. It also deals with the first performance of God and Demon. The second chapter guides for the proper structure of theatre, stage and screen arrangement. The third chapter includes various methods of worshipping the stage and playhouse. The fourth chapter is about dance and the types of drama. The fifth chapter deals with the background of a drama, the details given in this chapter are interesting and comprehensive.

In the sixth chapter, we have the rasa theory. The word rasa is understood differently at different time. It is meant as water, juice, wine, essence, and relish and cherishing. It also meant as a primary constituents of medicine. Rasa is also known as **aesthetic pleasure or enjoyment**, a meaning or associations of meaning with which we are essentially concerned. But to understand this last implication one should know its other association, the other possibilities through which it has travelled. Natyashastra is the first extant work in which rasa has been used in as aesthetic context and with an aesthetic purpose. There are nine rasas in total. In a drama there are the following eight rasa: erotic (Sringara), comic (Hasya), compassionate (Karuna), furious (Rudra) heroic (Vira), terrifying (Bhayanak), disgusting (Bibhtsa) and awesome (Adbhuta). The ninth one is Shantam (peace). It is argued that all the eight rasas lead to the ninth one. All these rasa have something common i.e. they have some emotional content. In a drama, we will see a representation of all these 'rasas', or emotions which will entertain the audience. The main objective of drama is imitation of life. Life is incomplete without emotions. So, the aim of a successful dramatic piece is how well it will move the audience.

#### The Nataka (The Play)

The Nataka is a finest example where all the rasas (emotions) are used to construct a story line. In the Nataka, the hero and the heroine are highly idealized. In the storyline, there would be a noble hero (Charudatta in this play) who resolutely overcomes many challenging situations but never loses his virtue. In the end, he reaches his desired goal. The message of a Nataka is that the good and the virtuous never gets defeated, and eventually the love, truth and justice (Dharma) must triumph over all evils. And harmony and peace once again prevails over chaos and disturbance.

The Nataka is a powerful means for the upliftment of the society, holding out hope and faith in the goodness of life, with illustrations of how the virtuous man and the women of the past dealt with the sorrows, disappointments, trials and tribulations in their life; how they fought against the confronting miseries that mounted upon them, with bravery and honesty, and how they eventually emerged out of the difficult situations with success, glory and dignity.

The play Mricchakatika by Sudraka is a play of **ten acts**. Such type of plays is called **prakarana**. Prakarana etymologically means 'to do perfectly'. In this kind of plays sringara (love) and prahasana (comedy) are the chief rasas. The hero mostly a Brahmin, minister or merchant would be of **dhirashanta** (calm yet firm and peaceful) type. The heroine would be a noblewoman or a courtesan (Vasantasena here). There would be a wider use of Prakrit dialects in these type of plays.

In this play as well, we see that there are ten acts. The main plot is about the amorous relationship between Vasantasena and Charudatta, the two main characters of the play. The subplot consists of the escape of Aryaka from the prison and how he manages to escape in the cart which got interchanged with Vasantasena's. Then finally at the end when Charudatta is saved from the gallows by the timely intervention of Samvahaka, the two plots meet at one place.