



Sanskrit Theatre

Classical Theatre of India



Overview

- ▶ Originated in the 1st Century A.D.
- ▶ Roughly 300 plays
- ▶ Mainly written in *Sanskrit*, although many plays are combinations with other dialects
- ▶ Wide variety of subjects
- ▶ Most plays have happy endings



The Importance of Language

Shifts between poetic verse and prose

► *Sanskrit:*

- Liturgical language of hinduism
- Many classical Indian texts are written in this language
- Spoken by characters representing the elite, or educated individuals
- Still used in modern hindu rituals

► *Prakrit*

- A variety of dialects
- Spoken by lower classes
- Simpler language than Sanskrit
- Spoken by characters representing common folk

The Playwrights

- Bhasa
- Kalidasa
- Shudraka



A scene from Kalidasa's "Shakuntala"

The Performances

- Often held in palaces
- Highly stylized movement
- Highly stylized costumes
- Music and dance

