

# The Metaphysics of 'Embodiment' in Bharata's System of Nāṭya: The Dynamics of 'Extra-Daily'

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## Editor's Note:

The term "extra-daily" translates the Nāṭyaśāstra's foundational distinction between *laukika* (ordinary, worldly) and *alaukika* (extraordinary, transcendent). This dichotomy pervades the text, particularly in the concept of *alaukika rasa-niṣpatti* (extraordinary *rasa* experience), wherein Bharata creates a consecrated performance universe distinct from empirical reality through non-daily time (*tāla*), consecrated space (*devatās*), and psychophysical embodiments (*sthāna*, *cārī*, *karaṇa*). While Eugenio Barba independently developed similar terminology in twentieth-century theatre anthropology defining "extra-daily techniques" as those which alter daily bodily behavior to create scenic presence. The present usage translates concepts indigenous to Bharata's metaphysical system, predating Barba's phenomenological framework by nearly two millennia. Both theorists recognize the fundamental distinction between performance and daily life, though Bharata's approach is cosmological and soteriological where Barba's is biomechanical and comparative. See Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*, trans. Richard Fowler, Routledge, 1991.

## Abstract

This critical essay examines the metaphysical foundations of embodiment in Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, arguing that the *sthānas*, *cārīs*, and *karaṇas* are not merely physical movements but psychophysical embodiments of cosmic *tattvas*. Drawing on parallels between the cosmological unfolding described in Taittirīya Upaniṣad and the theatrical universe of *nāṭya*, this study demonstrates how Bharata systematically creates an 'extra-daily' performance dimension through consecrated space, non-empirical time (*tāla*), and embodied gravitational presence. The essay explores how expansion of space through *sthānas* manifests specific energies (*rūpa* and *guṇa*), how *cārīs* dynamically explore floor and aerial space, and how *karaṇas* serve as epistemological tools for acquiring embodied knowledge. Central to this analysis is the concept of *Kaiśikī vṛtti*, which transforms daily actions into extra-daily artistic expressions capable of generating *alaukika rasa* experience. This

metaphysical framework reveals Bharata's system as a parallel universe creation on stage, where psychophysical embodiments serve the ultimate purpose of delivering dharmic teachings while elevating both performers and spectators beyond mundane emotional experiences.

**Keywords:** Nāṭyaśāstra, embodiment, extra-daily, sthāna, karaṇa, rasa, psychophysical performance, Bharata

## 1. Introduction

Embodiment constitutes a process of giving form to something imperceptible (like spirit). The prefix “em” stands for in and Middle English “bodi” means the whole physical structure of a human or animal; material frame.

This, in essence, represents the expression, arrangement or exemplifying an idea intelligently or perceptibly by bestowing a material form to it.

Now the question arises: what constitutes 'embodiment' in Bharata's nāṭya, and what is the rationale behind such embodiment? What we see as mere “movements” or “steps” for dance or “units of dance” such as Cārī, Hasta, Karaṇa, Aṅgahāra as found in the Nāṭyaśāstra are all embodiments. Embodiments of what? Embodiment of various tattvas or cosmic reality that manifests the universe of nāṭya. This might sound absolutely alien at the moment, but we read this in parallel with the cosmic unfolding of the universe where we live in, dwell in.

Taittirīya Upaniṣad extols the gradual unfolding of tattvas in a synchronic order -

तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशः संभूतः। आकाशाद्वायुः।  
वायोरग्निः। अग्नेरापः। अद्भ्यः पृथिवी।

- (Brahmānandavallī 1.1)

Ākāśa or ether or commonly referred as 'hollow space' emerges out of the Ātmān that is Brahman the ultimate Supreme no-space from where everything evolves. The gross emanation of the universe as we perceived through our five sense organs and five work organs begins to unfold from here.

This hollow space is not bound by anything. It possesses only one attribute or guṇa - the śabda-guṇa or the possibility of audibility.

This frequency may render inaudible to many living beings. That possibility of being audible intensifies as action or movement begins to occur as space gets denser and exude vāyu.

Vāyu adds another attribute to this system the sparśa-guṇa the attribute of touch. When the air begins to move in higher frequency, it gets ignited owing to the friction. This ignition is prakāśa or agni. Till now there was no visibility which finds its first appearance here. With visibility arrives the attribute of rūpa or form.

Śabda > Sparśa > Rūpa

When the heat gets cooled down, the space gets denser and appears fluidity - water bearing the attribute of rasa. And the finally arrives the most solid element - pṛthivī, bearing the attribute of gandha or smell, thus catering a complete circle of sensory experiences of perception for us.

This represents a gradual unfolding of cosmic emanation from the causal (Brahma) to imperceivable (hollow space), to subtle and gross. These five elements come together to create a complete structure. This entire process is only fathomed if there is a bhāvanā working behind it. It feels as a complete thought-process partakes in creating a form or structure. Was the cosmos not existing before this process was forged through an ideation? It indeed was there, but that did not reveal any process to us. Those tattvas were only grasped through bhāvanā.

Likewise, one might ask: was there no existence of performance or nāṭya before the Nāṭyaśāstra? Of course, there was. That was just the performance itself in the form of songs and dance etc. However, what the Nāṭyaśāstra did was to give a different shape to the tattvas required for nāṭya and unveiled the process. Not just that it bestowed a sense of deep purpose to take it away from mere practice of merriment.

The tattvas those manifest nāṭya are the Carīs, Karaṇas, Agahāras. What is imperceptible is given/expressed in forms to physically manifest the world of nāṭya, hence these Carī, Karaṇa, Agahāra are embodiments, not mere movements. The question that naturally follows is: how may we begin to grasp the embodiments of Bharata's system of nāṭya?

This process unfolds in two different parts. The first is through learning the Sthānas. Sthāna is that tattva that trains the actors to embody rūpa through the expansion of space. Now, one particular aspect is to keep in mind our body has already got a structure - rūpa. This is familiar to our own selves. Let's call it 'daily'. However, the characters one is about to portray, their rūpas are not identical to our rūpas. Therefore, Bharatamuni is devising a process to embody rūpa of some characters invisible to us. And that process is founded on the metaphysics of space and time. Let us understand that gradually.

Consider a space, a stage with no performer. This space is dormant, it has no form. But as soon as an actor enters and stands in that space, the space becomes dynamic. The presence of an actor itself breaks the space with directions and that makes the space 'ākāśa' palpable. It becomes deśa. Now, we all know that our entire life on the Earth is bound by directions. The rūpa we have, the body itself creates directions such as my left side, right side, head on top, legs at the bottom etc. We may find the same kind of ideation lending the foundation in the post-Bharata treatise Saṅgīta-ratnākara where the placement of hands can be observed to create directions –

पार्श्वद्वयं पुरस्ताच्च पश्चादूर्ध्वमधः शिरः ।

ललाटकर्णस्कन्धोरोनाभयः कटिशीर्षके ॥

ऊरुद्वयं च हस्तानां क्षेत्राणीति चतुर्दश ।<sup>1</sup>

- SR 7.546-547a

Coming back to our main discussion, this appearance of the 'daily' space, bound by the cardinal directions, is governed by the movement of the Earth around the Sun and the curvature path Sun creates everyday on the visible sky. However, Bharatamuni is psychologically freeing the actor at the very beginning. His system of nāṭya and the performance space is not governed by the 'daily' sense of direction. Here, the side where the audiences sit is always the East.

What about time? Does he adhere to the empirical flow of time? Not quite. Bharata keeps his theatre away from the 'daily' in this case as well. We know that the empirical time on this earth is also

<sup>1</sup> The two sides, front, above and below, the crown, forehead, ear, shoulders, naval, the waistband, the thighs - these are the 14 places where hands may be placed.

governed by the Sun as well as intrinsically linked to the 'daily' activities of our body.

The time taken to blink an eye is called an 'akṣi-nimeṣa', 15 such akṣi-nimeṣas create 1 kāsthā. 30 such kāsthās form a kalā and that leads to muhurta and days and night, resulting into 15 days of lunar cycles, months, seasons, years, aeons... Quite intriguingly Bharata does not subscribe to this empirical framework of time. He says -

या (सा) लौकिकी कला काष्ठा निमेषश्च स्मृता बुधैः ।

न सा तालकला ज्ञेया ह्यन्येषां तालगाः (गा) कलाः (ला) ॥

- NS 31.2<sup>2</sup>

This is how Bharata takes steps to create an 'extra-daily' tattva – tāla as measurement of time for his theatre. If one has to create tattvas for a new universe on stage (which itself is an extraordinary bhāvanā) the rūpa one needs to create and the time in which it needs to pulsate should not be created in any 'daily' space or time.

Now, let's come back to the performance space. With breaking the space free from the 'daily' sense of direction, Bharata is mentally elevating the space. This is first level of moving towards the 'extra-daily'. Secondly, we find Bharatamuni mentioning the placing of specific devatās at various pillars placed around the performance arena. This the second level of creating 'extra-daily' - from mental to physical. He is not just creating a space but consecrating a space. Though it is covered and does deal with directions, we may consider this as ākāśa since there is no action yet. It is the "hollow space".

As the actor enters and occupies at point, the action begins. This is a transformation and genesis of another tattva from the earlier. The actor needs to contemplate on this bhāvanā and readily that will emit a sense of elevated 'extra-daily' in their inner space which will help them to create convincing rūpas of invisible selves of characters outwardly through their already structured body-space.

Now, let's move closer to the actor occupying space on the stage.

<sup>2</sup> In common usage what is regarded as kalā, kāsthā, nimeṣa etc., those are not tāla-kalā or time-measures suitable for tāla.

The focus of the spectators is on that actor. The actor becomes the central point of attention. The presence creates a gravitational pull in space. As one occupies larger space, the gravitational pull becomes stronger. This is just like plants or stars having more mass and acquiring more space creating higher gravitational pull.

The same is created by the actors through Sthānas. The Sthānas teach the first manifestation of rūpa. My body already has a rūpa and I am learning to manifest another rūpa through the same body - it is the core of abhinaya. And so, this method is anādi. This is why Bharata's guru of creating a nāṭya is Brahmā, and the guru for kriya is Parameśvara. These two mentions propound the 'anāditva'.

## 2. Sthānas: Metaphysics of Space and Time

So, whenever there is a creation, it necessitates certain elements - tattvas, without which there can be no creation. So, here in the Nāṭyaśāstra Bharatamuni is unfolding the tattvas and method of an artistic creation. Therefore, the purpose of nāṭya has to remain clear in one's mind: when we are performing nāṭya, that is another creation, another universe. Over ages, as the historical time and space continue to change, we may create method, but something fundamental has to be there, the core remains unchanged. Bharatamuni puts his finger onto that. And so, the tattvas, the rūpas propounded here cannot be mere dance units or "items".

Let us go back to the actor creating gravitational pull and manifesting another rūpa through Sthānas. Bharata muni is teaching to increase the space between the feet in harmony with stretching the knees and the thighs. Quite curiously he uses a term that represents a time unit - tāla. The gradual expansion of tāla is mentioned to begin from one tāla to 2½ and runs up to 5. The one tāla expansion of space posits the body almost in equilibrium, whereas 5 tāla-expansion depicts the optimum stretch after which the body loses its natural balance. So, Bharata nowhere hurls upon anything inorganic which might go against the natural fabric of the body. All these Sthānas are his way of taking the actors beyond their normal 'daily' comfortable stances but also to expand their inner space of mind to install the embodiment.

How does this occur? Let us examine. Bharata mentions the names of the Sthānas as follows -

वैष्णवं समपादं च वैशाखं मण्डलं तथा ।  
 प्रत्यालीढं तथालीढं स्थानान्येतानि षण्णूणाम् ॥  
 - NŚ 10.51

The gradual expansion of space occurs as follows –

## 2.1 Samapāda

समपादे समौ पादौ तालमात्रान्तरस्थितौ ॥  
 - NŚ 10.58<sup>3</sup>

We see Bharata is ascribing the svabhāva of this sthāna. This determining of the svabhāva denotes the expression of a certain pulse or energy through a physical form. That is EMBODIMENT. This expansion of space embodies an energy a particular kind of energy. So, the actors are not just demonstrating a mere body-position, but manifesting an invisible energy in the outer space through a particular rūpa.

Now, to let this ideation of metaphysics – this bhāvanā sink deep within the actors, Bharata is ascribing Adhi-devatās for each and every Sthāna. This becomes an impetus for the actors and takes him towards the itikartavyata (what-to-do) successfully. For Samapāda it is -

स्वभावसौष्ठवोपेतौ ब्रह्मा चात्राधिदैवतम् ।<sup>4</sup>

Brahmā being the universal creator represents a harmonious state of balance and equilibrium. The same is demarcated with the one-tāla span. This is how the system of Bharata's nāṭya infuses the 'extra-daily' embodiments.

Thereafter, Bharata is moving onto solidifying this practice within the psyche of the actors. For this, he prescribes application of this to portray various characters or situations. Thus, these embodiments become psychophysical.

अनेन कार्यं स्थानेन विप्रमङ्गलधारणम् ॥

<sup>3</sup> Both the feet are parallel, placed at the distance of one tāla.

<sup>4</sup> Marked by the presence of natural Sauṣṭhava, Brahmā is the presiding deity of this posture.

रूपं पक्षिणां चैव वरं कौतुकमेव च ।

- NS 10.59b-60a<sup>5</sup>

स्वस्थानां स्यन्दनस्थानां विमानस्थायिनामपि ॥

लिङ्गस्थानां व्रतस्थानां स्थानमेतत् कारयेत् ।

- NS 10.60b-61a<sup>6</sup>

Hereafter the space begins to expand and at all the junctures certain energies get manifested.

## 2.2 Vaiṣṇava Sthāna

द्वौ तालावर्धतालश्च पादयोरन्तरं भवेत् ।

किञ्चिदञ्चितजङ्गं च सौष्ठवाङ्गपुरस्कृतम् ।

वैष्णवं स्थानमेतद्धि विष्णुरत्राधिदैवतम् ॥

- NS 10.53<sup>7</sup>

Here, we see how the expansion of space creates change in rasa

शृङ्गाराद्भुतबीभत्सवीरप्राधान्ययोजितम् ।<sup>8</sup>

And so, we see the applications mentioned for this embodied space becomes the embodiment of bhāva leading to rasa

चक्रस्य मोक्षणे चैव धारणे धनुषस्तथा ।

धैर्योदात्ताङ्गलीलासु तथा क्रोधे प्रयोजयेत् ॥

- NS10.50<sup>9</sup>

Here, for example, the act of releasing cakra or holding bow depicted at this expansion of space is not mere body position rather they are embodiment of Utsaha leading to Vīra. Likewise,

<sup>5</sup> This space is to be employed -

i) while holding the sacred thread, ii) to depict the appearance of birds, iii) while bestowing a boon, iv) and depicting curiosity.

<sup>6</sup> v) while normally standing at ease, vi) to portray an immobile chariot, vii) or an immobile aircraft, viii) or to portray the Śaivaite Lingayet sects, ix) or the ones observing penance.

<sup>7</sup> Distance between feet = 2½ tālas. The thighs are slightly open towards outside and Sauṣṭhava is held in front. Lord Viṣṇu is the presiding deity of this posture.

<sup>8</sup> This posture is fitting for portraying the acts of-a) Śṛṅgāra, b) Adbhuta, c) Bībhatsa, and d) Vīra.

<sup>9</sup> The releasing of the cakra and the holding of a bow, and the depiction of (i) patience, (ii) large-heartedness, (iii) pastime and (iv) anger.

इदमेव विपर्यस्तं प्रणयक्रोध इष्यते ।

उपालम्भकृते चैव प्रणयोद्वेगयोस्तथा ॥

- NS 10.56

The depiction of the lovers' quarrel, taunt and anxiety of love depict that this expansion of space also embodies the pulsation of Rati bhāva leading to the experience of Srigara rasa. In the same way this particular embodied space depicts -

शङ्कासूयोग्रताचिन्तामतिस्मृतिषु चैव हि ।

दैन्ये चपलतायां च गर्वाभीष्टेषु शक्तिषु ॥

- NS 10.57<sup>10</sup>

Another important aspect to concentrate on goes as follows

स्थानेनानेन कर्तव्यः संलापस्तु स्वभावजः ।

नानाकार्यान्तरोपेतैर्नृभिरुत्तममध्यमैः ॥

- NS 10.54<sup>11</sup>

Here, the prevalent quality (guṇa) of the actor gets subsided and the attribute (guṇa) of the space takes over. This makes our point pertinent where the rūpa and in turn the guṇa we possess in the 'daily' body-mind gets subsided. This is the metaphysics of embodiment of 'extra-daily' in Bharata's nāṭya.

The space gets expanded further and as it continued to expand, we find more and more rajah guṇa and more and more gravity gets manifested.

### 2.3 Vaiśākha

तालास्त्रयोऽर्धतालश्च पादयोरन्तरं भवेत् ॥ ६१

तालांसीनर्धतालांश्च निषण्णोरुं प्रकल्पयेत् ।

त्र्यश्री पक्षस्थितौ चैव तत्र पादौ प्रयोजयेत् ॥ ६२<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The same may be employed when depicting - Doubt, envy, severity, anxiety, reminiscing, poverty, restlessness, pride and power.

<sup>11</sup> This sthāna may employed in manyfold ways, the primary purpose of it is to depict general conversation among characters of high (uttama) or mid-quality (madhyama) category.

<sup>12</sup> The distance between the feet = three and a half tālas, to be adjusted seated on the thigh. The feet are positioned as angular pakṣasthita.

We see with the expansion of space more rigorous affairs are setting into place -

स्थानेनानेन कर्तव्यमश्चानां वाहनं बुधैः ॥ ६३

व्यायामो निर्गमञ्चैव स्थूलपक्षिनिरूपणम् ।<sup>13</sup>

शरासनसमुत्कर्षे व्यायामकृतमेव च ॥ ६४<sup>14</sup>

The space expands further and more gravity is added. If Vaiśākha depicted the gravity or riding horse, the Mandala depicts the gravity of riding an elephant. So, the gravity of such activity and pulsation of such activity gets embodied in the expansion of space and time.

## 2.4 Mandala

ऐन्द्रे तु मण्डले पादौ चतुस्तालान्तरस्थितौ ॥ ६५

त्र्यश्री पक्षस्थिती चैव कटिजानू समी तथा ।<sup>15</sup>

धनुर्वज्राणि शस्त्राणि मण्डलेन प्रयोजयेत् ॥ ६६

वाहनं कुञ्जराणां तु स्थूलपक्षिनिरूपणम् ।<sup>16</sup>

And finally, we find the expansion of space is taken up to five tālas between the feet. This is the optimum extent of stretch of human structure. The gravity is optimum here and so do fit the energy of the actions and characters accordingly –

## 2.5 Āliḍha

अस्यैव दक्षिणं पादं पञ्चतालान् प्रसार्य तु ॥ ६७

आलीढं स्थानकं कुर्याद्द्वद्रश्चास्याधिदैवतम् ।<sup>17</sup>

अनेन कार्यं स्थानेन वीररौद्रकृतं तु यत् ॥ ६८

उत्तरोत्तरसंजल्पो रोषामर्षकृतश्च यः ।

<sup>13</sup> This position may be used for a lot of acts - i) Riding a horse, ii) exercising, iii) exiting, iv) depicting a large bird

<sup>14</sup> This may be employed for - v) Drawing an arrow at the bow, vi) displaying exercises.

<sup>15</sup> Maṇḍala = Indra - presiding deity Distance between feet = 4 tālas One foot positioned diagonally and another in 180° Waist and knee are level

<sup>16</sup> This position is to be used for - i) Holding weapons such as bow and thunderbolt, ii) riding elephants, iii) depicting a fat bird

<sup>17</sup> The right foot is to be taken away at the distance of 5 tālas. Rudra is the presiding deity of this position.

मल्लानां चैव संफेटः शत्रूणां च निरूपणम् ॥ ६९<sup>18</sup>

मल्लानां चैव संफेटः शत्रूणां च निरूपणम् ॥ ६९

तथाभिद्रवणं चैव शस्त्राणां चैव मोक्षणम् ।<sup>19</sup>

One interesting aspect is that, alongside the gradual expansion of space-time and acquiring of various rūpa and guṇa, definite artha also gets designated. Thus, we can understand another dynamics of Bharata's nāṭya in respect to cosmic unfolding - there no creation until arrives any form or rūpa, and the moment it does, artha also gets determined. So, nāṭya again creates a replica of the cosmic creation of artha-maya jagat.

## 2.6 Pratyālīdha

The mirroring of Ālīdha is Pratyālīdha -

कुञ्चितं दक्षिणं कृत्वा वामपादं प्रसार्य च ॥ ७०

आलीढपरिवर्तस्तु प्रत्यालीढमिति स्मृतम् ।<sup>20</sup>

Looking at the expansion of space and thereafter the application of Pratyālīdha, one can visualise the heaviness of the weapons and in turn the energy of that embodiment.

आलीढसंहितं शस्त्रं प्रत्यालीढेन मोक्षयेत् ॥ ७१

नानाशस्त्रविमोक्षो हि कार्योऽनेन प्रयोक्तृभिः ।<sup>21</sup>

Now, on our regular life generally people are not familiar with the prāṇika śakti one requires to handle such weapons. Neither do people squat in at such expanse. So, we again can see that Bharata is creating an 'extra-daily' tattva for the efflorescence of nāṭya, and the applications provide the impetus to ponder on in the mental space because when the body gets expanded in the outer space the mental space has to be equally expanded, the prāṇika kriya has to coincide, and only then the inner and outer will merge in harmony, and this will lead it perfection in rendition. Thus, the embodiment becomes psychophysical.

<sup>18</sup> Many acts may be performed at this position by denoting Vīra and Raudra - i) accelerating arguments, ii) anger and rage, iii) confrontation of the wrestlers, and iv) depiction of enemies.

<sup>19</sup> iii) confrontation of the wrestlers, iv) depiction of enemies, v) harassing, troubling others, and vi) releasing weapons.

<sup>20</sup> Bending the right leg extend the left leg (at the same position). Thus, the opposite of Ālīdha is called Pratyālīdha.

<sup>21</sup> The weapons are to be drawn in the Ālīdha sthāna and to be released in the Pratyālīdha sthāna. Releasing various weapons is the chief function of this position.

With the introduction of the Adhi-devatās almost in the fashion of characters and situations, Bharatamuni demarcates this system and therefore the elements laid in the treatise primarily meant for the nāṭya or dramatic performances.

There is another layer of psycho-physicality embedded in here which becomes effective for the actors' training. Suppose a modern actor with no orientation of what a character like Bhīma or Duryodhana can do during a battle of clubs can do, has no direct engagement of memory thus no samskāra stored in buddhi. In that case how can they enact the scenes such as the battle between Bhīma and Duryodhana from the play Urubhaṅgam? Here, the actor trained in the system of Bharata only needs to fathom the dramatic situation and can easily employ the embodied psychophysical movements to depict the character.

### 2.7 Mindful Engagement vs. Mechanical Reproduction

One might ask: does this not encourage mindless engagement or mere reproduction of movements? No. On the contrary it depicts not just the mere physical conditioning but a much profound mental seasoning. And systems such as this bars the actor from resorting to random imitation of the real life events of the world, or worse still relate with any personal emotive situation and replicate that.

This is not at all intended for the thrust of Bharata's nāṭya is not in replicating reality

नानाभावोपसम्पन्नं नानावस्थान्तरात्मकम् ।

लोकवृत्तानुकरणं नाट्यमेतन्मया कृतम् ॥

- NS 1.112

but to engage in such a display of the 'affairs of the world' (sarva-karmānudarśakam) which is a glorious re-telling of all the dwelling of the mundane world -

त्रैलोक्यास्यास्य सर्वस्य नाट्यं भावानुकीर्तनम् ॥

- NS 1.107

This basic tenet is the core of this system, hence the necessity of creating 'extra-daily'. What we seek in today's world is a mere

physical perfection, achieved through the imitative correction and there's no self-correction generating from within. Whereas Bharata's nāṭya is propounding such a metaphysics and dynamics of embodied psycho-physicality which will prompt the actors to create and perfect one's rendition as per the rightful embodied energy and psychophysical movements.

The question that follows is: what is the ultimate purpose this metaphysics aims to achieve?

### 2.8 The Ultimate Purpose: Metaphysical Aims

The direct answer to this is to successfully render the extraordinary splendour of rasa-experience (alukika rasa-niṣpatti) which is distinct from the mundane emotional experiences because nāṭya itself has been qualified as such a substance which is unparalleled to the ten laukika padārthas and five laukika jñānas

नाट्यं नाम लौकिकपदार्थव्यतिरिक्तं  
 तदनुकारप्रतिबिम्बालेख्यसादृश्यारोपाध्यवसायोत्प्रेक्षास्वप्नमायेन्द्र  
 जालादिविलक्षणं तद्गाहकस्य  
 सम्यग्ज्ञानभ्रान्तिसंशयानवधारणानध्यवसाय-  
 विज्ञानभिन्नवृत्तान्तास्वादनरूपसंवेदनसंवेद्य वस्तु रसस्वभावमिति  
 वक्ष्यामः ।

Rasa is its core, and this experience of rasa is directed to the audience. And that is achieved through the creation of 'extra-daily' embodiments as explained above. The question naturally arises: why is it directed toward the audience?

### 2.9 Directing Experience to the Audience

Because the emanation of the knowledge of nāṭya itself happened to divert the attention of the viewers from the mindless indulgence in sensory activities and mere merriment. The idea is to pass on messages pertaining to caturvarga - dharma (advices on the sustenance of life and ethics), artha (advices on the financial affairs), kāma (teachings on the non-over-indulgence of sensory pleasures) and mokṣa (advices on being shedding psychological baggage and be free). This can only happen if the viewer are cut off from their immediate reality of time and space. This is precisely why Bharata is creating these new dynamics of 'extra-daily' space and time. Upon watching this splendid depiction of 'extra-daily' the audience will believe this newly

formed world of nāṭya on stage to be true, and thus, they can easily absorb the teachings depicted through the dwelling of the 'extra-daily' characters.

This is the higher purpose of nāṭya and so Abhinavagupta reminds the actors that -

तस्यापि तु नेह 'गायेनृत्येद्वादयेत्तन्त्रितो वा भवेत्'  
इत्युपदेशः क्रियते । अपि तु स्वरसत एव  
तावन्मनोजविषयास्वादप्रवृत्तस्यात एव  
वेदशास्त्रपुराणादिभीरुहृदयस्य तन्मनोजवस्तुमध्ये तादृगिदं  
वस्त्वनुप्रवेशितं यद्वलादेव पुमर्थोपायावगतिं करोतीति  
वक्ष्यामः।<sup>22</sup>

- ABh on NS 1.1

A question naturally arises: if all of this is directed toward the greater good of the audience, what does an actor achieve from this?

The achievement of the actors is tacitly woven. Through the training in this system the actor achieves a heightened body-mind conditioning and the state of 'being-doing' or effortless ability to perform. Moreover, this constant practice of distancing one's own rūpa and bhāva to bear and bring forth the rūpa and bhāva of someone else larger than their own selves bestow a blissful rendering of psychological counselling where the actors acquire the ability to not get too perturbed by or caught in the whirlpool of everyday emotions.

### 3. Cārī: Dynamic Exploration of Space

With this ideation of space containing energy and that emitting a rūpa in the Sthānas, the body begins to explore the space around in 3D cube. This is considered as first endeavour (ceṣṭā) to move with the harmonious engagement of the feet, cuffs, thighs and waist. This ceṣṭā is called Cārī -

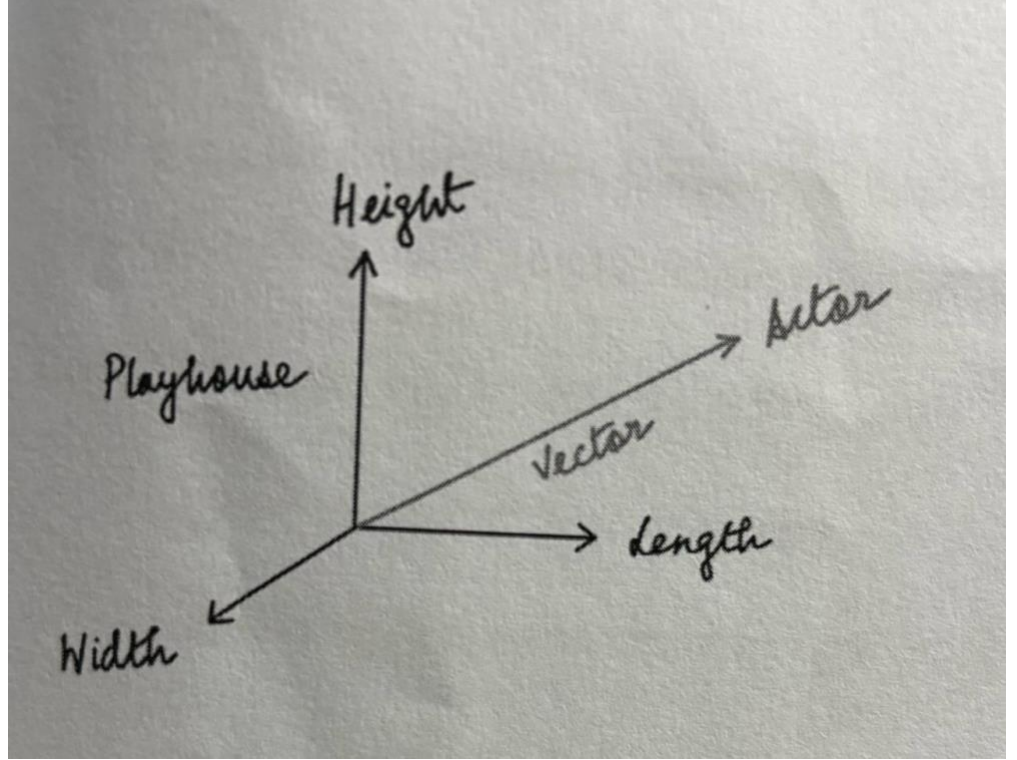
<sup>22</sup> Here (the Nāṭyaśāstra) it is not just advised to merely sing, or dance, or play, or remain attached with it (for merriment). The purpose here is to depict rasa and for that wisely chose topics of concern and engage to portray that for the ones who are disinterested in acquiring life-lessons through the teachings of Vedas and Purāṇas etc. It is advised to choose a vastu (plot for nāṭya) and thereafter emit knowledge through performance for the ones mentioned above, so that they may receive the knowledge of puruṣārtha (dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa) effortlessly.

एवं पादस्य जङ्घाया ऊरोः कट्यास्तथैव च ।

समानकरणे चेष्टा चारीति परिकीर्तिता ॥

- NS 10.1<sup>23</sup>

That engages in dynamism expressed through vectors, tangents and torques. This is vehicle with which the actors begin to move in space.



यदेतत्प्रस्तुतं नाट्यं तच्चारीष्वेव संज्ञितम् ।

नहि चार्या विना किञ्चिन्नाट्येऽङ्ग सम्प्रवर्तते ॥

- NS 10.6<sup>24</sup>

This begins with the exploration of floor-space around the body of an actor, followed by the areal space around. The earlier is called Bhaumī cārī and the latter is called Ākāśikī cārī.

Let us understand the dynamics through a few examples -

निषण्णाङ्गस्तु चरणं प्रसार्य तलसञ्चरम् ।

<sup>23</sup> The endeavour of moving leg, knee, thigh and waist together in balance is called Cārī.

<sup>24</sup> Whenever a nāṭya is presented it is unfolded with cārī. Nothing in nāṭya can be performed without the cārī.

उद्वाहितमुरः कृत्वा शकटास्यां प्रयोजयेत् ॥

- NS 10.16<sup>25</sup>

Here we can again find the connotation of nama-rūpa-kriyā. Here, the nama or name itself demarcates form and necessitates an action. But this could easily coincide with the worldly act of pulling a cart. How does Bharatamuni separate this ceṣṭā from the 'daily' and transforms to 'extra-daily'. He asks the actor to drag the feet. We have already seen the extension of two feet can be maximum 5 tālas, so presumably the same is followed here. Then, the raised chest is added, at such stretch of the body the tiresome job of pulling a cart is suggested here. The expansion of space, perhaps performed in slow tempo creates a stretch in the inner space of the actors as well. And in result what reverberates is the translation of body-mind reverb manifested in an 'extra-daily' rūpa and kriyā in the outer space. Now, under no circumstances a cart-puller takes the body closer to the ground or extends the feet so much.

This is the process of embodying the 'extra-daily' in the psychophysical exploration of the floor-space, while founding itself on the cornerstone of bhāvānukīta.

Let us examine an Ākāśikī cārī now –

कुञ्चितं पादमुत्क्षिप्य पुरतः सम्प्रसारयेत् ।

उत्क्षिप्य पातयेच्चैनमतिक्रान्ता तु सा स्मृता ॥

- NS 10.30<sup>26</sup>

Here, too, we find the playing around nāma-rūpa-kriyā to weave an 'extra-daily' dimension in the dynamics of exploring aerial space. Whereas a 'daily' leaping movement could easily do with stretching the leg and then leaping, we find a detailed array of movement of feet. This separates the ceṣṭā from 'daily' and adds move possibility to it rather than just leaping. Acārya

<sup>25</sup> One needs to get the body close to the ground while extending one foot forward by dragging the sole on the floor. (At this position) make the chest raised - this is applied depict pulling a cart (śakaṭa) forward (āśya). Whensoever a nāṭya is presented it is unfolded with cārī. Nothing in nāṭya can be performed without the cārī.

<sup>26</sup> Lift the leg bent in kuñcita and extend it forward. It should be thrown up and (thereafter) coming down and leaping (thus travelling in the aerial space) which is called Atikrāntā.

Abhinavagupta asserts an application of this: this may be applied to depict an uphill motion. While moving in atikrāntā cārī for an action, one should raise the body upwards to move with a leaping foot -

परिक्रामन्त्यनेनेति परिक्रामः चार्यादिसंनिवेशः  
तद्वशादेकस्यापि रङ्गदेशस्य स्थानभेदेनापरित्यागः, यथा  
"आरोढुमुद्वहेद् गात्रम्" "अतिक्रान्तेन पादेन" (XII.102)  
इत्यादिना विशेषे तु प्रासादपर्वतादिरूपत्वमस्यैव ।

- ABh on NS 13.3

Thus, we can find a mere body movement becomes an 'extra-daily' embodiment of psychophysical movement, fitting to serve as element or tattva for the manifestation of nāṭya. There is another interesting aspect: Bharata mentions that these cārī constitute vyāyāma for the actors and cārīs joined together can bring out the energetic expression of Arabhaṭī -

संरम्भावेगबहुलैर्नानाचारी समुत्थितैः ।  
नियुद्धकरणैश्चित्रैरुत्पन्नारभटी ततः ॥

- NS 20.14<sup>27</sup>

yet he mentions that these are lalita kriyās which are employed in launching/throwing all sorts of weapons -

एताश्चार्यो मया प्रोक्ता ललिताङ्गक्रियात्मकाः ।  
स्थानान्यासां प्रवक्ष्यामि सर्वशस्त्रविमोक्षणे ॥

- NS 10.50

This seemingly contradicting parameters again demarcate that Bharata is not trying to replicate the reality of combat, rather creating a different glorious-retelling of the situation without losing its spirit. We see an abundance of such "lalita" or graceful application of the daintiness of movements. Why is this so?

This constitutes a special mode or vehicle (vṛtti) called Kaiśikī. This vṛtti has the capability of transforming any 'daily' action into 'extra-daily', and in turn proves to be the most befitting vehicle for manifesting the alaukika rasa.

<sup>27</sup> Ārabhaṭī emerges out of the conjugation of various cārīs performed in excessive anger and flooding emotion, conjoined with articulated martial movements.

Now, rasa being the principal substance (dravya) of nāṭya finds itself replete with Kaiśikī. We find Bharatamuni also asking for such a dravya which could manifest rasa (in the 1st chapter of the Nāṭyaśāstra.) This Kaiśikī vṛtti thrives on the subtle pulsation of any movement of the limbs, marked by the presence of valana, vartanā etc. Without Kaiśikī the embodiment will happen but the subtle rasa will not be manifested.

This is where our concept of embodiment gets differed from the Western ideation of embodiment. Walking on the line of modern conceptualisations, even if we discard songs or orchestral music from the performance, still when a dancer creates pulsating movements with the limbs, the experience of rasa still may be felt through just the employment of Kaiśikī vṛtti. And Kaiśikā vṛtti is nothing but nṛtta which beneficiary (upaskāraka) for the nāṭya, says Abhinavagupta, for that nṛtta aids in augmenting the process of creating an unearthly, extra-ordinary aura of splendour, and thus, augmenting the rasa-experience. Quite rightfully Kaplia Vatsyayan observes that nṛtta has the capability of severing the thread of reality and transporting the audience to another plane. This is the power of Kaiśikī vṛtti. Now the question arises, how to manifest this Kaiśikī vṛtti?

Bharata is beginning the journey to reach the successful application of this by providing typical body- geography just for that - to understand the Aṅgas-Upaṅgas-Pratyaṅgas first. Owing to this reason, we find an elaborate delineation of various Aṅga, Upāṅga and Pratyaṅga bhedas.

#### **4. Karaṇas: Epistemological Tools for Embodied Knowledge**

##### **4.1 The Purpose of Systematic Classification**

The sole purpose of this system is to skilfully create an efficient body awareness of optimum quality, where the concentration of mind is permeated to every single movement, bent and angle of limbs. Thus, turning the physical body into an 'all eye'. This is intended to acquire the skilful status where through the movement of each limb rhythm and melody can be emitted.

The purpose of the illustrative practice of bhedas is to turn one's limbs into a charcoal to etch lines and angles in the hollow space where these movements will emerge as illumination, driven and operated by the prāṇika kriyā. We find a similar ideation in the

Vāstusūtra Upaniṣad which considers the straight line to the illumination of light and the movement of the air is foreseen to have a tangent movement -

तेजांसि सरलरेखाः । VU 2.9

तिर्यग्रेखा मरुद्रूपा इति । VU 2.22

Any angle creating any bhaṅgī in the body continues to change bhāvas. Human beings continue to display bhāvas emitted through their body squeezing and contracting during cold and ailment, expanding and restless in heat etc. So, the bhāvas those emerge in the inner space of the body find manifestation in the outer body of Aṅga-Upaṅga-Pratyaṅga, which the other śāstras address as indriyas.

Indriya means Karaṇa. Karaṇa means Sadhana or tool to practice and exercise jñāna. Knowledge can never be attained without practice. The knowledge of nāṭya and in turn nytta as delineated above is universal.

To acquire this knowledge within our system as effortlessly as breathing or eating, and sinking the skill of letting our already-shaped body partake shape of something else, a brilliant plethora of embodied practice is laid down in the Nāṭyaśāstra called the 'Karaṇas'.

These 108 Karaṇas are there to meet the purpose of such knowledge acquiring; thus, the 108 Karaṇas serve as tools to acquire the knowledge of metaphysics and dynamics of nytta. If we study and practice them carefully with heightened awareness, all our limbs - Aṅga, Upaṅga and Pratyaṅga will get rejuvenated, re-awaken through the special activity encapsulating prāṇa, manah and buddhi, for Karaṇa pushes an actor to hone these faculty to an optimum level. Karaṇas continue to put special conditions in front without which a Karaṇa cannot ever be qualified as so. Meeting these criteria deals with an acute manoeuvring of placing one's limbs in the rightful position while curving desired unbroken virtual paths with the limbs. Let us look at some of those criteria

हस्तपादसमायोगो नृत्यस्य करणं भवेत् ॥

- NS 4.30<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The conjoining of the movement of the lower and upper limbs constitutes the tools for nr̥tta.

The question that follows is: in what manner and to what extent must this be achieved? What criteria constitute the parikṣā for the successful manifestation of Karaṇa?

Abhinavagupta delineates -

हस्तोपलक्षितस्य पूर्वकायवर्ति शाखाङ्गोपाङ्गादेः  
पादोपलक्षितस्य चापरकायगतपार्श्वकट्यूरुजङ्घाचरणादेः  
सङ्गततयाऽत्रुटितत्वेवृत्तियोजने । पूर्वक्षेत्रसंयोगत्यागेन  
समुचितक्षेत्रान्तरप्राप्तिपर्यन्ततया एका क्रिया  
तत्करणमित्यर्थः ।

- ABh on NS 4.30

This is specially marked by the presence of beauty in galore and the daintiness of the movement

.... अधिकं (यत्) सौन्दर्यानुप्रवेशेन सविलासत्वं नाम ।

- ABh on NS 4.30

This is the difference of embodiment between Indian and Western conceptualisation as we mentioned earlier. This presence of beauty abundant, the daintiness of movement weaved within the embodied psychophysical movement itself that will automatically augment the rasa-experience. In the same line, we find Śarṅgadeva describing Karaṇas as kriyās which can manifest the seamless, unbroken flow of rasa

स्याक्रिया करपादादेर्विलासेनावृट्द्रसा ॥

- SR 4.548

This system of devising such embodied movement constitutes the knowledge of maximising the possibility of exploring what we always carry along with ourselves - our body-mind. The way we live and dwell in life, it impedes us from acquiring the first-hand knowledge and extra-ordinary possibility that is embedded within our body-mind.

Let us examine, a few examples to observe how Karaṇas embody bhāvas and in the process push the contour of suggestibility - The Karaṇas bring forth a special kind of embodied psychophysical movements to depict certain vākyarthābhinaya and serve as tool to translate meaning of the text in the gestural space, which in turn augment rasa experience. Phillip B. Zerilli observes this as a wonderful phenomenon in traditional Indian performance systems, such as Kathakali, to delve on embodied movements

which becomes stimulators and vehicles to augment the rasa-experience.<sup>29</sup>

We find the mention of such vākyārthābhīnaya in the Abhinavabhāratī, for example: Vartitam for depicting envy ('asūyā-vākyārthābhīnaye'), Apavidham for envy and anger ('asūyā-kopa-vākyārthābhīnaye'), Līnam for praying for something dear ('priya-prarthana-vākyārthābhīnaye'), Kaṭicchinam for bewilderment ('vismaya-pradhāna-vākyārthābhīnaye') etc.

Let us choose one such example to observe how it is moving away from the 'daily' to manifest 'extra- daily'.

#### 4.2 Vartitam: An Illustrative Example

We find the outline of this psychophysical embodiment from Bharatamuni and later being supplemented by Abhinabhagupta:

कुञ्चितौ मणिबन्धे तु व्यावृत्तपरिवर्तितौ ॥

हस्तौ निपतितौ चोर्वोर्वर्तितं करणं तु तत् ।

- NS 4.62b-63a<sup>30</sup>

The Abhinavabhāratī supplements necessary adhesives to completely visualise it as 'ekākriyā' which begins by departing from one position and reaches the rightful position thereafter in a flowless action-

वक्षः क्षेत्रे उन्मुखं स्वस्तिकवदश्लिष्टमेव मणिबन्धनगतं

करयुगलं कृत्वा तत्रैव विहस्तौ समकालं व्यावृत्तपरिवर्ती

(वृत्तौ) विधायोत्तानावेव यथास्वमूर्वोः पातनीयौ ।

असूयावाक्यार्थाभिनये चोत्तानौ पताकौ ।<sup>31</sup>

- ABh on NS 4.62b-63a

Here we can try to grasp how much Bharata is pushing the action of daily 'envious' to the edge of extra-daily through his

<sup>29</sup> See Phillip B. Zerrilli, *Psychophysical Approaches and Practices in India: Embodying Processes and States of 'Being-Doing'* (Cambridge University Press, 2011)

<sup>30</sup> When both the wrists break into vyāvṛtta-parivṛtta from kuñcita at the wrist, and falls on the thighs is called the Vartitam karaṇa.

<sup>31</sup> After holding the palms crossed much alike svastika near the chest, both the hands split in vyāvṛtta-parivṛtta at the same time to fall on the things. To embody the enactment of envy, let both the palms fall in patāka facing upwards.

śārīrābhinaya where only the conjoining of wrists at the chest level and thereafter splitting and falling on the thighs with upward patāka hasta let out the body reverberation of envious. Now, though that action is performed in the outer space with the outer body, the action cannot be comprehensible if the logic and ideation behind this is not fathomed.

We take more Karaṇas and try to observe the treatment of space n time embedded in there to depict the intended vākyaṛthābhinaya in the form of poetic suggestion or dhvani, manifested through the reverb of the body-mind.

Earlier Bharata mentioned in the 1st Chapter that nāṭya involves following all manners of various emotive and mental states of people, which constitute the 'daily' and then to distil it and present as glorious retelling (bhāvānukīrtana) to turn it 'extra-daily'.

## 5. Conclusion

The entire process of fathoming a mental state and then processing it first occurs in the cittākāśa of the actors with supreme awareness and keeping the bodily action 'extra-daily' in the outer space (bhūtākāśa) necessitates the presence of a perennially observing self. This ever-observing self is incurred from the ideation of ātmā that brings forth the layer of cidākāśa. Thus, we can see that Bharata's dynamics of nāṭya is founded on a layered ideation of space and metaphysical wisdom of movement rather than just bodily action and/or interaction with other bodies on the stage space.

This entire journey occurring from 'daily' to 'extra-daily', travelling away from normal occurring in the outer body space through sthāna, cārī, karaṇa and with specially engineered ka-ca-ṭa-ta-pa for measuring the time units are all there to lead the performance of nāṭya to reach the state of alaukika rasānubhūti. The same is attempted with employing extraordinary subtle schema of śruti for the vocal rendition. And as a matter of fact, such metaphysics of embodiment is permeated all over the Nāṭyaśāstra in pursuing the adhikāra-sūtra.

So, through all of these elements or tattvas Bharata is creating a different world altogether, the way Brahma creates a universe, likewise Bharata is creating a parallel universe on the stage. When

the sāmājika gets attached to that through their viewing experience (indriya samnikarsa), they begin to believe that world as 'real' and then the true rasanispatti occurs.

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