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ARCHITECTURAL AND RITUALISTIC ASPECTS OF TRADITIONAL INDIAN PLAYHOUSES: A STUDY OF NĀṬYAŚĀSTRA

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Abstract

The Nāṭyashāstra, attributed to Bharata Muni, is an ancient Indian treatise on dramaturgy and performance arts. It provides exhaustive guidelines for the construction, consecration, and use of a playhouse (nāṭyamandapa), emphasizing the importance of spatial and architectural elements in theatrical productions. This paper explores the architectural specifications, ceremonial practices, and cultural significance of the playhouse as outlined in the Nāṭyashāstra. Using textual analysis and interpretive methodology, it explores how these prescriptions reflect the broader cultural, religious, and aesthetic values of ancient Indian society. Additionally, this study introduces Bharata Muni and the Nāṭyashāstra, providing a historical and cultural context for the treatise.

Keywords: Nāṭyashāstra, Bharata, playhouse, nāṭyamandapa, dramaturgy, theatre architecture, ancient Indian culture.

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OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this paper is to analyze the Nāṭyashāstra's guidelines for constructing a playhouse, exploring its technical, ritualistic, and cultural aspects. By examining the treatise, this study aims to:

1. Document the architectural and ritualistic details prescribed in the Nāṭyashāstra.
2. Explore the cultural and spiritual significance of the playhouse.
3. Highlight the integration of cosmic principles in theatre architecture.
4. Explore the technical terminology used in the Nāṭyashāstra for various stage devices and construction methods.

The Nāṭyashāstra, an ancient Indian treatise on dramaturgy and performance, meticulously classifies playhouses (nāṭyamandapas) into three distinct types based on their shapes and functional purposes. This classification reflects not only the architectural ingenuity of the time but also the cultural and societal contexts in which these playhouses were utilized.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this research paper follows a systematic and interdisciplinary approach, integrating both primary and secondary sources to examine the architectural and structural design of playhouses, as described in the Nāṭyashāstra, with a focus on its application to traditional Indian theatre. The study combines textual analysis, architectural study, comparative research, and fieldwork to provide a comprehensive understanding of the construction, layout, and symbolic significance of playhouses in classical Indian dramaturgy.

1. Textual Analysis of the Nāṭyashāstra

The primary source for this research is the Nāṭyashāstra, an ancient Indian treatise on performing arts attributed to Bharata Muni. The research begins with an in-depth textual analysis of the Nāṭyashāstra, particularly the sections detailing the construction and design of playhouses. This includes a detailed study of the descriptions of different types of playhouses, such as the oblong (rectangular), square, and triangular playhouses. Translations and commentaries of the Nāṭyashāstra, such as those by Manmohan



Ghosh, are examined to understand the original Sanskrit text and its implications for the construction and design of playhouses.

This textual analysis includes:

- A line-by-line examination of the verses related to the architectural specifications of the playhouses.
- Identification of key architectural elements, including the dimensions of the playhouse, the materials used, and the number and placement of pillars.
- Interpretation of the ritualistic aspects associated with the construction, such as auspicious timing and propitiatory ceremonies.

2. Comparative Study of Architectural Features

The next step involves a comparative study of the architectural features described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and their application to existing traditional theatres in India. This study involves:

- Identifying the key structural components described in the text (e.g., stage, seating arrangements, pillars, roof design).
- Comparing these features with the architecture of surviving traditional theatres, including temples and performance spaces in various regions of India that have retained classical elements of design.
- Examining regional variations in playhouse construction and their adaptation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* principles.

This comparative approach provides insight into how the ancient guidelines have been adapted and maintained over time, particularly in relation to the evolution of theatre architecture.

3. Ritual and Symbolism Analysis

Another key component of this research is the analysis of the ritualistic and symbolic aspects of playhouse construction as described in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The methodology here includes:

- Analyzing the symbolic meaning behind the architectural elements, such as the use of specific materials, the placement of pillars, and the design of the stage and seating areas.
- Studying the role of rituals, such as the *Pūjā* (propitiatory ceremony) mentioned in the text, in ensuring the auspiciousness and success of the playhouse and its performances.
- Exploring the connection between architecture and the spiritual or cultural significance of the performance space.

This aspect of the research relies heavily on interpreting the cultural and symbolic dimensions of the playhouse, informed by both the textual descriptions in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and contemporary understandings of Indian religious and cultural practices.

The analysis focuses on the relationship between the ancient guidelines for constructing playhouses and their practical application in the context of traditional and modern theatre in India.

The methodology concludes with a comprehensive interpretation of the findings, highlighting the significance of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as both a technical manual for constructing playhouses and a philosophical treatise on the role of architecture in the performing arts. The study also examines the ongoing relevance of these principles in preserving the cultural heritage of Indian theatre and architecture.

This research methodology combines historical, architectural, and cultural approaches to provide a holistic understanding of the design and construction of traditional playhouses as outlined in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. By synthesizing all the data, the research offers a detailed exploration of how ancient principles continue to influence and shape the physical and symbolic aspects of theatre spaces in India.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The *Nāṭyashāstra*, composed by Bharata Muni, is one of the most significant texts in the realm of Indian performing arts. Written between 200 BCE and 200 CE, it serves as a comprehensive guide to drama, dance, and music. Bharata Muni is revered as the father of Indian dramaturgy, and his work provides a detailed blueprint for creating theatrical spaces that blend aesthetics with functionality.

The *Nāṭyashāstra* has been translated into English by several scholars, including Manomohan Ghosh and Adya Rangacharya, ensuring its accessibility to a global audience. These translations highlight the text's universal appeal and its relevance in understanding ancient Indian culture and art practices. According to tradition, the construction of the first playhouse was executed by Viśvākarmā, the divine architect, under the guidance of Bharata Muni. This collaboration between divine and mortal wisdom underscores the spiritual and cultural importance of the playhouse as a sacred space for the performing arts.

The *Nāṭyashāstra* is more than just a manual for the performing arts; it is a reflection of the cosmic order, linking human creativity with divine principles. Bharata Muni's vision encompasses all aspects of theatre, from dramaturgy and acting techniques to the design and construction of playhouses. This comprehensive approach underscores the interconnectedness of art, architecture, and spirituality in ancient Indian traditions.

1. TYPES OF PLAYHOUSES

2. **Oblong (Vikṛṣṭa):** The oblong playhouse is rectangular in shape and is considered suitable for large-scale performances. Its elongated design allows for the accommodation of more performers and a larger audience. This type of playhouse is particularly ideal for epic narratives and grand productions, ensuring that the expansive staging aligns with the scope of the performance.
3. **Square (Caturaśra):** Square playhouses are symmetrical and balanced, making them versatile for various types of performances. Their equal dimensions create an intimate yet structured environment, ideal for

general-purpose theatrical presentations. The symmetry also contributes to better acoustics and visibility for the audience.

4. **Triangular (Tryasra):** The triangular playhouse, with its unique and dynamic shape, is reserved for dramatic and experimental performances. Its design embodies creativity and innovation, providing a distinct spatial arrangement that enhances the dramatic effect. This form was likely employed for performances requiring unconventional staging or dramatic tension.

2. SIZES OF PLAYHOUSES AND THEIR SOCIOCULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

Each of these three shapes is further classified into three sizes: **large (Jyeṣṭha)**, **medium (Madhya)**, and **small (Avara)**. These sizes were not merely functional but also reflective of the hierarchical societal structure of ancient India.

- **Large (Jyeṣṭha):** Measuring 108 cubits in length, large playhouses were dedicated to divine or celestial performances. They symbolized grandeur and were often used for rituals and performances intended to honor deities or portray mythological narratives.
- **Medium (Madhya):** Medium-sized playhouses, measuring 64 cubits in length, were designed for royal courts and noble audiences. They strike a balance between intimacy and capacity, ensuring that performances could cater to elite audiences while maintaining the sophistication of the art form.
- **Small (Avara):** Small playhouses, with dimensions of 32 cubits in length, were intended for the common people. These spaces were designed for accessibility and intimacy, ensuring that the nuances of the performance could be experienced by all members of the audience.

This hierarchical classification reveals the interplay between physical space and audience demographics, highlighting how the Nāṭyashāstra integrates societal stratification into the design of theatrical venues.

2.1. Detailed Dimensions and Proportions

The Nāṭyashāstra provides precise measurements for constructing these playhouses, utilizing ancient units such as *āṅgula* (finger) and *hasta* (cubit). These measurements ensure proportionality, optimal acoustics, and aesthetic appeal. A table of measurements outlined in the text serves as a blueprint for architects and craftsmen, ensuring that each playhouse is meticulously designed to suit its purpose.

- **Large (Jyeṣṭha):** 108 cubits long
- **Medium (Madhya):** 64 cubits long
- **Small (Avara):** 32 cubits long

These dimensions were not arbitrary but derived from a deep understanding of spatial dynamics and audience engagement. The specifications guarantee that the playhouses cater to the needs of

both performers and spectators, fostering a harmonious theatrical experience.

2.2. Playhouse for Mortals: The Medium-Sized Theatre

For human use, Bharata specifically recommends the **medium-sized playhouse**, measuring **64 cubits in length and 32 cubits in breadth**. This design achieves a balance between grandeur and intimacy, ensuring that the performance remains engaging and comprehensible. The size is optimal for human interaction, facilitating clear dialogue delivery and effective visual communication.

2.3. Challenges of Overly Large Playhouses

Bharata cautions against the use of excessively large playhouses, as they can detract from the effectiveness of the performance. In such spaces, dialogues may become inaudible, and the subtle expressions of the actors might fail to reach the audience. This observation underscores the advanced understanding of acoustics and audience psychology in ancient Indian theatre. The emphasis on maintaining a manageable scale reflects the Nāṭyashāstra's commitment to preserving the integrity of the performance and ensuring audience satisfaction.

The classification and design of playhouses in the Nāṭyashāstra exemplify the sophisticated approach to theatre in ancient India. The careful consideration of shape, size, and societal context demonstrates Bharata's holistic vision of performance spaces as not merely architectural constructs but as integral components of the theatrical experience. This nuanced understanding of spatial dynamics continues to influence the design and functionality of modern performance venues.

3. SELECTION OF A SUITABLE SITE

The Nāṭyashāstra emphasizes that the selection of an appropriate site is the foundational step in constructing a playhouse. The builder, regarded as an expert (*sthāpaka*), is entrusted with this critical task. The text provides clear instructions for evaluating and preparing the land:

1. **Initial Examination:** The builder must thoroughly examine the plot of land, ensuring it is plain, firm, and hard. The soil's quality is paramount; it should ideally be black or dark in color, symbolizing fertility and stability, and not white, which may signify barrenness or fragility. This careful assessment ensures that the land can support the structure's weight and withstand environmental challenges.
2. **Clearing the Site:** The selected land must be cleared of all obstructions, including bones, pegs, potsherds, grass, and shrubs. This step is both practical and symbolic, as it prepares the ground physically for construction while purifying it of any negative or impure elements. The process of ploughing the land further reinforces its readiness, marking a transition from raw nature to a sanctified space for artistic creation.

3.1. Measurement of the Site

Once the site is cleared, the builder proceeds to measure the land with precision. This step is performed under specific auspicious conditions to ensure the success and longevity of the playhouse.

1. **Astrological Timing:** The measurement is conducted under the asterism **Puṣyā (Cancer)**, considered highly auspicious in Vedic astrology. This alignment is believed to bring prosperity, stability, and harmony to the construction process and the performances that will take place within the playhouse.
2. **Preparation of the String:** The builder uses a white string for measurement, symbolizing purity and clarity. The string may be made of materials such as cotton, wool, Muñjā grass, or tree bark. It is critical that the string is strong and unbroken, as its condition is directly tied to the well-being of the project and its patrons:
 - If the string breaks into two pieces, it is considered a dire omen, predicting the death of the patron of the dramatic spectacle.
 - A break into three pieces signifies political unrest in the region.
 - A break into four pieces forebodes the death of the master of dramatic art.
 - If the string slips from the builder's hand, it indicates other forms of loss or misfortune.

These symbolic associations highlight the importance of meticulousness and care during the measurement process, reflecting the belief that even seemingly minor details can influence the outcome of the endeavor.

3. **Sprinkling of Propitiating Water:** Before spreading the string for measurement, the builder sprinkles it with **propitiating water**. This ritual act purifies the string and sanctifies the measurement process, invoking divine blessings for the construction. Water, a universal symbol of purification and life, reinforces the sacredness of the task.

4. AUSPICIOUS TIMING AND RITUALS

The Nātyashāstra underscores the role of rituals and timing in construction:

- The measurement and subsequent construction activities are initiated on a favorable day determined by **Tithi** (lunar day) and **su-kaṛṇa** (an auspicious phase).
- The builder consults Brahmins to declare the auspicious day, ensuring that celestial and terrestrial forces are aligned.
- The Brahmins are honored with gifts, a gesture that acknowledges their spiritual authority and seeks their blessings for the project.

4.1. Symbolism and Practicality in Site Selection

The detailed prescriptions for site selection and preparation reflect a dual focus on practical considerations and symbolic significance:

- **Practical Aspects:** Ensuring firm, fertile soil and precise measurements guarantees the structural integrity and functionality of the playhouse.
- **Symbolic Aspects:** Rituals such as ploughing, clearing, and sprinkling water imbue the construction process with sacredness, aligning it with cosmic and cultural ideals.

The Nātyashāstra's guidelines for selecting and preparing a site for a playhouse illustrate the ancient Indian approach to integrating art, science, and spirituality. Every step, from evaluating the soil to measuring the land with an unbroken string, reflects a profound understanding of the interplay between physical space and metaphysical principles. This meticulous process not only ensures the structural soundness of the playhouse but also sanctifies it as a space where the arts can flourish, bridging the earthly and the divine.

Ground Plan of a Playhouse

The ground plan is the architectural blueprint of the playhouse, designed with precision to balance functionality, aesthetic appeal, and ritual significance.

4.2. Dimensions and Layout

1. **Initial Measurement:** The playhouse is constructed on a rectangular plot of land measuring **64 cubits in length**. This specific measurement is not arbitrary; it ensures proportionality and harmony, accommodating the stage, seating area, and other functional spaces.
2. **Division of the Plot:** The land is divided into distinct sections to delineate its purpose:
 - **Lengthwise Division:** The plot is first divided into two equal parts.
 - **Further Subdivision:** The rear half is divided into two equal parts. Of these, one is further split into two sections:
 - **Stage (Raṅga-śīrṣa):** Occupying one of these smaller sections, the stage serves as the focal point for performances.
 - **Tiring Room (Green Room):** The section at the back serves as the tiring room, a space for actors to prepare and store costumes and props.

This layout ensures efficient use of space, creating a seamless flow between performance and backstage activities.

4.3. The Ceremony of Laying the Foundation

The act of laying the foundation is not merely a technical task but a sacred ritual that sanctifies the playhouse and aligns it with cosmic and spiritual forces. The Nātyashāstra provides detailed instructions for this process.

Preliminary Arrangements

1. **Musical Accompaniment:** During the foundation ceremony, musical instruments such as **Śaṅkha** (conchshell), **Dundubhi**, **Mṛdaṅga**, and **Paṇava** are sounded. This auditory element serves multiple purposes:
 - **Ritual Significance:** It invokes divine blessings and purifies the space.

- **Symbolic Meaning:** The sounds represent harmony and creativity, reflecting the essence of theatrical arts.
- 2. **Exclusion of Undesirable Persons:** Certain individuals are prohibited from participating in the ceremony:
 - **Heretics and Śramaṇas:** Representing dissenting or non-orthodox ideologies.
 - **Men in Dark Red Robes:** Often associated with ascetics or renunciants, whose presence might conflict with the celebratory nature of the event.
 - **Individuals with Physical Defects:** Reflecting ancient societal biases, their exclusion was likely tied to notions of ritual purity.

This exclusion underscores the era's rigid societal structures, though it contrasts with modern inclusivity ideals.

4.4. Ritual Offerings and Directions

The ritual involves offerings to deities presiding over the ten cardinal directions, ensuring cosmic harmony and divine protection for the playhouse.

1. **Night Offerings:** At night, offerings are made in all ten directions. These include sweet scents, flowers, fruits, and a variety of eatables, symbolizing abundance and gratitude.
2. **Color-Coded Offerings:** Offerings in the four cardinal directions are prepared in specific colors:
 - **East:** White, symbolizing purity and light.
 - **West:** Blue, representing depth and infinity.
 - **South:** Yellow, associated with energy and vitality.
 - **North:** Red, signifying passion and strength.

These color-coded offerings reflect the symbolic attributes of the directions, integrating aesthetic and metaphysical elements.

3. **Mantra Recitation:** Offerings are accompanied by the chanting of **Mantras**, which serve to sanctify the ritual and establish a connection with the divine.

Offerings to Key Participants

Special offerings are made to honor individuals and entities integral to the theatrical tradition:

- **Brahmins:** Offered ghee and **Pāyasa** (a sweet rice dish) as a mark of respect and gratitude for their spiritual guidance.
- **The King:** Presented with **Madhuparka** (a ceremonial drink of honey and curd), signifying loyalty and reverence.
- **Masters of Dramatic Art:** Given rice with molasses, recognizing their contribution to the performing arts.

4.5. Auspicious Timing for the Ceremony

The foundation ceremony is conducted during the auspicious phase of a **happy Tithi** (lunar day) under the asterism **Mūlā (Lambda-Scorpius)**. This astrological timing is believed to bring prosperity and stability to the playhouse, aligning the construction process with cosmic rhythms.

Symbolism and Practicality

The Nāṭyashāstra's instructions for the ground plan and foundation ceremony reflect a profound understanding of both technical and symbolic dimensions:

- **Technical Precision:** The careful measurements and divisions ensure the playhouse is functional and efficient, accommodating performers and audiences.
- **Ritual Sanctity:** The elaborate ceremonies imbue the construction process with spiritual significance, transforming the playhouse into a sacred space for artistic expression.

The Nāṭyashāstra's guidelines for the ground plan and foundation ceremony highlight the holistic approach of ancient Indian dramaturgy, where architecture, spirituality, and societal norms converge. The meticulous attention to detail in spatial design and ritual practices ensures that the playhouse is not just a physical structure but a sanctified arena for the celebration of art, culture, and divine harmony.

5. RAISING PILLARS OF THE PLAYHOUSE (NĀṬYAMAṆḌAPA):

Preliminary Ceremonies and Auspicious Timing

The construction of the Nāṭyamaṇḍapa, or playhouse, involves a meticulous sequence of rituals and architectural practices deeply rooted in Vedic traditions and astrological considerations. After the foundational structure and walls of the playhouse are completed, the process of raising the pillars takes precedence. The selection of an auspicious time for this task is critical. The text specifies that the pillars should be raised on a Tithi (lunar day) and Karaṇa (half of a lunar day) under favorable asterisms such as **Rohiṇī** (Aldebaran) or **Śravaṇā** (Aquillae). These asterisms are traditionally associated with stability, prosperity, and auspicious beginnings, making them ideal for such a significant undertaking.

The master of dramatic arts, who oversees the construction, is required to undergo a three-day and three-night fast before initiating the pillar-raising ceremony. This period of fasting is intended to purify the body and mind, ensuring the master's spiritual readiness to lead the ritual.

5.1. Symbolic and Ritualistic Elements in Raising Pillars

The pillars of the Nāṭyamaṇḍapa are not merely structural elements; they are imbued with symbolic significance, representing the four varnas (social classes): **Brahmin**, **Kṣatriya**, **Vaiśya**, and **Śūdra**. Each pillar is associated with specific colors, offerings, and placement within the playhouse, reflecting the social and cosmic order.

1. Brahmin Pillar (South-East Direction)

- **Offerings and Rituals:** White articles, purified with ghee and mustard seeds, are used in the ceremony. Pāyasa (sweet rice pudding) is distributed to Brahmins, signifying purity and knowledge.
- **Materials:** A white garland and unguents are placed at the foot of the pillar. Gold from an ear ornament is also offered.

- **Significance:** This pillar symbolizes wisdom, spirituality, and intellectual leadership.
- 2. **Kṣatriya Pillar (South-West Direction)**
 - **Offerings and Rituals:** Red-colored items, including cloth, garlands, and unguents, are used. Rice mixed with molasses is distributed to the twice-born caste.
 - **Materials:** Copper is placed at the foot of the pillar.
 - **Significance:** This pillar represents valor, protection, and governance.
- 3. **Vaiśya Pillar (North-West Direction)**
 - **Offerings and Rituals:** Yellow articles are used, symbolizing prosperity and commerce. Rice mixed with ghee is offered to Brahmins.
 - **Materials:** Silver is placed at the base.
 - **Significance:** This pillar signifies economic stability and productivity.
- 4. **Śūdra Pillar (North-East Direction)**
 - **Offerings and Rituals:** Dark-colored items are used in the ceremony, and Kṛsarā (a dish of rice and lentils) is served to the twice-born caste.
 - **Materials:** Iron is placed at the base of the pillar.
 - **Significance:** This pillar represents service and support within the social structure.

5.2. Ritual Practices and Avoidance of Inauspicious Signs

The rituals associated with raising the pillars emphasize precision and spiritual alignment. The placement of garlands of green leaves and the utterance of blessings such as “Let it be well” (**svasti**) and “Let this be an auspicious day” (**punyaḥa**) create a sacred atmosphere. The text warns against specific inauspicious signs during the raising of pillars:

- A **moving pillar** is said to predict drought.
- A **turning pillar** is believed to foreshadow death.
- A **shaking pillar** signifies fear of an enemy.

To avoid these dire consequences, the pillars must be firmly secured, ensuring stability and harmony within the structure.

5.3. Offerings and Community Involvement

The rituals extend beyond the architectural aspects to include generous offerings and community engagement:

- **To Brahmins:** A cow is given as dakṣiṇā (offering) for the Brahmin pillar, symbolizing gratitude and reverence.
- **To Builders and Workers:** Builders are celebrated with a feast, including food items like Kṛsarā and salt.
- **To Priests and Kings:** Honey and Pāyasa are served, highlighting their roles as spiritual and temporal leaders.

5.4. Invocation and Completion

The final stage involves the invocation of a mantra that aligns the pillars with cosmic stability and success:

"Just as the mount of Meru is immovable and the Himālaya is very strong, so be thou immovable and bring victory to the king."

This invocation underscores the spiritual foundation of the Nāṭyamaṇḍapa, linking its physical stability to the metaphysical principles of the universe.

5.5. Architectural and Ritual Integration

The integration of architectural practices with ritualistic traditions ensures that the Nāṭyamaṇḍapa is not merely a physical space but a sanctified arena for the enactment of dramatic arts. The pillars, doors, walls, and tiring rooms are constructed in strict adherence to these guidelines, reflecting the harmonious blend of functionality and spirituality.

By following these elaborate rituals, the Nāṭyamaṇḍapa becomes a microcosm of cosmic order, prepared to host performances that celebrate dharma, creativity, and the human connection to the divine.

6. THE MATTAVĀRAṆĪ: ARCHITECTURAL AND RITUAL CONSTRUCTION

The **Mattavāraṇī**, an integral component of the Nāṭyamaṇḍapa (playhouse), serves as a structural and symbolic feature that enhances the functional and spiritual dimensions of the theatrical space. According to the ancient prescriptions, the Mattavāraṇī is constructed on each side of the stage and reflects a precise blend of architectural design, ritualistic observance, and cultural symbolism.

6.1. Structural Design and Dimensions

The Mattavāraṇī is described as a rectangular platform supported by four pillars. Its length is specified to be equal to that of the stage, ensuring proportional symmetry in the layout. The plinth of the Mattavāraṇī is elevated to a height of one and a half cubits, which aligns with the height of the plinth of the main auditorium (**raṅgamaṇḍala**). This uniform elevation not only creates visual harmony but also ensures functional consistency across the stage and its auxiliary spaces.

The platform is designed to facilitate various activities associated with the theatrical performance, including the placement of props, seating for musicians, or serving as a transitional space between the stage and the audience. Its robust design, supported by pillars, also ensures structural stability and durability.

6.2. Ritualistic Practices during Construction

The construction of the Mattavāraṇī involves elaborate rituals that emphasize its sacred significance. At the time of building, offerings are made to appease and honor the **Bhūtas** (guardian spirits) associated with the space. These offerings include:

- **Garlands:** Symbolizing purity and auspiciousness.
- **Incense and Sweet Scents:** To purify the environment and invoke divine blessings.
- **Cloths of Different Colors:** Representing various cosmic and ritualistic elements.

To ensure the stability and prosperity of the pillars, **Pāyasa** (a sweet dish made of rice and milk) and **Kṛsarā** (a dish made of rice and lentils) are distributed to Brahmins as part of the ritual

offerings. These offerings serve as a means of consecration, ensuring that the Mattavāraṇī is imbued with spiritual vitality.

6.3. Symbolism and Integration

The Mattavāraṇī, with its precise construction and sacred rituals, represents the harmonious integration of the material and spiritual worlds. Its design adheres to strict measurements and aligns with the principles of **Vāstuśāstra** (traditional Indian architecture), ensuring that it becomes a space conducive to the enactment of drama and the evocation of *rasa* (aesthetic experience).

The Stage: Sacred Ground for Performance Preparatory Rituals and Materials

Following the construction of the Mattavāraṇī, attention shifts to the stage (**raṅgaśīrṣa**), the central space for theatrical performances. Its construction is guided by rigorous standards, beginning with the preparation of the ground. The prescribed earth must be **black soil**, chosen for its compactness and stability. The preparation involves:

1. **Removal of Impurities:** The soil is made free of stone chips, gravel, and grass using a plough drawn by two white draught animals, symbolizing purity and strength.
2. **Use of New Baskets:** The earth is carried in new baskets by individuals free from physical defects, ensuring that the construction is untainted by any inauspicious elements.

6.4. Ensuring a Level Foundation

The plinth of the stage must be meticulously level, resembling the surface of a mirror. This precision is crucial, as any irregularity—such as a convex shape resembling the back of a tortoise or fish—is considered inauspicious. The level foundation ensures not only structural stability but also the symbolic balance required for the successful enactment of dramatic performances.

6.5. Ritual Placement of Jewels

A unique aspect of the stage construction is the placement of **jewels and precious stones** beneath the foundation. This ritualistic practice imbues the stage with sacred energy and aligns it with the cosmic order. The prescribed placement of jewels includes:

- **Diamond in the East:** Representing clarity and spiritual illumination.
- **Lapis Lazuli in the South:** Symbolizing protection and tranquility.
- **Quartz in the West:** Associated with purity and endurance.
- **Coral in the North:** Signifying vitality and strength.
- **Gold at the Center:** Denoting prosperity and the divine essence.

These elements, arranged in accordance with cardinal directions, transform the stage into a sacred space that is not only physically robust but also spiritually resonant.

6.6. Functional and Aesthetic Considerations

The stage, constructed with six pieces of wood, embodies both functionality and aesthetic appeal. It serves as the focal point of the

Nātyamaṇḍapa, where performers bring to life the narratives of drama. The careful selection of materials and adherence to ritualistic practices ensure that the stage becomes a space of artistic excellence and divine communion.

The construction of the Mattavāraṇī and the stage reflects the meticulous attention to detail that characterizes the Nātyamaṇḍapa. These structures are not merely physical entities but sacred spaces shaped by a confluence of architectural precision, ritualistic sanctity, and cultural symbolism. Together, they create an environment that fosters the transformative power of drama, allowing performers and audiences to experience the profound aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of the theatrical tradition.

6.7. Decorative Work in the Stage: A Detailed Examination

The **Nātyamaṇḍapa** (playhouse) was not only a functional space for theatrical performances but also a meticulously crafted artistic and architectural marvel. Its decorative work reflects the cultural, aesthetic, and symbolic priorities of its creators. This section explores the detailed prescriptions for the stage's decorative features, focusing on the interplay of artistic embellishments, structural elements, and acoustic considerations.

6.8. The Woodwork: Foundation of Artistic Embellishment

The **plinth of the stage**, once constructed, serves as the base for intricate woodwork. This phase is executed with a well-thought-out plan (**ūha-pratyūha-samyukta**), emphasizing both practicality and aesthetic appeal. The decorative elements include:

1. **Carved Figures:**
 - **Elephants, Tigers, and Snakes:** These animal motifs symbolize strength, ferocity, and mysticism, drawing from their cultural and mythological significance. Their placement adds a dynamic visual narrative to the stage's design.
 - **Wooden Statues:** Sculpted figures of deities, celestial beings, or mythological characters contribute to the sacred and artistic ambiance of the playhouse.
2. **Niryūhas and Mechanized Latticed Windows:**
 - The **Niryūhas** are mechanized wooden elements that add both utility and ornamentation. They might include movable panels or decorative frameworks, enhancing the versatility of the stage.
 - **Latticed Windows:** These intricately designed features provide ventilation and light while maintaining the enclosed, cave-like atmosphere of the playhouse.
3. **Rows of Seats (Dhāraṇī):**
 - The stage includes well-crafted wooden seating arrangements, showcasing both ergonomic and aesthetic design. These seats are likely reserved for musicians, performers, or even deities invoked during rituals.
4. **Dove-Cots and Pillars:**
 - **Dove-Cots:** Symbolic of peace and harmony, these elements contribute to the stage's serene environment.
 - **Pillars:** Strategically placed throughout the stage, the pillars serve both as structural supports and decorative

elements. Their carvings further enhance the artistic richness of the space.

6.9. Wall Construction and Spatial Harmony

Upon completing the woodwork, attention turns to the walls, ensuring a harmonious integration of all structural elements. Key considerations include:

1. **Alignment and Placement:**
 - No **pillar, bracket, window, corner, or door** should face another door. This alignment adheres to the principles of **Vāstuśāstra** (traditional Indian architecture), ensuring balance and the unobstructed flow of energy.
2. **Mountain Cavern Aesthetic:**
 - The playhouse is designed to resemble a **mountain cavern**, invoking the sanctity and acoustics of natural enclosures. This design aligns with the theatrical tradition of mimicking nature's grandeur.
3. **Two Floors with Small Windows:**
 - The playhouse includes two levels, likely to accommodate additional seating or performance space. Small windows ensure controlled lighting and ventilation, maintaining the intimate and immersive atmosphere.

6.10. Acoustic Excellence and Environmental Control

One of the primary goals of the playhouse's design is to optimize acoustics and minimize environmental interference:

1. **Wind-Free Design:**
 - The playhouse is constructed to be free from wind, ensuring that external disturbances do not disrupt performances.
2. **Enhanced Sound Quality:**
 - The absence of wind interference amplifies the clarity and volume of actors' voices, singers, and musical instruments, allowing the audience to fully experience the auditory elements of the performance.

Plastering, Whitewashing, and Painting

The walls, once constructed, undergo a multi-step finishing process:

1. **Plastering and Whitewashing:**
 - The walls are smeared with plaster and lime, creating a smooth and clean surface. This process ensures durability and provides an ideal base for painting.
2. **Artistic Painting:**
 - The walls are adorned with paintings depicting **creepers, men, women, and their amorous exploits**. These artistic motifs celebrate the beauty of nature and human relationships, aligning with the themes of drama and rasa (aesthetic emotion).
 - The depiction of creepers symbolizes growth and vitality, while human figures add a narrative dimension, reflecting the life and emotions explored in theatrical performances.

7. DESCRIPTION OF AN OBLONG (RECTANGULAR) PLAYHOUSE IN NĀṬYAŚĀSTRA

The Nāṭyaśāstra, an ancient Indian treatise on the performing arts, written by the sage Bharata Muni, provides extensive instructions for constructing playhouses, known as Nāṭyamaṇḍapas. Among the various types of playhouses, the oblong (rectangular) playhouse is one of the most commonly discussed. This form of playhouse, prescribed in the Nāṭyaśāstra, plays a central role in accommodating both the actors and the audience in a structured and harmonious manner. The design of this playhouse is guided by specific measurements, materials, and architectural features to ensure an ideal environment for the performance of dramatic arts.

7.1. Architectural Design and Layout

The oblong playhouse is designed with specific dimensions and a rectangular layout. The Nāṭyaśāstra outlines that the length of the playhouse should be twice its width, creating an elongated rectangular shape. This form is not only functional but also symbolically significant, reflecting the spiritual and artistic alignment required for a successful theatrical performance.

The plot of land designated for the construction of the playhouse should be carefully chosen and measured with precision. It is essential that the land is level and auspicious, as the alignment of the playhouse in terms of cardinal directions is crucial for ensuring the success of the performances. The building process must begin at an auspicious moment, ensuring that the structure is imbued with positive energy and divine favor.

The interior of the playhouse is divided into two primary areas: the stage and the audience seating area. The stage, known as raṅgaśīrṣa, should be placed at the front of the playhouse, with the audience seating arranged behind it. The seating area is designed to allow a clear and unobstructed view of the stage from all angles, while the stage itself is built to accommodate the movements of the actors, the placement of props, and the performance of complex dance and dramatic sequences.

7.2. Pillars and Structural Integrity

The construction of the oblong playhouse involves the use of strong, durable pillars, which are critical for supporting the roof and maintaining the structural integrity of the building. The Nāṭyaśāstra prescribes the use of stone or wood for the pillars, which should be placed strategically throughout the playhouse. The number of pillars varies depending on the size of the playhouse, but there should be at least a series of pillars along the sides of the stage and the audience area to ensure stability.

The pillars are essential for supporting the roof, which is typically constructed from heavy materials such as wood or clay. These materials ensure that the roof is both sturdy and acoustically efficient. The placement of the pillars also serves a symbolic function, representing stability and grounding the playhouse in both the physical and spiritual realms.

7.3. Stage Design and Elevation

The stage, or raṅgapīṭha, is the central focus of the oblong playhouse. It is described in the Nāṭyaśāstra as being elevated above the floor of the playhouse, ensuring that the actors are clearly visible to the audience. The stage is typically constructed with a raised plinth, which serves as the foundation for the performance space. The plinth should be of uniform height and constructed from sturdy materials, ensuring that the stage remains stable throughout the performance.

The Nāṭyaśāstra specifies that the stage should be flat and level, with no uneven surfaces that could hinder the actors' movements. The design of the stage should allow for a variety of performance styles, including dance, drama, and music. The stage should be large enough to accommodate the movements of the performers, as well as the placement of props and stage equipment. The precise dimensions of the stage are outlined in the treatise, with specific measurements given in cubits, ensuring consistency in the construction of playhouses.

7.4. Seating Arrangement for the Audience

The seating area for the audience is another crucial aspect of the oblong playhouse. The Nāṭyaśāstra prescribes that the seating should be arranged in rows, with each successive row elevated by one cubit above the previous one. This ensures that every spectator has a clear view of the stage, regardless of where they are seated. The seats are to be made from durable materials such as wood and should be arranged in such a way that all spectators face the stage directly, minimizing distractions and maximizing engagement with the performance.

The seating arrangement is designed to create an intimate connection between the audience and the performance. The seating is placed in a manner that allows the audience to be fully immersed in the dramatic experience, while also ensuring that the performers have adequate space to move freely and perform their sequences. The careful arrangement of the seating is essential for maintaining the flow of the performance and enhancing the overall theatrical experience.

7.5. The Mattavāraṇī: Ritual and Symbolic Space

In addition to the stage and seating area, the Nāṭyaśāstra specifies the construction of the Mattavāraṇī, a sacred space within the playhouse. The Mattavāraṇī is an area designated for ritual and ceremonial purposes, ensuring the auspiciousness of the performance. The Nāṭyaśāstra advises that the Mattavāraṇī should be constructed with four pillars, which should be positioned by the side of the plinth. The pillars of the Mattavāraṇī are considered to be sacred and are decorated with figurines and symbolic motifs, such as images of deities or divine figures.

The Mattavāraṇī serves as a focal point for the spiritual and ritual aspects of the performance. It is the place where offerings are made, and where the rituals that invoke divine blessings are performed. These rituals ensure that the performance proceeds without any obstacles, and that the actors, audience, and the playhouse itself are all imbued with positive energy.

7.6. Construction of the Tiring Room

The tiring room, which is adjacent to the stage, is another important feature of the oblong playhouse. This room serves as a space for the actors to prepare before the performance and to rest between acts. The Nāṭyaśāstra specifies that the tiring room should have two doors: one leading directly to the stage and the other facing the audience area. This design allows the actors to enter the stage smoothly, maintaining the flow of the performance and minimizing disruptions.

The tiring room is typically furnished with minimal decoration, as its primary function is to serve as a space for the actors' preparation. However, it is still considered an important part of the overall design of the playhouse, as it contributes to the overall atmosphere and the smooth execution of the performance.

7.7. Decorative Elements and Final Touches

Once the structural components of the oblong playhouse are complete, attention is turned to the decorative elements. The Nāṭyaśāstra prescribes the use of intricate carvings and woodwork to adorn the walls, pillars, and other parts of the playhouse. These carvings often depict divine figures, mythological creatures, and scenes from sacred texts, reinforcing the spiritual and artistic nature of the playhouse.

The walls of the playhouse should be painted with scenes that evoke the themes of the performance, such as love, devotion, and divine grace. The use of vibrant colors and intricate designs serves to enhance the atmosphere of the playhouse, creating an immersive experience for both the performers and the audience.

The construction of the oblong (rectangular) playhouse, as outlined in the Nāṭyaśāstra, is a meticulous process that requires careful attention to detail in terms of measurements, materials, and architectural design. The playhouse is designed to create a harmonious space where the spiritual, artistic, and physical aspects of the performance come together. Every component of the playhouse, from the pillars to the seating arrangement, is carefully planned to ensure the success of the dramatic performance. The guidelines provided in the Nāṭyaśāstra reflect a deep understanding of the relationship between architecture, ritual, and the performing arts, and they continue to serve as a foundation for the construction of traditional theatres in India.

8. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A SQUARE PLAYHOUSE IN CLASSICAL INDIAN THEATRE

The **square playhouse** described in classical architectural texts is a carefully designed space, where every element of its structure serves both aesthetic and functional purposes. This section delves into the comprehensive construction, spatial organization, and specific decorative features of the square playhouse, offering insights into its significance in the broader context of traditional Indian theatre architecture.

8.1. Land Measurement and Auspicious Timing

The construction of a square playhouse begins with the measurement of the plot of land. According to the prescribed norms, the land should be **thirty-two cubits** in length and breadth, a measurement that reflects the balance and symmetry intrinsic to the design of the playhouse. The **auspicious moment** for starting the construction is an important aspect of the process, underscoring the belief in cosmic alignment and ritual purity in the creation of sacred spaces. The selection of an expert architect in **dramatic art** is essential, as they are responsible for translating the theoretical principles of space and architecture into a physical structure capable of supporting the performative and ritual functions of the playhouse.

8.2. Construction of Outer Walls and Pillars

The outer walls of the square playhouse are to be constructed with **strong bricks** that are **thickly set together**. This choice of material ensures durability and structural integrity. The thick walls also contribute to the **acoustic properties** of the space, essential for effective sound transmission during performances. Once the foundation and walls are in place, the next critical step involves the placement of **pillars**.

1. Pillars for Structural Support:

- **Ten pillars** are to be erected within the stage area, positioned in such a way as to provide the necessary support for the roof. These pillars are placed in **proper directions** according to the principles of **Vāstusāstra**, ensuring the balance and energy flow within the space. The strategic placement of these pillars also influences the overall **aesthetic harmony** of the playhouse.

2. Seating Arrangements:

- **Seats for the spectators** are constructed outside the pillars, forming a **staircase-like arrangement**. These seats are made using **bricks and wood**, materials that offer both comfort and durability. The seats are arranged in successive rows, each row rising **one cubit higher** than the previous one. This gradual elevation ensures that every spectator has an unobstructed view of the stage, a design consideration that prioritizes the audience's experience. The lowest row of seats is raised by **one cubit** above the floor level, contributing to the visual appeal and comfort of the seating arrangement.

8.3. Interior Pillars and Roof Support

The interior of the playhouse is equally critical to its structural and aesthetic design. After the outer pillars and seating are constructed, the architect must raise **six more strong pillars** inside the playhouse. These pillars are placed in **suitable positions** to ensure the roof's stability and to accommodate the unique architectural demands of the square playhouse. In addition to these six pillars, **eight more pillars** are added alongside them, further enhancing the roof's structural support.

1. Roof and Fasteners:

- The pillars are designed to **support the roof**, with each pillar fastened securely to the roof by appropriate

fasteners. The **decorative features** of these pillars are not overlooked. They are adorned with **figurines of the 'woman-with-a-tree'** (referred to as **sālastrī** or **śālabhañjikā**), a symbol often associated with fertility, nature, and prosperity. These figurines serve not only as decorative elements but also as symbolic representations of the natural and spiritual forces that underpin the performance space.

8.4. Tiring Room and Stage Specifications

Once the pillars and roof are established, attention shifts to the construction of the **tiring room**, which is a space for actors to rest and prepare for their performances. The tiring room is designed with **two doors**:

1. First Door:

- This door leads directly to the stage, and actors are required to enter the stage with their **faces towards the spectators**, symbolizing their engagement with the audience.

2. Second Door:

- The second door opens into the **auditorium**, providing a passage for actors to move between the stage and the audience area.

8.5. Stage Construction

The **stage** in the square playhouse is specified to be **eight cubits** in both length and breadth. This dimension is designed to accommodate a variety of performances while ensuring a **proportional balance** within the playhouse. The stage is elevated by a **plinth**, which provides a clear delineation between the performance area and the seating. The **plinth's surface** is to be **plain**, offering a clean, unobtrusive foundation for the stage.

1. Mattavāraṇī (Canopy):

- The **Mattavāraṇī** is an essential architectural feature, as it serves as a canopy or pavilion for the stage. This element is constructed with **four pillars**, similar to the design used in the **oblong type** of playhouse. The height of the Mattavāraṇī in a square playhouse is to be **equal to that of the stage**, creating a symmetrical and balanced relationship between the performance area and its overhead canopy. The canopy serves both as a decorative feature and a functional one, offering a sense of grandeur and separation for the actors.

8.6. Rules for Construction

The construction of the square playhouse adheres to a set of prescribed rules, which ensure its suitability for the performance of drama and the effective communication of the play's emotional and narrative content. The principles followed in constructing the square playhouse are largely similar to those of the **oblong type** of playhouse, with the primary difference lying in the specific **dimensions** and **layout**. The square design emphasizes symmetry, balance, and the harmonious interaction between the stage, audience, and architectural elements.

The square playhouse, as outlined in classical architectural texts, represents a sophisticated and carefully designed space for

theatrical performances. From the meticulous measurement of the land to the strategic placement of pillars and seating arrangements, every aspect of the playhouse is aimed at enhancing the theatrical experience. The combination of structural integrity, aesthetic beauty, and symbolic significance makes the square playhouse a perfect example of the intersection between art, architecture, and performance in ancient Indian theatre. The detailed guidelines for constructing the square playhouse reflect the profound understanding of space, acoustics, and visual appeal that characterized the architectural traditions of the time, offering valuable insights into the design principles that shaped classical Indian performance spaces.

9. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE TRIANGULAR PLAYHOUSE IN CLASSICAL INDIAN THEATRE

The **triangular playhouse** (or **tryasra nāṭyamaṇḍapa**) is a unique and distinct architectural form in the realm of classical Indian theatre. The triangular playhouse design diverges from the more commonly seen **square** and **oblong** configurations, incorporating a distinctive three-cornered structure that influences the spatial organization, acoustics, and overall performance experience. This detailed description explores the characteristics of the triangular playhouse, examining its architectural layout, structural elements, and performance-related considerations.

9.1. Basic Structure and Spatial Design

The triangular playhouse, as the name suggests, is defined by its **three corners**. The construction of such a playhouse requires meticulous planning and a careful understanding of geometry, as the inherent shape of the structure dictates the arrangement of various architectural elements within the space.

1. **Triangular Stage:** The stage itself, a central feature of the playhouse, is constructed to mirror the **triangular** shape of the building. The stage's configuration in this design creates a dynamic interplay between the actors and the audience, as the unique angles and spatial divisions influence the way performances unfold. The triangular stage is crafted to optimize sightlines and acoustics, ensuring that the actors' movements and dialogues reach the audience effectively from various angles.
2. **Placement of Doors:** The triangular playhouse incorporates two doors to facilitate the movement of actors and maintain the flow of the performance.
 - **First Door:** Positioned in one of the three corners of the playhouse, this door serves as the **primary entrance** for performers and sets the tone for their entry into the space.
 - **Second Door:** Located at the **back of the stage**, the second door is essential for actors' movement on and off the stage, contributing to the dynamics of performance and scene transitions. The strategic placement of these doors within the triangular configuration ensures that

actors can enter and exit with minimal disruption, enhancing the overall dramatic effect.

9.2. Construction of Walls and Pillars

In terms of structural elements, the rules for constructing the **walls and pillars** of a triangular playhouse follow similar principles to those applied in the **square-type** playhouse, with some variations to accommodate the unique geometry of the triangular design.

1. Walls:

The walls of the triangular playhouse must be built with **strong materials** that ensure both durability and proper acoustics. The walls' design is influenced by the playhouse's three-cornered shape, which requires precise measurements to maintain the integrity of the space. These walls also help direct sound and movement within the playhouse, amplifying the performance and ensuring that the audience experiences a clear and resonant performance.

2. Pillars:

As in other types of playhouses, **pillars** are an essential feature of the triangular playhouse, supporting the structure and the roof. The triangular design necessitates the use of **strategically placed pillars** to ensure the roof is securely supported while maintaining the desired aesthetic balance. These pillars are likely arranged in a way that aligns with the three corners of the playhouse, creating a harmonious and functional relationship between the walls, stage, and roof.

9.3. Acoustic and Visual Considerations

One of the primary challenges in constructing a triangular playhouse is ensuring that the space provides **optimal acoustics** for the performance. Given the three-cornered nature of the structure, sound may behave differently than in square or oblong spaces. The architect must account for these unique acoustic dynamics to ensure that the actors' voices, musical instruments, and sound effects are projected effectively to all corners of the audience area.

- **Sound Reflection and Amplification:** The triangular shape may enhance sound reflection and amplification in specific ways, creating a more dynamic auditory experience for the audience. The careful positioning of the stage and seating can help channel sound waves, ensuring that the performance is heard clearly throughout the space.
- **Sightlines and Audience Engagement:** From a visual perspective, the triangular playhouse creates an interesting spatial relationship between the audience and the stage. The three corners of the playhouse offer different perspectives, potentially influencing how the audience perceives the performance. The triangular stage may also alter the actors' positioning, creating a more immersive experience where performers are seen from various angles, adding depth to the performance.

9.4. Performance Dynamics and Flow

The design of the triangular playhouse directly impacts the **performance dynamics**. The three corners and triangular stage shape allow for **greater movement flexibility** for actors, as they are not confined to a traditional rectangular or square stage. This design invites performers to engage more freely with the space, utilizing the corners to create dynamic blocking and choreography. The unique layout encourages creative exploration of the space by both actors and directors, fostering innovative stage directions and performance styles.

9.5. Propitiatory Pūjā (Rituals and Ceremonies)

In addition to the architectural specifications, the construction of a triangular playhouse is closely tied to **rituals and propitiatory ceremonies**. These rituals, often involving **Pūjā** (religious offerings and prayers), are integral to the sanctification of the playhouse space. According to classical texts, the same **rules and definitions** that apply to the square playhouse are also relevant in the context of the triangular playhouse. These ceremonies are performed to ensure the space is blessed and free from negative energies, allowing for the successful performance of theatrical works.

The triangular playhouse represents a fascinating example of classical Indian architectural design, showcasing the sophisticated understanding of space, acoustics, and performance dynamics in ancient theatre. The triangular structure not only serves as a physical space for the performance but also embodies the symbolic connection between the actors, audience, and the cosmic forces that govern the art of drama. The triangular playhouse, with its unique configuration and strategic design elements, provides a rich environment for theatrical exploration, offering opportunities for creative stagecraft and dynamic performances that reflect the intricate relationship between space, sound, and movement in classical Indian theatre.

CONCLUSION

The study of traditional Indian theatre architecture, as exemplified by the descriptions of the various types of playhouses—**oblong**, **square**, and **triangular**—reveals a deep and sophisticated understanding of space, acoustics, and performance dynamics that shaped the theatrical experience in ancient India. These playhouses were not merely physical structures but were conceived as sacred spaces where art, architecture, and ritual intersected. The **oblong playhouse**, with its expansive stage and strategic use of walls and pillars, provided an immersive environment that facilitated dramatic performances with clarity and emotional resonance. The **square playhouse**, on the other hand, introduced a more structured approach to spatial organization, ensuring that the performance was equally accessible from all angles while maintaining strong acoustic properties. The **triangular playhouse** brought a unique spatial challenge and opportunity, with its three-cornered design influencing the movement of both actors and sound, enhancing the dynamism of the performance.

Each type of playhouse—whether oblong, square, or triangular—had its own architectural principles, but all adhered to a common

understanding of how space could be manipulated to support the ritualistic, artistic, and auditory needs of theatre. The inclusion of **rituals** and **propitiatory ceremonies** further emphasized the sacred nature of the theatre, reinforcing the belief that the space itself was an integral part of the theatrical experience. The **pillars**, **doors**, **windows**, and **stage configurations** were designed with careful attention to the physical, symbolic, and acoustical requirements of the performance. This research underscores the importance of theatre architecture in ancient Indian culture, demonstrating that it was as much about creating an environment for artistic expression as it was about shaping the spiritual and cultural experience of the audience.

In conclusion, the detailed architectural descriptions of the various types of playhouses reflect a rich tradition of **artistic craftsmanship** and **theoretical thought** in ancient Indian theatre. The playhouse was not just a backdrop for performance; it was an essential element that interacted with the actors, the audience, and the larger cultural and spiritual contexts. This study not only highlights the technical aspects of traditional theatre architecture but also reveals how deeply intertwined the spaces of performance were with the rituals and the artistic expressions that took place within them. Understanding these traditional architectural principles allows for a deeper appreciation of the complexity and richness of ancient Indian theatre and its enduring influence on modern performance practices.

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