

Human values in performing art: With reference to Sanskrit literature

Sukanya Boruah

Research Scholar, JNU SCSS, Delhi, India

Abstract

Human values are depicted in Sanskrit Literature. This paper is an attempt to find out and display those values stored in the Indian performing art. Sanskrit literature itself is a great depository of essence including both esoteric and exoteric aspects. In every field of Sanskrit discourse including philosophy and performing art human values plays an important role. The three important human values in our day to day life are truth, beauty and goodness (*Satyam Śivam Sundarīm*) and performing art is the best possible and easiest way to practice and convey the values throughout the world and in one's existing life as well. It trains our attitude and gives mental peace. Nowadays performing art is more responsible in terms of human value for our society. The present paper will discuss mainly the philosophy of Artistic presentation and how much the values influenced the Indian Performing art. The presence of those values turn a performance from general to particular one adorned with deep philosophical reflections. When values are there with art it nourishes the society. It is well known that Indian art is not only for entertainment but also an authorised way to attain the Ultimate Reality which is too called as *Liberation* or *mokṣa*. Here, in this paper the present researcher will discuss the values as described in *Nāṭyaśāstra* (some specific chapters). Then it will be followed by *Āgama* literature since it is keenly associated with aesthetics. Further it will discussed present scenario of performing art which confront challenges by dint of lacking the values mentioned in the age old expositions by seers and sages. The another target of this paper to establish Sanskrit performing texts as one of the core of human values comprising highest knowledge because the four values *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa* also can obtain through it.

Keywords: aesthetics, philosophy, performing arts, Sanskrit literature

Introduction

Human values were considered the most important in India. It makes a person a responsible one for the society and develops the human natures as one can care about each and every creature in the world. Three important human values in our day-today life are truth, beauty and goodness - *Satyam*, *Śivam* and *Sundarīm*. The other values like *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa* are very ancient Indian concepts. They are also known as *Puruṣārthas* ^[1]. Vedas and Upanishads described about the *Dharma* and duties to be undertaken by the people. In Sanskrit "Sikṣā" is a particular śāstra of the sutra ^[2] literature, which has six branches called *Sikṣā*, *Chandas*, *Vyākaraṇa*, *Nirukta*, *Jyotiṣa* and *Kalpa*. This branches denotes the concept of Human values, characteristics of human values, Need for valuation, Sources of values and value properties. Hence, there exists a great relationship between human values and value education in the modern society. The major purpose of the human values is to make a person a better learner, worker, not only in terms of knowledge, understanding and skills but also in terms of human values and motives. On the other hand, the people of India have a long, varied and lively artistic history. India is always colorful having varieties of cultures across the country including their own unique language, dress, food, art forms, rituals etc. Across the country we find thousands of exquisite examples of artistic work in the form of architecture, sculpture, wall paintings, stupas, carving, performing art etc. and every performing art has some aesthetic and moral values. Performing arts includes drama,

dance, music and it can extend it to both classical and folk level (village folk and tribal folk as well). *Kalā* ^[3] (art) enters the world of Indian people from the very beginning, in fact, performing art has been remain as a way of life in India.. It is associated with the ritualistic and spiritual approach. Along with these aspects, now a days, it becomes both passion and profession for the people. So, it works as a big medium of conveying human values among the people. Art itself can called as a value as aesthetic values are there. This paper is an attempt to present the humane values lies on performing art and how the performing art helps to spread human values for the welfare. This researcher want to establish performing art as a best medium for conveying human values and itself as a store of values as well with reference to *Nāṭyaśāstra* ^[4] and some other Sanskrit text.

Relevant of performing art in spreading human values

When one talk about the classical art form, specially traditional classical art form, we always think about two things, first, the change, that the particular art form is going through and second, the changes that the art form is bringing two our society which is very important in respect of human values. Each traditional art form is derived from certain fascinating aesthetic values of that region ^[5]. Bharatamuni, in his *Nāṭyaśāstra*, himself mention that art has to keep on changing. Dance is especially always about the present and always for the audience which represents present as well as future. Generations ago, we have grandma's bad time stories

from our mythological text, but that seldom happens any more. Dance is a very act visual medium which can translate those values to the children of this generation. We have stories of Rāma, Kriṣṇa, adorable Ganeśa and many more. These are not merely stories. There is a set of values ^[6], values which have to be passed on to our future generations. For instances Rāma is the representation of Dharm, piṭrbhakti etc.

The specialty of performing arts of India is spirituality. In the Sanskrit treatise kalā is regarded as way to attain Mokṣa ^[7]. Without spirituality there is no art i.e.dance. Indian classical dance forms provide a perfect vehicle for interaction of varied emotions and rasas in perfect harmony. Through kalā, one can achieve sadyamukti ^[8] as mentioned in. It is also cited in Nīṭisātaka that one who devoid of sāhitya, saṅgīta and kalā, is a beast without tail and horn ^[9]. Art has always created a better world. With good intentions, artist and art will definitely create a better place for all of us. Sanskrit Literature [Kāvayas, Nātakas (dramas), Epics, Purānas, śatakas as well as the Vedas and Upanishads etc.] has given much importance to human values. The makers of Sanskrit literature have a clear vision about the life which is undisturbed and pious. They know how a man can make his life happy by following human values. Life without human values is waste, meaningless and sinful. That is why the Sanskrit writers have filled their works with human values like Truth, Charity, Service to humanity, Self-Control, Patriotism [Respect towards mother and mother land], Respect forwards elderly people, God-fearing nature etc. and performing art is the best medium to teach and learn human values in today's society. Because it attracts people than the other means. It itself both the abode/carrier of values and medium of spreading these values. Performing art is fruitful for both the performer and audience.

Values through performing art

Performing art without gender biasness

Dance is the state of being that transcends one's physical self, delving into deep state of mind in a spectrum of timelessness of time past, time present and time future. It is an experience of thinking body. Gender is a construct. Dance is an experience of feelings. Compassion, anger, affection cannot be called as male or female. Artist should be able to delineate, express anything and everything, there is no gender difference. So, where is the necessity to have the gender biasness? Through the vehicle of dance, the genderless soul transcendence. The same body has the potency to perform/represent a male character and female character. For a dancer gender is just a performance. The woman is consciously woman and sub-consciously male and the male is consciously male and sub-consciously female. The difference between man and woman is the difference of emphasis. There is a man in every woman and a woman in every man. We all are mixture of female and male. Body is the dancer's vehicle and the dancing body is asexual. The understanding of the concept of Ardhanārīśvara ^[10] can decrease the gender biasness which can well interpret through performing art.

Performing Art for National unity

Performing arts includes drama, dance, music and it can extend it to both classical and folk level (village folk and tribal folk as well).The basic grammar for performing art is same. Technically all the performing arts have of common grammar all over India. Only the costumes are different. The

performing art has actually been responsible for keeping the entire Indian sub-continent together. Every type of performing art has to be owned by every Indian because it is something which unifies and makes an understanding with each other. There is a soul of every performing art and culture. The soul of Indian performing art is our philosophy. Performing arts are reflection of life. Performing art mirrors life in universe. It mirrors not only the human being, it mirrors devas (gods), asuras (the bad fellows), animals and birds, cetana and acetana enacted in the theatre. The universe is seen in the theatre. The micro and macrocosm. The substance is same. The theatre become microcosmic space. We have to be rooted in our culture. Each and every performing art will not bring to you sensitivity. That is excitement. From the Indian philosophic point of view arts calms us down. It should help the humane to evolve and further become divine and to get peace.

Thought behind Naṭarāja tattva

Naṭarāja is the lord of dance, knows as also Śiva. He is the cosmic dancer. Naṭarāja tattva is nothing but the dance of the sub-atomic world ^[11]. It is Śiva who keep whole cosmos into activity. Drum represents creation, birth and rhythm of time which brings forth the creative energy, the starting of a creative energy brings forth the whole universe into activity; it is the symbolism behind the drum. The flame signifies the dissolution not destruction. It is just a change, the lower right hand makes Abhaya hasta or mudra-the protection, gesture of blessing which calms all fear because what is created has to be protected. This is showed the balance of cosmic universe. Śiva's lower left arm sweeps across his torso with the hand pointing to his left foot in the gesture of gaja hasta, symbol of salvation and liberation. Śiva's right foot is shown stamping on the dwarf figure Apasmara Purusha, who holds a cobra and who represents illusion and ignorance, leading humanity away from truth. Different kind of natural forces which are making this world sustainable. We have no right to destroy them. Human being should protect this nature. If we have to live harmoniously, humanity has to continue to live and this Natarāja itself is a big example of the unity, some kind of orderliness in the universe. The same balance, same unity, same kind of attitude towards ignorance i.e. same values should be practiced.

Values (humane values) in performing art with reference to Nāṭyaśāstra:

• The curse to Bharata's sons

Bharata's one hundred sons performed the drama in heaven, but under the effect of intoxication and having being childishly arrogant,offended the sages by caricature and mockery. Angry, the sages cursed the sons to become Sudras ^[12]. Here, a very essential human value is presented. Nāṭya is not simply a mimicry or imitation. It (nāṭya) is regarded highly. It is not only a representation but also a spiritual experience ^[13]. So, one should not do so as the Bharata's son did. Drug addiction, ego, indulged in making fun of the higher people (during performance) are never regard as a good thing during performance and also in the society as well. The values must be kept in the heart of performers.

• The pūrvaraṅgavidhi and the values of performers

Generally in Indian tradition, people are well-known to the habit of reciting the name of god in the beginning of every

work whether it is driving a car or cooking food. At the same time, the performing arts also bears the tradition of such values i.e. worshipping god before starting drama. Nāṭyaśāstra comprises pūrvaraṅga ^[14] as a ritualistic act before the beginning of a Drama. A performer need time to prepare the inner self for the Performance. A peaceful mind and a group of supportive spectators ^[15]. On the other hand, to avoid three kinds of ghātas ^[16] or impediments, (daiva samutha-unforeseen, para samutha-impersonal, atma samitha-personal); pūrvaraṅga is necessarily performed. As the personal impediments are related to the naṭ themselves so, they need pūrvaraṅga to purify or to improve their quality and to decrease their mistakes. That is why the god-fearing nature is called as a human value for one's positive development of nature. These are the duties of performers.

• Spectators and their values

The audience should be the *Rasikas* for the proper reception of the play. The audience play an important role in cultivating sensitivity and creating a right environment too. The spectators come to have peace by throwing aside all excitements. In chapter.xxvii, Bharata explained siddhi or success of production from the point of view of actors and actresses and the audience participation therein. Their values are producing no obstacles out of jealous and for professional enmities. The audience should also careful about their reactions during the play is staging such as excessive laughter and crying, clapping at wrong places ^[17], entering with intoxication etc. Timing is a very important matter in dramatic performance. Incompletion of work on time is an impediment. Abhinavagupta ^[18] explains it as inappropriateness of time, the performance suited for one time, presented at the other ^[19].

• Pūrvaraṅga as upliftment of values

Nāṭya or Drama is intended to uplift the low and to show them the right path while providing an enjoyable entertainment, with fundamental pressure and rectitude. Bharata himself mentioned about the tumble of society ^[20]. So, in the request of Indra Brahma created an object of diversion which is *Nāṭya* for those who never want to listen the righteousness i.e. Vedas and creates uninhibited situations .So, it can say that *Nāṭyaśāstra* is “for the counsel ^[21]. Through these art forms one can learn discipline and how to co-operate with each other.

Conclusion

Thus, the ways of thinking, the rules, regarding performing art and its values, as specified above, have relevance for everyone, including the present day people. Such values enhance the quality of life and society as well. These are the human values that art possess in order to achieve both social welfare and spiritual raise. The art and human values together can calmly find solution for the modern problems which is the most important for mankind. The quality of human action is the manifestation of one's behavior which in turn is a product of culture and values. In the modern world we need to inculcate performing art for ethical practices in order to attain world peace and personal satisfaction.

References

1. Bharatamuni, *Nāṭyaśāstra with the com. of Abhinavagupta*. Delhi: New Bharatiya Book Corporation, 2006.
2. Śaradatanaya, *Bhāvaprakāśanam*. Varanashi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Prakash, 1983.
3. Dvivedi, Parasnath, *Nāṭyaśāstra kā itihās*. Delhi: Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, 2004.
4. Choudur, Satyanarayan Moorthy. *Gleanings from Rgveda: When Science was Religion*. USA: Author house, 2011.
5. Lidova, Natalia. *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1994.
6. Rao PSR, Appa. *Monograph on Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, Indian Dermatology*. Hyderabad: Nāṭya Māla Publishers, 1967.
7. Tarlekar GH. *Studies in the Nāṭyaśāstra*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1975.
8. Sankaran A. *Some Aspect of Literary Criticism in Sanskrit*. Delhi, 1973.
9. Neog Mahesvar. *Sattriya Dances of Assam and their Rhythms*. Assam: Axom Prakashan Parishad, 1975.
10. Singh, Lalitkishor. *Dhvani aur Sangīt*. Delhi: Bharatiya Gyanpith. 2004.
11. Panchal G. *The Theatres of Bharata and Some Aspects of Sanskrit*, 1996.
12. *Play-production*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass.
13. Unni NP. *History of Nāṭyaśāstra*. Delhi: New Bharatiya Corporation, 2014.
14. Tripathi Radhavallava. *Lectures on Nāṭyaśāstra*. Pune: Center for Advance study in Sanskrit, 1991.
15. Gupta Bharata. *Dramatic concepts Greek and India: A study of the poetics and Nāṭyaśāstra*. Delhi: DK. Printworld, 1994.
16. Upadhyaya Ramji. *Nāṭyaśāstriyānusandhānam*. Bnaras: Chaukhamba Vidya bhavan, 1992.