A STUDY OF EAST INDIAN DANCE DRAMA AND ITS ADAPTATION TO WESTERN THEATRE CONVENTIONS

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Arlene L. Johnson

1961

THESIS

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
3 1293 01013 5147

LIBRARY
Michigan State
University

ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF EAST INDIAN DANCE DRAMA AND ITS ADAPTATION TO WESTERN THEATRE CONVENTIONS

by Arlene L. Johnson

The purpose of this study is to find a means of making East Indian classical dance drama understandable and meaningful to the audience of the West. It must be noted that two forms of drama exist now in India: the revived classical form, and the new Indian Theatre which began about one hundred and fifty years ago. The second form stems directly from the West. The investigation here is to discern the means by which the classical form may be adapted to the West as the Western form was adapted to Indian Theatre conventions.

To form a basis for comparison, the Western Theatre conventions are investigated, as are the conventions of the East Indian classical theatre. The facets of theatre which are discussed are the following: the dramaturgy, including the origin and purpose of the drama, the subjects considered, characters involved in the plot, and plot development; the aspects of production, including the theatre building, scenery, properties, costume, and make-up; and the animate aspects, including voice and gesture.

The investigation shows that that which is considered dramatic in Western theatre springs from an emotional and intellectual response by the audience to the dramatic characters and situations with which the audience can associate or which the audience can recognize as real. For this reason, the approach to drama and production usually taken in the Western theatre is realism. Rasa formation, the realization of emotion from a specific situation, is the crux of Indian classical theatre; and to produce an experience which is essentially beautiful, the Indian theatre is one of remote symbolism. The problem of adaptation, then, is to change the symbols of Indian theatre so that they have realistic connotations when the script, which is left intact, is viewed in performance by the West.

Various possibilities for adaptation in production are considered, and those approaches which seem best to retain the East Indian flavor of the script, while creating a realistic theatre experience for the West, are unified in the specific one-act play, Chitra, by Rabindrinath Tagore. Consideration of the theatre building, set design, lighting, costumes, make-up, and a dance and vocal interpretation script of the play form a production book by which a director might present this play as a valid experience for the Western audience.

The conclusion indicates that by using the principles for adaptation set forth in this study, a director could use this study as a basis for the adaptation to the Western stage of any of a suggested list of East Indian classical dance dramas.

A STUDY OF EAST INDIAN DANCE DRAMA

AND

ITS ADAPTATION TO WESTERN THEATRE CONVENTIONS

By

Arlene L. Johnson

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

1961

G15151
6/19/61

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES iii

LIST OF FIGURES iv

Chapters

I. Introduction 1

II. Western Theatre Conventions 9

III. Indian Classical Theatre Conventions 25

IV. Adaptation of Chitra 42

V. Conclusion 107

BIBLIOGRAPHY 112

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Lighting Schedule	55
2.	Make-up Chart	65

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Scene Design	50
2.	Floor Plan	51
3.	Lighting Plot for Scenes One, Three, Seven	52
4.	Lighting Plot for Scenes Two, Four, Six, Eight, Nine	53
5.	Lighting Plot for Scene Five	54
6.	Sketch for Pattern for Chitra's Sari	58
7.	Costume Plate for Chitra	59
8.	Costume Plate for Chitra	60
9.	Costume Plate for Arjuna	61
10.	Costume Plate for Vasanta	62
11.	Costume Plate for Madana	63
12,	Costume Plate for Villagers	64

INTRODUCTION

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to find a means of making East Indian classical dance-drama understandable and meaningful to the audience of the West. For some years in the West there has been a rise of interest in the Orient. This interest is manifest in Western art, architecture, philosophy, and religious study. However, the drama, as such, has not been adapted for our culture. When it has been presented, usually Oriental troupes were imported to exhibit their dramatic presentations as curiosities rather than as valid experiences of theatre for our part of the world. The attempt in this thesis is to so adapt the symbols and theatre conventions of East Indian classical dance-drama that a valid theatre experience will result when the drama is presented here.

The general problem which this study attempts to solve is finding a way in which the foreign symbols and theatre conventions can be made meaningful to the West. The specific problem with which this study deals is the adaptation of the one act play by Rabindrinath Tagore, Chitra, to the theatre conventions of the West. Background material for this adaptation comprises the second and third chapters of the thesis, in which the Western and East Indian theatre conventions are compared and contrasted. The specific facets of the drama and theatre which are examined and compared are the following: the dramaturgy,

including the purpose of the drama, its origin, subjects of treatment, characters, and plot development; the physical aspects, including the theatre building, scenic design, lighting, properties, costumes, and make-up; and the animate aspect, acting. Finally, the major problems with which the study deals are considered specifically in the suggested adaptation of the East Indian one-act play, Chitra.

For the actual adaptation, the play, Chitra, was chosen for two reasons. First, it is exemplary of East Indian classical drama in that it conforms with the demands of the Natyasastra, the book which forms the basis of Hindu dramatic theory and representation. Secondly, this script was translated into English by its playwright, Rabindrinath Tagore, whose efforts caused a reawakening of interest in Indian classicism during the early years of this country. Chitra was written in 1924.

This drama is based on the following story from the Mahabharata, one of the epics of India. In the course of his wanderings, in fulfilment of a vow of penance, Arjuna came to Manipur. There he saw Chitrangada, the beautiful daughter of Chitravahana, the king of the country. Smitten with her charm, he asked the king for the hand of his daughter in marriage. Chitravahana asked him who he was and, learning that he was Arjuna, the Pandava, told him that Parbhanjana, one of his ancestors in the kingly line of Manipur, had long been childless. In order to obtain an heir, he performed severe penances. Pleased with these austerities, the god Shiva gave him this boon,

that he and his successors should each have one child. It had so happened that the promised child had heretofore invariably been a son. He, Chitravahana, was the first to have only a daughter, Chitrangada, to perpetuate the family. He had, therefore, always treated her as a son and had made her his heir. Continuing, the king said, "The one son that will be born to her must be the perpetuator of my race. That son will be the price that I shall demand for this marriage. You can take her, if you like, in this condition."[1] Arjuna promised and took Chitrangada to wife, and lived in her father's capital for three years. When a son was born to them, he embraced her with affection, and, taking leave of her and her father, set out again in his travels.

Tagore (1861-1941) had as his primary aim the reawakening of interest in classical drama and its form of presentation. John D. Mitchell, in an address which was given at the American Educational Theatre Association convention in Chicago in December of 1956, said,

> Fortunately for world theatre, the dance dramas . . . have been rescued from oblivion in the reawakening of theatre in India. Initial credit must be paid to Rabindrinath Tagore, for the Bengali poet-playwright some decades ago fostered the rediscovery and teaching of Indian arts.[2]

---

1. Rabindrinath Tagore, Chitra (New York: Macmillan Company, 1924), p. ii.

2. John D. Mitchell, A Report to the American Educational Theatre Association, Chicago, 1956.

Two forms of drama now exist in India: the revived classical form, and the new Indian theatre which began around a hundred and fifty years ago. According to Faubion Bowers, it is now axiomatic to recognize that this later form stems directly from the West.[3] Modern theatre as a talking, non-religious, danceless, realistic, action-packed, abbreviated entertainment was, for the most part, the special reserve of Europe, and it initially received its highest development there. This is possibly one of the best legacies that the West left its colonies in the East. However, it would be pointless to attempt to readapt to the Western culture that which India has adapted from us. Therefore our consideration here is merely with the classical drama, attempting to discover how this form may be made acceptable interculturally as was the Western form for the East.

Indian drama generally, even in translation, is excellent literature; and, although the basic purpose of the theatre experience differs between the two cultures, the plays of India have much beauty to offer to American and the whole of the West. This, then, seems an appropriate time for such a study, for interest is rising in the West concerning the Orient. The plays of the Orient have a great deal to offer the West, for not only is the language very poetic but the plays themselves could help to complete our understanding of a culture which is different from ours.

---

3. Faubion Bowers, Theatre in the East (New York: Thomas Nelson and Son, 1956), p. 61.

An adaptation of Chitra which could be used as a basis for adapting other East Indian classical dramas to the West is, of course, a step forward in the direction of such intercultural understanding and art appreciation.

Two limitations are placed upon this study. The first is that the script is left intact. No changes are made in the dramaturgy which, though different from our own, is not so different as to be incomprehensible to the West. The second limitation is that this study, after comparison of the two theatrical forms, is to result in a production plan of the play Chitra. Production of the play will not be the termination of this study, for proof of this study in production could well form another thesis.

Three basic divisions form the content of this study. Since knowing the Western theatre conventions is necessary before any attempt can be made to adapt other conventions to our own, the second chapter of this thesis deals with the conventions of the theatre of the West. This chapter forms a base for comparison between our theatre and the classical theatre of India. This chapter, then, is a discussion of general concepts of Western theatre, with emphasis on the principal characteristics of drama and theatre as we find them. Naturally, for functional purposes here, a great deal of generalization concerning these aspects of theatre is necessary, for complete consideration of any of these topics would be worthy of a study in itself. The purpose here is but to lay the groundwork for comparison with a form of theatre quite different from our own.

The third chapter is a discussion of the classical Indian theatre. This chapter is exhaustive of all available materials concerning the East Indian theatre. It considers Indian theatre and drama as the second chapter considers the theatre and drama of the West. The conclusion of this chapter is a comparison of the two forms. This, of course, is most necessary in the study, for the forms must be compared to discern where adaptation is necessary.

Since the symbolism of the Indian production is not readily understood by the Western audience, certain changes must be made in the production if this drama is to be comprehensible and enjoyable to the audience here. Such changes are suggested, in the fourth chapter, for the play Chitra. In adapting East Indian or any drama of a foreign culture to the Western stage, the style of production must be adapted so as to be understandable to the audience, but the purpose of this adaptation is also to retain the flavor of that country from which the play came. The changes suggested here are an attempt to achieve a satisfactory compromise between the two production forms. Each possibility for adaptation of production is considered, and those approaches which seem best to retain the East Indian flavor of the script, while creating a realistic theatre experience for the West, are unified in the adaptation of the one-act play, Chitra, by Rabindrinath Tagore. Consideration of the theatre building, set design, lighting, costumes, make-up, and a dance and vocal interpretation script of the play form a production book by which a director might present this

play as a valid experience of theatre for the Western audience.

The conclusion indicates that by using the principles for adaptation set forth in this study, a director could use this thesis as a base for the adaptation of any of a suggested list of East Indian classical dance-dramas to the Western stage.

WESTERN THEATRE CONVENTIONS

Chapter II

WESTERN THEATRE CONVENTIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to form a base for comparison between our theatre and the classical theatre of India. This chapter, then, is a discussion of general concepts of Western theatre, with emphasis on the principal characteristics of drama and theatre as we find them. Naturally, for functional purposes here, a great deal of generalization concerning these aspects of theatre is necessary, for complete consideration of any of these topics would be worthy of a study in itself. The purpose here is but to lay the groundwork for comparison with a form of theatre quite different from our own.

Numerous theories exist in the West concerning the essence of the dramatic. Many of these can logically be defended, and dramatic critics throughout the ages have advanced and supported widely varying concepts. A reading of Barrett H. Clark's European Theories of the Drama[1] will serve to substantiate this. Discussion of all of these theories does not seem necessary here, as it would merely form a historical background for modern theory. Therefore, modern theory which seems an outgrowth of past theories will be considered. The first questions to be answered, then, are: What are the purposes of Western drama? How are these purposes achieved? What is the nature of the audience experience?

---

1. Barrett H. Clark, European Theories of the Drama (New York: Crown Publishers, 1957).

Brander Matthews says of modern drama that it is a story in dialogue shown in action before an audience.[2] George Jean Nathan has called good dra ma "anything that interests an intelligently emotional groups of persons assembled together in an illuminated hall."[3] In this statement Nathan obviously presupposed the intellectual and emotional appeal of the "story in dialogue shown in action."

The intellectual appeal of drama can be further defined. Education, broadly viewed, might be defined as such drawing out of the powers of a human being as shall bring him into harmony with his environment.[4] Realizing self in relation to the whole of the world, clearly perceiving life, is education in its most complete sense. Any institution, then, which attempts to make man more aware of the truths of life, is an educational means. According to Barrett H. Clark, one of the chief ends of drama is to reveal some sort of answer to the question of the purpose of life, over and above the obscure answer which man can formulate from his own observation and experience.[5] Therefore the conclusion may be reached that part of the end of Western art and theatre is to educate.

---

2. Brander Matthews, "The Development of the Drama," European Theories of the Drama, ed. Clark (New York: Crown Publishers, 1957), p. 494.

3. George Jean Nathan, "The Drama as an Art". European Theories of the Drama, ed. Clark (New York: Crown Publishers, 1957), p. 503.

4. Richard Burton, The New American Drama (New York: Thomas Crowell Co., 1913), p. 251.

5. Barrett H. Clark "Drama and Theatre", The Enjoyment of the Arts, ed. Max Schoen (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1944), p. 204.

The ways in which plays educate differ. Comedy and musical comedy primarily amuse and delight. Plays such as Green Pastures and Our Town inspire. Aristotle's catharsis theory still applies in many ways to modern tragedy. The Crucible and Desire Under the Elms both arouse and purge deep emotions, and the audience leaves the theatre feeling relieved. Yet all of these forms instruct the audience to the playwright's theme or idea, that truth or viewpoint which the playwright communicates to others through the medium of drama. From this idea, all other phases of the drama grow. In The Technique of the Drama Freytag has defined theme or idea with scattered phrases as

> the main element, vividly perceived, and comprehended in its entrancing, soul-stirring or terrifying significance, ... separated from all that casually accompanies it, brought into a unifying relation of cause and effect. . .[6]

About this same subject of theme he has further said:

> This idea works with a power similar to the secret power of crystallization. Through this are unity of action, significance of characters, and, at last, the whole structure of the drama produced.[7]

Either consciously or unconsciously, then, the playwright reveals in his script a theme. Audience understanding of that theme, the truth or viewpoint which the playwright expresses, makes theatre an intellectual experience. Thus, through mentally associating with the drama, the audience derives an education experience from theatre. The theme may

---

6. G. Freytag, "The Technique of the Drama," European Theories of the Drama, ed. Clark (New York: Crown Publishers, 1957), p. 354.

7. Ibid., p. 354.

be light or serious, beautiful or sordid, depending upon the outlook of the playwright. Yet the fact exists that the audience is made more aware of the playwright's theme through the theatre experience.

This, alone, does not explain the appeal of Western theatre, for a lecture can express an idea in a way which is as mentally stimulating as the theatre experience. Therefore, mental stimulation is part of the purpose of theatre, yet does not make for the essentially dramatic. Drama is a temporary escape from mundane experiences to experiences more vivid than those that normally occur to the viewer. The emotions of the viewer are captivated and held by association with the characters who form the subject of treatment and by the situations in which these characters are placed.

As has been suggested before, the way by which the ultimate object of theatre is realized is through emotional interplay between the actors and audience. This concept is not new. Aristotle first conceived the theory that tragedy must arouse and purge the emotions of pity and fear. And George Pierce Baker, in his book, Dramatic Technique, more succinctly tells us, "A play is the shortest distance from emotions to emotions."[8] The one distinguishing feature of the dramatic, then, is that the audience becomes emotionally involved with the characters and concerned with their ultimate fates.

---

8. George Pierce Baker, "Dramatic Technique," European Theories of the Drama, ed. Clark (New York: Crown Publishers, 1957), p. 497.

This association and tense concern is what Allison Gaw has called dramatic tension.[9] The final scene from Thornton Wilder's Our Town is an excellent example of this. The audience is exceedingly moved by the emotionally tense and highly dramatic scene. The plea in this scene is for awareness of the beauty of every passing moment. At this time in the play, the audience becomes intellectually aware of the playwright's theme. Yet the audience is held at a peak of dramatic tension through its emotional involvement with the principal character. According to modern critics, then, emotional involvement and dramatic tension are distinguishing features of the theatre experience in the West.

The drama of the West is a flexible one, which has been adapted to meet the needs of passing ages. In a spontaneous way it had its beginning at the festivals of Dionysus. The earliest Western drama critic was Aristotle. Writing after the Golden Age of Greek tragic writing, Aristotle inquired into each literary method and its potentialities as well as the effects it should create in the spectator, i. e. his catharsis theory for tragedy. His treatise was completely empirical through an approach that observed and appraised the works of his time. The Poetics is the first extant essay on art which is honestly exploratory.[10]

---

9. Allison Gaw advances this theory in his essay "Centers of Interest in Drama, Dramatic Tension, and Types of Dramatic 'Conflict'," published in the Schelling Anniversary Papers. (New York: The Century Co., 1923).

10. John Gassner, "Aristotelian Literary Criticism," Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1951), p. xxxix.

Since that time, critics have occasionally attempted to give dogmatic rules for the playwright to follow, but always playwrights have broken these rules and kept the drama in a flexible, changing state.

The result of this flux can be observed in modern drama. Virtually every subject is now discussed in the theatre: religion in Green Pastures, syphillis in Ghosts, infanticide in Desire Under the Elms, homosexuality in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, social problems in Death of a Salesman and Street Scene, existentialism in No Exit, love in Brigadoon. Virtually any subject, then, is acceptable for dramatic consideration. George Pierce Baker has said, "Anything that is human may be dramatic material provided it is treated so as to affect the emotions of a group as a group rather than the individual."[11]

The playwright also may choose any type of character to live in his play. Anyone from Mack the Knife to God may be portrayed. However, all of the characters of the drama have one thing in common. They do live on stage. They are believable people who can be recognized by the audience as a character type or possessing human characteristics. Much of the emotional part of the theatre experience stems from the dramatic tension which the audience feels as it associates with the characters in the drama. The viewer recognizes the stage character as a real or symbolic person, possessing qualities which the viewer may recognize as his own, as universal, or as representative of some group.

---

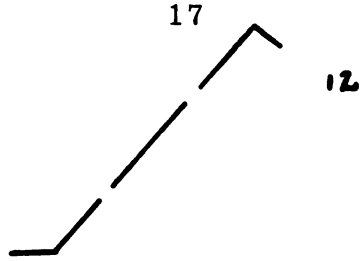
11. George Pierce Baker, Dramatic Technique (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919), p. 41.

Therefore whatever happens to the character in the play becomes a vicarious experience for the viewer who recognizes, associates, and sympathizes with him. The viewer, then, acts and reacts with the stage character. Man in action is portrayed on stage in the chain of cause and effect in nature. Believable characters in action live in Western drama.

Few dramatic rules are observed by all of our modern playwrights. Even the unities of time, place, and action are violated. My Fair Lady takes place over the time-span of six months. Most of the musical plays change locale many times. Even the unity of action is violated in the revues which, like LaPlume de Ma Tante, have received popular acceptance on the Western stage. Occasionally plays without portrayed action, reading theatre, appear on our stage. Plays such as Dylan Thomas's Under Milk Wood exemplify this. Poetic drama, such as MacLeish's J.B. or T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, finds an audience as well.

One feature of actual drama in the West which appears to remain constant from Aristotle to the present day is plot development. Western plays have almost always had a complication and denouement, a building and release of dramatic tension. They have what Aristotle called a beginning, middle, and an end. This is logical, for the building and release of dramatic tension is the outstanding feature of Western drama.

Brander Matthews in his book, A Study of the Drama, gives the following diagram to depict the rising action, climax, and falling action of most modern three-act plays.



Even this is occasionally violated, however, since a play such as Ibsen's Ghosts has no falling action whatever, and the audience is left at the end of the play wondering what the final outcome of the situation is to be. Since the audience expects rising and falling action, most plays are structured with complication and denouement.

Even though many diverse approaches to playmaking are in existence today, Brander Matthews has well summarized those characteristics which the well constructed play contains.

> Today as in every yesterday, that drama is most worth while and worthy of success which is able to arouse and retain and augment the interest of the spectators, when the plot is single, when its action is swift and direct, when its exposition is clear, when it has sustained suspense without disconcerting surprise, when its story moves steadily from its beginning through its middle to its end, when it centers our attention on its essential elements, when it omits all non-essential elements, when every situation is prepared for and in turn prepares us for those that follow, when it has proportion, harmony, and symmetry, and when, to sum up, it is well and truly made by an honest craftsman who is also a gifted artist.[13]

According to this, the play should be a well and beautifully constructed piece of art. Yet, as has been noted before, the playwright is free to choose among many dramatic forms, since Western drama is, indeed, a flexible art form.

---

12. Brander Matthews, A Study of the Drama (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), p. 213.

13. Brander Matthews, Rip Van Winkle Goes to the Play and Other Essays on Plays and Players (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 65.

The physical aspects of the theatre have become as flexible as the dramaturgical. Production, the fulfillment of dramaturgy, is next considered.

Conventionally, the theatre of the West is a building, the function of which is to enclose dramatic presentation. This type of building consists of two parts, a stage and an auditorium. The stage is usually a raised platform behind a proscenium arch, and the floor of the auditorium is often "raked," or slanted upward and away from the stage so as to allow a clear view of the stage from any of the seats which are arranged in rows facing the stage. The auditoriums in the Broadway theatres, according to Lee Simonson writing for the Encyclopedia Britannica, are built to accommodate from 500 to 1,700 spectators. Larger or smaller auditoriums are built to serve the needs of special groups.[14] However, if we consider the theatre any place where a play is produced publicly, churches, barns, public parks, private homes, street corners, ships, and military camps become theatres as such when performances are given and an audience is present. It is the presence of performers and spectators participating in a common function at the same time that constitutes theatre.[15] Theatres today

---

14. Lee Simonson, "Theatre Architecture," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. XXII, 1956, p. 39.

15. Barrett H. Clark, "Drama and Theatre," The Enjoyment of the Arts, ed. Max Schoen (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1944), p. 205.

are large or small, indoors or out, depending upon the needs and desires of those for or by whom the play is presented.

In these theatres scene design varies with the plays produced. Before scene design is discussed, definition of some of the more common terms used in reference to types of design is in order. Suggestive realism is what Cheney has called "truthfulness to detail."[16] This implies that the devices of the theatre, the wood and canvas and paint, are so put together as actually to simulate or create the illusion of reality. Symbolism is the use of a concrete thing to bring to the viewer's mind an abstract idea. Color is very often used symbolically; black or dark colors bring to mind evil or despair. Expressionism distorts design to express a character's or author's viewpoint. Theatricalism means the use of pure theatrical devices without any attempt at actual realistic effect. Constructivism is skeletal scene design without any ornamentation. Gassner, however, tells us that the distinction between these "isms" has lost its sharpness, for many scene designs are a combination of these.[17]

Scenery helps to establish locale and mood, is itself decorative, and provides acting area for the play. Theatrical devices are therefore employed to enhance the dramatic effect of the production. Suggestive

---

16. Sheldon Cheney, The Theatre (Tudor Publishing Co. : New York, 1949), p. 453.

17. John Gassner, Form and Idea in Modern Theatre (New York: Dryden Press, 1956), p. 133.

realism is that concept of scene design which appears most frequently on the American stage. Into this, symbolism, expressionism, and theatricalism are often incorporated, as John Gassner implies. Rarely is any one of these seen in its pure form. Perhaps the closest the American theatre has come to constructivism in this century is the design which is written into Thornton Wilder's Our Town. Expressionism is used in the design of such rare plays as Waiting for Godot and Endgame. However, since the audience in the West associates with what is happening on stage, it is logical that almost all scenery is basically realistic or at least has touches of realism.

On the concepts of Appia and Craig, following the invention of the incandescent filament lamp by Thomas Edison in 1879, the basis for modern theatre lighting was laid. Today light plays an important part in a production. Through the three controllable properties of light, quantity, color, and distribution, the five functions of modern lighting are accomplished. These functions are illumination, plasticity, realism, mood, and composition.[18] Since theatre is partly a visual art, the necessity for illumination is obvious. Plasticity is necessary, for the actor must stand out as a three-dimensional entity. By common definition, realism in theatre is the illusion of nature, and since many modern plays are realistic, lighting is needed to accomplish a realistic effect on stage. But even the most non-realistic play requires some

---

18. Wayne Bowman, Modern Theatre Lighting, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 4.

attention to the illusion of nature lest it lose all connection with human experience. Poets have long recognized that light is emotional. Mood creation, then, is enhanced by lighting effects. Last, light is a vital part of composition, unifying the whole, and pointing up the most important. Lighting, then, is an integral part of modern play production.

Properties, costumes, and make-up are the last of the physical aspects of theatre which will be considered here. For most productions these are realistic, conforming with the period of the play being produced. Costume is an extension of the set in line and color. Its three purposes are to compel audience attention, identify the actor to the audience, and help the actor identify himself with the role.[19] Occasionally groups will produce Shakespeare in blue jeans or the classics in modern dress, but for the most part realism is the keynote for period as well as modern dress. Abstract costuming and make-up are sometimes used. Picasso And Alexandra Exter, among others, have experimented with this, but for the most part, costumes and make-up must be natural and true to life.[20] The purpose of make-up is to create character and to make the actor's face more vivid to combat the effect of lights.[21]

Realism, too, applies to acting. Of course the movement, gesture, and facial play must be broader than in life because of the great distance

---

19. John Gassner, Producing the Play (New York: Dryden Press, 1953), p. 392.

20. Serge Strenkovsky, The Art of Make-up (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1943), p. 18-19.

21. Kenneth Buckridge, "Make-up for the Play," Producing the Play, John Gassner (New York: Dryden Press, 1953), p. 376.

from the audience to the actor. The actor's voice, also, must project so that it can be heard in the back row of the theatre. Whether an actor is playing a part of one his own age or of someone older or younger, his function is to convince the audience that he is the individual whom he is portraying. Styles of acting vary for plays from different periods. Formal and noble movements are most frequently used in classic drama. Modern realistic drama demands realistic acting. Beauty of movement is the keynote for the production of romantic drama. Dance is frequently used in musical plays; the style of dance varies with the choreographer, interpretative dance and stylized ballet being frequently used. Special acting styles are used in unconventional forms such as expressionistic plays and epic theatre. These, however, are determined by the individual director.[22]

At this point the two general approaches to acting should be briefly discussed. A proven generation of actors in the United States subscribes to an approach to acting known as "technique." This school of thought implies that the mind can best govern the body to create on stage consistent and believable emotions. This type of actor is not emotionally involved with the on-stage situation and often chooses to project his own personality into the role. A second school, the "method" group, is inspired by the work of Stanislavsky. Followers of this school of thought believe that through recalled emotion, the body and voice can best express the emotion of the play. This is a school to

---

22. John Gassner, Producing the Play (New York: Dryden Press, 1953), p. 65.

which many successful American actors subscribe. The aim of both groups, however, is to attempt to play a role in the way which is most believable and effective to the audience.

In summarizing the theatre conventions of the West, a number of major and distinct characteristics are found. The purpose of the theatre is to stimulate the viewer mentally and emotionally by making him aware of the idea or theme of the playwright through a dramatically tense situation. Virtually any type of play can be written using any type of subject matter and any type of characters. However the characters must be believable ones with whom the audience can associate. No rigid rules exist for the playwright. However most plays are written with rising and falling action, a more or less causally related series of events involving a complication and a denouement. So that an audience might best be able to enjoy the play and associate with it, the approach to playwrighting and production usually taken is that of realism. Theatrical devices are and must be used to enhance the dramatic effect. Plays, scenery, lighting, costuming, make-up, and acting which are far removed from the familiar are comparatively seldom found except in deliberately experimental theatre. This is logical, for d ramatic tension is created through audience association with the elements of the drama and of the production. Art-type theatre usually experiments with forms with which the audience cannot readily associate. Therefore the approach to all facets of theatre which is

most effective for the audience of the West is realism or suggestive realism embellished with theatrical devices, for in this way universal dramatic tension can be created.

INDIAN CLASSICAL THEATRE CONVENTIONS

Chapter III

INDIAN CLASSICAL THEATRE CONVENTIONS

The essence of East Indian drama has been very simply stated. "The purpose of the Sanskrit drama is to turn literature into art--a pathway of roses leading to charm and appreciation of joy and beauty."[1] The way in which this experience is accomplished, according to the aesthetic theory of the Hindus, is through the establishment of rasa. A work of art is a statement informed by sentiment (rasa). Rasa is an experience which is an analogy between physical and mental impressions.[2] To understand the idea of rasa, one must first understand the concept of bhava. Bhava is the concrete situation and condition of a period of time for some occurrence, and rasa is the aesthetic experience of that happening or condition.[3] It is an abstract idea, the essence of a particular situation formed in the human mind with a psychological sense of aesthetic beauty. For example, were one to smell a rose, the act and conditon of the smelling would be the bhava; the pleasure derived from the act would be the rasa. Eight basic rasas are the moods or "flavors" of Hindu poetry, dance, and acting. These, translated, are erotic, heroic,

---

1. R.V. Jagirdar, Drama in Sanskrit Literature (Bombay, 1947), p.15.

2. Projesh Banerji, The Dance of India (India: Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1947), p. 54.

3. Heinrich Zimmer, Philosophies of India (New York: Meridan Books, 1957), p.274.

pathetic, furious, humorous, terrible, odious, and wondrous.[4] Each rasa has its symbolic color. Respectively these are dark brown, golden, Indian rock dove (grey), red, white, black, blue, and yellow.[5]

At the very center of Indian philosophy lie the "Four Noble Truths." These are as follows: The First Noble Truth is, in brief, that all aspects of existence are suffering. The Second Noble Truth is that the cause of suffering is always desire; we are unhappy because we do not have and cannot get what we want. The Third Noble Truth is that by overcoming desire we may avoid sorrow. The Fourth Noble Truth is the method by which freedom is attained, a process by which man grows beyond himself.[6] The process of growing out of oneself relieves one from the cycle of Karma or cause and effect which causes rebirth.[7] By becoming disinterested in the things of the world, the Hindu dwells upon things of the spirit, becoming one with his atman or oversoul. In his next incarnation, he believes, he will be closer to Nirvana, oblivion, the heaven of his faith.[8] One of the ways of growing out of Karma is the realization of rasa. This belief makes drama a religious experience. Viewed in this light, classical East Indian dance-drama is a religious ritual in performance,

---

4. Banerji, op. cit., p. 64.

5. Ibid., p. 64.

6. James B. Pratt, India and Its Faiths (Boston, New York: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1915), p. 385-8.

7. Zimmer, op. cit., p. 274.

8. H. H. Wilson, The Theatre of the Hindus (London: Parbury Allen and Co., 1835), Vol. I, p. lvii.

and a religious experience for the viewer.

For this reason the supposition is quite logical that the myths which surround the beginnings of the drama would claim its divine revelation. The story is that the lesser gods approached Brahman and asked him for a form of diversion which must be audible as well as visible. Brahman granted the wish, and after resorting to yoga, combined the four Vedas. He incorporated into one Veda (the Natyaveda) the song from Saman, histrionic representation from the Yajus, the recitative from the Rgveda, and the rasa from the Atharveda. The gods communicated the new Veda to Bharatamuni who recorded the work in his book, the Natyasastra.[9] This is the classical book of dramaturgy and is used even to the present day after the revival of the classical theatre led by Rabindrinath Tagore.[10]

The themes of the plays come from legends of the gods, historical influences, and the epics of India, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.[11] Examination of the plays shows that all types of characters are represented in this drama. The four castes and the gods appear on the stage. The hero of the play, however, is a person descending from royal seers.[12]

---

9. Bharata-muni, The Natyasastra (trans.) Manomohan Gosh (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1955), p. 1-6.

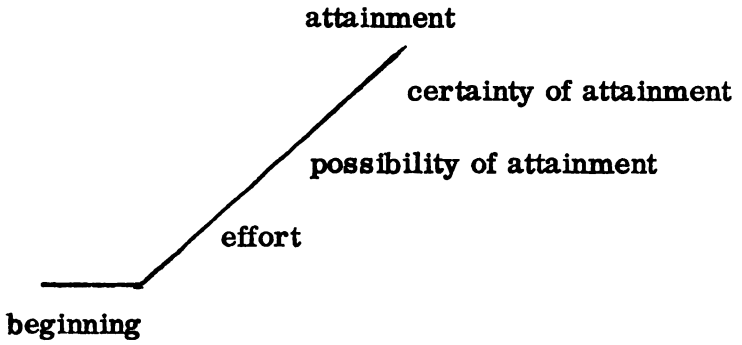
10. A. Arnson, Rabindrinath Through Western Eyes (India: Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1947), p. 80.

11. Kenneth Macgowan and William Melnitz, The Living Stage (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 295.

12. A seer is a prophet or one who can foresee future events.

Divine protection is given to him, and he performs many super-human feats leading to his success in different undertakings and amorous pastimes.[13] However the characters of the drama are not so important as is the situation in which they are placed. "The drama is an imitation of a situation in which the personages who form the subject of treatment are placed from time to time by means of gesture, speech, costume, and expression."[14] In this drama, then, the situation rather than the characters' reactions to the situation must be dramatic. The characters are romantic, two-dimensional, almost fairy-tale characters, and interest is held by the situation in which these characters are placed rather than by the characters themselves.

All phases of Hindu drama are prescribed by the Natyasastra. The plot line, too, is dictated and is unique in that there is no denouement. The plot is divided into beginning, effort, possibility of attainment, certainty of attainment, and attainment.[15] The plot line of this form can be illustrated thus:



13. Bharata-muni, Op. cit., p. 356.

14. A.B. Keith, The Sanskrit Drama (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 295-6.

15. Bharata-muni, Op. cit., p. 381.

The audience is left at the peak of the plot's intensity. The purpose of this, of course, is the creation of rasa.

The purpose of the drama and the purpose of the dramaturgy of East Indian classical drama is the creation of rasa. Characters who have received favors from the gods appear in situations which show their peace with the world. The plot is ended at the most intense point. All of these facets of the dramatic theory gear the drama toward a religious experience.

All aspects of the presentation of drama are governed by the purpose of the drama. Since rasa creation is the primary function of Hindu theatre, the symbolism of the production is directed toward this end. The discussion in the remainder of the chapter summarizes the tenets of production as prescribed by the Natyasastra: the theatre, scenery, properties, costume, make-up, and acting.

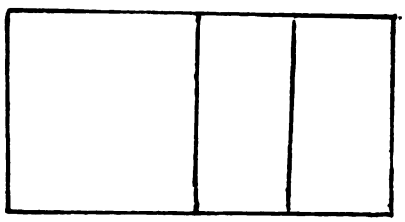
There are three types of playhouses devised by the wise Visvakarman, the heavenly architect, in the treatise on his art. They are oblong, square, and triangular. Their sizes vary: they may be large, middle-sized, and small. The lengths of these three sizes are fixed in cubits.[16] Since a cubit varies in length from eighteen to twenty-two inches, the median of twenty inches will be used here. The respective sizes of the playhouses in feet would be approximately one hundred and eighty feet, one hundred and five and one-half feet, and fifty three and one-half feet.

---

16. Bharata-muni, op. cit., p. 19.

According to Gosh, translator of the Natyasastra into English, the largest of the playhouses was actually only thirty-two yards long and sixty yards broad, capable of accommodating about four hundred spectators.[17]

The oblong playhouse is meant for mortals. The measurements for this type are the following: It is to be sixty-four cubits in length and thirty-two cubits in breadth. No one should build a playhouse larger than this, for the play presented in it will not be properly expressive.[18] The length is divided in half. This line separates the auditorium from the stage. The half which is to be the stage should be divided in half again for the stage and the tiring room thus:

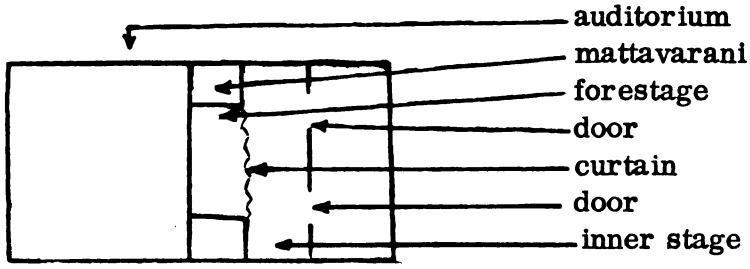


The Natyasastra uses two words for stage: ragnapitha and rangasirsa. For this reason two theories have arisen through the ages in connection with the stage's construction. Some believe that the stage should be divided into a forestage and a curtained inner stage, while others believe that both of these words refer to the same stage. Therefore, the following diagram is one to which many authorities subscribe.

---

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 20.



On each side of the stage should be built the mattavarani. The purpose of these rooms has become obscured through the ages; however they may have been used as tiring rooms to the side of the stage. These rooms, according to Bharata-muni,

> should be furnished with four pillars and should be [together] equal in length to the stage and its plinth [base] should be a cubit and a half high [above the stage] , and the plinth of the auditorium should be equal to the height of the two [mattavarini] .[19]

Therefore the auditorium is higher than the stage. The tiring room at the back has two doors which open onto the stage.

The unusual feature of the square playhouse, which is thirty-two cubits in length and breadth, is that the seats are constructed "in the form of a staircase, each row being one cubit higher than the one preceeding it."[20] The stage of this type of theatre is raised. With its raked auditorium and raised stage, it bears some resemblance to our own concept of a playhouse. This type, too, has a tiring room in back of the stage and mattavarani.

---

19. Ibid., p. 26.

20. Ibid., p. 30.

The triangular playhouse has a triangular stage with two doors for entrance and exits from the tiring room.[21] No mattavarani are prescribed for the triangular playhouse.

No realistic scenery as such is used for the presentations. This would be impractical to attempt, for the one-act play "Chitra" has nine different scenes, one lasting for only two lines. Therefore the stage is ornamented with carvings and tapestries which are decorative but not representative of any particular locale. The Natyasastra suggests decorative designs, carved figures of elephants, tigers, and snakes. Four pillars representing the four castes (religious leaders, rulers, workers, and untouchables) are permanent fixtures on all stages. Wooden statues and pillars are also set up there.[22]

As with scenic effects, hand properties are rarely used. Pantomimic gesture is used in their stead. However, when necessary, minor properties which are suggestive rather than real are used.[23] Gesture is discussed later in the chapter, but mention of the relative lack of hand properties is pertinent to the technical aspects of the theatre.

The dress of the actors is carefully regulated, especially regarding color, which is used symbolically to enhance the rasa. Ascetics wear garments of rags or bark; those in charge of the harem,

---

21. Ibid., p. 32.

22. Ibid., p. 29.

23. Keith, op. cit., p. 365.

red jackets; kings, gods, and lovers, gay clothing. Dirty clothes indicate madness, distraction, misery or a journey; uncolored garb, one engaged in worship.[24]

Make-up, too, is carefully prescribed, and is quite different from our own. An example of the make-up used is the following: Yellow and red powder are used on the face with white dots in black powder on the eyebrows. The white portion of the eyes is touched with a seed which makes the eyes blood-red and swollen. Red paint colors the lips. Artificial hairs are made of jute and stained with variegated colors.[25] Specific make-up as well as costume and other ornamentation is rigidly prescribed; each facet is highly symbolic and unrealistic. The colors, types of costumes, ornaments, and make-up, then, are stereotype symbols meaningful to the East Indian audience.

The inanimate and animate sound used in this form of drama are interdependent. For this reason they will be considered together. The music of the drama is not described at length. What is clear is that each sentiment or rasa has its special appropriate music, and each action its special accompaniment.[26]

Indian music is a purely melodic art, devoid of any harmonized accompaniment other than a drone. In modern European music, the meaning of each note of the theme is mainly brought out by the notes of

---

24. Banerji, op. cit., p. 65.

25. Keith, op. cit., p. 366.

26. Banerji, op. cit., p. 250.

the chord which are heard with it. Even in unaccompanied melody, the musician hears an implied harmony. To hear the music of India as Indians hear it, one must recover the sense of pure intonation and must forget implied harmonies.[27]

> In India it is far more the interval than the note that is sung or played, and we recognized accordingly the continuity of sound: by contrast with this, the European song, which is vertically divided by the harmonic interest and the nature of the keyed instruments which are heard with the voice, seems to the unaccustomed Indian ear to be "full of holes."[28]

The Indian art song is accompanied by drums or by an instrument known as tambura, or both. The tambura is of the lute family; the four very long strings are tuned to sound the dominant, the upper tonic twice, and the octave below. The pitch is adjusted to suit the singer's voice.[29] In actual practice, a chanter often narrates interludes of pure dance in the theatre.

The second means of theatrical representation consists of the use of speech. It relates to the proper musical notes, voice registers, pitch of vowels, intonation, and speech tempo to be used in reciting or declaming a passage for the purpose of evoking different rasas in the spectators.[30] As an example, to call a person at a distance the

---

27. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, The Dance of Shiva (New York: The Noonday Press, 1957), p. 90.

28. Keith op. cit., p. 339.

29. Coomaraswamy, op. cit., p. 90-92.

30. Bharata-muni, op. cit., p. LXI.

voice should proceed from the head register; when he is at a short distance it should be from the chest; and when he is at one's side, the throat register is proper. All other facets of speech are similarly described.

The gestures and movement for the drama are rigidly prescribed by the Natyasastra. According to legend, the god Shiva, holding a small drum in his hand, danced the creation of the world, the drum beating out the rhythm of the world. His gestures are the world processes, and his dancing one of his four aspects.[31] When he first saw the drama among the gods, before it was communicated to earth, he insisted that dance play the most important part in the drama.

The Natyasastra dictates specific gestures for each part of the body as it is to achieve rasa. The rasa is to be felt by the actor as he portrays it. Gestures are given for the head, the glances, the eyeballs, the eyelids, the eyebrows, the nose, the cheeks, the lower lip, the chin, the mouth, the neck, the hands (by far the most important), the breast, the sides, the belly, the waist, the thigh, the shank, and the feet.

For example, the head has thirteen different gestures which are as follows:

> Akampita: Moving the head slowly up and down.
> Kampita: When the movements in the Akampita are quick and copious. (Uses) The Akampita head is to be applied in giving a hint, teaching, questioning, addressing in an ordinary way, giving an order. The Kampita head is applicable in anger, arguement, understanding, asserting, threatening, sickness, and intolerance.

---

31. Banerji, op. cit., p. 21.

Dhuta and Vidhuta: A slow movement of the head is called Dhuta, and when this movement is quick it is called Vidhuta. (Uses) The Dhuta head is applicable in unwillingness, sadness, astonishment, confidence, looking sideways, emptiness, and forbidding. The Vidhuta head is applicable in the attack of cold, terror, panic, fever, and the first stage of drinking.

Pravahita and Udivahita: When the head is alternately turned to two sides it is called Pravahita, and when it is once turned upwards it is known as Udivahita. (Uses) The Pravahita head is applicable in demonstration, surprise, joy, remembering, intolerence, cogitation, concealment and amorous sporting. The Udivahita head is to be applied to pride, self esteem, showing height, looking up and the like.

Avadhuta: When the head is once turned down it is called Avadhuta. (Uses) It is to be applied in communicating a message, involving a deity, conversation, and beckoning.

Ancita: When the neck is slightly bent on one side the Ancita head is the result (Uses) It is applicable in sickness, swoon, intoxication, anxiety, and sorrow.

Nihancita: When two shoulders are raised up with the neck bent on one side the Nihancita head is produced. (Uses) It is to be used by women in pride, amorousness, light-heartedness, affected indifference, hysterical mood, silent expression of affection, pretended anger, paralysis, and jealous anger.

Paravrtta: When the face is turned around, the Paravrtta head is the result. (Uses) It is to be used in turning away the face, looking back and the like.

Utksipa: When the face is raised up the Utksipa head is the result. (Uses) It is used to indicate lofty objects, and application of divine weapons.

Adhogata: The head with the face looking downwards is called the Adhogata. (Uses) It is used in shame, bowing, and sorrow.

Parilolita: When the head is moving on all sides, it is called Parilolita. (Uses) It is used in fainting, sickness, power of intoxication, possession of an evil spirit, drowsiness, and the like.[32]

---

32. Bharata-muni, op. cit., p. LVII-LX.

Each part of the body similarly has prescribed movements according to the bhava and the rasa the actor is to express. The dance movements are difficult to master, and actor-dancers begin training at a very early age.

From the foregoing examples of gesture, it is apparent that the uses of gesture fall into two different types: the realistic and the conventional. Of these two categories, the gestures used conventionally far outnumber those of the other kind. But this should not appear strange, for ancient Indian dramatists and theatrical producers were fully conscious of the limited scope of realism in the arts of various kinds. Hence they conceived action as something very closely allied to dance. This demanded that while moving on the stage with or without speaking, the actors should gesticulate rhythmically to impart grace and decorative effect to their figures.[33] Classical Indian drama, therefore, is dance drama by definition.

The sole function of East Indian classical dance drama, then, is rasa creation, and toward this end all dramatic conventions are directed. If these conventions are to be adapted to the conventions of the West, at this p oint a comparison of the two forms should be made. In such a comparison, certain general principles can be discovered which will serve as a starting point for the adaptation of a specific script.

---

33. Ibid., p. LX.

Since the purpose of this study is to form a basis for the adaptation of any East Indian classical dance drama to the Western stage, the dramaturgy of the two forms must be compared. Even though this study leaves the translated play intact, the director of such a play must be aware of the specific dramaturgical differences.

The greatest differences between the two forms dramaturgically are the origins and the subjects of the treatment. Not until after the drama of the West was well begun did a critic give deductions concerning the form of the drama. Ours was a spontaneous form which has been changed to meet the changing demands of a growing culture. The drama which this study attempts to adapt to our flexible dramatic form was given a rigid, religious base. All of the aspects of the Indian drama are rigidly prescribed by the Natyasastra, and have been rigidly prescribed from the very conception of the form.

The subjects of the drama differ also. Our theatre discusses on stage anything which strikes the playwright's fancy. Virtually anything can be and is the subject of drama in the West. Most of the subjects of the drama of India are taken from the classical background of that country. Ancient themes and stories are retold on its stage.

On the surface, the purposes of the two forms seem quite different, yet they are surprisingly alike. Drama in the West creates dramatic tension through emotional association between the characters in the drama and the audience. The audience is given a vicarious experience and

responds intellectually and emotionally to that experience. The purpose of East Indian drama is rasa creation. Indian rasa can be equated to emotion in the Western theatre. Rasa is an experience or sentiment and joy from association with the beautiful. Its purpose is different from ours in that rasa attempts to elevate spiritually. Yet the means of elevation, sentiment and emotion, play a great part in the Western concept of the dramatic.

Characters of the two forms have many things in common. Both dramatic forms portray all types of characters on stage. Here a similarity exists. However, the ways in which the playwrights deal with the characters differ. Our characters are believable people with whom the audience can associate and sympathize. On the Eastern stage, the characters are primarily two-dimensional, romantic types. The two-dimensional character is not unfamiliar to our audience, for he is often seen in melodramatic plays. However in classical Indian drama the characters' functions are to assist the progression of the plot, for the plot and symbolism hold the interest of the audience. The characters do not.

Western audiences are accustomed to rising and falling action, dramatic tension and release, in plays which they view. Since the purpose of Indian theatre is rasa creation, the plot line for this form has no falling action.

The dramaturgy of these two cultures differs greatly, yet points of comparison do exist. Therefore, the production of an Eastern play

must be so adapted as to round out an interesting and meaningful production for the Western audience.

The symbolism of the Eastern theatre building is lost for the West, yet many small theatres here are comparable in size to the playhouses in which these performances are presented in India.

The remainder of the aspects of production make the real difference between the two forms most apparent. The Western audiences are accustomed to realism or suggestive realism. The theatre of the East is almost completely a symbolic one. The scenery, properties, costumes, make-up, and acting of the classical Indian theatre are symbolic in the highest degree. Spectators educated to this form may understand the symbolism, but only the initiated can fully appreciate it. Audiences of the West must have something with which they can associate for the theatre experience to be valid for them. The problem of adaptation, then, is generally this: that the symbolism of the East must be transferred to the West in terms of realistic or semi-realistic scenery, lighting, properties, costume, and make-up. The drama in its original form, however, is dance drama. As has been noted before, the West is accustomed to viewing interpretative dance on its own stage. Therefore even though the stylized dance of India has little meaning for audiences here, the West has its own dance forms which can be used in such an adapted performance.

ADAPTATION OF CHITRA

Chapter IV

THE ADAPTATION OF CHITRA

Since the symbolism of the Indian production is not readily understood by the Western audience, certain changes must be made in the production if this drama is to be comprehensible and enjoyable to the audience here. Such changes are suggested in this chapter for the play Chitra. In adapting East Indian or any drama of a foreign culture to the Western stage, the style of production must be adapted so as to be understandable to the audience, but the purpose of this adaptation is also to retain the flavor of that country from which the play came. The changes suggested here are an attempt to achieve a satisfactory compromise between the two production forms.

Since this study attempts to adapt the production of East Indian drama to our culture, the actual script of the drama, which was translated into English by its author, is left as it is. No changes are made in the wording or dramaturgy of this play. The dramaturgical differences which exist are not so great that audiences would find the play completely foreign to its knowledge of dramatic form.

Chitra by Rabindrinath Tagore, as was mentioned previously, has been chosen for this adaptation for two reasons. First, it was translated by its author. Second, Tagore applied each point of Hindu dramaturgy directly to the play. Chitra was written to create an erotic rasa through beauty of language and erotic subject material.

The script is obviously an imitation of an action. In the play the characters are caught in a situation for the course of nine scenes during which they are observed in a year-long situation. The action of the characters is not of first importance. The situation is of primary concern.

The rasa of the play is more important than the characters involved. The attention of the audience must be held by the mood of the performance. The characters, gods, a princess, a warrior, and villagers, are not fully drawn and cannot alone hold the attention of the audience. Their function is to exist in a situation through which a mood is created.

The subject matter of "Chitra" comes from the Mahabharata, one of the great epics of India, which is very familiar to the literate East Indian. Three classes are used in the play: the gods, who have reached their full spiritual growth; the Kshartiyas, the warriors and rulers to which caste Arjuna and Chitra belong; and the Vaisyas or artisans, producers, businessmen, and farmers. In this play these are the villagers.

The plot structure follows a straight line to final attainment at the last line of the play. Scene One gives the exposition, the beginning of the play; and with Chitra's pleading with the gods in this scene, the effort or rising action is begun. The effort continues through Scene Three. Scenes Four through Seven contain the possibility of attainment. Scene Eight is the certainty of attainment, and the attainment occurs in Scene Nine. All of the dramaturgical conventions of East India, then, apply to "Chitra."

The play is divided into nine scenes. Each scene heightens the situation of the plot in the following manner. During the first scene, Chitra discusses her plight with the gods, Madana, lord of love, and Vasanta, king of the seasons. She is a plain girl, the only child of a king who has made her his heir. She was content performing the duties of a man and dressing in man's clothing until the day when, while hunting in the forest, she saw Arjuna of the great Kuru clan resting in the path. After discovering who he was, she realized that she was a woman and wanted the love of a man. She tells the gods that the day after her first meeting with Arjuna that she put on woman's garments and went into the woods to find the man she loved. She proposed marriage to him. Telling her of his vow of celibacy, he refused her. Miserable and full of shame, she has brought her plight to the gods. They grant her complete beauty for the course of one year.

During the next scene, Arjuna has seen the beautiful Chitra and is captivated by her charms. When he again meets her on the stage, he learns that she has always worshiped his reputation and loves his gentility. Whereupon he renounces his vow of celibacy, telling her that he is Arjuna. She, however, knows that it is her beauty, not herself, that he loves, and commands him to go from her and "woo not falsehood."

Scene three is again between Chitra and the gods. They question her concerning the results of their boon. She tells them of the preceding night. During the night her affair with Arjuna began. The night was perfect with its beauty, and she gave herself completely to her hero.

She asks the gods, however, to take away their boon, for she wants to be loved for herself alone or not at all. Reproaching her for her unconcern with the effect that this would have on Arjuna, the gods tell her to return to her mad festival.

Arjuna, in scene four, tells Chitra that he wishes for her to accompany him when he returns home. Chitra answers, "Take to your home what is abiding and strong. Leave the little wild flower where it was born. . . to die at the day's end among all fading blossoms and decaying leaves." They then return to thoughts of immediate love.

Scene five is a very short one between the gods. They talk briefly of the year's nearing its close.

Scene six finds Arjuna beginning to become restless with lingering in the forest away from the duties of a warrior. When he asks her if she has no home to which to return, she realizes that he is beginning to tire of her. Chitra then tells Arjuna to wait until the year is over, and until then to press their love dry of the sweetness that it holds. She fears that he will still yearn for her beauty when it is dead.

The gods tell Chitra that her last night of beauty has arrived. She asks them to grant her one last night of the brightest and most complete beauty.

At the beginning of scene eight, villagers enter looking for Chitra. They have greatly missed her during her absence and long for her return. When the villagers leave, Arjuna talks with his mistress, not knowing that the woman is Chitra. He asks her of Chitra and admires the power and gentleness of the woman of whom the villagers spoke. He begs his

love to reveal her identity to him. In tears she refuses.

The year is over. In the final scene of the play Chitra reveals her identity to Arjuna, telling him that the flowers with which she worshiped have faded. All she has now to offer him is herself, the daughter of a king. With joy he gives her his whole heart in the final line of the play, "Beloved, my life is full."

The plot is a simple one, yet it is essentially beautiful. The theme, that real love will succeed even in the face of obstacles, has universal appeal. Many of the favorite comedies and novels of the West are based upon this theme. The Taming of the Shrew, Peg O' My Heart, Wuthering Heights, Pride and Prejudice, The Tender Trap, The King of Hearts, and The Philadelphia Story are examples. Therefore it is logical to assume that the plot would be accepted with interest as the play is performed here.

The dramaturgy of the play is left as it stands in the original. The adaptation here is of the stage conventions. The actual production of the script will be so changed from the original form of presentation as to be meaningful to the Western audience.

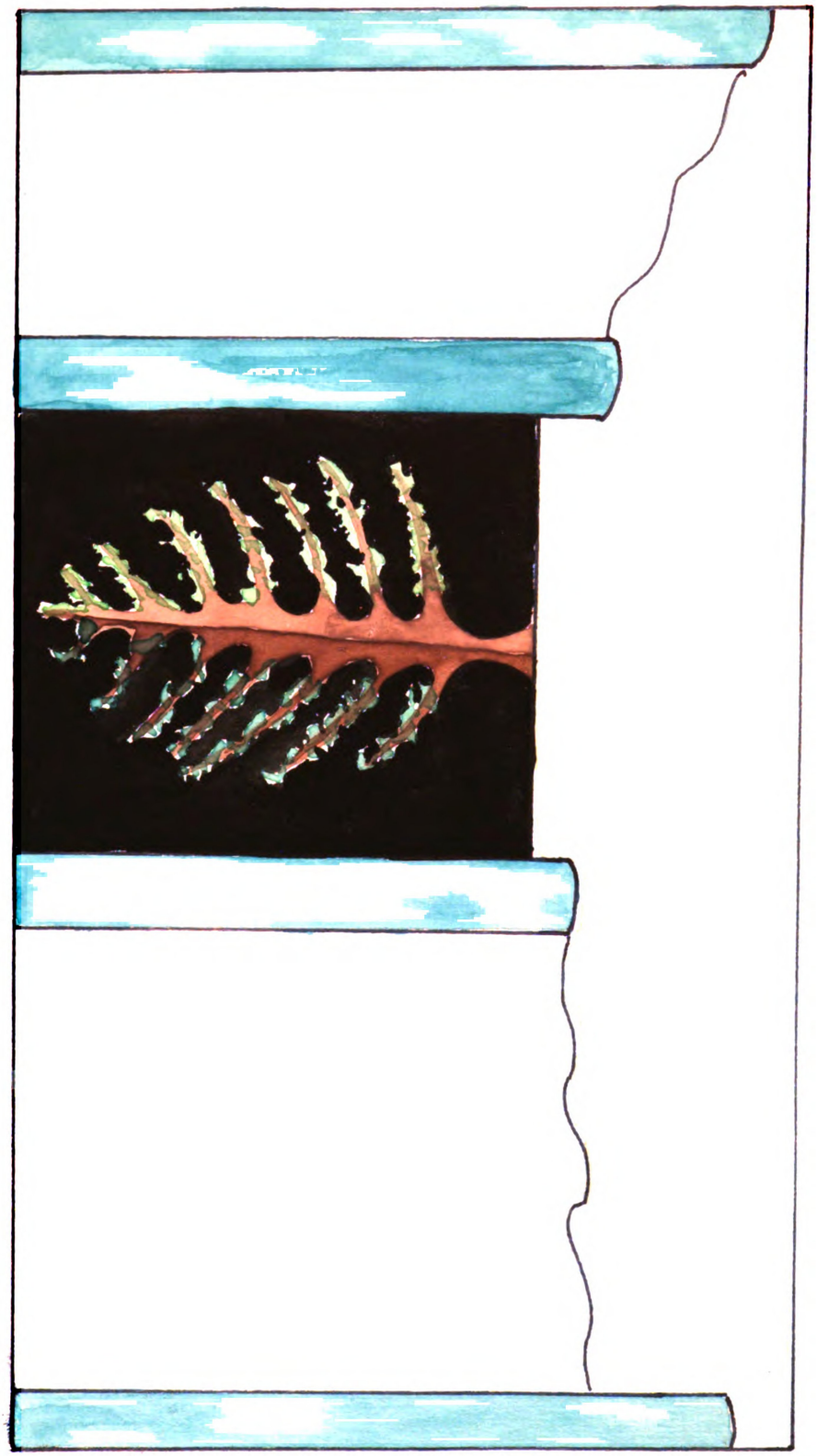
Two alternatives exist in the choice of the building in which the adapted theatre would be presented. Either a special building could be erected complying with the demands of the Natyasastra, or almost any small conventional theatre here could be used since this would place the audience in familiar surroundings, not alienating them at the beginning.

The latter suggestion is by far the more practical, for not only would the theatre already constructed here be more convenient and economical, but all of the symbolism of the actual Eastern theatre building is lost for the West. For three reasons the small Western theatre would be suitable for such a presentation. First, the size of many such theatres generally conforms with the size required by the Natyasastra; for they generally seat from one hundred to three hundred spectators, and the Natyasastra insists that for this dramatic form the theatre should seat no more than four hundred. Second, the audience seems to respond to a production best when the theatre is nearly full, and , of course, a small theatre would be easier to fill for such an experimental production as this would be. Last, as a matter of convenience, small studio theatres are generally more accessible, particularly in colleges where such experiments as this would logically take place. The remainder of the adaptation here is therefore for a small Western theatre such as the Michigan State University Studio Theatre.

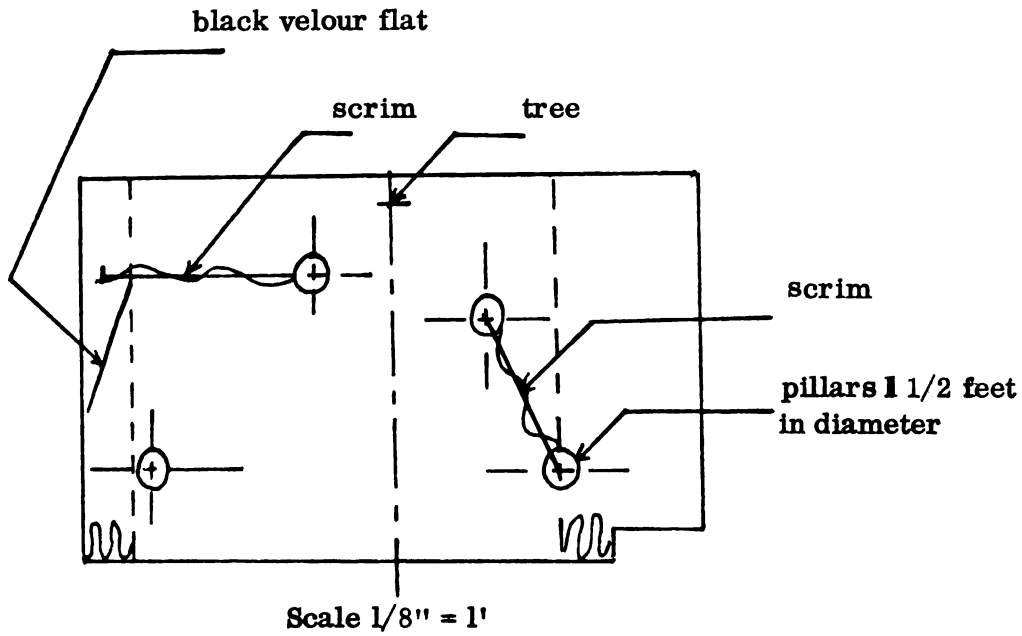
For adaptation of scene design, any of three possible approaches may be taken. Pure suggestive realism with changes of setting could be attempted. Even if aesthetically acceptable, such a solution is not practical, for East Indian dramas have many scenes, and small theatres often lack facilities for elaborate and fast-moving scene changes. Non-representational Indian tapestries and carvings could be used. However, since the Western audience is accustomed to realism, Eastern

stage design would be too far removed from our experience to be effective. Therefore, the most logical solution seems to be a compromise between the two forms.

Symbolic and non-representational elements from the Indian theatre can be so incorporated into scene design as to give effects which approach a stylized realism. For the specific play, 'Chitra, ' scenery is here designed to give a forest effect, for the play takes place in a forest, and to enhance the "other worldly" effect of the gods. To achieve this, the Indian Tree of Life is used in cut-out form against the black back wall of the set. Not only will this be symbolic of the love and life in the play, but will add to the forest effect as well. Since four pillars are always seen in the East Indian theatre, four pillars are incorporated into the adapted scene design. Three of these pillars serve functional purposes, for they conceal pipes which hold up the scrim. During the scenes in the forest, a blue-green leaf pattern will be projected onto the scrim . The gods, lighted with steel blue, will appear behind the scrim during other scenes. During the forest scenes, the area in front of the scrim is to be lighted for four acting areas. This same area will be lighted for two acting areas during Chitra's scenes with the gods. Other than for special effects, the gelatin colors used will be the daylight combination of light blue and straw. If the individual director has equipment available for flexible lighting, this could well be used instead of the static effects suggested in the light plots which follow. A flexible lighting plan is suggested in the movement and reading script at the end of this chapter.



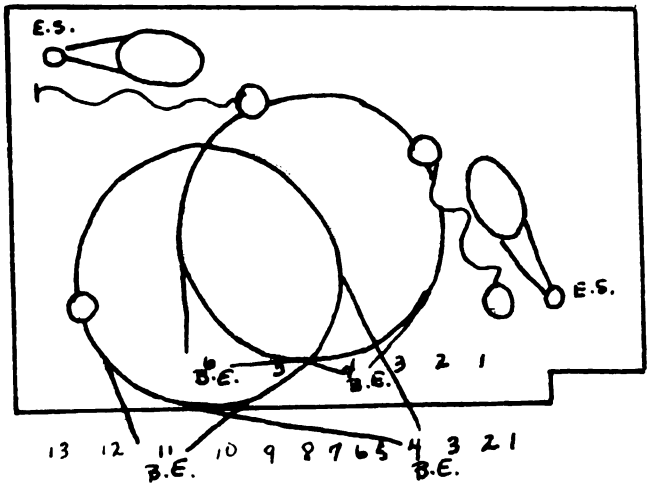
SCENE DESIGN Fig. 1.



FLOOR PLAN

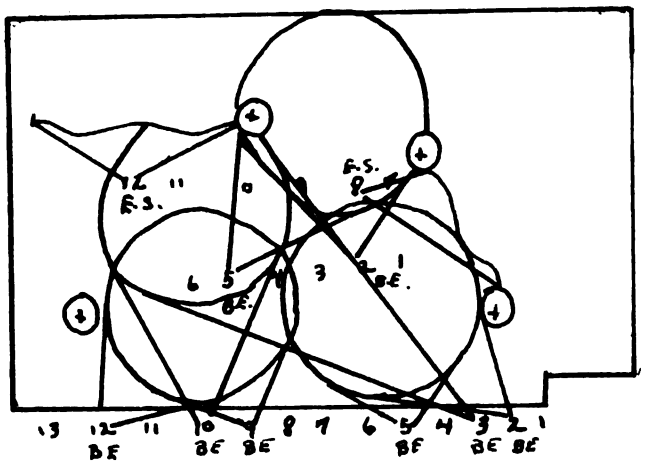
The height of the four columns is nine feet. Black duvetyn will mask the webbing of the scrim. The right scrim is to be held up with the pillar at one end and a pipe at the other. The pipe will be masked from the house by a black flat which will also mask the light tower behind the scrim. The tree will be propped against the wall.

Fig. 2.--Floor Plan



LIGHTING PLOT FOR SCENES ONE, THREE, AND SEVEN

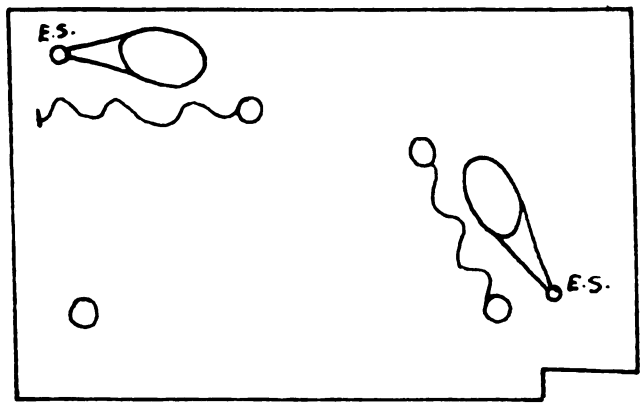
Fig. 3.--Lighting Plot for Scenes One, Three, and Seven



LIGHTING PLOT FOR SCENES TWO, FOUR, SIX, EIGHT, AND NINE

Lights 12 and 8 will be masked into a simulated leaf pattern similar to the example at the left.

Fig. 4.--Lighting Plot for Scenes Two, Four, Six, Eight, and Nine



LIGHTING PLOT FOR SCENE FIVE BETWEEN THE GODS

Fig. 5.--Lighting Plot for Scene Five

TABLE 1

LIGHTING SCHEDULE

Scene	Light	Number	light pipe	Color	Wattage
1	bird's eye	4	1	light blue 129	150
3	bird's eye	11	1	light blue 129	150
7	bird's eye	4	2	light blue 129	150
	bird's eye	6	2	light blue 129	150
	ellipsoidal spot	right tower		steel blue 130	500
	ellipsoidal spot	left tower		steel blue 130	500
2	bird's eye	2	1	light blue 129	150
4	bird's eye	9	1	light blue 129	150
6	bird's eye	2	2	light blue 129	150
8	bird's eye	3	1	light blue 129	150
9	bird's eye	10	1	straw 6	150
	bird's eye	12	1	straw 6	150
	bird's eye	5	1	straw 6	150
	bird's eye	5	2	straw 6	150
	ellipsoidal spot	12	3	green-blue 32	500
	ellipsoidal spot	8	3	green-blue 32	500
5	ellipsoidal spot	right tower		steel blue 130	500
	ellipsoidal spot	left tower		steel blue 130	500

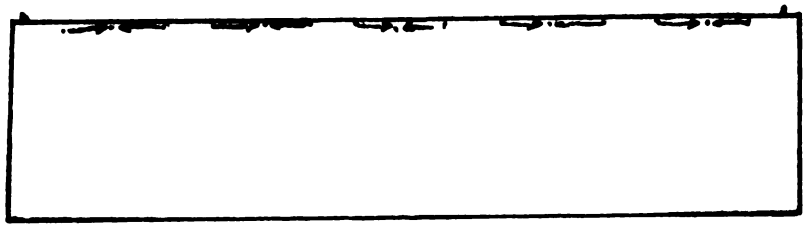
When this form of drama is presented in India, the colors, types of costumes, ornaments, and make-up are so stereotyped as to be symbolic to the audience of that country. Three alternatives exist in adapting this costuming to the Western stage. The original costumes could be duplicated for performance here. Such costuming and make-up, however, would have no meaning for the Western audience. Western costumes could be used for the performance. By using costumes of the West, however, the production would tend to lose the flavor of India. Therefore, in order to retain the flavor of India for our culture, the actors should be costumed in dress which the Western audience would recognize as Indian, rather than the completely unfamiliar Indian stage costumes or modern Western stage dress. The dress which is usually thought of as Indian includes fitted trousers for men, the sari for women, and costumes for the gods patterned after the statues of East Indian gods which the West has seen. Make-up, then, would be realistic, using the complexion tone of the Indians, light for gods and upper castes and dark for lower castes.

For such an adaptation for the play Chitra, the costumes might be as follows. At the beginning of the play, Chitra is dressed basically as a man. Her beige costume is fitted so as to allow her costume for the next scene to cover it quickly. The gods throughout the play are dressed in silver lamé with silver ornaments. Arjuna is dressed in a tightly fitting beige trousers and open-fronted shirt. His trousers reach slightly below the knee. The villagers are dressed much like Arjuna. Their

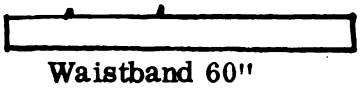
costumes of unbleached muslin, however, will be cut a bit fuller than his costume is. After the first scene, Chitra must don a sari which she wears until near the end of the play. In the final scene of the play, she removes the sari and reveals her original male attire. Chitra, then, will be dressed in a sari so constructed as to allow her to move with no fear of its coming off, but it must be put on and taken off easily and quickly.

With the costume sketches and make-up plot which follow, a pattern for Chitra's sari is included.

SKETCH FOR PATTERN FOR CHITRA'S SARI



Skirt 1 x 4 yards



Waistband 60"

Stole 3/8 yd. x 6 ft.

The material used in the sari should either be a silk or nylon chiffon. The skirt is pleated and attached to the waistband to tie, encircle the waist again, and retie. The stole is sewn to the waistband. This type of pattern will remain securely in place during the scenes where the sari is required, but can easily be removed for the end of the last scene.

Fig. 6.--Sketch for Pattern for Chitra's Sari

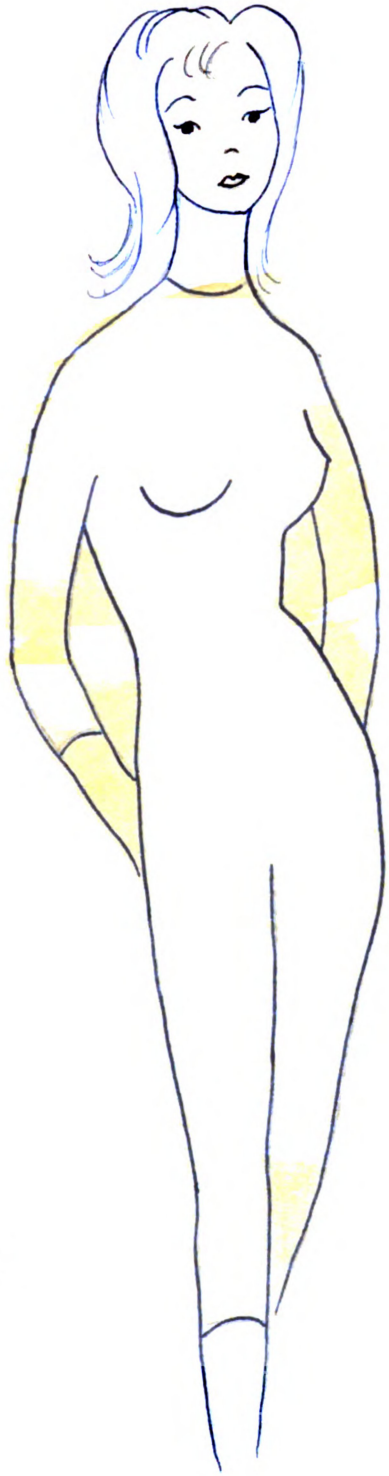


Fig 7 --CHITRA - SCENE I

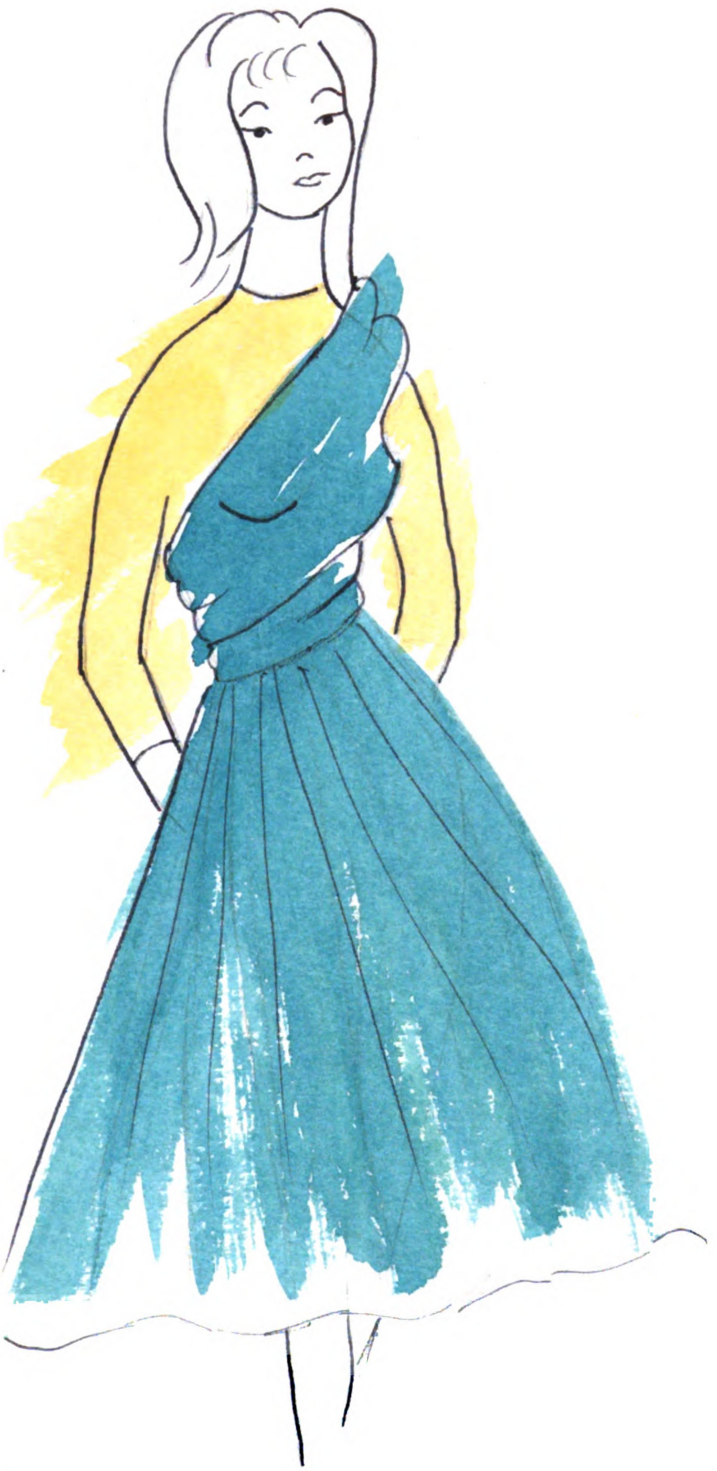


Fig. 8. -- **CHITRA**

Fig. 9. -- **ARJUNA**

Fig. 10. -- **VASANTA**

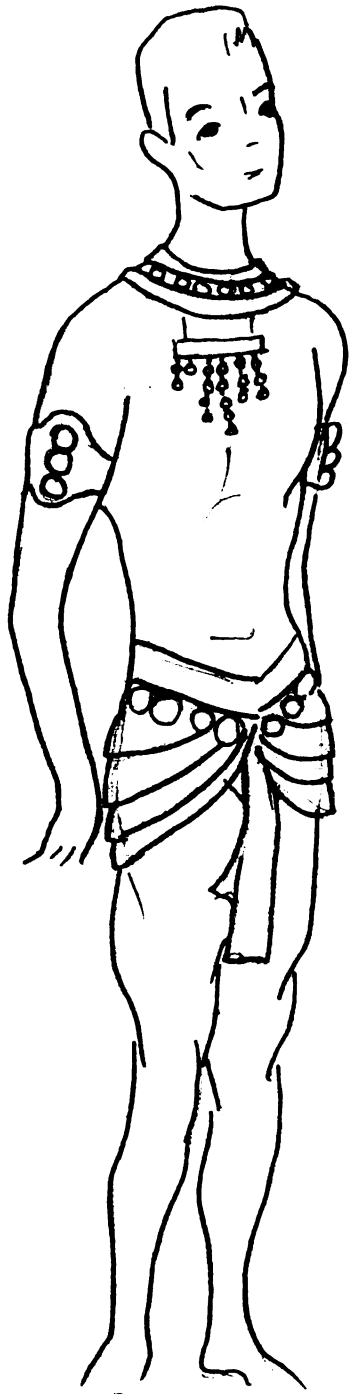


Fig. 11. -- **MADANA**

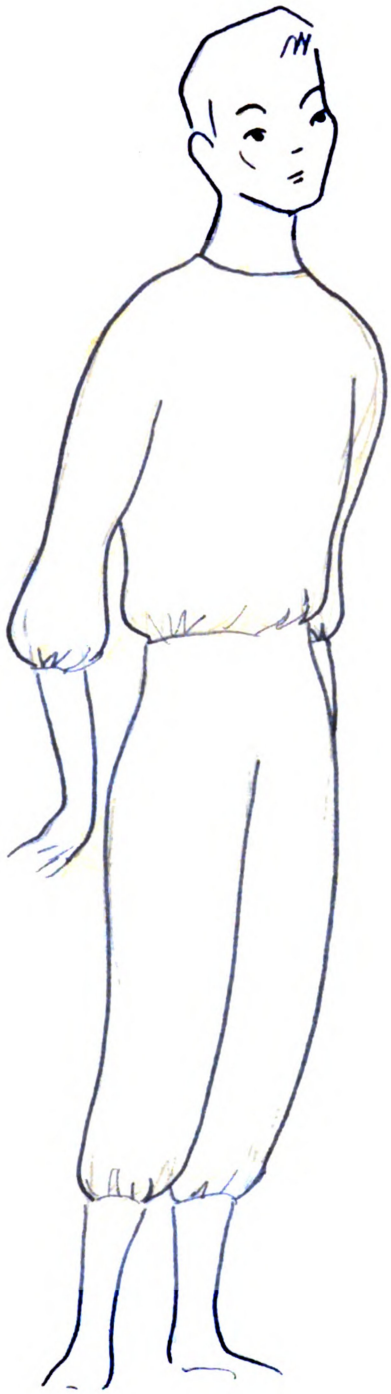


Fig. 12 -- **VILLAGERS**

TABLE 2

MAKE-UP CHART

Character	Base	Eyes	Shadows	Lines	Rouge	Lips	Body
Chitra	5 and 2a	brown shadow black outline mascara brows	none	none	medium red	medium red	nothing
Arjuna	5	same as above	brown at cheek hollows, sides of nose	light crow's feet	dark red blended to light	dark red blended to light	5 on chest
Gods	2 1/2	blue shadow black outline mascara brows	blue at temples sides of nose	none	dark red blended to light	dark red blended to light	2 1/2 on all revealed areas
Villagers	7	dark brown shadow black outline mascara	brown at the temples, sides of nose, cheeks	crow's feet general age lines	dark red blended to light	dark red blended to light	none

Several alternatives exist for the animate aspects of the adapted presentation. Western realistic acting, which is the current trend here, is the first possibility which must be eliminated. The language and situation of the script are so far removed from the "slice of life" play which demands realistic acting that the attempt to superimpose this acting approach on the drama of the East would lead to a most disjointed presentation. Since the themes of the drama are taken from the classical background of India, the formal classical approach might be taken for acting. However, even though the themes of the Hindu drama are based upon the classical literature of that country, the beauty of the language and suggestiveness of the subject material do not warrant a formal and noble treatment. Beauty of language brings to mind the Western romantic style of playwrighting and acting. Perhaps romantic acting, with emphasis on beauty of gesture and movement, is more valid than any of the other acting styles with which the West is familiar. This cannot be the total answer, however, since the dialogue of Chitra is exceedingly flowery and elaborate. The speeches are too long and involved with picturesque allusions for the actors to be able to hold the attention of the audience for the duration of the entire play. Therefore, the styles of acting with which the West is most familiar are not applicable to this form of drama.

Classical Indian drama is dance drama by definition. However, as has been discussed before, the gestures, movements, and positionings

prescribed by the Natyasastra are not only difficult to master, but have very little meaning for the Western audience. This drama, none the less, was conceived as dance drama. Therefore, the most logical approach to the presentation of this drama is for it to remain dance drama in adaptation. John Martin, discussing interpretative dance in his book The Modern Dance, has said, "The dance and the drama are internally related; they are of the same essential stuff, the one working in the medium of movement and the other in the medium of action, which are practically inseparable."[1] He has further said, "The actor and the dancer are Tweedledum and Tweedledee. The business of both is to express internal feeling through the medium of the body. The actor is fundamentally a dancer."[2] The proper and logical adaptation of the movement, then, would be interpretative dance. In this way actors skilled in Western interpretative dance would be able to perform in this type of drama without becoming completely re-oriented to a new dance form.

Interpretative or modern dance movement is difficult to define, for it came into being to release the dancer from definition.[3] It is meant simply to be expressive, using gesture but not "stock" gesture. There is

---

1. John Martin, The Modern Dance, (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1933), p. 99.

2. Ibid., p. 97.

3. Anatole Cujoy, The Dance Encyclopedia (New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1949), p. 309.

yet no standard vocabulary or compositional approach for the contemporary dance as there is for ballet or music.[4]

One principle is consistent throughout all modern dance, however, and that is that artifice and technical method are discarded and the dancer is free to rely upon himself as a vehicle of natural and expressive movement. Martha Graham has said of her art:

> I am interested only in the subtle being, the subtle body that lies beneath the gross muscles. Every dance is, to some greater or lesser extent, a kind of fever chart, a graph of the heart. I do not compose ideologically and I have never in any way considered my dances intellectual. Whatever theory may be read into them proceeds from the material, not vice versa.[5]

This is important because a tendency exists among the general audience to think that all modern dancers are exponents of a movement with a primer of aims and an undeviating set of principles and prejudices, rather than intelligent individuals approaching an art created to free them from such aims, principles, and prejudices.[6] The general public is, of course, in error, for the purpose of modern dance is purely to communicate emotional experiences through movement.[7]

Since modern dance is simply defined as expressive movement which avoids a vocabulary, it is logical that this form be chosen for the adaptation of "Chitra." In this way the director and dancer are free to

---

4. Robert Horan, The Recent Theatre of Martha Graham (New York: Dance-Index Ballet Caravan, Inc., Jan. 1947), Vol. VI, No. 1, p. 19.

5. Ibid., p. 2.

6. Ibid.

7. John Martin, The Dance (New York: Tudor, 1946), p. 105.

use whatever gestures, movements, and positionings that they feel are most expressive to interpret the script. This thesis does not attempt to define a vocabulary of movement for modern dance, nor should it, for stereotyped movements can only express stereotyped concepts of emotion, and the degree of emotion which the actor-dancer can realize from a work should not be limited.[8] Two basic types of movement are used in the suggested adaptation here. They are exaggerated gesture and semi-representational pantomime. No realistic movement is used, for exaggerated gesture may be loosely defined as danced reaction, and semi-representational pantomime may be loosely defined as danced narration. Narration, or initial statement of ideas, and reaction to such statements or ideas are not only the components of any script but also the components of any communication process.

Since the modern dance is conceived to give freedom of movement, positioning, and composition to the dancer himself, the dance movement is essentially an individual problem which can be solved only by the dancer with guidance from the director. Unless the director has extensive dance training or is a choreographer of greater ability than any of his dancers, he has to discover bit by bit through painful processes of trial and error all the fundamental principles that have already been found for him by others.[9] The director should, of course, act as the guide in the creative process, helping with the interpretation of ideas and emotions,

---

8. John Martin, The Modern Dance (New York: A.S. Barnes and Co., 1933), p. 17.

9. Ibid., p. 92.

but the dancer has the ultimate responsibility for the movement. For this study, the first scene of the play, "Chitra," has been choreographed. Once the actor-dancer has observed the type of movement suggested for the first scene, he should be allowed freedom of dance movement, for the basic concept of modern dance is that the expressive movement comes from the dancer. The director who is not a dancer himself may well achieve the best effect in his production if he indicates to the dancer the general type of movement he wants and the general stage area in which he wants the dancer at a particular time. Therefore this is the type of movement suggestion which is given for the rest of the script. This is one director's concept of the type of movement which should be used. Rather than suggesting that these movements are definitely prescribed, they should be viewed as a guide for the director and dancer.

Music of the East is as foreign to Western ears as Indian musical instruments are foreign to Western musicians. Therefore five possibilities exist in adaptation. The first is that records of Indian music be used; however, this would solve only half of the problem, for the sound would still be strange to the Western audience. The mood could be set by Western music; however, music of the West would be likely to detract from the basic Indian flavor of the production. No music or rhythmic sound at all might be used; however, something must set the rhythm for the dance action of the play. Since in the actual dance drama of the East, a chanter is often used to narrate interludes of pure dance, a subordinate reading theatre group could read the script, each reader

taking a specific role. This would free the dancers from speaking the lines of the script and allow them complete freedom of dance movement. However, this might seem rather like the old days of the movies when a gentleman used to stand at the side of the screen and tell us what was going on. "Now the hero sees the maiden, and behind her the villian advances. He puts his hand to his gun, he points its gleaming barrel at the offender's heart, he pulls the trigger," etc.[10] Such a reading theatre group might seem only to underline the obvious. By far the best approach would be for the director to use actor-dancers who could speak the lines as well as dance their interpretation. Since audiences are accustomed to hearing the lines come from the actors, this would give them a form which is familiar and would give unity to the production which would be lacking if a reading group were used. The director, however, must observe the capabilities of those whom he will direct and accordingly decide what form of vocal interpretation he will use. Of course, if a director does not have material with which to work to do a particular play well, he should choose another play suitable to the capabilities of his actors.

Since the language of the script is not realistic, the vocal interpretation should not be realistic, but stress instead the poetry of the language. Emphasis on the beauty of the language should be the aesthetic goal of the vocal interpreter. A suggestion for oral interpretation follows in the movement and flexible lighting script.

---

10. Ibid., p. 110.

The play book of Chitra has few stage directions or suggestions for interpretation. Those few which are included are not pertinent to this adaptation. Therefore those included in the original are deleted or expanded, and interpretation and movement suggestions which are found in the following script are director's notes.

LIGHT AND ACTING SCRIPT

Madana is behind scrim, upright. Vasanta is behind scrim, left. Chitra stands beside pillar, down right. Light fades in on Madana. Light up half on Chitra.

CHITRA

(FRIGHTENED, BESEECHING) (LEFT ARM UPWARD MOVEMENT)

Art thou the god with the five darts, the Lord of Love?

MADANA

(DEEP VOICED, AWARE OF HIS GREATNESS, YET KIND) (DEVELOPMENT FROM KNEELING POSITION TO FULL HEIGHT, ARMS OVER HEAD. ARMS IN DOWNWARD MOVEMENT.) I am he who was first born in the heart of the Creator. I bind (SMALL ARM MOVEMENT) in bonds of pain and bliss the lives of men and women.

CHITRA

(PAINFULLY) (DEPRESSING SHOULDERS, TURNING AWAY, LEFT HAND TO FOREHEAD, RIGHT ARM DOWN) I know, I know what that pain is and those bonds. (LIGHT UP ON VASANTA) (VASANTA DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT TO RIGHT KNEE FROM SITTING POSITION.) (CHITRA, SEMI-LUNGE WITH THE LEFT HAND DOWN, RIGHT ARM UP AS SHE TURNS TO VASANTA) (QUESTIONING) And who art thou, my Lord?

VASANTA

(TENOR VOICE, MORE CHILDISH THAN MADANA) (STANDS) I am his friend--Vasanta--The King of the Seasons. (RIGHT ARM TO CHEST HEIGHT, ACROSS BODY, CIRCULAR MOVEMENT AT HEAD HEIGHT,

DISPELLING MOVEMENT DOWN TO THE SIDE OF THE BODY) Death and decrepitude would wear the world to the bone but that I follow them and constantly attack them. (LEFT ARM EXTENDED TO THE LEFT SIDE) I am eternal youth.

CHITRA

(LIGHT UP HALF IN SECOND AREA) (WITH REVERENCE) (CROSSES TO CENTER, LOW BOW) I bow to thee, Lord Vasanta.

MADANA

(QUESTIONING) But what stern vow is thine, fair stranger? (CHITRA CROSSES RIGHT THREE STEPS TOWARD MADANA) Why doest thou wither (ARMS UP THEN DOWN AND IN) thy fresh youth with penance and mortification? (DISPELLING ARM MOVEMENT) (POSITIVELY ASSERTING) Such a sacrifice is not fit for the worship of love. (ARMS EXTENDED FRONT) (KINDLY) Who art thou and what is thy prayer?

CHITRA

(HUMBLE) (CROSSES DOWN CENTER LEFT) I am Chitra, the daughter of the kingly house of Manipur. (KNEELS ON RIGHT KNEE) With godlike grace Lord Shiva promised to my royal grandsire an unbroken line of male descent. (RIGHT ARM CIRCULAR SWEEPING TO THE SIDE) Nevertheless the divine word proved powerless to change the spark of life in my mother's womb--(RIGHT ARM CIRCLES ACROSS BODY) so invincible was my nature, (HEAD BOWED) (CONTRITE) woman though I be.

MADANA

I know, (CHITRA TURNS TO MADANA.) (MADANA LEANS TO CHITRA, RIGHT ARM EXTENDED ACROSS BODY) That is why thy father brings thee up as his son. (DEVELOP INTO POSITION OF HOLDING BOW, LEFT ARM EXTENDED) He has taught thee the use of the bow (LEFT ARM DOWN TO THE SIDE, RIGHT ARM DOWN AND UP FRONT, PALM POSITION OUT, STEP BACK ON THE LEFT FOOT) and all the duties of a king.

CHITRA

Yes, (ARMS FOLLOWING THE LINE OF THE BODY DOWN AT THE SIDES) that is why I am dressed in man's attire and have left (ARMS CROSSED, PUSH OUT) the seclusion of a woman's chamber. (PALMS OUT) I know no feminine wiles for winning hearts. (DOWN ON LEFT KNEE, HANDS HOLDING POSITION OF BOW, RIGHT PALM OUT) My hands are strong to bend the bow (LEANS BACK, RIGHT ARM ACROSS BODY, BACK ACROSS EYES) but I have never learnt Cupid's archery, the play of the eyes.

MADANA

(CAJOLING) (SLOW LUNGE, RIGHT HAND EXTENDED) That requires no schooling, fair one. The eye does its work untaught. (EXTEND BOTH HANDS) and he knows how well, (BOTH HANDS TO HEART) who is struck in the heart.

CHITRA

(LIGHTS UP TO FULL) (WALKS FROM UP RIGHT TO LEFT CENTER, THEN BACK TO PILLAR DOWN RIGHT) (REMEMBERING, ALMOST TO HERSELF) One day in search of game I roved alone to the forest on the

bank of the Purna River. (ARM AND LEG UP PILLAR) Tying my horse to a tree trunk (FALLS AWAY FROM PILLAR, OPEN TO AUDIENCE) I entered a dense thicket on the track of a deer. (WALKS RIGHT CENTER THEN DOWN LEFT CENTER) I found a narrow sinuous path meandering through the dusk of entangled boughs, the foliage vibrated with the chirping of crickets (STOPS, ARMS UP AND SLIGHTLY BENT IN) (INCREASE OF READING TEMPO) when of a sudden I came upon a man lying on a bed of dried leaves, across my path. (LUNGE TO THE RIGHT, ARMS EXTENDED OVER THE EARS) I asked him haughtily to move aside, (ARMS DOWN, CROSS, BACK UP, PULLING BODY STRAIGHT. EXTENDED LEFT LEG ELEVATED) but he heeded not. (HAUGHTILY) Then with the sharp end of my bow (CONTRACTION ON ONE LEG) I pricked him with contempt. (SHARP EXTENSION OUT) Instantly he lept up with straight, tall limbs, like a sudden tongue of fire from a heap of ashes. (CONTRACTION TO FLOOR) (RELIVING EMBARRASSMENT) An amused smile flickered round the corners of his mouth, perhaps at the sight of my boyish countenance. (ON RIGHT KNEE, HANDS FROM SIDES UP, UNDER BUST, OUT TO FRONT) (REALIZATION) Then for the first time I felt myself a woman, (RISES WITH EXTENDED HANDS, THREE RUNNING STEPS DOWN CENTER, LEAN, HANDS DOWN AND BACK) and knew that a man was before me.

MADANA

(KNOWINGLY) (THREE QUARTERS BACK, FACING CENTER, HANDS UP, BENT SLIGHTLY BACK) At the auspicious hour I teach the man and the

woman this supreme lesson, to know themselves. (QUICK TURN TO HER) What happened after that?

CHITRA

(LEANS BACK, ARMS FORWARD) With fear and wonder I asked him "Who are you?" (STRAIGHTENS, HEAD UP, WIDE STANCE) "I am Arjuna," he said, "of the great Kuru clan." (RETURNS TO FEMININE STANCE) Was this indeed Arjuna, the one great idol of my dreams! (TURNS RIGHT, TWO STEPS FORWARD) Yes, I had long ago heard how he had vowed a twelve-year's celibacy. (TURNS BACK LEFT) Many a day my young ambition had spurred me to challenge him in disguise to single combat (TO AUDIENCE WITH PRIDE AND NOBILITY) to break my lance with him and prove my skill in arms against him. (CROSSE POSITION, LEFT FOOT ACROSS, RIGHT KNEE BENT, RIGHT ARM PARALLEL TO LEFT LEG) Ah, foolish heart, whither fled thy presumption? (LOW ARABESQUE, STARTING ON THE LEFT FOOT, THREE STEPS DOWN RIGHT LEFT ARM FRONT) (WITH DESIRE) Could I but exchange my youth with all its aspirations for the clod of earth under his feet, I should deem it a most precious grace. (ELEVATION TO THE TOES, RIGHT ARM OVER HEAD, TURNS ABRUPTLY, RIGHT ARM EXTENDED) (SADLY) I know not in what whirlpool of thought I was lost, when suddenly I saw him vanish through the trees. (LUNGE TO MADANA, RIGHT KNEE BACK AND BENT, RIGHT ARM CLOSED TO ABOUT SIXTY DEGREES, HAND NEAR FOREHEAD, LEFT ARM BACK) Oh, foolish woman, neither didst thou greet him (KNEELS ON RIGHT KNEE, BODY BENT) nor speak a word, (SITS BACK, LEFT LEG STRAIGHT, RIGHT CROSSED UNDER)

nor beg forgiveness, (TURNS TO THE AUDIENCE, LEFT LEG STRAIGHT BACK, RIGHT KNEE BENT BACK, WEIGHT ON THE RIGHT LEG, RIGHT ARM TO FLOOR, LEFT ARM TO BACK LEG) but stoodest like a barbarian boor while (LEFT ARM EXTENDS FRONT) he contemptuously walked away! ... (CONTRITELY) (RISES SLOWLY, HANDS DOWN SIDES OF BODY) Next morning I laid aside my man's clothing. (ARMS CIRCLE OUT AND UP OVER HEAD THEN DOWN AND IN, PALMS FRONT AT SIDES) I donned bracelets, anklets, waist-chain and a gown of purple red silk. (HEAD BOWED) The unaccustomed dress clung about my shrinking shame; (HEAD UP, LEFT HAND EXTENDED, FOUR RUNNING STEPS LEFT) but I hastened on my quest and found Arjuna in the forest of Shiva.

MADANA

(CHITRA REMAINS IN POSITION, MADANA EXTENDS HANDS FORWARD, SWEEPS ARMS OUT TO SIDES AND DOWN) Tell me the story to the end. I am the heart-born god, and I understand the mystery of these impulses.

CHITRA

(LEFT ARM UP, ACROSS FACE, PALM DOWN) (Only vaguely can I remember what things I said, and what answer I got. (PALM UP, SWEEPING SLOWLY DOWN TO SIDE) Do not ask me to tell you all. (CONTRACTION TO FLOOR FACING AUDIENCE) (WITH OVERPOWERING SHAME) Shame fell on me like a thunderbolt (EXTENSION, ARMS UP STRAIGHT ABOVE HEAD) (BECOMING SHAMELESS) yet could not break me to pieces, so utterly hard, so like a man am I. (FALL TO RIGHT SIDE) His last words as I walked home pricked my ears like

red-hot needles. (EXTENSION, LEFT LEG AND ARM) "I have taken the vow of celibacy. I am not fit to be thy husband." (CONTRACTION, LEFT LEG AND ARM IN) Oh, the vow of a man! (SITS WITH LEFT LEG BACK FACING MADANA, RIGHT HAND ON FLOOR, LEFT ARM FORWARD) Surely thou knowest, thou god of love, that unnumbered saints and sages have surrendered the merits of their life-long penance (ARM SWEEPS DOWN AND BACK, POINTING TO LEFT FOOT.) at the feet of a woman. (ELEVATION ON KNEES, HANDS ABOVE HEAD, BREAKING MOTION) I broke my bow in two and (RISES TO FEET, HEAD BOWED, ARMS BENT BACK) burnt my arrows in the fire. (FIVE STEPS TOWARD HIM) I hated my strong, lithe arm, scored by drawing the bow-string. (ARMS SWEEPING FORWARD) O Love, god Love, thou hast laid low in the dust the vain pride of my manlike strength; (KNEELS ON LEFT KNEE, ARMS FORWARD) and all my man's training lies crushed under thy feet. (WITH COMPLETE CONTRITION, BEGGING) Now teach me thy lessons; give me the power of the weak and the weapon of the unarmed hand.

MADANA

(RIGHT ARM SWEEPS UP) (KINDLY) I will be thy friend. (SLOWLY LOWERS RIGHT ARM TO POINT TO FLOOR AT HER FEET) I will bring the world-conquering Arjuna a captive before thee, to accept his rebellions sentence at thy hand.

CHITRA

(<u>LIGHTS BEGIN TO LOWER ON CHITRA AND CONTINUE TO DIM THROUGHOUT THE REMAINDER OF THE SCENE</u>) (REMAINS IN

POSITION) Had I but the time needed, I could win his heart by slow degrees and ask no help of the gods. (KNEELING TURNS LEFT) I would stand by his side as a comrade, drive the fierce horses of his war-chariot, attend him in the pleasures of the chase, keep guard at night at the entrance of his tent, and help him in all the great duties of a Kshatriya, rescuing the weak, and meeting out justice where it is due. (LOWERS ARMS) Surely at last the day would come for him to look at me and wonder, "What boy is this? Had one of my slaves of a former life followed me like my good deeds into this?" (RISES, BACKS TO UP CENTER, FACING AUDIENCE) I am not the woman who nourishes her despair in lonely silence, feeding it with nightly tears and covering it with the daily patient smile, a widow from her birth. (ARMS SWEEP DOWN AND IN FROM SIDES, THEN EXTEND UP OVER HEAD.) The flower of my desire shall never drop into the dust before it has ripened into fruit. But it is the labour of a lifetime to make one's true self known and honored. (RIGHT ARM SWEEP DOWN TOWARD MADANA) Therefore I have come to your door, thou world-vanquishing Love, and thou, (LEFT ARM SWEEPS DOWN TOWARD VASANTA) Vasanta, youthful Lord of the Seasons, take from my young body this primal injustice, an unattractive plainness. For a single day make me superbly beautiful, even as beautiful as was the sudden blooming of love in my heart. (TURNS TO MADANA ON BOTH KNEES) Give me but one brief day of perfect beauty, and I will answer for the days that follow. (<u>LIGHTS OUT IN CHITRA'S ACTING AREAS</u>)

MADANA

Lady, I grant thy prayer. (RAISES RIGHT ARM ABOUT 120 DEGREES)

VASANTA

(RAISES RIGHT ARM ABOUT 120 DEGREES) Not for the short span of a day, but for one whole year the charm of spring blossoms shall nestle round thy limbs. (LIGHTS OUT ON VASANTA AND MADANA.)

SCENE II

ARJUNA

(SITS DOWN CENTER. USES PRIMARILY ARM MOVEMENT, MAY RISE TO KNEES) (WITH AWE AND PLEASURE) Was I dreaming or was what I saw by the lake truly there? Sitting on the mossy turf, I mused over bygone years in the sloping shadows of evening, when slowly there came out from the folding darkness of foliage an apparition of beauty in the perfect form of a woman, and stood on a white slab of stone at the water's brink. It seemed that the heart of the earth must heave in joy under her bare white feet. Me-thought the vague veilings of her body should melt in ecstacy into the air as the golden mist of dawn melts from off the snowy peak of the eastern hill. She bowed herself above the shining mirror of the lake and saw the reflection of her face. She started up in awe and stood still; then smiled, and with a careless sweep of her left arm loosened her hair and let it trail on the earth at her feet. She bared her bosom and looked at her arms, so flawlessly modeled, an instinct with an exquisite caress. Bending her head she

saw the sweet blossoming of her youth and tender bloom and blush of her skin. She beamed with glad surprise. So, if the white lotus bud on opening her eyes in the morning were to arch her neck and see her shadow in the water, would she wonder at herself the live-long day. But a moment after the smile passed from her face and a shade of sadness crept into her eyes. She bound up her tresses, drew her veil over her arms, and sighing slowly, (RISES) walked away like a beauteous evening fading into the night. To me the supreme fulfillment of desire seemed to have been revealed in a flash and then tohave vanished. (CROSSED DOWN RIGHT TURNS TO FACE UP LEFT) But who is it that pushes the door? (ENTER CHITRA FROM BEHIND SCRIM UP LEFT. SHE IS DRESSED AS A WOMAN) (BY THIS POINT THE LIGHTS WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN DIM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SCENE SHOULD BE ON FULL) (WITH AWE) Ah! it is she. Quiet, my heart! (TO HER) Fear me not, lady! I am a Kshatriya.

CHITRA

(CROSSES TO CENTER) (COURTEOUSLY) Honoured sir, you are my guest. I live in this temple. I know not in what way I can show you hospitality.

ARJUNA

(CROSSES TO RIGHT CENTER) (SINCERELY) Fair lady, the very sight of you is indeed the highest hospitality. If you will not take amiss I would ask you a question.

CHITRA

(CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT) You have permission.

ARJUNA

(CROSSES TO CENTER) What stern vow keeps you immured in this solitary temple, depriving all mortals of a vision of so much loveliness?

CHITRA

(TURNS TO HIM) I harbour a secret desire in my heart, for the fulfilment of which I offer daily prayers to Lord Shiva.

ARJUNA

(CROSSES TWO STEPS TOWARD HER) (ALMOST WORSHIPING HER BEAUTY) Alas, what can you desire, you are the desire of the whole world! From the easternmost hill on whose summit the morning sun first prints his fiery foot to the end of the sunset land I have traveled. (KNEELS ON RIGHT KNEE) I have seen whatever is most precious, beautiful and great on earth. My knowledge shall be yours, only say for what or for whom you seek.

CHITRA

(SITS) He whom I seek is known to all.

ARJUNA

(RISES, TURNS FOUR STEPS UP RIGHT) Indeed! Who may this favourite of the gods be (WITH ENVY) who has captured your heart?

CHITRA

(RISES, TURNS TO HIM) (WITH PRIDE AND ADORATION) Sprung from the highest of all royal houses, the greatest of all heroes is he.

ARJUNA

(TURNS TO HER) Lady, offer not such wealth of beauty as is yours on the altar of false reputation. Spurious fame spreads from tongue to

tongue like the fog of the early dawn before the sun rises. Tell me who in the highest of kingly lines is the supreme hero?

CHITRA

(CHIDING HIM) Hermit, you are jealous of other men's fame. Do you not know that all over the world the royal house of the Kurus is the most famous?

ARJUNA

(TURNS AWAY) (AMAZED) The house of the Kurus!

CHITRA

(CROSSES TO CENTER) And have you never heard of the greatest name of that far-famed house?

ARJUNA

(TWO STEPS TOWARD HER) From your own lips let me hear it.

CHITRA

Arjuna, the conqueror of the world. I have culled from the mouths of the multitude that imperishable name and hidden it with care in my maiden heart. Hermit, who do you look so perturbed? Has the name only a deceitful glitter? (CROSSES TO HIM) Say so, and I will not hesitate to break this casket of my heart and throw the false gem in the dust.

ARJUNA

(KNEELS) (PLEADING) Be his name and fame false or true, for mercy's sake do not banish him from your heart--for he kneels at your feet even now.

CHITRA

(TURNS TO HIM) (SURPRISED, PLEASED) You, Arjuna!

ARJUNA

Yes, I am he, the love-hungered guest at your door.

CHITRA

(CHIDING) Then it is not true that Arjuna has taken a vow of chastity for twelve long years?

ARJUNA

(CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT) (WITH DESIRE) But you have dissolved my vow even as the moon dissolves thenight's vow of obscurity.

CHITRA

(CROSSES TO UP CENTER) (WITH HER BACK TO HIM AND THE AUDIENCE) Oh, shame upon you! What have you seen in me that makes you false to yourself? Whom do you seek in these dark eyes, in these milk-white arms, if you are ready to pay for her with the price of your probity? (FACES HIM) Not my true self, I know. Surely this is not love, this is not man's highest homage to woman! Alas, that this frail disguise, the body, should make one blind to the light of the deathless spirit! Yes, now indeed, I know, Arjuna, the fame of your heroic manhood is false.

ARJUNA

(CROSSES TO HER) Ah, I feel how vain is fame, the pride of prowess! Everything seems to me a dream. You alone are perfect; you are the wealth of the world, the end of all poverty, the goal of all efforts, the one woman! Others there are who can be but slowly known. While to see you for a moment is to see perfect completeness once and for ever.

CHITRA

(CROSSED TO DOWN LEFT AWAY FROM HIM) (WITH SADNESS) Alas, it is not I, not I, Arjuna! It is the deceit of a god. Go, (LIGHTS BEGIN TO DIM) go, my hero, go. Woo not falsehood, offer not your heart to an illusion. (LIGHTS OUT)

SCENE III

CHITRA

(LIGHTS SLOWLY ON TO FULL AT THE ENTRANCE OF MADANA AND VASANTA) (SITS DOWN CENTER. USES EXTENSIONS FROM FLOOR) (STRUGGLING WITH SELF) No, impossible. To face that fervent gaze that almost grasps you like clutching hands of the hungry spirit within; to feel his heart struggling to break its bonds urging its passionate cry through the entire body--and then to send him away like a beggar--no, impossible! (ENTER MADANA AND VASANTA) Ah, (TURNS TO MADANA, STILL ON FLOOR) god of love, what fearful flame is this with which thou hast enveloped me! I burn, and I burn whatever I touch.

MADANA

I desire to know what happened last night.

CHITRA

(RISES, DANCE MOVEMENTS BACK AND RIGHT) (NARRATES) At evening I lay down on a grassy bed strewn with the petals of spring flowers, and recollected the wonderful praise of my beauty I had heard from Arjuna; (SITS UP CENTER RIGHT)--drinking drop by drop the honey that I had

stored during the long day. The history of my past life like that of my former existences was forgotten. I felt like a flower, which has but a few fleeting hours to listen to all the humming flatteries and whispered murmurs of the woodlands and then must lower its eyes from the sky, bend its head and at a breath give itself up to the dust without a cry. Thus ending the short story of a perfect moment that has neither past nor future.

VASANTA

A limitless life of glory can bloom and spend itself in a morning.

MADANA

Like the endless meaning in the narrow span of a song.

CHITRA

(THE DANCER MAY USE THE ENTIRE STAGE FOR THIS. THE TEMPO OF DANCE MOVEMENT AND READING INTENSITY RISES TO THE CLIMAX INDICATED IN THE SCRIPT) The southern breeze caressed me to sleep. From the flowering Malati bower overhead silent kisses dropped over my body. On my hair, my breast, my feet, each flower chose a bed to die on. I slept. And suddenly, in the depth of my sleep, I felt as if some intense eager look, like tapering fingers of flame, touched my slumbering body. I started up and saw the Hermit standing before me. The moon had moved to the West, peering through the leaves to espy this wonder of divine art wrought in a fragile human frame. The air was heavy with perfume; the silence of the night was vocal with the chirping of crickets; the reflections of the tree hung motionless in the

lake; and with his staff in his hand he stood, tall and straight and still, like a forest tree. It seemed to me that I had, on opening my eyes, died to all the realities of life and had a dream birth into a shadow land. Shame slipped to my feet like loosened clothes. I heard his call--"Beloved, my most beloved!" And all my forgotten lives united as one and responded to it. I said "Take me, take all I am!" And I stretched out my arms to him. The moon set behind the trees. One curtain of darkness covered all. Heaven and earth, time and space, pleasure and pain, death and life merged together in an unbearable ecstacy. . . (CLIMAX) (SLOWLY AWAKENING FROM ECSTACY, WONDERING) With the first gleam of light, the first twitter of birds, I rose up and sat leaning on my left arm. He lay asleep with a vague smile about his lips like the crescent moon in the morning. The rosy red glow of the dawn fell upon his noble forehead. I sighed and stood up. I drew together the leafy lianas to screen the streaming sun from his face. I looked about me and saw the same old earth. I remembered what I used to be, and ran and ran like a deer afraid of her own shadow, through the forest path strewn with shephali flowers. I found a lonely nook, and sitting down covered my face with both hands, and tried to weep and cry. But no tears came to my eyes.

MADANA

(CHIDING, BUT WITH PITY) Alas, thou daughter of mortals! I stole from the divine storehouses the fragrant wine of heaven, filled with it one earthly night to thebrim, and placed it in thy hand to drink--yet still I hear this cry of anguish!

CHITRA

(AS BEFORE, AND THROUGHOUT THIS WHOLE SCENE, THE DANCER WILL HAVE COMPLETE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND POSITIONING ON THE ENTIRE STAGE.) (BITTERLY) Who drank it? The rarest completion of life's desire, the first union of love was proffered to me, but was wrested from my grasp. This borrowed beauty, this falsehood that enwraps me, will slip from me taking with it the only monument of that sweet union, as the petals fall from an overblown flower; and the woman ashamed of her naked poverty will sit weeping day and night. Lord Love, this cursed appearance companions me like a demon robbing me of all the prizes of love--all the kisses for which my heart is athirst.

MADANA

(SADLY) Alas, how vain thy single night has been! The barque of joy came in sight, but the waves would not let it touch the shore.

CHITRA

(WITH ANGUISH) Heaven came so close to my hand that I forgot for a moment that it had not reached me. But when I woke in the morning from my dream I found that my body had become my own rival. It is my hateful task to deck her every day, to send her to my beloved and see her caressed by him. O god, take back thy boon!

MADANA

But if I take it from you how can you stand before your lover? To snatch away the cup from his lips when he has scarcely drained the first draught of pleasure, would not that be cruel? With what resentful anger he must regard thee then!

CHITRA

That would be better far than this. I will reveal my true self to him, a nobler thing than this disguise. If he rejects it, if he spurns me and breaks my heart, I will bear even that in silence.

VASANTA

(WISELY) Listen to my advice. When with the advent of autumn the flowering season is over than comes the triumph of the fruitage. A time will come of itself when the heat-cloyed bloom of the body will droop and Arjuna will gladly accept the abiding fruitful truth in thee. O child, go back to thy mad festival. (LIGHTS OUT)

SCENE IV

(LIGHTS ON FULL, DIM TO THE END OF THE SCENE.)

CHITRA

(UP RIGHT, SITS) (COYLY) Why do you watch me like that, my warrior?

ARJUNA

(DOWN LEFT, FACING HER, STANDING) (ADMIRING HER BEAUTY) I watch how you weave that garland. Skill and grace, the twin brother and sister, are dancing playfully on your finger tips. I am watching and thinking.

CHITRA

What are you thinking, sir?

ARJUNA

(WALKS TOWARD HER) (WITH HAPPINESS) I am thinking that you, with this same lightness of touch and sweetness, are weaving my days of exile into an immortal wreath, to crown me when I return home.

CHITRA

(STANDS) (DISTURBED) Home! But this love is not for a home!

ARJUNA

(GOES TO HER, TAKES HER HAND) (SURPRISED, DISMAYED) Not for a home?

CHITRA

(AWAY FROM HIM, DOWN CENTER) No. Never talk of that. Take to your home what is abiding and strong. Leave the little wild flower where it was born; leave it beautifully to die at the day's end among all fading

blossoms and decaying leaves. Do not take it to your palace hall to fling it on the stony floor which knows no pity for things that fade and are forgotten.

ARJUNA

(FOLLOWS HER) (SADLY) Is ours that kind of love?

CHITRA

Yes, no other! Why regret it? That which was meant for idle days should never outlive them. Joy turns to pain when the door by which it should depart is shut against it. Take it and keep it as long as it lasts. Let not the satiety of your evening claim more than the desire of your morning could earn. (CHANGING THE SUBJECT) . . . The day is done. Put this garland on (PUTS GARLAND ON HIM) I am tired. (ATTEMPTING TO PACIFY HIM) Take me in your arms, my love. Let all vain bickerings of discontent die away in the sweet melting of our lips.

ARJUNA

(HIS ARMS AROUND HER) Hush! Listen, my beloved, the sound of the prayer bells from the distant village temple steals upon the evening air across the silent trees! (LIGHTS OUT)

SCENE V

(LIGHTS UP ON THE GODS)

VASANTA

(BEHIND SCRIM LEFT) (USES ARM MOVEMENTS) (SEEMS TIRED, RATHER CHILDISH) I cannot keep pace with thee, my friend! I am tired. It is a hard task to keep alive the fire thou hast kindled. Sleep overtakes me, the fan drops from my hand, and cold ashes cover the glow of the fire. I start up again from my slumber and with all my might rescue the weary flame. But this can go on no longer.

MADANA

(BEHIND SCRIM RIGHT) (USES ARM MOVEMENTS) (CHIDING, CAJOLING) I know, thou art fickle as a child. Ever restless is thy play in heaven and on earth. Things that thou for days buildest up with endless detail thou dost shatter in a moment without regret. But this work of ours is nearly finished. Pleasure-winged days fly fast, and the year, almost at its end. swoons in rapturous bliss.

(LIGHTS OUT)

SCENE VI

ARJUNA

(LIGHTS UP TO FULL AT CHITRA'S ENTRANCE) (DOWN LEFT, CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT) (DISTURBED) I woke in the morning and found that my dreams had distilled a gem. I have no casket to enclose it, no king's crown whereon to fix it, no chain from which to hang it, and yet have not the heart to throw it away. My kshatriya's right arm, idly occupied in holding it, forgets its duties.

CHITRA

(ENTERS CENTER BETWEEN PILLARS UP CENTER) Tell me your thoughts, sir!

ARJUNA

(MAY USE THE ENTIRE STAGE, ENDS UP RIGHT) (LONGING FOR DAYS PAST) My mind is busy with thoughts of hunting today. See, how the rain pours in torrents and fiercely beats upon the hillside. The dark shadows of the clouds hang heavily over the forest, and the swollen stream like reckless youth, overleaps all barriers with mocking laughter. On such rainy days we five brothers would go to the Chitraka forest to chase wild beasts. Those were the glad times. Our hearts danced to the drum-beat of rumbling clouds. The woods resounded with the screams of peacocks. Timid deer could not hear our approaching steps for the patter of the rain and the noise of the waterfalls; the leopards would leave their tracks in the wet earth, betraying their lairs. Our sports over, we dared each other to swim across turbulent streams on

our way back home. The restless spirit is on me. I long to go hunting.

CHITRA

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT) (EXPLAINING THEIR SITUATION) First run down the quarry you are now following. Are you quite certain that the enchanted deer you pursue must needs be caught? No, not yet. Like a dream the wild creature eludes you when it seems most nearly yours. Look how the wind is chased by the mad rain that discharges a thousand arrows after it. Yet it goes free and unconquered. Our sport is like that, my love! You give chase to the fleet-footed spirit of beauty, aiming at her every dart you have in your hands. Yet this magic deer runs forever free and untouched.

ARJUNA

(CROSSES TO HER) My love, have you no home where kind hearts are waiting for your return. A home which you once made sweet with your gentle service and whose light went out when you left it for this wilderness?

CHITRA

(TURNS FROM HIM, CROSSES CENTER) (INQUIRING SADLY) Why these questions. Are the hours of unthinking pleasure over? Do you not know that I am no more than what you see before you? For me there is no vista beyond. The dew that hangs on the tip of a Kinsuka petal has neither name nor destination. It offers no answer to any question. (TURNS TO HIM) She whom you love is like that perfect bead of dew.

ARJUNA

(CROSSES TO HER) (PUZZLED) Has she no tie with the world? Can

she be merely like a fragment of heaven dropped on the earth through the carelessness of a wanton god?

CHITRA

Yes.

ARJUNA

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT) (WISTFULLY) Ah, that is why I always seem about to lose you. My heart is unsatisfied, my mind knows no peace. Come closer to me, unattainable one! (TURNS TO HER) (PLEADING) Surrender yourself to the bonds of name and home and parentage. Let my heart feel you on all sides and live with you in the peaceful security of love.

CHITRA

(CROSSES UP LEFT) Why this vain effort to catch and keep the tints of the clouds, the dance of the waves, the smell of flowers?

ARJUNA

(CROSSES DOWN CENTER) (YEARNING) Mistress mine, do not hope to pacify love with airy nothings. Give me something to clasp, something that can last longer than pleasure, that can endure through suffering.

CHITRA

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT) Hero mine, the year is not to full, and you are tired already! Now I know that it is Heaven's blessing that has made the flower's term of live short. Could this body of mine have drooped and died with the flowers of last spring it surely would have died with honour. Yet, its days are numbered, my love. (URGING HIM)

(CROSSES TO HIM) Spare it not, press it dry of honey, for fear your beggar's heart come back to it again and again like a thirsty bee when the summer blossoms lie dead in the dust.

(LIGHTS FADE OUT AS THEY EMBRACE.)

SCENE VII

(MADANA AND VASANTA ARE BEHIND THE SCRIM) (LIGHTS ARE FULL ON MADANA AND VASANTA; HALF ON CHITRA AS SHE ENTERS FROM RIGHT)

MADANA

Tonight is thy last night.

VASANTA

The loveliness of your body will return to the inexhaustable stores of spring. The ruddy tint of thy lips freed from the memory of Arjuna's kisses, will bud anew as a pair of fresh asoka leaves, and the soft, white glow of thy skin will be born again in a hundred fragrant jasmine flowers.

CHITRA

(CROSSES CENTER, KNEELS) (PLEADING) O gods, grant me this my prayer! Tonight in its last hour let my beauty flash its brightest, like the final flicker of a dying flame!

MADANA

Thou shalt have thy wish.

(LIGHTS OUT.)

SCENE VIII

(LIGHTS ON FULL) (ARJUNA STANDS BY PILLAR DOWN RIGHT)

VILLAGERS

(ENTER LEFT, CROSS TO CENTER) (QUESTIONING, PLEADING)

Who will protect us now?

ARJUNA

(CROSSES TWO STEPS TOWARD THEM) (CONCERNED) Why, by what danger art thou threatened?

VILLAGERS

(MAY USE THE WHOLE STAGE BUT FOR DOWN RIGHT) (THEY MOVE AND READ TOGETHER UNTIL EXIT.) The robbers are pouring from the northern hills like a mountain flood to devastate our village.

ARJUNA

(REMAINS DOWN RIGHT) Have you in this kingdom no warden?

VILLAGERS

Princess Chitra was the terror of all evil doers. While she was in this happy land we feared natural deaths, but had no other fears. Now she has gone on a pilgrimage, and no one knows where to find her.

ARJUNA

(SURPRISED) Is the warden of this country a woman?

VILLAGERS

Yes, she is our father and mother in one. (EXIT LEFT.)

(ARJUNA SITS DOWN RIGHT)

CHITRA

(ENTERS CENTER) Why are you sitting alone?

ARJUNA

(TURNS TO HER, BUT REMAINS SITTING) (SPECULATING) I am trying to imagine what kind of a woman Princess Chitra may be. I hear so many stories of her from all kinds of men.

CHITRA

(CROSSES TO HIM, SITS) Ah, but she is not beautiful. She has no such lovely eyes as mine, dark as death. She can pierce any target she will, but not your hero's heart.

ARJUNA

(RISES, CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO LEAN AGAINST PILLAR THROUGH CHITRA'S FOLLOWING SPEECH.) They say that in valour she is a man, and a woman in tenderness.

CHITRA

(USES ENTIRE STAGE) (SADLY) That, indeed is her great misfortune. When a woman is merely a woman; then she winds herself round and round men's hearts with her smiles and sobs and services and caressing endearments; then she is happy. Of what use to her are learning and great achievements? Could you have seen her only yesterday in the court of Lord Shiva's temple by the forest path, you would have passed by without deigning to look at her. But have you grown so weary of woman's beauty that you seek in her for a man's strength? (CROSSES TO HIM) (CAJOLING) With green leaves wet from the spray of the foaming

waterfall, I have made our noonday bed in a cavern dark as night. There the cool of the soft green mosses thick on the black and dripping stone, kisses your eyes to sleep. Let me guide you thither.

ARJUNA

(AWAY FROM HER DOWN CENTER) Not today, beloved.

CHITRA

(FOLLOWS HIM) Why not today?

ARJUNA

(TURNS TO HER) (ACKNOWLEDGING RESPONSIBILITY) I have heard that a horde of robbers has neared the plains. Needs must I go and prepare my weapons to protect the frightened villagers.

CHITRA

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT) (ASSURING HIM) You need have no fear for them. Before she started on her pilgrimage, Princess Chitra had set strong guards at all the frontier passes.

ARJUNA

(CROSSES TO HER, DOWN RIGHT) Yet permit me for a short while to set about a Kshatriya's work. With new glory will I ennoble this idle arm, and make of it a pillow more worthy of your head.

CHITRA

(MAY USE THE ENTIRE STAGE) What if I refuse to let you go, if I keep you entwined in my arms? Would you rudely snatch yourself free and leave me? Go, then! But you must know that the liana, once broken in two never joins again. Go, if your thirst is quenched. But if not,

then remember that the goddess of pleasure is fickle, and waits for no man. Sit for a while, my lord! Tell me what uneasy thoughts tease you. (UP LEFT) Who occupied your mind today? Is it Chitra?

ARJUNA

Yes, it is Chitra. I wonder in fulfilment of what vow she has gone on her pilgrimage. Of what could she stand in need?

CHITRA

(REMAINS UP LEFT. MAY SIT) Her needs? Why, what has she ever had, the unfortunate creature? Her very qualities are as prison walls, shutting her woman's heart in a bare cell. She is obscured, she is unfulfilled. Her womanly love must content itself dressed in rags; beauty is denied her. She is like the spirit of a cheerless morning, sitting upon the stony mountain peak, all her light blotted out by dark clouds. Do not ask me of her life. It will never sould sweet to a man's ear.

ARJUNA

(THROUGHOUT THE NEXT TWO SPEECHES HE QUESTIONS AND ADMIRES) (HE MAY USE THE ENTIRE STAGE FOR DANCE MOVEMENT.) I am eager to learn all about her. I am like a traveler come to a strange city at midnight. Domes and towers and gardens look vague and shadowy, and the dull moan of the sea comes fitfully through the silence of sleep. Wistfully he waits for the morning to reveal to him all the strange wonders. Oh, tell me her story.

CHITRA

(RELUCTANT) What more is there to tell?

ARJUNA

I seem to see her, in my mind's eye, riding on a white horse, proudly holding the reins in her left hand, and in her right a bow, and like the Goddess of Victory dispensing glad hope round her. Like a watchful lioness she protects the litter at her dugs with fierce love. Woman's arms, though adorned with naught but unfettered strength are beautiful! (WISHING FOR THE STRENGTH AND COMPANIONSHIP OF A WOMAN LIKE CHITRA) My heart is restless, fair one, like a serpent reviving from his long winter's sleep. (CROSSES TO HER) Come, let us both race on swift horses side by side, like two orbs of light sweeping through space. Out from this slumbrous prison of green gloom, the dark, dense cover of perfumed intoxication, choking breath.

CHITRA

(RISES, USES ENTIRE STAGE AREA, ENDS SPEECH DOWN RIGHT) Arjuna, tell me true, if now, at once by some magic I could shake myself free from this voluptous softness, this timed bloom of beauty shrinking from the rude and healthy touch of the world and fling it from my body like borrowed clothes, would you be able to bear it? If I stand up straight and strong with the strength of a daring heart spurning the wiles and darts of twining weakness, if I hold my head high like a tall young mountain fir, no longer trailing in the dust like a liana, shall I then appeal to a man's eye? no, no, you could not endure it. It is better that I should keep spread about me all the dainty playthings of fugitive youth, and wait for you in patience. When it pleases you to return, I will smiling pour out

for you the wine of pleasure in the cup of this beauteous body. When you are tired and satiated with this wine, you can go to work or play; and when I grow old I will accept humbly and gratefully whatever corner is left for me. Would it please your heroic soul if the playmate of the night aspired to be the helpmate of the day, if the left arm learned to share the burden of the proud right arm?

ARJUNA

(CROSSES TO HER, SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH OF HER) I never seem to know you aright. You seem to me like a goddess hidden within a golden image. I cannot touch you, I cannot pay you my dues in return for your priceless gifts. Thus my love is incomplete. Sometimes in the enigmatic depth of your sad look, in your playful words mocking at their own meaning, I gain glimpses of a being trying to rend asunder the langorous grace of her body, to emerge in a chaste fire of pain through a vaporous veil of smiles. Illusion is the first appearance of Truth. She advances toward her lover in disguise. But a time comes when she throws off her ornaments and veils and stands clothed in naked dignity. I grope for the ultimate you, that bare simplicity of truth. (CHITRA BEGINS TO CRY) (HE REACHED HER BY NOW AND CARESSES HER) (LIGHTS BEGIN TO DIM) Why these tears, my love? Why cover your face with your hands? Have I pained you, my darling? Forget what I said. I will be content with the present. Let each separate moment of beauty come to me like a bird of mystery from its unseen nest in the dark bearing a message of music. Let me forever sit with my hope on the brink of realization, and thus end my days. (LIGHTS OUT)

SCENE IX

(LIGHTS ON SLOWLY TO FULL TO THE FIRST "I AM CHITRA. . .")

(ARJUNA SITS DOWN RIGHT PILLAR AND REACTS TO ALL CHITRA SAYS)

CHITRA

(ENTERS ABOVE PILLAR LEFT, AND USES THE ENTIRE STAGE FOR THIS SPEECH IN WHICH SHE TOTALLY REVEALS HER LOVE AND HER TRUE SELF.) My lord, has the cup been drained to the last drop. Is this, indeed, the end? No, when all is done something still remains, and that is my last sacrifice at your feet. I brought from the garden of heaven flowers of incomparable beauty with which to worship you, god of my heart. If the rites are over, if the flowers have faded, let me throw them out of the temple. (REMOVES SARI AND IS CLAD IN ORIGINAL MALE ATTIRE) Now look at your worshiper with gracious eyes. I am not beautifully perfect as the flowers with which I worshiped. I have many flaws and blemishes, I am a traveler in the great world-path, my garments are dirty, and my feet are bleeding with thorns. Where should I achieve flower-beauty, the unsullied loveliness of a moment's life? The gift that I proudly bring to you is the heart of a woman. Here have all pains and joys gathered, the hopes and fears and shames of a daughter of the dust; here love springs up struggling toward immortal life. Herein lies imperfection which is yet noble and grand. If the flower-service is finished, my master, accept this as your servant for the days to come! I am Chitra, the king's daughter. Perhaps you will

remember the day when a woman came to you in the temple of Shiva, her body loaded with ornaments and finery. That shameless woman came to you to court you as though she were a man. You rejected her; you did well. My lord, I am that woman. She was my disguise. Then by the boon of the gods I obtained for a year the most radiant form that a mortal ever wore, and wearied my hero's heart with the burden of that deceit. Most surely I am not that woman.

I am Chitra. No goddess to be worshiped, nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self. If your babe, whom I am nourishing in my womb, be born a son, I shall myself teach him to be a second Arjuna, and send him to you when the time comes, and then at last you will truly know me. Today I can offer you only Chitra, the daughter of a king.

ARJUNA

(RISES, GOES TO HER, HOLDS HER) Beloved, my life is full.

(<u>LIGHTS SLOWLY DIM TO OUT</u>.)

CONCLUSION

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

The validity of this adaptation can be conclusively determined only by presentation. The purpose of this conclusion, then, is not to speculate concerning the results of what might form another study, nor comment upon these speculations. It is to summarize the discoveries which have been made during the course of this study of the production of Chitra as an example of Indian dance drama adapted to the stage conventions of the West.

The first and most basic schism between the two forms cannot be overcome. This deals with the dramaturgical background of the forms. The very essence of the dramatic in the West involves the creation of dramatic tension. On our stage emotion meets emotion, giving the audience a vicarious experience which mentally and emotionally inspires. Our drama is a growing and flexible form which had a spontaneous beginning. It has never, for any long period of time, been forced to adhere to rigid rules. Themes of the plays deal with virtually any subjects which strike the playwrights' fancies. Any type of believable people may live in the dramas. And, because the Western audience is accustomed to release from tension created by the drama, falling action has become a standard part of the plot structure.

The classical drama of India, however, creates sentiment rather than deep emotion. The audience is given a spiritual experience through association with the beautiful. In keeping with its religous purpose,

Hindu dance-drama had a rigid religious beginning. The subjects of the dramas are taken from the lore of India. Themes do not necessarily deal with modern problems. Characters are two-dimensional, their purpose is to create rasa and assist the progression of the plot rather than portray deep emotion. The plot is structured without denouement, for rasa is best created if the audience is left at the peak of the situation.

However, upon reading Chitra, one realizes that this is not a totally foreign approach to our concept of theatre, for the script is a delightful one to read which has something to say to the Western audience, and one which should be interesting in performance, for there is also something of suspense as to whether or not Chitra will retain Arjuna's love at the conclusion.

In production all of the original symbols of this dramatic form are lost. The West is accustomed to suggestive realism in all aspects of production. The Hindu drama is almost entirely symbolic. The theatre building, scene design, lighting, properties, costuming, make-up, and acting are so symbolic as to further an impression of beauty for rasa creation. Since the symbolism is completely foreign to the West, each of these facets of production has been adapted semi-realistically to the Western stage, in such a way as to attempt to preserve the Indian flavor of the drama while making the experience interesting and meaningful to the audience here. The theatre building would be almost any small, conventional one in the West. Scene design and lighting would be primarily nonrepresentational with suggestions of realism, using the

Tree of Life and projections on a scrim to suggest a forest. No properties would be used, but the dancer-actors would pantomime the action when necessary. Costuming and make-up would coincide with the Western concept of East Indian dress. And the acting would be modern dance with the lines spoken by the dancer.

Only one problem is considered by this thesis, that is making a drama of remote symbols understandable and enjoyable to a Western audience. The way in which this is accomplished can be simply stated: the symbols of such a drama are adapted in such a way as to suggest realism. This is obvious and logical, for the Western audience needs realism with which to associate for dramatic tension to be created. Each facet of this or any East Indian drama must be adapted realistically or semi-realistically. The rationale for the entire adaptation has been firmly laid in preceeding chapters; therefore no need exists to recapitulate the rationale at this point.

The type of adaptation suggested here would apply to other East Indian dramas. Among these dramas are several of Tagore's. King of the Dark Chamber, The Cycle of Spring, Sanyasi or the Ascetic, Malini, Sacrifice, The King and the Queen, Karna and Kunti are among these. All of these plays are available through the Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, New York. Shakuntala, by Kalidasa, who has been called the Shakespeare of India, could also be adapted in this fashion. These, in my opinion, are the Indian dramas to which this theatrical approach would best apply. This is the case with all of these

plays for three reasons. First, all of them are Indian, that is they conform with the demands of the Natyasastra and are not Indian adaptations of the Western form. Second, all of these scripts have interesting plots; they are not poorly written plays, but have something to say to all human beings. And third, all of these scripts are available; Tagore has translated his own plays, and many translations of Shakuntala are available.

The purpose of this thesis, then, has been fulfilled. This was to be a basis for adapting Chitra or any other East Indian classical dance-drama to the Western theatre. The theatrical forms of the two cultures have been compared, and the adaptation of Chitra is complete with rationale for production here. Not only Chitra, but any of the plays suggested in the conclusion could be adapted in a similar fashion. This type of adaptation does retain the flavor of India, yet will be meaningful to the audience of the West.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anand, Mulk Raj, The Indian Theatre. New York: Roy Publishers, 1951.

Arnson, A., Rabindrinath Through Western Eyes. Kitabistan: Allahabad, 1947.

Baker, George Pierce. Dramatic Technique. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919.

Banerji, Projesh. Dance of India. Kitabistan: Allahabad, 1947.

Barnett, Lional David. The Heart of India. London: J. Murray, 1924.

Bharata-muni. Natyasastra. M. Gosh (tr.) Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1955.

Bowers, Faubion. "Theatre Comes Back to Life in Free India," Theatre Arts, (October 1952).

_____. Theatre in the East. New York: Thomas Nelson and Son, 1956.

Bowman, Wayne. Modern Theatre Lighting. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957.

Burton, Richard. The New American Drama. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1913.

Buckridge, "Make-up for the Play," Producing the Play. New York: The Dryden Press, 1953.

Cheney, Sheldon. The Theatre. New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1949.

_____. Stage Decoration. New York: John Day Co., 1928.

Clark, Barrett H. "The Drama and Theatre," The Enjoyment of the Arts. New York: The Philosophical Library, Inc., 1944.

_____. European Theories of the Drama. New York: Crown, 1957.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. The Dance of Shiva. New York: Noonday Press, 1957.

Cujoy, Anatole. The Dance Encyclopedia. New York: A.S. Barnes, 1949.

Flexner, Eleanor. American Playwrights: 1918-1938. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1938.

Fuchs, Theodore. Stage Lighting. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1929.

Gassner, John. Form and Idea in Modern Theatre. New York: Dryden Press, 1956.

_____. Producing the Play. New York: Dryden Press, 1953.

Gaw, Allison. "Centers of Interest in Drama, Dramatic Tension, and Types of Dramatic 'Conflict' ", Schelling Anniversary Papers, New York: The Century Co., 1923.

Hiriyana, Mysore. The Essentials of Indian Philosophy. London: Allen and Unwin, 1949.

Horan, Robert. The Recent Theatre of Martha Graham, Vol. VI, No. 1. New York: Dance-Index Ballet Caravan, Inc., (Jan. 1947).

Jagirdar, R.V. Drama in Sanskrit Literature. Bombay, 1947.

Kalidasa. Sakuntala. Monier Williams (ed.) Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1876.

Keith, A. B. The Sanskrit Drama. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924.

Kramresch, Stella, The Art of India, New York: Phaidon Publishers, Inc., 1954.

Macgowan, Kenneth and Melnitz, William. The Living Stage. New York: Prentice Hall Inc., 1955.

Maha-Bharata. Romesh C. Dutt (tr.) Kitabistan: Allahabad, 1944.

Martin, John. The Dance. New York: Tudor, 1946.

_____. The Modern Dance. New York: A.S. Barnes, 1933.

Matthews, Brander. A Book About the Theatre. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1916.

_____. The Development of the Drama. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1903.

_____. The Principles of Playmaking. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1919.

_____. Rip Van Winkle Goes to the Play and Other Essays on Plays and Players. New York, London: C. Scribner's Sons, 1926.

_____. Studies of the Stage. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1894.

_____. A Study of the Drama. Boston, New York, etc: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910.

Mukerji, Dhan Gopal. Caste and Outcast. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1923.

Nathan, George Jean. "The Drama as an Art," European Theories of the Drama. New York: Crown Publishers, 1957.

Nicoll, Allardyce. The Development of the Theatre. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1927.

O'Malley, Lewis Snyder Steward. Popular Hinduism. New York: Macmillan, 1935.

Pratt, James Bissett. India and Its Faiths. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1915.

The Ramayana. Romesh C. Dutt (tr.), Kitabistan: Allahabad, 1944.

Schweitzer, Albert. Indian Thought and Its Development. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1957.

Simonson, Lee. The Art of Scenic Design. New York: Harper, 1950.

_____. The Stage is Set. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1952.

_____. "Theatre Architecture." Encyclopedia Britannica. XXII. 1956, p. 28-

Strenkovsky, Serge. The Art of Make-up. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1943.

Tagore, Sir Rabindrinath. Collected Poems and Plays. New York: Macmillan Co., 1948.

_____. Chitra. New York: Macmillan Company, 1924.

_____. Crescent Moon. New York: Macmillan Company, 1913.

_____. Fruit Gathering. New York: Macmillan Company, 1916.

_____. King of the Dark Chamber. New York: Macmillan Company, 1916.

_____. Personality. London: Macmillan Company, 1917.

_____. The Post Office. New York: Macmillan Company, 1916.

_____. Sadhana. New York: Macmillan Company, 1929.

_____. A Tagore Testament. Indu Dutt (tr.) London: Meridian Books, 1953.

Wilson, Horace Hayman. The Theatre of the Hindus. London: Parbury Allen and Co., 1835. Vols. I and II.

Yajnik, R. K. The Indian Theatre. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1933.

Zimmer, Heinrich. The Philosophies of India. New York: Macmillan Company, 1948.

ROOM USE ONLY

JUL 21 1962

ROOM USE ONLY

APR 23 1971

MICHIGAN STATE UNIV. LIBRARIES
31293010135147