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## Folk strands in Sanskrit dramas - A study based on bhana

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### Abstract

Sanskrit plays are usually termed as *Rupaka*. There are ten different *Rupaka* that enriches the plays with its own peculiarities. They have scientific *lakshana* as per *Bharata's Natyasastra* and other interpretations those came after it. *Uparupakas* are also mentioned by *Bharata* in his text *Natyasastra*. *Uparupakas* were well defined and interpreted later by other eminent scholars who followed *Bharata*. *Uparupakas* are small performances within *Rupaka* performed according to the *lakshana* of *Natya*, *Nritta* and *Nritya*. *Uparupakas* keeps on changing and later turned into *Rupakas*. It means course of time *Uparupakas* merged in *Rupaka* and they became less important in its own and this resulted in the wide acceptance of *Rupaka* among performers and audiences. It is lead to *Uparupaka* became extinct. In this paper discussed that the influence of the folk element in *Bhana* and its origin and development stage.

**Keywords:** Bhana, drama, folk, natyasastra, rupaka, uparupka

### Introduction

Sanskrit plays are usually termed as *Rupaka*. There are ten different *Rupaka* that enriches the plays with its own peculiarities. They have scientific *lakshana* as per *Bharata's Natyasastra* and other interpretations those came after it. *Uparupakas* are also mentioned by *Bharata* in his text *Natyasastra*. *Uparupakas* were well defined and interpreted later by other eminent scholars who followed *Bharata*.

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Though *Uparupaka* gave more importance to sentiments in plays they lacked emotionally rich performance. Word to word explanations made by the performers is the major peculiarity of *Uparupakas*. Thus they were also called *Padarthabhinaya* (word meaning acting). Some of the eminent interpreters noted that *Uparupakas* can play crucial roles in creating rich emotions in *Rupakas* and gave importance to *Uparupakas* while writing plays. The writers who supported *Uparupakas* and classified it into eighteen. One among those scholars was *Visvanatha* who lived in AD 14<sup>[i]</sup>. considering the attractiveness and importance of *Uparupakas* he classified them into eighteen with his own style and interpretations, namely *Totaka*, *Natika* etc.

*Uparupakas* were developed so as to influence the emotional feelings of spectators. They got prominence because of their *Raga* and *Kavya* elements. *Raga Kavya Uparupakas* had reached its peak as it dealt with the characters, themes, plots, emotional story situations and apt timely changes adopted by the writers. Compared to the depth of *Rupakas*, though rich in content *Uparupakas* remained as *Uparupakas* even they had strong similarities with *Rupakas*.

*Uparupakas* were classified according to dance emotions and theme. *Rasaka*, *Hallisaka*, *Narttanaka*, *Chalika* and *Samyalasya* gave importance to dance performance<sup>[ii]</sup>. *Natika*, *Sattaka*, *Prakaranika*, *Trotaka* gave importance to reactions and emotional feelings.

*Nataka* and *Prakaraka* are the two main *Rupakas* among the classification of *Dasarupaka*. Play historians considered *Uparupaka* as by-product of *Rupaka*. Scholars namely *Bharata*, *Dhananjaya* and *Visvanatha* had the same opinion on *Rupaka* and *Uparupaka*. *Natika* gave only less importance to male characters. It gave prominence to the emotions of female characters and also to sentiments, dance and speech more than *lalitabhinaya*.

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So *Natika* is considered as predecessor of *Nataka*. The key element and main objective of *Rupaka* and *Uparupaka* is to express *Rasa*. Thus body movements and emotions are used to create *Rasa*. *Uparupakas* that give *Rasa* can be seen at emotionally rich scene of *Uparupakas*. There are too many situations in which *Rasa* is expressed in dance based *Uparupakas*. Thus Sanskrit plays got emotional richness apart from body movements and became *Rasa- Bhava* based performances.

It is clear from the above stated facts that *Uparupakas* played a crucial role in the development and totality of drama. There is no clear evidence to prove that *Uparupakas* were derived from *Rupakas*. To express *Rasa* in *Rupaka*, emotions and sentiments etc of *Uparupakas* were merged into *Rupakas*.

### Folk Strands in Bhana

*Bhana* is one of the most important *Rupaka* among *Dasrupaka*. It is the *Rupaka* which have more folk elements compared to all other nine *Rupaka*. *Bhanika* is considered as the *Uparupaka* of *Bhana*. *Bhanika* is structured in a way to awake the *Rasa*, *Bhava* and emotional sentiments. Story and Characters of *Bhanika* made the audience enthralled as the *Lasyanga* and *Sandhyanga* is combined together in the *Uparupaka* [iii]. Most of the characters in this *Uparupaka* perform similar to folk arts.

*Bhanika* performance use masks on stage to present characters especially that of animals. Martial arts, war scenes, games and other entertainments are performed on the stage in *Bhanika*. Different kind of songs and dialogues are also presented on the stage. These scenes and masks performed by artists in *Bhanika* can be seen in different classical dances we see today. From these facts it can be stated that for the development of those classical dances *Bhanika* had played its role. The popularity of those classical dances is the result of folk elements that are incorporated in those dances. Because of folk elements in the *Uparupaka* it helped its *Bhana* to develop completely. Among Sanskrit plays, *Bhana* is the first model to consider folk elements [iv].

### Nritta and Lasya in Bhana

*Bhana* give more importance to *Nritta* and *Lasya*. Folk elements are also mostly seen in this *Nritta* and *Lasya*. Though *Nritta* and *Lasya* can be seen in other *Rupakas* like *Nataka* and *Prakarana* when compared to *Bhana* it is less. In *Bhana* there are four types of *Nritta* and eleven types of *Lasya*. It may be because of the influence of *Nritta* and *Nritya* that existed at that time.

### Lasya

*Lasya* is considered as a folk element because of it is originated from mimicking. As it has elements of old and popular mimicking elements it is clear that it had strong relation with lay man and his life. The *lasya* become popular because of its rich content of emotional sentiments in performances. *Drisya*, *Sravya* and *Ranjana* are the three factors that are included in *Uparupakas*. To retain the freshness and simplicity in conveying ideas to spectators *Lasya* and *Lasyanga* became an unavoidable factor in *Rupakas*. Ten different types of *Lasyanga* namely *Geyapadam*, *Sthithapathyam*, *Asinapathyam*, *Pushpagandhika*, *Prachedhika*, *Trimudhaka*, *Saindhavavahaka*, *Dvirudhaka*, *Uttramottamakam* and *Uktapratyakta* [v], is seen commonly in *Rupakas*. But *Bharata* enumerates and defines twelve *Lasyangas* [vi].

### Nritta

*Nritta* is another folk element of *Bhana*. Like *Lasyanritta* too have its prominence in *Bhana*. *Nritta* is placed in *Bhana* to enrich the performance. Spectators of those times appealed for dance performances in *Bhana*. Keeping this in mind the play writers incorporated dance performance with caution so that *Lasya* and *Nritta* have equal importance.

There are four types of *Nritta* in *Bhana* namely *Gulma*, *Sringalika*, *Lata* and *Bhedhaka*. Out of it *Gulma* and *Sringalika* are based on *Nritta*. The other two *Lata* and *Bhedhaka* are based on *Nritya* [vii]. *Gulma*- It is a group dance and it is also known as *Pindhibandha*. *Sringalika* - Performed in a chain formation. Artists hold hands each other while performing the dance. *Lata*- It is a performance by two artists. *Bhedhaka*- Performed individually.

### Other Nritta and Lasya Elements seen in Bhana

*Bhana* is the only *Rupaka* that present a whole dance on stage. Different dance prevailed in those decades are incorporated in *Bhana*. Though cultural and language differences were there all of them had folk elements in it.

As ten *Lasyanga* mentioned in *Natyasastra* we can see ten *Desi Lasyanga* in *Sangia Ratnakara* by *Sarngadeva*. They are *Cali*, *Calivada*, *Ladhi*, *Suka*, *Uronganam*, *Dhasakam*, *Angaharam*, *Oyaram*, *Vihasi* and *Mana*. *Nrittaratnavali* written by *Jayasenapati* also mention other types of *Lasyanga*. *Sangitadarpana* written by *Damodara* mentions about an order of concert with twelve sessions namely *Mukhacali*, *Yatinrittam*, *Sabdacali*, *Udupadhruva*, *Soudasabdha*, *Kavada*, *Gita*, *Sindh*, *Desiikatori*, *Vaipota* and *Sabdhanritta*. *Sangitamuktavali* by *Devanacaryan* describes another format of concert with thirteen sessions namely *Pushpanjali*, *Mukhacali*, *Sudhayatinrittam*, *Ragamgayatinrittam*, *Sabdhanrittam*, *Rupanrittam*, *Devanrittam*, *Sabdacali*, *Sudagitam*, *Gitaprabandham*, *Sindh*, *Daru*, *Dhrupad*. It is clear from these facts that these dance forms with folk elements were popular in those times. Apart from those dance forms *Gondhali*, *Perani*, *Premkhanam*, *Sivapriya*, *Kollattam*, *Kanthukanrittam*, *Sindh*, *Bhandika*, *Carananrittam*, *Jakkini* dance forms were also mentioned in the book. Most of these are seems to be the art forms of different communities.

*Gondus* or *Gondhali s* are the tribal community (Hunters) of Maharashtra. *Gondhali* is the developed form of their dance. *Jayasenapati* has noted that *Somesara*, the king of *Kalyan* who saw the *Gondhali* dance later made it into a well structured one. *Gondhali* is performed by playing the instrument *Trivali* by the performer himself or not. *Melapkkam*, *Pushpanjali* is performed before the main dance performance. Singing song after each session of dance by the performer is the peculiarity of this dance.

*Kollattam* is very similar to *Pinnalattam* that exists today. A ring with many ribbons will be tied at a height of the performing stage. The performer will plait the ribbons as he makes each step. They have to be very careful while performing so that the ribbons do not twist in wrong way.

*Kanthukanritta* is performed by playing with ball. The acrobatic performance is very attractive one. The elements of *Kanthukanritta* can be seen in certain sessions of *Kutiattam*.

*Sindh* is another popular dance among the Dravidians. Acting has more importance in *Sindh*. *Sindh* can be seen in the Andhra, Karnataka border villages. *Kjva/isindh* that tells the story of Lord *Muruka* is popular in *Tamilnadu*.

*Bhandikanritta* is performed by imitating the movements and sounds of Parrot, Peacock and Swan. The performer will act

as a dwarf and sometimes as a differently able man. The performance gives a comic approach most often.

*Jikkini* is an art form performed by Muslim community in which holding peacock plumes in both hand. The songs are composed in Persian language.

*Rasaka* is similar to *Hallisaka* which give importance to *Uparupakas*. Sixty four performers will stand as pairs in *Mandal* shape. Many peculiar *Tala* and *Laya* are seen in the performance that may come under *Sukumara* or *Udhata*. According to *Bhoja*, it is performed by sixteen, twelve or eight heroines performs the dance by scripting *Pibandha*, *Srinkhala*, *Bhedaka* and *Lata*. Though *Bhoja* clearly make detailed description about *Rasaka*, *Abhinava Gupta* doesn't mention anything about it. It is also known as *Carchari* in *Vasantharttu* since it is performed to make the king happy.

### Conclusion

*Uparupaka* and folk dances had helped the development and evolution of *Dasarupaka*. *Uparupaka* had influenced the growth of *Bhana*. Local and folk dance elements are mixed in *Bhanika* and *Bhana*. Thus *Bhana* became popular since it is the only *Rupaka* that describes the *Nritta*. Un- doubtfully it can be said that there are folk elements in *Bhana* as it give priority to *Vacikabhinaya*, *Lasya* and *Nritta*.

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<sup>i</sup> Bharatiya Kavyasastram, Dr. T. Bhaskaran, P.103.

<sup>ii</sup> Some folk Elements in Sanskrit Drama, Devarajan, T.,P.10

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid, P.11

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid, P.11

<sup>v</sup> Ibid, P.13

<sup>vi</sup> Natyasastra, Bharata, xix, 119-37

<sup>vii</sup> Bhavaprakasa, Saradatanaya VIII 175-177