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## **Landscape in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and clues to its spatial origin: A study in 2019**

### **ABSTRACT**

What does the landscape described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* look like? How does it compare with the landscape described in, for instance, the *Mahābhārata*? Can a reading of Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* in 2019 still yield clues about its spatial origin? Answers to these questions form the crux of this paper which also looks to a) address one of the many questions listed by scholar Kapila Vatsyayan (in her foreword to the 2016 book *NĀṬYAŚĀSTRĀ—Revisited* which contains her essay '*NĀṬYAŚĀSTRĀ—A history of criticism*') and b) to take one small step in a research area identified by another scholar Bharat Gupt (in his essay in *NĀṬYAŚĀSTRĀ—Revisited*). In answering the questions specified above, this paper looks to contribute to 'the critical analysis on the journey of the text of *Nāṭyaśāstra*' (sub-theme 2 of the conference) and to foreground insights, from studying what seems like lesser-researched aspects of the text, insights, that would be relevant in the pursuit of the framework for a new critical edition of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

### **KEYWORDS**

*Bharata, Nāṭyaśāstra, Mahābhārata, Bhāratavarṣa, Priyaṅgu, Tantra, Trika Shaivism, Pratyabhijna, Saffron, Kashmir.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Reconstructing a landscape from historical sources is hardly new and quite a regular academic practice. Consider, for instance, Map 2.1 *Routes Described by Bīrūnī* (Verdon 2015:42) constructed by Noémie Verdon in her essay *Cartography and Cultural Encounter Conceptualisation of al-Hind by Arabic and Persian writers from the 9th to 11th Centuries CE*. Far from being just an academic activity (meant only to inform academic questions about the past), such reconstructions can powerfully contribute in enabling near-instant clarity to even contemporary issues about state boundaries, the cultural identity of regions and more. One shining example of such a landscape reconstruction which clearly is of significant contemporary relevance to India's geopolitics in 2019 is Map 2 *Connected Histories-I* (Kaul 2018:110) found in historian Shonaleeka Kaul's book *The Making of Early Kashmir - Landscape and identity in the Rajatarangini*. The two examples of recent landscape reconstructions from historical sources cited above—[Verdon (2015) published by Routledge and Kaul (2018)—published by Oxford University Press] should abate any anxieties about the academic validity of the mere act of undertaking such reconstructions. With that out of the way,

what, then, does the landscape described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (*NS*) look like?

## LANDSCAPE IN THE *NĀṬYAŚĀSTRA*

The textual data from the *NS* used to construct the landscape is the following:

यथाऽचलो गिरिर्मैरुहिमवांश्च महाबलः <sup>1</sup>

इत्येवावन्तिपाञ्चालदाक्षिणात्यौद्रमागधैः  
कर्तव्यः पूर्वरङ्गस्तु द्विप्रमाणविनिर्मितः <sup>2</sup>

आवन्ती दाक्षिणात्या च तथा चैवौद्रमागधी  
पाञ्चालमध्यमा चेति विज्ञेयास्तु प्रवृत्तयः <sup>3</sup>

भारते त्वथ हैमे वा हरिवर्ष इलावृते  
रम्ये किंपुरुषे वापि कुरुषूत्तरकेषु वा <sup>4</sup>

एवन्तु भारते वर्षे कक्ष्या कार्या प्रयोगतः  
मानुषाणां गतिर्या तु दिव्यानान्तु निबोधत <sup>5</sup>

हिमवत्पृष्ठसंस्थे तु कैलासे पर्वतोत्तमे  
यक्षाश्च गुह्यकाश्चैव धनदानुचराश्च ये <sup>6</sup>

चतुर्विधा प्रवृत्तिश्च प्रोक्ता नाट्यप्रयोगतः  
आवन्ती दाक्षिणात्या च पाञ्चाली चौद्रमागधी <sup>7</sup>

महेन्द्रो मलयः सह्यो मेकलः पालमञ्जरः  
एतेषु ये श्रिता देशाः स ज्ञेयो दाक्षिणापथः <sup>8</sup>

कोसलस्तोशलाश्चैव कलिङ्गा यवना खसाः  
द्रविडान्ध्रमहाराष्ट्रा वैष्णा वै वानवासजा <sup>9</sup>

दक्षिणस्य समुद्रस्य तथा विन्ध्यस्य चान्तरे  
ये देशास्तेषु युञ्जीत दाक्षिणात्यां तु नित्यशः <sup>10</sup>

आवन्तिका वैदिशिका सौराष्ट्रा मालवास्तथा  
सैन्धवास्त्वथ सौवीरा आनर्ताः सार्बुदेयकाः <sup>11</sup>

अङ्गा वङ्गाः कलिङ्गाश्च वत्साश्चैवौद्रमागधाः  
पौण्ड्रा नेपालकाश्चैव अन्तर्गिरिबहिर्गिराः <sup>12</sup>

तथा प्लवङ्गमा ज्ञेया मलदा मल्लवर्तकाः  
ब्रह्मोत्तरप्रभृतयो भार्गवा मार्गवास्तथा <sup>13</sup>

प्राज्योतिषाः पुलिन्दाश्च वैदेहास्ताप्रलिप्तकाः  
प्राङ्गा प्रावृतयश्चैव युञ्जन्तीहोद्रमागधी <sup>14</sup>

अन्येऽपि देशाः प्राच्यां ये पुराणे सम्प्रकीर्तिताः  
तेषु प्रयुज्यते ह्येषा प्रवृत्तिश्चौद्रमागधी <sup>15</sup>

पाञ्चाला सौरसेनाश्च काश्मीरा हस्तिनापुराः  
बाह्लीका शल्यकाश्चैव मद्रकौशीनरास्तथाः <sup>16</sup>

हिमवतसंश्रिता ये तु गङ्गायाश्चोत्तरां दिशम्  
ये श्रिता वै जनपदास्तेषु पाञ्चालमध्यमाः <sup>17</sup>

द्विधा क्रिया भवत्यासां रङ्गपीठपरिक्रमे  
प्रदक्षिणप्रदेशा च तथा चाप्यप्रदक्षिणा <sup>18</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DVIVEDĪ 1992:180, Chapter 2, verse 68

<sup>2</sup> DVIVEDĪ 1992:664, Chapter 5, verse 181  
While variant occurrence of ओड् as ओद्र (and ओड् as ओद्र) merits being noted and maybe even being explored separately, this variance is not germane to the conclusions of this paper.

<sup>3</sup> DVIVEDĪ 1996:27, Chapter 6, verse 26

<sup>4</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:156, Chapter 13, verse 21

<sup>5</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:157, Chapter 13, verse 27

<sup>6</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:158, Chapter 13, verse 28

<sup>7</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:162, Chapter 13, verse 37

<sup>8</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:168, Chapter 13, verse 38

<sup>9</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:168, Chapter 13, verse 39

<sup>10</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:168, Chapter 13, verse 40

<sup>11</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:170, Chapter 13, verse 41

<sup>12</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:171, Chapter 13, verse 44

<sup>13</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:171, Chapter 13, verse 45

<sup>14</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:171, Chapter 13, verse 46

<sup>15</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:172, Chapter 13, verse 47

<sup>16</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:172, Chapter 13, verse 48

<sup>17</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:172, Chapter 13, verse 49

<sup>18</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:173, Chapter 13, verse 51

आवन्ती दाक्षिणात्या च प्रदक्षिणपरिक्रमे  
अपसव्यप्रदेशास्तु पाञ्चाली चोद्गमागधी <sup>19</sup>

आवन्त्यां दाक्षिणात्यायां पार्श्वद्वारमथोत्तरम्  
पाञ्चाल्यामोद्गमागध्यां योज्यं द्वारन्तु दक्षिणम् <sup>20</sup>

एकीभूताः पुनश्चैताः प्रयोक्तव्याः प्रयोक्तृभिः  
पार्षदं देशकालौ वाप्यर्थयुक्तिमवेक्ष्य च <sup>21</sup>

मागध्यवन्तिजा प्राच्या शौरसेन्यर्धमागधी  
बाह्लीका दाक्षिणात्या च सप्तभाषाः प्रकीर्तिताः <sup>22</sup>

यौधनागरकादीनां दाक्षिणात्याथ दीव्यताम्  
बाह्लीकभाषादीच्यानां खसानां च स्वदेशजा <sup>23</sup>

गङ्गासागरमध्ये तु ये देशाः सम्प्रकीर्तिताः  
एकारबहुलां तेषु भाषां तज्जः प्रयोजयेत् <sup>24</sup>

विन्ध्यसागरमध्ये तु ये देशाः श्रुतिमागताः  
नकारबहुलां तेषु भाषां तज्जः प्रयोजयेत् <sup>25</sup>

सुराष्ट्रावन्तिदेशेषु वेत्रवत्युत्तरेषु च  
ये देशास्तेषु कुर्वीत चकारप्रायसंश्रयाम् <sup>26</sup>

हिमवत्सिन्धुसौवीरान्ये जनाः समुपाश्रिताः  
उकारबहुलां तज्जस्तेषु भाषां प्रयोजयेत् <sup>27</sup>

चर्मण्वतीनदीतीरे ये चार्बुदसमाश्रिताः  
ओकारबहुलां नित्यं तेषु भाषां प्रयोजयेत् <sup>28</sup>

समुद्रहिमवद्गङ्गाः श्वेता हि स्युर्बलस्तथा  
रक्तमङ्गारकं विद्यात् पीतौ बुधहुताशनौ <sup>29</sup>

उत्तरास्तु कुरुस्त्यक्त्वा ते चापि कनकप्रभाः  
भद्राश्चपुरुषाः श्वेताः कर्तव्या वर्णतस्तथा <sup>30</sup>

विद्याधरास्तथा चैव पितरस्तु समा नराः  
पुनश्च भारते वर्षे तांस्तान्वर्णान्निबोधत <sup>31</sup>

किरातबर्बरान्नाश्च द्रविडाः काशिकोसलाः  
पुलिन्दा दाक्षिणात्याश्च प्रायेण त्वसिताः स्मृताः <sup>32</sup>

शकाश्च यवनाश्चैव पल्लवा वाह्लिकाश्च ये  
प्रायेण गौराः कर्तव्या उत्तरा ये श्रिता दिशम् <sup>33</sup>

पाञ्चालाः शौरसेनाश्च माहिषाश्चोद्गमागधाः  
अङ्गा वङ्गाः कलिङ्गाश्च श्यामाः कार्यास्तु वर्णतः <sup>34</sup>

Before getting to the visual landscape representation of the above textual data and specific observations on how some of it has been treated in the journey of the text (part of sub-theme two of the conference) a few quick points, on the rationale behind the choice of the background on which the above data has been plotted, are in order and as follows. Bharat Gupt, in surmising towards the end of his essay (*The Date of Nāṭyaśāstra*) that “since the 5th century B.C., when Bharata Muni compiled it, the structure of the *NS* has remained intact” (Gupt 2016:29), had also remarked in the same essay that “...an exhaustive study of the *Mahābhārata (Mb)*

<sup>19</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:173, Chapter 13, verse 52

<sup>20</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:173, Chapter 13, verse 53

<sup>21</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:174, Chapter 13, verse 54

<sup>22</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:556, Chapter 17, verse 49

<sup>23</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:557, Chapter 17, verse 53

<sup>24</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:559, Chapter 17, verse 58

<sup>25</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:560, Chapter 17, verse 59

<sup>26</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:560, Chapter 17, verse 60

<sup>27</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:560, Chapter 17, verse 61

<sup>28</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:560, Chapter 17, verse 62

<sup>29</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2004:246, Chapter 21, verse 98

<sup>30</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2004:247, Chapter 21, verse 102

<sup>31</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2004:248, Chapter 21, verse 104

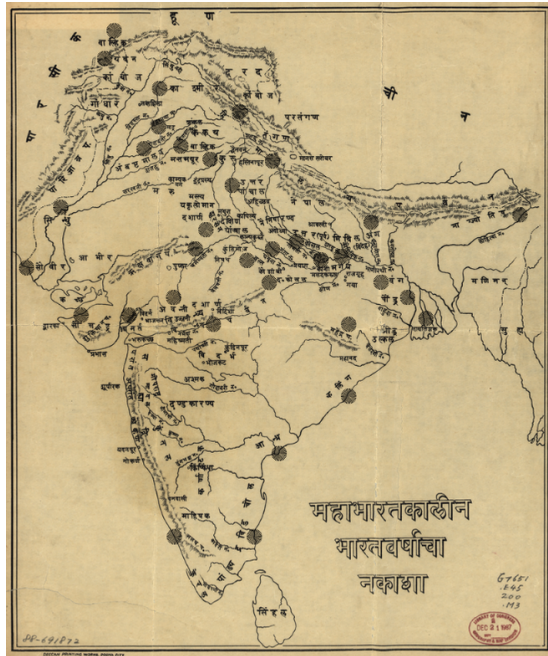
<sup>32</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2004:249, Chapter 21, verse 110

<sup>33</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2004:250, Chapter 21, verse 111

<sup>34</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2004:250, Chapter 21, verse 112

providing useful clues for research on the *NŚ* still remains to be undertaken” (Gupt 2015:20). It is in light of the above remark, and to answer questions 1 and 2 raised in the abstract, that the textual data compiled above is plotted on a 20th-century map<sup>35</sup> that shows place names in the *Mb*. It is, of course, not impossible that some verses containing geographical information from the *NŚ* may have been inadvertently missed out in the above compilation. If that turns out to be the case, it is hoped that the same will be pointed out by careful scholars in their critical comments of the above compilation<sup>36</sup>.

### Map 1: Landscape in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*



<sup>35</sup> *Map of India in the Age of the Mahabharata*. <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/144/>. Accessed on Dec 30 2019

<sup>36</sup> Some other geographical information has been noticed but the verses containing them have either not been included in the compilation above or not highlighted, if included. For example: जम्बूद्वीप, मेरु

1. Circles have been added near some place-names found both in the *NŚ* and the *Mb*.
2. Map may not be to scale; it is meant for broad representational purposes only.
3. See Appendix I for an enlarged version and Table 1 in Appendix II for place-name tabulation

Even without all the geographical data (in the *NŚ* verses collated above) plotted, one thing should become instantly clear, when one observes the above landscape: it's pan-Indian footprint.<sup>37</sup> It also becomes evident that even if the Bharata's *NŚ* contains far less geographical data than *Mb*—a cursory glance at the voluminous 63 verses after अत्र ते वर्णयिष्यामि वर्षं भारत भारतम् (*atra te varṇayiṣyāmi varṣaṃ bhārata bhāratam*)<sup>38</sup> in the critical edition of the *Mb* should make that clear—the shape of *Bhāratavarṣa*<sup>39</sup> that emerges, broadly speaking, is remarkably *congruent*. It would not at all be out of place here to recall historian Kaul's recent remarks on *Bhāratavarṣa*: “Moreover, the precise geographic location and contours of *bharatavarsha* were identified and spelled out. The Mahabharata defined it broadly yet resonantly as ‘the land north of the sea and south of the Himalayas’, a stable and subcontinental definition, if ever there was one. Not just geographic,

<sup>37</sup> When one sees this landscape, one wonders if there exists any better corroboration, from *NŚ*, to the statement: “The all India pervasiveness of the *NŚ* is most ably shown here and calls for a rethinking on many issues regarding North South relations.” (Gupt 2016:xii)

<sup>38</sup> 06.10.005 in the critical edition of *Mb*

<sup>39</sup> Note that Irfan Habib has written an entire paper titled *The Formation of India—Notes on the History of an Idea*, without alluding, even once, to *Bhāratavarṣa*.

*bharatavarsha*'s ethnic and cultural boundaries were also defined and embraced in this verse from the Vishnu Purana:

*Uttaram yat samudrasya  
himadreshchaiva dakshinam  
Varsham tadbharatam nama  
bharati yatra santatih  
Yojananam sahasram tu  
dvipo ayam dakshinottarat  
Purve kirata yasyante pashchime yavanah  
sthitah.*

North of the sea and south of the Himalayas  
That country is Bharata  
and her children Bharati.

A thousand *yojanas* from north to south  
It has Kiratas in the east and Yavanas in the west.[6]

Can there be a more explicit and clear understanding of a nation called India?" (Kaul 2019:540).

The significance of the above-mentioned *congruence*, courtesy the data in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, becomes significant when one comes across 21st-century papers with sweeping titles such as *Names for India in Ancient Indian Texts and Inscriptions* fail to even mention the *Nāṭyaśāstra*—leave alone engaging with the data found in it in any detail—even when dealing specifically with *Bhāratavarṣa* in ancient Indian texts. Another extremely striking *congruence* that makes itself easily conspicuous when a visual landscape of the *NS* is constructed, is the clustering of places along what

Upinder Singh<sup>40</sup> has outlined as *Dakshinapatha* and *Uttarapatha* in her map (6.3) titled '*Major Trade Routes of Early Historical India*'. [Emphasis added]

It is, of course, not that the geographical data found in the verses compiled above have gone completely unnoticed in the journey of the text of *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Perhaps one of the most comprehensive and critical treatments of much of the above data can be found in Monomohan Ghosh's introduction to his English translation of the *NS*, published in the mid 20th century. The first place where one encounters "geography" in Ghosh's introduction is in the subsection titled *VII - Data of India's Cultural History in the Nāṭyaśāstra*: "**In its chapters XIV, XVIII and XXIII the Nāṭyaśāstra mentions some geographical names** such as Aṅga, Anta (Anti) rgiri, Andhra, Avantī, Arvuda, Āvarta, Ānarta, Uśīnara. Oḍra, Kaliṅga, Kāśmīra, Kośala, Khasa, Tāmralipta, Tosala, Tripura, Dākṣiṇātya, Dramiḍa, Nepāla, Pañcāla, Pulinda (bhūmi), Pauṇḍra, Prāḡjyotiṣa. Prāmśu-pravṛtti, Plavaṅga, Bahirgiri, Brahmottara (Suhmottara), Bhārgava, Magadha, Madraka, Malavartaka, Mahārāṣṭra, Mārgava, Mālava, Mahendra, Mosala, Vaṅga. Vatsa, Vanavāsa, Vārtika (Mārtika), Vāhlīka, Vidiśā, Videha, Śūrasena, Śālaka, Sindhu, Suraṣṭra, Sauvīra, Gaṅgā,

<sup>40</sup> Singh herself cites Nayanjot Lahiri's arguments from the latter's book *The Archaeology of Indian Trade Routes (up to c. 200 B.C.)*. [Emphasis added]

Carmaṇvatī, Vetravatī, Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Mekala, Kālapañjara, Himālaya, Vindhya, Bhārata.” (Ghosh 1951:LXXX) [Emphasis added]. While this might be the first-ever listing of its kind (at least in print and in English) and is by and large comprehensive, it is not without issues. Only a few (those seen as relevant to arguments in this paper) are mentioned here:

1) Geographical data is found not only in (Ghosh’s) chapters XIV, XVIII and XXIII but also in other chapters, particularly earlier ones. Consider, for instance, the following verses from the second, fifth and sixth chapters of the *NS*:

यथाऽचलो गिरिर्मरुह्मिमांश्च महाबलः

Translation: “और जिस प्रकार महाबलवान् हिमालय अचल है”<sup>41</sup>

इत्येवावन्तिपाञ्चालदाक्षिणात्यौद्रमागधैः

कर्तव्यः पूर्वरङ्गस्तु द्विप्रमाणविनिर्मितः

Translation: “इस प्रकार अवंती, पांचाल, दाक्षिणात्य, औड़ तथा मगध के लोगों के द्वारा दो प्रमाण से विस्तार वाले (त्रयस्त्र और चतुरस्त्र दो प्रमाणों से विनिर्मित) पूर्वरङ्ग का प्रयोग करना चाहिए”<sup>42</sup>

आवन्ती दाक्षिणात्या च तथा चैवौद्रमागधी

पाञ्चालमध्यमा चेति विज्ञेयास्तु प्रवृत्तयः

Translation: “आवन्ती, दाक्षिणात्या, औड़मागधी, पांचाली तथा मध्यमा ये पांच प्रकार की प्रवृत्तियां कही गई हैं”<sup>43</sup>

It cannot be argued that Ghosh did not have access to these verses because his translation includes these verses: “...and the Himālaya is very strong” (Ghosh 1951:26); “In this manner the Preliminaries of two different extents (pramāṇa) should be performed by the people of Avanti, Pañcāla, Dākṣiṇātya and Oḍra regions.” (Ibid.:99); “Āvanti, Dākṣiṇātyā, Oḍramāgadhī and Pañcālamadhyamā are the four Local Usages (*pravṛtti*) in a dramatic performance.” (Ibid.:104)

2) Not all names have been listed. Few that have been missed in the listing are mentioned here by way of example:

i) हस्तिनापुर (*hastināpura*), in पाञ्चाला सौरसेनाश्च काश्मीरा हस्तिनापुराः<sup>44</sup>

ii) कुरु (*kuru*) in रम्ये किंपुरुषे वापि कुरुषूत्तरकेषु वा<sup>45</sup>

iii) काशि (*kāśi*), किरात (*kirāta*), बर्बर (*barbara*) in किरातबर्बरान्धाश्च द्रविडाः काशिकोसलाः<sup>46</sup>

Two pages after LXXX, Ghosh includes the following under the sub-heading *The Geographical Data*: “Geographical names occur in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (XIV. 36ff.) **mostly** in connexion with *pravṛttis* or Local Usages **which seem to be a later conception and not at all indispensable for understanding the theatrical art as explained in the *Nāṭyaśāstra***. In fact the

<sup>41</sup> DVIVEDĪ 1992:180, Chapter 2, verse 68

<sup>42</sup> DVIVEDĪ 1992:664, Chapter 5, verse 181

<sup>43</sup> DVIVEDĪ 1996:27, Chapter 6, verse 26

<sup>44</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:172, Chapter 13, verse 48

<sup>45</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:156, Chapter 13, verse 21

<sup>46</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2004:249, Chapter 21, verse 110



authors of the **Daśarūpa and the Nāṭakalakṣaṇa, who speak of the vṛttis are absolutely silent on pravṛttis which are connected with them. Considering the fact that these works depend a great deal on the Nāṭyaśāstra their omission of this item may be taken as very significant.** Geographical names occurring in connexion with the pravṛttis are found in the Mbh. and some of the Purāṇas, **some of these being almost in the same sequence** (see D.C. Sircar, “Text of the Puranic Lists of Peoples” in IHQ. Vol. XXI., 1945, pp. 297-314). **It seems that some interpolator put them into the text of the Nāṭyaśāstra,** for associating it with all the different parts of India, though **the original work was an exposition of the dramatic art as it was practised in the northern India especially in the midland only.** Hence the geographical data should not be used in determining the date of our text.” (Ghosh 1951:LXXII) [Emphasis added]

Before making some observations about this passage, one thing needs to be stated for clarity: the observations made about this passage is not to have proven a case for using geographical data in determining the date *NS*. At the same time, the *reasoning* used by Ghosh to conclude that “...geographical data should not be used in determining the date...” are observed closely for their validity. First, from the compilation of the textual information included earlier, it should be clear that Ghosh’s usage of the word “mostly” is appropriate. For there are instances where

geographical information is found but not necessarily in connection with only the *pravṛttis*. Consider, for instance, their occurrences in the context of भाषा: (*bhāṣāḥ*) and वर्ण (varṇa):

मागध्यवन्तिजा प्राच्या शौरसेन्यर्धमागधी बाह्वीका  
दक्षिणात्या च सप्त भाषाः प्रकीर्तिताः<sup>47</sup>  
विद्याधरास्तथा चैव पितरस्तु समा नराः  
पुनश्च भारते वर्षे तांस्तान्वर्णान्निबोधत<sup>48</sup>

Second, when Ghosh has written that *pravṛttis* “...seem to be a later conception and not at all indispensable for understanding the theatrical art...” this should be read for what it is: conjecture, at best. The usage ‘not at all indispensable’ in “...not at all indispensable for understanding the theatrical art...” could be seen as particularly problematic especially if an understanding of theatrical art had (or required to accommodate) local variations, a scenario not implausible in the diverse landscape found in the *NS*. Third, the argument based on the absence *pravṛtti-s* in *Daśarūpa* and the *Nāṭakalakṣaṇa* is—even if one were to take on face-value that these texts otherwise depended a great deal on the *NS*—again, at best a conjecture. It is hard for anyone to establish that this explanation is more plausible than it is not. Fourth, the comparative point that the geographical data in *NS* occurs “...almost in the same sequence” as it does in *Mb* and other *Purāṇa-s* is neither a fully-substantiated nor a robust one. For, there is enough data where geographical

<sup>47</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2001:556, Chapter 17, verse 49

<sup>48</sup> DVIVEDĪ 2004:248, Chapter 21, verse 104



information is not almost in the same sequence. It should be clear from all four points made above that not one of Ghosh's arguments can be said to be empirically more sound than unsound, more conclusive than inconclusive and hence Ghosh's view that 'it seems that some interpolator put them into the text of the Nāṭyaśāstra, for associating it with all the different parts of India...' is merely a conjecture. It has not been substantiated by him with reasoning that can be considered conclusive. To reiterate the point made at the beginning of this paragraph: a critique of Ghosh's reasoning should not be construed as having proven the opposite of his conjecture. The point in undertaking this critique<sup>49</sup> was to demonstrate that if Ghosh's arguments (portions considered above) constitute the best reasons in excluding the geographical data of *NŚ* from being a factor in dating of the text, then that hypothesis will require better reasons in order to be considered established.

### SPATIAL ORIGIN: A CLUE

In her Foreword to the book *Nāṭyaśāstra—Revisited*, Dr. Vatsyayan, after having raised the questions "Who was Bharata? Where did he live? Was he a person or was he only a pseudonym for the creator of text which has held the attention of scholars from the North to the South, East to the West, and beyond India?"

<sup>49</sup> Related read: Kane's critique of Sircar. "This is a strange and unconvincing argument." (Kane 1961:42)

(Vatsyayan 2016a:vi), has gone on to remark that "there is a body of scholarship on this seminal text, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*" (ibid.) and that "this could fill a library" (ibid.). Yet, answers to the questions she has raised are, for some reason, not explicitly stated (at whatever level of specificity they can be answered), at least not in that particular book. Even as one finds some other fresh and rare comparative insight—that "the Tamil *Tolkāppiyam* is the earliest translation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in any regional language, which moulded classical Tamil Sangam poets" (Ramachandran 2016:66)<sup>50</sup>—answers to questions about spatial origin of Bharata muni were elusive. At least 12 videos<sup>51</sup>—ones containing *Natyashastra* in their titles—have been uploaded in the Youtube channel *Vidya-mitra*<sup>52</sup> after the first edition of the book *Nāṭyaśāstra—Revisited* was published but an answer, or even a detailed discussion, on the spatial origin was not to be found in any of these resources. In contrast, *The*

<sup>50</sup>Ramachandran Nagaswamy's insight is also significant in light of this: "The earliest extant literary evidence for the assimilation of Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* into Tamil culture is Illangovadigal's *Śilappadikāram*." (Subrahmanyam 1980:91)

<sup>51</sup> See #3-14 in Table II (in Appendix III)

<sup>52</sup> *Vidya-mitra* is an online learning portal for all the e-content projects developed under the NME-ICT (National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology), MHRD. <http://vidyamitra.inflibnet.ac.in/index.php/about>. Accessed on Dec 30, 2019.

*Wonder that was Kashmir*<sup>53</sup> published a few months after the first edition of *Nāṭyaśāstra—Revisited*, contains at least what Subhash Kak cautiously terms as “indirect” reasons regarding the spatial origin of Bharata Muni: “An early name seen as belonging to Kashmir is Bharata Muni of the Natyashastra. The indirect reasons for this identification are that the rasa idea of the Natyashastra was discussed by many scholars in Kashmir. Another reason is that the Natyashastra has a total of 36 chapters and it is suggested that this number may have been deliberately chosen to conform to the theory of 36 tattvas which is a part of the later Shaivite system of Kashmir. Many descriptions in this book seem especially true for Kashmir. The bhana, a one-actor play described by Bharata is still performed in Kashmir by groups called bhand pather (bhana patra, in Sanskrit). It should be mentioned here parenthetically that a few scholars take Bharata to be a Southerner. It is also interesting that there exist some very close connections between Kashmir and South India in the cultural tradition like the worship of Shiva, Pancharatra, Tantra, and the arts. Recently, when I pointed this out to Vasundhara Filliozat, the art historian who has worked on Karnataka, she said that the inscriptional evidence indicates a continuing movement of teachers from

<sup>53</sup> Kak, Subhash (2016). *The Wonder that was Kashmir*.

<http://www.pragyata.com/mag/the-wonder-that-was-kashmir-217>. Accessed on Dec 30, 2019.

**Note:** Much of what has been excerpted from the article above is also found in Kak 2004:61

Kashmir to the South and that Kashmir is likely to have been the original source of many of the early Shaivite, Tantric, and Sthapatya Agamas” (Kak 2016). In the above context and close connection with landscape (part I of this essay), consider the following question: has the following data in the *NS*, in conjunction with geography and relevant aspects of cultural history, been considered in dealing with aspects of spatiality? If not, consider the following information found in the third chapter:

दिनान्ते वारुणे घोरे मुहूर्ते यमदैवते ।  
 आचम्य तु यथान्यायं देवता वै निवेशयत् ॥ १८॥  
 रक्ताः प्रतिसराः सूत्रं रक्तगन्धाश्च पूजिताः ।  
 रक्ताः सुमनसश्चैव यच्च रक्तं फलं भवेत् ॥ १९॥  
 यवैस्सिद्धार्थकैर्लाजैरक्षतैः शालितण्डुलैः ।  
 नागपुष्पस्य चूर्णेन वितुषाभिः प्रियङ्गुभिः ॥ २०॥

The translations of the above by three different scholars is as follows:

“[Along with these gods] should be [taken] red thread-bangle (*pratisarā*), the best kind of red sandal, red flowers and red fruits. [With these and] articles such as barley, white mustard, sunned rice, Nāgapuṣpa powder and husked saffron (*priyaṅgu*), the gods should be installed.” (Ghosh 1951:35)

“इस पूजन में सूत्र, मौली गंध, पुष्प, एवं फल सभी लाल रहने चाहिये। यव, सरसों, लावा तथा बिना टूटे हुए शालि तुन्डल, नागपुष्प के चूर्ण एवं तुषरहित प्रियङ्गु के साथ २ देवता का निवेशन स्थापन करें” (Shastri 1971:206)

“इन पूजन में लाल रंग के सूत्र का कंकण, मौली, लालचन्दन, लालरंग का फूल और लाल रंग का फल

होना चाहिए | जौ, सरसों लाजा ( धान का लावा, खील ), बिना टूटे हुए शालि ( धान ) के चावल, नागपुष्प का चूर्ण और छिलके रहित प्रियङ्गु इन द्रव्यों के साथ देवताओं का स्थापना करनी चाहिए” (DVIVEDĪ 1992:239)

Before proceeding to inferences from an analysis of the above textual information, a few points by way of context. In addition to the “indirect reasons” stated by Kak seen earlier, let us recall here Ghosh’s view (seen earlier) that “...the **original work was an exposition of the dramatic art as it was practised in the northern India especially in the midland only**” (Ghosh 1951:LXXII) [Emphasis added]. Note that Ghosh has, unlike Kak, not given any accompanying reasons for this conclusion of his, which yet comes with some very definitive delimitation.<sup>54</sup> In reading Ghosh and Kak together, it should, though, not be missed that while Ghosh is talking about the original work being an exposition of the dramatic art as it was practised in the northern India especially in the midland only, Kak’s reasons pertain to the location of Bharata Muni in Kashmir: related but not the same. Let it be recalled here that Gupt, in 2016, has stated that the structure of the *NŚ* has remained intact since the 5th century B.C. when, according to him, Bharata Muni compiled it (verbatim citation seen earlier) and that “to recognise

<sup>54</sup> Definitive delimitation—“...practised in the northern India especially in the midland **only**”—without giving reasons become particularly problematic, when viewed in light of, for instance, Ramachandran Nagaswamy’s conclusions regarding *Tolkāppiyam* (cited earlier) and *NŚ*.

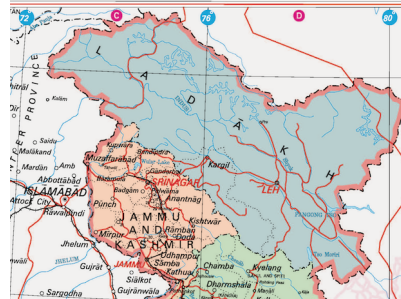
the personality of Bharata Muni is not to deny that passages have been interpolated into the *Śāstra* since his time, and that mutilations and losses have also not occurred” (Gupt 2016:29). Yet, Gupt has also, crucially, observed thus: “To my mind the text of the *NŚ* ceased to acquire anything new very early. By the 2nd century A.D. it had become in many respects antiquated” (Gupt 2016:28). K.D. Tripathi, in his 2016 essay *NĀṬYAŚĀSTRĀ—Two Divergent Views of the Text*, sets up an important binary with the following statements: “The approach adopted by a number of modern scholars culminates in the conclusion offered by Srinivasa Ayya Srinivasan who views *NŚ* as a heterogenous text. The other view is that of Abhinavagupta ... Abhinavagupta clearly and elaborately demonstrates the contextual consistency (*prakarna saṅgati*), the consistency in a given chapter and the consistency lying between the previous chapter and the following one (*ādhyaya saṅgati*), consistency as seen in a single given verse (*śloka saṅgati*), consistency as seen in the use of a given word (*pada saṅgati*) and even consistency seen in the use of a given morphological element such as suffix, root, a case-ending etc (*padamśa saṅgati*). All such main points given below have been thoroughly discussed in *Abhi.bhā* in order to demonstrate the unitary character of *NŚ*. ... **Thus, Abhinavagupta not only offers the coherence present from I to V chapters and the link between them and the rest of the text**, but presents the considered view of the text also according to which

*NS* is a unitary text of a single authorship” (Tripathi 2016:80-83) [Emphasis added]<sup>55</sup>.

With all the above as background, let us now look closely at the three verses दिनान्ते...प्रियङ्गुभिः and their translations stated earlier and ask: is there any information here that can help narrow down decisively to any reasonably specific region<sup>56</sup>? In other words, is there any information in these verses which uniquely identifies any one specific region from the landscape of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* while eliminating other possibilities? Perhaps the only such possibility has to be “saffron,” found in Ghosh’s translation of *priyaṅgu*. If Ghosh’s translation of *priyaṅgu* as saffron can be admitted without any

academic reservation, then today’s Jammu and Kashmir comes into contention.

**Map 2: From the *Political Map of India*<sup>57</sup>**



It is even possible to narrow down to such a specific region because a) there is no known history (yet), unless something has been missed, of saffron being cultivated in any part of the landscape of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (Map 1, seen earlier) other than the portion that overlaps with today’s union territory Jammu and Kashmir and b) existence of saffron “before 500 BCE” (McGee 2004:422) in Kashmir<sup>58</sup> (recall Bharat Gupt’s dating of fifth century BCE) is claimed by even non-Indian sources<sup>59</sup>. Between ~500 BCE

<sup>55</sup> Emphasis has been added because Tripathi’s point, even if not explicitly stated as being so, is a critique the Kane’s conjecture which culminated into the following: “The Natyasastra makes a valiant attempt to raise the status of the dramatic art, places it on a very high pedestal and infuses a spiritual and religious element in it. It is with this view that probably the first five chapters were added.” (Kane 1961:22) More broadly speaking, application of the “critical method” (higher criticism) has itself met with a serious criticism in *Problems with the Critical Method* (Adluri and Bagchee 2017:356-413). Though Adluri and Bagchee’s criticism is primarily at the intersection of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and German Indology, their meta-criticism of the historical-critical method itself needs to be studied carefully to see if there are any lessons to be learnt there in dealing with certain kinds of higher-criticism applied to the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

<sup>56</sup> Latent in this question and the analysis that follows is a presumption: that it is not too unreasonable to presume that items mentioned in these verses were locally available in the regions where the author of these verses was based.

<sup>57</sup> *Political Map of India* (2019). 9th edition. <http://www.surveyofindia.gov.in/pages/display/235-political-map-of-india>. Accessed on Dec 30 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Kashmir in ancient sources, whilst in the same vicinity as today’s union territory Jammu and Kashmir, might not overlap with the political boundaries of today’s Kashmir precisely.

<sup>59</sup> These non-Indian sources imply that saffron was not native to the Kashmir region and that “saffron crocus was carried eastward to Kashmir before 500 BCE”. Whether or not saffron is native to Kashmir, the point to note here is that even these differing groups would agree on saffron being present in the Kashmir region before 500 BCE. We authors, in citing the non Indian sources here do so only to highlight this resonance across difference. Our citing this source should not be construed as us

and the 11th century CE—that century in which the poet *Bilhana*, in his composition *Vikramāṃkadevacaritam*, remarked not having seen saffron being cultivated in any place other than Kashmir<sup>60</sup> (Bharadwaj 1958:17)—third-century Chinese attestations of saffron being grown in and sourced from Kashmir is reported in the *The Oxford Companion to Food*: “Laufer (1978), ..., stated that as long ago as the 3rd century AD a Chinese writer referred to saffron-growing in Kashmir; and that it was from Kashmir that saffron was exported to China.” (Davidson 2014:699). Marc Aurel Stein has reported, in the 19th century, the then-living tradition of worshipping *Takśaka Nāga* and its connection to place of origin of saffron cultivation in Kashmir: “**The *Takśaka Nāga* is worshipped to this day in the large pool of limpid water situated** close to the village of Zevan (or Jayavana, see vii. 607), in the Vihī Pargaṇa, **74°58’ long. 34° 3’ lat.**; ... **From the *Takśaka Nāga* the cultivation of the saffron flowers** which flourishes in this neighbourhood, **is supposed to have originated**; ... The *Āin-i Akb.*, ii p. 358, mentions a pilgrimage to the spring at the commencement of the saffron cultivation, i.e. in *Jyaiṣṭha*” (Stein 2009:36) [Emphasis added]. Reverse geocoding<sup>61</sup> 74°58’ long. 34° 3’ lat. yields

having taken a position that saffron was not native to the Kashmir region.

<sup>60</sup> सहोदराः कुङ्कुमकेसराणां भवन्ति नूनं कविताविलासाः ।  
न शारदादेशमपास्य दृष्टस्तेषां यदन्यत्र मया प्ररोहः ॥ 21॥

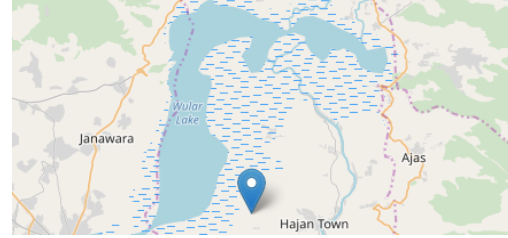
कुङ्कुम (*kuṅkuma*) is saffron

शारदादेश (*Śāradādeśa*) is Kashmir

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.latlong.net/Show-Latitude-Longitude.html>

a location near today’s Wular lake, in India’s Jammu and Kashmir.

**Map 3: 74°58’ long. 34° 3’ lat.**



Kishtwar, also in today’s union territory Jammu and Kashmir, is outside what is called the Kashmir valley. Its difference from Kashmir valley has been particularly noted in historical records, not only for its “finer in quality” (Moosvi 2003:394) saffron but also as a place where, unlike the Kashmir valley, barley<sup>62</sup> and gram were cultivated, along with lentils, millets and pulses. Cultivation of rice and mustard in Kashmir is, of course, well-known. Therefore, 4 out of 5 items in Ghosh’s (translation) list can be reasonably argued as being local to the Kashmir region, save one: *Nāgapuṣpa*. *Nāgapuṣpa*, which coincidentally precedes *priyaṅgu* even in Suśruta’s Elādi-group list (in vol 1 of *Suśruta-saṃhitā*), while today is generally found “...occurring in the Himalayas from Nepal eastwards, Bengal, Assam, evergreen rain forests of North Kanara, Konkan, forests of Western Ghats and Andhra Pradesh,”<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Barley in Neolithic times in the region: “Two, a particular variety of crop, the emmer wheat mingled with barley, exclusive to Neolithic Kanishkapura,...” (Kaul 2018:126)

<sup>63</sup> See *Nāgakeśara* (p. 125) in *THE AYURVEDIC PHARMACOPOEIA OF INDIA* Part I, Volume II.



has been mentioned as present in *Imḍraprastha*, in the *Mahābhārata*<sup>64</sup>. *Nāgapuṣpa* is a stumbling block, atleast so for the authors, in identification of Kashmir region and if there is an explanation, it is yet to be uncovered by the authors atleast. At this point, let us take a step back to ask the question: why have we been looking at only the Kashmir region in the first place? Primarily<sup>65</sup>, Ghosh's translation of *priyaṅgu* as saffron. Now, the *NŚ* verse contains “...वितुषाभिः प्रियङ्गुभिः”. This has been translated by Ghosh as husked saffron, by Śāstrī as तुषरहित प्रियङ्गु and by Dvivedī as छिलके रहित

<http://www.ayurveda.hu/api/API-Vol-2.pdf>  
(Accessed on Dec 30 2019). *Nāgakesara*, like *Nāgapuṣpa* is a name for *Mesua ferrea*.

<sup>64</sup> 01199039a उद्यानानि च रम्याणि नगरस्य समन्ततः  
01199039c आप्रैराप्रातकैर्नीपैरशोकैश्चम्पकैस्तथा 01199040a  
पुनागैर्नागपुष्पैश्च लकुचैः पनसैस्तथा 01199040c  
शालतालकदम्बैश्च बकुलैश्च सकेतकैः

<sup>65</sup> Kak's “indirect evidence,” seen earlier, has not been forgotten. In, and to add to, the context of these points—”It should be mentioned here parenthetically that a few scholars take Bharata to be a Southerner. It is also interesting that there exist some very close connections between Kashmir and South India in the cultural tradition like the worship of Shiva, Pancharatra, Tantra, and the arts. Recently, when I pointed this out to Vasundhara Filliozat, the art historian who has worked on Karnataka, she said that the inscriptional evidence indicates a continuing movement of teachers from Kashmir to the South and that Kashmir is likely to have been the original source of many of the early Shaivite, Tantric, and Sthapatya Agamas”—of Kak, which follows his “indirect evidence,” see, in Appendix IV, expert *Bharatanāṭyam* practitioner Dr. Padmaja Venkatesh Suresh's perspective on the interplay between the philosophy of the *NŚ* and Shaivism, particularly *Kashmir Śaivism* and *Śaiva Siddhānta*.

प्रियङ्गु. If husk is understood as it normally is—outer shell or coating of a seed—does “husked saffron” make sense? Does saffron actually come with husk or is it simply separated from the flower and then dried?<sup>66</sup> If “husked saffron” can be explained, then only *Nāgapuṣpa* as a stumbling block remains. However, if “husked saffron” makes little or no sense, could *priyaṅgu* be something other than saffron? Before moving on to other possibilities with *priyaṅgu*, it might be pertinent to point out that saffron as *priyaṅgu* is unusual also on the count that what has been extensively translated as saffron—right from the *Suśruta saṃhitā* to Bilhana's *Vikramāṅkadēvacaritam* and Kalhana's *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*—is not *priyaṅgu* but *kuṅkuma*. In interpreting *priyaṅgu*, it might make sense to heed to Susmita Pande's advise, stated in her essay in *History of Agriculture in India, Up to C. 1200 A.D* (2008): “...the interpretation of *priyaṅgu* should be according to the context.” (Pande 2008:838). The context for “वितुषाभिः प्रियङ्गुभिः” includes 1) पूजन (which, in this context, refers to worship of deities which involves offerings) 2) other items that are mostly edible cereals. Pande has suggested that *priyaṅgu* be identified as *Setaria italica* or *kanguni* when it is used in the context of cereals (ibid.). Just a few lines thereafter, in the context of *yagnic auśadhis*, where she reads *yava* as barley (just as Ghosh, Dvivedī and Śāstrī

<sup>66</sup> See *Harvesting and Processing Saffron Flowers* (2018). Accessed on Dec 30 2019.  
<https://www.uvm.edu/~saffron/Resources/Factsheets/HarvestingSaffronOct2018.pdf>

also do), she reads *priyaṅgu* as *kang[u]ni* or *Setaria italica*. Raghava S Boddupalli, in his 2019 paper *Plant Biology in Yajurveda* has also, in the context of yajnas, yagas, homas, offerings to deities, identified *priyaṅgu* as the cereal crop *Setaria italica*.<sup>67</sup>

The identification of *Priyaṅgu* as *Setaria italica* (synonym: *Panicum italicum*) instead of saffron does not, on that count alone, rule out the Kashmir region as one of the candidates because *Priyaṅgu*, as *Setaria italica*, has been read in the *Nīlamatapurāṇa*<sup>68</sup> as part of *Kaśmīra*'s past. What saffron can do, which *priyaṅgu* cannot (in this context) however, is to eliminate regions other than today's Jammu and Kashmir. If Ghosh's translation of *Priyaṅgu* as saffron is somehow still tenable and if a reasonably credible explanation for *Nāgapuṣpa* in or immediately around the Kashmir region can be explained, then the Kashmir region—already identified by (at least) Subhash Kak (albeit on reasons he rightly calls “indirect”)—could be on stronger footing with evidence more directly from the *NS* text. If, however, Ghosh's translation of *Priyaṅgu* as saffron is untenable and if the presence of *Nāgapuṣpa* in or immediately around the Kashmir region (not just in present times but in the past too) is an absolute impossibility (which, to be clear, is

not the latent position of the authors), then other regions from the landscape of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* will need to be evaluated to see if anyone unique region which can claim *Priyaṅgu* (*Setaria italica*), *Nāgapuṣpa* (*Mesua Ferrea*), Barley, Mustard and Rice to have been reasonably local from 500 BCE onwards. Could, by way of a hypothesis (only), the region of today's Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh be a candidate? *Mahābhārata* attests *Priyaṅgu* along Narmadā<sup>69</sup>. *Nāgapuṣpa* (*Mesua Ferrea*) is not unknown in that region. Barley, Mustard and Rice are also easily found in the region. The landscape in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* clearly shows regions along today's Narmadā, the northern and northeastern parts of today's Madhya Pradesh. Now, are there other empirically verifiable clues, both from within the text and from outside (the archeological and epigraphical record), that could be relevant to this hypothesis? Let us start with the text and look at a different, yet not at all unrelated, class of evidence: soil-type. Consider what is unambiguously specified in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* about the type of soil, particularly its color, that would be suitable for construction of *nātyamaṇḍapa* (loosely, playhouse):

समा स्थिरा तु कठिना कृष्णा गौरी च या भवेत् ।  
भूमिस्तत्रैव कर्तव्यः कर्तृभिर्नाट्यमण्डपः ॥<sup>70</sup>

Ghosh's translation of the above is as follows: “A builder should erect a playhouse on the soil which is firm, hard, and black or

<sup>67</sup> If the context of the verse were ignored, *Priyaṅgu* as *Callicarpa macrophylla*, found normally in “Sub-Himalayan tracts, from Hazara eastwards to Assam, up to 1,500 m” (Khare 2007:112), will also need to be considered.

<sup>68</sup> प्रियङ्गुमिश्र सिद्धार्थं ततो वै बीजपूर कैः । सर्वोषधिसर्वगन्धैः  
सर्वबीजैश्च काञ्चनैः ॥ ५३२ ॥ (Kaniilal and Zadoo 1924:44)

<sup>69</sup> 03087002a प्रियङ्गुवाप्रवनोपेता वानीरवनमालिनी  
03087002c प्रत्यक्स्रोता नदी पुण्या नर्मदा तत्र भारत

<sup>70</sup> DVIVEDĪ 1992:162, Chapter 2, verse 30



white.” (Ghosh 1951:21) [Emphasis added]<sup>71</sup>. Ghosh attributes his translation of च as ‘or’ to Abhinavagupta. DVIVEDĪ has translated च as “अथवा” (DVIVEDĪ 1992:162), that is, “or”. DVIVEDĪ’s citation and translation of Abhinavagupta’s commentary is as follows: “कृष्णा गौरी चेति | चो वार्थे |”; ““कृष्णा गौरी च’ में ‘च’ पद ‘वा’ (अथवा) अर्थ में प्रयुक्त है |” Madhusudan Shastri, however, has translated कृष्णा गौरी च as “जिसमें मिट्टी काली **एवं** गौरी हो” (Shastri 1975:175) [Emphasis added]. Even if only अथवा (‘or’) but more so if एवं (‘and’) [the latter, to us authors, seems like a more natural translation of the text *Nāṭyaśāstra*], the region which is today’s Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh would *prima facie* be in contention, when one sees the above textual data in the context of a typical Indian soil map<sup>72</sup>. Moving out of the text, the archaeological and epigraphic record of this region yields what appears to be perhaps the oldest (yet) known “ancient theatre” (Singh 2016:50). Anil Baran Ganguly, in his book (published in 1979) *Fine Arts in Ancient India*, has written thus: “Even these days we find specimens of stages as were prevalent in ancient days. These specimens are found inside two caves in a series of hillocks named Ramgarh in Sarguja State in the

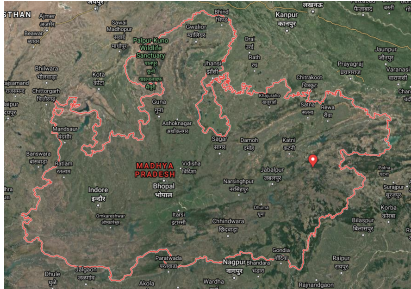
district of Chota Nagpur. These two caves are named as Shitabengā and Yogimārā. There are found the two specimens of dramatic stages coupled with green rooms as were prevalent in ancient days when Sanskrit plays used to be staged. It is said that these caves are at least 2,200 years old” (Ganguly 1979:84). Decades later, Upinder Singh has added thus: “The Sitabenga and Jogimara caves on Ramgarh hill (in Chattisgarh can be reached through a natural tunnel known as Hathipol, 180 ft long and so high that an elephant can pass through it. ... In front of the entrance of the Sitabenga cave is row of rock-cut benches arranged in terraces in the shape of a crescent, with aisles. ... The inscriptions and the layout of the cave and the area around it suggest that this may have been an **ancient theatre**, a place where poets recited their poems and where plays were performed long ago” (Singh 2016:50) [Emphasis added]. In her introduction to the volume titled *Indian Drama* (published by the Publications Division, Ministry of Information and broadcasting, Government of India), Suniti Kumar Chatterji has noted that “...at Sitabenga and Jogimara caves in Ramgarh hills...there are inscriptions which are highly suggestive of the existence of a developed dramatic art” (Chatterji 1981:6). Having just seen flora, soil-type data from the text being corroborated by physical evidence found in the Madhya Pradesh-Chattisgarh region, earliest (yet) known archaeological and epigraphic evidence directly corroborating “ancient theater” also from the same region, we come to the last item of physical evidence, again from the same region: “Sculpture piece

<sup>71</sup> Particularly in the context of soil, translation of गौरी as pale yellow makes more sense than Ghosh’s translation of गौरी as “white”

<sup>72</sup>

<https://store.mapsofindia.com/digital-maps/country-maps-1-2-3/india/india-soil-map>. (Accessed on Dec 30 2019). Note that we have used *prima facie* as this angle could benefit from an exploration of greater fidelity and granularity, a facet of which would be to look at whether there has been any dramatic change in soil type over the last three millennia. Such as dramatic change, in this region, over the last three millennia atleast does not seem to have been widely written about.

excavated from the Stupa at Bharhut.<sup>73</sup> First, the location of Bharhut (23°31'01.2"N 80°57'00.0"E)<sup>74</sup> followed by the artefact recovered, dated to c. 2nd century BCE:



(Image source: see footnote #74)



(Image source: see footnote #73)

73

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/photo/coll/s/largeimage59502.html> (Accessed on Dec 30 2019)

74

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Madhya+Pradesh/@23.957703,76.1793988,1062791m/data=!3m2!1e3!4b!4m13!1m7!3m6!1s0x0:0x0!2zMjPCsDMxJzAxLjliTiA4MMKwNTcnMDAuM CJF!3b1!8m2!3d23.517!4d80.95!3m4!1s0x39667381d35aea05:0xe0106b0d4e701c1e!8m2!3d23.4834007!4d77.2009277?hl=en> (Accessed on Dec 30 2019)

A reading of the inscription (top-left of the image; see image in footnote 73 for a clearer viewing) has established Bharhut as an important region, well-known to a wide range of people from all over India. The relief (if viewed in entirety) in this *Ajātasattu* pillar has stories from Buddha's life wherein the King is shown as kneeling in front of the Buddha with his guards (female). Focussing on the image we have here, the dancing motifs reveal use of hand gestures (*Hasta-s*), feet positions (*Sthānaka-s*) and the attire (*Āhāryā*) from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The formation resembles a *Pinḍibandha* or group dance, among which are the categories of *Pinḍī* (lump-like grouping), *Śṛṅkhalika* (design of a cluster), *Latābandha* (held together like a net or creepers) and *Bhedyaka* (individual dancers aligned in movement). The musicians are playing on drums, cymbals and are in tune with the dancers. The scene opens up possibilities of a *Nāṭyamaṇḍapa* within the palace with the hierarchy in seating of spectators (*Rasika-s*). The royal family is on the top while the common folks are below. The *Añjali mudrā* (prostrations) of dance is held by many which presupposes the simultaneous existence of a *yajña* in the scene.

## CONCLUSION

To state the obvious: more extensive multi-disciplinary effort might be required before anything final can be concluded about the spatial origin of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* text. That said, if this paper has, in a

reasoned manner and in the context of the landscape in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, at least foregrounded the potential for lesser discussed aspects of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* to contribute in getting closer to answering—in conjunction with evidence from multiple disciplines—old unanswered questions, then at least one of its objectives would have been served. The reconstructed landscape in itself, though, reveals a shape of *Bhāratavarṣa* (of which Kashmir<sup>75</sup> was clearly a part) congruent with much of today's India<sup>76</sup>, including regions south of the *Vindhyās*, so much so that Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* can easily and justifiably be seen as *Bhārata's Nāṭyaśāstra*. In having uncovered this possibility to posit, on textually sound grounds, Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* as *Bhārata's Nāṭyaśāstra* and having demonstrated how this particular 'idea' of India (that is *Bhārata*) has not been found in works such as Irfan Habib's *Formation of India—Notes on the History of an Idea*, Ishrat Alam's *Names for India in Ancient Indian Texts and Inscriptions*, and for that matter even in Bimala Churn Law's *Historical Geography in Ancient India*, this paper addresses voids in literature not only pertaining to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* but also literature seen by some as influential in *Idea/Ideas-of-India* discourse and the geography of Ancient India.

<sup>75</sup> **भारते** त्वथ हेमे वा हरिवर्ष इलावृते ।; एवन्तु **भारते वर्षे** कक्ष्या कार्या प्रयोगतः ।; पाञ्चाला सौरसेनाश्च **काश्मीरा** हस्तिनापुराः ।

<sup>76</sup> “1. (1) India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States.” in the Constitution of India PART I ‘*THE UNION AND ITS TERRITORY*’. See p.2 in [https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/npi/files/coi\\_part\\_full.pdf](https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf). Accessed on Dec 30, 2019.

## GRATITUDE

The spark to look at the landscape related data in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is courtesy Shonaleeka Kaul's book *The Making of Early Kashmir - Landscape and identity in the Rajatarangini* and in it, particularly, her *Map 2 Connected Histories-I*. The 2016 book *Nāṭyaśāstra—Revisited*, edited by Bharat Gupt, and therein, essays by scholars Kapila Vatsyayan, Bharat Gupt, R. Nagaswamy and K.D. Tripathi are of foundational value to many arguments as have been the scholarship of Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam and Dr. Subhash Kak. Though subjected to the maximum critique in this paper, Dr. Manomohan Ghosh's introductory essay and his English translation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* have been indispensable and will perhaps continue to remain an important milestone in the journey of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in at least the near future. Gratitude is also owed to Madhusudan Shastri and Pārasanātha Dvivedī for their Hindi translations of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and to the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, for its critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* and all scholars who made that critical edition possible. This paper would be lesser if any of the names included in the bibliography had not written what they did. Almost always taken for granted, the search engine Google has been of inestimable value. Last, but not the least, this paper has come into existence primarily because of the call for papers issued by the organisers of the seminar *The Recensions of Nāṭyaśāstra* and the institutions that made this seminar possible.

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APPENDIX I

MAP 1: Landscape in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (Circles represent some place-names found in both the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the BORI critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*)



## APPENDIX II

**TABLE I: Some geographical data from the NS found in the critical edition of the Mb. Most of these have been indicated with a circle in Map 1 (above).**

S No	Name		Nāṭyaśāstra	Mahābhārata
1	<i>ānarta</i>	आनर्त	13.041 सैन्धवास्त्वथ सौवीरा आनर्ताः साबुदेयकाः	05007004c आनर्तनगरीं रम्यां जगामाशु धर्नजयः (De 1940:20)
2	<i>andhra</i>	अन्ध्र	13.039 द्रविडान्ध्रमहाराष्ट्रा वैष्णा वै वानवासजा	06010048a अन्ध्राश्च बहवो राजन्तर्गिर्यास्तथैव च (Belvalkar 1947:54)
3	<i>aṅga</i>	अङ्ग	13.044 अङ्गा वङ्गाः कलिङ्गाश्च वत्साश्चैवोद्दमागधाः	06010044c अङ्गा वङ्गाः कलिङ्गाश्च यकृल्लोमान एव च (Belvalkar 1947:53)
4	<i>avantī</i>	अवन्ती	13.052 आवन्ती दाक्षिणात्या च प्रदक्षिणपरिक्रमे	06010041c कुन्तयोऽवन्तयश्चैव तथैवापरकुन्तयः (Belvalkar 1947:52)
5	<i>bāhlika</i>	बाह्लीक	13.048 बाह्लीका शल्यकाश्चैव मद्रकौशीनरास्तथाः	05004014a बाह्लीको मुञ्जकेशश्च चैद्याधिपतिरेव च (De 1940:14)
6	<i>bhārata</i>	भारत	13.021 भारते त्वथ हैमे वा हरिवर्ष इलावृते	06010005a अत्र ते वर्णयिष्यामि वर्षं भारत भारतम् (Belvalkar 1947:45)
7	<i>bhāratavarṣa</i>	भारतवर्ष	13.027 एवन्तु भारते वर्षे कक्ष्या कार्या प्रयोगतः; 21.104 पुनश्च भारते वर्षे तांस्तान्त्वर्णान्निबोधत	06010001a यदिदं भारतं वर्षं यत्रेदं मूर्च्छितं बलम्; 06010004c ये गृद्धा भारते वर्षे न मृष्यन्ति परस्परम् (Belvalkar 1947:45)
8	<i>carmanvatī</i>	चर्मण्वती	17.062 चर्मण्वतीनदीतीरे ये चार्बुदसमाश्रिताः	06010018c चर्मण्वतीं वेत्रवतीं हस्तिसोमां दिशं तथा (Belvalkar 1947:47)
9	<i>dakṣiṇātya</i>	दक्षिणात्य	17.053 यौधनागरकादीनां दक्षिणात्याथ दीच्यताम्	01112011c प्राच्यानुदीच्यान्मध्यांश्च दक्षिणात्यानकालयत् (Sukthankar 1933:497)
10	<i>draviḍa</i>	द्रविड	21.010 किरातबर्बरान्ध्राश्च द्रविडाः काशिकोसलाः	06010057a द्रविडाः केरलाः प्राच्या भूषिका वनवासिनः (Belvalkar 1947:56)
11	<i>gaṅgā</i>	गङ्गा	13.049 हिमवतसंश्रिता ये तु गङ्गायाश्चोत्तरां दिशम्	06010035a सरस्वतीः सुपुण्याश्च सर्वा गङ्गाश्च मारिष (Belvalkar 1947:51)
12	<i>hastināpura</i>	हस्तिनापुर	13.048 पाञ्चाला सौरसेनाश्च काश्मीरा हस्तिनापुराः	01096041c प्रययौ हास्तिनपुरं यत्र राजा स कौरवः (Sukthankar 1933:440)
13	<i>hima</i>	हिम	02.068 यथाऽचलो गिरिर्मेरुर्हिमवांश्च महाबलः	06032025c यज्ञानां जपयज्ञोऽस्मि स्थावराणां हिमालयः (Belvalkar 1947:155)
14	<i>kaliṅga</i>	कलिङ्ग	13.039 कोसलस्तोशलाश्चैव कलिङ्गा यवना खसाः	06010038a शूरसेनाः कलिङ्गाश्च बोधा मौकास्तथैव च (Belvalkar 1947:51)
15	<i>kāśi</i>	काशि	21.110 किरातबर्बरान्ध्राश्च द्रविडाः काशिकोसलाः	06010038a शूरसेनाः कलिङ्गाश्च बोधा मौकास्तथैव च (Belvalkar 1947:51)
16	<i>kāśmīra</i>	काश्मीर	13.148 पाञ्चाला सौरसेनाश्च काश्मीरा हस्तिनापुराः	06010052a काश्मीराः सिन्धुसौवीरा गान्धारा दर्शकास्तथा (Belvalkar 1947:55)

17	<i>kirāta</i>	किरात	21.110 किरातबर्बरान्धाश्च द्रविडाः काशिकोसलाः	06010055c किराता बर्बराः सिद्धा विदेहास्ताप्रलिङ्गकाः (Belvalkar 1947:55)
18	<i>kośala</i>	कोशल	21.110 किरातबर्बरान्धाश्च द्रविडाः काशिकोसलाः	06010038c मत्स्याः सुकुट्यः सौबल्याः कुन्तलाः काशि कोशलाः (Belvalkar 1947:51)
19	<i>kuru</i>	कुरु	13.021 रम्ये किंपुरुषे वापि कुरुभूतारकेषु वा	06010037c तत्रेमे कुरुपाञ्चालाः शाल्वमाद्रेयजाङ्गलाः (Belvalkar 1947:51)
20	<i>madra</i>	मद्र	13.048 बाह्वीका शल्यकाश्चैव मद्रकौशोनरास्तथाः	06010040c सौधा मद्रा भुजिङ्गाश्च काशयोऽपरकाशयः (Belvalkar 1947:52)
21	<i>magadha</i>	मगध	21.112 पाञ्चालाः शौरसेनाश्च माहिषाश्चौड्रमागधाः	06010044a विदेहका मागधाश्च सुहाश्च विजयास्तथा (Belvalkar 1947:53)
22	<i>mahendra</i>	महेन्द्र	13.038 महेन्द्रो मलयः सह्यो मेकलः पालमञ्जरः	06010010a महेन्द्रो मलयः सह्यः शुक्तिमानृक्षवानपि (Belvalkar 1947:46)
23	<i>mālava</i>	मालव	13.041 आवन्तिका वैदिशिका सौराष्ट्रा मालवास्तथा	06010058c कौकुट्टकास्तथा चोलाः कोङ्कणा मालवाणकाः (Belvalkar 1947:56)
24	<i>malaya</i>	मलय	13.038 महेन्द्रो मलयः सह्यो मेकलः पालमञ्जरः	06010010a महेन्द्रो मलयः सह्यः शुक्तिमानृक्षवानपि (Belvalkar 1947:46)
25	<i>mekala</i>	मेकल	13.038 महेन्द्रो मलयः सह्यो मेकलः पालमञ्जरः	06010039c उत्तमौजा दशार्णाश्च मेकलाश्चोत्कलैः सह (Belvalkar 1947:51)
26	<i>pañcāla</i>	पञ्चाल	05.181 इत्येवावन्तिपाञ्चालदाक्षिणात्योड्रमागधैः	06010037c कुरुपाञ्चालाः शाल्व माद्रेय जाङ्गलाः (Belvalkar 1947:51)
27	<i>paundra</i>	पौण्ड्र	13.044 पौण्ड्रा नेपालकाश्चैव अन्तर्गिर्बहिर्गिराः	02013019c पौण्ड्रको वासुदेवेति योऽसौ लोकेषु विश्रुतः (Edgerton 1944:74)
28	<i>prāgjyotiṣa</i>	प्राज्योतिष	13.046 प्राज्योतिषाः पुलिन्दाश्च वैदेहास्ताप्रलिप्तकाः	06112059a प्राज्योतिषस्ततो हित्वा पाण्डवं पाण्डुपूर्वज (Belvalkar 1947:653)
29	<i>pulinda</i>	पुलिन्द	21.110 पुलिन्दा दाक्षिणात्याश्च प्रायेण त्वसिताः स्मृताः	06010039a चेदिवत्साः करुषाश्च भोजाः सिन्धुपुलिन्दकाः (Belvalkar 1947:51)
30	<i>sahya</i>	सह्य	13.038 महेन्द्रो मलयः सह्यो मेकलः पालमञ्जरः	06010010a महेन्द्रो मलयः सह्यः शुक्तिमानृक्षवानपि (Belvalkar 1947:46)
31	<i>sauvīra</i>	सौवीर	13.041 सैन्धवास्त्वथ सौवीरा आनर्ताः साबुदियकाः	06010052a काश्मीराः सिन्धुसौवीरा गान्धारा दर्शकास्तथा (Belvalkar 1947:55)
32	<i>sindhu</i>	सिन्धु	17.061 हिमवत्सिन्धुसौवीरान्ये जनाः समुपाश्रिताः	06010020c पवित्रां कुण्डलां सिन्धुं वाजिनीं पुरमालिनीम् (Belvalkar 1947:47)
33	<i>śūrasena</i>	शूरसेन	21.112 पाञ्चालाः शौरसेनाश्च माहिषाश्चौड्रमागधाः	06010038a शूरसेनाः कलिङ्गाश्च बोधा मौकास्तथैव च (Belvalkar 1947:51)
34	<i>surāṣṭra</i>	सुराष्ट्र	17.060 सुराष्ट्रावन्तिदेशेषु वेत्रवत्युत्तरेषु च	06010042c अश्मकाः पांसुराष्ट्राश्च गोपराष्ट्राः पनीतकाः (Belvalkar 1947:52)
35	<i>tāmrālipta</i>	ताम्रलिप्त	13.046 प्राज्योतिषाः पुलिन्दाश्च वैदेहास्ताप्रलिप्तकाः	06010055c किराता बर्बराः सिद्धा विदेहास्ताप्रलिङ्गकाः (Belvalkar 1947:55)
36	<i>vaṅga</i>	वङ्ग	13.044 अङ्गा वङ्गाः कलिङ्गाश्च वत्साश्चैवोड्रमागधाः	06010044c अङ्गा वङ्गाः कलिङ्गाश्च यकृल्लोमान एव च (Belvalkar 1947:53)
37	<i>vatsa</i>	वत्स	13.049 हिमवतसंश्रिता ये तु गङ्गायाश्चोत्तरां दिशम्	06010039a चेदिवत्साः करुषाश्च भोजाः सिन्धुपुलिन्दकाः

				(Belvalkar 1947:51)
38	<i>vetravatī</i>	वेत्रवती	17.060 सुराष्ट्रावन्तिदेशेषु वेत्रवत्युत्तरेषु च	06010018c चर्मण्वतीं वेत्रवतीं हस्तिसोमां दिशं तथा (Belvalkar 1947:47)
39	<i>vindhya</i>	विन्ध्य	13.010 दक्षिणस्य समुद्रस्य तथा विन्ध्यस्य चान्तरे	06010010c विन्ध्यश्च पारियात्रश्च सप्तैते कुलपर्वताः (Belvalkar 1947:46)
40	<i>yavana</i>	यवन	13.039 कोसलस्तोशलाश्चैव कलिङ्गा यवना खसाः	06010064a यवनाश्च सकाम्बोजा दारुणा म्लेच्छजातयः (Belvalkar 1947:58)

## APPENDIX III

TABLE II: Videos in Youtube channel *Vidya-Mitra*<sup>77</sup> with “Natyashastra”<sup>78</sup> in its title<sup>79</sup>

1	20151229	<i>Natya Shasthra Compressed</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vKi71Nve_A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vKi71Nve_A</a>
2	20151229	<i>5 1 6 Natyashastra and Modern Theatre Tradition</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLG_s3pWGwA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLG_s3pWGwA</a>
3	20160706	<i>Karanas of Natyashastra (Tandava Lakshana) (PERA)</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfAhwniLzo0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TfAhwniLzo0</a>
4	20160928	<i>Introduction of Natyashastra (SKT-MA)</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4O0bL-kTmHM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4O0bL-kTmHM</a>
5	20160929	<i>Origin of Natyashastra: from shloka 1 to 40 (SKT-MA)</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXx61AjBo00">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXx61AjBo00</a>
6	20160929	<i>First chapter of Natyashastra: from shloka 81 to 139 (SKT-MA)</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ur-6c5XRiz0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ur-6c5XRiz0</a>
7	20160929	<i>First chapter of Natyashastra: from shloka 41 to 80 (SKT-MA)</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKUyhDXNJbA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKUyhDXNJbA</a>
8	20161022	<i>What is Natya Shastra? Details of its author, Natyaveda, and Origin of Natya (PERA)</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaMUzKGAynU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaMUzKGAynU</a>
9	20161022	<i>Relevance of Natya Shastra today</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ruXXzP6ggA&amp;t=1s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ruXXzP6ggA&amp;t=1s</a>
10	20161022	<i>Content and brief description of 1 – 15 chapters of NatyaShastra (PERA)</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMtBQ4R43a0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMtBQ4R43a0</a>
11	20170216	<i>Natyashastra and Rasa (ENG)</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgpN80y4_Zs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgpN80y4_Zs</a>
12	20170809	<i>Bharat Muni Aur Unka Natyashastra</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkOAt5JJmzo&amp;t=1s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkOAt5JJmzo&amp;t=1s</a>
13	20170829	<i>Natyashastra</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xPkqad1_1Q">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xPkqad1_1Q</a>
14	20170905	<i>Natya Sastra (ENG)</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHNi5aMHHDc&amp;t=435s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHNi5aMHHDc&amp;t=435s</a>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCUr096WDP86n62CXBeHIQw/about><sup>78</sup> With and without space between Natya and Shastra<sup>79</sup> All these links were accessed on Dec 30, 2019

**APPENDIX IV*****Nāṭyaśāstra, Śaivism, Kashmir Śaivism and Śaiva Siddhantā: a Bharatanāṭyam practitioner's perspective (referred to in footnote #65)***

The philosophical basis of Natya or dramaturgy explains the link between the physical, emotional and vital space of the TRIAD of stage, spectator and actor with the universe as a micro-model. Tantra represents the underlying sheath or fabric that connects all of creation itself. In general, when one refers to the term it would connote the 'science' beneath the activity. It stands for energy, will, power, movement, often represented as 'Shakti'. It is energy that consents to move from sound to word, to sentence, to poem, to song, to dance, to painting, to sculpture, to emotion and thus the entire manifested world. 'It all starts from the word' say almost all religious faiths. In the cycle of creation and dissolution, the supreme PARAVAK where all sound is in seed form, rises as PASHYANTI-thought, then as MADHYAMA- whisper and then as VAIKHARI-spoken or heard voice. Natya Shastra opens chapter by chapter, exactly showing the world drama unfold from the word, making the characters play various roles with involved acting. The actor is like a Yogi, actually detached from the act in the true sense. There is symbolically the end of a scene, an act, a play like the end of the world drama too. The popular Dance of Shiva is Creation or descent from the subtle realms to the gross and Dissolution or ascent from the gross to the subtle realms.

A treatise of energy, moving towards consciousness is what actually defines the Tantra in Natya Shastra. The Tantrika Yogi of Kashmir, Abhinavagupta has been so far the greatest commentator ever on Natya Shastra. Although Bharata himself has not given explicit references to Tantra in the Shastra, his work, especially the most important chapter of *Rasa Nishpatti* is often being studied under the lens of Tantric Trika Shaivism, much due to the influence of Abhinavagupta. Bhavabhuti, the dramatist, is probably the first to mention Bharata Muni as the author and he calls him *Tauryatrikasutradakara*, one who has given a treatise of Trika Shaivism through Natya Shastra. The Tryambaka school of Kashmir is known as Trika Shaiva system of philosophy and Yoga. It has three aspects, Agama, Spanda and Pratyabhijna. Agama Sastra, the revelation by Shiva, lays down both the principles and practices of the system. Bharata follows

the Agamic ritualistic consecration of the playhouse with Yantras [mystical diagrams] and Mantras [potent sound syllables]. Spanda Sastra elaborates the principles laid down, from the point of view of energy or vibration called Shakti. Prakasha is Shiva, the Eternal Light without which nothing can appear. Vimarsha is Shakti, the character or Svabhava of Siva, the mirror that reflects His grandeur, power and beauty. Spanda is also the movement, the inner rhythm of the aesthetic experience. This force manifests in the instinctive emotions like joy, anger, fear, love etc. The dance and music take both the artiste and spectator to concentrate upon sound as pure melody, pure rhythm and both melody and rhythm. The Pratyabhijna philosophy explains Svatantrya or sovereignty as the characteristic of Shiva which expresses into Ichha (will), jnana (knowledge) and kriya (action) Shaktis. Pure Knowledge—Consciousness is Purusha (male) Shiva, the Self, and the equipments of the individual and the confusing universe of endless plurality constitute Prakriti, (female) Shakti, the non-self. This glorious concept, and all its sacred implications, the man-woman form of Shiva – Ardhanareeshwara presents the significance in realizing the macrocosm and the microcosm as the mere play of the ONE SELF in and through the non-self. When the play with story, song and dance is being represented, there is apparent identification with character and mood both in the artiste and spectator. The former is a Patra, a vessel who may have to travel from role to role, if it is multiple role-playing often done in mono-act or in Ekaharya Lasya- classical solo dancing in single costume. The latter thoroughly enjoys from his position of deeply concentrating on the visual poetry -Drushya Kavya before him and undergoes processes of imagination and catharsis before arriving at ‘transcendental’ realization of Rasa. Pratyabhijna calls this as the reduction in objective, relative identities [Becomingness of Shakti/s] leading to resting in one absolute subject [Being Shiva]. At this stage, Rasa is just ONE, like the joy of sad tales or the beauty of a ugly woman in a painting! Aesthetic experience is in tasting one’s own essential beatitude and in this sense, Rasa is truly single and this ‘I’, gets coloured by determinants and consequents (*vibhavas* and *anubhavas*) but remains as ITSELF- *Aham Idam*. These determinants and consequents and Vybhicharis or transitory moods along with Satvika expressions that arise from the concentrated mind, comprise of scientific use of gestures, music, dialogue, stage property, dance and various other elements. For Abhinava the aesthetic performance and experience leads the adept towards identity with



Shiva by disclosing his or her possession of his immanent Shakti. *Vijnana Bhairava*, *Siva Sutra*, *Tirumandiram* and other texts ‘before Abhinavabharati’, have variously interpreted the philosophical rationalization of Rasa as Brahman Aswada Sahodara [brother of supreme consciousness], along with its assimilation to Tantra. While Moolar talks of the highest meditative realm- NADANTA state of Chidambaram Nataraja’s dance, Vijnana Bhairava talks of the NADA in harmony of musical instruments and meditation on inarticulate sound vibration, leading to self-realization. These Shaiva Tantras are usually presented in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and Parvati. Shaivism, broadly, has spiritual aims without ignoring the worldly goals of life consisting of objective enjoyments. Therefore it is different from Advaita Vedanta which has the discriminative view that the world is false-Mithya or illusion-Maya. Shaiva Siddhantha practices are highly systematized and deeply mystic. Shiva in his five functions is transcendent as Paramashiva’s Parashakti [granting grace/Anugraha] and immanent as Adi, Iccha, Gnana, Kriya Shaktis; these four being the power of Tirodhana/obscuration, Samhara/dissolution, Stithi/ sustenance and Srishti/creation. Siddhanta Shaivism worships Shiva as both the supreme Brahman and as the benevolent Eshwara or God. The ultimate Advaitic philosophical belief is that the entire creation is synonymous with the creator.

It is to be noted that, if Shiva connotes the principle of consciousness, Shakti connotes the energy that vibrates it as primal sound. For a Shaiva, the Shakti path is fused in the practice. It is Shakti who opens the doorways to Shiva. Shiva is constantly in the joy of Shakti, infused in Him. Like the sun is known through its light or fire through its heat, Shiva has no meaning without Shakti while Shakti has not existence without Shiva. Central to this philosophy is the triangle of Shiva/Pati or God, Nara/Pashu or individual soul and Shakti/Pasha or bondage. The difference between the three entities is real in existence, but they are inseparable from supreme Reality.

Nāṭya Shastra evidently is founded on Shaivism, and whether Trika or Shaiva Siddhanta or any other, it wouldn’t matter in reality. The idea is the same - Tantra Marg/path is upasana, sadhana, japa mantra, yoga, asana, pranayama, viniyoga, mudra, all integrated. These are all existing and practised in Natya. The mind, the contemplating instrument on a deity,

is transformed in Tantra Sadhana, esoteric meditative practice into that which it is meditating upon. THAT THOU ART is the highest realization in both Tantra and Natya, there is a constant feeling of being One and the same, yet becoming different. Leading to union with the divine, there is spontaneity as the totality of our rays of consciousness are reflected back in the individual consciousness of all present in the theatre. In the Yoga of Natya, Nada- music, Laya-perfect tempo in movement, along with the inherent principles of a Shastra or science embodied in it, there is the mystical journey in aesthetic experience. Rasa flows from poet in whom the idea germinates as the seed and pertains until the spectator as flower or fruit.

Although Vedic in origin, Natya is open to all people universally as mentioned in the text, again classifying it as a type of Tantra Sadhana, perhaps the only difference being that in Natya, there is public consumption and not austerity alone. The hand gestures in pure Tantra are to communicate with the deities [Prana Pratishta] as is 'still followed' in Kerala, Bengal and Assam temples while these gestures are adapted for representation of various emotions and for dancing purposes in Natya. Other than Kashmir, scholars have often associated Shaivism and Tantrik practices widely in South India, like Virashaiva, Nakuleesha, Paashupata, Raseshwara and Shaiva Siddhanta. Evidence is not sufficient to establish whether/why there was migration towards south where it has stayed on, if at all it originated only in Kashmir. The relationship of Natya Shastra with Tolkappiyam and Silappadikaram have been elucidated by Ramachandran Nagaswamy (2016) and Padma Subrahmanyam (1980) respectively.

Natya Shastra had value then, has value now and will continue to have value in future to come, world over. In fact, if one were to compare the movements of almost all dances world-wide and the Charis, Karanas and Angaharas in Natya Shastra, one would be amazed as to how Bharata has already given every possibility of limbs, hands, neck, face and parts of face, torso and feet in movement, with wide appeal. He has left ample scope for innovations based on the discipline. There is a role in drama for everyone in society, as Natya is the mimicry of people. Universalization or Sadharanikarana is the reason why it has sustained through ages both in India in some form or other and across continents where its influence is evident. This concept itself has a Tantric foundation as it connects the fundamental emotional states in all of nature and

mankind [Sthayi or predominant Bhavas] with the discovery of self through realization of Rasa or aesthetic bliss. The Natya Dharmi histrionic, specialized acting of Satvika Abhinaya [concentrated emotional expressive mode] seems unique to Indian dances, drama and some Asian cultures while the Loka Dharmi common acting is universally adapted. Barring Varanasi which has this culture, rest of central India do not show the existence of Trika form of Shaivism. *Kaashmiran gacchami* was articulated during *upanayana samskara* by young students during olden days, meaning that “ I go to Kashmir for knowledge”. While it cannot be disputed that the city of Srinagar, literally meaning the city of goddess Saraswati, has produced a large number of great saints in comparison to any other part, we know that mighty Kings have contributed to the glory of Kashmir as well; Eg-Lalitaaditya defeated the King of Kannauj and brought Atrigupta, the ancestor of Abhinavagupta to Kashmir. Hence we cannot altogether rule out the possibility of a culture with its philosophy that could have moved from another place into Kashmir, although both being within Bharata.

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