AESTHETICS AS RESISTANCE: RASA, DHVANI, AND EMPIRE IN TAMIL “PROTEST” THEATER

BY

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DISSEYATION

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Abstract

_Aesthetics as Resistance: Rasa, Dhvani, and Empire in Modern Tamil “Protest” Theater_

addresses questions concerning the role of aesthetics in the development, production, and impact of Tamil “Protest” Theater (1900-1930) on the success of the Indian anticolonial movement in the colonial Tamil state. In addition, I explore the possibility for a Modern Tamil aesthetic paradigm that arises from these syncretic plays, which borrow from both external and indigenous narrative and dramaturgical traditions. I begin with the following question, “Can aesthetic “relishing” (rasasvāda) be transformed into patriotic sentiment and fuel anticolonial resistance?” Utilizing Theodore Baskaran’s _The Message Bearers_, which examines the development and production of anticolonial media in the colonial Tamil state as point of departure, my research interrogates Tamil “popular” or “company” drama as a successful vehicle for evoking anticolonial sentiment. In this context, I posit the concept of “rasa-consciousness” as the audience’s metanarrative lens that transforms emotive cues and signposts in the dramatic work into sentiment through a process of aesthetic "remembering.” This lens is constituted through a complex interaction between culture, empire, and modernity that governs the spectator’s memorializing process. The culturally-determined aesthetic “lens” of Tamil spectator necessitates a culture-specific messaging system by anticolonial playwrights that links the dramatic outcome with feelings of nationalism and patriotism. More specifically, I argue that Tamil “Protest” plays, as generic wholes, become unifying symbols of “nation” by engaging with multiple anticolonial, political, and class and gender-based sociocultural struggles taking place in the community at large. Thus, they transform the rasika (culturally-informed aesthete) into a citizen of an imagined nation-community by utilizing these tensions as markers of unity and identity. I see the implications of my work as two-fold. First, instead of maintaining Baskaran’s unidirectional movement from “elite” to “popular” drama, my dissertation argues that in fact, these plays can be said to constitute a new Tamil aesthetic predicated on rasa-consciousness. Second, my work addresses the history, influences, production, and performance of these plays to elucidate why the success of the anticolonial popular drama in the Tamil colonial state occurs gradually and largely has been ignored in literary and colonial study to this point.
For Mom and Dad—
Your love and unwavering support made this possible.

and

For Rajeshwari Vijay Pandharipande—
My mentor, gurvī, and most ardent supporter who always believed in me.
Acknowledgements

This completed dissertation owes much to several people without whom I would not have been successful. Let me begin by thanking my parents, Kalyana and Sumathy Sundaram who provided love, support, and maintained their belief in me, when even my own faltered. Also, much is owed to my two sisters, Maaya Sundaram and Rumya Sundaram who cheered me up, supported me without restriction, and pushed me forward, even when I did not want to be pushed. And, I want to thank David Scroggins, my incredibly supportive partner, who never tired of listening to me, edited for me, and believed in me, even when it was difficult. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my beloved dog Misha and remarkable cat Mira, both of whom have passed on during this process, for being my loyal companions, my best friends, and the ultimate listeners.

I was incredibly fortunate and blessed to have wonderfully supportive and insightful members on my dissertation committee who consistently encouraged my best work and supported me as my thesis developed into its own direction. I owe my training in Sanskrit and the original idea and shape for my thesis to my thesis adviser and mentor, Rajeshwari Vijay Pandharipande who provided constant affection, guidance, and assistance. Michael Palencia-Roth, my committee chair, helped me find the rigor and discipline required to finish a dissertation while urging me forward when everything seemed overwhelming. I would also like to thank Indira Viswanathan Peterson who really made this project possible through invaluable advice, critique, and suggestions. In particular, the specific comments throughout my dissertation draft were a much-needed resource in honing my final product. And, I owe much to Jim Hansen whose flexibility and openness to the various “incarnations” of my “Irish chapter” and vast expertise on Irish drama helped me see new possibilities and connections that were vital in strengthening my argument.

Several friends, relatives, and various acquaintances have played important roles in helping me get here, by procuring me difficult-to-acquire texts in Tamil, getting me access to various libraries in Tamil Nadu, providing moral support when I was discouraged, providing Tamil translation assistance, etc. First, let me thank my grandparents, Shakuntala and V.T. Rajan who were so proud to learn that I wanted to write about Tamil playwrights despite having grown up in the United States. Also, a special thank you to Shanti Mohan who provided invaluable
insight into modern Tamil politics and information on the Chennai Sangamam situation and Brindha Jayakanth who was able to jumpstart my research process by getting me access to the American consulate library. In addition, Bhuvana Natarajan’s translations of Tamil plays were incredibly helpful. The additional last-minute translation and language assistance provided by Meena and Ganesh Vaidyanathan proved invaluable and was buoyed by their ardent love and support. Thank you to Dr. Theodore Baskaran for advice and insights that provided vital leads and avenues for research for my project. The library staff at the Roja Muthiah, Konnemara libraries in Chennai, India as well as the University of Illinois Library here deserves commendation and my gratitude for procuring rare, out-of-print Tamil plays, without which this project would not have been possible. A special thank you goes out to Mr. Meenakshisundaram, the digital librarian for the Konnemara Library in Chennai, for his extensive time and effort procuring information, texts, and providing contacts for my research.

Finally, I want to mention my wonderfully patient friends who played a vital role in helping me complete this project. I would like to thank Andy Heidkamp for his constant pick-me-ups, Spencer Savoie for his terrible jokes he used to keep me smiling, Mike Donnelly for listening to me complain about anything and everything, Chitra Kumar for the late-night phone conversations filled with laughter and happy childhood memories, and Annette Schimizzi and Andrea Alexander for providing stress relief by letting me come over and drink beer and watch whatever sporting event was in season. And, finally, to my dearest friend Tatiana Kuzmic for her advice, comic relief, stern lectures, and never-ending love and support throughout this process, I am profoundly grateful and indebted. I am certain there are many others who have helped me in completing this milestone not mentioned here to whom I also offer my heartfelt gratitude. Without all of you, this would not have been possible. Though it was a long and arduous journey, the contribution of so many friends, family, and colleagues makes me appreciate this accomplishment as a reflection of my hard work and determination as well as their love, belief, and support.
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Note on Methodology and Sources

While both Tamil and Sanskrit have a detailed and storied history that has been well-documented by scholars, the difficulty of locating manuscripts of plays posed a huge hurdle for my investigation. In particular, it was difficult to find either biographical information or the actual play manuscripts for many of these playwrights with the exception of Sankaradas Swamigal and Pammal Sambandham Mudaliyar, both of whom have been widely recognized for their contributions to the development of Tamil Drama. Given these difficulties, my analysis will focus on the plays that I have been able to procure and employ a close reading of these texts in support of my argument. In addition to a dearth of primary sources, the secondary sources on this period (early twentieth century Tamil drama) are also sparse with the British and American Consulate libraries, the Hindu newspaper archives, and the Connemara Research Library in Chennai, India providing the bulk of the biographical and historical information for this project. While access to the Government of India archives and more extensively to archived editions of “The Hindu” would no doubt have answered more substantively several instances of speculation in my investigation regarding the nature of influence from English and Irish sources on Tamil “Protest” Theater, I have addressed these issues by offering a two pronged approach which connects the stagecraft of these plays with English melodrama and the political theme and substance with the Irish Nationalist movement which enters the Tamil milieu via the media and certain important figures like Annie Besant. Overall, I have employed a text-based approach that follows a historical and thematic trajectory beginning by detailing the Sanskrit aesthetic process and culminating in how the concept of rasa-consciousness transforms popular drama into a vehicle of resistance.
Note on Translation

Throughout the course of this project I have been indebted to the insights and abilities of Sanskrit and Tamil scholars whose translations have proved invaluable. While in most cases, I have endeavored to provide my own translations for passages from both theoretical and literary works in Tamil and Sanskrit, in some places it has been necessary to rely on and/or consult the translations of others (as cited in the text). In particular, I am indebted to the work of Daniel Ingalls, Barbara Stoler Miller, S.K. De, M.R. Kale, and C.R. Devadhar in producing my Sanskrit translations. To ensure the accuracy of the Tamil translations produced here, I have sought the expertise of Theodore Baskaran, Bhuvana Natarajan, Ganesh and Meena Vaidyanathan, and Sujata Kannagi. In addition, translations in the work of David Shulman, A.N. Perumal, Kamil Zvelebil, Stuart Blackburn, among others have been consulted and/or cited in some places. Translations have been produced by the author unless cited otherwise.

Finally much thanks goes to my mentor and adviser Rajeshwari Pandharipande as well as my Tamil committee member Dr. Indira Peterson for advice and assistance with my translations. Both were painstaking in reviewing my work in their respective areas of expertise, correcting errors, and suggesting revisions.
Note on Transliteration

For terms used from Sanskrit and Tamil I have adhered to the accepted transliterations tables (provided below). In terms of proper names from literary works in Sanskrit and Tamil I have also included the appropriate diacritics. For historical figures, I have not used diacritics for those from the nineteenth and twentieth century. However, I have used them for the Sanskrit and Tamil figures from earlier periods where the custom of using diacritics in names is more common.

**Sanskrit**

For Sanskrit I have used the standard transliteration table used by most scholars in the field. I have given a table of the Devanāgarī letters and diacritics below:

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Introduction

I. Foundations

The rise of anticolonial sentiment in nineteenth and twentieth century India was largely augmented and, in turn, propagated by resistant strains of “popular” drama. The popular drama medium, unlike print media, permitted anti-British messages to be transmitted orally and to a vast and diverse audience. In general, performance in the Indian context fulfills multiple cultural, social, and political functions at the same time. Indeed, as Ralph Yarrow states in Indian Theatre in the Indian context, “performance is understood as an individual and communal act which aims at the transcendence of everyday limits of consciousness by the precise cultivation of holistic functioning of multi-channeled awareness” (11). This particular feature of Indian theater becomes even more important during the anticolonial period. Particularly in Southern India, where the prominence of “popular” or “company” drama occurs more gradually, performance becomes an act of cultural as well as communal identification. Thus, as such, it would become a driving force behind the anticolonial movement during the twentieth century.

The later dramatic innovations in aesthetic style, stagecraft, and subject matter that Tamil “Protest” dramatists employ, result from the syncretic aesthetic foundation provided by nineteenth century playwrights such as P. Sundaram Pillai and Suryanarayana Sastri. Both were educated in English and Sanskrit literature, but were invested in producing work in Tamil to be read by a Tamil audience. Thus, English aesthetic influences most notably enter the sphere of

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1 The categories of “folk,” “classical,” “elite,” and “popular” have been used in various ways to categorize and delineate various genres of performance in India. For this investigation, I am focused on the “popular” genre of theater by which I am referring specifically to the dance, drama, and song that finds expression in the traveling drama troupes at the close of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth as well as literary publications and songs meant for mass consumption such as drama and film songs and the burgeoning chap book and novel industry. While slippage between these terms is a constant hazard, my intent is to employ the “popular” to specifically discuss the modalities of artistic production I have listed here.

2 Vasudha Dalmia’s, Poetics, Plays, and Performances (2006), Theodore Baskaran’s, The Message Bearers (1981), and Rakesh Solomon’s piece on culture, convention, anticolonial sentiment in Marathi drama (1994) each discuss the role of company-based drama productions in shaping the cultural, social, and political discourse in colonial India. Also, Aparna Dharwadkar’s in-depth study of postcolonial drama and performance, Theaters of Independence: Drama, Theory, and Urban Performance (2005) along with these other works offers a critical point of departure when situating the Tamil “Protest” playwrights into an appropriate historical, aesthetic, and political context. These works each document popular performance traditions that play a vital part in the resistance effort against colonial rule as well as in the postcolonially in advocating for economic and socio-political reforms. A.N. Perumal’s work on the history of the Tamil dramatic tradition (1981) as well Kamil Zvelebil’s The Smile of Murugan (1973) on the Tamil literary tradition are important historical resources for recognizing how the “Protest” playwrights reflect a modern Tamil aesthetic that stems from a complex performative history.
Tamil theater in nineteenth century in plays such as Sundarampillai’s *Manomaniyam* which is an adaptation of a novel by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, a Victorian English playwright and writer. *Manomaniyam* reads as an epic poetic treatise rather than a drama. Additionally, though written in accord with Sanskrit aesthetics, it shows evidence of English literary and dramaturgical stylistic influences. Similarly, Suryanarayana Sastri, in his play *Rūpāvatī*, incorporates a Sanskrit dramatic style with formal Tamil language and stock characters in the style of Victorian melodrama. Though it is unlikely that either of these plays was performed on account of length, style, and the difficulty for the audience to follow the language, both Sundarampillai and Sastri can be seen as forefathers to P. Sambandham Mudaliyar, widely thought of as the father of Modern Tamil drama as well as the Tamil “Protest” playwrights. In essence, they foreshadow the unique position held by Tamil Protest playwrights. These pioneering dramatists fabricate a national “Indian” identity that subverts the colonial enterprise using both Western and indigenous dramatic aesthetic tools while simultaneously affirming a “Tamil” consciousness that develops contentiously as an alternative to the Sanskrit tradition perceived as heavily Brahmanical.

Pammal Sambandham Mudaliyar continues the syncretic aesthetic paradigm engendered by Suryanarayana Sastri and P. Sundarampillai. Mudaliyar’s most valuable legacies remain his work to restore and legitimize the Tamil dramatic tradition and his push to make drama a valued tool of social education and advancement. Mudaliyar sees this syncretic approach as vital to creating good work in one’s “mother-tongue” evidenced by his advice to aspiring playwrights: “Study the masterpieces of Shakespeare in English and Kalidasa in Sanskrit, and try to understand them, then only will you understand their greatness, and above all, you will get the best training for writing dramas in your mother- tongue” (*Not in the Reviews*, 34). Mudaliyar particularly focuses on closing the gap between the so-called legitimate drama and “popular” drama. One of the subsequent effects of Mudaliyar’s founding of the Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā (a literary salon) and his own theater company is the growing popularity of what is termed “company drama” or the “popular” drama most prevalent in Chennai at the time. It refers to the practice of touring drama troupes that traveled around the state putting on commissioned performances. Before the prolific success of Mudaliyar’s plays and popular theater company,

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3 The Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā is a literary salon established by Pammal Sambandham Mudaliyar to promote, patronize, and reinvigorate the Tamil dramatic tradition.
theater troupes are portrayed as low-class hooligans by much of the public. Initially, he combats this with a simple name change from “kūṭṭāṭikal” (hooligans) to “kalaikal” (actors) (Baskaran). Along with these changes to the perception of acting as a profession, he enacts several substantive changes in performance length, acting techniques, stagecraft, and dialogue to restore what he saw as a “lost dignity” to the theater. He produces a modern Tamil theater that catered to the growing middle class public in Madras city; the capital of the colonially administrated Madras Presidency; the colonial administrated Tamil state that included large Telegu-speaking regions at this time (Peterson and Soneji, 2008). Furthermore, the loss of royal patronage for many court performers such devadāsīs (court performers) and naṭṭuvārās (dance instructors) during the late nineteenth century creates a mass migration of artists seeking employment into the urban center of Madras and brings Sanskrit aesthetics into the popular performance milieu. Innovations and adaptations of Tamil popular dramatic conventions to accommodate an influx of aesthetic influences undergirds the development of a multifaceted and in some cases, syncretic modern Tamil drama as well as the fledgling film industry of the early twentieth century in India. In this context, Mudaliyar’s commitment to producing dramas for Tamil audiences, which incorporate his interests in English and Sanskrit aesthetic traditions, make him the pivotal figure for the later anticolonial dramatists whose careers are launched at the Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā. Few scholars document the critical role that Tamil “Protest” Theater plays in the growth and spread of anticolonial sympathies and agitations in the twentieth century in the colonial Tamil state. T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar, Swaminatha Sarma, and Sankaradas Swamigal, once members of the Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā, are the primary representatives of Tamil “Protest” theater. This somewhat unrecognized group of playwrights flourished 1900-1935 with the widespread popularity of plays such as Pavalar’s Kaṭṭar Pakti (Victory of Khaddar) (1926), Sarma’s

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4 Performers and performing near the close of the nineteenth century are seen through the lens of the wandering or itinerant theater companies that mainly staged popular songs in the context of well-known narratives. These dramatic productions do not employ literary Tamil or implement any particular style of drama, but rather cater to whims of mass culture and entertainment. During this time, actors are often discriminated against and treated as trouble-makers and the “dregs of society” as Suryanarayana Sastri scornfully proclaims in the introduction to Rūpāvati.

5 The transition from drama to film is an important one as many theatrical conventions are adapted from the stage for the screen (Baskaran). Early films emulate both dramatic themes as well as popular drama’s use of music and dance in an effort to keep viewers and interest them in the genre. In addition, as film becomes more popular it takes over the role of political messaging, even in the rural areas in which, previously, popular drama had been the main source of information.
Theodore Baskaran’s *The Message Bearers*, which traces the historical progression of the Tamil anticolonial movement through various mass media such as theater and film, offers the most complete and thorough analysis of this movement and these playwrights. Baskaran’s discussion of theater focuses largely on the impact of what he argues is a unidirectional shift from legitimate to popular theater in the anticolonial movement from around 1898 to 1930 before the advent of film. However, he does not address specifically the indigenous and non-indigenous influences that have impacted these playwrights.

My work examines the following questions in thinking about the relationship between the aesthetics of these plays and the development of an organic anticolonial movement in the Madras Presidency. Why are Tamil “Protest” plays so successful in evoking anticolonial sentiment and disseminating anticolonial messages? What role does the relationship between the audience and drama play in their success? How do indigenous (e.g. Sanskrit Aesthetics) and non-indigenous (e.g. English Melodrama) aesthetic principles affect the composition, thematization, and performance of these plays? And finally, can these plays be seen as examples of a distinct and unique Modern Tamil dramatic aesthetic paradigm? My dissertation addresses these questions by positing Tamil “Protest Theater” as a new aesthetic medium, which mixes indigenous and non-indigenous thematic and poetic conventions in order to manufacture nationalist sentiment within the audience.

II. Aesthetic “Incursions”: Sanskrit, English, and Irish “Borrowings”

How do these plays come to incorporate both indigenous and non-indigenous aesthetic conventions? The influence of “English” education, the influx of English translations of Sanskrit texts incorporated into a popular drama form derived from the Tamil dramatic tradition make Tamil “Protest” plays uniquely syncretic. In addition, Tamil literary and performance traditions also privilege the spectator’s experience of sentiment (Sanskrit: *rasa*; Tamil: *cuvai*) rooted in the ancient Tamil treatise on language, aesthetics, and grammar, the *Tolkāppiyam*. As a foundational text in Tamil poetics probably produced around the same time as the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (~200 BCE-200 CE), it shares two important aesthetic discussions with the *Nāṭyaśāstra*: “activation” of sentiment (*rasa*cuvai) through the performative experience and the dialectical relationship between performer and aesthete in ensuring dramatic success. In addition, Sanskrit and Tamil
have had several moments of “conversation” in the post-Caṅkam\textsuperscript{6} era (after 600 CE) including epic and \textit{puranic} literary crossover as seen in Kampan’s \textit{Rāmāyaṇa} in the twelfth century, the vibrant \textit{bhakti} poetic and performance tradition in sixth through twelfth centuries, polyglot dance-drama and music in Nāyaka and Marātha court performance traditions in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, and in a crucial moment of confluence between “elite” and “folk/ritual” art, in the nineteenth and twentieth century Tamil folk/ritual theater genre, \textit{terukkūttu}. Thus, in modern Tamil drama, \textit{rasa} enters from several indigenous avenues. These include: (1) the \textit{devadāsī}-s (court performers) who, having left the profession, sought employment with the newly minted traveling drama troupes, (2) the classical and “popular” musical traditions which, like the \textit{devadāsī} and temple theater tradition bridges the gap between “elite” and “popular” realms art\textsuperscript{7}, (3) \textit{bhakti} in ritual performance contexts as in \textit{terukkūttu}, and most unusually, (4) through the translation and dissemination of Sanskrit works (poetic, didactic, epic, religious/spiritual, etc.) into both Tamil and English. Therefore, these plays are not simply an amalgam of aesthetic conventions or cultural praxis. Rather, they are, in essence, “double conversations.” In other words, they manipulate and transform the overdetermined process that governs the evocation of \textit{rasa} to engender feelings of nationalism and help produce and affirm an anticolonial Indian identity that is further defined and honed within the Tamil context.

Cross-cultural connections between anticolonial uprising in Ireland, Scotland, and India, as reported through intra- and extra-national sources such as newspapers, literature, and various other means, further complicate the aesthetic fabric of Tamil “Protest” theater. Additionally, education in English-medium schools as well as the ready access to English and Irish literary works in colonial Tamil state during this time cement the syncretic nature of literary production in colonial India as well as in other British colonies such as Ireland and Scotland. This is the paradigm shift that Elleke Boehmer proposes in her book, \textit{Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction} (2002). She argues for consideration of the “extent to which the interactive conceptualization of the anti-colonial nation, or of cultural resistance, undercuts the notions both of top-down and of bottom-up discursive impacts that still

\textsuperscript{6} The Caṅkam period in Tamil literary history refers to a classical corpus of works produced in South India roughly over the course of third century BCE to fifth century CE.

\textsuperscript{7} The \textit{devadāsī}-s often left the confines of the court during festivals and performed in parades that moved through the streets of the village. In these cases, they often incorporated local dances such as the \textit{domba} (drum) dance. In this way they represent a conduit between folk and Sanskritic performance genres as well between upper and lower classes in society, having access, so to speak, to both “worlds” (Kersenboom, 1999).
organize definitions of the colonial relationship (5). Boehmer’s concept of resistance through interaction provides a useful analytical model to examine how these plays successfully break down traditional cultural tensions while negotiating competing attitudes/approaches towards Self-rule, in order to foster a sense of belonging to a unified whole (i.e. the nation). Therefore, the rasika, or discerning audience member, becomes the critical thread linking the traditional and “popular” realms of dramatic art in modern India. Thus, the success of early twentieth century Tamil anticolonial drama in activating an anti-British sentiment, results from the playwrights establishing an emotional link with the audience. The audience’s ability to connect emotionally as well as intellectually with the cultural, social, and political symbols allows these plays to skirt censorship while communicating effectively with the masses. In this way, these plays become vehicles of anticolonial communication comprised of a mixture of indigenous and non-indigenous aesthetic devices and convention often permitted the playwright to mask his intent to some degree while still creating an emotional conduit between the audience and the performance and fostering nationalist sentiment.

III. Aesthetic “Vehicles” of Resistance: Rasa and Dhvani

What is rasa? What is dhvani? These questions must be answered before proceeding further. Rasa or “sentiment” is the centripetal force within a literary work, which not only emotively binds the internal dramatic world but also serves as an aesthetic conduit to the audience. In terms of aesthetics, rasa describes the emotional response of the audience which is cultivated for the ultimate success of the play. The rasika is an aesthetically and culturally knowledgeable observer who is able to be appropriately stimulated by the dramatic cues and thereby experiences the primary emotional “flavor” of the drama. While rasa refers to the culmination of the poetic process, dhvani or “suggestion” refers to the process itself. It has three types according Ánandavardhana who is widely regarded as the originator of the theory of dhvani: vastu dhvani (suggestion of plot or facts); alaṅkāra dhvani (literary and figurative suggestion); and most importantly, rasadhvani (suggestion of sentiment). As Ánandavardhana argues, the function of “suggestion” undergirds all linguistic expression, but it is particularly crucial in kāvya as it is the mechanism by which all other poetic devices and tropes operate. Thus, the evocation of sentiment depends on a network of “suggestions” in the dramatic narrative which steer the audience towards a particular emotional interaction.
While the theories of *rasa* and *dhvani* developed in the midst of several critical debates which, in some cases, remain unresolved, what remains important for my investigation is the movement of *rasa* from a peripheral element of poetics only important in drama to the central facet of successful artistic production. The early aesthetic theorists such as Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin downplay the importance of *rasa* and do not acknowledge *dhvani* as an independent poetic power. Figures such as Udbhaṭa and Rudraṭa, having settled the notion that *kavya* (poetry) results from the *śabdārthau* (combination of word and meaning), consider and acknowledge (as Rudraṭa does directly) the role of *rasa* in all poetic expression, not just drama as outlined by Bharata. Ānandavardhana’s theory of *dhvani* revolutionizes Sanskrit poetics by offering one of the first comprehensive paradigm explaining the nature and construction of poetic expression. Abhinavagupta takes Ānandavardhana’s theory by not only affirming that evocation of *rasadhvani* is the highest success a poetic text could achieve, but also theorizing the *rasika*’s (spectator) vital role in the success of drama. Thus, they represent an important “turn” in the tradition that firmly entrenches the concepts of *rasa* and *dhvani* as the foundational elements of *kavya*. The aesthetic “revolution” that *dhvani* spawns includes several important detractors. The most significant of these are Kuṇṭaka and his theory of *vakrokṭī* (the power of words), which he argues is the true soul of *kāvyā*, Mahimabhaṭṭa who argues for *anumāna* or inference as the central aesthetic principle of poetry, and Bhaṭṭanāyaka who notes the importance of *dhvani*, but questions whether it can be considered the central mechanism of the poetic process.

Additionally, many Sanskrit literary theorists including and following Abhinavagupta have argued that since *rasa* represents a “state of enjoyment or ultimate bliss” the experience is similar to *mokṣa* or the release of the body from the material plane and the extinguishing of the self into the ultimate reality. The poetic process requires the *rasika* to connect the various emotional signposts in the dramatic narrative with personal emotional experience thereby creating an emotive link between the dramatic world and audience. Thus, the audience member is able to extinguish the individual experience of emotion into one which enjoins the audience to the successful outcome of the play and its protagonists. In essence, the *rasāsvāda* (experience of aesthetic bliss) as opposed to the process by which it is evoked or cultivated, becomes the focal point of the dramatic performance.⁸

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⁸ Abhinavagupta, Bhaṭṭanāyaka, and others have critically negotiated this comparison of religious “ecstasy” and aesthetic relishing. In particular, Abhinavagupta and Bhaṭṭanāyaka discuss at length the possible “identity” of the
Can the concept of *rasa* as “aesthetic memory” be used as a way to transform a mass medium such as popular theater in order to evoke a nationalist sentiment? More specifically, has the aesthetic signification process utilizing a system of culturally determined symbols in *kāvyā* been repurposed in modern Indian drama as a tool of resistance? All modern South Asian drama and poetry bear indirect or direct connection to the dramatic tenets laid out in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Attributed to a figure named Bharata, the Sanskrit text *Nāṭyaśāstra*, likely extant by 100 CE, is a comprehensive manual on dramatic production, creation, acting, performance, and goals. Although actual Sanskrit Drama as described by Bharata no longer can be found in modern dramatic performance (with the exception of the close relationship between Sanskrit Drama and *Kuttiyāṭṭam*), various rituals, the role of the audience, and use the epic and *purāṇic* narratives and characters continue to be a part of a pan-Indian performative milieu. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* describes the evocation of *rasa* as “arising (*nispattiḥ*) from the joining (*samyoga*) of various poetic elements (*vibhāva, vyābhicaribhāva, sañcaribhāva* and *anubhāva*) within the context of performance and aesthetic appreciation of the spectator.”

The playwright must adapt elements such as the *vibhāva*-s (determinants) or *anubhāva*-s (responses) to operate within the sociocultural context of the audience. Moreover, the successful evocation of *rasa* depends also on the cultural needs and emotional triggers of the audience. Sociocultural mores and conventions become foundational to the meaning and use of aesthetic symbols in Sanskrit Drama. In this context, Saskia Kersenboom has argued, both Sanskrit and Tamil aesthetic paradigms privilege an indelible link between word, text, and dramatic image that can only be fully activated in the context of performance (1995). Extending this relationship beyond the realm of Sanskrit poetics, this crucial connection between audience and performance as a culturally determined, pan-Indian feature of performance, provides the departure point for my analysis of Modern Tamil “Protest” drama.

To expand the concept of *rasa* beyond the definition given by Bharata is not a new strategy, as several have questioned not only what constitutes the state of *rasa* but also, the process for its evocation. Although Keith (1970) and others have suggested that early Sanskrit literature and prose did not contain a “political character” several scholars since have noted the valuable educational and political contributions in works by Viśakhadatta and Bhāsa. Indeed, as

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“relisher” if the self is extinguished at the moment of aesthetic relish. In addition, the question of whose “*rasa*” is being experienced in this moment also remains at issue.

9 vibhāvanubhāvavyābhicarisamyogātrasaniṣpattiḥ. (Rasasūtra in *Nāṭyaśāstra*)
Dileep Kanjilal argues in *Literature on Patriotism and Patriotic Feeling in Sanskrit*, Sanskrit literature has a documented tradition of literature that highlights the intimate relationship between the Indian people and geographical terrain in which they live. Furthermore, he demonstrates how this relationship becomes enhanced and strengthened through a shared cultural history that has been cultivated largely in the realm of literature. Citing passages in canonical Sanskrit literary works such as Kālidāsa’s epic poem *Raghuvaṃśa* as well as Vālmīki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*, which convey the theme of love of country or motherland, Kanjilal traces a politically-charged literary and linguistic history embedded within the Sanskrit tradition.

Rajeshwari Pandharipande’s critical analysis of Madhusudanasaravati’s work also underscores *rasa* as a fundamentally “open” system. In her manuscript, *Madhusudanasarvasvati ani Bhaktiras: A Critical Analysis of Madhusūdanasarasvati’s Bhagavadbhaktirasāyana* (unpublished dissertation) she extends Madhusūdhana’s argument (and Rūpagosvāmin) which includes *bhakti* (devotion) as an addition to the eight or nine sentiments traditionally recognized to suggest that particular group of people, who are fully focused on God have *bhagavadakaracittavṛtti* (god-consciousness) which *can* be treated as a *sthāyibhāva* (dominant emotion) culminating in an experience of *bhakti rasa* (the sentiment of devotion). Pandharipande states the number of *rasa*-s can expand the number of *sthāyibhāva*-s acknowledged by Bharata and other early *alaṅkārin*-s (aesthetic theoreticians), even if the experience of that new dominant emotion is restricted to a particular group of people. In other words, a particular group can be culturally conditioned to experience a particular sentiment.

While Pandharipande and Kanjilal both focus on modifying existing principles of Sanskrit aesthetic theory, Simona Sawhney attempts to remove the classical mooring from Sanskrit literature and theory and test its applicability within a modern context. In her recent book *The Modernity of Sanskrit*, Sawhney calls for an analysis of appearance and status of Sanskrit texts in modern India and their contributions to literary, political, and cultural modernity (16). Sawhney examines what she calls “modern texts that dramatize…their own act of intercepting Sanskrit texts as a politically resonant act” (16). What emerges is the argument for a modern literary, cultural, and critical application of Sanskrit texts and the rereading of native literary traditions through a Sanskrit aesthetic lens. While Sawhney’s work is a pioneering
analysis of the ways in which politics, culture, caste\textsuperscript{10}, religion, and nationalist ideologies have intersected with Sanskrit in modern Indian drama; she admits, it is limited necessarily by her own training in North Indian Hindi-language drama. In many ways, my dissertation seeks to expand Sawhney’s investigation to include an analysis of the modernity of Sanskrit aesthetics in the colonial Tamil state. Thus, Kanjilal, Pandharipande, and Sawhney all argue for the possibility of an expansive and dynamic application of \textit{rasa}, a poetic trope which Rustom Bharucha recognizes has “radical” possibilities. The openness of the concept of \textit{rasa} coupled with its resistant capabilities provides the necessary foundation for the aesthetic “adaptations” the concept of \textit{rasa}-consciousness requires.

\textbf{IV. The Rise of Popular Drama and Tamil “Protest” Plays}

Beyond its ability to skirt British censorship, why did the Tamil “Protest” playwrights chose “popular” drama as the medium most suited to disseminating the anticolonial message? What is “popular” drama? Also how does this medium reflect an amalgam of indigenous folk performance traditions, the stagecraft of Parsi traveling drama companies, music from both “elite” and “popular” sources, and epic narrative sources? Partly, this particular medium, as evidenced by P.S. Mudaliyar’s extensive reforms to the Tamil drama, provides an ideal platform for aesthetic innovation. In addition, “popular” drama is an appellation given to a hodge-podge of touring drama companies that staged productions in various urban and rural venues. These companies have a distinct advantage over print media since low literacy rates did not present an impediment. As seen in North Indian dramatic forms such as \textit{nautanki}, which incorporates epic subject matter into socially instructive dramas as well as in Bengal and Kerala with the traveling popular drama troupes, drama as a platform for anticolonial discourse and messaging is not a new idea or one limited to India as evidenced by the similar methods employed by anti-Imperial resistance movements in South Africa and Ireland during the same period. Vasudha Dalmia and Theodore Baskaran each discuss the development of anticolonial themes in popular entertainment in the twentieth century and detail various influences on the production and performances of these dramas. While Baskaran traces the movement from “elite” or “legitimate” theater to “popular” drama and then ultimately, the development of film in colonial Tamil state;

\textsuperscript{10} The caste -system refers to a cultural/religious stratification system which governed social interaction and was particularly robustly followed in Tamil Nadu. In short, there are four castes: \textit{Brähmaṇa} (teachers), \textit{Kṣatriya} (Warriors/Kings), \textit{Vaiśya} (Merchants), \textit{Śūdra} (Laborers).
Dalmia’s work focuses on the aesthetic and dramaturgical conventions of resistant folk theaters in Northern India. Together, these two texts create a discursive field in which anticolonial and resistant drama represents a platform of interaction for the various binaries that complicate the evocation and development of nationalist sentiment.

My work problematizes some of these “binaries” by focusing on uncovering various pathways of confluence through aesthetic “dialogues” that often undercut category definitions such as “elite” and unsettle the notion of unidirectional shifts between these performance genres. Rather, the boundaries between these traditions as Saskia Kersenboom (1995) notes are mutable, “flexible,” and ultimately “fringed” as seen in the syncretic nature of drama, music, and performance as a whole in the early twentieth century. Before the modernization of Tamil drama, implemented by P.S. Mudaliyar’s Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā, popular theater companies mostly staged religious or mythological plays that largely ignored acting and plot development in favor of song and dance. Later, as Baskaran notes, acting, stagecraft, and dramatic narrative begin to take precedence. It is in this climate that Tamil “Protest” playwrights are able to manipulate and recast cultural connections their audiences maintain to the epic tradition in India as nationalist symbols of unity. Ancient champions, such as Rāma, historical kings like Śivājī or Hyder Ali, become emblems of Tilak and Bhagat Singh and other modern heroes of the Indian resistance movement. These symbols do not remain limited to “Indian” heroes or moments of heroism, but often reference other colonial struggles. For example, Bharathi’s songs regarding Gandhi’s agitations in South Africa or Sarmā’s allegorization of the Scottish heroes Robert the Bruce and William Wallace exemplify their acknowledgement of a modern Tamil literary milieu whose cultural “memory” has become both inter- and intra-national.

11 Śivājī Bhonsle (1627-1680), a ruler from the Bhonsle Marātha clan, establishes a progressive civil rule with disciplined military and administrative organizations. He revamps military tactics, pioneering guerrilla warfare methods that leverage strategic factors like geography, speed, and surprise to launch pinpoint attacks and defeat more powerful enemies. Śivājī expands his father’s minimal force of two thousand soldiers to over a hundred thousand and constructs several forts to safeguard his territory. Well-known for promoting ancient Hindu political traditions and court conventions and the use of Marathi and Sanskrit, rather than Persian, in court administration; his legacy garners increased importance with the emergence of the Indian independence movement, as many see him as a proto-nationalist and hero of the Hindus.

12 Hyder Ali (1721-1782), becoming ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore in southern India in 1761, actively resists the military advances of the British East India Company during the First and Second Anglo-Mysore Wars. He is also the first to use the iron-cased Mysorean rockets. One of the earliest anti-British plays in the Tamil colonial state uses a drama about this historical king to question the ethics of kingship and critique the British for an abdication of responsibility to their “subjects” (Baskaran).
As the advent of the “three-hour” drama promulgated by P.S. Mudaliyar took hold and flourishes, Tamil “Protest” playwrights—T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar, Kandasamy Mudaliyar, Swaminatha Sarma, and Sankaradas Swamigal—each form their own theater companies and become instrumental in spurring forward the nascent anticlonial movement first the urban center of Madras and later throughout the Presidency. What distinguishes these playwrights (with the exception of Swamigal who was not directly affiliated with the Sabhā) from other anticlonial dramatists is their membership in and subsequent departure from the Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā as well as their education at the Adyar School\(^{13}\), which promoted the value of literature and philosophy. Finally, each of these playwrights is invested in dramatic innovation in theme, stagecraft, acting techniques, scenery, theme, and/or aesthetics. Both Pavalar and Sarma were teachers who grew dissatisfied with the print media as an effective method of communication with the masses and turned to popular drama instead. As members of the Sabhā they learned the art of modern Tamil drama and stagecraft from P.S. Mudaliyar. While Pavalar is clearly influenced by the Victorian melodrama and pulp fiction as evidenced by the style of his plays, Sarma, noting his affinity for some of the tenets of the Theosophical Society, writes in a more literary style, reminiscent of romanticism. Both write plays that incorporate aesthetic, characterization, and staging elements from both indigenous and external sources and in the process, inventing a new style of “popular drama” consonant with the cosmopolitan aesthetic appetite of modern Tamil audience. The political necessity of the times, as both would note, prompted their departure from the Sabhā. Shortly afterward, in 1926 Pavalar releases his immensely popular play (both in India and London) entitled, Kaṭṭar Pakti (Victory of Khaddar) detailing the story of the hero Govindan and his fiancee Kamatchi. While Govindan is a nationalist and promotes the values of “home-rule,” Kamatchi’s father is ingratiated with the ruling party and attempts to thwart his marriage to Kamatchi which eventually fails. The end of the play Kamatchi, her father, and Govindan extoll the virtues of loyalty to the nation and Kamatchi is no longer wearing her “foreign-cloth” sari. Similarly, Sarma’s play, Pāṇapuratu Viray features an idealistic hero whose love of “Pārata Mātā (Mother India)” is unwavering and trumps even his love for his wife and Lord Eesan (Śiva). Also widely performed, this play pays homage to Bhagat Singh as it opens with the execution of a revolutionary, Valisan, who, before

\(^{13}\) The Adyar School operates in the early twentieth century within Theosophical Society in Adyar. It provided a haven for the arts as support for “folk-dance and folk-arts” pervaded the institution (Ahuja, 1880).
his death, entrusts the fate of the country to the hero, Puresan. In this play, a mythical country is owned by a tyrannical king who oppresses the people and in the end Puresan is able to defeat this king with his own army of volunteer “citizens” and take back the country. Both plays allegorically call for individual revolt while fostering a sense of community as nation. In each play, class and gender differences are elided in favor of the nationalist imperative.

Sankaradas Swamigal, like his colleagues, becomes an ardent supporter for the causes of the less fortunate. His plays were known to incorporate popular epic and puranic stories and his theater troupe known as the “Boys Company” was one of the first organized efforts to help young street children earn a living wage. Swamigal begins the first of these “Boys companies” in 1911 as a way to promote “discipline, order, and “drama” proper in the early popular productions. Most notably, Swamigal provides a concrete link between the “folk” tradition terukkūttu and the popular or “company” based drama that flourishes in the early part of the twentieth century. Swamigal transforms terukkūttu from a folk medium into a popular one by removing the ritual component and utilizing a proscenium stage (Frasca, 1990, Seizer). The extensive use of “epic” in his plays in order to provide social, moral, or political instruction demonstrates the continued pan-Indian symbolic value of the epic and puranic stories within ritual, popular, and elite performance genres (Frasca, 1990, 1994). Words, scripts, and dialogues are often lacking in these early performances as improvisation and songs remain paramount. Since people are familiar with the stories in most cases, plot development and acting become secondary to the song, dance, and comedic improvisation. Swamigal like Mudaliyar in the “amateur sabhā drama,” introduces proper scene/Act divisions, more judicious use of songs, and proper adherence to scripts while minimizing improvisation (Seizer, 56-58). While his work is prolific, two plays in particular, Abhimanyu Sundari and Satyavan Savitri, offer ideal

\[14\] Swamigal’s use of “epic” themes in his work refers to the uniquely Tamil tradition of epic narrative as seen in terukkūtu. Epic narratives, rewritten within a Tamil context, become a part of continuing and dynamic tradition of cultural memory molded by modern Tamil playwrights like Swamigal to evoke nationalist sentiment.

\[15\] The term “sabhā” in colonial India refers to artistic or literary organizations that promote various types of performance, literature, and music. Mostly catering to upper and middle class literati, sabhā-s play a large role in modernizing and innovating Tamil literary and artistic culture. Particularly in the classical music and dance-drama traditions, these organizations operate as dynamic hives of middle-class culture, values, and socio-political ideologies. Many also operate as schools which specialize in a particular artistic or intellectual pursuit. Furthermore, sabhā-s have significant impact on the “elite” vs. “popular” divide. Many sabhā-s patronized by British dignitaries and government officials as well as wealthy and powerful Indian clientele, become reluctant to support anticolonial struggles, often discouraging artists from introducing such themes in their work. However, some offered support for art that critiques intra-Indian social justice issues such as caste-division, child marriage, child labor, etc. (Baskaran).
examples of Swamigal’s penchant for moral instruction through the use of epic themes and episodes, adapted to comment on present day situations and issues.

Scant information is available regarding the works and life of Kandaswamy Mudaliyar, about whom I have corresponded with his great-great grandson who lives in Iceland. While he had no copies of his great-great grandfather’s work, he was able to provide some useful information regarding K. Mudaliyar’s early life and work. According to him, Mudaliyar, raised in a conservative middle class household, was fortunate to have a “full” education which included literature and philosophy and continued study of English, Irish, Sanskrit, and Tamil literary works as well numerous other European authors in translation. As a member of the Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā, K. Mudaliyar acted in several plays staged by the Sabhā including leading role as the devious seductress Vasantasenā in Manoharan, which is a P.S. Mudaliyar Tamil recreation of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. K. Mudaliyar is known for writing popular dramas that follow the plot lines of famous Tamil popular detective fiction writers, Vaduvur Duraiswamy Ayyengar and J.R Rangaraju. Despite not being able to locate an extant copy of any of his plays or films, it is clear his colleagues respected and admired his work as epigraphs and dedications in plays written by Swamigal, Sarma, and Pavalar suggest. Thus, these playwrights’ diverse educational background and immersion in a dynamic Tamil literary modernity help fashion a syncretic but “local” vision of India with which their audience could identify.

V. Rasa-consciousness as Aesthetic Resistance

I contend that rasa-consciousness is a meta-narrative lens through which any rasika reconstellates diverse discourses of cultural, social, and political discontent within the dramatic narrative as a cohesive expression of nationalist sentiment. These plays utilize aesthetic symbols to transform the rasika into a citizen by converting anti-colonial feeling into nationalist sentiment. The dramas as a whole become unifying symbols of “nation” by engaging with multiple anticolonial, political, class and gender-based sociocultural struggles taking place in the community at large. These struggles are transmitted through emotional signposts as those of the nation symbolized by the hero’s loss, transgression, and eventual reunion with his beloved. The

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16 I have been unable to locate copies of Kandaswamy Mudaliyar’s work despite his obvious cultural importance. Theodore Baskaran’s work on Tamil popular drama, brief editorial pieces in The Hindu, correspondence with his great-grandson, and A.R.Venkatachalapathy’s 2012 work on the Tamil novel sketch his prolific career as playwright, novelist, and actor.
process of converting *rasika* into a citizen succeeds by neutralizing various tensions within the Tamil community through pan-Indian cultural symbols functioning as markers of unity through aesthetic “remembering.” Boehmer offers the following argument stemming from her examination of the Boer War, Sol Plaatje’s South-African nationalism, and the Indian and Irish anticolonial movements: “The flow of power relations in this new picture, the movement and exchange of anticolonialist, nationalist, class, gender, and other discourses, appears more constellated and diversified, far more multiply-mediated than in standard dualistic configurations for the colonial” (Boehmer, 2002, 5). Applying Boehmer’s argument to Tamil “Protest” Drama we see how diverse tensions that inform the production of these plays both breakdown existing power structures, external and internal, while helping create a new power dynamic indicative of burgeoning nation’s various contradictions.

The Tamil “Protest” playwrights negotiate between various competing discourses dealing with class, caste, gender, political, cultural, and religious tensions operating within the audience. By harnessing discursive tensions in the service of a particular emotive outcome, Tamil anticolonial playwrights create a singular image of “nation” within the audience, which solidifies the patriotic sentiment as the dominant emotion (*sthāyibhāva*) stoked by the dramatic performance. This dramatized image of the nation becomes crucial to developing an organized resistance to British occupation. In this context, the individual *rasika* becomes a citizen-aesthete when experiencing the sentiment of patriotism through a process of culturally-bound aesthetic memory predicated on a “Tamilized” vision of “India.” This staged free “India” reconstellates plural cultural identifications within the Tamil polity as connected through shared opposition to British imperialism. Tamil “Protest’ Theater’s syncretic model of dramatic representation transforms the modern Tamil performance milieu in crosscutting and decentralizing ways while potentially creating a new aesthetic paradigm. In essence, poetic devices/cues within the dramatic work convert the “aesthetic relish” of the spectator into a “political-aesthetic consciousness” that, in turn retools anticolonial feeling into patriotic sentiment the dramatically “imaged/imagined” India.

### VI. The Chapters

In the chapters of this dissertation, I employ a text-based approach that follows a historical and thematic trajectory beginning by detailing the Sanskrit aesthetic process and
culminating in how the concept of *rasa*-consciousness transforms popular drama into a vehicle of resistance. Chapters I and II provide a historical analysis of Sanskrit aesthetics, literature, and address the concept of *rasa* as a process of “aesthetic remembering.” Chapter I examines Sanskrit primary texts and dramaturgical theory in order to create a historical trajectory for the articulation and application of *rasa* theory. In addition, earlier work that offers expansive and elastic readings of *rasa* is discussed. Chapter II expands the application of *rasa* theory as centered in the relationship between the performance and the spectator. Thus, *rasa* becomes a process of aesthetic “remembering” by the audience. Kālidāsa’s works are used as case-studies to demonstrate this process. Chapters III and IV move into the modern period with an exploration of aesthetic and dramatic “conversations” that lay the ground for the modern Tamil performance. Chapter III focuses on Sanskrit and Tamil “conversations” in poetics, epic literature, court dance-drama and musical performance genres, and concludes with how the development of modern Tamil drama emerges from negotiating an artistic identity that is simultaneously, uniquely “Tamil” and patriottically “Indian.” Chapter IV examines the cultural milieu of the Tamil Protest Playwrights through Irish, English, and other external political and poetic “conversants.” Here, I analyze plays by T.P Krishnaswamy Pavalar and Swaminatha Sarma to demonstrate how aesthetic “remembering” transforms the aesthete into a “citizen” by exploiting an inter- and intra-nationally determining cultural milieu.

My conclusion posits the usefulness of “*rasa*-consciousness” as a tool of analysis for Tamil “Protest” Theater and its role in developing a Modern Tamil aesthetic paradigm. This new Tamil aesthetic, forged by Pavalar and others, demonstrates the possibility of linguistic and aesthetic symbols producing cultural/political capital by deploying particular images of authenticity and identity as seen in the works of Bernard Bate, Lisa Mitchell, and Sumathi Ramaswamy which each explore various facets of the relationship between language and politics in postcolonial South India. An “Afterword” relates a personal anecdote about the Tamil Nadu government’s cancellation and subsequent reinstatement of an annual arts festival in Chennai called the “Chennai Sangamam” that combined various types of dramatic, dance, and vocal performance genres from across Tamil Nadu. The story shows how political entities manipulate aestheticized images of Tamil “authenticity” to maintain power and manage “enjoyment” of the performance that could lead citizens to abandon socio-political divisions and seek redress for government inaction and corruption. Therefore, the implications of my work are two-fold. (1)
Instead of maintaining Theodore Baskaran’s unidirectional movement from “elite” to “popular” drama, I argue that these plays reflect the complexity and anxiety of aesthetic influence and constitute a new Tamil aesthetic predicated on the paradigm of “rasa-consciousness,” allowing the spectator to interact simultaneously with various competing socio-cultural discourses and aesthetic modes of expression as “both/and” representations of “nation.” (2) I also suggest reasons for the more gradual success of the popular drama movement in the colonial Tamil state as catalyst of anticolonial feeling by considering the political, socio-historical, and cultural conditions for the production and performance of these plays.
Chapter One

Towards a Rasika-Centered Poetics: The Evolution of Rasa and Dhvani

Introduction

Krishna Chaitanya opens his investigation into Sanskrit Poetics with the following statement: “In India, poetics evolved out of dramaturgy” (1). He attributes this particular phenomenon to “a remarkable accident” that led Bharata in his seminal treatise on dramatic theory and production, the Nāṭyaśāstra, as well as subsequent dramatic theorists, to view drama as the “perfect fruition of aesthetic creativity” (1). In other words, the dramatic production, which in the Indian context includes song, dance, gestures, speech, etc., is an artistic organism whose success depends on its ability to evoke the appropriate emotive response from the audience. More importantly, as Chaitanya and others point out, in this way, the “drama” becomes the model for understanding and critiquing all “art” in the Indian context. Thus, the audience experiences the rasa or emotive “flavor” of the dramatic production, which is the “soul” or essence of poetic expression in the Indian context. The word rasa first appears in the Rg Veda referring to “water, soma juice, cow’s milk, and flavour” (Mishra, 197). Later in the Ātharva Veda it is used to mean “juice of plants” and “taste” (Mishra, 197). In the Upaniṣads, rasa starts to become associated with both “aesthetic speculation” as well as “transcendental bliss” (Chaitanya, 2). Finally, the foundational text of Sanskrit poetics, Bharata’s Nāṭyaśāstra, posits the concept of rasa as the binding element of all “good” nātya or all dramatic works in

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1 Chaitanya refers to Bharata’s privileging of drama amongst all aesthetic production as a singularly important “accident.” In his view, the world was lucky to have had the early advent of an aesthetician who privileged the dramatic form and saw its primary function as imparting and evoking a generalized sentiment within its audience.

2 SK De, HR Mishra, PV Kane, Krishna Chaitanya, and others have argued that the Nāṭyaśāstra defines drama as an “art” which encompasses other forms of “art” and therefore, the most important. Further, in the modern context, theorists such as Vasudha Dalmia, Saskia Kersenboom (1995, 2005, 2008), Hanne de Bruin (1999), Darius Swann (1995), Rakesh Solomon (1994) and others have demonstrated that (either consciously or unconsciously) the concept of rasa has found its way into modern Indian popular and elite dramatic forms in various parts of the country.

3 The Vedas are sacred texts in the Hindu tradition which were written in Sanskrit and produced between 1700-800 BCE. The oldest Veda, the Rg Veda is thought to have been produced sometime between 1700-1100 BCE. There four Vedas: Rg Veda, Śāma Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda.

4 Several authors have discussed at length the role of rasa in the Vedas as well as in the Upaniṣads. Mishra also suggests a connection between Śiva’s semen and rasa that elevates “rasa from the physical to the superphysical plane” (198). Both Mishra and Chaitanya note the divine origins for the “sense-pleasure” connoted by the experience of rasa. Indeed, Chaitanya states, “Art…mediates between the experience of the world and the experience of the transcendent” (2).
general. Further, Bharata’s focus on the centrality and importance of the overall “sentiment” of the dramatic work suggests that “success” and value ascribed to an artistic production depends on its ability to convey its binding aesthetic emotion. Post-Bharata, Sanskrit aestheticians further develop this view of rasa to include all kāvyā, or poetic works as a whole. In this context, the Sanskrit tradition of aesthetics can be seen as an educational tool: an open system that can be used in the service of socio-cultural and political agendas such as the widespread evocation and dissemination of nationalist sentiment.

How does rasa become a crucial element for all dramatic production in the modern Indian context? This chapter traces the development of rasa and dhvani as foundational to poetic expression in Sanskrit aesthetics. Further, the aesthetic “coattails” of dhvani theory are discussed in the context of later alaṅkārin-s (aestheticians) who provide the groundwork for modern aesthetic innovation. As seen with the Tamil Protest playwrights in the twentieth century, the emotive tether fashioned between audience and production becomes a conduit for not only aesthetic sentiment but also feelings of nationalism and patriotism evoked through the dramatic narrative and aesthetic framework. In this context, the suggested meanings form a culturally exclusive subversive narrative that work to undermine the British colonial enterprise through the emotional connection fostered between the spectator and performance. Thus, this brief and inexhaustive theoretical trajectory of rasa and dhvani demonstrates shift towards a spectator-centered poetics foundational to all Indian performance art. The first section discusses Bharata and the early alaṅkārin-s and how they perceived of the rasa and its role in poetic expression. The next section details how Ānandavardhana’s Dhvanyāloka and Abhinavagupta’s commentary the Locana, reinterpret rasa and dhvani as the most integral components of an artistic production. The third section concludes the chapter with an analysis of the contributions of three important groups of aestheticians, post-Ānandavardhana; (1) the transitional figures, (2) disputers of dhvani and (3) later innovators. The first group lays the groundwork for the two later groups comprised of theorists who represent pivotal moments or “contrails” of Sanskrit aesthetics in its waning dominance as “high” art, when rasa and dhvani enter the realm of the “popular.” Therefore, it is the malleability of these poetic elements that undergirds the syncretism and aesthetic innovation of modern Indian anticolonial drama.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how the definition of rasa provided in the Nāṭyaśāstra is interpreted and altered as a robust Sanskrit poetics and literary tradition develops,
in turn producing a number of aestheticians including the esteemed Ānandavardhana and his revolutionary theory of dhvani. Specifically, this chapter interrogates the shift in Sanskrit poetics from focus on the components comprising the aesthetic object to the experience of “the poetic” itself in answering the question, “What constitutes poetic beauty?” Thus, the aesthetic innovations of Ānandavardhana and his successor, Abhinavagupta, result from centuries of investigation by linguists, aestheticians, and grammarians, who each represent important theoretical “turns” as the tradition moves towards viewing the spectator’s experience of “the poetic” as paramount. After several aesthetic “turns,” rasa and dhvani become the necessary components of successful and “good” art. Rasa emerges as the goal of and motivation for the poetic experience and dhvani is the framework and process that imbricates the spectator into the imagined universe of the poetic. The success of the Sanskrit play depends on the audience enjoying and identifying with the “ideal” world represented on the stage. As Kālidāsa’s plays demonstrate, dramatic symbols, which are culturally and socially bound, must be woven together to evoke feelings of aesthetic enjoyment or fulfillment in the audience in order for a play to be successful. Thus, this particular aspect of Sanskrit aesthetics—cultivating the enjoyment of the spectator—remains vibrant in all modern Indian art.

M. Christopher Byrski, Edwin Gerow, Eliot Deutsch, Robert Goodwin (Byrski, 1974; Gerow, 1979, 1981; Deutsch, 1981; Goodwin, 1998) are some of the scholars who have examined the possibilities and flexibility housed within the system of rasa and its influence and role within the Sanskrit system of aesthetics and literary production. Rasa can refer to both a climactic state as well as a process through which this state is affected. This process transforms Sanskrit dramatic characters into “pivots” representing universal values and emotional states (love, hate, anger, jealousy, honor, heroism, sorrow, etc.) similar to characters in Victorian melodrama. Byrski describes rasa as this “concrete process whereby theater artists provide on stage the precondition, the theatrical stimulus, for the rasa experience of the audience (Baumer, 210). Moreover, in each of his works on Sanskrit Drama, Byrski, with a painstaking attention to detail, seeks to reveal the “implicit dharmic" worldview” with drama that reifies the sacrifice as a cosmic process (Goodwin, xiv). However, within this rigorous attention to detail an idealized

5 The term “dharmic” essentially means in accordance with the structures of dharma or the Hindu concept of “duty or law” that incorporates religious strictures and societal mores. Here, it refers to a particular spiritual paradigm of “duty” that informs both the construction and reception of Sanskrit drama.
vision of Sanskrit performance emerges that does not pay enough attention to what Goodwin terms the “rasika’s cult of feeling” or the experience of the sentiment by the rasika. Raghavan argues that the rasa can be “relished” by the actor as well as the spectator while Gerow and others suggest this experience is limited to the audience (Baumer, 211). Edwin Gerow spends considerable time linking the form and content of Sanskrit drama in the realm of aesthetics in two works: “Rasa a Category of Literary Criticism” and “Plot Structure and the Development of Rasa in the Śakuntalā” (1981). Gerow like Byrski employs an exhaustive textual analysis but in contrast, he uses rasa as an interpretative tool to construct what is largely an ethical argument that transforms the aesthetic experience into an abstracted, intellectual exercise rather than an emotion-based experience (Goodwin). Gerow and Deutsch each consider whether or not the process of audience engagement inherent within rasa theory is uniquely Indian or bears any similarity to “Western” dramaturgical and aesthetic tropes. However, Gerow’s focus remains on the process of evoking sentiment and minimizes the experience of sentiment itself. In contrast, Goodwin’s work on the “playworld” of Sanskrit drama, focuses on the emotional engagement and what calls the “eros” in the “rasika-sahṛdaya myth” (xv). Within this myth, the rasika and nāyaka are involved in dialectical relationship that allows the spectator to empathize with the hero’s plight that results from “the ascetical death-drive [being] sublimated into aesthetic detachment” (Goodwin, xvi). Specifically, the Brahmanical curse that leads to the lovers separation not only promotes sympathy for the hero, but also provides a valid excuse (for both hero and spectator) to view the nāyikā (heroine) as an aestheticized object serving as an “entryway” into the mythical poetic world while demonstrating that his “good intentions” are ruined through no fault of his own (Goodwin). In this way, the myth of the rasika becomes “a world-view depicting essential areas of conflict and smoothing them over with symbolic mediations” (Goodwin, xvii). Ultimately, the identification between rasika and hero is only partial, according to Goodwin, as the rasika ultimately rejects the notion that sentiment can trump all, still imbricated into a world in which ascetical “truth” remains powerful.

Gerow (1981), Raghavan (1981, 1993), Deutsch (1981) and others reiterate the point that rasa must be “culture-bound” and cannot be experienced, for instance, from a Western audience viewing a Greek tragedy. Outside of the work of Robert Goodwin, the missing component in each of these works is the analysis of rasa through the focal point of the “knowledgeable”
satisfactor or rasika who the Nāṭyaśāstra and other successive Sanskrit dramaturgical treatises (particularly post-Ānandavardhana) argue is imperative for the successful evocation/experience of rasa. Furthermore, while many scholars explore the possibilities of rasa as universal system of appreciation, none consider its potential as a tool of resistance. Two “concrete parallel developments” in the theory of Rasa are a “direct result of the world view embodied in Sanskrit literature which preceded the writing of the Nāṭyaśāstra by several centuries: symbolizing sacrificial ritual discussed in the Brāhmaṇa-s [group of exegetical texts on the Veda-s] and “chiseled, abstract and speculative thought of the Upaniṣad-s” (Vatsyayan, 1981, 47). This relationship between the concrete praxis of ritual and the abstract nature of speculation emblematizes the nature of art in the Sanskrit context. Similar to symbolic structures in ancient Tamil poetics, the foundational element of the poetic experience as well as the spiritual one is the relationship between the “one” and the “many”; man as the image of the cosmos (Vatsyayan, 1981, 47). For this reason, it is the rasika as vessel for a dynamic cultural memory and as the nexus point for the “abstract” and “concrete” that becomes the focal point of my investigation into the aesthetics of nationalist popular drama.

Building on Goodwin’s notion that the rasika and nāyaka represent, in a way, mirror images of one another, my work suggests this emotional engagement need not be rejected by rasika (as Goodwin suggests) when the dharmic structure or “ascetical truth” of the playworld is shifted to reflect the changing tensions of the outside world as seen in modern Indian performance at the turn of the twentieth century. In contrast to Sanskrit world, combatting British imperial regime (functioning as the unavoidable “ascetical truth”) operates as a shared goal of the both nāyaka and rasika. Here, the dialectic between these spectator and hero becomes a politicized one. Furthermore, the stakes of the “success” of this identification become imbricated with the evocation of sentiment, investing the rasika concretely in the success of the hero within the dramatic world. In other words, what we see in the popular drama context is dharma or duty becoming a matter of loyalty to the “nation-in-the-making” for both hero and spectator. Like the Brahmin’s curse in Abhijnānasākuntala, popular drama represents the colonial encounter and situation as an unavoidable obstacle. However, here the rasika can not only transcend barrier in the dramatic world “on the higher level of the contemplative aesthetic appreciation” as Goodwin argues, but must also do so in the “real-world” to ensure the play’s
success. In this vein, complete identification between spectator and hero must be possible. In popular anticolonial drama, the cultural milieu of performance does not merely inform the dramatic world but rather, becomes refashioned through it. Thus, the spectator’s empathy for the hero is transformed into activism and the resolution of the play thus, becomes a call to action.

In this context, rasa can be used as a tool of analysis of the performative in the Indian context. I suggest that the relationship between the rasa or aesthetic “flavor” evoked and the aesthete’s appreciation of this sentiment within the performative is a pan-Indian phenomenon. This provides a fertile environment to introduce rasa and dhvani as generalized categories of aesthetic analysis and reconfigure the possibilities contained within the various bhāva-s and rasa-s since the vyaṅgyārtha or suggested meaning is always culturally determined. Additionally, the importance of having a knowledgeable and discerning spectator imbues all genres of Indian performance and foregrounds the flexibility of rasa. In other words, since “poetic-ness” depends on the spectator’s ability to appreciate, the concept of rasa is also culturally determined. Rasa demands that the spectator establish an emotive link with the dramatic performance and relies on the spectator’s ability to infer underlying meanings and suggestions from dramatic cues. Culture is an amalgam of various dynamic processes (social, political, spiritual, etc.) and by virtue of this dynamism, remains in a state of flux. The cultural component coupled with the need for a “knowledgeable” aesthete continues to fuel the dialectic of spectator and performance in modern Indian drama. In essence, what I call rasa-“consciousness” persists as an underlying aspect of modern Indian performance as a way of “seeing” and experiencing the dramatic world through a culturally-determined lens. Thus, since rasa is a culturally determined process of aesthetic “remembering,” it remains flexible, portable, and an ideal vehicle for the social and political messaging seen during the colonial period. While spectators of Sanskrit drama who identified with the nāyaka (hero) such as Duṣyanta experience the rasāsvāda (aesthetic relish) of śṛṅgāra rasa (love sentiment) represented in his successful reunion with Śakuntalā, the modern Indian rasika attending a popular social or political dramatic production, becomes reinvented as a social or political “activist-aesthete.”

Modern regional dance-drama traditions also become repositories for the remnants of the Sanskrit dramatic tradition as the Sanskrit literary and poetic production wanes near end of the twelfth century. Later Sanskrit theorists and dramatists focus not only on the poetic experience of rasa, but also on “new” and hybrid dramatic forms that have developed. Beginning with
Dhananțaya (eleventh century CE) and continuing with more detail by Viśvanātha (fourteenth century CE), Sanskrit poetic theorists identify and categorize the genre of uparūpaka-s or minor dramatic forms, likely derived from the ten major rūpaka-s (dramatic forms), as important syncretic dramatic genres that focus on song and dance. Bharata defines these dramatic forms as combination of nṛtta (pure dance-nonrepresentational) and rūpaka, which develops from the close interrelationship between music, dance, and drama in the Indian poetic context. However, his description of these forms is sparse. These dance-based dramatic forms are possibly one aesthetic “avenue” through which Sanskrit dramatic principles found in the Nāṭyaśāstra enter into regional theater traditions like Yakṣagāna (Karnataka), Bhāgavatamelu (Tamil Nadu), Chau (Bihar, Orissa, Bengal), Kathakali (Kerala) etc., either directly or indirectly (Raghavan, 1993, 5). Uparūpaka-s, as hybrid dance-drama genres are an important “way-station” in which the regional, folk, as well elite dramatic traditions commingle. In Sanskrit Play Production in Ancient India, Tarla Mehta argues that the eighteen uparūpaka-s Bharata mentions in the Nāṭyaśāstra form a conduit between Sanskrit dramaturgy as it begins to lose prominence after fourteenth century CE and regional dramatic performance which simultaneously gained popularity in various forms across India.

The gradual deterioration in its continuity came around twelfth century CE with the emergence of the regional languages causing the decline of Sanskrit theatre. Consequently, the development of ten major rūpaka-s and eighteen minor uparūpaka-s which had evolved out of the rich intermix of the court and temple theater traditions and popular drama was affected in the process. The Sanskrit rūpaka-s relying on the well-defined scripts…lost prominence with the decline of the…language [while] the uparūpaka-s, with emphasis on dance, song, abhinaya and [less] stress on speech and the written text [were] adopted into the regional requirements. (Mehta, 253)

The “intermix” mentioned here by Mehta and also discussed by V. Raghavan (1993) establishes the trajectory of rasa into modern regional performance traditions. Furthermore, the vestiges of court performance tradition in nineteenth century South India also become “conduits” of aesthetic and dramatic conventions as they become assimilated into modern performance genres. For instance, devadāsī-s, displaced by the waning patronage from the court during the beginning of the twentieth century (e.g. Balamani Ammal or K. Sundarambal), garner new life in the world of popular performance, bolstered by the independence movement (Weidman; Baskaran; Hughes). It should be said that many devadāsī-s did not have the opportunity to “reinvent”
themselves in Tamil nāṭakam, icai nāṭakam, “special” drama, the gramophone industry, later in
the film industry or through avenues often open to icai vēḷār men (teachers of dance within the
court dance tradition) such as harikathā and the new industry of teaching bharatanāṭyam
(Weidman). In addition to the court performance tradition, the bhakti movement catalyzes the
development of devotional poetry and performance traditions in many parts of South India. An
eexample is “Harikathā,” a performing art in which devotional episodes from the epics and the
purāṇa-s are depicted using abhinaya, songs, and narration in the style of Sanskrit nāṭya
performed by a specific hereditary caste of theater artists (Mehta, 253-4). Mehta discusses
several other regional theater traditions across the Indian subcontinent including kuttiyāṭṭam in
Kerala and yakṣagāna in Karnataka which have ties with Sanskrit aesthetics, dramatic
conventions, or modes of performance (258-9). Thus, this connection between the “elite” and
“popular” traditions near the end of the robust period of Sanskrit literary production
demonstrates the “entry” of not only Sanskrit dramatic elements, but also aesthetic conventions,
namely sentiment (rasa) and the way to indicate or evoke sentiment (abhinaya) into regional
theater traditions.

As Sanskrit poetics ostensibly begin with Bharata’s Nāṭyaśāstra, the earliest extant
comprehensive manual on dramatic production, aesthetic principles/tropes, and goals, my
investigation takes this definition of rasa as the original. Although actual Sanskrit Drama as
described in Nāṭyaśāstra no longer can be found in modern indigenous forms of dramatic
performance, many regional performance genres include dramatic elements found in this text,
such as purification rituals, cultural/religious references, and most importantly, focus on the
“enjoyment” of the spectator. In this context, the Nāṭyaśāstra reflects “a world view, [which] is
embedded in a cultural context, shares a vast body of knowledge in many disciplines, was
perhaps orally transmitted for centuries through a highly systemized methodology of
transmission, teacher to pupil, pedagogic schools, is inter- and multidisciplinary in nature, and is
pan-Indian” (Vatsyayan, 1981, 45). Thus, the aesthetic principles Bharata discusses inform the
entirety of modern Indian artistic production and performance. More specifically, as an ancient
authority on nāṭya this text has shaped theoretical trajectories of Sanskrit aesthetic tropes as well
as Sanskrit dramaturgical praxis. Commentaries on the Nāṭyaśāstra offer robust interpretations
of the text and variegated approaches to critiquing Sanskrit poetics and drama. However, the undeniably central role of *rasa* within dramatic production begins in earnest with Bharata.

### I. Aesthetic Underpinnings of the Poetic Concepts, *Rasa* and *Dhvani*

#### Introduction

*“na hi rasādṛte kaścidarthah pravartate”*

No meaningful idea can be conveyed without *rasa*. (From the Rasādhyāya in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*)

Many theorists since Bharata have examined the role of *rasa* critically, within a poetic/dramatic work. Some of the major figures in the development of Sanskrit poetics general and the concept and role of *rasa* specifically include (but are in no way limited to)-Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, Udbhaṭa, Lollaṭa, Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Dhanaṅjaya, Mammaṭa, Bhoja, Viśvanātha, and Jagannātha. Each of these theorists has played a vital role in the development of *rasa* as the central component of any aesthetic undertaking. Before Ānandavardhana the debate was fractured by various art forms and each of the schools of poetics made arguments (through many of the various theorists listed above) for the superiority of *alaṅkāra*-s (figures of speech), *vṛtti*-s (styles of composition), *guna*-s (qualities), etc. in particular realms limiting the scope of *rasa*, if discussed in detail at all, to dramatic works. More specifically, each figure listed above, represents a turning point or critical juncture in the development of *rasa* theory in the post-Bharata era. However, Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta emerge from this group as pivotal figures. Ānandavardhana is the first to attempt to create an overarching paradigm of Sanskrit poetics centered around a single principle—in this case *dhvani*. While he notes several times that the concepts of *rasa* and *dhvani* were in common use and well-known, it is Ānandavardhana who mobilizes them into twin loci of a theory of poetics that encompasses all Sanskrit “art.” For this reason, his work changes the landscape of Sanskrit aesthetic production and poetics, as critics now engaged in a debate regarding whether or not *rasadhvani* is the overarching principle, which harnessed together an artistic work.

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6 There have been several commentaries on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of which only Abhinavagupta’s *Abhinavabhārati* remains extant. But Abhinavagupta does mention commentators including Sarṅgadeva, Matṛguptācārya, Udbhaṭa, Lollaṭa, Saṅkuka, Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Harṣa, Kīrtidhāra, and Nanyadeva (De, 32). Abhinavagupta also includes the views of several other figures who may have commented on portions of the Bharata’s text (De, 32-33). Unfortunately, the only evidence of these non-extant commentaries comes from citations found in Abhinavagupta’s work as well as few other theorists.

26
Ānandavardhana saw the concept of *rasa* and for that matter, “art” in the Sanskrit context, differently than many of his predecessors and contemporaries. For him, the concept of *rasa* could not be reserved as the central component of drama alone. Instead, he saw the heart of all poetic works to be “*dhvani,*” and therefore asserts that all “good” poetry has *dhvani* as its undercarriage. Even critics of aspects of *dhvani* theory such as Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Mammaṭa, Dhanaṅjaya, and Mahimabhaṭṭa, have had a profound influence on the further evolution of the concepts of *rasa* and *dhvani.* For the most part, they accept these concepts as foundational elements of poetic expression while disputing Ānandavardhana’s contention that *dhvani* forms the “soul” of poetry, encompassing all other aesthetic tropes. For example, both Bhaṭṭanāyaka and Mahimabhaṭṭa accept that *dhvani* is an important element for poetic construction. However, both also subsume its role and importance within other narrative or aesthetic devices. Similarly, while Dhanaṅjaya’s *Daśarūpaka* explores in detail and in some cases, expands on the types of drama described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra;* the text provides lackluster endorsement of Ānandavardhana’s view that poetic choices should be made solely in service of *dhvani.* Mammaṭa, like Daṇḍin and others more closely allied with the *Ālāṅkāra* School of Poetics, subsumes *rasa* under the rubric of “figures of speech” and argues that in any given drama any combination of these could determine the dominant aesthetic composition. It is Mammaṭa’s equivocal description of the *dhvani* which draws critique from Viśvanātha who characterizes Mammaṭa’s decision as one made purely to avoid raising the ire of other critics of *Dhvani Theory.* In other words, Mammaṭa asserts that the individual dramatic devices, not *rasa* determine the dominant emotive sentiment experienced by the audience. In many ways as is indicated in Abhinavagupta’s *Locana* and by Ānandavardhana as well, the *Dhvanyāloka* (*Sāhrdayāloka*) exemplifies the inclusion of aspects of each of these theories. Ānandavardhana’s texts argue that *dhvani,* is necessary to differentiate poetry from prose, which was considered exempt from the conscription of poetic guidelines. For Ānandavardhana, *rasa* is the primary goal of drama as it is for Bharata and Dhanaṅjaya, but he is also interested in thinking about the process of meaning evocation in the poetic realm as a whole. Specifically, how does the aesthetic construction of the play lead to the evocation of a particular emotive sentiment within the

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7 Ingalls as well as Krishnamoorthy note that the Ānandavardhana’s text has been referred to by other names in various references by other contemporary and later theorists including the particularly appropriate title, “*Sāhrdayāloka*” which means the “the light on man of feeling.” This title indicates that Ānandavardhana’s text is also concerned with the process by which the aesthete perceives and receives the dramatic work.
audience? Therefore, in poetry and drama in particular, dhvani extends and expands the literal and indicative meanings of the words and sentences.

This brief history of poetic tropes and important theorists focuses on the period from fourth century CE to the fourteenth century CE as a time in which Sanskrit poetics becomes a well-developed, robustly successful, and complex discipline with several variant critical strains.

In this context, dating several of these early Sanskrit theorists is difficult for two reasons: (1) Many of these theorists and dramatists share names with other important historical figures making it difficult to decipher who wrote what from the fragments of hagiographic material and limited biographical data available. (2) In several cases, it has been difficult to determine influence and borrowing as during this period, robust production of literature and critical theory in Sanskrit produced a fair amount of cross-fertilization of thought. Therefore, I examine periods of theoretical and literary production in light of these “cross-fertilizations” by discussing theorists in relation to the various Schools of Poetics operating while they were writing. By using this thematic approach I hope to avoid some of the pitfalls incurred by inaccurate dating and statements of influence. Instead, the purpose will be to uncover major turning points in the development, expansion, and articulation of Rasa Theory and later Dhvani Theory. Ultimately, these “shifts” in perspective on the role of rasa are explicated in terms of the seminal articulation of Ānandavardhana’s theory of dhvani which changes the landscape of Sanskrit Poetics by positing the notion that all “good” poetry is predicated on a network of culturally-bound “suggestion.”

Before Bharata: Early Aesthetic Trends

Exploring the origins of rasa before Bharata, unfortunately, remains a difficult task. No extant texts remain from earlier authorities within the alan̄kāra tradition from which, Bharata may have drawn. However, there are references in other texts to earlier figures that may have influenced Bharata’s theory. Rājaśekhara, an aesthetician from the tenth century CE, in his work Kāvyamimāṃsa, discusses a figure named Nandikeśvara, the likely author of the

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8 The purpose here is not to discuss every major Sanskrit theorist or aesthetician and every poetic innovation, but rather to highlight those responsible for significant “shifts” in the development of the dramatic tropes, rasa and dhvani. Thus, Ānandavardhana’s canonical treatise on the use and importance of dhvani or suggestion as the central focus of poetic production provides an important nexus point. My historical trajectory will highlight important contributors and predecessors to Ānandavardhana’s work while considering later aesthetic “manipulations” of the concept of dhvani that inform its use in modern Indian drama.
Abhinayadarpaṇa, “to whom the Science of Rasa was entrusted” (Mishra, 199). Mishra also mentions another figure, Keśava Miśra, who discusses a theorist Sūtrakāra Bhagavān Sauddhodani who supposedly formulated the concept of rasa as “the essence of poetry” (Mishra, 199). However, dating these theorists presents a difficult proposition as most of our knowledge of them stems from excerpts and references in later works on Alaṅkāra by theorists such Hemacandra, Rājaśekhara, Abhinavagupta as well as Ānandavardhana. S.K. De points out that the available recensions of the Nāṭyaśāstra present several issues as they do not agree on number of chapters, order of chapters, or number of verses in chapters (1960, 19). He points to Abhinavagupta’s commentary on the Nāṭyaśāstra, which notes two versions of the text with which he is familiar that contain thirty-six chapters. However, neither of these recensions survives in the modern period. Others have mentioned a work entitled, Nandibharata, attributed to an early expert on music, abhinaya, erotics, and histrionic art, Nandikeśvara (De, 19). Another work attributed to Nandikeśvara, Abhinayadarpaṇa, a treatise on histrionic art, refers to Bharata several times, possibly indicating that it follows Bharata’s work; however, it is also possible he is a contemporary of Bharata.9 The final colophon in the last chapter of the Nāṭyaśāstra asserts that the rest of this topic will be treated by another poetic theorist Kohala. From all indications, Kohala appears to be a contemporary of Bharata and is recognized as an ancient authority on rasa by the eighth century, first by Damodaragupta and later by Abhinavagupta, Rājaśekhara, and others (De, 21). Kohala, as De notes, is credited by later aestheticians with the introduction of the term “uparūpaka” or “minor variety of drama,” while others cite works such as Kohaliya Abhinayaśāstra (a work on drama and acting) and Kohala Rāhasya (work of at least thirteen chapters, which deals with musical modes) to indicate Kohala was an early authority on aesthetics and histrionic art. There is also evidence which suggests Bharata’s definition of the production of rasa in dramatic works was widely accepted.10 My

9 The Abhinayadarpaṇa is an important text for the South Indian court tradition of performance in the nineteenth century as its tenets become incorporated into the aesthetic framework within which the Tanjore Quartet operates (Soneji, 58). As Davesh Soneji notes, the Telegu text Abhinaya Lakṣanamu, thought to have been “transcreated” by the prominent “Quartet” composer Čin̠ ni̠ a in late medieval period from the Abhinayadarpaṇa, along with the Varna Svara Jāti contain a large portion of the oral repertoire of the Tanjore Quartet recalled by descendants (58).

10 Bharata’s conception of rasa is accepted by dramatists such as Kālidāsa, Bhāsa as well as by every major aesthetician from Bhāmaha forward. De (1960), Dasgupta and others cite discussions of other authorities on aesthetics and their potential influence on Bharata as well as the theory of Rasa. However, whether Bharata was compiling theories popular during his time or was the sole author of the Nāṭyaśāstra and originator of his theory of Nāṭya, his work remains widely cited and his definition of rasa taken as a point of departure by subsequent Sanskrit poetic theorists.
investigation will use the *Nāṭyaśāstra* the original authority on the concept of *rasa* upon which these other scholars are building while considering the importance of the *Abhinayadarpāṇa* as a “cultural pathway” through which *rasa* enters regional contexts as evidenced by the South Indian court performance tradition. Notably, the concept of *dhvani* is not recognized initially as a poetic trope and is not mentioned as such in *Nāṭyaśāstra* or earlier poetic treatises including those after Bharata by Bāhāma, Daṇḍin, Udbhaṭa, etc.

**Bharata’s *Nāṭyaśāstra***

Bharata’s *Nāṭyaśāstra* provides the foundation for this investigation as it is the first known text in which the stagecraft, acting technique, production rules, etc. of drama are detailed in addition to the goals of effective dramatic production.¹¹ It is a manual for the production of *nāṭya-dharmi* or the “idealized and stylized technique, which [makes] Sanskrit drama an integrated art of poetry, music, and dance” (Raghavan, 1993, 104). Furthermore, this dance-drama style, popularized by Kālidāsa and Harṣa and seen as superior by Bharata, survives “in indigenous provincial forms in the country” possibly derived from *uparūpaka*-s and therefore remains a “distinct characteristic of the Indian Stage” (Raghavan, 104). The *Nāṭyaśāstra* asserts: “The harmonious combination of ‘sense’ and ‘purpose’ is necessary for the production of poetry.”¹² In other words, poetry requires aesthetic components that convey its “poetic-ness” as well the necessity for an aesthete who can reconstellate these components into meaning or “sense.” The *Nāṭyaśāstra* defines the aesthetic and dramaturgical components and structure of Sanskrit drama or *drśya-kāvya* (poetic work which is seen and heard).¹³ As Chaitanya rightly argues, Bharata conceived of drama as “Gesamtkunstwerk, or synthesis of all the arts” (1). For Bharata, “there is no *nāṭya* without *rasa*” (Rangacharya, 54).¹⁴ Thus, later writers such Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta extrapolate from this idea when articulating the concept of

¹¹ Dating the *Nāṭyaśāstra* remains difficult as historians must rely on references to it in other works. However, based on later theorists’ references as well some historical data, it is accepted that Bharata lived during the second century BCE. De argues that no credible concrete evidence dates Bharata to a period before the seventh century CE however Das Gupta seems to disagree. Both Das Gupta and Kane note later references to Bharata as a *muni* (sage) by Kālidāsa (whose date may also be much older than previously assumed) indicating Bharata’s work had already earned him legendary status in the poetics community and it must have been well in circulation by Kālidāsa’s time. For this reason, Das Gupta dates Bharata to as early as the middle of the second century BCE.

¹² *ebhirarthakriyāpekṣaiḥ kāryam kāvyam tu laksanaiḥ* (*Nāṭyaśāstra*, Ch. 16.87)

¹³ Various theorists, including Bharata, Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, and Dhananḍa have argued for the superiority of *nāṭya* (drama) over other forms of poetry such as *śravya-kāvya* (poetic work which is read/recited/heard) in evoking the dominant sentiment within the spectator.

¹⁴ *tatra rasāneva tāvadādāvabhivyākhyāsyāmaḥ na hi rasādṛte kaścidarthāḥ pravartate* (*Nāṭyaśāstra*, Ch. 6.31)
dhvani as the foundational aspect of all poetic expression by asserting that rasa must be “suggested” in every aspect of the “successful” poetic narrative.

The Nāṭyaśāstra, often called the “fifth Veda” intended for all classes (varṇa-s), functions as a treatise on dramatic construction, production, and performance, which the devas (gods) commission Bharata to compose. Thus, the style of the text mirrors, in some ways, dramatic monologues where the speaker addresses an unseen audience. The entire text is couched in the idea that nāṭya is another model for sacrifice and reverence of the Divine, while noting that it is the only art form that can represent any aspect of human existence. Indeed, Bharata goes further and argues that if something cannot be represented in drama, then it does not exist in the world (Chapter twenty-six, Nāṭyaśāstra). Therefore, the “success” of drama depends on the poet making the world “the source, the proof, the authority, and the measure for valuation of success by those doing nāṭya” (Raghavan, 1993, 241). Later, Abhinavagupta uses this idea to refute Bhaṭṭanāyaka and others, arguing that the banality of the world must not be eradicated in the context of the drama, but rather transformed through the dispassionate lens of dramatic representation in order to elicit aesthetic enjoyment from the spectator.

In order to reinforce drama as a vehicle for reverence, Bharata constructs each of the substantive chapters as a running dialogue with the “great sages” in which, he provides information about the various aspects of drama and performance as a series of responses to the sages’ queries. The first four chapters open with a story of the origin of nāṭya and of the performance of the “first” drama, composed by Brahmā and staged by Bharata for the gods’ enjoyment. Beginning with Chapter five, the text employs a question/answer format, couching Bharata’s dramatic theory as a series of answers to the sages’ queries. For example, Chapter six opens with the sages asking Bharata to “tell [them] about five things: What are the rasa-s of which nāṭya experts speak? What constitutes a rasa? What are bhāva-s? What feelings do they convey? And what are saṁgrāha (essence of contents), kārikā (explanatory verse) and nirukta (etymological analysis)?” (Nāṭyaśāstra, verses 1-3) Similarly, in Chapter eight, the sages introduce the subject of abhinaya (acting, representing) by asking Bharata about the kinds of

15 lokasiddhaṃ bhavet siddhaṃ nāṭyaṃ lokasvabhāvajam
tasmān nāṭyaṃ lokasya sthāvarasya ca
śāstraṇaṁ nāṭyaṃ kartum bhāvaceṣṭāvidham pratiṣṭitam
naṁśīlāḥ prakṛtayaḥ śīle nāṭyaṃ pratiṣṭitam
tasmāllokaḥ pramāṇaḥ hi kartavyam nāṭyayoktrbhiḥ (Nāṭyaśāstra, Ch. 26.115-120)
abhinaya performed in nāṭya, what the experts say, and how abhinaya should be performed to ensure “success” of the drama (Nāṭyaśāstra, verses 1-4). The style of the Nāṭyaśāstra cements the divine origin for the theory of nāṭya Bharata asserts by couching it in a traditional dialogue between student and teacher in the Indian context. In essence, the reader witnesses Bharata explain the theory of nāṭya, its origins, and its value to the sages. The text gives detailed consideration to the preliminary rituals, stagecraft, characters, diction, dance, music, etc. involved in producing the ideal Sanskrit drama.

Chapters six, seven, twenty through twenty-seven, and thirty-four through thirty-six are the most important for the examining the development of rasa in the Sanskrit poetic tradition. In Chapter six Bharata introduces the concept of rasa and the following chapter (seven) discusses the corresponding bhāva-s (residual/latent emotions). These two chapters provide detailed descriptions of these concepts and how they operate in the dramatic narrative and therefore, are the most crucial part of Bharata’s work. Thus, they are the foundation for subsequent poetical inquiry into the concept of rasa throughout the history of Sanskrit Poetics in the wake of Bharata. The famous rasasūtra, discussed in the Introduction, is an important point of departure for later aesthetic theory as this definition launches an avalanche of analysis of these two concepts (rasa and bhāva) and what role they play in the poetic production. It is clear Bharata strongly supports the idea that the “aesthetic creation is a representation (abhinaya)” shaped by the “aesthetic emotion (rasa)” which imbues the work (Chaitanya, 1). For Bharata, “stage-craft, music, dance, and the poetic text are all representations [however] the soul of creation remains the aesthetic emotion, rasa” (Chaitanya, 1). Chapters twenty through twenty-seven address several issues including acting techniques, types of plays, and what makes a drama “successful,” while chapters thirty-four through thirty-six examine the types of characters that may appear and the reasoning for the descent of drama onto earth (Rangacharya). Thus, the Nāṭyaśāstra provides a comprehensive and detailed accounting of the construction, production, and performance of nāṭya. In this way, it forms the basis for the Sanskrit alaṅkāra tradition that builds specifically on areas of opacity within Bharata’s work: the nature of the “poetic”, the production of rasa, and the role of the spectator.

Bharata and the earlier theorists before him draw from a variety of performance sources including both “elite” and vernacular traditions. For example, the staff of Indra that Bharata describes as part of the pre-dramatic rituals appears is a feature likely taken from popular forms
in circulation (Raghavan, 1993). In this way Sanskrit dramatic production is not inherently a courtly tradition and instead like many of the other performance traditions in India, it draws from other modes of performance in circulation and popular at the time. It is likely a similar type of approach governed the aesthetic structure and code which Bharata attempts to standardize with his manual on not only the stagecraft and acting techniques but also aesthetic sentiments and how these are to be depicted and for what purpose. It is here we see not only the connection to the popular traditions in that for both the role of the spectator is vital in creating the emotional tether between the performance/performers and audience. Through this tether the aesthetic structure of the drama creates a portal for the spectator to enter the dramatic world and experience the dominant sentiment through a culturally constructed lens of meaning production triggered through the various dramatic tropes, figures of speech, etc.

**Early Alaṅkārin-s: Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, Udbhāta, Vāmana**

The early Alaṅkāra theorists (poeticians) are representatives of the Alaṅkāra School of Poetics which Mishra dates to “the middle of second century BCE during the age of Patañjali” (521). This school of aesthetic thought promotes language and literary embellishments and includes many theorists whose works are no longer extant. Beginning with Bhāmaha likely the earliest known representative of the Alaṅkāra School and concluding with Rudraṭa who represents the theoretical “turn” towards the experience of the “poetic” as determinative of aesthetic choices, this section highlight poetic “pivots” that undergird the theory of dhvani (Dasgupta). These early scholars of aesthetics develop theories focused on the material aspects of poetic expression, seeing language as the “soul” of poetry. “The earliest definitions of Poetry… [give] us the substance of which Poetry is made, namely, Šabda (word) and Artha (meaning)” (Raghavan, 1970, 82). Indeed, this is the definition Bhāmaha provides for poetry. Even after Ānandavardhana reorients poetics through the lens of dhvani, śabda, and artha “[continue to be] taken as the body of Poetry” (Raghavan, 82). This early theorization of poetry in terms of language not only demonstrates the porous boundaries between grammarian and aesthetic schools of inquiry, but also how the word “sāhitya,” initially defined as the union of word and

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16 Patañjali, a grammarian from the second century BCE, is the compiler of the Yoga Sūtras, an important collection of aphorisms on Yoga practice. According to tradition, the same Patañjali was also the author of the Mahābhāṣya, a commentary on specific rules of grammar elucidated in Kātyāyana's vārttikas (short comments) and in Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī. An unspecified work of medicine (āyurveda) has also been attributed to him (Mishra).
meaning, becomes a synonym for poetry. Sāhitya is derived from the verb root sam + dhā which means “put together, bring together.” The first mention of the word sāhitya in the title of an aesthetic work does not appear until Rūyaka’s Sāhitya-Mīmāmsa in the twelfth century. Raghavan highlights Rājaśekhara’s discussion of Sāhitya-vidyā (here: the knowledge of poetics) as one of the classical branches of learning (Raghavan, 85). Later theorists, beginning in earnest with Rudraṭa, begin viewing the experience of the poetic as paramount. However, as seen in the work of Mahimabhaṭṭa and Kuṇṭaka, the concept of word/meaning as the heart of poetics championed by the early alaṅkārin-s does not disappear. Rather, as the trajectory of Sanskrit poetics shifts the locus of inquiry from the material components of poetry to the experience of the poetic as determinative, the union of word and meaning or “sāhitya,” becomes the science of the poetics.

For sixth century poetician Bhāmaha, the principle characteristic of poetry is atiśayokti (all “adorned” language, hyperbole). As Krishnamacarī notes, Bhāmaha sees atiśayokti (what Kuṇṭaka later calls vakrokṭi) as the means by which “meaning” is rendered assimilable or delectable in a poetic work and therefore the foundational element of for the production and appreciation of kāvya. Bhāmaha views rasa as subordinate to the alaṅkāra-s, which work in concert with concept of vakrokṭi or “hyperbole.” While like Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin (fl. 6th-7th century CE) emphasizes the importance of the poetic elements such as figures of speech, his fundamental theoretical attitude leans towards the Rīti School that privileges styles of poetic speech as the heart of poetic expression. As the first theorist to refer to the kāvyaśarīra (body of poetic work), Daṇḍin provides the ground for Vāmana’s important poetic shift; kāvya is the combination of śabda (word) and artha (meaning/sense) made poetically beautiful by the additions of guṇa-s and alaṅkāra-s. This connection between the “word” and “meaning” undergirds the assertions Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta make regarding the way in which language functions in the poetic context. Most notably, poetry derives its effect from a network of suggested meanings created by words becoming aesthetic signposts in poetic narrative. Finally, Daṇḍin also introduces the element of saundarya or “poetic beauty” as an important poetic consideration, further developed by Vāmana. However, like his predecessor Bhāmaha, he

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17 During the development of Sanskrit poetics, the concepts of sāhitya (science of poetics) and kāvya (poetry) have been treated as “nearly synonymous” with both translatable as “poetry” (Gren-Uklund, 156). Gren-Uklund suggests that Raghavan conflates these two concepts in his discussion of poetics and poetry in his article “Sāhitya” and on Bhoja in An Introduction to Indian Poetics (156).
remains interested in the elements, which technically make a text “poetically beautiful,” rather than experience of “poetic beauty” as the essence of poetic expression.

Though clearly influenced by both the Guṇa School as well as the Alaṅkāra School, Udbhaṭa (fl. 8th-9th century) a likely contemporary of Vāmana, represents a shift in Sanskrit Poetics when he suggests rasa is a vital element of not only dramatic expression, but all non-prose or poetic forms of expression. Unlike Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, Udbhaṭa is the first theorist to include the notion of suggestion within “expressed poetic figures like rūpaka” which would be explained by the later dhvanikārīna as alaṅkāra dhvani (suggested sense created by a figure of speech). Abhinavagupta in his Locana notes that Udbhaṭa is the first to introduce the notion of suggestion as important to the poetic process and should be seen not as abhāva-vādin (denier of dhvani) but rather as anantarbhāva-vādin (one who includes dhvani within other elements of poetry) (De, 1960, 53). Thus, a significant move towards seeing rasa as a binding aesthetic element that imbues all aspects of poetic expression seems to begin with Udbhaṭa. Although, at this point, the investigation into the nature of “the poetic” still focuses on proper construction of the aesthetic object as opposed to the spectator/reader’s experience of that object. While Bhāmaha, Daṇḍin, and Udbhaṭa focus their poetic analysis on the use and mobilization of figures of speech within the poetic work, Vāmana (fl. 8th-9th century CE) uses a broader definition of alaṅkāra to situate “poetic style” as the foundation of aesthetic expression. Like Daṇḍin, Vāmana views the guṇa-s as “the cause of poetic beauty” (Nandi, 34). However, Vāmana saw rīti or “speech-style” as the fundamental element of poetic composition since it foregrounds the overall sense of “poetic beauty (saundarya)” which all other poetic tropes must work together to produce. Vāmana expands on the “opaque” description of alaṅkāra found in both Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha, into both a broad sense of saundarya as well as the narrow meaning of alaṅkāra discussed above (Nandi, 31-32). In this way, Vāmana lays the groundwork for later aestheticians to go further and argue that sentiment undergirds and drives poetic expression and its experience as seen in the work of important aesthetician, Rudraṭa.

Rudraṭa, the final prominent representative of the Alaṅkāra School, is the first theorist after Bharata, whose work remains extant, to assert that rasa is the “soul of all poetry.” Rudraṭa’s significance rests in his intensive organization of aesthetic tropes into a system based on usage as well as his acknowledgement of the vital importance of sentiment to the “success” of
any poetic work, not only dramatic works. This is a notable break from earlier aestheticians as Rudraṭa orients his theory around the notion that poetry must be constructed in order to be “enjoyed” or “relished.” Moreover, he argues that the poet had a responsibility to make poetic choices in accordance with this goal. Thus, Rudraṭa raises the status of rasa from alaṅkāra to that of a pervasive poetic entity that should permeate “good” literature in general (Mishra). Furthermore, connoisseurs of poetic works or “men of heart” (sahṛdaya-s) can only achieve the goals of life\textsuperscript{19} through kāvya (poetic texts).\textsuperscript{20} For this reason, “the poet…should make his kāvya-s full of rasa-s…without knowing this element of rasa a poet cannot create poetry which tends to be charming” (Nandi, 37). Since they are “men of heart,” they can achieve these “ends” of life only through kāvya. While Rudraṭa provides the initial “push” toward the “experiencer,” it is Ānandavardhana that first uses the “experience” of the poetic as the aesthetic lens through which, sabdārthau (the combination of word and meaning) must be mobilized. Thus, these early poeticians represent important moments of theoretical innovation within the tradition. They expand the role of rasa from drama into the realm of literary expression as a whole while elucidating the process by which sentiment is produced with lengthy discussions of aesthetic elements such as figures of speech, qualities, styles of poetic expression, etc. For each, the questions of what constitutes “kāvya” or poetry and how do these constituent elements produce “poetic beauty” remain paramount.

\section*{II: Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, and the Theory of Dhvani}
\subsection*{Introduction}
Several schools of poetics fight for dominance from the time of the Nāṭyaśāstra to the decline in Sanskrit Poetics beginning around the twelfth century CE. This vibrant critical engagement and conversation with the early alaṅkārin-s promotes the development of various strains of thought within the tradition. However, beginning with Rudraṭa; the “poetic” becomes defined as that which has rasa its core. At this time, the concept of dhvani exists, but primarily as a grammarian notion of meaning, notably discussed by both Patañjali as well as later by

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{19} The four “goals” or “ends” in life according to traditional Hindu philosophy are artha (wealth/prosperity), dharma (duty according to one’s stage in life and social class), kāma (love), and mokṣa (liberation from the cycle of rebirth). The purpose is to enlarge one’s identity through the various stages in life according to one’s social class and work towards these “ends.”

\textsuperscript{20} Jvaladujjvalakprasaraḥ sarasaṃ kurvanmahākaviḥ kāvyam/ sphutamākalpamanalpaṃ pratanoti yaśaḥ parasyāpī (Kāvyālaṅkāra, 1.4, Rudraṭa)
Bhartṛhari, famous grammarians from the Mīmāṁsaka School. Furthermore, the dhvani, like rasa, it is relegated into the realm of alaṅkāra-s, for example, as the figure of speech, gunībhūtavyan̄gyārtha (that which is secondary or subordinate to the primary meaning is suggested). It is Ānandavardhana who first defines dhvani as an independent poetic process which encompasses all other poetic tropes. In the Dhvanyāloka, dhvani as “linguistic resonance” becomes the founding element of a poetic work’s aesthetic framework as well as the mechanism by which the audience experiences the dominant aesthetic sentiment. Thus, Ānandavardhana represents the next important step in the development of Rasa theory by positing a theory of poetics which is “rasa-centric.” The discussion to this point has focused on how the experience of rasa becomes the governing element of poetic construction. Taking the experience of the “poetic” as a point of departure, ninth century Sanskrit theorist, Ānandavardhana constructs his theory of Dhvani, which posits that suggestion is what makes a work poetic; and that suggestion should always work in service of the dominant sentiment. Therefore, the theory of Dhvani becomes the first rasa-oriented poetic paradigm. The energetic disagreements between the Dhvani School the Alaṅkāra School continue in the wake of Ānandavardhana’s Dhvanyāloka as a cultivated and lingering skepticism regarding the pivotal role of dhvani in poetic expression persists. These later alaṅkārin-s are influenced heavily by the Abhinavagupta’s Locana (commentary) which explains the suggestive function of poetic language as the paradigmatic principle of artistic production (especially in drama); the process that produces the connection between śabda (word) and artha (meaning). Furthermore, Abhinavagupta discusses at length the roles of the rasika, kavipratibhā (poetic imagination), and smaral/smṛti (memory as a poetic trope), poetic elements crucial to the success of Kālidāsa’s aesthetic paradigm. These elements

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21 The Mīmāṁsaka School takes its name from the Sanskrit word meaning “investigation.” It refers to several atheistic and theistic doctrines which flourish from approximately first century BCE through the tenth century CE. The philosophical veins of inquiry from this school of thought focus on the character of dharma (duty), rather than probing the existence of God. Furthermore, the Mīmāṁsāka-s (followers of the Mīmāṁsaka School) primary point of interest is textual exegesis (initially mostly of the Vedas). Consequently, their work undergirds the study of philology and the philosophy of language. For example, the Mīmāṁsaka vision of the “word” (śabda) as an indivisible unity of sound and meaning (signifier and signified) stems from the work of Bhartṛhari (5th century CE). It is this principle which informs Bhartṛhari’s Theory of Sphoṭa, which in turn grounds Ānandavardhana’s theory of dhvani.

22 The Dhvani School is most often described as an “off-shoot” from the Alaṅkāra School of Poetics as it is clear that proponents of dhvani do not abandon the core principles of alaṅkāra, guṇa, rītī, etc. Rather than begin a new “school” of poetics, Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta transform the Alaṅkāra School by placing dhvani at the center of kāvyā (Raghavan, 1993; De, 1960)
also represent the aspects of Sanskrit aesthetics that have survived in various incarnations in modern Indian regional performance traditions.

**Sources for Dhvani Theory: Bhartṛhari’s Vākyapadīya and the Ancient Sahṛdaya-s**

Ānandavardhana describes the process of “realizing” or experiencing dhvani for the rasika as asamlaksyākramadhvani (suggestion (vyañjana) which is apprehended (vyañgya) without being conscious of the suggesters (vyañjaka-s) (Chapter 1, Dhvanyāloka). This particular type of dhvani indicates Ānandavardhana’s familiarity with Sphoṭa theory, which argues that words, sentences, and language in general become “meaningful” via an indescribable and varying process of connections, which culminate in a sudden realized understanding (sphoṭa). This “apprehension” can occur at any time in the process of encountering the morpheme or even part of a morpheme. Furthermore, “it maintains that a word or a sentence is to be considered not as a concatenation made up of different sound units arranged in a particular order, but mainly as a single meaningful symbol (here: used to mean linguistic sign)” (Raja, 97). Therefore, this semantic unit (word/sentence) as the symbol becomes the “meaning-bearer” and the “articulated sounds in linguistic discourse” are merely the means, which reveal this meaning.

Ānandavardhana’s view of rasa and ultimately his theory of dhvani are composites of years of poetic study and in particular, the work of the grammarian, Bhartṛhari and other proponents of sφoṭa. Bhartṛhari also draws on earlier works and some of the underlying theories found in earlier grammatical and philosophical literature. However, as Raja points out, there is no evidence that suggests vaunted Sanskrit grammarian and author of the Aṣṭādhyāyi, Pāṇini, is familiar with anything similar to sφoṭa theory despite the fact early theorists “refer to the tradition ascribing the theory to sage Sphoṭāyana, mentioned as an authority by Pāṇini (98). Most notably, the concept of sφoṭa is found first in Patañjali’s grammatical treatise, the Mahābhāṣya. However, for Patañjali the notion of sφoṭa is “not a single indivisible symbol considered as a meaning-bearer, but only the unchanging sound-unit, a time-series pattern of such units (Raja, 103). In other words, the dhvani-s or sounds in this context create an indivisible

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23 Sahṛdaya is a term meaning “men of heart” or more generally, the knowledgeable aesthete/spectator for whom the playwright is writing.
sound unit but Patañjali limits this process to the concept of the phoneme. Thus, while Patañjali’s concept of *sphoṭa* is markedly different from that later developed by Bhartṛhari, his work is the first to deal with some of the fundamental problems of language perception which form the impetus for Bhartṛhari’s work as well. For example, the questions of what makes an aggregate of letters/sounds a word and what gives that word meaning and finally, how that meaning is perceived or understood are addressed initially by Patañjali. It is these questions, approached in various ways by subsequent grammarians from various schools of thought that shape the development of *śabda-artha* (word-meaning) theory going forward. Some argue that meaning is created when the last letter of a word is uttered. Others, like followers of the *Yogasūtra*, assert that meaning arises from “the confused muddle [of the] spoken word, the ‘thing-meant’, and the concept formed in the mind” (Raja, 112). Using this concept as a foundation, Bhartṛhari makes the claim that thus the “word has a double power; it can convey an idea of the form of an expression as well as its content” (Raja, 118).

According to Bhartṛhari, speech and thought are only two aspects of the same speech-principle: a sentence is an undivided utterance and its meaning is an “instantaneous flash on insight” sometimes also called *pratibhā* (Raja, 99). Thus, *sphoṭa* results from what he terms, *prakṛta dhvani* or a symbol which contains the “phonological structure, sound pattern, of the norm, or the acoustic image of the normal expression” (Raja, 120). Since *sphoṭa* cannot be quantified, pronounced, or written, it manifests through *prakṛta-dhvani* through the interplay between *śabda* (word) and *artha* (meaning). Bhartṛhari sees the sentence or semantic unit as a “fundamental linguistic fact” and therefore, the only “reality” is the meaning generated by the sentence-symbol as a whole. Words are “suggesters” (*dhvani*-s) and only garner semantic value in that they are pointers to this undifferentiated “meaning.” This somewhat unquantifiable process provides the basis for Ānandavardhana’s theory of *dhvani* as the central binding element of *kāvya*. As Ingalls points out in his introduction to the *Dhvanyāloka*, the concept of *dhvani* as a philological concept and part of a technical grammatical function was well-known in the

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24 Raja compares this distinction to Saussure’s “duality of * langue* and * parole*” where *langue* refers to the “social product of the faculty of speech” and *parole* is simply “individual speech-activity contingent on a socio-cultural paradigm to make sense” (105). In this way, like Saussure’s notion of the signifier/signified, Sphoṭa arises from the interplay between *śabda* (word) and *artha* (meaning). Interestingly, Saskia Kersenboom describes the difference between the experience of the performance of the *vartāprabandha* and reading the text as akin to that between *langue* and *parole* (1995). In other words, only in the performance (“parole”) can the meaning of the text become activated.
Kashmiri intellectual circle in the eighth and ninth centuries CE. However, the notion of suggestion lacked poetic application and indeed spawned ridicule from Ānandavardhana’s contemporaries over its inclusion as the overarching function which produces poetic expression. The theory of vyan̄jana comes from the Alaṅkāra School and as well as from the grammatical concept of “suggestion” discussed in the Vākyapadīya. In addition, the concept of dhvani was also well-known in many circles, particular amongst the Kashmiri intellectuals with whom Ānandavardhana was likely conversant (Ingalls). Ānandavardhana’s revolutionizes the field of Sanskrit poetics by positing the concept of dhvani as an aesthetic paradigm which defines all other poetic choices and the criteria by which a work can be seen as “poetic.” “It is the [production of a] workable critique of beauty in literature” that codifies Ānandavardhana’s vaulted position amongst Indian literary critics (Ingalls).

However, while the grammarians provide an important linguistic foundation for Dhvani theory, in the first kārikā (verse) of the Dhvanyāloka, Ānandavardhana suggests, dhvani may have an extensive “poetic” history as well. He asserts dhvani is an ancient poetic concept lauded by learned men for several generations (Krishnamoorthy, 24). Ānandavardhana’s tribute suggests, “Dhvani was very much in vogue in a famous circle of cultured critics, and though it was never committed to writing, it was being traditionally handed down as a valuable treasure from generation to generation” (Krishnamoorthy, 25). However, “the total absence of Dhvani in all the works on Poetics from Bharata down to Rudraṭa” indicates that within the scope of Sanskrit Poetics, dhvani as an aesthetic trope was not yet recognized, at least not widely (Krishnamoorthy, 24). In this vein, Ānandavardhana distinguishes between “men of literary taste” who recognize dhvani and “writers of rhetoric” who seem to ignore it (Krishnamoorthy, 25). Ingalls similarly notes that Ānandavardhana often refers to contemporary theorists, such as Manoratha, who ridicule the concept of dhvani. Thus, it seems likely that the Dhvanyāloka tasks itself with systematizing the ideas of these ancient aesthetic theorists who previously articulated the precepts of dhvani theory that have since been lost (Krishnamoorthy, 27). Krishnamoorthy’s lengthy exposition of the sources for dhvani theory also mentions the Kavirāja Mārga, a work on poetics produced by Nṛpatuṇga, a South Indian king who, like Ānandavardhana, flourishes during the ninth century CE. Describing this work as combination of Daṇḍin’s Kāvyadarśa and

\[\text{Ch.1.1, Dhvanyāloka}\]
Bhāmaha’s *Kāvyālaṃkāra*, Krishnamoorthy argues that as Ānandavardhana’s contemporary, it is unlikely Nṛpatuṅga was familiar with the *Dhvanyāloka*. While the text clearly privileges the role of figures of speech, unlike the early *alaṃkārin*-s discussed in this chapter, he mentions and describes *dhvani* as an additional *alaṃkāra* (Krishnamoorthy, 30). Therefore, this reference indicates that *dhvani*, as a poetic concept, in some form, likely predates the *Dhvanyāloka*.

It is also evident that Ānandavardhana is familiar with major figures in the Alaṅkāra School, being in many ways indebted to their work which focused mainly on *alaṃkāra*-s, *vr̥tti*-s, and *guṇa*-s or the “building blocks” of poetic works. Indeed, until Rudraṭa the poetic trope *rasa* is not recognized as an independent aspect of aesthetic character which imbues the entire work and thereby certifies the work as “poetic.” Similarly, while Daṇḍin and Vāmana are the first to discuss the *kāvyaśarīra* (body of poetry) tying the words of the poetic work (*śabda*) with the meaning (*artha*), neither goes further than this to postulate a theory on the basis of this link between the poetry itself and the sense conveyed (or how the poetic beauty of the work is conveyed/perceived) (Das Gupta; De, 1960). In contrast, Ānandavardhana incorporates elements such as *guṇa*-s and *alaṃkāra*-s into his theory as “suggesters” chosen based on the dominant sentiment of the poetic work. He asks, for example, how can an *alaṃkāra*, which is “maker of beauty” be also, the beauty itself? He instead argues for the idea that “*alaṃkārya*” or “*saundarya*” (poetic beauty) is the goal for all *alaṃkāra*-s and this state is synonymous with *rasadhvani* (Nandi). For Ānandavardhana these figures of speech like everything else in a poetic/dramatic work must never be so elaborate as to take either the poet’s mind or the reader’s mind off the main goal, which is *rasa*. In this way, it is Ānandavardhana’s goal to establish *dhvani* as an independent power of words and thereby show “suggested meaning” as the foundational aspect of poetic speech which would include *alaṃkāra*-s, *guṇa*-s and theories such as those privileging *vakrokti* (unusual striking turn of a word/phrase) and *anumāna* (inference) as paradigmatic principles for theorizing the nature and production of the poetic experience. Therefore, *dhvani*, governed by *rasa*, becomes the vehicle and poetic process by which the spectator becomes imbricated into the poetic world and eventually, experiences the aesthetic relish.
Ānandavardhana’s Dhvanyāloka

Ānandavardhana’s Dhvanyāloka changed the face of Sanskrit poetics by positing the first comprehensive theory of poetics. Likely flourishing around the early part of the ninth century CE, Ānandavardhana draws from the existing critical aesthetic, linguistic, and grammarian theories in circulation in creating an aesthetic paradigm predicated on the concept of dhvani or “suggestion.” Further, he argues that it is this mechanism of “suggestion” that undergirds both poetic production and appreciation. Literally dhvani means “sound” or “resonance” in Sanskrit. While any element from the sound of a part of word to an entire scene can be an example of dhvani within an aesthetic context, the overarching principle, which binds these suggested meanings together within a work, is the emotive sentiment or rasa. Indeed, Ānandavardhana states this point unequivocally and in the Locana, Abhinavagupta goes further and uses this point to recast the importance of dhvani theory in terms of the “highest” aim of poetry, rasadhvani (Dhvanyāloka, Chapter 1.5-6). Before delving into the function of poetic language, Ānandavardhana begins by describing the three main types of meaning identified by Indian linguists and semioticians are: abhidāÑ-denotational meaning; lakṣana-connotational meaning; vyañjana-suggested meaning. These categories of “meaning” have been in circulation in linguistic circles for some time and are considered common knowledge amongst the scholarly community by the time Dhvanyāloka is written. Ānandavardhana explains that each of these types of meaning can also be an example of dhvani. For instance, “The house is on the Ganges” is an example of “lakṣana meaning.” Here, the literal or explicit meaning (which does not make sense) must be cancelled in order so the primary “sense” can emerge, “The house is next to Ganges/on the bank of the Ganges.” The “suggested” meanings from this statement (possibly endless without context) must begin with the word “Ganges,” which has a diverse range of meanings. In this case the name of the river alone can suggest a variety of meanings to those with the appropriate cultural knowledge. Furthermore, it is the suggested “sense” which

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26 De (1960), Keith, and others have argued that since Abhinavagupta often refers to the author of the Kārīkās as the “Dhvanikāra or Kārikākāra” in the Locana it is likely that Ānandavardhana did not write this portion of the text. Later scholars such as Daniel Ingalls who publishes his translation of the Dhvanyāloka and Locana in 1990 provides the following argument for a single author of both the Kārīkas and the Vṛtti: “First, there is not a single instance in the Vṛtti of substantial disagreement with the Kārīkas…Second, if some earlier genius had established the system of dhvani and the general critique of literature in terms of dhvani and rasa which is found in the Kārīkas, I find it inconceivable that a later author should not have given some praise, some respect, to him” (24-27). For the purposes of this investigation, I will assume that the author of the Kārīkas and the Vṛtti are the same and will refer to this person as “Ānandavardhana.”
imbricates the spectator into the poetic world as it requires an emotional as well intellectual engagement with the work. As Ānandavardhana argues, the poetic frame imbued with the overarching aesthetic emotion governs which suggested meanings will arise.

Ānandavardhana takes the concept of dhvani from the grammarian and philological tradition and makes it the overarching principle central to the successful creation of poetry. He bases his theory on vyañjana or “suggestion” refers to the “sense” of a word, symbol, sound, or figure only accessible through what is “suggested.” According to Ānandavardhana and further argued by Abhinavagupta, the vyañgyārtha or vyañgyā (suggested meaning) is always culture-bound and often references current social mores, political issues, etc. relevant to the audience. For example, when Kālidāsa compares Śakuntalā to the atimukta creeper and by extension, Duṣyanta to the mango tree, the suggested meaning is that only an extraordinary man can “support” her like only the mango tree can support this particular vine. Therefore, it is these layers of meaning that offer the audience access to the full aesthetic impact of the poetic/dramatic work. As Chaitanya points out, “The basic recognition in Sanskrit poetics, dating…to Bharata [was] that poetic experience was fundamentally identical-in its derivation, not ultimate reach-with general human experience in the varied contexts of living [which] made Ānandavardhana, Mammaṭa, and others insist that poetic meaning was communicated by the entire context and not by the expression through language alone” (126). While in the Nāṭyaśāstra Bharata indicates that rasa, which refers to the “sentiment or essence” of a dramatic or poetic work, is the most important element of any such work, Ānandavardhana builds on this concept. He bases his critical theory of aesthetics on the notion that poetry is a network of suggestions that are created by various linguistic, dramatic/poetic, aesthetic tropes, and figures of speech that work together to evoke the appropriate rasa or emotive flavor and affect the state of aesthetic relish experienced by the audience.

Ānandavardhana distinguishes himself from earlier alaṅkārin-s by offering a nuanced critique of the difference between rasadhvani (that which places rasa in the principal position) from rasādi-alaṅkāra, which is used to denote rasadhvani in a subordinate position to the primary sense/meaning of the word/statement. In the Locana, Abhinavagupta furthers this

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27 In terms of the two aspects of Sanskrit Drama mentioned here: political intrigue and social education the best examples can be found in Śudraka’s Mrčchakatika in which political corruption is exposed and Bhāsa’s Mahābhārata plays which are intended to recast some of the players in the Mahābhārata in an often redemptive setting, in order to espouse a particular ideal to the audience.
argument by exalting rasadhvani as the highest aim of poetic expression which includes the other two types of dhvani Ānandavardhana identifies (vastu dhvani and alaṅkāra dhvani). In the second udyota (chapter) Ānandavardhana also delineates between two types of rasādi-kāvya (rasa as prominent poetry): dhvani-kāvya (poetry with suggestion) and rasadhvani-kāvya (poetry in which the suggestion of sentiment is prominent). Here, he argues that in the case of the former, it possible for the rasādi to be subordinate to another sense intended by the sentence and therefore is being used to “beautify” that sense, while, in the latter, the suggestion of the sentiment must be the primary purpose (Nandi, 1006-7; Dhvanyāloka, Ch. 2.4, 2.5). When rasādi is prominent the result is rasadhvani or “poetry of the highest order” according to Mammaṭa who classifies poetry as uttama (highest), madhyama (middling), adhama (lowest); a notion that is shared by Jagannātha, Viśvanātha, Ānandavardhana, and Abhinavagupta. Rasadhvani and other dhvani-s work together to evoke the dominant sentiment promoted in a work, within the audience. Even if the sentence or moment is not directly related to the primary/dominant sentiment of the work, its importance on another level of meaning is still necessary to the overall suggestion of sentiment in the play.

In the opening chapter, Ānandavardhana begins by dispensing with various criticisms that may be leveled against the theory of Dhvani and then states that all men of taste admire the “sense” of poetry which is of two varieties: explicit and suggested (Krishnamoorthy, 102). Ānandavardhana explains that since previous aestheticians have offered detailed analyses of the explicit “sense,” the Dhvanyāloka will be concerned with the “suggested.” Here, he immediately notes, that “beauty of the suggested sense is not identical with the beauty of its components, but something over and above it” (Krishnamoorthy, 102). This is notable as the final rhetorical shift towards the “experience” of poetry as paramount. As he asserts here, the “components of beauty” do not necessarily create the poetic but rather may only enhance it. The poetic sense is “over and above” each individual aesthetic element and can only be suggested (Krishnamoorthy, 103). In this way, Ānandavardhana articulates a theory of poetics which operates from the perspective of the “experience” of poetry. Suggestion or dhvani then becomes the process through which the aesthetic emotion (rasa) binds poetic choices.

In order show how poetic “sense” does not reside within the word, figure, etc., but rather it can only suggested by these elements, Ānandavardhana offers the following example of vastu dhvani: “Continue on, o sage, confidently, that dog is killed today by the fierce lion which lives
in overgrown brush on the bank of the Godāvari river” (Dhvanyāloka, Chapter 1.3).\(^{28}\) As seen here the literal meaning about the death of the dog does not provide the full impact of this verse. Contradicting the literal meaning of the verse, the “suggested” sense operates as a veiled threat to the mendicant, indicating that if he previously feared a dog, the peril has increased considerably with the lion. In this way, the relationship between the explicit “sense” and the suggestion “idea” is one of opposition and necessary in order to fully appreciate the intended meaning. \(\textit{Alaṅkāra dhvani}\) functions such that the literal meaning becomes a metaphor in which the suggested “sense” becomes the element of comparison. Ānandavardhana offers his own work as an example. “Lit up are the quarters with your lustrous beauty and your face looks charming with a smile upon it. And still, O darling, if the ocean does not rise, obviously it is a mass of stillness” (Dhvanyāloka, Chapter 1.6).\(^{29}\) Here, without understanding the suggested “sense” of the woman’s face resembling the moon, the passage cannot become fully meaningful (Krishnamoorthy, 106). This is also an example which demonstrates the importance of cultural knowledge to deciphering the full “poetic sense” being conveyed. The traditional use of the “moon” as a standard of beauty is culturally defined and understood, a reference that would not be appreciated without this cultural background. Finally, \(\textit{rasadhvani}\), the most important of the three suggestive functions, demonstrates that no emotion can be denoted by words, but rather emotions must be suggested. In some ways, all examples of \(\textit{dhvani}\) can be classified as \(\textit{rasadhvani}\) as every element of a poetic work must suggest the aesthetic emotion. Notably, here, Ānandavardhana provides the example of Vālmīki and his pity for the two birds separated eternally by the arrow of a hunter which “transformed itself into a verse.” Thus, as Krishnamoorthy points out, “the sorrow of the bird gets transfigured in the vision of the imaginative poet and result is śloka or song” (107).\(^{30}\) In this way, it is clear, that the poetic experience, which is beyond words, figures, qualities, and other concrete poetic elements must be evoked and felt through suggestion and cannot be expressed or denoted.

In the second chapter, Ānandavardhana describes how words, sentences, paragraphs, the work itself, etc. can each be examples of \(\textit{dhvani}\). Here, he defines each of the major concepts in

\(^{28}\) \(\text{brāhma dhārmika viśrabdhaḥ sa śunako ‘dya māritastena/godāvarīnadīlalatīgahanavāsinā dṛptasiṃhena} \) (Dhvanyāloka, Chapter 1.3).

\(^{29}\) \(\text{lāvan̄ yakāntiparitadin̄ mukhe ‘asminu smere ‘adhunā tava mukhe taralāyatākṣi/kṣobhaṃ yadeti na manāgapi tena manye subyaktameva jaḍarādhirayam payodhiḥ} \) (Dhvanyāloka, Chapter 1.6).

\(^{30}\) \(\text{kāvyasyātmā sa evārthastathā cādikaveḥ purā kraun͂ cadvandvaviyogotthaḥ śokaḥ ślokatvamāgataḥ} \) (Dhvanyāloka, Chapter 1.5)
Sanskrit aesthetics and demonstrates how they each operate within the overall function of dhvani. He argues that elements such as guṇa-s, alaṅkāra-s, nrtya (dance), gītā (songs), etc. each can become suggesters of rasa through the dhvani process, evoke poetic beauty, and thereby, initiate the “aesthetic relishing” of the spectator. Ultimately, for Ānandavardhana, the functionality of poetic elements within the poetic narrative depends on their ability to “suggest” the dominant aesthetic emotion. Ānandavardhana provides more subdivisions of dhvani in the final chapter. Here, there is an extended discussion of propriety or “appropriateness” in kāvya as well as investigations into theme, style, characters, and the varying levels of “excellence” in poetry (Krishnamoorthy, 99). He provides numerous examples to illustrate the inexhaustibility of poetic expression; in essence, it becomes a practical application of the theory espoused in the first two sections. Ānandavardhana uses these examples to show not only endless possibility of dhvani, but also the expansive reach of pratibhā or poetic imagination and that the subject of poetry only becomes “poetic” through aesthetic representation.

Finally, Ānandavardhana attempts to deal with some of the abstractions of the concept of rasa left by Bharata by laying out a series of “tests” for the literary work to ensure that it will succeed in evoking the appropriate sentiment. For example, he notes that literary works should display aucitya or “appropriateness,” which refers to the doctrine stating only poetic elements consistent with the rasa, which the author intends, should be included. As Raghavan notes, aucitya is the harmony between “the whole and its parts” and represents a perfection of “morals and beauty in art” (Raghavan, 1993, 103). In the Nāṭyaśāstra, Bharata defines drama as the “imitation of the three worlds or representation of the actions of men of various natures” (Raghavan, 102). Thus, he devotes several chapters to the “appropriateness” of costume, speech patterns, musical elements, etc. (i.e. how these elements relate to the dominant sentiment). More specifically, Bharata argues that in order to evaluate dramatic performance, it is necessary to know “the infinite variety of human nature” (Raghavan, 102). However, this variety must be represented in accordance with governing element of aesthetic emotion or rasa. Thus, this idea of “appropriateness” presupposes rasa as the binding element of poetic expression. Ānandavardhana builds on this connection between sentiment and aesthetic choices by redefining figures of speech, qualities of poetry, and other poetic elements as ultimately, serviceable and interchangeable in accordance with rasa. Furthermore, he argues that each of these elements functions as “suggesters” of sentiment within the poetic narrative and therefore
must be in harmony with this sentiment. For example, Ānandavardhana indicates that the 
*aucitya* of *alaṅkāra*-s or figures of speech can be achieved by following “principles for their 
proper employment” in accordance with the aesthetic emotion (Raghavan, 107). Thus, 
Ānandavardhana uses *aucitya* to define each of the major aesthetic elements as subordinate to the 
independent power of language to “suggest (*dhvani,*” by which *rasa* inhabits the poetic work. 
In this way, “wherever there is suggestiveness of *Rasa* in the expression, be it the element of 
sound and letter, separate words, collocation, portions of the theme (*Prakaraṇa*) or even the 
work as a whole (*Prabandha*), there we have the *Aucitya* of those elements to the main thing, 
*Rasa*” (Raghavan, 108).

The concept of *aucitya* is further developed by later theorists such as Rājaśekhara and 
Kṣemendra who focus more intently on how *rasa* governs all aspects of poetic production. 
However, for Ānandavardhana “words and senses seem to have a within them a deeper 
significance than that expressed, and they would not reveal their secret to discursive intellect 
without the aid of imagination and feeling” (Krishnamoorthy, 97). Thus, it is sentiment, shaped 
by poetic imagination, which must drive poetic choices and the doctrine of suggestion. In the 
*Locana*, Abhinavagupta further develops the roles of *pratibhā* (imagination) and *rasa* within the 
paradigm for poetic articulation Ānandavardhana presents. Thus, the *dhvani* process 
Ānandavardhana espouses is a complicated and layered system of poetic expression that 
becomes the foundation as well as the means to achieving the “goal” of dramatic/poetic works, 
which must be the experience of *rasa* by the spectator. Here, we see the theoretical “pivot” 
towards a spectator-centered poetics. Post-Ānandavarvdhana, theorists no longer (for the most 
part) question the notion that *rasa* is the soul of poetry and concede that the experience of *rasa* 
must also drive poetic construction. Furthermore, Ānandavardhana’s focus on the experience of 
rasa through dhvani continues the move towards a spectator-centered poetics. As seen in the 
work of Abhinavagupta, the aesthetic experience of the aesthete becomes paramount and now, 
the focal point for aesthetic theorization.

**Abhinavagupta Locana; Bhārati**

As a tenth century aesthetician, Abhinavagupta is best known as an ardent proponent of 
the concept of *dhvani* espoused by Ānandavardhana and for his two commentaries: 
*Abhinavalocana* (on Ānandavardhana’s *Dhvanyāloka*) and *Abhinavabhārati* (on Bharata’s
Nāṭyaśāstra). Though Bhaṭṭa Tauta’s work, Kāvyakautuka, has been lost, the numerous quotations from this text by Abhinavagupta and others suggest it must have been an influential text (Sreekantaiya, 56). For instance, Abhinavagupta famously quotes Bhaṭṭa Tauta’s view on poetic imagination, “Intuition which presents new and ever new ideas is considered imagination” (Abhinavabhbhārati).\(^{31}\) Abhinavagupta utilizes this particular definition of pratībhā or “imagination” as applicable to both the artist/playwright as well as the actors when discussing how narrative choice and representation (abhinaya) convey rasa. Furthermore, both commentaries Abhinavagupta produces demonstrate his primary contribution to Sanskrit aesthetics are his extensive theoretical considerations of the interrelationship between rasāsvāda, smara, and pratībhā and forceful reiteration of rasadhvani as the highest aim of poetry. These three poetic tropes coupled with dhvani as the poetic undercarriage and rasa as ultimate “result” or “effect,” form the lynchpins of Abhinavagupta’s poetic theory. Abhinavagupta wants to reiterate Ānandavardhana’s point that “a poet’s fancy may have the power to mint a hundred images, but he must use only those that are in harmony with the Rasa” (Sreekantaiya, 72).

Furthermore, Abhinavagupta ascribes a spiritual basis to the notion of pratībhā noting, “the Parā Pratibhā-the supreme power of Śiva ever residing in himself and revealing the entire creation in the process of self-revelation can equally apply to Kavipratibhā, the poet’s imaginative vision to which the whole universe becomes open (Locana, Ch.1.4).\(^{32}\) This focus on the spectator’s role and their personal and spiritual fulfillment through the phalāgama (resolution) or siddhi (success) of a dramatic performance lays the groundwork for the use of drama as an anticolonial tool of resistance and communication in the twentieth century. In particular, the delicate interplay between the poetic imagination of the playwright, the actors’ ability to “represent” the characters, and the holistic experience of the spectator forms the backbone for the success of regional art forms as Sanskrit theater declines during the eleventh through fifteenth centuries.

More than Ānandavardhana, it is Abhinavagupta who “establishes in clear terms the pre-eminence of rasa suggested in the Dhvanyāloka” (Sreekantaiya, 53). Abhinavagupta “[decides] that dhvani, in fact, means rasadhvani...[and] explains rasa from the point of view of the dhvani principle” in order to answer objections to dhvani theory while also avoiding pitfalls suffered by theorists such as Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Bhoja or Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa who focused the origin or location of

\(^{31}\) prajñā navanavollekhaśālinī pratībhā matā
\(^{32}\) yadunmīlanaśakyāiva viśvamunmilati kṣanāt/svātmāyatanaviśrāntāṃ tāṃ vande pratībhāṃ śivām
rasa (Sreekantaiya, 54-55). Like other proponents of dhvani, Abhinavagupta interprets Bharata’s rasasūtra to mean “Rasa is suggested by the union of the sthāyin with the vibhāva-s through the relation of the suggested (vyāṇya) and the suggester (vyāṇjakā); the nispatti (creation) of Bharata, therefore should mean abhivyakti (manifestation, is distinguished)” (De, 130). In other words, the process of suggestion becomes the primary element in the evocation of sentiment. Unlike Lollaṭa or Bhaṭṭanāyaka, who both see “nispatti” as relating a concrete process in which poetic elements directly “cause” sentiment, Abhinavagupta argues it is not the sentiment that manifests in the spectator, but rather the “relish (asvāda) of the sentiment. This is “not the mood itself, but its reflection in the form of a subjective condition of aesthetic enjoyment in the reader (De, 1960, 131). In this way, “Rasa cannot be identified with the constituent vibhāva-s, for the latter are not experienced separately, but the whole appears as Rasa” (De, 133). Finally, Abhinavagupta goes one step further in distinguishing his vision of sentiment from previous Rasa theorists by suggesting the permanent mood or sthāyin remains in the hearts of the appreciating audience in the form of “latent impressions (vāsanā),” which build on the “germ of [permanent mood] already existent in the reader’s mind” (De, 134). Therefore, Abhinavagupta completes the theoretical “turn” that privileges the rasika’s experience as controlling mechanism governing poetic construction. Now, the “rasika alone is capable of realizing Rasa; for Rasa is not an objective entity which can reside in the hero or the actor, but a subjective condition realized by the reader’s own capacity of aesthetic enjoyment” (De, 135).

In this way, Abhinavagupta both reiterates and reformulates Ānandavardhana’s discussion of rasa as well as rasadhvani by explicitly stating rasa functions as the ultimate goal of suggestion. In addition, he interrogates the production and location of rasa as well as the vital role of the rasika in much more detail than his predecessor. Notably, Abhinavagupta argues that suggestion as a means to an end without “poetic beauty” is, for all intents and purposes, not “poetic,” another view which is implied but not discussed in detail by Ānandavardhana. Furthermore, Abhinavagupta describes the triple function of the poetic word as “structure, lucidity, and beauty” and only words which display this elasticity of meaning should be employed in poetry” (Locana, Ch.3).  

Thus, like Ānandavardhana, he argues that the addition of poetic elements and use of suggestion in a poetic work must occur in the service of sentiment. However, unlike the author of the Dhvanyāloka, Abhinavagupta shifts focus of the Alaṅkāra

\[33\text{ racanayā prasādena cārutvena upabrihmitā eva śabdāḥ kāvye yojyāḥ} \]
School of Poetics even further towards the “experiencer” by offering a concrete paradigm for understanding both the production and experience of aesthetic emotion. In essence, he asserts that kāvya is that which motivates the spectator to experience “aesthetic consciousness.” Therefore, all suggestion must work towards rasadhvani and “good” kāvya has rasadhvani as prominent and the spectator’s experience or “relishing” now determines the form and content of the aesthetic object.

III: Dhvani “Aftershocks”: Alaṅkāra After Ānandavardhana

Transitional Poetics: Lollaṭa, Rūyakka, Rājaśekhara, and Bhoja

While Ānandavardhana is the first to posit a comprehensive theory of poetics from the perspective of “suggestion,” it is in the Locana of Abhinavagupta that the theory of dhvani develops and flourishes. He begins his defense of dhvani in the commentary on Chapter one of the Dhvanyāloka, “scrutinizing and rejecting” most criticisms of dhvani theory levied by later theorists such as Kuṇṭaka, Mahimabhaṭṭa or Bhaṭṭanāyaka (Nandi, 710). In order to do this, Abhinavagupta, like Ānandavardhana, first establishes vyan͂ jana as “a separate and independent word power” (711). After Ānandavardhana introduces dhvani as the foundational element of poetic construction and Abhinavagupta further develops this idea but elucidating concepts such as pratibhā and equating the experience of sentiment with that of mokṣa (liberation), many later theorists remain unconvinced. However, as noted earlier, Ānandavardhana’s systematic representation of the poetics changes the discussion and forces all later theorists to respond to his assertion; ultimately, it is the experience of rasa through the power of dhvani, not the various poetic devices that defines poetic expression. These transitional figures are mostly concerned with what they view as lacunae in Ānandavardhana’s text, i.e. the lack of clarity on the role and importance of rasa, lack of clarity on dhvani in relation with other poetic tropes, etc. For this reason, Abhinavagupta should be seen as the first “transition” after Ānandavardhana as he redirects the focus onto particular aspects of Dhvani theory, which highlight the experience of the aesthetic emotion. Furthermore, it is Abhinavagupta who clearly defines rasadhvani as the highest aim of poetry and argues that it actually includes the other two varieties of dhvani defined by Ānandavardhana. Thus, Rājaśekhara, Lollaṭa, Bhoja, and Rūyyaka are each concerned with the Dhvanyāloka’s treatment of rasa and question whether dhvani is always necessary to produce it.
As Nandi notes, “Rājaśekhara was posterior to Ānandavardhana by less than a hundred years and we cannot exactly make out his approach to vyañjana as his magnum opus-Kāvyamimāṃsa-has not come down to us in its complete form, or perhaps he left it unfinished” (13). It is thought to be a fragment of a larger treatise on poetics, Kavirāhasya that influences several important theorists including Kṣemendra34, Hemacandra35, and Bhoja. Rājaśekhara provides a compendium of the poetic theories in circulation and a detailed description of the qualities of the poet. The initial chapter mentions a Saiva darśana text that describes rasa as a synonym for Siva’s semen (Mishra, 199). This connection of rasa with the vital essence of the divine is a rhetorical move made by Abhinavagupta as well to elevate the experience of the aesthetic emotion as comparable to “spiritual bliss.” However, despite his ardent support for rasa as the ultimate aim of poetic expression, Rājaśekhara provides a rather conventional definition of poetry, which focuses on the various aesthetic devices like Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin as well as the theory of styles espoused by Vāmana (Krishnamacariar). Rājaśekhara’s contribution to the theory of poetics centers on his mobilization of rasa as the controlling mechanism of poetic expression and his discussion of the concept of “appropriateness” or aucitya (Kane, 211).

Many of these theorists see dhvani as another alaṅkāra or tool of ornamentation and suggest that rasa not dhvani should be called the “soul of poetry.” For example, Bhoja sees the grammatical function of vyañjana and sphoṭa as separate from the poetic function of dhvani. In addition, he privileges sṛṅgāra rasa (love sentiment) as the meta-rasa in which all other sentiments resolve (De, 1960). Twelfth century theorist Rūyyaka represents a “bell-weather” in the development of Sanskrit poetics; in that his work functions as measure for the influence and scope of the theory of dhvani at this time. Rūyyaka’s adopts Kuṇṭaka’s conception of kavi-pratibhā (imagination of the poet) in the production of the aesthetic emotion. More notably, he

34 Kṣemendra was an Alaṅkāra theorist who flourishes in the early part of the eleventh century and may also have been a contemporary of Kuṇṭaka. He is thought to be the author of two texts on alaṅkāra, the Aucityavicāra and Kavikanṭhābharaṇa (Das Gupta, 554). Das Gupta argues that Kṣemendra, like Ānandavardhana, was said to have” regarded the study of grammar, logic, and drama as indispensable for a poet” (554). The concept of aucitya or “appropriateness” in poetic expression was Kṣemendra’s primary focus his work, Aucityavicāra and for him, the “relish of sentiment” (Keith, 1993, 397). His other work, Kavikanṭhābharaṇa explores the intricacies of becoming a poet, the “charm” of poetry, and various aspects of poetic construction with which the poet should be familiar (Keith, 397).

35 Hemacandra was a likely contemporary of Mammaṭa who “placidly borrows from Mammaṭa, Abhinavagupta, Rājaśekhara…and so on” (Keith, 394). The major work attributed to Hemacandra is entitled Kavyamāśāsana. Dasgupta, De (1959), Keith (1970, 1993) and others note that Hemacandra’s work “lacks originality” and has value only in that it addresses kāvyā. Hemacandra was “primarily a grammarian” who had “little influence on his successors” (Das Gupta, 560).
applies Kuṇṭaka’s notion of “poetic charm” (vicchitti-viśeṣa) evoked by the poet’s imagination as a “test” for each figure of speech to determine its “poeticity” or “charmingness” (De, 231). Shortly after Ānandavardhana in the ninth century, Lollaṭa suggests vibhāva-s (determinants) as the direct cause of rasa, which makes the experience of the aesthetic emotion an “effect” or anukārya (De, 118). Thus, he uses the words “utpatti (generates as a consequence)” or “puṣti (develops, grows)” instead of Bharata’s term “nispatīḥ (being brought about, derived from)” to indicate how rasa is produced. Several later writers including notably, Viśvanātha, offer the following objection to this view of rasa: “If the Rasa is an effect, having for its cause the perception of the vibhāva-s, then at the time of the relish of Rasa, the vibhāva-s would not be perceived; for we do not find the simultaneous perception of cause and effect” (De, 119). In other words, the experience of rasa could be a direct result of the determinants as the process of cause and effect requires these events to be sequential as opposed to simultaneous. Additionally, Lollaṭa argues the rasika experiences the sthāyin or “permanent mood” of the hero, who is imitated by the actor. Thus, unlike Abhinavagupta and Ānandavardhana, Lollaṭa does not address rasa from the perspective of the spectator’s experience of “the poetic.” Thus, the debate between these transitional figures focuses on the location, production, and primacy of rasa representing an acceptance of rasa as a primary component of the poetic. In this context, these theorists attempt to answer questions such as “who experiences rasa?”; “whose rasa is being experienced?” and “is dhvani necessary for the production of rasa?” And finally, “what is the locus of poetic inquiry, the spectator or the poetic work?” However, Abhinavagupta’s focus on rasika as the point of entry into analysis of the poetic body remains a point of contention.

“Disputers” of Dhvani: Kuṇṭaka, Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Mahimabhaṭṭa, and Dhanaṅjaya

Introduction

The term “disputers” refers to the ways in which these writers expand and reformulate dhvani theory and their skepticism regarding its role as independent poetic process which subsumes other aesthetic devices. Krishna Chaitanya outlines the objections to the centrality of dhvani made by Mahimabhaṭṭa, Mammaṭa, Bhaṭṭanāyaka and others noting that while these theorists have accepted and stipulated certain aspects of Ānandavardhana’s theory, each either reorient or expand this theory to accommodate their own views as well as a dynamic poetics landscape. For example, Bhaṭṭanāyaka defends the importance of alaṅkāra-s not dhvani in
creating *rasa* while Mahimabhaṭṭa argues for the over-arching principle of *anumāna* (inference) in contrast with Kuṇṭaka who posits the notion of *vakroṭi* or “hyperbole.” Thus, none of these theorists disputes the goals of poetry or the ultimate effects of “aesthetic relish” (*rasāsvāda*). However, each takes issue with the process of *dhvani* as the sole arbiter of this goal and, in this context, suggestion as the underlying feature of poetic expression (Nandi; Chaitanya, 121-8). With a few notable exceptions, in particular Kuṇṭaka, most aestheticians at this point have accepted *rasa* as the driving force behind poetic expression. However, there is still vast disagreement on the process by which *rasa* is evoked. Abhinavagupta attempts to curtail these “insurrections” by focusing his argument on the importance of *rasadhvani* as the founding element of poetry and the poetic experience as a spiritual one and locus of poetic inquiry. In doing so, he prioritizes the role of the *rasika* by Abhinavagupta and highlights some of the fundamental alterations that the concept of *rasa* undergoes as it “reincarnates” in regional modes of artistic production.

**The “Disputers”**

Many of these “disputers” remain skeptical of *dhvani* as the overarching poetic process at play and offer their own aesthetic paradigms. For instance, Kuṇṭaka reclassifies *dhvani* under the category of *upacāravakrata* (implied sense based on resemblance or attribution) (Krishnamacariar, 752). In his view, the power of hyperbole or *vakroṭi*, inherent within the word, is the element which gives “life” to poetic expression and subsumes all other poetic devices. Kuṇṭaka seeks “to establish the idea of Vaicitrya [striking denotation] which causes extraordinary disinterested charm in poetry” (De, 50). *Vakroṭi* consists of a “strikingness of expression…different from the established or current mode of speech,” that when unleashed in poetic contexts, should be “capable of pleasing the relisher” (De, 50-51).

Therefore, Kuṇṭaka suggest the distinction between “*alaṅkāra-s*” (embellishers) and “*alaṅkārya*” (poetry beauty or embellishment) is irrelevant since “the embellished speech itself in its entirety is poetry” (De, 52). In this way, Kuṇṭaka attempts a largely unsuccessful campaign to reorient and return the locus of poetic inquiry to the poetic process as determinative of the aesthetic experience.

Unlike Kuṇṭaka, tenth century theorist Bhaṭṭanāyaka views *rasa* as vital element of the poetic experience. In some ways, his work on *rasa* stands between that of Lollaṭa and Saṅkuka in

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36 Tadvidāhalādakāritva
that he privileges the experience of *rasa* as paramount, but argues the spectator must ultimately experience the contrived sentiment of the hero and questions whether *dhvani* can be seen as an independent poetic process subsuming other poetic elements. In the *Hṛdaya-darpana*, intended as a passionate refutation of the theory of *dhvani*, Bhaṭṭanāyaka defines the three functions of the words in a poetic context—*abhidhā* (denotational meaning), *bhāvanā* (the state in which the determinants (*vibhāva*-s) are presented in an impersonal way), and *bhogakṛti* or *rasācaranā* (pleasure of the text leading the spectator to become one with the subject presented) (Kane, 222).³⁷ Bhaṭṭanāyaka like Bhoja argues the evocation of *rasa* must remain the primary goal of poetic expression. However, as evidenced by Abhinavagupta’s clever argument refuting Bhaṭṭanāyaka’s position in the first chapter of the *Locana*, Bhaṭṭanāyaka does not entirely discount or abandon the theory of *dhvani* Ānandavardhana champions; however, he also does not necessarily endorse it. Instead, he suggests that *rasācaranā* (aesthetic “tasting”) not *dhvani* is the “soul of poetry” (Kane, De). Furthermore, like Lollaṭa, Bhaṭṭanāyaka argues the *rasa* the *rasika* experiences derives from the hero, not personal register of residual emotional states. In essence, Bhaṭṭanāyaka views *dhvani* as part of a larger poetic process stemming from the goal of evoking *rasa* rejecting the notion that “suggested meaning” must operate as an independent poetic process. Thus, for Bhaṭṭanāyaka “*dhvani* means *rasa*” (Kane, 224).

Eleventh century scholar Mahimabhaṭṭa, also views the establishment of a “separate function called *vyaṇjana* by the *Dhvani* theory” as unnecessary since [for him] “poetic intention [is] realized…through inference (*anumāna*)” (Chaitanya, 124). More specifically, the “expressed meaning” or the meaning which is intended by the poet operates on a wide plane of inference which includes all the types of meaning: *abhidhā* (primary/literal), *lakṣaṇā* (indicative) *vyaṇjana* (suggestion). In some ways, this is similar to Lollaṭa’s conception of *abhidhā* but antithetical to the positions held by Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, and Bhaṭṭanāyaka who each state that the notion of inference is separate from suggestion as the former implies a particular agency by the spectator is required while the latter intends the poetic choices to “trigger” particular emotional reactions and connections, in a sense involuntary by the spectator. However, Mahimabhaṭṭa argues that “suggested meaning” is made possible by expanding this

³⁷ Bhaṭṭanāyaka makes a distinction between *abhidā* meaning used in *śāstra*-s and didactic texts and *bhāvana* (connotational meaning) in order to show how poetic language serves a different purpose. This is a similar distinction to one made by Kuṇṭaka when advocating for *vakrokti* as the foundation of poetic expression noting that poetic language by its nature cannot be straightforward like the language of didactic texts.
realm of inference in which the expressed sense/meaning operates. However, “Mahīma does not deny the realities of poetic experience to which the dhvani theorists pointed. He only differs in the interpretation of the exact nature of the processes involved” (Chaitanya, 124). In this way, he is similar to Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Mammaṭa, and others who felt the process outlined by Ānandavardhana which places vyañgyārtha (suggested meaning) at the core of poetic production is potentially flawed but ultimately, rasa must be the goal of all kāvya. Thus, not all theorists are convinced that dhvani is necessarily the supreme function of the aesthetic realm. However, in many cases (as seen in the work of Dhanañjaya, Jagannātha, Jayadeva, and Viśvanātha) these refutations remain important for the future innovations in Sanskrit aesthetics post-Ānandavardhana as well as for modern Indian dramatic traditions that borrow from figures besides Ānandavardhana in Sanskrit poetics. In this way, each of these “disputers” of dhvani attempts to reconceptualize the role and importance of dhvani in terms of achieving rasa within the aesthetic framework of kāvya.

Dhanañjaya’s influential work, Daśarūpaka requires further discussion. This text emphasizes the importance of the rūpaka-s (types/forms of drama) and alaṅkāra-s (figures of speech) arguing that dramatic form and choice of dramatic elements determine and produce the dominant sentiment in a poetic text. Most notably, the term uparūpaka (minor variant of drama) is described in detail here for the first time; laying the foundation for later “mixing” and experimentation as the prominence of Sanskrit drama fades. Rather than championing the dhvani as the central poetic mechanism, Dhanañjaya subscribes to the theory of tatparya38 or “import/purport” as the binding element of poetic expression that produces rasa. Therefore, for Dhanañjaya dhvani does not always have to be present in order for a work to be considered “poetic.” While Dhanañjaya agrees with Abhinavagupta and other proponents of rasa that aesthetic pleasure is the goal of the performance, he asserts that the process through which this experience is produced should consist of a carefully negotiated series of alaṅkāra-s in

38 The theory of tātparya (purport/import), espoused by a limited class of writers, argues that the connection between the meanings of the constituent words of a poetic text represents the “import” of the sentence as a whole. In this way, tātparya conveys the meanings of several words and therefore differs from the traditional division of words (abhidhā or denotative meaning and lakṣaṇa or connotative meaning). This theory privileges the idea the words work together in “compatibility, expectancy, and proximity” to produce the anvaya (connection) from which tātparya arises (De, 1960, 149). While dhvanikārin-s do not enter into this debate and most writers from Ānandavardhana’s time forward accept the categories of abhidhā, and lakṣaṇa a few remain split on the theory of tātparya as a separate linguistic function. Mammaṭa and Viśvanātha subsume its function under vyañjana-vṛtti (power suggestion), the third function of language first theorized by Ānandavardhana.
conjunction with the vibhāva-s, anubhāva-s, and vyabhicāribhāva-s. Dhanañjaya describes rasa (similar to Mammaṭa, Viśvanātha, and others who follow Abhinavagupta’s interpretation of the rasasūtra) as “a mental state, a subjective experience of the reader, in which enjoyment [āsvāda, carvanā, rasanā, bhoga] is essential and in which the enjoyer and the object of enjoyment become identical, the reader receives the represented feeling into his own soul and thereby enjoys it” (De, 1960, 260). Similar to Abhinavagupta, Dhanañjaya argues the locus of rasa resides in the spectator as opposed to the represented hero or the poem itself while disagreeing that it can also be located in the pratīti (apprehension) of the emotions by the spectator. Rather it is the “generalized representation by the vibhāva-s which bring the sthāyibhāva to the enjoyment of the rasika,” converting it into the experience of rasa (De, 261).

Dhanañjaya is one of the first theorists to catalogue types of drama which resemble uparūpaka-s or minor types of dramatic performance that Bharata mentions but does not elaborate. The definitions of nṛtta (pure dance) and nṛtya (interpretative dance), and the term uparūpaka, which is initially theorized in detail in the work of Viśvanātha (Sāhityadarpaṇa-6.6) in the fourteenth century, have changed or been expanded significantly since Bharata.

Dhanañjaya clearly delineates nṛtya and nṛtta as separate from nāṭya not including it with the ten major forms of drama [(rūpaka-s) that he details following Bharata (Bose, 2000). Bose notes that “nṛtya is absent from the taxonomy…outlined by Bharata, accepted by Dhanañjaya and Viśvanātha [and] could have been neither nṛtta (dance) nor rūpaka (drama)” (Bose, 293). While Dhanañjaya does not discuss nṛtya in detail, his commenter, Dhanīka, outlines “seven constituent types” that seemingly “did not exist before Dhanañjaya or Viśvanātha” (Bose, 293). Bose offers several possibilities as to why the categorization of nṛtya is absent from earlier work and suggests “if [it] did exist, [it was] not prominent enough to be part of the mainstream… tradition of performing arts that Bharata had made his subject [or]…left undescribed, just as regional varieties of dancing were acknowledged but not described by Bharata. (Bose, 293)39 The work of Dhanañjaya provides the foundation for the later commenter and theorist, Dhanīka to elaborate on these syncretic forms which, presumably, had become prominent and popular since the advent

39 Chapter nine of the Nāṭyaśāstra details several varieties of dance found in regional art forms. In addition, stylized movements and mime are used extensively throughout the Nāṭyaśāstra to describe scene changes and the creation of various dramatic effects (Vatsyayan, 1981). However, as Bose points out, these are not described in any detail as independent genres of performance. Thus, later theorists, beginning with Bhāmaha onward, reformulate types of dance described in the Nāṭyaśāstra as syncretic genres of dramatic performance dominated by music, songs, and dance (Bose, 2000, 291-3).
of the Nāṭyaśāstra. Both are clearly building on a tradition that is grounded in Bharata’s theory of drama which outlines a series of stylized movements (i.e. dance) necessary for conveying the various dramaturgical and scenic elements of the play with a minimal use of props (e.g. changes in scenery, entry of characters, special relations of characters, etc.) (Vatsyayan, 1981). Furthermore, dance and mime remain a vibrant part of regional performance traditions such as Kuttiyāttam (Kerala) and Bhāgavata Mela/Melattur (Tamil/Telugu). Thus, as the need for classicism envelops the modernizing project of regional visual art forms; many of these participate in recuperating a tradition and history in order to reclaim and restore value to texts such as the Abhinayadarpaṇa. Such textual connections permit modern cultural performance contexts to assert the classical “bonafides” of these traditions by linking court performance traditions with an ongoing “classical” tradition as they transition into an urban modern performance environment (Peterson and Soneji, 2008).

Later Innovators of Dhvani Theory: Viśvanātha, Jagannātha, and Jayadeva

Introduction

This final section examines the last vestiges of the hey-day of the Alaṅkāra School. I have chosen to focus my discussion on three prominent figures from this time period: Viśvanātha, Jagannātha, and Jayadeva since each represent an important shift or change in the articulation of dhvani theory and development of the concept of rasa in poetic expression after the so-called School of Dhvani develops. Other prominent theorists from this period such as Mammaṭa suggest the poet’s aesthetic choices (dramatic elements such as the figures of speech) govern the evocation and creation of the dominant sentiment, but he does acknowledge and confirm the importance of dhvani. Viśvanātha’s Sāhityadarpaṇa operates as a median between the positions of Bhoja (who argues for the centrality of rasa while remaining somewhat dubious of the pervasive and all-encompassing power of dhvani) and the position of Mammaṭa and Dhananţja who elevate alaṅkāra-s as the primary poetic vehicle for rasa. Like Mammaṭa, Viśvanātha does not dispute Ānandavardhana assertion that “dhvani is the soul of poetry”, but he is also convinced of the superior importance of figures of speech like his predecessor, Mammaṭa. In agreement with Bhoja and other Rasa Theory proponents, Viśvanātha posits rasa as the “soul” of poetry, while also defending Ānandavardhana’s elucidation of the aesthetic process as one rooted in suggestion. Jagannātha and Jayadeva are South Indian Sanskrit aestheticicians who are
the last major figures in the Alaṅkāra tradition. Both are included here to show how Sanskrit aesthetics find their way into South Indian as well North Indian regional performance media. Later writers whose efforts focus on theorizing the experience and production of *rasa* were unable to argue persuasively that *dhvani* is a subordinate trope used in poetic language (either contained within the *alaṅkāra*-s or *guna*-s) that cannot operate as defining principle of poetry. *Dhvanikārin*-s respond by noting this connection between the poetic text and its audience, created through suggestion, binds the choice of the aesthetic devices with in the poetic work. Thus, *dhvani* governs the choice, articulation, and mobilization of these elements in a poetic context and thereby, imbues the poetic narrative with the dominant sentiment.

The “Innovators”

Viśvanātha’s most important work, the *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, demonstrates critical engagement with Mammaṭa’s *Kāvyaprakāśa* as well as the theory of *Dhvani* championed by Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta.⁴⁰ In many ways, Viśvanātha’s text acts as a “middle ground” between the competing ideas regarding the role of *dhvani* versus the importance of *alaṅkāra*-s in the evocation of *rasa* (Krishnamoorthy). However, Viśvanātha does stake out an absolute position on the concept of *rasa*, arguing that it must be clearly articulated as the chief aim of poetry. Following the work of Abhinavagupta, he also argues that *rasadhvani* represents the highest type of poetic expression and the primary function through which *rasa* can be experienced by the spectator. Though Viśvanātha draws extensively from Mammaṭa in the *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, he also spends considerable time critiquing Mammaṭa’s preoccupation with *alaṅkāra*-s. He argues that Mammaṭa fails to interrogate the competing theories and instead simply lists them and does not make it clear that the figures of speech must be used in the service of *rasa* through *dhvani*, not as poetic ends to themselves (Dasgupta). De argues that Viśvanātha “pushes [Dhvani Theory] to the extreme limit and builds his scheme of Poetics on the basis of the theory that poetry consists of a sentence of which the ‘soul’ is Rasa” (De, 1960, 178).⁴¹

Several historical accounts including Jagannātha own work suggest that he flourishes under the patronage of Shah Jahan (1628-1658 CE) from whom he received the title “Paṇḍitarāja.

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⁴⁰ Viśvanātha draws extensively from the works of Rūyyaka and Mammaṭa and also cites verses from the *Gītāgovinda* of Jayadeva indicating he flourishes no earlier than the end of the twelfth century and probably between 1200 and 1350 CE (De, 213).

⁴¹ vākyam rasātmakaṃ kāvyam (*Sāhityadarpaṇa*, 1.1)
(king among pundits)” (De, 1960, 231). Jagannātha’s significance to the development of poetics stems from how he “rethink[es] old problems” within the tradition (De, 253). Reminiscent of Daṇḍin, Jagannātha defines kāvyā as “a word or linguistic composition which brings a charming idea into expression” (De, 253). And the concept of dhvani becomes the vehicle of apprehension that transforms “charmingness” into the experience of the aesthetic emotion (Kane, De). More specifically, the quality of “charmingness” is a disinterested pleasure of the poetic which the spectator experiences. For Jagannātha, apprehension of this disinterested pleasure arises from contemplation of the poetic object. So, understanding a simple sentence such as “I go to the village” does not produce “charmingness” since it the meaning is clear. Like Abhinavagupta and Viśvanātha, Jagannātha also privileges rasadhvani which he characterizes as “parama-ramaṇīya” or the “supreme charmingness.” Like most post-Ānandavardhana aestheticians, he acknowledges the importance of the Dhvanyāloka he remarks that the “authors of the Dhvanyāloka settled the path to be followed by later writers on Poetics” (De, 179). For Jagannātha, like Rājaśekhara, Lollaṭa, Bhoja, and other post-Ānandavardhana critics, rasa, as the goal of poetic expression is paramount. However, unlike Viśvanātha, who also makes the case that rasa is the “soul” of poetic expression, Jagannātha notes that the considerations espoused by Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta in terms of dhvani’s role in the production of rasa cannot be ignored (De, 166). Moreover, Jagannātha’s definition of rasa as resulting from the “mental condition” in which one enjoys a pleasure “disassociated from all personal interests,” can be seen as a synthesis of the theories of Abhinavagupta, Viśvanātha, Mammaṭa and others (De, 255). Thus, Jagannātha reinforces the theoretical “shift” to analyzing the material components of the aesthetic object through the locus of the spectator’s perception of “poetic beauty.” In essence, the experience of “poetic beauty” has now become the entry point for poetic inquiry into the dramatic choices, elements, and structures.

Jayadeva represents possibly the final major shift towards a rasika-centered poetics as the Gītāgovinda becomes a foundational text of the bhakti or devotional movement within Hinduism. A poem about the love between Kṛṣṇa and the gopī-s, in particular Rādhā, the Gītāgovinda has been translated and adapted into various regional contexts and provides an important nexus point between the Sanskrit poetics tradition and ritual performance modalities.

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42 Ramaṇīyārtha pratipādakah śabdah (Rasagaṅgādhāra)
43 dhvanikṛtamālāṅkārikasaranāṇivyavasthāpakaṭvāt (Rasagaṅgādhāra)
Bhāṭṭanāyaka, Rājaśekhara, Rūpagośvāmin, Jagannātha, Bhoja, and Abhinavagupta provide the theoretical “ground” for the bhakti tradition of aesthetics, cemented in Jayadeva’s Gītāgovinda that equates the experience of spiritual union with that of aesthetic relish. Within this ideological framework, notably theorized by Vaiṣṇava philosophers Rūpagośvāmin (fl.1489–1564) and Madhusūdanarasasvatī (fl. 1540-1640), devotional/ultimate bliss functions as the highest aim and can be achieved through the appropriate spiritual connection with the divine within a ritual context. Furthermore, in devotional contexts, the goal of “devotee-aesthete” is to become one with the aesthetic object/divine; similar to the process of aesthetic apprehension (pratīti) Abhinavagupta details. Beginning with Rudraṭa who mentions the sentiment of friendship (sākhya) and continuing with Viśvanātha who includes parental love (vātsalya), some theorists do acknowledge other sentiments of “love.” However, the primary focus of aesthetic theory before the fourteenth century has been on the experience of the “erotic.” Bhakti aesthetics arise not only from the burgeoning Vaiṣṇava (and also Śaiva) sectarian traditions, but also from this lacuna in the theory of rasa; the possibility for śṛṅgāra (sentiment of love) to include other kinds of love beyond the romantic variety (e.g. parental love, friendship, fraternal love, etc.) (Goodwin, 138). In part, these connections build on Abhinavagupta’s conception of sānta rasa (that includes bhakti as a method to achieving śānta rasa) and its subsequent developments in the critical tradition. In each case, we see the possibility for innovation housed within the process for experiencing rasa. Indeed, in this context, Rajeshwari Pandharipande’s work on Madhusūdanarasasvatī suggests that the ability of bhakti as a rasa to be experienced by a specific group of people that share spiritual praxis and goals and demonstrates that the parameters for evoking/experiencing rasa remain fundamentally open and flexible.

The attainment of this bliss through the aesthetic experience of performance art provides a vital opening between the disparate worlds within growingly rigid class structures in many parts of India. In essence, providing access to the divine through performance becomes an important in each of these communities, demonstrating the broad and wide-ranging appeal of rasa as the vital component to any performance, not just Sanskrit dramas. The Gītāgovinda becomes a vastly influential work within South India as well. This text provides, much like the Rāmāyaṇa, a pool of literary, aesthetic, and religious signifiers that “bleed” into, in particular folk/popular/ritual or devotional performance contexts. This also demonstrates some of the important connections between the so-called “high” art of the Sanskrit dance-drama tradition and
the multi-tiered, pan-Indian dance-drama panorama. The early years of the Tanjore Marātha court saw the production of a number of yakṣagāna-style plays in Telugu, Marathi, and Sanskrit that contained “song-types and musical forms clearly meant for dance (such as kavuttaram, korvai, jakkini, and abhinaya-pada)” indicating these works are to be performed by court dancers (Soneji, 62). Soneji provides the example of a twelfth century Sanskrit poem describing the the love between a Marātha ruler Śāhāji (1684-1712) in the early part of the Tanjore court era and a courtesan named Līlāvatī that parallels the narrative and aesthetic structures in the Gitāgovinda (62). Furthermore, a large corpus of texts on dance is produced during the Tanjore court era including a Sanskrit text entitled Saṅgītā Sārāmṛta that attempts to produce a “localized Sanskrit theory of dance” by renaming Tamil and Telegu dance movements in Sanskrit (Soneji, 63). Soneji notes that between Serfoji II (1798-1832) and Śivājī II’s (1832-1855) rule, a host of works intended as a dance-suite for courtesan performance contained two versions: one which lauds the royal patron and one that praises a deity, demonstrating the influence of the bhakti performance tradition on the court (Soneji, 65) Furthermore, bhakti poems must be construed like the script of the play, in that only through performance can their full impact be experienced or understood (Cutler, 1987, 112). While Cutler limits his discussion to the Tamil bhakti tradition, the vital role of the performative in meaning production is echoed by Kersenboom (1995) in her analysis of the Tamil varṇam (song) and Richard Frasca (1990) in his work on the Tamil ritual theater of terukkūttu and therefore, can be applied to the devotional/ritual literary and dramatic corpus as a whole. Like the experience of rasa, “bhakti must take into account not only the words of a bhakti poem but also the entire context in which it is recited” in order to reveal the “the triangular relationship of poet, god, and audience encoded in the text” indicating the vital role of spectator/devotee in both Sanskritic and regional ritual performance modalities.

Conclusion

Hence, beginning with Bharata and later expanded by Ānandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, Viśvanātha, Jagannātha, and Jayadeva it is the “poetic sensibility” of the spectator that dictates poetic construction and choices. Mammaṭa argues that only the person possessing “poetic sensibility will be enabled by the various clues to penetrate through the expressed meaning to the suggested” (Chaitanya, 126). Viśvanātha, while agreeing with the importance of the spectator,
describes Mammaṭa’s “syllogistic method” as “inadequate” for elucidating how meaning is communicated in poetic contexts (Chaitanya, 126). He cites an example Mammaṭa provides, where a young girl, speaking to her beloved, states, “At the time you would not take anywhere else your glance, riveted on my cheeks. Now I am exactly the same and the cheeks are the same, but the glance is different” (Chaitanya, 126). Chaitanya uses this example to explain Viśvanātha’s position on “inference” versus “suggestion” in poetic contexts. He explains that Viśvanātha views “the cryptic suggestion of the expressed meaning” as unperceivable automatically through inference and that [therefore] “the suggested meaning will reveal itself only to the stirred poetic sensibility (127). In other words, the full import of the “changed glance” is only available to the rasika or knowledgeable aesthete. Thus, Sanskrit plays depend on sociocultural connections to be fully understood, and to be completely successful in their communication to the audience and ensure their rasāsvāda or aesthetic bliss. Furthermore, they also require the audience to be well-versed in cultural and social conventions of the time of the play’s production in order to be receptive to its poetic communication. Therefore, dhvani operates as an independent poetic process, enhanced by cultural context of the spectator, which governs the choice of poetic components in order to evoke the appropriate rasa. For Ānandavardhana, the figures of speech, like all narrative devices, can only be a means to an aesthetic end. Since the rasa and its evocation through dhvani are paramount and more specifically, aesthetically determinative, figures of speech must be subservient to this aesthetic goal (Dhvanyāloka, 2.3).

The various trajectories of Sanskrit Poetics have each expanded and reinterpreted Bharata’s rather opaque and sparse description of rasa. Before Ānandavardhana, the early writers subsume rasa under the category of alaṅkāra. Post-Ānandavardhana, rasa operates as an aesthetic “link” to the collective generalized emotional core of the audience. For Ānandavardhana and the other dhvanikārin-s (proponents of dhvani), evocation of rasa relies on a network of suggested meanings produced through narrative, aesthetic, and staging choices made in the play. It is this “emotive tether” to the dramatic narrative, which remains vital to the success of all Indian dramatic production. Although Ānandavardhana did not invent the concepts of rasa and dhvani, he mobilizes suggestion as the central process of meaning-production in Sanskrit poetic contexts. Thus, what remains most crucial and relevant from Ānandavardhana’s theory and its later exposition in Abhinavagupta’s commentary, is that the production of rasa
and the theory of dhvani both depend on the relationship between aesthetic “effects” and dramatic symbols, which must be culture-bound (therefore culturally appropriate and relevant).

Each of the theorists discussed here signifies an important poetic “turn” towards the idea that rasa, must become the ultimate goal of poetry. The overarching questions that drive this dynamic development of poetics are: “What is the nature of kāvya? What makes something ‘poetic?’” The early alaṅkārin-s, such as Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin privilege the role of alaṅkāra-s or figures of speech and other poetic “devices” such as guṇa-s (qualities) or vṛtti-s (styles) within the poetic text which make it ostensibly “poetic” and therefore kāvya. These theorists seem concerned primarily with the elements of poetic construction and the poetic process as an end in itself. In this way, they argue the “experience” of poetry or sentiment is the expected result from a well-fabricated kāvya, but not necessarily the driving motivation. Beginning with Rudraṭa, Sanskrit aestheticians shift focus to the “experience” of the “poetic” or sentiment as determinative of whether a text is kāvya. Therefore, the rasika’s emotional engagement with the poetic narrative becomes paramount for determining the “success” of poetic expression. In this context, Ānandavardhana argues that it is the suggestion of sentiment which governs the rasika’s immersion into the poetic narrative and therefore the “enjoyment” or “relishing” of the text. So, kāvya becomes that which networks poetic “suggestions” to produce sentiment within the spectator. However, ultimately as both he and Abhinavagupta remark, poetry is that which is experienced as such (i.e. through sentiment) and therefore, even suggestion subordinates to the experience of rasa. In the post-Ānandavardhana era, most accept the view that the experience of rasa is the driving force behind poetic expression, but many still question the doctrine of dhvani or suggestion. While some propose alternative methods of aesthetic signification including Mahīmahatta’s anumāna (inference) or Kuṇṭaka’s theory of vakrokṭi (hyperbole), each theorist accepts rasa as the fundamental aim of poetry and the defining element of “the poetic.” In this way, as seen in the work of Jagannātha and Jayadeva later alaṅkārin-s, the phalāgama or “success” of poetry ultimately, comes to depend on the saḥṛdaya or “relisher’s” experience of “poetic beauty.” Furthermore, with the advent of the bhakti tradition, the aesthetic and divine are conflated within the poetic world and performance becomes a form of spiritual ecstasy resulting from the aesthetic relish.

The stakes of this dramatic “success” rise as drama becomes an important vehicle for social change in twentieth century India. In addition, this “success,” as evidenced in plays that
invoke divine figures as symbols of nation or family, is predicated on the spectator’s ability to, essentially, have a temporary “immortal” moment in which the “self” is extinguished and there is only the experience of the emotional “current” of the performance. Abhinavagupta, particularly through his long dialogues with Bhaṭṭanāyaka, theorizes the connection between the spiritual union of the “soul” and the “ultimate reality” and the experience of what he calls “aesthetic consciousness.” According to Abhinavagupta, “aesthetic consciousness” does not exist before the dramatic performance or persist afterward, but rather it is produced through the interaction of the spectator with the unfolding dramatic narrative. Furthermore, the performance and subsequent rasa experience provide a momentary escape from the banal through a dispassionate portrayal of it (Gnoli, 77). Therefore, the aesthetic “relishing” can be compared with “experiencing” the divine. However, Abhinavagupta distinguishes the temporary state of aesthetic bliss from “God”-consciousness as the experience of an aesthetic emotion that requires an immersion in the mundane. Instead, he suggests the aesthetic “moment” stems from the ability of the dramatic world to provide an omniscient, generalized view of the “banal” for the “experiencer” or spectator. Thus, the poetic work becomes a mechanism by which the spectator is granted access to the poetic process through “signposts” or “suggesters” within the narrative, thereby transforming the “banal” of the everyday into a universal experience of poetic beauty. It is this mechanism, which modern Indian playwrights exploit in order to transform cultural and religious symbols into representations of “nation.”

Chapter Two further explores the role of rasa and dhvani in creating this emotional bond between the audience and the dramatic production using the works of Kālidāsa as case studies. Indeed, it is Kālidāsa’s innovative use of rasa as aesthetic “memory” and a vehicle for “dharmic” redemption, which makes his work an important aesthetic model for modern playwrights who reconfigure this process of aesthetic “remembering” to engender sympathy for various social and political issues and eventually, anticolonial concerns. Kālidāsa’s works show how the experience of rasa, evoked through aesthetic “remembering,” becomes this moment of “aesthetic consciousness” to which Abhinavagupta refers. In addition, Ānandavardhana’s profound reordering of Sanskrit poetics provides the ground for Abhinavagupta and others to equate the experience of rasa with that of “spiritual release” (as we see in bhakti literature in the fourteenth century). Thus, the dramatic performance as a vehicle of personal redemption of rasika-s through aesthetic “remembering,” in effect, operates as an aesthetic representation of the
sacrificial ritual. This intricate aesthetic process which undergirds the dramatic narrative (the dialectic between pratibhā (poetic imagination), smara (memory), and alaṅkāras) in Kālidāsa’s plays, demonstrates how the rasika’s emotional journey of possession, transgression, and redemption proceeds through various dramatic “signposts” resulting in rasāsvāda or “aesthetic relish.”

In India, propagated by a variety of forces operating in political, cultural, and social arenas, dramatic experimentation transects “elite” versus “popular” boundaries. Modern Indian dramatists manipulate and reconstellate the experience of rasa as an aesthetic state of mind that operates as a tool of political and social change. This “reconstellation” involves repurposing familiar cultural and religious symbols, in specific regional cultural, linguistic, and literary contexts, to evoke nationalist sentiment within the spectators. Rustom Bharucha notes that Bharatanāṭyam dancer Chandralekha “emphasizes the liberational possibilities of rasa through its capacity to ‘recharge’ human beings” (129). He argues that this “‘drive’ towards ‘regeneration of the human spirit’ is ‘nothing short of radical’” (Yarrow, 127). The culturally regenerative possibilities of dhvani, resulting from flexibility in the use of familiar symbols, make rasa the founding element for aesthetic appreciation as a whole in the Indian context, while also demonstrating its potentially “radical” applications. For instance, though many anticolonial playwrights in the colonial Tamil state were not directly knowledgeable of Sanskrit aesthetics, most were familiar with venerated works such as Kālidāsa’s Abhijnānaśākuntalam or regional-language versions of epics such as the Mahābhārata or Rāmāyaṇa. More importantly, they knew their audience would know these stories and characters. Capitalizing on this connection, playwrights mobilize these figures as cultural “signposts” or metaphorical entryways that connect the audience’s present-day situation with a cultural history of resistance and heroism. Literary heroes such as Rāma and historical figures such as Śivājī are reinvented as champions of Indian freedom. Therefore, the Sanskrit poetic tradition, through crosscutting paths of aesthetic and literary influence and conflation of “elite” and “popular” art forms, becomes an integral part of the dynamic and diverse aesthetic milieu, from which the anticolonial movement draws.
Chapter Two

Characters as Conduits of Aesthetic Memory in Kālidāsa’s “Playworlds”

Introduction

Examining the development, alteration, and innovation of rasa and dhvani within the context of Sanskrit poetics highlights a few aesthetic ideas which emerge as important to Indian artistic production as a whole: (1) The goal of every poet should be to construct a work in which every aesthetic choice is governed by sentiment; (2) The sentiment of a text must be experienced by the spectator (rasika or sahrdaya) in order for it to be considered “poetic;” (3) This experience of rasa by the spectator should be an end in itself, which mimics the spiritual union of the soul with the ultimate reality in that it transcends the human experience of space and time and the banality of the “world” (alaukika). Furthermore, the success of performance relies in some measure on the spectator’s imbrication into the dramatic spectacle. This last point becomes a fixture of regional art forms both “elite” and “popular’ as the use of divine figures as well as the idea of creating a “religious” experience through performance did not remain limited to Sanskrit courtly drama. Therefore, the abstract description of the disputes and developments through which rasika-centered poetics develops undergirds the discussion of the interplay between rasa, dhvani, smara (memory), and pratibhā (poetic imagination) and the use of characters as conduits of aesthetic emotion in Kālidāsa’s “playworld.”

In thinking about why Tamil “Protest” Drama is so successful from an “aesthetics” perspective, I suggest that the process of aesthetic “remembering” Kālidāsa perfects in his three plays offers a paradigm for aesthetic appreciation retooled by modern playwrights to engender sympathy for social and political causes. This process relies on the poet’s pratibhā (imagination)

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1 I take the term “playworld” from Robert Goodwin to refer (as he does) to the dramatic universe which Kālidāsa creates through a set aesthetic paradigm that reflects his unique sense of poetic style.

2 The use of epic, historical, and religious figures in various performance genres is a pan-Indian tradition. As discussed in the next section, epic characters have been recast and eulogized by several Sanskrit writers including Kālidāsa, Bhāsa, Bāṇa, Bhavabhūti, Bhāravi, and others. In some cases, the epic characterization has been emulated as in Kālidāsa’s Raghuvamśa, in others a particular episode or mood or quality is emphasized, and in others, like Bhāsa’s Mahābhārata plays, the characters are altered for a particular educational or ethical purpose. Similarly, in folk and religious forms such as Terukkūttu, Yakṣagāna, Krṣṇaṭṭam, Rām Līlā, etc. epic and Hindu religious figures become redefined or are altered or embellished to fit culturally relevant issues and contexts. For example, in Terukkūttu performances, the audience participates “in the burning of huge effigies, here as a version of Bhīma and Duryodhana’s fight” (Yarrow, 81). In traditions that describe bhakti (devotion) as the ultimate relishing experience, ritual performance conflates the experience of brahmanāsvāda (relishing of the ultimate reality) and rasāsvāda (relishing of sentiment). For example, in Krṣṇaṭṭam, where the actors are male and the perspective is feminine (i.e. gopi-s’ love for Krṣṇa) Yarrow suggests that the ‘liminality’ of the “male experience of female desiring” provides a representation of the “field of desire” present in Indian performance as a whole, “allow[ing] all to participate” (141).
forging an emotive bond between the rasika (learned spectator) and the nāyaka (hero) through smara (memory). The concept of smara functions as both an aesthetic trope as well as the process by which the rasika emotively connects with the dramatic world in order to “relish” the rasa of the performance. More specifically, the poet’s use of cultural symbols draws the spectator into Kālidāsa’s “playworld,” via one’s emotional memories, catalyzed by signature moments in the play, culminating with the spectator’s rasāsvāda or aesthetic “relishing.” As the play proceeds the connection between the rasika and nāyaka (here a vessel of access to the dramatic world) becomes stronger and the rasika, entangled in the dramatic world, unwittingly (like the hero) “transgresses” while witnessing the hero’s dharmic transgression. In essence, the salvation of the hero becomes that of the spectator as well, forging for both, a spiritual as well as emotional investment in the successful resolution of the dramatic tension. Therefore, like the hero, the rasika is also “redeemed” at the end of each play.

I begin this chapter with the following questions: How does Kālidāsa use suggestion and symbols through “memory” to emotionally engage the spectator? Can this process of aesthetic “remembering” produce a “redemptive” bliss for the spectator? There are two parts to my analysis of Kālidāsa’s poetic process in his dramatic works. The first is the examination of how Kālidāsa produces what Abhinavagupta terms “aesthetic consciousness” through a process of aesthetic “remembering” where the spectator’s own experiences of the world and one’s cultural knowledge work in concert with dramatic cues to evoke the dominant aesthetic emotion. The second is how this process evokes a particular kind of “redemptive” aesthetic bliss such that “dharmic” transgressions by the hero also “belong” to the spectator. Furthermore, Kālidāsa’s use of dramatic “signposts” to trigger a series of aesthetic “memories” in the rasika provides a prototype for modern playwrights as well an open system to be molded and manipulated in accordance with cultural standards of morality, beliefs, and ideologies. Epic, dramatic, and puranic figures become contested sites of meaning and vehicles for resistant and counternarratives against both social and political hegemonic systems in modern literary and dramatic contexts. An interesting example of this occurs in the work Tamil nationalist founder of the Self-Respect League, E.V. Ramasamy who produces a scathing critique and commentary on the Rāmāyaṇa. However, while decrying Āryan domination of South Indian culture and dismissing Vedic standards for proper behavior, he ironically accuses Rāma of violating Āryan mores and moral standards for ethical behavior. In other words, the moral code that Rāma fails to
uphold is decidedly a Vedic one (Richman, 1991). Additionally, regardless of whether later playwrights are directly influenced by Kālidāsa’s technique, the process of “aesthetic” remembering carries over into modern Indian drama as well. Nationalist plays often use characters as cultural memory touchstones to evoke images of an epic hero, prominent king, or anticolonial freedom fighter hoping these past symbols of resistance will inspire action in the present moment.

Several theorists post-Ānandavardhana have argued for various locations of “rasa” (i.e. in the audience, the characters being represented, the actors, the play as whole, etc.). \(^3\) Prominently, Bhaṭṭanāyaka argues, “Rasa never becomes an object of cognition” (Mishra, 234).\(^4\) However, Abhinavagupta argues “bhoga (pleasure) itself is a kind of cognition” and therefore, “[Bhaṭṭanāyaka’s] admission that the spectator…enjoys the emotions” necessarily indicates that his argument that “rasa cannot be generated or suggested” is unsound (Mishra, 234). Finally, Bhaṭṭanāyaka suggests that these emotions experienced by the spectator are not his own but rather those “of the original characters (invented by the pratībhā of the poet) presented in their generalized forms” (Mishra, 234-5). Abhinavagupta contradicts him stating that since the state of rasa is realized by the “experiencer” or spectator’s emotional/spiritual “cognition,” then it must their emotions which they experience-only “suggested” and “symbolized” by the actors (Gnoli, 78). I provide this brief overview of this argument between Abhinavagupta and Bhaṭṭanāyaka to ground my reading of Kālidāsa. Abhinavagupta states the following regarding the experience of rasa: “Rasa is not a thing in itself, formed previous to the act of consciousness by which it is perceived, but the consciousness itself (and therefore perception) (Gnoli, 76).

Therefore, he shifts the focus from rasāsvāda from “realization of another man’s emotions generalized and deprived of imitations” into “the enjoyment of spectator’s or the reader’s own emotions realized in a generalized form (Mishra, 235). The nāyaka’s (hero’s) triumphs, love, loss, transgression, etc. of act as a series of “triggers” for the spectator, evoking various memories of specific emotional contexts consonant with those of the hero. Now, the hero’s love

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\(^3\) I am not engaging in the debate regarding the “location of rasa” per se. However, the purpose to provide ground for reading Kālidāsa’s work in light of Ānandavardhana’s theory of dhvani and specifically Abhinavagupta’s view that rasāsvāda is solely based on the ability of the dramatic performance to “activate” the cultural world of the spectator. Moreover, in each drama, Kālidāsa creates a dialectical relationship between nāyaka and rasika that relies on evoking vāsana-s or latent memories in the spectator to forge a bond between the cultural milieu of the spectator and the dramatic world.

\(^4\) raso na pratīyate, raso na pratītisāmānyasya viṣayo bhavati
and loss belong to the spectator as well, making the successful resolution of the play necessary for both.

Abhinavagupta’s definition of the rasa experience provides an expansive reading of both what constitutes an aesthetic “trigger” as well as the relationship of sthāyībhāva-s (residual emotions) to “aesthetic consciousness.” The examination of Kālidāsa’s plays demonstrates how rasa, through the aesthetic “remembering” process, carries a redemptive role and highlights the two most important features of rasa and dhvani theory that survive in Modern Indian dramatic traditions. These are: (1) the importance of cultural symbols and (2) the creation of the emotive tether between the performance and spectator resulting in the experience of rasa. Bhartṛhari, Ānandavardhana, and Abhinavagupta each discuss how “meaning” production relies on culturally determined “suggestions” that must be decoded by the spectator. Building on this concept, Kālidāsa employs culturally meaningful aesthetic “signposts” to “trigger” personal memories that promotes the rasika’s identification with the hero’s successes and failures and thereby, the successful resolution of the play. A brief analysis of Kālidāsa’s three dramatic works demonstrates the interplay between pratibhā (poetic imagination), smara (memory), dhvani (suggestion) in producing the experience of rasa: Abhijnānaśākuntalam (The Recollection of Śakuntalā), Vikramorvaśīyam (Urvaśī Won by Valor), and Mālavikāgnimitram (Mālavikā and Agnimitra). Most importantly, it this dynamic dialectic between the narrative or aesthetic “triggers” and spectator’s cultural knowledge and personal experience that permit the experience of rasa to reemerge in the modern Indian literary milieu, modified, reconstellated, and re-presented, within various “popular” and “elite” forms of modern Indian dramatic productions. In that, this dynamism reflects an ever-changing cultural context which expands the possible meanings contained within the aesthetic symbol.

I. Epic, Orality, and Characters

Introduction

Oral modes of performance have permeated the Indian aesthetic culture for some time. In the Sanskrit tradition, sound is the primary constitutive element of meaning. The relationship...
between sound and meaning, further explored in the grammatical tradition by figures like Bhartṛhari and Patañjali, as well as within the Vedic chanting and ritual tradition and the concept of *Om* (breath of the universe) as discussed in the Upaniṣads, undergirds the poetic, religious, and the performative. Nearly all Indian performance modalities include *agni* (fire) either in prelude rituals or center stage throughout the performance as in ritual contexts. Yarrow posits that this connection between *agni* and the performance stems from the opening of the *Ṛg Veda* which begins with the phrase “agnimi ḷe purohitam…” (53). More specifically, it is from the utterance of “*a*” in “*agni*” that “the *Ṛg Veda* locates the openness from which utterance arises, both as metaphor for the multiplicity of linguistic forms and as physical act” (Yarrow, 53). In this way, sound then becomes “the activation of the language” and the necessary “condition [which] precedes performance” in India (Yarrow, 54). Furthermore, through the resonance of the articulation (*dhvani*), diverse meanings become possible; a principle that undergirds the performance tradition in India as a whole. Thus, it becomes evident how the concept of *dhvani*, originally the resonance of an articulated sound which is then processed as meaning by consciousness (according to Bhartṛhari) becomes the basis for poetic expression. Ānandavardhana takes *dhvani* as not only the resonance of the sound of the word, but also the various meanings of the word that resonate from the original *śabda* (element).

The epic tradition, which proceeds and overlaps the development of the robust Sanskrit literary tradition, has been disseminated and transformed in regional performance theaters including South Indian ritual theater such as *yaksagāna* (Kannada) and *terukkūttu* (Tamil) as well as in urban traveling theater troupes, through “orality”. In devotional and ritual performance genres, the recitation of the epic operates as sacred ritual and becomes another medium for communicating with the divine. The act of procuring a dramatic performance for a village is seen as spiritually beneficial for not only the individual, but also the community as a whole. Thus, either separately or within various genres of performance, the recitation of epic narratives, reformulated and often, rewritten entirely, serves as a conduit for the spectator to enter into the literary realm, experience the divine as moral conduct, and receive spiritual benefits from this interaction. In this way, the act of “hearing,” procuring the “hearing” (i.e. the one commissions such a performance), and the performers performing (mediators of the “hearing”) interactively produce a moment in which spectator and performer, within the intertext of the performance, experience a spiritual “relishing.” While describing the power in the performance of the
varṇaprabandham (the central composition of a classical Tamil concert or kaccēri) Kersenboom demonstrates how the smaralmarapu experience produces a conflation of senses that characterizes the “word” in Tamil performance (1995). Performance provides the means for the text to “live in the world, in the hearts and in the memory of the community” (Kersenboom, 1995, 38). Furthermore, it is in the context of “this confrontation of text, performance, and world [that]…the text becomes meaningful action” (Kersenboom, 38). In essence, it is the dynamic interaction produced through the “orality” of performance that allows the spectator to experience the full gamut of culture, tradition, and memory housed in the dramatic/poetic text.

However, while the “oral” component of the epic tradition contains Vedic roots, the regional developments of epic narrative and mythology are more of a dialogue between so-called elite and non-elite forms of literary, linguistic, and religious expression. For example, the vidāṣaka (buffoon character) acts as a mediating figure between Sanskrit drama and regional modes of performance:

[ Vidāṣakas] stand aside from the action both physically and linguistically; they frequently use the codes of the contemporary world in order to relocate and question issues derived from the epics. So although derived from the epic texts, performance in many periods can reconceptualise them; as it does so, it operates its own version of narrative across into narrating…the dialogic form of drama nearly always involves an opening up and pluralising of points of view; in any case the story is mediated through performers-and often, especially in Indian theatre, through a multiplicity of performance codes as well-who either implicitly or explicitly act as a framework to the story and offer other perspectives or comments on it. (Yarrow, 47)

Yarrow’s discussion highlights the idea that within the scope of performance as a means of communication is an inherent plurality of perspective, stemming from its dialogic nature. Thus, while the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata can be seen as collections of spiritual and moral teachings, they can also be read as ancient histories, religious scriptures, and even more culturally specifically and ideologically (as seen in South Indian retellings and re-creations of the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata) stories of colonialism, oppression, or heroism. In this way, even texts constructed to reify and promote hegemonic social and class structures can be undermined and reconstellated through the mode of performance. For instance, the story of Draupadi’s
disrobing from the Mahābhārata⁶ has become the fundamental narrative theme for several folk and regional art forms in South India including Tamil folk theater, terukkūttu and the Kannada puppet-drama, yakṣagāna (Frasca, 1994). In these modern regional theater genres, while the basic narrative plotline is maintained from well-known version of the story, the terukkūttu performance casts Draupadī more generally as a resistant figure, a fighter against injustice (Frasca, 1990, 3-4). Thus, the epic tradition undergirds the full gamut of literary production in India, both within the Sanskrit tradition as well as in regional performance modalities as well. The moral codes, religious signification, symbology of the characters, and the narrative themes all find their way into regional performance (ancient and modern).

Rasa in Epic: The Rāmāyaṇa: Rāma, Sītā, and Rāvana⁷

While Sanskrit dramatic works begin to appear approximately three hundred years after to the latest portion of the Rāmāyaṇa is written, the poetic principles of Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa (400BCE-400CE) undergird all Sanskrit aesthetic theory, particularly in regards to representing beauty and pathos. Both Abhinavagupta and Ānandavardhana provide several examples from the epic in order to show the spontaneity and liminal aspects of poetic beauty (Keith, 1970, 32). It is the first literary work to display the full gamut of Sanskrit aesthetic principles such guṇa-s, alaṅkāra-s, and rasa (Kale). Most notably, unlike the Mahābhārata, it is regarded as both ādikāvyya (the first poem) as well as a purāṇa (ancient story/ to be recited as a source of knowledge). The tradition views the hero of the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma as an incarnation of the god, Viṣṇu having lived and ruled thousands (or in some views, hundreds of thousands) years ago, although this is a later recasting of Rāma.⁸ Thus, it seems clear that Vālmīki weaves the

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⁶ The story of Draupadī’s disrobing is a popular episode for reenactment in various regional performance genres, particularly in South India. Draupadī is the wife of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, won by Arjuna over Kaṇḍa at her svayamvara (wedding “self-choice” ceremony). The particular moment occurs in the Mahābhārata during the second dice-game episode after Draupadī has been lost by her husband Yuddhiṣṭhira (as a result of cheating by the Kauravas, Duḥśāsana and Duryodhana) and Duḥśāsana attempts to unravel her sari in the middle of the court. At this moment, Draupadī prays to Kṛṣṇa for relief and is provided with a neverending sari, preventing her public humiliation.

⁷ I have limited my discussion of epic as source material to a detailed analysis of this process in terms of the Rāmāyaṇa. The primary reason for this choice stems from how the figure of Rāma, more so than any characters in the Mahābhārata, becomes a site of moral, social, and ethical contestation. Particularly in Tamil Nadu, as evidenced by the various counter-Rāma stories constructed in the service of Tamil and Dravidian nationalist ideologies, the Rāmāyaṇa presents an interesting example of ways that memory, loss, tradition, and desire operate in regenerative and resistant ways.

⁸ While scholars attribute the “original” Rāmāyaṇa to Vālmīki, “in the course of centuries [it] has grown” in southern and northern recensions with several branches and sub-branches (Sankalia, 7). Various historical, cultural,
Ramayana story and genealogies of characters “from such floating, uncrystallized material” (Sankalia, 5). Within the scope of Sanskrit literature, the Ramayana holds the special position of foregrounding the principles of poetics used by subsequent poets and playwrights. In addition, Sanskrit aestheticians each cite Valmiki as the first instance of the “spontaneous outburst of poetry” or sloka (verse) born from sorrow (soka) (Keith, 1970). 9

The Ramayana operates as a virtual pool of extant and future signifiers that pervades all Indian genres of performance. The unique position of the Ramayana and its proliferation within literary, political and religious traditions becomes clear through its “penetration of its specific narrative into the realms of public discourse of post-epic India, in temple remains, ‘political’ inscriptions, and those historical narratives that are available” (Pollock, 1993, 263). Sheldon Pollock argues that these instances of incursion of the Ramayana “mytheme” make it “possible to specify with some accuracy the particular historical circumstances under which the Ramayana was first deployed as a central organizing trope in the political imagination of India” (263). In other words, the aesthetic, narrative, and literary symbols and elements of this epic through regional translations, poetic renderings, and various other nexus points of interaction in socio-cultural and religious contexts offer a full “repertory of imaginative instruments for articulating a range of political discourses” (Pollock, 262). The “invention” of “Rāma as king” and the entry of the Ramayana into “the arena of political discourse” and becomes “a language in which the political imagination expresses itself” in the twelfth century, well after the famous kāvya versions produced by Kālidāsa, Bhāsa, Bhoja, and others. Throughout the eleventh through fourteenth centuries the Ramayana comes alive as a politically meaningful text. Pollock suggests that “a divine political order can be conceptualized, narrated, and historically grounded, and…a

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9 In the opening sequence of the Ramayana, Valmiki while in the forest, witnesses two krauṇca (a type of crane) birds, who were clearly mates for life, communing with each other. He then sees a hunter kill one of the birds. The other is, of course, devastated by the loss of his mate, mourns over the body. Valmiki is moved by this scene and curses the hunter. He is then asked by Brahmā (the Creator god in the Hindu trinity) to write the Ramayana. This myth is often called the “Birth of Poetry.”
fully demonized Other can be categorized, counterposed, and condemned” that is most interesting (Pollock, 1993, 264). This “demonizing formula,” arises from particular enabling conditions-(1) legitimation of kingship and (2) the increasing presence of unassimilable “Others” (Pollock). Regional translations of the Rāmāyaṇa (as seen in the South by Kampan’s famous version) manipulate and undermine this formula for political and cultural purposes salient to a particular regional or communal context (Pollock). In this context, David Shulman’s discussion of Kampan’s Irāmāvatāram in “Fire and Flood: The Testing of Sītā in Kampan’s Irāmāvatāram” highlights how this account of the Rāma story “raises questions about the limited extent to which human beings can know the divine and attain union with him” (Richman, 1991, 11).

In the introduction to Many Rāmāyaṇaś, Paula Richman mentions several resistant retellings of the Rāmāyaṇa during the colonial period in Bengal as well as in South India, arguing that these texts “demonstrate the potential plurality of characterization and plot in the Rāmāyaṇa tradition” (1991, 12). She also notes the importance of the cultural, social, and aesthetic considerations as constitutive of the ways in which these characters are deployed in these modern contexts. In her work, on E.V. Ramasamy’s commentary on the Rāmāyaṇa, Richman’s argues that “E.V.R’s style of argumentation derives from oral presentation” and his use of parody to present a traditionally pious object (i.e. epic) in a ridiculous and humorous light, stokes mass appeal (1991, 192-3). In many ways, the reader/listener “really encounters more of E.V.R. than Rāma” (193). As a compendium of “signifiers” constantly being attached to new “signifieds,” the epic becomes fertile ground for literary innovation and creation in various socio-cultural modalities. These characters in a sense, are provided new “lives” in these various regional recreations of the epic as seen, for instance, in the valorization of Rāvaṇa in South India as a hero of cultural resistance (north vs. south) and ethnic pride (Richman, 175). The primacy of orality, along with a rich and plurally developed narrative tradition, and the dialogic vehicle of performance, provide the ground for the recasting and reconstituting of Rāmāyaṇa characters as allegories of political, cultural, and social contestation and resistance. Even in regional traditions in which characters such as Rāma, Sītā, and Rāvaṇa are dynamic and in some cases, portrayed dramatically differently from Vālmīki’s so-called original version of the story, the point, as Ramanujan states, is that the original narrative provides an “cultural literary fodder” from which these other “Rāmāyaṇa s” each draw and therefore, everyone knows the characters as they operated in Vālmīki’s version which permits them to be altered, manipulated, and recreated.
(Richman, 1991, 8). More specifically, he argues that each “Rāmāyaṇa” can be seen as a “crystallization” drawn “from a poll of signifiers that includes plot, characters, names, geography, incidents, and relations” that can “borrow or refute,” however, still remains connected “through this common code or common pool” (Richman, 8). Indeed, as Yarrow points out, “Krishna and Rama are not just regarded as abstract principles or folk heroes, they are felt to be tendencies within the field of experience, or they function as role models” (41). And, I would add to Yarrow’s list, the idea of “anti-hero” particularly in terms of resistant and counternarrative traditions that utilize the narrative base from the epic and recast the character to buoy particular social, cultural, or political identities. Indeed, it is through the dynamic development of myth through performance which is “liminal, suggestive, [and] interactive,” from which resistant and entirely new cultural modes of performance emerge (Yarrow, 41).

II. A Rasika’s Remembering: Characters as Cultural Symbols and Kālidāsa’s Aesthetic Process

Introduction

Ānandavardhana’s theory of rasadhvani as well as Abhinavagupta’s commentary and detailed discussion of the audience’s central role in the dramatic outcome are both vital to understanding how Kālidāsa creates his “playworld,” particularly, in consideration of the relationship fostered between the rasika and nāyaka. The rasika’s “active” participation in the dramatic performance is crucial for its “success.” An aesthetic connection is created between the audience and dramatic world, which then allows the spectators to develop an emotional investment in the outcome. This connection, fomented through the characters, who become aesthetic containers of a mythical universe of reference and meaning, is activated skillfully by the poet through suggestion. Suggestion, “perceived” through a “remembering” process connoting an interactive relationship between memory, desire, and myth, becomes the vehicle through which the spectator enters the dramatic world. In this way, they fall in love, transgress against that love or societal mores or both, and subsequently, are redeemed along with the characters in the play. Characters such as Nala, Rāma, and Duśyanta provide, “literary representations of love-in-separation [and therefore] become mythic nuclei of real-life feelings” (Goodwin, 44). In other words, they are not simply mythic heroes who represent lauded ideals, but rather, also symbols of the “everyman” who fall in love, is separated from their beloved, and
longs to be reunited. Thus, Kālidāsa utilizes both the mythic and mundane aspects of characters as poetic “signposts” designed to forge a bond between the audience and the performance. Thus, these characters simultaneously connect the “playworld” and the “everyday” while also evoking images of mythical and fantastic heroic narratives. In effect, the relationship between nāyaka and rasika is paramount as the nāyaka represents the rasika or sahrdaya in the play (Goodwin, Chaitanya). Therefore, rasika invests in the outcome of the performance by identifying with the banal aspects the hero’s persona against the backdrop of the mythical allusions of the character represents.

As the original meaning of the word connotes, everything from the resonance of a particular part of a word to the entirety of scene can be an example of dhvani. For example, it can be argued that the entire opening scene of Kālidāsa’s Abhijñānaśākuntalam, while providing the reason for King Duṣyanta’s presence in the hermitage also foreshadows and mimics the King’s pursuit of Śakuntalā which comprises what takes place in the first three acts of the play. Since Ānandavardhana views vyāngyārtha as culture-bound, the characters, references, and poetic narrative should be adjusted accordingly. It is this particular idea that governs Kālidāsa’s choice to portray King Duṣyanta as an ideal hero. For poetic purposes of ultimately evoking srṅgāra rasa within the audience, he alters the story of Śakuntalā detailed in the Mahābhārata to provide a more acceptable reason for Duṣyanta forsaking Śakuntalā. While the Mahābhārata version raises questions regarding Śakuntalā’s purity; Kālidāsa’s version, which idealizes the figure of Śakuntalā as a vessel of purity, remakes the transgression into a matter of destiny. In this way, the King’s loss and eventual recovery of his ring drives the plot in Kālidāsa’s play, ostensibly, mitigating Duṣyanta’s later rejection of Śakuntalā as “fated” to occur, as is their reconciliation at the end of the play. Kālidāsa’s alterations to the Mahābhārata version of the story demonstrate the poetic control of aucitya, which determines when a particular element should be included as well as (to an extent) what is being “suggested.” In addition the notion “appropriateness” includes adhering to prohibitions for performance as well as a certain “dharmic” framework or unwritten “laws,” which explains the necessity for Śakuntalā and Duṣyanta to undergo their respective “penance” for transgressions of dharma.

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10 David Gitomer makes this argument in his article titled, “The Theater in Kālidāsa’s Art” included in Barbara Stoler Miller’s edited volume on Kālidāsa’s three plays, Theater of Memory.
Since symbols form the basis for *dhvani* theory, ultimately, the aesthetic choices of the playwright determine whether *rasa* will be successfully evoked. Kālidāsa masterfully employs various poetic devices and in particular, assails the audience with culturally defined double entendres and symbolic gestures within the dramatic narrative leading the spectator to “experience” the dominant emotional sentiment of the play. “We will fail to understand why Kālidāsa showed polygamous heroes, used curse as a motive for separation of lovers or made his story move between heaven and earth, unless we remember the context of the time in which he worked and general beliefs and conventions that were quite valid for it” (Bhat, 28). One example occurs in Act VI of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* when King Duṣyanta’s agrees to help Indra fight the *asura*-s (demons) before he is able to seek out Śakuntalā. Without understanding the need for dharmic redemption (both his and hers) this battle would seem gratuitous and rather out of place at this juncture in the narrative. However, the resolution of the play cannot be complete without the absolution of the characters and in the turn, the audience for the dharmic transgressions which occurred earlier. Indeed, as Goodwin points out, “the curse is needed to mythicize a gap that already exists between the desire of the heart and the poetic dreamworld that represents it…By giving us the *rasika* as uncomprehending victim and soliciting a gush of sympathetic feeling on his behalf the play shifts from an ideal of aesthetic-erotic transformation to one of tragic self-portrayal” (47). In other words, for the *sahṛdaya* to move beyond the idealized image of Śakuntalā as a mysterious and beautiful nymph and the “paradisal appeal” (never realized) of the first three acts, he must, as Duṣyanta does, move from “confident *rasika*” to “chastened, obedient servant of destiny” (Goodwin, 46). In this context, not only must the playwright adhere to cultural prescriptions, but also to those imposed by dramatic necessity. Thus, the play moves from the erotic during the narrative of “possession,” to the pathetic (*karuṇa rasa*) characterizing the transgression and penance stage, and concluding with awe (*adhbūta rasa*) in the final scene in the āśrama (hermitage) when the King reunites with his beloved and newly discovered (or rediscovered) heir.11

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11 Abhinavagupta argues that the experience at the end of the play represents peace and resolution and can be seen as “śānta rasa” (sentiment of peace or rest).
Kālidāsa’s Poetic Imperative: Smara/Smṛti (Memory), Dhvani (Suggestion), and Pratībhā (Imagination) as the Founding Elements of Rasa

Before proceeding into the analysis of Kālidāsa’s three seminal plays in the context of the two central components of rasadhvani: (1) use of cultural symbols in creating an emotive tether between the audience and the dramatic world; and (2) the rasāsvāda of the rasika: a brief discussion of Kālidāsa’s dramatic technique as a whole, is required. Kālidāsa’s dramas are designed with the primary goal of imbricating the rasika into the dramatic world to sensorally as well as spiritually. Kālidāsa uses smara or smṛti (love, memory, desire) as a paradigmatic aesthetic device that connects with spectator with the dramatic world while also binding the two disparate themes in each drama, dharma (duty) and kāma (love). In The Modernity of Sanskrit, Simona Sawhney defines Kālidāsa’s dramas as dialectic between the dual meaning of smara as both love and desire arguing “love may constitutively share with memory its focus on a lost presence” (22). She also offers Charles Malamoud’s assertion that “moments without a past can only be most fully savoured when one’s thoughts hearken back to them” (23). Taking this idea of smara as both memory and desire for something “lost,” I suggest that the internal dialogue of smara fosters the dialectical relationship between spectator and “playworld” through the process of suggestion (dhvanti), leading to the spectator’s experience of aesthetic relishing (rasāsvāda).

Furthermore, it is this indelible and interactive connection between desire, love, and memory that operates as a foundational element of the relationship between performer and performance in the Indian context. The multivalent and experiential nature of smara operates much like the Tamil concept of marapu [which] combine[s] love, memory, tradition, and worship. [Both terms] refer to reverential acts of ritual attendance [and] to the passionate longing of love” (Kersenboom, 1995, 19). Specifically, this “longing of love” occurs through a process of “tasting (cuvai in Tamil; rasa in Sanskrit)” in which the rasika is “capable of tasting and appreciating the tasteful work of art” (15). Thus, as Kersenboom argues, in the context of performance, the text of Tamil varṇam-s (songs) “transforms from the living, sensuous, colourful pageant, that is, the word in its…

\[12\] Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta mention the concept of smṛti as something which can suggest rasa however it cannot be substituted for rasa (Dhvanyāloka, Locana. 2.4). Most Sanskrit scholars provide the meaning of “smara” as “love and memory” indicating the possibly inseverable relationship between these two conditions. The use of smara as a paradigm of analysis has been examined in the work Amanda Hunt in her unpublished dissertation, “Investigating Smara: An Erotic Dialectic” where she posits smara as a dialectical “process” in which memory and desire interact, through a semantic mapping of Kālidāsa’s three plays. More recently, Simona Sawhney has explored smara as an aesthetic process in the first chapter of The Modernity of Sanskrit (2009).
all-encompassing presence, into the mentalistic iconoclasm of meaning” (21). It is the “mentalistic iconoclasm of meaning” to which Abhinavagupta hints in his discussion of vāsanās (latent impressions/memories) which are stimulated through the poetic work in order to produce the experience of rasa.

When discussing the process of aesthetic relishing, Abhinavagupta refutes several theories on the location of rasa and how exactly rasa is affected and by whom. While doing so, he suggests that vāsanās are the vital component within the rasika which provides the capacity for aesthetic relishing. Acknowledging these theories, he argues: “We can see that Bhaṭṭanāyaka’s criticism, pointing to the impossibility of a rasa residing in the spectator or someone else, applies only the first view [described after Bhaṭṭanāyaka]. But in all the views…the unavoidable fact remains that rasa is perceived…To say that ‘rasa-s’ are perceived is a turn of phrase [meaning] rasa consists in the being perceived [of vibhāva-s, anubhāva-s, vyabhicāribhāva-s, guṇa-s, alaṅkāra-s etc.].…For minds are characterized by a great variety of latent impressions (vāsanā-s). As has been said…Though separated by birth, place, and time, the latent impressions are uninterrupted because of the correspondence of impressions and memory” (Ingalls, DAL, 225). In other words, despite the distance between the present day context and the mythological world, there is a “correspondence of impressions and memory” that ensures the rasika will be able to connect to the mythically imagined character as an amalgam of social values and human actions, through the actor and hence, the performance. Both here as well as in his commentary on the Nāṭyaśāstra (Abhinavabhārati), he states that “beneath the particular emotions which we manifest, there lies a latent capability of many others” (Ingalls, DAL, 226). These emotions can be accessed through the appropriate stimulus and each may manifest through the process of “remembering” the invoked by performance.

Abhinavagupta further suggests that all rasa-s ultimately resolve in śānta (peace) and that the experience of this “master rasa” transforms aesthetic enjoyment (bhoga) or aesthetic relishing (rāsāsvāda) temporarily into “the cessation of that obscuration [of the true nature of the self,] which is caused by the thick darkness of ignorance” (Ingalls, DAL, 225). Here, as he does throughout the text, Abhinavagupta draws synonymy between aesthetic relishing and the

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13 citravāsanāviśiṣṭatvāccetasaḥ. yadāha—tāsānāditvatmāsiṃśo nityatvāt. Jātideśaśālavyavahitānāmapyānāntaraṃ śmṛti saṃskārayorekarūpatvād—iti. Tena pratītistāvadrasasya siddhā (Locana, 2.4).
14 bhogo’pi na kāvyasabdāna kriyate api tu ghanamohāndhyasafakṣaṭidvāreṇāvādāparanāmna alaukike drutivistāravikāsatātāmni bhogam kartavye lokottare dhvananavyāpāra eva mūrdhābhiṣiktāḥ (Locana, Ch. 2.4)
religious or mystical experience associated by mokṣa or liberation from samsāra (the reincarnation cycle of rebirths) by focusing on the aesthete’s method of perception or perceiving (pratīti) as a process of suggestion that permits access to the alaukika (non-material world). The Sanskrit word “pratīti” has the sense of “clear apprehension of insight,” a meaning which Abhinavagupta connects to “relishing” by describing this process as the “melting, expansion, and radiance (drutivistārvikāsātmān)” of the mind. In doing so, he defines the aesthetic experience as one which can only occur when, rasa, by means of suggestion, can be perceived through a culturally-conditioned dialectic between word and meaning. Furthermore, he likens the aesthetic experience to the spiritual extinguishing of the self, a connection which he uses to further valorize the process of suggestion as the fundamental component of poetic composition. The purpose of this discussion is to highlight the parallel Abhinavagupta sees between these two states to, in a sense, to “elevate” the experience of rasa. It is from this “elevation” of rasa as a spiritual state that later bhakti-rasa traditions develop.\(^\text{15}\) Near the end of this section, Abhinavagupta highlights the importance of cultural knowledge for the aesthetic as he chides Bhaṭṭanāyaka for his assertion that spectator can glean nothing from the actual character of Rāma because they cannot possibly connect to his memories. Having acknowledged the educational value of poetry is different than that of scriptural or śāstric texts, he asserts, “Relishing of rasa bears a family resemblance to the relishing of the ultimate brahman…[and] the educative effect (vyutpadana) [of poetry] is different [from śāstras, historic narrative, etc.]…For in addition to the analogy which it furnishes that we should behave like Rāma [and not like Rāvaṇa], it produces in the final result an expansion of one’s imagination, which serves as the means of tasting rasas (Ingalls, DAL, 226).\(^\text{16}\) In a note on this passage, Ingalls points out that

\(^{15}\)Richard Frasca (1990) makes the case that South Indian village theaters can be divided into two general types of performance: 1) devotional theater in which the aesthetic enjoyment (experience of rasa) is clearly the goal of the performance and 2) devotional/ritual theater through the practitioner and spectator can access and commune with the divine. Thus, while he argues that the experience of aesthetic relish appears in both, it is a means to spiritual end in certain devotional theaters.

\(^{16}\)The example given by Abhinavagupta in this section of the Locana is a response to a lengthy Bhaṭṭanāyaka quotation he provides earlier in this section of his commentary where Bhaṭṭanāyaka, in response to the notion that rasa can be perceived (pratiyate) by the spectator, provides the following argument according to Abhinavagupta: “How can a determinant (vibhāva) such as building a bridge over the ocean by an extraordinary hero like Rāma ever become generalized? Nor can it be said that Rāma, as full of heroic energy (utsāha), is remembered for he has never formed part of our past experience?” (Locana, Ch. 2.4). As evidenced by this statement by Bhaṭṭanāyaka he believed that rasa could not hold in a particular aspect of the dramatic performance (i.e. actor, character, poet, spectator, etc.). Abhinavagupta refutes this argument noting that experiencing rasa precludes the idea that it must be perceived. He further elucidates how this perception takes place as the spectator/reader engages with the aesthetic object (nāṭya, kāvya, etc.). Moreover, Abhinavagupta’s argument stresses the use of cultural meaning,
Abhinavagupta, admitting the educational value of poetic texts differs from that instructional and historical prose texts, argues the moral and ethical restraint kāvya provides, inextricably links aesthetic bliss and the educational value of drama (DAL, 233). It should be noted that Gerow suggests that Abhinavagupta clearly views the primary purpose of the poetic text as aesthetic and not spiritual or philosophical, even in his discussions of śānta rasa (peace sentiment) as akin to the spiritual experience of mokṣa (1994,189). “Abhinava cannot be reasonably seen to have abandoned the distinction between art and life” and instead argues that Abhinavagupta filters this relationship through the metaphor of the spiritual adherent seeking knowledge of the supreme (Gerow, 1994, 190). It is this dialectic between drama, education, and sentiment couched within a socio-religious paradigm that reifies the belief in the diversity of the material world as ultimately an illusion, which is exploited by the Tamil “Protest” playwrights in order to foster a nationalist sentiment. In the modern context, the spiritual “knowledge” the aesthete gains at the resolution of the performance is that ethnic, social, class difference resolves in the unified image of India, personified as “Pārata Mātā” or “Mother India.” In this way, as stated several times, for example, in T.P. Krishnaswamy’s Kaṭṭar Pakti (Devotion to Khaddar), “truth” comes from recognition of the superiority of Bhārata Mātā (in Tamil Pārata Māta) and dedicating oneself to her service.

The relationship between aesthetic pleasure and religious or mystical experiences has a long history of confluence in Indian philosophical as well literary circles. Several scholars have speculated on whether the aesthetic experience of pleasure could be expanded or modified to include other ecstatic states achieved through other means. Bhaṭṭanāyaka argues that the aesthetic experience is characterized by the aesthete’s temporary and complete immersion in the poetic subject and makes it akin to Brahman (ultimate reality) (Gnoli, 77). However, he is careful to note the boundary between the two states noting that religious experience demands an absence of all polarity, divisions, and dialectic, however, in aesthetic experience, “the feelings and the facts of everyday life, even if they are transfigured, are always present” (Gnoli, 78).
Abhinavagupta accepts this principle and expands it further to argue that the religious drive for “extinction” or an “end” is the “antithesis of aesthetic experience, which is perfect self-sufficiency” (Gnoli, 77). For Abhinavagupta as well as Ānandavardhana and Bharata, art represents the very essence of life. In this way, art can depict every aspect of the “real” world, albeit in a fantastic context and depersonalized manner. And, in this way, Abhinavagupta classifies the work of art as a disinterested version of life itself. Furthermore, he notes that this grounding in the world and the temporary nature of the aesthetic experience that limit its spiritual capacity. In other words, while aesthetic relishing mimics the “extinction of difference” akin to the spiritual idea of liberation from the material world, this extinction can only ever be temporary and will always have (unlike the experience of mokṣa) be inseparable from the life and experience of daily existence (Gerow, 1994). This connection between the spiritual union and aesthetic relish reifies the relationship between the fruits of sacrifice and the success of drama. In addition, in modern social and political drama, this relationship is manipulated to inscribe moral and ethical values to particular political, social, and religious positions. For instance in the Ramanāmi tradition, which valorizes the Tulsi Das version of the Rāmāyaṇa, focuses on particular aspects of the text as spiritually redemptive. In addition, as seen in postcolonial Tamil Nadu, Dravidian activists such as E.V. Ramasamy argue that the Rāmāyaṇa is actually an amoral representation of conquest, arguing that rather being spiritually redemptive, aspiring to be like Rāma only reifies Dravidian culture as inferior to that of the Āryans (Richman, 1991). In each case, the notion of spiritual gratification is reconstellated through an ideologically constructed literary model to promote a particular social or religious position.

Abhinavagupta and Bhaṭṭanāyaka both argue for an aesthetic experience devoid of individual interest and representative of universalized aesthetic sentiment. Lollaṭa and others argue that rasa is an ordinary movement of mind promulgated by the combination of the effect of the play, the actors, the setting, etc. Lollaṭa also suggests that the rasa experienced by the spectator was that of the represented character and by proxy the imitating actor (a position Abhinavagupta also rejects). Saṅkuka disagrees with Lollaṭa and instead argues that rasa resides in the actor who imitates the state of mind of the character and it this imitated state of mind perceived by the audience which constitutes rasa. Bhaṭṭanāyaka’s disagreement with both of these writers comes in their insertion of the “mind” into the aesthetic experience. For Bhaṭṭanāyaka, the actors are vessels which allow the audience to experience a generalized emotion which then interacts with their conscious mind to transform it into a state of aesthetic pleasure. Finally, Abhinavagupta, while accepting the notion of a generalized emotional experience, dissents from Bhaṭṭanāyaka in the relationship between art and real life. Though he also agrees aesthetic relish comes when the aesthetic experience is unfettered by the vagaries and banalities of the “real” world, he notes that art’s very life-force derives its strength and diversity from real-life. Therefore, Abhinavagupta posits a slightly different model of the individual experience of aesthetic pleasure, which links personal experience with the dramatic world in order to create a state of aesthetic relish.

17 Abhinavagupta and Bhaṭṭanāyaka both argue for an aesthetic experience devoid of individual interest and representative of universalized aesthetic sentiment. Lollaṭa and others argue that rasa is an ordinary movement of mind promulgated by the combination of the effect of the play, the actors, the setting, etc. Lollaṭa also suggests that the rasa experienced by the spectator was that of the represented character and by proxy the imitating actor (a position Abhinavagupta also rejects). Saṅkuka disagrees with Lollaṭa and instead argues that rasa resides in the actor who imitates the state of mind of the character and it this imitated state of mind perceived by the audience which constitutes rasa. Bhaṭṭanāyaka’s disagreement with both of these writers comes in their insertion of the “mind” into the aesthetic experience. For Bhaṭṭanāyaka, the actors are vessels which allow the audience to experience a generalized emotion which then interacts with their conscious mind to transform it into a state of aesthetic pleasure. Finally, Abhinavagupta, while accepting the notion of a generalized emotional experience, dissents from Bhaṭṭanāyaka in the relationship between art and real life. Though he also agrees aesthetic relish comes when the aesthetic experience is unfettered by the vagaries and banalities of the “real” world, he notes that art’s very life-force derives its strength and diversity from real-life. Therefore, Abhinavagupta posits a slightly different model of the individual experience of aesthetic pleasure, which links personal experience with the dramatic world in order to create a state of aesthetic relish.
This reconstellation process ultimately stems not only from regional, cultural, or political considerations of a particular group, but also what can best be characterized as “poetic genius.”

While several Sanskrit aestheticians have discussed the importance of pratibhā (imagination) versus rasa and dhvani in terms of the central goal of poetic expression, my investigation will not re-litigate these poetic arguments. Rather my purpose here is to show how particular Sanskrit poetic tropes cohere in the production the dominant rasa of a dramatic work. What is important in terms of understanding the impact of Kālidāsa’s work as well as how rasa survives in modern regional theater traditions, is Abhinavagupta’s formulation of the aesthetic experience which Gnoli terms “aesthetic consciousness” (Gnoli, 76). In describing the views of Abhinavagupta concerning the experience of rasa, Gnoli posits the following: “The [spectator’s] consciousness itself (and therefore the perception) which, freed from external interferences…becomes rasa or aesthetic consciousness” (76). What both Bhaṭṭanāyaka as well as Abhinavagupta mean when arguing for an aesthetic experience perfected is one which is unmitigated by “obstacles which are raised by the ego.” It is particular idea of “obstacles” which hinders the aesthete’s ability to appreciate and enjoy the drama, but also a dramatic tool, which Kālidāsa exploits. In other words, Kālidāsa deliberately goads the spectator with a voyeuristic opportunity in the middle of each play, in order to further imbricate them into the dramatic world by making the outcome spiritually crucial, as well as pleasurable. In Abhijñānaśākuntalam, the spectator, via the King’s gaze secretly watches Śakuntalā and similarly, in Mālavikāgnimitram, the spectator along with the King and the Viduṣaka, anxiously and furtively watch for signs of love from Mālavikā as she tends to the Aśoka tree. In Vikramorvaśīyam, the audience watches as Purūravas desperately searches for his missing bride while the audience watches his crazed ranting to mountains and descent into madness, knowing (privy to a conversation between two of Urvāśī’s friends) that his beloved had been turned into a creeper. Furthermore, in both Mālavikāgnimitram as well as Vikramorvaśīyam, the “metadramas” also serve as important moments in which the spectator’s role as voyeur becomes reinscribed as they simultaneously view the king in the act of watching while participating in the king’s gaze.

Like the cultural determinants that govern how other poetic tropes function, these elements also shape and hone the poetic imagination. However, pratibhā in the Sanskrit poetic

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18 Kuṇṭaka, Bhaṭṭanāyaka, Bhoja, and Rājaśekhara each have spoken at length on many of these issues, in particular, pratibhā.
context refers to the quality which separates a poet from the sahridaya; it is the impetus which leads to Vālmīki’s spontaneous outburst of poetry after seeing the slain krauñca bird. Pratibhā literally means a “flash across the mind” and therefore “a revelation characterized by ‘immediacy and freshness’” (Sreekantaiya, 62). In the context of Sanskrit poetics, pratibhā (or pratibhāna) has traditionally included two meanings: (1) fancy and (2) genius (Sreekantaiya, 61). In the poetic and literary realm “fancy” refers the poet’s ability to concoct superficial, fantastic narratives while “genius” refers to the “innate super-normal capacity which lies at the root of all great work” (Sreekantaiya, 61). Thus, pratibhā, though probably derived from a number of philosophical traditions before its use in poetics, in a literary context can be seen as “imagination.”

19 Abhinavagupta’s views on pratibhā as well as his theorization of the location of rasa become crucial to understanding not only Kālidāsa’s genius, but how Sanskrit poetics remains relevant in the context of modern Indian artistic production. He offers his first description of poetic imagination in Chapter one of the Locana where he praises the “pratibhā” of Śiva which can open the whole universe through the process of self-revelation.²⁰ This can also be read as the awesome extent of the power of kavi-pratibhā by which the whole world opens through poetic vision. Clearly, Abhinavagupta seeks to endow the poet’s muse with a divine character in order to demonstrate how both maintain the ability to “see” the beauty of the “real” world, fashion this beauty into art, and provide the aesthete access to this world via aesthetic relishing. ²¹ In a later verse in from the Locana, Abhinavagupta gives a more precise definition of pratibhā by classifying it generally as concept of “imagination” from which all creative work arises and contains several strains of imagination, including the poetic imagination (Sreekantaiya, 63).²² Others such as Mahimabhaṭṭa, take this view further by arguing that “before the disinterested gaze of the poet the objects of the world shed… their mark of familiarity and generality; and each thing reveals its own unique self” (Sreekantaiya, 65). Specifically,

19 Several systems of philosophy in ancient India have used the word pratibhā to denote the “transcendental knowledge” acquired through an immediate vision as opposed through grueling intellectual study. These include for example, the Nyāya, Āgama, and Jain schools. As Sreekantaiya notes, the notion of kavi-pratibhā (poet’s imagination) can easily be traced to this idea of transcendental knowledge in these philosophical doctrines (62). It should also be noted that several other important poeticians including Mahimabhaṭṭa and Kuṇṭaka in particular, have discussed the importance and role of pratibhā in poetic production.

²⁰ yadunmīlanaśaktyaiva viśvamunmīlati kṣaṇāt
svātmāyatanaviśrāntām tām vande pratibhām śivām (Locana, Ch. 1)

²¹ Kuṇṭaka’s theory of kavi-pratibhā argues that the poetic imagination works in conjunction with and through vakroktī (hyperbole) in order to create poetic texts.

²² pratibhā apūrvavastunirmāṇakṣamā prajñā tasyā viśeṣah
rasāveśavaiśadysaundaryakāvyanirmāṇakṣamantvam (Locana, Ch. 1)
everyone has *pratibhā* as an innate poetic “self.” However, the poet, like the *sahṛdaya*, has the special power necessary to activate it. While both the *sahṛdaya* and the *kavi* (poet) are repositories of sentiment, only the poet, through access to his *pratibhā*, can access the sentiment within and evoke sentiment in others (*Dhvanyāloka*, 3.1). This view is supported by Abhinavagupta’s reading of a passage from the third chapter of the *Dhvanyāloka* which refers to the “*dṛṣṭi*” of the poet (eye of imagination) to which he ascribes a divine origin (*Locana*, 3.1).23

The interplay of *smara*, *kavi-pratibhā*, and *dhvani* can only be realized as *rasa* in the context of performance. Kersenboom argues in Tamil as well as Sanskrit traditions, the role of the knowledgeable aesthete/spectator remains necessary to “activate” the text and bring it to life. In Kālidāsa’s works, this interplay takes place primarily through the triangular relationship between the spectator, hero, and heroine (1995). In the moment of transgression, the tension between spectator and the dramatic world is heightened, as the heroine becomes a site of forbidden enticement. However, already participating as voyeur, the spectator has no choice but to watch and transgress along with the hero. Thus, the hero and spectator engage in a series of aesthetic “transactions” in which the spectator initially reaffirms the hero’s actions, engages with his love for his beloved through the *vāsanā*-s, and eventually, is seduced into the trap of forbidden knowledge. Now, the hero’s plight must be resolved in order to redeem the spectator as well. In this way, the experience of *rasa* results from a complex set of poetic figures, specific *mudras* (gestures) and abhinaya (miming), etc. coupled with the evocative figure of the hero who becomes of symbol of various meanings and impressions as the spectators enjoy the performance through a particular socio-cultural lens. We will see how this “lens” which reconstellates, manipulates, and situates the various meanings poetics symbols evoke, functions within Tamil polity during the rise of anticolonial sentiment in the early part of the twentieth century in order to promote particular social values (i.e. caste equality, abolishing child labor, *sati* (the practice of female immolation after the death of her husband), etc.) and eventually, anticolonial sentiment.

23 *Dṛṣṭi* has several meanings within Sanskrit. Here it is taken from the *yoga* concept which refers to a focused concentration by the “mind’s eye” in order to eradicate the distractions of the material. In the poetic context, Abhinavagupta defines *dṛṣṭi* in two ways depending on whether it functioning as poetic figure or referring to the poet’s “sight.” In the case of the former, he argues that there is a gap (*virodha*) between what is seen and perception of that sight as rasa while in the latter; he suggests no such gap exists in the poetic vision (Ingalls). In other words, the poet can “see” how to create and the effects of that creation.
III. Kālidāsa’s Dramatic Realm: Aesthetic Remembering, Cultural Symbols, and Rasāsvāda

Introduction

As Kālidāsa’s works were well in circulation at the time both the Dhvanyālōka and the Locana were produced, it seems reasonable to assume that Kālidāsa’s work offered an ideal test subject to explore the practical application of dhvani theory and in particular the evocation of rasadhvani as the primary goal of the text. More importantly, Kālidāsa’s works provide a model for later dance-drama performance styles in many regional contexts (Raghavan, 1993, 101). More specifically, while the importance of rasa, aucitya, rasāsvāda, etc. is not in question for any Sanskrit poet, Kālidāsa distills two particularly important aspects of rasa which survive in modern regional art forms in India: (1) the use of cultural symbols as aesthetic triggers and (2) the process of aesthetic remembering leading to rasāsvāda. This process begins with the poetic imagination and poetic choices made by the playwright and culminates when the spectator via the actor assuages “the pain and misunderstanding of separation [that] is ultimately illusory, arising from a forgetfulness that there is only harmony” (Yarrow, 106-7). Yarrow sees the curse Duṣyanta suffers to forget Śakuntalā as a representation of how “we take māyā (illusion of the material world) for reality” (107). Thus, the dramatic experience for the spectator “deliberately includes both forgetting (being fully involved in the pathos) and subsequent remembering” (Yarrow, 108). The interpretation of the curse as māyā is in keeping with Abhinavagupta’s reading of the aesthetic experience as one akin to the spiritual extinction of the self. More importantly, what Yarrow notes is the “forgetting through pathos and subsequent remembering” demonstrates the active role of the aesthete who interacts with the dramatic world and through aesthetically produced vāsanā-s (latent memories), invests in the outcome, and therefore benefits from the successful narrative resolution.

It is this model, in which the spectator identifies with the hero of the play, transgresses along with him, and is ultimately redeemed, which is employed by the Tamil “protest” playwrights. However, in these plays, the “redemption” or tranquility at the end of the play represents the idealized image of an “India” free from British rule. This tranquility, unlike in Kālidāsa’s plays, essentially, functions as a call to action. The peace rests in the hero’s ability to

24 Dating Kālidāsa, like so many other ancient figures, is a difficult and contested proposition. William Jones dates him to the first century BCE, while Keith (1993) and many others place him around the fourth and fifth centuries CE during the Gupta period while German scholar Max Muller suggests he may have flourished in sixth century CE.
repossess the heroine (India sullied by colonial rule) and in the end, the audience and hero can rejoice in her rebirth. In this way, these plays sought to enhance the connections between the “playworld” and the everyday unlike traditional Sanskrit drama and more in keeping with the Tamil literary tradition. They pushed towards more personal and specific identifications necessitated by political exigency and popular with their audiences. In other words, the people were asked to be good citizens of India like Govindan in Kaṭṭar Pakti or Valisan and Puresan in Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ in order to, in effect, produce in the laukika (material world) the peaceful, free nation dramatically imagined.

**Kālidāsa’s Abhijñānaśākuntalam**

While each of Kālidāsa’s works offers examples of his attention to poetic conventions as outlined in the Nāṭyaśāstra, Abhijñānaśākuntalam can be considered the most notable and pervasive in its reach. Each of his plays focuses on a love story between a king and a semi-divine heroine hence the dominant emotional sentiment being evoked is śṛṅgāra rasa or ‘love.” Therefore, each choice made with respect to the plot, characters, setting, scenes, etc. must also conform to this sentiment and operate within the cultural milieu of the audience. For example in the third act of Abhijñānaśākuntalam, the symbols of the atimukta creeper (Śakuntalā) and the mango tree (Duṣyanta) reinforce the symbiotic relationship that exists between the heroine and hero since this particular creeper can only be supported by the mango tree (a fact well-known to audience). In addition, in each of the plays, Kālidāsa juxtaposes the heat of the summer sun and the heat sickness suffered by the nāyikā (heroine) to signify her heat exhaustion from the intense “burning” of love. In this way, the references to the summer heat trigger a gamut of emotional and cognitive responses within the audience allowing them to fully experience the feelings between the king and his beloved. The opening scene of the Abhijñānaśākuntalam shows King Duṣyanta pursuing a deer into the hermitage to foreshadow his pursuit of Śakuntalā. Anasūyā

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25 The exhaustion as a result of “being in love” suffered by Śakuntalā is mirrored by Urvaśī and Mālavikā in the scenes in their respective plays in which they enter the pleasure garden near the palace are watched by the king and his companion, viduṣaka. The Viduṣaka or buffoon character fills a dual role of close friend and in some cases, proxy for the king, as well as the liaison between the audience and the dramatic action. Additionally, as Tarla Mehta and V. Raghavan point out in discussion of uparūpaka-s, this particular feature of Sanskrit drama survives in folk and popular theater as it continues to fill the role of ensuring the audience follows the story. In some regional theaters, the sūtradhāra (literally thread-keeper) or stage manager in Sanskrit dramas is also retained. More than likely the viduṣaka figure was originally added from popular theater forms operating before and concurrently with the Sanskrit drama described in the Nāṭyaśāstra (Raghavan, 1993, 103-8).
and Priyamvadā, and later Kaṇva each confirm that Duṣyanta is the perfect suitor for Śakuntalā; she represents the ideal of beauty and purity in the drama and as a hunter he signifies strength, power, and masculinity. While Duṣyanta pursues her, he and audience also desire to possess her perfect purity, innocence, and ideal beauty.

Another example of Kālidāsa’s poetic prowess can be seen in his adaptation of the plot in Abhijñānaśākuntalam in order to ensure that dominant sentiment, srñgāra rasa, imbues every aspect of the play. In order to maintain the aucitya or appropriateness for this rasa, he had to change the original Mahābhārata version of the story to make Duṣyanta’s “forgetting” of Śakuntalā a result of a fateful act (Miller). In fact, he uses the “ring” as a tool of dharmic redemption for both Śakuntalā and the Duṣyanta and thereby the audience, as the fateful trajectory of the ring “corrects” a series of transgressions committed by nāyaka and nāyikā. For instance, Śakuntalā transgresses appropriate dharma by failing to immediately take care of Durvasas the sage and is then subsequently also cursed to be “forgotten.” This external curse relieves the transgression committed by Duṣyanta when he forgets her after she loses the ring as the curse foreshadows. However, in order for these dharmic transgressions to be corrected, good actions must be performed and as is often the case in Kālidāsa’s plays, fate intervenes. The role of fate (daiva) in the play first appears in the form of Durvasas’s curse and also in the introduction of the narrative of the fisherman who finds the ring with the royal seal and brings it to the attention of the king, without which, the story could not end pleasurably. Thus, in this way, Kālidāsa uses the ring as both an aesthetic signpost in that it becomes a symbol of transgression as well as redemption for the audience and the characters, while also providing the narrative mechanism necessary to ensure the phalāgama (dramatic resolution) and success (siddhi) of the drama.

Kālidāsa alters mythical heroines such as Śakuntalā and Urvaśī to fit the image of the ideal heroine Bharata describes as well cultural appetite. In addition, softening, for example of Śakuntalā’s image as stern and uncompromising figure as well as the recasting of Urvaśī as overcome by her love for Purūravas is utilized by Kālidāsa to ensure the spectator’s investment in the fortunes of the hero and reify the heroine as a mythical object of desire that has been “lost.” In the context of the dramatic narrative each of Kālidāsa’s heroines undergo “a period of debasement/punishment in order to gain the one they love; culpability and servitude become interchangeable since what is significant is not guilt as such, but rather the structural position of
being susceptible to the force of authority” (Sawhney, 33). Thus, the heroine’s agency must be muted as “her acute vulnerability is essential to her relationship with the king” as well as the spectator. While Sawhney connects this vulnerability with the sexualized natural imagery Kālidāsa uses to aestheticize the King’s power and claim to the land, my focus remains on the heroine as an aesthetic object to be possessed. She becomes an entryway for the spectator to participate in the dramatic world allowing the audience to identify with the hero “on the basis of both the sahrdaya sensibility and behavioral code on the sophisticated, ‘divine’ level as well as he naively ‘human’ fantasy involvement in his loves and sorrows (Goodwin). In effect, the heroine represents an invitation to the spectator to not only experience the king’s mastery, but also his loss, and eventual redemption. In this context, the Mahābhārata version of the story and the question of purity of Śakuntalā are repurposed in the context of dharma (duty) and karma (actions) in keeping with the cultural worldview in which Kālidāsa is operating while also fulfilling his specific aesthetic “goals” for the performance (Goodwin, xv). Śakuntalā is destined to lose the ring and not be remembered by the king but as importantly, both the king and Śakuntalā’s various forms “penance” for their transgressions lead to the happy ending and the recognition of not only Śakuntalā, but their son. While some argue the curse is inserted in order to absolve Duṣyanta of blame, it also functions to construct Śakuntalā as the site of the struggle between desire and duty and thereby, reifies the hero as the spectator’s double within the play. In this way, it becomes a necessary component of the drama, ensuring that the spectator can experience the hero’s love, loss, and redemption through entry into the play through a moment of voyeurism that cements the heroine as the mythical object to be possessed.

Abhijñānaśākuntalam “gives us the most profound mythic rendition of the rasika’s encounter with the Śri of his imagination” (Goodwin, 25). Here “Śri”26 represents the aesthetic ideal of beauty. Indeed, “no other heroine in Sanskrit drama is so profoundly enhanced as the object of aesthetic gaze” (Goodwin, 26). While Śakuntalā remains the “object of the gaze” the goal of the dramatist is to imbricate the spectator into the dramatic world by using aesthetic triggers designed to create sympathy for the position of the nāyaka. In effect, through the nāyaka the audience is drawn into the story with the king by the deer chase, falls in the love with

26 “Śri” refers to goddess Lakṣmi who represents wealth, prosperity, and also holds the meanings of “light, radiance, luster, beauty” coming from the Sanskrit verb root “śri” which has the meaning of spreading or diffusing luster, radiance, beauty. It is commonly is used to signal uncommon, rare, or seemingly divine-like beauty. In a sense, it operates as an ideal vision of beauty.
the maiden through the king’s verbal depictions, and “possesses” her vicariously through the
King at the end of Act III during their *gandharva* marriage (forest-wedding). After this
connection has been established, the spectator is briefly placed into an omniscient position as
they become privy to knowledge of the curse incurred by Śakuntalā which is unknown to both
Duṣyanta as well as Śakuntalā. It is this key moment in the play, the turning point, during which
the audience’s emotional connection to the hero is strengthened as it creates a sense of
impending doom which the spectator now feels acutely while also vesting the spectator with an
even more vigorous desire to see a positive resolution. In other words, the first three acts are
devoted to fabricating an aesthetic link between the spectator and nāyaka to ensure the spectator
shares the nāyaka’s goal; to win the love of Śakuntalā and thereby invest in the dramatic
outcome. The second half of the play manipulates this cultivated relationship by using the curse
revealed only to the audience in Act IV to cement the emotional ties between the nāyaka and
spectator, investing both in a resolution. The transgression of *dharma* is not only the forgetting
of Śakuntalā, but also that of the spectator as they become “guilty” of continuing the voyeurism
of the nāyaka in Act III. In this way, the “recollection” of Śakuntalā redeems both hero and
spectator. Furthermore, it is this concept of personal redemption through an “aesthetic gaze” that
is later manipulated by the anticolonial theater movements in the early twentieth century. The
gradual and deliberate nature of the king’s “possession” of Śakuntalā is linked irrevocably with
the effectiveness of formal and aesthetic deployment of this process as one, which triggers the
memory of latent experiences. In this way, the experience of *rasa* allows both the audience and
the heroine to attain “*dharmic* purity.” Despite this, for her minor transgression against Durvasas
she must suffer in order to fulfill her love, in other words, recreate her flawless nature.

The prologue and Act I construct a comparison between Śakuntalā and the helpless,
innocent deer Duṣyanta pursues inauspiciously into the hermitage. The chase, mimicked by the
actress’s song in the prologue, foreshadows Duṣyanta’s pursuit and possession of Śakuntalā as
well as the “*dharmic*” transgression that precedes their separation. The discussion between the
*sūtradhāra* (stage manager) and the actress in the prologue begins with when he calls the actress
on to the stage and informs her and the audience that they would be performing Kālidāsa’s new
play, *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*. He then requests the actress to please the audience with a song
about the summer season. As with every detail in the play, the choice to open with a song about
the summer is deliberate. The song offers a composite of sensorial triggers designed to induce
the experience of summer within the audience. Commending her singing, the stage manager comments that audience seems ensnared by the beauty of her song and then asks her, “What play shall we perform to entertain them?” (*Abhijnānaśākuntalam*, Prologue). After the actress reminds the stage manager this was already decided, he explains that he was “carried away” the beauty of her song like King Duṣyanta beholding the fleet-footed deer (*Abhijnānaśākuntalam*, I.5). The “forgetting” reinforces the intoxicating nature of beauty and desire; in the case of the king his desire for the deer and later Śakuntalā. Act I depicts Duṣyanta’s chasing a deer into the confines of the Kaṇva’s hermitage and represents the first dharmic transgression in the play.

Several passages in this part of the play operate as sentiment triggers, hinting at the love that would develop between Śakuntala and Duṣyanta: The description of the deer which begins Act I, the hermit’s blessing of Duṣyanta to have a son after he agrees not to kill the deer, Duṣyanta’s first glimpse of Śakuntalā and her friends, Anasūya’s remark about the vine named by Śakuntalā as “vanajyotsnā” or “forest-light” as the “bride” of the mango tree, and Duṣyanta’s envy of the bee which irritates Śakuntalā. Each of these examples foreshadows various events in the tumultuous love affair between Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā and provides a sentimental foundation for the spectator to enter into the dramatic world. In essence, Act I provides an overview of the entire story, the love, transgression, forgetting, and remembering through emotive cues for the spectator. The actress’ singing at the beginning of the play, the deer-chase, or the elaborate depictive descriptions are intended to “make the audience ‘forget’ the everyday world and enter the fantastic realm of imagination that is latent within them (Miller, 38).” In this way, the audience participates wholly with the characters, particularly the nāyaka “so that the rasa of the play can be realized and savored (Miller, 39).” Thus, through the nāyaka, the audience is able to also view nāyikā’s body as an object of worship and therefore as a “vehicle for transforming erotic passion into the aesthetic experience of love” (Miller, 30). In essence, through Duṣyanta’s verbal “possession” the audience captures her as well. And eventually, both (hero and spectator) are redeemed by the more fecund union at the end of the play which mirrors the beginning of the play except occurring in a dharmically appropriate setting.

In Act III, the physical affliction of love suffered by both hero and heroine becomes clear. At this point, the audience joins him as he proceeds on his journey to possess Śakuntalā.

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27 *tadidānīṃ katamatprakaraṇamāśriyainamārādhayāmah*

28 *tavāsmi gītarāgeṇa hāriṇā prasabhaṃ hṛtaḥ/ eṣa rājeva duṣyantaḥ sāraṅgeṇātiraṇhasā*
He scolds the moon and Cupid for seeming trustworthy (viśvaṇīyābhyāmati), while only providing flowery-arrows hard as Indra’s thunderbolt (kusumabāṇānvajrasārīkarōṣi) (Abhijñānaśākuntalam, 3.3). The king questions the Cupid angrily, asking why someone whose arms are flower-covered must dispense such pain. Blaming Śiva, he invokes the story of how the God of Love was burned to ashes by Śiva for disturbing him during a meditation for the audience deepening the significance of the quote. In addition, the language of “heat” and “burning” further elucidates for the audience the intensity of their love, with the traditional association of “heat” and “love.” In this context, the king blames his current situation on the misplaced anger of Manmatha (God of Love) towards Śiva, claiming, “How else could you, O agitator of the soul, who were consumed to ashes, be so scorching to such as me?” (Abhijñānaśākuntalam, 3.3)

What is interesting in this passage is the imagery of love “burning” and “inflaming” the characters; consuming in such a manner that they cannot resist. When hearing the king say, “kathamevamūṣṇaḥ” the audience remembers Śakuntalā’s ailment and her own battle with heat which is related earlier. Kālidāsa is able to connect these two episodes as both doubling the affliction of summer heat with that of love providing an example of Abhinavagupta’s conception of memory as operating through the continuation of tradition and as a culturally refracted process. However, as the king is quick to point out in the fifth verse of this Act, this pain is not entirely unpleasurable (Abhijñānaśākuntalam, 3.5). Here, Duṣyanta briefly dwells on delight and happiness he would experience if Cupid (Kāma) were able to bring them together. Again, placing the love in the hands of Kāma is done not only to uphold the socio-cultural framework of the dramatic world but also to emphasize the almost divine nature of their love. In this way, the audience’s emotional connection to the performance also gains a divine nature, reifying the ancient sacrifice between Indra and the Gods. Therefore, the eventual resolution of the play holds a stake for the audience as they both transgress through the figure of Śakuntalā in Act IV and are

29 An interesting example how symbols and meanings change through cultural interaction is the term Manmathā (Cupid) itself. As shown here, it carries various trajectories of meaning (mythological, religious, local/regional, social, etc.) concerning the experience of love. More interestingly, these trajectories of meaning are not static and are continually being renewed through various linguistic, social, and cultural changes. For instance, the context and meaning of the word “Manmatha” is altered in the Tamil context in which it is often used adjectivally as “Manmathan” to indicate a person who is good-looking or well put together. However, when examining the derivation of the word “Manmatha” in Sanskrit as stemming from “man (from manas=mind) + math (intensive verb form=agitating) producing the literal translation of “one who agitates or churns the mind,” it may be possible to see a connection between this meaning and the one given in the Tamil context.

30 bhagavatkusumānyudha tvaya candrāmasa ca viśvasanīyābhyāmatisamdhīyate kāmījanasārthah

31 yadi madirāyatanānām tāmādhikṛtya praharatītī
redeemed with Duṣyanta at the end of the story in Act VII as the play travels full-circle to end in a hermitage with the lovers’ happy reunion and Duṣyanta’s recognition of his heir.

As the act continues, Duṣyanta continues to observe Śakuntalā unseen. Here, his verbal possession of her, the depth of his desire, and strength of his resolve becomes even more transparent. In addition, his transgressive behavior now becomes the audience’s guilty pleasure of voyeurism as well since this act, like the other middle acts in Kālidāsa’s plays, is constructed such that the audience must interact with the dramatic world through the eyes and actions of the hero. Here Duṣyanta observes that:

> Her breasts are smeared with lotus balm, her lotus-fiber bracelet hangs loose, Here is the afflicted yet beautiful form of [my] beloved
> Love burns the mind much like the summer heat, but the offence of hot weather only makes young maidens more charming (does not bother them).

*(Abhijñānaśākuntalam, 3.8)* 32

The ensuing scene places both the audience and the king in the position of a voyeur adding excitement while enhancing their now joint desire for Śakuntalā. The audience also experiences the gratification as they anticipate the love-struck couple’s imminent union. Much like in Verse seven, Verse eight continues King Duṣyanta’s verbal possession of Śakuntalā as he observes “here is the afflicted yet beautiful form of his beloved[of Śakuntalā]” He continues, commenting on her body, describing her bosom and limbs, once again, through natural imagery. In this case, he uses the natural remedies applied to specific portions of the body to personify a heat-struck Śakuntalā, who requires ointment for her burnt skin and appears thin and waif-like. Yet, this image of her disordered form is coupled gracefully with his growing love, which becomes even greater at this moment as recognizes that despite her disarray she remains uncommonly beautiful.

Throughout Act III, Śakuntalā is compared with different objects, mostly in the natural world and here these veiled comparisons are revealed through the direct allusion to her as desire itself. This allows the audience to connect directly with the experience of the king and thereby immerse themselves in the desire for the Śakuntalā’s pure, untainted beauty. At this point in the play, the king’s role shifts from a desire-stricken hunter to a devoted, passionate suitor joyful while being ensnared within the embodiment of desire itself. In this way, this section links the interaction

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32 *stananyastośīraṃ śīthilitamṛṇālaikavalayam priyāyās sābhādhā kimapi kamaṃ vapuridam/ samastāpaḥ kāmaṃ manasijanidághapraśarayorna tu grīṣmasyaivaṃ subhagamaparāddhāṃ yuvatiṣu.*
between the audience and the dramatic world with the young lovers’ relationship. Thus, the secret, romantic courtship between Śakuntalā and both the king and spectator is cemented while the eventual conclusion of the play is foreshadowed; in this way, this Act becomes a visual, oral, physical representation of śṛṅgāra rasa.

The final four acts of Abhijñānaśākuntalam address the curse, the forgetting of Śakuntalā by Duṣyanta, the fisherman narrative, the “recollection” of Śakuntalā, and finally the reunion and redemption symbolized by their son, Sarvadamana. The main purpose of the fourth act is to provide the obstacle that is seen as necessary to enhance the pangs of desire through memory and temporary separation (vipralamba). When Śakuntalā “forgets” to serve the sage Durvasas and subsequently cursed to also be “forgotten” by her lover, the audience member becomes an omniscient viewer---for the first time in the play---privy to knowledge unknown to the king (similar to the spectator in Act IV in Vikramorvaśīyam). Meanwhile, Kaṇva is informed of Śakuntalā’s pregnancy by a divine voice (4.6). The juxtaposition of these two events solidifies the rasika’s omniscience and subsequent culpability and investment in the dharmic resolution (siddhi) of the play. Before this moment, the rasika is invited to view the play through the “gaze” (here-the aesthetically constructed viewpoint of the hero) of the nāyaka-the initial chase of the deer, the verbal depictions of Śakuntalā by while the king secretly watched her, etc. After this moment, the rasika and nāyaka, both “possess” the heroine and in this way, share in her transgression. In addition, the spectator’s position as “voyeur” unwittingly witnessing Śakuntalā’s moment of “forgetting,” necessitates the spectator’s continued investment in the drama his own adharmic (against moral/ethic practice) actions must also be mitigated. Thus, the subsequent “forgetting” by the King brings the curse to fruition for sahṛdaya and hero, creating the need to rectify the dharmic transgression for both. Using Romila Thapar’s reading of the Kālidāsa’s alterations of the character of Śakuntalā from the Mahābhārata version of the story, Sawhney argues that in many ways, Śakuntalā symbolizes the citizen in an oppressive political situation whose lack of agency is exacerbated by their acceptance of blame for this condition. While Sawhney’s argument is provocative and compelling, it does beg the question as to why Kālidāsa would then need to insert the scene in which Duṣyanta joins Indra in battle if not to “cleanse” him spiritually (“dharmically”) for his rejection of Śakuntalā. Regardless, my contention is that the moment of transgression becomes the moment in which the spectator invests in the resolution of the dramatic narrative as identification with the hero ensures this
transgression belongs to both. While it is Śakuntalā’s “transgression” (a point on which Sawhney focuses as the unexplored narrative within the text) provides the focal point for the dialectic between desire and duty, I suggest that the rasika/hero’s voyeurism and the King’s subsequent “forgetting” operate as a cycle of transgression that mirrors the semantic interaction between memory, desire, and meaning.

In Act V, the cycle of transgression (rasika/hero’s voyeurism, Śakuntalā’s dereliction of hospitality, and the king’s “forgetting” of Śakuntalā) culminates with the King’s “forgetting,” which effectively emasculates him. And it is “this passive, pathetic display [that] succeeds in rousing the hidden paternal spectator to action” (Goodwin, 51). The “hidden paternal spectator” is Mārica whose divine blessing sanctifies the union of Duṣyanta, Śakuntalā, and their own in Act VII. Thus, Mārica’s authority manifests through Indra who offers Duṣyanta an opportunity to alleviate any “disappointment and disapproval of his ancestors” by redeeming himself through battle with “a fully surrogate demonic ‘Other’” to reestablish “his officially authorized dharmic role” (Goodwin, 51). This paves the way for his eventual reunion with Śakuntalā and his son. While the first three acts develop the passion between hero and heroine as dialectic between desire and restraint using the imagery of summer, in Act VI, as we approach the resolution, the imagery shifts to the innocence and “mildness” of spring, mirroring the dramatic action’s focus on the newness and wonder of life (symbolized by the son) (Goodwin, 53). While Indra’s role is clearly vital to advancing the dramatic narrative in a dharmically appropriate manner, it is the sage Mārica who sanctifies the union between Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā referring to the three of them as Faith (Śakuntalā), Prosperity (Sarvadamana-son), and Order (Duṣyanta) (7.29). Here, the three not only personify the Vedic triple fire of sacrifice, but also the harmony between desire, meaning, and memory respectively. In this way, the resolution functions as the moment in which rasika is redeemed through the experience of the hero’s piety, remorse, and relief.

Mālavikāgnimitram

Most likely Kālidāsa’s earliest play, Mālavikāgnimitram depicts the love story of King Agnimitra and a servant girl/princess named Mālavikā, who works in the service of Queen Dhārīṇī, the King’s first wife. The plays contains five acts like Vikramorvaśīyam, however, it seems to lack some of detail and flourish found in his later work and is Kālidāsa’s “metadrama” or play about a play (Goodwin). Despite some early critical arguments levied by Wilson and
others that the “Kālidāsa” mentioned in the prastāvana (opening interlude) was not the same playwright who penned Abhijñānaśākuntalam and Vikramorvaśīyam, it is widely believed that the cruder symbolism and imagery depicted are evidence this play was likely “an early and therefore immature production of the poet, when his genus had yet to find its highest level…evident from the tone of the prastāvana itself” (Kale, xxiv). Additionally, although the story has been invented by the playwright, the hero, King Agnimitra, likely refers to a historical figure. Historians have used this play to document the Śuňga period (187-78BCE) and provide a picture of the political relations within the dynastic family as well as with rival kingdoms (including the Bactro-Greeks)” (Goodwin, 89).

This play differs from the two later plays by Kālidāsa in a few important ways. First, while Kālidāsa uses epic and mythological sources for the stories he dramatizes in both Abhijñānaśākuntalam as well as Vikramorvaśīyam, as noted above, in Mālavikāgnimitram he invents the story using historical personages and events. The play depicts a cliché story of royal love between the King and the queen’s maidservant who turns out to be a princess, and finally joins the King’s, already ample harem of wives. This rather mundane and somewhat hackneyed narrative theme well-known to the public may not have been the only source for the play’s narrative. There is also some resemblance between Kālidāsa’s drama and the story of Bandhumati in the Brhat-Kathā (first century BCE through third century CE) and in Somadeva’s Kathāsaritsāgara (eleventh century CE), which is a collection of aphoristic, short stories. However, there is no direct evidence which conclusively demonstrates that Kālidāsa borrowed from this story. Another major difference between this play Kālidāsa’s other two and indeed, all

33 Goodwin acknowledges this argument of “crudeness” made by some critics regarding the love affair between Mālavikā and Agnimitra as equally unfounded and also notes a similarity between this love tryst and that which takes place between Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā. “There is very little difference in spirit between Agnimitra’s infatuation for an ostensible slave girl and King Duṣyanta’s passion for Śakuntalā: both are ostensibly entirely physical, with the aesthetic amplification typical of all kāvya-s” (Goodwin, 89).
34 Kale and Tilakasiri describe several events, names, etc. which can be independently verified as authentic historic figures, occurrences including the Puspamitra dynasty and his son and successor Agnimitra and four other kings in the dynasty to the period 185 BCE-73 BCE. This may also be more evidence that suggests that Kālidāsa was living much earlier than originally believed. Kālidāsa probably used the historical figures of Agnimitra and Mālavikā since the memory of this illustrious empire was fresh in the minds of his audience (xxvi, Kale).
35 The Brhat-Kathā is reputedly a “store-house of plots to many later writers, including Bāṇa, Harṣa, Bhavabhūti, and Viśākhadatta” according to Kale (xxxi). Despite the resemblance between the story of Bandhumati provided in the Kathāsaritsāgara and in the Brhat-kathā with that of Mālavikā, Kale believes that it is a coincidence. Further, he notes that Kālidāsa “could not have connected an imaginary love story with a historical character like Agnimitra” (xxxi). He points out that there must be some basis for the story that exists in fact for such a connection therefore either he invented the story of the gandharva marriage (forest-marriage) between the King and Mālavikā or Kālidāsa’s play and the story of Bandhumati both borrow from a common source.
of his over work, is the cruder poetic style employed throughout the play. Though the similes and poetic verses provide echoes of the cultivated, refined versions of these found in *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, they lack Kālidāsa’s later elegance and are less smoothly integrated into the dramatic narrative. Furthermore, unlike Śakuntalā and Urvaśī, Mālavikā is not an *apsarā* (semi-divine being). In addition, this play replaces the important moments of divine intervention seen in Kālidāsa’s other two plays, with pivotal actions by the Viduṣaka character that ensure Mālavikā and Agnimitra eventual reunion (Tilaksiri).

However, even within his early work, it is possible to identify how the playwright utilizes aesthetic triggers to evoke personal memory and forge the *rasika*’s investment in the hero’s success. And, like in the other two plays, the prologue foreshadows the union and inevitable separation of the lovers with the mention of Queen Dhārinī (also a reference to the earth goddess) whose machinations to prevent the King from falling in love with Mālavikā, mirror the role of the “curses” in Kālidāsa’s other two plays. Although Mālavikā is not a nymph, her origins remain mysterious and murky until her identity is revealed at the end of the play. And notably, while this play does not utilize divine intervention to advance the narrative, Kālidāsa begins this play by reifying the link between divine sacrifice and the performance of drama.

For ancient sages consider drama the visible and pacific sacrifice of the gods; Rudra (Śiva) himself has divided it into two parts in the body shared (made) with Uma; Here the actions of men, born of nature’s three qualities (*guṇa*-s), exhibiting various sentiments are seen. And though people have many different tastes, drama (*nāṭya*) is the one gratification of all. (*Mālavikāgnimitram*, 1.4)

This verse echoes Bharata’s vision of drama’s central purpose and reifies the link between the dramatic performance and the sacrificial ritual by emphasizing the benefit for both the actors and spectators through the successful resolution of narrative. It also shows the fervent belief that within drama is a unifying principle unavailable in other avenues of literary representation that is universally accessible.

Addressing the audience and the King, the *vidūṣaka* Gautama informs both of Bakulāvalikā and Kaumudikā’s conversation regarding Mālavikā’s captivating and unforgettable beauty. Here, unlike Śakuntalā or Urvaśī, Kālidāsa presents Mālavikā to the spectator and the

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*devānāmidamāmananti munayaḥ kāntaṃ kratuṃ cākṣuṣaṃ rudreṇedamūkṛt̐avyatikare svāṅge vibhaktāṃ dvidhā/traiguṇyodbhavabhatra lokacaritān nānārasaṃ dṛṣyate nātyaṃ bhinnarucerjanasya bahudāpyekeṣaṃ samāraḍhanam.*
king through a description of her beauty by two other servant maids of the queen. This moment, like the prologue, continues to hint at the Queen’s jealousy while reminding the audience of King’s weakness for beautiful women. By the end of Act I, the King has engineered (with the help of Gautama the buffoon) the dance competition providing the perfect opportunity to watch Mālavikā. However, Queen’s silent reproach of the King’s, indicating that she is aware of his manipulation, is important. The spectator’s “knowledge,” having seen the Queen’s anger and the King’s blissful ignorance, marks the moment of the spectator’s entry into the “playworld” through transgression. Reifying this “entry” into the “gaze” of the King, the voyeuristic, omniscient perspective to which the spectator is treated during the dance competition, permits him to identify with King’s euphoria while also transgressing along with him. This metadrama operates as the “twist of fate (a quarrel between Gaṇadāsa-the court dance instructor whose pupil is Mālavikā and Haradatta-a challenger),” which ensures the meeting of the hero and heroine. The matter, they argue, must be settled by a competition between the pupils of each to be judged by the Queen and the nun Kauśikī-an expert in these matters-all but ensuring the King is granted a first-hand view of the beautiful and talented Mālavikā. Furthermore, unlike the king who is already in a world of his own, enthralled by the beauty of Mālavikā “despite trying to compose myself, the drumbeat hurries me forward---as though it is sound of my desire heading down a path to satisfaction,” the spectator begins to feel the uneasy sensation of foreboding (Mālavikāgnimitram, 1.22). At this point, the spectator is more concerned for the potential pitfalls to come than the hero, already demonstrating his investment in the successful outcome of the dramatic narrative. Here, the king’s words, through the double meaning and evocative language, construct Mālavikā as aestheticized object of desire.

Having long eyes, a face awash with the beauty of the autumn-moon, arms curving at the shoulder, a small chest with plump, firm breasts, a torso as if polished, ample hips with a waist measurable by [two] hands and curved toes; her whole body was ideal for any form of dancing [envisioned] by her dance teacher (Mālavikāgnimitram, 2.3)
Here, the verbal “possession” of the heroine begins in earnest and continues throughout this act (Verses 6, 8, 10, and 13), culminating in Act III with the scene in the garden with the Aśoka tree. As with all of Kālidāsa’s characters, Mālavikā is constantly described in terms of nature and natural elements cementing her as symbol of purity and innocence sought by the King and by extension the rasika. Here, the spectator “watches” the king watching Mālavikā during the dance performance and noting her form as “ideal in the teacher’s mind.” And while the king’s remarks indicate her “idealness” in form as dancer, his description mirrors that of a lover describing his beloved. Most notably, her waist is described as one which “hands could encircle” directly referencing her body in terms of possession. Her waist is the perfect size to be held. In this way, the spectator, like the hero, imagines holding her and beholding the shape of her body. The physical description of her form reifies Mālavikā as an object of desire and serves as a verbal narrative of possession. Through the King depiction that focuses on the various parts of her body, the spectator “possesses” each part.

In Act III, as the king watches Mālavikā without her knowledge, he notices that “her cheeks are pale as stalks of cane; her ornaments are few--- an early jasmine vine whose buds are rare and leaves still new” (3.8) and happily deduces that she reciprocates his feelings of love. In addition, here the symbolism of the aśoka operation, through which Bakulāvalikā makes clear the King’s passions to Mālavikā, becomes a binding theme of the play. As Tilaksiri notes: “The incident of the ‘kicking of the aśoka tree’ is also one which has many an association with the conduct of lovers” (109). In Act V, this “kicking,” like the various moments throughout the play that increase the feelings of love between hero and heroine, leads to the blossoming of the aśoka tree and Queen Dhārini’s change of heart towards Mālavikā. This, along with the arrival of the spring season, considered a propitious time for marriage, paves the way for the king’s romantic union with Mālavikā. The physical manifestation of love depicted here---loss of appetite, pale skin, gaunt appearance---are recognized by the spectator as markers or consequents (anubhāva-s) of the experience of love and mirroring the reactions of the King described earlier. These markers permit the spectator to participate and possess the King’s feelings of love, anguish in

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39. The chalika dance form most likely comes from a popular dance tradition and similar to some of the performance modalities described by Bhoja and Viśvanātha in their description of uparūpaka-s. In addition, this particular dance is utilized to invoke the śṛṅgāra rasa similarly to the tone, song and movements of Mālavikā’s dance in Act II (Raghavan, 1993, 99)
separation, etc. Most importantly, these markers function by way of the dialectic between desire and memory inherent to the process of *smara* as it is the remembered image of Mālavikā that enchants both spectator and King:

My body wastes away, without access to the joy of her embrace; my eyes are tear-filled deprived of seeing her. But you, my heart, who has girl with doe eyes enshrined within; why then so close to bliss do you suffer so and cry? *(Mālavikāgnimitram, 3.1)*

Ah! God of Love! What a difference between this heart-rending pain and a tender weapon like a flower! O Cupid! That which can be seen as sharp and soft, I see in you. *(Mālavikāgnimitram, 3.2)*

Here, the king describes his physical affliction of love through the language of loss and absence. He muses at the incongruity between the beauty and tenderness of love like a flower and its ability to deliver sharp and heart-searing agony. It is the “lost embrace” and the “failure to see her face” that undermines his heart’s constant proximity to his beloved. In this way, he provides a description of his physical reaction to *vipralamba* and also a process by which loss for something not yet possessed, can be aesthetically constructed. Act III concludes with another moment of transgression as the scene between the King and Iravatī (another wife) mirrors the one which concludes Act I. The audience becomes aware of Iravatī’s pique regarding the King’s infatuation with Mālavikā. Here, mirroring Queen Dhariṇī’s displeasure regarding the dance competition, Iravatī’s anger at the end of the Act III is also a harbinger of the Mālavikā’s kidnapping. Despite the fact that the tension of whether Mālavikā loves the King has been alleviated, the king’s unabashed romantic feelings for Mālavikā are noticed by Iravatī who is solicited in the plot to kidnap Mālavikā executed in Act IV. This is the king’s “penance” for his transgression of ignoring his queen for a girl thought to be a servant at this point in the story. Here, the act of illicit “watching,” initiated in Act I, is reenacted as now both hero and spectator

40 śaṭraṃ ksamaṃ syādasati dayitāśinganasukhe bhavetsāsram caśuḥ kṣaṇamapi na sā dṛśyata iti/tayā sāraṅgākṣyā tvamasi na kadācidvirahitaṃ prasakte nirvāṇaḥ paritāpaḥ vahasi kim
41 bhagavan sañikalpayone, pratibandhavatsvapi viśayeśvabhiniveṣya tathā praharasi yathā jano’yam kālāntarakṣamo na bhavati.

kva rujā hṛdayapramāthinī kva ca te viśvasanīyamāyudham/ mṛdu tīkṣṇenataraṃ yaducyate tadidaṃ manmatha dṛśyate tvayi
now become true “voyeurs”---the king secretly watching Mālavikā looking for signs of love and the spectator watching all.

In both Vikramorvaśīyam and Mālavikāgnimitram, the voyeurism of the audience is mirrored in the scenes involving the king attending a dramatic performance within the play narrative. Here, the playwright invites the audience to participate in the doubly illicit pleasure of watching both performances. The moments of metadrama in these two plays provide another aesthetic signpost, which allows the spectator entry into the dramatic world. At the same, it doubles the voyeuristic component as now the spectator watches the characters engage in a sanctified voyeurism unaware that they are being watched. As the king watches Mālavikā in the contrived dance contest, it is clearly a guilty pleasure divulged to the spectator through his doubled position of voyeur. Here, the spectator is enticed into a moment of illicit “watching.” In this way, the act of watching becomes a transgressive one, pleasurable, but forbidden, much like Urvaśī’s entry into Śiva’s grove or Śakuntalā’s love-struck giddiness leading to shirking her responsibility. After this moment, Mālavikā has to bear the brunt of the punishment for this transgression as she is kidnapped and imprisoned. When the vidūṣaka rescues her and she is brought before the king, it is at this point that she is “remembered” as the lost daughter of neighboring kingdom and her love for the king become dharmically sanctified. In addition, the flowering of the Aśoka tree has softened Queen Dhārinī’s anger, paving the way for the marriage of Mālavikā and Agnimitra. Furthermore, unlike Kālidāsa’s other two plays, Mālavikāgnimitram does not end with the king recognizing and acknowledging a “lost son.” Instead, the King is informed of the birth of a son.

Vikramorvaśīyam

Kālidāsa’s heroine, Urvaśī is an apsarā or nymph (like Śakuntalā) whose ethereal beauty is a constant reminder to the audience of King Purūravas’s love for her. In Vikramorvaśīyam, Kālidāsa dramatizes the well-known mythological love story between Urvaśī and King Purūravas.42 There are several references in both Sanskrit and regional literatures to the figures,  

42 In the Mahābhārata, Urvaśī is called Gaṅgā, while, interestingly, Purūravas appears as an ancestor of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas in a story in which he angers Brahmins by stealing their money. After being instructed on how proper conduct, he ignores this advice and is cursed by the angry Brahmins. However, he brings Urvaśī and
Urvaśī and Purūravas, including in the Rg Veda, Yajur Veda, the Epics (Ādiparvan of the Mahābhārata), and the Purāṇas (Janaki, 2004, 40). In Kālidāsa’s version, Urvaśī falls in love with King Purūravas with whom eventually, she is permitted to remain by Indra to raise their son, Āyus. In many respects, the natural imagery and use of simile in Vikramorvasīyam is similar to that in Abhijñānaśākuntalam. Additionally, it mimics the pattern of possession through natural imagery, transgression, and eventually redemption as the lover and his beloved are no longer separated and most importantly, the king has an heir to the throne, who symbolizes resolution, innocence, possibility, and renewal. Finally, the trope of forgetting and recognition, intended to intensify the expression of love (śṛṅgāra) with the underlying sentiment of pathos (karuṇa), depends on narrative figures, sound patterns, devices, word choice, and most importantly, operates within a culturally determined moral and ethical paradigm.

Kālidāsa alters the myth of Urvaśī and Purūravas from early versions of the story by (as he does the Śakuntalā story) by muting Purūravas’s complicity in the transgressions committed and punishments incurred by the heroine. While in Kālidāsa’s version of the story the Urvaśī is cursed to be born as a mortal, here her “transgression” is not as in some puranic versions of the story in which she exchanges glances with her lover. Here, she divulges her feelings for Purūravas by mistakenly speaking his name. The figure of Purūravas is no longer the subject of divine and Brahmanical curses incurred in other versions of the story and instead, is burdened with the transgressions of a man. Consequently, the agency and in some cases, power exemplified by Urvaśī in her relationship with Purūravas in other versions of the story has been supplanted with a heroine who becomes the object of desire whose unattainability becomes a

“the three-fold fires” for sacrifice from the Gandharvaloka (realm of semi-divine beings) (Janaki, 2004, 45). Purūravas’s connection to the triple fire is reaffirmed in various purāṇa-s (ancient mythological stories) including Agni, Brahmāṇḍa, Vāyu, Viṣṇudharmottara, and Bhāgavata. But here the story is narrated differently as Urvaśī abandons Purūravas on account of deception by the gandharvas (semi-divine beings thought to be the consorts of the apsarā-s or nymths) (Janaki). He searches for her, eventually finding her, he requested that he might see her once a year, since she refused to return with him. The story proceeds with Urvaśī pitying the king during their visit and requesting that he propitiate the gandharvas, who, in turn, give him a container for fire. Later this container becomes two trees grown together from which Purūravas, desperate to reach Urvaśī, cuts to pieces of wood and rubs them together as he thought about his union with Urvaśī, thus creating “the sanctified fire” (Janaki, 46-47). In each of the various mentions of Urvaśī emerges her unmistakable connection to the art of dance and drama. As an apsarā, she must possess extraordinary charm but also be well-versed in the art of performance. Janaki also notes several early references to Urvaśī including one of her singing at festival for Arjuna along with other celestial beings and also of Nārāyaṇa painting the form of Urvaśī on his thigh with mango-juice (53) indicating her connection to the arts. She concludes her discussion with a brief reference to the Tamil epic Cilappatikāram by Iḷḷaṅko, in which the author describes the heroine, Madhāvī as “Urvaśī herself, born into the mortal world due to a curse” (54). It was her loving glances with King Jayanata, also present at a divine assembly headed by Indra, that lead to her mortality and the king being reborn as a bamboo shoot.
condition of her character as opposed to resulting from a conscious decision. In Kālidāsa’s version, instead of Indra, Bharata curses Urvasī for flubbing her lines during a performance to remain “mortal and ignorant” which leads to her wandering into Śiva’s grove without permission and ultimately, being turned into a creeper. Ostensibly, these interludes are inserted by playwright to create the tension produced by love-in-separation which intensifies the sentiment and ultimately is assuaged as it resolves in the reunion in a more dharmically appropriate venue at the end of the play. However, the curse-trangression-punishment cycle also offers the spectator a voyeuristic moment of omniscience and the entry point into the “playworld” as in Mālavikāgnimitram and Abhijñānaśākuntalam. Thus, the spectator becomes aware of the plight of both hero and heroine and witnesses the dharmic transgression leading to their separation. This “secret” knowledge imbricates the spectator into dramatic narrative having now dharmically transgressed like the hero and heroine. And, thus, the spectator becomes enjoined to the dramatic world and successful outcome of the performance.

In the prologue the audience is introduced to Urvasī’s plight necessitating her meeting with Purūravas. “A celestial courtesan, the issue of a sage’s thigh, returning from service to Indra, lord of Kailāsa, has now been abducted on the way by the gods’ demon foes; now her company of nymphs is crying out pitifully” (1.3). Kālidāsa’s reference to Urvasī’s origins as from “a sage’s thigh” appears similar to the early puranic version describing Urvasī’s birth from Nārāyaṇa’s thigh. Similar to the opening of Abhijñānaśākuntalam, the prologue informs the audience about the upcoming meeting between hero and heroine. Purūravas hearing the plight of the nymphs is convinced to help and saves Urvasī. Like Duṣyanta, here Purūravas “seeks” Urvasī and once he sees her, he is immediately enamored. The act ends with the King addressing a creeper with gratitude stating, “Creeper, you favor me by producing a momentary delay to her moving away; again I see her, turning back, casting sidelong glances toward me” (1.16). He finally watches her leave wistfully and notes that this nymph “violently tears [his] mind…like a wild goose tearing a thread from a lotus stalk’s broken tip” (1.18). This reference to his mind being torn apart foreshadows his mental unraveling in Act IV as he searches for Urvasī in the

43 Īrūdbhāvā narasakhasya muneḥ surastra kailāsanāthamipasaṛtya nivartamānāḥ/ bandikṛtā vibidhaśatrubhirardhamārge krnadatyataḥ śaraṇamapsarasāṃ gaṇo’yam.
44 Priyamācaritaṃ late tvayā me gamane’syāḥ kṣaṇavighnamācarantyā/yadiyaṃ punarapapāṅganetra pariśrītārmukhiḥ maya’ḥ dya drṣṭā.
45 Eṣā mano me prasabhaṃ śarīrāpituḥ padaṃ madhyamamutpatantī/ suraṅganā karṣatī khaṇḍitāgrāśṭṛtraṃ mṛṇālādiva rājahaṃsī.
mountain grove. Similarly, his direct address of the creeper mirrors his crazed diatribe towards the mountain as he becomes more desperate to find his beloved.

Although only five acts like Kālidāsa’s first play, Mālavikāgnimitram, Vikramorvaśīyam is much more detailed in its depictions of nature and offers more refined and poetically cultivated use of simile and metaphor. And, as in Kālidāsa’s other plays, love itself is compared with forces of nature, inevitable and unavoidable. For example, in Act III, the King provides a description of his heart’s yearning for Urvaśī, despite knowing that she also deeply cares for him. Her describes his feelings as a “flooding river’s fury growing as its torrent breaks on jagged rocks/ love’s power increases hundreftold when obstacles bar the joy of union” (3.8). This verse demonstrates the concept of vipralambha (love in separation) as fundamentally experienced through smara. In this moment the audience identifies with the hero by filtering his statement through their own emotional experience of love in separation and can experience the pathos and abandon of the love the king depicts. Furthermore, Kālidāsa manipulates the tropes of memory, loss, and love, re-creating the hero’s “longing” and “loss” as that of the spectator. In other words, through the hero, the spectator desires something not yet possessed. And, this desire or love is constituted through the dialectic between the spectator’s experience of memory and the culturally defined “playworld.” This aptly demonstrated later in Act III when the King describes his love for Urvaśī in terms of “loss” that would be instigated by her memory. He laments, “My body afflicted by Cupid would not feel joy with another’s touch, as the white water lily will open only for moonbeams, not being hit with scorching sunrays” (3.16). As seen in the other two plays, love, intensified by viyoga (separation) is “inflaming” and “agitating.” This “sickness” can also be read, as it has by several scholars, as the moral reproval for what is perceived as eros unchecked, a morally suspect passion at this point. What is interesting here is Kālidāsa’s manipulation of smara to invoke the memory of the future through the language of negation and natural imagery which reinforces the idea of impotency. In the verse, Purūravas’s affliction makes him immune to the charms of others and uniquely sensitive to Urvaśī’s touch, again creating the aestheticized image of “loss.” In this case, he depicts future “loss” that would result from the memory of this present “longing.” He “would not feel joy” just as the water lily would not open “being hit with sunrays.” Through this language of negation, the spectator must

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46 Nadyā iva pravāho viṣamaśilāsaṃkaṭaskhalitavemah/vidhнатasmāgamsukho manasiśayah śataguṇo bhavat
47 Aṅgamaṇaṅgakliṣṭaṃ sukhaiyedanyā na me karasparṣāt/noczhiśati tapanakiraṇaiścandrasyaivāṁśubhiḥ kumudam

104
participate in a semantic game of remembering where they imagine, first how the King’s (i.e. the rasika’s) body would feel joy and second, the “loss” of that joy (my emphasis).

Act IV begins with a despondent Purūravas searching for his beloved Urvaśī, trying to repair his “transgression” of glancing at another woman in front of Urvaśī (who is known for her jealous rage).48 At this point, only the audience is aware of the Urvaśī’s plight of being turned into a creeper as a result of the curse incurred resulting from the her slip in the dramatic performance for the gods. Purūravas’s extended monologue referencing various flora and fauna depicts his desperation and thereby, further involves the spectator in the hero’s passion and pain in separation from his beloved (vipralambha). Thus, this scene represents the pivotal moment, which ensures the spectator’s investment in the dramatic outcome. By being privy to the reason (being turned into a creeper for breaking a rule of entry into Śiva’s grove) for Urvaśī’s continued lack of response to Purūravas’s pleas; the spectator has already “transgressed” and must now be “redeemed” by the successful reunion of Urvaśī and Purūravas. This Act emotionally imbricates the spectator into the playworld as he identifies with the hero’s search for his beloved, having identified with the pain of his separation in the previous Act. Purūravas begins by interrogating a mountain named “Surabhikandara” regarding the whereabouts of his beloved. He begins searching here since it is a “beloved area for repose of the nymphs.”49 As he asks the mountain these questions, he briefly imagines that the mountain responds to him, but then quickly realizes that is merely an echo.50 The passage ends with his disappointment in realizing that the voice he

48 This type of extended monologue and even the dialogue with various animate and inanimate natural objects is not only present in other works by Kālidāsa, such as Meghadūtam as discussed above. It is also found in epic narrative for example in the Mahābhārata episode containing the story, “Nala and Damayantī.” In this story, there are extended monologues by both Nala and Damayantī, during each character’s time spent in the forest, which could seem maudlin and redundant in a non-Indian context. However, like Purūravas, both of these epic characters also carry on conversations with various flora and fauna. And, similarly, as is the case in Vikramorvaśīyam, the nature and despondency with which these dialogues are perpetrated is intended to communicate the intensity of the love between hero and heroine, in both moments on union (sambhoga) and even in their moments of separation (vipralambha). Furthermore, it is important to note, this is the type of extended emotional dramatic outpouring to which the Indian aesthete responds, either within the context of an elaborate dramatic performance or a raucous song and dance rendition. The prevalence of these types of narrative in dramatic, poetic, and epic Indian literature—modern and ancient, demonstrates the pervasive link between these aesthetically contrived emotive monologues the spectator’s aesthetic relish of the text.

49 Priyāścayamapsarām…(Vikramorvaśīyam, 4.51)

50 The use of trigata (a poetic figure involving a word having a triple meaning) in this passage further invests the spectator into the dramatic narrative as it emphasizes the hero’s desperation through the language. The original text reads “by you (is) seen the woman deserted by me.” The absence of the interrogative and interchangeability of “by me” and “by you” in Purūravas’s original statement makes the echo “response” possible (Miller, 364). Several scholars have noted this verse’s similarity to one in the “Araṇyakāṇḍa” of the Rāmāyaṇa (64.29-30).
hears is his own echoing from the cave entrance on the side of the mountain. He then decides to
take rest on the banks of a mountain stream which seems to remind him of his beloved.
This passage is typical of Kālidāsa’s work in that he interested in drawing the spectator into the
dramatic narrative, often by way of the hero’s experience. He wants them to experience the
desire, love, loss, and redemption that the typical Kālidāsa hero experiences in a play. In this
play, which follows a similar pattern to each of his major plays, the hero falls in love with the
heroine with whom there is an issue (i.e. not entirely human as in the case of Śakuntalā and
Urvaśī or perceived to be of a lower social standing as with Mālavikā) and then loses her due to a
transgression of dharma. This scene, in some ways, can be compared to Dusyanta’s search for
Śakuntalā once he sees the ring and remembers their union. In particular, the motif of the passage
the conversation with an inanimate object is a common theme for Kālidāsa as is evidenced in
other works such as Meghadūtam (Cloud Messenger) where in similar sequences, the Yakṣa who
longs for his beloved, propositions a cloud with messages for her (hence the title of this poem-
“cloud-messenger”).

Here, the nāyaka asks the mountain “Is the woman who has full breasts and hips staying
here in this forest?”51 The images evoked by the description of the woman create a cohesive
picture of her perfect womanly figure. In this way, she becomes the desire sought by the
audience as well. In other words, the success of the nāyaka in his quest becomes directly
connected to the audience’s search for emotional absolution through the vehicle of the drama.
Since Sanskrit Drama depends on the spectator’s appropriate emotive response in order to
catalog the success of the play, passages like these appear throughout the play in order to invite
the audience to participate in the emotional experience of the characters, in particular, the nāyaka
or hero. He becomes the focal point or lens through which each of the characters can be seen and
also the catalyst for the emotional cues given to the audience. In this way, the playwright, using
the nāyaka as a point of entry into the dramatic world, is able to create an emotional conduit for
the audience, thereby making the eventual resolution of the play matter for both. Like the ring in
Abhijñānaśākuntalam, the ruby becomes a symbol of the curse, the recognition/remembering
moment, and the resolution. The king, searching for his beloved, encounters the “gem of
recognition” as a narrative device inserted to not only break the curse in the play, but also
function as an aesthetic “trigger” of memory for the spectator. Here it is the audience’s

51 api vanāntaramalpakucāntarā śragati parvata…(Vikramorviṣṭyam, 4.5).
connection to the hero’s loss, which sparks memories of love and loss within the spectator’s own life that are then distilled through the characters’ experiences and dramatic narrative and reintroduced to the spectator as sentiment. The experience of *rasa* does not refer to the aesthete experiencing the emotion of the hero or character represented, but rather a generalized experience of the poignancy of within a particular aestheticized moment. In both *Vikramo’ṣṭiṃyam* and *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, the curse(s) cause a separation between the lovers, place their relationship in jeopardy, and thereby create the necessary “loss” or separation (*viyoga*) to intensify the sentiment of love (Yarrow, Goodwin). Furthermore, the curse in these two plays, and kidnapping of Mālavikā in Mālavikāgnimitram, each demonstrate moments in which the spectator is invited or enticed into the playworld. By participating and subsequently transgressing, the spectator becomes the site of the tension between desire and duty and now, pivotal in the resolution of this tension through the process of *smara*. In this way, *smara* becomes the aestheticized “interaction” between spectator and the lost object of desire and in modern contexts, this object takes on meanings of national and linguistic loss that must be “remembered” and then reclaimed.

Indra’s role, both in Act V of *Vikramo’ṣṭiṃyam* and in Act VI of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, demonstrates not only the role of divine intervention in ensuring a *dharmic* outcome, but also the continued interaction between elite and so-called non-elite forms of performance.52 “It is said the touch of a son thrills every limb of the body—/come, then, and gladden me now, like a moonbeam melting a moonstone” (5.11).53 Here, the king sees his son for the first time after learning that he killed the bird which had stolen the jewelry. Much like in *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, a supernatural or fortuitous event eventually leads the hero to reuniting with not only the heroine, but also his heir, ending the “curse” and resolving the play and redeeming both spectator and hero. Like the fisherman who finds the ring in the *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, the incident in which the vulture is shot by Urvaśī’s son Āyus is inserted by the playwright in order to resolve the curse and transgressions. Thus, Indra can be seen to symbolize the “grace” of the divine or an instrument of that grace. In both *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* and *Vikramo’ṣṭiṃyam*, Indra resolves the *dharmic* transgression by offering either an appropriate avenue for redemption as in Duṣyanta’s

52 The original sacrifice to Indra, opening his inaugural dramatic performance, which Bharata describes in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, has roots in popular festival. In particular he notes several regional modes still use Indra’s staff in opening rituals (Raghavan, 1993, 101-104).
53 *sarvāṅgīṇaḥ sparśaḥ sutasya kila tena māmupagatena/āhlādayasva tāvaccandrakaraścandrakāntamiva*
destruction of demons or in the case of Purūravas, as an embodiment of dharma, permitting Urvaśī to remain with him. In addition, the importance of the heir is clear, as Indra’s pledge is also predicated on this condition, intimating if she and the king never reproduced, she would not have to return.

Conclusion

“In Indian dramatic theory each performance is conceived as a conflict between opposing forces of existence…a substitute for the Vedic sacrificial union of Indra” (Miller, 29). I think Miller’s assertion can be generalized to suggest that all Indian performance contains or mimes the outcome of spiritual or ritual praxis. Bate makes a similar case positing a divine linkage between particular linguistic markers and aesthetic tropes in Tamil that are then used to enhance the images and maintain power of political figures. This idea of performance as sacrifice may not hold for all performance in India as it did for Sanskrit drama. However, the concept of performance as a ritual in which one can commune with the divine is a vital aspect of politically and socially motivated dramatic productions before and after Indian independence as well as a number of other regional theater traditions. Thus, here, the ideal spectator is aware of this divine sacrificial union of Indra that must be “remembered” in order to create the appropriate context for the drama. This early sacrificial moment also references a moment of hybridity within the tradition as the Indra sacrifice Bharata describes remains extant in various forms and elements in regional performance genres (Raghavan, 1999; Varadpande, 1992). Miller also suggests that the “dichotomies of sensual desire (kāma) and sacred duty (dharma) are reintegrated” in a fantasy world created through poetic depiction (29-30). In other words, desire and duty, functioning dialectically within the dramatic world by triggering latent memories within the audience, constitute connections between the emotions of the hero and the spectator’s world of emotional experience in a depersonalized context. For example, the rasika must “remember” how summer heat mirrors that same warmth generated from a new, burgeoning desire. Additionally, the reference to “manmathā” adds further complexity to the meaning(s) suggested as the story of his fiery consumption by Śiva’s third eye is evoked and subsequently, his ability to “agitate the
mind” though unseen. Thus, the force and multi-pronged assault of desire mitigates the mastery of the King and consequently the omniscient position of the spectator. Thus as the audience feels the excitement of Duṣyanta when he chases the deer and also his bewildered guilt when he realizes his hunt has violated the hermitage’s sacred boundaries; both begin to experience the dramatized tension between desire and duty through an internal dialectic between love, loss, desire, and redemption that springs to life through identification with the hero. In this way, the emotive tether created between the hero (nāyaka) and the spectator (rasika) ensures the participation of the latter in the poetic universe (kāvyasaṃsāra) along with the former.

Therefore, the underlying identification with the nāyaka’s desire (kāma) by the audience allows the hero’s plight “to carry mythic weight, telling the paradigmatic story of the ‘man of heart’ with the broader Indian (mainly Hindu) culture” (Goodwin, xv). The audience must aesthetically appreciate Duṣyanta’s excitement through a recollection of how that should feel or has felt or may feel from one’s personal compendium of emotional experiences. The performance must activate these emotional recesses through the focal point of the hero who acts as a “mediator” transmitting the appropriate triggers to foster the spectator’s investment in the hero’s desire. Together, these emotional “signposts” much like Roland Barthes conception of the “punctum,” function as momentary encapsulations of universal experience ensnaring the spectators into a process of aesthetic remembering via the narrative chronicle of possession, transgression, and redemption.

Kālidāsa uses the initial portions of each play in order to cultivate an emotional tether between the rasika and nāyaka ensuring that each moment of the courtship belongs to both. The dramatic production invites the spectator to participate in a process of “aesthetic remembering”

54 Another epithet of Kāma, also used in the Tamil context, is Pañcabāṇa (the one who has five arrows). The five arrows represent the five senses which are simultaneously infiltrated by the feeling of love. This indicates the how the notion of love and its operation is seen as a dialectical process between various elements including love, desire, memory, and tradition, that operates unseen, and is comprehensive in its effects (Kersenboom, 1995, 23).

55 This kind of metonymic aesthetic paradigm is reminiscent of Roland Barthes’s concept of the “punctum” in his work Camera Lucida. He describes the “punctum” as the aspect of a photograph that is an “accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)” (27). He further defines the “punctum” as “the element, [which] will break the studium, [or]…taste for someone, [or] a kind of general enthusiastic commitment…” (26). The relationship between the studium and punctum is similar to that between Sanskrit dramatic world and rasa, respectively. In addition, like the Sanskrit poet or playwright, the photographer’s impetus for taking the photo in particular way can be seen as his pratibhā, or “flash which crosses his mind” which like in Sanskrit Drama, which governs artistic creation in accordance with the potential aesthetic enjoyment of the photo evoked by the punctum. Therefore, just as Barthes values photographs that contain a “punctum,” Sanskrit dramatic performance which establishes an emotive tether between the spectator and the hero and ensures the spectator’s aesthetic relish, can claim success.
in which certain dramatic triggers (i.e. the deer chase in Abhijñānaśākuntalam, Purūravas saving the nymphs and seeing Urvāśī for the first time in Vikramorvaśīyam, and the King’s first sight of Mālavikā in her dance class in Mālavikāgnimitram) become signposts of personal memory. Thus the rasika is able to construct an internal vision of “love” culled from memories of personal experiences evoked by the dramatic narrative and thereby become emotionally invested in its successful resolution. In this way, spectator is imbricated into the dramatic world and can participate along with the hero. The turning point in each of Kālidāsa’s plays comes at the moment in which the spectator obtains an omniscient perspective and becomes aware of an obstacle, which threatens the successful resolution of the play (the union of the hero and heroine and the production of an heir to the throne). This moment serves as the catalyst which cements the identification of the rasika with the nāyaka cementing the emotional investment of the rasika. In this way, the second half the play, in which the conflict/obstacle is revealed and then eventually resolved, belongs to both the hero and spectator. The omniscient moment is both empowering for the spectator while also being an instance of transgression. In this moment, the audience member becomes the sole voyeur; a role he had previously shared with the hero. Thus, in a sense, the spectator becomes the “hero” of the play and must now resolve the conflict in order to atone for his “transgression.” Now, like Duṣyanta watching Śakuntalā illicitly through the bower of creepers or King Agnimitra secretly watching Mālavīkā strike the Aśoka tree in the pleasure garden, the spectator become privy to knowledge that can only have been garnered in an illicit way. This transgression now binds both actors and spectators to the resolution of the play to ensure their own redemption. Thus, the restoration of the dharmic framework at the end of each play allows both the nāyaka as well as the rasika to be redeemed. It should be noted that the dramatic spectacle itself operates on a similar principle, which requires the creation of emotional sympathies, suspension of disbelief, and personal connection between the aesthete and the dramatic narrative. Furthermore, the act of “watching” or the spectator’s “gaze” is already one of a voyeur invited to view the undertakings of the hero and heroine unbeknownst to them. Thus, by isolating that role and momentarily highlighting this aspect of spectatorship, the moment of “transgression” in these plays makes the aesthete self-aware of his voyeurism and therefore, eager to aid in the successful outcome of the play by investing in the return of aesthetic pleasure.
In each of Kālidāsa’s plays, the process of aesthetic remembering follows the pattern of possession, audience identification/moment of transgression, and redemption and resolution. This pattern articulates how the sahṛdaya or rasika experiences the aesthetic emotion or rasa through the playworld’s aesthetic stimulation of latent “memories” or what Abhinavagupta terms “vāsanās.” These memories ensure the gradual imbrication of the spectator into the dramatic world. Thus, the resolution of the contrived transgression (either via curse or in the case of Mālavikāgnimitram the queen’s conniving) must occur for the redemption of the spectator and hero. In other words, the peace felt by the hero at seeing his heir in the conclusions of both Vikramorvaśīyam and Abhijñānaśākuntalam is experienced by the audience as aesthetic bliss at the successful resolution of the play. As a paradigmatic process, aesthetic “remembering” undergirds all performance in India since the spectator’s participation plays such a vital role. In addition, this “remembering” process, which is a depersonalized one, remains dynamic and mutable as continually culturally defined. For this reason, social and anticolonial theater in the twentieth century transform and utilize this process in order to promote particular ideological or political aims by “suggesting” these through various well-known characters/events/narratives. Like Bhāsa’s Mahābhārata plays, these plays often recast epic heroes or religious figures in order to promote particular goals, reforms, or ideas. For example, the symbol of the charka, characters based on historical kings such as Hyder Ali, or the staging of Bhagat Singh’s hanging each have been staged to elicit a strong emotional response while invoking various meanings (spiritual, cultural, social, political, historical, etc.) encoded into the everyday world of the spectator to promote ideological or political causes. In this way, the playwrights are able to use the principle of suggestion and aesthetic relish by tailoring culturally relevant symbols to the anticolonial cause, often averting the strict censorship measures instituted by the British in early part of the twentieth century.

How the symbols are deployed within narrative and dramatic constructs reflects modern and often, regional socio-political aesthetic sensibilities, far removed from the Sanskrit poetic strictures provided by Bharata and others. This is aptly demonstrated by E.V Ramasamy’s counterreading of the Rāmāyaṇa as an incursion of North Indian/Aryan values, Rāvaṇa becomes the hero of the anticolonial or cultural cause (Richman, 1991). Another example can be found in terukkūṭtu in which the figure of Draupadī is transformed into a divine entity with the power to remove all the problems facing a particular village. In addition, as Saskia Kersenboom argues,
many of these modern performance genres demonstrate “flexibility” in the demarcation between so-called elite and popular traditions of music, dance and drama (1995). Similarly, Sheldon Pollock examines the “globalizing literary-cultural practices and representations of Sanskrit” noting that despite limiting his study to early Kannada, it is clear that “the vernacular reconfigures the cosmopolitan…[and] they produce each other in the course of their interaction” (Pollock, 1998, 7). Furthermore, the “Sanskrit cosmopolis” shows how a mythical base of signifiers, produces a “space of cultural circulation” in which newly imagined meanings, uses, and venues of performance arise through a dialectical process of aesthetic and cultural “conversation” (Pollock, 6). In essence, these symbols become more than the epic, mythological, or puranic narratives from which they are drawn. Indeed, they reflect the continuity of the tradition as Abhinavagupta notes in his argument for locating the rasa outside of both the spectator and character and hero. And more importantly, they become figural openings for resistance and innovation conditioned by dynamics of the audience, region, and convention. Thus, while aesthetic appreciation remains a crucial link or mainstay in these intra-cultural “dialogues,” these moments of interaction also become instances of cultural production through performance in the early part of the twentieth century in South India. Therefore, the successful resolution of the dramatic narrative (siddhi) in resistant popular drama results in the spectator experiencing, not just the love of the hero for the heroine, but patriotic sentiment towards the image of India fashioned by the culturally defined “aesthetic” memories.

In the following chapter, I explore the two central aspects of rasa that Kālidāsa exploits: cultural symbols and aesthetic relish, within a Tamil literary context by interrogating moments of “dialogue” between rasa and dhvani, Sanskrit literature, and various Tamil performance traditions. By reconstructing “Tamilized” cultural pathways of aesthetic “memory” such as epic re-creations, temple performance genres, and musical admixtures, it is possible to highlight what survives and persists in the tradition. Though Sanskrit court literature and the golden age of kāvyā ends in the twelfth century, Sanskrit aesthetic paradigms do not necessarily die out; rather, they become dispersed, reformulated, and participants in the production of performative and literary contexts. Rather than following a unidirectional trajectory of influence-i.e. elite to popular or vice versa) Sanskrit literary works and poetics become one of several “conversants” in the development of modern Tamil popular or Company drama. For instance, Indira Peterson’s work on the South Indian Bhāṇa or “one-act play” interrogates important aesthetic alterations
that reflect “flexibility” in representation induced by cultural considerations (i.e. the South Indian Brahman community that comprised the primary audience for these plays) (Peterson, 2004). Diverse aesthetic dialogues between the performance genres found in the eighteenth and nineteenth century Tanjore court provides the ground for syncretism and intra-genre flexibility as seen in the devadāsī tradition as well as Sanskrit-influenced “elite” music and dance-drama traditions and later, folk, ritual, and popular modes of performance discussed by Amanda Weidman (2006) and Lakshmi Subramanian (2006). In other words, the dialectic between memory and desire does not remain restricted to the Sanskrit dramatic tradition; instead it interacts fluidly within Tamil performance modes and aesthetic principles. Therefore, rasa is transformed into a “Tamilized” tool of poetic and performative innovation which manipulates culturally relevant symbols as signposts/triggers in the dramatic narrative in order to emotionally link the audience to a particular sociocultural, ideological, or political perspective.
Chapter Three

Transitions: Aesthetic Remembering and the Production of a “Tamilized” India

Introduction
Partha Chatterjee offers this statement in thinking about postcolonial identity in India:

The point, therefore, is no longer one of simply demarcating and identifying the two domains [“elite” vs. “communitarian”] in their separateness, which is what was required in order to first to break down the totalizing claims of a nationalist historiography. Now the task is to trace in their mutually conditioned historicities the specific forms that have appeared, on the one hand, in the domain defined by the hegemonic project of nationalist modernity, and on the other, in the numerous fragmented resistances to that normalizing project. (13)

While Chatterjee is concerned with the postcolonial “effects” of what he calls the “normalizing project” of nationalism, what is relevant for my work is the ways in which so-called elite and popular communities, “through struggle…shaped the emergent form of the other and [the production] of ‘historicities’ [that] are ‘mutually conditioned’” (12-13). In this chapter, I examine the way in which competing, resistant, historicities of “classical” and “popular” performance genres in the twentieth century colonial Tamil state are more than mutually conditioned; they are also mutually constitutive. The terms “elite” and “popular” are fraught and somewhat problematic in discussing the rich and diverse performance traditions that cater to the cosmopolitan Tamil populace in nineteenth and early twentieth century. I am using these terms to demarcate the performance traditions which were interested primarily in social/political messaging and entertaining a wide swathe of the populace versus others like the Tamil Icai tradition or Bharatanātyam which are vested in the definition of classical as a way to maintain exclusivity and create historical contiguity. In the historical and cultural trajectories of the devadāsī tradition, which transmit this temple/courtly dance tradition into urban performance centers such as Madras or Bombay in the middle of the nineteenth century, produce not only cultural and geographical changes, but also aesthetic and genre-specific ones. Some devadāsī-s such as Balamani Ammal entered the realm of “popular” drama or touring drama troupes. In the 1935 the seminal dance performance by Rukmini Arundale represents a shift from the court performance tradition to a broader audience base. Now, instead of only performing within the confines of the court, for the first time, what had been known as dāsī āṭṭam is called catir as
devadāsī-s perform for the general public and eventually, bharatanāṭyam when the performance accommodates a large audience. The venue change leads to subtle changes in the performance style, material chosen, and most notably, the rather drastic change in respectability of the dance-drama itself (Kersenboom, 1987). As this form develops within the urban setting, it becomes predominantly practiced by Brahmins. This, of course, occurs while devadāsī-s are deemed symbols of moral turpitude by political and social groups during the twenties and thirties leading to the Devadasi Act in 1947 which banned the dedication of girls to temples. Thus, as devadāsī-s and others within the court performance world move from the courts to the cities, they essentially operate as cultural and aesthetic corridors of innovation for both popular and classical performance traditions within the Tamil context. Specifically, their repertoire and performance style become the aesthetic ground for the emerging so-called “classical” dance-drama form Bharatanāṭyam, while also bearing significant influence on the production and development of popular music and drama during the early twentieth century and later, within the rapidly expanding film industry. As Stephen Hughes remarks, many devadāsī-s, such as K.B. Sundarambal (who comes from a devadāsī family), enter the fast-growing popular music industry and with the advent of the gramophone find their way into the nascent Tamil cinema industry.

In this chapter, I hope to construct a “story” of Tamil literary modernity that avoids labels such as either “elite”, “popular”, “folk”, or “devotional” as discrete categories of performance. Rather, my project is to sketch the aesthetic and cultural milieu from which Tamil “company” drama and subsequently nationalist popular plays are produced. I suggest this cultural milieu results from vibrant contestations, collusions, and conversations between competing discourses of aesthetics, social and cultural identity, caste¹ and gender politics, religion, and nationalism. The development of Tamil literature and culture reflects an “inner tension” stemming from two sources: “the truly dialectical relationship between the general and the specific [and] the conflict

¹ In Tamil Nadu, until the 1960s, this hierarchy was essentially reduced to “Brahmins” versus “non-Brahmins” with the former oppressing and subjugating, both socially and economically, the latter. Though caste-discrimination was later banned by law in the post-independence era cultural practices and speech patterns continues the cultural separation of these groups in Tamil Nadu. Political and social action begins with the Self-Respect Movement in the early part of the twentieth century led by E.V. Ramasamy and others and continues after Independence with the Dravida Kazhagam Party (DMK) and Karunanidhi’s rise to power within this movement in the middle part of the twentieth century. While these movements have mitigated some of the disparity in economic opportunity and outright social discrimination they have also produced some other, possibly unforeseen, issues regarding the eliding of literary and historical precedent in the interest of producing a uniquely “Tamil” cultural identity. However, this discussion lies outside the scope of my current investigation.
between tradition and modernity” (Zvelebil, 1973, 9). Zvelebil makes the point that the tension between “general” and “specific” refers to that which is “universally Indian” versus “the distinctively Tamil.” By examining this tension, my investigation highlights various moments of aesthetic and cultural “dialogue” between not only Sanskrit aesthetics and Tamil performance genres, but also between so-called elite, popular, folk, and devotional Tamil theaters. As evidenced by the “traveling” between genres exhibited in many of these examples, it is not surprising to see a common theme of spectator-centered poetics in each of these performance traditions. The role, interaction, and benefit of the spectator varies, however, the importance of a culturally knowledgeable aesthete for whom the performance is intended remains constant. While it is important to note the lines between these performance genres are porous and “flexible;” there are important cultural, ideological, and social considerations that govern the production of exemplar traditions from each, and thereby the manner and form of the aesthete’s engagement (Kersenboom, 1995). As Kersenboom argues, the process of smara in the Sanskrit tradition operates similarly to the Tamil notion of marapu with both aesthetically located in the inextricable nature of word, text, and meaning. Furthermore, the process of smara and marapu each seem to manifest through the dialectic of love and desire as a constitution of “aesthetic pleasure” within the rasika. Thus, only through the spectator’s experience of the medium of performance can the full import of the text and words find meaning. In this way, “marapu” becomes a foundational paradigm for not only the dialectic between word, text, and meaning that can only be experienced through spectacle of performance; but also for cultural “remembering” as a fundamental aspect of performance in the Tamil context (Kersenboom, 1995). Much like the process of smara, which functions as a dialectic between desire and memory that is tempered by duty (dharma), marapu operates through an interaction of tradition, memory, and love that highlights the role of eros in Tamil performance traditions. Using the concept of marapu as paradigm of Tamil cultural consciousness, I identify various “conversations” between Sanskrit poetics and dance-drama tropes and the development of the modern Tamil performative aesthetics that undergirds anticolonial company drama in colonial South India. The purpose is to demonstrate how the production of Tamil literary modernity occurs through a series of aesthetic dialogues and moments of collusion between Sanskritic and “elite” Tamil theater traditions, classical music traditions, and temple and ritual performance, and folk theater. From this milieu,
Tamil “Protest” theater emerges as a unique “popular” amalgam of these traditions as well those stemming from external sources that gain entry through the colonial encounter.

Resulting from these nexus points of interaction, collusion, and collision in aesthetics and performance is a broadly constructed cultural “memory” that becomes vital to the literary construction of an imaginary, free “India” in nationalist and anticolonial works. Ultimately, these aesthetic “conversations” dovetail with the innovations of dramaturgy that result from cultural movements between performance styles in the realm of popular drama. This chapter begins with a brief “imagined” dialogue between the Tolkāppiyam and the Nāṭyaśāstra in order to show how the importance of the spectator’s enjoyment is not limited to Sanskrit poetics and highlights moments of synonymy between the two. The next section explores the various paths of aesthetic “memory” which constitute “Tamil India” including the “Tamilization” and “transcreation” of epic and puranic literature, the urbanization and classicization of devadāsī-ś, the staging of folk theater as an admixture of oral, epic, and ritual, and finally, the musical moments of conversation between so-called classical and vernacular modes of performance. In each case, the purpose is to show how spectator-centered poetics is pan-Indian and the experience of aesthetic relish is culturally determined through the recognition, reconstitution, and recasting of characters. The final section of this chapter examines how these culturally determined pathways of memory, particularly in the work of Subramanya Bharathi, assist the spectator in maintaining a dual identification with an individuated sense of “Tamil-ness” and also a “Tamilized” vision of India. Thus, both discourses become mutually constitutive of a “Tamil” Indian nationalist movement. Figures such as Subramanya Bharathi, Suryanarayana Sastri, Sundarampillai, and Pammal Sambandham Mudaliyar represent “bridgepoints” between various aesthetic, political, and social discourses. Tracing their innovations of performance culture in the precolonial and colonial Tamil state demonstrates how aesthetic relishing is transformed into dramatically-induced political consciousness as various social and political causes utilize drama to engender support. I focus on how religious, historical, and mythological figures become metonymic cultural touchstones “activated” through performance (e.g. Rāma, Bhagat Singh, etc.).

As a classical language of India, Tamil has an independent linguistic, literary, and religious/philosophical history. Moreover, the “metalanguage” of Tamil unlike Kannada, Malayam, and Telegu “has always been Tamil, never Sanskrit” (Zvelebil, 1973, 4). Tamil is
cultivated as a literary language around the third or fourth century BCE and “accompanied by conscious efforts of grammarians and a body of bardic poets to set up a kind of norm, a literary standard, which was called ceyyul-or the refined, poetic language-or alternatively centamil- the elegant, polished, high Tamil” (Zvelebil, 4-5). However, Zvelebil also asserts that Sanskrit is the one language spread equally over the South India and “intellectual exchange [in this region] very probably took place through the medium of Sanskrit and the Prakrits” (5). Additionally, he notes since so many prominent Sanskrit authors were from South India, “in many cases, [they] could not help but let themselves be enriched and influenced by indigenous traditions, conventions, etc.” (5). Taking this further, I contend that these interactions or “enrichments” are not unidirectional and rather one of many moments of confluence between Sanskrit and Tamil literary and poetic traditions, particularly in the realm of performance. My intention is not to suggest that Tamil poetics and performance derives or even borrows linearly or directly from Sanskrit theater in theory or practice. Rather, I focus on the five dynamic moments of “conversation” depicting the confluence of Sanskrit and Tamil concepts of poetic enjoyment, sentiment, and the vital role the spectator: Tamil Caṅkam literary corpus (themes of akam and puram), prabandha literature, courtly performance tradition, ritual theater/bhakti tradition, and the development of the modern Tamil “3-hour” drama. Thus, these moments of interaction produce cultural pathways through which rasa and dhvani become a part of the Tamil cultural “air” and therefore, a uniquely Tamilized version of aesthetic “remembering.”

I. Rasa and Marapu: “Conversations” between Sanskrit and Tamil Aesthetics

The moments of interaction between the Sanskrit and Tamil literary traditions occurs both aesthetically and thematically. The aesthetic confluence between the traditions can be traced through music tradition, devadāsī-s, and prabandha-s while the reinvention of Sanskrit epic and puranic literature in the Tamil performative context provides some thematic connections. While rasa and dhvani remain moored in the Sanskrit poetic tradition; these concepts have interacted with alaṅkāra poetics within the Tamil context and they represent performative tropes common to both Tamil and Sanskrit aesthetic structures (sentiment and the “tasting” of sentiment by spectator to create meaning). “In the seventh through tenth centuries Sanskrit had been

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Prakrit is a vernacular dialect spoken by all actors in Sanskrit drama except kings, Brahmins, courtesans, and the viduṣaka who speaks both Prakrit and Sanskrit.
welcomed or thrust into Tamil literature… Even after freely borrowing words and ideas from Sanskrit, Tamil literature, [Tamil authors] assimilated them perfectly” (Roy, 18). Taking the shared poetic ideals of sentiment (*rasa* (Skt.)/*cuvai* (Tamil)) and the “tasting” (*cuvai/meypāṭu* in Tamil) or “relishing” (*rasasvāda* in Skt.) of sentiment through a remembering process (*smara* (Skt.)/*marapu* (Tamil)) as a point of departure, this section explores three specific moments of confluence or “conversation” between Sanskrit and Tamil in poetics and performance:

*Nātyaśāstra* versus *Tolkāppiyam*; *Cañkam* aesthetic interactions; *prabandha* (*pirapantam* in Tamil) literature. Each of these literary “moments” or corpus of works represents a thematic or aesthetic “entryway” through which elements of the Sanskrit poetic tradition, particularly the idea of *rasa* and *rasasvāda* (aesthetic relish), become reinvented within the South Indian regional-folk, ritual, and courtly theaters.

Tolkāppiyar (second century BCE and third century CE), author of the *Tolkāppiyam*, is described as a linguist interested in the “dynamism of language which feeds on the vicissitudes of contemporary use as much as on the presentness of the past” (Murugan, xii). As a comprehensive treatise on grammar, poetics, and literary production, the *Tolkāppiyam* attempts to “harmonize” the literary language (*ceyyulāru*) with the spoken dialect (*valakkāru*). As a unit the three sections of the *Tolkāppiyam*, likely produced and edited over several hundred years, reiterate the inherent relationship between language, utterance, and aesthetic experience (Zvelebil, 1973). (1) “Eluttatikaram”-This section deals with the Tamil alphabet, pronunciation and grammatical issues, etc.; (2) “Collatikaram”-This section discusses morphology and syntax of the language. Here, the author also provides an important note on utterance that suggests that the world and the word are one. “Each utterance expresses reference matter/The knowing of the thingness and the knowing of the utteranceness become in the speaking, say the experts” (Kersenboom, 1995, 47). In other words, the indelible link between the Tamil utterance and the Tamil world constitute “meaning” (Kersenboom, 48); (3) “Porulatikaram”- In this final section, the author treats Tamil poetics and literary production as a whole. Here, the materials for structuring different types of literature in Tamil, theories of literature, theory of emotions, prosody, imagery, rhetoric, sociology and psychology of literature are detailed. Within this section, the “Meyppātiyal” chapter, which outlines the theory of human of emotions, is most relevant for this investigation. In the discussion of *meypāṭu* (aesthetic experiencing) in the sixth

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3 ellāccollum porul kuṟittanave//poruṇmaieritalum coṉmai terintalum/collin̠ ākum eṉmaṉār pulavar//
chapter in the “Porulatikaram,” “sixteen poetic sentiments” are described which “come down to emotions of eight kinds” with each sentiment stemming from four potential sources which “represent the spheres of human sport” (Murugan, 515). These are “laughter, grief, disgust, wonder, fear, pride, anger, and joy” (Murugan, 515). This chapter goes on to discuss the sources for these eight emotive states as well the appropriate “phases” through which the hero and heroine, in premarital passion, may pass. The conclusion outlines modes of simile (uvama) noting the grounds for literary comparison, the relationship between simile and the emotive states, and tenor and classes of similes.

While no conclusive evidence can be given that either the Nāṭyaśāstra or Tolkāppiyam were influenced by the other, the concept of rasa, or in a broader sense the notion of aesthetic “tasting” (cuvai in Tamil) through performance, occupies a central place in both works. Both also provide the framework for a concept of performative memory as a necessary component of the aesthetic experience of performance. In the Tolkāppiyam, the sense of the concept of marapu or “memory” arises in all three major parts of the work in the following three chapters: “Eluttu-adikaram (Tamil ‘Chapter on Graphemes’), Col-adikaram (Tamil ‘Chapter on Utterance’), and Porul-adikaram (Tamil ‘Chapter on Reference’)” (Kersenboom, 2008, 207). Kersenboom notes that an aesthetic concept is not a “rule” but a “set of activities that follow a rule” (207). Thus marapu or the process by which the “body work[s] out the memory” does not change essentially, but rather slowly evolves “in accordance with the needs of the time” (207). Furthermore, Kersenboom argues that the soul of marapu is smara, which “facilitates its flexible potential to survive” (206). Here, we see how a dynamic cultural remembering process lies at the heart of both Sanskrit and Tamil aesthetic paradigms; and in both, the importance of a flexible application of aesthetic rules dependent on cultural context. In addition, the nature of the performative, Kersenboom states, is at its core, a “search for the strategic intelligence of rite, coupled to an evocative, compelling myth to establish a Cosmos that generates a sense of flow within and among its performers;” one that Bharata would suggest “has a close affinity to rasa as juice, taste, tasting in experiencing the resultant of a performance” (2005, 73). This type of approach allows a “conversation” between various positions on performance and aesthetics, a theoretical “ālāpana” or conversation and exchange of ideas (Kersenboom, 73). She also argues that the eight rasa-s Bharata denotes constitute eight individual “genre[s], force[s], and
experience[s]” and thereby provide a “cognitive base” or way of “organizing memory in an easily recognizable form” (73). In this context, “memory” or smaralmarapu is the free range of experience from which the brain draws in constructing an aesthetic ethos during performance (Kersenboom, 74). Thus, the experience of “sentiment” forms the backbone of performance and through the dialectical act of performing and spectating, a particular cultural memory trajectory is “activated.”

The Tolkāppiyam provides the ground for all Tamil cultural, literary, and linguistic production. Moreover as Zvelebil notes, “to a great extent [the Tolkāppiyam] is the product of an Āryan-Dravidian synthesis” which demonstrates the author’s knowledge “of such Sanskrit authors as Pāṇini and Patañjali” (1973, 10-11). His point is that the Tamil literary tradition could not have developed in a “cultural vacuum” nor could it have been achieved through “by simple cultural mutation” as the earliest vestiges of Tamil literary production manifest “clear traces of Aryan influence” just as “Indo-Āryan literature [such as] the Rg Vedic hymns show traces of Dravidian influence” (11). However, in terms of poetic sentiments and importance of aesthetic relish, we see that the Tolkāppiyam espouses similar views to those found in the Nāṭyaśāstra. Furthermore, both texts promote the use of archetypal characters and describe dramatic performance as the quintessential expression of the human condition. In addition, the role of spectator or rasika as the vital component to unlocking the meaning of a poetic text offers the final important moment of confluence between Tamil and Sanskrit aesthetic systems. “The Tolkāppiyam presents an integrated view of the classical Tamil ethos and culture as rooted in the vision of a two-fold deed of Akam and Pugam, love-urge and power-urge, which are seen to be evolving from their immediacy of Tamilness into universal themes” (Murugan, xv). These two concepts can be seen as the two ways in which human beings experience the world: akam “inside, heart” and pugam “outside, public.” A.K. Ramanujan and Norman Cutler describe pugam poetry from the Caṅkam period as mostly laudatory verses aimed at chieftains, kings, and other important public figures (1983). In contrast, Tamil lyrical and love poetry utilizes the images contained within the “imagined Tamil interior world of akam, spread out over five regions, all…found in Tamil country” (Kersenboom, 1995, 48). In each region, a specific lovers union is deemed appropriate to take place. In this way, the poetic work does not just describe, but rather it invents and enlivens the space and its inhabitants through the power housed within the
poetic composition. “To utter these [attributes specifying time, space, and nature]…meant to make them flourish and come true, to instill their contextual power into the reality of a king, queen or other noble members of Tamil society” (Kersenboom, 49). In this way, the realm of the poetic, in the context of performance becomes a “dynamic exploration by the brain…a live, coloured Sign, marked by the markers of Tamil life” (Kersenboom, 49). Similar to Bharṭṛhari’s theory of Sphoṭa and Ānandavardhana’s theory of dhvani, meaning is created in moment of actuation of the sign (i.e. through the mode of performance) through the myriad of markers that comprise the spectator’s cultural universe. More specifically, in performance, the spectator “activates” the meaning of the poetic text through the dialectic between akam and puṟam which operates on the ground of the spectator’s cultural memory or what Abhinavagupta would call vāsanā-s (latent impressions). This particular moment of confluence between Sanskrit and Tamil aesthetics-the foregrounding of the spectator’s aesthetic enjoyment and appreciation as a central principle of “performative” success-retains relevance for modern nationalist drama. In both poetic traditions, the aesthete participates in a culturally-determined process through which meaning is produced through performance. In this context, characters in these literary works become both universal representations while also remaining culturally-determined through the medium of performance. This negotiation between the “universal” and the “particular” plays an important role in Tamil “Protest” plays as seen in the deliberate conflation of Pārata Māta (Mother India) and Tamil̠ Tāy (Mother Tamil) in Swaminatha Sarma’s Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ.

Caṅkam-era literary works provide an important link not only between so-called classical and modern Tamil performance and literary expression but also serve an important nexus point between Sanskritic aesthetics and the Tamil performative tradition. David Shulman argues in his recent work on notion of bhāvana, which he defines as a sort of metaphysical “connectivity,” one cannot understand premodern and classical Tamil literary developments without considering the comingling of Sanskrit and Tamil in terms of literary sources as well as expression (2012). He states: “First millennium literary and metaphysical materials in Sanskrit are naturally and inherently germane to a second-millennium renaissance…finding its voices in regional languages and, still, in Sanskrit” (2012, 23). As the Tamil literary development moves from the classical period into the premodern and modern era, these Sanskritic echoes not only remain, but also become dispersed across the performative landscape. Both akam and puṟam literary works influence later developments in classical Tamil literature, particularly in the sixth through twelfth
centuries in the realms of epic and devotional poetry. The fifth century Tamil epic *Cilappatikāram* (The Tale of an Anklet) by Ilaṅkovaṭikal provides another important nexus point, particularly in terms of Sanskrit aesthetics of dance. Divided into three chapters, the epic is set in the early part of the Common Era against the backdrop of the three prominent early royal lines in Tamil country: Cheras, Cholas, and Pandyas. The heroine Kannagi and Kovalan reside in Puhar, then the capital of Chola Empire. Kovalan’s dalliance with Mādhavī, a courtesan dancer, creates the initial tension. The Kovalan and Kannagi eventually resettle in Madurai, the capital of Pandya Empire. Kovalan eventually sells Kannagi’s anklet to start a business, however is beheaded it for stealing it from a queen. Kannagi attempts to prove her husband’s innocence and is said to have burnt the entire city of Madurai by her chastity. Chapter three describes Mādhavī’s dance recital and compares her to Urvaśī, a possible reference to Kālidāsa’s heroine in *Vikramorvaśīyam*. The opening scene describes Mādhavī’s musical accompaniment corresponding with the prescriptions in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (a vocal musician, a drum player, a stringed instrument player, and a flute player) (Raghavan, 1993, 136). Furthermore, the description and dimensions of the stage on which Mādhavī performs including its decoration seem to mirror those provided in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Commentary on the *Cilappatikāram* cites several works on *nāṭya* on which the author and commenter rely, none of which are extant except in some fragments (141). Raghavan notes that the *Cilappatikāram* itself provides certain prescriptions for staging and theater production. Furthermore, in a later Tamil treatise on *nāṭya*, *Śuddhānandaprakāśam*, the rules of dramatic performance detailed in the *Cilappatikāram* are reproduced. This work seems to draw on Sanskrit treatises with nearly identical descriptions of how to build the stage, the deities to be worshipped, etc. (Raghavan, 144). Hence these aspects survive in the modern performance traditions in modified form geared towards the social and political issues of the day. They become cultural markers that through the process of *marapul/smarca* connect the audience to a shared aesthetic history that transcends class/caste and economic barriers to create an overarching notion of Tamil “Indianness.”

The focus on the spectator as “activator” also remains important in the Sanskrit and Tamil *prabandha* (Tamil *pirapantam*) tradition. Despite being considered a “minor literature,” the *prabandha*-s occupy an “increasingly important part in the literary production from the late medieval period onward” and provide the ground for the modern Tamil literary world (Ebeling, 56). Furthermore, *prabandha*-s are part of a wealth of literature commissioned through royal and
temple patronage. Thus, the hotbed of production for this literature, maṭam-s (monasteries) “[provide] the general meeting point for pulavars and itinerant poets who came from all over South India” (Ebeling, 60). Kersenboom’s description of the varṇaprabandha-s (performance of a Tamil lyric poem), Raghavan’s exploration of the nṛtyaprabandha-s (hybrid dance-drama genres that combine local performance conventions and motivations with Sanskrit aesthetic tropes) or less prominent popular dance-drama forms that early Sanskrit aestheticians classify as uparūpaka-s, and Sascha Ebeling’s literary accounting of the nineteenth century Tamil Pulavars or Śaiva Siddhanta literary scholars\(^4\), each demonstrate an important moment of confluence between Sanskrit and Tamil in the vibrant genre of prabandha-s or literary works that combined “myths and local historical accounts” (Ebeling, 57). Kersenboom describes the prabandha as “not a document but an event…a cue to action” (1995, 34). The varṇaprabandha performance Kersenboom documents, offers an example of the dynamic character of the literary works in the Tamil context. Varṇam is part of the literary genre of prabandha traced to the tenth century CE (Kersenboom, 1995). Specifically, the varṇam is “a colour or colourful event that manifests itself into the world of senders and receivers” (Kersenboom, 2008, 202). In this context, bhairavi varṇam, a patavarnam (a song meant to be danced) only realizes its “colourful character” and manifests the weaving of words, sounds, and images through performance (203). Thus, the varṇam operates as a “dynamic sign” generated from roots in the Tolkāppiyam containing a flexibility stemming from “context-sensitive rules” that depend on “sophistication and familiarity with the artistic scope…shared between performer and audience” (Kersenboom, 202-3). Thus, prabandha/pirapantam literature links the traditions of the Caṅkam period and Sanskrit aesthetic principles and literature while providing an example of the syncretic innovation indicative of premodern/modern literary genres in South India.

In nṛtyaprabandha-s and varṇaprabandha-s there is a meeting between Tamil aesthetic convention and Sanskrit aesthetic and poetic prescriptions. According Sanskrit aesthetic theoreticians the uparūpaka is minor variant of drama that cannot be classified as a “rūpaka” or full-fledged dramatic form because it lacked the ability to “present a full rasa with other rasas as accessories…and could only present a bhāva or bhāvas,” could only depict a fragment of a dramatic theme, or lacked one or more of the four abhinayas required for a rūpaka (Raghavan,

\(^4\) The Pulavars are traditionally educated, pre-modern Tamil literary scholars/poets prominent during the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries.
One of the main features of these dramatic forms is the emphasis on music and dance indicating these may have been popular dance forms incorporated into the classical pantheon. While these forms may have initially taken by classical poets as “bases or motifs for sophisticated and elaborate dramatic efforts,” the emphasis on literary theorization and their popularity may have led to their becoming complete dramatic forms (Raghavan, 179). One example may be Kālidāsa’s drama Vikramorvaśīyam which has been described as a toṭaka (an uparūpaka form described by both Kohala and Abhinavagupta) though no definitive evidence of this description can be given and the Nāṭyaśāstra merely defines toṭaka as one of the sixty-four sandhyaṅga-s or incidental ideas occurring in a regular drama referring to something said in agitation (Raghavan, 179).

Raghavan makes the point that these uparūpaka-s, sparsely described in the context of ancient Indian theater, provide an important “link or common ground where the classic met the popular; and the sophisticated took up the folk-form” and contends it is more useful to refer to them as nṛtyaprabandha-s (1993, 180). He also identifies the various types of nṛtyaprabandha-s mentioned by Abhinavagupta and later by Bhoja and Śāradātanaya: śṛṣṭadita, prasthāna, kāvyclitākāvya, rāga-kāvya, bhānakal/bhānikā, goṣṭhi, hallīsaka, nartanaka, prekṣanaka, tāṇḍava, lāsya, nātya-rāsaka/daṇḍa-rāsaka, pīṇḍī, ḍombī/ḍombalikā, prerana, rāmakrīḍā, gοṇḍalī, śivapriya, kollāṭa, kanduka-nṛtta, cindu, bhāṇikā, cāraṇa-nṛtta, bahurūpa, ghaṭisiri, and a few others in some later works. While it is beyond the scope of my investigation to detail the features of each of these dance-drama forms, I would like to take a few of these to demonstrate how these perform ance genres become a link between modern classical art forms such as bharatanātyam and regional/popular traditions. Taking the following three types of nṛtyaprabandha-s: prekṣanaka, ḍombī/ḍombalikā and nartanāka/lāsya, it becomes clear how these dances straddle the line between popular and local cultural performance traditions and Sanskrit aesthetic principles. Prekṣanaka refers to a show that took place in the streets, temple courtyards, another public space designated for performance. Often involving a large number of people, Bhoja provides the example of the Burning of Cupid, still performed in Maharashtra during Holi festival (Raghavan, 1993, 186). This term is also used by later authors to denote “any kind of irregular stage performance” (Raghavan, 186). ḍombī/Ḍombalikā is a “nautch-type dance” performed by a single artist while accompanied by singers and a hudukkā (drum). The dancer also sings, but unlike nautch dance, the ḍombī (dancer) does not convey the words and
meaning of the songs closely through *abhinaya* (mimetic representation) and rather performs actions that pantomime narrative and theme of the song (Raghavan, 190). Raghavan also notes that the *dombī* is both a kind of drum as well as a reference to a community of performers that were likely patronized by kings (190). *Nartanāka/lāsya* includes the *chalikā* dance Mālavikā learns in Kalidāsa’s drama. It survives in the modern period in performance genres such as *bharatanāṭyam* as it refers to a well-known dance recital by a single artist (Raghavan, 185). In each of these examples, the dance includes narrative or procedural elements from a regional popular performance tradition combined with one or more Sanskrit poetic tropes.

II. Pathways of Aesthetic Memory: Kampan, *Devadāsī*-s, *Terukkūttu*, and Music

Introduction

Now the question becomes, in what ways does *rasa* and *rasika*’s experience become an integral part of Tamil performance genres? The answer stems from the extensive interaction between South Indian court performance traditions and the Sanskritic aesthetics of dance and song. In order to understand the interactions and borrowings between elite and popular Tamil dramatic art forms in the twentieth century and the way in their relationship with each other as well as the anticolonial movement in the Madras Presidency evolved and changed during this period, it is useful to view these “interactions” through the nexus points of *alaṅkāra* (poetic figures), *nrtya/nṛtta* (dance), and *gītā* (song). For instance, the elite traditions of dramatic and musical performance rely on the appreciation of the cultured and knowledgeable aesthete while popular drama troupe performances also must ensure the spectators can expertly navigate the symbols and allusions which fabricate the “playworld” and properly appreciate the performance in order for it to be successful. Furthermore, aspects of the waning *devadāsī* tradition, which draws on Nandikesvara’s *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, reemerge in popular music and dramatic performance genres near the beginning of the twentieth century (Hughes, Baskaran). The advent of modern Tamil drama can be traced to the middle of the nineteenth century. However, this cross-fertilization between Tamil and Sanskrit artistic traditions occurs over the course of nearly three centuries in fits and starts producing a modern Tamil dramatic tradition which infuses uniquely Tamil productions with pan-Indian aesthetic principles.

In this section, I discuss moments of synthesis and confluence between a variety of different performance modalities (dance-drama, musical-drama, music, etc.) as well as
performance categories such as “folk,” “ritual/devotional,” “classical,” and finally, the
“popular.” The “popular” refers to the amalgam of dramatic techniques, musical performance
modes, and aesthetic principles that inform the production and performance of “company” or
traveling troupe drama as well the music and songs used in these productions. Given the
complexities of this argument, the structure of my analysis takes a narrative rather than linear
approach to historicizing these moments of “dialogue.” While it is clear that a variety of folk
stories and ballads, Sanskrit epic narratives translated and transcreated into Tamil (Villipūttur’s
Pāratam; Kampan’s Irāmavatāram), as well Tamil epics such as the Cilappattikāram, form the
foundation of the repertoire for many South Indian folk theaters such as terukkūttu and later
Sankaradas Swamigal’s company drama and the “special drama” tradition. Mixing, alterations,
and additions to these genres through the medium of performance demonstrate how the modern
Tamil cultural and literary milieu emerges. Furthermore, in this context, devadāsī-s represent a
conduit for aspects of elite, non-Brahmin, matriarchal performance traditions (part of the
continuous icai vēḷāḷa tradition) and ritual/temple performance genres (such as cinga mēḷam or
“small band” and catirldāsī āṭṭam) to enter the popular realm through song and company drama
while simultaneously being reinvented by Brahmanical music revivalists as a classical dance-
drama. Finally, taking the work of Indira Peterson (1998, 2011), Amanda Weidman (2006), and
Lakshmi Subramanian (2006, 2007) as points of departure, I trace points of confluence between
the Tanjore Court performance tradition and company drama style and popular song industry that
dominates the early part of the twentieth century in the colonial Tamil state. In particular, I am
interested in the relationship of the so-called “Tanjore Quartet” (four brothers who standardize
the repertoire for the “catir kaccēri” in the nineteenth century) to the development and
codification of a South Indian classical music tradition as well as its contributions to the popular
performance genres devoted to social and political enterprises (Krishnan, 74). In this context,
both Hari Krishnan and Lakshmi Subramanian demonstrate the competing and crosscutting
trajectories of both the icai vēḷāḷa non-Brahmin classical tradition along with the development of
the Madras Music Academy as mutually constitutive of a modern cosmopolitan public
possessing a broad range of aesthetic, literary, and musical tastes. In addition, Stephen Hughes’s
exploration of the development of the popular music tradition and the impact of the gramophone
further details how this unique admixture of “elite” and non-“elite” performance modalities and
aesthetics constitutes a reconstellated modern Tamil aesthetic. In this way, the shift in focus in
the twentieth century of the Icai Vēḷāḷa tradition to promoting and maintaining a “Tamil” music repertoire through the popular realm of performance and tradition proved more fruitful than earlier attempts to produce an organization that would rival the Brahmanical and less “Tamilized” performance repertoire of the Madras Music Academy (Subramanian, 2006). Furthermore, the pin-pāṭṭu artists within the popular song tradition widely popularized with the advent of the gramophone also assist in this endeavor.

“Tamilizing” Epic: Tamil Bhakti and Kampan’s Irāmāvatāram

As A.K. Ramanujan argues, the Rāmāyaṇa becomes a pool of signifiers from which future narratives draw and create anew (Richman, 1991). Contending that all later “Rāmāyaṇas play on the knowledge of previous tellings” and become in essence, “meta-Rāmāyaṇas,” Ramanujan cites an anecdote from the sixteenth century telling of the story of Rāma (the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa) where Sītā, on the eve of Rāma’s exile to the forest, provides the following among a host of arguments as to why she should accompany Rāma to the forest.

“Countless Rāmāyaṇas have been composed before this. Do you know of one where Sītā doesn’t go with Rāma to the forest?” (Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, 2.4.77-8) (Ramanujan, 1999, 143). He goes on to point out that even this motif occurs in other Rāmāyaṇa-s to show that later tellings of the Rāma story generate their own offspring both within and outside of the Indian subcontinent. For instance, the Malaysian and Thai works on Rāma borrow names of characters from the Tamil and not Sanskrit version of the story. In this context, the twelfth century “transcreation” of Vālmīki’s Rāmāyaṇa by the Tamil poet Kampan provides another important moment of confluence between Tamil and Sanskrit narrative and aesthetic traditions. His importance to the Tamil literary canon cannot be disputed as Kamil Zvelebil describes this Irāmāvatāram as “not just an epic poem, [but] an entire literature” (Zvelebil, 1973, 207). In this vein, his work provides important “openings” for later Tamil authors to question, recast, contest the “story” of the Rāmāyaṇa as told by Vālmīki. The life and date of the poet are a bit murky and even Kampan’s name remains clouded with doubt. However, it is likely he comes from an uvacca community (temple drummers or pūjāri-s in Māriyammaṇ’s temples) in the Tanjore district of South India and benefits from the patronage of a local chieftain, Caṭaiyappan, who he thanks in every thousandth verse of his epic poem (Zvelebil, 1973, 208). Other references to various kings from the Chola dynasty coupled with the earliest known quotation of Kampan found in Periya
Āccān Piḷḷai’s mid-thirteenth century commentary on the *Tīyappirapantam*⁵, date Kampan’s work to the twelfth century, “definitely within the period of the Imperial Cholas” (Meenakshisundaram, 102). Having said this, Kampan’s translation, while likely the most famous, is not the first introduction of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to the Tamil audience.

The Rāma story may have been well-known in the Tamil South in the early classical age through Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* hymns that contain copious references to Rāma as the *avatāra* of Viṣṇu (Zvelebil, 1973, 209). Norman Cutler points out during the “golden age of Tamil *bhakti*” in seventh through the ninth centuries these “poets utilized many literary models-Tamil Caṅkam poems, folksongs, Sanskrit hymns of praise (*stotras*), and even Vedic hymns—thus producing a corpus of great variety with roots in both Tamil and Sanskrit sources” (2003, 147-148). For instance, poems where a the “poet assumes a female voice and expresses love for Viṣṇu exhibit an idiom modeled closely on *caṅkam akam* poems” (Cutler, 147). Like we see in Sanskrit *bhakti* works, the construction of devotee/divine mirrors a relationship between lovers to ensure the spectator/devotee attains a spiritual/aesthetic release through the performance. However, what remains distinctive in Tamil *bhakti* literature, despite the allusions to Hindu myths and gods is the “emphasis on the poet’s own experience and the relationship between poet and God” (Cutler, 148). Furthermore, Cutler notes that “Tamil *bhakti* poems blur the boundary between devotee and saint by providing a paradigm upon which devotees model their own experience of divinity” (148). This model of “devotee and saint” provides a good analogy for the type of identification with the hero sought the nationalist and socially-conscious playwrights in the popular drama scene. In this way, Tami *bhakti* poetry as a distinctive and eclectic genre of literature becomes an important moment of “conversation” between Tamil and Sanskrit aesthetic convention and literary sources. In addition, the importance of the relationship between spectator and performance is vital in ritual performance. Indeed, in Tamil *bhakti* poetry “all who participate in the ritual performance of the saint’s poem reenact the saint’s experience of communion with the deity” (Cutler, 149). If we take this model and examine the monologues addressing (directly or indirectly) “Mother India” in nationalist plays such as *Kāṭṭar Pakti* or *Pāṇapuratu Vīrang*; in these instances, the spectator becomes a “citizen” of the imagined nation via participation in the performance and experiences “nationalist” sentiment (similar to communion with deity in ritual

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⁵ The *Nālāyirat-tīyappirapantam* refers to a collection of roughly four thousand “sacred compositions” of the twelve Tamil Ālvār saints recognized by the Tamil Vaiṣṇava tradition. This text is frequently called the “Tamil Veda” within this tradition (Cutler, 2003, 148)
Ramanujan and Cutler make a similar case for analogous narrative structures between *puram* poetry from the Caṅkam Period and the early Vaiṣṇava Ālvārs’ work. They suggest poetic constuctions from *puram* Caṅkam poetry that valorizes kings, chieftains, heroes, etc. are modified and fused into akam-style *bhakti* poetry lauding the exploits of Viṣṇu and his various incarnations (*avatāra*-s) (1983). In this vein, the Tamil *vaisnava bhakti* tradition along with Kampan’s Tamil epic *Irāmavatāram* have a significant influence on the creation of a “Tamilized” Rāma figure within the Tamil literary corpus similar to what we see in folk and ritual theater (*e.g.* terukkūttu) with Draupādi (in Tamil-Tirupatai). While inspired by their epic predecessors, these figures take on Tamil characteristics—divine heroism in the case of Rāma. For instance, in Vālmīki’s version of the story, Rāma is distinctly human with all the trials and tribulations that entails while shadowed by his divine essence. In contrast, Kampan, displaying the influence of the Tamil *bhakti* poets, creates a purely divine Rāma, “on a mission to root out evil, sustain good, and bring release to all human beings” (Ramanujan, 1999, 142).

It is the problematic and unique position of “Rāma” as both divine and human that makes possible the multiple representations and ideological interpretations of the both the *Rāmāyana* as well as the *Rāmakathā* (the Rāma story) (the former is the epic text while the latter refers to the narratives that describe the life, times, and adventures of Rāma), particularly in the Tamil context. David Shulman highlights two particular episodes that explicitly participate in this “deconstructing of divinity” process, “first…the painful case of his cowardly and unfair slaying of the monkey-king Vālīn; and second, [Rāma’s] relations with Sītā after the war and her restoration to him” (Shulman, 1991, 89). Modern indological scholarship has dealt with Rāma’s unfair treatment of Sītā as an issue of “accretion” which Shulman argues cannot apply universally and therefore, is unacceptable (90). Kampan’s version of the story only deals with the first of these issues in detail since it concludes the story with Rāma’s happy return to Ayodhya and does not include the Uttarakāṇḍa. More specifically, as work of that builds on “earlier foundations of poetry [and] inherited modes of classifying the world and its typical understandings of human identity and experience,” Shulman describes Kampan’s work as, “a striking condensation of cultural distinctiveness [and] a devotional kāvya, replete with the poses and values of Tamil *bhakti* religion [as well as] the general cultural orientations of the Kaveri delta during the Chola period” (90). Moreover, Kampan’s work is “more dramatic that Vālmīki’s” with poetic flourishes and “local” flair as seen with the episode of Ahalyā and Indra.
in both texts (Ramanujan, 1999, 141). In both works, Indra has an illicit sexual encounter Ahalyā but in the Vālmīki version, Indra seduces a willing Ahalyā while in Kampan’s recreation of the scene, Ahalyā realizes she is wrong but cannot abandon forbidden pleasure (Ramanujan, 141). In Kampan’s work, Indra is punished by a sage by being covered with the object of his desire: vaginas while Ahalyā is turned into stone for her lack of self-control (Ramanujan, 141). These motifs, Ramanujan points out are uniquely “Tamil” and “attested to in South Indian folklore and other southern Rāma stories, inscriptions, and earlier Tamil poems” (141). Thus, his work represents not a translation of the Sanskrit work by Vālmīki, but a uniquely Tamil work that transforms and creates anew a story of Rāma informed by various trajectories of culture, aesthetics, and religion that inform the Chola imperial period.

Another example of how Kampan creates such an “opening” appears in his rendering of the scene of Rāma killing Vālīn. Even in Vālmīki this scene seems problematic at best. Vālmīki’s approach to the problem is to pose the question of why the “idealized man” must act in a “seemingly, cruel and unfair manner” and the answer is a murky and flawed relationship drawn between Rāma, his dharma, and his role as an avatāra (descent) of Viṣṇu (Shulman, 1979, 655). Kampan’s version highlights the plight of Vālīn and confronts the moral issue in the situation. The episode involves Rāma’s interaction with the monkey king Sugrīva and his brother Vālīn. Sugrīva offers to help Rāma retrieve Sītā from Rāvana if Rāma would assist him in reclaiming the kingdom and his wife from Vālīn. Sugrīva plaintive appeal to Rāma, arguing that he still feared for his life, convinces Rāma to slay Vālīn. In the following verse, cited and translated by Shulman, it becomes clear how Kampan questions the actions of Rāma and problematizes his divine status despite pointedly reaffirming it throughout his work.

He who appeared [on earth] to safeguard the path of kings
Proclaimed by Manu without straying from the Veda’s truth
Came before him [Vālīn] who was crying:
“If the Lord can deviate from what is right,
what, then, will be the nature of the lowly?
Yet He has done wrong to me!” (655)

The language used by Vālīn clearly connotes the paradox of Rāma as both human and divine as he exclaims, “if the lord can deviate from what is right…” This line also shows an unmooring of the concept of dharma and questioning how it is determined and by whom. Through Vālīn’s
language, *dharma* becomes a tool of the powerful rather than a universal divinely ordained paradigm of morality. Here, as Shulman notes, Kampan “deliberately underlines the moral conflict” embedded in the figure of Rāma as both *dharma* (duty) incarnate and potential perpetrator of a “serious breach of conduct” (Shulman, 655). Shulman’s discussion underlines both the emotional as well critical considerations this incident highlights. The position of Rāma as both “human and inhumanly upright” in many ways, undermines later readings that would prefer an uncomplicated paragon-of-virtue image of Rāma to a complicated and contradictory human version (Shulman, 655).

I would also suggest Kampan’s narrative invites resistance by complicating the argument of Rāma as ideal. By making Rāma a divine figure and therefore a symbol of morality, his actions contrary to dharma are no longer defensible as a result of his “human” weakness. However, his divinity also permits Kampan’s uniquely “Tamil” Rāma to functions as a guide (much like the sage in the *bhakti* tradition) for the spectator’s “soul” to attain release from the cycle of rebirth. Kampan’s constructs a narrative in which the reader/listener must question the actions of Rāma in these moments. As Richman notes in her discussion of E.V. Ramasamy’s counterreading of the *Rāmāyana*, these incidents often are used to reify Rāma as a moral derelict and Āryan oppressor. Furthermore, E.V.R. uses Rāma’s actions against Vālīn to demonstrate of a pattern of suspect behavior conflating Rāma’s divinity and humanity in order to promote his view of Tamil nationalism. Others such C. Rajagopalachari and Gandhi, who saw Rāma as a model of righteousness and the story as a parable for “ideal and just rule” engage in assimilating and excising practices in order to promote a “Rāma” devoid of flaws. They saw “Rāma Rājya” or the use *Rāmāyana* ideals of society, morality and governance as a model for the newly formed government of independent India. Richman notes that Rajagopalachari does not even discuss, for example, the incident of Rāma killing a śūdra man (laborer caste) for performing *tapas* (austerities) in order to return a Brahmin boy to life and preserve *dharma*; an incident that figures heavily into Ramasamy’s argument for Rāma as corrupt and evil. Shulman’s discussion of good and evil provides an interesting departure point in thinking about the way the figure of Rāma functions in modern Tamil social and political discourse both before and after Independence in 1947. In the anticolonial sphere, before widespread proliferation of the Self-Respect movement, the *Rāmāyana* plays of Sankaradas Swamigal, Subramania Bharathi, P.S. Mudaliyar and others (as seen extensively in the Parsi drama tradition) reprise the epic as a pan-Indian story of
heroism, valor, pathos, just kingly rule, and desire. More importantly, early in the twentieth century when mythological plays dominate the popular drama scene, it is in sly references to the people of Ayodhya rejoicing at having an honorable king or the heroism of Rāma’s victory over Rāvana as one which preserves the freedom of the people that begin the trend of nationalist rhetoric (Baskaran). In this way, the figure of Rāma becomes part of the continuing tradition of cultural memory in Tamil literary modernity as a multivalent and contradictory signifier of anti-colonial resistance, divinity in various contexts, linguistic and cultural colonization, and Brahmanical Hinduism.

Kampan’s description of the episode where Rāma kills Vālin and his killing of the Śūdra man for performing asceticism problematizes the dichotomy of the infallible divine with the tragic and inevitable fallibility of humanity. Moreover, these episodes offer openings for later interpretations of the Rāmāyaṇa as well as important critiques such as seen with the rise of the Self-Respect movement in the 1930s through the 1960s. Most importantly, Kampan’s portrayal of Rāvana as somewhat ambiguous figure, softening his image as a villain and rather emphasizing his role as father, lover, hero, and ruler provides the literary ground for later re-creations of the story in the Tamil context that cast Rāvana as hero. Each of the characters reflects Kampan’s effort to “Tamilize” the Rāmāyaṇa in order to make the Sanskrit epic relevant within the local Tamil context. In addition, Kampan’s text, unlike Vālmīki’s, opens with a different “creation myth” for Rāma “picking up traditional Tamil motifs like the five landscapes attested to in classical Tamil literary works and an emphasis on water as a source of life and fertility, an important connotation with roots in the Tamil epic Tirukkuṟṟal (Ramanujan, 1999, 155). While it is important to note, that like the direct interactions between Sanskrit alaṅkāra works and Tamil scholars, initially, only those in the elite and wealthy circles had direct access to not only Vedic scripture, but also purāṇa-s (ancient stories) as well as the epics. However, the oral tradition of storytelling broadened the access to these Sanskrit literary works and allowed the themes and symbols inherent within them to be incorporated into all aspects and classes of Tamil literary culture. In addition, regional literary and dramatic productions of the stories from these epics

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6 The Self-respect movement refers to the push by, at first “elite” non-Brahmins such E.V. Ramasamy and others, to purify Tamil of influence from other languages, mainly the Sanskrit and Hindi loan words as these were perceived as Brahmanical/Aryan cultural colonization of the Tamil language, history, and people. While there were various factions within this movement that emphasized particular issues such as language or caste relations, the broad impetus was to reclaim or reconstruct Tamil’s rich literary, linguistic, cultural, and religious history as unique, continuous, and most importantly, classical.
uniquely adapted for the Tamil people introduced not only these narrative themes into the Tamil literary and artistic milieu, but also the aesthetic principles which undergird their appeal; namely the importance of an emotional connection constructed through cultural symbols embedded in the poetic fabric.

The importance of cultural symbols in performance is reinforced by the distinct influence of the bhakti literary and cultural motifs on Kampan’s work. Kampan’s Rāma is a divine figure through whom salvation could be gained and evil would be destroyed---an ideal vision for an anticolonial hero. Nationalist plays often eulogized martyrs for the cause such as Bhagat Singh or Bal Gangadhar Tilak as not only defenders of the nation, but also as bringers of salvation through a commitment of citizenship by the spectator. In effect, these plays function similarly to the public performance-readings of Tamil bhakti poetry in which all participants benefit spiritually from the performance. The spectator invests in the fate of the hero and shares his allegiance to the “imaged” nation by accessing his own experiences of colonial repression. Now, the dramatic world becomes, in essence, the imagined “India.” For example, in Sarma’s Bānapuratu Vīraṇ, Puresan, the main protagonist mirrors the heroism of Rāma while his wife Sutharmai is directly compared with Sītā’s in terms of her character and behavior. Puresan is reminiscent of Kampan’s Rāma—a divine hero, a savior for the people, a defender of “good” and defeater of “evil,” and most importantly, an absolver of transgressions. After defeating the tyrannical Athiratha king, the play concludes with Puresan vowing to protect the freedoms of the people and restore moral order. In a sense, he ensures the “salvation” of the people by freeing the nation. Sarma’s hero demonstrates how Tamil bhakti’s symbolic structures and literary corpus provide a useful model for interrogating the aesthetics of devotion that undergirds Tamil anticolonial plays.

**Terukkūṭtu and Rewriting the Mahābhārata**

Theodore Baskaran highlights the importance of folk drama in bringing the masses and so-called “non-elites” into the independence movement by relying on a shared cultural “memory” constructed through myth, music, religion, language, and aesthetics. Initially, the anticolonial movement was only supported by so-called “elites” who lacked the ability to communicate directly with populous on account of societal caste and class divisions (Baskaran). Furthermore, the rise in popularity of popular/“company drama” stems from its ability to draw on familiar
themes such epics and myths in the Indian tradition. In this context, the use of folk drama as a teaching mechanism is an important precursor to its role in the promoting nationalist ideology and sentiment. In addition, in the initial stages of the nationalist movement, these plays were often done as “mythologicals” or plays which regaled the heroism of Rāma (based on Tamil versions of the Rāmāyana including that of Kampan) or as in the Pañcalī Capatam, valorize Draupadī from the Mahābhārata. However, as the movement began to garner support in the urban center of Madras, these plays began to include sly references to modern Independence heroes like Gandhi, Tilak, or Bhagat Singh. In addition, the Tiraupatai kūṭtu-s in terukkūttu performances often use incidents such as her public disrobing or cursing of Duḥśāsana to highlight local and contemporary social and political issues through strategically placed cultural symbols in the dramatic narrative. Here we see the unique intersection of aesthetic presentation, history, myth, and memory which undergirds the Indian performance tradition as a whole.

Hanne de Bruin discusses at length the issues with translating the term “terukkūttu” as “street drama” or to use it to refer to the practices she observes in her fieldwork in Tamil Nadu, for which she instead offers the term “kaṭṭaikūttu” referring to the wooden bangles worn by the performers (1999). Both she and Frasca (1990) identify both terukkūttu and kaṭṭaikūttu as separate but related genres of folk/ritual performance theater in rural Tamil Nadu. In his history of Tamil drama, A.N. Perumal refers to all non-elite arenas of dramatic performance as terukkūttu including what Theodore Baskaran defines as “company drama.” However, Perumal’s use of this term is problematic for a few reasons. Despite Sankaradas Swamigal’s transferal and adaptation of terukkūttu dramatic style, themes, and narratives (kūṭtu-s) to the proscenium stage, the theater he creates is a new genre, not a direct transposition of a folk theater onto an urban performance space (Frasca, 1990; de Bruin, 1999). Frasca notes that several practitioners, with whom he discusses Swamigal’s work, explain the removal of the ritual context makes these other “popular” dramas similar, but ultimately, not kūṭtu (56). Perumal’s use of this term likely refers to the development of itinerant dramatic production groups which sprung up in the colonial Tamil state after the increased popularity of Parsi traveling drama troupes who performed

7 Richard Frasca (1990, 1994) discusses “Tiraupatai-disrobing” as a recurring motif of terukkūttu plays in the villages outside of Kañicipuram that he visits during his field case study. The mythologization and hagiography that surrounds the figure of Tiraupatai being enacted in these plays draws from Villiputtur’s Tamil retelling of the Mahābhārata, entitled Pāratam. Appearing in both terukkūttu and kaṭṭaikūttu performances, these dramas exploit the mythological framework of the Tiraupatai Amman’s hagiography, well-known throughout the area.
“Indianized” Shakespearean narratives in a variety of locales both within the British India as well as in other parts of the Empire.

My discussion of terukkūttu focuses the dramatic, aesthetic, and narrative “borrowings” between the terukkūttu folk tradition and the “popular” drama Sankaradas Swamigal produces to show how devotional and folk theaters participate in the production of the eclectic cultural memory that includes interactions with various aesthetic, linguistic, and cultural paradigms to produce the multivalent Tamil literary modernity in which the popular drama phenomenon gains ground. Julie Hollander (2007), Hanne de Bruin (1999), and Richard Frasca (1990) conduct studies of sister genres of folk theater (de Bruin notes that she and Frasca must have worked with several of the same artists) that offer a rare glimpse of the process of staging and performing a terukkūttu drama. While this folk drama tradition may share some similar roots with other so called “outdoor” drama traditions, the terukkūttu refers to theater troupe who enacts an all-night drama in which specific performance patterns and costuming are followed. In addition, the bhakti or devotional aspect of these performances exemplified in the rituals and rites performed in the several days leading up to the kūttu performance that indicate the importance of the ritual aspect of this theater tradition. Frasca’s discussion of sentiment and purpose within the terukkūttu tradition provides an interesting perspective on the relationship and interaction between aesthetic relishing and the primary goal in many village performances, āveśam or “possession by the divine through performance” (56). He argues:

After the advent of Brahmanical Hinduism and the development of major temple complexes in Tamilnadu, the ritual performing arts bifurcated into two streams, one involving the temples and one involving the villages. Whereas the later was oriented toward possession or the presence of a powerful sacred entity immanent in an object (e.g. the karakam) or person (cāmiyāṭi), the former had the overriding goal of engendering in the audience the experience of rasa (aesthetic essence), a transcendent phenomenon that also had sacred importance. The homologuous relationship of both of these branches of performance with an extraordinary religious experience on the part of the audience…indicates an important relationship between āveśam [possession] and rasa. (56-7)

Most of the terukkūttu repertoire is drawn from the a particular kind of “musical chanting of verses” from important Tamil and Sanskrit works, usually accompanied by a prose elucidation of the moral and ethical meaning and further commentary connecting their importance to contemporary issues facing that the particular community (Frasca, 1990). More importantly, this
form, *piracaṅkam* (Skt. *prasaṅgam*), cannot be classified as folk or classical, but is entirely different from the more Sanskrit musical chanting tradition of *Kathākālakṣepam* (Frasca, 54).\(^8\)

It is a musical rendering of verses from the Villiputtūr’s *Pāratam* performed during ritual festivals in many of the larger village temples. In this way, this tradition becomes an important link between folk and ritual performance modalities. In addition, while the folk and village oriented performance genres such as the *piracaṅgam* and *terukkūttu* make little use of the Sanskrit verses in the *Mahābhārata* unlike the more classical temple exegesis forms such as the *kathākālakṣepam*, the themes and narratives (*itiḥāsa*) and religious motifs demonstrate links with Vaiṣṇava devotional traditions as well as epic recitation. Interestingly, the *Pārata-piracaṅgam* is the likely literary source from which much of the *terukkūttu* repertoire is drawn providing an important link between ritual and folk performance modes (Frasca, 1990). Important historical and Tamil folk ballads are among the *kūttu*-s regularly performed.\(^9\) Thus, the aesthetic imperative of “mixing” Frasca identifies may offer a way to connect folk, ritual, and classical modes of performance, the divergent canons of epic narratives from which each draws notwithstanding. However, what seems to be a more substantial link between these performance types is the use of dance and song (in many cases with aesthetic elements taken from various aesthetic traditions) as well as the spectator’s role as an aesthete/devotee who must maintain an emotive tether to the performance to ensure its “success;” highlighting in all cases resolution of the performance that mirrors (or in some cases literally functions as) a spiritual communion (albeit viewed entirely differently within each of these performance modalities) (Frasca, 1990).

Finally, there are some important differences between the term *nāṭakam* (drama; *nātya* in Sanskrit) and *kūttu* (“drama” in the *terukkūttu* sense) that distinguishes between performance contexts (Frasca, 1990, 59). *Nāṭakam* refers to performance taking place in large temple complexes while *kūttu* denotes the folk art of dramatization in a ritualized context for a ritual

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\(^8\) *Kathākālakṣepam* is a classical Brahmical Sanskrit traditional musical chanting performance style in Tamil Nadu that takes place predominantly during festivals in larger village temples. It also largely draws its most of its material from the Villiputtūr *Pāratam*.

\(^9\) Frasca describes the repertoire of the troupe he studies in Tontaimantalam. He includes a large corpus of works including roughly four categories of works: 1) *ammap* (goddess) *kūttu*, 2) *caṇṭai* (battle) *kūttu*, 3) *kalyāṇam* (marriage) *kūttu* and 4) *mokṣa* (liberation of the soul) *kūttu* (1990). He notes the *caṇṭai kūttu*-s are most taken from the epic tradition although a few historical *kūttu*-s are performed including *Rājā Teciniku* which a story about an important ruler of Cenji. There have several folk ballads and plays regarding this particular ruler seen as defender of the last bastion of “Hindu rule” against the Mughal invaders. For example, Tamil nationalist playwright, T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar, dramatizes the story of *Rājā Teciniku’s* final battle against the Mughals to symbolize the Indian resistance against the British.
goal. However, the “freedom of nātya” which Kersenboom cites becomes quite relevant here in the “borrowings” and “conversations” between the kūṭṭu folk/ritual tradition and the popular dramas of Sankaradas Swamigal (Kersenboom, 1995, 223). Swamigal begins writing and directing dramatic performance in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He adapts several performance techniques from terukkūṭṭu for production on the prosценium stage in urban settings (Frasca, 59). Evidence from practitioners who emphatically deny these hybrid productions as “kūṭṭu” relies on two premises: 1) there is no possession (no ritual context) and 2) they are not aitikam (Skt. itihāsa-oral story tradition) (Frasca, 59). The first distinction is vital as the decontextualization of the kūṭṭu-s alters the goal of the audience from divine possession to entertainment, bringing to the fore the same aesthetic goals of the other more-aesthetically oriented folk arts Frasca describes such as the kathākālakṣepam (dramatic recitation of mythological stories). In terms of the second, I would suggest the oral tradition now becomes a part of the cultural memory which informs and conditions the arrival of a Tamil literary modernity. It should be noted that Swamigal’s borrowings did not simply recreate terukkūṭṭu on the popular stage. In fact, he borrows little from the costume and makeup traditions of the kūṭṭu performers (Frasca, 60). However, the aesthetic component becomes the primary element with the removal of divine possession element demonstrating the vital role of the spectator and how that role is contextually altered but still requires an interactive aesthetic participation with the act of performance. Thus the entertainment imperative coupled with the need to innovate, both find expression in Swamigal’s adaptation of terukkūṭṭu dramatic practices and themes. In addition, we see the shift of rasa from epic to folk/ritual and then into the urban setting with popular drama and songs.

Sankaradas Swamigal is often discussed as a “bridge between tradition and modernity” (Seizer, 43). Susan Seizer’s ethnographic study of “special” drama or a particular type of Tamil popular drama in which the set of performers is called together based on the needs of the performance, notes that performers in this genre see Swamigal as a “revered and honored…guru and as the founder and first teacher of their art form” (43). Like Pavalar, Sarma, and Kandasamy Mudaliyar whose works have been lost, Swamigal’s historical imprint on popular drama has only been marginally explored until more recently. More recently, his role has been revived and

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10 The 2009 publication of eighteen Sankaradas Swamigal plays with an introduction by V. Arasu is one of the first modern collected editions of plays from this period. In addition Susan Seizer’s work on “Special Drama” and the
transformed in the context of “special” drama communities where most of the plays performed even today were written him. Seizer notes: “He is actively remembered in speech, song, and worship, as in annual collective, commemorative festivals” (43). It is this legacy which can be traced to show his actual impact on the development of popular Tamil drama. Further Swamigal’s work, like that of Pavalar, Sarma, and Mudaliyar is syncretic and straddles several performance modalities within both elite and non-elite realms as well indigenous and non-indigenous ones. The primary subject matter of most of Swamigal’s plays was mythological or epic (i.e. Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata) drawn from the folk ballads (kummi), Tamil myths, legend, and epic, and kūttu-s from the terukkūttu tradition. Swamigal is unique within the popular dramatic tradition as much Mudaliyar he focuses on the discipline and rigors of acting. Furthermore, his transformation of epic narratives that have then been “Tamilized” within the folk realm through the folk/ritual oral tradition, into a “popular” medium of messaging predicated on aesthetic engagement between spectator and performers was model that would be followed by many of the Tamil Protest playwrights, particularly Pavalar. The shift from the folk to the popular is one propagated by entertainment as opposed to ritual. However, in the modern period, growing anticolonial sentiment along with pressing social issues necessitate a change in the function of drama as communicatory medium for political, social, and moral ideologies. Indeed, as Seizer argues: “Swamigal’s oeuvre has rendered both his works and the artists who continue to perform them rather too uncategorizable for historians” (44). The hybrid dramatic sensibility of “special” drama, as noted by Seizer, Baskaran, Perumal, and others, is a characteristic of the Tamil “Protest” plays as well which incorporate (like “special” drama) proscenium staging, stock characterization, and the stark morality of melodrama most likely derived from the traveling British troupes performing Shakespeare as well as Mudaliyar’s Tamil versions of famous Shakespeare plays, and the traveling Parsi drama troupes which feasted on a healthy stream of clientele before Tamil drama troupes took over in earnest.

“Classical” Meets “Popular”: Tanjore Polyglot Performance, Devadāsī-s, and Musical Dialogues

contribution of Sankaradas Swamigal to this particular genre has also brought notoriety to his influence on the Tamil popular performance modes as a social, political, and aesthetic innovator. Hanne de Bruin, Richard Frasca, and Theodore Baskaran all discuss his “urbanization” or “popularization” of the Tamil folk drama terukkūttu.
In many ways, a discussion of dance, drama, and music in the Indian context cannot be separated as they work together in the context of performance to constitute meaning. Near the end of the nineteenth century, “a series of music sabhas emerged providing new settings, access and availability for Karnatak music [making] the question of aesthetics…related directly to the expansion of public concerts in Madras city” (Subramanian, 2007, 198). The search for a common standard for performance and aesthetics in 1920s leads to production of an “acoustic space [in which] individual vocalist[s] or soloist[s]…function as the central mediating channel of musical experience” (Subramanian, 200). Subramanian also cites P.S. Iyer, a prominent newspaper critic writing during the nascent popularity of public concerts who describes the audience of these public concerts as a diverse set of listeners each clamoring for what they perceived as the true “classical” music. In many cases this would lead to some listeners requesting popular melodies such as patam-s, jāvalī-s, tillānā-s while others would insist on a traditional classical repertoire of kṛti-s and kīrtana-s (Subramanian, 200). Similarly, in drama sabhā-s like P.S. Mudaliyar’s Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā, the performance of certain plays/scenes, songs, and the use of particular characters become popular with various sectors within the audience leading to the need for a standard of performance. Like the vocalist whose repertoire is under pressure from the audience directly, drama spectators would often shout to have a song sung again or a character revived from the dead. P.S. Mudaliyar like other founders of music and drama sabhā-s seeks to streamline modern Tamil drama by eliminating these practices, he creates this standard by focusing on the revival of a colloquial Tamil and by utilizing themes from local and pan-Indian myths while avoiding many of the social and political issues of the day. Subramanian notes that what is pertinent here is how sabhā-s “reflected a new sense of the public and the middle-class investment in culture and this generated new models of appreciation, aesthetics and music criticism” (2007, 199). Part of what leads to a continuous state of dynamism in the modern period is this search for a middle-class aesthetic standard that is suitably classical and but still new and innovative. For instance one of Iyer’s criticisms of the early public concerts centers on the performer often repeating the same embellishments (saṅgati-s) learned from a teacher in an effort to inject “classicism” into the performance instead of reinvigorating the classical melody by spontaneous innovation through performance (200). Thus, the “onus” remains on the performer to “create a shared space of communication,” (200). With the
performer as the primary mouthpiece, it is easy to see how aesthetic conventions “travel” as these performers move between genres of performance.

In her discussion of the aesthetics of the Tamil varṇam (song), Saskia Kersenboom outlines the threefold sensorial experience of performance as akin to viewing a painting (1995). She notes that the painting cannot be conceived as an end-product and rather remains productive through viewership. Similarly, the Tamil relationship between word, text, and image derives meaning through performance. Therefore the Tamil text “lives in symbiosis with the world; its testing ground is not its objectification as inscription, but its being performed in communication [and dependence] on exposure to an interactive audience for its validation” (Kersenboom, 1995, 15). The interactive nature of performance requires a discussion of how these various elements of the performative in the Tamil context—dance, drama, and song—interact, transect, and interrogate folk, popular, and classical boundaries while conditioning the development of modern performance modalities and aesthetic paradigms. In addition, the integral relationship of the artist/performer to the production and promotion of various political and social ideologies in the modern Tamil performative space mirrors one that emerges in the medieval period as seen in the court patronage tradition in Southern India where the relationship between the poet/singer and the ruler functions as a “reciprocal interaction…an intercourse of poetry and strategy between the ruler and the bard” (Venkatasubramanian, 29).

Music plays a leading role in forming a so-called “Karnatak” ethos. Around fourteenth century, the saint-singer Purandara Das (1484-1564) standardizes and codifies basic music scales and vocal training (Kersenboom, 1999). In the Vijayanagara Court, a medieval Hindu bulwark, this system, developed further, serves as a model for vocal and instrument training. This tradition continues in both the Nāyaka and Marātha court traditions in Tanjore. In the nineteenth century four brothers, often referred to as the “Tanjore Quartet” (Poṇṇaiyā, Ciṇṇaiyā, Civāṇantam, and Vaṭivēl), descended from a clan of musicians, ushered in various innovations in court performance repertoire and like their contemporaries “drew from a cultural pool of artistic materials related to solo female dance in the region” (Krishnan,75). They retool the court repertoire into a structure of performance for the female solo performer including the following
components: alārippu, jātisvaram, śabdam, varṇam, patam, jāvali, and tillānā (Krishnan, 75). The “Quartet” provides a paradigm for dance training that operates similarly to the one offered by Purandara Das a few hundred years earlier (Kersenboom, 1999). They produce a collection of songs that form the basis for the classical music canon that develops in earnest in the twentieth century with the founding of the Madras Music Academy. The development of the classical music tradition in the modern Tamil state is linked indelibly to the emergence of so-called “classical” dance-drama traditions such as bharatanāṭyam in the twentieth century as both claim roots in the performance traditions originating in the temple and court performance traditions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indira Peterson suggests in her work on the evolution of the Kuravāṇci performance tradition (Fortune-teller “folk” drama that focuses on the Kuravar tribe in the Tamil region) into a prominent dance-drama form of the eighteenth century hinges on “continued and varied negotiations between what might be called ‘classical’ and ‘folk’ styles, genres and thematic material of heterogeneous origins” (1998, 40). She further argues that these “negotiations” inform the ways in which modern Bharatanāṭyam dancers have found ways to “negotiate the folk” in the process of constructing a so-called “classical” canon (Peterson, 40). Thus, the dynamic cultural, aesthetic, literary milieu of nineteenth century South India, resulting from the rich literary legacy of the court performance traditions, produces, “a transformation of the public space in southern India [through] the articulation of new publics constituted by networks of migration, colonial education, and religious institutions” (Subramanian, 2006, xvi).

The aesthetically diverse cultural space in which the Nāyaka and Marātha court performance traditions (poetry, music, and dance-drama) flourished during the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries provides the ground for this modern “transformation of the public space of southern India.” The Marāthas build to the large extent on the Nāyaka literary performance genres while instituting major innovations including the promotion of dramatic and lyric works  

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11 These “standardization” of this sevenfold sequence of courtly dance and the genres of which it is comprised remain in contention as information regarding this stems from oral sources. In some instances, śloka is substituted for the form of jāvali (Soneji, 247fn).

12 Peterson raises the issue of the problematic categories of “folk” or “classical” or “popular” when discussing Indian art and literature forms. Performance and literary traditions are classified within the tradition as either mārga (the universal) or deśī (local or regional) that do not always translate well into “western” of classification of performance traditions such as “folk” versus “classical” (Peterson, 1998, 41). She notes, for example, that genres defined as “deśī” often “encompass a variety of phenomena whose origins lie in popular, non-canonical, regional, and tribal milieu (41).
“intended for performance in dance and music, both at the court and for large public audiences” (Peterson, 2011, 291-2). Additionally, the Marāthas, in contrast to the focus on Telegu and Sanskrit in the Nāyaka court, the Marāthas oversee the production of a whole range of works in Marathi alongside “popular literary works in Telegu, Tamil, and Sanskrit” (Peterson, 292). As Peterson notes, the Marātha ruler Shahji II (1684-1712) authored and commissioned polyglot dramas and “the premier literary genres at the court featured folk characters and an intriguing mix of elements from elite and popular literary forms, the latter ranging from non-elite linguistic registers to folkloric characters” (Peterson, 292). The influence of the Shahji court in moving towards public performance and vernacular languages is palpable in the courts of later Marātha rulers as near the advent of the nineteenth century, text-in-performance all but replaces literature as a verbal artform (Peterson, 294). Furthermore, Peterson points out that nineteenth century Tanjore is dominated by composers of music and dance compositions in vernacular languages both within and outside of court patronage (294). Already by the time of Serfoji II’s rule in the eighteenth century, in the beginning of the colonial era, the polyglot legacy of Shahji continues with the inclusion of English. However, this multilingual performance culture differs from its predecessors shaped by modern political, social, and aesthetic trends. Most notably there is a significant influence of “constituencies outside the court” such as prominent figures in “monastic organizations, popular devotional forms of text and performance such as polyglot bhajana (devotional public singing) and harikathā (kathākālakṣepa) a composite style of dramatic storytelling to demonstrate important tenets of Hinduism (306).

The heterogeneity and accommodating nature of modern Tamil popular drama, which incorporates elements of folk and comic, classical, devotional performance genres that precede it (these categories themselves being constructed by various aesthetic, social, and political forces—both classical and contemporary), provides a home for displaced artists such as the devadāsī-s, often ostracized from the classical dance-drama academies. Devadāsī-s occupy a unique position in Tamil performance history given the sexual politics and “politics of disenfranchisement” that encompass their art (Peterson and Soneji, 17). As the uneasy “founders” of bharatanāṭyam devadāsī-s also become the “victims” of its invention as a classical art form; a process that required the devadāsī-s role to be elided or mitigated to assuage middle-class discourses of respectability. Furthermore, similar to the musicians and other performers during the nineteenth century, naṭṭuvagārs (male members of devadāsī communities; tavil (drum) players and the
natasvaram (wind instrument with bell) players in the temples and courts) and devadāsī-s flocked to Madras City (Peterson and Soneji, 17). In the first half of the nineteenth century, these performer communities flourish, particularly as “Brahmin teachers taught and collaborated with devadasis” (Peterson and Soneji, 11-12, 18). The prominent composers of music for this type of performance come from “the hereditary melam communities” as well as Brahmins” (Peterson and Soneji, 11). Here we can see an example of aesthetic transmission. Peterson and Soneji point to several exchanges between prominent “classical” composers such as Muttuswami Dikshitar and gifted devadāsī performers like Tiruvarur Kamalamuttu which “continue well into the twentieth century” (12). This process of aesthetic “traveling” further carries into the popular realm as devadāsī-s become displaced by classicizing arm of the Brahmin middle class project.

In addition, between 1880 and 1910 jāvali-s (a Telugu or Kannada devadāsī musical performance form) become “extremely popular as Tamil devotional songs meant for theatrical performance” (Soneji, 99). Soneji makes the point that “this new scripting of jāvali in religious language indexes the flexibility of the genre and heterogeneous constitution of artists and audiences who encountered it as a distinctly modern form” (99). He also notes that many of these songs are composed by non-Brahmin Vēḷāḷars “involved in the emergent world of Tamil popular drama known as icai nāṭakam or “special” drama…shaped by Caṅkaratās Cuvāmikāl” (99). In other words, these disaffected members of the court performance tradition become aesthetic carriers, incorporating and transmitting this knowledge as the genre loses patronage and public interest near the beginning of the twentieth century. Furthermore, as a part of “a new set of performance practices deeply affected by Parsi theater companies” touring the Madras Presidency, Soneji makes the point that many of these “modern” jāvali-s employ “North Indian melodies adapted from Hindustāni rāgas” and are eventually classified in a “catchall genre” called “pārsī meṭṭu” or “Parsi tunes” (99). Eventually, this term comes to refer to any “odd” tune that could be identified as part of the classical South Indian repertoire including gramophone recordings, popular drama songs, and other popular Tamil song genres as well as songs based on English tunes such as a jāvali which is a Sanskrit version of “God Save the Queen” (Soneji, 100). He also provides an example of a multilingual jāvali (Tamil, Telegu, Kannada, and English) that must have been intended for a cosmopolitan audience (100-101). Thus, jāvali-s offer another example of how the space of public performance in the early twentieth century in Madras
Presidency reflects cultural exchanges between various aesthetic and performative paradigms and the growing cosmopolitanism of the modern South Indian audience.

The waning popularity of so-called salon dance directly coincides with a growing “anti-nautch” movement that seems to result from a confluence of European sensibilities, a lack of court patronage, and the “public condemnation of the sexual morality of devadasis” (Peterson and Soneji, 18). “Nautch” becomes a generic catch-all term used to describe sexually suggestive dance in various venues with the colonial administration seeing “nautch” dancers as veritable prostitutes. This association is compounded in South India where the practice of temple dedication indicated a sort of “sacred prostitution” seen a “visible sign of the depravity of the Hindu religion and of female sexuality in Indian society” (Peterson and Soneji, 18). They also cite Partha Chatterjee’s argument that many nineteenth and twentieth century nationalists also saw the erotic elements of dance texts and gestures to be “obscene” and counter-productive to the image of the chaste, morally righteous “pure” Indian woman who presents a viable custodian of nationalist interests. This dovetails with the Brahmin domination of the political and social scene near the beginning of the twentieth century in an attempt to combine “the agendas of nationalist activism, social reform, and cultural regeneration” (Peterson and Soneji, 13). Thus, between the end of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth century, devadāsī-s are systematically marginalized and disenfranchised, “through legislation and social stigmatization” and their dance is criminalized as is the practice of dedication (Peterson and Soneji, 18). Ironically, while the devadāsī-s may have been ostracized as group, the slow demise of catir dance and its rebirth as bharatanātyam and leads to the dispersal of devadāsī-s and the aesthetic principles of their art into various modern performance genres, including popular song, cinema, and drama troupes particularly in the 1920s during the growth of company drama and the gramophone industry. While many still remained destitute, unable to find success in any of these avenues, in 1948 devadāsī-s regroup with the unification of siga mēlam and periya mēlam groups into the icaī vēḷālar community (Peterson and Soneji, 19). Even in this context, the naṭṭuvanār-s remain sought after as teachers while devadāsī-s are treated as “informants” or “demonstrators of the art form” in order to help create the new art of bharatanātyam to be performed by middle-class non-devadāsī women (Peterson and Soneji, 19).

The modern Tamil performance milieu reflects a close relationship between the “classical” music artists and the popular music industry through the advent of the gramophone,
popular drama, and Tamil cinema. Tamil Icai singers as well as devadāsī-s find a more positive reception in the realm of popular drama than in the burgeoning classical music scene fomented by an emerging Tamil middle class community in the twentieth century (Subramanian, 2006). Prominent stage singers coming from a devadāsī background such as K.B. Sundarambal and Rajambal, become popular icons as gramophone recordings of their stage songs uncover the voracious public appetite for this music (Baskaran; Hughes). The development of both popular or what here is largely touring “company” drama troupes who often include prominent singers and the attempts to create a “classical” tradition of Tamil music both Icai Vēḷāḷa tradition as well as the Madras Music Academy each have been shaped by the “journey” taken by performers and repertoires for performance from the Tanjore court to the twentieth century performance world. Devadāsī-s become aesthetic “travelers” bringing markers of the classical tradition of salon dance into both “classical” (e.g. catir or bharatanāṭyam) and “popular” (e.g. traveling or “company” drama troupes) realms of performance. The court tradition of performance that still bears marks of Sanskrit aesthetic influence in the realms of dance and song is revitalized in twentieth century by an emerging Tamil middle class’s need for classical moorings and popular theater movement catalyzed by anticolonial sentiment. (Subramanian, 2006) Many court performers enter the popular performance genres, particularly with the advent of the gramophone which rapidly increased the popularity of singers and launched a separate popular music industry no longer tethered to the company dramatic performances. In terms of approaching this issue from a research perspective, Lakshmi Subramanian suggests that scholars should exercise an approach that permits “cross-over” between these traditions. By doing this she argues that “we can also expect to problematize categories such as the classical and the popular more effectively and in the process locate cultural practices within a larger moral economy and one that was not entirely circumscribed by a specific region constructed either by an act of cartographic fiat or by singularizing linguistic identities.” (Subramanian, xviii) In the interstices of these layers a distinct Tamil cultural identity emerged, one that drew from an older, shared and living repertoire of religion, arts, performance, and ritual practice even while attempting to make a crossover to modernity. Furthermore, this emerging cultural identity compels “an abiding engagement with inventing and reinventing cultural traditions that had to be appropriately classical, adequately nationalist, and uniquely authentic” (Subramanian, 24). In other words, the aesthetic “traveling” from the court performance tradition informs and conditions the production
of a heterogeneous Tamil modern literary and performance culture that breaks down these discrete categories of investigation.

III. Aesthetic Dynamism: Modernizing Tamil Drama

Introduction

Beginning in the nineteenth century, Tamil drama enters a new period which highlights two sharply different aspects of Tamil drama; elite, Sanskritized dramas which employ a particularly erudite form of Tamil and a rise in popular and folk drama which championed Tamil myths and *purāṇa*-s, vernacular language, and accessibility. Though “classical”, “folk”, “devotional”, and “popular” art forms each utilize narrative and characters from the epic tradition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, as discussed in the context of *terukkūttu*, the performance modalities maintained by the “elite” such as Brahmin-dominated bharatanātyam draw from a different and more “Sanskritized” versions of these epics. However, as seen in the various collusions and collisions in the twin developments of the Madras Music Academy and the Tamil Icai tradition, despite these differences in canon, the modern Tamil theater demonstrates interesting borrowings between so-called “elite” and “popular” performance traditions. In this way, the Tamil literary modernity, particularly with the advent of the nationalist movement (beginning with *satyagraha* agitations in the 1920s) comes to represent a shared cultural aesthetic memory as simultaneously representative of distinctive performance and literary modes of expression defined by discourses of caste, class, language, and cultural difference as well as the continuous and constellation process by which these discourses are constructed, constituted, and conditioned by a sense of “Tamilness.” Unlike the anticlonial theater developing near the turn of the century in Pune and Calcutta that had little to no inclusion of “indigenous folk theater traditions,” in Tamil Nadu, popular dramatic traditions that took their cue from the reforms instituted by P.S. Mudaliyar were the primary impetus behind the anticlonial movement in the South (Solomon, 342). However, Mudaliyar’ precursors, Suryanarayana Sastri and P. Sundarampillai provide an important foundation for modern Tamil drama. It is this “shared-but-different” conception of “Tamilness” on which later anticlonial playwrights such Swaminatha Sarma, Kandasamy Mudaliyar, and T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar build their work. Bharathi also spends considerable time writing about the lack of dissonance
between a nationalist identity and a Tamil one. Indeed he posits that one defines the other’s greatness (Roy, 97)

**Founding Fathers of Modern Tamil Theater: P. Sundarampillai, Suryanarayana Sastri**

Among the most prominent playwrights/artists from this period who are exemplars of “elite” theater are P. Sundarampillai and Suryanarayana Sastri who can be seen as the forefathers of modern Tamil drama. Both were interested in bringing Tamil drama back to prominence. Additionally, Suryanarayana Sastri authors one of the most thorough compositions on Tamil drama and poetics, the *Nāṭakaviyal*. In the *nūrpā-s* (*cuttiram-s* or stanzas), he explains the rules for form, aesthetic character, staging, characterization, acting, etc., much like Bharata’s *Nātyaśāstra* (Perumal, 146). Both Sastri and Sundarampillai produce works in Tamil that incorporated elements from English and Sanskrit aesthetic principles. However, for both the primary focus is renewing a literary Tamil deemed “lost” through the “corruption” of outside forces. *Manomaniyam* (1891) (Sundarampillai), *Rūpāvatī* (1897) (Sastri), and *Kalāvatī* (1893) (Sastri) are written in formal Tamil difficult to follow for most of the Tamil populace and too long to command interest. Therefore, it is doubtful that any of these dramas were staged and were likely not intended to be performed. Furthermore, the early period of modern Tamil drama is dominated by works that are meant to be read as opposed to performed as scenes, difficult to stage or too long, difficult to follow, full of characters engaged in long monologues or extended dialogues, confusing and tedious for a live audience (Perumal, 150).

A famous example of such a work is one of the first modern Tamil Dramas, which is entitled *Manomaniyam* by P. Sundarampillai. It is a syncretic drama composed in the style of a traditional Sanskrit Drama while using an elite-style Tamil. Sundarampillai’s avid interest in not only Sanskrit literature but also in English literature and philosophy is demonstrated by his inclusion of elements of English melodramatic elements such as stock characters, simple good vs. evil themes, etc. For example, *Manomaniyam* promotes “the power of God and his instantaneous help in times of dangers” (Perumal, 154). In other words, faith in God and his power to effect “good” would be rewarded. Moreover, this play like other classic Tamil dramas embodies the two values most prized by the Tamil audience: valor and love (Perumal). The influence of the English melodramatic tradition is evident in not only early modern Tamil plays such as *Manomaniyam*, but also in later works (as Shakespeare became widely translated into
regional languages and performed by traveling drama troupes) produced by Mudaliyar and others. In particular, Sundarampillai was fascinated by the works of Edward Bulwer-Lytton, a nineteenth century English novelist and playwright known for his popular bawdy novels and plays. It these same types of novels that are copied, imitated, and blatantly plagiarized by Tamil novelists in the early twentieth century such as Duraiswamy Iyengar and J. Rangaraju who both become immensely popular and have many of their works converted into popular dramas by Kandaswamy Mudaliyar. In this, Sundarampillai attempts an early, more literary adaptation of a Lytton’s Victorian pulp in his verse-style play *Manomaniyam* (Perumal, 155). Given the length for a potential performance as well as the difficult and formal style of the Tamil in the play, Sundarampillai did not intend for the play to staged, but rather as contribution to returning literary glory to the Tamil language (Perumal). While Sundarampillai earned little praise his dramatic work, his poetry and other writings became popular with the growing Dravidian nationalist movement. Indeed, his famous poem entitled “Mother Tamil” written later becomes the state anthem for Tamil Nadu. Sumathi Ramaswamy highlights the famous lines in Sundarampillai’s poem about “Tamil̠āty (Mother Tamil) that proclaim that Sanskrit is a “dead language” and laud the superiority of “kannittamil̠ (ever-continuing Tamil)” as an important “mantra” for the Self-Respect movement and vital link in their revival and construction of a continuing ancient literary tradition in Tamil (1997, 76-77). Here, Sundarampillai paints Tamil as a “living” language by juxtaposing its “life” to the static classicism and hegemonic tradition (i.e. death) of Sanskrit. The narrative becomes, in this sense, Sanskrit attempting to “suck the life” from the vibrancy of Tamil (Ramaswamy, 77). It demonstrates the ways in which these early playwrights’ (much like Yeats in Ireland) commitment to refining and developing a vibrant literary tradition that revives the Tamil language becomes recast as an explicitly political enterprise in the post-independence political arena.

While it is clear that both these men are invested in a valorization of Tamil, it is not at all evident that they believed such a valorization should eradicate or demean the value of other languages. As M.S. Purnalingam Pillai notes in his the English introduction to Suryanarayana Sastri’s famous Tamil play, *Rūpāvatī*, that the author hopes to accomplish what “Sundaram

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13 Ramaswamy also notes that when this poem was selected as the Tamil national anthem, the government of Tamil Nadu deliberately excised these lines from the play in order to emphasize the more “Indianist” view as opposed to a “contestatory classicism” of the equal value and importance of both tirāvīṭa nāṭu (Dravidian nation) and paratak kāṭa (Indian nation) as originally emphasized by Sundarampillai (1997, 77).
Pillai’s Manomaniyam is in verse” (iii). Furthermore, he notes that Sastri is invested producing an art that “provides the felicities of Tamil diction, pure and unmixed, and given the reading public not only an intellectual feast but so vivid a portraiture…that their imagination cannot but be quickened, exalted, and ennobled” (iii). After providing a synopsis of the play he proceeds into a brief analysis of the characters according to the prescriptions of the Nāṭyaśāstra, describing Sundarananda as a “dhīrodatta” hero.14 What is equally interesting is the description of Rūpāvatī, the heroine as constructed in the style of “Shakespeare’s women such as Julia, Viola, Portia, Rosalind, and Imogen who each dress as men through force of circumstance” but distinguished from them as learned, intelligent, and faithful in love (Purnalingam Pillai, vii). Thus, Sastri’s impact both politically and aesthetically derives from his primary goal of returning Tamil literature to its “historical glory” as he states in his Tamil preface to the play and echoed in Purnalingam Pillai’s comments. The works of Sundarampillai and Sastri set the stage for a modern Tamil drama that was experimental, traditional, and syncretic. In addition, during this time, regional drama troupes dominated the local venues mostly because Tamil drama was unpopular. In particular, Parsi drama troupes drew large crowds and performed melodrama-style mythological plays on a proscenium stage (Baskaran). Parsi drama becomes an important aesthetic and dramaturgical influence on the hybrid and syncretic dramas produced by the Tamil protest playwrights. Many of these Parsi troupes, originally located in Bengal, were influenced by the traveling Shakespearean drama companies from England which had popularized Shakespeare in several districts in the British India, however mostly serving British and Indian “elite” audiences. The Parsi traveling troupes borrow heavily from Sanskrit epics and dramatic literature, Bengali folk theater, and Shakespeare in the production, acting, and staging of their plays. In his work on Bengali popular theater’s influence on the Bengali anticolonial movement, Rakesh Solomon argues that the proscenium staging of plays is cribbed from English Shakespeare companies which toured India at the time and as well as other characteristics of melodrama such as: use of stock characterization, universal ideals, and starkly contrasted moral positions; all compatible with a pan-Indian sense of aesthetics (1994).

14 This is one of four types of hero described in the Nāṭyaśāstra and refers to the characteristics that this type of hero must possess: courage, heroism, intelligence, good education, versed in the arts of war.
Pammal Sambandham Mudaliyar and the Revival of Tamil Drama

Pammal Sambandham Mudaliyar (1873-1964), often referred to as the father of modern Tamil drama, founded the Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā on Mount Rd. in Chennai 1887 in order to promote his own work while creating a home for modern Tamil playwrights like Kandaswamy Mudaliyar, T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar, S.S. Viswanathan Das, Swaminatha Sarma, and others. His own work initially dominated the productions at the theater in the Sabhā as Mudaliyar is responsible for a hundred or so plays of which ninety-six are extant (Perumal, 160). Later many playwrights had their plays performed there. At age eighteen, Mudaliyar’s first production was one of his most famous plays, Manoharan, a comedy, which is a rewriting of his original play, entitled Amalātitān an adaptation of Hamlet. He also adapted several plays by Shakespeare and produced them becoming an important vehicle for the introduction of English literature and aesthetic traditions in the socio-cultural and artistic sphere of Tamil Nadu. In addition, Mudaliyar’s Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā becomes a hot-bed for a new Tamil drama that becomes entertaining to wide range of audiences by incorporating a variety of elements from English, Sanskrit, and Tamil sources as well other intra-Indian sources such as the Parsi and Telegu company performances he frequents in his youth. Thus, the indigenous influences on the modern Tamil drama are not limited to the folk realm and rather include both traditional and elite aesthetic tropes as well.

Throughout the popular art scene in the urban centers of South India, Parsi traveling drama troupes become the major Indian popular entertainment in the latter portion of the nineteenth century. The early Telegu performances Mudaliyar attends, which mimic the cosmopolitan aesthetic and indigenous topics of the Parsi company drama, significantly influence his view of so-called proper drama and his aesthetic and dramaturgical choices in writing and staging plays. In addition, his love for English literature emerges through his dramas in character development, plot division, performance length, stage directions, acting instructions, and stagecraft. However, deeply committed to creating a modern Tamil drama, in Manoharan, he includes the classical Tamil style of song in the initial scene of the drama (divided into pallavi, anupallavi, and caranam). Unlike many of the popular dramas of the time, Mudaliyar restricts the use of song and song-narrative in his work. He also removes many of the folk elements that had become staples of the popular stage. Mudaliyar discusses this at length in his memoirs noting that he was very impressed by the Telegu popular drama conducted by K.
Bellachary and longed to create Tamil drama with the discipline, acting technique, and stagecraft he witnesses in these performances. As Baskaran points out, before Mudaliyar’s revival and revamping of Tamil drama, many dramatic performances would cater to the whims of the audience; a dead king could be revived if the audience demanded another song, the plot could be abandoned in favor an encore a particular song or dance, etc. While Mudaliyar, like Suryanarayana Sastri and Sundarampillai, is also invested in promoting a popular “legitimate” theater, he makes an important shift to the vernacular language. Sastri and Sundarampillai’s works remained distant from the many common people on account of lack of widespread education (later political uses of their work notwithstanding), the use of vernacular Tamil permitted Mudaliyar to standardize what Baskaran terms the modern Tamil “legitimate” drama. I would suggest that while Mudaliyar sought to streamline and modernize Tamil dramatic productions through the introduction of proper acting technique, strict adherence to script, removal of extraneous song and dance scenes, and three hour performance limit, he also borrows from these same conventions in creating dramas that accessible to broader swathe of the population. Mudaliyar’s Sabhā remains a middle and upper class establishment in contrast to the touring drama companies that emerge from modernizing and innovating forces both within and outside of Tamil Nadu (Parsi traveling troupes, Mudaliyar and other modern dramatists “revising” and renewing the Tamil play, Shakespeare through the education system as well as entertainment venues, etc.) to reform the genre of popular drama in both stagecraft and form, demonstrate how these innovations make these dramas accessible to a broader audience.

Like his predecessors Suryanarayana Sastri and Sundarampillai, P.S. Mudaliyar was educated in Sanskrit, Tamil, and English. In particular he was interested in creating a type of drama that was accessible to everyone, able to be performed within three hours, and once again, a central form of entertainment and education. In short, he wanted to change the perception of Tamil folk dramatic traditions as “low-class” and wanted to reclaim respect for the acting profession. While his efforts are remembered in this regard, this change begins, in effect with the considerable reform enacted by Suryanarayana Sastri and Sundarampillai in providing a model for “literary and proper Tamil” as opposed to the “pigeon Tamil employed by the wandering nomads and dregs of society” (Purnalingam Pillai, 230). Evidenced in this criticism is both

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15 The following biographical information and PS Mudaliyar’s comments on aesthetics and drama are taken from his autobiography, Nāṭakameṭai Ninaivukal (Memories of Drama) (1933).
Mudaliyar’s valorization of “pure Tamil” while opposing its “vernacularization” in performance and literature. In large measure, this only continues the discrimination and disdain that Mudaliyar describes in his initial encounter with the profession. Mudaliyar’s role is somewhat in between these positions as he certainly took issue with the itinerant troupes of performing artists that lacked skill and discipline. However, he sought to reform the profession through a reconstruction of the dramatic text. In addition, his work coincides with the advent of company drama which introduces a new dimension to the “itinerant artist” dynamic. The development and restoration of pride to the acting profession occurs in earnest with Sankaradas Swamigal, whose more popular leanings (than Mudaliyar, Sastri, or Sundarampillai) provide standing to the performers to whom Sastri and others refer to as the “dregs of society.” Susan Seizer and Hanne de Bruin (1999) both discuss pervasive prejudice against actors in “company” and folk and traditional dramas not considered, “elite” which often characterizes them as mūrai or “not proper.” While the folk and elite realms of drama still cater to disparate audiences during this period, the rise to prominence of company dramas and the folk-dramatic tradition in Tamil Nadu after P.S. Mudaliyar’s and Sankaradas Swamigal’s revamping of Tamil dramatic production, becomes highly influential in the development of the modern Tamil anticolonial drama and songs which used social and political rhetoric to close this chasm (Perumal).

As a proponent of drama as an entertainment to be enjoyed by the masses, Mudaliyar ushered in a new era for a modern Tamil drama. This drama consisted of five or fewer act plays with performance lasting three hours or less and topically centered on social and political issues/stories/themes/narratives. Mudaliyar also makes a shift in language in promoting the use of vernacular speech with a focus on proper acting to ensure that the audience can follow the performance. In other words, his vision for promoting Tamil was a vernacular one in which the common language would grace the stage. As in the Sanskrit tradition, in Tamil drama, tragedy is generally avoided (in contrast with the goal of Aristotelian Poetics which privileges the cathartic

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16 Mudaliyar describes his negative feelings towards Tamil drama as stemming from a similar disdain to the one expressed by Purnalingam, Sastri, and Sundarampillai regarding the deplorable state of performance and degradation of the “histrionic art.” He remarks, that as a boy, despite wanting to study Tamil, he only wanted to perform and produce plays in English since he felt that Tamil drama was completely unviewable. Later he describes wanting to write a play in Tamil and being taken by his father to see a Tamil play (since he had never seen one) and being horrified by the improvisational singing, the excessive singing drowning out narrative, the lack of narrative focus, etc. He resolved at that moment to reform the Tamil drama as he saw it.

17 See the discussion in Hanne de Bruin’s Kattaikāttu: The Flexibility of a South Indian Dramatic Tradition (1999), “Introduction” pp. 9-16 and in Susan Seizer’s Stigmas of the Tamil Stage; “Introduction.”
release most forcefully brought about in a perfect tragic drama). Indeed, as Perumal notes, “something must be done to make every piece of literature end with happy promises…such denouement is considered canonical in Sanskrit and Tamil dramaturgy” (159). Mudaliyar steps away from this convention and is the first early Tamil playwright to pen tragedies of which Irunappārkal stands as the most notable. This play details the story of Satyavaṭī from the Mahābhārata and ends with the tragic death of the hero, her beloved. In this case, Mudaliyar wanted to evoke pathos within the audience by experiencing the heartrending pain of the heroine. In other cases, the rising political and social tensions and climate of social change produced tragic plays which sacrifice the main characters in order to create social commentary. In this vein, Mudaliyar’s play Rāmacūtiram decries Rāma’s slaying of a śūdra man performing tapas (austerities) and extolls the virtue of caste equality by appealing to what he saw as a shared “Tamilness” or Tamil identity. Before Mudaliyar’s dramatic reforms and his founding of the Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā, where several prominent playwrights came to learn about dramaturgical practice, formal guidelines for “company drama” did not exist. Plays could last for several hours with dead characters springing back to life if the audience so demands and would have very little focus on acting or narrative structure. Mudaliyar’s innovation and reform of Tamil dramatic praxis also opened a door for experimentation and syncretic production.

Subramanya Bharathi: Bridge between “Old” and “New”

The final nexus point between the curious amalgam of folk, popular, and classical traditions in the modern Tamil popular performance can be found in the figure of Subramanya Bharathi (1882–1921). Born in Eṭṭayapūrām in Tinnevelly district, Bharathi flourishes in an environment already ripe with the arts (Chandrasekar, 88). By the age of eleven, he is given the title of “Bharathi” in recognition of his abilities as a poet. Roughly contemporary with P.S. Mudaliyar, Bharathi becomes an important figure for Tamil literary modernity, aesthetically, politically, and linguistically. Indeed, in many ways, his profound influence on the nascent anticolonial movement through mainly through patriotic songs set to folk tunes makes him the

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18 In the Mahābhārata Satyavaṭī was a fishermaid who became the object of passion for King Śāntanu (the great-grandfather of the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas) and she is seen as a symbol of māyā or impermanence in the text. Satyavaṭī insists that if she were to marry the king that her sons and not the King’s older son by his other queen, Bhīṣma, should become the heirs to the throne. The king agrees and thus the two sides of the Mahābhārata war are born from this decision as Bhīṣma becomes the regent of the kingdom and Satyavaṭī’s two sons, Vicitravīrya and Citraṅgāda the heirs to the throne.
“voice of this newly awakened national consciousness” in the Tamil Nadu in the beginning of the twentieth century (Roy, 20). As a Brahmin who decried the orthodoxy of the “smṛti” (sacred remembered texts of Brahmanical Hinduism) and followed Swami Vivekananda’s teaching of universalism through the Bhagavadgītā, Bharathi becomes a unique figure in Tamil Nadu, beloved by all. While it may be difficult to classify Bharathi as a literary innovator, he pioneers a simple diction in prose and poetry in Tamil while also demonstrating a “lyrical charm and rapture, in melody, and in the outburst of pure emotion and feeling” in his patriotic songs” (Roy, 22). For this reason coupled with his use of folk tunes he would hear on a train being hummed by a railway worker for example, his songs become incredibly popular and instrumental in the anticolonial sentiment. Finally, his entry into the world of journalism and literature coincides with a growing sense of urgency regarding the social and political issues of the day. Bharathi’s engagement with a variety of prominent writers both foreign and domestic including Goethe, Shelley, Shakespeare, Tagore, and Aurobindo coupled with growing interest in world affairs further informs his aesthetic and political vision. In this way, he promotes a nationalism that is both universal and particular in its scope. Evidenced by numerous writings for New India and Commonweal (Annie Besant’s two newspapers) Bharathi views the issue of women’s rights as vital element in the nationalist cause. Early in his career, he lauds Besant as “a model and incentive” to all those working for the liberation of women (V. Bharathi, 1972, 63). He also composes several poems for Sister Nivedita, seeing her as supremely divine “mother” and praises the work of Margaret Cousins often holding these women’s achievements as paradigm for the “respected” woman referring to Nivedita as “‘Mahāśakti’ herself in human garb”

19 Sister Nivedita born Margaret Elizabeth Noble (1867-1911) was an Irish social worker who became a disciple of Swami Vivekananda after meeting him in London 1895. Spending her youth in Ireland, she began teaching and eventually opened a school. After meeting Vivekananda she travels to Calcutta 1898 to join him and he gives her the name “Nivedita” meaning “one who offers themselves [to God].” In November 1898, she opens a girls’ school in Bagbazar area of Calcutta to those girls. In 1899 during the plague epidemic in Calcutta, Nivedita tended the needs of poor patients. She also becomes closely aligned with the Ramakrishna Mission (an organization founded by Vivekananda to promote a type of “vedanta” spiritualism through philanthropy) from which she later disassociates having become active in Indian nationalist activities.

20 Margaret Cousins (1878-1954), known as an Irish-Indian educationist, suffragist and Theosophist, established the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1927. Throughout her life, she is active in women’s causes both in Ireland and later in India including becoming the first non-Indian member of the Indian Women's University at Poona in 1916, cofounding the Women's Indian Association with Annie Besant and Dorothy Jinarajadasa in 1917, and undertaking the role of headmaster 1919–20 at the National Girls' School at Mangalore. She is also appointed as the first woman magistrate of India in 1922. Wife of poet and literary critic James Cousins, with whom she moved to India in 1915, she is credited with composing the tune for the Indian National Anthem "Jana Gana Mana" in February 1919, during Rabindranath Tagore's visit to the Madanapalle College. (Biographical details taken from Catherine Candy’s The Occult Feminism of Margaret Cousins in Modern Ireland and India, 1878–1954)
Meeting Sister Nivedita in Calcutta shortly after attending a meeting of the All India National Congress in 1905, Bharathi pledged “to devote himself to three causes—the political liberation of India, the eradication of casteism and emancipation of womanhood” (Chandrasekar, 89).

Bharathi’s political views and patriotism was largely one of accommodation and unity. For example, in 1905 when Bharathi adapts and publishes Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s famous mantra “Vante Mātaram” in Tamil, he follows “Long live the glorious Tamil, Long live the fine Tamil people” with his own addition; “Long live the auspicious Indian nation” demonstrating his attempt to enjoin Tamil freedom to that of India. He seeks to negotiate “gingerly between loyalty to Pārata Mātā and devotion to Tamilīttāy, between the shoals of pride in the nation (tēcāpīmāṇam) and pride in their language (pācāpīmāṇam), [reminding] Tamil speakers that the liberation of Tamil would have to proceed in tandem with the liberation of India” (Ramaswamy, 1997, 48). As seen in much of Bharathi’s work, this joint vision of nation that is both uniquely Tamil but wholly Indian persists in most Bharathi’s work. Despite, his own contention that Tamil’s rich literary tradition had no parallel, Bharathi’s accommodating nationalism (as well as that of Pavalar, Sarma, and K. Mudaliyar) becomes less effective as the Self-Respect movement takes hold in middle of the 1920s and linguistic nationalism becomes attached to issues of social class, caste, and economy. Although viewing the nationalist situation as most pressing, Bharathi’s writings range from literary to philosophical to didactic and journalistic. He also writes on Sanskrit poetics, the Russian revolution, colonial rebellions in Ireland, Egypt and Greece indicating a wide range of interests. While several of his writings are of interest including his work on rasa which associates the aesthetic experience directly with a devotional one, since Bharathi’s main impact is through his nationalist songs, the rest of this section will focus on his composition of popular songs and their use in popular drama.

Bharathi’s active involvement in politics begins with his association with Tilak and participation in the Surat Congress in 1907 and fuels his initial, more extremist views of nationalism (Venkatachalapathy, 2012, 54). Though having spent time as assistant editor of Swadesamitran, a Tamil-language newspaper from 1904-06, he found it difficult to coexist with the more moderate nationalist views of the editor (Venkatachalapathy, 54). He began editing two other newspapers in 1907: India and an English language paper Bala Bharatham. During 1897-1913, he wrote and published prolifically in various journals and newspapers including The
At this time, Bharathi’s songs had become regular fare at swadeshi (self reliance) meetings that were increasing in frequency. In addition, he produces a nationalist drama using the popular story of the Draupadi’s (heroine of the Mahābhārata) disrobing and curse of her tormenters entitled Pancāli Capatam (Curse of Draupadi) in 1912. Bharathi revamps this story from the version seen in terukkūttu performances to inject political character into Draupadi’s resistance. Frasca details several connections between Bharathi’s drama and the terukkūttu work on the same narrative theme: ritual structure, epic storyline, and sacred motifs (1994). Bharathi’s work includes political and cultural touchstones intended for a modern audience, while the ritual theater of terukkūttu remains focused on Draupadi as a vehicle for spiritual salvation. The use of ritual structure in both versions of the story (use of songs of praise to open the dramatic performance) functions differently in each work. While the terukkūttu performance witnessed by Frasca includes tuti-s (songs of praise derived from the Sanskrit term, stuti) to Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa showing the influences of the Tamil bhakti and local traditions of worship. Bharathi’s version opens with two songs; one is dedicated to “brahman” (the ultimate reality in Vedic belief) and the other (similar to the terukkūttu tradition) serenades Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning. It is this combination of localized Tamil tradition with a Vedantist perspective that increases the appeal and power of this drama (Frasca, 1994, 94). Furthermore, both versions of the drama employ a type of “telescoping” of the series of the events following the curse by Draupadi of Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana for attempting to disrobe her to ensure the play ends on the “auspicious” note of the Pāṇḍava victory at the end of the Mahābhārata rather than in the “inauspicious” moment of the curse (Frasca, 97). Finally, Frasca details a few important changes made by Bharathi in order to politicize Draupadi’s resistance. Bharathi employs a consistent and simple meter and contemporary, vernacular language “resulting in poetry that is immediately intelligible and accessible to its audience” (Frasca, 97). Bharathi’s ability to contemporize this narrative using prose, present-day language, and familiar rhythms of thought in a sense, “recreate[s] the contemporary, producing a new literary and political idiom” that becomes an important model for many of Tamil nationalist playwrights like T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar. Also his use of covert epic symbology to convey political messages (e.g. Draupadi as the symbol of an oppressed India, Duryodhana and his brothers represent the colonial oppressors, etc.) is also a shift from the use of epic in terukkūttu and a vital aspect of nationalist drama going forward. This
is clear in the scene in which Draupadī is summoned to the court by Duryodhana having been lost in the game of dice: she is described as a “protector of morality” while Duryodhana takes on the appellation of “Emperor of India” (Frasca, 100). In a sense, this is an example of how marapu operates in the modern period as a culturally determined process of remembering instigated by the symbol of Draupadī and instrumental in ensuring the spectator views her resistance a call to action.

In spite of Bharathi’s lament regarding the popularity of cheap imitations of Victorian pulp fiction that flood the Tamil marketplace in the early portion of the twentieth century, he clearly draws from these same sources for the tunes of songs and some of themes of his work (Venkatachalapathy, 2012, 84). In addition, Bharathi’s songs are regularly adopted and performed in popular dramas, particularly those later produced by the TKS Brothers’ Bala Shanmugan Sabha as well as earlier by T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar who requested Bharathi compose songs for his plays after his return from Pondicherry in 1918 (Gomathinayagam, 45). Bharathi published several song books, including most notably, Swadeshi Geethangal Parts I, II, and III (1908), which contain over a one hundred nationalist songs and poems. In Bharathi’s nationalist songs there is often a bringing together of disparate notions under the unified vision of “Nation.” In this way, his work fits well with that of Pavalar and Sarma who are interested in promoting an image of the nation in which Tamil is a “sibling” to use Ramaswamy’s term that must work to free her brothers and sisters in order to achieve freedom herself. And, though he wrote extensively for periodicals, Bharathi felt that the poetics of song was the best way to impart information that could “electrify [the people] and make heroes out of common clay” (Roy, 52). The political freedom that Bharathi describes in his songs is “synonymous with social equality and economic justice” (Roy, 53). Specifically, Bharathi approaches his role as a patriot-poet from three directions: 1) valorization of India, 2) the injection of ideal freedom into every person, and 3) the evocation of the lives of great men of India as living examples for emulation (Roy, 54-5). From this description clearly Bharathi sees the emotional component of poetry and song as the vital ingredient that transforms information into an experiential truth unbound by the imagination. His songs on Rāma, Gandhi, Sister Nivedita, Sikh founder of Khalsā-Guru Gobind Singh, and other famous mythological or historical figures fulfill his last “direction” in poetry composition—to utilize “great men” as examples of patriotism. For Bharathi, these figures function as “aesthetic signifiers” that create an emotional undercarriage to the nationalist
movement and ensure its success. Thus, he becomes a blending of “old and new” melding his experiences with the India’s poetic traditions (Roy, 63).

**Conclusion**

In classical Tamil literary production, the epic world of Kampan, later in the court performance tradition, and finally in modern Tamil “classicizing” projects, the choice of poetic elements is determined by the cultural world of the aesthete much like in Kālidāsa’s carefully constructed Sanskrit dramas. This dynamic panorama of signifiers becomes broader as result of the various cultural and political forces at play during the turn of the twentieth century. The unique amalgam of Tamil literary and performative history that comprises the cultural milieu of Tamil modernity becomes a vital element in the burgeoning prominence of popular company drama (also an important vehicle for popular song) that focused on communicating nationalist, anticolonial, and social messages between 1900 and 1930. The modernization of Tamil drama, dance, and literature dovetails with the rise of South Indian anticolonial agitations in the early part of the twentieth century. The complexities informing the development of the classical music tradition demonstrate the ways in which non-Brahmin and Brahmin social and aesthetic cultures draw from analogous and in sometimes identical pools of signifiers in constructing their respective canons in the modern period. Moreover, these music canonization projects are conditioned and contested by folk and popular forms of performance that gain prominence in during the nationalist movement. Thus, the construction of a modern Tamil cultural “memory” combats the homogenizing and marginalizing efforts of classicizing projects in the modern Tamil performance milieu. The divides between these various classical traditions in the modern period occur “as a result of the cultural division of how the campaign for nationalism should proceed” (Subramanian, 2006, xviii). In this way, “The downside of this initiative [classical music homogenizing project] was in displacing and marginalizing other segments and constituencies of performance and performers, and divesting music’s history from a more inclusive sound-scape to which it had once belonged” (Subramanian, xviii). Subramanian suggest this argument to explain the failure of the Tamil Icai (non-Brahmanical Tamil music cohort) to develop an organization that would rival the success and reach of the Madras Music Academy. Furthermore, this failure, she argues, is the reason Tamil Icai makes an eventual turn to the popular performance realm to promote the value of Tamil language songs (popular drama and song, non-Brahmin temples,
etc.). Ultimately, they align themselves more closely with a public sympathetic to the political agenda of their work. These movements suggest further complicating transactions and aesthetic “conversations” that occur in the modern Tamil literary milieu between divisions of performance traditions: ritual/devotional/elite—elite (divided into Brahmin, non-Brahmin, temple, etc.)—further divided into popular/elite vernacular and elite non-vernacular/mix (Subramanian).

The Tolkāppiyam provides the ground for Tamil literary and poetic production by offering the fundamental connection between “world” and “utterance” as a process of becoming. The Nāṭyaśāstra, said to be constructed with elements taken from the four Vedas (element of recitation from Ṛg Veda, song from Sāma Veda, mimetic art from Yajur Veda, and from the Ātharva Veda, sentiment), is described as an “art” which would provide “instruction in all the ends of men” (Keith, 1993, 12). The Tolkāppiyam and Nāṭyaśāstra maintain several differences in agenda, structure, and poetic theory and no verifiable evidence exists that these two texts were in direct “conversation.” However, I have marked overlapping elements between the two works that remain vital in modern Tamil performance traditions. Specifically, both privilege the representation of the human condition through dramatic utterance and performance while emphasizing the pivotal role of the knowledgeable spectator’s emotional engagement with the artistic work. In essence, for both, the power, meaning, communicative ability of a poetic piece resides in its capacity for enjoyment or appreciation. Only within the performative can the full gamut of the aesthetic emotion housed in poetry, through smara/marapu, be experienced; making the spectator a necessary component for its success and production. Here, the tradition, memories, love, and desire that inform the cultural world of the spectator function dialectically with the actors and “playworld” as a whole. While the result of this dialogue between spectator and performance varies depending on the cultural, ritual, or performative context; in each instance, the spectator functions as an “activator” of memory, which in turn fuels the performance, leading to the spectator and performer’s aesthetic relish.

South Indian performance traditions (both folk and classical) hinge on the dialectic between “abstraction” versus “concreteness” as a “direct outcome of the ritual contexts in which all traditional performing arts developed” (Frasca, 1990, 110). Frasca goes on to point out the “striking correspondences and parallelisms between dance steps used in terukkūṭtu and those of the more classical bharata nātyam” suggesting a similarity in the “fundamental kinetic
conceptualizations of both forms” (111). He contends that both must have a shared foundation in an “older, very basic common system of dance kinetics…prevalent throughout village South India” (111). Hence, there is a clear connection between the folk/ritual and classical modes of the South Indian performative that provides the ground for aesthetic confluence as well. Most importantly, Frasca notes that the dharmic framework embedded in Vyāsa’s Mahābhārata seem to find expression in Villiputtūr’s Pāratam and subsequently in the terukkūttu but here, underpinned by Tamil cultural praxis (1990, 72). In this context, the Caṅkam-era dichotomy between akam and puram appears to be reflected in the terukkūttu performative corpus (Frasca, 73). He provides the example of the need to avenge Tiraupatāi’s sexual purity in the terukkūttu dramatization of this scene from the Mahābhārata as driving the Pāṇḍavas’ need for war to uphold their dharma or duty (73). In other words, the Sanskrit dharmic model “strikes a chord” in ancient Tamil culture (i.e. the need to uphold women’s chastity to maintain societal morality). However, in terukkūttu, the figure of Kṛṣṇa has a profound influence on the events that transpire; a break from the Caṅkam-era literary corpus. The role of Kṛṣṇa in the terukkūttu performance of Tiraupatāi Vastirāpaharaṇam (The Disrobing of Draupadī) in ensuring her chastity is unmarred as well as the dramatization of his profound influence in securing the Pāṇḍavas final triumph are examples of outside influences on the Tamil religious tradition which does not have ancient precedents of a “transcendent, divine entity” intervening in such situations (Frasca, 74). Thus, in terukkūttu we find a juxtaposition of the Tamil concepts of akam and puram with the “North-Indian god Kṛṣṇa” offering a “fusion of indigenous Tamil religion with more Sanskritic concepts of the sacred” (Frasca, 74).

Furthermore, Tamil bhakti poetry’s focus on the devotee/saint relationship reappears in a sense as a model for the confluence of styles, genres, and motifs that form the cultural foundation for modern Tamil protest plays. The importance of the spectator’s aesthetic experience though the vehicle of hero is the most important shared component between Sanskrit and Tamil aesthetic structures. These nationalist dramas often cast the hero as divinely ordained savior of the people in order to focus the audience’s attention on the anticolonial messaging embedded in his narrative arc. Symbolic structures inherent in Tamil bhakti poetry such as the references to various epic characters or Hindu myths and gods as well as the poetic structures used to construct the love between devotee and the divine appear in Tamil folk/ritual performance genres as well as in twentieth century popular drama. Zvelebil suggests that the common element in Tamil
literary production seems to be “a striving after powerful abbreviations, clarity, and transparence, which is the result of much effort to exploit to the utmost the technique of suggestion [my emphasis] of allusion of inference and word-play, of a complex and telling use of imagery, of multiple overtones. This effort may be seen in the earliest lyrical stanzas as well as in the intensely concise couplets of the Tirukkural, in the songs of Cilappatikāram, in various stanzas of Kampan’s epic, in modern essays and short stories” (1973, 22). In the colonial Tamil state, “Protest” playwrights devoted to delivering anticolonial propaganda through the “popular” drama, offer a powerful example of this as well. The need for robust acting and dialogue given limited access to props as well as word-play, codes, and inference to subvert British censors necessitates these plays employ a network of suggestion through culturally relevant symbols, eclectic dramatic structures and familiar narrative arcs in order to achieve a similar result to the bhakti poets. In essence, they advocate devotion to the nation as a moral and divine undertaking. Thus, two central tenets of bhakti performance: (1) the notion of transcendence associated with the experience of rasa and (2) the religious/spiritual value of performance as a whole, gain renewed prominence in ritual performance genres such as terukkūttu and provide an important dramatic model for the social and political “company” dramas emerging at the turn of the twentieth century. The commissioning, viewing, and participation in a performance (i.e. the act of performing) all are acts of bhakti in the context of performed Tamil bhakti poetry (Cutler, 2003). Both of these connections indicate Kampan’s familiarity with Sanskrit as well as Tamil literary, aesthetic, and religious traditions. Comparison between several passages from Kampan’s work and various bhakti poems demonstrate his awareness of these other “Rāma” stories and his use of their ideas (Meenakshisundaram, 104-5). Thus, Kampan’s work likely represents a composite of Tamil “Rāma”

Devadāsī-s or court performers also become conduits of aesthetic memory through their displacement and subsequent elision from the revamped classical canon. Soneji’s project reconstructs a lost aesthetic history for the devadāsī community in South India by examining “salon dance.”²¹ He relies heavily on “acts of remembering” that become both “pure memory” as well as “sites” that commemorate, through nostalgia, a past that no longer exists and an aesthetic that is no longer viable” (Soneji, 17). Soneji argues that it is “remembering that connects

²¹ Salon dance refers to a type of prominent stylized dance performance popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that took place in a court, temple, or wealthy family home.
devadāsī women to the past” and linearity cannot reflect the ways in which devadāsī memory “simultaneously functions as an embodied present and a memorialized past” (17-18). Devadāsī-ś become an aesthetic “link” between court and temple traditions in eighteenth century South India and the modern Bharata Nāṭyam tradition. For example, Rukmini Arundale’s (Rukmini Devi) famous performance in 1944 represents a “landmark” effort to “re-establish what she characterised as the ‘classical’ tradition of Indian dance, which was in danger of extinction on account of the demise of the devadāsī system and of the courtly context in which catir or cinga mēḷam dance (the precursor of modern Bharata Nāṭyam) had been nurtured” (Peterson, 1998, 40). However, the liminal status of the devadāsī is partly what leads to their pursuit of “popular” genres of aesthetic representation in addition to the modern classical stage. Although only a small percentage of devadāsī-ś can be documented within the popular entertainment movement, it is likely there were more. The gramophone and film industries offer other avenues for devadāsī-ś to continue to perform. Since initial film production takes place outside Tamil country early films transport “a range of music with no previous connection to Tamil drama into widespread currency throughout south India” (Hughes, 26). Furthermore, these early filmmakers, aware of the “diverse tastes of their imagined…audiences,” create “hybrid dramas” and “film songs from a wide range of musical derivations, including classical Indian Karnatic and Hindustani music” (Hughes, 26). The eclectic company dramas popular near the turn of the twentieth century cater to a Tamil public with eclectic and variegated aesthetic tastes—a feature that prominently figures into the success of anticolonial Tamil theater that exploits the same tension between localized tradition and national identification (i.e. “Tamil” vs. “Indian”) Bharathi negotiates in Paṅcāḷi Capatam. Thus, we see how the popular drama tradition conditioned by “elite/non-elite” aesthetic forces and practices also becomes a repository of marginalized performance/performers and the harbinger of a continuing aesthetic hybridism and innovation that pervades the emerging film industry.

While the aesthetic traveling of the devadāsī-ś brings the poetics of the “classical” court repertoire into the realm of the “popular;” Subramanya Bharathi and Sankaradas Swamigal produce modern Tamil dramas that mirror the eclectic tastes of the cosmopolitan Tamil audience of the early twentieth century. Like predecessors such as Mudaliyar, both seek to revive Tamil literature and construct an independent and contiguous Tamil literary history. Bharathi represents what Sumathi Ramaswamy terms, the “Indianist view” of Tamil literature that suggests that
Tamil develops independently from Sanskrit, producing a unique literary and cultural canon that should be celebrated as representative of tāymoli (mother-tongue). Sankaradas Swamigal, meanwhile, can be seen as a nexus point between folk and popular dramatic traditions and has a different approach to modernizing Tamil. While Bharathi draws from folk ballad tunes in creating patriotic songs (Roy), Swamigal’s use of epic and song drawn from the Tamil folk sources reinforces contextually relevant moral and ethical values, making his version of the company drama particularly effective in the rural areas in promoting anticolonial sentiment (Baskaran). Thus, the literary modernity in Tamil Nadu at the turn of the twentieth century becomes an aesthetic and performative amalgam in which various types of “memory” converge and collude.

The historical and conceptual trajectory sketched here shows the vital role rasal/cuvai plays in connecting a Tamil audience with Tamil custom and culture while helping define the pan-Indian aesthetic, (one which is distinctly non-Western) used to “image” an all-inclusive “India” during the colonial period. These moments of confluence between Sanskrit poetics and Tamil artistic expression pave the way for a reformulation of the Sanskrit concept of rasa within a Tamil performative context that reaffirms “Tamil-ness” as also wholly, “Indian.” This provides the ground to understand why characters in Tamil “Protest” theater, culturally constituted, become conduits of sentiment and function as a “master trope[s]…in which the desire to develop intimate and pleasurable relationships between servants and leader, devotees, and gods---an ancient cultural logic---appears to be operative as a primary modality in the production of and relationship to power” (Bate, 117). In other words, the spectator’s emotional connection to the political figure as Bate argues, or as in the case of anticolonial popular and company drama, the hero as “patriot” of an imagined “India” can be manipulated in order to generate, maintain, or acquire political and/or social power. Thus, when nationalist playwrights utilize various pan-Indian as well as Tamil symbols or iconic figures to evoke feelings of national pride and anti-British sentiment within the audience, the aesthetic experience of the performance becomes a tool of resistance.

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22 Sumathi Ramaswamy uses “Indianist” to describe a group of nationalist-minded Tamil (mostly upper and middle class) journalists, scholars, and writers who view the Dravidian nationalist movement’s absolutist position on Tamil as counterproductive to the cause of ending “the greater evil” of British imperialism (1997). She defines the language and cultural paradigm from which “Indianists” operate as one that sees the freedom of “Tamil Tāy” (Mother Tamil) as contingent on the liberation of “Pārata Mātā” (Mother India) and dual allegiance does not indicate the superiority of either, but rather independent greatness of both (1997).
Chapter Four
Dialogue with Empire: Melodrama, Cultural Memory, and Tamil “Protest” Drama

Introduction
The previous chapter highlights some important aesthetically constitutive moments of “conversation” that inform the production of the cultural “memory” and the process of “remembering” in Tamil literary modernity. However, while the moments of confluence between Tamil and Sanskrit aesthetic “worlds” account for the two central facets of rasa theory (spectator’s relishing and cultural context) that infiltrate modern regional classical and vernacular performance traditions, external dramatic and political influences play a vital role in the development of the modern Tamil dramatic milieu, particularly given the pervasive and widespread nature of the British Imperial enterprise. The colonial exchange on various levels, as Elleke Boehmer argues, requires transnational and unorthodox intracultural allegiances. She points out that “oppositional nationalist, proto-nationalist, and anti-colonial movements learn from one another as well as drawing from their own internal political and cultural resources or the political culture of their oppressors (Boehmer, 2006). In this way, “anti-colonial resistances inspired one another, but also debated with one another about how best [colonial authority] should be challenged” (Loomba, 185). While much work has been done on Bengal-Irish nationalist exchanges in the realms of culture, politics, and media, the potential intercultural/international transactions produced through media coverage in the colonial Tamil state of Irish anti-imperial agitation has been explored rather minimally. I also hope to draw

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1 Michael Silvestri’s Ireland and India: Nationalist, Empire, and Memory examines the relationship between Irish and Bengali nationalism in New York examining conversation between members of the Sinn Fein movement and an organization of upper-class Bengalis. He also notes the Bengali uprising known as the “Chittagong Army Raid” on Good Friday in 1930 was a conscious effort by Bengali revolutionaries to emulate and commemorate the anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rebellion. Other important works in this area (a no means exhaustive list) Sudipta Kaviraj’s collection of essays on the construction of the political imagination and “image” of colonial and postcolonial India, Howard Brasted’s work on the relationship between Frank Hugh O’Donnell and other “friends” of India and the imperial administration in India on issues such as land reform, prison reform, and “home-rule,” and Elleke Boehmer’s (2002, 2006) work examining the intercultural discourses that demonstrate transnational allegiances not always consonant with the hegemonic and dominant structures of nationalist and anti-British resistance. 

2 When beginning my research I hoped to discover evidence that Tamil “Protest” playwrights were in direct contact or were in conversation with Irish literary and dramatic resistance movements. This avenue of investigation, due to archival access issues, has been somewhat unsuccessful. However, it is clear that Irish agitations against the British Empire, like those in South Africa, through media reports, word of mouth, and most importantly, as seen in the works of Subramanya Bharathi, through drama, literature, and songs become a part of the development of a Tamil nationalist consciousness. Therefore, my argument for “dialogue” between the Irish anti-Imperial movement and the
attention to the importance of Irish figures within the Theosophical Society such Annie Besant and James Cousins who introduce the “situation of Ireland” into the Tamil political consciousness in varying ways. For instance, Annie Besant’s arrest in 1917 on charges of sedition spurs the immensely patriotic T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar to quit his job as the Chief Tamil instructor at the Muthialpet Boys School in George Town, join the freedom movement as a member of the Indian National Congress, and work closely with Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and others (*Madras Vignettes*, 8.27.2013). The growing print media culture along with increasingly oppressive legislative measures undertaken by the British to quell anticolonial uprisings in the beginning of the twentieth century, sparks popular outrage providing an opening for the popular drama and song movement to take hold in creating a “nationalist” consciousness. However, this movement is not at all uniform or united as concurrent discourses of caste discrimination and Tamil nationalism are competing and initially quite resistant to an “Indianist” nationalist stance. Thus, the task of this chapter is two-fold: 1) I demonstrate the way in which melodramatic themes, stagecraft, and characterization infiltrates the Tamil literary milieu during the early part of the twentieth century. As a result, the Tamil “Protest” theater utilizes a syncretic aesthetic and dramaturgical paradigm that not only draws from indigenous aesthetic, cultural, ritual traditions, but also adapts and recasts Victorian literary themes and Shakespearean motifs. 2) While in form, characterization, and in some cases, narrative themes Tamil “Protest” theater includes elements of Victorian melodramatic style, as a vehicle of resistant messaging, the popular performance genres attempt to move away from, what was until this point, largely an upper class movement and focus efforts on recasting social difference within a nationalist ideology. Therefore, I argue that in addition to using the “English education” as a tool of anticolonial resistance, these playwrights are employing strategies that have demonstrated success in other colonial struggles such as Ireland.

The relationship between the Irish and Indian anticolonial aspirations largely reflects mutual antipathy for the Empire and strategic alliances of necessity. As Kenny argues, most conflicts between “colonies” and the British Empire were not simply “English vs. the natives.” The widespread participation of the Irishmen and Sikhs in the British imperial forces complicates these moments of colonial oppression. For these reasons, the Connaught Rebellion (1920) in developing nationalist consciousness in the colonial South India hinges on the lynchpin of intercultural exchange of paradigms of resistance via the press and performance.

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northern part of India (Jullundur region of Punjab) provides a perfect example of the ways an “internationalist” moment of rebellion links the struggles of Ireland and India through a syncretic cultural memory. The Connaught Rangers’ actions commemorate the violence and brutality of the British government in the events surrounding the Easter Rising in 1916 becoming a memorial “link.” This event invokes the ghost of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny (despite the protesters language to the contrary) while also acting as a harbinger of the 1919 Amritsar massacre. Through this sort of “internationalization” of colonial trauma, the cultural memory of oppression is broadened and intensified, permitting anti-British and nationalist rhetoric to transect various intra-Indian cultural, social, and linguistic identifications. In the Tamil context we observe a similar “broadening” in the work of Swaminatha Sarma. His vision of “nation” allegorizes the Scottish uprising against the British, which he describes as uniquely similar to the “Tamil situation.”

For Sarma, Valisan is a “Tamilized” Sir William Wallace (1270 –1305), a Scottish landowner who becomes one of the main leaders during the Wars of Scottish Independence. Along with Andrew Moray, Wallace defeats an English army at the Battle of Stirling Bridge in September 1297 and subsequently appointed Guardian of Scotland, serving until his defeat at the

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3 In 1916, the Easter Rising, also known as the Easter Rebellion and referred to in some contemporary British reports as the Sinn Fein Rebellion, was an Irish insurrection during Easter Week, 1916. The Rising was mounted by Irish republicans with the aims of ending British rule in Ireland and establishing the Irish Republic at a time when the British Empire was heavily engaged in the First World War. It was the most significant uprising in Ireland since the rebellion of 1798. In the brutal clash between rebels and British forces produced several casualties and the British executed two men as the instigators. This event sparks a series of skirmishes between the Irish and the British, notably the Connaught Rebellion in 1920.

4 The Indian Rebellion of 1857 is often eulogized as India’s first battle for independence. Though it begins as the mutiny of Indian Sepoy soldiers in the East India Company’s army on May 10, 1857 in Meerut (Uttar Pradesh) is soon escalated and other mutinies and civilian rebellions sprung up in the Gangetic plain and central India. Taking nearly a full year to quell (failing in the fall of Gwalior in June 20, 1858), the rebellion arises from a variety of grievances. However, the proverbial “last straw” came when the soldiers were asked to bite off the paper cartridges for their rifles greased with animal fat, offending Muslims and Hindus alike. The main result of the rebellion was the dissolution the East India Trading company and a political and military reorganization of the British presence in India, renamed as the “British Raj” (Spear, 147-8).

5 The events that are commonly described as the “Amritsar massacre” arise from an incident occurring in Jallianwallah Bagh (garden) near Amritsar in the Punjab region of colonial India. On April 13, 1919, the British army (comprised of more than just “British” soldiers) brutally suppresses a group of unarmed men, women, and children who had peaceably gathered in the public enclosed space. Since the soldiers were blocking the only entrance and exit, when the shooting began many people jumped into a well in the middle of the grounds. A plaque in the monument says that 120 bodies were plucked out of the well. As a result of the firing, hundreds of people were killed and thousands were injured. Official records put the figures at 379 killed (337 men, 41 boys and a six-week-old baby) and 200 injured, though the actual figure is believed to have been much higher. Adding insult to injury, a curfew prevented the wounded from being moved from where they had fallen. Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer reported to his superiors that he had been “confronted by a revolutionary army” and retained only the support of Michael O’Dwyer, the Governor of Punjab.
Battle of Falkirk in July 1298. In August 1305, Wallace is captured in Robroyston near Glasgow and handed over to King Edward I of England, who had him hanged, drawn, and quartered for high treason and crimes against English civilians. Taking over the guardianship of Scotland, Robert I or Robert the Bruce (1274-1329) continued the fight for Scottish independence. It is Robert the Bruce that captures Sarma’s attention as he models his primary protagonist, Puresan on this Scottish nationalist and freedom fighter. As Earl of Carrick, Robert the Bruce supported his family’s claim to the throne and took part in William Wallace’s revolt against Edward I of England. In Sarma’s play, Robert the Bruce is depicted by the hero Puresan. Both figures carry on the independence fight begun by fallen comrades. In 1298, Robert the Bruce becomes Guardian of Scotland alongside his great rival for the Scottish throne, John Cornyn, and William Lamberton, Bishop of St. Andrews. Resulting in part from his quarrels with Cornyn and from the likely restoration of King John, Bruce resigns as guardian in 1300. With the death of his father in 1304, Bruce inherits his family’s claim to the throne and quickly seizes the throne and is crowned king of Scots in 1306. King Edward I’s forces defeat Robert the Bruce in battle, forcing him into hiding in the Hebrides and Ireland. In 1307, Bruce returns to defeat an English army at Loudoun Hill and wage a highly successful guerrilla war. In 1309 he is able to hold his first parliament at St Andrews, and a series of military victories between 1310 and 1314 affords him control of much of Scotland. At the Battle of Bannockburn in June 1314, Bruce defeats a much larger English army under King Edward II, confirming the re-establishment of an independent Scottish monarchy.

This brief recounting of the exploits of Wallace and Robert the Bruce offer an important historical foundation for Sarma’s play. He draws not only the conflict between England and Scotland, but on the nature, passion, and method of resistance employed and embodied by Wallace and Bruce. In order to adequately portray colonial situation in India, Sarma draws on a number of both “extra- and intra-Indian” events. Taking the growing internationalism of the press as well as the “aesthetic traveling” that takes place during the colonial encounter in South India as a backdrop; I suggest that media coverage of the Easter Rebellion in 1916 provides an entry point for Irish politics into the Indian resistance movement. In Bengal these connections are clear as seen in the 1930 Chittagong Armory Raid, when a group of young Bengali nationalists, led by Surya Sen, raid the Armory of the police and auxiliary forces housed at Chittagong armory in Bengal province on the anniversary of the Easter Rising, openly
acknowledging solidarity with the Ireland’s fight for independence. This transparent display of solidarity becomes eulogized in both Irish and Indian histories of the raid as well as in contemporary newspaper coverage in both national and local papers. In the Tamil context, the events that occur around India and in other parts of the Empire become a part of the political-consciousness through the newspapers and burgeoning popular drama and song movement as well as the newly formed novel industry that was amply supplemented by the literary appeal of chapbooks.⁶

These events, though only tangentially linked through history, become a part of a continuing cultural memorializing process that is evoked through Indian performance to constitute not only the image of a “free India,” but also redefine the spectator as an activist. And clearly, other Indo-Irish collusions occur during this period leading to Eamon de Valera’s rather forceful words of allegiance:

“We of Ireland and you of India must each of us endeavor, both as separate peoples and in combination, to rid ourselves to forget what weapon it was by which Washington rid his country of this same vampire Our cause is a common cause” (Address delivered at the India Freedom Dinner of the Friends of Freedom for India, on February 28, 1920 at the Central Opera House, New York City)⁷

Later in the speech, Valera directly transposes the acts of British brutality against both Ireland and India saying, India suffers from “Black and Tans” and it is the Irish people who were slaughtered in Amritsar, and Ireland has swaraj⁸, while India has Sinn Fein (Silvestri, 250). In this context, the work of James Cousins as theosophist and nationalist is quite interesting as for him “reviving Indian culture became an extension of reviving Irish culture” (Lennon, 330). Selina Guiness argues James Cousins’s attempts to show similarities between the Indian and

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⁶ Chapbooks, sold at the gujili marketplace are cheap publications of stories, songs, and essays by established and unknown writers often sold by writer or singer himself (Venkatachalapathy, 2012).
⁷ Two collections of essays Ireland and India: Colonies, Culture, and Empire edited by Tadhg Foley and Maureen O’Connor and Ireland and India: Connections, Comparisons, and Contrasts discuss the connections between various Indian intellectual and political activists such as Sarmila Bose who meet with Irish resistant figures such as Eilis Ward and later Eamon de Valera with Jawaharlal Nehru As Foley and O’Connor note in their introduction: “there was a close connection between the Irish doctrine of Sinn Fein and its Indian equivalent, Swadeshi” while noting, as does Elleke Boehmer, the “friable” nature of this nationalism (xiv-xv).
⁸ Swaraj refers to the self-rule movement initiated by Gandhi which outlines several tenets for modernization along with political independence including the abolition of child marriage, widow-burning (sati—the practice of woman whose husband dies of burning herself alive with his body), and caste-discrimination. Swann (1995) connects Ārya Samāj, a conservative anti-colonial organization that promotes traditional Hindu values and Sri Krishna, a famous nautanki producer/playwright to show that Gandhi’s ideas are not the only driving motivation behind successful anti-colonial movements nor are all aspects of his philosophy popular.
Irish struggles for independence, reflects his view that “cosmopolitanism and cultural nationalism might serve as compatible ideologies for new states” (75). However, his extensive writing on racial nationalism and caste argues for the limitations of “cultural nationalism as an anticolonial politics” (Guiness, 75). Cousins’s views on caste are consonant with his nationalist views and heavily influenced by Bengali “universalist” nationalists such as Tagore and Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble). He argues that caste be remade as a functional moral community at the national level (Guiness, 76). While Guiness contextualizes Cousins’s language of “racial fractions” that unite in “the region of imagination” within his “critique of capitalism” as an imperialist enterprise, it also demonstrates his view that “cultural memory” is not only constructed by intra-national events, ideologies, customs, etc. but also by extra-national ideas, events, and cultural memories” of imperial oppression. In this way, he also emphasizes the need for a shared cultural experience of oppression to break down caste barriers as well as strike at the factionalism the imperial process utilizes to maintain control (Guiness, 75). Here his “nation of free slaves” idea aptly describes how he seeks to replace religious truth and harness cultural nationalisms through the symbol of “nation” to which all citizens can form “a voluntary bond” of moral commitment for the freedom of all (Guiness, 77).

Thus, figures such as Annie Besant and James Cousins, important theosophists and advocates for home-rule, become conduits of nationalist ideas between Ireland and the colonial Tamil state. As evidenced in her efforts to use the Theosophical society and Tagore’s vision of universalism to promote Indian home-rule as an Irish concern as well, Besant’s active pursuit to promote “home-rule” plays a critical role in the development of anticolonial sentiment among the Tamil upper classes in particular. While each of these figures represents a sort of problematic Orientalist discourse, their significant contribution to the nationalist movement cannot be overlooked. Similarly, their use of theosophical discourse as way to naturalize the Brahmanical worldview is also formative in terms of the Tamil nationalist movement as nationalist-theosophists such Besant ally with heavily Brahmanical Congress Party. Both Besant and Cousins become a part of Indo-Irish cultural conduit filtered through Theosophical Society that is particularly influential in developing nationalist sentiment through journalism, lectures, and writing most geared towards the upper-class elites and those who were literate

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Rabindranath Tagore maintains similar “universalist” views shaped by his association with Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita. He also communicates extensively with the Irish nationalist and playwright, W.B. Yeats who writes an introduction for a translation of his poetry.
(approximately one to two percent of the population). However, their influence remained limited in building a mass movement of nationalism, such as the one concurrently being propagated by Gandhi. As Gandhi provides an important link between the nationalist intelligentsia and the Indian public, in this way, the Tamil “Protest” plays and songs similarly provide an opportunity for intellectual and “elite” nationalists to disseminate these ideas to a broader spectrum of the public and thus, breakdown some of these barriers through the unifying, though “friable” symbol of “India.”

Various “moments” of conversation in literary, journalistic, and critical realms through the aesthetic “traveling” that happens by means of the imperial enterprise produces an “internationalism” of cultural memory in India. The Easter Rising’s revival and adoption as a ghastly antecedent to the Amritsar massacre which occurs in India in 1919, becomes a part of shared cultural experience of oppression through these various “conversants.” And even more oddly, the cross-cultural, trans-border Connaught Rebellion which occurs shortly after the Easter Rising (in large part as a response to the executions and violence that arises from the incident) and one year after the Amritsar massacre, becomes a “historio-memorial” link between the Indian Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, the Easter Rising 1916 in Ireland, and the Amritsar massacre in 1919. In other words, by reinscribing these insurrections as part of an “Indian” cultural memory of British oppression, they each become a part of the Indian collective “psyche” of resistance and thereby magnify the effects of British oppression. This process occur through a complex process of memory acculturation affected through various avenues of information production including: news-media, word of mouth, and literary, dramatic, and musical representations of the Amritsar Massacre and other moments of Indian resistance, notably Bhagat Singh’s execution in 1931. Thus, the Easter Rising and the Amritsar Massacre become twinned symbols of imperial oppression, which evoke a cultural “remembering” that informs and intensifies the image and identification of the British as oppressor of Indians.

The final portion of this chapter examines passages from T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar’s Kaṭṭar Pakti and Swaminatha Sarma’s Pāṇapurate Vīraṇ, in order to demonstrate how these playwrights cultivate cultural memory to foment national pride and loyalty through the use of indigenous symbols of heroism. Incorporating elements from devotional, folk, ritual, and

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10 The term “friable” is used by Elleke Boehmer in reference to the nature of the transactional collusions and alliances that form between various aspects of the Empire in the early part of the twentieth century (Boehmer, 2006).
“classical” indigenous performance traditions into the poetic process, their work represents a unique amalgam of indigenous aesthetics, dialogue with non-indigenous strains of thought, and the cultivated cultural resonance with anti-Imperial acts of resistance in British Dominion as a whole, all re-created as a uniquely Tamil story. The genre, Tamil “Protest” theater, refers to the plays produced 1905-1937, staged by traveling drama troupes modeled after the Telugu and Parsi versions popular at the time. My investigation focuses on T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar and Swaminatha Sarma, who begin their careers writing in so-called “respectable” realms of literary production, and leave those behind to produce nationalist plays. While Pavalar becomes an important link between the disciplined theater of Mudaliyar and the popular theater tradition which incorporated more song, dance, and improvisation, Sarma’s work employs a literary style with a minimal use of spectacle and song, initially curtailing its influence and success. This is clearly shown in 1931 when the TKS Brothers’ Bala Shanmugan Sabha alter, recast, and stage the play as the story of Bhagat Singh’s execution and the eventual freedom of India. With the inclusion of several of Subramanya Bharathi’s nationalist songs, as well as scene showing Valisan being hanged, and a villu pāṭṭu (bow-song) about Gandhi’s life, the play becomes very popular, within the urban center of Madras as well in other regions and districts (Baskaran, 37).

By culturally reinscribing internal and external moments of resistance to British into an indigenous system of signification perfectly suited to the cosmopolitan Tamil public; in effect, these plays transform anticolonial feelings into patriotic sentiment for the nation-to-come. These syncretic works “perform back” to the colonizer while also “performing Tamil-ness” as convergence of difference. In a way, the popular drama movement, like Gandhi’s initial vision, attempts to collapse sectarian, economic, and caste-based divisions into two discursive categories: the upper-class/ caste(s), educated “elite” vs. the non-“elite,” (e.g. poor, low-caste, dalit, etc.) in some cases, illiterate public at large creating a tenuous partnership between competing social, aesthetic, religious, and political discourses that inform each group using the imagined free nation-state of India as the unifying image.
I. Imperial Aesthetics: The “Indianization” of Melodrama and Shakespeare in the Colonial Tamil State

Introduction

Venkatachalapathy argues that the new cultural elite of Madras, having first encountered the novel through “its Victorian English form in their curriculum,” near the latter part of the nineteenth century, also become avid consumers of a “curious amalgam of prescribed novels and Victorian pulp” (2012, 76-77). This section explores the complex interactions and interconnections between the introduction of Shakespeare and melodrama into the Tamil milieu and the production of Tamil literary modernity: Shakespeare in the service of imperial education practices and later in popular drama; the influx of Victorian literature and pulp fiction and its effect on the publishing industry; and the production of a modern “popular” literary tradition, disavowed by so-called elite and literary authors such as Bharathi and V.V.S. Aiyer as well as non-Brahmin Self-respecters such E.V. Ramasamy Naicker. As a theatrical genre, melodrama can be described as a “dream world inhabited by dream people and dream justice, offering audiences the fulfillment and satisfaction only found in dreams” (Brooks, 14). More specifically, melodramatic plays include spectacle, idealized characters, heavy moral overtones, sensationalism, and championing of innate human virtue. These particular characteristics made the overly sentimental or bawdy Victorian novels by GWB Reynolds and other prominent popular and pulp authors in the early twentieth century popular in India. Several traveling drama company including the Parsi troupes such as the New Alfred Theater Company adapted Reynolds’s novels for the popular stage (Hansen, 1998). Melodramatists often linger on emotive scenes in tragedies and comedies at the expense of plot and characterization. Most importantly, “true morality is championed above all things” (Brooks, 41). Writers such G.W. M. Reynolds (1814-1879) “serve not just as metaphor[s], but as index[es] to the wide appeal of the most beloved forms among Indian readers” (Joshi, 1998, 215). Taking Peter Brooks’s definition of melodrama as a “system of experience” Joshi suggests that in India the “moral modalities” of melodrama create a world in which Indians can enter and inhabit “without contradiction or censure” since it addresses two important needs for the colonial Indian society: an affection for didactism and a “symbolic means to resist empire” (216). In this way, melodrama’s “cleaner-than-life modalities, the economy of persecution and justice,” and the simplification of reality
into virtue vs. vice become the site of “corroboration and inspiration” for resistant literary and performance art in the colonial India (Joshi, 217).

As depicted in the drama of Sankaradas Swamigal and TP Krishnaswamy Pavalar, the British utilize methods of cultural and educational indoctrination to produce a class of Indian “English” who would function as ostensible “cultural colonizers” and a bulwark against social uprisings (Viswanathan, 1989). While this does happen to some extent, it also leads to experimentation and innovation within the arena of performance and art that produces resistant and contestatory “writing back” through Shakespeare and other stalwarts of Western education. Thus, the questions examined here are: What are the important elements that are retained or reformulated from the Shakespearean and melodramatic performance traditions and how do they become aesthetic tools of resistance in Tamil Protest plays? Finally, Venkatachalapathy’s (2012) work on the rise of the Tamil novel, Gauri Viswanathan’s (1989) book on English education practices, and finally, in the realm of popular drama Nandi Bhatia’s (2004) and Sangeeta Mohanty’s (2010) research on Shakespeare’s “rewriting” in popular Indian contexts, collectively demonstrate the aesthetic, dramaturgical, and literary links between Shakespeare, imperialism, and Indian reinvention. What remains vital for my analysis is the ways in which each genre of modern Indian art represents a series of putative moments in which the construction and dissemination of art or aesthetics becomes an ideologically charged enterprise of national/linguistic/social identity emerging from this “triangle” of influence. In other words, how does Shakespeare, intended as a tool of indoctrination, in effect, become reinterpreted as the essence of what it means to be “Irish or “Indian”?

Literary “Borrowings”: Melodrama, Shakespeare and the Colonial Encounter

The passage of the Indian Education Act in 1835 that leads to a prescribed English literature curriculum in Indian schools, rather than functioning as an egalitarian gesture of empowerment, reifies “hegemonic structures” through moral manipulation. The native “elite” who predominantly comprised the educated class at this point, relished the opportunity for employment that such education measures would produce (Singh, 103). Furthermore, Shakespeare, having been introduced as “colonial book of the British Raj,” operates as what Jyotsna Singh terms a “privileged signifier” that bears significant influence on Indian literary and theatrical praxis (107). The introduction of an English literature curriculum in colleges after
1857 that included a several selections from Shakespeare was an important tool in the “civilizing mission” of the British Empire in India. In this context, the purpose of bringing English literature into the educational curriculum of India was not to provide a “liberal education,” but rather to impart particular moral, ethical values that dovetail with the proselytizing mission (Viswanathan, 1989, 206). Most importantly, it becomes a mechanism of control both economically, educationally, and thus, socially and politically. As a result of this curriculum, which made employment in civil service now possible as Shakespeare was included on the entrance exam, Shakespeare becomes a means to “establish British cultural authority” and make India “English” (Bhatia, 54). In addition, dissemination of Shakespeare to the upper classes via educational institution produces an environment in which an “Indianizing” of Shakespeare takes place. Thus:

By the late nineteenth century, the vogue of Shakespeare had spread to most urban centers…to watch and study Shakespeare became ‘fashionable’ among Bengali elites. In addition to the theaters in Bengal, numerous theater companies, especially the privately funded Parsi theaters, were also formed in Bombay, Delhi, and other regions…These companies disseminated Shakespeare to a cross-section of the population, which had no access to his works through the educational curriculum or in the elite theaters, bringing, in the process, “Shakespeare” into the popular cultural life of the nation. (Bhatia, 54)

However, these productions of Shakespeare did not provide Britain or other European locales as the setting, include English character names, or utilize elaborate costume or scenery initially. Instead, the plays were adjusted, sometimes to honor the patron of the performance as in one case where a troupe stages a play entitled Tara that is an adaptation of the Shakespeare’s play Cymbeline to celebrate the marriage between a Tanjore princess and her sister Tarabhai with the ruler of Baroda (Bhatia, 51). Here, the city names become changed to Suvarnapur and Vijayapura and the play opens with a benediction to the elephant god Ganeśa. As in the Sanskrit tradition the play is introduced by a sūtradhāra and the characters are also given Indian names. In this way, the play is no longer just a translation of the Shakespeare, but a localized story about well-known figures rather than the distant lands and characters of the Shakespearean playworld. What becomes clear is that “translations” of Shakespeare, while effective in the university setting as well in the publication industry; they are less effective in various indigenous performance modalities operating within British India near the end of the nineteenth century. In essence, these plays had to be adapted thematically and aesthetically for the Indian stage.
As modern Tamil drama historian, Sundar Kali remarks in a recent forum on drama in Madurai, that Pammal Sambandham Mudaliyar had little success when releasing his play Manoharan (Hamlet) the first time as “Amalāṭitan.” The play was redone as “Manoharan” with the characters ‘Indianized’ and an infusion of sentiment through a few songs and the drama became very popular” (The Hindu, 3.26.05). Thus, Shakespeare in the Indian performance not only transects elite and popular boundaries, but also provides a valuable insight into the nature of Indian aesthetics. Interestingly, Mudaliyar also discusses his nervousness during the initial release of Amalāṭityan regarding “how the actors would acquit themselves” and “how [he] would satisfy the demands of the aesthetes with critical insight” in Part III of Forty Years before the Footlights (1997, 37). He describes in detail, the preparation of actors, his own performance as “Hamlet,” and the subsequent accolades from friends and English notaries and government officials in the audience. The performance takes place February 8, 1906 on the South Indian Athletic Association Grounds (Mudaliyar, 36). Mudaliyar remarks that the notoriety of the performance leads to one-hundred and fifty-three new Sabhā members while solidifying the Sabhā’s new found role in providing entertainment for various members of the colonial administration when they visited (36-37). It is clear from these two accounts of the staging and “success” of Mudaliyar’s “Hamlet” is viewed from two different perspectives: aesthetic and political/social. Mudaliyar invests wholeheartedly in the improvement of Tamil drama by producing a regimented, disciplined, modern performance-genre modeled after both Telugu and Parsi Drama productions as well as the Shakespeare plays he read and loved in school, intended to promote acting technique, discipline to script, and less arbitrary use of song and spectacle.

However, while it is clear that “Protest” playwrights such Pavalar, Sarma, K. Mudaliyar, former members of the Sabhā, are influenced aesthetically by Mudaliyar’s reforms as they produce plays meant to be performed in three hours, that emphasize acting technique, and in some cases, non-indigenous staging techniques such as showing death on the stage, the use of tragedy, etc.; the political situation and the disinclination of Sabhā members to jeopardize their position with the British government forces their departure.

The Parsi drama troupes provide an important aesthetic link between the spectacle of melodrama and the “Indian” themes of puranic and court stories. Based in Bombay, these drama

11 Mudaliyar further notes that as the requests became more and more frequent the general membership of the Sabhā voted to “no longer entertain requests to play for such receptions” (1997, 37).
companies originally comprised of amateur theater students, become business ventures for local Parsi businessmen and landholders. Shortly after 1850, the first Parsi theater company begins producing plays and charging admission (Hansen, 1998; Gupta, 2005). This is seen as the advent of commercial theater in India (Hansen, 1998; Seizer, 52; Baskaran). The Parsi theater borrows heavily from the British touring drama troupes in terms of styles of playbills, tickets, staging and props. The use of the proscenium arch and the painted backdrops indicate the shift towards a realistic visual representation of mythic themes, characters, and storylines. Furthermore, Seizer and Hansen (1998) each argue these innovations by Parsi theater troupes demonstrate the changing spectatorial relations at play and the quickly broadening appeal of this drama beyond the urban and cosmopolitan elites into working-class and rural communities. The popularity and widespread reach of Parsi theater flows from a syncretic dramatic “fare [that] pleased all tastes and communities” subsequently producing a model for Tamil popular performance genres that was easy to adopt and recreate in regional locales (Seizer, 53).

One of the primary features adopted by Tamil theater companies from the Parsi tradition is the transformation of theater into a commercial enterprise. The selling of tickets and seeking of patronage not only makes drama into a “legitimate” profession, but also provides the framework for the broad reach and popularity of this type of performance (Seizer). Other important “borrowings” focused on the form and themes of these plays. Victorian elements of stagecraft such as the use of props, an elevated platform, Western musical instruments (harmonium and clarinet), special costumes, the casting of women in “sexually provocative roles,” and “the merging of a melodramatic style of acting with an indigenous performance style” become commonplace in modern Tamil performance (de Bruin, 2001, 56). These early Tamil drama companies also draw themes and stories from the Parsi companies and initially produce “love and miracle dramas adapted from well-known Persian stories (Inder Sabha), Hindu epics (Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata), Tamil epics (Kovalan), Tamil folk stories (Saragantharam, Pavalakkodi, Nalla Thangal), and stories about great Tamil devotees and saints (Nandanar, Sakkubai, Arunagirinathar) (Hughes, 6). Seizer argues that the founding of Mudaliyar’s Sabhā in 1887 and Sankaradas Swamigal’s drama troupe in 1910 signals a split between two prominent strains of social drama in modern Tamil performance milieu: the amateur “sabhā” drama vs. the professional “company” drama (53). While Baskaran makes a similar case in outlining the shift from the “legitimate” to “popular” drama resulting from the pressing concerns of nationalism.
and growing anti-British sentiment, I would suggest that this “back” and “forth” is more indicative of an aesthetic “dialogue” as seen in the plays of T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar and Swaminatha Sarma that draw elements from both of these “streams” of dramatic performance. This aesthetic syncretism becomes most apparent in the use of popular songs and music in the “company” dramas. As a unique amalgam of classical, devotional, and folk melodies, North and South Indian rāgas, and western musical instruments like the harmonium, popular song (i.e. drama music) becomes the aesthetic “glue” through which a myriad of performance traditions, both indigenous and non-indigenous, find expression in the modern Tamil literary milieu (Hughes, 4).

Near the close of the nineteenth century in Tamil theater and songs still contain only a modicum of European influence except in production technology (use of proscenium staging was now common). As the agitations against the British increase, growing numbers of the emerging Tamil middle class see independence as an urgent need, impossible to achieve without the allegiance and support of the masses. Playwrights such as Kandasamy Mudaliyar, T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar, and Swaminatha Sarma as well the poet laureate of Tamil country Subramanya Bharathi, become increasingly concerned with political causes. Popular drama and the non-cooperation movement become inextricably intertwined as the colonial authorities often raided performances asserting they were fronts for seditious activity. In particular, the growing unrest in South India results from not only media representations of the violent confrontations that had taken place in the North (Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, the execution of Bhagat Singh) and in other parts of the empire (in particular Ceylon, Ireland, and South Africa), but also from the use of popular drama as a vehicle for anticolonial messaging. Socials, mythologicals, and historicals, all popular dramatic themes during the early part of the twentieth century, now infuse indigenous folk performance traditions (as in Sankaradas Swamigal’s proscenium stage version of terukkūttu) with modern production technology to make plays and songs tools of revolutionary propaganda. Until 1919, most Tamil dramatists contented

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12 The non-cooperation movement which was initiated by Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi was a widespread civil disobedience campaign which included public non-violent protests such as the Salt March (1931) while also promoting a wholesale boycott against “foreign-made” and specifically British-made goods. For example, khaddar (homespun cloth) was seen as better than the finer British muslins that had been imported into the country. While beginning as a nationalist movement, it came to encompass struggles of social injustice, caste, and gender discrimination as intertwined with the anticolonial imperative. There were two phases to this movement. The first which Gandhi attempts to institute
themselves with escapist plays that depicted mythological themes from Indian epics. The Jallianwallah Bagh massacre “triggers the process of politicization in the popular theatre” across India (Baskaran 25). This event spawns nationwide opposition to the Rowlatt Act\textsuperscript{13} and provides the impetus for Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement. Most importantly, it transforms the role of popular theater in the revolutionary movement as now traveling troupes became messengers of revolutionary information and performances double as anticolonial rallies. Between 1919 (after the Amritsar massacre) and 1937 anticolonial plays become increasingly incendiary and skillful in organizing the public civil disobedience agitations. During this time, many playwrights introduce elements of the flourishing tradition of melodrama to invest their productions with mass appeal.

II. Irish Conversants? Theosophy and Nationalist Sentiment: Annie Besant and James Cousins

Introduction

Interestingly, the Connaught rebellion in the northern part of India functions as a memorial link between the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, the 1919 Amritsar Massacre and the Easter Rising in 1916. Inspired by Martial law imposed in Ireland during and after the 1916 Easter Rising, the 1920 rebellion included Irish and non-Irish Connaught rangers and becomes an iconic representation of the “friable transnationalism” Elleke Boehmer identifies between cultural “elites” in various colonial contexts. “Within this expanded, interconnected space, nationalist elites from different regions repeatedly came into contact with one another and with one another’s ideas while travelling on the Empire’s steamships and trains. They read each other’s newspapers…which reached them on those same ships and trains, and via telegraph links. To stem the operation of these networks would have meant cutting off the blood supply of the British Empire itself” (Boehmer, 2006, 59). While Boehmer’s argument explores the ‘fragmented’ and multi-layered transnationalism of Gandhi and Sister Nivedita, I think it can also be applied to the Connaught situation by focusing on the common element of “acts of

\textsuperscript{13} The Rowlatt Act gave the government power to detain any person thought to be a revolutionary menace (Irschick, 1969, 132). As an extension of the Defense of India act of 1915, this legislations vested the Government of India with extraordinary powers to quell sedition by silencing the press, including detaining the political activists without trial, arrest without warrant of any individuals suspected of sedition or treason, as well as trial before special tribunals and \textit{in camera}. In addition, it gave the government the power to restrict and ban public gathering in the interest of security. Its passage sparked massive outrage within India.
cooperation” which may be “purely performative” but also, mutually beneficial (60). While it is doubtful that reading nationalist newspapers or works of nationalist literatures plays a significant role in the Connaught Ranger rebellion; the news of the British reaction to the Irish rebellions sparks a self-reflection which culturally embeds this rebellion within the imperial psyche. As one Ranger tells his comrades, “We were doing in India what the British forces were doing in Ireland” (Kiberd, 256). He goes on to respond to the commanding officer’s pleas to remember their impeccable reputation and honor by noting that was only for England. Since this action was for Ireland it would be the most honored (Kiberd, 256). It is interesting that what inspires the Rangers actions for Ireland is recognition of their own complicity in expansion and maintenance the Empire. The ranger emphasizes the connection between India and Ireland as “victims” of Empire. In doing so, he highlights the process of Imperial rule which requires the colonized to take part in victimization enterprise by which they are still being oppressed. With the “fresh popular memory of the Amritsar massacre” the British were rightly concerned that this incident could embolden Indian nationalists. Despite being careful to use the words “rebellion” instead of “mutiny” it invoked images of the 1857 Mutiny. Concerned about the revolutionary “ripples”, the British Imperial military decide that this act of insubordination had to be punished given ongoing rebellions in Ireland and Egypt. These fears seemed partially realized in newspaper accounts in Delhi, Bengal, and Madras praising the insurgency. Since the 1916 Easter rising executions of Irishmen had become somewhat difficult, so just one man, James Daly, bore the brunt. “In the end, he had to die, not for Ireland, but for India”’ (Kenny, 111). These rebellions indicated a “crisis of empire” in 1920 characterized by unrest in Ireland, India, and Egypt (Kenny, 110). In this way, these agitations become part of a continuously constitutive “memory” of resistance that remained politically independent in large measure but mutually conditioning of anti-British sentiment and in some cases, providing unintended assistance. Thus, the Connaught rebellion offers an ideal example of the Irish conflict with Empire becoming a catalyst for Indian resistance. This transnational insurrection triggers images (for both Indians and the British) of

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14 Declan Kiberd notes several Indian newspapers not only praised the “patriotic actions” of the Connaught Rangers, but also “contrasted them with the Indian troops who had ‘shot down their innocent countrymen and children at the order of General Dyer” (257). British intelligence suspected Eamon de Valera’s speech to an Indian and Irish Nationalists in New York (referenced in the Introduction) may have influenced the Rangers however; there is no evidence for this.
the Indian mutiny by the Sepoy soldiers forging a continuous cultural “memory” of British oppression against the “native.”

The story of the Connaught Ranger Rebellion offers a perfect example of the strange collusions that inform the syncretic process of constructing cultural memory. The difficulty of codifying or even describing such a process is a daunting task. What I suggest is that Connaught Rangers offer a discrete moment in this process of acculturative memorialization that exemplifies the complex, interactive, and constitutive nature of these events in producing a contiguous cultural memory of imperial oppression that is simultaneously universally “Indian,” uniquely communalized/localized, and internationally conditioned. This particular section has changed many times into its present incarnation. The purpose here is to show how the “Irish situation” enters into the Tamil political consciousness, initially within a small minority of Indian elites (predominantly Brahmin) and eventually, within the entire populace through the medium of drama. In particular, the Theosophical society’s overlap with Indian nationalist politics becomes particularly interesting when examining their influence through print media, political clout, and internationalism of the colonial experience. I begin with a couple questions. First, in what ways do theosophist/nationalist figures such as Annie Besant and James Cousins, condition and constitute the development of nationalist sentiment in the colonial Tamil State? Second, does theosophy inform Tamil nationalist aesthetics in terms of how indigenous symbols are used to create a memory/desire for something “lost” (a lost Tamil antiquity, a lost nation of India, a lost unified Ireland)?

Annie Besant and James Cousins: A Problematic Nationalism

While Annie Besant and James Cousins are best characterized as “problematic” nationalists given their unique position as agents of empire as well as imperial resistance movements, both have significant impact on producing an anticolonial consciousness among middle-class and upper-class Tamilians.  

15 “Home-rule” became an important issue in Imperial politics in the early twentieth century in India and somewhat earlier in Ireland. In a sense, this particular idea suggested that while both India and Ireland would remain as part of the “Dominion” they would be free to form their own constitution, adjudication practices, etc. However, as seen in the development of much more extreme and radical nationalist movements in both India and Ireland, these “concessions” by the British Imperial regime could not placate growing dissatisfaction with British acculturative practice, disinterested and destructive legislative maneuvers, and most notably, use of “blood and treasure” from the colonies to support the war effort (in WWI).
rule” in India, which she borrows from her advocacy for the same in Ireland. She makes a materialist and economic argument for India’s self-rule in her political writings, “Birth of New India” and India, A Nation” using Ireland as a “cautionary tale” to the Empire of what could happen in India without proper action. While Besant’s nationalism is a logical extension of her work on “Home-Rule,” women’s rights and suffrage, and rights of labor in Ireland as well as her theosophical beliefs in the unity of all religions and nations as stemming from the same universal spirit, James Cousins is more interested in creating an aesthetic of internationalism. It is this on this point which most of his work focuses particularly after being fired from New India and taking a teaching post Madanapelle College several hundred miles from Madras. It is here that he continues the prolific career as a poet and writer he began in England several years earlier. Cousins becomes fascinated with a common theme among many theosophists, the possible ethno-racial relationships between the Celtic and Aryan people (Viswanathan, 2004). However, while his poetry and writings on this and other themes of internationalism in aesthetics are discussed marginally in either Irish or Indian compilations of literary works, what he describes as the resistant capacity of aesthetics provides a useful model for examining the way in which nationalist popular theater operates.

Unlike Besant, Cousins’s work suggests that he feared sectarian conflict he witnessed in the Irish fight for “Home-Rule” would derail India’s nationalist efforts and strongly advocated a sort of “transcendental vision of statehood” which would guarantee religious and communal tolerance (Guiness, 78). Cousins’s articles in Besant’s New India on the Easter Rising, his last well-known act of anti-British writing and subsequent firing, provide the unexpected spark to his career as educator, poet, and writer in Southern India. His work in education, for which he is remembered in India, provides the foundation for his theory of aesthetics that suggests “the greatest aesthetic aspired to heal wounds—emotional, psychological, cultural, spiritual—caused by the forces of the modern world—colonialism, war, poverty, ignorance, materialism, unmitigated desire, and human suffering in general” (Cousins, 1925b, 20) In this way, Cousins’s view of the responsibility of the artist differs from other Irish modernist writers whose works often “concentrated on themes concerning loss of traditions and alienation of the masses” (Lennon, 85). Instead, he embraces various “native” cultural practices that he sees as “national, international, and spiritual” and promoted “political responsibility as integral to poetry” and as a means for “cultural decolonization” (Lennon, 85). Several examples of Cousins’s “international”
aesthetic can be seen in his later works in India; In *Footsteps of Freedom* he treats the *aisling* poets in seventeenth and eighteenth century England as forebears for Indian, Irish, and other writers around the world (Lennon, 86). The aesthetics of nationalism Cousins espouses suggests that in Ireland and India, there is a devotional component that must accompany nationalist messaging. In other words, nationalist communication that blends the language of devotion with that of nationalism appeals to a broader audience (Lennon, 86-87). Furthermore, Cousins sees the poet’s role as to “go deeper than nativity” and “find a common cause” which, for Cousins remained “where East and West are one” (Cousins, 1941, 359-360). Thus, Ireland, and India “could serve as cultural lynchpins to unite the fractured world” (Lennon, 87). It is this “fracturing” that most concerns Tamil nationalist poets and playwrights, including Subramanya Bharathi, T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar, and Swaminatha Sarma. While it is unclear whether Sarma had contact with Cousins, he was actively involved and inspired by the activities of the Theosophical Society. Similarly, Bharathi initially finds the work of Sister Nivedita, Annie Besant and Margaret Cousins incredibly important for the betterment of women. While continuing to revere Sister Nivedita, later he lambasts Besant in an allegorical tale that denounces her unwillingness to support a full push for Indian nationalism and Gandhian agitation tactics.

Both Besant and Cousins employ a language of a universal mystical unity, an “Orientalized” vision of oneness that grounds their respective visions of nationalist. For Cousins, the nationalism should be cosmopolitan and not sectarian and he saw aesthetics as an important form of resistance while Besant saw the newspaper as an important mouthpiece for political change. Through her, India initially pursues a strategy of independence within the British Commonwealth. It is this strategy that Besant advocates after 1918 which wanes the last of her political support and leads to her departure from India to pursue “home-rule” for India in England. It should be noted that I am not endorsing Besant’s view that the caste system demonstrates the inherent democratic foundation of Brahmanism or that nationalism should concurrently reflect a Hindu “revivalism.” That said, her infusion of an “Irish-style” resistance to British imperial rule, vocal and active participation in cultivating a nationalist vision that was influential on later writers such Swaminatha Sarma and to some extent, Subramanya Bharathi, as well as her vital role in furthering the colonial Tamil newspaper industry make her a vital cog in the production of a Tamil nationalist consciousness. Interestingly, Besant’s arrest in 1917 for
anti-British activities is the event which inspired Pavalar to leave his job teaching Tamil and join the Indian National Congress and begin writing plays in support of the nationalist movement (Guy, 2009). While Besant sees Indian religion as an expression of this oneness, something that many of her writings on India and Indian consciousness reflect, in my view, inadvertently what she documents is an Indian process of acculturation and inclusion. This process is utilized to rebuff various incursions (religious, political, colonial) through a dynamic cultural renewal that repurposes the new variables along the way as part of a continuing tradition.

Annie Besant becomes a prominent figure in both Irish and Indian politics during the early part of the twentieth century. She is “credited by many commentators with the successful application of Irish methods of political agitation” in the campaigns waged by Indian separatists (Kiberd, 252). This comes through most notably in her application of the term “home-rule” (taken from the Irish context) to the Indian swaraj movement (Mortimer, 63). However, Besant believed that decolonization for India meant emergence as part of federation of nations with Britain at the center (Viswanathan, 2004, 205). Therefore, Besant’s nationalism while influential largely due to widespread circulation of her newspapers amongst the educated elite and members of the Theosophical Society, ultimately was limited her view of the “spiritual maturation” required for India to become completely independent (Guiness, 71). Her calls for a national regeneration based on Āryan roots not only jeopardized her Theosophical claim that “no religion asserts value and the truth of each seeks no converts,” they eventually alienate her nationalist base of support, particularly after her criticism of Gandhi’s second non-cooperation movement initiative in 1920 (Guiness, 71).

During the period between 1913 and 1917, through the mouthpiece of her two popular newspapers, Commonweal and New India, Annie Besant emerges as the dominant voice in nationalist politics in Madras (Mortimer). It during this time she publishes extensively on the how India should resist British control and the economic merits of “Home-Rule” for both India and the Empire. For example in an article entitled “Federation,” (later published as part of collection called Birth of New India) Besant writes about the coming of “Home-rule” to Ireland.

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16 While initially Besant describes “home-rule” in terms of “swaraj,” as the nationalist movement develops along more popular lines, leading to a split between Besant and Gandhi, these two terms come to represent their divergence in position. “Home-rule” advocates for an independent India still under the confines of the British Dominion like Canada, Australia, or New Zealand, while swaraj or “self-rule” champions a position of complete independence from Britain.
and the Ulster resistance as an example of internal and external difficulties in creating “Home-
rule.” She ultimately states that these measures, however unprecedented, “create a situation in
which the problem of Federalism must come to the front, and the ideal of a few ‘dreamers’ shall
enter—more rapidly than had seemed possible—the sphere of practical politics” (Commonweal,
4.17.1914). She refers the ideal of a free India operating within a commonwealth of nations
headed by Britain. She uses this idea as a platform for the economic plea she makes later in the
piece regarding the need for India to have control over indigenous agricultural, political, and
educational enterprises to ensure her continued support for the crown. It is this argument (not so
much the reasoning she gives) the broadly resonates with the developing tenor of the nationalist
movement as the British encroachment on local enterprise becomes an important feature of
Gandhi’s non-cooperation initiative in the 1920s directly coalesces nationalist cause with
economic freedom. She offers a detailed plan for Indian self-government which includes a
pointedly returns control of native industry to villages and local Indian government (“Birth of
New India,” Commonweal, 4.17.1914). She further emphasizes the need for Indians to develop
an independent and indigenous system of government with assistance but not interference from
the British Crown, asking “do we want here a replica of English Self-Government?” Finally, she
uses this notion to show why a more constellated vision of government should operate in India
asking “will the labourer, and the miner, and the docker, and the factory hand, be satisfied to
exchange the Imperial franchise for the local one?” (“Birth of New India,” Commonweal,
4.17.1914). Here, Besant offers a detailed vision of Indian self-government as a necessarily
decentered federation of village councils that would reflect the local and communal concerns of
regions while maintaining the ability to work together to address national and district-wide
issues. Besant viewed such a village-based system of government as much better equipped the
current British system to deal with issues of land reform, education, and caste/class politics.
While Besant is not the first to suggest such a schema, her promotion of this particular paradigm
of using panchayat-s (village councils) in a system of federated ruling bodies becomes
influential in later discussions on Indian self-government.

In these and other writings 1914-1918, Besant promotes not only the idea of “home-rule”
but “theosophical” vision of the equality of all Indians and their rightful place within the Empire.
During WWI, Besant connects these two ideas suggesting that “home-rule” in India makes her a
stronger ally as it promotes a sense of equality and respect and would make indigenous industry
stronger strengthening the Crown as well (Besant, 1915a, 45-47). Here she directly compares India with Ireland suggesting if Ireland were treated as India has been, they would justly rebel. “Does Ireland, in rallying to the Empire, proclaim that in the Penal laws, in the destruction of her manufactures, in the famine-compelled exile of her once-numerous population, in the suspension of the Habeas Corpus, in the hanging of Emmet, in the imprisonment of Davitt, England ruled her well?” From the language, it also clear, she wants to remind England that despite their “greatness” there is “no safety in empire” unless “it be like the throne of Britain ‘broad-based upon the people’s will’” (New India, 10.13.1914). Beyond her deliberate critique of the British Empire’s hubris, she also makes clear the reason her brand of nationalism falls from favor not only with the Non-Brahmin contingent, but also with many of elite followers she cultivates during this period. Her unwillingness to see a path for India’s freedom that did not proceed through the spiritual maturation process she saw as necessary, ultimately make her position untenable as the Gandhian vision overtakes the nationalist movement after the Amritsar Massacre in 1919. Furthermore, her decline in prominence after this period, not only signals the concurrent rise in concern regarding social issues of caste and class, but also the limitations of the reach of the printed press. Priya Joshi’s (1998) discussion of literacy rates in India 1890-1920 highlights a dramatic rise in literacy and the circulation of novels, newspapers, and periodicals in English as well as native Indian languages. However, she also notes that literacy rates still hover below twenty percent in most areas. Thus, proponents of nationalist propaganda had to find a different method to inform the non-reading masses.

Annie Besant’s move of the Theosophical Society’s headquarters from Benares to Adyar in 1907 marks a significant event in the history of the press in the Madras Presidency (Ganesan, 46). While initially restricting her writings and publications to theosophy, passage of the “Home-Rule Act” in Ireland in 1913 sparks her entry into the political realm in India in earnest (Mortimer, 63). At this time she forms an organization called the Brothers of India, with members initially drawn from Theosophical society ranks, with each member pledging allegiance to creed that India’s best interest would be served by freedom under the British crown (Mortimer, 63). The formation of this group coincides with a series of lectures Besant gives in 1913 that are later published as a book Wake Up India! (Mortimer, 64). A year later Besant joins the Indian National Congress and begins producing political and social commentary via her two newspapers and makes her first demand for Home-Rule for India as WWI commences in Europe.
(Mortimer, 65). *The New India* becomes a catalyst in nationalist and anti-British propaganda in the Tamil press, called by some as the “New India Virus” (Ganesan, 47). Thus the Government of Madras took more drastic measures to counter the growing number of both English and Tamil newspapers during this period such as demanding high securities to operate a press, raising the cost of paper, requiring publishing permits, and other financially repressive measures (Ganesan, 47). Through Besant, the pro-Congress views gain traction among many upper and middle class literate Tamils (Ganesan, 48). Additionally, her newspapers’ success become inspiration for Tamil-language newspapers as well as impetus for the competing ideas expressed the Dravidian Press (Aarooran, Ganesan). The Justice Party emerges during this time as an alternative the “home-rule” being proposed by Annie Besant, Congress, and the newly formed Home-Rule league in 1916. Fearing that home-rule” would be synonymous with “Brahmanical Rule,” the Justice party advocated for a more deliberate and slow-moving political process that worked in conjunction with the British administration (Irschick, 1969). The conflict between the Congress Party and Justice Party finds expression in the warring newspaper editorials of pro-Congress papers such as *New India, The Hindu, Indian Mail*, *Commonweal* and pro-Justice papers such the *British run Madras Mail, Wednesday Review, The Justice, and The Dravidian* (Ganesan, 49). Several Tamil newspapers such as *Desabhaktan, Swadesamitram*, and *Naradan* carried Home-Rule propaganda as well as articles on caste and social issues (Ganesan, 49). Thus, Annie Besant’s foray into the publishing world not only instigates vigorous discourse and debate; it also helps promote the newspaper a viable public forum for the discussion of social and political issues for the literate public.

Thus, while figures like Besant and Cousins initially spread the message of nationalism, the racial “fracturing” Cousins feared, becomes a reality as a result of the “Brahmanical” tenor of the nationalist movement until the formation of the Justice Party in 1916. “Not only was the political arena between the 1900s and 1920s an elite arena, but the style of politics largely consisted of petitioning the British government” (Barnett, 21). Barnett further argues that the initial limitation of popularity of the nationalist movement in the colonial Tamil state to Brahmin elites catalyzes the development of Tamil-language newspapers and other Non-Brahmin and “Depressed Classes” organizations that begin advocating for separate representation in the Indian National Congress (21-22). This idea is not popular with the pro-Home-Rule movement in colonial Tamil Nadu who saw this type of factionalism as detrimental to the cause of
nationalism. The Justice Party members conversely saw Besant and her form of nationalism as a front for Brahmin hegemony (Barnett). In effect, the Tamil “Protest” poets as part of a “colonized culture”, as Cousins predicts in *The Aesthetical Necessity of Life*, realize the “beneficent revolutionary potencies inherent” in performance, literature, and art (1944). Furthermore, like Cousins, using nationalist literature to posit the moral economy of the “nation” as paramount and the locus around which cultural nationalisms and communal/sectarian concerns should be constellated. In this context, it is also interesting that both James Cousins and Annie Besant engage in similar efforts to reconstruct a mythologized image of a storied, ancient tradition that needed to be revived and protected while disagreeing on how this should happen via the nationalist movement in both India and Ireland.\(^\text{17}\) The decision to include a discussion of Annie Besant in thinking about the development of nationalist aspiration in the colonial Tamil state is a necessary, but problematic one. While Besant is clearly invested stoking a feeling of national pride in the India citizenry, she does so by reifying hegemonic cultural structures (i.e. the supremacy of the Brahmanical culture, religion, caste, etc.) by recreating (like many Hindu revivalist movements during this period) a mythologized, “lost” India that must be “found” and nurtured by the British Raj in order for India to be a good friend of the empire. However, that aside, the concern of this project is Besant’s use of the burgeoning Tamil periodical and newspaper industry which becomes a vital cog in fostering anti-British sentiment by not only reporting atrocities and issues within India, but also events of unrest in other parts of the British Empire. Therefore, through these Irish “conversants” the brutality and violence of the Easter Rebellion, not only prolific in its effects on the Irish national movement, becomes a part of the anticolonial consciousness of India as a whole. For instance, in the Madras Presidency, James Cousins’s 1916 news article in Besant’s newspaper, *Commonweal* on the Easter Rising recreates this massacre as salient and relevant to the Tamil situation. Despite his subsequent firing, other articles regarding skirmishes between Britain and “the colonies” appear in newspapers across India.\(^\text{18}\) Thus, the Easter Rebellion becomes recast through the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre in

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\(^{17}\) Gauri Viswanathan notes James Cousins’s preoccupation with the Indian mythos and spiritual worldview in creating his aesthetic and political visions (2004).

\(^{18}\) While it has been difficult to procure some of these newspapers to make a more substantial case for this, Ganesan’s work on Tamil print media during the anticolonial period mentions that several newspapers in both Tamil and English began covering pan-Indian and international events within and outside of the Empire, initially imitating British-run newspapers, and later with the advent of nationalism, independently and critically reporting these events of unrest. These events include: the Connaught rebellion in the Punjab region in 1914, the Easter Rising in Ireland in
1919 in India as part of a continuing tradition of British oppression broadening the imaginative base of Indian cultural memory. More specifically, local and intra-national cultural memory becomes internationally conditioned through these acts of resistance.

III. Tamil “Protest” Plays: Aesthetic Remembering as a Syncretic Process

Introduction

Unlike in the Bengal Presidency where nationalist plays by Tagore and others circulate actively several years earlier, in South India, the politicization of drama occurs more slowly, gaining momentum only after the events of 1919. Initially, the revival of popular drama draws apathy from much of the Tamil polity who also remained leery of supporting non-cooperation efforts and anticolonial rhetoric. Annie Besant’s active political efforts play an important role in convincing large portions of emerging Madras City middle class of the merits of “home-rule.” Between 1905 and 1915 these efforts become more effective with increased literacy efforts and the growing circulation of newspapers, chapbooks, periodicals, novels, dramas, songs, and nationalist and anticolonial literary productions that espoused similar sentiments. Besant’s efforts in education, nationalism, and social reform retained an elitist and Brahmanical vision of India which both spurs the once apathetic elite to invest in the nationalist project, while stymieing her influence with the non-Brahmin Tamil communities. Interestingly, her overt “Aryanization” of the nationalist project and valorization of Brahmins in her two newspapers *New India* and *Commonweal* sparks the production of several indigenous Tamil-language newspapers and literary magazines such as *Swadesamitram*, *The Dravidian*, and *Justice*.

As an earlier supporter of nationalist art, S. Satyamurthy, a Brahmin and amateur actor sees performance as an important vehicle of social and political education. Believing theatrical propaganda crucial to the nationalist cause, he convinced several actors and playwrights to provide support for a non-violent demonstration in Madras city in 1921 (Baskaran, 29). The banning of political drama in the Chidambaram district coupled with Satyamurthy’s repeated appeals to the Indian Congress leads to growing support and respect for the popular theater movement. However, Satyamurthy and other Brahmin “elites” who initially become active in

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1916, the Jallianwallah Bagh (Amritsar) massacre in 1919, and later the execution of Bhagat Singh in 1930 and Gandhi’s salt march in 1931 as well as dozens of other incidents from within the Tamil region and other imperial spaces embroiled in colonial tensions including Egypt, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and South Africa. I suggest these incidents become a part of continuing tradition of cultural “memory” production that informs the political consciousness of the Tamil polity thereby making the process of *smaral/marapu* a syncretic and international one.
nationalist efforts, garnered little support from non-Brahmin groups wary of Besant’s “Home-rule” push suspecting it was a ploy to continue Brahmin hegemony (Irschick, 1969, 49). Furthermore, while it is clear the Annie Besant’s efforts in cultivating a “nationalist consciousness” in the Tamil colonial state is initially somewhat successful; her unwillingness to fully support Gandhi’s non-cooperation movement leads to her exit from Indian politics (Irschick, 1969). Thus, while Besant, Cousins and the other Theosophists who actively fought for “Home-rule” and reforms before 1920 decline in popularity, the growing Non-Brahmin social reform movements produce several rifts in the Tamil nationalist vision. Their concerns gain traction through various newly founded political organizations to voice, in particular, Non-Brahmin issues (e.g. the founding of the Justice Party in 1917 and the Self-Respect movement in 1926). The varying goals of these sociopolitical factions fracture the nationalist cause and necessitate a new vehicle for communicating nationalist messages that circumvents these divisions. It is these “rifts” which are addressed by the Tamil “Protest” Theater. By producing a unifying vision of nation that recasts patriotism as moral imperative that subsumes all other “difference;” Tamil “Protest” playwrights actively promote the notion that local and communal interests are served, ultimately, by a commitment to freeing India from British rule.

**Popular Songs and Nationalist Sentiment**

Many of these plays produced in the early part of the twentieth century urban center of Madras exemplify distinctive performative elements from the Tamil folk, devotional, and classical dance-drama-music traditions while also incorporating English modes of stagecraft. Use of the villu pāṭṭu (bow-song), which is a musical rendition of a story about a particular well-known figure or god in popular drama, the folk tunes that often provided the inspiration for Bharathi’s songs, and the chapbook publication method broadening distribution of popular songs, plays, novels, etc. each demonstrate the unique aesthetic and thematic “dialogues” taking place in the Tamil literary milieu. Three central characteristics of these plays are the use of songs, the depiction of social reform, and the use of allegorical and directly political themes (Baskaran). The use of song and allegory provide important methods for these nationalist playwrights to convey anticolonial messages while avoiding censorship. For example, in T.P.
Krishnaswamy Pavalar’s *Kaṭṭar Pakti*, the second scene in Act II opens with Kamatci singing a Bharathi nationalist song while spinning *khaddar*:

> Spin the wheel of Rāṭṭinam (weaving tool), hunger runs away! Hail the country’s flag so high, flutter on its way! Bhārata’s Valor, Valor, Valor we show! Slaver slaver slaver let him run in a row/ Codes of Gandhi in which beauty abides, words of Gandhi where magic resides. Vante Mātaram! Allah Akbar! Mahatma Gandhi Jai! (Act II, Scene 2)\(^{19}\) (trans. T. Baskaran)

Here, the consonance between Pavalar and Bharathi’s nationalist views becomes clear. This song encapsulates each of the primary themes of “Indianist” nationalist discourse: Gandhi, *khaddar*, and the need for unity despite sectarian, communal, and linguistic division for the promotion of social and political goals. Bharathi reconstellates varying intra-cultural discourses of religion and class as secondary to the economy of nationalism. Using the emotional tenor of brotherhood and the moral economy of community as a basis, these songs form the emotional backbone of popular drama. It is in the songs that the nationalist message persist and disseminate as seen in by the vast amount of proscription activities directed towards the *gītāṅkals* (songbooks) (Venkatachalapathy, 2012). These songs presented the first step to informing the illiterate and uneducated public about the nationalist cause as they were catchy tunes, easily memorized, no longer requiring the paper publication or dramatic performance to circulate. Eventually, well-known dramatists and theatre companies hired singers and included patriotic songs in their productions. Often, these songs would serve like a chorus in epic theatre recounting some of the action in the play. This is likely drawn from Tamil folk traditions such as *terukkūtu* that utilize a chorus in the position of a dialogic “other” to the performer(s) and spectator, often filling a comic or educational role (Frasca, 1990). Most importantly, the words and music were easily learned and difficult to ban as often both the words and music transmitted orally and memorized, breaking down the barrier of illiteracy and nullifying proscription efforts.

\(^{19}\) rāṭṭinattai cur̠ r̠ i paci oṭṭuvōmē-cuya
rājya koṭiyai nilai nāṭuvōmē
nāṭṭinip pārata vīram kāṭṭuvōmē
nāvil nammatimait taṇjam oṭṭuvōmē
ejlāru mahātmā kānti
iyampiya yantira mētti
vante mātaram allāhu akpar
mahātmā kāntikkku je je en ēru-rāṭ (38).
Here, the Tamil bardic tradition as well as the pan-Indian culture of orality, undermines Imperial efforts to combat the nationalist movement by banning various media and literature.

Popular music provides an important link between a variety of aesthetic and performance modalities. In “commercial” drama, “the story was merely a series of excuses for introducing a song” (Baskaran, 30). Drama companies employed song-writers conversant with both classical and folk music traditions to compose songs on well-known themes and stories according to the tastes of their audience (Baskaran, 30). The vātiyār (leader of the drama troupe) provided “guidance” in terms of these songs should reflect relevant themes and reactions to social and political events of the day. Before the seminal event of the Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre in 1919, it is the songs, rather than the dramas themselves, that primarily spread anti-British rhetoric (Baskaran, Hughes). In this context, Subramanya Bharathi’s patriotic songs become some of the most popular and continue to be used in the later political popular dramas. His translation of Bankim Chatterjee’s song “Vande Mātaram” becomes a popular mantra at political agitations (Roy). Later prominent song-writers such as S.S. Viswanathan Das, Bhumi Balagadas, and Madurakavi Baskara Das become defacto news sources for rebellion against the Empire. Examples include songs about the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, the Irish Easter Rising, the situation of Indians in South Africa, etc. In the following song, S.S. Viswanathan Das compares the South African Indian appeal to Gandhi to social issues in India:

Like untouchables,
We have been living afar—
since your arrival, we are courageous
So please listen to our plea (trans. Baskaran, 31)

Here, the language of the song not only relates India’s struggles with other colonial rebellions, but also compares the specific situation of the South African Indians with that of the “untouchables,” (a marginalized group referring to those not included within the four Hindu castes) in India. As this particular issue had become explosive in South India, partly resulting from Annie Besant and Theosophical Society’s Hindu “revivalist” nationalist rhetoric, this song represents a shift in nationalist politics to construct an image of India that is simultaneously universal, particular, and “singular” or local. Similar rhetoric can be seen in the nationalist songs of Bharathi which often end with praise to Allah, Pārata Mātā, and Tamilūṭṭāy.

While the publication of songbooks and in some cases, their adoption in educational curriculums represents one aspect of the popular music movement, the lack of literacy, the
growing expense of paper, and the transition from the patronage tradition to commercial mode of support for the publication of performance of literary art mitigates the reach of these songbooks until the advent of the chapbook publishing industry (Venkatachalamapathy, 2012). This “commercialization” becomes particularly apparent in the proliferation of popular drama companies by the 1920s as well the independent success of pin pāṭṭu artists via the gramophone recording industry (Hughes, 7). Pin pāṭṭu (back-stage singers) musicians emerge as the “backbone of the stage performance” while also becoming the important vehicle through nationalist songs could be widely disseminated (Baskaran, 32). In addition, many of these artists come from backgrounds in other performance traditions, including prominent pin pāṭṭu artists K.B. Sundarambal who hails from a devadāsī family and her husband, S.G. Kittapa, a classically trained singer, who both bring their classical training to the popular stage (Hughes). Furthermore, the commercialization of popular songs and the cheapening of publication through “chapbooks” expand the reach of nationalist rhetoric in popular dramas beyond the stage to a broader audience. Hughes traces the development of popular drama music in the early twentieth century from the Parsi-style productions that “innovated a new operatic style of performance” and provide a portable style of theatrical activity that models “the connective tissue of images, tastes, and values that underlie the success of Indian mass media in the twentieth century” (Hughes, 6). This “connective tissue” represents the syncretic and hybrid nature of the Parsi drama not only in themes and staging but also in language and musical styles. Additionally, similar to Lakshmi Subramanian’s assessment of the social history of Tamil music, T.K. Venkatasubramanian has argued, music in the Tamil modernity develops via a variety of trajectories imbricated with cultural concerns of social and aesthetic identity and concurrently defined within larger agendas of “tying music and dance to paradigms of social and political reform” (119). In this way, the genre of “patriotic songs” becomes a marker of socio-political identity as well as an important method for associating “the land of one’s birth with divinity” (Venkatasubramanian, 120). Furthermore, the music in popular musical dramas in the early twentieth century Tamil colonial state is a “locally adapted mix of Karnatic music, Hindustani raga-s, Parsi drama music, and Maharashtrian bhavgeet influences [combining] to create a cosmopolitan, uncomplicated, and accessible music” indicating the confluence of the variety of aesthetic trajectories in Tamil popular literary and music production (Hughes, 7). Thus, popular songs function as an aesthetic
lynchpin between the myriad of literary and performance traditions that stratifying Tamil society in helping to create an emotional connection to a unified vision of nation.

The Beginning of “Protest” Theater in the Tamil Colonial State

As songs became popular, nationalist revolutionaries saw the value of extending their message beyond legitimate drama (codified by Pammal Sambandam Mudaliyar) into the popular realm. Kasi Viswanatha Mudaliyar is an important pioneer in connecting these two types of theater by taking the more acting-oriented, regimented “legitimate” dramas and inserting political propaganda through songs (Baskaran). Initially, these plays are concerned with reforming social values and attitudes, and only later become wholly political. Here, the prominent role of sensationalism and spectacle in the melodramatic tradition is revisited in Tamil “Protest” theater. Many playwrights insert political comments and nationalistic symbols in mythologicals or plays based on the historical figures such Hyder Ali or Raja Desingu. By using stock characters representing abstract principles of “good” and “evil,” these plays sought to dramatize India’s current situation through cultural metaphor and symbols. *Ali Badusha*, a popular play in this genre, includes one scene in which a king discusses the natural resources of India and wonders why the country remains impoverished. He determines the country’s troubles stem from alien rule. Each of the three actors involved in the production wore red, white, or green and at various moments throughout the play, would display the Indian Congress flag (Baskaran 25-6).

The first protest plays following the Non-Compliance movement went unchecked as the Dramatic Performances Act, enacted in 1876 primarily for insurgency in the North, had not been implemented in the South. This Act required all dramatic performances to have a permit saying the government had approved the material. The first play of this type, *Pañcāla Parabhāvamu (The Glory of Pañcālī)*, written by Dr. Pundarikakshudu in 1920, depicts the events that followed the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre. One scene depicts Mother India asking Gandhi to “devise some means for the emancipation from servitude of the thirty-three crores of your brothers here” (Baskaran, 27). In another scene, a woman whose hands and feet are bound by O’Dwyer and Johnson (the two British government officials in charge during the massacre) symbolizes the
state of Punjab. Intended to explain the satyagraha movement (a non-violence campaign advocating self-rule initiated by Gandhi), the play concludes with a scene depicting Nehru, Gandhi, and the other members of the Amritsar Congress. Thus, activist dramas become the driving force in spreading information for agitations against the British such as the Salt March led by Gandhi in 1931. The British government grew agitated over the increasing popularity of this type of popular “documentary” drama. At one performance, a British police officer commented, “...The drama impressed very well on the audience and in my humble opinion even several Non-cooperative meetings could not impress so well” (Baskaran, 27). Other similar reactions from other British officers convince the government to declare the play seditious and ban it.

As several more plays suffer the same fate, playwrights extend and expand their creativity in script-writing as well as staging to avoid proscription with veiled character references and indigenous symbols. For example, in Sarma’s Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ, Sutharmai’s chastity is compared with that of “Sītādevī” by a guard holding her captive in the enemy king’s prison. This reference provides reference for Sutharmai’s character within the play while also evoking the story of Rāma and superimposing those characters onto the dramatic situation. The Athiratha king becomes “Rāvaṇa,” Puresan, Sutharmai’s husband and hero of the story becomes “Rāma,” and the positive outcome not only represents Puresan’s triumph over tyranny, but it also the victory of dharma (duty) over sin. Several plays began incorporating English melodramatic style given the popularity of Victorian melodramatic fiction (Joshi (1998); Venkatatalapathy (2012). The use of khaddar (home-spun cloth) in Pavalar’s play Kaṭṭarin Vērī (Triumph of Khaddar), Gandhi’s cap, the charka (spinning wheel) and other symbols of resistance appear regularly as subversive anticolonial messaging tools intended to stoke feelings of patriotism in the audience. The Bhagat Singh execution generated a subject for several plays in the 1930s including Sarma’s Tecapakti (1931). Manipulating culturally relevant symbols, staging of sensational events such as hangings and executions, and casting idealized characters such as the “virtuous” Indian people versus the “wicked” British government these playwrights utilize an “Indianized/Tamilized” melodramatic dramaturgical framework.

Aesthetics as Resistance in Tamil “Protest” Plays

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T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar, Swaminatha Sarma, Sankaradas Swamigal and other popular playwrights in the early part of the twentieth century significantly influence the aesthetics, themes, stagecraft, and performance of what Baskaran terms “company drama” or drama that was performed by traveling troupes of actors. Subramanya Bharathi also provides an important link between so-called “elite” Tamil literary enterprise and the popular mass culture. While figures like Bharathi did not always vocally support the aesthetic tenor of the popular modes of production, it is clear that his popularity and canonization is rooted in the widespread dissemination of his nationalist songs and poetry through the medium of popular drama.

Bharathi’s primary concern regarding the accessibility and communicability of Tamil solidifies his legacy as the inventor of a simple poetics in Tamil. “He managed to convey everyday thoughts, political messages, children’s rhymes, and romantic sentiments in language that was accessible to the man of ordinary education, yet also pleased the literati” (Baker, 15). As Christopher Baker argues in his introduction to Baskaran’s work, few had the talents of Bharathi and were able to navigate this particular aesthetic pitfall so artfully. However, by the 1920’s the interest in the Tamil language diverges with academics on one side and politically-minded individuals on the other. It is this environment that the later Tamil “Protest” playwrights, Pavalar and Sarma, emerge as important links between these two disparate groups, with goal of “us[ing] language and performance to spread a political message to a wider audience, particularly to that immense audience that lived outside the cities and out of the reach of literature and culture” (Baker, 17).

Thus, popular music and drama tradition in South India, constituted by a variety of aesthetic, dramatic, and musical trajectories and transactions, operates as an amalgam of indigenous and non-indigenous stagecraft, aesthetics, and themes. More specifically, as Bruce Kapferer and Angela Hobart point out, the appreciation of aesthetics and the concept of “beauty” results from “historical, cultural, social, and political processes” especially, in the case of “nationalist representations and art” (7). Immanent in the compositional symbolic dynamic of aesthetic construction is how human beings imagine and form their existential circumstances to themselves and to others” (Kapferer and Hobart, 7). It is this “symbolic composition dynamic” that permits Tamil protest plays to negotiate these various political, social, and aesthetic discourses through smaralmarapu. Saskia Kersenboom’s description of this “remembering” process is instructive. Smaralmarapu operates as a “cluster of possible meanings, objects, and
physical realities [that] point in the direction of memory as a key to experience that unlocks by sensory activation” (1995, 73). In this way, it “broadens the content of memory far beyond information into the realm of imagination” (Kersenboom, 73). She posits the eight rasa-s of Bharata as “cognitive base” that organize the “structures of experience” into digestible and accessible categories of meaning. In this way, “structure, process, and contextual data flow together and transcend both verbal and nonverbal communication” (Kersenboom, 73). In this sense, meaning also becomes more than information, it develops an emotional content in the performative context. This emotional link fostered through the performative moment operates through “a free selection of memory” creating “a theory of the world” that allows these “past experiences” to make sense (Kersenboom, 74). In Tamil “Protest” Drama this process operates syncretically to evoke a range of memory trajectories both intra-cultural and extra-cultural within the spectator that inform the process of identification with dramatic symbols. Thus, the cultural memory of the audience becomes a dynamic world of memory “signified-s” harnessed together into particular narratives of meaning through the medium of performance.

Demonstrating the heterogeneity and variety that characterizes the “popular” realm of performance in the early twentieth century Tamil colonial state, Sankaradas Swamigal also can be seen as an innovator in bringing the folk performance modality of terukkūttu to the proscenium stage and nationalizing it. Removing the component of āveśam (possession) through this decontextualization from the ritual and devotional traditions in which terukkūttu is performed, Swamigal creates a new modern Tamil popular mode of performance that provides the foundation for the “special drama” or the organization of performance and performers commemorating or celebrating a particular event, gathering, etc. Special Drama develops “in the interstices between the traveling British and Parsi troupes of the nineteenth century and the myriad large Tamil drama companies that came to dominate the Tamil Stage in the first decades of the twentieth century (Seizer, 47). As these drama companies become training grounds for actors (both adult and boys), many would develop a full acting repertory and “freelance” their services to drama troupes as needed, thus spawning “special drama” (Seizer, 47-8). In this way, the development of “special drama” complicates “the straight line of a predetermined rise from rural to urban that has characterized the historiographic narrative of the modernization of Indian theater” and instead, operates as a “back and forth between ‘modern’ and ‘the folk’” (Seizer, 49).
Continuing in this trend of aesthetic innovation, T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar, who joins Mudaliyar’s Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā around the time of its founding in 1893, leaves shortly afterward to begin producing popular nationalist drama. Though it is clear that Pavalar respected Mudaliyar’s knowledge and experience, he eventually felt compelled to leave the Sabhā to pursue what he viewed as the necessary action for the times. While Mudaliyar was interested in using drama and his dramatic organization to combat social issues such as child labor, child marriage, prostitution, class discrimination, etc., his primary goal was the revival of a cultured and modern Tamil drama. Furthermore, as many of the Sabhā’s patrons included British dignitaries, wealthy middle-class Indians, and local British ruling elements, Mudaliyar was not interested in political critique that would jeopardize their patronage (Baskaran). It is this lack of desire to speak out against British atrocities such as the Salt tax or the foreign cloth issue or more heinous occurrences such as the Amritsar Massacre coupled with the impressive efforts of Annie Besant and other proponents of “home-rule” that compel T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar, K. Mudaliyar, Swaminatha Sarma, and others to leave the Sabhā and begin producing anticolonial dramas invested in spurring the polity into resistance against British occupation. Pavalar’s work in particular demonstrates an amalgamation of various dramatic and aesthetic styles. As seen in Swamigal’s work as well, melodramatic-style character development and stagecraft mix liberally with indigenous folk-language, customs, and idioms; and pan-Indian traditional cultural symbols and signposts. The syncretic aesthetic of Tamil “Protest” plays incorporates melodramatic dramaturgical tropes and Tamil folk ballads/tunes in patriotic songs, into the three-hour structured modern drama Mudaliyar perfects. However, unlike Mudaliyar, Pavalar and Swamigal see the value in the use of songs in his work, particularly as they move into producing only anticolonial plays. In addition, Pavalar did not limit his plays to urban theater settings and instead, through his own drama troupe (Bala Manohara Sabha) as well as that of the TKS Brothers, his plays were performed across the Tamil region as well as in England marking the only Tamil popular artist to perform at the British Imperial Fair in 1924 (Guy, 2009). Further, the focus on the aesthetic pleasure of the audience member which continues despite the formalization of dramatic style ushered in by Mudaliyar, harnesses these aesthetic traditions into a unique dramatic form ideally suited for delivering the message of nationalism. In this way,

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20 There is a dedication to Mudaliyar that opens Pavalar’s play _Vijayavilocaṇai_, a love story, in which he describes him as an amazing teacher and friend to the field of drama and to actors.
Tamil modern drama fathered by Mudaliyar becomes a platform for political persuasion when expanded and molded to fit within the popular realm by Pavalar, Sarma, and others.

Ultimately motivated to join the nationalist movement by the jailing of Annie Besant in 1916, Pavalar left his job as a Tamil instructor and joins the Indian National Congress. Like many other nationalists writers such as Subramanya Bharathi, V.V.S. Aiyer, and Suthananda Bharathi, T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar viewed media as the most viable method of information dissemination. Thus, he enters into the foray of nationalist propaganda by attempting to start a daily newspaper, *Inṟaya Camācāram* (Today’s News). This failure of this periodical highlights the low literacy rates during this period, despite vast improvements in this area from 1890 to 1920\(^1\) while also precipitating Pavalar’s move into writing and staging plays. T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar’s most influential play is probably *Kaṭṭar Pakti* (Victory to Khaddar). Pavalar was interested in not only promoting the values of freedom and independence but he was, like Mudaliyar as well as Subramanya Bharathi, interested in promoting social/caste equality, women’s rights, and human rights’ issues. Pavalar, like Bharathi, promoted a uniquely “Tamil” nationalist identity that ensconced the fight for human rights and caste inequalities within the pan-Indian struggle for freedom from British colonial rule. *Kaṭṭar Pakti* borrows several narrative elements from *Kaṭṭarin Ver̠r̠i*, which is an example of common tactic employed by playwrights in order avoid censorship. Interestingly, Pavalar was asked to take part in the India exhibit in the British Imperial Fair in Wembley Auditorium in 1924. While in London performing *Kaṭṭarin Ver̠r̠i* for a British audience, the same play, performed by Madurai Original Boys Company run by S.M. Sachidhanandhan Pillai, is banned in Madras and Madurai (Baskaran; Guy, 2009). Pavalar maintained numerous connections with high-ranking British officials including a strong friendship with the then Governor of Madras Presidency, Lord Willingdon, through which he persuades authorities to rescind the ban on his work (Guy). Baskaran suggests that the Indian Congress also assists in this process (28).

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\(^{1}\) Nambi Aarooran discusses the “spurt in [Tamil] literary activities” 1905-1920 that coincides with the development of a Dravidian nationalism. The table Aarooran provides suggests that by 1920, the Tamil language periodicals and newspapers and the publication of books has increased considerably from 1900. However, even with these vast improvements, the literacy rates remained under twenty percent in most regions (70-71). Of course, these rates also vary according to various districts as well as segments of the population. Aarooran notes that this Tamil literary and linguistic revival evolves indirectly as a response to Annie Besant and Theosophical Society’s “Hindu revivalism” (71).
The popularity of Pavalar’s plays (being adopted and performed by several traveling troupes) leads to the Government of Madras to reconsider proscription of his work as “a dubious decision” (Guy, 2009). While it is quite clear that Pavalar was a prolific playwright, the advent of cinema seems to have obscured his contribution to Tamil literary development as well as the nationalist movement. Thus far, I have only been able to locate copies of a handful of his works. His well-known nationalist plays include Teciya Koṭi (The National Flag), Pati Pakti (Devotion to the Husband), Bombay Mail, Tecǐṅku Rājan (Story of Raja Desingu), Kaṭṭarin̠  Ver̠ r̠ i (Victory of Khaddar) and Kaṭṭar Pakti (Devotion to Khaddar). The growth and development of popular musical dramas, particularly in the nationalist context, coincides with mushrooming of popular theater companies as well the commercialization of trained stage artists and singers that emerge from companies such as the “boys company” as “independent contractors” or freelance artists that comprise the world of “Special Drama” (Seizer, 56). With the introduction of copyright protections by the British as another way to control the publishing industry through the 1910 Press Act, plays could be licensed to various theater companies. As a result, the nationalist drama movement receives a commercial boost as nationalist plays reach nearly all parts of the Madras Presidency, staged by multiple traveling theater companies in different districts at the same time including notably the TKS Brothers as well as Pavalar’s theater group (Gomathinayagam, 49).

Like Pavalar, another Tamil “Protest” playwright, V. Swaminatha Sarma, also begins his career as a nationalist and political activist in the realm of journalism writing extensively for the journal Navaśakti before entering the literary milieu and first publishing Pāṇapuratu Vīrany here in 1921. In a recent article on Tamil translators and their prolific influence on the world of Tamil literature from the turn of the century into the present, the author notes the prominent role Swaminatha Sarma plays in this particular field.

Those who are in their eighties now would know that they literally grew up with V. Swaminatha Sarma's works that brought the world to them and inspired patriotic feelings. He translated classics like Plato's Republic, Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War and Rousseau's The Social Contract, among others. He had none of the comforts of modern technology and financial help that today's translator gets in a big way. Even when Rangoon was being bombarded by Japanese forces and when he trudged on foot the long distance from Burma (now Myanmar) to India as a refugee, Plato kept him company. Such was his deep involvement in his chosen work. (The Hindu, 4.19.11)
In spite of the author’s words, it is clear that even “people in their eighties” barely remember Swaminatha Sarma today. Maybe it is because of his exile to Burma and the many years he spends away from Madras. Swaminatha Sarma faces a similar situation to Pavalar with his play _Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ_ (The Hero of Bāṇapura) which is banned in 1924 and then later restaged as _Tēcapakīti_, (Devotion to the Nation) in 1931. The narrative follows the hero Puresan who tries to free his country from the rule of a tyrannical king and eventually does so in battle. He also is motivated to avenge the execution of his friend, Valisan, with whom the play opens, giving a monologue asking how loving one’s country could be wrong. Eventually, Sarma was forced to flee British India to Burma (Myanmar) to avoid capture in 1921. His exile to Burma 1921-1938, during the most active moments of the popular drama craze in the Tamil colonial state, likely accounts for why he is not remembered widely as a prominent figure from this period. However, his play, _Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ_ restaged as _Tēcapakīti_, becomes incredibly popular shortly after Gandhi’s Salt March in 1931. During his exile, he also travels to Pondicherry and likely meets with other exiled nationalists such V.V.S. Aiyer and Aurobindo who had each come there to avoid continued harassment by the British CID (Criminal Investigation Department). In 1908, Bharathi and Aiyer flee to the French colony hearing that they were about to be arrested by the Government of Madras for publishing proscribed and seditious material and suspected involvement in the antigovernment activities. Having already seen the harsh sentence imposed on their comrade V.O. Chidambaram in the Tinnevelly Sedition Case, they decided to escape to Pondicherry and continue their resistance. While Bharathi returns to Madras in 1918, Aiyer remains in Pondicherry until 1922.

Despite Sarma’s prolific work as poet, journalist, and translator, only his work on Gandhian philosophy is widely available. His plays have all but disappeared after the advent of independence, even though, as Baskaran notes in a 1975 interview with him, Sarma’s writing career continues until his death. In addition, like Bharathi, he is influenced significantly by the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley and the other Romantics calling Shelley more than a “visionary,” but a model for creating the political self through aesthetic enterprise (Sarma, 25). Furthermore, in his work on Gandhian philosophy, we see a rich collection of Western (Plato, Shelley) and Indian philosophies and literatures (_Bhagavadgītā, Upaniṣads_, teaching of Yājñavālkya, etc.) intertwined with Gandhian ideals, similar to the eclectic amalgam of metaphysical language and heroism present in his retelling of the story of Robert the Bruce. Sarma represents the
quintessential intellectual elite in colonial Madras in the early twentieth century being a middle-
class Brahmin with an education in English, Sanskrit, and Tamil to which he later adds French
(Guy, 2009). However, like Pavalar and Bharathi despite seeing the importance of reforming the
literary production and reconstructing a Tamil canon of literature, he believed that the freedom
of the Tamil people first from the oppression of the British and then from the strictures of Vedic
religion was paramount (Sarma, 26) His view on caste is heavily influenced by Gandhi as he
moves away from the early influence of the Theosophical society into the universal Hinduism
espoused by Swami Vivekananda, much like Bharathi (Perumal).

The final portion of this chapter analyzes a few sections from T.P. Krishnaswamy
Pavalar’s Kaṭṭar Pakti and V. Swaminatha Sarma’s Pāṇapuratu Vīray to demonstrate how
characters and symbols become conduits of nationalist sentiment that cultivate feelings of
patriotism in the audience by producing a dramatized image of the nation. In each play, the
narrative can be divided into three parts: oppression, “transgression,” and redemption/freedom.
In Kaṭṭar Pakti, the first two Acts encompass the “oppression” stage in which the hero identifies
the moorings of Empire in society. Govindan directs a constant mantra of wearing only khaddar
towards Kamatci and her father, Diwan Bahadur Ramasamy in order to highlighting the ills of
the country which he attributes to the British oppression of the Indian economic enterprise and
critique those who accept titles and wealth from the British without considering the
consequences. In Pāṇapuratu Vīray, the conversations between Puresan and his friend
Naganathan in the first two Acts depict the full extent of the oppressive behavior of the Athiratha
King, as well as how the complicity of Bāṇapura residents seeking wealth only furthers this
agenda. The “transgression” stage is the immoral application of the colonial power. The
imprisoning Govindan at the end of Act II in Kaṭṭar Pakti and the kidnapping of Puresan’s
family in Act III in Pāṇapuratu Vīray can be seen analogous acts of “transgression.” In both
cases, the hero or hero’s loved ones are accused of “transgression” deceitfully. In this way, the
“transgression” while advancing the dramatic narrative and creating narrative tension, also
becomes a symbol of the false “imprisonment” of India by the British. The final acts in both
plays represent the redemption/freedom stage in which the hero’s success and freedom coincides
with the freedom of the nation. Kaṭṭar Pakti culminates in the khaddar-infused marriage of
Govindan and Kamatci that concludes with the crowd’s jubilant chants of “Vante Mātaram”
(Praise Mother India) learning that Gandhi’s Salt March has led to talks with the Viceroy.
Similarly, the final scene of *Pāṇapuratu Vīraṅ* shows the townspeople celebrating the successful return of Puresan and the freedom of their country. The use of these meta-dramatic scenes in which the hero addresses a raucous, nationalist crowd, completes the identification of the spectator with the hero. Here, the spectator becomes the recipient of the hero’s direct message of nationalism, which functions as a call to action. Like the citizens of Bāṇapura or the guests at Govindan and Kamatci’s wedding, the spectator is given the blueprint for how the new nation should be constructed. In this sense, like the “heir” in Kālidāsa’s plays that signals the new beginning and resolution of tension, here the dramatically “imaged” nation enjoins the spectator as caretaker/citizen now responsible for its future. Throughout both of these plays, despite the differences in style and theme, the playwrights cast immoral behavior as a result of the colonial incursion, “curable” only through commitment to nationalism in order to create a moral and political image of “India” that transects caste, class, and gender boundaries. Thus, the hero’s “loss” of and “desire” for freedom is filtered through the spectator’s meta-cultural/meta-narrative aesthetic “lens” constituted by an amalgam of British colonial oppression filtered through discrete events of rebellion throughout the empire such as the Amritsar massacre and the Easter Rising, competing discourses of gender, caste, class, morality, religion, etc., and the dynamic Tamil literary modernity that results from these complex interactions, transactions, and collusions taking place before and during the colonial encounter. And, in this way, this “loss” and “desire” for a free “India,” dramatically “imaged” through the various instances of “patriotic dharma” in both plays, manifests as patriotic sentiment in the spectator for this “imagined” India.

**T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar’s *Kāṭṭar Pakti (Devotion to Khaddar)*\(^22\)**

In *Kāṭṭar Pakti* as well as *Kāṭṭarin Ver̃i*, Pavalar utilizes female characters as symbols of the nation/Tamil morality corrupted/deluded by the colonial encounter. The heroine is “redeemed” by reaffirming her commitment to the non-cooperation movement. In this way, the hero, Govindan (described derisively as “Gandhian Govindan” by Raghavan, Kamatci’s brother) becomes the ideal citizen with whom the spectator identifies at the end of the play. For instance, in *Kāṭṭar Pakti* Kamatci, is initially seen as “unclean” by Govindan, since she is wearing “foreign” cloth (i.e. British-made), concerned about her father’s reaction. In contrast, the

\(^{22}\) Tamil translations of *Kāṭṭar Pakti* provided here have been produced by the author in collaboration with Sujata Kannagi.
prostitute, Sundarambal, with whom Govindan visits, immediately won over by Govindan’s devotion to Mother India, vows to wear only *khaddar* or homespun cotton cloth. This deliberate collapsing of the class distinction between Kamatci and the prostitute through the creation of a new dialectic between “pro-independent India” and “pro-British Raj” demonstrates one of the ways in Pavalar attempts to assuage class divisions and animosities by creating a more powerful division between the colonizing power as an economic bandit and the people who are victimized by them. Furthermore, he attributes the decline or degradation in moral behavior to the incursion of the British and their negative influences perpetrated by cultivating the Indian’s appetite for British culture. Like Sarma, Pavalar is interested in using the marginalization of women as well as other groups to undercut traditional social mores in order to construct a sort of “nationalist morality” that filters all associations and loyalties through the primary allegiance to the “nation.” As the following exchange between Govindan and Sundarambal demonstrates, part of Pavalar project is not only collapsing these class distinctions as counterproductive but also positing a new “patriotic” moral economy.

Govindan: Madam! I am pleased to see people like you, who are sex-workers, are very patriotic. If only (other) women would follow your lead and support *khaddar*, the children and men would also follow. If people begin wearing *khaddar* clothes, they like the nation would become strengthened. [Govindan hands over the clothes]. The total price is only thirty rupees.

Sundarambal: Oh! Only this much? It seems quite cheap. From now on, you must also include me in the group of volunteers for *khaddar*. I am troubled that so many of our countrywomen, my sisters, while promoting the cause of *khaddar*, are jailed, while I am reveling in this unworthy profession. It’s a shame! I want to join your movement immediately.

Govindan: You are welcome, Madam! The Gandhi’s movement belongs to all thirty-five crores of people in India and you are one among them. I will certainly send the necessary application through one of my volunteers. Sign it and pay just four annas per year. If you want, you may also join the pickets or demonstrations. Please come to the people’s forum mantap (tent) whenever convenient and I will include you in the forum.

Sundarambal: Well, I will do so!

Govindan: May Pārata Mātā, the mother of our country, shower her blessings on all women to have mettle like you! *Vante Mātaram*!
Sundarambal: *Vante Mātaram!* (Act I, Scene 2)  

Here the appeal is not only to Sundarambal, but also directly to the audience to join Gandhi’s cause and support the nation by buying *khaddar*. In addition, Pavalar deftly uses the figure of Sundarambal to comment on the social status of prostitutes and suggest that through nationalist *dharma* the so-called harlot could find redemption and become a catalyst for change. It should also be noted that this ideology dovetails with the classicizing project of the emerging South Indian middle class that seeks to “reform” the *devadāsī* as women increasingly come to be seen as a moral ambassador of the nation coming into being. Sundarambal also becomes the narrative device that entangles Govindan into the “transgression” phase of the play as she is tricked by Munusamy and Raghavan into inviting Govindan for a tryst. The juxtaposition of Sundarambal as “good” nationalist and “morally suspect” concubine in this scene depicts the problematic position of many women in this community. Pavalar seems to be arguing that through a commitment to nationalism this moral quandary could be resolved.

Despite her commitment to the nationalist cause, Munusamy and Raghava exploit her position as a “concubine” to undermine Govindan’s credibility. However, her perseverance for the truth leads to her illuminating conversation with Ranjan (the moment which inaugurates the redemption/freedom stage) and the discovery of the plot Munusamy, Raghavan, and corrupt detective Ranganathan concoct to frame Govindan for murder. In this moment, Sundarambal’s inadvertent “transgression” (setting up Govindan as a womanizer) is “redeemed” by her assistance in revealing the truth. Pavalar uses the character of Sundarambal to highlight the ways...
in which intra-cultural and intra-societal stratifications lead to further manipulation by the imperial “Other” in an effort to suppress self-rule agitation. Pavalar symbolizes this manipulation through the “agency” given to Sundarambal and Kamatci. In contrast to the independence that Sundarambal displays, Kamatci’s patriotic behavior and commitment to khaddar are mitigated by her inability to circumvent her father’s authority. When given the opportunity to protest her marriage to Munusamy, she sees death as the only option (a moment in which she chooses to wear khaddar). Even her “conversion” to khaddar seemingly results from her love for Govindan. In this way, Kamatci’s position as a middle-class woman whose agency is curtailed by the male members of her family represents a particular kind of colonial citizen who is both trapped by the strictures of class and unable or afraid to see the “truth” of British destruction of indigenous enterprise. In this moment, Pavalar is doubly representing the struggles of identity and agency of women as those of India in clutches of British rule. In contrast to Kamatci, Sundarambal, who remains at the mercy of several men throughout the play, is depicted as an independent thinker, who is unwavering in her position. She never sways from her commitment to khaddar after the moment the moment quoted above in Act II. Here, Sundarambal can be seen as the nationalist alter-ego of Kamatci, the representation of agency through a commitment to the nationalist cause. Her reaction to Govindan’s imprisonment, like Kamatci, is one of suspicion and disbelief. However, while Kamatci’s agency is hampered after her father orders Govindan to leave the house, Sundarambal is shown participating in khaddar rallies, searching for information to secure Govindan’s release, and in essence, taking control of her life. Throughout the play, the figures of Munusamy and Raghavan along with the corrupt police department represent the tentacles of empire in Indian society that are not only economically bankrupting the country as Annie Besant vehemently argues, but also functioning as a moral threat that must be averted through self-definition (1915a). In this way the Tamil “nationalist consciousness” is constituted through trans-Indian as well as intra-Indian discourses of self-respect of the marginalized groups in society, including working-class women and non-Brahmin castes. Rather than reinforce some of the more extreme views of the Justice Party and the Dravidian nationalist newspapers, Pavalar offers a perspective much more in line with Bharathi’s “Indianist” vision of nationalism. By rebranding socially marginalized figures such Sundarambal and A. Govindan (Govindan’s attendant) as patriotic citizens, Pavalar equates social morality with patriotic behavior undercutting traditional mores of decorum, caste, social standing, etc. In this way, Pavalar wants
to posit a nationalist view that reflects the broad and diverse Tamil polity bound by the need to halt the economic and moral colonizing efforts of the British and establish a “free” India, which subsequently means a free Tamil land.

In the middle of the first scene in Act II, Govindan makes a similar plea to the one he makes earlier to Kamatci, her father, and Sundarambal regarding the value of *khaddar* to their fellow countrymen, to a “Muslim” about to enter a “foreign-cloth store.” Again, we see Pavalar reconstellate a sectarian identity within a nationalist context:

Sir, we entreat you not to purchase these foreign goods. You can see for yourself that we brethren are beaten by police on account of our dedication to *khaddar*. Won’t you reconsider? Patronize this locally produced *khaddar* [cloth] and our countrymen and the starving millions will thrive. What is the point of helping the British flourish instead of our people? Please consider this, brother! (Act II, Scene 1)

Here, Govindan clearly makes the case that sectarian division only leads to the “British flourishing” and the “starving of millions” of Indians and that patriotism is therefore, a moral imperative. Pavalar, like Annie Besant several years earlier, and Gandhi realizes that a material/economic argument for India’s freedom would carry the most weight. While Besant is unable to convince the populous of this position through her newspaper campaign and political agitations, Pavalar provides a dramatic representation of Gandhi’s coordinated vision of *swatantra* (self-sufficiency) with *swaraj* (self-rule) by associating patriotism with moral behavior. This complex dialectic between patriotic duty, economic conditions, and morality is symbolized aptly in Govindan’s appeal to Muslim’s reservations. Govindan prostrates before him saying: “We are all children of Pārata Mātā. We too are your brethren. Treat us as such by granting our request” (Act II, Scene 1).

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24 *tōlārkalē, nīṅkal orupūramāka iruṅkal, epṭaṭiyiruntālum pōlīcār nammai jaṉanatamāṭṭattirku īṭaiṅcal ceytiṛōm eṅgu collattāṅ pōkıṛāṅkal…jayā, tayai ceytu pātēca āṭaikaḷī vāṅkavēṅtāī. nūṛrukkāṅkkāṅa unṅkal čakōṭarkalākīyanāṅkal tiḻum atiyum…paṭirīrōme, ataiyēvatu tāṅkal kavaṇjitt kal cuṭāṁ? Namatu nāṭṭu tuṇiyai āṭariyṅkal paṭṭiyiyāl vāṭum pallāyirām eḷaiṅkal pilaippārkai. mēṇuṭṭirūkkēk koṭṭīk koṭuppatāl enna paḷanggan, yōcipuṅkal. (34-35)

25 nām ellōrum inta intiya mātāvinīḷḷai kalā? uṅkaḷtanā pir̠ anta čakōtarar unṅkalai vēṇṭikoṇṭal tāṅkal avarukku virōtamāka naṭantu koḷivākai? atupōl, eṛgīyum unṅkal čakōtaraṅ eṅgu koṅtu, eṇ vēṇṭukūlkikkaiyuṅkal. unṅkal kālīl vilīṅkēn. (35)

26 čalāṃpāy! nī eluṇtiru nāgu vāṅkale, thō pōroṇ (35)
being of the nation as a way to transect sectarian boundaries and create a moral economy
founded on patriotism.

Both Pavalar and Sarma divinize the nation as a “Goddess.” In Pavalar’s work, Bhārata
Mātā is both a figure to be protected as well as a protector. Throughout the play, Govindan,
Kamatci, and Sundarambal make pleas to Pārata Mātā to help them overcome difficult situations.
Kamatci’s monologue which opens the fourth scene in Act III and depicts her decision to commit
suicide, demonstrates the role of Pārata Mātā as both “nation” and “divine” while also critiquing
social practices seen as “anti-modern” and uncivilized. While on the one hand, Pavalar seeks to
create a moral paradigm in which immoral behavior results from the colonial encounter, in this
scene, it is clear he also wants to use the discourse of nationalism to critique other social
practices that would retard progress towards freedom and more importantly, modernity. Here
Kamatci begins by asking, “Do they dream that I would marry this fool?” Her father and
brothers had just arrived before this with a selection of saris for her from which to choose for her
wedding. She was informed at this time of her father’s decision to “sell” her to Munusamy. As
she notes near the beginning of the passage, “I have already married my lover in spirit… In case
he cannot overcome the scandal (the trumped up charges that he frequents prostitutes), I will
commit suicide.” She expresses her sorrow about her condition and that of so many other
young women to Pārata Mātā saying, “How I pity the many marriageable age girls who are sold
by greedy parents!” In this passage, the morality of the nationalist position also includes the
eradication of morally suspect social and cultural practices such as bride-price (dowry), child-
marrige, the rights of women, etc. In addition, the reference to Pārata Mātā is also important
here it reveals the way in which the playwright manipulates a framework of devotion that already
undergirds Indian society in general by replacing the divine references throughout the play with
references instead to the “Pārata Mātā or Bhārata Devī (Goddess of India).” In doing so, he is
able to make the pursuit of nationalism and the nationalist agenda a morally righteous act that is
“divinely” ordained.

The need to produce a “moral” society and attribution of immorality to the colonial
encounter had become a common theme in nationalist propaganda after 1920. Nearly all plays

27 nāṇo inta mùtaçaï maçam ceytu koḻvēn! (71)
28 eŋ pîrāṇātāraï karuttîl maçuńtu aļavārra āṇaṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟṟ所所
29 he pārata tevi! ennaippōl ettaçaįp peṇkal îppuv iyēr kevalam paṇattīkāya vīkappatūkiṇaṛnar! (72)
from this time period include anti-alcohol rhetoric casting this activity as resulting from the influence of the foreign “Other.” For example, it is no accident that Ranganathan, Muthusamy, and Raghavan collect “henchmen” such as Parthasarthy (described as a rough character) and conduct all of their shady dealings in a sleazy bar, unseen by the “moral” public. Furthermore, Pavalar utilizes Kamatci’s brother Raghavan to symbolize the more insidious type of colonized citizen, one who participates in degenerate behavior (embezzling, gambling, drinking, and prostitution) to maintain status within the colonial regime. Pavalar links Raghavan’s actions and eventual arrest to his father’s preoccupation with status and recognition from the British elite.

His father’s utter disbelief at his son’s actions is immediately tempered by Kamatci’s sharp criticism of her father’s title of “Diwan”:

Kamatci: You earned the “heart burning” of my lover who did nothing heinous to you. You will reap what you sow! See for yourself! What is use of that title Diwan now? Where is the “Bahadur” and British Officers’ favoritism to you now! Do they come to your rescue? Father: Now at least consider Gandhi and his mission since you have derided and been biased against those who are saviors of the poor!

[The people attending the marriage disperse. The police arrest Raghavan and Munusamy and take them to the police station.]

D. Ramasamy: Yes, since I have spoken despicably of Mahatma Gandhi, a celebrity all over the world, I deserve this. Please leave me to ponder this and compose myself. I never thought my son would be so heinous! All along I had been doing things foolishly charmed by his words. (Act IV, Scene 3)³⁰

Here, D. Ramasamy’s dazed reaction and need to ponder how he could have been “charmed by [Raghavan’s] words so foolishly” indicates not only his disappointment in his son, but also in the British Empire that fails him in this moment of need. Kamatci’s angry words, to which D. Ramasamy is responding, demonstrate how Pavalar connects the debasement of Gandhi for British favor leads to this outcome. In this moment, Raghavan embodies the dark moral

³⁰ kāmāṭci: oru cur̠ rumum ar̠ r̠ avarai vayi̠ r̠ ir̠ iccal kaṭṭik koṇ̠ ṯīkālē, antap palaṇ̠ paṇ̠ tür̠ rā? uṅkaḷ tiv̠ ū pahatūr paṭṭamum, veḷḷaikkārar tayavum evval̠ vu varaiyil uṅkal̠ ukku utaviyāyī! anṇai! elaikaḷ tuyaraip pokka ulaikkum tāntiyaṭikal̠ aiyum, avar iyakkai̠ aiyum pālj̠ tān̠ kāl̠ katiyai̠ y̠ avatu eni̠ pēr̠ ūn̠ kāl…

tiv̠ ūn̠ pahatūr rāmacāmi: ām, ulakam pōr̠ um uttamāratiya kānti mahāṇaip paḷjitätāl̠ ā p̠ kku ik̠ katı vantatu! enaṇaic ci̠ r̠ itu nēr̠ am cāvatāṇamāk̠ a viṭu! en maḥaṇ ippaṭiptaṭa vēlaiyai̠ ceyvān̠ eru nān̠ enēvē illai! avaṇu̠l nān̠ mayāṅki, ivval̠ avu kāryumum ceytn (88)
underbelly of the colonial encounter that misleads Ramasamy away from the “truth” represented by Gandhi. In this way, social and moral proscription became another way of reinforcing the anticolonial message while simultaneously promoting the values of the “India.” Here, it becomes clear that these plays are not merely interested in stoking anti-British feelings but rather, in producing within their audience a particular vision of the nation complete with a moral structure and code of behavior. In essence, by defining immoral and ethical behavior in terms of the British occupiers, Pavalar is able to produce “India” as the moral “Other.”

V. Swaminatha Sarma’s *Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ (Hero of Bāṇapura or Banockburn)*

*Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ* (Hero of Bāṇapura) retells the story of Robert the Bruce and William Wallace in Tamil arguing that this is not just the story of the Scots, but it is the narrative of the Tamil people (preface to *Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ*). It is this fight that is begun by Valisan, and carried forward by Puresan in his quest to free his country. Throughout the play, Puresan’s fraternal love for Valisan symbolizes his love for the nation (like in epic narratives like the *Rāmāyaṇa* or in the black and white morality seen in Victorian melodrama). Sutharmal is referred to as “the embodiment of Chastity” by the citizens of Bāṇapura and called upon to remain chaste by a guard while imprisoned by the Athiratha King. She is compared with Sītā from the *Rāmāyaṇa* throughout to reinforce this image. In this way, images of country, family, and divinity are layered throughout the play to promote these as various facets of a single whole. Sarma’s play displays the influence of Theosophical Society ideas as well as that of Gandhian social politics such as the notion of *samadarśin* (seeing with an equal eye) from the *Bhagavadgītā*. However, unlike Gandhi’s political ideology that emphasized nonviolent resistance, *Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ* espouses militant resistance as an effective method to achieving this equality and independence. While he produces other work more directly related to the caste question, the final scene of the *Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ* demonstrates a similar political stance to that of Pavalar and Bharathi. Here Sarma clearly posits the notion that devotion to Pārata Mātā (Mother India) supports rather subverts the interests of Tamilṭṭāy (Mother Tamil).

Puresan: Dear Brothers! We have won what we were fighting for and lost many things along the way…including our great Valisar…Now, with independence,

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31 Tamil translations of *Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ* have been produced by the author in collaboration with Sujata Kannagi and Ganesh and Meena Vaidyanathan.
our responsibility increases. We must prove ourselves to be people of love and patience to the world. We should provide equal justice, equal law and respect to all. We should cast away ignorance and illiteracy completely. We should give and protect the respective rights of men and women. We should drive away poverty and hunger. We should form a government according to these notions. We need the assistance of all citizens for this to be successful. I believe not one of you will step back from (this challenge). Long Live Freedom! Long Live Bravery! Long Live Valisan’s name! Long Live Bāṇapura! (Act V, Scene 2)\footnote{cahōtararkāḷē! nām etēŋ poruṭu neṭunāḷāka pōrāti vantōmō, etai virumpī ulaka cukaṅkalai maṟantu niŋ gōmō, etai nōṭṭi palluyirkalai palīṉīṉōmē etarkāḷa vāḷīcār īṟaṅtārō atai-anta pēṟṟakariyā pēṟṟai –cutantarttai pēṟṟu viṭṭōm. iniṭān nām kaṭmania atika māṭṭatūrė cutantām pēṟṟu viṭṭūṭāl namakkū karvam īṟaṅtārē ruppāṭēkka ulakāṭṭē nīṟaṅkkumpāṭi nām nātū koṇṭāl namakkū ataviyā veṛuṣu veṇṭuvatillai. Nammūṭāya poṟūmaiyum āṟūṟum ulaha tārāl parīcōṭikkappalām. avaikaḷukku nām ītu koṭtunirakavēṛūṭum. āṟṇavaṇṭavārum pāṟaṅkkappāṭṭār ēṛṇu unarci yāŋṭūr nilava vēṛūṭum. ūṟavarkku orē caṭṭum, orē niṭi, orē matippu vāḷaṅkkappāṭṭār vēṛūṭum. nāṭṭi aliyāmā atiyōṭu akalumppāu ceyyevēṛūṭum. āṅkalukkuriyā urūmāi āṅ kalukkum piṅkalukkuriyā urūmāi peṅkalukkum alīkappaṭṭār vēṛūṭum. varṭāmā nōy őṭā vēṛūṭum. pacinōy paṅka vēṛūṭum. Ittakaiyā āṭci muṟaiyē nām amaittu koḷḷavēṛūṭum. itarkāḷa ellāṟaiyā utaviyām vēṛūṭum ivviṅkṣayattil eṛvānum pinvāṅkku māṭṭār ēṛṇu karutūkiren. cutantām vāḷ! vīram vāḷ! vāḷīcār vāḷ! pāṇapūram vāḷ! (55-56)}

In Act V after Puresan leads the Bāṇapura army to victory he speaks on the public stage to the people. This scene in many ways mirrors the wedding scene which concludes the play Kaṭṭar Pakti, as in both cases, the audience within the drama functions as a sort of chorus that reinforces the main themes of freedom and nation. Here, in this final exchange between Naganathan and Puresan the Goddess of Freedom is declared the patron deity of the land and the manifesto for the newly freed nation is detailed. The chorus-like feature in the final scenes of both Pāṇapuratu Vīraṇ and Kaṭṭar Pakti stems from folk Tamil traditions is similar to an aesthetic convention found in the terukkūṭu tradition (Frasca, 1990). The endings in both plays utilize a “chorus” or audience that operates as a legitimizing feature and completes the spectator’s transformation from aesthete to citizen by dramatizing an imagined public to which the spectator now can belong. The desire for freedom that has been driven through the tension and anxiety fostered through the narrative of “loss” of nation resolves in the spectator via the audience and Puresan’s commitment to the newly recovered/reclaimed nation that can now be properly created anew with the correct, local ideals of morality and ethics that had been eroded through the imperial rule of the Athiratha King. Similarly, as Govindan and Kamatci reaffirm their marriage, they also reiterate their commitment to the freedom of the nation (in this play not yet achieved).

Like in Kaṭṭar Pakti, Sarma conflates the image of nation with that of “Mother Nation.” However, in Pavalar’s play this is a symbolic conflation in that Pārata Mātā represents the nation as divine. Sarma uses the icon of this picture to connect this scene with the opening one with
Valisan. In both scenes, the picture of Bāṇapura becomes an iconic representation of the nation as divine. Puresan leaves his wife to come back to fight the king, instead of praying to god to protect him, he looks at painting on the wall of his country and asks for strength and protection from “Pārata Mātā.” After having praised his wife as the embodiment of “śakti (power/feminine energy of Śiva)” and requesting her “divine” assistance, he tells her of his meeting with the Athiratha King. While suspecting it may be a trap, he decides to go at his wife’s urging.

Puresan: (looking the picture of Bāṇapura hanging on the wall) Mother! I leave with belief I have in you. Bid me farewell (worships the picture and leaves). (Act II, Scene 3)\(^{33}\)

Here, the “image” of nation becomes an icon of nationalism like khaddar. In each play, the nation as “Mother” functions as the “soul” of the people that must be protected and freed, but remains eternal. Sarma clearly differentiates between the “Goddess of Freedom” who is addressed by both Puresan and Valisan as a maternal figure throughout and “Lord Easan” or Śiva, who Puresan implores to destroy the world since it is filled with injustice and poverty, in a moment of despondency in Act IV. In this way, there is a clear distinction between the all-powerful divine as creator and destroyer and the more “localized” Goddess of Freedom, “soul” of Bāṇapura. This distinction becomes apparent in references by the Athiratha King and his generals to killing Bāṇapura’s Goddess of Freedom that occur in the second battle scene at the beginning of Act V.

Puresan also seeks guidance from “nation” which he calls “Mother” in making his most difficult decisions. Finally, the element of “worship” is introduced in the stage directions as Puresan presumably prostrates before the image before he leaves. This is one of the few moments in the play in which such a prostration is shown; and in every case, the image or divine embodiment of the nation appears as the object of worship. Thus, Sarma ensures that once the spectator identifies with the hero and adopts his goals as his own, he will also identify with the cultural practices/worldviews of the hero. In this sense, this is a conversion process in which the moment of absolution occurs when the hero and spectator, both invested in the resolution of the play, are freed/redeemed at the end. The chorus-like scene at the end of Sarma’s play when Puresan returns victorious functions as an affirmation of the spectator’s commitment to the

\(^{33}\) (cuvar̠ril māṭṭappaṭṭirukkum pāṇapurattiṇ paṭattai pārttu) ammaṇi! ummaiye nampi celkir̠ēn. viṭai koṭum. (vaṇaṅki celkir̠ān.) (19)
nation (conversion to Pārata Mātā) “absolution” occurs that is mirrored in the dramatic narrative by the chants of “Long live King Puresan!” (Act V, Scene 3). In both this scene as well as those in *Kaṭṭar Pakti* when the image of Pārata Mātā is invoked, the playwright manipulates the Indian sociocultural norms that encourage the blending of religious symbols and mores into everyday life. Unlike Sarma’s careful delineation between the “maternal” role of the Goddess of Freedom and the all-pervasive power of the divine, Pavalar deliberately blurs this line, positing the nation as divine. Neither Govindan nor Kamatci address “divine” figures other than Pārata Mātā in the play, particularly in moments of stress. For example, Kamatci, distraught over the possibility of a forced marriage for the sake of money, explains her decision to commit suicide to “Pārata Mātā” and implores her to guide her in this moment. Since seeking reassurance and grace from the divine is a necessary component for the successful Indian play. Both playwrights use the most compelling of these moments to meld the audience’s love for God with that of country recreating the aesthete as both citizen and devotee.

Puresan’s impassioned request for a blessing from the picture of Bāṇapura on his wall and subsequent prostration reminds the audience of the opening scene of the play. Here, Valisan (Puresan’s best friend), about to be sentenced to death for sedition, looks at a picture of his homeland and delivers a long monologue, professing love for his country:

Mother! [Seeing the map of Bāṇapura hanging in the court] Here, is my mother. Mother! A thousand greetings at your feet. I am giving my life for your growth. Please accept it with love. I have been born out of your blood, trying to direct you towards good and I am going to die for you. I do not know others; I know only you. You are oppressed by the Athiratha King. I am stating this in his court as well. I tried to unshackle you from this oppression. However, my efforts did not succeed. Even if I go to heaven I will think only of your goodness. Even after this body is destroyed and goes into ashes my soul will always praise your feet. Until you become free, decorated and beget righteous sons, I will be praising your name. Even if I get the chance to be with God, I will aspire to be only with you. (Act I, Scene 1)
In this section of the monologue, Valisan’s unshakable love and commitment for the object of his affection as well as his bravado and fearlessness at the thought of his fate are connected within the dramatic narrative so the audience can again equate love of country with the divine. Furthermore, the image of “country” is conflated with figure of “Mother” nation until the final portion of the passage where the two are referenced separately. However, the hero notes his preference for “nation” over even God. In addition to divine undercarriage, the maternal imagery pervades not only Sarma’s work but also that of Pavalar, Bharathi and several other anticolonial dramatists during this period. In Tamil contexts, this image of “mother” competes with the notion of “Tamilṭṭāy” or Mother Tamil. Much like Bharathi, Pavalar and Sarma sought to valorize both Tamil and India and therefore introduce these two “mothers” side by side. “it was not a choice between one or the other…but rather while Tamilṭṭāy’s womb and milk unites all Tamil speakers as Tamilians, the womb and milk of Pārata Mātā transfigures them into Indians, and ties them with other Indians in webs of sibling solidarity” (Ramaswamy, 1997, 46). In other words, supporting nationalist endeavors could not erode, but only strengthen Tamil identity. Bharathi is a leading voice in this area who often struggled with some of the more extreme Dravidian nationalist figures who viewed the “Indian” and “Tamilian” as symbiotic beings in order to cement not only India as divine, but also the Tamil state and its people. And, therefore, devotion to nation is a divine calling, larger than social difference, class distinction, religious difference, linguistic/cultural difference, and material possessions. Much like with Abhinavagupta’s concept of aesthetic consciousness in which the self is temporarily extinguished during the moment of aesthetic immersion, in that way, in Sarma’s play the sacrifice to the nation becomes a metaphorical extinguishing of the “self” enacted by both hero and spectator and experienced by the spectator as “aesthetic relish.”

In Sarma’s comments in his preface to the play he remarks that he chooses this story since it uniquely reflects the condition and situation of the Tamil people. So, not only does “mother” reference Pārata Mātā or Mother India, but also, her equally important counterpart who is simultaneously evoked here, Tamilṭṭāy (Mother Tamil). It is important to note how like in

ulakattai uyiṟeṇa koṇṭa maṇgaṇeṟum tilakamaṇṭintu tāṅkaḷ tanṭaḷ makkaḷukku taricaṇṭam taraiyamraintu inta jīvaṁ umatu caraṇaṇkālīl tuṟittu koṇṭe yirukkum. āṇṭavaṇ kannitiyil yān irukkum pākkaiyattai peṟṟa pōtillum, atanaivittā tanṭaḷ munṟilaiyil tanṭaḷ poruṭṭu tunpuṟṟirippatē periteṅa karutuvēn, ic cuvaitavira accuvaṟi vēnṭēn. (7-8)

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Pavalar’s plays, the wife or beloved of the hero provides the moral echo of the hero’s nationalism. In other words, she functions much like the chorus in Tamil folk theater traditions, reifying the choices the hero makes as dharmically correct for a tecāpimāgi (patriot). While in Pavalar’s play Kamatci and her father play the ignorant colonized elites that must be educated by Govindan in order to become patriots (i.e. committed to khaddar in this case); Sarma’s play constructs Sutharmai’s character as a symbol of a nation that has been “kidnapped” or “hijacked” or “lost” through actions perpetrated by the larger, more powerful “Other.” Clearly, Sarma’s play advocates a righteous militant uprising in the name of freeing the country, while Pavalar’s work advocates the Gandhian non-violent anticolonial struggle. This is not to say that Sarma opposed Gandhi’s views, but more likely reflects the fact that during the height of the Gandhi’s influence on Tamil politics, Sarma was still in exile in Burma. Moreover, in 1943 Sarma produces a work on Gandhian principles, The Essentials of Gandhism.

Conclusion

Within an emerging Tamil modernity at the turn of twentieth century, arises a variety of new literary genres, aesthetic and dramaturgical innovation couched in and arising from the conflation of political and social tensions through the colonial encounter. In this context, appeal of popular songs and drama and particularly the advent of the traveling theater company (drama) and the gramophone industry (song) at the turn of the century signals the arrival of dynamic Tamil literary modern that not only would incorporate elements from indigenous performance traditions that transverse boundaries of “folk”, “ritual”, and “classical” as well as “elite” or “legitimate” vs. gujili. I take the term gujili from A.R. Venkatachalapathy to refer to publications of books, pamphlets, and other literary material that were seen of poor quality, including advertisements, often full of spelling and grammar errors, etc. Presently, the word “gujili” has come to mean “market or bazaar” according to the Madras University Lexicon. It most likely comes from a reference to a Gujarati community that lived quite close to where most of the gujili bazaars are located (Venkatachalapathy, 2012, 134). Venkatachalapathy uses this term to distinguish between three genres of literature being produced in the early part of the twentieth century that figure in the development of print culture in the colonial Tamil state—the gujili (low), the popular (mass culture so also low), and the literary novel (considered high). Though he does not apply these distinctions to drama, I think it is possible to do so as he points
out that many popular dramatists were “published” and their works sold in gujili books in bazaar including those of Sankaradas Swamigal and S.G. Kittapa. My application of the “gujili” follows Venkatachalapathy’s cultural definition of “low-brow” literature, often in both form and content. Tamil popular performance develops first as a response to capitalistic demand resulting from the popularity of the traveling Parsi drama troupes which performed regularly across South India. Then, these dramas become socially conscious, addressing various societal ills such as caste/class inequities and child marriage/labor. Finally, popular drama executes a nationalist turn as tensions escalate between the British imperial administration and the Indian population and the news of the other rebellions across the empire spreads through the burgeoning newspaper industry. Also politics in the colonial Tamil state—home rule propagated by Annie Besant, James and Margaret Cousins, the Indian National Congress, the Self-Respect Movement, changing performance modalities and aesthetic values, and gender issues—all feed into the dyadic movements asserting, in some cases, competing notions of Tamil identity and Indian nationalism and find expression in the cosmopolitan character of modern Tamil performance. While the success and popularity of these plays is not in question, what remains interesting is the way in which the playwrights utilize cultural symbols to instill emotional and moral investment in the nationalist cause. Swaminatha Sarma and T P Krishnaswamy Pavalar mobilize symbols of economic, social, and spiritual unity such as khaddar, “Mother India”/“Goddess of Freedom,” Gandhi, and British censorship as aesthetic “triggers” drawing the spectator into the dramatic world by evoking their desire for a “free India” through a dramatization of their collective “loss” of freedom.

Indian dramatic forms can only be completely appreciated through the modality of performance. That is to say, as Chaitanya, De, and others have noted, dramatic theory in particular is developed from and within the scope of performance and not the “text” of the dramas. This is similar to Saskia Kersenboom’s argument that the conversation within and relationship between the threefold “nature” of the Tamil language (muttamil) can only be fully appreciated through the performative (1995, 2005, 2008). Thus the performance operates as a dynamic repository of Tamil tradition and memory activated by the “gaze” of the spectator. Furthermore, severing the word or text from the interactive context of performance would not only be unattractive in Tamil but also, unthinkable as it would compromise the process of meaning production (Kersenboom, 1995, 16). This interactive, performative role the spectator
fulfils becomes even more important in the modern Tamil public performative space; both in kacceri-style concerts in the classical arena as well as popular drama and song that often relied on improvisation. Often, the alterations to the script or song reflect a strategy that playwrights, chapbook writers, and novelists employed to avoid British censorship during the anticolonial movement. However, these “alterations” also result from the mood of the performers/spectators and other external factors that can only appear in the moment of performance. In this way, the role of the audience becomes paramount as not only potential messengers of anticolonial sentiment, but also as “intensifiers” of that sentiment during the performance itself. Often the theater halls where these nationalist dramas were performed became raucous gatherings of nationalist fervor with spectators joining in with the performers in singing nationalist songs and chanting of nationalist slogans such “Vante Mātaram” (Baskaran). In this way, the performance “activates” the process of aesthetic remembering by the spectator which is enhanced and promulgated by the reactions and responses of other audience members. Thus, these nationalist dramas function as symbolic narratives, intended to be filtered through the spectator’s meta-narrative lens of aesthetic appreciation (rasa-consciousness) or dramatic “vision.” Through the various symbols of “nation” spectator invests in the dialectic between “desire” and “loss” for the hijacked nation that undergirds the narrative trajectory of oppression—“transgression”/resistance—freedom/redeemption. In each of the plays discussed here, the hero is oppressed, unfairly accused of transgressing against the villain (representing the British Empire), and then is redeemed through freedom of the nation. In this way, the spectator’s identification with the hero bestows the burden of citizenship while transforming their aesthetic pleasure into patriotism. In this way, they are not only rasika-s, but rasika-apimāi-s (aesthete-patriots).

Pavalar’s dramas, like the literary works of his lofty contemporaries such as Bharathi, as well as plays by fellow dramatists like Swaminatha Sarma, Sankaradas Swamigal, and others who emerged from the Adyar educational ranks display a narrative unity which is undergirded by a nationalist emotional foundation accessed by the audience through culturally determined touchstones. These are cultural symbols well-known amongst not only Tamils, but throughout most of India. Some examples include the charka (spinning wheel to make cloth-symbol of Gandhi’s push for khaddar), the figure of Śiva, Pārata Mātā (Bhārata Devī/“Mother India,”) Allah, Sutharmai as “Sītādevī,” “Śakti,” and “Chastity incarnate,” and Govindan as “Gandhian.” These characters/symbols emerge as composite signifiers of a complex network social, cultural,
linguistic, religious, aesthetic, and communal discourses that inform modern Tamil cultural “memory. Thus, these playwrights transform these figures into loci of this shared/multiple Tamil identity designed to engender a desire for the “lost” nation. It is important to note, that while drawing on in a sense, pan-Indian cultural symbols, these playwrights were well aware of their Tamil audience. In order to draw the audience into a dramatic world, which has been constructed using extraordinary, literary, and fantastic elements imbued with suggestions of modern-day political and social concerns, these symbols must be not only culturally-specific but also vital emotional signifiers. In this way, the “aesthetic relish” of the play becomes threefold (1) Spiritual; (2) Dramatic; and finally and most importantly for these plays, (3) Political (Goodwin). More specifically, the “aesthetic consciousness” that arises from the interaction of the spectator with the dramatic experience now undergoes a further metamorphosis, transforming the spectator from aesthete into politically consciousness citizen.\textsuperscript{35} In this context, these playwrights use each level of “success” in the dramatic performance to further this progression from aesthete to patriot.

Thus, these plays create nationalist sentiment through semiotic paradigm of oppression-“transgression”-freedom/redemption subsequently transforming the spectator (through identification with the hero) into a citizen of the imagined nation community. While \textit{Kaṭṭar Pakti} displays many of the traits of melodramatic character and style coupled with popular song element from the folk tradition, \textit{Pāṇapuratu Vīran̠} employ a literary language and does not include any songs except in the opening benediction. Of course, in performance, \textit{Pāṇapuratu Vīrag} becomes popular only after being adapted to fit the hybrid melodramatic folksy style Pavalar and Swamigal employ (with elements such as an inclusion of a Gandhi \textit{villu pāṭṭu} (bow-song), the hanging scene to invoke images of Bhagat Singh, and several patriotic songs written by Bharathi and S.G. Kittapa). In this way, these playwrights demonstrate the process of \textit{smarālmarapu} as operating as an interactive, localized “remembering” that links disparate events of oppression through an aesthetic dialectic of desire, loss, and freedom in performance thereby becoming a subversive and resistant force within the audience. Now, aesthetic process becomes a tool of resistance through the audience’s aesthetic “remembering” of the “nation” evoked through the dramatic narrative. Furthermore, the “internationalization” of cultural memory

\textsuperscript{35} Note Sreekantaiya’s discussion of Abhinavagupta’s theory of dramatic spectatorship as well Gnoli and Chaitanya’s discussion of the experience of \textit{rasa} as “aesthetic consciousness.”
occurs through an acculturative process of memorialization of imperial oppression in other parts of the empire, particularly Ireland; in essence, a complex interweaving of aesthetics and politics. Pavalar and Sarma dramatically reconstruct the “lost” nation through symbols that compel the spectator to remember its antiquity and history. Thus, these plays become “activated” as conduits of nationalist sentiment and reinscribe spectators as “citizens” through performance. Specifically, the spectator’s move from aesthete to patriot occurs through rasa-consciousness which functions as a meta-narrative/meta-cultural lens of meaning-production constituted through the interaction, intersection, and opposition of multivalent aesthetic, political and social discourses that inform and condition a dynamic, interactive, and syncretic modern Tamil cultural memory. Therefore, anticolonial drama becomes an exercise in the use of cultural memory to construct a historical narrative that operates from the perspective of the colonized as opposed to the colonizer. Using the dialectic between memory, desire, and loss inherent in the spectator’s engagement with the performative world, nationalist drama alleviates that loss through construction of an imagined nation produced through a deliberate evocation of cultural memories. Ultimately the desire for freedom drives the spectator’s investment in the narrative and his empathy for the hero as a figure who both figuratively and literally suffers through the same trials and oppression as the spectator.
Conclusion

The Double Conversation: “Rasa-consciousness” as a Means for Creating Nationalist Sentiment

Introduction

In his book *The Discovery of India*, Nehru describes India as an “ancient palimpsest of reverie in which each succeeding layer cannot completely erase those which came before” (50, Nehru). In both the colonial and postcolonial periods, the construction of a national history becomes a problematic enterprise in the Indian subcontinent as a whole. In India, the intra-nationalisms and the dominance of cultural, ethnic, or religious associations, such as the tensions between Dravidian and Brahmin communities in Tamil Nadu or the violence spawned by the Babsri Masjid incident in Gujarat, demonstrate the difficulty of creating a history that represents the social, cultural, and political development of both Pakistan and India that does not elide these tensions or simplify them. In *A Nation and its Fragments* Partha Chatterjee critiques Benedict Anderson’s contention that the construction of a nationalist identity is necessarily derived from Western modes of nationalist resistance and thought. In his view, the history of India must be constructed from the focal point of the violence of the colonial intrusion and therefore should be represented as a series of “fragments” to demonstrate the varying pieces that come together to form the modern postcolonial nationalist landscape in India. For Chatterjee, the “loss” of linguistic, communal, and cultural identity (for instance by Bengali and Punjabi communities) was in fact a rearticulation of these “identities” within a new context. By looking at alternative points of intersection beyond the binary of nation/other or nation/culture, Chatterjee addresses the loss of cultural identity in the wake of independence and its reinvention as an expression of nationalist fervor. Taking Chatterjee’s assertion that cultural identity is reinvented as nationalist fervor as a point of departure my dissertation explores the following questions: Can aesthetic remembering create nationalist sentiment? Can rasa-consciousness become a tool of resistance? Can we create a mass sentiment of feeling or what Sudipta Kaviraj refers to as “anticolonial consciousness” that is then transformed through performance into nationalist “consciousness”?

By positing Tamil “Protest” Theater as a new aesthetic medium, which mixes indigenous and non-indigenous thematic and poetic conventions in order to manufacture nationalist sentiment within the audience; I suggest that it becomes what Chatterjee describes as a vehicle
for cementing a culturally unifying nationalist identity essential for the creation of the idea of India. Furthermore, only once the image of the nation is fashioned, when people have something for which to put aside their other differences, can they move from being against colonialism to fighting for “India” as their nation (Kaviraj, 56). In Tamil “Protest” Theater, to spur this process, the “imaged” nation is used a locus of moral patriotism that undercuts competing discourses of caste, social status, and gender offers a sort of patriotic morality as the undercarriage for a “free India.” I have suggested that the Sanskrit aesthetic concept of rasa, in conversation with various other aesthetic and poetic trajectories in the Tamil context, becomes created anew in the modern Tamil context as a metanarrative lens that itself is constituted through the various social, political, national, class, and gender discourses of identity that it reconstellates as an expression of “nation” through the vehicle of drama. Furthermore, the structure of spectator-divine-performer/poet that frames Tamil bhakti poetry and other ritual theaters becomes a model for the citizen/aesthete-“nation”-protagonist/performer dialectic that drives most Tamil anticcolonial dramas. In other words, these dramas like Sanskrit drama as well as most dramatic performance in India (modern and premodern) predicate “success” on the audience’s ability to “decode” the cultural cues in the dramatic narrative, identify with the hero, and thereby derive an emotional fulfillment from the performance. However, this process of “emotional fulfillment” and the subsequent suggested “meanings” are necessarily culture bound. However, as my argument has demonstrated, the construction and coming into being of cultural “moments” continues and remains a dynamic, interactive, and transgressive process. I use the term “transgressive” here to suggest that there is a sort of mutually defining tension between societal mores and a changing cultural climate. In this way, only through the transection and transgression of such boundaries can the culture remain dynamic and continue to develop as an interactive organism.

I: Revival of Rasa in Tamil “Protest” Theater: Aesthetic Remembering and Swaraj

Chatterjee’s investigation into the construction of a colonial/postcolonial Bengali-Indian identity also offers some salient points regarding the ways in which mutually contestatory and constitutive forces construct a cultural history that is simultaneously communal, local, and national. As seen in the work of the Tamil “Protest” plays, these forces are harnessed into an uneasy nationalist identity through the juxtaposition of morality and duty with service to the nation. In addition, these playwrights skillfully manipulate the discourse of pan-Indian symbols
as well as locally relevant figures such as the hero Kovalan and heroine Kannagi to construct an image of “India” that is both pan-Indian and simultaneously, uniquely Tamil. Furthermore, as seen in the work of several scholars, notably Bernard Bate and Sumathi Ramaswamy, the manipulation of cultural symbols and language through aesthetic mediums to promote particular ideological perspectives conditioned and constitutive of a dynamic shared cultural memory space continues after independence as a valuable tool in local and communal identity construction. In addition, Lisa Mitchell’s work on the emotional attachments to language in South India and the politicization of the concept of “mother tongue” makes the point that “national languages are…almost always semi-artificial constructs…and virtually reinvented. They are the opposite of what nationalist mythology supposes them to be… (24). The idea of national language as a politically and socially motivated “construct” provides a fairly accurate description of the Dravidian language movement’s development while highlighting the difficulties faced by nationalist activists in trying to invest, in this case, Tamilians in the Indian independence movement. In other words, the diversity within Tamil language and cultural praxis (i.e. what it means to be “Tamil”) remains a formidable adversary to the independence movement, to which Tamil Protest plays offered a solution-employ a pan-Indian aesthetic model of messaging.

Mitchell, Ramaswamy, and Bate each discuss the use of symbols and linguistic ideologies in the Dravidian movement noting the contestatory and sometimes, conciliatory ways these symbols are employed indicating the role of political and social ideological positions in determining their “meaning” trajectories. Bate notes that Tolkāppiyar claims the “first things” of the world were “time” and “place” meaning an “experience of the world in which signs are contiguous with all others, in which indexicality draws relations between signs and structures them into unique contexts” (112). He makes case that this “tropic indexicality” is a fundamental component of “vocatives of political praise” as well as the “speaker and power-that-is” (113). In other words, in the Tamil political context akupeyar (metonymy in a Tamil context) creates an intimate connection between “praiser” and “praised” like we see in Tamil bhakti poetry (Bate, 113). Moreover, akupeyar operates via an aesthetic system that is “built up by the concatenation of linguistic elements” and embedded in a “Tamil linguistic and civilizational antiquity” (Bate, 116). Thus, as these symbols are deployed, much like the strange incident of the Connaught Irish Ranger Rebellion on Indian soil, they become carriers of the continuing tradition of a “Tamil-
Indian” memory. Thus, each use continues to invest these symbols with new meanings building on the ones already acculturated into the Tamil ethos. It is in this context that Abhinavagupta’s discussion of the production of an aesthetic consciousness that is conditioned and constituted through the dialectic of memory, loss, and desire becomes important. The image of a “consciousness” that is not located within either performance or spectator and can only be produced in the moment of the performance becomes the psychic ground that undergirds the success of Tamil “Protest” theater. These playwrights build a unified vision of the “nation” through poetic symbols in the dramatic narrative in order to evoke a nationalist sentiment from the audience and make the aesthete a patriot. Since evocateurs of sentiment are culturally determined, śṛṅgāra Ṗvīra rasa-s (the heroic/love) can be connected to latent residual emotion apimāṇaṃ/teca apimāṇaṃ/tecāpimāṇi (pride/patriotism/patriot-here-love for the nation). In other words, the process of aesthetic remembering functions as an acculturating process as well as a generative one; using traditional associations to produce new valences within the audience. Thus, cultural memory becomes a constitutive process, triggered by the dramatic performance that manifests through the rasika’s rasāsvāda. In anticolonial drama, the aesthetic relish, realized as feelings of patriotism fuels a desire to become a citizen of the nation-to-be.

“Mother India,” as a symbol of both the nation and of the Divine Mother, invokes feelings of patriotism and protectiveness, much like the bee in Abhijnānaśākuntalam incites the protective instincts of the king while also evoking the promise and desire of love.¹ It could also be suggested that the “image of the nation” functions much like the “heir” in Kālidāsa’s works. The “heir,” which appears at the end of both Vikramorvaśīyam and Abhijnānaśākuntalam, signifies a sense of peace and resolution. Similarly, the hero and heroine’s reunion at the end of Sarma’s Pāṇapuratu Vīران cements the image of a unified nation, whose divisions are trumped by its citizens’ commitment to this vision. The use of symbols, culturally defined, constructed, and mobilized within a uniquely Tamil construct coupled with the concept of rasa as aesthetic relish connects these modern playwrights to the Sanskrit aesthetic tradition. While this connection is circuitous, the process by which the nation is “imaged” in these plays relies on the one Kālidāsa’s works display; a process of aesthetic remembering which results in rasa-

¹ In Kālidāsa’s Abhijnānaśākuntalam, the bee is a symbol of the King but also a rival as it “tastes” Śakuntalā. In both Acts I and III, while King Duṣyanta pities his beloved for the harassment she suffers, he also expresses his envy of the bee’s close contact with Śakuntalā.
“consciousness” or a state of aesthetic relish which includes a sense of belonging or unity. In the case of socially conscious plays, the goal is moral and ethical agreement, while in anticolonial plays, the resolution requires spectators to “agree” with the position of independence via dramatic identification with the hero or young nationalist. Thus, *rasa*-consciousness becomes an interpretative lens which reconstellates this aesthetic relish experienced when the *vipralambha* of the hero and heroine (mirroring the spectator’s “separation” from the nation) has been alleviated and their union symbolizes the link between citizen and nation. As the spectator identifies with the hero in this moment, the love of nation and for the heroine merge, and patriotism emerges as the so-called “righteous” path. Instead of the production of an “heir,” the spectator leaves the performance identifying with the role of citizen as caretaker for the newly imagined “nation.”

Evidenced by the nineteenth century drama *Harishchandra* when Sanskrit is “newly discovered” and later with the Hindi playwright Jayashankar Prasad (1889-1937) who sought “deliberate recourse [in] the aesthetics of classical Sanskrit drama” the reemergence of Sanskrit dramatic techniques within the popular theater sphere is solidly present within the context in North India (Dalmia, 15). Dalmia notes elements such as *rasa* (flavor) and *bhāva* (emotion) have been adjusted and transformed to fit the entertainment and diversionary character of the popular theater. In this context, Dileep Kumar Kanjilal’s work on flexibility of sentiment in Sanskrit literature explores how “patriotism” could operate as a *bhāva* or latent emotional state and the potential for nationalism as “*rasa,*” which is expressed when the *rasika’s* (spectator) *bhāva* is activated through dramatic triggers (34-36). Considering this flexibility as well as the goal of Sanskrit drama as outlined by Bharata, “to reestablish emotional harmony in the microcosm of the audience by exploring the deeper relations that bind apparent conflicts of existence”, modern popular performance, as an entertainment delivery system, becomes the ideal carrier for social, political propaganda as well as unexpected forum for aesthetic innovation (Miller). In Bharata’s mythic account, drama is a holy presentation that the gods originated to offer ethical instruction through diversion when people were no longer listening to the Vedic scriptures (Miller). It is this function of art Jayashankar Prasad and other nationalist artists sought to revive within the context of the *swaraj* movement.

The nationalist theater movement in India constructs dramas within which every element evokes the idea of “independence” within the audience by creating an emotional connection between the audience and the image of India as “nation.” In other words, in both cases the
audience must accept the dramatist’s ideological framework for the performance to succeed. When this formula is utilized in the context of anticolonial drama as in the later example, the stakes of “success” become quite high. “Rasa-consciousness” offers a theoretical principle through which we can interpret the extent to which anticolonial popular theater movements, on the one hand, repurpose indigenous Indian dramatic principles, while, on the other, produce resistant “art” through an incorporation of non-indigenous artistic and political influences into distinctly “Indian” modes of dramatic production. The contested nature of Indian history stems not only from the colonial period, but it is also reinforced as well as reinvented in the service of nationalist and communal agendas undertaken by various groups within India before and after Partition. In other words, both the “history” and the right to create the canonical historical narrative, become pawns in the undertaking of defining and modernizing the fledgling nation. Furthermore, performance is not only the primary mode of poetic expression, but also the nexus point for the dynamic and dialectical process of producing cultural meaning and social praxis. Dramatic performance and art occupy a central role in the development and promotion of social/political/aesthetic values. Sanskrit Drama is seen as one of the earliest modes of teaching moral law and reinforcing social mores as in the “Mahābhārata plays” of Bhāsa or the political intrigue dramatized by Viśākhadatta in Mudrarākṣasa. Thus, these works along with the various traditions they have spawned have become the precursors to modern social/political drama in India. Aesthetic values are values with emotional and ethical implications, and as such are dramatized in the plays against the backdrop of a broader cultural ideology of self-restraint (Goodwin). Goodwin emphasizes the idea that “aesthetic” principles are embedded in “real-life.” Sanskrit Drama, through the culturally-determined lens of the “rasika, provides a crucial two-fold perspective: (1) It allows a critique that employs formal criticism. (2) And while doing so, it also addresses the real-life concerns evoked by the drama.”

Since the success of Sanskrit Drama is predicated on the emotive experience of the audience which is catalyzed by the hero figure in the play, the dual use of an extra-dramatic figure such as the sūradhāra or “theater manager” who speaks both Sanskrit and Prakrit (making a connection between the high-caste and low-caste metaphorically) as both introducer as well as actor (he often steps in for the hero later in the play) makes these dramas appealing to all social levels in the audience. In the case of Abhijñānāśākuntalam, the audience is immediately bonded to the dramatic narrative through the sūradhāra, who is literally being “carried away”
by the melody of the opening song and as he departs after introducing the King who is now being “carried” or drawn into the forest by deer. This transition ensures the audience is ensconced with the dramatic narrative when the hero is introduced. In addition, as Sawhney points out in her analysis of this scene, the use of the word harin (captivating) reinforces this sense of “being carried off” as it derives from the verb root hr meaning “take, take away.” In this way, the sūtradhāra’s statement becomes a double entendre—he is reinforcing the possessive power of the “beauty” which carries him away while also inviting the audience to be captured by it as well. In other words, sūtradhāra and as seen in modern Tamil plays the viduṣaka (buffoon character) become important focal points through which, the audience can enter “the play within the play” a concept from the Nāṭyaśāstra called, nāṭyāyita (metatheater). This perception changes by the beginning of the nineteenth century as Sanskrit drama’s popularity wanes and knowledge of the aesthetic principles outlined in the Nāṭyaśāstra fades in the wake of more accessible folk, ritual, and popular traditions. Additionally, in early twentieth century South India caste politics become a central issue which colors national and social politics. A disavowal of all things Sanskrit as “foreign” and “Brahmin” and a reclaiming of a recently “discovered” Tamil antiquity and linguistic/performative/literary history further complicate the relationship between Sanskrit aesthetics and modern popular drama. What results is a uniquely Tamil modification (as seen in the works of Pavalar, Sarma, and Bharathi in particular) and alteration of the rasa which focuses on the metonymic (as opposed to metaphorical) aspect of the language (e.g. the charka (spinning wheel for cloth) represents both swadeshi (self-reliance) as well as the icon Gandhi). Hence, these company dramas utilized audience enjoyment as a meter for what type of dramatic elements to include (i.e. song, dance, a particular character, etc.) Thus, the popularity of these productions make them the ideal vehicle for nationalist and anticolonial propaganda; a political soapbox tailor-made for the audience at hand.

II. “Rasa-Consciousness” in Modern Indian Anti-Colonial Drama

In colonial India, the modernization of the popular or “company” drama as traveling drama troupe became an important tool for the burgeoning independence movement’s need to deliver information to the mass public. In addition, in other areas of anticolonial agitation, important figures like Subramanya Bharathi, Swaminatha Sarma and other members of the educated and elite communities, recognizing the need for mass dissemination of the anticolonial
message, turn to popular drama as an important vehicle for this cause. Sudipta Kaviraj suggests that there were actually the two different “nationalist movements” operating in the country that are joined by Gandhi. His ability to deliver the nationalist message to the masses and produce enough results to maintain support from the “elites,” creates the necessary coalition to subvert British rule (Kaviraj). While Kaviraj focuses on the political, it could be argued that what Gandhi does in the political arena, popular drama and song perform on the political stage.

All Indian dramatic performance emphasizes the role of the audience in the success of the play. Since in most areas of artistic expression in India, originality is privileged in the representation of a story not in its creation, the mythological plays presented stories to the audience with which they were already very familiar. However, now the stories are couched in a modern context (i.e. the context of anticolonial propaganda and a need to incite anger against the colonial government while making a cultural connection with the audience) narrating massacres and atrocities committed by the British while capitalizing on the cultural associations embedded within the audience with a figure like Rāma or Rāvaṇa as the hero fighting against this injustice. Using Rāma or Draupadī permits these playwrights to create plays that require a particular process of remembering to take place within the spectator that connects this modern heroism with mythological heroes above reproach. In this way, the Indian epic tradition represented in a mythologized history in epics such as the Rāmāyaṇa, finds its way into the anticolonial movement as a tool of legitimization and resistance. In essence, the people were able to relate to the socio-cultural mores as well as the nationalist ideology espoused in these plays since they entered the performance with certain values which they associated with figures such as Rāma. When these values were effectively transferred through the emotional connection between the play and the audience, the audience was able to use cultural memory of the figure of Rāma to view Bhagat Singh and other revolutionary heroes as, in a sense, reincarnations of the values represented by the epic heroes.

Vasudha Dalmia examines how classical dramaturgical texts such as the Nātyaśāstra continue to play a constitutitory role in “an essentially modernist enterprise which yet sought to contain itself in a relatively conservative frame” (15). Focusing on modern Hindi theater genres Dalmia also notes such influences and attempts by other Modernist theater movements in India, including those in the South to infuse their work with classical or traditional character,
particularly to promote particular social and political agendas. Tracing popular drama from the colonial into the postcolonial, the modernizing and repurposing transformations and adjustments made by the popular theater movement as India moves into the Post-Independence era in order to reflect different political and social concerns (Dalmia). These attempts to infuse a classical character into Modern drama are not only intended as ancient Sanskrit drama to instruct and reify traditional sociocultural principles, but also as surreptitious method of communicating with the audience. In these plays, the audience, familiar with many of these techniques, could be now be molded into experiencing sentiments of nationalism through the frame of a new-age rasa-consciousness. Considering later critics’ call for a revival of Sanskrit, such as Suresh Awasthi, Malayali playwright and director, G. Sankara Pillai offers the view that modern Indian folk theater is developing as an enterprise with an “anti-Western tone, which was also manifestly anti-Modernist” (205). In Pillai’s view: “The Modern Indian playwright searched…for an ‘identity with the traditional idioms’ because of the ‘realization that we are traditionally removed from realism. Our acting dictums never recognized realism” (Dalmia, 205). In essence, the need for the classical texts, even within the realm of non-elite performance modalities, undertakes a decidedly nationalist bent, since it is couched in an anti-Western sentiment.

Dalmia places the PWA (Progressive Writers Association) as a precursor to a later revival of Sanskrit in North India. A progressive writer’s group arising in the early 1930’s in India when the People’s Theater Movement begins to develop as an anticolonial enterprise, in 1935, the PWA convenes in London to “meet the demands created by the new social consciousness that followed the financial crisis of 1929 and the threatening rise of fascism in Europe...[this program] declared explicitly that the writer was first and foremost a socially and politically responsible member of his society…and to take cognizance of the specific Indian situation, to participate in the struggle for political and economic emancipation” (Dalmia, 160). This organization becomes the Indian branch of international convention of writers that included Bertoldt Brecht, Andre Gide, and E.M. Forster and becomes a leading proponent of the resistance movement within the world of literary expression as it opens offices all over India through the late 1930’s and 40’s. In addition, she argues that this organization sets up the framework for the IPTA (Indian People’s Theater Association that flourishes beginning in the 1940’s) (159). This movement gains fervor particularly after 1942 as “there was a new emphasis
on ‘Indianness’, a new enthusiasm for the culture of the people coupled with a fervent post-1942 patriotism that condemned alien rule…The organizers realized the importance of traditional folk forms for the purpose of direct communications with, as well as creative participation by, the people” (Dalmia, 161). While the IPTA never gains a strong foothold in Tamil Nadu, similar organizations such as Tamil Actors Association arise from social concerns and economic concerns of the acting community. Thus, the popular theater enterprise was instrumental in bolstering the cause for Indian independence as the most effective method available before the advent of film, to disseminate political and social messages to the masses (Dalmia).

While Dalmia’s argument explains the value of popular drama as a forum for communicating political and social positions, why this forum is successful requires inquiry into the dramas themselves. Rasa-consciousness, as a pan-Indian, but intra-culturally differentiated metanarrative aesthetic lens, provides a unique link between various performance traditions near the turn of the twentieth century invested in particular social and/or political aims. One example is nautanki, a folk theater discussed at length by Darius Swann (1995) as well as Kathryn Hansen (1983), which demonstrates the way in which the emotional investment by the audience member in the successful outcome of the performance can be repurposed for sociopolitical goals as well as aesthetic ones. Although nautanki has certain differences in themes, cultural reference points, and ideological agenda of Tamil “Protest” theater; I include this brief analysis to posit rasa-consciousness as a pan-Indian open system of aesthetic appreciation that operates via cultural symbols that produce meaning through the spectator’s “remembering” to transform rasāsvāda into patriotic sentiment. Much like Tamil “company” drama, nautanki gains a wide audience by becoming a mouthpiece of the anticolonial movement and loses popularity as the advent of the film industry and independence stem the need for its message. The Amritsar massacre and the figure of Sivaji become important nautanki themes intended to inspire and mobilize widespread anti-British feelings within the citizenry into a unified expression of nationalist resistance. For example, “by 1927, Sri Krishna [a prominent Nautanki playwright,] had imbibed the influence of the great nationalist leader, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who…at that point, represented the revolutionary, or radical, wing of the Indian Congress forces agitating for Indian freedom from British rule” demonstrating the close ties between the anticolonial movement and popular theater (Swann, 200). Sri Krishna also produces a play entitled Chātrapati Śivājī, a popular nationalist
allegory that details the death of Śivājī’s lieutenant in Marātha warriors’ struggle against the Moghul Empire. This play along with Hākīkatraī, which tells the story of a young Hindu boy accused of insulting Islam by his Muslim teacher and classmates, both juxtapose nationalist sentiment with a so-called moral superiority (Swann). Eventually, the boy is executed for refusing to convert to Islam, despite pleading by the community at large. Each of these plays, produced during the inception of agitation and civil disobedience movements in India, contain historical and religious themes to create connections for the audience between cultural praxis and patriotism and reinvent the spectators as committed citizens of the free “India” not yet in existence. Thus, through performance, indigenous cultural and traditional stories, customs, beliefs, and literary forms are transformed into anticolonial parables rife with triggers of patriotic sentiment. In this way, popular drama helps to fashion and promote a nationalist message that transcends class and caste distinctions. In the outset, these divisions presented significant obstacles to the movement, as the British often manipulated and stoked these latent divisions in order to prevent mass anticolonial sentiment and movements for independence. However, popular drama begins to attack these divisions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, by utilizing cultural symbols that are simultaneously pan-Indian and region-specific as seen with the conflation of Pārata Mātā (Mother India) and Tamiḻṭāy (Mother Tamil).

III. “Rasa-Consciousness” and Possibility of Aesthetic Innovation

The applicability of the concept of rasa-consciousness beyond the colonial period, though outside the purview of this investigation, provides an important point of departure for future work on this area. Here are few of my remaining questions that could provide fruitful areas for study: How may rasa-consciousness rearticulate a “lost” “Tamil” community/identity/language/nation through aesthetic “remembering”? What are the limitations/possibilities/applications of rasa-consciousness as an aesthetic doctrine beyond the colonial period in Tamil Nadu? Since my investigation as focused on a narrow portion of the history of the colonial encounter, it seems useful to think about how rasa-consciousness operates in post-independence theater in Tamil Nadu. In particular, it would be interesting to research authors/artists/performers that reinvigorate popular drama as a political exercise in the 1960s in the service of the Dravidian nationalism and politics to see how these productions “borrow” from earlier anticolonial playwrights/plays both stylistically as well as thematically. These modern
“borrowings” suggest that the interrelationship between aesthetic relishing and cultural memory remains an integral part of the Indian performance. The evocation of the rasa through cultural symbols (i.e. cultural dhvani) remains a constant in dramatic and aesthetic representations in various performance contexts in India. Furthermore, Sanskrit has been in dialogue both aesthetically and thematically and with South Indian authors, playwrights, actors, and performance traditions. The notion of a conditioned or evoked emotional response necessary for the ideal or perfect drama is not limited to Sanskrit as demonstrated in my discussion of emotive states in the Tolkāppiyam. Thus, the development of Tamil aesthetics, within both elite and non-elite traditions, privileges the emotional connection between the audience and the performance fostered through aesthetic remembering. This connection is exploited and retooled through popular drama in order to engender an emotional connection to the image of “India” and produce a resistant citizenry invested in procuring independence for the emerging nation.

My investigation on Tamil popular drama has focused on the development of the anticolonial Tamil plays as an offshoot of “company” drama that employs a syncretic aesthetic; English melodramatic stagecraft and indigenous narrative and poetic motifs are recast in a uniquely Tamil dramatic “casing.” Indian dramatic genres, as shown throughout my work, contains certain defining characteristics that bind them together that stem from a common background in folk art, music, and dance later conceptualized into an poetic paradigm by figures like Bharata as well as Tolkāppiyar in Tamil Nadu. The development of these aesthetic tropes and theories did not occur in isolation, but rather more likely in conversation and concurrently. In other words, whether Bharata or Tolkāppiyar arrived at their theories independently or in concert or one before the other is secondary to the notion that nearly all performance in India shares the need for of the emotional/spiritual fulfillment within the spectator at the resolution of the performance in order for it to be deemed successful. Even Bollywood films in the modern era remain reluctant to counteract the unspoken taboo on unhappy endings (a holdover from the Sanskrit tradition). I have been cautious to discuss the potential “conversations” between Sanskrit and Tamil literary and aesthetic circles in a deliberately narrow way. It is not my intention to attach an originary label to Sanskrit, but rather to note that despite the independent development of literary traditions in both North and South India, it seems clear that Sanskrit aesthetics has moments of confluence with each of them. The hybrid dance-drama tradition of uparūpaka-s and the devadāsī repertoire each demonstrate a “give and take” between Sanskrit
dramatic principles and regional art forms that has continued for centuries. Furthermore, the experience of *rasa* and the vital role of the *rasika*, both emerge as common elements in Indian performance; part of a pan-Indian aesthetic.

This observation provides the theoretical ground for “*rasa*-consciousness” as a viable tool of analysis, particularly in determining the reasons for the success of popular drama in the anticolonial movement. A future research project tracing the development of the syncretic “company” drama in the postcolonial performance era, noting its revamping and resurgence during the rise of the Dravida Munetra Kazagham (DMK) party in the 1960s and how it is culturally “reconstellated” in the contemporary Tamil Nadu would be a logical progression of my current research. Several authors examine the postcolonial politics of north Indian performance genres while leaving the socio-political dramatic landscape in modern South India fertile ground to explore the continued viability of *rasa*-consciousness. In this vein, Vasudha Dalmia’s work and Aparna Dharwadkar’s *Theaters of Independence* each explore how postcolonial performance in India continues the project of building the nation through a complex integration and negotiation between caste, gender, class, and socio-political identities. Both highlight the Indian performance tradition’s penchant for mixing history, memory, and myth in the service of particular aesthetic, cultural, and political goals. During the colonial period, Indian playwrights and actors utilize a similar strategy to construct dramas that promote anticolonial as well as social and educational causes (e.g. T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar and Sankaradas Swamigal found “boy’s companies” providing an alternative to homeless/destitute children). In other words, the resistance or social injustice was no longer merely being “staged,” but rather the “staging” had become their lived experience. The Tamil “Protest” playwrights and their troupes of actors demonstrate how intra-nationalist and communal agendas (which often take precedence) can be reconstellated as disparate parts of a singular whole—a “free” India and Tamil State. In the Partition aftermath, the absence of the unifying figure of the imperial enterprise produces a myriad of “fragments” which are the newly emerging cultural identities in India, briefly suppressed in service of national identity (Chatterjee). We see this in the competing visions of “authentic” Tamil identity that pervade the Tamil sociopolitical space from the later colonial period to the present. Thus, contestatory discourses of “Tamilness” continue to inform and reinvent the process of “nationalizing” or the building of a sentiment of national identity.
Afterword: The “State” of Performance

During 2009 winter break, while in Chennai visiting family, my aunt asked if I was going to the Tamil arts and drama performance taking place in a few weeks (in the first week of January). Immediately interested, I replied I knew nothing about this and asked how I might acquire tickets to attend. She mentioned that my cousin and another aunt were working closing with the chief organizer, Kani Mozhi and that she would phone them right away to procure admission for opening night. A few days later, my aunt, Aruna Balasubramanian, called and said that she had a VIP pass for me and we would being going to the opening night of the “Chennai Sangamam” the following week. Curious about the performance, I asked, “So, what kind of performance is this? Classical like Bharata Nāṭyam? Or is it a folk drama troupe?” I was hopeful it would provide a departure point for my dissertation thesis which was nothing more than a vague idea at this point.² My aunt replied, “It is a compilation of various arts from Tamil Nadu including folk, classical, art, literature---you know what, Dheepa? There will be one thousand five hundred artists from around the state coming together and performing for the first time! Such arts have rarely been placed together in the same venue. I think you will enjoy it.” I thought what could be better than such an eclectic show to illuminate the current “State of Performance” in Tamil Nadu. I became quite excited.

The performance took place a week or so later and as promised by our VIP passes, we had front row seats. The performance lasted several hours and included various types of folk, classical, and popular dance and drama acts. Having only seen Bharata Nāṭyam, Kucipuṭi, and classical dance performances in the past, I was enthralled by the complex mix of humor, drama, music, costume/makeup, song, and dance that characterized the various performance genres. I could not look away from the stage, helplessly ensnared by the whirlwind of color, movement, and music. When Chief Minister Karunanidhi came to deliver a concluding speech, I experienced a twinge of sadness, wishing the performance could have continued all night. I

² The almost child-like curiosity I expressed when presented with this opportunity results from years of being unable or not permitted to travel while in India visiting my family. Traditional values and mores coupled with a well-ingrained affectionate chauvinism, made traveling and pursuing my own interests quite a challenge. It was not uncommon for me to hear from various family members in response to requests to arrange transportation for a performance I was interested in seeing, “Why would you want to go there, villages are unclean and not very safe? There is nothing there, dear, nothing to see. I will take you somewhere that is much better. What is this “drama-dance” you are interested in? Is it Bharata Nāṭyam? Then you should go and see my daughter’s instructor, she will tell what you need to know.
returned to my grandmother’s house, having profusely thanked my aunt for the tickets, and woke my mother and sister to regale them with the video and photos I had taken and my own colorful descriptions of the event.

…

After returning to the USA, I began to prepare in earnest for my preliminary examinations. With my exams completed, dissertation research and writing became paramount. So, I quickly started planning another trip to India. I excitedly phoned my mother to ask if my cousin Shanti or my aunt Aruna could again procure tickets to the Chennai Sangamam. My mother replied, “Didn’t I tell you? It’s been canceled. There was some political dispute and so they canceled it.” I asked, “What “political dispute”? Wasn’t it just an arts show with--” My mother interrupted, “Dheepa, in Tamil Nadu, nothing is “just” anything and everything is political. You should talk to your cousin Shanti to learn more.”

Dejected that the performance had been canceled for no apparent reason, I decided to find out why. As often happens in India and as I came to understand, in the Tamil Nadu political sphere, it all turned out to be more complicated than one could imagine. Since my cousin Shanti had been involved closely in the organization, financials, and set up with Kani Mozhi, the program organizer and the former Chief Minister Karunanidhi’s daughter, an email to her was the logical next step in my investigation. An enlightening response from Shanti confirmed some of my own suspicions. Shanti’s account of the situation essentially states that despite the widespread popularity of the event, certain accounting irregularities noted by opposition government parties, the large amounts of government dollars spent, Kani Mozhi’s relationship to the Chief Minister, and the Chief Minister’s curious suggestion that the Tamil New Year be changed to coincide with the opening of the Chennai Sangamam, prompting accusations of manipulating the Tamil calendar for publicity reasons, all led to the political “shutdown” of the event. As she remarked, “While I can’t speak for before 2009, I accounted for every dollar spent and I know exactly what was paid to the artists. There was no conspiracy or cover up. This is only about Kani Mozhi getting MP status.” When I pressed further, she sent a few articles from some local papers regarding cancellation of the event and accusations levied by the following Chief Minister Jayalaleetha regarding improper accounting. Most interesting Jayalaleetha makes
a “cultural” charge against Karunanidhi in that he illegally sought to change the Tamil New Year to secure more publicity for his daughter’s event. When I asked Shanti how someone could arbitrarily change the date of the New Year, she laughed wryly and said, “This is politics in Tamil Nadu.” This second of charge of cultural misconduct reveals steep divides imbricated in the modern concept of “Tamilness” and the political implications of defining it.

I tell this story to show how the aestheticization of politics becomes an important tool in creating and manipulating “cultural” solidarity. “Chennai Sangamam” essentially becomes a political football tossed between various political parties in the hopes of establishing a particular cultural foothold or solidarity. This anecdote also highlights the power of aesthetics in transecting social and intra-cultural boundaries. The Chennai Sangamam is unique when compared with similar projects such as the Tamil Rural Arts Sangamam or the Tamil Sangamam in that it sought to create multifaceted audiences that transect traditional social groups (much like the nationalist Tamil dramatists, songwriters, and poets) in order to produce, as Karunanidhi says, “a full and contiguous performance history of Tamil Nadu in all her splendor.” When Karunanidhi takes this one step further and tries to place his political stamp on the Sangamam’s more eclectic ideal of “Tamilness,” the opposition became enraged. Not only have political entities recognized the unifying power of deploying “Tamil” as a monolithic symbol, but also value in manipulating various aestheticized representations of “Tamilness” to maintain political control. Last year, Chief Minister Jayalaleetha commissioned the construction of a “Mother Tamil” statue in Madurai and three new awards for Tamil translation, literature, and computing (The Hindu, 5.15.2013). Comparing Jayalaleetha’s attempt to produce a culturally unifying image of “Tamilness” that also satisfies her constituency with Karunanidhi’s similar effort demonstrates how both politicize cultural identification through the iconic value of aesthetic figures/symbols (Bate). This process is mediated through a politicized aesthetic narrative intended to connect a particular group with a specific linguistic/cultural identity by manipulating emotional allegiances. In other words, it reflects what Victor’s Turner calls “performative reflexivity” or the way in which discrete cultural moments of identity become dynamic and productive of the culture itself or in this case, of multiple versions of Tamil cultural identity.

Epilogue: Since 2013 the Chennai Sangamam has been reinstated by the AIDMK Party and current Chief Minister Jayalaleetha.
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Appendix A: Glossary of Frequently Used Sanskrit, Tamil, and Indian Terms

Abhidhā “literal or denotational meaning” Sanskrit grammarians used this term to indicate the literal sense of a word. (Skt.)

Abhinaya “using movements and expressions to express meaning in performance” This term is used to describe how “acting, pantomime” must reflect the dominant sentiment of the poetic text. (Skt.)

Adhama “lowest” This term here refers to a classification of poetry used several Sanskrit poetic theorists to describe poetry that was lacking in style or sentiment, etc. Criteria for classifying poetry as adhama vary between theorists with some overlapping positions. (Skt.)

Ādikāvya “first poem” This term is used to refer to the Rāmāyaṇa which has a mythical beginning in which the author is supposed to have spontaneously burst out the first two lines of the text when moved by the sorrow of seeing a bird killed by hunter’s arrow while communing with its mate. (Skt.)

Agni “fire, god of fire” This term is used here to refer to the sacrificial fire used to for communication between human beings and the gods. It can also refer to the fire God who is thought to facilitate this communication. (Skt.)

Akam “inside; house; privacy; type of poetry/expression which treats love and other ‘subjective’ incidents” This term is used to describe poetry in Tamil which is divided in the Tolkāppiyam into akam and pugam (outside; poetry referring to objective incidents). (Tamil)

Akupeyar “metonymy, synecdoche-lit. ‘transformed words’” This term refers to a particular aesthetic device used in Tamil that Bernard Bate describes as the foundation for the success of political figures as symbols of the Tamil language. (Tamil)

Ālāpana/Ālāpan̠ am or Ālāpan̠ ai “conversation, musical opening” This term refers to a type of improvisation within the notes of the rāga (scale) that introduces its main elements at the beginning of a performance. (Tamil and Skt.)

Āl̠ vār “one who is immersed in devotion to Viṣṇu” The Tamil Vaiṣṇava tradition recognizes twelve poet-saints or ālvār-s whose poetry is collectively known as the “four thousand sacred compositions” or Nālāyirattritivīyapirāpantam and sometimes referred to as “the Tamil Veda” (Cutler, 2003).(Tamil)

Anubhāva “emotional states that are the consequents of vibhāva-s” This is one of the central components which Bharata describes as part of the process for evoking rasa. (Skt.)

Anumāna “inference” This term refers to both a particular poetic device as well as the primary function behind Mahāmabhaṭṭa’s theory of poetics. In his treatise Vyakti-Viveka, he argues that dhvani can be ultimately subsumed under the broader rubric of anumāna. (Skt.)
Anupallavi “lines following the chorus or pallavi” In Carnatic-style music, this term refers to the second section of a song and the part which precedes the caranam or ending of the song. (Tamil and Skt.)

Apimāṇi/Apimāṇam-Tamil (Abhimāni/Abhimāna-Skt) “patriot/patriotism; pride” This term appears in Sanskrit and Tamil as well as other South Indian languages (e.g. Telegu and Kannada). While in Sanskrit it refers to “pride,” during the independence movement, this word in the regional language comes to mean “patriot” or “one who take pride or loves in the nation” and often is used to refer to anticolonial activists as seen in the works of Swaminatha Sarma and T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar. (Tamil and Skt.)

Apsaras “nymph, celestial being” These are celestial female divinities who are often the wives of gandharva-s (genies or celestial protectors of soma) and inhabit the sky. They are thought to be fond of water and have the ability to take different shapes. In Kālidāsa’s plays Vikramorvaśīyam and Abhijnāśākuntalam, the female protagonists are both apsarā-s. (Skt.)

Artha “meaning” This term refers to the meaning of a word or meaning in general. It is also the name of one of the four “goals” included in the puruṣārtha. (Skt.)

Āśrama-s “stages of life” These include four stages: student, householder, hermit, and renouncer. (Skt.)

Asvāda “relishing, enjoyment, pleasure” Here, this term refers to the aesthete’s process of appreciating and interacting with the poetic work. Other words used to describe this experience include: carvaṇā, rasanā, bhoga. (Skt.)

Ātman “soul, self” This term is the Sanskrit word to refer to both the divine self within the human form as well as the “self” as an abstract concept. (Skt.)

Aucitya “appropriateness, proper” This term refers to the process which determines whether an element should be included within the body of the poetic work. If the element is favorably situated towards to the dominant sentiment of the work and is “dharmically” appropriate it may be included in the kāvya. (Skt.)

Avatāra “descent of Viṣṇu” This term refers to the notion in Hinduism of the ten descents of Viṣṇu (god of sustenance) to earth in order to rescue the people from disaster. Each form is more evolved than the next and is contextually determined to fit the needs of the situation. Rāma, Buddha, Kṛṣṇa include some important divine figures included among these. (Skt.)

Bhakti “devotion, love” (Tamil-Pakti) This is a reference to a theistic tradition opposed to the austerity of asceticism that championed a passionate relationship with the divine. In later Sanskrit poetics/literature bhakti is acknowledged as a rasa of devotional love (notably by Madhusūdanasaravatī). It also refers to a genre of literature that develops in conjunction with devotional practices that posit the relationship between the divine and devotee as similar to that between lover and beloved. (Tamil and Skt.)

Bhāna “particular type of Sanskrit drama” This term refers to a type of Sanskrit dramatic entertainment in which only one of the interlocutors appears on the scene or a narrative of some intrigue told either by the hero or a third person. (Skt.)

Bhārata Mātā (Tamil-Pārata Mātā) “Mother India” This is a term popularly used in colonial India as personification of a unified India and symbol of Indian independence.

Bharatanāṭyam (Tamil-Paratanāṭṭiyam) “classical Indian dance form originating in Tamil Nadu courts and temples” This term refers to dance form that denotes nineteenth and twentieth century reconstructions of catir which was the
art of the devadāsī-s (court/temple dancers). The mudra-s (movements/gestures) and abhinaya-s (movements/expressions) are taken from texts based on the Nātyaśāstra and the Abhinayadarpaṇa. (Skt. and Tamil)

Brāhmaṇa/Brahmin “teacher caste/priest” This term refers a “teacher/priest” class in the Hindu caste system. (Skt.)

Caṅkam “gathering; academy; genre of Tamil literature” This term is used here to refer to a classical corpus of Tamil literature produced over the course of several hundred years with the oldest works dating roughly to third century BCE. (Tamil)

Catirldāsī āṭṭam “dance” These terms refers to the dance performed by devadāsī-s in courts and temples in South India in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Catir provides the foundation for Sanskritic South Indian dance bharatanāṭyam. In modern contexts, the term “catir” is most often used with kaccēri (concert) to refer to the distinctive style of performance emerging from the eighteenth and nineteenth century Tanjore Court tradition (Soneji). (Tamil)

Caranam “lit. foot; ending of song” This term refers to the final section of Carnatic-style song which follows the anupallavi or second section and pallavi or the “primary thematic pattern.” (Tamil and Skt.)

Charka “cloth spinning wheel” This term refers to a traditional manual device used to spin cotton cloth (khaddar). It was used by Gandhi and others as a powerful symbol of nationalism and independence through swadeshi (self-reliance).

Cinna Mēḷam “lit. small band” This term refers to a dance performance accompanied by small instruments like drum and harmonizing element. It is supposed to have been a precursor of Bharatanāṭyam. (Tamil)

Cuvai “taste” This term is similar to rasa in Sanskrit. It refers to the aesthetic “flavor” or sentiment of a poetic work that must be appreciated or “tasted” in order for the work to be deemed successful. (Tamil)

Daivakī “divine success” This term refers to what the drama achieves on a divine level when performed and constructed properly to evoke aesthetic relish within the spectator. (Skt.)

Dharmā “duty, law, righteousness” This term refers to the parameters of righteousness that stem from the Hindu religious tradition and imbue all aspects of social and cultural interactions in this context, including performance. Deriving from the verb root dhṛ which means “hold,” dharma is the moral fabric which holds society together. (Skt.)

Diwan Bahadur “honorable title issued by the British in India to individuals who had performed service to the Empire” This term marked British loyalists and was used deliberately by playwrights to mark certain characters as such.

Devadāsī “lit. servant of the gods; court dancer” This term refers to the tradition of dedicating young girls to the temple and then having them dance in royal courts. The practice of dedicating girls was abolished in the twentieth century by the Devadasi Act. (Tamil and Skt.)

Dhīrodhata “brave and haughty” This term is used by Bharata in his classification of the different types of nāyaka-s a drama may have. The other types are dhiralalita (brave and sportive), dhīrodata (brave and magnanimous), and dhiraprāśānta (brave and calm). (Skt.)

Dhvani “suggestion, resonance” This concept comes from the Sanskrit aesthetic and grammarian traditions and refers to the relationship between poetry and its aesthetic and poetic flavor. The dhvani theory of aesthetics, famously propagated by Sanskrit aestheticians Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta, argues that poetic meaning is created through an interaction between the spectator and poetic work through a process of suggested meanings.
Ānandavardhana outlines three types of dhvani: vastu dhvani (suggestion of plot or facts); alaṅkāradhvani (literary and figurative suggestion); and most importantly, rasadhvani (suggestion of sentiment). (Skt.)

Dhvanikāri “poetic theorist whose theory revolves around the concept of dhvani” This term refers to those Sanskrit poeticians who follow Ānandavardhana and place the concept of dhvani as the center of their poetic theory. (Skt.)

Doṣa “fault or improper poetic/linguistic usage that impedes the poetic sentiment or flow of the play” This is one of several components like guṇa, alaṅkāra, rīti, etc. which govern the technical structure and production of poetic works in Sanskrit. (Skt.)

Gandharva “sometimes called a ‘genie’ refers to a semi-divine being thought to have a knowledge of medicine and live in the sky or heavenly waters” This term is used to describe semi-divine beings thought to be the keepers of soma (nectar of immortality) and often regarded as celestial musicians or heavenly singers. (Skt.)

Gujili “marketplace” This term, taken from A.R. VenkatachalaPathy’s work on the history of publishing in Tamil Nadu, to refer to the marketplaces and bazaars in which the initial proliferation of songbooks and chapbooks (cheap paper publications of stories/novels) took place in Tamil Nadu (2012).

Guṇa “qualities or poetic excellence a drama should possess” This term also refers to a school of aesthetics within the Sanskrit tradition propagated by Daṇḍin and Vāmana that saw the essence of poetry as within the style of poetic language chosen. In this context, guṇa-s or “excellences” in poetry for Daṇḍin becomes the foundation of what makes a work poetic. (Skt.)

Icai “sound, praise, melody, music” This refers to the indigenous Tamil tradition of music and another aspect of the threefold Tamil (muttamil). The term is defined in the Tolkāppiyam as “music and song.” Tamil Icai refers to a classical Tamil performance repertoire and tradition revived in the twentieth century as challenge to the Madras Music Academy and “Brahmanical” project to establish a classical performance tradition informed primarily by middle-class and urban aesthetic sensibilities (Subramanian, 2006). (Tamil)

Icai Vellala “name for Tamil classical music tradition revived in the twentieth century” This term is used to describe a composite non-Brahmin caste group sometimes referred to as Mangalavandalu caste, who were performers in the temple bands called cinna mēlam (small band) and periya mēlam (big band) (Subramanian, 2006). (Tamil)

Itihāsa “lit. Thus it was; history/story” This term is often used to describe epic literature since they are supposed to be historical recounting of great heroes and gods. (Skt.)

Iyal “natural Tamil; word” This term is used here to refer to “literary Tamil.” It is part of the threefold division of muttamil (word, sound, image) (Kersenboom, 1995). (Tamil)

Jāvaḷi “type of song performance” This refers to a Telugu/Kannada musical genre stemming from the Mysore court that becomes repopularized in the in late nineteenth century as a medium for Tamil devotional poetry and songs. (Telegu/Kannada)

Kaccēri “concert; assembly” This term refers can refer to any kind of music concert. Often used with the term “catir” to refer to particular performance style of the Tanjore Court tradition. (Tamil)

Kalaikal “actor” This term gains traction in the early twentieth century through Pammal Sambandham Mudaliyar and others who want to remove the stigma associated with acting and drama in the Tamil tradition during this period. (Tamil)
Kathākālakṣepam “a performative genre that incorporates music into story-telling” This term refers to a performance genre in Tamil Nadu where music and narrative are combined. The story is carried through songs and compositions in languages like Sanskrit, Tamil, Marathi, Telugu, Kannada and Hindi, which is a peculiarity in the Tamil Nadu-style of storytelling. (Skt. and Tamil)

Kāvya “poetic work or expression” Kāvya refers to more than just poetry but also a genre of poetic works (different from drama) that are constructed along the lines of Sanskrit aesthetic principles. (Skt.)

Khaddar “coarse, homespun cloth made in India that becomes a symbol of self-sustenance” Khaddar cloth becomes an important symbol of Indian independence and self-sustenance constantly referenced in anticolonial rhetoric, songs, and performance.

Kṣatriya “warrior” This term refers to “warrior/princely” class within the Hindu caste system and includes the great heroes of Sanskrit epics such as Rāma. (Skt.)

Kūttāṭikal “hooligan (derogatory term used for “actor”)” Before Pammal Sambandham Mudaliyar revamps Tamil drama this term is used frequently to describe actors who were seen as degenerates and troublemakers. Actor or dancer is still listed as a meaning for this word in many Tamil lexicons. (Tamil)

Kūttu “folk performance” This term refers to wide range of folk performance genres in Southern India including the terukkūṭtu drama discussed in Chapter three which Sankaradas Swamigal revamps for the proscenium stage in the early twentieth century. As Frasca points out, his “conversion” of terukkūṭtu for the raised stage makes his plays nātakam-s (dramas) not folk theater (1990). (Tamil)

Lakṣana “referential/connotational meaning” This term refers to the second of the three types of meaning discussed by the Sanskrit grammarians. Unlike abhidhā meaning or the literal sense of the word, lakṣaṇa meaning manifests only when the literal sense of the word has been canceled. For instance, in the sentence “Rāma lives on the Gaṅga River,” it necessary to eliminate the possibility that he lives in the river and assume it means he lives near the river. (Skt.)

Madhyama “middling” This term here refers to a type of poetry as delineated by several Sanskrit poetic theorists. The criteria for classifying poetry as uttama, madhyama, or adhama vary between theorists with some overlapping views. (Skt.)

Mahābhārata “great war; Sanskrit epic” This is the title of one of the two great epics in the Sanskrit tradition. Roughly composed between 200BCE-400CE and attributed to a figure called Vyāsa, it narrates the story of two warring families, the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas whose conflict over the kingdom leads to a great battle which is eventually won by the Pāṇḍavas, who are seen as the “heroes.” This epic has been translated and “transcreated” into nearly every Indian regional language as well as several non-Indian languages as well. In Tamil, the Villipūttur Pāratam provides an important narrative and stylistic foundation for many folk, ritual, and popular performance traditions. (Skt.)

Mahākāvya “Sanskrit court-epic” This refers to elaborate Sanskrit poetic works often drawn from epic sources. (Skt.)

Manmatha “epithet for the God of Love” This term refers to a common epithet for Kāma or Cupid in Sanskrit drama and literally means “one who agitates the mind.” (Skt.)

Mānuṣi “human success (siddhi)” In drama, this refers to a play’s popular success as opposed to the play’s divine success or daivakī. (Skt.)
Marapu “memory, tradition, love” This term refers to the imaginative realm that plays in an important role in the aesthetic process of appreciation by the spectator. This “memory realm” does not just include the personal memories of the spectator, but also the cultural and historical “memories” in which the spectator is imbricated. (Tamil)

Mārga “style(s) of poetic speech” This is a similar concept to rīti (style) propagated by Daṇḍin as the fundamental element of poetic expression. (Skt.)

Mārgam “type/style of performance or organization of musical genres” This term is used to denote a particular music genre or refers to the organization of a performance like we see with the bharatanāṭyam repertoire. (Tamil)

Mēḷam “fret on the vīṇa (large lute); drum; musical band” This term is used when referencing two types of temple performance in South India: cinna mēḷam (small band) and periya mēḷam (big band). (Tamil)

Meypātu “emotive states which manifest on the body of the heroine and are recognized by the educated and refined observer” This term refers to that which “affects the body” or the state of experiencing (Kersenboom, 1995). (Tamil)

Mokṣa “liberation from the cycles of rebirth” This refers to one of the primary “goals” or puruṣārtha-s for a human being. (Skt.)

Mudra “hand movements and gestures intended to create meaning in performance” This is a term from the Sanskrit dramatic tradition referring to specific hand gestures and movements that convey particular sentiments, emotions, and culturally-specific aesthetic messages. (Skt.)

Muttamil “threefold Tamil” This term refers to the triple function of Tamil as it manifests in performance. It is comprised of iyal “word;” icai “sound;” and nāṭakam (mimesis) (Kersenboom, 1995). (Tamil)

Nāṭaka “drama; type of Sanskrit drama” This term refers to dramatic representation as well as specific type of Sanskrit Drama in which the playwrights dramatizes a well-known mythological or historical tale (e.g. Kālidāsa’s Abhijnānaśākuntala) (Skt.)

Nāṭakam “drama” This term is used to differentiate “drama” from prose and poetry and as notably, kūttu-s or folk performances. It also comprises the mimetic mode of expression within the three-fold division of Tamil (muttamil). (Tamil)

Nāṭuvagār “dance instructor/master” This term refers to a male dance instructor who accompanies the devadāsī dance as a music conductor and vocal percussionist. In pre-modern South India, particularly among the Tamil-speaking devadāsī communities, the nāṭuvagār would train the dancer and would also join her during the performance by reciting vocalized rhythms (Krishnan). (Tamil)

Nāṭya “drama” This term is used to differentiate Sankrit “drama” from other types of kāvyā or Sanskrit poetic literature and initially was seen as the only work in which the evocation of rasa within the spectator was paramount. (Skt.)

Nāyaka “actor; hero” This term is used by Bharata to describe the primary male protagonist of the play. (Skt.)

Nāyāṃmār “one who leads” The Tamil Saiva tradition recognizes sixty-three saints or nāyaṃmār-s whose “legendary life stories” are contained in the twelfth century hagiographic text, Periya Purāṇam. The Periya Purāṇam is the last of a sacred corpus of poetry (Tirumūr) canonized by Tamil Saivism (Cutler, 2003). (Tamil)

Nāyikā “actress; heroine” This term refers to the primary female protagonist, cast as the love interest of the nāyaka. (Skt.)
Nispatti “being brought out, effected” This term lays at the heart of Bharata’s rasasūtra and becomes in important point of inquiry in determining the relationship between the components parts of the dramatic work and the aesthetic release within the spectator. For Abhinavagupta poetic elements cannot “cause” sentiment, but rather they may interact in order to bring about aesthetic relish within the aesthete supporting a less “causal” interpretation of nispatti. (Skt.)

Nṛtya “dance” This term refers to performance genres that feature “dance” in both Sanskrit and regional performance traditions. Another term with a similar meaning, often used to refer to “abstract dance” is nṛtta (Skt.)

Om “breath of the universe” In the Upaniṣad-s this term is combination of three sounds: “a+u+m”; referring to three gods or the three realms. (Skt.)

Pallavi “refrain or chorus” Refers to one thematic line or segment of a song in Carnatic music often repeated twice to give the percussionist the rhythm or tālam for the song. It is often seen as the heart of the song. (Tamil and Skt.)

Patam “song, composition” This term refers to a form of musical composition in the classical Tamil music tradition (Carnatic music tradition). The lyrical content utilizes śṛṅgāra rasa and these compositions are often a part of Bharatanāṭyam recitals. (Tamil)

Pāṭṭu “song” This term describes one of the types of songs used in popular or “company” dramas. Villu pāṭṭu or “bow song” is a particular type of Tamil folk song tradition that was also used during the colonial period for spreading anticolonial messages. (Tamil)

Periya Mēḷam “lit. big band” This term refers to a classical form of Tamil music ensemble consisting of the nāgasvaram, the tavil, the tālam, and some form of harmonizing instrument. Both cínna mēḷam and periya mēḷam were part of the temple rituals.

Phalāgama “attainment of the fruit of action” This term refers to the final stage of action in a dramatic work which follows the resolution of conflict and is reflected in the attainment of the final goal within the dramatic narrative. (Skt.)

Pin-pāṭṭu “back-stage music” This term refers to a class of artists that sang popular nationalist songs off-stage however, often were the main attraction in early popular (company) dramas. In addition, these performers offered a new platform for political and social messaging. The artists and their songs “acquired significance independent of the dramas” in which they were initially performed (Baskaran, 32). (Tamil)

Prabandha (Tamil-Pirapantam) “any literary composition; here: hybrid Sanskrit dramatic form which is dominated by song and dance” This term refers to a tradition of Sanskrit literature that includes genres such as the uparūpaka and nṛtyaprabandha—s and is produced in regional contexts while drawing from Sanskrit aesthetic and mythological sources. (Tamil and Skt.)

Pratibhā “flash across the mind; poetic imagination” This term refers the poetic impulse within, when cultivated and honed by the poet, can produce an ideal work of poetry. (Skt.)

Pulavar “poet, learned man” This term refers to class of eighteenth and nineteenth century Tamil literary scholars who were known as experts in muttamil. (Tamil)

Pur̠am “outside; politics; public” This term refers to a type of poetry/expression which treats life in general (esp. war and the affairs of states) and other ‘objective’ incidents. (Tamil)
Purāṇa “old story-usually about the exploits of divine figures” This term refers to a particular type of text which lauds the exploits of divine figures as well as particular rhetorical tradition which begins around the seventh century CE. This corpus of works is often referred to as puranic literature. (Skt.)

Puruṣārtha-s “four goals of life” This term refers to the four goals for each person including love, wealth, duty, and liberation from samsāra or the cycle of rebirth. (Skt.)

Rāga “musical mood” This term refers to the “mood” in which a particular musical piece is played. The mood determines which “scale” should be used and what emotions the piece is intended to evoke. (Skt.)

Rākṣasa “lit. one who must be protected from; often referred to as a demon” These figures are supernatural figures who play the role of “villain” in many Sanskrit texts. They are often harassing sages in the forest or kidnapping women as seen in the Rāmāyaṇa. After the tenth century and the advent of the avatāra theory (theory of Viṣṇu’s descents to earth), rākṣasa-s are seen by some as fallen deities/men that have chosen to be “evil” and be redeemed by Viṣṇu when he destroys them, rather than reentering the cycle of rebirth to redeem their ignoble actions. (Skt.)

Rāma “lit. beautiful, pleasure; hero of the Sanskrit epic, Rāmāyaṇa” As the hero and primary protagonist of the Rāmāyaṇa, Rāma is often held up as the figure of the “ideal king” in the Sanskrit context. (Skt.)

Rāmāyaṇa “the story or happenings of Rāma; Sanskrit epic” This is the title of the one of two major Sanskrit epics. Composed roughly between 400 BCE and 200 CE by Vālmīki, the Rāmāyaṇa is known as the ādikāvya (first poem) and narrates the story of the protagonist Rāma, his wife Sītā, and his quest to defeat Rāvaṇa (the demon-king of Laṅkā). This is often referred to in the Sanskrit tradition as the “epic of ideals” with Rāma representing the “ideal” king, Sītā the “ideal” wife, Lakṣmaṇa the “ideal” brother, and so on. The notion of the “Rāma-Rajya” or the “ideal rule of Rāma” referenced by Gandhi and Rajaji and others (opposed by equality activists such as Ambedkar and E.V.R) became a point of contention during the push for independence as Indians debated how an independent India would be governed.

Rasa “taste” This term refers to the dominant aesthetic emotion or sentiment that imbues all Sanskrit poetic work. Bharata identifies eight rasa-s and corresponding bhāva-s to which later theorists have added an additional rasa (śānta or peace) and bhāva (śama or rest and in some cases, vairāgya or renunciation). These eight rasa-s are: śṛngāra (love), hāsya (laughter, mirth, comedy), raudra (anger, fury), kāruṇa (compassion, mercy), bībhatsa (disgust, aversion), bhayānaka (horror, terror) vīra (heroic), abhutam (wonder, amazement) (Skt.)

Rasādi “poetry having sentiment as prominent” Ānandavardhana divides rasādi poetry into two types: dhvani-kāvya (poetry with suggestion) and rasadhvani-kāvya (poetry in suggestion of sentiment is prominent). In the first case, the rasādi is being used to “beautify” another sense; while in the second sentiment must be the primary goal. (Skt.)

Rasadhvani “rasa functions as the ultimate goal of suggestion” This is the highest form of dhvani (suggestion) according to both Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. Abhinavagupta, in particular, argues that all “good” kāvya strives to have rasadhvani as the dominant mode of suggestion. He also notes that rasadhvani is necessary for a work to be considered poetic. (Skt.)

Rasāsvāda “aesthetic relishing/tasting/enjoying” This term refers to the spectator’s experience of the aesthetic emotion in the dramatic work and process by which this occurs. (Skt.)

Rasika “taster, connoisseur of performance” This term describes the ideal spectator of the Sanskrit drama who has the appropriately refined aesthetic palate and cultural knowledge to experience the dramatic performance successfully. (Skt.)
Rāvaṇa “lit. one who causes crying; villain figure in the Rāmāyaṇa” Rāvaṇa is a rākṣasa painted as the opposite of Rāma. Despite being a good king for his people, Rāvaṇa’s desire for Rāma’s wife, leads to his destruction. Rāvaṇa’s character has been interpreted differently by various groups, most notably by E.V.R and the Self-Respect Movement as the true hero of the Rāmāyaṇa who defends the Dravidian South from the incursion of the Āryan North. (Skt.)

Ṛti “School of Poetics that focuses on styles of poetic expression and language” The merits and existence of this school have been hotly contested by several scholars as Vāmana seems to be the only proponent. Like Daṇḍin, Vāmana saw styles of poetic expression as the fundamental element of poetic expression necessary to create good poetry. (Skt.)

Rūpaka “type of drama” This term refers to the 10 classifications of drama first outlined by Bharata in the Nātyaśāstra and later described in-depth by Dhanañjaya. Of these ten, prakaraṇa (plays that concern middle-class characters invented by the playwright with stories that take place outside of palaces and royal circles and are concerned with middle-class interests: money, love, legal justice, and bourgeois honor) and nāṭaka (plays that concern stories of cosmic import, reiterating the divine roles of kings and sages of myth) are the most common. (Skt.)

Śabda “word, sound” This is the term for a word that is identified as one of the important components of creating meaning. (Skt.)

Śabdartha “combination of word and meaning” This term refers to one of the elements identified by Sanskrit aesthetic theorists as being an integral part of kāvya or poetry. (Skt.)

Sabhā “assembly; performance art or writing organization” This term is used to refer to any assembly as well as specifically to dramatic and musical organizations like the Suguna Vilāsa Sabhā in Chennai, which was founded by P.S. Mudaliyar to promote Tamil drama. (Skt.)

Śāhitya “the union of word and meaning; the science of poetics” As the trajectory of Sanskrit poetics shifts the locus of inquiry from the material components of poetry to the aesthete’s experience of the poetic as determinative, “śāhitya,” is used to refer to the science of the poetics. (Skt.)

Sahṛdaya “man of heart” This term is used to describe the ideal connoisseur of drama; a man who has the intellectual as well as emotional capacity and knowledge to appreciate the dramatic work. (Skt.)

Śaiva/Śaivism “devotees/adherents of Śiva” This term refers to the sectarian tradition that views Śiva or the Hindu god of destruction as the supreme divine being.

Śama “rest” This is one of the suggested sthāyibhāva-s that may correspond with the so-called ninth rasa, śānta (peace). (Skt.)

Saṃsāra “cycle of rebirth” This is the world which is often conceived of as the “realm of ignorance” and cycle of continuous reincarnation. (Skt.)

Śānta “peace” This is the so-called ninth rasa included many post-Bharata Sanskrit aesthetic theorists. It is not seen as appropriate within drama. Its sthāyibhāva is seen by Abhinavagupta and Ānandavardhana as vairāgya (renunciation). (Skt.)

Satyagrāha “lit: seizing/holding the truth” This refers to the movement in 1920s (led by Gandhi and others) for non-violent political protest in the form of peaceful agitation through picketing, songs, media proliferation, and demonstrations/rallies.
**Siddhi** “success, fulfillment” This refers to the success of a Sanskrit dramatic performance, both aesthetic and spiritual “successes.” (Skt.)

**Sītā** “lit. land; heroine of the Rāmāyaṇa” Sītā is presented as the “ideal wife” in the Sanskrit epic and ultimate “chaste” woman. This reference to Sītā as a symbol of chastity and purity is invoked by Swaminatha Sarma in Pāṇapuruṣatu Viṣṇu in reference to Sutharmai, Puresan’s wife. (Skt.)

**Smara** “memory, love, desire” (Skt.) This term is difficult to define. In Sanskrit aesthetics, Abhinavagupta defines smara as aesthetically triggered “remembering” process that encompasses memory, desire, history, and tradition through which the spectator experiences the sentiment of the poetic work. (Skt.)

**Soma** “juice of the Soma plant; divine nectar” This term refers to a plant extract from Sarcostema Viminalis or Asclepias Acida produced by pressing the stalks between stones, sprinkled with water, purified in a strainer, mixed with clarified butter and flour, allowed to ferment, and then offered as a libation to the gods and/or was drunk by the Brahmins who prized the exhilarating effects. It was thought to have been collected by moonlight on certain mountains or from the sky by a falcon and is guarded by the gandharvas. (Skt.)

**Sphoṭa** “burst; lightning flash” This term refers to the process of “meaning-production” described by Bhartṛhari in his work, Vākyapadīya. Ānandavardhana uses Bhartṛhari’s work as a foundation for his poetic theory expanding the concept of sphoṭa beyond its grammatical roots as a fundamental element of poetic expression. (Skt.)

**Śṛn̄gāra** “love” This is the most widely used and important of the eight emotive states defined by Bharata in the Rasasūtra. It is the goal for the aesthete to experience this feeling at the end of all three of Kālidāsa’s plays. (Skt.)

**Śthāyibhāva** “residual emotional state” There are eight residual states within the spectator which correspond to the eight rasa-s according to Bharata. However, this number changes to nine with later Sanskrit theorists to include śānta rasa (peace) and śama (rest) as a sthāyibhāva. These eight states are: rati (love), hāsya (mirth), śoka (sorrow), krodha (anger), utsāha (energy), bhaya (terror), jugupsā (disgust), vismaya (astonishment) (Skt.)

**Śūdra** “laborer” This term refers to the “laborer class” within the Hindu caste system. (Skt.)

**Śūtradhāra** “stage-manager” This is the term refers to the stage-manager in Sanskrit dramas as well as in a number of regional performance styles. It also refers to an acting troupe leader. (Skt.)

**Swadeshi** “self-reliance” This term refers to the movement in the early twentieth century promoted by Gandhi and others to use indigenous goods and services (as opposed to those imported from Britain) to promote Indian economic independence as well as encourage nationalist sentiment.

**Swaraj** “self-rule” This term refers to movement beginning in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century for self-governance in India. While initially many anticcolonial activists such as Annie Besant and B.G. Tilak promoted “home-rule” or an independent India which remained within the British Commonwealth, later swaraj comes to mean complete independence from Britain or “self-rule.”

**Tāla** “musical rhythm” This term refers to the rhythm or beat pattern that governs a particular song. There are six beat patterns, eight beat patterns, etc. (Skt.)

**Tāy moḻi** “mother tongue” (Tamil) This term refers to particular type of Tamil language (devoid of Sanskrit, English, and Hindi words) that becomes popularized by the Dravidian movement after Indian Independence. (Tamil)
Tamil Tāy “Mother Tamil” This term is a divinization of the Tamil language although it can also refer to the Tamil culture and people. During the colonial period this term becomes the emblem of a competing discourse of Tamil identity that remained leery of the pan-Indian figure of Pārata Mātā. (Tamil)

Tātparya “import/purport” This term refers to a theory of meaning that argues the connection between the meanings of the constituent words of a poetic text represents the “import” of the sentence as a whole. In this way, tātparya conveys the meanings of several words and therefore differs from the traditional division of words (abhidhā or denotative meaning and lakṣanā or connotative meaning). Dhanaṇjaya sees this as the binding element of poetic expression that produces rasa arguing; therefore, dhvani does not have to be present for a work to be considered “poetic.” (Skt.)

Terukkūttu “popular Tamil dance-drama” This term refers to the indigenous Tamil dance-drama which is revamped and popularized by Sankaradas Swamigal in the early twentieth century for the urban stage. Though the term literally translates as “street theater” this is a bit of a misnomer. In its “original” form, it is a ritualized folk theater, which includes song, dance, and spoken word and is often performed in front of shrines during particular seasons. (Tamil)

Tillānā (lit: engrossed) This term refers to a rhythmic piece usually performed at the end of a classical South Indian music or dance performance. It is one of the seven genres of performance codified by the Tanjore Brothers in the nineteenth century: (Ciṇṇaiyā, Poṇṇaiyā, Civāṇantam, Vaṭivēl). (Tamil and Skt.)

Upama (Tamil-Uvama) “simile” This term refers to a particular comparative aesthetic device in the Sanskrit and Tamil poetic traditions. (Tamil and Skt.)

Uttama “highest” This term refers here to types of poetry as delineated by several Sanskrit poetic theorists. (Skt.)

Uparūpaka “minor and hybrid varieties of dramatic performance” This term refers to eighteen varieties of dance-drama forms that did not contain all of the components of any one of the ten rūpaka-s described first by Bharata and often incorporated more songs and dance. These hybrid Sanskrit dance-drama forms provided an important foundation and resource for regional theater traditions. (Skt.)

Vairāgya “renunciation” This term refers to the sthāyibhāva (residual emotion) Ānandavardhana suggests for śānta rasa (peacefulness; at rest). (Skt.)

Vaiṣṇavism “devotees/adherents of Viṣṇu” This term refers to the sectarian tradition centered on the belief that the Hindu god of sustenance, Viṣṇu is the supreme divine being, encompassing all others. (Skt.)

Vaiśya “merchant” This term refers to the “merchant/farming” class within the Hindu caste system. (Skt.)

Vande Mātaram (Tamil-Vante Mātaram) “lit. I praise/honor Mother India” This is a phrase that became the mantra (slogan) of the independence movement in India. It was used as a greeting, rallying cry, and as a protest slogan. (Hindi, Skt.)

Varṇam “song; musical notes pertaining to a particular tune; quality or character” This term has multiple meanings. It refers to a “song” within the Carnatic music repertoire consisting of short metric pieces which encapsulate the main features and parts of a rāga (scale). It is often performed as the opening act in a Carnatic music performance. (Tamil)

Vāsanā “latent memory impression from a previous life” Abhinavagupta uses this term to explain spectator’s aesthetic encounter with the performance. He argues that the process of memory is steeped in the continuity of
history, tradition, and cultural reference. Therefore, the aesthetic experience is predicated on the spectator’s ability to filter the dramatic world through this temporally and culturally variegated aesthetic lens of *vāsa*-nā-s. (Skt.)

*Vātsalya* “parental love” This term refers to a later *rasa* (sentiment) included by Sanskrit theorists (notably Viśvanātha) who saw the possibility of other kinds of “love” beyond that included within *śṛṅgāra* (romantic love sentiment) (Skt.)

*Vibhāva* “poetic device that functions as a determinant” Bharata lists several possible *vibhāva*-s in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and notes which ones should appear in conjunction with each *rasa*. (Skt.)

*Vidūṣaka* “buffoon character” This figure appears in all Sanskrit dramas as well as many regional performance genres as a companion to the hero and liaison between the dramatic world and audience. (Skt.)

*Villupāṭṭu* “musical narration of episodes; bow-song” This term refers to South Indian folk/village-performance genre in which a large bow (*villu*) with small bells attached to the string is used to maintain rhythm. Performers tell stories on mythological, social, and political topics. The main storyteller narrates while striking the bow which rests on a mud pot kept facing downwards. Another performer beats the pot while singing while a third performer/singer, who acts as active listener to the narration, provides appropriate oral responses. This performance genre has been used as a vehicle for social and political messaging (Baskaran). (Tamil)

*Vipralambha* “love in separation” This term refers to one type of “love” between hero and heroine depicted in drama. Often seen as the most poignant and powerful of various types of love, this particular aesthetic device is employed by Kālidāsa in each of his plays. (Skt.)

*Vīra* “heroic sentiment” This refers to one of the primary sentiments outlined by Bharata and often appears in conjunction with *śṛṅgāra*. (Skt.)

*Viyoga* “dis-union; separation” Like *vipralambha* this term also refers to the separation of lovers in the dramatic narrative, but also it can mean any separation. (Skt.)

*Vṛttī* “style” This term refers to a particular style of composition, which occurs in four varieties, with the first three suited for *śṛṅgāra* (love), *vīra* (heroic), and *raudra* (anger) *rasa*-s. (Skt.)

*Vyābhicaribhāva* (Sanjāri) “temporary emotional states” This term refers to the forty-one temporary emotional states that can be represented, which Bharata describes in chapter six of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. (Skt.)

*Vyākaraṇa* “grammar and grammatical discourses in the Sanskrit tradition” This term refers both “grammar” as well the school of grammatical discourse in the Sanskrit tradition. Major figures within this tradition include Pāṇini, Patañjali and Bhartrihari who pioneer the theory of *spoha* (flash of meaning across the mind) which becomes the basis for *dhvani* theory. (Skt.)

*Vyānja* “suggester” This term refers to the components within a *kāvya* (poetic work) which interact with the aesthete in order to produce the suggested meaning. (Skt.)

*Vyaṅgya (Vyaṅga)* “suggested meaning” This term refers to meaning which is produced by the suggesters (vyānja). (Skt.)

*Vyaṅjana* “suggested meaning; function of suggestion” This term refers to the one of the three types of meaning for morphological components outlined by the Sanskrit grammarians that becomes the basis for Ānandavardhana’s theory of *dhvani*. In Ānandavardhana’s theory, *vyaṅjana* refers to the function of suggestion within the context of *kāvya*. (Skt.)
Appendix B: Timeline of Selected Sanskrit Poetic Theorists, Scholars, and Playwrights/Composers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Playwrights/Composers</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Selected Major Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vālmīki</td>
<td>fl.500BCE-100 CE</td>
<td><em>Rāmāyaṇa</em> (epic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vyāsa</td>
<td>fl. 400BCE-200 CE</td>
<td><em>Mahābhārata</em> (epic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śūdraka</td>
<td>fl. 200 BCE-5th century CE</td>
<td><em>Mrcchakatika, Padmaprābhrtaka</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhāsa</td>
<td>fl. 2nd century BCE-2nd century CE</td>
<td><em>Mahābhārata</em> Plays, <em>Svapnavāsavadatta, Cārudattam</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aśvaghoṣa</td>
<td>fl. 80-150 CE</td>
<td><em>Buddhacarita, Mahālaṅkāra</em> (poetic text)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viśākhadatta</td>
<td>fl. 4th century CE</td>
<td><em>Mudrarākṣasa, Devicandragupta</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhāravi</td>
<td>fl. 6th century CE</td>
<td><em>Kīrāṭārjunīya</em> (mahākāvyya “epic poem”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harṣavardhana</td>
<td>fl. 590-647 CE</td>
<td><em>Ratnāvalī, Nāgānanda, Priyadarśikā</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bāṇabhaṭṭa</td>
<td>fl. 7th century CE</td>
<td><em>Harṣacarita, Kādambari</em> (novel), <em>Parvatīpariṇaya, Caṇḍikāśataka</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhavabhūti</td>
<td>fl. 7-8th century CE</td>
<td><em>Mālaṭīmādhava, Uttararāmacarita</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dāmodaragupta</td>
<td>fl. 8th century CE</td>
<td><em>Kuṭṭanīmāta</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theorists/Scholars</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Major Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nandikeśvara</td>
<td>fl. 200BCE-200 CE</td>
<td><em>Abhinavadarpāṇa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharata</td>
<td>fl. 200BCE-200 CE</td>
<td><em>Nātyaśāstra</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohala</td>
<td>fl. 200BCE-200 CE</td>
<td>no extant works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pāṇini (Grammarian)</td>
<td>fl. 5th century BCE</td>
<td><em>Aśṭādhyāyi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patañjali (Grammarian)</td>
<td>fl. 4-5th century BCE</td>
<td><em>Mahābhāṣya, Yogasūtra</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vātsyāyana (Philosopher)</td>
<td>fl. 3rd century CE</td>
<td><em>Kāmasūtra, Nyāya Sūtra Bhasya</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharṭṛhari (Grammarian)</td>
<td>fl. 5th century CE</td>
<td><em>Vākyapadiya</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhāmaha</td>
<td>fl. 6-7th century CE</td>
<td><em>Kāvyālaṅkāra</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daṇḍin</td>
<td>fl. 6-7th century CE</td>
<td>Kāvyadarśa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udbhāta</td>
<td>fl. 8th-9th century CE</td>
<td>Kāvyālaṅkārasaṅgraha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vāmana</td>
<td>fl. 8th-9th century CE</td>
<td>Kāvyālaṅkāra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhaṭṭa Lollaṭa</td>
<td>fl. 8-9th century CE</td>
<td>no extant works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author Unknown</td>
<td>~8-11th century CE</td>
<td>Agnipurāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudraṭa</td>
<td>fl. 9th century CE</td>
<td>Kāvyālaṅkāra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ānandavardhana</td>
<td>fl. 9th century CE</td>
<td>Dhvanyāloka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhoja</td>
<td>fl. 10-11th century</td>
<td>Sarasvatīkanṭhabharana, Śrīṅgāraprakāśa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rājaśekhara</td>
<td>fl. 9-10th century CE</td>
<td>Kāvyamimāṃsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhaṭṭa Tauta</td>
<td>fl. 9-10th century CE</td>
<td>Kāvyakautaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka</td>
<td>fl. 9-10th century CE</td>
<td>Sahṛdayadarpana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saṅkuka</td>
<td>fl. 10th century CE</td>
<td>no extant works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanaṅjaya</td>
<td>fl. 10th century CE</td>
<td>Daśarāpaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abhinavagupta</td>
<td>fl. 10th-11th century CE</td>
<td>Bhārati; Locana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuṇṭaka</td>
<td>fl. 10-11th century CE</td>
<td>Vakroktijīvita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kṣemendra</td>
<td>fl. 11th century CE</td>
<td>Suvṛttatilaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mammaṭa</td>
<td>fl. 11th century CE</td>
<td>Kāvyaprabhāsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahimabhaṭṭa</td>
<td>fl. 11th century CE</td>
<td>Vyaktiviveka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rūyyaka</td>
<td>fl. 12th century CE</td>
<td>Sahṛdayalīlā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śāradātanaya</td>
<td>fl. 13th century CE</td>
<td>Bhāvaprabhāsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayadeva</td>
<td>fl. 13th century CE</td>
<td>Candrāloka, Gītāgovindā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viśvanātha</td>
<td>fl. 1378–1434 CE</td>
<td>Sāhityadarpana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rūpagosvāmin</td>
<td>fl. 1489–1564 CE</td>
<td>Ujjvalanilamani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appayya Dīkṣita</td>
<td>fl. 1520-1593 CE</td>
<td>Kuvalayānanda, Citramimāṃsa, Vṛttivārttika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhusūdana Sarasvatī</td>
<td>fl. 1540–1640 CE</td>
<td>Bhāgavadbhaktirasāyana (authored many works on topics in Vaiṣṇava devotional tradition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jagannātha</td>
<td>fl. 1610-1670 CE</td>
<td>Rasagaṅgādhāra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C: Timeline of Notable People, Publications, and Events in Colonial India/Madras Presidency and the British Imperial Regime (1760-1947)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Political Events in Colonial India/Tamil Nadu</th>
<th>Literary &amp; Dramatic Events</th>
<th>Significant Events in the British Empire (1760-1947)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1760-1770</td>
<td>Trinity of “Carnatic” Music: The contemporaries Tyāgarāja (1767–1847); Mutucuvāmi Tiṭcitār (1775–1835) and Śyāma Śāstri, (1763–1827) are regarded as the Trinity of Carnatic music because of the quality of Śyāma Śāstri's compositions, the varieties of composition by Mutucuvāmi Tiṭcitār, and Tyāgarāja's prolific output in composing kṛti-s (type of song). In 1763, Tuḷajā II (rules: 1763-87) becomes the last independent ruler of Tanjore. 1774-6, the Nawab of the Carnatic region annexes Tanjore. The Directors of the East India Company return the throne, but in a much weaker capacity.</td>
<td>In 1764, the British defeat the last and very weak Mughal Emperor to become rulers of Bengal, richest province of India and effectively begin their colonial enterprise. After the sacking of Pondicherry in 1761, the Vepery Mission in Madras Presidency acquires the first printing press of the three colonial presidencies.</td>
<td>In 1769, Prithivi Narayan Shah, ruler of Gorkha principality, conquers Nepal Valley and moves his capital to Kathmandu, establishing the present-day nation of Nepal. The American Revolution, a political upheaval that took place between 1765 and 1783, leads to the thirteen American colonies leaving the British Empire to form an independent nation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1771-1790</td>
<td>In 1784, British judge and linguist Sir William Jones founds Calcutta's Royal Asiatic Society; first such scholastic institution. Serfoji II (1777-1832) succeeds his father Tuḷajā II on the Tanjore Court throne in 1787</td>
<td>In 1773, the British East India Company obtains a monopoly on the production and sale of opium in Bengal. 1787-95, British Parliament impeaches Warren Hastings, Governor General of Bengal (1774-85) for misconduct.</td>
<td>Printing press is used to produce and distribute a full revised translation of the Bible (first translated into Tamil in 1710) and a Tamil-English dictionary in 1779. In 1786, William Jones uses the Sanskrit word Āryan (“noble”) to</td>
<td>In 1776, the newly formed Continental Congress for breakaway American colonies declared independence from Britain. In 1787, the British Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade is formed, marking the beginning of the end of slavery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
though deposed by his uncle with British assistance shortly afterwards. Recovering the throne in 1798, soon afterward he accedes to British control and the territory becomes the Tanjore District of Madras Presidency.

In 1792, Britain’s Cornwallis defeats Tipu Sahib, the Sultan of Mysore and most powerful ruler in South India at this time and thereby removing the main bulwark of resistance to British expansion in India.

In 1798, the British colonial administration declares the port city of Madras the capital of Madras Presidency—a region which included large portions of Telegu regions in what is now Andhra (Soneji and Peterson, 12).

In 1803, the second Anglo-Maratha war results in the British capture of Delhi and control over large parts of India. India’s population is 200 million.

| 1791-1810 | Tanjore Quartet (taṇcāi nālvar): Cin̠ cāiyā (1802-56); Poṇṇāiyā (1804-64); Cīvāṇantam (1808-1863); and Vaṭivēl (1810-1845) These four brothers, born into a performing family and educated in music by famed classical composer Mutucuvāmi Tiṭcitār. The four brothers flourish under royal patronage and are best known for codifying the basic adāva-s (dance units) of bharatanāṭyam and configuring the māṛgām (the repertoire of bharatanāṭyam performance, from alārippu to tīllānā) appropriate for the concert stage. | In 1792, Britain’s Cornwallis defeats Tipu Sahib, the Sultan of Mysore and most powerful ruler in South India at this time and thereby removing the main bulwark of resistance to British expansion in India. In 1798, the British colonial administration declares the port city of Madras the capital of Madras Presidency—a region which included large portions of Telegu regions in what is now Andhra (Soneji and Peterson, 12). In 1803, the second Anglo-Maratha war results in the British capture of Delhi and control over large parts of India. India’s population is 200 million. | The Irish Rebellion of 1798 or the United Irishmen Rebellion was an uprising against British rule in Ireland lasting from May to September 1798. The United Irishmen were an Irish Republican revolutionary group influenced by the ideas of the American and French revolutions, were the main organizers of the rebellion. |
| 1811-1830 | Mīn̠ āṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai (1815-1876) celebrated teacher and an important figure for Tamil literary development. He composed mostly thāla purāṇa-s (mythical/spiritual histories) (Ebeling). Māyūram Vēṭanāyakam Piḷḷai (1826-1889) becomes one of the first “modern” Tamil authors. | F.W. Ellis locates Beschi’s manuscript on Tamil grammar originally produced in 1716 and it is published by Babington in 1822. | 1825 marks the first massive immigration of Indian workers from Madras to Reunion and Mauritius. This immigrant Hindu community builds their first temple in 1854. |
1831-1850  | Annie Besant (1847–1933) is a prominent British socialist, theosophist, women's rights activist, writer and orator and supporter of Irish and Indian self-rule. Śivājī II, Serfoji II's son, the last Maratha ruler of Tanjore remains in power 1832 to 1855. Lacking authority and a male heir (despite his wife’s adoption of her nephew after the Śivājī’s death in 1855), the British annex this region according to policies outlined in the Doctrine of Lapse. Doctrine of Lapse is a policy of annexation of princely states in the Indian subcontinent when the king died without an heir or was declared incompetent.  

1835  | In 1835, civil service jobs are made available to Indians.  

1837  | In 1837, the British government suppresses Kālī-worship (Goddess of Destruction/Mother Goddess) as a detrimental practice.  

1843  | In 1843, the British conquer the Sind region (in present-day Pakistan).  

1846  | In 1846, the British sell the region of Kashmir to the Maharaja of Jammu for one million pounds.  

1849  | In 1849, a Sikh army is defeated by the British military at Amritsar.  

1851-1860  | Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920) is a prominent Indian nationalist, journalist, teacher, lawyer, and social reformer. He and is both a social reformer and a colonial official (Ebeling, 29).  

1858-1947  | India was ruled officially by the British government after 1857 “Indian (Sepoy) Mutiny” through a  

1851  | In 1851, M. Monier-Williams (1819–99) publishes English-Sanskrit Dictionary. His completed Sanskrit-English Dictionary is  

1833  | In 1833, the British government abolishes slavery.  

1835  | In 1835, Mauritius receives 19,000 immigrant indentured laborers from India. The last ship of laborers arrives in 1922.  

1837  | In 1837, Britain formalizes emigration of Indian indentured laborers to supply cheap labor under a system more morally acceptable to British Christian society than slavery.  

1840  | In 1840, Joseph de Goubineau (1816–1882), a French scholar, writes The Inequality of Human Races in which he declares the “Aryan race” superior to others and posits a class-based doctrine of “Aryanism” that later provides the basis for Hitler's theory of Aryan superiority.
is the first popular leader of the Indian Independence Movement and originally advocated for armed resistance against the British, a position he later mitigates as join Annie Besant to promote “home-rule” in 1915.

G. Subramania Iyer (1855-1916) is founder of The Hindu and its Tamil counterpart Cutēcamittiran̠. These are a part of slew of newspapers and journal published during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that provided ground for the role of media as both a forum and catalyst of public debate.

P. Sundarampillai (1855-1897), Tamil scholar and playwright, is best known for a song he composed for his play Manomaniyam that praises “Mother Tamil” and is adopted as the Tamil National Anthem.

In 1854, Peter Percival publishes his general survey of Indian culture, The Land of the Veda.

In 1856, Robert Caldwel publishes A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages which espouses Francis Whyte Ellis’s theory of the independent development and relationship between South Indian languages (formulated in 1816 to counter William Jones’s contention that Sanskrit is the root of all Indian languages) (Venkatachalapathy 2012).

In 1858, Kasi Viswanatha Mudaliar writes and stages the play Tācitar Nāṭakam, one of the earliest anti-British plays produced in Tamil. It satirizes the malpractices in government administration.

1861-1870

M.V. Ramanujachari (1866-1940) translates the Mahābhārata from Sanskrit into Tamil. Publishing it in installments, he hoped to acquire subscriptions. The first installment is published in 1908.

Sister Nivedita or Margaret Elizabeth Noble (1867-1911) is an Irish woman who comes to India in 1898 to become a follower of Swami Vivekananda.

In the 1860s and 70s, Parsi Drama troupes begin touring north and south India (leaving urban Bengal), producing Shakespearean-Indian plays in a commercial, widely appealing format mimicked by Theater troupes/companies in other parts of colonial India in the early twentieth century.

In 1860, two British ships, S.S. Truro and S.S. Belvedere dock in Durban, S. Africa, carrying the first indentured servants (from Madras and Calcutta) to work in sugar plantations. With contracts of five years and up, thousands emigrate over next fifty years.

In 1867, Annie Besant marries Frank Besant from whom she later separates over religious differences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Person(s)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871-1880</td>
<td>V.O. Chidambaram (V.O.C.) (1872-1936) was also known as V.O. Chidambaram</td>
<td>In 1876, the British Queen Victoria (1819-1901), head of Presidency College in Madras and editor of the magazine <em>Tīgavartmāṇi</em>, publishes Tamil-English; English-Tamil dictionary. In 1875, Helena Blavatsky, Henry Steele Olcott, and William Quan...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1872-1922</td>
<td>T.T. Sankaradas Swamigal</td>
<td>He is best known as one of the fathers of the modern Tamil drama and taking the folk-performance form, <em>terukkūttu</em> and transforming it for the urban stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870-1903</td>
<td>Suryanarayana Sastri</td>
<td>He becomes an inspiration for later Tamil language proponent, Maraimalai Adigal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1869-1948</td>
<td>Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi</td>
<td>He catalyzes the Indian independence movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867-1922</td>
<td>Simmi Jain’s <em>Encyclopedia of Indian Woman Through the Ages: Period of Freedom Struggle</em></td>
<td>In 1868, a book of songs about the railway <em>Chennaipattina Pukaivanti Elapāṭtu</em> (Madras Railway Songs) is released. (Baskaran, 46).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867-1922</td>
<td>(Encyclopedia of Indian Woman Through the Ages: Period of Freedom Struggle)</td>
<td>Vivekananda’s brand of Hinduism. She becomes a prominent teacher, author, social worker and eventually an influential nationalist activist. After her death in 1911, her epitaph states “Here reposes Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India” (Biographical details taken from Simmi Jain’s <em>Encyclopedia of Indian Woman Through the Ages: Period of Freedom Struggle</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Baskaran</td>
<td>In 1868, a book of songs about the railway <em>Chennaipattina Pukaivanti Elapāṭtu</em> (Madras Railway Songs) is released. (Baskaran, 46).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>Chennaipattina Pukaivanti Elapāṭṭu (Madras Railway Songs)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kappalottiya Tamilian &quot;The Tamil Helmsman. He is a Tamil political leader and disciple of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He is also a contemporary of Subramanya Bharathi, V.V.S Aiyer and widely involved in nationalist activities until his arrest and imprisonment for sedition in Tinnevelly in 1908.</td>
<td>Church of England, is proclaimed Empress of India (1876-1901) by Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) who was a Conservative British Prime Minister in 1868 and again in 1874-1880. In 1876, the Dramatic Performances Act is passed giving the government the right to censor performance deemed incendiary or seditious. This act comes in use heavily after 1919, when political dissent takes hold in the realm of popular drama. Beschi’s treatise on Tamil (heavily influenced by Tamil translations from Sanskrit) is published in the original Latin by A.C. Burnell in 1876. In 1878 <em>The Hindu</em>, an English-language Indian newspaper headquartered at Chennai is launched as a weekly paper. It is published daily beginning in 1889 through the present.</td>
<td>Judge found the theosophical society in New York. It later moves to England, Ireland, India, and Australia. In 1876, Max Muller, pioneer of comparative religion as a scholarly discipline, publishes 50-volume Sacred Books of the East, comprised of English translations of Indian-Oriental scriptures. In 1877 Annie Besant &amp; Charles Bradlaugh are prosecuted in Ireland for publishing Charles Knowlton’s controversial birth control pamphlet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) is a prominent Bengali nationalist, poet, and spiritual leader. After the British imprison him for writing seditious material, Aurobindo goes to Pondicherry to focus on spiritual reform ideas. Here he interacts with Tamil poet-nationalists Swaminatha Sarma and Subramanya Bharathi.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Cousins (1873-1956) is a theosophist, aesthetician, Irish nationalist, and an educational reformer in India. He is brought to India by Annie Besant in 1915 to join her branch of the Theosophical Society in Adyar.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pammal Vijayaranga Sambandha Mudaliyar (1873-1964), called “the founding father of modern Tamil Drama,” is a playwright, director, producer, and actor. J.R. Rangaraju (1875-1959) is a popular serial novelist from the</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
early part of the twentieth century in Tamil Nadu.

Mohammed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), a lawyer, activist, and politician, is a prominent leader of the Indian nationalist movement and becomes the first prime minister of Pakistan.

Margaret Cousins (1878-1954) is an Irish-Indian Theosophist, suffragist, and education activist in both Ireland and India. Wife of James Cousins, she is active in advancing the rights and roles of women in political & social venues and increasing access to education for Indian women.

E.V. Ramasamy Naicker (1879-1973), Tamil social activist, leader, and writer, is known for founding the Self-Respect League 1926. He also was an advocate for a system of government for independent India that recognized the unique, non-Sanskritic history of Tamil.

<p>| 1881-1890 | V.V. S Aiyer (1881-1925) was an Indian revolutionary from Tamil Nadu who fought against British occupation. C. Subramanya Bharathi (1882-1921), the great Tamil poet-laureate, is a literary innovator, proponent of caste equality, and anticolonial activist. |
| 1885 | Founding of Indian National Congress (INC). Gradually, this organization slowly moves from a position of adviser for to critic of the British administration soon demanding the transference of power to native Indian politicians. Cutēcamittiran̠, the first Tamil newspaper is published. It becomes a daily in 1898. In 1887 Pammal Sambandham Mudaliyar founds Suguna Vilāsa Sabha in Madras Presidency. Kasi Viswanatha Mudaliar writes and stages the play Dumbachari in 1881, one of the earliest “socials” |
| 1885 | In 1881, women are permitted to stand for local elections though still not at the parliamentary level in Britain. On November 13, 1887 Annie Besant and others are involved in a demonstration against unemployment, coercion in Ireland and to demand the release of MP William O’Brien, imprisoned for incitement as a result of an incident in the Irish Land War. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Vadavur Duraiswamy Iyengar</strong> (1880-1942) is one of the first Tamil novelists, widely known for his popular detective fiction in the 1930s. He is also thought to have been an inspiration for the Kandaswamy Mudaliar.</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>S.S. Viswanathan Das</strong> (1886-1940) is an actor/singer who first enters the stage at age eight, under the tutelage of Sankaradas Swamigal. After meeting Gandhi in 1911, he joins the anti-colonial movement and begins performing in nationalist productions.</td>
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<td><strong>Jawaharlal Nehru</strong> (1889-1964) is a prominent nationalist, politician, and the first prime minister of Independent India. He was an active member of the Indian National Congress and played an important role in negotiations with the British for Partition.</td>
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<td><strong>T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar</strong> (1890-1934), a poet, playwright, actor, one of the most important of the Tamil Protest Playwrights, joins the Indian National Congress which brought him into close contact with Gandhi, Tilak and Rajagopalachari.</td>
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<td><strong>Kandaswamy Mudaliyar</strong> (~1875-1940) is a playwright and actor whose exact dates are unknown.</td>
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<td>or plays with a social message to be produced in Tamil.</td>
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<td>In 1887, <em>Kalittokai</em> becomes the first work of the Caṅkam corpus to be printed.</td>
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<td>In 1889, the Caṅkam Period classic <em>Pattuppāṭu</em> is printed.</td>
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<td>The Social Democratic Federation and the Irish National League were the primary organizers of the protest. Violent clashes took place between the police and demonstrators and reports suggest four hundred people were arrested and at least seventy-five of protesters and police were injured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The London Match Girls Strike in 1888 resulting from poor working conditions in the match factory, including 14-hour work days, poor pay, excessive fines and severe health complications from working with white phosphorus. Annie Besant and Herbert Burrows publish an article on the situation in a weekly paper <em>The Link</em>. Bryant &amp; May management (match company) attempted to have the workforce to sign a paper contradicting Besant’s article. Refusal to do this leads to the dismissal of a worker and becomes a catalyst for the strike with nearly 1,400 women and girls leaving work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In 1889, Annie Besant becomes involved in the London Dock Strike in which day-laborer dock workers leave work to lobby for better working conditions and pay.</td>
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<td>In 1890, Annie Besant meets Helena Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society.</td>
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</table>
While it seems none of his works are extant his son, M.K. Radha, his son is a well-known nationalist actor.

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<tr>
<td>1891-1900</td>
<td>Swaminatha Sarma (1895-1975)</td>
<td>is a Tamil playwright, scholar, and translator who flees to Burma to avoid arrest after the banning of his nationalist play, Pāṇapuratu Viraj (Hero of Bānapura) in India. C.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) is a prominent social activist best known for his work promoting the so-called depressed classes or socially oppressed castes/classes.</td>
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<td>1894</td>
<td>Gandhi drafts a petition protesting the indentured servant system. Shortly afterward, the British announce the halt of indentured emigration from India.</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>In 1905, Lord George N. Curzon (1859-1925), British Viceroy of India 1899-1905, resigns over Partition of Bengal debacle.</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>In 1907, Annie Besant moves the headquarters of the Theosophical Society from Benares to Adyar College in Madras.</td>
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<td>1908</td>
<td>In 1908, Subramanya Bharathi and V.V.S. Aiyer flee to the French colony of Pondicherry fearing arrest for anti-British activities. Bharathi returns to Madras in 1918 while V.V.S. Aiyer comes back in 1921.</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>K. Sundarambal, (1908-1980) from a devadāsī family, begins her acting career in 1927 when she joins a traveling drama troupe where she co-stars next to her husband S.G. Kitappa and becomes immensely popular.</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>Balamani Ammal (fl. early twentieth century), known as “Queen of the Tamil Stage” is born into a devadāsī family and joins theater from an early age. She ran a popular all-women’s theater group that became one of the first to stage Rajambal based on J. Rangaraju’s novel.</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>In 1911, the Tinnevelly Sedition Case occurs in response to the nationalist activities of V.O. Chidambaram.</td>
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<td>1912</td>
<td>In 1912, anti-Indian race riots in the United States West Coast displace large Hindu immigrant population.</td>
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<td>More open to a moderate nationalist position.</td>
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<td>In 1914, Annie Besant joins Indian National Congress. In 1915, James and Margaret Cousins come to Madras Presidency from Ireland. In 1920, Gandhi formulates the notion of <em>satyagraha</em> or &quot;firmness in truth,&quot; which becomes a strategy of noncooperation and nonviolence against the British. He revamps this movement to include a push for <em>swadeshi</em> (self-reliance) and vows to wear only <em>khaddar</em> or &quot;homespun cotton.&quot; In the same year, Gandhi becomes leader of INC in Nagpur.</td>
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<td>1913 Muslim League is dominated by younger moderate generation of nationalists drawn from urban, professional classes; M.A. Jinmah leaves Congress to join the League this year.</td>
<td></td>
<td>New <em>India</em> and it became her mouthpiece to advocate for Indian freedom. 1914-1918—Another three works from the Caṅkam corpus appear in print: <em>Nāgrīnai</em> (1914), <em>Kuguntokai</em> (1915), and <em>Paripāṭal</em> (1918). In 1914, T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar founded a Tamil newspaper, <em>Irruva Camācāram</em> (Today's news) which he ran for six years until he decided that low literacy rates made drama a better medium for messaging. Annie Besant’s arrest for sedition in 1917 spurs T.P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar to quit his job as the Chief Tamil teacher at the Muthialpet Boys School in George Town and join the freedom movement. In 1916, Tilak and Annie Besant set up “home-rule leagues” around the nation in the style of Ireland to advocate for Indian autonomy. In 1916, T. P. Krishnaswamy Pavalar at the Muthialpet Boys School in George Town and join the freedom movement. In 1916, the Lucknow Pact, (negotiated by INC and Muslim League) establishes separate electorates for Muslims. In 1917 Annie Besant becomes president of the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress; founds the Indian Women’s Association (dedicated to women’s social and political empowerment). Justice Party is established by T.M. Nair and Thiagaroya Chetty in Tamil Nadu in 1917. In 1918, Montague-Chelmsford Reforms introduced by Lord Chelmsford (Viceroy of India 1916-1921) and Secretary of State for India, Edwin Samuel Montague were the basis for the establishment of separate electorates for Muslims. In 1917 Annie Besant becomes president of the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress; founds the Indian Women’s Association (dedicated to women’s social and political empowerment). Justice Party is established by T.M. Nair and Thiagaroya Chetty in Tamil Nadu in 1917. In 1918, Montague-Chelmsford Reforms introduced by Lord Chelmsford (Viceroy of India 1916-1921) and Secretary of State for India, Edwin Samuel Montague were the basis for the establishment of separate electorates for Muslims. In 1913, South Africa enacts law prohibiting Indian immigration primarily in response to white colonists’ alarm at competition of Indian merchants and expired labor contracts. In 1914, Annie Besant founds “Young Men’s Indian Association” in Madras to train young men for public work. Annie Besant also two newspapers: <em>The Commonweal</em> and <em>New India</em> in 1914. In 1916, the Easter Rebellion or Easter Rising, an armed protest mounted by Irish republicans to end British rule in Ireland and to establish an independent Irish Republic at a time when the United Kingdom was heavily engaged in World War I, takes place. It was the most significant uprising in Ireland since the rebellion of 1798. Seven members of the Military Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood began the Rising on Easter Monday and it lasted for six days. Members of the Irish Volunteers, led by Patrick Pearse, and joined by the Irish Citizen Army of James Connolly, seize key locations in Dublin and proclaim the Irish Republic’s independence.</td>
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Government of India Act. They were intended to provide limited self-government to the Indian subcontinent.

In 1919, the Government of India Act (Rowlatt Act) is introduced to suppress opposition and dissatisfaction with the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. This act restricted public assembly and was seen as an affront to the support India provided during WWI.

In 1919 growing unrest and anger at British repressive policies, particularly the Rowlatt Act, leads to a peaceful protest in a public park in Amritsar, Punjab. The brutal response by the British to protest is known as the Amritsar Massacre (Jallianwallah Bagh Massacre); the slaughter of ~3000 unarmed men, women, and children by British forces led by Gen. Reginald Dyer by order of then Governor of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer.

In 1920, the Justice Party wins first direct elections after Montague-Chelmsford Reforms.

1920-1937, the Justice Party dominates seats in four out of five ministries and holds control of Tamil state government thirteen of seventeen years in this period.

In 1920, Pavalar founds the Ramanathapuram Bala Manohara Boys Company which initially staged only “mythologicals” but later moved into staging nationalist, social, and historical plays.

In 1920, N.S Veluswamy Kavirayar produced a collection of nationalist songs called Teciya Kītāṅkal.

In 1920, five Connaught Rangers in Punjab protest against the effects of martial law in Ireland by refusing to carry out their duties. They were joined by other Rangers (some not Irish) declaring they would not return to duty until British forces left Ireland. Led by Private James Daly, the protest spread to the Connaught Ranger company at Solon but eventually, was forced to surrender. 88 mutineers were court martialed: 19 were sentenced to death (eighteen later had sentences commuted to life in prison), 59 were sentenced to 15 years in prison, and 10 were acquitted. Daly was shot by a firing squad in Dagshai Prison in 1920.

In 1921, the Irish Republic is established as a revolutionary stance against the British and by 1922, the Irish Free State is created, providing the newly formed state with Dominion status within the British Empire.

In 1921, a Tamil activist and dramatist, Suthanandha Bharathi staged his patriotic play, Viru Pergu Nilladā (Stand Up with Valor). He is one of the first playwrights to begin staging nationalist plays in and around Madras.

In 1921, Kopali Chinna Krishna Rao and Bodi Narayana Rao, Telegu amateur dramatists, founded a drama company dedicated to producing nationalist plays, Sarasā Vinodhini Sangam.

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<td>1922-1935</td>
<td>In 1926, E.V. Ramasamy Naicker founds the Self-Respect League in Chennai in response to growing social and political dissatisfaction within socially disadvantaged castes. In 1928, Jawaharlal Nehru drafts plan for a “free India” and becomes president of the Congress Party in 1929. In 1930 M.A. Jinnah, leader of Muslim League gives a speech calling for Indian independence with strong protections for Muslims. The speech is dismissed by many INC members as “communal” highlighting the widening split between Hindu and Muslim groups. On March 25, 1931, Bhagat Singh (1907-1931), an Indian revolutionary and anticolonial activist, is executed for planting a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly and killing John Saunders and becomes a symbol of Indian resistance and spurs the anticolonial movement, particularly in drama and song. In 1932, BR Ambedkar chastises Gandhi for keeping his promises to these groups which leads to the Pune Act. This Act provides a significant no. of reserved seats for oppressed classes, in 1922, Annie Besant helps establish the Hyderabad National Collegiate Board in Bombay (Mumbai) India. Bardoli riots take place in 1922 in which policemen are killed by angry peasants forcing Gandhi to end most successful non-cooperation boycott to date. In 1927 the Simon Commission (all British group put together to determine the possibility of constitutional reforms in India) brought Hindus and Muslims together for negotiations but failed because it did not include input from Indians. In 1930, Gandhi’s salt march takes place from March to April. This protested the British Salt Tax which prevented salt from being harvested freely by the Indian people. In 1934, the Central Bank of India in Delhi is founded. During this period, India has fiscal autonomy (relating to taxes) but not financial autonomy (relating to currency and credit). In 1935, the Government of India Act is enacted. This provided more autonomy to India, divided country into two semi-autonomous provinces within the Commonwealth and provided the</td>
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Sir John Marshall announces the discovery of the Pre-Āryan Indus Valley Civilization in 1924.

In 1924-25 the Third British Imperial Fair showcasing handicrafts, performance, and other displays from the British colonies in London takes place in Wembley Auditorium. The fair was supposed to re-interest the populace in the value of the colonies but instead becomes a costly failure.

In 1929, 1,200,000,000 yards of cloth is imported to India while in 1939 that drops to 150,000,000.
<p>| 1936-1950 | In 1939, Mohammed Ali Jinnah calls for a separate Muslim state | In 1942, Cripps Proposal is offered and rejected; The | People’s Theatre Association) founded in 1942. K. Sundarambal records a song for Gandhi’s journey to London and the Round Table Conferences following the Salt March 1931. In 1931, the TKS brothers’ drama troupe retools and restages Swaminatha Sarma’s <em>Pāṇapuratu Vīraṅ as Teca Pakti</em>. The new version opens with Bhagat Singh’s execution and includes several songs praising Gandhi and <em>khaddar</em> while employing a less literary style than the original. In 1933 Rukmini Arundale, sees a <em>catir</em> dance performance at the Annual Conference of Madras Classical Music and learns dance from ‘Mylapore Gowri Amma’. In 1934 in Madras, A. Narayanan founds “Srinivasa Cinetone,” the first film studio equipped with sound and produces <em>Srinivasa Kalyanam</em>, the first Tamil “talkie.” In 1935, assisted by E. Krishna Iyer and Pandanallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, Rukmini Arundale (Rukmini Devi) gives the first public performance of <em>catirbhārata nāyam</em> at the Diamond Jubilee Convention of the Theosophical Society. | In 1939, Britain and France declaring war on Germany, join WWII. |</p>
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<td>In 1936, J. Nehru becomes president of the INC.</td>
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<td>Sir Stafford Cripps arrives in India to give another offer to the Indian provisional government. The Viceroy of India offers several proposals of mitigated independence to the Indian National Congress on 1940-41, which are all rejected.</td>
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<td>Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945), prominent Indian nationalist, heads the Indian National Army (INA), an army begun by the Japanese during WWII who wanted to have an army to fight the British with them. Bose is known for his opposition to Gandhi’s pacifist approach and supported an “unequivocal swaraj (self-rule).”</td>
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<td>Congress Working Committee passes the Quit India resolution, renewing demand for British rule in India to end immediately.</td>
<td>Jinnah calls for Direct Action Day in 1946 to push the INC to accept the Atlee Mission plan dividing India into Hindu/Muslim majority areas; produces bloody communal riots, particularly in Calcutta.</td>
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<td>In 1947, India gains independence from Britain &amp; Pakistan becomes a separate Muslim nation. Many die during the population exchange of ~twelve million between the two new nations.</td>
<td>After independence in 1947, Madras enacts the Madras Devadasis Prevention of Dedication Act (also called the Tamil Nadu Devadasis Prevention of Dedication Act) which gives devadāsī-s the right to marry and criminalizes the dedication of girls to temples. Other such Acts were passed in Bombay (1934; 1957) and Andhra Pradesh (1988).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor on December 7th 1941 impelling the United States to join WWII.</td>
<td>Adyar; an academy of dance and music, structured on the model of the teacher/student system espoused in traditional Indian modes of instruction.</td>
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<td>WWII ends in 1945.</td>
<td>The IPTA (Indian People’s Theatre Association) is founded in 1942, with the backdrop of WWII; grows with the Bengal famine of 1943 &amp; colonial repression in response to the Quit India Movement.</td>
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<td>In 1943, Tamil Icai Caṅkam (Academy of Tamil Music) is founded to counter the Madras Music Academy and is dedicated to preserving a classical (non-Brahmin) Tamil performance suite.</td>
<td>In 1943, the All India People's Theatre Conference is held in Mumbai with the objective that theater should represent salient political/social issues &amp; promote people’s rights &amp; responsibilities. Leads to growth of IPTA groups across India.</td>
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<td>In 1944, Sakti Nataka Sabha stages S. D. Sundaram’s Kaviyin̠ Kana̠v (The Poet’s Dream)—which he writes while imprisoned for seditious activity—in Nagapattinam to packed houses for many months.</td>
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