



ISSN: 2582-9513

PRANAV JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS

Communicational Styles in Dance

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Abstract:

Communication is the act of sharing or exchanging, ideas or feelings. It is well known that communication is of different types. In this article, the different Communicational styles in dance have been discussed. There are 5 types of communication mentioned below. Do they all play an important aspect for an effective communication? Or can each aspect by itself make an effective communication? While discussing about Communicational styles in dance, do movement and communication play an intertwined role?

Aim:

The main aim of this paper is to establish some of the prominent methods of communication and to refresh of how each rasa communicates and caters to different emotion and situation.

Keywords – communication, dance, rasa

Communication and its types:

Communication is an extensive and complex subject, and this area of study has been concisely illustrated in this journal, of how individuals interact with each other. The conventional communicating method that is universally followed by humans are verbal/lingual (speech or text), and unspoken (i.e) non-verbal methods such as mannerism, facial expressions.

Communication is the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviours to express information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feeling, etc. It is classified into 5 sub-divisions

- Verbal Communication
- Non – Verbal Communication
- Written Communication
- Listening
- Visual Communication



Non-Verbal Communication:

It is the manner of sending and receiving messages by not using words spoken or written. The communication process is made effective by using platforms such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body language, posture, space, sound, and paralanguage. Non-verbal communication has more emotional characterization, therefore, must be handled with additional caution. The best proverb that can be quoted for Non-Verbal Communication is “Actions speak louder than Words”. Non – Verbal communication is categorised into four classes

- Sign Language
- Action Language
- Object Language
- Sound

Movement and Communication

What is the connection between movement and communication? Is it necessary to have movement in an effective communication?

Movement is a fundamental factor for communication for humans as well as animals.

While performing, the management of stage positions must be well-organized for the recital to reach out loud. If it is concerned with steps (nritta) the more movement the more colour to the performance. Moving to the Abhinaya aspect, one must give utmost importance to the Action language (i.e) gestures, facial expressions. In a non-verbal communication, an approximate of 55% of the expressions / emotions is conveyed through body-language. And one of the important movements comprehended worldwide is Sign language.

Dance as Communication:

Language is a medium used for sharing an individual's thought / feeling either through sound / writing. Likewise, dance is recognized as a physical language which opens the opportunity to explore innumerable ways of communication through the body.

As comprehended by all, dance is a form of non-verbal communication. It is an art that allows the body to communicate the tone and mood of the happening.



Apart from non-verbal communication, dance has some corresponding scale with verbal communication as well. For instance, in a dance recital, the dance sequences are established as words in synchronization with the lyrics of the song.



Codified Physical Language:

Non-verbal communication when interpreted with dance, involves many elements to it, beginning with bodily movement, stance, gestures, and several other factors to initially interconnect the dancer and the spectator. This initial vibe is gradually layered with more complexities such as style and technique which enhances the facial expressions. The spectators who are aware with the narrative of what the dancer characterizes pursue along, but for those unaware, are persuaded to use their imagination.

To further break it down, body movement can be expressive and communicative. It is used as a tool of self-expression where there is no necessity for vocabulary and the feelings are conveyed through movement and emotions. Conventionally it is to comprehend that movements with slow intensity generally exhibit the tone of sadness or dejection, whereas movements with sharp intensity express strength and delight. Handling another illustration, movements that involve extensive swift moving and rising motion reveal anger.

Narrowing down, Indian Classical Dance forms are like the Western Dance forms having codified physical language.

Indian poetics has had a breakthrough in establishing a strong base for theories and law relating to poetry and drama. Natyashastra, an Indian literature book, is considered as the encyclopaedia of dramatic arts. Natyashastra is the earliest literature text that addresses the discipline of music and dance authored by Bharata Muni with 36 chapters. The sixth chapter particularizes the RASA theory.



What is Rasa? What is the connection between Rasa and Codified Physical Language?

There is no exact English translation for the word Rasa. But it can be associated with the word Relish. Bharata is the first to pronounce the word 'Rasa'. Rasa can be obtained by savouring the joy created from hearing and seeing. It is a quality created linking the artist and the spectator. In the words of Bharata, Rasa is a sentiment, and the spectator progresses with the sentiment as a piece of creative object. The realization of Rasa is got from the specific sthayibhav. In other words, Rasa is evident through Sthayibhav.

In Natyashastra, Bharata enumerates the 'natya rasa' as eight

- Shringara (erotic)
- Hasya (humorous)
- Karuna (pathetic)
- Raudra (anger)
- Veera (heroic)
- Bhayanaka (fear)
- Bhibatsa (disgust)
- Adbhuta (surprise)

Later, in a text called Abhinaya Darpana authored by Nandikeshvara, he adds another rasa called 'Shanta' (peace). This collectively is recognized as 'Navarasa'.

As known by all, there are 8 types of Indian Classical Dances - Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Kathakali, Sattriya, Manipuri and Mohiniyattam. All these 8 dance forms have a prominent use of the above-mentioned rasas, which in an implicit manner is connected to codified physical language that will be explained below.

- The Shringararasa is born from the pleasure of love. This kind of emotion is usually expressed by exchange of glances, in addition to that, external factors that enhance the emotion are beautiful decorations, flower creepers and moonlight.



- Hasya rasa is born from the emotion of mirth. As the name proposes it is laughter and the emotion can be understood by the dancer moving the lips, cheeks, and nose, along with the change of colours in the face.
- Karuna is born from the state of grief. This rasa is expressed through tears, dropping face and limbs, breathing deeply.
- Raudra indicates anger. It is communicated by exhibiting expressions like red eyes, knitting the eyebrows, quivering the cheeks, and clenching the hands.
- Veera is born from state of strength or energy. This emotion is exhibited through courage, heroism, clearness of intellect.
- Bhayanaka reveals fear. This emotion can be identified by actions like shaking of hands, feet, and eyes, trembling, pale face.
- Bhibatsa is a state of disgust. A reaction that causes an unpleasant sight, smell, taste, touch, and shudder.
- Adbhutais born from astonishment. It can be understood when there is a priceless emotion seen on the face such as wide opening of eyes filled with happiness, joyful tears (a combination of tears with smile).
- Shanta the final rasa is born from the state of tranquillity. This emotion can be sensed with calmness and composure, perception, and meditation.

Verbal Communication - Quoted Speech:

Quoted Speech /Direct Speech is used when we simply repeat what someone says. When associating it with dance, the dancer simply interprets the lyrical aspect in the form of actions and facial expressions. An example of this kind of speech is - samiyaivarasolladisakhiye. In the above said line, it is evident that there is no hidden meaning in it. The line simply says - Oh friend, please request the God to come. In this the hands and the expression signify the direct meaning of the line.

Non-Verbal Communication - Sound:

As discussed earlier, Non-verbal communication is conveyed through various modes, and one important aspect is sound. Sound can be understood as a pressure wave created by a vibrating object. When associating sound with dance as a non-verbal communication, each instrument performed individually accompanied with dance delivers a whole new idea of communication based on the imagination of the dancer and the viewer, similarly instruments played together



accompanied with dance communicates a different understanding.

Having Indian Classical Dance as the main discipline some common instruments used during dance recital are – Mridangam, Flute, Violin, Veena, Tabla and Nattuvangam.

When creating a scene which has conflict as the subject, the instruments used are Mridangam, Violin and Nattuvangam – by using this with the appropriate steps and actions it is clearly understood that the event is denoting a war or some struggle.

To develop a scene that is joyous, instruments such as flute, violin, nattuvangam, veena, mridangam can be used. Apart from this, the above said instruments can be used separately to denote a scene, for instance – for a horse galloping - mridangam, to ring a bell when entering a temple - nattuvangam, to show Lord Krishna playing his favourite instrument – flute, to rejoice in happiness – veena / violin.

Written Communication – Statement:

Written communication is a way of communication that happens by sending letters, circulars, reports, telegrams, etc. When viewing this kind of communication through the lens of dance, there are many situations (sancharis') created where

- the heroine (nayika) sends letters to her beloved (hero – nayaka)
- the King sends or receives messages from the spy sent to the enemy kingdom
- King sending or receiving invite from companion kingdom

The first two kind of messages were usually tied to the leg of the pigeon and sent across. Whereas the third kind of message, an invite was generally sent through a soldier riding the horse.

These kinds of scenarios are commonly depicted via dance accompanied by appropriate story and music.

Listening – Facial Reaction:

A point to be keenly noted is that, by listening it does not mean only with ears, but with the facial reactions created complimenting each other. Expression is generally expressed to enhance the beauty of the dance and to give elegance, but reaction is something that communicates the intensity of the situation to the audience in the form of listening. When the reaction goes and reaches the audiences it creates an enhanced impression (as if they were a part of the happening). For instance, a scene of Krishna and the gopika's are performed. The event is where Krishna playfully teases the gopis. At this situation the characters in the scene and the spectators are equally thrilled and



excited. This kind of emotion portrayed by every individual present creates a long-lasting reaction which is thus portrayed in the form of facial expression a form of listening.

Visual –Light, properties, costume, and backdrop:

A well-known added component for dance communication is – Lights, Props, Costume and Backdrop. Apart from the sub-categories seen above, the 4 elements always highlight the performance.

- Light – One of the significant factors to consider before choosing the lights are, the theme / mood of the performance. Lights are generally classified into two categories –(1) Warm colours and (2) Cold colours.

Warm colours include yellow, red and orange and are used to raise feelings of excitement, warmth and anger. On the other hand, Cold Colours like blue, green and purple are used to evoke intense yet soothing emotions of sadness or romance.

Apart from this there are other light patterns that are used depending on the number of performers.

- For a solo recital a much familiar method of light is used which is known as a single pool down light (i.e) light that spotlights the dancer by leaving the remaining stage dark. This kind of lighting is generally done when the dancer's emotions and expressions need to be highlighted.
- To feature a group performance and emphasize on a particular formation, light patterns such as path (strip of light displayed vertically), plain (strip of light displayed horizontally) and diagonal are used.
- Backdrop –A cyc backdrop (white curtain exhibiting different colours), and a traveller backdrop (black curtain displaying white lights from above and sides) are the most conventionally used ones. But when performing an Indian classical dance, backdrops with dark colours (black, navy blue) decorated with flowers are lamps are frequently seen.
- Costume –When representing Indian Classical Dance, all the 8 dances have a grammar on how the costume must be designed and without many changes it applies for solo as well as group performances. But when it is a dance drama that is performed, depending on the story and the characters the costume is presented.



ISSN: 2582-9513

PRANAV JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS

- Props –Props always add a better outlook to the performance. Some of the common props are dandiya sticks used during celebrations, crowns for King and Queen, sometimes even to show Goddess, swords for war scene, various masks for varied scenes.

Conclusion:

Every communication division is an important aspect for interaction. Compromising on any one aspect leads to ineffective communication. Taking for example, a dance recital without the verbal trait (lyrical song) does not convey the meaning or the emotion of what the dancer interprets. Similarly, without proper visual outlook the whole quality of the performance is compromised. Therefore, it is important for each mode of communication to be present for an effective transmission.

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