

CONCEPT OF GATI

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Gati is the movement of the actor through which the character and situation is established on the stage. *Gati* refers to the gait, which comes from the root-word *gam-gach* – to move or to go. *Gamanam* means moving or walking, a synonym of gait. Hence, *gati* represents the way the actor moves on the stage. Abhinavagupta says, though the uses of *aṅgas* and *upāṅgas* starting from the head to feet based on the exposition of *rasas* and *bhāvas* are given separately, Bharata enumerates the combination of its uses in these gaits or movements performed by the *cāris* and *maṇḍalas*, which influences the *cittavṛtti*.¹ *Gati* can be dance - in dance movements and walk - in drama sequences. As soon as a person enters the stage, his character of the drama can be judged by the spectator from his gait. The character should first enter the stage, so the starting action is *gati* and then he or she can perform the expression in *sthiti* (static) or *gati* (dynamic). When the actions are performed or the songs are danced, the actor cannot stay in a single place, he has to move around and cover the stage. Though the gait involves mainly the movement of the legs, hands and facial expressions also come under *gati*, when the actor represents the mental caliber of the character through his gait. Therefore, the actor should be proficient in all *abhinayas* especially *āṅgika*. These are the features of *gati* in drama. At times, the drama also has dance segments. In dance, *gati* relates to the movement of the leg in unison with the rhythm. Here the *gati* is always dance – like, based on the rules of *nātyadharmī*² and thus involves time measure. Thus, *gati* can be placed in *nāṭya* as a stylized walk, in *nṛtta* and *nṛtya* as dance movements. Therefore, *gati* becomes an integral part of dance and drama.

Bharata says *nāṭya* is *anukarāṇa*, that which re-presents the activities of the people in the world. When a person plays a role of a man, a woman or a bird or an animal, he should walk around the stage with that particular movement to represent that character, in other words the actor should imitate the actions of the happenings. *Gati* depends upon the character, situation, sentiment, place, time, and so on. Abhinava says, *gatisca prakṛtiṃ rasamavastham desam kalam capeksya vaktavya pratipuramabhidhanat*³

The gait can be presented on stage in a natural way or a stylized way. Sometimes the actor has to imagine a mountain on the stage and climb on it with a particular gait or he has move around with steps on the stage making the audience feel as though his gait is on the aerial sphere. The mood or the property for the scene is created by the gait of the actor. It involves movement of the *aṅgas*, *upāṅgas* and *pratyāṅgas* of the whole body.

There are *cāris* and *karaṇas* referred by Bharata and these movements form the gait for all the actors. *Gati*, if taken as walk it relates to *cāri* and if taken as movement it relates to *karaṇa*. These movements can be performed repeatedly so that the character moves from one place to another. The *maṇḍalas* are sequential movements, which can be used in fight. *Āṅgahāras* are sequential movements, which are of *uddhata* (forceful) and *sukumāra* (graceful). The *uddhata āṅgahāras* can be used in *vīra* and *raudra rasa* and *sukumāra* in *sr̥ṅgāra rasa*. Thus, *gati* plays an important role in the delineation of *rasa*.

Gati is based on the rhythmic aspect of *tāla* also. Abhinava says, ‘the action of hands is *tāla*.’⁴ Time measured with the beating of palm is *tāla*. *Tāla* is very important because there is nothing

without *tāla*.⁵ He also adds the importance of *tāla*. The letter ‘*tā*’ denotes *tāṇḍava* and lord *Śiva* as it is performed by him. Letter ‘*lā*’ denotes *lāsya* and goddess *Śakti* as it is performed by her. *Tāla* is thus named because of the union of *Śiva* and *Śakti*. *Takarastandavah prokto lakaro lasyamucyate*.⁶ These vocal and instrumental music are the essential arts on which the other arts like dance, drama, etc. are based on.

Other than this, *gati* can also be used in dance movements. Here the gait of the dancer is more stylized and it brings a visual impact in the spectator. These gaits are mainly used for covering the stage and it brings out the *utsāha bhāva* in the dancer. *Gati* is a culmination of the action of the whole body through a combination of the elements of *āṅgika* and *sāttvika abhinaya*. Hence, *gati* forms the basic element of *nāṭya*, *nṛtta* and *nṛtya*.

Gati in works on Nāṭya

Many writers in dramaturgy have dealt with *gati* in different ways. Though Bharata is considered the earliest writer on dramaturgy, it is surprising to know that no one has followed his way in describing the gaits, except *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*. Bharata elucidates the chapter on *gati* in a very elaborate manner, but some later scholars gave a different approach to the subject, though they follow him in other aspects of *āṅgika abhinaya*. Works on dance like *Abhinayadarpaṇam* just mention the *gati* as the gait of various animals and birds. *Saṅgītaratnākara*, which faithfully follows Bharata and even adds some *deśī* aspects of dance elements such as *cāris* and *karaṇas*, has not dealt with the aspect of *gati* in a separate topic. However, the *vinīyogas* of *karaṇas* in the performance of the gait of various *bhāvas*, *rasas*, locales and situations are explained by Śārngadeva. The works on drama, such as *Daśarūpaka* and *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*, does not mention about *gati*. *Saṅgītamakaranda* has a manuscript, which deals with gaits.

Bālarāma Varma in his *Bālarāma Bharatam* does not include the topic of *gati* but he defines *gati* in a stanza, which says:

*vinayollasa bhavabhyam angavinyasa purvakam |
talanukaranam kṛtvā gamane gaturucyate |*⁷

Thus, he feels that the expression of the song performed followed by the rhythm and movement is *gati*.

It is interesting to note that the importance of *gati* as in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is neither thought-out by the works on drama nor works on dance which came after the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. An evolution has taken place and the concept of *gati* has taken a different form. However, Bharata’s demarcation seems to be unique and very useful to the theatre artists, the dancers and the actors.

Gati in Nāṭyaśāstra with explanations from Abhinavabhāratī

Bharata in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* has written a chapter on *gatipracāra*. This comes as the final chapter on *āṅgika abhinaya*. He deals with its varieties in an exhaustive manner, nearly twenty categories though he does not number them.

Abhinavagupta, the author of *Abhinavabhāratī*, has explained it skillfully. Without his work, it would be very difficult to understand the nuances of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

Bharata gives various gaits to be followed by various types of characters, in different situations, portraying the nature, for enhancing various sentiments and for many other subjects. These can be performed only after having a basic knowledge of the chapters based on *āṅgika abhinaya*, which relates to the basic exercises of the movement of *aṅgas* and *upāṅgas*. These gaits explained by Bharata in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*⁸ can be brought under five broad classifications.

1. Gaits according to theater.
2. Gaits for types of characters.
3. Gaits relevant to sentiments.
4. Gaits pertaining to circumstances.
5. Gaits of animals and birds.

These gaits can be performed accordingly by the actors when they move around on stage portraying different characters. Bharata, in *tāṇḍava lakṣaṇa*- the fourth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, has defined the *karaṇas* (combined movements of hands and legs) and in eleventh chapter the *cārīs* (movements of legs). He states the *karaṇas* and *cārīs* can be used for depicting the *gati* in dramas (*nāṭya*), but is not mentioned in the chapters of the *karaṇa*, *cārī* or in the *gati* about which *cārī* or *karaṇa* is to be used for the relevant *gati*. Abhinavagupta has explained all the *cārīs* and *karaṇas* elaborately and has suggestions for the uses of the *karaṇas* in a particular *gati*. However, he has not elaborated about the uses of *karaṇas* in the *gati* chapter.

Bharata has enumerated a variety of *gaits*, which gives ample scope for the dancer and dramatist. The researcher feels that as these *cārīs* and *karaṇas* are given under *nṛtta* varieties, which can be used for portraying the gait in a dance drama. During Bharata's period, *nṛtta* (dance) was a component of *nāṭya* (drama). However, now as drama has taken a separate form, these gaits given by Bharata can be performed in *nāṭyadharmī* - stylized way of using the *cārīs* and *karaṇas*. Moreover, a particular gait can be performed with one or more *cārīs* or *karaṇas*.

Therefore, *gati* can be performed through *ceṣṭākṛta* - actions or movements of the whole body, or *cārīs*- thirty-two specified movements of the legs, or *maṇḍalas* (combination of *cārīs*) - twenty specified movements of the legs used in fighting sequences or *karaṇas*- hundred and eight specified movements of the body or *aṅgahāras* - thirty-two combined movements of *karaṇas* either in drama or in dance.

Bharata says, after the *upavahana*, instrumental music is played and the *dhruvā* song, appropriate to the place and sentiment, is sung. Then the curtain is removed and to the accompaniment of music, the characters enter exhibiting the theme and sentiments of the play.⁹

Abhinavagupta explains thus: "After *upavahana* - the humming of the tune, *gati* can be understood just with music."¹⁰ *Upavahana* is one of the components of the *pūrvaraṅga*, procedure in which the singers start humming the musical notes of the song. After this the instrumental music is played in order to enhance the entry of the character. *Gati* thus introduces the *sthāyī bhāva* to the audience and intensifies the *rasa*. *Gati*, which is *aṅgavikṣepa*, transforms to *aṅga abhinaya* when the character is introduced. *Dhruva* songs describe the place, garden and characters, *naṭī* will enter, sing the season and call the character to the stage. *Gati* is thus used for entrance and actions on stage. Character should enter with a perfect *sthāna*, *dṛṣṭi* and *mukharāga*.¹¹ Audience should understand the character and the *rasa* immediately. These *sthānas* are stances of the body from which the *gati* originates. The *dṛṣṭi* and *mukharāga* refers to eye and the *mukhaja abhinaya* or facial movements of the actor. *Praveśa dhruva* is sung along with *puṣkaravādyā* when a character enters the stage. *Praveśa* or entry of a person cannot be done without the music and song. The full impact of music is got by *gati* and thus music is taken to audience by the exact *gati* and vice versa.

Hence, *gati* is performed for entering the stage, *raṅgapraveśa* along with the *praveśa dhruva*. This will be in *madhya laya* along with *susṅkāṣara gānam*. These *susṅkāṣaras* are meaningless syllables that are recited or sung like the solfa syllables or *jathi solkattus* of present parlance. Thus, the entry of a character should be with a proper *gati*. Gait, which is based on body movements, along with eye and facial expressions becomes *sāttvika* and thus is capable of strengthening the *rasa*. These

praveśa dhruvas are now seen in dance forms in the name of *praveśa daru* and these songs introduces the characters.

Relevant *Sthānas* and *Nyāyas* Related to Perform the *Gati*

The basic beauty of the body is maintained through these positions that give raise to the movements. The *rekha* or the bodyline and *aṅgaśuddham* is to be maintained through these elements. As the stances give rise to the movements they should be properly maintained. Those performing the movements should take care of the *sauṣṭhava*, for the limbs without *sauṣṭhava* does not create beauty in drama or dance. This gives beauty to the stance as well as to the movement.¹²

Sthānas are postures of the body from which the gait or movements begin. The six *sthānas* for men are *vaiṣṇava*, *samapāda*, *vaiśākha*, *maṇḍala*, *ālīḍha* and *prayālīḍha*. They are to be used in the release of missiles. The *sthānas* or stances are the starting position for the *cārīs*, *karaṇas* and *gatis*. Therefore, the actor should possess the perfect *sthāna* before he starts his move.

Nyāyas are the different ways of releasing the missiles. They are of four types and in the *bhārata nyāya* the weapon should strike at the waist, in the *sāttvata* at the foot, in the *vārṣagaṇya* at the breast and in the *kaiśika* at the head. In these *nyāyas*, arising out of the various *cārīs*, the actors should move about on the stage while using weapons. The *nyāyas* are so called because fights on the stage are *niyante*- carried out with the *aṅgahāras* relating to the *nyāyas* and arising out of them.¹³

With these graceful movements of the limbs, weapons like the bow, the thunderbolt and sword are to be performed by the use of gestures and postures along with rhythm and tempo.¹⁴ All these can be performed with beautiful *karavartanas* and *maṇḍalas*. Women have to assume certain stances in their movements like walking and in conversations. There are three such stances, for women are *āyata*, *avahittha* and *aśvagrānta*.¹⁵

Manifestation of *Gati* in *Cārīs* and *Karaṇas*

Cārīs prescribed by the rules and connected with different limbs relate to one another constitute a *vyāyāma*. (*Vyāyacchante* from *vyā-yām*, stretch out to). A *cārī* is a correlated movement of the whole leg. The movement mainly with a single foot (*pāda*) is called the *cārī*. The movement of the two feet is called the *karaṇa*.¹⁶ If one leg is moved in various ways, direction it is *cārī* and generally the other leg is static, and when the other leg starts to move it becomes *karaṇa*. Both legs can be moved simultaneously on the ground or even off the ground in some of the movements like leaps and jumps. However, this *cārīkaraṇa* is different from the *nṛttakaraṇa*, which is a simultaneous movement of the hand and leg. *Maṇḍalas* are the combinations of various *cārīs*, which are the sequence of movements. *Gati* is mainly based on these movements. Bharata says, *nāṭya* is completely dependent on *cārī*, and without the performance of *cārī* nothing can be done in a *nāṭya*.¹⁷ *Karaṇas* are combined movements of hands and legs, which can be used for depicting the *gatis* in *nāṭya* and *nṛtta*.

Performance of *Cārī*

Cārī forms the base for management of spacing techniques on the stage. As in choreographic methods, the stage is fully utilized for the movements and positioning of characters. The main action of the movement of *cārī* is only through the leg. But, sometimes it involves the upper part of the body also. Foot is moved close to the ground in *Bhūmi cārī*. Foot is moved in the air and then placed on the ground in *Ākāśa cārī*.

Prayoga of Cārī

From the *cārīs* proceeds dance as well as movements in general. The release of missiles and the fighting sequences on stage should be performed with the *cārīs* and *maṇḍalas*. These *cārīs* are used in personal combats as well as in the *karaṇas*.¹⁸ The *ākāśacārīs* consist of the graceful movements of the limbs. They are to be applied in the release of weapons like an arrow and the thunderbolt (*vajra*).¹⁹

These *cārīs* consists of graceful and forceful movements of the limbs. Abhinava suggests the uses for *cārīs*. The *gati* of *cāṣa* in *cāṣagati cārī*, *gati* of *ajakā* in *eḍakākriḍita cārī*, *lajjā* and *īrṣyā* in *ūrūdvṛtta*, *matta gati* in *mattalli*, *mṛgapluta* for *vidūṣaka*, etc.²⁰ He adds that *sthāna* in *sthitī* and *cārī* in *gati* are the main elements. All these *cārīs* are movements or *gatis* at first, and then they become stances or *sthitīs*.²¹

Performance of Gati through Maṇḍalas

The *maṇḍalas* are beautiful combinations of the *cārīs*, which give scope for mere *nṛtta* sequences and fighting sequences. The *maṇḍalas* are grouped as the *bhū maṇḍalas* – earthly and *ākāśa maṇḍala* – aerial, just as the *cārīs*. Ten *maṇḍalas* are given in each earthly and aerial *maṇḍalas*. The *Bhūmaṇḍalas* have some *ākāśacārīs* too and the *ākāśamaṇḍalas* have some *bhūmicārīs* too. If the *bhūmi* or *ākāśa cārīs* are combined separately based on the category then it is called *samacārī maṇḍalas*. The *gati* performed by the *maṇḍalas* is very important in *nāṭya*. They are called *maṇḍalas* because the formations are in circles. The *khaṇḍas* are combination of few *cārīs* performed in semi-circles and *maṇḍalas* are combination of *khaṇḍas* and they are performed in circles.²² These gaits can be identified in *uparūpakas* such as *rāsaka*, *daṇḍarāsaka*, *nāṭyarāsaka* and many dance forms like *kummi*, *kolāṭṭam*, *garbha* and so on. Such circular and semi-circular movements are also in fighting sequences like *kalarippayaṭṭu*, *śilambam*, etc. These are not specified with varieties in *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Bharata allows us to create *Khandas*. These can be used in the gait for attacking and defending.

Representation of Gati with Karaṇas and Aṅgahāras

An *aṅgahāra* is a combination of six or more specified *karaṇas*. The combinations of the *karaṇas*, that is the *aṅgahāras*, have been dealt and numbered in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as thirty-two *aṅgahāras*. Some are *uddhata*, some are *sukumāra*, and they can be used as *nṛtta gati* and interspersed in order to enhance the *abhinaya* items so that the mood of the piece is not altered.

Abhinavagupta says *karaṇa* is *kriyā*-action. It is the action of dance. i.e. the action of moving the limbs beautifully. Amarasimha says *aṅgahāra* is known as *aṅgavikṣepa*, which means gracefully composed limbs.²³ These *karaṇas* and *aṅgahāras* can be performed in various speeds while executing the *nṛtta gati*. Abhinava quotes Bharata here.²⁴ As in the *aṅgahāra* called *apavidha* the movement should be performed in fast tempo. Abhinava adds, that in between the song the *gati* is added.²⁵

Sixteen *aṅgahāras* should be performed in *caturaśra tāla* (four beats) and other sixteen in *tryaśra tāla* (three beats).²⁶ From this, it is understood that *gati* can be performed with *aṅgahāras*. The explanation and uses of *karaṇas* given in *Abhinavabhāratī*, *Saṅgītaratnākara*, *Nṛttaratnāvalī* and the commentary on *Saṅgītaratnākara*. Therefore, these *nṛtta karaṇas*, which comprises of leg movements called *cārīs*.

Observations on Gati Aspects

The concept of *gati* is very important for the dancers and the dramatists. Scholars who have

written works on dance and drama have not elaborated the concept of *gati*, which is beautifully explained by Bharata in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. This is because, the change took place due to the non-performance of *rūpakas* and performance of *uparūpakas*, which were more dance oriented. Jayasenapathi, author of *Nṛttaratnāvali*, who had followed Bharata in many aspects have not expanded on gaits in his work but has mentioned about *nṛttagati*, which must have been popular during his period. Śārṅgadeva who has completely followed Bharata for his chapter on dance has not taken this topic in his work. Yet, as some *karāṇas* for the performance of *gati* had been mentioned, we come to know that Śārṅgadeva was familiar with Bharata's concept of *gati*. It is astounding to know that even Dhanañjaya, who had followed Bharata in writing his work *Daśarūpaka*, which gives all the details about dramatics, has also not explored into the topic of *gatipracāra*.

It is interesting to know that neither the scholars who wrote works on dance, nor drama, have included the chapter on *gati* in an elaborate manner. Bharata has commenced the chapter on *gati*, as it determines the character on the stage and it is an important element, which gives the *rasānubhava* to the audience. Therefore, it should have been an important element in Sanskrit dramas. Before the advent of the *deśī* works on dance and drama, these dramas should have been performed as *nāṭya*, based on Bharata's technique. Even the commentaries on *nāṭakas* of Kālidāsa and other famous authors explain only the literary aspect. The performance of Sanskrit plays as per Bharata's norms should have been obsolete after the 10th century. It must be the reason why no major works on dramaturgy starting from *Daśarūpaka*, which is dated 10th century, had elaborated the *gati* aspects.

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