

Vācīkābhīnaya - The Holistic View in Sanskrit Theatre

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According to *Nāṭyaśāstra* *vācīka* originated from *Ṛgveda*. It is the *Pāṭhya* of the play; but it does not from merely the written text. When the *pāṭhya* evokes vocalized acting, it becomes *vācīka*, Even when the text is merely read out it does not attain the stature of *vācīkābhīnaya*. It has to be animated for which the Indian concept of the holistic treatment of the four components of *Abhinaya* is significant. The dramatic use of the *vāk* (word) demands a process of articulation doing justice to the derivation of the word '*vāk*'. According to the *Nirukta* , "*Vācaḥ akṣam iti akṣaram*". *Vāk* is made up of *akṣara* and *akṣara* again is *na kṣaram*, that which is imperishable. We find that the dynamics of *vāk* is its latency; its vigour lies dormant within, with the potential to flare up. This blaze happens not in the printed state or bookish version of *vāk*; but in its oral enunciation. Words are spelt through the nonlinguistic device of vocalization which includes human as well as instrumental sound.

The scope of discussion on *vācīka* in my presentation here is limited to my own experience on the subject derived from my interaction with Sanskrit plays in production. Even in realistic and naturalistic presentation speech is larger than life expression. It is to be applied commensurate to the artistic demand prompted by the required emotion. Even in daily life situations when we pray to God with a mind engrossed in a poignant and devotional state, we are tempted to apostrophize Him with an extremely emotive thrust which easily can be identified as out of ordinary. This measure of application will not suffice to create an incessant flow of *bhāva* in the *Nāṭyadharmī* style of acting. The demand which the text poses in enacting the meaning of the words, the sense or sentiments contained therein, necessitates the involvement of *āṅgīka* and *sāttvīka* acting also. In the absence of a synthesis of these components of acting there will occur total disharmony in the presentation. When the representational style is such that it breaks the Aristotelian fundamentals of the three units and demands to maintain the composite character of the art of acting and its imaginative recreation of the theatre space and time, it becomes essential to frequent the available time tasted channels of artistic expression of one's own milieu.

The *vācīka* basically relates to story telling which necessarily involves

declamations, declarations, asides, character-to-character dialogues, *ākāśabhāṣita* and *janāntika* many such categories. The main point to be noticed here is that in the case of stylized rendering the *vācika* has to interlink with *āṅgika* ie; with gesture, and with or without locomotion - both coinciding and complimentary to each other. There can never be *vācika* in theatre without maintaining this mutuality. I would like to call it punctuational acting as the music and movement create a rhythmic phrase. *Vācika* works as the emanent point to which the other ingredients of acting depend for their functional engagement. In the process of story telling the actor passes through first person singular to second and third and narrates the experience on different levels for which the basic theatrical dynamics that works the magic of communication is transformation. The text becomes live and expressive within a time-space frame and the creation involved therein composes an audio-visual unity. Against the linear treatment, the narrative quality makes a curvature process with decorative designs. An idea is thus celebrated with a lot of stage pictures of symbolic significance, frozen moments, variation in speed all in aesthetic balance by maintaining proper synthesis and proportion to the auditory expression.

Time and space are the two components of *āṅgika* with which the dramatic text is articulated as a language of feeling, and it serves as a vehicle of ideas in theatre. These ideas as structural speech elements sprout into *kriyā* which is the natural corollary of a creative endeavour. This intrinsic unison is manifested in the following expression of Abhinavaguptācārya.

Na kāla: kriyāvyatireka:

Kāla or time is not different from *kriyā*. The idea of *kriyā* (action) in the context of *kāla* as an aspect representing time is not found in *Nāṭyaśāstra* or later texts. But it was Abhinavagupta who identified time as *kriyā*.

Movement logically relates to space as it occupies space and makes its extension through space. There is also the creation musical space as it suggests the illusion of space through which we can make a travel. We get a sense of distance through the auditory modulation. Music being the art of time having its rhythmic and melodic ambience, can also create the semblance of space. This is made clear by Abhinavagupta when he observes;

"Sarveṣāṃ paricchedahetu

kāla ityucyate

paricchedaśca kriyaiva"

Time is the cause of all divisions and when divided it becomes *kriyās* or actions. While discussing the concept and image of Time Susnne K. Langer, the British philosopher and art theorist, in her book "*Feeling and Form*" makes a very interesting observation "..... Time is a one-dimensional continuum, and segments of it may be taken from any extensionless "moment" to any succeeding one, and every actual event may be wholly located within just one segment of the series, so as to occupy it completely" :- (*From & Feel* by Susnne K. Langer, Page III). This further gives us the scope to feel about the fleeting Time in relation to the temporal action which is so limited that it is humanly equated with the time on the calendar or clock. The infinite Time is measured out into human actions and the action is understood as time itself. Time in this context works as Brahmāṇḍa as against Pinḍāṇḍa - the macro and the micro (irrespective of whether it means time or space).

We now come to the *prayoga* of music associated with the mental states of the characters, their emotions, their movement patterns, the mood of the situation, the compatibility of all the components of action and many other minor as well as major aspects and their blending to produce the resultant effect that is *rasa*. The expression of the meaning of the text whether it is *padārtha* or *vākyārtha* or *bhāvārthas* the declamatory tone, pitch or timbre and the *asabda prayogas* culminate in a punctuative get-through of ideas and feelings.

The basic exercises of this punctuation are found in the regional music of Kerala which maintains the *Mārgī* tradition of *kāla* and *pāta*. In the Kerala musical system we have this principle which we came across in Chapter XXXI while Bharāta discusses about the rules for the solid Instruments.

Vādyam tu yat ghana proktam

kālapātalayānvitam

Pāta is the sounding beat and *kāla* is the time measure which is the non sounding one. This *Tāla* system of the *mārgī tāla* variety is the most significant character of Kerala music. (Demonstration).