

Klara Gönc Moačanin
University of Zagreb
Faculty of Humanities & Social Studies
Department of Indology and
Far Eastern Studies
Croatia

Nāṭya vs. Veda

Ṛgvedic saṁvādas as precursors of nāṭya?!

The origin/s of *nāṭya*, the classical Indian theatre, is still an unsolved problem despite many indological efforts (Windisch, Oldenberg, Weber, Lévi, Winternitz, von Schroeder, Sieg, Konow, Keith, Alsdorf, Horsch, Gonda, Kuiper, Witzel et al.) who undertook to trace *nāṭya*'s roots in different Indian literary traditions. One of the most popular attempts has been concentrated on the Vedic literature with Oldenberg's *ākhyāna* theory as a leading star in the midst of so many controversial ideas. But the beginnings of *nāṭya* were seen also in the Vedic dialogical hymns *saṁvādas* and in some Vedic rituals (*agniṣṭoma*, *mahāvṛata*).

Present paper intends to give a short overview of the vexed question of *saṁvādas*, its still unexplained relationship/s with *ākhyānas*, *itihāsas*, *purāṇas*. The main subject of my presentation will be the tentative explanation of two famous hymns RV 10, 10 and RV 10, 95 (the importance of which lies in the fact that it is the only *sūkta* whose characters feature in *nāṭya*, in Kālidāsa's *Vikāmorvaśīya*) ; how did mythic/legendary heroes come to be transformed to *nāṭya*'s *nāyaka* and *nāyikā*? And among gods featuring in the *saṁvādas* Indra has different roles allotted to him in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

An important question is why the *Nāṭyaśāstra* does not mention *saṁvādas* and how and why did indologists find connection between *nāṭya* and the *Ṛgveda*? The *Nāṭyaśāstra* refers to *itihāsa* which in my opinion points to the crucial role that epics had in forming the art of *nāṭya*. That does not mean to forget the definition of *nāṭya* in the *nāṭyasamgrāha* which in theatrological sense gives us a picture of total theatre or in Richard Wagner's words Gesamtkunstwerk. From *Ṛgveda* to the art of *nāṭya* there has been a long-lasting pathway with many detours.