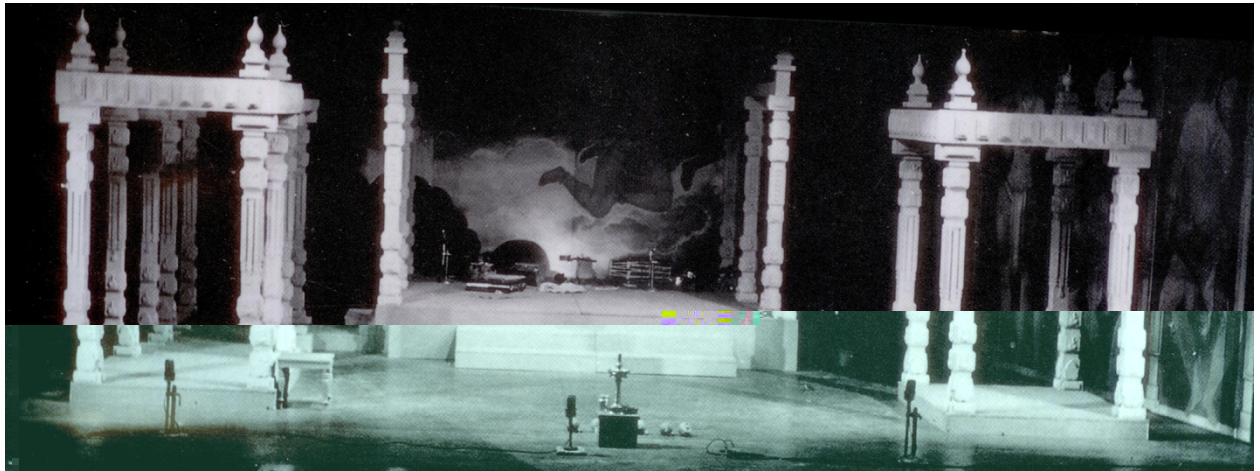


CHAPTER 1

PRACTICES OF SANSKRIT THEATRE:



CHAPTER 1**PRACTICES OF SANSKRIT THEATRE:****❖ PART 1:**

- In India as well as in Abroad (East and West)

⇒ **Practices of Sanskrit Theatre,**

⇒ **Sanskrit Play Productions and**

⇒ **Performances of Sanskrit Drama** are being implemented by various directors since many years and have also served as a visual treat to spectators, which has been interesting and quite a challenging phenomenon.

- So far, many directors have contributed towards Sanskrit plays by adding their own interpretations and experimenting with the different style or styles.
- Here, ‘**Style**’ word is used with respect to –

⇒ **PERFORMANCE STRUCTURE PATTERN,**

⇒ **ACTING PATTERN,**

⇒ **PRODUCTION PATTERN.**

- In totality, it can be said that Practices of Sanskrit Theatre / Sanskrit Play Productions can be characterized under ‘Three Major Trends’ –

⇒ **WESTERN MODEL,**

⇒ **NATYA 12 Y 0 12 116.0[-0.TC 116.0AD[-0.T-10(UCT)-5(I)-3()-5(RN,)] TJ /TT2 1 Tf 0 Tc 0 Tw**

❖ **WESTERN MODEL:**

- Approximately In the 19th Century, and mainly when the British East India Company was established in India, the British introduced “Modern European Theatre” to India in different ways; in this way ‘Western plays / British Theatre performances’ also traveled in India. As a result, its effect could be seen on Sanskrit plays, which were translated into different Indian languages and performed in different parts of India by urban middle-class intellectuals.
- But its presentational style was laid down / depended on ‘British Theatre / Western Theatre’ style and this was clearly visible till independence, the salient features of which are as follows:

⊗ **SALIENT FEATURES OF THE PRESENTATIONAL STYLE/S:**

- ⇒ The dialogues of Sanskrit Classical Plays were spoken in a Realistic manner like contemporary social plays.
- ⇒ The ‘Shlokas – Verses’ were either dropped considering being unnecessary as found impeding the action of the play or were paraphrased into prose or as in Maharashtra songs were introduced in the translated plays.
- ⇒ The dance and music had become part of the plays staged though the dialogues were spoken in a semi realistic style.
- ⇒ The descriptive passages such as Vidushaka’s description of the seven-storied mansion of Vasantsena were deleted as they were thought to be unnecessary padding.
- ⇒ These plays were invariably produced in the Proscenium Theatres with settings consisted of flats, painted wings, borders and backdrops.
- ⇒ The furniture that was not required was painted on the screens depicting a palace or a house or a hut. An attempt of at verisimilitude was made by the use of perspective in painting scenery.
- ⇒ The costumes of heroic types at times were, more or less, based on the Western Melodrama, which themselves reflected the Greek or the Roman influence.

- ⇒ A touch of Indianness was added to the costumes by a ‘Turban’ with a jeweled plume or tassel; a long ‘Coat’ heavily embroidered with ‘Zari’, a ‘Crown’ and embroidered ‘Shoes’.
- ⇒ The women usually donned saris worn in the style and material prevalent in the region.
- ⇒ In short, the whole atmosphere was rather akin to the presentations of the melodrama of the West with touches of Indianness with elements such as music, dance, costumes and scenery that reflected some Indian scene.
- ⇒ The three dimensionality of the actor was pitted against the two-dimensional flat painted surfaces.

⊗ **MAJOR PRODUCTION SUMMARY:**

- ⇒ On 21 Dec. 1831 the newly formed theatre company of Bengal Hindu Theatre performed H.H. Wilson’s English translation of Bhavbhuti’s “**Uttar Ramacharitam**” at Prasanna Kumar Tagore’s Garden House, along with selected scenes from Shakespeare’s Julius Ceaser.
- ⇒ Vidyatoshini Theatre presented Bengali Translations of Bhatt Narayan’s “**Venisamharam**” (Tr. Ram Narayan Tarkratna), Kalidas’ “**Vikramorvashiyam**” (Tr. Kali Prasanna) and Bhavbhuti’s “**Malati Madhav**” (Tr. Kali Prasanna) on 11 April 1857.
- ⇒ Pathuria Ghat Rangmanch performed the Bengali Translation of Kalidas’ “**Malavikagnimitram**” (Tr. Yatindra Mohan Tagore) in 1859; Royal Bengal Theatre also performed Kalidas’ “**Shakuntala**” in 1890 before Queen Victoria.
- ⇒ The New Theatre Movement in Kannada also started with Translations - Adaptations of Sanskrit Classical Plays towards the end of 19th Cent.
- ⇒ Kirloskar Natak Mandali initiated its Professional Activities on regular basis with the staging of “**Shakuntala – Its Four Acts**” in a Marathi translation entitled “**Sangeet Shakuntala**” on 31st Oct. 1880 at Pune, in which the verses of the play were rendered in classical music and the local milieu in costume material, mode of wearing, hair style and ornaments of the time are reflected. (*Illustration: 1*)

- ⇒ In Hindi, Bhartendu Harishchandra also Translated – Adapted Sanskrit Classical Plays.
- ⇒ Parsi Theatre presented Hindi-Urdu Translations of Sanskrit Plays which were performed in either Shakesperean or Parsi Theatre Style.
- ⇒ Prithvi Theatre's maiden venture was also the performance of the Hindi adaptation of **“Shakuntala”** on 15 January 1944 at Bombay's Opera House. Though artistically unsuccessful, it was highly popular among theatergoers and fetched 212 performances. *(Illustration: 2)*
- ⇒ Daji Bhatawadekar directed **“Shakuntala”** for the Brahmana Sabha Bombay in early fifties, which was staged at Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan with a setting, with tree branches and a painted curtain depicting on ashram. The some production was revived in 1970-71. *(Illustration: 3)*
- ⇒ Daji Bhatawadekar also directed Marathi Musical Sangeet **“Mrichhakatikam”** for the Brahmana Sabha of Bombay.
- ⇒ Dr. V Raghavan, the founder of 'The Sanskrit Rangam', (founded in 1958) directed **“Shakuntala”** in 1961. *(Illustration: 4)*
- ⇒ **“The Priest and the Prostitute”** – Performed in Sanskrit by Sanskrit Rangam at the Museum Theatre, Madras in 1960, Directed by V. Raghavan. *(Illustration: 5)*
- ⇒ Sanskrita Rangam has staged many Sanskrit Classics interspersed with Karnatic Music and Bharat Natyam Dance and with Realistic Settings.
- ⇒ **“The Priest and the Prostitute”** – Performed in National School of Drama, New Delhi, in 1960.
- ⇒ Eminent Organizations such as Brahmana Sabha of Bombay, the Sanskrit Rangam of Madras and the Kalidas Samaroh of Ujjain staged Sanskrit plays as literary exercises rather than any theatrical experience to popularize Sanskrit language and literature.

❖ **NATYASHASTRIC TRADITION:**

- Almost from 1940 and mainly after independence, “**SWADESHI MOVEMENT**” started gaining importance and various fields started tracing their roots and were in search of their own identity. This search had a great impact on Theatre also and thus began the quest for the “**THEATRE OF ROOTS**”.
- Playwrights and Directors turned to their ‘Roots’ in –

⇒ “**NATYASHASTRA**”,

⇒ “**TRADITIONAL GENRES OF A PERFORMANCE**”; for a search for an “**OWN IDENTITY**”.

- Indian Theatre / Sanskrit Theatre is based on Bharata’s ‘Natyashastra’, in which majorly three characteristics of Sanskrit theatre have been discussed in detail –

⇒ **PERFORMANCE STRUCTURE / PATTERN / SEQUENCE,**

⇒ **ACTING STYLE,**

⇒ **PRODUCTION ELEMENTS.**

⊗ **MAJOR PRODUCTION SUMMARY WITH SALIENT FEATURES OF THE PRESENTATIONAL STYLE/S:**

⇒ In these phase, the impact of Natyasastra of Bharata is seen in the production style and technique with increasing awareness of music, dance, stylized gestures and movements, correct costumes and other Sanskrit Theatre conventions.

⇒ Various attempts were made at the re-creation of Bharata’s ‘Natyashastra’ in the “Vikrushta Madhyam Natyamandapa” to create a congenial atmosphere for it was closer to the style of staging the Sanskrit Plays in which the “Natyamandapa” was an integral part of the

⇒ The “Proscenium Stage” was consciously avoided with all its paraphernalia, such as, the drop or draw curtain, lighting except for illumination and setting of any kind. Thus, the qualities of “Realism”

King Udayana are trying to hide in the foliage in another part of the garden. The impression of the garden is created by gestures and by verbal description as the scenic representation is considered unnecessary. We can also see here open stage being marked by sacred paintings which probably refers to “Brahma Mandala” mentioned by Bharata. *(Illustration: 7 and 8)*

- ⇒ Shanta Gandhi staged “**Vikramovarshiyam**” at the Kalidas Samaroh, Ujjain in 1974. The “Natyamandapa” with all its elements was roughly recreated by Goverdhan Panchal. Even the lighting arrangement on the pillars with earthen lamps was made. This was the first time in Ujjain that such an attempt at creating the “Natyamandapa” was made, where Sanskrit Plays till then were staged on improvised crude “Proscenium Stage”. The music in this production was classical played on Vina - Flute and Pakhavaj enhancing the atmosphere. Faintly ‘Stylized Movements, Hand-Gestures and Speech’ were used. The “Aharya” was also attempted as described in the ‘Natyashastra’. Here the use of “Mattavarinis” was confined to the characters waiting there for their immediate entry. But her attempt to recreate the “Sanskrit Natya Style” was, however, genuine.
- ⇒ Shanta Gandhi also produced “**Urubhangam**” both in Sanskrit and Hindi in 1979 at Ujjain with an elaborate ‘Purvaranga’ with “Rhythm – controlled Movement and Recitation of Shlokas”.
- ⇒ Another notable attempt in recreating the “Natya Tradition” at Ujjain was the production of “**Mudraraksas**” of Vishakhadatt and “**Abhijnana Shakuntala**” of Kalidasa, both in Marathi traditions by Vijaya Mehta. The various areas of the “Natyamandapa” were broadly created by the designer, Godse. Here the “Mattavarini” on the left is treated like a corridor. Both the “Mattavarinis” raised on the levels, presumably for aid in compositions.
- ⇒ “**Shakuntala**” - Directed by Vijaya Mehta and Fritz Bennewitz played in German Democratic Republic. Here is seen the “Natyamandapa” of Bharata in a solid structure with the essential areas clearly defined but not tied together. *(Illustration: 9)*
- ⇒ Vijaya Mehta’s production of “**Abhijnana Shakuntala**” in Marathi in the mixed style of ‘Bharati and Kaishiki Vrittis’ and produced in Bharata’s “Natyamandapa” seemed to be

more significant for the purpose of recreating the “Natya Style”. Here the competent actors were at home with their thinly ‘Stylized Speech’ which was interspersed with ‘Stylized Hand-Gestures and simple Dance Movements in Kathak Style’. The verses of the text were recited by the actors or sung from the background from a tape. The raised and rectangular “Mattavarinis” were treated like corridors by the actors while making use of it for exits now and then. The Ashrama characters’ costumes were ‘Kashaya – Colour worn by Ascetics’ throughout in tune with the Ashrama environment. (*Illustration: 10*)

⇒ Vijaya Mehta’s production of “**Mudrarakshas**” was based on the ‘Bharti Vritti - Predominating in Speech’. There were also moments which gave an impression of the realistic theatre but barring some such elements the overall production was impressive.

(*Illustration: 11*)

⇒ In the hands of above directors and good actors, though not trained in the elements of “Tauryatrikam: Dance - Nritya, Song – Geeta and Instrumental Music – Vadya” essential for the correct “Production Style of the Sanskrit Plays” based on “Natyashastra”, feel of it was certainly created by both Shanta Gandhi and Vijaya Mehta in their respective productions.

⇒ On 9th Dec. 1989 the West Zone Cultural Centre sponsored the Sanskrit play “**Dootvakyam**” of Bhasa through the Sanskrit Seva Samiti which was directed by Goverdhan Panchal. His attempt was to produce the play in the “Natya Tradition of Bharata” using music, dance, stylized “Angika”, “Stylized Hand-Gestures in Bharata Natyam Style” and other “Stage Conventions of the Sanskrit Dramatic Traditions” such as the entry behind the “Chitra Yavanika”. The picture depicts Duryodhana’s entry behind “Chitra Yavanika”. Here the nature of Duryodhana is symbolized by the use of suitable motif painted on the “Chitra Yavanika”. It was staged in the linear “Natyamandapa” environment with all its essential elements and was designed by the director himself. In this production, the Scenes such as the ‘Chitrapata’ in which Duryodhana tries to divert his attention from being impressed by Vasudev’s entry was made live for creating a visual effect and another scene in which Vasudeva calls his weapons was also made live by each personified weapon entering dancing befitting the

character. The convention of “Akashbhashit” was used for speaking of the non-present characters. (*Illustration: 12 and 13*)

- ⇒ Kamlesh Datta Tripathi staged the IV Act of “**Vikramorvashiyam**” in “Natya Style”, with music sensitively created by Premalata. The Director for the first time tried to investigate the possibility of staging the Act on a “Tryasara – Triangular Stage” of Bharata using some visual realistic elements like trees to create the atmosphere of the forest in which Urvashi was lost, instead of using models as suggested by Bharata.
- ⇒ Premlata Sharma and K.D. Tripathi had directed “**Uttarramcharitam**” for the Abhinava Bharti of Varanasi. The “Natyamandapa” was designed by Vasudeva Smart having a painted canopy over it with musicians at the back in the ‘Kutapa’ position. (*Illustration: 14*)
- ⇒ Srinivasa Rath and Sanjeev Dixit directed “**Urubhangam**” for Kalidas Academy, Ujjain in which an attempt was made to recreate the ‘Purvaranga of Bharata’ in a fine authentic manner. The picture shows the ‘Kutapa, Vedika and Jarjardhwaja’ on the right and Duryodhana with his son. (*Illustration: 15*)
- ⇒ The Sanskrita Rangam of Madras on the occasion of the 81st Birthday celebration of late Dr. V. Raghavan, staged “**Swapnavasavadattam**” in Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan’s Theatre directed by S.S. Janaki. It was staged in a linear “Natyamandapa” designed by Goverdhan Panchal with the various acting areas broadly defined by the bare structure which marked a departure from their style of production earlier. The various “Kakshyas” of the stage were very well utilized as the action flowed from one “Kakshya” to another smoothly and effortlessly. (*Illustration: 16*)
- ⇒ With the establishment of the Kalidas Academy in 1977-78 and taking over of the ‘Kalidas Samaroh’ by it has been a catalyst for Sanskrit Plays, bringing radical change in the production of the Sanskrit plays being staged in ‘Sanskrit, Hindi and Regional Languages’.
- Hence we could see impact of Laws and Practices of Natyashastra on presentation of Sanskrit plays approximately till 70s.

❖ **MODERN ATTEMPTS:**

- Eclecticism in productions of the Sanskrit dramas. In the 70s...

“THEATRE OF ROOTS:

THE MOVEMENT OF ENCOUNTER WITH TRADITION”

...was strongly felt, in which ‘Playwrights and Directors’ turned to –

⊗ **INDIGENOUS SOURCES:**

⇒ TRADITIONAL THEATRE

⇒ RELIGIOUS RITUAL

⇒ CLASSICAL DANCE

⇒ MARTIAL ART

⇒ SANSKRIT / NATYASHASTRA AESTHETIC THEORY. This impulse became –

“OUR OWN PLAYS ABOUT OUR OWN PROBLEMS IN OUR OWN FORMS.”

- Different directors, in this respect, according to their own interpretations, directed Sanskrit Plays on the basis of “Laws and Practices of Natyashastra” along with added their own “Regional Traditional Forms” which are laid down on / based on ‘Natyashastra’ to create their own unique style.
- The various experiments of the ‘Modern Era’ are mostly in the direction of finding contemporary idioms of staging the Sanskrit Plays for modern audiences and are not concerned with rediscovering the staging style or styles based on the ‘Natyashastra’. These are individual approaches to the Sanskrit Play with a stamp of individuality. This aspect gets emphasized as all of them draw more or less from their “Regional Traditional Forms”. These staging experiments of the Classical Sanskrit Plays for the modern audiences are aimed at giving varied theatre experiences for investigating new forms and new style of production, giving new interpretation to bring them to suit the modern times, thus, giving them a contemporary dimension.

- Various modern attempts at staging the Sanskrit plays for contemporary audiences in different styles can be classified in the following broad categories.

⊗ **PRODUCTIONS REFLECTING “TRIBAL DANCE OR DANCE – DRAMA FORMS”:**

⇒ Habib Tanvir was among the first to create an awareness of the ‘Traditional Theatre’ among the urbans. His dedicated work on the ‘Chhatisgarhi Tribal Theatric Form – Nacha’ culminated in the “**Mrichhakatikam**” directed by him and presented at the Kalidasa Samaroha. It was a genuine, sincere attempt to investigate and apply the tribal ethos in all its aspects. It looked as if the tribals had suddenly discovered the play “**Mitti Ki Gadi – Mrichhakatikam**” handed down by one of their own man in their own dialect. It was an experience to see these tribals handling a classical play in their own dialect, in their own gestures, movements, songs and dances in the costumes and ornaments of their daily wear and performed on an open stage without scenery.

(Illustration: 17)

⇒ Habib Tanvir had also adapted Vishakhadatta’s “**Mudrarakshas**” in Chhattigarhi and presented in ‘Nacha Form’, in 1977. *(Illustration: 18)*

⇒ In 1977-78 Habib Tanvir presented three plays of Bhasa viz. “**Panchratram, Dootavakyam and Urubhangam**” as a single play under the title “**Duryodhana**”. All the three plays were linked and connected through “Pandavani - The Tribal Narrative Form” of Chhattigarh and the plays were adapted in Chhattisgarhi language.

⇒ Habib Tanvir directed Bhatta Narayana’s “**Veni Samharm**” in Chhattisgarhi language again employing “Pandavani - The Tribal Narrative Form” of Chhattigarh.

⇒ Habib Tanvir’s Chhattisgarhi adaptation of Bhavabhuti’s “**Uttara Ramacharitam**” at Kalidasa Samaroha, Ujjain in 1979; attracted criticism by Sanskrit Scholars as they could not digest the fact that the Sanskrit Classics can be performed in the tribal idiom.

⇒ Habib Tanvir presented “**Bhagvad Ajjukiyam**” in Chhattisgarhi for which he himself had written the songs.

⊗ **PRODUCTIONS BASED ON POPULAR “REGIONAL TRADITIONAL THEATRE FORMS”:**

- ⇒ Kailash Pandya and Damini Mehta produced “**Bhagvad Ajjukiyam**” based on “Bhavai - The Popular Traditional Theatre Form of Gujarat” for Darpana Academy of Ahmedabad which was staged during the Oriental Conference in 1985.
- ⇒ Nautanki Kala Kendra, Lucknow, produced “**Shakuntalam**” in authentic “Nautanki” as a musical. (*Illustration: 19*)
- ⇒ “**Loka Shakuntala**” in “Yakshagana” style with stylized Hindi speech was directed by K.V. Subanna for the students of National School of Drama, New Delhi on an open stage in 1982. All the elements of the production – music, dance, costumes etc. were authentically used. (*Illustration: 20*)
- ⇒ Staging of “**Hasyachudamani**” by Vatsaraja directed by Omprakash Sharma in Mach style took place during Kalidasa Samaroh in 1986.
- ⇒ An experiment to stage Bhasas’s “**Swapnavasavdattam**” (1981) in the Mach style of Madhya Pradesh at the Kalidasa Samaroha, Ujjain, directed by Srinivas Rath and Sanjeev Dixit had the feel of authenticity of the regional popular dramatic form.

⊗ **PRODUCTION STYLE BASED ON PURE “CLASSICAL / TRADITIONAL DANCE OR DANCE – DRAMA”:**

- ⇒ Ratan Thiyam’s “**Act IV of Vikramovarshiyam**”, “**Karnabharam**” and “**Urubhangam**” all in Meitei translations was cast in the ‘Manipuri Dance’ in its pure authentic form.
- ⇒ Ratan Thiyam’s “**Act IV of Vikramovarshiyam**” was lyrical and poetic, the swimming swans, the flight of the birds, the elephant were all tellingly portrayed using Manipuri Dance’s lyrical quality, authentic Manipuri costumes, music and enchanting ‘Lasya Dance’. (*Illustration: 21*)

- ⇒ Ratan Thiyam's "**Urubhangam**" had the quality of vigour as it was based on "Pungcholan - The Tandava variety of Manipuri Dance", suitable for an antiwar play. His soldiers in Vishkambhaka reflected the political scene of the country today.
- ⇒ Ratan Thiyam's **Karnabharam** was also based on the "Traditional Manipuri Forms". Here Karna on his way to the battlefield. The horses are suggested by 'Pung Players'.
(*Illustration: 22*)
- ⇒ "**Shakuntalam**" in Hindi Translation directed by Sanakhya Ebotombi for the Ranga Mandal of Bhopal staged during the Kalidasa Samaraha in 1988 was a step forward in the direction of finding an effective idiom to stage a Classical Sanskrit Play for modern audience using a traditional dance, music and costumes in their authentic form. He had converted the stage at Ujjain into a Manipuri Rasa Mandala as is done at the Temple of Govindji at Imphal during the 'Rasa Lila' festivals, thus, creating an environment for his Manipuri Shakuntala and breaking the monotony of the barren stage. (*Illustration: 23*)
- ⇒ Sankhya Ebotombi also directed Bhasa's "**Swapnavasavdattam**" in B.V. Karanth's Hindi Translation for second year students of National School of Drama employing some traditional performing art forms of Manipur like Pungcholan, Rasa Lila and Nat Sankirtan during 11-16 December, 1992. (*Illustration: 24*)

⊗ **PRODUCTIONS INSPIRED BY A SORT OF MIXED "CLASSICAL REGIONAL TRADITIONAL" AND "RITUAL" - FORMS:**

- ⇒ Examples of such productions are Bhasa's "**Madhyam Vyayogam**" (1980), "**Karnabharam**" (1987) "**Urubhangam**" (1988) Kalidasa's "**Shakuntala**", all directed by Kavalam Narayana Panikkar at the Kalidas Samaroh at Ujjain which was produced using elements from 'Kathakali, Kutiyattam and Theyyam Forms'.
- ⇒ In the play "**Madhyama Vyayogam**" staged by Panikkar in Sanskrit during Kalidas Samaraha, elements from Kathakali such as dance movements, postures and hand-gestures were effectively used. The speech pattern was borrowed from Kutiyattam. The only set elements are a bare long platform. Costumes reflect local milieu.

- ⇒ Panikkar's "**Karnabharam**" at the Bhasa Festival and "**Urubhangam**" at the Kalidas Festival at Ujjain were produced in the same style. From the descriptive passage in the texts, the director created visual images often with telling effect.
- ⇒ In "**Urubhanga**", Panikkar brought two fold aspect of Duryodhana, the mundane one is the mortal existence of Duryodhana struggling under the pangs of death. The other is his spirit which unveils a supernatural dimension and is projected in his "Theyyam".
- ⇒ "**Mattavilasam**" directed by Panikkar for NSD Repertory in 1984 and "**Swapna Katha**" directed for NSD Second Year Students in 1994. (*Illustration: 25 and 26*)
- ⇒ "**Karnabharam**" was presented by Lokdharmi, Kochi under the direction of Chandradasan at Bharat Rang Mahotasava – 2008 in Panikkar's style synthesizing "Classical Regional Forms like Kutiyattam, Kathakali, Kalarippayattu, Padayani, Sopana – Sanggetham" to form a 'Modern Theatrical Idiom'. (*Illustration: 27*)

⊗ **FREE STYLE OF TAKING ELEMENTS OF DIFFERENT FORMS:**

- ⇒ A sort of free style was attempted taking elements of different Traditional Theatre, Dance or Dance-Drama forms and sometimes including acrobatics and blending them in a stylized form.
- ⇒ The play "**Hasyachudamani**" directed by Bansi Kaul and staged at the Goa Kala Academy, Goa and "**Venisamharam**" also directed by him. (*Illustration: 28*)
- ⇒ Bhasa plays directed by M.K. Raina also fall in this category produced at Ujjain, Delhi etc. (*Illustration: 29*)
- ⇒ "**Malavikagnimitram**", "**Vikramorvashiyam**" and "**Mrichhakatikam**" directed by K. S. Rajendran for the students of NSD, New Delhi and "**Uttar Ramacharitam**" at Bhopal, during the workshop and presented at Kalidas Samaroh also. (*Illustration: 30 and 31*)
- ⇒ Major plays of Bhasa like "**Madhyama Vyayogam**", "**Avimaraka**", "**Pancharatram**" etc., Bhatta Narayan's "**Venisamharam**" directed by Bhumikeshwar Singh in "Chhau Style" at Delhi. (*Illustration: 32 and 33*)

⊗ **PERSPECTIVE DIRECTORS SEARCHING DISTINCTIVE STYLE OF PRODUCTION FOR SANSKRIT PLAYS:**

- ⇒ **“Mrichhakatikam”** – Directed by E. Alkazi for the National School of Drama, New Delhi, staged at Kalidas Samaroha, Ujjain.
- ⇒ **“Shakuntalam”** – Directed by Prabhat Kumar Bhattacharya for the Kalidas Academy, Ujjain, staged at the Kalidas Samaroha.
- ⇒ **“Urubhangam”** – Directed by Satyabrata Rout for the East 15 Acting School, U.K. (*Illustration: 34*)
- ⇒ **“Mudrarakshasa”, “Vikramorvashiyam”, “Avimaraka”** and mixed version of **“Bhagvad Ajjukiyam and Mattavilasam”** - Directed by B.V. Karanth for the National School of Drama, New Delhi and some staged at the Kalidas Academy, Ujjain. (*Illustration: 35 and 36*)
- In this phase some of the directors who made intense and in depth efforts in this respect are Habib Tanveer, B. V. Karanth, K. N. Panikkar, Ratan Thiyam, Bansi Kaul, and M. K. Raina etc. They all experimented with different style or styles in Sanskrit theatre.

- But among all the directors, ‘Panikkar’ is the best example of ways in which the ‘Theatre of Roots’ especially “Presentation Method of Sanskrit Theatre” has redefined “Modern Indian Theatre”. He has drawn his sources from “Indigenous and Classical, Traditional, Folk, Ritual Traditions”. Panikkar developed very unique and authentic method for “Presentation of Sanskrit Plays in Modern / Contemporary Indian Theatre”; because he uses the ‘Performance Structure / Dramaturgical Structure’ of ‘Kutiyattam - Most Nearest Traditional Sanskrit Theatre Form of the Natyashastra’, the ‘Actor – Training Methods’ of ‘Kathakali’, the ‘Physical Training’ of ‘Kalarippayattu’ and ‘Aesthetic Theory’ from the ‘Natyashastra’ to ‘Redirect the Aesthetic Goal of Performance’, the ‘Director’s

Relationship to Text’, the ‘Actor’s Relationship to Character’ and the ‘Spectator’s Mode of Engagement’, to create a theatre that has the capacity to present many perspectives.

- One of the characteristic of the “Roots Movement” and especially “Presentation Method of Sanskrit Theatre” and particularly of the work of Panikkar of its exemplary and most renowned practitioner, on whose work I focus on in my ‘Thesis’, because it offers an opportunity to examine the most important and influential theatrical innovations of the “Theatre of Roots Movement”, especially “Sanskrit Theatre” is that ‘Director / Playwright’ complicate the linear narrative, allowing for a multiplicity of voices and multiple perspective.
- Means, if an analytical and performative analysis is to be done on Panikkar’s theatre, it’s detailed study can be done mainly on the basis of –

⇒ **NATYASHASTRA,**

⇒ **KERALA’S MAJOR PERFORMATIVE ART FORMS.**

- In which the most important study of comparative analysis between “Regional Traditional Sanskrit Theatre – Kutiyattam” and the “Laws and Practices of Natyashastra”, because ‘Natyashastra’ is “A Dramaturgy / An Anthology of Sanskrit Theatre”, which is totally ‘Theoretical Aspect’, while ‘Kutiyattam’ is “The Most Nearest Traditional Form of Natyashastra” and “Living Tradition of Sanskrit Theatre”, which is totally ‘Practical Aspect’. If we take a close look at the presentation, a detailed study of its comparison and contrast is essential.

❖ PART 2:

KAVALAM NARAYANA PANIKKAR

A MONOGRAPH OF THE ARTIST

→ ARTISTIC JOURNEY AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

- Kavalam Narayana Panikkar has carved out a niche for himself in the evolution of a “Regional Theatre Movement”, which is one of the major components constituting the “National Theatre in Modern India”. In a career spanning over four decades, Panikkar has given a new lease of life for the age-old “Sanskrit Theatre Tradition” on one hand and on the other, he identified the interrelations between the evolved art forms and folk arts, successfully creating a fusion that has enthralled the contemporary audience since then.

- Panikkar was born on the 28th April 1928 in the picturesque village of ‘Kavalam’, part of ‘Kuttanad’, once famed as the granary of Kerala. The rustic lifestyle of the agricultural community closely identified with Mother Nature, the scenic beauty of the area where the sacred ‘River Pampa’ ends its journey by merging into ‘Vembanad Lake’ all provided an ideal background for the young Panikkar to develop his inborn artistic talents and vision. He believes that the whole ambience of the area played a decisive role in developing his personality in the early stages of life.
- Panikkar was born into a matrilineal joint family where the system made the maternal uncle, the head of the family. This system gave him the first lessons of discipline in life. However, it was his father, ‘Late Godavarama’, who introduced him to the world of literature. In fact, Panikkar remembers that he was initiated to the fascinating world of great epics like “Ramayana and Mahabharata” by his father. Moreover, a system of intense and regular reading of the epics existed in the house where his mother, grandmother and women from neighborhood participated. This tradition inspired him to organize poetry reading sessions in public later in life, at a time when it was argued that poetry was for private reading and enjoyment.
- Panikkai, after his initial education in local schools in ‘Kavalam’ and in the nearby village ‘Pulinkunnu’, joined the famous CMS college in ‘Kottayam’, that had produced prominent personalities like KPS Menon and Sardar KM Panikkar, the latter being Shri Panikkar’s own uncle. He took his degree in Economics from S D College, ‘Alappuzha’ and later Bachelor of Law degree from Madras Law College.
- Taking inspiration from his surroundings and upbringing, Panikkar had started writing poetry from his schooldays. The poems, rich with rural idioms, were the reflections of a young poet’s mind on the archetypal imageries, myths and parables that had profound influence on him.
- After obtaining his Law degree, Panikkar started his career as a lawyer in ‘Alappuzha Bar’ and practiced for six years from 1955. However, he continued to pursue his artistic interests and a breakthrough came when he was nominated as ‘Secretary’ of “Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academi” in the year 1961 and shifted his base to ‘Thrissur’, the cultural capital of Kerala.

- The new responsibility gave him a chance to interact with artists from all over the state and get introduced to different art forms, both “Sanskritised and Folk” based. He remembers that the tenure helped him to expand his relations and facilitated the growth of the artist in him. Panikkar’s tenure in the Akademi also saw the institution getting more organized and systematic in its functioning. During the period, the Akademi organized many festivals, which gave Panikkar more insights into the rich cultural heritage of the state and its deep rooted and “Indigenous Traditional / Folk Traditions”. He started his research in the “Traditional, Folk and Classical Arts” of Kerala, which ultimately saw him entering the theatre, inspired by “Traditional, Folk and Classical Traditions”.
- Panikkar admits that his first few experiments, to write plays in tune with the established and popular realistic theatre traditions, were not successful. But the journey in search of his real identity continued. A turning point in his theatre experiments, especially as a playwright came with the production of “Daivathar.” However, Panikkar did not direct the drama, but tried to actively collaborate with directors like Kumara Varma, interpreting his textual inputs to the director.
- In 1974, Panikkar shifted his residence to the state capital ‘Thiruvananthapuram’ and a highlight of the period was the staging of his play “Avanavan Katampa”, directed by the then established film director G. Aravindan. In contrast to Aravindan’s known style of functioning while donning the mantle of a film director, he interacted a lot with the playwright as well as the actors in the production of “Avanavan Katampa”. This resulted in what is termed as ensemble acting.
- The structure of this play and its presentation were truly path breaking. The theme demanded an open auditorium with trees in the background having hanging lamps. The concept of proscenium and picture frame stage with roll curtain divide was broken. The acting area started growing beyond its prescribed limits, creating a sense of involvement and participation among the audience.
- A major breakthrough in Panikkar’s career as a director came when he was offered a chance to produce and present a Sanskrit drama at the prestigious “Kalidas Samaroh” in Ujjain. He selected “Bhasa’s Madhyama Vyayogam”, which was his first directorial attempt.

- And on November 2, 1978, “Madhyama Vyayogam” was presented in ‘Ujjain’ and received with a standing ovation. The culturally sound audience could feel the strength of the Sanskrit presentation, the usage of body dynamics by the actors and their ability to combine the “Satvika and Vachika Abhinaya”. And above all, the directorial contribution of Panikkar. Since the first production of “Madhyama Vyayogam”, Panikkar has enjoyed a special bond with Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh, which has virtually become his ‘second home’. Most of the years, his Sanskrit plays are performed here and almost all the debut shows of Sanskrit dramas are organized in the Samaroh at Ujjain. The participation in the Samaroh also gave him and his team an opportunity to get exposed to a wider audience. The impression created in Ujjain had its effect in New Delhi also. Kamaladevi Chatopadhaya, the chairperson of the “National Sangeet Natak Akademi”, was instrumental in inviting Panikkar to New Delhi and the play presented in February 1979, went to have repeated shows.
- Panikkar also remembers a special occasion when he was requested by Adya Rangacharaya, director of “Kalidas Akademi”, to present Bhasa’s Sanskrit play “Doota Vakyam” using artists from Madhya Pradesh. It was a great experience for him as well as the artists on the practical implementation of the techniques of “Natyash

This gives a durable nature and makes them suitable for “Lok Dharmi and Natya Dharmi” treatment. Another salient feature of his plays is the absence of exhaustive use of language as a medium of communication. Instead, the “Bhava” or expression is utilized as a powerful vehicle to provide ample space for improvisation as well as interpretation. All the plays are part of the author’s experiments to develop’ the structural patterns and explore its possibilities in the Indian context. He still continues to do the same.

- Panikkar has successfully introduced indigenous music of the regional “Sopana Sangeetam” as an organic accompaniment to ‘Mohiniyattam’. Famous dancers like Dr. Kanak Rele from Mumbai and Bharati Shivaji from New Delhi have worked with him in this project.
- He has visited many countries, including the erstwhile Soviet Union. He considers his interaction with the Greek Theatre in producing “Iliyayana” a memorable experience worth mentioning. “Iliyayana”, which he produced along with Greek Theatre group Volos, was a combination of Ramayana and Greek epic Iliad. In the project that saw a wonderful fusion of two great ancient cultures of the world, he was supported by Greek director Shri. Spyros Wracorites, two specialists Dr Ayyappa Panikkar and Prof. Andriades, a Greek scholar.
- This Playwright - Director prefers to call his Kalari, “Sopanam “, consisting of 20 artists, as his ‘Theatre laboratory’. His wife Sharadamani has been a perennial source of strength and inspiration to him. His two Sons (Late) Harikrishnan and Shreekumar are also assisting him in his creative ventures, taking time off from their official responsibilities.
- He lives in Thrikkannapuram on the banks of Karamana River, away from dust and din of the state capital, yet near to the city. He has another house at his native village on the banks of River Pampa, an abode he considers as a great source o nostalgic inspiration.

→ **THEATRE ACTIVITIES TIME LINE:**

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>PLAY</u>
1964	Written a Play.	SAKSHI
1966	Directed for Kerala Kalamandalam.	THIRANOTTAM
1972	Written a Play.	JABALA SATYAKAMAN
1973	Written a Play.	DAIVATHAR
1974	Written a Play.	TIRUVAZITHAN
1975	Written a Play.	AVANAVAN KADAMBA
1976	Directed a Play in Malayalam.	BHAGAVADAJJUKAM
1977	Written a Play.	OTTAYAN
1978	Directed a Play in Sanskrit.	MADHYAMA VYAYOGA
1979	Written a Play.	PASHU GAYATRI
1979	Written and Directed a Play.	SOORYASTHANAM
1980	Directed for Bharat Bhavan in Sanskrit.	DOOTA VAKYAM
1982	Written a Play.	THIRUMUDI
1982	Directed in Sanskrit.	SHAKUNTALAM
1982	Directed in Sanskrit for the Seminar in the Kalidas Samaroh, Ujjain.	VIKRAMORVASHIYAM - 4 th ACT
1982	Directed for Nrithalaya Aesthetic Society, Singapore.	OTTAYAN
1982	Participated at the International Theatre Festival at Toga-Mura, Tokyo, Japan and conducted Theatre Workshop.	
1983	Conducted Theatre Workshop at Common Wealth Institute, London and Theatre Laboratory at Wales, U.K.	
1983	Conducted Kathakali and Theatre Workshop at the International Theatre Festival in Kolkata.	
1983	Written and Directed a Play.	KARIMKUTTY

1983	Directed in Hindi for Final Year Student, NSD.	URUBHANGAM
1984	Directed in Hindi for Final Year Student, NSD.	SOORYASTHANAM
1984	Directed in Sanskrit.	KARNABHARAM
1985	Directed in Hindi for NSD Repertory.	MATTAVILASAM
1985	Directed in Malayalam for School of Drama, Thrissur.	MATTAVILASAM
1985	Directed in Sanskrit for Uni. of Wisconsin, USA.	URUBHANGAM
1985	Directed in English for Uni. of Wisconsin, USA.	BHAGAVADAJJUKAM
1985	Presented in Sanskrit for Festival of India.	KARNABHARAM
1985	Presented in Sanskrit for Festival of India.	BHAGAVADAJJUKAM
1985	Participated in the International Theatre Festival at Delphi, Greece.	
1986	Participated in the Seminar on Indian Theatre at the Uni. of Warsaw, Poland.	
1986	Directed for Bharat Bhavan in Hindi.	AVANAVAN KADAMBA
1986	Written and Directed a Play.	KOYMA
1987	Directed in Sanskrit.	URUBHANGAM
1987	Written a Play.	MARRATTAM
1987	Presented in Sanskrit for Festival of India, USSR.	KARNABHARAM
1987	Presented in Sanskrit for Festival of India, USSR.	MADHYAMA VYAYOGA
1987	Directed in Hindi for Second Year Student, NSD.	RAJA
1987	Organized the International Theatre Festival on "BHASA".	
1988	Written a Play.	KINARVATTOM
1988	Written a Play.	KALANEETHEENI
1988	Presented in Sanskrit for Tokyo International Festival.	KARNABHARAM
1988	Presented in Sanskrit for Tokyo International Festival.	BHAGAVADAJJUKAM
1989	Visited Greece with Sopanam for an Indo – Greek	ILIYAYANA

	Project on the two epics Ramayana and Iliad.	
1989	Organized the International Theatre Festival on “BHASA”.	
1990	Written and Directed a Play.	ARANI
1990	Written a Play.	KAKKUTTAPPADU
1990	Written a Play.	AGNIVARNANTE KALUKAL
1991	Written and Directed a Play.	MARUKIDATHY
1991	Written and Directed a Play.	THEYYA THEYYAM
1991	Participated in Carnantum Festival in Austria.	
1992	Written a Play.	FAUST
1993	Written a Play.	CAVALRY
1993	Directed in Sanskrit.	SWAPNA VASAVADATTAM
1994	Directed in Malayalam.	BHISHMAR
1994	Directed in Hindi for Final Year Student, NSD.	SWAPNA KATHA
1994	Organized the International Theatre Festival on “BHASA”.	
1995	Written a Play.	KUNJICHIRAKUKAL
1995	Written and Directed a Play.	PORANADI
1995	Visited China as a Member of Indian Delegation.	
1995	Presented in Sanskrit for Kalidas Samaroh, Ujjain.	VIKRAMORVASHIYAM
1996	Presented in Sanskrit for Festival of India, Bangladesh.	MADHYAMA VYAYOGA
1996	Directed in Sanskrit.	DOOTA VAKYAM
1997	Participated and Presented in Malayalam for the ITI Festival in South Korea.	MAYA
1998	Written a Play.	APPRAKAN
1999	Directed in Sanskrit.	PRATIMA
2000	Translated and Directed in Malayalam.	TEMPEST
2000	Participated in the International Theatre Festival Lamama, Italy.	

2000	Organized the International Theatre Festival on “BHASA”.	
2001	Translated, Directed and Presented in Malayalam for the Alliance Francaise.	Sartre’s - TROJAN WOMEN
2001	Presented in Sanskrit for BRM, New Delhi.	KARNABHARAM
2001	Presented in Sanskrit for BRM, New Delhi.	TEMPEST
2001	Written and Directed a Play.	KALLURUTTY
2001	Presented in Sanskrit for Nandikar Festival Kolkata.	KARNABHARAM
2002	Written and Directed a Play.	KALANETHEENI
2002	Directed in Sanskrit.	CHARUDATTAM
2002	Presented in Sanskrit for BRM, New Delhi.	KALLURUTTY
2002	Presented in Sanskrit for BRM, New Delhi.	PRATIMA
2002	Directed for Nrithalaya Aesthetic Society, Singapore.	VIKRAMORVASHIYAM
2003	Written and Directed a Play.	



1. Kirloskar Natak Mandali's "Sangeet Shakuntala".



2. Prithvi Theatre's "Shakuntala".



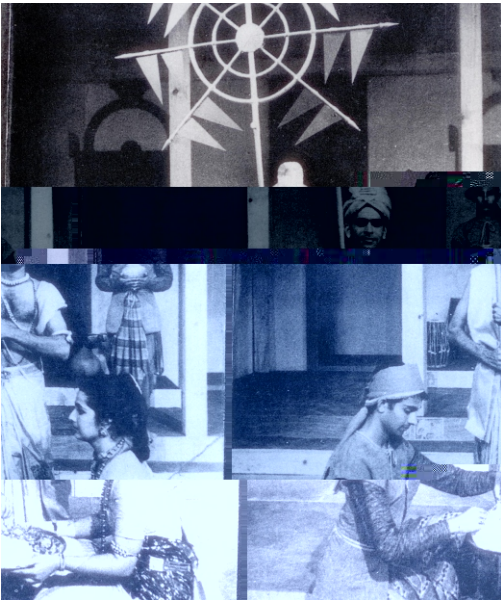
3. "Shakuntala" for 'The Brahmana Sabha' directed by Daji Bhatawadekar.



4. "Shakuntala" for 'The Sanskrit Rangam' directed by Dr. V Raghavan.



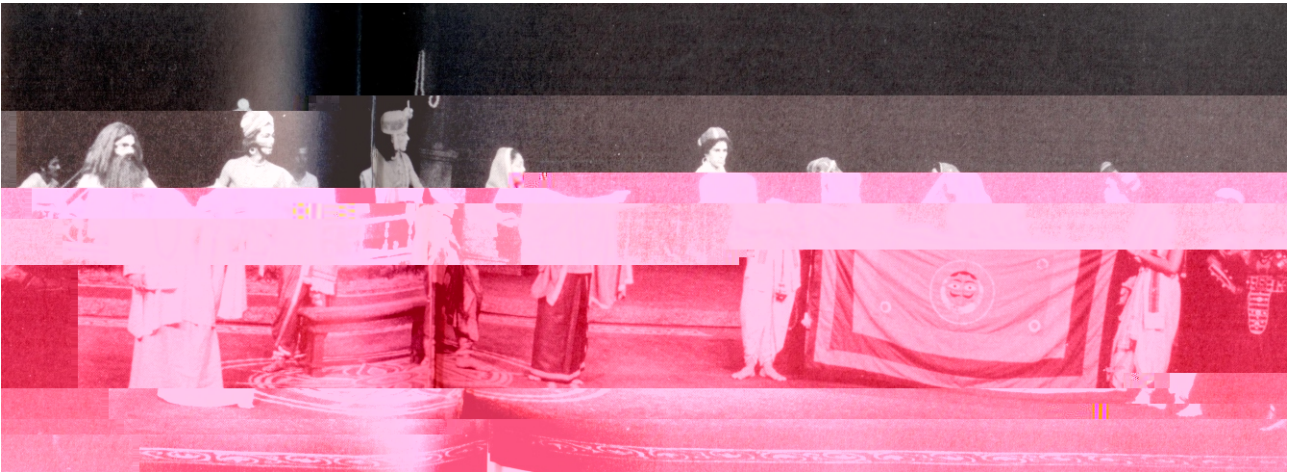
5. "The Priest and the Prostitute" directed by Dr. V Raghavan.



6. **“Madhyama Vyayoga”**
for NSD directed by Shanta Gandhi.



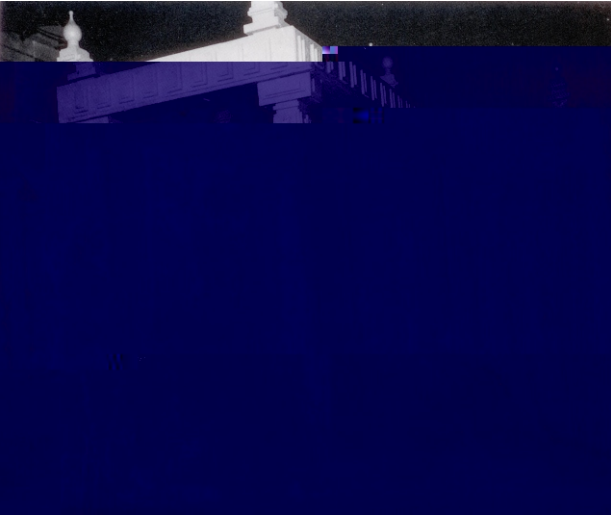
7. **“Swapnavasavadattam ”**
for University of Hawai directed by Shanta Gandhi.



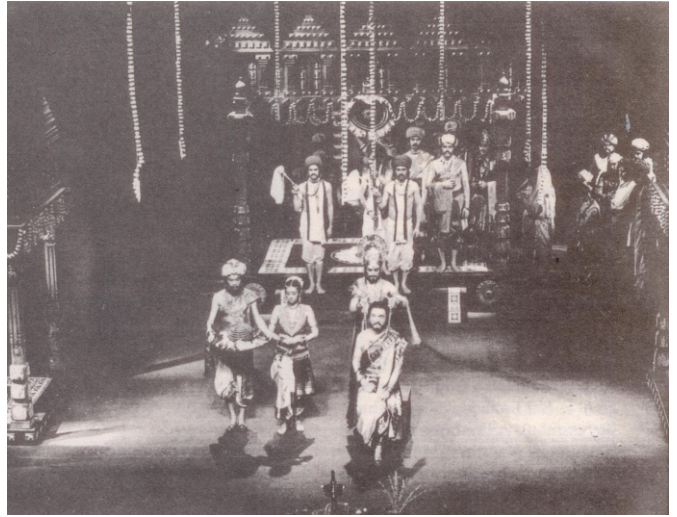
8. **“Swapnavasavadattam ”**
for University of Hawai directed by Shanta Gandhi.



9. Vijay Mehta's production of **“Abhijnana Shakuntala”**.



10. Vijay Mehta's production of
"Abhijnana Shakuntala".



11. Vijaya Mehta's production of
"Mudrarakshas".



12 & 13. "Dootvakyam" for 'Sanskrit Seva Samiti' directed by Goverdhan Panchal.



14. "Uttaramcharitam"
directed by Premlata Sharma & K.D. Tripathi.



15. "Urubhangam"
directed by Srinivasa Rath & Sanjeev Dixit.



16. “Swapnavasavadattam” for 'The Sanskrit Rangam' directed by S. S. Janaki.



17. “Mitti Ki Gadi – Mrichhakatikam”
directed by Habib Tanvir.



18. “Mudrarakshas”
directed by Habib Tanvir.



19. “Shakuntalam”
produced by Nautanki Kala Kendra, Lucknow.



20. “Loka Shakuntala”
directed by K.V. Subanna for NSD



21. **“Act IV of Vikramovarshiyam”**
directed by Ratan Thiyam.



22. **“Karnabharam”**
directed by Ratan Thiyam.



23. **“Shakuntalam”**
directed by Sanakhya Ebotombi.



24. **“Swapnavasavdattam”**
directed by Sanakhya Ebotombi for NSD.



25. **“Mattavilasam”**
directed by Panikkar for NSD Repertory.



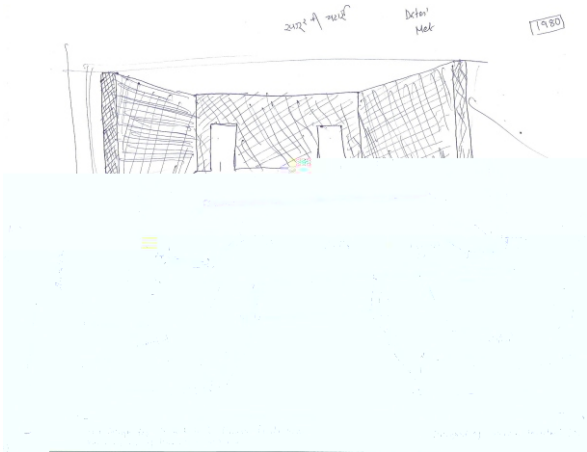
26. **“Swapna Katha”**
directed by Panikkar for NSD.



27. **“Karnabharam”** directed by Chandradasan.



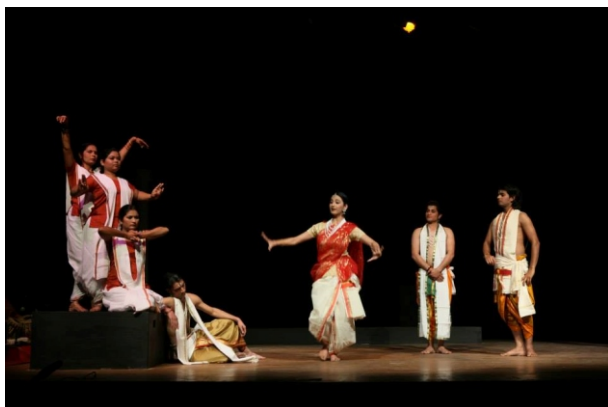
28. **“Venisamharam”**
directed by Bansi Kaul.



29. Set Design for Bhasa's Production,
designed by Suresh Bhardhwaj,
directed by M. K. Raina.



30. **“Malavikagnimitram”**
directed by K. S. Rajendran for NSD.



31. **“Uttar Ramacharitam”**
directed by K. S. Rajendran
during Bhopal Workshop.



32. **“Madhyama Vyayogam”**
directed by Bhumikeshwar Singh.



33. “Venisamharam”
directed by
Bhumikeshwar Singh.



34. “Urubhangam” directed by Satyabrat Rout.



35. “Mudrarakshasa”
directed by B.V. Karanth for NSD.



36. “Vikramorvashiyam”
directed by B.V. Karanth for NSD.