



**Laya in Natya for Special Needs**

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**Abstract**

Communication is a vital aspect in everyone's day-today life. Communication skills allow you to understand and be understood by others. These can include but are not limited to sharing ideas with others, actively listening in conversations, giving, and receiving feedback and speaking (*Job Search India / Indeed*, 2019). Communication skills are one of the most listed skills that every individual must possess. Effectively using, improving, and showcasing your communication skills can help each and every one to live in happiness. Under general circumstances, we use verbal and written modes of communication, However if the recipient is specially abled like with mental challenges, Autism, Down's syndrome or Cerebral Palsy, the general mode of communication will not be appropriate. Hence, there is a need for special mode of communicating which enables them to lead their day today life effectively. In this study, I have brought about the utilization of Bharatanatyam techniques in effectively communicating to the clients with Special Needs. The aspects of Natya are used in various forms to bring this effective communication. Initiating with the basic aspect of teaching rhythm the Laya, quoting the examples as simple as heartbeat. End of the study, we can expect to see a huge difference in bringing the clarity of communication and thereby helping the clients with Special Needs to lead their day today life in a seamless manner.

Key Words: Special Needs, Communication, Effective communication, Laya Natya

**Introduction:**

**Importance of music in Natya:**

India has been a land of rich culture and heritage. Theatre arts and its tools like natya, drama, music arts and craft has been intrinsic part of this rich heritage. From the days when the Vedas originated till this day this rich art plays a vital role in educating. These art forms have not been merely an entertainment for people but also an education.

Natya and Music are very important for the growth of our heritage. Literature is the mirror for the growth of our cultural heritage. The life of people become the main source of literature, it shows the era of people in that particular region, state and country. It gives us a clear picture of the culture



followed, language used and the life style they followed. It also shows us how music and natya started complementing each other. We can see the growth, development of Natya and music through our history. Written scripts are also one of the sources where, we find that music and natya always went hand in hand.

Music plays a vital role in Natya, natya which gives us the complete rasanubhava. The natya movements and expressions put together becomes natya. Song and Thala becomes the mean to expressthrough a set rhythmic pattern. It is not always necessary to have a story base, to express one's emotions. We can express happiness, sadness with or without lyrics also. The background support becomes a necessary aspect. This can be shown through the gestures, movements and the expressions which can be followed by the people who cannot follow the language too. Music is an art which is a combination of words, sounds, and instruments. The expression of emotions becomes the melody. We come to know that the existence of music was known even before second century BC through the literature given by great saints like Bharata Muni and Nandikeshwara.

In music, we can see lyrics praising and worshipping the almighty, great stories were told, good morals were shared through music. This was taught by Sage Bharata Muni to Apsaras and Narada Munias ordered by Lord Shiva which can be seen in our Natya Shastra

During the twelfth century BC in the book 'Sangeeta Ratnakara' by Saranga Deva, he said "Geetham Vadyam thatha NrityamTriyam Sangeetha muchyate"

Which means - songs, instruments and natya put together is called music which also means Swara, raga and Thala put together.

### **Introduction to Natya:**

Natya can be best depicted through the following shloka

"Angikam Bhuvanam Yasya  
Vachikam Sarva Vangmayam  
Aaharyam Chandra Tharadi  
Tam nama Satvikam Shivam"

Lord Shiva, whose bodily movement is the entire universe, whose speech is the language of the universe, whose ornaments are the moon and the stars, to him we worship.

Abhinaya is the main technique of Natya. Abhi means towards, Natya means to carry. This means carry your emotions through expressions to the audience. It is an inseparable component of natya. Natya is derived from the root 'Nat' meaning to natya or to act, it is a combination of literature,



music and drama, “iyal, isai and natakam”. Facial expressions or abhinaya is important in natya. Story is narrated along with elements of drama where Vachika Abhinaya becomes the integral part. Make up and costumes may suit the character portrayed. Good music gives the utmost happiness to the listener, so does the natya. They become the source to creative activities. If a poem is sung with a good rhythm, expressions and actions, it is very easy to grasp rather than reciting in lines. Through repeating and imitation of the same which brings about the combination of audio and visual memory, one can learn to memorize it in an easy way. The word to word meaning, tune, rhythm, laya all put together makes it attractive and so it can remain in long term memory.

### **Introduction of Laya:**

Repetitive nature of any phenomenon, example, heartbeat, Movement of seconds needle in the clock, seasons of our planet, walking, running has all laya in it. Application of time to sound is Laya. It is the temporal discipline, ordering in time, organization in time. Laya is the fundamental concept than Thala. Laya is the critical aspect of natya. It carries the capacity to make an impact or not to make. A mistake in laya would not create, the kind of impact that one would desire. So laya is a tempo, a speed with which natya is done to teach laya in natya, we need Thala. Shruthi, Swara, Raga and Thala are the most important aspects of the music, Shruthi is the mother, laya is the father. Shruthi means the musical pitch, laya means maintaining the speed of thala, Though the Thala's may be different laya remains the same. Within the limits of laya the following standard of times beats are taken into account. Thishra (Three counts), Chathushra (four counts), Khanda (5 counts), Mishra (7 counts), Sankeerna (9 counts).

### **Introduction to Special Needs:**

Any of various difficulties such as physical, emotional, behavioural, or learning difficulties, that causes an individual to require additional or specialized services or accommodations such as in education or recreation is Special Needs. (*Special Needs*, 2022)

Generally, there is a recognition of one's strength and developing it to the next level. This can be done in stages by

1. Give information – teaching,
2. Remembering – with clues/practices,
3. Recalling – after a gap of two days.



## **Types of Special Needs**

There are different types of Special Needs:

1. Physical needs like Visual, Hearing and Speech.
2. Intellectual needs like Specific learning disabilities, Autism spectrum, Down's syndrome, Cerebral palsy, Intellectual challenges (Mental challenges).

Rhythm keeps the mind and physical health intact. Continuous listening, viewing or performing of good music and natya enhances one's confidence and will help the special client to present himself/herself in a socially acceptable manner. Following the beat, tapping the feet, clapping hands to a structured rhythmic pattern can reduce the stress and improve the quantity and quality of relaxation and rest. So, introducing Laya in natya becomes an important and an inevitable need.

## **Approach to Teaching Laya in Natya for children with Special Needs**

### **Introduction to Beats:**

It is easy to teach laya through thala for natya. So, introduce laya through thala. Thala means beat, the constant union of fingers and palm is known as thala. Tha is shiva and la is Shakthi. The union of Shiva and Shakthi gives rise to Thala. The Suladhi Saptha Thala is the most used system for natya. They are,

1. Dhruva Thala, 2. Matya Thala, 3. Roopaka Thala, 4. Jhamphe Thala, 5. Triputha Thala, 6. Atta Thala, 7. Eka Thala.

The five Jaathis are

1. Tha – Ki – Ta: 3 counts - Thishra
2. Tha – Ka – Dhi – Mi: 4 counts – Chathushra
3. Tha – Ka – Tha – Ki – Ta: 5 counts – Khanda
4. Tha – Ka – Dhi – Mi – Ta – Ki – Ta: 7 counts – Mishra
5. Tha – Ka – Dhi – Mi – Ta – Ka – Ta – Ki – Ta: 9 counts – Sankeerna

Though there are these many thalas, when it comes to teaching the Special Needs, we can start and stick to only few of them which are easier for them to learn and use. Here are few examples, we have taken Thishra -3 counts, Chathushra – 4 counts and Khanda – 5 counts.

For example, teaching the laya through usage of different kinds of adavus make it much easier to understand. (Adavus are the basic standing posture, Charis, bhramaris, sthanakas all put together



with beating of legs)

Before teaching the *theadavus*, try with clapping so that they get used to the rhythm and slowly introduce the *adavu* you are aiming to teach.

A:Counts: Thishra Jaathi (3)

Adavu used: Thatt *Adavu*.

Task analysis:

1. lift the right leg and beat for one beat at a time by saying 1,2 &3
2. Repeat the same for the left leg,
3. Use the same pattern and increase the speed to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>

B: Counts: Chathushra (4)

*Adavu* used: Naat *Adavu*

How to Perform:Stretch one leg in line with your body with the foot facing the sky and the other remaining in *Aramandi* (*bending on the knee*) position

Task Analysis

- Stretch the right leg and place it in line with your body with the foot facing the sky and the ankle on the floor, while the left leg remains in *Aramandi* position
- Bring back the right leg to *Aramandi* position to the count of 2.
- Repeat the same in the left leg.

Use the same pattern to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> speed

C.Count: Khanda (5)

*Adavu* used: Metu *Adavu*

How to Perform:Use the toes to tap the floor

Task Analysis:

- To the count of 2 lift your right leg and stamp the floor on the toes and use full foot to stamp the floor to the count of 3.
- Repeat the same on the left leg.
- Use the same pattern to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> speed

## Changes in Tempo

Laya can be defined as the rhythm in which a song moves, it is the frequency of the speed between the angas of the thalam. This is primarily classified into three major divisions namely,



- Vilambit Laya (Slow tempo)
- MadhyamikLaya (Medium tempo)
- Dhrit Laya (fast tempo)

So, laya is a tempo, a speed with which natya is done. To teach laya through natya will be much easier.

This methodology is easy and fun learning without realizing the difficulty. It helps them to work in Synchrony and move to Rhythm.

Doing simultaneous actions, development of actions or occurrence of actions with repetition is one of the important means which helps in the growth of creativity in a person with Special Needs

Example:

Step 1: Holding hands and looking at each other

Step 2: Walking movement: Moving forward step by step to the rhythm

Step 3: Stopping at a particular given point

Step 4: Side kicking of legs alternatively

Easy and Hard rhythms

Rhythm is usually taught in an orderly manner starting from the slow tempo through the flow of sound for a particular meter. The pattern is set in such a way to suit the performance of the subject according to their capability

Step 1: Clapping

Step 2: Use of spoon and plate

Step 3: Using sticks

Step 4: Using available percussion instruments

Tool: Instrument

Property: Bucket, Khanjara, Tambola, Sticks, Cymbals

### **Conclusion:**

The aesthetics of natya, one of the most basic motives of natya is, the expression and communication of emotions. People and even certain animals often do natya as a way of realising powerful feelings such as sudden access of high spirits, joy, impatience or anger. (*The Aesthetics of Natya*, 2020). These spontaneous movements when structured and given a form will be called natya.



Through these techniques we can help the individual achieve emotional, cognitive, physical and social integration with self -confidence. This helps both physical and mental health as it reduces the stress and also helps in mood management, helps them to gain muscular strengths, helps in getting in coordination with life and also gives them mobility. This will increase their communication and social skills. The nervous system itself is affected, so they will have a lot of behavioural issues and repetitive behaviours which can be reduced through the application of this technique which is very well structured as per their need and to their capabilities.

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