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mostly existed in the *court theatre*. Had there been in Kannada a drama-form before 900 A. D., surely, *Kavirāja Mārga* of Nṛpatunga the earliest extant Kannada work would have made a mention of it. Nṛpatunga however recalls with gratitude a number of poets who preceded him.¹ Some of these poets who are believed to have written 'Kāvya' might have written drama also as 'Kāvya' must have included 'Nāṭaka' even in Kannada, because of the pressing influence of the Sanskrit language particularly in reading the connotation of words. It is thus possible that Nṛpatunga did not make a special and separate mention of Nāṭaka. Viewing this from another angle, it is convincing that the life of a people, with regard to their art and culture in particular, would neither grow nor fall all too suddenly. Visible traces of art and culture are embedded in the invisible past, and thus, if some tangible traces of the existence of drama could be found in the early 10th century, the tradition must have found its roots further back in the past; but the absence of earlier evidences to the written drama or the court theatre leads one to consider as to whether the court theatre had its beginning in Karnatak only after the Sanskrit plays had come to be known all over. From those early days to the recent times of *Mitravinda Govinda*, representative Sanskrit plays seem to have been translated into Kannada from time to time, obviously for the stage. Along with the Kannada versions of Sanskrit plays, original Sanskrit plays like *Jāmbavati Kalyānam* were also put on the stage by the court theatre; and besides both these, a specialised 'dance-drama' that went by the name 'Nāṭaka' was always popular in the royal court. This type of *Nṛtya-nāṭaka* or Theme-dance that included music and gesture enjoyed a predominant position and immense popularity in the court theatre from about the 12th century to 17th century possibly at the cost of prose-plays. It is not improbable, as Sri Bendre suggested, that the steady development of *Gandharvagāna* from the times of Chalukyas of Kalyani on the one hand, and the advent of the Vaishnava methods of *Kathā keertane*, *bhāv-nṛtya*, *bhāv-geeta* and *bhāv-kathā* on the other, contributed considerably to the popularity of the dance-drama for a long time from the 12th century.² The court thus preserved a theatrical tradition and nursed it as an important institution of literary and

1. ಪರಮ ಶ್ರೀವಿಜಯ ಕವಿಶ್ವರ ಪಂಡಿತ ಚಂದ್ರಲೋಕ ಪಾಲಾದಿಗಳಾ
ನಿರತಿಶಯ ವಸ್ತುವಿಸ್ತರ ವಿರಚನೆ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಯಂ ತದ್ ಅದ್ಯಕಾಂಕ್ಷ್ಯಂಧುಂ

—*Kavirajamārga* VII 33.

2. Sri D. R. Bendre : *Kannada Nāṭakada Prārambhakāla : Jayanti* : Sept. 1950*
pp. 144-46.

K.T.-3

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