

Kālidāsa and Āhārya Abhinaya

Vijay Pandya

विजयपण्ड्यामहाभागः नाट्यप्रयोगे आहार्याभिनयस्य महत्त्वम्
आवश्यकताञ्च निरूपयन् तत्तदाचार्यैः प्रतिपादितानि आहार्याभिनय-
सम्बन्धीनि लक्षणानि परिशील्य कालिदासीये नाटकत्रये तस्याभिनयस्य
प्रधान्यं, तदभिनयसम्बद्धान् विविधान् प्रकारान् विशदीकृत्य संस्कृत-
नाटकप्रयोगे प्रयोक्तृभ्यो दीयमानं स्वातन्त्र्यमपि स्पष्टयति।

What is Āhārya Abhinaya? The benediction stanza of the Abhinaya-darpaṇa (AD.) most gloriously and lucidly crystallizes the essence of the Abhinaya of which āhārya is one of the four types. The verse runs as follows:

आङ्गिकं भुवनं यस्य वाचिकं सर्ववाङ्मयम्।
आहार्यं चन्द्रतारादि तं नुमः सात्त्विकं शिवम्।¹

We bow to the Sāttvika Śiva whose āṅgika is the whole universe, whose vācika is the entire language and whose āhārya is the moon and the stars and so on.

So āhārya includes objects of the world like the moon and the stars and in the theatre world also, the āhārya is the stage-property. Further AD. explains the āhārya

आहार्यो हारकेयूरवेषादिभिरलंकृतिः। (AD, 40a)²

Āhārya is the decoration of the body with necklace and armlet etc.

It is called āhārya because 'It is external to the actor, to be put on and taken off.'¹³ Nāṭyaśāstra (NS.) first calls āhārya as *nepathyam* and then *nepthyam* is further divided into four types:

1. Abhinaya-darpaṇa Gujarati Translation by Dr. Panubhai Bhatt, pub. by Gujarat Vidhyapitha, Ahmedabad, First Edn. 1967.
2. Ibid AD 40a.
3. V. Raghavan, p-22 in Sanskrit Drama in performance, ed. by Rachael Van in Baumer and James R. Brandon, pub. by the University Press & Hawaii Honolulu, (date not available).

चतुर्विधं तु नेपथ्यं पुस्तोऽलङ्कार एव च।
तथाङ्गरचना चैव ज्ञेयं सजीवमेव च॥ (NS. 21-4)¹

This āhārya comprises not only the personal make-up of a character, but also four-fold external techniques viz. the use of colour, costume and ornaments, masks and properties.

The whole of the 21st chapter of the NS. expounds the āhārya-abhinaya. The various characters in their different states are best introduced by revealing the traits of the character through the other aspects of acting techniques. An actor, elucidates Bharatamuni, has to give up or cover up his personal identity and become a new and different person. Bharatamuni sets forth in detail the differences and details to be followed in facial complexion, hair-style and dress according to a character's sex, age, country, religion, profession and status and whether he is god, man, sage or demon. Even in the same person, particular activities and emotional states like separation or sorrow will make difference in dress and decor. Ācārya Bharata says that ornaments, crowns and armour must be of a very light material, so that actors do not get tired by their weight or hampered in their movements in abhinaya.

Ācārya Bharata also describes mountains, vehicles, chariots, shields, armour and banners. These also should be made of light material viz. fibre, bamboo, hide or wax. Animals, birds and reptiles are also made from similar light materials and used on the stage.

These all form the material of the āhārya abhinaya, as these are described by the ācārya in great detail. Obviously this must form the part of the scenery and properties of the stage, if the script of the drama so demands. Ācārya Bharata says that

नास्त्यन्तः पुरुषाणां हि नाट्योपकरणाश्रये। (NS. 21-1936)²
प्रासादगृहयानानि नानाप्रहरणानि च।

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1. Nāṭya Śāstra, 21-4, ed. by Ācārya Revaprasāda Dwivedi, First Edn. 2005, Pub. by Bharatiya Uchcha Adhyayana Sansthan, Shimla.
 2. Ibid.

न शक्यं तानि वै कर्तुं यथोक्तानीह लक्षणैः॥ (NS. 21-197)¹

There is no end to the things required in this world, but it is not possible to bring them all in their proper form on the stage.

So, while considering the āhārya abhinaya in the Kālidāsa's plays, we have to keep in mind this theoretical aspect of it, which has been described at length in the NS. of Bharata.

Now to illustrate, if the fourth act of the Vikramorvaśīyam is to be staged then, how to go about it? We may consider the staging of this act from the āhārya abhinaya point of view.

We know that the hero of the play Purūravas is in a disturbed state of mind due to his separation from his beloved Urvaśī and searching for her in the forest where she was lost. Purūravas is asking animate and inanimate objects such as a peacock, a cuckoo, an elephant, a swan, a bee, a mountain, a river, a cloud, an antelope, saṅgamanīya jewel so called because it is to bring about a union of the hero-heroine and a creeper about his lost beloved Urvaśī. These objects cannot be presented on the stage in their original forms, though they are described by the poet Kālidāsa in that vein and there are no dramatic directions-raṅgasūcanā in the text itself about its performance on the stage. Here, I think, we can take a cue from the theoretical discussion in the NS. about āhārya abhinaya and produce a play, here the fourth act of the Vikramorvaśīyam. So the āhārya abhinaya will be the mainstay of the fourth act of the Vikramorvaśīyam. Out of all these objects described in the play, it may be pointed out here that, Saṅgamanīya jewel also is a part of the material of the āhārya abhinaya. Now considering the important part played by the jewel, the jewel cannot be dispensed with and it must form an important segment of the stage-property of the Vikramorvaśīyam. The Jewel brings about the union of the hero and heroine in the fourth act and further in the fifth act too, it becomes an instrument to bring about the family reunion, so to say. To wit, the son Āyus who was weaned away from his mother Urvaśī, as soon as he was born, again gets united with his parents due to his Saṅgamanīya jewel, indirectly if not directly. We need not go into the details of the story as that it well-known to all of

1. Ibid.

us. Again we may say that the jewel indirectly almost becomes as instrument to bring about the separation also of Urvaśī from Purūravas. So the importance of the Sangamanīya jewel cannot be overemphasized. This jewel has to be somehow shown on the stage in an effective manner in order to reveal the important role assigned to it by the playwright in the drama. So, the jewel has to be a part of the āhārya abhinaya.

Similar remarks may also be made regarding the ring in the Śākuntalam play. Ring also plays a very significant part in the development of the story of the Śākuntalam, and obviously the ring also should be a part of the stage property of the Śākuntalam. Performance of Sanskrit drama in any language on the stage is highly creative thing and hence, no straitjacket rules can be laid down about the employment of the stage-property on the stage. Yet a producer or a director or a sūtradhāra of a Sanskrit play has to interpret the text of the play, take into account the convention of the Sanskrit theatre, feasibility of performing a particular scene on the stage from the point of view of effective representation and convenience and so on. All this, nitty-gritty of the stage has to be mastered and then a Sanskrit play or any other play is to be performed on the stage. So, regarding the object, a ring in the Śākuntalam, is a very small thing and even the highly limited audience of the Sanskrit theatre, would not be able to see the small thing like a ring from even a little distance. Then what is to be done? I may venture to say that, whenever there is a reference and a role of the ring in the Śākuntalam in any act or acts, a symbol or a big image of a ring or a façade of the ring may be constantly kept on the stage, say for example in the first act, or the forth act and the seventh act also. Creativity reinforced by the knowledge and experience of the stage can take any shape. One cannot make any watertight rules and regulations about the performance. On the stage of any play in any language less of a Sanskrit play on the stage. So the objects, animate and inanimate as well, say of the fourth act of the Vikramoraśīyam may be presented by their images on the stage.

In Kālidāsa's theatre-world, a ring occupies a very prominent place as we saw with reference to the Śākuntalam and

we may find similar importance attached to the ring in the development of the play *Mālavikāgnimitram*.¹ Kālidāsa is a dramatist of the highest order and so, in the *Mālavikāgnimitram* the ring with the seal of a snake-impression, worn by the queen Dhārinī is mentioned. And this ring with a snake-impression is a part of an āhārya abhinaya in the *Mālavikāgnimitram*. Kālidāsa very ingeniously utilizes this ring with a snake impression during the course of the events in the drama. So by the āhārya abhinaya, a director or a producer has to reveal the dramatic genius of our great poet Kālidāsa. Vīdūṣaka, in the act four to procure release of Mālavikā from a cellar, pretends that he is bitten by a snake. And when Vīdūṣaka makes an entry on the stage, he is shown as entering on the stage with his thumb tied up with his sacred thread. *yajñyopavītabaddhāṅguṣṭhaḥ vidūṣakaḥ* enters. Yajñopavīta also should be a part of the āhārya abhinaya. And the physician Dhruvasiddhi required a ring with a serpent-image on it to cure Vīdūṣaka of a snake-bite. It is all so dramatically delightful. So in the play *Mālavikāgnimitram* also, the ring plays a very significant role and without any doubt, the ring should be a part and parcel of the stage-property.

Now this āhārya abhinaya and the entire dramatic representation on the stage can be discussed and analysed from another point of view also; i.e. from the dharmī point of view. This dharmī is divided with two kinds : loka-dharmī and nāṭya-dharmī. These terms mean the qualities pertaining to loka-world or nature and the stage. In modern theatre terminology, loka-dharmi means Idealistic Theatre. Again, there can never be watertight compartments between these two kinds of theatre. No stage-production of any Sanskrit or any other play can either be totally loka-dharmī or nāṭya-dharmī, exclusive of each other. That is impossible in the very nature of things. In a Sanskrit play, dialogues in prose can only be loka-dharmī and the verses should be regarded as nāṭya-dharmī. Nāṭya-dharmī is anything peculiar to drama and not found in exactly the same manner in the world. Loka-dharmī is the natural condition of things in the world. But overall, the performance of a Sanskrit play can be more of a nāṭyadharmī rather than of a Loka-dharmī.

1. *Mālavikāgnimitram*, ed. by M.R. Kale, Ed. 1960, P. 120.

From the style of the performance of a Sanskrit play on the stage, a Bhāṇa type of rūpaka which has a single character in the play is nāṭya-dharmī while from the theme point of view, the Bhāṇa type of rūpaka may be regarded as a loka-dharmī drama being closer to the reality of the world. Nāṭaka type of rūpaka is nāṭyadharmī and Prakaraṇa type of rūpaka from the theme point of view, being more realistic is lokadharmī play.

In the Sanskrit theatre tradition, it can be safely stated that, prakaraṇa type of rūpaka is the ideal loka-dharmī play while nāṭaka type of rūpaka is a perfect nāṭya-dharmī play. Again in the nāṭya-dharmī rūpaka like nāṭya form, the dialogues may be loka-dharmī and even the poetic description may be nāṭya-dharmī, though they may have a basis of loka-dharmī. So exclusive division of nāṭya-dharmī and loka-dharmī is not possible.

Hence, the fourth act of the Vikramoraśīyam, may be performed on the stage in such a way, which may be closer to the loka-dharmī type of play. In this style, as in the fourth act of the Vikramoraśīyam, a mountain, a river, a peacock, an elephant can be represented on the stage by their small replicas made of lighter material as the Ācārya Bharata envisages. These small replicas, it is obvious should be closer to the realistic world and nobody can gainsay that fact. So in this respect, the production of the fourth act of the Vikramoraśīyam can be loka-dharmī as it is mainly based upon the āhārya abhinaya. On the other hand, the performance of the fourth act of the Vikramoraśīyam can be done in an opera style i.e. dance style, and happily the version of this style is available today. The entire fourth act of the Vikramoraśīyam can be represented on the stage in a dance or an opera style.

Now this opera style production will be of course, nāṭya-dharmī and the production which gives importance to the āhārya abhinaya is loka-dharmī. So, the fourth act of the Vikramoraśīyam can be regarded both as nāṭya-dharmī as well as loka-dharmī, depending upon the style adopted to produce the act on the stage.

Thus, it is an eternal credit to our śāstrakāra's (especially to NS.) to grant and acknowledge the artistic freedom so intensely required in staging a play and that is why, it is not surprising that

the Sanskrit theatre has the richest and longest tradition in the entire world.¹

1. A.L. Kroeber quoted by V. Raghavan in his article in the volume Sanskrit Drama in performance ed. by Rachael Van M. Baumer and James R. Brandon, The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu.