

# Theatre Communication: Revisiting Bharatmuni's Nāṭyaśāstra

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## *Abstract*

Theatre has been one of the prominent forms of communication in ancient India and the Nāṭyaśāstra is considered to be the first documented form of rich and diverse theatre traditions present in India. It contains plenty of theatre principles guiding practitioners even in the modern times and helping them understand the art and science of theatre. The Nāṭyaśāstra is a highly versatile text, hence, provides umpteen opportunities to the scholars for exploring the nature of human communication. Also, the text allows us to understand and perceive the patterns of communication which is beyond the limitations of definitions. The investigation of Nāṭyaśāstra in the form of this research article provides many new insights for understanding verbal as well as non-verbal communication that may help in establishing the Indian as well as Asian parameters in the discipline of communication. Systematic and chapter-wise explanation in this article not only interprets the text of this classical book in easy-to-grasp language but also enlightens its readers with the communication perspectives present in this treatise.

**Key words:** *Bharatmuni, Nāṭyaśāstra, Theatre Communication, Indian Perspectives*

## **Background**

The word *Natya* has often been translated as Drama and the plays of ancient India have indeed some points of similarity with those of Greeks. But on a closer examination of the technique of their production as described in *Bharatmuni's Nāṭyaśāstra*, the Hindu dramas represented by the available specimens, will appear to be considerably different (Ghosh, 1950). The moment we say 'theatre' instead of 'drama', it has to be about communication. Drama is the literary text while theatre is the performance of that literary text. As the performance involves performers and the audience, the very fact of theatre having the aspect of communication is established. With the performer as communicator and audience as

communicatee, theatre becomes an experiential process of human interaction. Then, theatre is not just a medium of communication but opens up new dimensions to understand communication from the perspective of theatre.

In this age, when we talk about communication, it is indispensable to think of the other party at the receiving end in the process. The context of the receiver in the works and discussions on communication has now become an absolutely significant angle. In such a frame of reference theatre is a medium which depends on the audience to great extent as much as that on the performers. As Sircar (1978) writes:

*“Communication is essential in every art form; the artist communicates to other people through literature, music, painting, acting. But the methods of communication are different. A writer writes—he does not have to be present when his writing is being read. So, it is with the painter and the sculptor. In cinema, the film artists do not have to be present when the film is being projected. But in the theatre, the performers have to be present when the communication takes place. This is a fundamental difference. Theatre is a live show, cinema is not. In theatre, communication is direct; in cinema it is through images.”*

### **Theatre as Communication**

Ever since when there was no media, theatre existed establishing communication which entertained as well as educated the general people. The idea that performers aimed to communicate with the audience in an effective way can be observed as evidence in the Nāṭyaśāstra (Chattopadhyay, 2013). This means that the association of two disciplines is not a matter of doubt since the ancient times in India. But throwing light on the works in the West, surprisingly, Gillespie (1979) stated that until 1976 many scholars failed to establish a commonality between these two disciplines. On the contrary, as mentioned in the first chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra, drama or theatre originated for the communicative benefits of society. Out of the need to create awareness using such a method that engaged not only minds but also hearts of people, an art like theatre came into existence. It is for this reason that Nāṭyaśāstra becomes an important text in order to trace back the history of communication in India. This also provides us with understanding of the methods and techniques used for communication that reaches deeply and effectively to the audience. One essentially important fact to note here is that Veda is referred to as ‘knowledge’ (Tripathi, 2013). Discussing in detail about the Veda, *Upaniṣada* and other relative treaties, Radhavallabh Tripathi explains that these

treaties consisted of the knowledge of the world which could be used in daily life. Similar assertions are presented by Loho Choudhury (2014) in one of his insightful papers.

There are several aspects of theatre that makes it an aesthetically rich medium of communication. Over several centuries and decades since Nāṭyaśāstra has been penned down, theatre has played many different roles in society. It has strongly stood up as a form which has moulded itself over time as per the need of the society. A good number of literature is available throwing light on the role of theatre in different era (Dāsgupta, 1944; B. LohoChoudhury, 2014; Ojha, 2012; Shekhar, 1978; Trivedi, 1999) which itself is a subject of discussion for some other time. The present article is an innate look at each chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra from the communication perspective. In other words, how ĀchāryaBharatmuni has indicated towards the communicativeness of theatre is a matter of discussion in this article.

### **Aims and Method**

The present research article is an interpretation of Nāṭyaśāstra from the perspective of communication. The objective of this article is to find out various useful elements and insights in the Nāṭyaśāstra relevant in the context of communication discipline. This is an attempt to revisit and relook at this classical text with deeper efforts to comprehend new explanations and interpretations to the old text. To attain this purpose, the researchers have applied modern knowledge of communication on the classical text and interpreted it in the entirely new context. The writers have presented the entire book in a brief manner while discussing each chapter with completely fresh views from the perspectives of communication.

There is a good number of works by communication scholars identifying the relationship of Nāṭyaśāstra and communication (Chattopadhyay, 2013; Adhikary, 2014; LohoChoudhury, 2014; LohoChoudhury & Bhattacharyya, 2014; Verma & Raj, 2018; Raj & Singh, 2020). Their work has been stimulating for the present article. Also, several Asian scholars, in order to look for Asiacentrism in communication discipline, have approached the classical and ancient texts using interpretative analysis (Bhattacharyya & Dasgupta, 2013; Chen, 2007; Dissanayake, 1982; Gunaratne, 2009; Ishii, 1984; Yum, 1988).

There are many versions of Nāṭyaśāstra as many contemporary Indian authors have compiled, translated and written commentaries on this text and they have presented the Nāṭyaśāstra in different ways. The two translations with comments followed in this research article are that of Sri Babulal Shukla Shastri in Hindi published by Choukhamba Publication, Varanasi and that of Manmohan Ghosh in English published by Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta. Both these translations are the most widely referred in their respective languages. Since the researchers are bilingual, wanted to be particular about the content and also be specific in the choice of words, both Hindi and English translations are referred. The translation in Hindi has four volumes while the English one has only one book containing the full content of Nāṭyaśāstra except for four chapters from 28 to 31 which have details on musicology. However, the chronology of the content in both the books is the same.

### **Nāṭyaśāstra: Introduction and Origin**

The Nāṭyaśāstra is an ancient Sanskrit treaty on dramaturgy written by Āchārya Bharatmuni. It is dated to be composed around the 5th century BC. However, there are debates about the dates of this text. But most of the scholars have estimated this date with evidences based on several aspects such as the words and language used in the text, references to certain traditions in the text, reference of Nāṭyaśāstra in texts written after it, so on and so forth.

The book starts with Bharatmuni remembering Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva referring to the former as the creator of the fifth Veda which is also known as Nāṭyaveda (Shukla, 2014) or Gandharva Veda (Dāsgupta, 1944). Bharatmuni writes: -

*Praṇmyāsirsā devoupitāmahmaheshwrou |  
Nāṭyaśāstram pravakṣyāmi brahamṇā yadudīritam ||*

In the very first chapter of the treaties the whole story of the origin, evolution and development of Nāṭyaśāstra is mentioned. The presentation style is anecdotal in nature. While Bharatmuni explains the fundamental techniques and methods of drama, the beginning has a narrative style which continues till the last chapter. After presenting gratitude towards both the gods who enunciated the Nāṭyaśāstra, Bharatmuni tells the readers that a few Ṛṣi (sages) came to him asking five questions regarding the Nāṭyaveda. The questions asked were about the creator of Nāṭyaveda, its functional aspects (*vibhāga*), its structural aspects (*aṅg*), ways to understand the Nāṭyaveda and how to implement these parts in presentation.

As Bharatmuni began to satisfy the *R̥ṣis*' curiosity, he narrated the complete Nāṭyaśāstra in answers to the above questions. The whole set of explanation is constructed in 36 (in few versions this number is 37) chapters of Nāṭyaśāstra. Here all the questions are very important for us from the aspect of communication because the explanations give a direction to us in understating the aspects of theatre as a medium of communication, both in terms of its creation and reception. Therefore, here we are going to discuss about each of Bharatmuni's answer as to what he explained and how that makes a significant aspect to understand it in terms of communication.

The very first question is the most essential one as it lays down the foundation and makes it explicitly evident that theatre (Nāṭyaveda) came into existence for the purpose of communication. Bharatmuni narrated that Indra along with other gods reached Lord Brahmā and told that people have become addicted to sensual pleasure leading to misconduct like jealousy, anger, sadness etc. and henceforth instability has prevailed in society. Also, the Śūdras and others are not allowed to listen to the Vedas which is also leading to disturbance because the teachings are not reaching to everyone in the society. Hence, all the gods requested Lord Brahmā to create the fifth Veda as a medium for *manovinod* (entertainment/recreation) which would be both audible and visible and would be accessible to all *varṇas* (castes). Then Lord Brahmā remembered all the four Vedas, picked up the important elements from all and created Nāṭyaveda as the fifth Veda. Nāṭyaveda, henceforth, consist the elements of *pāthya*(recitation) from R̥gveda, *gīta*(songs) from Sāmaveda, *abhinaya* (art of representation and imitation) from Yajurveda and *rasa* (sentiments) from Atharvaveda.

### **The purpose of Nāṭyaśāstra**

The Nāṭyaveda was created at that point when society wasn't stable. The point of significance is that Nāṭyaveda or Nāṭyaśāstra came into existence in order to communicate the knowledge of Veda, referring to the teachings that would imbibe good conduct in people. The Vedas and Puranas are the texts presenting evidence of the nature of communication in ancient India(LohoChoudhury, 2014). This indicates that the idea of communicating Vedas to the people actually means communicating the incidences, activities and traditions followed in order to aware people about the world around them. Also, 'Veda' actually means knowledge

and are the source of origin of drama in Indian tradition which points out the significance of drama in ancient India as a communication medium for not only entertainment but also a means of knowledge extension (Tripathi, 2013).

Further from the story, emphasis on the aspect of entertainment along with offering teachings is that characteristic of theatre which has the possibility of effective penetration of knowledge. Eyes and ears being the most active and attentively receptive senses in humans are also strengths for a communication medium like theatre. Alongside this, when Lord Brahmā introduced the Nāṭyaveda to Indra and other gods, he said that it is such an art form which uniquely combine all the forms of art, would inculcate all the knowledge of the world and would have the ability to give all sorts of satisfaction to different kinds of people in society, irrespective of their knowledge, wealth, age, gender, caste or class. The very essence of the Nāṭyaveda, therefore, is its ability to sensitize people through various methods and techniques which would keep the spectator engaged and will serve the purpose of providing knowledge.

Narrating this story of the origin of Nāṭyaveda to the sages, Bharatmuni came to explain about the various functional aspects of Nāṭyaveda. The major aspects of theatre that worked according to this Veda were verbal representation, music, acting and *rasa*. Further on the structural aspect of theatre, Bharatmuni put forth the idea with which Lord Brahmā created this medium that would have an ensemble of all the forms of art, but the ultimate aim would be to evoke the *rasa* among the spectators. As to the fourth question of the sages, it has been already mentioned in the story above that realization of the functional and structural aspects of theatre would be attained through the eyes and ears of the spectator. And finally, to the last question of how all of this would be implemented, the complete text of Nāṭyaveda further is an answer. In these chapters ahead, Bharatmuni has explained in detail about the mathematics and science of constructing an auditorium, the methods and techniques for all types of acting, the use of body and music, about the process of characterization, the visual literacy for the artistes to apply in their drama and so on. Another interesting fact about Nāṭyaśāstra is that it is in the form of dialogic conversation between Bharatmuni and sages curious about Nāṭyaveda.

### **Communication Perspectives in Nāṭyaśāstra**

As mentioned before that there are 36 chapters in Nāṭyaśāstra however in some editions of Nāṭyaśāstra this number is 37. There are two stories regarding the transformation of theatre (Nāṭyaveda) on earth which is mentioned in the last chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra. In some editions it is mentioned in one chapter while there are two different chapters for two stories. That is why there are either 36 or 37 chapters. A brief mention of the content in each chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra with respect to its communicative interpretation is presented as follows:

### *Chapter One*

The very first chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra has the content related to the origin of the Nāṭyaveda. The story of how this dramaturgical treaty was created is mentioned above. This particular chapter discusses not only about how the Nāṭyaveda was conceived but also about how it evolved. In the way, this chapter introduces theatre as an art form which includes all forms of art for communicating the worldly activities around. Also, a narrative on the need to create the right physical environment for a theatrical performance to be communicated effectively is discussed. Bharatmuni mentioned about the use of different dramatic *vṛtti* (styles) namely *Sātvati*, *Bhāraṭi* and *Ārbhaṭi* in the play and its presentation in front of Lord Śiva. On watching the performance, Lord Śiva asked Bharatmuni to incorporate the *Kaiśikīvṛtti* which will add a grace to the performance. Bharatmuni requested Lord Brahmā to provide him with skilled women in order to practice and incorporate *Kaiśikīvṛtti*. The creator of Nāṭyaveda went into meditation and created twenty-three *Apsarās* for Bharatmuni. Svāti and Nārada Muni were also provided to Bharatmuni for the element of music in the performance.

Further Bharatmuni prepared a performance to be staged in the Indra Dwaja festival where the performers received appreciation and gifts from the gods for their creation. But there came the *vighnas* (obstructing elements) on the performers created by *Daiṭya* and *Asuras* under the leadership of Virupākṣa during the first performance as they were unhappy with the presentation. Indra protected the actors with his *Jarjara* and later gave it to Bharatmuni saying this will always protect the performers from evil spirit. While continuing the rest of the performance, the *vighnas* returned back. On seeing this, Bharatmuni requested Lord Brahmā for protection. Lord Brahmā then ordered Viśvakarmā to build a *nāṭyagrha* (playhouse or auditorium as we know it by this name today) so as to have protection for actors and uninterrupted dramatic performance.



When the *nāṭyagr̥ha* was created, different gods were assigned to protect different parts and aspects of performance. Then the gods requested Lord Brahmā to mollify the *vighnas*, to which he spoke to Virupākṣa who put the grievance on behalf of his community saying that the practice of Nāṭyaveda is presenting them in unfavourable light. After listening to Virupākṣa, Lord Brahmā put forth the characteristics of drama in front of everyone present. He said to the Daitya and Asuras that Nāṭyaveda is created not only to present yours' and gods' deeds, but it will also present the actions, emotions and situations of the whole world. Anything which is happening around will be represented in Nāṭya and there wouldn't be any knowledge and art that won't be a part of this art, which states that theatre is a composite art form. With this incidence, the first chapter concluded after the *pūjā* was offered to the gods which became a necessary activity before beginning the performance.

### *Chapter Two*

In relation to the first chapter, the next one has the details about the construction of a *nāṭyagr̥ha*(playhouse or auditorium) which plays a very important role in creating the right environment for the performance to be communicative. Bharatmuni has elaborately explained the detailed characteristics of different types and sizes of auditorium, how to construct them, the measurements to be kept in mind, details of putting up pillars, setting the ground, making the stage, side wings and greenroom for the actors, the ceremony for the foundation etc. In this chapter, Bharatmuni has exclusively mentioned about three different types of auditoriums of different sizes and has explained the ideal type of auditorium for humans. He has mentioned three shapes viz. (1) *Vikṛṣṭa* (oblong), (2) *Caturastra* (square), and (3) *Trayastra* (triangular). Also, there is a mention of three sizes of auditoriums which are (1) *Jyeṣṭha* (large), (2) *Madhya* (middle-sized), and (3) *Avara* (small). Other aspects relating to the construction, establishment and rituals are also explained in this chapter.

Derived from the incident mentioned in the first chapter about the disturbances caused during the theatrical performance given by Bharatmuni and his sons, this chapter gives detailed instruction on designing and constructing a good auditorium so as the disturbances can be avoided during the performance. Ever since, auditorium has played a significant role in uninterrupted theatrical performance according to the traditions of Nāṭyaśāstra. Further, the types of *nāṭyagr̥ha* in terms of its size and shape gives an idea of what kind of plays will work in which type of auditorium based on the design of the performance. The disturbances today are the external factors and tangible facilities that might create a problem in the



attentive reception of the performance for which a well planned construction of the auditorium is very essential.

### *Chapter Three*

As mentioned in the story above in the first chapter where Lord Brahmā asked the gods to establish themselves and their power on the different positions of the auditorium, this chapter deals with the rituals for the same. The following chapter has the *pūjā* (worshiping) rituals of the gods who are protecting the auditorium. What to offer, when to offer and peculiarities like these are explained here. What we understand from the whole process of rituals here, is the idea of efforts and sincerity needed to be put in for a theatre performance. This chapter is rather a matter of tradition and belief of the artistes, which is not necessarily in practice today by everyone. Some still follow the tradition of offering a small *pūjā* and distributing the *prasāda* among the team in order to receive blessing from that universal energy for a good and satisfying performance. This chapter somehow leads to the understanding of having discipline, sincerity and humbleness in the act of communication.

### *Chapter Four*

This chapter leads to the understanding of the non-verbal communication. The story of the theatrical performance of '*AmṛtaMañthana*' and '*Tr̥purdāha*' are described in this chapter. Enjoying and appreciating the performances, Lord Śiva told Brahmā to include *Aṅgahāra* (dance figures) and *Karaṇas* (movement of hands and feet) in the representation of drama. For this purpose, Lord Śiva ordered his associate Taṇḍu to teach the techniques to Bharatmuni. Further in this chapter, Bharatmuni has explained about the use and importance of dance in dramatic performance, positions of dance movements consisting 32 *Aṅgahāra* and 108 *Karaṇas*. Since theatre is a composite art form, dance makes an important part of theatre, especially the kind of themes and content of Sanskrit drama, which add son to the beauty of non-verbal communication. Even today, dance movements are an important part of many performances, of course, depending on the style and content. Also, not just from the perspective of dance but looking at the aspect of movement as gestures and postures, these falls under the *Āṅgika abhinaya* which is plays an important role in communicating the meanings of the whole.

### *Chapter Five*

In this chapter the sages ask Bharatmuni about the provision of *Pūrvaraṅga* (preliminaries). *Pūrvaraṅga* or preliminaries refers to the activities which are performed before the play begins. Bharatmuni explains about the *Nāndī* (benediction), *Prastāvanā*(prologue) and *Dhruvā*(song) in this very chapter. The methods and techniques of preliminaries discussed in this chapter are not followed in contemporary times as they are instructed but there are some aspects which indirectly follows the theories of Nāṭyaśāstra. The concepts like *pratyāhāra*, *avatarāṇa*, *āśrāvaṇā*, *parighaṭṭnā*, *sanghoṭanā* instructs about the instruments before the performance begins, which are the obvious practices followed today in order to be careful. Then the concept of *trigata*, *prarocanā*, *āśrāvaṇā*, *prastāvanā* which deals with the introduction of the play, plot and synopsis, playwright and purpose of the play are certain things which are practiced today as well, but in a different format. Very interestingly, there is a mention of *prekṣākāraka*(producer) who bears the expenses of the theatrical performance who plays a crucial role in a theatrical performance. Interestingly enough, the financial matters are highly relevant both in the functional disciplines of theatre as well as communication. In Nāṭyaśāstra, *prekṣākāraka* is given a mention with good wishes in the *nāndī*. However, there are superstitions about the punishment of not doing the *pūrvaraṅga* properly, but this indicates towards the attentive efforts toward the performance.

### Chapter Six

This chapter has been the most discussed by the communication scholars. This chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra has contributed a very significant theory of aesthetics called the *Rasa Sidhhānta*. A detailed explanation of the eight *Rasa* (sentiments evoked from the *bhāvas*), eight *SthāyīBhāvas*(persistent emotive state of mind) and 33 *SanchārīBhāvas*, also known as *VyabhicārīBhāvas* (transient emotions)(Deshpande, 1989) are explained in this chapter. Bharatmuni has also explained in detail about what are the factors that lead to the process of evoking the *Rasa* which is called *RasaNiśpatti* in a *kārikā* as follows:

*vibhāvānubhāvavyābhicharisanyogādrasaniśpattiḥ*

This means that *Rasa Niśpatti* happens when *Vibhāva*, *Anubhāva* and *Vyābhichāri* (*Sanchāri*) *Bhāva* combine together. The meaning and explanation of these terms are given in detail in the next chapter in Nāṭyaśāstra. This chapter is very crucial as it gives us a detailed understanding on the concept of entertainment and its significance in any theatrical performance. The importance of the aesthetic expression of emotions to evoke this feeling called *Rasa* has a deep effect on the spectators. The deep meanings of effective

communication processes can be understood through this theory and hence this chapter gives an important idea and philosophy about theatre communication.

### *Chapter Seven*

A detailed discussion on the *Bhāvas* (emotional states) is done in this particular chapter which also is matter of independent research in the discipline of communication. Bharatmuni has mentioned about three states of emotions as *Sthāyī Bhāva*, *Sanchāri Bhāva* and *Sātvik Bhāva*. Further in this chapter he has also explained about *Vibhāvā* that refers to the determinants and *Anubhāvā* that refers to the consequences (Deshpande, 1989), which play prominent roles in the process of *Rasa Niśpatti*. This chapter, just like the previous one, is very crucial from the communication perspective. As mentioned in the paragraph above for chapter six, the concept of *Rasa* and *Bhāva* play a very significant role in understanding the functioning of theatre on an emotional level and hence leading to an aesthetic experience which can be seen through the perspective of entertainment. These two chapters together help us in redefining the concept of entertainment from the Indian perspective on theoretical basis. The concepts of *Vibhāva*, *Anubhāva* and *Vyābhichāri Bhāvā* draws attention towards the communicating elements of theatrical performance leading to the realization of *Rasa* by the spectator.

### *Chapter Eight to Thirteen*

In chapter eight, Bharatmuni has mentioned the four types of *abhinaya* (representations). The four types are described as (1) *Āṅgika* (using the body), (2) *Vācika* (using the speech), (3) *Āhārya* (the external craft and design like dresses and make-up), and (4) *Sātvika* (the inner temperament of the actor). Further in this chapter, the *Āṅgika abhinaya* is classified and explained in detail being more specific about the use of each part of the face and neck by the actor. The ninth chapter deals with the use of hands and upper body of the actor. Bharatmuni has elaborately named and explained about different *mudrās* (hand gestures) using single hand which are 24 and using both the hands which are 13. Their use, creation, and symbolism to communicate certain meanings for the *bhāva* and *rasa* are discussed in this chapter. Chapter ten also discusses about the *Āṅgika abhinaya* where the use of middle and lower body of the actor is explained to depict the mood of the character.

The eleventh chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra is completely based on the types of the *Cāri*. This term refers to the movements of foot or feet in a certain manner and speed. Here Bharatmuni has explained the four types of movements of feet etc. viz. *cāri*, *karṇa*, *khaṇḍa* and *maṇḍala* which are defined and differentiated on the basis of the use of one foot, two foot and certain steps to create a visual in representing a particular movement. The use of foot or feet to depict certain situations like that of dance, fights or ordinary movements are explained in this chapter. A combination of *cāri* creating *maṇḍala* are named and described in the twelfth chapter. The thirteenth chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra is quite elaborated and lengthy. In this chapter Bharatmuni has explained about the gait of different characters which is termed as *gatipracāra* in Hindi. The walking style, speed, gestures in walking and sitting styles of different characters like that of a king, prince, princess, aged woman, children, tribal woman and other characters, and of different situations like riding a horse, walking long distances, intoxicated person, worshipping etc. are instructed in this chapter.

The above mentioned six chapters are technically rich in terms of explaining the gestures, postures and movements which were extremely apt for the times of Sanskrit drama. These chapters are still of great relevance for plays and characters having the context of Sanskrit drama. Also, these help us in understanding the important role of performers' bodies in theatre to communicate with the audience from the stage. It brings attention towards the fact that minute details of body movements matter to a great extent in a medium like theatre where each body part is essentially noticeable in its own way.

#### *Chapter Fourteen*

The structure and types of auditorium are explained in the second chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra but a further detailed theory on the structure of the stage and backstage are discussed here. Bharatmuni has also given instructions about the use of spaces in auditorium to represent the location of the play like forest, sea, mountain, island, house, city etc. are explained. Further different regions of and countries to be presented on stage are also defined. Another important subject matter discussed in this chapter is *pravṛtti* (the local characteristics of people of different areas) and *vṛtti* (the styles of presentation of the *pravṛtti* of characters) which constitute a significant role in the representation of any character and story of the play. These are explained in detail in chapter 22. Further a major classification of theatrical practices is mentioned and explained which are *Lokadharmi* (realistic)

and *Nāṭyadharmi* (stylized). The *Nāṭyadharmi* practice is translated as ‘conventional’ (Ghosh, 1950).

This chapter is an important reference work in order to understand the communication aspects of theatre in its representational form. Firstly, as it discusses the use of stage for depicting certain specific locations, it provides us with an understanding of use of space in a symbolic way which is also relevant to the understanding of the spectator. Secondly, this part of the chapter enables understanding of techniques to be used to show the variety of different characters according to their region or countries (as stated in the text) which gives an idea to the spectator about the character through the costume, language etc. Lastly it talks about the two major representational styles in theatre which are *Lokadharmi* (realistic) and *Nāṭyadharmi* (stylized). This makes a very important aspect of a theatrical performance as it determines the design of the play. Technically, *Lokadharmi* (realistic) style refers to the representation in the natural, simple and real form as seen in daily life. Whereas, *Nāṭyadharmi* (stylized) representation has a little dramatic way of presentation. These styles of representation symbolize and communicate the nature of characters. Though every detail given in this chapter may not have direct implication in today’s theatrical practice but the indication of the significance of body language and appearance forms the basis of the theory for contemporary theatrical practice for sure.

#### *Chapter Fifteen to Nineteen*

After describing the *Āṅgika abhinaya* in the previous chapters, Bharatmuni has discussed about the use of language, words, sentences and addressing patterns in the next five chapters from the context of drama and poetry. These chapters are highly relevant in order to understand the peculiarities and also to attain verbal communication skills. In the fifteenth chapter, Bharatmuni has explained about the aspects of *Vācika abhinaya* (speech). (Ghosh, 1950) has titled this chapter as ‘Rules of Prosody’ in his English translation which (Shukla, 2014) has called as *Vācikābhinayādhyāya*. Bharatmuni has elaborated on the characteristics and pronunciation of the letters and vowels and has given definitions of the grammatical terms in this chapter. The metrical patterns of the words and sentences are also mentioned here.

After the chapter on the theory of language, the sixteenth chapter discusses the use of metrical patterns with many examples as well. More than 60 such patterns are named and described in the following chapter. Chapter seventeen discusses the 36 characteristics that determine the quality of 'visual poetry' according to Bharatmuni. The figure of speech, qualities and errors in poetry are discussed here. Next, chapter eighteen has a detail about the use of different languages according to the context and characters. The peculiarities and specificity of using Sanskrit, Prākṛita and other vernacular languages in the play are instructed in detail. The different types of languages and dialects are also mentioned and discussed.

Further, chapter nineteen is specific to the characters of play in terms of addressing them, giving them names etc. Further the qualities of speech or recitation are also discussed where Bharatmuni has mentioned the relationship between the notes (of music) and *rasa*. Lately the six *alaṃkāra* which enhances the meaning of the speech or recitation is also explained. The peculiarities of language explained in these chapters lays down important theoretical concepts for the use of language even in today's theatrical practices. However, languages like Prākṛita are not in use in today's time, also the use of Sanskrit is less and vernacular languages of contemporary India are definitely different from that of the era when Nāṭyaśāstra was composed. But the idea of what kind of language can be used for what types of characters can be taken into consideration from these chapters. The fact that the role of language in terms of its construction and use is very important. Also, a detailed explanation on the art of speech or recitation in a particular pattern of musical notes to evoke the *rasa* instructs towards the aspect of dialogue delivery, which plays a crucial role in any theatrical performance. Therefore, the concept of language and its utilization for communication to achieve the success in a performance can be implicitly learned from the above chapters.

### *Chapter Twenty*

In this chapter, Bharatmuni has classified ten different types of drama on the basis of subject, content, writing style and the leading emotions. The characteristics of each type of drama which is called *rūpaka* are discussed. These different types will help us understand the different types of plays in terms of its genre, as it is referred to today. These *rūpaka* are: Nāṭaka, Prakaraṇa, Aṅka or Utsrṣṭikāṅka, Vyāyoga, Bhāṇa, Samavakāra, Vīthī, Prahāsana, Ḍimaand Ihāmṛga. There are many different types of plays classified today on the basis of subject content and also on the basis of its presentation. However, the genres classified on the

basis of presentation also falls under the theory of *Lokadharmi* and *Nāṭyadharmi* forms explained in chapter fourteen and also on the *Vṛtti* as mentioned in chapters one, fourteen and twenty-two. The nature, style, characteristics and other peculiar details of these ten types of plays are mentioned in this chapter of *Nāṭyaśāstra*. These details help in understanding the content and structure of a play in its written and presentation form. This particular chapter, though, mentions about ten types or formats of play, Bharatmuni hints in the concluding *kārika* of this chapter that there can be many more formats which may also be created in coming time, but the basic and major features are explained here. This chapter contributes in understanding the genres of play in today's time so as also to analyse the general themes of contemporary theatrical practices and liking of the audiences and their concerns.

#### *Chapter Twenty-One*

Bharatmuni has instructed about the techniques of writing a story for drama in this chapter. This part of the text helps in learning the techniques of storytelling and creating the content of the message for communication. He has discussed in detail about development of the plot, major types and nature of characters in a drama, the graph of story according to the episodes, putting in the elements for different emotions, concluding the play and so on. The emphasis on the detailing of construction of drama indicates the significance of story and construct of a play that plays a major role in communicative content. The idea of story as the most important element in theatre varies in today's time which is a matter of analysis.

#### *Chapter Twenty-Two*

This chapter is basically about the styles used for communication in terms of verbal and non-verbal categories, keeping in mind the aesthetics of it. In *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the contributions of Lord Brahmā and Lord Śiva in the development of the elements of theatre are discussed in the previous chapters. Now the role of Lord Viṣṇu is narrated here where he has contributed in the creation of *Vṛtti* which is also mentioned in the very first and fourteenth chapters. *Vṛtti* bear the nature of the activities done by an actor in order to depict the situation in the play. The story of a fight between Lord Viṣṇu and two *daitya* lead to the creation of four *Vṛtti* namely *bhāratī*, *sātvatī*, *kaiśkī* and *ārabhatī*. Also it is mentioned in this chapter that these *Vṛtti* are derived from the four Vedas again in the chronology of Ṛgveda, Sāmaveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda. The meaning of these four *Vṛtti* stand for the following:

1. **Bhārativṛtti**: This style is led by speech and is translated as 'verbal style'.



2. **Sātvatīvr̥tti:** This style is led by acting. It is translated as ‘grand style’ because it is led by *satva*.
3. **Ārabhaṭīvr̥tti:** This is led by energy and excitement and is translated as ‘energetic style’ which is closely associated with the use of *cāri*.
4. **Kaiśikīvr̥tti:** This is led by music, instruments and other methods of entertainment like *aṅgahāra* and is translated as ‘graceful style’.

There could be one or many styles of presenting a play depending on the nature of the play. In this chapter, there is also a reference to the type of *rūpaka* as to which *vr̥tti* is suitable for that particular *rūpaka*. This aspect talks more about the presentation rather than the written text. In terms of communication, these *vr̥ttis* and their usage are a way of presenting the content in one or different ways by using more of speech, action, music etc. according to the subject content and design of the play.

### *Chapter Twenty-Three*

The twenty-third chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra is dedicated to the *Āhārya abhinaya* in dramatic presentation. These elements are also a part of non-verbal communication but other than performer’s body. It is referred to as the extraneous representation which involves the backstage activities. This chapter has detailed explanations on the kinds of costumes, make-up and ornaments to be used for different parts of actors’ body playing different characters. The four types mentioned in this kind of representation are *pustracanā* (properties for presentation of objects using rope, wood, etc.), *alamkāra* (decoration of different body parts using flowers, ornaments and costumes), *aṅgaracanā* (body paint) and *sajjīva* (living creatures). Further sub-types and a detailed explanation of the above kinds according to the available material of that era are given in this chapter. The use of *āhārya* according to the nature, status and gender of characters are described accordingly. The use of colors and their mixing to create another color is mentioned. The technique and theory of body, face and hair color and style, and face masks according to the nature of living beings are also discussed in this chapter.

Every minute detail about the look of a character according to the personality is described in here which enhances our understanding on the use and importance of *āhārya abhinaya* in a theatrical performance. This whole chapter talks about that aspect of theatre which creates and enhances the aesthetics of theatre as an art. At the same time, all of these elements of

*āhārya abhinaya* play a major role in communicating the details of a play or story in an unsaid manner.

#### *Chapter Twenty-Four to Twenty-Five*

These chapters are a detailed one where the techniques of representation of basic things are explained, such as different kinds of men and women, characters' bodies in different moods, etc. leading towards the opportunities to study the semiotics. The types of acting through the *bhāva* called as *satvābhinaya*, which actors represent through the emotions and their reflection on actor's behaviour is explained along with the *sharīrābhinaya* which refers to the use of body parts for acting out the characters, are discussed. Then, *vācīkābhinaya*, using language and words, and its 12 types are discussed further. These types discuss the articulation and modulation of speech which are dependent on the feeling, emotions and type of *rasa* evoked. Under the same head, types of sentences are explained. The techniques of making certain sounds in speech (using the *ālāpa, pralāpa* etc.) to depict specific situations; the characteristics of particular characters are looked upon in twenty-fourth chapter. Further, types of women, heroin in a play and their behaviour are discussed. A long description on the aspect of representation of love and its subsequent emotions between male and female characters is explained. Chapter twenty-five is about the description of heroic characters, men with different qualities like being superior, inferior, etc., different stages of woman's age, other female characters like messengers, courtesans etc. and different types of lovers as well.

Both these chapters, especially the later one is about the relationship between male and female characters. The characterization is discussed here on the basis of the relationship of the lovers. Some of the parts of the former chapter are important to understand contemporary theatrical practice. However, the type of characters discussed here are not completely and directly relevant but gives an idea for processing character development.

#### *Chapter Twenty-Six*

This chapter details about the representation of certain events or time by an actor through bodily presentation like seasons, time of a day etc. The special situations are mentioned in detail in this chapter and Bharatmuni has given instructions on how to represent such events. These events involve situations of fear, anger, sorrow, tremor, weakness, burning sensation, hiccoughs etc. This chapter is titled as *Citrābhinaya* by Bharatmuni where the use of speech and actions are explained in order to present the events mentioned. Here *citra* literally means

picture and *abhinaya* is acting. In a theatrical performance, this part is predominantly played by the actors where they present certain activities. Alike the *āṅgika abhinaya* this aspect of *citrābhinaya* also deals with how does it look when an actor performs. This leads us to look at the efficiency of an actor to present a character and lead the story for audience's understanding.

### *Chapter Twenty-Seven*

This chapter explains a very important aspect of dramatic performance which is *Siddhi*. This element of *siddhi* is related to the reception of the play by the audience/spectators. The appreciation of any theatrical production by its spectators is considered to be very important and this chapter deals with describing how the spectators react to situations during a performance and what these reactions are called. There are two types of *siddhi* namely *mānuṣi* and *daivīsiddhi*. Here Bharatmuni explains that *mānuṣi siddhi* is the when the audience expresses its appreciation through speaking some words of expression or by reacting through their body movement like that of tears, standing up, getting stiff and alert etc. Whereas *daivīsiddhi* is when the auditorium is a house pack and yet there is complete silence of attentiveness among every audience. The first kind of *siddhi* happens with general audiences while the second one happens with pure theatre-loving audiences.

Further, these two types of audience members are discussed where in one category there is a general public and in the second category there are intellectuals, artistes and experts. Another important point to notice in this chapter is about the performance competitions that used to take place at that time. According to that the later type of audience were given an important task to judge the performance on different parameters. Bharatmuni has also discussed problems that may occur during any theatrical performance leading to disturbances. He also explains that these disturbances are hindrance in attainment of *siddhi*. Later in this chapter, a different time of performances is discussed which is suggested to be chosen according to the *bhāva* and *rasa* of the play. This chapter is one of the most significant and relevant sections of the text so as to understand and look at the audience of theatre and this is the only chapter that discusses the audience and play's reception in detail. There are of course differences in many aspects according to the nature and construct of society, infrastructure etc. But at certain points, we see similarity in the basic structure of the understanding the audience and theatrical performance. On the basis of the characteristics of the audiences given here, we can look at today's audiences classifying them in the categories given.

### *Chapter Twenty-Eight to Thirty-Three*

These six chapters deal with music which includes instruments and vocals. A detail on the musical aspect of theatre is explained in chapter twenty-eighth. Bharatmuni has discussed four types of music instruments, the different notes in vocal and instrumental music and also about the combination of different notes. Further, chapter twenty-nine deals with the use of music in order to stimulate *rasa*. The groups of notes generate certain emotions which are explained here. A detailed explanation on the types and structure of *Vīṇā* is also given in this chapter. The next chapter, thirty, is a smaller one where there is a description about the wind instrument and its notes are discussed. Chapter thirty-one is a detail on the rhythm created and used. The different types of *laya* (speed), *tāla* (beats), their number and construct are explained in detail. Also, where and how to use *laya* and *tāla* for a performance is instructed along with the description on *dhruvāgīta*. This is a very lengthy chapter where the parts of songs, when and how to present them in the play are explained in much detail. The thirty-third and last chapter on music has a detailed mention about the percussion instruments. The structure, types, different materials used to make the percussion instrument and the process of making these instruments are instructed here by Bharatmuni. There is also a discussion on the practical aspect of playing the percussion.

These chapters on music give an in-depth understanding of music not only for theatre but also for those interested in classical music. The fact that music is an essential part of a theatrical performance in order to create the *rasa* makes this chapter important for communication research. The technicalities and theory of music in this chapter lead to understanding the effect that music can create, so as to communicate the whole experience of a theatrical performance. It is to note that chapters 28 to 33 are not translated in the English edition of *Nāṭyaśāstra* by Manmohan Ghosh.

### *Chapter Thirty-Four*

This chapter is based on the details about the different characters in a play. There are three major types in terms of their characteristics: *uttama*(superior), *madhyama*(middling)and *adhama* (inferior). The characteristics of all these types of men and women are explained in detail like types of hero, heroine, *vidūṣka*, women working for the king, the army people etc. The details and explanations in this chapter are mostly of those characters which are

associated with the king. This chapter seems not completely relevant for contemporary theatrical practices as the character classification is limited.

### *Chapter Thirty-Five*

This chapter titles *bhūmikāvikalpa*. A detailed instruction on the distribution of characters to the actors is composed in the thirty-fifth chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra. This is what we understand as the casting in contemporary theatrical practice. Bharatmuni has given details about the characteristics of the character in many previous chapters but here he specifically mentions about the qualities of the actors in a theatrical troupe. He also classifies three natures of characters called as *anurūpā*, *virūpā* and *rūpānusariṇī* which respectively means that (1) the male and female roles are played by the actors of same gender, (2) a child plays the role of an old man and vice-versa, and (3) the female character is played by male while the male character is played by a female. Bharatmuni has further discussed the abilities of male and female actors and also about the characters' need for a certain type of actor. Further he has classified two types of plays on the basis of their nature as *sukumāra* and *āviddha*. Here *sukumāra* plays refers to those plays which have stories based on general humanly activities and is rich in *śṛṅgārarasa*. In such plays, there are more women than men. While *āviddha* plays are those which have a lot of fighting scenes and heavy costumes and have a greater number of men than women characters. A reference to use *āhārya* to present the character in the right manner is also mentioned in this chapter. The personalities of actors needed to be characters in a play like the king, hero, heroine, *vidūṣka*, *naṭa*, *gaṇikā* etc. are discussed further. Also, those artists who are needed for a theatrical production like writer, painter, craftsmen etc. are also mentioned.

Concluding this chapter, Bharatmuni writes that all these on stage and backstage artistes are important for any theatrical production and should be a part of the production accordingly. He emphasizes that artists should be given the task for the play according to their work abilities. This chapter helps us understand who the important artists in a theatrical production and performance are. However, again, because of the change in the types of stories, technological advancement and many other factors, the characters and artists' role have changed. This chapter definitely makes an important part for communication research in order to understand the significance of different elements, artists and specializations needed for a production. Though we have already observed that theatre is seen as a composite form

of art even today, artistes (specifically actors) tend to learn and practice almost everything about theatre other than just acting.

### *Chapter Thirty-Six*

This is the last chapter of the treaty Nāṭyaśāstra where the story of how drama reached on the earth is narrated. There are two stories associated with this event. As mentioned before that in some editions these two stories are compiled in either one or two chapters which make Nāṭyaśāstra having either 36 or 37 chapter respectively. According to the first story, the sons of Bharatmuni were cursed by the sages for presenting the comedy play which they felt was insulting for the sages. So, it was because of the sages' curse that drama came to earth and the practitioners had to lead disrespectful lives. The second story narrates that *Nahuṣ*, who was once the king of heavens, requested Bharatmuni to take the art of drama to the earth. The conversation of Nahuṣ with Bharat indicates that theatre practice existed on earth and was later re-established. This opens up this idea that Nāṭyaśāstra is a text based on the practice which existed on earth in the society. In the end of the text, Bharatmuni says that all that is not written in the text must be observed and learned from the people and the world. This establishes the relevance of theatre with regard to the world around us and also indicates the liberal and open approach of Nāṭyaśāstra to be relevant to any society.

### **Conclusion**

The present paper, as an attempt to have a detailed look at the opportunities, has presented each chapter of the text in brief while each of them have the capacity of being explored individually from various dimensions. Other than the possibilities of determining the parameters for verbal and non-verbal communication, other areas as well. As can be observed in this article also, Nāṭyaśāstra offers us innate look at the need and role of communication in society and what are the various facets it can contain. The very idea that the process of communication has been looked upon as a series of activities, Nāṭyaśāstra helps us understand every step in the communication process as an activity itself. For example, the multiple techniques and peculiarities of verbal and non-verbal communication is an area for exploration to have Asian parameters.

As communication is a discipline which is closely associated with allied subjects like psychology, sociology, language and semiotic, architecture, painting, sculpture, management etc., every chapter of Nāṭyaśāstra provides great scope for multidisciplinary

research as well. There are many subjects like feminism, role of rituals in systematic work approach, understanding the finance in the communication activity, role of aesthetics in human communication, importance of physical environment etc. that can be uniquely explored. The text gives several terminologies which can be of great use in understanding the indigenous communication concepts, like *Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* has already been explored (Adhikary, 2008). In the light of Nāṭyaśāstra, not only various conceptual frameworks and theories can be drawn for the contemporary communication practices, but it also is a source to explore research concepts and traditions as well. Though there are several scholarly articles and papers on Nāṭyaśāstra, but mostly they are specific to certain aspect or segment of the text. The present article has attempted to point out every aspect of Nāṭyaśāstra in whole under the light of communication which would surely give a direction to further research in this area.

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