

Sanskrit Dramas and Bhavai

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Sanskrit Drama

- Full-length poetic play
- Mainly in Sanskrit
- Combine both classical Sanskrit with Prakrit or different forms of vernacular languages
- Maintained for nearly 1 200 years, which makes it the longest continuous performing tradition of any drama texts in the world
- Include full-length poetic love stories, political plays and palace intrigues, as well as shorter farces and one-act love monologues.





Pictures of Sanskrit Dramas

Sanskrit Drama on the stage

- Acting technique corresponded to the stylised *natya*,
- Rasa, or the sentiment, was conveyed not only by word but also through facial expressions, symbolic gestures and other stylised body language.
- The theatre houses in which the Sanskrit dramas were performed were small because abhinaya, or the mimetic acting style, with its facial expressions and eye movements had to be seen close-up.
 - The stage was bare
 - Sanskrit dramas include stage directions.
 - Stage props may have been used. They may have included various weapons, chariots etc, although these could have been indicated by movements and symbolic hand gestures.

Bhavai

- Bhavai was started in the 14th Century by Asaait with the help of his three sons. Bhavai was dedicated to the Goddess Amba ,during the Navratri festival, it is performed at the famous Amba temple near Mount Abu.
- The connection with the Goddess is in the name 'Bhavai' itself. Bhavai is called so because it is performed through Bhav-- -Sanskrit word for 'Expression'.
- The artists are known as -Bhavaiyaas and Naayaks.
- Bhavai was performed only by males even the female parts up until recently.
- Bhavai is an extremely simple form of theatre, It is not dependent on heavy stage lights and theatrical assistances and is performed in the available open space.



Bhavai

- The only musical instruments used are Drums, cymbals and Sarangi. The Naayak is the chief protagonist and he is assisted by a Jester.
- Bhavai became popular in the courts of feudal lords and nawabs of the time. During this time, the Naayak - Bhavaiyaas prospered.
- Bhavai is a seven hundred year old folk theatre form of Gujarat state in India.
- Roots of Bhavai are found in the Natyashastra, a treatise on the poetics of theatre written by Bharat three thousand years ago
- Performed outside in front of village temples, in village squares, or any open space.
- The small playlets or scenes are called Veshas
- In Veshas there is no written script for the actors to follow. The Veshas are merely loose outlines for the actors to improvise around. (Indian form of Improv)



Pictures of Bhavai

Western Theater VS Indian Theater

- Has Stage directions
 - Actors create their character
 - Use of Props and lighting
 - Dancing and Acting commonly come together in musicals not actual plays
- More a form of Improv.
 - Actors are identified by characters and costumes.
 - Basic, minimal lighting and props.
 - Involves dancing and acting as the play.