



A STUDY OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION SYMBOLIC MEANINGS REFLECTED IN BHARATANATYAM GESTURES

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INTRODUCTION

People communicate by using symbols like words or gestures that have a common meaning. In dance such symbols are gestures, movements, the whole system of figurative, nonverbal techniques explained in ancient treatises and discussed in this paper. Dance expression is possibly the most intricate and evolved, yet simply understood dance form, as it uses the body as a channel of communication (Chander, 2003). This phrase undoubtedly pertains to Indian dance as well, as it covers a variety of nonverbal communication skills that will be discussed later in this study.

Symbol, According to Hofstede's (2001) assertion, are words, discourse, nonverbal gestures, pictures and art forms that contain "often complex meanings recognized as such only by those who share the culture (Tatjana & Blau, 2003). Semiotics is the study of how people make meaning and how they transmit it. Its roots are in the academic study of how visual and linguistic signals and symbols produce meaning. The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the semiotic theory. Symbols can have different meanings according to different cultural backgrounds.

The practice of delivering and receiving messages without the use of spoken or written words is known as nonverbal communication. Symbols attempt to communicate something from the unconscious, the unknown universe, to the conscious. People assume that a symbol has an unknown meaning when we suggest it has a symbolic meaning. Even when we try our hardest to express the hidden part of the meaning, a symbol's main feature is that some part of it is still left unclear. The variety of nonverbal cues that you utilize to communicate your feelings and intentions is known as body language. Body posture, facial emotions, and hand movements are examples of these. Understanding and interpreting body language can assist in detecting unsaid concerns or bad feelings in others.

Indians view Bharatanatyam as both a paradigm of dance and an essence of their ancient culture. The idiom's name has had a strong influence on its current prominence and status. 'Bharatanatyam' means 'the dance theatre of Bharata', the writer to who is ascribed the oldest surviving treatise on Indian theatre - the Natya Shastra - dated at not later than the third century AD (Puri, 1985). *Asamyutha Hastha* (or *Hasta*) - single hand gestures - and *Samyutha Hastha* - double hand gestures - are two types of Bharatanatyam hand gestures. These every gesture has their own symbolic meaning and researcher wants to analyse those symbolic meaning with nonverbal communication implications.

Objectives of this Research were to study the symbolic meaning of the Bharatanatyam gestures according to Indian dancing tradition and to identify the history and religious meaning of Bharatanatyam. Research problems were what are the nonverbal communication implications of the Bharatanatyam gestures? And how Bharatanatyam gestures connect with Indian traditional beliefs?

METHODOLOGY

Methodology of the research was the study of primary sources related to Bharatanatyam. A research structure was formulated to enable an equal analysis of all of the gestures, covering background and symbolic meaning according to tradition of Bharatanatyam. The *Natyaashastra* is



an encyclopaedia overview of theatre theory and practice as it evolved in India during the early Christian period. The thirty-six chapters of the treatise deal with such topics as the origin of drama (mythological), prayers to the gods, descriptions of the playhouse, and rules on the use of language. Other chapter headings are: Costume and Make-up, Types of Dramatic Characters, and Kinds of Play (Puri, 1985). Next primary resource is *Abhinaya Darpanam* by Nandikeshwara. The *Abhinaya Darpanam* is a Sanskrit treatise on Indian traditional dances, which includes a full description of dance movements and attitudes. The entire material is written in the form of poetry (*padya*). The initial origins of Bharatanatyam are regarded to be Bharata Muni's *Natyashastra* and Nandikeshwara's *Abhinaya Darpanam*. These two resources are considered main resources in Bharatanatyam. Researcher used these two books as primary resources and analysed Bharatanatyam gestures and their symbolic meanings and nonverbal communication implications through these resources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Because Indian dance is inextricably tied to the society's history, mythology, and religion, a grasp of those fundamental cultural components is essential from both a communicative and sociological standpoint. Further discussion of the historical setting in terms of Indian dance will allow some more meanings to be revealed. Where the hands (*Hasta*) go, the eyes (*Drishti*) follow; where the eyes go, the mind (*Mana*) follows; where the mind goes, an aesthetic expression of emotion (*Bhava*) is created; and where there is *Bhava*, the essence of the spirit (*Rasa*) is evoked in both the performer and the attentive and sensitive audience (*Rasika*). *Rasa* can be also referred as mood, flavour and sweetness.

All dance forms are based on the nine rasas (or emotions) depicted in Bharatanatyam's *Abhinaya*. *Hasya* (joy), *krodha* (anger), *bibhatsa* (disgust), *bhaya* (fear), *shoka* (sorrow), *viram* (courage), *karuna* (compassion), *adbhuta* (wonder), and *shanta* (wonder) are some of the terms used in the Vedas (serenity). For each of these rasas, they use the identical hand motions or *hasta mudras*, but they differ where the local genius has adapted them to local wants and needs (Chander, 2003).

Bharatanatyam's *Hastha Mudras*, or hand movements, are a highly evolved feature of the art and a science of divine communication. They're used for a number of purposes, including miming the song's essence, conveying deeper emotions, bringing out intrinsic attributes, invoking the divine in all of its forms, and in some instances, simple aesthetic ornamentation.

What matters is that the dancers' hand gestures clearly convey their thoughts, and that they, along with their facial expressions, play a critical role in defining specific meaning or detail. The *alapadma* hand gesture, for example, is symbolic of the sun when placed high above the head in the left hand. *Shikhara* *hasta mudra*, a closed fist with the thumb raised, is another well-known *hasta mudra* that is used to represent the embodiments of Divine forces. It also represents a pillar, an offering to manes, the upper lip, a tooth, asking, something entered, saying no, remembrance or the act of embrace, and sounding a bell. *Pataka mudra* in which the thumb is bent to touch the fingers, and the fingers extends, is indicative of "the beginning of a *natya* and denotes the clouds, a forest, forbidding things, bosom, night, a river, region of gods, the horse, cutting, wind, lying down, attempt at going, prowess, favour, moonlight, strong sunlight, forcing open doors, meaning of seven case-endings, wave, entering a street, equality, anointing the body of one's oneself, taking an oath, silence, palmyra leaf, shield, touching things, benediction, the ideal king, saying 'such a such place', the sea, a series of good deeds, approaching someone, moving forward, wielding a sword, a month, a year, a wet day, and sweeping with a broom" (Ghosh, 1957).

According to holy Indian treatises, every divinity is endowed with its certain attribute or weapon: Brahma with lotus, Indra - with thunderbolt, Sri Rama with bow, etc. (Devi, 1990). It has been suggested that specific hand motions, such as *hasta mudras*, can be used to express



these symbols and therefore placate and please the gods. Taking all into account, it is obvious that classical Indian dance has served as a brilliant example of a social group interacting throughout history using dance as a non-verbal mode of communication. The great practices of dance, wherever they are found in the world, purposefully and intentionally express meaning. They are not simply meaningless entertainments (Puri, 2004).

There are different mudras with which the performer can communicate not just various things, but also any acts, feelings, or abstract thoughts, as Ragini Devi writes in her book *Dance Dialects of India*. This beautifully depicts the communicative function of Indian dance. Ideography of its symbolic movements also signified gods and their attributes, heaven and earth, and the nether regions, the five elements, the sun and the moon (Chander, 2003).

Humans behave against people and objects in accordance with the meanings they are given. The core component of human action is meaning. Accordingly, there is a certain essence, or shared sense, in Indian dance, without which appreciation and comprehension of this art form would be impossible. In the context of Symbolic Interactionism theory, the Mahabharata and Ramayana epics, national folklore, myths and legends may serve as meanings in the phase of Indian dance.

As the above explanations demonstrate, Indian dance is not only a purveyor of Indian culture, an embodiment and audio-visual depiction of this society's national history, but it is also a purveyor of nonverbal communicative characteristics through which varied messages are delivered. As a result, Indian dancing is a particularly fascinating subject for Communication Sociology science.

CONCLUSION

According to the study, the researcher found that various non-verbal communication implications in Bharatanatyam dancing and how Bharatanatyam gestures connect with Indian traditional beliefs. Body Language, kinesics and nonverbal communication proves that Indian classical dance forms are really great not only to watch but also to understand the great influence of nonverbal communication in our life. Most people will associate these dance forms with antiquity and a culture and practice unique to a particular geographical region or civilization. These dance forms, on the other hand, depict a wide range of emotions and feelings that every person on the planet is likely to experience on an unconscious level. Indian Classical Dance, on the one hand, communicates. When the performer is familiar with Indian mythologies, religious patterns, and history, the meaning of this dance can be deduced. One cannot actually understand what Indian dancers non-verbally communicate, if there is no knowledge of their special language. However, the importance of music in every dance, as well as the emotional aspects of Indian dance, makes it truly universal. Given that all of those symbols can be intuitively deciphered by any human being, and that the majority of them are archetypal, Indian Dance as a means of communication can be understood by nearly everyone in many parts of the world.

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